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ABSTRACT

DOCTORAL THESIS

“ROMANIAN MONASTICISM IN THE LIGHT OF HOLY SCRIPTURE AND SPIRITUAL BASIS IN THE LIFE OF THE CHURCH”

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In this summary of the doctoral thesis entitled "Romanian monasticism in the light of Holy Scripture and spiritual basis in the life of the Church", we try to bring to light, given the content we dealt with in this study, and starting from the biblical bases of living the Christian monastic life, and obedience to God, what the biblical connection of Orthodox monasticism in general represents, and then, a special look into Romanian Orthodox monasticism.

What we dealt with this study and wanted to highlight is the fact that Orthodox Christian monasticism and, in this case, Romanian monasticism, has contributed and continues to contribute to the spiritual development of believers. We talked about the love of God, which is the first commandment that our Saviour Jesus Christ highlighted the most out of the ten commandments that Moses was given on Mount Sinai.

Our Saviour Jesus Christ emphasized love as being the greatest commandment in the Law: the love of God and the love of thy neighbour. Hence, in a subdivision of the first chapter, I have emphasized the basis of Christian monasticism, because without the love of God and without the love of thy neighbour, Christian monasticism could not have been founded, or could not have been developed and manifested, even more so could not have withstood time, in the way it is represented today in the Orthodox and Romanian world.

We have spoken of monasticism as a foreshadowing of it, and we have referred to the Old Testament, which is an integral part of the Holy Scriptures or the Bible, and which we must keep in mind and consider it as being the basis we must go from, and consider all the writings and books that we have in the Old Testament. Given the present project to which we are referring, we have shown that in the Old Testament times there was dedication for a period of time, so that those who did so showed love for God in a different sense, but not as in the Christian monastic life which we have today. The foreshadowing of Christian monasticism presented in the Old Testament through the institution of Nazirites, highlights the desire to serve God through a clean life of abstinence, dedication, and the desire to devote oneself entirely to the divine will for a short period of time.

Starting from this desire of the Old Testament people, we arrived in the New Testament, in the biblical part of the New Testament, in which people dedicated and continue to dedicate their lives in another way of manifestation to God, not for a short period of time as it existed in the Old Testament through the institution of Nazirites, but for the whole of their lives.

Following and fulfilling the teachings of the Holy Scriptures, and especially the assumption, represent the basic principle from which all monks start in the Orthodox monastic life, because the fulfilment of the evangelical commandments and counsels, which in fact represent the three monastic vows that the monks submit upon entering monasticism, but also the ordinance that they must fulfil, did not, from the beginning, represent some strict rules. They became stable, in the sense that they were ordained and established by the Church in the fourth century, when they acquired a canonical value in the Church, and monasticism received in this sense, the quality of gracefulness in the Church.

All who enter monasticism must adhere to this essential principle of life, which means the love of God whom they must serve, and of their neighbour, whom they must help, and to do to all, as Our Saviour Jesus Christ taught us that we must help the wretched and the distressed, the suffering and needy, the poor, the hungry, the thirsty, the imprisoned, for doing these things and all that derives from this commandment, and doing good to all who are in these situations, we do in fact to Our Saviour Jesus Christ.

In monasticism, the laying down of monastic vows, voluntary obedience, virginity or chastity, and voluntary poverty represent the living, conscious, and free will of man who wants to follow Christ for life in a sincere way especially because he sees and feels that at the end of this dedication, "sacrifice, in the sense of giving up everything for God", the monk receives the crown that God gave to the saints and to all those who listened to Him, obeyed and followed His commandments and counsels.

In this context, in the second chapter of the thesis, we have two principles that both monks and lay people must observe, with the difference that divine commandments must be obeyed by all believers for salvation, and for monks it is necessary to follow the evangelical counsels. It actually means the votes cast upon entering monasticism. All these are mentioned in the Holy Scriptures and spoken of by Our Saviour Jesus Christ, thus having a scriptural basis, and those who choose the monastic life, do nothing but go walk the path of perfection in a freely and sincerely chosen way, by which to fulfil both the divine commandments as well as evangelical counsels.

Giving up the goods of this world, and especially giving up voluntarily in a free and conscious way, is a sacrifice difficult to express in words, because the man in this situation, in

this case the monk, is put in a position to cut off his will, to knowingly give up on all the goods of this world in favour of salvation, considering that if he obeys the commandments and fulfils the monastic vows made upon entering the monastic life, he receives as a gift from God the salvation of his soul.

Salvation is accomplished only within the Church, and exclusively through the calling in prayer of Our Saviour Jesus Christ, who is the centre of our existence. Through Baptism, which is the gateway to Christianity, through the anointing with the Holy and Great Myrrh and then through the reception of the Holy Sacraments, the Body and Blood of Our Saviour Jesus Christ, every Christian becomes a living member of the Church, thus being able to spend his whole life under the protection of The Holy Trinity, and at the time of awareness and maturity to be able to choose the path through which he feels he can serve and praise God.

The service and dedication of God for the whole life by casting the vows of entry into monasticism, is not suitable for any Christian, but only for those who feel this call in a mysterious and powerful way, and for them, the lay people must have special respect for and pay special attention to, because monasticism was the essential vein for preserving the true faith in the Romanian space through which the Holy Church lasted and in the porch of which the Romanian faith, language and culture developed and flourished.

In the third chapter we then referred to, and deepened the paths and spiritual nourishment of the monks' lives, starting with and placing prayer at the forefront as a means of communication and connection with God. We then emphasized the importance of fasting that Christ Himself practiced, not that He needed it, but to show us that if He Himself was tempted by the devil, so much more would we be. That is why he emphasized that this nation of devils would solely be driven out through prayer and fasting (Matthew 17:21). Both in the life of the ordinary lay person and especially in that of the monk, fasting and prayer become weapons of defence against the temptations that come to us from the evil one, it being known that fasting, which is a free and conscious renunciation or abstinence from certain foods, drinks and pleasures are a living will of every Christian to draw closer to God. By fulfilling the prayer and fasting ordained by the Church, but also in a spiritual way recommended by the spiritual priest, another step is taken towards the spiritual ascent that leads to salvation and towards the ultimate goal of the Christian to spend eternity with God.

Union with God represents a mysterious way to be by His side, and together with Him. The man who desires to be united with God means that he must renounce his passions and cultivate his virtues, cut off his will, and renounce his deeds which are not in accordance with the evangelical commandments and counsels. It means to desire union with Him, given the counsel we learn from the Epistle to the Ephesians of the Holy Apostle Paul who says, "He who fulfils all things through the Holy Spirit," because union with God means union with the One who fulfils all with perfect love. Here, we consider all Christians, lay people and monks, because they are all part of the mysterious Body of the Church of Jesus Christ. From this point of view, from this angle, we could understand that the Orthodox and Romanian monasticism that we have covered within this project, should be felt and seen as a state of grace in the Church, and which is part of the mysterious members of the Church.

The union through the Holy Sacraments that the Church preaches, that is, through Baptism, Anointing and Holy Communion, represents, as I previously mentioned, the gateway to the Church, both for lay people and monks, therefore the monks fulfilling all these stages of entry in the Church, as members of the Church, they can also take the step of entering monasticism, proving a special will, greater than that of the lay people, by observing and fulfilling the evangelical commandments and counsels, which have become monastic vows.

The biblical foundation of evangelical commandments and counsels, keeping in mind Orthodox monasticism, manifested itself as a special state in the Church, as a state of grace, from the beginning being only the living desire of Christians to worship and follow Christ the Lord, by respecting and fulfilling His words, and later, as has been said, to become an organized institution of the Church in the fourth century.

According to the evangelical counsels, after prayer and fasting, we go through a stage of a sensitive moment, which is called confession and communion. Confession of sins is part of the exhortations that Christ left for the salvation of the world, namely, that the Lord Jesus gave power, and we could write in capital letters, that He through His divine intervention gave power to man to help man. He, once crucified, dead, laid in the tomb, resurrected to heaven and appearing before His disciples, made a gesture beyond humanity... He made a godly gesture, which He, as the Son of God and implicitly the Holy Trinity The Father and the Holy Spirit left to us, some of us, the power to bind and untie sins, the power to be connected to the absolute

divine power, knowing that during the confession Christ the Lord is present, He who forgives sins, but not only Him but also the whole of the Holy Trinity. At this divine moment, any Christian or monk who confesses before the spiritual priest, be he a priest of myrrh or a hieromonk, that is, a monk priest, takes part. In this context, any priest who is canonically ordained, by receiving the Grace of the Most Holy Spirit, and ordained a clergyman, has received through the Holy Sacrament of the Priesthood the power to bind and untie the sins of men. I have emphasized these things to highlight the fact that any canonically ordained priest has the same power to choose and unravel the sins of men, whether he is a married priest, with a family, in a parish of myrrh, or a priest who belongs of a monastery and which is called hieromonk, and in this case is a monk.

After the remission of sins, there is the most beautiful part of living the human life but also the spiritual one, that of receiving Him, feeling Him and living with the Lord Jesus Christ through communion with the Holy Sacraments, because ultimately, and if we could say more deeply, the ultimate goal of our lives is to dwell within God. For dwelling within God, as we learn from His words, that “He that eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, dwelleth in me, and I in him” (John 6:56), and in the words of the Holy Apostle Paul who especially dealt with this great Sacrament of the kingdom of God, it is necessary to share with His Most Holy Sacraments. By receiving the Holy Sacraments, the Body and Blood of the Lord, the Christian remains in Christ the Lord and He remains in him.

In the Romanian space, monasticism had an exceptional role, and we say so because we, as the only Latin-speaking people, have inherited, received, have lived, live, will continue to live and will strongly support the faith in Our Saviour Jesus Christ that the Holy Apostle Andrew preached in the Carpathian-Danubian-Pontic space, and for which the Church and our people, the Church that is called Apostolic, and our people, following research, and following the statements of both theologians and secular specialists in history, was born Romanian and Christian.

As such, in the fourth chapter we referred to our ancestral Church, but also to the development of our monasticism in all Romanian provinces. The ancestral church together with monasticism are part of the family of the Apostolic Orthodox Churches, monasticism, as a charitable institution, representing our national joy and glory, because if we say pride, it means that we have committed a sin. So, we could boast with the representation in the Orthodox world

of Romanian monasticism, given the fact that, even if in this summary we do not follow the steps that we considered we should express in fragments, called chapters of this doctorate thesis, we highlight the essentials. However, we appreciate that resorting to exact references and making a corroboration between these chapters, we think that Romanian monasticism, beyond the fact that it is based on Holy Scripture, is something national, the breath of faith, culture and steadfastness in this space blessed by God.

The manifestation and presence of important monastic personalities in the Romanian space, and especially the presence and existence of monuments and masterpieces of art difficult to explain in words even by great experts in the field of history and archaeology, therefore represents the will of the people, the will of the Romanian people by means of which it contributed, dedicated its life and national being in preserving Orthodoxy, in preserving the biblical vein and the apostolic tradition, left since the first Christian century on the land of Dobrogea, and later in the Danubian-Carpathian.

By the presence and steadfastness on our lands of the Holy Apostle Andrew, the first called to the apostolate, he became for us, as a people and nation, the Protector of Romania. The union in spirit and in truth, represents the human quality that the Romanian Christian and monk have always had. Prayer as an example given by Our Saviour Jesus Christ Himself, and later ordained by the Church, represented and represents in our national Church, both for monks and lay people, a prayer manifested by the praise of God, of gratitude and then of prayer.

In the last chapter we mentioned some of the greatest people of the ancestral Church, hierarchs, priests, deacons, monks and scholars of the Orthodox faith, who rose from the ranks of monks, monks who dedicated their lives to Christ, understanding this according to the evangelical commandments and counsels which Our Saviour Jesus Christ left to His holy disciples, that they might later put them in writing, and which we shall mention today.

The institution of Romanian Orthodox monasticism remained faithful to these evangelical teachings, and contributed to the preservation of the faith, to national unity, to culture, to the promotion of the Romanian language in worship and education, but especially to the preservation of Romanian dignity in both the Eastern and Western worlds, proving steadfastness and devotion in this God-blessed space called Romania.

Therefore, whoever wants to enter monasticism, must bear in mind from the beginning, that living the monastic life or living in the monastic life, is similar to the angelic life, but also to the service of both God and thy neighbour, because Orthodox monasticism, in the end, is based on the teachings of Holy Scripture as well as on the ordinances left by the Holy Fathers.