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*PhD Thesis*

**HEALING THROUGH LOVE**

*Summary*

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**Key words:** Love, *Philia* (Φιλία), *Agape* (Αγάπη), *Eros* (Έρως), communion, Law, health, sin, passion, disease/illness, suffering, psychotherapy, positive psychotherapy, psychotherapy of responsibility, logotherapy, existential dynamic (noodynamic), orthodox psychotherapy, asceticism, virtue, education, risk (assumed), transfiguring dynamism, freedom from passion (*apatheia*), spiritual life, purification (*praxis*), illumination (*theoria*), deification (*theosis*), knowledge (through love), the contemporary man (recent), moral crisis, unconstrained love, Christian love, healing.

## INTRODUCTIVE AND METHODOLOGIC CONSIDERATIONS

Informative, contemporary, postmodern, globalised, secularised society suggests as model for human: *the man without love*, cold, distant, arrogant, individualist, selfish, as a robot (*the human robot* or *the machine man*), highly tied by the contemporary “realities” (*the recent man*), docile to the world’s most powerful ones, with a syncretism belief or without, living *without love*, therefore in a continuous state of licentiousness (committing a continuous adultery: to God, to his/her husband or wife, and last but not least, even to himself, by alienation from God’s face and the path to obtain resemblance), with an apparent freedom, but which hides the deep enslaving (to the material goods of this world and to the unseen created world, fallen...), lonely in a world of communication, living a drama of communication whereas the new technologies facilitate the transmission of information and the interactivity, exploring and offering numerous possibilities for communication. In this context, *the recent man* is a *sick man*, full of suffering, along many illnesses of the body. The illness condition is, therefore, a “natural” state of the contemporary man.

The love itself is the essence of Christian life, the first and the most important command (cf. Mathew 22, 36-40, Marcu 12, 28-34, Luca 10, 25-28 ș.u.), based on which all the Law and the Prophets are founded and embraced (cf. Mathew 22, 40), is the first virtue of the first virtues (cf. 1 Corinteni 13, 13), the beginning, the foundation, the peak and the perfection of all perfection (cf. St. John Chrysostom, St. John Climacus, St. John of Damascus, St. Maximus the Confessor ș.a.). The need of healing demands *love as a therapeutic method* (*work, power*), which led to the writing of this PhD thesis, entitled “*Healing through Love*”, knowing that such a vast subject cannot be covered (love is the definition of the whole teology), and having an equidistant confessional, regarding the spiritual complexity (depth) and the therapeutic experience (healing, thaumaturgic) of the Orthodox Church, revealed by the Holy Scripture and the Holy Fathers. The text does not pretend to offer final answers (though authentic answers cannot be written texts, but life experiences, as it was said by Father Filothei Faros<sup>1</sup>), but it rather assumes the opening of a research synapse (with interdisciplinary values) of healing through love, lived and assumed (regardless the risk’s magnitude), considering that an authentic problem solving involves a constant questioning of all involved.

Regarding the theme chosen for research, we appreciate that it is an original one, considering the conditions in which the speciality literature, the Romanian but also the international one, it chooses either to approach the theme of love (through theological, philosophical, historical, literature, psychological, sociological, etc. point of view), or the one of the disease (spiritual, mental or body regarded), as a phenomenon and/or therapeutic; the present study we are trying, a modest contribution to the explored directions up to present day, regarding love (insisting on its healing work), but also the phenomenon and/or therapeutic of the sickness and of the suffering (highlighting its assuming as the essence of love). The purpose of this approach in the research is to find a healing solution (through love) for persons (itself), families, peoples, the other (including the enemies), but also to the whole seen creation, love being the only one able to dissolve the opaque and waterproof shell of selfishness, to lure out people from the isolation state, and to give back the communion its joy.

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<sup>1</sup> *Manual de iubire - Firea dragostei*, trad. Ovidiu Lăzărescu, Editura Egumenița, Galați, 2005, p.8.

The different crisis lived by the contemporary society, definitely have, a common root: *the moral crisis fundamented on the lack of love*. The healing of the human kind is possible only by renewing of the moral values (the Christian love having the ability to renew everything that is positive in the human being), and restoring the face of the Trinitarian love in the contemporary man.

The father professor Dumitru Belu says, regarding this concern that “any attempt to reform the human and his social realities is meant from the beginning to fail, if its initiators are trying to accomplish this against or ignoring life’s ground law: *the law of love*”<sup>2</sup>. Love is, thus, the fulfilment of “God’s Face” in human, it being *man’s health*. The man who has achieved it is called to bless the world, and protecting himself from its sick predispositions. This is also the *main mystery of love (and its healing work)*: to follow Jesus, to walk on His footstep (cf. John 13, 15; Mark 8, 34-35), assuming the life of the other (but without his sin), sacrificing ourselves, even dying for it (total abandoning of self and crucifying for the other, are the pillars on which love lies in healing the person/self).

From the *methodologic* point of view, for the suggested research, it was first taken into consideration the identification of the informative sources and the collection of data by researching the speciality bibliography from Romanian and international literature; to give arguments to the complexity of the presented themes in a topic like this, it was studied the speciality literature which refers to the issue of love, of disease, and the therapeutical experience of the Orthodox Church, shown by the Holy Scripture and the Holy Fathers; it was run through the studies related to love (from theologic, philosophic, psychological, historical, literar, sociological, etc. point of view) and the therapeutics of disease under its different symbols or shapes, in an interdisciplinary context; there were analysed the writings of Holy Fathers regarding the subject matter; there were consulted the sites with the specialty subject, interviews on the topic which gave the opinion of pastoral personalities who deal directly with the subject matter and who have experience in Christian love practices and orthodox psychotherapy; there were conceived and applied questionnaires, the information obtained was processed and analysed, etc. There were followed the three steps scientific action (cumulative or “preparation”, analitical, deliberative): *a*, gathering the information, using as methods: *scientific observation, investigation and bibliographic research*; *b*, processing it through *analyse* (quantitative and qualitative), and *c*, the third step, the final step, researching, starting with *synthesis* after formulating the conclusions and the solutions, this method was based for the achieving of its purposes, on numerous means, the present study using mainly *comparing and systematization*.

The thesis is structured in three parts (each being divided in three chapters, having in total 28 images, 8 tables and 3 appendixes), preceded by introductory and methodological considerations, and each part ends with conclusions; at the very end of the thesis is the bibliography.

## **PART I. LOVE IS THE FULFILLMENT OF THE LAW**

In the first part, entitled *Love is the Fulfillment of the Law*, are given the theological and philosophical landmarks (the conceptual basis) of the research theme, starting with the formal and semantically analysis of the concept of “love”, detailing the fundamental features (here are presented the factors involved in the process of love and its characteristic features) and highlighting the theological basis of love, culminating with the command character of the Christian love (which is presents from a theological perspective, love is *a fulfillment of the Law*, it is as a *demand*, but it is also as a *lived virtue*, sprung from the perfect model of divine life, the desired purpose being highlighting love as a comprising and fulfilling the whole Christian life, the beginning and the fulfilling of any soul’s therapy, bridge of the divine-human communion and link for the communion between human), continuing with the fundamental meaning (forms) of love (as power for the grounds of life, love has various faces, and it expresses its never-failing

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<sup>2</sup> Pr. prof. dr. Dumitru BELU, *Despre iubire*, ediția a III-a, Editura Mitropoliei Olteniei, Craiova, 2007, p.27.

richness in numerous faces, the specialty literature<sup>3</sup> reduces the variable of the real appearances of love to three fundamental forms: *love-eros*, *love-phia* and *Christian love* or *agape*), in the context of reflection about the love specific to Greek philosophy, but also to the traditional orthodox patristic, in the end, there were revealed the three Christian faces of love: the love of God, the love of our neighbor and the (pure) love for the self; there were tried to find some solutions to the exit from the state of profound crisis in which the contemporary society is, and which is detailed in the last part of this study, the love of our enemies representing the face of the perfect Christian love.

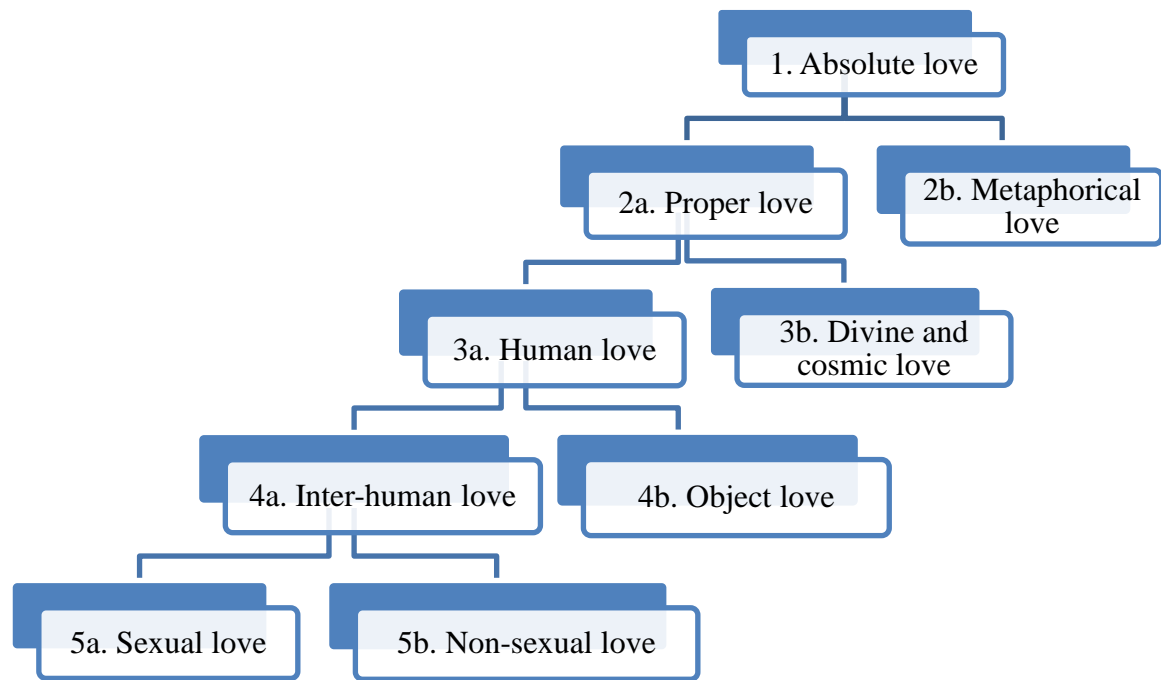


Fig. 1. A model for distinguishing different conceptions of love (according to Nico Nuyens, 2009<sup>4</sup>)

It is undoubtful the fact that the notion of love did not apper at the same time with Christianity; love, through its triad affective-cognitive-volitive (emotional mood, knowledge factor and international act), it is known not onl in the writings of the Old Testament, but also in the oriental and Greco-Roman philosophies, along the philosophical and sociological conceptions from the modern and contemporary world. The explanation of this fact resides in the general acceptance of a natural, normal, inclination, which directs the human beings one to the other.

In contrast to any kind of natural love which draws its vigour from sympathy, from the human feeling of solidarity, or from the one of common interests, the Christian love has a special nature, having its starting point, its cause and its purpose in God, Who is in His essence, love (cf. 1 John 4, 8, 16). The world itself is the work of God, from the creation point of view, but also from the human's salvation through His Incarnate Sun's sacrifice point of view. Regarding these,

<sup>3</sup> Pr. D. BELU (*Despre iubire*, p.58), adds the fourth fundamental form, love between sexes; Prof. Gerasimos SANTAS (*Plato and Freud: Two Theories of Love*, Basil Blackwell Limited, Osford, 1988, p.9) distinguishes three fundamental forms: *Philia* – family love (parents, sons, brothers), as well as friendship love; *agape* (Christian love) – God's love for the humans, and humans' love for God and for their neighbours; *eros* – sexual love between men and women, men and men, women and women.

<sup>4</sup> Nico NUYENS, *What is Love? A Conceptual Analysis of „Love”, focusing on the Love Theories of Plato, St. Augustine and Freud*, Groningen Research Institute of Philosophy, GRIPh Working Papers No. 0901, 2009, p.7.

three Moscow's Filaret metropolitan bishop's words are highly suggestive<sup>5</sup>: "The Father is the love Who sends His Son to crucifixion and sacrifice, The Son is the love Who sacrifices Himself on the cross, and the Holy Spirit is the love as an invincible power of this world". Thus, the love appears to be an existential manifestation of divine Trinitarian life, externalised through the overflow of love outside the divine being, through its uncreated energies, this being the work of absolutely free divine will, so that other beings can share its perfection. The man's answer to the creative act through Trinity's full love is also through love. Without the pagan *eros*, which meant the raise of man to God, *agape*, the Christian love, has its origins in God's descending towards man so that the man can raise himself to God<sup>6</sup>.

Although it is an expression of divine love, through sin, the man remove himself from the communion with his Creator, Who has been consistent in His love, not willing to lose for good His Face, gave the man the *Law* as a means to knot again the broken bundle. The fear of God appears as manifestation of divine love, a help, a guidance through time to the fulfillment of Heavenly Father's promises. Its role in the Old Testament was to correct the man, to maintain him towards God and to prepare himself for the receiving again Jesus Christ's love. However, once with God's Son incarnation, it disappears, Christ representing God's closeness to humans. Jesus Christ, God's Son incarnated, commands love and fulfills it by giving Himself all to those who want Him and love Him, establishing the communion between man and God (raising all men, through His love, as His sons). The communion towards we are all called is the fulfillment (deification, *theosis*) towards we all aspire (tend), and which we can fulfill by loving God through loving our kind<sup>7</sup>.

In the Church, Christ is always present among those He loves, and through Church and through Christ, the grace and the love completely tie, in the Holy Spirit, human's will and God's will, as a beginning and earnest of the Kingdom of Heaven for all those who want to enter, renewing in their lives God's Son's highest command.

## **PART II. THE THEOLOGICAL DIMENSION OF THE DISEASE OR THE ASSUMING OF THE SUFFERING AS THE ESSENCE OF LOVE**

Part II, "*The Theological Dimension of the Disease or the Assuming of the Suffering as the Essence of Love*" highlights the decisive (essential) role of love in assuming the suffering and the healing process of a sick man. The whole part wants to be a sketch of the losing the suffering through love, and at the same time, an urge to assume the suffering as the essence of love, to follow Christ, because "*the truth I speak*, says the Savior: "*If the whole wheat which falls into the ground, does not die, it remains alone; but if it dies, it brings a lot of fruit*" (John 12, 24). For this, it was necessary to precisely present the diseases and their causes in the context of defining the health care of the man, then being detailed, the spiritual means of the diseases and the positive mean of the suffering, the divine-human cooperation for love, showing the closeness of human to eternal life (cf. John 17, 3). The original mark of this part is given by the applying and interpreting of a questionnaire to young people regarding the meaning of suffering. In the end, from the interdisciplinary perspective, it is approached the thaumaturgic dimension of Orthodoxy, a special attention is given to the conceptual issues, responsible psychotherapy (pr. Filothei Faros) and existential psychology (Viktor Frankl), as alternatives to the conventional psychotherapy, as well as the general methodology of the orthodox psychotherapy, enlisted in the Christian love, trying to give an answer to the question: "Are the mental conditions a myth or an explosive reality?"

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<sup>5</sup> cf. Arhid. prof. dr. Ioan ZĂGREAN, „Sensul activ al iubirii creștine”, în *Mitropolia Ardealului*, anul XV, Nr. 4-6 (aprilie-iunie), 1970, p.273.

<sup>6</sup> This love of man for God represents the centre of christianity's moral doctrine (cf. Arhid. I. ZĂGREAN, „Sensul activ al iubirii creștine”, p.274).

<sup>7</sup> cf. Pr. drd. Theodor DAMIAN („Teama și iubirea de Dumnezeu”, în *Studii Teologice*, anul XXXII, nr. 1-2, 1980, p.113) places correctly the relation between horizontality and verticality of existence into love: "The horizontal communion expresses the vertical one".



The study starts with the *unhealthy dimension of the sin* approach. Any disease is an interpretation, more vivid and deep because it is not abstract or free, that enlists itself in an *ontological experience* which is often excruciating. Very often, this interpretation is crucial; because the illness always draws in discussion (more or less) its fundamentals, the context and our own existential forms, the established balances, our own free soul and body dispositions, reference values, the relation with the others, and our own life. In many cases, the disease is a spiritual trial that employs our whole being and that set a decisive mark on the dynamic of our life. Each of one of us, during our existence, must not only expect diseases and suffering (trials and sins' consequences), but, when these come, we must continue living in spite of them, and we must try and find our fulfillment<sup>8</sup>.

The utterance man's healing in the terms of *therapeutical* and *cure* it is considered by some contemporary speakers as a simple figure of speech, which in some cases it is true; but, in general, it can be talked about the natural relation between body illnesses and/or mental illnesses (psychosomatic diseases) and those that have a spiritual root (soul's illnesses). The matching of the medical terminology with the nature of the subject matter is justified by the fact that the fallen human nature is from the spiritual point of view, indeed sick; and in Christ, through Holy Spirit, it is prepared a healing, through the Communion and the ascetic needs, having as guidance the eternal undying light of prayer. The symbol, at this level, has an essential role because the man does not know immediately the fallen spiritual state, his spiritual conditions are not as obvious as the body or mind diseases<sup>9</sup>.

The source of the passion is the original sin. Adam's sin was spread to the entire humanity, and it is the main cause of body and soul conditions. Through sin, the man has fallen from the communion with God and from eternity (cf. Romans 5, 12). Therefore, the spring of all bad things, illnesses, helplessness, suffering, damage and death, but also to all shortcomings that affect the human nature, is shown by the Holy Fathers as being in man's free will, in the sin committed in Heaven. The addiction condition is the lowest stage the human can reach; their Greek name (*παθη*), but also the Latin or Romanian one (*passiones*), shows the fact that the human is drawn in a passive stage, enslavement.

A feature of the passion is that through them it is manifested a thirst without images, which seeks its peace but unable to find it (this is actually, *the upside down thirst for God, vicious*; cf. Jeremiah 2, 13). The passion are, thus, the opposite of true love (the only one that establishes the natural harmony amongst people), they tear apart the ties between humans and they maintain the chaos; they are the wall that separates human kind from God; intrinsic, natural forces of the soul, corrupted because of the sin and of removing themselves from God, as it is shown by the whole biblical-patristic tradition. The passion are the real "diseases of the soul (*ψυχης νόσοι*)" Clement of Alexandria<sup>10</sup>, Saint Isaac of Syria<sup>11</sup> or Saint Macarius of Egypt<sup>12</sup> say; and Saint Nichita Stithatul talks about the "suffering disease"<sup>13</sup>. Saint Maximus the Confessor also shows that "as

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<sup>8</sup> cf. Jean-Claude LARCHET, *Teologia bolii*, traducere din lb. franceză de pr. prof. Vasile Mihoc, Editura «Oastea Domnului», Sibiu, 1997, p.8.

<sup>9</sup> cf. Jean-Claude LARCHET, *Terapeutica bolilor spirituale*, în românește de Marinela Bojin, Editura Sophia, București, 2001, pp.10-11.

<sup>10</sup> *Cuvânt de îndemn către elevi (Protrepticul)*, capitolul XI, 115, 2, în *Scrieri. Partea întâia*, traducere, introducere, note și indici de Pr. D. Fecioru, colecția P.S.B., vol. 4, Editura Institutului Biblic și de Misiune a Bisericii Ortodoxe Române, București, 1982, p.156.

<sup>11</sup> *Cuvinte despre sfintele nevoițe*, în *Filocalia*, vol. X, Editura Humanitas, București, 2008, p.368.

<sup>12</sup> *Scrieri. Omilii duhovnicești*, Omilia XLIV, traducere pr. prof. dr. Constantin Cornițescu, introducere, indici și note de prof. dr. N. Chițescu, colecția P.S.B., vol. 34, Editura Institutului Biblic și de Misiune a Bisericii Ortodoxe Române, București, 1992, p.260 ș.u.

<sup>13</sup> CUVIOSUL NICHITA STITHATUL, *Cele 300 de capete despre făptuire, despre fire și despre cunoștință, Suta a doua a capetelor naturale: despre curățirea minții, ale aceluiași, 22*, în *Filocalia*, vol. VI, traducere din grecește, introducere și note de Dumitru Stăniloae, Editura Humanitas, București, 2004, p.254.

the disease and the heath state sees itself to the body of the animal, as the light and darkness to sees itself the eyes, it is the same with the virtue and the sin for the soul<sup>14</sup>.

The possibility of the passion' appearing is given through the existence of *natural feelings*. "The features of the sufferings" of which Saint Maximus the Confessor talks about are the *feelings* (τα πάθη), thought to be as irrational features, penetrated in the human nature after the falling into sin, and which brings him closer to animal nature<sup>15</sup>; they are not sinfull, but they facilitate the appearance of te sin (for example, the lust for food is just a feeling, but overeating becomes a sin)<sup>16</sup>. Saint Maximus the Confessor calls them *passion according to our nature*, because they also represent a feature of human nature's passivity – a deeper passivity then the *passion against our nature*<sup>17</sup>. These feelings are part of the original building of our human nature, they they were not created at the same time. They have sprouted in the human nature after the human's falling from the perfect state, they represent the animal like aspect of our human nature, renewed through arising the communion with God (they are not to be blamed because they cannot be controlled by will, as long as they remain among their boundaries, serving to the biological existence; exemples: the appetite, the pleasure of eating, fear, sadness); they can become passion through an unorganised movement, or they can become good habbits through orienting the human hunger for the infinit towards God (for example: the hunger can be converted into spiritual longing for the divine, the pleasure in freely working together of the mind with the divine gifts, the fear of evoding the eternal conviction, the sadness for the healing redemption, etc.)<sup>18</sup>.

The Holy Fathers tried to clarify all these passion (diseases), establishing a true *pastoral nosography*<sup>19</sup>. *Saint Ioan Damaschin*<sup>20</sup> distinguishes the soul's sufferings from the body's sufferings; *Saint Maximus the Confessor*<sup>21</sup> draws a classification of the sufferings into three other chategories: the ones that arouse from the search of pleasure, the ones from evoding suffering and the ones that appear from the union of the two impulses; *Evagrie Ponticul*<sup>22</sup> identifies, for the first time, eight main sufferings, calling them "general evil thoughts", and they embody all the others; *Saint John Cassian*<sup>23</sup> distinguishes th eight thoughts of evilness and Saint Maximus the Confessor highlightes three, or one, that is considered the spring of all the others (love of self, φιλαυτία). It is remarkable the endeavour of the Fathers to reduce the number of the passion, enlisted by Evagrie as being hundreds, to eight and then to three<sup>24</sup>, and in the end to only one unit: filautia (φιλαυτία) or selfish love of self<sup>25</sup>.

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<sup>14</sup> SF. MAXIM MĂRTURISITORUL, *Cele patru sute de capete despre dragoste, a patra sută...*, 46, în *Filocalia*, vol. II, trad. din grecește, introducere și note de Dumitru Stăniloae, Ed. Humanitas, București, 1999, p.112.

<sup>15</sup> see SF. MAXIM MĂRTURISITORUL, *Răspunsuri către Talasie*, 1, și nota 1, în *Filocalia*, vol. III, trad. din grecește, introducere și note de Dumitru Stăniloae, Editura Humanitas, București, 1999, pp.40-41.

<sup>16</sup> Father Prof. Dumitru Stăniloae (*Filocalia*, vol. III, p.78, note 1) notes, in the same context, the natural character of marriage compared to the earthy existence of the human nature and the natural character of virginity compared to the eternal existence, to which the human nature is called upon.

<sup>17</sup> SF. MAXIM MĂRTURISITORUL, *Răspunsuri către Talasie*, 55, în *Filocalia*, vol. III, p.248.

<sup>18</sup> cf. SF. MAXIM MĂRTURISITORUL, *Răspunsuri către Talasie*, 1, în *Filocalia*, vol. III, p.40

<sup>19</sup> The collocation belongs to the professor Jean-Claude Larchet (cf. *Terapeutica bolilor spirituale*, p.114).

<sup>20</sup> *Cuvânt minunat și de suflet folositor*, în *Filocalia*, vol. IV, traducere din grecește, introducere și note de Pr. prof. dr. Dumitru Stăniloae, Editura Humanitas, București, 2000, pp.184-185.

<sup>21</sup> *Smeritul monah Maxim către preacuviosul prezbiter și egumen Talasie, Despre diferite locuri grele din dumnezeiasca Scriptură* (Introd. la *Răspunsuri către Talasie*), în *Filocalia*, vol. III, pp.30-31.

<sup>22</sup> *Tratatul practic*, 5, apud J.-Cl. LARCHET, *Terapeutica bolilor spirituale*, p.117. This list, fixed by the Evagrius, became traditional in the othodox ascetic, and it can be found in the writings of: SF. IOAN CASIAN, *Convorbiri duhovnicești*, V, 2; *Așezămintele mânăstirești*, V, 1.; SF. IOAN SCĂRARUL, *Scara*, XXVII, 43; XX, 1; XXVI, 2; 33. SF. GRIGORIE CEL MARE, *Comentariii la Iov*, XXXI, 45; SF. IOAN DAMASCHIN, *Cuvânt de suflet folositor*; SF. NIL SORSKI, *Regula*, V.

<sup>23</sup> *Despre cele opt gânduri ale răutății*, în *Filocalia*, vol. I, traducere din grecește, introducere și note de Dumitru Stăniloae, Editura Humanitas, București, 1999, pp.111-135.

<sup>24</sup> *gastrimarghia, arghilofilia și chenodoxia*, cf. SF. MAXIM MĂRTURISITORUL, *Capete despre dragoste, A treia sută...*, 56, în *Filocalia*, vol. II, trad. din grecește, introducere și note de Dumitru Stăniloae, Ed. Humanitas,

The detailed and methodical description of sufferings which we encounter with the Holy fathers, represents a true nosology and an authentic medical semiology, which have the purpose to elaborate a methodic, rigorous and effective therapeutic of these soul's diseases. The healing starts at the same time with the defining of these sufferings, allowing the human to know and to understand his soul's movements, to discover their deep meaning and to stop the evil that constrained him or is about to constrain him, so that, the man stops being blindly controlled by mechanisms that he does not know, that disturb him and cause him suffering.

To continue with, it is highlighted the "*the spiritual dimension of illness*", beginning with aspects related to "*health instability/precarious state* (or "*the survival of the illness*") and *the duality of health and illness*, until underlining *the saving sense of suffering*. The suffering and the disease, as hard and tormenting they are, they are a sign of God's presence and work in man's life, a proof of His unlimited, and at the same time, real love. The suffering gets a shape as a pedagogic instrument that God uses for his welfare, that draws man out of his autosufficient captivity, of passing/temporary pleasures. Man's assuming of suffering represents an understanding of this divine pedagogy and an entering on the natural way on a saving road.

The disease (the suffering) is a shortcut towards the saving; it reestablishes the corruption that the sin has generated, reorienting the human state to its natural verticality, that was before the falling. The fleshly illness becomes, through God's care, a healing means (a medicine) of the soul and a way of clerical progress.

If for the contemporary man, the speed and the lack of free time, in the middle of a more and more exciting, provoking and stressful world, is a state *cvasigeneral*, then, *a suitable and short way*, that leads to the desire purpose (salvation), is the *suffering*. An adequate attitude does not allow suffering to be wasted, but, no matter the place and moment, it immortalises it, transforming it in a path to Heaven. In this regard, an Avvă in Pateric says that: "In the morning you could be in Hell, and in the evening you could be in Heaven"<sup>26</sup>. *The time of saving is shortened by assuming the suffering, into love*. The best example is that of the thief on the cross, who, beyond all the crimes (possible) that he committed, he redeemed himself, he showed Him all his repentance, hoping for His mercy and His love, he took the correct (right) attitude towards God and he heard the known words: "*Truth I speak to you: today you will be with Me in Heaven!*" (Luke 23, 43).

The chance/possibility to leave the state of illness and suffering into an dynamic attitude of waiting God's help, that requires a continuously run from the passivity of bearing a disease "without horizon", meaning purposeless, covered by a deepening in materialism, specific to the corporal human. The delay of the divine help or of the healing has the key to understanding of divine pedagogy (the time fullness, faith strengthened, patience). The disease and the suffering can and must be clerically overcome and transformed into Christ; the choice of health is natural, but with the condition of being lived into God and for God.

In order to capture aspects related to physical-psychical sickness experience and its corresponding suffering, regarding young people and their family, colleagues and friends, its meaning, the problem of inside conflicts, it was applied a *questionnaire about the meaning of suffering*. We tried to show *highschool teenagers' attitude towards disease and suffering* in the context of such an exciting, demanding and decaying world. The number of teenagers that participated was 100, with the age between 16 and 19 (42 students from junior highschool – 9th

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București, 1999, p.97. These correspond to the devil's three temptations in the desert of the Savior's (Mathew 4, 1-11 și loc. par.), he made three offers for Jesus : the bread, the miracle and the power.

<sup>25</sup> This is considered the root of the eight main passions and of all sins that are born from them. SF. MAXIMUS THE CONFESSOR (*A doua sută a capetelor despre dragoste*, cap.59, în *Filocalia*, vol. II, p.79; see also *A treia sută...*, cap.57, p.97) notes that the passion from which all the other passions spring ("the mother of all evil") is the love form himself (φιλαυτία), which is "the irrational love of the body", from which are born "the three sinful thoughts, which are more general: the womb's greediness, the love for silver and the fame in vain", from them are born "all the other passions from the list".

<sup>26</sup> cf. Arhim. Simeon KRAIOPOULOS, *Taina suferinței*, traducere de Preot Victor Manolache, Editura Bizantină, București, 2007, p.23.

and 10th grade; 58 students from senior highschool – 11th and 12th grade), 60% from them were girls and 40% boys. They answered to 12 questions, along with the information about their age and gender.

The third chapter of this part is dedicated to the *thaunturgic dimension of Orthodoxy or orthodox psychotherapy*. Firstly, it was approached the problems related to the *concept, methodaology and the morality of psychotherapy*, seen from the human's suffering perspective (human's restlessness, especially the contemporary man) based on the search on intern causes of the suffering (and restlessness), which wants to give an answer to the profound humans' needs, based on the belief that many soul wounds can be healed through an authentic, consistent interhuman relation, which demands a real communication. From the very beginning, it is presented the semnatic duality of the concept of *psychotherapy*<sup>27</sup>: a *spiritual* acceptance of healing of the soul, based on the antropology and soteriology of the Holy Fathers, converging (until juxtaposition) with the "process" of healing of the soul's illnesses (the methodaology of orthodox psychotherapy), and another acceptance, the *medical* one, that corresponds to an interdisciplinary domain situated at the border between medicine and psychology. The two dimensions are material, but for an effective soteriology, it is supposed a spiritual moulding of the latetr one on the structure of the first one; many non-orthodox psychotherapists use an inadequate saving methodology, and which, instead of healing, it is making the ill's condition worse (from the mental condition point of view, but also from the soul's, thus proving the indenstructible tie between the soul and the body). In the virtue of these percepts, the orthodox psychotherapy thinking, seadfacted in the spirit of the Holy Fathers, it can be missed from the medicalmethods use... It is thus legitimated, the following question: if the spiritual assistance and the orthodox therapy must "accept" (suport, encourage), in some mental disorder cases, the collaboration with the laic psychotherapy and the help of medical assistance, it can be achieved an efficient laic psychotherapy without the spirital help and the help of orthodox psychotherapy with its entire methodology based on Scripture and patristic writtings?...

Moreover, are presented *the main psychotherapeutical theories and methods*. Following the historical background of the therapeutical approaches, it is observed that the psychotherapeutical theories and methods have evolved and have diversed very much (especially with the second half of 20th century). The best known therapeutical orientatons and methods<sup>28</sup> are: psychodynamic therapies, like psychoanalysis (also having multiple orientations: started by Freud, Jung, etc), adlerian psychotherapy (which has its inspiration roots in the theoretical writings of the doctor Alfred Adler), nondirective psychotherapy or he psychotherapy centred on the person/cient (Carl Rogers), behaviour therapies (Dollard, Eysenck, Miller, Skinner, Wolpe), cognitive-behaviour therapies (Aaron T. Beck, Albert Ellis), hipnotherapy (Milton H. Erickson), psychodrama (Jacob Levi Moreno, psyhotherapis of Romanian origin), neurolingvistic programming or NLP (Richard Bandler, John Grinder), transpersonal psychotherapy (Stanislav Grof), expressive psychotherapy (including art-therapy, the therapy through dance and movement, drama therapy, melotherapy), narrative psychotherapy (Michael White, David Epston), gestalt psychotherapy (Frederick și Laura Perls), to which we add biological therapies.

In a separate study it is detailed the *positive psychotherapy and family therapy*, a suggested psychotherapeutical method, starting with the year 1968, by the Iranian origin professor dr. Nossrat Peseschkian (1933-2010), who begins from the idea that in psychotherapy it is important not only of psychodynamic focused on acknowledging the disease, but also on the discovery the pacient's born capacity and ability, which may help him in dealing with the disease (according to the quote: whenever you need a helping hand, search it at the end of your arm")<sup>29</sup>.

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<sup>27</sup> The term comes from Greek, through the combining of the words *psyche*, that means "soul", and *therapein*, that means "to heal", "to cure", "to treat", "to make somebody recover".

<sup>28</sup> Acknowledged by EAP (European Association of Psychotherapy), 2015.

<sup>29</sup> cf. Nossrat PESECHKIAN, *If you want something you never had, then do something you never did. Stories and Maxims*, Sterling Publishers Pvt. Ltd., New Delhi, 2012 (<sup>1</sup>2005).

At the end of this subchapter, it is approached, from an orthodox perspective, *the morality of psychotherapy*, and it is highlighted the shortage of morality and the potential of harm from spiritual perspective of many of these contemporary psychotherapeutic orientations, also the necessity of the assiduous pastoral involvement of the Church in the psychotherapeutic practice.

A special attention is accorded to *psychotherapy of responsibility* and to *existential psychotherapy*, as alternatives to conventional psychotherapy. The study begins with the issue of the *mental conditions* (origins, diagnostic criteria, theories, definition and classification<sup>30</sup>, it is launched a challenge, that requires a complex answer: *is the mental condition a myth or a (expensive?) reality*, followed by the introduction of the *psychotherapy of responsibility in the vision of father Filothei Faros*, but also the underling of the *risk to love in psychotherapy*. In this part of the study it is presented a possible alternative to the conventional psychotherapy, the psychotherapy of responsibility, suggested by the father Filothei Faros<sup>31</sup>, who defines the mental condition by characterising the person who has certain psychotic problems, just as being irresponsible, and he highlights the type of work and behaviour of the person being treated, and not on the act of knowing the conflicts from his subconscious or his insufficiency. The main role of this psychotherapy is not the mitigation of the suffering produced by the irresponsible behaviour but the strengthening of the person being treated. Psychotherapy of responsibility aims a changing in the existential paradigm, and has a foundation on establishing a long lasting tie (suitable) between the psychotherapist and the person being treated, which presumes a loving attitude, doubled by an equal means from the psychotherapist, and assuming the risk of this love – because any meeting with the other means, from the Christian perspective, offering the love and consenting the freedom of the other to accept it or deny it, and on the other hand, assuming the suffering that derives from the opening towards the other, by carrying all his pains.

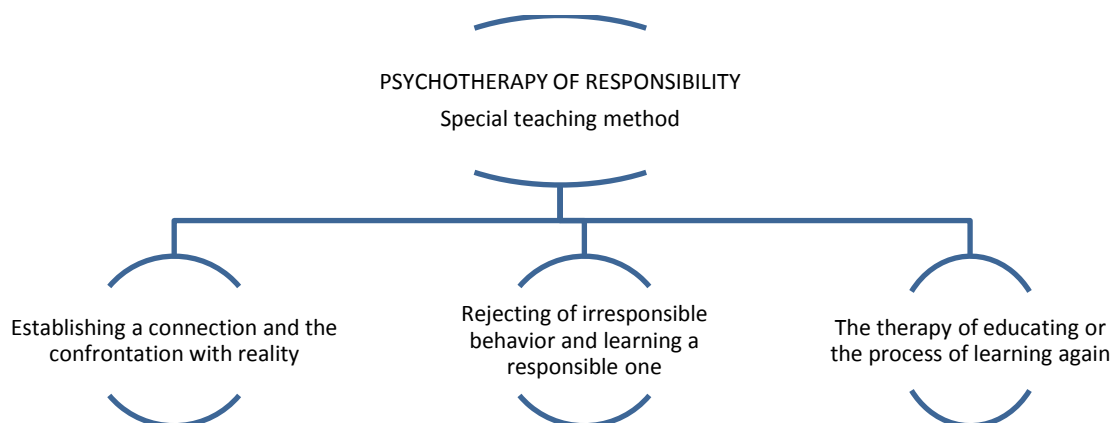


Fig. 2. *The steps in the psychotherapy of responsibility in the vision of Father Filothei Faros*

Then it is presented a therapeutical method suggested by *dr. Viktor E. Frankl*, a psychotherapy centred by meaning, called *logotherapy*<sup>32</sup> – a therapeutical form which, through some specific characteristics, gets closer to the theological vision of the Holy Fathers (Metropolitan Hierotheos Vlachos<sup>33</sup>). A major cause of the mental disorders is, according to

<sup>30</sup> The categories of mental disorders are presented according to the main categories of diagnosis DSM-IV (*Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders*, Fourth Edition, Washington, DC: American Psychiatric Association, 1994, apud Edward E. SMITH, Susan NOLEN-HOEKSEMA, Barbara L. FREDRICKSON, Geoffrey R. LOFTUS (Daryl J. BEM, Stephen MAREN, colab.), „Atkinson & Hilgard” *Introducere în psihologie*, ediția a XIV-a, Editura Tehnică, București, 2005, pp.769-770).

<sup>31</sup> cf. Părintele Filothei FAROS, *Mitul bolii psihice*, traducere: Ovidiu Lăzărescu, Editura Egumenița - Editura Cartea Ortodoxă, Galați-Alexandria, 2009.

<sup>32</sup> cf. Viktor E. FRANKL, *Omul în căutarea sensului vieții*, traducere din limba engleză de Silviu Guranda, Editura Meteor Press, București, 2012 (12009).

<sup>33</sup> *Psihologia existențialistă și psihoterapia ortodoxă*, traducere din limba greacă, introducere și note de Nicușor Deciu, Editura Doxologia, Iași, 2011, p.21.

logotherapy, the lack of the meaning in life, that is manifested under the form of so-called existential emptiness, the specific disease of the contemporary world, in which the void condition and the helplessness rule. Frankl asserts the necessity of a Superior meaning in man's life, this thesis coming from the observing of the limited character of the world and all meaning connected to it. One of the most important aspects of logotherapy is the noodynamic or "the existential dynamic in a polar tension field", according to the author, just this tension (intrinsic), from what the man has done (what he is) and what he must accomplish (what he must become), being the essential condition for the mental health.

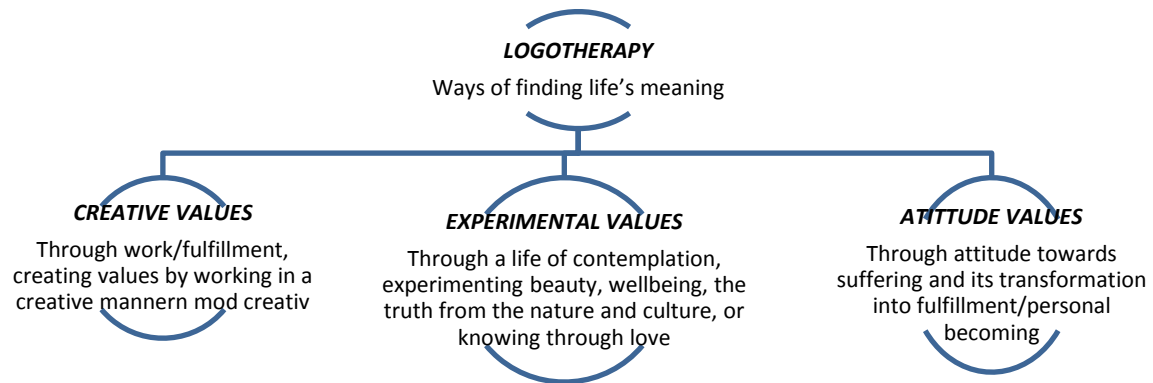


Fig. 3. Ways through which the man can find a meaning in life according to Viktor Frankl

Logotherapy is noted through the optimism message, the message of hope, Frankl belief being that that despite all man's suffering, all his constraints, they cannot cancel his freedom; it aims for the dignity of the human existence, distinguishing the freedom that can not be wholly suppressed.



Fig. 4. The existential dynamic in a tension polar field in the vision of V. Frankl

It was said about contemporary orthodoxy that it takes back (updates) the meaning of the notion of psychotherapy. The term "orthodox psychotherapy" appeared as a natural adaptation of the Church (whose fundamental message is the universal calling to gain the eternal Kingdom of Heaven with Jesus Christ the Savior, and has always manifested a special care to solving men's existential disorders and problems) to the conceptual issues of the contemporary culture, as a challenge addresses to all psychotherapists, but also as a way to greet "the people who actually live, in a certain environment, adapted to cultural coordinates specific to modernity and postmodernity, essentially different from the ones that were a hundred years ago (...). Far from being an "innovation or a means of secularization of the Christian belief fond", the orthodox psychotherapy represents "the same creed as Jesus's Church presented, but most of all practiced, based on a very concrete principle and that is: promoting the art of healing the soul through the teaching of the Holy Fathers"<sup>34</sup>. The phrase *orthodox psychotherapy* renews the therapeutic dimension of Orthodoxy<sup>35</sup>, which in its essence is an education and a therapeutic method, that has as main goal to orient the man towards Him Who has the power to heal, and He is the One

<sup>34</sup> Nicușor DECIU, „Nevoia universală de terapie și răspunsul Bisericii”, în Hierotheos VLACHOS, *Psihologia existențialistă și psihoterapia ortodoxă*, pp.8-9.

<sup>35</sup> In the patristic biblical tradition are speculated a number of expressions like: curing, healing or soul's therapy (θεραπεία της ψυχής).

Who David the psalmist as said that He “*heals all the diseases*” (Psalmul 102, 3), to put him in the right relation with God, because, from his inside he must obey the Law<sup>36</sup>.

There are presented the therapeutical procedures used by Orthodoxy, fixed as methods to purify the soul, and which at the same time represent subjective conditions of the enwritten healing, with the healing through the Holy Communion (objective conditions), in the general conditions of the healing and having as a model the Great Healer that is Christ. The psychotherapeutic procedures try to remake the road of the man’s falling in the passion’s slavery, inverting the descendent movement of the soul, giving it an ascending orientation. The healing of the passion is not exclusively man’s work and not exclusively a spiritual work. It is demanded a work together, *the synergy*, between God and the man, which highlights the teandric work of the Church.

The soul’s healing procedures or the conditions, highlighted by the Holy Scripture and by the Holy Fathers are: the acknowledgement of the disease and the will to be healed, the right faith, humility, repentance, obedience, watch, prayer, fasting and hope, all these under the supervise of the spiritual psychotherapist and mirrored by the eternal love. A special consideration is given by the prayer, as love’s experience and perpetuity.

The purpose of orthodox psychotherapy is, thus, the fulfillment of the right relation, natural and everlasting with God, remaining in this relation meaning the persistence in health. The end of the orthodox psychotherapy “is not only a state of elimination of the sins and passion which generate mental disorders, but it aspires towards a reorientation of the soul’s energy to receiving the spiritual sight of God”, which in the nonreligious language is equivalent to *man’s deification*. The therapeutic process is considered finished only when the man reaches this last stage of the spiritual life, when being in the deification state, he is not preoccupied about the passion anymore, but he enjoys his everlasting communion with God<sup>37</sup>.

### **PART III. THE HEALING WORK OF LOVE OR THE RESTORATION OF THE FACE OF TRINITARIAN LOVE IN THE CONTEMPORARY MAN**

Part III represents the most extensive part of this paper, being entitled “*The Healing Work of Love or the Restoration of the Face of the Trinitarian Love in the Contemporary Man*”. In the first chapter it is presented the work of love that gives life, starting with the intertrinitarian love as an archetypes of human love, the structure of supreme love and basis of Christian spirituality, as the Professor Father Dumitru Stăniloae called it, then continuing with Christ’s healing work, full of love. Chapter two highlights the healing process of a sick man (fallen) and health gaining into Christ, being dedicated to the role of love in healing passion and acquiring the virtues, but also in healing of other people and in children’s education. The theoretic arguments are sustained and determined (according to the case) by the applying of two questionnaires to young people, one related to the healing work of love, and the other about the role that love has in children’s education. Purification of passion is naturally accompanied by the enriching of values, that culminates with the stop of any man’s inside passionate movement, unity with God or deification through love or participation to the divine love (love being viewed as the life mystery into Christ) that are detailed in the last chapter, in the end, it was approached the nowadays problem of Christian love and it is set a challenge: true love implies total assuming of the risk to love, meaning the total giving up of the self for the other, or, only the love of a person who is willing to die for itself can become a healing love...

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<sup>36</sup> The main meaning of the Greek word „θεραπεία” is that of “worship or adoration of God”, later receiving also the meaning of “healing” or “curing” (see G. IOANIDU, *Dicționar elino-românesc*, vol. I, Tipografia Statului, București, 1864, p.1049, apud Nicușor DECIU, „Nevoia universală de terapie și răspunsul Bisericii”, în Hierotheos VLACHOS, *Psihologia existențialistă și psihoterapia ortodoxă*, p.11).

<sup>37</sup> Nicușor DECIU, „Psihoterapia ortodoxă”, în *Biserica și lumea*, nr. 1/2007, p.86 (see also Nicușor DECIU, „Nevoia universală de terapie și răspunsul Bisericii”, în Hierotheos VLACHOS, *Psihologia existențialistă și psihoterapia ortodoxă*, pp.13-14).

For the start it was approached the theme of *love giving life*. The Church's outmost preoccupation is the issue of *life*, and its purpose and mission, *saving the human*; these can only be accomplished through *guarding Christ's commandments* that establish *God's love* and *the love for our neighbor* (John 14, 21, 23). The love for our enemies, Saint Siluan Athonitul<sup>38</sup> said, It is the only true and secure way towards the knowledge of God, Who is the eternal Life (cf. John 14, 21, 23; 17, 3). The gates of love are always opened for everyone, the commandment "Love your enemies" is the Love's perfect reflex into the world from the Holy Trinity; therefore, this commandment represents the corner stone of the comprehensive Christian teaching, a synthesis of the theology, "life in abundance" (John, 10, 10), the fire that God came to throw over the earth (Luca, 12, 49), the uncreated Light showed to the Apostles on the Tabor Mountain, the cloven tongues of fire in which the Holy Spirit descended over the Apostles, God's Kingdom came "into power" (Mark, 9, 1), assuming the state of Heavenly Father's sons, fulfillment of the human being and the perfect resemblance with God (cf. Matthew, 5, 44-48). Fulfilled love that constantly absorbs the intertrinitarian love is necessarily preceded by the love for the enemies. The carrier of this love, said the same father, it is now part of the eternal Life, having in his soul a certain confession, becomes a dwelling for the Holy Spirit and into Him, knowing for real the Father and the Son, fully lives the state of being God's son, Christ's brother and friend and god by His grace<sup>39</sup>.

Intrinitarian love is *the archetype of human love*. The only spring of love is the Trinity, "the supreme structure of love"<sup>40</sup>, the supreme mystery of the whole existence, that explains everything, and without its presence we cannot explain anything, the fundamental and the purpose of creation<sup>41</sup>. The Trinitarian interpersonal love preceded the creation, representing the motive of bringing to life, out of nothing, of the world, and the same love embraced the entire creation making it through man's deification after the grace, part of the untold divinity kindness. The restoration of the lost communion and man's ability to remain in this communion is due to the Son, the second Person from the Holy Trinity, Who has taken upon Him the humanity, sacrificing Himself for the fallen man and raising him to His divine plenitude life, common with the Father's and the Holy Spirit's. Therefore, The Professor Father D. Stăniloae, constantly accentuates, that the man first was created and then he was saved by the Trinitarian God with the meaning of an eternal divine, of an *eternal growth towards love*. On the other side, he notes that the Orthodox Church sees the Trinity as Loving God, working through the Holy Spirit in the believers' souls, to raise them in the loving relation between Its Persons<sup>42</sup>.

In their love, the Persons give themselves to each other, They accept each other and They confirm each other. God couldn't have been a God of love if He hadn't forever been a Father Who gives Himself up to His Son forever and with all His being, giving birth to Him; and then, without a Third to Show Him the love and Their joyfulness, and the joy they have together with Him, as Him, as the Third, to be able to confess the love between the Two. Holy Spirit's participation to Father's joy of His Son and to Son's joy to His Father, but also the Father's and Son's joy for the Holy Spirit it is suggestively explained by the Professor Father D. Stăniloae<sup>43</sup>, who shows that the Spirit is not *the third* in a robust meaning of the word, it could be also correctly to call it *the second*, as the Son (a different second), or because the Son but also the Spirit are the same with the Father and together with Him, *They are All the first*.

<sup>38</sup> cf. *Viața și învățătura stareșului Siluan Athonitul scrise de ucenicul său, arhimandritul Sofronie*, ediția a II-a, traducere de pr. prof. dr. Ioan Ică, Editura Deisis, Sibiu, 2004, pp.259-260.

<sup>39</sup> cf. *Viața și învățătura stareșului Siluan Athonitul...*, pp.260-261.

<sup>40</sup> cf. Preotul Profesor Dumitru STĂNILOAE, *Teologia Dogmatică Ortodoxă*, vol. I, ediția a III-a, Editura Institutului Biblic și de Misiune a Bisericii Ortodoxa Române, București, 2003, p.293 ș.u.

<sup>41</sup> cf. Vladimir LOSSKY, *Teologia mistică a Bisericii de Răsărit*, traducere, studiu introductiv și note de Pr. Vasile Răducă, Editura Anastasia, București, 1990, p.93.

<sup>42</sup> Preot Acad. Prof. Dr. Dumitru STĂNILOAE, *Sfânta Treime sau La început a fost iubirea*, Editura Institutului Biblic și de Misiune a Bisericii Ortodoxa Române, București, 1993, pp.6-8.

<sup>43</sup> *Teologia Dogmatică Ortodoxă*, I, pp.332-333.



Inertrinitarian love is *the origin of human interpersonal relationships*. The existence fullness, divine's being own, cannot be lived by an alone I, said Professor Father D. Stăniloae<sup>44</sup>, because the joy by himself is not a fulfilled joy and therefore not the existence fullness<sup>45</sup>. Love always requires two I s (ego) that love each other, in an acceptance and perfect abnegation, at the same time, each of them represents a giving I (ego) or a transmitter (of love) and a receiver I (ego) (of love); at the same time the love unites the two I s (ego) in a relation directly proportional with the love among themselves without confusing them, in this case the love between him stops (the I s (ego) include themselves in a co-relationship of giving and receiving, but they remain distinct). But, "the number that represents, by excellence, the distinction in unity, or the explicit unity, is number *three*"<sup>46</sup>. Only through a third, the love between the two becomes generous, selfless, capable to extend to the outside subjects. The isolation of an only I, makes impossible the act of flooding. The true love is the perfect love between three, the third being "the task of fire of true love between two persons"<sup>47</sup>, without any jealousy. Saint Gregory of Nazianzus<sup>48</sup> shows that the Holy Spirit is the One necessary for the fulfillment of love and joy, the sign of perfect love into God. Through the Holy Spirit, the Trinity's love proves to be really holy, scattering (over flooding) itself. In another words, the Spirit brings into the creation the intertrinitarian love, raising the creation in the field of the intertrinitarian love and of deification<sup>49</sup>. And we, the people live the necessity of a third, to fulfill a perfect love; the more we love a third, the more we love each other together, getting out of a selfish sfera of a jealous and autosufficient love. *The authentic man is not self-centred because he is exocentric*, according the model of the Holy Trinity, said Kallistos Ware<sup>50</sup>. Acquiring the interhuman authentic love, when there is no "I" only "we", when there is nothing that is "mine" but it is "ours", raises us to the stage of communication with God, we unite ourselves with Him. Our whole effort must be directed towards fulfilling the human love, according to the model of Trinitarian perichoresis (intersubjectivity). In this way only, the means of human interpersonal communion according to the Trinitarian pattern, we become God's sons (cf. Galateni, 4, 7).

The Holy Trinity is *the foundation of Christian love*. God means "The Other" said Paul Evdokimov, and Olivier Clément also said that "God gives Himself to the people according to their thirst. Some of them, who cannot drink more, He gives them a drop", but "He would like to give whole waves" so that the Christians "could, themselves water, the world"<sup>51</sup>.

The man is not trully a man unless he puts himself in this relation of communion with the others, according to the Holy Trinity pattern. This communion is only seen in the Church, as the place where "the human people's unity with God" is fulfilled<sup>52</sup>. The real communion is compiled by the ensemble of those who believe in God and our Savior Jesus Christ and they eucharist themselves with His Body and Blood, actively participating to the Holy Sacraments from the Church. Only the continuous exchanges between man and man, the permanent interhuman relationships from the community, lead to a common enrichment, no one can get rich by himself, isolated. Love "keeps the man unimpeded in this exchange and in this work of enrichment, that can only be done in communion"<sup>53</sup>. Only in the Church "the wilderness has

<sup>44</sup> *Sfânta Treime sau La început a fost iubirea*, pp.64-65; *Teologia Dogmatică Ortodoxă*, I, p.293, 308.

<sup>45</sup> "A unique subject in an absolute meaning would lack joy, and thus the meaning of existence" (Pr. Prof. D. STĂNILOAE, *Teologia Dogmatică Ortodoxă*, I, p.319).

<sup>46</sup> Pr. Prof. D. STĂNILOAE, *Teologia Dogmatică Ortodoxă*, I, pp.319-320.

<sup>47</sup> Pr. Prof. D. STĂNILOAE, *Teologia Dogmatică Ortodoxă*, I, p.321.

<sup>48</sup> *Cele cinci cuvântări teologice, A cincea cuvântare teologică, Despre Sfântul Duh*, traducere din limba greacă, introducere și note de preot dr. acad. Dumitru Stăniloae, Editura Anastasia, 1993.

<sup>49</sup> Pr. Prof. D. STĂNILOAE, *Teologia Dogmatică Ortodoxă*, I, p.321.

<sup>50</sup> *The human person as an icon to the Trinity*, în „Sobornost”, vol. 8, nr. 2, London, 1986, p.12 (sursa: <http://www.stnicholaspx.org/wp-content/uploads/2007/12/humanperson1.pdf>, acc. în 4 febr.2014).

<sup>51</sup> Paul EVDOKIMOV, *Rugăciunea în Biserica de Răsărit*, prefață de Olivier Clément, traducere: Carmen Bolocan, Editura Polirom, Iași, 1996, p.19.

<sup>52</sup> VI. LOSSKY, *Teologia mistică a Bisericii de Răsărit*, p.205.

<sup>53</sup> Pr. Prof. Dumitru STĂNILOAE, *Comunitatea prin iubire*, în „Ortodoxia”, nr.1, 1963, p.68.

bloomed from love”<sup>54</sup>, only in the Church the man lives the faith communion from love: “We should love each other as in a thought to confess God, the Son and the Holy Spirit”. God sees in the love between us the premises of a powerful faith in Him and viceversa, from the strong faith in Him, stated in common, the love between us grows, and through this we get closer to the Kingdom of the Holy Trinity, Which is Love<sup>55</sup>.

Next it is presented *Christ’s healing work*, the Incarnated Logos being nothing more than God’s perfect love that has become the love that serves the humans<sup>56</sup>. *The experience of perfect love is possible only into Jesus Christ, God’s Son incarnated*. Thus, the proof of God’s perfect love for the humans is the Christ’s incarnation, the true Means between God and humans. Christ’s incarnation was done through love, a perfect love, alive, working, sacrificing, not personal, independent and foreign from the human logic “the misunderstood understanding”<sup>57</sup>, specific to an order over logic and over human, and for that “it is real and capable to show God’s truth”<sup>58</sup>.

Christianity is the only *religion of love* because in Its essence, the divine Being is sacrificial love – only in christianity God’s existence and sacrificial love are one and the same, only christianity can state a humble and loving God (cf. Filipeni 2, 8). The experience of perfect love into Jesus Christ, God’s Son incarnated, thus represents, a fulfillment of never ending thirst to call upon and to be claimed, to call and to answer, real and immediate, to the absolute and personal divine love. The certainty of the Being thus becomes so powerful that is beyond any human logic or demonstration. Any authentic meeting with the self becomes inevitably, an authentic meeting with Jesus Christ.

The incarnated God experienced as a concrete and near reality, our life being a continuous tension towards and into Jesus Christ, the only Person Who has spoken about God’s life’s intimacy, Who did not explain (theorized) but offered love, Himself being a concrete proof of Trinitarian love (cf. John 3, 16; 15, 9). The man can literally speak with certainty about love only through his personal experience, through his own living *Christ’s life*, he personally experiments (closely) God-Love (cf. 1 John 4, 16).

*The rewarding work full of Christ’s love was fulfilled through His Passion, death and His Resurrection*. Jesus Christ is not only God’s love enlisted forever into history as assistant, compassionate and participant to human suffering, but is the love that includes, assumes from inside, and takes the human suffering to the climax until death. Jesus Christ’s death represents *God’s experience of death*<sup>59</sup>.

Through His whole earthly activity, through all His healing deeds, God’s incarnated Word has done *a healing work full of love for the human nature*; healing the man from his passion, Christ makes him regain his natural usage of his soul’s powers, and makes then directed again toward God. Christ’s redeemer work is not to create but to *create again*; the renewing of the human nature, Adam’s restoration, regaining the true human nature, man’s true life and purpose. Man’s redeemer remains a great mystery, impossible to comprise in whole its profoundness and to explain with human words, that the Holy Fathers cherish it into silence.

Jesus Christ is considered not only the healer of the human nature in general, in the context of the theology that deals with the redeemer of the whole human kind, as *Doctor of the souls and of the bodies*, called for help by every man who awaits Him to heal his suffering at the neighbour’s suffering. His healing work was directed towards human nature renewed into Him,

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<sup>54</sup> Prof. N. CHIȚESCU, Pr. prof. I. PETREUȚĂ, Pr. prof. Isidor TODORAN, *Teologia dogmatică și simbolică. Manual pentru Facultățile Teologice*, vol. I, Editura Renașterea, Cluj-Napoca, 2008, p.290.

<sup>55</sup> Preotul Profesor Dumitru STĂNILOAE, *Spiritualitate și comuniune în Liturgia Ortodoxă*, ediția a II-a, Editura Institutului Biblic și de Misiune al Bisericii Ortodoxe Române, București, 2004, p.399.

<sup>56</sup> Pr. Vasile MIHOC, *Fiul Omului după Noul Testament*, în *Studii Teologice*, 1-2/1973, p.34.

<sup>57</sup> The akathist of the Annunciation, the second icos; our Jesus Christ’s akathist, the second icos.

<sup>58</sup> George REMETE, *Suferința omului și iubirea lui Dumnezeu – o introducere*, ediția a II-a, revizuită și adăugită, Editura Reîntregirea, Alba Iulia, 2006, p.17.

<sup>59</sup> cf. G. REMETE, *Suferința omului și iubirea lui Dumnezeu – o introducere*, pp.29-31.

but also towards every person that comes to Him, working every day to heal everybody, as Saint Athanasius of Alexandria said: “For God’s Son is living and active (Hebrew 4, 12), works every day; works for the salvation of everyone”<sup>60</sup>.

The second chapter of this part studies *the healing work through love*. Regarding the *healing process of the fallen man* (addict), according to the patristic writings, the paper wanted to present some redeemer steps (healing) and to present the whole process, being highlighted the pillars of the healing, starting with the inside conversion or man’s coming back towards God (which firstly represents the acknowledging of the morbid state in which they are), fulfilled by the heart’s purification (*praxis*), continuing with the fulfillment of generic virtues, healing factors of the soul’s fundamental powers, all these steps being accompanied by the continuous fight with the thoughts and the lust (asceticism), closely and loving supervised by a spiritual father (thaumaturge, healer).

Next it is highlighted the *love’s work in healing the neighbour*. The love that sacrifices itself for the other, having the origin in the middle of the Trinity, is *the authentic love, life giving, that has Jesus Christ in the centre*, God’s Son incarnated, Who was crucified for us so that we could receive the salvation. And offering us an authentic model of love, sacrifice, and saving suffering. In this love for the other there is climb that has its origin, but also its end, in Christ’s love; because Christ is *a way of loving* and into loving *towards God*, He is the beginning but also the ending of love and of our perfection, into Him we participate to the intertrinitarian love, the perfect model of love.

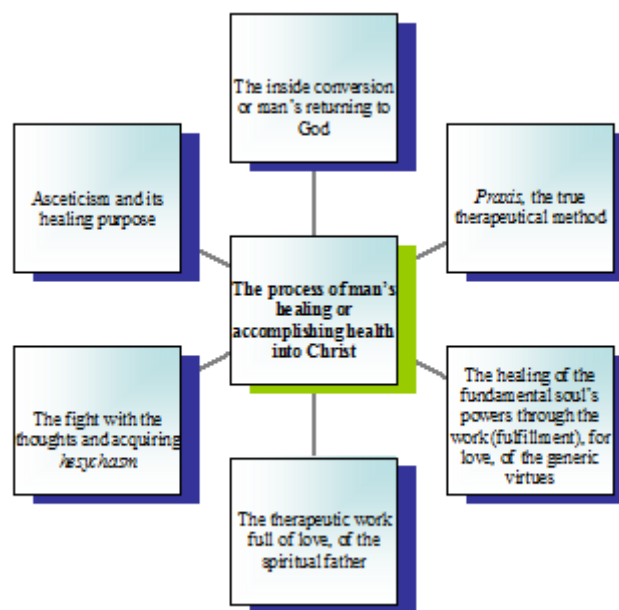


Fig. 5. *The components of the fallen man’s healing work (process)*  
(adaptation according to Jean-Claude Larchet, 2001)

Love is remarked as the factor of perfect unity and the earnest of the new life with and in Christ. If God is the personification of love itself (1 John 4, 8) and the love is identified with the Person, in ecclesiastic field, love must boost the phylanthropy, *the grow into love* meaning nothing else than giving your goods to the other, to giving your life to the other. Only in this sacrificial stage of the interhuman relationships. We get to taste the future life promised by Christ (John 17, 3), living “a new life with Christ and into Christ, lead by the Holy Spirit”<sup>61</sup>; only by

<sup>60</sup> SF. ATANASIE CEL MARE, *Scrieri*, Partea I, *Tratat despre intruparea Cuvântului și despre arătarea Lui nouă prin trup*, Capitolul IV, XXXI, trad. din gr., introd. și note de Pr. Prof. Dumitru Stăniloae, colecția P.S.B., vol. 15, Editura Institutului Biblic și de Misiune a Bisericii Ortodoxe Române, București, 1987, p.126.

<sup>61</sup> Serghei BULGAKOF, *Ortodoxia*, în românește de Nicolae Grosu, Editura Paideia, București, 1994, p.1.

having as a model the sacrificial love of Christ do we reach to knowing God, the absolute Love, confessing with the Saint Apostle and Evangelist John (1 John 4, 16).

Love is the life of the Church, its foundation; Christianity is the religion of love. The new commandment given by Christ to His apprentices, *to love one another*, this being *the trait of the apprentices* (John 13, 34-35), does not represent a saving individual teaching, but a reconciliation, a reassembly of those scattered (who have moved away from the Creator and from Love, the people became more and more distant from God and from one another, remote from one another, distant because of the lack of love like icebergs from ice cap), *a restoration of the love destroyed through sin*.

Christian love is “the impossible possibility”<sup>62</sup> to see Christ in our neighbour, no matter who he is (no matter his real or apparent flaws), because only love can overcome the “accidental” disability and the obtuse “exterior” in the other.

The discovery of the other it is always done in the *Hypostasis of the second person*, of you, through direct experience that means *communion*. We discover the other only by listening to him (because through the word he is revealed to us as a subject) and surpassing the selfish reaction, the self centred and egolatria feeling, the main reason of impenetrability to the other subject’s experience, meaning the reason of *person’s impenetrability to love*, to this obscurity. The meeting with the other (I-you) it is thus shown as *a real trial, testing of love*, the person’s fulfillment being possible only through the other’s experience, through the communion into love, the love of the other being a confirmation of the trait of Christians<sup>63</sup>.

*The true belief extends into love*; we, therefore, acknowledge love’s work in the human relationship (love is the one that makes that the relation between I and you to become a working one), *the creative quality of the communion state*.

Next, there are presented the results of a questionnaire applied to young people about the love’s healing work. Our intention was to show the aspects related to the experience of love and its different forms in which it appears, regarding the young people, but also their environment of the family, colleagues or friends that represent their entourage, the purpose of life, the problem of forgiving the other, also the conditions of the physical-psyhical or soul’s diseases that can be healed through love; it was tried to highlight the role that love has in person’s forming/healing. The application of this test was made in the conditions of noticing in the school counseling activity of the multiplying the problems related to the deficient relations with their friend and families (an alienation of the relation with the other...), mental disorders often caused by the lack of affection, conflicts (the experience of hate as a lack of love), drinking, drugs etc., meaning all that defines a lack of balance state, without love and therefore a morbid state. It is not meant to be a clinic study, but, by applying of this questionnaire we tried to point out, on a smaller scale, *the particular role that love has in the life of young people*, in the context of a world that is more and more selfish, self centred and foreign... The number of teenagers that participated was 100, with the age between 15 and 18 (62 students from junior highschool – 9th and 10th grade; 38 students from senior highschool – 11th and 12th grade), 61% from them were girls and 39% boys. The questionnaire is structured into six categories (multiple choice items, questions, some of them having multiple subcategories), along requests to identify the age and the gender.

In the chapter dedicated (to the study) *the work of love in educating children* we intended to highlight the particular role that love has in educating children. The full human existence is not possible without education, love being its foundation, it is not possible to conceive an education without love. Love is the key element of the educational process, that transforms it into art. Only through the love connection between educator and educated it is possible the transformation of the paedetic practices into the field of art, only there, the training metamorphoses into making. The relation between love and education must be a natural one

<sup>62</sup> Alexander SCHMEMANN, *Postul Mare. Pași spre Înviere*, trad. și studiu introductiv de pr. dr. Vasile Gavrilă. Editura Sophia, București, 2013, p.48.

<sup>63</sup> cf. Pr. Prof. Dumitru STĂNILOAE, *Iisus Hristos sau Restaurarea omului*, colecția „Dumitru Stăniloae – Opere complete”, IV, Editura BASILICA a Patriarhiei Române, București, 2013, pp.33-36.

(cannot be imposed), strong, stable, pure from selfish tendencies. Authentic love is not the prisoner of its own self-centred illusions, but it opens itself towards the others.

In the end of this study, the results of a questionnaire applied to young people were analysed, our intention was to show some aspects related to love's role in children's education and related to children's perception about their relation with their parents and teachers; it was tried to point out the decisive importance that parents-children relationship has in educating the young generations, the school takes up from the beginnings the foundations from the family environment. In accordance with the suggested objectives for this study, we wanted to approach quantitative which meant measuring children's opinions about the studied phenomenon, using as a method of research, the inquiry based on the questionnaire. The number of teenagers that participated was 120, with the age between 16 and 19 (74 students with ages between 16 and 17; 46 students with ages between 18 and 19), 80% from them were girls and 20% boys. The questionnaire is structured into twenty-six items (multiple choice items, questions), along requests to identify the age and the gender.

The third chapter of this part, entitled "*Love, the mystery of life into Christ – assumed risk and transfiguring dynamism*", wants to highlight the transfiguring dynamism of knowledge through love, love being the foundation of knowledge, but also the target of deification. The progress into love of God means the progress in unity with Him, and this is actually man's progress in knowing God and the creatures until full knowledge of full love, in eternal life, as participating to divine communion. Perfect love comes from freedom from passion (*apatheia*)<sup>64</sup>, raising the man to contemplation (*θεωρία*) and spiritual knowledge (*γνώσις*), leading him, firstly toward natural contemplation (*θεωρία φυσική*), meaning toward seeing the spiritual reasoning of what is in the world (being), and then toward knowing God (*θεωλογία*)<sup>65</sup>; it is the climax of spiritual conversion in which the man comes back from the disease toward health, the Saint Maximus the Confessor considered that when the soul reaches the freedom of passion (*apatheia*), "it starts feeling its own health"<sup>66</sup>. Next, there are detailed *the steps (phases) of spiritual life*, the spiritual climb toward perfection, as it is presented in the life and writings of Holy Fathers (the Saints Dionysius the Areopagite, Maximus the Confessor and Nichita Stithatul, Symeon the New Theologian etc.) that meant going on the *three steps of the spiritual life*: purification of passion or of the heart (that is called *praxis*), illumination or enlightenment of the mind (contemplation or *theoria*) or unifying through love with God or deification (*theosis*), man's healing being accomplished step by step, passing through the three stages that define the features of the healed soul. According to the whole eastern patristic and mystical anthropology, deification is a purification of passion (to remove self love, selfishness, and to make room for God's grace and love) and spiritual intensity, meaning an amplification of the spiritual powers that are numb because of the sin; deification is nothing more than a tight interconnection of human nature and the divine grace, the one that has become the subject of love – thus, the man becomes the spring of an eternal divine love, a different god, but not from itself, through grace and communion with God. *Man's deification through grace*, when he becomes part of the "*divine nature*" (*θειας κοινωνοὶ φύσεως*; 2 Peter 1, 4) without losing the condition of created being, it is done as *god through adoption* (cf. Psalm 81, 6), represents an old Christian spirituality theme; for many Fathers, this represents a superior spiritual state for which all the people are called to fulfill, as a corollary of their spiritual life; eastern mystique, often debates the theme of deification, but not through nature, through participating to the uncreated light, through divine energies. Through deification or unity with God in love, it is understood the human's total transformation, through the divine grace, without man's becoming God in the literally meaning,

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<sup>64</sup> cf. SF. MAXIM MĂRTURISITORUL, *Întâia sută a capetelor despre dragoste*, 2; *A patra sută a capetelor despre dragoste*, 91, în *Filocalia*, vol. II, pp.54, 119.

<sup>65</sup> see J.-Cl. LARCHET, *Terapeutica bolilor spirituale*, pp.601-602 ("only through love that springs from knowledge, ends the desires and the needs. Freedom from passion (*apatheia*) is only the «the flower of ascetic», its fruit and its end is the love").

<sup>66</sup> SF. MAXIM MĂRTURISITORUL, *Întâia sută a capetelor despre dragoste*, 89, în *Filocalia*, vol. II, p.66.

through essence and nature, this fact was greatly highlighted by Saint Symeon the New Theologian: “See how great a love the Father has bestowed on us, that we would be called children of God; and such we are (1 John 3, 2)”<sup>67</sup>; „through the communion with God I also become a whole God in felt and acknowledged face (*en aisthesei kai gnosei*), not through being, but through Eucharist (*ouchi ousia, metousia de*). As God was born in a body with no change and was seen by everyone, I will be born in an unexpressed and spiritual face, and remaining a human He is going to make me god”<sup>68</sup>; for Saint Symeon (as for the entire orthodox patristic tradition), the spring for deification represents the incarnation, or with other words, the purpose of incarnation is deification<sup>69</sup>. A special attention was given to *seeing God and to divine light experiencing* (especially referring to Symeon the New Theologian Sfântul Simeon Noul Teolog).

On the other side, the second part of the chapter, deals with the problem of *Christian present love*, that is presented in antithesis with selfish love<sup>70</sup> and Christian love, in the modern crisis context, the decisive disposition of contemporary man and the myth of “masculin sexuality”<sup>71</sup>. The unprecedented development and the technique glorification in the contemporary world, along the “heritage” of a materialistic philosophy, but also with a so-called modern ideology, lead to getting ill (we can call it unprecedented of) love, its degeneration (transformation into vulgarity) into sex, favoring authentic love feeling to disappear, weakening the passion as positive tension toward the other, but also the erasing of personal identity; the contemporary man is (it is desired to be) a robot-man, that mutilates love and reduces it to the selfish dimension, carnal. In recent times, it was succeeded, in a certain amount, the isolation of the physical natural attraction from the other faces of love (love for the other and for the whole creation, love as a friendship, love for the enemies), and it was removed the contemporary face of love (present, “in general” accepted and promoted) from God’s model of love for the man, spring from the perfect intertrinitarian love, through vulgarisation and idolatry of sexual love (eroticism).

In the last subchapter, entitled “*The crucifixion character of love and the risk to love*”, we tried in a short presentation, to give a possible answer (a solution) to the many faces of the crisis in which the contemporary man is – crisis that has its roots in a shortage of love or its sickening (cf. 1 Corinthians 13, 1-3) –, starting from the reality of “*the leather clothes*” and *the biological mortality* (*nekrotos*), which defines man’s state after the falling, as a second nature, as it was seen by the Holy Fathers. We, also, consider that Holy Mother’s unbounded love – spring of all love’s rivers that support and protect the humanity, and an uninterrupted *presence* through the dew of her maternal love - , and the actualisation of some Saints’ experience, old and new, from all places and times, whose confessions are constant foundation of life lived into Love, that live in God’s Time (eternal) not in a normal time, it is *today* eternal and gives answers to all contemporary crisis forms<sup>72</sup>.

<sup>67</sup> SF. SIMEON NOUL TEOLOG, *Imne, epistole și capitole. Scrieri III*, Erosurile imnelor dumnezeiești, 15, introducere și traducere: diac. Ioan I. Ică jr, Editura Deisis, Sibiu, 2001, p.93.

<sup>68</sup> SF. SIMEON NOUL TEOLOG, *Imne, epistole și capitole...*, Erosurile imnelor dumnezeiești, 50, p.263.

<sup>69</sup> Differently from the orthodox patristic tradition, occidental Christian anthropology considers that “Christ’s embodiment has as a purpose not the deification, but the man’s reconciliation with God in the Christ’s substitute sacrifice on the Cross through which He infinitely satisfied the divine majesty and justness outraged through sin. The purpose of Christian existence is the earning through moral deeds-deserving, of a supernatural blessing «grace» (created!) but through which, in the after life, the man will get to reach the happiness of seeing the intellectual happiness of the divine essence (!)” (diac. Ioan I. ICA jr, „Îndumnezeirea» omului, P. Nellas și conflictul antropologiilor”, în Panayotis NELLAS, *Omul – animal îndumnezeit. Perspective pentru o antropologie ortodoxă*, ediția a IV-a, studiu introductiv și traducere: diac. Ioan I. Ică jr, Editura Deisis, Sibiu, 2009, p.18).

<sup>70</sup> The term (lb.gr., *autonomimeno somaticou erota*) is suggested by the Father Filothei Faros (...*Firea dragostei*, p.96), referring to the love lust, under the conditions of “freedom” and erotic tyranny of our times, of its vulgarity (love) in this life, literature or art.

<sup>71</sup> A mechanical understanding of love based mainly on sexual (relaxing) stress relief (cf. Pr. Filothei FAROS, ...*Firea dragostei*, p.10 ș.u.).

<sup>72</sup> cf. Părintele GALERIU, *Cuvânt introductiv la ediția românească*, în Georges HABRA, *Iubire și senzualitate*, traducere Dora Mezdrea, Editura Anastasia, 1994, pp.I-II.

## CONCLUSIONS

We know God only by *participating* (cf. Hebrew 3, 14; 2 Peter 1, 4). In the state of “*individual 3<sup>e</sup>*” (selfish, self centred, self-seeking), the man cannot fulfill himself and, thus, save himself. He must remove the selfishness, the self centred and egolatri feeling, to give himself to others (the other), to fight against passion to become free of passion (*apatheia*), having the need of a life in communion, according to Trinitarian model. We could say that human kind has only one chance: *love*; only through love we can reach God’s knowledge (love), to participate, lead by the Holy Spirit (the quill that imprints [Christ’s] Love into us – cf. 2 Corinthians 3, 2-3), to divine life, to offer a meaning to our lives (a purpose). And an essential step in spiritual progress is the love for *the other* (cf. 1 John 4, 20-21).

In order that man to be *real*, he must live *teocentric*, because, being created according to God’s face, he is *theological*, God is not an external principle, He is the real principle and ontologically purpose – man’s ontologically principle is *the existance into Christ*, its fulfillment being a road from “the face” to the Face or from an iconical existance to a real one; man has, thus, its origin and its final aim into Christ (Who is the spring and the model of love for all the humans from all the places from all times, *Christ’s actuality being the same with the actuality of Christ’s love*).

Love is the fulfillment of “God’s face” into human, it represents *the health state of the man*. The man who has fulfilled it is called to cherish the world by not letting himself contaminated with its morbid accession and predispositions. This is also the *great mystery of love (and its healing work)*: to follow Christ, to step on His footsteps, assuming the life of the other (but without his sin), sacrificing ourselves, even dying for him (a total renouncement to the self and crucifying ourself for the other).

The crucifying feature of love needs a permanent self giving, a permanent crucification of the self for life (for goodness, giving, happiness, health, etc.) of the other, the perfect model being given by Christ’s sacrifice (Isaia 53, 5). To give yourself up to love (to truly love) is always an indisputable risk, having the face of a waste of a self death, that must be assumed, (even with the risk of our life), following Savior’s commandment (and exemple) (John 15, 13). On one side it represents the acceptance of positive and negative aspects related either with the joy of fulfillment, in deepening in knowing the other, or especially knowing the self, either of some (possible) states of sadness or disappointment; and on the other side, it means a moving of the ontologic centre from “*I*” to “*He*”, a crucification of the self for the other (you cannot truly love expecting something in return, not even the “justified” feed-back/answer, love being unconditionally; to love can be synonym with the entering into a new world, with jumping into emptiness, giving up the personal comfort, accepting an uncertain future, of any rejection, obtaining the vulnerability of the most intimate part of the soul, that is synonym with opening of a “door towards pain”, towards “suffering”, when love is not shared, when the loved person is not the “right one” or when the loved person dies etc.). *Assuming the risk to love is a brave act*, Savior’s words represent an advice: “...*take courage; I have overcome the world!*” (John 16, 33) and “*For whoever wishes to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake and the gospel’s will save it*” (Mark 8, 35; see also Mathew 10, 39; 16, 25; Luca 9, 24; 17, 33; John 12, 25). *Only the love of a person who is willing to die to itself*, to die for any impulse that could bring comfort through relaxation, stress relief, redemption from suffering, *can become a healing love*.

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