ICOANA CREDINȚEI

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Preface

The 20th issue year 2024 of Icon of Faith (Icoana Credinței), International Journal of Interdisciplinary Scientific Research (IFIJISR) encompasses a group of articles on various themes, dedicated to the areas of Theology and Christian life.

The commencing paper is: *THE ANCIENT CHURCH AND THE ORIGINS OF THE MEDICAL ASSISTANCE SYSTEM*, by Rev. Prof. Ph.D. Leontin POPESCU. *The writings of the Holy Fathers reveal a variety of attitudes towards medicine, ranging from acknowledging it and displaying extreme trust in doctors' prescriptions to reasons for distrust; however, there is almost always a Christian concern to legitimize medicine as a useful tool for healing, but at the same time to consider it a gift of God who instituted it.* The subsequent paper, *THE EXERCISE OF TEACHING POWER AND ITS CANONICAL BASES* is signed by Prof. Ph.D. Cătălina MITITELU. *Since the participation of the two constituent elements of the Church, clergy and laity, in the administration of her teaching power, through acts of preaching, spreading, defending the Christian faith, formulating the truths of faith, etc., has both a scriptural and a canonical basis, in the pages of this canonical study the author have examined both texts.* Prof. Ph.D. Ionuț HOLUBEANU, sign the papers: *THE ECCLESIASTICAL PROVINCE OF MOESIA SECUNDA IN THE MID-5TH CENTURY AD* and *A CRITICAL ANALYSIS OF THE BISHOPS' SIGNATURE SEQUENCE IN THE LETTER OF MOESIA SECUNDA IN ENCYCLIA, AD 457–458. The author outlines the organization of the Church in Moesia Secunda in the decade following the Hunnic invasion of AD 447/448. Paper II, investigates the principle guiding the order in which the hierarchs of Moesia Secunda signed the response epistle addressed to Emperor Leo I.*

The next paper belonging to Prof. Ph.D. Cristian GAGU is: *THE EVOLUTION OF CHRISTIAN ICONOGRAPHY IN THE VI-VII CENTURIES. The II-III centuries represented the period of the birth of Christian sacred art through Christians imitating the custom of pagans, from whose ranks most of them came, to decorate their graves, sarcophagi or mausoleums with images and even by borrowing some pagan symbols and themes, to which they obviously gave a new, Christian meaning, to which, of course, exclusively Christian themes were added, most often of biblical origin, most of them having a narrative-historical character.* After that Lecturer PhD. Nicușor MORLOVA signs the paper *THE IMPACT OF ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE (AI) ON SPIRITUAL LIFE, FROM THE PERSPECTIVE OF CHRISTIAN ORTHODOXY. Artificial Intelligence, as a manifestation of human ingenuity, has fundamentally transformed many aspects of our daily life. The article aims to explore the multifaceted implications of AI on the spiritual life of humankind, and the define of the personal identity, specifically from the perspective of Christian Orthodoxy.* PhD. Candidate Fr. Andrei Alexandru GRIGORESCU signs the paper: *THE SOCIO-CULTURAL CONTEMPORANEITY AND ITS INTERACTION WITH CHRISTIAN MORALITY. In the midst of a secularized ethos, the rejection of moral reference points often results in a misguided sense of liberation.* Lastly, PhD. Ionuț VLĂDESCU, signs the paper: *ORTHODOX TEACHING ON TIME. The Orthodox Church, taking into account the truths detached from the divine revelation, gave the concept of time a major importance, not only to eternal life, but also to the time of the present life.*

Therefore, the content of the current issue is a good and interesting opportunity to reading research on specific themes presented in the journal book, which is open for constructive ideas for Christian view point.

January 2024,   **Editor Rev. PhD. Marian BUGIULESCU.**

THE ANCIENT CHURCH AND THE ORIGINS OF THE MEDICAL ASSISTANCE SYSTEM

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ABSTRACT

The writings of the Holy Fathers reveal a variety of attitudes towards medicine, ranging from acknowledging it and displaying extreme trust in doctors' prescriptions to reasons for distrust; however, there is almost always a Christian concern to legitimize medicine as a useful tool for healing, but at the same time to consider it a gift of God who instituted it. Numerous testimonies also convey the metaphor of Christ "medicus", variously described and circulated in both East and West. The combination of Christian care and professional medicine gave rise to the first hospitals, also inspired by the Christian hospitality and philanthropy available in various establishments in both East and West. The new structures were established as centres of treatment and effectively assumed a monopoly on universal medical practice.

Keywords: *Christ; doctor; hospice; hospital; care; philanthropy;*

INTRODUCTION

"This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you" (In 15,12). Such words, spoken by the Saviour Jesus Christ shortly before his Passion, have remained central in the Church's consciousness for the foundation of its mission in the world. And we can safely say that in every age the Church has shown great care in responding to this Gospel command, adapting at every moment to the many changes of history and to the many needs of human society.

From the most famous example of Emperor Julian Apostate (361-363), who in his attempt to revive paganism lamented the fact that Christ's disciples extended philanthropy even to pagans in need[1], to the institutionalization of philanthropy and social welfare in the time of the founding of universities[2] and in the contemporary period, we can witness numerous testimonies in which the Church has shown its service as a Good Samaritan.

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[1] Salaminius Hermias SOZOMENUS, "Historia Ecclesiastica, Libro V, 16: Arsacio sacerdoti Galatiae", in: J.P. Migne, *Patrologiae Graeca (PG),* vol. 57, col. 1262D-1266, here col. 1263: (pers. transl.) *"It would be shameful, while the Jews have no beggars, and the ungodly Galileans (Christians) feed their poor and ours together, to see that our needy people lack the help we owe them"*

[2] University of Salerno seems to be older than the one in Bologna and known at the time particularly as a very good medical school, with very close links to the Byzantine East: cfr. Charles H. HASKINS, "L'origine delle università", in: Girolamo ARNALDI, Le origini dell'Università, Il Mulino, Bologna, 1974, p. 33-84, here p. 36; see also Prof. Leontin POPESCU, *Începuturile învăţământului universitar european,* ISTROS, Brăila, 2012, p. 38.

1. THE VIRTUE OF LOVE AS A PROMOTER OF PHILANTHROPY IN THE CHURCH

Philanthropy, almsgiving, welcoming strangers, caring for orphans and widows, healing and comforting the sick, all exercised by the Church throughout the ages, are all manifestations of the virtue of love fully exemplified by God through His Son Jesus Christ Himself by means of two healing actions: on the soul through the forgiveness of sins and the power of the evangelistic word, and on the body through the power of miraculous healing.

The Gospel texts show that Jesus heals the souls of the sick first and then their bodies: their sins are forgiven, their faith heals them, they are saved. And from this point of view, Christ's therapeutic work is an integral part of the work of salvation of the human race. St. Matthew the Evangelist thus sums up the Saviour's mission: "*And Jesus went throughout all Galilee, teaching in their synagogues and preaching the gospel of the kingdom and healing all sickness and all disease among the people. And the news of Him went throughout all Syria, and they brought to Him all who were suffering from many diseases and afflictions, the posessed, the lunatics, the weak, and He healed them*" (Matthew 4:23-24). For this the Saviour is recognised and glorified as the Greatest Physician, not only of souls but also of bodies[3].

In both East and West, the title "physician" has been attributed not only to Christ the Saviour, but also to the prophets and great personalities of the Old Testament, as well as to apostles, bishops, priests, deacons and churchmen[4]. Analogously, the Holy Fathers of the ancient Christian period assumed notions and metaphors from the medical practice of their time to illustrate the various moments and modes of spiritual therapy. St. John Chrysostom's statement on the priesthood and the priest is famous: "*Those who heal people's bodies have at their disposal a great quantity of medicines, all sorts of medical instruments and foods suitable for the sick; (...). But for priests there is no other tool or method of healing than using words to teach*"[5].

In this metaphor of *Christ the Physician,* Christians define the ideal physician, what a physician should be: as a *bonus medicus*; his moral duty (officium) consisting of love for people (philanthropy); such a physician treats everyone indiscriminately, giving everyone the right medicines; free treatment; he also assists the hopelessly ill and considers it an honour to cure diseases that cause disgust.

The image of Christ as the Physician provides an opportunity in this period to deal argumentatively with certain aspects of the professional behaviour of the physician in general, while at the same time establishing a parallel with Christ's action towards the believer. Thus, the first contact between doctor and patient is normally based on a relationship of trust, whereas in the case of Christ, He takes all the initiative by coming to the aid of the one in need[6] . The characteristics of the ideal Christian doctor, modelled on the *medicus bonus* par excellence, i.e. Christ, are directly or indirectly derived from all the late ancient medical literature (4th and 5th centuries) which is strongly influenced on the one

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[3] Calisto VENDRAME, "La guarigione dei malati come parte integrante dell'evangelizzazione", in: *Camillianum,* 2 (1991), p. 28-35, here p. 30.

[4] Clementina MAZZUCCO, "Gesu e le guarigioni di indemoniati", in: *Io sono il Signore, colui che ti guarisce. Illness versus religion between ancient and modern. Atti del Convegno internazionale, Roma, 26-29 maggio 2010*, Edizioni Dehoniane, Bologna, 2011, p. 179-197, here p. 196-197.

[5] ST. JOHN CHRYSOSTOM, "De sacerdotio", in: J.P. Migne, *PG* 48, col. 623-692, here IV, 3, col. 665.

[6] Sandro SPINSANTI, "Medico", in: *Nuovo Dizionario di Teologia Morale,* San Paolo -Cinselo Balsamon, Milan, 1990, p. 736-749, here, p. 740.

hand by the decline of research and on the other hand it is more sensitive than ever to the practical needs of the ordinary patient[7].

The image of Christ - MEDICUS in the first three centuries of Christianity was not forgotten, but on the contrary the help and concern for the suffering led to the creation of a culture[8] of philanthropy and assistance to the sick over time in the form of a triple imperative: - care for the sick and needy must be universal without any discrimination according to the words of St. Apostle Paul. "There *is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor freedom, there is neither male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus"* (*Gal* 3:28); - care for the sick must be an expression of God's love shown through His Son, Jesus Christ, who received and healed all the sick; - the defence of the life of every person in need from conception to the natural end of man's life.

The first sign that the Church founded on the sacrifice of Christ is interested in those in suffering and in need was the valorization of man in a new anthropological vision: personalist-ontological. Man is the person engaged in a dialogue with God and with his fellow human beings. In the Christian vision, expressed in the first chapters of Genesis, it is evident how God established a hierarchy of values among creatures. Man, created in the image and likeness of God, is placed at the centre and summit of creation, not only because all that exists is destined for him, but above all because by reflecting the radiance of the divine image and imitating his Creator in love he has the duty that through him the whole of creation may reach complete perfection. From this perspective, only man of all creatures can be and is a person[9].

The term *person* in Eastern Christianity has such a great value that Orthodox Theology explains by it both the Incarnation of the Son of God[10] and all His saving acts precisely because man is that being who is oriented towards God[11] and bears in himself His image. From this point of view all the pastoral action of the Church has a *prosopocentric* character[12]. The person of Christ is the prototype of every Christian facing sickness, suffering and pain. Christ became incarnate, suffered, was crucified and died not to eliminate suffering, but to transfigure it into obedience[13].

This vision of man, even if it was not systematized as we know it today, is present even in the Acts of the Apostles, where the apostles bring into existence the institution of the diaconate both to materially help the needy through agape and to spiritually nourishing them

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[7] Innocenzo MAZZINI, "La Letteratura Cristiana Antica e la Medicina (II)", in: *Les Études Classiques,* 71 (2003), p. 241-261, here p. 251-252.

[8] Antonio CASERA, "Storia della sanita e dell'azione della Chiesa nel mondo sanitario", in: Gian Maria COMOLLI and Italo MONTICELLI, *Manuale di Pastorlae sanitaria*, Edizioni Camilliane, Turin, 1999, p. 63-73, here p. 63.

[9] MANLIUS SEVERINUS BOETHIUS, "Liber de persona et duabus naturis", in: J.P. Migne, *Patrologiae Latinae (PL)* 64, 1337D-1354D, 1343B: "*From all this, it is clear that there can be no question of person in lifeless bodies; no one says that there is a person of the stone, of living creatures without sentience. There is no person of the tree or of beings without intelligence and reason, of the horse or the ox and the other animals that lead their lives dumb and without reason, living only by the senses. But we say that there is a person of man, of God, of the angel.*"

[10] Dumitru STĂNILOAE, *Orthodox Dogmatic Theology*, vol. III, 3rd edition, IBMBOR Publishing House, Bucharest, 2003, p. 113.

[11] Dominique BEAUFILS & com, *Bioethics and the Mystery of the Person. Perspective ortodoxe*, translated from the French by Nicoleta Petuhov, Editura Bizantină, Bucharest, 2005, p. 40-41.

[12] The focus is on the person. From the Greek προσοπον - person.

[13] Leontin POPESCU, "Suffering in Holy Scripture", in *Theology and Education in the Lower Danube*, Archdiocese of the Lower Danube, Galati, 2020, p. 200-221, here 218.

through the Holy Eucharist. Deacon means "servant" and at the time of the Acts of the Apostles it represented the mission that needed to be developed within a community-Church that felt the need and urgency to provide pastoral care for the poor, homeless, widows and orphans. The "Constitutions of the Apostles" says of the members of this diaconate institution that they are "the eye, the heart, the soul of the bishop for the sick and the poor, and they are to keep a record of those in distress and in need, constantly informing the bishop[14]. Along with the institution of the diaconate, many hospital houses appeared, called *domus episcopus* those days because they were located near the bishop's residence and became archetypes of modern hospital institutions[15].

In the apostolic and post apostolic period, the ministry of helping the sick and needy will be concomitant with the proclamation of the Gospel, continually strengthening itself in the confrontation of Christianity with Greek philosophy, especially with the cynic-stoic philosophy in which the philosophers presented themselves as doctors capable of healing the passions of the soul[16]. In general, research on patristic medicine attests to a positive appreciation for the science of medicine on the part of Christians. But inevitably over time there have also been tensions and even some rejections[17].

2. "CHRIST MEDICUS" IN THE TIME OF THE APOLOGISTS

All Christian apologists combat the mysteries and gnosis of the Greek philosophers as "diabolical imitations" of Christian truth, the image of *Christ MEDICUS* thus acquiring great force and being transferred to the dogmatic and catechetical realm as a counter-image of the ancient god of medicine Asklepios with numerous cult temples throughout the Mediterranean Sea basin[18], the center being in the city of Pergamum[19].

The 2nd century was the age of medical personalities such as Soranus and Galenus[20] who gave a strong impetus to medicine and awakened enthusiasm for the medical art; it was also the century in which the cult of Asklepios developed greatly, being assigned the title of sotér (saviour) for the miraculous cures attributed to him by his believers, a fact

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[14] CONSTITUTIONES APOSTOLICAE, III, 19, in: J.P. Migne, *PG* 01, col. 501-1156, here col. 802C-803A; see also DISDASCALIA ET CONSTITUTIONES APOSTOLORUM, III, 13, 2-7, in: Franciscus Xaverius Funk, vol.1, Paderbonae, Libraria Ferdinardi Schoeningh, 1905, p. 212-216: (pers. transl.) "Therefore, *if the Lord has done this, you deacons do not hesitate to do this for the helpless and the weak, because you are workers of the truth, conformed to the example of Christ. Serve therefore with love, without murmuring or doubting; for if you do so, you do that for man and not for God, and you will receive your reward alike your diaconate on visit day. Therefore it is necessary that you deacons visit all who are in need. And as for those in need, report to the bishop; and you must be his soul and mind in all things moved and obedient to him."*

[15] Giorgio COSMACINI, *Long art. Storia della medicina dall'antichità a oggi*, Laterza, Bari 2009, p. 117-118.

[16] Vicenzo LOMBINO, "Medico (Cristo)", in: *Nuovo Dizionario Patristico e di Antichita Cristiane F-O*, Maerietti, Genova-Milani, 2007, p. 3168-3181, here p. 3169.

[17] Enrico DAL COVOLO, " I primi cristiani e la medicina. L'assistenza e la cura dei malati", in: *Studi sull'oriente cristiano,* vol.11, 2 (2007), p. 31-40, here p. 33-34.

[18] V. LOMBINO, "Medico (Christ)", p. 3171.

[19] Vincenzo Marcello LA MATINA, "Il posto del malato tra ethos e logos. Luoghi di cura e saperi nel mondo antico e tardoantico", in: *Medic. Metodologia Didattica e Innovazione Clinica- Nuova Serie*, vol. 15, nr. 2, Editore Ospedaletto, Pisa : Pacini**,** 2007, p. 17-31, here p. 21.

[20] Immacolata AULISA, "Medicina umana e medicina divina nella polemica tra giudei e cristiani: le fonti agiografiche altomedievali", in: *Studi Bitontini, special issue. Atti del Convegno di Studi temp(i)o della sofferenza. Temp(i)o di Dio. Malattia e Religione tra antico e moderno, Bitonto, 16-19 March 2013,* 99-100 (2015), p. 125-154, here p. 130; see also Stefania FORTUNA, "Controversie nella Medicina antica", in: *Medicina nei secoli arte e scienza : rivista di storia della medicina /* founded by Luigi Stroppiana; edited by: Dipartimento di medicina sperimentale, Universita degli studi La Sapienza di Roma, 29/3 (2017), p. 741-751.

attested by the numerous votive offerings placed in the sanctuaries of Epidaurus, Cos, Pergamum, Rome or those scattered throughout the Mediterranean[21]. However, the recovery of health has always been considered the fruit of the miraculous action of the god, whose epiphany, direct or mediated by oneiric visions and the incubation rite[22], was attributed to the healing efficacy of the remedies indicated, even when they were homologous to those prescribed by the secular medicine of the time.

The risk of Jesus of Nazareth being equated with a mere miracle worker or healer was difficult to remove from the very beginning of his public ministry, and all the more so in the religious context of the 2nd-4th centuries, especially in the syncretism promoted by Emperor Commodus and then the Severan dynasty (185-235). The fact that the god of medicine exerted a dangerous fascination on Christians is evident from a simple foray into ancient Christian literature, where not infrequently Christian authors vigorously combat the image of Asklepios superimposed on ancient representations of Christ[23].

In order to bring to light the true work of Christ for mankind, the ancient Christian writers orchestrated a real strategy, designed to deprive the assimilation of Christ with Asclepius of any credibility. First of all, the Holy Fathers began their protest by entering the same terrain as their pagan adversaries, namely by attacking without hesitation the sacred realm of myth: this is the meaning found in all the authors of the classical tradition, such as epic poets, lyricists and tragedians, who were considered in a way the 'repositories' of pagan myths. Secondly, the Fathers tried to highlight the more scandalous, or even immoral, aspects of the pagan myth in question. By publicly unveiling scandalous moments in connection, for example, with the birth and death of Asklepios, they intended to show that he could in no way be equated with a god; and the accusations of greed and incompetence in the exercise of his profession destroyed his credibility as a man-god. He is clearly reduced to contempt, while any claim he has to compete with Jesus Christ is ridiculed, who instead is preached - only He - as doctor and benefactor, as the world's only saviour.

At the end of this operation, systematically conducted against pagan religion, Jesus Christ could only be left without competitors, because the gods collapsed one by one, and the "gallery of divine figures" suggested for imitation and prayer gradually emptied. It is a natural consequence that places sacred to Asklepios, but not only[24], should be converted into places of Christian healing. The transition from the cult of Asklepios to that of the saints who were silverless doctors and miracle workers, such as Cyrus and John, Cosmas and Damian, Ilarion, Antony, Thecla, Dimitrios[25], is understandable and obvious, especially if

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[21] Dario DAFFARA, *Samson's Hospital in Constantinople and the care of the sick in the proto-Byzantine world. Specialization thesis*, School of Specialization in Archaeological Heritage, University of Bologna, Bologna, 2014, p. 11-21.

[22] Divinatory rite consisting of sleeping in or near a temple to obtain, in a dream, the answers from a healing god.

[23] Ernesto DE MIRO - Giulia Sfameni GASPARRO - Valentina CALÌ (eds.), The cult of Asclepius in the Mediterranean area. Atti del Convengo Internazionale, Arigento 20-22 November 2005, Gangemi Editore, ROMA, 2009, p. 265-275.

[24] Giulia Sfameni GASPSRRO, "Thaumaturgia e culti terapeutici e taumaturgici nel mondo tardo-antico: fra pagani, ebrei e cristiani", in: *Nuova Biblioteca di Scienze Religiose*, 11, (2008), p. 13-53; (edited by) Enrico DAL COVOLO and Giulia Sfameni GASPSRRO, *Cristo e Asclepio. Culti terapeutici e taumaturgici nel mondo mediterraneo antico fra pagani e cristiani*, Atti del Convegno internazionale Accademia di Studi Mediterranei, Agrigento 20-21 November 2006, Las-Roma, 2008, here p. 30-31.

[25] Franca Caterina PAPPARELLA, " Sul concetto di malattia e guarigione nell'antichità cristiana. Analisi iconografica e archeologia della devozione", in: Rivista Biblica, 3 (2018), p. 423-463, here p. 439-440.

the evangelical exhortation is taken into account: *Heal the helpless, raise the dead, cure the lepers, cast out demons; the gift you have taken is the gift you are giving* (Mt 10:8).

Christian criticism of the cult of Ashklepios, according to some biblical scholars[26], begins as early as St. John the Evangelist, but takes on concrete forms in the period of the apologists who criticize the passions, especially the avarice of such medical gods. Athenagoras[27], for example, tells the Greeks that a god who should be immortal is above greed, and he cannot manifest himself as a man. One of Asklepius's major faults was in fact that he was a greedy god: "*Among your pagan deities you have not only a blacksmith but also a doctor; the doctor was greedy and Asklepios was his name*," writes St. Clement of Alexandria[28]. According to Tertullian, Asklepios' "avarice" led in ancient society to the neglect of the science of medicine, which cost him the condemnation of Jupiter who incinerated him with a thunderbolt[29].

Christ's free-of-cost healing and saving not only those close to him, but also those far away, not only his followers, but also those of different faiths and cults, is unknown in the Olympus to which Asklepios belongs. Aristides the Apologist[30] or the Athenian writes in this respect that for Christians providing service to the neighbor is totally disinterested and is done according to the commandment of Christ even for enemies. Lactantius also states that philanthropy "*is a sign of supreme humanity and it is a great work to care for the sick, who have no one to help them, who must be cared for and comforted*"[31]. St. Justin Martyr and Philosopher is much more direct in considering the cult of Asklepios and the healings in his temples as the work of demons who thus tried to hinder the work of *Christ Medicus*[32]. In the same way St. Justin also proceeds in his *Dialogue* with the *Jew Tryphon* where he explains with pertinent arguments that all the healings performed by Asklepios or similar characters are nothing but diabolical imitations and misappropriations of the prerogatives of Christ, attributed to Him by the Old Testament prophets[33]. Here St. Justin is not arguing with

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[26] Ekkart SAUSER, "Christus Medicus - Christus als Arzt und seine Nachfolger im fruhen Christentum (Christ as physician and his followers in early Christianity)", in: Trierer Theologische Zeitschrift, vol. 101 (1992) 101-123 here p. 106.

[27] ATHENAGORAS ATHENIENSIS PHILOSOPHUS CHRISTIANUS, "Legatio pro cristianis", in: J.P. Migne, *PG* 06, col. 890-973, here XXIX,3 col. 956C: (pers. transl.) *"So if these were gods, in this case they paid no attention to gold: gold, a gift most welcome to mortals; neither mother nor children offer equal delight for divinity has no need and is superior to greed; nor could they die but as they are men, and unscrupulous and wicked, they let themselves be overcome by greed for riches".*

[28] SANCTUS CLEMENS ALEXANDRINUS EPISCOPUS, "Chohortatio ad gentes - Protrepticus ad Graecos", in: J.P. Migne, *PG* 08, col. 49- 246, here col. 102: "*Nec solum aeris fabrum, sed etiam medicum habes inter deos. Is vero avarus erat, et nomen habuit Aesculapi".*

[29] QUINTUS SEPTIMIUS FLORENS TERTULLIANUS, "Apologeticus adversus gentes pro cristianis", in: J.P. Migne, *PL* 01, col. 305-604, here col. 407C: (pers. transl.) *"After all, they say, Asklepios against the Fates, i.e. in spite of Jupiter's will, brought back to life certain dead people, bought at a huge price. But for this the lightning struck him, and the subsequent burning, which are evidence of an impure life and character, not at all sincere."*

[30] ARISTIDES, "Apologia", in *Gli Apologeti Greci*, translated by Carla Burini, Citta Nuova Editrice, Rome, p. 47-59, here p. 59.

[31] Lucius Caecilius Firminianus LACTANTIUS, "Divinarum Institutionum Liber VI", in: J.P. Migne, *PL* 06, col. 633-732A, here col. 680BC: "AEgros quoque, quibus defuerit qui asistat, curandos fovendosque susciper, summae humanitatis et magnae operationis est".

[32] SANCTUS JUSTINUS PHILOSOPHUS ET MARTYR, "Apologia prima pro Christianis", in: J.P. Migne, *PG* 06, col. 327-440, here col. 362: "*Sed haec, ut diximus pravi daemones perpetrarunt*"

[33] SANCTUS JUSTINUS PHILOSOPHUS ET MARTYR, "Dialogus cum Tryphone Judaeo", in: J.P. Migne, *PG* 06, col. 471-802, here chap. 69, col. 635D: "*Diabolus, dum veritatem aemulatur, invexit fabulas de Baccho, Hercule et Aesculapius".*

pagans, but with Jews, but this does not prevent him from using the myth and cult of Asklepios as a particular aspect of the many-tempered activity of demons. He tells Trypho that the demons, in their endeavour to deceive man, succeed in establishing a direct relationship between the stories of the pagans and Holy Scripture, with the aim of demonstrating that the prophetic announcements are in fact also fulfilled in those who dealt in magic among the pagans. In this way the demons organise a real attempt to mislead those who approach the sacred books. "*When the devil presents Asclepius as raising the dead and curing other illnesses,*" St. Justin asks Trypho, "*must I not say that in this aspect too he imitates the prophecies concerning Christ?*"[34].

In dissonance with the other Greek apologists, Theophilus of Antioch captures the activity of the *medicus bonus* in the person of God the Father, who freely carries out His work of salvation and healing through Logos and Wisdom, thus affirming the common work of the persons of the Holy Trinity for the salvation of man[35]. Likewise St. Irenaeus of Leo in *Adversus Haeresis*[36] presents either the image of Christ Medicus or the image of God as a Good Physician who proves His skill in healing sick humanity. St Ignatius Theophorus also writes to the Ephesians[37] that the body of Christ is the only bread that "is the medicine of immortality", an antidote to death, the food of eternal life within Jesus Christ.

In the third century, it was the Alexandrians who gave a fuller definition to the metaphor of *Christ medicus*. In particular, special attention to medical practice is evidenced by Origen when he states that "*it is necessary to know the method and principles of medicine, not only to know what to do, how to act, to intervene on a wound, to establish a sober and strict measure, diet, to feel the fire of fever in the beat of the pulse, to dry, temper and restrain the abundance of moisture in the cycles of treatment. If one knows only these things and does not follow them with action, his knowledge will be useless*"[38]. It is also Origen who strikes a balance between medicine as a science and the pedagogical value of suffering in Eastern mysticism by considering the art of medicine as a gift from God: "*Religious people,*" says Origen, "*appeal to physicians as collaborators of God, knowing full well that He has given to men, like all other sciences, the science of medicine and that it was He who commanded the earth to grow herbs. In any case, religious people also know that the art of medicine can do nothing if God does not want it to, and that it can do a great deal*

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[34] *Ibidem, 638A: "Cum autem AEsculapium muortuos excitantem et alios morbos curantem inducit, nonne edita de Christo vaticinia in hoc quoque similiter imitatum dixerim?"*

[35] S.THEOLPHILUS ANTIOCHENUS, "Libri tres ad Autolycum", in: J.P. Migne, *PG* 06, col. 1023-1175, here col. 1033: "*Quis est iste medicus? Deus qui per Verbum et Sapientiam sanat et vivicat. Deus per Verbum te sapientiam condidit universa;*" (Who is this doctor? God who heals and gives life through Word and Wisdom. God created the whole universe by His Word and Wisdom.")

[36] SANCTUS IRENAEUS, episcopus Lugdunensisi et Martyr, "Advesrsus Haereses libri quinque", III, 5, 2, in: J.P. Migne, PG 07,1, col. 433- 1224, here col. 359: *"For the Lord has come as a Physician [to us], as He Himself confessed: 'It is not the healthy who need a physician, but those who are sick. For I have not come to call the righteous to repentance, but sinners"* (Mk. 2:17; Lev. 5:31-32).

[37] SANCTUS IGNATIUS, "Epistola ad Ephesios", in: J.P. Migne, *PG* 05, col. 643-662B, here col. 662B: "*Filius est hominis et Filius Dei, ut obediatis episcopo et presbyterio mente indivulsa, frangentes panem unum, qui pharmacum cum immortalitatis est, antidotum, ne moriamur, sed vivamus semper in Jesu Christo".*

[38] ORIGEN, "Homiliae in Lucam", in: J.P. Migne *PG* 13, col 1801-1900, here I, col. 1804: "*Velut in medicina oportet me rationem et dogmata scire medicinae, non ut tantummodo noverim quid debeam facere, sed ut faciam, id est, ut secem vulnera, victum moderatum castigatumque disponam aestus febrium in pulsum venarum sentiam, ut curationibus cyclis humorum abundantiam siccem, temperem atque restringam. Quae si quis tantum scierit et non opere fuerit subsecutus, cassa erit eius scientia.*"

when God wants it to"[39]. In his opinion, God cooperates in the action of the ordinary physician, but this does not prevent the Alexandrian from having a natural conception of bodily medicine; diseases and infirmities of the body have their natural causes and cannot always be considered the consequences of sins. Origen insists on the necessity of going to the doctor for the recovery of bodily health. Origen therefore considers medicine essential for humanity[40] and recommends it to believers, but he is also convinced of the option of healing through prayer for those who are spiritually evolved[41]. St. Gregory of Nyssa also expresses the same idea, defining Christ as "the true doctor of the sufferings of the soul"[42].

For Origen, as for Clement the Alexandrian[43], medicine and the knowledge of God's word are comparable, because both are necessary for human life, so that the image of *Christ Medicus* takes an important place both in catechetical and spiritual discourse, but also in apologetics[44] as we shall see in St. Athanasius[45] and St. Cyril of Jerusalem[46] and just as strongly in the Cappadocian Saints.

The metaphor of *Christ medicus* not only alludes to Christ's work of salvation, but Christ is actually defined as the one who heals both body and soul at once, "the only physician of bodies and souls" who heals those who call upon Him in diseases of body and spirit[47]. Between the 4th and 5th centuries, in the West, the figure of Christ Medicus is used less for apologetic purposes, but it acquires theological depth in this period[48]. St Ambrose[49]

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[39] ORIGENES, "Adnotationem in Librum III Regum.", in: J.P. Migne *PG* 17, col 53-56, here col. 54C-55A: *"Qui enim religione sunt praediti, utuntur quidem medicis tanquam ministris Dei, sciens quod et medicam scientiam ipse largitus est hominibus, quemadmodum et reliquas herbas quoque ipse de terra germinare edixit. Sciunt tamen nihilominus, nihil posse, quantum Deus vult"*.

[40] ORIGEN, "Contra Celsum", in: J.P. Migne *PG* 11, col. 637-1632, here, Liber III, 12C, col.934C: *"Itaque quuoniam commoda, imo necessaria generi humano medicina est"*.

[41] *Ibidem*, Liber VIII, 60, col. 1607C: *"Sed medicinae ope quaerenda est sanitas, si quis simplicem et communem vitam velit ducere; si autem vulgari praestantiorem, pietate in summum Deum et fusis ad illum precibus"*.

[42] SANCTUS GREGORIUS NYSSENUS, "De Oratione Domenica", in: J.P. Migne *PG* 44, col. 1119-1194, here col. 1161D: *"Verus igitur animae vitiorum et morborum medicus est"*.

[43] CLEMENS ALEXANDRINUS EPISCOPUS, "Paedagogus", in: J.P. Migne, *PG* 08, col. 247-684, here col. 320BC.

[44] V. LOMBINO, "Medico (Christ)", p. 3173.

[45] SANCTUS ATHANASIUS ALEXANDRINUS ARCHIEPISCOPUS, "Oratio de Incarnatione Verbi", in: J.P. Migne, *PG* 25, col. 95-197, here col. 127BC; 174C: (pers. transl.) *"But for this He became man, and there was need to heal what was, it was fitting that the Physician and Saviour should approach the things that were built to heal them"*.

[46] CYRILLUS HIEROSOLYMITANUS, "Catecheses", in: J.P. Migne, *PG* 33, col. 331-1059, here Catechesis II, 6, col. 414C: (pers. transl.) *"All your sins added together do not overcome the greatness of God's mercy! Your wounds do not overcome His great medical skill! Give only yourself in faith!* Catechesis X, 13, col. 678: *"In Hebrew 'Jesus' means 'Savior' and in Greek 'healer'. For He is the doctor of souls and bodies and the healer of those held by evil spirits. He also heals the eyes of the blind, but also enlightens the mind. He is the doctor of the lame, but He also directs the feet of sinners to repentance"*).

[47] ORIGEN, "Homiliae in Leviticum", in: J.P. Migne *PG* 12, col. 405-573, here Homily VII, col. 476B: (pers. transl.) *"Now, however, the physician of souls and bodies, and at the same time the Lord, commands us to beware of the weeds of drunkenness and fornication"*.

[48] I. AULISA, "Human Medicine...", p. 131.

[49] SANCTUS AMBROSIUS, "De Helia et Ieiunio", in: *Corpus Scriptorum Ecclesiasticorum Latinorum (CSEL)* 33, ex recensione: Carolus Schenkl, Vindobonae, Lipsiae, 1897, p. 411-465, here 457-458: (pers. trans.) *"And if we have been subject to him in any way, now, we are no refuge for the doctor, he has healed the wounds from above, and if any bitterness remains, the medicine will not lack, even if we have done any harm, he will not remember who once did it, even if we have sinned grievously, we have found a great doctor, receiving his grace and gift as a great cure; for great medicine removes great sins. We have yet more support, with which we*

for example, preaches the need for conversion and the hope of finding forgiveness in Christ, the True Saviour Medicus for the forgiveness of sins and spiritual healing[50]. Augustine[51] deepens the theological meaning of the names *medicus* and *savior* attributed to Christ by urging both doctors and patients to realize that only God can truly heal. Augustine is among the first to insist not only on the confident use of medical science, but also on another necessity typical of Hippocratic medicine: that of going beyond the symptom and looking for the causes of the disease: "*When a physician wants to eradicate a disease, if he confines himself to treating the disease and not the cause that produced it, it seems to be cured for a while, while the cause remains, the disease reappears*"[52].

In another work: "*De civitate Dei*", Fer. Augustine emphasises on the one hand the frequent ineffectiveness of medicine and its painful remedies, which often add to the pain already caused by the disease, and on the other hand, miraculous cures and cures obtained by faith or miracles following the manifestation of faith, which are valued[53]. Somewhat later, St. John Damascene would also express mostly the same ideas, considering the need to examine the disease starting from the nature of the whole: constitution, place, time, age. "*An expert physician* - writes St. John Damaschin - *does not administer the same type of remedy to all and not always, but gives the medicine to each according to constitution, place, illness, time and age. Therefore, he treats the infant in one way, the older in another, the sick one way and the healthy in another, and not even the sick in the same way, but on the basis of their condition and illness and takes into account their state of health, so as to provide one remedy in summer, another in winter, another in spring, another in autumn and finally another for each place according to the differences of the regions*"[54].

In the West, St. Benedict of Nursia was among the last to contribute to the use of the metaphor of Christ Medicus, which later slowly lost its theological impact[55]; in the early Middle Ages, the power of *Christ Medicus*, slowly, slowly passed to the silverless holy doctors, famous both in the East and West. On the other hand, the title of "spiritual doctor"

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redeem our sins, you have money, redeem your sin. The Lord is not for sale, but you yourself are for sale, you have been sold for your sins: redeem yourself with your deeds, redeem yourself with your money."

[50] SANCTUS AMBROSIUS, "De Cain et Abel", in: *CSEL* 32, ex recensione: Carolus Schenkl, Vindobonae, Lipsiae, 1897p. 339- 409, here p. 388: (pers. trans.) *"The Redeemer of the Levites is such a wise man, who, like a physician, heals the minds of the sick and sprinkles certain medicines of the stronger mind, imitating that physician who came from heaven to show men the ways of wisdom and to reveal to the little ones the ways of wisdom, for he saw that the afflicted could not be healed without remedy and therefore he administered cures to the sick, therefore he brought health to help all, so that whoever perished might ascribe to himself the causes of his death. But mercy will be preached to all, for those who perish through their own indifference will perish, but those who are saved according to the will of Christ will be delivered, He who wants all men to be saved and to come to know the truth."*

[51] S. AURELIUS AUGUSTINUS, "Sermo 155, 10", in: J.P. Migne, *PL* 38, col. 840 -849, here col. 846-847: (pers. transl.) *"But medicine was invented for this reason, that vice might be banished and nature cured. That is why the Saviour came to the human race, He found no one healthy, that is why the great physician came".*

[52] S. AURELIUS AUGUSTINUS, "In Ioannis Evangelicum", in: J.P. Migne, *PL* 35, col. 1379-1976, here Tractatus 25, 16, col. 1604: "*Medicus quando aegritudinem discutit, si curet quod per aliquam causam factum est, et ipsam causam qua factum est non curet, ad tempus videtur mederi, causa manente morbus repetitur*".

[53] S. AURELIUS AUGUSTINUS, "De civitate Dei", in: J.P. Migne, *PL* 41, col. 13-804 , here Liber XXII, 8 and 22, col. 760-771: "*De miraculis, quae ut mundus in Christum crederet facta sunt et fierimundo credente non desinunt*"; 784-787: "*De miseriis ac malis, quibus humanum genus merito primae praevaricationis obnoxium est et a quibus nemo nisi per Christi gratiam liberatur*".

[54] SANCTUS JOANNES DAMASCENUS, "Pro Sacris Imaginibus Orationes tres", in: J.P. Migne, *PG* 94, col. 1227-1421, here col. 1289B.

[55] I. AULISA, "Medicina umana...", p. 132; see also V. LOMBINO, "Medico (Cristo)", p. 3180.

attributed both in the East and in the West to bishops, compared even by the Apostolic Constitutions[56] *to spiritual surgeons*, through St. Athanasius who writes the Life of St. Anthony the Great called "the physician of Egypt"[57] goes on to designate the monk as the spiritual physician, able to cure the diseases of the soul. St. John Cassian[58] through his writings also spreads within the Latin monastic world the faith in *Christ the Physician* who uses the methods of the medical science to heal the passions of the body and soul. In the following centuries, the metaphor of *Christ the Physician,* while it remains present in certain theologians and spiritual fathers, will gradually lose its vigour for specific doctrinal themes[59].

3. PATRISTIC MEDICINE AND CARE FOR THE SICK AFTER THE FIRST COUNCIL OF NICAEA 325

Since the 4th century a number of concomitant causes caused Greek-speaking societies to evolve differently from Western societies, creating favourable conditions in Byzantine cities for the emergence and development of philanthropic institutions mainly for the assistance of poor citizens, foreign immigrants or pilgrims[60]. The Holy Fathers of the First Synod of Nicaea 325 recommended in canon 70 of the so-called "Arabic paraphrase"[61] that centres for pilgrims, foreigners, the disabled, and widows[62] be organized in every city. Philanthropic assistance is even better organized during the so-called "Constatinian peace"[63] with structures specific to charitable needs, but also with a specific administrative

[56] CONSTITUTIONES APOSTOLICAE, II, 41, *PG* 01, col. 698BC-699A; see also DISDASCALIA ET CONSTITUTIONES APOSTOLORUM, II, 41,1-10, in: Franciscus Xaverius Funk, vol.1, p. 130-132: (pers. transl.) "*Therefore, like a compassionate physician, He cares for all sinners and uses all prudence and brings healing to sustain their lives, and does not hasten to cut off the members of the Church, but uses the word of the scriptures and chastisements to soften everything with the bandage of prayer. For a deep ulcer is made by the melting of the flesh, the cure of which is equal to welcome medicines; but if it becomes ugly, cleanse it with a biting cure, that is, with the word of reproof. But if the flesh comes out, scratch it and treat it with a sharp medicine, that is, with a threatening judgment. And if there is a cancer, cauterize it with fire, i.e. by imposing many fasts, cutting and purifying the putrid ulcer. But if the ulcer becomes even larger and defies even cauterization and is foul-smelling, then, taking counsel with other physicians and after much meditation, amputate that foul-smelling member, lest it spoil the whole body of the Church. Therefore do not hasten to cut, nor rush immediately, nor run to a saw armed with many teeth, but first use a chisel and open the ulcer, so that the cause of the hidden disease, such as it is within, may be seen and clearly understood, so that the whole body may be kept free from pain. But if you see anyone who does not repent and offers no hope, cut him off with sorrow and grief and banish him from the Church.*"
[57] S. ATHANASIUS, "Vita Sancti Antonii", in: J.P. Migne, *PG* 26, col. 835-978, here col. 966A: "*Demum quasi medicus AEgypto a Deo datus erat*". (Finally, he had been given by God as physician to Egypt).
[58] IOHANNIS CASSIANI, "De Institutis Coenobiorum et de Octo Principalium Uitiorum Remediis", in: CSEL 17, ex recesione Michaelis Petschenig, Vindebonae, 1888, p. 5-68, here. XII, 8, p. 211: (pers. transl.) "*And therefore God, the creator and physician of the universe, knowing that the beginning and cause of sickness is pride, has been able to cure opposites by means of opposites, so that it may be known that those who have fallen through pride will rise through humility*"; see also STS. JOHN CASSIAN, "The Monastic Settlements", in: *Fathers and Church Writers*, vol. 57, Publishing House of the Biblical and Missionary Institute of the Romanian Orthodox Church, Bucharest, 1990, p. 109-265, here p. 252.
[59] V. LOMBINO, "Medico (Cristo)", p. 3180.
[60] E. DAL COVOLO, " I primi cristiani e la medicina...", p. 4.
[61] Giovanni ZANNINELO, *Storia della Medicina. Breve Epitome*, Edizioni Nuova Scintilla, Chioggia, 2007, p. 29; see also: A. CASERA, "Storia della sanita...", p. 64; E. DAL COVOLO, "I primi cristiani e la medicina...", p. 5.
[62] E. DAL COVOLO, "I primi cristiani e la medicina...", p. 5; see also A. CASERA, "Storia della sanita...", p. 64.
[63] Glen L. THOMPSON, "The Pax Constantiniana and the Roman Episcopate", in *The Bishop of Rome. in Late Antiquity,* Edited by Geoffrey D. Dunn, Australian Catholic University, Ashgate Publishung, UK Farnham, Surrey, 2015, pp. 17-36.

organization. Fer. Augustin[64] and Fer. Jerome[65] mention the *matricula pauperium* and the *descripta viduarum* respectively, which were nothing more than lists of the needy[66]. Some of the buildings assigned for the needy in this period were not slow to show quite obvious features related to medicine and the cure of diseases, especially in the great centres of oriental culture, Caesarea, Antioch, Alexandria. St. Basil the Great, as it is well known, built between 370-374[67] at Caesarea an establishment compared by St. Gregory of Nazianz to a city[68], not only because of its size but especially because of the way it was organised: in sections with separate buildings, differentiated according to categories of patients: temporary or chronic, incurable. He himself[69] speaks of this welfare complex that stood at the gates of Caesarea Cappadocia, which he himself called *katagògia*[70] as a specialised residence (to live in) with everything it needed: doctors, administrators, auxiliary staff. At other times, St. Basil[71] defines it as *prochotropeion* - house of maintenance for the poor which meant that the assistance of those in need extended to all levels: sick, poor, strangers, pilgrims for which throughout history it also received the generic name of *Basiliada*[72].

From St. Basil the Great onwards, all the other Eastern Fathers will always be present in the care and organization of such centers of medical and social assistance. Another example in this regard is St. John Chrysostom, who in his turn will administer and open a series of medical establishments, first in Antioch and then in Constantinople under the name of *nosocomion*[73]. Many other such hospitals would appear in the East and especially in Constantinople towards the end of the 5th century, especially under the influence of the

[64] SANCTUS AURELIUS AUGUSTINUS, "Epistolae ex Duobus Codicibus nuper in Lucem Prolatae. Epistola 20 ad Fabiolam", in: *CSEL* 88, reprinted Johannes Diujak, Vindobonae, Wien, 1981, p. 94-112, here p. 95: *"And so this became the record of the poor whom the Church maintains, and by this all began to be under our care within God's mercy"*.

[65] Eusebius HIERONYMUS, "Epistle 92", in: J.P. Migne, *Patrologiae Latinae (PL)*22, col. 756-769, here col. 766: (pers. transl.) *"Describes how, for the bishops to consider it, a list of widows was drawn up, in order to make the appropriate alms for the relief of pain"*.

[66] Charles MUNIER - Aangelo DI BERARDINO, "Opere di Assistenza e di Carità", in: *Nuovo Dizionario Patristico e di Antichita Cristiane F-O*, Maerietti, Genova-Milani, 2007, p. 3627-3632, here p. 3631.

[67] Vincenzo Marcello LA MATINA, "Il posto del malato...", p. 22; see also: E. DAL COVOLO, "I primi cristiani e la medicina...", p. 4.

[68] SANCTUS GREGORIUS THEOLOGUS, Archiepiscopus Constantinapolitanus, "Oratio 43- In laudem Basilii Magni", in: J.P. Migne, *PG* 36, col. 494-606, here col. 578: *"What else? A noble thing is philanthropy and support of the poor and assistance to human weakness. Go a little out of the city, and **behold the new city,** that storehouse of godliness, the common treasury of the rich, in which the surplus of their wealth, yes, and even what they need, are deposited, as consequence of his encouragments, freed from the power of the moth, no longer pleasing the eyes of the thief, and escaping both the strife of envy and the corruption of time: where sickness is regarded in a religious light, and disaster is thought of as a blessing, and sympathy is put to the test."*

[69] SANCTUS BASILIUS MAGNUS, CAESARIENSISI EPISCOPUS, "Epistolarum Classis II. Epistola 94", in: J.P. Migne, *PG* 32, col. 486C-490A, here col. 487C: (pers. transl.) *"And also to whom do we cause offence, while we build hospices for strangers, whether they pass by, or for those who need some medicine for their sickness, and thus make it necessary to comfort them and their sick companions; physicians, beasts of burden, conductors? To these it has been necessary to add other trades, both those which are necessary to life, and those which are designed for a more honourable institution of life; things which, in their totality, are a true adornment to our city, and grounds for pride for our governor, for upon him also the good fame of these works is showered."*

[70] *Ibid*, col. 488C.

[71] S. BASILIUS MAGNUS, "Epistola 150", in: J.P. Migne, *PG* 32, col. 601A-606D, here col. 604C: "prohotrfeion"; 603C: "pauperum hospitium"

[72] D. DAFFARA, *L'Ospedale di Sansone...*, p. 41.

[73] E. DAL COVOLO, "I primi cristiani e la medicina...", p. 5; see also D. DAFFARA, *L'Ospedale di Sansone*, p. 43.

martyrdom and activity of the saint silverless doctors (*anargyros*): Cosmas and Damian, Samson[74] and Diomid, Cyrus and John. It will come as no surprise, therefore, to find that in the centuries following the Fourth Ecumenical Council of Chalcedon in 451, which regulated[75] the way in which pilgrims travelled and were received in houses of assistance, differentiated settlements would appear during the 5th and 6th centuries: houses for the poor and chronically ill (*ptocheion, procotropion*), houses of welcome and hospitality (*xenodochium*), leprociums, houses for the elderly (*gerocomion*), houses for the sick (*nosocomion*), orphanages (*brephotropheion*)[76]. It was Emperor Justinian (482-565) who gave authority and legal personality to all these forms of Christian assistance and healing by entrusting them to monks and monasteries[77].

In the West, Fer. Jerome[78] (347-422) accredits the establishment of the first hospital in 390 in Rome by the noblewoman Fabiola, influenced by his sermons. He had returned to Rome in 381 from the Calcis desert, where he translated the Latin Bible, the famous Vulgate from Greek and Hebrew-Aramaic. Sick people lying in the markets, tired of poverty and famine, were gathered in the hospital of the noble Fabiola. When she died, the people of Rome paid tribute to her in gratitude for caring for the poor, comparable to that of a conqueror[79]. Also in the same period, Fer. Jerome[80] also mentions a wealthy Roman widow named Marcella who adapted her own palace to serve as a convent for nuns.

Fabiola and Marcella were not paid by the State or anyone else: they were, as we would say today, volunteers for life, moved by the love of Christ and integrated into the institution they founded. The charitable works of Fabiola and Marcella in the West and St. Basil in the East later became models for the establishment of various charitable institutions throughout the Middle Ages[81].

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[74] D. DAFFARA, *L'Ospedale di Sansone...*, p. 29; 44: Samson was a doctor from Rome who came to Constantinople under Justinian and founded a health resort for the poor, adapting his modest home for this purpose. The emperor became seriously ill and was only able to recover thanks to Samson's care; to show his gratitude, Justinian rebuilt the modest shelter, creating a large hospital.

[75] Prof. Ioan N. FLOCA, *Canons of the Orthodox Church. Notes and comments*, Sibiu, 2005, p.95: CANON 11 (CANONICAL LETTERS OR EPISTOLES): "*I have ordained (decided) that all the poor and those who need help should travel, after temptation (and verification), with letters and that is only with ecclesiastical letters of peace, not with letters of recommendation (of entrustment), because letters of recommendation should be given only to faces (persons) who are under suspicion*".

[76] Jole AGRIMI and Chiara CRISCANI, "Carita e assistenza nella civilta cristiana medievale", in: J. AGRIMI-J.N. BIRABEN - C. CRISCIANI & com., *Storia del pensiero Medico Occidentale. 1. Antichita e Medioevo*, Editore Laterza, Bari, 1993, p. 217-259, here p. 235; see also D. DAFFARA, *L'Ospedale di Sansone...*, p. 41.

[77] Gian Maria COMOLLI,, *Compedio di Pastorale della Salute,* Editoriale Romani, Savona, 2018, p. 56.

[78] E. HIERONYMUS, "Epistle 77", in: J.P. Migne, *PL* 22, col. 690-698, here col. 694: (pers. transl.) *"She sold his wealth and with the money raised he prepared for the use of the poor, she established the first nosocomial, in which to gather the sick from the streets and heal the limbs of the poor, worn out by fatigue and hunger. Shall I now describe the various diseases of the people? [...]How many times has she carried the burden of illness on her own shoulders? How often has she washed the festering wounds that no one else has dared to even look at? [...]I could list all the names of the diseases Fabiola has changed into such a great relief to the poor, that many would envy the poor and weak in health. Not to mention that she behaved freely towards clerics and monks and virgins - that all convents were supported by her resources. Which among the naked and the sick did Fabiola's clothes not cover? On whom among the needy did not her swift and hasty generosity pour out?"*

[79] G. ZANNINELO, *Storia della Medicina...*, p. 28-29; see also G. M. COMOLLI,, *Compedio...*, p. 55.

[80] Fer. Jerome writes this noblewoman named Marcella a number of about 16 epistles, starting with Epistle 23, in: J.P. Migne, *PL* 22, col. 425- 480;

[81] Luigi MEZZADRI and Luigi NUOVO, *Storia della carità*, Jaca Book, Milan 1999, p. 30; see also Knut HAEGER, *Storia illustrata della chirurgia*, Il pensiero scientifico Editore, Rome 1989, p. 56.

It can be said that in the West the first hospitals, reception centres for the sick, the poor, pilgrims and foreigners called by the same name and with the same meaning of "xenodochi", were born out of the private initiative of noble persons such as Fabiola and Marcella. They organised and adapted them in their own palaces and provided them with the necessities of maintenance and existence by making available their wealth and sometimes even their lives. Somewhat later, in the 5th and 6th centuries, the initiative came from bishops, priests or religious individuals who created 'urban houses of hospitality', usually called by names similar to those in the East: 'Domus Dei', or 'House of God', in Italy; '*God's house'* in England; 'Godshuis' in the Netherlands, 'Hotel-Dìeu' in France, etc.; many of them operating either within or alongside monasteries, which thus opened their "pensions" for foreign guests, "infirmaries" for the sick and invented a vast pharmacopoeia[82].

Monasticism in both East and West has played an important role in establishing and achieving an operational configuration that responds to the demands of those in extreme situations of poverty, illness and abandonment. Monasticism manifested and believed that caring for others was one of its primary tasks, and among the various forms of assistance it included medical care. The administration of medical treatment was initially addressed to the monks of the monastery, but when monasteries began to come into contact with urban reality, necessity demanded that medical treatment be extended to the outside world. Therefore, it seems[83] that medical care was born in monasteries to replace natural family care. Both in the Rules of St. Basil the Great[84] in the East and of St. Benedict of Nursia[85] in the West we find sometimes even obligatory recommendations regarding the care of pilgrims, sick strangers and the poor. In every monastery it was thus stipulated that there should be an infirmary, but also a space dedicated to those who were not sick with a staff separate from those who cared for the sick, equipped with a dining room (trapeze) and adequate food. The main motivation in this case, universally found in both East and West, was the belief that the sick are part of the sacred things to be loved and served as Christ Himself[86]. Monasticism generally regarded the science of medicine not only as a beneficial practice for helping one's fellow-man in the distress of illness, but also as a true art and science. Benedictine libraries in general, which were responsible for transcribing, copying and transmitting both philosophical treatises and books of doctrine and spirituality of the Holy Fathers, also preserved numerous medical codices. The multifunctional activity of the monasteries and of the Church was later recognised by kings and emperors who in turn

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[82] *Ibid,* p. 32; see also G. M. COMOLLI,, *Compedio...*, p. 56.

[83] Andrew T. CRISLIP, *From Monastery to Hospital, Christian Monasticism & the Transformation of Health Care in Late Antiquity,* s.l., University of Michigan Press, 2008, pp. 235, here pp. 39-67.

[84] S. BASILIUS MAGNUS, "Constitutiones monasticae", in: J.P. Migne, *PG* 31,col. 1322-1429, here col. 1327B: (pers. transl.) *"You have therefore received, beloved, examples and proof; imitate what you will; you may become either the servant of the poor or the lover of Christ's teaching. But if you could imitate both, from both streams you will receive the fruit of salvation."*

[85] SANCTUS PATER BENEDICTUS, "Regula commentata", in: J.P. Migne, *PL* 66, col. 215-933, here col. 581D: *"Infirmorum cura ante omnia et super omnia adhibenda est, ut sicut revera Christo"* (Care for the sick must take precedence and superiority over all, so that they may be truly served like Christ himself); 749D: *"Omnes supervenientes hospites, tanquam Christus suscipiantur: quia ipse dictrus est: Hospes fui, et suscepistis me. Et omnibus congruus honor exibeantur, maxime domesticis fidei et peregrinis".* (All guests who come to the monastery are received like Christ, since one day He will say: "I was a guest and you received me" and due honour is given to all, but especially to our brothers and pilgrims).

[86] A. CASERA, "History of health...", p. 64.

copied the Church's charitable system and organised a civil health system which has developed step by step to the present day[87].

Among the monks who became popular and recognized over time for their knowledge of medicine are primarily St. Basil the Great[88] and St. John Chrysostom[89]; St. Basil in "On the Structure of Man" gives a description of the structure of the human body with all the limbs and their functions in the human body; he does the same in his treatise on the creation of the world: Hexaemeron[90] where in addition to the theology of creation he gives a lot of information on physics, botany and medicine. Moreover, in the Great Rules[91], St. Basil praises medicine, stating that medicine is an art that comes from God for the healing of the body as education and wisdom for the soul. Here he draws a logical parallel between healing the body of suffering through the art of medicine and cleansing the soul of sins. If for the healing of the body - says the holy Father - we endure surgeries, cauterizations and drink bitter medicines, in the same way for the healing of the soul we have to endure the cutting of reprimand and the bitter medicines of epitaphs. Medicine is an art in the vision of the Holy Father, but like any earthly art it is limited and therefore a good collaboration is necessary between the art of healing the body and the art of healing the soul, which is duhodoxy[92]. Likewise, St. Gregory of Nyssa, following the logic and teaching of his brother, in "*De hominis* opificio"[93], also gives a detailed anatomical description of the human body, which shows that like all the fathers of the 4th century, he too had a great deal of knowledge of medicine. In the 5th century, Atticus, bishop at Constantinople in the 5th century[94] mentioned by Socrates Scholasticus in his Church History; Nemesius of Emesa[95] (4th century) who writes a treatise "On the nature of man" highly appreciated in the Middle Ages for his outstanding medical knowledge, especially for information on blood circulation. Paul Bishop of Eghina[96] (620-680) writes a "Medical Encyclopedia", in which the disease of cancer is mentioned for the first time.

In the West they were famous and appreciated both by their contemporaries and later in the MiddleAges: Lactanțius[97] (sec. II), called as such in the age of Cicero of the Christians, claims that blood is the basis of nutrition for the body and gives a description of the functions of the stomach, kidneys, bone structure and joints of the human body[98]; Paulinus bishop of Nola[99] in the 4th century; Cassiodorus (485-580) who, after giving up his political functions granted by Emperor Theodosius the Great, comes to Calabria where he

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[87] G. M. COMOLLI,, *Compedio...*, p. 55.

[88] S. BASILIUS MAGNUS, "Oratio II: De hominis structura", in: J.P. Migne *PG* 30 , col. 38-68D, here 58C-62D.

[89] In the life of St. Basil the Great we are told that he had a great deal of medical knowledge, as did St. John Chrysostom, considered the protector of epilepsy sufferers;

[90] S. BASILIUS MAGNUS, "Homiliae in Hexaemeron" in: J.P. Migne, *PG* 29, col. 02-207

[91] S. BASILIUS MAGNUS, "Regulae fusius tractatae" in: J.P. Migne, *PG* 31, col. 890-1050, here col. 1043C-1046A.

[92] Leontin POPESCU, "Healing the body between medical practice and Christian moral theology", in *Icoana Credintei. International Journal of Interdisciplinary Scientific Research,* 5(2017), pp. 69-81, here p. 71.

[93] S. GREGORIUS NYSSENUS, "De Oratione Domenica", in: J.P. Migne *PG* 44, col. 1123-258.

[94] SOCRATES SCHOLASTICUS, "Historia ecclesiastica VII,4", in: J.P. Migne, *PG* 67, col. 30 -843, here col. 746AB.

[95] cf. Johannes QUASTEN, *Patrologia,* vol. II, Marietti, Genoa, 1969, p. 354-358.

[96] cf. Nicolae VĂTĂMANU- Gheorghe BRĂTESCU, *A History of Medicine*, Albatros Publishing House, Bucharest, 1975, p. 156.

[97] LACTANTIUS, "De opicio Dei, vel formatione hominis", in: J.P. Migne, *PL* 07, col. 09-78.-430

[98] G. ZANNINELO, *Storia della Medicina...*, p. 41-42.

[99] E. DAL COVOLO, " I primi cristiani e la medicina...", p. 7.

builds a monastery - Vivariense - where he will also establish a centre for health studies[100]; A special place is also occupied by St. Gregory the Dialog (Pope Gregorius I Magnus) who in his Dialogues speaks of the power of the saints to heal[101]. The monasteries of Montecasino, Camaldoli and Vallobrosa became famous from this point of view in medieval times.

CONCLUSION

From its very beginnings, the Church has shown a constant and assiduous concern for the service of those in suffering and social difficulties. In some cases it has had pioneering achievements in filling glaring gaps in civil society. And to reveal all this activity in the service of people would require substantial volumes to be written to tell the story of all this. Alongside medicine, which has been renewed from age to age, Christian communities in both East and West have offered those in need of help not only therapeutic care but also loving closeness and tenderness. And this can easily be seen by exploring the history of medicine, which throughout time has been closely intertwined with the history of Christian philanthropy. In this shared history, the work and involvement of the ancient Church Fathers was influential in at least two ways: doctrinal-theologically and practically as an example of philanthropic service and care for the needy. From a theological-doctrinal point of view, the ancient period was a period of debate and discovery of the truth about Christianity, producing theological treatises which formed the basis of later theological culture and the foundation of the ecumenical synods. As far as we are concerned, the disputes led to the affirmation of "Christ medicus" and the discrediting of all "men of divine origin" and pagan gods as was the case with Asklepios/Esculapius related to the cult of pagan gods and magic.

From a practical point of view, the ancient Church Fathers especially promoted philanthropy based on God's love, which can only be achieved through loving one's fellow-man, by creating structures of medical and social care that are the basis of today's medical and philanthropic institutions. Monasticism gave an early impetus to the organisation of these charitable structures by adopting professional methods of care and treatment. From this point of view, too, we can say that the first hospitals were born from the union of Christian care and professional medicine, inspired also by the Christian hospitality available in establishments with different names: *prochotropeion, nosocomion, xenodochion, gerocomion, brephotropheion, Domus Dei*.

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[100] G. M. COMOLLI, *Compedio...*, p. 55.
[101] SANCTUS GREGORIUS MAGNUS, "Dialogorum", in: J.P. Migne, *PL* 77, col. 149-430, here Liber III, 33, 9 col. 297D.

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THE EXERCISE OF TEACHING POWER AND ITS CANONICAL BASES

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ABSTRACT

Since the participation of the two constituent elements of the Church, clergy and laity, in the administration of her teaching power, through acts of preaching, spreading, defending the Christian faith, formulating the truths of faith, etc., has both a scriptural and a canonical basis, in the pages of this canonical study we have examined both texts, to which we have given the necessary doctrinal clarifications. In order to show the canonical basis for the exercise of this teaching power, I have referred to the text of some canons (apostolic, ecumenical and local), which I have explained taking into account the canonical doctrine of the Eastern Church, which also confirms that the power of the Church comes from its Founder, that is, from our Lord Jesus Christ, and has been transmitted through His Holy Apostles and their successors, that is, through the bishops of the Ecumenical Orthodox Church (Universal/Catholic). According to this canonical doctrine, only the bishops of the Church are the "de jure" administrators of this power. Priests and laity can and do carry out acts of administration of ecclesiastical power, including teaching power, but only with the approval of the local hierarch, and within the limits of the power they have received through the Sacrament of Holy Baptism or through the Holy Sacrament of Ordination, as both the texts of the holy canons and the commentaries of some reputed canonists of ecumenical Orthodoxy show.

Keywords: *Christian faith; administration of ecclesiastical power; clergy; laity;*

INTRODUCTION

According to the teaching of the Eastern Church, the Church was "founded by Jesus Christ ... to save the world"[1], to whom he revealed "the teaching which everyone who wishes to be a member of the Church must receive"[2]. As "Head" of the Church (*Ephesians* 5:23; *John* 10:11), Christ endowed all his Apostles "with equal power" to preach and spread the divine message. By virtue of the special mandate of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Holy Apostles had de jure divino the full exercise of the three branches of ecclesiastical power (teaching, sanctifying and ruling) (cf. *Matthew* 28:19; *Mark* 16:15).

Through the Holy Sacrament of Ordination, the Holy Apostles transmitted this power to their descendants, that is, to the bishops, but it does not have an infallible and universal character like that of the Apostles of Christ[3].

A hermeneutical analysis of the text of some of the canons of the ecumenical and local synods of the first millennium, accompanied by research in the speciality literature has

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[1] N. Milaș, *Dreptul bisericesc oriental*, trans. I. Cornilescu / V. Radu, revis. by I. Mihălcescu, Bucharest, 1915, p. 170.
[2] N. Milaș, *Dreptul bisericesc...*, p. 170.
[3] L. Stan, *Mirenii în Biserică. Studiu canonic-istoric*, Sibiu, 1939, p. 103.

enabled us to see that the administration of the teaching activity was one of the main concerns of the priesthood, which had in the laity, since the apostolic age, reliable collaborators in their teaching activity.

By administering the teaching power, they thus gave expression to the following of the command of our Saviour Jesus Christ, according to which the Holy Apostles received the divine mandate to teach "all nations" (*Matthew* 28:19; *Mark* 16:15), and to spread the good news, that is, the Gospel of Christ, to the whole human race (cf. *Matthew* 10:2).

Throughout the centuries, the teaching activity of the members of the Church (clergy and laity) has been materialized through various acts, such as, for example, the instruction (catechesis) of those who are strangers to the Christian faith, both by sacramental ministers and lay people, with the aim of spreading, explaining and defending the right faith.

Those who administer the teaching power, however, must be "learned" and "skilled in the word"[4], as the Constitutions of the Holy Apostles, written ad quem - post quem in the second half of the 3rd century and the first half of the 4th century, also stipulated.

1. EXERCISING THE TEACHING POWER OF THE CHURCH THROUGH THE MINISTRY OF PREACHING, SPREADING AND DEFENDING THE RIGHT CHRISTIAN FAITH

Teaching power, the first form of manifestation of the Church's power, has been exercised since the Church's foundation through the work of preaching and spreading the Christian faith.

In this work of exercising teaching power participated - along with the Holy Apostles - both clerics of divine establishment (bishops, priests and deacons) and lay believers[5], men and women, as the texts of the ancient Canonical Collections of the Ancient Oriental Churches[6] also show, such as, for example, those of the Egyptian (Coptic) Church and the Ethiopian Church, among "whose provisions are also those concerning the role of the laity"[7] as "teachers, catechists"[8], in spreading and defending the right faith.

The role of the catechists in the Old Church should not be confused with that of the didascals, who, although they "also fulfilled the role of catechists"[9], nevertheless, they had "a wider circle of activity, and only of necessity were they also catechists"[10], which made "from the fruit of the activity of the lay didascals"[11] develop over time "theological Schools"[12].

The Apostle Paul urged the Corinthians that "women should be silent in the church" (I *Corinthians* 14:34), reasoning - in the spirit of Jewish synagogue doctrine and practice - that "it is shameful for women to speak in the church" (I *Corinthians* 14:35). In their commentary on Canon 70 of the Sixth Ecumenical Council, the Byzantine canonists were

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[4] "Așezămintele Apostolice", lb. II, 1, in *Scrierile Părinților apostolici dimpreună cu Așezămintele și Canoanele apostolice*, trad. I. Mihălcescu et al., II, Chișinău, 1928, p. 15.

[5] L. Stan, *Mirenii în Biserică...*, p. 64-109.

[6] N. V. Dură, "Dialogul teologic între Biserica Ortodoxă și Bisericile Vechi Orientale. Rezultate și Perspective", in *Autocefalie și comuniune. Biserica Ortodoxă Română în dialog și cooperare externă (1885-2010)*, I.B.M.B.O.R. Publishing House, Bucharest, 2010, p. 272-297.

[7] L. Stan, *Mirenii în Biserică...*, p. 97.

[8] L. Stan, *Mirenii în Biserică...*, p. 97.

[9] L. Stan, *Mirenii în Biserică...*, p. 97.

[10] L. Stan, *Mirenii în Biserică...*, p. 97.

[11] L. Stan, *Mirenii în Biserică...*, p. 97.

[12] L. Stan, *Mirenii în Biserică...*, p. 97.

keen to add that "St. Paul commands women to be silent not only at Mass but in every assembly of the faithful"[13].

This prohibition of women from teaching or speaking in the Church on matters concerning the Christian faith is indeed based on the Law of Moses, according to which "the woman" is ruled by "the man" (*Acts* 3:16).

The testimonies of the early Church, however, testify to the fact that "in the beginning", i.e., in the pre-Nicaean era, lay people (men and women) were allowed to read from the "Holy Scriptures", and "to preach in the Church"[14], but "in time, however, they were prevented from doing so by synodal dispositions"[15].

Such a ban was of course also due to the emergence of all kinds of heresies and dissident groups that no longer respected the apostolic and post-apostolic order of the early Church. This also explains why, from the 4th century, "it was forbidden for laymen to read from the Holy Books in the Church"[16] unless they had "the clerical tonsure of anagnostics (readers or lectors), and who belonged to the lower clergy"[17].

In the Old Church, on the occasion of the Holy Mass, the bishop or priest also prayed "for the priests, for the psalters, for the virgins, for the widows and orphans ..., for those who are married and giving birth to children, ..., for the eunuchs who live in holiness, ..., for those who live a humble and pious life"[18].

From the same text of the Constitutions of the Holy Apostles we also note that the reader (anagnostic) was ordained by an ordination from the hierarch, who was asked to seek "your servant", who is empowered to read the holy "Scriptures to your people"[19] and give him "Holy Spirit, spirit of prophecy"[20].

The Fathers of the Sixth Ecumenical Council (Constantinople 691/692) noted that in their time, "in the land of the Armenians", there was still the practice of establishing "singers (ἱεροφαλτας) and readers (ἀναγνώστας) of the divine shrine"[21], and that they were to have the "clerical pruning (ἱερατικῇ κουρᾷ)" (can. 33 Sin. VI ec.)[22], without which - the Byzantine canonists specified - it was forbidden for anyone to read "the divine words (τὰ θεῖα λόγια) from the pulpit"[23].

But, as mentioned by the erudite canonist Rev. Prof. Liviu Stan, "the provision of canon 33 of Sin. VI ec. was not respected"[24], just as the provision of canon 14 of the Seventh Ecumenical Council was not respected, "because the laity have continued to read Scripture in the Church until today"[25].

From the text of Canon 14 of the Seventh Ecumenical Council we note that, in accordance with the "ancient custom", anagnostics were "ordained to the clergy in infancy,

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[13] Zonara, Commentary on can. 70 of Sin. VI ec., in G.A. Rhali and M. Potli, *Σύνταγμα τῶν θείων καὶ ἱερῶν κανόνων (Syntagma of the Divine and Holy Canons) (Athenian Syntagma)*, vol. II, Athens, 1852, p. 468.

[14] L. Stan, *Mirenii în Biserică...,* p. 93.

[15] L. Stan, *Mirenii în Biserică...,* p. 93.

[16] L. Stan, *Mirenii în Biserică...,* p. 93.

[17] L. Stan, *Mirenii în Biserică...,* p. 93.

[18] *Aşezămintele Apostolice*, ..., p. 232.

[19] *Aşezămintele Apostolice*, ..., p. 252.

[20] *Aşezămintele Apostolice*, ..., p. 252.

[21] *Athenian Syntagma*, vol. II, p. 379.

[22] *Athenian Syntagma*, vol. II, p. 379.

[23] Balsamon, Commentary on can. 33 of Sin. VI ec., in *Athenian Syntagma*, vol. II, p. 380.

[24] L. Stan, *Mirenii în Biserică ...,* p. 95.

[25] L. Stan, *Mirenii în Biserică ...,* p. 95.

taking ordination (χειροθεσίαν) from the bishop"[26] to read "from the pulpit at Mass", but that at that time this ordinance was no longer observed, hence the obligation imposed by the Fathers of the Seventh Ecumenical Council that 'horebishops' also ordain readers, but only "with the bishops' permission"[27].

In their commentaries on Canon 14 of the Seventh Ecumenical Council, the Byzantine canonists also affirm that only the readers (anagnosts) could read "from the pulpit the Holy Scriptures (τὰς Βίβλους τὰς ἱεράς)"[28] because they had "the pruning in the clergy"[29]. Some of the laymen were the illuminators and the christianizers of certain nations, such as, for example, the brothers Frumentius and Edesius of Syria, who christianized the Axumites[30], St. Nina, the christianizer of the Georgians (the Iberians, the Gruzinians)[31], St. Gregory the illuminator[32], the christianizer of the Armenians, etc.

The fact that women continued to carry out their teaching activity - which they also exercised through the mission of preaching the divine message - is attested by the paradigmatic example of Mother Teresa (1910-1997), originally from North Macedonia.

With regard to the missionary activity of women - materialized primarily in the preaching and defence of the faith of the apostolic Church - it should not be ignored that, in the Old Church, the woman "... was chosen to be a deaconess"[33], as it attested to us the prayer that the Church of that time addressed to "the eternal God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ" (2 *Corinthians* 1:3), "the Creator of man and woman, ..., and Who hast not thought it a shame that Thy Son, the only-begotten, should be born of a woman, Who also in the tabernacle of the testimony and in the temple hast chosen a woman to be the keeper of Thy holy gates, Thyself and now seek unto Thy handmaid, which hast been chosen to be a deaconess, and give her a Holy Spirit, and <purify> her (2 *Corinthians* 7, 1) from all filthiness of body and soul, that she may worthily perform the work entrusted to her, ..."[34].

Being included in the category of divinely established clerics through the Holy Sacrament of Ordination, the woman therefore also had the duty to preach, defend and make explicit the right faith of the Church, especially in the midst of the female laity.

According to the canonical doctrine of the Eastern Church, "the office of the magisterium has its ordained ministers in the priesthood"[35], and, as such, the special teaching mission is by definition only carried out by divinely instituted clerics, but this ecclesiological-canonical reality has not eliminated the activity of the laity (men and women). Moreover, even the provisions of some canons of the ecumenical Synods, such as canon 64 of the Sixth Ecumenical Council, could not "eliminate the participation of the laity in preaching, since later it was observed that they were allowed to preach in the Church, with

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[26] *Athenian Syntagma*, vol. II, p. 615; I. N. Floca, *Canoanele Bisericii Ortodoxe. Note şi comentarii*, Sibiu, 1991, p. 163.

[27] *Athenian Syntagma*, vol. II, p. 615.

[28] Zonara, Commentary on can. 14 of Sin. VII ec., in *Athenian Syntagma*, vol. II, p. 468.

[29] *Athenian Syntagma*, vol. II, p. 468.

[30] N. V. Dură, *Organizarea Bisericii etiopiene şi bazele ei canonice*, I.B.M.B.O.R. Publishing House, Bucharest, 1990, p. 17.

[31] *Sfânta Nina cea întocmai cu Apostolii şi luminătoarea Georgiei*, 2nd ed., Sofia Publishing House, Bucharest, 2012.

[32] C. Toumanoff, *Les Dynasties de la Caucasie Chrétienne de l'Antiquité jusqu'au XIXe Siècle. Tables Généalogiques et Chronologiques*, Rome, 1990, p. 242.

[33] *Aşezămintele Apostolice*, lb. VIII, XX, ..., p. 251.

[34] *Aşezămintele Apostolice*, lb. VIII, XX, ..., p. 251.

[35] L. Stan, *Mirenii în Biserică ...,* p. 85.

the will of the bishops"[36]. Lay preaching continued to be practised in the Church, as it was in the Church of proconsular Africa (cf. canon 98 of the Synod of 398), but "under the control of the hierarchs"[37]. That this was also the reality in the Constantinopolitan Church in the 12th century is also confirmed by the well-known Byzantine canonists in their commentary on canon 19 of the Sixth Ecumenical Council. For example, the canonist Balsamon makes express reference to the laity who preached and taught in the Great Church of the Imperial City during the time of Emperor Alexios I Comnenus (1081-1118)[38].

By Canon 64 of the Trullan Council, the Fathers of the Sixth Ecumenical Council forbade the laity only to preach the faith of dogmas (τὰ περὶ τῆς πίστεως δòγματα), and especially the preaching of it in public assemblies, i.e., outside the Church, which led to the disturbance of the "peace and good order in the Church"[39], and not the preaching and defence of the right (orthodox) faith.

In their commentary on this canon (64 Sin. VI ec.), the Byzantine canonists were also keen to reaffirm that, "if the laity are able to preach, <they also do not stop spreading and teaching in private (κατ᾽ ἰδίαν) those who ask>"[40].

In fact, since the pre-nicene epoch, the laity were also allowed to teach catechumens during the "three years" of catechesis. Indeed, according to the testimony of the Constitutions of the Holy Apostles, "the catechumen for three years is to be catechized"[41], and "he who teaches, even if he is a layman, but is clever in speech and of a chosen morality, let him teach"[42], because, according to the word of our Lord Jesus Christ, "all will be taught of God" (*John* 6:45). Finally, we should also mention that, in principle, even the Basilicas[43], the collection of laws of Emperor Basil I Macedonian, published in 912 by his sons (Alexander and Leo VI the Wise) did not prohibit laymen from preaching, but only from discussing dogmatic or theological matters in public without the consent or blessing of the local bishop, or without their having the appropriate theological training. This is why, over the years, local Churches have provided in their canons for the obligation of bishops to have "doctores in ecclesiis"[44] (scholars in the Churches, i.e., theologians), to explain the doctrine of the Ecumenical Orthodox Church.

The work of preaching, spreading and defending Christian teaching was also carried out through the sermons delivered by the clergy of the Altar in the framework of the Holy Liturgy[45], on which occasion the truths of the Church's faith were explained in accordance with those "definitiones fidei" formulated by the ecumenical Church through the dogmatic decisions of the ecumenical synods, as was the case, for example, with the Niceno-Constantinopolitan Creed[46].

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[36] L. Stan, *Mirenii în Biserică ...,* p. 86.
[37] L. Stan, *Mirenii în Biserică ...,* p. 87.
[38] Balsamon, Commentary on can. 19 of Sin. VI ec., in *Athenian Syntagma*, vol. II, p. 348.
[39] Balsamon, Commentary on can. 64 of Sin. VI ec., in *Athenian Syntagma*, vol. II, p. 455.
[40] Zonara, Commentary on can. 64 of Sin. VI ec., in *Athenian Syntagma*, vol. II, p. 454-455.
[41] *Așezămintele Apostolice*, lb. VIII, XXXII, ..., p. 257.
[42] *Așezămintele Apostolice*, lb. VIII, XXXII, ..., p. 257.
[43] See L. Stan, *Mirenii în Biserică ...,* p. 88.
[44] A Synod of the Armenian Church, meeting in Partav in 771, also expressed this view (*Fonti*, vol. VII, p. 243; L. Stan, *Mirenii în Biserică ...,* p. 89, n. 3).
[45] N. V. Dură, "Rânduieli şi norme canonice privind administrarea Sfintei Euharistii"*,* in *Spovedania şi Euharistia izvoare ale vieţii creştine*, II, Basilica Publishing House, Bucureşti, 2014, p. 465-484.
[46] N. V. Dură, "Canoanele Sinodului II ecumenic şi obligativitatea de a mărturisi şi păstra cu credincioşie Crezul niceo-constantinopolitan", in *Ortodoxia*, XXXIII, 2 (1981), p. 442-459.

2. CANONICAL ORDINANCES AND NORMS CONCERNING THE EXERCISE OF TEACHING POWER BY CLERGY AND LAITY

The obligation of divinely instituted clerics[47] to preach and defend the right faith, specified and formulated by the decisions of the Synods, is also attested to by the provisions of certain canons of the Eastern Church[48], according to which clerics who do not fulfil this canonical duty are subject to the punishment of "suspension from the ministry"[49].

In this regard, Apostolic Canon 58 provides that a bishop or presbyter who shows "carelessness" and does not teach "the clergy or people ... the right faith, shall be afflicted, and if he continues in carelessness and sloth, he shall be unfrocked"[50].

With regard to the punishment of damnation, it should be pointed out that both in Apostolic Canon 58 and in other Apostolic Canons (5, 29, 57), it "does not have the meaning of excommunication, but only that of suspension from the ministry"[51], but, in case of carelessness and laziness of the clerics concerned, they were punished by defrocking.

To the text of Apostolic Canon 58, reiterated in its principle provision by the Fathers of the Sixth Ecumenical Council, they also added the obligation of the bishop and priest not to be "overcome by the passion of ignorance" (can. 19 Sin. VI ec.), since this no longer enables them "to teach every day ... the words of the right faith" (can. 19 Sin. VI ec.).

The same Holy Fathers forbade the bishop "to teach publicly in another city" not under his canonical jurisdiction. He who has done so, must "cease from the episcopate; he is to perform only those of the presbyter" (can. 20 Sin. VI ec.). In this state, the bishop in question "can only perform the office of presbyter, i.e., he is not permitted, although he has the grace capacity, to ordain, to consecrate the holy sacrament, etc."[52].

According to the canons of the Orthodox Church, clerics also have the duty to instruct and teach the heterodox[53] who are to be received into the Church (cf. can. 7 Sin. II ec.; 96 Sin. VI ec.).

Among other things, the Fathers of the Second Ecumenical Council (Constantinople 381-382)[54] had noted with bitterness that in the Church "much was done either out of necessity or at the insistence of men against the canon of the Church"[55], as had been the case with those who had "recently come from the pagan life to the faith"[56], that is, to the Orthodox faith, who were "baptized" or "promoted to the episcopate or the presbyterate"[57] without having been sufficiently catechized, hence the provision of principle set forth in Canon 2 of the First Ecumenical Council, according to which they were to be catechized "even after baptism"[58].

[47] C. Mititelu, "Clericii de instituire divină şi îndatoririle lor după Pravila de la Govora"*, in Revista de Teologie Sfântul Apostol Andrei*, 1 (2013), p. 245-255.

[48] N. V. Dură, "Învăţătura credinţei ortodoxe după canoanele Bisericii Ortodoxe", in *Biserica Ortodoxă Română*, XCVIII, 5-6 (1980), p. 663-670.

[49] I. N. Floca, *Canoanele Bisericii Ortodoxe...*, p. 36.

[50] I. N. Floca, *Canoanele Bisericii Ortodoxe...*, p. 36.

[51] I. N. Floca, *Canoanele Bisericii Ortodoxe...*, p. 36.

[52] I. N. Floca, *Canoanele Bisericii Ortodoxe...*, p. 112.

[53] C. Mititelu, "Norme şi rânduieli canonice privind modalităţile primirii eterodocşilor în Biserica Ortodoxă"*, in Revista de Teologie Sfântul Apostol Andrei*, 1 (2008), p. 322-336.

[54] N. V. Dură, "Legislaţia canonică a Sinodului II ecumenic şi importanţa sa pentru organizarea şi disciplina Bisericii", in *Glasul Bisericii*, XL, 6-8 (1981), p. 630-671.

[55] *Athenian Syntagma*, vol. II, p. 116.

[56] *Athenian Syntagma*, vol. II, p. 116.

[57] *Athenian Syntagma*, vol. II, p. 117.

[58] *Athenian Syntagma*, vol. II, p. 117.

In their commentary on Canon 2 of the First Ecumenical Council, the twelfth century Byzantine canonists also reaffirmed the canon's basic provision that the divinely instituted clergy have a duty to continue the catechetical process both of the faithful after receiving the Holy Sacrament of Baptism and of clerics after their promotion to the rank of bishop and presbyter[59].

In the field of the provision of principle set forth in Apostolic Canon 58, reaffirmed by Canon 2 of the First Ecumenical Council, the Fathers of the Sixth Ecumenical Council laid down the obligation of all "the primates of the Church ... to teach the clergy and the people every day, and especially on Sundays"[60], but not to depart in their preaching from what was "taught by God the Father-bearers (τὴν ἐκ τῶν Θεοφόρων Πατέρων παράδοσιν)" (can. 19 Sin VI ec.)[61].

Therefore, the sources and inspiration for preaching must be Holy Scripture and the teaching of the Fathers of the Ecumenical Church, who were indeed "the enlighteners and teachers of the Churches through their writings" (can. 19 Sin. VI ec.)[62].

According to the canonical teaching of the Orthodox Church, heterodox who were to be "attached to Orthodoxy and to the part of those who are saved"[63] had first of all to renounce and anathematize "all heresy" and to confess and teach "as Holy Catholic (universal/ecumenical n.n.) and apostolic Church of God" (can. 95 Sin. VI ec.)[64], i.e., one Holy, Ecumenical and Apostolic Church.

According to the "ordinance and custom" of the Apostolic and Ecumenical Church (cf. can. 7 Sin. II ec. and can. 95 Sin. VI ec.), heretics were received into "those of Orthodoxy" (can. 1, Sin. III ec.), i.e., to the Orthodox Church, through three procedures.

The first procedure involved the confession of the Orthodox faith in writing; the second involved anointing with the Holy Chrism, and finally, the third involved rebaptism (cf. can. 18 and 19 Sin. I ec.; can. 1 and 7, Sin. II ec. and can. 95 Sin VI ec.).

As regards the confession of the Orthodox faith, this involved the spread, defence and explanation of the faith established and formulated - through their dogmatic decisions - by the Holy Fathers of the Ecumenical Synods.

This teaching of faith of the Ecumenical Orthodox Church was transmitted not only through catechesis and catechetical teaching, proper to the didactic activity of the pre-Nicaean Church, but also through its transmission through the schools of theological education, which were not lacking neither in the Romanian Orthodox Church.

According to God's command and the apostolic ordinance of the Church, the lay believers (laity) were "obliged to confess Christ and the truths of the faith to which he has called us" (*Matthew* 10:32)[65] , which proves that they too received the teaching ministry from Christ.

The fact that towards the end of the 7th century the Sixth Ecumenical Council prohibited - by Canon 64[66] - "public discussion of the faith and teaching as a teacher"[67], i.e.,

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[59] See the Commentaries of Zonara, Balsamon, and Aristens on Canon 2 of the First Ecumenical Council, in *Athenian Syntagma*, vol. II, p. 117-120.
[60] *Athenian Syntagma*, vol. II, p. 346.
[61] *Athenian Syntagma*, vol. II, p. 346.
[62] *Athenian Syntagma*, vol. II, p. 346.
[63] *Athenian Syntagma*, vol. II, p. 529.
[64] *Athenian Syntagma*, vol. II, p. 530.
[65] I. N. Floca, *Canoanele Bisericii Ortodoxe...*, p. 136.
[66] *Athenian Syntagma*, vol. II, p. 453.
[67] Zonara, Commentary on can. 64 of Sin. VI ec., in *Athenian Syntagma*, vol. II, p. 454.

that the laity teach in public, does not mean that they were forbidden to spread and teach the right faith. On the contrary, according to the ordinance and ancient Church practice the laity could continue to exercise teaching power, but with the express approval of the hierarchy. Indeed, Canon 64 of the Sixth Ecumenical Council only forbade the discussion of the dogmas of the faith in a public place (δημοσία) without the approval of the local bishop, must be understood in this sense.

In their commentary on Canon 64 of the Sixth Ecumenical Council, the classical Byzantine canonists also reaffirmed the principle provision of this canon, namely "that the laity should not make discourses on the faith or teach as teachers (διδάσκολον) in public ..."[68]. But they were keen to point out that the Fathers of the Sixth Ecumenical Council did not forbid the right of the layman to preach and teach the faith of the Church if he has the approval of the local hierarch.

The text of Canon 70 of the Sixth Ecumenical Council, which forbids "women to speak during the Divine Liturgy"[69], has been interpreted and understood in the same sense, to which Byzantine and modern-day canonists have added the prohibition of women to engage in "public discussions of a religious-dogmatic character"[70].

The Fathers of the Ecumenical Synods foresaw the duty of divinely established clerics to teach and catechize the faithful of all ages and of both sexes. For example, the Fathers of the Seventh Ecumenical Council (Nicaea 787) made a point of providing for the obligation of clerics to teach "children" and "married couples" to read "with perseverance the Holy Scriptures, because - the Holy Fathers reasoned - for this they received the priesthood" (can. 10 Sin VII ec.)[71].

In their commentary on this canon, the Byzantine canonists stated that the graceful state of divinely instituted clerics implies their duty to "teach" both the "children" of their masters and those of their servants, namely "slaves"[72], which reveals the humanist spirit of Christian doctrine towards slaves[73], which is in fact anchored in the natural moral law.

According to another reputed Byzantine canonist of the 12th century, the cleric who does not fulfil this duty, i.e., to instruct, teach and catechise the "children" and "housewives" of the slave owners, was "to be catechised"[74].

The teaching activity of the Church, which has materialized in particular through the preaching of the Church's priests, must be in the spirit of the teaching formulated by the Fathers of the Orthodox Church, expressed in the decisions of faith of the ecumenical synods, and which, indeed, are nothing other than acts of preaching and defending "the right faith", expressed "in an official and authentic form"[75].

These acts of preaching the right faith, which also imply the prohibition of saying prayers "against the faith", or others than those which were "once gathered by the most wise" (can. 103 Carthage), i.e., by the Fathers of the Ecumenical Church, and ordained by synodal decisions.

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[68] *Athenian Syntagma*, vol. II, p. 454.

[69] *Athenian Syntagma*, vol. II, p. 467-468.

[70] I. N. Floca, *Canoanele Bisericii Ortodoxe...,* p. 138.

[71] *Athenian Syntagma*, vol. II, p. 588.

[72] Zonara, Commentary on can. 10 of Sin. VII ec., in *Athenian Syntagma*, vol. II, p. 588.

[73] C. Mititelu, "Dreptul natural, ca temei al libertății sclavilor, în concepția lui Epifanie din Moirans (1644-1689)", in *Revista de Teologie Sfântul Apostol Andrei*, 1 (2012), p. 282-293.

[74] Aristen, Commentary on can. 10 of Sin. VII ec., in *Athenian Syntagma*, vol. II, p. 590.

[75] I. N. Floca, *Drept canonic ortodox. Legislație și administrație bisericească,* vol. II, I.B.M.B.O.R. Publishing House, Bucharest, 1990, p. 28.

The laity participate in the exercise of the teaching power of the Church by virtue of the grace received through the Sacrament of Holy Baptism[76], by which the one who is endowed with this Sacrament is enrolled in the category of "holy priesthood", hence the obligation of those baptized "according to the ordinance of the Lord, in the Father and in the Son and in the Holy Spirit" (cf. can. 49 ap.)[77], that is, in the name of the Holy Trinity, to offer "spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ" (1 *Peter* 2:5).

The members of this "holy priesthood", i.e. the laity, can exercise teaching power (potestas magisterii) only with the approval of the divinely instituted clergy, and in particular the bishop and the priest, but it should not be ignored that in the Church, both clerics and faithful are "a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people of God's own making", from which follows their right to proclaim "to the world the goodness of him who called them out of darkness, into his marvellous light" (1 *Peter* 2:9).

Thus, according to both the scriptural and canonical texts, "all the lay faithful in union with the hierarchy form a priesthood"[78], whose principal duty is also to participate in the exercise of teaching power.

CONCLUSIONS

From the examination of the text of the canonical legislation of the Eastern Church, in conjunction with her canonical doctrine, it was seen that the teaching power is exercised by bishops, and that, by their empowerment, also by priests and deacons according to the degree of their grace. Therefore, the power held and exercised by the bishop is not an exclusive and absolutist one, so that "it does not remain for deacons and lay people to participate in the exercise of this power"[79].

The legislation and canonical doctrine of the Orthodox Church also attest to the fact that "the right of the ruling Church to teach does not exclude that of the laity"[80], even if later there were periods in which they "were forbidden to preach before the bishop and then only with the permission of the ecclesiastical authority where they allowed to preach"[81].

By these ephemeral prohibitions, it was intended that no one should be able to take upon himself the "teaching office", but that he should obey "the ordinance preached by the Lord"[82], according to which they can only be taught with the consent of the ecclesiastical authority, because only "those who have received the gift of the word of teaching" are entitled "to teach the divine things" (can. 64 Sin VI ec.)[83].

The Church has forbidden the laity who have not received teaching power from those who hold it, i.e., the bishops, to preach from the pulpit or to speak publicly on matters of Christian doctrine. But the laity may also "teach the things of the faith ..., if they know them, if they have the approval of a bishop or priest"[84], since "all the faithfuls are obliged to confess Christ and the truths of the faith, to which he has called us (*Matthew* 10:32)"[85].

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[76] N. V. Dură, *Rânduieli și norme canonice privind administrarea Sfintei Euharistii ...*, p. 465-484.

[77] I. N. Floca, *Canoanele Bisericii Ortodoxe ...,* p. 32.

[78] N. Milaș, *Dreptul bisericesc...,* p. 182.

[79] L. Stan, *Mirenii în Biserică...,* p. 105.

[80] L. Stan, *Mirenii în Biserică...,* p. 108.

[81] L. Stan, *Mirenii în Biserică...,* p. 108.

[82] I. N. Floca, *Canoanele Bisericii Ortodoxe ...,* p. 135.

[83] I. N. Floca, *Canoanele Bisericii Ortodoxe ...,* p. 135.

[84] I. N. Floca, *Canoanele Bisericii Ortodoxe ...,* p. 136.

[85] I. N. Floca, *Canoanele Bisericii Ortodoxe ...,* p. 136.

Finally, from this brief presentation it can be seen that in the Eastern Orthodox Church the teaching power was exercised according to the ordinances established by the Lord and his Apostles, and the canonical norms laid down by the ecumenical canonical legislation of the first millennium, which have the force of *jus cogens* for the whole Orthodox Church.

Hence the obligation to know and apply both the ordinances established by the Founder of the Church and conveyed by His Apostles, and the canonical norms concerning the way in which the Church's teaching power (potestas magisterii Ecclesiae) is administered by all its members (clergy and laity).

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[7.] Dură, N. V., *Organizarea Bisericii etiopiene și bazele ei canonice*, I.B.M.B.O.R. Publishing House, Bucharest, 1990.

[8.] Floca, I. N., *Canoanele Bisericii Ortodoxe. Note și comentarii*, Sibiu, 1991.

[9.] Floca, I. N., *Drept canonic ortodox. Legislație și administrație bisericească,* vol. II, I.B.M.B.O.R. Publishing House, Bucharest, 1990.

[10.] Milaș, N., *Dreptul bisericesc oriental*, trans. I. Cornilescu / V. Radu, revis. by I. Mihălcescu, Bucharest, 1915.

[11.] Mititelu, C., "Clericii de instituire divină și îndatoririle lor după Pravila de la Govora"*, in *Revista de Teologie Sfântul Apostol Andrei*, 1 (2013), p. 245-255.

[12.] Mititelu, C., "Dreptul natural, ca temei al libertății sclavilor, în concepția lui Epifanie din Moirans (1644-1689)", in *Revista de Teologie Sfântul Apostol Andrei*, 1 (2012), p. 282-293.

[13.] Mititelu, C., "Norme și rânduieli canonice privind modalitățile primirii eterodocșilor în Biserica Ortodoxă"*, in *Revista de Teologie Sfântul Apostol Andrei*, 1 (2008), p. 322-336.

[14.] Rhali, G. A.; Potli, M, Σύνταγμα τῶν θείων καὶ ἱερῶν κανόνων *(Syntagma of the Divine and Holy Canons) (Athenian Syntagma)*, vol. II, Athens, 1852.

[15.] *Sfânta Nina cea întocmai cu Apostolii și luminătoarea Georgiei*, 2nd ed., Sofia Publishing House, Bucharest, 2012.

[16.] Stan, L., *Mirenii în Biserică. Studiu canonic-istoric*, Sibiu, 1939.

[17.] Toumanoff, C., *Les Dynasties de la Caucasie Chrétienne de l'Antiquité jusqu'au XIXe Siècle. Tables Généalogiques et Chronologiques*, Rome, 1990.

THE ECCLESIASTICAL PROVINCE OF MOESIA SECUNDA IN THE MID-5TH CENTURY AD

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ABSTRACT

In this article, the author outlines the organization of the Church in Moesia Secunda in the decade following the Hunnic invasion of AD 447/448. He refutes the hypothesis that Abritus (now Razgrad, Bulgaria) assumed the function of the metropolis of Moesia Secunda and that its bishop took over the ecclesiastical leadership of the province after the destruction of Marcianopolis (now Devnya, Bulgaria) during this period. While the temporary relocation of the administrative headquarters from Marcianopolis to another city within the province is conceivable, there is no clear evidence that it specifically moved to Abritus. However, the bishop of this latter city presided over the extraordinary session of the provincial synod in 457/458 following the death of Metropolitan Valerian. Historical sources from the mid-5th century confirm that the see of Marcianopolis maintained its metropolitan status permanently, with its suffragan bishoprics being Abritus, Appiaria (now Riakhovo, Bulgaria), Durostorum (now Silistra, Bulgaria), Nicopolis ad Istrum (now Nikiup, Bulgaria), and Novae (now Svishtov, Bulgaria). In contrast, the ordinary bishopric of Odessus (now Varna, Bulgaria) was subordinated to the metropolitan see of Tomi (now Constanța, Romania) within the ecclesiastical province of Scythia at that time.

Keywords: *Moesia Secunda; Marcianopolis (Devnya); Abritus (Razgrad); Appiaria (Riakhovo); Durostorum (Silistra); Nicopolis ad Istrum (Nikiup); Novae (Svishtov);*

INTRODUCTION

Towards the end of AD 457, Emperor Leo I (r. 457–474) initiated a comprehensive investigation into religious matters carried out in most provinces of the Eastern Roman Empire. Those questioned—hierarchs and monks—were asked to express their opinions on three major issues: 1. The appropriateness of convening a new ecumenical council; 2. The validity of the decisions of the Council of Chalcedon (451); and 3. The canonicity of the election of Timothy Aelurus (457–460, 475–477) as the patriarch of Alexandria in Egypt. In specialized studies, this investigation and its outcome are known by the generic term of *Encyclia*.[1] The documents surrounding this inquiry, partially preserved in *Codex Encyclius*, provide numerous pieces of information regarding the ecclesiastical organization in the Eastern Roman Empire at that time. In some instances, however, this information is not

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[1] On *Encyclia*, see Ionuț Holubeanu, *Christianity in Roman Scythia—Ecclesiastical Organization and Monasticism (4th to 7th Centuries)*, coll. *East Central and Eastern Europe in the Middle Ages, 450–1450*, vol. 90, Brill, Leiden/Boston, 2024, pp. 44–45 ff.

sufficiently clear, leaving room for interpretations. This situation also applies to the two Roman provinces along the Lower Danube—Scythia and Moesia Secunda.[2]

The episcopal structure of the province of Moesia Secunda, as presented in the *Encyclia*, has prompted questions among scholars. One of these concerns the status of the see of Odessos (now Varna, Bulgaria). The question arises from the bishop of this city using the name 'Scythia' in his signature: "*Dizza, episcopus ciuitatis Odissae Scythiae similiter*" ["Dizza bishop of the city of Odessos in Scythia, similarly (i.e., I have confirmed and subscribed)"].[3] According to the most recent interpretation, through this term, Dizza indicated that his see, although located in a city within the territory of civil Moesia Secunda, was a suffragan of the metropolitan see of Tomi within the ecclesiastical province of Scythia.[4]

Another aspect of Moesia Secunda that raises questions pertains to the hierarch who held the ecclesiastical leadership in the province at that time. G. Siebigs proposed the hypothesis that Abritus temporarily assumed the function of the metropolis of Moesia Secunda beginning in 447. Concurrently, the bishop of Abritus took over the ecclesiastical leadership of the province.[5] Siebigs supported his statement with four observations: 1. Marcianopolis was conquered and destroyed by the Huns in 447; 2. Although the bishop of Marcianopolis, Valerian, is mentioned in the list of addressees in the *Encyclia*, his name and signature do not appear in the response letter from the hierarchs of Moesia Secunda addressed to the emperor; 3. The bishop of Abritus is mentioned and signed first in the letter; and 4. Valerian's successor in the see of Marcianopolis, Paul, is attested in the year 460 in Constantinople.[6]

Based on these observations, Siebigs concluded that the see of Marcianopolis continued to exist and have a bishop even after the city's destruction by the Huns. However, due to Marcianopolis remaining in ruins, its bishops relocated their residence to Constantinople. In this context, the bishop of Abritus became the ecclesiastical leader of Moesia Secunda.[7] Until Siebigs's work was published in 2010, scholars had not considered such a possibility.[8] Nevertheless, we believe that examining the hypothesis and accurately

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[2] On the data concerning Roman Scythia in the *Encyclia*, see I. Holubeanu, *Christianity in Roman Scythia*, pp. 46–58.

[3] *Acta Conciliorum Oecumenicorum* (hereafter cited as *ACO*), vol. II/5, Eduard Schwartz (ed.), De Gruyter, Berlin/Leipzig, 1936, p. 32[31].

[4] See I. Holubeanu, *Christianity in Roman Scythia*, pp. 46–51.

[5] See Gereon Siebigs, *Kaiser Leo I. Das oströmische Reich in den ersten drei Jahren seiner Regierung (457–460 n.Chr.)*, De Gruyter, Berlin/New York, 2010, pp. 358 (n. 323) and 627–628.

[6] Siebigs [*Kaiser Leo I*, pp. 358 (n. 323), 522 (n. 147), and 826 (n. 5)] refers there to the Home Synod from 458/459, which he dated to 460. On this synod, see below, section "The Home Synod of AD 458/459."

[7] G. Siebigs (*Kaiser Leo I*, p. 627) assumes that the city of Abritus, situated in a more secluded mountainous area, suffered less from the Hunnic invasion around the year 447. However, other scholars argue that Abritus was also affected by the Hunnic invasion during that time—see Andrew Poulter, *Nicopolis ad Istrum. A Roman, Late Roman and Early Byzantine City. Excavations 1985–1992*, coll. *Journal of Roman Studies Monograph*, vol. 8, Society for the Promotion of Roman Studies, London, 1995, p. 35; Rumen Ivanov, *Roman cities in Bulgaria*, vol. 1, Academic Publishing House, Sofia, 2012, p. 171. The relocation to Constantinople of Metropolitan Valerian of Marcianopolis is also accepted by Alexander Minchev, "Marcianopolis in the 2nd–6th Centuries AD. From a Roman City to a Late Antique Capital," in *Roman Provincial Capitals under Transition. Proceedings of the International Conference Held in Plovdiv 04.–07. November 2019*, Milena Raycheva and Martin Steskal (eds.), coll. *Österreichisches Archäologisches Institut. Sonderschriften*, vol. 61, Holzhausen, Vienna, 2021, p. 275.

[8] See Michael le Quien, *Oriens christianus*, vol. 1, Ex typographia regia, Paris, 1740, col. 1217–1220; Johann Elieser Theodor Wiltsch, *Handbook of the Geography and Statistics of the Church*, vol. 1, trans. John Leitch,

identifying the episcopal structure of the province in the mid-5th century, based on the available documentary information, would be valuable for understanding the ecclesiastical organization of Moesia Secunda in the decade following the Hunnic invasion of AD 447/448.

1. METROPOLITAN SATURNINUS OF MARCIANOPOLIS (431–*c.*449)

The known archaeological data does not provide clear clues to resolve the issue of the relocation of the metropolitan of Marcianopolis to Constantinople following the destruction of this city in 447. Currently, it is known that large areas of the city remained uninhabited after the destruction in that year. A few churches were reconstructed in the late 5th or early 6th century, and it is presumed that a new and much smaller fortress was erected next to the city's amphitheatre during this time.[9] However, based on this evidence, it is difficult to determine whether the metropolitans resided in the city or had relocated to Constantinople between the years 447 and 459.

Bosworth & Harrison, London, 1859, p. 185; Heinrich Gelzer, "Zur Zeitbestimmung der griechischen Notitiae Episcopatuum," in *Jahrbücher für protestantische Theologie*, XII (1886), no. 3, pp. 340–342 and 345; Vasile Pârvan, *Contribuţii epigrafice la istoria creştinismului daco-roman/ Epigraphic Contributions to the History of Daco-Roman Christianity*, SOCEC & Co., Bucharest, 1911, p. 59; Dimitŭr Tsukhlev, *Istoriia na Bŭlgarskata tsŭrkva/ History of the Bulgarian Church*, vol. 1, Sofia, 1911, III.d. Available at http://www.pravoslavieto.com/history/BPC_history_864-1186_Tsouhlev.htm. Accessed 2022 May 9; Ernst Gerland, "Rezension: J. Weiss, *Die Dobrudscha im Altertum*," in *Berliner Philologische Wochenschrift*, 32 (1912), no. 30, col. 946–947; Raymund Netzhammer, *Die christlichen Altertümer der Dobrudscha*, SOCEC & Co., Bucharest, 1918, p. 56; Jacques Zeiller, *Les origines chrétiennes dans les provinces danubiennes de l'empire romain*, E. de Boccard, Paris, 1918, pp. 164–165, 361–362, and 600; Henri Leclercq, "Mésie," in *Dictionnaire d'Archéologie chrétienne et de Liturgie*, vol. XI/1, Fernand Cabrol and Henri Leclercq (eds.), Librairie Letouzey et Ané, Paris, 1933, col. 507; Eduard Schwartz, "Praefatio," in *ACO*, II/5, p. XIIII; Hans-Georg Beck, *Kirche und theologische Literatur im byzantinischen Reich*, coll. *Byzantinisches Handbuch im Rahmen des Handbuchs der Altertumswissenschaft*, vol. II/1, Beck, Munich, 1959, p. 175; Raymond Janin, "La hiérarchie ecclésiastique dans le diocèse de Thrace," in *Revue des études byzantines*, 17 (1959), pp. 140–141; Lili Gajdova, "Zum Problem über die Einbeziehung der Odesser Kirchengemeinde in die Rangliste der autokephalen Archiepiskopate," in *Pulpudeva*, 4 (1983), pp. 297–298; Kazimierz Ilski, "Biskupstwo w Novae a zagadnienie chrystianizacji Mezji Dolnej"/ "The Bishopric of Novae and the Issue of the Christianization of Lower Moesia," in *Balcanica Poznaniensia*, 1 (1984), p. 307; Kazimierz Ilski, "Korespondencja biskupów Mezyjskich"/ "The Correspondence of the Moesian Bishops," in *Studia Moesiaca*, Leszek Mrozewicz and Kazimierz Ilski (eds.), VIS, Poznań, 1994, pp. 134–135; Alexander Minchev, "Rannoto khristiianstvo v Odesos i okolnostite mu"/ "Early Christianity in and around Odessos," in *Izvestiia na narodniia muzeĭ Varna*, 22 (1986), pp. 41–42; Alexander Minchev, "Marcianopolis Christiana," in *Miscellanea Bulgarica*, 5 (1987), pp. 298–299 and 303; A. Minchev, "Marcianopolis in the 2nd–6th Centuries AD," p. 275; Giorgio Fedalto, *Hierarchia Ecclesiastica Orientalis*, vol. 1, Messaggero, Padova, 1988, p. 341; Bistra Nikolova, "The Church of Odessos-Varna between Byzantium, the Bulgarian Tsardom and the Patriarchate of Constantinople," in *Études Balkaniques*, 34 (1998), nos. 1–2, pp. 94–95 and 97; Andrzej Bolesław Biernacki, "A City of Christians: Novae in the 5th and 6th C AD," in *Archaeologia Bulgarica*, 9 (2005), no. 1, p. 1; Georgi Atanasov, *Khristiianskiiat Durostorum-Drŭstŭr/ The Christian Durostorum-Drastar*, Zograf, Veliko Tarnovo, 2007, pp. 86–89; Georgi Atanassov, "Christianity along the Lower Danube Limes in the Roman Provinces of Dacia Ripensis, Moesia Secunda and Scythia Minor (4th–6th c. AD)," in *The Lower Danube Roman Limes (1st–6th C. AD)*, Lyudmil Vagalinski, Nikolay Sharankov, and Sergey Torbatov (eds.), NIAM-BAS, Sofia, 2012, pp. 358–363; Nelu Zugravu, *Erezii şi schisme la Dunărea Mijlocie şi de Jos în mileniul I/ Heresies and Schisms on the Middle and Lower Danube in the First Millennium*, Presa Bună, Iași, 1999, p. 98; Nelu Zugravu, "Studiu introductiv, notițe biobliografice, note și comentarii"/ "Introductory Study, Biobibliographical Notes, Footnotes, and Comments," in *Fontes Historiae Daco-Romanae Christianitatis* (hereafter cited as *FHDRCh*), Nelu Zugravu (ed.), Editura Universităţii "Alexandru Ioan Cuza," Iași, 2008, pp. 93 and 121–122.

[9] A. Minchev, "Marcianopolis in the 2nd–6th Centuries AD," pp. 277–282.

More valuable in this regard are the attendance and signature lists of the synods held during this time span. The first of these is the signature list of the Home Synod during Patriarch Flavian I of Constantinople (446–449) on 22 November 448.[10] In its contents appears the signature of Saturninus of Marcianopolis: "Σατορνῖνος ἐπίσκοπος Μαρκιανουπόλεως ὁρίσας ὑπέγραψα" ("Saturninus bishop of Marcianopolis, I have given my sentence and signed").[11] It proves that at that time, the metropolitan of Moesia Secunda was in Constantinople.

It must be specified that the signatories respected the hierarchical principle. Specifically, metropolitans signed in the initial part, while ordinary bishops signed in the final part of the list.[12] Saturninus is the first among the metropolitans to sign the document, following Patriarch Flavian. This proves that he held the rank of metropolitan, and this was recognized by the ecclesiastical authorities in Constantinople.

Saturninus's name also appears in the attendance list of the hearing in Constantinople on 8 April 449: "Σατορνίνου τοῦ εὐλαβεστάτου ἐπισκόπου τῆς Μαρκιανουπόλεως" ("Saturninus the most devout bishop of Marcianopolis").[13] The list is also compiled in accordance with the hierarchical principle, with Saturninus' name appearing among the group of metropolitans—the fifth out of nine. In the group of ordinary bishops, Secundinus of Novae in Moesia Secunda is also mentioned.[14]

Most likely, Saturninus was in the capital of the empire throughout the interval 22 November 448 to 8 April 449. Therefore, the assumption that the metropolitan of Marcianopolis sought refuge in Constantinople in 447 could be correct. In the attendance list at the hearing in Constantinople on 13 April 449, Saturninus is no longer mentioned.[15] Only the name of his suffragan from Novae, Secundinus, appears.[16]

On 30 March 449, while Saturninus was in Constantinople, Emperor Theodosius II (408–450) ordered the convening of the Second Council of Ephesus (449). Certainly, the official notification was also directed to the metropolitan of Moesia Secunda. The imperial letter specified the start date of the council—August 449. However, no hierarch from Moesia Secunda participated in the council. The non-participation of Saturninus could be attributed either to his absence from Constantinople in July-August 449 or to his inability to travel to Ephesus (possibly due to medical reasons or his death?). Otherwise, it would have been expected for him (or his successor) to accompany Patriarch Flavian to the council.

Similarly, at the Council of Chalcedon (451), the see of Marcianopolis was not represented. Once again, if the metropolitan of Moesia Secunda (whoever he may have been, Secundinus or Valerian, his successor) had been in Constantinople, it would have been expected for him to attend this important council alongside the delegation of Patriarch

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[10] The case of the Constantinopolitan archimandrite Eutyches, accused of heresy, was debated at this Home Synod—see Aloys Grillmeier, *Christ in Christian Tradition*, vol. I/2, 2nd ed., trans. John Bowden, John Knox Press, Atlanta, 1975, pp. 523–525.

[11] *ACO*, vol. II/1.1, Eduard Schwartz (ed.), De Gruyter, Berlin/Leipzig, 1933, p. 145[21]; *ACO*, vol. II/2.1, Eduard Schwartz (ed.), De Gruyter, Berlin/Leipzig, 1932, p. 19[10]; *ACO*, vol. II/3.1, Eduard Schwartz (ed.), De Gruyter, Berlin/Leipzig, 1935, p. 129[2]. See also *ACO*, II/1.1, p. 118[16–19]; *ACO*, II/3.1, p. 98[14–17]; *ACO*, II/2.1, pp. 52[30–31].

[12] The case of Metropolitan Dorotheus of Neocaesarea, who signed the document alongside the suffragan bishops, is the only exception to the hierarchical criterion in the list.

[13] *ACO*, II/1.1, p. 150[8]; *ACO*, II/3.1, p. 134[3].

[14] *ACO*, II/1.1, p. 150[23]: "Σεκουνδίνου τοῦ εὐλαβεστάτου ἐπισκόπου τῆς Νοβησίων πόλεως" ("Secundinus the most devout bishop of the city of Novae").

[15] See *ACO*, II/1.1, pp. 148[4]–149[20].

[16] *ACO*, II/1.1, p. 149[4]: "Σεκουνδίνου τοῦ εὐλαβεστάτου ἐπισκόπου τῆς Νοβηνσίων πόλεως" ("Secundinus the most devout bishop of the city of Novae").

Anatolius (449–458). It is worth noting that Chalcedon was situated across the straits from Constantinople, making travel there relatively easy.

From the previously mentioned, it is evident that between April 449 and November 451 (when the Council of Chalcedon concluded), that is, for almost two and a half years, the metropolitan of Marcianopolis is no longer documented in Constantinople.

It is difficult to say what happened to Metropolitan Saturninus between 8 and 13 April. His absence from the hearing on 13 April could be explained in two ways: 1. Either he urgently returned to Moesia Secunda to address a more serious issue; 2. Or he fell ill or even died. The first explanation seems unlikely. Satuninus's departure from the imperial capital during a hearing aimed at clarifying accusations against Patriarch Flavian and his staff appears improbable.[17] It would have been a lack of gratitude towards Flavian, who had hosted him during the two years of refuge (between 447 and 449). Furthermore, as far as it is known, from 447 until 477, Moesia experienced a peaceful period, and the occurrence of an event of exceptional gravity seems improbable.[18] In such a case, on the one hand, it would have been expected for the bishop of Novae to leave the imperial capital as well. On the other hand, it should be noted that Saturninus sought refuge in Constantinople precisely because of a serious event (the Hunnic invasion), which could have endangered his life. Therefore, his return there in the midst of a similar situation must be ruled out.

The second hypothesis—his illness or death—is supported by Saturninus's advanced age. In 449, he had been a bishop for 18 years, and most likely, at the time of his election to lead the Church of Moesia Secunda, he did not appear to be very young. The context in which he became metropolitan also supports this latter assumption. More precisely, his election took place immediately after the First Council of Ephesus (431), against the backdrop of serious disturbances that occurred in Moesia Secunda during the Nestorian crisis. All the bishops of the province who participated in Ephesus were supporters of Nestorius, and Metropolitan Dorotheus, Saturninus's predecessor, was one of his most ardent advocates.[19] Upon arriving in Marcianopolis in 431, Saturninus was initially expelled by the city's inhabitants, who remained loyal to Dorotheus and, most likely, to his theological opinions as well.[20] From this situation, it can be deduced that the imperial and ecclesiastical authorities in Constantinople wished to establish at Marcianopolis in 431 a theologian with experience and sufficient maturity to be able to assert himself against any potential local challengers.

Thus, it is possible that Saturninus died around the spring or the summer of 449, and Valerian was elected in his place. However, the available data presented above imply that the latter preferred to go to Marcianopolis. His absence from the Second Council of Ephesus and especially from the Council of Chalcedon suggests that he prioritized addressing the situation of his Church over the theological debates in the empire at that time.

This brief overview suggests that the metropolitan Saturninus of Marcianopolis sought refuge in Constantinople after the destruction of his city in 447, likely remaining there until the spring or the summer of 449. It appears that at that point, he died. There is no

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[17] By ordering this hearing, Emperor Theodosius II responded to a plaint from the archimandrite Eutyches, who complained that the minutes of the Home Synod of November 448 had been falsified (see Richard Price and Michael Gaddis, *The Acts of the Council of Chalcedon*, vol. 1, coll. *Translated Texts for Historians*, vol. 45, Liverpool University Press, Liverpool, 2005, pp. 230–231). These accusations also affected Patriarch Flavian, who presided over that Home Synod.

[18] A. Minchev, "Marcianopolis in the 2nd–6th Centuries AD," p. 281.

[19] See I. Holubeanu, *Christianity in Roman Scythia*, pp. 56 and 318.

[20] See *ACO*, vol. I/4, Eduard Schwartz (ed.), De Gruyter, Berlin/Leipzig, 1922–1923, pp. 88–89.

evidence to suggest that his successor, Valerian, lived in Constantinople during the period 449–457/458.

Regarding the assumption of leadership of the Church in Moesia Secunda by the bishop of Abritus between 447 and 449, during metropolitan Saturninus's stay in Constantinople, this topic will be examined in the final section of the present study.[21]

2. THE LIST OF RECIPIENTS IN THE *ENCYCLIA* (457–458)

Information about the province of Moesia Secunda appears in two documents in the *Encyclia*: 1. The list of recipients of the questionnaire letter sent by Emperor Leo I; and 2. The response letter from the hierarchs of Moesia Secunda to the emperor.

The list of recipients includes the names of those who were direct addressees of the questionnaire letter dispatched by Emperor Leo I.[22] It is believed that it was compiled by the imperial chancery at the time of the investigation and was included in the original volume containing documents related to the inquiry.[23]

Based on these considerations, it can be appreciated that the information contained in this list reflects the official standpoint of the most significant civil authority of the empire regarding the structure of the episcopal organization scheme within the Roman state. On the other hand, considering that the investigation was launched in the middle or in the second half of October 457, it can be surmised that the information in the list reflects the situation of this structure at that particular moment.[24]

The recipients of the imperial letter in the list are arranged according to certain criteria. The first four positions in the list mention the pope of Rome (no. 1), the patriarch of Constantinople (no. 2), the patriarch of Antioch (no. 3), and the archbishop of Jerusalem (no. 4).[25] The remaining recipients are mostly grouped according to the civil dioceses to which their ecclesiastical sees belonged. The order of the dioceses is: Oriens (nos. 5–21),[26] Pontica (nos. 22–35),[27] Asiana (nos. 36–49),[28] Thrace (nos. 50–54),[29] and Illyricum (nos. 55–62).[30] After the sections dedicated to the dioceses, Bishop Julian of Cos in the Islands (no. 63),[31]

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[21] See below, section "The order of signatures of the bishops from Moesia Secunda in the *Encyclia*."

[22] *ACO*, II/5, pp. 22^{31}–24^{28}.

[23] See E. Schwartz, "Praefatio," p. XV; G. Siebigs, *Kaiser Leo I*, pp. 826–829.

[24] On the onset of the investigation and its duration, see E. Schwartz, "Praefatio," p. XII; Theodor Schnitzler, *Im Kampfe um Chalcedon. Geschichte und Inhalt des Codex Encyclius von 458*, coll. *Analecta Gregoriana*, vol. 16, Apud aedes Universitatis Gregorianae, Rome, 1938, pp. 19–20, 22–23, and 34–35; Ernst Honigmann, *Patristic Studies*, coll. *Studi e Testi*, vol. 173, Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, Vatican, 1953, p. 184; G. Siebigs, *Kaiser Leo I*, pp. 357, 359–360, and 392; I. Holubeanu, *Christianity in Roman Scythia*, p. 45.

[25] *ACO*, II/5, p. 22^{32-35}. Patriarch Timothy Aelurus of Alexandria, who was under investigation, was not questioned. Additionally, the other hierarchs from the diocese of Aegyptus do not appear in the list of recipients. In their case, the emperor had previously received letters from both supporters and opponents of Timothy Aelurus, in which their views on the matters under investigation were presented (see *ACO*, II/5, pp. 11^{35}–17^{20} and 21^{24}–22^{21}).

[26] *ACO*, II/5, pp. 22^{36}–23^{15}.

[27] *ACO*, II/5, p. 23^{16-29}.

[28] *ACO*, II/5, pp. 23^{30}–24^{11}.

[29] *ACO*, II/5, p. 24^{12-16}.

[30] *ACO*, II/5, p. 24^{17-24}. The hierarchs from Praevalitana, Moesia Prima, and Dacia Ripensis were not questioned due to the disorganization caused in these provinces by the attacks of the Huns (see J. Zeiller, *Les origines chrétiennes*, p. 361; G. Siebigs, *Kaiser Leo I*, pp. 358 and 827 (n. 14); Pauline Allen and Bronwen Neil, *Crisis Management in Late Antiquity (410–590 CE). A Survey of the Evidence from Episcopal Letters*, coll. *Supplements to Vigiliae Christianae*, vol. 121, Brill, Leiden/Boston, 2013, p. 133).

[31] *ACO*, II/5, p. 24^{25}.

Titular Metropolitan Lucian of Bizye in Europa (no. 64),[32] and Metropolitan Theotimus of Tomi in Scythia (no. 65)[33] are mentioned. Only the positioning of the last two hierarchs in the list appears unusual.[34]

Within the sections dedicated to each diocese, the recipients are arranged according to another rule. First, the metropolitans of great metropoleis are mentioned, followed by titular metropolitans, ordinary bishops, and lastly, representatives of monasticism, where applicable.[35] For a better understanding of the topic, some clarifications are necessary here. At that time there were in existence two types of metropolitan sees: great metropoleis and titular metropolitan sees. The first ones were the sees of the urban settlements that were provincial capitals and had suffragan bishoprics. The second ones, also known as 'autocephalous metropoleis' or 'autocephalous archbishoprics,' were the sees of the cities that were granted the title of metropolises (not being provincial capitals). The titular metropolitan sees had not a province attached and suffragan bishoprics and ranked between the great metropoleis and the ordinary bishoprics.[36]

In the preserved form of the list of recipients in the *Encyclia*, there are two omissions. These concern Metropolitan Euippus of Neocaesarea in Pontus Polemoniacus and Titular Metropolitan Sebastian of Beroe in Thrace.[37] Their absence from the list of recipients has been attributed to errors made by copyists.[38]

Significant for the present investigation is the observation that the direct addressees of the emperor were the metropolitans—including titular ones—and not the ordinary bishops. The latter were, for the most part, indirect addressees of the inquiry. In his questionnaire letter, the emperor asked every metropolitan to call the provincial synod in order to inform their suffragans about the issues he raised, analyze them together, and then write a common answer.[39] However, the list also includes three ordinary bishops: Julian of Cos, Adelphius of Arabissus, and Julian of Tavium.[40] The direct questioning of Julian of Cos

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[32] *ACO*, II/5, p. 24²⁶.

[33] *ACO*, II/5, p. 24²⁷.

[34] On this issue, see I. Holubeanu, *Christianity in Roman Scythia*, pp. 57–58.

[35] Only in the section of the diocese of Oriens are the names of three renowned ascetics mentioned: Symeon Stylites, John of Cyrrhus, and Baradates—*ACO*, II/5, p. 23¹³⁻¹⁵.

[36] See H.G. Beck, *Kirche und theologische Literatur*, pp. 67–68; Evangelos Chrysos, "Zur Entstehung der Institution der Autokephalen Erzbistümer," in *Byzantinische Zeitschrift*, 62 (1969), pp. 273–279; Richard Price and Michael Gaddis, *The Acts of the Council of Chalcedon*, vol. 3, coll. *Translated Texts for Historians*, vol. 45, Liverpool University Press, Liverpool, 2005, p. 208.

[37] Although their names are missing from the preserved form of the recipient list, their questioning by the emperor is certain, as their response letters have been preserved (see *ACO*, II/5, pp. 30–31 and 79–84).

[38] E. Schwartz, "Praefatio," p. XIIII; G. Siebigs, *Kaiser Leo I*, p. 826, n. 2.

[39] This request from the emperor can be inferred from certain response letters of the bishops—see *ACO*, II/5, pp. 29¹¹, 50¹⁸⁻²⁰, 64²⁵, 77²⁸⁻³¹, and 90¹⁴. It also emerges from the content of the letter addressed by the emperor to Patriarch Anatolius of Constantinople. In this letter—included in the *Codex Encyclius* as a specimen—, the emperor asked the patriarch to analyze the topics raised by him within the Home Synod, not on a personal basis—see *ACO*, II/5, p. 11²¹⁻²³. On this issue, see also Aloys Grillmeier, *Christ in Christian Tradition*, vol. II/1, trans. Pauline Allen and John Cawte, John Knox Press, Atlanta, 1987, pp. 196–197; G. Siebigs, *Kaiser Leo I*, pp. 349–350.

[40] Adelphius of Arabissus: *ACO*, II/5, p. 29²³ (no. 35); Julian of Tavium: *ACO*, II/5, p. 23²⁸ (no. 34). They are considered by most scholars to be ordinary bishops—see H. Gelzer, "Zur Zeitbestimmung," p. 343; E. Honigmann, *Patristic Studies*, pp. 177–178; E. Chrysos, "Zur Entstehung der Institution," p. 278, n. 76; Siebigs, *Kaiser Leo I*, pp. 521–522, 826 (n. 5), and 827 (n. 12); P. Allen and B. Neil, *Crisis Management*, p. 132; I. Holubeanu, *Organizarea bisericească*, p. 118, n. 21 (where an analysis of the data from the *Encyclia* concerning these two bishops is done). Only Eduard Schwartz ("Praefatio," p. XIIII) considers them titular metropolitans.

is attributed to his role as a papal representative in the East, while for the other two, it was due to their theological prestige. As for the positioning of the hierarch of Marcianopolis in the list, it raises no suspicion. '*Valeriano reuerentissimo episcopo Marcianopolis*' ('Valerian the most devout bishop of Marcianopolis') appears in the Thrace diocese section (no. 53).[41] His name is preceded by that of the metropolitan of the Haemimontus province, Gregory of Hadrianopolis (no. 52),[42] and followed by that of the metropolitan of the Thrace province, Valentius of Philippopolis (no. 54).[43]

All these pieces of evidence support the conclusion that, during that period, the imperial chancery acknowledged the hierarch of Marcianopolis as having the status of a metropolitan and serving as the official representative of the Moesia Secunda province. Furthermore, his positioning ahead of another metropolitan—the head of the Thrace province - suggests that his rank was not considered in any way inferior to that of the latter. If Valerian had been only a titular metropolitan, it would have been natural for his name to be placed in a lower position. In fact, considering the criterion used to arrange the recipients in the section of each diocese, his place would have been at the end of the Thrace diocese section, following the metropolitan of Philippopolis, and not ahead of him. Moreover, if the hierarch of Marcianopolis had been an ordinary bishop, he would not have been a direct recipient of the imperial letter.[44]

As far as the name of the bishop of Abritus is concerned, it does not appear in the list of addressees. This absence suggests that the imperial authorities in Constantinople did not consider him a representative or holding any significant position within the Church of Moesia Secunda. It seems improbable that such an exceptional situation in Moesia Secunda would have remained unknown in the capital of the empire nearly ten years after its establishment, especially considering the presumed presence of the bishop of Marcianopolis there in October 457. Therefore, one would expect the name of the bishop of Abritus to be included in the list of addressees, alongside the names of the other three suffragan bishops questioned for specific reasons. As the (official) representative of the metropolitan of the province, he should have convened the provincial synod and informed the ordinary bishops about the topics raised by the emperor. On the other hand, the absence of any other hierarch of Moesia Secunda in the list of recipients also indicates that no bishopric of the province held the rank of titular metropolitan see at that time (October 457). Otherwise, its hierarch would have had to be, in turn, a direct addressee of the imperial letter, like all the other titular metropolitans.

In short, in its preserved form, the list of recipients in the *Encyclia* supports the conclusion that the see of Marcianopolis still held the rank of metropolitan within Moesia Secunda in October 457. Apart from this, all other ecclesiastical sees within the province had the status of ordinary bishoprics. Furthermore, the absence of the bishop of Abritus from the contents of the list suggests that he was not recognized in Constantinople as holding a leadership position within the Church of Moesia Secunda. All these pieces of evidence,

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[41] *ACO*, II/5, p. 24[15].

[42] *ACO*, II/5, p. 24[14].

[43] *ACO*, II/5, p. 24[16].

[44] The see of Marcianopolis is recorded with this status—of ordinary bishopric—in the *Notitia Episcopatuum* 3 (according to the numbering by Jean Darrouzès)—see Jean Darrouzès, *Notitiae episcopatuum ecclesiae Constantinopolitanae. Texte critique, introduction et notes*, coll. *Géographie ecclésiastique de l'empire Byzantin*, vol. 1, Institut français d'études byzantines, Paris, 1981, 3.36.607, p. 241. At that time, the rank of great metropolis of Moesia Secunda was held by the see of Odessos. This historical stage was inaugurated in May 536—see I. Holubeanu, *Christianity in Roman Scythia*, pp. 128–147.

along with those analyzed in the previous section of this study, argue in favor of the fact that in October 457, the metropolitan of Marcianopolis was not in Constantinople.

3. THE RESPONSE LETTER OF THE BISHOPS OF MOESIA SECUNDA

There are two important pieces of information for the current investigation in the response letter of the bishops from Moesia Secunda: 1. The salutation formula at the opening of the letter; and 2. The signatures of the hierarchs at the end. Within the content of the letter, there is no information regarding the sending bishops.

The salutation formula mentions the names of six hierarchs: '*Marcianus*, *Martialis*, *Minofilus*, *Marcellus*, *Petrus et Dizas*.' Their names are followed by the phrase '*episcopi secundae Mysiae*' ('bishops of Moesia Secunda').[45] Based on this paragraph, the only certain conclusion that can be drawn is that all those mentioned were bishops, and their sees were located in the territory of Moesia Secunda.

As for the general title of '*episcopus*,' it supports the previous conclusions, suggesting that none of these hierarchs held the rank of metropolitan (including titular). However, it does not constitute conclusive evidence in this regard, as the *Encyclia* presents numerous situations where metropolitans from other provinces identify themselves in the salutation formula as '*episcopus*' without mentioning their metropolitan rank.[46]

The names of the same hierarchs, in the same order, also appear at the end of the letter, in the signature section. This time, each of them mentioned his status as '*episcopus*' and the name of the see they occupied, as follows:

> *Marcianus episcopus ciuitatis Abryti confirmaui et subscripsi*
> *Martialis episcopus ciuitatis Appiarensis similiter*
> *Minofilos episcopus ciuitatis Durostori similiter*
> *Marcellus episcopus ciuitatis Nicopoleos similiter*
> *Petrus episcopus ciuitatis Nouensis similiter*
> *Dizza episcopus ciuitatis Odissae Scythiae similiter*.[47]
> (Marcian bishop of the city of Abritus, I have confirmed and subscribed
> Martialis bishop of the city of Appiaria, similarly
> Minofilus bishop of the city of Durostorum, similarly
> Marcellus bishop of the city of Nicopolis, similarly
> Peter bishop of the city of Novae, similarly
> Dizza bishop of the city of Odessos in Scythia, similarly).

Based on these signatures, the same conclusions can be drawn as in the case of the salutation formula. They suggest that none of these hierarchs held the rank of metropolitan. However, even in this case, the individual use of the title '*episcopus*' does not entirely rule out the possibility that one of them might still have been a (titular) metropolitan. This is

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[45] *ACO*, II/5, p. 32$^{1-2}$.

[46] Twenty-three metropolitans with suffragans (see *ACO*, II/5, pp. 26^{20}, 28^{38}, 31$^{12-13}$, 32$^{35-36}$, 38$^{31-32}$, 40$^{9-10}$, 41$^{11-12}$, 42$^{40-41}$, 44$^{31-33}$, 46^{13}, 50$^{12-13}$, 63$^{38-39}$, 69$^{13-14}$, 71^{11}, 75$^{22-23}$, 77$^{21-23}$, 79$^{21-22}$, 84$^{13-14}$, 86^{10}, 88^{2}, 90$^{3-4}$, 93^{18}, and 96$^{37-38}$) and two titular metropolitans (see *ACO*, II/5, pp. 30^{11} and 42$^{40-41}$) did not mention their ecclesiastical rank in the salutation formula. Additionally, Patriarch Anatolius of Constantinople referred to himself in the salutation formula as '*constantinopolitanus episcopus*' ('Constantinopolitan bishop') (*ACO*, II/5, p. 24^{32}). The case of the metropolitan of Perge in Pamphylia province was not considered here (see below, n. 49).

[47] *ACO*, II/5, p. 32$^{26-31}$.

because, in the *Encyclia*, there are instances where certain metropolitans did not mention their rank when signing.[48]

On the other hand, it can be observed that all six hierarchs categorized their city of residence as '*civitas.*' None of them used the term '*metropolis.*' The use of '*civitas*' suggests that none of these cities held the rank of '*metropolis*' ('μητρόπολις'), and therefore, the ecclesiastical sees there did not have the metropolitan rank.

However, even the term '*civitas*' does not entirely rule out the possibility that one of these cities might have had the actual status of a civil metropolis. This is because such a case also appears in the *Encyclia*. It concerns Metropolitan Epiphanius of Perga in Pamphylia. He designated his city of residence as '*ciuitas,*' rather than '*metropolis,*' as one would expect.[49]

In conclusion, the letter of the hierarchs from Moesia Secunda does not provide any decisive argument in elucidating the topic under consideration here. However, it can be observed that none of the elements within this letter contradicts in any way the previous conclusion regarding the metropolitan rank of the see of Marcianopolis. Furthermore, the terms '*episcopus*' and '*civitas*' they used point to the conclusion that none of them held the rank of metropolitan (including titular metropolitan). The significance of the order in which the names of the six hierarchs are mentioned in the salutation formula and their signatures at the end, will be addressed below.[50]

4. THE ABSENCE OF THE SIGNATURE OF METROPOLITAN VALERIAN OF MARCIANOPOLIS IN THE *ENCYCLIA*—POSSIBLE EXPLANATIONS

Regarding the reason for the absence of the name of Metropolitan Valerian of Marcianopolis from the response letter sent from Moesia Secunda, three possible explanations could be put forward. One could be inferred from G. Siebigs's hypothesis. If Valerian no longer resided in Marcianopolis but in Constantinople at that time, this could be a reason for his absence from the provincial synod where the issues presented by the

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[48] Eleven metropolitans with suffragans (see *ACO*, II/5, pp. 28[12], 34[38], 40[1], 44[21], 45[37], 50[33], 55[32], 57[17], 65[39], 96[28], and 97[31]) and one titular metropolitan (see *ACO*, II/5, p. 44[24]) did not mention their rank in the signature. Taking into account the expressions used in the salutation formulas and those in the signatures, it can be noted that eight metropolitans with suffragans—from Europe (*ACO*, II/5, pp. 26[20] and 28[12]), Syria Prima (who was also the patriarch of Antioch) (*ACO*, II/5, pp. 32[35–36] and 34[38]), Syria Secunda (*ACO*, II/5, pp. 38[31–32] and 40[1]), Phoenice Prima (*ACO*, II/5, pp. 42[40–41] and 44[21]), Phoenice Secunda (*ACO*, II/5, pp. 44[31–33] and 45[37]), Cilicia Prima (*ACO*, II/5, p. 50[12–13, 33]), the Islands (*ACO*, II/5, pp. 63[38–39] and 65[39]), and Crete (*ACO*, II/5, pp. 96[37–38] and 97[31])—and one titular metropolitan—Eustathius of Berytus in Phoenice Prima (*ACO*, II/5, pp. 42[40–41] and 44[24])—did not mention their ecclesiastical rank in either of the two places. The metropolitan of Perge in Pamphylia (see below, n. 49) was not considered here, nor were those from Mesopotamia, Dardania, and Epirus Vetus. Although the latter three did not mention their rank as metropolitans in their signatures, they referred to themselves as bishops of the province: '*Maras episcopus uestrae Mesopotamiae*' ('Maras, bishop of your Mesopotamia') (*ACO*, II/5, p. 42[27]), '*Vrsilius episcopus Dardaniae*' ('Ursilius, bishop of Dardania') (*ACO*, II/5, p. 88[26]), '*Eugenius episcopus Epiri*' ('Eugenius, bishop of Epirus') (*ACO*, II/5, p. 95[4]). Their signatures suggest that this formula ['*episcopus provinciae*'/'ἐπίσκοπος ἐπαρχίας' ('bishop of the province')] was another way for a metropolitan to express his ecclesiastical rank.

[49] *ACO*, II/5, p. 60[7]: '*Epiphanius Pergenae ciuitatis episcopus*' ('Epiphanius, bishop of the city of Perge'). However, the rank of Epiphanius was subtly highlighted in the salutation formula of his province's letter, where a distinction is made between him and his suffragan bishops: "*Epiphanius episcopus Pergensis et qui cum eo sunt reuerentissimi episcopi […] Pamphyliae regionis*" ("Epiphanius, bishop of Perge, and those who are with him the most devout bishops […] in the region of Pamphylia"), *ACO*, II/5, p. 58[1–2, 4].

[50] See below, section "The order of signatures of the bishops from Moesia Secunda in the *Encyclia*."

emperor were discussed.[51] However, as already shown, the residence of the metropolitan of Marcianopolis in Constantinople at that time finds no support in any of the available documentary evidence. Moreover, even in such a situation, it would be hard to believe that Valerian, as the president of the local provincial synod and the sole hierarch from Moesia Secunda addressed in the imperial letter, would have overlooked the emperor's request by missing such a crucial synodal session.

The second possible explanation could be that Valerian responded on his own behalf to the emperor, but his letter did not survive. This explanation was put forth by E. Schwartz. Noting that Valerian's name does not appear in any of the preserved response letters in the *Encyclia*, the German scholar suggested that the response letter from Valerian might have been lost.[52] However, later, considering the existence of the letter sent by the bishops of Moesia Secunda in *Codex Encyclius*, E. Schwartz abandoned this explanation.[53] Nevertheless, it was subsequently supported by other scholars.[54] It must be noted, however, that Valerian's mention in the list of recipients in *Encyclia* only certifies that the emperor sent him the questionnaire letter. It does not, however, support the assumption that Valerian actually responded to the emperor. Moreover, as will be seen below, the list of recipients also includes the names of two other metropolitans—Ibas of Edessa and Symeon of Amida—about whom it is known for certain that they did not respond to the emperor.

On the other hand, as previously mentioned, the emperor had requested the metropolitans to discuss the issues raised by him alongside their suffragans, within their provincial synod, rather than individually. Where the convening of the synod was possible,[55] all metropolitans complied with this request, responding to the emperor alongside their suffragans.[56] There is no exception in this regard in *Encyclia*. Moesia Seconda would be the

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[51] G. Siebigs does not put forward this explanation, but it can be formulated based on his assumption that the hierarchs of Marcianopolis relocated their residence to Constantinople after 447.

[52] See *ACO*, II/5, p. 24, *apparatus* 15.

[53] See E. Schwartz, "Praefatio," p. XIIII; Eduard Schwartz, "Corrigenda," in *ACO*, II/5, p. XXIII. On E. Schwartz's final explanation regarding the absence of the name of Valerian of Marcianopolis in the letter of Moesia Secunda, see below, paragraph with n. 57.

[54] K. Ilski, "Korespondencja biskupów," pp. 134–135; Kazimierz Ilski, *Biskupi Mezji i Scytii IV–VI w./ The Bishops of Moesia and Scythia: 4th–6th Centuries*, coll. *Moesia II et Scythia Minor*, vol. 2, *Prosopographia Moesiaca*, vol. 5, VIS, Poznań, 1995, pp. 45 and 66; B. Nikolova, "The Church of Odessos," p. 94; A.B. Biernacki, "A City of Christians," p. 1. G. Atanasov ["Belezhki i dopŭlneniia kŭm t͡sŭrkovnata organizatsiia v Skitiia i Vtora Miziia prez IV–VI v."/ "Notes and Additions to the Church Organization in Scythia and Moesia Seconda during the 4th–6th Centuries," in *Acta Musei Varnensis*, VIII-1 (2008), pp. 304–305; "Christianity along," p. 359] wrongly claims that the signature of Valerian of Marcianopolis appears in the response letter addressed to the emperor. Similarly, N. Zugravu (*Erezii și schisme*, p. 100; "Studiu introductive," pp. 121–122) argues that the metropolitan of Marcianopolis expressed his position "together with his suffragans" in favor of maintaining the creed established at Chalcedon and against Timothy Aelurus. In the latter work, Zugravu refers to the response letter of the hierarchs from Moesia Secunda in the *Encyclia* ("Studiu introductive," p. 122, n. 838). However, as seen, Valerian's name does not appear there.

[55] The convening of the provincial synod was not possible in the Islands, Cappadocia Prima, and Scythia; on this issue, see Ionuț Holubeanu, "The Ecclesiastical Organization in Armenia Interior in the 5th Century AD," in *Revista Română de Studii Eurasiatice/ Romanian Review of Eurasian Studies*, 13 (2017), nos. 1–2, pp. 257–259; I. Holubeanu, *Christianity in Roman Scythia*, pp. 54–57.

[56] The titular metropolitans (autocephalous archbishops) represent a particular case. Although all of them received personal letters from the emperor, their responses varied. Some of them, such as Sebastian of Beroe in Thrace (*ACO*, II/5, pp. 30^10–31^11) and Lucian of Bizye in Europa (*ACO*, II/5, p. 28^17–35), responded to the emperor individually. In contrast, Eustathius of Berytus in Phoenice Prima (*ACO*, II/5, p. 44^24) preferred to respond alongside the other members of his provincial synod. It is unknown how the other four titular metropolitans (Peter of Nicaea and Eleutherius of Chalcedon in Bithynia, Aetherichus of Smyrna in Asia, and

only province where the provincial synod and the metropolitan did not conform to the emperor's explicit request, sending him different response letters. Therefore, this explanation for Valerian's absence from his province's response letter is most likely incorrect.

Finally, other scholars have attributed Valerian's absence to his death.[57] This explanation finds support in two other similar cases from the *Encyclia*. One of these is that of Metropolitan Ibas of Edessa in Osrhoene. His name is mentioned in the list of recipients, just like Valerian's.[58] However, in the response letter from the hierarchs of Osrhoene, the name of his successor to the metropolitan see, Nonnus, appears.[59] The date of Ibas's death is also known (28 October 457). Based on these pieces of evidence, scholars have concluded that at the time of the dispatch of the official letters by the imperial chancellery, news of Ibas's death had not yet reached Constantinople.[60]

The second case is that of Metropolitan Symeon of Amida in Mesopotamia. His name also appears in the list of recipients,[61] but in the response letter sent by the hierarchs of the province, Maras is mentioned as the metropolitan.[62]

The difference between these two cases and that of Valerian would consist of the fact that in Osrhoene and Mesopotamia, the successors of the deceased metropolitans had already been elected at the time of dispatching the response letters to the emperor by the hierarchs of these provinces, whereas in Moesia Secunda, the see of Marcianopolis was still vacant. Such a situation may be explained by the fact that Valerian had recently passed away, and the election of his successor [or at least his ordination in Constantinople, in accordance with the provisions of Canon 28 of the Council of Chalcedon (451)][63] had not yet taken place when the hierarchs of Moesia Secunda dispatched their response letter to the emperor. Another argument supporting the hypothesis of the death of the metropolitan of Marcianopolis is provided by the signature list of the Home Synod in 458/459. As will be shown below,[64] at that time the metropolitan of Marcianopolis was no longer Valerian, but Paul.

5. THE ORDER OF SIGNATURES OF THE BISHOPS FROM MOESIA SECUNDA IN THE *ENCYCLIA*

Important for understanding the civil and ecclesiastical situation in the period 447–457 in Moesia Secunda is the principle that underpinned the establishment of the order in which the province's hierarchs signed their letter addressed to Emperor Leo I. As already mentioned, the bishop of Abritus (Marcian) appears first, followed by those of Appiaria (Martialis), Durostorum (Minofilus), Nicopolis ad Istrum (Marcellus), Novae (Peter), and

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Philip of Hierapolis in Phrygia Pacatiana) questioned by the emperor (see *ACO*, II/5, pp. 23[26–27] and 24[10–11]) proceeded, as neither the letters from their provinces nor any personal response letter from any of them have been preserved.

[57] J. Zeiller, *Les origines chrétiennes*, pp. 165 (n. 7) and 362 (n. 1); E. Schwartz, "Praefatio," p. XIII; G. Siebigs, *Kaiser Leo I*, p. 956, n. 5. This possibility seems to be accepted by B. Nikolova as well ("The Church of Odessos," p. 94, n. 7).

[58] *ACO*, II/5, p. 23[5].

[59] *ACO*, II/5, p. 41[3].

[60] E. Schwartz, "Praefatio," p. XIII; T. Schnitzler, *Im Kampfe um Chalcedon*, pp. 54–55, n. 5; G. Siebigs, *Kaiser Leo I*, pp. 357 (n. 319), 412 ff.

[61] *ACO*, II/5, p. 23[6].

[62] *ACO*, II/5, p. 42[27]. For Maras's metropolitan rank, see also above, n. 48. Maras's metropolitan rank is affirmed by G. Fedalto as well (*Hierarchia Ecclesiastica Orientalis*, vol. 2, Messaggero, Padova, 1988, p. 823).

[63] Norman P. Tanner, *Decrees of the Ecumenical Councils*, vol. 1, Sheed & Ward, London, 1990, pp. 99–100.

[64] See below, section "The Home Synod of AD 458/459."

Odessos (Dizza). In a study dedicated to this topic, it was concluded that the suffragans of Marcianopolis signed the document according to their seniority.[65] Specifically, Marcian is mentioned first in the salutation phrase and signed first at the end of the letter due to his lengthy tenure as a bishop, spanning at least 28 years by 457/458. The other signatories had shorter lengths of service. Hence, any other bishop from the province could have been mentioned first in the salutation phrase and could have been the first to sign the letter if he had a longer tenure in the episcopate than Marcian.

This is why Marcian chaired the special session of the provincial synod and assumed temporary leadership of the Church in Moesia Secunda—a role he took on following the death of Metropolitan Valerian and until the election of Paul as his successor. Therefore, the position of Marcian's signature does not indicate the transfer of the Church's leadership from Moesia to Abritus in 447, nor the relocation of the provincial administrative and military apparatus to this city.

Regarding the latter aspect, it is plausible that the administrative headquarters was temporarily moved to another city following the destruction of Marcianopolis in 447. Among all the cities of the province, Odessos was the most suitable choice for such a relocation. It was the closest geographically to Marcianopolis and the best protected against potential new barbarian attacks (see the map). Just taking this latter aspect into account, Emperor Justinian officially moved the capital of the province from Marcianopolis to Odessos approximately a century later (in 536).

6. THE HOME SYNOD OF AD 458/459

The Home Synod of AD 458/459 took place under Patriarch Gennadius of Constantinople. Its central theme was the approval of a circular letter drafted by the patriarch, which was aimed at condemning the practice of simony.[66] The documentation pertaining to this synod is significant, especialy since it occured in the context following the *Encyclia* investigation.

What is particularly interesting in the present investigation is the list of signatures attached to the circular letter. It contains the signatures of 81 hierarchs—metropolitans and bishops—who participated in the synod. Among them, at position 7, is the signature of Paul of Marcianopolis: "Παῦλος ἐπίσκοπος τῆς μητροπόλεως Μαρκιανουπόλεως ὑπέγραψα"[67] ("Paul, bishop of the metropolis of Marcianopolis, I have signed").

The signature certifies that Valerian was no longer the metropolitan of Marcianopolis, confirming the previous conclusion regarding his death towards the end of 457 or the beginning of 458.[68] As for Paul, the successor in the see, he is also attested with

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[65] See Ionuț Holubeanu, "Câteva considerații privind ordinea semnăturilor episcopilor din Moesia Secunda în *Encyclia* (457/8 p.Chr.)"/ "Some Remarks on the Sequence of Bishops' Signatures in the Letter of Moesia Secunda in *Encyclia* (AD 457/8)," in *Pontica*, 50 (2017), pp. 127–135. At the moment, we are preparing the English version of this study.

[66] See Venance Grumel, *Les regestes des Actes du patriarcat de Constantinople. vol. I: Les actes des Patriarches, fasc. I: Les regestes de 381 à 715, Institut français d'études byzantines*, 2nd ed., Paris, 1972, pp. 104–105 (with bibliography).

[67] Eduard Schwartz, *Publizistische sammlungen zum acacianischen schisma*, Beck, Munich, 1934, p. 176, n. 1 (no. 7).

[68] G. Fedalto (*Hierarchia*, 1, p. 341) does not mention Paul in the list of hierarchs from Marcianopolis. Based on the information provided by Fedalto and the list of recipients from the *Encyclia*, N. Zugravu (*FHDRCh*, p. 423, n. 2) considers that the mention of Paul as the metropolitan of Marcianopolis, rather than Valerian, in the signature list of 448/449, is a mistake. Conversely, E. Schwartz, publishing the critical edition of the list, makes no observation regarding Paul's signature. Furthermore, in his commentary on this document, Schwartz notes

the rank of metropolitan. As observed, he clearly stated the status of metropolis of his city of residence—'τῆς μητροπόλεως Μαρκιανουπόλεως' ('of the metropolis of Marcianopolis')—and, consequently, the metropolitan rank of his see. The same type of signature, in which the metropolitan status of the see is highlighted by mentioning the civil rank of the city of residence, also appears in the signatures of all the other 19 metropolitans (including titular ones) in the list.[69]

It should also be noted that the civil status of a settlement was the basis for its ecclesiastical rank. This is clearly evident in the provisions of canon 12 of the Council of Chalcedon (451), which regulate the situation of the titular metropolitan sees ('autocephalous metropoleis' or 'autocephalous archbishoprics'). The canon indicates that the bishoprics of the metropolises held the status of metropolitan sees.[70]

On the other hand, analyzing the structure of the list, it can be observed that the signatories consciously followed the hierarchical principle. The first signature on the list is that of Patriarch Gennadius. The signatures of the metropolitans are found at positions 2–19, while those of the ordinary bishoprics are at positions 20–50 and 52–81. The only exception to the hierarchical principle is the signature of the titular metropolitan (autocephalous archbishop) Serenus of Maximianopolis in Rhodope, who appears in the group of suffragan bishops at position 51. The reason for this positioning is unknown. However, given the substantial number of participants (81 signatories), this exception does not fundamentally undermine the evidence supporting the hierarchical principle. Furthermore, it is noteworthy that no signature from any suffragan bishop appears within the group of metropolitans.[71]

Regarding Paul's signature, it appears in the group of metropolitans in a prominent position—the seventh out of 19. This positioning provides additional evidence that the hierarch of Marcianopolis held the rank of metropolitan, and he was not considered in any way inferior among the other bishops with this rank participating in the synod.[72]

However, the form of the signature and its position in the list do not allow for a clear conclusion regarding the specific type of this rank. More precisely, based on this evidence, it cannot be definitively established whether the see of Marcianopolis was a great metropolis (i.e., a metropolitan see with suffragan bishoprics) or merely a titular metropolitan see (i.e., a metropolitan see without suffragans). Both cases are possible. In fact, in the group of metropolitans, the signatures of those with suffragans—nos. 2–4, 6, 8–11, 13–14, and 16—are mixed with those of titular ones—nos. 5, 12, 15, and 17–19. Additionally, there are no distinctive elements in the signatures that would allow the identification of metropolitans with suffragans and titular metropolitans. Both groups defined their city of residence simply as 'μητρόπολις' ('metropolis') without any additional distinctive elements.[73] Noteworthy, though not conclusive in itself, is the observation that in

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that in Marcianopolis, as well as in three other episcopal centers, the hierarch mentioned in the *Encyclia* had been replaced by another (E. Schwartz, *Publizistische sammlungen*, p. 177, n. 1). Paul's tenure at Marcianopolis instead of Valerian is also accepted by B. Nikolova ("The Church of Odessos," p. 94, n. 7) and G. Siebigs (*Kaiser Leo I*, p. 358, n. 323).

[69] See E. Schwartz, *Publizistische sammlungen*, p. 176, n. 1 (nos. 1–6, 8–19, and 51).

[70] See N.P. Tanner, *Decrees*, p. 93.

[71] See E. Schwartz, *Publizistische sammlungen*, p. 176, n. 1; I. Holubeanu, *Organizarea bisericească*, annex 8, pp. 348–355.

[72] H. Gelzer ("Zur Zeitbestimmung," pp. 341 and 345) also sees in Paul of Marcianopolis's signature a clear proof that, at that time, his see still held the rank of metropolitan within the province of Moesia Secunda.

[73] The only exception in this regard is the signature of Metropolitan Stephen of Hierapolis in Euphratensis. In his signature, the name of his city of residence is not mentioned; instead, the name of the province over which

the *Notitiae episcopatuum*, the see of Marcianopolis is never recorded as an autocephalous archbishopric (i.e., a titular metropolitan see), but only as a great metropolis or ordinary bishopric.[74] However, given that the see of Marcianopolis is repeatedly attested as a great metropolis throughout the preceding decade, it can be concluded that it still held this rank in 458/459.

It is hard to say what prompted Paul's arrival in Constantinople. The analysis in the first part of this study rules out the possibility that he was a refugee there, like Saturninus.[75] His arrival could be seen in the context of his election as metropolitan following Valerian's death, to be ordained by the ecumenical patriarch in accordance with the provisions of Canon 12 of Chalcedon (451).[76] Another possible explanation might be his endeavor, as a freshly appointed metropolitan, to secure material support from the imperial authorities for his Church—like the allocation of funds for the building of the new metropolitan cathedral in Marcianopolis—or his province.

7. THE ROLE OF THE BISHOP OF ABRITUS DURING METROPOLITAN SATURNINUS'S REFUGE IN CONSTANTINOPLE, AD 447–449

In the following lines, we will briefly analyze the possibility that the bishop of Abritus officially assumed the leadership of the province of Moesia Secunda between the years 447 and 449, at the time when Metropolitan Saturninus was in Constantinople. For this, we will outline the main rights held by a metropolitan in an eastern province.

First and foremost, it is important to underscore that the hypothesis attributing metropolitan rights to the bishop of Abritus is based on Marcian's presidency of the provincial synod of 457/458. Nonetheless, as illustrated, this circumstance stemmed from the demise of Metropolitan Valerian. Hence, this occurrence ought to be viewed as exceptional and transient, lasting until the ascension of Paul, Valerian's successor.

Regarding the metropolitan's rights, one of these consisted of convening and presiding over provincial synods. According to the provisions of canon 5 of the First Council of Nicaea (325) and canon 20 of the Council of Antioch (*c.*341), ordinary synods were biennial, one being held in the spring and the other in the autumn.[77] Within them, primarily cases of disciplinary nature arising in the province were to be discussed. Canon 20 of Antioch also stipulated that ordinary provincial synods cannot be held without the metropolitan.

This last provision rules out the possibility of the bishop of Abritus convening and presiding over the provincial synods of Moesia Secunda between 447–449. It seems more likely that no such synod was held during that time, given the refuge of Metropolitan Secundinus in Constantinople, his advanced age, and the province's disarray caused by the

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his see presided is indicated: 'Στέφανος ἐπίσκοπος τῆς μητροπόλεως Εὐφρατησίας ὑπέγραψα' ('Stephen, bishop of the metropolis of [the province of] Euphratensis, I have signed')—E. Schwartz, *Publizistische sammlungen*, p. 176, n. 1 (no. 13).

[74] As a great metropolis: J. Darrouzès, *Notitiae episcopatuum*, 1.37, p. 205; 1.32.444, p. 213; 2.36, p. 217; 2.32.512, p. 227; 3.47 and 50, p. 231; 3.44.727, p. 244; 4.37, p. 249; 4.31.462, p. 260; 5.32, p. 265. As an ordinary bishopric: J. Darrouzès, *Notitiae episcopatuum*, 3.36.607, p. 241.

[75] See above, section "Metropolitan Saturninus of Marcianopolis (431–*c.*449)."

[76] N.P. Tanner, *Decrees*, pp. 99–100.

[77] On canon 5 of Nicaea (325), see N.P. Tanner, *Decrees*, p. 8. On canon 20 of Antioch (*c.*341), see *The Seven Ecumenical Councils of the Undivided Church. Their Canons and Dogmatic Decrees, Together with the Canons of All the Local Synods Which Have Received Ecumenical Acceptance*, Henry R. Percival (ed.), coll. *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, vol. II/14, Eerdmans, Grand Rapids, Michigan, 1971, p. 254.

Hunnic attack of 447/448. The non-convening of these synods would not have been unusual at that time. From the clarifications set forth in canon 19 of the Council of Chalcedon (451), it appears that provincial synods were not held in many provinces of the Eastern Empire. For this reason, the Chalcedonian canon reinstated the observance of this practice.[78]

Very likely, however, Marcianus of Abritus was the one who convened the extraordinary provincial synod of 449, during which Secundinus's successor was elected. This is because he was senior in terms of ordination in Moesia Secunda. However, this is also an exceptional situation, motivated by the death of the metropolitan.

It is difficult to say who convened the extraordinary provincial synod prompted by the investigation of Emperor Leo I. If he was still alive, the convocation must have been made by Metropolitan Valerian. If he was already deceased upon the arrival of the imperial letter, then the task again fell to the bishop of Abritus. He also presided over the provincial synod during which Valerian's successor, Paul, was elected. It is possible that the latter was elected during the synod in which the issues raised by Emperor Leo I were discussed and the response letter to him was drafted. This was also an exceptional situation, motivated by the death of the metropolitan.

Another right of the metropolitan was to confirm the election of the new bishops in the province, according to canons 4 and 6 of the First Council of Nicaea.[79] The transfer of this right by Secundinus to the bishop of Abritus is also unlikely. However, there is no documentary evidence to establish whether any new bishop was elected in Moesia Secunda between 447 and 449. Peter of Novae, who had the shortest tenure in episcopacy among the bishops of the province in 457–458, must have been elected after the death of Saturninus, during the tenure of Valerian. This is because Secundinus of Novae, Peter's predecessor, is attested as bishop on 13 April 449 (see above). It is not known, however, when Bishop Marcellus of Nicopolis ad Istrum, who had a longer tenure in the episcopacy than Peter, became bishop.

Finally, the metropolitan served as an intermediary between central civil and ecclesiastical authorities and his suffragan bishops. This would involve announcing the convocation of the Second Council of Ephesus, the Council of Chalcedon, and the initiation of Emperor Leo I's religious investigation. Historical information analyzed within the scope of this study excludes the possibility that the intermediary between the emperor in Constantinople and the bishops of Moesia Secunda was anyone other than the metropolitan of Marcianopolis.

CONCLUSIONS

Based on the investigation discussed above, the following conclusions can be drawn:

➢ After the destruction of Marcianopolis by the Huns in 447, its metropolitan, Saturninus, sought refuge in Constantinople, where he spent his last years (447–*c*.449). Most likely, however, he retained his metropolitan rights and responsibilities during his stay in the imperial capital;

➢ It is possible that the administrative headquarters of Moesia Secunda was temporarily moved to another city within the province after the destruction of

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[78] N.P. Tanner, *Decrees*, p. 96: "Ἦλθεν εἰς τὰς ἡμετέρας ἀκοάς, ὡς ἐν ταῖς ἐπαρχίαις αἱ κεκανονισμέναι σύνοδοι τῶν ἐπισκόπων οὐ γίνονται" ("We have heard that in the provinces the synods of bishops prescribed by canon law are not taking place").

[79] See N.P. Tanner, *Decrees*, pp. 7 and 8–9.

Marcianopolis by the Huns in 447, but there is no unequivocal evidence that this city was Abritus. It seems more likely that it was moved to Odessos;

➢ The name of Metropolitan Valerian does not appear in the response letter of the hierarchs from Second Moesia because he had recently passed away. At the time of the provincial synod during which the issues raised by Emperor Leo I were discussed, the metropolitan see of Marcianopolis was vacant;

➢ In October 457, none of the bishoprics within the ecclesiastical province of Moesia Seconda held the rank of titular metropolitan see;

➢ At the time Emperor Leo I initiated his religious investigation (October 457), the ecclesiastical province of Moesia Seconda had the following episcopal structure: Marcianopolis (great metropolis), Abritus, Appiaria, Durostorum, Nicopolis ad Istrum, and Novae (ordinary bishoprics).

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Anexes: *Map of the episcopal sees in the Roman province of Moesia Secunda in AD 457-458*
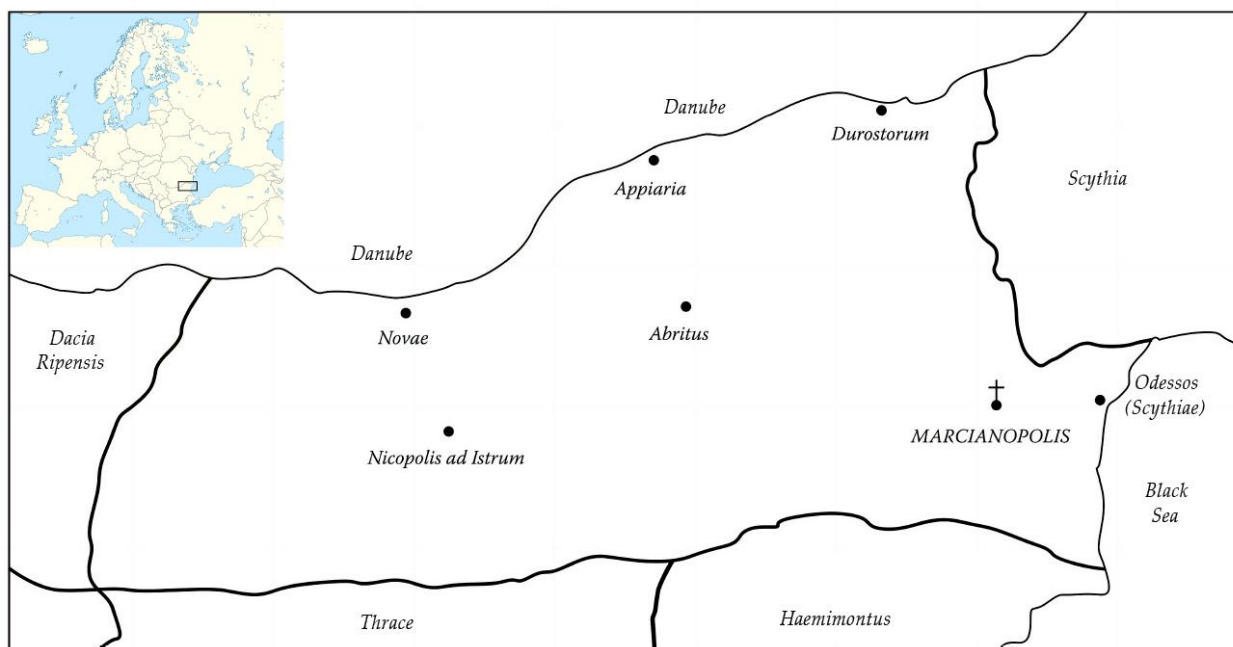
A CRITICAL ANALYSIS OF THE BISHOPS' SIGNATURE SEQUENCE IN THE LETTER OF MOESIA SECUNDA IN ENCYCLIA, AD 457–458

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ABSTRACT

This study investigates the principle guiding the order in which the hierarchs of Moesia Secunda signed the response epistle addressed to Emperor Leo I (r. 457–474) during the religious investigation known as the Encyclia (AD 457–458). The analysis marks the first detailed examination of this topic since T. Schnitzler's initial inquiry, which suggested that the bishops' signatures were arranged in descending order of their tenure in the episcopate. The investigation undertaken here confirms the thesis of the German researcher. Furthermore, the correlation of the data from Encyclia with those from the signing lists of the First Council of Ephesus (431) and those from the Notitiae Episcopatuum of the Church of Constantinople led to the conclusion that there was no hierarchy among the ordinary bishoprics of Moesia Secunda at least until AD 536. Until then, when the metropolitan see of Marcianopolis was vacant, the ecclesiastical leadership in the province was assumed by the bishop with the longest tenure in the episcopacy. It is possible that in AD 536, as part of the extensive ecclesiastical reorganization that took place in Moesia Secunda, the status of protothronos ('πρωτόθρονος,' the first-ranked ordinary bishopric) may have been introduced in the province. In such a case, the rank was most likely assigned to the see of Novae (now Svishtov, Bulgaria).

Keywords: *ecclesiastical organization; Moesia Secunda; Abritus (Razgrad); Durostorum (Silistra); Novae (Svishtov);*

INTRODUCTION

Towards the end of AD 457, Emperor Leo I (r. 457–474) initiated a comprehensive investigation into religious matters in most provinces of the Eastern Roman Empire. In specialized studies, this investigation and its outcome are known by the generic term of *Encyclia*.[1]

In his questionnaire epistle, the emperor asked every metropolitan to call the provincial synod in order to inform their suffragans about the issues he raised, analyze them together, and then write a common answer. At that time in Moesia Secunda, the see of Marcianopolis (now Devnya, Bulgaria) held the metropolitan rank, while those of Abritus (now Razgrad, Bulgaria), Appiaria (now Riakhovo, Bulgaria), Durostorum (now Silistra,

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[1] On *Encyclia*, see Ionuț Holubeanu, *Christianity in Roman Scythia—Ecclesiastical Organization and Monasticism (4th to 7th Centuries)*, coll. *East Central and Eastern Europe in the Middle Ages, 450–1450*, vol. 90, Brill, Leiden/Boston, 2024, pp. 44–45 ff.

Bulgaria), Nicopolis ad Istrum (now Nikîup, Bulgaria), and Novae (now Svishtov, Bulgaria), held the rank of ordinary bishoprics.[2]

Metropolitan Valerian of Marcianopolis was the direct recipient of the imperial questionnaire in 457.[3] His name, however, does not appear in the content of the response epistle to the emperor drafted during the provincial synod. At the end of it, only the signatures of the other bishops from the province are listed.

This study examines the principle underlying the order in which the hierarchs of Moesia Secunda signed the response epistle addressed to Emperor Leo I during the religious investigation of 457–458.

1. SCHOLARLY VIEWS ON THE SUBJECT

To our knowledge, only two researchers—T. Schnitzler and G. Siebigs—have focused on this topic in their studies. The former, in a work dedicated to *Encyclia*, addressing the order of signatures in response epistles sent to Emperor Leo I, identified a certain hierarchy: 1. The metropolitan of each province took precedence by signing the document first; 2. The second signatory of the response epistle was the hierarch who enjoyed the greatest prestige within his province. This prestige could be due to the importance of the see he occupied, or his personal merits;[4] 3. The other bishops of the province signed in descending order of their seniority in the episcopate. T. Schnitzler noted that only in the case of epistles sent from Pamphylia and Achaea was this order not followed. Instead, he argued that in the case of ten provinces, including Moesia Secunda, adherence to this hierarchy is fully evident.[5]

T. Schnitzler overlooked the fact that the metropolitan of Marcianopolis did not sign the document. Additionally, he failed to specify if, in the case of Moesia Secunda, the second rule was applied. More precisely, there is no clarification of whether the precedence of Marcian of Abrytus's signature on the document was attributed to the significance of his see or his personal prestige. Furthermore, regarding adherence to the principle of seniority within the episcopate, T. Schnitzler only generally noted that it can be verified through comparison with signature lists from previous synods, without offering concrete evidence.[6]

According to G. Siebigs, the city of Abritus temporarily served as the metropolis of Moesia Secunda from AD 447, following the Huns' conquest and destruction of Marcianopolis. After this event, the metropolitan of Marcianopolis sought refuge in Constantinople, continuing to reside there even in 457/8. Consequently, during that decade

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[2] See Ionuț Holubeanu, "The Ecclesiastical Province of Moesia Secunda in the Mid-5th Century AD" (Submitted for Initial Review).

[3] *Acta Conciliorum Oecumenicorum* (hereafter cited as *ACO*), vol. II/5, Eduard Schwartz (ed.), De Gruyter, Berlin/Leipzig, 1936, p. 24[15] (no. 53).

[4] In this case, T. Schnitzler referred to Eustathius of Berytus in Phoenice Prima and Julian of Tavium in Galatia Prima, whom he classified as "Ehrenmetropoliten" ("honorary metropolitans")—see Theodor Schnitzler, *Im Kampfe um Chalcedon. Geschichte und Inhalt des Codex Encyclius von 458*, coll. *Analecta Gregoriana*, vol. 16, Apud aedes Universitatis Gregorianae, Rome, 1938, p. 39. The placement of Eustathius's signature immediately after that of Metropolitan Dorotheus of Tyre in the response epistle from Phoenice Prima to the emperor can be attributed to his rank as a titular metropolitan. In contrast, Julian of Tavium, who held the rank of an ordinary bishop, had his signature following that of Metropolitan Anastasius of Ancyra in the response epistle from Galatia Prima due to his theological prestige. As a result, Julian was also a direct recipient of the questionnaire epistle sent by Emperor Leo I [see *ACO*, II/5, p. 23[28] (no. 34)], similarly to the metropolitans. On the matter, see I. Holubeanu, *Christianity in Roman Scythia*, p. 44.

[5] T. Schnitzler, *Im Kampfe um Chalcedon*, p. 39, n. 29.

[6] T. Schnitzler, *Im Kampfe um Chalcedon*, p. 39.

(447–457/8), the ecclesiastical leadership of the province was assumed by the bishop of Abritus. This would have been the reason why he was the first among the province's bishops to sign the response epistle addressed to the emperor.[7]

As far as the order of signatures of the other hierarchs of Moesia Secunda is concerned, G. Siebigs did not express any particular viewpoint.

Documentary evidence, however, invalidates G. Siebig's hypothesis. In a study dedicated to the episcopal structure of the Church in Moesia Secunda in the mid-5th century, it was concluded that only Metropolitan Saturninus of Marcianopolis (431–*c*.449) was in refuge in Constantinople between the years 447 and 449. His successor, Valerian (*c*.449–457/8), left the imperial capital, residing in his province. As for his failure to sign the response epistle to the emperor during the religious events of 457–458, this was explained as a result of his death. It occurred shortly before the conducting of the provincial synod during which the epistle was drafted.[8] Another possible explanation for the order in which the bishops of Moesia Secunda signed their response epistle to the emperor could be that it reflected the existing hierarchy of the province's sees at that time. This hierarchy might have been influenced by factors such as the historical seniority of the bishoprics or the significance of their cities. The following lines offer an examination of the explanations put forward by T. Schnitzler and of the previously presented hypothesis.

2. ORDER OF SIGNATURES

In the response epistle of the hierarchs from Moesia Secunda addressed to Emperor Leo I, there are six signatures, presented in the following order:

Marcianus episcopus ciuitatis Abryti confirmaui et subscripsi
Martialis episcopus ciuitatis Appiarensis similiter
Minofilos episcopus ciuitatis Durostori similiter
Marcellus episcopus ciuitatis Nicopoleos similiter
Petrus episcopus ciuitatis Nouensis similiter
Dizza episcopus ciuitatis Odissae Scythiae similiter.[9]

(Marcian bishop of the city of Abritus, I have confirmed and subscribed
Martialis bishop of the city of Appiaria, similarly
Minofilus bishop of the city of Durostorum, similarly
Marcellus bishop of the city of Nicopolis, similarly
Peter bishop of the city of Novae, similarly
Dizza bishop of the city of Odessos in Scythia, similarly).[10]

As previously indicated, the first principle T. Schnitzler identifies concerns the signing of the document first by the metropolitan of the province. In the case of Moesia Secunda, this principle was not applied. Neither the name nor the signature of the metropolitan of Marcianopolis appear in the response epistle to the emperor.

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[7] Gereon Siebigs, *Kaiser Leo I. Das oströmische Reich in den ersten drei Jahren seiner Regierung (457–460 n.Chr.)*, De Gruyter, Berlin/New York, 2010, pp. 358 (n. 323) and 627.

[8] See I. Holubeanu, "The Ecclesiastical Province of Moesia Secunda."

[9] *ACO*, II/5, p. 32$^{26–31}$.

[10] As can be observed from this signature of Bishop Dizza, the see of Odessos, although located on the territory of the Roman province of Moesia Secunda, was subordinated to the metropolitan see of Tomi within the ecclesiastical province of Scythia. On this matter, see also I. Holubeanu, *Christianity in Roman Scythia*, pp. 46–51.

The second principle the German researcher highlighted concerns the signing of the document immediately after the metropolitan by the hierarch with the highest prestige in the province. In this case, it could be either a titular metropolitan or a theologian appreciated by contemporaries for his knowledge.

The first of these aspects is not applicable in the case of the see of Abritus. Titular metropolitans were direct addressees of the emperor's questionnaire epistle.[11] However, in the list of addressees preserved in the *Codex Encyclius*, the name of Bishop Marcian is not mentioned.[12] Based on this aspect, it can be deduced that his see held the rank of an ordinary bishopric, rather than a titular metropolitan see.

Regarding the theological prestige of Bishop Marcian, the available data argue against such a possibility. On the one hand, within the First Council of Ephesus (431), in which he participated, Marcian appears alongside the supporters of Nestorius of Constantinople (428–431). He signed the documents from the session of the Easterners (anti-Cyrillians) on 26 June 431, which decreed the deposition of St. Cyril of Alexandria and Memnon of Ephesus.[13] His signature also appears on the circular of Nestorian bishops addressed to the clergy and faithful of Hierapolis in Euphratensis dispatched after 17 July 431.[14] Finally, he also signed the memorandum of Nestorian bishops addressed to their representatives in Constantinople in September 431.[15] This is an indication that, at that time, he did not excel as an orthodox theologian.

On the other hand, considering that he was not a direct addressee of the questionnaire epistle dispatched by Emperor Leo I in October 457—like the ordinary bishops Julian of Tavium or Adelphius of Arabissus— it can be inferred that he was not renowned as a theologian in Constantinople at that time, either.[16]

It could only be considered a possibility that Marcian was appreciated as a theologian in his province in 457/8. However, this potential local prestige must have been generated precisely by his long service as a bishop and life experience acquired during the tumultuous events in which he participated. As such, it does not exclude the possibility that he was the hierarch with the longest episcopate in the province, but rather supports it.

3. PRINCIPLE OF SENIORITY IN THE EPISCOPACY IN THE EPISTLE OF MOESIA SECUNDA

In this section, the hypothesis of the bishops of Moesia Secunda applying the principle of their seniority in the episcopacy when signing the response letter to Emperor Leo I will be examined, based on the available documentary evidence.

The oldest information about Marcian of Abritus originates from the First Council of Ephesus in 431.[17] Based on these records, it can be deduced that by the year 458, he had served at least 27 years in his episcopal role.

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[11] See I. Holubeanu, *Christianity in Roman Scythia*, p. 44.

[12] See *ACO*, II/5, pp. 22^{32}–24^{28}.

[13] *ACO*, vol. I/1.5, Eduard Schwartz (ed.), De Gruyter, Berlin/Leipzig, 1927, p. 124^1 (no. 35); *ACO*, vol. I/4, Eduard Schwartz (ed.), De Gruyter, Berlin/Leipzig, 1922–1923, p. 38 (no. 38).

[14] *ACO*, I/4, p. 46 (no. 39).

[15] *ACO*, I/4, p. 67^{18} (no. XX).

[16] On Julian of Tavium and Adelphius of Arabissus as direct addressees of the questionnaire letter dispatched by the Emperor Leo I, see *ACO*, II/5, p. 23$^{28–29}$ (nos. 34 and 35).

[17] See above, n. 13–15, and, in addition, Michael Le Quien, *Oriens christianus*, vol. 1, Ex typographia regia, Paris, 1740, col. 1219–1221; Vasile Pârvan, *Contribuții epigrafice la istoria creștinismului daco-roman/ Epigraphic Contributions to the History of Daco-Roman Christianity*, SOCEC & Co., Bucharest, 1911, pp. 67–

The approximation of the episcopal tenure of the second signer, Martialis of Appiaria, is not possible. According to one interpretation, this see was represented at the First Council of Constantinople (381) by Bishop Agrius.[18] However, the names of none of the hierarchs who served between Agrius and Martialis are known. The only information that can be considered in this case is that in the list of Nestorian bishops who lost their sees after the First Council of Ephesus, two hierarchs from Moesia Secunda are mentioned. They are Valerian and Eudocius, suffragans of Metropolitan Dorotheus of Marcianopolis. However, the names of their sees are not mentioned in the document: "*Valerianus et Eudocius Mysiae, qui sub eodem Dorotheo existentes, ultro ab ecclesiis recesserunt*" ("Valerian and Eudocius of Moesia, who were under the same Dorotheus, voluntarily withdrew from the Churches").[19]

Considering, however, that at that time Marcian was serving at Abritus and Jacob at Durostorum, Valerian and Eudocius could only have been bishops at Appiaria, Nicopolis ad Istrum, or Novae. Their tenure in Odessos is excluded, as the hierarch there was a suffragan of the metropolitan of Tomi in ecclesiastical Scythia, not of Marcianopolis, at that time.[20] If Valerian and Eudocius held the sees of Appiaria and Nicopolis ad Istrum, then certainly Marcian of Abritus had the longest tenure as bishop in 457/8, since Peter of Novae could not have been bishop for more than eight to nine years.[21] But if either Valerian or Eudocius held the see of Novae, then there would remain one bishop—either Martialis of Appiaria or Marcellus of Nicopolis ad Istrum—who hypothetically could have had a longer tenure as bishop than Marcian of Abritus.[22]

68; Siméon Vailhé, "Abrytus," in *Dictionnaire d'histoire et de géographie ecclésiastique*, vol. 1, Alfred Baudrillart, Albert Vogt, and Urbain Rouziès (eds.), Letouzey et Ané, Paris, 1912, col. 197; Jacques Zeiller, *Les origines chrétiennes dans les provinces danubiennes de l'empire romain*, E. de Boccard, Paris, 1918, pp. 168, 354, and 600; Henri Leclercq, "Mésie," in *Dictionnaire d'Archéologie chrétienne et de Liturgie*, vol. XI/1, Fernand Cabrol and Henri Leclercq (eds.), Librairie Letouzey et Ané, Paris, 1933, col. 507; Giorgio Fedalto, *Hierarchia Ecclesiastica Orientalis*, vol. 1, Messaggero, Padova, 1988, p. 342; Kazimierz Ilski, "Korespondencja biskupów Mezyjskich"/ "The Correspondence of the Moesian Bishops," in *Studia Moesiaca*, Leszek Mrozewicz and Kazimierz Ilski (eds.), VIS, Poznań, 1994, p. 134; Kazimierz Ilski, *Biskupi Mezji i Scytii IV–VI w./ The Bishops of Moesia and Scythia: 4th–6th Centuries*, coll. *Moesia II et Scythia Minor*, vol. 2, *Prosopographia Moesiaca*, vol. 5, VIS, Poznań, 1995, pp. 38–40; Nelu Zugravu, "Studiu introductiv, notiţe biobliografice, note şi comentarii"/ "Introductory Study, Biobibliographical Notes, Footnotes, and Comments," in *Fontes Historiae Daco-Romanae Christianitatis*, Nelu Zugravu (ed.), Editura Universităţii "Alexandru Ioan Cuza," Iaşi, 2008, pp. 119, 121, and 361 (n. 9).

[18] Ernst Honigmann, "Recherches sur les listes des Pères de Nicée et de Constantinople," in *Byzantion*, 11 (1936), pp. 440–449.

[19] *ACO*, I/4, p. 203^{33–34}. See also J. Zeiller, *Les origines chrétiennes*, p. 169; H. Leclercq, "Mésie," col. 508; Ernst Gerland and Vitalien Laurent, *Corpus notitiarum episcopatuum ecclesiae orientalis Graecae. I. Les listes conciliaires*, Socii Assumptionistae Chalcedonenses, Istanbul, 1936, nos. 241–242, p. 91; K. Ilski, *Biskupi Mezji i Scytii*, pp. 29–30 and 65; N. Zugravu, "Studiu introductiv," pp. 119–120.

[20] On this matter, see above, the reference from n. 10.

[21] See below, the paragraph with n. 24–25.

[22] Some researchers claim the presence at the First Council of Ephesus of the bishop Petronius of Novae from Moesia Secunda—see M. Le Quien, *Oriens christianus*, col. 1221; J. Zeiller, *Les origines chrétiennes*, pp. 353–354; H. Leclercq, "Mésie," col. 507; Kazimierz Ilski, "Biskupstwo w Novae a zagadnienie chrystianizacji Mezji Dolnej"/ "The Bishopric of Novae and the Issue of the Christianization of Lower Moesia," in *Balcanica Poznaniensia*, 1 (1984), p. 308 (his first opinion). In reality, this hierarch represented the see of Neves in Arabia—see Giorgio Fedalto, *Hierarchia Ecclesiastica Orientalis*, vol. 2, Messaggero, Padova, 1988, p. 752; K. Ilski, *Biskupi Mezji i Scytii*, pp. 30 and 65 (his second opinion). Evidence for this is the fact that in his place, Bishop Zosimus of Esbus in Arabia signed the documents from the session of the Easterners on 26 June 431:

Regarding the see of Durostorum, it was represented at the First Council of Ephesus by Bishop Jacob.[23] It is not known if there was any other bishop between him and Minofilus, the one mentioned in the *Encyclia*. However, Minofilus certainly had a shorter tenure as bishop than Marcian of Abritus. Nonetheless, the relationship between the tenure of Minofilus and that of Martialis of Appiaria, whose signature precedes his, cannot be determined.

No other information has been preserved about Marcellus of Nicopolis ad Istrum. Likewise, the names of none of his predecessors are known. Therefore, it is impossible to determine his tenure as a bishop. If either Valerian or Eudocius, the Nestorian bishops, occupied the see of Nicopolis ad Istrum, then Marcellus could not have had a longer tenure as a bishop than Marcian of Abritus. However, if they were bishops at Appiaria and Novae, then, as already mentioned, Marcellus could have surpassed Marcian in the episcopal service.

Finally, at Novae, preceding Peter, evidence of Secundinus exists. He is attested at the session of the Home Synod on 22 November 448, where the Constantinopolitan archimandrite Eutychius was judged and condemned.[24] Additionally, he is attested at the hearings of 8 and 13 April 449 in Constantinople.[25] Based on this information, it can be established that, in 457/8, Peter of Novae could not have held the see for more than eight to nine years.

In conclusion, during the religious investigation of 457–458, Marcian of Abritus (position 1) had at least 27 years of episcopacy, while Peter of Novae (position 5), the last signer from the ecclesiastical province of Moesia Secunda, had at most eight to nine years. Among the other bishops, Minofilus of Durostorum (position 3) certainly had a shorter tenure than the bishop of Abritus. Only Martialis of Appiaria (position 2) and Marcellus of Nicopolis ad Istrum (position 4) could have surpassed the tenure of the bishop of Abritus.

Therefore, although, based on the extant documentary information, the hierarchy of seniority among all these bishops cannot be precisely determined, T. Schnitzler's statement regarding their signing of the document according to the principle of seniority in the episcopacy appears to be correct. In fact, the extant documentary evidence does not directly contradict this point.

"*Petronius episcopus Neuae per Zosim episcopum Esbuntos subscripsi*" ("Petronius bishop of Neve, I have subscribed through Bishop Zosimus of Esbus"), *ACO*, I/4, p. 38 (no. 53).

[23] *ACO*, I/1.5, p. 123[38] (no. 34); *ACO*, I/4, pp. 38 (no. 37), 45 (no. 31), 67[26] (no. XXVIII), and 28[35] (no. XXIII). See also M. Le Quien, *Oriens christianus*, col. 1227; V. Pârvan, *Contribuţii epigrafice*, pp. 69–70; J. Zeiller, *Les origines chrétiennes*, pp. 166 and 600; H. Leclercq, "Mésie," col. 507; G. Fedalto, *Hierarchia Ecclesiastica*, 1, pp. 343–344; K. Ilski, *Biskupi Mezji i Scytii*, pp. 32–33; N. Zugravu, "Studiu introductiv," p. 119; Georgi Atanassov, "Christianity along the Lower Danube Limes in the Roman Provinces of Dacia Ripensis, Moesia Secunda and Scythia Minor (4th–6th c. AD)," in *The Lower Danube Roman Limes (1st–6th C. AD)*, Lyudmil Vagalinski, Nikolay Sharankov, and Sergey Torbatov (eds.), NIAM-BAS, Sofia, 2012, p. 358.

[24] *ACO*, vol. II/2.1, Eduard Schwartz (ed.), De Gruyter, Berlin/Leipzig, 1932, p. 20[13] (no. 28). On the presence of Secundinus at the Home Synod of 448, see also *ACO*, vol. II/1.1, Eduard Schwartz (ed.), De Gruyter, Berlin/Leipzig, 1933, p. 170[1–2]; *ACO*, vol. II/3.1, Eduard Schwartz (ed.), De Gruyter, Berlin/Leipzig, 1935, p. 157[9–10].

[25] April 8, 449: *ACO*, II/1.1, p. 150[23] (no. 19); *ACO*, II/3.1, p. 134[17] (no. 19). April 13, 449: *ACO*, II/1.1, pp. 149[4] (no. 25) and 170[1–2]; *ACO*, II/3.1, pp. 133[1] (no. 25) and 157[9–10]. On Secundinus of Novae, see also M. Le Quien, *Oriens christianus*, col. 1221; V. Pârvan, *Contribuţii epigrafice*, p. 70; J. Zeiller, *Les origines chrétiennes*, pp. 167 and 600; H. Leclercq, "Mésie," col. 507; G. Fedalto, *Hierarchia Ecclesiastica*, 1, p. 348; K. Ilski, *Biskupi Mezji i Scytii*, pp. 49–50; I. Holubeanu, "The Ecclesiastical Province of Moesia Secunda."

4. PROTOTHRONOS OF MOESIA SECUNDA

The accuracy of the previous conclusion can be verified by clarifying two other aspects: 1. The possibility that the bishop of Abritus might have been the first to sign the response epistle to the emperor because his see held the status of protothronos ('πρωτόθρονος,' i.e., the first-ranked ordinary bishopric) within the Church of Moesia Secunda; and 2. The possibility that the order in which the bishops signed might have been determined by the hierarchy of their sees at that time.

Clarifying these issues can be achieved based on two sources: the conciliar lists and the *Notitiae episcopatuum* of the Church of Constantinople. In the case of the former, the relevant lists are those of the councils where at least one other ordinary bishop from Moesia Secunda participated, alongside the hierarch of Abritus. The only situation of this kind is that of the signature lists from the First Council of Ephesus (431). In three of these lists, the names of Bishop Jacob of Durostorum and Bishop Marcian of Abritus appear. The most important is the signature list of the session of the Easterners on 26 June 431. It has been preserved in Greek and Latin. In both versions, the names of the two bishops from Moesia Secunda appear consecutively. This indicates that they jointly signed the document, Jacob of Durostorum being the first to sign: "… Ἰάκωβος Δοροστόλου, Μαρκιανὸς Ἀβρύτου, …"[26] ("Jacob of Durostorum, Marcian of Abritus") / "... *Iacobus episcopus Dorostoli subscripsi, Marcianus episcopus Abryti subscripsi* ..."[27] ("Jacob bishop of Durostorum, I have signed; Marcian bishop of Abritus, I have signed").

The sequence of their signatures can be considered an indication that, at that time, the see of Abritus did not have precedence over that of Durostorum. Most likely, in this case as well, seniority in the episcopacy must have been the principle respected by the two hierarchs. In other words, Marcian of Abritus, who must have been young at the time, deferred to his colleague, Jacob, who likely had a longer tenure as a bishop.

In two other lists, their names appear separately. One of the lists is found at the end of the epistle addressed by the supporters of Nestorius to the priests and faithful of Hierapolis in Euphratensis, dispatched after 17 July 431. In this one, Jacob's signature appears at position 31, while Marcian's at 39.[28]

The second list accompanied a memorandum dispatched in September 431 by the Nestorian bishops to their eight representatives at Constantinople. This time, Marcian's signature (position 20) precedes that of Jacob (position 28).[29] In this case, Jacob's "delay" is hard to explain. However, it is not excluded that these last two documents were drafted by the hardcore of the Nestorian group and were subsequently signed, in the days that followed, by the other hierarchs of their party.

Regarding the *Notitiae episcopatuum*, those of paramount importance for this investigation are the ones known as Epiphanius's and De Boor's (i.e., *Notitiae* nos. 1 and 3, respectively, according to the classification by J. Darrouzès). The former (Epiphanius's) originates from a *Notitia* compiled in the 7th century.[30] However, the information it provides

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[26] *ACO*, I/1.5, pp. 123^{38}–124^1 (nos. 34 and 35).

[27] *ACO*, I/4, p. 38 (nos. 37 and 38).

[28] *ACO*, I/4, p. 45 (no. 31): "*Iacobus episcopus Dorostoli*" ("Jacob, bishop of Durostorum"). *ACO*, I/4, p. 46 (no. 39): "*Marcianus episcopus Abryti*" ("Marcian, bishop of Abritus").

[29] *ACO*, I/4, p. 67^{18} (no. XX): "*Marcianus episcopus Abryti*" ("Marcian, bishop of Abritus"). *ACO*, I/4, p. 67^{26} (no. XXVIII): "*Iacobus episcopus Dorostoli*" ("Jacob, bishop of Durostorum").

[30] Jean Darrouzès, *Notitiae episcopatuum ecclesiae Constantinopolitanae. Texte critique, introduction et notes*, coll. *Géographie ecclésiastique de l'empire Byzantin*, vol. 1, Institut français d'études byzantines, Paris, 1981, pp. 7–9.

about the internal structure of the Church in Moesia Secunda reflects the situation in the first decade (*c.*527–535) of Emperor Justinian I's reign (527–565).[31]

The list of ordinary bishoprics of Moesia Secunda in *Notitia 1* is not complete. It mentions, in the following order, Durostorum, Transmarisca (now Tutrakan, Bulgaria), Novae, Zekedepa (now Tsarevets?, Veliko Tarnovo, Bulgaria), and Scaria (Appiaria?). The sees of Abritus, Nicopolis ad Istrum, and possibly Appiaria (in case Scaria is not an altered form of Appiaria) are not mentioned.[32]

Although the list is incomplete, it contributes to the understanding of the ecclesiastical organization in Moesia Secunda. As can be observed, the episcopal centers were enumerated based on geographical criteria: first the Danubian sees were listed from downstream to upstream (Durostorum, Transmarisca, and Novae), followed by inland ones (Zekedepa-Tsarevets and the enigmatic Scaria) (see the Map). It is noteworthy that even the mention of the see of Transmarisca, established shortly after AD 527, was based on geographical rather than chronological criteria.[33] In the latter case, it should have been mentioned at the end of the list, being one of the newest in the province at that time. This suggests that there was no hierarchy among the bishoprics of Moesia Secunda at that time (*c.*527–535), further implying that such a hierarchy likely did not exist prior to the year 527, either.

Based only on this incomplete list, however, it is difficult to establish whether the status of protothronos existed in the Church of Moesia Secunda between 527 and 535. In case of an affirmative answer, it cannot be asserted with certainty whether this status was held by Durostorum, which is the first ordinary bishopric mentioned in the extant form of the list. It would be possible that in its original form, any of the other three unmentioned sees (Abritus, Nicopolis ad Istrum, and possibly Appiaria) might have occupied the first position. In this case, one of them could have held the rank of protothronos.

Nevertheless, the likelihood of either Abritus or Nicopolis ad Istrum preceding Durostorum in the original form of the list is low, as both were inland centers. In such a case, considering the geographical criterion applied in compiling the list, it would have been natural for the other inland see, Zekedepa-Tsarevets, and possibly Scaria to be mentioned immediately after Abritus and Nicopolis ad Istrum, and before the bishoprics along the Danube (Durostorum, Transmarisca, and Novae). However, as observed, the latter precede Zekedepa-Tsarevets and Scaria in the list.

It is also possible that the rank of protothronos did not exist within the Church of Moesia Secunda during that period. In this case, the mention of Durostorum in the top position on the list does not signify any hierarchical importance. One plausible explanation for its prominent position might be that officials at the Ecumenical Patriarchate, who compiled the list at the outset of Justinian I's reign, referenced a civil document outlining the administrative structure of the empire. Within this document, Durostorum was noted in a leading position within the section dedicated to Moesia Secunda. This placement, devoid of ecclesiastical significance, was likely mirrored by the Patriarchate's officials in their

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[31] See Ionuț Holubeanu, "Organizarea bisericească în Moesia Secunda în secolele V–VII p.Chr."/ "Ecclesiastical Organization in Moesia Secunda in the 5th–7th Centuries AD," in *Pontica*, 50 (2017), pp. 81–95; reprint in: Ionuț Holubeanu, *Organizarea bisericească în Scythia și Moesia Secunda în secolele IV–VII/ The Ecclesiastical Organization in Scythia and Moesia Secunda in the 4th–7th Centuries AD*, Basilica, Bucharest, 2018, pp. 143–165. The English version of this study is in progress.
[32] See J. Darrouzès, *Notitiae episcopatuum* 1.32.444–449, p. 213.
[33] On the establishment of the bishopric of Transmarisca, see I. Holubeanu, "Organizarea bisericească în Moesia Secunda," pp. 82–95; I. Holubeanu, *Organizarea bisericească în Scythia*, pp. 144–165.

compilation. Concerning the other bishoprics of the province, they may have been either arranged according to their geographical proximity to Durostorum or listed in the same order as their respective cities appeared in the civil document the ecclesiastical officials relied upon.

Such a civil document is Hierocles's *Synecdemus*. It contains information on Moesia Secunda that can be dated to AD 527.[34] Following the metropolis of Marcianopolis, the text lists six cities in sequence: Odessos, Durostorum, Nicopolis ad Istrum, Novae, Appiaria, and Abritus.[35] As already noted, during this period, the bishopric of Odessos was a suffragan to the metropolitan see of Tomi within the ecclesiastical province of Scythia. Consequently, in a procedure akin to the aforementioned, Durostorum would be the first bishopric listed in Moesia Secunda.

Data provided by *Notitia 3* (the so-called De Boor's) is also important for clarifying these aspects. The document dates between AD 787 and the end of the 9th century.[36] However, the information it contains regarding the ecclesiastical province of the metropolitan see of Odessos reflects an earlier situation in Moesia Secunda, around AD 536.[37] In that year, the bishopric of Odessos was transferred to the ecclesiastical province of Moesia Secunda, where it took over the metropolitan rank from the see of Marcianopolis.[38]

In the document, most of the ordinary bishoprics of the province are mentioned according to a geographical principle. The Danubian sees are first listed, organized from upstream to downstream (Novae, Appiaria, and Durostorum), followed by those inland, from east to west (Marcianopolis, Abritus, and Nicopolis ad Istrum).[39] Although some sees of the province are missing from the list, namely Transmarisca, Zekedepa-Tsarevets, and possibly Scaria, based on the arrangement of those mentioned, it can be deduced that there was no hierarchy among them at that time, as before. However, in the list, the see of Palaistene (i.e., Palmatae, now Onogur, Bulgaria), recently established, is not mentioned based on its geographical position (that is, before Marcianopolis), but at the end of the list (see the

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[34] See I. Holubeanu, "Organizarea bisericească în Moesia Secunda," pp. 76–77; I. Holubeanu, *Organizarea bisericească în Scythia*, pp. 134–136; I. Holubeanu, *Christianity in Roman Scythia*, pp. 88–89 (with bibliography).

[35] Hierocles, *Synecdemus* 636.1–8, in Ernst Honigmann, *Le Synekdèmos d'Hiéroklès et l'opuscule géographique de Georges de Chypre: texte, introduction, commentaire et cartes*, coll. *Corpus Bruxellense historiae Byzantinae. Forma imperii Byzantini*, vol. 1, Éditions de l'Institut de philologie et d'histoire orientales et slaves, Brussels, 1939, p. 13.

[36] J. Darrouzès, *Notitiae episcopatuum*, p. 32. More recently, I. Basić proposed dating this document during the patriarchate of Tarasios of Constantinople (784–806)—see Ivan Basić, "O dataciji "ikonoklastičkog" popisa biskupijâ Carigradske crkve (*Notitia episcopatuum ecclesiae Constantinopolitanae 3*) s osobitim obzirom na Tračku dijecezu" / "On the Dating of the "Iconoclastic" Episcopal List of the Church of Constantinople (*Notitia Episcopatuum Ecclesiae Constantinopolitanae 3*) with a Special Emphasis on the Diocese of Thrace," in *Na obzorju novega. Območje severnega Jadrana ter vzhodnoalpski in balkansko-podonavski prostor v obdobju pozne antike in zgodnjega srednjega veka: posvečeno Rajku Bratožu ob njegovi sedemdesetletnici*, Alenka Cedilnik and Milan Lovenjak (eds.), Založba Univerze v Ljubljani, Ljubljana, 2022, pp. 285–313.

[37] See I. Holubeanu, "Organizarea bisericească în Moesia Secunda," pp. 100–104; I. Holubeanu, *Organizarea bisericească în Scythia*, pp. 172–178 and 205–233; I. Holubeanu, *Christianity in Roman Scythia*, pp. 128–147.

[38] On the transfer of the metropolitan rank to the see of Odessos within the ecclesiastical province of Moesia Secunda in 536, see I. Holubeanu, *Christianity in Roman Scythia*, pp. 139–147, followed by Georgi Atanasov, "L'exception scythe d'après Sozomène et les exceptions scythes d'après l'histoire et l'archéologie paléochrétiennes," in *Pontica*, 56 (2013), p. 104; Alexander Minchev, *Odesos prez kŭsnata antichnost (IV–nachaloto na VII v.)/ Odessos during Late Antiquity (4th to Early 7th Centuries AD)*, Izdatelstvo MS, Varna, 2023, pp. 162 and 368.

[39] J. Darrouzès, *Notitiae episcopatuum* 3.36.604–609, p. 241.

Map).[40] Therefore, it seems that a new criterion is being introduced in its case, namely the chronological one. It reflects the beginning of a hierarchy among the newly established sees of Moesia Secunda.

Regarding the issue of the status of protothronos, Durostorum no longer appears in the first position in the list, but in the third. Novae has taken its place, which in the list from *Notitia 1* appears in the third position. This change could be explained in at least three ways: 1. The see of Durostorum truly held the rank of protothronos before 536 and lost it in favor of the see of Novae in that year; 2. The status of protothronos was introduced in Moesia Secunda during the ecclesiastical reorganization of the province in 536, being attributed to the see of Novae; or 3. The status of protothronos did not exist within the province, and in this case, being mentioned in the first position on the list holds no significance.

Since in the first decade (527–536) of the reign of Justinian I there are no known events that would have significantly affected the situation of Durostorum and the decline in importance of its bishopric, the possibility of it losing the status of protothronos in 536 seems unlikely. Therefore, it is most likely that before 536, this rank did not exist within the Church of Moesia Secunda.

The second and the third hypotheses cannot be verified based on the extant documentary information. After the tenure of Peter of Novae, who signed the epistle to Emperor Leo I in 457/8, no bishop is known at Novae. Nor in the *Notitiae episcopatuum* is there any information about the ordinary bishoprics of Moesia Secunda after the year 536. However, in favor of assigning the rank of protothronos to the see of Novae in 536 (i.e., the second hypothesis above), the replacement of Durostorum with Novae in the first position of the list in *Notitia 3* argues for it. Specifically, if this position had been devoid of any administrative significance, why did the officials in Constantinople not keep Durostorum in the first position on the list, as in *Notitia 1*? Therefore, it seems plausible that with the major reorganization that took place within the Church of Moesia Secunda in 536—by moving the metropolitan center from Marcianopolis to Odessos—the status of protothronos was introduced there as well. This was granted to the see of Novae, which, based on this aspect, was moved to the first position among the ordinary bishoprics in the province in the official *Notitia*. The other sees were mentioned, as already shown, based on their geographical position relative to the protothronos. The only exception in this regard was the see of Palmatae.

As for the see of Abritus, it is mentioned in the last part of the list (between Marcianopolis and Nicopolis ad Istrum) in *Notitia 3*, in accordance with its geographical location.

Therefore, the documentary information analyzed within this section provides no indication in favor of the possibility that the see of Abritus was ever the protothronos of Moesia Secunda. Also, the extant data excludes the existence of a hierarchy among the ordinary bishoprics in Moesia Secunda before 536. In this case, the only criterion that could have been the basis for the order in which the bishops of Moesia Secunda signed the epistle to the emperor in 457/8 was the seniority in their episcopal office.

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[40] J. Darrouzès, *Notitiae episcopatuum* 3.36.610, p. 241. Most likely, the establishment of the bishopric of Palmatae occurred in the second part or even towards the end of the period 527–536. On this matter, as well as on the identification of Palaistene with Palmatae, see I. Holubeanu, "Organizarea bisericească în Moesia Secunda," pp. 105–106; I. Holubeanu, *Organizarea bisericească în Scythia*, pp. 178–181. The identification of Palaistene with Palmatae is accepted by G. Atanasov as well—see G. Atanasov, "L'exception scythe," p. 104, n. 11.

CONCLUSIONS

Based on the investigation discussed above, the following conclusions can be drawn:

➢ The bishops from Moesia Secunda who took part in the extraordinary provincial synod of 457/8 signed the epistle in response to Emperor Leo I, adhering to the principle of seniority in episcopacy. The first to notice and emphasize the adherence to this rule was the German researcher T. Schnitzler. The present analysis confirms his assertions;

➢ In AD 457/8, there was no hierarchy among the episcopal sees of Moesia Secunda. Moreover, the rank of protothronos did not exist within the local Church. Most likely, in the absence of the metropolitan, the hierarch with the longest tenure in the episcopacy assumed his responsibilities. During the religious investigation initiated by Emperor Leo I, this was Marcian of Abritus;

➢ It is possible that with the major ecclesiastical reorganization that took place in Moesia Secunda in AD 536, the rank of protothronos was introduced there. In such a case, it was most likely assigned to the see of Novae.

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Anexes: *Map of the Roman province of Moesia Secunda (first half of the 6th century AD)*
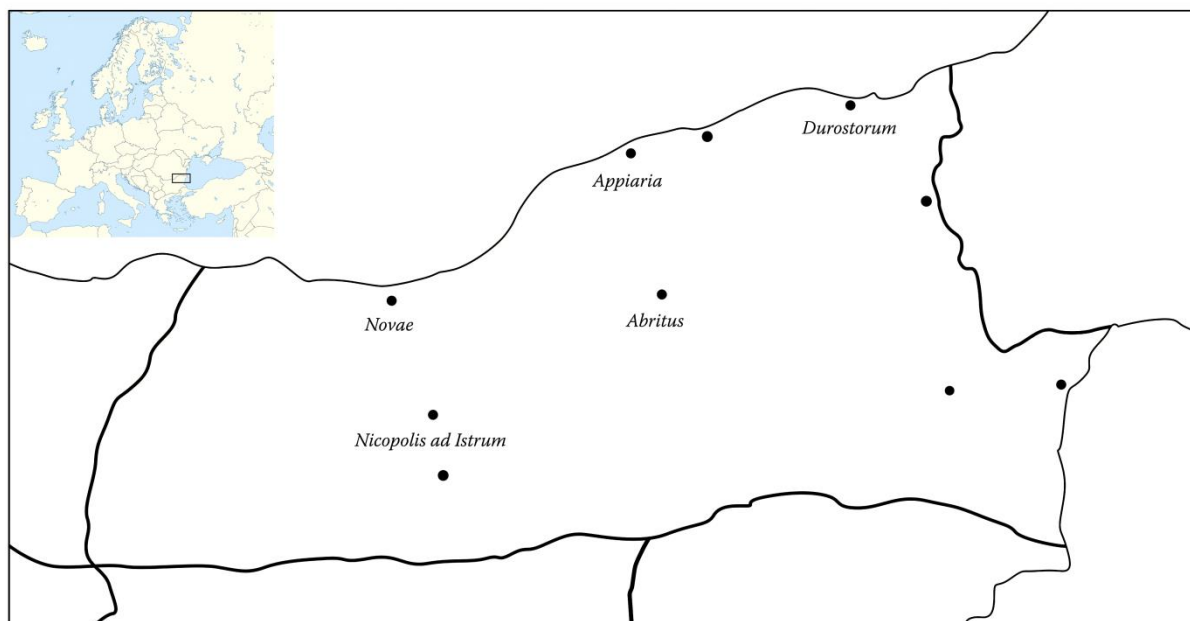
THE EVOLUTION OF CHRISTIAN ICONOGRAPHY IN THE VI-VII CENTURIES

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ABSTRACT

The II-III centuries represented the period of the birth of Christian sacred art through Christians imitating the custom of pagans, from whose ranks most of them came, to decorate their graves, sarcophagi or mausoleums with images and even by borrowing some pagan symbols and themes, to which they obviously gave a new, Christian meaning, to which, of course, exclusively Christian themes were added, most often of biblical origin, most of them having a narrative-historical character. In the 4th-5th centuries, under the careful supervision of the Church, a synthesis was made regarding the themes addressed, by abandoning some, by taking over others from the imperial imaginary, prevalence acquiring a dogmatic character, from the desire to express and through the mediation of figurative art, not only through the poetic, transposed into songs, the truths of faith formulated at the first four ecumenical synods, but also in terms of styles. In this second stage of the history of Christian sacred art, especially in the 5th century, as a result of the synthesis achieved in the capital of the empire between the two great artistic currents that manifested themselves in painting, the Hellenistic-Alexandrian and the Syro-Palestinian, was formed the Constantinopolitan painting school and the stylistic features specific to this school crystallized . The present study aims to point out the main characteristics and developments of Christian sacred art in the Byzantine Empire starting from the time of Emperor Justinian I until the outbreak of Byzantine iconoclasm.

Keywords: *miniatures; Nilotic landscape; Quinisext synod; canon of orthodoxy; Justinian;*

INTRODUCTION

Beginning with the reign of Emperor Justinian I (527-565), Christian iconography experienced an era of extraordinary development, both thanks to the art of mosaic and parietal fresco painting, by decorating the churches built during this period in Constantinople and in the great cities of the empire, as well as thanks to miniature art, which gained considerable momentum.

Between the two types of painting, the monumental, wall painting, and the miniature, there seems to have been a reciprocal exchange of themes, with the miniaturists drawing inspiration from monumental art to decorate their manuscripts and vice versa[1].

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[1] Herbert L. KESSLER, "Narrative Representations", in: Kurt WEIZMANN (ed.), *Age of Spirituality. Late Antique and Early Christian Art, Third to Seventh Century*, *V. The Christian Realm*, Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, 1979, p. 495.

1. THE ROLE OF MINIATURES IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF SACRED ART IN THE VI-VII CENTURIES

Compared to the parietal painting, in which the number of scenes was limited not only by the surface of the church walls, but also by the costs that such a painting entailed, especially the mosaic, the manuscripts represented the environment conducive to the increase in the number of compositions, sometimes a theme being illustrated by a whole cycle of images. In some manuscripts executed between the 5th and 7th centuries, hundreds of scenes are represented, sometimes as many as 69 on a single page, as in the *Ashburnham Pentateuch*[2], originating apparently from North Africa, the total number sometimes exceeding 300 scenes for a manuscript.

The Book of Kings, the earliest Christian manuscript, also known as the *Quedlinburg Itala*, probably made in Rome at the beginning of the 5th century, has between 200 and 300 illustrated scenes, the author apparently drawing inspiration from the mosaics of the church of Santa Maria Maggiore[3]. There are about 330 scenes in the *Cotton Genesis* manuscript, which was to be used as a source of inspiration in the 13th century by the mosaicists who decorated the domes of St. Mark's Cathedral in Venice, and in the *Vienna Genesis* even more[4]. Along with these miniatures, we should mention the *Rossano Gospel*, created in Antioch or Jerusalem in the 6th century, the *Rabulla Gospel*, made in 586 in Mesopotamia, at the monastery of St. John in Zagba[5], the *Syriac Bible* from Paris, to which it also adds others, of lesser importance.

The miniatures are also important because, beyond the predominantly narrative character of the scenes that illustrate them, especially when it comes to the Old Testament texts, some scenes have a dogmatic character, such as *Christ in glory*, or liturgical, such as the *Communion of the Apostles*. They also prove that in the 5th-6th centuries the compositions of the main New Testament themes that illustrate the fundamental events in the life of the Savior Jesus Christ – the Birth, the Baptism, the Transfiguration, the Passion, the Resurrection, the Ascension, but also His miracles, were already finalized.

In the *Rossano Gospel*, the theme of the *Communion of the Apostles* is represented, the composition of which, broadly speaking, is the same to this day. Only the Holy Table of Sacrifice and the ciborium, which usually appear in contemporary compositions of the theme, are missing from the miniature composition, instead the Savior Jesus Christ is represented twice, sharing with the holy Apostles on the right and left of the composition, dressed in white, slightly bowed, in humble postures, prepared to receive the Holy Eucharist. To the right of the Savior, due to his white hair, can be identified the Holy Apostle Peter, who receives the Holy Body[6]. Another representation of the Communion of the Apostles, this time engraved on a paten, sometime between the years 565-578, is much closer to the consecrated composition, as it also shows the Holy Table and the ciborium[7].

Rabulla's Gospel also preserves probably the earliest composition of the *Crucifixion* theme in which Christ is represented clothed, in earlier compositions, from the 5th century,

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[2] Kurt WEIZMANN, *Late Antique and Early Christian Book Illumination*, George Braziller, New York, 1977, p. 15; John BECKWITH, *Early Christian and Byzantine Art*, col. *The Pelican History of Art*, Penguin Books, 1979, p. 145.

[3] K. WEIZMANN, *Late Antique and Early Christian Book Illumination*, p. 20.

[4] K. WEIZMANN, *Late Antique and Early Christian Book Illumination*, p. 16.

[5] K. WEIZMANN, *Late Antique and Early Christian Book Illumination*, p. 21.

[6] K. WEIZMANN, *Late Antique and Early Christian Book Illumination*, p. 21.

[7] John BECKWITH, *Early Christian and Byzantine Art*, p. 99.

Christ having only his loins covered with a cloth, called a *subligaculum*[8]. Unlike the previous compositions of the *Crucifixion* from the IV-V centuries, the one in *Rabulla's Gospel*, which has a narrative character, is much more developed, the author trying to render as faithfully as possible the Gospel accounts of the Savior's crucifixion. In this composition Christ appears crucified between the two robbers, the Roman soldier stabbing him in the side with a spear, while a servant hands him the cane at the end of which is the sponge soaked in vinegar. At the foot of the cross, three Roman soldiers are playing dice with the shirt of the Saviour, on the right, standing figures, are the Virgin Mary and the Holy Apostle John, and on the left, three little myrrhs, weeping. Immediately below the scene of the *Crucifixion* is illustrated the *Resurrection*, in a sequence of three frames. To the right of the image appears the angel who announces the Resurrection to the Mother of God and the myrrh-bearers, in the center of the image the tomb is represented, in the form of a structure with two columns whose door is open, in front of which are the fallen Roman soldiers as dead, and on the left, Christ the Savior He is shown His Mother and Mary Magdalene, fallen at His feet[9] (fig. 1).

If the previous representations of the *Crucifixion*, from the 4th-5th centuries, will most likely not be sought to visually testify to the Chalcedonian doctrine, this type of representation of the *Crucifixion* represents the answer given by Chalcedonian orthodox theology to the Monophysite heresy. He pleads in this regard several important arguments. First, being copied in a monastery, the Gospel has an official character, being the expression of the faith professed by the inhabitants of that monastery, and it is known what influence the monasteries had in the life of the Church and Christian communities at that time.

The argument has all the more relevance since the monastery of Zagba was located in a geographical area where the Monophysite heresy had many followers, therefore Rabulla will be sought to highlight, through this miniature of the *Crucifixion*, the human nature of the Savior Jesus Christ, which the Monophysite heretics denied. Also, according to the statements of some researchers, the scene had as its model a monumental painting from one of the churches in Jerusalem, probably that of the Resurrection[10]. Last but not least, another argument in favor of this statement is the fact that in the lower section of the same page the theme of the *Resurrection* appears, while on the next page the theme of the *Ascension* is represented, both highlighting both the deified human nature and the divine glory of the Savior Jesus Christ. Moreover, the presence of the Mother of God in the scene of the *Ascension* is interpreted as a way of highlighting the human nature assumed by the Incarnation of the Son of God[11].

So, on just two pages, representing the *Crucifixion*, the *Resurrection* and the *Ascension*, Rabulla testifies iconographically and iconologically to the Chalcedonian teaching about the union of the two natures, divine and human, in the incarnate Person of the Son of God.

The scene in which the *Ascension of the Savior* is represented (fig. 2) shows that the theme was definitive from an iconographic point of view, it differed very little from the composition that was to be consecrated. The only difference lies in the fact that, in Rabulla's miniature, Christ ascending is represented standing, in the mandorla, blessing with the right

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[8] Frédérick TRISTAN, *Primele imagini creştine. De la simbol la icoană secolele II-VI,* traducere de Elena Buculei şi Ana Boroş, Ed. Meridian, Bucureşti, 2002, pp. 456-458; H. L. KESSLER, "Narrative Representations", pp. 502-504.

[9] *S. Quatuor evangelia. Anno Chr. DLXXXVI. Syriace exarata.* cod. plut. 1.56, Biblioteca Medicea Laurenziana, Florence, http://teca.bmlonline.it/ImageViewer/servlet/ImageViewer?idr=TECA0000025956&keyworks=Plut.01.56; Charles BAYET, *Byzantine Art*, Parkstone Press International, New York, 2009, p. 48.

[10] H. L. KESSLER, "Narrative Representations", p. 495.

[11] H. L. KESSLER, "Narrative Representations", p. 455.

and holding an open rotulus in the left, and not sitting on the two rays of the rainbow, surrounded by the nimbus that symbolizes His divine glory, as in the current compositions. The mandorla is supported in the upper part by two angels, on either side of the mandorla two other angels in flight holding in their hands, on the side, a crown, the mandorla being carried by tetramorphs in the chariot of fire, as in the prophecy of Ezekiel (Ez 1:4-28). In the lower register of the image, in the central axis, the praying Virgin Mary is depicted, framed by two angels turned to the Apostles on the right, with Saint Paul the Apostle in the foreground, with a book in his hand, and on the left, headed by Saint Peter the Apostle, who holds the keys and a cross.

This composition is also important from an iconological point of view because, through the presence of the Mother of God and the Holy Apostle Paul, its iconography exceeds the scriptural narrative framework. Through the presence of the Virgin, whose participation in the Ascension of the Lord is not mentioned by the Holy Gospels, but is affirmed by the church tradition, is postulated not only the teaching about the two natures united in the Person of the Savior through His Incarnation and Virgin Birth[12], but also about the plenitude To the Church, its Head, Jesus Christ, and the Holy Apostles being present. The presence of the Holy Apostle Paul reinforces the image of the fullness of the Church, symbolizing at the same time the dynamism of the Church after the Descent of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost. Likewise, the praying attitude of the Virgin recalls her role as intercessor for people before the Throne of Her Son[13], as one who is Mother of God - Theotokos. Moreover, from this period the teaching about the role of intercessors before the Savior Jesus Christ of both the Mother of God and the saints is imposed, and this can be seen in the development of the iconography of the Virgin and the saints[14]. A theme that illustrates this teaching, which would become representative of Eastern Christianity, is the one known as *Deisis*, a composition in which on either side of the throne of judgment on which sits the Savior Jesus Christ, the Right Judge, is His Mother, on the right, and Saint John the Baptist, on the left, interceding for Christians[15].

A particular evolution of Marian iconology that sought to illustrate the dogma established at the 3rd Ecumenical Council in Ephesus about the Virgin Mary as Mother of God – Theotokos took place in Rome. Starting from the 5th century, the Virgin Mary was represented in the mosaic of the church of Santa Maria Maggiore as a Roman Augusta, an image that would be repeated in the following period in other churches, in a painting from the church of Santa Maria Antiqua being dressed as a queen, with imperial jewels. This image of the Virgin, known as *Mary the Queen*, was not received in the East, however, remaining a specific creation of the West[16], from which other themes would later develop, such as the *Coronation of the Virgin*.

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[12] K. WEIZMANN, *Late Antique and Early Christian Book Illumination*, p. 101.

[13] Michel QUENOT, *Învierea și icoana*, traducere și prefață de pr.Vasile Răducă, Ed. Christiana, București, 1999, p. 213; †Vasile COSTIN, *Semnificația icoanei bizantine în ortodoxie*, Târgoviște, 1997, pp. 69-70.

[14] Margaret FRAZER, ”Iconic Representations”, in: Kurt WEIZMANN (ed.), *Age of Spirituality. Late Antique and Early Christian Art, Third to Seventh Century*, V. *The Christian Realm*, Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, 1979, pp. 516, 557.

[15] S. SOPHRONIUS HIEROSOLYMITANUS Patriarcha, *SS. Cyri et Joannis miracula*, 36, *PG* 87/3: 3558D; Cyril MANGO, *The Art of the Byzantine Empire, 312-1453, Sources and Documents*, Medieval Academy reprints for teaching, 16, published by University of Toronto Press, p. 135.

[16] J. BECKWITH, *Early Christian and Byzantine Art*, p. 94.

Along with the manuscripts mentioned above, one more must be counted, executed at the end of the 5th or the beginning of the 6th century[17], the original of which is lost, but which is known from a copy made at the beginning of the 9th century. Known as the *Apocalypse of Trier*, after the name of the place where it was discovered, but being most likely executed in the scriptorium of the monastery of Tours in the style specific to the Carolingian era[18], the manuscript contains no less than 74 miniatures illustrating the *Apocalypse* of Saint John the Apostle, a fact that denotes the interest of Christians in the Lord's Parousia at a time when millenarian ideas still persisted. Among the seventy-four miniatures, each occupying a whole page, those compositions in which Christ in glory, represented either with His face, as a beardless young man with long hair, sitting on a nimbus, or as a Lamb, in a nimbus, holding the Book with seven seals is surrounded by tetramorphs (fig. 3). In the context of these miniatures, although in most of them they have the Book of the Gospel in front of them, the tetramorphs are no longer associated only with the Holy Evangelists, whose symbols they had become, but also with the Last Judgment, this meaning emerging both from the fact that the Lamb-Christ has in front of him the Book with seven seals (Ap 5:1-8), as well as the presence in miniature of the seven candles or the twenty-four elders from the Apocalypse (Ap 4:4-7).

The oldest iconographic representation of the tetramorphs in a church also dates from the same period as the original of the *Apocalypse from Trier*. In the apse of the Hosios David church in Thessaloniki, the original mosaic is preserved in which Christ is represented in glory, as a beardless young man with long hair, sitting like a throne on the rainbow inscribed in the nimbus that symbolizes His divine glory, which is surrounded by the tetramorphs of the vision of Ezekiel (1:5-11) (fig. 4).

As a mode of representation, there are both similarities and differences between the tetramorphs in the scene of the *Ascension of Christ* in *Rabulla's Gospel*, described above, those in the *Theophany* of Hosios David and those in the *Apocalypse of Trier*. In all three representations the tetramorphs have many eyes on the wings, like the cherubim, and are around Christ in glory, glory symbolized either as a nimbus, in Hosios David and in the *Apocalypse of Trier*, or as a mandorla in *Rabulla's Gospel*. Instead, in the *Apocalypse of Trier* the tetramorphs are represented both with the whole body and the book of the Gospel, as in Hosios David, and only with the zoomorphic head and three pairs of wings, as in the *Gospel of Rabulla*. As for the symbolism of the tetramorphs in the three compositions, those from *Rabulla's Gospel* are undoubtedly associated with the divine glory from Ezekiel's vision, considering the theme of the *Ascension of Christ*, those from Hosios David are associated with the Holy Evangelists, an understanding also supported by the presence, on one side and the other of the composition, of the prophets Ezekiel and Habakkuk, and those of the *Apocalypse of Trier* are associated with the Last Judgment. And regarding the representation of Christ in glory there are similarities and differences between the three compositions. Thus, in *Rabulla's Gospel* Christ is represented in a mandorla, standing, with long hair and a beard, with his right hand raised, while in his left hand he holds an open scroll, in the *Theophany* of Hosios David, he is depicted as a young man, with long hair and beardless, sitting on the rainbow and surrounded by the nimbus of his divine glory, with his right hand raised and the scroll in his left, while in the *Apocalypse of Trier* Christ, also

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[17] James SNEYDER, "The Reconstruction of an Early Christian Cycle of Illustrations for the Book of Revelation – The Trier Apocalypse", *Vigiliae Christianae* 18 (1964), North-Holland Publishing Co., pp. 153-155.
[18] J. SNEYDER, "The Reconstruction of an Early Christian Cycle of Illustrations for the Book of Revelation – The Trier Apocalypse", pp.148-149.

young and beardless, having a cruciform aura, is seated on the nimbus as a throne of glory, or the throne of glory on which he sits is symbolized by two superimposed nimbuses.

The several similarities between the representations of the tetramorphs and Christ in glory in the original that served as a model for the *Apocalypse of Trier* and the scene in the apse of the church of Hosios David could mean either the existence of a common source, from which both the miniaturist and the who executed the mosaic, or the fact that one of the two works became a source of inspiration for the author of the other. If we take into account the claim that the scene of the *Ascension of Christ* in *Rabulla's Gospel* was inspired by the Palestinian prototype of a monumental parietal painting[19], we can assume that the mosaic from Hosios David became a source of inspiration for the miniaturist of the original manuscript of the *Book of Revelation*, which, in turn, served as a model for the copyists in the scriptorium of the monastery of Tours who produced, at the beginning of the 9th century, the *Apocalypse of Trier*. The probability that the representations of the tetramorphs and Christ in glory from the mosaic of the church of Hosios David in Thessalonica were taken over in the original manuscript of the Apocalypse which then reached a monastery in France should not raise great problems of acceptance, considering the wide circulation of manuscripts in the era and their role in disseminating iconographic themes and compositions in the Christian area. This last aspect is confirmed by a passage from Bede the Venerable (672-735), which records the fact that the monk Benedict Biscop (628-690), traveling to Rome, acquired a significant number of books illustrated with miniatures to be used as models for decorating the churches he had built in Wearmouth[20].

The 6th century records, therefore, the appearance of the first explicit representations of the *Last Judgment* theme, based on the *Book of Revelation*, and this not only in the manuscript to which I referred. On the triumphal arch of the church of S. Michele in Affricisco is preserved a scene in which Christ the Redeemer, seated on the throne, is surrounded by nine angels, seven of them blowing trumpets, a scene that would refer to the text of the *Apocalypse* (8:7 – 11:19)[21]. The first illustration of this theme, however, belongs to the end of the 3rd century or the beginning of the next and illustrates the parable of the choice and separation of the sheep from the goats in *Matthew* 25:31-46, being carved on the lid of a sarcophagus located in Rome[22], a scene that would be repeated in the 6th century in the church of Sant'Apollinare Nuovo in Ravena[23].

2. ICONOGRAPHY OF THE HOLY ANGELS

The presence of the images of the tetramorphs in the miniatures from the original manuscript of the *Apocalypse*, which appeared at the end of the 5th century, the beginning of the 6th, in the *Gospel of Rabulla*, in the church of Hosios David in Thessalonica is not exactly accidental, this represents, most likely, the visual materialization of the symbolic theology of Pseudo-Dionysius the Areopagite, who lived and wrote in the same period[24],

[19] J. SNEYDER, "The Reconstruction of an Early Christian Cycle of Illustrations for the Book of Revelation – The Trier Apocalypse", nota 11, p. 152.

[20] VENERABILIS BEDAE, *Vita Sanctorul abbatum monasterii in Wiramutha et Girvum*, *PL* 94:717B; J. SNEYDER, "The Reconstruction of an Early Christian Cycle of Illustrations for the Book of Revelation – The Trier Apocalypse", p. 147.

[21] J. BECKWITH, *Early Christian and Byzantine Art*, p. 118, 122. C. DELVOYE, *Arta bizantină*, vol. 1, traducere de Florica-Eugenia Condurachi, prefață de Vasile Drăguț, Ed. Meridiane, București, 1976, p. 131.

[22] M. FRAZER, "Apse themes", in: Kurt WEIZMANN (ed.), *Age of Spirituality…*, p. 558.

[23] F. TRISTAN, *Primele imagini creștine…*, p. 384.

[24] Kevin CORRIGAN and L. Michael HARRINGTON, "Pseudo-Dionysius the Areopagite", *The Standford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Summer 2023 Edition), Edward N. ZALTA and Uri NODELMAN (eds.), https://plato.stanford.edu/cgi-bin/encyclopedia/archinfo.cgi?entry=pseudo-dionysius-areopagite, 04. 03. 2024; Pr. Dumitru Stăniloae, on the other hand,

from the work *On the Heavenly Hierarchy*. In this writing of Pseudo-Dionysius the Areopagite, the first symbolic interpretations of the tetramorphs and the holy angels in Christian theology appear, interpretations to which we can give an iconological character since the author interprets the analogous faces/icons[25] of the holy angels, as they were seen by the authors saints during the revelations received. After stating that the theological language of Holy Scripture is symbolic when it uses "figures" to speak of the holy heavenly powers, Pseudo-Dionysius warns that:

"in order that we also may not, like the vulgar, irreverently think that the heavenly and Godlike minds are certain manyfooted and many-faced creatures, or moulded to the brutishness of oxen or the savage form of fions, and fashioned like the hooked beaks of eagles, or the feathery down of birds and should imagine that there are certain wheels of fire above the heaven, or materil thrones upon which the Godhead may recline [...]"[26].

Pseudo-Dionysius also shows that, "out of regard to our intelligence, so to speak"

"the theologians ought, when they have come to the bodily representation of creatures altogether without body, to represent and display them by appropriate and, as far as possible, cognate figures, taken, at any rate, from our most honoured and immaterial and exalted beings, and ought not to clothe the heavenly and Godlike simple essences with the many froms of the lowest creatures to be found on the eath"[27].

Interpreting the faces of the tetramorphs, Pseudo-Dionysius interprets that the human face shows "on account of the intellectual faculty, and their having powers of looking upwards"[28], the lion's face signifies "the leading, and robust, and indomitable", the bull's face "denotes the strong and the mature, turning up the intellectual furrows for the reception of the heavenly and productive showers; and the Horns, the guarding and indomitable", while the face of the eagle "denotes the kingly, and soaring, and swift in flight, and quickness in search of the nourishment wich makes strong, and wariness, and agility, and cleverness; and the unimpeded, straight, and unflinching gaze towards the bounteous and brilliant splendour of the Divine rays of the sun, with the robust extension of the visual powers"[29]. About the wings that are sometimes attributed in Holy Scripture to holy angels (Acts 25:20, Is 6:1-3, Is 1:5-6, Dan 9:21, Rev 14:6), the author interprets that they "displays the elevating quickness

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invokes a series of arguments in favor of identifying Pseudo-Dionysius with Dionysius the Areopagite, the philosopher converted by the Holy Apostle Paul in the Athenian Areopagus, Pr. Dumitru STĂNILOAE, *Introducere*, in: SFÂNTUL DIONISIE AREOPAGITUL, *Opere complete*, traducere, introducere și note de pr. Dumitru Stăniloae, PAIDEIA, București, 1996, pp. 9-13.

[25] S. JOANNES DAMASCENUS, *Oratio III, Adversus eos qui sacras imagines abjiciunt*, 21, *PG* 94:1342A; ST JOHN DAMASCENE, Treatise on Images, Part III, in: *On Holy Images, followed by three Sermons on the Assumption*, translated from the original Greek by Mary H. Allies, London, 1898, pp. 95-96; SF. IOAN DAMASCHIN, Tratatul III apologetic despre sfintele icoane, 21, în vol. *Tratatele apologetice contra celor ce atacă sfintele icoane*, traducere, introducere și note de pr. Dumitru Stăniloae, București, 1998, pp. 138-139.

[26] S. DIONYSIUS AREOPAGITA, *De coelesti hierarchia*, II, 1, *PG* 3:138A; DIONYSIUS THE AREOPAGITE, *On the Heavenly Hierarchy*, II, 1, in: *The Works of Dionysius the Areopagite. Part II. The Heavenly Hierarchy and The Ecclesiastical Hierarchy*. Now first translated into English from the original Greek, by the Rev. John Parker, James Parker and Co., London, 1899, p. 4; SFÂNTUL DIONISIE AREOPAGITUL, *Despre Ierarhia Cerească*, II, 1, in: *Opere complete*, p. 16.

[27] S. DIONYSIUS AREOPAGITA, *De coelesti hierarchia*, II, 2, *PG* 3:138C; DIONYSIUS THE AREOPAGITE, *On the Heavenly Hierarchy*, II, 2, p. 5; SFÂNTUL DIONISIE AREOPAGITUL, *Despre Ierarhia Cerească*, II, 2, in: *Opere complete*, pp. 16-17.

[28] S. DIONYSIUS AREOPAGITA, *De coelesti hierarchia*, XV, 3, *PG* 3:330D; DIONYSIUS THE AREOPAGITE, *On the Heavenly Hierarchy*, XV, 3, p. 57; SFÂNTUL DIONISIE AREOPAGITUL, *Despre Ierarhia Cerească*, XV, 3, p. 36.

[29] S. DIONYSIUS AREOPAGITA, *De coelesti hierarchia*, XV, 8, *PG* 3:335D-338A; DIONYSIUS THE AREOPAGITE, *On the Heavenly Hierarchy*, XV, 7-8, pp. 63-64; SFÂNTUL DIONISIE AREOPAGITUL, *Despre Ierarhia Cerească*, XV, 8, p. 38.

and the heavenly progress towards higher things, and the superiority to every grovelling thing by reason of the ascending, and the lightness of the wings denotes their being in no respect eartly, but undefiledly and lightly raised to the sublime"[30].

Pseudo-Dionysius the Areopagite has the merit, therefore, of having offered the first solid theological arguments, with authority, considering the reception and influence of his theology on the subsequent development of Christian theology, in favour of the anthropozoomorphic iconic representation of the Holy Angels, emphasizing the symbolic character of the "figures" or "faces" with which they, being described in the Holy Scriptures by the holy authors, can also be represented in icons by painters.

The symbolic theology of Pseudo-Dionysius in *On the Heavenly Hierarchy* was a response to the aniconic theological current of the 4th century based on the spiritualist-intellectualist theology whose leading exponents were Saint Epiphanius of Salamis (313-403), Evagrius the Pontic (345-399) and Macarius of Magnesia (295-394)[31]. Among other arguments against icons, Saint Epiphanius invoked the one according to which art could not convey any truth about the spiritual nature, so that even angels, who are spiritual, incorporeal and immaterial beings, cannot be represented iconographically[32].

The aniconic theology of St. Epiphanius of Salamis and Macarius of Magnesia, from the 4th century, was continued in the 6th-7th centuries by the Monophysite hierarchs Philoxen of Mabugg (†523) and Severus of Antioch (459-538). Philoxenus of Mabugg affirmed, in the case of the spiritual nature of angels, only a knowledge by faith and an intellectual worship, to the absolute exclusion of any material representation, which is not suited to their spiritual nature, and which would do nothing but deceive the mind.

In his homily *On Faith*, he wrote: "And thus also is it in respect of the spiritual natures and orders of celestial beings, and it is faith which maketh it possible to receive every word which is spoken concerning them; for otherwise there must necessarily be unbelief, since the Book calleth them «absolute spiritual beings» [in one place], and in another it speaketh of them as «compacted bodies», to which it attributeth forms which are diffesent from each other. Concerning the Seraphim' we are told by the word of the Book [that they have] wings and faces, and concerning the Cherubim' [we are told that they have] other forms which are different from each other; which of these statements are we to accept as true? for according to the outward hearing of the word each contradicts the other"[33].

After affirming that all the Scriptures say about angelic powers are received and understood by faith, Philoxenus of Mabugg, like Pseudo-Dionysius, interprets the meaning of the eyes and wings and the other limbs with which angels are described in Scripture, and shows that these limbs symbolize the power of the whole spiritual nature of angels to see, to reason, to move, to understand, or to perform other works[34]. Unlike Pseudo-Dionysius, however, Philoxenus de Mabugg remains at the affirmation of the understanding of the

[30] S. DIONYSIUS AREOPAGITA, *De coelesti hierarchia*, XV, 3, *PG* 3:331D; ; DIONYSIUS THE AREOPAGITE, *On the Heavenly Hierarchy*, XV, 3, pp. 59-60; SFÂNTUL DIONISIE AREOPAGITUL, *Despre Ierarhia Cerească*, XV, 3, p. 37.

[31] Glenn PEERS, *Trupuri imateriale. Reprezentări bizantine ale îngerilor*, traducere din limba engleză de Maria Yvonne Băncilă, prefață de Ștefan Ionescu-Berechet, NEMIRA, 2011, pp. 100-106.

[32] Glenn PEERS, *Trupuri imateriale. Reprezentări bizantine ale îngerilor*, p. 100.

[33] PHILOXENUS OF MABBÔGH, *The Second Discourse. On Faith*, in: *The Discourses of Philoxenus Bishop of Mabbôgh, A.D. 485-519, edited from syriac manuscripts of the sixth and seventh centuries in The British Museum*, vol. II, with an English translation by E. A. Wallis Budge, Asher and Co. Publisher, London, 1894, p. 30.

[34] PHILOXENUS OF MABBÔGH, *The Second Discourse. On Faith*, pp. 30-31.

spiritual nature of angels through a purely intellectual belief, rejecting the possibility of their material visual representations.

Philoxenus of Mabugg's attitude towards the iconic representation of angels was also embraced and supported by Severus of Antioch in his homilies. In *Homily 72, At the deposition of the holy relics of the Holy Martyrs Procopius and Phocas in the church named after the Archangel Michael*, he argued his attitude of rejecting the veneration of the holy angels in icons[35], accusing their worshipers of "borrowing some images" from pagans to express the truth of faith[36], and that they "worship angels, in fact, as gods; through lack of moderation they exceed even the legitimate limits and take the veil of idolatry as the outward appearance of piety"[37].

Citing the scriptural texts in which the angelophanies are described, after highlighting the different forms in which the angels manifested and allowed themselves to be seen by men, Severus accepts that the holy authors, "using the custom in use among us", described angelic powers in words and images common to the knowledge of men, but these images and likenesses to sensible things and materials are used as symbols for their spiritual attributes, for which reason he interprets all statements concerning the holy angelic powers symbolically. So far, his thinking is in agreement with that of Pseudo-Dionysius. But, contrary to this, after showing that "if we think that the nature (of the angels) is identical with the appearances under which they appear, it is equally necessary to think that they are various and material, and this, when they are immaterial and simple because they are spiritual", he concludes that angels, since they are spiritual beings, which cannot be seen in their essence, have no materiality and no corporability, nor can, and, by way of consequence, neither should they be represented in material images in icons[38]. Therefore, Severus of Antioch condemns the representation of angels in icons and the painters who made them, accusing that: "the painters' hand, which is unseemly and is its own law, favouring pagan inventions or idolatrous scorns and arranging everything in its favour, depicts Michael and Gabriel dressed as princes or kings, with royal purple robes, adorning it with crowns and putting in their right hands the sign of authority and dominion over all the earth. For these and similar reasons, those who honour angels in such a foolish way, depart from the Church and violate her commandments, are anathematized by those who ordained[39] the holy canons"[40].

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[35] SÉVÈRE D'ANTIOCHE, *Homélie LXXII, Sur la déposition des corps sacrés des saints martyrs Procope et Phocas dans l'Église dite de Michel*, in: Maurice BRIÈRE (ed.), *Les Homeliae Chatedrales de Sévère d'Antioche*, version syriaque de Jaques d'Édesse (Hom. LXX à LXXVI), *Patrologia Orientalis*, XX, Firmin-Didot, Paris, 1919, pp. 71-89.

[36] SÉVÈRE D'ANTIOCHE, *Homélie LXXII, Sur la déposition des corps sacrés des saints martyrs Procope et Phocas dans l'Église dite de Michel*, p. 73.

[37] SÉVÈRE D'ANTIOCHE, *Homélie LXXII, Sur la déposition des corps sacrés des saints martyrs Procope et Phocas dans l'Église dite de Michel*, p. 74.

[38] SÉVÈRE D'ANTIOCHE, *Homélie LXXII, Sur la déposition des corps sacrés des saints martyrs Procope et Phocas dans l'Église dite de Michel*, pp. 78-81.

[39] Severus of Antioch refers to Canon 35 of the Synod of Laodicea, held sometime between 343 and 381, in which the participating bishops decided: „Christians must not forsake the Church of God, and go away and invoke angels and gather assemblies, which things are forbidden. If, therefore, any one shall be found engaged in this covert idolatry, let him be anathema; for he has forsaken our Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God, and has gone over to idolatry." (Henry R. PERCIVAL (ed), *The Seven Ecumenical Councils of the Undivided Church. Their Canons and Dogmatic Decrees, Toghether with the Canons of All the Local Synods which have Received Ecumenical Acceptance. Edited with Notes ghathered from the Writhings of the Greatest Scholars*, col. *Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church*, second series, Philip Schaff and Henry Wace (eds), vol. 14, T&T Clark, Edinburgh, 1900, p. 150; Arhid. Ioan N. FLOCA, *Canoanele Bisericii Ortodoxe, note și comentarii*, Sibiu, 1992, p. 225). The canon has in mind a heresy called the angelics, from the regions of Phrygia and Pisidia, whose beginnings go back to the apostolic period, since St. Apostle Paul also condemns it in the

The text of Severus of Antioch, beyond the attitude against the honouring of holy angels both in the worship of the Church and through the creation of their icons, is important for the iconography of the holy Archangels Michael and Gabriel in the 6th century, as it describes how they were depicted in icons.

The hostile attitude of Severus of Antioch towards the veneration of angels and their representation in icons was probably determined by the existence of exaggerated local cultic practices in Phrygia and Pisidia, dedicated to holy angels, conducted separately from the public worship of the Church, on the one hand, and, on the other hand, by the fact that the painters were inspired by the models of pagan art to create some representations of the holy winged angels[41]. Added to this is the fact that some exponents of paganism claimed that the angels, whom Christians honoured and represented in icons, were identical to the pagan gods, which is why Severus equated the veneration of holy angels with pagan idolatry.

In the regions that had not known the local context of Phrygia and Pisidia the iconic representation of the holy angels did not raise problems of acceptance by the Church. The winged Archangel Gabriel appeared in the scene of the *Annunciation* in the church dedicated to Saint Sergius in Gaza[42], winged angels were engraved everywhere on the silver plates in which the iconostasis of the Great Church of Constantinople was dressed[43], and icons of the Archangel Michael were in a church in the Constantinople district Plates and in the one rebuilt by the emperor Justinian from Sosthenion[44]. The orator and poet Aghatias (532-580), in an epigram dedicated to the icon of the Archangel Michael of Plata, reveals a different theological report from those of Philoxen of Mabugg and Severus of Antioch towards the icon of the Archangel, a report in accordance with patristic theology, according to which honour ascends from the figure in the icon to the prototype. Aghatias wrote the following in this epigram: "The wax, very bold, represented the invisible, the immaterial archist of the angels in the likeness/appearance of his form. Yet [the task] was not without satisfaction, so long as the mortal man who beheld the image turned his mind to a higher contemplation. His veneration is no longer distracted: engraving upon himself the [archangel's] features, he trembles as if in the presence of the latter. The eyes encourage deep thoughts, and art is able, through colours, to send [to its object] the prayer of the mind"[45].

The theological thinking of Pseudo-Dionysius the Areopagite concerning the holy angelic powers was followed in the following centuries by other defenders of the cult of holy angels in general and of their iconographic representation in particular. Thus, bishop John of Thessalonica (610-649) answered a pagan, who objected that angels cannot be represented because they are spiritual beings, that the nature of angels is not like the divine nature, the only invisible and uncircumscribed, they have some corporeality, aerial or as of fire, being therefore circumscribed, that they could be seen in human form by those to whom they were sent by God, and therefore can be represented[46].

Epistle to the Colossians (2:18) as "a hypocritical worship to the angels", whose followers replaced the prayer and worship to the Savior Jesus Christ with that offered exclusively to the holy angels.

[40] SÉVÈRE D'ANTIOCHE, *Homélie LXXII, Sur la déposition des corps sacrés des saints martyrs Procope et Phocas dans l'Église dite de Michel*, pp. 83-84; Glenn PEERS, *Trupuri imateriale. Reprezentări bizantine ale îngerilor*, p.113.

[41] Glenn PEERS, *Trupuri imateriale. Reprezentări bizantine ale îngerilor*, pp. 53, 63, 66.

[42] C. MANGO, *The Art of the Byzantine Empire, 312-1453*, p. 64.

[43] C. MANGO, *The Art of the Byzantine Empire, 312-1453*, p. 87.

[44] C. MANGO, *The Art of the Byzantine Empire, 312-1453*, pp. 115-116.

[45] C. MANGO, *The Art of the Byzantine Empire, 312-1453*, p. 115.

[46] MANSI, *Sacrorum conciliorum nova et amplissima collection*, vol. 13, col. 163-166; C. MANGO, *The Art of the Byzantine Empire, 312-1453*, pp. 140-141.

3. FIGURES OF FOUNDERS AND DONORS IN CHRISTIAN ART

In the era of Justinian, the emperors who founded them or who granted them certain privileges and the bishops during which the respective churches were built or decorated with parietal images began to be represented in the mosaics or frescoes that decorated the churches, some of them being even buried there[47], and examples of this are quite numerous and edifying, especially in Italy.

Thus, in a composition that occupies the entire shell of the apse of the holy altar of the church of Santi Cosma e Damiano in Rome (526/530) Bishop Felix IV (490-530) appears, on the right of the scene, holding a model of the church in his hands. In the centre of the composition is Christ the Redeemer, to whom the Holy Apostle Paul, standing on His right, presents one of the two martyred brothers, and on the left, the Holy Apostle Peter introduces the other brother. On the left side, opposite Pope Felix, balancing the scene, is the Holy Martyr Theodore[48] (fig. 5). Very similar to the composition in the church of Santi Cosma e Damiano is the one on the triumphal arch of the church of San Lorenzo fuori le mura in Rome (578/590)[49]. In this composition, the holy martyr Lawrence, on the right of Christ in glory, sitting on the nimbus, is introduced by the Holy Apostle Peter, and the holy martyrs Stephen and Hippolytus, represented on the left, are introduced by the Holy Apostle Paul. Bishop Pelagius II (579-590) is represented on the right of the composition, with a smaller stature than that of Saint Lawrence.

In the conch of the apse of the holy altar of the church of San Vitale in Ravenna (546/547) a slightly different composition is preserved. In the central axis of this composition, Christ is depicted in glory, a beardless young man, sitting on a nimbus, with a winged angel on his right and on his left, dressed in white clothes. The angel on His right presents the Holy Martyr Vitalius, to whom Christ offers the crown of martyrdom, while the angel on the left introduces Bishop Ecclesius (522-532), the founder of the church, who offers Christ the Redeemer the model of the church[50]. Also in Ravenna, the figure of Bishop Victor[51] (538-545) can be recognized on the cloth woven in gold and silk for the table of the Holy Altar in the Ursiana church, and in the church of San Apollinare in Classe there are mosaics with bishops Severus (308-348), Ursus (399-426), Ecclesius, Ursicinius (533-536), considered its founder, as well as a panel with Archbishop Reparatus (671-677) together with Emperor Constantine IV (668-685)[52]. By far, the most famous mosaic panels in Ravenna are the two in the church of San Vitale, in which the emperor Justinian (527-565), accompanied by the bishop Maximianus (546- 556), by priests and soldiers, and Empress Theodora, accompanied by the ladies of the Court[53].

It is not only in Rome and Ravenna that we encounter the custom of representing the figures of emperors or bishops on the walls, most often in mosaic, in the churches they founded. We also meet this practice in Gaza, in the churches of Saint Sergius[54] (536) and

[47] J. BECKWITH, *Early Christian and Byzantine Art*, pp. 112, 114-115, 118-120.

[48] J. BECKWITH, *Early Christian and Byzantine Art*, pp. 125-126.

[49] J. BECKWITH, *Early Christian and Byzantine Art*, pp. 147-148.

[50] C. MANGO, *The Art of the Byzantine Empire, 312-1453*, p. 105; Judith HERRIN, *Ravena, capitala imperiului*, traducere din limba engleză de Mihai Moroiu, Baroque Books & Arts, București, 2021, p. 269 și pls. 29.

[51] J. BECKWITH, *Early Christian and Byzantine Art*, p. 112; C. MANGO, *The Art of the Byzantine Empire, 312-1453*, p. 105; J. HERRIN, *Ravena, capitala imperiului*, p. 263.

[52] C. MANGO, *The Art of the Byzantine Empire, 312-1453*, p. 130; J. HERRIN, *Ravena, capitala imperiului*, pp. 398-399, pls. 56.

[53] J. HERRIN, *Ravena, capitala imperiului*, pp. 271-274, pls. 37, pls. 38.

[54] C. MANGO, *The Art of the Byzantine Empire, 312-1453*, p. 62.

Saint Stephen[55] (536/548). In most cases, the Holy Apostles Peter and Paul or the holy martyr to whom the respective church was dedicated present to Christ the Savior, represented in glory, the founder of the church, who holds the model of the church in his hand, offering it either to the patron saint or to the Savior Jesus Christ[56].

However, the precedent had been created in the 5th century by Emperor Leo I (457-474). He placed on the ciborium above the reliquary where the covering (maphorion) of the Mother of God had been deposited, an icon of the Virgin Mary in majesty, sitting on the throne, to her right and left being prostrated the emperor Leon and his wife Verina[57]. Following the example of Emperor Leo I, the patricians Galbius and Candidus, who, according to tradition, had discovered the maphorion of the Mother of God in Capernaum and brought it to Constantinople sometime between 471-473, dedicated a very large icon to the Virgin Mary, which was placed in the church built by Leo I in honour of the Virgin. In the upper part of this icon, two angels were represented, on one side and the other of the Virgin and Child Jesus were Saint John the Baptist and Saint Conon, and in the lower part, in a humble posture of prayer and gratitude, the two patricians[58].

The presence of the founder and the bishop in the frescoes or mosaics that decorate the churches, very often even in the dome of the apse of the holy altar, is explained by the rhetorician Choricius in one of the writings in which he describes the church of Saint Sergius in Gaza, built during the time of Emperor Justinian by the governor of Palestine, Stephen, and by bishop Marcian of Gaza. Describing the mosaic that adorned the cap of the apse of the holy altar, Choricius shows that in the centre is represented the Virgin Mary holding the Baby Jesus at her breast, and on one side is represented a group of pious people, in the attitude of adoration. "At the extreme right of this group", writes Choricius, "is a person who looks in every respect like an emperor, and who is worthy both to be among the friends of God and to bear the name of the first of God's deacons of old [St. Ștefan]: this for several reasons and above all because, having the bishop as a partner in his work, he donated the church to his fellow citizens, knowing full well that, while other liberalities bring only the embellishment of the city, the building of churches it brings not only beauty, but in addition a name for godliness. He is the one who, sitting next to the patron of the church [St. Serghie], asks him to accept the gift graciously; the latter consents and looks at him with a gentle look as he puts his right hand on his shoulder, evidently about to present him to the Virgin and her Son, the Saviour"[59].

From the text of Choricius it is quite obvious that the depiction of the founder in this scene, and by extension in all scenes of this type, is not meant to glorify him before the people, but on the contrary, to show him humble, humbly waiting as the saint to whom the church was dedicated to receive his gift and invoking his intercession before the Savior and the Virgin Mary for the forgiveness of his sins. This theme would appear frequently in the foundations made by Christian principles over time, but over time it migrated from the apse of the Holy Altar, or from on or from the vicinity of the triumphal arch on the western wall of the church.

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[55] C. MANGO, *The Art of the Byzantine Empire, 312-1453*, p. 70.
[56] Tomasz POLAŃSKI, "The Mosaic and Painting Decoration in the Church of Saint Stephen of Gaza and the Christian Ecphrasis (Choricius of Gaza, Asterius of Amaseia, Nilus of Sinai)", in: *Folia Orientalia*, 48, 2011, pp. 194-195.
[57] C. MANGO, *The Art of the Byzantine Empire, 312-1453*, pp. 34-35.
[58] C. MANGO, *The Art of the Byzantine Empire, 312-1453*, pp. 34-35.
[59] C. MANGO, *The Art of the Byzantine Empire, 312-1453*, p. 62.

4. THE CRYSTALLIZATION OF THE CHURCH ICONOGRAPHIC PROGRAM

The presentation made by the rhetorician Choriciu of the church of St. Sergius in Gaza is particularly important from an iconographic point of view, as the author describes all the holy images that adorned the walls on one side and the other, starting with the *Annunciation* and continuing with the *Visit of the Virgin to Elizabeth*, the *Nativity of the Lord*, *Annunciation of the Nativity of the Lord to the shepherds*, *Meeting of the Lord*, *Wedding at Cana*, *Healing of Peter's mother-in-law*, *Healing of the withered hand*, *Healing of the centurion's servant*, *Resurrection of the son of the widow of Nain*, *Faith of the sinful woman*, *Calming of the storm on the sea*, *Peter walking on the sea to Christ*, *Healing of the demoniac*, *Healing of the woman with the issue of blood*, *Raising of Lazarus*, *Last Supper*, *Kiss of Judas*, *Christ before Pilate*, *Pilate washing his hands*, *Crucifixion of Christ between the two robbers*, *Soldiers guarding the tomb*, *Resurrection of Christ*, *Christ appearing to His Mother and the myrrh-bearing women*, *Ascension*. Choricius also states that the central part of the ceiling was decorated with the prophets of the Old Testament, who prophesied about the coming of Christ into the world[60].

It can be observed, from the description made by Choricius, the existence in the era of a real iconographic program, well-knit, with a narrative character, inspired by the Holy Gospels, in which the influence of the apocryphal accounts about the Virgin Mary timidly made its way. In the *Annunciation* scene, surprised by the greeting of the Archangel Gabriel, the Virgin "drops the purple from her hand", a detail that does not appear in the canonical writings, but which is related in the apocryphal ones[61].

The existence of this iconographic program during the 6th-7th centuries is also confirmed by the *Vita S. Pancratii*[62], a writing that was compiled in Taormina, Sicily[63], most likely at the beginning of the 8th century, around the time of the outbreak of iconoclasm, the years 732 /733[64]. According to the author of this writing, the Holy Apostle Peter asked a painter to represent in images the figure of the Savior Jesus Christ, as well as the entire history of salvation, beginning with the *Annunciation* and continuing with the *Birth*, *Baptism*, Apostles, healings, *His sale by Judas*, *Crucifixion*, *Putting in tomb*, the *Resurrection from Hell*, until the *Ascension to heaven*, urging that all the churches be decorated with these scenes so that the faithful are convinced of the reality of the Incarnation of the Son of God and strengthen themselves in the right faith[65]. Even if it is of little historical value, given that it was written in Taormina, reflecting, among other things, the "attitudes and practices towards religious images and church decoration" in Sicily[66], the *Vita S. Pancratii* not only confirms the existence of an iconographic program, but proves that it is the same generalized iconographic program, the one in Sicily being similar to the one in Gaza. Very likely, the same iconographic program will have been followed in the church of

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[60] C. MANGO, *The Art of the Byzantine Empire, 312-1453*, pp. 64-68.

[61] ***The Infancy Gospel of James*, 10, 11, 12, in: *The Complete Gospels*, Annotated Scholars Version, Revised and Expanded Edition, Robert J. Miller (ed.), Sonoma, Polebridge Press, 1994, pp. 388-389; ***Protoevanghelia lui Iacob*, X, XI, XII, in: *Evanghelii apocrife*, traducere, studiu introductiv, note și prezentări de Cristian Bădiliță, Polirom, Iași, ²1999, pp. 39-40.

[62] Cynthia J. STALLMAN-PACITTI, *The Life of Saint Pankratios of Taormina*, Greek text, English Translation and Commentary, edited by John B. BURKE, *Byzantina Australiensia* 22, Brill, Leiden/Boston, 2018.

[63] C. J. STALLMAN-PACITTI, *The Life of Saint Pankratios of Taormina*, pp. 18-19.

[64] C. J. STALLMAN-PACITTI, *The Life of Saint Pankratios of Taormina*, pp. 11-18.

[65] C. MANGO, *The Art of the Byzantine Empire, 312-1453*, pp. 137-138; C. J. STALLMAN-PACITTI, *The Life of Saint Pankratios of Taormina*, 6-9, pp. 51-59.

[66] C. J. STALLMAN-PACITTI, *The Life of Saint Pankratios of Taormina*, p. 22.

San Apollinare Nuovo in Ravenna, in the 26 panels that describe the life, miracles and passions of the Savior Jesus Christ[67].

However, the existence of this iconographic program did not mean, for the era we are referring to, the obligation of its representation in every newly built church. Emperor Justinian I, for example, did not decorate any of the churches he built or rebuilt in Constantinople[68] with holy images. In Saint Sophia, it was limited to representing the sign of the Holy Cross in the apse of the holy altar[69], and on the walls above the circular arches on the ground floor, all around the church, baskets with fruit, leaves, trees with birds in their branches and vines with bunches of grapes[70]. However, on the silver dome that covered the Holy Altar, the figure of the Savior was engraved, as well as the Holy Angels, the Prophets, the Holy Apostles and the Virgin Mary[71], and on the vestment that covered the Holy Table, *Christ Pantocrator* was woven in gold thread, having on the right and on the left the Holy Apostles Peter and Paul, scenes inspired by the Savior's miracles, but also the important edifices built by Justinian[72].

A possible explanation for the fact that the emperor Justinian was reserved in decorating the walls of the churches of Constantinople with holy images could lie in his repeated attempts to reconcile the Chalcedonians with the Monophysite heretics and the influence of his wife Theodora, who was a supporter of the Monophysite party, reason for which will probably be maintained, their vision of the human nature of Christ. From this perspective, the image of Empress Theodora in the church of San Vitale in Ravenna, where she appears with the mantle decorated with the *Adoration of the Magi* scene (fig. 6), becomes interesting. Even if only the three magi are visible on the mantle, the scene obviously also implies the presence of the Virgin and Child, whom the viewer must see with the mind's eye. If the Virgin carrying the Child in her arms visually testifies to the teaching from the Council of Ephesus in the year 431 which states that she is the Mother of God - Theotokos, the Baby Jesus carried in the arms of His Mother expresses the dogma about the union of the two natures in the Incarnate Person of the Son of God, established at the Council of Chalcedon in the year 451. Considering Theodora's pro-Monophysite attitude, the representation of this scene on her mantle will have been the way chosen by the panel sponsor to challenge and ironize the empress's heretical faith, making her this, against her will, preacher of the Chalcedonian faith against which she fought? The presumptive affirmative answer to this question, although it cannot be argued, must not be absolutely rejected.

In addition to the biblical images that made up this iconographic program, in the Christian East churches were usually decorated, either on the walls of the nave (narthex) or

[67] J. BECKWITH, *Early Christian and Byzantine Art*, pp. 107-108.

[68] In addition to Saint Sophia, in Constantinople he also built the church of the Virgin in Pêgé (p. 103), St. Apostles (p. 103), St. Michael the Archangel from Platê (p. 115) and the one in Sosthenion (p. 116), cf. C. MANGO, *The Art of the Byzantine Empire, 312-1453*.

[69] PAULUS SILENTIARIUS, *Descriptio Ecclesiae Sanctae Sophiae*, Ducangio interprete, 491-492, *PG* 86/2:2138B; PAULUS SILENTIARIUS, *Descriptio S. Sophiae*, 491-492, ex recognitione Immanuelis Bekkeri, in: Paulus Silentiarius, Georgius Pisida et Sanctus Nicephorus Cpolitanus, *Corpus Scriptorum Historiae Byzantinae*, 1837, p. 25; C. MANGO, *The Art of the Byzantine Empire, 312-1453*, p. 83.

[70] PAULUS SILENTIARIUS, *Descriptio Ecclesiae Sanctae Sophiae*, 650-654, *PG* 86/2:2144A; PAULUS SILENTIARIUS, *Descriptio S. Sophiae*, 650-654, p. 32; C. MANGO, *The Art of the Byzantine Empire, 312-1453*, p. 86.

[71] PAULUS SILENTIARIUS, *Descriptio Ecclesiae Sanctae Sophiae*, 693-709, *PG* 86/2:2146AB; PAULUS SILENTIARIUS, *Descriptio S. Sophiae*, 693-709, p. 34; C. MANGO, *The Art of the Byzantine Empire, 312-1453*, p. 87.

[72] PAULUS SILENTIARIUS, *Descriptio Ecclesiae Sanctae Sophiae*, 764-802, *PG* 86/2:2148B-2150A; PAULUS SILENTIARIUS, *Descriptio S. Sophiae*, 764-802, pp. 37-38; C. MANGO, *The Art of the Byzantine Empire, 312-1453*, pp. 88-89.

on the pavement, and with images of a profane nature[73], representing scenes of hunting or fishing, fruit trees and plants, birds and animals or aquatic landscapes, a favorite theme being the *Nile*[74] (fig. 7). The descriptions made by the rhetorician Choricius of this type of images executed in the churches of Saint Sergius[75] and Saint Stephen[76] in the 6th century are confirmed today by archaeological discoveries in the Middle East and beyond. As for the reason why, in the period of the V-VIII centuries, this type of images was used to decorate the churches, researchers' opinions are divided. While some believe that their role was purely decorative, others affirm the existence, in a Christian context, of a meaning, if not several, that refers to the teaching of the Christian faith. According to the latter, the representation of the Nile, either anthropomorphic or of an aquatic landscape, would refer to the Garden of Eden, the Nile being considered one of the four rivers of Heaven. Scenes of this type would therefore induce the idea of earthly paradise. A second meaning, considering the role of water, and of the Nile in particular, for the fruitfulness of the earth, would be that of the richness of the fruits that people receive through divine providence[77]. The same meanings could be attributed to trees laden with fruit, in which birds sing, or to flowers and plants, and even panels with animals. However, beyond the possible meanings that some researchers identify, the source texts show that the role of these representations was rather a decorative-aesthetic one, of delight or pleasure to look at, as it appears from the records of St. Nilus of Sinai ("so that to delight the eye in the house of God")[78] and of Choricius ("what a splendid, what a delightful sight", "this delightful sight")[79].

The end of the 7th century recorded the enrichment of Christian iconography with a new theme, that of the *Ecumenical Councils*. A. Grabar is of the opinion that this theme appeared in Constantinople, shortly after the end of the VI Ecumenical Council (680-681), and that it is due to the emperor Justinian II (685-695 and 705-711)[80], the images of the synods being represented both in the Imperial Palace and in the famous Milion, the place from which the roads to all the provinces of the Empire left, up to its edges, but also beyond them, as well as in churches. According to him, it was from Milion, the tribune from which the emperors made known, *urbi et orbi*, the confession of faith they supported[81], that the theme of the six synods would have been taken over and figured in the mosaic in the Church of the Nativity in Bethlehem[82]. The date of the appearance of this new theme is, however, rather subsequent to the conclusion of the Second Trulan Council in Constantinople (691-

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[73] A se vedea, în acest sens, Janine BALTY, *Mosaïques antiques du Proche-Orient, chronologie, iconographie, interprétation*, Annales littéraires de l'Université de Besançon, Paris, 1995.

[74] Anne-Marie GUIMIER-SORBETS, "The Repesentation of the Nile on Mosaics: Various Context, Various Meanings", in: *Journal of Mosaic Research*, 16, 2023, pp. 239-250; Rachel HACHLILI, "The Iconographic Elements of Nilotic Scenes on Byzantine Mosaic Pavements in Israel", in: *Palestine Exploration Quarterly*, july, 1998, pp. 106-120; Tomasz POLAŃSKI, "The Nilotic Mosaic in the Saint Stephen's church of Gaza in Choricius' description", in: *Studies in Ancient Art and Civilisation*, 13, Kraków, 2009, pp. 169-180.

[75] C. MANGO, *The Art of the Byzantine Empire, 312-1453*, p. 62.

[76] C. MANGO, *The Art of the Byzantine Empire, 312-1453*, p. 72.

[77] A.-M. GUIMIER-SORBETS, "The Repesentation of the Nile on Mosaics:…" p. 246; R. HACHLILI, "The Iconographic Elements of Nilotic Scenes...", p. 118; T. POLAŃSKI, "The Nilotic Mosaic in the Saint Stephen's church of Gaza..", p. 177.

[78] S. NILUS ABBAS, *Epistolarum libri IV. LXI Olympiodoro eparcho*, PG 79:578D; C. MANGO, *The Art of the Byzantine Empire, 312-1453*, p. 33.

[79] C. MANGO, *The Art of the Byzantine Empire, 312-1453*, p. 69, 72.

[80] André GRABAR, *Iconoclasmul bizantin*, traducere, prefață și note de Daniel Barbu, Editura Meridiane, București, 1991, p. 110.

[81] A. GRABAR, *Iconoclasmul bizantin*, pp. 109-111.

[82] A. GRABAR, *Iconoclasmul bizantin*, pp. 113-114.

692) than the Sixth Ecumenical Council, as A. Grabar states[83], since the iconographic scheme of the Councils preserved in the Church of the Nativity in Bethlehem visualizes not only the six Ecumenical Synods, but also six local synods, which would suggest that it expresses iconographically the first two canons of this synod, in the first one being recalled and reaffirmed the teaching of faith established in the six Ecumenical Councils held until then, and in the second, the canons adopted both within the Ecumenical Councils and those of the local councils, the apostolic councils and those of the Holy Fathers of the Church were received and strengthened[84].

Also, perhaps we should not exclude the hypothesis that the cycle of ecumenical and local councils appeared in the Church of the Nativity in Bethlehem, precisely as a confession of faith and a silent reminder of the dogmas and canons of the right faith in a Muslim environment hostile to Christians, and from here the imperial authority from Constantinople took over the theme only in the part that expresses the true faith established in the six Ecumenical Councils and represented it in the Imperial Palace and in Milion as a public affirmation of the faith that the emperor officially supported and which it had to be accepted by all his subjects. It is certain that, if in the Church of the Nativity in Bethlehem the cycle of synods had an exclusively confessional character of the right faith, the one in the Imperial Palace and in Milion had an exclusive character of affirming the religious policy of the emperor, thus explaining the fact that the emperor Philippicus Bardanes (711-713), who was a Monothelite, erased from the Imperial Palace the image of the 6th synod, which condemned the Monothelite heresy, and Constantine V (741-775) erased from Milion the entire cycle of Ecumenical Councils, replacing with images of chariot races from the Constantinopolitan hippodrome[85].

As for the iconographic representation of this theme, as shown by A. Grabar, each synod is symbolized by a *ciborium*, on the Holy Table with the Holy Gospel, and the section of the church, which has a domed roof. In Bethlehem, due to the aniconic religion of the Muslim occupier and the legislation stemming from it, which forbade any representation of any being, the characters are missing, the synod being identified by the inscription of the name of the city where it took place above the dome of the church and by an inscription that summarizes the decisions of the synod[86]. In Constantinople, the iconography is distinguished by the presence of the main actors who participated in the synod in question, the emperors and bishops, gathered in a solemn session of the synod under the presidency of the emperor[87].

Despite the flourishing period that Christian sacred art experienced in this era, iconoclastic ideas and manifestations did not completely disappear from the life of the Church. In the first half of the 6th century, in an epistle addressed to his suffragan Julian of Atramytos, to whom he answered several questions, Bishop Hypatius of Ephesus (531-538) was forced to justify the prohibition of the second commandment of the Decalogue, on the one hand, and, on the other, the presence of holy icons in churches and their veneration[88].

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[83] A. GRABAR, *Iconoclasmul bizantin*, p. 113.

[84] Henry R. PERCIVAL (ed), *The Seven Ecumenical Councils of the Undivided Church. Their Canons and Dogmatic Decrees, Together with the Canons of All the Local Synods which have Received Ecumenical Acceptance…*, pp. 359-361; Arhid. Ioan N. FLOCA, *Canoanele Bisericii Ortodoxe, note și comentarii*, Sibiu, 1992, pp. 97-101.

[85] A. GRABAR, *Iconoclasmul bizantin*, pp. 110-111.

[86] A. GRABAR, *Iconoclasmul bizantin*, pp. 103, 107.

[87] A. GRABAR, *Iconoclasmul bizantin*, p. 117.

[88] C. MANGO, *The Art of the Byzantine Empire, 312-1453*, pp. 116-117; Paul J. ALEXANDER, "Hypatius of Ephesus: A Note on Image Worship in the Sixth Century", in: *Harvard Theological Review*, vol. 45, no. 3(Jul. 1952), pp. 177-184.

Hypatius of Ephesus argued the necessity of holy images in the church through economy, highlighting their didactic role in catechizing Christians who are imperfect in knowledge, who, through the medium of sight, can more easily understand the lives of the saints and follow their example. To strengthen his position, the author invokes the example of the prophet Moses, who ordered that the figures of Cherubim be woven into the curtain that separated the Holy from the Holy of Holies and that on the lid of the Ark of the Testimony there should be two cherubs beaten from pure gold (Is 36: 33; 37: 7-9).

Although iconoclastic attitudes and ideas were much more widespread in the East, where iconoclasm started, moreover, Ephesus being one of the centres directly involved in the outbreak of this phenomenon, through bishop Theodosius (729-754), they did not absent from the West as well, although they manifested themselves on a smaller scale. Thus, at the end of the 6th century, Bishop Serenus of Marseilles (595-600) ordered the removal of icons from churches, being the first bishop to take such a measure. Pope Gregory the Great (590-604) disapproved of this measure and, in an epistle, he addressed to him, he wrote that

"you should not have destroyed what had been placed in the churches, not for worship, but only to be worshipped. It is one thing to worship an icon, and another thing to learn from this icon before which he addresses his prayers. What the Scripture is for those who know how to read, that is the icon for the ignorant, who learn from these icons the path to follow. The icon is the book of those who do not know how to read"[89].

5. THE BIRTH OF THE ORTHODOX ICONOGRAPHIC CANON

The iconoclastic attitude of Bishop Serenus of Marseilles was however singular at that time, the icon already having its place, role and importance in the life of the Church well established, which, moreover, were consecrated by the Church through canons 73, 82 and 100 of the Quinisext Synod from the years 691-692, also known in history as the Second Trulan Council, after the name of the Trullo room of the imperial palace where it took place.

In Canon 73 the Church referred to the representation of the Holy Cross, deciding that the sign of the Holy Cross should no longer be represented on the ground in order not to be trampled on and thus profaned by passers-by: "Since the life-giving cross has shewn to us Salvation, we should be careful that we render due honour to that by which we were saved from the ancient fall. Wherefore, in mind, in word, in feeling giving veneration (προσκύνησιν) to it, we command that the figure of the cross, which some have placed on the floor, be entirely removed therefrom, lest the trophy of the victory won for us be desecrated by the trampling under foot of those who walk over it. Therefore those who from this present represent on the pavement the sign of the cross, we decree are to be cut off"[90].

Much more important for the history of sacred art and for Christian iconology is Canon 82, by which the Church ordered that the Savior Jesus Christ should no longer be represented symbolically, as a lamb, but in his human form: "In some pictures of the venerable icons, a lamb is painted to which the Precursor points his finger, which is received as a type of grace, indicating beforehand through the Law, our true Lamb, Christ our God. Embracing therefore the ancient types and shadows as symbols of the truth, and patterns given to the Church, we prefer «grace and truth», receiving it as the fulfilment of the Law. In

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[89] S. GREGOIRE, *Epistole*, l. IX, epist. ix, *PL* 77:949; C. J. HEFELE, *Histoire des conciles*, tome III, deuxième partie, l. XVIII, chp. I, 332, Paris, 1910, p. 610.

[90] C. J. HEFELE, *Histoire des conciles*, tome III, première partie, l. XVII, 327, Paris, 1909, p. 572; Henry R. PERCIVAL, "The Canons of the Council in Trullo; often called The Quinesext Council, A. D. 692", in: *The Seven Ecumenical Councils of the Undivided Chrch…*, p. 398; Arhid. Ioan N.FLOCA, *Canoanele Bicericii Ortodoxe, note şi comentarii*, p.147; L. USPENSKY, *Teologia icoanei*, p. 57.

order therefore that «that which is perfect» may be delineated to the eyes of all, at least in coloured expression, we decree that the figure in human form of the Lamb who taketh away the sin of the world, Christ our God, be henceforth exhibited in images, instead of the ancient lamb, so that all may understand by means of it the depths of the humiliation of the Word of God, and that we may recall to our memory his conversation in the flesh, his passion and salutary death, and his redemption which was wrought for the whole world"[91].

Interpreting this canon, Leonid Uspensky opines that the Church did not limit itself "to the suppression of symbols and the formulation of the dogmatic principle that lies at the foundation of the direct image", but showed, indirectly, that in order to become an icon the image must capture not only the historical fact, but also the divine glory of the One who became incarnate, suffered, died, but also rose again, saving man from sin. The same theologian believes that the end of the canon represents the key to the symbolism of sacred art, which shows that "the teaching of the Church is not only expressed through *the subject* of the image, but also through *the manner* of treating that subject". He then defines *the manner* as the "pictorial language" adopted by the Church to express through a "historical image a spiritual and eschatological reality"[92].

Sorin Dumitrescu is of the opinion that the Russian theologian discovered "in the depths of this conciliar decision, the manifesto of modernity", that is, the *modal* era or the sign of *how* inaugurated by canon 82, through which, paradoxically, the painter gained freedom of expression on the condition of respecting *the authenticity* of the face of the painted One, "an appropriation without historical precedent" on the art market, and shows that according to this principle the Savior must be painted in such a way that "in every iconic detail of the human appearance of the Lord *the seal of the divine idiom can be understood*"[93].

From the statements of the two it follows that this Canon 82 of the Quinisext Synod marks the beginning of *the iconographic canon*, defined by Uspensky as "a certain criterion of the liturgical quality of the image [...] a principle that allows us to judge whether an image is an icon or not. He establishes the conformity between the icon and the Holy Scripture, defining the basis of this conformity, i.e. the authenticity of the transmission of the divine revelation in the historical reality with the means of what we call symbolic realism and in which the Kingdom of God is effectively revealed"[94].

Knowing and respecting the iconographic canon requires knowing the three essential aspects that define it, namely *liturgical*, *conciliar* and *ecclesiological*, which the icon must illustrate at once in order to be considered a canonical representation[95].

According to Sorin Dumitrescu, the pattern of the icon is in a reciprocal relationship with the iconographic canon, which he defines as the practical norm of the canon, while the canon represents the doctrinal norm of the pattern[96]. In turn, the icon's pattern figure embodies the icon's orthodoxy or the icon's quality of being orthodox and a orthodox model, therefore the pattern figure "fixes the orthodox way of the icon, the righteous strategies to which the icon's ways of asserting and preserving its righteous orthodoxy obey"[97]. The

[91] C. J. HEFELE, *Histoire des conciles*, tome III, première partie, l. XVII, 327, p. 573; H. R. PERCIVAL, "The Canons of the Council in Trullo…", p. 401; Arhid. I. N.FLOCA, *Canoanele Bicericii Ortodoxe*, p. 151; L. USPENSKY, *Teologia icoanei...*, p. 57.
[92] L. USPENSKY, *Teologia icoanei...*, pp. 60-61.
[93] Sorin DUMITRESCU, *Noi şi Icoana*, Ed. Anastasia, 2010, p. 95.
[94] L. USPENSKY, *Teologia icoanei...*, p. 62.
[95] S. DUMITRESCU, *Noi şi Icoana*, p. 104.
[96] S. DUMITRESCU, *Noi şi Icoana*, p. 92.
[97] S. DUMITRESCU, *Noi şi Icoana*, p. 112.

author exemplifies his statement by showing that from the 14th century, probably after the Church accepted the Palamite doctrine of uncreated divine energies, the divine light shared and experienced by the saints is symbolized in the icon by the application of "flashes" on the face and on their clothes[98].

If through Canon 82 it abolished "shadows and figures" in favour of the "human face" of the Incarnate Word, thus speaking out against "Jewish immaturity", through Canon 100 the Church manifested itself against "pagan immaturity", stopping any representations that provoke "toward the attachments of shameful pleasures":

"«Let thine eyes behold the thing which is right», orders Wisdom, «and keep thine heart with all care». For the bodily senses easily bring their own impressions into the soul. Therefore we order that henceforth there shall in no way be made pictures, whether they are in paintings or in what way so ever, which attract the eye and corrupt the mind, and incite it to the enkindling of base pleasures. And if any one shall attempt to do this he is to be cut off "[99].

It is unlikely that by this canon the Church had in mind images existing in churches, in which some characters were represented impudently, sensually, scantily clad, which would have scandalized the faithful and would have called into question the sanctity and necessity of the icon, so as it would happen in the Catholic West after the twelfth century through the fall into naturalism and sensualism. As L. Uspensky states, this canon shows that "the Church demands of its members a certain asceticism not only in life, but also in the art that both reflects and influences this life"[100].

CONCLUSIONS

The veneration of the icons of the saints led, over time, to some exaggerated practices. Thus, some very wealthy Christians ended up weaving images of saints onto their clothes, a practice apparently of Egyptian origin, which was probably motivated by the same belief in the *apotropaic* power of the icon[101] as in the case reported by Blessed Theodoret of Cyrus in the *Life of the Saint Teodor the Stylite*[102]. Bishop Asterius of Amasia fought, since the 4th century, the "vanity" of Christians who abused their wealth, embroidering on their clothes the face of Christ the Redeemer or the Holy Apostles, or miracles performed by Christ[103], thus confirming the existence of this practice quite widespread. The custom was perpetuated in Byzantine society, two centuries later being captured even iconographically. In the 6th century mosaic from the church of San Vitale in Ravenna, which has as its theme

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[98] S. DUMITRESCU, *Noi și Icoana*, p. 114.

[99] C. J. HEFELE, *Histoire des conciles*, tome III, première partie, l. XVII, 327, p. 575; H. R. PERCIVAL, "The Canons of the Council in Trullo…", p. 407; Arhid. I. N. FLOCA, *Canoanele Bicericii Ortodoxe,* pp. 159-160; L. USPENSKY, *Teologia icoanei...*, p. 62.

[100] L. USPENSKY, *Teologia icoanei...*, p. 62.

[101] Bente KIILERICH, "The State of Early Christian Iconography in the Twenty-First Century", in: *Studies in Iconography*, 36, 2015, p. 109.

[102] THEODORETUS, CYRENSIS EPISCOPUS, *Historia Religiosa seu Ascetica Vivendi Ratio*, XXVI, Symeones, *PG* 82:1473-1474A; THEODORET OF CYRRHUS, *A History of the Monks of Syria*, XXVI. Symeon (Stylites), 11, Translated with an Introduction and Notes by R. M. Price, coll. *Cistercian Studies Series*, 88, Cistercian Publications, 2008, p. 165; C. MANGO, *The art of the Byzantine Empire, 312-1453*, p. 41; FERICITUL TEODORET, episcopul Cirului, "Viața Sfântului Simeon Stâlpnicul", 11, în *Viețile sfinților pustnici din Siria*, traducere din limba greacă și note de Dr. Adrian Tănăsescu-Vlad, Ed. Institutului Biblic și de Misiune al Bisericii Ortodoxe Române, București, 2001, p. 146.

[103] ASTERII AMASEAE EPISCOPI, *Homiliae*, I. *Homilia in locum Evangelii secundum Lucam, de divine et Lazaro*, *PG* 40:167-168; ASTERIUS OF AMASIA, "The Rich Man and Lazarus", in: *Ancient Sermons for Modern Times by Asterius, Bishop of Amasia, circa 375-405, A.D.*, translated by Galusha Anderson and Edgar J. Goodspeed, The Pilgrim Press, New York, Boston, Chicago, 1904, pp. 24-25.

the procession of the empress Teodora, the *Adoration of the Magi* is represented on the edge of her garment (see fig. 6). Another exaggerated practice, recorded in the miracles performed by Saints Cosmas and Damian, consisted in scraping some particles from the material from which the icon was made, mixing them with water and consuming them to cure diseases[104]. To these is added the replacement of the godfather at the baptism of an infant with the icon of a saint by some Christians, a practice recorded and, at the top, praised by Saint Theodore the Studite, the defender of the veneration of holy icons[105].

It would seem that, along with the other religious and doctrinal causes, such as the influences of the Paulician and Messalian sects, of the Monophysite heretics, who repudiated icons, but also of the Jews and Muslims, who considered the veneration of icons idolatry, these exaggerated practices, mentioned above, and the abusive use of holy images by depicting them on the various materials and objects sold as souvenirs in the holy places where Christians went on pilgrimages or even on the coins issued by the Byzantine imperial authority finally led to the public outbreak of iconoclastic attitudes in the 7th century.

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[5]   5. S. DIONYSIUS AREOPAGITA, *De coelesti hierarchia*, II, 1, *PG* 3.

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[104] MANSI, *Sacrorum conciliorum nova et amplissima collectio*, vol. 13, col. 67; C. MANGO, *The Art of the Byzantine Empire, 312-1453*, p. 139.

[105] S. THEODORUS STUDITA, *Epistolarum liber I, XVII, Joanni Spathario. De imagine S. Demetrii, in baptismo adhibita pro susceptore*, PG 99:961; C. MANGO, *The Art of the Byzantine Empire, 312-1453*, pp. 174-175.

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fig. 2. Rabbula Gospels, Biblioteca Medicea Laurenziana, Cod. Plut. I, 56, fol. 13v

fig. 3. Trier Apocalypse, Revelation, XIII century

fig. 4. Thessaloniki Hosios David Church, Theophany

fig. 5. Apse Mosaic of Saints Cosmas and Damian Church, Rome

fig. 6. Theodora Imperatrice, San Vitale in Ravenna, VI century

fig. 7. Umm ar-Rasas, Church of St. Stephen, 756 year, central mosaic

THE IMPACT OF ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE (AI) ON SPIRITUAL LIFE, FROM THE PERSPECTIVE OF CHRISTIAN ORTHODOXY

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ABSTRACT

Artificial Intelligence, as a manifestation of human ingenuity, has fundamentally transformed many aspects of our daily life. The present article aims to explore the multifaceted implications of AI on the spiritual life of humankind, and the define of the personal identity, specifically from the perspective of Christian Orthodoxy. While AI offers unprecedented advantages in various sectors, its intersection with spirituality poses both challenges and opportunities. This exploration addresses the shifting paradigms of belief, the human desire for connection or escape from daily reality, and the evolving definitions of soul, purpose, and spiritual ascendence.

Keywords: *Artificial Intelligence; spirituality; identity; virtual reality; time; transcendence; transhumanism; bioetics;*

INTRODUCTION

With the exponential development of technology in the last nearly 50 years, concerns about the moral principles of its use have gradually emerged, leading to the creation of a new branch of science, generally called Bioethics. Governmental institutions, academic environments, and, not least, the Church have attempted to formulate certain moral principles to guide the ethical application of new discoveries, such as in vitro fertilization, organ transplants, implants, nanotechnology, connection to virtual environments, etc.

Appearing in America in the 1970s, in a context characterized by moral pluralism and changing ideas about the nature of moral authority, bioethics asserted the need to develop a set of principles and a method for making morally acceptable decisions for all.

Since its inception in the United States, bioethics has been marked by the commitment of theologians or Christian philosophers. All, absolutely all of those we consider the founders of this discipline belonged to these categories. Catholics Richard A. McCormick (1922-2000), André Hellegers (1926-1979), Edmund Pellegrino (1920-2013), Daniel Callahan (1930-2019), H. Tristam Engelhard (converted to Orthodoxy in 1991), and Protestants Joseph Francis Fletcher (1905-1991), Robert Paul Ramsey (1913-1988), James Gustafson (1925-2021) played an essential role in the emergence of scholarly discourse in bioethics.

In 1969, Daniel Callahan founded the Hastings Center, and in 1971, André Hellegers became the founding director of the Kennedy Institute of Ethics at Georgetown University. The first Center for Bioethics in Europe was the Borja Institute of Bioethics of the Jesuits in Catalonia. It's also worth noting that one of the foundational documents of biomedical and

behavioral research ethics involving human subjects - the Belmont Report - was developed by Christian bioethicists[1].

As AI becomes an increasingly integrated part of our daily lives, it is imperative to consider its impact on the deeper dimensions of human existence. This paper explores the intersection of AI with human spiritual, ethical, philosophical, and religious considerations, focusing on the concepts of virtual reality (VR), personal identity, and transhumanism. The technological revolution and its integration into our lives raised fundamental questions about what means to be human, our unique spiritual journey, and the ethical considerations surrounding science.

The spiritual life of humankind, traditionally the realm of religion and philosophy, now confronts a new dimension: a world where the boundaries between machine and human blur. Humanity's spiritual journey has always been influenced by its understanding of God, His creation – the cosmos, and its place in it. But in light of new scientific discoveries, new philosophical concepts such as transhumanism, posthumanism, relativism, consumerism, etc., also emerge. For example, the Transhumanism, a movement that aims to transcend the limitations of the human condition, often through technological means, it has been very fashionable in recent years. AI plays a crucial role in this vision, particularly in endeavors like brain-computer interfaces or digital mind uploads.

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As we embrace the future, it is crucial to anchor our explorations in spiritual, ethical, and philosophical frameworks that respect both: the amarvels of technology and the profoundness of human spirit.

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[1] Dr. Vasile Astărăstoae, *Bioetica într-o societate orfană de Dumnezeu (III)*, *(Bioethics in a godless society)* from: https://poruncaiubirii.agaton.ro/articol/4606/bioetica-intr-o-societate-orfana-de-dumnezeu-iii, accessed on 28.01.2024.

As a gift of God, human intelligence is a universe of cognitive processes, emotional understanding, intuition, creativity, and adaptability. One the other hand, AI, as a creation of human ingenuity, is a tool, designed to simulate human-like thinking processes using algorithms and computational models. Rooted in data processing, it operates based on predefined criteria, learning mechanisms, and optimization techniques.

1. THE PSYCHOLOGICAL DESIRE TO ESCAPE FROM DAILY REALITY AND PERSONAL IDENTITY

From the ancient tales told by campfires to the captivating world of movies and now to the immersive experience of VR, the need for escapism has been a recurrent theme throughout human history. This proclivity to escape can be seen as a response to the stresses of daily life and an innate desire to experience alternative realities. Before delving into VR, it is crucial to understand that escapism is not a new phenomenon. Historical practices like ritual dances, storytelling, theater, and later, radio, television, and now the internet, have served as escape mechanisms. These mediums allowed people to detach momentarily from their realities and lose themselves in a different world.

Everyday life brings about challenges, from mundane tasks to existential crises. Economic pressures, societal expectations, personal failures, and global events can contribute to stress and anxiety. The repetitive nature of everyday life can also be mentally exhausting, giving birth to the desire for something different or stimulating.

The allure of alternate worlds stems from the human desire for exploration, adventure, and the escape from physical limitations. However, the contrast between our ideal and real selves can create cognitive dissonance, leading to a desire for places where we can reinvent ourselves and explore new identities, often found in virtual worlds. VR provides a sense of belonging and community, enabling users to form relationships and find refuge, especially for those feeling alienated in the real world.

While VR offers comfort, the virtual-real divide can cause psychological distress due to the gap between virtual satisfaction and real-life dissatisfaction, worsening feelings of unhappiness, depression, and anxiety. Overuse of VR may affect cognitive function, distort perceptions of reality, blur virtual and real boundaries, and potentially hinder decision-making, problem-solving, and critical thinking skills. Relying on virtual worlds can challenge societal structures and norms, redefining community, relationships, and individual roles. The merging of reality and virtuality could reshape social interactions, giving rise to new social paradigms.

In the virtual space, the phenomenon of religion could not be absent. Shortly after its emergence, cyberspace became a mission territory for almost all churches and religious groups, a place where any religious idea and belief has the chance to be known and embraced by an impressive number of people. Between redefining the virtual space as sacred and demonizing it as a source of secularization of religious manifestos, communities of believers who have chosen a form of computer-mediated communication have found strategies to adapt to the new conditions and have developed at a pace worthy of the information age. In the year 2000, more people were using the Internet for spiritual and religious purposes than for banking operations or other services[2]. The concept of a virtual community is not new, but the emergence and growth of information technology have led to

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[2] E. Larsen, *Cyber Faith How Americans Pursue Religion,* from: *https://www.pewresearch.org/internet/2001/12/23/cyberfaith-how-americans-pursue-religion-online/,* accessed on 05.01.2024.

the proliferation of this reality so much, so that there is increasing talk of a mass exodus to a vast and still insufficiently explored territory. This territory promises to dissolve the boundaries between the imaginary and the real, creating new forms of human interaction. The demographic explosion of the virtual space has manifested itself in the emergence of an impressive number of diverse online communities, with a continuous influx of members, accessing them and tremendous potential for development.

From creating an escape from everyday life to establishing support groups for patients with incurable diseases or facilitating the collaborative research efforts of expert groups, virtual communities have demonstrated their applicability in a variety of domains of individual and social existence. The Metaverse is a challenge that will fundamentally change our perception of the world. This new form of VR, also known as augmented reality (AR), is taking shape, evolving rapidly, and will become the new mode of expression for the internet, seamlessly integrating into real life in the very near future. Does it produce anxieties and fears? Certainly! Are they justified? Very likely, yes! Will it have benefits or harm us? It's hard to answer. What is certain is that there is no turning back, so adapting to and prudently managing the new challenges of the digital universe are the only alternatives.

Most virtual experiences are visual in nature. However, technological advancements now offer the possibility of complex simulations that engage other senses (such as somato-kinesthetic senses that continuously inform the central nervous system about the body's position, muscle contractions, and tactile sensations), transforming virtual reality into AR. Some technologies provide mechanical feedback to motion, creating a complete mental experience or tricking the brain and senses, making the synthetic world, in terms of perception, similar to reality.

The main issue is that it is becoming increasingly difficult for the human brain to distinguish between digitally complex sensory events and truly real ones. Consequently, managing both worlds - the real and the virtual - becomes an ongoing challenge for the nervous system, leading to disturbances and adverse effects. Specifically, the question arises as to whether the human brain will be able to differentiate between the virtual universe it perceives with its senses and the real one. Furthermore, virtual experiences trigger real physiological reactions. There are changes in breathing and heart rate, blood pressure fluctuations, the presence of stress as a physical-chemical phenomenon in the body, and the experienced emotions are real, leading to the release of neurotransmitters. All of these effects are more intense when an individual's sensory involvement is more complex.

Virtual reality and augmented reality can have long-lasting psychological effects because the brain's perception of digital experiences is identical to that of the real world, altering how the physical world is understood. The observed negative physical effects of using virtual and augmented reality include:

1. Vision impairment
2. Spatial-temporal disorientation
3. Postural instability
4. Physical discomfort
5. Nausea and/or dizziness
6. Seizures
7. Accidents (broken bones and ligaments)
8. Severe fatigue
9. Headaches
10. Insomnia

All these symptoms are collectively referred to as "cyber sickness" or "simulation sickness." Additionally, they can have an impact on emotions. If the physical symptoms resemble motion sickness in broad strokes, the effects of digital worlds generate significant, primarily negative consequences, especially on mental health, which are the main causes for concern.

A study conducted at Stanford University found that augmented reality experiences to which subjects were exposed altered people's interactions in the real world, even long after the AR session had ended. For instance, people refused to sit in an empty chair where they had previously seen an AR-generated avatar sitting. This intense behavior is what psychologists refer to as social inhibition, the difficulty of performing a task when they believe they are being observed. They also transferred characters, emotions, and feelings experienced in the digital environment into the real world[3].

A pattern of repetitive, passive thinking centered on virtual situations was observed, as well as an increased brain response to stimuli that would be neutral in the real world, along with lower cognitive performance due to longer reaction times.

Regarding the potentially negative effects that disrupt the logical thinking patterns of virtual and augmented reality, these concerns have been present from the beginning. However, it was considered that most of the symptoms of cyber sickness are mild and quickly disappear once virtual experiences cease. Content creators and technology developers warn users about immediate side effects, which can be compared to motion sickness and possible accidents, but the long-term psychological effects of virtual and augmented reality are often overlooked.

Other psychological effects include the acceptance of violent behavior, heightened competitiveness, along with chronic nervous overstimulation leading to desensitization to violence and reduced empathy - a deeply human trait - among individuals who extensively use virtual reality. All of these factors cumulatively contribute to a shift in personality and self-identification with game characters.

Another set of negative effects observed are related to reduced satisfaction with real-life events - where strength, abilities, and achievements are inferior to those allowed by the digital world. This is associated with anxiety, depression, and a tendency to become less adaptable to real life, limiting the ability to focus on important aspects of real life. All these negative effects are significantly amplified in adolescents and children whose brains are still in the developmental stage[4]. An increasing pervasion of social networks into daily life has brought a considerable transformation in how individuals perceive, consume, and interact with digital content. A crucial aspect of this transformation involves the "scroll" technique, utilized ubiquitously across platforms, affecting users' perceptions and experience of time. With the advent and proliferation of social networks like Facebook, Instagram, YouTube, Tik Tok, and Twitter, users globally have embedded these platforms into their daily routines. A dominant interaction technique across these platforms is the infinite scroll, which allows users to continuously engage with an endless stream of content with a simple swipe or scroll of their device.

[3] Alex Shashkevich, *New Standford research examines how augmented reality affects people's behavior*, from: https://news.stanford.edu/2019/05/14/augmented-reality-affects-peoples-behavior-real-world/ , accessed on 18.01.2024.

[4] Silviana Pătrăşcanu, *Metaversul: Efectele Universului Digital*, *(The Metaverse: The Effects of the Digital Universe)* from: https://www.reginamaria.ro/articole-medicale/metaversul-efectele-universului-digital, accessed on 18.01.2024.

The anticipation of finding interesting content triggers the release of dopamine, a neurotransmitter associated with pleasure and reward. The rapid consumption of information may hinder users' ability to retain and process content effectively. This has implications for critical thinking, information recall, and the development of deep insights. This can lead to a disconnection from the physical world, affecting users' relationships, productivity, and overall well-being. The experience can contribute to heightened levels of anxiety, stress, and a fear of missing out (FOMO).

This technique, while facilitating a seamless and frictionless user experience, has implications regarding our perceptual and experiential engagement with time. The seemingly unending cascade of content ensures that users remain engaged. A blend of varied content – images, texts, and videos – creates a rich, captivating experience, diluting any temporal benchmarks that signal the passage of **time**. Infinite scroll technology enables instant access to a plethora of content, fostering a desire for immediacy and gratification that is perpetually satisfied by a never-ending content feed.

Time holds a unique and profound significance in religious traditions across the world. In the Orthodox Christian tradition, time is not merely a measure of chronological progression; it is a vessel through which believers experience their relationship with God. Orthodox Christianity views time as a sacred reality, reflecting the divine plan and presence. The notion of time as a gift from God is deeply rooted in the Orthodox theological framework. Creation itself is seen as an act occurring within time, and God's providence unfolds through history. Thus, every moment is imbued with divine significance, inviting believers to discern God's presence in the unfolding of their lives.

Orthodox theology distinguishes between two types of time: "Chronos" and "Kairos". Chronos represents chronological time, while Kairos refers to a moment of divine opportunity or encounter. Kairos moments are those instances when the eternal breaks into the temporal, offering the potential for transformation. Orthodox spirituality emphasizes the need to be vigilant and receptive to these Kairos moments, recognizing them as invitations from God to draw nearer. Ascetic practices are integral to the Orthodox tradition, and are often seen as means to redeem time. Through fasting, prayer, almsgiving, and other ascetic disciplines, believers strive to cultivate self-control and detachment from the distractions of the world. This ascetic ethos transforms one's relationships with time by reorienting priorities toward the eternal, and cultivating a sense of inner stillness.

Central to this understanding is the belief that God is both transcendent and immanent, existing beyond the constraints of time and space while actively engaging with creation within these parameters. This theological foundation underscores the idea that time is a creation of God, a dimension through which humanity can experience divine presence and purpose.

The seven sacraments of the Orthodox Church, including Baptism, Chrismation, Eucharist, Confession, Holy Unction, Matrimony, and Ordination, are significant markers of time in the life of an Orthodox Christian. Each sacrament represents a sacred moment of encounter with God's Grace, guiding believers on their journey toward Salvation. In these sacraments, time is transformed into a vehicle of divine communion, fostering spiritual growth and unity with God.

"Chronos is imbued with meaning by Kairos, and Kairos is nothing more than a stop, a way station, from which we can survey the past and look out onto the future. Without Kairos, time flows on without meaning, sunk in death, and nothing that happens within it survives. In all of creation, only the human being can change time into Kairos. The

prerogative and responsibility of the freedom given to him or to her by the Creator is to enter through time, even if only briefly (as happens in the Divine Liturgy), into the presence and foretaste of the Eschaton, that which will not be lost together with all the useless things we carry around us in this life"[5].

Beyond altering the perception and the way time is spent, virtual reality induces a depreciation of personal identity. In the online environment, a person can assume any kind of identity, change their gender, declare abilities and qualities they do not possess. This mirage of personal improvement has no counterpart in the real world. We desire to look our best, according to the models we see in the mass media, and if this does not happen in real life, we take refuge in the virtual one. Orthodox Christianity teaching places crucial emphasis on the unique value of the human person.

Personal improvement is more related to spiritual progress, the becoming of the human being in its entirety, body and soul. But the main goal is spiritual perfection, the salvation of the soul, considering the transient nature of physical life. On the other hand, when a person truly wishes to escape from the reality of their daily life, Christianity offers them the alternative of retreat into monastic life, characterized by the desire for self-transcendence, continuous spiritual progress, through asceticism and prayer. The great historian of religions, Mircea Eliade, after a study trip to India, said with nostalgia: "I know that there is somewhere in the mountains, a cave that awaits me!" Others connect their aspiration to a space considered perfect, an island, a forest, or any other place where they have felt spiritually fulfilled. Often, spiritual inclinations towards philosophy and spirituality have been related to the contemplation of the beauty of nature and withdrawal from the tumult of large urban centers.

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Orthodox Christianity teaches that time is not limited to the temporal world but extends into eternity. The ultimate goal of an Orthodox Christian's life is theosis, the process

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[5] John Zizioulas, "*Response to the Academic Laudatio and the honors bestowed to him during his reception as Fellow and Honorary Member of the Volos Academy for Theological Studies*", October 28-30,2011, from: publicorthodoxy.org/2023/02/16/Kairos-of-john-zizioulas/, accessed on 05,01,2024.

of becoming likeness with God. Time is seen as a journey towards this union, a pilgrimage through which believers draw closer to the eternal reality of God's presence. The Orthodox perspective on time invites individuals to live in anticipation of the eternal life promised by Christ. Understanding the value of time in Orthodoxy offers insights into the spiritual richness of this tradition and its relevance in a contemporary world marked by hurriedness, superficiality, distraction, and the desire to escape from reality. It reminds us, that time, when embraced in a spiritually meaningful way, can lead us towards the timeless and eternal presence of God.

Another danger resulting from the excessive use of the internet is related to the privacy of each person's private life. Although they believe they are a user of a "free" service, their profile is carefully monitored based on the choices they make during each online session, stored in a vast database, and targeted to become a loyal, ideal, and dependent consumer. Based on this profile, they can be subliminally influenced in the decisions they make, whether it's online shopping, participating in legislative elections, or adopting persuasively circulated mainstream opinions. This leads to a change in mentalities, moral values, and most often, not in a positive way. A person can lose their moral compass, traditions, values, and their spiritual and personal identity, transforming into just another individual, a mere binary number.

The Christian tradition places great emphasis on promoting and understanding the concept of personhood. This concept first emerged in the 4th century when the Cappadocian Fathers had to differentiate between two synonymous terms: nature (ousia) and hypostasis (ipostas) in order to defend both the consubstantiality between the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit and the uniqueness of God. The term "person" (prosopon) at that time referred to the mask worn on stage by actors. It became accepted in its Latin form as a synonym for hypostasis due to the difficulties in translating the Greek distinction between ousia and hypostasis.

However, in the last two centuries, under the influence of various social contexts and philosophical currents, the focus of this concept has shifted from the trinitarian realm to the anthropological one. More and more theologians are beginning to ponder what it means for a human being to be considered a person. The answer often comes with a new distinction between person and individual. The individual is merely a member of the human species, caught in the monotony of the struggle for survival and selfishness. In contrast, the person is unique, irreplaceable, and spiritual.

The concept of personhood must be understood on two levels: a triadological one and an anthropological one. On one hand, there is the existence of an absolute Person God, and on the other hand, there is the human as a personal existence. Under the sign of this personalist theology, a bridge is created, an interpersonal relationship between God and humanity. Relationship and communion become constitutive of human nature, and in this way, humanity reflects the Image of God, who is Person and Communal Love. The icon of the Trinity and the manifestation of the intra-Trinitarian relationship, full of love, serve as the human model, and humanity is called to become a communal being.

The entire Orthodox anthropology affirms the biblical axiom that the basis of human existence lies in the Holy Trinity, which serves as the foundation and prototype of humanity. The holistic view of the human being as a person stands in contrast to the individualistic philosophy that fragments and atomizes human existence into isolated self-sufficiency, detached from others.

2. TRANSHUMANISM AND THE ORTHODOX CHRISTIAN RESPONSE TO BIOETHICAL PROBLEMS INVOLVED

Advancements in technology, especially those related to super-intelligent machines, have led some to foresee the emergence of Homo Sapiens 2.0: a technologically enhanced variant of humanity, endowed with capabilities markedly surpassing those of contemporary humans. In contemporary discussions regarding the future trajectory of AI, a substantial group of scientists from diverse fields – including cognitive science, neuroscience, data analysis, evolutionary biology, robotics, psychology, and theology – is seriously entertaining the idea that by the 2040-2050 decade, AI might match human intelligence across numerous professions. Many believe that once machines achieve human level intelligence, they will rapidly ascend to a super intelligent level, far exceeding human capabilities[6].

Concurrently, advancements in methods for human modification are anticipated to substantially advance and diversity, including genetically modified food to address hunger, AI-driven medical diagnosis, regularly developed bionic limbs, enhanced human cognitive abilities, and refined rational decision-making and mental state control. While only a minority of scientists foresee AI superseding and potentially extinguishing humans, the simultaneous progression of human augmentation and super intelligent machines has sparked speculations about the emergence of a posthuman era. Some even theorize that the rise of superintelligence may enable the uploading of human minds to sufficiently advanced computers, allowing them to persist indefinitely, even beyond the decay or intentional abandonment of their physical bodies.

For example: "Billionaire technologist Elon Musk announced at 31.01.2024 that his company Neuralink has implanted its brain-computer interface into a human for the first time. The recipient was "recovering well", Musk wrote on his social media platform X (formerly Twitter), adding that initial results showed "promising neuron spike detection"—a reference to brain cells' electrical activity.

Each wireless Neuralink device contains a chip and electrode arrays of more than 1,000 super-thin, flexible conductors that a surgical robot threads into the cerebral cortex. There the electrodes are designed to register thoughts related to motion. In Musk's vision, an app will eventually translate these signals to move a cursor or produce text—in short, it will enable computer control by thinking. "Imagine if Stephen Hawking could communicate faster than a speed typist or auctioneer. That is the goal," Musk wrote of the first Neuralink product, which he said is namen Telepathy. The U.S. Food and Drug Administration had approved human clinical trials for Neuralink in May 2023. And last September the company announced it was opening enrollment in its first study to people with quadriplegia. Neuralink's original ambitions, which Musk outlined when he founded the company in 2016, included meshing human brains with artificial intelligence. Its more immediate aims seem in line with the neural keyboards and other devices that people with paralysis already use to operate computers."[7].

Transhumanism and posthumanism represent intertwined philosophical schools of thought, both significantly anchored in the potential of technological advancements. Posthumanism envisions a subsequent phase in human evolution wherein technology interweaves with humanity, propelling us into a posthuman state. Conversely, transhumanism not only extols values that facilitate this transformative journey but also

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[6] Harari N. Yuval, *Homo Deus: A Brief History of Tomorrow*, New York, Random House, 2016, p.367-368.

[7] From: https://www.scientificamerican.com/article/elon-musks-neuralink-has-implanted-its-first-chip-in-a-human-brain-whats-next/, accessed at 07.04.2024.

strategically guides humanity toward posthumanism by leveraging technological possibilities. Essentially, while transhumanism delineates the pathway, posthumanism embodies the ultimate destination. Despite having their distinct roles and definitions, they fundamentally converge on a unified value system.

Unfortunately, the utilization of technology appears to be altering our neural patterns, subsequently influencing our behaviour. This varies from person to person, depending on their tendencies and temptations. We can identify three main realms: social networking (identity and relationships), gaming (addiction, aggression, and attention), and search engine (memory and learning). Thus, an emerging dialog between some transhumanists and Christians seeks to shape the future of humanity by integrating the basics commitments of transhumanism and Christianity.

Religion is summoned to engage in a profound debate about the concept of human augmentation, which involves the process by which Homo Sapiens alter themselves to become more powerful, intelligent, to lead longer, improved, and healthier lives. It also addresses the notion of human enhancement, which primarily revolves around moral enhancements, emphasizing human qualities like empathy and altruism, among others.

Being a Christian, I've long believed that applying biblical wisdom could offer solutions to social issues. Unfortunately, in today's discussions about science, technology, and society, religious perspectives are seldom included, and when they are, theological arguments rarely influence decisions. Sometimes, bias against religion hinders meaningful contributions, but in many cases, poorly articulated, contentious, or unclear theology only confuses crucial conversations. Consequently, I frequently observe discrepancies between pressing problems in need of solutions and my core beliefs. These discrepancies lead to challenges in reaching agreements among well-intentioned individuals on what actions are necessary or how to achieve common goals when they are identified.

There exists a distinction between the terms "transhuman" and "posthuman." "Transhuman" refers specifically to the "moderately augmented" human, meaning individuals who have undergone a limited number of technological "prosthetic" or "augmentative" enhancements that grant them some superior capabilities compared to those who remain "unaltered" humans. However, it's important to note that the transhuman stage is merely a transitional phase. The ultimate phase is envisioned as the "posthuman" stage, characterized by entities that are "completely augmented," vastly "superior to the human species in the evolutionary scale," equipped with "artificial superintelligence," and, as transhumanists like Nick Bostrom[8] hope for, potentially immortal.

The technology, as Bostrom argues, aims to persuade us that it will solve all of humanity's problems. Disease, poverty, environmental destruction, and suffering will be eradicated through the use of advanced nanotechnologies by super artificial intelligence. Superintelligence will indefinitely extend human life, halting aging through nanomedicine and/or providing a form of virtual "immortality" through the "uploading of the human mind" onto digital platforms. This will enable a tremendous increase in intellectual capacities. In an ideal world, humans will lead a life filled with joy and fulfilment, dedicated to their relationships with others, experiences, personal growth, and the pursuit of ideals. It's a perfect description of utopia.

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[8] Nick Bostrom, *Transhumanist Ethics,* from: https://nickbostrom.com/ethics/transhumanist.doc. Accessed on 20.01.2024.

The term "transhumanism" has a longer history, with its first usage dating back to 1957 by Julien Huxley, who used it to define the human will to surpass their own biological limitations and improve their living conditions through becoming "trans-human." For Huxley, transhumanism was a "religion without revelation," as evident in the title of his work. The desire to empower humans to self-transcend through technology and the ideal of modifying or reconfiguring humanity are part of a project aimed at giving technology a salvation role[9].

This is also the point at which Christian transhumanism diverges from technological transhumanism. In the United States of America, there is currently a Christian transhumanist association called the "Christian Transhumanist Association", which aims to justify transhumanist actions and research using Christian concepts. To join this association, consent to five statements is required:

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

2) We seek growth and progress in every dimension of our humanity: spiritual, physical, emotional, mental, and at all levels: individual, community, society, global.

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

4) We are guided by the greatest commandments of Jesus: "Love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul, mind, and strength... and love your neighbour as yourself."

5) We believe that the intentional use of technology, coupled with following Christ, will enable us to become more human across the entire spectrum of what it means to be creatures in the image of God[10].

Comparing it to traditional religions, we can assert that this ideological movement has the potential to become a religious project. The necessity to enhance, ameliorate, or change human nature reveals a profound discontent, expressed through the desire to improve it through genetic editing, human-machine symbiosis, or transferring consciousness into a computer. All of these aspects paint a picture of a technologically rooted, Manichaean-like gnosis that seeks to alter or annihilate humanity.

The Christian transhumanism is proposed as an alternative to atheistic, utilitarian transhumanism. This movement starts from the premise that the future will inevitably be shaped by technology, and that Christians should seize the opportunity to influence the direction transhumanism will take in the future. Therefore, Christians should engage in this movement now, guided by discernment and Christian moral principles. If the Church's purpose is to guide individuals and nations toward salvation, then it also has the responsibility to provide them with spiritual guidance in matters of ethics and bioethics in their daily lives, to prevent them from falling into the traps of an increasingly sophisticated and secularized technological environment.

Transhumanism advocates the idea that humans should enhance themselves to attain a superior state compared to their current ordinary state. Christian transhumanism holds the belief that humans were created in the image and for the purpose of infinite resemblance to

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[9] Cecilia Calheiros, *Aspiration métaphysiques et attentes eschatologiques chez les transhumanistes*, From: "Revue d'éthique et de théologie morale", nr. 302, 2019, p. 45.

[10] The Christian Transhumanist Affirmation, from: https://www.christiantranshumanism.org/, accesed on 24.01.2024.

God and have the duty to surpass their own limits imposed by the fall and strive for perfection – understood in a spiritual and moral sense, referred to as theosis in Orthodoxy, or "deification." The prefix "trans" can be accepted by Christian transhumanism if it is understood as a desire for humans to transition to a higher state without leaving behind their humanity, as post-humanists argue, but by acquiring a transformed, divinized human condition through grace. In this sense, this endeavour for self-transcendence has always been implicit in Christian teaching, but it is understood as surpassing the fallen, sinful condition through dispassion, purification, asceticism, and prayer, with the help of God rather than technology.

When referring to "beyond human," technological transhumanism strictly means the "augmentation" of humans through technologies that aim to "free" them from their humanity and help them become as "transhuman" as possible, in the sense of superhuman or nonhuman. In contrast, Christian transhumanism understands "beyond human" as the state of perfection achieved by the Saint who, with the help of God, ascended beyond the state of sin and attained deification through grace.

Advocating this teaching since the early days of Christianity, the Orthodox Christian ethos, although the most marginalized in global cultural battles, will not be silenced. In Orthodoxy, the presence of God endures. Orthodoxy does not share common ground with the dominant ethos, as it has ancient roots immune to secularist influence. For Orthodox Christians, morality is not a set of philosophical norms but a covenant between the living God and humanity, based on His revelation, His commandments, and a reality beyond the visible world[11].

The Christian understanding and the transhumanist perspective on what it means to be human are fundamentally distinct. In the transhumanist view, we are recognized as members of a species, albeit at an intermediate stage of evolution, and "true persons" are individuals capable of enhancing their own existence. In the Christian perspective, humans are distinct beings from animals because they were created in the image of God, and consequently, they possess absolute value, not relative, dependent on their physical attributes. A human person, created in the image of God, encompasses even the weak, the helpless, the poor, and all are precious in the eyes of God, even if they are incapable of "enhancing their own existence."

Human flourishing entails a life with harmonious relationships both with God and with fellow humans. To be in the image of God involves responsibilities for caring for the Earth with all its biological diversity and caring for one another in all human diversity. True humanity means a humble awareness of our dependence on God.

If we were to reinterpret transhumanism in a theological context, it can be seen as a call for humans to continually transcend themselves on a spiritual level, striving for perfection and holiness. The Saint transcends the biological human dimension, and at a certain level of spiritual perfection, they reach a mystical experience that involves access to God's uncreated energies. This is the moment of absolute encounter and communion, but this time, the initiative no longer belongs to humans, but to God. This is the true transhumanism, one in which humans never lose their deepest personal identity but manage to transcend their human condition tainted by sin.

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[11] Andrei Dârlău, *Schiță de critică morală a transhumanismului ateu din perspectiva bioeticii creștine a lui T.H. Engelhardt, (Outline of Moral Critique of Atheist Transhumanism from the Perspective of T.H. Engelhardt's Christian Bioethics)*, in „Altarul Reîntregirii", 2/2020, pp.102-103.

CONCLUSION

The technological revolution is of an immeasurable magnitude at this moment, and the excessive technologization of life is a warning signal about the potential dangers posed by such a phenomenon, especially considering that we are in the midst of these transformations, which truly have no precedent in human history. In the technological paradigm, humanity becomes "robotic" being "recreated" in the image and likeness of the computer, and such a transformation cannot be considered truly human.

The technological paradigm entails a fundamental shift in our relationship with God. The computer becomes the new God, as it is the core of the technological world, being omniscient, omnipresent, and omnipotent within this paradigm. Thus, humans are no longer called to follow God, to become godlike, but to become like computers, to become robotic.

This is not about demonizing or rejecting technology but making an effort to understand the nature and implications of current technological environments. It is a journey through which we can recognize the utopias of today's transhumanism and posthumanism, so that we can adopt and nurture a position based on spiritual discernment, even when engaging in theological reflections about the challenges in our technologized society.

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[10.] Yuval Harari N., *Homo Deus: A Brief History of Tomorrow*, New York, Random House, 2016, p.367-368.

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THE SOCIO-CULTURAL CONTEMPORANEITY AND ITS INTERACTION WITH CHRISTIAN MORALITY

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ABSTRACT

In the midst of a secularized ethos, the rejection of moral reference points often results in a misguided sense of liberation. This article delves into the conflict between Christian Orthodox morality and secular ethics, emphasizing the detrimental consequences of sidelining the Church's guidance. The modern individual may unknowingly stray into moral abysses, oblivious to the erosion of ethical foundations. The postmodern conception of freedom, which emerges from the rejection or avoidance of axiological alignment with the life of the Church, it is far from being liberating, leading to profound imbalance. The article extends its scrutiny to the contemporary globalist ideology, which contributes to the erosion of the ontological significance of human existence by downplaying the role of religion. It is also emphasized the urge of reestablishing a plenar connection with the Church's moral framework as the antidote to the perceived moral atrophy and the unfulfilling nature of a seemingly boundless but directionless postmodern freedom.

Keywords: *morality; ethics; secularization; liberty;*

INTRODUCTION

In the contemporary socio-cultural context, the individual grapples with profound tension, encountering difficulties in achieving genuine moral ideals. This obstacle partially stems from the process of secularization, which has diminished the influence of Christian moral traditions on the public ethos. The religious dimension of morality has been progressively marginalized, propelling morality towards a self-declared autonomy, in which it reaffirms an independent tradition apart from the religious framework[1].

The modern individual, aspiring to absolute moral independence, often disavows the religious ethical foundations that have served as guidance for many generations, suggesting that the Church, as a divine-human institution, should lean more towards humanity, granting greater heed to creation than to the Creator[2]. The result of this paradigm shift is a sense of alienation and disorientation, as despite one's desire to adopt an ethical stance, the individual no longer benefits from that traditional moral framework to guide them. Thus, the contemporary individual is in a continuous process of searching and redefining their values, confronting the challenges that autonomy and moral relativism bring to their ethical sphere.

Father Professor Nicolae Achimescu believes that contemporary secularized morality is the product of confusion between good and evil, so that permissibility is transfigured into law, acquiring normative status. However, Christian morality distinguishes itself from this

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[1] Oliviu-Petru Boτoι, „*Raportul dintre Religie şi Morală în educaţia paideică a educaţiei tineretului contemporan''*, în *Altarul Reîntregirii*, nr. 1, (2016), p.552.
[2] Pr. Prof. Dr. Dumitru Popescu, *Omul fără rădăcini*, Editura Nemira, Bucureşti, 2001, p.14.

view, as moral truth cannot be instituted by majority consensus[3]. This distinction underscores the ongoing tension between secular and religious values in defining and understanding morality. While secularized morality leads to relativism based on predominant social norms, Christian morality anchors its principles in a transcendental and immutable framework, denying the possibility of ethical determination through mere human conventions.

In this endeavor, we aim to articulate a conceptualization of the existential crisis confronting the contemporary individual, ensnared in the contradiction between their aspiration toward authentic moral fulfillment and their reluctance to conform to established precepts or norms. This modern delineation of freedom, perceived as a complete absence of restrictions, appears to have a paradoxical effect, inducing imbalance and unfulfillment in the individual's life.

1. CHRISTIAN MORALITY AND SECULAR ETHICS

In the light of secularization processes, the concept of morality calls for reinterpretation. It is imperative that this reassessment be conducted through a perspective that blends traditional moral essence with the specificities of the postmodern era, so as not to succumb to excessive relativism or nihilism. This entails recognizing the importance of ethical foundations, even in a society marked by pluralism and cultural diversity, while simultaneously avoiding unjustified prescriptions[4].

Morality and ethics are often differentiated based on their nature and field of application. Morality has roots in religious traditions and is profoundly influenced by the specific doctrines of a faith; it "relies on the acceptance of the idea that the good is the purpose of the world's existence - because God created it out of His own goodness, and acceptance requires faith, it follows that morality is religious in character"[5]. In this sphere, moral norms and principles are often seen as straightforward imperatives, derived from religious or divine precepts. For instance, the commandment "thou shalt not kill" in Judeo-Christian traditions establishes an absolutist moral framework regarding the sanctity of life[6]. From this perspective, religious morality has a high normative character, based on a set of rules or commandments considered inalienable and universal within the Christian community. This does not mean that morality is completely intransigent, but it gives it significant resilience to change or reinterpretation.

In contrast, ethics deals more with moral reasoning and the justification of norms. In ethics, norms are not necessarily absolute but subject to critical examination, debate, and possible revision. Although ethics may incorporate traditional moral wisdom, including religious wisdom, it also allows for the adaptation or reinterpretation of principles in the face of new ethical challenges. Thus, while morality may be based on a belief system that establishes what is "good" or "bad" in a transcendental sense, ethics engages in a deliberative process to determine what should be considered "good" or "bad" in various

[3] Nicolae ACHIMESCU, „*Secularizarea moralei''*, în vol. *Religie, modernitate și postmodernitate*, col. Media Christiana, Editura Trinitas a Patriarhiei Române, București, 2012, p.414.
[4] Pr. Alexandru ARION, *Întâlniri cu realitatea – repere pentru dialogul contemporan dintre teologie și cultură*, Editura Cetatea de Scaun, Târgoviște, 2017, pp. 17-20.
[5] Sfântul NECTARIE de la Eghina, *Morala creștină*, trad. în limba română de Diana CĂRBUNEANU, Editura Doxologia, Iași, 2013, p.116.
[6] V. G. LIPOVETSKY, *Amurgul datoriei. Etica nedureroasă a noilor timpuri democratice*, Editura Babel, București, 1996, pp. 66-67.

contexts and situations[7]. Ethics constitutes a vast territory encompassing a multitude of approaches and theories, each with its own criteria for evaluating moral behavior, demonstrating a tendency to distance itself and explore alternative modes of existence. This highlights the idea that ethics is not a unitary and unchanging construct but rather an amalgamation of perspectives that may propose varied solutions to the same moral dilemmas. Such an approach raises questions about the issue of individual freedom. Philosopher Fernando Savater emphasizes that unlike other beings, humans benefit from the privilege of free will, thus having the possibility to select their own moral norms[8].

Throughout the development of philosophical and theological thought, the interaction between ethics and morality has sparked intense debates, with a notable example being the work of Saint Thomas Aquinas. In his work, the "Summa Theologica," Aquinas created an impressive synthesis between Christian theology and Aristotelian philosophy, aiming to demonstrate that divine revelation and human reason are not antagonistic but can coexist in a reciprocal dialogue.

Aquinas integrated Aristotelian ethics into a theological structure, offering profound insights into virtues and morality. Before him, ancient philosophy had a significant impact on defining the notions of ethics and morality, with Socrates, Plato, and Aristotle playing essential roles in this evolution. Socrates, through his philosophical dialogues, emphasized the importance of introspection and self-knowledge as the foundations of morality. Plato developed this idea, asserting the existence of Forms or Ideas, which are transcendent realities that function as archetypes for entities in our world. In this vision, ethics and morality are grounded in a higher metaphysical reality. Aristotle, Plato's disciple, in his works "Nicomachean Ethics" and "Eudemian Ethics," approached morality from a more humane perspective, focusing on the idea of "eudaimonia" or the highest common good. For him, virtues, both moral and intellectual, are key elements for achieving an authentic and meaningful life[9].

However, in the contemporary era, we witness a shift in the perception of ethics and morality as the influence of philosophical and religious traditions on public and private thought seems to wane. Factors such as the increasing influence of secularization, cultural and ideological diversity, or the complexity of ethical issues in a secularized world contribute to this evolution. The decline of traditional authority, whether religious or philosophical, in the ethical domain raises questions about the stability and coherence of moral norms. This not only raises a series of questions regarding ethical relativism but also underscores the need for a reassessment of morality in current conditions. In a world where ethics is increasingly influenced by cultural pluralism and fast information exchange, adapting or reinventing traditional frameworks for understanding morality becomes a major challenge to cope with the realities of a rapidly changing world.

In contemporary secularized society, individuals tend to evaluate moral concepts not through the lens of Christian teachings but rather interpret and apply them according to their own desires and satisfactions. The transformation of the moral order has reconfigured how

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[7] V. G. LIPOVETSKY, *Amurgul datoriei…*, p.67.
[8] Fernando SAVATER, *Etica pentru amador*, Editura Timpul, Iași, 1997, p. 35.
[9] Pr. Dr. Dorin Octavian PICIORUȘ, *Lumea postmodernă și depersonalizarea omului*, Editura Teologie pentru azi, București, 2005, p. 312.

society and individuals understand and apply principles. This change indicates a reassessment of norms and values that previously guided human behavior[10].

The decline of religious morality and the rise of a "reckless" ethics reflect the anxiety of a cultural and ethical transition moment. In this context, there is emphasized a movement from a moral system anchored in tradition and religious dogma towards an ethical system that seems to be more fluid, more adaptable, but also potentially more volatile. The change in paradigm suggests not only a secularization of morality but also a diversification of ethical criteria. If religious morality provided a well-defined and absolute normative framework, based on divine prescriptions and ancestral traditions, modern ethics is influenced by pluralism, relativism, and pragmatism. Thus, the modern individual faces the challenge of navigating through an ambiguous ethical landscape, where norms are not so clearly established or universally accepted, everything being related to one's own pleasure[11].

2. THE MORAL DECLINE IN POSTMODERNISM: A PURSUIT FOR LOST MEANING

Contemporary society is marked by multiple crises that manifest at various levels, from political and economic to cultural ones. However, what often remains understated is the profound moral crisis unfolding beneath these aspects. We are witnesses to an era where superficiality and formalism dominate, where deconstructivism and the excessive autonomy of the individual promote a mentality of supreme being in the absence of divinity. This way of life, which ignores traditional moral structures, places the secular individual in a labyrinth of uncertainty and unfulfillment. The contemporary paradigm seems to suggest that true fulfillment comes from eliminating all restrictions and prejudices, ignoring the fact that often these moral frameworks have functioned as essential guides in the search for meaning and purpose in life.

In a context of ethical and moral transition, the moral crisis can be understood as a manifestation of ontological dislocation, a crisis of the existential foundation of humanity. This type of crisis is not just a symptom of the decay of traditional norms but also of the inadequacy of contemporary ethical models to respond to the fundamental needs of human consciousness and society. Ontologically, the crisis suggests a disintegration of meaning, coherence, and finality that in the past were provided by established ethical and moral systems. Confronted with this disintegration, modern consciousness becomes vulnerable to nihilism, to the sense of futility or lack of meaning. This condition is exacerbated by the fact that contemporary society is often dominated by advanced forms of technology and consumerism, which can diminish the transcendental or spiritual dimensions of existence.

Thus, the ability to recognize the gravity of the situation and to act accordingly may be atrophied. To the detriment of engaging in a deep investigation of the causes and solutions, the postmodern individual may be tempted to approach the crisis through a form of denial or avoidance, thus exacerbating the human condition and diminishing the chances of moral and ethical recovery or reorientation. Such a diagnosis suggests the need for a new collective commitment to explore and implement ethical and moral models that are robust enough to navigate through the complexities of modern life but also flexible enough to encourage innovation and adaptation. This duty entails interdisciplinary and intercultural

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[10] Anastasios YANNOULATOS, *Ortodoxia și problemele lumii contemporane*, Editura Bizantină, București, 2003, p.191.
[11] Zygmunt BAUMAN, *Etica postmodernă*, Editura Amarcord, Timișoara, 2000, p. 214.

dialogue, where resources from philosophy, theology, social sciences, and even natural sciences can be mobilized to address the contemporary ontological crisis.

Religion, in the context of contemporary society, is often regarded as an outdated habit, and the modern man seems to be subjugated by epistemological and ontological paradigms that glorify a reconfigured pattern of humanity, one that claims to exercise unlimited freedom without constraints. This evolution reflects a profound axiological crisis, manifested by a detachment from the traditional value system, a process facilitated and amplified by postmodern discourses. Under the guise of an apparently unrestricted freedom, these contemporary narratives promote a set of ideologies that can be perceived as fundamentally antithetical to traditional moral precepts, doctrines that include radicalized feminism, proposals for the deconstruction of the family institution, autonomy in matters of sexual orientation and gender identity, as well as a general reluctance, if not hostility, towards conventional moral norms[12].

This situation is an effect of secularization, which has resulted in the diminishing influence and prevalence of religious tradition in everyday life, so that "religion becomes a universal ethos, an antidogmatic attitude that constitutes not only the presupposition of hermeneutics but also of democracy itself. Precisely by developing its own secular vocation, Christianity can become a universal religion and can favor the renewal of civil life"[13].

In the postmodern era, the thesis is advanced that religions are equivalent from a moral perspective, suggesting that their origin lies in human reasoning, not in a transcendent principle. Thus, the idea of a divine origin of religion is rejected, arguing instead that man conceptualized it and divinity itself. This postmodern perspective refuses to recognize the Revelation specific to the Judeo-Christian tradition, which culminates in the Savior Christ, and proposes a religious egalitarianism, placing Christianity on the same level as other religious traditions. Another defining aspect of this era is the adoption of an integrative discourse, which blurs the distinctions between truth and falsehood, between salvific orthodox doctrine and heresy, this being manifested even at the ecclesial level[14].

We are witnessing a reinterpretation and sometimes even a subversion of the notion of correctness. Traditional religious morality, which has served as the foundation for many societies over the centuries, is now subjected to intense pressures and faces significant challenges in the postmodern era. Postmodernism, with its roots in secularization and sometimes seen as an extension of Marxist principles, brings contradictions and ambiguities to correctness. We live in an era where traditions and established norms are often questioned, and relativism seems to dominate discourse. In addition to this, we are witnessing an accentuation of individualism and a rejection of any transcendental authority, creating an environment where the traditional limitations of human behavior are often seen as restrictive. Thus, the individual is tempted to follow his impulses without deep reflection on the moral consequences of his actions[15].

The twentieth century was marked by the emergence and consolidation of various ideologies that had a profound impact on social and cultural structures. Although ideology

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[12] Pr. Dr. Doru COSTACHE, „*Antropocentrismul modern şi oferta antropologiei eclesiale. Elemente pentru misiunea Bisericii''*, în *Analele Universităţii din Craiova*, nr. 10, (2002), p. 231.

[13] Santiago ZABALA, „*Introducere: O religie fără teişti şi ateişti''*, în vol. col. Richard RORTY, Gianni VATTIMO, *Viitorul religiei. Solidaritate, caritate, ironie*, Editura Paralela 45, Piteşti 2008 , p. 14.

[14] Pr. Conf. Univ. Dr. Gheorghe PETRARU, *Teologie Fundamentală şi Misionară.Ecumenism*, Editura Performantica, Iaşi, 2006, p. 231.

[15] Constantin C. PAVEL, „*Tragedia omului în cultura modernă''*, în colecţia *Impasuri şi semen,* coord. Christos YANNARAS, Editura Anastasia, Bucureşti, 1997, p. 19.

often presents itself under the auspices of correctness and the promotion of freedom, it can actually represent a serious obstacle to ethics and morality.

This apparent paradox is fueled by the fact that radical ideologies, especially those with an authoritarian or dictatorial character, are intrinsically incompatible with universal ethical principles. Ideology, in these conditions, proves to be not only a mechanism for organizing society but also a tool for nullifying ethical and moral nuances and complexities. It can impose a monolithic vision of reality, one that excludes the need for critical reflection and constructive dialogue on ethics and morality. Thus, in a context where authoritarian ideologies can suppress or even eradicate ethical traditions and moral norms, a rigorous examination of the relationship between ideology, ethics, and morality becomes imperative[16].

Twentieth-century ideologies, such as fascism, communism, and Nazism, developed their own ethical systems which, under the pretext of defending specific values or rights, defied and violated the fundamental rights of man. Nazism, under the guise of promoting living space for the Aryan race, as described in "Mein Kampf," denied and suppressed the rights of other ethnic groups. Communism, likewise, was responsible for numerous abuses, including political crimes and spiritual persecutions. In the contemporary era, we are witnessing the emergence of more subtle yet equally influential ideologies. These ideologies promote values such as human rights, globalization, and mass leadership, but in reality, they can lead to the manipulation of these by a small group of individuals with their own interests. Economic globalization, under the auspices of the new world order, seems to consolidate this trend, as the major resources of the planet become increasingly concentrated in the hands of a small number of people. It is crucial to understand and analyze these dynamics to ensure that the fundamental rights of the individual are not sacrificed in the name of larger interests or a distorted ideological vision[17].

The fundamental needs of human beings, such as physiological ones, underpin any action and decision, directly determining their receptivity to any form of control or influence. Control over these essential resources allows for the manipulation of individual and mass will. In the context of postmodernism, man is often portrayed as the center of his own universe, perceived as a "god without God," disregarding the existence of God[18]. This presupposes an unrestrained freedom, without consequences or responsibilities towards others, which can lead to an extremely selfish attitude and exploitation of those around them.

Under the influence of globalist ideology, there is a tendency to view religion as anachronistic and as an obstacle to human "progress." Such a viewpoint can lead to the marginalization or even persecution of practitioners of these religious traditions, as they are seen as barriers to a so-called "evolution" of society and the individual. The postmodern individual faces a crisis of their essential freedom and identity, a degradation of the ontological sense of existence that makes man, as Romanian philosopher Petre Țuțea asserts, "a poor speaking rational animal who comes from nowhere and heads towards nowhere"[19]. Through his statement, he underlines a certain despair and a loss of meaning in human existence, presenting man as an ephemeral entity, devoid of a clear and defined purpose.

[16] Pe larg în Pr. Prof. Dr. Leon ARION și Lect. Dr. Alexandru ARION, „*Globalizarea, gigantică mutație civilizațională''*, în volumul *Religia în societate la început de secol XXI. Tendințe europene*, Editura Valahia University Press, Târgoviște, 2006, pp. 39-53.
[17] Olivier CLEMENT, „*Despre secularizare''*, în *Teologie și viață*, nr. 5-8, (2002), p. 15-20.
[18] Pr. Prof Ilie MOLDOVAN, *Darul sfânt al vieții și combaterea păcatelor împotriva acestuia*, Editura I.B.M al B.O.R., București,1997, p.25.
[19] Petre ȚUȚEA, *Între Dumnezeu și neamul meu*, Editura Anastasia, București, 1992, p. 55.

This "poor speaking rational animal" finds himself in an apparently indifferent cosmos, without a clear source of origin and without a defined destination, a bleak vision highlighting the destabilizing effects of a society that removes spiritual and transcendent values in favor of a purely materialistic and immediate view of reality.

A society that departs from God or isolates Him in the realm of "utopian philosophies," denying His influence on collective conduct, is one that autonomously rejects its source of life. This underscores the spiritual danger in which the community finds itself when God is eliminated or marginalized from its value and moral structure, leaving room for purely human interpretations of the meaning and purpose of existence[20].

The concept of freedom, in its current understanding, is brought to an extreme degree of intensification. Paradoxically, society often evolves unaware that it is under the influence of a neo-Marxist ideology.

One of the major issues contemporary society must address concerns the phenomenon called the "clash of civilizations," a masterful concept expounded by Samuel Huntington in his emblematic work of the same name. Unfortunately, the ideal of tolerance is often eclipsed or even sabotaged by extremist factions rooted in various global cultures. Globalization, with all its potential to unify, has also generated profound transformations in the structure and dynamics of civilizations and cultures, both in the East and the West. The Western individual, who in the modern era distanced himself from traditional spirituality and adopted a secularized position, surprisingly finds himself susceptible to Eastern fascination and seduction. Thus, starting from the sixth decade of the last century, we witness an effervescence of cultural revolutions manifesting on multiple levels of society[21].

The Oriental Mysticism has been assimilated and adapted in various ways within the Western cultural context. For instance, yoga, despite capturing widespread interest among contemporary populations, is often approached without a deep and authentic understanding of its essence and intrinsic meanings. This superficiality in adoption demonstrates an effort to integrate exotic elements, yet, at the same time, a potential misunderstanding or simplification of Eastern practices and philosophies.

The contemporary individual tends to be characterized more by a syncretistic approach than by a profound commitment to authentic spirituality. In this direction, the aesthetics of "form without substance," as well as the emptiness of content, represent concepts that significantly influence and shape him, suggesting potential superficiality or diversity in approaching the spirit and human values in the modern era.

The abandonment of Christian moral principles has not found an adequate substitute within atheistic and free-thinking paradigms, as human essence is undeniably moral, and superficial approaches fail to satisfy this intrinsic need. Western culture is inexplicably drawn to the spiritual and moral practices of the East, without requiring intensive proselytism. Offering unrestricted freedom, the individual feels an inner void, facing dilemmas of non-achievement and stagnation. Immersed in daily turmoil, there is a loss of identity, transitioning from the status of "person" to that of "individual." In this light, the Western postmodern man, although perceives freedom as an inalienable right, is often a prisoner of his pleasures. He is under the illusion that technological progress has ensured a superior standard of living, but in reality, indulges in reckless consumerism. Thus, one of the

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[20] Placide DESEILLE, *Nostalgia Ortodoxiei*, Editura Anastasia, Bucureşti, 1995, p. 276.
[21] Pr. Prof. Dr. Leon ARION şi Lect. Dr. Alexandru ARION, „*Globalizarea, gigantică…* p. 247.

main causes of the depletion of earthly resources can be attributed to this widespread consumerism, rather than uncontrolled population growth[22].

An individual uprooted[23] from his fundamental spiritual sphere, granted absolute freedom over sensory experiences, inevitably becomes vulnerable, being exposed to manipulation, especially through the media, in the current context. Reiterating the concept of the "clash of civilizations" in the postmodern era, we observe that significant transformations have occurred in the Eastern sphere as well, both spiritually and morally, as well as in the field of technology. Thus, in the context of current geopolitics and cultural diversity, reconciling civilizations seems a monumental challenge. The notion of "unity in diversity" becomes a difficult ideal to conceptualize and, even more so, to achieve, even in light of the progress of globalization[24].

Today, we can identify a profoundly postmodernist society deeply influenced by consumerist ethos, where superficiality comes to dominate the value palette. The spiritual deficit leads to erosion, if not outright elimination, of fundamental moral values. Ethics imported from outside, lacking anchorage in a deep religious tradition, proves inadequate in meeting the authentic needs of contemporary man. The culture of the present is undeniably shaped by the predominant ideology within society, reflecting a symbiosis between epistemological paradigms and behavioral manifestations of individuals. Culture and civilization can be defined as what we sow, but the problem arises when we cultivate sin, migrating unquestioningly to a "perverse culture"[25].

Instead of contributing to the development and ennoblement of human beings, today's culture seems to be more of a factor of disruption and erosion, humanity being "directly and constantly exposed to the culture of death"[26].

In the postmodern era, the absence of spirituality is supplemented by selfish, consumerist tendencies, and a simplistic approach to reality; there is also a decrease in the morality of the contemporary individual, whose existence is outlined in a deconstructivist context. Despite access to extensive freedom and countless opportunities, man feels drained of content and struggles to (re)discover himself. In a search for transcendence, he desires connection with God but resists integration into a religious community. This mentality efficiently aligns with the directions of a new order, making the New Age movement appear as a response to the modern man's attempt to find meaning and fulfillment in spiritual and moral planes[27].

In the current context marked by syncretism and unregulated freedom, the contemporary individual falls prey to an illusion of spirituality, convinced that he is boundless. In tandem with this perception of freedom, tolerance is often misunderstood, facilitating and promoting a hedonistic lifestyle, devoid of a clear purpose. This ephemeral existence thus becomes an end in itself, bypassing the essential destiny of human existence. We observe a trend of dilution of ties with cultural heritage and alienation from ancestral values. Postmodern society, with its deconstructivist tendencies, harshly criticizes traditions and moral norms, perceived as archaic relics and sources of prejudices. This postmodernist

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[22] Georgios MANTSARIDIS, *Globalizare și universalitate, himeră și adevăr*, Editura Bizantină, București, 2002, pp. 25-29.
[23] Expresie a Pr. Prof. Dr. Dumitru POPESCU, *Omul fără rădăcini*, Editura Nemira, București, 2001.
[24] Dominique SOURDEL, *Islamul clasic*, Editura Meridiane, București, 1975, p. 207.
[25] Ierom. Rafail NOICA, *Cultura Duhului*, Editura Reîntregirea, Alba Iulia, 2002, p.15.
[26] Pr. Conf. Dr. Mihai HIMCINSCHI, „*Cultura Evanghelică''*, în vol. *Omul de cultură în fața descreștinării*, Editura Reîntregirea, Alba Iulia, 2005, p.294.
[27] Mirel BĂNICĂ, *Locul celuilalt – Ortodoxia în modernitate*, Editura Paideia, București, 2007, pp. 31-33.

pseudo-cultural current denigrates the notions of "Christian" and "cultivated," indicating a departure from the fundamental values that underpinned the construction of Western civilization. In this light, we may suggest that we are nearing the end of a cultural era. Future generations may view the pre-postmodern period as a golden age, an idyllic period compared to the complexity of the present[28].

CONCLUSION

Achieving moral and social fulfillment represents a significant challenge, considering the concessions often necessary to integrate into the predominant societal matrix. Resistance to the ethical precepts of postmodernism can lead to the ostracization of the individual from the community; however, the spiritual tenacity and moral integrity inherent in the authentic Christian individual can serve as a guiding light amidst the darkness of the world.

Thus, man discovers his authenticity and purpose not as an isolated individual but as a relational entity, as a dialogical being. In this sense, true fulfillment can only be attained through mutual communion with fellow human beings, highlighting the dual nature of man as both rational and inherently personal. Therefore, profound fulfillment, both moral and spiritual, manifests in the social context[29], as the individual is never closed in on oneself but open to the bond of love with others. In the image of the Trinity, transcending nature, communion does not mean living alongside each other but living through one another, according to the words of Christ: "As you, Father, are in me, and I in you, may they also be in us, so that the world may believe that you have sent me" (John 17:21). This is why the Holy Trinity has been portrayed as the structure of supreme love, and this is also why the mission of the Church is to surpass rationalistic systems and to bring love, justice, goodness, and philanthropy into interpersonal relationships among members of society. In short, we could say that the Holy Trinity forms the basis of the Church's social program in the world in which we live. This is another relevance of Orthodox theology for the contemporary world.

In the current context, secularized society promotes an ethical vision of human existence detached from traditional restrictions and free from preconceptions. The absence of the spiritual dimension not only attenuates the moral foundation of the individual but also aligns him with contemporary models, distancing him from his authenticity and existential essence.

In a society dominated by hedonism, commercialism, and utilitarianism, the supreme value of pleasure has been elevated to alarming levels. In this paradigm, the individual has turned the pursuit of pleasures into a type of faith, and money has become a divine simulacrum, a euphemistic idol. The disastrous consequence of this hedonistic "religion" is the propulsion of the individual into the abysses of depression, despair, and spiritual as well as physical alienation[30].

The desacralization and moral decline undoubtedly manifest as results of the transformations that have taken place in the sphere of human reasoning, will, and affectivity. The contemporary mind is subjected to constant evolution, necessitating a profound reassessment of the essence and particularities of moral responsibility.

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[28] H.-R. PATAPIEVICI, *Omul recent. O critică a modernității din perspectiva întrebării „Ce se pierde atunci când ceva se câștigă?"*, Editura Humanitas, București, 2001, p. 85.
[29] Olivier CLEMENT, *Adevăr și libertate. Ortodoxie în contemporaneitate. Convorbiri cu Patriarhul Ecumenic Bartolomeu I*, Editura Deisis, Sibiu, 1997, pp. 118-144.
[30] Andrei PLEȘU, Gabriel LIICEANU, Horia PATAPIEVICI, *O idee care ne sucește mințile*, Editura Humanitas, București, 2014, pp.101-102.

Post-modern ethics, characteristic of the secularized individual, seems to operate a reversal of traditional values: the fundamental essence is lost in favor of an excessive focus on details and particularities. In such a framework, ethics becomes predominantly utilitarian, evaluating actions more based on their immediate results than on intrinsic principles or their essential value. The change in paradigm, in the absence of solid ethical principles, risks leading society to an unacceptable threshold of morality, where the meaning and value of life become increasingly unclear, and towards profound nihilism, where nothing has absolute value or perpetual significance[31].

The Church has the duty to counteract these ideologies that distance the human being from its true mission. The dominant conceptions in contemporary society may be tempting for the current believer, but, as Saint Apostle Paul reminds us: "All things are lawful for me, but not all things are profitable. All things are lawful for me, but I will not be mastered by anything" (1 Corinthians 6:12). The Church, being the "pillar and foundation of truth" (1 Timothy 3:15), possesses the capacity to provide the individual with salvific solutions to all the dilemmas they face.

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[31] Pr. Ștefan FLOREA, ,,*Christian Ethics and the Ethics of Contemporary Man'',* în *HEc Forum*, 2008, 20 (1), p. 71.

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ORTHODOX TEACHING ON TIME

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ABSTRACT
The Orthodox Church, taking into account the truths detached from the divine revelation, gave the concept of time a major importance, not only to eternal life, but also to the time of the present life. The Holy Fathers emphasized the axiological aspect of time, with reference to its significance for man's life in achieving its saving goal, although they also presented theoretical studies on the essence and origin of time, and showed that, paradoxically, although time is connected with the creation "ex nihilo", yet it is compatible with eternity, that is, with the uncreated.
Keywords: *time; orthodoxy; eternity; revelation; creation;*

INTRODUCTION

Orthodoxy teaches that time is, in origin, in solidarity with creation and constitutes a fundamental, inherent teaching of the creature, being its very condition or mode of existence[1]. The indissoluble connection between time and the cosmos is also proved by the fact that time did not exist before the creation of the world, but began with it, so time and the world condition each other.

The biblical conception on which this teaching is based is admirably understood by Blessed Augustine, who says that the world and time were created together, which means that the very principle of time is good[2].

Time appears for man as a fulfillment of his being and with a unique value - "The destiny of human existence is fulfilled in time, it is placed under the sign of time".[3] On the other hand, time introduces meaning into our lives, because it is linked to created existence (If our being is dependent, therefore, on time, time is independent of our being, having an objective reality, distinct from the creature and the changes of things). Everything that is created takes time. Created existence cannot be conceived outside of time, just as non-existence cannot be in time. Existence and time are closely ontologically linked[4].

The objective reality of time is based on the fact of its creation by God Himself, for what God creates cannot have merely a fictitious or subjective existence, but a real one—objectively, like the entire cosmos created by Him[5].

In an absolute sense, God does not need time. If, however, He created it, it means that it is not the Creator but the creature who needs it, for God does nothing superfluous and

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[1] Drd. Dan Ciubotea, *Time and its value for salvation in Orthodoxy*, in *Orthodoxy* XXIX (1977), no. 2, p. 206.
[2] Paul Evdochimov, *Orthodoxy*, Paris, 1965, p. 204.
[3] Nicolas Berdiaeff, *Cinq meditations sur l'existence*, p. 133, to Fr. Dr. Corneliu Sarbu, *"The Nature and Value of Time"*, in *Theological Review*, Sibiu 1943, p. 16.
[4] Drd. Fer Nicolae, *The Orthodox Teaching on the "Fullness of Time"*, in *The Voice of the Church* XXXII (1973), no. 5-6, pp. 538-539.
[5] Fr. Dr. C. Sârbu, *op. cit.*, p. 38

pointless. Therefore, in time we must see an element necessary for the cosmos, for the created world[6].

Like the world, time cannot be kept in existence without the will and power of the Creator, who sustains it through His provident action. If heavenly providence is a continuous creation of the world, then time is also continually created by God[7]. From Him we have every moment: "*For from Him and through Him and in Him are all*" (Rom. XI, 36). *"Yours is the day and yours is the night"* (Psalm 73:17) *"According to Your order the day remains, for all things are Your servants"* - confesses the psalmist (Psalm 118/91). The existence and power of time ultimately comes from God, and its value is that which divine influence confers upon it, as well as that which man imprints upon it through his action[8].

It can therefore be affirmed that time is in solidarity with all creation not only in its divine origin, but also in its ultimate purpose. Having its distinct place in the bosom of creation, time rises with other creatures to serve man, so that man in turn may rise through service and love to God.

The Orthodox teaching on the nature and meaning of time rises above the one-sidedness and ambiguity of various philosophical conceptions that strive to reveal the truth about time in that it is founded on the Divine Revelation made by Jesus Christ, the Truth itself.

(Knowledge of it is therefore needed from every theologian and believer to substantiate the authentically Orthodox faith and piety).

1. THE REVELATIONAL FOUNDATIONS OF TIME TEACHING

The analysis of the terminology relating to time used in Scripture is a first step in specifying this teaching.

The notion of time is generally expressed by two terms: καίρος and αιών. The distinction between these two terms is likely to reveal the two fundamental aspects of time: the aspect of duration and the aspect of succession, passage.

The "Καίρος" used in both the Old and New Testaments primarily means a decisive, decisive moment[9]. *"Why die before your time?"*(Eccl. 7:17). Another meaning is that of a favorable moment: *"There is a time for everything under heaven"* (Eccl. 3:1). The classic place in Scripture that reveals the meaning of the special moment time, crucial in existence, is the one in the Epistle to the Galatians chap. IV, 4-5: *"And when the fullness of time came, God sent his Son, born of a woman, born under the law, to redeem those under the law, that we might obtain adoption."*

These favorable moments - chosen by God in the economy of salvation - are sprinkled in biblical time. What Christ did for the salvation of the world, He did at times willed and decided by Him, when "the hour came"[10] (Matthew 26:45; 14; 35).

The reunion of the Καίρος - distinct from each other - forms the ascending line of salvation[11]. *"I work today and tomorrow, and on the third day I will finish"* (Luke 13:32).

"'Αιών" is the term used to show a stretch of time. or time as duration[12]. He expresses the time of this world: *"The ages were established by the word of God"* (Heb. 11:3), but also

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[6] Fr. Dr. C. Sârbu, *op. cit.*, p. 38
[7] Fr. Dr. C. Sârbu, *op. cit.*, p. 38
[8] Fr. Dr. C. Sârbu, *op. cit.*, p. 38
[9] Gerhard Delling, *Kairos*, art. in *Theologisches Wörterbuch zum Neuen Testament*, Stuttgart, 1938, vol. III, p. 458
[10] Drd. Dan Ciubotea, op. cit., p. 199
[11] Oscar Cullman, *Christ el le temps*, second ed. Neuchâtel, 1966, p. 30.

the eternity of God (Rom. 16:26). The same term is used to delineate the life of the present from the future – "the present eon from the future eon".[13] The present eon is identical with the time of light; the future eon is the new one that is coming: the Kingdom of God.

Therefore, the term "αἰών" signifies in Holy Scripture; an unlimited time – divine eternity; a time limited in both directions – the duration of this world; and a limited and unlimited time, the age to come, or limited in one direction[14].

The relationship between time and eternity, as presented in Sacred Scripture, is not a relationship of exclusivity. Between time and eternity there is undoubtedly a great ontological and qualitative difference; However, both meet without disbanding.

If time is created God, then eternity does not abolish time, but gives birth and sustains it, coexisting with it[15]. The establishment of an exclusive contrast and an irreducible opposition between time and eternity makes impossible the connection between eternal God and temporal man.

Eternity is the creative cause of time: time originates in eternity[16]. Time being the creature's mode of existence, eternity is God's mode of existence. The two modes of existence are distinct but not opposites. For Orthodoxy, time and eternity, not being in opposition, although distinct, can communicate with each other, and this is the prerequisite for the possibility of God's descent in time and our participation in eternal life[17].

The Holy Fathers were reluctant to define eternity as opposed to time, because if the categories of time are motion, change, passage from one state to another, then the term stillness, immutability cannot be applied to the eternity of God, for this would be the eternity of an intelligible world of Plato, not that of the living God. If God lives in eternity, this living eternity must overcome the opposition between movable time and motionless eternity. St. Maximus the Confessor, speaking of the relationship between time and eternity, compares the world to a room. The chamber is an ontological category: the bounding of the world by itself. Pondering an unlimited room and boundless time is a contradiction. Just as the world is bounded, like a bounded room, so "time is a bounded movement."[18]

Thus, God's eternity no longer appears opposite to time. On the contrary, eternity is turned to time, for it goes with it to fulfill it ontologically. Time does not have an existence, but a shared one. He keeps himself only in contact with eternity, which gives time meaning and value[19].

Eternity makes it possible to understand time. God has made us beings capable of response; through this He has given us the connection to eternity and in communion with Him we will obtain eternity. But this eternity is obtained by grace and will no longer be like God's.[20] From a biblical perspective, between time and eternity we must show the nuptial relationship of the theandric mystery of Christ with the theandric mystery of the Church, the

[12] Sasse, *Aion*, art. in *Theologisches Wörterbuch zum Neuen Testament*, Stuttgart, 1933, vol. I, pp. 128-200.

[13] Ibid., p. 204.

[14] O. Cullman, *op cit*., p. 34.

[15] Fr. dr. C. Sârbu, *op. cit*., p. 35

[16] H. Andrutsos, Dogmatics of the Orthodox Church, p. 63, cit. to Fr. Dr. C. Sarbu, *op. cit*., p. 24

[17] Drd. Dan Ciubotea, *op. cit*., p. 35.

[18] St. Maximus the Confessor, *Questiones ad Talasium*, 65, P.G. XC, 757, D – cit. to Drd. Fer Nicholas, *op. cit*., p. 545.

[19] Drd. Fer Nicolae, *op. cit*., p. 344

[20] Fr. dr. Dumitru Stăniloae, *God is love*, in *Orthodoxy*, XXIII (1971), no. 3, p. 380.

relationship of the wedding at Cana with the banquet of the Kingdom of God[21]. Time is an open path to eternity, in which the creature begins dialogue with God. Such was the paradisiacal time when God communicated with the creature as with a friend. Human nature tended toward God, for in paradisiacal time the creature was given the opportunity to rise into the likeness of its creator[22].

The fact that the transition from image to Godlikeness had to take place for us under the species of time, is further proof that time, as a concretization of passage, had multiple valences and positive content in God's plan[23].

Time enables us to introduce meaning and value into the cosmos. It gives meaning to all events because it serves the macro- and microcosm as a medium and instrument of preparation for eternal happiness, as a gateway to existential wholeness and full participation in the Supreme Being[24]. Only in time can the cosmos be realized as a harmonious whole and reach the fulfillment of its final destiny, the fullness of the Kingdom of God. Time appears as a cosmic riverbed, constitutive of created existence, through which the changes of creature's flow under the sky of eternal light. But time is not identified with these changes or with created existence, just as the bed of a river is not identical to the water of the river. Time and existence are distinct realities[25].

The solidarity of time with all creation is complete from the very beginning. The fall produces deep corruption over time. Original sin unites time with death. Time had been given to man to walk toward love and the fullness of his existence through the likeness of God. Man transforms, through the fall, time into death. The time of divine presence turns into a time of absence open to nothingness.

Time-passage to the deification of man henceforth also becomes a measure of the passage to death (Rom. V, 12). But time was not entirely fallen, it did not identify with the fall. The fallen time is strengthened by God's blessing upon it, so that during this time the creature turns freely to God, wants Him, and understands the immensity of love. The time will be waiting for God, preparing communion with the divine[26].

If the cyclical time of pagan religions depersonalizes God and the creature by wanting to absorb into eternity, Old Testament time is linear time, "teacher unto Christ" time (Gal. III, 24) that is never repeated, an ascending time of God's actions. All the significance of the linear time of the Old Testament, all its tension towards a fulfillment still in the future, will be summed up in the sermon of St. John the Baptist: *"Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is near"* (Matthew III, 2).

However, the linear time of holy history isolated God from the creature, supported the duality between creature and God, and creature could not enter communion with the divine.

Only with the Incarnation of the Son of God – and the restoration of human nature through perfect union with His divine nature will time "be filled with God", will it once again become a paradisiacal time of divine-human dialogue[27].

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[21] Oliver Clément, Notes sur le temps, in Mesager, nr. avril, 1957, Paris, p. 90 – cit. to Drd. Fer Nicolae, op. cit., p. 546.

[22] Drd. Fer Nicolae, *op. cit*., p. 546.

[23] Drd. Dan Ciubotea, *op. cit*., p. 198.

[24] Fr. Corneliu Sarbu, PhD, *op. cit*., p. 63.

[25] Drd. Fer Nicolae, *op. cit*., p. 344.

[26] Drd. Fer Nicolae, *op. cit*., p. 346

[27] Drd. Fer Nicolae, *op. cit*., p. 347.

2. THE REDEMPTION OF TIME THROUGH JESUS CHRIST

The linear tense of the Old Testament confirms the awareness that God is far from the creature, that he has withdrawn from communion with it, leaving a time empty of his transcendent and real presence. The commandments, the divine law takes the place of communion until its realization. by law. God did not let man fall totally; The creature lived, in the tension of waiting for divine help. The prophets positively prepared the messianic time, thereby showing that time was still under God's dominion[28]. The whole creature was waiting for the new time.

The removal of the empty time of death and sin could not be done until the Son of God himself descended out of love (John III, 16) to fill time with the presence of his deity. This is "the fullness of time" (Gal. IV, 4). There could not have been a quicker "fullness of time" because a certain experience was required on the part of the creature before it suffered from the state of non-communion in which it found itself with God, recognized the need for divine help, and ardently desired the state of communion[29].

"The fullness of time" means the moment from which Beginning we have a time full of God, of His presence, because His Son became man, took our nature and remains so forever, living with us filled with the Supreme reality. "Christ was born man for man and accepted day and time"[30]

It is the fullness of time not only as a moment when messianic expectation is realized, but an ontological fulfillment. Orthodoxy sees in the "fullness of time" also a full realization of time through Christ. The time after Christ is different; new time, which receives value through the very fact of the Incarnation. The act of chenosis of the Son of God is the elevation of the cosmos and time to their filling by Him in whom *"dwelleth all fulness"* (Col. I, 19)

Through the incarnation of the Lord, all creation is sanctified and directed toward God[31]. With the incarnation begins the re-creation of the world and implicitly of time. Time virtually regains its primordial quality, that is, its exclusive effect as a promoter of life, as a dynamic factor of human fulfillment[32].

The divine Logos became flesh, lived our time, and sanctified Him by His presence. The first Adam had to fulfill His calling, that of union with God, the second Adam, the Son of God, realizes this union of the two natures through His person, becoming flesh and rising to communion with God.

The new time has its beginning in the chenosis that eternity makes in time through the descent of the Son of God. The Incarnation produces a new cut in time, which causes time to receive a new center, Jesus Christ[33]. The cutting of time by eternity makes possible the inauguration of the new time, of the time in which eternity is open to time. Time becomes new in that it is touched entirely by the incarnate Logos[34].

Christianity discovers God as God over time. This divine presence suppresses repetition and confirms to each event its uniqueness. Time is turned to Christ, to this focus of light, which manifests its Eucharistic presence within time. The Incarnation being the

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[28] Drd. Dan Ciubotea, *op. cit*., p. 199.

[29] Drd. Fer Nicolae, *op. cit*., p. 347.

[30] Petru Hrisologul, *Senno CXXXI*, P.G., 52, col 560 B, *cit.* to Fr. dr. Corneliu Sârbu, *op. cit*, p. 98.

[31] Prof. Nicolae Ghiţescu, *The premises of Christian teaching on the relationship between grace and freedom*, in *Orthodoxy*, XI (1959), no. 1, p. 7.

[32] Fr. Corneliu Sarbu, PhD, *op. cit*., p. 98.

[33] O. Cullman, *op. cit*., pp. 58-59.

[34] Drd. Fer Nicolae, *op. cit*., p. 348.

descent of eternity into time, opens for us a whole new perspective, in which temporality is touched by the holiness of the Eternal[35].

In Christ, every moment of cosmic time is sanctified and transfigured. It is the vision proper to Orthodoxy that sees in the Incarnation the transfiguration of the cosmos and time[36]. Jesus Christ is God in a human way and Man in a divine way. As a man He lives His divine life in human nature, He lives eternity in time, as God lives human life divinely, transfiguring time through the eternity of His divine life. In Christ time and eternity are found in perfect harmony, in a divine-human union. This is because the Savior unites the separate: heaven and earth, the sensible with the intelligible, the created nature with the uncreated, [37]time with eternity. The consequence of this union is the transfiguration and deification of the time of human nature from the divine hypostasis of Christ.

Christ's time is united with the appropriation of human nature by the person of the divine Logos with the eternity of the divine hypostasis. Through this temporal-supratemporal union, time is not abolished, just as, through hypostatic union, the two natures (divine and human) do not absorb into each other, nor do they separate, but each keeps its own personal attributes. The time assumed by Christ and transfigured is the basis of the deified time of the Church[38].

In Jesus Christ we are renewed and deified in principle. "God gave to the Word a created body," says St. Athanasius the Great, "that we might be renewed in Him and deified."[39] The Word, the image of the Father, becomes man in order to introduce the divine likeness to be attained in paradisiacal time and to renew human nature from within. Christ recapitulates us all in His human nature and renews us, making us live in the new time of deification. "When the Son of God became flesh," says St. Irenaeus, "He recapitulated in Him the long line of men, He brought us salvation. and that which we have lost through Adam, that is, to be in the image and likeness of God."[40]

Recapitulated in Christ, we are all sacrificed to the Father and renewed. It is a mysterious, spiritual recapitulation, through which we are crucified and buried with Christ to be resurrected, redeemed through His sacrifice, together with Him in the new season of transfiguration: "Yesterday I buried myself with You, Christ – sings Orthodoxy on Resurrection Sunday – today I rise with You, raising You. Yesterday I was crucified with You, with You glorify me."[41]

Time itself finds itself recapitulated "with all" in Christ: "There is but one God the Father," says St. Irenaeus, "and one Christ Jesus, our Lord, who has recapitulated all things in Him."[42] In Christ, the sanctified body transcends the time in Paradise in its new dimension: that in which men can become God's children according to grace. The time of the deification of the creature exceeds the time of the paradisiacal state. "Here" this time is present, "there" gave only in the future that the first Adam was supposed to reach. In the second Adam, the new time becomes a continuous present. Christ changes creation and time

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[35] Drd. Fer Nicolae, *op. cit*., p. 549.

[36] O. Clément, *Transfigurer le temps*, Neuchâtel, Paris, 1959, *possum*, cit. to Drd. Fer Nicolae, op. cit., p. 549.

[37] Prof. Nicolae Chițescu, *The Saviour Jesus Christ, the center of our life*, in *The Voice of the Church*, XV (1956), no. 8-9, p. 445.

[38] Drd. Fer Nicolae, *op. cit*., p. 549.

[39] St. Athanasius the Great, Against the Arians, II, 47, P.G., XXVI, p. 248, cit. to Drd. Fer Nicholas, *op. cit*., p. 549.

[40] St. Irenaeus, *Against Heresies*, III, 18, P.G., VII, 1932, cit. to Drd. Fer Nicolae, *op. cit*., p. 549.

[41] Troparion of peasna III of the Canon of Matins Sunday Df. Easter, in Pentecostar, Bucharest, 1953, p. 7.

[42] St. Irenaeus, *op. cit*., III, 16, P.L., VII, 925, cit. to Drd. Fer Nicolae, *op. cit*., p. 550.

into receptacles of divine life. In time, the divine life is communicated, and it is the act by which it takes root in the Absolute and takes part in the divine[43].

Through Christ's sacrifice, time escapes the power of sin, death, and nothingness. In the face of the open nothingness of being, for existence and time to be saved, the divine Logos as man had to stand. The cry "*My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?"* ("But for a Small Moment | Neal A. Maxwell | BYU Speeches")(Matthew XXVII, 26) is the expression of the full vision of the nothingness that threatens to engulf existence, and which had to be overcome for the cosmos and time to receive transfiguration and graceful fullness through the resurrection[44].

On the cross, the eternal made time allows into Him all that was negative in time, not only to consume it and to reverse its meaning, to fill it with light, so that the glory it has from the Father (John I, 14) may henceforth come to us through time, to show that time, far from opposing eternity, it is God's chosen receptacle to communicate true eternity[45].

Through death on the cross and the resurrection of the Savior, time prevailed over sin and death. In Christ's resurrection, time has reached the final stage of its fullness (This is why Christ is the absolute summit of our salvation, the plenary form of time). Jesus Christ having risen, restored through the restoration of an updated content of life, full time, led him to the perfection to which he aspired. Now of resurrection, time is transfigured. The resurrection of Christ, the beginning of the new creation of the world and time. The moment of resurrection transcends and cancels, at once, the falling aspect of time, with its most painful consequence, death. He discovers the meaning of the "passover-passing" time to eternal life[46].

After the resurrection, Christ is closer to the creature, being raised Himself to a maximum state of communion with all believers. Jesus Christ is close to everyone, not as an external person, but as an inner, spiritual reality, and through it we grow spiritually during our transfiguration towards a pure life of intimate relationship between our ego, situated in the temporal dimension of existence, and Jesus Christ. The One who transcends His eternity and enters time, so that we may enter the eternity of love of the Holy Trinity. This is the fulness of time fully realized through the resurrection. Creation and time are filled with light as they enter a new region under the sign of the eighth day of the kingdom of light, of resurrection to eternal life. Time is turned to the time of resurrection, which is beyond death.

This is why the resurrection of Jesus Christ is the celebration of the cosmos and time[47]. Without going out of time, but rising above the sinful experience of time, we meet the reality of Christ, Who, through the resurrection, lives in a form close to our temporality. Having perfected time, Christ ascended to the Father. After the Ascension, Christ's own time unifies earth and heaven, time and eternity.

Christ's connection with time and the world is intimate even after the Ascension, through the Holy Eucharist. In the deified time of the Church the creature must be assimilated to the glorious time of the Lord. The fulness of Christ's time opens the time of fulness in the church[48].

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[43] Louis Lavelle, *Du temps et de l'éternité,* Aubier, Paris, 1945, p. 18.
[44] Drd. Fer Nicolae, *op. cit*., p. 550.
[45] O. Clément, *Notes sur le temps*, p. 92, cit. to Drd. Fer Nicolae, *op. cit*., p. 550.
[46] Drd. Dan Ciubotea, *op. cit*., p. 199.
[47] Drd. Fer Nicolae, *op. cit*., p. 199.
[48] Drd. Fer Nicolae, *op. cit*., p. 199.

3. THE TRANSFIGURED TIME OF THE CHURCH – THE ENVIRONMENT OF THE DEIFICATION OF THE BELIEVER

Through the resurrection a new existential order is proven, for through it the kingdom of heaven breaks out in earthly time, the new eon, eternity, as an anticipation through transfiguration of the eternity of the world[49]. Believers are already saved from this cunning age now (Gal. I, 4) and tasted the powers of the age to come (Heb. V, 5). If the resurrection from the dead means the change of eons, the beginning of the new, then the new eon began with the resurrection of Christ, which is the beginning of the general resurrection (I Cor. XV, 20-23).[50]

The transcending of our profane time into a sanctified time takes place in the theandric structure of the Church, which shines with divine light emanating from the glorious Body of the Lord. The Church is the Pentecost of eternity in time, and in her we take part in the conditions of divine life[51]. The time transfigured by Christ is present in the theandric fullness of the Church in which we are given the eternal beauty of the Kingdom of God. Through the Church, time is more intimately connected with Christ and, through Christ, with the life of the Holy Trinity[52].

The Church can be defined as the "place" of the meeting of time and eternity, as they met before in the person of the incarnate Logos. In the holy time of the Church the believer lives the divine life, for through the Church the life, which is eternally in the womb of the Father, after being communicated to the Triune Persons, is imparted by grace to spiritual creatures. In time, believers take part in sacramental eternity, because the Church is the extension of divine life[53].

Since the Church is the community of Trinitarian life in the Holy Spirit, she absorbs believers into her living reality, to pass them from the time of sin into eternity of communion with God. Through the mysterious Body of Christ, the Eternal manifests itself as the subject of communion with the call of those who are in time to communion with Him. This precisely means the transfigured time of the Church, through the sanctification of the believer[54].

The life of the Church is the new life of the Spirit, who makes present the reality of Christ within us and Who says: Come!

The action of the Holy Spirit, who calls us to dialogue of communication with Christ and with the entire Holy Trinity, achieves the fullness of time through the deification of the believer. Believers become by the grace of the holy temples in which the Holy Spirit shines and in which we take part in the eternal divine life that flows out in the deified time of the Church.

It is uncreated grace that makes possible the entological transformation of human nature. By grace God has made possible the living relationship with Him, which consists in a continuous transcendence of us towards Him and in His intimate communication with us. What was deified in Christ during His time is His human nature appropriated by the divine hypostasis. What must be deified in the time of the Church is our whole nature, which must enter union with God, live the transfigured time of the Lord's glorious time[55].

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[49] Fr. Corneliu Sarbu, *op. cit*., p. 102.
[50] *Sasse*, art. cit., p. 201.
[51] Paul Evdochimov, *op. cit*., p. 125.
[52] Drd. Fer Nicolae, *op. cit*., p. 552.
[53] M.Y. Congar, Ecclesia de Trinitate, in Irenikon no. 2, tome XIV, 1937, p. 131, cit. to Drd. Fer Nicolae, *op. cit*., p. 552.
[54] Drd. Fer Nicolae, *op. cit*., p. 552.
[55] Drd. Fer Nicolae, *op. cit*., p. 552.

In the new time of the Church, the believer is saved from life torn apart by death and lives on the plane of divine life, lives the uncreated life of Christ: "I no longer live, but Christ lives in me" (Gal. II, 24). This is the purpose of the deified time of the Church, and the Church the purpose of sanctified time. The state of deification is an inner opening of our being in its temporal dimension, towards eternal divine life, an exit by sacramental grace from the immanence of time, towards transcending it into an eternal union with God, without a breaking of the boundaries of time and without a merging of our human nature with the divine, just as in Jesus Christ the deified human nature did not emerge from the coordinates of time and space until after the resurrection. The likeness of God is the attainment of eternal life, which for the believer begins beyond time. Deification means for the Christian the entrance into the eternity of God's life: "As the Lord, putting on flesh, became man," says St. Athanasius the Great, "so we, believers included in His body, are deified through the Logos and henceforth have eternal life as our inheritance[56].

The divine life, enshrined by grace in human nature, transfigures our being and raises it to the fullness of existence. The time in which the believer lives is no longer a time open to death, as in Martin Heidegger, but a time in which the believer opens himself to divine life and the fulness of grace. Human existence transcends temporality in that it is destined for a life that transcends the frames of time into eternity. Man is a traveler to eternity[57]. It is no longer a time and existence towards death, but an existence towards deification, in which the creature lives time in communion with heaven. Now the Christian becomes the friend of light and transfigured time, in which he unites with the divine. He takes part in the Absolute in the ford of time through which the uncreated divine light flows[58].

The time of the Church is a continuous actualization-contemporalization of the work of salvation conducted by Jesus Christ. For the Church, the time of life presented has only one meaning: it is the time of salvation. This means that the Church's time expresses the maximum value of time. The holy time of the Church is par excellence the time of encounter with God, an encounter which also involves the presence of one's neighbor[59].

Every liturgical connection of the Gospel places us in the event narrated. "At that time" – the consecrated form with which every liturgical reading of the Gospel begins, signifies sacred time, contemporaneity.

In the celebration of Christmas, we see the birth of Christ, and the risen Christ appears to us on Easter night and makes those who celebrate eyewitnesses of the Resurrection. In the liturgical dimension every moment is near, for its content is present in everything else. "In the grave with the body, in hell with the soul, as a God in heaven with the thief, and in the chair, you are with the Father and the Holy Spirit, filling everything."[60]

On Christian holidays there is no longer the inactive time of infinite repetition, but everything is still finally. The same divine act, which took place at a precise moment in history, is always offered in Mystery. He has the power to open time and be behind any moment, as the true content of all moments[61].

The season of feasts is a holy time, sanctified by the real-mysterious presence of Christ and transformed into a factor of objective salvation, that is, all events connected with

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[56] St. Athanasius the Great, *op. cit*., III, 34, P.G., XXVI, 397 A.B., cit. to Drd. Fer Nicholas, *op. cit*., p. 553.
[57] Fr. Corneliu Sârbu, *op. cit*., p. 83.
[58] Drd. Fer Nicolae, *op. cit*., p. 554.
[59] Drd. Dan Ciubotea, *op. cit*., pp. 200-202.
[60] P. Evdochimov, *op. cit*., p. 208.
[61] P. Evdochimov, *op. cit*., p. 208.

objective salvation[62]. The services of the Church show a liturgical manifestation of time, its authentic manifestation of service in sanctifying man.

The religious force liturgically attributed to the dates of the astronomical calendar shows their function as sign and foreshadowing. Thus, the 12 days between Christmas and Epiphany (Dec. 25 – Jan. 6) foreshadow the 12 months of the year. In the Church Fathers – the Sabbath, being the seventh day of the week among the Jews, Sunday does not replace it but constitutes the eighth day, or the first in the absolute and unique sense. If the days of the week symbolize the totality of history, on the contrary, the day of resurrection, Sunday is the eighth day, Easter weekly and symbolizes eternity[63]. Thus, the whole mystery of time and eternity is summed up for Orthodoxy in the meaning of Sunday. Sunday is the time when eternity gives birth to time and the moment it receives it. Sunday is paradise found and eschatology inaugurated, the haloed moment of that "fiat" of the Creator and the dark light of the eighth day in which time will be no longer (Rev. X, 6-7), for God *"will be all in all"* (I Cor. XV, 28).[64] The 40 years in the desert, the 40 days of the Saviour's fast, the 40 days of Great Lent are the days of waiting before reaching the "promised land." Thus, the time of fasting represents in small the totality of history, the time of waiting.

On the contrary, the 50 days between Easter and Pentecost are considered as 50 Sundays, a time of joy, symbol of the age to come, already begun[65].

The Orthodox calendar is a living organism for believers. He does not come to measure time, but to give it an expression, a face to the progress of the weather. The calendar organizes time, but not in a material sense, but spiritually. The moments in the calendar are units of rhythm, not measurement, time being something alive, the calendar is its rhythm[66].

The time of the church year and in general the time of Christian life is not an advance towards exclusively terrestrial goals and towards the definitive end of individual life, but an advance, in cycles ever closer to God or towards the eternity of full communion with Him. In the church year we advance from "glory to glory" but each year the next in a circle closer and closer to God, to the eternal glory that awaits our being[67].

CONCLUZIONS

A final aspect of the value of time is that of the ecological factor. The Parussia of God and the ashatological events connected with it have a historical side and a suprahistorical side. As the end of history, Parussia is a temporal event. But seen in its content, it transcends temporality and penetrates eternity. Time will be seen and judge of man's deeds in the public judgment, for he keeps our deeds imprinted in his "memory."[68]

In terms of teaching about the place of time in eschatology, Western theology differs somewhat from Orthodoxy. Anchored too much in the cosmic-historical perspective, the Roman Catholic eschatological conception cannot give time its due transfiguration into the next life but teaches that there will be time there too[69].

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[62] Fr. Corneliu Sarbu, PhD, *op. cit.*, p. 101.
[63] P. Evdochimov, *op. cit.*, p. 209.
[64] Drd. Fer Nicolae, *op. cit.*, p. 555.
[65] P. Evdochimov, *op. cit.*, p. 209.
[66] Fr. Corneliu Sarbu, PhD, *op. cit.*, p. 101.
[67] Fr. prof. D. Stăniloaie, *The Road with Christ the Saviour through the Mysteries and Feasts of the Orthodox Church*, in *Orthodoxy*, XXVIII (1976), nr. 2., p. 416.
[68] Fr. Corneliu Sarbu, PhD, *op. cit.*, p. 104.
[69] Toma d'Aquimo, Suppl. q., 84 a 3, cit. to Fr. Dr. Corneliu Sarbu, *op. cit.*, p. 73 – in note.

Through Christ, time fulfills its vocation as a servant of man to salvation: "It is impossible to suddenly become a good and wise man," says St. Anthony the Great. There must be persistent thought, living, trial, weather, striving, and longing for the good thing."[70]

In an authentic Christian sense, time has a unique value because only in it can the Christian be saved. Therefore, the meaning of time transfigured in Christ and lived in sacramental form in the Church is that of the realization of the Kingdom of God, of glorious fulness in which Christ will be "First and Last" [71]

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[70] *Philokalia*, vol I, p. 10 (trans. by Prof. D. Stăniloaie, Sibiu, 1946).

[71] Drd. Fer Nicolae, *op. cit*., p. 555.

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