



**BABEȘ-BOLYAI UNIVERSITY OF CLUJ-NAPOCA**

**FACULTY OF ORTHODOX THEOLOGY  
"ISIDOR TODORAN" DOCTORAL SCHOOL**



**LOVE AS A WORK OF HEALING FOR THE CHRISTIAN MORAL CONSCIENCE  
IN THE DIGITAL AGE**

**PhD Thesis**

**-SUMMARY-**

**Supervisor:**

**Pr. Prof. Dr. Iloaie Ștefan**

**PhD Candidate:**

**Ciorăneanu Cristian Marian**

**Cluj – Napoca**

**2025**

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**Keywords:** Love, moral conscience, digital age, Church, healing, faith, Christianity, technology.

## Introduction

The present thesis, entitled *Love as a Work of Healing for the Christian Moral Conscience in the Digital Age*, addresses the influence of technological and digital expansion on the Christian moral conscience and the spirituality of contemporary humanity. The work proposes to find solutions to mitigate the consequences of this influence with the help of God and the Church, through the healing power of love. Subsequently, we will succinctly explain the title of the work through the terms used so that the reader may understand the aim and meaning of this thesis.

In this context, love is viewed as the relationship between God and humanity: God's love for humanity and humanity's love for God within the spirit of the Church. This loving relationship is found and established through the actions of the Church and its sacraments. Orthodoxy is also referred to as the religion of love, and since God is love (1 Jn 4:16), the actions we undertake within the Church are acts of love, performed in the name of love, and for the multiplication and propagation of love. The foundation of this relationship lies in the communion of love of the Holy Trinity, operating through the Holy Spirit in the souls of the faithful to elevate them into the loving relationship between its Persons. This approach to the concept of love considers the meaning of the Christian life, namely the deification (theosis) of the person and advancement into the loving Kingdom without end. The word "work" (lucrare) found in the title refers to a derivative form of the concept of energy, which in the Greek language also bears this meaning (Gr. *energeia*, as the putting into action of an operation). Within the context of this PhD thesis, we will refer to the theological meaning given to love as an energy that puts divine actions into operation.

Therefore, we can understand love as a transformative and healing power. Healing (*tămăduire*), as a phenomenon related to Orthodox spirituality and specific to it, refers to the synergistic work between fallen humanity and its relationship with God, as the physician of our souls and bodies. We emphasize the nuance of this term, as it is not about healing or curing in a physical sense (although they may be synonymous in certain contexts), but rather the specific meaning we consider in this thesis, which addresses love in the relationship between humanity and God, and God and humanity. Thus, we will use the specific term, that of *tămăduire* (healing), consecrated by the Church through the voice of the Holy Fathers. As an example, I add a quotation from the teaching of Saint Ignatius the God-Bearer, from the Epistle to the Ephesians: "There is only one Physician, who is both flesh and spirit, born and unborn, God in man, true life in death, both from Mary and from God, first subject to suffering and then beyond it, Jesus Christ our Lord."

The Christian-Orthodox moral conscience is defined, according to the Philokalic teaching, as follows: "when God made man, He implanted in him a divine spark of illumination, like a more fervent intellect and a guiding word for the human mind, to be able to distinguish good from evil. This is the natural law, which is called conscience." Furthermore, the moral conscience implies the psychological one, and in this sense, we can refer to the cognitive, mental, and internal phenomena of humanity and its relations with a "self." In the present work, we do not address this subject directly, although we include it, but we will refer to conscience from the point of view of Christian morality. We will not enter into the polemic related to human conscience in relation to so-called artificial consciousness. This polemic is built around the question: Does consciousness remain a unique attribute of

humanity under conditions where the increasingly rapid and efficient evolution of artificial intelligence and robotics leads to the development of a form of artificial consciousness? We specify this fact in the work but do not develop it, as we do not consider it a useful or relevant polemic for the thesis. In this thesis, we will refer only to the specific phenomenon of human conscience, namely conscience linked to Christian-Orthodox morality, although many elements of the Christian moral conscience are common to every person, regardless of the spiritual context they belong to.

The digital age refers to the present, ongoing time, and the framing of the thesis within the current issues of human interaction with technology. Simultaneously, the digital age also implies placing humanity within a unit of time and space that brings influences on all levels of life. This provokes us to confront a series of problems specific to our times, bombarded by technicality and digitalization, which arouse interest in the field of moral theology and bioethics, but which are also current and researched by specialists in other fields of study. We can say that we live in an age of digitalization and the internet, where digital media—computers, smartphones, video games, and not least, television—influence and change our lives and can also affect us spiritually. In the present work, I will refer only to those problems raised by technology and digitalization that pertain to the field of bioethics and moral theology, but which have a direct or indirect, yet important and relevant, connection to the thesis.

One of the greatest challenges brought by digitalized society is related to the state of fallen humanity, full of egoism and self-sufficiency, constantly finding arguments in the results of technological, IT, and digital progress, and the fact that to answer any existential, axiological, personal, or any other type of question, modern humanity finds answers imbued with the power of technology and digitalization, speed and superficiality, which are false and unsatisfactory and throw them into disillusionment, depression, and a social chaos created by themselves, which becomes a vicious cycle without God and without meaning.

### **Motivation for Choosing the Topic**

The research topic, *Love as a Work of Healing for the Christian Moral Conscience in the Digital Age*, was chosen out of a desire to harmoniously unite research targeting new discoveries in the field of digital technologies, brain functions, and the inexhaustible spring of Christian faith.

The Spirit of the Church has the power to heal pathologies not only of the moral conscience but also of the essential, emotional, and physical nature of contemporary humanity, who is becoming, with each passing day, the digital and digitized, technicized and robotized human, ultra-dependent on technology and the internet. When I began this endeavor, there was a strong desire to show that theology has at its disposal methods and means to help and extract humanity from the state of enslavement often produced by its relationship with the digital technological environment and the artifacts offered by the digital age.

The topic was partially treated, under a different title and with different emphases, as a research space, within the Faculty of Theology in Sibiu, as a bachelor's thesis under the guidance of Prof. Dr. Sebastian Moldovan, who placed a profound emphasis on the practical part, and to whom I owe this thirst for deepening the subject, especially from a practical, not

merely theoretical or predominantly theoretical, perspective. For that bachelor's thesis, I conducted two interviews to outline how love can change something in the essence of the human being in the concreteness of life; it involved two conversions, not only to Orthodoxy but also to monastic life, and I thank all those who helped me bring that project, which gave birth to this one, to a successful conclusion. In the PhD thesis, I did not use those interviews but conducted a practical part more suited to the social sciences and the addressed topic: a questionnaire, a questionnaire-based study completed by over 400 high school students, to collect information and evidence necessary for the hypotheses proposed by the present work.

The subject was not entirely new when I chose it as a scientific approach at the doctoral level, but the speed of its development, and generally all subjects concerning the digital age and the expansion of technology, means that some of the uncertain and problematic information from 7 years ago, regarding their veracity, is now outdated and clarified quite clearly.

I will illustrate with the term conscience: if it has as an intrinsic component the moral conscience, given by God to each, and includes the psychological, vegetative, and biological consciousness, and over time, a person can develop the moral-Christian conscience through education and knowledge coupled with Grace. These are statements that are known and scientifically approved. What can we say about a part of the brain responsible for this general phenomenon called moral behavior that might cease to exist, yet the person retains their self-awareness!

Such research shows that humans physiologically possess a portion in their biological brain responsible for their moral behavior. But research also shows that a molecule existing in the brain and circulating in human blood is responsible for human deeds and moral behavior—a "moral cell." Although there have been theories contested in specific research, I have tried to adopt and apply the exhortation of Saint Basil the Great to the youth: to gather like a diligent bee pollen from every flower and produce honey; this could be the present thesis. And, as a comparison, I have avoided becoming like a fly and settling on any scientific or theological controversy to make speculations or clothe uncertainties in arguments for the sake of my own pseudo-academic or other pretensions, perhaps even out of negligence or indifference.

I largely avoided addressing uncertain or still-debated hypotheses or theories; even though I mentioned some for scientific consideration, I did not comment on subjects irrelevant to the thesis. I avoided, as much as possible, detailing the topic scientifically towards other research fields, especially those too loosely correlated with moral theology and bioethics. For example, when describing the pathologies or maladies of the moral conscience, I limited myself to the theological field, although conscience and its pathologies are also treated by psychology, which I used as much as was possible and relevant, but without elaborate, concrete expositions from this field, and by psychiatry, which uses different terminology and other factors for measuring and evaluating pathologies of human consciousness, referring to the human conscious from a perspective completely irrelevant to the thesis.

Another approach in this chapter would have been from a philosophical perspective and the theories of thinkers throughout time, as social theories, but they did not bring profound relevance to the subject; they were rather easily contestable polemics, questionable

by anyone through patristic theology, making them irrelevant to the thesis and useless for those who would read this material.

I focused, recalling the exhortation of Saint Basil, on the clear spring of the Church's teachings. For example, when it was about how contemporary humanity can be healed, healing happens in the Church, through God's Grace, and God is love; therefore, it would be evident to state that the power of love is the healing one. I used this kind of scientific approach, taking advantage of the fact that it is well-anchored in the academic environment and other works that use the concept of love. I brought to the reader's attention, as an element of novelty, the approaches to this subject of love in the newly canonized Romanian saints this year, on the occasion of the patriarchal centenary.

I chose to deepen this subject by showing that we must take concrete measures regarding the problems arising from digital technologies; I approached the subject with concrete examples from daily life. I treated with great interest the effect the smartphone has on the human brain as a result of its excessive use and explained theologically the phenomenon of "Brain-rot," which was distinguished with the title of Word of the Year 2024, as stated by Oxford University Press. This is not accidental, because it explains a profound pathological state caused by prolonged scrolling on digital devices, tablets, or smartphones, which has a concrete incidence on life from all points of view, both physiological and spiritual, both mental and biological; the person dependent on technology suffers greatly, being captured and enslaved by the increasingly powerful nets of technicization and digitalization.

I approached as succinctly and practically as possible acedia as a phenomenon that often occurs in our lives and is responsible for most of the psychic and spiritual afflictions of youth and not only, discovering a very current topic: acedia in the digital age, a contemporary malady. These approaches were made out of a keen interest expressed for those around me, both as a teacher and as an uncle, neighbor, brother, as a person living in a communion of love with those around. I have been, to some extent, affected myself by digital addictions due to playing chess on specialized networks and platforms, and I am sure this study helped me better understand how and why the spiritual person can be harmed by these nets and how they can escape them with the help of God and their own will. I understood that, although I have been a professional chess player for almost 20 years and a teacher of this sport, dependency on technology through games, regardless of their type or purpose, affects brain functions profoundly and sometimes irreversibly.

I pointed this out to underline the personal motivation for the treated subject. Another personal motivation is that related to my career as a director, where through master's studies and work on my own films, I was forced to spend many hours watching and analyzing films and footage, time spent mainly in front of small or large screens, which change the paradigm of understanding the universe we live in and which gave me the chance to experience both the problems of the digital era that are debated and the methods of returning to normal, defining normal through the Church and by relating to God. I described these two personal motives so that the thesis gains an aura of authenticity, first, due to the strong motivation I had during the process of information gathering, processing, and its redaction, and secondly, due to the research results achieved.

## **Research Hypothesis**

The hypothesis from which we started in this research on love as a work of healing for the moral conscience in the digital age is that contemporary humanity can heal from technology-related dependencies, can become aware of the problems related to the digital age we live in, and can judge, more precisely, what is happening with their moral life if they do not resort to sometimes urgent measures to mitigate the negative influences of the technicization and digitalization of daily life. It is understood by this that very few people who will consider this thesis and are in possession of a smartphone understand that they have spent, during 2024, in a cumulative manner, at least one month, 30 days, of their life, just in front of this device. The hypothesis of an ongoing phenomenon: the effects of digitalization on the spiritual life of humanity. Can modern humanity mitigate the influences that digital media have on the moral conscience? Can the effects produced by digital media and the excessive and irrational use of technology be healed? How and in what way can humanity escape the nets of the digitalization and technicization of its life?

## **Aim of the Research**

The present work has as its main aim the public awareness of the effects that digitalization produces on Christian morality, and also that humanity can heal from its effects, by compiling a collection of arguments, which are supported also from a practical point of view through Chapter V, which treats the obtained results through the questionnaire-based study, where the extent of online media usage among youth and the fact that it influences their decisions and life is highlighted.

Another main aspect is that of bringing to the forefront the values of Orthodoxy, its orthopraxic values, the putting into practice of the teachings established by the Church and connected to the problems that arise due to the digital and technicized environment.

A secondary aim is to contribute, on the occasion of this work, to the consolidation of a harmonious dialogue between theology and the world of sciences that have dealt with this subject. Based on this dialogue, relevant conclusions can be fruitful which, transposed into the life of the community, can bring benefits to the entire society. An example, in my opinion, is the following: for over 15 years, the scientific community has known that the development of the frontal cortex, the part of the brain responsible for decision-making, reaches maturity around the age of 25; however, a driver's license can be obtained at the legal age of 18, when the young person is physiologically less capable of making correct decisions based on reason, but rather dominated by impulses, with speed, but without adequate rational deliberation. If legislation would consider this scientifically demonstrated shortcoming and would allow the granting of a driver's license at a scientifically recommended age due to cognitive development, then we might have better results in reducing the number of road accidents. Studies have statistically shown that accidents caused by young people aged between 18 and 23 are three times more numerous than those caused by drivers aged between 23 and 33 years.

## Research Objectives

Through these objectives, I have tried to contribute to the deepening of research in the field and to explore a subject of global interest. Through the original way in which the theoretical themes are framed and approached, together with the practical part of the work, I believe it achieves its proposed objectives. Among these general objectives of the thesis, we mention:

1. Highlighting love as a connecting and healing factor, as a working energy in any era, regarding the disturbances caused by the negative influence of the digital age and technologies on the moral conscience and how they can be healed with the help of the Church's recommendations.
2. Promoting an accessible and integrative academic language regarding the interpenetrating relationships between Moral Theology and the rest of the theological disciplines, such as spirituality, dogmatics, biblical studies, but without overstepping these disciplinary boundaries, as well as the harmony between the secular domains and theology, such as: medicine, neuroscience (especially neurotheology), psychology, or philosophy, without diluting the theological message or losing sight of the red thread of theology and Orthodoxy.
3. Strengthening the interdisciplinary theological discourse by formulating and reinforcing a new specific research path, through the contribution brought by the Romanian saints canonized in 2025, regarding the concept of love and the effect they have on society as models of Christian moral living.
4. Critical analysis of the effects that appear among youth and society, in general, due to the use of digital media on spiritual life and moral conscience, through the quantitative analysis study and its interpretation within the theoretical context contained in the thesis.
5. The scientific contribution of recent discoveries in neuroscience regarding the effects of digitalization and digital technologies on human consciousness, reported to the possibility of healing proposed by the Church through its actions called - love.

For the edification of these objectives, I used critical specialist literature, first and foremost; I consulted volumes written by my guidance professors from my license period, Prof. Dr. Sebastian Moldovan, and the coordinator of this thesis, Rev. Prof. Dr. Ștefan Iloaie. I approached specialist literature through native authors such as: Archim. Andrei Andreicuț, Archd. Sorin Mihalache, Virgiliu Gheorghe, Rev. Răzvan Ionescu, Prof. Adrian Lemeni, Rev. Mihai Iordache, Rev. Conțiu Hadian, Rev. Petru Cernat, Rev. Ioan Teșu, and others, but also from outside the country such as Rev. Jean Boboc, Tristram Engelhardt, Manfred Spitzer, or Jordan Peterson. I mention the older theorists who have edified and expressed themselves on this subject and to whom I am grateful for their contribution, such as Neil Postman, Marshall McLuhan, and Jacques Ellul. I also specify thinkers who have distinguished themselves with a prophetic spirit, one might say, who describe the digital age without having lived it and who have influenced even scientifically the way society is perceived in the digital age we live in: Aldous Huxley, George Orwell, and Stephen Hawking.



Also, I specify the saints whose literature served as a foundation and basis for the present thesis: the Three Holy Hierarchs and the three chosen Romanian Saints from the 16 canonized in 2025, namely: Saint Priest-Confessor Dumitru Stăniloae, Saint Priest-Martyr Ilarion Felea, and Saint Venerable-Confessor Arsenie of Prislop, who through their writings bring to this thesis an important glimmer from the light of eternity, springing from their holiness.

## **Research Methodology**

As mentioned above, I used the writings and scriptural interpretations of the Holy Fathers of the Church; I used, as such, the hermeneutic and exegetical methods, methods indispensable to our endeavor.

The hermeneutic method is a method very often used in the field of theological writings, and the basis of interpretation is supported by Saint Paul in the Second Epistle to the Corinthians, through the words: "who has made us competent to be ministers of a new covenant, not of the letter but of the Spirit; for the letter kills, but the Spirit gives life." (2 Cor 3:6). From here, two fundamental meanings emerge, dating back to early Christianity: the first meaning is the grammatical, literary, and historical one, and the second is the spiritual one, hidden in the letter but understood through the spiritual understanding of the texts. The acceptance of these meanings led to the assimilation and explanation of pagan texts with the allegorical interpretation of biblical texts, using philosophical profusion to interpret scriptural meanings. The present work also desires this, attempting to express and interpret the defining elements of the concepts of love, healing, and conscience, stipulated in the Church's teaching, for contemporary humanity.

The exegetical method is particularly remarked in the first two chapters of the thesis to provide a sufficiently strong theological basis to support the edifice of the proposed hypotheses.

The comparative method is a specific method and as such often used in interdisciplinary approaches. It is found in the dialogue that the present work proposes between Moral Theology and the disciplines: medicine, neuroscience, psychology, educational sciences, philosophy. This method helps find points of convergence, applied in the chapters of this thesis, and to highlight the specific elements of each discipline separately. The comparative method is important because it helps formulate a coherent and well-founded theological discourse, through complementary arguments from the research area of other disciplines, with which it intersects harmoniously in the scientific endeavor of the work.

The descriptive method was used often in this work, particularly in the first two chapters, where I tried to explain the theology of love and the pathologies of the moral conscience to a reader interested in the essence of these concepts and enthusiastic about the exposition as succinct yet complete as possible.

The quantitative method was used through an exploratory study using an online questionnaire. The study was successfully conducted on a sample of 411 high school students, aged between 14 and 19, from across the country. This study was applied and realized to serve this PhD thesis, based on which interpretations were constructed, aiming at the common purpose shared by the objectives achieved, in accordance with the theoretical part of the work.

## State of Current Research

Each chapter is addressed by a number of authors, and therefore I will try to be as specific but succinct as possible regarding the current state of research in the field to which the thesis belongs and my proposals regarding other approaches to this theme.

In the first chapter - on Christian love, love is a subject that has been researched by specialist theological literature through the Holy Fathers, found in the collection of Fathers and Church Writers, but also in the complete works of the main prominent figures of the Church. Most known saints and church writers have left writings about love, including among the Philokalic writers, such as Saint Maximus the Confessor, to whom an entire volume is dedicated in the Philokalia collection for the "Chapters on Love." In other works by authors closer to our days, we can mention Rev. Prof. Dumitru Belu: *On Love*, or the newer treatise on love by Prof. Dr. Conțiu Hadrian: *Healing Through Love*, but also by foreign authors like Jean-Claude Larchet: *On Christian Love*, to mention just three representative references on this theme. I observed, however, that studies on the applicability regarding love in the newly canonized saints are not yet in print, and their works are not very easy to consult. The exception will certainly be the written work of Saint Father Dumitru Stăniloae, and we can say also the three volumes we know remain as writings left by Saint Father Arsenie Boca, which are easily found. Regarding Saint Father Ilarion Felea, we cannot say they are either very accessible or very difficult to procure. We can also observe that these were among the most prolific in terms of writings among the newly canonized saints, as my choice in this work was also based on the criterion of access to their writings. I would recommend that in the future, critical editions be prepared of the texts of the mentioned authors regarding this subject of love and healing through love in the digital age. I also recommend that for other saints, from the ranks of the 16 newly canonized, their writings be made available to the faithful, and then critical works be composed, to also honor, in an academic sense, this endeavor of the Church to highlight through canonization the life and work of the perfected men of the Romanian people. Regarding the originality of my thesis concerning this chapter, it is precisely the approach of these three Romanian saints and the general synthesis of love expounded throughout it.

The second chapter, which treats the Christian moral conscience, I will mention that writings on this subject exist in almost all textbooks of Moral Theology of the Faculties of Theology throughout the world. As authors who have addressed this subject, we mention Georios Mantzaridis, *Christian Morality*; Archd. Ioan Zăgrean, *Christian Morality*; Archbishop Andrei Andreicuț, *Principles of Christian Morality*; but especially from studies and articles written by Rev. Prof. Dr. Ștefan Iloaie, Prof. Dr. Sebastian Moldovan, theologians of renown like Tristram Engelhardt or Jean-Claude Larchet. For this chapter, I also researched secular literature from medicine, psychology, or neuroscience, where I want to point out the main works of neurotheology and recommend, for the future, that younger researchers facilitate easier access to them in the Romanian language, as well as critical editions of them by Romanian Orthodox theologians: Laurence McKinney, *Neurotheology: Virtual Religion in the 21st Century*; Robert Burton, *Neurotheology*; and Andrew Newberg, *Principles of Neurotheology*.

The third chapter of the present thesis treats the subject related to the digital age, and I will bring to the reader's attention an original approach to the phenomenon of "Brain-rot" and

acedia from an updated perspective framed within the problems related to the digital environment and the technicized life of contemporary humanity. A number of authors have written representative works on this chapter and have treated the subject from an academic point of view; thus, we mention among them: Archd. Sorin Mihalache, Virgiliu Gheorghe, Rev. Răzvan Ionescu, Prof. Adrian Lemeni; foreign authors like Manfred Spitzer, Jordan Peterson, Jaron Lanier, Tristan Harris, and others.

In the fourth chapter on healing, I will refer as succinctly as possible to the directions consecrated by the Church and the recommendations of the Holy Fathers, as it is a subject treated by many authors of specialist theological literature. It is a subject that has been given much attention, especially in recent years, perhaps also due to the 2020 pandemic. Among the known and prolific authors in the newer specialist literature, we mention: Metropolitan Hierotheos Vlachos, Jean-Claude Larchet, Konstantin Zorin, Dr. Dimitri Avdeev, Dimitry Semenik, but also among Romanian doctors with a profound sense of living and Orthodox faith like: Dr. Pavel Chirilă, Dr. Alexandru Vlad Ciurea, Dr. Leon Dănăilă. For this chapter, I believe research could and certainly will evolve towards the newly opened sector of digital pathologies and new problems that open up with the expansion of new digital technologies.

The last chapter is the practical one, which is a successful study, but I would recommend that in the future, more such studies, more complex, be conducted; that they be taken into account in the government's legislative endeavor; and that preventive measures be taken regarding the risks that digitalized society brings to the mental health of youth and not only.

I recommend opening specialized clinics and doctors specialized in telephone and internet addiction disorders. The subject should be further developed on the stricter level of addictions in middle school children. In the present thesis, it was not the case to express myself so concretely, but through the practical part and logical deductions, we can think that the main cause of mobile phone and internet addictions, in general, stems from a lack of supervision and appropriate education during childhood, which will reverberate into adolescence, and hence we have such a high proportion of youth who spend, according to my own research, more than 3 hours a day on social networks when they could be engaged in face-to-face discussions and meetings.

## **Thesis Structure**

The thesis could be divided into two parts: a first theoretical part, which in turn comprises four chapters, and a practical part, which comprises the fifth chapter and refers to the study realized with the help of the questionnaire research method, through which to solidify, from a practical point of view, the hypotheses formulated theoretically within the thesis. Each chapter brings in its introduction terminological clarifications of the proposed theme.

In the theoretical part, I focused on the hypotheses of this research and on consolidating them, based on already consecrated writings and scriptural sources. All chapters use an adequate academic, specialist language, with permanent framing within the treated subject.

In the practical part, I realized a quantitative research type study using the questionnaire method.

From a structural point of view, the work comprises 5 chapters, with their respective subchapters, which I will describe succinctly in what follows.

In Chapter I. Love, I presented Christian love through 5 other subchapters:

- In the first subchapter, in the introduction, I defined the concept of love from a Christian perspective, showed the limitations of this chapter, and provided terminological clarifications, ensuring the theme would fit coherently and harmoniously with the rest of the thesis;
- In the second subchapter, I treated briefly the main scriptural references about love;
- In the third subchapter, I wrote about the concept of love in the Old Testament, which I divided in turn into two, respectively:
  - The historical and prophetic books of the Old Testament; and
  - The poetic and sapiential books of the Old Testament.
- In the fourth subchapter, I continued with the scriptural incursion through the concept of love in the New Testament, to then;
- In the fifth chapter, embark on a short patristic incursion of the concept of love, and I chose to divide this subchapter into two other parts, respectively:
  - The concept of love in the teaching of the Three Holy Hierarchs, where I chose to write in turn about each of these saints:
    - Saint John Chrysostom on love of neighbor,
    - Love of God and love of neighbor in the teachings of Saint Basil the Great, and
    - Love of God through love for the poor in the thought of Saint Gregory of Nazianzus; then,
  - The concept of love in the teachings of the Romanian saints canonized in 2025 on the occasion of the patriarchal centenary of the Romanian Orthodox Church, where I chose three of them based on the writings I could find and which fit the treated theme, thus, I chose:
    - Saint Priest-Confessor Dumitru Stăniloae on the love of God as a working energy in the life of contemporary humanity,
    - Love as an act of repentance in Saint Priest-Martyr Ilarion Felea, and
    - The concept of love in the life and teachings of Saint Venerable-Confessor Arsenie of Prislop.

In Chapter II. Conscience, just as in the first chapter, is divided into five other subchapters, as follows:

- In the first subchapter, in the introductory part, I chose to delimit the reference space regarding my research field within Moral Theology and to conceptually define the term;

- In the second subchapter, I brought to the forefront the main scriptural references related to the Christian moral conscience;
- In the third subchapter, I aggregated the main patristic references related to the Christian moral conscience;
- In the fourth subchapter, I began with explaining the pathologies of the moral conscience and divided this subchapter into five other parts for each main affliction in turn, as follows:
  - Moral infantilism
  - Lability, instability, or moral madness
  - Scrupulosity
  - Laxity
  - Pharisaism
- In the last subchapter, the fifth, I treated briefly guilt as an essential factor regarding pathologies of the moral conscience.

In Chapter III. The Digital Age, I chose in this chapter also to have five subchapters and to divide them as follows:

- In the first subchapter, I showed the terminological and study limitations of this vast space of the digital age and defined it;
- In the second subchapter, I treated the subject of the digital age from a historical point of view and entitled it: From the print age to the digital age – a short history of the public message;
- In the third subchapter, I wrote about the digital age and problems of Christian morality;
- In the fourth subchapter, I treated a newer subject as a theological approach, namely the phenomenon of "Brain-rot" in digitalized society, where I divided this subchapter into two other parts, thus:
  - An Orthodox perspective on the "brain-rot" effect
  - Possible solutions for the "brain-rot" effect
- In the last subchapter of this chapter, I treated Acedia – the moral malady of humanity in digitalized society, which I divided into three other parts, as follows:
  - Acedia in the tradition of the Holy Fathers
  - Contemporary forms of acedia in the digital age
  - Some practical remedies for getting out of the state of acedia

In Chapter IV. Healing, this chapter treats the way in which humanity, captured by digital media and the inhuman technicization of life, can return to the natural; this chapter is divided into six subchapters, as follows:

- In the first subchapter, in the introduction, I chose to talk about the terminological and theological limitations of healing and to define it;
- In the second subchapter, I treated healing in the Church;
- In the third subchapter, I talked about healing in the context of digitalization;
- In the fourth subchapter, I wrote about spiritual healing and bodily healing;
- In the fifth subchapter, I wrote about personal factors of healing and divided and explained these factors into four, as follows:
  - Repentance - the change of mind
  - Prayer and spiritual meditation
  - Reading from Holy Scripture and from the teachings of the Holy Fathers
  - On fasting and nutrition as healing factors
- In the sixth subchapter, I treated community factors that can lead to healing and divided them into four parts, as follows:
  - Family
  - Community
  - Church services
  - The Canons of the Church

In the last chapter of the thesis, as mentioned above, I treated the practical part of the present work. I mentioned that the results of this study are very representative and useful for the present thesis. Through it, I found that from the sum of high school students aged between 14 and 19 who participated in this questionnaire - 411 high school students, 67% are female and 33% male. Regarding the specialty in which the high school class is framed, a proportion of 62% are from the humanities track and 38% from the sciences track. Regarding the percentage by county of the students who completed this questionnaire, the most representative counties are the following: Maramureș (31%), Timiș (29%), Brașov (11%), Alba (11%).

They answered the following questions related to the theoretical content of the present thesis:

- How many hours a day do you spend on your mobile phone?
- What are the most used social networks? Instagram, Tik-Tok, Facebook, Others (which?).....
- Do social networks influence important decisions in your life?
- Do you believe that excessive use of the digital environment and technology in daily life can affect physical and mental health?
- Can extracurricular activities with a spiritual character (pilgrimages, carol concerts, church services, etc.) mitigate the negative impact of using digital technologies?

- How much does faith influence you in making important decisions?
- Can addictions (dependencies) related to technology be healed through faith and assumed spiritual life?
- Does participation in church services or other spiritual commitments of this kind have an important role in your life?
- Does daily use of digital technologies have an impact on society from a moral point of view?

The graphs are found in chapter 5 of the thesis along with their succinct interpretation.

At the end of the work, I presented a set of conclusions and thanks to all those who made the redaction and conception of this work possible.

Given that humanity is the conscience of the entire creation, I consider it very important for it to find the necessary resources to heal and to draw near to its fellows with the help of love, to know itself in the loving light of God.

The present work is pluridisciplinary, as it has a very rich coverage area concerning theological disciplines, but it is also closely linked to medicine, neuroscience, psychology, sociology, as well as to specialist scientific theological research such as: dogmatics, patristics, liturgics, or biblical studies.

I conclude this introduction by remembering that none of our works is perfect. Always a certain dose of impurity is mixed in – and the part that is truly good is not ours, it is from God.

## **Thesis Conclusions**

### **1. Reiteration of the Thesis Aim and Relevance**

This thesis aims to analyze the impact of technology and digitalization on the spirituality and moral conscience of contemporary humanity, offering solutions based on the healing power of Christian love. Through an interdisciplinary approach – moral theology, bioethics, psychology, neuroscience, and sociology – the work highlighted the necessity of a dialogue between faith and science to combat the negative effects of digital dependency.

### **2. Confirmation of Hypotheses and Obtainment of Results**

The initial hypothesis of the research – that humanity can overcome digital dependencies through awareness, will, and divine grace – was confirmed both theoretically, through the analysis of biblical and patristic sources, and practically, through an applied study on a sample of 411 students. The results showed that:

- 67% of young people spend over 3 hours/day on mobile devices, and social networks (Instagram, TikTok) influence their decisions.
- Only 23% consider faith a decisive factor in decision-making, indicating a diminishment of the role of spirituality.
- Over 80% acknowledge the negative impact of technology on mental health, but only 35% regularly participate in spiritual activities.

These data underline the need for active intervention from the Church and society.

### **3. Love as the Foundation of Healing**

The thesis demonstrated that Christian love – defined as a synergistic relationship between humanity and God – is the only sustainable solution for the moral pathologies of the digital age:

- The model of the Holy Trinity (the communion of love between the Persons of the Holy Trinity) offers an ideal of authentic relating, opposed to virtual isolation.
- The teachings of the Romanian saints canonized in 2025 (St. Dumitru Stăniloae, St. Ilarion Felea, St. Arsenie Boca) emphasized love as an act of repentance and change towards advancement in deification (theosis).
- The Sacraments of the Church (prayer, confession, communion) are concrete means of restoring spiritual balance.

### **4. Moral Conscience between Freedom and Robotization**

The research highlighted the risk of an atrophied moral conscience through:

- Moral infantilism (the inability to distinguish good from evil in the virtual environment).
- Emotional lability (instability caused by informational supersaturation).
- Digital Pharisaism (the hypocrisy of a simulated virtue in the online space).  
The proposed solution is the re-education of the conscience through:
- Meditation on the Scriptures and Philokalic reading.
- Ascetic practices such as fasting and guarding the senses for self-mastery.

### **5. Challenges of the Digital Age and the Church's Remedies**

The thesis analyzed two maladies specific to the 21st century:

a. "Brain-rot" (cognitive degradation through the abuse of superficial digital content):

\* Causes: compulsive scrolling, dopamine dependency.

\* Orthodox remedies: prayer and fasting, avoiding virtual stimuli.

b. Digital acedia (lack of purpose and procrastination):

\* Prevention: involvement in community activities, confession of passions.

### **6. Practical Recommendations for Society and the Church**

To combat the effects of digitalization, the thesis proposes:

1. Educational programs in schools and parishes about the healthy management of technology.
2. Counseling centers specialized in digital addictions.
3. Collaboration with specialists (doctors, psychologists) for integrated approaches.



4. Promotion of the Church's Sacraments as therapy for anxiety generated by social media.

## 2. Originality and Contribution to the Field

The work brought the following original contributions:

1. The first theological analysis of the "brain-rot" phenomenon in an Orthodox context.
2. The quantitative study of the impact of digitalization on Romanian youth.
3. A synthesis of the teachings on love and healing of 3 out of the 16 Romanian saints canonized in 2025.

## 3. Limitations and Future Research Directions

1. Limitations: The restricted sample (only students), the need for broader studies.
2. Suggestions for continuation: Research on the impact of artificial intelligence on morality and critical editions of the works of the recently canonized Romanian saints.

## 4. Final Conclusion

In a world where technology dominates human relations, the thesis has shown that love remains the only divine "technology" capable of restoring meaning and spiritual health. By returning to the sources of authentic Christianity – communion with God and neighbor – humanity can transcend digital bondage and rediscover its calling to deification (theosis). "God is love" (1 Jn 4:16), and His love is the only work that heals the conscience shattered by the illusions of progress. This thesis represents a step in the dialogue between theology and digital society, inviting a collective reflection on the balance between technical progress and humanity's spiritual destiny.

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