

**SYNTHESIS OF THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN
THE HOLY TRINITY AND THE CHURCH:
SAINT MAXIMUS THE CONFESSOR'S
MYSTAGOGICAL VISION**

His Eminence Dr. IRINEU ION POPA¹

Keywords:

Dogmatic Theology, Holy Trinity, Theology of Church, Saint Maximus the Confessor, Mystagogical Perspective.

Abstract:

The Son of the Father chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, and appointed us for adoption because he desired to restore all things to Him. In order to fulfill the Father's will, Christ the Savior has set the beginning of the Kingdom of Heaven on the earth and revealed His mystery to us, and through His obedience has achieved the redemption of the human race. Thus, the mystical Body of the Lord, present in the mystery of salvation economy, progresses visibly in the world through the power of the Holy Trinity. This beginning and development are fortified through the blood and water that came out of the pierced rib of the crucified Lord Jesus Christ, and are promised by the words of the Lord about his death on the cross: "And I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all people to myself". Therefore, whenever Liturgy is celebrated Christ the Savior – "our Passover" is sacrificed for us and for our salvation. At the same time, through the Holy Eucharist, the unity of believers, who form one flesh in Christ the Lord, is represented and achieved.

**SAINT DIONYSIUS EXIGUUS AND HIS APOLOGETICAL
WORK IN ROME**

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Keywords:

Saint Dionysius Exiguus, Rome, Apologetic Work, Daco-Roman

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Monastic Tradition.

Abstract:

From all those illustrated above, one can conclude on the Scythian monk's genuine tendency for the Christian Church calendar. It is quite sure that, in addition to a very good knowledge of the Alexandrian chronology, the Holy Father was definitely helped by "astrological knowledge which Deceneus' reform, about 600 years before, had put in the hands of Burebista's Daco-Getae all over the Daco centralized state, including Scythia Minor, teaching them to contemplate the 12 signs of the zodiac, the course of the planets, the rise and fall of the moon, the extent to which the solar disc exceeds the surface of the earth, the race of the 346 stars around the celestial pole and the complete astrology".

**STEPHEN HAWKING'S DEIST POSITION ON THE ORIGIN
AND MEANING OF HUMAN EXISTENCE.
A CRITICAL APPROACH FROM THE PERSPECTIVE OF
ORTHODOX THEOLOGY**

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Keywords:

Contemporary man, origin and meaning of the human existence, Christ, science, Stephen Hawking, evolutionary theory.

Abstract:

The question of the meaning of human existence is an object of research of the human spirit in an ontological and ineffable way, rather than of science and art. This is a question both old and new, precisely because man, diverting from the Origin, has also lost the Target, being in a constant search. The great weakness of the evolutionary theory, along with its precarious origin, is that it cannot provide the certainty of the goal towards which a man must run. However, the human spirit cannot accept death as the absolute finality of such a beautiful and harmonious creature. Nowadays, the answer to the meaning of human existence is more uncertain than ever, not because of the denial of meaning, but because of the multitude of meanings and paths that are proposed. Paradoxical, plurality of principles means absence of principle, just as

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polytheism is the same as atheism. As such, with regard to the meaning of human existence, Stephen Hawking promotes the deistic view, which denies by affirming. He cannot give a certain image of the human target, because he cannot explain the origin of creation either. Hawking believes that the universe will end suddenly, but the Divine Revelation speaks not of the end but of transfiguration. However, the real and correct meaning can be discovered in those who have reached the measure of human fulfillment. An honest self-inquiry brings to our attention the saint, conqueror of death and full of the beauty of virtues, like his Model, Christ, the God-Man.

THE PARABLE OF THE GOOD SAMARITAN IN SYRIAC LITURGICAL TRADITIONS

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Keywords:

Syriac Theology, St. Ephrem, Parable, Exegesis, Syriac Liturgical Tradition.

Abstract:

This makes their interpretations lively and enjoyable. Ordinary people could draw profit out of this. Even minute points are taken care of in this sort of biblical interpretation. The curiosity of the readers is taken care of. Sometimes details that are absent in scripture are fished out from oral traditions, Targumic and Rabbinic interpretations etc. As a result the readers come across a very fruitful way of coming closer to the world of revelation in the context of meditation and prayer rather than sterile intellectual scrutiny devoid of the soul. The homiletic purpose of the authors is self-evident. Liturgical poetry is for pedagogical motive that takes the readers to the presence of self-revealing God. Vivid imagination, incredible insights into inner psychology, intriguing details of biblical presentation, vibrant dialogue of various biblical figures, lively narratives, dramatic tensions etc. appear here and there, making their scriptural interpretation very much present and influential upon the mind of the readers. In a way the Syriac Fathers try to explain the message of salvation with the help of psychological, typological and symbolical methods of interpretation. They are not tied down to

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verbalism, historical details and insignificant elements of scripture. They take the scripture as it is alive here and now. It speaks to the present. It is not a dead letter of the past. Intellectual scrutiny is not their key of interpretation. Human elements in scriptures attract their attention. Syriac liturgy is very much enriched by these sorts of patristic literature, out of which Syriac Christian theology and mysticism flourished into what it is now.

SOME CHRISTIAN REFLECTIONS ABOUT THE „HUMAN MIND” (ANΘΡΩΠΙΟΝ ΝΟΥΣ) IN SAINT JUSTIN MARTYR’S PHILOSOPHY

Rev. Lecturer MIHAI CIUREA, PhD⁵

Keywords:

Human Mind, Epistemology, Platonic Philosophy, Holy Spirit, Divine Grace.

Abstract:

The present paper examines how Saint Justin Martyr, an early Christian Apologist and Philosopher, developed an authentic Christian epistemology using Platonic language and ideas. He explores the role of the human mind within the spirit, seen as the heart in biblical anthropology, and how it leads to Jesus Christ when aided by the Holy Spirit, particularly in his main work, “Dialogue with Trypho”. Saint Justin argues that Christianity is the true philosophy and demonstrates its superiority when compared to Platonism and Judaism. The central debate revolves around the meaning of grace, specifically expressions like “grace to understand” or “grace to know”. This discussion also touches on divine and human activities in relation to human freedom and rationality. Ultimately, the philosopher asserts that rational knowledge and graced knowledge are not in contradiction but rather complementary aspects of the same epistemology, both aiming towards an authentic Christian way of life. This submission to Christian principles results from both divine intervention and human cognitive efforts.

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**MARTYRS – THE PROTECTING WALLS OF THE CHURCH
REFLECTIONS ON MARTYRDOM IN THE WEST SYRIAC
LITURGICAL TRADITION**

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Keywords:

Martyrs, Syriac Areal, Liturgical Tradition, Syriac Theology.

Abstract:

My paper entitled “Martyrdom in the West Syriac Liturgical Tradition” is an attempt to explore the notion of ‘Martyr and Martyrdom’ in the West Syriac (Antiochean) liturgical tradition. The paper explains the notion of martyrdom in Sacred Scripture, Syriac Orient, and West Syriac liturgy. The paper also attempts to clarify some theological themes related to martyrdom considering prayers from West Syriac ferial breviary, called Šhimo.

**ZECHARIAH 9:9 – MATTHEW 21:5: THE TYPOLOGY
BETWEEN “ALREADY” AND “NOT YET”**

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Keywords:

Typology, Zechariah 9:9, Matthew 21:5, orthodox interpretation, modern exegesis.

Abstract:

Any exegetical approach is based on a principle, which states that the “how” of an interpretation depends primarily on the “why” of that interpretation. Therefore, before embarking on such an exegetic path, we must ask ourselves: Why do we want to interpret this text? For an Orthodox Christian, the answer should be a very easy one to give because it must be in accordance with the purpose of our spiritual life,

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which is deification, the union with God. That is why the first question this paper wants to answer is: What is our place in this entire mechanism (which has become increasingly complicated in time) of interpreting a biblical text?

Essential to this endeavor is that it directs exegesis towards a very personal approach, which stems from the understanding of Scripture as being – as St. John Chrysostom said – the love letter that God addresses to man. Therefore, the effort of the exegete must focus on the approach of Scripture from the perspective of the addressee of this letter: the centrality of the reader becomes essential for any exegetical endeavor. This paper aims to open the way for a coherent response, in accordance with the Orthodox experience, to the challenges inherent in the current biblical interpretation.

THE BOOK OF PSALMS IN THE ASCETIC PRACTICES OF THE PHILOKALIC FATHERS

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BOGDAN ȘOPTERIAN, PhD⁹**

Keywords:

Psalms, chanting, Philokalic Fathers, spiritual life, hermits.

Abstract:

Reading, psalmody, and assuming and incarnating the texts of the psalms by monks offered us the possibility to become aware of the role that the psalms have within the spiritual life. The daily reading or psalmody up to the level of achieving a mysterious identity between the hagiographer and the reader (see the example of Abba Philemon) may place the contemporary man, either monk or laic, in the proximity of God, in the field of direct/immediate sight. Even though reaching such a level of experience is reserved for the mystics, those who dedicate their time daily to reading psalms and psalmody enjoy the spiritual fruits of the Psalter. Before all, reciting the words that the Holy Spirit has inspired to the hagiographer offers man the possibility to become a part

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of the same grace that will accompany and guide him to understand the divine revelations. The reader will become able to know God by adopting the experiences of the holy authors who have come to a level of understanding of the heavenly realities. Then, the psalms offer man the necessary discernment to distinguish between good and evil and to choose the path that leads to salvation. Thus, the reader will dominate his passions and will have a virtuous life. Nonetheless, he will achieve the power to defeat the devil and he will shatter from the beginning his temptations.

We consider that this synthetic research can be developed in other studies which can focus on only one of the Philokalic Fathers mentioned above. Saints Barsanuphius and John or Saint John Climacus may well become the subject of more thorough research which may analyse in a much narrow context the way these saints relate to the reading of psalms or to psalmody.

EPIGRAPHIC TESTIMONY REGARDING SAINT DEMETRIUS OF THESSALONIKI

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Keywords:

Saint Martyr Demetrius of Thessalonica, inscriptions, martyrs, Roman-Byzantine Empire.

Abstract:

From Mount Atos, from the Vatopediu Monastery, we have an Engolpian reliquary from the c. XII, of St. Demetrius, gilded silver with dimensions of 11.7 x 6.5 x 6.5 cm. The following inscriptions appear on the engolpion: A "Σὺ μὲν εἶ, Χ(ριστ)έ, σκέπη μου, μάρτυς λέγει· θεῖος δ' ἄγγελος στέφει κορυφήν δέει", ("While the martyr says: "You, Christ, are my protector", the divine angel catches the head with a crown"). B "Ἐν εἰρκτῇ βληθεὶς ὁ γεννάδας εὐθέως σταυροῦ σφραγιδι θανατοῖ τὸν σκορπίον.", ("After being struck in prison, the fighter immediately kills the scorpion with the sign of the cross"). C "Καὶ ἀμφὶ διπλῶ στέφει ταινιωθήσῃ βαλῶν Λυαῖον καὶ σεπτῶς ἐναθλήσας", ("And he was crowned on both sides with a double crown. After he struck Lyaios and piously endured suffering"). D "Λυαῖον χειρὶ Νέστωρ vallée ἐν τάφῳ",

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(“Nestor throws Lyaios into the grave with his hand”). E. “Λόγχαις τρωθείς πέπτωκε σῶμα μ[ὲν...] πρὸς Χριστὸν πνεῦμα δ' ἔπτη”, (“After being wounded with spears, the body fell[.....] and the spirit flew to Christ”). F. “Κ(ύριό)ς σε ρώννυσιν ὁ Θεὸς ἡμῶν ὁ ἀνορθῶν ἀεὶ τοὺς κατερραγμένους”, (“The Lord strengthens you, our God, He who always restores the fallen”).

A reliquary engolpion of St. Demetrius from the XII-XIII, gilded silver with dimensions of 4, 8x 4.2x1 cm, from a private collection bears the following inscription: "Φρουρόν σου μύρον, πίστιν ἔχων καὶ πόθον Συμεῶν· Ἄθως. Δομήσατό σοι, Δημήτριε μέγιστε σὸν Προκοπίῳ", (having faith, love and the protection of your bridegroom. Simeon. Athos. This was made for you, a great Demetrius with Procopius).

LIFE AND DEATH FROM ADAM TO CHRIST IN THE WRITINGS OF SAINT GREGORY OF NYSSA

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Keywords:

Gregory of Nyssa, death, immortality, incarnation.

Abstract:

Life and death are not two distinct topics, but they are one sole topic, essential for each and every of us. Saint Gregory of Nyssa, in his works, helps us to understand this subject in a better way. He takes into account the possibilities offered to man to overcome his condition as a ephemeral creature and to live in communion with God, from the perspective of immortality. He does not consider death as the end of man, because “nature was created for immortality.” Man was not created immortal in terms of his nature from the very beginning by his Creator. He was not created mortal either, because God cannot be the cause of death in the world. In fact, in original heaven, death did not exist. It fell upon the foreparents only in the moment when they transgressed the law. Adam's sin separates man from God, the only one who is eternal and immortal. Man, losing his participation in good, he also loses immortality. Death has its own way to work on people from the moment Adam fell until the Incarnation of the Son and a completely different presence and work from the moment of the coming of the “new Adam”.

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DISCOURSES OF SAINTHOOD AND THE EDUCATING OF THE SOUL IN LATE ANTIQUE MONASTICISM

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Keywords:

Sainthood, Monasticism, desert, Spiritual Guidance, Ascetic Education, Late Antiquity.

Abstract:

This paper explored the theme of sainthood in late monasticism. I pointed out that ascetic practice was incorporated into monastic life because it could provide an essential means for spiritual progress. From this perspective, the monk's ascetic life towards sainthood was accompanied by spiritual exercises understood as a kind of ascetic discipline or self-improvement. Therefore, I proposed an understanding of late monasticism by analyzing the category of spiritual exercise in the spirituality of the desert. In short, ascetic practice was a central factor in the monk's spiritual perfection.

Also, I developed here a discourse of spiritual guidance understood as a path to spiritual elevation. Thus, if ascetic discipline created an opportunity for holiness, the practice of the spiritual direction became a condition to achieve this holiness. Our thesis is that the body of the monk was an external sign of his personal sainthood. And indeed, as we saw above, the true sign of sainthood was written on the body of the monk.

THE BEGINNINGS OF THE COMMUNIST DICTATORIAL REGIME IN ROMANIA. THE STATUS OF THE ROMANIAN ORTHODOX CHURCH (1945-1947)

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Keywords:

Romania, communist regime, dictatorship, Romanian Orthodox Church, clerg.

Abstract:

On February 27, 1945, the Deputy Commissar for Foreign Affairs of the U.S.S.R., Andrei Ianuarievici Vășinski, asked King Mihai I of Romania (1921-2017) to immediately dismiss the government led by General Nicolae Radescu and appoint Petru Groza, one of the leaders of the Communist Party, as Prime Minister of Romania. In order to forestall any trace of disobedience from the Romanian authorities, the Soviets ordered the demobilization and disarmament of numerous units of aviation, artillery, infantry, police, and firefighters in Bucharest. All firearms were placed under Soviet custody. In vain were the protests of the Romanian General Staff, which showed that "disarmament has the most serious consequences on the morale of the entire population, as well as the Romanian army, which cannot be subjected to such contradictory treatment, namely: on the front, Romania is a comrade in battle whose joint efforts are required, and on its territory, the object of capture, disarmament, and vexation." In addition to Russian tanks and patrols, 4.000 N.K.V.D. agents were also sent to the capital of Romania. (the future K.G.B.), their mission was the complete neutralization and disarmament of all Romanian defense units and the imposition by force of a communist totalitarian regime following the Russian (Soviet) model. Between 1945-1947, the early years of the communist dictatorship in Romania, the Romanian Orthodox Church was among the institutions that enjoyed "special attention" from the new regime. Atheists, according to the political doctrine they had embraced, the Romanian communists of this period drew up the coordinates of State-Church relationships that would define Romanian Orthodoxy for 45 years. In just a few years, about two-thirds of the Romanian Orthodox hierarchs in office at the time of the establishment of the communist regime were forced to retire or resign. The removal of the hierarchs was considered undesirable. The appointment of obedient people in the Orthodox dioceses became a priority for the communist regime after taking power. However, the pressures would intensify at the beginning of 1946, when Patriarch Nicodim initiated a series of meetings with Roman Catholic prelates, meetings that indicated a possible orientation of the Romanian Orthodox Church towards the West and a separation from the Russian Orthodox Church. In the years to come, thousands of priests, church singers, theological students, monks, and nuns will be arrested and sent to re-education camps, tortured, and killed because they did not want to collaborate with the communist authorities, continuing to think freely

and, unacceptable for a dictatorial regime, to abuses and injustices of any kind.

HISTORICAL IDENTITY AND SPIRITUAL INTERFERENCES THE WOODEN CHURCH DEDICATED TO THE “ASSUMPTION OF MARY”, “THE BEHEADING OF ST. JOHN THE BAPTIST” IN THE VILLAGE OF BĂDULEȘTI, CRÂNGULUI TOWNSHIP, DÂMBOVIȚA COUNTY

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Associate Professor ALEXANDRINA BĂDESCU, PhD¹⁵

Keywords:

Wooden Church, Patrimony, Historical Monument, Architecture, Mural Painting.

Abstract:

The wooden churches in Dâmbovița County are essential testimonies of the local history, serving as monuments around which the community has crystallised its identity. These constructions are not mere buildings but also true sources of inspiration, fostering the reverence and humility towards the local history and traditions. Dâmbovița County stands out for the diversity of historical monuments with artistic and architectural value, while wooden churches significantly contribute to this cultural landscape. Located in secluded areas, often within old cemeteries, these churches are an integral part of the national heritage. A detailed case study of one such church, located in the village of Bădulești, Crângurile Township, dedicated to the "Assumption of the Mary" and the "Beheading of St. John the Baptist," highlights a unified and original construction. With a rectangular plan altered by a slightly widened nave and a detached pentagonal apse of the altar, along with distinctive structural and decorative elements, these churches form a cohesive and profoundly original group. Built in a characteristic style, featuring a rectangular plan and a semicylindrical longitudinal vault, these churches do not exceed the mid-18th Century in terms of age. A

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detailed analysis of the volume and plasticity of the church reveals three distinct construction stages, highlighting its evolution over time. The in situ research, including the direct and raking light examination, as well as the stratigraphic surveys and tests for the removal of deposits, led to the identification of two valuable mural paintings. Recently, the church underwent conservation and restoration works on these paintings, emphasising the importance of preserving this cultural heritage.

ART AND NON-ART

Associate Professor, EMILIA BURLAN, PhD¹⁶

Keywords:

Art Teachers, The Art, The Non-Artist, Museum, Visual Artists.

Abstract:

Whoever wants to gain access to art must, first of all, make contact with it. Gradually, the whole richness of works of art is revealed and arranged, when we perceive it correctly, with the messages it conveys to us. Pictorial form develops according to well-defined rules, from the simplest to the most complex images, in a process of gradual differentiation. Form development is an autonomous mental process between perceptual and conceptual representational concepts. Authentic art today is much more difficult to accept. Our eyes have been reduced to the role of tools of identification and measurement, unable to perceive the meaning of what we see. Mere contact with the masterpieces is not enough, a visit to the museum or browsing through an art album, art is best understood in the loft among pencils, brushes, canvases, chisels, symbols, plastic artists, art teachers. The artist must have the wisdom to find meaning in particular events, understanding them as symbols of universal truths. These qualities are indispensable. But not only artists possess them. The privilege of the artist is the ability to perceive the nature and meaning of an experience in relation to a certain artistic technique, thus being able to make them tangible. The non artist is left speechless by the fruit of his sensory wisdom. He cannot give it a proper material form. He can express himself more or less intelligible, but he cannot express his feelings. In the moments when a human being is an artist, he finds a configuration for the informed

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structure of the received. Children's works should not be viewed negatively, as something unsatisfactory, something to be overcome as soon as possible, the better on the way to competent art. It is natural for the artist and the art teacher to imagine that his field is self-contained, governed by its own rules and destined for its own purpose. Yet we cannot hope to cultivate the sense of visual form in any part of the curriculum if this sense is neglected or ill-used in art.

THE LIVING SPACE ARTISTIC REFLECTIONS OF THE INTERIOR

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Keywords:

Art, Reflection, Space, Interior, Artistical Perspective, Technics.

Abstract:

Postmodernism pulverizes any boundaries of art, the artist gaining absolute freedom. Even if on the contemporary artistic scene the ready-made, the happening, the object, the street-art, the digital art and other conquests of the new occupy the foreground, the painting retains an important place. In contemporary art, the artistic approach outlines a mix of styles and approaches through which the interior takes shape. The theme is approached by the artists of the new figurative, as the Leipzig school was called, marking a real break in the way of looking at reality and to process the invading visual of the present. Rooted in the art of Gerhard Richter and Luc Tuymans, the new painting by artists such as Tom Eitel, Matthias Weischer or the Polish Wilhelm Sasnal is both brutally honest, aggressive and relentless, but also full of a strange poetry of everyday banality and of a metaphysics of ridicule.

THE ARTISTIC LEGACY OF PAINTER JOSEPH KEBER AND HIS CONTRIBUTION TO THE ICONOSTASIS PAINTING AT ST. DEMETRIUS CATHEDRAL IN CRAIOVA

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Keywords:

Art, Painting, Icon, Iconostasis, Church, Byzantine, Expressiveness.

Abstract:

This article provides a brief overview of the life and artistic contributions of the eminent painter Joseph Keber, focusing on his role in adorning the iconostasis of St. Demetrius Cathedral in Craiova. As a highly expressive artist, proficient in both easel and monument painting, Keber emerges as one of the most prominent figures among 20th-century church painters. Influenced by the ornamental style of Wallachian Renaissance painting, he adeptly crafted iconographic ensembles, showcasing unparalleled mastery of ornamentation and the sumptuousness inherent in iconographic painting of his time. Notably, his Byzantine-style rendering of the St. Demetrius Cathedral iconostasis, stamped by original ornamental motifs and the artistic and chromatic expressiveness of his characters, solidifies his work as a priceless adornment in the realm of church painting.