

IULIU-MARIUS MORARIU

**THE DIALOGUE BETWEEN CHURCH AND SOCIETY IN THE
CONTEMPORARY WORLD**

Iuliu-Marius Morariu

Babes-Bolyai University, Cluj-Napoca, Romania.

Email: iuliumariusmorariu@gmail.com

Abstract: Review of Ioan C. Teșu, *Ortodoxia, în dialog* [Orthodoxy, in dialogue], (Iași: Editura Sfântul Mina, 2019).

Key words: dialogue; spiritual paternity; confession; contemporary world; patristic; theology.

Professor of spirituality in the Faculty of Orthodox Theology from Iași University, author of different books and articles on theology, published in Romania and abroad (among the latest titles, there can be mentioned: Teșu 2017, Teșu 2018; Teșu 2018a), speaker in radio or television or guest to different theological or interdisciplinary events, Fr. Ioan Cristinel Teșu is one of the theologians that can be surely considered an open-minded priest.

His book titled: *Orthodoxy in dialogue* (Teșu 2019) is for sure a proof of this aspect. An anthology of studies and articles previously published in different scientific journals published by institutions like the Faculty of Orthodox Theology from Iași or different institutions, the research deals with actual topics both for theological area, as for the lay one, like: world as a masterpiece of divine beauty, space for human life and human evolution and task for the evolution of human being (Teșu 2019, 9-15), fasting and its theological and therapeutic role (Teșu 2019, 22-69), hunger and its relationship with the aforementioned process, spiritual life and the global situation (Teșu 2019, 89-102), illness and its role for human being and its relationship with God, pornography (Teșu 2019, 103-122), its influence on human life and the destruction of real empathic capacity of people, the spiritual father and his role in counselling people, but also his responsibility regarding the disciples (Teșu 2019, 146-190), the prayer and its multiple valences (Teșu 2019, 195-207), mercy as a virtue and social act (Teșu 2019, 222-225), proudness as a personal and social sin (Teșu 2019, 226-233) or the dreams and their relevance for the spiritual life (Teșu 2019, 240-246; Steinhart 2005, 103).

Avoiding a certain type of discourse often used by theologians, that insists on the juridical understanding of religion and emphasizes God as a punisher and the religion as a stratified structure that rather reminds about the Middle Ages, and does not look like an assembly of people united by the faith in God, nurturing the respect for common values and cultivating love, he starts the introduction of the book by presenting the world as the way chosen by divinity to show his love: "The world and the man have been created that we can share this divine beauty and the climb to the spiritual completion is a progress in well and good. Creation is a work of the super – being love of God, of ineffable beauty. Since the creation of the world, God, as noted by the hagiographer, saw that all were very good, that they had the character of initial perfection through the act of their creation" (Teșu 2019, 10).

In previous times, important thinkers of the Church like Augustin (Augustine 1991) have also spoken about it, while in recent times, it was a topic discovered by mystical vocations like Saint Silouane from Mounth Athos (Athonite 1976; Athonite 2001). Still, in the daily theological

research this aspect is not yet enough underlined, fact that makes the work of Ioan C. Teșu valuable from this point of view.

In a way that reminds to the reader by the attitude of Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew (Bartholomée 2015; Chrysavgis 2012; Morariu 2019, 19-25), or Pope Francis (Francis 2015), he draws the attention on the relevance of the carefully attitude for the entire creation (Teșu 2019, 12-13), insisting on the fact that the man is created to protect God's creation and not to destroy it.

Very interesting are also his notes regarding confession and the need for introspection. Offering some interesting thoughts that can surely create bridges between psychology and spirituality, he says that: "The experience of evaluating one's own inner life is most often done, in times of crisis or in the limiting situations of existence. The secularized West seems to be very much used by consultations with the therapist or psychologist: Eastern Orthodox space, thanks to the Lord! - it still retains the practice of confession or confession." (Teșu 2019, 172).

Without excluding the role of a good therapist in solving important crises of contemporary man, Ioan Teșu also shows the fact that confession is important and useful and in many situations, can be complementary to that one (Teșu 2019: 185-189). In the same time, his ideas do not exclude the possibility of complementary therapies like philosophical counselling, often used and important for the contemporary cultural space (Frunză 2019; Marinoff, 2012; Marinoff 2016; Sandu 2019; Morariu 2019a. 1717-175).

Extremely useful are also his notes about the prayer and its relevance for Christian space and contemporary world. Using the Scripture and the tradition of the Church (Holy Fathers and Liturgical texts) as main sources, he presents the way how, during the time, the Orthodox Church understood it and saw it as a form of dialogue with God. Later, he will speak about virtues like mercy or humility. The last one will be presented in antithesis with the pride, one of the most important sins. Putting the accents at their place, Cristinel Teșu will insist on a very encountered form of manifestation of pride, showing that: "One of the typical or general forms of manifestation of this passion is not self-reflection, but comparison. It fulfils the man of today in his comparison with others and those he has with other ones." (Teșu 2019, 230).

Starting from that, he shows that the recommended form is also the one suggested by psychologists, that insist on the fact that a self-centred attitude which is not necessary a narcissist one, but it consists in a realist evaluation of the self and on the correct direction of guilt and the causes of mistakes towards oneself and not towards those around you (so not an externalization, but an internalization), can be extremely useful into the process of purification of the soul.

His ideas regarding suffering and pain and the way how God cures people through those instruments, expressed too in other books and being influenced by authors like Larchet (Larchet 2006; Larchet 2008), or

Hausherr (Hausherr 1955; Hausherr 1965; Hausherr 1969; Hausherr 1999) are also useful and prove the fact that the Orthodox Church is, thanks to writers like Ioan C. Teșu, opened to dialogue and capable to contribute to the development of science and creation of bridges. Containing interesting and actual considerations regarding contemporary problems, his book is not only an useful tool for the theologians, but also for the readers interested in the way how the Church can offer answers to the contemporary problems and can contribute to the welfare of the society and an useful radiography of the contemporary society and of its main spiritual problems. Necessary for the 21th century, will surely constitute the start of future debates dedicated to the approached topics, and we hope also, the start of future projects from the same field.

References:

Athonite, Silouane the. 2001. *Între iadul deznădejzii și iadul smereniei* [Between the hell of desperation and the hell of humility]. Sibiu: Editura Deisis.

Athonite, Silouane the. 1976. *Ecrits Spirituels – extraits*. Begrolles en Mauges: Abbaye de Bellefontainte.

Augustine, Saint. 1991. *Confessions*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Bartholomée Patriarche œcuménique. 2015. *Et Dieu vit que cela était bon. La vision théologique de la création dans la tradition orthodoxe*. Paris: Les Editions du Cerf.

Chrysavgis, John (ed.). 2012. *On Earth as in Heaven. Ecological Vision and Initiatives of Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew*. New York: Fordham University Press.

Francis, Pope. 2015. *Encyclical Letter Laudato Si' of the Holy Father Francis on Care for our Common Home*. Vatican: Libreria Editrice Vaticana.

Frunză, Sandu. 2019. *Comunicare și consiliere filosofică (Communication and philosophical counselling)*. București: Editura Eikon.

Hausherr, Irénée. 1955. *Direction spirituelle en Orient autrefois*. Roma: Pontificium Institutum Orientalium Studiorum.

Hausherr, Irénée. 1966. *Hésychasme et prière*. Roma: Pontificium Institutum Orientalium Studiorum.

Hausherr, Irénée. 1969. *Études de spiritualité orientale*. Roma: Pontificium Institutum Orientalium Studiorum.

Hausherr, Irene. 1999. *Paternitatea și îndrumarea duhovnicească în Răsăritul creștin* [Paternity and spiritual accompaniment in Eastern Christianity]. Sibiu: Editura Deisis.

Larchet, Jean-Claude. 2006. *Terapeutica bolilor spirituale* [Therapeutics of spiritual illness], Bucharest: Editura Sophia.

Larchet, Jean-Claude. 2008. *Terapeutica bolilor mintale [Therapeutics of mental illness]*. Bucharest, Editura Sophia.

Marinoff, Lou. 2016. *Ghidul filosofului practician. Teorii, metode, aplicații [The guide of practician philosopher. Theories, methods, applications]*. Timișoara: Editura ESP System.

Marinoff, Lou. 2012. *Plato, Not Prozac! Applying Eternal Wisdom to Everyday Problems*, New York: HarperCollins Publishers.

Morariu, Iuliu-Marius. 2019. "Sociological Relevance of the Ecological Thought of Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew." *European Journal of Science and Theology*, vol. 15, issue 5: 19-25.

Morariu, Iuliu-Marius 2019a. "Philosophical Counselling and Personal Development in the Contemporary World." *Journal for the Study of Religions and Ideologies*, vol. 18, issue 53: 171-175.

Sandu, Antonio. 2019. *Consilierea filosofică apreciativă [Appreciative philosophical counselling]*. Iași: Editura Lumen.

Steinhardt, N. 2005. *Jurnalul fericirii [Diary of happiness]*. Rohia: Editura Mănăstirii Rohia.

Teșu, Ioan C. 2017. *Simt boala ca iubire a lui Hristos [I feel the illness as God's love]*. Iași: Editura Doxologia.

Teșu, Ioan C. 2018. *Vocația desăvârșirii [The vocation of perfection]*. Iași: Editura Sfântul Mina.

Teșu, Ioan C. 2018. *Teologia necazurilor [The theology of the problems]*. Iași: Editura Sfântul Mina.

Teșu, Ioan C. 2019. *Ortodoxia, în dialog [Orthodoxy, in dialogue]*. Iași: Editura Sfântul Mina.