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## ***I. BIBLICAL THEOLOGY***

# ***LET THERE BE LIGHT! GEN. 1:3 IN THE INTERPRETATION OF THE PRIMORDIAL LIGHT***

**IOAN CHIRILĂ\***

**ABSTRACT.** The concept of light occupies a prominent place in most religions and cultures and can be understood both at a literal and a metaphorical level. Ever since antiquity, people have created and, later on, have developed a mutual connection between light and divinity. Noticing that the sun was the one that provided them with light, the people of ancient times came to attribute human qualities to the light in the sky and to serve it. Unlike them, the hagiographers specified from the very first book of the Holy Scripture that light is God's creation (Gen. 1:3-5; Is. 45:7) and that it differs significantly from the lights in the vault of the sky (Gen. 1:14-18). The light made by God on the first day of creation to give light to the world is different from the natural light that the sun and the moon shed. Prophet Isaiah underlines this distinction, foretelling a time when the sun will no longer have to shine during the day, as God Himself will be an everlasting light for man (Is. 60:19-20; acc. Rev. 21:23; 22:5). In other words, the Old Testament grants a deep theological dimension to the primordial light, highlighting the fact that its radiance is due to God and that it cannot exist separately from Him. Thus, in this study we shall demonstrate that the uncreated light which was commanded into being by God is nothing else than the radiance of God's glory and, implicitly, a manner of revealing the mystery of the uncreated light that overflowed the world from the very first day of the text of creation.

**Keywords:** light (of God), darkness, divine grace, the day of the Lord, Hexaemeron

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## Introduction

It was mostly the Fathers who have homilies on the Hexaemeron (Origen<sup>1</sup>, St. Basil the Great<sup>2</sup>, St. Ambrose of Milan<sup>3</sup>, St. John Chrysostom<sup>4</sup> etc.) that wrote on the nature of light and on its role in the text of creation. It was natural that they would notice the very special qualities of this godly light and specify its different nature compared to the physical light that God made visible only on the fourth day. The rabbis (Rashi<sup>5</sup>, Maimonides<sup>6</sup> etc.) who interpreted the text of creation carried out a similar undertaking. However, their interpretations are imbued with rational nuances that differentiate their discourse from that of the Church Fathers. Only their mystical accounts found in the Midrashim (*Genesis Raba*) are entirely consonant with the patristic perspectives which identify the primordial light with the radiance of godly grace. With regard to the vision developed by the Fathers as to the light of the first day, we also notice an interpretation on a Christological note (Origen, St. Cyril of Alexandria). This light that was meant to fill all matter with God's presence cannot be dissociated from the One Whom John the Evangelist calls the Light of the world (Jn 8:14) from the very prologue of his writing.

In the international literature, the subject of the primordial light is tackled from a scientific point of view in biblical dictionaries<sup>7</sup>. The authors of

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<sup>1</sup> Origen, *Omilii la Cartea Facerii* [Homilies on the Book of Genesis], in *Părinți și Scriitori Bisericești* [The Fathers of the Church] 6, transl. by Teodor Bodogae et al. (Bucharest: IBMBOR, 1981).

<sup>2</sup> St. Basil the Great, *Omilii la Hexaemeron* [Homilies on the Hexaemeron], in *Părinți și Scriitori Bisericești* [The Fathers of the Church] 17, transl. by Dumitru Fecioru (Bucharest: IBMBOR, 1986).

<sup>3</sup> St. Ambrose the Great, *Hexaemeronul* [The Hexaemeron], in St. Ambrose of Milan, *Tâlcuiri la Sfânta Scriptură* [The Interpretation of the Scriptures], in *Părinți și Scriitori Bisericești* [The Fathers of the Church] 52, transl. by Teodor Bodogae et al. (Bucharest: IBMBOR, 2007).

<sup>4</sup> St. John Chrysostom, *Omilii la Facere* [Homilies on Genesis], in *Părinți și Scriitori Bisericești* [The Fathers of the Church] 21, transl. by Teodor Bodogae et al. (Bucharest: IBMBOR, 1987).

<sup>5</sup> Rashi, *The Torah with Rashi's commentary translated, annotated, and elucidated. Genesis*, vol. 1, ed. Yaakov Blinder (Mesorah Pubns Ltd, 1999).

<sup>6</sup> Ramban, *The Torah with Ramban's commentary translated, annotated, and elucidated. Bereishis*, vol. 1, ed. Yaakov Blinder and Yoseph Kamenetsky (Mesorah Pubns Ltd, 2004).

<sup>7</sup> James Swanson, *Dictionary of Biblical Languages with Semantic Domains: Hebrew (Old Testament)* (Oak Harbor: Logos Research Systems, Inc., 1997), 239-40; James Strong, *The new Strong's dictionary of Hebrew and Greek words* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1997), H215; R.L. Harris, G.L. Archer, Jr. and B.K. Waltke (eds.), *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1980), 25-7; Johannes Botterweck and Helmer Ringgren, *Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament*, vol. 3, transl. by John Willis (Grand Rapids, MI: W.B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1977), 148; Dominique Mathieu, "Lumière I. Étude Biblique," in *Dictionnaire de spiritualité, ascétique et mystique*, vol. 9 (Paris: Beauschesne, 1976), 1142-9; Pierre-Thomas Camelot, "Lumière II. Étude patristique," in *Dictionnaire de spiritualité, ascétique et mystique*, vol. 9 (Paris: Beauschesne, 1976), 1149-58; Otto Böcher, "Licht und Feuer," in *Theologische Realenzyklopädie*, vol. 21 (Berlin: De Gruyter, 1991), 83-119.

these specialised studies intended to infer the etymology of the word אור, which can be both a noun and a verb, to present the evolution of this concept in the Semitic area or in biblical Judaism and to make thematic syntheses. The later studies of Bible exegetes significantly followed these directions. In the Romanian literature on the Bible, we would like to mention the presence of a study carried out by father Constantin Oancea, which presents systematically the main directions for tackling the concept of *light* in the Old Testament<sup>8</sup>. Noteworthy is also the research of father Cătălin Vatamanu<sup>9</sup>, who identified the Scriptural foundation on which father Dumitru Stăniloae<sup>10</sup> based his discourse on the light of the first day of creation. Besides these works of reference, we could also mention some personal studies in which we have highlighted the Old Testamental specificity of the theology of godly light. My interest in this subject started with a synthetic study published more than 25 years ago<sup>11</sup> and now, recently, I have developed various perspectives on the manifestation of godly light within creation and within eternity<sup>12</sup>. In order to provide this theological

<sup>8</sup> Father C. Oancea presents the most frequent uses of the term אור, grouping them in the following categories: natural light, light as a symbol (for life), light as a metaphor, light as God, God's light for Israel and God's light for all the nations. Constantin Oancea, "Utilizarea termenului *lumină* în Vechiul Testament [The Use of the Term *Light* in the Old Testament]," *Revistă Teologică* [Theological Journal] 2 (2006): 112-121.

<sup>9</sup> Cătălin Vatamanu, "Fundamente biblice ale teologiei luminii dumnezeiești, în scrierile Părintelui Stăniloae [Biblical Fundamentals of the Theology of Godly Light in the Writings of Father Stăniloae]," *Teologie și Viață* [Theology and Life] 9-12 (2013): 22-33.

<sup>10</sup> Fr. Dumitru Stăniloae is one of the most important dogmatists of European Orthodoxy. His most representative writings have been translated into several international languages. The Holy Cross Publishing House published, among other works, his five-volume treatise on dogmatic theology, entitled: *The Experience of God*.

<sup>11</sup> Ioan Chirilă, "Teologia luminii în Vechiul Testament" [The Theology of Light in the Old Testament]," in *Anuarul Facultății de Teologie Ortodoxă din Cluj-Napoca* [Annual of the Faculty of Orthodox Theology], 2<sup>nd</sup> tome (1992-1994), ed. Alexandru Moraru (Cluj-Napoca: Renașterea, 1994), 47-58.

<sup>12</sup> Ioan Chirilă, Stelian Pașca-Tușa, Ioan Popa-Pota and Claudia-Cosmina Trif, "Light – Icon/ Stained Glass – Illumination," *Journal for the Study of Religions and Ideologies* 50 (2018): 96-108; Ioan Chirilă, Stelian Pașca-Tușa, Adrian Mărincean, Bogdan Șoptorean, "The Divine Light. The Sight and Experience of It in Gregory Palamas Theology," *Astra Salvensis* 13 (2019): 221-230; Ioan Chirilă, "*Luminează-te, luminează-te, Ierusalime!*" (Is 60,1) – revărsarea luminii dumnezeiești și devenirea întru lumină [Arise, Shine, Jerusalem! (Is. 60:1) – the Overflowing of Godly Light and the Transformation into Light]," in *Sfânta Scriptură în Biserică și Istorie. Studii Teologice în onoarea pr. prof. dr. Vasile Mihoc* [The Holy Scripture in the Church and in History. Theological Studies in honorem Fr. Prof. Vasile Mihoc, PhD], eds. Alexandru Ioniță and Daniel Mihoc (Sibiu: Ed. Andreiană/Astra Museum, 2018), 166-85; Ioan Chirilă, "*Întru lumina Ta vom vedea lumină* (Ps 35,9) – despre lumină și taina întunericii în care se află Dumnezeu (Ieș 20,21) [In Your Light Do We See Light (Ps. 36:9) – about the light and mystery of the darkness in which God is (Ex. 20:21)]," in "*Voi pune înainte Ierusalimul, ca început al bucuriei mele*". In *Honorem Pr. Prof. Univ. Dr. Dumitru Abrudan la împlinirea vârstei de 80 ani* [I Consider Jerusalem My Highest Joy. In Honorem Pr. Prof. Dumitru Abrudan, PhD,



discourse with more coherence, I deemed it necessary to focus my attention on the first day of creation, namely on the moment when light received God's order to be on earth as it is in heaven.

In this respect, I have set out to tackle the text in Gen. 1:3-5 from an exegetic point of view, by resorting mainly to the Eastern instruments of interpretation of the Scriptural text. The Tradition of the Church shall represent the main source of inspiration, yet, whenever necessary, I shall also resort to the Judaic tradition in order to observe the way in which the first addressees of this pericope received the godly light. First of all, we shall insist on the elements that define the nature of this light. Then, we shall specify the differences between the primordial light and the astral light, highlighting the fact that there is no antagonistic relation between this light and the darkness that hovered over the face of the deep and we shall underline the connection between the light of the first day and the light that characterises the age to come.

### The Nature of the Primordial Light

When God utters the words *Let there be light*, the meaning given by God's will takes the form of a command<sup>13</sup>. What God utters is fulfilled immediately. This fact is mentioned in the Hebrew text, which uses the same words to certify the reality of what happened. The phrase *אור יהי* is repeated in an identical form after the coordinating conjunction *ו*, underlining the fact that when God utters the word, His will simultaneously becomes real<sup>14</sup>.

This command that highlights God's almightiness and His capacity to create *ex nihilo* marks the moment when the Holy Trinity revealed Themselves for the first time *ad extram*. This fact is extremely important and represents the

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on his 80<sup>th</sup> Anniversary], eds. Aurel Pavel and Nicolae Chifăr (Sibiu: Astra Museum, 2018), 214-37; Ioan Chirilă, "Veniți să umblăm în lumina Domnului" (Is 2,5) – discursul isaian despre lumina dumnezeiască" [Let us Walk in the Light of the Lord (Isa. 2:50) – Isaiah's Discourse on the Godly Light], in *In honorem pr. prof. univ. dr. Vasile Stanciu [In honorem Fr. Prof. Vasile Stanciu, PhD]*, ed. Daniel Mocanu (Cluj-Napoca: PUC, 2018), 91-107; Ioan Chirilă, "Lumina dumnezeiască în teologia profetilor mici [The Godly Light in the Theology of the Minor Prophets]," in *Anuarul Facultății de Teologie Ortodoxă* [Annual of the Faculty of Orthodox Theology], tome 18 (2017-2018), ed. Vasile Stanciu (Cluj-Napoca: Renașterea, 2019). Ioan Chirilă, "Kavod și Șekina – Slava lui Dumnezeu spre luminarea creaturii [Kavod and Shekinah – God's Glory for the Enlightenment of the Creature]," in *Anuarul Facultății de Teologie Ortodoxă* [Annual of the Faculty of Orthodox Theology], tome 14 (2011-2014), ed. Vasile Stanciu (Cluj-Napoca: Renașterea, 2014), 19-26.

<sup>13</sup> St. Basil the Great, *Omilii la Hexaemeron*, 93.

<sup>14</sup> Where the verbal form *אור יהי* is used after the particle *ו* we are dealing with a prophetic perfect which justifies the fact that God's command has been fulfilled at the same time.

key to the interpretation of the entire text of creation, in particular of the one day that announces the future age. The manifestation *ad extram* clarifies the mystery of the primordial light, which is not a light that came into being following an act of creation. This light shining forth from God's Being is uncreated. It is, in fact, the radiance of God's glory, which reveals itself freely outside the Trinity as soon as the Lord utters the words *let there be*<sup>15</sup>. To be more explicit, we shall use an expression from the *Lord's Prayer* which can be applied in this context. God commands light to be on earth as it is in heaven. As such, on God's command, the radiance of His glory exists not only in heaven, but also on earth,

Also on God's command, those elements which were in the light of His grace in heaven begin to exist on earth. This is also the reason why God first called upon the light and then commanded the existence of all that is seen. Authentic creation cannot be achieved in darkness, which is why the six days of creation unfolded from morning until evening. To better understand these assertions, we shall refer to the subject of godly rationales developed by Saint Maximus the Confessor. These thoughts of God, according to which all beings were created, existed before the creation of the world, as "all the things that are or that will in some way be created by Him in their substance were willed and pondered beforehand and known beforehand. Everything is always encompassed in God's will through foreknowledge, in accordance with His endless power."<sup>16</sup> Did these not exist in the light of His glory? And then, was it not in the same light that all that was "pondered and known beforehand" had to be created? Therefore, the way in which Saint Maximus thought of cosmology helps us understand the mystery of light and to realise that the primordial light is nothing else than the greatness of the godly grace, which is uncreated.

### Godly Light and the Lights in the Sky

In the Jewish mentality, the light of the first day was meant to put order in creation until the lights in the sky appeared. Once the sun, the moon and the

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<sup>15</sup> In previous research we proposed a translation that captures this nuance: "Let there be light or take it from Me." The void began to fill with light and from the filling to reveal its *nomosic*, eloquent, and doxological substance. All take shape, in the image of His light, good light in which, contained, they are also shown in their goodness as participation. Ioan Chirilă, "Reflexii filologice – ziua una (Facere 1,1-5) [Philological reflections – The First Day (Genesis 1:2-5)]," *Romanian Orthodox Old Testament Studies* 2 (2009): 96.

<sup>16</sup> St. Maximus the Confessor, *Ambigua*, in *Părinți și Scriitori Bisericești* [The Fathers of the Church] 80, transl. by Dumitru Stăniloae (Bucharest: IBMBOR, 1983), 280. All were in a paradigmatic form in the Divine Omniscience. That is why there is a major connection between the wisdom and glory of God.

other lights were created, the primordial light was replaced by the physical light shed by these heavenly bodies. Rashi believes that, starting with the fourth day, the light of the first day concealed itself far away and distanced itself from the earth<sup>17</sup>. Its place was taken by the heavenly bodies that God put in the sky to give light to and to rule the day, the night, the seasons and the times. The new sources of light were generically called “lights” by God<sup>18</sup>.

His opinion is somehow continued by Maimonides, who tries to justify the appearance of the astral light on the grounds of a lack of light. He claims that God created the lights in the sky due to the fact that there was no longer light on earth. Starting with the second day of creation, the capacity of the primordial light to radiate decreased significantly. The apparition of the firmament, of the expanse, on the vault of the sky reduced the overflow of light onto the elements beneath. When the dry land appeared, darkness spread again over the face of the earth. Therefore, God had to make other lights that would shine over the entire visible creation<sup>19</sup>. If the former light came to be “outside the raw matter *hule* in the sky”<sup>20</sup>, the latter had to physically originate from a big body of light and a small one that would shine during the day and at night, respectively. The rabbi’s interpretation is rational. Although he claimed that the light created on the first day was a very special one, his words denote the fact that it could not cross the firmament. Differently put, its capacity to shed light and to shine on earth was limited. Nonetheless, Maimonides claims that the lights in the vault of the sky were made from the light of the first day<sup>21</sup>.

The Church Fathers reject such an approach. Indeed, the primordial light had the role of ordering creation, but its mission did not end on the fourth

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<sup>17</sup> Rashi, *The Torah. Genesis*, 15.

<sup>18</sup> Claus Westermann, *Genesis 1-11*, in *A Continental Commentary* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1994), 104.

<sup>19</sup> “Light was created on the first day and it shone over all the elements of the earth, but on the second day, when the firmament was created, the latter prevented the light from shining over the elements beneath, so that on the third day, when the dry land appeared, there was darkness, not light. But now, the Holy One, may He be blessed, saw on the fourth day that it was necessary to have lights on the surface of the sky to shed light on the earth.” Ramban, *The Torah. Bereishis*, 53.

<sup>20</sup> Ramban, *The Torah. Bereishis*, 54. The primordial light and its source became subjects of speculation for the Jewish mystics. This was also due, in part, to a psalmic text in which God, in the act of creation, is covered with light as with a garment (104:2). In *Genesis Rabbah* (3.4), the primordial light is considered to be the radiance of God’s glory. Nahum M. Sarna, *Genesis*, in *The JPS Commentary* (Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society, 1989), 7.

<sup>21</sup> “According to the wise men, the first light existed during the first four days; the lights that were put on the vault of the sky were made from it. This is how they took shape and give light, the greater to the day and the lesser to the night, together with the stars.” Ramban, *The Torah. Bereishis*, 54.

day of creation; it continued to fulfil the reason for it existed on earth including after the seventh day<sup>22</sup>.

In his commentary on the Hexaemeron, Saint Basil the Great describes the impact of the light as soon as it appeared in the world. Its presence revealed everything that was in the dark: the sky with all its beauty and the depth of the earth. The air was filled with light and, suddenly, there was no more sadness and everything looked merry and pleasant: "And the air is more pleasant after the light, and the waters brighter, since they not only admit but also return the brightness from themselves by the reflection of the light, the sparkling rays rebounding from all parts of the water. The divine word transformed all things into a most pleasing and excellent state. Just as men who throw oil in deep water create a clear space, so the Creator of all things, by His word instantly put the gracious gift of light in the world."<sup>23</sup> In this description, we notice that the light shining forth from God was spread further by the waters that were filled with light. Thus, the waters reacted to light, sending its radiant reflections everywhere. Like this, light was present in all that is seen from dusk until dawn and from midnight until midday. In other words, light filled all parts of the earth, reaching up into the aether and into the sky. Likewise, Saint Basil also underlined its qualities: the light was "rare and transparent"<sup>24</sup>, its rays being able to pass through the air to its uttermost bounds, at a speed similar to that with which man's eyes scrutinise the horizon.

This hierarch from Cappadocia is one of the Fathers who explain the relation between the two lights. On the first day of creation, the nature of light was made and, on the fourth day, the vehicles of this first-born light were created. This explains the connection between the primordial light and the lights, by means of association. He compares the primary light and its vehicle with fire and the lamp: "fire having the power to give light, and the other made to show that light to those who need it." In other words, the sun and the moon (but also the other vehicles of light – the stars, lightning) spread the light they receive from the primordial source of light that shines forth from God's Being.

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<sup>22</sup> Saint Basil the Great warns us of the fact that the astral light was influenced by the primordial light. The former takes over the order established by the latter and continues it, without changing anything: "Now, henceforth, after the creation of the sun, it is day when the air is illuminated by the sun shining on the hemisphere above the earth, and night is the darkness of the earth when the sun is hidden. Yet, it was not at that time according to solar motion, but it was when that first created light was diffused and again drawn in according to the measure ordained by God, that day came and night succeeded." St. Basil the Great, *Omilii la Hexaemeron*, 94. The hierarch from Cappadocia signals the fact that the only difference in this case is marked by the appearance and withdrawal of the heavenly light.

<sup>23</sup> St. Basil the Great, *Omilii la Hexaemeron*, 93.

<sup>24</sup> St. Basil the Great, *Omilii la Hexaemeron*, 93.

For Basil the Great, the sun is nothing else than a body filled with light. To better clarify these words which might seem unbelievable, the hierarch resorts to yet another association: "And, just as the Apostle says that there are certain lights in the world, but the true Light of the world is something else, and by participation in it holy men become the lights of the souls whom they have taught, drawing them out from the darkness of ignorance, so also now, having prepared this sun for that most bright light, the Creator of the universe has lighted it around the world."<sup>25</sup> By mentioning who the true Light is, Saint Basil urges us to acknowledge the fact that there is a strong connection between Jesus Christ and the light of the first day<sup>26</sup>.

In Saint John Chrysostom's opinion, God created the sun to render the light of day even brighter. The moon was not created for the same reason. The Antiochian hierarch draws attention to the fact that God created the lights only on the fourth day so that people would not believe that it was due to the sun and the moon that the day existed<sup>27</sup>. John's desire to fight the idolatrous beliefs that promoted the sun's supremacy is evident. Indirectly, Saint John underlines the importance and the role of the primordial light in the economy of the first three days, but also in the entire act of the creation of the world. Saint Ambrose the Great has a similar apologetic discourse: "Look first upon the firmament of heaven which was made before the sun; look first upon the earth which began to be visible and was already formed before the sun put in its appearance; look at the plants of the earth which preceded in time the light of the sun. The bramble preceded the sun; the blade of grass is older than the moon. Therefore, do not believe that object to be a god to which the gifts of God are seen to be preferred.

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<sup>25</sup> St. Basil the Great, *Omilii la Hexaemeron*, 133. Saint Augustine makes a clear distinction between the created light and the begotten one. The former springs from God's Being and overflows the angels and the entire creation and the latter is God's very Wisdom, namely Jesus Christ, the One Who would call Himself God's Light. He also claims that the created light is something that changes, whether it be corporeal or lacking in materiality. St. Augustine, *On the Literal Interpretation of Genesis* 5.20, in *Fathers of the Church* 84, transl. by Roland J. Teske, S.J. (Washington, D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 1991), 158.

<sup>26</sup> In an allegorical interpretation of the place the lights have in the sky, Origen considers we can associate Jesus Christ, the "Light of the world", with the sun and the Church and her Christians with the moon. Just like the moon takes its light from the sun to give light to the night, so do Christians take their light from Christ and spread it toward the ends of the world, dispelling the darkness of sin from the night of ignorance. Origen, *Omilii la Cartea Facerii*, 131. Even if the association made by the exegete from Alexandria does not totally correspond to the idea launched by Saint Basil, the emphasis still falls on Jesus Christ and on His attribute of being the Light of the world (Jn 8:14).

<sup>27</sup> St. John Chrysostom, *Omilii la Facere*, 82.

Three days have passed; no one, meanwhile, has looked for the sun, yet the brilliance of light has been in evidence everywhere. For the day, too, has its light which is itself the precursor of the sun."<sup>28</sup> We notice here the last sentence, according to which the day has its light which does not come from the sun. Following the logic of the text, we should extol God's work and His light that ordered all that was created.

Therefore, we shall keep in mind the fact that the primordial light that represented the object of the first day of creation<sup>29</sup> becomes a *sine qua non* condition for the whole undertaking of creation that took place during the other days<sup>30</sup> and that the main purpose of the lights that emphasised the beauty of creation was to be signs that help tell apart seasons, days and years, as well as means of setting a boundary between days and nights. Likewise, we would also like to stress the fact that life on earth was not conditioned by the light offered by the heavenly bodies. The trees and the vegetation appeared on earth under the bright rays of the godly light<sup>31</sup>. Life can exist even without the sun, according to prophet Isaiah (60:19), who claims that during the very last days, during eschatological times, the sun will lose its light and will no longer have a role in maintaining life as God Himself shall be a light for His people and no other source of light will be necessary<sup>32</sup>.

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<sup>28</sup> St. Ambrose the Great, *Hexameronul*, 45. Saint Ephrem the Syrian specifies that the light that was in the beginning did not come from the sun. The primordial light was bestowed by God upon the earth to spread over it, without the possibility of being constrained or fixed by anything from beneath. It dispersed the darkness that ruled on earth and that was motionless. Upon the advent of light, darkness withdrew into the deep. After three days during which light fulfilled the mission for which it had been created, God put the sun in the sky to make grow and mature that which had germinated and sprouted under the first light. Ephrem the Syrian, *Commentary on Genesis* 1.8.3; 9.2, in *Fathers of the Church* 91, transl. by Edward G. Mathews, Jr. and Joseph P. Amar (Washington, D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 1994), 81.

<sup>29</sup> Fred Skolnik et al., *Encyclopaedia judaica*, vol. 5 (Farmington Hills: Keter Publishing House, 2007), 273.

<sup>30</sup> Victor Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis. Chapters 1-17*, in *New International Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans Publishing, 1990), 114. For these reasons, in the Jewish mentality, the primordial light was assumed as a symbol of life, of joy and of the liberation from darkness. Sarna, *Genesis*, 7.

<sup>31</sup> In the rabbinic literature, there is a clear difference between the light of the first day and that of the lights. In this respect, the texts in prophet Isaiah (30:26) and in Job (38:19-20) are brought as testimony. They also consider the simple observation that when the sky is covered with clouds so dark that the sun can no longer pass through, there is still enough light on earth. Sarna, *Genesis*, 7.

<sup>32</sup> For further details, see Chirilă, "Luminează-te, luminează-te, Ierusalime! (Is 60,1)," 166-85.

## The Primordial Light and Darkness – Distinct, yet not Opposing Realities

God ordained that the radiance of His glory be on earth as it is in heaven, then established that it should be separated from the darkness that hovered over the deep. This separation ought not to be interpreted in an adversarial manner. God merely ordains the two to be separated. In other words, light and darkness were assigned a space in which to manifest themselves<sup>33</sup>. Nevertheless, light, which God considered to be good and beautiful<sup>34</sup>, was given the power to pierce darkness without being overcome by the latter in any way. At the same time, one must realise that light does not aggress darkness and that darkness is in no way associated with sin. On the contrary, it can indicate the presence of a mystery which is unknown to us.

Maimonides makes a clear distinction between the darkness referred to in verse 2 and the one in verses 4 and 5, stressing the fact that there is a significant difference between them. In the former case, the darkness that hovered over the deep marked a specific stage in the act of creation. That darkness was in itself an absence of light. When God ordained the light to show itself, the time allocated to the darkness came to an end<sup>35</sup>. The appearance of light marks the beginning of a new stage of creation. Within this new stage, God ordained a period during which the light should no longer shine. Thus, a period of darkness ensued which is different from that which existed before the appearance of light. The former darkness was not conditioned by a time

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<sup>33</sup> Westermann, *Genesis 1-11*, 98.

<sup>34</sup> God deemed the light to be good because it fulfilled the purpose for which it was created, namely that of driving out the darkness that hovered over the deep. The meaning of the Hebrew term *tob* comprises a vast array of interpretations. It may indicate a state of bliss, beauty, moral justice, superior quality or a superlative when referring to the value of something (A. Bowling, "טוב (*tôb*)," in *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament*, vol. 1, eds. Robert L Harris et al. (Chicago: Moody Press, 1999), 345-46). This quality of light, or rather, this observation which God makes with respect to light, is understood by the Jewish mentality as an invitation to become permanent. In other words, what Jews see in these words of God is the argument that all things created are meant to endure (Ramban, *The Torah. Bereishis*, 34). Saint John Chrysostom holds that this phrasing reveals God's leniency in likening Himself to a man of some trade or other who knows what the thing he is about to make is going to look like and what purpose it is going to serve. In the view of the Antiochian hierarchy, the hagiographer had no other interpretation in mind than the one mentioned (St. John Chrysostom, *Omilii la Facere*, 80).

<sup>35</sup> "This term of *darkness* is different from the darkness in verse 2, as the latter refers to the element of fire, that darkness which was the absence of light, which is why He did not call upon the light before a certain period of time had passed, for God assigned a period of time to each stage of creation and that period of darkness (fire) came to an end, which is why He called upon the light." Ramban, *The Torah. Bereishis*, 34.

interval, while the darkness which followed the overflowing of the divine light was characterised by a certain rhythmicity. There is a period of light and one of darkness during which the light concealed its radiance. The verses that follow tell us how long the light and that apparent darkness lasted: "And there was evening and there was morning – the first day" (Gen. 1:5).

The act of separation mentioned five times in the first chapter of Genesis (v. 4, 6, 7, 14, and 18) bears no negative connotation. The separation of the waters above the vault from those below it (v. 6-7) and the separation of day from night (v. 14 and 18) cannot have a negative significance. Marked as we are by a kind of thinking which is acquainted with the existence of evil as well, we could find a negative side to the darkness of night, but, in the former case, we will not be able to conceive the situation in that manner. The waters beneath the sky are in no way evil, nor are the ones above the vault. As such, separation, or delimitation, or the establishing of a space that belongs to each element of creation does not involve any kind of negative connotation<sup>36</sup>. The separation that God makes gives rise to a new order: light is separated from darkness, the waters beneath the vault are delimited from those above it, day is separated from night and, as we will see further on, the existential unity of man is also made up of two distinct hypostases, namely man and woman<sup>37</sup>. Only after the fall may these separations be loaded with connotations which can cast a shade on the order that God initially instilled into creation. Returning to the idea which triggered this digression, we would like to stress once again that there was no tension between light and darkness, nor was any generated by separating the one from the other.

Maimonides brings another reasoning in support of this view, namely that, by naming day and night, and all things created, God merely marked those boundaries which nothing and no one could cross<sup>38</sup>. Adam was going to do the

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<sup>36</sup> When speaking about the act through which God separated light from darkness and the one through which he named light and darkness, Saint Augustine draws attention to the fact that God did not create darkness. Nowhere in the Scriptures is there such a statement. According to the Western hierarchy, darkness is nothing more than the absence of light. The naming of light and darkness was done in order to render them more easily distinguishable. We would like to point out that these statements were made with an apologetic purpose as well, as these words were written against the Manichaeans. St. Augustine, *Two Books on Genesis Against the Manichaeans* 1.9.15, in *Gen.* 84:62-63.

<sup>37</sup> To the Jewish mind, separation or partition is rather a kind of differentiation. Moreover, it is a means through which the act of creation takes place. Light and darkness are seen as distinct entities especially when thought of in relation to God (Is. 45:7). Sarna, *Genesis*, 7.

<sup>38</sup> This idea was promoted long before by Saint John Chrysostom, who stated that, through the act of naming, God established the limits of all the things He had created. "He assigned each of them its own place, tracing certain boundaries from the start, which they were meant to always maintain unimpededly. And any judicious man can see that, from that moment to this day, light



same when God asked him to name the animals that He had created. Each animal received the name that Adam thought fitting for its being. Thus, the first man traced certain limits and made certain separations. However, there was nothing in that act that had a negative connotation. There were no such thing as clean and unclean animals; they were all “very good”, according to the word of the Lord (Gen. 1:31). Only after the fall were some of the animals going to be considered unclean. But this has nothing to do with Adam. Such is the present case, in which God separates light from darkness only in order to trace a limit. In other words, God said to light: “your limit is night” and to night: “your limit shall be day”<sup>39</sup>. Otherwise put, according to Saint Basil, God saw to it that “light and darkness should not mix, but remain separate from each other; He parted them and separated them very much the one from the other.”<sup>40</sup>

### The “Day One” and the Light of the Age to Come

The chorus “and there was evening, and there was morning” in verse 5, which appears at the end of each day of creation, ought not to be regarded as an element which marks a temporal computing unit, but rather as a reference to a time of rest, or, better yet, a time when one of God’s works has been completed. The act of creation is resumed only after the morning has passed<sup>41</sup>. Saint Basil the Great provides a few exegetic details which come to confirm the statements above. He points out that evening is nothing other than a common border between day and night. During this moment of the day, light and darkness intertwine without mixing. The same happens during the morning as well, except, this time, it is the darkness that leaves room for the light to come in. In the view of the Cappadocian hierarch, the morning represents “the night’s vicinity to the day”. Moreover, Saint Basil claims that the night gives precedence to the light, as to one that was created first. That is why the end of the day is mentioned before the end of the night is. This same exegete notes that, before the appearance of light, there was no night, but only darkness. This darkness

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has not stepped outside of its own boundaries, nor has darkness trespassed against the ordinance imposed upon it to give rise to mingling and disorder. This alone is enough to make those who wish to persist in not listening to and obeying the words of the Holy Scriptures copy the ordinance of these elements – light and darkness – in their turn, for the latter unimpededly keep to their path and do not step outside their own measure, but know their own nature.” St. John Chrysostom, *Omilii la Facere*, 85.

<sup>39</sup> Ramban, *The Torah. Bereishis*, 38.

<sup>40</sup> St Basil the Great, *Omilii la Hexaemeron*, 94.

<sup>41</sup> In the Jewish mentality, the evening and the morning mark a moment in time during which the act of creation is completed and resumed, respectively. Sarna, *Genesis*, 7.

was different from the one that God called night. The former marked the end of a stage in the act of creation, while the latter appears as an element of separation, one that delimits light, without bearing any negative connotations. The name that darkness received served to mark it as distinct from day<sup>42</sup>.

Most rabbis believe that a literal exegesis is necessary here, according to which we are indicated the duration of a day. Maimonides claims that the first day of creation, which is called “day one”, not “the first day”, had the same number of hours and minutes as it does today. In that sense, the days of creation become a paradigm for the days of the week<sup>43</sup>. The said rabbi specifies that it is unfit to call this day the first day, as there was no other day at the time. His interpretation is in accordance with the one of another medieval rabbi, Rashi<sup>44</sup>, who claims that the first day of creation had an entirely special connotation, as no one was present in that stage of creation except for God<sup>45</sup>.

Saint Basil clearly stresses the special character of this day in the *Hexaemeron*. He postulates that this day is entirely distinct and ought not to be compared to those that followed. For such reasons, he calls it “day one”, using the cardinal numeral, as opposed to the ordinal one. First, the Cappadocian hierarch provides a literal interpretation. The “day one” is the one that sets the duration of a day. Even though the duration of the night and day varies based on the movement of the sun and the seasons, the day already has certain limits set by means of the evening and morning. The rotation of the sky from one sign back to the same sign (which takes place within a single day) marks the duration of a day. The arrival of the evening and the looming of the dawn mark the duration of a day, regardless of the fact that the interval during which there is light on earth can be longer or shorter. The great Basil goes on to identify a deeper meaning, which emphasises the importance of this day that foreshadows or reflects eternity. He points out that God ordained that the week should start from and return to the same day, thus marking the movement of time. Time starts from and returns to the same point. This circular movement foretells the realities of the age to come, which “revolves upon itself and ends nowhere. If then the beginning of time is called “day one” rather than “the first day”, it is because the

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<sup>42</sup> St. Basil the Great, *Omilii la Hexaemeron*, 94-5.

<sup>43</sup> “One should be aware that *the days* mentioned in the act of creation were real days, with hours and minutes, and that there were six of them, as there are in the working week, just as a simple understanding of the verses indicates.” Ramban, *The Torah. Bereishis*, 31.

<sup>44</sup> Rashi, *The Torah. Genesis*, 10.

<sup>45</sup> According to the treatise *Genesis Raba*, the angels were created on the second day of creation, when the vault which God called “sky” is mentioned. In the opinion of Saint Ambrose, the angels were created by God at some point in time and they existed at the time when God created light and the visible world. St Ambrose, *Hexaemeron 1.5*, in *Gen. 42:18*.

Scripture wishes to establish its relationship with eternity. It was, in reality, fit and natural to call “one” the day whose character is to be one wholly separated and isolated from all the others.”<sup>46</sup>

The prophetic writings foretell a time when there will no longer be a need for the lights in the sky in order for there to be light in the world. This can be correlated with the first day of creation, when the divine light had no need for any celestial body in order to radiate and separate day from night. These prophetic texts highlight the idea that God will be the only source of light (Is. 60:19). In an initial stage, the celestial bodies will lose their light and, as a consequence, everything will be plunged into darkness (Is. 5:30; Jer. 4:23-24). The sun, the moon and the stars will stop giving their light (Is. 13:10; Ez. 32:7; Joel 2:10). The earth will quake and there will be great deprivation, as an apparent reminiscence of the darkness which preceded the appearance of the primordial light on the first day of creation (Zeph. 1:15). Such events represent the characteristics of “the day of the Lord”<sup>47</sup>, of that eschatological time when God will pass just judgment both on Israel and on the other peoples (Is. 13:9; 24:21-23; Am. 5:18). On “the day of the Lord”, the sun and moon will be replaced by God’s eternal light and thus will begin the eveningless day which was foreshadowed by the “day one”, as Saint Basil the Great stressed. In the final chapter of *Revelation*, Saint John confirms this image, saying that there will be no more night, that men will no longer need the light of lamps or the sun, “for the Lord God will be their light” (22,5 acc. Rev. 21:23)<sup>48</sup>. In other words, the

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<sup>46</sup> St. Basil the Great, *Omilii la Hexaemeron*, 95-6. Origen believes that the first day of creation was called “day one” because, up to that point, time had not existed. It was only going to appear in the following days: “day One. [The reason is the following:] time did not exist before the world existed, but started to exist in the days that followed. For the second day, the third, fourth and all the others begin to designate time.” Origen, *Homilies on Genesis*, 123. For details, see Dumitru Rusu, “Studiu comparativ al exegezei lui Origen la cartea Facerii cu comentariile Sfinților Trei Ierarhi [Comparative Study of Origen’s Exegesis of the Book of Genesis with the Commentaries of the Three Holy Hierarchs],” *Altarul Banatului* [The Altar of Banat] 4-6 (2011): 18-32.

<sup>47</sup> The text in Habak. 3:3b-4 portrays God as the One from Whom all light radiates: “His glory covered the heavens and his praise filled the earth. His splendor was like the sunrise; rays flashed from His hand, where His power was hidden”. However, it is unknown when this outburst of light will take place. The prophet Zachariah announces only that “it will be a unique day – a day known only to the Lord – with no distinction between day and night. When evening comes, there will be light.” (Zach. 14:7), while the prophet Joel provides a few preceding signs: “I will show wonders in the heavens and on earth, blood and fire and billows of smoke. The sun will be turned to darkness and the moon to blood before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the Lord.” (Joel 3:3-4). The manifestations of light on that day will not be limited to the celestial bodies; on the contrary, their influence will decrease and they will withdraw as they see the Lord Sabaoth showing Himself in all His glory. Herbert G. May, “The Creation of Light in Genesis 1,3-5,” *Journal of Biblical Literature* 3 (1939): 210-1.

<sup>48</sup> Botterweck and Ringren, *Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament*, vol. 1, 159.

divine light in Genesis 1 represents the beginning, the text in Isaiah 60 and other prophets are intermediary texts which foretell the overflowing of God's light onto the world in eschatological times, while Revelations 22 marks the beginning of eternity, when the radiance of divine glory fills the renewed heaven and earth with light.

## Conclusions

The light which overflowed onto the world on the first day is identical to the radiance of divine glory. This light represents a reflex of the uncreated divine energies which flow from the Being of the Trinity and through which God reveals Himself to the world.

Between the light of the first day and the celestial light created by God on the fourth day there is a significant difference which has to do with their nature. As it is uncreated, the primordial light originates from God, while the other one comes from the celestial bodies which are bearers of the radiance of divine glory. Consequently, the light that we receive from the heavenly bodies makes us aware of God's presence in the midst of creation and leads us towards that primordial light in which communion with God is complete.

The light of the first day and the primordial darkness are not opposites. They are distinct realities which play a part that is well defined by God. The darkness that hovered over the deep bears no negative connotations, just as the darkness that Moses went into on Mount Sinai cannot be construed as a space that lacks God either. On the contrary, to mystical interpreters, the darkness on the mountain was a bright one, in which God revealed Himself in a maximal form. This view could be developed in a subsequent study.

And, finally, the divine light of the first day of creation and the light which will overflow onto the world when God reveals His glory in eschatological times are one and the same, for they both stem from the same source: God's Being.

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## GOD'S MERCY OR JONAH'S ANGER? AN ORTHODOX APPROACH TO THE CASE OF NINEVEH

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**ABSTRACT.** The Book of Prophet Jonah challenges us to face a reality that justifies our quality of God's children. Often, Christians are faced with a choice between creating or not the necessary frameworks for the redemption of the contemporary man who has sometimes an adverse attitude towards the Church. It is this choice that their privileged status of God's chosen people, of holy people whose mission is to be a light among other people, depends on. Those who set themselves up as judges and punishers of others' deeds are in conflict with God, by neglecting their vocation and the mission to which they have been called. For these reasons, the association with Jonah is extremely appropriate. The prophet refuses to preach in Nineveh in order to avoid being the instrument by which God brings redemption to an impressive number of sinners. The aim of this study is to fructify this behavioural paradigm to acknowledge the fact that disobedience towards God takes us out of communion and makes us lose the privileged status of God's chosen one. In order to succeed in this endeavour, I shall bear in mind the most recent researches that try to solve the mystery of the prophet's unexpected behaviour, but also the opinions of some personalities who represent the Jewish and patristic tradition, which mostly characterises the Christian East. These directions shall offer the reader the possibility of thinking more before choosing to get angry like Jonah or be merciful like God

**Keywords:** Jonah, anger, paradigm, mercy, Nineveh, Jonah's sign, repentance

### Introduction

Jonah's prophetic book gives the reader the image of such a loving God who visibly contrasts with the status of a Ruthless Judge with which the God of the Old Testament was labelled, so that none of His closest collaborators managed to truly understand Him. Jonah did not understand the generosity of

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God, although he knew that the Lord is long-suffering and feels sorry for the mistakes of human beings. He preferred to avoid the mission entrusted to him, to become disobedient and then to fill himself with anger because God did not punish the sinful people of Nineveh. He rather wanted to see how a city where thousands of people lived was destroyed, than to take part without being constrained to the redeeming mission of the people of Nineveh.

Therefore, the book highlights a disturbing conflict whose protagonist is prophet Jonah. He considered himself entitled to feel angry because the Lord did not act as a righteous judge, but on the contrary, He accepted sinners and gave them the opportunity to repent. If we take into account the interpretations of some Church Fathers and exegetes of the Bible<sup>1</sup> according to whom Jonah prefigured through his actions the attitude of the chosen people towards their God, then we will understand that the narrative only draws attention to a wrong relation. The same thing would happen later with the disciples of John the Baptist who did not understand the mission of Christ (Lk 7:19-23) and with all those who over the centuries failed to reach a higher level of understanding of divine mercy. In other words, in each of us there is a Jonah who, by virtue of our privileged status as sons of God, despise those who, while worthy of chastisement, benefit from the mercy of their loving Father.

Jonah's atypical behaviour has been analysed by many exegetes of the Bible. The study of Stuart Lasine<sup>2</sup> gives us an ample perspective of how the prophet was received by posterity<sup>3</sup>. Three major directions of relating to the prophet have been indicated. For specialists, Jonah is: a negative character (an anti-hero<sup>4</sup>); a simple man; and an eminently positive character<sup>5</sup>. To be more explicit, I will point out that, for Gerhard von Rad, Jonah is a ridiculous prophet<sup>6</sup> who does not have the capacity to understand his mission and the mercy of God. Due to similarities, some compare Jonah with Elijah<sup>7</sup> or Jeremiah.

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<sup>1</sup> St. Jerome, St. Maximus the Confessor, Grazia Papola, Rob Barrett.

<sup>2</sup> Stuart Lasine, "Jonah's Complexes and Our Own Psychology and the Interpretation of the Book of Jonah," *Journal for the Study of the Old Testament* 2 (2016): 237-60.

<sup>3</sup> S. Lasine analysed the opinions of biblical scholars regarding Jonah's character, underlying in each case whether they based themselves on the Holy Book and whether they were influenced by various psychological approaches. Even if philosophy studies help us assess more clearly Jonah's character and his attitude towards God, S. Lasine wants to pinpoint that the theological factor plays an essential role in understanding Jonah. Lasine, "Jonah's Complexes," 255.

<sup>4</sup> K.J. Dell, "Reinventing the Wheel: The Shaping of the Book of Jonah," in J. Barton and D.J. Reimer (eds.), *After the Exile: Essays in Honour of Rex Mason* (Macon: Mercer University Press, 1996), 88-90.

<sup>5</sup> Lasine, "Jonah's Complexes," 239-40.

<sup>6</sup> Gerhard von Rad, *Old Testament Theology. The Theology of Israel's Prophetic Traditions*, vol. 2, trans. by D.M.G. Stalker (New York: Harper & Row, 1965), 291.

<sup>7</sup> Like Elijah, Jonah asked God to let him die, because he did not deem himself suitable for the mission that he had been entrusted with „Like Elijah (see 1 Kgs 19,4), sitting under a tree, Jonah

Others have tried to demonstrate that Jonah had a psychological complex: he either had a defensive attitude in the face of danger (Gunn and Fewell; Ackerman) or he was simply fleeing a responsibility imposed on him (Maslow). We end these examples by mentioning that Jonah has also been considered an ordinary, vulnerable man like many of us or a mature man who behaved like a grumpy child<sup>8</sup>. These ways of relating to Jonah, actually quite diverse, have given an insight into Jonah's character, but we have not offered satisfactory responses to clarify his behaviour towards the shipmen, the people of Nineveh and last but not least towards God. Only the research of Rob Barrett<sup>9</sup> makes a consistent contribution in unravelling the mystery of this book. The author demonstrates that this writing highlights the erroneous relation of the entire Israel (assumed mysteriously by Jonah) both to their God and to the other peoples.

In this study, I aim at developing this perspective by placing more emphasis on the paradigmatic character of the prophet<sup>10</sup>. By using the frameworks of replacement theology<sup>11</sup>, according to which Christians are seen by the Church Fathers as the new chosen people<sup>12</sup>, I will emphasise that this type of conflict between the chosen people and God can be encountered in many present situations. Many Christians, not understanding the love of God, choose to be angry, to hate their neighbour, to want his / her evil and await his / her destruction, even though they are aware that the Lord wants to save the sinner and, to top it all, through them. My research is designed to give to the contemporary Christian an Old-Testament behavioural paradigm and a legitimate challenge: What do I choose today? To be angry like Jonah or to be merciful like God?<sup>13</sup>

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expresses his wish to die (see Jonah 4,3.8). His reasons for this wish could not be more different from Elijah's, though. Elijah was fighting with Jezebel and the priests of Baal and wanted to die because he did not feel adequate to this difficult task." Annette Schellenberg, "An Anti-Prophet among the Prophets? On the Relationship of Jonah to Prophecy," *Journal for the Study of the Old Testament* 3 (2015): 357. See also Papola, "A Biblical Story of Conversion," 156.

<sup>8</sup> Lasine, "Jonah's Complexes," 247-54.

<sup>9</sup> Rob Barrett, "Meaning More than They Say: The Conflict between YHWH and Jonah," *Journal for the Study of the Old Testament* 2 (2012): 237-57.

<sup>10</sup> According to G. Papola, the history of Jonah "becomes the paradigm for the whole people sent to ask about what it means to truly confess the Lord beyond the formulas of the faith which can appear abstract to the rough test of history. The experience, in fact, often poses a strong challenge which in some cases is intolerable and forces you to think differently both about God and about the way that he does justice in human affairs, and also is the sense of belonging to a community of faith which has specific rules to be observed." Grazia Papola, "A Biblical Story of Conversion: The Book of Jonah," trans. by Carl-Mario Sultana, *The Person and the Challenges* 2 (2016): 174.

<sup>11</sup> The replacement theology is currently criticized especially for the anti-Semitism it can promote. In this study, the supersessionism has only an axiomatic value.

<sup>12</sup> St. Justin Martyr (*Dialogue with Trypho* 11); St. Hippolytus of Rome (*Treatise Against the Jews* 6); Tertullian (*An Answer to the Jews* 3); St. Augustine (*The City of God* 18.46).

<sup>13</sup> While Jonah wanted the destruction of the city, God sought its deliverance, through the very disobedient and angry prophet. Barrett, "The Conflict between YHWH and Jonah," 246. See

To accomplish this, I will first make use of the results of the latest studies taken from the Web of Science that address the issue of the conflict between Jonah and God. Subsequently, I will focus on the interpretation offered by Philo of Alexandria in *De Jona* treaty and, in the end, I will fructify the perspectives of the patristic tradition that creates the basis for assuming Jonah's paradigm in contemporary times. The Fathers of the Church I am referring to during this approach are Saint Maximus the Confessor<sup>14</sup> and Saint Jerome<sup>15</sup>. The assumption of these two interpretive traditions will highlight the Orthodox view of this subject. As one can see, the study will analyse the prophet's inner conflict ever since he was sent on his mission; it will put a marked emphasis on the fourth chapter; it will complete the paradigm by giving it a specific note of the Christian East; and it will apply it in several current contexts that will in turn become behavioural models especially for theology students.

### 1. *Missio Israelis* and the sending of Jonah to Nineveh

The chosen people have had a missionary vocation ever since its foundation. When God chose Abraham and promised him paternity over a great people, he asked him to take responsibility for being a source of blessing to all nations on earth (Gn 12:1-3). For this reason, after his arrival to the Promised Land, He did not allow him to spend much time in the land that was to become his descendants', but He sent him to Egypt and the region of Gerar to give testimony of the True God. In this respect, Father Ioan Chirilă indicated that the choice / calling of Abraham marked the beginning of the brother's mission among peoples<sup>16</sup>. This missionary responsibility was also assumed by Joseph, who was sent by God all over Egypt to deliver Pharaoh and all his kin from the hunger that would fall upon them and, at the same time, to make his elders accustomed to wisdom (according to Psalm 105: 21). His mission was accomplished, for Joseph poured the blessing of the living God on Egyptians, escaping them from death and, at the same time, determined Pharaoh to assert in front of everyone that the Spirit of God worked through Joseph more than through his wise men (Acts 41:38). Similar testimonies would be given to the

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more in: Constantin Oancea, „Câteva observații referitoare la ideea de izbăvire în Cartea Iona,” in *Biblie și misiune creștină. Popas aniversar pr. prof. Dumitru Abrudan*, ed. Constantin Oancea (Sibiu: Universității “Lucian Blaga”, 2010), 261-76.

<sup>14</sup> Sf. Maxim Mărturisitorul, “Răspunsuri către Talasie. Despre proorocul Iona și Ninive”, in *Filocalia* 3, trans. by Dumitru Stăniloae (București: Harisma, 1994), 418-52.

<sup>15</sup> Sf. Ieronim, *Comentariu la cartea profetului Iona*, trans. by Dan Batovici (București: Anastasia, 2004), 120 p.

<sup>16</sup> Ioan Chirilă, “Reperele fundamentale ale misiunii în Vechiul Testament,” in *In Honorem Pr. Prof. Valer Bel*, Cristian Sonea and Paul Siladi eds. (Cluj-Napoca: Presa Universitară Clujeană, 2018), 169.

Babylonian kings who were convinced of the power of the Almighty God. These “confessions of faith” were due to the genuine mission that Daniel and the three young people pursued in several situations. Being faced with indisputable evidence, these kings acknowledged the supremacy of the God of Israel over all other gods (Dn 2:47; 3:28; 6:26-28)<sup>17</sup>. Therefore, the purpose of Israel was to bring light to peoples<sup>18</sup>, preaching the True God (Is 42:6) and calling them to Zion to learn the Law (Is 22:3-4; 6:9-11; 56:2-8). “The flow of peoples to Jerusalem” (Is 2:2) can constitute, in the opinion of Father Ioan Chirilă, the actual response of the peoples to the mission of Israel<sup>19</sup>.

These missionary coordinates have been presented to state from the very beginning that the sending of Jonah to Nineveh did not come out of the frameworks of the *missio israelis*<sup>20</sup>. Israel's main purpose was to make God known to all peoples and languages on earth. Jonah refused to comply with this imperative request from the Lord (“Go to the great city of Nineveh and preach against it...” – 1-2) and ran away from Him to Tarshish<sup>21</sup>. The prophet's behaviour is unforgivable<sup>22</sup>! For this reason, his reprehensible gesture was correlated, even in the Jewish tradition, with Cain's attitude. Abraham ibn Ezra believes that, from that moment, the prophet came out of his communion with God<sup>23</sup>. Therefore, Jonah must be seen as the very image of the entire Israel. For his disobedience and for not having fulfilled his mission, he would be sent as a slave to Babylon, to give testimony of the True God<sup>24</sup>.

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<sup>17</sup> S.R. Miller, “Daniel,” in *The New American Commentary* 18 (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 2001), 103. Cf. J.A. Montgomery, *A critical and exegetical commentary on the book of Daniel* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1927), 181. J.E. Goldingay, “Daniel,” in *Word Biblical Commentary* 30 (Dallas: Word, Incorporated, 2002), 129. Jerome, „Commentary on Daniel 6.25-27,” in *JCB* 69 – K. Stevenson and M. Gluerup, “Ezekiel, Daniel,” in *Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture OT* 13 (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2008), 219. John Chrysostom, “Homilies of St. John Chrysostom, Archbishop of Constantinople, on the First Epistle of St. Paul the Apostle to the Corinthians,” in *The Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers* 12, eds. H. K. Cornish et al. (Oak Harbor: Logos Research Systems, 1997), 217.

<sup>18</sup> Ioan Chirilă, “Luminează-te, luminează-te, Ierusalime! (Is 60,1) – revărsarea luminii dumnezeiești și devenirea întru lumină?” în *Sfânta Scriptură în Biserică și Istorie. Studii Teologice în onoarea pr. prof. dr. Vasile Mihoc*, eds. Alexandru Ioniță and Daniel Mihoc (Sibiu: Andreiană / Astra Museum, 2018), 177.

<sup>19</sup> Chirilă, “Luminează-te, luminează-te, Ierusalime!,” 175.

<sup>20</sup> Chirilă, “Repererele fundamentale ale misiunii,” 174.

<sup>21</sup> We notice that Jonah did not argue with God after he was entrusted with the mission, but simply headed somewhere else. Schellenberg, “An Anti-Prophet among the Prophets?,” 356.

<sup>22</sup> Jonah's evasion is an act of betrayal towards God and his mission as a prophet. Papola, “A Biblical Story of Conversion,” 165.

<sup>23</sup> U. Simon, *Jonah. JPS Bible commentary* (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1999), 5.

<sup>24</sup> Kurtis Peters, “Jonah 1 and the Battle with the Sea: Myth and Irony,” *Scandinavian Journal of the Old Testament* 2 (2018): 165.

## 2. Jonah's conflict with God

Jonah's attitude is unique in the Old Testament context. No prophet had the courage to refuse God's call in the way Jonah did. Even if Moses tried to evade his mission and asked the Lord to send another in his place (Ex 3-4) or even if Jeremiah asked God to entrust his mission to someone else because he was young (Jer 1:6), none dared to face God. Jonah, on the other hand, refused the mission and ran away from the Lord (Jn 1:3). Even when he confessed to the sailors that the storm came upon them because of him, he did not show any remorse (1:12)<sup>25</sup>. It is also worth noting that he presented himself as a practising Jew who served the Lord (1:9)<sup>26</sup>. Not even in the womb of the fish did Jonah change his mind about this ingrate mission. He asked for salvation because he was in a difficult situation, but he did not recognise his mistake (chap. 2)<sup>27</sup>. This can be confirmed by the anger that he felt when he realised that his message was effective and that the Lord would deliver the city<sup>28</sup>. Not even when, constrained by God, he announced the divine sentence to the people of Nineveh, did he do anything to determine their repentance<sup>29</sup>. He informed them that there were only forty days left until Nineveh would be destroyed (3:4) and he left. So profound and rebellious was the prophet that he asked God to take his soul because it was better for him to die than to be alive (4:3-8)<sup>30</sup>. The thought that the Lord could eventually destroy the people of Nineveh made John stay on a hill near the city to see what would happen (4:5). For him, the comfort offered by the shadow of a castor-oil plant<sup>31</sup> was much more relevant than the

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<sup>25</sup> The repentance of the pagan sailors was a sign for Jonah meaning that, following a salvation act by God, pagans could also repent. Papola, "A Biblical Story of Conversion," 160. See also: D. Stuart, "Hosea-Jonah," in *Word Biblical Commentary* 31 (Dallas: Word, Incorporated., 2002), 464.

<sup>26</sup> *Nota Bene!* Jonah was a faithful prophet (1:9) who knew how God acts (4:2).

<sup>27</sup> In his prayer, Jonah asked God to save him, for he was in an extremely delicate and difficult situation. However, we have to note that he did not ask for forgiveness for his disobedience. Barrett, "The Conflict between YHWH and Jonah," 244-5.

<sup>28</sup> Gregory Nazianzen, "Select Orations of Saint Gregory Nazianzen," in *The Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers Second Series* 7, trans. by C. G. Browne and J. E. Swallow (Oak Harbor: Logos Research Systems, 1997), 226. See also: Vladimir Petercă, "Supărarea profetului și stăruința lui Dumnezeu (Reflexii despre Iona 4,1-11)," *Cercetări Biblice* (2014): 9-22.

<sup>29</sup> Schellenberg, "An Anti-Prophet among the Prophets?," 356.

<sup>30</sup> Augustin, "Letter 102," in *Fathers of the Church* 18 – A. Ferreiro, „The Twelve Prophets,” in *Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture OT* 14 (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2003), 147.

<sup>31</sup> Several therapeutic measures are applied to Jonah (the storm, the big fish, the scorching sun, the withered plant, the scorching wind) to change his sad vision on God's decision. Papola, "A Biblical Story of Conversion," 160. Therefore, the animals and the other beings are means by which God corrects Jonah in order to make him feel at least mercy. Alluding to the question from the title of the study, I wish to point to the fact that, by means of the plant, God extends His goodness to *the*

one he should have normally felt when a city that numbered more than a hundred and twenty thousand people returned to God (4:9-11)<sup>32</sup>.

The exegetes tried to find a reasonable answer to motivate Jonah's attitude, a behaviour that remains a mystery. I believe the list made by Yael Shemesh<sup>33</sup> in his research on the role and status of animals in this prophetic writing sums up the most relevant motives. In what follows, I will mention the main causes for Jonah's rebellion that were identified by specialists. The first reason would be that Jonah, being a nationalist prophet<sup>34</sup>, would have wanted the destruction of any people who could have affected the safety of Israel<sup>35</sup>. The second reason is of a theological nature: if the people of Nineveh returned from their paths, Israel would have no word of defence in front of the Lord, since the prophets' urge to penance had never ceased<sup>36</sup>. Some considered that Jonah had in mind his prophetic prestige when he refused the mission. If his words had

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*angry...* Alexander I. Abasili, "The Role of Non-Human Creatures in the Book of Jonah: The Implications for Eco-Justice," *Scandinavian Journal of the Old Testament* 31.2 (2017): 242, 149.

<sup>32</sup> Even if the penitential gesture of the people of Nineveh temporarily saved the city from perdition, eventually it was still destroyed. This is also suggested by the analysis of spacial terms made by motion verbs, deretional and localitonal prepositions and stylistic devices. Karolien Vermeulen, "Save or Sack the City: The Fate of Jonah's Nineveh from a Spatial Perspective," *Journal for the Study of the Old Testament* 2 (2017): 243. Jonah is aware that the repentance of the people of Nineveh is short-lived. Maybe this also contributed to his attitude towards God. And God knew what would later happen to the people of Nineveh, but He wanted to show Jonah the extent of His goodness. Daniel Timmer, "Jonah's theology of the nations: the interface of religious and ethnic identity," *Revue Biblique* 120.1 (2013): 19. See also: Alexandru Mihăilă, "A fost Ninive cruțată?," in *(Ne)lămuriri din Vechiul Testament. Mici comentarii la mari texte* (București: Nemira, 2011), 409-13.

<sup>33</sup> Yael Shemesh, "And Many Beasts [Jon 4:11]: The Function and Status of Animals in the Book of Jonah," *Journal of Hebrew Scriptures* 6 (2010): 20-2.

<sup>34</sup> Jonah believed that his status of Israeli prophet did not allow him to preach to other peoples. Such a mission would have given him a bad reputation among the prophets of the chosen people. Moreover, his prophetic credibility would have been questioned. Schellenberg, "An Anti-Prophet among the Prophets?," 357-9.

<sup>35</sup> This direction is also taken on by G. Papola: "Can one accept to live in a world in which paradoxically through his mission, the enemy is spared so that it could act once again against its own people?" Papola, "A Biblical Story of Conversion," 172.

<sup>36</sup> I shall illustrate this line of understanding Jonah's behaviour through Saint Jerome's words: "Enlightened by the Holy Ghost, the prophet was aware that the repentance of the peoples would throw the Israelis into disgrace. Loving his country, he could not rejoice at the salvation of the people of Nineveh as long as he knew his country would perish. Jonah lamented that he had been chosen to go to Assyria, to the enemies of Israel, to their biggest city, where idolatry was blooming and God was ignored. Likewise, he feared that Israel would be completely forgotten once the people of Nineveh converted as a result of his preaching." Jerome, "Commentary on Jonah 1:3," in E.B. Pusey, *The Minor Prophets: A Commentary* 1 (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1972), 398.

not come true, he would have been considered a false prophet<sup>37</sup> by the people of Nineveh. Although this direction of interpretation has been assumed by many exegetes, the argument is devoid of consistency. The case of prophet Isaiah is relevant in this respect. Even if he had told King Hezekiah that he was going to die, he was not affected by the change of God's decision following an act of penitence. Upon finishing his prayer, the Lord sent the prophet to tell the king that the Lord had added another 15 years to his life (Is 38:1-6).

The last direction we will insist on is that Jonah wanted the Lord to make judgement and to punish sinners, not to show them mercy. His attitude, even if motivated by this reasoning, is not the right one. Abraham, his father, behaved quite differently. When the Lord revealed his plan with respect to the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah, he began to intercede for their forgiveness and salvation (Gn 18). When the Lord wanted to destroy the Israelites and make a faithful people from Moses and his descendants, the latter prayed to the Lord and said: "Lord, why should your anger burn against your people... Turn from your fierce anger; relent and do not bring disaster on your people." (Gn 32:11-12)<sup>38</sup>. As such, Jonah would have had someone to learn from, but he did not<sup>39</sup>! His insensitivity towards those who repented for their sins is in no way pardonable. And then a natural question arises: Was Jonah, a prophet living in the proximity of God, who knew the depth of Divine Mercy, indeed capable of so much insensitivity? Was his behaviour not a parable for his fellow people? Did Jonah behave like that to draw Israel's attention to the wrong way in which

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<sup>37</sup> "How could the prophet defy the Lord out of fear that the people of Nineveh might call him a false prophet – it wonders rhetorically ibn Ezra? How would that hurt him, given that he did not live among them? Furthermore, the Ninevites were no fools. The Lord sent a prophecy to them so that they would return to Him and if they did not repent the decree would be carried out. If they knew it was true that if they returned to God, He would repent of the evil, how could they call him a false prophet?" Shemesh, "And Many Beasts," 21. More details on this line of interpretation can be found in: B. Ego, „The Repentance of Nineveh in the Story of Jonah and Nahum's Prophecy of the City's Destruction: A Coherent Reading of the Book of the Twelve as Reflected in the Aggada," in P.L. Redditt and A. Scharf (eds.), *Thematic Threads in the Book of the Twelve* (Berlin: W. de Gruyter, 2003), 155-64; A. Ferreiro, *The Twelve Prophets*, in *Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture, Old Testament 14* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2003), 129-30, 146-47.

<sup>38</sup> D.K. Stuart, "Exodus. An exegetical and theological exposition of Holy Scripture," in *The New American Commentary* (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 2007), 685. Apostle Paul had a similar attitude when he said that he preferred to be anathema than to see his brothers separated from Jesus Christ (Romans 9:3-5). Jerome, "The Letters of St. Jerome," in *The Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers Second Series 6*, eds. W. H. Fremantle et al. (Oak Harbor: Logos Research Systems, 1997), 172.

<sup>39</sup> Jonah expected God to punish the people of Nineveh and not to show them mercy. His attitude was in clear contrast with that of certain characters who mediated for wrongdoers (eg.: Abraham, Moses). Shemesh, „And Many Beasts," 20-2.

they regarded their mission among peoples? How could peoples flow towards Zion to learn the Law of the Lord if they wanted their destruction? Was this not an alarm sign that the Lord gave to the people, with the conscious help of Jonah?

### 3. Jonah – a paradigm for Israel

In the opinion of Rob Barrett, the whole writing is a parable following which Israel had to realise how far they were from the mission that the Lord had entrusted them with<sup>40</sup>. To argue his claim, he associates the episode with the castor-oil plant, related in the last chapter, with the way in which God treated his people<sup>41</sup>. We will not insist on this demonstration now, but we will focus on how Jewish and Christian tradition relate to this paradigmatic behaviour. Before we do this, we underline that all talking and non-talking beings that are mentioned in the book, even the wind, the sea, the sun and the plants, obeyed the word of the Lord, only Jonah did not<sup>42</sup>! Israel, the chosen people for whom the Lord had done countless miracles and concessions, refused to bow before the Lord and to at least respect His will, if they did not want to partake in fulfilling it.

Philo of Alexandria argues in his commentary (*De Jona*) that the Lord, wanting to heal the illness of the people of Nineveh, like a skilled physician, chose himself a skilful help, a co-worker for their salvation. Even though Jonah was first cured of his lack of wisdom, he remained a partner, a help for the Lord,

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<sup>40</sup> The same idea is signalled by G. Papola: "Like Jonah, Israel is also invited to transform the desire for revenge and to the demands of justice to the recognition of a mercy addressed to itself, whilst also awaiting a manifestation of forgiveness even to its enemy." Papola, „A Biblical Story of Conversion," 159.

<sup>41</sup> The parable of the plant and, implicitly, of the city of Nineveh is that of offering Israel a lesson. Jonah symbolises the entire Israel. If God cares about a city that he did not raise and take care of, how could He not care about His people: "If YHWH is concerned with the ephemeral city of Nineveh, how much more has he demonstrated his commitment to Israel. [...] Should I not spare Jonah, my prophet who desires death, whom I have laboured over, in order to bring him to this place where he, too, can learn to respond to me? And should I not spare Israel who also chooses death (Deut. 30.19), that great and ignorant people, over whom I toiled and whom I grew, the people who have been my inheritance from times of old?" Barrett, "The Conflict between YHWH and Jonah," 239, 252. Thus, God's attention still rests on Jonah and Israel, the others being but means by which God corrects Israel. In other words, the book of Jonah is a historical testimony of the fact that Israel will be forgiven if it repents for its sins. Jason T. LeCureux, "Reading Jonah as 'history'? The implications of canonical location for Jonah and the Book of the Twelve," *Pacifica* 1 (2015): 78.

<sup>42</sup> Shemesh, "And Many Beasts," 13-4. Jonah is the only person in the entire world who, while being close to God, does not obey Him. Barrett, "The Conflict between YHWH and Jonah," 237.



a true thaumaturge (3:8-9). It can easily be noticed that Jonah, according to Philo, held a privileged status, namely that of an apprentice of the Lord (13:54) who contributed to the fulfilment of the Lord's will even if he did not fully understand it. When he realised his wrong way of seeing things, he asked the Lord to give him as an example to those who would judge things like him so that they could understand their error as quickly as possible: "I have learned not to flee from the eyes of He who sees and knows everything and does not despise any more the words of the Lord. Being convinced now, I just want to be an example of Your Power in Your Book to all those who will read about the story of the fugitive prophet, for whom the fish was both lesson and deliverance." (23:86) From Philo's commentary, we also retain the Lord's harsh indictment against the prophet, when he unjustifiably got angry for the repentance of the people of Nineveh. The message of this text will be fructified in the last part of the paper, in which I will update the case of the prophet for our times: "Why is it precisely you that did not rejoice for their repentance? Why do you not join their worshipping voice? If you are angry because of the peoples' piety you are wrong. If you are taken over by jealousy because of the salvation of those whom I cared for, you are not human." (46:184-5). We note the last phrase in which he who allows himself to be taken over by jealousy when a sinner is saved decays as a being and can no longer be considered human<sup>43</sup>.

Saint Maximus the Confessor considers Jonah innocent in front of the Lord. He did nothing else but present in a prefigurative manner the attitude of Israel, both towards the others and towards God. In his opinion, Jews are the ones who were filled with hatred against peoples who came to the true faith (in Christ), and not Jonah: "This madness of the Jews was portrayed by the great Prophet Jonah within himself as a type, without him suffering – God forbid – from the weaknesses of the Jews, but condemning in himself, with anticipation, their lack of faith, because of which they lost their old glory... The Jewish people, envious of any love of men, complained because of people's salvation and, therefore, dared to rebel even against divine goodness. Full of ingratitude, discontent and hatred of people, he was consumed with anger, felt sick of life and grieved because of peoples' salvation in Christ."<sup>44</sup> Unlike Philo, Saint Maximus absolves Jonah of any blame. The former creates a framework of ideas in which the prophet acknowledges that he was wrong and asks God to make an example out of him for those who would resist divine will in the future. The

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<sup>43</sup> See details on the interpretation of the sign of Jonah in: Ioan Chirilă, "De Jona – un tip profetic oikoumenic cu deschideri spre bioetică," *Anuarul Facultății de Teologie Ortodoxă din Cluj X* (2006-2007): 13-36.

<sup>44</sup> Sf. Maxim Mărturisitorul, „Despre proorocul Iona și Ninive,” 433.

attitude resembles in a certain way the one taken on by king David in psalm 50 when he promised God that he would teach the unlawful how to return to the right path<sup>45</sup>. It is possible that Saint Maximus' choice of keeping the prophet's soul profile untouched was due to the status Jonah acquired through the sign that Jesus Christ offered to the Pharisees (Mt 12:38-41). Jonah's stay in the belly of the big fish had become a prefigurative sign of the Lord's resurrection in the depths of the home of the dead.

More than that, we also notice that Saint Maximus does not criticise only Jews for their rebellion against God, but also Christians. The fact that he first refers to Jews as the first addressees of the text does not prevent him from criticising with similar strength those who are part of the new Israel, the Christians. He gives the example of the Jews' behaviour and urges Christians not to behave contrarily to the Lord by cherishing vain things more than the truly important values: "Therefore, let us not separate ourselves from this city through our inner mood, like the Jewish people, loving our body like an arbour and taking care of the pleasure of our body as if it were a castor-oil plant, lest the worm of consciousness pass through it and dry up our affection that is lost in pleasures and lest we feel sick of life and rebel against the judgement of the Lord because of punishment for what we have done in our life comes upon us like a burning wind, through unwelcome trials."<sup>46</sup>

The intransigence that Saint Maximus applies to Jews is also present in the warnings that he addresses to Christians. If Christians gladly took on the status of God's chosen people, then they must be aware of the mistakes of those who, through disobedience and opposition, disregarded God's generosity. In this situation, adopting an attitude opposing the privileged status of God's son is much more serious, as Christians had to learn from the mistakes of the Israelis. Moreover, the exigencies that Christians had to assume were much greater. God's commands could no longer be accomplished only at a bodily or factual level, but also at the level of the heart. Even sinful thoughts had to be fully removed from the mind. For these reasons, Saint Maximus urged Christians to be very watchful and asked them not to follow the negative example of the Jewish people who, represented beforehand by Jonah, stubbornly opposed God's will.

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<sup>45</sup> Saint Jerome draws attention to the spiritual evolution of the penitent king: "David made such a progress that he, who little before was a sinful penitent, became a teacher and was capable of saying *Then I will teach transgressors your ways, so that sinners will turn back to you.*" Jerome, "Letter," in *CSEL* 56, 1 – Q. F. Wesselschmidt, "Psalms 51-150", in *Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture, Old Testament* 8 (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2007), 3.

<sup>46</sup> Sf. Maxim Mărturisitorul, „Despre proorocul Iona și Ninive,” 445.

As for Jonah, we need to understand that his anger could be justified. No one could fully sense or understand God's love for everyone. Jonah was a prophet who loved very much his people and did not want by any means that they suffered following the redemption that God would bring to the people of Nineveh. As much as he had tried to love the people of the city of Nineveh, he could not have been like God. He accomplished his mission before stepping on the shores of Nineveh. In one of his speeches, father Ioan Chirilă pinpointed the fact that, although Jonah did not have to same love as God, he got to be, however, a sign for the Jewish people. When the Pharisees asked the Saviour for a sign, He reminded them of Jonah and, in particular, of his stay in the belly of the big fish. The prophet's stay in the big fish for three days would anticipate God's resurrection (Mt 12:40). Only when God rose all the righteous from the home of the dead, could one truly understand that God loves everyone, irrespective of the people they belong to. This would be confirmed by the openness of Christianity towards the peoples. In fact, Jesus Christ told the Jewish people that many from the East and from the West would come and dine with Abraham and the other two patriarchs, while the sons of the kingdom would remain outside (Mt 8:11-12). Accordingly, God's attention was not focused on his mission in Nineveh, but on his role of sign that announced Jesus Christ's resurrection and, implicitly, the resurrection of all the people who chose the path of life. Therefore, the people of Nineveh would stand up at the judgement and condemn the Jews for not having repented on hearing the words of the Lord, who was "greater than Jonah" (Mt 12:41)<sup>47</sup>.

## Conclusions

Through his attitude, prophet Jonah becomes a model of behaviour both for Jews and for Christians. He offers us the possibility of better understanding how we should relate to our neighbours who, through their deeds, have distanced themselves from their communion with God. The Saviour underlines the prophet's paradigmatic dimension when He offers him to the Pharisees as a sign of His resurrection. The sign of Jonah, which reminds us of his stay in the belly of the big fish for three days, makes us aware of the fact that the human being is destined to resurrect. This reality should make Christians aware of their responsibilities. Each and every one of us must give the people he / she interacts with, irrespective of their moral state or of their attitude towards us, opportunities to redeem themselves.

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<sup>47</sup> See details on the interpretation of the sign of Jonah in: C. Blomberg, *Matthew*, in *New American Commentary* 22 (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 2001), 205-7.

Setting ourselves up as judges of our neighbours puts a distance between us and God. By weighing the morality of the others and by spoiling the objectives of our mission into the world, we enter an area of justice and personal whims that has nothing to do with God. As such, the right understanding of Jonah's attitude towards God and the people of Nineveh should give us the possibility of always choosing God's mercy to the detriment of Jonah's anger.

I believe it would be important to research and develop into a study father Chirilă's interpretation with respect to the sign of Jonah. This perspective could provide the book of the prophet a new direction of understanding, which would make the message of prophet Jonah's mission to Nineveh more accessible.

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## *II. SYSTEMATIC THEOLOGY*

# **PASSION, BODY AND SOUL AT JOHN THE SOLITARY AND ISAAC OF NINEVEH**

**BENEDICT VESA\***

**ABSTRACT.** The paper explores the relations between body, soul and passion from the perspective of two Syriac writers, John the Solitary and Isaac of Nineveh. According to them, the body and the soul are not in opposition since through them man contemplates the beauty of the outer and inner world. For this reason, we have three elements as parts of the human nature: the body, the soul and the spirit (the innermost part of the soul) and a threefold spiritual life: according to the body, to the soul and to the spirit. As regarding the body-soul-passion connection, both authors believe that passion can be good, bad or neutral and belongs to both body and soul. Ultimately, bad passions, as temptations, can be necessary for man's spiritual progress because God has put everything in the structure of man for its benefits. So, salvation refers to the totality of human, body and soul, and passions can be transformed into `wings` to facilitate our spiritual ascent.

**Keywords:** passion, body, soul, ascetic life, inner man, external man, anthropology, Syriac tradition

'Passion' is one of the essential concepts in the ascetical theology with a high presence in the Philokalic Fathers' writings. Yet, many times the expression of its relation with human had no uniformity, in particular in reference to its cause – body and/ or soul. So, one has at this moment two important relations – a first one, more elementary, between body and soul in relation with ascetic life and a successive one, between passion and body or soul/ body and soul, as generated by/ in them. In reference to the way of understanding these relations one may have different perspectives.

The pre-established and unilateral association between passion and body generated in different theological areas, for quite a long time, a negative

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perspective in reference to the body. It is the see of carnal desires that give birth to different passions. This occurred sometimes in detriment of the positive signification of the body in the ascetical conduct. Nowadays there is an increasingly interest and a return of the argument in the core of discussion, theologically as well as anthropologically. This stage is supported also by the interpellations other social sciences bring in the realm of religion and praxis, in general. This time, the perspective is mostly positive while describing body in terms of performance, transformation and progress and the world as the space for limitless progress.

In this paper, I will refer in particular to two very important authors from the Syriac milieu. The first one, John the Solitary, who is the ‘father’ of the Syriac ascetical spirituality, and Isaac of Nineveh, the very famous mystic writer of the VII-VIII century, a faithful follower of John the Solitary. There will be two important sections of the analysis – firstly I will focus on the relation between body and soul and, consequently, I will dwell on the problem of ‘passion’ and its colligation to body and soul.

### Body and soul

There is an entire argumentation John makes in his ‘Dialogue of the soul’<sup>1</sup>, in reference to human structure. The first point to start with is the structure of the world itself –as it has two dimensions (seen and mysterious), human too was created according to this double structure. John says that there is a double ‘ousia’, the first one that makes human capable to admire the beauty of visible things (sensible ousia of the bodies<sup>2</sup>) and a second one of the soul (the hidden ousia of the soul<sup>3</sup>) capable to identify the hidden mystery of creation.

The Syriac terms used to express the body are two: ܩܝܡܐ and ܩܝܡܐܝܬܐ. If John the Solitary makes a distinction between the two terms – the latter one is in a way limited, referring more to the physical body, the ‘place’ of ‘pagro’<sup>4</sup>, the first one has a symbolical dimension<sup>5</sup> – Isaac is not systematic in stressing this

<sup>1</sup> Yoḥannan, *Dialogue sur l’âme et les passions des hommes*, trans. Sven Dederling and Irénée Hausherr, vol. 120, *Orientalia Christiana Analecta* (Roma: Pont. Inst. Orientalium Studiorum, 1939); for the Syriac: Sven Dederling, *Johannes von Lycopolis. Ein Dialog Über Die Seele Und Die Affekte Des Menschen. Herausgegeben von Sven Dederling. Syr. Arbeten Utgivna Med Understödet Av Vilhelm Ekmans Universitetsfond, Uppsala 43* (Uppsala; Leiden, 1936).

<sup>2</sup> ܩܝܡܐ ܩܝܡܐܝܬܐ ܩܝܡܐܝܬܐ.

<sup>3</sup> ܩܝܡܐܝܬܐ ܩܝܡܐܝܬܐ ܩܝܡܐܝܬܐ.

<sup>4</sup> ܩܝܡܐܝܬܐ ܩܝܡܐܝܬܐ ܩܝܡܐܝܬܐ.

<sup>5</sup> Patrik Hagman, *The Asceticism of Isaac of Nineveh* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 62.

nuance<sup>6</sup>. The signification of the body is ambivalent: on one side, it is the context for a worldly material life, so it has a negative sense, on the other side, it is the fundament for asceticism, the basic instrument of manifesting the spiritual struggle. The soul is “a nature that is more subtle in its senses than all bodies”<sup>7</sup>, capable of identifying God’s presence in creation. John goes further in his argumentation asserting that, by the soul, human has the prominent role to rule and contemplate creation. He is “the king of all beings of this entire creation”<sup>8</sup>. The soul makes the difference between humans and other creatures<sup>9</sup> in reference to the capacity of understanding the divine wisdom within creation.

One can grasp two ways of ‘knowing’, reflecting the two components – the material, sensible knowledge and the inner, intelligible knowledge of the hidden things. In this line, based on Paul, he speaks about ‘external man’<sup>10</sup> and ‘inner man’<sup>11</sup> reflecting the two components. The first reality pertains to a bodily life, while the latter to a stage according to the soul with correspondent ascetical works. ‘The inner man’ is the connection between the visible realities and the life to come and anticipates the life after resurrection<sup>12</sup>.

Yet, human’s knowledge occurs as existing in the body and eventually human’s life means soul in the body with the things and works pertaining to it. For instance, as long as mind is connected with the body, it thinks in pictures.

<sup>6</sup> See *Mystic treatises by Isaac of Nineveh. Translated from Bedjan’s Syriac Text with an Introduction and Registers*. (Verhandelingen der Koninklijke Akademie van Wetenschappen te Amsterdam. Afdeling Letterkunde. Nieuwe Reeks D. 29 1), trad. Arent Jan Wensinck, Martin Sändig, (Wiesbaden, 1969), 288 (abbreviated I). For Syriac, Paul Bedjan, ed., *Mar Isaacus Ninivita: De Perfectione Religiosa* (Parisiis; Lipsiae: Otto Harrassowitz, 1909) (abbreviated B).

<sup>7</sup> ܘܢܫܘܬܐ ܕܢܫܘܬܐ ܕܘܫܘܬܐ ܕܘܫܘܬܐ.

<sup>8</sup> ܘܢܫܘܬܐ ܕܢܫܘܬܐ ܕܘܫܘܬܐ ܕܘܫܘܬܐ.

<sup>9</sup> Dederling, *Johannes von Lycopolis. Ein Dialog Über Die Seele Und Die Affekte Des Menschen*, 3.

<sup>10</sup> ܘܢܫܘܬܐ ܕܢܫܘܬܐ.

<sup>11</sup> ܘܢܫܘܬܐ ܕܢܫܘܬܐ, p. 23, 91; see also Paolo Bettolo, ‘Sulla preghiera: Filosseno o Giovanni?’, *Le Museon* 94, 1–2 (1981), 75–89, here 77. This expression is found also in Isaac of Nineveh. He equates the ‘inner man’ with ‘man of the Spirit’ (for details see II, 8,2,16/ for second part, abbreviated II, see: Isaac di Ninive, *Discorsi spirituali: capitoli sulla conoscenza, preghiera, contemplazione sull’argomento della gehenna, altri opuscoli*, trans. Paolo Bettolo (Magnano: Qiqajon, 1990).; Syriac – Isaac of Nineveh (*Isaac the Syrian*): the second part, chapters IV–XLI, vol. 554, Corpus Scriptorum Christianorum Orientalium. Scriptorum Syri 224, ed. by Sebastian Brock (Lovanii: Peeters, 1995).; translation – Isaac of Nineveh (*Isaac the Syrian*): the second part, chapters IV–XLI, vol. 554, Corpus Scriptorum Christianorum Orientalium. Scriptorum Syri 225, trans. by Sebastian Brock (Lovanii: Peeters, 1995).

<sup>12</sup> For details see Sabino Chialà, *Dall’ascesi eremitica alla misericordia infinita: ricerche su Isacco di Ninive e la sua fortuna*, vol. 14, Biblioteca della Rivista di storia e letteratura religiosa. Studi (Firenze: L.S. Olschki, 2002), 152–53.

The body was made 'to see' the beauties of the visible world and the soul 'to perceive' what is behind the visible creation and beyond the earthly life<sup>13</sup>.

Lastly, I will evoke John's dichotomist anthropology. He speaks about human as body and soul and yet the spiritual life following three stages<sup>14</sup> – of the body, of the soul and of the spirit with correspondent works. Using Saint Paul's anthropology (1 Thessalonians 5:23) as a starting point, he counterparts the Greek terms *sarkikos*, *psychikos* and *pneumatikos* with the Syriac *pagrana*, *naphshana*, and *ruhana*, translated as 'on the level of the body, of the soul, respectively, of the spirit'.<sup>15</sup> Adding the suffix 'utha', he points to three stages: somatic (against nature), dominated by carnal passions; noetic, according to nature/natural, transitory to the spirituality of angels, which presupposes a rough physical and intellectual asceticism; and spiritual, above nature, which is communion with God, a foretaste of the future world. Here one deals with what John calls purity, limpidity and perfection.

Isaac of Nineveh is faithful to his master John and yet he uses his anthropology in a personal manner, as a result of a synthesis with other two important authors – Theodore of Mopsuestia and Evagrius. Regarding the structure of human being, Isaac speaks about body,<sup>16</sup> soul<sup>17</sup> and spirit<sup>18</sup> / or occasionally mind<sup>19</sup>, the final adding in the line of Evagrius. Despite the apparent tripartite spiritual constitution, he expresses a dichotomical anthropology – body and soul – while the spirit is the innermost part of the soul, the locus or the state of perfect communion with the Holy Spirit.

When speaking about body, Isaac seems to have a positive attitude – "a high theology"<sup>20</sup>, generated by the general idea that accompanies his entire perspective – everything is given for the best use of human. To understand his anthropology, it is useful to interpret it within the larger history of human and creation, in general. At the beginning, everything was good, so the body – the physical body. It was meant for him to see the beauties of creation. The good was something natural (according to the order of the nature), what appeared

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<sup>13</sup> Werner Strothmann, *Johannes von Apamea*, vol. 11, *Patristische Texte und Studien* (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1972), 152–153.

<sup>14</sup> ܡܫܘܚܘܬܐ.

<sup>15</sup> Dedering, *Johannes von Lycopolis. Ein Dialog Über Die Seele Und Die Affekte Des Menschen.*, 13–14.

<sup>16</sup> ܢܘܦܫܐ.

<sup>17</sup> ܪܘܚܢܐ.

<sup>18</sup> ܢܘܫܐ.

<sup>19</sup> ܢܘܫܘܬܐ.

<sup>20</sup> Hannah Hunt, 'Praying the body: Isaac of Nineveh and John of Apamea on Anthropological integrity', *The Harp* 11–12 (1998-1999), 153–158, here 158.

bad afterwards is called accidental. Yet human was not perfect, but a child to become mature by progressing in the divine knowledge. Thus, physical body means, on one side, something useful and necessary in this progress – symbol for ascetical life (*asceticism as training*), but also symbol for passions coming from outside (body of passions), described in negative terms (*asceticism as purification*). In this transformation, the body has to be always in obedience to the soul, the spiritual component of human structure, while the spirit, a mysterious ‘place’, is destined to the highest spiritual experiences.

The bishop of Nineveh does not speak very often about the three elements as parts of human structure, but more in the context of existing a threefold spiritual life: according to the body, to the soul and to the spirit and three specific conducts. Isaac names the three orders<sup>21</sup>: against nature (somatic),<sup>22</sup> natural (psychic),<sup>23</sup> and supernatural (spiritual),<sup>24</sup> corresponding to their own service. More specifically, he returns to the pattern of John the Solitary in the Second Collection, the 20<sup>th</sup> discourse. There he speaks about the ‘understanding’ of the one who is at the level of the body (ܦܚܝܘܬܐ), fearful and concerned with bodily things. The second category refers to the one who lives at the level of the soul (ܢܦܫܘܬܐ), performing intelligible activity and reflection on resurrection. And, finally, he lists the level of the spirit (ܪܘܚܢܘܬܐ), when one attains real knowledge and experiences divine joy. Implying the consecrated biblical expression ‘I know a person...’, Isaac describes some mystical forms while picturing the spiritual conduct: ‘stirrings of Spirit’<sup>25</sup>, ‘particular mystical insights’<sup>26</sup>, when one perceives hidden joy and consolation<sup>27</sup>.

In parallel, Isaac also speaks about three conducts<sup>28</sup> integrated within the three stages we are dealing with. If the first order – against nature – presupposes a state when the body and the soul are conditioned by material and intellectual passions<sup>29</sup>, the bodily conduct<sup>30</sup> refers already to an ascetical life, expressed in a negative language as purification of passions. It is integrated

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<sup>21</sup> ܦܚܝܘܬܐ.

<sup>22</sup> ܠܥܝܢܐ ܗܘܐ ܦܚܝܘܬܐ.

<sup>23</sup> ܦܚܝܘܬܐ.

<sup>24</sup> ܠܠܗܘܐ ܗܘܐ ܦܚܝܘܬܐ.

<sup>25</sup> ܐܝܩܘܢܐ ܕܪܘܚܢܘܬܐ.

<sup>26</sup> ܫܩܘܠܐ ܕܪܘܚܢܘܬܐ.

<sup>27</sup> II, 20, 13-19.

<sup>28</sup> ܦܚܝܘܬܐ.

<sup>29</sup> Bodily life is for those who have no knowledge of God or spiritual matters (for John the Solitary, see Dederling, *Johannes von Lycopolis. Ein Dialog Über Die Seele Und Die Affekte Des Menschen*, 20–21.).

<sup>30</sup> ܦܚܝܘܬܐ ܕܦܚܝܘܬܐ.

in the second order – the natural state – followed by the soul’s conduct<sup>31</sup>, described as intelligible ascetical purification. And, lastly, the spiritual conduct<sup>32</sup> pertains to the spiritual order (supernatural).

The process of knowledge itself is dependent on human’s double structure. It begins from a more bodily oriented perspective up to a spiritual knowledge, reflecting the Pauline relation ‘external’ and ‘inner man’<sup>33</sup>. In other terms, one can speak about the knowledge of the senses and the noetic knowledge, in the line of Evagrius. In fact, Isaac often deals with the second type that begins with a material practice, continues with a noetic practice and ends in what he calls ‘spiritual knowledge’ (*theoria*). In the first centuria we can identify this succession of stages and the corresponding works for each moment: “Tutta la conoscenzadunque si divide in due parti, in una parte sensibile e in una parte intelligibile. La prima è chiamata pratica, che è la virtù, e la seconda contemplazione. E la prima parte, ancora, si divide in due altre parti: in una pratica materiale e (in una) immateriale. La materiale si compie tra le altre persone, l’immateriale è quella che uno compie in se stesso”<sup>34</sup>.

### Passion, body and soul

It is useful and necessary to dwell at short on the understanding of ‘passion’ by Isaac. The term he uses – *hasha*<sup>35</sup> – is ambivalent, it refers either to a natural capacity of the soul that can be directed towards both good and evil or to a sinful desire of the body or soul. Passions, in the negative sense, are ‘additions’ to nature, which came forth as a result of human sin<sup>36</sup>. Therefore, body as well as soul, initially were pure, together created in a perfect state so as to be able to reflect God’s glory in the world and to participate in the divine knowledge. In the line of John the Solitary’s ascetical theology and of Theodore of Mopsuestia’s pedagogical history, Isaac states that, as a good pedagogue, God finally applies all measures for the benefit of humans, so even passions are inserted in God’s providentially work: “All the existing passions were given to be of help to each of the natures to which they naturally belong and they were given by God for the growth of these natures”<sup>37</sup>.

<sup>31</sup> The knowledge of the soul – *ἡ γνώσις τῆς ψυχῆς*.

<sup>32</sup> *ἡ γνώσις τῆς πνεύματος*.

<sup>33</sup> II, 8,2,16.

<sup>34</sup> II, 3.1,56; II, 3.1,29.

<sup>35</sup> *ἡ ἡσῆ*; its radical means ‘to suffer’, analogous with the Greek *παθος*; other related terms: *ἡ ἀσθενία* (weakness), *ἡ πειρασμός* (temptation).

<sup>36</sup> I, 3, p. 15 (B, 22).

<sup>37</sup> I, 3, p. 15 (B, 25).



influenced by Evagrius, such as anger, rage<sup>46</sup>. Isaac shares the opinion that there are three categories of passions: those which belong to the nature of the body, those which belong to the soul and those belonging to the soul “in a secondary way”<sup>47</sup>. The third category is given by the soul being joined to the body<sup>48</sup>.

Isaac boldly declares that God has put everything in the structure of human for its benefit. Only after Adam’s fall it appeared an enmity between body and soul. Quoting Paul (Galatians 5, 19), in the same manner as John the Solitary, he affirms that in the fallen state often what the flesh desires harms the soul and the other way round. This occurs as long as ‘the soul is clothed with the flesh’<sup>49</sup>.

In the line with his pedagogical ascetic theology, Isaac goes further arguing that even ‘bad passions’ are ultimately not bad for human, but necessary for its progress, interpreted as temptations<sup>50</sup>. This last significant might be considered a third category of passions next to good and bad or, better, an ascetical interpretation in the line of the pedagogical understanding of history and, more specifically, each independent personal itinerary. God is a pedagogue that teaches his disciples so that to reach the state of perfection.

## Conclusion

Both the authors, John the Solitary and Isaac of Nineveh, have a positive vision regarding body and human in general. In the original state was no perfection but human was called to reach plenitude along with an ascetic itinerary in the synergy with God. The body had sometimes a negative sense not because of a deficiency in the very platonic sense, but more because of the lack of this plenitude. At the beginning, both body and soul were included in ‘everything was good’ of the Genesis, sin and passion appeared accidentally afterwards as coming from outside, in connection with the body and by means of the soul’s decision, and yet this reality is not natural for the original state. It is accepted by both the authors partially as ‘natural’ for the body, but not for the soul, if not only by the situation as being joined to the body. It is also true that

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<sup>46</sup> I, 80, 550.

<sup>47</sup> *Ḥikmat* / I, 3, 17-18 (25-26).

<sup>48</sup> I, 3, p. 16 (B, 23); for the list of the passions see II, 3.4, 27. The ascetic life observes a succession pertaining to this division – the beginners are more preoccupied with the bodily labors (conduit of the body), while the ascetics more experienced with the labors of the soul (conduit of the soul).

<sup>49</sup> I, 3, 27 (*ḥad ḥad*).

<sup>50</sup> I, 3, 35.

Isaac nuances this position with a final, but not easy, acceptance of the idea of passions belonging also to the soul, by making a synthesis of John's vision with that of Evagrius. The last important element here is to include the itinerary of the fallen human within God's providential action that takes us to the conclusion that even passion is part of the divine plan for leading human to the plenitude of his life. From here, one can grasp the visible 'high theology' we spoke about at the beginning of this paper. Finally, salvation refers to the entire human, soul and body, in this way valuing human in its fullness.

The optimistic anthropology of both the authors leads us to the understanding of asceticism in its transformative role. They speak about new world and new body in the sense of continuation, not interruption of what was created good by God. It is, on one side, a confirmation of the creation made by God good, by searching for its original beauty. In addition, on the other side, it is about the completion of history by achieving an anticipatory experience of the life to come. This means changing the horizontal world-view with a holist-vertical reading of reality.

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# THE THEOLOGICAL AND DOXOLOGICAL REFERENCE TO THE RESURRECTION AND THE PENTECOST ACCORDING TO THE ORATIONS OF GREGORY NAZIANZEN XLI AND XLV

EIRINI ARTEMI\*

**ABSTRACT.** In the 41 oration, Gregory Nazianzen analyses again the divinity of the Holy Spirit, a subject that is developed in his Fifth Theological Oration. Gregory tries to establish the point by quite a different set of arguments from those adopted in the former discourse, none of whose points are here repeated. In the other oration, 41, Gregory refers to the importance of the resurrection for the human race. He presents Christ as the new Adam who saved the human from the death and reunites again the man with God. In this paper, we will examine the teaching of Gregory Nazianzen about the divine status of the Holy Spirit and his equality to the other two persons of the Triune God through theological and biblical images. Also we will present how he connects his teaching for anthropology with the teaching of Christology. In the end we will show how Gregory produced these orations for public festivals within the literarily ripe tradition of pagan festival rhetoric but he gives to his orations theological content.

**Keywords:** Nicholas Cabasilas, doxological reference, Gregory Nazianzen, liturgy, Pentecost

## Introduction

The Liturgy “Leitourgia” is compounded by the words “λαῖτος” (people) and “ἔργον” (deed). It means public deed. Already in ancient times, the Greek word *leitourgia* had the meaning not only of public service, but also of public worship. In Byzantine ecclesiastical terminology, the word refers mainly to the religious service at the core of which is the celebration of the sacrament of the Divine Eucharist (Latin: *missa*). Nicholas Cabasilas underlines: “The function of the celebration of the sacraments is to convert the gifts offered into the body and blood of Christ, and its aim is to sanctify the faithful who, through receiving

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the sacraments, gain remission of sins, the inheritance of the kingdom of heaven, and similar good things.”<sup>1</sup>

The Liturgy is really in the heart of the Church’s tradition. The Liturgy’s roots go back to Jewish worship and the adaptation of Jewish worship by Early Christians<sup>2</sup>. The Divine Liturgy is seen as transcending time, and the world. It is a heritage from the apostles which is transmitted from generation to generation down to us. From the apostolic era, the worship of God exists in the Divine Liturgy centered on holy Eucharist. A new element is added to the worship of God. This means that the Holy Liturgy didn’t have as center only the Triune God, but it has mainly as center the Incarnate Word, Christ<sup>3</sup>.

The Divine Liturgy lifts us up to the very throne of God. As Moses ascended the mountain to receive the Divine Law and as the three disciples ascended the mountain with Christ to behold His transfiguration, so have we been granted a divine ascent. Yet, such a blessing carries great responsibility. Moses delivered the Law to God’s people and the disciples evangelized the known world. We are called to be the presence of Christ in the world, “praising God and having favor with all the people”<sup>4</sup> and being the instruments through which the Lord will add to the Church those who are being saved.

Almost from the period of Ireneaus of Lyon (2nd Century) there is a strong connection between the faith, the dogmatic theology and the Divine Liturgy, “But our opinion is in accordance with the Eucharist, and the Eucharist in turn establishes our opinion”<sup>5</sup>. The latter based on the mysteries of faith, of which the Resurrection of Christ has a central place, is filled with dogmatical and doctrinal statements, whether from the doctrine of the Councils, or from the doctrine of the Fathers of the Church<sup>6</sup>. The Liturgical texts of the Church in general are a mine of both precise theology and theological meditation, which can be of great help to anyone who wants to know the faith by praying and worshipping according to the faith.

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<sup>1</sup> Nicholas Cabasilas, *Commentary on the Divine Liturgy* 50, PG 50, 483CD, transl. from greek into english by Fr. Nicholas Palis for the official page of Orthodox Metropolitanate, of Hong Kong and South East Asia, <https://www.omhksea.org/archives/3906>.

<sup>2</sup> John Fountoulis, *Issues about Liturgy* (Thessaloniki: 1977), 14.

<sup>3</sup> Fountoulis, *Issues about Liturgy*, 14.

<sup>4</sup> Acts 2:47.

<sup>5</sup> Ireneaus of Lyon, *Against Heresies*, book IV, 18, 5, PG 7, 1028AB. transl. from greek to english by Alexander Roberts and William Rambaut. From Ante-Nicene Fathers, Vol. 1. ed. by Al. Roberts, J. Donaldson, and A. Cleveland Coxe (Buffalo, NY: Christian Literature Publishing Co., 1885). Revised and edited for New Advent by Kevin Knight. <http://www.newadvent.org/fathers/0103418.htm>.

<sup>6</sup> Konstantinos Fylaktos, *Historical and Theological Aspect of Anaphora (Eucharistic Prayer) of the Divine Liturgy of St. Gregory the Theologian* (Athens, 2016), 114. George Filias, *Tradition and Development in the Worship of the Church, Gregory’s Editions* (Athens, 2014), 92. George Filias, “Anaphora (Eucharistic Prayer),” in George Filias, *Studies of History and Theology of Orthodox Worship, Gregory’s Editions* (Athens, 2002), 127.

The liturgical texts consist of the whole dogmatic theology of the Church. So in these texts the believers have the chance to listen to again and again the triadological, Christological, pneumatological theology. The liturgical theology should not be isolated from the patrology, the history of Christian dogma, the patristic theology of different writers and doctors of the Church at different epochs. The study of liturgical hymns, of their appearance, their development and content, fulfils the study of the theological writings of the Church Fathers. Several Church Fathers are not only the authors of theological treaties, but are also the source of the hymnographical material. The study of liturgical parts and mainly of hymnography completes our knowledge of history and of the system of Byzantine theology. The believers should not limit the study of patristic writings only to theological treaties written in prose, but it is necessary to turn themselves also to ecclesiastical poetry, iconography, symbolism, and more generally, to liturgy<sup>7</sup>.

Although there is great importance of the connection of the Holy Divine Liturgy with the dogmatic theology, in the first centuries this relation was rather restricted. Basil of Caesarea wonders: "Does not this dogmatic truth come from that unpublished and secret teaching which our fathers guarded in a silence out of the reach of curious meddling and inquisitive investigation? Well had they learned the lesson that the awful dignity of the mysteries is best preserved by silence"<sup>8</sup>, and he continues: "In the same manner the Apostles and Fathers who laid down laws for the Church from the beginning thus guarded the awful dignity of the mysteries in secrecy and silence, for what is bruited abroad random among the common folk is no mystery at all. This is the reason for our tradition of unwritten precepts and practices, that the knowledge of our dogmas may not become neglected and contemned by the multitude through familiarity"<sup>9</sup>.

In the fourth century, there are many church fathers who contributed with their theology to the texts of the holy liturgy. One of them is Gregory the theologian or Gregory Nazianzen.

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<sup>7</sup> Job Getcha, "The Notion of 'Liturgical Theology' in Kern and Schmemmann," February 2, 2009, <http://abbaaw.blogspot.com/2009/02/notion-of-liturgical-theology-in-kern.html>.

<sup>8</sup> Basilius Caesareae, *On Holy Spirit*, XXVII, 66, PG 32, 188AB.

<sup>9</sup> Basilius Caesareae, *On Holy Spirit*, XXVII, 66, PG 32, 188B.

## 1. The theology of Gregory Nazianzen in his orations XLI and XLV

### 1.1. *The attributes of the Holy Spirit before the Pentecost in the oration XLI*

In his forty first oration «On Pentecost»<sup>10</sup>, Gregory Nazianzen dealt for one more time with the same subject of the Fifth Theological Oration, the question of the Deity of the Holy Spirit, but proceeded to establish the point by quite a different set of arguments from those adopted in the former discourse<sup>11</sup>. Until the fourth century, the Holy Spirit is spoken of as a “force,” or as “power” emanating from God, rather than as God himself<sup>12</sup>. He was thought as creature<sup>13</sup>. Gregory underlines with emphasis that the Holy Spirit is God. Anyone who refuses something like that, rejects the divinity of the Holy Spirit<sup>14</sup>.

In this Oration for Pentecost 41.11-17 Gregory Nazianzen analyses a narrative of the deed of the Third Person of the Holy Spirit after the ascension of Christ. His intention is to introduce his audience through the history of the Spirit's interactions with visible and invisible creation. As he does so, Gregory ultimately summarizes his entire understanding of how and why the Holy Spirit relates to Christians as it does<sup>15</sup>.

In his Homily for the celebration of the Feast of Pentecost, he found the chance to speak again for the deity of the Holy Spirit. He invoked the assistance of the Spirit for his preaching, he immediately picked up on the distinction between dominion and servitude that he introduced in Oration 34 “On the Arrival of the Egyptians.” By this way, he unquestionably highlighted the deity of the Holy Spirit: “As for what concerns the Spirit, may the Spirit assist me and give me speech, as much as I would like; but if not that much, as much as is fitting to the occasion. And he will assist entirely as a master, but not as a slave, not awaiting a command, as some suppose. For he blows where he wills, and

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<sup>10</sup> Gregorius Nazianzenus, *In Pentecosten*, Oratio XLI, PG 36, 428-452. Eirini Artemi, “The Divine Personhood of the Holy Spirit in the teaching of Gregory Nazianzen,” *Vox Patrum* 68, no. 37 (2017): 181 (179-192).

<sup>11</sup> Ch. G. Browne, J. Ed. Swallow, *From Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers, Second Series*, Vol. 7, ed. by Ph. Schaff, H. Wace, *Christian Literature Publishing Co.*, (Buffalo-New York, 1894), <http://www.newadvent.org/fathers/310241.htm> [access: 18.04.2016].

<sup>12</sup> Browne and Swallow, *From Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, <http://www.newadvent.org/fathers/310241.htm>.

<sup>13</sup> Gregorius Nazianzenus, *In Pentecosten*, Oratio XLI, 6, PG 36, 437A: “They who reduce the Holy Spirit to the rank of a creature are blasphemers and wicked servants, and worst of the wicked. For it is the part of wicked servants to despise Lordship, and to rebel against dominion, and to make That which is free their fellow-servant.”

<sup>14</sup> Gregorius Nazianzenus, *In Pentecosten*, Oratio XLI, 6, PG 36, 437A.

<sup>15</sup> Daniel G. Oppewall, *The Holy Spirit in the life and writings of Gregory of Nazianzus*, (McMaster University, 2012), 41.

upon whom, and whenever and however much he wishes. Thus we are inspired both to think and to speak about the Spirit”<sup>16</sup>.

For Gregory the Holy Spirit was beyond human comprehension. He always was and is and will be without beginning, without end, but is always ranked and numbered with the Father and the Son. He is in a mutual relationship with the Father and the Son<sup>17</sup>. According to Gregory's pneumatology, the Spirit, as God, is always the same as Himself and as those with whom he is ranked, invisible, eternal, uncontainable, unchanging, without quality, without quantity, without form, intangible, self-moving, ever-moving, self-determining, self-powered, all-powerful<sup>18</sup>.

The role of Holy Spirit revealed Himself on the day of Pentecost. On that day there is the third part of the accomplishment of the revelation of the Person of God. Especially, Gregory speaks to his audience about the catalytic role of the Holy Spirit from the creation of the world to the liking of the disciples of Christ on the day of the Pentecost. So, there are the basic stages of the Spirit's working in creation, beginning with the Spirit's relationship to the angels, and continuing through the ways in which the Spirit works in the Old Testament prophets, and finally the disciples of Christ<sup>19</sup>. For Gregory, the “illumination (ἐλλαμψις)” and “completion (τελείωσις)” of the angels are the work of the Spirit, as is the ability of the Old Testament prophets to have the vision of both God and the future. Gregory's discussion of the disciples focuses on the three stages of their own reception of the Spirit. These three stages are indicated by Gregory in the following way<sup>20</sup>.

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<sup>16</sup> Gregorius Nazianzenus, *In Pentecosten*, Oratio XLI, 5, PG 36, 436C-437A, trans. V.E.F. Harrison, Saint Gregory (of Nazianzus), *Festal Orations* (New York: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 2008), 148.

<sup>17</sup> Gregorius Nazianzenus, *In Pentecosten*, Oratio XLI, 9, PG 36, 144A.

<sup>18</sup> Gregorius Nazianzenus, *In Pentecosten*, Oratio XLI, 9, PG 36, 441BC.

<sup>19</sup> Opperwall, *The Holy Spirit in the life and writings of Gregory of Nazianzus*, 41-42.

<sup>20</sup> Opperwall, *The Holy Spirit in the life and writings of Gregory of Nazianzus*, 42. Gregorius Nazianzenus, *In Pentecosten*, Oratio XLI, 11, PG 36, 444B. Trans. by Charles G. Browne and James E. Swallow, *From Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, Second Series, Vol. 7. ed. by Philip Schaff and H. Wace (Buffalo, NY: Christian Literature Publishing Co., 1894). Revised and edited for New Advent by Kevin Knight. <http://www.newadvent.org/fathers/310241.htm>: “He wrought first in the heavenly and angelic powers, and such as are first after God and around God. For from no other source flows their perfection and their brightness, and the difficulty or impossibility of moving them to sin, but from the Holy Spirit. And next, in the Patriarchs and Prophets, of whom the former saw Visions of God, or knew Him, and the latter also foreknew the future, having their master part moulded by the Spirit, and being associated with events that were yet future as if present, for such is the power of the Spirit. And next in the Disciples of Christ (for I omit to mention Christ Himself, in Whom He dwelt, not as energizing, but as accompanying His Equal), and that in three ways, as they were able to receive Him, and on three occasions; before Christ was glorified by the Passion, and after He was glorified by the Resurrection; and after His

In the period of the Old Testament, God the Father reveals Himself to the population of Israel. In the New Testament, the second Person of the Triune God, the Word, incarnated. He became total man and remained total God. So in the period of the New Testament there is the revelation of the Son of God. After the Pentecost there is the revelation of Paraclete, of the Holy Spirit, the third Hypostasis of the Triune God. Of course it should be underlined that the three divine Hypostases of God are in no way separated. The Divine Unity consists of the Father, with His Son and His Spirit distinct from God the Father and yet perfectly united together in Him. Every attribute of divinity which belongs to God the Father—life, love, wisdom, truth, blessedness, holiness, power, purity, joy—belongs equally as well to the Son and the Holy Spirit. The being, nature, essence, existence and life of God the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit are absolutely and identically one and the same<sup>21</sup>.

In God, in eternity, as well as towards the world in creation, revelation, incarnation, redemption, sanctification, and glorification—the will and action of the Trinity are one: from the divine Father, through the divine Son, in the divine Holy Spirit. Every action of God is the action of the Three. No person of the Trinity acts independently of or in isolation from the others. The action of each is the action of all; the action of all is the action of each. And the divine action is essentially one<sup>22</sup>.

The Holy Spirit reveals Himself to man from the time of creation of the universe until the end of the world. The progressive revelation of the triune

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Ascension, or Restoration, or whatever we ought to call it, to Heaven. Now the first of these manifests Him — the healing of the sick and casting out of evil spirits, which could not be apart from the Spirit; and so does that breathing upon them after the Resurrection, which was clearly a divine inspiration; and so too the present distribution of the fiery tongues, which we are now commemorating. But the first manifested Him indistinctly, the second more expressly, this present one more perfectly, since He is no longer present only in energy, but as we may say, substantially, associating with us, and dwelling in us. For it was fitting that as the Son had lived with us in bodily form — so the Spirit too should appear in bodily form; and that after Christ had returned to His own place, He should have come down to us — Coming because He is the Lord; Sent, because He is not a rival God. For such words no less manifest the Unanimity than they mark the separate Individuality.”

<sup>21</sup> Eirini Artemi, “The triadological teaching of Gregory Nazianzen about God in his twentieth Oration *On Theology and the office of Bishops*,”

<http://www.egolpion.com/02A5FDDBA.el.aspx#ixzz2wzLLdDND>, 25.3.2014. Eirini Artemi, “Gregory Nazianzen’s trinitarian teaching based on his Twentieth Theological Oration -La doctrina trinitaria de San Gregorio Nacianceno basada en si Quinta Oración Teológica,” in *De Medio Aevo* 4 (2013/2) <http://capire.es/eikonimago/index.php/demedioaevo/article/view/92>, 127-146.

<sup>22</sup> Eirini Artemi, “Gregory Nazianzen’s trinitarian teaching based on his Twentieth Theological Oration,” 127-146.

Godhead, firstly of God the Father, then of God the Son and, later of God the Holy Spirit, is a process of God's condescension to people's inability to understand the mystery of the Godhead<sup>23</sup>.

On Pentecost, "the dispensations of the Body of Christ are ended; or rather, what belongs to His Bodily Advent, and that of the Spirit is beginning"<sup>24</sup>. Stylianos Papadopoulos explains that Gregory wanted to show the "real" work of the Holy Spirit after the resurrection of Christ. So he used expressions which can be misunderstood<sup>25</sup> as the divine economy has shifted from the "bodily" manifestation of Christ to that of the Holy Spirit<sup>26</sup>.

The Spirit is present not just in his activities and energies, as he was present to angels, the prophets of Israel and the disciples of Jesus before his passion and death: "the Disciples of Christ (for I omit to mention Christ Himself, in Whom He dwelt, not as energizing, but as accompanying His Equal), and that in three ways, as they were able to receive Him, and on three occasions; before Christ was glorified by the Passion, and after He was glorified by the Resurrection; and after His Ascension, or Restoration, or whatever we ought to call it, to Heaven. Now the first of these manifests Him — the healing of the sick and casting out of evil spirits, which could not be apart from the Spirit; and so does that breathing upon them after the Resurrection, which was clearly a divine inspiration;"<sup>27</sup>

He has united himself to the Church in his very essence and being. At Pentecost God bestows God: the gift and giver are one. This part of the Oration of Gregory is analyzed by Vladimir Lossky: "The operation of the Holy Spirit in the world before the Church and outside the Church is not, therefore, the same as His presence in the Church after Pentecost. As the Word, "by whom all things were made," revealed the Wisdom of God in creation before He was sent into the world or entered its history through His Incarnation; so also the Holy Spirit (in whom the divine will—creator and upholder of the universe—was fulfilled from the moment of creation) was at a given moment sent into the world to be present there not only by His operation, common to all three Persons of the Trinity, but considered as Person"<sup>28</sup>.

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<sup>23</sup> Eirini Artemi, "The knowledge of the Triune God according to Isidore of Pelusium," *Vox Patrum* 61, 34 (2014), 327-342, esp. 340-341.

<sup>24</sup> Gregorius Nazianzenus, *In Pentecosten*, Oratio XLI, 5, PG 36, 436C-437A, trans. V. E. F. Harrison, Saint Gregory (of Nazianzus), *Festal Orations* (New York: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 2008), 148.

<sup>25</sup> Stylianos Papadopoulos, *Patrologia*, II (Athens, 1990), 501.

<sup>26</sup> Gregorius Nazianzenus, *In Pentecosten*, Oratio XLI, 5, PG 36, 437A. *Ibid.*, 11, PG, 444BC.

<sup>27</sup> Gregorius Nazianzenus, *In Pentecosten*, Oratio XLI, 11, PG 36, 444A.

<sup>28</sup> Vladimir Lossky, *The Mystical Theology of the Eastern Church* (New York: St Vladimir's Seminary Press, 2002), 157-158.



In this part of the Oration, the Holy Spirit is presented as “He is the Lord”<sup>29</sup>. According to Papadopoulos, Gregory the theologian with this term “Lord” sealed the theology of the Second Ecumenical Council in Constantinople in 381, because in the Creed the Holy Spirit is called “the Lord, and Giver of Life”<sup>30</sup>.

On the Pentecost, the Holy Spirit reveals Himself as third Person or the Triune God. Pentecost is the day when God clearly demonstrates that salvation and redemption are the work of the triune God. The Father is the source, the initiator, and the final goal of all the redemptive acts of God. The Son is the embodiment of the mission of God. The work of salvation is accomplished through His birth, life, death, resurrection, and ascension. The Holy Spirit is the empowering presence of God who makes us holy<sup>31</sup>.

The Holy Spirit is Christ’s gift to his church. In John 14 to 16 Jesus Christ promised that when he returned to his Father he and his Father together would send the Spirit to indwell those who believe in Christ, and be with them forever. The Old Testament anticipations of the Spirit, and this promise of Christ to send the Spirit, were fulfilled on the Day of Pentecost. The outpouring of the Spirit from heaven on the Day of Pentecost is a one-off, never-to-be-repeated fulfillment of the prophetic symbolism embedded in the Feast of Pentecost, in the same way that the crucifixion of Christ on the Passover day is a one-off, never-to-be-repeated fulfillment of the prophetic symbolism embedded in the Passover Feast. Just as the Crucifixion could only happen at Passover, so the outpouring of the Spirit could only happen at Pentecost.

Gregory refers some examples from the Old Testament to prove that the Holy Spirit descends upon people who were in Jerusalem and near the apostles and dwells with them. He uses the examples of Isaiah, Elijah and David among others, and finally Jesus who, Gregory notes, is both glorified by and gives glory to the Spirit<sup>32</sup>. The Holy Spirit has the important and absolute role to purify people in order the latter to win the Kingdom of God<sup>33</sup>. The purification can happen only if the Holy Spirit frees us from the bitter tyranny of the Devil, because human nature was voluntarily enslaved to the man slaughterer Devil. Otherwise, we will not be liberated, unless the Kingdom of God, that is to say the Holy Spirit, comes to us so as to expel from us the tyrant enemy and reign in us. It is obvious from the above that the Kingdom of God is not an external

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<sup>29</sup> Gregorius Nazianzenus, *In Pentecosten*, Oratio XLI, 11, PG 36, 444A.

<sup>30</sup> Papadopoulos, *Patrologia II*, 502.

<sup>31</sup> Gregorius Nazianzenus, *In Pentecosten*, Oratio XLI, 11, PG 36, PG 36, 444C.

<sup>32</sup> Gregorius Nazianzenus, *In Pentecosten*, Oratio XLI, 12, PG 36, 445D-448A.

<sup>33</sup> Gregorius Nazianzenus, *In Pentecosten*, Oratio XLI, 14, PG 36, 448BC.

arrangement of the world, but the dwelling of the Holy Spirit in our hearts. This results in the transfiguration of the world through transfigured people<sup>34</sup>.

The important thing is that the Holy Spirit appeared as tongues of fire as it was said by the Prophet Isaiah: "With other tongues and other lips will I speak unto this people, and not even so will they listen to Me"<sup>35</sup> says the Lord. Additionally, Gregory explains that at Pentecost is said to have been a reversal of the events at Babel in Genesis 11<sup>36</sup>. At Pentecost, God poured out his Spirit. At Babel, the people did not have the Spirit of God. The people of Babel tried to make a name for them. They were not trying to do God's will or glorify his name. The consequence of this was that God cursed them by confusing their language. They could not co-operate with each other and so they were scattered. God did the opposite of this at Pentecost. People were able to understand each other again and co-operate to build God's city, the church<sup>37</sup>: "But as the old Confusion of tongues was laudable, when men who were of one language in wickedness and impiety, even as some now venture to be, were building the Tower<sup>38</sup>; for by the confusion of their language the unity of their intention was broken up, and their undertaking destroyed; so much more worthy of praise is the present miraculous one. For being poured from One Spirit upon many men, it brings them again into harmony"<sup>39</sup>. The presence of the Holy Spirit on Pentecost did not end. Into that mystical Body men from every tribe and tongue and people and nation are to this day still being incorporated, by the power of the Holy Spirit working through the Church and its sacraments<sup>40</sup>. Through the Church, everyone can succeed the transformation with the grace of the Holy Spirit and become the testimony of the one truth of Triune God which was revealed not only through the holy people but through the Incarnation of the Word Himself. As example of the above words, Gregory presents himself who became the preacher of the only Truth of God and of his Theology.

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<sup>34</sup> "None can see or enter into the Kingdom, except he be born again of the Spirit, (John 3:3) and be cleansed from the first birth, which is a mystery of the night, by a remoulding of the day and of the Light, by which every one singly is created anew. This Spirit, for He is most wise and most loving, (Wisdom 1:6) if He takes possession of a shepherd makes him a Psalmist, subduing evil spirits by his song, (1 Samuel 16:23) and proclaims him King; if he possess a goatherd and scraper of sycamore fruit, Amos 7:14 He makes him a Prophet. Call to mind David and Amos. If He possess a goodly youth, He makes him a Judge of Elders, even beyond his years, as Daniel testifies, who conquered the lions in their den. (Daniel 6:22)." Gregorius Nazianzenus, *In Pentecosten*, Oratio XLI, 14, PG 36, 448BC.

<sup>35</sup> Isaiah 28:11. Gregorius Nazianzenus, *In Pentecosten*, Oratio XLI, 15, PG 36, 449A.

<sup>36</sup> Genesis 11:7.

<sup>37</sup> Gregorius Nazianzenus, *In Pentecosten*, Oratio XLI, 16, PG 36, 449C.

<sup>38</sup> Genesis 11:7. Gregorius Nazianzenus, *In Pentecosten*, Oratio XLI, 16, PG 36, 449C.

<sup>39</sup> Genesis 11:7. Gregorius Nazianzenus, *In Pentecosten*, Oratio XLI, 16, PG 36, 449C.

<sup>40</sup> Gregorius Nazianzenus, *In Pentecosten*, Oratio XLI, 6, PG 36, 437B.

“And He is the Spirit of Meekness, and yet is provoked by those who sin. Let us therefore make proof of Him as gentle, not as wrathful, by confessing His Dignity; and let us not desire to see Him implacably wrathful. He too it is who has made me today a bold herald to you — if without rest to myself, God be thanked; but if with risk, thanks to Him nevertheless; in the one case, that He may spare those that hate us; in the other, that He may consecrate us, in receiving this reward of our preaching of the Gospel, to be made perfect by blood”<sup>41</sup>.

Gregory gives emphasis to the fact that He is not saying therefore that the full revelation of the Spirit's deity came after the New Testament Scriptures were completed, but that the Spirit's deity was revealed when he came at Pentecost to dwell with the disciples. It was then that the things which the disciples could not bear before the Passion were taught by the Spirit. Of these things, the one was the deity of the Spirit himself<sup>42</sup>. He underlines the parts of John's gospel<sup>43</sup>, which refers to the Paraclete who totally reveals Himself on the day of Pentecost. On that day there was a historic fact the descent of the third Hypostasis of Triune God. In this fact, we have the total distinction of Holy Spirit from Christ. He, the Holy Spirit wasn't the resurrected Christ. He was another Paraclete, the advocate who bodily “received” his place to this part of historical Christian Church. The event of Pentecost reveals the deity of the Spirit, his consubstantiality with Father and Son as God. Hence he is said in John to be “another Paraclete” since the word “another” marks not only one who is distinct, but also one who is co-equal<sup>44</sup>.

Additionally, the Holy Spirit shares the grace and the gift of God to people and reveals the Father and the Son. For this Gregory underlines: “the Spirit of Adoption, of Truth, of Wisdom, of Understanding, of Knowledge, of Godliness, of Counsel, of Fear (which are ascribed to Him ) by Whom the Father is known and the Son is glorified; and by Whom alone He is known; one class, one service, worship, power, perfection, sanctification”<sup>45</sup>.

In the end we should add that in the eve of the day of the feast of Pentecost, on the day of the celebration of Pentecost and on the next day, the Orthodox Church has some hymns which show the influence of Gregory's oration 41 to the liturgical texts. So in the Orthodox Church in the Eve of the feast, the writer of hymns underlines: “We are keeping the feast of Pentecost and of the Coming of the Spirit, and the appointed time of the Promise, and the

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<sup>41</sup> Gregorius Nazianzenus, *In Pentecosten*, Oratio XLI, 14, PG 36, 448BC.

<sup>42</sup> Gregorius Nazianzenus, *In Pentecosten*, Oratio XLI, 14, PG 36, 448BC.

<sup>43</sup> John 16:7; 14:26; 14:15.

<sup>44</sup> T. A. Noble, “Gregory Nazianzen's use of Scripture in defence of the deity of the Spirit,” *Tyndale Bulletin* 39 (1988): 101-123, esp. 121.

<sup>45</sup> Gregorius Nazianzenus, *In Pentecosten*, Oratio XLI, 9, PG 36, 441B.

fulfillment of our hope. And how great, how august, is the Mystery"<sup>46</sup>. So on Pentecost's feast and liturgy we can recognize most of the parts of 41 oration of Gregory for the revelation of the Holy Spirit, on His deity and about the three stages of his revelation through the history of Israel.

### **1.2. The triadological teaching of Gregory in his Oration XLV on Easter**

Gregory distinguishes between theology (*theologia*) and economy (*oikonomia*)<sup>47</sup>. "«Theology» refers to the mystery of God's inmost life within the Blessed Trinity and "economy" to all the works by which God reveals himself and communicates his life. Through the *oikonomia* the *theologia* is revealed to us; but conversely, the *theologia* illuminates the whole *oikonomia*. God's works reveal who he is in himself; the mystery of his inmost being enlightens our understanding of all his works. So it is, analogously, among human persons. A person discloses himself in his actions, and the better we know a person, the better we understand His actions"<sup>48</sup>.

In the Oration 45, many of the teachings of the oration 38 are repeated. One of the characteristic text in which there is a repetition, is the one which is referred to the nature of God. The divine essence is boundless: "The Divine Nature then is boundless and hard to understand; and all that we can comprehend of Him is His boundlessness; even though one may conceive that because He is of a simple nature He is therefore either wholly incomprehensible or perfectly comprehensible"<sup>49</sup>. Also, in another part of this oration, Gregory explains for the God: "For in Himself He sums up and contains all Being, having neither beginning in the past nor end in the future...like some great Sea of Being, limitless and unbounded, transcending all conception of time and nature, only adumbrated by the mind and that very dimly and scantily"<sup>50</sup>.

In the previous part of Oration 45, Gregory, according to Brian Matz, uses a neoplatonic language mixed with the biblical language into his knowledge of what it means For God to be<sup>51</sup>. Gregory speaks about the coeternity of the Hypostases of the Triune God and how this can be a testimony for the coequal

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<sup>46</sup> Gregorius Nazianzenus, *In Pentecosten*, Oratio XLI, 5, PG 36, 436B.

<sup>47</sup> Gregory Nazianzenus, *In Sancium Pascha*, Oratio XLV, 4, PG 36, 628C.

<sup>48</sup> "In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the holy Spirit," in *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, [http://www.vatican.va/archive/ccc\\_css/archive/catechism/p1s2c1p2.htm](http://www.vatican.va/archive/ccc_css/archive/catechism/p1s2c1p2.htm).

<sup>49</sup> Gregorius Nazianzenus, *In Theophania, sive Natalitia Salvatoris*, Oratio XXXVIII, 7, PG 36, 317CD. Gregorius Nazianzenus, *In Sancium Pascha*, Oratio XLV, 4, PG 36, 628AB.

<sup>50</sup> *Ibid.*, 3, PG 36, 625C.

<sup>51</sup> Brian Matz, *Gregory of Nazianzus* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Academic, 2016), 57.

Trinity<sup>52</sup>. The Easter is the honor of the whole Triune God<sup>53</sup>. The creation visible and invisible, logic and illogic, with mind and without mind is no longer “primarily worshipping the victorious Saviour who defeated death, but the entire Trinity”<sup>54</sup>.

When the Cappadocian father refers to God, he explains that God is the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit<sup>55</sup>. In fact, Gregory as all the Cappadocian fathers identify person with hypostasis — namely, a real concrete existence — and teach that the three persons, or hypostases, are three absolutely distinct and unique modes of personal existence, that are, nevertheless, co-equal, co-eternal and co-substantial; with one and the same divine being, power and activity<sup>56</sup>. Again in this part of this oration, Gregory repeats the same text word by word to show that the Triune God has three persons without mixture and He is one God, and by this way Christian religion distinguishes the view of monarchy of God that Jews support and polytheism of ancient Greeks: “But when I say God, I mean Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. For Godhead is neither diffused beyond these, so as to bring in a mob of gods; nor yet is it bounded by a smaller compass than these, so as to condemn us for a poverty-stricken conception of Deity; either Judaizing to save the Monarchia, or falling into heathenism by the multitude of our gods”<sup>57</sup>. The Triune God is the being, because He is beyond place and time: “For Was and Will Be are fragments of our time, and of changeable nature. But He is Eternal Being”<sup>58</sup>.

Concerning the above passage from Gregory, father Loudovikos wrote: “...the only definition of monarchy [from the Cappadocians] must be that of Gregory Nazianzen: 'Monarchy that cannot be limited to one person, for it is possible for unity if at variance with itself to come into a condition of plurality; but one which is constituted by equality of nature, and agreement of opinion, and identity of motion, and a convergence of its elements to one, something that is impossible to happen in the created nature; so that though numerically distinct there is no division of ousia’”<sup>59</sup>.

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<sup>52</sup>Gregory Nazianzenus, *In Sancium Pascha*, Oratio XLV, 4, PG 36, 628B.

<sup>53</sup> Gregory Nazianzenus, *In Sancium Pascha*, Oratio XLV, 2, PG 36, 624B.

<sup>54</sup> Dragos-Andrei Giulea, “The Cappadocian Paschal Christology: Gregory Nazianzen and Gregory of Nyssa on the Divine Paschal Image of Christ,” *ZAC* 12 (2009), 477-503, esp. 478, ref. 3, doi 10.1515/ZAC.2008.029.

<sup>55</sup> Gregory Nazianzenus, *In Sancium Pascha*, Oratio XLV, 4, PG 36, 628C.

<sup>56</sup> Gregory Nazianzenus, *In Sancium Pascha*, Oratio XLV, 3-4, PG 36, 628A-D.

<sup>57</sup> Gregorius Nazianzenus, *In Theophania, sive Natalitia Salvatoris*, Oratio XXXVIII, 8, PG 36, 324C. Gregorius Nazianzenus, *In Sancium Pascha*, Oratio XLV, 4. PG 36, 628D.

<sup>58</sup> *Ibid.*, 3, PG 36, 625C.

<sup>59</sup> Nicholas Loudovikos, “Person instead of grace and dictated otherness: John Zizioulas’ final theological position,” *The Heythrop journal* XLVIII (2009): 1-16, esp. 8, DOI: 10.1111/j.1468-2265.2009.00547.x.

To sum up, Gregory analyses the triadology underlining the one essence and the three persons of Triune God. He explains how difficult is for the believer to have the knowledge of God, and teaches the simple nature of God: "He is therefore either wholly incomprehensible or perfectly comprehensible"<sup>60</sup>. Gregory doesn't analyse the theory about the essence and the attributes of God. It can be estimated that his reference for God is rather superficial, because he repeats some parts of his teaching on Homily 38 without more explanations and without deepening on the Triadology of God. That happens because there are some parts from the previous orations of Gregory which are repeated. A characteristic example is Gregory's homily 38, which underlines the boundless of God as we referred above. Also, another common part of the orations 45 and 38 is "For in Himself He sums up and contains all Being, having neither beginning in the past nor end in the future; like some great Sea of Being, limitless and unbounded, transcending all conception of time and nature, only adumbrated by the mind, and that very dimly and scantily...not by His Essentials, but by His Environment"<sup>61</sup>

As we can suppose, Gregory repeats his triadological teaching in his oration 38 and in the oration 45<sup>62</sup>, because for the Cappadocian father this is not the main subject in this oration. In Oration 45, he wants to analyze the passion, the crucifixion of Christ and of course the important role of His resurrection to the human mankind.

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<sup>60</sup> Gregory Nazianzenus, *In Sancium Pascha*, Oratio XLV, 3, PG 36, 628A.

<sup>61</sup> Gregorius Nazianzenus, *In Theophania, sive Natalitia Salvatoris*, Oratio XXXVIII, 7, PG 36, 317B.  
Gregorius Nazianzenus, *In Sancium Pascha*, Oratio XLV, 3, PG 36, 625D.

<sup>62</sup> Another part of the orations 38 and 45 which is identically is: "But since this movement of self-contemplation alone could not satisfy Goodness, but Good must be poured out and go forth beyond Itself to multiply the objects of Its beneficence, for this was essential to the highest Goodness, He first conceived the Heavenly and Angelic Powers. And this conception was a work fulfilled by His Word, and perfected by His Spirit. And so the secondary Splendours came into being, as the Ministers of the Primary Splendour; whether we are to conceive of them as intelligent Spirits, or as Fire of an immaterial and incorruptible kind, or as some other nature approaching this as near as may be. I should like to say that they were incapable of movement in the direction of evil, and susceptible only of the movement of good, as being about God, and illumined with the first rays from God — for earthly beings have but the second illumination; but I am obliged to stop short of saying that, and to conceive and speak of them only as difficult to move because of him, who for his splendour was called Lucifer, but became and is called Darkness through his pride; and the apostate hosts who are subject to him, creators of evil by their revolt against good and our inciters." Gregorius Nazianzenus, *In Theophania, sive Natalitia Salvatoris*, Oratio XXXVIII, 9, PG 36, 320CD. Gregorius Nazianzenus, *In Sancium Pascha*, Oratio XLV, 5, PG 36, 629AB.

### 1.3. The person of Christ in the oration XLV of Gregory of Nazianzen

Beeley aptly remarks: "Gregory's doctrine is both Christocentric and focused on the entire Trinity at the same time"<sup>63</sup> and he observes that "To regard these two conceptualities as divergent theological positions is to miss the point of both"<sup>64</sup>. In this oration, Gregory reveals again his triadological teaching of the oration 38, which is repeated with the same words. Then he speaks about the person of Christ, His passion, His crucifixion and His resurrection and the importance of all these in the salvation of the mankind.

Christ, the incarnate Word came in the world to save the man from the trap of death and to unite him again with His God. The man's participation into the attributes of God presupposes the purification of believers. The ultimate source of this purification is God. "Christ effects the purification of Christians<sup>65</sup>, enlivening all of the virtues that they practice and purifying their bodily senses"<sup>66</sup>.

In this Oration, Gregory thrusts the Incarnation of the second Word of Triune God to a soteriological finality and defines as accurate as he could the *communicatio idiomatum*<sup>67</sup>. Gregory connects the unity of two natures of Christ, total man and total God, with the goal of his sacrifice. So he makes the context of sacrifice "synonym" with the hypostatic union in the person of Jesus. Only the incarnate God could purify people and save them from sin and death. Only the incarnate Word could give to man the objective salvation. Through his blood, Christ established a New Covenant<sup>68</sup> of which He Himself became a mediator. Christ immolated for the salvation of all human beings: "But that great, and if I may say so, in Its first nature unsacrificeable Victim, was intermingled with the Sacrifices of the Law, and was a purification, not for a part of the world, nor for a short time, but for the whole world and for all time"<sup>69</sup>.

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<sup>63</sup> Christopher Beeley, *Gregory of Nazianzus on the Trinity and the knowledge of God. In Your Light We Shall See Light* (Oxford: Oxford Studies in Historical Theology, 2013), 227. Andrew Hofer, O.P, *Christ in the Life and Teaching of Gregory of Nazianzus* (Oxford: Oxford Early Christian Studies, 2013), 46.

<sup>64</sup> Beeley, *Gregory of Nazianzus on the Trinity and the knowledge of God*, 227.

<sup>65</sup> Gregorius Nazianzenus, *In Theophania, sive Natalitia Salvatoris*, Oratio XXXVIII, 13, PG 36, 325D. Ors. 11.4; 30.6; 39.1; 40.7.

<sup>66</sup> Gregory Nazianzenus, *In Sancium Pascha*, Oratio XLV, 13-14, PG 36, 641A-D. Beeley, *Gregory of Nazianzus on the Trinity and the knowledge of God*, 84.

<sup>67</sup> Antoine Nacheff, *Mary: Virgin mother in the thought of the Cappadocian Fathers*, Doctoral Dissertation, (Dayton, Ohio: International Marian Research Institute University of Dayton, 1997), 98.

<sup>68</sup> Heb. 9:15.

<sup>69</sup> Gregory Nazianzenus, *In Sancium Pascha*, Oratio XLV, 13, PG 36, 640C.

The second Hypostasis of the Triune God became total man and remained total God. Logos created the invisible and visible world with God the Father. A specific time He incarnated, became truly human being and remained total man in the womb of Theotokos. The divine Word became true human with flesh and blood. The only begotten Son, born according to nature of God the Father: "the Word of God Himself, Who is before all worlds, the Invisible, the Incomprehensible, the Bodiless, the Beginning of beginning, the Light of Light, the Source of Life and Immortality, the Image of the Archetype, the Immoveable Seal, the Unchangeable Image"<sup>70</sup> came down, and was incarnated, he partook of flesh and blood like to us; he made our body his own, and came forth man from a woman, not casting off his existence as God, or his generation of God the Father, but even in taking to himself flesh remaining what he was: "the Father's Definition and Word, came to His own Image, and took on Him Flesh for the sake of our flesh, and mingled Himself with an intelligent soul for my soul's sake, purifying like by like; and in all points except sin was made Man; conceived by the Virgin, who first in body and soul was purified by the Holy Spirit, for it was needful both That Child-bearing should be honoured and that Virginitly should receive a higher honour. He came forth then, as God, with That which He had assumed; one Person in two natures, flesh and Spirit, of which the latter deified the former... The Self-existent comes into Being, the Uncreated is created, That which cannot be contained is contained by the intervention of an intellectual soul mediating between the Deity and the corporeity of the flesh. And He who gives riches becomes poor; for He assumes the poverty of my flesh, that I may assume the riches of His Godhead. He that is full empties Himself; for He empties Himself of His Glory"<sup>71</sup>.

The characterization of Christ with some Christological names shows His eschatological glory from the Paschal night. On these names, a scholar can note the adoption of the previous church tradition by Gregory. These names were used by Melito of Sardis<sup>72</sup>, Origen<sup>73</sup> and Pseudo Hippolytus<sup>74</sup> and revealed the risen Christ. Gregory teaches with emphasis that the Word of God was conceived by the Virgin and she gave birth for Him<sup>75</sup>. The Holy Spirit purified

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<sup>70</sup> Ibid., 9, PG 36, 633C.

<sup>71</sup> Ibid., 9, PG 36, 633C.

<sup>72</sup> Melito of Sardeon, *Peri Pascha* 103, 766-769, ed. O. Perler, SC 123 (Paris, 1966), 60-126, esp. 124.

<sup>73</sup> Origen of Alexandria, *Peri Pascha*, 2,5; 3,14.16 (194, 3f; 244, 23f; 248, 14 Guéraud/Nautin), in Dragos-Andrei Giulea, "Seeing Christ through Scriptures at the Paschal Celebration: Exegesis as Mystery Performance in the Paschal Writings of Melito, Pseudo-Hippolytus, and Origen," *Orientalia Christiana Periodica* 74.1 (2008), 27-47, esp. 42-43.

<sup>74</sup> Pseudo-Hippolytus, *In Sactun Pascha* 1, 230, 1-12V, in Dragos-Andrei Giulea, "Seeing Christ through," 38).

<sup>75</sup> Gregory Nazianzenus, *In Sancium Pascha*, Oratio XLV, 9, PG 36, 633CD.



the Virgin, before her pregnancy<sup>76</sup> and the incarnate Word was total man with flesh and soul, without sin<sup>77</sup> and by this way he managed to purify the mankind from the original sin<sup>78</sup>.

Christ is called “the Sun of Righteousness,” a title that prophet Malachias employed for the incarnate Son of God<sup>79</sup> and had to refer to Jesus’ resurrection from the dead early on Sunday morning. Christ came as the Sun of Righteousness to dispel all the sin clouds of earth and to bring in the reign of everlasting righteousness. This Sun will take away the spiritual darkness and will shatter the power of sin and death that we might be justified by grace through faith in His glorious Gospel of peace<sup>80</sup>.

The Cappadocian theologian uses the term “intelligent soul – ψυχῆ νοερά”<sup>81</sup> as an answer to the heretical teaching of Apollinaris. The latter compromised Jesus’ true humanity by denying that He possesses a human mind or soul, since the human mind or soul is an essential component that makes human beings human. And, by compromising Jesus’ humanity, Apollinarism gives us a Savior who cannot save us. If Jesus does not possess a human soul, then He is not truly human, and thus cannot atone for the sin of other humans<sup>82</sup>.

Gregory the theologian as Cyril some decades later uses the word “empty” to express the action whereby Christ “emptied himself”<sup>83</sup> in order to give the chance to the human nature to be enriched. The incarnate Word became from rich as God, poor, because he wore the human nature (remaining God)<sup>84</sup>. It is worthy to be underlined that §9 of this oration is an exact repetition of the phrase of the §13 of the oration 38<sup>85</sup>. The same thing happens in the paragraphs 7-13 of the oration 38 and in the same text, the paragraphs 14-15. The same verbatim passages can be found in the oration 45, 3-9 and 45, 26-27. The use of verbatim passages in the work of Gregory reveals that the latter had kept his own documents and his own writings to safe place and he can use them anytime he thinks.

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<sup>76</sup> Gregory Nazianzenus, *In Sancium Pascha*, Oratio XLV, 9, PG 36, 633D.

<sup>77</sup> Gregory Nazianzenus, *In Sancium Pascha*, Oratio XLV, 13, PG 36, 641B.

<sup>78</sup> Gregory Nazianzenus, *In Sancium Pascha*, Oratio XLV, 9, PG 36, 633D.

<sup>79</sup> Malach. 4:2. Gregory Nazianzenus, *In Sancium Pascha*, Oratio XLV, 13, PG 36, 641A.

<sup>80</sup> Eph. 6:15.

<sup>81</sup> Gregory Nazianzenus, *In Sancium Pascha*, Oratio XLV, 9, PG 36, 633CD.

<sup>82</sup> Eirini Artemi, “‘One incarnate nature’: i) Apollinaire’s reading, ii) Cyril’s reading,” *Ecclesiastic Faros* 64 (2003): 293-304.

<sup>83</sup> Gregory Nazianzenus, *In Sancium Pascha*, Oratio XLV, 9, PG 36, 636A. Gregorius Nazianzenus, *In Theophania, sive Natalitia Salvatoris*, Oratio XXXVIII, 13, PG 36, 325D. Cyril of Alexandria, *In Isaiam*, PG 70, 950D; PG 70, 1044B.

<sup>84</sup> Gregory Nazianzenus, *In Sancium Pascha*, Oratio XLV, 9, PG 36, 636A. Gregorius Nazianzenus, *In Theophania, sive Natalitia Salvatoris*, Oratio XXXVIII, 13, PG 36, 325D. Cyril of Alexandria, *In Isaiam*, PG 70, 950D; PG 70, 1044B.

<sup>85</sup> Gregory Nazianzenus, *In Sancium Pascha*, Oratio XLV, 9, PG 36, 633B - 636A. Gregorius Nazianzenus, *In Theophania, sive Natalitia Salvatoris*, Oratio XXXVIII, 13, PG 36, 325A-D.

Gregory argues that God was born, died and rose for our salvation. Beeley supported that “these expressions are not merely linguistic conveniences, but they reflect the very heart of the Gospel in Gregory’s view: the very purpose of the incarnation was for God to assume human existence and especially to undergo death on cross”<sup>86</sup>. So Gregory declares: “We needed an Incarnate God, a God put to death, that we might live. We were put to death together with Him, that we might be cleansed; we rose again with Him because we were put to death with Him; we were glorified with Him, because we rose again with Him”<sup>87</sup>.

The Cappadocian Father teaches that Christ is the God-man who lives a full human existence and suffers a horrifying death. This Father doesn’t refer to the incarnation of God the Son more than to his passions, suffering, crucifixion and resurrection. On the opposite side there was Athanasius the Great who insists more on the Incarnation of the Son of God than on His sacrifice. Nazianzen shows the concernment of Christ’s sacrifice to God the Father. The latter refused the sacrifice of Isaac and put into the place of the child a ram<sup>88</sup>, because this sacrifice was less important than the sacrifice of Christ on the cross which was accepted<sup>89</sup>. God the Father chose to send His Son into the world to die in our place and to save people from the trap of the death and sin. Man’s sins and death penalty were placed upon Him, and the mankind was set free<sup>90</sup>.

To sum up the Easter is the Feast of the Feasts, because men through Christ could stop to creep on the ground and managed to become stars which can have their lights from the only Sun, the Sun of Righteousness<sup>91</sup>. In Pascha we celebrate the sacrifice of Saviour of mankind. The one who is God, the High Priest, became the Victim, the ultimate sacrifice for men’s salvation. The importance of this oration could be reflected in the orthodox celebration of Pascha and mainly in the ninth song of the paschal canon which is based on this oration and mainly to the thirtieth part of this Oration: “O Pascha, great and holy and purifier of all the world — for I will speak to you as to a living person — O Word of God and Light and Life and Wisdom and Might — for I rejoice in all Your names — O Offspring and Expression and Signet of the Great Mind; O Word conceived and Man contemplated, Who bearest all things, binding them by the Word of Your power”<sup>92</sup>.

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<sup>86</sup> Christopher A. Beeley, “The Early Christological Controversy: Apollinarius, Diodore, and Gregory Nazianzen,” *Vigiliae Christianae* 65, no. 4 (2011): 376-407, esp. 404, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/41291365>.

<sup>87</sup> Gregory Nazianzenus, *In Sancium Pascha*, Oratio XLV, 28, PG 36, 661C.

<sup>88</sup> Gregory Nazianzenus, *In Sancium Pascha*, Oratio XLV, 22, PG 36, 653B.

<sup>89</sup> Gregory Nazianzenus, *In Sancium Pascha*, Oratio XLV, 22, PG 36, 653B.

<sup>90</sup> Gregory Nazianzenus, *In Sancium Pascha*, Oratio XLV, 22 & 23, PG 36, 653B. 641C.

<sup>91</sup> Gregory Nazianzenus, *In Sancium Pascha*, Oratio XLV, 2, PG 36, 624B.

<sup>92</sup> Gregory Nazianzenus, *In Sancium Pascha*, Oratio XLV, 30, PG 36, 664A.

## Conclusions

The feasts of Pascha and Pentecost are very important in Orthodox liturgy. The resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead is the center of the Christian faith, without the resurrection of Christ the preaching of the disciples of Christ will be empty and Christ would be another prophet but not the Messiah. The resurrection reveals Jesus of Nazareth as not only the expected Messiah of Israel, but as the King and Lord of a New Jerusalem: a new heaven and a new earth.

On the Pentecost, there is the historic birth of Church and the revelation of the Holy Spirit. On this day, we have the culmination of the meaning of sacrifice of Christ with the presentation of the Holy Spirit into the lives of believers.

Gregory Nazianzen underlines that God the Holy Spirit completes the work of *Christ*. For one more time, the Cappadocian father shows the deity of the Holy Spirit. He underlines the divinity of the third person of the Triune God, which is a problem for that era. Many heretics refused the divine and coeternal nature of the Spirit. In order Gregory to speak about the divinity of the Holy Spirit, he asks for the help of the Spirit: "As to the things of the Spirit, may the Spirit be with me, and grant me speech as much as I desire; or if not that, yet as is in due proportion to the season. Anyhow He will be with me as my Lord; not in servile guise, nor awaiting a command, as some think. For He blows where He wills and on whom He wills, and to what extent He wills<sup>93</sup>. Thus we are inspired both to think and to speak of the Spirit"<sup>94</sup>.

Gregory then presents this magnificent description of the Holy Spirit: "The Holy Spirit always was and is and will be, without beginning, without end, but is always ranked and numbered with the Father and the Son. For it was not at any time fitting that the Son be lacking to the Father, or the Spirit to the Son. For it would have been the greatest dishonor for the divinity to have come, as it were through a change of mind to a fullness of perfection. Hence the Spirit always is participated in but does not participate, perfects but is not perfected, fills but is not filled, sanctifies but is not sanctified, deifies but is not deified"<sup>95</sup>.

Through this oration "On Pentecost" which underlines the divinity of the Spirit, Gregory explains that the Holy Spirit is beyond human comprehension. He always was and is and will be, without beginning, without end, but is always ranked and numbered with the Father and the Son. He is in a mutual relationship with the Father and the Son<sup>96</sup>.

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<sup>93</sup> John 3:8.

<sup>94</sup> Gregorius Nazianzenus, *In Pentecosten*, Oratio XLI, 5, PG 36, 436CD-437A.

<sup>95</sup> Gregorius Nazianzenus, *In Pentecosten*, Oratio XLI, 9, PG 36, 441AB.

<sup>96</sup> Gregorius Nazianzenus, *In Pentecosten*, Oratio XLI, 9, PG 36, 441A.

For Gregory, the deity of the Holy Spirit is a chance to speak about the Triune God: “the Trinity as one divinity, and, if you will, one nature; and we will ask the Spirit to give you the word God”<sup>97</sup>.

The necessity of Gregory to speak for the Triune God, bases on the fact that he starts the second oration for Pascha with a quick repetition of the triune dogmatic theology. Moreover “the nature of the Church is to be understood as the Church of the Triune God. The Holy Trinity is the ultimate basis and source of the Church’s existence and, as such, the Church is in the image and likeness of God. This being in the image of the blessed Trinity constitutes the mode of the Church’s existence, which, in fact, reveals her nature. Being in God, the Church reflects on earth God’s unity in Trinity. What is natural to God is given to the Church by grace”<sup>98</sup>.

On the sermon for Pascha, the sacrifice of Christ unites again man with God and gives to manhood the objective chance of Salvation. Christ’s sacrifice, passion, death and His resurrection uncover the darkness of evil from the world and give them the bright light of the Sun of rightness.

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<sup>97</sup> Gregorius Nazianzenus, *In Pentecosten*, Oratio XLI, 9, PG 36, 440B.

<sup>98</sup> George Dragas, “Orthodox Ecclesiology in Outline,”  
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## THE CHRISTIAN-ORTHODOX FAITH AND CHRISTIAN TRANSHUMANISM

CĂLIN EMILIAN CIRA\*

**ABSTRACT.** The Church has been confronted with various challenges in the recent period. One of these is the transhumanist movement that aims to create a new man by using the means of science and technology. In this context, the “Christian Transhumanist Association” was set up, an organization which proposes a dialogue with Transhumanism and even a way to find compatibilities between Christianity and this new trend. In this essay, having “The Christian Transhumanist Affirmation” as a starting point, we will try to offer a possible perspective from the point of view of Orthodox Christianity in relation to what this association claims.

**Keywords:** Transhumanism, Christian transhumanism, Eastern Orthodox Church, technology, science.

The recent period is characterized by an extraordinary evolution of technologies. This fact leads, on the one hand, to the improvement, to some extent, of people’s lives but at the same time triggers new problems and challenges of an ecological, economic and moral nature. Concomitantly with these technical and scientific changes, we can observe a process of dechristianization in Europe and in other areas around the globe where Christianity has been the predominant faith for a long time. In this context, some Christian denominations have tried to adapt their discourse and even their morals to the new tendencies of the world. As a result, in various branches of Protestantism, compromises were made by shortening religious services, recognizing same-sex marriages, and by ordaining women as priests and even bishops. By adapting the Christian teachings to the new world trends, it was believed that those who had left the faith would return. In general, this has not been the case. The Orthodox Church itself is under pressure to renounce certain teachings which today, for some people, seem outdated and even devoid of love.

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Nowadays, Christianity and implicitly the Eastern Church are confronted with the questions brought about by these new trends. One of them is Transhumanism, which proposes the creation of a new man with the help of biotechnologies, genetic engineering and artificial intelligence: "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"<sup>1</sup>. From this perspective we can observe that the idea that man can control his evolution alone, or one could argue, even go beyond his own limits, is advocated for. In general, this trend is characterized by an indifference to religion and, sometimes, even by atheism: "Transhumanism 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"<sup>2</sup>. This perspective is present not only in the secular-humanist circles but also in the religious ones. Thus, the Orthodox bioethicist Jean Boboc claimed the following in an interview: "This ideology is not new, it finds its roots already in the philosophy of the Enlightenment, which is anti-Christian, based on the knowledge of man, and at the same time based on scientism, more precisely the British one, on British biology. No wonder that the first modern transhumanists were the Anglo-Saxons. If we go back in history, however, we could say that Adam himself in a way opened up the era of Transhumanism, for he was part of a created humanity, but because of the original sin he fell into a state that needed to be restored."<sup>3</sup> Another Orthodox theologian, Brandon Gallagher, regards Transhumanism as demonic because it is a form through which man venerates himself: "Transhumanism is Satanic. When I write this I am not being provocative, let alone vaguely metaphorical. It is meant literally and with the strongest realism"<sup>4</sup>. From these two harsh statements we could extrapolate that there can be no form of dialogue between Orthodoxy and Transhumanism. The two seem to be in contradiction. Transhumanism aims to create a new man, more resistant to diseases, with

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<sup>1</sup> Nick Bostrom, "The transhumanist FAQ - A General introduction- Version 2.1. (2003)", accessed March 2, 2020, <https://nickbostrom.com/views/transhumanist.pdf>.

<sup>2</sup> Max More, "The philosophy of transhumanism", in *The transhumanist Reader*, ed. Max More and Natasha Vita-More (Chichester: Wiley Blackwell, 2013), 4.

<sup>3</sup> "Nașterea lui Hristos și eugenia transumanismului" [The Birth of Christ and the Eugenics of Transhumanism], interview with father Jean Boboc, by pr. Ioan-Aurelian Marinescu in <https://ziarullumina.ro/interviu/nasterea-lui-hristos-si-eugenia-transumanismului-140196.html>, accessed on 28.03.2020.

<sup>4</sup> Brandon Gallagher, "Godmanhood vs. Mangodhood: An Eastern orthodox Response to transhumanism", *Studies in Christian Ethics* 32, no. 2 (2019): 200.

increased intellectual capacities and with a higher life expectancy, capable even to reach immortality. The means by which these aptitudes are to be achieved, are scientific knowledge and the use of biotechnologies, genetic engineering, computer science, artificial intelligence. The fundamental idea is to recreate the heavenly state without God. The Orthodox Church, of course, cannot adopt such an attitude. First of all, its purpose is the preaching of the Gospel to all nations and the salvation of man. The way in which it accomplishes all this is not strictly human, but theandric. The church was founded by Christ, the Son of God Incarnated for the salvation of the world and the universe. It is in fact “Christ extended in humanity”. God in the Trinity is the one working through the Church. Man is unable to become free from the “bondage of death” by himself or through any of his creations, no matter how efficient. The means offered to us by the Church to help us achieve immortality are the Holy Sacraments, prayer, fasting and moral improvement. From the point of view of Christian anthropology, it is considered that there is life after death (a fact not taken into account by Transhumanism) and that the world is heading towards an end that is not synonymous with the death of the universe but with its transfiguration. Thus, there are great differences between the Orthodox approach to existence and that of Transhumanism.

In the Protestant environment, however, it was hypothesized that these transhumanist ideas could be adopted by Christianity. As a result, in 2013, for example, the “Christian Transhumanist Association” was established in the United States. It believes that Transhumanism is a philosophy that advocates for the improvement of life on earth through the interchange of science and technology<sup>5</sup>. Thus a Christian dimension can be given to this movement and should not be confiscated exclusively by a secular-humanist vision. They see this compatibility by supporting the following ideas:

**“1. We believe that God’s mission involves the transformation and renewal of creation** including humanity, and that we are called by Christ to participate in that mission: working against illness, hunger, oppression, injustice, and death.

**2. We seek growth and progress along every dimension of our humanity:** spiritual, physical, emotional, mental—and at all levels: individual, community, society, world.

**3. We recognize science and technology as tangible expressions of our God-given impulse to explore and discover** and as a natural outgrowth of being created in the image of God.

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<sup>5</sup> See <https://www.christiantranshumanism.org/about>, accessed on 28.03.2020.

**4. We are guided by Jesus' greatest commands** to "Love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul, mind, and strength... and love your neighbor as yourself."

**5. We believe that the intentional use of technology, coupled with following Christ, will empower us to become more human** across the scope of what it means to be creatures in the image of God."<sup>6</sup>

These statements point to a Christian view on the importance of knowledge in solving some of humanity's problems. It is a Christian interpretation of Transhumanism. As a matter of fact, it is actually a redefinition of it, because the emphasis falls on the value of Man who is seen as created by God, in His own image. Man was given the gift of being a creator and a collaborator of the Divinity in improving the world. Science and technology are the means by which this work can be accomplished. It is a completely different perspective than the one with which we are accustomed and which places an emphasis strictly on human beings as solely responsible for their own evolution and in no need of the relationship and moral-spiritual guidance of the Holy Scripture and the Church. Technology is not seen as an end in itself that leads to the disappearance of man but is merely a means by which some human sufferings can be limited and even eliminated. It is practically a means to fulfill the biblical commandment to love thy neighbor.

The question that we will try to tackle below, hoping to find a clarification, is the following: Can the Orthodox Church be compatible with such an approach as that of the "Christian Transhumanist Association"?

In order to attempt to answer it, we will start from the anthropology of the Christian East, we will take each of the statements of the aforementioned association and we will confront them with the teachings of the Orthodox faith.

**"1. We believe that God's mission involves the transformation and renewal of creation** including humanity, and that we are called by Christ to participate in that mission: working against illness, hunger, oppression, injustice, and death."

According to the Revelation of the Holy Scripture, the world was created by God out of nothing in order for it to be able to share in the goodness and divine love: "If everything was created by God to share in His love, their purpose is to fully take advantage of this love, which is to say, to accomplish a full communion with God[...]"<sup>7</sup> As a result of the fall of man, the whole humanity experienced a

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<sup>6</sup> <https://www.christiantranshumanism.org/affirmation>, accessed on 28.03.2020.

<sup>7</sup> Dumitru Stăniloae, *Teologia Dogmatică Ortodoxă* [Orthodox Dogmatic Theology], 2<sup>nd</sup> edition, (Bucharest: EIBMBOR, 1996), 1: 233.

state of decay, as shown by St. Paul in his Letter to the Romans: “We know that the whole creation has been groaning as in the pains of childbirth right up to the present time” (Rm, 8, 22). Thus, evil taints both creation and man: “The entire creation loses the image of good mixed with evil, the depths open to infinite knowledge, and reveals, through the sinful man, a face mixed with pain, with many failures and resentments. Christianity associates with sin, or with the separation from the Spirit of God, the weakening of one’s soul life, or the death of the soul, so also with diseases, corruption and physical death.”<sup>8</sup> For this reason everything that man creates is subject to error, corruption, failure, to being used for evil. Christianity has indeed fought since its inception to improve the moral and material state of man. This was manifested through its caring for the poor, the sick, the children and through the construction of hospitals, orphanages, schools. Throughout its history the Church has spoken out and advocated for the creation of a better society. At the same time, however, the acknowledgement that the transfiguration of the world and the creation of a “new heaven and new earth” will be accomplished with the Second Coming was always present. This work, however, began with the Incarnation of the Son of God and is continued by the work of the Holy Trinity within the Church through the Holy Sacraments and Services. Through these means, a renewal of man takes place and the communion with God is accomplished. Man does not remain passive in this process, however the radical change of the whole creation is made by the Creator of Heaven and Earth. So, we can partially adhere to this statement, taking into account the above-mentioned amendments.

**“2. We seek growth and progress along every dimension of our humanity:** spiritual, physical, emotional, mental—and at all levels: individual, community, society, world.”

From the point of view of the Orthodox Church, man is called to deification. This does not mean that we can become identical to God, but that we can become gods through grace. According to Orthodox anthropology, the Son of God was incarnated to deify man: “The actual model of human deification is offered to us by Christology, and the place of its fulfillment is shown by ecclesiology. [...] More precisely, to be deified means, above all, to freely assume the way of existence as a son of God, to become through grace a son within the Son. Since the condition of attaining deification is to assume the way of life of Christ as Son of God, it can only be accomplished within His Body which is the Church. [...]”<sup>9</sup> The way to accomplish this is the faith operating through love and

<sup>8</sup> Dumitru Stăniloae, *Teologia Dogmatică Ortodoxă* 1: 327-328.

<sup>9</sup> Ioan Ică Jr., „Îndumnezeirea’ omului, P. Nellas și conflictul antropologiilor” [The ‘Deification’ of Man, P. Nellas and the Conflict of Anthropologies], in Panayotis Nellas, *Omul – animal îndumnezeit* [The Deification of Man], introduction and translation diac. Ioan I. Ică Jr. (Sibiu: Deisis, 1994), XII.

an active participation in ecclesial life. Practicing virtue, which is faith in action, means taking part in the divine life and for this reason there can be an infinite growth in good: “The Divine One is himself the Good (in the primary and proper sense of the word), whose very nature is goodness. This he is and he is so named and is known by this nature. Since, then, it has not been demonstrated that there is any limit to virtue except evil, and since the Divine does not admit of an opposite, we hold the divine nature to be unlimited and infinite. Certainly, whoever pursues true virtue participates in nothing other than God, because he is himself absolute virtue.”<sup>10</sup> The spiritual and moral improvement also has positive consequences on one’s psychological and physical state. A person whose life is dedicated to Christ will improve and develop his talents and will use his knowledge and creativity to fulfill the biblical commandments. The growth we are referring to, however, is not based on our strength alone, but it is rather a fulfillment of one’s collaboration with God in this process. Man alone cannot accomplish this change. In fact, it is not a continuously ascending path, but rather one of peaks and valleys. Sin makes its presence felt in everyone’s life.

The other notion present in statement 2 is that of progress. This is a relatively modern idea, although, according to Nikolai Berdyaev, it traces its origins back to the messianic idea of the Jewish people, being a secularized version of it: “This idea has ancient religious-messianic roots. It is the old Judaic idea of the messianic solution of history, of the advent of a Messiah who will solve the earthly destiny of Israel and, with it, that of all peoples. It is the ancient belief in the realization, sooner or later, of the Kingdom of God, the reign of perfection, truth and justice.”<sup>11</sup> Transhumanism advocates for a new world and for solving the problems of humanity through technical-scientific means. According to some sympathizers of the movement, there will come a time called “singularity” when artificial intelligence will surpass human intelligence and the pace of technological change, and social change implicitly, will be very fast. This moment is a kind of coming of the Kingdom of God on earth. Indeed, at a technological and scientific level, we are dealing with real, measurable, tangible progress. One way or the other, every one of us feels it. However, every new technology holds within itself the potential to be used for wrong. That is why this progress is permanently haunted by the parasitic presence of evil. The church does not oppose scientific and technical progress but urges wisdom and discernment in its use. The faith-based teaching of the Church calls for a struggle with evil, no matter what form it takes, acknowledging that it is necessary, first

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<sup>10</sup> Gregory of Nyssa, *Life of Moses*, translation, introduction and notes by Abraham J. Malherbe and Everett Ferguson (New York: Paulist Press, 1978), 31.

<sup>11</sup> Nikolai Berdyaev, *The Meaning of History*, trans. George Reavey (London: Lowe and Brydone Printers, 1949), 186.

of all, for a growth in virtue in order for the life of society to improve. As a result, any form of individual and collective advancement cannot be done without the presence and work of grace in creation. Without Christ, we cannot fulfill the “growth and progress” this statement refers to.

**“3. We recognize science and technology as tangible expressions of our God-given impulse to explore and discover and as a natural outgrowth of being created in the image of God.”**

Science and technology are permanently present in our lives. Man wants to know the reality surrounding him and to improve his living conditions. This fact is fulfilled also by the technical means he invents, and through them the fact that man is made in the “image of God” is also manifested, that is to say, that man is both creator and ruler of the world: “The Church Fathers regard man as a true commander and ruler of the universe and understand this reign as a form of exercise of his role as emperor. Thus, for the believer who regards things from a theological perspective, no progress or technical conquest could ever be grounds for astonishment. By revealing the secrets of the universe, man does nothing but fulfill one of the steps of his destiny, since most definitely the organization of the universe is moving in the direction of its humanization.”<sup>12</sup> The Holy Scripture regards technology as form of practical wisdom: “See, I have chosen Bezalel son of Uri, the son of Hur, of the tribe of Judah, and I have filled him with the Spirit of God, with wisdom, with understanding, with knowledge and with all kinds of skills— to make artistic designs for work in gold, silver and bronze, to cut and set stones, to work in wood, and to engage in all kinds of crafts” (Exodus, 31, v.2-5). Technology emerged as a necessity in the world after the fall into sin, when the harmony between man and nature was lost, and the former became subject to the adversity of the latter. In Heaven there was no need for technology because man was in the presence of God. Instead we can state that science was present because Adam was called to name the animals: “Now the Lord God had formed out of the ground all the wild animals and all the birds in the sky. He brought them to the man to see what he would name them; and whatever the man called each living creature, that was its name. So the man gave names to all the livestock, the birds in the sky and all the wild animals” (Gen.2, 19-20).

There must be no conflict between science, technology and the Church. Such a strained relationship can only arise when science is ideologically used against faith or when technology is used for immoral purposes. For this reason, the Church must analyze certain scientific discoveries and technical achievements

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<sup>12</sup> Nellas, *Omul – animal îndumnezeit* [The Deification of Man], 11.

to prevent them from leading to human destruction. Of course, it is not an issue of banning scientific and technological knowledge, but rather of exercising caution to avoid any form of idolatry.

**“4. We are guided by Jesus’ greatest commands** to ‘Love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul, mind, and strength... and love your neighbor as yourself.’ ”

The commandment of love is central to Christianity. We could say that this statement is the basis for the other points of this Christian Transhumanist Association, because it guides the purpose which considers that there is certain compatibility between Christianity and Transhumanism. Based on this commandment, one can argue that the creation and use of technology to combat suffering is a form of love for one’s neighbor. The most conclusive example comes from the medical field, regarded as a method by which man is brought from disease to health. Of course, the problem of love is a much more complex one. It is a virtue towards which we must strive and which is difficult to achieve. It is not a mere feeling, but rather a work of the will. In fact, Christ speaks not only of the love for thy neighbor, but also of the love for thy enemies. The cultivation of this virtue cannot be done by technological means, but, indeed, it can be manifested through them. This can be reached by approaching God in His Church, through the Holy Sacraments, asceticism, prayer and through the fulfillment of the commandments. Indeed, this commandment must be the foundation upon which various technologies are built and created, in order for man to be able to put them to good use.

**“5. We believe that the intentional use of technology, coupled with following Christ, will empower us to become more human** across the scope of what it means to be creatures in the image of God.”

Following the teachings of Christ in the use and creation of technology would be a means for the divine image to manifest itself in the world because an improvement of the human life would be achieved, a fundamental aim of the Church from its very beginnings. It was the one to create hospitals, schools, orphanages, universities with the purpose of improving the state of the people. At the same time, many monks and priests have been involved over time, to a lesser or greater extent, in the development of scientific and technological knowledge. There are canonized saints in the Eastern Church, priests and hierarchs dedicated to these activities, such as St. Luke of Crimea and martyrs like Pavel Florensky. The two, science and technology, have been seen as methods by which we can know God’s creation, and through certain technologies the commandment of the love of one’s neighbor is actually fulfilled. It should

not be forgotten, however, that as a result of the fall, the face of man was altered and therefore evil affects the way in which all these creative activities are carried out. This is why we must act rationally and conduct a thorough analysis of each technology that is developed, to see if the benefits they bring outnumber the negative or even destructive effects. However, an effect of the ancestral sin is contained in the truth that everything that man creates is not perfect but subject to decay, error and use for destructive purposes.

### **As a conclusion**

Attempting to answer the question “is the Orthodox Church compatible with Christian transhumanism?”, we tried to show that in the Protestant faith there is the “Christian Transhumanist Association” that wants to play a fundamental role in carrying out a dialogue between this new trend and theology. This movement has a fundamental role in creating a dialogue between theology and the new trend, which is characterized by an open attitude towards technology and science, seen as methods of knowledge and creation through which the fact that man is created in the image of God is manifested. What defines Christian transhumanism is an extraordinary optimism towards technology. The roles of the Church, of the ascetic struggle, of the Sacrament are not emphasized, which can be explained by the fact that we are talking about an association that emerged in the Protestant environment. The reality of sin and its consequences are not very clearly articulated. The image of God is mentioned but not its alteration after the fall. Another reservation concerns the adoption of the concept of Christian transhumanism. Christianity, however, does not seek to transcend man but to “restore it”. The incarnation of Jesus and the fulfillment of His commandments is the way to accomplish this desideratum. Jesus Christ, the incarnated Son of God, is the perfect man and only through Him can we also become “new beings”. Technology can at most help us practice the virtue of helping one’s neighbor, but the anchor of this commandment is in the One who gave it to us. Man cannot accomplish anything by himself. Therefore, it can be argued that there is a contradiction in terms between Transhumanism and Christianity. The church can assert its involvement in scientific and technical development, but these must not be idolized. So it can be said that there is no complete compatibility between Christian transhumanism and orthodoxy – even if we can, for the most part, agree with the five statements of the above-mentioned association – which gives a definition of this movement – because transhumanism ultimately militates for the disappearance of man. This fact cannot be accepted by the Church because, according to the teachings of faith “for the Son of Man came to seek and to save the lost” (Lc. 19, 10), and does not desire the elimination of man.



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## SAINT BASIL THE GREAT, MASTER OF PHILANTHROPY

RADU PETRE MUREȘAN\*

**ABSTRACT.** The present study aims to highlight the concept of philanthropy in the writings of the Saint Basil the Great, the manner in which it was materialized during the lifetime of the Great Cappadocian Father and its relevance for the mission of the Orthodox Church in the contemporary society. Man as a social being and philanthropy as a result of the communion in love, following the Trinitarian model, are the main themes of Saint Basil's sermons. The study shows that the philanthropy-centered discourse of Saint Basil would not have any impact if it weren't reinforced by the personal example, when he shared to the poor all his wealth inherited from his parents and built a whole philanthropic complex on the outskirts of Caesarea. Regarding the importance of St. Basil's writings for the current life of the Church, the study points out that St. Basil was actively involved in the life of society and tried, with audacity and perseverance, to denounce and correct its inequalities. In so doing, he proved to be a leader of the Church whose spiritual, administrative, and moral authority was so great that it could no longer be ignored or challenged by the authority of the state.

**Keywords:** Saint Basil the Great, Christian philanthropy, social welfare, history of the Christian Church

Preparing an article on Saint Basil the Great as a master of the liturgical, monastic, family and philanthropic life is difficult: how to comprise in just a few pages, almost the entire life and work of the Great Father from Cappadocia? The eulogy by Saint Gregory of Nazianzus, presented on the death of Saint Basil the Great, which was published in the collection *Sources Chrétiennes*, contains 95 pages (the Greek version)<sup>1</sup>. On the works and activity of Saint Basil the Great,

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<sup>1</sup> Grégoire de Nazianze, "Discours 43. Pour le Grand Basil. Oraison funèbre," in *Grégoire de Nazianze, Discours 42-43*. Introduction, texte critique, traduction et notes par Jean Bernardi (Paris : Les Editions du Cerf, 1992), 116-307. I also found an old Romanian version translated by Archimandrite Theoctist Scriban, which it is difficult to read because of its archaic language

this impressive personality of the Christian Church many articles, studies, books have been written both in Romania<sup>2</sup> and abroad<sup>3</sup>. Subsequently I was told that the theme I had to speak about was reduced to the *matter of philanthropy* and, even so, I found myself before a theme that was largely approached in numerous theological and historical treatises<sup>4</sup>.

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and spelling: *Cuvânt funebru a Sfântului Grigorie Teologul, Arhiepiscopul Constantinoplei în lauda Sfântului Vasile cel Mare, Arhiepiscopul Cezareei Capadociei*, translated into Romanian and published by Archimandrite Theoctist Scriban (București: Tipografia Lucrătorilor Asociați Passagiului Român, 1869).

<sup>2</sup> Prof. dr. Teodor M. Popescu, "Caritatea creștină în Biserica veche" [Christian Charity in the early Church], *Biserica Ortodoxă Română* LXIII, no. 1-3 (1945): 20-66; The commemoration of 1600 years from the death of this Great Father of the Church, in 1979, generated a special emulation among the Romanian theologians, which found its expression in a honorary volume, *Sfântul Vasile cel Mare – Închinare la 1600 de ani de la săvârșirea sa* [Saint Basil the Great – Tribute on the Commemoration of 1600 Years of his Death], (București: Editura Institutului Biblic și de Misiune al Bisericii Ortodoxe Române, 1980). See also the volume by Metropolitan Nestor Vornicescu, *Despre viața și opera Sfântului Vasile cel Mare. La 1600 de ani de la trecerea sa către Domnul* [On the Life and Works of Saint Basil the Great. Commemoration on 1600 Years from his passing to the eternal life], (Craiova: Editura Mitropoliei Olteniei, 1979), as well as the first issue of the magazine *Ortodoxia* from 1979, which was dedicated to Saint Basil the Great. During the year 2009, dedicated to Saint Basil the Great and other Cappadocian Fathers, the first three volumes of the Collection *Studia Basiliana* were published: *Sfântul Vasile cel Mare. Închinare la 1630 de ani* [Saint Basil the Great. Dedication on the commemoration of 1630 years]. Second edition revised and expanded by Emilian Popescu and Adrian Marinescu (București: Basilica, 2009) (cited as *Studia Basiliana 1*); *Sfântul Vasile cel Mare. Închinare la 1630 de ani/ Saint Basil the Great. Dedication on the commemoration of 1630 years*. Edition coordinated by Emilian Popescu and Adrian Marinescu, București: Editura Basilica a Patriarhiei Române, 2009 (cited as *Studia Basiliana 2*); *Sfântul Vasile cel Mare. Închinare la 1630 de ani* [Saint Basil the Great. Dedication on the commemoration of 1630 years. Documents of the Symposium of the Romanian Commission for Ecclesiastic History. București-Cernica, 2-3 October 2008]. Published by Emilian Popescu and Mihai-Ovidiu Cățoi, București: Editura Basilica a Patriarhiei Române, 2009 (cited as *Studia Basiliana 3*).

<sup>3</sup> See the following studies dedicated to Saint Basil the Great and some references in volumes of Patristics and History of the Church: L'Abbé Bayle, *Saint Basile. Archevêque de Césarée (329-379)*. Cours d'éloquence sacrée, Avignon, 1878; Otto Bardenhewer, *Les Pères de l'Eglise. Leur vie et leurs œuvres* (Paris: Bloud et Cie, 1905), 68-88; Joseph Tixeront, *Précis de Patrologie* (Paris: Librairie Victor Leconte, 1927), 222-226; Stanislas Giet, *Les idées et l'action sociale de Saint Basile le Grand* (Paris: Gabalda, 1941); Johannes Quasten, *Patrologia, vol. II Dal Concilio di Nicea a quello di Calcedonia* (Torino: Marietti, 1980): 206-238; "Βασίλειος ὁ Μέγας," in Στυλιάνου Παπαδόπουλου, *Πατρολογία. Τόμος Β'. Ο Τέταρτος αιώνας: Ανατολή και Δύση* (Αθήνα: ΓΡΗΓΟΡΗ, 1990), 355-407; Averil Cameron, Peter Garnsey (ed), *The Cambridge Ancient History*, vol. XIII: The Late Empire, AD 337-425 (Cambridge University Press, 1998), 252; Augustine Casiday and Frederick Norris (ed), *The Cambridge History of Christianity*, vol. II: Constantine to c. 600 (Cambridge University Press, 2007), 360-361.

<sup>4</sup> Pr. Prof. dr. Theodor Bodogae, "Un apel fierbinte la solidaritate creștină: predica Sfântului Vasile la vreme de foamete și de secetă," *Glasul Bisericii*, no. 5-6 (1979): 479-488; Deacon Teodor

That is why, without claiming to say inedited things, I will try to summarize the ideas referring to the assistance of the neighbour, as they can be found in the writings and homilies of Saint Basil the Great, to present the manner in which they were put into practice and to emphasize their relevance for the mission of the Romanian Orthodox Church in the context of the contemporary society.

### **Man as a social being and philanthropy as a result of the communion in love in the thinking and homilies of Saint Basil the Great**

In his writings, Saint Basil the Great insisted on the fact that *man is a social being and he has the vocation of living in community, no matter whether he is a layman or a monk*. This idea is expressed clearly when, referring to the duty of the monk to live within a community and not alone, he said: “when one is living in association with others, the grace privately bestowed on each individual becomes the common possession of his fellows. “To one, indeed, is given the word of wisdom; and to another, the word of knowledge; to another, faith, to another, prophecy, to another, the grace of healing” (1 Cor 12:8,9) and so on. He who receives any of these gifts does not possess it for his own sake but rather for the sake of others, so that, in the life passed in community, the operation of the Holy Spirit in the individual is at the same time necessarily transmitted to all. In case of several persons living together, each enjoys his own gift and enhances it by giving others a share, besides reaping benefit from the gifts of others as if they were his own”<sup>5</sup>. In other words, in living within a community each individual enjoys his gift and multiplies it by sharing it with the others.

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Damşa, “Bogăția și sărăcia în lumina omiliilor Sfântului Vasile cel Mare,” *Mitropolia Banatului*, no. 4-6 (1979): 301-313, republished in *Studia Basiliana* 3, 345-361; Pr. Magistrand Mihai Georgescu, “Idei morale și sociale în Comentariul la Psalmii al Sf. Vasile cel Mare,” *Studii Teologice*, no. 7-8 (1958): 463-475; Liviu Petcu, “Sfântul Vasile cel Mare. Panegirist al milosteniei,” in *Studia Basiliana* 3, 159-180; Metrop. Antonie Plămădeală, “Idei sociale în Sfântul Vasile cel Mare” in *Închinare la 1600 de ani de la săvârșirea sa*, 284-311 (republished in *Studia Basiliana* 1, 387-658); Pr. Ioan Popa, “Sfântul Vasile cel Mare, predicator al milosteniei,” *Studii Teologice*, no. 3-4 (1971): 224-34 (republished in *Studia Basiliana* 3, 329-345); Dr. N. Vătămanu, “1600 de ani de la înființarea Vasiliadei-cel dintâi așezământ de asistență socială și sanitară,” *Biserica Ortodoxă Română*, no. 3-4 (1969): 297-312; Ion Vicovan, “Sfântul Vasile cel Mare-teologul și modelul filantropiei,” in *Studia Basiliana* 3, 144-259.

<sup>5</sup> “On the necessity of living in the company of those who are striving for the same objective that of pleasing God and the difficulty and hazards of living as a solitary” in Sfântul Vasile cel Mare, *Scrieri. Partea a doua. Asceticele* (București, Editura Institutului Biblic și de Misiune al Bisericii Ortodoxe Române, 1980), 231-233. On the monasteries founded by Saint Basil the Great, Saint Gregory of Nazianzus said that they were close to “his cenobitic communities and, instead of distinguishing and separating the one from the other, as if by some intervening wall, he brought them together and united them, in order that the contemplative spirit might not be cut off from

And the foundation of the cenobitic life is love, which has as model and origin the Trinitarian love: "Nothing, indeed, is so compatible with our nature as living in society and in dependence upon one another and as loving our own kind"<sup>6</sup>. The communion in love stands at the basis of family life, because, within the family there is an increased responsibility of one for the other and in the exercise of this responsibility man becomes truly a person, a factor of great efficiency in the life of the other and of the society<sup>7</sup>. Also, the prayers read by the priest during the Liturgy of Saint Basil the Great render clearly the idea of the brotherly relation that exists between the Christians from all the ages and from all the places and the necessity of philanthropy<sup>8</sup>. They have a communitarian role through that they determine a Christian to be aware of the fact that man does not achieve salvation all alone, but only in communion with his brothers, through the bond of love<sup>9</sup>. Even in his canons, the Great Cappadocian Father insists on the fact that healing must be decided not depending on time, but depending on the

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*society, nor the active life be uninfluenced by the contemplative, but that, like sea and land, by an interchange of their several gifts, they might unite in promoting the one object, the glory of God,*" (Grégoire de Nazianze, "Discours 43. Pour le Grand Basil. Oraison funèbre," 261). See also Archdeacon Prof. dr. Ioan Floca, "Sfântul Vasile cel Mare- reorganizator al vieții monastice" in *Sfântul Vasile cel Mare – Închinare la 1600 de ani de la săvârșirea sa*, 331-354.

- <sup>6</sup> Sfântul Vasile cel Mare, *Scrieri. Partea a doua. Asceticele*, 225; Rev. Magistrand Mihai Georgescu, "Idei morale și sociale în Comentariul la Psalmi al Sf. Vasile cel Mare," *Studii Teologice*, no. 7-8 (1958): 463-475 also refers to the duty of loving our neighbor (φιλάλληλον) in the commentaries of Saint Basil the Great.
- <sup>7</sup> In his *Homily on Psalm 1*, Saint Basil the Great shows that when Prophet David blesses "the man who walks not in the council of the ungodly," "he does not exclude women from this blessing. For as the creation of both man and woman enjoyed and equal honor, so is the reward given for both in the same honor." See Saint Basil the Great, *Scrieri. Partea întâia. Omilii la Hexaeron. Omilii la Psalmi. Omilii la cuvântări* (București; Editura Institutului Biblic și de Misiune al Bisericii Ortodoxe Române, 1986), 186.
- <sup>8</sup> *Liturghierul*, published with the approval of the Holy Synod and with the blessing of Daniel, Patriarch of the Romanian Orthodox Church (București: Editura Institutului Biblic și de Misiune al Bisericii Ortodoxe, 2008), 242-244. To this respect, the prayer after the Anaphora is very suggestive: "Remember, Lord, those who bear fruit and do good works in Your holy churches, and those who remember the poor. Reward them with Your rich and heavenly gifts. Grant them in return for earthly things, heavenly gifts; for temporal, eternal; for corruptible, incorruptible."
- <sup>9</sup> Rev. Mircea Nișcovescu, "Teologia Sfântului Vasile cel Mare în rugăciunea euharistică," *Studii Teologice*, no. 5-6 (1967): 290-301 (republished in *Studia Basiliana* 1, 642-658); On the communitarian aspect of the Holy Liturgy in general, see Rev. Prof. dr. Ioan Bria, "Aspectul comunitar al dumnezeieștii Euharistiei," *Studii Teologice*, no. 7-8 (1959): 417-428; Rev. Prof. dr. Dumitru Stăniloae, *Spiritualitate și comuniune în Liturghia Ortodoxă* (București, Editura Institutului Biblic și de Misiune al Bisericii Ortodoxe Române, București, 2004), 8: "No one can achieve perfection and a profound faith without the help of the others and without showing his progression in perfecting the relationships with the others. The Orthodox Liturgy answers to this belief in a special and pronounced manner, nurturing the spiritual communion between Christians with the unspeakable content and rich depth of the Christian faith."

“manner of repentance”, and these are a proof of the love which aimed to reintegrate the fallen individual into communion with the Church<sup>10</sup>.

The communion in love is the one that stands at the basis of philanthropy. In his Homily on Psalm 14, referring to the words of Christ: “Give to him who asks you, and from him who wants to borrow from you do not turn away”, Saint Basil fundamentals the duty of helping the neighbor on this social nature of man: “*these words urge to social action, to mutual love, to what is characteristic to our nature. Man is a social and sociable being. In our social living, in the relationships we have with the others it is necessary to offer to help the poor*”<sup>11</sup>. Saint Basil exhorts the Christian not to use only for their own needs the goods given by God, and thus to prove worse than the animals that use in common the natural fruits of the earth: “Flocks of sheep graze together on the hillside. Herds of horses feed upon the same plain. And all living creatures permit each other to satisfy their need for food, but we hoard what is common and keep for ourselves what belongs to many others”<sup>12</sup>. In another sermon, referring to bats he said: “what natural love bats have for each other! How they interlace like a chain and hang the one upon the other! A very rare spectacle among men, who for the greater part prefer individual and private life to the union of common life”<sup>13</sup>.

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In 367-368, when the provinces of Asia Minor, among which Caesarea Cappadocia were struck by famine and drought, Saint Basil the Great, as priest, evoked in numerous sermons the sufferance of people and animals. Saint Gregory of Nazianzus tells us that Saint Basil could not make bread fall from the sky, but, through his penetrating word, he opened the granaries of the rich and satiated the poor, fed in famine the hungry, filled the humble with every good thing, as the Scripture says<sup>14</sup>.

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<sup>10</sup> See, for example, the second canon, referring to women who abort deliberately or the forth canon referring to polygamy (Dr. Dr. Nicodim Milaș, *Canoanele Bisericii Ortodoxe. Însoțite de Comentarii*, Arad, 1936, 50-53). Archdeacon Prof. dr. Iorgu Ivan, “Opera canonică a Sfântului Vasile cel Mare și importanța ei pentru unitatea Bisericii,” in *Sfântul Vasile cel Mare - Închinare la 1600 de ani de la săvârșirea sa*, 355-377.

<sup>11</sup> *Homily on Psalm 14, Scrieri. Partea întâia*, p. 212.

<sup>12</sup> “Omilia VIII: În vreme de foamete și secetă” [Homily VIII: In Time of Famine and Drought], in Saint Basil the Great *Scrieri. Partea întâia. Omilii la Hexaeron. Omilii la Psalmi. Omilii la cuvântări*, 432.

<sup>13</sup> “Omilia a VIII-a la Hexameron/Homily VIII on Hexaeron, in Saint Basil the Great *Scrieri. Partea întâia. Omilii la Hexameron. Omilii la Psalmi. Omilii la cuvântări*, 166.

<sup>14</sup> Grégoire de Nazianze, “Discours 43. Pour le Grand Basil. Oraison funèbre,” 203. On the famine from 367-368, “the most severe one ever recorded,” see *ibid.*, 201-207, where Saint Gregory names Saint Basil “second Joseph.”

The sermons were addressed first and foremost to the rich, whom he tried to sensitize using various methods. Sometimes, he described very vividly and realistically the sufferance of the poor, in danger to die because of famine: "Starvation, the distress of the famished, is the supreme human calamity, a more miserable end than all other deaths ... Famine is a slow evil, always approaching, always holding off like a beast in its den"<sup>15</sup>. Other times he reminded them that life passes rapidly and we will all come before the Righteous Judge: "What answer shall you make to the Judge, you who dress walls, but will not clothe a man; who spruce up horses, and overlook an unfashionable brother; who leave grain to rot, but will not feed the starving; who burry your money and despise the oppressed?"<sup>16</sup>, or he described in bright colors the joy that the merciful will have on Judgment Day: "God will welcome thee, angels will laud thee, mankind from the very beginning will call thee blessed. For the stewardship of these corruptible things thy reward shall be glory everlasting, a crown of righteousness, the heavenly kingdom"<sup>17</sup>.

The urges to be merciful also addressed to those who were not very rich, but still had the possibility to offer something: "And if you have only one remaining loaf of bread, and someone comes knocking at your door, bring forth the one loaf from your store, hold it heavenward, and say this prayer, which is not only generous on your part, but also calls for the Lord's pity: «Lord, you see this one loaf, and you know the threat of starvation is imminent, but I place your commandment before my own well-being, and from the little I have I give to this famished brother. Give then, in return to me your servant, since I am also in danger of starvation. I know your goodness, and am emboldened by your power. You do not delay your grace indefinitely, but distribute your gifts when you will». And when you have thus spoken and acted, the bread you have given from your straitened circumstances will become seed for sowing the bears a rich harvest, a promise of food, an envoy of mercy"<sup>18</sup>.

Saint Basil shows that if someone does an act of mercy he offers himself, together with the act, offers something from within, or renounces to at least a part of his selfishness: "When wealth is dispersed, in the way the Lord advises,

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<sup>15</sup> "Omilia VIII: În vreme de foamete și secetă" [Homily VIII: In Time of Famine and Drought], in Saint Basil the Great, *Scrieri. Partea întâia. Omilii la Hexaeron. Omilii la Psalmi. Omilii la cuvântări*, 430.

<sup>16</sup> "Omilia VII: Către bogăți" [Homily VII: To the reach], in Saint Basil the Great *Scrieri. Partea întâia. Omilii la Hexaeron. Omilii la Psalmi. Omilii la cuvântări*, 413.

<sup>17</sup> "Omilia VI: La cuvintele Evangheliei după Luca" [Homily VI: To the Gospel of Luke], in Saint Basil the Great, *Scrieri. Partea întâia. Omilii la Hexaeron. Omilii la Psalmi. Omilii la cuvântări*, 402.

<sup>18</sup> "Omilia VIII: În vreme de foamete și secetă" [Homily VIII: In Time of Famine and Drought], in Saint Basil the Great, *Scrieri. Partea întâia. Omilii la Hexaeron. Omilii la Psalmi. Omilii la cuvântări*, 429.

it naturally stays put; but when held back it is transferred to another. If you hoard it, you won't keep it; if you scatter, you won't lose"<sup>19</sup>.

We can also learn from Saint Basil the Great that the true mercy must be accompanied by a correct judgment. In Letter 150, Saint Basil addresses to Amphilochius, future bishop of Iconium, to whom he says that he must differentiate between the individual that is truly needy and the one that begs for greed: "For whoever gives to the afflicted gives to the Lord, and from the Lord shall have his reward; but He who gives to every vagabond casts to a dog, a nuisance indeed from his importunity, but deserving no pity on the ground of want"<sup>20</sup>.

In general, the Holy Fathers recommend *acumen* when they refer to giving to the poor, because not all to ask for mercy are on the bread line. Most often, to ease our conscience that we have not passed ignorantly by someone who begs, we give money to an individual that could work to support his existence and thus we encourage beggary and sloth. Saint Basil urges us to calm with a little money the "barking" of those who shout, but to direct all our attention towards those who do not tout their pain and suffer patiently torments and troubles. "God wants you, in the simplicity of your heart to be merciful to the one who begs from you; however, use your reason to distinguish the needs of those who beg... Such as the sick often need wine, but one must find the appropriate time, the quantity and quality, and the doctor is needed to administrate the wine, so is the case of the poor, whose practice does not benefit all... Undoubtedly the mercy of this service is not useful to those who turn their invalidities and wounds into a means of profit. Helping such people becomes a source of evil. One must silence their barking with a little money; but we must show mercy and love to those who learned to suffer their pains with patience"<sup>21</sup>.

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In his sermons, Saint Basil the Great used some rough words against the rich, who did not help those in sufferance. Before 1989, some theologians stated that the Great Cappadocian Father condemned private property and even supported the common possession of goods<sup>22</sup>. It is true that Saint Basil refers

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<sup>19</sup> "Omilia VII: Către bogăți" [Homily VII: To the reach], in Saint Basil the Great, *Scrieri. Partea întâia. Omilii la Hexameron. Omilii la Psalmi. Omilii la cuvântări*, 411

<sup>20</sup> Philip Schaf, *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, Series II, volume 8 (Grand Rapids: Christian Classics Ethereal Library), 603 (Letter CL: *To Amphilochius in the name of Heraclidas*).

<sup>21</sup> Saint Basil the Great, *Scrieri. Partea întâia*, 429-430.

<sup>22</sup> For example, in an article by Metropolitan Antonie Plămădeală, it is indicated the fact that Saint Basil the Great, even though he accepts private property, he accepts it on condition that all have equal properties, and this "would be the equivalent of the common possessions." See Metropolitan Antonie Plămădeală, "Idei sociale în Sfântul Vasile cel Mare," in *Închinare la 1600 de ani de la săvârșirea sa* (București: Editura Institutului Biblic și de Misiune al Bisericii Ortodoxe Române,



several times to the situation of early Christians. For example in *Homily VIII In Time of Famine and Drought*, Saint Basil reminds his parishioners of the first Christian centuries, when all the goods were used in common (Acts 2:44): “Emulate the first constitution of the Christians, how they had all things in common: life, soul, concord, common table, undivided brotherhood, love without dissimulation, many working to one end, many souls agreeing in harmony”<sup>23</sup>. In fact, *Saint Basil the Great, as other Holy Fathers of the Church, never condemned private property, never condemned wealth in general, but its wrongful use*<sup>24</sup>. Otherwise, the letters addressed to several officials of the local administration, in which he asked for protection for some friends’ properties as if they were his own, would be senseless<sup>25</sup>.

Wealth is ephemeral and a true Christian will use it as a tool: “The nature of richness is a state of flux. They run past their possessors more swiftly than the torrent; they are at one time to pass by one, and again, another. As a river, swept down from a height, approaches those standing on the bank, it at the same time reaches and immediately withdraws, so also the satisfaction from riches has a very swift and slippery presence... Do not be further affected in your soul, but accept the use of them, not as if loving exceedingly and admiring some good thing, but as if choosing its service as something practical”<sup>26</sup>.

He reinforced the idea that *man is nothing but an administrator of the earthly goods*. In Homily VI on Luke, On Selfish Wealth and Greed he said: “You

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1980), 284-311 (footnote 11). Against the tendency to transform Saint Basil the Great into “a socialist against his will” see: *Saint Basile. Archevêque de Césarée (329-379). Cours d'éloquence sacrée*, Avignon, 1878, par l'Abbé A. Bayle, 255 (See the entire subchapter XIV, titled “La charité de Saint Basile,” 250-267).

<sup>23</sup> “Omilia VIII: În vreme de foamete și secetă” [Homily VIII: In Time of Famine and Drought], in Saint Basil the Great *Scrieri. Partea întâia. Omilii la Hexaeron. Omilii la Psalmi. Omilii la cuvântări*, 432.

<sup>24</sup> In the same Homily, he accuses the unmerciful rich: “Because of you God sentenced this calamity: having, you did not give; rushing past the hungry, you did not turn to those who were wailing; to those lying prostrate, you had no mercy. Evil afflicts a whole land on account of only a few; a land is destroyed by the wickedness of some.” (ibid., 429).

<sup>25</sup> Philip Schaf, *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, 512 (Letter 83 addressed to a magistrate to protect a friend’s property): “I have a property at Chamanene, and I beg you to look after its interests as though they were your own.” In Homily VI to Luke (*On selfish wealth and greed*) Saint Basil said that “we are tempted in two ways in this life: either through the troubles that torment our hearts ore most often through wealth... For it is as hard to keep your soul fearless when in troubles as is not to take pride, humiliating others, when you are rich and have everything you need.” “Omilia VI: La cuvintele Evangheliei după Luca” [Homily VI: To the Gospel of Luke], in Saint Basil the Great, *Scrieri. Partea întâia. Omilii la Hexameron. Omilii la Psalmi. Omilii la cuvântări*, 399.

<sup>26</sup> “Omilia la Psalmul LXI.” [Homily to Psalm LXI], in Saint Basil the Great, *Scrieri. Partea întâia. Omilii la Hexameron. Omilii la Psalmi. Omilii la cuvântări*, 337.

who have wealth, recognize who has given you the gifts you have received. Consider yourself, who you are, what has been committed to your charge, from whom you have received it, why you have been preferred to most other people. You're the servant of the good God, a steward on behalf of your fellow servants." And in the same homily he asked rhetorically: "Where does your wealth come from then? If you say it's the result of hazard, then you prove yourself unfaithful, for you do not know your Creator and you do not thank the One who gave you wealth. If you confess you have it from God, tell me then why did you receive it? Is God unjust for making an unequal distribution of the gifts? For you are rich and the other is poor? Without a doubt, it is for you to receive the reward for your kindness and righteous administration of wealth, and for the other to be honored with the great rewards of patience"<sup>27</sup>.

Saint Basil's sermon would surely not have had any impact if it weren't reinforced by the *personal example* and this is a theme on which we, the priests today, should meditate more often. Right after his baptism, young Basil gave everything he had to the poor. Later, when he was bishop of the Church from Cappadocia, during famine and drought, Saint Basil was not content only to give a couple of sermons to urge the rich to share their possessions, but he himself gave for a second time all his wealth to the poor, feeding them, without discrimination, either Christians or Jews. During the same crisis, Saint Basil used the wealth he inherited from his father to help the poor. His family was rich and had extended properties in three regions, and a large part of the profit was used for philanthropy<sup>28</sup>.

### **Institutionalized philanthropy – creation of Saint Basil the Great**

Saint Basil also showed us that the help of our neighbor must not be restricted to fixed actions that are only a momentary solution for those who are poor, or ill, and here I refer to the practice of giving something to charity from time to time. *It is necessary for the impulse of mutual help to take an institutionalized continuous form*, in order to have results on the long term. After he was ordained as Bishop in 370, he added to the inheritance left by his mother's family, several important donations from friends and rich acquaintances, and even from his former enemy, Emperor Valens, to found a complex of philanthropic institutions, *where he even established his residence*<sup>29</sup>. This complex included a hospital, an orphanage, a hospice, a home for poor travelers and visitants, a hospital for infectious diseases and a poorhouse. All the institutions founded by Saint Basil and

<sup>27</sup> Homily VI, in *Scrieri. Partea întâia*, 401, 407.

<sup>28</sup> Liviu Petcu, "Sfântul Vasile cel Mare-panegirist al milosteniei," in *Studia Basiliana* 3, 159-179.

<sup>29</sup> Demetrios Constantelos, *Byzantine Philanthropy and Social Welfare* (New York, 1991, 50-52.

known under the generic name Basiliad, were situated at the periphery of Caesarea and the staff was formed of laics and clergymen<sup>30</sup>.

In this institution a whole ensemble of social preoccupations and actions materialized, and they were meant to improve the situation of the poor and needy of the time, that nobody cared for. In addition, what we have already said, we would like to mention poorhouses, shelters for pilgrims and strangers, schools for the education of the sinner girls, workshops for various handicrafts, houses for the medical staff, all these formed this philanthropic institution. Saint Basil the Great took care of everything that was necessary for the existence of this institution. Since the situation of the lepers was truly difficult at that time, Saint Basil also included a leper house in the Basiliad founded by him and then asked the rich to contribute to its construction and funding. Saint Basil advised the monks that worked in that house to care for the patients as if they were Christ's brothers<sup>31</sup>.

However, the documents mention only a few details referring to the organization and functioning of this philanthropic institution. In a letter that Saint Basil addresses to the governor of the province Caesarea from Cappadocia, he asked rhetorically: "But to whom do we do any harm by building a place of entertainment for strangers, both for those who are on a journey and for those who require medical treatment on account of sickness, and so establishing a means of giving these men the comfort they want, physicians, doctors, means of conveyance and escort? All these men must learn such occupations as are necessary to life and have been found essential to a respectable career; they must also have buildings suitable for their employments, all of which are an honor to the place"<sup>32</sup>.

Also, in his *Funeral Oration*, Saint Gregory of Nazianzus praises this multi-functional institution as a new city, a chamber of mercy, the treasure of the rich: "Go forth a little way from the city, and behold the new city, the storehouse of piety, the common treasury of the wealthy, in which the superfluities of their wealth, aye, and even their necessities, are stored, in consequence of his exhortations, freed from the power of the moth, no longer

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<sup>30</sup> Historian Sozomenos wrote in his *Church History* about the Basiliad that it was the most famous hospital dedicated to the poor. Translated into Romanian by Iosif Gheorghian, Primate Metropolitan of Romania (București, 1897), 262; On the location of the Basiliad, W. Ramsay, *Historical Geography of Asia Minor* (London, 1890; repr. Amsterdam, 1962), 446; Liviu Petcu, *art. cit.*, 164-168.

<sup>31</sup> Saint Basil the Great, *Scrieri. Partea a doua. Asceticele*, 382. For the social ideas and the activity of Saint Basil the Great, see the extended study by S. Giet, *Les Idées et l'Action sociales de Saint Basile* Paris, 1941, especially 400-423; also, Demetrios Constantelos, *op.cit.*, 75-76, 119-120.

<sup>32</sup> Philip Schaf, *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, 527 (Letter 94 addressed to To Elias, Governor of the Province).

gladdening the eyes of the thief, and escaping both the emulation of envy, and the corruption of time: where disease is regarded in a religious light, and disaster is thought a blessing, and sympathy is put to the test”<sup>33</sup>. The church historians observed that the “New City” transformed into a center through which “the irresistible influence of the Church permeated the whole district, as, centuries before, the cities founded by the Greek kings had been slowly penetrated the country round”<sup>34</sup>. The example set by Saint Basil was followed by the Byzantine Church for many centuries. Today, Saint Basil is honored by the Orthodox world not only as father of the Christian philanthropy.

### **The actuality of the philanthropic conception and work of Saint Basil the Great**

Some might say that the solutions adopted by Saint Basil for solving the social problems were appropriate for the society of his time, but can only find a partial applicability in the contemporary society. Indeed, in the early ages of Christianity, slavery was widely spread and usury was one of the methods used for a quick enrichment. For this reason, when I started to prepare for this conference I was initially tempted to put aside any reference to slavery or usury in the writings of the Great Father of Cappadocia.

However, I realized that these two realities which had a dehumanizing role in the ancient world, can also be found, in other forms, in the contemporary society. What other words can we use to describe the situation of the Romanians that work abroad to help their families and sometimes end up being exploited by ruthless men, with their identity cards confiscated or working and living in unhealthy conditions for others to get rich quick? What other words can we use to describe the situation of millions of people from Romania that work hard for the minimum salary for the profit of greedy employers or for the state? Usury is also present and I do not refer here to isolated cases when certain individuals take advantage of the people in need to get rich, but to its institutionalized form, banks. It is well known the fact that many people who took a loan to buy a house or for other needs and could not pay their loan rates which increased with every month (some of them because they lost their jobs), lost all their possessions and even committed suicide<sup>35</sup>. I would not wish for you

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<sup>33</sup> Grégoire de Nazianze, “Discours 43. Pour le Grand Basil. Oraison funèbre,” 262-263.

<sup>34</sup> William Mitchell Ramsay, *The Church in the Roman Empire AD 170* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1904), 461.

<sup>35</sup> Omilia II la Psalmul XIV [Homily II to Psalm XIV], in Saint Basil the Great *Scieri. Partea întâia. Omilii la Hexameron. Omilii la Psalmi. Omilii la cuvântări*, 215: “Making such pretenses, and fawning upon and enticing the wretched man with such words, he binds him with contracts;

to understand from my words that we are against market economy, but we are against its savage forms of manifestation, which transform people into objects, into helpless slaves in front of the globalist roller.

What priest can learn from Saint Basil the Great is that this important Father of the Church was very receptive to everything that happened around him, he was preoccupied with the social life, which he observed with a critical eye, he involved himself in it and tried to repair as many things as possible<sup>36</sup>. Although he was a monk, he never isolated himself from the world, he did not think it is better to keep to himself, or to hide himself into helplessness and indifference. Besides the financial help, Saint Basil the Great preached and fulfilled abundantly spiritual help. Of his 366 letter, 66 are recommendations and intervention epistles, most of them to help those that were unable to pay their taxes. His intervention did not restrict only to “make an intercession” for someone, as we would say today, but he also intended to increase the responsibility of that clerk in doing his job: “But since God has called you to an occupation which gives you opportunity of showing kindness, and in the exercise of which it lies in your power to bring about the restoration of my own city, now level with the ground, it is, I think, only my duty to remind your excellency that in the hope of the requital God will give, you should show yourself of such a character as to win a memory that cannot die, and be made an inheritor of everlasting rest, in consequence of your making the afflictions of the distressed hard to bear”<sup>37</sup>.

When speaking about Saint Basil’s philanthropy towards his parishioners and towards Church in general, Saint Gregory of Nazianzus mentions firstly his boldness towards the governors and secondly the fact that the solutions he proposed became laws immediately, and only after that he mentions the other acts of the physical or spiritual mercy: the care for those in need, distributing food to the poor, entertaining strangers etc.<sup>38</sup>. In other words, Saint Basil’s philanthropy was supported by a related ecclesial administration that knew how to manage the relations with laic authority and with its own faithful. The Prefect Modestos, the prime-minister of the Arian Emperor Valens, who had

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then, after having imposed on the man the loss of his liberty in addition to his oppressing poverty, he departs. As the borrower has made himself responsible for the interest, of whose full payment he has no idea, he accepts a voluntary servitude for life... But many, he says, grow rich from loans. But more, I think, fasten themselves to halts. You see those who have become rich, but you do not count those who have been strangled, who, not enduring the shame incurred by their begging, preferred death through strangling to a shameful life.”

<sup>36</sup> Metropolitan Antonie Plămădeală, “Idei sociale în opera Sfântului Vasile cel Mare,” in *Închinare la 1600 de ani de la săvârșirea sa*, 299.

<sup>37</sup> Philip Schaf, *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, 512 (Letter 83 addressed to a magistrate to protect a friend’s property).

<sup>38</sup> Grégoire de Nazianze, “Discours 43. Pour le Grand Basil. Oraison funèbre,” 219.

accompanied him in Caesarea in 370 and had threatened Saint Basil the Great with exile, was eventually impressed by Saint Basil's courage. Not only had he become one of Saint Basil's admirers, but also a faithful collaborator in philanthropic acts, as we can see from a series of letters<sup>39</sup>.

Many times we cultivate relations with a distinguished representative of the laic authority and the Church benefits from the indulgences that we may obtain from him so long as he is in that position. Saint Basil the Great showed us a different face of the spiritual mercy, namely the intervention for persons that fell into imperial disfavor, such as the case of Maximus, a former governor of the province, who was accused of treachery, his possessions were confiscated and he was thrown into prison. Saint Basil made an intercession for him and addresses to Trajan, one of the most influential generals on the court, because he was convinced that "*even the ability to bewail their own calamities brings much comfort to the distressed*"<sup>40</sup>.

## Conclusions

Saint Basil the Great was the preacher par excellence of mercy, who also acted upon it, through the fact that he spoke realistically about mercy and practiced it himself and then gave it an institutionalized form, meaning efficiency and disposition towards the future. Thus, by taking care both of the souls and bodies of his parishioners, *Saint Basil honored human dignity, human person, body and soul*. Saint Gregory of Nazianzus showed that Saint Basil the Great was not concerned only to provide food and water to the people, but also to provide them with the Word, with what is truly nurturing and life-giving<sup>41</sup>. Saint Basil the Great was a leader whose spiritual, moral and administrative authority lifted the institution of the Church to such a level that it could no longer be ignored or, on the contrary, contested and questioned by the state authority and was able to offer its own solutions, inspired by the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ for the social problems of the time.

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<sup>39</sup> Philip Schaf, *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, Letters 104, 106, 110, 279, 280, 281. As prime-minister of Arian Emperor Valens and his attendant in Caesarea in 370, Modestos threatened Saint Basil the Great to be exiled. The courage with which Saint Basil answered transformed Modestos from enemy into admirer. On the dialogue between Modestos and Saint Basil see also Saint Gregory of Nazianzus, *Funeral Oration*, 227-237. Saint Gregory of Nazianzus states that this is the moment when the Emperor changed his attitude and became more human towards the Orthodox Christians (περί ἡμας φιλανθρωπίας ἀρχή).

<sup>40</sup> Philip Schaf, *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, 599 (Letter 148 to Trajan).

<sup>41</sup> Grégoire de Nazianze, "Discours 43. Pour le Grand Basil. Oraison funèbre," 207.

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### **III. HISTORICAL THEOLOGY**

## **THE CHURCH IN NORTHERN NIGERIA IN THE FACE OF RELIGIOUS FUNDAMENTALISM, AND THE RE-INTERPRETATION OF THE DOCTRINE OF CHURCH SUFFERING: A REFLECTION**

**EMMANUEL OSEWE AKUBOR\*, CHINEDU AYOGU\*\***

**ABSTRACT.** Extant studies have shown that at the outset of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, the most immediate danger faced by nations of the world, apart from global climate disruption is fundamentalism. It has shown that this phenomenon has tended to divide the world on the line of religion. In the case of Nigeria, this dividing line is always in the increase and is setting the people against themselves. This is because, this has not only disrupted development, but has led to a situation in which some people have become second class citizens in their native country, so much so that they arguably constitute what the Catholic Doctrine refers to as the “Church Suffering”-faithful who are undergoing the purification of purgatory while on earth. This is hinged on the premise that perhaps for the sake of Christ and the Church, they are being prepared for heaven after torturous life on earth. The qualitative method is used for this particular research. Data obtained from primary and secondary sources were deployed to carry out the study with an analytical and narrative historical approach. This includes historical, descriptive and analytical approaches based on gathered evidence. The primary source for this research is based on field investigations conducted in the area and surrounding territories. Among other things, the data collection process includes semi-structured interviews with individuals. The research also uses historical documents from the national archives, relying on previous research conducted on issues relating to Colonial and Missionary activities in northern Nigeria, Religion, doctrine and intergroup relations in addition to documentary data taken from newspaper accounts, diaries, letters and verbal reports.

**Keywords:** Religious Fundamentalism, The Church, Doctrine of Church Suffering.

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## Introduction

Extant studies have shown that at the outset of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, the most immediate danger faced by nations of the world, apart from global climate disruption is fundamentalism<sup>1</sup>. This in the view of Caplain, makes Fundamentalism an unquestionable evocative image of modern time, with its roots back in history<sup>2</sup>. Scholars have argued that the one definition for this crisis-ridden trend is ‘enthusiasm without substance’<sup>3</sup>. In his analysis, Herriot argues that the major problem with fundamentalism and fundamentalist is that it is a type of belief system that enables individuals to make sense of their lives and provides them with an identity<sup>4</sup>. It sort of stereotype their view of others and their religion. In this way, the society is presented with a situation and a social phenomenon, in which strictly religious people act according to the norms, values, and beliefs of the group to which they belong. It is a cultural product, in the sense that different cultural settings result in different forms of fundamentalism. And it is a global phenomenon, in the obvious sense that it is to be found everywhere, and because it is both a reaction against, and also a part of, the globalizing modern world. This contemporary crisis gives urgency to a re-examination of the various perspectives of the concept of fundamentalism. The challenge is urgent given to the fact that some adherents of different religions in the world have torn themselves between awe and terror at what humanity, as agent of its cultures and religions, has inflicted upon itself in the name of God. This shows that the global community stands in desperate need of intercultural and interreligious dialogue that brings fundamentalism into conversation.

## Fundamentalism: Origin and Root

Fundamentalism comes from the *Latin* word “*fundare*”, meaning to establish. The first and most basic distinguishing feature of fundamentalist movements is that they are reactive. Fundamentalists believe that their religion is under mortal threat from the secularism of the modern world, and they are

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<sup>1</sup> Mathew Hassan Kukah. *Religion, Politics and Power in Northern Nigeria* (Ibadan: Spectrum Books, 1993), 1-200. Gaiya P. Maigamu, *Religion and Justice: The Nigerian Predicament* (Kaduna: Espeep, 2004), 25.

<sup>2</sup> Caplain Lionel, ed. *Studies in Religious Fundamentalism* (London: Macmillan Press, 1987): vii, 2.

<sup>3</sup> Nwosu P., “Fundamentalism in Religion from Catholic Perspective,” in Emmanuel Osewe Akubor, and Shabayang Barnabas Samaila, eds., *Religion, Religious Education and Nation-Building: Nigeria and the World in the 21st Century: Festschrift in Honour of Professor Joseph Haruna Mamman* (Ibadan: Darosat Publishers, 2019), 257.

<sup>4</sup> Peter Herriot, *Religious Fundamentalism: Global, Local, Personal* (USA: Routledge, 2009), 2.

fighting back<sup>5</sup>. They may resist in different ways, but they are all essentially oppositional; they have to have an enemy. Religious Fundamentalism refers to the belief of an individual or a group of individuals in the absolute authority of a sacred religious text or teachings of a particular religious' leader, prophet and/or God<sup>6</sup>. In this way, the fundamentalist argues that their religion is free from human influence and error as well as above any form of criticism<sup>7</sup>. Their view is therefore that the religion, her doctrines and/or teaching must be forced upon others (compelled to accept such at the risk of death). In this way, logical explanations and scientific evidence have no place in these belief system if they work against their religious fundamentalist. For these adherents, religion dictates every sphere of their daily life, and they also attempt to involve the entire society into their own belief system through the use of violent force<sup>8</sup>. Generally, fundamentalism is the act of following very strictly the established rules and teachings of any religion. In Christian religion, fundamentalism is the belief that everything that is written in the Bible is absolute and completely without error. In an attempt to explain fundamentalist, Nwosu, P.U, opined thus:

Fundamentalism, as a trend, is a twentieth century development and its most outstanding feature is its violent opposition to liberal and cultural changes associated with modernism. ...fundamentalism opposes criticism, the social gospel movement, and the secularization of social and political institutions<sup>9</sup>.

Generally, Scholars seems to agree that fundamentalism began as an attempt to defend the teaching of biblical inerrancy against modern scientific and philosophical thought<sup>10</sup>. According to these school of thought, for the fundamentalist, "divine revelation could not come by way of a book that contained any errors. The holy book, therefore, must be inerrant"<sup>11</sup>. Consequently, fundamentalists oppose the teaching of evolution and the historical criticism of the Old and New Testaments. In recent times, as observed by Hopfe and Woodward, fundamentalists have turned their attention to combating the secularization of political and social norms like the push for legal protection for homosexuals<sup>12</sup>.

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<sup>5</sup> Lionel Caplain, ed., *Studies in Religious Fundamentalism*.

<sup>6</sup> Leslie J. Hoppe, "Fundamentalism," in *Dictionary of Mission: Theology, History, Perspectives*, ed. Karl Muller et al. (New York: Orbis Books, 1997), 167; Akubor and Shabayang, *Religion, Religious Education and Nation-Building*, 257.

<sup>7</sup> Leslie, "Fundamentalism," 167; Sen Nag Oishimaya, "What is Religious Fundamentalism" (2017), <https://www.worldatlas.com/articles/what-is-religious-fundamentalism.html>.

<sup>8</sup> Oishimaya, "What is Religious Fundamentalism", 1-4.

<sup>9</sup> Nwosu, "Fundamentalism in Religion from Catholic Perspective", 257.

<sup>10</sup> Herriot, *Religious Fundamentalism*, 2.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid.

<sup>12</sup> Leslie, "Fundamentalism," 167.

## **Church: Definition**

According to the doctrine of the Catholic Church, The word "Church" means "convocation<sup>13</sup>." It designates the assembly of those whom God's Word "convokes," i.e., gathers together to form the People of God, and who themselves, nourished with the Body of Christ, become the Body of Christ. The Catechism of Catholic Doctrine goes on to describe the Church thus

The Church is both the means and the goal of God's plan: prefigured in creation, prepared for in the Old Covenant, founded by the words and actions of Jesus Christ, fulfilled by his redeeming cross and his Resurrection, the Church has been manifested as the mystery of salvation by the outpouring of the Holy Spirit. She will be perfected in the glory of heaven as the assembly of all the redeemed of the earth (cf. Rev 14:4). The Church is both visible and spiritual, a hierarchical society and the Mystical Body of Christ. She is one, yet formed of two components, human and divine. That is her mystery, which only faith can accept. The Church in this world is the sacrament of salvation, the sign and the instrument of the communion of God and men<sup>14</sup>.

It is therefore in line with the above that the Church is used in this work to mean the body of people who belief in God as the creator of the universe in unity with the Son and the Holy Spirit irrespective of their denomination.

## **The Church in Nigeria: A Brief History**

The history of the Church in Nigeria is unique in the sense that while it was well accepted in the Southern part of the Country with the missionaries bringing along with it other services like education, health care delivery system and so on<sup>15</sup>. In the northern part of Nigeria which was predominantly Islam, the colonial government gave the religion a boost by appointing and installing/imposing new emirs in predominantly non-Muslim areas and they imposed their Shari'a on the indigenous population whose way of life had been different and who previously had resisted the Fulani/Hausa hegemony<sup>16</sup>. This indirect rule system introduced by the British, turned out to be indirect promotion and protection of Islam and its Shari'a. Through it the emirs gained more powers to

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<sup>13</sup> *The Catechism of The Catholic Church* (Kenya: Paulines Publications Africa 1994), 182.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, 182-3.

<sup>15</sup> Adigwe, ed., *One God, Many Religion*, 19.

<sup>16</sup> Kukah, M.H, Almajiri, "What Happened On the Road to Heaven?," *Premium Times*, June 8, 2020.

rule their subjects-both Muslims and non-Muslims alike<sup>17</sup>. In this way, the spread of Christianity in the northern part of the country suffered some form of resistance<sup>18</sup>, while those that accepted it were persecuted by the ruling elite class and derogatively were referred to as Maguzawa. This is well documented in Akubor and Musa (2018) in which he noted thus,

... the Maguzawa are a remnant of the Hausa and provide a reflection of pre-Islamic Hausa society.<sup>15</sup> Scholars have also established that, after adopting a non-violent attitude toward Hausa Muslims who tried to force them to convert to Islam, the Maguzawa have always migrated to the geographical fringes of Hausaland. As a result, they have always been on the move and have registered at the bottom of virtually all social measurements in the region, including urbanization, religion, power, and status; they have been treated with contempt by their neighbors.<sup>16</sup> Maguzawa have historically lived in wards and have appointed leaders called ward heads. The ward head is often appointed by a supervising Muslim village who supervises their ward. The ward head's functions are to collect taxes from his own people and to serve as a marriage counselor and peacemaker. The Maguzawa have always tried to limit their contact with Muslim leadership, and their strategies of geographical retreat and internal problem-solving have supported this goal<sup>19</sup>.

In some cases those who accepted Christianity are branded as Infidel (*Kaafir*, *kufir* or *Kuffar*), and have been so much persecuted and denied the basic necessities of life even in their homeland, Akubor and Musa, (2018) described their situation and plight for the mere fact that they accepted Christianity thus:

Although Islam is widely practiced in northern Nigeria, the emergence of fundamentalist groups in this part of the country has led to major adulteration and manipulation of the teachings of the religion and this has gradually come to be seen as part of the basic tenet of the religion. One impact of such is the oppression of those who have refused to accept the teachings and as such have been sidelined in the scheme of progress in the society. This has led to the emergence of those who has been referred to as Kaafir (Infidel) on the one

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<sup>17</sup> Cyprian Ubaka, "What is The Shari'a," in Adigwe Hypolite (ed.), *One God, Many Religion*, 19.

<sup>18</sup> Emmanuel Ayandele, "The Missionary Factor in Northern Nigeria:1870-1913," *Journal of Historical Society of Nigeria* 3, no. 3 (December 1966); UBAH C., "Administration of Kano Emirate under the British 1900-1930." PhD Thesis, Ibadan, 1973; Ubah C., "Problems of Christian Missionaries in the Muslim Emirates of Nigeria: 1900-1930," *Journal of African Studies* no. 3 (Fall 1976): 351-371.

<sup>19</sup> Emmanuel Osewe Akubor, and Gerald Musa, "The Maguzawa and Nigerian Citizenship: Reflecting on Identity Politics and National Question in Africa", *Ufahamu: A Journal of African Studies*, 41, no. 1, (2018): 65-83.

hand and Maguzawa (unbelievers). In this case, while the term Kaafir, kufr or Kuffar is used to describe non-believers of the religion generally, Maguzawa is for the indigenous people who have refused to accept the religion. While the Kaafir are often left alone to leave in separate area, so that they don't influence the people and religion, the Maguzawa are relegated in the scheme of activities. These people though indigenous have been relegated to the background politically, economically, socially, and educationally. By this, they have been denied official permission to build their own schools in their communities, discriminated against and denied the opportunity for development due to their religious affiliation. Scholars have argued that these forms of discrimination and denial of opportunities is part of a plan by a certain section of the northern oligarchy to maintain control over minorities in the north. In some other cases, educational institutions that were provided to these communities through self-help and through missionaries have been taken, thus denying the people ownership and easy access<sup>20</sup>.

### **Doctrine of the Church: The Tripodal Nature of the Church**

The idea of man's relationship with God both on earth and the life after is well documented in the Catechism of the Catholic Church and also celebrated at various time of the year. Thus the Catholic Church commemorates the Church Triumphant and the Church Penitent in its liturgy on two consecutive days: All Saints' Day on November 1 (the Church Triumphant) and All Souls' Day on November 2 (the Church Penitent). These terms are not used in the Catechism of the Catholic Church, an authoritative summary of the teaching of the Catholic Church published in 1994. However, the teaching these terms represent is precisely restated, quoting *Lumen gentium*:

The three states of the Church. "When the Lord comes in glory, and all his angels with him, death will be no more and all things will be subject to him. But at the present time some of his disciples are pilgrims on earth. Others have died and are being purified, while still others are in glory, contemplating 'in full light, God himself triune and one, exactly as he is'<sup>21</sup>.

Andrea da Firenze<sup>22</sup> has argued that In Christian theology, the Christian Church is traditionally divided into: the Church Militant (*Latin: Ecclesia militans*), which consists of Christians on earth who struggle as soldiers of Christ against

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<sup>20</sup> Akubor and Musa, *The Maguzawa and Nigerian Citizenship*, 65-83.

<sup>21</sup> *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, 127-300.

<sup>22</sup> Andrea da Firenze (ed.), *The Church Militant and the Church Triumphant*, fresco, Santa Maria Novella, c. 1365; [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Churches\\_Militant,\\_Penitent,\\_and\\_Triumphant](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Churches_Militant,_Penitent,_and_Triumphant).

sin, the devil, and "the rulers of the world of this darkness, against the spirits of wickedness in the high places"; the Church Penitent (*Latin: Ecclesia poenitens*), also called the Church Suffering (*Latin: Ecclesia dolens*) or the Church Expectant (*Latin: Ecclesia expectans*), which in the theology of certain churches, especially that of the Catholic Church, consists of those Christians currently in Purgatory; and the Church Triumphant (*Latin: Ecclesia triumphans*), which consists of those who have the beatific vision and are in Heaven<sup>23</sup>. These divisions are known as the three states of the Church, especially within Catholic ecclesiology. In reference to other denomination, he wrote

In systems of theology which reject the doctrine of Purgatory, such as Lutheranism, the Churches Militant and Triumphant are together known as the two states of the Church. These divisions are often discussed in the context of the doctrine of the communion of saints; although Christians may be physically separated from each other by the barrier of death, they nonetheless remain united to each other in one Church, and support each other in prayer<sup>24</sup>.

In line with the above, Mannion France<sup>25</sup> in his work *The Church: Triumphant, Militant and Suffering*, gave a vivid description of the various strata the Church is positioned. In his analysis opined thus:

The church triumphant describes the Church in heaven. In the kingdom of God — the realm in which the holy Trinity, the angels and saints, and the abode of all those who have reached the fullness of salvation in Christ — the Church already exists. But it will have its fullest being at the end of time, when all of creation and (we hope) all human beings will be conformed to Christ and all reality will be one of divine praise and glory. The term "church triumphant" underlines the truth that in the glory of heaven all human sin will have been transformed, death and suffering will be no more, and the glory of God will have triumphed over all the imperfections of human history<sup>26</sup>.

On the second level, he wrote:

The church militant refers to the Church on earth. The term "militant" can suggest an antagonistic relationship between the Church and the world. Nevertheless, it refers to an authentic reality: that the Church on earth works to

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<sup>23</sup> Ibid.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid.

<sup>25</sup> Francis Mannion, "The Church: Triumphant, Militant and Suffering," <https://simplycatholic.com/byline/msg-r-m-francis-mannion/>.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid, 1-2.



overcome the imperfect and sinful dimensions of human existence. The Church's mission is not to oppose the world and society, but to work for their transformation by the convincing preaching of the Gospel and by the edifying power of the good works and example of those who are baptized into Christ. The Church's best asset is the saintly activity and example of those who have chosen the Christian way of life<sup>27</sup>.

On the issue of the third level of the Church, Mannion continued...

The church suffering refers to the church in purgatory. Purgatory is not a kind of temporary hell. It is rather the threshold, the antechamber of heaven. In purgatory, all those — whether Christian or not — who have reached the gates of death without reaching the full perfection of life represented in Christ are cleansed in a kind of ongoing baptism and are purified by the enlightening fire of the Holy Spirit. The suffering of purgatory is not one of destruction, but the suffering that comes from leaving the old self behind and taking on the new<sup>28</sup>.

### **The Rise of Fundamentalist Groups in Nigeria**

Scholars are of the view that the rise of fundamentalist groups in the Nigerian context could be traced to the fact that the Nigerian state has failed the citizenry in her constitutional responsibilities<sup>29</sup>. For instance Otegwu I<sup>30</sup>, argued that a careful study of states' functions (as spelt out above using the Nigerian situation) will reveal that in relation to Nigeria and Africa in general, the state has not been able to live up to its responsibilities to its entire citizenry. Nigerian leaders have demonstrated more determination to continue with the exploitation and underdevelopment of the country which the colonial authorities instituted before their departure. Furthermore, in Nigeria, since the independence years no conscious efforts have been made by authorities to inculcate shared socio-political images in the consciousness of the entire citizenry. Political socialization (one of states' duties to its citizens) relates to the learning, accepting and approving of customs and rules, structures and environmental factors governing political life. Consequently, states without a cohesive base have at best a deficient ability to build consensus. They can serve as coercive organizations

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<sup>27</sup> Ibid.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid.

<sup>29</sup> Emmanuel Osewe, Akubor, "Civil Unrest in Northern Nigeria: Beyond the Literal Boko Haram," *The Constitution* 11 (2011): 71-83; Shehu Sani, "Boko Haram: History, Ideas and Revolts," *The Constitution* 11 (2011): 17-41.

<sup>30</sup> Isaac Otegwu (ed.), *The State and the Rise of Fundamentalism in Nigeria: The Boko Haram Insurgency in Perspective*, Department of Political Science, Ahmadu Bello University, Zaria.

but not as effective tools of societal and political action which require a strong normative element. In addition to the above in Nigeria there is widespread discontent and disenchantment among the various communities because of the inability or refusal of successive governments to resolve their grievances over long periods something which generates despair which impel established aspiring ad hoc leaders to organize acts of defiance or incipient lawlessness<sup>31</sup>. Extant research have established that Religious Fundamentalism especially by religious and political leaders is as old as the history of modern Nigeria (Nigeria since independence)<sup>32</sup>. However, over the years, the inability of the government and people to check the rising tide has continually led to religious violence in various parts of the country since independence<sup>33</sup>. Some of these includes: Maitatsine crisis in Kano, 1980, Bullum-Kutu 1982, Maiduguri 1982, Yola, 1984, Ilorin 1984, Bauchi 1984, Ilorin 1987, Kano 1984, Kafanchan 1987, Zuru 1980, Birnin Kebbi 1990, Katsina 1991, Tafawa Balewa 1991, Kano 1991, Jalingo 1992, Kaduna Polytechnic 1992, Kasuwar Magani (Kaduna) 1994, Gure Kahugu 1987, Kafanchan 1987, 1999, Kaduna 2000 Jos 2001, Kano 2001, Tafawa Balewa (since 2000), Nasarawa 2001. Others include Chamba-Kuteb crisis in Taraba state since 1975 Tiv-Jukun crisis, Bassa-Igbira crisis in Toto and a host of others<sup>34</sup>. From ordinary conflict and unrest, through the act of manipulation have led to the emergence of even more radical fundamentalist groups, who are no longer interested in just creating internal crises, but are currently working towards the disintegration of the country and the creation of a religious state. Thus, it is not surprising that the Boko Haram group which made itself known in 2009, has taken over parts of northern region. This group working in collaboration with other groups with similar ideas and doctrines with some sponsorship from within and outside the country have continued to launch deadly and destructive attacks on people of other faith<sup>35</sup>.

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<sup>31</sup> Kukah, *Religion, Politics and Power in Northern Nigeria*, 1-115.

<sup>32</sup> Kukah, *Religion, Politics and Power in Northern Nigeria...*, 1-115; Akubor, *Historical Root of Religious Manipulation*, 37-50; Akubor, "Civil Unrest in Northern Nigeria," 71-93.

<sup>32</sup> Ibid.

<sup>33</sup> Aliyu Yahaya, "Socio-political Conflicts in the Central Nigerian Area: A Historical Inquiry into the Metropolitan Sharia Conflict," in *Historical Perspectives on Nigeria's Post-Colonial Conflicts*, ed. Olayemi Akinwumi, Okpeh, et al (Lagos: Historical Society of Nigeria, 2007), 1-50.

<sup>34</sup> Akubor, *Historical Root of Religious Manipulation*, 35-50.

<sup>35</sup> Dikwa Musa, "How 3 Northern Governors Created Boko Haram" – <https://www.pmnewsnigeria.com/2020/03/01/how-3-northern-governors-created-boko-haram-musa-dikwa/>. 2020.

## **Fundamentalism in Modern Nigeria and the Fate of Northern Minorities: Historicizing Boko Haram and Related Groups**

Experts<sup>36</sup> traced the emergence and activities of the Boko Haram group to the “Taliban” raids in 2003. In term of space, the group first settled at Bukarti Village in Bursari Local Government Area claiming to be disciples purely devoted to praying and learning of the Quran only for them to commence training by an oasis in Janama (Kanama) in Yunusari Local Government Area from where they commenced attacks that led to the death of some police officers<sup>37</sup>. The Boko Haram, believes that Western education is Haram, an Arabic word for forbidden/sin and its adherents are taught that it is their duty, as pure Muslims, to ‘cleanse’ society of all influences of Western education and replace it with sharia.

Evidence shows that according to the group that western education is the cause of corruption, inequality and injustice bedeviling the society and must be forbidden. Believed to have started in Maiduguri, an ardent Boko Haram member must be ready to pay the supreme price to defend this cause<sup>38</sup>. Many of the members as a result of this belief tore their degree, Higher National Diploma and other certificates and renounced Western values, as a demonstration of their faith<sup>39</sup>. The Sect therefore fought against anything that represented the state/government or western literacy, attacking police stations, schools and other symbols of government.

Proffering detailed account on the background to the formation of the new fundamentalist group in modern Nigeria as well as their *modus operandi*, Dikwa M (2020) wrote

The creation of Boko Haram started in 2000... When Olusegun Obasanjo became the President of Nigeria in 1999, he appointed service chiefs – all from the North Central zone – Benue, Plateau, Kogi and Kwara states. Incidentally, all of them were Christians. The development prompted three northern governors to come up with the idea of creating and raising Islamic militants to fight for Islam because they felt Obasanjo did not appoint their own (what they described as pure Hausa/Fulani northerners as service chiefs). From there, they created Islamic militants. Those governors contributed N100m each to buy working equipment, uniforms and so on for the militants. Immediately, Nigeria started experiencing religious crisis. After they contributed the money,

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<sup>36</sup> Akubor, “Civil Unrest in Northern Nigeria,” 71-93; Sani, “Boko Haram: History, Ideas and Revolts,” 17-41.

<sup>37</sup> Ibid.

<sup>38</sup> Ibid.

<sup>39</sup> Ibid.

those organised Islamic militants started religious crisis in Kaduna, Kano, Jigawa, Zamfara, saying they wanted Sharia. The aim was to intimidate and oppress the Christians. They started attacking churches and killing people. Any time elections took place and they did not favour them, they would burn churches and attack their members. They never went to offices of political parties or the Independent National Electoral Commission office to carry out their attacks<sup>40</sup>.

On the activities of the militant group and focus, Dikwa (2020) continued:

On February 18, 2006 in Maiduguri, those boys came out and said they wanted Sharia law and that a governor in the state then did not cooperate with them. And because of a cartoon that was designed in Denmark in 2006, they protested and burnt down 66 churches in the state and killed many Christian men, women and children. After that, they started moving from house to house, church to church... in July 2009, the insurgents “burnt down 27 churches and killed many Christians. At that time, they only killed security agents and Christians. From 2009 till 2014, they were attacking churches – going from house to house, slaughtering Christians. They started attacking people, including Muslims in 2014 when they felt their leaders had deceived them by not backing them to fight ‘infidels’ in the North. Four reverends were slaughtered in 2009.<sup>41</sup>

The result is that the Christian church and minorities in these occupied areas are often the target. This position has been made clear by Adjoa Osafo-Binfoh thus:

Nigeria has long been home to people who subscribe to different religious beliefs. Yet, in recent years the conflict between the different religious groups, especially Christians and Muslims, has become increasingly violent and more frequent. The growth of Islamic fundamentalism seems to be the catalyst of much of the violence in the region. This has been especially so since the establishment of a terrorist organization by the name of Boko Haram in 1995, who carry out attacks in their quest to establish a ‘pure’ Islamic state. The organization promotes fundamentalist ideologies, meaning that subscribers of the organization are often unwilling to be tolerant of those who do not adhere to the same beliefs as them<sup>42</sup>.

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<sup>40</sup> Dikwa, “How 3 Northern Governors Created Boko Haram,” 2.

<sup>41</sup> Ibid.

<sup>42</sup> Adjoa Osafo-Binfoh, “The Rise of Fundamentalism in Nigeria,” <https://www.hart-uk.org/blog/rise-fundamentalism-nigeria/2020>.

In the case of the northern part of the country, these minorities include those who may be of the same linguistics background with the people but do not belong to the religion of the fundamentalists, as well as those of other ethnic stock residing in the area. In the northern part of Nigeria, the fundamentalist groups most often are supported by some power politicians and religious leader for selfish interest. Akubor opined thus,

...Available historical document has it that what later became the beginning of religious insurgence in northern Nigeria could be traced to the period between 1979 and 1989, at the beginning of armed Taliban uprisings against the Soviet occupation of Afghanistan. The success of this group in forcing the Russians out of their country was deemed a feat to be emulated by those against foreign occupation. During this period, intelligence report in Nigeria had it that there was the infiltration of Nigeria by foreign Islamic fundamentalists. A renowned Islamic scholar and leader of a popular Islamic school believed to have escaped arrest in either troubled Sudan or the war-ravaged Afghanistan. The unidentified Islamic scholar was for eight months allegedly hidden by another scholar in Katsina. The arrest of this scholar and his host was seen by the people as an attempt to undermine the religion and teachings of the scholar, whom they regarded as Message of God. This sparked off riots in various parts of the north. This was to mark the beginning of trouble for the people of the federation<sup>43</sup>.

In line with the above, Osafo-Binfoh wrote:

....Although relations have been particularly fraught between these religious groups throughout Nigeria, nowhere has witnessed more suffering than the central and northern regions, where discrimination against Christians is rife. Areas of particular concern include the states of Borno, Yobe and Kano states where it is alleged that Boko Haram have been responsible for scores of attacks. As of April 2013, these three states had collectively seen no fewer than 902 casualties as a result of Boko Haram instigated attacks since 2009. Acts of violence that have and continue to take place include suicide bombings, massacres and the deliberate targeting of churches<sup>44</sup>

Although the above have shown the beginning of fundamentalism in Nigeria, however further studies have opined that the role of the fundamentalists and fundamentalism became “legalized and Institutionalised” with the entry of the Nigerian state into the Organisation of Islamic Conference in 1986. This was under the administration of General Ibrahim Babangida, when he made Nigeria

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<sup>43</sup> Akubor, “Historical Root of Religious Manipulation...”

<sup>44</sup> Adjoa, “The Rise of Fundamentalism in Nigeria...”

a permanent member of the Organisation of Islamic Countries (OIC) in Fez, Morocco in January 1986<sup>45</sup>. This gave more impetus to the victimization of one religious groups by another. Under what it perceived as “The perception that government policies are discriminatory against Christians”, Iheanyi M. Enwerem<sup>46</sup> argued that this was the beginning of the restrictions which the government placed on Christian evangelism without, in CAN's opinion, placing similar restrictions on Islam. In his view this was in line with the position of the leadership of CAN's Northern Zone which argued thus:

Our schools and colleges have been taken over by government and yet we see schools and colleges established under the umbrella of another religion [that is, Islam] being sponsored and entirely financed and administered by government; we have been denied access to the use of the electronic media in certain parts of the country and yet another religion has the monopoly of rendering a near-24-hours religious broadcast in the same areas; some States have deliberately refused to accept and recognize the growing population of Christians in the States, thus depriving the Christians not only of their rights, but also questioning their claim to being indigenes of such states as claim to be religiously homogeneous<sup>47</sup>.

Going further under what is described as

Another discriminatory government policy was the establishment of a Pilgrims' Board. The issue of pilgrimage became politicized from the time the Regional Government of the Northern Region sponsored Isa Kaita's pilgrimage to Mecca in 1954. Consequently, confronted by the possibility of religious strife in the old Western Region, where Muslims accounted for about half of the population, and as a measure of precaution, Awolowo statutorily established in May, 1958, a Pilgrims Welfare Board for Muslims. Most non-Muslims did not object to the need for Muslims to perform the pilgrimage in fulfilment of their religious obligations, but many did object to State support and subsidy of the pilgrimage. The Christian position is premised on the view that the state must play no role in religion — since the country is constitutionally a secular one — and therefore the state must not render any financial assistance to the religious activity of any group. But should the State choose to render such assistance, Christians argue, it should not be denied to Christians who may wish to go on

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<sup>45</sup> Institute of Pastoral Affairs, “Trends in Nigerian Christian-Muslim Relations”, Notes at the occasion of the One-day Seminar held in Lokoja, Okene, Kabba between 13 and 15 November, on Contemporary Islam and Nigeria, by the Institute of Pastoral Affairs, Jos, Nigeria (1989), 1-30.

<sup>46</sup> Iheanyi Enwerem, *Dangerous Awakening: The Politicization of Religion in Nigeria*, (IFRA Books Series Africa Dynamics, 1995), 1-20.

<sup>47</sup> Adjoa, “The Rise of Fundamentalism in Nigeria...”

pilgrimages to Christian holy places in Rome and in Israel. The government's response to the Christians after much protest was to provide, from the 1980s, a 'limited government financing of Christian pilgrimages and the erection of Christian Pilgrim Boards'. Christians availed themselves of this provision. On their return from pilgrimage, some Christians add 'JP' (Jerusalem Pilgrim) to their titles to counter Muslims, who add 'Alhaji' to their name after making the pilgrimage to Mecca. As the number of Christian pilgrims increased, CAN began to scrutinize the government support and subsidy for religious pilgrimages. It became obvious to CAN that there was a disparity in favour of Muslims, and it saw this as further evidence of the government's unfairness to Christians<sup>48</sup>.

In the opinion of scholars this made Nigeria not just a member of the OIC, but also the headquarters of Islam in Africa<sup>49</sup>. This according to this school of thought have made the area volatile especially as some people now consider themselves as victim, while others are victors, using state apparatus and machineries to oppress others<sup>50</sup>.

### **The Structure and Persons: Sitting on Time Bomb**

In term of structures and persons, the activities of the fundamentalist groups have become a threat to the existence of such as structures put up by the Christian groups are on a daily bases targeted for destruction. This may have informed the view put forward by Kukah<sup>51</sup>, in which he opined thus:

The persecution of Christians in northern Nigeria is as old as the modern Nigerian state. Their experiences and fears of northern, Islamic domination are documented in the Willinks Commission Report way back in 1956. It was also the reason why they formed a political platform called, the Non-Muslim League. All of us must confess in all honesty that in the years that have passed, the northern Muslim elite has not developed a moral basis for adequate power sharing with their Christian co-regionalists. We deny at our own expense. By denying Christians lands for places of worship across most of the northern states, ignoring the systematic destruction of churches all these years, denying Christians adequate recruitment, representation and promotions in the State civil services, denying their indigenous children scholarships, marrying

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<sup>48</sup> Ibid.

<sup>49</sup> Ohieku J., *Secular State or Islamic Nigeria: Which Way, Mr. President in Contemporary Islam in Nigeria*, (Jos: Institute of Pastoral Affairs (IPA), 1989): 48.

<sup>50</sup> Ibid.

<sup>51</sup> Kukah, Mathew Hassan, "Homily at the Funeral Mass of Seminarian Michael Nnadi," Kaduna: Good Shepherd Major Seminary, 11th February 2020.

Christian women or converting Christians while threatening Muslim women and prospective converts with death, they make building a harmonious community impossible. Nation building cannot happen without adequate representation and a deliberate effort at creating for all members a sense, a feeling, of belonging, and freedom to make their contributions. This is the window that the killers of Boko Haram have exploited and turned into a door to death. It is why killing Christians and destroying Christianity is seen as one of their key missions<sup>52</sup>.

The position as posited by scholars above is made even clearer with the table below which summarizes the direct attack of persons and properties of adherents in Nigeria. Although this attack began since the early 1980's, but it has become even more intensified since 2000's, which the attackers using more deadly weapons and engaging in mass destruction of people and their properties<sup>53</sup>.

**Table 1.** Attacks on People and Places by Boko Haram 2011-2019<sup>54</sup>

s/no	Date	Target	Implement	Result
1	22 /09/ 2011	Mandala, Niger State	Unknown	Five Igbo traders killed for inability to recite Quran
2	25/12/2011	St Theresa Catholic Church, Mandalla, Niger State	Explosives	Worshippers and residents injured and killed
3	1/01/2012	Winners Chapel, Sapele Road, Benin	Planted explosives	Foiled, suspects arrested
4	5/01/ 2012	Deeper Life Church, Gombe	Guns (attack during worship inside church)	6 killed, 10 injured
5	5/01/2012	Adamawa State	Gunmen	4 Christian/Igbo traders Killed
6	6/01/2012	Christ Apostolic Church, Jimeta.Yola	Boko Haram gunmen	8 Killed
7	6/01/2012	Mubi, Adamawa State	Boko Haram gunmen	About 20 Igbo/Christians killed during a town hall meeting
8	6/01/2012	Adamawa State	Boko Haram gunmen	Killed kinsmen of murdered Christians planning burial rites

<sup>52</sup> Ibid.

<sup>53</sup> Akubor, "Historical Root of Religious Manipulation...", 42.

<sup>54</sup> Ibid.



s/no	Date	Target	Implement	Result
9	7 /01/ 2012	University of Maiduguri	Boko Haram gunmen	2 Christian students Killed
10	7/01/ 2012	Larmurde, Adamawa	Boko Haram gunmen	7 Christians killed on their way out of Adamawa
11	22 /01/ 2012	St Theresa Catholic Church Tafawa Balewa	Explosives	No lives lost
12	22/01/2012	Evangelical Church Tafawa Balewa	Explosives	No lives lost
13	29/04/2012	Bayero University Kano, Old Campus	Guns and explosives	Worshippers killed including students and 2 professors
14	07/08/2012	Deeper Life Church Okene Shooting Churches In Kaduna, Wussasa and Sabon Gari		Islamic militants attacked a Church, Killed worshippers 80 injured, Islamic militants bombed three churches
15	07/06/2012			
16	20/01/2012	Kano	Boko Haram gunmen	Attacked businesses belonging to mainly Christians
17	06/02/2014	Gwoza in Borno	Boko Haram gunmen	Christian settlements attacked
18	2016- 2019	Christian villages in Benue	Boko Haram gunmen	People Killed
19	2016 -2019	Churches in Benue state	Guns and explosives	Worshippers killed
20	21/02/2020	Ekklesiyar Yan'uwa a Nigeria (Church of the Brethren in Nigeria), Garkida, Adamawa	Boko Haram gunmen	Church Burnt
21	21/02/2020	Living Faith Church, Garkida, Adamawa	Boko Haram gunmen	Church Burnt
22	21/02/2020	Anglican Church, Garkida, Adamawa	Boko Haram gunmen	Church Burnt, vehicle destroyed

Apart from the fact that structures belonging to the Church have been systematically targeted for destruction, attempts were also made to capture people of the faith in large numbers and sold into slavery, slaughtered or forced into marriage. For instance, in 2015, Ese Oruru, a 14-year old girl was kidnapped in Delta state, taken to Kano state and forced into marriage without the consent of

her parents to one, Yinusa, a trader and water vendor and forced to convert to Islam<sup>22</sup>. While this act was condemned by well-meaning Nigerians and the international world, a presidential Aide in the present administration saw it as something glorious<sup>55</sup>. Also, there is the case of the missing 219 Chibok girls, kidnapped in 2015 and 110 Dapchi in 2017 from their schools in Borno and Yobe States. Elders and pastors of the church are also kidnapped and killed<sup>23</sup>. In March 2016, Christians in Kaduna mourned the Rev Iliya Anto, one of three men abducted by armed men as they travelled along the Kaduna-Abuja Expressway to clear a piece of land on which to build a seminary. Rev Anto, Rev Emmanuel Dzigau and Rev Yakubu Dzarma, all ministers in the United Church of Christ in Nigeria, were abducted on 22nd March. The kidnappers subsequently killed Rev Anto's, whose decaying body was found in the bush on 30th March and that same evening the two other clergy were freed and taken to hospital. Furthermore, while Fr. Clement Ugwu of St. Mark Catholic Church, Enugu State was kidnapped and later killed, his counterpart, Fr. Paul Ottu of Enugu Diocese was shot and killed on August 1<sup>st</sup> along Agbudu Road, Agwu by unknown assailant respectively. Similarly, in Benue State, Fr. Joseph Gor and Fr. Felix Tyolaha alongside 19 persons, on the one hand were murdered in 2018 during mass at St. Ignatius Catholic Church, Ukpokor Mbalom Parish, Gwer East Local Government Area by suspected Fulani herdsman; Fr. David Tanko was ambushed and killed by unknown assailant while on his way to help resolve a dispute between two ethnic groups<sup>24</sup>. In 2020, the Chairman of Christian Association of Nigeria (CAN) Adamawa state Rev. Lawan Andimi, was abducted and later killed by the Islamic fundamentalists. In the same years, members of the Islamic Fundamentalist groups stormed the Good Shephard Major Seminary in Kaduna state, where four seminarians Michael Nnadi, Pius Kanwai, Peter Umenukor and Stephen Amos were abducted. Michael Nnadi was later killed, while Pius Kanwai, Peter Umenukor and Stephen Amos were released<sup>56</sup>. Till date, Leah Sharibu is still held in captivity for refusing to denounce her faith<sup>57</sup>. This situation seems to be in the increase at an alarming rate daily. According to Grim<sup>58</sup> by summer 2017, the toll of death and destruction carried out by

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<sup>55</sup> Unini Chioma, "Ese Oruru: Presidential Aide, Bashir Ahmed Promises Twitter User to Influence Yunusa Dahiru's Court Conviction," <https://thenigerialawyer.com> 22 May, 2020 (accessed 20/5/2020).

<sup>56</sup> Kukah, "Homily at the Funeral Mass," 2-8.

<sup>57</sup> Akubor and Musa, "The Maguzawa and Nigerian Citizenship", 65-83.

<sup>58</sup> Brian J. Grim, Todd M. Johnson, Vegard Skirbekk and Gina A. Zurlo eds., *Yearbook of International Religious Demography* (Leiden: Brill, 2017). ACN interview with Catholic Bishop Joseph Bagobiri of Kafanchan, northern Nigeria, March 2017; ACN (UK) News, 27/04/17 <<http://acnuk.org/news/nigeria-is-the-government-complicit-in-the-supply-of-arms-to-islamists/>>

Islamist groups against Christians was becoming fully apparent. Similarly, Lozano Maria<sup>59</sup>, documented that as at March 2017, over 1.8 million people in the state had been displaced as a result of the Boko Haram conflict, while 5,000 women were widows and 15,000 children had become orphans. It was also reported that there was damage to 200 churches and chapels, 35 presbyteries and parish centres. In total, 26 million people in the region had been affected by Boko Haram<sup>60</sup>.

Over the years, it has been observed that in spite of the Nigerian military's efforts to push back Boko Haram, the Islamists' ongoing attacks on Christians and the increased potency of other militants' violence meant that the outlook for the Church was increasingly uncertain. Brian J. Grim et al<sup>61</sup> reported thus:

With Boko Haram allegedly responsible for the bulk of the violence, the evidence indisputably shows that, during the period under review, the Islamists held firm to their declared aim: "The Nigerian state and Christians are our enemies and we will be launching attacks on the Nigerian state and its security apparatus as well as churches until we achieve our goal of establishing an Islamic state..." It followed a March 2012 Boko Haram declaration of a "war on Christians" aimed at eliminating them from parts of the country: "We will create so much effort to have an Islamic state that Christians will not be able to stay."<sup>62</sup>

Similarly, The Tablet<sup>63</sup> in line with the view of Brian J.G et al opined thus:

Having sought to eliminate Christianity from the region, it can clearly be indicated that Boko Haram is guilty of genocide in parts of northern Nigeria, warnings of which were made by Catholic clergy as far back as 2014.5 While the government had, at the time of writing, succeeded in wresting Maiduguri from the control of Boko Haram, the threat had by no means passed, with the city falling victim to repeated suicide attacks.

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<sup>59</sup> Lozano Maria, "Report on ACN Communication Trip to Nigeria, March 2017; ACN interview with Catholic Bishop Joseph Bagobiri of Kafanchan, northern Nigeria, March 2017," ACN (UK) News, 27/04/17 <<http://acnuk.org/news/nigeria-is-the-government-complicit-in-the-supply-of-arms-to-islamists/>>

<sup>60</sup> Ibid.

<sup>61</sup> Grim et al. (eds.), *Yearbook of International Religious Demography*.

<sup>62</sup> Ibid.

<sup>63</sup> The Tablet, 02/07/14 <http://www.thetablet.co.uk/news/940/0/boko-haram-engaged-in-genocide-against-christians-in-northern-nigeria-as-attacks-killings-and-abductions-continue>.

The views and reports of both The Tablet and Brian et al cited above, have been authenticated by the report obtained from field research and released by Action Aid, which reported thus;

During their spring 2017 visit to northern Nigeria, the Aid to the Church in Need delegation was handed a dossier from Church leaders showing that in the Diocese of Kafanchan, southern Kaduna, 988 people had been killed since 2011. The report also showed that over that same period 71 mostly Christian-majority villages had been destroyed, as well as 2,712 homes and 20 churches. They heard that the diocese had been targeted by Fulani herdsmen, Islamist fighters described as forming a “sister organisation” to Boko Haram. After late 2016, there was an upsurge of Fulani violence against Christians in the diocese. The attacks in spite of the Nigerian military’s efforts to push back Boko Haram, the Islamists’ ongoing attacks on Christians and the increased potency of other militants’ violence meant that the outlook for the Church was increasingly uncertain. By summer 2017, the toll of death and destruction carried out by Islamist groups against Christians was becoming fully apparent. In March 2017, an Aid to the Church in Need delegation flew into Maiduguri, capital of the worst-affected state, Borno. ACN were told that 1.8 million people in the state had been displaced as a result of the Boko Haram conflict. They also learned that 5,000 women were now widows and 15,000 children had become orphans. There was damage to 200 churches and chapels, 35 presbyteries and parish centres. In total, 26 million people in the region had been affected by Boko. Haram<sup>64</sup>

In most parts of the northern states, the situation has continued to create refugee crises. For instance, by February 2020, the governor of Bauchi in the north-eastern part raised alarm that due to insecurity, the state is currently accommodating people escaping from various crises zones so much so that the population in the state has risen from 4.6 million to 7.5 million, while at the same time coping with more than 1.3 million out-of-school children<sup>65</sup>.

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<sup>64</sup> Christian Solidarity Worldwide, 21/02/17, <http://www.csw.org.uk/2017/02/21/news/3462/article.htm>; John Newton, Nigeria: The Church under Attack, (Aid to the Church in Need (UK), May 2017), [http://acnuk.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/02/322671-ACN-1705-Nigeria-Report\\_v5-FINAL.pdf](http://acnuk.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/02/322671-ACN-1705-Nigeria-Report_v5-FINAL.pdf); ACN (UK) News, 27/04/17 <http://acnuk.org/news/nigeria-is-the-government-complicit-in-the-supply-of-arms-to-islamists>.

19 Global Christians News, 07/05/17, <https://www.globalchristiannews.org/article/boko-haram-released-82-chibok-school-girls-in-a-prisoner-swap/>.

<sup>65</sup> <https://www.nairaland.com/5703523/yakubu-gowon-leads-leads-prayer-rally>.

## **Redefining and Reinterpreting the Church Suffering**

The situation in Nigeria presently is such that some Christians are asking if the situation does not really reflect the case of the church suffering than the Church militant. In the view of the Christians (with particular reference to Catholic Christs), the argument is that perhaps, the persecution of the Church in Nigeria is as a way of reparation for the sins of the people and their purification and preparation of the heavenly glory. For most Nigerians, the Church Penitent/Church Suffering or the Church Expectant, which in the theology of certain churches especially that of the Catholic Church, consists of those Christians currently in Purgatory is presently Nigeria and the state of the church. To modernist scholars, this situation best describe the Nigerian state and its inability to redeem her people from constant hardship, terrorism and hopelessness in the face of tyranny. Noble Laurent Wole Soyinka (1993), had giving his view of Nigeria under the purgatory system thus;

A Nation of some 90 million people is being wound round the finger of a Master Player whose mental state is seriously in question. His cohorts insist that the nation is on the path to democracy, but surely the signpost reads to all but the purblind: Transition to Hell. Purgatory is our present interminable manoeuvring between the U-Turns, Diversions and Cul-de-sacs in a lunatic maze subjected to the daily improvisations of a - surely by now - recognisably irrational designer who is firmly locked onto a monomaniac goal: survival in power<sup>66</sup>

Similarly, Michael Chiedoziem Chukwudera a young Nigerian creative, in his work Purgatory An Igby Prize essay on being young in Nigeria, noted thus:

...While being young in Nigeria is not the end of the world and has its pros, it is definitely not as good as it should be. It is not impossible to have your dreams come true as a young Nigerian living in Nigeria, but the yardstick is hardly based on merit, and so sincere hard work is not enough. There is always a lot of things wrong with a system where hard work and excellence is ditched in favour of average people who have higher hands... *Being young in Nigeria is mostly like purgatory — you realize after graduating from school, that there is in fact, long years of another phase of brutal struggle and relearning.* The optimism inherent in the Nigerian people keeps a lot of us going, hopefully. But this same optimism has kept us more laid back and tolerant than we ought to

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<sup>59</sup> Soyinka Wole, "Nigeria's state of purgatory verdict," <https://www.independent.co.uk/voices/nigerias-state-of-purgatory-wole-soyinka-winner-of-the-nobel-prize-for-literature-condemns-the-1494572.html>. Tuesday 29 June 1993 (accessed 22/05/2019).

be and that is neither too good. Being young in Nigeria can and should be better than what it is<sup>67</sup>.

Also, Emmanuel Ufuophu-Biri, public analyst and commentator has described the situation as worse than purgatory, in fact he described the situation in Nigeria as HELL<sup>68</sup>. According to the source:

...The nation has witnessed more darkness as a result of the ineptness of the public electricity company. Unemployment has been on the increase; terrorism has crept in to stay; crimes such as arm robbery, human ritual killings, kidnapping, human trafficking, political violence, public infrastructure vandalism, secret cult terrorism, examination malpractices, rape, corruption among public office holders and politically motivated crimes, among many others, have increased geometrically. The image of Nigeria has nose-dived thus making us a laughing stock in the international arena. The Naira that was once a global prestige has, today, almost become a national disgrace, making it one of the least rated currencies in the world. So, the last 20 years has been good for a few Nigerians, but has been a hell for most Nigerians<sup>69</sup>.

## Conclusion

Generally, the paper has been able to examine the activities of the fundamentalist on the growth and expansion of the Church in Nigeria especially the northern part of the country. This situation has made life unbearable for the Christian adherents in that part of the country so much that the general believe is that in line with the teaching of the Church the people and Church may be undergoing some form of purification especially when seen in the light of the fact that Purgatory has been described as not a kind of temporary hell, but the threshold, the antechamber of heaven. This is because in purgatory, all those — whether Christian or not — who have reached the gates of death without reaching the full perfection of life represented in Christ are cleansed in a kind of ongoing baptism and are purified by the enlightening fire. In the thinking of the authors, the situation is replicated in the Nigerian situation.

It is in line with the above, that the Church in Nigeria have requested the faithful to wear black outfits on Ash Wednesday which heralds the 40 days

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<sup>60</sup> <https://kalaharireview.com/purgatory-eab361c9a9e1>.

<sup>61</sup> Ebenezer Adurokiya, "20 years of civil rule has been hell for Nigerians," <https://tribuneonlineng.com/20-years-of-civil-rule-has-been-hell-for-nigerians-ufuophu-biri> *tribuneonlineng.com*, Jan 2, 2020.

<sup>69</sup> Ibid.

Lenten season in protest to the consistent insecurity challenges in the country. The directive was communicated in a statement by Catholics Bishops' Conference of Nigeria (CBCN) respectively, reads:

As a mark of mourning all our brothers and sisters who have been victims of the most recent wave of violence against Christians, we are all dressed in black today and offer our prayers and penance for their repose. We invite the universal church and all Christians to join us in prayers for our dead brothers and sisters and for peace and security in Nigeria...We equally appeal to the international community to come to the aid of the Nigerian Government in the fight against terrorists, who want to destabilise our country. The repeated barbaric executions of Christians by Boko Haram insurgents and incessant cases of kidnapping for ransom linked to the same group and other terrorists have traumatised many citizens.<sup>70</sup>

While the aforesaid directive hinge on expressing the Church's dissatisfaction over the spate of insecurity in the country, it arguably doubles as a clarion call for the "Church Militants"- (lay faithful on earth; striving towards perfection) to rise and fight for their rights in the face of the government's seeming cluelessness at addressing the menace of insecurity. It is in line with this that the paper submit that the government should as a matter of urgency put in place structures that will really strengthen the provision of the Nigerian Constitution which seemingly prohibits the government from adopting a particular religion as well as protect the fundamental human rights of Nigerians (Module II) which recognizes the rights of the citizens to religion and by extension association<sup>71</sup>. This is the only way, the unity of the country can be sustained.

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<sup>70</sup> Ezeamalu Ben, "Insecurity: Nigerian Catholics to wear black on Ash Wednesday, Premium Times, Abuja," <https://www.premiumtimesng.com>. 24 Feb. 2020.

<sup>71</sup> The 1999 Constitution of The Federal Republic of Nigeria, Federal Government Press.

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#### IV. PRACTICAL THEOLOGY

## THE TABORIC LIGHT IN THE HYMNS OF THE VESPERS OF THE TRANSFIGURATION FEAST. CATECHETIC CONSIDERATIONS

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**ABSTRACT.** Man's purpose, by his own nature, is deification; he is called to mysteriously become god through his free collaboration with the grace of the Holy Spirit. In other words, man must partake in the radiance of godly glory and become a light similar to the One Who is Light and the source of Light. This calling is underlined many times in the writings of the mystics who experienced the becoming into light. The transfer of these mystical experiences can be found in a catechetical form in the liturgical rites gravitating around the feast of the Lord's Transfiguration. The content of these odes helps us understand that the partaking in the light radiating from the Being of the Trinity is not a request reserved only for those initiated in the Hesychastic life, but an offer made to all Christians who take part in Eucharistic life. They mysteriously rejoice at their partaking in the mystical Body of Jesus Christ. This suggests that actually living in the light of God's glory is a *sine qua non* condition for salvation.

**Keywords:** Light, God's glory, Transfiguration, catechetical, Vesper

### Introduction

In the present study, we aim to analyse the subject of man's partaking in the uncreated godly light. The objective is to discover the catechetical mastery of the hymnographer and, for that purpose, our source will be the liturgical odes of the feast of Transfiguration, celebrated every year on- August 6<sup>th</sup>. The choice of the texts we rely on was not fortuitous, as, from the first sticheron (ode) with which Vespers begins on the day of the *Forefeast*, an invitation is launched to the real partaking in the light radiating from the transfigured body of the Lord.

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The first sticheron from “Lord, I have cried” asks us to climb the mountain together with our Saviour and to partake in the theophany so that, later on, “illuminated in mind, let us gaze upon Light amid light”<sup>1</sup>. The hymnographer urges us to walk beside Christ on the holy mountain in order to be filled with light. We notice in this ode that the author states the purpose of his invitation from the very beginning: the enlightenment of the mind, the filling with light and the sight of godly light. It is not by chance that, upon analysing the words of Saint Irenaeus of Lyon, Saint Justin Popović underlined the following: “without any doubt, the mind of the first man created was pure, bright, undefiled, capable of deep knowledge, (...)”<sup>2</sup>. Enlightenment, illumination and sight, as stages of plenitude, will be found in the vespereal hymns. The process of enlightenment entails inner purification and preparation for the attainment of the state of plenitude, of gracious radiance. In other words, in order to partake in the godly glory, man must prepare his soul and, by living like God, he must get closer to the One Who reveals Himself to human sight. This illumination is in fact a sight which was clearly translated by the theologian Vladimir Lossky as being knowledge<sup>3</sup>.

One of the most important studies, this time from the field of practical theology, belongs to father Viorel Sava, professor of liturgical studies at the Faculty of Theology of Iasi (Romania)<sup>4</sup>. He highlighted the way in which the human person experiences the divine in the liturgical service and in the icon of the Lord’s Transfiguration. After outlining a few exegetic reference points, the priest and professor mentions the main theological subjects developed in the services of the feast. Among them, he also refers to the subject we wish to tackle in the present study, namely the partaking in godly light.

Unlike him, who covered all the liturgical services which are specific to a great feast, we shall focus only on the odes of Vespers (Small and Great) which introduce us into the theological subject of our partaking in the Taboric light. We shall concentrate on the texts of the odes which refer to godly light, to the manner in which it shines forth from Jesus Christ, our Saviour, to the way in

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<sup>1</sup> “Come, let us go up with Jesus Who ascendeth the holy mountain, and there let us listen to the voice of the living God, the all-unoriginate Father, which through the divine Spirit beareth witness by a cloud to His true Sonship; and, illuminated in mind, let us gaze upon Light amid light” (The first sticheron from *Lord, I have cried*, the Vespers of August 5<sup>th</sup>). *Mineiul lunii August* [The Menaion for August] (Bucharest: Tipografia Cărților Bisericești, 1929), 55.

<sup>2</sup> St. Justin Popović, *Dogmatica Bisericii Ortodoxe* [Dogmatics of the Orthodox Church], vol. 1, trans. by Zarko Markovski (Iași: Doxologia, 2017), 371.

<sup>3</sup> Vladimir Lossky, *Vederea lui Dumnezeu* [The Sight of God], trans. by Remus Rus (Bucharest: EIBMBOR, 1995), 7.

<sup>4</sup> Viorel Sava, “Aspects of the Human Person’s Experience of the Divine as Reflected in the Service and the Icon of the Feast of our Savior’s Transfiguration,” *International Journal of Orthodox Theology* 8.3 (2017): 114-141.

which it overflows unto the five protagonists of the transfiguration (the prophets Moses and Elijah, the apostles Peter, John and Jacob), to the manner in which they perceive it and to the blissful state in which we are called upon to partake in godly glory. Moreover, by illustrating through texts the theological richness of the feast, we will analyse the mysterious harmonisation between hymn and preaching. Behind the hymnographer, there is always the preacher and the catechist inspired by the text. To accomplish this endeavour, we shall resort to the Eastern exegetic instruments, which will generate short theological reflections that will highlight the message hymnographers<sup>5</sup> wanted to convey to the Eucharistic community<sup>6</sup>. As such, after presenting the prolegomena of the partaking in the Taboric light, which are developed in the Small Vespers of the feast, we will examine the odes which refer to the subject of godly light in the Great Vespers of the Lord's Transfiguration.

### **1. Prolegomena of the Partaking in the Taboric Light (the Small Vespers of the Transfiguration)**

The first sticheron of the Small Vespers held on the day of the feast of the Lord's Transfiguration (the 6<sup>th</sup> of August) is centred on theophany. The hymnographer makes a comparison between the events which took place on Mount Sinai, when the Lord revealed Himself to Moses in the burning bush, and the episode which occurred on Mount Tabor, when Moses saw the One Who had spoken to him from the burning bush in front of him: "He Who of old spake with Moses on Mount Sinai in images, saying: I am God Who am! today, transfigured on Mount Tabor, showeth forth the Prototype, shining with rays of splendor. Wherefore, O Christ, I magnify Thy power!"<sup>7</sup> The author of the ode establishes a relation of identity between the God Who spoke to Moses on Mount Sinai and the One Who spoke to him on Mount Tabor. Differently put, the God of the Old Testament is the same as the God of the New Covenant, an idea whose theological force cannot be challenged. If then the Word of the Father spoke to Moses mysteriously, by means of elements which mediated the dialogue (the burning bush, the burning fire, etc.), now Jesus Christ openly engages in a dialogue with him, speaking about His Passion. The text of the ode also suggests that, in the act

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<sup>5</sup> The odes of the feast of the Transfiguration have four authors: Cosmas the Monk, Anatolius, the Monk Cosmas of Maiuma, and St. John of Damascus. The odes analysed in this study belong mostly to Cosmas the Monk. Sava, "Aspects of the Human Person's Experience of the Divine", 127-128.

<sup>6</sup> The believers with whom the hymnographers are concerned are encouraged not to approach a feast day coldly, but to actively participate in it as an integrating part of the liturgical rituals, whose purpose is to sanctify man and, through him, the entire creation.

<sup>7</sup> *Mineiul lunii August*, 69.

of transfiguration, our Saviour reveals the face man had when he was created. And this face, which radiated in the Protoimage, was surrounded by light<sup>8</sup>.

In the following two odes, the hymnographer presents the historical thread of the events which took place on Mount Tabor. Here, we see him embodied in the catechist whose preoccupation is to have the neophytes who are ready for enlightenment poetically recapitulate the historical reality. Christ takes the three disciples (Peter, John and Jacob), He climbs up the mountain and is transfigured before them and they are afraid, but also full of joy<sup>9</sup>. Afraid because they could not stand the radiance shining forth from the face of their Teacher, who, as they had understood, was the Son of God, and full of joy for they had partaken in the godly light and their eyes became open to see the Godly grace<sup>10</sup>. However, we must not forget to mention the following expression, which is almost a leitmotif: "as far as they could bear it". In the sticheron of *Glory, Now and ever*, the hymnographer introduces the prophets Moses and Elijah, as representatives of the Old Covenant, in the thematic structure of his plan: "The cloud of the law, in which Moses and Elijah stood, received the radiant darkness of the transfiguration; and, vouchsafed all-radiant glory, they said unto God: "Thou art our God, the King of the ages!"<sup>11</sup> It is important to notice that the author of the ode directs the Lord's Transfiguration towards the two leading figures of the Old Law. They were found worthy of seeing the godly grace on Mount Horeb and now they clearly see the One Whom they had only guessed "face to face". Moses asked the Lord to show him His grace, but the Lord told him he could not see His face. This is why God put him in the cleft of a rock and, after His glory passed before him, the prophet could see His back (Ex. 33:18-23). But now, when

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<sup>8</sup> We infer that, as Saint Gregory of Nyssa pointed out, man was a spark of light, because his origin was in the source of light, in the Father of light.

<sup>9</sup> "The apostles of old, trembling at Thine unapproachable advent, O Christ, falling prostrate on the ground, marveled at the power of Thy divinity, which shone forth more brightly than the sun, O Good one, with Thine ineffable might." (The second sticheron of Lord, I have cried, the Small Vespers of August 6<sup>th</sup>) *Mineiul lunii August*, 69.

<sup>10</sup> In the second ode of the Vespers held on August 5<sup>th</sup> ("Come, let us dance beforehand, let us purify ourselves and faithfully prepare for divine entry into the dwelling-place of the transcendent God; and let us receive the glory which the forechosen apostles were vouchsafed to behold mystically on Mount Tabor"), the hymnographer makes the believers aware of the fact that what they will see, namely the light shining forth from the Saviour Himself, is nothing other than godly grace. Any revelation of God entails the overflowing of heavenly light unto those who partake in the godly sight. *Mineiul lunii August*, 55. Details on God's glory and on its manifestation in the Old Testament can be found in Chirilă, "Kavod și Şekina – Slava lui Dumnezeu spre luminarea creaturii [Kavod and Shekinah – God's Glory for the Enlightenment of the Creature]," in *Anuarul Facultăţii de Teologie Ortodoxă* [Annual of the Faculty of Orthodox Theology] 17 (2013-2014), Vasile Stanciu ed. (Cluj-Napoca: Renaşterea, 2015), 20-26.

<sup>11</sup> *Mineiul lunii August*, 69.

Moses was also full of heavenly glory, he could look directly at the Saviour and talk to Him. We also observe that this ode, just like others from the canon of the feast, closes with the following firm assertion, which is extremely important for those coming towards baptism, but also for those already baptised: "Thou art our God and the King of the ages". Likewise, we would like to underline the presence of the bright cloud as a sign of the mysterious work of the Holy Spirit<sup>12</sup>.

In the aposticha, the hymnographer repeats the subjects already mentioned<sup>13</sup> and develops them separately in a few short odes, whose catechetical importance is essential. These subjects are: the transfiguration of the face of the "old man", which is brought to the primordial state;<sup>14</sup> the purification of the soul is an indicative of the sight of godly glory; the dullness of astral light in comparison with the one radiating from Jesus Christ<sup>15</sup>; and the fact that Moses and Elijah see God embodied from the Virgin. Out of these odes, we will analyse only that which compares the solar light with the godly one. "The sun, illumining the earth, straightway setteth, but Christ, having shone forth with glory on the mountain, hath enlightened the world."<sup>16</sup> In the beginning, God commanded light to be on earth as it is in heaven. This uncreated light offered the necessary framework for the accomplishment of all the acts of creation. For this reason, with the apparition of the sun, the godly light did not disappear, nor was it replaced. The purpose of astral light is that of showing the beauty of creation<sup>17</sup>. In other words, the uncreated primordial light still exists in the world today, it just cannot be seen with material eyes, but only with the spiritual ones. The saints who experienced the sight of godly light claimed that the difference between it and the material light was so big that they could see shadows in the solar light even when it was at its brightest<sup>18</sup>. As such, the author

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<sup>12</sup> Edmond Jacob, *Théologie de l'Ancient Testament* (Paris: Delachaux & Niestlé, 1955), 63.

<sup>13</sup> For a better understanding of the subject developed in Small Vespers, it is advisable to read the odes of the Vespers and of the Matins held on the day of the *Forefeast* (August 5<sup>th</sup>).

<sup>14</sup> "Today, on Mount Tabor, Christ, transforming the darkened nature of Adam and enlightening it, hath made it divine" (The first sticheron of the aposticha, the Small Vespers of August 6<sup>th</sup>). *Mineiul lunii August*, 69.

<sup>15</sup> The radiance of Jesus Christ's glory surpasses that of the light of the sun, which fades before the Source of Light. Paul Blowers, *Maximus the Confessor. Jesus Christ and the Transfiguration of the World* (Oxford: University Press, 2016), 81-2.

<sup>16</sup> The third sticheron of the Aposticha, Small Vespers. *Mineiul lunii August*, 70.

<sup>17</sup> See details in Ioan Chirilă, "Teologia luminii în Vechiul Testament" [The Theology of Light in the Old Testament], in *Anuarul Facultății de Teologie Ortodoxă din Cluj-Napoca* [Annual of the Faculty of Orthodox Theology], 2<sup>nd</sup> tome (1992-1994), Alexandru Moraru ed. (Cluj-Napoca: Renașterea, 1994), 47-58.

<sup>18</sup> Ioan Chirilă, Stelian Pașca-Tușa, Ioan Popa-Pota and Claudia-Cosmina Trif, "Light – icon/stained glass – illumination," *Journal for the Study of Religions and Ideologies* 50 (2018): 104; Jean Gouillard, *Mica filocalie a rugăciunii inimii* [Small Philokalia of the Jesus Prayer], trans. by Ilie and Ecaterina Iliescu (Bucharest: Herald, 2008), 120.



of the ode says that the solar light set as soon as light emerged from Christ. Moreover, so big was the impact of this enlightenment that the entire world became filled with light. This assertion must be understood in the key of the aforementioned, namely that godly light can only be seen with spiritual eyes<sup>19</sup>.

## 2. Enlightenment and the Becoming into Light (the Great Vespers of the Transfiguration)

The correlation between the Transfiguration and the Passion of the Lord is not accidental<sup>20</sup>. The hymnographers chose to tackle the subject of the passion because the dialogue between the two prophets and the Saviour, which took place on the mountain, was thus oriented, but, what is more, it is supported by the narrative of the Holy Gospels. The first ode of Vespers captures the perspective of the Passion as follows: "Before Thy crucifixion, O Lord, the mountain emulated the heavens and the cloud spread itself out like a tabernacle when Thou wast transfigured and borne witness to by the Father. There were Peter, James and John, for they were to be with Thee also at the time of Thy betrayal, that, beholding Thy wonders, they might not be afraid of Thy sufferings, which do Thou vouchsafe that we may venerate in peace, for the sake of Thy great mercy."<sup>21</sup> The hymnographer, with the care of a thorough catechist, even with that of a preacher, also clarifies the reason why the Lord chose the

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<sup>19</sup> Ioan Chirilă, Stelian Pașca-Tușa, Adrian Mărincean, Bogdan Șopterean, "The divine light. The sight and experience of it in Gregory Palamas theology," *Astra Salvensis* 13 (2019): 222. See also John Meyendorff, *O introducecere în studiul vieții și operei Sfântului Grigorie Palama* [An Introduction in the Study of the Life and Work of Saint Gregory Palamas], trans. by Măriuca and Adrian Alexandrescu (Bucharest: Nemira, 2014), 344-349.

<sup>20</sup> The Transfiguration of the Lord and the experience of the Taboric light were meant to make the disciples trust in the Godhead of their Teacher: "Shining forth like the sun on the mountain today, before undergoing His sufferings, Christ showeth to the initiates of His mysteries a divine sign of His divinity" (The second sticheron of the Aposticha, the Vespers of the *Forefeast*). The Apostles should not have doubted the Godhead of the Son when He was hanging on the wood of the Cross. The One Who was willingly suffering was none other than the One Who once radiated a light brighter than that of the sun on Mount Tabor. The subject of the passion is also addressed in the following ode, in which the hymnographer mentions Adam. Christ climbs up the mountain to show the disciples the reason why He came into the world, namely to change the fallen nature of Adam and to deify it. This saving work was not limited only to our forefather, but also extended towards his descendants. In another sticheron<sup>20</sup>, God is entreated to enlighten the believers with the light of His conscience so that they would walk on the paths of the commands which deify them: "O Christ God who (...) showed the glory of Thy divinity to Thy disciples" illumine us also with the light of the knowledge of Thee, and guide us to the path of Thy commandments, for Thou alone art good and lovest mankind." The sticheron of *Glory and now* from the Aposticha of the Vespers held on August 5<sup>th</sup>. *Mineiul lunii August*, 56.

<sup>21</sup> The first sticheron of Lord, I have cried, Great Vespers. *Mineiul lunii August*, 70.

three. Both Peter (2 Pet. 1:16-19) and the two sons of Zebedee told the Saviour that they were ready to suffer for Him, should it be necessary. As such, the Lord wanted to strengthen their eagerness so that they would not be afraid during the Passion. We also see a few figures of speech in the text, which describe the event of Mount Tabor from a cosmic perspective: the mountain is likened to the sky and the clouded sky is compared with a tent. The second image is taken from the doxological psalm of creation (Ps. 104).

The hymnographer takes a step further; he does not remain only in the sphere of the Passion, but moves towards the Resurrection<sup>22</sup>. Christ enlightens His disciples with the rays of power, wishing to show them the radiance of the Resurrection<sup>23</sup>. The bright face, man's restored and complete face, the Saviour's face after the Resurrection is that which the Lord showed to the disciples (1 Jn 3:2) on Mount Tabor (in fact, the interdiction put on the disciples would be terminated after the Resurrection). This light of which God found the apostles worthy would be a reference point and a stimulus for all those who wanted to get closer to God. If man rises towards the spiritual, he will be found worthy of this radiance and will partake in the godly glory<sup>24</sup>, just like the disciples and the two prophets.

Special attention must be granted to the ode of *Glory, Now and ever*, which ends the series of stichera from *Lord, I have cried*<sup>25</sup>. As we well know, on

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<sup>22</sup>“Taking the disciples up upon the lofty mountain before Thy crucifixion, O Lord, Thou wast transfigured before them, illumining them with effulgence of power, desiring both in Thy love for mankind and in Thine authority to show them the splendour of the resurrection... .” The second sticheron of *Lord, I have cried*, Great Vespers. *Mineiul lunii August*, 70.

<sup>23</sup> Sava, “Aspects of the Human Person’s Experience of the Divine”, 132.

<sup>24</sup> “Transfigured on the high mountain, the Savior, having with Him His pre-eminent disciples, shone forth most wondrously, showing them forth as illumined by the loftiness of the virtues and as vouchsafed divine glory.” The third sticheron of *Lord, I have cried*, Great Vespers. *Mineiul lunii August*, 70.

<sup>25</sup> Among these odes, the fourth sticheron, which synthesises the most representative elements of the theophany that took place on the mountain, stands out: “The mountain which before dark and gloomy is now honorable and holy, for thereon did Thy feet stand, O Lord; for in the latter days Thou didst make manifest the hidden, pre-eternal mystery, Thine awesome transfiguration, to Peter, John and James. But they, unable to endure the radiance of Thy countenance and the brightness of Thy raiment, fell prostrate on the ground and covered themselves. And, seized with terror, they marveled, beholding Moses and Elijah conversing with Thee as they stood with Thee; and the voice of the Father bore witness, saying: This is My beloved Son in Whom I am well pleased: Him do ye obey! He Will grant the world great mercy!” (*Mineiul lunii August*, 71). The ode starts with an obvious allusion to the theophany of Mount Sinai, in which Moses and the entire Israeli people took part, when the Lord gave the Law. If then the mountain was frightening, because of frightful phenomena (fire, lightnings, thunders, a dark cloud), now everything was full of light. In addition, the hymnographer draws attention to the fact that the mystery of man’s salvation through the revelation of the deified, bright face of the One Who took on our nature, with

Sundays, this ode is called Dogmatikon, as the teachings presented in its content are deep and focus on salvific truths. The text of this ode is the following: "Foreshadowing Thy resurrection, O Christ our God, Thou didst take three of Thy disciples – Peter, James and John – and didst ascend Tabor. And as Thou wast transfigured, O Savior, Mount Tabor was clothed with light. Thy disciples cast themselves upon the ground, O Word, unable to endure the sight of Thine invisible countenance. Angels ministered to thee in fear and trembling; the heavens were afraid and the earth quaked, beholding the glory of the Lord upon the earth."<sup>26</sup> The hymnographer identifies the Resurrection as an objective of the Transfiguration. The disciples would see how the pneumatized bodies of men would look after their resurrection. Likewise, the hymnographer also specifies the reason why the disciples kept their face to the ground. The three apostles could not see God's unseen face, shining in its full glory. The author of the sticheron includes a detail in the ode, which is not mentioned explicitly in the Scripture, namely the fact that the angels served the Lord during the Taboric Transfiguration. In the course of a theophany, the Lord was never alone, but surrounded by the heavenly powers. Isaiah's (ch. 6)<sup>27</sup> and Ezekiel's (ch. 1)<sup>28</sup> inaugural visions bear witness to this. Moreover, when the godly light is revealed, the one who looks at God's glory can also see the angels, who are also light.

For this liturgical day, two readings from the Book of Exodus and one from the Books of Kings have been established. The former two refer to two

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all its defects, is also revealed here. The ode mentions for the first time the Scriptural detail regarding the Lord's clothes, which were white as light (Mat. 17:2). This image is taken on by terminologists when representing the icon of this Scriptural event. Fotie Kontoglu, *Expresia iconografiei ortodoxe* [The Expression of Orthodox Iconography] (Athens: Gamma, 1993), 166. Constantine Cavarnos, *Ghid de iconografie bizantină* [Guide to Byzantine Iconography], trans. by Anca Popescu (Bucharest: Sofia, 2005), 88.

<sup>26</sup> Glory..., Now and Ever..., Great Vespers. *Mineiul lunii August*, 70.

<sup>27</sup> For details, I recommend the subchapter "Serafimii în contextul vedeniei profetului Isaia" [The Seraphim in the Context of Prophet Isaiah's Vision], in Stelian Pașca-Tușa, "Iconizarea serafimilor – reperele biblice și patristice care au stat la baza realizării acestei morfologii iconice și a mesajului ei teologic [The Iconic Representation of the Seraphim – Biblical and Patristic Reference Points on which this Iconic Morphology and its Theological Message were Based]," in *In honorem pr. prof. univ. dr. Vasile Stanciu* [In honorem Fr. Prof. Vasile Stanciu, PhD], ed. Daniel Mocanu (Cluj-Napoca: Presa Universitară Clujeană, 2018), 337-54.

<sup>28</sup> See details in Stelian Pașca-Tușa and Ioan Popa-Bota, "The Byzantine Iconic Representation of the Cherubim – Scriptural Reference Points," *Studia Universitatis Babeș-Bolyai – Theologia Orthodoxa* 2 (2019): 5-20; Stelian Pașca-Tușa, "Implicațiile teologice ale reprezentărilor heruvimilor în sanctuarul biblic [Theological Implications of the Cherubim's Representations in the Biblical Sanctuary]," in *Icoană. Mărturie creștină. Totalitarism* [Icon. Christian Testimony. Totalitarianism], eds. Vasile Stanciu and Cristian Sonea (Cluj-Napoca: Presa Universitară Clujeană, 2017), 57-72 and Ioan Popa-Bota, "Taina și înfățișarea Heruvimilor la Sfinții Părinți [Mystery and Image of the Cherubim in the Writings of the Church Fathers]," *Astra Salvensis* 13 (2019): 195-204.

theophanies experienced by Moses on Mount Sinai and the latter to the godly glory seen by prophet Elijah after his forty-day journey towards that same mountain (1 Kgs 19 et seqq.). The former theophany marks the moment when Moses enters the cloud to receive the Law (Ex 24:12 et seqq.) and the latter recalls his experience when he asked to see the Lord's glory (Ex 33:11 et seqq.)<sup>29</sup>. These Old Testament readings are not accidental. Through them, the reason why the two prophets were present on Mount Tabor together with the Saviour is explained to the worshipper. They both experienced unique moments when the Lord's glory was shown to them as far as they could bear it. If then they did not have the privilege of revelling in the splendour of godly glory, now, on Mount Tabor, they enjoyed a special status: they found themselves in front of the Lord, talking to Him about the forthcoming Passion. Likewise, we must acknowledge that these readings are also aimed at inviting listeners to become more closely acquainted with the text. It is the biblical "framework" of the evening liturgical service, it is the pillar of the bridge built towards the day of the feast, when the Gospel read during the Holy Liturgy represents the other pillar and, at the same time, the end point of the bridge. It is an occasion for biblical catechesis and, why not, for homily.

The third sticheron of the Litia summarises a theological perspective whose temporal span stretches forth from eternity and aims to integrate us into God's endless Kingdom: "Dwelling bodily on earth, Christ, the Light from before the sun, Who before His crucifixion fulfilled all things of His awesome dispensation in godly manner, today hath mystically shown forth on Mount Tabor the Image of the Trinity; for taking His three excellent disciples, Peter, James and John, He led them up to it together, and having hidden His guise of flesh for a little while, He was transfigured before them, revealing the majesty of His original beauty, though not completely. And while making it known to them, He also took pity upon them, lest they in anywise cease to live because of what they saw: yet were they able to grasp with their bodily eyes, holding fast. And Thou didst summon Moses and Elijah, the foremost of the prophets, who bore witness reliably concerning Thy divinity, and that it is the true effulgence of the essence of the Father, O Thou Who hast dominion over the living and the dead. Wherefore, the cloud enfolded them like a tabernacle, and the voice of the

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<sup>29</sup> Moses' experience of light is presented in detail in the chapter "Întunericul luminos din Sinai" [The Bright Dark of Mount Sinai] in Ioan Chirilă, "*Luminează-te, luminează-te, Ierusalime!*" (Is 60,1) – revărsarea luminii dumnezeiești și devenirea întru lumină [Arise, Shine, Jerusalem! (Isa. 60:1) – the Overflowing of Godly Light and the Becoming into Light]," in *Sfânta Scriptură în Biserică și Istorie. Studii Teologice în onoarea pr. prof. dr. Vasile Mihoc* [The Holy Scripture in the Church and in History. Theological Studies in honorem Fr. Prof. Vasile Mihoc, PhD], eds. Alexandru Ioniță and Daniel Mihoc (Sibiu: Ed. Andreiană/ Astra Museum, 2018), 166-85.

Father testified, speaking forth from the cloud like thunder, saying: This is My Beloved Son, Whom I begat incorruptibly from within Me before the morning star, and Whom I have sent to save those who are baptized in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, and who confess with faith that the one dominion of the Godhead is indivisible! Hear ye Him And do Thou Thyself, O Christ God Who lovest mankind, illumine us with the light of Thine unapproachable glory, and show us forth as worthy heirs of Thy kingdom Which is without end, in that Thou art all-good.”<sup>30</sup>

The sticheron begins with a direct reference to the primordial light. In the hymnographer’s view, Jesus Christ, Who was transfigured on the mountain, is the Light that shone and emanated the uncreated light onto the world from the very first day of creation<sup>31</sup>. That which occurred then, at the beginning of the world, takes place again now, on Mount Tabor. The divine light flows onto the earth and is seen by God’s disciples and by the two prophets. In other words, the uncreated light is identical to the light that shone on Mount Tabor, for they both originate from the same source: the Word of the Father, the Light of the world. The first sentence also indicates that, through His divine transfiguration, our Lord mystically and brightly revealed the Trinity.

The hymnographer then refers to the mystery of God’s incarnation and mentions that, during the transfiguration, our Saviour “concealed His incarnation”. Thus, through incarnation, the Word made Himself smaller, shed His Celestial Glory and became like us to such an extent that people did not realise that He is God. In the act of transfiguration, our Saviour allowed His Godly Glory, which was mystically concealed within Him, to become visible. This unparalleled beauty was also imprinted in the face of the first man made by the Father in the image of His Son. Jesus Christ is the Protoimage that served as a model for the creation of man<sup>32</sup>. Otherwise put, by looking at our Saviour’s face, the apostles could intuit what the initial face of Adam looked like. It is not without reason

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<sup>30</sup> The third sticheron of the Litia, Great Vespers. *Mineiul lunii August*, 72-3.

<sup>31</sup> This view is grounded in the Johannine prologue and the examinations from a Christological perspective made by the fathers of the Church when analysing the text of creation. In that sense see: Origen, *Omilii la Cartea Facerii* [Homilies on Genesis] in *Părinți și Scriitori Bisericești* [Fathers and Writers of the Church] 6, trans. by Teodor Bodogae et al. (Bucharest: IBMBOR, 1981), 131; St. Basil the Great, *Omilii la Hexaameron* [Homilies on the Hexaameron], in *Părinți și Scriitori Bisericești* [Fathers and Writers of the Church] 17, trans. by Dumitru Fecioru (Bucharest: IBMBOR, 1986), 133; and St. Augustine, *On the Literal Interpretation of Genesis* 5.20, *Fathers of the Church* 84, trans. by Roland J. Teske, S.J. (Washington, D.C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 1991), 158.

<sup>32</sup> St. Theodore the Studite, *Iisus Hristos, prototip al icoanei Sale* [Jesus Christ, the Prototype of His Icon], trans. by Ioan Ică jr. (Sibiu: Deisis, 1994); Ioan Chirilă, “Présence du Logos dans l’«image»,” *Echinox* 12 (2007): 231-232.

that we said that they could intuit it, for they never fully saw God's face, but only in part, such as was appropriate<sup>33</sup>.

The hymnographer goes on to talk about an Old-Testament belief according to which man could not see God's face and live<sup>34</sup>. Moses once asked the Lord on the mountain to show him His Glory and God replied that he could not live after He has shown him His face (Ex. 33:18-20). Reminiscences of this reality can be found in other writings of the Old Covenant as well, especially in the Book of Judges. The author of the ode professes that the Lord strengthened and spared His disciples so that the unmediated sight of God's glory should not bring about their death. It is necessary for us to understand that this limitation is of a pedagogical nature and was compelled by man's spiritual immaturity, which renders him unable to look upon heavenly realities with mortal eyes<sup>35</sup>. In the mystical literature, the fathers unanimously claim that this blindingly bright godly light cannot be regarded except with the spiritual eyes which the Holy Spirit opens in him whom He enables to partake in the theophany<sup>36</sup>.

In the view of the author of the ode, the two prophets were brought there to give testimony as to the Divinity of the Son and confirm the fact that He is "the reflection of the Father". Moses and Elijah experienced that light in which God revealed Himself to them and, as such, they were able to understand much more of what they saw on Mount Tabor than the Lord's disciples; they were capable of dialoguing and beholding. That which they saw in the form of reflections and symbols they could now see clearly and, in the ecstasy of their full knowledge, they were able to say who the One shining on the mountain was. In order to make the connection to the theophanic events on Mount Sinai, the hymnographer includes in his ode a reference to the bright cloud which covered the mountain like a tent (acc. Ex. 24:18)<sup>37</sup>.

Towards the end of the hymn, after the hymnographer has specified the meaning of the words which the Father uttered from the heavens, a prayer is

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<sup>33</sup> Sava, "Aspects of the Human Person's Experience of the Divine," 132.

<sup>34</sup> Ioan Chirilă, "Întru lumina Ta vom vedea lumină (Ps 35,9) – despre lumină și taina întinericului în care se află Dumnezeu (Ieș 20,21) [In Your Light Do We See Light (Ps. 36:9) – About the Light and the Mystery of the Darkness in Which God Abides]," in "Voi pune înaintea Ierusalimul, ca început al bucuriei mele". In Honorem Pr. Prof. Univ. Dr. Dumitru Abrudan la împlinirea vârstei de 80 ani [I Consider Jerusalem My Highest Joy. In Honorem Fr. Prof. Dumitru Abrudan, PhD, on his 80<sup>th</sup> Anniversary], eds. Aurel Pavel and Nicolae Chifăr (Sibiu: Astra Museum, 2018), 234.

<sup>35</sup> Vladimir Lossky, *Vederea lui Dumnezeu* [The Sight of God], trans. by Maria Camelia Oros (Sibiu: Deisis, 1995), 1.

<sup>36</sup> St. Gregory of Nazianzus, *Cele cinci cuvântări teologice* [Five Theological Orations], trans. by Dumitru Stăniloae (Bucharest: Anastasia, 1993), 23.

<sup>37</sup> Details on the theophany on Mount Sinai and the bright darkness into which Moses went can be found in Chirilă, "Întru lumina Ta vom vedea lumina," 214-237.

addressed to our Saviour asking to partake in the light. This kind of phrasing can be found in several hymns. Usually, after referring to the experiencing of the light, either by the apostles or by the two prophets, Jesus Christ is entreated to enable us, too, to partake in His glory. Such an illumination confers upon us a privileged status, namely that of heirs to the Kingdom of Heaven. The hymnographer thus brings the ode to a full circle by returning to the initial statement: may Christ Who showed Himself at the beginning of the world and imprinted His bright image upon man lead us into eternity by making us like Him through grace<sup>38</sup>.

The stichera canon of the Litia is concluded with an invitation addressed by the hymnographer to the faithful, asking those who celebrate to join the disciples and climb the mountain in order to become filled with light: "Come ye, let us go to the mountain of the Lord, to the habitation of our God; and let us gaze upon the glory of His Transfiguration, the glory of the Only-begotten of the Father; and let us receive light through the Light; and, exalted by the Spirit, let us hymn the consubstantial Trinity forever."<sup>39</sup> The ode is made up of several phrases ("the mountain of the Lord", "the house of our God") found in previous stichera and of biblical expressions that speak of the Son's divine glory. The sight of this glory can only be experienced from inside this light, which is only attainable through the work of the Holy Spirit, Who raises us to that spiritual state. The ode is concluded with an urge to praise the divine Trinity. Such doxological manifestations characterise the state that people are in when faced with a theophany<sup>40</sup>.

The first ode of the aposticha reminds us of one of the Old-Testament theophanies whose protagonist is Moses. The hymnographer does not limit himself to the two theophanies which Moses partook in on Mount Sinai, as recounted in chapters 24 and 33, but also refers to the revelation in the burning bush<sup>41</sup>. Although it is the fire which burned<sup>42</sup>, yet was not consumed, that is mentioned there, the theophanic framework is the same. Both Moses and the apostles fell with their faces to the ground before that wondrous sight. The

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<sup>38</sup> Sava, "Aspects of the Human Person's Experience of the Divine," 133.

<sup>39</sup> *Glory* at the Litia, Great Vespers. *Mineiul lunii August*, 73.

<sup>40</sup> In that sense, see the attitude of the seraphim in the inaugural vision recounted by the prophet Isaiah 6.

<sup>41</sup> Saint Gregory holds that there are obvious similarities between the two/three theophanies, as each represents a stage in Moses' partaking in the radiance of God's glory. St. Gregory of Nyssa, *Despre viața lui Moise sau despre desăvârșirea prin virtute* [On the Life of Moses or Fulfillment through Virtue] (Bucharest: Sfântul Gheorghe Vechi, 1995), 31.

<sup>42</sup> To Saint Makarios, this fire is identical to the one in which Elijah found himself while he was being raised to the heavens and represents the divine fire which illuminates our souls (*Spiritual Homilies* V.8).

hymnographer states that He who spoke with Moses from the burning bush is the same One Who was transfigured before him, Elijah, and the disciples. Aside from this, the image of the original face of man is emphasised<sup>43</sup>, as is the restoration of the radiance which it used to possess, but which was altered through sin. This anticipated gift was shown to the apostles, who were to wait for the resurrection in order to see it materialise<sup>44</sup>.

The bright light of divinity made Mount Tabor itself leap with joy. This was miraculously seen by the prophet David, who exclaimed in his psalms: "Tabor and Hermon sing for joy at Your name." (Ps. 89:12) The hymnographer suggests that mystical joy and ecstasy were not experienced by the apostles alone, but by the whole of nature. However, it is man's partaking in the light which is stressed: "The foremost of the apostles, beholding Thine unbearable splendour and Thine unapproachable divinity, O unoriginated Christ, were stricken with godly awe; and covered with a radiant cloud, they heard the voice of the Father proclaiming the mystery of Thy becoming man; for Thou alone, even after Thine incarnation, art the only-begotten Son and Savior of the world."<sup>45</sup> This text describes the way in which the Apostles related to this theophanic episode. First of all, the overflowing Light mentioned by the hymnographer was unapproachable. It spread over the mountain and covered everything in light. For a few moments, Mount Tabor was the centre of the Universe. The Apostles were able to see this light because they were in a state of ecstasy<sup>46</sup>. Moreover, in his state of mental rapture, they were transformed and became like our Saviour<sup>47</sup>. Naturally, the radiance which the apostles possessed was incomparable to that of the Lord. And

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<sup>43</sup> This idea is presented even more clearly in the second sticheron of the aposticha, which says that, through His transfiguration, the Lord restored the radiance to Adam's nature, which had been blackened by sin.: "... For, having ascended that mountain with Thy disciples, O Savior, Thou wast transfigured, and didst cause the darkened nature of Adam to shine again, imparting to it the glory and splendor of Thy divinity..." *Mineiul lunii August*, 73.

<sup>44</sup> "He Who of old spake with Moses on Mount Sinai in images, saying: "I am He Who is", is today transfigured before His disciples on Mount Tabor, and having shown forth the pristine beauty of His countenance, hath taken upon Himself human nature. And having set before them Moses and Elijah as witnesses to this grace, he made them partakers of gladness who, for the sake of the Cross, proclaim His glorious and saving resurrection" The first sticheron of the aposticha, Great Vespers. *Mineiul lunii August*, 73-74.

<sup>45</sup> The third sticheron of the aposticha, Great Vespers. *Mineiul lunii August*, 74.

<sup>46</sup> St. John Chrysostom, *Omiliile la Matei* [Homilies on Matthew], in *Părinți și Scriitori Bisericești* [Fathers and Writers of the Church] 23, trans. by Dumitru Fecioru (Bucharest: EIBMBOR, 1987), 651.

<sup>47</sup> St. Gregory of Sinai, *Discourse on the Holy Transfiguration of our Lord Jesus Christ*, in Ioan I. Ică jr., "Teologia taborică a Cuviosului Grigorie Sinaitul și probabila ei iradiere în spațiul românesc" [The Taboric Theology of Saint Gregory of Sinai and its Probable Echo into the Romanian Sphere] *Tabora 1* (2007): 24.



yet, unless they became light, they could not see the light. This occurred as soon as the luminous cloud covered them. The cloud indicated the presence of grace and, implicitly, of the Holy Spirit. Since the Trinity was visibly present here, the author does not hesitate, when the theme he approaches allows it, to underscore the trinitarian character of this theophany.

The *Glory, Now and ever* ode is a synthetic presentation in which the apostles' mystical experience is described. The text of the ode is centred on the description of the manner in which the disciples received God's Transfiguration<sup>48</sup>. The hymnographer recalls the details in the Gospel (God's clothes were as radiant as light and His face more brilliant than the sun) and specifies that the three apostles could not bear the light which enshrouded them, which is why they fell with their faces to the ground<sup>49</sup>.

### 3. The Troparion and Kontakion – Syntheses of the Light-Filling Feast

Of all the hymns of a feast, its troparion and kontakion are the most relevant, as they enable us to capture the specificity of the event being celebrated. As we have done so far, we will not insist upon the details in the text which have already been explained and expanded on. We will focus on the new elements or on the nuances which highlight the teaching about the godly light. In the troparion we are told that the Lord revealed all of His glory before His disciples, but they were only able to understand as much as the Lord showed them: "Thou wast transfigured on the mountain, O Christ, our God, showing to Thy disciples Thy glory as each one could endure. Shine forth Thou on us, who are sinners all, Thy light ever-unending. Through the prayers of the Theotokos, Light-Bestower, glory be to Thee."<sup>50</sup> Their eyes were not prepared to behold and understand the beauty of divine glory. That is why they are portrayed in icons as sleeping, with their faces turned towards the ground, or covering their eyes with their hands. Besides, the biblical text tells us that they found themselves in a state of numbness or dormancy. Their state was caused by their lack of spiritual readiness and incapacity to freely behold the light of God's

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<sup>48</sup> Sava, "Aspects of the Human Person's Experience of the Divine," 128.

<sup>49</sup> "To Peter, James and John, Thy foremost disciples, O Lord, Thou hast shown the glory of Thy divine countenance today on Mount Tabor; for they beheld Thy garments illumined as with light, and Thy face shining more brightly than the sun. And unable to endure the unbearable sight of Thine effulgence, they fell face down upon the ground, in nowise able to look further. And they heard a voice from above bearing witness, saying: "This is my beloved Son, Who hath come into the world to save man!"." *Glory, Now and ever* of the aposticha, Great Verspers. *Mineiul lunii August*, 74.

<sup>50</sup> *Mineiul lunii August*, 70.

glory<sup>51</sup>. Such an unpreparedness was also explained by the fact that a crucial moment, namely that of the Pentecost, had not yet occurred. Unlike the three apostles, Moses and Elijah do look directly at Jesus Christ and speak to Him. That is due to the divine grace which they collaborated with during their lifetime and to their spiritual preparedness. This is not the first such experience for them. Both have seen God in His glory on Mount Horeb.

The hymnographer then goes on to beseech the Lord (in everyone's name) to bestow his light over people, even though they are sinful. Before uttering this entreaty, he specifies that the apostles, too, were made worthy of that glory through His intermission. The Lord allowed them to see as much as they were capable to. As such, God can make sinners partake in the light of His divine glory, too, inasmuch as He sees fit, according to His grace and mercy, not to the state of righteousness of those who wish to partake in the light. This uncreated light, which is eternal, enables man to become eternal. The everlasting light can make man live forever. And it is no coincidence that the hymnographer asks Jesus Christ for this light. He is the Giver and source of the light. In this context, the intermission of the Virgin Mary is invoked for a reason. The hymnographer refers here to her capacity as the one who gave birth to God, for Christ's transfiguration is directly related to the mystery of the incarnation. We have just mentioned that the two prophets of the Old Testament partook in an extraordinary event: they saw God during the theophanies on Mount Sinai, while on Mount Tabor they saw Him in His capacity as complete Man. During the transfiguration, human nature, acquired through birth from the Virgin Mary, shone and became enlightened and thus deified.

This troparion is included in the ritual for the blessing of icon painters by the priest. Tradition says that, at the end of the ritual, the priest used to utter the troparion of the Transfiguration, thus urging the icon painter to long for the state of enlightenment which the apostles attained on Mount Tabor.<sup>52</sup> Given that the troparion summarises the theological synthesis of the feast, it stands to reason that the icon painter is persuasively guided to very conscientiously take part in the liturgical rites dedicated to this feast. Aside from gaining a better understanding of the Transfiguration event, through the hymnographer's repeated urgings to climb the mountain together with the disciples and become filled with light, the icon painter will become more capable of experiencing the godly light. Thus, he will be able to experience something similar to what Saint Symeon the New Theologian did, who saw other people than the Apostles on Mount Tabor<sup>53</sup>.

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<sup>51</sup> Sava, "Aspects of the Human Person's Experience of the Divine," 129-130.

<sup>52</sup> Kontoglu, *Expresia iconografiei ortodoxe*, 169.

<sup>53</sup> St. Niketas Stethatos, *Viața Sfântului Simeon Noul Teolog* [The Life of Symeon the new Theologian], trans. by Ilie Iliescu (Bucharest: Herald, 2003), 34-5.

Given the importance of the troparion and kontakion for the understanding of the feast being celebrated, we have found it fit to analyse the kontakion here, even though it will only be featured later, during Matins, after the sixth ode of the canon. The kontakion of the feast stresses the limitation which the Lord's apostles incurred when looking upon God's glory and underscores one of the practical purposes of the event on Mount Tabor: "On the mountain wast Thou transfigured, and Thy disciples beheld Thy glory as far as they could endure, O Christ God; that when they would see Thee crucified, they would comprehend that Thy suffering was voluntary, and proclaim to the world that Thou art of a truth the Effulgence of the Father."<sup>54</sup> The Lord's Transfiguration was meant to show the disciples who the One who was to suffer on the cross was. Even though this sight was reserved only to the coryphei of the apostles, they were meant to understand that their Teacher is the Son of God. Thus, when they were to behold the Lord's tortured face bereft of beauty, they should remember how greatly His face shone when he was on Mount Tabor. This sight was to determine the disciples to make Him known to the world and bear witness as to the fact that the One on the cross was none other than the Son of God. We note the expression "the radiance of the Father", which keeps the hymnological discourse within the sphere of light.

### Conclusions

Church services are not limited to an anamnesis-centred perspective which allows Christians to commemorate various events in our Saviour's life or in the history of the Church, but transpose them into a sanctifying time where they become contemporary with that redeeming history. In the case of the feast of the Lord's Transfiguration, liturgical hymnography lays the premises for the genuine integration of all the members of the Eucharistic community within the historical framework described by the evangelists, thus fulfilling the catechetical and homiletic dimension of the feast. Worshippers are invited to join our Saviour and His disciples in climbing Mount Tabor to see the way in which Jesus Christ shows His divine glory. Moreover, the hymnographer's prayers asking for the heavenly light to be bestowed upon all those present at the feast makes Christians partake in the mystical experience which both the apostles and the two Old-Testament prophets participated in. Even though the exigencies entailed by such an experience are high and not meant for those who are just starting off on the path of knowledge, the authors of the hymns of these feasts' Vespers suggest that no one is left out. Even sinners can be allowed to partake in the divine sight offered to people out of God's great mercy. The phrase "as much as

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<sup>54</sup> *Mineiul lunii August*, 80.

they could behold” employed by the hymnographer in the troparion indicates that the Lord allows each person to see inasmuch as (s)he is able the radiance of His glory, which can be revealed through symbols as well. In other words, the authors of these hymns make worshippers aware of the greatness of the feast that they are participating in and calls upon them to partake in the light which the Son of God spreads over the world as He once did on Mount Tabor.

Given that in the present study we have focused exclusively on the odes sung during Vespers, it would be desirable that, in the future, the way in which the teachings of the Church are made known through the hymns of Matins and the other liturgical rites around the feast of the Lord’s Transfiguration should be studied.

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## VI. REVIEWS

***Collatio Carthaginensis Anni 411: Gesta Collationis Carthaginensis Augustinus, Breviculus Collationis Augustinus, Ad Donatistas Post Collationem (CSEL 104), edited by Clemens Weidmann, De Gruyter, Berlin/Boston, 2018, VI+418 pages (ISBN: 978-3-11-046967-7)***

To the prestigious collection *Corpus Scriptorum Ecclesiasticorum Latinorum* has been added a new volume, which brings a valuable contribution to the Donatist issue.

The three texts published in this tome were carefully edited by Clemens Weidmann, who dedicated the last two decades to the research and editing of the oldest surviving manuscripts of Augustine's works. After editing Augustine's *Enarrationes in psalmos* (CSEL 93/1A – Wien 2003 and CSEL 93/1B – Wien 2011) and *Sermones selecti* (CSEL 101 – Berlin 2015), this time Clemens Weidmann is completing some of his decades-long projects.

In this volume are published the three critical edited texts related to the so-called Conference of Carthage (411 A.D.). The first one is *Gesta collationis Carthaginensis* (CPL 724) with a number of improvement proposals to the edition published by Serge Lancel in the collection *Sources Chrétiennes* (195, 224) and in *Corpus Christianorum Series Latina* (149A). Although the text published isn't the lost version of Flavius Marcellinus who made it public in June 411, but one of his collaborators, Marcellus, written sometime between July 411 and September 413, its importance is crucial and the only manuscript fit for the critical editing (codex unicus) was the 9th century manuscript of Paris (BNF lat. 154). After establishing the direct transmission of the text and its three revisions and also the indirect delivery of some fragments, the editor underlines the features of *Gesta collationis Carthaginensis*. In his general observations Clemens Weidmann points out the uneven character of the text, determined by the dynamics of the Conference. This isn't some "fictive dialogue designed by a single author, but the recording of an actual conflict-filled confrontation between two opposing parties, between which the Cognitor Marcellinus has to mediate" (p. 18). This is why the text is filled by interruptions, reflecting the dominant oral style of these "minutes" of the Conference, and sometimes they are proofs of non-verbal elements that accompanied the tumultuous discussions. Further observations about the vocabulary, syntax, ellipses, biblical quotations and the subchapter dedicated to the older editions complete the Introduction (p. 5-32) to text of *Gesta collationis Carthaginensis* (p. 33-258).



The second text is Augustine's *Breviculus collationis* (CPL 337), which represents a short version of *Gesta collationis Carthaginensis* compiled by the bishop of Hippo Regius, who considered the access to the Conference's reports compelling and self-sufficient to prove the lack of foundation for the Donatist cause. Although *Breviculus collationis* tries to make an objective presentation "it always slides into a very subjective presentation that not only summarizes the events, but also presents the actual or suspected motives and evaluates and comments on an ever greater scale" the facts (p. 262). Until recently this augustinian work was known only through the first edition (editio princeps) published by Johann Amerbach in 1506, without any witness text. But in 1997 it was found the only (until now) manuscript containing the Augustine's *Breviculus collationis* (Praha, Národní knihovna Ms. XXIII D 177, 15th/16th century) and the editor tries to establish the complicated relation of the manuscript version with editio princeps (p. 264-266), in the opening of Augustine's *Breviculus collationis* (p. 269-307).

The third and final text is another augustinian work related to *Collatio Carthaginensis*, namely *Ad Donatistas post collationem* (CPL 338). It was written by Augustine in order to face some of the allegations made by the Donatist side after the conference and to turn to the Donatist laymen. "In this pamphlet, however, Augustinus was able to give free rein to his polemic and to appeal effectively to the Donatist laypeople and react to criticisms expressed by the Donatist side after the Conference" (p. 311). In contrast to the previous two works which were transmitted only through one manuscript, *Ad Donatistas post collationem* has a rich manuscript tradition. In this case the editor needed to classify them in three groups or families of manuscripts, pointing out the differences and similarities between them. However, in order to fully document the manuscript tradition of this augustinian work "all textual witnesses are included in the critical apparatus". The well documented Introduction (p. 311-323) is followed by the actual text (p. 325-374). The volume closes with the Bibliography (p. 375-377) and the so much needed Index of biblical passages and authors, beside the accustomed Index nominum et locorum (p. 378-418).

The meticulous labor and attention to this texts makes the Weidmann's edited volume a valuable contribution and an indispensable instrument for any serious research on Donatism and Augustine's position regarding the Donatist issue from now on.

**DRAGOȘ BOICU**

## V. REVIEWS

### **Ioan C. Teșu, *Simt boala ca iubire a lui Hristos* [*I feel the illness as God's love*] (Iași: Doxologia, 2017), 271 pages**

Suffering and illness have been, since the first centuries of the Christianity, approached topics. Holy Fathers have tried, based on the Scripture arguments, to define and understand them and to offer keys of seeing them not as punishments, but as a part of the divine pedagogy.

Nowadays, when illness has become an often encountered element in almost everybody's life, the need of approaching this topic again, based on the contemporary realities, but also on Church's teaching, became imperiously necessary. Due to this need, Fr. Ioan Cristinel Teșu from Iași Faculty of Orthodox Theology, offered in 2017, an interesting book entitled: *Simt boala ca iubire a lui Hristos [I feel the illness as God's love]*. Notorious voice of the contemporary theological research from the Romanian space, known thanks to the already published titles,<sup>1</sup> he offers an investigation based not only on the use of the patristic sources, but also on their deep knowledge. Segmented in eight chapters and forwarded by Professor Pavel Chirilă (pp. 7-8), his book speaks about topics like the "daily life's cross" (pp. 15-49), "the metaphysics of the suffering" (pp. 76-114), or the "philosophy of the illness" (pp. 232-271). As the aforementioned professor shows in the introductory part:

"The exams that man need to pass in his daily life are precious, are essentials: the assumed in sufferance, the unwavering patience in case of injustices, the love for the enemy, asceticism, sacrificing love the prayer and the accomplishment of God's will in any moment of life.

Father Ioan C. Teșu goes – inspired by the suffering man, on the road of curacy or, better said, on the road of recovering." (p. 7).

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<sup>1</sup> Like: Ioan C. Teșu, *Ortodoxia, în dialog [Orthodoxy, in dialogue]*, (Iași: Sfântul Mina Publishing House, 2019), Ioan C. Teșu, *Vocația desăvârșirii [The vocation of perfection]*, (Iași: Sfântul Mina Publishing House, 2018); Ioan C. Teșu, *Teologia necazurilor [The theology of the problems]*, (Iași: Sfântul Mina Publishing House, 2018).

Since the beginning, the perspective of the author is interesting<sup>2</sup> and the emphasis on the personal dimension of pain and of its understanding can determinate the reader to see this topic not anymore as a punishment, but rather as a call to a deeper understanding of the Christian message:

“The true answer to the problem of suffering is not just a theoretical one, but a practical one, not a general one, but a personal one, because each one understands and lives his own tests separately. The final answer to all these existential questions, related to the presence and purpose of the tests it can only come from the one who is ‘The Way, the Truth and the Life’ (John 14: 6), Christ the Lord, the Healer of our souls and bodies.” (p. 11).

Starting from this assumption, Fr. Ioan Cristinel Teșu uses the patristic ideas in order to define the “daily cross”, to speak about the pain as about an effect to the seeking for pleasure (pp. 24-31), but also about health and its value as a gift of God (pp. 16-23). Then, in an optimistic key, he suggests the fact that suffering should be seen as a sign that defines the chosen ones for the future and eternal joys (pp. 66-75). Moreover, due to this aspect, he speaks about the metaphysical dimension of the aforementioned topic (pp. 76-103), bringing into attention defining elements like the purpose of the pain, the limits of the “tests” for the human being, but also the pedagogy of suffering. Following the patristic line, he speaks, in the 4<sup>th</sup> chapter about the “suffering as the academy of the virtues” (pp. 115-149), offering an overview on the way how pain can determinate people to develop a virtuous life and start to love more their neighbour.

In the same optimistic note, he develops, in the last two chapters, the idea of bodily pain as a testimony of God’s love (pp. 186-272). In order to justify this idea, he uses Holy Father’s thought, and in two interesting essays that bring together authors from the first eight Christian centuries and other from the contemporary space, considered also representative for our context, he insists on the relevance of the spiritual aspects in the understanding of the material ones in the investigated situation. Without limiting his approach only to a theoretical aspect, he presents also practical solutions and even speaks about the *milieux* that can be used to overpass the illness and pain (pp. 220-231). Here, he shows that from the spiritual point of view, the practice of the virtues and the prayers are very important elements:

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<sup>2</sup> The author underlines the fact that: "Life itself is a road filled with needs and sufferance, because in times when sins seem to multiply and deepen, to fight against them, to live clean, beautiful and tall, fulfilling Christian virtues, is not an easy thing, but it requires hardworking and effort. But how sweet is the reward and joy that the soul will receive at the end of the road!" Ioan C. Teșu, *Simt boala ca iubire a lui Hristos [I feel the illness as God's love]*, (Iași: Doxologia, 2017), 9.

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“Together with the penitence and humility, a healing cure for the suffering ones is also the earnest prayer. To the sick ones, Saint Porfirie has always recommended to pray not for curacy, but for the peace of their souls. *‘Pray “to be good,” not to “get cured!”* he said. *“Let us ask that God’s wish be accomplished, and he will work what is better for them.”*“

The prayer is ‘the key for the spiritual life,’ and this cannot be learned from anybody, not even from the spiritual Father, but through its practicing and the insufflation of God’s Grace.” (p. 224).

Dedicated to an extremely actual topic and offering not only a theoretical approach, but also solutions for the contemporary people, on the basis of Church’s experience, the book of Fr. Ioan Cristinel Teșu is not only an interesting book that highlights important aspects from the patristic treasure of the Church, but also offers a text that can help the reader to reorganise his or her life and find how the relationship with God can change one’s soul in his way to God.

**MAXIM MORARIU**