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## Dogmatic Teachings on the Persons of the Holy Trinity Reflected in the Works of the Preachers from Muntenia in the 20<sup>th</sup> century

### Abstract

In addition to being extremely varied, and comprising to a large degree the crucial issues of the Christian Orthodox teaching, the contents of sermons is treated with much acribie and a solid argumentation, the author standing out as refined theologians, doubled by a solid erudition.

Although the topics approached are largely moral in character. Still, the preachers from Muntenia in the 20<sup>th</sup> century do not limit themselves to moral themes but also refer to doctrinal, liturgical, missionary, historical and biblical topics as well.



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Among the themes that are classified in the range of Dogmatic Theology, approached by the preachers of Muntenia in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, we mention: the Church as body of Christ, Kenosis, the Cross as altar on which Christ sacrificed Himself, The Holy Spirit and his work in the world, God, Eucharist, angels, the Resurrection of Christ as fundament of our resurrection, the Universal Judgment and the second arrival of the Lord, the freedom of will, the Mother of God – intermediary before God, our Savior Jesus Christ, redemption, death, Repentance, Priesthood, divine providence, the Holy Trinity, the soul, eternal life.

### Keywords

Holy Trinity, God, Jesus Christ, Holy Spirit, Kenosis, Christ's Resurrection

## **1 Introduction**

The Romanian Sermon played an important part in defending Orthodoxy and developing the national language and culture, a fact mentioned today in all studies concerned with the history of the Romanian language and literature. Its role in preserving the conscience of national unity of Romanian from beyond and from this side of the Carpathian Mountains is also well known. With their contents closely linked to the life of Romanian society in various ages, many of the old sermons passed on to us are nowadays reflections from which historians, sociologists, and philologists come to learn about the state of facts long vanished.

The 20<sup>th</sup>-century sermon in Muntenia reflects the cultural, social, economic and political realities experienced by our

nation more than the sermons from any other previous centuries. The preaching activity was cultivated in the area of Ardeal due to the vicinity of the Protestant Church. There, as we know, liturgical simplifications set aside to give way to sermon, being a truly missionary competition materialized in the delivery of sermons well put together, published in the magazines of the time and in volumes of sermons. Even so, in Muntenia as well it is an undisputed fact that all hard-working preachers structured their sermons first and foremost to (or “intending to”) fulfilling the religious and moral purpose but still taking into consideration the realities of everyday life. In this respect the 20<sup>th</sup>-century sermon in the Muntenia area experiences three stages: from its beginnings to the installation of the communist regime (1945); the actual communist period (1945-1989) and the period between 1990-2000, when freedom of expression was regained and manifested itself.

In addition to being quite varied, comprising mainly crucial issues of the Christian Orthodox teachings, as we will notice, the contents of sermons is approached with great akribia and solid argumentation, the authors standing out as refined theologians, doubled by a thorough erudition. Though the subject matters approached are largely moral in character, the preachers in 20<sup>th</sup> century Muntenia do not limit themselves to moral themes but also refer to dogmatic, liturgical, missionary, historical and biblical themes as well.

## **2 Dogmatic Themes on the Persons of the Holy Trinity**

Among the dogmatic themes on the Persons of the Holy Trinity, approached by preachers in Muntenia in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, we mention: *Kenosis, the Holy Spirit and his work in the world, God,*

*Christ's Resurrection as the fundament of our resurrection, the Redeemer Jesus Christ, Divine Providence, the Holy Trinity.*

## **2.1 Kenosis**

The importance of the embodiment of God's Son must be understood as the best way to redeem man, because sin and death have come into the world through one man (Adam), so redemption had to come through one man as well (the New Adam), who is God-Man, Jesus Christ, that is God's grace and his gift to the world should be abundant, through the embodiment, Death, and Resurrection of Christ. He descends, says Patriarch Miron, on the earth“ to ascend man to the skies; the One Without Sin will clothe himself in the attire of the sinful human body, to learn and help man conquer sin and death. God becomes a man to deify man”<sup>1</sup>.

## **2.2 Eternity pervades Ephemerality**

Father Balcă Nicolae considers that by the act of embodiment it is not only the human nature of our Saviour, Jesus Christ, that is deified, but the entire universe as well, and eternity bonds with what is ephemeral, with time and the world is sanctified: “The Earth united with the skies, in fact, the earth became heaven, through the fact that human nature becomes a sanctuary for the Heavenly King. It is the celebration of an event through which eternity pervades ephemerality, as result of the fact that the immortal Son of God accepts to be born in time in the bosom of the Holy Virgin, so as to draw and raise ephemerality into eternity, changing its face, transforming it and enrichening it

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<sup>1</sup> † Miron Cristea, *Pastorale, predici și cuvântări*, (București: Tipografia Cărților Bisericești, 1938), p. 89.

with holiness”<sup>2</sup>. Thus, the Son of God became human at the same time to give men the possibility of being deified through grace. He did not take on human nature just for the period he spent on earth, but forever, and the grandeur of this godly act consists in the privilege granted to human nature of receiving deification in the womb of the Holy Virgin Mary.

### ***2.3 The Son of God becomes Son of Man***

The birth of Christ is a godly *oikonomia* and occurs according to the laws of God. “The One With No Body becomes the body. The Word of God becomes flesh. The Unseen One becomes visible, The Untouched One lets himself be touched, the One Beyond Time acquires a beginning, the Son of God becomes Son of Man to raise man from rottenness and death, to restore in him the face of God, teaching us to be like God and given the possibility to die so as to kill our death. It is only through embodiment that the Son of God has become our Savior”<sup>3</sup>.

Following the trail of the words of the Saint Apostle Paul further on (Philip. 2, 6-7), Father Chilea acknowledges that by His embodiment, the Son of God clothes human nature in its most simple forms, the simple man reduced to the most rudimentary conditions, the human nature as such is generated by the Creator’s hands, destitute, full of suffering and pain, humiliated down to the lowest level of humiliation. Although God and Lord of Glory, still He deigned to show Himself to the world as a humble man, what’s more, as the humblest of men, and took upon Himself all human infirmities – all but sin – that

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<sup>2</sup> N. Balcă, *Predică la Bunavestire*, in: *Glasul Bisericii* (henceforth: GB.) nr. 3-4, 1967, (218-221), p. 220.

<sup>3</sup> I. G. Coman, *Predică la Nașterea Domnului*, in: GB. nr. 11, 1958, (1039-1041), p. 1040.

come with human life subjected to decrepitude, suffering, and death”<sup>4</sup>. “He became a child to show that before God human life is equally precious from crib to grave. He appears as the ideal child in which God’s eternity meets the ephemerality of man. His Purpose was to serve an everlasting cause, redemption”<sup>5</sup>.

The descent of the Son of God to our status as a creature, having only His face and similarity, is the condition of the encounter with us at the level at which we can receive his riches of life and grace. His Kenosis, as Father Ioan G. Coman points out, is the condition and the cause for our deification using the deification of His human nature, which is that of all of us.

The embodiment of the Son of God as man is the sign of the great honor paid to humankind. With all its sins and all its deeds, man continues to remain the most precious creature of God. The man is created to resemble God’s face, and He would never allow his Face to be annihilated. That is why, when the time was right, the Word, Son of God came into the world, acquiring body from the Virgin Mary and the Holy Spirit. God that has become a man is the greatest honor that the skies pay the earth<sup>6</sup>.

### **3 The Holy Spirit – his Work in the World**

Due to the fact that the Holy Spirit is the divine person through which our Savior Jesus Christ shares his grace in the Church, being at the same time the One who spreads the life of God or

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<sup>4</sup> S. Chilea, Predică la Nașterea Domnului, in: Mitropolia Olteniei (henceforth: MO.) nr. 11-12, 1958 (780-782), p. 780.

<sup>5</sup> Ibidem, p. 781.

<sup>6</sup> I. G. Coman, Predică la Soborul Maicii Domnului, in: GB. nr. 11-12, 1966, (1001-1003), p. 1001.

his redeeming or sanctifying grace over those who come into communion with Christ, this grace is also known as the grace of the Holy Spirit or the Holy Spirit himself.

Starting from this truth, Father Mihail Bulacu tries to imprint in the memory and hearts of the people by insisting on the responsibility to maintain the grace of the Holy Spirit, received at Baptism, through faith, because “all Holy Mysteries of our Church that we received imprinted on us the seal and strength of the grace of the Holy Spirit! (...) By receiving these holy mysteries, the grace of the Holy Spirit has secretly descended upon our soul. (...) In fact, the very inner atmosphere of our ancestral Church is filled with mysticism and mystery, because it preserves unimpaired the redeeming grace of the holy mysteries, as the apostolic Church had it initially. Moreover, full of mystery are the prayers, the Christian songs, the icons, the lit candles, together with our entire ancestral Orthodox cult. In our Churches we always have our Lord before us, in a mysterious way, using the holy sacrifice, established by He Himself and left to us, priests, through His Holy Apostles. Moreover, all mysteries work through this divine power of the Holy Spirit, and is shared to the souls prepared to receive it.”<sup>7</sup>.

### ***3.1 The Mystery of the Descent of the Holy Spirit can be profoundly understood only within the entirety of the godly oikonomia: together with the Ascension, Resurrection, Baptism, Birth of the Lord and Annunciation***

In this respect Father Galeriu captures the divine unity existing between the Annunciation and the Descent of the Holy Spirit on

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<sup>7</sup> M. Bulacu, *Cuvinte din Evanghelie pentru suflet românesc*, vol. I, (București: Tipografia Curții Regale, 1944), p. 241.

the Fiftieth: “There the Spirit casts his shadow upon the Virgin and Son of God is born; here, on the Fiftieth, the Spirit descends over the Apostles and the ‘sons’ and ‘brothers’ of the Lord are born, as Jesus named the apostles after Resurrection (John 20, 17); there, Christ, here, the Church; there the Head, here, His Body; there, the Icon, here, those created to resemble her, i.e. we”<sup>8</sup>.

### ***3.2 The same Heavenly Spirit continues to work and manifest Himself in the World***

The wonder occurred in Jerusalem ten days after the Ascension, led to the spreading of the grace of the Holy Spirit over the Apostles and their change to such extent that they could no longer be recognized. Father Ștefan Slevoacă points out that the force of the Holy Spirit was felt not only on the Fiftieth but from the beginning of time and up to the present day, and he says: “It is important to know that the same heavenly Spirit continues to work and manifest Himself in the world today”<sup>9</sup>, and when speaking about the importance of the Spirit in the Church, he asserts that: “What the soul means to the human body is what the Holy Spirit means to the mystical body of Christ”<sup>10</sup>. In the course of the Church’s existence, the Holy Spirit makes its presence felt through the spreading of the sanctifying grace through the Holy Mysteries. The arguments in support of this assertion are provided by the scriptural text in the I Corinthians 12, 4-6, where we are shown that the gifts vary, but the Holy Spirit is the same. The urge to work jointly with the divine

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<sup>8</sup> C. Galeriu, *Predică la Duminica Pogorării Duhului Sfânt*, in: GB. nr. 9-10, 1988, (465-469), p. 466.

<sup>9</sup> Ș. Slevoacă, *Raze din lumina lui Hristos*, (Buzău: Editura Episcopiei Buzăului, 1996), p. 56.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibidem*.



grace strengthens and completes it with the help of verses from the Holy Scripture, so that man does not allow himself to be fooled by the lusts of earthly nature.

### ***3.3 The Work of the Holy Spirit in the World is presented from the very first Chapter of the Scripture***

In order to prepare the arrival of Messiah, the Spirit was the one to give strength and speak through the voice of the prophets; the Embodiment and Birth of the Son happened by means of the shadow cast by the Holy Spirit and the Baptism from water of the Jordan River also occurred through the Spirit who descends upon Jesus taking the form of a dove.

However, when the prophecy of Joel comes true, the Holy Spirit appeared in and with an overwhelming power, when the apostles were gathered to perform the breaking of the bread, together with many people “blades like fire flames descended upon the apostles and stood above each of them”<sup>11</sup> and “then all were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other languages” (Deeds 2, 4).

In this way, the work of the Spirit in the Church begins, on the day of its foundation. Moreover, Father Slevoacă points out very well to the work of the Spirit within the Apostles, as follows: “When they were flooded in the light of the Holy Spirit, those people became unrecognizable. All of Jesus’s words became clear and alive in their minds. Whatever doubt they might have had, it disappeared. Whatever fear they might have felt, vanished. (...) However, the Holy Spirit was the light and the

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<sup>11</sup> Idem, *Predici pentru toate Duminicile și sărbătorile anului bisericesc*, (București: EIBMBOR, 1979), p. 335.

truth not only for the Apostles but all nations”<sup>12</sup>, as our Savior tells us: “the Alleviator shall remain with us forever” (John 14, 16). This Alleviator is present in all the sanctifying works of the Church, and it has kept and keeps our Church untouched by the heretical teachings.

### ***3.4 The Work of the Holy Spirit***

The teachings about the Holy Spirit were established at the second Ecumenical Synod. However, from the beginning of the Scripture we notice (Creation 1, 2) the activity of the Holy Spirit who took part in the creation of the world; through Him, the Son of Virgin Mary came to being; He descended over the Saint Apostles filling them with the Holy Spirit (Deeds 2, 2-4).

The Holy Spirit is the one who sanctifies all. This teaching about the Holy Spirit “contains mysteries that are profound and inconceivable to the mind”<sup>13</sup>. The explanation of the equality between the three persons of the Holy Trinity is confirmed by the Scripture: “Three are those who testify in the heavens: the Father, the Word and the Holy Spirit, and all these three are one” (I John 5, 7), but all originate in the Father (John 15, 26).

Before its Ascension to heaven, the Savior promised the Apostles that he will not abandon them and that he will send them another Alleviator, whose mission would be to advise them on the truth. The promise is fulfilled ten days after the Ascension when the Holy Spirit descends upon the Apostles in the form of tongues of fire. Father Sofian Boghiu also claims that the work of the Spirit was present even before Christ’s arrival, since it was through the Spirit that the prophets of the

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<sup>12</sup> Ibidem, p. 338.

<sup>13</sup> Idem, *Din tezaurul Ortodoxiei. În apărarea credinței străbune*, (Buzău: Editura Episcopiei Buzăului, 1990), p. 169.

Old Testament spoke out, preparing the arrival of the Messiah. In the New Testament, it is constantly present: "When Jesus is embodied, the Holy Spirit precedes Him with the Annunciation of the Virgin. When our Lord Christ is baptized, the Spirit is His Confessor"<sup>14</sup>.

The work of the Spirit in the world is to sanctify, to complete. That is why "through the Holy Spirit we become spiritual people because we are reborn through the Mystery of Baptism (...). Through the Holy Spirit, God forgives us for our sins when we confess them. Through the Holy Spirit, the bread and wine from the Holy Chalice become the Body and the Blood of our Savior. (...) He is sacred and sanctifies our life through the seven Holy Mysteries (...). We feel His presence only if we want Him; we summon Him, we desire Him"<sup>15</sup>. Moreover, if we do not want Him, He does not force Himself upon us because we were created to have free will.

### ***3.5 The Prophecies were made possible through the Holy Spirit***

The same reasons apply to Father Boris Răduleanu as well, who confesses that the Holy Spirit was present and toiled for the world. And we say that, when "the Father, through His Word, ordered the waters to fill with creatures and the earth to grow grass, and trees and live beings, all these were generated by the energies bestowed by the Holy Spirit, who followed the Father's Word"<sup>16</sup>; thus the entire Holy Trinity participated in the

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<sup>14</sup> S. Boghiu, *Buchet de cuvântări. Predici și meditații*, (București: EIBMBOR, 2006), p. 109.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 109-110.

<sup>16</sup> B. Răduleanu, *Semnificația marilor sărbători creștine*, vol. 1, (București: Editura Bonifaciu, 2006), p. 216.

creation. In the Old Testament, through the same Holy Spirit, the prophecies were made possible; because, through the work of the Spirit, Ezequiel the prophets our resurrection to be; Daniil predicts the time of Messiah's arrival; Isaiah announces His birth, His sufferings, and His Resurrection; the Spirit transformed fire into dew for the three young men thrown into the furnace.

In the New Testament, it is through the Holy Spirit that Jesus Christ descends into the womb of the Virgin Mary, cleansing her of the ancestral sin. During the Savior's labor, the Holy Spirit is present on numerous occasions: at Baptism – in the form of the dove; on the day of the Turn of the Face – in the form of the lighted cloud; at the Lord's Supper, sanctifying the bread and wine; at Ascension – the Spirit comes in the form of a bright cloud. All this time the Holy Spirit was and remained unseparated from the Son. The Holy Spirit had not descended into the world; it was not in the world because Jesus had not yet been glorified. The work of the Holy Spirit in the world happened solely in the name of and through Christ<sup>17</sup>. Jesus tells the Apostles that he shall send them the Spirit, because, if does not ascend to the Father, the Spirit will not come. Moreover, on the Fiftieth “when all the apostles were gathered together with the Mother of our Lord, a roar came from heaven like the blow of wind and blazes of fire stood upon each. The promise of man had come true”<sup>18</sup>. Moreover, from that moment on the Spirit would continue to work in the world through the Apostles and the bishops, priests, and deacons.

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<sup>17</sup> Ibidem, p. 218.

<sup>18</sup> Ibidem, p. 219.

### ***3.6 After descending upon the Saint Apostles, the Holy Spirit did not leave the world, but stayed on, forever present, alive and active in the Church***

He is the force that gives life, and from that moment he has incessantly enlivened, protected and strengthened the visible Church. Referring to the fact that not only the Saint Apostles but the other blessed witnesses drank from the rich rain of the Spirit, Father Ene Braniște mentions: “the power of the Spirit inspired the Saint Evangelists and the other sacred authors of the books of the Holy Scripture; it spoke through the fiery sermon of Saint John Golden Mouth, it rose from the slime of sin saints such as Mary the Egyptian and the Blessed Augustin, it strengthened the arm and sword of the Christian princes such as Stephen the Great and Saint (n.n.) and Michael the Brave, for the defense of the ancestral law and of the country, it guided the hands and prying glances of the masterful builders, stone and wood sculptors and painters, who gave the world those beautiful masterpieces of Christian art, such as the Saint Sophia of Țarigrad, the monastery of Neagoe in Argeș, the Trisfetitele in Moldova’s Iași and so many others”<sup>19</sup>.

## **4 The One God**

Contemplating creation as an objective reality, with its laws and harmony, as well as the structure of the human being, the Christian’s mind postulates as necessary the personal existence of the all-perfect and omniscient Creator, above all creation, but

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<sup>19</sup> E. Braniște, *La Duminica Rusaliilor*, in: GB. nr. 5-6, 1970, (453-457), p. 456.

present within it, which is God. Thus, the entire fabric reveals to us its Creator and Pronator, and the Pronator of man.

#### ***4.1 The Beauty of the World mirrors the Work of a Wise Creator***

Even though humankind has estranged itself from God due to sin, by drawing the shadow of sin upon the entire creation, still, the world preserves on itself the fingerprints of the Creator and the traces of His steps in its making. That is why Father Micle considers that the entire constitution of the world represents “a means of getting to know God, by which a series of teachings about Him and His qualities are revealed to us. Firstly, like a book, it tells us that there is an All Mighty Being which made it. Its order and beauty mirror the work of a Wise Creator, filled with endless love”<sup>20</sup>.

#### ***4.2 God’s Existence***

Human beings have always felt the need to subdue themselves and adore the unseen one, who has always been perceived by each nation in a different way until the right time comes and the Son is embodied. However, to worship and know this Supreme Being, it must, first and foremost, exist. His existence is illustrated through the religious life manifested by all civilizations in earth’s history.

This, as Father Slevoacă says, is historical proof. God’s existence can also be understood by ascertaining the things around us, because if we reason well with our mind, looking on earth “we realize that we are surrounded by an entire myriad of wonders. Let us think how a grain of wheat sprouts, how a baby bird

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<sup>20</sup> V. Micle, Predică la Duminica a XIII-a după Rusalii, in: GB. nr. 6-9, 1980, (230-233), p. 232.

develops from the shell of an egg, how the bee builds the honeycombs as if it were the most skilled engineer ever (...), if we look at a particle of matter through the modern microscopes (...) we will notice the extraordinary world of cells, atoms, neutrons, so many other wonderful worlds, at a small scale, which move, combine, generate energy, according to laws that bedazzle even the emperors”<sup>21</sup>.

The greatest proof of God’s existence is “God showing himself in the person of His Son and Our Savior, Jesus Christ. Jesus’s entire life, His teachings, His wonders and His prophecies are but powerful proof that God is, that He Himself is divine in nature and that He loves us all like a father loves his children”<sup>22</sup>.

### **4.3 Only One God**

In *The Symbol of Faith*, we confess that we believe in God who is only one, as the Holy Scripture confesses in the first order given through Moses. One of God’s qualities is *uniqueness* because there is “only one God who should be adored and not more than one.”<sup>23</sup> As arguments to God’s uniqueness, Father Slevoacă quotes several verses from the Bible: Deuteronomy 32, 39; Psalm 85, 79; Osea 2, 21; Isaiah 42, 8; John 17, 4; I Corinthians 8, 4; I Timothy 2, 5, from which it can be concluded that God Himself confesses His uniqueness, the prophecies of the Old Testament or the Apostles, who had to fight hard in a polytheist world. For this reason, we also must confess that there is only one God and Father of All, above everyone and everything, who

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<sup>21</sup> Ș. Slevoacă, *Din tezaurul Ortodoxiei. În apărarea credinței străbune*, p. 99.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 101.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 104.

loves us with unspoken love. In no one else do we find redemption<sup>24</sup>.

The deification of the Father was not contested in the course of history. In the Old Testament, the name *Father* is not encountered: instead other expressions are used, such as God Our Lord, Lord Savaot, Lord of Armies. However, upon the arrival of the Son into the world, we see that his lips “would always utter the word *Father*, a word so familiar now to the sons of humankind (...), it represents the key to Christian religion, the great comfort of our faith. Moreover, the wonder lies in the fact that the unlimited force that rules the universe, that created everything wisely, is to us a merciful Father”<sup>25</sup>. It is not being born from our parents that give us the great honor of becoming the sons of the Father but being born from water and Spirit, upon the Mystery of Baptism, in the name of the Holy Trinity. This teaching about “the Highest of Beings being *Father* belongs exclusively to the Gospel of our Savior Christ,”<sup>26</sup> who makes the Father known to us.

#### ***4.4 The Justice of God***

At the foundation of Christian faith lies the teaching called the justice of God, and this truth is found throughout the entire Holy Scripture. The Savior Himself consecrates this truth, clarifying, through paragons and teachings, the fact that God will do justice and “shall reward each and every one according to his deeds” (Matthew 16, 27), because disobedience entails punishment (e.g. Adam and Eve; the inhabitants of Sodom and Gomora, Joseph’s brothers). By narrating the Suffering and the

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<sup>24</sup> Ibidem, p. 108.

<sup>25</sup> Ibidem, p. 109.

<sup>26</sup> Ibidem.



Resurrection, we discover the true justice occurred in Jesus Christ, because Father Slevoacă says: “Being of the same being as the Father, descended from the heavenly skies to redeem the world, Jesus was, for as long as he lived on earth, ill-spoken, persecuted, disdained, sentenced to death and killed as a wrongdoer would be. Three days later, the truth triumphed and the balance of justice raised the Son of Man”<sup>27</sup>.

Having faith in God’s justice, we can live through these tumultuous times, so full of injustice, more easily and peacefully. It takes a substantial effort on our part to arrange things in the fabric of our souls in such a way so that by the end of our life, the sentence of the Judge will be in our favor because such sentence is given “according to the truth” (Romans 2, 2).

In the second book of the Holy Scripture, we find a command which recommends us not to dishonor the name of the Creator: “Do not take the Lord’s name in vain” (Exit 20, 7). From the biblical history, Father Slevoacă presents situations where people who uttered blasphemies against God were punished, and, at the opposite end, people who braced themselves with God’s name, becoming victorious or even producing miracles. However, the tireless and deceitful devil fights against God through the tongue of the sinners, taking the Lord’s name in vain in different ways:

- uttering His name with no respect;
- swearing on God’s name, so that “for every trinket, for a penny or a string our Christians swear, curse, take the Heaven as their witness”<sup>28</sup>;

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<sup>27</sup> Idem, *Raze din lumina lui Hristos*, p. 128.

<sup>28</sup> Idem, *Făclii pentru dreapta credință. Predici*, (Buzău: Editura Episcopiei Buzăului, 1985), p. 105.

- profaning the holy Churches, the sacred things and the servants of God, because our Savior Himself “in His living days has never been so aggrieved as on the day when he found in the temple the traders who defiled the home of our Heavenly Father”<sup>29</sup>;

- insults addressed to God or the sacred things when people are unaware or nervous.

By showing how God’s justice works in the case of those who honor or dishonor His name, priest Slevoacă says: “If God does not leave unpunished the man who takes His name in vain, we believe that He shall undoubtedly reward the man who contributes to the furtherance of His Glory”<sup>30</sup>.

## **5 The Resurrection of Christ as Fundament of our Resurrection**

In the Resurrection of Christ, Father Galeriu sees a radical and full renewal of life. Moreover, in this dogmatic truth lies an entirely new fact. On the one hand, the death of death occurs, as the Church confesses on Easter: *“The Lord has Risen, killing death because He is the Son of God.”* On the other hand, a radical renewal of life takes place. A new way of life commences the way of eternal life. The resurrection of God does not mean coming back to the life before, as it happened with Lazar, with the son of the widow of Nain and with the daughter of Jairus.

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<sup>29</sup> Ibidem, p. 106.

<sup>30</sup> Ibidem, p. 107.

Easter represents a triumph, a final victory over sin and death, over hell, over nothingness, as was with creation itself<sup>31</sup>.

### ***5.1 Acquiring Eternal Life***

The joy of Christ's resurrection gives us full assurance that the transient earthly life shall bring us the life beyond, the life for which we prepare in this existence: eternal life. Far from regarding death as a tragic and hopeless disappearance into the unknown, priest Petre Teodor highlights the idea that "by means of Christ's resurrection on the third day, we have redeemed our double death through a double resurrection: that of the body, also gaining the unabated hope of the collective resurrection – when those sleeping their eternal sleep shall appear in body before the judge – and that of the soul, through the absolution of the sins inherited since the beginning of time"<sup>32</sup>.

Our Savior Christ, who resurrected the dead and whom He came back from the dead on the third day, has the power to resurrect our bodies as well, as the Saint Apostle Paul tells us: "Christ resurrected from the dead, and the beginning of the resurrection of the dead was thus made" (I Corinthians 15, 20). Faith in the resurrection of the dead, says Father Teodor, "offers us comfort before death, and this differentiates us from those who do not believe, thus regarding death like a bridge of passage from this life and of the encounter with our loved ones. (...) However, for death, we shall prepare our entire life because we shall resurrect for trial when not only our soul but our body

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<sup>31</sup> C. Galeriu, *Predică la a doua zi de Paști*, in: GB. nr. 3-5, 1980, (306-309), p. 309.

<sup>32</sup> P. Teodor, *Hrană și bucurie. Predici la Duminicile de peste an*, (Valea Popului: Editura Valea Popului, 1995), p. 92.

as well will be tried so that together they may receive a reward for the deeds done in this life”<sup>33</sup>.

### ***5.2 People will have the same bodies as they did in their historical life***

Christ shows the possibility of resurrection on various occasions (the resurrection of the daughter of Jairus, the resurrection of Lazarus), but “the wonder of all wonders, the most brilliant proof of the truth of the bodily resurrection is the rising of the Son of Man from the dead”<sup>34</sup>.

Referring to the bodies that will resurrect for trial, Father Slevoacă says that “people will have the same bodies as they did in life. We will recognize relatives, friends, but they will appear with a changed image. (...) The bodies of the righteous will resemble the glorious body of Christ (the Philippians 3, 21), they shall shine like the sun (Matthew 13, 43), they shall not rotten and shall be flawless”<sup>35</sup>.

Patriarch Miron confesses that the light of Christ’s Resurrection also reveals the path by which we, mortal humans, can overcome death and acquire everlasting life. After the resurrection, the meaning of the Savior’s words about the resurrection of people to an eternal life became apparent. It was like the waters of a mountain spring, and the thought that we, Christians, will also be resurrected, become the foundation of life and hope for apostles and all Christians everywhere at any time.

Referring to this fundamental truth of Christianity, the famous Father Prof. Mihail Bulacu notices that the Resurrection of

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<sup>33</sup> Ibidem, p. 285.

<sup>34</sup> Ș. Slevoacă, *Din tezaurul Ortodoxiei. În apărarea credinței străbune*, p. 51.

<sup>35</sup> Ibidem, p. 205-206.

Christ was preached not only by the Saint Apostles and by their followers. It was preached also by writers and historians such as Plinius the Young, Tacit, Suetonius, Joseph Flavius, as well as by the great classical teacher J. J. Rousseau.

### ***5.3 The Resurrection of Christ proves, more than any other miracle, the existence of God***

By confirming once again the truth that Christ's Resurrection is the greatest event ever to take place under the sun, the author highlights the multitude of the dogmatic teachings deriving from this truth: "In other words, beloved Christians, the greatest miracle of Christ's Resurrection is the center of our Christian faith, which supports the propagation of the Church and strengthens Christian faith. The resurrection of our Savior Christ proves to us, more than any other miracle that God exists. Our Savior assures us of the immortality of the human soul and therefore, of the divine justice, for the reward of the righteous and the punishment of sin. Our Savior's resurrection thus presents itself to us as a divine balance of the entire Deification, which created and ruled this world"<sup>36</sup>.

### ***5.4 Resurrection asserts the eternity of life, despite its ephemerality, the triumph of life over death, the whole victory of existence over non-existence***

Though incessantly preached for centuries and centuries, the Lord's Resurrection is no less a spring of joys, hopes, and certainties, than it was at the time of its occurrence. Indeed, as Vasile Ispir shows, the Lord's Resurrection is a spring of joys because it showed the impotence of death. It is a spring of

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<sup>36</sup> M. Bulacu, *Cuvinte din Evanghelie pentru suflet românesc*, p. 218.

hopes because it opened the horizons to another life. It is a spring of certainties because it assured us of the redemption of us all. "Christ's Resurrection sealed the truth of divine revelation, which summons us to make a choice between what is passing and what is permanent, what is good and what is evil, between lie and truth, the Antichrist and Christ, death and life. (...) Christ's Resurrection restored the divine symphony in the universe, that symphony filled with harmony and joy, which impregnates all beings with order and peace and eternal tranquility. Christ's Resurrection stands witness of God's power and reminds us of the future life when we shall stand before God – The Father. It sets an ethical principle of life and urges us to a better world, lived in the glorification of God"<sup>37</sup>.

## **6 Our Savior Jesus Christ**

If, through His life, His suffering, and His Death, Christ shows Himself to us as the gentle and humble-hearted Emperor, like the Lamb of God who willingly sacrifices himself for the redemption of the world, then, through His Holy Resurrection, He shows Himself to us in all His Deity Brightness, as the Eternal King of Heaven and Earth.

Lingering on this particular topic, Fr. Petre Teodor notes that through His sacrifice on the Cross, Christ redeems humanity from the slavery of sin, reconciles it and reunites it with God in His heavenly kingdom. Through His sacrifice on the Cross, Christ establishes His Kingdom here on earth, and His Kingdom is the Church where he will continue to remain in body and

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<sup>37</sup> V. Ispir, *Biserica Activă. Predici la Radio*, (București: Editura Ion Creangă, 1941), p. 145.

blood until the end of time, giving Himself away to all those who will believe in Him, through the Holy Mysteries of the Sacrament. It is from here, from the Church that He will share His Grace through the Holy Mysteries, and it is from here, from the Church that he will tie and untie the sins of His believers, through the mediation of the priests. Therefore, even after His Ascension with His Body to heaven, Christ will continue to remain among us in His spiritual kingdom on earth, which is the Church”<sup>38</sup>.

By resurrecting from the dead, the kingly dignity of the Savior reveals itself in its entire and genuine divine glory and light. This shall be revealed to all upon His second arrival when He will be “surrounded by glory and by His holy angels. Because, after His Ascension to heaven, he sits by His Father in His Glory, and at the world’s end He will judge the entire humanity, and then he will forever rule with those chosen by Him”<sup>39</sup>.

### **6.1 Christ, as True God and True Man**

The redeeming work of Christ is described by Fr. Petre Teodor as follows: “Christ was not only an erudite, the powerful man of the day; an erudite, a powerful man had influence solely over a period, he can embrace the good of several mortals, while our Lord Jesus Christ is also the Son of God, because he embraced all times and all mankind. The miracle of our Lord’s, Jesus Christ’s Resurrection was the keystone of the soul-redeeming faith”<sup>40</sup>.

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<sup>38</sup> P. Teodor, *Hrană și bucurie. Predici la Duminicile de peste an*, p. 60.

<sup>39</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 61.

<sup>40</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 87.

### ***6.2 Our Savior Christ is the Son of God, embodied, True God and True Man***

He was at the same time in heaven and on earth. God did everything to annihilate the separating abyss between heaven and earth, by sending His Son into the world, as a force of love, reconciliation, togetherness, and unification of man with his Creator. For that, the Embodiment of our Lord, His life, and sacrifice on the Cross represent “the supreme act of God’s love for the annihilation of the abyss between heaven and earth. By embodying Himself and making Himself one of us, Lord Jesus embraced in Himself all the efforts that God and the people made and still make to acquire the original communication. The wood from the Golgotha brought into the world this crossed bridge which, on the one hand, unites heaven and earth, and on the other hand, brings together the sides of the earth” confesses the hard-working Father, Petre Teodor<sup>41</sup>.

### ***6.3 Christ’s Teachings – the Spring of the Water of Life***

The arrival of the Son of God into the world is owed to the falling of the first people. Being kind and merciful, he takes on a body, thus giving the greatest proof of love toward the world: “Only through the Lord Christ, Who was God and had all the power in heaven and on earth, and Who was Pure Man, did we pass from death to life (...), through His Blood we were absolved of sins and acquired eternal life”<sup>42</sup>. Thus, through the sacrifice on the cross, as Father Slevoacă says, we became sons of God through faith. He made Himself known to us through His teachings and deeds, and “His teaching is the most sublime ever to be uttered, and once it has reached the soul and is followed

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<sup>41</sup> Ibidem, p. 301.

<sup>42</sup> Ș. Slevoacă, *Raze din lumina lui Hristos*, p. 107.



by the faithful apostles, it becomes spring of the water of life, working on perfection"<sup>43</sup>.

#### ***6.4 The Miracles of Our Savior***

As technology progresses, people grow farther apart from God. They have managed to make all kinds of discoveries and experiments, and some concluded that the miracles of the Gospel did not exist. Of course, faith has not touched their souls. As Father Slevoacă asserts, a miracle "is an unusual work, occurred supernaturally, through God's powers"<sup>44</sup>. Many times the Savior has surpassed these laws of nature by bringing the dead back to life, multiplying bread and fish, walking on the sea, curing illnesses, but, above all, through His Resurrection.

Not just the Apostles witnessed the miracles of Christ, but many people, because after he had resurrected Lazarus in Bethania, the Pharisees and bishops said:

"This man makes miracles. If we let him be, everyone will believe in Him. So they decided on that day to kill Him" (Jn. 11, 47). The apostles were witnesses of his power to make miracles because the Savior gave them this power. However, they made miracles with the power given to them by God, "whereas Jesus made them with His power (...) like a God who commands nature, the winds, the Devils, the dead"<sup>45</sup>, all obeying Him. He could have made himself known to men even without miracles, but he chose this way to show His Deification.

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<sup>43</sup> Ibidem, p. 108.

<sup>44</sup> Ibidem, p. 178.

<sup>45</sup> Ibidem, p. 180.

### **6.5 The Deification of Our Savior Christ**

In *Cuvântul la Vinerea Mare (A Word on Great Friday)*. Fr. Ștefan Slevoacă highlights the divinity of the Son of Man. It is impressive that, before His suffering, Christ spoke to the Apostles about the ordeal that was to follow: "Look, we shall climb to Jerusalem, and the Son of Man will be surrendered to the bishops and scholars, and they shall sentence Him to death" (Mk. 10, 33). In the face of death, Christ remains calm, both in the Ghetsimani garden as well as all through the trial, and on the way to Golgotha. In the Ghetsimani garden, the soldiers were deeply impressed when they saw the One who had to be arrested, and in fear "they recoiled and fell to the ground." (Jn. 18, 6). Also in this place, when Peter takes out his sword, Christ reprimands him, and afterward, like a God, he cured the ear of the bishop's servant. Christ's divinity is also illustrated by the reply that he gives the bishops, being forced to this action, that He is the Son of God. Moreover, on the Cross, He promises the thief on His right that he shall stand with Him in heaven. Last but not least, it is illustrated by the power to forgive His murderers and persecutors: "This forgiveness sprung from love toward the sinners is one of the greatest proofs of His Godly nature"<sup>46</sup>. Even nature shook seeing its Creator raised on the Cross, because "signs could be seen in heaven and on earth, signs of the grief of creation for the dreadful death of its Master through which all were created"<sup>47</sup>.

To demonstrate the dogmatic teachings that Christ is True God, descended from the bosom of the Father to redeem men, Father Toma Chiricuță stresses the fact that, in this world that was under the rule of Satan's power, Christ came from heaven to

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<sup>46</sup> Ibidem, p. 296.

<sup>47</sup> Ibidem.

redeem it from under the domination of evil. Although this world is under the influence of The Evil One, still God, in his mercifulness, does not abandon it but sends His Son to save all from the domination of Satan and to return it to its initial state, which came out of God's hands in perfect condition.

To better highlight this dogmatic idea, the preacher uses the following example: "Jesus should mean for us all, what the clock in the cathedral tower meant for a town in the northern part of our country one day. Until that day people could not be organized because the clocks of the people did not match. Some woke up late; some woke up early. Some left for work early, other late. However, when the clock was placed in the cathedral tower, then all the other clocks were set according to it. Moreover, then all people began waking up at the same hour, going to bed at the same time. In other words, in the life of that town, a perfect order was settled. My dear brother! You need to know that our Lord Jesus is not only yours. He is the Savior of the entire world. He alone can show us all the path to redemption"<sup>48</sup>.

In the *Sermon on Fig Sunday*, Father Balcă gives a plausible explanation of the Savior's gesture to accept to be received as an earthly emperor, a gesture apparently in contrast to His usual attitude of rejecting earthly glory. Our preacher considers this gesture as an act of divine will, with a major teaching connotation, by which Christ made a final attempt to convince the Pharisees and the scholars of the reality of His deification. "God's will was (...) that His Son go in triumph toward the place of sacrifice in Jerusalem, where He forever withdrew from the

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<sup>48</sup> T. Chiricuță, *Cunoști tu Calea? Chemări către suflet*, (București: Editura Fântâna Darurilor, 1934), p. 122.

crowds who wanted to proclaim Him emperor, confessing that His kingdom is not in this world (John 18, 36): but today He wants to show Himself in all His greatness. He wants to be received triumphantly in the holy citadel of Jerusalem, in the citadel of His ancestors and to be recognized and acclaimed there as the true Messiah, Son of David”<sup>49</sup>.

### **6.6 Christ – Doctor of Souls and Bodies**

Pleading for the construction of a church at Băile Borsiji, the first Patriarch of Romania shows that the health of the body cannot be attained without peace of the soul. In this respect, the author says “doctors who prescribe baths have fewer remedies at hand. So we need to consult the One who is<<doctor of souls and bodies>>, our Savior Christ. His Gospel is the pharmacy with medicine which has proved to work in every situation of life”<sup>50</sup>.

## **7 Divine Providence**

In the *Sermon on the 20<sup>th</sup> Sunday following Pentecost*, Father Petre Teodor seeks to implant and root in the audience’s conscience the Christian teaching that God is Father and Pronator, which is our Caretaker. When conceiving the miracle of the resurrection of the young man from Nain, he says: Before this miracle, no doubt all have been in awe, because in the presence of divine power at work, man feels small and unworthy. However, this miracle has shown more than this to

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<sup>49</sup> N. Balcă, Predică la Duminica Floriilor, in: GB. nr. 3-4, 1968, (376-380), p. 377.

<sup>50</sup> †Miron Cristea, *Pastorale, predici și cuvântări*, p. 191.

the people. It proved that God searches and cares for His people. Indeed, the resurrection of the son of the widow of Nain is the best sign that proves to us that God is aware of our sufferings, that He is with us always, helps us, gives us strength, cures us. *He shall never hide from us; he shall never pass by the one that resembles His face; he shall never let our pain remain unsearched, just as he did not let unsearched the suffering of the widow from Nain*<sup>51</sup>.

### ***7.1 God is at the Helm of our Life***

Before showing how God cares for His creature, Father Slevoață presents to us the dangers and factors that participate in the alienation of men from God, men who serve their body more, relying on their strengths. We will find more help if we are aware that we are the sons of God and that, if we seek Him first, all other needs will be sure to follow, because, “the Lord knows we need food and He will give it to us. Just as He cares for the birds in heaven and the grass in the field, He will not forget about us, as the most precious of His creatures, His children, created to resemble Him”<sup>52</sup>.

Man’s impotence, in the absence of God’s help, even before nature, which was given to be used by man, is suggested by the fact that “He gives us good weather, health, the power to work so that from bare stone we will be able to take our bread. However, if God forsakes us and if He turns away from us, we lose our breath, and we crumble to the ground. (...) There is, however, one fact that gives profound reassurance: the Father is in heaven; God is at the helm of our life. So let us not fear and

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<sup>51</sup> P. Teodor, *Hrană și bucurie. Predici la Duminicile de peste an*, p. 276.

<sup>52</sup> Ș. Slevoață, *Raze din lumina lui Hristos*, p. 75.

worry”<sup>53</sup>. 40 years He has cared for the people in the desert and has fed him with blight. He has freed Joseph from prison and rescued Daniil, the prophet, from the lions’ den, and multiplied the fish and bread, feeding many a nation, and, so, in the same way, he will care for us, His creatures.

Father Sofian Boghiu pays particular attention to this topic, defining it as follows: “The divine providence is the work through which God continuously takes care of the world. Because only the power that created the world can also preserve it”<sup>54</sup>.

### ***7.2 After creating the entire Universe, God did not leave His Creation at the mercy of haphazard***

“He did not withdraw from it, as some mistakenly suggested, but remained within it and is constantly present everywhere, available to His Creatures, as the One who is Omnipresent, preserving and protecting His creatures, working together with them and guiding them toward the achievement of the final goal of their existence”<sup>55</sup>. That is why Our Savior says: “My Father has labored until now: I too labor” (John 5, 17). Every one of us can see God’s work in the world by looking around and carefully examining how life carries on for all the creatures surrounding us. These things were noticed by prominent figures who portrayed God as the ruler of all: Cicero, Voltaire, J.H. Fabre, Robert Brown, Newton, Tyndall, Kepler, and others. After showing that God gave man the most precious gifts, such as the beautiful skill of speech, Patriarch Miron Cristea criticizes in the *Pastoral* entitled *Contra înjurăturilor de cele*

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<sup>53</sup> Ibidem, p. 76-77.

<sup>54</sup> S. Boghiu, *Buchet de cuvântări. Predici și meditații*, p. 247.

<sup>55</sup> Ibidem, p. 248.

*sfinte (Opposing the curses against the sacred)* man's attitude who uses this gift against the Kindest and Most Merciful of his donators, against God. "Who built, supports and rules heaven and earth; Who created not just man, endowing him with health, but made the entire earth available to him, with its fields and wealth crops and with all its goods, sending him the beneficial light and warmth, the fertile rains, etc. Who, even after his disobedience, did not forsake us, but loved and continues to love men so much that He sacrificed His only Son (...). Moreover, from Whom, with one single word, comes all the kindness and perfect generosity"<sup>56</sup>.

### ***7.3 Wherever we are, we can feel God***

In turn, Father Toma Chiricuță approaches the theme of Providence, ascertaining that nothing happening in this immense world, surrounding us, does not occur at random because "because you see God when you look at nature. Wherever you may be, you feel God. Even if you were on the top of mountains, amidst the storm or waves of the sea, in the flames of the furnace or the mouth of beasts, you would feel Him everywhere; you will see Him.

Moreover, God is present everywhere, He is the Master of all, guiding all and nothing happens at random; not one hair falls from your head without God's will and without God knowing about it. And so, there is no reason for you to be concerned, even when suffering comes upon you, even when you are put to the worst of trials, even if hunger, sickness, poverty assault you, even if your house burns down, and your children die, even if the entire world rises against you, even if you are contaminated

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<sup>56</sup> † Miron Cristea, *Pastorale, predici și cuvântări*, p. 78-79.

with the leper, and you have become a pile of scum, pointed at by the world and called: ‘Behold the madman’, you, child of God, never say other than: ‘God has given, God has taken away, blessed be God’s name’. Because you see what they cannot blind as they are, while you can see everything everywhere, you see your Heavenly Father; you see God”<sup>57</sup>.

Everything happens according to a plan of God’s love that He has laid as a foundation of all things “Not even the most insignificant flutter of the wings of an insect, the fall of a dry little leaf, the floating of a tiny particle of dust in a ray of sun, nothing, absolutely nothing, happens without God’s will and knowledge”<sup>58</sup>.

#### ***7.4 The Core of Christian Doctrine***

God’s care is felt and visible at every step we take, in every moment, with every heartbeat. For Father Sebastian Chilea this constitutes the core of the Christian doctrine and the centerpiece of Christian sermon, which tends to guide Christian’s life. This theme evidences “not just the supernatural glory of God in the course of the unfolding of universal phenomena, but especially the staggering closeness between God and His creatures”<sup>59</sup>.

#### ***7.5 The teaching about providence removes any fear***

He who has fully surrendered himself to the care of God knows how to look at life’s situations and the world through God’s eyes. The following example is also worth considering, as being

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<sup>57</sup> T. Chiricuță, *Anul în predici*, (București: Editura Anastasia, 1996), p. 158.

<sup>58</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 154.

<sup>59</sup> S. Chilea, Material omiletic. Despre Providență, in: MO. nr. 7-8, 1958,(537-543), p. 542.



extremely suggestive: "Talking to some sailors, an announcer of the Holy Gospel described the sea as a school extremely rich in teachings. God created seas not for the purpose of separating nations but for uniting them. Seas were explored before the continents. The sea, with its limitless ampleness, is a great teacher. Moreover, particularly, because of what it teaches a man. Above all, the sea shows how the forces of nature can be put to use. Few of creation's works bring souls as close to God as the sea, immense and deep, splendid when tranquil, grand when the storm raises its waves. At any time carries our thoughts to God, in its midst man, must suspect and acknowledge the power, providence, and wisdom of God"<sup>60</sup>.

## **8 The Holy Trinity**

The Mystery of the Holy Trinity is the fundamental doctrine of Christianity, through which it distinguishes itself from any other religion. God is One in being, but triple in Persons, each with Its work directed at the life and redemption of the world. Relating himself to the testimony of Augustin, who realized that the limited cannot comprise the unlimited, Father Teodor makes an attempt to explain the great mystery, the first and the most profound teaching of the Church, the doctrine of the Holy Trinity, in the following way: "The Father is from eternity unborn, creator of heaven and earth, of all, seen and unseen. The Son is born from eternity and ignites like a light from another, not made but embodied from the Holy Virgin for the life and redemption of the world. Moreover, the Holy Spirit,

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<sup>60</sup> Ibidem, p. 542.

originated in the Father, in eternity, spreading waves of divine grace over the Christians, sanctifying them, strengthening them and deifying them”<sup>61</sup>.

### ***8.1 The Mystery of the Holy Trinity***

The truth about the Holy Trinity remains the greatest truth of Christian faith, a truth above the comprehension ability of the human mind. Many have tried to understand and explain to others how God can be one in being and yet triple in persons, but have not succeeded, or have lost their way, which is even worse.

As Father Constantin Galeriu confesses, the mystery of the Holy Trinity is unnatural, “it is a cross of the conscience to reflect on God, to think about the fact that forever He has been Three and One. That you have to address Him like Abraham once did, when seeing three Men said to them as he would have said to One: ‘Oh, Lord, if I have found grace before You, do not overlook Your serf’. However, let us not forget for one minute that God is Spirit that He is love, and that love cannot be conceived alone. That God the Live is life and that His life is the love of the Three which makes One”<sup>62</sup>.

This same idea is also shared by Father Ene Braniște, who uses the following comparison: “It is the same to try to look with your eyes at the sun or to penetrate with your mind the mysteries of Deification: our eyes cannot withstand the blinding brightness of the rays of sun no more than our mind can comprehend the depth of Deification. Moreover, just as the light

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<sup>61</sup> P. Teodor, *Hrană și bucurie. Predici la Duminicile de peste an*, p. 137.

<sup>62</sup> C. Galeriu, *Predică la Sfânta Treime*, in: GB. nr. 3-5, 1980, (318-321), p. 320.

of sun blinds you, so does the unique brightness of Deification overwhelms our mind's power of comprehension"<sup>63</sup>.

### ***8.2 The Three Persons are in Perfect Union and different from one another***

They are distinguished from one another through the way in which they hold divine being. God – the Father holds the divine being within Himself, not from someone else. The Son and the Holy Spirit get their being from the Father. This eternal truth acquires, even more, profundity: “God – the Father is the origin of Deification. He has no beginning and no cause. He was not born, not originates in anyone, He was before there was anything else. He created everything out of nothingness, and from His being, before the beginning of time, the Son was born, and the Holy Spirit originated, just as light is ignited by another light, without the second making the first lesser or smaller. Our Lord, the Son, was born, as God, from the Father, from the very beginning, from eternity, and as a man, in time, from the Holy Virgin Mary and the Holy Spirit; through Him, the world was redeemed. God, the Holy Spirit, originated in the Father, before eternity. He is the creator of life; He breathes life into and sanctifies all, and through him, all divine gifts needed for redemption are spread into the world. (...) The Holy Spirit is the one who, through the hands and prayers of priests, sanctifies the Holy Offerings at Mass, gives us absolution for our sins through the mystery of confession, blesses us, sanctifies us and strengthens us so that we reach the good deed”<sup>64</sup>.

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<sup>63</sup> E. Braniște, *Predică la Sfânta Treime*, in: GB. nr. 5-6, 1978, (472-476), p. 475.

<sup>64</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 474.

From the first pages of the Scripture, we discover that the Persons of Deification conferred on how to create man (Creation 1, 26). Moreover, Christ proclaimed the Father and the Spirit all the while he was on earth. However, how do three persons exist in only one God? Father Boris Răduleanu states that one unity represents the Holy Trinity “a single God, a single Power, a single Will, Activity, Domination, but diversified as Three Persons. The Persons of the Holy Trinity have the same will, activity, domination. They interlink because they are identical to love, perfection, through all Their Qualities, constituting a Unit, a single God”<sup>65</sup>.

From the early centuries of Christianity, theologians have talked about unity in diversity and diversity in unity of the Holy Trinity, using certain comparisons. Even the Saint Apostle Paul explains this by resorting to a comparison with the human body: our body“ is an entirety, but with many parts: hand, leg, eye, etc. Each has its function. (...) Together, however, without coming in contradiction, without excluding one another, they form the body in which circulates the same blood feeding all”<sup>66</sup>. It is the same with the Persons of the Holy Trinity.

## Conclusions

A common trait of all scholar-preachers in the three Romanian provinces up to the 20<sup>th</sup> century is represented by concerns shared by their ancestors, namely the protection and the promotion of faith, the development of language and culture in

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<sup>65</sup> B. Răduleanu, *Semnificația marilor sărbători creștine*, p. 227.

<sup>66</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 230.

the Romanian language, the maintenance of the conscience of the national unity of all Romanians.

For the representatives of Romanian sermon in the early half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, these noble ideals are completed with the goal of strengthening this liturgical mission which is preaching, in the context of the traditional rite of Holy Mass. For the preaching priest of early 20<sup>th</sup> century, the sermon played an important part in the protection of Orthodoxy and the fulfillment of the religious and moral purpose, even more than it did for the representatives of our old culture or those of the “Ardelean-School”. Such role fully matched the realities of everyday life so that it can be asserted that in all these speeches so filled with theological orthodox teaching, we discover dogmatic and moral subtleties that reflect the richness of the Romanian spiritual life of this time.

During communism, the preaching dimension of the Church suffered greatly due to the intimidation policy led against the representatives of the Orthodox Cult, though formally, the sermon was not banned, only suspected and constantly persecuted with the intention of being annihilated. Despite this, by focusing particularly on the theological aspects, the preaching priests from the communist period never ceased to preach the Christian teachings, sometimes paying the price of their freedom or even their life. That is why it is safe to say that between 1945-1989, the Romanian Orthodox Church managed, through its survival strategy, to remain the only institution that saves the Romanian nation from a spiritual catastrophe.

After 1989, the Church had the chance to resume its leading position in the context of the Romanian contemporary society, given intensifying its missionary, sacred and redeeming work. We observe a flourishing of the homiletic genre, both regarding the oratorical discourse and its particular virtues, as well as

relating to the accomplishment of their compiling, impressive through their theological and artistic qualities.

An overview of the sermons in the area of Muntenia in the 20<sup>th</sup> century highlights the idea that the themes developed are concerned not only with the moral dimension but also with the dogmatic, liturgical, missionary, historical and biblical ones, which demonstrates that the authors are refined, erudite theologians, with thorough training.