

“OVIDIUS” UNIVERSITY CONSTANTA

FIELD:TEOLOGY

Father academician
DUMITRU POPESCU
ecumenist orthodox and
Apologist postmodern

- SUMMARY -

SUPERVISOR

Priest Professor Doctor **VASILE NECHITA**

PhD STUDENT

Priest **LUCIAN MUSCALU**

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INTRODUCTION

In his ample activity, Father academician Dumitru Popescu approached a wide spectrum of themes, with the sole purpose of offering concrete answers to the Romanian theologians – and not only – but also for supporting the Orthodox Theology in ecumenical dialogs, dialogs that proved not to be few. Amongst his many studied topics, we can enumerate: Church and society, Church and culture or role of the Church in postmodernity. On top of the ones listed, a high interest was directed towards the relationship between Theology and science, in the first place, due to the fact that – in only two centuries – the explosion of technology took over the entire world – reducing to minimum its material resources –, a world in which humans have tried to impose their own law and attitude towards nature, self proclaiming itself its legislator.

Through one of his researches, Priest Dumitru Popescu proves that science went so far as to knock at the divine transcendence's doors, aspect which – not long ago – for the scientists, was inconceivable. This subject needs to be addressed with a high level of interest, due to the fact that between science and religion there are many differences, but also many common points, as for example: the fact that there is an ultimate reality, who's existence is to be found in itself, and from this ultimate reality the entire existence flows. A group of the Holy Fathers – among which we enumerate The Saint Vasile the Great, Saint Atanasie the Great, or Saint Maxim the Confessor – they can be seen as the precursors of science due to the fact that they

established the foundations of a united cosmology – overcoming the dissociation between the sensitive world and the understandable/ perceivable world – but also trinity in the same time, cosmology in the centre of which we find the divine Logos. The equation Theology-science represents for Father Dumitru Popescu, the main domain in which Theology can meet and cooperate with the postmodern culture; the progress met in the physics research – in the micro-cosmos area – together with the religious rebirth, constitute one of the main factors in overcoming the Cartesian dichotomy – between the spirit and matter –in the same time, overcoming the aversion between the two. Hence, there is a new crossing from the modern culture – characterized by mechanics and deterministic science – towards a scientific culture found under the guardianship of the energetic and unpredictable sciences.

Another important aspect that needs increased attention is represented by the merits the Father Academician Dumitru Popescu had in the Ecumenical Movement, where – because of his sturdy preparation, based on a rich patristic fundament – he got involved as active as possible, supporting the authentic Orthodoxy on western territory. This was possible also because, following a context, he was chosen the Director of Research at the European Churches Conference (CEB), with its centre in Geneva, Switzerland, where – in the period between 1980-1988 – he enjoyed a wonderful success. His activity and role in the context of the current ecumenical framework are to be praised. Considering that, even in the ecumenical context, there is the question of a crisis – blamed mainly on the lack of

finalisation for any of the ecumenical steps, the inability to define the common meaning of what The Church of Christ truly means, from which, all those who were Baptised in the name of the Holy Trinity and believe in His Gospel, belong to. This can have a positive result only through ecclesiological in depth hard work. Therefore, only by taking full responsibility over some of the steps require in the in-depth study of the ecclesiology by the Churches members of the Churches Ecumenical Council will pull out the ecumenism out from the deadlock it finds itself in at the moment, releasing itself from the secular language that is to be found in almost all the ecumenical documents.

Without showing false modesty, Priest Academician Dumitru Popescu was self conscious that the stone he placed in the Romanian Orthodoxy – and in the actual ecumenical framework – it's a fundamental one, strongly believing that he offered a few essential milestones for a new apologetic vision of the Christians, in the contemporary society and for the future. We are talking about the society in which the transfer from *teocentrism* to *anthropocentrism* gave birth to the tragic phenomenon of secularity, praising human's autonomy towards God as a state of normality.

When we use the term society, we are talking about an amalgam of societies and cultural waves that penetrated – more or less – by the secularity “spirit” mentioned above. Among these societies we also find countries from the Eastern Europe who – dozens of years – were oppressed by the atheist communist system with the purpose of killing any human freedom aspiration, under the equality and collectivistic justification; but

also Western countries, who's societies are, very commonly, tributary towards an illuminist type of capitalism.

I. ECUMENICAL THEMES IN THE WRITINGS OF FATHER DUMITRU POPESCU: CHURCH AND SOCIETY, CHURCH AND CULTURE, ORTHODOXISM AND POSTMOEDRINTY, TEOLOGY AND SCIENCE.

1.1. Church and society

“Human was not created by God to live alone, but in society. The entire history shows us that the human is a social creature, created by God to live not as an isolated individual, but in a society of his own siblings. *It is not good for the human to be alone*, God said when he created the human, Adam, *and I shall create for him a worthy match* (Genesis 2, 18)”.¹

This feature of the human to live inside a society is merely a reflex of the divine face he was blessed with.

The Church – in his power as an institution – was formed based on the principles left by Jesus Christ and paid forward to His apprentices, The Holy Disciples, whom – in return – paid it forward to their followers, the bishops². Through them, from generation to generation,

¹ Pr. prof. acad. Dumitru Popescu, *Hristos, Biserică, Misiune. Relevanța misiunii Bisericii în lumea contemporană*, Editura Arhiepiscopiei Dunării de Jos, Galați, 2011, p. 23; idem, *Creștinismul integral sau doctrina socială ortodoxă în Hristos, Biserică, Societate*, Editura Institutului Biblic și de Misiune al Bisericii Ortodoxe Române, București, 1998, p. 23.

² Cf. Pr. prof. acad. Dumitru Popescu, *Apostolatul ortodox și provocările lumii moderne, în Hristos, Biserică, Misiune*, p. 166.

these norms, commands, principles were kept unaltered in Orthodoxy until our days. The Church was formed in the context of society, trying, gradually, to transfer its own holy and moral norms; this can easily be noticed in the cultural development of each society. Proof that the Church was born inside the society's context is represented by the first Christian community formed in Jerusalem – immediately after the Pentecost – community that had a strong social character.

In regards to the actual society, the Church can't remain inert towards the challenges that the society promotes and sometimes, even imposing them. Reason why, there is an effort in trying to take measures that may positively contribute towards slowing down the furious race towards a nihilistic and destructive era, because, actually stopping this race can not even be considered.

1.1.1. Society, the ideologies its' confronting with and Church's attitude towards these ideologies

During the two millennial that passed since the Incarnation of the Son of God, Whom – on top of Logos Creator – he became also Logos Savior, the society changed its attitude towards Church. During the Antiquity the human was talking to the cosmos, for him being no distinction between the Creator and cosmos, seeing himself as integrated part into the cosmos, in the medieval times the human was talking to God, due to Christianity which proved that the universe is God's³ creation, freeing him from under cosmos's domination.

³ Pr. prof. acad. Dumitru Popescu, *Apostolatul ortodox și provocările lumii moderne...*, p. 168.

During the Illuminist era – which culminate with the French Revolution and as a consequence of the conflict with the medieval Inquisition – the human stops talking both with God, and with the Cosmos, and he only talks with himself; today the drama of the individual reaches its apogee because it closed down inside the created sphere, the Creator being isolated somewhere in the transcendent.

Following this twist of morals, God's laws are being put to the side, and the human is trying to impose its own law and attitude towards nature, transforming into its legislator: “Human's role is no longer to draw laws from nature, but to force its own laws. Therefore, ideologies started emerging and thought systems that obliged the human – due to their reductionist character – to live in an artificial environment.”⁴. Among the main ideological currents that Orthodoxy faced, we can list:

- 1.1.1.1. *Communism and Capitalism*
- 1.1.1.2. *Evolutionism and creationism*
- 1.1.1.3. *Neopaganism*
- 1.1.1.4. *Vitality*

1.1.2. The importance of individual's interiority in the development of society

An important role in the transformation of actual consumerism society is attributed to the ascetic and mystical dimension of the human existence. Lack of abstinence from food and beverage, other body needs, greed, exacerbated luxury and the wish to have as many material goods as possible – despite the fact that they

⁴ Pr. prof. dr. Dumitru Popescu, *Creștinismul integral sau doctrina socială ortodoxă...*, p. 40.

don't represent a necessity – lead to the domination of nature, drying it, polluting it at a planetary level; even getting close to an ecological collapse. The contemporary human needs to be aware that the renewal of society can be done only by changing the social structures that are not outside of the human's structure, but mainly by changing the inner structures of the human soul, by transforming the selfish desires in virtues of mercy and love towards God and our closest.

1.1.3. The necessity of scriptural and patristic texts in defining the relationship between Church and society

The mere fact that The Church is relying on the scriptural texts and on the patristic ones, proofs how necessary they are in the context of the mission it has to fulfill in the contemporary society. There is one small detail in this situation which we need to consider; and that is, the requirements of the present world, other answers are ought to be given than the ones given to the worshipers in the first centuries, despite the fact that the mission of the Church remains the same one.

1.1.3. The Church and the political society. The importance of these implications

The first encounter – regarding the implication of the Orthodox Church in politics – is represented by the words of Jesus Christ when He says: “*Render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and unto God the Things of God*” (Matei 22, 21), creating a clear separation between what is political and what is spiritual. The second encounter has in its sight the political plurality of the current times, and an implication of the Church in it would be fatal; its role being one for keeping the society's balance; maintain the spiritual and

moral unity of the people. If we were to talk about Church's presence on the political stage, that would only be through its worshipers.

1.2. Church and culture

From the day of creation, humans were gifted with a unique sensibility and an openness towards what's good and beautiful; and by expressing these powers of the soul with which the human was gifted – the culture was born – which, according to its' definition, it represents “the total cumulus of the material and spiritual values created by humanity and the necessary institutions for communicating these values.”⁵

1.2.1. The main cultural trends that influenced and still influences the Church

Ever since its beginnings, the Church faced both Platonism, which was supporting the idea of an intelligible world, regarding the soul and the rationalisation of the universe, but also with Aristotelianism, which promoted the idea of a sensitive world, as substance and matter of the same universe.

The two culminated with the illuminist era, which influenced and still influences the contemporary society.

1.2.2. Universal – private relationship and its influence over culture

One aspect of the relationship between Church and culture is represented by the tension between the universal and the private, which, inevitably is reflecting over culture. With this tension – and why not, opposition between general and private – the Church is confronting

⁵ <http://dexonline.ro/definitie/cultura/> 18/11/2013.

from its first Christian centuries. The equation between the global culture and the private culture can find its solution by reporting this relationship to the Holy Trinity – the supreme model of communion through love.

1.2.3. Romanian Orthodox Church and culture

Romanian Orthodox Church, despite the fact that its tradition and culture is formed during almost two millennial – today, it finds itself under the shooting gun of the occidental culture, culture characterized by secularism and globalization; the power of this attack tends to shut down the human inside its own shell, ignoring the presence of God. Hence – in the context of postmodern deconstruction, where even the European culture Christian roots are being denied – it is mandatory for us to impose this valuable inheritance.

1.2.4. Icons, continuous flow of haric spring, but also cultural values in postmodernity

The Orthodox are maintaining an iconographic representation which needs to carry the worshiper across this material barrier; reason why everything that is fleshly is painted for helping him to grow, for helping him gain spiritual advancement. The icon does not represent a mere interior decoration of the places of worship; nor a fall into idolatry, unlike certain, so called Christians whom are dominated by beliefs purely spiritual tend to believe, for whom the matter and the seen world has absolutely no value.

1.3. Orthodoxy and postmodernity

The dialog that takes place between the Orthodoxy and postmodernity is supported through apologetics; Father Academician Dumitru Popescu – through his characteristic original style – he brings a new light over

the Romanian orthodox apologetics, determined by the fact that it had a lot to suffer during time from the influence of the scholastic.

1.3.1. Subjectivity and objectivity, reflex of character duality in Christ

One of the main measure Orthodoxy needs to take in the context of the current society is the openness towards universality. Hence, in its relationship with postmodernity, Orthodoxy needs to imperiously take Christ into account – in his duality – of the fact the He is both God and Human. Only relying on this aspect and having as a foundation for truth Christ and his teachings, the construction by the Church of a relationship with the secularised world will be a long lasting one and with great potential for success for the lost souls who are in great need of support anchored in the eschaton.

1.3.2. Privatization of religion, the consequence of the artificial tension between the subjective and objective character of the religious phenomenon

The French Revolution (1789) is seen as a turning point in the history, not only politically wise, but also – specially – of the relationship between Church and the state. Starting with this moment, the Church was gradually moved from the political sphere of influence – being aimed to keep it anchored in the private sector – in a matter of personal opinion. Also, eliminating the Holy Trinity from the public sphere and its isolation in the private sector attracts, inevitably, the privatization of the religion, which means losing the objective character of the religious truth and becoming submissive to subjective opinions. The purpose of these rampage attacks that are hitting the Church are due to the fact that

the Church itself represent the element of stability and unity of the society.

1.3.3. Uncreated divine energies, the shield of Orthodoxy in postmodernity

Divine energies gain an important role and a double role towards the secularised culture of today: firstly it represents an obstacle that cannot be crossed against negative aspects of secularisation and secondly, it allows us to harness the positive aspects of the above mentioned culture, even though they are only a few.

1.3.4. Holy Trinity – model of communion in postmodernity

From a Christian point of view, the unique model – towards the society can aim – is the one that has its roots in the Holy Trinity and is mirrored in the community of the Church's sacraments, for this model takes into consideration both the human rights: liberty and ownership – but also the social duties – responsibility and integrity. For an honest reflection of the Holy Trinity supreme example, the worshiper needs to bring proof of its connection with the Church, meaning to taste from the uncreated divine energies to access the connection with the Holy Trinity.

1.3.5. Romanian Orthodoxy in postmodernity

In Romania, the transition from communism to capitalism – which took place after the events of 1989 – the latest also being called democracy, brought along both benefits and challenges towards which the Church needed to take action for or against. It must be mentioned though, that the Romanian Theology tried to highlight the rational and dehumanizing character of these systems of individual rate, searching – in the same

time – to highlight the perennial value of the Christian lessons. Towards this, a theological literature developed, which main subject was and is the Holy Trinity, along which a series of catechetic activities also took place not only on the parish and diocese levels, meant to maintain the authentic orthodox light and the Romanian conscience.

1.4. Theology and science

From the beginning, it must be remembered that between religion and science there is a great difference in which concerns the purpose of each; hence, the purpose of science is related to the purpose of knowledge, while the purpose of religion is to bring the worshiper towards salvation, which finds itself above any form of knowledge.

1.4.1. Science and its ideological journey

The amazing progress in discovering the secrets of nature brought along a spiritual regress directly proportional, determining the creation of an inner imbalance very hard to control and launching the slavery instincts altered by sins. To be highlighted is the fact that the entire excess of cosmological and anthropological ideologies proves its limits specifically because of science, which, despite not being able to bring happiness – as it hoped to – its known purpose remained known: to research and process what is given. Despite being vehemently supported that science has unlimited powers, in reality – the resources the science is using are unlimited. From the moment its unravelled that everything is in a relationship, nothing existing by itself – of the understandable world or the rationality of the creation ontologically scripted in the sensitive world –

there is a gate that is being created and it opens the seen worlds to its Creator. Even so, no matter how big the optimism dose is when analysing this relationship, it needs to be accepted that recognizing the existence of the revealed truth by the savants and confessing Christ as ultimate Truth does not necessarily mean the acceptance of the Revelation as a norm by the science in its whole, but only by those scientists that are religious and due to following a high level of spiritual advancement benefit from the help of the Holy Spirit, which enlightens them.

1.4.2. Holy Fathers – precursors of science through supporting the supernatural Revelation

The main Holy fathers that developed a dialog with the natural science are Saint Atanasie the Great, Saint Vasile the Great and Saint Mxim the Confessor and had as foundation the prologue of the Gospel by Ioan, in which it talks about the divine and supreme Logos, through which everything was done.

1.4.3. Reporting of the contemporary theologians towards science

The relationship between Theology and science needs to be maintained and intensified mainly at an academic level, though a serious commitment from both sides; especially because there is already a start in this. What must be enforced in this dialog is the accentuation of the fact that matter – which is a concentration of spirit and energy – has the possibility to be transcended; and – seen from a soteriological point of view – can even be spiritualized.

II. FATHER CONTRIBUTION DUMITRU TOWARDS POPESCU'S ROMANIAN

THEOLOGY ASSERTION IN THE ECUMENIC CONTEXT

Father Dumitru Popescu's interest in supporting the Romanian Orthodoxy in the ecumenical context was noticeable early. With every stone placed on the foundation of his career both as a student – during his high school – continuing further with his University studies and Post Graduate studies were important contributions for his personality development. With a sharp sense of observation and with a strong ability to synthesize information, Father Academician Dumitru Popescu contributed through his writings to the development and renewal of the culture and orthodox theology. Using also his rich ecumenical experience gained during his activity, and built on a strong patristic foundation, he looks at the relationships between the Orthodox Church and Roman-Catholic one and the rest of the cults or Christian denominations from an original and refreshing point of view.

2. 1. Short history of state relations between Romania and Vatican

2.2. Romanian Orthodox Church's position towards roman-catholic ecumenism

2.3. Differences or convergences between Orthodoxy and Roman-Catholicism

For a great relationship between the two Sister Churches, it is mandatory to establish – mainly – the common elements which can constitute the starting points in being successful with this quest.

2.3.1. Procession of the Holy Spirit and the Filioque addition

The fact that the Symbol of faith was already said – same as it was established during the first two official Ecumenical Councils – without the *Filioque*⁶ add-in represents a first step of reconciliation mainly between the Orthodox Church and the Roman-Catholic Church.

2.3.2. *The sacraments of the Christian inception: Baptism, Chrismation, Eucharist*

2.3.3. *The uncreated energies and the created grace, conciliation or antagonism*

The reconciliation between the uncreated energies and the catholic dogma of the uncreated grace will not be accepted by Orthodox either – nor by the Catholics – however, in needs to be praised, in the same time, the wish of unity between the two Churches, coming from the western representatives of the Church. The interest shown in the theological catholic environments for the uncreated energies represents a step forward due to the fact that they start to recognise the true value and the importance for life and the Christian mission in the contemporary world; even though, it must be admitted that there are still reservations in claims and support.

2.4. *Father Dumitru Popescu's point of view towards the Ecumenical Move and its role in the Orthodoxy's life*

With strict referral to the activity and the role of Father Dumitru Popescu in the actual ecumenical context, when the crisis that started in Porto Alegre

⁶ În urma discuțiilor avute cu ortodocșii pentecostali din România au renunțat la adaosul *Filioque*, lucru foarte important de altfel, ca o roadă benefică a demersurilor ecumenice realizate de-a lungul timpului. Cf. Pr. prof. dr. Vasile Nechita, *Prinos de recunoștință*, p. 83.

continues, we cannot dismiss and not acknowledge his salutary contribution. This crisis – mainly determined by the lack of an outcome of any of the ecumenical initiatives, of the impossibility of commonly defining what the Church of Christ actually means, to which all those who were baptised in the name of the Holy Trinity belong to and believe in His Gospel – it can end in a rewarding manner only through in depth assiduous ecclesiological work.

III. DOCTORATE – “ROMAN-CATHOLIC ECCLESIOLOGY BASED ON THE DOCUMENTS OF THE SECOND COCILIE OF VATICAN AND ITS ECHOS IN CONTEMPORAY THEOLOGY.”

The scientific paper for which Father Professor Dumitru Popescu received the doctor title in Theology is structured in chapters and subchapters and on the same “skeleton” was structured this chapter as well for the current paper, taking into consideration the conferences and discussions that took place on behalf of the decisions made at the Vatican Council II and the negative effects or positive that followed those decisions.

3.1. Holy Trinity and the Church

Starting from the misconception that Holy Trinity and the Church are two “plenitudes”, there must be understood the report between “God’s total plenitude” – Holy Trinity and “divine gifts plenitude” – The Church.

3.1.1. *Holy Trinity*

Lack of occidental trinity – or better yet, the trinity errors supported at the Vatican Council II – are quasi-impersonalism, due to the separation of the divine nature of the trinity people, procession of the Spirit and from the Son – *Filioque* – and the incommunicability,

because of which, the Holy Trinity is isolated in transcendence, are leading to a conception fully deist.

3.1.2. *The Church*

Seen more from a juridical point of view, Roman-Catholic Church is trying to recover territory through the works of the Vatican Council II, interpreting the Church – “the second plenitude” – and as a “mystery”.

3.1.3. Church’s Relationship with the Holy Trinity

3.2. **The Church ad intra**

This plenitude – the Church – is analysed and supported in the same time, in the context of the works of the second Council of Vatican, under three shapes: sacramental, juridical and pnevmatological.

3.2.1. **Sacramental category of the Church**

Church’s role of an intermediate between God and world – as a connection between the two realities – is present even from the first chapter of the *Lumen Gentium* Constitution: “The Church is sacrament and instrument of intimate love with God and unity of the entire human race.”⁷

3.2.1.1. *The Episcopacy*

Starting from the insoluble connection between Father, Sun and Holy Spirit, Orthodoxy does not accept that the Church will carry a created grace received from Christ from bypassing the Holy Spirit. God’s grace is not created and transcends the entire creature because it irradiates from the holly being; from the Father, through Son, in the Holly Spirit. And the bishops do not have the

⁷ *Lumen Gentium*, 1, apud Pr. asist. Popescu Dumitru, *op. cit.*, p. 349.

role of replacing Christ and there is no opposition between priests and bishops; despite the fact that bishops can deliver the Holy Sacrament of Ordination and that only through the Holy Spirit.

3.2.1.2 *The Sacraments*

Sacraments come through the route Christ – episcopacy and from the thesaurus with which this college of bishops was once and for all equipped with; they are spread among humans through the Holy Sacraments. Due to this scholastic medieval conception that the Church is dependent fully on the Holly Sacraments – because these were representing the grace deposit – now, because the hierarchy is the one that possesses this deposit of the divine grace, Holy Sacraments are the ones who depend on the episcopacy.

3.2.1.3. *Laity*

Even in the case of laity, the council adopts and attitude through which it follows reaching the final purpose: the of undermining everything to the Pope, through the use of *hierarchy*. If in the previous chapters it was discussed about the direct submission of the hierarchy to the Pope, about the Holy Eucharist – as a centre of effusion of sacraments – and about the fact that sacraments depend fully on the hierarchy, about laity its said that through sacraments they are incorporated into the hierarchy.

3.2.2. **Church's juridical category**

3.2.2.1. *Pope's Attribute of „faith's unity foundation”*

Seen from an orthodox point of view, the quality of being the foundation of faith – which was attributed to the Pope – is absurd, because you cannot exclude God and the worshipers from this equation which consists

mainly of the strong connection between the two elements, which in this case if not excluded, are at least marginalised.

3.2.2.2. Pope's Attribute of "communion foundation"

The participants of the Vatican's Council II considered best that the foundation and the main principle of Church communion is the Pope and not – how it should rightfully be – the Holly Spirit.

3.2.3. Church's pnevmatologic category

In theological language, everything that is pnevmatologic refers to the Person or the work of the Holy Spirit. Following the decisions of the Vatican Council II, Holy Spirit is conceived as being an impersonal power, separated from Christ, which – at its turn – is identified with the Church, through episcopacy; and on its foundation the roman papacy is rising. From an orthodox point of view, the Church is being built, in Christ, on faith and in Holy Spirit. Because of this fact, the Church is maintaining its intrinsic relationship with Christ in Trinity and includes harmoniously both the hierarchy and the worshipers.

3.3. Church ad extra

3.3.1. Roman-catholic ecumenism

In the process of ecumenical openness – the Western Church, through the Vatican Council II voice, is guiding the catholic worshipers to give up the refractory attitude towards the worshipers of the other Churches, eliminating the words, judgments and actions that are not in line with fraternal love. The attitude is to be praised, because through this method it is tried to eliminate all obstacles that are lined up against this so much wanted union; even though, the ultimate goal of this mission

remains the same: union with Rome under the monarchic-juridical leadership of the Pope.

3.3.2. Roman-catholic Church's attitude towards the world

Roman-Catholic Church – separated by Christ and the divine gifts shared in the Holy Spirit through the Holy Sacraments – becomes autonomous; same with the world, broken in its turn from all that is divine becomes autonomous. The report between the two autonomous realities is one of superiority of the Church towards the world, and the relationship between the two is associated, according to the Augustinian conception – with the one between the two *citadels*. The communication between the two realities is done through the laity, which have the quality of being citizens of both citadels. Despite giving the impression of being somewhere far from the world, through its teaching its searching to unite the world. Looking at just the Church from the world, without talking about the world in the Church, the council remains tributary to the Augustinian dualist conception; tending to minimize the world din rapport to the Church, without offering to the world any solutions and concrete answers to its problems.

3.4. Echoes of the Vatican's II ecclesiology in contemporary theology

Roman-Catholic Church's efforts to repair – through the work of the Vatican Council II – some problems which, along the time, made that the papal institution to lose credits, received from both the Orthodox Church and from protestants cults – but also from roman-catholic theologians – critics and praises.

3.4.1. *Church's Mystery*

Despite the fact that the attempt to offer a trinity theology is shy, the separation between Christ and Holy Spirit is as obvious as possible. Even more so, with this aspect there is a continuity of identifying the Church with Christ - *Christus et Ecclesia eademque persona* – and the transformation of the Holy Spirit in a complement for the hierarchy.

3.4.2. *Episcopal Comradeship*

The main problem though – the one of the infallibility of the Pope – continues to exist: Bishops College does not influence in any way the decisions of the Pope, while the decisions of the episcopate synods depend solely on what the roman pontiff supports. The Pope can then take alone any decision he wants – and to declare it infallible – while the decisions of the bishops' college will never become infallible. The only power the bishops' college has is reflecting solely on the worshipers.

3.4.3. “God’s People”

Despite the existence of a lot of discussions about “God’s people” in a general frame, meaning the totality of the Church’s members – laity and clerks – similar to a return to the old traditions of the Church, tradition kept unaltered by the Orthodox Church, through it there is an attempt to offer a certain value to the universal priesthood, talking first about the laity and after approaching the position and hierarchical nature. Even though – in approaching the problem of the laymen, the ecclesial situation ad-intra of the ones just mentioned is left in the shadow – it is highlighted in return the ad-extra exercise, in the quality of a layman of the Church in the world or of universal priesthood, developing then

a theology of the history. The only activities that laity can be used for are the missionary and propagandistic ones, meant to consolidate Catholicism in the world. This concept is influencing the historic dimension and implicitly the eschatological one; the nevralgic point from which the entire roman-catholic frivolity starts is due to the pontiff power.

CONCLUSIONS

In the context of secularized postmodernism of today, Orthodox Church must no longer remain inert and accept this state of lethargy in which it finds itself in, but must take an attitude towards trying to stop this furious surge towards a destructive and nihilistic perspective, because stopping it can not be possible. First of all, the Christian society, in general, confronted along the time with a series of ideologies which determined a change of trajectory and values in the human existence. If in the antic times, the human would speak with the cosmos, especially because for him between the Creator and cosmos was no difference - , in the medieval times, due to Christianity, the man starts talking to God, unravelling It as a Person. The spiritual fall came together with the illuminist era when the human starts isolating God somewhere in the transcendent, discussing with himself in a created closed environment. Therefore, even if we are talking about evolutionism or creationism, even if it was about communism or capitalism or even if we are discussing about Neopaganism and vitalism in the context of this complex phenomenon of nihilism, all these are only hits aiming the foundation of the Church with the purpose of breaking any connection between

human and God. These ideologies had an influence both on the spiritual aspect or cleric, but inevitably it got spread over the society.

For countering these attacks, the Church must work on restoring the person's status through the divine grace, through the uncreated divine energies, transmitted through the Holy Sacraments of the Church, meaning in an ecclesiological environment where the light and love of the Holy Trinity has entered. There is a reciprocity that exists here which needs to have a positive start. The reciprocity is represented by virtue of the individual, this state will reflect over the society as well – consequently – the society will be one crossed by authentic moral and spiritual values. If the life of the individual is a vicious one – dominated by petty interests and passions pushed to the limits of the irrational or antirational – the society will also be a sick and disfigured one. The contemporary person must understand that while his internal structures are flooded by sick passions, nor the society in which he lives in will be a healthy and long lasting one.

In the context given, the Christianity mission is to transfigure the secularized society through a permanent infusion of divine grace; and this can be accomplished directly through the participation to an authentic liturgical life in which primordially must be the ascetic and mystic dimension of the human life. Through ascetics the human is purifying its interior and in the same time, disciplining itself living the life through Christ, through Gospel and the Holy Sacraments, in a synergic work through prayers and philanthropy.

The entire plethora of ideas and themes, approached with a sharp practical sense by Father Dumitru Popescu, represents a rich thesaurus which should be exploited with more interest by the young generation of Romanian theologians with the purpose of successfully face the avalanche of problems with which the Orthodox Church and the contemporary society is facing.

The current paper wishes to be a humble homage to the one that was Father Academician Professor Doctor Dumitru Popescu, paper written with the close supervision and parent-like guidance of one of his disciples, Priest Professor Doctor Vasile Nechita.

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