

## DUMITRU STĂNILOAE. A MISSIONARY OF SACREDNESS

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**Abstract.** This is a presentation of Dumitru Stăniloae as an author and of his contribution to the philosophy of religion, in translation. The fragment translated from his work concerning Origenism, its interpretation and its erroneous evaluations. The relation between the Gnostic and the Christian perspectives and terminologies are also approached, with certain pantheistic interpretations. All eternity God has surrounded himself with a world of spiritual beings or their evenly matched spirits. Also, the vision of St. Maximus is presented in its personalistic and optimistic characteristics, but also in the unspeakable complexity and substantial density of his writing.

**Keywords:** Dumitru Stăniloae, Origenism, Gnosticism, Christianity, God.

He was born on November 1903 in Vladeni, Brasov. His parents were peasants and pious Orthodox Christians. He goes to the confessional primary school in his home village, then to „Andrei Saguna” high school in Brasov and then to the Faculty of Theology in Cernauti. He continued to study theology for one year in Athens and one year in Berlin. He obtains his PhD in theology in Cernauti with the paper „Patriarch Dosoftei of Jerusalem and his ties with the Romanian Principalities” and then becomes professor and president of the Theological Academy of Sibiu, where he is active for almost twenty years (1929-1947). At the same time he is editor-in-chief of the national ecclesiastic magazine „Telegraful român” („Romanian Telegraph”). Then he becomes professor of asceticism and mysticism at the Institute of Theology in Bucharest. In 1958 he is arrested and is held as a political prisoner – in Jilava and Aiud prisons – until 1963. In 1965 he becomes once again professor of dogmatic theology in Bucharest.

He publishes numerous and extensive theological dissertations and Christian metaphysics treatises, such as *Orthodox Dogmatic Theology* (3 vols), *Orthodoxy and Romanian Spirit*, translates and comments important patristic works like *Philokalia* (12 vols), *Maxim the Confessor* (2 vols) and others.

His works were translated and published in the United States, Great Britain, France, Germany, Greece, Switzerland and Belgium. Theological magazines dedicated whole issues to comments and studies of his works by well-known Western Christian metaphysicists and theologians.

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Institute in Paris and of the University of Bucharest. He is awarded important prizes of the Anglican Archbishopric of London, the Faculty of Protestant Theology in Tübingen and others.

### **Where There Is Love, There Is Meaning**

*An excerpt from Dumitru Staniloae's  
Introduction to **Ambigua** by St. Maximus the Confessor\**

We shall now bring you a synthesis, after Evans Jonas, of the origenist doctrine, whether it comes entirely from Origen or it appears, in some points, with exaggerations and inferences proceeded from origenists of various times following his time, especially from those of the 14<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> centuries. Evans maintains that all points come from Origen who was influenced by the gnostic system of his time, though he created his own gnostic system with a Christian terminology, yet maintaining the characteristic features of the other gnostic systems that considered individual entities to result from and return endlessly to a fundamental essence, in a pantheistic sense. Here is this system, in Jonas' exposition:

Since eternity, divinity has surrounded itself with a world of spiritual beings or minds of the same essence with it, necessarily emanated from it, even though Origen calls them created. They are, at the start, pure, noncorporeal beings, lacking number and name, so that they form a unity, owing to identity of nature, power and work and to their union in knowledge with God Logos (the beginning of the second anathematism of the 5<sup>th</sup> ecumenical Synod).

Above these spirits is the Son Who is, nevertheless, lower than the Father. Only the Father is "non created". He is "the light". The Son is, in relation to Him, only "the brilliance of the light". The Holy Ghost is, to the Son, in the same relation as is the Son to the Father. The Son, as a brilliance of the Father, throws light on all the other beings, but He is much weaker than the Father, Who is the light. The Holy Ghost, who comes from the Son, is still more limited than the Son in power and work. Both hypostases, coming from the Father, are "creatures", but since eternity. With them starts the creation of inferior spirits who are not created, either, as they come from the divine being (E. Jonas, op. quot p. 179-181, where there are many quotations to this effect).

As it can already be seen, there is great ambiguity in this thinking. On the one hand, the Son is the brilliance in eternity of the Father, Who is the light; on

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\* St. Maximus the Confessor, *Ambigua*, Part I, trans., introd. Dumitru Staniloae (Bucharest: Publishing House of the Biblical and Mission Institute of the Romanian Orthodox Church, 1983), pp. 32-42.

the other hand, he is called “creature”. Likewise, the other spirits are called “creatures”, yet they are considered, at the same time, to have existed from eternity and from God's being. That is why, Saint Maximus insists on explaining in Chapter 7 of *Ambigua* that beings are not “part” of God in the sense of their unity in nature with Him.

Origenism claims to be Christian, but does not succeed in eluding the Hellenistic-gnostic influences. For it, the dominating fact by which the spirits get off the unity and reinstate it is freedom of will and, by that, it claims to be Christian, unlike the gnostics who saw the dominating fact in knowledge. But what kind of freedom is that which, in the end, reinstates them all in the same unity and then makes them fall out of it again and again, endlessly, according to an implacable law? Another ambiguity of origenism: the spirits, though representing a multiplicity in relation to God, are, nevertheless, a unity, lacking number and name. They are and are not different from the two hypostases starting from the father. “With the two hypostases, they can be called, with a certain liberty, the plirioma of the origenist system” (E. Jonas, op. quot. p. 182).

On the other hand, their number is limited, for God himself is limited. He creates (or, better to say, from Him emanate) only as many spirits as can be governed by Him (E. Jones, op. quot. p. 182; there, too, in Note 1, he gives quotations from Origen, preserved in the epistle of Justinian to Patriarch Mina, which ends with the ten anathematisms sanctioned by the Synod as well as in the epistle of Jerome to Avitus: “If God's power were without limits, He could not think Himself, for the infinite is, by its nature, boundless. He is limited. He has created only as many beings as He can embrace and lead and keep under his Providence; and He has created only as much matter as He can order”). This proves, once more, the pantheist conception of origenism. God Himself is subject to some laws, He is conditioned by these laws, being, therefore, limited in His power.

In their unity in eternity, the spirits find themselves in a happy rest of immobility. Then, how does motion arise? “Tired of divine love and of the sight of God, they have turned to what is worse”. Anathema II tells us. Certainly, this can be explained by the premise that God is not without limits. But, then, how can something limited exist from eternity?

“They have grown cold in their love for God” (Anat IV). By growing cold, they have become souls. The souls are spirits grown old in love. But only with humans, this growing cold is so great that the spirits become souls. This growing cold in love is their fall. The grade they fall into corresponds to their growing cold in love. Some spirits fall to the grade of cherubs, others to the grades of other angels, others to the grade of human souls, others to the grade of daemons (E. Jonas, op. quot p. 183). But all are of the same being; they differ only to the extent of their growing cold towards God. And, according to how far they are from God,

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they get lighter or heavier bodies, bodies more opaque, ethereal bodies (Angels), voluptuous or earthly bodies-carnal – (humans). (E. Jonas, op. quot p. 186-187). Origen states, sometimes, that these bodies and, therefore, matter, are attached to them by God as a punishment for having detached themselves from unity; at other times, he says that the spirits themselves, getting separated from God, form an ethereal or material crust for themselves (E. Jonas, op. quot p. 185).

While the other gnostic systems speak about various natures of existence emanating from God, origenism sees the difference among angels, humans and daemons not in their nature, but in their will, which is nearer to or more remote from God's will. That is why, humans may become, in other stages of existence, daemons or angels, just as angels may become humans or daemons and daemons may become humans or angels. For any being is capable of both good and evil, whatever the grade on which it is placed.

Yet, it is not in the course of the present form of creation that they can change these grades, but in future forms, separated among them by different ultimate judgements of God.

These worlds can succeed one another under the form of a cycle, in a number unknown to us. But, finally, in a really ultimate judgement, all spirits will gather again by will in the initial unity. Yet, that reunion of all will not be definitive, either; it, too, will have an end, since God will never be infinite in order to satisfy, eternally, the contemplation of the spirits. Consequently, a new cycle of worlds will start, and so on and so forth (jonas, op. quot p. 193). God will always be inferior to the thirst for perfection in knowledge and love of these beings. Here, we have a new contradiction. How can a God, limited in his responsibility eternally to satisfy the spirits emanated from Him, produce spirits with such an infinite thirst? From a point of view, they seem superior to the God they emanate from.

To this eternal come and go, up and down, of the spirits, in constantly changed grades, to this endless and meaningless merry-go-round, never free from hope, yet never with hope fully satisfied, with no real personal identities, Saint Maximus opposes the eternal mobile rest in love for and contemplation of God – the One who is really infinite – of persons eternally aware of their identity, in the endless happiness of communion with God who, through Trinity, is in eternal communion, to whom they have ascended, rising from their initial position by a motion planted in them by God, who wants to expand his communion with other beings, too. Humans stay, eternally, humans and distinct persons; they stay humans in their specific entirety, but deified even in their body, differing from man to man, as everyone's soul is different, advancing towards this deification by their efforts to communion, helped in grade, in earthly love which acquires, by that, an unspeakable value. For, how could the love of one for another be possible if it were not stimulated by what everyone brings specific in it and by an ever

greater, endless thirst for love? How else could one explain the unconditional responsibility everyone feels for the others, here, in earthly life? The continuous breaks in this advance put a seal of relativity on all there is. Everything falls, in the origenist conception, in a really boring relativism, in an eternal lack of full satisfaction of hope in absolute perfection (...)

Saint Maximus will not deal, as in *Ambigua*, with the refutation of all origenist errors. He will do that only about the theory of the fall of the spirits from their initial unity and of the origins of motion in them. But, in the way he expounds the teaching of the Church, one may see that he aims at the origenist errors.

What has, actually, made Saint Maximus launch out in this struggle against origenism and why has he done that, giving exact explanations to some passages in Saint Gregory?

The last thing is explained by the fact that, as we have seen, the VI<sup>th</sup> century origenists used some passages of deep meaning in Saint Gregory of Nazians, which could be interpreted as favouring their errors. What made, in the first place, Saint Maximus venture the underlining of the fundamental contradiction between origenism and Christianity was the use of origenism as a basis for the new heresy that started taking shape, namely monenergism leading to monothelism, in whose direct life and death combatting Saint Maximus engaged himself some time later<sup>1</sup>. Like other Fathers, Saint Maximus did not practise theology for the sake of of theology, but for the needs of the Church of his time.

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<sup>1</sup> Monenergism and monothelism appeared as an intermediary between the orthodox monophysism and diophysism and were supported by the emperor (Justinian – editors note) to conciliate the two divided parts of the empire. But that was, actually, disguised monophysism. For, since the work and will of human nature was denied, this nature was no longer a real nature. Without motion or work or will, nature is no longer nature. Saint Maximus says: “The only, true expression of a substance is its natural, conscious power. We are not far from truth when we call this work natural, strictly and primarily characteristic of nature, as its specific motion, more general than any Duality belonging to it and, without which, it is just non-existence. For, according to this great teacher (Dionysius) only non-existence has neither motion nor existence (*Ambigua* 5). Hereby, we see how origenism lay at the basis of both monophysism and monothelism. The meeting of these three can be seen, for instance, in Theodore of Pharan, a monothelite bishop (620 to 650). He said that the soul could not put power on the body to make it free from mass and gravity: “But this was done in the embodied Word. Because It came out without mass and without body from the Virgin's womb, not to be undone. Thus, it came out of the grave, thus is passed the open gates. Thus it walked on water, because It had no body” (E. Amman, Theodore of Pharan, in *Diet. of Cath. Theol.*, VI, col. 282). N. Ozolin, following G. Florovschi, says: “This is not far from Origen's ambiguous histology. To Origen, Christ's body was an entirely wonderful body (*Contra Celsum* I, 33). God, the Word, could not take our body because he did not sin before embodiment, like the other spirits that fell into the embodied state, as human souls, owing to sin (saint Maximus recalls Theodore of Pharan in “*Opuscula theologica et polemica*”, P. G. 91, p. 136). After resurrection, the body of the Word entirely melted into deity, so that no distinction can be made between Him and us” (art. quot, in “*Messenger*”, quot p. 246).

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Monenergism – as an initial form of monothelism that started appearing about the years 620, as a formula of conciliation between monophysism and the orthodox teaching, a formula liked by the Byzantine emperors – maintained that in Christ there is no work, as well, that is, there is no motion of the human nature. The idea was, obviously, characteristic of origenism. For if motion appeared in pre-existent spirits as a form of their fall, and Christ's pre-existent spirit did not come into the body by fall, Christ could not have a human work. Hereby, it follows that salvation is achieved only through God's work, man being reduced to a puppet in God's hand. But is this salvation?

That is why Saint Maximus joins the combatting of the origenist error about spirits pre-existent in the primordial unity and fallen into bodies, wherefrom they are again carried into that unity, with the affirmation of the positive role of motion, that is of human work. He inverts, as Sherwood notices, the origenist triad: staying in the haenad, motion through sin and birth in the seen world and the new rest in the haenad from which the spirits have fallen. To Saint Maximus, first is creation then motion and, in the end, as a result of it, endless rest unto God (P. Sherwood, *op. quot.* p. 93).

But this is not merely a question of changing the order but also of changing the sense of every member of the triad. According to origenism, there is no creation proper but a staying in the initial unity; then, as a result of sin, motion and, afterwards, a return to the initial unity, not to a superior and eternal one. There is no proper creation, because God is not free to produce such a creation and motion causes the appearance in body and continuing in body does not lead to something new but is a return to what was in the beginning. It is an endless motion in a circle. Nothing properly called new appears. Motion has no positive, creative sense.

With Saint Maximus, motion has a main creative role and leads to the really eternal rest, in an endless life, which did not exist before and from which one cannot fall any more because, the felicity of communion with God the tripersonal being infinite, it causes no boredom. Sherwood has remarked the principal importance of motion with Saint Maximus. But, equally important is the eternal rest which is a rest of the human person in the boundless love of God the personal and, consequently, inexhaustible in the life He conveys to us.

Thus, Saint Maximus does not contend himself with refuting, by texts of the Holy Scriptures and of the Saint Fathers, the origenist assertion about the sinful character of motion, but shows its affiliation to the nature of the creatures. It has been planted in the nature of the beings by God himself. God, on their creation,

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The idea that the Word will not stay with the body after resurrection has been found in many passages in Origen, also by Andrew Louth (*The Origins of the Christian Mystical Tradition*, London, 1981, p. 65). That is why, our soul, too, must pass, on its way to the union with God, beyond the embodied Word (*ibid.*).

implanted in them the motion animated by the desire to advance towards eternal rest, in loving communion with God. “The main argument of Maximus in his refutation of origenism is based on the doctrine on motion”<sup>1</sup>. “For the refutation of origenism (as a basis of monenergism) it has been necessary to demonstrate that substance and work, better to say the coming to existence (in the body) and rest, are not to succeed one another immediately. The middle term which has been necessary is natural motion; to combat monenergists it had to be shown that a work should proceed from – and manifest – its own substance.”<sup>2</sup> There can be no nature without power. And power is manifest in motion or in work. “What has no power has no work. So, work depends on power and power on substance”<sup>3</sup>.

Thus, the triad: birth (or making), motion, eternal rest meets the triad: being and power, motion, eternal rest on beginning, middle, final aim<sup>4</sup>. God has all these and is their source for the being; at the same time, He is above them (the first heads of the first hundred of Gnostic Heads).

The triad: substance, power, work has been taken from Aristotle. But Aristotle did not know the final aim of the motion in everlasting rest above nature, that is in God the One transcendent to nature, to Whom one cannot pass through motion, but through the ravishment by God or through the ecstasy of the one who has prepared toward Him, or has prepared toward this, advancing to God by motion<sup>5</sup>.

Yet, for conscious beings, work is closely linked to will power. Therefore, the triad: nature, power, work is reflected in the triad: nature, power, will power<sup>6</sup>. For, without will power, motion is no work with a final, conscious aim.

In Saint Maximus' teaching, opposed to origenism, an important place is held by the theme of divine reasons. This theme is also to be met in Origen, and Saint Maximus does not reject it, he appropriates it, yet attaches to it another role and meaning. While with Origen, reasons were one and the same thing as the pre-existent spirits, somehow united in nature with the Logos, with Saint Maximus reasons are just thoughts of God, according to which he brings beings to existence by the decision of His Will. Reasons are not existences but thoughts of God, after which beings are created, some of which are persons of indefinite depths. Through creation, a transition is made from the level of thought to the ontological level, from the level of beings thought by God to the level of their existence by God's Will. The human persons seen are not embodiments, brought about by sin, of

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<sup>1</sup> P. Sherwood, *The Earlier Ambigua of St. Maximus Confessor and his Refutation of the Origenism*, Romae, 1955, p. 114.

<sup>2</sup> Idem, *ibid.*

<sup>3</sup> *Opus theol. et polem.* P. G. 91, 23 BC.

<sup>4</sup> Sherwood, *op. Quot.* p. 109.

<sup>5</sup> Sherwood, *op. quot.* p. 105, 99.

<sup>6</sup> Idem, *op. quot.* p. 105.

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some unseen spirits existing in the haenad and emanated from God without His Will. The reasons of the beings have their models in the divine Logos which is the supreme hypostatic Reason and it is necessary for Him – as a Person – to want to create the world, to bring it to existence according to the reasons or thoughts in His thinking, but also in His image. In this is shown God's true power, superior to that of the created existences. Bringing beings to existence, in keeping with their reasons existing in the supreme Logos, He plants in them the motion by which they will conform themselves, as fully as possible and by their own will, with their reason in God, and also unite with Him as Person. Creation causes a ramification of the reasons from their unity in the divine Logos and motion causes their gathering back into this unity. Creation is, properly, bringing to existence the multitude of beings, in keeping with their reasons united in the divine Logos, beings who, by their motion, should come to a close union with the reasons in the divine Logos and, by that, with Him and among themselves. “The multiplicity of beings is seen as one by the unconfused reference of all to the hypostatic Word, the One... The Word is the one that creates all creatures according to their reasons (logoi) pre-existent in Him and achieved with His will”. He helps them advance towards their aim because their reasons themselves, which are also uncreated energies, work in them or collaborate with them, and by them the divine Logos Itself works, which is above reason, entire in every of the reasons working in them, just like in every sub-ray and in every thing reached by that ray the whole sun is present. In this sense, one can speak about a multiplication of the Reason which is One in all reasons and in the beings they work into, as well as about a gathering of all in the One Reason. The full efficiency of Its work for gathering the reasons and the beings made after them in the Self, without confusing them with the Self, is reached by the divine Logos through its embodiment into Christ. Acquiring a body, He, first, sets free the motion of beings from the sin placed in them, not in a non-corporal pre-existence, but after their creation into bodies; primarily, He liberates them from their maintenance in separation from God and then strengthens their orientation towards God, with their true aim.

In this way, the refutation of origenism becomes, with Saint Maximus, a description of the ascent of the conscious beings – and through them, of the entire Cosmos – to God's eternal rest, an ascent to eternal perfection or to deification. Rest unto God is eternal because, He being personal and infinite, rejoicing in Him can never cause, in beings, the boredom, the satiety caused by the origenist deity which is limited or of the same nature as the beings. In this sense, God, though being the bosom of all reasons, is above them; He can never be defined.

Compared to origenism which, on the one hand, depreciated the human body and, on the other hand, limited the blissful rest of the human spirit unto God, conceived as an essence subject of some laws of repetition, Saint Maximus sees in body a constituent part of the human being, man as a whole being God's work. On



the other hand, he sees man, called to eternal bliss, in his communion with the God personal, a bliss which does not mean his getting lost as a spiritual-corporal person<sup>1</sup>. For, a person does not get lost in the communion with another person.

After all, this has been the doctrine of the Ecumenic Synods and the aim of their entire effort for the definition of the Christian faith. The IV<sup>th</sup> Synod, considering that the Son of God the embodied is “of a nature with us in humanity” attaches to man, as a whole, an unspeakable and infinite dignity, while the VI<sup>th</sup> Synod, asserting the deification of the entire humane element into Christ, sees this dignity also in the eternal final aim into which man is called.

Actually, all Synods have formulated the personalist-communitary Christian teaching against the origenist pantheist and emanationist conception under whose Christian terminology the Hellen-pantheist philosophy was hidden. The first ecumenical Synod formulates the teaching of the eternal equality and communion of the Son with the Father, their eternal sacred existence, differing from creation, against the origenist histologic subordinationism, asserting, by that, the eternally personal, communitary and loving character of God, which He could not have if the Son held an inferior position between God and the world. The second ecumenical Synod formulates the equality of the Holy Ghost with the Father and the Son, against the pneumathologic subordinationism of the same origenism, for a love between two which does not include the third is not perfect love, that is, it does not save the distinct, fully personal, character of God. The third ecumenical Synod affirms the real embodiment, as a man, of the Son, the One of a being with the Father, condemning God's disdain of man, implied by nestorianism. The

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<sup>1</sup> Origen, following Plato, divided reality into intelligible and sensitive. Saint Gregory of Nyssa and Saint Maximus have set up the distinction between the uncreated and the created level (Weisswurm, “The Nature of the Human Knowledge”). Therefore, creation is not a mere incorporation of the pre-existent reasons, but the appearance of some plasticized reasons, consonant with the reasons pre-existent unto God. The reasons of the things are, on the one hand, created, on the other hand, copies of the divine reasons, having the latter as a continuously supporting foundation, not to be separated from them, though they can develop other than in agreement with the divine reasons. While with Origen, we have no clear distinction among the created reasons or between the human spirit and the divine Logos, in Saint Maximus' doctrine on motion and on the end of the creature unto God, the origenist theories are refuted, a clear distinction being made between creation and the non-created” (Sherwood, p. 29). Making no clear distinction between human spirit and Logos, Origen does not assert firmly the need of the human mind to surpass itself in order to unite with the Logos. The mind unites with the Logos, somehow discovering itself. This is an idea which will be taken over by Evagrius. “Origen develops a doctrine on contemplation, in which the soul does not go beyond itself... In the union (with God), the mind finds its own nature; it should not pass beyond itself, into another; no ecstasy occurs”. (Andrew Louth, *The origins of the Christian mystical tradition from Plato to Denys*, Oxford, Clarendon-Press, 1981, p. 72-74). In connection with the identity of reasons and Logos, according to Origen, H. Urs von Balthasar says: “The world of ideas is absorbed in the unity of the Logos. Their multiplicity is transformed into the wealth of aspects of the concrete unity which is Christ” (*Parole et Mythos chez Origène*, Paris, 1957, p. 122).

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fourth ecumenical Synod asserts the value and the reality, distinct from God, of man, by the formulation of the “deibeing” of the Son with us, according to His humanity, or His being equal with us, through the assumption of our humanity, for eternity. The sixth ecumenical Synod asserts the integrity of the dynamic human nature unto Christ and its deification for eternity. The seventh ecumenical Synod affirms the eternal persistence of Christ's body, alongside with the perspective of our bodily resurrection, as well as the capacity of our body to be the medium through which divinity irradiates, the integrity of the humane element being, at the same time, maintained.

Today, the same pantheist tendency is manifest, lowering both God and man under the force of monotonous, invariable laws, seeing in humans successive, transient individualities of the same, unique essence, which admits neither the liberty of God, the One transcendent to nature, non-confined to the simple reason of repetition, nor the eternal value of the human person, called, through deification, to the same absolute superiority, in eternal freedom and conscience, distinct and always enriched, compared to nature, which only offers man's melting into it.

Yet, man re-establishes himself in the eternal and all-intimate communion with God, ascending, in union with Christ, to a consonance, through virtues, as expressions of the human will and work, with His reason that is resident, since eternity, in God. On the one hand, he is led, in his ascent, by the embodied divine personal Reason, towards an ever greater resemblance of the personal human reason with Him and, on the other hand, he is encouraged by his free efforts, guided and animated by reason, and also by human will, attracted by divine Reason. Through his ascent, personal human reason rises to the supreme Reason above reason of the divine Person, and we, all, are called to do the same, guiding, alongside us, the reasons of all creatures towards the supreme Reason, after Whose reason they have been made. That is why alongside the personal human reason, the body, too, ascends and, with the reasons of the Cosmos, the Cosmos itself ascends. For, the virtues, rational products of the personal will, sanctify the body and clean the Cosmos, expand it and deepen it through its being seen and used by our voluntary reason, turned pure, not limited and not smeared by inferior lusts.

There is an affinity or a mutual personal love between The Supreme Reason and the created reason, which – by right judgment, by knowledge, but also by personal will – tends to the Supreme Reason thanks to an inner wish or to a conformity, to an increasingly intimate relationship with it as it also exerts an attraction for the created voluntary reason. And the nearness of the created personal reason to the Supreme Personal Reason is not only its ever greater actualization as personal reason, but also a development of its love of the Supreme Personal Reason. This gives power to the knowing human reason to get nearer to God not only through knowledge and, therefore, not only through itself, it also

gives it power to lead, by virtues, the entire human being to God through love. Thus, St. Maximus closely combines love and reason in his outlook. Or he gives a foundation to love in the connection between the personal reasons of the creatures and the Supreme Personal Reason, which works on them through the models of these reasons, with which they tend to unify in the Person of the Word together with the creatures themselves.

The human reason comes to the fore and strengthens by also strengthening the ontological reason of the human being and imposes itself on man with its wish for the Supreme Personal Reason by his liberation from the power of temptations that draw him to a narrowed and exclusive passional relationship with the sensitive surface of things. But also by virtues. For these are the forms of the dynamism of the personal human nature liberated from the slavery of passions, oriented to good and reestablished in its rational genuineness that is equal to the communion with the Person of the Word. "Virtues are the human forms of the qualities of the Divine Reason" (Quaest ad Thalas, 22; P. C., 90, 321 B). By virtues the body itself is raised by reason to God and at the same time it is "rationalized", impressed by reason. The Divine Personal Logos works through them too.

The struggle against the exclusive joining of the bodily pleasures connected to the opaque surface of things, the effort for virtues, the love of God and people as a virtue and an utmost reason are now included by St. Maximus in the outlook of a cosmic rise to God, to the Supreme Reason and Love and, by that, to the advance of everybody in reason and love as a communion with the personal God and among people.

St. Maximus essentially corrects Origen and Evagrius in this outlook of the ramification of the aspects of the divine reasons within the Divine Personal Reason in creatures and of their new rise to the Divine Personal Reason and to their models in That and in the importance attached in this rise to the liberation from passions. According to Origen and Evagrius, existences – in their tendency to gather again in the henaed – are animated by the nostalgia after their previous stage in the initial unity, from which they fell, being encased in the bodies as a punishment. According to St. Maximus it is not a fall of the spiritual beings which occurred on a supersensitive plane – an immanent plane within us – that urges them to gather again in the Word. It is their natural tendency to rise from the fall after creation and to improve themselves, to improve their existence in the bodies according to their preexisting models in Logos and to gather in God through love. If one can speak of their restoring, this is a mere return from their deviation after they were created in the bodies with a view to the everlasting and ever greater conformity with their models given in the divine reasons.

In *Ambigua* St. Maximus demonstrates that souls did not exist prior to bodies as a punishment. They were created simultaneously with the bodies and

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everything God created is good and was created with a view to increasing the good, especially because He created all existences to make them rise, through their own efforts and with His help, to an ever greater resemblance and union with Him forever (P. G., 91, 1328). By the idea of creation and love of God he lays emphasis on His transcendence as a source of everything that exists and of all good.

So St. Maximus positively appreciates the body and the visible world and points to their destination to the everlasting happiness in God. The idea expressed by him that all visible realities had their reasons in God and were created in keeping with the models represented by these reasons is different from the ideas that the souls preexisted and were sent to the bodies as a punishment (they were to come back to their own reason). This is even contrary to the latter idea. The former idea implies God's freedom in the act of creation and the goodness of the entire creation founded in God. The latter idea implies the fact that the act of creation of the sensitive world was imposed by a necessity brought about by the spirits being fed up with God as a finite rationality or by the wish for an irrational adventure. This way Origen denies a really free, good and infinite God, that is a proper God. The former idea implies the conformity of the body with the soul and the other way round in the unity of the person as the body too has a reason in God, a reason united with the reason of the soul or, to be more accurate, a reason shared with the soul as a reason of the integral human nature tending the infinite God as a Person. The latter does not imply such a conformity of the body with the soul and the other way round; neither does it imply the goodness of the entire human nature as a rational unity above reason. This is why what is composed has to be decomposed again and asceticism is directed to this very purpose. This is why Origen castrated himself. In this case the visible world was created out of necessity, because of a previous evil that appeared in the preexisting spirits. And this very world is bad as it is.

But evil has no reason at all as St. Maximus emphasizes (*Ambigua*, 91,1328). The idea that the bodies were created by God with a positive purpose – in keeping with a reason of the human being existing in God – results in the fact that they are called to an eternal existence together with the soul in the infinitely good God, who is, therefore, personal. Consequently, the human beings' rise in God or the gathering of all of them in the Supreme Reason (in Logos) does not mean that the bodies have to be laid down. One cannot accept that the bodies should be laid down as the Holy Writ does not teach such a thing (*Ambigua*, P. G. 91,1329; see also P. G. 91,1328, 1069).

Origen's doctrine mentioned a cyclical movement of the souls: their preexistence in a primeval unity, the fall from this unity, the return to it, a new fall from it, etc. Maximus offers decisive arguments to oppose this theory in Chapters 7 and 15 of *Ambigua*. Once rising to God, human beings cannot fall. Moreover,

they eternally go deeper into Him. Beyond the monotonous narrowing of reason, man gets familiar with the infinity of renewal, which is nevertheless not contrary to reason.

Question is, how is it possible that the movement of the created beings should stop for ever in God if it is given simultaneously with the nature of creatures and is connected to it? St. Maximus resorts to a paradox: "God's stability is also movement" it is not a movement from a finite thing to another; it is a movement stable in the experience of the divine infinity through renewal, in which we are going to have everything. The immobility consists in the fact that the soul does not wish to move from God to something else, for God is infinite. He is the eternal personal source of love in His capacity as the Trinity. He contains everything and anything else is less than He. This does not mean a cessation of vision, of the joy to see, to know other things (*Ambigua*, P. G. 91, 1077 AB). Actually this will be a stable movement, a movement concentrated in the same infinite personal contents, a fulfillment and overfulfilment of any capability of spiritual vision. One could say that this state of experiencing infinite love is beyond movement and stability, a state including both of them. This idea was taken by St. Maximus from St. Gregory of Nyssa. If the souls get bored in God, this means He is not infinite, He is relative and limited, He is the essence subject to some rules of repetition. In Him the souls reach a ceiling and descend in the bodies to repeat this route between two limits eternally: they want to get away from the narrowing to the mere reason and can only get away for short spans of time only. While Evagrius, Origen's supporter, regards movement as an evil, recommends a rapid way out of it and declares that God appears in a mind liberated this way (Chapters 53, 51, 37 of the 60 chapters of W. Frankenberg's *Evagrios Ponticos*, Berlin, 1922), St. Maximus says it is only in afterlife that the soul will get a full view of God thanks to His transcendence. When it comes to Evagrius and Origen it is difficult to find the difference between a God, different from creation, and the souls.

In everything there is the same narrowed, rational pantheism. The human being moves and stops only when it reaches perfection and this perfection he can only have in the personal and transcendent God that is infinite in meanings and love. This is the proof of man's being made for God, different in essence from Him. St. Maximus regards movement as an argument of the existence of the personal God transcending nature as an aim of man's aspiration after the endless communication with the One eternally in communion. Evagrius considered that the soul could see God in introspection; therefore he did not admit the soul's getting out of itself (Sherwood, p. 153, note 57). It is itself the God is bored of. There are some opinions according to which Dionysius the Areopagite regards God as totally transcendent. There is no access to God either in the present life or in afterlife. It is surmised that, by this theory about God's absolute transcendence,

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Dionysius became the teacher of the West (Hans Urs von Balthasar, *Kosmische Liturgie*, ed. 2, p. 40).

According to Urs von Balthasar, St. Maximus made a synthesis between Dionysius and Evagrius and mentioned a union between soul and God or a permanent ecstasy in afterlife, but not in the present one too (*ibid.*). It seems to us that Dionysius does not state an absolute transcendence of God as against the creature. His doctrine about “getting out”, about sanctification, about the progress to the resemblance with God, about becoming God-like makes possible a meeting of the soul with God in this very life. The Christian East saw the question of the relationship between God and the world in a more complex way than the West did. It offered the doctrine of the uncreated energies, no matter whether it called them like that or differently, and also offered a solution by which, on the one hand, God's transcendence is maintained and, on the other hand, he admitted a meeting between God and the creatures, and access of the creatures to God. Not understanding Dionysius this way, the West did not understand him correctly. Hence, the permanent hesitation of the West between the two simplistic extremities: the separation between God and the world in theology and the identification of the world with God in philosophy and mystique. As against the pure extreme of reason or of the mystery, St. Maximus unites both of them in the person.

The solution of the East is to be found with St. Maximus too. Not understanding this dialectical solution, Urs von Balthasar says that St. Maximus, in his letter to Presbyter Marin (P. G. 91, 333 AB), retracted his statement made in *Ambigua* (P. G. 91, 1076) that the saints in heaven would have one single work to do: the work of God (*Kosmische Liturgie*, ed. 2, p. 67).

But if we are more careful about what St. Maximus says in his letter addressed to Presbyter Marin, we can easily see he does not contradict himself. He himself admits he does not contradict himself with what he said in *Ambigua*. Mentioning that in Chapter 7 of *Ambigua* he emphasized that becoming God-like was not the work of our natural power, that it was the work of God, St. Maximus says in his letter addressed to Presbyter Marin: “Therefore, I did not suppress the natural work of those convinced of it declaring that it would only bear the joy of the goods received. I said that it was only the power exceeding the limits of an ordinary being that makes God-like those who became God-like depending on their grace.” In other words St. Maximus says that the work of the human nature is maintained as a happy discovery of the God-like character given to it, not causing this God-like character. He distinguishes between the producing and the receiving functions of the human nature. We do not possess everything through the work of our nature, but we can discover, we can get through it everything given to us. And there is a growth too in this function as we get things that are being given to us.

Then, as Christ manifests Himself in earthly life in the two works, the divine and the human one, it is clear that the human work is not devoid of the divine one. And if, according to St. Maximus, Christ's human will was made God-like without being suppressed, it is clearly understood that His human work was made God-like without being suppressed. This is the foundation on which Christ used to work on the divine things through the human work and on the human things through the divine work (P. G. 91, 593).

It is at that time that people believing in Christ were made God-like as early as their earthly life. Therefore, making someone God-like is not wholly transcendent.

Doubtlessly, St. Maximus thinks the same as Dionysius the Areopagite: like Dionysius he considers God transcendent. But like Dionysius too, St. Maximus does not think that this transcendence rules out the possibility of God's work in people and their being made God-like.

St. Maximus speaks of a certain union of man with God as early as his life on earth. To the same extent he appreciates the movement of the human nature. This movement does not preclude man's being made God-like as early as his earthly life and man's being made Godlike to the highest degree in the life to come does not totally annul the human work. "Therefore, it is quite dear that neither the expectation of the end nor stability means that any work ceases to exist." In the stability obtained in God there is no alternating movement no passage from one thing to another: "This implies persistence in God, an eternal mobile stability, a stable or identical movement, a direct and permanent remaining in the primary cause" (Sherwood, *op. at.*, p. 112). This is the movement in communion, in which those in communion neither separate nor get mixed. St. Maximus' attitude to creation is a quite positive one. It is not a pessimistic one. But this positive attitude does not mean that he has to give autonomy to creation, as Urs von Balthasar hints from the viewpoint of the western Christian spirit.

Movement is positively related to the created nature as is stability (*Epist. 7 ad Ioannem Presb.* P. G. 91, 436 AB). This is why St. Maximus avoids to suppress movement in the creature's everlasting life and he also avoids to deny stability in earthly life. The stability of the creature's reason (of the essence) and the movement of the "modes" make up the double dialectical aspect of creation. A fully statical reality is no ideal for St. Maximus. It is through movement, not through getting out of movement that the creature reaches its infinite aim (*Quaest. ad Thalassium*, 59; P. G. 90, 609 AD). But the creature is not devoid of a certain stability when performing the movement through which it tends to reach God. Existences advance, get nearer to God, increase or decrease, regress, get away, but they remain the same in their reason or essence (*Ambigua*, P. G. 91, 1217).

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Somewhere in the second part of *Ambigua* (the first part as regards the time when it was written) St. Maximus laid an extensive theoretical foundation for the progress of rational beings in spiritual life.

This work was complete when he added, as the first part, the refutation of another erroneous theory that had started to divide the opinions in the Church after he had written the second part. It seems that the second part (actually the first when it comes to the time when it was written) was finished in mid 630 and the first (actually the second as regards the time when it was written) was drawn up only after Sophronius, now a Patriarch of Jerusalem, published a synodal letter, in which he officially supported the human work in Christ even if – by keeping the promise he made in 633 to Sergius, Patriarch of Constantinople – he did not use the phrase “two works”. Though saying that each nature in Christ kept its own work, St. Maximus strongly emphasizes the union of the two works and speaks of a “double work” resulting from the union of the two works. All this shows that the part under consideration was written in 634-638, when Patriarch Sergius and Patriarch Sophronius used to write in a similar way in their synodal epistles (taking as basis the agreement of 633 according to which nobody was to lay too much emphasis either on one work or on two). Then, in this part St. Maximus does not mention the enemies of the “two works”.

In a quite different manner will St. Maximus write after 638, when Emperor Heradius' *Ecthesis* brings about the open conflict between the two parties.

Why did St. Maximus put this Christological part (in which he defends Christ's two works) in front of another writing that had treated the theological bases of spiritual life? Because the ultimate reason of spiritual life could only be a Christological one. It is only if the human work was not demolished in Christ that the faithful man can make efforts for his improvement through his own work. The salvation in Christ does not consist in a judicial compensation outside man, performed by Christ in front of the Father, it consists in an inner recovery of the human nature, which had been a slave to passions because of the affects penetrating it due to Adam's sin. This recovery cannot be possible without human efforts. But these efforts are-not possible without the power transmitted to those believing in Christ, Who did away with the power of these affects in the human nature assumed by Him (*Quaest. ad Thafasium.*, 62; *filoc rom.*, III, p. 62 ff.). Thus, the Christians' spiritual life is the only one by which they appropriate salvation, the foundation of which was laid by Christ through the recovery of the human nature assumed in Himself.

*Ambigua* essentially contains all the theology of St. Maximus as the basis of spiritual life, by which the Christians appropriate salvation advancing to God and in God eternally.

By reading this work, one can infer a grandiose positive vision of the destination of the created world. The world is not something created and



provisional meant for the punishment of the fallen spirits eager to get free from it as soon as possible. To replace this Platonic and Origenian outlook St. Maximus chooses the Aristotelian structure of a world firmly organized forever, to which he adds the Christian dynamism of the advance to perfection that is tantamount to the everlasting rest in God or to God's everlasting rest in it, which also means it's totally being made God-like without any confusion between Him and it.<sup>1</sup> It is called upon to advance morally, cognitively and spiritually until its virtual qualities, which were planted in it according to the divine paradigms, are so fully actualized that they are able to actually hold God or that God is actually accommodated in them. All its reasons and structures will be filled with the paradigms of the divine reasons, which are both actualized in these structures and reasons and above this actualization. The world is a revelation of God called upon to advance from a rather virtual revelation to a fully actual revelation, which means an almost complete union between the natural revelation and the supernatural revelation that also advance, by various stages, to the eternal eschatological revelation. And this very fact means that the world and mankind as a whole and every man taken separately are called upon to be a "temple of the living God", a developing temple, a temple that moves by perfecting itself in God and God moves in them to an almost complete union and transparency; God is emanated from mankind and the world, but man and the world are no independent idols (2. Cor., 6, 16). This temple is also a magnificent work of art if the work of art consists in reflecting the spiritual infinity in the visible forms.

St. Maximus builds the positive vision of this world made eternal in its form completed in God, which boasts an utmost transparency of the divine in it or an utmost actualization of the divine beauty reflected in its forms that are founded in the virtuality of the forms in God. He builds this vision by taking five of the ten Aristotelian categories and regarding them as serving the advance of the world to its everlasting rest in God.

There are five categories showing the well-ordered firmness of the world meant for eternity in the final state of the richest and most suitable combination of the elements residing in it. For the world will eternally be structured according to these categories or they are the fivefold mode of the eternal organization of the world, which, on the other hand, is called upon to advance by movement to an utmost transfiguration so that God may be reflected in it. These five categories are: substance, movement, difference, combination and stability. Substance is the being of creation; the other categories are its predicates. It is meant to last for ever. Difference is all distinctions in the substance of creation. The human being is a different distinction within it, consisting of soul and body; the body is created

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<sup>1</sup> P. Sherwood notices that this doctrine of an Aristotelian origin had become a common heritage of Neoplatonism. The substance-power-work triad is to be found in Jamblichus' *De mysteriis* (P. Sherwood, *op. cit.*, p. 105).

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too, but it is created by a category completely different from the other distinctive forms of substance. By the identity of substance the world remains the same, it does not incessantly change into another one in an Origenian acceptance. But by the permanently new combinations of its different elements it can advance to perfection guided by the possibilities included in it.

The distinct elements of substance are combined in all kinds of modes, some by nature, some others by man's doing. The more recent science discovered several new modes of combining the elements of substance and also the modes they are combined through nature. And who can say how many new modes of combination in nature and by man's doing are still to be discovered? In its life connected to the world and to what is beyond this world, the human spirit has discovered indefinitely varied modes of combining the words – therefore, combining interpersonal and public meanings and acceptations – of combining the forms, colours, sounds. In art the human spirit is called upon to lead the world to the most exquisite combinations and forms that are most capable of reflecting in themselves the infinity of the God-like kindness, thinking and beauty. So the human spirit united with the God-like one is called upon to actualize the virtual richness of this world that is also staunch in its firmness and unspeakably elastic, making possible an unexpectedly varied freedom and imagination of the human spirit. People can reach themselves and can also lead the world to this aim, that is to their supreme rest in God, on one condition only: they should always consider the infinite unifying horizon extending beyond the world and people, the God-like horizon, and should advance to it and in it by means of knowledge, aesthetics, economic usefulness in brotherly communion.

It is only by advancing to the infinite divine aim on all these planes that creation wholly uses the movement planted in it to reach the consummate state that is one and the same with the final stability or with its eternal rest in God, the source of its endless life which will entirely be given to it. It is only if all combinations serve the progress in spirituality that is in the purification of the selfish passions and in the love of all people of one another and of God that the source of the endless love really advances to that perfection in God and to the everlasting rest in Him. For its real advance is from existence to a good existence, following to end in the eternally good existence, which is lived as an infinite richness.

St. Maximus also sees a new gathering together of the creatures' reasons in the Only Reason, the source of their models, in the Divine Logos. This is not the Origenian henaed of some bodiless spirits that cannot boat the God-imbued variety of the visible world. It is the unity of people, which consists of the souls and bodies related to the whole visible world. Mankind takes along with it all the good manifestations of the natural virtual qualities hidden in the world and in mankind itself, manifestations for the completion of which it has taken great pains when helped by the works of God.

The final unity is not a mere return to the unity before the Origenian fall. It includes the greater gifts of the men who were then sent to work in the vineyard. They grew in the knowledge and kindness given to them as an aspiration and partly as virtuality in the beginning, working together in the world. They made room in themselves and in the world for God's wealth of thinking, kindness and beauty in keeping with their power to receive and reflect it, by also actualizing the possibilities planted in them and in the world.<sup>1</sup>

St. Maximus does not attach the greatest value to a petrified existence and a contemplation of this existence, from which the spirits get out by falling, in the Platonic and Origenian acceptance. He values most the everlasting rest in a love to which it grew by the movement planted in it by creation. In the movement of creation to God, God Himself is the mover through His Holy Spirit, Who leads the creation to God through spiritualization, that is, through the real development

In an unspeakable way the God of the Christian faith – as a God made up of three Persons, in His capacity as a loving Father, a loving Son and a spirit of love – is a living God, not a petrified one. He is, of course, stable, but He is stable in love and thus gives us too the eternal stability in love.

The everlasting rest in God cannot but be a rest in our love to Him as a Trinity of Persons. The impersonal essence does not favour love. This is why it inevitably brings about boredom if the one uniting with it does not dissipate in it as a person. Origen's God that brings about boredom is a pantheistic essence. As such it is monotonous and, in this respect, finite. The persons are not bored in God alone, an eternal personal communion that wants to create other persons too with a view to drawing His communion to eternity. Creation begins with love, which is also its aim. The human being as a product of the Trinity love has to grow up in love in order to fully rest in the Trinity love. This is why we are not going to look for God in our past, but in our future, we are not going to look for Him as a source, but as an aim. This is clearly a futuristic and eschatological orientation of

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<sup>1</sup> Lars Thunberg, *Symbol and Mystery in St. Maximus the Confessor*; Separatdneck vom Maximus Confessor, Actes du Symposium sur Maxime le Confesseur, Fribourg, 2-5 septembre, Editions Universitaires Fribourg, Suisse, 1982, pp. 295-96: "The Origenian-Evagrian double concept about providence and judgement reinterpreted and purified of the heresies inherent in the Origenian myth, helps Maximus demonstrate how the structure of the universe and the structure of salvation support together the anthropocosmic fundamental prospect of Christology. This total system now includes an important element movement. Cosmologically, it can be characterized by the double concept of expansion and concentration, and Christologically it is expressed by a vision that is an equivalent of 'thickening' and of 'thinning', which corresponds to Christ's coming into this world and with His return to the Father as a man and as a representative of all believers and of mankind. In *Ambigua* (10, 33) this is dearly related to the idea of the threefold embodiment, therefore to the three general laws of the world: the natural law, the written law and the law of grace; the embodiment of Logos in the reasons of the world, in the reasons of the Scripture and in man (Jesus Christ)."

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the creation, which is being discovered again today by the theological doctrine of Moltmann and Pannenberg.

St. Maximus' thinking offers a comprehensive personalistic-communitarian and optimistic view of the human, which is the offshoot of love thirsting for the perfection in the love of the communion. This is a personalism and a pantheism that are not to be found in any pantheism, the Origenian one included.

But love is no meaningless feeling. It is infinite and equally infinite are the meanings manifest in the reasons of the creation and of the Scriptures. In any person the endless thirst for love is united with the indefinite richness of meanings and with the unending thirst to know and understand them. And the Holy Trinity, an eternal personal communion, ultimately embodies them both, being the origin of both of them and drawing us to It as the bosom of both of them. Where there is love there is meaning and this is why the infinite meaning and the real meaning are not to be found in narrow-mindedness, in the lack of love. A reason devoid of love is a monotonous, narrow-minded reason, a meaningless repetition.

This is why St. Maximus' outlook reveals not only personalism and optimism, but also an undescribably rich complexity. Hence, the excellent quality of his writing, in which he wants to include this complex richness that is however undefined. And this is why there will always be no end of comments on his work. Our notes were only able to render a small portion of this rich contents as much as it was revealed to us while writing them.

### **A Missionary of Sacredness**

an interview with Father Dumitru Stăniloae

*1. What made you serve the Church and how did you progress during your study years?*

A decisive factor that made me study theology and serve the Church was the insistence of my mother, who was the granddaughter of a priest, and of a priest, my uncle, that is, a brother of hers.

The spiritual atmosphere of that time was not going to encourage me in this respect. Our intellectuals, who childishly believed in the 19th-century incipient science and the French atheism, greatly influenced the younger generation of my time. It was believed that everything came down to the material world known by science and nobody sensed the spiritual level of existence.

Hearing that I wanted to study theology, a quite serious classmate of mine in my last high-school year asked me in astonishment “Why are you going to study theology? Aren't you the best of us all? If you want to study theology you're sure to finish it in a few hours.” The teacher of Romanian, who was generously bent on Communism regarded as an order which took care of the people that had been

wronged, looked at me in astonishment too when he heard I intended to study theology. Mention should be made of the fact that, in my old days, I met the above-mentioned classmate several times. He had studied sports and had taught it. He had also written a few scholarly books on gymnastics. Well, he fully believed me when I told him that after a lifetime study of theology I still felt as if I had been a mere beginner. In 1945 I met the teacher I told you about. He had served long years in prison for his Communist convictions and was then refusing to take advantage of what Communism offered him, the Communism that had come to power. And he voiced his disappointment at this system.

But their convictions of their young days were then making me doubt my decision of taking the advice given me by my mother and uncle. On the other hand, it seemed to me that they were not fully grounded either. The unswerving conviction of my parents who went to church and took us, their children, along with them had made me deeply believe in God. This is why the views I have spoken about could not prevent me from fulfilling my mother's wish. I thought that, by combining the study of theology with the study of philosophy, I should be able to clarify the relationship between science and philosophy (both focused on this world) and theology (asserting another level of existence). I asked Metropolitan Bishop Nicolae Bălan of Sibiu to give me this permission. He received me in audience and promised to grant me a scholarship for the Department of Theology in Cernăuți. I told him I wanted to study theology as well as philosophy at the University of that city. I also told him that, when studying theology, I intended to lay emphasis on scholastics, which, as I had heard, united theology with philosophy. Smiling somewhat ironically when he heard what my wish was, he asked me to use all my diligence and study theology.

At that time the intellectuals' world was dominated by two dialectical doctrines, which actually did not differ when considering this world as the sole reality: Hegel's dialectics, which regarded the material forms of existence as deriving from the spiritual ones by a law of contradiction, and Marx' dialectics (dialectical materialism), according to which the spiritual forms derive from the material ones. The former was adopted by capitalist Europe. The latter started dominating the Soviet Union and tempted a lot of western intellectuals, lots of youths of my generation included.

As a first-year student in Cernăuți I could not find reason enough to leave the two dialectical doctrines behind although I sensed that neither of them included the entire reality. The theology that was not minutely studied spiritually and the rather historicist philosophy – both of them studied by first-year students – did not convince me of the divine existence above this world. The language of the old-fashioned books, which were written in a style characteristic of Aron Pumnul [a teacher and linguist of Bukovina, 1818-1866 – editor's note], made me fear that I might no longer be able to write in the language used by contemporary literature.

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After getting the highest marks in all the examinations at the end of the first year, I found it necessary to leave for Bucharest and attend the courses of the Department of Letters and Philosophy. During the 1923-24 academic years I attended the courses of famous professors of that time, such as Mihail Dragomirescu, Ovid Densusianu, Caracostea, Rădulescu-Motru, who had not yet started understanding Romanian Orthodoxy himself, P. P. Negulescu, who totally opposed it. Exactly as theology, their lectures made me belong to this world, with its drawbacks, as a unique reality. By attending these lectures, I was beginning to see that the perceptible world could not possibly be the only reality. I was asking myself: "Am I going to spend my whole life in mental effort without being able to surmount the meaninglessness of existence by taking the road of literature and philosophy as I have done so far? Isn't it more important for me to deal with God, without whom nobody could explain this world ruled by laws?"

It was Providence that made me meet Metropolitan Bishop Nicolae Bălan as I was walking in Strada Academiei. I wanted to avoid him, I did not want him to see me. But he recognized me although he had only once seen me. He stopped and asked me: "Are you satisfied?" I gave him a doubtful answer. "Come back," he said to me. "You are going to have a clearly defined mission to fulfil." "Give me some time, I'm not quite sure," I answered. And a week later I wrote and asked him again for the scholarship to Cernăuți.

I came back to theology. But now I started again to study it with the firm conviction I had reached by the helplessness of our literature and philosophy to persuade me that this world, with the two "dialectical doctrines" trying to explain everything, was not the only reality. I was now warmly attending the Holy Liturgy, feeling Christ's presence in it. I was reading Romanian and German theology books that were now making it possible for me to sense God. The apologetics lectures delivered by Professor Nicolae Cotos, a thoughtful man who, when speaking, discovered new reasons for faith, and the fact that Professor Vasile Loichița was quite near and familiar to me helped me feel the truth of the Christian faith to an ever larger extent. The articles published by Nichifor Crainic and Nae Ionescu in the *Cuvântul* newspaper, which I used to read enthusiastically, also made their contribution to my identifying with the Christian faith. I had already begun to discover, especially in the fragmentary texts of the early church fathers, the expression of this experience of God. To the end of the fourth year this made me write a memorial to Metropolitan Bishop Nicolae Bălan, asking him for a scholarship to enable me to continue my studies in Athens with a view to starting the Romanian translation of the early church fathers, which would make its contribution to the renewal and enrichment of Romanian theology and culture.

The Metropolitan Bishop was not pleased to get that memorial. He thought I was teaching him a lesson. But in the end he granted my request for a scholarship to Athens. And that year when I studied there was indeed extremely useful to me.

First, due to the warmth revealed by the Greek people when attending the religious service; and it was a warmth that overwhelmed me too. Then, the detailed lessons of dogmatics taught by Professors Andrutsos and Ziobuniotis enriched me. But even more useful to me was the fact that, by learning Old Greek, I was able to translate several patristic writings and imbue my own writings with the warmth of their spiritual experience and faith. That year I prepared my thesis for a doctor's degree, which I got in Cernăuți after coming back from Athens. This astonished Metropolitan Bishop Bălan and made him forget the distrust I had inspired him with when I quitted theology after the first year and when I handed him that memorial.

In autumn 1928 I went to Munich where there was a Department of Byzantinology (the Metropolitan Bishop was trying to prepare me for the Department of World Church History of the Sibiu Theological Academy). I was very happy to be able to steep in byzantinology as this made me get nearer to the study of the early church fathers, especially of Gregorius Palamas, who compelled my attention when I read in the church history at Cernăuți that he had been an apologist for the Hesychasts, who maintained that, by permanently praying to Jesus Christ, they saw Him in their hearts in light. This made me go to Paris during my holidays at the end of the term in March-April. There I got the original work of Gregorius Palamas from the National Library and started to study it. In the second term I went to Germany, to Berlin, where I attended the lectures of some illustrious professors of church history, especially of Lietzmann, who was ready to accept the theological thinking of his age too.

At the time German Protestant theology had begun to be dominated by the dialectical theology represented by Karl Barth, Brunner, Osogarten, Tumeysen. It was a real dialectics, opposed to the dialectics created by Hegel and Marx. Karl Barth had inaugurated the theology of a real dialectics that considered a "diastasis" between God and the world, between God and man's life included. Intending to oppose the previous theological pantheism, which regarded the world and Christ as products of the evolution of a unique essence, dialectical theology laid emphasis on an almost insurmountable separation between God and the world. Man cannot meet God and thus liberate himself from sin. He only has the possibility to believe in Him and, thus, ensure his redemption in the future world.

After reading Barth, but also Palamas' manuscripts, it was but natural for me to see the great difference between Orthodoxy and Barth's dialectics. However, this helped me gradually sense the great difference between Orthodoxy and western Christianity. I understood that Orthodoxy too revealed the dear-out distinction between God and the world, therefore it exceeded any pantheistic dialectics that was rather apparent. Still, God is not separated from the world. On the contrary, He penetrates it with His uncreated energy defended by Gregorius Palamas.

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In the West the separation between God and the world began by scholastic theology, especially by the theory of Anselm of Canterbury in the late 12<sup>th</sup> century. He said that Christ, by crucifixion, atoned for God's hurt honour and as he brought about forgiveness for us, he withdrew to heaven, leaving a pope to replace him, a pope giving people forgiveness in the merits obtained by Him under the form of a created grace, as a supernatural, but created state conferred by the sacraments.

The Protestants said then: "If we do not get the divine power in the sacraments, why do we need them anymore?" And they stuck to a Christ that preached to them. The non-Protestant sects went to the end and some of them even refused to recognize Jesus as Christ or as God and the Saviour. They regard Jesus as a kind of human messenger, as a kind of prophet born of the union of man and woman and thus dying not for our sin, but for his own. The world and mankind are still delimited by their rules. The Son of God does no longer come to this world through the Virgin and He does no longer save mankind from sin by the cross.

This separatists mentality of the so-called western "Christianity" nourished the western philosophical thinking too, which, since the Renaissance, has materialized in pantheistic systems similar to those before Christianity. This is why they actually differ from marxism economically only. This is to be seen in Romania, too, today after the removal of Communism as a collectivist economic system.

Considering this separatistic religious mentality of the West, I gradually understood – by starting from Gregorius Palamas – the real evangelical teachings of Christ and the Apostles, according to which He comes into us through Sacraments as Paul says: "For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ" (Gal. 3, 27). Or "yet not I, but Christ lived in me" (Gal. 2, 20). Or "Know you not that you are the temple of God, and *that* the Spirit of God dwelleth in you?" (I Cor. 3,16).

This is how our people experiences Christ in itself and in everything blessed and sanctified by the Church. Orthodoxy is neither the separation from God as in the "Christian" West nor the pantheism placing God and the world on an equal footing. It is the presence and the work of Christ and of the Holy Ghost in everything by prayer accompanied by the updated cross. God is an active presence of transcendence in immanence. Otherwise, why should Christ have changed into man if He were not united, in a way, with those opening themselves to Him? Through its dependence, everything I see in this world opens me a window to an independent beyond and to a loving Saviour, therefore a personal or interpersonal one.

This is the line followed by my theological thinking and writing after I came back to this country and began my activity as a professor at the Theological Academy of Sibiu in autumn 1929.



2. *How did your theological outlook progress during your activity as a theology professor in Sibiu through your contact with the Romanian thinkers of that time and what was your attitude to them in your writings?*

Shortly after I was appointed professor at the Theological Academy, Metropolitan Bishop entrusted me with the publication of *Telegraful Român*, the national church newspaper founded by Metropolitan Bishop Andrei Șaguna in 1854. In this capacity it was but natural for me to note and express my attitude to the ideas upheld by the Romanian writers in their books or in magazines and newspapers.

I made friends and got a real spiritual relationship with Nichifor Crainic, who was a Christian Orthodox poet and essayist contributing to *Gândirea*, *Calendarul* and other publications. I used to spot his articles and he used to spot mine in *Telegraful Român*. What I liked about him was the way he learnt Orthodoxy in the people's life, in the thoughts with which it used to gather wheat and bake bread. He came to Sibiu in 1934 to deliver a lecture. We met at Metropolitan Bishop Brian's and it was then that he offered me to contribute to *Gândirea*. He asked me to deal with the relationship between Orthodoxy and Romanianism, which I myself had dealt with in *Telegraful Român* and thus defended Orthodoxy against its enemies. Then we met more and more frequently either in Sibiu or Bucharest. He used to ask me to send my contributions for every issue of *Gândirea*. What I appreciated about him and what he appreciated about me was the close relationship between Orthodoxy and our people's spirituality. He was a man who served long years in prison like none other just to make known the Romanian people's Orthodox faith, in his writings. He was no member of any political party. While he was in prison, his wife died. His daughter lived in cellars for a long time, a fact which weakened her so much that she died soon after the release of her father from prison.

I also appreciated Nae Ionescu's Orthodox thinking, but I saw no progress of the relationship between his love of his nation and the Orthodox faith with him. Once he wrote that nationalism had no moral obligations and then I pointed out in *Gândirea* the moral character of nationalism in an article titled "The Ethics of Nationalism." In various other articles I tried to reveal the moral qualities our people had thanks to Orthodoxy, the spirit of communion, regard for one's fellow-beings, compassion. All of them referred to the work of Christ's uncreated energy, of the love of the persons loving one another.

Thanks to Crainic and Nae Ionescu, we finally witnessed the beginning of a Christian thinking in Romanian philosophy. One could also add Mircea Vulcănescu and, to a certain extent, Rădulescu-Motru, who, in his book entitled *Romanianism. The Catechism of a New Spirituality* voiced his understanding of the Romanian people's Orthodoxy that he described rather as a psychological phenomenon than an ontological truth. Generally Noica followed in the footsteps

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of Plato, Hegel and Heidegger, of their dialectics, but sometimes he had some bright idea that surpassed the rationalism incarcerated in this world (for instance, in the article “Intelligentia quae non intelligit”, published in *Transilvania* in January 1992) or considered the Nicene Council as the beginning of Europe. Mircea Eliade introduced sacredness into the immanent dialectics, a thing obviously untrue showing that one could not deny the existence of sacredness in the world. Looking upon things like that, although he does not admit it openly, Eliade implicitly accepts the idea that the world, with its wretchedness, is not the sole reality. The same conclusion could be drawn from Eugen Ionesco's considering this world absurd. He pointed out, to a certain extent, that it could not possibly be the ultimate reality (see the article “An Evidence of the Church Today” in the above-mentioned *Transilvania*). The dialectical evolutionism and the rationalism of the previous philosophies were thus turned to dust and ashes.

Quite inevitably, the writings of Lucian Blaga riveted everybody's attention at that time. In the beginning I was happy to see him use some theological terms. It was clear that he had studied theology in Sibiu during the First World War and that he was the son of a priest. But in 1942 some colleagues of mine, who taught at the Theological Academy, drew my attention to the fact that in a recent book written by him, *Religion and Spirit*, Blaga said that Christ was a myth. This assertion had been made tibly one single German writer, Strauss, in 1830 in his book *Das Leben Jesu*, which, as Professor Ioan Lupaş said in astonishment, Blaga's father used to read during the breaks between the chants from lectern to the altar. After those colleagues expressed their indignation I read more carefully *Religion and Spirit* and other Blaga books. And so I found out that his thinking was actually included in pantheism by expressing the idea that everything in this world was out by the “Great Anonymous” out of His own body. This made me, though regretting, write a book, *Mr. Lucian Blaga's Attitude to Christianity and Orthodoxy*, to prevent people from considering him a Christian thinker only due to some Christian religious terms used by him.

Thinking of his system later, I realized that Blaga's philosophical work actually borrowed not only some Christian religious words, but also some Christian ideas, which made his system evince a lot of contradictions. So, for instance, we are wondering how the “Great Anonymous” can still be afraid of the men cut out of him when this cutting shows him as a pantheistic essence subject to a necessity of producing parts cut out of him. For fear is a personal quality. And then how should the “Great Anonymous” be afraid of the parts cut out of him when they are smaller than he? And if they are his size, as a kind of children of his, they cannot be prevented from knowing him by knowing themselves. Anyway, how can he be bigger if he is afraid of the parts cut out of him?

Blaga rightly sees the sacrament in the created world; the pantheistic philosophies do not see it this way. This is a Christian idea too. So he introduces the

Christian sacrament into a pantheistic world: a sacrament man cannot understand, not because it is impossible to understand in itself, not because man has no capability to understand it, but because he is voluntarily prevented by the "Great Anonymous" from understanding it. And can a sacrament stay unpenetrated, through its own will, not through its very quality and man's impossibility to penetrate it? And can the "Great Anonymous" be so mean spiritually as to keep man away from the joy of knowing it? And does mutual knowledge among persons not bring about their joy by making them forget about loneliness?

If Blaga had been more resolute in penetrating the Christian idea of God, all these contradictions would have disappeared. So God would have realized He was completely incomprehensible through Himself. But he would also have helped man make progress in His knowledge and this is why He would also have bestowed upon him the quality of expressing Him in metaphors, Him, who is impossible to express in all the infinity of His reality.

So Blaga made the ultimate sacrament descend into immanence and he also did it by the fact that, in any knowledge in the world, he saw a union between what is finite and what is infinite, between what cannot be known by man and the possibility to know it (*The Dogmatic Aeon*). This way there is no progress in man's knowledge. Everything remains unchanged when other new metaphors are produced that give no information of the reality. We live secluded in a continuous creation of imaginings, of apparitions.

Blaga could not get away from Christianity, but he took away from it that beautiful part by which man is raised by God from his sin and limitations through His love.

By drawing a positive conclusion, we could say that, through his failure to deny Christianity, Blaga actually opens the gate to the acknowledgement of the truth of the Christian faith, exactly as Cioran, who brings this about by not admitting the rationalistic explanation of a world devoid of God, exactly as Mircea Eliade, who cannot deny sacredness, but wrongly attributes it to this world and does not see its transcendental origin. The difference between Blaga and Mircea Eliade, on the one hand, and Emil Cioran and Eugen Ionesco, on the other hand, consists in the fact that the latter two see the wretchedness of the world devoid of God, whereas the former think the world is satisfactory as it is because actually it is still rich and wonderfully harmonized by God in a certain way. Generally speaking, they show the inconsistency of a dialectics that would like to replace the difference between God and the world with a contradiction within the world, which actually does no longer see the evil as evil. Their dialectics – actually as a failure of any immanent dialectics – points out the truth of the difference between God and the world, which is a contradiction only when man does no longer want to recognize God and thus the evil is born. When he recognizes Him, the relationship between God and the world is a relationship of God's

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love of the world created by Him. The above-mentioned Romanian thinkers involuntarily shattered the simplistic and conceited rationalism of the meaningless pantheistic philosophies and pointed out that the human enclosed in itself through its rationalism could not get rid of its wretchedness, of some strange and useless products. They opened the way to the understanding of the real fulfillment of the human forever through the God of love, whose Son made himself a man, therefore he made men his brothers and sons of the father to get spiritually richer endlessly and get all possible joys from the communion with God of love and his fellow-beings united through love in Him. Man without God is nothing or it is an absurd wretchedness and so is the world. Through God he partakes of the endless good. Where there is no God, nothingness gains ground as do the contradictions of the seeming assertion of the ego, which is actually a weakening by not participating in the communion with God and his fellow-beings. It is only where there is God that there are gifts alone, for in Him there is everything endlessly and lovingly. He who meets God meets Christ actually, meets the God and master of all people who lacks nothing. The Romanian people know Him who is independent of everything and on whom everything depends. This is the Absolute Being, "Everybody's Master," on whose will everything depends in its existence and also in its everlasting happiness. So He cannot be but personal.

*3. What made you move from Sibiu to Bucharest and what were the charges against you when you were imprisoned during the Communist regime?*

After the setting up of the government headed by Petru Groza in March 1944, he, who was aware of how things stood in Sibiu, sent a message to me saying he was dissatisfied with the lack of eulogies for him in *Telegraful Român* I was in charge of. Unwilling to accept the style imposed by him, I had to give up publishing the newspaper. But Groza wanted me to give up my office as a rector of the Theological Academy too. So two of my colleagues brought letters demanding this from him to Metropolitan Bishop Bălan. After being members of an extreme right-wing party, these two colleagues of mine had joined Groza and were asking him themselves to dismiss me from my rector's office because I did not want to join the official policy. After the Metropolitan Bishop put up staunch resistance for two years – and Groza had not wanted to grant him any audience all this while – he asked me to resign as he could not oppose any more.

As I had previously been called to fill a vacancy and teach ascetical and mystical theology at the Theology Department of Bucharest, I left Sibiu. Hints were given to me that, if I was to stay there any longer, other misfortunes would be in store for me. In Bucharest my job was soon lost and I was entrusted with the Dogmatic Theology Chair at the courses for persons preparing for their doctor's degree. One of the assistant professors at the Chair of Ascetical and Mystical Theology was Father Benedict Ghius. He introduced me to a group of monks and intellectuals he belonged to. This group was later named the Burning Stake after

the title of a poem read by poet Sandu Tudor at one of their meetings, who was ordained at that time under the name of Father Daniel. This group included intellectuals like thinker Alexandru Mironescu, poet Vasile Voiculescu, etc. We used to gather at the house of one of us, but we also delivered lectures in a room in the Antim Monastery. Lots of intellectuals interested in lectures attended. One of the members of this group was Andrei Scrima, an assistant professor at Anton Dumitriu's Philosophy Chair. In 1956 he was able to go abroad and granted an interview on the radio to Olivier Clement, speaking of the resistance put up by some Romanian intellectuals, monks and priests to communism in Romania. The interview was published in *La Reforme* in 1957 or early 1958. Several of us were named there.

In summer 1958 some members of the group were arrested and in early September 1958 I was arrested too. All of us were sentenced to several years' imprisonment. While in prison, I used to say my prayers and explain the Christian faith to people living in the same cell with me, who changed quite often. In 1963 I was set free after a general amnesty decree. Two years later, in 1965, I was appointed again at the Theology Department and was allowed to continue to contribute to church journals. People working with the Department of cults used to tell me: "What are you waiting-for? Start writing right now! Radio Vatican and other foreign radio stations are asking what's the matter with you."

I once received the Russian translation made in Moscow of Vladimir Lossty's book *Essai sur la theologie mystique de l'Église d'Orient*. I showed it to one of the directors of the Department of cults and asked him for permission to go on publishing *Philokalia*, the first four volumes of which I had printed in Sibiu in 1945-48. "Do you mean to say," the director asked, "that the Russians have again been more rapid than we? Go ahead with the volumes you have!" I went to the Patriarch of that time, Justinian, and asked him to have *Philokalia* published. "If you can arrange things with the people at the Department of Cults..." he said to me. "I have already talked to them and they are all for it," I answered. "Then go ahead with the remaining volumes!" And this is how, in 1976, I started publishing the other 8 volumes of *Philokalia* after the 4 previously printed in Sibiu.

Then I published *Orthodox Dogmatic Theology* in 1976 and the other theological books and patristical translations.

**4.** *What is your opinion of the personalism stated by Rădulescu-Motru and what relationship do you discern between it and the personalism of Orthodoxy emphasized by you? And what is your opinion of the pragmatism that has widely spread in recent years?*

Rădulescu-Motru's personalism was a reaction to the pantheistic philosophies, which emphasized the essence and thought that they saw everything when seeing a few qualities of this essence. They overlooked the value of a person's uniqueness. Therefore, they also overlooked the responsibility of a person for

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another and the joy brought about by a person to another. But Rădulescu-Motru reduces the person to a mere psychological feeling of each individual. Then, by considering it energetic personalism, he did not say what the purpose of the person's activism was. Christianity sees the person's importance founded in God Himself. The foundation is the entire existence. God is both a unity of being and a Trinity of persons. The being really exists in persons alone. As the unity of being gives the persons' unity, it accounts for the necessity of one for the other. But the difference of the persons makes life of the being not be monotonous and dry, it is full of love among persons. It is here where the persons' energy is manifest. Because it is achieved in persons, there is a movement, an active energy in the being. In the persons of the same being there is actually the interest of a person in another one, the love among them, the will to bring joy to one another. With human beings the persons need one another with a view to completing themselves by their characteristics and by what they share in common.

Pragmatism, so widely spread nowadays, as you say, should not forget the persons' conscience, should not forget that they complete – one another, that they need mutual help, that they need the joy they ring to one another by the love they express to one another. A pragmatism that would neglect the awareness of the persons' value would be meaningless. It would be a leveller crushing everything around and annihilating the unique value of every one of them.

*5. Was the Romanian people's option for Orthodoxy a mere chance, an even revealed by the course of history and geographical location or an organic matching to its nature?*

The Romanian people's joining to Asia Minor was not a mere chance. It was due to the nearness to Asia Minor, where the Apostles disseminated the evangelical Christianity. Our forefathers were a part of the Thracians, who lived in the Balkan Peninsula and were as early as the 4th century, the majority population of the Byzantine Empire, with the capital in Constantinople, where Emperor Constantine the Great moved, and coming from the West that was permanently disturbed by the rush of the Germanic peoples. During his second missionary journey Paul has a vision in Troas in which “There stood a man of Macedonia and prayed him, saying, Come over into Macedonia and help us” (The Acts, 16, 9). Coming by boat from Troas across Bosphorus, he reaches Philippi, “the chief city of that part of Macedonia, and a colon” (The Acts, 16, 12). It was a Thracian city taken by the Romans in the 2nd century B. C. If this part still uses Latin – which is not the case with Greece, Asia Minor, Egypt, Syria – these Thracians must have been a Latin-speaking people themselves. Ever since the Christian faith has been translated into a Latin language different from that coming from Rome because Christianity reached that place spreading from those used in Rome. We say “Father”, “Maker”, “Virgin”, “Kingdom” and Rome sent to the West such words as “Pater”, “Creator”, “Virgo”, “Regnum”.

We have preserved Christianity nearer to the Gospel, we have filled it with Christ's presence in contradistinction to the West where, as we have already seen, it weakened by the separation between God and the world, which led to all pantheistic and atheistic philosophies.

*6. There is a quite popular mentality in Europe – sending echoes in Romania too – that gives Catholicism a privileged place as compared to the other Orthodox Churches. This conflict is not new at all. The historical context alone may be. In an interview Petre Țuțea said that you were an enemy of Catholicism. Therefore, how do you regard the present-day attack of Catholicism in the traditional area of Orthodoxy as well as the call to the unity of the Church, launched by the Vatican to the Christian world?*

My previous answer offers the answer to this question too. The present attempt of Catholicism at winning over the Orthodox believers in Romania and the other Orthodox countries is in keeping with its attempt in the past, by which it set up the Greek Catholic groups or the Catholic groups of a Byzantine rite. It is accordance with the spirit of the leadership of the Catholic Church, which has always been thirsty for power and never attached much importance to people's life in keeping with Christ's teaching. On the contrary, it emphasized the necessity to be part of an organization subdued to such a leadership with a view to strengthening its quasi-political power in the world. We have to defend ourselves against this attempt as it threatens our unity, our spiritual continuity with our ancestors and, therefore, our identity as a specific nation. Orthodoxy was the greatest power of our unity in our entire past, when various unfavourable circumstances managed to keep us apart politically. Let us not lose this last foundation of our unity and identity.

Needless to mention the superior and really evangelical specific traits of our Orthodox Christianity, about which I already spoke in some of my previous answers.

I would like to point out a few other specific traits of the superior Romanian spirituality, a real mark of Orthodoxy. These traits are the spiritual equilibrium, kindness and the sense of mystery to be found in the reality experienced by our people.

a. The Romanians are a people with much sense of equilibrium. This is why, seeing someone exaggerate one way or another, they say something humorous or even ironical, when the man persists in his exaggeration. The Romanians do not like people who praise themselves; they do not like the lack of continuity in one's doings, one-sidedness. To the Romanians, such a man is “wrong in the upper storey” or “has bats in the belfry”. They do not appreciate “dialectical” contradictions when it comes to learning the truth. They try to come to an understanding. This is why they do not like the claims of those who want to rule over others. In a village

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all peasants appreciate one another, but at the same time every one of them tries to satisfy the others and not make a fool of himself. In a village the priest does not have to be a master, he has to be the father of the entire village community. They do not like the power asserted by Catholicism, they like mutual appreciation. In the balanced behaviour they are so fond of, they live in the harmony uniting the entire universe. They do not favour dialectics, or struggle, because they do not regard it as the characteristic feature of the world. The Romanians are kind-hearted people. They unite kindness with compassion and humility. When a man laughs at another; this is no mockery. The moment he sees another man is in trouble, he immediately becomes kind and compassionate. The Romanians laugh at conceitedness. They like humbleness and awareness of one's own limits and faults. They always consider the value of their fellow-citizens. Hence, the word "decency" that cannot be translated. One can easily infer that they do not like to be imposed on and that they do not like to impose on others either.

b. The Romanians have a deep-going sense of mystery in everything. They see the embodiment of God in every man and everything, in all their successful deeds. And here the spirit of Orthodoxy is quite obvious, for Christ is to be found in every baptized man, he is not separated from man and the world, as it happens in the West, where Catholic separatism left its imprint. Their songs are not necessarily lively ones inspired by the necessities of the body, they are sweet-flowing *doinas* full of spiritual regard for the other one as a spiritual being, not only as a physical being as it happens in the western songs. The Romanian song expresses a deeper communion among persons, the longing after the beloved, who may be away, the sadness at not being able to have him or her by one's side. This broadens the Romanians' horizon to the mystery beyond this world the person is filled with, to God. It makes possible the communion with the others in God. Of course this spiritual superiority of the Orthodoxy experienced by the Romanian people does not make Orthodoxy less eager of an ecumenical gathering together of all Christians. The union or the deeper communion experienced among persons makes the Orthodox community wish the union with everybody more than it is wished for by the Catholics, who are outwardly united by a dominating power, and by the individualistic Protestants and neo-Protestants. It is known that this deep and loving communion can only be achieved through Christ, transmitted in the Holy Sacraments, as it is experienced by the Orthodox believers. Orthodoxy wants to perfect the union among the Christians as in a body, the limbs of which complete one another through love and mutual help, having Christ as the head. Here is how Paul puts it "For as the body is one, and hath many members, and all the members of that one body, being many, are one body: so also is Christ. /For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body" (I Cor., 12, 12-13). Orthodoxy wants to accomplish this unity of the Christians in Christ transmitted through the Sacraments, as he himself asked: "If ye keep my commandments, ye shall abide in



my love: even as I have kept my Father's commandments, and abide in his love. / These things I command you, that ye love one another" (John, 15,10,17).

*7. In the last half of a century Romanian authorities tried hard to make a brutal break between the religious and lay morals after the Orthodox Church had been the pillar of the entire nation for almost two millennia. Excessive industrialization and the amassment of people in urban areas weakened the power of the Romanian State in preserving traditions and limiting alienation. One must never forget that the Romanian State has always been the preserver of spirituality, with religion as its lodestar. Do you think this separation could be removed, that the confusion of many of our fellow-beings could be attenuated?*

This could be possible if the aim one has in view through the Christian morals is love among people or the almost complete removal of selfishness and if other morals different from this one could not be superseded by any other morals. On the contrary, as man was forced to live in ever larger groups because of the excessive industrialization and the growing number of the urban population, much more efforts were necessary to bring about love among him and his fellow-beings. It was easy to live in a small familiar group. Actually we witness today the contradictory phenomenon: the larger the group man lives in, the more estranged he feels. But this is no joy for him. And we have to do our best to discern in any man in the crowd a valuable face of God that should deserve being loved, that should need my love, a fact which makes me too to leave behind the barrenness of loneliness. As a matter of fact, living permanently in a large group of people may help me know every man's unique mystery and make myself richer by what every of them transmit to me specially. Modern society requires increasing efforts from the Christian faith to fulfill itself and to help this society go deeper in its humaneness.

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