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## **TOHU WABOHU IN GENESIS 1, 2. KABBALISTIC, PATRISTIC AND MODERN EXEGESIS**

**GRIGORE DINU MOȘ\***

(BHS) וְהָאָרֶץ הָיְתָה תֹהוּ וָבֹהוּ וְחָשֶׁךְ עַל־פְּנֵי תְהוֹם וְרוּחַ  
אֱלֹהִים מְרַחֶפֶת עַל־פְּנֵי הַמַּיִם:

**ABSTRACT.** The study presents the views of some important representatives of the Jewish, patristic and contemporary exegesis of the *tohu wabohu* (Genesis 1, 2). The exegesis of the expression is important because it raises, in the context of the first two verses of Genesis, the question of the way in which God created the world: from nothing or from a pre-existing chaos. I found many translations and interpretations of *tohu wabohu*: chaos (Jeremiah's understanding, Jer 4: 23-26), balance between the infinite creativity of God and the limited receptivity of the pure space (Kabbalistic view), invisible and unformed (LXX and the Greek Fathers), waste, void, desert, chaos, nothingness, formless, empty (most of the contemporary exegetes). The various interpretations of the concept were usually determined by the more general view of Genesis 1: the descriptive view; the chronological view, the gap theory, the framework view or the dynamic ontological view; the liturgical, poetic and spiritual view. I found Westermann's and Brueggemann's hermeneutical positions accurate, honest and convincing: we do not need to choose between creation from nothing and creation from a pre-existing chaos, because the Hebrew text is in fact richer if we ignore or overlook this conceptual limitation. Based on its apophatic vision, Orthodox theology can accept these hermeneutics, because the conceptual "antinomy" can be a way to overcome the limits of human reason. Ontologically speaking, the primordial nothingness or abyss could be understood as the infinite "kenosis" of the absolute and infinite Logos. This can be the ultimate antinomy, the last limit of thought, because when we affirm the infinite "kenosis" of the divine Logos, we must affirm the absolutely affirmative and "enstatic" character of God, who admits no negation and no change within Him. I also appreciated the interpretations which accepted the idea of a primordial chaos created by God, because these interpretations allow a dialogue between the biblical cosmology and the scientific cosmology; at the same time, they offer many possibilities for application in the

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spiritual life and for improving faith. Why did God create the world in this way? Because only in a world that has degrees of indeterminacy in its inner structure can a real freedom be possible for human beings.

**Keywords:** *tohu wabohu*, waste, void, formless, chaos, creation, indeterminacy

## Introduction

“*Tohu wabohu* (תהו ובהו) is a Biblical Hebrew phrase found in the Book of Genesis 1:2 that describes the condition of the earth before God said “Let there be light” (Gen. 1:3). A precise translation of the phrase is difficult, since it is a Hebrew wordplay. [...] It is usually translated as “waste and void,” “formless and empty,” or “chaos and desolation”<sup>1</sup>.

Numerous interpretations of this phrase were made from different linguistic sources, with diverse cultural backgrounds and different theological implications. In particular, the exegesis of this phrase in the context of the first two verses of Genesis raises the question of the way in which God created the world. Did He create the world from nothing or from a pre-existing chaotic matter? Was this formless matter created as a first step to the creation of the cosmos? If so, why did He need this stage of creation? Or does Genesis 1, 2 simply convey a literary image, a pure conceptual contrast, an anticipative non-ontological correlation that highlights the creative power of God and its final purpose, and, therefore, has no meaning within itself, but only in connection with the following verses in which God reveals the cosmos in its plenitude and perfection? The aim of this study is to present the views of some important authors who are representative of Kabbalistic, patristic and modern exegesis, and to discover possible answers to the questions above.

(BHS) וְהָאָרֶץ הַיְתֵהָ וּבְהוּ וַחֲשֵׁךְ עַל־פְּנֵי תְהוֹם וְרוּחַ אֱלֹהִים מְרַחֶפֶת עַל־פְּנֵי הַמַּיִם:

BHT: wəhāʾāreš hāyṭāḥ ṭōhū wābōhū wəḥōšek ʿal-pənē ṭəhōm wərūḥ ʿēlōhim mərəḥēpēt ʿal-pənē hammāyim

ἡ δὲ γῆ ἦν ἄορατος καὶ ἀκατασκεύαστος καὶ σκοτός ἐπάνω τῆς ἀβύσσου καὶ πνεῦμα θεοῦ ἐπεφέρετο ἐπάνω τοῦ ὕδατος (LXX)

<sup>1</sup> “Tohu Wa-Bohu,” *Wikipedia*, December 10, 2016, [https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Tohu\\_wa-bohu&oldid=754036145](https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Tohu_wa-bohu&oldid=754036145).

Terra autem erat inanis et vacua et tenebrae super faciem abyssi et spiritus Dei ferebatur super aquas (Vulgata)

Various English translations:

“And the earth was without form, and void; and darkness was upon the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters.” (KJV)

“The earth was without form and void, and darkness was over the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God was hovering over the face of the waters.” (ESV)

“And the earth was waste and void; and darkness was upon the face of the deep: and the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters.” (ASV)

“Now the earth was formless and empty, darkness covered the surface of the watery depths, and the Spirit of God was hovering over the surface of the waters.” (HCSB)

“The Earth being unformed and void, with darkness over the surface of the deep and a wind from God sweeping over the water” (Jewish Publication Society)

“Earth was a soup of nothingness, a bottomless emptiness, an inky blackness. God’s Spirit brooded like a bird above the watery abyss.” (MSG)

## 1. Jewish/Kabbalistic Exegesis

### 1.1. *The View of Prophet Jeremiah*

Jaques van Ruiten finds that the clearest similarity between Jer 4: 23-26 and Genesis 1, 2 is in the words *tohu wabohu*: ‘waste and void’. This juxtaposition occurs only here and in Gen 1:2. (In Isaiah 34:11, the syntactical construction is different.) For Jeremiah, the meaning of this expression is “complete chaos, a destruction of creation. And because of the use of these two words, it is likely that the text is alluding to the creation story in Genesis 1.”<sup>2</sup> Of course, Jeremiah “does not seem to be describing a *literary* return to the chaotic primary condition before creation. The comparison is being used as an image. The judgment on Israel is *as a* return to the original chaos. [...] The author seems to have made use of the story of the creation to interpret the chaos after the destruction. The events should thus

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<sup>2</sup> Jaques T.A.G.M van Ruiten, “Back to Chaos: The Relationship between Jeremiah 4: 23-26 and Genesis 1,” in *The Creation of Heaven and Earth. Re-Interpretations of Genesis I in the Context of Judaism, Ancient Philosophy, Christianity and Modern Physics*, ed. George H. van Kooten, Themes in Biblical Narrative. Jewish and Christian Traditions, VIII (Leiden, Boston: Koninklijke Brill NV, 2005), 28.

be understood as a doom coming from YHWH.”<sup>3</sup> Therefore, Jeremiah seems to consider that *tohu wabohu* in Genesis 1, 2 was a real chaos.

### 1.2. The Kabbalistic View

The Kabbalistic interpretation of *tohu wabohu* is very profound and very precisely conceptualized. According to David Smith, this expression is unique and does not have an exact English translation. *Tohu* is usually translated as “unformed”, “inconceivable”, or “chaos”, and it suggests the totality of creative dynamism that overwhelms the human perception and concepts.<sup>4</sup> “To the human mind the power of B’reshit becomes *tohu*. *The power of tohu* that overwhelms the meager human sense of order is kept in balance by the power of *bohu*. *Bohu* is the empty receptivity of space that is inherently contextual. Its context allows the potency of *tohu* to continually adapt to ever-changing needs.”<sup>5</sup> The kabbalist Aryeh Kaplan states that *bohu* is emptiness and it can be read as two words *bo hu*, which means “in it”.<sup>6</sup> “*Tohu* and *bohu* represent a primordial purity which is completely beyond time and ungraspable by human intellectual standards.”<sup>7</sup> *Tohu* indicates that chaos (in the form of entropy) is in the very nature of things and that this is a peril to human psychological stability. At the same time, it can be used against our attachments and addictions. A balance between *tohu* and *bohu* is needed for a good function of our mind, for working with effective power and without agitation and confusion. “*Bohu* reveals *tohu*” in the deepest nature of the mind, which is at the same time “our greatest love and our greatest fear.”<sup>8</sup>

## 2. Patristic Exegesis

According to Ed Noort, “LXX ἡ δὲ γῆ ἦν ἀόρατος introduces a logic for *invisible* and *visible* which is absent from MT. Here, the translator realized that the earth becomes *visible* in v. 9, which means that it had to be invisible in

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<sup>3</sup> Ibid., 30.

<sup>4</sup> David Chaim Smith, *The Kabbalistic Mirror of Genesis. Commentary on Genesis 1-3* (Glasgow: Daat Press, 2010), 20.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid., 21.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid., 20.

v. 2.”<sup>9</sup> The Greek Fathers used the Septuagint in their exegesis; in this version, however, the opening verses of the book of Genesis encourage a rather Platonic interpretation of the true light: “It was the Septuagint which translated the very first words of *Genesis* as follows: ‘In the beginning God made the heaven and the earth. But the earth was invisible and unformed: ἡ δὲ γῆ ἦν ἀόρατος καὶ ἀκατασκεύαστος (1:1– 2a). The notable difference from the Hebrew is that there the earth is not called ‘invisible and unformed,’ but *tohu wa-bohu*: formlessness and voidness. [...] In this way, Philo and John understood the light which was created in the beginning, when there was an invisible earth, as the true, intelligible light.”<sup>10</sup>

This would also support the association made by George van Kooten between the prologue to the Gospel of John and the prologue to the opening of the book of Genesis: “Reading about the invisibility of the earth in the Septuagint translation of *Genesis* 1:2 (ἡ δὲ γῆ ἦν ἀόρατος καὶ ἀκατασκεύαστος), it seems plausible that John—like Philo and Clement before and after him—took the invisibility of this earth to allude to the non-visible, noetic paradigm which was subsequently implemented in the visible world at its creation. For that reason, John also took the reference to the light in *Genesis* 1:3 as a reference to the invisible, true, real light which preceded the creation of the world’s physical light.”<sup>11</sup>

The Fathers of the Church have very different interpretations on Genesis 1,2. Void, invisible, formless, shapeless, darkness, abyss, chaos – all these concepts are interconnected and used frequently by the Fathers in their discourse about the first moments of time and creation.

One of the very first theologians who tried to understand and interpret the meaning of Genesis 1, 2 was Origen. In his Homilies on Genesis, he sees the earth as being “invisible and unformed” before God created the light, the firmament, and all the rest. However, his discourse on the deep is in a slightly different register: “What is «the abyss»? That place, of course, where «the devil and his

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<sup>9</sup> Ed Noort, “The Creation of Light in Genesis 1: 1-5. Remarks on the Function of Light and Darkness in the Opening Verses of the Hebrew Bible,” in *The Creation of Heaven and Earth. Re-Interpretations of Genesis I in the Context of Judaism, Ancient Philosophy, Christianity and Modern Physics*, ed. George H. van Kooten, Themes in Biblical Narrative. Jewish and Christian Traditions, VIII (Leiden, Boston: Koninklijke Brill NV, 2005), 10.

<sup>10</sup> George H. van Kooten, “The ‘True Light Which Enlightens Everyone’ (John 1: 9): John, Genesis, The Platonic Notion of the ‘True, Noetic Light’, and the Allegory of The Cave in Plato’s Republic,” in *The Creation of Heaven and Earth. Re-Interpretations of Genesis I in the Context of Judaism, Ancient Philosophy, Christianity and Modern Physics*, ed. George H. van Kooten, Themes in Biblical Narrative. Jewish and Christian Traditions, VIII (Leiden, Boston: Koninklijke Brill NV, 2005), 155.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, 192.

angels» will be. This indeed is most clearly designated in the Gospel when it is said of the Savior: «And the demons, which he was casting out that he not commands them to go into the abyss».”<sup>12</sup>

Then, Saint John Chrysostom explored the reasons behind the invisibility of the earth, attributing them to the craftsmanship of God. However, its formlessness suits a slightly different purpose: “The earth, you know, is our mother and provider; to it we owe our beginning and our growth; this is homeland and grave for us all alike; to the earth we come back in the end, and through it we lay hold of countless benefits. So, in case human beings might through the pressure of necessity treat the earth with a respect beyond its due, he shows it to you formless and imperfect so the you would not attribute the earth’s gifts to it but to the one who brought it into existence from nothing. For this reason the text reads: «The earth was invisible and lacking of all shape».”<sup>13</sup>

In calling the earth “invisible and unfinished”, Saint Basil the Great argues that nature had not blossomed entirely and that either there was no one to enjoy it or it was not to be seen. “Surely, the perfect condition of the earth consists in its state of abundance: the budding of all sorts of plants, the putting forth of the lofty trees, both fruitful and barren, the freshness and fragrance of the flowers, and whatever things appeared on the earth a little later by the command of God to adorn their mother. Since as yet there was nothing of this, the Scripture reasonably spoke of it as incomplete. [...] Scripture called the earth invisible for two reasons: because man, the spectator of it, did not yet exist, or because, being submerged under the water which overflowed its surface, it could not be seen.”<sup>14</sup> .

In the second part of the same homily, Basil the Great argued in favor of creation *ex nihilo* against any pre-existing matter<sup>15</sup>. He is against those who “explain the darkness, not as some unlighted air, as is natural, or a place overshadowed by the interposition of a body, or, in short, a place deprived by the light through any cause whatsoever, but, they explain the darkness as an evil power, or rather as evil itself, having its beginning from itself, resisting and opposing the goodness of God”<sup>16</sup>. In fact, for him, darkness and depth have a strictly natural meaning and refer to the physical impossibility of seeing the earth in the absence of light: “[...] we know that many bodies frequently are

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<sup>12</sup> Origen, *Homilies on Genesis and Exodus*, trans. Ronald E. Heine, The Fathers of the Church, Volume 71 (Washington, D.C: Catholic University of America Press, 1982), 47–48.

<sup>13</sup> Saint John Chrysostom, *Homilies on Genesis, 1–17*, The Fathers of the Church, Volume 74 (CUA Press, 1999), 36.

<sup>14</sup> Saint Basil, *Exegetic Homilies*, The Fathers of the Church, Volume 46 (CUA Press, 2010), 21–22.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, 22–24.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, 26.

seen through rather shallow and translucent water. How, then, did no part of all the earth show through the water? Because the air flowing above it was still unlighted and in darkness. A ray of the sun penetrating through the waters does not often reveal pebbles on the bottom, but in the depth of night, in no way may anyone perceive objects under the water. Thus, the statement that ‘the deep overspread it and was itself in darkness’ is capable of establishing the fact that the earth was invisible. The deep, then, is not a mass of opposing powers, as some have imagined, nor is darkness some sovereign and wicked force let loose against good”<sup>17</sup>.

St. Ambrose, in his interpretation, associates God to an architect, pointing out that the act of creation preceded the act of putting everything into place. “The good architect lays the foundation first and afterward, when the foundation has been laid, plots the various parts of the building, one after the other, and then adds to it the ornamentation.”<sup>18</sup>

Lastly, Joseph Torchia presents Augustine’s vision of formlessness as an existing potentiality that hasn’t yet come to fruition. “From this standpoint, the creation of heaven and earth entails the making of the ‘seed’ or raw material of what will become the visible heaven and earth. For Augustine, however, such formless matter is not expressed by heaven and earth alone. It also emerges in three other phrases: (1) *the earth invisible and without order*; (2) *the abyss with darkness*; and (3) *the water over which was borne the Spirit of God*.”<sup>19</sup> He sees “water” as a better definition for the matter without form that was to be arranged by God and explains that formlessness is suggested by all these words from Genesis 1, 2, “so that we might grasp the meaning by degrees, for we are unable to think cognitively about an absolute privation of form that still does not go as far as nothing.”<sup>20</sup>

### 3. Modern and Contemporary Exegesis

For Luther, *tohu wabohu* means “empty” because there was nothing on the earth. The earth was “unfinished”, “mixed with water”, without any “distinctive

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<sup>17</sup> Ibid., 27.

<sup>18</sup> Apud Andrew Louth, ed., *Genesis 1-11*, vol. Old Testament I, Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture 1 (Illinois: InterVarsity Press, 2001), 5.

<sup>19</sup> Joseph Torchia, *Creatio Ex Nihilo and the Theology of St. Augustine: The Anti-Manichaeon Polemic and Beyond*, vol. 205, American University Studies Series 7: Theology and Religion (New York: Peter Lang Publishing, 1999), 101.

<sup>20</sup> Apud Louth, *Genesis 1-11*, Old Testament I:5.

marks.”<sup>21</sup> Heaven was unformed like the earth, because it had not been separated from the earth and from the water. Luther disagrees with the opinion that matter in Genesis 1: 1-2 is a pure potentiality or almost nothing. For him, the matter is a genuine substance. “Water and abyss and heaven are used in this passage for the same thing, namely, for the dark and unformed mass”<sup>22</sup>. Luther interprets 2 Peter 3: 5-6 where St. Peter seems to refer to the fact that the earth was brought forth in the water and out of the water.<sup>23</sup> He concludes in a characteristic way: “Let this be enough on the subject of matter; for I think that if anyone were to argue with greater subtlety, he would not do so with profit”.<sup>24</sup>

In contemporary hermeneutical literature, this expression is analysed in great detail.

According to Wenham, *tohu wabohu* means “total chaos” as an example of hendiadys, literally “waste and void”. Tohu, “waste”, “has two main meanings – either “nothingness” (e.g., Isa 29: 21) or, as here, “chaos, disorder”, most frequently of the untracked desert where a man can lose his way and die (Deut 32: 10; Job 6: 18). This frightening disorganization is the antithesis to the order that characterized the work of creation when it was complete. Here and in Isa 34: 11 and Jer 4: 23, *tohu* is coupled with *bohu*, “void”, where, as the context shows, the dreadfulness of the situation before the divine word brought order out of chaos is underlined.”<sup>25</sup> The next part, “darkness covered the deep” is another powerful description of the “black chaos”, “the terrible primeval waste”, but it could indicate “the hidden presence of God waiting to reveal himself.”<sup>26</sup>

Brody considers that “the creation process begins with something like a formless waste: *tōhû bōhû*. The first word, *tōhû*, suggests something shapeless, formless, uninhabitable; and it may also be related etymologically to *tēhôm*, “the deep”. *Bōhû*, in rhyming with *tōhû*—forming an assonant hendiadys—it simply reinforces its effect.”<sup>27</sup>

For Hamilton, the translation “without form and void” gives the impression that the words *tohu* and *bohu* are adjectives. But these words are nouns, which means that the correct translation of the first clause from Genesis 1, 2 is “And the

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<sup>21</sup> Jaroslav Pelikan, ed., *Luther's Work. Lectures on Genesis. Chapters 1-5*, vol. 1 (Saint Louis, Missouri: Concordia Publishing House, 1958), 7.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, 1:9.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, 1:8–9.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*, 1:9.

<sup>25</sup> Gordon J. Wenham, *Genesis 1-15*, vol. 1, World Biblical Commentary (Colombia: Thomas Nelson, 1987), 15–16.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*, 1:16, 17.

<sup>27</sup> Thomas L. Brodie, *Genesis as Dialogue. A Literary, Historical and Theological Commentary* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001), 133.

earth – it was a desert and a wasteland”.<sup>28</sup> The rhyme in *tohu wabohu* could indicate that the verse is poetry rather than prose. No certain Semitic equivalent for *bohu* has been discovered so far, but *tohu* may be paralleled with Ugar. Thw, “desert.”<sup>29</sup> *Bohu* appears only three times in the Old Testament and always in conjunction with *tohu*: “the line of confusion [*tohu*] and the plummet of chaos [*bohu*]” (Isa 34: 11), “the earth, and lo it was waste [*tohu*] and void [*bohu*]” (Jer 4: 23). *Tohu* appears twenty times in the Old Testament; it may stand alone (without *bohu*) and it means “desert.” Figuratively, *tohu* describes something without substance, reality or ground, like the idols.<sup>30</sup> But the meaning of *tohu* is made more clearly by “the words with which it appears in parallel: desert, wilderness, wind, nothing, vanity”<sup>31</sup>. For the interpretation of Genesis 1, 2, it is very interesting whether we read Isa 45: 18 “Yahweh did not create the earth a chaos” or “Yahweh did not create the earth to be a chaos”.<sup>32</sup>

Westermann said that *tohu wabohu* means desert, waste, devastation, nothingness, and for the Israelites it was something more “ominous”, “gruesome” and “fearful” than for us.<sup>33</sup> The translation “formlessness” is not quite accurate; it induces the Greek idea of chaos. An older and more elementary idea of chaos seems to be behind the LXX translation of *tohu wabohu*: “invisible and not yet order”; we can observe in this translation a rationalizing tendency and even a Platonic influence. Westermann considers that the Aquila’s translation: “a waste and a nothing” and the Theodotion’s translation: “a nothing and an emptiness” are closer to the Hebrew text than is the LXX.<sup>34</sup> Also, he observes that “the course of the debate about the mythical explanation of *tohu wabohu* indicates clearly that the arguments for a mythical background are becoming weaker and weaker. The discussion can now be considered closed.”<sup>35</sup>

In a *chronological* view of Genesis, *tohu-wabohu* is an element of chaos (together with the darkness and the depth), very characteristic for the first stage of the creation. Apparently, we have only two exegetical options: 1. the chaos was from eternity and God was only a Demiurge, or 2. God created the chaos and then

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<sup>28</sup> Victor P. Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis. Chapters 1-17*, The New International Commentary on the Old Testament (Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1990), 108.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*, 109.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>33</sup> Claus Westermann, *Genesis 1-11. A Commentary*, trans. John J. Scullion, 2nd ed., vol. 1 (Minneapolis, London: Augsburg Publishing House, SPCK, 1990), 103.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*, 1:104.

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*, 1:103.

He ordered, divided and arranged this undifferentiated matter and chaotic energy. But, as Westermann explains, “the alternatives which this question raises come from a causal way of thinking which does not belong to Gen 1. The fact that the verb בָּרָא (bārāʾ) is not used with any preposition meaning “out of” indicates that such a question was irrelevant. What is peculiar to biblical talk about the creation of the world is that it looks wholly and solely to the creator: God has created the world; and so everything that one can say has been said. If one wants to know more, one must move outside this framework. The sentence “God created the world out of nothing” does not say more, but rather less than the sentence “God created the world.” The question “is it creation ex nihilo or not?” is not relevant to the text.”<sup>36</sup> The idea of an abstract and neutral primordial matter is clearly a very Greek way of thinking. The term matter passed from Greek philosophy into language and thought of creation theology, with the Wisdom of Solomon (see v 11: 17).<sup>37</sup> The expression “formless matter” was taken up by Augustine from Aristotelian physics and through him passed over into Western theology. In the context of Neo-Platonism, “it was a pyramid of existence with a matterless form at the summit and formless matter at the base” (D. Rischl, “Die Last des augustinischen Erbes”, *Parrhesia, K. Barth zum 80. Geburtstag*, 1965, 470-490, p. 475)<sup>38</sup> Also, it is not accidental that the idea of *creation ex nihilo* occurs first with the passage from 2 Macc 7: 28 (Septuagint), under the influence of Greek thought.<sup>39</sup> I have two observations regarding Westermann’s interpretations: 1. Orthodox theology can accept these hermeneutics based on its apophatic vision, because indetermination and antinomy can be a way of overcoming the limits of human thinking. 2. This interpretation rediscovers the original meaning of the Hebrew text and the genuine thinking of the author and has a great ecumenical value, because it makes clear the cultural and confessional backgrounds of each doctrinal positions and offers a common hermeneutical space for honest dialog and convergence.

In a *gap* view, there was an initial perfect creation (Genesis 1:1), a catastrophe (Genesis 1:2), and a re-creation of the world (Genesis 1:3-31). This catastrophe might be Satan’s fall from heaven; the extent of this gap between the first and second creation cannot be determined. But the syntax of the entire verse, as Hamilton demonstrates, is not in favor of this interpretation<sup>40</sup>, that it remains pure speculation. Gerhard von Rad considers this hypothesis “parfaitement impossible...”

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<sup>36</sup> Ibid., 1:108-9.

<sup>37</sup> Ibid., 1:109.

<sup>38</sup> Ibid., 1:109-10.

<sup>39</sup> Ibid., 1:110.

<sup>40</sup> Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis. Chapters 1-17*, 115-16.

du point de vue du langage et des faits objectifs”<sup>41</sup>. For Hamilton, verse 2 describes the situation prior to the detailed creation, in a *pattern of movement from generalization to particularization*.<sup>42</sup>

A variant of this *pattern of generalization – particularization* is the *framework* view: “the six days form a logical framework for describing actual historical events, but with events arranged *topically* instead of *chronologically*. Genesis 1:2 describes the earth as “formless and empty,” so there are *two problems*. The *two solutions* are to produce form and to fill them. The first 3 days produce **form** (by separations, in time or space, that produce day and night, sky and sea, and land with plants) and the second 3 days **fill** these forms (with sun for day and moon for night, birds for sky and fish for sea, and land animals that eat plants):

	separate to make <b>form</b>		create to <b>fill</b> each form
<b>1</b>	separating <i>day</i> and <i>night</i>	<b>4</b>	sun for <i>day</i> , moon for <i>night</i>
<b>2</b>	separating <i>sky</i> and <i>sea</i>	<b>5</b>	<i>sky</i> animals, <i>sea</i> animals
<b>3</b>	separating <i>land</i> and sea, land <i>plants</i> are created	<b>6</b>	<i>land</i> animals and humans, <i>plants</i> are used for food

(<http://www.asa3.org/ASA/education/origins/agetheology.htm#fw>)

The “form and fill” structure describes two related aspects of creation in Days 1 and 4 (for light), 2 and 5 (for sea and sky), 3 and 6 (for land), in a logical framework for the history of creation. The days could be logical *and* chronological, but non-chronological days produce a better match between what we see in the Bible and in nature.”<sup>43</sup>

In a *dynamic* view, “the process of God’s creation in all of its forms and aspects continues” and the actions of ordering and “controlling the chaotic forces” can be consider as the “renewal, preservation and completion of creation”<sup>44</sup>. In this view, the chaos from Genesis 1, 2 seems to be a condition of a continuous creation, which implies a progress from imperfection to perfection (cf. Rom 8: 19-23).<sup>45</sup> I appreciate that the last two approaches are very useful in the dialogue

<sup>41</sup> Gerhard von Rad, *La Genèse*, trans. Etienne de Peyer (Genève: Labor et Fides, 1968).

<sup>42</sup> Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis. Chapters 1-17*, 117.

<sup>43</sup> Craig Rusbult, “An Overview-FAQ for the ‘big Picture’ of Creation, Evolution, and Intelligent Design,” accessed January 4, 2017, <http://www.asa3.org/ASA/education/origins/agetheology.htm#fw>.

<sup>44</sup> Thomas M.M., *In the Beginning God (Genesis 1-12,4)*, trans. Philip T.M., CSS Books, vol. 1, Contextual Theological Bible Commentary (Tiruvalla, 2003), 53.

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid.*, 1:54.

between theology and science. The evolutionary model of cosmology, geology and biology, the quantum mechanics, the fractals, the chaos theory, Heisenberg's uncertainty principle and Gödel's incompleteness theorems etc. are very compatible with the idea of a primordial chaos created by God as the first step in the creation of the universe, because in scientific cosmology at the different levels there is an implicit concept of indetermination. Why did God create the world in this way? Because only in a world that in its inner structure has degrees of indeterminacy, a real freedom is possible for human beings.

According to Gerard von Rad, the notion of a created chaos is contradictory in itself, but it must be said that the text deals with questions which are beyond the capacities of human representation.<sup>46</sup> Without speaking about chaos, we cannot tackle creation in a satisfactory manner. Gerard von Rad considers that "tohouwabohou signifie l'informe"<sup>47</sup> and Genesis 1, 2 contains an exigence of faith. Le chaos is a possibility that can always be recurrent.<sup>48</sup> "Derrière tout ce qui est créé subsiste l'abîme de l'informe, qu'en somme le chaos constitue la perpétuelle menace pour toute créature, voilà une expérience primordiale de l'homme, une perpétuelle pierre d'achoppement pour sa foi. C'est à cette expérience que devait répondre la foi en la création. Ainsi, le v. 2 enseigne le miracle de la création en partant de sa négation, il parle d'abord de l'informe et de l'insondable d'où la volonté de Dieu a tiré la création et au-dessus duquel elle la maintient constamment. Car le cosmos a continuellement besoin de cette volonté créatrice qui le supporte. Nous voyons ici que la pensée théologique de Gen. 1 se meut non dans l'opposition néant—créé, mais dans la polarité chaos – cosmos."<sup>49</sup>

In a *pure descriptive* view, "there are no specific indications within the setting itself that the idiom *tohu wabohu* means chaos in this text."<sup>50</sup> The textual evidence suggests that *tohu wabohu* is a primordial absence of form and fertility. Clearly, *Erets* (earth) exists, but not yet in its final shape and function and not yet filled with life forms. This transformation takes place during the narration of the days of creation.<sup>51</sup>

For Tsumara, "the term *tohu* means (1) "desert," (2) "a desert-like place," i.e. "a desolate or empty place" or "an uninhabited place" or (3) "emptiness"; the phrase *tohu wabohu* has a similar meaning and refers to a state of "aridness or

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<sup>46</sup> von Rad, *La Genèse*, 44–45.

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid.*, 45.

<sup>48</sup> *Ibid.*, 47.

<sup>49</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>50</sup> Norman Habel, *The Birth, the Curse and the Greening of Earth. An Ecological Reading of Genesis 1-11*, The Earth Bible Commentary Series, 1 (Sheffield: Sheffield Phoenix Press, 2011), 29.

<sup>51</sup> *Ibid.*

unproductiveness" (Jer 4:23) or "desolation" (Isa 34:11).<sup>52</sup> Tohu wabohu in Gen 1:2 describes a state of "unproductiveness and emptiness", "the earth in a "bare" state, without vegetation and animals as well as without man."<sup>53</sup> This interpretation of *tohu wabohu* fits the literary structure of the entire chapter<sup>54</sup>, as we have already seen in the framework pattern. And "it is by God's fiat that the "unproductive and empty/ uninhabited" earth becomes productive with vegetation and inhabited by animals and man."<sup>55</sup> According to Tsumara's conclusion, "both the biblical context and extra-biblical parallels suggest that the phrase *tohu wabohu* in Gen 1:2 has nothing to do with "chaos" and simply means "emptiness" and refers to the earth which is an empty place, i.e. "an unproductive and uninhabited place." Thus, the main reason for the author's mentioning the earth as *tohu wabohu* in this setting is to inform the audience that the earth is "not yet" the earth as it was known to them."<sup>56</sup>

Other authors develop a *liturgical* view and /or an *application* view.

According to Bonhoeffer "not the work, no, it is the Creator who is to be glorified. The earth is without form and void, but he is the Lord, who performs the totally new, strange, unfathomable work of his dominion and love. The earth was without form and void, nevertheless it was our earth, which has proceeded from God's hand and now lies ready for him, submissive to him in holy worship. God is worshiped first by the earth which was without form and void. He does not need us men to prepare his glory; he creates worship himself from the silent world which slumbers, resting mute and formless in his will".<sup>57</sup>

For Brueggemann, God's movement toward creation is an act of perpetual generosity and the response of the creation is an unceasing doxology.<sup>58</sup> Verse 1 suggests God created out of nothing, but verse 2 seems to deny this, speaking about an already existing chaos. Brueggemann thinks that "the historical experience of exile may be the "formless and void" from which God works his creative purpose."<sup>59</sup> Even if the New Testament and the Christian theology affirm that

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<sup>52</sup> David Toshio Tsumura, *The Earth and the Waters in Genesis 1 and 2. A Linguistic Investigation*, ed. David J. Clines and Philip R. Davies, Journal for the Study of the Old Testament Supplement Series 83 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1989), 41.

<sup>53</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>54</sup> *Ibid.*, 42.

<sup>55</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>56</sup> *Ibid.*, 43.

<sup>57</sup> Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *Creation and Fall. A Theological Interpretation of Genesis 1-3*, trans. John C. Fletcher (SCM Press LTD, 1959), 17.

<sup>58</sup> Walter Brueggemann, *Genesis Interpretation. A Bible Commentary for Teaching and Preaching* (Atlanta: John Knox Press, 1982), 28.

<sup>59</sup> *Ibid.*, 29.

God created *ex nihilo* (Rom 4: 17; Heb 11: 3), “we should not lose sight of the experiential factor in the notion of creation from chaos”, because “the lives of many people are chaotic (cf. Mark 1: 32-34)” and “the chaos of our historical life can be claimed by God for his grand purposes”.<sup>60</sup> In conclusion, “the very ambiguity of creation from nothing and creation from chaos is a rich expository possibility. We need not choose between them.”<sup>61</sup> In terms of application, both offer important theological affirmations: the absolute power of God and the indispensable value of human freedom in the work of salvation and new creation.

### Conclusions

I have found the exegesis of *tohu wabohu* (Genesis 1, 2) very challenging and very rich in nuances and implications. I appreciated the interpretations which accept the idea of a primordial chaos created by God, because these interpretations allow for a dialogue between biblical cosmology and scientific cosmology; at the same time, they also offer many possibilities for application in spiritual life and for improving faith. Why has God created the world in this way? Because only in a world that in its inner structure has degrees of indeterminacy can a real freedom be possible for human beings.

I consider the positions of Westermann and Brueggemann accurate, authentic, honest and convincing: we do not need to choose between the creation from nothing and the creation from a pre-existing chaos, because the Hebrew text says more ignoring and overlooking this conceptual limitation. Based on its apophatic vision, Orthodox theology can accept these hermeneutics, because the conceptual “antinomy” can be a way to overcome the limits of human thinking. Ontologically speaking, the primordial nothingness or abyss could be understood as the infinite “kenosis” of the absolute and infinite Logos. This can be the ultimate antinomy, the last limit of thought, because at the same time as we affirm the infinite “kenosis” of the divine Logos, we must affirm the absolutely affirmative and “enstatic” character of God, who admits no negation within Him.

These interpretations rediscover the original meaning of the Hebrew text and the genuine thinking of the author and have a great ecumenical value, because they make clear the cultural and confessional backgrounds of each doctrinal position and offer a common hermeneutical space for honest dialogue, for convergence and for wide and profound spiritual application.

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<sup>60</sup> Ibid.

<sup>61</sup> Ibid.

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## REJUVENATING ORTHODOX MISSIONARISM AMONG THE LAYMEN: THE ROMANIAN ORTHODOX FELLOWSHIP IN INTERWAR TRANSYLVANIA

IONUȚ BILIUȚĂ\*

**ABSTRACT.** The paper discusses the interwar activism of Orthodox laymen and the founding of the organization of Romanian Orthodox Fellowship. By arguing that they subsequently answered to the call of the Transylvanian Orthodox bishops, it addresses how this initiative of Orthodox laity and clergy meant to counterbalance both the Greek-Catholic oriented propaganda in the intellectual milieu and the corrosive influences of modernity, stemming from secular circles. Another aim targeted by the paper is to emphasize that Archbishop Andrei Țaguna's 19<sup>th</sup> century reflections about the status of the ecclesiastical collegiality between the clergy and the laymen in the institutional structures of the Orthodox Church received their actual confirmation with the formation of the Romanian Orthodox Fellowship of intellectuals and their theological framework with the theological reflections highlighting the importance of the laity laid by Fr. Liviu Stan (1909-1973).

**Keywords:** Orthodox Church, laymen, Orthodox theology, social mobilization, nationalism, Greek-Catholic Action, intellectuals, religious rivalry, national identity, political Orthodoxy.

On a cloudy Sunday of 5<sup>th</sup> of March 1933, when the Orthodox Church celebrated the Sunday of Orthodoxy, large masses of university and secondary school professors, lawyers, doctors, took their seats in the large hall of the National Theater in Cluj-Napoca. Summoned by the Metropolitan from Sibiu, Dr. Nicolae Bălan (1882-1955) and their bishops who all headed the gathering, these intellectuals decided that, in the spirit of their ancestors and Metropolitan Andrei Țaguna's ideas about the close-collaboration at all levels between clergy and laymen, it was time to organize in a under the banner of the Orthodox Church. Although meant to galvanize, defend and herald the

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sentiments of the Orthodox Transylvanian intellectuals in front of several challenges addressed by their Greek Catholic counterparts, this body of laymen intended also to found a missionary apostolate among their fellow-Orthodox and non-Orthodox and to strengthen their allegiance with the clergymen of the Orthodox Church.

The present paper aims to underline the theological and historical underpinnings of this long-forgotten event in the history of the contemporary Romanian Orthodox Church. By making reference to a vast array of archival material, religious and non-religious newspapers, theological journals, and personal recollections of the event by some of the participants, I intend to assess the mainstream discussions about the status of the lay component of the Orthodox Church in Transylvania and, subsequently, how these discussions turned into theological reflection in the late 1930s.

I argue that, in many respects, the attempts to crystalize a well-established and broadly accepted theological narrative about the status of the un-consecrated members of the Orthodox Church pursued the line of argumentation of the 19<sup>th</sup> century school of theology influenced by Archbishop Andrei Țaguna (1809-1873), some of the main representatives of the Sibiu school of Orthodox theology (Fr. Dumitru Stăniloae, Fr. Spiridon Căndea, Fr. Liviu Stan, etc.) pushing even further the importance of the layman in the ecclesiological and institutional structure of the Transylvanian Orthodox Church. Deeply ingrained in the spirit of the Sibiu Theological Academy and nurtured by Archbishop Nicolae Bălan's constant commitment towards the advertisement of Țaguna's theological reflections among his clergymen, this notion of collaboration and mutual assistance at all power-levels and all activities of the Orthodox Church between the clergymen and the laymen found its accomplishment in the 1939 reflections of Fr. Liviu Stan.

The article will be shaped into two parts. In the first, in order to set the stage, the emphasis falls on the historical transition of theological ideas from the age of Archbishop Țaguna to that of Archbishop Bălan. The reaction towards the constant interferences of the post-1918 Romanian state in the life and finances of the Orthodox Church and the competition with the social mobilization of the laymen in the life of the Uniate Church determined the coalescence between the clergy and the laymen in the institutional framework of the Orthodox Fellowship. Designed as means of missionary work among the scattered Transylvanian communities and engaging laity with the social work of the Orthodox Church, this newly emerging organization fulfilled the most ambitious expectations of the organizing committee.

The second section focuses on the translation of FOR's ideas into a theological vernacular, one that could be broadly disseminated both among

the Transylvanian clergy and outside its boundaries, in the Old Romanian Kingdom. Although several attempts were previously made by different theologians and laymen to clarify and explain this development in the life of the Transylvanian Orthodox Church, thus upholding the importance of the laymen in the life and administrative structure of the ecclesiastical body, it was a young professor of Canon Law from Sibiu Theological Academy who eventually rose to the task. In 1939, by buttressing his innovative ideas on the earlier endeavors of his illustrious predecessors in the spirit of the vivid tradition of the Orthodox Church, he penned the paramount theological narrative regarding the ecclesiological co-dependence between clergy and believers in the Orthodox Church, underscoring the pivotal relevance of the laity.

### **1. From Șaguna to Bălan: Laity in the Transylvanian Tradition of the Orthodox Church**

The interest nurtured by interwar theologians, that of emphasizing the role of the laymen in the Orthodox Church, related with a canon-law tradition in the Transylvanian Church, namely that of always maintaining a proportion of one clergyman to two laymen in any decisional Church assembly or department of the Church. Established on Protestant theological ideas deriving from the ecclesiology of the German Lutheran Church by its first leader the Archbishop and Metropolitan of Transylvania, Baron Andrei Șaguna (1809-1873), as the theological basis for an institutional reform of the Church's relationship with the laity, the inclusion of the laymen twice as much as the clergymen in every department of the Church reshaped the fundamental framework describing the relationship between the Orthodox clergy and their flock.<sup>1</sup>

This radical change of pace between the constitutive elements of the Orthodox Church was meant to both attract the Transylvanian intelligentsia in the

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<sup>1</sup> For Archbishop Șaguna's reform please see Keith Hitchens, *Orthodoxy and Nationality: Andreiu Șaguna and the Romanians of Transylvania, 1846-1873* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1977). Also, for the Western influences in Șaguna's ecclesiology and social theology, see Johann Schneider, *Der Hermannstäädter Metropolit Andrei von Șaguna. Reform und Erneuerung der orthodoxen Kirche in Siebenbürgen und Ungarn nach 1848* (Köln: Böhlau Verlag, 2005); the Romanian translation (Sibiu: Deisis, 2008), 230-252. Regarding Șaguna's relevance for the Transylvanian Orthodox Church and its historiography, see Ioan-Vasile Leb, Gabriel-Viorel Gârdan, "Nationality and Confession in Orthodoxy," in *Journal for the Study of Religions and Ideologies*, vol. 7, no. 21 (2008), 66-78; Gabriel-Viorel Gârdan, "Andrei Șaguna and the Contemporary Historiography," in *Transylvanian Review*, vol. XX, no. 4, (2011), 287-303. For a balanced historical and theological analysis of the Șaguna's ecclesiology and its post-1918 career, see Paul Brusanovski, *Reforma constituțională din Biserica Ortodoxă a Transilvaniei între 1850-1923*, (Cluj-Napoca: Presa Universitară Clujeană, 2007).

Church's social and missionary undertakings and, also, to rally secular intellectuals with the Orthodox clergy on the same nationalist barricade. The participation of the Orthodox laity in the internal affairs of the Church also went hand in hand with the 19<sup>th</sup> century political activism displayed by the Orthodox clergy in the Austro-Hungarian political sphere to preserve the vernacular in confessional schools and to bolster national awareness among peasant masses.<sup>2</sup>

Again, Șaguna's reforms once implemented by the central and local administration of the Orthodox Church in Transylvania enjoyed massive popular support among Orthodox communities and safeguarded these communities in front of the nefarious policies of de-nationalization implemented by the Hungarian part of the dual Monarchy and against the aggressive proselytism displayed by the Uniate clergy among their Orthodox counterparts.<sup>3</sup> Nevertheless, the presence of the Orthodox laymen in the administration of the internal affairs of the Transylvanian Church ensured that any unrestrained loyalty towards the political centers and the central authority of the Dual Monarchy would be called into question by the Romanian majority in Transylvania on nationalist grounds, thus paving the way for the building an all-encompassing political front among and shielding the rights of the Romanian Orthodox believers.<sup>4</sup>

Therefore, I argue that Archbishop Șaguna's reform concerning the status of the laity in the Orthodox Church represents the birth date of a consciously shaped nationalistic "political Orthodoxy" in order to mobilize the Orthodox intellectuals and clergymen around the same nationalist ideas.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> For the political activism of the Romanian Orthodox clergy in Transylvania, see Sorin Mitu, *Geneza identității naționale la românii ardeleni* (Bucharest: Humanitas, 1997); Keith Hitchins, *A Nation Affirmed: The Romanian National Movement in Transylvania, 1860-1914* (Bucharest: Editura Enciclopedica, 1999), 169-220. Mihaela Bedecian, *Presa și Bisericile Românești din Transilvania (1865-1873)* (Cluj-Napoca: Presa Universitară Clujeană, 2010), 178-198. Marius Eppel, *Politics and Church in Transylvania 1875-1918* (Frankfurt: Peter Lang Verlag, 2012), 15-23.

<sup>3</sup> Peter E. Sugar, „Ethnicity in Eastern Europe,” in *Ethnic Diversity and Conflict in Eastern Europe*, edited by Peter E. Sugar, (Oxford: ABC-Clio, 1980), 428-429; Nicolae Bocșan, „Nation et confession en Transylvanie au XIX<sup>e</sup> siècle. Le cas de la Métropole roumaine”, in Nicolae Bocșan, Ioan Lumperdean, Ioan-Aurel Pop, *Ethnie et confession en Transylvanie* (Centrul de Studii Transilvane/Fundația Culturală Română, Cluj-Napoca, 1996), 93-183.

<sup>4</sup> Irina Livezeanu, *Cultural Politics in Greater Romania. Regionalism, National Building and Ethnic Struggle, 1918-1930* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1995), 211-244. Lucian Leuștean, “For the glory of Romanians: Orthodoxy and Nationalism in Greater Romania, 1918-1945,” *Nationalities Papers*, Vol. 35, no. 4 (September 2007), 720.

<sup>5</sup> I coined the term after Brian Porter-Szücs, *Faith and Fatherland. Catholicism, Modernity, and Poland* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 232-271. For a social analysis of this mobilization, see Peter F. Sugar, “Conclusion,” in Peter F. Sugar (ed.), *Native Fascism in Successor States, 1918-1945* (Santa Barbara: Clio, 1971), 170-173; Zoltán Pálffy, “Nationhood Reasserted: Transylvanian Educated Elites before and after the 1918 Change of Sovereignty,” in Anders E. B. Blomqvist, Constantin Iordachi, Balázs Trencsényi (eds.), *Hungary and Romania*, 331.

Although, clearly a political move of the hierarchy meant to gain support for the Church among Romanian intellectuals and to make them aware of the obstacles the Orthodox Church had to overcome for its very existence, the consolidation of a single Orthodox front was also meant to defend the confessional schools, to preserve the national aspirations of the Romanians, and to generate an Orthodox countermovement *en masse* against the competing “political Catholicism” extolled by the Roman- and the Greek-Catholic (Uniate) Church.<sup>6</sup> Although from a political point of view Șaguna’s reforms proved ineffective and designed only for the upper social classes, the presence of the Orthodox Church and its clergy in the cultural organizations and confessional schools belonging to the Romanian communities in Transylvania insured a long-term relationship on the one hand between the Church and the incipient national culture and between the very institution of the primary/secondary school and local clergymen.<sup>7</sup>

The generalization of Șaguna’s reform in the newly formed Romanian Patriarchy after 1925 was not the only factor triggering the rapid realignment of the Orthodox Church’s towards the laity. The decision of the Vatican to create a special organization for the laity and to expand the importance placed on the missionary apostolate assigned to laymen in the Roman Catholic Church.

As an organization for intellectuals founded under the umbrella of the Roman Church, the “Catholic Action” was initiated in 1927 by Pope Pius XI with the sole purpose of determining Catholic laity across the world to

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<sup>6</sup> See Christopher Clark, “The New Catholicism and the European Cultural Wars,” in *Culture Wars. Secular-Catholic Conflict in the Nineteenth-Century Europe* edited by Christopher Clark and Wolfram Kaiser (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 11-46. For the 19th century political activism of the Greek-Catholic (Uniate) Church, see Teodor V. Damsă, *Biserica Greco-Catolică din România din perspectivă istorică* (Timișoara: Editura de Vest, 1994), 206-214; Cornel Sigmirean, *Intellectualitatea ecleziastică. Preoții Blajului (1806-1946)* (Tg. Mureș: Editura Universității Petru Maior, 2007), 79-83. Hans-Christian Maner, „Die ‘rumänische Nation’ in den Konzeptionen griechisch-katolischer und orthodoxer Geistlicher und Intellektueller Siebenbürgens im 18. und 19. Jahrhundert,” in *Nationalisierung der Religion und Sakralisierung der Nation im östlichen Europa*, edited by Martin Schulze Wessel (Stuttgart: Franz Steiner Verlag, 2006), 76-85. Gabriel Adriányi and Jerzy Kłoczowski, “Catholic nationalism in Greater Hungary and Poland,” in *Cambridge History of Christianity*, Vol. 8, edited by Sheridan Gilley and Brian Stanley (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 267. For the relationship between nationalism and Greek-Catholicism, see John-Paul Himka, *Religion and Nationality in Western Ukraine. The Greek-Catholic Church and the Ruthenian Movement in Galicia, 1867-1900* (Montreal: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 1999), 23-72. For an overview of “political Catholicism” in the interwar years, see Martin Conway, “Catholic Politics or Christian Democracy? The Evolution of Interwar Political Catholicism” in *Political Catholicism in Europe 1918-1945*, Volume I, edited by Wolfram Kaiser, Helmut Wöhrle (London: Routledge, 2004), 193-206.

<sup>7</sup> Dumitru Stăniloae, *Catholicismul de după războiu* (Sibiu: Tiparul Tipografiei Arhidiecezane, 1933), 139-155.

actively participate to the Catholic hierarchy's apostolate.<sup>8</sup> The Roman Catholic's emphasize placed on the importance of the laity in the modern world proved to be a particular successful design in the case of the Romanian Greek-Catholic Church, especially in spreading Catholic ideas and attracting the secularized Uniate intelligentsia in performing ecclesiastical social work according to the ideals of the universal Church of Rome.<sup>9</sup>

By approaching and perceiving papal affidavit towards a joint activism of the clergymen and the laity in pursuing missionary goals for the inner consolidation of the Roman Church and its expansion among non-Catholics, the Transylvanian Greek-Catholic Church mobilized all its active forces and, although most of the Greek-Catholic elite turned secular by the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, encouraged its laymen to join local chapters of the Catholic Action.<sup>10</sup>

The major electoral success of the National Peasant Party in December 1928 especially in Transylvania where Greek-Catholic intellectuals drew substantial support and vouched for the newly formed party led by Iuliu Maniu (1873-1953) eventually materialized in substantial subsidies and administrative assistance received by the Greek-Catholics from central state authorities regarding all the contentious issues regarding the Uniate Church still hanging in the balance (the status of their properties, the confessional schools, the position of the Uniate Church in respect to Romanian nation, etc.). It also enabled them to stem the tide of the its constant interference in their Church's internal affairs and a new wave of laymen (including Orthodox) joined the organizations of the Catholic Action in Transylvania.<sup>11</sup> Moreover, the signing of the Concordat between the Romanian State and the Vatican also bolstered the actions of the Greek-Catholic among its intellectuals and outside the realm of the Catholic Church in the attempt to reconvert the Transylvanian "schismatic" intellectuals.

Several years before, because of the large amounts of land properties and financial subventions granted to the Roman and Greek Catholic Churches

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<sup>8</sup> For "Catholic Action", see John Pollard, *Catholicism in Modern Italy. Religion, Society and Politics since 1861* (London: Routledge, 2008), 76. For its political radicalization during the interwar period, see Jorge Dagnino, "Catholic Modernities in Fascist Italy: The Intellectuals of *Azione Cattolica*," in *Clerical Fascism in Interwar Europe* edited by Matthew Feldman, Marius Turda, Tudor Georgescu (London: Routledge, 2008), 117-131.

<sup>9</sup> Nicolae Brânzeu, *Acțiunea catolică* (Blaj: Diecezană, 1930), 15. For the interwar Greek-Catholic mobilization see Aurelia Știrban, Marcel Știrban, *Din Istoria Bisericii Române Unite de la 1918 la 1941* (Satu Mare: Editura Muzeului Sătmărean, 2005), 222-244.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid*, 241.

<sup>11</sup> Keith Hitchins, *Rumania*, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1994), 320-332; Irina Livezeanu, *Cultural Politics in Greater Romania. Regionalism, Nation Building, & Ethnic Struggle, 1918-1930*, (New York: Cornell University Press, 1995), 29-48; Stephen Fischer-Galați „The interwar period: Greater Romania,” in *Romania. A Historical Perspective*, edited by Dinu C. Giurescu and Stephen Fischer-Galați (Boulder: East European Monographs, 1998), 293-295.

by the Liberal government at the request of the dying King Ferdinand (+20<sup>th</sup> of July 1927),<sup>12</sup> the Orthodox Church replied in the Romanian Parliament through the voice of the Metropolitan Nicolae Bălan, who considered the Orthodox Church as the only institution able to contribute to the development of the Romanian nation.<sup>13</sup> Although the Orthodox Church protested vehemently against its ratification by the Romanian Parliament, it was later adopted and left the Church hierarchy with a sense of wounded pride and self-aware of their much weakened position within the national state.<sup>14</sup>

Determined by the Greek-Catholic mobilization of the laity and taking advantage of the fact that 1933 was an electoral year when the attention of the National Peasant Party would be focused on winning the upcoming elections, Metropolitan Nicolae Bălan of Transylvania decided to make a radical move and to impose a change of pace between the clergymen and the laity in the Orthodox Church.<sup>15</sup> Gradually, he picked up the 19<sup>th</sup> century idea of “political Orthodoxy” from the tradition of the Transylvanian Church and decided to capitalize on its basis and convert the social appeal in social mobilization in the political arena. By also turning to the religious effervescence and deep piety displayed by the young students and intellectuals associated with different intellectual and social backgrounds, the archbishop from Sibiu intended to galvanize the interest of the young generation of nationalists

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<sup>12</sup> King Ferdinand of Romania was a Roman Catholic by baptism but he baptized all of his children in the Orthodox faith, as a part of the agreement signed by King Carol, when he became Prince of Romanian in 1866. This measure disrupted the relations with the Pope in Vatican who refused to administer to the dying King the last communion. Wanting to receive his last rights from the Catholic Church, the King signed secretly a Concordat with Vatican, giving the Roman and the Greek Catholic Churches from Transylvania huge tracts of land and numerous financial concessions. For a complete inventory of the property entrusted by the Romanian State to the Roman-Catholic Church from Romania see Onisifor Ghibu, *Acțiunea Catolicismului Unguresc și a Sfântului Scaun în România Întregită. Raport înaintat M.S. Regelui Carol II* (Cluj: Institutul de Arte Grafice “Ardealul”, 1934), 22-23.

<sup>13</sup> Metropolitan Nicolae Bălan, *Biserica neamului și drepturile ei* (Sibiu: Tiparul Tipografiei Arhidiecezane, 1928), 32-34.

<sup>14</sup> See I. Mateiu, *Valoarea Concordatului încheiat cu Vaticanul* (Sibiu: Tiparul Tipografiei Arhidiecezane, 1924); Fr. V. Nistor, *Să se facă dreptate! Revendicările Bisericii Ortodoxe Române* (Sibiu: Asociația Clerului “A. Șaguna”, 1934), 16-19.

<sup>15</sup> For the ecumenism of Metropolitan Nicolae Bălan outside Transylvania, see Mihail Săsăujan, “Romanian Orthodox Theologians as Pioneers of the Ecumenical Dialogue between East and West: The Relevance and Topicality of their Position in Uniting Europe,” in Thomas Bremer (ed.), *Religion and Conceptual Boundary in Central and Eastern Europe. Encounters of Faiths* (Houndmills: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008), 152-155 and 146-152 for the whole attitude of the Romanian Orthodox Patriarchy towards the Ecumenical meetings and relations. For the implication of the Romanian Orthodox Church in the 1936 ecumenical debates with the Anglicans from Bucharest, see Bryn Geffert, *Eastern Orthodox and Anglicans. Diplomacy, Theology, and the Politics of Interwar Ecumenism* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 2010), 201-207.

towards the agenda of the Church and to determine them to co-sponsor his project.<sup>16</sup>

In the first instance Metropolitan Bălan brought in support from reputed Orthodox clergymen such as Dean Ioan Moța from Orăștie, who, despite their indifferent Old Kingdom counterparts, fostered radical nationalist feelings and played an active role in the affirmation of the Romanian nation in Austro-Hungarian context.<sup>17</sup> By establishing a common link with between his mindset and that of Șaguna's and by dully incorporating new ideas coming from Western Europe such the predominant role of the laity in ecclesiastical philanthropy, the role of the laymen in the public arena in defending in front of the secular state the moral role brought to light by the Christian churches, or in the management of the Church's finances, the Transylvanian initiative fell under the scope of the constant process of renewal already taking place in the Russian Orthodox theology of the exile.<sup>18</sup>

Furthermore, from the early 1920s up to the beginning of 1930s, Metropolitan Bălan cultivated strong relations of friendship with his protégés from Bucharest such as Fr. Grigore Cristescu (1895-1961) and even sought the support of the Bucharest nationalist intellectuals such as the famous theologian, poet, and journalist Nichifor Crainic (1889-1972).<sup>19</sup> By making extensive use of their voice in the pages of *Calendarul* and his own religious newspapers, he launched a press campaign of energizing the Transylvanian Orthodox lay-intellectuals around the Orthodox Church.<sup>20</sup>

<sup>16</sup> Metropolitan Nicolae Bălan was not the only post-1918 Romanian Orthodox Bishop interested in attracting the interest lay intellectuals in the inner-affairs of the Orthodox Church. Bishop Grigore Comșa of Arad (1889-1935) also promoted the idea of a "lay apostolate" during the 5<sup>th</sup> of March 1933 event in his speech. See Grigore Comșa, *Apostolatul laic* (Arad: Diecezană, 1933), 21.

<sup>17</sup> Valeriu Gabriel Basa, "Preotul Ion Moța și rolul său la dezvoltarea presei românești din Orăștie," *Slujitor al Bisericii și al Neamului. Părintele Prof. Univ. Dr. Mircea Păcurariu, membru corespondent al Academiei Române, la împlinirea vârstei de 70 de ani* (Cluj-Napoca: Renașterea, 2002), 443-453.

<sup>18</sup> Nicolae Arseniev, *Biserica Răsăriteană* (Bucharest: Gândirea, 1929), 11; Sergiu Bulgakov, *Orthodoxia* (Sibiu: Tiparul Tipografiei Arhidiecezane, 1933), 78.

<sup>19</sup> Elie Miron Cristea, *Note ascunse. Însemnări personale (1895-1937)* (Cluj-Napoca: Dacia, 1999), 52.

<sup>20</sup> Fr. Grigore Cristescu, "Nevoia apostolatului laic in zilele noastre," *Revista Teologică*, Year XIV, no. 10-11 (October-November 1924), 273-275. Fr. Grigore Cristescu (1895-1961) was trained in Bucharest (in Theology) and in Iași (in Letters). Studies in the Catholic Institute and Department of Protestant Theology from Paris (1921-1923). He graduated his PhD in 1924 and from that September that year until 1929 he taught Moral and Pastoral Theology in the Theological Academy from Sibiu. According to an archival document, ACNSAS, Fond Penal, file no. 258626, 59, his conversion to Șaguna's ideas took place while still teaching in Sibiu and, as in the case of Liviu Stan, it is possible that Metropolitan Nicolae Bălan had an influence in winning him over. Nichifor Crainic, "Semnalul Ardealului," in *Calendarul*, Year II, no. 307 (27<sup>th</sup> of February 1933), 1. Dragoș Protopopescu, "Cruciada ortodoxiei," *Calendarul*, Year II, no.317 (11<sup>th</sup> of March 1933), 1. For the historical context, see Philip Vanhaelemeersch, *A generation "without Beliefs" and the Idea of Experience in Romania (1927-1934)* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2006), 23.

Following Crainic's collaboration, even voices from Sibiu theological milieu shed light on the sustained efforts of Metropolitan Bălan to amass Orthodox intellectuals around their bishops and priests and popularized these ideas among the people of Bucharest.<sup>21</sup> As an example, Fr. Dumitru Stăniloae (1903-1993), at that time professor of Systematic Theology in Sibiu's Theological Academy and one of Metropolitan Bălan's most intimate protégés, advertised the founding of the fellowship in the special page "Biserica și Școala" in *Calendarul* and addressed an appeal to all the Orthodox lay intellectuals to join Metropolitane Bălan in the 5<sup>th</sup> of March meeting to found an association for Orthodox laity under the blessing of the Transylvanian Orthodox Metropolitan See.<sup>22</sup>

"Frăția Ortodoxă Română" [The Romanian Orthodox Fellowship] for the entire Transylvania was founded in Cluj-Napoca on the 5<sup>th</sup> of March 1933 in the presence of Patriarch Miron Cristea (1868-1939), Metropolitan Nicolae Bălan of Transylvania, Bishop Grigore Comșa of Arad (1889-1935), Bishop Nicolae Ivan of Cluj (1855-1936), Bishop Roman Ciorogariu of Oradea (1852-1936), Bishop Ioan Stroia of the Army (1865-1937), Auxiliary Bishop Tit Simedrea (1886-1971), and Auxiliary Bishop Vasile Stan (1875-1945).<sup>23</sup> The founding members based their initiative on the already present Fellowship of Orthodox intellectuals from Cluj, which was founded on December 5<sup>th</sup> 1932 at the initiative of Bishop Nicolae Ivan and a local group of intellectuals.<sup>24</sup> Moreover, during the official ceremony celebrating the peaceful conciliation between clergy and laity, the public discourse of Metropolitan Bălan laid down the main guiding principles meant to oversee the historical trajectory of the Orthodox Fellowship of laity in the near future.<sup>25</sup>

Outlining the main principles of the organization of Orthodox laity in Transylvania (the need for constant awareness of laity in front of the main threats such as neo-protestant proselytism and the spread of corrosive ideas among Orthodox communities to the missionary expansion preventing the fulfilment of its pastoral role), Metropolitan Bălan heavily underscored the importance of "the national factor" in any future action undertaken by the Orthodox Church and its laity.<sup>26</sup> Due to the contrasting views regarding which Transylvanian Church should be regarded as the sole spiritual expression of the Romanian nation, the Orthodox archbishop from Sibiu left no doubt on which Transylvanian Church fell the responsibility for preserving and nourishing the spirituality of the Romanian

<sup>21</sup> "Un partid clerical?" in *Cuvîntul*, Year V, no. 1477 (3<sup>rd</sup> of June 1929), 6.

<sup>22</sup> Fr. Dumitru Stăniloae, "Chemarea intelectualilor ortodocși din Ardeal," in *Calendarul*, Year II, no.278 (23d of January 1933), 3. He addressed the same invitation in "În Duminica Ortodoxiei să fim la Cluj!" in *Telegraful român*, Year LXXXI, no. 20-21 (4<sup>th</sup> of March 1933), 1.

<sup>23</sup> N. P., "Frăția Ortodoxă Română," in *Revista Teologică*, Year XXIII, no. 3 (March 1933), 128-132.

<sup>24</sup> "Frăția Ortodoxă Română," in *Renașterea*, Year XI, no. 10-11 (19<sup>th</sup> of March 1933), 1.

<sup>25</sup> "Cuvântarea I.P.S.S. Nicolae Bălan," in *Renașterea*, Year XI, no. 10-11 (19<sup>th</sup> of March 1933), 7-11.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid*, 9.

nation and, in front of the Romanian intellectuals from Transylvania assembled in Cluj, stated that “[Romanian] race and Orthodoxy are the original constitution of the Romanian national essence.”<sup>27</sup>

This particular detail mentioned by Metropolitan Nicolae Bălan in his speech signaled the ecclesiastical aspiration that Romanian elite from Transylvania and the former Kingdom of Romania would financially and politically support of the Orthodox Church by advocating the close-relationship between the Orthodox faith and the Romanian nationalism. Following in the footsteps of a number of lay intellectuals from Bucharest already stressing publically in their publications the vigorous organic relationship between Orthodoxy and Romanianness [*Românism*], Metropolitan Bălan and his closest collaborators poignantly adopted this nationalist perspective by funneling it through a more radical lens, a process suiting their intentions of monopolizing the “national” claim of their church.<sup>28</sup> It also responded to a process of nationalist re-definition of national identity, i.e. of what meant to be Romanian and Orthodox, an interrogative process already taking place in the intellectual and nationalist milieus of the late 1920s and early 1930s.

By making reference to the 1930 major debate between Nichifor Crainic (1889-1972) and Nae Ionescu (1890-1940), who associated Orthodox infused spirituality as depicted by the traditional folk culture with the essence of Romanian nationalism, and the Greek-Catholic claims of forming the Romanian national awareness as presented by Iosif Frollo (1886-1966) from the enlightened ideas of the Transylvanian School, Metropolitan Bălan launched a final missionary plea addressed to the Transylvanian laity and draw its support for the Orthodox Church, thus torpedoing the missionary mobilization from the 1930 of the Greek-Catholic intelligentsia and its corrosive proselytizing among the Orthodox believers.<sup>29</sup>

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<sup>27</sup> Metropolitan Nicolae Bălan, *Ortodoxia în mijlocul frământărilor de azi. Orientări programatice pentru Frăția Ortodoxă Română* (Sibiu: Diecezană, 1933), 14. FOR was also meant to offer an updated political alternative to the 19<sup>th</sup> century cultural association “ASTRA” from Sibiu, in which activated a number of Greek-Catholic or even Freemasons along with the Orthodox majority. For the Orthodox Church and Freemasons, see Metropolitan Nicolae Bălan, *Studiu asupra Francmasoneriei* (Bucharest: Tipografia Cărților Bisericești, 1937), 5-6; For the role of ASTRA after 1918 and its relationship with the Orthodox Church from Transylvania, see Valer Moga, *ASTRA și societatea, 1918-1930* (Cluj-Napoca: Presa Universitară Clujeană, 2003), 71-82.

<sup>28</sup> Teodor Bodogae, “Contribuția Ortodoxiei la formarea sufletului român,” in *Anuarul Academiei Teologice Andreiane*, Vol. IX (1932-1933), 125-132; N. [Nicolae Colan], “Biserica și Națiunea,” *Viața ilustrată*, Year I, no. 1 (March 1934), 2-6. N., “Ortodoxie și Românism,” in *Viața ilustrată*, Year I, no.2 (April 1934), 2-8

<sup>29</sup> Nae Ionescu, “Concordatul,” in *Cuvântul* Year IV, no. 1039 (8<sup>th</sup> of March 1928), 1. This article was followed by another seven on the same topic. Katherine Verdery, “National Ideology and National Character in interwar in Romania”, in Ivo Banac & Katherine Verdery (eds.), *National Character and National Ideology in Interwar Eastern Europe* (New Haven: Yale Center for International and Area Studies, 1995) p. 105.

Also, another point on Archbishop Nicolae Bălan related to his wish to create an Orthodox, nationalist alternative for social mobilization to the Freemasonry sweeping through the lines of Orthodox intellectuals and the re-direct the attention of the Transylvanian intelligentsia from the traditional political parties to more nationalistic and pro-religious attitude. As one of the founding members of FOR elected as Secretary General of the organization Ion Mateiu (1884-1946) confirmed the primordial role of the fellowship was to reconnect the intellectuals with the spiritual ideals of the Orthodox clergy and to re-insert these ideals in the Romanian politics.<sup>30</sup>

During the sessions of the gathering of Orthodox intellectuals, the assembled members elected their president in the person of university professor Ioan Lupaș and Ion Mateiu as their Secretary General for the next four years.<sup>31</sup> Furthermore, at the behest of Nicolae Colan, the delegates selected several of them from every Transylvanian bishopric (Sibiu, Cluj, Oradea, Caransebeș, Arad) to constitute the permanent delegations of FOR in every Transylvanian chapter.<sup>32</sup>

The nationalist press welcomed the creation of the Orthodox fellowship perceived as the return of the old generation to Christ and His Church, re-adopting and, thus, acknowledging the youth's efforts to preserve Christianity from secularism or atheist influences.<sup>33</sup> During the 1930s in their publications stressing the importance of unified radical nationalist agenda different laymen advocated for a militant Orthodox Church, with its priests acting in the Romanian society as the moral censors and constant nationalistic educators of the Romanian political life.<sup>34</sup> Also, the Orthodox clergy from Sibiu such as Fr. Spiridon Căndea from Sibiu picked up this topic in a praising article, commemorating five years from the establishment of F.O.R.<sup>35</sup>

## **2. Pouring New Wine in Old Bottles: Fr. Liviu Stan's Contribution to the Debate regarding the Status of Laity in the Orthodox Church**

The establishment of the royal dictatorship of King Carol II with its royal conservative authoritarianism and integral nationalism as the main

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<sup>30</sup> I. Mateiu, "Frăția Ortodoxă Română". *Obiective și Metode* (Cluj: Tiparul Tipografiei Ortodoxe Române, 1933), 4.

<sup>31</sup> "Frăția Ortodoxă Română," in *Renașterea*, Year XI, no. 10-11 (19th of March 1933), 15.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid*, 16.

<sup>33</sup> Cuvântul studentesc, "Frăția Ortodoxă Română" și studențimea," *Cuvântul studentesc*, Year VIII, no. 2 (12 of March 1933), 3. See also V. Coman, "Tineretul și Frăția Ortodoxă," *Viața ilustrată*, Year I, no.1 (March 1934), 21.

<sup>34</sup> Pompiliu Nicolau, *Naționalismul constructiv* (Bucharest: Cugetarea, 1937), 65.

<sup>35</sup> Fr. Spiridon Căndea, "Necesitatea actuală a apostolatului laic," *Revista Teologică*, Year XXVIII, no. 3 (March 1938), 89-98; Fr. Dumitru Păcurariu, *230 de ani de învățământ teologic la Sibiu*, 153-189

ideological means to seduce the masses into submission imposed a conceptual reassessment of the previously employed “political Orthodoxy” as related with the preponderance of the laymen in every ecclesiastical aspect.<sup>36</sup> During this period from 1938 to the autumn 1940, one of Metropolitan Nicolae Bălan’s most fervent clergymen, Fr. Liviu Stan (1910-1973) focused his theological writing on a topic dear to the Transylvanian Orthodox Church: the status of the laymen in the Orthodox Church’s constitutive assemblies, the importance of their vote in electing bishops or in controlling the Church’s finances, their involvement in the social care or the missionary work carried out by the Church in the public sphere.<sup>37</sup> By publishing his PhD thesis in Canon Law defended at the University of Cernăuți, Fr. Liviu Stan fell in line with the wishes of his protector and Mecena, Metropolitan Nicolae Bălan, who hoped for a theological argumentation that provided new avenues of development and much-needed rationale for furthering the social and ecclesiological mobilization of the Transylvanian laity in support of the Orthodox Church.<sup>38</sup>

The theological spearhead was Fr. Liviu Stan, the best canon law expert of the Romanian Orthodox Church at that time. In 1939, he published *Mirenii în Biserică. Studiu Canonic-Istoric*, his first major theological work.<sup>39</sup> It opened with a quote authored by his mentor Archbishop Nicolae Bălan, making reference to the 1933 rapprochement between Orthodox intellectuality and the clergy as the long-awaited fulfilment of Șaguna’s tradition:

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<sup>36</sup> For the royal dictatorship please see Al. Gh. Savu, *Dictatura regală 1838-1940* (Bucharest: Politică, 1970); Maria Bucur, “Carol II of Romania” in Bernd J. Fischer (ed.), *Balkan Strongmen: Dictators and Authoritarian Rulers of South-Eastern Europe* (London: Hurst, 2007), 87-118; Constantin Iordachi, “A Continuum of Dictatorships: Hybrid Totalitarian Experiments in Romania, 1937-1944,” António Costa Pinto, Aristotle Kallis (eds.), *Rethinking Fascism and Dictatorship in Europe* (Houndmills: Palgrave, 2014), 246-253. For the post-1918 realities regarding the Orthodox Church in the Greater Romania, see Paul Bruszanowski, *Autonomia și constituționalismul în dezbaterile privind unificarea Bisericii Ortodoxe Române (1919-1925)* (Cluj-Napoca: Presa Universitară Clujeană, 2007), 331; Paul Bruszanowski, *Rumänisch-orthodoxe Kirchenordnungen (178 -2008): Siebenbürgen-Bukowina-Rumänien* (Köln: Böhlau, 2011), 283-287.

<sup>37</sup> Also, Fr. Spiridon Căndea, a professor of Pastoral Theology penned some contributions strictly related to his teaching position. See Spiridon Căndea, “Pastorația familiei,” in *Anuarul Academiei Teologice Andreiene*, edited by Dumitru Stăniloae, vol. XIV (1937-1938), 5-47.

<sup>38</sup> Fr. Liviu Stan, Liviu Stan, I.S. *Mitropolit Nicolae al Ardealului și principiul autonomiei bisericesti* (Sibiu: Tiparul Tipografiei Arhidiecezane, 1940); Fr. Liviu Stan, *Biserica și dreptul. Studii de drept canonic ortodox. Probleme canonice actuale*, Vol. V (Sibiu: Editura Andreiană, 2014), 112-113. Bishop Nicolae Popoviciu, “Școala Mitropolitului Nicolae Bălan,” *Omagiu Înalt Prea Sfinției Sale Dr. Nicolae Bălan Mitropolitul Ardealului La Douăzeci de Ani de Arhipăstorie* (Sibiu: Tiparul Tipografiei Arhidiecezane, 1940), 178-181. Fr. Dumitru Păcurariu, *230 de ani de învățământ teologic la Sibiu 1786-2016* (Sibiu: Andreiană, 2016), 155.

<sup>39</sup> Fr. Liviu Stan, *Mirenii în Biserică. Importanța elementului mirean în Biserică și participarea lui la exercitarea puterii bisericesti. Studiu Canonic-Istoric* (Sibiu: Tiparul Tipografiei Arhidiecezane, 1939).

Through Şaguna's legislation, we turned back to the principles of the primordial Christianity with the only thought in mind to tie the knot between the Church and its people. ...We in the first place fell responsible to defend the rights deserved by the laymen in our Church... and we need their collaboration because they are *a constitutive part of the Church*.<sup>40</sup>

Fr. Liviu Stan's undertaking constitutes itself in a theological and historical attempt to contextualize over time the role of the laymen in the Church. Originated in Archbishop Şaguna's posterity and in the trail opened by Archbishop Nicolae Bălan Fr. Liviu Stan accommodated in his book several intellectual trends and ideas floating inside his mind at that particular time. The importance of the laymen in the process of decision making in the Church, caesaro-papism when describing the relation between the Church and the Romanian monarchy, the laymen and the clergymen as constitute parts of the national/ecclesiological overlapping communities represent the conceptual targets settled by Fr. Liviu Stan's book.<sup>41</sup>

As he acknowledged in one of his footnotes the trigger determining him to produce this book was the 1933 mobilization of the F.O.R. by Metropolitan Nicolae Bălan, offering the theological basis of existence to the Romanian Orthodox Fellowship of laity.<sup>42</sup> By proposing a compelling historical argumentation stressing the close collaboration of laity and the clergy in leading the Church and in the administration of its wealth Fr. Liviu Stan intended to curb the tendencies towards the laity disproportionate importance in relation with the episcopate, the indiscriminating clericalism, the intrusion of the political parties under the cover of defending the laity's rights in the church, the lack of balance of power between the two constitutive parts of the Church or their complete separation in the ecclesiastical corpus.<sup>43</sup> Idealistically ambitious, the book of Fr. Liviu Stan turned out to be an successful undertaking to reconcile the two conflicting parts of the ecclesiological body especially during the Second World War years and during the first years of the Communist regime. Even the Communist authorities refrained from dismantling the Şaguna's Statute (*Statutul şagunian*) from the Orthodox Church's canon law and its constitutional and elective assemblies. Fr. Liviu Stan's insights continued to fuel the minds of

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<sup>40</sup> Dr. Nicolae Bălan, *Ortodoxia în mijlocul frământărilor de azi* (Sibiu: Tiparul Tipografiei Arhidiecezane, 1933), 7-9. See Fr. Mihai Himcinschi, "Rolul și importanța apostolatului laic în misiunea Bisericii," in *Dreptul canonic în viața Bisericii*, edited by Fr. Florin Dobrei (Deva/Alba Iulia: Editura Episcopiei Devei și Hunedoarei/Reîntregirea, 2015), 197-211.

<sup>41</sup> Fr. Liviu Stan, *Mirenii*, 236.

<sup>42</sup> Fr. Liviu Stan, *Mirenii*, 123.

<sup>43</sup> Fr. Liviu Stan, *Mirenii*, 289.

young theologians and kept alive the idea of ecclesiological collegiality between clergymen and laity in the Romanian Orthodox Church and led Șaguna's ideas to theological and institutional impersonation.

### **3. Instead of Final Remarks**

The foundation of the Romanian Orthodox Fellowship (FOR) in March 1933 stands out as proof of the constant capacity of theological inner-renewal of the Transylvanian Orthodox Church and its institutional ability to exercise the ecclesiastical collegiality with their fellow laymen. By encouraging priests and intellectuals to join hands to stem the tide of the Greek Catholic proselytism and keep at bay the dangerous ideas spread by the secular organizations, the Orthodox hierarchy re-aligned its interests along the missionary lines of the Orthodox theology at that time. The contribution of Metropolitan Nicolae Bălan and his bishops to the social mobilization of the clergy under the banner of the Romanian Orthodox Fellowship proved to be a decisive factor in the reenactment of the ideas of his illustrious predecessor, Archbishop Andrei Șaguna. The collaboration between laity and clergymen insured a much more assertive attitude of the Transylvanian Church and a useful forum of negotiation inside the Orthodox Church against anarchical tendencies and possible splinter groups. Although the fellowship stood as a highly-selective, elitist body of upper class intellectuals and people coming from liberal professions discouraging upward mobility and the actual presence in its governing bodies of the lower classes (peasants, proletarians, small business owners, etc.), the Romanian Orthodox Fellowship marks a first step towards progress and towards a much wider participation of the laity in the internal affairs of the Orthodox Church.

The theological effort of Fr. Liviu Stan stands out as the constitutive last piece of the puzzle. Although many historians and theologians grappled with Liviu Stan sophisticated predicaments as too visionary or lacking the needed invigorating appeal for the Orthodox Church especially during Communist regime, the theology of laity as put forward by professor of canon law from Sibiu still functions as the linchpin between the theological tradition of the 19<sup>th</sup> and that of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Tackling with the intricate topic such as the status of the laity in the Orthodox Church and the constant accusations of clericalism imposed from outside the Orthodox Church by different intellectuals or competing religious denominations, Fr. Stan reshuffled the outdated perspective of the Orthodox ecclesiology and turned it around back to the life of the Spirit.

His insightful remarks paved the way for a theological grounding of the privileged position of the laity, proving to be a religious incentive for the institutional and philanthropic collaboration between the two layers of the

Orthodox Church. Although Fr. Liviu Stan's poignant book still constitutes the closing and the fulfilment of Şagunian project of restoring a sense of reasonable equality between the clergy and the laymen, and the sense of usefulness of the laity inside the ecclesiological structure of the Orthodox Church, the contemporary appliance of this ecclesiological project hangs today in the balance.

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## CHURCH AND COMMUNIST REGIME IN SERBIA

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**ABSTRACT.** Christianity as a religion is not anti-political, but as in other segments of its existence, it overcomes politics and human organizations, for the Lord tells us that 'My Empire is not of this world' (Jn 18:36). Morals, which are so important for Christ's faith, invite people to accept authority and comply with civil obedience. Everything can be misused, or misunderstood, however, the general moral significance of the State is needed to limit evil and to maintain good for everyone when it comes to social relations between people.<sup>1</sup> The State, as a system of legal regulations that manages interpersonal relations in one community, exists in various forms, almost as many as mankind. Unfortunately, Christianity wasn't well understood from its very beginning in the country where it appeared – the Roman Empire, because of suspicion that it's anti-state and anarchist, even thought that is far from the truth. It took some time until the State realized the meaning of St. Paul's words: "Let everyone put himself under the authority of the higher powers, because there is no power which is not of God, and all powers are ordered by God" (Rom 13:1), these words imply that Christians can be good citizens only if a common language is found. However, at certain times even after gaining its freedom the Church has borne a wreath of martyrdom because of State persecution. History shows us that the systems that fought against the Church, actually fought against God, and the one who fights against God is always defeated in the end.

**Keywords:** Church, Yugoslavia, Communism, suffering

### Introduction

After the end of the First World War, a long-awaited wish of South Slavic nations to have their own state, was finally realized in 1918. In the Balkans, from former territories of the Austro-Hungarian Empire and the Ottoman Empire, the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes was formed. The state unity encouraged to find a solution for the dissolved Church, as was done by the renewal of the Patriarhate of Peć in 1920.

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<sup>1</sup> Ivica Zivkovic, *Christian ethics: The relationship of Christians towards the Government: State, Society and Human Rights* (Belgrade, 2011), 169.

In the 1920s, the world was recovering from the effects of the war by accelerated modernization and improvement of infrastructure. The constitutional monarchy led by the royal dynasty of Karađorđević enabled the Serbian Church unhindered development, more precisely it worked on restoring spiritual unity of the Serbian people and created conditions for the improvement of the Church life in the spirit of new needs. During the administration of the patriarch Dimitri (+1930), the administrative organization was improved by creating new dioceses and ecclesiastical organs. Orthodox Christian faculty was found in the University of Belgrade for the needs of education of new generations of the clergy. The work of patriarch Dimitri was continued by his successor, patriarch Varnava (+1939).

Among the prominent figures from the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century in the Serbian Church, is Bishop Nikolaj Velimirović. The work of the newly established National Christian Community was helped by his advocacy in 1920, the well-known Prayer movement, in order to defend Orthodox Christian faith from various sects that came to the Serbian territory after the Great War. This movement, which worked until the beginning of the Second World War, largely determined the course of the work of Serbian Orthodox Church and people of the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, and we can still see today the consequences. Especially there was a link between nationalism and Saint Sava, from where the term 'Svetosavlje' comes from. Svetosav nationalism, in its negative form, caused much damage to the Serbian Church during the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, when the Church had to struggle with the division within itself, while also fighting for existence in the new state order. As an overture to the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, during the Second World War, but also somewhat earlier, in the territory of Yugoslavia, communism appeared.

This work is dedicated to the relationship between the Serbian Orthodox Church and one of the most humiliating systems of state governance, communism, which committed horrible crimes in an effort to exterminate the faith of the people and erase the Name of God. We will try to explain the historical circumstances that marked the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century and their consequences, when the short-lived, but demonic evil and bloody, reign of Nazism gave way to a godless communism that oppressed, humiliated and persecuted the Church of God for almost half a century.

## **I. Communism and its Historical Formation on the Territory of Yugoslavia**

Communism (lat. Communio – community) represents an ideology that advocates the establishment of a classless society that is based on joint ownership of the means of production. In its present form, communism emerged from the workers' movement of Europe from the 19<sup>th</sup> century, which was conditioned by

advanced capitalism that cruelly exploited workers in every possible way. The fathers of communism are Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, who advocated the idea of revolution as a form of freedom from the existing system and the introduction of radical social equality. The basic principles of their ideology are: the destruction of capitalism by armed forces and the establishment of the communist society and the dictatorship (rule) of the working class.<sup>2</sup> It should be noted that communism, after the October Revolution in Russia in 1917, when the imperial Romanov family was executed, received its anti-monarchist spirit; the fact that the Church was closely linked to the monarchy because of their traditional cooperation, communism became an anti-clerical movement. Warfare against the monarchy meant war against the Church, and war against the Church was war against religion and God.

The Communist Party in the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes was created in 1919, as the Communist Party of Yugoslavia, which was banned by the royal government after a couple of years, but continued to operate illegally, spreading its influence and gaining more and more supporters. In 1937 Josip Broz Tito became the head of the party; his goal was to fight against fascism, takeover power and establish a socialist republic. The monarchy collapsed during World War II, when the king fled, and Yugoslavia was occupied by Germany. The Allies decided to provide the support to Tito and the Communists, which was the final blow to the monarchy and the beginning of the political rise of communism in the former Kingdom of Yugoslavia, which ceased to exist officially on November 29<sup>th</sup> 1945, with the declaration of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia.

## II. Serbian Church and Communism

The Serbian Church was able to organize and strengthen itself, even though historical circumstances heralded a dark future for it in the first half of the twentieth century. Patriarch Varnava greatly improved the life of the Church, as it was in his time that the Serbian Church reached the number of 37 dioceses, adopted the Constitution of the Serbian Orthodox Church and started the construction and reconstruction of many churches, among others, the church of St. Sava on the Vračar in Belgrade (1935).<sup>3</sup> Unfortunately, this flourishing church life was short-lived. The monarchy was in crisis due to the strengthening separatism in some parts, especially among the Croatian population. The Roman Catholic Church was not satisfied with its position, in spite of its age-

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<sup>2</sup> Ranko Pejić, *History* (Serbian Sarajevo, 2003), 240.

<sup>3</sup> Radomir Popović, *Orthodoxy at the crossroads of centuries: Local Orthodox churches* (Belgrade, 1999), 132.

old aspirations to regain supremacy in the Balkans. Yugoslav politics which was year to year more strongly pursued by the royal government, not only failed to reconcile differences within the religiously and ethnically divided monarchy, but irritated even more those who were already dissatisfied.<sup>4</sup> The attempts of joining the Concordat with the Roman Catholic church collapsed because of the harsh reaction of the Serbian church, which was soon pushed into the background due to the outbreak of World War II, that brought the world enormous suffering and destruction, but also changes in the field of political configuration, because the world was faced with the expansion of communism.

### ***1. Serbian Church after the Second World War***

At the peak of the Concordat crisis in 1937, under strange circumstances, Patriarch Varnava died, and his place was taken by the former Metropolitan of Montenegro and the Littoral, Gavriilo (Dožić). During the unfortunate war that divided Europe and the world, Patriarch Gavriilo took refuge in the monastery of Rakovica, then in the Žiča and finally to the monastery Ostrog. He was captured by the Nazis in Ostrog and deported to Belgrade, where they kept him in prison. The execution of the patriarch was not possible, even though the Germans wanted it, but they knew it would just irritate the enslaved people. In 1944, the Patriarch, together with Bishop Nikolaj Velimirović, was imprisoned in the Dachau concentration camp, where he stayed until the end of war. During the absence of the patriarch, who could not immediately return to Serbia – he would return only in 1946 – the deputy for Belgrade was Metropolitan of Skopje Josif Cvijović.<sup>5</sup>

The Metropolitan Josif was an energetic man who was aware of the difficult situation, so he took care of the Serbian church, and did everything that was possible to allow the work of the Holy Synod of Bishops,<sup>6</sup> taking over the presidency of the Synod as the oldest bishop at consecration. The Communist government had already begun even before the end of the war, to be unjust towards the Church and the clergy, so that the Metropolitan publicly addressed a protest letter to Josip Broz Tito, where we learn about the relationship between the Church and the communist authorities at the very beginning of his reign: “...With various sides to the Holy Synod are incoming complaints from ecclesiastical

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<sup>4</sup> Zoran M. Jovanovic, *Belgrade Archdiocese and its environment in space and time* (Belgrade, 2014), 120.

<sup>5</sup> Veselinovic, 269.

<sup>6</sup> Sava Vukovic (Bishop of Sumadija), *Serbian hierarchs* (Kragujevac-Belgrade-Podgorica, 1996), 262.

authorities. We cannot ignore the many cases where national authorities unfairly interfere in internal affairs of the Church.” Here a Metropolitan introduced only a couple of cases, where the government had interfered in church affairs and the Liturgy, attacked the priests, desecrated holy objects, forbade prayers and other ceremonies, and even physically attacked the clergy, in almost all dioceses of the Serbian Orthodox Church, not only in Serbia. Then the Metropolitan vehemently requested that the government enforce and respect the freedom of the Church and its organizations, to respect and protect its clergy, and to return church property seized by the state government during the war. He finished his letter with these words: “You may think of the Church what you will, but by legal status, which the Church is constitutionally guaranteed, everyone has to respect it.. As you can see from all that was written above there were a lot of cases in which the Serbian Orthodox church was the victim of the gravest violations, and therefore the Holy Synod, in the interest of the correct legal relationship between Church and State, asks the Presidency of the Yugoslav Government to stop with these actions, and that the regional state authorities order the necessary instructions, as it is stated above.”<sup>7</sup> This was in 1945. The state did not grant the Metropolitan’s request.

Even before the war the Communist government had a vision of creating a federal state based on six countries, with the prerequisite to create these six countries. The Communists wanted to create a Macedonian and Montenegrin state, which also involved the creation of independent church organizations, independent from Belgrade, to be as efficient as established pseudo-national consciousness. In 1944 the so-called Initiative committee for the organization of church life in Macedonia was founded, which was quite ignorant of the earlier church organization.<sup>8</sup> It was the beginning of the creation of the non-canonical Macedonian Orthodox Church, until now unrecognized. Metropolitan Josif and the Holy Synod did not agree with this, but the government was persistent. In the late 1946 Patriarch Gavrilo returned from abroad and immediately convened an urgent meeting of the Holy Synod. Unfortunately, the war was taking its toll and freedom was not met by Dabrobosnian Metropolitan Petar Zimonjić, Upperkarlovac Bishop Sava Trlajić, Banja Luka Bishop Platon and the Czech-Moravian Gorazd. The four bishops died as martyrs by the hands of the invaders. Patriarch Gavrilo was grieved as one evil replaced the other evil. The departure of Nazi troops did not bring the expected prosperity and freedom, but an even worse situation encouraged by the attitude of government authorities toward the Church and

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<sup>7</sup> Radomir Popovic, *Sources for church history – second edition: Letter from Metropolitan of Skopje to Josip Broz Tito* (Belgrade, 2006), 576.

<sup>8</sup> Slavko Dimevski, *History of the Macedonian Orthodox church* (Skopje, 1989), 34.

all of its concerns. The question of the Macedonian church remained unsolved, although the state pressure was rather increasing. The communist government of that time implemented extensive measures against the Serbian church, among other things, in addition to what has in the protest letter written by Metropolitan Josif, the government completely separated the Church from the state, took its land possessions of approximately 70,000 hectares and 1,180 buildings, which were worth about eight billion dinars.<sup>9</sup> Patriarch Gavriilo had already died under strange circumstances, suddenly in 1950, at age of 71, although he did not feel sick or enfeebled.

The successor of Patriarch Gavriilo was the Bishop of Zletovo-Strumica and administrator of the Ohrid and Bitola Diocese, Vikentije. It should be noted that the communist government had put pressure on the upper echelons of the Serbian church in order for Vikentije to be elected, which was evidenced by the presence of representatives of the Initiative Committee of the electoral council, by the will of the state. The communist government believed that by choosing him, it will achieve all its goals when it comes to the “Macedonian question”, but they were wrong. Patriarch Vikentije did not allow to violate the canonical tradition of the Church for the sake of national interests that were not just secular, but would also do harm to Serbian people. Pressure was exerted on all sides and after only two years the Patriarch received a state act, by which the Theological Faculty was excluded from the University, due to his refusal to consider the “Macedonian Question”.<sup>10</sup> The patriarch gave in and the Holy Assembly of Bishops of the Serbian Orthodox Church accepted the request of the autonomy of the Church in Macedonia in 1955, based on the existence of the former ancient Ohrid Archbishopric. Unfortunately, the sincere desire of the Serbian Church for Macedonia to develop normal religious life was not identical with the communist wishes, because the communists wanted a “Macedonian nation”, hated the Church itself, and initiated the creation of the Macedonian church in order to achieve their own goals. The Patriarch visited Macedonia but he didn’t give his blessing for the establishment of the canonical Church in addition to the existing hierarchy of the Serbian Church. The Parliament of the Serbian church refused the nominations for bishops of Macedonia (since it is part of the certificate of autonomy, and included in the national hierarchy), holding that all candidates were unfit (they were all married priests), but the government warned that the issue of the Macedonian church must be solved, regardless of canonical and other obstacles. All this was followed by a shock to the Church and the nation. Patriarch Vikentije died under very mysterious

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<sup>9</sup> Popovic, 132.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid., 133.

circumstances, shortly after the regular session of the Holy Assembly of Bishops, in which he and the bishops confirmed his decision not to recognize the so-called "Macedonian Orthodox Church". He died on July 5<sup>th</sup>, 1958 in Belgrade.<sup>11</sup> In his place was elected the former Bishop of Zica, German.

## ***2. Church and Political Events in Yugoslavia during the Second Half of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century***

After the Second World War, according to the Metropolitan Josif, the Serbian Church was thrown into poverty, because it was the first time in history that it lost its property and secure revenue for the maintenance of the central bodies and educational institutions.<sup>12</sup>

The new Yugoslavia, unlike the first, monarchist state, was filled by state-national or state-civil Yugoslavism, combined with ethno-pluralism, which recognized the equality of all nationalities. In 1953, when Stalin – a second Diocletian, one could say – the great communist leader of the USSR died, Josip Broz Tito came to power as President of Yugoslavia; he was nothing less "religious" than Stalin. Ten years later, in 1963, the name of Yugoslavia was changed to the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (SFRY), and its leader, the hero of heroes, was Tito. He was Yugoslavia, and Yugoslavia was him.<sup>13</sup>

Patriarch German was one of the most important Serbian shepherds of the Church, since he led the Church at the time of the most severe persecution, perhaps even worse than the Turkish times.<sup>14</sup> His election was accompanied by pressure from state authorities, since he was considered the most suitable candidate for future cooperation between the Church and State. At the time of the election of Patriarch German, almost everyone was talking about corrupt elections – that the last sexton knew that the Patriarch was elected against the will of archbishops, with good agitation and terror.<sup>15</sup> These stories, which are not completely untrue, are the reason why Patriarch German was called the "red patriarch" in later sources. The next year, in 1959, he was enthroned in Peć. That year, the Serbian Orthodox Church, by the signature of the Patriarch recognized the so-called pseudo-Macedonian church's creation and, consequently, the head of the Serbian church bore the title, unprecedented since the existence of the Patriarchate of "Serbian and Macedonian patriarch"; as an expression of its

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<sup>11</sup> Vukovic, 79.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, 263.

<sup>13</sup> Holm Zundhausen, *Serbian history from 19<sup>th</sup> to 21<sup>th</sup> century*, translated from German by Tomislav Bekic (Belgrade, 2009), 381.

<sup>14</sup> Djoko Slijepcevic, *History of Serbian Orthodox Church III* (Belgrade, 1991), 89.

<sup>15</sup> Misina Veljko Djuric, German Djoric, *Patriarch in dedivinized age* (Belgrade, 2012), 54.

gratitude, the state awarded him the Order of the Yugoslav Flag of the First Order.<sup>16</sup> However, confirmation of the Macedonian quasi autonomy, failed to please the Macedonians. In the following months there were problems due to the insolence of the “chief” of the Macedonian Church, Metropolitan Dositej (+1981); he had been the vicar of patriarch Vikentije, after whose death the ethnic-church synod in Skopje elected him as the non-canonical “Archbishop of Ohrid and metropolitan of Skopje and Macedonia.” According to the folk proverbs, if you don’t want the easy way, we’ll go the hard way, the third national-church synod in Skopje in 1967, on the occasion of the two hundred years anniversary of the abolition of the Ohrid Archbishopric, declared the autocephalous status of the Macedonian church. The Serbian Church refused to accept this precedent and distanced itself from the Macedonian church, indicting the former Metropolitan Dositej and four bishops, which came with him into schism, in the canonical court. None of the Eastern Orthodox Churches recognized the autocephaly. The attitude of Patriarch German has not changed even after the elections of Dositej’s successor, Angelarije (+1987) and Gavriilo II (+1993), who, after their enthronement, sent requests to Belgrade to recognize the autocephaly, for which they received a negative answer.

Besides the “Macedonian question”, Patriarch German was the culprit in the Serbian church’s suffering in other ways, for example, many priests suffered persecution and torture by government authorities, and no one was allowed to even speak about the issue. On the relationship between communist authorities and Church, the Serbian Orthodox clergy speak about mostly tragic and bitter experiences after the 1945: they were forbidden to perform clerical actions, expelled, killed, arrested and convicted, especially in the area of Banja Luka eparchy.<sup>17</sup> Many priests were leaving Yugoslavia, which was a big problem to bishops and the patriarch.<sup>18</sup> The consequences of systematically pushing the Church to the margins of society evidently were difficult. Disruption of the traditional religious rituals in Orthodox churches was a daily occurrence. The ones that were observing religious and traditional customs, possessed icons and religious symbols in their homes, were usually sent to the judges! It is difficult even today to prepare a precise list of churches and parish buildings that were desecrated, icons and relics that were destroyed, given the fact that state authorities did not record many of these misdeeds, and also on the other hand the Church itself was sometimes forbidden to report crimes. In implementing its politics towards the Church, the state had many ecclesiastic goods proclaimed cultural and historical monuments, singling them out from the wing of the

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<sup>16</sup> Dragoljub Vurdelja, *Decapitated Serbian Church* (Trieste, 1964), 80.

<sup>17</sup> Dragan Scur, *Banja Luka Diocese during Bishop Vasilije Kostic, 1947-1961* (Banja Luka, 2009), 48.

<sup>18</sup> Djuric and Djoric, 160.

Church. And finally, the very youth of Church was devalued, since the theologians were not entitled to social security, and were invited to the military service before graduation. The situation was more than difficult, since the priests were mostly old, and there was nobody to replace them.

The turning point in the history of communism in Yugoslavia was the death of the former leader, the last major of World War II and symbolic figure of Socialist Yugoslavia, Josip Broz Tito, on May 4<sup>th</sup> 1980. The oligarchy of the country, in a false homogenous state, began a relentless struggle for power<sup>19</sup> and slowly started to leave communist traditions of the previous decades, which brought a positive change for rigid ideological attitude towards religion and the Church.

Cooperation of Patriarch German with communist authorities, despite outcry of individual bishops like the bishop of Raska-Prizren, Pavle (the latter successor Patriarch German), led to the fact that the Serbian diaspora in the United States separated from the mother Church in 1963, with the leadership of the US-Canadian Bishop Dionisije. This was certainly a part of plan of the communist government to sever ties between the Serbs in Serbia and those in the diaspora, and on the other hand Dionisije himself was an ambitious man, having previously asked the Holy Synod to grant him the title of metropolitan, three Vicars, and to add to his territory South America and South Africa. The Serbian church subsequently joined by dividing the American-Canadian Diocese, which served as a pretext for the schism. Besides this painful event in Serbian Church Parliament, with decay of communist regime bishops intended to renew the prayer movement of Bishop Nikolaj, to rehabilitate his personality and ideas, as well as the promotion of a tougher course for the country.<sup>20</sup>

The last Christmas epistle of Patriarch German was rocked by 1989. His Holiness was bedridden due to illness, and soon after, the Holy Assembly decided that the patriarch would retire in 1990. He died on August 27<sup>th</sup> 1991 and was buried in St. Mark's Church in Belgrade.<sup>21</sup> Even during his lifetime, Pavle, the Bishop of Raska and Prizren, was elected in 1990 for the new patriarch. The old Yugoslavia "died" in 1992 when the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia began, which marked the end of communism in Yugoslavia; the new state consisted of Serbia and Montenegro. The Serbian Church, led by the new Patriarch, opted for nationalism in those turbulent years; it at least managed to get through the "American question," when in 1992 it repaired the rift in the US, but the Macedonian issue was not resolved.

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<sup>19</sup> Zundhausen, 413.

<sup>20</sup> Djuric, 256.

<sup>21</sup> Vukovic, 135.

## Conclusion

For the Church the world still is the world whose face passes (1Cor 7:31), and this attitude applies to all forms and all institutions of the world. In Orthodox social ethics, the question of relations between Church and state is additionally burdened by the notion of state-building nations. As yet it is impossible to impose the faith, so it is impossible to abolish or prohibit its existence in the atmosphere of truth, love and freedom, far above any form of violence. Through this historical period, when the terror was atheistic communism, the Serbian church and religion in the nation were experienced as martyrs, but eventually took the victory wreath. The Serbian Church came out not as the defeated opponent of the system, but as transformed dynamical victory of good over evil. And in this sense speaks Apostle John: "... and this is the victory that wins the world – our faith" (1Jn 5:4). Mimicking the words of his brother in Christ, Apostle Paul continues, "Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Grief and anguish, persecution or hunger ... but in all this we win through Him who loves us ... For I am convinced that neither death nor life ... nor any other substance will not be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord" (Rom 8:35-39).

Even in the Old Testament it was written: "So the fool says in his heart: there is no God" (Ps 14:1), which clearly shows who is the one who hates God. The Serbian church had put up with terrible suffering during many decades of communism. "Heaven and earth will undergo, but my words shall not pass away" (Mk 13:31), they say that he has left us a legacy of our Saviour to remember them in the most difficult times. Persecution, torture, prohibition, punishment and most diverse abuses, are the results of communism in our countries. Starting from Patriarch Gavriilo, and then Vikentije, who were most likely executed due to their resistance to the government, the Church has experienced the largest interfering of politics in its affairs in the time of Patriarch German. His struggle that lasted for decades, has managed to preserve the church, the clergy and the faith to new generations. Although certain methods of Serbian clergy caused schisms, it may be the opinion only of the ignorant, because all the misdeeds that occurred within the Church were the result of government intrigue. Finally, we can conclude this work with the famous words of Lactantius:

"The Church until recently demolished rose again as the temple of God, which the unbelievers destroyed, builds with greater glory and grace of God. Now, after a turbulent whirlwind of dark storm, desired shine and pleasant air finally came. Those who rise up to the Lord, lie, those who destroyed the holy temple, were killed in an even greater demolition, those who cut the righteous dropped the souls under the strikes from the sky and under the deserved

torments. Because the Lord revealed their downfall, to thereby provide a large and lovely examples in which the descendants learn that God is one and the same judge who determined worthy of punishment and wicked persecutors."<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>22</sup> Lactantius, *Death of the pursuers* (Belgrade, 2014), 11.



## ROMAN CATHOLIC CHURCH IN THE FIGHT FOR SOCIAL JUSTICE DURING THE COMMUNIST DICTATORSHIP IN POLAND

PRZEMYSŁAW KANTYKA\*

**ABSTRACT.** The Roman Catholic Church in Poland was the main force capable to oppose the communist dictatorship. Although the state was officially “socialist” the condition of ordinary people, including workers in industry and agriculture, was deplorable. Communist regime totally neglected the principles of social justice, creating and using against society the whole apparatus of repression. The Church was only force in the society which created “space of liberty”, provided instruction in the principles of Catholic social teaching and moral strength to the fighting for peoples’ rights. In the absence of any organisation truly representing the world of work, the Roman Catholic Church often played the role of intermediation between the civil authorities and the society. All this led in many ways to the martyrdom of Church leaders and other Church representatives. Suffering with the nation and sharing its fate allowed the Church building up a unique authority, what is still fruiting nowadays when the society tries to shake off the rests of communism now disguised in the suit of liberalism.

**Keywords:** Roman Catholic Church in Poland, solidarity, martyrdom, communist regime, Cardinal Wyszyński, Jerzy Popiełuszko, Bishop Kaczmarek

It is obvious to say that communist regime in Poland has never been established as a result of democratic processes of transmitting the power, such as we know nowadays. World War II finished for Poland with the change of occupant form Nazi Germany to Soviet Union. 300-400 thousands<sup>1</sup> of Red Army troops stayed in Poland after the war and secured the introduction and stabilization of communist government. The achievement of power of communist authorities was disguised in the suit of democracy. Nothing however was left to hazard. The first

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<sup>1</sup> Cf. *22 lata temu Polskę opuściły wojska radzieckie*, <https://www.polskieradio.pl/39/156/Artykul/934270,22-lata-temu-Polske-opuscily-wojska-radzieckie> (2.11.2017).

post-war referendum of 1946 and then the elections to the Parliament in 1947 were heavily rigged. Thus the communist commando parachuted to Poland from USSR gained its formal legitimization. After the liquidation of the rests of Armia Krajowa – Polish underground army – by means of new Polish People’s Army and of NKVD troops, after the imprisonment of thousands of Polish patriots, the time has come to deal with the Roman Catholic Church, perceived by Moscow dependent new authorities as a main obstacle on the road to the full implementation of communist regime. It was because the Roman Catholic Church in Poland was rightly perceived as the main force capable of opposition against the communist dictatorship. Although the state was officially “socialist” the condition of ordinary people, including workers in industry and agriculture, was deplorable. Communist regime totally neglected the principles of social justice, creating and using the whole apparatus of repression against society.

### 1. Cardinal Wyszyński–Primate of Poland

The monumental figure of this time is surely Cardinal Stefan Wyszyński<sup>2</sup>, the Primate of Poland. Wyszyński begun his primatial ministry in 1948, nearly at the same time as the communist terror started with its full strength. Before the Second World War Fr. Wyszyński became an expert in Church social teaching, by defending his doctoral dissertation in this matter. As the bishop of Lublin, from 1946 he personally lectured the Church social teaching at the Catholic University of Lublin. The subject of social justice and other subjects of the social teaching of the Church were constantly present in his sermons, also when he became archbishop of Warsaw in 1948 and then cardinal. It was counted, that he preached roughly 600 sermons a year, and 75% of them were consecrated to social matters<sup>3</sup>. This was the consequence of evident necessity to oppose the anti-human communist system introduced in Poland against the will of the nation.

From the very beginning Cardinal Wyszyński became the main opponent of the communist regime. In the absence of any form of representation of the civil society, this Church leader became the voice not only of the Catholic Church, but of the whole nation submitted to unwanted *junta* installed by soviet occupant. In 1950 cardinal Wyszyński, as head of the Polish Catholic Church, signed an agreement with the communist regime. In exchange for the accord to continue teaching Catholic religion in schools and safeguard the work of the

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<sup>2</sup> Cf. A. Micewski, *Cardinal Wyszyński: a biography* (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1984).

<sup>3</sup> Cf. J. Zabłocki, *Nauczanie społeczne Prymasa Tysiąclecia*, [http://www.nowezycie.archidiecezja.wroc.pl/stara\\_strona/numery/102001/03.html](http://www.nowezycie.archidiecezja.wroc.pl/stara_strona/numery/102001/03.html) (3.11.2017).

Catholic University of Lublin the Cardinal agreed to recognize the new western Polish border and disapproved the continuation of fighting by last troops of underground partisan army<sup>4</sup>.

The agreement did not last long. On 25<sup>th</sup> September 1953 the Cardinal was arrested and put in a place of isolation without any trial, consecutively in Rywałd Królewski, Stoczek Warmiński, Prudnik Śląski nad Komańcza. In this last place cardinal Wyszyński wrote the program of moral renewal of Polish nation, the first act of which was the renovation of famous vows of king John-Casimirus from the time of Swedish invasion (so called "deluge") in 17<sup>th</sup> century. According to the same program cardinal Wyszyński led the Great Novena preparing the Church and nation for the celebration of the millennium of Christianity in Poland in 1966. Rightly diagnosing the deprivation of human being by communist ideology the Cardinal in his program of moral renewal pointed at the sins of drunkenness, adultery, abortion, social injustice, laziness and wastage. The vows contained promises of pursuit of holy life, of social justice and human dignity of every person<sup>5</sup>.

Once again the Primate and the Church in Poland became the object of vigorous attacks from the side of communist regime on the occasion of the initiative of Polish-German reconciliation, which has been taken by Polish bishops. It was only 12 years from the end of the Second World War and the relations between two episcopates: Polish and German, likewise between the clergy and laity, were deeply cold. Enough to remind, that Polish clergy shared the fate of Poles submitted to genocide performed by Nazi-Germans during the war.

On the 18<sup>th</sup> of November 1965 Polish bishops issued an address to their German brothers. The text of this letter has been prepared by three eminent Polish bishops: archbishop Bolesław Kominek from Wrocław (Breslaw)<sup>6</sup>, Karol Wojtyła, archbishop of Krakow and future pope, and Jerzy Stroba, then auxiliary bishop of Gorzów Wielkopolski. The context for this address was the forthcoming celebration of the millennium of Christianity in Poland in 1966.

Major part of the address was consecrated to the description of difficult events in the common history of neighbouring nations. Recalling the memory of past events aimed to explain the complexity of situation in which the Poles understandingly felt mistrust towards their German neighbours. In the address there has also been introduced the reference to the new Polish-German border

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<sup>4</sup> Cf. *Życiorys Sługi Bożego Stefana Kardynała Wyszyńskiego*, [http://www.kul.pl/zyciorys-slugi-bozego-stefana-kardynala-wyszynskiego,art\\_11957.html](http://www.kul.pl/zyciorys-slugi-bozego-stefana-kardynala-wyszynskiego,art_11957.html) (2.11.2017).

<sup>5</sup> Cf. *Tekst Jasnogórskich Ślubów Narodu Polskiego*, <http://www.wyszynski.psur.pl/sluby.php> (2.11.2017).

<sup>6</sup> Cf. W. Kucharski, and G. Strauchold, *Wokół Orędzia: kardynał Bolesław Kominek, prekursor pojednania polsko-niemieckiego* (Wrocław: Ośrodek "Pamięć i Przyszłość", 2009).

on Oder and Neisse, as a bitter for Germans fruit of last war resulting in massive murders, destruction of our country and the suffering of its population. But there has also been introduced a reference to the sufferings of those Germans, who were voluntary refugees and who were expelled from their homes in the consequence of resettlement decided by victorious powers in Potsdam Conference. The most important words are in the last part of the address, which has been issued in the frame of the Second Vatican Council coming to its end:

“In this the most Christian and the very human spirit, we extend our hands to you, sitting here on the benches of concluding Council and we offer our forgiveness as well as we ask for it. And if you, German bishops and Council Fathers, fraternally take our extended hands, then we will be able to celebrate our millennium in the very Christian way”<sup>7</sup>.

“Traitor of the nation and political idiot<sup>8</sup>” – in these words the first secretary of the Communist Party, Władysław Gomułka, addressed the primate Wyszyński. The offer of forgiveness presented to the Germans by Polish Catholic Episcopate went far beyond what Polish communist authorities could expect and accept in those times. Asking for forgiveness from the German part has been immediately classified as treason. However, many of Poles – not without influence of strong official propaganda – were also still restraint to the concept of reconciliation with the oppressor. All what is described here took part on the ecclesial ground, but had a strong influence on civil society. Polish communist authorities strongly disapproved the gesture of Polish Episcopate accusing the bishops even of treason. But in fact they played double-game on the nation’s feelings. The communists counted too much for the sentiment of revenge in the society and for the possible divorce between Polish public opinion and the voice of the Church. They however underestimated the power of religious message of Christian forgiveness.

Shortly before his death in 1981 cardinal Wyszyński once again stood hand by hand with the nation during the strikes of 1980. Contrary to the desires of communist junta cardinal tried to calm the tense relations between the government and “Solidarity” and served as intermediary in negotiations. Cardinal died in quasi free Poland of 1981, before the state of war imposed by communist junta in December of the same year.

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<sup>7</sup> *Orędzie Biskupów Polskich do ich Niemieckich Braci w Chrystusowym urzędzie pasterskim*, <http://www.cdim.pl/en/edukacja/zasoby-edukacyjne/teksty/52-oficjalne-teksty-kocioa-katolickiego/49-1965-11-18-ordzie-biskupow-polskich-do-niemieckich> (21.12.2013).

<sup>8</sup> Cf. J. Żaryn, *Gomułka umiejętnie wykorzystywał antyniemieckie nastroje Polaków*, <http://dzieje.pl/aktualnosci/prof-jan-zaryn-gomulka-umiejtnie-wykorzystywal-antyniemieckie-nastroje-polakow> (21.12.2013).

## 2. Martyrdom of Bishops and Priests

The communist regime rightly defined the Catholic Church as his principal opponent and the main obstacle in extending its powers to the whole society. During the 45 years of communist rule many bishops and priests paid for their engagement in the fight for social justice the price of imprisonment or even of their lives. The care for social justice for all people led in many ways to the martyrdom of Church leaders and other Church representatives. Two distinctive personalities can serve as examples of adamant but peaceful attitude towards communist dictatorship. One is the Bishop of Kielce, Czesław Kaczmarek. Second – Fr. Jerzy Popiełuszko.

The tragic fate of bishop Czesław Kaczmarek<sup>9</sup> is not known outside Poland. This brave pastor, who first defended his flock against Germans during the Nazi occupation of the country, was then in Stalinist times falsely accused of collaboration with the occupant and of spying for Vatican, as well as for the CIA. Bishop Kaczmarek, who received PhD title in political and social sciences from Lille University (1927), become Bishop of Kielce in 1938, shortly before World War II.

“In the 19th and 20th centuries the politics monopolized everything – said bishop Świrski during the funeral of Czesław Kaczmarek in 1963 – the youth, the worker and the peasant and the whole social action and said, that the priests are not allowed in these areas. Young and fervent social activist could not agree and had to oppose it vigorously. Neither the youth, nor the large masses of people could he leave to the politicians, especially to those who exclaimed: away with God, away with the Church”<sup>10</sup>.

Arrested in 1951, after two years of trial full of physical and psychological torture, including drugging, the bishop was sentenced in 1953 for 12 years of prison, of which he served 4 years before coming back to his diocese, where he continued his steadfast fight for dignity of every human person, this dignity so strongly undermined by anti-human system of oppression falsely called “socialism”. The trial of bishop Kaczmarek was a case study for communist authorities, who wanted to intimidate other bishops and present to the public opinion the highest hierarchs of the Catholic Church as traitors of the nation.

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<sup>9</sup> Cf. A. Kemp-Welch, *Poland Under Communism. A Cold War History* (Cambridge: University Press 2008), 48.

<sup>10</sup> Cf. J. Śledzianowski, *Przeszedł czyścić na ziemi - 50 rocz. śmierci bp. Czesława Kaczmarka*, <http://www.diecezja.kielce.pl/przeszedl-czysciec-na-ziemi-50-rocz-smierci-bp-czeslaw-kaczmarka> (3.11.2017).

Three decades later, during the state of war in Poland in the first half of the 80-ties, the world got to know a humble priest from Warsaw, Fr. Jerzy Popiełuszko<sup>11</sup>. Although never officially nominated, Fr. Popiełuszko became chaplain to the world of workers, who then created the largest pro-freedom movement in Europe – the “Solidarity”<sup>12</sup>. Today’s blessed by the Catholic Church, Fr. Popiełuszko became a martyr, being killed after torture by Communist Secret Police on October 19<sup>th</sup> 1984. Why this simple priest became so dangerous for communist *junta*, equipped with the whole apparatus of repression? In the so called “Masses for the Fatherland” in the Warsaw’s parish of St. Stanisław Kostka participated dozens of thousands of people. All what Fr. Popiełuszko did was the persistent and systematic teaching of the Gospel values. He preached about human dignity of ordinary people, about the right to the truth, about love which overcomes hatred. His main motto was the sentence derived from St. Paul Apostle: “Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good”<sup>13</sup>. The idea that in response to this teaching the people of work could show a peaceful resistance, that they could seek social justice without hatred but with determination, that they could not be any more afraid, was absolutely unsupportable for communist dictatorship. Popiełuszko was a prophet. Often the destiny of a prophet is to die for truth.

Many other priest were liquidated in secret by so called “unknown perpetrators”, who after years were proven to be secret communist police agents. We know some names of these priests. Fathers: Michał Pilipiec (murdered in 1946), Stanisław Domański (+1946), Michał Rapacz (+1946), Stanisław Ziółkowski (+1946), Lucjan Niedzielak (+1947), Rudolf Marszałek (+1948), Jan Szczepański (+1948), Roch Łaski (+1949), Władysław Gurgacz (+1949), Boguchwał Tuora (+1950), Zygmunt Kaczyński (+1953), Roman Kotlarz (+1976), Leon Błaszczak (+1982), Honoriusz Kowalczyk (+1983), Stefan Niedzielak (+1989), Stanisław Suchowolec (+1989), Sylwester Zych (+1989)<sup>14</sup> were brutally murdered for their uncompromised moral fight for just and peaceful society.

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<sup>11</sup> Cf. G. Sikorska, *A Martyr for the Truth: Jerzy Popiełuszko* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1985).

<sup>12</sup> Cf. L. Goodwyn, *Breaking the Barrier: The Rise of Solidarity in Poland* (Oxford: University Press 1991).

<sup>13</sup> Cf. *Błogosławiony ks. Jerzy Popiełuszko*, <http://popieluszko.net.pl/bl-ks-jerzy-popieluszko/> (3.11.2017).

<sup>14</sup> Cf. G. Kuczyński, Tomasz Bieszczad, *Zamordowani, zamęczeni, zastrzeleni, straceni...*, <http://www.solidarni2010.pl/32605-zamordowani-zameczeni-zastrzeleni-straceni.html> (3.11.2017).

### **3. The Church as a “space of liberty” and intermediary role of the Church**

During the communist dictatorship the Catholic Church in Poland was the only force in the society which created a unique space for cultural, artistic and even scholar life free of the omnipresent censorship. This “space of liberty” allowed quasi official, quasi unofficial distribution of films regarding the religious, social and moral problems. Not only the films were displayed in the churches, but many artists were given shelter and performed in the Church premises, while the State censorship banned them from the stages of State operas, theatres and concert halls.

Talks of invited Catholic scholars and social activists provided instruction in the principles of Catholic social teaching and gave the nation moral strength of fighting for peoples’ rights. With the years a unique form of massive instructions comprising talks and even artistic performances has been elaborated. The so called “weeks of Christian culture”<sup>15</sup> spread around the country. Such kind of activity of churchmen and laity was of course strongly disliked by communist authorities. Nevertheless, the same authorities rarely intervened in what was being happening behind the Church walls. The Poles, Catholics, of other faith or even non believers, gladly profited of these “spaces of liberty”. Not only instruction in faith, in social and moral matters was important. In the times when the official life was leached of ideas – as in communist propaganda nobody believed, even the communist party officials – this semi-underground life gave to the people the sense of existence, arguments for worthiness of moral life in the society and something very precious: the hope for better life and future.

In the absence in the civil society of any organisation truly representing the world of work, the Roman Catholic Church often played the role of intermediation between the civil authorities and the society. The bishops often – especially in the situations of great social tension – held informal talks with the authorities. In the same time the authority of the Church allowed to cool down the tempers so that humiliated society didn’t go on suicide fight with the state, which although marionette, was sustained by Red Army troops largely deployed in Poland.

Nevertheless, when the anger and determination of workers reached the summit, like in 1956 in Poznań, in 1968 in Warsaw, in 1970 in Gdańsk, in 1976 in Radom or again in 1980 in Gdańsk and in the whole country, the Church did not abandon revolting people. The priest went to the factories and other places of strikes to provide pastoral care, to bring comfort and to show solidarity with the

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<sup>15</sup> Cf. *Christian Life in Poland*, Warszawa: Instytut Wydawniczy PAX 1989.

oppressed. This was also common during the state of war, declared by communist junta in December of 1981. Thousands of “Solidarity” activists were arrested and imprisoned. The Church sent priests to the prisons and camps of internment, organized material and spiritual help for the families of the detained. Many top “Solidarity” activists were never caught only because they found secret shelter in the Church establishments. The Church officials offered also in great secret financial help in underground activity. The famous case of hiding the funds of Low Silesia region of “Solidarity” in the residence of the archbishop of Wrocław can be here the best example<sup>16</sup>.

#### 4. Conclusion

Martyrdom of bishops and priest joined the martyrdom of thousands of lay Christians, who did not agree to renounce Christ in everyday life. Lay Christians, especially members of Church movements and organizations, were also heavily persecuted, sometimes up to the point of giving their lives or being imprisoned. Every day or “soft” persecutions of lay Christians however comprised the loss of work, inability to get promotion in professional life, but often a one-way ticket to emigrate from Poland. The Church suffered in all Her body: head and members. And the entire Church: pastors and the flock longed for just social life, for freedom of conscience and cult.

In the collective consciousness of the people in Western Europe the political break through to freedom of the nations of Eastern and South-Eastern Europe, subjected to soviet domination or occupation, is connected with the fall of the Berlin Wall the 9th of November 1989. However this would not happen, or at least not so soon, if the “Solidarity” movement in Poland had not fought from 1980, closely supported by the Catholic Church. This unique symbiosis of the world of work with the Church’s social teaching brought blessed fruits of freedom and rebuilding the society. Thus the realisation of the postulates of social justice had nothing in common with degenerated and bankrupt communist ideology, but was a pure realization of Gospel teaching. Suffering with the nation and sharing its fate allowed the Catholic Church in Poland building up a unique authority, what is still fruiting nowadays when the society tries to shake off the rests of communism now disguised in the suit of liberalism.

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<sup>16</sup> Cf. J. Antczak, *80 milionów Solidarności. Rozmowa z Katarzyną Kaczorowską*, <http://www.gazeta-wroclawska.pl/artykul/471110,80-milionow-solidarnosci-rozmowa-z-katarzyna-kaczorowska,id,t.html> (3.11.2017).

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## THE FIRST DOGES OF VENICE, REPRESENTATIVES OF THE BYZANTINE ADMINISTRATION

GEORGE MARIAN LĂȚCAN\*

**ABSTRACT.** The purpose of this study is to present the origins of the Venetian rulers and the relationship of the first doges with the Byzantine Empire. The fact that the first doges were officials of the Byzantine administration is an obvious form of Byzantine civilization over Venice. On the other hand, the accentuation of the Byzantine matrix of the Venetian doge is capable of shedding light on the role the doges have had in universal history. The fact that the Doges adopted the ideological hegemony of the Byzantine emperors, as well as numerous forms of protocol and ceremony, inspired the Venetian rulers to impose the North-Adriatic state as the main economic force of the Mediterranean Sea. The special status that Venice acquired on the Byzantine route explains today's separatist tendency of the Veneto region, which also includes Venice. As all these tendencies find the answer in the past, it is necessary to research some important aspects of the relationship between Byzantium and Venice during the Middle Ages.

**Keywords:** Venice, Byzantine Empire, Doges, Middle Ages

The Byzantine model manifested in Venice the first forms of political organization<sup>1</sup>: "The first dukes of Venice were Byzantine officials"<sup>2</sup>. Giorgio Ravegnani, in his work on the Venetian Doges, makes it very clear: "Byzantines were the original forms of government. First, a *dux* meant a general governor on the model of other masters in Italy, to whom the Venetians gave the name of *doge*"<sup>3</sup>.

"The title of duke, which is at the same time Germanic, Lombard, Carolingian, is, above all, Byzantine"<sup>4</sup>. From an etymological point of view, the word *doge*<sup>5</sup> came from the Latin *dux*, through the dialectical *doxe*. "The Doge

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<sup>1</sup> Stefano Gasparri, *Venice between the VIIIth and the IXth centuries. A reflection on the sources*, in: *Venetians Studies offered to Gaetano Cozzi*, ed. Gherardo Ortalli, Venezia: Publishing House, 1992, 16.

<sup>2</sup> Giorgio Ravegnani, *Il doge di Venezia* (Bologna: Il Mulino), 8.

<sup>3</sup> The duke was a military commander of the border provinces.

<sup>4</sup> Nicolae Iorga, *Les commencements de Venise*, in: *Bulletin de la Section Historique*, tomes XVIII, (București, 1932), 15.

<sup>5</sup> The duke was a military commander of the border provinces.

title is nothing but a Byzantine Duke”<sup>6</sup>, being the governor of a territorial-administrative unit of the Byzantine Empire, or the abbreviation of *domesticus scholae*, a kind of imperial cavalry ruler. If the oldest Venetian documents that mention this word date back to the 9<sup>th</sup> century, especially during the 7<sup>th</sup> to 9<sup>th</sup> centuries, the true ruler of the lagoon was the emperor of Constantinople and the ducal leader was, at best, a governor<sup>7</sup>.

The Doge, a high ranking dignitary of the Eastern Empire, distinguished himself by his noble origin and on the other hand had a special status through the increased interest of Constantinople in the Northern Adriatic Sea: “Venice is a small Romania administered by a chosen duke with his officials or judges, as they were called in Rome, with his local patricians, elective creation and imperial denomination”<sup>8</sup>. Not by chance, the first Ducal families were Veneto-Byzantine.

At first, the doge was “appointed by the emperor, depending on the emperor, adorned with titles by the emperor, related to the emperor”<sup>9</sup>. However, the Venetian urban community enjoyed a certain autonomy, “to which the Byzantium imposed nothing but the recognition of its power and the fulfilment of certain duties”<sup>10</sup>. Although the Byzantine emperors could have named the Venetian Doges, they were satisfied only with confirming the choice even if they wanted someone else.

The first doge, detained more by the Venetian tradition that tends to deceive the beginnings of history of the lagoon, was Paoluccio Anafesto. Venetian chronicles strive to emphasize the democratic character of the event<sup>11</sup>, “but the choice would require the approval of the Byzantine Emperor”<sup>12</sup>. Some chronicles have fantastically interpreted the name Anafesto as “the primitive name of the Falier family”<sup>13</sup>. It is far more likely that Paulicius, Paoluccio or Paolo Lucio Anafesto was not a Venetian, but a Byzantine diplomatic representative, perhaps Paul the exarch of Ravenna. Thus, the supposed Venetian Doge was, at best, a Byzantine official and the legendary view of the sources of the 10<sup>th</sup> century, such as that offered by John the Deacon, is the product of pro-Western agendas of that period.

More a Byzantine governor than doge, the second doge of Venetian tradition was Marcello Tegaliano, who ruled Venice for 9 years until 726. Although the first Venetian rulers received the same title of doge, only this year can we talk of a clear Venetian political organization at the head of which is the Doge.

<sup>6</sup> Nicolae Iorga, *Cinci conferințe despre Veneția*, Ediția a II-a (Vălenii de Munte: Așezământul de Tipografie Datina Românească, 1926), 46.

<sup>7</sup> Thomas F. Madden, *Venice: A New History* (London: Viking Penguin, 2012), 13.

<sup>8</sup> Nicolae Iorga, *Études Byzantines*, vol. I (București, 1939-1940), 219.

<sup>9</sup> Iorga, *Cinci conferințe despre Veneția*, 73.

<sup>10</sup> Nicolae Iorga, *Relations entre l'Orient et l'Occident* (Paris, 1923), 159.

<sup>11</sup> Mario di Biasi, *La cronaca veneziana di Giovanni Diacono*, vol. I (Venezia: Ateneo Veneto, 1986), 73.

<sup>12</sup> Wilhelm Heyd, *History of sea trade in the Middle Age* (Leipzig: Otto Harrassowitz, 1885), 109.

<sup>13</sup> Ravegnani, *Il doge*, 15.

The event that marked the beginning of Venice's national history was the Iconoclast Schism<sup>14</sup>, which tightened the relationship between the West and the Byzantine Empire. At that time, pro-Byzantine doges were replaced by a local ruler, without the consent of the Byzantine exarch of Ravenna. It was a nobleman, named Orso Ipato, who occupied the ducal chair between 726 - 737. It took the traditional Byzantine strategy, offering gifts, rewards, and titles, for the relationship to return to normal. The privileges were not very numerous, but it was enough that the Venetian rulers were assimilated to the Constantinopolitan aristocracy. Emperor Leon III the Isaurian (717-741) recognized "the province of Venice protected by us and God" and confirmed the doge Orso by offering the title "of consul" (*hypathos*) the first Byzantine noble rank offered to the Venetian rulers. Byzantine tactics worked as the Venetian fleet played a decisive role in rejecting the Longobard siege on Ravenna in 732. During the siege, the exarch of Ravenna fled to Venice, and Pope Gregory III (731-741) had a direct epistolary exchange with the doge, aspects that influenced the political evolution of the Venetian state<sup>15</sup>.

After the reign of Orso, Emperor Leon III decided to return Venice under Byzantine authority. That is why he suspended the appointments of the doges and forced the lagoon to be led between 737-742 by career soldiers, *magister militum*<sup>16</sup>: "When the relations with Byzantium were tense, they returned to the old military system. When they were in good terms, they'd go back to the doge system"<sup>17</sup>. The Venetian chronicles describe this period in elusive terms, suggesting the impossibility of keeping the string of doges. The same Venetian tradition retained the names of the new rulers: Leone, Felice called Cornicola, Deusdedit, son of former doge Orso, Giovanni and Giovanni Fabriciaro.

The next doge, politically oriented towards Constantinople, was Deusdedit (742-756). Chronicler Giovanni Giacomo Caroldo emphasized the continuity of the relationship with Byzantium under the reign of the new duke, who due to his nobility was invested with the dignity of consul and was much loved by the Greek emperors. After the end of the exarchs period of Ravenna in 751, Venice took over the position of the Byzantine centre in Northern Italy. At the same time, the new political status increased Venice's independence, which was formally dependent on a distant gentleman who was in Constantinople and not in Ravenna. Nevertheless, the military collaboration maintained friendly political relations between Venice and Byzantium: "The political link with Byzantium remained operative and can be

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<sup>14</sup> The Schism or the iconoclast crisis started with the decision of Leo III the Isaurian (717-741) to prohibit the cult of icons.

<sup>15</sup> Pierre Daru, *Histoire de la République de Venise*, vol. I (Paris: Imprimeurs de L'Institut de France, 1853), 37.

<sup>16</sup> "Magister militum" was a political-military governor who ruled an army made of local soldiers that fought on behalf of the Byzantine Emperor.

<sup>17</sup> Iorga, *Les commencements de Venise*, 14.

found in the participation of the Venetian troops in the defence of Istria"<sup>18</sup>. The removal of Deusdedit from the Ducal Chair was carried out in a Byzantine manner: he was "blinded by Galla who takes his dukedom only for a year. He is also blinded by Domenico Monegario"<sup>19</sup>.

After several years of reign (756-764), Doge Monegario will lose the ducal throne in the same manner.

The first doge, a nobleman of Byzantine Heraclea, was Maurizio Galbajo (764-787). By associating his son, Giovanni instituted a form of Byzantine reign, the co-regency that offered a dying character to the Venetian reign between 764-1032<sup>20</sup>.

At the beginning of the 9<sup>th</sup> century, the supremacy of Venice was disputed by the two great Christian empires, the Byzantine and Carolingian Empires. In 803, during the reign of Emperor Nikephoros I (802-811), a compromise was reached on dividing the spheres of influence between the two empires. The Pact, known under the name of *Pax Nicefori*, stipulated that Venice, Istria, Dalmatia and Southern Italy would remain under the influence of the Eastern Roman Empire. Three years later, the same territory enters the authority of Charles I's son, Pepin, during the first division of the Carolingian Empire, and to prove his authority, Pepin invaded Venice. During the confrontation the Venetians who "did not want to become Frank and could not be Byzantine"<sup>21</sup> nevertheless affirmed adherence to the Eastern Empire. That is why the Venetians were supported by a powerful Byzantine fleet led by Admiral Nicetas. The High Byzantine dignitary rejected the Franks, confirmed the Doge Obelerio Antenorio (804-811) and offered him the Byzantine title "bearer of the sword" (*spatharios*). However, in order to prove the Byzantine authority, Admiral Nicetas sent the associate of the doge, Beato, the patriarch of Olivolo, Christopher and the tribune Felix, into exile to Constantinople.

Unexpectedly, the conflict between the Venetians and the Franks brought together the Byzantine Empire and the Carolingian one, and the Venetians became the indirect agents of the first settlement between the Eastern and Western Emperors. In 810 Emperor Nikephoros sent an ambassador, the *spatharios* Arsaphios, to the court of the sovereign Charles the Great, from whom he received the recognition of Byzantine authority over Venice and Istria.

During the reign of the next basileus, Michael I Rangabe (811-813), more precisely in 812, peace between the Byzantines and the Franks was reconfirmed, by which Charles the Great was recognized as emperor in exchange for the transfer of rights to Venice and Dalmatia. So the Venetian region remained under the "further, but efficient protection of the Byzantine Emperor. This dependence

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<sup>18</sup> Giorgio Ravegnani, *Bisanzio e Venezia* (Bologna: Il Mulino, 2006), 40.

<sup>19</sup> Biasi, *La cronaca veneziana*, 87.

<sup>20</sup> Ravegnani, *Il doge*, 29.

<sup>21</sup> Nicolae Iorga, *Venice and the peninsula...*, 7.

will mostly favour the peaceful penetration of the Venetians into the Empire"<sup>22</sup>. Another consequence of the war between the Venetians and the Franks was the relocation of Venice's administrative centre to the island called Rialto<sup>23</sup>. The first doge who settled here, Agnello Partecipazio (811-827), had probably, like his wife Elena, Byzantine origins. The Armenian Emperor Leon V (813-820) confirmed this move by sending the relics of Saint Zachariah and by building a house of worship. As a token of respect, Doge Agnello sent an embassy to the new Byzantine Emperor, Michael II (820-829). The diplomatic mission gained a memorable character by marrying the doge's nephew to a Byzantine princess<sup>24</sup>.

Justinian, the son of Doge Agnello, received the title of "consul" (*hypathos*) in 827 from Constantinople to complete the title "of imperial consul and humble duke of the province of Venice" (*imperial hypathos and humilis dux provinciae Venetiorum*)<sup>25</sup>. Venice's diplomatic delegation to Constantinople, ruled by Justinian, recalls the close ties between Byzantium and Venice since the beginning of the 9<sup>th</sup> century, for "the Doges continued to look to the Eastern Empire as a factor of decision to confirm their legitimacy"<sup>26</sup>. This embassy is an example of the diplomatic relations of the 9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> centuries: between the years of 807-991, numerous diplomatic missions were registered and crossed the Mediterranean between Constantinople and Venice, more precisely seven Venetian embassies in Constantinople and five Byzantine diplomatic missions in same period. The intense diplomatic activity seems to be due to the same effect of the Byzantine model. During Justinian Partecipazio's reign – although he only ruled between 827-829 – two memorable events took place in Venice: the reception of the relics of St. Mark's Apostle or Mark's episode in Alexandria of Egypt, and then the campaign against the Arabs. Since the beginning of the 9<sup>th</sup> century, the Arabs have taken possession of Sicily, the Taranto Bay and the Tyrrhenian Sea coast. The Sarasin issue required firm action. That is why the Byzantine basileus Michael II (820-829), who strived for the Adriatic Sea „to remain a great Byzantine sea"<sup>27</sup>, asked for the assistance of the Venetian fleet against the Arabs.

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<sup>22</sup> Freddy Thiriet, *La Romanie vénéitienne au Moyen Âge. Le développement et l'exploitation du domaine colonial vénitien (XIII-XV siècles)* (Paris: Editions E. de Boccard, Paris, 1959), 29.

<sup>23</sup> Rialto, in the past *Rivus altus*, then *Rivo-alto*, that is the deep canal, the canal which was dug where the lagoon was at its the highest point, is the most beautiful and well-situated island in the Venetian archipelago which became the center of the Venetian fortress.

<sup>24</sup> G. F. Tafel, G. M. Thomas, *Urkunden zur altern Handels und Staatsgeschichte der Republik Venedig* (Wien, 1856), 4.

<sup>25</sup> Roberto Cessi, *Storia della Repubblica di Venezia* (Firenze: Giunti Martello, 1981), 36.

<sup>26</sup> Șerban Marin, *Giustiniano Partecipazio și reprezentarea primei ambasade venețiene la Constantinopol în cronică Serenissimei*, in: *Studii venețiene*. vol. I, *Veneția, Bizanțul și spațiul românesc* (București: Editura Academiei Române, 2008), 89.

<sup>27</sup> Vera von Falkenhausen, *The Byzantine domination of Southern Italy from the IXth to the XIth centuries* (Bari: Ecumenica Editrice, 1978), 41.

During the reign of Justinian Partecipazio or Badoer (827-829), his brother, Giovanni, retired to Constantinople. The choice of the Byzantine capital as a place of refuge, tells a lot about the relationship between Venice and Byzantium. The physical impotence and the fact that he did not have a direct successor led Justinian to recall his exiled brother, making him a consort and successor.

The Partecipazio dynasty, that ruled Venice between 811-836, is particularly significant for the relations between Venice and the Byzantine Empire because “it expresses the return of the dukedom of Venice to the completion of Eastern allegiance; these are the true founders of Venice as we know it today”<sup>28</sup>. Not even the fiercest defenders of the Venetian autonomy could fail to notice that the Byzantine elements were evident during that period.

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<sup>28</sup> Antonio Carile, *La Romania dalla Venetiarum Provincia alla Signoria di Venezia*, in: *Porphyra*, V, Nr. 11, (Venezia: Associazione Culturale Bisanzio, 2008), 31.

## THE PASTORAL PROFILE OF FATHER IOAN SABĂU REFLECTED IN THE DOCUMENTS FROM THE ARCHIVES OF SECURITY

NIFON JORJA\*

**ABSTRACT.** Father Ioan Sabau (1941-2009) had been a worthy priest and confessor of his faith who has built a grandiose church, such as a cathedral, in Vinerea locality, Alba county during a full communist era. The hallowing of this church had been the excuse of arresting Father Ioan, but the real reason for which he was taken into the Security attention was the “guilt” of completely achieving his priestly mission. The Father’s prosecution from the CNSAS archive contains almost 850 pages, from which it can be distinguished the pastoral face of father Ioan Sabau, his qualities and his diligences. If we bear in mind that all the hard work of the informers of the security was to find reasons to compromise the father, we do understand that the value of these confessions is given by the fact that they were some of the Father’s enemies.

**Keywords:** Father, confessor of the orthodox faith, communist era, priestly mission, Father Ioan Sabau, CNSAS archive, Vinerea locality.

Father Ioan Sabau (1914 – 2009) was to the attention of the Security for the “guilt” of fulfilling his priestly mission. The whole endeavor of informers and security was to find reasons to compromise the Father, but, nevertheless, the nearly 850 pages of documents from the CNSAS archive, it constitutes a true praise at his address, being one of the most powerful evidence about the worthiness of an exemplary priest, since it is a testimony that came exactly from his enemies.

In these documents we will attempt to identify, in the following several aspects of personality and pastoral activity of Fr. Ioan.

### The Accuses Towards Fr. Ioan Sabau

The “guilt” brought to Fr. Ioan Sabau was to be lived the Christianity and to have availed himself of the priesthood in an exemplary way. In one informative note given by M.A.I. Hunedoara-Deva Region, “Crinul” report as follows: *“Fr. Sabau*

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*says that it should be done something for the unity of all the believers... to make a front against the common enemy. Christianity is undergoing a big moral exam in the moments of speaking. Enemy of the faith and of the Church was looking to destroy it systematically.*"<sup>1</sup> Of course, such an attitude was regarded as an affront to the atheist communist regime ever since. As such, the person concerned must have been pursued, punished and annihilated.

The papers prepared in different moments of prosecution of the priest are recommended and always accentuated his main accusations:

"... he was selected as a priority attention, being reported with some tendentious manifestations towards the socio-political system in our country, also because of intensifying his religious concerns".<sup>2</sup>

"In Vinerea village he organized the association called "Saint George", whose members were manifesting hostile actions against the U.T.M. organization from this locality, and after banning religious activity of the "LORD 'S ARMY", a religious association activity he continued to LEAD and to organize this association.

In 1948 he wrote a memoir to some Romanians being in the U.S.A. and in Belgium, asking a monetary aid for the construction of the church, and with that occasion he informed them about some events happened in our country, namely that near Cugir locality occurred an explosion at an ammunitions depot.

In the sermons of the church he makes agitation with enemy character towards the regime.

For these feats he was sent to trial, being judged and acquitted. Since 1956, on the occasion of the events in Hungary, he intensified his contra revolutionary activity, having some different vicious manifestations to the regime.

For the contra revolutionary activity that he progressed he was arrested, tried and sentenced to eight years of jail through the sentence no. 105 of T.M. Brasov.

Punishment has run in Aiud prison until 17 of July 1964 when he was absolved by the rest of the punishment.

In prison, as it results from the informative note given by the agent "PETRARCA" of the "K" organs, he had frequent vicious manifestations towards the regime ... he installs mysticism among inmates."<sup>3</sup>

"He is preoccupied even for the multiplication of one versified material from the Holy Scripture (which would have belonged to the God's Army) more accessible for the children's power in their religious education and he teach some religious lessons and songs with the students from Bobalna village in the former Greek-catholic church of the village which is more isolated. He is used to ask for and even to carry elucidation with young people that are going to get married to donate to the church fund amounts ranging between 300-1000 lei."<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> ACNSAS, operative fund, file I 259463, vol. I, paper 6.

<sup>2</sup> ACNSAS, operative fund, file I 259463, vol. III, paper 1.

<sup>3</sup> ACNSAS, operative fund, file I 259463, vol. II, paper 14.

<sup>4</sup> ACNSAS, operative fund, file I 259463, vol. III, paper 11.

“In the file of the Gendarmerie from Cugir in 1944-1945 it was noted as being dangerous for the State safety (old file from Antonescu’s time). He was convicted. He was a great nationalist. Sure he was afraid to act openly against the regime.

Then he sought with all his strength of work and persuasion (strong power of conviction) to channel all energies of the village to the construction and finalization of the church, for defying the regime. He managed through sermons, that you could interpret them as wanted if you came out of the sphere of religious mysticism. Here I think he speculated the fear of the farmers, especially women (that I see now in Vinerea) of the collectivization, respectively of the socialization of agriculture, the delivering of compulsory quotas and so on. That fear coupled with poor cultural preparation inherited and somehow continuing, reduced concern of the present directors, it gets people closer, particularly women, to church and prayers. Of this fact he took advantage and he speculated it in the favor of Father Sabau Ioan.”<sup>5</sup>

One of the informative notes included, in words few but essential, Father Ioan’s testimony about his guilt. The document reveals that Father was in the church during a rehearsal with the choir which he organized, when the “source” entered the church.

“The source informs that the 23<sup>rd</sup> of May 1965 he met with Father SABAU from Folt.

Source: Why did he arrest you? Of what were you culpable?

Sabau: For excessive zeal, I was too popular in Vinerea and I was assigned to the cult of personality.

Now I go well, I work here, me and my family we are established in Folt. The source also informs that the meeting hour was 19, 15. Every Sunday around this hour he led a chorus of the citizens in the church from Bobalna and he disturbs all the cultural activities from the village.”<sup>6</sup>

Therefore, the real “guilt” of Fr. Ioan was, in fact, to have too much zeal for serving the priestly mission. In a certain moment of detention, in the same cell with the Fr. there was an informer, who reported consistently every discussion which he assisted in the cell, that were particularly recorded in a long detailed information note. From this we find out that, while in custody, Fr. Ioan had convictions at Zarca because he exercised his priestly ministry among the prisoners.

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<sup>5</sup> Information note from 18<sup>th</sup> of October 1959 in ACNSAS, operative fund I 259463, vol. I, paper 27.

<sup>6</sup> ACNSAS, operative fund, file I 259463, vol. II, paper96.

On the 15-16 of October 1960, the prisoner Sabau Ioan has had the next discussions inside the room:

“I am taken on Zarca, being taken out of the factory, because a Jew, that came with a lot of about one hundred, by January 1960, sneaked that I made church service on the day of Easter. In fact, me and priest Popescu from Bucharest, we made a great service along with several priests, all the prisoners have breathed deep – of course that a Judas was found to sneak.”<sup>7</sup>

“I don’t know how, but it can be seen that the providence makes this to happen with me, because in 1949, when I was put away in Deva, it happened to me also at Easter to sing “Christ is risen!” in the room where there were over 100 political prisoners, when the windows were open, the jail was in town, and the world crowded on the street that blocked the walker circulation, listening to the religious song from the chests of over a hundred people.

When the Security Major heard, which was also the prison chief, he came into the room, and addressed to me personally with the following words: “You, legionary beast of priest, you make hooliganism, do you provoke the prisoners to hooliganism and fascist acts? You’ve got to die here without air, for thus you deserve!”, and he put nails into the windows, not to be opened and nothing from the street to be heard. However, what happened? The prisoner Sabau Ioan continues to say further, being very satisfied of what happened. Instead of me dying – he says with a satisfying smile – the major of Security died because God did not bear him to take the lives of more than 100 innocent beings, locked in the room and with the windows blocked with nails, without air, of course that we could have been dead until evening, but the wonder of God shows itself, the major dies because he treated and, instead of taking one phial how it was written in the prescription to drink, he took another phial that was between others and dies, being buried with a lot of fast. He had over 30 crowns, put on the grave, that till morning they all burned, even the crucifix from the head. You see, God had punished him, that on the third day since he blocked our windows with nails and he threatened me with death, he was buried and the entire grave burned. The guards announced us of what happened.”<sup>8</sup>

We specify that, starting with this moment, any time a religious holyday came, Fr. Ioan was isolated from other fellow cellmate, but nobody dared to take very drastic measures towards his holiness, fearing not to happen something like those happened with the major.

All these guilt referring to father Ioan are things that do honor to any true servant of the Savior Jesus Christ.

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<sup>7</sup> ACNSAS, operative fund, file I 259463, vol. II, paper 104.

<sup>8</sup> ACNSAS, operative fund, file I 259463, vol. II, paper 105.

## **The Construction of the Church from Vinerea**

Above all, the strongest reason of condemning Fr. Ioan was to build up and sanctificate the church from Vinerea, a real cathedral. The church was consecrated in 1957, and the following day after sanctification, the father was arrested, receiving the longest and toughest condemnation of all those received up to then. To raise a church, a big and beautiful one like it the church from Vinerea, in full era of persecution of the Church, it meant a real courage and even a defiance to the regime.

The construction of the church from Vinerea is linked to the creation of the "Saint George" Association, in 1946. Fr. Ioan has set up this association at Vinerea with the purpose to attract the youth to the church and to take charge of their education.

It was a religious-moral association, where many young people were involved, some high school students, other students in agronomy, medicine, or conservatory and which activate only during secondary schools holiday when students were coming home. The theatre plays prepared here were presented in the nearby localities, and the amounts gathered were used for building the church. The activity related to the "St. George" Association was not accepted by those who held power in the village, since it was considered that the association was founded to have an adversary activity to the organizations of "progressive" youth. At that time, in the village there was such an organization, with the name of "Youth Village Organization", that was in animosity and competing with the "St. George" Association. From such considerations this activity was one of the accusation heads for Fr. Ioan, as is evident from the summons of inquiry:

“Question: What character had the “St. George” Association from Vinerea?

Answer: .... It had a religious-moral character.

Question: Concretely, with what was dealing this association?

Answer: There were made religious plays, religious choirs and religious poems.

Question: What was the purpose of “St. George” Association?

Answer: The purpose of “St. George” Association from Vinerea was to educate youth in moral and religious spirit and only when the pupils from the secondary school were coming home for holiday.

Question: Talk about this association in a detailed way.

Answer: The “St. George” Association was founded in order to attract the youth to religion and to take charge of their education. Only young Romanians Orthodox were allowed. There were not allowed other nationalities, nor people without school. There were allowed young people that were attending different medium or superior school, there were the sons of wealthy men from the locality.”<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> ACNSAS, operative archive, file P 15054, vol. I, paper 27.

Around the years 1946-1948, Fr. Ioan was left without funds and could no longer continue construction at the Church. Even before the First World War, many Romanians settled in the village Vinerea have settled in U.S.A.

Fr. Ioan was advised by their relatives from Vinerea, by their acquaintances with those who had grown up together, and some that had been in the U.S.A., but they came back in their country, in 1948, has compiled a memoir for the Romanians from U.S.A., coming from Vinerea, through which he asked them to help, how they will be able, at the building of the new Church from Vinerea. The memoir was multiplied in 3-4 copies and sent to the painter, Nitulescu from Bucharest, to send it by plane. The painter replied in a letter to the Father that he sent it. The painter's letter got in the hands of the security and it was the beginning of the Father's many sufferings, as can be seen from the investigation file. Americans didn't come to help.

For the same purpose, to get help for the Church, Father wrote to a citizen from Vinerea established in Brussels. But neither from him could he not receive help as he responded to the Father that he cannot send money in Romania.<sup>10</sup>

Those from the Security believed that in the memoir have been written things that would contribute to defame the country outside the borders. We know the content of the memoir from Father's Ioan investigation file. During an interrogation of 12 of February 1959, Fr. received ink and paper and he was asked to remake, from memory, that memo addressed to Romanians from U.S.A. Fr. replied that he may render it roughly, because it remembers its essential parts, just that he does no longer recalls certain passages of the Holy Scripture that he had used in the memoir. With a writing which betrays an exhausted body, Fr. Ioan put down on paper the following:

Brothers from Vinerea,

The Holy Scripture tells us that a good word from a brother from far is like a glass of water given to a thirsty worker. From great distance and from the streets of your childhood we bring you good words, we, your fellow villagers of yesterday, some your relatives.

Your childhood spin in memories at nostalgic hours can't be taken away from the pleasant glimpses from holidays, when you run like some lambs around the old church from the cemetery. Do you remember that, since childhood, the church was old and too small. Since then, it was talking intensely of a more suitable church for your big village. Fatality herself wanted to put into action the thought of believers here because, in two rows, two fires have destroyed it almost entirely. The material was packed and the work area was ready to start, but as you remember the flames of the First World War had started and throughout the toil of generation nothing

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<sup>10</sup> ACNSAS, operative archive, file P 15054, vol. I, paper 48.

remained. Years of restoration came, two decades leaked until I could resume in 1937 and thread we dug up the Foundation for the new Church. With burst we worked until 1941, when a new war was imposed to us and over our lands were sowed mourning- the prime of our youth and our men in full powers had to be destroyed slowly on the battle field. With widows, orphans and old people couldn't lead our yoke, being drained by any unnerved. Now we are in a period of recovery with so many ruins remaining on our own lands. Recently there has been an explosion of a munition warehouse near our village. The Church became totally unfit for the divine service; we had to start again, but our yarn powers do not help us. Your brothers from Vinerea, those who were work comrades on those places, tell us that you live your lives, and still remember that, even from the time when they were there, have you thought about something to squeeze funds for our Church. Now we pray to you warmly to bring the thread in your memory and, as far as possible, to help us by giving us strength to our weak heart.

We assure that as far as a patient in agony figure brightens when making him a blood transfusion, so your help will be for us a much larger gathering of our forces.

Good God ordain your days as you can once return in your village to pray in the Church for which we ask now your contribution, and we assure you that every time we leave the knees, we will remember of you.

On behalf of the believers of your childhood village,  
Fr. Ioan Sabău<sup>11</sup>

This memoir was one of the "causes" for the big conviction found to the father in 1958.

### **Tracking File Drawn up After the Release from Prison of Father Ioan Sabău**

On 1<sup>st</sup> of August 1964, Father Ioan was released of Aiud and returned to his native village in Folt. Beginning with the 1<sup>st</sup> of October 1964 he was named priest at Bobalna.

All the sacrifice of Father Ioan for building the church remained deeply embedded in the consciences of the faithful ones from Vinerea:

"When I met with the assigned I was announced, with great satisfaction and joy, about the arrival of Sabău from jail, the man who was the soul of the village, who was able to create the most beautiful church in the region in the most critical periods, through which the Church passed. Bura said: Sabău sacrificed himself for Vinerea as Christ sacrificed for the mankind."<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> ACNSAS, operative archive, file P 15054, vol. I, papers102-103.

<sup>12</sup> ACNSAS, operative archive, file I 259463, vol. II, paper 43.

After the liberation, the Father was permanently pursued by security and informants who reported every move, every detail observed in his everyday life and the activity of the Father, informing the State authorities systematically regarding the persons who visited the Father, about his departures from the parish, about the content of the sermons that he delivered, about all the work that he performed. The Security file is full of informative notes, but the conclusion of all is that the Father has never manifested anger against the regime and that he was very balanced in statements. Many documents are highlighting the love that Father received from his former parishioners. One of those evidences of love is a note from a letter intercepted by the security, written by a believer from the parish of Orastie to someone from Baia Mare, in August 13th, 1964:

“Ionel came out from prison too, they were all on Sunday at the Church, and although he spent 6 years in jail he is young and very handsome, we all had a great joy when seeing us together. People from Vinerea are coming all the times to ask him to come in Vinerea, he refused to go, and they feel sorry for him; when he stayed at home a lot of people, men and women, came to see him.”<sup>13</sup>

It was the beginning of the winter and the family of the Father does not have any savings. From the informative data found at the Police station of Folt, we found that after the Father’s release from prison, “*it was formed a team in order to visit the residents of the village and ask to gather wood for the Church and for the priest.*” It was also gathered “*some corn to give to priest Sabau Ioan, who came out of the prison and has nothing to live with.*” It is specified a villager’s claim that “*we should help priest Sabau Ioan, who came out of prison, because he was*” *unjustly imprisoned by the communists*”.<sup>14</sup> The residents of Vinerea came often to Folt, bringing bread and wine, and some supplies.

Although they knew that the priest is pursued, the believers of Vinerea never stopped to manifest love openly towards their shepherd:

“The day of 26 of December 1964, at the home of priest Ioan Sabau from Folt came several citizens of Vinerea with the train in the morning. They walked to the door of his house and refused to enter until the end of the Christmas carol, although the door was opened to them. At the end of the Christmas carol they went into the priest’s house filled with sadness, crying, and then they went together with him to the church in the Bobalna village”.<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> ACNSAS, operative archive, file I 259463, vol. II, paper132.

<sup>14</sup> ACNSAS, operative archive, file I 259463, vol. I, papers101-102.

<sup>15</sup> ACNSAS, operative archive, file I 259463, vol. II, paper 100.

“Regarding a demonstration of sympathy made by some inhabitants of Vinerea to former priest Ioan Sabau, released from jail as a political prisoner, facts that took place in August, the source tells the following. Things happened as follows: Priest Ioan Sabau and his wife, Alexandrina, went to Cugir. His wife, Sabau Alexandrina, got off the train in Vinerea, and he continued his road towards Cugir. His wife came in Vinerea at her Godson Todoran Dionisie, worker at UMC Cugir. Finding the news that Sabau Ioan will pass back to Folt with the train at 8 pm, several inhabitants gathered and made a demonstration of sympathy.”<sup>16</sup>

Not a day went by without a delegation, or an individual application to the Episcopacy made by residents from Vinerea who were demanding to be allowed to give them back their shepherd:

“It fully confirms the fact that a large number of faithful people insists that the priest should be brought back in the commune, asserting the idea that he enjoys a great confidence, being a good orator and his arrival would lead to a better understanding among citizens, at a multilateral progress of all. Moreover, it demonstrates that the CAP would work much better, as well as all public affairs.”<sup>17</sup>

At one time it was composed a memorandum signed by 600 people from Vinerea, it was addressed to the Bishop from Arad<sup>18</sup>. However, all the requests were rejected.

Sometimes the accents of discontent of the people from Vinerea were transformed into protests, as seen from a given source information note “Horestaing Hita” in Orăștie, at M.I.A. on 23<sup>rd</sup> of March 1967:

“Former Greek Catholic Christian peasants are struggling to bring into the village the priest Sabau by any method. (...) They made countless petitions to protos, episcopacy, etc. When they heard that they are going to have a priest named HALMAGHI or BUDAI, they said: «do we need Hungarian? NO. The Church is ours and we pay the priest so we have the right to bring whoever we want.». (...) They wanted the priest Sabau because he knows to practice wonderful service, he delivers nice sermons, they know him from childhood because he was the only under this system, with the risk of his life, who was able to build a beautiful church how none other is in the region. Micu Gheorghe told me that they have read a pastoral by which priests in the country were

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<sup>16</sup> ACNSAS, informative fund, file I 259463, vol. III, paper 201.

<sup>17</sup> ACNSAS, operative fund, file I 259463, vol. II, paper 141.

<sup>18</sup> ACNSAS, operative archive, file I 259463, vol. II, paper 52.

demanding financial help from the faithful people (since they had poorer parishes). In the church Micu said, « We do not give anything, because neither the Metropolia is giving us the priest we want. »<sup>19</sup>

The same zeal of serving his priestly mission has continued to be the principal accusation of Father Ioan:

“He is accomplishing his everyday service at the church during the Great Lent, like a monk”<sup>20</sup>, as an informant from Bobalna reported. Another informant affirms that the aim of these religious services officiated by Father Ioan Sabau during the Great Lent was to “freshen up the religious-moral life of the believers. This is because latter it was found that many believers participate in evening prayers of the neo-cults, which are subsidized by foreign elements of our nation and which are not aimed by anything than breaking the unity of our Romanian nation, and the dissolution of the religious life.”<sup>21</sup>

In April 15, 1965 a verification was made in the management of the parish from Bobalna. Document drawn up on this occasion shed light on the results of the hard work deposed by father Ioan in less than a year:

“In the year 1964, when the parish was administrated by the Orthodox priest Candea Romulus from Boiu, the candles sold were valued at 1.000 lei, while in the first quarter of the year 1965 the candles sold were valued at 2.155 lei. This is due to the intensification of religious life in the parish by Fr. Ioan Sabau”.<sup>22</sup> In the same document we find out that “the Orthodox priest Ioan Sabau formed a choir composed by about 15 people, most of whom they are women, in the parish church from Bobalna. A huge influence on the formation of the choir was the wife of the Cooperative of Agricultural Production President from Bobalna. This woman was very much appreciated by the priest and by the members of the church choir.

The priest Ioan Sabau has decided that at the end of April this year, the preparing of the choir will end; he knows that they need to be involved in the agriculture campaign.

The Director of Communal Council from Folt will take care of the wife of the President of the Cooperative Production by training her in cultural work within the locality shelter.”<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>19</sup> ACNSAS, operative archive, file I 259463, vol. II, paper 56.

<sup>20</sup> ACNSAS, operative fond, file I 259463, vol.III, paper 147.

<sup>21</sup> ACNSAS, operative fond, file I 259463, vol. III, paper 68.

<sup>22</sup> ACNSAS, operative fond, file I 259463, vol. II, paper 98.

<sup>23</sup> Idem.

## The Pastoral Qualities of Father Ioan Sabau Reflected in the Pages of the File Tracking

From the archive documents placed in the CNSAS results *the good moral prestige* of Father Ioan. Here are some of the characteristics of Father Ioan, made by the informants:

“The character: open, ambitious, spiteful. Morality: good. Due to the fact that the named is a Priest, he enjoys a good moral authority in the municipality. He is treated with reverence and submission by the people. He is esteemed by the intellectuals.”<sup>24</sup>

“He is a kind of intellectualist, and as far as I met him, he is proud with no reason, and I understand that he has a mystical inner feeling, he has great power of expression and he is deeply conscious of the Bible and of an extensive general culture sphere. (...) He is obviously distancing himself from any other priest in the surroundings and he is appreciated as such.”<sup>25</sup>

“I can say that he is an example of a man and a priest, he doesn't highlight any sort of addiction, he is an able and honest man. He is sometimes ironic or performs a joke that someone may interpret wrongly, as he would do it out of animosity. I do not see in this man any meanness; despite how many troubles and hardships his family got, they encounter them with manhood, you can't see at him anything but courage and confidence.”<sup>26</sup>

Father Ioan Sabau *ruled the “pastoral art”*, he had that ability to find its way to every single soul, to win as much of them for God, for the Church, for Salvation, he knew how to speak to every man as his own heart needed:

“The source informs that, on 21<sup>st</sup> of March 1967, at 15 hours, he was at the funeral of Craciun Ana, a funeral where a lot of people were present, because the news that the priest Sabau from Folt is coming spread in the village, and the people talked that if they would have a priest in the village the people would go to work on the collective property in crowds. The source asked the two advisers who were part of the Church's Council: why would the people come as you speak? Because he knows each one and knows how to talk to them and he was together with them in any local work. At these talk other companions were present, they spoke about this priest: he could be a simple general of the army and the people would go working on the collective property, because he spoke to each person with affection and he behaves very

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<sup>24</sup> ACNSAS, operative fond, file I 259463, vol. I, paper 10.

<sup>25</sup> ACNSAS, operative fond, file I 259463, vol. III, paper 143.

<sup>26</sup> ACNSAS, operative fund, file I 259463, vol. III, paper 37.

nice with the world and he has the gift to speak to the people so that he can be understood. At these discussions participated very many people.”<sup>27</sup>

“He has a great influence on the people in the parish: whatever he says, they do.”<sup>28</sup>

Of this influence of the priest upon people were afraid the political representatives. This ability of Father Ioan to congregate people around him was envied by some of the leaders of the social institutions in that time, who intensely desired to dominate the community, but they didn't have neither the skill or love, or the ideals of Father Ioan. So, for example, we learn about the Principal of the school from Bobalna that he was very jealous on the achievements of Father Ioan and on his ability to gather people around him:

“Talking with Todor Ioan, also called Maxim, a carpenter at Bobalna.

Source: Where are you going?

Maxim says: To Orastie, I have to do some shopping for the holidays.

Source: So, what else is new for you, how are you satisfied with the priest?

Maxim says: Great, we formed a chorus on four voices only from those who are married and my wife's a part. Twice a week, in the evenings, they make a rehearsal with the priest, and in the rest of the time in the Church Tescaru lead us. Despite of this initiative some began to show up, as headmaster, who cannot see this achievement because he is sure that he will not be able to achieve anything, and neither does he compete because he doesn't know how to behave with people. He is very intrigued because the faithful are making everything free of charge for the Church and for their priest, and for the school he has to pay every service in cash. He is looking for prohibit children to attend church services; as long as religion is free, why are the children's parents fighting for this fact? It turns out that he doesn't realize that you can't love someone with repugnance, or by force.”<sup>29</sup>

Father Ioan did not say anything when they had to give “those of the Caesar to Caesar”, but he knew that all the people have a great confidence in him and he will not allow doing anything to discredit him, but he kept to the dignity of the priesthood that he wears. From an informative note given to M.I.A., Orastie, on the 11th of May 1967 we hear about such a situation in which Father Ioan had to choose between his priest mission requirements and demands of the Communist regime:

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<sup>27</sup> ACNSAS, operative archive, file I 259463, vol. III, paper 54.

<sup>28</sup> ACNSAS, operative fund, file I 259463, vol. III, paper147.

<sup>29</sup> ACNSAS, operative fund, file I 259463, vol. III, paper 193.

“In the Bobalna village the communists have the perspective to build a new cooperative building. On the day of 28<sup>th</sup> of April 1967, I met priest Sabau and comrade Iancu Gh. and Călin from the URCC Orastie in front of the cooperative of Folt, they said that they arrived to hold a meeting in order to make the people of the village understand that, in addition to labor, they had to help also with cash, after the economic strength of each other (about 50% of the value of the work). Comrade Iancu thanked the priest for the competition that he has given in order to help people understand that they had to contribute with manpower and it asks again to communicate the new disposition relative available to the monetary contribution. At this new request, the priest did not give a definite affirmative answer. After leaving them, I went home with the priest. On the road, the priest said: I have communicated to the people that they have the task of the contribution in labor days. Now, when I have to communicate to them that they must help also with money, what would they say? Don't I discredit myself and the institution?

If I do it, I am discredited, but if I don't do it it's even worse, they think that I am who knows what. In this situation I don't have to do it.”<sup>30</sup>

Father John was a true *apostle and missionary*. He fought with everything that brings death to the soul: with atheism, with materialism, with sectarianism, with carelessness. Once, when he was in prison, he discussed with his cell comrades about his missionary aspirations. Because one of them was found to be a traitor they were recorded in the pages of the Father's files:

“I am planning to buy a car, that I will personally drive and I will go from village to village and from city to city to strengthen the Union of churches into one, thereby contributing much to the strengthening of the Christian religion, against Freemasonry and communism. I'll be a religious missionary of Transylvania. I know the German language and for that I thank mister engineer Florescu Ilie (detention colleague i.n.) that helped me to be even better, because I will use it in my religious propaganda, as you need German language in Northern Transylvania and anywhere else.”<sup>31</sup>

The prison experience has not intimidated him; the Father kept his missionary enthusiasm and went further:

“The source informs that Father Sabau had expressed his concern towards the dangers of reformed sects, in which he sees the hand of some strange powers, and he expressed the conviction that our State is making a mistake by not taking any action against them. He also expressed the regret that the parents are unable to bring their children to church, unlike other reformed

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<sup>30</sup> ACNSAS, operative fund, file I 259463, vol. II, paper 49.

<sup>31</sup> Informative note in the ACNSAS, operative fund, file I 259463, vol. II, paper 118.

sects or even Jews where they can take the children with them. Related to this issue he said that some (unidentified) have interpreted that he would go against party policy, which is very wrong and in disaccord of what he wanted to express. The source informs that the priest is loved by the faithful people and that he is doing his duty".<sup>32</sup>

"In a discussion held in September, among others problems he spoke about the reformed people, and by the discussion results that he doesn't accept them, taking an attitude of disrespect for them. He also affirmed that our State should take a stand against these reformed, but he accepts them, because the children of the reformed are going to their meetings, and Orthodox children are not allowed to come to church, being somehow restricted."<sup>33</sup>

The Father's desire for the truth of orthodoxy was not against love for all people. Father knew to preach orthodoxy that he lived so that other denominations admired him.

"One morning at the 5.45 hours I found the priest in ferry on the Mures. Asking him where he was going, he said that he goes to celebrate the service of Holy Mystery of Unction in Vinerea. On this occasion he told me that he is forced to return from Vinerea in Folt as soon as possible to take part at a funeral of Cornea Ioan, the father-in-law of the church singer Ioan Adam.

After the funeral, at which the priest Ioan Sabau spoke, I heard different people from the village saying that he spoke so sentimental that all priests have cried. *Avram Juja of Solomon who is reformed and does not attend the Orthodox church but the Baptist one, took part at the funeral and says that would also like to have a priest like that because he will squeeze tears from a stone speaking with his Golden mouth.*"<sup>34</sup>

"The day of 27<sup>th</sup> of February 1966 I witnessed a conversation between the carpenter Todor Ioan and the source (Bobalna). The source said: you came up with all the family in the dialogue between the commune of Folt and Turdas. Todor says: Yes, I have come to see our talents. We, the people of Bobalna, have a church choir of all to praise, but without the priest Sabau all these remained hidden. He is the engine which moves all the aggregates. *Even the reformed people admire him.*"<sup>35</sup>

Father Ioan was speaking with so much *courage*, that the people who heard him trembled with fear at the thought that, perhaps, immediately after the sermon he will be arrested. Although he was often called to the police station, and to the security, however he never made compromises in terms of

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<sup>32</sup> ACNSAS, operative fund, file I 259463, vol. III, paper 70.

<sup>33</sup> ACNSAS, operative fund, file I 259463, vol. III, paper 52.

<sup>34</sup> ACNSAS, operative fund, file I 259463, vol. II, paper 100.

<sup>35</sup> ACNSAS, operative fund, file I 259463, vol. III, paper 192.

the faith and the truth he preached. We have testimonies from the informative note of a snitch, imprisoned in the same cell with father, who gave the following information stored in the file of the priest:

“In one day of January 1961, about the 15th-16th of January, talking in the room, (inmate Sabau Ioan) says the following:

In the year 1944, during the month of June, the day of the Jews, I was elected by the priests to keep a sermon at the tomb of heroes and, a lot of people being present, around thousands of auditors, I have mentioned, among others, the heroism of the Romanian soldier along with the German in the fight for the cross, country and Church, taken against the communist hordes.

Vlad, the former minister of Cults and Agriculture tells me to stop giving such sermons because it seeks reconciliation with Russia. I replied: you are old but you have no knowledge about what is communism. To shake hands and reconcile with communism, it means to cut off one’s nose. Communism means devouring fire, sure death. The Church will be turned into cattle manure, the estates will be taken from you and you will live in the dungeons, where you’ll die among all the proprietors from across the country. Two months later, the Russians are coming, the land and court is taken from him, being hold up in a prison in Sighet, where he dies. His son, an agricultural engineer, tells me that what I told his father was correct, like a prophet. His son, Mircea Vlad, he is also convicted.”<sup>36</sup>

The same information note contains a convincing paragraph about the *freedom of the spirit* that Father Ioan experienced in prison, about the courage and temerity of sharing his sorrows with his suffering comrades. It’s sad that among them a traitor was found also, but the Divine Providence changed the course of events as we can learn today from that “blabbermouth” what feelings and experiences Father Ioan had in the difficult years of imprisonment:

“The inmate Ioan Sabau”: The Church persecution of paganism in-between the 1<sup>st</sup> and the 4<sup>th</sup> century lasted for 300 years, and they were bloody, Christians being hanged, burned alive in the fiery furnaces, all the martyrs and the saints of the Church have been tormented on hot iron grids, or feeded to the Lions to be torne apart, etc. but the Communist persecution is more tough, because beside the flesh wounds there are also those of the soul by not letting the world to go to church, like I said once, it abducts the right to worship God and attend Church services, etc. The children are receiving a bad education,

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<sup>36</sup> ACNSAS, operative fund, file I259463, vol.II, papers 117-118.

promiscuity is fashionable, the lie and the perversity are systematically cultivated, so we talk about a body torment in prison and a soul torment by darkening it with all the wild methods of Russian Steppe.<sup>37</sup>

From the pages of the dossier we learn about the courage with which father Ioan was speaking within the conferences at which he took part. So, for example, at a conference targeting priests from Deva, the 8<sup>th</sup> of April 1968:

The theme of the Conference was: "the priest and the current ethics". There were present about 80 priests. After reading the Conference held by Grosu Valer, the sign up to speak followed. Several priests signed up to speak, among them was the priest Ioan Sabau from the former rank of Orastie, probably from the parish of Bobalna. This priest, after having made an introduction, sought to decrease the moral ethics of today, saying that there's nothing new, it was all the same from the beginning of Christianity. He came with a quote from comrade Ceausescu's Congress with the leaders of the country's religious affairs, saying that "Foreign Journalists have put up, among other questions, to the Chief of the Jewish cult: How do you feel in an atheist state? Question at which the head of this cult answered that we feel perfect, we enjoy the freedom that we haven't had under past regimes (bourgeois)". The priest Sabau has not commented further on the question, seeking to remain merely the expression of journalist that *we live in an atheist state*.

After the interventions of the other speakers, who have highlighted the measures taken by the State and which are *a product of the new ethics*, the source says: *For his attitude he has been criticized by the Bishop, who has not allowed anymore to say anything else, saying that he has not learned anything from the suffering through which he passed. Fr. Sabau said: If you don't like it, send me there again.*<sup>38</sup>

One of the great charismas of Father Ioan Sabau was the *oratorical talent*, with which he opened the hearts of the faithful people and he has been very much loved by them. A citizen of Bobalna, secretly spied by an informant, had the following confession:

"We, the people of Bobalna, we are very proud with such a priest, we all go with the biggest love to the church because there is no divine service without preaching and each time he says something new. I once asked the priest from where he may find so many words and he said to me: the science is endless and many events had occurred since the world exists, you just have to know to look for them and to make a selection."<sup>39</sup>

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<sup>37</sup> ACNSAS, operative fund, file I 259463, vol. II, paper 104.

<sup>38</sup> ACNSAS, operative fund, file I 259463, vol. III, paper 182.

<sup>39</sup> ACNSAS, operative fund, file I 259463, vol. II, paper 37.

After leaving prison in Aiud, Father was often called to Vinerea and in the surrounding area, especially for the Holy Unction and for some funerals. His word brought much consolation and encouragement in those hard times, being seen as *"a man of tremendous spiritual vocation; it was impossible not to be emotionally affected by heavenly truth cause the sermons which he holds at funerals."*<sup>40</sup> Someone said joking, that he spoke so nicely at funerals that you wanted to say: God, why didn't I die, to enjoy such a sermon?

The father's presence at funerals and his every time sermon brought a lot of comfort to the sorrowful souls:

"Regarding the so-called Craciun Gelu from Vinerea, the source informs you that: (...) The mother of so called Craciun Gelu died during this week and he said that he was very sad because there not everyone invited came to the funeral. He said that however he has the satisfaction of the speech of Fr. Ioan Sabau who emphasized all the sufferings of his mother when her sons were in prison."<sup>41</sup>

Eventually, Fr. Ioan was prohibited to go to funerals in other localities, which disheartened him:

"From the discussions held, I deduced that he was unsatisfied not by the State or the regime, but by the Church leadership, which has prohibited him to go to funerals in other localities, without knowing the reason.

And so he tells me an accidental happening not long ago at a funeral of a retired priest in Calan. Sure, there were invited several priests, and when he arrived, closer to the end because he had been late, the others asked him to preach - the truth of the matter is that he's a very talented orator.

At first he refused, he avoided, but eventually he accepted because they have insisted and in that moment he thought it was right to talk about the condition of the priest in the past and his condition of today, the role he has had in the past, and the importance and the value that he has today, especially about the maintenance of spiritual and national unity of the state.

How did he spoke, he doesn't know, but he knows that at the end of his sermon a Secretary of a Party from Calan (I do not remember his name) came and told him in front of the others that if the Church would have only half of such priests then he would be convinced that there would be no sectarian. And then, if a person who has no tangency with the Church is expressing that manner, then why the leadership of the church stands against him and obliges him to no longer come out from the confines of his parish, since the neo-religious representatives are coming from the country edge."<sup>42</sup>

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<sup>40</sup> ACNSAS, operative fund, file I 259463, vol. II, paper 43.

<sup>41</sup> ACNSAS, operative fund, file I 259463, vol. II, paper 58.

<sup>42</sup> ACNSAS, operative fund, file I 259463, vol. III, paper 35.

Sometimes, he was definitely forbidden to participate in some church services, with categorical threats. In August 1978 at Chimindia it was a wedding of two young people from the "Lord's Army", where about 1000 people participated, they have come from all over the country, many of them were theologians and members of the "Lord's Army". An informant stated that "*Avramescu and Sabau did not come because they were promised that they would be arrested if they participate*"<sup>43</sup> and from the talk with Father Sabau he understood that "*he runs away from home because he was afraid of them, and he shouldn't be Sunday at home because he's not allowed to attend the wedding in Chimindia.*"<sup>44</sup>

The documents from the archives CNSAS highlights even the *goodness and humanity* that characterized Father Ioan. Thus, for example, an informant reported the following:

"I hired on the 21<sup>st</sup> of August 1967 the painter Rositoiu Constantin from Bobalna, who is also a singer at the Church, to paint two rooms for me. During this time I chatted with him.

Source say: How are you satisfied with the superior, with the priest?

Rositoiu says: Very satisfied, I do not know if there is another priest like this one in the country, if there are 2 or 3 like him.

Source says: How does he behave with the subordinates and faithful people?

Rositoiu says: With us, those who sing, I can say that he carries very well, as so does with the faithful people. For example, if gifts are brought to a divine service (bread and wine) he gives us all of it, but we, by shame, we offer him a part. He does not drink; also he does not eat too much, he is fed by the Spirit of God".<sup>45</sup>

As a bearer of the priesthood of Christ, love and caring of Father Ioan did not limit only to the believers that he shepherded, but he was pouring out to all the oppressed, regardless of the religion or ethnicity, whether they were good or bad.

Even if he did not approve the immoral facts of some of them, the Father was sensitive to their pain and suffering:

"The source informs you about priest Sabau from the village of Bobalna as follows: in a discussion at his home, the so called expressed his concern on the "Gypsy danger" and about the error of our state that it does not take drastic measures against the Gypsies, who have become a plague to our society

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<sup>43</sup> ACNSAS, operative fund, file I 259463, vol. III, paper 66.

<sup>44</sup> ACNSAS, operative fund, file I 259463, vol. III, paper 67.

<sup>45</sup> ACNSAS, operative fund, file I 259463, vol. II, paper 37.

through their behavior towards humankind, thefts, etc. In the same discussion he expressed his Christian "pity" towards the Gypsies and he said that he helped families harassed with clothes, food and even to get rid of lice and bugs into an outbreak of infection of this kind."<sup>46</sup>

From the proceedings of expropriation the *humble life* of Father Ioan and of his family is highlighted: he had only a sofa bed with a crate, a pendulum clock, a radio and a library.<sup>47</sup>

All efforts of the informers to compromise Father Ioan remained fruitless. Being watched closely, the father continued his sacrifice in order to serving the Church, living in the greater modesty and simplicity of life:

"After having several discussions with the priest Ioan Sabau from Bobalna, I report the following:

After his release from prison, following the recent events, he realized that in the intellectual field he could not do almost anything, being closely watched and then, in order to justify his paycheck that he receives, he began to carry out on administrative field of the household; in this way, over the years he built a church and a home office from foundation, he made capital repairs to another Church, he painted it all around and so on.

He states that all his life he worked for others and for him he did not do almost nothing and he argues the fact that now, at the old age, he does not have the material possibility neither to buy an apartment in the city so that he is forced to repair his parental home in Folt, which was flooded twice and after retirement he should return and spend the last years of life here."<sup>48</sup>

Even if it is the Chronicle of a suffering life, Father Ioan's file is a powerful testimony about the worthiness of his Holiness, even more as it is a testimony that came from those who had the duty to accuse. There may not be a bigger vengeance than to force your enemy to recognize your godness and superiority. This was the only revenge of father Ioan, made with the power of the one who said, "But take heart! I have overcome the world!"

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<sup>46</sup> ACNSAS, operative fund, file I 259463, vol. III, paper 70.

<sup>47</sup> ACNSAS, operative archive, file P 015054, vol. I, paper 173.

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## **GOD OF MERCY, PEOPLE OF MERCY: THE YEAR OF MERCY AND THE MISSION OF THE CHURCH**

**STEPHEN B. BEVANS\***

**ABSTRACT.** The paper offers a missionary interpretation of Mercy. Mercy is presented as a visible and effectively active aspect of the essence of God, who is love (1John 4:8, 16). It is an attribute of God Who created the world, the creation being God's first act of mission. Then Mercy is a reality in the history of Israel, where it takes a human face in the person of Jesus of Nazareth. In Pope Francis's reflection, Jesus Christ is incarnate Mercy, or "the face of mercy". The great mercy of God does not stop with simply having mercy on us, but He takes us in the heart of Mercy and makes us a community of mercy. Christians, as mercy-bearing disciples, need to constantly discern where God's mercy is at work and beckons them to work in today's Australian context: showing mercy to migrants and refugees, showing mercy to victims and perpetrators, and showing mercy to God's creation.

**Keywords:** Mercy, mission, incarnate Mercy, community of mercy, disciples, migrants, refugees, victims, God's creation

*The quality of mercy is not strained;  
It droppeth as the gentle rain from heaven  
Upon the place beneath. It is twice blest;  
It blesseth him that gives and him that takes:  
'Tis mightiest in the mightiest; it becomes  
The throned monarch better than his crown:  
His sceptre shows the force of temporal power,  
The attribute to awe and majesty,  
Wherein doth sit the dread and fear of kings;  
But mercy is above this sceptred sway;  
It is enthronèd in the hearts of kings,  
It is an attribute to God himself;  
And earthly power doth then show likest God's*

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*When mercy seasons justice. Therefore, ...  
...consider this,  
That, in the course of justice, none of us  
Should see salvation: we do pray for mercy;  
And that same prayer doth teach us all to render  
The deeds of mercy.*<sup>1</sup>

Portia's well-known speech in Shakespeare's *The Merchant of Venice*—probably quoted a lot in this Year of Mercy—startled me when I read it once again as I searched for words in literature to speak to you about mercy in a Year of Mercy. I was startled, because I found in these beautiful, powerful words the entire outline of what I want to share in this presentation about Mercy and Mission. God's mercy, Shakespeare says, is an attribute of God as such. God is a God of Mercy, and human beings are most like God when they are merciful themselves, especially "seasoning" justice with mercy. Without God's mercy, if God dealt "with us according to our sins" (Ps 103:10), none of us would see salvation.

But God *is* a God of mercy, and opening up to God's mercy calls us to be People of Mercy. Former Archbishop of Canterbury Rowan Williams defines Mission as "finding out where the Spirit is at work and joining in."<sup>2</sup> Since God's Spirit is "the Finger of God's right hand divine,"<sup>3</sup> and so a Spirit of Mercy, we might paraphrase Rowan Williams's definition to say that "Mission is finding out where God's Mercy is at work, and joining in."

These opening reflections on Mercy and Mission suggest a way to organize these reflections that I would like to share with you today. A first part will meditate on our Triune God, a communion-in-mission, as a God of Mercy. Part II will reflect on how, as God's People, the church, we are called to be a People of Mercy, called to be a "Community of Missionary, Mercy-Bearing Disciples."<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> William Shakespeare, *The Merchant of Venice*, Act IV, Scene 1.

<sup>2</sup> Rowan Williams, "Fresh Expressions" website, <http://www.freshexpressions.org.uk/guide/about/principles/transform>. Cited also in Kirsteen Kim, *Joining in with the Spirit: Connecting World Church and Local Mission* (London: Epworth Press, 2010), 1.

<sup>3</sup> Hymn "Veni Creator Spiritus." See the original Latin: "digitus paternae dexterae," at <http://www.preces-latinae.org/thesaurus/Hymni/VeniCreator.html>.

<sup>4</sup> See Pope Francis, Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii Gaudium* (EG), [http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/apost\\_exhortations/documents/papa-francesco\\_esortazione-ap\\_20131124\\_evangelii-gaudium.html](http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/apost_exhortations/documents/papa-francesco_esortazione-ap_20131124_evangelii-gaudium.html), 24. Francis's phrase is "community of missionary disciples."

## **A God of Mercy: Community-in-Mission**

Mercy, wrote Shakespeare, “is an attribute to God himself.” Cardinal Walter Kasper, however, notes that God’s mercy needs to be understood even more fundamentally. It is, he says, “God’s Defining Attribute.”<sup>5</sup> Mercy, insists Kasper, cannot be regarded as a marginal, derivative quality of God. “Instead, mercy is the externally visible and effectively active aspect of the essence of God, who is love (1John 4:8, 16).

Equating God’s mercy with God’s love points to the fact that it is not a quality that generates a “Plan B” for a fallen humanity and a fallen world. No, according to its etymology—clearer in the Romance languages’ *misericordia* and the German *Baumherzigkeit*—mercy is at the very heart of God. Why “God never tires of forgiving us”<sup>6</sup> is because the overflowing heart of God in love and delight in what God is still in the process of creating, and God’s pain of creatures’ suffering. Mercy is at the very core of what it means to be God, the deepest motive for God’s mission of sending the Spirit at the first nanosecond of creation and sending the Son “in the fullness of time” (Gal 4:4). Shakespeare was right on target: “the quality of mercy is not strained.” It is simply who God is.

### ***Mercy from the First Moment of Creation***

During an Angelus message soon after he became pope, Pope Francis told of an old woman he had met in Buenos Aires who told him that without mercy the world would not exist. Francis, struck by the truth of this conviction, asked the woman if she had taught theology at the Gregorian in Rome!<sup>7</sup> Creation, God’s first act of mission, is the result of God’s overflowing, “unstrained” heart of mercy, which as St. Bonaventure expresses it, “is diffusive of itself.”<sup>8</sup>

Australian theologian Denis Edwards describes the act of creation as the gentle, caring, loving action of the Holy Spirit, coaxing and persuading the formation of gases and molecules, stars and planets, emerging life on earth, microbes, corals, barramundi, kangaroos, and human beings.<sup>9</sup> U.S. theologian Elizabeth Johnson writes of how the Spirit’s presence was active, and yet not

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<sup>5</sup> Walter Kasper, *Mercy: The Essence of the Gospel and the Key to Christian Life* (New York / Mahwah, NJ: Paulist Press, 2013), Kindle Edition, location 1617.

<sup>6</sup> EG 3.

<sup>7</sup> Austen Ivereigh, *The Great Reformer: Francis and the Making of a Radical Pope* (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 2014), Epilogue, location 7173.

<sup>8</sup> See Bonaventure, *The Mind’s Journey to God*, V, 1, quoted in Kasper, location 1704, note 18.

<sup>9</sup> Denis Edwards, *Breath of God: A Theology of Creator Spirit* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2004), 43-49.

the presence of a manipulating and all-determining monarch. It was the freeing, life-giving presence of a lover: "... the Spirit, more mobile than any motion, blows throughout the world with compassionate love that grants nature its own creativity and humans their own freedom, all the while companioning them through the terror of history toward a new future."<sup>10</sup> Creation is conceived in and executed in mercy. As Australian Anglican Bishop Stephen Pickard has expressed it, it is a "continual and infinitely patient act of love."<sup>11</sup> It is a mercy "mightiest in the mighty," as Shakespeare wrote. God's mercy, argued Thomas Aquinas, manifests God's omnipotence to the greatest degree.<sup>12</sup>

### ***Mercy in the History of Israel***

It is in the history of a relatively insignificant people, however (Dt 7:7), that God revealed Godself fully as a God of mercy. In Abraham, "all nations" would find a blessing" (Gen 12:2). In and through Israel God would show God's mercy—this was the oath that God swore "to Abraham and Sarah, and their descendants forever" (Lk 1:56; see Lk 1:78-79). When that people was oppressed by the Egyptians, God in God's mercy heard their cry and sent Moses to free them from slavery (see Ex 3:7). Even in the midst of betrayal by that people, God's purposes for them would not be deterred. As God gives the Law to Moses on Sinai—the great proof for Israel of God's *hesed* and *emeth*, God's mercy and love—God passes by Moses and cries out: "The Lord, the Lord, a God merciful and gracious, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness, keeping steadfast love for the thousandth generation" (Ex 33:6-7).

God's mercy and purpose for Israel is beautifully expressed, as British Anglican theologian Sam Wells highlights, in the eleventh chapter of the prophet Hosea.<sup>13</sup> Wells sees it in four parts, but let's just concentrate here on the first three. In a first part, God is reminiscing about God's love for Israel. "When Israel was a child, I loved him" (11:1); "It was I who taught Ephraim to walk" (11:3); "I took them up in my arms" (11:3); "I was to them like those who lift infants to their cheeks" (11:4). Wells writes: "You can feel God stroking Israel's soft skin and getting out the little spoon and trying to put some liquidized food in Israel's mouth as it sits in its high chair. What a tender scene."

<sup>10</sup> Elizabeth A. Johnson, *Ask the Beasts: Darwin and the God of Love* (London: Bloomsbury, 2014), 159.

<sup>11</sup> Stephen Pickard, "Wicked Problems: The Ecology of the Praise of God," Second Keynote Address at the Life of Abundance Conference, Australian Anglican Church, Melbourne, Australia, February 11, 2016, <http://www.abmission.org/resources.php?action=list-items&catId=23>.

<sup>12</sup> Aquinas, quoted in EG.

<sup>13</sup> Samuel Wells, *Learning to Dream Again: Rediscovering the Heart of God* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2013). The quotations in the following treatment are from pages 16-18.

But then the scene shifts to the present, and God laments Israel's unfaithfulness. "The more I called them, the more they went from me. ... My people are bent on turning away from me" (11:2, 7). And that unfaithfulness has and has had consequences: exile and slavery. "They shall return to the land of Egypt, and Assyria shall be their king, because they have refused to turn to me" (11:5).

The third scene of Chapter 11, as Wells describes it, "is the most poignant one of all," because "we're given the awesome privilege of a window into the heart of God." Here we see "an all-night struggle between sober, realistic pragmatism; passionate, wild fury; and overwhelming, tender compassion"—mercy. "How can I give you up, Ephraim? How can I hand you over, Israel? ... My heart recoils within me; my compassion (mercy!) grows warm and tender" (11:8). In Pope Francis's reflection on this passage, he ends by quoting St. Augustine: "It is easier for God to hold back anger than mercy."<sup>14</sup>

God cannot save Israel from the consequences of its sin and unfaithfulness, but God will be faithful. And so in the end, love and mercy win. God will continue to work in Israel's history. In the end, God promises a new covenant, one in which Israel's hearts of stone will be replaced by hearts of flesh, and God will place God's very Spirit within them (Ez 36:27).

One small verse in Psalm 49 might explain how, in Sam Wells's words again, "God's love is crazy, illogical, and a matter of pure grace"<sup>15</sup> The line is "God delights in God's people" (Ps 149:4). For some crazy reason, God loves Israel. As God said to Moses in Deuteronomy, it was not because they were more numerous than other peoples. It was simply because God loved them. There was simply something about this people that moved God's heart. In her amazing novel *Gilead*, Marilynne Robinson describes her main character, the Reverend John Ames, reflecting on a passage in John Calvin "somewhere" that each person is an actor on a stage and God is the audience. Ames muses: "I do like Calvin's image ... it suggests how God might actually enjoy us. I believe we think of that far too little."<sup>16</sup> God enjoys us, Ames muses, "not in any simple sense, of course, but as you enjoy the *being* of a child, even though he is in every way a thorn in your heart."<sup>17</sup> "Could a mother forget her child?... Behold, I have carved you on the palm of my hand" (Is 49:15, 16).

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<sup>14</sup> Augustine, *Homilies on the Psalms*, 76, 11. Quoted in Pope Francis, *Misericordiae Vultus* (MV), [https://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/apost\\_letters/documents/papa-francesco\\_bolla\\_20150411\\_misericordiae-vultus.html](https://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/apost_letters/documents/papa-francesco_bolla_20150411_misericordiae-vultus.html), 21.

<sup>15</sup> Wells, *Learning to Dream Again*, 13.

<sup>16</sup> Marilynne Robinson, *Gilead* (New York: Picador—Farrar, Straus, and Giroux, 2004), 124.

<sup>17</sup> Robinson, *Gilead*, 125.

### *Incarnate Mercy*

“In the fullness of time” (Gal 4:4) the mercy lavished upon all creation in general but on Israel specifically takes on a human face in the person of Jesus of Nazareth. He is incarnate Mercy, or “the face of mercy,” as Pope Francis reflects in his message at the beginning of this year of mercy.<sup>18</sup> Jesus is “God’s body language,” in the beautiful expression of British Anglican theologian Mark Oakley.<sup>19</sup>

We see God’s mercy as Jesus performs so many healings and exorcisms in his brief ministry in Israel. We see it in Jesus’ healing of Blind Bartimaeus (Mk 10:46-52), who cries out “Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me!” And Jesus did. And Bartimaeus received his sight. We see mercy in Jesus’ healing of a leper. Mark’s version of the story (Mk 1:40-45) notes that when Jesus heard the leper’s plea for healing he was “moved with pity”—mercy—and reached out and touched him. It struck me one time while I was meditating on this passage what that touch might have been like. Most likely it wasn’t a tentative, fearful touch—eeew!—but a loving, generous, merciful touch. And the leper was healed.

Every once in a while we see mercy incarnate in Jesus’ attitudes and actions. In Mark’s sixth chapter, beginning with verse 30, we read how the apostles came back to Jesus after they had been on mission, proclaiming the Reign of God, casting out many demons, and curing many sick people. They were obviously excited, and were sharing with Jesus “all that they had done and taught” (30). Jesus responds by inviting them to come with him to a deserted place and rest a while. Jesus and the Twelve must have been tired—the text says that so many were “coming and going” that “they had no leisure even to eat” (31). As they left, however, many people in the crowd saw where they were going, and got to the place before them. No rest for the weary! As they came ashore Jesus “saw a great crowd,” and what does the text say? You would think he might say something like: “oh NO!” But we read: “he had compassion (mercy) for them, because they were like sheep without a shepherd” (34). Jesus went on to teach them, and then, because it was getting late and they had nowhere to go to eat, he fed the whole crowd with the little that his disciples had with them. Incarnate mercy. The face of mercy. God’s body language.

Many of Jesus’s parables express God’s mercy, incarnations in word of the mercy of his Father. Perhaps Jesus’ most powerful and beautiful parables are the three that make up chapter 15 of Luke’s gospel: the story of the shepherd searching for and finding his lost sheep, the story of the woman searching for

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<sup>18</sup>MV, 1.

<sup>19</sup> Mark Oakley, *The Collage of God*, Second Edition (Norwich, UK: Canterbury Press, 2012), 25, 27.

and finding her lost coin, and the story of the father waiting for—the text says that he saw him coming back in the distance (Lk 15:20)—and accepting his long lost, really unworthy son. In these parables we see the determination of God—incarnate in the good shepherd and the persistent woman—and God’s joy when that determination succeeds; we see as well the truth of Pope Francis’s often-repeated line that God never tires of forgiving us.<sup>20</sup> I find a marvelous parallel to Jesus’ parable of the loving father and wayward son in a lovely poem by the American poet Wendell Berry. It’s called “To My Mother,” and goes like this:

I was your rebellious son,  
do you remember? Sometimes  
I wonder if you do remember,  
so complete has your forgiveness been.

So complete has your forgiveness been  
I wonder sometimes if it did not  
precede my wrong, and I erred,  
safe found, within your love,

prepared ahead of me, the way home,  
or my bed at night, so that almost  
I should forgive you, who perhaps  
foresaw the worst that I might do,

and forgave before I could act,  
causing me to smile now, looking back,  
to see how paltry was my worst,  
compared to your forgiveness of it

already given. And this, then,  
is the vision of that Heaven of which  
we have heard, where those who love  
each other have forgiven each other,  
where, for that, the leaves are green,  
the light a music in the air,  
and all is unentangled,  
and all is undismayed.<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>20</sup> See EN 3.

<sup>21</sup> Wendell Berry, “To My Mother,” in ed. Garrison Keillor, *Good Poems* (New York: Penguin Books, 2003), Kindle Edition, location 2641.

God's mercy is perhaps most fully and graphically revealed, however, in Jesus' death on the cross. As Paul puts it powerfully, to die for a friend or a good person is rare enough. Jesus reveals the extent of the merciful heart of God, however, in that "while we were yet sinners" he died for us (Rom 5:8). U. S. poet Denise Levertov writes of God's mercy as a gushing waterfall:

To live in the mercy of God.

To feel vibrate the enraptured

waterfall flinging itself  
unabating down and down  
to clenched fists of rock.  
Swiftness of plunge,  
hour after year after century,

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Thus, not mild, not temperate,  
God's love for the world. Vast  
Flood of mercy  
flung on resistance.<sup>22</sup>

As we well know, and as we celebrate in these days after Easter, Jesus' death is not the end of the story. If it were, as British scripture scholar N. T. Wright argues persuasively, we would not be able to explain how Jesus and his story continue to live on today, and continue to transform those who acknowledge his Lordship and take on his lifestyle. Without the resurrection, Jesus would join the ranks of those great women and men who have made a difference in the world, and whose names live on, but who are not experienced as alive, as present, as transforming today.<sup>23</sup> As it is, the mercy of God, incarnate in Jesus, raised from the dead, has been shared with Jesus' disciples, the women and men who have been called to be his church. In a real way, perhaps the greatest mercy of God is that Jesus, through the Spirit, has called us to be witnesses to, servants of, and proclaimers of that mercy in the world today. God's mercy calls us as People, Missionaries of mercy. God's mercy calls us to mission.

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<sup>22</sup> Denise Levertov, "To Live in the Mercy of God".

<sup>23</sup> N. T. Wright, *Jesus and the Victory of God* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1996), 658-61.

## **A People of Mercy: A Community of Missionary, Mercy-Bearing Disciples**

The great mercy of God does not stop with simply having mercy on us—giving us and all creation the gift of existence, and, for some of it, the gift of life; recognizing our need of and working for our healing and liberation, restoring us to relationship despite our betrayal and sin. God’s mercy takes us into God’s very life, God’s very mission.

St. Paul implies this when he writes of how Christians, in virtue of their Baptism, have put on Christ (Gal 3:27), have the mind of Christ (1Cor 2:16; Phil 2:5), are conformed to Christ (Rom 8:29; 2Cor 3:18), are Christ’s body in the world (Rom 12:3-8; 1Cor 12:12-30). St. John connects the life of Christians to Christ’s with his image of Christ as the vine and Christians as the branches (Jn 15:1-11). The Second Letter of Peter (2Pet 1:4) tells how baptized Christians share the divine nature.

This idea of sharing in the divine nature is echoed repeatedly in the writings of Irenaeus, Clement of Alexandria, Athanasius, and many others as they talk of deification or *theosis*.<sup>24</sup> While such language often seems static, Norman Russell, a major patristic scholar who has written extensively on *theosis*, insists that it really has a missionary cast to it. As he writes, “It is not simply the remedying of our defective human state. It is nothing less than our entering into partnership with God, our becoming fellow workers with him (1Cor 3:9) for the sake of bringing the divine economy to its ultimate fulfillment.”<sup>25</sup>

What I would like to suggest, therefore, is this: because God is a God of mercy we are People of mercy. God is—in Denise Levertov’s words—an intemperate waterfall of mercy, mercy “not strained” as Shakespeare puts it. God created the world out of this overflowing, unstrained mercy. God looks with eyes of mercy on those who suffer and who are oppressed, and so calls for justice. God forgives us, almost preceding our wrong (as Wendell Berry put it) when we betray God, one another, and God’s creation in sin. We who are baptized into the divine life and share the divine nature are therefore People of mercy, called to be witnesses to and sacraments of God’s mercy. At the end of MV, Pope Francis speaks of God’s mercy as a “great river,” flowing “from the heart of the Trinity, from the depths of the mystery of God.” He goes on to speak of the church as echoing “the word of God that resounds strong and clear as a message and sign of pardon, strength, aid, and love. May she never tire of

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<sup>24</sup> See a “sampler” of patristic statements about *theosis* in Norman Russell, *Fellow Workers with God: Orthodox Thinking on Theosis* (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir’s Seminary Press, 2009), 38-39.

<sup>25</sup> Russell, *Fellow Workers with God*, 36.

extending mercy, and be ever patient in offering compassion and love.”<sup>26</sup> As a “community of missionary disciples,” therefore, the church is a community where mercy is “freely given.”<sup>27</sup>

### *Embodying Mercy*

What might it mean concretely to act as a People of Mercy in our world today? Pope Francis has certainly pointed to the fact that a first and basic way is that the church community needs to embody God’s mercy in its own institutional and community life. In MV, Francis images the church as an “oasis of mercy.”<sup>28</sup> In EG, Francis writes movingly that local church communities should be like “a mother with an open heart,” “the house of the Father, with doors always wide open,” like “the father of the prodigal son, who always keeps his door open so that when the son returns, he can readily pass through it.”<sup>29</sup>

Part of this “open door policy” is that “the doors of the sacraments” should not “be closed for simply any reason.”<sup>30</sup> Francis urges that the door of Baptism be wide open—that it be available for any parent, for example, who requests it. As a kind of example of this, Francis himself baptized the child of a civilly married couple on January 12, 2014.<sup>31</sup> Similarly, Francis implies that the church should have a more open attitude toward the reception of the Eucharist. “The Eucharist, although it is the fullness of sacramental life, is not a prize for the perfect but a powerful medicine and nourishment for the weak. These convictions have pastoral consequences that we are called to consider with prudence and boldness.”<sup>32</sup> Might such “prudence and boldness” entail allowing divorced and remarried Catholics to receive the Eucharist? Might it include more instances of intercommunion with other Christian churches and communities? These questions are subjects of hot debate in the church today. Might they be solved by remembering that we are a People of Mercy? As Francis says, “the Church is not a tollhouse; it is the house of the Father, where there is a place for everyone, with all their problems.”<sup>33</sup>

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<sup>26</sup> MV 25.

<sup>27</sup> EG 24, 115.

<sup>28</sup> MV 12.

<sup>29</sup> EG 47, 46.

<sup>30</sup> EG 47.

<sup>31</sup> See <http://www.christianpost.com/news/pope-francis-causes-stir-for-baptizing-unmarried-couples-baby-in-sistine-chapel-tells-mothers-its-ok-to-breastfeed-in-church-112519/>.

<sup>32</sup> EG 47.

<sup>33</sup> EG 47.

Similarly, Francis reminds priests that “the confessional must not be a torture chamber but rather an encounter with the Lord’s mercy which spurs us on to do our best.”<sup>34</sup> Speaking in February to priests from around the world who he was officially commissioning as “missionaries of mercy,” Francis told them that holiness of life, not the “club of judgment” would bring people back to God and the church.<sup>35</sup> As he said in his interview with Antonio Spadaro in the fall of 2013, “the ministers of the church must be ministers of mercy above all.”<sup>36</sup>

In the same interview with Fr. Spadaro, Francis offered a striking image of what a church of “mercy freely given” might look like. “I see the church as a field hospital after battle. It is useless to ask a seriously injured person if he has high cholesterol and about the level of his blood sugars. You have to heal his wounds. Then we can talk about everything else. Heal the wounds, heal the wounds.”<sup>37</sup> In MV Francis is explicit: “It is absolutely essential for the church and for the credibility of her message that she herself live and testify to mercy.”<sup>38</sup>

### ***“Mercying”***

Pope Francis’s episcopal motto is a phrase from a homily by Venerable Bede that reflects on the call of St. Matthew in Matthew’s gospel (9:9-19): “having mercy, he chose him,” or, as the pope prefers to translate it, “mercying, he chose him.”<sup>39</sup> Kerry Weber comments that “in turning the noun into a verb, a sentiment into an action, Francis calls us not only to have mercy or to show mercy, but to *embody* mercy.”<sup>40</sup> One way that such embodiment can take place is what we reflected on above—the church community becoming a community of openness, vulnerability, and hospitality. Another way it can take place is what we will reflect on in this section—Christians “mercying” by doing works of mercy, the traditional Corporal and Spiritual Works of Mercy. Once more this connects mercy directly with God’s mission, and the mission of the church.

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<sup>34</sup> EG 44.

<sup>35</sup> <http://www.cathnewsusa.com/2016/02/francis-confessors-should-never-judge-club-of-judgment-wont-bring-sheep-back/?newsletter=1>.

<sup>36</sup> Interview with Antonio Spadaro, SJ, *A Big Heart Open to God: A Conversation with Pope Francis* ((New York: HarperOne/America, 2013), Kindle edition, Location 357.

<sup>37</sup> Interview, location 350.

<sup>38</sup> MV 11.

<sup>39</sup> Interview, location 146-153. The pope coins a word in Spanish—*misericordiando*—making “mercy” into a verb: “mercying.”

<sup>40</sup> Kerry Weber, “Mercy-ing,” in Interview, location 1051.

The Corporal Works of Mercy certainly have their roots in the Old Testament, particularly in passages like Is 58:7-9 and Micah 6:8, but more immediately in their Christian form they are drawn almost wholly from the great judgment scene in Matthew 25:31-46: “I was hungry and you gave me to eat; thirsty, and you gave me to drink; a stranger, and you welcomed me; naked, and you clothed me; sick, and you visited me; in prison, and you came to me” (35-36). To these six practices the Christian tradition added a seventh—to bury the dead. Pope Francis’s recent encyclical *Laudato Si’* suggests an eighth corporal work of mercy—to care for creation.<sup>41</sup> As they arose in the tradition, the Spiritual Works of Mercy are also seven. They are: instruct the ignorant; counsel the doubtful; comfort the sorrowful; admonish the sinner; gladly forgive injuries; bear wrongs patiently; and pray for the living and the dead.<sup>42</sup>

Walter Kasper quotes a beautiful prayer by St. Faustina Kowalska (to whom St. John Paul II was so devoted) that eloquently expresses the extent of the “mercying” that Christians as People of Mercy, missionary disciples of mercy, should be about:

Help me, O Lord, that my eyes may be merciful...  
Help me, O Lord, that my ears may be merciful...  
Help me, O Lord, that my tongue may be merciful...  
Help me, O Lord, that my hands may be merciful...  
Help me, O Lord, that my feet may be merciful...  
Help me, O Lord, that my heart may be merciful...<sup>43</sup>

Hand in hand with these acts of mercy goes the commitment to justice. Genuine “mercying” does not just relieve suffering or misery. It goes to the root of the problems and works for personal, societal, and structural change. Not only does the commitment to working for justice show mercy to the victims of injustice, however. It also shows mercy to perpetrators of injustice, for ultimately those who are exposed or convicted as perpetrators of injustice, can and will receive mercy. The prophets railed against Israel not out of hatred for the people, but because they loved them. Their call to “return” to God was as much an act of mercy as it was a call for justice. As Shakespeare recognized, justice must be “seasoned” with mercy. At the same time, however, mercy needs to be seasoned with justice.

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<sup>41</sup> Francis, Encyclical Letter *Laudato Si’* (LS), [http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/encyclicals/documents/papa-francesco\\_20150524\\_enciclica-laudato-si.html](http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/encyclicals/documents/papa-francesco_20150524_enciclica-laudato-si.html).

<sup>42</sup> For a listing of the Corporal and Spiritual Works of Mercy and further reflection, see Kasper, *Mercy*, location 2662-2693.

<sup>43</sup> *Tagebuch der Schwester Maria Faustyna Kowalska* (Hauteville: Parvis Verlag, 1990), 80-81, in Kasper, *Mercy*, location 2696-2716.

### ***“Mercying” in Today’s World, Today’s Australia***

What might “mercying” look like concretely, especially today’s Australia? How might we live out the spiritual and corporal works of mercy today, as partners in God’s mission? Obviously the concrete ways are many, and Christians, as missionary, mercy-bearing disciples, need constantly to discern where God’s mercy is at work and beckons them to work in their particular contexts. In this final section of my reflections on mission and mercy I’d like to offer three rough sketches of where God is working and beckons us to work in today’s Australian context: showing mercy to migrants and refugees, showing mercy to victims and perpetrators, and showing mercy to God’s creation.

#### ***Mercy for Migrants and Refugees***

On his first trip outside the Vatican after being elected pope, Pope Francis traveled to the Mediterranean island of Lampedusa, the first landfall of many migrants making the perilous journey from Africa to Italy. Many of these migrants, victims of corrupt smugglers, were “dying at sea, in boats which were vehicles of hope and became vehicles of death.” In his homily on Lampedusa, Pope Francis asked disturbing questions: “‘Has any one of us wept because of this situation and others like it?’ Has any one of us grieved for the death of these brothers and sisters? Has any of us wept for these persons who were on the boat? For the young mothers carrying their babies? For these men who were looking for a means of supporting their families? We are a society which has forgotten how to weep—to experience compassion—‘suffering with’ others. The globalization of indifference has taken from us the ability to weep”<sup>44</sup>—in other words, from the ability to have mercy.

We see the same kind of indifference in many Europeans who harden their hearts against Syrian and Afghani migrants and refugees who crowd their borders, in demagogues like Donald Trump who would build a wall along the US-Mexican border or forbid Muslims to enter the United States. In his introduction to the Australian Bishops’ Social Justice Statement for 2015-2016, Bishop Long Nguyen, Auxiliary of Melbourne, writes that “We Australians have rightly felt appalled at the dangers that refugees experience on their journeys, but we seem to have come to believe that harshness and rejection will be enough to deter desperate people from their flight to safety.”<sup>45</sup>

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<sup>44</sup> Pope Francis, Homily at Lampedusa, [https://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/homilies/2013/documents/papa-francesco\\_20130708\\_omelia-lampedusa.html](https://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/homilies/2013/documents/papa-francesco_20130708_omelia-lampedusa.html).

<sup>45</sup> Chairman’s Message, Australian Bishops, Social Justice Statement, 2015-2016, “For Those Who Come across the Seas: Justice for Refugees and Asylum Seekers,” 2.

As individual Christians, however, and as church, we need to do all we can to show mercy to these poorest of today's poor. The corporal work of mercy of welcoming the stranger, and the spiritual work of mercy of praying for the living and the dead, need to take concrete shape in our personal actions, our voting, our charitable contributions, and our liturgical and private prayers. How can the picture of that small Syrian child lying on a Turkish beach be ignored? How can hundreds of Latin Americans dying of thirst in the Arizona desert leave us unmoved? How can we remain indifferent to people in virtual concentration camps in Baxter, Curtin, or Christmas Island?

### *Mercy for Victims and Perpetrators*

The spiritual work of mercy of consoling the sorrowful might take on concreteness in today's world and today's Australia as we open our hearts and lives to the world's victims—women who have been sexually harassed or raped, women and children who have been physically or sexually abused, victims who have been displaced by war, victims of human trafficking, children who have been recruited to fight civil wars, children who are the victims of clergy sexual abuse. The corporal work of mercy of healing the sick takes on powerful significance as we show mercy to victims of AIDS, or Ebola or the Zika virus. The corporal works of mercy of feeding the hungry, giving drink to the thirsty, and clothing the naked take concrete shape as we come to the aid in any way we can to victims of natural disasters. As Christians and as church, we need to weep for these victims, pray for them, take political action on their behalf, do anything we can to alleviate their suffering, and work for the justice of their causes.

Much harder, however, is to extend mercy to those who perpetrate violence and injustice, and thus put into practice the corporal work of visiting the imprisoned and the spiritual works of forgiving injuries and bearing wrongs. While justice must always be seasoned with mercy, mercy needs always to be seasoned with justice. As Pope Francis writes, "these are not two contradictory realities, but two dimensions of a single reality that unfolds progressively until it culminates in the fullness of love."<sup>46</sup>

Having mercy on perpetrators does not mean ignoring or forgetting the evil they have done, nor does it mean absolving them of the consequences of their actions. Certainly, society needs to be protected from criminals, rapists, child abusers, drug dealers and the like. Such protection, however, does not necessarily entail cruel punishment that would treat them in an

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<sup>46</sup> VM 20.

inhuman way and deny the human dignity that they have denied by their actions. Christians and the church need to work for prison reform, and the abolition of the death penalty where it still exists.

There have been wonderful examples of “healing circles” in which reconciliation is cultivated and restorative justice is practiced—I think of Fr. Dave Kelly and his ministry with victims and perpetrators in the Back of the Yards neighborhood in Chicago. Powerful scenes of mercy to perpetrators have been enacted in the Truth and Reconciliation Commission in South Africa after Apartheid; or after a fatal mass shooting in Pennsylvania, USA, by the Amish community; or Pope John Paul II forgiving his would-be assassin. Can there be forgiveness in the Christian community for the pilot of the Germanwings jet that crashed into the French Alps last year? Smugglers who provide refugees with leaky boats? People who profit from human trafficking? For the terrorists who attacked Paris in November, 2015? For Cardinal Law or Cardinal Pell? As Robert Schreiter writes, reconciliation—or mercy for perpetrators—is not primary a human task. It is the result of God’s grace. Without denying the need for justice, might Christians not offer them mercy? As People of Mercy who share God’s life, can they act any less mercifully than God?

### ***Mercy for Creation***

In EG, coming to the defense of vulnerable human beings, Pope Francis writes of “other weak and defenseless beings who are frequently at the mercy of economic interests or indiscriminate exploitation. ... creation as a whole.”<sup>47</sup> Like John Paul II and the Australian bishops, Francis calls for an “ecological conversion,” one that recognizes creation’s beauty and dignity, and calls for our mercy on its wounded and broken state.<sup>48</sup>

As far back as 1988, the bishops of the Philippines wrote that “God intended this land for us, God’s special creatures, but not so that we might destroy it and turn it into a wasteland.... After a single night’s rain, look at the chocolate brown rivers in your locality and remember that they are carrying the life blood of the land into the sea.... How can fish swim in sewers like the Pasig (the river that flows through Manila) and so many more rivers which we have polluted? Who has turned the wonderworld of the seas into underwater cemeteries bereft of color and life?”<sup>49</sup>

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<sup>47</sup> EG 215.

<sup>48</sup> LS 218; John Paul II, General Audience, January 17, 2001; Australian Catholic Bishops’ Conference, *A New Earth—The Environmental Challenge* (2002), [http://www.socialjustice.catholic.org.au/files/SJSandresources/2002\\_SJSS\\_statement.pdf](http://www.socialjustice.catholic.org.au/files/SJSandresources/2002_SJSS_statement.pdf).

<sup>49</sup> Catholic Bishops of the Philippines, Pastoral Letter, *What Is Happening to Our Beautiful Land?*, quoted in EG 215.

In 2004 the bishops of Queensland published a magnificent pastoral letter on the protection of the Great Barrier Reef, which entitled *Let the Many Coastlands Be Glad!*. They described the Reef as having “a special glory.” “Wonder, gratitude and praise of God lead easily to a deeper sense of responsibility for what God has made. Our Reef is home to thousands of creatures, ‘many of which appear to be dressed for an underwater mardi-gras so absurd and brilliant are their colours and patterns.’”<sup>50</sup> And yet they noted that this magnificent but fragile wonder is under serious threat from soil erosion, waste disposal, over fishing, tourism, development, and global warming. The Queensland bishops’ call for the use of more renewable energy, a change in people’s habits of consumption, recycling and conservation of electricity are calls for acts of mercy, the practice of the “new” corporal work of mercy that is the care and protection of creation.<sup>51</sup> Ecological commitment is an integral part of the mission of the church, for it joins in with God’s merciful protection of creation.

### ***Conclusion***

Mercy is not only what God does. It is who God is, incarnate in Jesus of Nazareth, the face of God’s mercy. The quality of mercy is not strained. It flows like an intemperate waterfall, a flowing river, from God’s heart. In Pope Francis’s Prayer for the Year of Mercy, he asks us to pray to the Lord Jesus to send the Spirit to

Consecrate every one of us with its anointing,  
So that the Jubilee of Mercy may be a year of grace from the Lord,  
And your Church, with renewed enthusiasm,  
May bring good news to the poor,  
Proclaim liberty to captives and the oppressed,  
And restore sight to the blind.<sup>52</sup>

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<sup>50</sup> Catholic Bishops of Queensland, *Let the Many Coastlands Be Glad! A Pastoral Letter on the Great Barrier Reef*, <http://catholicearthcare.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2015/02/Let-The-Many-Coastlines-Be-Glad-A-Pastoral-Letter-on-the-Great-Barrior-Reef.pdf>, 6. Quoting Penelope Figgs and Geoff Mosely, “Australia’s Wilderness Heritage, Volume 1,” *World Heritage Areas* (Sydney: Landsowne Press, Published in Association with the Australian Conservation Association, 1993), 47-51.

<sup>51</sup> Bishops of Queensland, *Let the Many Coastlands Be Glad!*, 21-22.

<sup>52</sup> Prayer of Pope Francis for the Extraordinary Jubilee of Mercy, [https://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/prayers/documents/papa-francesco\\_pregchiere\\_20151208\\_giubileo-straordinario-misericordia.html](https://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/prayers/documents/papa-francesco_pregchiere_20151208_giubileo-straordinario-misericordia.html).

Pope Francis asks us to pray, in other words, that the God of mercy make us a People of Mercy, a community of missionary, mercy-bearing disciples.

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## JOSEPH HAZZAYA AND THE SPIRITUAL ITINERARY

BENEDICT (VALENTIN) VESA\*

**ABSTRACT.** Joseph Hazzaya is one of the most well-known East Syriac mystics and a prolific writer, belonging to the same spiritual and theological family together with Isaac of Nineveh, Simon of Taibuteh and John Dalyatha. His name is also mentioned in the Christological debate of 786-787 in the East Syriac Church, during the time of Patriarch Timothy I, next to John the Solitary and John Dalyatha. The first chapter of this paper is dedicated to his theological biography, as revealing an important historical meeting between a scholastic-dogmatic theology and a spiritual-monastic perspective. The second section focuses on the tripartition of the spiritual life within the frame of the East Syriac ascetical tradition, in particular in reference to John the Solitary, “the father of the East Syriac spirituality”. And in consequence, the third chapter connects the three-fold stages of spiritual itinerary with the monastic life, for Joseph Hazzaya was a prominent representative of this milieu and all his writings were generated in this vein. The scope of this paper is to recuperate the personality of a great mystical author banished by the ‘Western’ Byzantine Church because of his belonging, as well as occasionally, by his own community.

**Keywords:** Joseph Hazzaya, spiritual itinerary, Christology, stage, conduct.

### Short Theological Biography

Joseph Hazzaya, quite unknown, at least for the Romanian theological field, is one of the most well-known East Syriac mystical writers. His writings represent a kind of synthesis and a systematisation of the East Syriac spiritual tradition. Ishodnah of Basra, in his ‘Book of Chastity’, dedicates a chapter to this prolific author. He was born around the first decade of the 8<sup>th</sup> century, in the city of Nimrod, in a pagan family. His father was a chief Magi. When his native city was conquered by the Arabs, he became prisoner and three years later he was sold to a Christian, named Cyriacus, in the village of Dadar, region of Qardu, south-east of today Turkey. By the influence of St. John of Kamul Monastery, he received the baptism and then

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entered Abba Saliba's Monastery in the region of Bet Nuhadra. Successively, he became hermit in the mountains of Qardu, then superior of Mar Basima Monastery, hermit again in the mountains of Zinai (region of Adiabene), around the monastery of Rabban Bektisho, and then superior of this very monastery<sup>1</sup>.

One may find his name, next to John the Solitary and John Dalyatha, in the so-called "process of mystics" ruled by Catholikos Timothy I in 786-787. Up to now, it is impossible to trace what happened with him after this very important anathematisation, but at least the fact that he was not buried in his monastery, but rather in Mar Atqen Monastery, gives us reasons to consider the effect of this conciliar document of anathematisation.

We do not have the documents of the council. What we can evoke is only a conciliar letter, transmitted by the "Nomocanon of 'Abdisho bar Brikha"<sup>2</sup>, which mentions the condemnation, and an Arab translation (a summary) of the anathema of the mystics<sup>3</sup>. And yet, we have a panorama that Elijah of Nisibis gives us, in the 11<sup>th</sup> century. Doing a description of the council, the author points out to an important element – there was a number of Christians who believed and professed that the Man assumed from Mary "sees" the eternal Lord. In consequence, a big gathering (formed of 16 metropolitans, 30 bishops<sup>4</sup>, numerous monks, savants and notable Christians) excommunicated all who believed that it was possible for human to have an ocular or intellectual vision of the eternal Verb, in this world or in the world to come<sup>5</sup>. From the document of Ibn at-Tayyib, one can observe that there is no clear motivation for John the Solitary's condemnation. For John Dalyatha, the Arab translator shows that he was condemned for his Modalist

<sup>1</sup> See J. B. Chabot, *Livre de chasteté compose par Jesusdenah. Mélanges d'archéologie et d'histoire* XVI (1896), 1-79; and P. Bedjan, *Liber superiorum* (Paris, 1901), 437-517; French translation in J. B. Chabot, *Livre de chasteté*, 225-91 (with index of names); here, n. 125, 54-55.

<sup>2</sup> Vittorio Berti, *Vita e studi di Timoteo I († 823) patriarca cristiano di Baghdad. Ricerche sull'epistolario e sulle fonti contigue* (Paris, Cahiers de Studia Iranica 41, Chrétiens en terre d'Iran 3), 190-193.

<sup>3</sup> *Bibliotheca Orientalis Clementina Vaticana* III.1 (Roma, 1725), 100; Wilhelm Hoenerbach and Otto Spies, *Ibn at-Tayyib, Fiqh an-Nasraniya. Das Rech der Christenheit* (Louvain, 1957), CSCO, 167-168, 185-187 (187-188).

<sup>4</sup> The contemporary scholars question the possibility of so many representatives being present (see Vittorio Berti, *Vita e studi di Timoteo I*, 192-193).

<sup>5</sup> Élie bar Šennaya, *Kitab-al-Majalis*, evoked by Khalil Samir, "Entretien d'Élie de Nisibe avec le vizir Ibn' Alī sur l'unité et la trinité", *Islamochristiana* 5 (1979): 31-117 (here p. 90, n. 17). The anathemas have been already analysed by Antoine Guillaumont and Robert Beulay. For Joseph Hazzaya: A. Guillaumont, "Sources de la doctrine de Joseph Hazzāyā", *Oriens Syrien* 3.1 (1958): 3-24; Robert Beulay, "Joseph Hazzaya", *Dictionnaire de Spiritualité* VIII, col. 1341-1349; for John Dalyatha: Robert Beulay, *L'enseignement spirituel de Jean le Dalyatha, mystique syro-oriental du VIII<sup>e</sup> siècle* (Paris, 1990), and recently by Alexandre Treiger, "Could Christ's Humanity See his Divinity? An Eight Century Controversy between John of Dalyatha and Timothy I, Catholikos of the Church of the East", *Journal of Canadian Society for Syriac Studies* 9 (2009): 2-3.

Trinitarian phraseology, naming the Son and the Holy Spirit divine “powers” of the Father, instead of persons, while Joseph Hazzaya was accused of Messalianist thesis:

- In order to receive the Holy Spirit one does not need to attend the offices, but to pray in hidden places;
- The perfect man does not need prayer anymore;
- The consecration of bread and wine by the Holy Spirit during incessant prayer; and
- The vision of divinity.

The last part of the text underlines the main reason for the condemnation of the three mystics, the source of the other accusations: Mar Timothy anathematised all those who asserted that the “nature of Christ could see His divinity and those who said that it might be seen by some created beings. Consequently, he added that there was no human perfection in this world and the souls were not able to feel anything after leaving the body upon their return after the Judgement”.

Accepting that Christ’s humanity is not able to see his divinity means asserting the impossibility for any human being of seeing God. This thesis came against the mystics’ claim to see God, a constant of monastic theology<sup>6</sup>. From a

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<sup>6</sup> If we are to make a retrospective, we will point to some important voices from the Antiochene tradition as well as from the East Syriac space, evoked by Robert Beulay in his monograph dedicated to John of Dalyatha: John Chrysostom, although he does not accept any vision of God’s essence, points to the possibility of communicating with Christ’s resplendence of His glorified humanity; for Theodore of Mopsuestia, God’s nature is made visible under a form adapted to man’s capacity, in the corporeal Man Jesus. Divinity acts by such means. The possibility of divine vision reflects only seeing its image in the body of Christ; Theodoret of Cyrus asserts that God reveals Himself in a real way in the corporal humanity of Christ. Divine nature becomes visible in Christ’s nature by means of his power manifested in the miracles and in Church’s sacraments; Ephrem uses the apophatic language while interpreting Moses’ life and argues that, while Moses had the vision of God’s glory, he knew that seeing means not seeing. Human cannot see God’s essence, but his glory, because of God’s condescendence by which he proportioned the vision of his glory to the human capacity of pertaining; another important author is Narsai. For him, Christ resplendent of glory will make humans able to see without seeing the Hidden Being. Christ’s humanity, principle of divine essence among us, will be as an image for the exterior senses and, by means of mind, it will have some knowledge of the essence that remains invisible; Babai the Great, the radical East Syriac conservatory theologian, argues that there is a gradual knowledge of God. By means of symbols and images God reveals His justice and providence in the saints and more in Christ, in which dwells the plenitude of divinity. Borrowing the Evagrian language, he speaks about the knowledge of God in creation, the knowledge of the intelligible beings, by the elevation of soul above the earthly reality, so the contemplation of the corporals and intelligible beings and, finally, the knowledge of the Son, who surpasses all other knowledge by the unique knowledge of the Trinity, that we will see, but not in a vision. It is about the glory and the light of the face of Christ, mirror and image of the Essence of God. He also uses an apophatic language in the line of Pseudo Dionysius when he speaks about un-knowledge and union in the cloud with One who is unknowable. In fact, there is no knowledge, but a look

theological point of view, the possible explanation that stands behind this anathema is of Christological nature. The idea of divine vision brings forth the acceptance of communication between the natures in Christ. In this context, we can identify two suspicions that Timothy and the institutional theology had at that time – the fear of Monophysism, respectively, a kind of spiritualization of the body (of Jesus) up to Docetism (associated with Messalianism). This idea may be better advocated if we remember another important event colligated with the election of Nestorius as bishop of Bet Nuhadra, the biographer of Joseph Hazzaya, connected with the Monastery of Rabban Yozadaq. As an exponent of a charismatic community, before being elected bishop, he was asked by the party of ecclesiastical officials to make a profession of faith regarding the East Syriac Christology, in reference to the strict distinction between Christ's humanity and divinity and the eternal existence of the Verb (Word) vis-à-vis that of Man Jesus (against those who deny the humanity and the divinity of Jesus and, specifically, against the Monophysite and Chalcedonian Christology)<sup>7</sup>, and, in consequence, against Messalianist theses. Finally, the profession points again to the three mystical consequences, essential for our discussion and three anathemas for those advocating them:

- The divine nature is incorporeal, limitless and invisible, while the human nature is corporal, limited and visible; so, in Christ, there is no possibility for human nature to experience the vision of the divine nature;
- Advocating a divine vision means accepting a changing and transformation of the natures in Jesus Christ or the spiritualisation of humanity, not acceptable for their theology; the human nature in Christ is simple and without composition;

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without desire of knowing, a loving conscience of the absolute transcendence of God, constituting for human the supreme and beatific delectation (p. 423-440). I will add four important authors in matter of the mystics of vision: Evagrius, despite the fact that he clearly states that God is incomprehensible in Himself and His nature is unknowable, he also argues that the spiritual intellect is the visionary of the Holy Trinity and that a real theologian is the one who sees God/ Evagre le Pontique, *Les six centuries des Kephalaia Gnostica d'Evagre le Pontique*, ed. Antoine Guillaumont, PO (Paris: Brepols, 1958), 5.51-52, 57, 63; 3.30 ; 5.26; Pseudo Macarius, in the Syriac translation, speaks about the vision of God, giver of life, with the hidden eye of our intelligence, safeguarding God's transcendence that surpasses all vision; the cognitive eye of the inner man is fixed on the insatiable, splendid, unknowable and completely incomprehensible Beauty, so that soul is absorbed in love by this divine nature (see Robert Beulay, *Jean de Dalyatha*, 442); Gregory of Nyssa, using an apophatic language, points to the transcendence of God, while stating also the possibility of seeing him during the limitless progression in the union with God/ Gregorio di Nissa, *La vita di Mosè*, a cura di Manlio Simonetti (Fondazione Lorenzo Valla, Arnoldo Mondadori Editore, 1996), § 220, 227, 235; in the same way, the darkness, in the language of Dionysius, is not equivalent to the absence of divine vision. He speaks more about a super vision, bringing together the un-knowledge and the divine vision in the darkness (*Mystical theology*, I.1 PG 3, 997B, I.3, PG 3, 1000A; *The divine names*, I.4, PG 3, 592C).

<sup>7</sup> For details see Vittorio Berti, "Grazia, visione e natura in Nestorio di Nuhadra, solitario e vescovo siro-orientale", *Annali di Scienze Religiose* 10 (2005): 229-232.

- In the mystical realm, there is no perfection in this world while being in the body and there is no knowledge or action out of the body<sup>8</sup>.

We can easily observe that Nestorius' abjuration and profession of faith reflects the same salient points problematic in Timothy's council. These are the consequences of a Christological vision that, colligated to a specific anthropology, develops in a certain courageous and non-institutional mystical school.

### The Tripartition of the Spiritual Life

Joseph Hazzaya remains an important exponent, especially for his spiritual theology. He portrays the ascetic path in three moments called "stages", "orders", "levels" or "places/ spheres", expressed in two different series that interpenetrate and overlap each other:

- Corporeal stage (ἁσώματος) – sphere of purification (ἁγίασις ἁσώματος)
- Psychic stage (ἁψυχίου) – sphere of limpidity/ serenity (ἁγίασις ἁψυχίου)
- Spiritual stage/ spirituality (ἁσπύτου) – sphere of perfection (ἁγίασις ἁσπύτου)<sup>9</sup>.

The first stage assimilated to the novitiate in coenobitic life includes vocal prayers, ascetic labours in order to free from passions – philautia<sup>10</sup>, akedia<sup>11</sup>, fornication<sup>12</sup>, judgement against the brothers and the superiors<sup>13</sup> and vain glory<sup>14</sup>. It is about the process of purification that aims at attaining a "natural state" and the vision of natural knowledge hidden in creation. One finds it necessary to point that, for Joseph, the natural condition refers to the initial good state and not the corrupted condition after Adam's fall. There are good powers that have to be activated in the personal good-workings.

The sphere of limpidity, which implies a hermitical life, includes the practice of inner virtues, unceasing prayer, peace and certainty that generates compassion towards all. In the cognitive plan, contemplation takes higher forms – of the incorporeal, judgment and providence.

<sup>8</sup> Cf. Oscar Braun, "Ein Brief des Katholikos Timotheos I über biblische Studien des 9 Jahrhunderts", *Oriens Christianus* 1 (1901): 299-313 (here 301-309); "Briefe des Katholikos Timotheos I", in *Oriens Christianus* 2 (1902): 1-32; 3 (1903): 1-15.

<sup>9</sup> Cf. A. Mingana, *Early Christian Mystics*, Woodbrooke Studies 7, 263-269 (150-158).

<sup>10</sup> Giuseppe Hazzaya, *Le tappe sulla vita spirituale*, (Monastero di Bose: Qiqajon, 2011), 67-68, § 11.

<sup>11</sup> *Le tappe*, 119-120, § 88.

<sup>12</sup> *Le tappe*, 119-122, § 88-90.

<sup>13</sup> *Le tappe*, 121, § 89.

<sup>14</sup> *Le tappe*, 121-122, 128-129, § 90, 100.

The third stage, the spiritual stage pertains to the activity of the intellect, beyond all kinds of works. It is the place of perfection and the highest level of contemplation – the vision of Christ and the Holy Trinity in shapeless light. In this stage it is not so much about the specific ascetic synergy, but rather a growth in spiritual passivity, where the action is generated by God Himself and alone. It is the partaking to the Spirit that activates the gifts of Baptism in what he calls “supernatural state” and the most specific manifestation is stupor (ܠܘܨܘܬܐ), as a response to God’s loving intervention.

The very source for this tripartite spiritual itinerary is John the Solitary. Using as starting point Saint Paul’s anthropology (1 Thessalonians 5:23), he counterparts the Greek terms *sarkikos*, *phychikos* and *pneumatikos* with the Syriac *pagrana*, *naphshana* and *ruhana*, translated as “on the level of the body, soul, respectively, of the spirit”<sup>15</sup>. Adding the suffix “utha”, he points to three stages: somatic (against nature), dominated by carnal passions<sup>16</sup>; psychic/noetic, according to nature/ natural, transitory to the spirituality of angels, which means 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 (*dakyuta*), limpidity (*shaphyuta*) and perfection (*gmiruta*). In other words, the progress from the level of the body to that of the soul can be interpreted as interiorisation (the birth of the inner person). The border between the level of the soul and the spiritual level is marked by what he calls “limpidity” (*shaphyuta*), which describes the self-emptying of the interior and combines the purity with clarity and lucidity.

Regarding the methodology, one can identify a major difference between Joseph’s vision and that of John’s. Robert Beulay argues that there is a change from a modal way of understanding the spiritual life’s tripartition, specific to John the Solitary, to an objective way, theorised by Joseph and not only<sup>17</sup>. If for John the body, the soul and the spirit are mostly successive principles that rule the way of thinking, for Joseph the three stages are not so much modes of

<sup>15</sup> *Dialogues sur l’âme e les passions des hommes* 13-14, *Orientalia Christiana Analecta* (Roma, 1939).

<sup>16</sup> The practical stage of Evagrius, which presupposes an ascetic lifestyle, does not correspond to John’s bodily stage, used to describe those who have no divine knowledge, but refers already to the psychical stage, or the bodily and, partially, the noetic conduct. For John, escaping bodily life means turning towards the other world and transforming jealousy, characteristic for the bodily stage, into a sense of justice. The psychic person turns from an excessive concern of the body towards the soul, and is concerned with the practice of virtuous acts and penitence. And, finally, perfection consists in the knowledge of the spirit. See *Johannes von Lycopolis: Ein Dialog über die Seele und die Affekte des Menschen*, ed. by Sven Dederling (Uppsala: Arbeten utgina med understöd av Vilhelm Ekmans universitetsfond), 66.

<sup>17</sup> Robert Beulay, *La lumière sans forme. Introduction à l’étude de la mystique chrétienne syro-orientale* (Chevtogne, 1987), 102-125.

acting, but rather three objects of actions, specific spaces where one manifests his ascetic life in collaboration with divine grace. Joseph starts the spiritual itinerary from the point one has already left the world. From here commences the work of purification. Then follows the psychic stage, where the ascetic work is correlated to the soul. This stage goes up to limpidity and the contemplation of the immaterial beings. To the spiritual stage corresponds the perfection with the contemplation of the light of the Holy Trinity.

The tripartite schema of “the workings of grace of the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ” is detailed by the same author in eleven stages that are not really given actual names so as not to engage too much in theoretical speculation, but to give space to the reality of experience. I will evoke them at short, using the synthesis done by Serafim Sepälä:

- The stage of complete physical and psychical rest – maximum of quietude;
- The stage of workings of intuitions – against distraction of mind; the recitation of Psalms and prostrations before the Cross are recommended;
- The stage of the love of Psalms and of recitation – freeing the mind from vain glory;
- The stage of the flow of tears and continual prostrations before the Cross. This is the boundary between purity and limpidity;
- The stage of contemplation of divine judgement and providence, continual prayer. Christ is identified in all;
- The stage of impulses of light and fire stirrings in the heart, while the Spirit operates in the senses of smell and taste;
- The state of hearing the voice of glorification – stirrings of the world to come; the mind participates to the Cherubim’s praise;
- The stage when the mind is silenced and swallowed up in the light of the vision of lofty and sublime contemplation; the mind is mingled with the divine visitation;
- The stage of clothing oneself with fire in which one sees oneself as fire and receives knowledge concerning the world to come. The affected senses are sight and touch;
- The stage “inexpressible in a letter”, in which one feels joy and sheds tears without knowing why; the active senses are touch, sight and smell, but the distinctions between them are, in a way, blurred;
- The stage of flow of spiritual speech, during which hearing is active<sup>18</sup>.

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<sup>18</sup> For details see Serafim Sepälä, *In Speechless Ecstasy: Expression and Interpretation of Mystical Experience in Classical Syriac and Sufi Literature*, *Studia Orientalia* 98 (2003), 128-129.

## The Tripartite Spiritual Itinerary and the Monastic Life

Regarding the construction of his theological discourse, one may notice from the very beginning that it has a very practical scope correlated with the monastic life. Thus, the initial point is the *flight from the world*, embracing monastic life. Entering the monastery, the “coenobium”, signifies the initiation in the bodily stage. One primary condition is to forget the world and to focus on the heavenly things. Regarding the progress, this is a necessary step from one stage to another; nobody can reach the highest state without passing through those that are before. These two principles are well connected – leaving the world signifies adopting a new style of living, so, in consequence, nobody can go further in the monastic life without forgetting the world. I will quote a short fragment: “Not everyone who has come out of the world is released from his conducts. Many have come out of the world in the outward appearance, but they continue according to their lifestyle. That is why I have said there are two exits from the world. Persons who have left the world, you will find many, but released from their conducts one from thousand”<sup>19</sup>.

Joseph mentions some factors that determine this first movement. The first one is represented by what he calls “the natural seeds” put by God in human in his initial nature<sup>20</sup>. Immediately comes the second movement generated by the guardian angel that confirms the inner natural seed of doing good (§ 7). The calling for monastic life pertains to the highest spiritual level of perfection. So as to illustrate this aspect, Joseph uses the Scripture and interprets contextually the different callings Christ does to the monastic life: Mt. 19:21; Mc. 8:34; Mt. 6:34; Mt. 6:24 (§ 8). These verses are means for the inner love that generate such a decision and, consequently, a specific ascetic behavior (§ 9-10). Once this decision is taken, the first ascetic struggle is against philautia, specific for the worldly behavior that encompasses: gratifications, renunciation to the material goods, glory, power, and adopting forward the condition of the stranger, poverty and even misery. It is, symbolically speaking, the flying from Egypt towards the “Promised Land” (§ 11-18). Next to this sensible flying, Joseph adds the necessity of intelligibly leaving out the world (§ 19). One can identify here the object of spiritual progress – from the bodily to the noetic asceticism.

Here begins the bodily stage, with the entrance in the coenobium<sup>21</sup>. Again, symbolically speaking, the communitarian life in coenobium pertains to

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<sup>19</sup> *Le tappe*, 71, § 19.

<sup>20</sup> *Le tappe*, 64, § 6; see also Evagrius, *Gnostikos*, I, 39-40; *Praktikos* 57.

<sup>21</sup> According to Abraham of Kashkar’s Monastic Rules, the monastery implies two types of life – communitarian (coenobium) and hermitic (cell). There are two terms that describe the former type – “Umra” (أمر) and “Daira” (دير) – convent and monastic complex (*laura*). Inside the monastery we find two distinct forms of life: communitarian for the years of initiation into monastic life (أمر مشترك), and the life in solitude in separate cells (أمر منعزل / أقبية or أقبية, cave,

the life in the desert of the people of Israel (§ 20). In a narrative way, the monastic life is presented using the biblical symbols that are present in the Book of Exodus. For example, when speaking about necessary obedience for monastic life, he mentions Joshua and Caleb, or disobedience Core, Dathan and Abiram (§ 24-27). Two of the monastic plagues are clearly mentioned in the next chapters, correlated with the Israel's attitude – to grumble against God, and, immediately after, the cultivation of bad thoughts, pictured by the snakes in the desert (§ 28-29). The symbol of the cross powerfully appears here – as a way of healing of spiritual illnesses and, at the same time, as a symbol for monastic life, in general (§ 30). Successively he mentions five important virtues to work for – silence, poverty, love, fasting and vigil (§ 34-35). An important aspect is represented by the relation between the spiritual father and his disciples. One needs a “master” to guide the younger brothers so as to bring an equilibrium, a moderation, in the fervent attitude of the latter category. Otherwise the vain glory may destroy all the good works they do:

“A questo punto è richiesta una guida sapiente, che corregga la gioia di questa tappa con l'umiliazione e la tristezza con la speranza delle promesse (fondate) sulla misericordia... Poiché se il fratello a questo punton non ha una guida, o i demoni lo esaltano con la vanagloria, e distruggono il suo intelletto con le immagini che gli dipingono davanti, o lo gettano nella tristezza, nell'angoscia e nella disperazione, e lo riportano verso l'Egitto della malvagità<sup>22</sup>.”

During this second stage Joseph insists that on the classic monastic advice regarding a moderate attitude reflected in what the ascetic theology calls “discernment”. The monastic rule has to be taught “with discipline and moderation... so as not to exaggerate and the fervor of their love not to become insensible” (§ 47). The fervor of the young brothers is good, but it can generate confusions and can bring spiritual falling if, because of it, some stages are omitted in the way to spiritual perfection. Thus, the role of the spiritual guides is essential and, consequently, the obedience of the novices is firmly requested.

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often being carved into the rock). Coenobium included the central church, refectory with kitchen (bread oven), food storage, cells for novices and those who were administering the monastery. Regarding the second form, the cells were near the monastery, and those living there used to add to the community on Sundays and holidays to participate in the liturgy and take communion. Thus Syriac monastic terminology differentiates between the two successive forms of life – “dairaya” (ܕܝܪܝܝܐ) and “ihidaya” (ܝܚܝܕܝܐ). Referring to the governance of the monastery one speaks about an abbot/ superior (ܐܒܬܐ), assisted by a parsimonious (ܐܘܨܝܘܢܝܐ). Abraham's Rules mention also a third instrument of authority – the brothers' congregation/ community (ܕܝܪܝܝܐ) / in Sabino Chialà, *Abramo di Kashkar e la sua comunità* (Bose: Qiqajon, 2005), 159-167.

<sup>22</sup> *Le tappe*, 84, § 41.

The psychic stage is associated with the movement of the novices from the coenobium to the cell. This occurs not in an objective way immediately, but requires a personal appropriation of an ascetic living and inner transformation:

“None of the lazy and negligent should think that, thanks to the vigil of consecration celebrated by his brother in the cell<sup>23</sup>, he reaches the rest and the tranquility, if in the Coenobium he had not been thoroughly exercised in humility and in obedience towards his fathers and spiritual brothers. It does occur only with the one who practiced that in the coenobium to search for the peace in the cell”<sup>24</sup>.

Symbolically, this movement is correlated with the double passing on the other side of Jordan River of the Israel people (§ 64). The bodily asceticism continues in this stage, only that the emphasis is placed on the soul’s virtues. An important role is occupied by reading of the Scripture, the observation of the liturgy of the hours (§ 74-75, 85), the reading of the Church Fathers (§75, 84) and the manual work (§77). The vices to struggle against become more subtle in this stage, considered to be of the soul, on the base of the soul’s unity with the body – acedia (ⲕⲁⲓ ⲁⲓⲁⲉ), fornication (ⲕⲁⲓⲁⲓ), anger (ⲕⲁⲓ ⲁⲓ), vain glory (ⲕⲁⲓⲁⲓ ⲕⲁⲓⲁⲉ), sadness (ⲕⲁⲓⲁⲓⲁⲓ), desperation, anxiety (§ 88-91), envy and restlessness (§ 101). For all this cases one needs a spiritual Father and the gift of discernment. The struggle against passions describes one side of this stage, but it is not the end, as the hermit if gifted with different spiritual consolations – intellections (ⲁⲓⲁⲉ) that move the mind towards tears, peace and humbleness (so called “of the right side”), as works of the grace (§ 102), the contemplation of the immaterial beings, of God’s Judgment and Providence (§ 137), the vision of the two worlds – of the passed and the future things (§ 140).

The last stage, the spiritual stage, pertains completely to the noetic realm. It is about one’s mind vision, prepared by the contemplation of the immaterial beings, of the divine justice and providence. This itinerary is the distinctive sign for this state. In Joseph’s words, it is about “the vision of your mind, united to invisible powers, commingled only to the glorious light of the Holy Trinity” (§142). If the contemplation described in the former stage presupposed an important human involvement, the spiritual contemplation is mostly passive with “Christ all in all” (Col. 3:11). The intellect is overwhelmed by the Spirit “that leads him”. It has no anymore power in it, when reaching the spirituality stage, but one only regards the contemplations that come one after another (§ 144). In the last paragraphs he tries to argue the possibility to reach this state and strengthens

<sup>23</sup> For the ritual of the celebration of the cell see Simone Tabutheh, *Abitare la solitudine: discorso per la consacrazione della cella* (Bose: Qiqajon, 2004).

<sup>24</sup> *Le tappe*, 99, § 66.

his arguments with the example of Saint Paul who experienced this (2 Corinthians 12). Using Paul's description, he asserts that in those very moments the mind does not belong to him anymore, as its spirituality coexists with the holy light in which it is clothed and is not capable anymore to distinguish it from that (§ 146). Next to the light, which belongs to the future reality, Joseph adds the concept of peace, as a result of the presence of light (§ 147). Symbolically this moment represents the glorious Zion, the scope of the very itinerary of Israel people.

In the last three paragraphs of the text, he makes a very systematic summary of the three stages in correspondence with the monastic itinerary. I will quote a short fragment:

“These are, in summary, the things that we have written down by the sake of your charity, according to the request you have addressed to me, oh my brother, using for our speech the Egypt, which is a symbol of this world, and making the exodus of the children of Israel from Egypt image for our entry into the coenobium and the bodily stage. Our dwelling in the cell, our struggle against passions, the fighting and visits of the grace we have identified them in the crossing of Jordan by the children of Israel and in their entry into the Promised Land. We have also introduced a subdivision into the psychic stage, the one in which the solitary experiences all the virtues of the conduct of thought and reaches the place of limpidity. The place above the limpidity we then indicated in Zion, which is the stage of spirituality (§ 148)”.

## Conclusion

The spiritual itinerary proposed by Joseph Hazzaya has a very practical sense<sup>25</sup>, despite its technical expression that comes as secondary. Contextualising his experience, being addressed to his brothers, he needs a theological vocabulary known and accessible to his fellows in the line of a specific tradition, in particular John the Solitary and Evagrius. As the name of his main work says, he writes a letter on the stages that a monk may follow, observing the possible spiritual growing, step by step, commencing from the fights of the body against material passions up to the spiritual state. Faithful to his East Syriac tradition, in matter of the great biblical influence, he uses the image of the people of Israel exodus from Egypt and its way to the Promise Land<sup>26</sup> so as to express the monastic life, in particular, and of Christian life, in general. The process might be described as a gnoseological endeavour up to the divine knowledge.

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<sup>25</sup> And personal too, coming out from his own experience. Even his name suggests this personal dimension of his writings as “hazzaya” means “seer” of the divine reality.

<sup>26</sup> This symbolical interpretation is quite common in the ascetic theology, from Gregory of Nyssa and his “De vita Moysis” onwards.

In the bodily stage one fights against material passions while he is still connected with material representations. It is the time of purification and the biblical colour associated with it is the zephyr, similar with the sky colour (Exodus 24:10)<sup>27</sup>. The highest point here is the inner vision of itself of the intellect, the initial state before Adam's falling. In the psychic stage, the bodily struggles transform more into inner struggles. Human, once materially purified, receives the intellections, inner perceptions regarding nature (the natural primary contemplation), immaterial beings (natural secondary contemplation), the contemplation of the divine judgement and providence. The prominent symbol for this stage is the fire that fulfils the process of purification. The spiritual stage is inaugurated by the limpidity. At this point, next to the intellections, comes the divine vision – the vision of the divine glory, “the light of the Holy Trinity”, the light without form<sup>28</sup>, the light of Christ. Here, one identifies the role of Incarnation at the base of human's capacity to partake the divine vision. It is, finally, the foretaste of the new world, the state after resurrection. In fact, it is, practically and liturgically speaking, the development of the divine life communicated potentially in the baptism.

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<sup>27</sup> On the spiritual signification of the colour see Gabriel Bunge, “Le «lieu de la limpidité». A propos d'un apophtegme énigmatique: Budge II, 494”, *Irenikon*, 1 (1982): 7-18.

<sup>28</sup> For details see Robert Beulay, *La lumière sans forme. Introduction a l'étude de la mystique chrétienne syro-orientale*, Chevtogne, 1987.

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**FROM 'VEIL' (καταπέτασμα) THEOLOGY TO 'FACE'  
(πρόσωπον) CHRISTOLOGY. BODY AS A VEIL  
CONCEALING DIVINE GLORY - DIRECT EXPERIENCE  
AND IMMEDIATE PERCEPTION (αἴσθησις) OF GOD**

**NICHIFOR TĂNASE\***

**ABSTRACT.** According to Pauline theology we are 'earthen vessels' (2 Cor. 4:7) till Christ is formed in us (Gal. 4:19). Into the most holy place of our being, in which the very presence of God dwells, He 'enters within the veil' (Heb. 6:19) and 'put in our hearts the light' (2 Cor. 4:6). So, being 'clothed in Christ' (Gal. 3:27) we all are being 'transformed into his image' which is the 'form of God' ἐν μορφῇ Θεοῦ (Phil. 2:6). To Saint Ephrem, "The First-born wrapped himself in a body / as a veil to hide His glory" (CNis XLIII,21, *LumE* 74). He juxtaposes the image of Moses being veiled with Jesus' veiling on Himself in the Incarnation. Face of Moses shone and he laid veil over his face, just as Lord, from the Womb, entered and put on the veil of the Body (*Nativity* 73). Also, the veil of the temple was intended by Moses to symbolize the veil of heaven, and both veils together prefigured the flesh of Christ, which enfolded and concealed his divinity. Firstly, we will focus on the analogy between Thabor's garments and bodies in the water of Baptism (*De Epiphania* 9, 12), both glory / Light garments of the Son, the "Father Ray" (Heb. 1: 3; *Sogyatha* I 1-2). Secondly, we are interested in St. Ephrem's interpretation of Matthew 27:50-51 (*The Crucifixion* IV, 1-12, *Comm. Diatess.* XXI, 4-6). Here, he combines two Pauline texts (Heb. 6:19 and 2 Cor. 3: 14-18) showing that, in fact, the veil split gave back to the Lord the glory that Jews have rejected. The latter dressed him with veil altar (*Azym.* V, 6 – the purple, which was the inner veil of the temple; *Katapetesma*: a curtain) actually they clothed Him with His symbol of the divine glory presence. The Veil of Light is that who hides the apophatic 'aesthetics' of God's Face. This is the way of concealing the divinity from *velum scissum* to the eucharistic bread. In this view the Body becomes the 'Veil of flesh' (καταπέτασμα) in accordance with the clothing imagery. This study is about the Biblical, syrian and hesychast perichoretic interweaving of visible (created) and invisible (uncreated). First, the syntagm "Within the Veil" (καταπέτασμα) is related to the biblical and patristic understanding of salvation as a garment. Thus, the Syrian (nuhrā qaddīša Ephrem's "*estal šubha*") is nothing less than the reception of Paul (veil of flesh, Heb 10:20) spirituality of divine light (δόξα). Dionysius speaks of his spiritual father, Hierotheos who is "suffering" the mystery of

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the Incarnation (παθῶν τὰ θεῖαν, DN II, 9). So, holy man is “theophanic”, becoming present to the Trinity (DN III, 1) and the hierarchy’s members becomes “spotless mirrors of the primordial light” (icons of the divine energies). Theurgic light and deiformity (θεοειδεῖ) by union with the rays of the unapproachable light. “Suddenly” (ἐξαίφνης) vision of Christ in light represents the divine motion as God extended “ecs[aes]tetically” into immanence. Therefore, the theophany of light (ἀπρόσιτον φῶς) is Imparticipable participable (τὰ ἀμεθέκτως μετεχόμενα) and God ad extra.

Accordingly, the veil (καταπέτασμα) theology is the hermeneutical key to reveal by concealing the divine presence, a real point of contact or somatic experience. In a word, God’s self-revelation as concealing presence. *Perichoresis* of the visible and the invisible (interweaving of the created and the uncreated in biblical, syrian and hesychast clothing metaphors) becomes possible within the body, understood as a ‘veil’. The biblical theology of clothing, especially the Significance of Clothing Imagery in the Pauline and the Clothing Metaphors, as a Means of Theological Expression in Syriac Tradition are both engaged to understand the late hesychast theology of uncreated light, this vision of God being “veiled unveiling” or hidden in his manifestation. The flesh becomes the veil of (καταπέτασμα) God’s self-revelation (a concealing presence) and the “shining face” of both the Desert Fathers, as well as the byzantine hesychasts, during prayer, is the witness of the realism of that communion, being the point of tangency of created (*aesthetics*) body and uncreated (*apophatic*) light.

**Keywords:** Veil (καταπέτασμα), Ephraem the Syrian, robe of glory, Divine Names, Dionysius the Areopagite, Pneumatic bodies, “clothed with Christ”, divine ‘Face’, ‘Light’ theophany, Gregory Palamas

## 1. The *pārōket* veil of the *Holy of Holies* and the degrees of holiness. The Tabernacle as a living extension of Mount Sinai’ theophany<sup>1</sup>

“And you shall be for me a priestly kingdom and a holy nation” (Exod. 19:6). A correct understanding of these verses which summon Israel, as a result of Sinai, to its vocation, is vital.<sup>2</sup> *Priestly kingdom* (*mamleket kōhānīm*), as a *hapax*

<sup>1</sup> An abridged version of this paper, with the title “Within the Veil” (καταπέτασμα) – salvation as a garment. The Syrian (nuhrā qaddīša), reception of Paul spirituality of divine light (δόξα), was presented Wednesday 7th September in the Nicolson Building to *The Sixth British Patristics Conference*, held at the University of Birmingham (5<sup>th</sup>–7<sup>th</sup> September 2016).

<sup>2</sup> W.J. Dumbrell, *Covenant and Creation: An Old Testament Covenantal Theology* (Exeter: Paternoster, 1994), 80: “The history of Israel from this point on is in reality merely a commentary upon the degree of fidelity with which Israel adhered to this Sinai-given vocation”.

*legomenon*, has been the most difficult to interpret.<sup>3</sup> In seeking the nature of the priesthood, we look ahead to the tabernacle material in the presentation of *Exodus*. First, the priest represented the Lord. *Exodus* illustrates this association through the garments of the high priest. Aaron's garments were made of the same materials, woven in the same manner, as in the Holy of Holies, the specific place in the tabernacle where the Lord dwelt (Ex. 25:22; 26:34). The unmistakable association between Aaron's garments and the Holy of Holies suggests that Aaron, so dressed, symbolized the Lord's presence: "In wearing the garments, Aaron effectively represented the Lord as he displayed his glory".<sup>4</sup> Picking up the language of *Exodus* 19:4-6, Peter writes, "You are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for his own possession, that you may proclaim the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light" (1 Pt. 2:9). Similarly, Jesus told his disciples: "You are the light of the world..., let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven" (Mt. 5:14-16). Saint Paul refers to Christ's ability to radiate his divine light of himself while other OT luminaries like Moses could only reflect that light: "For it is the God who said, 'Let light shine out of darkness', who has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ" (2 Cor 4:6). This experience is being, also, described as "transformation into unveiled glory" (2 Cor. 3.7-18). Man is *the mirror of divine glory* (δόξα). Likewise, for Finlan, Phil 3:21, 2 Cor 3:18 and 1 Cor 15 demonstrates that participationist language is central to Paul's soteriology. In glorification, the Christian participates in Christ'd divine power and receives a pneumatic body: "Christ transmits God's light to believers, who shine with Christ's glory".<sup>5</sup>

What is the tabernacle material of *Exodus*, in particular the *pārōket* veil, which guards the Holy of Holies, meant to communicate?<sup>6</sup> The preciousness of the

<sup>3</sup> Georg Steins has argued that the grammar offers five possibilities: a kingdom under the authority of priests, a royal priesthood, a divine kingdom over a people of priests, a priestly kingdom, or a kingdom consisting of priests. Apud, Georg Steins, "Priesterherrschaft, Volk von Priestern oder was sonst? Zur Interpretation von Ex. 19,6," *Byzantinische Zeitschrift* 45, no.1 (2001): 20-36, here 23-24. Priest (*mamleket*) and holy (*gōy*) are often used synonymously (1 Kgs 18:10; 1 Chr. 16:20; 2 Chr. 20:6; 32:15; Ps. 46:7; 79:6; 105:13; Isa. 13:4; 60:12; Jer. 1:10; 18:7; Ezek. 29:15, Nah.3:5). As Sarna writes: "This concept of priesthood provides the model for Israel's self-image and for her role among the nations of the world", in Nahum M. Sarna, *Exodus*, The JPS Torah Commentary (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1991), 104.

<sup>4</sup> W. Ross Blackburn, *The God who makes himself known. The missionary heart of the book of Exodus* (Illinois: InterVarsity Press, 2012), 90-91.

<sup>5</sup> Stephen Finlan, "Can We Speak of Theosis in Paul?," in Michael J. Christensen and Jeffrey A. Wittung, *Partakers of the Divine Nature: The History and Development of Deification in the Christian Tradition* (Michigan: Baker, Grand Rapids 2007), 68-80, here 75.

<sup>6</sup> The principle at work in the system of concentric circle is that the closer one moves to the Holy of Holies (containing the ark and the golden cover, or *kippōret*), the more elaborate and magnificent the materials and workmanship involved, and everything else was subordinate. See: Philip Peter

fabrics corresponds to the relative sanctity of particular zones in the tabernacle. The *pārōket* veil of the Holy of Holies is made of the three dyed wools and linen, with *hōšēb* workmanship. The pillars of the *pārōket* veil are overlaid with gold, with golden hooks and silver based.<sup>7</sup> Again, the preciousness of the materials corresponds to their proximity to the Holy of Holies. Conforming to the gradations noted above, the priestly vestments exhibit the same pattern of relative sanctity. The garments worn exclusively by Aaron are of a superior quality both in materials and workmanship. The ephod and the breastpiece are both constructed of the same materials as the *pārōket* veil. Nahum M. Sarna says it well:

“... [this] gave expression to the presence within it of the ultimate Sources of holiness. God’s holiness is the very essence of His Being, and is intrinsic to Himself. The graduated sequences described above effectuate the gradual distancing from that ultimate Sources of absolute holiness. Precisely because the Tabernacle was constructed in the first place to give concrete, visual symbolization to the conception of God’s indwelling in the community of Israel, that is, to communicate the idea of God’s immanence, it was vitally important that His total independence of all materiality, His transcendence, not to be compromised. The gradations of holiness are one way of articulating this, of giving voice to God’s unapproachable holiness, and of emphasizing His ineffable majesty and the inscrutable mystery that He is.”<sup>8</sup>

The Tabernacle was meant to be a living extension of Mount Sinai. During the theophany, the mount was separated into three distinct zones of increasing degrees of holiness and restriction of access.<sup>9</sup> The summit of the mountain constituted the third zone, which was exclusively reserved for Moses. Its counterpart in the Tabernacle (*miškān*) was the Holy of Holies.

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Jenson, *Graded Holiness: A Key to the Priestly Conception of the World*, JSOPSup 106 (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1992), 40-88; Frank H. Gorman, *The Ideology of Ritual: Space, Time, and Status in the Priestly Theology*, JSOTSup 91 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1990), 181-190.

<sup>7</sup> The *pārōket*, or veil, separated the Holy of Holies from the Holy Place. This hung from golden hooks on four wooden posts overlaid with gold. The posts were set in four silver sockets (Exod. 26:31-33, 36:35-36).

<sup>8</sup> Nahum M. Sarna, *Exploring Exodus. The Origins of Biblical Israel* (New York: Schocken Books, 1996), 221.

<sup>9</sup> The three zones are: the top of the mountain (only Moses is permitted to ascend, Ex. 19:20), the second zone extends upwards from the border of the mountain, but not include the top of the mountain (here the select group of Aaron, his sons and the seventy elders are permitted, Ex. 19:22) and the foot of the mountain (guarded by a border to prevent the common Israelite from ascending the mountain, Ex. 19:12-13). See: Angel Manuel Rodríguez, “Sanctuary Theology in the Book of Exodus”, *Andrews University Seminary Studies* 24, no. 2 (1986): 127-145, for here p. 131-137; also: B.J. Schwartz, “The Priestly Account of the Theophany and Lawgiving at Sinai”, in M.V. Fox et al., (eds.), *Texts, Temples, and Traditions: A Tribute to Menahem Haran* (Winona Lake, Indiana: Eisenbrauns, 1996), 103-134.

“Just as the Lord communicated with Moses on the mountaintop, so He does in the Holy of Holies; and in the same way that the cloud covered Mount Sinai after Moses had ascended, so the Tabernacle become enveloped in cloud on its completion, and the pillar of fire hovered over both Sinai and it”.<sup>10</sup>

Thus, says Blackburn, “The Holy of Holies, the locus of God’s presence was associated with the law... In her obedience to the law Israel would encounter the Lord’s presence”.<sup>11</sup> The tabernacle is also seen as microcosm of the universe, and in creation “God functions like an Israelite priest”.<sup>12</sup> Wenham has observed striking parallels between the tabernacle and the Garden of Eden.<sup>13</sup> For instance, the entrance to Eden faced east, guarded by cherubim, while tabernacle entrances likewise face east, the Holy of Holies symbolically guarded by the cherubim woven into the *pārōket* veil.

Regarding the significance of the Veil as Clothing, the veil’s primary function is to facilitate movement from one state or spatiality to another, either away from or toward the higher state of being. Yet the veil also had another function similar to the function of clothing. In Numbers 4:5 we are told: “And when the camp setteth forward, Aaron shall come, and his sons, and they shall take down the covering vail, and cover the ark of testimony with it”. The veil represented the demarcation of the ark, the symbolic presence of God. The association of the veil with clothing is also found in the color scheme of the veil. The scriptures state that the primary function of the clothing was “for glory and for beauty” (Exodus 28:2).<sup>14</sup> That the priest himself functions like the veil between God and the rest of the host of Israel goes without saying, and the veil, like clothing, defines the spaces it covers or separates. “With this in

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<sup>10</sup> Sarna, *Exploring Exodus*, 218.

<sup>11</sup> Blackburn, *God who makes himself known*, 134.

<sup>12</sup> Jon D. Levenson, *Sinai and Zion: An Entry into the Jewish Bible* (Minneapolis: Winston, 1985), 127. World is a sanctuary, that is “a place in which the reign of God is visible and unchallenged, and his holiness is palpable, unthreatened, and pervasive”, in J.D. Levenson, *Creation and the Persistence of Evil: The Drama of Divine Omnipotence* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1988), 86.

<sup>13</sup> Gordon J. Wenham, “Sanctuary Symbolism in the Garden of Eden Story,” in Richard S. Hess and David Toshio Tsumura (eds.), *I Studied Inscriptions from Before the Flood: Ancient Near Eastern, Literary, and Linguistic Approaches to Genesis 1-11*, SBTS 4 (Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 1994), 399-404. See also Gregory K. Beale, *The Temple and the Church’s Mission*, NSBT 18 (Leicester: Apollos: Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2004), 29-80.

<sup>14</sup> Blake Ostler, “Clothed Upon: A Unique Aspect of Christian Antiquity,” *BYU Studies* 22, np. 1 (1982): 35-36: “Many ancient texts confuse the garment with the veil of the temple, such as Ambrose of Milano’s *Tractate of the Mysteries* or the *Hebrew Book of Enoch* where ‘garment’ and ‘veil’ are used interchangeably. Enoch is clothed with the veil in the *Hebrew Book of Enoch*: “The Holy One . . . made me a throne similar to the throne of glory. And He spread over me a curtain [veil] of splendour and brilliant appearance of beauty, grace, and mercy, similar to the curtain [veil] of the throne of glory, and on it were fixed all kinds of lights in the universe.”

mind, it is not surprising to see that Christ, our intermediary, is symbolically associated both with the temple veil and as clothing.”<sup>15</sup>

Lord may dwell among his people, his glory remains hidden. In response to Moses’ request ‘Please show me your glory’, the Lord says: “*You cannot see my face, for man shall not see me and live*” (Ex. 33:20). According to Irenaeus, life is given to those who see God: “*The glory of God is man fully alive. If the revelation of God through creation already brings life to all living beings on the earth, how much more will the manifestation of the Father by the World bring life to those who see God*”.<sup>16</sup> So, the glory of God remains hidden, at least in part, even for Moses (yet he saw the glory of the Son on Thabor mountain), because Irenaeus defines life as that which is brought to those who see God, and the Father is being made known only through the Son, the Word of God. Blackburn says that

“The Lord’s presence is crucial throughout the book of Exodus. The Egyptian deliverance was accomplished because the Lord fulfilled his promise to Moses that ‘I am with you’ (3:12). The Lord trained Israel in the wilderness so that Israel would trust the Lord’s presence with her.”<sup>17</sup>

In *Exodus* 28 the priestly clothing are to be made for “*kavôd* and *tipheret*” (תִּפְאָרָה or “*tipharah*”, with the meaning of beauty, glory). This term is used to describe concrete, physical phenomena. For instance, *tiph’erah*, derived from the root *pe’er* (with the meaning to adorn) and in *Isaiah* 28:5, the Lord himself is a crown of *tiph’eret* that will be worn. Also, it appears that the *tiph’erah* of an object referred to the brilliance, or luminosity of the object. This association is clear in *Isaiah* 60, where the reader is told that someday the sun and moon will no longer provide light but that “Yahweh will be an eternal light to you, your God will be your *tiph’erah*.” Earlier, in verse 7, the temple is the place of God’s *tiph’erah*, suggesting a relationship between the tangible cloud of light that characterized the presence of God. Like *tiph’eret*, *kavôd*, the other term used in *Exodus* 28 to

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<sup>15</sup> Daniel Belnap, “Clothed with Salvation: The Garden, the Veil, Tabitha, and Christ”, *Studies in the Bible and Antiquity* 4 (2012): 43-69, here 61. The fear of being naked, without identity, is strong in rabbinic perspectives. Nakedness is a nakedness of self in a social context, not just a nakedness of body. On this see: Rita C. Poretsky, “Clothing and Self: Biblical and Rabbinic Perspectives,” *Journal of Psychology and Judaism* 10, no. 1 (1986): 42-54, here 53; Robert A. Oden Jr., *The Bible without Theology: The Theological Tradition and Alternatives to It* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1987), especially chap 2: “Grace or Status? Yahweh’s Clothing of the First Humans” (Oden, *Bible without Theology*, 92-105), Jung Hoon Kim, *The Significance of Clothing Imagery in the Pauline Corpus* (London: Clark International, 2004), 17-20.

<sup>16</sup> Saint Irenaeus of Lyons, *Adversus Haereses (Against Heresis)* 20.7, in Irénée de Lyon, *Contre les hérésies: Dénonciation et réfutation de la gnose au nom menteur*, préface A. Decourtray, traduction Adelin Rousseau (Paris: Le Cerf, 2001).

<sup>17</sup> Blackburn, *God who makes himself known*, 199.

describe the function of the priestly clothing, appears to reflect an actual physical visual. It is often used to describe the physical, tangible presence of light denoting the presence of God that was seen by Israel.<sup>18</sup> The association of both *tiph'erah* and *kavôd* with light or the reflection of light may explain their use in Exodus 28. Along with the color scheme, gold filament appears to have utilized in the priestly clothing as well. In Psalm 104, God is described as clothed "with *hōd* (הֹד - meaning "splendor," "majesty," or "glory") and *hadar* (הֶדָר - *splendor*)" and who covers himself with light like a garment." Similarly, in Job 40:10, Job is told to clothe himself in the selfsame "hod and *hadar*." Like, *tiph'erah* and *kavôd*, these terms represent both abstract concepts as well as actual, physical properties (all three terms, *tiph'erah*, *hod* and *hadar* appear in *Psalm* 96).<sup>19</sup>

The term "theophany" is used not in figurative sense of "encounter with the divine", but, in keeping with the Greek *φαίνειν*, "to appear", it implies the presence of a visual component in addition to verbal interaction.<sup>20</sup> The *kabod* is described consistently as a "visible and palpable manifestation of the divine",<sup>21</sup> which appear (בִּשְׂאוֹת; in: Exod 16.7, 10; Lev. 9.6, 23; Num. 14.10, 22; 16.19; 17.7; 20.6; Deut. 5.24; 2 Chron. 7.3) in plain sight of all Israel. The *malakh* (מַלְאָךְ meaning "angel" or "messenger") another representation of numinous presence, is most often described as visibly apparent.

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<sup>18</sup> Daniel L. Belnap, "Let the Beauty of the Lord Our God be Upon Us'. The Importance of an Aesthetic in the Ritualized Visualizations of the Israelite Cult," *Temple on Mount Zion* 3 (2015): 121-140, here 127; this paper was presented by Belnap for the "Ritual in the Biblical World: Ritual Symbolism and Visual Arts session of the 2014 International Society of Biblical Literature Meeting" in Vienna, Austria (my thanks to Father John Mihoc for the indication).

<sup>19</sup> Belnap, "Let the Beauty of the Lord", 128. Von Rad suggested as much when he stated that Moses's encounter with God's *kavôd* in Exodus 33:18, was a cultic etiology "that associates God's dwelling in his house with the experience of a theophany", in Gerhard von Rad, "Righteousness' and 'Life' in the Cultic Language of the Psalms," in *The Problem of the Hexateuch and other Essays*, trans. by E.W. Trueman Dicken (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1966), 243-266, here 258. See also, Victor H. Matthews, "Theophanies Cultic and Cosmic: 'Prepare to Meet Thy God!'" in Avraham Gileadi (ed.), *Israel's Apostasy and Restoration: Essays in Honor of Roland K. Harrison* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1988), 307-317. "Temple worship expressed a confidence in a Sinai-like epiphany in Jerusalem" (Matthews, "Theophanies Cultic and Cosmic", 312).

<sup>20</sup> George Savran, *Encountering the Divine. Theophany in Biblical Narrative* (Oxford, T&T Clark 2005), 6. F. Polak distinguishes between theophany as displaying an 'outside perception', while simple address (not a theophanic experience) involves what Polak calls an 'inner light'. This is a distinction between theophany and epiphany as denoting divine presence and divine power. See: Frank Polak, "Theophany and Mediator: The Unfolding of a Theme in the Book of Exodus", in Marc Vervenne (ed.), *Studies in the Book of Exodus. Redaction - Reception - Interpretation* (Leuven: Peeters, 1996), 113-148, here 113, n. 4; N.F. Schmidt and P.J. Nel, "Theophany as Type-Scene in the Hebrew Bible", *Journal for Semitics* 11 (2002): 256-281, here 260.

<sup>21</sup> Savran, *Encountering the Divine*, 49.

## 2. “Καταπέτασμα” and the “velum scissum”. The veil guarding the Holy of Holies - ‘the curtain of the temple was torn in two’

The final words of Exodus: “*Then the cloud covered the tent of meeting, and the glory of the Lord filled the tabernacle*” (Ex. 40:34). Here is the manifestation of the Lord’s presence among Israel: the return of the cloud. Exodus is suggesting that the Lord, dwelling in the tabernacle, still cannot dwell directly among his people, a veil shielded the presence of God from people. We see the Lord dwelling with Israel a final time at the end of Revelation:

“And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, ‘Behold, the dwelling place of God is with man. He will dwell with them, and they will be his people, and God himself will be with them as their God’ (Rev. 21:2-4).”

In effect, says Blackburn

“this takes us right back to the garden of Eden, the original sanctuary, where the Lord dwelt and where he met with Adam and Eve, walking with them in the cool of the day. How did we get there? Again we turn to John 1:14, ‘And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth’. In a reference to the tabernacle, Jesus ‘tabernacled’ (eskēnōsen) among his people, fully revealing the glory of God... It is in the death of Jesus that the glory of God – the glory of both the father and the Son – is most clearly revealed. It is also through the death of Jesus that the barrier between God and humanity is removed, as the Word made flesh, full of grace and truth, bears the sin of the world. To use an image from Matthew to illustrate, it is at the death of Jesus that ‘the curtain of the temple was torn in two, from top to bottom’ (Mt. 27:51; Mk 15:38). The veil guarding the Holy of Holies, with its two cherubim, is in Jesus’ death removed, restoring access to God that was characteristic of life in Eden, but impossible since Genesis 3. The point is that, in Jesus, and particularly in his death, fellowship with God is fully restored”.<sup>22</sup>

In Paul’s words, “*For God, who said, ‘Let light shine out of darkness’, has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ*” (2 Cor. 4:6). To return to Irenaeus, the glory of God can be seen, face to face – in the face of Jesus.

By far the most common interpretation of the *velum scissum* associates this event with the veil tradition discussed at three locations in Hebrews. Here, the believer’s hope lies “behind the καταπέτασμα” (6:19) in the holy of holies, where Christ offered himself as a sacrifice (9:3) and has opened for believers a “new and living” way to God through the καταπέτασμα, which, the author says, is Christ’s body (10:20).<sup>23</sup>

<sup>22</sup> Blackburn, *God who makes himself known*, 205.

<sup>23</sup> Daniel M. Gurtner, *The Torn Veil. Matthew’s Exposition of the Death of Jesus* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 2007), 11.

Among the most creative (as well as most ancient) interpretations of the rending of the veil is one which highlights its close proximity to the statement of Mark 15:37: “ὁ δὲ Ἰησοῦς ἀφείξ φωνὴν μεγάλην ἐξέπνευσεν.” Evans insists that “the force” of Jesus’ “powerful shout” is what “actually tears the temple veil”.<sup>24</sup> D. Sylva highlights the close proximity of Jesus’ death to the *velum scissum*, using the rending of the veil to interpret Christ’s death.<sup>25</sup> Saint Ephraem the Syrian (*Comm. on the Diatessaron* 21.4–6) speaks of “using the rent veil to clothe honorably the naked body of Jesus on the cross”.<sup>26</sup>

Matthew’s *καὶ ἰδοὺ* in 27:51<sup>27</sup> is likewise used to indicate something unexpected and theophanic in nature, for a theophanic understanding seems most congruent with the divine origin of the *velum scissum*. Also, a theophanic understanding of *καὶ ἰδοὺ* appreciates the correlation between the *velum scissum* and two other places where the expression occurs: the opening of heaven (3:16) and the transfiguration (17:3).<sup>28</sup>

Matthew’s veil was torn ἀπ’ ἄνωθεν ἕως κάτω εἰς δύο. The phrase is found nowhere else in Greek literature save in subsequent references to the Matthean *velum scissum*. In the New Testament it can refer to the place from which Jesus’ garments were torn (John 19:23). The most common use of ἄνωθεν, however, is to designate divine origin (John 3:3, 7, 31; 19:11).<sup>29</sup> While the motion alluded to in John 19:23<sup>30</sup> may also be in view (by virtue of both the garment’s and the veil’s being of cloth material), that the divine origin is most

<sup>24</sup> It as both a prediction of temple destruction *and* the departure of God’s Spirit from the Jews.

<sup>25</sup> Dennis D. Sylva, “The Temple Curtain and Jesus’ Death in the Gospel of Luke”, *Journal of Biblical Literature* 105 (1986): 239-250, here 241. Also, see: D.D. Sylva (ed.), *Reimagining the Death of the Lukan Jesus* (Frankfurt am Main: Anton Hain, 1990), a collection of essays offering a variety of views.

<sup>26</sup> Raymond E. Brown, *The Death of the Messiah, Volume II: From the Gethsemane to the grave: A commentary on the passion narrative in the four gospels* (Anchor Bible Reference Library, Doubleday, New York, 1993), 1098-1117, here 1108, n. 22. Symeon the New Theologian (*Hymn* 36.41) and Leontius of Constantinople (*In sanctam parasceven*, 39-40), also describe the rending of the veil symbols (Gurtner, *The Torn Veil*, 21 and 36-39).

<sup>27</sup> “And the curtain of the Temple was parted in two from end to end; and there was an earth-shock; and the rocks were broken” [Καὶ ἰδοὺ τὸ καταπέτασμα τοῦ ναοῦ ἐσχίσθη ἀπ’ ἄνωθεν ἕως κάτω εἰς δύο, καὶ ἡ γῆ ἐσεισθη, καὶ αἱ πέτραι ἐσχίσθησαν].

<sup>28</sup> See A. D. A. Moses, *Matthew’s Transfiguration Story and Jewish-Christian Controversy*, JSNTSup 122 (Sheffield: Academic Press, 1996), 127-128.

<sup>29</sup> See Daniel M. Gurtner, “Καταπέτασμα: Lexicographical and Etymological Considerations to the Biblical ‘Veil’”, *Andrews University Seminary Studies* 42 (2004): 105-111.

<sup>30</sup> John 19:23: “And when Jesus was nailed to the cross, the men of the army took his clothing, and made a division of it into four parts, to every man a part, and they took his coat: now the coat was without a join, made out of one bit of cloth” [Οἱ οὖν στρατιῶται ὅτε ἐσταύρωσαν τὸν Ἰησοῦν ἔλαβον τὰ ἱμάτια αὐτοῦ καὶ ἐποίησαν τέσσαρα μέρη, ἐκάστῳ στρατιώτῃ μέρος, καὶ τὸν χιτῶνα. ἦν δὲ ὁ χιτῶν ἄραφος, ἐκ τῶν ἄνωθεν ὑφαντὸς δι’ ὅλου].

prominent. The phrase, also, refers to a heavenly locale as God's abode and source of his blessings and, in a cultic sense, refers to the position of the glory of God *above* the ark.

The καταπέτασμα is the inner veil before the holy of holies and is torn as an act of God (ἐσχίσθη), alluding to God in the heavenlies and perhaps to his location. The singular veil before the holy of holies is now made into two (εἰς δύο), indicating the cessation of its function. The veil generally functioned to provide general *cultic "separation"*. This supports the traditional view that there is a new accessibility to God created through the removal of the separating function of the inner veil.

The veil's separation function was executed by its prohibition of *physical and visual accessibility* to God. If this function ceases at the *velum scissum*, then the barrier that prohibits one from physically entering the presence of God, as well as from seeing his face, is effectively removed. Yet, as we have seen, *physical accessibility* could only be accomplished when the entrant had a high priestly status. Matthew's Emmanuel Christology counters a theology of divine presence.

Other scriptures associate divine investiture of the priests with clothes of salvation: "let Your priests, o Lord God, be clothed with salvation" (2 Chronicles 6:41), and "I will also clothe her priests with salvation" (Psalm 132:16). Later, in Isaiah 61:10, the individual rejoices, "for [God] hath clothed me with the garments of salvation, he hath covered me with the robe of righteousness." The significance of this passage and the saving power of Christ was not lost to the early Christians, for Luke 4 records that Christ began his public ministry by standing up, reading from Isaiah 61, and sitting down, proclaiming that "this day is this scripture fulfilled in your ears" (Luke 4:21). Though the association of Christ with clothing has already been noted in the Garden of Eden narrative, Isaiah 61 explicitly reveals the Messiah as one who will invest others with clothing (פְּעֵר, *pě'er* as "beauty").<sup>31</sup>

Other scriptures associate divine investiture of the priests with clothes of salvation: "Let thy priests, O Lord God, be clothed with salvation" (2 Chronicles 6:41), and "I will also clothe her priests with salvation" (Psalm 132:16). Later, in Isaiah 61:10, the individual rejoices, "for [God] hath clothed me with the garments of salvation, he hath covered me with the robe of righteousness." Christ began his public ministry by reading from Isaiah 61, and proclaiming that "this day is this scripture fulfilled in your ears" (Luke 4:21). Also, the man, out of whom the devils were departed, sitting at the feet of Jesus, clothed (*enduo*, ἐνδύω)<sup>32</sup> *array, clothe (with), endue, have (put) on., and in his right mind*

<sup>31</sup> Belnap, "Clothed with Salvation", 62.

<sup>32</sup> The word "*enduo*", From *en* and *duno* (in the sense of sinking into a garment), *dunó*: to enter, to sink into - original word: *δύνω*; to invest with clothing (literally or figuratively). Matthew 6:25 "body, what ye shall put on. Is not life" (ὁμῶν τί ἐνδύσησθε οὐχὶ ἡ) *vb.-aor. subjunctive middle-2nd pers. pl.*;

(Luke 8:35). In the parable of the prodigal son Christ's transforming power is emphasized when the father has him clothed (*enduo*) in the best robe, a symbolically restoring him to his proper place within the family. Finally, Christ tells his disciples that they were to remain in Jerusalem following Christ's resurrection until "ye be *endued* with power from on high" (Luke 24:49). In Revelation 7:14 the martyrs killed during the fifth seal are given white robes made "white in the blood of the Lamb." Eternal life is also described in terms of clothing. Those who have been baptized "put on" Christ. Similarly, Romans 13:14 exhorts the saints to "put on" the Lord Jesus Christ.<sup>33</sup> But perhaps the

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Matthew 22:11 "a man not *clothed with* clothes of wedding" (ἄνθρωπον οὐκ ἐνδεδυμένον ἔνδυμα γάμου); Matthew 27:31 "and *put* His [own] garments *on* him" (χλαμύδα καὶ ἐνέδυσαν αὐτὸν τὰ) *vb-aor. indicative active-3rd pers. pl.*; Mark 1:6 "John was *clothed with* camel's hair" (ὁ Ἰωάννης ἐνδεδυμένος τρίχας καμήλου) *vb-perfect participle middle-nominative masculine sg.*; Mark 6:9 "sandals; and [He added], *Do not put on* two tunics" (καὶ μὴ ἐνδύσησθε δύο χιτῶνας) *verb-aorist infinitive middle*; Mark 15:20 "purple [garment] and *put on* him His [own] garments" (πορφύρα καὶ ἐνέδυσαν αὐτὸν τὰ) *verb-aorist indicative active-3rd person plural*; Luke 8:27 "with demons; and *who had not put on* any clothing" (ικανῶ οὐκ ἐνεδύσατο ἱμάτιον καὶ) *verb-aorist indicative middle-3rd person singular*; Luke 12:22 "for the body, *what you should put on*" (ὕμων τί ἐνδύσησθε) *verb-aorist subjunctive middle-2nd person plural*; Luke 15:22 "best robe and *put it on* him" (πρώτην καὶ ἐνδύσατε αὐτὸν καὶ) *vb-aor. imperative active-2nd pers. pl.*; Luke 24:49 "until *you are clothed with* power from on high" (ἕως οὗ ἐνδύσησθε ἐξ ὕψους) *vb-aor. subj. middle-2nd pers. pl.*; Acts 12:21 "Herod, *having put on* his royal" (ὁ Ἡρώδης ἐνδυσάμενος ἐσθῆτα βασιλικήν) *vb-aor. participle middle-nominative masculine singular*; Romans 13:12 "So let us *put aside* the deeds of darkness and *put on* the armor of light" (τοῦ σκότους ἐνδυσώμεθα δὲ τὰ) *vb-aor. subj. middle-1st person plural*; Romans 13:14 "*But put on* the Lord Jesus" (ἀλλὰ ἐνδύσασθε τὸν κύριον) *vb-aor. imperative middle-2nd pers. pl.*; 1 Corinthians 15:53 "must *put on* incorruption" (φθαρτὸν τοῦτο ἐνδύσασθαι ἀφθαρσίαν καὶ) *vb-aor. infinitive middle*; 1 Corinthians 15:53 "mortal *must put on* immortality" (θνητὸν τοῦτο ἐνδύσασθαι ἀθάνασίαν) *vb-aor. infinitive middle*; 1 Corinthians 15:54 "perishable *will have put on* the imperishable" (φθαρτὸν τοῦτο ἐνδύσεται τὴν ἀφθαρσίαν) *vb-aor. subj. middle-3s*; 1 Corinthians 15:54 "mortal *this put on* immortality then" (θνητὸν τοῦτο ἐνδύσεται ἀθάνασίαν τότε) *vb-aor. subj. middle-3s*; Galatians 3:27 "were baptized into Christ *have clothed* yourselves with Christ" (ἐβαπτίσθητε Χριστὸν ἐνεδύσασθε) *v-aor. indicative middle-2p*; Ephesians 4:24 "And *that ye put on* the new man" (καὶ ἐνδύσασθαι τὸν καινὸν) *V-Aor. Inf. M*; Ephesians 6:11 "*Put on* the full armor of God" (ἐνδύσασθε τὴν πανοπλίαν) *v-aor. imp. m-2p*; Ephesians 6:14 "with truth, and *having put on* the breastplate" (ἀληθεία καὶ ἐνδυσάμενοι τὸν θώρακα) *v-aor. part. m-nominative masculine pl.*; Colossians 3:10 "and *have put on* the new self [man]" (καὶ ἐνδυσάμενοι τὸν νέον) *v-imp-nmp*; Colossians 3:12 "and beloved, *put on* a heart" (Ἐνδύσασθε οὖν ὡς) *v-aor. imp. mid-2pl.*; 1 Thessalonians 5:8 "let us be sober, *having put on* the breastplate" (ὄντες νήφωμεν ἐνδυσάμενοι θώρακα πίστεως) *v-aor. part. m-nom. masc. pl.*; Revelation 1:13 "of man, *clothed in* a robe reaching to the feet" (ὄϊον ἀνθρώπου ἐνδεδυμένον ποδήρη καὶ) *v-perf. part. masc. sg.* [27 occurrences].

<sup>33</sup> Ewa Kuryluk, *Veronica and Her Cloth: History, Symbolism and Structure of a "True" Image* (New York: Basil Blackwell, 1991), 30-41. This is an intriguing study on the early Christian association of Christ with clothing, the role of cloth imprinted with the images of Christ in early Christian belief. See, also: Nahum M. Waldman, "The Imagery of Clothing, Covering, and Overpowering," *Journal of the Ancient Near Eastern Society* 19 (1989): 161-170; Herbert L. Kessler and Gerhard Wolf (eds.), *The Holy Face and the Paradox of Representation* (Rome: Nuova Alfa Editoriale, 1998). As Sebastian

most intriguing image is that of Hebrews 10:19-20, where we are exhorted to have “boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way, which he hath consecrated for us, through the veil, that is to say, his flesh.” As the verse suggests, at least some in early Christianity associated Christ and his mission with the temple veil that separated the holy place from the holy of holies. Certainly there is affinity in function between the veil and Christ in that both must be approached if one is to enter into the presence of God. In this regard, Daniel Belnap honestly concludes: “Thus Christ represents the veil that all must pass through to enter the holy of holies, and the veil represents Christ as the keeper of the way to exaltation”.<sup>34</sup> The clothing became tangible symbols of spiritual and somatic transformation. Like Adam and Eve, we have a need to be clothed in divine glory and the garment is acting like the temple veil.

### 3. Ephrem’ “*eṣtal šubḥa*” – the robe of glory (στολή δόξης). The christological transformation of the sign (‘*ātā*) and the epiphanic function of the *rāzā*, or mystical symbol in Jacob of Sarug

In late antiquity there was what one might call a whole “theology of clothing”, and in the Judaeo-Christian context the beginnings can already be seen in occasional figurative language in the Old Testament, such as Psalm 13,17 (LXX): “I will clothe her priests with salvation”. But it is in Jewish literature of the Hellenistic period that the theme really begins to be developed,<sup>35</sup> as a ‘theology of clothing’.<sup>36</sup>

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Brock emphasizes “the eschatological aspects of the ‘robe of glory’ obviate any idea of a purely cyclical process, in that the *Endzeit* is by no means a straight reflection of the *Urzeit*: the last state of Adam/mankind is to be far more glorious than his former state in the primordial Paradise, for, as Ephrem puts it, ‘The exalted One knew that Adam desired to become a God, so he sent his Son who put Adam on, to give him his desire.’ The Syriac Fathers, no less than the Greek, see the theōsis or divinization of man as the end purpose of the inhumanization of God”; see: Sebastian Brock, “Clothing Metaphors as a Means of Theological Expression in Syriac Tradition,” in Margot Schmidt (ed.), *Typus, Symbol, Allegorie bei den östlichen Vätern und ihren Parallelen im Mittelalter* (Regensburg: Pustet, 1982), 11–38, here 20.

<sup>34</sup> Belnap, “Clothed with Salvation”, 66. Christ himself was experiencing the utter humiliation of nakedness. At least three times over the course of the atonement, Christ was stripped of his clothing. The first occurrence was prior to his scourging, as recorded in Mark 15:15, where he was stripped to be beaten with the whip. The second occurrence was experienced as the Roman soldiers stripped Christ of his own robe and placed purple clothing on him, mocking him as king. Finally, the last stripping occurred at the cross as his clothing was taken from him and gambled away among the guards.

<sup>35</sup> Sebastian Brock, “Some Aspects of Greek Words in Syriac” in Albert Dietrich (ed.), *Synkretismus im syrisch-persischen Kulturgebiet*, Symposion, Reinhausen bei Göttingen, 1971, *Abhandlungen der Akademie der Wissenschaften in Göttingen, Philologisch-Historische Klasse, Dritte Folge*, 96 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1975), 80-108, reprinted in *Syriac Perspectives on Late Antiquity* (Hampshire: Ashgate Publishing, 2001), 80-108, here 85-86 and 98-104.

In Christian writers it is clear that the imagery of clothing is, in particular, employed in two fairly well defined contexts: when used in connection with Christ, the reference is to the incarnation, while, with reference to the Christian, the context is most frequently that of baptism. The robe of glory (*στολή δόξης*), become something of a technical term in Syriac, in the forms *est la d-šubha*, or *estal šubha*, i.e. preserving the Greek word *στολή*. The “robe of glory” is essentially something that one receives at baptism.

The phrase already occurs a number of times in Ephrem’s writings: in his Sermones, (I, 5,93), for instance, he writes “I gaze upon the *stole* of glory that I put on at baptism”.<sup>37</sup>

- Elsewhere (H. Nativ. V.4,5) he links the baptismal connotations of the phrase very closely with the incarnation, and Christ’s selfabasement: “He hid his own glory (*tešbuhteħ*), and gave his swaddling clothes as a robe (*στολή*) of glory to mankind”.<sup>38</sup>

- In one of the Hymns on Paradise (IV,5) he speaks of a new *stole* as having been woven for Adam by Mary (“Mary clothed us with an incorruptible robe (*στολή*) of glory”).

- In the same hymn collection (VI,9) the theme of Adam’s recovery of his original glorious robe is again introduced: Ephrem describes the new paradise of the Church, and writes: “none (of the saints) there is naked – they are clothed in glory... our Lord himself has caused them to rediscover Adam’s original *stole*”.<sup>39</sup>

- Exactly how Adam recovered his original robe (*stole*) of glory is described in rather more detail in an interesting passage in the *Cave of Treasures*, which speaks of Adam putting on the robe of glory, *estal šubha*, at the baptism he receives by means of the water that flowed from Christ’s side on the cross.<sup>40</sup>

<sup>36</sup> Erik Peterson, “Theologie des Kleides,” in *Benediktinische Monatsschrift* 16 (1934): 347-356; Erik Peterson, *Pour une théologie du vêtement*, Traduction by M.-J. Congar (Lyon : Éditions de l’Abeille, 1943); Edgar Haulotte, *Symbolique du vêtement selon la Bible*, Théologie 65 (Paris: Aubier, 1966); A. Kehl, “Gewand (der Seele),” *RAC* 10 (1978) 945-1045.

<sup>37</sup> See Beck’s note to his translation (*Scr. Syri* 131), p. 94 note 1.

<sup>38</sup> St. Ephraim the Syrian, *Hymns and Homilies of St. Ephraim the Syrian* (Veritatis Splendor Publication, 2012) this is a re-publication of *A Select Library of the Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers of the Church, Second series*, ed. Philip Schaff (Buffalo: The Christian Literature Co., 1886, vol. 13), “Nineteen Hymns on the Nativity of Christ in the Flesh,” *Hymn V*, in *Hymns and Homilies*, 204. H. Nativ. XXII. 39.3: “our body has become thy garment (*lbušak*), thy Spirit has become-our robe (*estlan*)”.

<sup>39</sup> “*My beautiful garments have been ruined, and are no more*”; Two strophes later Adam speaks of the light (*nuhra*) that he wore (*d-lebšet*) in Paradise; in *St. Ephrem the Syrian: Hymns On Paradise*, translation by Sebastian Brock (New York: St Vladimir’s Seminary Press, 1997), 98 and 111.

<sup>40</sup> The blood and water from the side of Christ came down into the mouth of Adam (buried immediately beneath the cross), and Adam was thus delivered, and he put on the robe of glory. According to Ephrem (*Comm. Diat.* XVI.10), Jesus came “to heal Adam’s wounds, and to give a covering of glory to his nakedness” (*d-nasse maħwata d-Adam, w-taksit šubha l-pursayeh nettel*).

The Hebrew text of Genesis 3:21 reads: “and the Lord God made for Adam and for his wife garments of skin, and clothed them”. The Palestinian Targums, together with Targum Onkelos, however, state that God provided them with *lbušin d-iqar*, “garments of glory” (aramaic *iqara* renders hebrew *kabod*. “garments of splendour (*mdt HDR*) in eternal light”). The difference between “garments of skin” (*‘or*) and, the “garments of light” (*‘or*) consists of a single letter.<sup>41</sup>

In Syriac tradition, it is clear that the “robe of glory”, *eṣtal šubḥa*, that the newly baptized received was none other than Adam’s original robe of glory which he had lost at the Fall. The phrase *eṣtla d-šubḥa* became a commonplace in Syriac literature, especially in a baptismal context.

Adam’s clothing before the Fall, the “robe of light” (*eṣtal nuhra*) in Syriac with its recurrent theme of the ascetic anticipating the life of paradise already in this world.<sup>42</sup> Ephrem, too, speaks of a “garment of light” as worn by men and women in paradise, but he uses the Semitic word *lbuša* (*lbuš nuhra*)<sup>43</sup>; at the end of the poem in question, however, he laments how his own sins have lost him “the crown, the name, the glory, the robe (*estla*), and the bride-chamber of light”. You will notice how similar the combination of these terms is to that in the passage I quoted from the Manichaean psalms.

First is the evidence of Scripture itself: commenting on 1 Corinthians 6:19, “Do you not know that your bodies are a temple of the Holy Spirit who dwells within you”, Ephrem points to the honour which God himself pays to the body by making it “a dwelling place and habitation of the Trinity” (*Commentary on the Pauline Epistles*, quote John 14:23); and later on, commenting on 2 Corinthians 5, he says “Just as our bodies became worthy to be the dwelling of his Spirit, so he makes them worthy at the end to put on eternal glory” (*Commentary on the Pauline Epistles*, p. 96). Ephrem elsewhere speaks of the human body as having become God’s new temple, replacing the Temple on Mount Sion (*Heresies* 42:4). Secondly, the very fact that God “put on a body” (*Nativity* 9:2 and often elsewhere) indicates that there is nothing unclean or unworthy about the body. And finally, the Eucharist provides Ephrem with similar evidence of the worth of the body; in the following extract he is arguing against a group of Christians who hold the body to be impure but accept the Eucharist:

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<sup>41</sup> Cf. S. Brock, “Some Aspects of Greek Words in Syriac”, 101.

<sup>42</sup> Sebastian Brock, “Early Syrian Asceticism,” *Numen* 20 (1973): 1-19. Sebastian Brock, *The Luminous Eye: The Spiritual World Vision of Saint Ephrem the Syrian*, Cistercian Studies, 124 (Kalamazoo, Michigan: Cistercian Publications, 1992), 37.

<sup>43</sup> *H. Parad.* VII. 5; Sebastian Brock, “Jacob of Serugh on the Veil of Moses,” *Sobornost* 3 (1981): 70-85.

“for how could Christ have despised the body/  
yet clothed himself in the Bread,  
seeing that bread is related to that feeble body”.  
(*Heresies 47:2*)

In a short poem, *Hymn Thirty-Seven* of the cycle on the Church, Ephrem compares Eve and Mary to the two inner eyes of the world: one is darkened and cannot see clearly, while the other is luminous and operates perfectly:

“It is clear that Mary/ is the ‘land’ that receives the Source of light;/ through her it has illumined/ the whole world, with its inhabitants,/ which had grown dark through Eve,/ the source of all evils./ Mary and Eve in their symbols/ resemble a body, one of whose eyes/ is blind and darkened,/ while the other/ is clear and bright,/ providing light for the whole./ The world, you see, has/ two eyes fixed in it:/ Eve was its left eye,/ blind,/ while the right eye,/ bright, is Mary. (...) But when it was illumined by the other eye,/ and the heavenly Light/ that resided in its midst,/ humanity became reconciled once again.”

“Praise to the Son, the Lord of symbols,/ who has fulfilled all kinds of symbols at His Crucifixion” (*Unleavened Bread 3*). The verse provides three main starting points for typological exegesis: the side, the lance, and the issuing forth of blood and water. The side looks back to Adam’s side, whence Eve was extracted (Genesis 2:22), the lance likewise looks back to the cherub’s sword that guarded paradise after the expulsion of Adam and Eve (Gen. 3:24), while the issue of blood and water looks forward to the Mysteries of the Church, the Eucharist and Baptism.

“The sword that pierced Christ removed the sword guarding Paradise;/  
His forgiveness tore up our document of debt” *Col. 2:14*  
(*Crucifixion 9:2*)

“The piercing of Christ’s side thus makes it possible for humanity  
to reenter Paradise:  
so that, by the opening of His side/ He might open up the way to Paradise”.  
(*Nativity 8:4*)

Saint Ephrem writes concerning the Incarnation:

“All these changes did the Merciful One make,/ stripping off glory and putting on a body;/ for He had devised a way to reclothe Adam/ in that glory which Adam had stripped off./ Christ was wrapped in swaddling clothes,/ corresponding to Adam’s leaves,/ Christ put on clothes, instead of Adam’s skins;/ He was baptized for Adam’s sin,/ His body was embalmed for Adam’s death,/ He rose and raised up Adam in his glory./ Blessed is He who descended, put Adam on and ascended!” (*Nativity 23:13*)

'He put on Adam', that is, humanity, and so raised humanity to its original state, clothed in the 'robe of glory'. Thus, the continuum of salvation history is provided above all by the image of the 'robe of glory', a robe which Ephrem sometimes also calls the 'robe of light'.

Christ's baptism in 'the womb' of the Jordan looks back in time to His conception in Mary's womb. Both wombs, Mary's and the Jordan's, by bearing Christ the Light, are clothed with light from His presence within them:<sup>44</sup>

As the Daystar in the river, the Bright One in the tomb,  
He shone forth on the mountain top and gave brightness too in the  
womb;

He dazzled as He went up from the river,  
gave illumination at His ascent.  
The brightness which Moses put on  
was wrapped on him from without,  
whereas the river in which Christ was baptized  
was clothed in light from within;  
so too did Mary's body, in which He resided,  
gleam from within. (*Church 36:3-6*)

Christ's baptism, and the sanctification of the Jordan waters provide the occasion for the recovery of the lost robe of glory in Christian baptism. Already in Saint Paul we have clothing imagery "putting on Christ" at baptism.

Again the wedding garment is none other than 'the robe of glory', acquired at baptism, which must be kept unspotted for the eschatological wedding feast:

The First-born wrapped Himself in a body/ as a veil to hide His glory./  
The immortal Bridegroom shines out in that robe:/  
let the guests in their clothing resemble Him in His./  
Let your bodies - which are your clothing - /  
shine out, for they bound in fetters/ that man whose body was stained./  
Lord, do You whiten my stains at Your banquet with Your radiance.<sup>45</sup>  
*(Nisibis 43:21)*

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<sup>44</sup> Gabriele Winkler, "The Appearance of the Light at the Baptism of Jesus and the Origins of the Feast of Epiphany: An Investigation of Greek, Syriac, Armenian, and Latin Sources," in Maxwell E. Johnson (ed.), *Between Memory and Hope. Readings on the Liturgical Year* (Collegeville, Liturgical Press, 2000), 291-348.

<sup>45</sup> "The Nisibene Hymns", ed. Philip Schaff (2012), 150.

Here Ephrem, with deliberate paradox, identifies the wedding garment of the parable, not with the baptismal robe of glory (as his readers might have expected), but with the actual bodies of the wedding guests, which are to correspond to the radiance and glory of Christ's body, that is, the garment that the Heavenly Bridegroom Himself put on.

The parable of the wedding guest in Matthew 22 can also serve to illustrate the tension between the baptismal and eschatological roles of the robe of glory.

“Among the saints none is naked,  
for they have put on glory;  
nor is there any clad in fig leaves,  
or standing in shame,  
for they have found, through our Lord,  
the robe that belonged to Adam and Eve.”  
(*Paradise 6:9*)

In *Discourse on our Lord 48* “Christ is a coal of fire hidden in flesh” (cf also *Commentary on the Diatessaron 1:25; Nativity 6:13*).

Elsewhere, just as Christ's human body is ‘the garment of His divinity’ (*Faith 19:2*), so too the Eucharistic Bread is another garment:

“Who will not be amazed at Your various garments?  
The body has hidden Your radiance – the awesome divine nature;  
ordinary clothes hid the feeble human nature;  
the Bread has hidden the Fire that resides within it.”  
(*Faith 19:3*)

Ephrem uses another word, also with a rich sacral background in Jewish Aramaic, namely the verb *shra*, “take up residence, dwell”. It is this term that Ephrem regularly uses with reference to Christ's presence both in Mary's womb and in the consecrated Bread and Wine.<sup>46</sup> The verb is employed especially in connection with the *Shekhina*, the divine presence, and the *iqara*, divine glory. Christ is said to ‘reside’ (*shra*) in Mary's womb:

“Blessed is He who took up residence in the womb  
and built there a temple wherein to dwell” (John 2:21), a shrine in which to be,  
garment in which He might shine out.”<sup>47</sup>  
(*Nativity 3:20*)

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<sup>46</sup> See Sebastian Brock, “Mary and the Eucharist: An Oriental Perspective”, *Sobornost* 1, no. 2 (1979): 50-59.

<sup>47</sup> “Nineteen Hymns on the Nativity of Christ in the Flesh”, ed. Philip Schaff (2012), 191-192.

As was to happen later with the term *aggen*, so too the term *shra* came to be extended to other salvific events: thus Ephrem uses it both of the action of Christ's body in the Jordan, and of the Holy Spirit upon the disciples at Pentecost (*Faith 14:12*). Just as the Divinity 'took up residence' in Mary's womb, so too does the divine 'hidden power' in the Bread and Wine 'take up residence' in the communicant.

So far we have been concerned with the body as the bridal chamber where the soul meets the Bridegroom. The imagery may also be interiorized, in which case the bridal chamber is no longer located in the body, but in the heart, the very centre of the human person.<sup>48</sup> Ephrem is conveying here in very compact form is schematically the following: the Divinity that resided on Mt Sinai, but which was rejected by the intended bride, Israel, now resides in the heart of the baptized.

In Ephrem's *Homily on Our Lord*<sup>49</sup> we will look specifically at his use of the word "sign" (*ātā*), mainly the christological transformation of the sign. The use of the word sign continues to be a distinguishing element in Ephrem's exegesis of Moses' theophany at Sinai (Exod 33:17-23; 34:33-35) and Paul's theophany on the road to Damascus (Acts 9) in *Homily*, §22-33. Just as the Israelites had erred by worshipping a golden calf in the wilderness, Simon the Pharisee is marked by his trust in physical signs. Ephrem writes, "But when our Lord stopped the signs, (the Pharisee) was overcome with the doubt of his countrymen." The sinful woman who lies prostrate before Christ in her posture of repentance is also an allusion to Saul who falls to the ground upon seeing the divine light (Acts 9:4). Unlike the Pharisee who doubts Christ, the woman recognizes the theophany before her. In this section, Ephrem points that Paul's blindness ironically led to his ability to see.<sup>50</sup> With similar irony, Moses is granted the opportunity to see the glory of YHWH but then conceals it from the Israelites with a veil. Ephrem writes:

"Even though the eyes of Moses were physical, like those of Paul, his interior eyes were Christian. For 'Moses wrote concerning me...' In the case of Paul, his exterior eyes were as open as those within were closed. The exterior eyes of Moses radiated because his interior eyes saw clearly. Paul's exterior eyes were kept closed, so that by

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<sup>48</sup> Thomas Buchan, "Paradise as the Landscape of Salvation in Ephrem the Syrian," in Michael J. Christensen and Jeffery A. Wittung, *Partakers of the Divine nature. The History of Development of Deification in the Christian Traditions* (Baker Academic, Grand Rapids, Michigan, 2007), 146-159.

<sup>49</sup> Edmund Beck, *Des Heiligen Ephraem des Syrers Sermo de Domino Nostro*, (CSCO 270, 271; Louvain, 1966). See also the English translations by Edward G. Mathews, Jr. and Joseph P. Amar, *St. Ephrem the Syrian, Selected Prose Works*, The Fathers of the Church 91 (Washington, D.C.: Catholic University of America Press, 1994), 269-332.

<sup>50</sup> Robert Murray, *Symbols of Church and Kingdom* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1975), 2.

the closing of his exterior eyes those within would be open. He who had been unable to perceive our Lord through His signs with exterior eyes, perceived Him with interior eyes once his physical (eyes) were closed. And because he took an example from his own experience, he wrote to those whose bodily eyes saw clearly: 'May he enlighten the eyes of your hearts.' So visible signs in no way helped the exterior eyes of the Jews; faith of the heart opened the eyes of the hearts of the nations. If Moses simply had come down from the mountain without his face radiating, and had said, "I saw the radiance of God there," the infidel fathers would not have believed him. And likewise with Paul: the crucifying sons would not have put faith in him if his eyes had not been injured, and he had said, "I heard the voice of Christ." This is why, as though out of love, (God) set a desirable sign of radiance on Moses in order to convince them that (Moses) had seen the divine radiance. But on Saul, as on a persecutor, He set the infamous sign of blindness so that the liars would believe that he had heard the words of Christ" (Homily, §32).

Ephrem goes on to write that the Israelites fail to recognize the visible signs on their bodies and their clothes. The visible signs and transformations that God provides are ineffectual at persuading.<sup>51</sup> The external sign, says Angela Y. Kim, corresponds to the interior state of the branded individuals. In the case of Moses, the sign refers to a state of grace because he was granted a vision of the glory of YHWH. For Saul the external sign is one of blindness. The implication is that it is only through interior vision that one comes to know Christ, not through physical sight and physical signs.<sup>52</sup> Here, Ephrem reveals the complexity of his understanding of sign. The word sign is no longer used in a metaphoric sense, as in a sign on the heart (*Homily*, §7), but rather in a literal and visible way.

"Ephrem has transformed the visible sign of guilt into a visible sign of grace... The literal and the metaphoric understanding of the word sign plays an important role in illustrating the central theological theme of the homily, namely Christ's transformative power".<sup>53</sup>

Regarding the 'epiphany of mystical symbols', Richard E. McCarron emphasizes the highly dynamic role that the *rāzā*, or "mystical symbol", will play in the Abraham narrative of Genesis 22. Jacob of Sarug explains that in the very telling of the story now the mystical symbol will be active once again in an "epiphany". Jacob begins with the injunction of the Lord to Abraham to take

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<sup>51</sup> P. Yousif, "Exegetical Principles of St. Ephraem of Nisibis," *Studia Patristica* 18, 4 (1990): 296-302.

<sup>52</sup> Robert Murray, "The Theory of Symbolism in St. Ephrem's Theology," *Parole de L' Orient* 6-7 (1975/6): 1-20.

<sup>53</sup> Angela Y. Kim, "Signs of Ephrem's Exegetical Techniques in his Homily on our Lord," *Hugoye: Journal of Syriac Studies* 3.1 (2010), 55-70, here 68.

his son and sacrifice (*dbh*) him. In the Peshitta text, Isaac is called the *ihîdâyâ*, or “only one”. The term *ihîdâyâ* has significant christological and spiritual meanings,<sup>54</sup> as the Syriac equivalent for *ho monogenes* and a frequent title of Christ (associations between Christ and Isaac). Jacob sees in Isaac the image (*surtâ*) of Jesus. He Image of the Son of God, carrying the cross himself to Golgotha, Isaac put on a coat of mystical symbols and shone with beauty as he walked on the way to his killing (“the mystical symbol of the Son that Isaac was clothed”). Having arrived at the spot on the mountain, Abraham sets about building the altar for the holocaust. He knew the spot because the “visible glory of the mystical symbols” (*škîntâ drâzê*) dwelt there. “The *râzâ* is not static, says R.E. Mccarron, Abraham’s mind works faster than his deeds: for in his mind, Isaac is already killed and the colors of the mystical symbol shine forth for him”.<sup>55</sup>

Therefore, the key is the function of the *râzâ*, or mystical symbol. The mystical symbol is not a static image or thing. The *râzâ* breaks linear time (like in Jn 8:57: “You are not yet fifty years old, and have you seen Abraham?”): what matters for Jacob is the story of salvation being. For Jacob Abraham actually sees Jesus’s saving actions played out before him in his own actions. He describes the *râzâ*’s function as that of epiphany. Jacob speaks of Christ as working with gestures (*remzê*) or traces the mystical symbol is working once more, blazing or shining forth for the present listeners to see at work the traces of history that are indeed part of their tradition. They perceive once again the *râzâ*’s brilliance and are led to a deeper love of Christ and of his passion. The *râzâ* is almost always referred to by means of light or visual imagery. It blazes, shines, or burns. The visible quality is part of the mystical symbol by which an invisible reality is rendered visible. The work of the mystical symbol itself is the “presence of concrete spiritual reality” and it opens the way to the perception of God’s activity (this is the epiphany of the mystical symbol).<sup>56</sup>

<sup>54</sup> Sidney H. Griffith, “Singles in God’s Service: Thoughts on the *ihîdâyê* from the Works of Aphrahat and Ephraem the Syrian,” *The Harp* 4 (1991): 145-159.

<sup>55</sup> Richard E. Mccarron, “An Epiphany of Mystical Symbols: Jacob of Sarug’s Mêmâr 109 on Abraham and his Types,” *Hugoye: Journal of Syriac Studies* Vol. 1, no.1 (1998): 57-78, here 69-70. Typically, this mode of exegesis is identified as typological. Typology is generally defined as an exegetical strategy that interprets all of history in light of its fulfillment in Christ, shadows of New Testament truth in Old Testament events. But “to consider Jacob’s analysis solely in terms of the standard type-antitype relationship misses Jacob’s complex poetic contribution”. Indeed, while typology as ordinarily understood is considered outmoded by modern biblical scholars given to the historical-critical methods, one should note that “typology incorporates the old into the new and thereby helps to constitute a tradition” (Mccarron, “An Epiphany of Mystical Symbols”, 71-72).

<sup>56</sup> Verna Harrison, “Word as icon in Greek patristic theology,” *Sobornost* 10 no. 1 (1988): 40. See also Sidney H. Griffith, “The Image of the Image Maker in the Poetry of St. Ephraem the Syrian,” *Studia Patristica* 25 (1993): 258-269, who demonstrates that Ephraem’s work better exemplifies the phenomenon of iconographic language. She notes the tendency to dismiss patristic exegesis because

According to Richard E. Mccarron, Jacob seeks God's actions (activities or *energeias*) in the mystical symbols. Abraham and Isaac directly participate in the revelation of this way by painting the blazing portrait of mystical symbols: the literally blazing light of the Pasch manifested by *rāzê* (such would be the "spiritual" sense of the passage). By calling forth attention to the epiphany of mystical symbols that allow an almost ecstatic communion of past, present, and future. Thus, "truth no longer means verification, but manifestation, i.e., letting what shows itself be".<sup>57</sup>

#### 4. Dionysian' Χειραγωγία - "Sacred veils" and theurgic lights/rays. Holy σύμβολον (icon of the invisible) and the Face of Providence disclosed within the veils of the Church

##### Θεῖα ἀγάλματα - divine names as *notional icons* or "divine images". Transcendence and Presence

Divine Names for Dionysius are sacramental in their character. They carry the divine presence (divine light), because the divine names are θεῖα ἀγάλματα, "divine images" or "icons" of God.<sup>58</sup> The immateriality of the soul is an image of the incorporeality of God, Holy Scripture, too, is full of symbols. In the Incarnation God "became complex" by entering "into our nature". After the "vesture" of His Incarnation, God remains present into the "veils" of Scripture and Liturgy. But, even the revealed names (Father, Son and Holy Spirit) are finally icons, images drawn from human experience in world. Thus, God can only be known in the experience of His presence, His light. Also the patristic meaning for "mystical" is hidden. God is hidden by the light (*Ep. I*) and His divine darkness (γνόφος) is the unapproachable light, his dwelling place (*Ep. V*).<sup>59</sup> Therefore, light is both the Presence (*shekinach*) as immanent transcendence or as tension between transcendent hiddenness and revelation.

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it is often characterized as "typology" or "allegory" and suggests an "iconic" reading would be the way to bridge, judge, and rehabilitate patristic exegesis. For a developed argument for a "theoretic" hermeneutics (in the sense of *theoria* or "spiritual vision") see John Breck, *The Power of the Word in the Worshipping Church* (Crestwood: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1986), 49-92.

<sup>57</sup> Mccarron, "An Epiphany of Mystical Symbols", 76-77.

<sup>58</sup> Alexander Golitzin, *Et introibo ad altare Dei: The Mystagogy of Dionysius Areopagita* (Thessaloniki: Patriarchikon Idruma Paterikōn, 1994), 70-74.

<sup>59</sup> See *Ep. V* and *DN VII.2* for the equation of the cloud of Sinai (γνόφος) with the "unapproachable light" (ἀπρόσιτον φῶς) in 1 Tm. 6:16. Cf., John Anthony McGuckin, "Perceiving Light from Light in Light (*Oration 31.3*): The Trinitarian Theology of Gregory the Theologian," *The Greek Orthodox Theological Review* 39 (1994): 7-31.

As Golitzin says, “*Areopagite’s originality derives less from the imitation of the pagan masters than from his fidelity to patristic teaching on the Trinity and the divine names or attributes*”.<sup>60</sup> Regarding the “names” of God as “notional icons”, they bear a certain sacramental power. In his name is God, who goes “outside” of his hidden essence (ἐξῶ ἑαυτοῦ γίνεται, *DN IV*, 13).

“The patristic theology of divine transcendence and immanence is the foundation of the DN: God is transcendent as both One and Three, yet is fully immanent to creation in his powers, whose presence we may discern in the notional icons of his names given in revelation”.<sup>61</sup>

But, in the same time, the terminology bearing on light is consistent throughout the whole *CD*. God ad extra, the divine πρόοδοι, seem to indicate: ray, effusion of light, radiance. Thus, God takes on the name of “intelligible light” (φῶς νοητόν) or “overflowing outpouring of light” (ὑπερβλύζουσα φωτοχυσία). As Golitzin concludes, “the language of ‘rays’ direct us to the nonsubstantial character of the πρόοδοι and thus to Dionysius’ fundamental alteration of the pagans’ emanationism scheme”.<sup>62</sup> As Bradshaw emphasizes, Dionysius uses πρόοδος to signify the presence of God as “outside” his essence: “The *proodoi* both *are* God and *manifest* God, who remains beyond them as their sources”.<sup>63</sup>

God’s names are sacrament of his presence and they direct us to, and participate in, the greater sacrament (μυστήριον) of God’s self-giving love. In this context, the εἰκών has an ontological value, it does not imitate but rather reveals a “real presence”. With this meaning, Eucharist is an icon, a symbol and ritual gesture a theophany (ὑπ’ ὄψιν, recognition of a real Presence).<sup>64</sup> As icons, hierarchy is the revelation of the saving presence, an icon of the Thearchic beauty and the participants as divine images become recipients of the primordial light’s Thearchic rays (*CH III.2*).

Also, the symbol is putting-together matter and divine light (a revelation). The therachic ray illumine us by the variety of sacred veils, because the ‘rays’ of the divine energies are capable of appropriating or “puts-itself-together-

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<sup>60</sup> Alexander Golitzin, *Mystagogy: A Monastic Reading of Dionysius Areopagita: 1 Cor 3:16, John 14:21-23* (Liturgical Press, Collegeville, Minnesota), 59.

<sup>61</sup> Golitzin, *Mystagogy*, 67.

<sup>62</sup> Golitzin, *Mystagogy*, 77. God’s immanence is particularly developed by the cappadocians: the divine πρόοδοι as a kind of radiance or ‘penumbra’ about the transcendent essence. The Dionysios πρόοδοι represent in short the elimination of the pagan κόσμος νοητός (‘intelligible worlds’), the intermediary ‘henads’. Names of God are degrees of the divine processions, not God *in se*.

<sup>63</sup> David Bradshaw, *Aristotle East and West: Metaphysics and the Division of Christendom* (Cambridge University Press, 2007), 181. But, these are, after all, the divine energies, called by Dionysius ἀγαθουργίαι, πρόοδοι, διακρίσεις etc.

<sup>64</sup> Golitzin, *Mystagogy*, 200-201.

with" (συμβολή). As icons of the invisible the veils are guides (χειραγωγία) for us and we can speak about the pedagogical roll of these 'veils'. The 'veils' are stuff of our universe (matter, physical gesture or motion, spoken word), a diffusion of divine light which illumined matters for the transmission of the gift of light. This participation (μετουσία) to the super-abundant light (CH X.3) is a participation/revelation of the invisible through the visible. Thus, because of the capacity of matter to carry the light of God (holy σύμβολον), the veils are "material light icons of the immaterial gift of light".<sup>65</sup>

To recapitulate: 1) symbols – carry a "real presence" (the nature of the symbol – indwelling of divine in matter), 2) hierarchy – as "icons of the divine energies" (EH V.1.7), 3) sacraments – hidden God's energies streaming into creation, 4) "sacred veils" – revelations, 5) χειραγωγία – brings us in accordance with the divine archetype.

Therefore, it is a light that renders us "co-workers" of God's divinity: "Veiled in the images of our hierarchy, as he was veiled in the flesh, he renders those veils mean of participation in, and revelation of, his glory".<sup>66</sup> But, says Golitzin, if "veils" never to be wholly dissolved, humanity clothes his divinity (the mystery hidden within the veils) and, thus, Jesus' humanity, his body, is our permanent "envelope". Christ is, thus, "the place of the presence of God" or "place of meeting" and "face of Providence disclosed within the veils of the Church".<sup>67</sup> The Areopagite Church is not an institution, but the continuation of the Incarnation, it is *'the'* icon of God. The unique mystery is to touch and sense the light of God himself, to know him in the darkness of his unattainable glory. Thus, God is forever transcendent, but we share his glory or light. This light and glory of Christ also reside within, rest upon the "altar". We know God in Christ partly hidden and partly revealed. This glimpse of the glory is at once concealed and manifested.

### ***Christ as μύρον and as divine altar. In Him, transcendence and immanence (απόφασις and κατάφασις) have met***

Having united himself the body and God communicated to it his own immortality. "Christ's body, clothed in the incorporeal Word of God, no longer fears death or corruption, because its garment is life."<sup>68</sup> "God molded together this holy body, as it were, and ineffably placed into it His own radiance and

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<sup>65</sup> Golitzin, *Mystagogy*, 202.

<sup>66</sup> Golitzin, *Mystagogy*, 226.

<sup>67</sup> Golitzin, *Mystagogy*, 222.

<sup>68</sup> Athanasius, *De Inc.* 44, PG 25:173-176. Saint Athanasius, *On the Incarnation* (New York: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 2012), 84.

incorruptibility.”<sup>69</sup> Therefore, if Christ died, it was only because it was pleasing to the Divine Logos to distance himself from his body for a time, but death could not hold in its power this temple of life itself. On Tabor, streams of divine glory flow through the garments of flesh, for God is light. “Even His garments Christ showed to be white as light, because out of the entire body of the Savior there flowed the glory of His Divinity and His light shone in all His members” (Ephrem the Syrian, *Or.* 32). After the resurrection, not everyone could see with physical eyes the spiritualized body of the Savior entering through closed doors. The Son of God completely covered himself with flesh as with a veil.<sup>70</sup>

Ps.-Dionysius view of the univers as a structure essentially infused by the divine light reflects, also, a metaphysics of the light, whilst Jesus is the deifying light and hierarchies communicate light and love, and “this light, which proceeds from and returns to its source, the Father, is none other than Jesus”.<sup>71</sup> Jesus appears to Paul as a blinding light from heaven, “his pseudonymous identity” in Acts 9, 3 and 22, 6: “suddenly (*ἐξαίφνης*) a light from heaven flashed about [Paul]”.<sup>72</sup> We enter into God through God, Christ and the Church as His body is the place of the encounter with God. Thus, “entering into” the divine presence (*γένομαι*, *Ep.* X) represent, according to Golitzin, a “key theophany”.<sup>73</sup> But Christ himself is the deifying gift (*θεοποιῶν δῶρον*, *Ep.* III). He gives his actions (*ἐνέργεια*) or powers (*δυνάμεις*), but not his essence (*οὐσία*). This is the distinction between God *in se* and *ad extra*.

There is in *CD* the explicit affirmation of three levels or aspects of the beatic vision: body, intellect (*νοῦς*) and union with the “supraluminary rays” of divinity:

“We shall... be filled, on the one hand, with pure contemplation of His most visible theophany, shining round us with manifest brilliance as it shone round His disciples at the divine Transfiguration, and, on the other hand, we shall [also] participate in His noetic gift of light with our intellects grown passionless and immaterial; and [finally

<sup>69</sup> Cyril of Alexandria, *Ador.* 9, PG 68:597. Cyril of Alexandria, *De adoratione et cultu in spiritu et veritate* (CPG 5200).

<sup>70</sup> Gregory of Nazianzus, *Or.* 39.13, PG 36, 349; *Oration* 39: “On the Holy Lights,” in *Gregory of Nazianzus*, translation by Brian Daley, *The Early Church Fathers* (New York: Routledge, 2006), 127-137.

<sup>71</sup> Charles M. Stang, *Apophysis and Pseudonymity in Dionysius the Areopagite “No Longer I”* (Oxford, New York, Oxford University Press, 2012), 94. Dionysian Christology can be read as a response to Paul’s rhetorical question from 2 Cor 6:14: “What fellowship is there between light and darkness?” (Stang, *Apophysis and Pseudonymity*, 97).

<sup>72</sup> Stang, *Apophysis and Pseudonymity*, 95-96. Several passages from Paul’s letters support Dionysius’ understanding of Jesus as light: 2 Cor 4:6 (“For it is the God who said, ‘Let light shine out of darkness,’ who has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ”); Eph 5:8 (“For once you were darkness, but now in the Lord you are light. Live as children of light”); Col 1:12 (“the Father . . . has enabled you to share in the inheritance of the saints in the light”).

<sup>73</sup> Golitzin, *Mystagogy*, 42.

we shall share] in the union which transcends the [created] intellect through the unknowable and blessed impulses of [His] supra-luminary rays in a more divine imitation of the heavenly intellects because, as Scripture says, 'we shall be equals to the angels and sons of God, being sons of the Resurrection'.<sup>74</sup>

The idea of the necessary connection between proto-image and image, which Pseudo-Dionysius had in mind when he speaks of deification through likening to God. Like an artist "will make, if one can use such an expression, a *double* of the one he is portraying, and he will represent reality *in the likeness, the proto-image in the image and the one in the other, except the distinction of essence*."<sup>75</sup> The highlighted words of the Areopagite became the motto of the defenders of icons. Every representation presupposes a proto-image and an image. The real body of Christ is the proto-image, His icon is the image.<sup>76</sup>

## 5. Palamas' consecrated bread is "like a veil concealing the divinity". The "Shining Face" as Hesychast Veil (καταπέτασμα)

Following Dionysius the Areopagite, hesychasts thinkers understand the symbolic function of the veil. So, creation as a theophany or manifestation of God is analogous to Incarnation as true theophany of the divine. This movement or self-manifestation, the paradoxical visibility of the invisible, is a direct ontological communion with God, which take place in or through various symbolic mediations. To reify the dichotomy between sense and mind is "*the farthest thing from Dionysios' intent... (he) insists that God is both inaccessible and accesible to both the sense and*

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<sup>74</sup> DN I.4, 592BC (114:7-115:5). On this passage, see A. Golitzin, "'On the Other Hand': A Response to Father Paul Weshe's Recent Article on Dionysius", *SVTQ* 34 (1990), p. 305-323, esp. 310-316. Notes as well Macarius' insistence on the divine and objective nature of the light which appears – not a νόημα, a product of the intellect, but an ὑποστατικόν φῶς, "substantial light" 58.2.5 (II:183, lines 14-15): "And the Lord has clothed them with the garments of the kingdom of unspeakable light, the garment of faith, hope, love, joy, peace, goodness, human warmth, and all the other divine and living garments of light, life, and ineffable tranquillity. The result is that, as God is love and joy and peace and kindness and goodness, so too the new man may become by grace." (Homily 2, 5, Pseudo-Macarius, *The Fifty Spiritual Homilies And The Great Letter*, translated, edited and with an introduction by George A. Maloney, S.J., preface by Kallistos Ware (New York: Mahwah, Paulist Press, 1992), 46.

<sup>75</sup> Dionysius the Areopagite, *EH* 4.3.1, PG 3:473.

<sup>76</sup> About the body in the context of *theosis* as liturgy (sacramental and anthropological aspect of deification), see: Vladimir Kharlamov, *The Beauty of the Unity and the Harmony of the Whole. The Concept of Theosis in the Theology of Pseudo-Dionysius the Areopagite* (Eugene, Oregon: Wipf & Stock, 2009), 204-225; and, also, about the Christ as Light, resplendent in His hierarchies see: William Riordan, *Divine Light: The Theology of Denys the Areopagite* (San Francisco, California: Ignatius Press, 2008), 151-169.

*mind*".<sup>77</sup> Even in his self-revelation in the uncreated light or in the Incarnation, God "remains hidden even after his manifestation, or to speak more divinely, in his manifestation".<sup>78</sup> The nature of the symbolic is simultaneously 'to reveal by concealing'.<sup>79</sup> If veils are 'ontological symbols', what is required is a movement into the signs, a paradox of a "mediated immediacy" (ἀμεθέκτως μετεχόμενα).<sup>80</sup>

To Palamas, Adam was clothed in a garment of divine illumination while he dwelt in paradise under God's command, but he lost this gift in the Fall. Access to this grace was restored to man in the incarnation and manifested anew by Christ on Mount Tabor, revealing what we shall become in the future age. The apostle Paul, who himself received a pledge of this illumination in his vision on the road to Damascus, referred to it as "our heavenly dwelling place" (2 Cor 5.2: cap. 66-67).<sup>81</sup> The deifying gift of God is his energy, which the great Dionysius and all the other theologians everywhere call divinity, while insisting that the title of divinity belongs to the divine energy rather than to the divine substance. [*Ep 3 Akindynos* 15]. Palamas began by setting out his favoured scriptural and patristic witnesses to the Taboric Light. These all point to the divine and uncreated character of that Light and its intimate association with the Godhead (*Cap.* 146).

That this light is not visible through the mediation of air is shown by the great Denys,<sup>82</sup> and those who with him call it the "light of the age to come", the deifying light is also essential, but is not itself the essence of God.<sup>83</sup> The great Denys, who elsewhere terms this light a "superluminous and theurgic ray",<sup>84</sup> also calls it "deifying gift and principle of the Divinity",<sup>85</sup> that is to say, of deification. Uncreated light is the glory of God, of Christ our God, and of those who attain the supreme goal of being conformed to Christ.<sup>86</sup> This light at present shines in

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<sup>77</sup> Eric Perl, "Symbol, Sacrament, and Hierarchy in Saint Dionysios the Areopagite," *Greek Orthodox Theological Review* 39 (1994), p. 311-355, for here p. 319.

<sup>78</sup> Dyonisios, *Letter 3* (1069B).

<sup>79</sup> Maximos Constas, *The Art of Seeing: Paradox and Perception in Orthodox Iconography* (Alhambra, California: Sebastian Press, 2014), 230.

<sup>80</sup> Dyonisios, *On the Divine Names* 2.5 (644A).

<sup>81</sup> Saint Gregory Palamas, *The One Hundred and Fifty Chapters, A Critical Edition*, Translation and Study by Robert E. Sinkewicz, C.S.B, *Studies and Texts* 83, (Toronto: Pontifical Institute of Mediaeval Studies, 1988), p. 39.

<sup>82</sup> Cf. *De Div. Nom.* 1.4, PG III, 592BC. Cf. *Hom. in Transfig.* VII, PG XCVII, 949C.

<sup>83</sup> Tr. III.i.22-23, in Gregory Palamas, *The Triads*, Edited with an Introduction by John Meyendorff, translation by Nicholas Gendle, Preface by Jaroslav Pelikan (Paulist Press, 1983), 80-81.

<sup>84</sup> Cf. *De Cael. Hier.* 111.2, PG III, 165A.

<sup>85</sup> *Ep.* II, PG III, 1068-1069.

<sup>86</sup> Tr. II. iii. 66, Gendle ed., 67.

part, as a pledge,<sup>87</sup> for those who through impassibility have passed beyond all that is condemned, and through pure and immaterial prayer have passed beyond all that is pure.

Such is the vision of God which in the Age which is without end will be seen only by those judged worthy of such a blessed fulfillment. This same vision was seen in the present age by the chosen among the apostles on Thabor, by Stephen when he was being stoned, and by Anthony in his battle for inner stillness<sup>88</sup> Palamas also affirms that the prophets and patriarchs were not without experience of this light. For indeed, why should God have simulated some other light, when He possesses the eternal light in Himself, made visible (albeit in a mysterious way) to the pure in heart today just as in the Age to Come, as the great Denys affirms?<sup>89</sup> Denys the Areopagite<sup>90</sup> reveal to us that most divine knowledge according to the supernatural union with the superluminous light, which comes to pass in a manner beyond mind and knowledge.<sup>91</sup> According to Denys, that was the same light which illumined the chosen apostles on the Mountain: His visible theophany which will illuminate us with its most brilliant rays, just as it illuminated the disciples at the time of the most divine Transfiguration."<sup>92</sup>

Who are of one body with Him, they will be transformed into a temple for the triunitarian divinity: "This is an unsurpassed miracle: He is united even with human hypostases, mingling Himself with each of the faithful through participation in His holy body, becoming one body with us and making us the temple of the entire divinity" (*Defense*, p. 449, Tr. I.3.38). The sacraments are not simply "media" for they are the grace, but still Mantzarides says that "The sacraments are created media which transmit the uncreated grace of God".<sup>93</sup>

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<sup>87</sup> Cf. Rom. 8:23. The light of the Age to Come can truly be seen by anticipation by the saints in this life. Although their full transfiguration, body and soul together, awaits the final Resurrection, deification can and must begin in this life.

<sup>88</sup> Athanasius, *Vita Antonii* 10, PG XXVI, 860AB. The reference is to the "ray of light" from heaven, which appears to banish the demons and give respite to Anthony in his struggle against the forces of evil.

<sup>89</sup> Tr. II. iii. 66, Gendle ed., 67-68. Cf. *De Div. Nom.* 1.4, PG III, 592 BC.

<sup>90</sup> Tr. II. iii. 68, Gendle ed., 68. *De div. nom.* VII.3, PG III, 869CD.

<sup>91</sup> *Ibid.*, 872AB.

<sup>92</sup> Tr. III.i.10, Gendle ed., 72. cf. *De div. nom.* 1.4, PG III, 592BC. The saints in heaven enjoy the same vision of the transfigured Christ as the apostles did on Thabor. So, Gregory is referring to the Second Coming, when Christ will appear in the same glory as that in which He was revealed on Thabor.

<sup>93</sup> Georgios I. Mantzarides, *The Deification of Man: Saint Gregory Palamas and the Orthodox Tradition* (St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, Crestwood, New York, 1984), 41. Through baptismal grace that which is "in the image" is purified and brightened and acquires the power to achieve likeness to God (*On Divine and Deifying Participation* 7). On this point, Palamas faithfully follows the teaching of St Diadochus of Photike. He too said the grace of God confers two benefits on man through baptism, one of these being the regeneration of that which is "in the image" and the other the possibility of realizing that which is "after the likeness" (Mantzarides, *The Deification of Man*, 46).

As Michaels Kunzler has demonstrated<sup>94</sup>, participation in the grace of the sacraments was the basis for saint Gregory Palamas's theology, because it was understood as participation in the uncreated energies of God. It is not simply a moral union. They do not constitute a single hypostasis with Him. This sacramental union is a real union with His deifying grace and energy (partakes of the divine energy).<sup>95</sup>

This mingling of human existence, renewed in baptism, with Christ's deified and deifying body, provides the basis for Palamas' teaching on the mystical vision of the uncreated light. At the transfiguration Christ's divine body illuminated His disciples from without, because it had not yet entered into the bodies of men, whereas now it lumines their souls from within, because it is commingled and exists within them.<sup>96</sup>

Because the Holy Eucharist is spiritual, it must be viewed in a spiritual manner. The bread of the Eucharist is a sort of veil concealing divinity: "For the consecrated bread is like a veil concealing the divinity... If you give attention only to its outward appearance, it is of no benefit to you; but if you perceived its spirit, and regard it spiritually, you will in partaking of it be given life" (*Homily 56*).<sup>97</sup>

Through communion in the sacraments of Christ man partakes of His uncreated grace and is united with Him into one body and one spirit. "Through His grace we are all one in our faith in Him, and we constitute the one body of His Chrch, having Him as sole head, and we have been given to drink from one spirit through the grace of the Holy Spirit, and we have received one baptism, and one hope is in all, and we have one God, above all things and with all things and in us all" (*Homily 15*).<sup>98</sup> It is possible, even in the present life, for man to experience his deification as already taking place. Palamas and the mystical theologians of Byzantium link this experience with the practice of continual prayer, whose aim is perpetual communion with God and hence the vision of divine light. This light is not a created medium nor a symbol of the divine light,

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<sup>94</sup> Michael Kunzler, *Gnadenquellen: Symeon von Thessaloniki als Beispiel für die Einflußnahme des Palamismus auf die orthodoxe sakramentologie und Liturgik* (Trier: Bonifatius, 1989), 95-148. Cf., Nicholas P. Constatas, "Symeon of Thessalonike and the Theology of the Icon Screen," in Sharon E. J. Gerstel (ed.), *Thresholds of the Sacred. Architectural, Art Historical, Liturgical, and Theological Perspective on Religious Screen, East and West* (Washington DC: Dumbarton Oaks/ Harvard University Press, 2006), 163-184, here 165.

<sup>95</sup> John Meyendorff, "Le dogme eucharistique dans les controversies théologique du XIV<sup>e</sup> siècle," in *Commemorative Volume on the Sixth Hundredth Anniversary of the Death of St Gregory Palamas* (Thessalonike, 1960), 82-83.

<sup>96</sup> Tr. I.3.35 in Grégoire Palamas, *Défense des saints hésychastes*, Introduction, texte critique, traduction et notes par Jean Meyendorff (Louvain: Spicilegium Sacrum Lovaniense, 1959), 436.

<sup>97</sup> Saint Gregory Palamas, *The Homilies*, trans. by Christopher Veniamin (New York: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 2016), 460-467.

<sup>98</sup> Palamas, *Homilies*, 108-114.

but an uncreated, natural energy deriving from God's essence. Williams noticed that, "once again we see him wanting to preserve both the authenticity of divine self-communication and the ultimate otherness of God".<sup>99</sup>

The theme of uncreated light is the central point of the hesychastic dispute and it represents the heart of Palamas' teaching on the deification of man, reckon as a new illumination or, as Palamas says, the reassumption of his vestment of light (*Homily 35*).<sup>100</sup> The theophanies of the Old Testament, the illumination of Moses' face, the vision of Stephen the first martyr, the light on the road to Damascus, and above all, the light of Christ's transfiguration on Tabor – all these are various forms of the revelation of God's natural light to men. Barlaam of Calabria denied the concept of a real theophany, the revelation of the glory of God in the Old Testament is not for him a real presence within history or natural energy of God, but a created symbol.

The light of the transfiguration does not constitute a hidden, third nature of Christ, or another element between His human and divine natures, but it is the natural brightness of divinity, which has been hidden underneath His human body, revealing Himself as He was.

As Christ on Mount Tabor shone with the uncreated glory of His divinity, the righteous who partake of uncreated grace will shine in the Kingdom of God like the transfigured Christ. Man may share in God's glory and brightness, but the divine essence remains inaccessible and nonparticipable (Tr. III.1.33). The Byzantine theologians and Palamas synthesized these two traditions and linked the vision of God with the incarnation of the Logos and with man's deification, achieved in the Holy Spirit through the incarnation (*Homily 34*).<sup>101</sup> For Norman Russell, "The spirituality of the Orthodox Church is both liturgical and monastic and takes full account of our corporeal nature as part of our identity".<sup>102</sup> An experience of *participation* with the *imparticipable* Godhead, and this conceptual contradiction constitutes a real (unique) possibility of knowledge of the reality of God: "This, then, is the kernel of theosis – participation in the divine energies through communion with Christ in his Body which is the Church."<sup>103</sup> Gregory of Nyssa speaks about three stages in the spiritual life:

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<sup>99</sup> Anne N. Williams, *The Ground of Union. Deification in Aquinas and Palamas* (Oxford University Press, 1999), 124, 137.

<sup>100</sup> Palamas, *Homilies*, 274-281.

<sup>101</sup> Palamas, *Homilies*, 266-273.

<sup>102</sup> Norman Russell, *Fellow Workers With God: Orthodox Thinking on Theosis* (St. Vladimir's Seminary Press: New York, 2009), 170.

<sup>103</sup> Russell, *Fellow Workers With God*, 138-139. To Russell, "Yannaras and Zizioulas represent two different approaches to participation in God, each of which is the fruit of profound meditation on different strands of the patristic tradition. Yannaras locates theosis on the level of the divine energies, Zizioulas on the level of the hypostasis. Yannaras speaks of participation in

light/purification, cloud/ contemplation, darkness/perfection. By clothing ourselves in Christ through the agency of the Spirit our nature is transformed in Christ, sharing in the divine attributes of glory. Our dynamic participation in the divine life is sacramental and ecclesiological. And our participation in Christ through the Eucharist is both corporeal and spiritual: “For St Symeon the New Theologian this is expressed on the one hand by the vision of the divine light, and on the other hand by union with Christ through receiving in the Eucharist. These are not two ways, two alternative approaches”.<sup>104</sup> St Gregory Palamas repeats the Maximian idea and even strengthens it when he says that those who attain deification ‘become thereby uncreated, unoriginate, and indescribable (ἀκτίστους, ἀνάρχους καὶ ἀπεριγράπτους).<sup>105</sup>

## 6. Momentarily lifted veil of time: Theophanic Light as “Natural Symbol”

To “draw the mind into the heart,” the “controlling organ” and “throne of grace” (*Triads* i.2.3), means to “recalls into the interior of the heart a power which is ever flowing outward through the faculty of sight” (*Triads* i.2.8). The effect is a transformation of the whole person, body as well as soul: “their flesh also is being transformed and elevated, participating together with the soul in the divine communion and becoming itself a dwelling and possession of God” (*Triads* i.2.9). The light beheld by the hesychasts is identified by Palamas with the light that shone around Christ at the Transfiguration. It is not a created symbol, but the “garment of their deification” and a foretaste of the light that will eternally illuminate the blessed (*Triads* i.3.5, 26). The light is in fact the eternal and uncreated glory of God: “God, while remaining entirely in Himself, dwells entirely in us by His superessential power, and communicates to us not His nature but His proper glory and splendour” (*Triads* i.3.23). It is beheld, not by any sensory power, but by the intellect (*nous*) through bodily eyes (*Triads* i.3.27). This light is not an intelligible object; the intellect itself becomes like light, so that “with the light it clearly beholds the light, in a manner surpassing not only the bodily senses but everything that is knowable to us” (*Triads* i.3.9). The light is perceived only in the “cessation of all intellectual activity” (*Triads* i.3.17) as a gift of grace.

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the energies, Zizioulas of communion through the Eucharist. The approaches are different but complementary” (Russell, *Fellow Workers With God*, 141).

<sup>104</sup> Russell, *Fellow Workers With God*, 146.

<sup>105</sup> *Triads* 3.1.31, trans. by Gendle (1983), 86. Cf. Torstein Theodor Tollefsen, *The Christocentric Cosmology of St Maximus the Confessor* (Oxford University Press 2008), 212-213.

Although he denies that the light is a created symbol of God, Palamas allows that it is a *natural* symbol. A natural symbol always accompanies that which it symbolizes and depends on it for existence, as dawn accompanies the rising sun and heat the burning power of fire (*Triads* iii.1.14). Because of this innate association, the object symbolized may be said to “become” its natural symbol, although it remains one: “the capacity of fire to burn, which has as its symbol the heat accessible to the senses, becomes its own symbol, for it is always accompanied by this heat yet remains one and does not exist as double” (*Triads* iii.1.20). According to David Bradshaw, this contrast between the imparticipable (sun, fire) and participable (ray, heat) serves as an analogy between the Divine Essence and the participable energies (e.g. glory or light). “This is as close as we can come to reconciling the reality of *theosis* with the absolute transcendence of God”.<sup>106</sup>

Symbol is opposed to allegory and in the *Triads* and other works, St. Gregory distinguishes, therefore, between created and natural symbols. The theophanic light is the natural symbol of divinity and deification (*theosis*). Yet he rejects the notion that the light is an independent reality, for this would heretically add a third nature to Christ (*Triads* iii.1.17). Rather it is connatural and coessential with God. Palamas approaches the ontological status of the divine glory with the concept of *enhyposstasis* (persistent in being, substantial) as used by the Fathers.<sup>107</sup> This indwelling of divine energy is not like “art in works of art,” but rather as “art (*techne*) in the man who has acquired (i.e., learned) it.” In other words, the energy of divinization is something given to us but not something produced in us. The saints thus act as instruments of the Holy Spirit, working miracles by His energy (*Triads* iii.1.13).<sup>108</sup> The purified can by

<sup>106</sup> David Bradshaw, *Aristotle East and West: Metaphysics and the Division of Christendom* (Cambridge University Press, 2004), 236-237. Palamas’ language here is inspired by the remark of Maximus that in the Incarnation God “became His own symbol,” *Ambigua* 10 (PG 91 1165d). Palamas interprets not only the light seen by the hesychasts but also the “things around God” spoken of by Maximus as, in this sense, natural symbols of the divine (*Tr.* iii.1.19).

<sup>107</sup> The light, according to Palamas, is obviously a natural symbol of Christ’s divinity, not humanity. For Palamas and many Greek Fathers, a “nature” (*physis*), consists of essence (*ousia*) and energy (*energeia*). Energy is not an accident, but the actualization of a nature. Those deified “have received an energy identical to that of the deifying essence,” (*Triads* iii.1.33) i.e., the divine energy received is the same as the natural energy of the Divine Essence. Deification is made possible by the Incarnation, for “In Christ the fullness of divinity dwells bodily” (Col. 2:19).

<sup>108</sup> Edmund M. Hussey, *The Doctrine of the Trinity in the Theology of Gregory Palamas* (Ann Arbor, MI: UMI Publishing, 1972), 72; George Maloney, S.J., *A Theology of Uncreated Energies* (Milwaukee, Wisconsin: Marquette University Press, 1978), 66; Scott F. Pentecost, *Quest for the Divine Presence: Metaphysics of Participation and the Relation of Philosophy to Theology in St. Gregory Palamas’s Triads and One Hundred and Fifty Chapters* (Ann Arbor, MI: Catholic University of America, 1999); Thomas L. Anastos, “Gregory Palamas’ Radicalization of the Essence, Energies, and Hypostasis Model of God,” *The Greek Orthodox Theological Review* 38:1-4 (1993): 335-349.

virtue of an excellent spiritual gift see the light of God just as the disciples had done in Thabor. And though this light is called a symbol, it is a natural one and does not exist apart from God; in other words, it is an uncreated operation of His (*Tr.iii.1.14*).<sup>109</sup>

The opposite of seeing God “by means of an alien symbol” would be seeing by means of a natural symbol. So, the man who has seen God by means not of an alien symbol but by a natural symbol, has truly seen Him in a spiritual way. The natural symbol Palamas refers to is Christ, the physical and spiritual embodiment, manifestation, and revelation of God’s deifying presence. It is, says Eugene Webb, in Theoleptus’s words, “the light of the knowledge of God” that comes over one “like a luminous cloud” – not a light that one looks at, but a light one lives in and knows God in.<sup>110</sup> Palamas refers to the light as a “natural symbol”, as it reveals the nature of that which it symbolizes. In showing forth uncreated light from His person, Palamas argues, the Lord “become His own symbol”, and the Archetype for all instance of human nature, both by revealing Himself as the “form” of all humanity and by showing “how God’s splendor would come to the saints and how they would appear in the age to come”.<sup>111</sup>

God, while remaining entirely in Himself, dwells entirely in us by His superessential power.<sup>112</sup> Palamas also interprets the light of Thabor as a “natural symbol” of the divine essence: “natural symbol always accompanies the nature which gives them being, for the symbol is natural to the nature”.<sup>113</sup> Palamas thus clearly lays the foundation for a realist understanding of divine presence and self-disclosure. For this reason Palamas underlines that experience of the divine light and the divine energy is an *immediate* experience of God. This notion of immediacy is not an innovation in Byzantine theology.<sup>114</sup> But how can this immediacy be reconciled with the “hiddenness” of the divine essence? As Bradshaw, Loudovikos and Clouser remark, by experiencing the divine energies

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<sup>109</sup> Panayiotis Christou, “Double Knowledge According to Gregory Palamas,” *Studia Patristica*, vol. 9 (Leuven: Peeters, 1966): 20-29; Kallistos Ware, “The Transfiguration of the Body,” in A.M. Allchin (ed.), *Sacrament and Image. Essays in the Christian Understanding of Man* (London: Fellowship of St Alban and St Sergius, 1967), 17-32.

<sup>110</sup> Eugene Webb, *In Search of the Triune God: The Christian Paths of East and West* (Columbia, MO: University of Missouri Press, 2014), 260-262.

<sup>111</sup> Demetrios Harper, “Becoming Homotheos: St Gregory Palamas’ Eschatology of Body,” in Constantinos Athanasopoulos, *Triune God: Incomprehensible But Knowable-The Philosophical and Theological Significance of St Gregory Palamas for Contemporary Philosophy and Theology* (Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2015), 232-245, here 240.

<sup>112</sup> Tr. i.3.23, trans. N. Gendle, 39.

<sup>113</sup> Tr. iii.1.14, trans. N. Gendle, 75.

<sup>114</sup> Maximus the Confessor, for instance, speaks of the direct experience (πεῖρα, εμπειρία) and immediate perception (αἴσθησις) of God, which surpasses rational and conceptual knowledge about God (Maximus the Confessor, *Ad Thalassium* 60, CCSG 22, 77-78).

we directly participate in God and are not restricted to a “divine mask”, behind which lurks as unknown and possibly dark deity. It is rather the synchronic and diachronic inexhaustibility of the divine self-manifestation and its human reception that constitutes the divine mystery.<sup>115</sup> Thus, indeed, for Plotinus there is continuity between sense and intellect. “Vision is not merely a metaphor for a Platonist. On the contrary, sensation and intellection belong on a continuum – the ‘vivid sensations’” (έναργεῖς αἰσθήσεις *Ennead* VI.7[38].7, 30-31), the presence of the Divine in the physical cosmos, an intimate and unmediated relation.<sup>116</sup>

Instead, Augustine decides in favor of a manifestation of God that takes place *through* created signs (“per formas”, “per creaturam”, “significative”). The concern of the East was not so much to safeguard the reality of the Old Testament manifestations (which was never contested) but their validity as precisely *theophanic* revelations. The Eastern theologians sought to affirm that it was indeed God who appeared to the prophets. That particular concern led them back to the who question that Augustine had avoided answering. The answer that the East has to offer us, and especially in the context of Palamite theology and its subsequent reception, is quite unexpected. It is not God the Father who appears in the Old Testament theophanies, nor is it God the Son, nor is it God the Holy Spirit, but rather the divine energies that manifest God. Now, the energies, being divine,

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<sup>115</sup> Constantinos Athanasopoulos, Christoph Schneider (eds.), *Divine Essence and Divine Energies: Ecumenical Reflections on the Presence of God in Eastern Orthodoxy* (Cambridge: James Clarke and Co Ltd, 2013), 19: “This also explains why it would be nonsensical in Orthodoxy to hope for a direct vision of the divine essence in the Eschaton: there are infinite degrees of union with God, but already here and now, we experience God himself, and not a ‘secondary’. But Milbank is entirely right in pointing out that in Christian theology we always have to do with a ‘mediated immediacy’.”

<sup>116</sup> Douglas Hedley, *The Iconic Imagination* (New York: Bloomsbury Academic, 2016), 14-16; see also his chapter about the “Symbol, Participation and Divine Ideas,” 119-148. Frederic M. Schroeder says that the Platonic Form is often presented as an instrument of explanation and as a cause in ontology, epistemology, and ethics. The most adequate of all the sensible figures employed by Plotinus to describe intelligible reality is light. Light is also in an immediate, dynamic, and continuous relationship with its source, as “light from light”. The light from luminous bodies, therefore, is the external activity (ένέργεια) of a luminous body; (4-5 [29].7.33-49) “Abiding” (μένοντος from μένειν) may then appropriately describe the intransitive activity of the source of light. Therefore the image of light is the most adequate to express the nature of intelligible reality and its dynamic and immediate presence. In fact, “emanation” is not a term fondly embraced by Plotinus. Aristotle specifically denies that light is an emanation (ἀποροή) *De Anima* II.7.418b15. For here, see: Frederic M. Schroeder, *Form and Transformation: A Study in the Philosophy of Plotinus* (Quebec: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 1992), mainly chap. “Light” 24-39, in particular 24-25, 33-34. Tuomo Lankila, “The Byzantine Reception of Neoplatonism,” in Anthony Kaldellis, Niketas Siniosoglou (eds.), *The Cambridge Intellectual History of Byzantium* (Cambridge University Press, 2017), 314-324; Andrew Louth, “Platonism from Maximos the Confessor to the Palaiologan Period,” in Kaldellis, Siniosoglou (eds.), *The Cambridge Intellectual History of Byzantium*, 325-340.

are fundamentally uncreated. According to Manoussakis, here we can see the conflict between Augustinian and Palamite Theology taking shape:

“for Augustine the means of God’s manifestations is creation touched by God, for Palamas it is rather God appearing to creation. It is interesting to notice how Palamas’s suggested solution, instead of solving the problem, re-produce the old dichotomy (the root of the problem) between an invisible God and his visible manifestations, by transcribing it into a new modality – that of the unknown divine essence and the knowable divine energies. By introducing the solution of divine energies the East too avoids answering the disputed who question. Or to put it better, Palamas’s answer is not an answer... We often read that Augustine takes these theophanies to have happened by means of merely created ‘sings’ or ‘symbols’ – that the theophanic events themselves were nothing more than modulations of creation; and it would seem so with good reason, for Augustine himself employs such terminology”.<sup>117</sup>

Augustine regards Moses (in *Exodus* 33) and Paul (when he was taken up into the “third heaven”, *2 Cor.* 12:2) as having been granted a distinctive form of the vision of God known as “intellectual” vision, unlike corporeal theophanies (dreams, prophetic visions). The intellectual vision is precisely a vision of “God in himself”; to David Bradshaw that is the point of “distinguishing it from visions of corporeal theophanies and the like, which Augustine regards as mediated”.<sup>118</sup>

For Palamas the light that shone on Mt. Tabor, the mystical experiences of the saints throughout the history of the Church, and the beatific vision of God at the eschaton are one and the same event (*Tr.* i.3.43). Eschatology is implicated in the Theophanic events in a twofold way: “*proleptically* and *retrospectively*... the overcoming of the present limitations of the body so as to experience, as if in preview, the eschatological vision. However, such a *pre*-eschatological vision of God is precisely made possible only retrospectively by the eschaton itself – that is, the kingdom which is to come and yet always coming, flowing, as it were, into history. At the moment of Christ’s transfiguration the eschaton is not anticipated, if by this we mean simply expected, but must rather be revealed – as if the veil of time is momentarily lifted so as to allow us to take a peek at the kingdom behind it, which we, from this side of the veil, still await, but which itself already exists and unfolds.”<sup>119</sup> Palamas clearly reads in the Old Testament theophanies

<sup>117</sup> John Panteleimon Manoussakis, *For the Unity of All: Contributions to the Theological Dialogue between East and West* (Eugene, OR: Cascade Books, Wipf and Stock, 2015), 56.

<sup>118</sup> David Bradshaw, “Augustine the Metaphysician,” in Aristotle Papanikolaou, George E. Demacopoulos, *Orthodox Readings of Augustine* (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir’s Seminary Press, 2008), 227-251, here 248.

<sup>119</sup> Manoussakis, *For the Unity of All*, 67. The Kingdom is already a reality active in historical reality and as it manifests itself in such moments as the transfiguration on Mt. Tabor. Similarly, the transfiguration, in its turn, was itself retroactively reaching back in history to those Old Testament theophanies.

the *results* of Christ's transfiguration on Mt. Tabor, and he considers the latter, in turn, the result of the final and eschatological vision (*Tr.* iii.38.1). For Manoussakis, this holds, then, as a general principle of any theological aesthetics, of which the Old Testament theophanies cannot be an exemption: "there is no revelation without a transfigurative sanctification (deification), and there is no deification without revelation. The revealer always gives something of himself (more accurately: he gives himself) to those to whom he reveals himself".<sup>120</sup>

Thus, says Saint Gregory Palamas, "the tabernacle, the priesthood, and their appurtenances were sensible symbols and veils, covering the things which Moses saw in the divine darkness" (*Triads* 2.3.55), and because "the Holy Spirit that takes its seat (ἐφιζάνων) on the intellect of the prophets... how is it not obvious that the Spirit is light, visible to the intellect, different from intellectual understanding," (*Triads* 2.3.59). In the case of the light of Thabor, its substrate is the uncreated God, this is what Palamas calls a "natural" symbol. Thus we posit that, even though it co-exists with God in the substrate of the divine nature, it was (or is) something projected outward like a veil (παραπέτασμα), in the same way that God is said to "clothe himself with light as with a garment" (Ps 103:2).<sup>121</sup> Those who, having

<sup>120</sup> Manoussakis, *For the Unity of All*, 68. See, also: Aidan Nichols, *Redeeming Beauty: Soundings in Sacral Aesthetics* (Aldershot Hampshire: Ashgate, 2007), 80-82, for a perspective on the 'neo-iconophile theology' of the icon.

<sup>121</sup> According to Fr. Maximos (Constat) the icon (*or* image) and the symbol are alike in necessarily bearing a likeness to their prototypes, for this is how they are related to them. Thus, the Son of God is called the "exact image" of the Father (cf. Hebr 1:3), for they share the same nature. Symbol can never have the exactitude of likeness, and from this point of view is of a lower rank than the image. Conversely, the image, unlike the symbol, cannot share the same substrate (*now in the sense of "subject"*) with its archetype, on account of its irreducible otherness. The "veil" as the self-revelation of God offers a valuable distinction between a "symbol" (light of the Transfiguration was a "symbol" of the divinity in *Ambigua* 10.29) and an "icon": "They were taught, in a hidden way, that the wholly blessed radiance that shone with dazzling rays of light from the Lord's face, completely overwhelming the power of their eyes, was a symbol of His divinity, which transcends intellect, being, and knowledge" (τὴν μὲν ἀκτινοφανῶς ἐκλάμπουσαν τοῦ προσώπου πανόλβιον ἀίγλην, ὡς πᾶσαν ὀφθαλμῶν νικῶσαν ἐνέργειαν, τῆς ὑπὲρ νοῦν καὶ αἴσθησιν καὶ οὐσίαν καὶ γνῶσιν θεότητος αὐτοῦ σύμβολον εἶναι μυστικῶς ἐδιδάσκοντο); in Maximos the Confessor, *On Difficulties in the Church Fathers. The Ambigua. Volume 1*, edited and translated by Nicholas Constat, Dumbarton Oaks Medieval Library (Harvard University Press, 2014), 190-191.

This statement, which describes the divine light as a "symbol," provoked considerable discussion during the Hesychast controversy of the fourteenth century; see Gregory Palamas, *Triads* 2.3.21-22; 3.1.13-14 (ed. Meyendorff 1959, 2:431-33, 583-87); John VI Kantakouzenos, *Refutation of Prochoros Kydones* 1.5 (CCSG 16:8); and Theophanes of Nicaea, *On the Light of Thabor* 3.8,4.21 (ed. Zacharopoulos 2003, 224-25, 276-77). Note that in *Ambigua* 10.7: "Why does the teacher say that the flesh (σάρκα φησίν) is a 'cloud' (νέφος) and a 'veil' (προκάλυμμα)?" Maximus says that the 'cloud' (νέφος) have the meaning of 'fleshly passion' and the 'veil' (προκάλυμμα) the sense or 'sensation' (*Ambigua* 1, ed. Costas, 158).

beheld the things of God beyond the veils subsequently shape within themselves a certain image.<sup>122</sup> Therefore, the “journey beyond the veil” is a journey into the holy of holies where God’s immanence and His transcendence meet.<sup>123</sup>

**7. Pneumatic bodies as being “clothed with Christ” (Χριστὸν ἐνεδύσασθε). God’s breath ‘ἐμφύσημα’ and man’ face ‘πρόσωπον [πρός-ὄψις]’ – infusing (ὁ Θεός ἐμφύσησε) the uncreated energies of the Holy Spirit**

Using the ascetic phenomenology Saint Mark the Ascetic (Hermit) interprets the *καταπέτασμα* (*katapetasma*) by the way in which the soul enters within the veil:

“The temple is the holy place of the soul and body that is built by God. Finally, the altar is the table of hope placed in this temple. Here the first born thought is sacrificed by the mind... But this temple also has a place within the veil. There Jesus entered for us as the Forerunner (Hebrews 6:20), living from baptism in us”.<sup>124</sup>

This place is the innermost, more hidden, and more sincere room of the heart, a room which, unless it opens through God, can certainly not know the One who lives in it. “Wherefore, O man, says saint Mark, that you have been baptized in Christ, give only the work for which you have taken power (δὸς τὴν ἐργασίαν εἰς ἣν δύναμιν εἴληφας) and prepares you to receive the revelation of Him who dwells in you”.<sup>125</sup> And if we do not work God’s commandments, the grace given to us will not be revealed. The grace of the baptism gives us help to the growth in Christ.

So, Christ is living from baptism in us, where He enters into the inner sanctuary behind the curtain (εἰσερχομένην εἰς τὸ ἐσώτερον τοῦ καταπετάσματος). Further, Saint Mark explains this presence of Christ beyond the veil as a

<sup>122</sup> Maximos the Confessor, *Second Century on Theology* 80-83: “A pure heart offers the mind to God free of all image and form (ἀνείδεον καὶ ἀμόρφωτον), and ready to be imprinted (ἐνσημανθῆναι)<sup>122</sup> only by God’s own types, by which God himself is made manifest ... But if ‘we have the mind of Christ’ (1 Cor 2:16), it is because the saints receive Christ’s intellect” (PG 90:1161D-1164A). The repeated use of compound words beginning with ἐν-, which at once signals the polarities of Byzantine thought as well as their harmonies and unions realized in this “middle place,” where divine and human energies meet and coalesce, the “threshold” of the noetic *parapetasma*.

<sup>123</sup> Ps.-Basil, *Commentary on Isaiah*: “The perfect attain to the very Holy of Holies, behind the veil (εἴσω τοῦ καταπετάσματος), that is, having passed through (διαβάς) corporeal realities, they commune with beings by means of naked contemplation” (PG 30:173A); Alice Smith and C. Wagner, *Beyond the Veil: Entering into Intimacy with God Through Prayer* (Hampshire, Bloomington-Minnesota: Chosen Books, Baker-Grand Rapids, 2010), 195-211.

<sup>124</sup> Mark the Hermit, *De Baptismo* (“On Baptism”), in *Philokalia*, vol. 1, (rom. transl. by D. Stăniloae, București, Humanitas 2<sup>ed</sup>, 2004), 265.

<sup>125</sup> Mark the Hermit, *De Baptismo*, ed. Stăniloae, 271.

presence of light. And he do that through some, well-selected, mostly Pauline, texts in order to to emphasize the triad Christ-Light-Baptism by the connection between: τοῦ πατρὸς τῶν φώτων (“Father of lights”)<sup>126</sup> – Χριστὸν ἐνεδύσασθε (“clothed with Christ”)<sup>127</sup> – becoming φῶς ἐν κυρίῳ (“light in the Lord” or τέκνα φωτὸς “children of light”)<sup>128</sup> – τοῦ πληρώματος τοῦ Χριστοῦ (“the stature of the fullness of Christ”).<sup>129</sup>

There is a connection between the light of the Holy Trinity in which the Father baptizes us when He clothes us in Christ or in the light of His Son. Now the perfect man is the one who, by the work of the commandments, makes this uncreated light or grace of baptism to shine on his face. Until then, Christ-Light is hidden with the Spirit within our heart from Baptism. This is, in fact, “the stature of the fullness of Christ”, when Christ from within us, like a thaboric metamorphosis, is irradiating “*exother*” His Light or divine energy. This happens beginning with our heart and even upon our glowing body and shining face.<sup>130</sup>

The revelation of God in our deep coincides with the discovery of “inner self”. This fact inherently relates to St. Mark’s teachings of Baptism, as the dwelling of Christ in the hidden depth of the heart, “within the veil”.<sup>131</sup> The heart is the ontological *topos* of perceiving God’s presence in ourselves, meant to “be filled

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<sup>126</sup> James 1:17: “Every good and perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights, who does not change like shifting shadows (Πᾶσα δόσις ἀγαθὴ καὶ πᾶν δῶρημα τέλειον ἄνωθέν ἐστιν, καταβαῖνον ἀπὸ τοῦ πατρὸς τῶν φώτων, παρ’ ᾧ οὐκ ἔνι παραλλαγὴ ἢ τροπὴς ἀποσκίασμα).”

<sup>127</sup> Galatians 3:27: “For those of you who were baptized into Christ have been clothed with Christ” (ὅσοι γὰρ εἰς Χριστὸν ἐβαπτίσθητε, Χριστὸν ἐνεδύσασθε).

<sup>128</sup> Ephesians 5:8: “For you were once darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Live as children of light” (ἦτε γὰρ ποτε σκότος, νῦν δὲ φῶς ἐν κυρίῳ· ὡς τέκνα φωτὸς περιπατεῖτε).

<sup>129</sup> Ephesians 4:13: “until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature (perfect man), attaining to the whole measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ” (μέχρι καταστήσωμεν οἱ πάντες εἰς τὴν ἐνότητα τῆς πίστεως καὶ τῆς ἐπιγνώσεως τοῦ υἱοῦ τοῦ θεοῦ, εἰς ἄνδρα τέλειον, εἰς μέτρον ἡλικίας τοῦ πληρώματος τοῦ Χριστοῦ).

<sup>130</sup> Robert E. Sinkewicz, “The Concept of Spiritual Perception in Gregory Palamas’ First Triad in Defence of the Holy Hesychasts,” *Χριστιανικὴ Ἰστορία* 1:7 (1999): 374-390; John Panteleimon Manoussakis, “Theophany and Indication: Reconciling Augustinian and Palamite Aesthetics,” *Modern Theology* 26, no.1 (2010), 74-91.

<sup>131</sup> Saint Mark the Hermit’s baptismal-mystic theology will be found later in Diadoch spirituality as “*aisthēsis noeras*”, at Evagrius through the dwelling place of the *nous* and as the metaphor of the “descent” in hesychasm. See: Kallistos Ware, “The Sacrament of Baptism and the Ascetic Life in the Teaching of Mark the Monk”, *Studia Patristica* (Berlin, 1970, vol. X), p. 441-452; Kallistos Ware, “Prayer in Evagrius of Pontus and the Macarian Homilies”, in Ralph Waller, Benedicta Ward (ed.), *An introduction to Christian Spirituality* (London: SPCK, 1999), 14-20; Michel Van Parys, “La liturgie du Coeur selon saint Grégoire le Sinaïte,” *Irénikon* 51 (1978): 312-337.

with divine light”.<sup>132</sup> From the ‘endothen’ presence of the uncreated light of Christ, is radiating then ‘exothern’ upon the illuminated body and concentrating this light as “shining face”.<sup>133</sup> “Deified man is endowed with divine energies, which become his own energies. Human being retains their created human essence and obtains uncreated divine energies”.<sup>134</sup> In the result of a sacramental life, “Christ’s uncreated life and energy become the property of the man who is united with Him, and in whose person Christ himself lives and operates”.<sup>135</sup>

All the powers of the soul are concentrated in the heart, which is “the meeting place and mystical synthesis between the body and the soul, and thus between whole man and grace, the place where man sees God”,<sup>136</sup> because it is “the inner chamber of the Veil (καταπέτασμα), where Jesus Christ is dwelling it from the baptism”.<sup>137</sup>

But, putting on of the *clothing of holiness* by baptism is another component of the Glory likeness, is the visible glory of Transfiguration. This study is about the contemplative experience of *an outward luminosity, a physical radiance*. On the *unveiled shining faces*,<sup>138</sup> *the divine energy of the ‘Christ the Image and Glory of God’*

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<sup>132</sup> Dumitru Stăniloae, *Orthodox Spirituality: A Practical Guide for the Faithful and a Definitive Manual for the Scholar*, transl. By Archimandrite Jerome and Otilia Kloos, foreword by Alexander Golubov (Waymart, PA: St. Tikhon’s Seminary Press, 2003), 199.

<sup>133</sup> Marcin Podbielski, “The Face of the Soul, the Face of God: Maximus the Confessor and πρόσωπον,” in Sotiris Mitralaxis, Georgios Steiris, Marcin Podbielski, Sebastian Lalla (eds.), *Maximus the Confessor as a European Philosopher* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 2017), 193-228.

<sup>134</sup> Paweł Rojek, “The Logic of Palamism,” in Andrew Schumann (ed), *Logic in Orthodox Christian Thinking* (Frankfurt, Piscataway, NJ: Ontos Verlag, De Gruyter, 2013), 38-81, here 56; Christophe Erismann, “Logic in Byzantium” in Kaldellis, Siniosoglou (eds.), *The Cambridge Intellectual History of Byzantium*, 362-380.

<sup>135</sup> Georgios I. Mantzaridis, *The Deification of Man*, transl. L. Sherrard (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir’s Press, 1984), 128.

<sup>136</sup> Dumitru Stăniloae, “Natură și har în teologia bizantină,” *Ortodoxia* 26, no. 3 (1974): 392-439, here 429.

<sup>137</sup> Stăniloae, *Orthodox Spirituality*, 283.

<sup>138</sup> This is the Christology of the Desert Fathers, which the specialists are looking for and they are trying to find it. So, according to Harmless “*The Apophthegmata says nothing about Christology; it neither touches on nor encourages such theological concerns. Is this silence intentional? It is an intriguing possibility*”; W. Harmless, *Desert Christians* (Oxford University Press, 2004), 250. But in Ps 67:1-2, 80:3, and 80:7 God’s shining face or presence (פניו) procures salvation (ישועה). See: David D. Kupp, *Matthew’s Emmanuel. Divine presence and God’s people in the First Gospel* (Cambridge University Press, 1996), 116-138, for paradigms of presence in the Old testament, and 192-196, for parallels of presence: Shekinah and Jesus; Christopher Barina Kaiser, *Seeing the Lord’s Glory. Kyriocentric Visions and the Dilemma of Early Christology* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2014), 265-300, here, in particular, the description of the three movements that marginalized visions of the anthropic form of the Lord (Judaism, Gnosticism and Arianism), that moved the church from an anthropic Deity to an aniconic (apophatic) one; N.T. Wright, “Reflected Glory: 2 Corinthians 3:18” in *Climax of the Covenant*, (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1992): 175-192; Carey C. Newman, *Paul’s Glory-Christology: Tradition and*

is being revealed.<sup>139</sup> Our nature is transformed in Christ, sharing in the divine attributes of glory and receives a pneumatic body: *Christ transmits God's light to believers, who shine with Christ's glory*. Christ is the "Splendor" (φέγγος) of the Father and the visible appearance of the unseen Father.<sup>140</sup> The robe of glory with which the baptismal candidate is clothed thus becomes simultaneously the wedding garment without which one may not enter into eternal light. The righteous are light for their clothing is splendor. Their brightness become their own light. Therefore, saints have 'put on glory' and they always wear the luminous robe at the wedding banquet. But the hermeneutic key is that the Light is Christ himself.<sup>141</sup> Thus, the sting of Theophilus of Alexandria's argument was directed not only against the

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*Rhetoric* (Leiden: Brill, 1992), 184-212, about the glory as a 'sign' of Christophany; David A. Renwick, *Paul, the Temple, and the Presence of God* (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1991), 25-46, here, as the temple, the believers are corporately the place of God's presence, and they are God's temple through the indwelling Spirit; Michelle V. Lee, *Paul, the Stoics, and the Body of Christ* (Cambridge University Press, 2006), 103-197, here 161; Linda L. Belleville, *Reflections of Glory. Paul's Polemical Use of the Moses-Doxa Tradition in 2 Corinthians 3.1-18* (New York: T&T Clark 1991), 204-205; M. David Litwa, "2 Corinthians 3:18 and Its Implications for Theosis," *Journal of Theological Interpretation (JTI)* 2 (2008): 117-133, here Paul's soteriology can be called deification or sharing in God's reality through Christ, we are being transformed into the same image; Willem Cornelis van Unnik, "With Unveiled Face: an Exegesis of 2 Corinthians 3:12-18," *Novum Testamentum* 6 (1963): 153-169; and, also, Crispin H. T. Fletcher-Louis, *All the Glory of Adam: Liturgical Anthropology in the Dead Sea Scrolls* (STDJ 42; Leiden: Brill, 2002), 91-97.

<sup>139</sup> Speaking of the hesychast method of prayer and transformation of the body, Gregory Palamas also uses this Pauline theology of 2 Corinthians 4:6-7 in *Triad* 1.2.2: "So we carry the Father's light in the face (*prosōpon*) of Jesus Christ in earthen vessels, that is, in our bodies, in order to know the glory of the Holy Spirit." For him, Moses the lawgiver, Stephen the protomartyr, and Arsenius the desert ascetic are examples from the Bible and the Fathers are men who were visibly transformed by divine light (*Triad* 2.3.9). God transcends the senses yet the knowledge of God is experiential: seeing a vision of light at the culmination of intense period of prayer. For the light is nothing less than the uncreated radiance of God – a divine energy accessible to the senses. This manifestation of Christ is not something external to ourselves. *It is only by having Christ radiant within us that we can enter into the truth which even in the Gospels is veiled from ordinary eyes*" (Russell, *Fellow Workers With God*, 103). *Transfiguration* becomes an interior experience to Abba Pambo, Sisoës, Silvanus, St Seraphim of Sarov, St. Seraphim of Sarov (1759-1833) and Archimandrite Sophrony (1896-1991).

<sup>140</sup> Juan Ochagavia, SJ, *Visibile Patris Filius. A Study of Irenaeus's Teaching on Revelation and Tradition* (Romae: Pont. Institutum Orientalium Studiorum, 1964), 43-81.

<sup>141</sup> The hermeneutic key is the transfiguration of Christ, The light seen on Mount Tabor Gregory calls it 'enhypostatic', i.e. without any hypostasis of its own (*Triad* 3. 1. 28). For its hypostasis is Christ; he himself is the deifying light (*Triad* 3. 1. 16). Deification is a supernatural gift that transforms both mind and body, making divinity visible (*Triad* 3. 1. 33). For what Christ is by nature the Christian can become by grace. The saints henceforth live with the life of God (*Triad* 3. 1. 35). Only through hesychast theology we could understand the christology of the Desert Fathers. If we equate Christ with light of the *visio Dei*. But, this light must be uncreated to ensure that there is real presence of Christ, not a transitory visible effect.

denial of God's image in man in postlapsarian humanity<sup>142</sup>, but also is a recognition of the Presence of Christ – the Face of the Father – in the shining face of the ascetics. He says to the angry monks: “In seeing you, I see the face of God”.

It is the Son who is the eternal image and form and indeed - to recall both Clement of Alexandria and Theophilus' answer to the lynch mob - the “face” of the Father.<sup>143</sup> Christ will radiate within us like to the desert Fathers: Pambo, Sisoë, Silvanus. Christology of the Desert Fathers overlaps with pre-Nicene Christology. Choufrine conclude that the Light that illumined Abraham is for Clement, just as it is for Philo, the Logos. In Clement's interpretation the theophany is a Christophany as a manifestation of the preincarnate Christ, who, as the Logos, is the one who reveals God.<sup>144</sup> In *Paidagōgos* Clement uses the “gnostic” metaphors of light as in the *Protr.* 77.3. Knowledge that Clement has in mind is baptismal “illumination” (φωτισμός implies presence of φῶς - light).<sup>145</sup> Clement seems to be stressing that the awakening effected by baptism is “from within”: “εὐθέως ενδοθεν... ου τό φῶς αὐτοῖς ἐξωθεν χορήγησι” (*Paed.* 1.28.1). This might be a hidden polemic, says Arkadi Choufrine, against Philo's view that the soul encounters the divine Word when it “despairs of itself and secretly waits” for His visitation “from without” (ἐξωθεν) (*Somn.* 1.119). The “essence” that becomes “free” (ελευθερα) according to Clement is the organ of gnosis: the “pupil” of the “eye” (κόρη οφθαλμοῦ) of the soul, its “divine spirit.” This element of the soul is integral to the constitution to the human being, since it is identical with the “breath” (πνοή) God breathed into (ἐνεφύσησενousia or

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<sup>142</sup> Paul A. Patterson, *Visions of Christ: The Anthropomorphic Controversy of 399 CE* (Mohr Siebeck, Tübingen, 2012), 12. For an attempt to link body metaphysics to anthropomorphic controversy, all seen through scholastic lens, see, also: Stephen H. Webb, *Jesus Christ, Eternal God: Heavenly Flesh and the Metaphysics of Matter* (Oxford University Press, 2012), 75-96. This is an attempt to recover within the catholic theology of the uncreated light theology and body's participation in this divine light from this life, which the positive reception of Palamas' interpretation of Transfiguration (Webb, *Jesus Christ, Eternal God*, 165).

<sup>143</sup> Georges Florovsky, “Theophilus of Alexandria and Apa Aphou of Pemdje” in *Aspects of Church History* 4 (Belmont, Mass: Nordland Publishing Co, 1975), 97-129. Aphou seems clearly to have believed in a humanlike, though divine, form of glory which provided the prototype for the human body, and he adds to our collection of texts the evocation of the descent of the heavenly man in John 6, together with a reference to the “unapproachable light” of divinity in I Tim.6:16. The Son as *morphe* (76-77), “face of the Father” (78-81), and as the “heavenly bread” and “light” (82-85), and recall Apa Aphou's use of Jn. 6:51.

<sup>144</sup> Arkadi Choufrine, *Gnosis, Theophany, Theosis: Studies in Clement of Alexandria's Appropriation of His Background*, (Patristic Studies 5, New York: Peter Lang, 2002); Dragoș Andrei Giulea, *Pre-Nicene Christology in Paschal Contexts. The Case of the Divine Noetic Anthropos*, Supplements to *Vigiliae Christianae*, Texts and Studies of Early Christian Life and Language, Volume 123 (Leiden: Brill 2014) 99-103.

<sup>145</sup> Choufrine, *Gnosis, Theophany, Theosis*, 17.

ἐνφύσησε) Adam at his creation (Gen. 2:7).<sup>146</sup> The coincidence of the Light and Face is, also, the *Casiday's contribution* through the study of the evagrian theology. Kindred light (τό συγγενές φῶς – *Skemmata* 2) is the splendour of the Lord's face.<sup>147</sup>

Like Evagrius, too, "Macarius" is also an advocate, and if possible even more forcefully so, of the *visio del luminis*, which he insists is not a mere product of the intellect, a *noema*, but: "a divine light, shining essentially and substantially [*en ousia kai hypostasei*] in the hearts of the faithful... the divine and essential [*ousiodes*] light which appears and shines in souls more than the light of the sun".<sup>148</sup> Here Macarius opposes scriptural accounts of a *visio luminae*, including Paul's conversion on the Damascus Road, the vision of Stephen at the latter's martyrdom, and his favorite text, 1 Corinthians 3:18. The visionaries behold themselves as being luminescent, they become "entirely" luminous by this metamorphosis. Regarding the source of the divine light, it is all about the "inner" nature of the luminous metamorphosis - the illumination that comes from inside. In later Jewish and Christian traditions the radiant luminosity is the hidden *Kabod* that is revealed through its light. The Macarian homilies Moses' shining countenance and the luminosity of Adam's prelapsarian *tselem* serve as metaphors for major paradigms of the transformational vision. But in a peculiar Macarian understanding of Christ's transfiguration on Mt. Tabor, the duality of inner and outer in *visio Dei*, the internal and external aspects of transformational mystical experience are resolved:

"For as the body of the Lord was glorified when he climbed the mount and was transfigured into the divine glory and into infinite light, so also the bodies

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<sup>146</sup> Choufrine, *Gnosis, Theophany, Theosis*, 66. Cf., e.g., *Paed.* 1.7.1-2: "τὸν δὲ ἄνθρωπον δι' αὐτοῦ ἐχειρουργήσεν καὶ τι αὐτῷ τῷ ἴδιον ἐνέφύσησεν". The ἴδιον here clearly means "A piece of his [God] own being". From 'εμφύσημα' to 'πρόσωπο' of Adam. God infused (ο Θεός εμφύσησε) the Holy Spirit into Adam (ie the uncreated energies of the Spirit). The "breath" (πνοή) that God "inspired" (ενεφύσησε) man was not just the breath but also the Holy Spirit. The "εμφύσημα" was the Holy Spirit and not only biological life. Also, Christ breathed (ενεφύσησε) on the disciples and said: "Receive the Holy Spirit" (John 20:22). The death of the soul is its separation from the life-giving energy of the Holy Spirit (Ιωάννης Ρωμανίδης, *Το Πρωπατορικό αμάρτημα*, σελ. 119). Our face is the mark of a seal on our earthly nature. Seal is divine and unique. It is the face of God's Word. This breath (πνοή) of God, the uncreated energy of the Holy Spirit is the same as that which is planted for Christians as the seed of the Church in the Holy Baptism.

<sup>147</sup> Augustine Casiday, *Reconstructing the Theology of Evagrius Ponticus: Beyond Heresy* (Cambridge University Press: New York, 2013), 185.

<sup>148</sup> Macarius' insistence is on the divine and objective nature of the light – not a νόημα, a product of the intellect, but an ὑποστατικόν φῶς, "substantial light" (II:183, lines 14-15). Alexander Golitzin, "The Demons Suggest an Illusion of God's Glory in a Form»: Controversy over the Divine Body and Vision Of Glory in Some Late Fourth, Early Fifth Century Monastic Literature," *Studia Monastica* 44, no. 1 (2002): 13-43, here 39.

of the saints are glorified and shine like lightning. Just as the interior glory of Christ covered his body and shone completely, in the same way also in the saints the interior power of Christ in them in the day will be poured out exteriorly upon their bodies" (II.15.38).

The bodies of visionaries are now not simply covered externally with the divine light but are 'lightened': "Similarly, as many lamps are lighted from the one, same fire, so also it is necessary that the bodies of the saints, which are members of Christ, become the same which Christ himself is" (II.15.38). Human luminous transformation is "glorification". First, Christ is the Glory after which a visionary is transformed. Second, He is also the visionary himself, whose face and garments are transformed. In the Macarian writings Christ's interior glory is poured out upon external body, making it luminous. As Golitzin pointed out, "the locus of the visionary's perspective now is not external to the divine luminous form, but is rather immanent within it"<sup>149</sup> (inner glory pours out exteriorly upon the body). The interior power of Christ will lighten us as a lamp, so we can 'become the same which Christ himself is'.<sup>150</sup>

We receive the "deifying gift" mentioned in Dionysius' *Ep. II* and we are led to encounter the mystery of Christ's divinity in "transcendent outpouring of light".<sup>151</sup> Ps.-Dionysios' view Jesus is the deifying light and hierarchies communicate light and love, and "this light, which proceeds from and returns to its source, the Father, is none other than Jesus".<sup>152</sup> Jesus appears to Paul as a

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<sup>149</sup> Andrei Orlov and Alexander Golitzin, "Many Lamps Are Lightened from the One: Paradigms of the transformational vision in Macarian Homilies," *Vigiliae Christianae* 55 (2001): 281-298, here 298. So, there is a theological connection between Adam's creation after the image of God and Christ as the image of God. But, says Golitzin, by the fourth century in patristic Trinitarian debates about the divine light the Kabod terminology was almost completely substituted by the symbolism of the divine image. A thousand years later, in Hesychast theological and mystical visions of the Taboric light, the concept of the image of God still continued to play a crucial theological role. Gregory Palamas' theology of the divine image shows parallels to the concepts of Macarius' luminous tselem of Adam and with Syrian understanding of the luminous reflection of God's Glory. Notably in *2 Enoch* from which we learn that the Lord created Adam after His face (Orlov and Golitzin, "Many Lamps Are Lightened from the One," 289-294).

<sup>150</sup> In Gregory of Nazianzus' 39<sup>th</sup> Oration, entitled *On the Holy Lights*, he lays out a pattern of human life, integration with God: "forming ourselves in God's image and receiving the Word"; Brian E. Daley, *Light on the Mountain: Greek Patristic and Byzantine Homilies on the Transfiguration of the Lord* (New York: St Vladimir's Seminary Press, 2013), 132.

<sup>151</sup> Plotinus, too, uses "sudden" (*Enneads* V.3.17 and VI.7.36) to point out the vision of the One in light. See, A. Golitzin, "'Suddenly', Christ: The Place of Negative Theology in the Mystagogy of Dionysius Areopagites," in Michael Kessler and Christian Shepherd (ed.), *Mystics: Presence and Aporia* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2003), 8-37; and István Perczel, "The Christology of Pseudo-Dionysius: the Fourth Letter in its Direct and Indirect Translation," *Le Muséon* 117, no. 3-4 (2004): 409-446.

<sup>152</sup> Charles M. Stang, *Apophysis and Pseudonymity in Dionysius the Areopagite: "No longer I"* (Oxford University Press, 2012), 94. Dionysian Christology can be read as a response to Paul's rhetorical

blinding light from heaven, “his pseudonymous identity” in Acts 9, 3 and 22, 6: “suddenly (ἐξαίφνης) a light from heaven flashed about [Paul]”.<sup>153</sup> A theophany of light attached to the word “sudden” intends to signify the presence of Christ, as the sudden flash of the “unapproachable light” within together with his visitation within the temple of body of the ascet. St Ephrem links the “sudden” to Christ, to light. It is Christ Who is the “star of light Who shone forth suddenly” in the Incarnation.<sup>154</sup>

Bogdan G. Bucur notes that “face” Christology, one of the early building blocks for emerging Christian doctrine, never become a major player, but was replaced by more precise vocabulary shaped by the Christological controversies of the third and fourth centuries.<sup>155</sup> Bucur outline the occurrence of “face” Christology in Clement of Alexandria, Aphrahat the Persian sage, and in the seven spirits of the book of revelation.<sup>156</sup> But, this *unveiled shining face* is the participation to the divine energy of the ‘Christ the Image and Glory of God’. Therefore, there is a convergence of desert wisdom with the Palamite hesychast theology regarding the visible glory of Transfiguration.<sup>157</sup>

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question from 2 Cor 6:14: “What fellowship is there between light and darkness?” (Stang, *Apophysis and Pseudonymity*, 97).

<sup>153</sup> Stang, *Apophysis and Pseudonymity*, 95-96. Several passages from Paul’s letters support Dionysius’ understanding of Jesus as light: 2 Cor 4:6 (“For it is the God who said, ‘Let light shine out of darkness,’ who has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ”); Eph 5:8 (“For once you were darkness, but now in the Lord you are light. Live as children of light”); Col 1:12 (“the Father . . . has enabled you to share in the inheritance of the saints in the light”).

<sup>154</sup> Ephrem Syrus, *De natura*, 6.7, *CSCO* 186, 52; ET: K. McVey, *Ephrem the Syrian: Hymns* (New York: Paulist Press, 1989), 112, apud Golitzin, *Mystagogy*, 47.

<sup>155</sup> Bogdan G. Bucur, “The Divine Face and the Angels of the face: Jewish Apocalyptic Themes in Early Christology and Pneumatology”, in Robert J. Daly (ed.), *Apocalyptic Thought in Early Christianity* (Holy Cross Greek Orthodox School of Theology, Baker Academic: Grand Rapids 2009), 143-153.

<sup>156</sup> Mark S. Burrows, “On the Visibility of God in the Holy Man: A Reconsideration of the Role of the Apa in Pachomian,” *Vigiliae Christianae*, Vol. 41, No. 1 (March 1987): 11-33; John Chrysavgis, “Fire and Light in the Egyptian Desert: Aspects of Desert Spirituality,” *Cistercian Studies Quarterly* 34, no.4 (1999): 455-467. David Frankfurter, “Where the Spirits Dwell: Possession, Christianization, and Saints’ Shrines in Late Antiquity,” *The Harvard Theological Review* 103, no.1 (2010): 27-46; Thore Bjornvig, “Metaphors and Asceticism: Asceticism as an Antidote to Symbolic Thinking,” *Method and Theory in the Study of Religion* 19 (2007): 72-120.

<sup>157</sup> John Panteleimon Manoussakis, “Theophany and Indication: Reconciling Augustian and Palamite Aesthetics” *Modern Theology* 26, no. 1 (2010): 74-91. George C. Padademetriou, “The Human Body According to Saint Gregory Palamas,” *Greek Orthodox Theological Review* 34, no. 1 (1989): 1-10.

**8. Forms of the veil – forms of the light. The ‘uncreated link’ between *pārōket* veil, *καταπέτασμα*, “*eṣtal šubha*”, *θεῖα ἀγάλματα* (or *σύμβολον*) and the *Eucharist bread***

We saw that God’s theophany in earthly tabernacle take place behind an elaborate cultic veil, wherein the invisible God dwelt. But in Byzantine thinking, the liturgical veil (‘icon screen’), enclosing the divine presence, has in addition the gates of the sanctuary decorated with the icon of Annunciation. Here the Mother of God is depicted as spinning thread for the veil of the temple, an Orthodox faith in Incarnation: Invisible God had been revealed through paradoxical concealment in a veil of flesh. So, the veil of the temple provides a superlative expression for the mystery of the Incarnation, resulting in a “new Christian epistemology, metaphysics and aesthetics”.<sup>158</sup> This theology of the veil was used to symbolize the Hesychast distinction between essence and energies within God.<sup>159</sup> Both the doctrine of revelation and the symbolic architecture of the church are formally unified. The Palaiologan hesychasme employs a ‘binary formula’ closely associated with cognate patterns (visible-invisible) of Christology (two natures: divine-human), anthropology (body-soul) Triadology (essence-activities, manifestations) and Holy Sacraments (in a twofold form: visible and material – intelligible and mystical). Analyzing the theological contribution of Simeon of Thessaloniki (1375-1430) who is turning to the hesychast language of “veils” and “symbols”, Maximos Constas says that:

“Once again, the principle of physical and metaphysical union is a direct corollary of the Incarnation, an event in which the invisible God has visibly ‘appeared among us’, traversing and thereby abolishing the opposition of ‘above’ and ‘below’. In the dual-natured person of the God-man, both the (created, visible) image and its (uncreated, invisible) archetype are woven together in a uniform coincidence of opposites rendered present in the sacramental mystery of the liturgy”.<sup>160</sup>

For father Constas the sanctuary veil is a sacramental symbol, which make communion possible as medium of the experience. Among the Hesychasts,

<sup>158</sup> Jaroslav Pelikan, *Imago Dei: The Byzantine Apologia for Icons* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1990), 99, 107.

<sup>159</sup> Thomas L. Anastos, “Gregory Palamas’ Radicalization of the Essence, Energies, and Hypostasis Model of God,” *The Greek Theological Review* 38, no. 2-4 (1993); 335-351; Leonidas Contos, “The Essence-Energies Structure of Saint Gregory Palamas with a Brief Examination of its Patristic Foundation,” *Greek Orthodox Theological Review* 12 (1964); 283-297.

<sup>160</sup> Maximos Constas, *The Art of Seeing: Paradox and Perception in Orthodox Iconography* (Los Angeles: Sebastian Press, 2014), 210.

he stresses, “the image of the veil was used to represent the ‘symbolic’ character of God’s self-revelation”.<sup>161</sup> This realistic notion of the symbol, a sacramental theology of “real presence” (symbolic forms participate directly in their referents), is taken directly from the Dionysios the Areopagite, whose doctrine of divine revelation played a prominent role in the Hesychast controversy.<sup>162</sup> In this context, Symeon provides a similar interpretation for the veil as “garment of light”, a designation for the uncreated energies of God: “The veil (καταπέτασμα) on the altar symbolizes the immaterial tabernacle around the God, which is the glory and grace of God, by which he himself is concealed, ‘clothed himself with light as with garment’ (Ps. 103:2).”<sup>163</sup> Conostas lacks of any reference to Saint Gregory Palamas’ *Homily* 56, to the theology of Ephrem the Syrian and to the “shining face” spirituality of the Desert Fathers, and that makes incomplete his analysis about the ‘veil’ theology. For Conostas the veil “separates” but also it is the very thing that enables contact, disclosing or revealing precisely to the same degree that it conceals. The gradations of sacred space are marking a dynamic continuity between the sensible and the intelligible. Thus, a paradigmatic symbol, the “veil,” has a symbolic function in the domain of spiritual vision, (interchangeable symbols for veil are: the garment, the mirror). The παραπέτασμα or καταπέτασμα was seen as bodying forth the very nature of vision itself (a “spreading out” and “opening outwards”). In the microcosmic temple of the human person, the veil is *psyche*, serving as link between the visible and the invisible, between corporeality and intellect (*aisthesis* and *noesis*). Even the incarnate Christ, veiled in flesh, is “an image of Himself.” He is hidden and totally beyond all manifestation (with the visible divine actions of his flesh as signs of his invisible infinity, which is totally transcendent, and secretly hidden).

At issue was Dionysios’ understanding of the vision of God, mediated by “symbols” described as “veils” (*παραπετάσματα*) and being read it in conjunction with Saint Maximos the Confessor interpretation of the divine light as a “symbol” of

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<sup>161</sup> Conostas, *The Art of Seeing*, 213.

<sup>162</sup> For the liturgical veils in Dionysios, see: Eric David Perl, *Theophany: The Neoplatonic Philosophy of Dionysius the Areopagite* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2007), 65-81; Carl Schneider, “Studien zum Ursprung liturgischer Einzelheiten östlicher Liturgien: Καταπέτασμα,” *Kyrios* 1 (1936): 57-73; Alexander Golitzin, *Mystagogy: A Monastic Reading of Dionysius Areopagita* (Collegeville, 2013), 117-119.

<sup>163</sup> Conostas, *The Art of Seeing*, 215-216. Symeon sees the sanctuary portal/veil, as a symbol of Christ who gave us entrance into the Holy of Holy through the veil of his flesh (Heb. 10:19-20). Also the ritual use of incense symbolizes the effusions of glory emanating from the divine presence. Also, Symeon make an association of incense with the presence of the Holy Spirit, being an ‘impartation of divine grace’.

the divinity (*Ambigua* 10.29).<sup>164</sup> In his *Refutation of Prochoros Kydones* and in his *Letters* (5.10) to Paul the Calabrian, John VI Kantacouzenos wrote in defense of the Hesychast view. So, as shown by Conostas, “the created symbol in question is the body of Christ, the physical medium of the divine light, and thus he identifies the ‘symbolic veil’ of Dionysios with the ‘veil of flesh’ from the Letter to the Hebrews”.<sup>165</sup> Illumined by the theurgic/thearchic ray, we can see the light by means of the veil, that is, the flesh of Christ (Heb. 10:20).

Dionysius’ symbolic ontology offers a sacramental vision of the world, since the entire cosmos participates in the divine energies. Perl writes: “Dionysius represents precisely those doctrines which are most typical of Orthodoxy in distinction from the west: creation as theophany; grace as continuous with nature; knowledge as union of knower and known; Incarnation and sacrament as fulfillment.”<sup>166</sup> For Dionysius, the closest parallel to the Hellenic term *theourgia* is the term *hierourgia*,<sup>167</sup> the ritual enactment of divine works. Dionysian sacraments, given by God, are enacted to recreate the divine work – the incarnation of Christ. Dionysius uses the Hellenic vocabulary for theurgic tokens (*synthema*, *symbolon*, *sphragis*, *typos*) to describe the Christian sacraments, the efficacy of which divinize the soul, just as in Hellenic theurgy. For Dionysius, *theourgia* is first and foremost the sacred acts of Christ, particularly the incarnation, which is enacted by men through sacramental *hierourgia*. “In addition to meaning the salvific works of Jesus, *theourgia* refers also to human co-operation in this

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<sup>164</sup> Defending the union with God, Palamas make the distinction between: “natural symbols” (share the nature of their referents), “non-natural symbols” (only a conventional relation with their referents) and “appearance” (having non independent reality).

<sup>165</sup> Conostas, *The Art of Seeing*, 226. The same ideas are advanced by Philotheos Kokkinos, who asserts that “the glory of the divinity becomes the glory of the body, but the mystery beyond nature cannot be contained by human eyes, and thus the unendurable and unapproachable light concealed itself by means of the flesh, as if under a kind of veil” (*Refutation of Nikephoros Gregoras*, Oration II).

<sup>166</sup> Eric D. Perl, “Symbol, Sacrament, and Hierarchy in Saint Dionysius the Areopagite,” *Greek Orthodox Theological Review* 39, no. 3-4 (1994): 311–355, here 355.

<sup>167</sup> Sarah Klitenic Wear and John Dillon, *Dionysius the Areopagite and the Neoplatonist Tradition: Despoiling the Hellenes* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2007), 99. Unlike Iamblichus or Proclus, used the term ‘theurgy’ to mean ‘work of God’, not as an objective genitive indicating a work addressed to God but as a subjective genitive meaning God’s own work. Andrew Louth, in his article, “Pagan Theurgy and Christian Sacramentalism in Denys the Areopagite,” *The Journal of Theological Studies* 37, no. 2 (1986): 432-438, agrees through *hierourgia*, we become *theourgikoi*: participants of the work, co-workers of the work. Thus, Rorem and Louth correctly assert that *theourgia* pertains only to divine works. More recently, Dylan Burns also lays out similarities between Hellenic and Dionysian treatment of theurgy in his article, “Proclus and the Theurgic Liturgy of Dionysius,” *Dionysius* 22 (2004): 111-132.

salvific work (as *theourgikos*), a state very rarely achieved through *henôsis* and *theôsis*. *Hierourgia* is the ritual engagement and reproduction of *theourgia*.<sup>168</sup>

In contrast to icons (or “image”), which share the likeness of their archetypes, but which differ from them in terms of their nature or substance, the divine light, as a special kind of ‘symbol’, shares the nature of that which it symbolizes, but differs from it outward appearance. Thus, “the uncreated light is not the ‘image’ of God, but rather the ‘symbol’ of God”.<sup>169</sup> Palamas maintains the dionisyian paradox of uncovered/veiled brilliant darkness, but also speaks clearly of a direct vision unmediated by veils:

“The Most High came to dwell in the Virgin in his own person. He did not reveal his presence through darkness and fire, as he did to Moses, nor through a tempest and cloud, as he did to Elijah, but immediately, and without any kind of veil, the power of the Most High overshadowed the Virgin’s womb with nothing intervening” (*Homily 37, 4*).<sup>170</sup>

Just as the light of the transfiguration the light-bearing robe of the unfallen Adam has a equally theological importance for *theosis*. Deification means to be “re clothed in cleanliness” and it is built on the idea of Adam and Eve being clothed first in light/glory and then skin/fig leaves/shame. Therefore, the concept of clothing in early Syrian writings is a representation of a state of being, namely *theosis*.<sup>171</sup> Embodiment is at the heart of Syrian theology and anthropology. Before Christ “put on the body”, God “put on words”, clothed himself in language.<sup>172</sup> The divinizing function of the Incarnation is also explicitly phrased as a process of stripping off and re clothing, a symmetrical stripping of the glory of the Godhead to match that lost by Adam, and re clothing of Adam through Jesus being “clothed in a body”, as expressed in *Hymn 23 on the Nativity* (13).<sup>173</sup>

Late antique writers use images of clothing to show the interchange between divinity and humanity.<sup>174</sup> A recurrent image in Syrian writings is that

<sup>168</sup> Wear and Dillon, *Dionysius the Areopagite* (2007), 102.

<sup>169</sup> See Theophanes of Nicaea, *On the Light of Tabor*, Or. 3; in Constatas, *The Art of Seeing*, 227.

<sup>170</sup> Saint Gregory Palamas, *The Homilies*, trans by Christopher Veniamin (Mount Thabor Publishing, 2016), 266-273, here, p. 270-271. In similar way we shall behold the eternal light immediately, with no intervening veil (Tr. ii.3.24).

<sup>171</sup> Hannah Hunt, *Clothed in the Body. Asceticism, the Body and the Spiritual in the Late Antique Era*, Ashgate Studies in Philosophy & Theology in Late Antiquity (London: Ashgate, 2012), 136-137.

<sup>172</sup> Susan A. Harvey, “Embodiment in Time and Eternity: A Syrian Perspective,” *St. Vladimir’s Theological Quarterly* 43, no. 2 (1999): 105-130, at 109.

<sup>173</sup> Sebastian Brock, *The Syrian Fathers on Prayer and the Spiritual Life* (Kalamazoo, Michigan: Cistercian Publications, 1987), xxiv.

<sup>174</sup> Robert Murray, *Symbols of Church and Kingdom: A Study in Early Syrian Tradition* (London: Gorgias Press, 2006), 69-94, ad 80.

of God being veiled from Moses. Ephrem juxtaposes the image of Moses being veiled with Jesus' veiling on Himself in the Incarnation. Face of Moses shone and he laid veil over his face, just as Lord, from the Womb, entered and put on the veil of the Body (*Hom. on Nativity* 73). Sebastian Brock extends comparison between two forms of light with the internal light of Mary's womb when bearing Jesus: "brightness which Moses put on" is coming from outside him, but to the river in which Jesus was baptized, He "put on Light from within".<sup>175</sup>

Baptism cleans the robe of glory. The robe of glory with which the baptismal candidate is clothed thus becomes simultaneously the wedding garment without which one may no enter into eternal light. The righteous are light for their clothing is splendor. Their brightness become their own light. Therefore, saints have "put on glory" and they always wear the luminous robe at the wedding banquet. *Theophanies* here, can be termed apophatic and the body mediated the promised realities.<sup>176</sup> The theophanies of ritual required "symbols and signs", but the flesh participated in sacramental theophanies not by symbol but in reality. Laity, also, were deemed capable of theophanic lives or to be theophanic, they may materially encounter God by means of their transfigured bodies, but through the work of the Holy Spirit' grace.<sup>177</sup> Cyril of Alexandria likewise focused on the transformative rehabilitation of the senses, on how believers might presently participate with the body in the life of God.<sup>178</sup> So, when our texts use

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<sup>175</sup> Sebastian Brock, *The Bride of Light: Hymns on Mary from the Syrian Churches* (Kottayam, 1994), 29. Sebastian Brock, "St Ephrem on Christ as Light in Mary and in the Jordan: *Hymni de Ecclesia* 36," *Eastern Churches Review* 7 (1975): 79-88.

<sup>176</sup> Sarah Coakley studied Nyssa's phrase, "αἰσθητήρια τῆς ψυχῆς" (Gregory of Nyssa's fifteen homilies on the *Song of Songs*, covering Song 1:1-6:8) and concluded that this does not mean "spiritual senses" in opposition to "bodily senses". Instead, she translates the phrase as "senses of the soul" that "refer to the transfigured workings of ordinary perception". Indeed she argues that Gregory's corpus reveals "an emerging and developing sense of the significance of bodily life for 'spiritual sensation'"; see Sarah Coakley, "Gregory of Nyssa," in Paul L. Gavrilyuk and Sarah Coakley (eds.), *The Spiritual Senses. Perceiving God in Western Christianity* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 36-55, here 48.

<sup>177</sup> Gordon D. Fee, *God's Empowering Presence: The Holy Spirit in the Letters of Paul* (Peabody: Hendrickson, 1994), 12-13; François P. Möller, *Words of Light and Life: The Work of the Holy Spirit in the Life of the Believers* (Pretoria: J. L. van Schaik, 1998), 1-9.

<sup>178</sup> For Chrysostom, the catechumens that once illumined in baptism, they should be God's torches in order to "illumine those who look to you". On this topic see: Kilian McDonnell and George T. Montague, *Christian Initiation and Baptism in the Holy Spirit: Evidence from the First Eight Centuries* (Minnesota: The Liturgical Press, 1991), 86-92, with very important biblical conclusions here. Chrysostom connected this sacramentally light's experience of baptism to the effects of being united to the Body of Christ through the Eucharist. Chrysostom insisted on Paul's choice to describe the effect of the Eucharist (in 1 Cor 10:16) through the stronger term of "participation" (*μετοχή*). Saint Paul intended point out how close was the union (*τὴν συνάφειαν*): "in that we communicate not only by participating, but also by being made one (*οὐ γὰρ τῷ μετέχειν μόνον καὶ μεταλαμβάνειν, ἀλλὰ καὶ τῷ*

dichotomous language opposing spiritual and bodily senses, the correct meaning refers to the bodies as “theophanic vehicles”.<sup>179</sup> Holy Fathers and their ‘splendid deeds’, says Gabriel Bunge are thus an *example* (ὑποτύπωσις) or a ‘pattern’<sup>180</sup> for us today.

### Conclusion: ‘Veil’, ‘Face’, ‘Light’ - a ‘somatic’ experience

In this study I make a connection between: 1) *pārōket* veil of the *Holy of Holies*, 2) *καταπέτασμα* or *velum scissum* as ‘the curtain of the temple who was torn in two’, 3) Ephrem’s “*eṣtal šubḥa*” or the robe of glory (στολή δόξης) theology, 4) Dionysian’ *Χειραγωγία* - “Sacred veils” (theurgic lights) and holy *σύμβολον* (icon of the invisible) and 5) Palamas’ *Eucharist bread which, for him, is like a veil concealing the divinity*. The link is provided by the Ephrem’s statement of Christ’ “body, as a veil” (CNis XLIII.21) and the *pārōket* veil, having as its function to hide God’s glory. All these theological themes are being synthesized in the hesychast theology about our bodies which are shining out in that glory robe, with Christ’ radiance (divine light or energy). I argued here that there is an inward connection between this ‘Veil’ theology and the ‘Face’ Christology. So, in contrast to “name” Christology, “wisdom” Christology, and “glory” Christology, Bogdan G. Bucur notes that “face” Christology, one of the early building blocks for emerging Christian doctrine, never became a major player, but was replaced by more precise vocabulary shaped by the Christological controversies of the third and fourth centuries.<sup>181</sup> Bucur outline the occurrence of “face” Christology in

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*ἐνοῦσθαι κοινωνοῦμεν*). For as that body is made one with Christ, so also are we made one with Him by this bread (καθάπερ γὰρ τὸ σῶμα ἐκεῖνο ἦνωται τῷ Χριστῷ, οὕτω καὶ ἡμεῖς αὐτῷ διὰ τοῦ ἄρτου τούτου ἐνούμεθα); see *Homily 24* on 1 Corinthians 10:16 (*Homiliae in Epistulam I ad Corinthios*, PG 61:200). See: John N. D. Kelly, *Golden Mouth: The Story of John Chrysostom – Ascetic, Preacher, Bishop* (New York: Cornell University Press, 1995); Wendy Mayer and Pauline Allen, *John Chrysostom* (London: Routledge, 1999); Anthony C. Thiselton, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000), in particular, the chapters: “Union with Christ and the theology of the Body” 458-457, “the semantic of ‘one bread... one body’” 750-778, “Spirit-Baptism” 998-1085; Judith L. Kovacs, *1 Corinthians: Interpreted by Christian Medieval Commentators* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2005) 159-176.

<sup>179</sup> Patricia Cox Miller, *Corporeal Imagination. Signifying the Holy in Late Ancient Christianity* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania, 2009) 41. This is a study of the evolution of materiality in Christian spirituality. It incorporates both contemporary aesthetic theory and patristic theology. The anthropology of “spiritual senses” is based on the encounter with saint’s relics and holy men as ‘other Christs’.

<sup>180</sup> Gabriel Bunge, *Earthen Vessels: The Practice of Personal Prayer according to the Patristic Tradition* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2003), 22.

<sup>181</sup> Bogdan G. Bucur, “The Divine Face and the Angels of the face: Jewish Apocalyptic Themes in Early Christology and Pneumatology,” in Robert J. Daly (ed.), *Apocalyptic Thought in Early*

Clement of Alexandria, Aphrahat the Persian sage, and in the seven spirits of the book of revelation. It is also interesting the Anastasius the Sinaite speaks in his work *Hodegos* &8 about the glorious face of a son of Adam, Seth, as a component of God's image. Notably in *2 Enoc*, from which Golitzin quotes, we learn that the Lord created Adam after His face (let's emphasize the theological uniqueness of such creational imagery). From my point of view, the Face Christology will be developed in the theology of the icons through the seven ecumenical council.

Also, only through hesychastic theology of the taboric light, systematized by Saint Gregory Palamas, I could recognize this 'Face theology' as being hidden revealed experientially into the "shining face" of Desert Fathers (about their christology, until now, the specialists said it was missing). So, what binds the theology of "Veil" with the theology of "Face" is the presence of God in the "uncreated Light" irradiating on the bodies of the ascetics. Therefore, the "shining face" is a veil (*καταπέτασμα*) that hides the inner presence of Christ. The temple is the body of the ascetic. Also, according to Mark the Ascetic, the heart as the spiritual center of the human being, also has an intrinsic veil beyond which Christ has entered from Baptism as Forerunner. But, the veil of Moses is removed, the veil (*καταπέτασμα*) is split into two and, in the future age, the energies of Godhead will be concentrated in the human face of Christ. The nature of the *glory* (of Moses, Stephanus, Antonius, Pambo, Silvanus, Sisoe, Symeon the New Theologian, Seraphim of Sarov, Sophrony Sakharov or Paisios Aghioritis) and his visible splendor, shining from their brilliant faces, represent the direct contact with God or God's visible, divine presence. As all believers encounter God directly (with *unveiled faces*) through the Spirit's presence they reflect this glory as mirrors and are themselves glorified in the process (*from glory to glory*). The *transformation into this glory is not only noetic but also embodied because it is a visible manifestation*. The noetic enlightenment is associated with participation in divine glory is correlated to the somatic experience of glory. In spiritual tradition of hesychasm the vision of light at the culmination of intense periods of prayer is the deification of our nature. This light is "enhyposstatic symbol", the uncreated radiance of God, a divine energy. This manifestation of Christ in the divine nature is not something external to ourselves, but it is interiorized through the life of ascetism and prayer. But if the gates of the heart are opened by repentance, Christ rises as from a tomb (Maximus the Confessor) and the light of the resurrection wraps the body of the ascetic, focusing on his face, a sign of intersubjectivity claiming the existence of the real deified 'person'.

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*Christianity* (Holy Cross Greek Orthodox School of Theology: Baker Academic: Grand Rapids, 2009), 143-153.

The body partake of uncreated light what I call the “aesthetic of apophaticism” another name for deification as christification by uniting with uncreated light. Theosis, also, is described as “*transformation into unveiled glory*” (2 Cor. 3.7-18), a somatic experience of glory in which we *cannot separate ‘christosis’ from ‘theosis’*. This aspect of deification as transformation into glory (*glorification*) is both an inward quality of spiritual knowledge and an outward radiance. Transfiguration becomes an interior experience. The epistemic process of contemplation generates the ontological mirroring process, because for us there is no veil over the face, we all see as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, and we are being transformed (μεταμορφούμεθα) into his likeness (τὴν αὐτὴν εἰκόνα) with ever-increasing glory (ἀπὸδόξης εἰς δόξαν). Deification to the Desert Fathers acquire a specific anthropological content in christophanies, a face-to-face encounter. *In other words, it is both a theological theme and a spiritual teaching, both the goal of the divine economy and the process by which the economy is worked out in the believer.* To Palamas, deification is, also, a supernatural gift that transforms both mind and body, making divinity visible (*Triad* 3.1. 33). Likeness also means a radiation of the presence of God within man, a “reciprocal interiority”. In the saints this communion is expressed in the way God’s glory is reflected in their faces, in anticipation of the age to come. Therefore, *being able to find God through the senses suggests a rehabilitation of the whole of the human person, operating not just at an intellectual level but in an enfleshed body which perceives rather than intuites God.* Participation is in the mainstream Greek-Byzantine tradition of theological thought, means that God is actively working in what He has made. This is the way through which we have to find out how Palamas thinks that such a transcendent activity is accommodated to created otherness.

This study is the echo of Nicaea-Constantinople in “light of light”, the mingling language prominent in Syrian Christianity and the identification of God’s real presence with light – the Father is the Glory, the Son its ‘ray’, and the Holy Spirit its light. We must emphasize here that the macarian homilist the first who binds the “shining face” to the uncreated light, by identifying this divine light with that of the future age. For him the man “*becomes all light, all face, all eye*” (*Hom* 1, 2), because beauty of the ineffable glory of the light of Christ Light will make the body and the soul completely all light, brilliantly shining. So, the “*kingdom of light and the heavenly Image, Jesus Christ*” (*Hom* 2, 5), now mystically illumines the soul and holds dominion in the souls of the saints. But, what the soul now stores up within shall then be revealed as a treasure and “*displayed externally in the body*” (*Hom* 5, 8). The glory of the Holy Spirit “*rises up from within, covering and warming the bodies of the saints*” (*Hom* 5, 9). This is the glory they interiorly had before, hidden in their souls. For that

interior fire, inhabiting our hearts, emerges then and brings about the resurrection of the bodies (*Hom 11, 1*). The Lord, even now, forms an image in the soul which will be manifested exteriorly in the resurrection, “*glorifies their bodies interiorly and exteriorly*” (*Hom 11, 3*). Just as the interior glory of Christ covered his body and shone completely, in the same way also “*in the saints the interior power of Christ in them in that day will be poured out exteriorly upon their bodies*” (*Hom 15, 38*). Similarly, as “*many lamps are lighted from the one*”, same fire, so also it is necessary that the bodies of the saints, which are members of Christ, become the same which Christ himself is. The first who connect the Transfiguration specifically with theosis is St Andrew of Crete. For him the Transfiguration is the revelation of the deified humanity of Christ.

The authority (*exousia*) of the Holy Fathers comes from the presence in them (*enousia*) of the light of Christ, the seal of the Spirit. It exaggerates the relationship between the holy man of the late antiquity and the ascetics of the desert. In this regard, even certain authors introduced and then follow another pseudomorphosis: the quest for the “inner” or “real self”, for me a kind of non-Christic, non-mystagogical and pagan-paideic asceticism. This rather philosophical line, starts from Augustine (*Confessiones*) and it is developed by Michel Foucault (*Hermeneutics of the Subject*, 1981), Peter Brown’s (*Body and Society*, 1988), James F. Masterson (*Real Self*, 1990), Phillip Cary (*Inner Self*, 2000), Gavin Flood (*Ascetic Self*, 2004), Hannah Hunt (*Clothed in the Body*, 2012).<sup>182</sup> They do not understand that this “inner” or “real self” is actually Christ present within their baptismal being (Gal. 2:20), revealed as light in a Christophanic face to face encounter. Thus, theology is not only a theology as ascetic act (‘self-denial’), it’s also a theology of the experience of God or mystagogy. During the hesychast controversy, St Gregory Palamas defended precisely this reality of the encounter with God of those monks who reported seeing a vision of light at the culmination of intense period of prayer. For the light is nothing less than the uncreated radiance of God – a divine energy accesible to the senses. This manifestation of Christ is not something external to ourselves. *It is only by having Christ radiant within us that we can enter into the truth which even in the Gospels is veiled from ordinary eyes.* The Transfiguration becomes an interior experience. In the

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<sup>182</sup> Also, Charles Taylor, *Sources of the Self: The Making of the Modern Identity* (Harvard University Press, 1992). For an orthodox outlook on this theme, see: Nikolaos Loudovikos, *Closed Spirituality and the Meaning of the Self: Mysticism of Power and the Meaning of Personhood and Nature* (Ellinika Grammata, Athens, 1999); N. Loudovikos, *Beyond Spirituality Christian Mysticism of Power and the Meaning of the Self in the Patristic Era* (Turnhout: Brepols Publishers NV, 2018 forthcoming); N. Loudovikos, *Church in the Making: An Apophatic Ecclesiology of Consubstantiality. 21st Century Greek Theologians* (New York: St Vladimir’s Seminary Press, 2015); Norman Russell & Christos Yannaras, *Metaphysics as a Personal Adventure* (New York: St Vladimir’s Seminary Press, 2017).

fourteenth century Gregory Palamas make the distinction between the divine essence and actions, *energeiai*, in order to allow for the possibility of the vision of light or the Glory, of the radiance of God himself, without at the same time compromising the divine transcendence. Through *a direct experience of God in the vision of the uncreated light, God works in his hiddenness*. Just as the light of the transfiguration the light-bearing robe of the unfallen Adam has an equally theological importance for *theosis*. Deification means to be “re clothed in cleanliness” and it is built on the idea of Adam and Eve being clothed first in light/glory and then skin/fig-leaves/shame. Therefore, the concept of clothing in early Syrian writings is a representation of a state of being, namely *theosis*.

Golitzin argues the *visio Dei* shifts from the “outer man” of the physical senses to the “inner man” of the spiritual. But this is actually a contradiction of the hesychast theology of the body participation to the divine light. Thus, we will not support Golitzin’s opinion about the ‘shift from exterior to interior’, from anthropomorphism to the “formless light” beheld within, firstly because God is above the distinction between objective and subjective and secondly because the ascetics certainly had no fear of displaying their own theological opinions using linguistic shifts as subterfuges and dissimulations instead of their original experiences. Therefore, this study try to demonstrate through the “Veil” and “Face” theology, understood as being clothed and hidden revealed into divine light, that the Palamite theology and the Orthodox spirituality are being both liturgical-communitary and hesychast-contemplative. Embodiment is the theological and anthropological key. Ephrem, as we have seen above, juxtaposes the image of Moses being veiled with Jesus’ veiling oh Himself in the Incarnation. Face of Moses shone and he laid veil over his face, just as Lord, from the Womb, entered and put on the veil of the Body. On the other hand, mesopotamian mystic, John of Dalyatha’ distinction between the (revealed) divine Glory and (permanently hidden) divine nature anticipates Gregory Palamas’ essence-energies language by six centuries.

For me the veil (καταπέτασμα) theology reflects both the distinction between being and energies, as well the lived “immanent” apophaticism of the uncreated light. This light is that illuminates through Holy Spirit grace activity the “shining face” of the fathers. But the most eloquent explanatory text about the importance, not only of the theological but also liturgical, of the veil in *Orthodox Spirituality* is that of the father Stăniloae:

“The Orthodox East, keeping the καταπέτασμα closing the altar, continuously suggests that the divine being remains hidden and incomprehensible to the faithful. Westerners have removed the veil, for they do not know the difference between

divine energies, communicated to the world and the divine being forever remain unshared, as an inexhaustible reservoir of mystery".<sup>183</sup>

See here the genius of the hesychast theology. Therefore, Palamas' liturgical-sacramental theology about the consecrated bread who is "like a veil concealing the divinity" and the hesychast continuation of the experience of Desert Fathers "shining face" theophanic experience understood as the "Hesychast Veil" (καταπέτασμα), are both reconcilable into a theology of the uncreated light. Here the 'Veil' and the 'Face' are Christo-(logical)phanic related. 'Veil' theology and 'Face' Christology represents the forgotten roots of being-energies palamite-hesychast distinction and the 'somatic' experience of 'Christ-Light'.

As I have already explained in other studies published so far, the "aesthetics of apophaticism" establish in a "deconceptualization of concepts" form the experience of uncreated light (the apophatic aspect) in which the body (the aesthetic aspect) participates too. So, we delimitate our 'antinomic' *syntagm*, from the beginning, from three other forms of conceptualization of the experience of seeking and meeting the divine: 'theo-poetics' (from late antiquity), spiritual senses (in intellectual understanding) as well as Augustinian quest for the real self (as 'inner self').<sup>184</sup> I find my approach much closer to Andrew Louth' interpretation of dogma, because for him, also "the Orthodox dogma is

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<sup>183</sup> Dumitru Stăniloae, *Ascetica și Mistica Bisericii Ortodoxe* (București: EIBMBOR, 2002), 411, n. 527.

<sup>184</sup> Now the "theo-poetics" in 'process theology' (Alfred North Whitehead, Stanly Hopper, David Leroy Miller, Amos Wilder, Catherine Keller) or in the 'theo-poetic school' (namely, Drew University in New Jersey) is an alternative to the conceptual systematics of classical theology and the literalist hermeneutics in the use of religious language and symbols. "Theo-poetics" first appears in antiquity as the elongated for *theosis*, a process of deification: *theo-poiesis* as *becoming* divine ('apotheosis' of the world into God). Whitehead' *Process and Reality* as "trading beauty" and his use of 'poetics' as creative essence of reality (events are *aesthetic* processes), appear to be a mode of thought contrary to the *Theodramatic* of Hans Urs von Balthasar. On this, see: Roland Faber, *The Becoming of God: Process Theology, Philosophy, and Multireligious Engagement* (Eugene, Or: Cascade Books, Wipf & Stock, 2017), especially: "theo-poetics" and "theophany" 187-194, and 'God and Cosmos in creative mutuality ('mutual imanence') 121-127. Also, for the western theological and philosophical point of view regarding the form-critical schema for a theophany *Gattung* (genus, type) and the recurs to 'negative' thinking about the Graeco-Christian apophatic tradition (different from Orthodox understanding of apophaticism), see: John Kenneth Kuntz, *The Self Revelation of God*, (Westminster Press, 1967), 58-71; Bernard McGinn, "Hidden God and Hidden Self: The emergence of apophatic anthropology in Christian mysticism", in April D. DeConick, Grant Adamson (eds.), *Histories of the Hidden God: Concealment and Revelation in Western Gnostic, Esoteric, and Mystical Traditions* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2014), 87-100; David Bentley Hart, *The Experience of God: Being, Consciousness, Bliss* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2013), 87-291; Brendan Cook, *Pursuing Eudaimonia: Re-appropriating the Greek Philosophical Foundations of the Christian Apophatic Tradition* (Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2013), 133-199.

glimpsed more as beauty, than as logically coherent exposition”.<sup>185</sup> The distinctions, therefore serve to unite. Union and distinction – *gnosis* and *diakrisis* – belong together (would be no more *explanandum* but rather *explanans*). What remains antinomy, contradiction, concepts not properly formed at the level of concepts, may find resolution at the level of experience. 215 The single passage from the New Testament that perhaps most perfectly expresses the answer for the “*aesthetics of apophaticism*” is Paul’s comparison, in 2 Corinthians 3:12-18, between the veiled face of Moses and the unveiled faces of those being transformed, from glory to glory, into the likeness of Christ; and perhaps no word in that passage more perfectly captures the essence of that answer than the single, somewhat amphibologous participle κατοπτριζόμενοι<sup>186</sup>: either “beholding in a mirror” or “reflecting upon” in mirroring Christ within ourselves we are somehow being conformed to the very ‘splendor of his glory’, becoming radiant vessel of divine glory. Thus, the veil (καταπέτασμα) theology and its “clothing” cognate, will be able to restore understanding the signification of both “*aesthetics of apophaticism*” and “*shining face*” Christology.

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<sup>185</sup> Andrew Louth, “St Gregory Palamas and the Holy Mountain”, in Dimitri Conomos, Graham Speake (eds.), *Mount Athos, the Sacred Bridge: The Spirituality of the Holy Mountain* (Bern: Peter Lang, 2005), 49-68, here 62-65. Louth borrow from Pavel Florensky, *The Pillar and Ground of the Truth*, trans. Boris Jakim (Princeton, 1997), 117-119: any dogma contains an antinomy – a contradiction; if it did not, it would not be a dogma of *faith*, it would be something rationally apprehensible.

<sup>186</sup> David Bentley Hart, “The Hidden and the Manifest: Metaphysics after Nicaea,” in Aristotle Papanikolaou, George E. Demacopoulos, *Orthodox Readings of Augustine* (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir’s Seminary Press, 2008), 191-226, here 215.

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## HEALING THE WOUNDS OF HISTORY: THE STUTTGART DECLARATION OF GUILT (1945) AS A CONSTITUTIVE ACT OF THE POST-WAR GERMAN EVANGELICAL CHURCH

PIOTR KOPIEC\*

**ABSTRACT.** The history of both societies and social institutions provides us with the examples of whether acts or documents, which, while expressing various ideas and values, have become sources of political, social and cultural inspirations as well as a reference points for active struggling for these ideas and values. The examples of such documents are numerous: the Universal Declaration of Human Rights by the UN, the constitutions of particular states, the Treaty of Maastricht as a founding act of the European Union.

Another illustration of such an historic document is also the Stuttgart Declaration of Guilt (*Die Stuttgarter Schulderklärung*), which was released in 1945 by the Evangelical Church of Germany and today is declared to be one of its most fundamental acts. The document was prepared by the group of theologians and church leaders who were involved in the resistant movement against the German Nazi-state. The declaration confirmed an awareness on the part of the German Evangelicals that the Protestant Churches in Germany were also held responsible for the moral disaster of Nazism, even though their blame consisted, above all, in a passive attitude towards evil. The paper surveys the main aspects of the history of declaration and attempts to provide a brief reflection on its theological and sociological importance. Furthermore, it stresses the links between the secularization processes and the nationalism reflected in the history of the German state and German church.

**Keywords:** The Stuttgart Declaration of Guilt, Evangelical Church in Germany, nationalism, secularism

The Institution of the Evangelical Church in Germany (*Evangelische Kirche in Deutschland, EKD*) traces its own history back to the end of the World War II. In a time of moral, cultural, social and economic calamities, a number of Evangelical priests, theologians and churchmen were looking for the new paths for German

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Protestantism after the moral collapse in the epoch of the Nazi-State. It was these representatives of the Church who were aware both of guilt of the German nation and of Christians partaking in the insanity and atrocities committed in the name of nationalism during the thirteen years of Hitler's power. They declared that the Church should be held responsible for its silent acceptance of the State's ideology. In spite of the unfavourable reaction of the majority of both their own Churches and the rest of the nation, they built a new ecclesial structure which sought to develop a new identity. Their struggles were depicted in many ways, particularly in the Constitution of the Church (*Grundordnung*) adopted in July 1948 in Eisenach.<sup>1</sup> Yet, the constitutive act had been preceded by the *Stuttgart Declaration of Guilt* (*The Stuttgarter Schuldbekentnis*), a document prepared and signed only three months after Germany had capitulated and which is today an integral and intrinsic factor of the identity of the EKD. One must state that this distinctive act of confession pronounced by a relatively small group of theologians on behalf of an entire nation, made the Church credible again in the eyes of following generations.

The Declaration brought about a break in the Protestant confessional tradition. It inspired a theological approach towards history, society and culture.<sup>2</sup> Furthermore, it demonstrated a sense of responsibility for the future of Christianity, the one which derived from the observations of the increasing secularization processes. In the opinion of theologians gathered in Stuttgart, the Church, when facing the new challenges of a future world, must be settled and reconciled with the past. The document may be thus declared to be an history-breaking act, the significance of which for the institution of the Church is primordial. It is still a source of inspiration for contemporary theological attempts to find the proper and credible place for Christian Churches in order to advance their mission.

## I. Christianity, Secularization and Nationalism

The cruel experiences of the World War II were, and still are, influencing Western civilization. The moral disaster of Nazism led, on the one hand, to the degradation of many social institutions which supported traditionally legitimized social order and, on the other, to the slow erosion of the ideas that had driven this civilization for the three centuries since the

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<sup>1</sup> A. Silomon, *Anspruch und Wirklichkeit der „besonderen Gemeinschaft“*. *Der Ost-West-Dialog der deutschen evangelischen Kirchen* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2006), 38.

<sup>2</sup> P. Kopiec, *Stuttgarckie Wyznanie Winy (1945) jako akt nawrócenia instytucjonalnego* [*The Stuttgart Declaration of Guilt (1945) as an Act of Institutional Conversion*], w: *Nawrócenie. Ewangeliczne wezwanie i konteksty interpretacyjne*, red. M. Składanowski, T. Syczewski, J. Połowianuk (Lublin: Wydawnictwo KUL, 2015), 127-149.

Enlightenment. The European pride in human achievements collided with the images of atrocities revealed in the liberated concentration camps. The conviction of the “world becoming adult” pronounced earlier by Kant became delusional once again. Jean-François Lyotard, when introducing the notion of postmodernity to philosophy and sociology, brought into prominence the term of metanarratives, thus, the leading ideas that organized cultures and societies up to the middle of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Their bankruptcy, as he firmly claimed, was to be observed in the places symbolized by Auschwitz and Kolyma. Metanarratives lost its credibility and gave way to micronarratives, thus, the internal convictions shared by a countless number of small groups or individuals. The results of this process must have been reported in the illustration of relativism, the only common approved rule of the postmodern epoch.

The postmodern relativism appears to have been combined with the 1960s counterculture phenomena, a process that has weakened, or deeply transformed, many social institutions of the old order. The post-war generations have feverishly asked what happened in Auschwitz, and, also, “where was God in Auschwitz?”<sup>3</sup> In the opinion of many people, states, culture, politics, family, axiological systems, and the previous model of upbringing, all of them lost their sense and credibility, since they were creating by and simultaneously created social institutions that failed to prevent from the totalitarian insanity. Accusations by the counterculture movements were also aimed at Christian churches and Christian culture, for they were considered to be an important part of the old order.

The Churches have paid for the close, and sometimes immediate, cooperation with the nationalist ideology in the interwar period, as in the case of Francoist Spain. Yet, while it is true to say, that Church leaders were late in recognizing the threats of national egoism and national darwinism, it is also true, that the nationalist idea was assumed to be an ally of Christianity in facing the dangers of communism. Even though Christians of all confessions were giving their lives in prisons and concentration camps, and on battlefields, as they fought atrocities driven by ideologies, an alliance of state and church in the majority of European countries paved the way to the secularization of the public sphere in the post-war reality.

A number of theologians had warned against nationalism as did most prominent Protestant authors, as Karl Barth, Dietrich Bonhoeffer and Reinhold Niebuhr. Niebuhr, in particular, perceptively understood the nature of nationalism and its relationship to secularization. In his opinion, the triumph of the nationalist idea was deeply related to the moral alienation of a

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<sup>3</sup> N. Solomon, “Jewish Holocaust Theology”, *The Way*, 37, 3, (July 1997): 250.

secularized culture. He assumes that God is the centre of all values, thus, the only credible axiology is embedded in the Christian faith. When removing the notion of God from ethical and epistemological reasoning, a source of values has to be discovered in nature. Thus such natural instincts, as egoism and a desire to dominate, determines the hierarchy of values. Since these values are revealed and received in the culture of a given group or society, they strengthen its identity and justify acts committed on its behalf. Consequently, the nation as a large group of special significance, fills the empty place left by religion which is vanishing as a social force. Niebuhr sees the idea of nation as a spare-religion, or, more accurately, a counter-religion that puts national egoism at the top of the hierarchy of values.<sup>4</sup> According to this interpretation, nationalism paves the way to the intensification of secularization processes. In Niebuhr's eyes an alliance of state and church entailed serious consequences for Christianity. It is worth mentioning, that although Niebuhr's interpretation concerned the case of the German Nazi-state in particular, it was many times confirmed in the history of 20<sup>th</sup> century.

## **II. The Struggle (*Kirchenkampf*) for the Credibility of the Evangelical Church during the German Nazi-State.**

Commentary prepared by the synod of the Confessing Church (*Bekennende Kirche*) held in Wrocław in October 1943 has contained these poignant words: "Woe betide us and our nation, if we approved the killing people because of their race or because it was assumed they were not allowed to live".<sup>5</sup> It was one of the last act of the heroic history of the resistance movement on the part of the Evangelical Church against the Nazi-state.

These words witnessed the existential tragedy of their authors and, at the same time, revealed their awareness of being absolutely alienated from their own nation. The loneliness of the small group of churchmen and theologians deepened as they were discovering the extent of the participation of their Church and theology in the collective insanity of Nazism. They insisted that the Church has contributed to the spread of the nationalist idea to a certain degree, on the both ideological and institutional levels. Regarding the first one, they regarded the orthodox Lutheran teaching on two kingdoms as being partly responsible for the blind cult of authority, the unquestioning acceptance of the social order and the intrinsic principle of obedience

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<sup>4</sup> P. Merkley, *Rheinhold Niebuhr. A Political Account* (Montreal, Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1975), 222.

<sup>5</sup> A. Morawska, *Chrześcijańin w Trzeciej Rzeszy* (Warszawa: Biblioteka Więzi, 1970), 77.

embedded in the German society (*Obrigkeit*), even as the social and political relationship was being corrupted.<sup>6</sup> Regarding the latter, they looked at the immediate history of the division of their Church into two disproportionate parts. The more powerful and more numerous movement of the “German Christians” (*Deutsche Christen*) and the above mentioned above organization of the Confessional Church. The first one was an important supporter of Hitler’s regime, the second one is today assumed to be a crucial part of the resistance in German society.<sup>7</sup> The fight between both sides was described as the *Kirchenkampf* and it is the history of a moral helplessness, apathy and theological compromises destroying Christianity from inside on the one hand, and, on the other, the history of heroism, moral inflexibility and theological heights.

Members of the Confessional Church very early discerned the inevitability of the defeat of the German Nazi-state. They also understood the immensity of the guilt of the German society. For the first time they developed an understanding of the specific role of the Church in demonstrating and realizing this guilt and in expressing repentance on behalf of an entire nation. In the opinion of Armin Buyens, as the starting point of the process leading to the confession of the nation may be acknowledged in the exchange of letters between representatives of the Confessional Church and the ecumenical working team of the future World Council of Churches. The German side was represented by Hans Asmussen from Berlin, and the ecumenical side by the most prominent figures of the ecumenism of the time: Willem Visser’t Hoof and Karl Barth.<sup>8</sup>

Members of the ecumenical movement and participants of the German resistance were in touch from the very outset of the war, particularly in order to help those who were persecuted by Hitler’s regime, e.g. people of Jewish descent, and, to report to the ecumenical circles as well as to the European Churches about the situation in the German society. Theologians and churchmen who were engaged in the reciprocal relations belonged to the elites of the Church, as e.g. Theophil Wurm, the bishop of Württemberg and Dietrich Bonhoeffer. All of them were earlier involved in the preparation of the Barmen Declaration, the founding act of the Confessional Church and most of them were later signatories to the Stuttgart Declaration of Guilt.

Yet apart from the often heroic history of the people involved in the resistance against the Nazi-state, the documents reporting their activities reveal a paradoxical attitude of being torn between their Christianity and their national loyalty. The content of letters sent to the members of the ecumenical

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<sup>6</sup> Ibid., 55.

<sup>7</sup> E. Röhm, J. Thierfelder, *Kirche-Staat-Politik. Zum Öffentlichkeitsauftrag der Kirche* (Stuttgart: Calwer Verlag), 44ff.

<sup>8</sup> A. Boyens, “Das Stuttgarter Schuldbekennnis von 19 Oktober 1945 – Entstehung und Bedeutung”, *Vierteljahrshefte für Zeitgeschichte*, 19 (1971) Heft 4: 575.

movement shows the depth of their internal struggle, driven as it was by the awareness of both the guilt of their nation and also their patriotism. In a letter to Visser't Hooft Asmussen asked, "how the nations were to bear the burden of the terrifying guilt resulting from the war", and, he stressed, that, "the question of guilt should not be dealt with as a political problem but as a spiritual one".<sup>9</sup> Furthermore, the author, while referring to the teachings on the priestly office of the Church, stressed the need for the common begging prayer as well as for the act of common confession of guilt. On the other hand, some utterances used in the text, have stirred many controversies, even among friends within the ecumenical movement. First of all, it has seemed Asmussen would not acknowledge the entire responsibility of Germans for the outbreak of war, and, further, he would expect a reciprocal act of confession of guilt, did by Germans and other nations who took part in the war.

It is striking to examine and to reveal the thinking of those who were involved in the German resistance against Hitler's regime. As mentioned above, they were torn apart by an internal crash of awareness of guilt of their own nation and their feeling of national belonging. The fact, that even members of the Confessional Church, thus, the most fervent adversaries of Hitler, remained in the intrinsic conflict, shows, how effective the propaganda of Nazi-state was, and how much it has influenced their identity. There were many fields where ideology shaped perception of Germans, and one of the most important was constituted by religion and theology. Language used by the then spin-doctors was full of religious and even mystic references and terms. Furthermore, theological thinking in dualistic categories of who is good and who is bad, allowed Nazis to organize the culture and the system of values as they wanted. Such a corrupted hierarchy of values was actually strengthening, as the fall of Hitler's regime became imminent. A millions of soldiers gave their lives on the battlefields and civilians lost their families, and homes. When observing and experiencing war atrocities, Germans regarded themselves as being another victim of war they had broken up. Yet these feelings of collective harm was combined with and intensified by the principal objectives of Nazi-ideology, making society more vulnerable to the demands of the idea of national state and justifying sacrifices for this idea. This has relativized the guilt of the German nation, in particular the parts of society who later protested against the trial of Nazi war criminals.

It is certainly important to take into consideration a gradual process in revealing the enormity of the crimes committed on behalf of the German

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<sup>9</sup> G. Bessier, *Intimately Associated for Many Years. George K. A. Bells and Willem A. Visser't Hooft's Common Life-Work in the Service of the Church Universal – Mirrored in their Correspondance. (Part One 1938-1949)* (Newcastle: Cambridge Scholar Publishing, 2015), 15.

nation. Immediately after the war, as atrocities from the concentration camps were coming to light, circumstances around the discussion about guilt were also changing. Such a process is well reflected in the history of the “Message to the German Churches”. The document was developed in the headquarters of the World Council Churches, just as the ecumenical organization was being established. The content was firstly written by German co-workers of the WCC and then summarized by Willem A. Visser’t Hooft, who was the first general secretary of the Genevan organization. The document addressed following topics: crimes committed on behalf of the entire German nation; genocide of the Jews; extermination of population on massive scale in Eastern and Southern Europe; resistance and protests on a part of churchmen against persecutions; the passive attitude of British Christians, who disregarded the threats of the Nazi-Germany; their poor support of those, who fought against Hitler’s regime; acknowledgement of the true Church of Jesus Christ existing in Germany; support of the German Christians, who would have admitted the guilt of German nation; the future challenge to rebuild the Church, the institution of the family and international life in Europe.<sup>10</sup>

The summary of this ecumenical message could be described as a working plan of the WCC in the post-war Europe. In the first decade of its existence the organization focused on the healing the wounds of a destroyed Europe and injured European societies. Moreover, it played an important role in reconciliation between European nations. On the other hand, the circumstances of the writing of the message, as well as discussion on its content have shown, how differently the matter of war and repentance was understood by the European. Britons regarded it as absolutely unacceptable to compare British passivity to Hitler before the war with the enormity of the German war crimes. Consequently, as more and more Nazi crimes were revealed, the document and its summary produced by Visser’t Hooft was criticized and, eventually rejected by ecumenists from the WCC. It is worthwhile to add, that later many historians cast doubt on the unilateral guilt of the German side:

“The defeated Germans, at the mercy of their conquerors in staged trials which afforded the accused little opportunity to place the war in historical perspective, were unable to raise the issue of the war crimes of the victors. This pretence of a collective, unilateral criminality on the part of the Germans afforded the victors a classic, dehumanizing, un-Christian exoneration”.<sup>11</sup>

The gradual awareness of the need of an entire nation, and also of the Evangelical Church in Germany, to confess their guilt, is the history of self-overcoming, of rejecting the past thinking and of beginning anew., it is thus,

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<sup>10</sup> Boyens, *Das Stuttgarter Schuldbekentnis*, *ibid.*, 584ff.

<sup>11</sup> C. R. Lang, “Imposed German Guilt: The Stuttgart Declaration of 1945”, *Journal of Historical Review*, 8 (1988), 55-78.

the history of conversion, and, one must emphasize, a collective conversion. These two Christian Churches were the only institutions at the time, that were able to bear the task of rebuilding German society after the moral, cultural and social catastrophe driven by the Nazis. Yet this would be possible only when the guilt was confessed.

### **III. The Stuttgart Declaration of Guilt as a Constitutive Act of New Social Order**

“The Council of the Protestant Church in Germany welcomes representatives of the Ecumenical Council of Churches at its meeting in Stuttgart on 18.-19. October 1945.

We are all the more grateful for this visit, as we not only know that we are with our people in a large community of suffering, but also in a solidarity of guilt. With great pain we say: By us infinite wrong was brought over many peoples and countries. That which we often testified to in our communities, we express now in the name of the whole Church: We did fight for long years in the name of Jesus Christ against the mentality that found its awful expression in the National Socialist regime of violence; but we accuse ourselves for not standing to our beliefs more courageously, for not praying more faithfully, for not believing more joyously, and for not loving more ardently.

Now a new beginning is to be made in our churches. Based on the Holy Scripture, with complete seriousness directed to the Lord of the Church, they start to cleanse themselves of the influences of beliefs foreign to the faith and to reorganize themselves. We hope to the God of grace and mercy that He will use our churches as His tools and give them license to proclaim His word and to obtain obedience for His will, amongst ourselves and among our whole people.

The fact that we, in this new beginning, find ourselves sincerely connected with the other churches of the ecumenical community fills us with great joy. We hope to God that by the common service of the churches the spirit of violence and revenge, which again today wants to become powerful, will be directed to the whole world, and that the spirit of peace and love will come to predominate, in which alone tortured humanity can find healing.

Thus we ask at a time, in which the whole world needs a new beginning: *Veni creator Spiritus!* (Come, spirit of the creator!)”.<sup>12</sup>

Although content of the confession is very condensed, the text contains rich meanings. When making a theological analysis, it is possible to distinguish at least three important references. Firstly, the declaration refers to the Barmen Declaration, in particular to the words: “We reject the false doctrine, as though there were areas of our life in which we would not belong to Jesus Christ, but to other lords-areas in which we would not need justification and

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<sup>12</sup> The Stuttgart Declaration of Guilt: <http://www.history.ucsb.edu/faculty/marcuse/projects/niem/StuttgartDeclaration.htm> [Access: 18.05.2016]

sanctification through him”.<sup>13</sup> Secondly, there is reflected the theology of Dietrich Bonhoeffer, an approach that later influenced decisively theological trends in the Evangelical Church in Germany. In the collection of the prison letters, that were posthumously released as a volume “Letter and Papers from Prison” (German title “Widerstand und Ergebung. Briefe und Aufzeichnungen aus der Haft”), Bonhoeffer bitterly stated that “ Our church has been fighting during these years only for its self-preservation, as if that were an end in itself. It has become incapable of bringing the word of reconciliation and redemption to humankind and to the world. So the words we used before must lose their power, be silenced, and we can be Christians today in only two ways, through prayer and in doing justice among human beings<sup>14</sup>. In order to be a credible force of the secular epoch, church must reconstruct its structure and functions. Church must also explain to modern societies, what does it mean to live with Christ and how to live “for others”. Thirdly, the words of the Declaration reveal theological belief about a need for realizing the Kingdom of God on earth, here and now, *hic et nunc*, a concept deeply embedded in the liberal theology of the 19th century.

As it was mentioned above, the writing of the was preceding by long discussions. Also, while it developed, the enormity of the crimes committed by the German Nazi state were being revealed. Nevertheless, the authors of the declaration were chastised from two opposite side. One the one hand the document was welcomed by various European Evangelical churches, yet, their members raised doubts over its representativity, thus, they asked whether it is affirmed by all of German society. On the other hand, Germans did not understand the meaning of collective sin and a need for the confession of guilt at the time. The majority of Germans regarded themselves as victims of the Nazis, furthermore, the feeling of defeat and harm were strengthened due to the economic and social calamities. Thus, the doubts raised by the European evangelicals were justified.

Authors of the document met also stumbling blocks within their own church. Deep divisions were revealed again and again, based on the evaluation of the attitude of the German church towards Nazis. Tensions were also reflected in the attitudes of the delegates to the Church Conference that was organized at the turn of August and September 1945 in Treysa, Hessen. The conference was the preparatory meeting for the gathering in Eisenach in 1948, where the Evangelical

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<sup>13</sup> N. Davies, M. Convey, *World Christianity in the Twentieth Century. A Reader* (London: SCM Press, 2008), 4.

<sup>14</sup> D. Bonhoeffer, *Letters and Papers from Prison*, ed. John W. de Gruchy (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2010), 389.

Church in Germany was officially established. Many conservative churchmen and priests, in particular from the Northern Germany, did not want to consider issue of a guilt of the church, since they did not accept there was a need of such a discussion.<sup>15</sup> Otto Dibelius, the bishop of Berlin and one of the most prominent activists of the Confessional Church, wrote, that many churchmen were opposed to the “account of guilt” of Germans. Furthermore, many worried about the consequences of such a document. In their opinion it could justify a harsher Allies policy against a defeated Germany.<sup>16</sup>

Consequently, the preparation of the declaration required great determination on behalf of the authors, as well as courage, to resist mounting criticism. They eventually expressed doubts about their efforts. In particular, they were struck by the arguments of their adversaries who emphasized their responsibility for the faithful and the importance of belonging to the national community.

Significance of the act of the declaration of guilt is that it consisted of an historical examination of conscience. It paved the way for a new, institutional Church structure, that has helped it to prepare to face new oncoming challenges of secularization.

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In spite of its concise form, the Stuttgart Declaration of Guilt embraces many primordial factors concerning whether human nature, or principles of social processes, or cultural patterns and human spirituality. It is, first of all, an act that reflected Christian responsibility, wisdom and humility of its authors. Theologians who were gathered in Stuttgart understood what are the main objectives of the church. Even though majority of them were victims of the Nazi state, they became representatives and promoters of a declaration act that had acknowledged a guilt of the nation. They saw their functions on two levels, theological and historical. The first one would have consisted in a propitiative prayer and representation of the German nation before God, the second would have helped German society to accept an awareness of its own corporate sin and to achieve a reconciliation with other European nations.

Signatories of the declaration were aware that their efforts would bear fruit very slowly. They face also uncertainty over church’s involvement in the processes concerning the nation. Deep reflection by theologians resulted in acceptance that the Church might lose its credibility, and consequently, might

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<sup>15</sup> C. Vollnhaus, *Evangelische Kirche und Entnazifizierung 1945-1949: Die Last der nationalsozialistischen Vergangenheit*, München: R. Oldenbourg Verlag 1989, s. 34.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, s. 35.

need a new inception. In their opinion that was the situation of the German Evangelical church. It was clearly highlighted twenty years later, when secularization processes, counterculture of the 1960' and questions concerned history were transforming Western societies. The act of converting of the institution of church helped to make it credible and to prepare it to face the challenge of post-war society and culture.

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## ***BOOK REVIEWS***

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**Vasile Rojneac, *Sfântul Niceta de Remesiana. Viața și activitatea*  
[Saint Nicetas of Remesiana. His life and activity]  
(Cluj-Napoca: Cluj University Press), 2017, 330 pp.**

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At a first reading of the title, any reader would presuppose that this book is just a simple monograph of a Saint of the Orthodox Church, written by compiling ancient sources and on the ground of countless academic papers, a book only for scholars interested in the life of a Saint of the fourth and fifth centuries. Fortunately, this presupposition is totally wrong. The book published by Vasile Rojneac and presented as a doctoral dissertation at the Faculty of Orthodox Theology of Cluj-Napoca, under the coordination of Rev. Fr. Professor Dr. Alexandru Moraru, is a work of great importance that deals with the detailed analysis of the life, activity, works, theological conceptions of a Saint, who was unfortunately overlooked by Orthodox theological research despite the fact that the Orthodox Theology of the 20<sup>th</sup> century was influenced by the so-called neo-patristic synthesis promoting a “return to the Fathers”. This kind of synthesis was focused mostly on the Cappadocian Fathers or on the Greek Fathers from the Eastern part of the Roman Empire. The book analyses the vast pastoral and missionary activity and the theological and dogmatic works of Saint Nicetas, bishop of Remesiana, a city in the Roman province of Dacia Mediterranea.

The book published by Vasile Rojneac is important for the following reasons. Any attempt of describing the life, personality and activity of Saint Nicetas, bishop, theo-

logian, and composer of liturgical verse, represents a difficult approach due to the small amount of ancient sources regarding details from his biography. This fact is well emphasised by the author in the first chapter of the book, entitled “Reception of Saint Nicetas of Remesiana in (contemporary) historiography”, dedicated to the *status quo* of the academic research on the life, personality, and activity of Saint Nicetas. The chapter is divided in two subchapters dedicated to foreign and Romanian academic literature regarding Saint Nicetas of Remesiana. This method of approaching the theme is very important for the author because it gives him the possibility to identify several issues that were not debated or that did not draw the attention of the scholars until now. This approach is very important as well for the identification of several subjective interpretations that can be found in the academic literature regarding the life and activity of St. Nicetas on the ground of confessional predeterminations. For example, the author emphasised the position of several Greek-Catholic theologians who, by studying the activity of Saint Nicetas of Remesiana, were giving arguments for an extended jurisdiction of the pope in the Roman Empire, or the position of some Romanian historians and theologians who were using the activity of Saint Nicetas as an argument for the Christianisation of the Daco-Roman population of

the upper Danube valley, being considered the "Apostle of Daco-Romans". This is the reason why the author affirms that: "*Bishop Nicetas was not more Western and less Oriental or more "Catholic" and less "Orthodox" in the sense that these words are understood today, because he lived in a period when both the West and the East were "One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic" the Church, he himself understanding and defining it as "communion of saints"*".

The second chapter of the book, entitled "Life and activity of Saint Nicetas of Remesiana" analyses the ancient sources regarding the youth, education, ecclesiastical and political context in which Nicetas was elected bishop of the city of Remesiana, as well as his friendship with the bishop Paulinus of Nola. The author describes this friendship as a true example of episcopal collegiality that can be applied today as well in our Orthodox Church. At the same time, the chapter is dedicated to the missionary area of St. Nicetas. Was the jurisdiction of the see of Remesiana including the population of the upper Danube valley? Taking into account many opinions of the scholars and based on the ancient sources, the author came to the conclusion that the missionary area of Saint Nicetas must be limited only to the jurisdiction of his bishopric and not exceeding the jurisdictional territories of the see of Remesiana. This conclusion of the author is based on the limits of canonical jurisdiction imposed by the 2<sup>nd</sup> Canon of the Second Ecumenical Council (381) and on the 3<sup>rd</sup> canon of the Council of Serdica (343), the existence of several bishoprics in the lower Danube valley which made impossible a canonical missionary activity of Saint Nicetas in the upper Danube valley without an immixture in the canonical jurisdiction of other bishops, and the political, ec-

clesiastical, and doctrinal context of the times imposed a permanent presence of the bishop in his eparchy. According to these arguments it would be very difficult to consider Saint Nicetas of Remesiana the "Apostle of Daco-Romans" or the "Apostle of the ancestors of Romanians", as some of the Romanian academic scholars believed and argued. Despite this, the author is not excluding the possibility that the Dacians from the upper Danube valley listened the sermons of the bishop of Remesiana, but they sure did this in the jurisdiction of his bishopric.

The third chapter of the book, entitled "The works of Saint Nicetas of Remesiana", analyses the authenticity of the works of St. Nicetas preserved in manuscript or of the works attributed to him during history as well as the transmission of the text of this works before the first printed editions. The author is taking into account all the published editions of the texts attributed to St. Nicetas. The works of St. Nicetas are divided by the author in "Dogmatic works" (*Libelli instructioni, De diversis appellationibus D. N. Iesu Christo convenientibus*), "Liturgical works" (*De vigiliis servorum Dei, De psalmodiae bono, Te Deum laudamus*), and "Moral works" (*Ad virginem lapsam, Epistle from the Corbeienne manuscript*). During this chapter, the author is critically analysing the transmission of the texts and describing these works according to the cultural, political, and religious context of the fourth and fifth century. The author tried to determine for every work the sources and the influences from other Church Fathers, both from East and West, such as: Tertullian, Cyprian of Carthage, Saint Cyril of Jerusalem, Ambrose of Milan or Augustine, Saint Gregory the Theologian, Saint Basil the Great, Saint Gregory of Nyssa and Saint John Chrysostom, or Augustine.

The last chapter of the book is called "The theology of Saint Nicetas". Based on the division of the works found in the previous chapter, the author is analysing the possibility of a theological system in the works of St. Nicetas of Remesiana. Accordingly, the author gives arguments for a division of the theology of Saint Nicetas in: "Liturgical Theology", "Dogmatic Theology", and "Moral Theology". The first subchapter is dealing with the way in which St. Nicetas developed for his pastoral and missionary activity a precise theology regarding the institution of Catechumenate and the stages in the Rite of Christian Initiations. One of the most important approaches of this book is represented by the theological analysis of the work *Libelli instructionis*, which had a major role in the Christianization of the barbarians in the lower Danube valley as well as in the developing of a Latin culture among them, and of the dogmatic reflections pre-

sent by the author in the treatises *De ratione fidei*, *De Spiritus Sancti potentia* and *De Symbolo*. The author analyses as well the dogmatic theology of St. Nicetas regarding triadology, mariology, ecclesiology, and eschatology. The book ends with an important subchapter in which the author is bringing arguments for a moral theology of St. Nicetas. Based on the work "*Ad virginem lapsam*", the author is analysing the theological understanding of monachism, spiritual struggles and challenges of monastic life, and the moral value of repentance.

Taking into consideration all the aspects presented by the author, I find this book to be both historically informative as well as contemporarily relevant for the academic research regarding the life, activity and works of Saint Nicetas of Remesiana.

**RĂZVAN PERȘA**



## **BOOK REVIEWS**

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### **Pantelis Kalaitzidis, *Orthodoxy & Political Theology, (Doxa & Praxis)*, Geneva: World Council of Churches Publications, 2012, 148 pp.**

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Nine decades after patenting the topic of "Political Theology"<sup>1</sup> as a notion that speaks about the way how the love for the neighbour from the Gospel can be transmuted in the political life,<sup>2</sup> the work of professor Pantelis Kalaitzidis, from Volos Academy brings an Orthodox perspective on this topic. Since the beginning of the discussions about this subject, there were also some Catholic approaches of it,<sup>3</sup> Protestant and ecumenical ones<sup>4</sup>, and recently, it was published an interesting collective volume that summarizes the Orthodox view from multiple perspectives.<sup>5</sup>

In this context, a book to emphasize the Orthodox approach on Political Theology and to offer a synthesis of the topic from this point of view was not only important, but also expected. Therefore, answering this expectance and doing interesting connections with other confessional approaches, the aforementioned Greek scholar<sup>6</sup> is offering an interesting research, entitled *Orthodoxy and Political Theology*. His book brings together two texts that have already been published, connected together not only through the subject, but also through the approaches, as it is segmented in two big parts. The first one entitled: "*Orthodoxy and Political Theology*" (p. 15-86), debates some interesting topics, namely: "*The theology of politics*" (p. 15-44), "*The politics of Theology*" (p. 45-64), "*The public role of the Church and Theology*" (p. 81-86), and tries to answer the question: "*Why has Orthodoxy not developed a Political or Liberation Theology?*" (p. 65-80). The second one, entitled "*Eschatology and politics*" (p. 89-140) is dealing with the eschatological dimension of Church and

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<sup>1</sup> First used by Carl Schmitt in 1922. See: Carl Schmitt, *Political Theology: Four Chapters on the concept of Sovereignty*, trans. by George Schwab, (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1985).

<sup>2</sup> Jean-Louis Leuba, "Autour de la Theologie politique", in Mihail P. Grigoris (ed.), *Nikos A. Nissiotis, Religion, Philosophy and Sport in Dialogue. In memoriam*, (Athens: Press of Thessaloniki Theological Institute, 1994), 203-207.

<sup>3</sup> Like: Jean-Yves Calvez, *La politique & Dieu*, col. "Essais", Les Editions du Cerf, Paris, 1985.

<sup>4</sup> See, for example: Thia Cooper, *Controversies in Political Theology: Development or Liberation?*, (Controversies in Contextual Theology Series), (London: SCM PRESS, 2007); Peter Losonczi, Mika-Luoma-Aho, Aakash Singh (eds.), *The Future of Political Theology. Religious and Theological perspectives*, (Burlington; Ashgate, Farnham, 2011); Gabriel R. Ricci (ed.), *Politics in Theology*, (Religion & Public Life 38), (New Brunswick and London: Transaction Publishers, 2012).

<sup>5</sup> Kristina Stoeckl, Ingeborg Gabriel, Aristotle Papanikolaou (eds.), *Political Theologies in Orthodox Christi-*

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*anity. Common Challenges – Divergent Positions*, (T&T Clark Theology), (Edinburgh: T&T Clark and Bloomberg, 2017).

<sup>6</sup> There must be mentioned that some of his works has already been translated in Romanian language. See: Pantelis Kalaitzidis, *Ortodoxie și modernitate. O introducere*, translated in Romanian by Florin-Cătălin Ghiț, (Universitatis, Series Theologia Socialis 9), (Cluj-Napoca: Eikon Press, 2010).

its relationships with Political Theology (p. 89-112), relation between ministry and power (p. 113-134), and between Theocracy and secular power (p. 135-140).

From its very beginning, Kalaitzidis mentioned the aim of his research<sup>7</sup> by defining the fundamental notions and emphasizing the historiography of it. Afterwards, without losing himself in an analysis that imitates the Protestant model (like some of our researchers are doing today) he takes over its fundamental elements and benchmarks, and he goes deep into the History of Orthodoxy showing that the roots of Political Theology in that area must be sought in the beginnings of Christianity. Also their development can be seen in the history of Byzantine Empire,<sup>8</sup> where the people believed that "their state and society were the mate-

rialization of the kingdom of God on earth."<sup>9</sup> Then, comparing the opinions of two important theologians of nowadays about the Byzantine legacy, namely Zizioulas and Yannaras, he is disagreeing with the attitude of the last one on the idealization of those times.<sup>10</sup>

After these introductory and historiographical remarks, he points out some fundamental questions for the entire debate:

"Of course, the crucial question, after this brief reference, to left-leaning political theology and liberation theology, is: *Why, with few exceptions, had Orthodoxy not developed a "political theology" in this second, liberating, and radical sense of the term?* Why have prominent Orthodox theologians underestimated, or even misunderstood, the meaning and context of political theology? Why has the idea of the "theological Christian left" not developed in Orthodoxy, as it has in nearly all the countries of Western Europe as well as America? And furthermore, since we frequently consider elements of political theology *avant la lettre*, can we extrapolate from the texts written by the Fathers of the church: is the denunciation of wealth, propriety, usury, or economic exploitation enough for us to talk about the Fathers of the church having a "political theology" when these figures lived, worked, and wrote in an era completely different from our own, an era which clearly lacked democracy and freedom?"<sup>11</sup>

<sup>7</sup> "The aim of this book, therefore, is to study the relationship between Orthodoxy and political theology. Taking as its starting point the invention of "political theology" by the German conservative philosopher of law Carl Schmidt, followed by the leftist turn in political theology initiated by theologians such as Johann Baptist Metz, Jurgen Moltmann, Dorothee Solle and Latin American liberation theology, this work proposes to examine the reasons for which Orthodoxy – with a few exceptions – has not developed a "political theology", in the liberating and radical sense of term. It looks also to understand why prominent Orthodox theologians have underestimated, or even misunderstood the meaning and context the meaning and context of political theology, or why the idea of the "theological or Christian left" has not developed in the Orthodox milieu, as it has in many countries of Western Europe and America." Pantelis Kalaitzidis, *Orthodoxy & Political Theology*, (Doxa & Praxis), Geneva: World Council of Churches Publications, 2012, 9-10.

<sup>8</sup> "It is religious-political ideology that remains dominant thorough the Byzantine and post-Byzantine periods- never openly of fully declared as such but frequently alluded to in several Byzantine texts." *Ibidem*, 27.

<sup>9</sup> Steven Runciman, *The Byzantine Theocracy*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1977, 1.

<sup>10</sup> "The same, however, cannot be said about Yannaras. Not only does he idealize, socially and politically, the theological texts he sets out to interpret – not only does he glorify entire cultures and societies, such as the Byzantine and the Greek society under the Turkish rule, while whole-heartedly condemning other societies such as the medieval West – he can be taken to task, I think for drawing a direct connection between texts and social reality." Pantelis Kalaitzidis, *Orthodoxy & Political Theology*, 40-41.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibidem*, 53.

Some of them are answered, others only debated in an interesting and useful presentation. Speaking about the fact that the Orthodox debate on Political Theology has never known the impact from other ones, he shows that the historical context has a huge influence on this.<sup>12</sup> He links the discourse about politics to the notion of power<sup>13</sup>, which may be a temptation for a secularised world like the one where we live in. After that, he points some very important aspects about this topic, offering a perspective about the way how the Church should behave with politics:

"The church's political discourse, then, must never lose sight of the fundamental importance in Christian consciousness of an active expectation of the kingdom of God, nor content itself with the now familiar themes of the defence of the nation and national continuity, ethno-cultural identity, or the demographic problem – which, of course, are neither issues nor priorities in the kingdom of God. The church's obligation, according to the example set by its founder, is to voluntarily withdraw from the quest of worldly power and authority, to fight the temptation to become a power itself or to decide to become involved in politics in an authoritarian way – to become established, in other words, within history, forgetting its eschatological orientation."<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> "In everything I said above, which can be summarized as the unquestionable primacy of the ethnic-national over the theological-ecclesial and the social, we must also bear in mind the particular conditions in which the Orthodox Church lived during the 19<sup>th</sup> and primarily 20<sup>th</sup> centuries. And this has to do not only with the creation of national Balkan states or with the "Orthodox" Balkan monarchies and the religious nationalisms or ethno-religious ideologies, mythologies, and narratives that developed in the imaginations of their peoples. It also relates to the October Revolution of 1917 (as well as with the so-called "socialist" regimes that ruled in the Eastern Europe after World War II) and the unprecedented anti-religious persecution that this unleashed, the first victims of which were the Orthodox Churches of Russia and the other Orthodox countries." *Ibidem*, p. 74. Cf. Catherine Piskstock, "Is Orthodoxy Radical", in Peter Losonczy, Mika-Luoma-Aho, Aakash Singh (eds.), *The Future of Political Theology. Religious and Theological perspectives*, (Burlington; Ashgate, Farnham, 2011), 67-74.

<sup>13</sup> "The discourse about politics, apart from the obvious question about the relationship between the church and the world, and the church and history, leads to a discussion about the origin, nature and limits of power in its worldly manifestation, and begs the study of the phenomenon of power as a "temptation" and a "sign" of the church's secularisation." Pantelis Kalaitzidis, *Orthodoxy & Political Theology*, 92.

Written in an interesting way that brings not only information but also an overview of the history of Political Theology in the Orthodox academic debate, the work of Pantelis Kalaitzidis is not only an interesting contribution to the investigation of this topic from an Orthodox perspective, but also a book that surely enriches the reader and makes him to understand deeper the history of Eastern Christianity and its contemporary approach on different problems.

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<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, 122.