CARINA MATEI   PAUL SILADI
ADRIAN OPRE

OUR GOD AND THE GOD OF OUR PARENTS: FAITH AND IDENTITY

Carina Matei
Babes-Bolyai University, Faculty of Psychology and Educational Sciences, Doctoral School in Applied Cognitive Sciences, Cluj, Romania
Email: carinamatei@psychology.ro

Paul Siladi
Babes-Bolyai University, Faculty of Orthodox Theology, Cluj, Romania.
Email: paul.siladi@ubbcluj.ro

Adrian Opre
Babes Bolyai University, Faculty of Psychology and Educational Sciences, Psychology Department, Cluj, Romania.
Email: adrianopre@psychology.ro

Abstract: One of the main developmental tasks of emerging adulthood is finding the answer to the question "Who am I"? This quest can be guided directly and indirectly by parents, culture, faith, and social context. Finding the answer before starting adulthood can contribute to the individuals' well-being later on in life. By using inductive thematic analysis, we aim to explore and capture the personal view of religious faith in a sample of Orthodox Christian religious emerging adults from Romania. The in-depth interviews allowed for a theme relating to identity and religious teachings from parents to emerge in an organic manner. Following the protocol for our inductive analysis, we reviewed the research literature on these topics. We begin by presenting the review of the literature on the main concepts that relate to our data. We continue by presenting the data from a small segment of an extended qualitative research. Finally, we discuss the implications on a theoretical level both from a psychological and theological perspective, and also on a practical one by referring to psychological and theological aid.

Key words: emerging adulthood, identity, religiosity, spirituality, well-being, Orthodox Christianity, pastoral counselling.

1. Introduction

A large portion of the research literature paints a picture of positivity and prosperity when it comes to religiosity and physical (Yonker, Schnabelrauch &Dehaan, 2012) and mental health (Smith & Snell, 2009, Yonker et al., 2012; Koenig, King & Carson, 2012; Upenieks, 2022). It is important to note though that this is not the full picture. Also, there are arguments against these relationships (e.g., see Abu-Raiya, Pargament & Krause, 2016; Nadal, Hardy & Barry, 2018; Upenieks, 2021). To have a better understanding of this contrast in the research literature, we argue the importance to take a closer, more nuanced look, at a specific developmental period: emerging adulthood. Emerging adulthood is the step in one's development that can set the tone of the individual's life later on during adulthood and old age. Considering this, there is a need to have a clearer image on how these concepts are related with each other.

Emerging adulthood is roughly between 18-29 years of age (Arnett, Zukauskiene & Sugimura, 2014). During this time, individuals start to analyze their commitments, their beliefs, and who they really are. According to Arnett and colleagues (2014, 570), "it is during emerging adulthood that most people think seriously about the commitments that will define the structure of their adult lives in love relationships, and work, and they gradually move towards making those commitments at around 30 years of age." Arnett (2000, 2014) proposed identity explorations to be one of the distinct features of emerging adulthood. According to Erikson's lifespan theory of development (1963) identity exploration is specific to adolescence. Considering that emerging adulthood is a relatively new developmental period, that did not exist before 50 years ago, it is to be expected not to have been described by Erik Erikson. Thus, in line with current literature, it is argued that indeed identity exploration might begin with adolescence (Schwartz, Zamboanga, Luyckx, Meca & Richie, 2014), but it is continued during emerging adulthood. From adolescence to adulthood, a large portion of identity formation becomes central to the individual. This is one of the major developmental tasks for emerging adults. Religiosity "is an important element that factors into identity construction" (Upenieks, 2021, 3). This is also a time of doubt and change as a result of the identity development processes, including the religious dimension. Not being able to conclude emerging adulthood with the identity issues resolved, could lead to mental health issues during adulthood (Arnett et al., 2014).

In our present article we wish to establish a dialogue between psychological and theological perspectives on faith, identity, and how they are related to parental teachings, as well as the long-term implications. First, we present the key concepts after a review of the literature. We continue by presenting a small segment of an extended qualitative research. Finally, we discuss the implications on a theoretical level and also on a practical one (i.e., in psychological and theological aid). And considering

that religiosity is a central component of human development and so is culture, and the fact that these are rarely studied together (Tarakeshwar, Stanton & Pargament, 2003), we take into consideration the Romanian socio-cultural context.

2. Religiosity and emerging adulthood

Religiosity and spirituality aspects are revised usually during this developmental period (Barry & Abo-Zena, 2014; Hall, Edwards and Wang, 2016; Zarzycka & Zietek, 2019; Haney & Rollock, 2020). This revision can sometimes lead to or contribute to doubt or uncertainty in one's life. According to the theory of faith development (Fowler, 2001), during this time emerging adults enter the stage named individual-reflective faith. This is a stage of faith development that involves youth finding their personal religious beliefs. Upenieks (2021) raises awareness to the fact that even though, at a theoretical level, we can find discussions on religious doubt during this developmental period, there is not that much research available. We know from identity development research (Erikson, 1968; Adams & Montemayor, 1998, Kroeger, 2007) that finding the answer to the question "Who am I?" can be a tumultuous process with impact on one's life beyond emerging adulthood, this including various life domains (e.g., career; romantic relationships). The same is argued by Dillon & Wink (2007) in relation to religious belief and practice, and the impact later in life. Beginning with Erikson (1968) the argument has been made that religious involvement plays a significant part in identity formation and has been supported ever since (see Hardy, Pratt, Pancer, Olsen & Lawford, 2010).

Thus, religious identity is of relevance when looking at the large picture of emerging adulthood in connection to healthy adjustment later in life. All of this exploration can be supported by emerging adults' physical and cognitive development (see Barry and Abo-Zena, 2014 for a more detailed presentation).

3. Parental influences on religiosity during emerging adulthood

Youth's religiosity has been found to be positively connected to family religiosity (Mahoney, 2010; Negru, Haragâș & Mustea, 2014). Parents that come from religious backgrounds, implicitly with beliefs and values derived from their religion, try to transmit them to their children (Dollahite, Marks, Babcock, Barrow & Rose, 2019). This topic has been of interest in the literature, researchers investigating the manner in which parents can successfully transmit their religious beliefs and values to children (Bao, Whitbeck, Hoyt & Conger, 1999; Myers 1996). From an early age, parents' impact on their children's religiosity can be in a direct and indirect manner (Nelson, 2014). Parents are educators (Negru et al., 2014)

or "spiritual models" (Silberman, 2003 as cited in Nelson, 2014, 61) and they model religiosity in youth's lives. Engagement in religious behaviours (e.g., attending church, prayer) and religious teachings through discussions contribute to the development of religion in ones' life (Flor & Knapp, 2001; Kelley, Galbraith & Korth, 2021). For example, rituals in the family such as prayer (Chelladurai, Dollahite & Marks, 2018) or reading scriptures together (Dollahite & Marks, 2009) are means for intergenerational transmission of religion. Also, children are observant by nature and they take notice of parents' behaviours, values, emotions, and explicit beliefs. According to research conducted by Kelley and colleagues (2021), parents emphasize three main religious teachings: (1) believing in the divine; (2) good morals, and (3) manifesting love, service, and showing respect towards others. These teachings are also in line with Orthodox Christian principles.

The way parents approach religiosity (e.g., church attendance, prayer, rituals in general) seems to impact the transmission of religion. For example, compulsory family worship (Lee, Gail, Rice & Bailey, 1997), parents that are rigid in their approach to religion, and who show lack of warmth and flexibility are the least successful in this endeavor. In other words, the more rigid the parent, the more increased the chance the child grown to be an adult will become disaffiliated with their parents' religion (Hansen, 1998; Dollahite et al., 2019). The opposite parental approach, of warmth and flexibility, while still sharing religious heritage, modeling of religious commitment, and being open to discuss religious aspects with youth, tends to facilitate faith transmission (Smith & Denton, 2005; Dollahite & Tatcher, 2008; Dollahite et al., 2019).

One might argue that parents' influence during emerging adulthood decreases and thus becomes irrelevant in relation to religiosity. That is not quite so, according to the research literature. Indeed, parental authority tends to decrease but attachment to family is still present (Arnett, 2014). Emerging adults usually move away from home to attend college. But even those who do not, still receive relatively increased autonomy over their lives (Nelson, 2014). But as argued above, the impact of early religious exposure within the family can have a lasting effect on the individual. Indeed, when youth leave home and start to manage their own time and activities, when they start exploring – changes can happen. We address this aspect in the final part of the article.

Further, as far as the indirect effect of parents is concerned, they might facilitate youths' access to a religious congregation. In such a congregation, they might come across other peers or clergy that can strengthen their faith (King & Furrow, 2004; Nelson, 2003, 2014). For example, Gane (2014) argued that parents' faith transmission can be successful through meaningful relationships within the church. According to Nelson (2003) these relationships with clergy can aid youth in their strivings to

clarify their religious beliefs, to make important life decisions, and also examine their identity and purpose in life.

4. The Romanian context

This being a discussion of particular nuances of religious faith and identity in Romanian Orthodox Christian emerging adults, we consider it to be of importance to characterize in a few words this particular socio-cultural context. Most of the literature that addresses these concepts is coming from North American populations with Protestant faith (Hill & Pargament, 2003).

Romania as country has been going through some changes after the 1989 revolution, when the freedom to manifest religion was reestablished (Stan & Turcescu, 2007, as cited in Negru et al., 2013). Unlike other countries that had a communist background, Romania did not adopt a secularized perspective. Quite the opposite happened, Romania being considered one of the most religious nations in Europe (Pickel, 2009). It is argued that this might be the result of the combination between national and religious identity (Stan & Turcescu, 2007). And as Negru et al. (2013) presents, it might be through intergenerational transmission of Orthodox Christian faith (Pickel, 2009). The family seems to play a major role in this aspect (Mayer & Trommsdroff, 2012; Negru et al., 2013). "The Barometer for Public Opinion (Bădescu, Comşa, Sandu & Stănculescu, 2007) indicates that 83% of Romanian adults view their family as the most important aspect in their life" (Negru et al., 2013, 384).

5. Qualitative research

5.1. Inductive qualitative research

We conducted an extended qualitative research in our attempt to capture the way emerging adults relate to religiosity and spirituality, from their subjective perspective. For the purpose of the current research, we have selected a segment of the main research. The study was guided by three research questions: (1) How do Romanian Orthodox Christian emerging adults define religiosity for themselves?, (2) What is the role that religiosity plays in the lives of Romanian Orthodox Christian emerging adults? and (3) Is there a connection between religiosity, spirituality, and meaning-making from the perspective of Romanian Orthodox Christian emerging adults? But in the present paper we are focusing on outcomes that were a result of the exploratory nature of the research. In other words, one of the major themes emerged organically in relation to our questions. Thus, considering the inductive nature of the research, the themes that we identified cannot appear, at first sight, to be related to the

interview guide (Braun & Clarke, 2006). In our case, they emerged organically from the unhindered speech of our participants.

Methodology. According to our research objective, we conducted explorative, individual, in-depth interviews with Romanian Orthodox Christian emerging adults. They were run by the main author of the research. An interview guide was created in relation to our objective and research questions. We protected the confidentiality of the participants by using pseudonyms instead of real names.

Participants. The criteria of inclusion in this research were: (1) being baptized in the Orthodox Christian faith, (2) having a belief in the divine and its existence, and finally (3) the age between 18-29. Six people were included in this research (Mage=23 years old, N=1 male). Other demographical data: living area (84% were from urban areas), level of education (16% high-school diploma, 16% bachelors' degree, 68% masters' degree) and college specialization (16% vocational high-school, 16% economy, 16% foreign language, 52% law). The participants were recruited through social media and word of mouth, by using the snowball method (Ellsberg & Heise, 2005). Participation was voluntary, no incentives were given. More information about the participants can be found in Table 1.

Table 1. Demographic data about participants at the time of the research

Participant	Demographic data
Participant 1	Female, 23-year-old, medium socio-economic status and high-school diploma from a vocational school
Participant 2	Female, 23-year-old, medium socio-economic status and a BA in economy
Participant 3	Female, 24-year-old, medium socio-economic status and a BA in law, at the time of the research she was studying for a MA degree in law
Participant 4	Male, 25-year-old, medium socio-economic status and a BA in law
Participant 5	Female, 23-year-old female, medium socio-economic status and a BA in law, studying for a MA degree in law
Participant 6	Female, 23-year-old, medium socio-economic status and a BA in foreign languages, studying for a MA degree in foreign languages

Interview guide. The interview guide was elaborated in relation to the objective of this research, and it included several aspects related to faith. During semi-structured interviews, the researcher emboldened the participants to an open and relaxed discussion. The interviewer did not intervene often, only in order to facilitate the conversation in order to follow a natural flow. Every participant was interviewed alone, in a location and date of their choosing. They were invited to read and sign a consent form

and the interviewer answered any questions that the participant had a-bout the process of the research and data collection. A digital recorder was used, and the interviews lasted on average for 35 minutes. Following the verbatim format, the recordings were transcribed in detail. These transcriptions included the natural manner in which the participants spoke and gestured (e.g., nonverbal and paraverbal aspects such as the pauses in speech and main body signals were recorded; Poland, 2002; Braun & Clarke, 2006).

Data Analysis. We used the thematic analysis method according to Braun & Clarke (2006). The method involves six stages of analysis: (1) getting familiarized with the data; (2) generating the initial codes; (3) the search for themes; (4) the revision of themes; (5) naming and operationalizing the themes and (6) writing the final report in detail. Considering that we have a bottom-up data-driven approach, we used emic coding. We aimed to extract themes and subthemes that can be considered to be relevant and appropriate by the natives of the culture whose faith and behaviours we have researched. This is reflected in the naming of the theme and subthemes.

Fig. 1. *Thematic map, main theme Shaping religious faith*

By exploring the research question (1) How do Romanian Orthodox Christian emerging adults define religiosity for themselves? one of the major themes emerged organically in relation to our questions was "Shaping religious faith." Through "shaping" we refer to the process of learning of behaviours, beliefs, and attitudes related to participants' faith in the divine. The subordinate subtheme is "Learning religious faith," and it is related to two codes: (1) "In the family" and (2) "Outside of the family"

(see Fig. 1). Five out of six participants made a direct reference to the way their faith was shaped. Out of these participants, four of them were grouped under the "In the family" code. The data extracts that support this subtheme are presented. For example, Participant 3:

> "That is the way that I was raised [...] ...every night I have to say my prayers, at the table [when I eat] I should make the sign of the cross... I mean [I have] to respect the Church a lot and go to church, to beware of the way that I dress... [the way] that I behave...what I speak...how I speak...And to respect the faith that I was born in and the religion." (Participant 3)

In a similar manner, Participant 6 said:

> "Well... since I was little... I was forced to go to church with my family. My family is quite religious, I mean, my father comes from a family of priests and that is how he is also pretty religious, but... I appreciate it that he is keeping it to himself. On the other hand, my mother is like the old ladies [imitating a person with a pointing finger and threatening, demanding voice] you must never do that! [something sinful] do not wash your clothes on Sunday! And that is how...since I was little, I know that I was brought to church."

In relation to the second code "Outside of the family," only one participant mentioned it. They referred outside of the family individuals more, as having an impact on their religious faith.

Though even this participant mentioned having a religious mother. The difference here was that in the perception of Participant 5, the "outsider" had the real and major impact in relation to her faith. Here are some extracts from the data set:

> "Yes, indeed, to have a spiritual director, someone who constantly supervises your spiritual growth, leads you and knows... look... [he] knows the decisions that you have to make. [He] helps you to make the decisions in relation to the progress that you are making, the tendency that you have, your bearings... the qualities that you have and can further develop. So... everything! So... he literally... he literally gives you... absolution. That is how it is called... absolution prayer and afterwards, depending on the sins that you have committed, depending on their severity... he allows you to take communion. [...] I had too many questions and the Father (priest) stayed with me, [he] spent a lot of time with me and [he] explained [everything] to me, and explained again. And afterwards, we began a program. [...] Oh... (she sighs heavily) I am so glad not to look [at life] alone. By having a Father as a spiritual director... and... by going

> and receive the Eucharist... it is so... (she sighs again and gestures to indicate a great relief, at the interviewer) you know?"

This participant explored her identity and clarified various emotions and strong conflicts through the mentorship relationship with the priest. This religious mentor helped her make important life decisions. Even though it is only one participant from a small sample, we can see the result as being in accordance to the literature (Abo-Zena & Ahmed, 2014).

Finally, as mentioned before, all the participants in this research believed in the existence of the divinity and they are of Orthodox Christian faith – both of these being criteria of inclusion in the research. We have explored here the way that these emerging adults gain their religious knowledge regarding the divinity and its' existence. These participants, and Romanian children in general, are born and baptized shortly after birth in the Orthodox Christian faith. This can be considered an aspect of Romanian culture (Negru et al., 2013). From childhood to emerging adulthood, we have identified two main paths of learning and adhering to the religious teachings: (1) through family, and (2) through an outsider of the family (in this case, a priest). These results are in accordance with the research literature. First, parents are considered to play the part of educators (Negru et al., 2013), and second, religious mentors are also considered to have a significant impact during adolescence with lasting effects during adulthood (Nelson, 2003; Schwartz, Bukowski & Aoki, 2006).

This research has its limitations, the small sample being a common one among qualitative research. But we did find the results to be in line with existing literature (see Negru et al., 2013 for a more detailed qualitative research on Romanian Orthodox Christian emerging adults). Also, our results align with the arguments of Bruin-Wassinkmaat, Kock, Visser-Vogel, Bakker & Barnard (2019) who argued that by narrating ones' life story, religious identity becomes apparent in certain contexts, Romania fitting that type of context. Also, such an analysis allows for nuanced exploration of such complex aspects (Straub & Arnold, 2008).

6. Further relating the present research with the literature

From a psychological perspective a few key aspects come forward. The impact of religious experiences on one's development is oftentimes neglected or ignored (Hansen, 1998). Considering that the prevalence of mental health issues during these years of emerging adulthood, a clearer image of this developmental period is imperative (Arnett, 2014). Our research argues the importance of considering religion, including religious history, as a cultural variable in research and practice.

By looking at the results of the above-mentioned segment of qualitative research we find an interesting result. We did not aim to address parents' religiousness and teachings, but they did come up organically in

the participants' speech. By exploring the research question (1) How do Romanian Orthodox Christian emerging adults define religiosity for themselves? they started by referring to their childhood and parental involvement. This indicates that they do not separate their own religiosity from that of their parents, rather suggesting that theirs emerged based on their parents' religiosity. Even in the case of the one participant (see Participant 5) that emphasizes the role of the "outsider" (the priest), from the excerpts presented, we can see the religious family background. Further, all participants made references to the way their parents approached religiosity (e.g., church attendance, prayer, and rituals in general). This confirms the literature that these aspects appear to impact the transmission of religion. Also, we can see indicators of a less flexible approach. For example, Participant 3 used the term "have to" in relation to many obligations in life that are religion based. Participant 6 expressed the obligation to attend church as "I was forced to go," Religiosity seemed to be something mandatory that guides many aspects of their lives. When taking this into consideration and the research literature of identity development, some important aspects come into focus.

First, youth that are either in the beginning or middle of emerging adulthood (which is between 18-29 years old) are still in the stages more favourable for exploration. Coming into contact with different people and moving in a different city, as is the case of the small group from our research and for many students in Romania, might present an opportunity to turn against the initial faith. Youth might associate becoming more autonomous and mature with renouncing their parents and their parents' teachings (Nelson, 2014). This might raise a risk of delaying identity formation and religious doubt, both contributing to decreased well-being (Harty, 2010; Upenieks, 2021). At risk for this transition are the youth that come from strict, rigid parental practices in relation to religiosity (Hansen, 1998; Dollahite et al., 2019).

Second, and in line with the argument above, this differentiation process might not happen. Youth might internalize this rigidity and not explore at all or very little and without depth, instead maintaining the same level of religiosity or more. This might put emerging adults at another potential risk. Indeed, on one hand maintaining religious involvement without major fluctuations could stimulate identity formation (Hardy et al., 2010). This could actually conflict with religious teachings. Youth raised this way might have defensive attitudes towards other religions and cultures, have low tolerance, personal autonomy and individuality (Boyatzis, Dollahite & Marks, 2006). This type of development could involve also, when referring to identity formation models, a specific identity status. Referring to the literature on identity (Luyckx, Goossens & Soenens, 2006), when one is not preoccupied and indecisive regarding personal choices (ruminative exploration), one does not explore diverse options (exploration in breadth) or explores present commitments (exploration in depth)

but does adhere to their specific religious beliefs (commitment making) and one incorporates the present commitment within one's sense of self (identification with commitment) – one falls into the foreclosed identity status.

When referring to the foreclosed identity status, it can be seen as "a double-edged sword" (Negru-Subtirica, Tiganasu, Dezutter & Luyckx, 2016, 4). The authors of a research on Romanian emerging adults (see Negru-Subtirica et al., 2016) used these words in order to describe this identity status due to its double nature. On one hand, it has benefits due to the high levels of commitment and low level of rumination. But on the other side, the low levels of exploration in depth and breadth can expose the individual to rigidity in goals (Luyckx, Schwartz, Goossens, Beyers & Missotten, 2011) and perspectives. They usually encounter change with resistance and difficulties in adjustment, as well as decreased autonomy. According to Hardy et al., (2010, 133) there is a possibility that "the religious context is more likely to encourage involvement through family, and this in turn may bring more potential for foreclosure." In other words, individuals in the foreclosed identity status have internalized without personalization, the beliefs and views of the family. In the case of religious identity, it can be the religious teachings, values, beliefs, and practices of the parents or another significant model in their lives. This can also equip the individual with preset and pretested ways of dealing with various life challenges (e.g., choosing a life partner, raising a child, etc.) and not create much distress during some usual life events.

Third, emerging adulthood can be an optimal period to explore both in depth and in breadth.

This type of exploration can support a healthy, more advanced form of identity development: achieved identity (McLean & Pratt, 2006). This type of identity is associated with optimal personal and social adjustment (Luyckx et al., 2011; Meeus, 2011). This does not necessarily mean total abandonment of previous beliefs, but rather having a thorough appraisal of current and past religious commitments and also thinking of various paths for future engagement, all the while exercising autonomy and choice. Thinking outside the familiar box, one might say. Indeed, ruminative exploration can also take place. This type of exploration is associated with decreased well-being (Weisskirch, 2019) and distress (Luyckx et al., 2008). But this can be overcome within a period of time if the individual does find the answers to their quest. A prolonged rumination, though, negatively affects the individual.

Another way of viewing this differentiation could be through Fisherman's religious identity (Fisherman, 2011, 2016). This theory is in accord with the previously described Eriksonian based theory of identity, referring to exploration as an essential step in order to develop a healthy identity. In a study on Modern Orthodox male adolescents he classified three levels of religious identity development. The levels are: (1) dangerous, (2)

unhealthy, and (3) healthy. In Fisherman's view (2016) in order to mature in a healthy manner, youth should transit from childish faith to adult faith. Fisherman (2016) defined childish faith as being the one "highly dependent on parents' faith, as children lack the capacity for reflection and independent abstract thinking" (Bruin-Wassinkmaat et al., 2019, 14). This might be adaptable when the individual's development fits the lack of cognitive abilities, but it is not anymore, when the physical and cognitive development supports a more mature identity (Peek, 2005). The way to transit from one to another is by exploring, questioning and having doubt (Fisherman, 2016). By not doing so, one does not exercise choice and autonomy that is characteristic during emerging adulthood and needed as a fully developed adult - thus it becomes a less desirable and potentially dangerous identity.

Considering that in Romania youth are born and raised in the Orthodox Christian faith, they might end up perceiving their faith as a central part of themselves and their lives. Thus, even with exposure to exploration opportunities from their environments (e.g., going to college), they might end up not making the step towards freedom of choice and autonomy. This could be even more evident in strictly inflexible religious families and contexts, independent of denominational affiliation (for a review on youth and strict religiosity see Bruin-Wassinkmaat et al., 2019).

From a theological perspective, we argue based on the teachings on the divinity and how faith is transmitted from one generation to another. First, we address the saying "Lord our God and God of our fathers." Martin Buber's (2002) *Ten Rungs*, his collection of Hassidic sayings, begins with a short story about two possible types of faith, whose cardinal difference lies in their origin. He meditates in his text on a well-known biblical invocation: "Lord our God and God of our fathers." Why is He ours and why our parents'? Because we can reach God in two ways: either by inheriting our parents' faith or by discovering it through personal study and reflection. Each path has its rewards and its drawbacks. The faith one inherits is resilient, monolithic, cannot be easily shaken, but has the disadvantage of having been received as is, without being filtered through one's spirit. On the other hand, the faith you attain through your own search, through your own powers, is a living faith, although lacking the strength of the one inherited through a long tradition. It can easily be shaken by evidence. The person who unites the two kinds of faith is invincible. That is why we say our God, with reference to our own spiritual quests and queries, and God of our fathers, given the whole tradition by which we inherit the faith (Siladi, 2019).

This interpretation of the two biblical affirmations stems from the concrete Jewish reality of transmitting the faith in God from one generation to the other, whereby the chosen people have reached a point where national identity and faith in Jehovah coalesce. In Christianity things are a little different. The God of our fathers no longer is the God of our biolo-

gical fathers, the God of our ancestors, but the Lord of our forefathers in the faith, of the Fathers of the Church who have testified about Him. The God of our fathers is the God to Whom the whole Church Tradition coherently bears witness, in whose communion we enter when we believe. When the Apostle Paul writes to the Corinthians "in Christ Jesus I have begotten you through the gospel" (I Cor. 4: 15), he assumes the role of a parent in the deepest sense of the word; it is a form of paternity that surpasses biological filiation.

We could ask who is our God then? He is the Personal God, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, Who calls unto us and awaits our encounter with Him. He is the living God, the One who can be known in a personal relationship, within the Church. We could say that God of our fathers is an illustration of dogma, and our God is the expression of mysticism. But the two, dogma and mysticism, are inseparable. "The eastern tradition has never made a sharp distinction between mysticism and theology; between personal experience of the divine mysteries and the dogma affirmed by the Church" (Lossky, 1976, 8). In Christian spirituality, dogma and mysticism do not exist independently, for "if the mystical experience is a personal working out of the content of the common faith, theology is an expression, for the profit of all, of that which can be experienced by everyone" (Lossky, 1976, 8-9). The connection between the two is so close that Vladimir Lossky can say that "there is, therefore, no Christian mysticism without theology; but, above all, there is no theology without mysticism" (Lossky, 1976, 9).

In other words, for a Christian, the God of our fathers is the Lord of Whom the whole Church Tradition speaks. This is the golden thread of Tradition that marks the transmission of the teaching, of the dogma, and structures the setting in which the mystical experience, the encounter with God, occurs. In the absence of these markers, mysticism runs the risk of devolving into psychology. Tradition not only delivers a set of intellectual principles that try to circumscribe God and make His experience possible; it also carries on the Spirit, the only environment in which the union with God can take place, the ultimate aim of the entire theology and mysticism. Inasmuch as theology is lived, the God of our fathers, the God of dogmas, also becomes our God: the One we discover on our own, by personally taking the ever so beaten and arduous path of the perpetual search for God (Siladi, 2019).

To sum up, we believe that the present article contributes with practical implications, both for professional psychological and theological aid. As far as psychological interventions are concerned, we address the psychological counselors and psychotherapists. In order to increase well-being, identity aspects should be addressed. Equipping the individual with coping strategies during exploration and navigating life's challenges as they go through emerging adulthood is an important step. Youth should be able to exercise autonomy and choice in a safely manner. While

maintaining the family faith, one can also find their own identity. When looking at religious faith and its impact across the life course, variables such as family and culture should be taken into consideration (see also Upenieks, Andersson & Schaffer, 2021). Thus, acknowledging that this developmental period has its particularities and needs adequate evaluation, as well as having consideration towards religious aspects – is another important point for psychological specialists.

Also, when referring to the theological perspective, the clergy that offer support (i.e., priest, spiritual directors, etc.) can also encourage reflexive exploration of the individual. A literal interpretation of this saying (i.e., "Lord our God and God of our fathers") can lead one to believe that it is about the biological parents and not this Christian teaching of searching for God and connecting with Him. Thus, it could facilitate inheritance of parents' faith and not having faith that has been filtered through one's spirit by way of personal study and reflection.

In conclusion, in relation to the different and opposing results presented in the literature between religiosity and physical and mental health, we argue that such details and nuances are relevant in having a better understating of these relationships. The increased religiosity among this generation's emerging adults is argued to also be a result of the post-revolution of 1989 (Stan & Turcescu, 2007). The generation that birthed current emerging adults and young adults manifested an increased religiosity as a result of the post-communist freedom of religion. This is true especially considering that religiosity is present from birth; babies of Orthodox Christian faith being baptized shortly after birth. And so are other main life events that are tied to institutionalized religion (e.g., wedding, funeral). Therefore, considering the Romanian socio-cultural context, where the Orthodox Christian faith is the main denomination, we argue that this dialogue between psychology and theology is very fruitful and constructive.

Thus, taking into consideration that youth should have access and also benefit from various psychological and theological aid, we believe this research could further develop the dialogue between these two domains, the psychological and theological one.

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