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Psychology in the Texts of the Holy Scriptures

Foreword by Metropolitan Hierotheos Vlachos

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*The first law is Judaism,
the second is the mystery of Suffering (of the Cross);
one is shadowy and destroys gods,
the other one is clear and solves mysteries.*

Saint Gregory of Nazianzus

(The Sayings of the Holy Fathers

Deisis Publishing, Sibiu, 2010)

Foreword

During my visits to Romania, among others I met Prof. Dr. Pavel Chirilă and I valued his zeal and love for God and man, his piety and charity. He has great sensitivity towards human suffering, for people that suffer, and he fights with the strength he can gather to give people rest and, most importantly, to help them to find Christ, to taste of His love and to eternity unify with Him. In this work some fellow strivers help him, among whom is a blessed hieromonk, father Teofan Munteanu. Doctor Chirilă asked me to write the prologue for the book *Psychology in the Texts of the Holy Scriptures*, which I do with great joy.

Father Ioannis Romanidis of blessed memory, professor at the Theological Faculty of Thessaloniki said that if Christianity had appeared in our era, we would not have understood it as a philosophical, social, or ethical system, not even as a religion, but as a spiritual hospital, since it heals man of his spiritual weaknesses, this having consequences in the body too. The true sickness is separation of man from God – Who is the fountain of life. St. Maximus the Confessor wrote (and later this word was taken up again by St. Gregory Palamas) that the mind that departs from God becomes either demonic, through the pride of the rational part of the soul, or animal-like, through the passions of the lustful part and impulsiveness.

Christ came into the world to heal man so that healed he could see God as Light. He took upon Himself the passionate and mortal nature of man, his entire existence aside from sin, to heal what St. Gregory the Theologian called with a well-aimed word, "what was unhealable." The

Church, the Body of Christ, is a spiritual hospital that heals man of thoughts, of imaginations, of lust and passions and leads him to communion with God. The spiritual medicines that heal man are faith in God, the Mysteries of the Church, prayer, fasting and the rest, but more than everything else communion with the Body and Blood of Christ – named by St. Ignatius Theophorus the "**medicine** of immortality." Through the clergy Christ heals man in the Church – "the guesthouse" in the parable of the merciful Samaritan.

The Holy Scripture, the Old and New Testament, is the book of spiritual healing, revealing the way and method for healing. Just as doctors know from their research how each member of the body functions, the kind of illnesses and their mode of treatment, and transcribe this science in books in order to be studied by others who desire to help people's health, so it happens with the Holy Scripture: first of all the saints healed themselves, they knew God's love, they saw His glory, and then they transcribed their experience in the books of the Old and New Testament, so that other people too could arrive at this experience.

Of course, as is natural, the Holy Scripture is read and interpreted within the framework in which it was written, that is, in the Church: as long as the Church is a spiritual hospital, and the clergy are spiritual doctors, it means that the Holy Scripture is not interpreted outside of the Church and outside of the hermeneutics of the Holy Fathers. Father Ioannis Romanidis said that just as someone who wants to perform an operation does not merely read a book of surgery, but must be in a hospital and take lessons from professors of surgery, the same thing happens with the interpretation of the Holy Scriptures.

Dr. Pavel Chirilă has understood that the Holy Scripture is a book of spiritual medicine which speaks to us about the spiritual healing of man, and for this he chose many verses that speak about spiritual health, about spiritual illnesses and about the method through which man can be healed. Yet just reading these scriptural passages is not sufficient; afterwards man must search for a spiritual doctor in the Church (this spiritual hospital) in order to be healed through the Holy Mysteries, through faith and through prayer. This does not mean that all of the illnesses and bodily weaknesses will be healed for certain. In the Church man is healed spiritually, obtains faith and love, will escape from thoughts and imaginations, will acquire inner peace, will turn towards God, and will arrive at not being afraid of death any more. If beyond these certain neuropsychological weaknesses remain, the appropriate medical specialists have their place, when they do their work with love, professionalism, and also with respect for the spiritual needs of each person, for his ecclesial or religious convictions.

I pray that all of those who will read this book will find peace, will feel that God is neither a prosecutor nor a judge or a harsh parent or a feudal lord that demands satisfaction, but is completely only love, mercy, philanthropy, the true doctor. The use that will come from reading this book will also help its writer.

Hierotheos

Metropolitan of Nafpaktos and Holy Vlasie

Foreshadowing

Man is a created being.

But man is also a fallen being.

After the fall God said, *Adam, where are you?* And man answered, *I heard Your voice... in the garden, and I was afraid...* This "I was afraid" was the first cry of suffering of man on the Earth.

There are spiritual causes for illnesses:

- sins
- lack of faith
- prophylaxis of pride
- to show us the work and power of God through healing
- falling again
- trial
- receiving communion unworthily
- possession
- idolatry

God the Creator – the Father, Son and Holy Spirit – is a God of healing.

The soul is healed more easily than the body.

Healing begins through repentance, through the consciousness that we are a fallen being, through looking for and finding the spiritual

causes of illnesses, through assumption, and continues through faith, through asceticism and through the practice of virtues.

It is impossible to heal ourselves before we forgive all who have done us wrong. Fear that we have done wrong is a pathological fear, that is, it brings about suffering.

The fear of God is the beginning of wisdom. It is the fear to not do wrong and it is a holy fear.

Christ is the Great Healer. He said: *without Me you can do nothing.*

Christian medical activity is an ecclesial activity.

Healing is a continuous process.

People, though they are fallen beings, were created to be holy and the sons of God. This truth explains the drama of human suffering and at the same time the absolute chance for healing.

The authors

I. The Plea for Orthodox

Psychotherapy

*The Lord God, compassionate, merciful,
longsuffering, abounding
in mercy and truth
(Exodus 34:6)*

Psychology is a relatively new science full of contradictions in its very essence, which is, characterized by very many definitions that complement or challenge one another.

As it is promoted and taught, it is a science that has proposed for itself to study the most mysterious expressions of human manifestation, but it wants to decipher the undecipherable without God, without the Creator of the human being. It is a risky approach.

Statistics show that 10 to 25% of the global population is marked by psychopathology; being touched psychologically is like a pandemic.

These are the motives why we have proposed to show that there is also a psychology viewed through the eyes of faith, that is, a noological

psychology, in which man is studied and treated in his relationship to God.

The concept of Orthodox psychotherapy is founded on a profound and unlimited hope: no one and nothing can stop God from revealing Himself to all, even to those who are against Him. That is the case of the Apostle Paul to whom God revealed Himself “for his conversion” on the road to Damascus; that is the case of the three apostles who saw the "Kingdom of God in glory" on Tabor before being baptized.¹

Christian psychotherapy is addressed to the healing of all mankind, not only Christians, since "those who lack the glory of the name of Christian do not lack the other glory which they received when they were created: they are the image of God."²

Religious psychotherapy must be taken into consideration also for the pure and simple motive that the greatest part of people is religious, not atheistic, and "for the faithful person suffering is closely interwoven with his religiosity."³

All of the evidence and statistics recognize that most people are religious. That means that on the basis of their religious convictions and faith they express themselves, make decisions, establish interhuman relationships, and have a certain morality that is at the basis of their value system.

But if we consult the great treatises of psychology promoted by the Academic School, we see that God is obstinately excluded from their texts.

¹ Hierotheos Vlachos, *The Illness and Healing of the Soul in the Orthodox Tradition*, Sophia Publishing, Bucharest, 2009, p.168

² Ignatius Brianchaninov, *On Deception*, Egumenița Publishing, Galați, 2010, p.143

³ Dmitry Avdeev, *When Soul Is Sick*, Sophia Publishing, Bucharest, 2005, p.35

The text from *Jeremiah* associates "not knowing God" with being adulterous, slanderous, deceitful and "going from bad to worse." For our times this is even graver since we live a few thousand years after God revealed Himself to us.

For example, in Larousse, *The Great Dictionary of Psychology*, throughout the 1358 pages the words *God, Jesus Christ, Holy Spirit* – essential to the Christian religion – never appear.

In addition, psychology of the last century carried out numerous sacrileges and blasphemies addressed to the Trinitarian God of the Christians. In order not to maculate paper, since sometimes not even it can bear too much, it is sufficient for us to quote a few cases:

- The founder of psychoanalysis wrote in 1913, "we rediscover the origins of religion, morality, society, art in the Oedipus complex and this is in complete conformity with psychoanalytic thesis..."⁴

Even making abstraction of the moral incompatibility of this text with the Church's life for whose holiness and victory the Son of God sacrificed Himself upon the Cross, hence viewing the problem strictly epistemologically, it is hard to prove and accept that sexology in general and incest in particular explains and resolves all the tragic human suffering and searching, let alone that it could explain man's longing for God.

These words could not be said by anyone other than a militant atheist⁵ for whom "the reality of God and the entire spiritual world are psychological projections, and religion – an illusion."⁶

⁴ Catherine Meyer, *The Black Book of Psychoanalysis*, Sedcom Libris Publishing, Iași, 2009, p.212

⁵ Jean-Claude Larchet, *The Spiritual Unconscious*, Sophia Publishing, Bucharest, 2009, p.39

- A little later, a disciple of the blasphemer, yet just as renowned as his master wrote, "Jehovah has two hands: the right is Christ, and the left is Satan."⁷

He contested faith in the Holy Trinity and tried to introduce the notion of *quaternity*, according to which the devil was part, as a fourth person, of Divinity. More impressive than the anti-Christic deviations of certain teachers, are the nearly idolatrous affiliations of entire generations of psychotherapists to their techniques.

Thousands and thousands of sick people on the continent that became Christian 2000 years ago, baptized in the name of the Holy Trinity are subjected and subject themselves to certain therapies and techniques founded on profoundly anti-Christian convictions. We have the right to ask ourselves if one of these sick people can respond to such a kind of psychotherapy that has no connection with his faith, baptism, dogma, morality and convictions.

These two examples express the reality from the verse that speaks about the *abomination of desolation... in the holy place* (*Matthew 24:15*).

And in the verse from *2 Corinthians*, which says that *the god of this age has blinded ...the minds* of those *who do not believe* (*2 Corinthians 4:4*), it is clear that the Christian psychotherapist must easily recognize *the god of this age* and avoid his pitfalls, remaining in *the fountain of wisdom*, which is *the word of God* (*Wisdom of Sirach 1:5*).

- All of the theories that have been developed up to present speak about the psyche as manifestation but not about the

⁶ Ibid., p.40

⁷ Ibid., p.82

soul as an anthropological entity created and sent by God and having an eternal existence.

Psychology has gradually developed as an atheistic science that refuses to make any connection between the life of the soul and God, swirling around in a materialistic and myopic universe.

This atheistic science seems itself unhealable in its hardness.

Its founders and promoters behave towards Christian healing like the members of the Sanhedrin that judged Stephen 2000 years ago: ***And all who sat in the council, looking steadfastly at him, saw his face as the face of an angel*** (Acts 6:15), but in the end they still condemned him and killed him with rocks.

They are also like those who do not believe in *The Wisdom of Solomon*: ***And if they were amazed at their power and working, let them understand from them how much more powerful than these is He who made them... However, they are not to be excused; for if they were able to know so much with their ability to investigate the world, how is it possible they did not quickly find the Lord of all these things?*** (*Wisdom of Solomon* 13:4-9).

The breach between "the two psychologies" is so great that it is said that they cannot understand each other.

In the first three centuries the Church moved forward through the world in a nearly hidden way, no one knowing that there was a small community that had found the Messiah.

Once Christianity was recognized as an official religion of the Roman Empire "the boundaries between the Christian community and the

world (in the biblical sense of the word) diminished and nearly disappeared."⁸

It was the beginning of the dangerous secularization which, however, had in itself an opportunity as well: the opportunity to present The Great Healer to the world.

Speaking to people about the healing that comes through faith and the Church, we can keep ourselves far away from the effects of secularization and the Church can continue to rise through the world without being maculated by the effects of the world.

Christos Yannaras speaks about the sad destiny of modern man, considered "an individual with a neutral dual unity" which leads to "his existential alienation," since he is deceived with false messianic visions of communal happiness proposed to him by "the individualistic culture of wealth and consumerism."

The only chance for healing of this morbid state is "the existential truth of the Church's unity" where man would find both peace and hope.⁹

The times of today are turbid and uncertain, "the honor towards the natural virtues that both the Jews and pagans can have, has been strengthened... and the honor and understanding of Christian virtues have decreased."¹⁰ That is why there is a duty for preachers to promote the concept of **Christian psychology**.

Lay psychology, which is without God, has pulled a multitude of souls out of the Church, because it offers man the illusion that his soul can be healed without God.

⁸ Christos Yannaras, *The Truth and Unity of the Church*, Sophia Publishing, Bucharest, 2009, p.106

⁹ *Ibid.*, p.15

¹⁰ Ignatius Brianchaninov, *On Deception*, op. cit., p.155

Psychology and psychotherapy without God are like the description in Isaiah: *Woe to those who quarrel with their Maker, those who are nothing but potsherds among the potsherds on the ground (Isaiah 45:9)*

Having close at hand the Holy Scripture, the writings of the Holy Fathers and the bimillennial living experience of the Church, we can learn the science of spiritual healing through the eyes of faith.

Practicing a Christian psychotherapy means answering to *everyone who asks you a reason for the hope that is in you, with meekness and fear; having a good conscience, that when they defame you as evildoers, those who revile your good conduct in Christ may be ashamed (1 Peter 3:15-16)*.

In this way the Christian psychotherapist becomes not only a healer, but also a witness of the Resurrection Gospel. Since he practices and proposes psychotherapy in a dogmatic and moral system where there is no death.

Moses will not purely and simply die, but will *be added to your people (Numbers 27:13)*.

The Apostle Peter, as one who had seen His glory, promised to the faithful that he would help them with proclaiming [the gospel] even after leaving this world: *Moreover I will be careful to ensure that you always have a reminder of these things after my decease (2 Peter 1:15)*.

Hierotheos Vlachos warns us that Orthodox psychotherapy should be practiced by "people who are bearers of revelation." Otherwise there is the dangerous risk of its secularization.

Orthodox psychotherapy is not a simple therapeutic alternative or a *second opinion*; it is the most ancient method of

searching for and discovering God and for us to be healed "in Him."¹¹

The Orthodox Christian religious psychotherapy does exist. It has a few golden precepts and rules:

1. Man is a created being. The soul is immortal. Through the act of creation it is indissolubly and eternally tied to God. Through the absolute liberty with which the Creator endowed it, the soul can depart from God at the risk of temporary or eternal suffering.

Christian psychotherapy is the crying out of an ecclesial therapeutic act of turning the soul around towards the Creator and of making it evolve towards Him.

If the psalmist David said to God: *You took hold of me from my mother's womb* (Psalm 138:13), it is normal to run towards Him.

And in a different section David said: *I was cast upon You from the womb, from my mother's womb You are my God* (Psalm 21:11).

The equation for healing is very simple: God made man according to His *image* (Genesis 1:27) and His *likeness* (James 3:9): God's image in man is an incorruptible and indestructible power to be healed, and likeness is the effort through prayer and asceticism in a co-working with the grace of God in order to be illumined and to be deified.

St. John Chrysostom says that spiritual healing is much easier than bodily healing.

¹¹ Hierotheos Vlachos, *Existential Psychology and Orthodox Psychotherapy*, Bizantină Publishing, Bucharest, 2007, pp.77-78

A person's spirit... searches throughout one's innermost being (Proverbs 20:27). It could be said that the soul contains the body. Unique body, unique soul.

"The soul can gather together and influence the whole world through the body."¹² And on the other hand "it feels and is anchored in the superior order."¹³

Today, as in the past, atheistic, anti-Christian, pseudo-religious, pseudo-Christian and idolatrous spying kindles and claims the truth, virtue, healing and happiness. "The earth shakes seeing the spying of man."¹⁴

That is why today, as in other times, Orthodox psychotherapy has to cry out from the rooftops that healing is Christ.

2. There are spiritual causes of bodily illnesses and illnesses of the soul.

These causes refer to the relationship of man with God.

This means that the method and path of healing must also be spiritual, not "simply psychological."

The imperfection and suffering of the human person is not from creation but from the fall. Hence, "healing" also means "lifting up." St. John Climacus says, "You have fallen, arise!"

In the Holy Scripture God is attributively named the one *who heals all your diseases* (Psalm 102:3), and in a different section the one who *heals the brokenhearted* (Psalm 146:3).

¹² Dumitru Stăniloae, *Orthodox Dogmatic Theology*, The Biblical and Missionary Institute of the Romanian Orthodox Church Publishing House [BMIROCPH], Bucharest, 1996, vol. 1, p.258

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ Irénée Hausherr, *Weeping and Piercing of the Heart at Eastern Fathers*, Deisis Publishing, Sibiu, 2009, p.162

The events of Exodus were *prefigurations of the future* and were written *for our exhortation...*

The Exodus from the land of slavery towards the land of promise is a path of healing. On this road, as well as the other, it is not permitted for us:

- to become idol worshipers
- to fornicate
- to test the Lord
- to complain (*1 Corinthians 10:10*)

There are many “particular” healings in the New Testament where the sick person or the community ask and pray for healing.

But there are also passages where it is shown how the Savior healed *the multitudes* or *all the sick* without their asking (*Luke 7:20-22; Matthew 14:14*).

So much the more the Savior comes when we call Him: ***The strength of our Lord shall be with those who seek Him... (1 Ezra 8:52).***

3. Christian psychotherapy is not only addressed to Christians.

The pagans (*Matthew 8:5-13*) and Lord’s enemies (*Luke 22:50-51*) have access to healing through Him.

The Lord supports all who stumble... (Psalm 144:14) ...because we trust in the living God, who is the Savior of all men, especially of those who believe (1 Timothy 4:10).

The Christian therapist assists the sick pagan, heretic, Jew, or enemy of the Church and prays for his healing with the same zeal as for his brothers.

But he does not fall into the error of assuming the *foreign yoke* of the unbelievers (2 Corinthians 6:14).

He can descend *empathetically* with the sick person into the deepest darkness, but maintaining his purity of Christian dogma and zeal for the virtues which he obtained through faith and asceticism, so as to be able to raise the sick one to *the light of the knowledge of the glory of God* (2 Corinthians 4:6).

4. The modern sick person and the modern therapist have more faith in the material means of healing.

Psychological illnesses being suffering of the soul and the soul being immaterial, we must help the sick person to believe in healing through prayer and through the word: *Your word, O Lord, which heals all...* (Wisdom of Solomon 16:12).

St. Gregory Palamas, quoted by Hierotheos Vlachos, precisely defined the aim of Orthodox psychotherapy as early as the 14th century: to reintegrate the mind "that was scattered by the senses outside of the heart."¹⁵

5. Just like Christian medical action, the Christian psychotherapeutic process is an ecclesial action. It is performed in the Church by a Christian psychotherapist and a consecrated priest.

The true healer is Jesus Christ, Who heals in the Church through the Church's members.

¹⁵ Hierotheos Vlachos, *Orthodox Psychotherapy*, Învierea Publishing, Timișoara, 1998, p.127

The sick who are in the Church are human persons on the path of healing.

...*the Lord searches all hearts and understands every thought (1Chronicles 28:9).* In the Church, therapeutic work is carried out through doctors, priests, psychotherapists, laypeople, monastics, and deacons.

The therapist and the ill Christian aspire towards eternal life, where all of the meanings and trials of this life are fulfilled. John the Evangelist explains to us in fact what eternal life means: to *know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom You have sent (John 17:3).*

6. The Christian psychotherapist addresses the soul, not the psyche, in the first place because the soul is eternal and when we investigate it, we must investigate it with the thrill with which we investigate eternity.

The soul is, as the Holy Fathers say, by nature Christian (*anima naturaliter christiana*); it has nostalgia for primordial health and it is that which evolves towards the Creator.

The soul easily understands the questions of our investigation and submits itself to our anamnesis and, at the same time, it is open towards receiving healing through divine providence.

The soul is *somebody*, not something (Dumitru Stăniloae).¹⁶

Man can give nothing in exchange for his soul, which is worth more than the entire world (*Matthew 16:26*).

Christian psychotherapy places its values in a hierarchy according to the soul's opportunity for progress, not according to "feeling better."

¹⁶ Dumitru Stăniloae, *Orthodox Dogmatic Theology*, op. cit., vol. 1, p.257

Researching the soul is efficient research *For a man's soul sometimes tells him more than seven watchmen...* (Wisdom of Sirach 37:14).

The psalmist assures us one more time that the soul comes from God and at the same time it is in His hands (*Psalms* 65:8-9; 61:2; 118:109).

The law of the Lord is blameless, converting souls (*Psalm* 18:8).
Therefore let those who suffer according to the will of God commit their souls to Him in doing good, as to a faithful Creator. (*1 Peter* 4:19).

7. Each therapeutic discipline has a reference book according to which the master teaches his disciples and through which his previous experience is transmitted.

The primary reference book of the Christian psychotherapist is the Holy Scripture, the Book of Books, that is, (according to all statistics) the most read book in the world. This book bears witness to everything about healing, what has been ordained, what has been seen, what has been heard, what has happened, and what is in the future.

The apostles bore witness: *For we cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard.* (*Acts* 4:20)

John urges us: *You search the Scriptures, for in them you think you have eternal life* (*John* 5:39)

The events of Creation are unique in time which flows historically, determined, finite.

The Holy Scripture is the history of unique events in the life of the human person and the human community.

Christ became incarnate, sacrificed Himself on the cross, resurrected, and ascended into Heaven. The Holy Scripture presents Christ to us as a *unique foundation: For no other foundation can anyone lay... (1 Corinthians 3:11).*

For man, the Scripture is the book of perfection: *All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work (2 Timothy 3:16-17).*

The religious approach towards the human person and psychological suffering is described in its complete profundity – analytically and therapeutically – in the Epistle to the Hebrews: *For the word of God is living and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the division of soul and spirit, and of joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart. (Hebrews 4:12)*

8. The therapeutic act that reaches healing is neither passive nor magic. It presupposes a spiritual and ascetic effort, for it is a great, *glorious (Wisdom of Solomon 18:3)* act, as was the Exodus towards the Promised Land, *For we are God's fellow workers (1 Corinthians 3:9).*

Thus our collaboration is imperatively necessary:

- The Orthodox psychotherapist awakens in the sick person the consciousness that Christ died for us. It is an enormous

step that both – the psychotherapist and the sick person – make towards healing. Since to the extent to which we bear in our bodies the murder of Jesus, Jesus's life is shown *in our mortal flesh* (2 Corinthians 4:11).

- Human power – both the therapist's and the sick person's – does not exist outside of God. Orthodox psychotherapy bases every approach and every therapeutic gesture on this foundation: *O my strength, I shall keep watch with You...* (Psalm 58:10).

According to the concept of Christian medicine and psychology, healing does not merely mean the disappearance of uncomfortable symptoms, but regaining "the initial nature".

The therapeutic process presupposes the conversion of the same energy of the soul inside of man which was operating "pathologically," towards the therapeutic, purifying operation; healing does not need to be understood as the sum of certain new effects or energy brought in from outside, which create the good condition, but rather as a nearly continuous travail.

Moreover, the true purpose is not escaping from passions (or escaping from passions in and of itself), but obtaining communion with God, that is, "returning in safety to your home country."¹⁷

As long as man is alive he is like a being on the culmination of a wave. The risk of falling is great. We learn this from the life of the Holy Apostle Peter. He, who on Tabor saw the Kingdom of God, 40 days later, betrayed the Savior.

¹⁷ Vasilios Thermos, *Man in Sight! Orthodox Psychology and Psychiatry*, Sophia Publishing, Bucharest, 2010, p.50

At the same time we find in the evangelical texts how amazing and exemplary his return was through repentance.

Man's fall took place in the bosom of creation and his healing also takes place in the bosom of creation, *Because the Spirit of the Lord fills the world, and He who holds all things together knows what is said* (Wisdom of Solomon 1:7), including every whisper of suffering, and all of *creation groans and labors with birth pangs together until now.* (Romans 8:22).

The mystery of the indissoluble and absolute connection between man and God is expressed even in the Old Testament where Exodus symbolizes the evasion of slavery and healing towards and in the Promised Land: *Then he [Moses] said to Him, "If You Yourself do not go up with us, do not bring us up from here."* (Exodus 33:15).

This verse expresses very well the meaning of healing *with* God, *through* God and *in* God.

The victory of Exodus comes to an end in the Promised Land and is due to the fact that their evolution has meaning.

A characteristic of contemporary pathology is that which Zorin names "ontological shock"¹⁸, that is, a life without sense, expressed clinically through apathy, sadness, emotional anesthesia, fear; the person who is touched by this condition *is conscious of* and *feels* the lack of meaning as a drama with acute pressure.

The Orthodox therapist is the doctor who discovers the meaning, that is Christ, in Whom healing is fulfilled.

¹⁸ Konstantin V. Zorin, *Arise and Walk! Steps towards Healing*, Sophia Publishing, Bucharest, 2009, p.225

The human therapist does not always understand the soul (psyche) of the sick person in front of him, or in any case only after a certain closeness.

The psalmist says to the Lord: *O Lord, you have searched me and known me... You understand my thought afar off* (Psalm 139:1-2).

That is why Orthodox psychotherapist prays for his patients and makes use of knowledge through faith.

Orthodox psychotherapy is efficient through faith in Jesus Christ the incarnate one. Any spirit or prophet who does not bear witness that Jesus Christ came in the flesh is the spirit of the antichrist and a false prophet and they work in the world.

If Christ had not come in the flesh, suffering and death would not have been assumed, suffering and death would not have been defeated.

Christians, but it is those who believe that Christ came in the flesh, those who operate with Orthodox psychotherapy and call the Savior to their side on the cross of their suffering, have the maximum opportunity for healing since John tells them: *...because He who is in you is greater than he who is in the world.* (1John 4:4).

In the person of the Savior the two natures – the divine and the human – communicate and cooperate. When the Savior bears in His body our *sufferings* and *weaknesses*, their contact with the divine nature produces healing.

But for this, for the Lord to be near, we must call Him *in truth* (Psalm 144: 18).

Hence what is worth recalling for both the patient and the therapist is that not every call succeeds, but only that which is *in truth*...

For this reason we stand *looking unto Jesus*, (Hebrews 12:2).

And if we were to return to the Old Testament, Jesus of Sirach in his wisdom knew that

By him – God the Father – everything has ***prosperous success*** (*Wisdom of Sirach* 43:26).

The Orthodox psychotherapist must yet still know:

- ***If you abide in Me, and My words abide in you, you will ask what you desire, and it shall be done for you*** (*John* 15:7).
- our suffering must make us think of and help us feel *Christ's passions* again in our body.

To the extent to which ***the sufferings of Christ abound in us, so our consolation also abounds through Christ*** (*2 Corinthians* 1:5):

- ***There is no wisdom nor understanding nor counsel against the Lord*** (*Proverbs* 21:30);
- The Lord's Path – organically connected to Truth and Life – though it is unique, works antinomically and has antinomical effects: ***it is strength to the upright, but destruction shall be to the workers of iniquity*** (*Proverbs* 10:29).
- ***Commit your works to the Lord...*** (*Proverbs* 16:3).

9. Orthodox psychotherapy has not had and probably will not have the fate of a renowned method, praised and situated at the top of the worldly charts.

As the Church itself, the concept of Christian medical and psychological therapy will withstand like "the apostle's loneliness" (*2 Timothy* 4:16) millennium after millennium, without ever being defeated.

This power springs from the personal reserves of each soul that being saved, evolves towards eternity. Personal experience with the Lord and personal healing through the Lord and His Church cannot be contested or annulled by anyone or by any statistics.

The Apostle Paul is as great as "the Mediterranean", as Petre Țuțea said, but the Jews said at that time *...we have found this man a plague (Acts 24:5)*.

The Christian religion – essentially messianic and salvific – is characterized in *The Book of Acts* as heresy, which *is spoken against everywhere (Acts 28:22)*.

The Christian psychotherapist and doctor should not be surprised if people stand against him.

The Jews from Thessaloniki spoke about Paul and Timothy as those who *have turned the world upside down (Acts 17:6)*, and sometimes the Jews associated themselves with the pagans against the apostles (*Acts 14:4-5*).

The concept of Christian medicine and psychology is centered on *person*. For this reason it cannot be undermined either from within or from without.

10. If the psychotherapist is not a man of the Church, he cannot (it is impossible for him to) practice the Orthodox psychotherapy, because to use the name of the Savior as magic is a sin and is also dangerous (*Acts 19:13-16*).

Lay psychology and atheistic or religiously-indifferent psychologists understand religious psychology with great difficulty or do not understand it at all. They cannot understand how the faithful person

can have perfect social inclusion, can even attain a certain level of performance, and at the same time believe and relate to a series of spiritual values and convictions that are not of this world, nor of this age.

How hard it is for an atheist to believe the verse from the *Revelation* ***He is coming with clouds*** (*Revelation* 1:7) as truly normal or how hard it is for an atheist psychologist to believe that the Christian who before Communion reads in the third prayer: "...allow me to greet You in the clouds, my Judge and Maker, along with all Your saints..."¹⁹ is "mentally normal."

It is as if there were two parallel worlds that intersect in an aleatory way.

There are also cases when the atheist psychotherapist or the one who is religiously indifferent could get therapeutic benefit from the patient.

The Orthodox therapist however can help pagans, heretics, Jews, and atheists to become healed since the Lord ***desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth*** (*1 Timothy* 2:4).

The Orthodox therapist can help the faithful even more since with them – whether Jew, Greek, slave, free, male or female – they ***are all one in Christ Jesus*** (*Galatians* 3:28).

And in another section the Scripture says about Christ that He ***is the Savior of all men, especially of those who believe*** (*1 Timothy* 4:10).

Why does the Orthodox therapist (the one who has experienced faith and its fruits) work with such zeal? Because he says as the apostles Peter and John did: ***...we cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard*** (*Acts* 4:20).

¹⁹ from *The Book of Hours*

As a man of the Church, the Orthodox therapist understands that *to heal* is a gift through the Holy Spirit, *to serve* is from the Lord and *to work* is from **God who works all in all** (1 Corinthians 12:6).

11. The patient and therapist always have in mind the words of the psalmist concerning the Lord:

***O my God,
my helper,
my protector,
my mercy*** (Psalm 58:18).

12. The Golden rule, princeps, of Orthodox psychotherapy is awakening repentance in the soul of the patient who is in front of us. Repentance is the beginning, middle and triumph of healing. If repentance is continuous, then healing too is continuous, that is, the patient will live the miracle in which healing is continuous.

The Savior told Paul on the road to Damascus that those who repent have an ***inheritance among those who are sanctified by faith in Me*** (Acts 26:18).

In front of death repentance remains the only saving thing, since we can no longer manifest our love or do good deeds. But it is possible to experience repentance and is salvific up to the moment when the soul abandons the body.

Doctor D. Avdeev confesses that during his life he met patients whose psyche "evolved poorly," yet spiritually "they evolved very well,"

or "better and better." It is a case where the two psychotherapies – the lay and the religious – disengage and powerfully reflect the distinction of one from the other, which is incomprehensible according to all scholastic or academic reasoning, but very easily understood according to spiritual reasoning.²⁰

In the end we can note the fact that the Orthodox psychotherapist has to confront three extensive and painful psychological processes:

Fear, pathological fear appears from our mistakes and is stimulated by the demons. After the fall, when the Lord asked the first man *Adam, where are you?*, he answered: ...*I was afraid* (*Genesis 3:9-10*). The psychotherapist must help the patient replace "fear because he erred" with "fear of erring."

Despair is the premature death of the soul which remembers *the evils I did*, but without repenting (*1 Maccabees 6:1-16*).

False **Joy** born in the soul that believes it can rejoice in material values. The Scripture calls one like this a fool (*Luke 12:19-21*). The distance is enormous between him and the martyr who dies with joy for Christ.

The Orthodox psychotherapist does not stop in his trajectory. He assists the patient up until death, and beyond...

People want to escape from the passions because they generate suffering. But the ultimate purpose of Orthodox psychotherapy is not "freedom from passions, but attaining communion with God."²¹

²⁰ Dr. Dmitry Avdeev, *Contemporary Problems of the Orthodox Psychotherapy*, Sophia Publishing, Bucharest, 2007, p.137

²¹ Hierotheos Vlachos, *Orthodox Psychotherapy*, op. cit., p.310

We should not be surprised that there are and will be objections against Christian psychology: ***Therefore the world does not know us, because it did not know Him (1 John 3:1).***

II. Orthodox Christian Teaching

*The way of the Lord is a stronghold
to the blameless, but destruction
to evildoers
(Proverbs 10: 29)*

God cannot be defined, because definitions belong to the composite world.²²

The Lord is named by the psalmist as: the one ***Who heals all your diseases, Who redeems your life from corruption, Who crowns you with mercy and compassion (Psalm 102:3-4); The Lord restores those broken down. The Lord gives wisdom to the blind (Psalm 145:8); He heals the brokenhearted and He binds up all their wounds (Psalm 146:3).***

Faith is a living connection, free and conscious between God and man.²³

Faith appears or does not appear in the heart of man.

Founded on faith, the human person makes certain decisions in this life and searches with hope for a place in eternity for himself.

Divine revelation means "divine discovery."

²² Iustin Moisescu, *Evagrius of Pontus*, Diocese of Argeş and Muscel, Anastasia Publishing, Bucharest, 2003, p.123

²³ *The Orthodox Faith*, Trinitas Publishing, Iaşi, 2007, p.5

God reveals Himself to people in a *natural way*, that is, "through created things", through the manifestation of the laws that govern the physical and biological world – laws that express in a wonderful way harmony, equilibrium and perfection.

Likewise God reveals Himself to people in a *supernatural way*, directly, unmediatedly, through His own intention and initiative, seeding in man's heart the thought that He exists.

Supernatural revelation "grants superior and eternal meaning"²⁴ to natural revelation, that is, it prevents man from falling into idolatry of things or human social values.

Supernatural revelation awakens in man the nostalgia for heaven, the longing for God, the desire to be in communion with his peers, sentiments of universal fraternity and – importantly for salvation – reveals the path towards The Kingdom.

The Saints do not abruptly separate the natural revelation from the supernatural one, because asceticism taught them to see the divine meanings of existence and conversation with God in creation.

In order to ease the understanding of the teachings of the Orthodox faith we will explain a few key terms:

The Holy Scripture is the path of revelation that contains in its pages the history of creation, of the fall and of the salvation of the human race. It is a book through which we have been given supernatural revelation.

The word of God is eternal; it is the fountain of knowledge, of laws, of liberty, of asceticism, of sacrifice, and of wisdom.

²⁴ D. Stăniloae, *Orthodox Dogmatic Theology*, vol. 1, op. cit., p.21

In the pages of the Holy Scriptures, the path shines towards deification, the method of healing, faith, hope, love – as virtues, values and eternal certainty.

The Holy Scripture is also a book of teaching that helps us to understand where we are, what dangers await us and how much unlimited value the soul has in its evolution into eternity.

It is in essence an open book of the birth and becoming of the human person in an absolute and indissoluble connection with God. In its verses we understand our fall and ascension, healing as the divine-human action.

The Holy Scripture has the miraculous power of transforming sinners into saints. It is the most widely read book in the world.

The Holy Apostle Paul speaks in this manner about the Holy Scripture: *the word of God is living and powerful... and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart* (Hebrews 4:12).

"It is meant for us to read the Holy Scripture with humility, as of the Word of God, asking from Him first of all assistance to understand it and having a warm desire to illumine our being through its contents."²⁵

Christian Anthropology teaches us that man is made *in the image and likeness of God* (Genesis 1:26-27).

The image of God in man is indestructible and incorruptible. It gives us the certainty for healing, salvation, for our rising up out of the fallen state.

²⁵ *The Orthodox Faith*, op. cit., p.30

Likeness with God is potential; it depends on our work in the world, our desire and our efforts to become like Him.

In Eden man was at the same time mortal and immortal. He chose "to die" through disobedience and then, so that man would not taste of the tree of eternal life and so that disobedience (sin) would not be eternal, God permitted death.

Salvation is the healing of the fallen man, that is, obtaining eternal life in Christ. The incarnation of the Savior, His sacrifice on the cross and His ascension into heaven make our salvation possible and give it certainty. Salvation is obtained through faith, good deeds and the grace of God.

Salvation is virtually accessible to anyone.

The Holy Trinity is a single being in three persons: Father, Son and Holy Spirit – distinct persons, immutable, equal and indivisible.²⁶ Dumitru Stăniloae says that the Holy Trinity is "the mystery of the perfect unity of distinct Persons."²⁷

Each person of the Holy Trinity pours out into the world the love of the other two as well.

The Savior Jesus Christ is the Son of God, the founder of the Christian religion.

He is "consubstantial with the Father as regards his divinity and also consubstantial with us as regards his humanity" (The Fourth Ecumenical Council).

²⁶ Mihail Gavril, *The Church, the Synagogue, the Lodge*, Puncte Cardinale Publishing, Sibiu, 2007, p.13

²⁷ Dumitru Stăniloae, *Orthodox Dogmatic Theology*, vol. 1, op. cit., p.1

He is the Teacher because He has taught us to love our enemies, He is the High Priest because He sacrificed himself on the cross, He is the Emperor because He leads the Church with power towards the Kingdom and because "His Kingdom shall have no end."

The Holy Spirit is a third person of the Holy Trinity. Through Him the Church was founded. Here are His gifts: 1) wisdom 2) understanding 3) counsel 4) power 5) knowledge 6) good-faith 7) fear of God.

The **Holy Church** is a theandric divine-human work, born in a visible way through the Descent of the Holy Spirit onto the first Christian community on the Day of Pentecost.

The way into the Church is through Baptism as a Holy Mystery. The white (unstained) vestments of Baptism are preserved pure through faith, good deeds, repentance (the mystery of confession), and Communion.

Baptism heals man in the integral nature of his body and soul.

"Yet Baptism saves man from sin, but not from the possibility to sin."²⁸

Baptism does not abolish liberty.

The Church is the oldest institution in the world. It passes through the world, sanctifying the world, without being maculated by the world's intentions.

The Church moves forward through the world towards the Kingdom like a march, into which enters whoever can and whoever believes that this is the progress towards salvation.

²⁸ Jean-Claude Larchet, *The Therapy of Spiritual Illnesses*, Sophia Publishing, Bucharest, 2001, p.289

In the Bible it is written that *the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it* [the Church] (*Matthew 16:18*).

The Church is the mystical body of the Savior. He is the head of the Church.

The Church is a hospital and not a courtroom. It is the place where those who believe in the Savior – The Great Healer – are healed.

It embraces and comprises people on the path of healing.

Christian medical action is an ecclesial action (performed in and through the Church).

Knowledge of God - we cannot know God unmediatedly, but we know that He exists; we know His existence in three ways:

- through faith, when He reveals Himself to us precisely because we believe in Him;
- through the rationality of the things that exist: the perfection of the laws that move the Universe, of the laws that move living organisms from birth to death;
- through "the obsession" for eternity placed and manifested in man, without intentionality, spontaneous, natural, not invoked.

The word of the prophets, the incarnation of the Savior, the work of the Holy Spirit in the Gospels and in the Church are the works of supernatural revelation.

We know that God exists through the cataphatic way, that is, seeing the perfection of creation. The perfect harmony in the Universe makes us believe in a rational way that unique God exists, the unique God of Israel.

But we also know that God exists through the apophatic way, that is, through the asceticism that leads us to the place where only amazement can say something more, there where we realize that not being able to know Him truly, we are eternally attracted towards Him with a burning desire to know Him.

Christianity is the ultimate great religion of the world (Petre Țuțea) because it is the only religion that asks you to love your enemies; there is no way one superior to it can appear; that is why it is the ultimate and the greatest.

The Christian dogma teaches us that God is a Being in three Persons.

In the evening at prayer I cry out to God, "Lord help me!", I don't say, "Principle, help me!" or "Energy, help me!"

The energies of God – the uncreated (which work in the Holy Mysteries) and the created (that work in the Universe) – are the manifestations of God's power.

According to the teaching of our faith, all people have a chance to be saved, that is, to arrive in heaven.

Dogma is the "method and cure" for healing. It is "the living expression of the Church" and "the guide towards unspeakable words."²⁹

The evolution of the soul to eternity is the Christian's greatest concern. This evolution is decisive in earthly life, as a trial by fire, through faith, good deeds, and immense effort not to err before God.

All of these are manifested through a continuous exercise of humility, hope and repentance.

²⁹ H. Vlachos, *The Illness and Healing of the Soul in the Orthodox Tradition*, op. cit., p.13

"The life of the Church is, in its entirety, a tense activity and a fight for salvation..."³⁰

Right Judgment, as it appears in biblical verses, is an act of grandeur, impossible to be understood completely by a human being not even when it is about his own soul's evolution into eternity, nor when it is about evaluating other people's chances:

- one thing is sure: *...we shall all stand before the judgment seat of Christ (Romans 14:10).*
- *for every idle word men may speak, they will give account of it in the day of judgment (Matthew 12:36),* including the hidden things (*Romans 12:16*);
- *So then each of us shall give account of himself to God (Romans 14:12);*
- *For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may receive the things done in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad (2 Corinthians 5:10);*
- those who do not submit to the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ *shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of His power (2 Thessalonians 1:9);*
- the Christian person mirrors his intentions and deeds in his neighbors – hungry, thirsty, stranger, naked, sick, imprisoned – with whom Christ identified Himself (*Matthew 25:31-46*);

³⁰ *The Orthodox Faith*, op. cit., pp.136-137

- through the act of creation man is free; that is why *So speak and so do as those who will be judged by the law of liberty* (James 2:12);
- We are not permitted to judge anyone:
 - *I shall repay on the day of vengeance...* (Deuteronomy 32:35);
 - *...in whatever you judge another you condemn yourself* (Romans 2:1-4);
 - *Judge not, that you be not judged* (Matthew 7:1-2);
 - *Condemn not, and you shall not be condemned* (Luke 6:37).

Judgment is a complex process, great and mysterious at the same time, in which the justice and mercy of God, our words and deeds, the Gospel which we have heard, our conscience and daring, repentance and faith that through the mercy of God we will be saved work with power for a moment. This is seen also in the following verses:

God is a righteous, strong, and patient judge (Psalm 7:12).

For the Father judges no one, but has committed all judgment to the Son (John 5:22).

You judge according to the flesh; I judge no one. And yet if I do judge, My judgment is true; for I am not alone, but I am with the Father who sent Me (John 8:15-16).

And if anyone hears My words and does not believe, I do not judge him; for I did not come to judge the world but to save the world. He who rejects Me, and does not receive My words, has that which

judges him –the word that I have spoken will judge him in the last day (John 12:47-48).

Most assuredly, I say to you, he who hears My word and believes in Him who sent Me has everlasting life, and shall not come into judgment, but has passed from death into life (John 5:24).

For if we would judge ourselves, we would not be judged (1 Corinthians 11:31).

Beloved, if our heart does not condemn us, we have confidence toward God (1 John 3:21).

Blessed is he whose soul does not condemn him (Wisdom of Sirach 14:2).

Love has been perfected among us in this: that we may have boldness in the day of judgment... (1 John 4:17).

Mercy triumphs over judgment (James 2:13).

...your patience and faith in all your persecutions and tribulations that you endure, which is manifest evidence of the righteous judgment of God (2 Thessalonians 1:4-5).

The universal judgment is the moment that separates finite time from eternity. That is why it is of an overwhelming significance and the Holy Fathers were always thinking about it, considering it the greatest educator for salvation.

The Kingdom of Heaven is eternal time where those arrive who have been healed in finite, determined space and time of this age. It is *of all the ages* (Psalm 144:13).

It is defined as the *righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit* (Romans 14:17).

Through the Savior's coming *...surely the Kingdom of God has come upon you* (Matthew 12:28).

Healings in the New Testament are constantly associated with the preaching of the Kingdom (Luke 9:2,11).

Returning to the stage of the child soul is certainty for entering the Kingdom (Luke 18:15-17; Matthew 19:14)

The Apostle Paul reveals the mystery to us: *...the kingdom of God is not in word but in power* (1 Corinthians 4:20).

The verses from Luke express the truth that the opportunity and chance for healing exist ontologically in man, even if they are not perceived by either the body's or the mind's eyes: *The kingdom of God does not come with observation... the kingdom of God is within you.* (Luke 17:20-21).

It is possible to enter the Kingdom within you only *if you are willing* (Matthew 11:14) and through the effort of detachment – even painful – from this world: *No one, having put his hand to the plow, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God* (Luke 9:62).

St. Isaac the Syrian, quoted by H. Vlachos, says that God pours out His providence before all people but "it is only seen by those who have purified themselves of sin."³¹

The history of the human race's salvation is structured by *unique* events. The incarnation of the Savior is a unique event, His teaching is a unique event, the foundation laid by the apostles through faith in Him is unique.

³¹ Hierotheos Vlachos, *Orthodox Psychotherapy (sequel and debates)*, Sophia Publishing, Bucharest, 2001, p.141

That is why to prove *integrity* in *doctrine* (*Titus 2:7*) is a command from the Apostles and the Holy Fathers and is an essential particularity of Christian Orthodox teaching.

For no other foundation can anyone lay than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ (1 Corinthians 3:11).

Dogma – fixed by the Holy Fathers – remains unchangeable until the end of the world.

The fact that on Sunday, at the Holy Liturgy, I pray as those in the 4th century prayed, and they prayed as I pray is an unspeakable joy, it is a gift of “unchanging attitude”, it is a certainty.

III. Christian Anthropology. The Biblical Basis.

*...the entire world before You
is like a small additional weight on scales,
and like a drop of dew early in the morning
that falls on the ground.*

(Wisdom of Solomon 11:22)

The universe of faith is like a kingdom into which the Lord is always calling all people from everywhere, *everyone called by My name. For in my glory I prepared him, and formed and made him (Isaiah 43:6-7).*

To be *made, formed and prepared* for *His glory* is a chance, privilege, appreciation, all at the same time.

Man is formed of body and soul through the act of divine creation (*Genesis 2:7*).

Your hands made me and fashioned me (*Psalms 118:73*).

In the Old Testament the Creator is named *the God of the spirits of all flesh* (*Numbers 16:22*).

...*the body without the spirit is dead* (*James 2:26*). In the New Testament teaching of faith, the body is *the temple of the Holy Spirit* (*1 Corinthians 6:19*). That is why consciously and indifferently damaging the body (abortions, experiments on embryos, contraceptives, iatrogenics, etc.) is a sin. *If anyone defiles the temple of God, God will destroy him* (*1 Corinthians 3:17*).

The body evolves towards death and decomposition; it returns to the earth, but the soul retains its memory until the second coming of the Savior and the universal resurrection, when they will be reunited in the form of a spiritual body (*1 Corinthians 3:16*). That is why the Apostle Paul says: *The first man was of the earth, made of dust; the second Man is the Lord from heaven* (*1 Corinthians 15:47*).

The Apostle Paul urges us to present our bodies as *a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God*... (*Romans 12:1*).

God was merciful and lenient with the chosen people when they erred, remembering that *they are flesh, a spirit that is passing and not returning* (*Psalms 77:39*).

To place greater value on the body is risky, since *flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God* (*1 Corinthians 15:50*).

A person's spirit is the lamp of the Lord; it searches throughout one's innermost being

(Proverbs 20:27).

In the first days of creation God said: *Let...* When he made man he said: *Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness* (Genesis 1:26) and *breathed in his face the breath of life; and man became a living soul* (Genesis 2:7).

The soul is eternal. Biological death – in the concept of Christian medicine – means separation of the soul from the body and its evolution towards eternity.

John Damascene says that the soul has reason, anger and desire.

Self-consciousness and aspiration towards the Kingdom of God are the efficient expression of the soul.

The liberty a person is endowed with by the very act of creation is also a work of the soul and it is an essential feature that determines human manifestation and all of its consequences. (St. Maximus the Confessor, P.G. 11, 1100 D-1101A)

In the moment when gametes unite God sends the soul, since the body would not be able to grow without the soul. A temporally discordant union is inconceivable since "it could not happen without corruption."

The body/soul connection also remains after death, if the soul is of a person, not simply soul (Maximus the Confessor).

In the body-soul relationship, the soul is determining. Decision is made by the soul, and the body works what it has decided.

The importance of the soul in the existential determination of the person can be also seen from the words of St. John Chrysostom quoted

by Metropolitan Nicholas of Alma-Ata and Kazakhstan: "Without the soul the body is not in the condition to do anything bad."³²

Man-person is "somebody" through the soul, not through the body.

"To separate the body from the soul only pertains to the one that connected them, but to separate the soul from the body also belongs to the one who desires virtue."³³

"The rational soul works according to nature when its desiring faculty longs for virtue, its irascible part fights for it and its rational part soars towards the contemplation of created things."³⁴

Primordial health only existed in heaven.³⁵

At death the body descends, and the person ascends (D. Stăniloae), that is, the body returns to the earth, as it was, and the soul returns to God, who gave it (*Ecclesiastes* 12:7).

Appreciation for the human being is expressed in different ways in the Holy Scripture, but it always has one sense, one very well defined significance.

In *Genesis*, before the fall, man is *master* over creation: ***Then God said, "Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness. Let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, over the birds of heaven, over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that moves on the earth"*** (*Genesis* 1:26).

³² Nicholas, Metropolitan of Alma-Ata and Kazakhstan, *The Human Soul between Illness and Healing*, Sophia Publishing, Bucharest, 2010, p.41

³³ Gabriel Bunge, *The Teaching of Evagrius Ponticus on Anger and Meekness*, Deisis Publishing, Sibiu, 1998, p.61

³⁴ G. Bunge, op.cit., p. 44 or 49

³⁵ Pavel Chirilă, Mihai Valică, *The Christian Hospital*, Christiana Publishing, Bucharest, 2004, p.5

And later the psalmist referred to the Lord Who *fashioned the hearts* of men.

From His prepared dwelling-place, He looked upon all who dwell on the earth, He who alone fashioned their hearts (Psalm 32:14-15).

The concept of Christian medicine accords a different meaning to the notion of *health* than the lay concept.

It is self-evident that health is a *state*, or better said, *a dynamic and elastic phenomenon in which the existence of both body and soul transpires.*

The health of the human being requires the fulfillment of three conditions:

1) The health of the body

- anatomical integrity;
- the functional harmony of internal organs;
- homeostasis, that is the continuous adjustment of functions, their unperceived, “automatic” correction if endogenous or exogenous aggressions and disruptions appear;
- "the peaceful" functioning of internal organs, that is, without feeling their labor;
- controlling the limbs through an act of will with limited power, but sufficient in order to maintain and balance that which enters and exits body, to avoid dangers and to dispose it towards movements for worshiping God the Creator.

2) The health of the soul

- to recognize the character of created being;
- to freely desire a relationship with God;
- to practice the virtues;
- to have the consciousness of the soul's eternity;
- to have hope of the resurrection in Jesus Christ, the Lord and the Savior.

3) **The harmonious body-soul relationship**

- is a temporary, short-time relationship;
- regardless of the body's condition, this relationship must show the soul's complete health, that is, its preparation for salvation.

The health of the body and the soul influence and sustain each other, but the status of a healthy man is confirmed to him by the soul's condition; paradoxically, there are situations when bodily suffering becomes an important therapeutic factor for obtaining or re-obtaining the soul; in this way the salvific meaning of suffering, of the cross is confirmed.

If a person has a bodily illness – even incurable – but the soul is pure, he searches for God and desires salvation – we identify such a person as *healthy*.

The Holy Fathers say that bodily health cannot impede a man from arriving in Gahanna and it is not sufficient for obtaining the Kingdom.

Integral, ideal health, is the state of perfect harmony of creatures in heaven, when man did not feel any suffering, having complete

communion with God the Creator and chance for eternal life through his obedience to Him.

The prototype of complete health was lost during the fall of our first parents (*Genesis* 3:16).

Health is at the same time a special spiritual state, which imperatively requests through an inner urge to thank God in each moment that you are healthy.

Man aspires to the state of perfect health working out his own salvation on his way towards the Kingdom. The state of the soul is decisive in this activity, because the body is either curable or incurable, yet the soul is definitely curable at any moment.

The World Health Organization and the academic (lay) schools of medicine in general define health as "a state of complete physical, mental and social well-being and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity."³⁶

The criteria used by the lay medical concept in order to define health are expressed as follows:

- good functional condition;
- the organism's capacity to adapt;
- the individual faculty to be creative;

The definition in the medical treatises continues with the presentation of the factors that influence the state of health: biological, ambient, behavioral, health services.

As we can see, the lay definition is an atheistic definition, since in it the relationship to God is absent as well as the relationship between

³⁶ D. Enăchescu, Gr. Mihai Marcu, *Health and Sanitary Management*, All Publishing, Bucharest, 1998, p.5

body and soul, and from the factors that influence the condition of health the spiritual causes of illness are completely absent.

In the writings of the Apostolic Fathers, the notion of health cannot be separated from the Creator, the Holy Trinity, from grace:

– the wish to obtain health "in God the Father and in Jesus Christ, our common hope"³⁷

– the wish for health "in union with God, having an undivided spirit, which is Jesus Christ"³⁸

– the wish for health "in Jesus Christ"³⁹

– the wish for health "until the end, in the patience of Jesus Christ"⁴⁰

– the wish for health "in Christ Jesus, our common hope"⁴¹

– the wish for health "in the power of the Spirit"⁴²

– the wish for health "in the grace of God"⁴³

The condition of health is not an exclusive good of the individual; it also has the community meaning, the patrimony of community; by virtue of the quality of being healthy it is my duty to sustain the social dimension of existence, to be of use to those who have lost the condition of health.

Execution of righteousness is a sign of complete health:

...the souls of the righteous are in the hand of God, and no torture will ever touch them (Wisdom of Solomon 3:1).

³⁷ *The Writings of the Apostolic Fathers*, BMIROCPH, Bucharest, 1995, Ignatius to the Magnesians

³⁸ *The Writings of the Apostolic Fathers*, op. cit., Ignatius to the Magnesians, XV,1

³⁹ Ibid., Ignatius to the Trillions, XIII,2

⁴⁰ Ibid., Ignatius to the Romans, X,3

⁴¹ Ibid., Ignatius to the Philadelphians, XI,2

⁴² Ibid., Ignatius to the Smyrnaeans, XIII,1

⁴³ Ibid., Ignatius to the Smyrnaeans, XIII,2

But after the fall Jesus Sirach asks himself what use man is (*Wisdom of Sirach* 18:7).

Divine providence holds creation in the palm not because man would be useful, but out of love.

Moreover, even in times of confrontation with the pagans, in periods of bloody warfare, God asks us to have a spirit of fraternity: ***And He has made from one blood every nation of men to dwell on all the face of the earth*** (*Acts* 17:26) or ***You shall not abhor an Egyptian, because you were an alien in his land*** (*Deuteronomy* 23:8).

Man has, at the same time, and antinomically, the quality of God's son and slave.

...as the eyes of servants look to the hands of their masters... So our eyes look to the Lord our God until He shall have compassion on us (*Psalms* 122:2).

Faith in Jesus Christ however brings about the quality of son: ***For you are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus*** (*Galatians* 3:26).

Man's fall provoked in his being a battle of contraries between *the inner man* and *his members* – a battle that became acerbic in the New Testament era: ***For I delight in the law of God according to the inward man. But I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members*** (*Romans* 7:22-23).

The Christian's battle is to change his condition of slave: ***...having been set free from sin, and having become slaves of God, you have your fruit to holiness, and the end, everlasting life*** (*Romans* 6:22).

This is what it means – according to the Apostle Paul – to be the *servant* of God, that is, to have the majestic stature of the human person

and the certainty of salvation: ...*in all things we commend ourselves as ministers of God:*

- *in much patience;*
- *in tribulations;*
- *in needs;*
- *in distresses;*
- *in stripes;*
- *in imprisonments;*
- *in tumults;*
- *in labors;*
- *in sleeplessness;*
- *in fastings;*
- *by purity;*
- *by knowledge;*
- *by longsuffering;*
- *by kindness;*
- *by the Holy Spirit;*
- *by sincere love;*
- *by the word of truth;*
- *by the power of God;*
- *by the armor of righteousness on the right hand and on the left;*
- *by honor and dishonor;*
- *by evil report and good report;*
- *as deceivers, and yet true;*
- *as unknown, and yet well known;*
- *as dying, and behold we live;*

- *as chastened, and yet not killed;*
- *as sorrowful, yet always rejoicing;*
- *as poor, yet making many rich;*
- *as having nothing, and yet possessing all things* (2 Corinthians 6:4-10).

Anthropologically speaking, the body cannot be the valuable criterion for judgment and differentiation, but at the most the power to subject it to asceticism to the extent that it represents the detachment from "this world" and the healing of addiction to material values: ***For there is no distinction between Jew and Greek, for the same Lord over all...*** (Romans 10:12).

Some of the verses show the absolute limits of the body when it has to do with manipulating it only through human intention: ***Which of you by worrying can add one cubit to his stature?*** (Matthew 6:27). And in a different part: ***But the very hairs of your head are all numbered*** (Matthew 10:30).

Before the Lord no one is pure, without stain; all people are sinners: ***How then can man be righteous before God? Or how can he be pure who is born of a woman?*** (Job 25:4).

But in the salvific sense of the New Testament we learn that ***...the inward man is being renewed day by day*** (2 Corinthians 4:16).

There is something great about the earthly existence of man: ***our days on earth are a shadow*** (Job 8:9). But in this finite shortness of existence eternity can be conquered, that is healing, that is salvation: ***...lay hold on eternal life, to which you were also called...*** (1 Timothy 6:12).

In the Old Testament the genetic succession and membership in the same tribe were important: ***These sought their listing among those who were registered by genealogy, but they were not found; therefore they were excluded from the priesthood...*** (1 Ezra 2:62). When David headed towards the Philistine, King Saul asked ***whose son*** he was (1 Kings 17:56). And when Hiel built Jericho, he laid the foundation on Abiram's grave, his firstborn, and set up the gates on Segub's grave, his youngest son, according to the word of the Lord (1 Kings 16:34).

In the New Testament this succession extends and works outside of the body, since the Apostle Paul names Timothy ***a true son in the faith*** (1 Timothy 1:2), and Titus ***a true son in our common faith*** (Titus 1:4).

Faith in Jesus Christ places the human person outside of the world. Christians are in the world, but they are no longer of the world: ***I have given them Your word; and the world has hated them because they are not of the world, just as I am not of the world*** (John 17:14).

Moreover, they have received power ***to become children of God*** (John 1:12). This power exists potentially in every person baptized in the name of the Savior and remains for his liberty to decide, since, if Christ is the vine and we are the branches, God casts off those that bear no fruit, and ***every branch that bears fruit He prunes, that it may bear more fruit*** (John 15:2).

The notion of *chosen vessel* appears in the New Testament in reference to the Apostle Paul. Yet this meaning is connected to the greatness of the sudden discovery of God on the Damascus Road and to suffering for His name (Acts 9:1-16).

We also meet the notion of the *chosen vessel* in the Old Testament when the Lord intervenes with great power in order to use certain people for fulfilling His plans: *Before I formed you in the womb, I knew you, and before you were born, I sanctified you. I established you a prophet to the nations* (Jeremiah 1:5).

In the Apostle Paul's letter to the Galatians *the works of the flesh* are shown:

- *adultery;*
- *fornication;*
- *uncleanness;*
- *lewdness;*
- *idolatry;*
- *sorcery;*
- *hatred;*
- *contentions;*
- *jealousies;*
- *outbursts of wrath;*
- *selfish ambitions;*
- *dissensions;*
- *heresies;*
- *envy;*
- *murders;*
- *drunkenness;*
- *revelries, and the like.*

...those who practice such things will not inherit the kingdom of God (Galatians 5:19-21).

Our formation and our coming into the world has meaning: “we received thought to know Christ, desire to run towards Him, we have memory to bear Him.”⁴⁴

Man's true revelation and knowledge will take place at his end. This biblical affirmation is important for diagnostic evaluation. Probably it is then that the time comes when the human manifestation can no longer be concealed: *...in his end his deeds shall be discovered* (*Jesus Sirach* 11:27).

The Creator – created being relationship is perfected. The Creator makes man according to His image, endowed with absolute liberty. God is reflected in the human person. He says to Jerusalem: *your beauty... was perfect because of My splendor* (*Ezekiel* 16:14).

Your hands made and fashioned me (*Psalms* 118:73) and *I will praise You, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made* (*Psalms* 139:14) – are verses that found the consciousness of created being.

Jacob already realized in the first three chapters of Genesis the pain of the fall "to the earth" since in answer to Pharaoh's question "How old are you?" he answers *The days of the years of my sojourn are...* (*Genesis* 47:9).

That is why the second birth "from above" was imperative, since *Whoever has been born of God... cannot sin* (*1 John* 3:9).

Christians have a special aureole according to the text from the *Ephesians*. In the bosom of the Holy Trinity the decision to be chosen into Him was made *before the foundation of the world* (*Ephesians* 1:4).

There are many passages in the New Testament to express the fact that Jesus came into the world and the world did not know Him.

⁴⁴ H. Vlachos, *Orthodox Psychotherapy (sequel and debates)*, op. cit., p.15

The Savior's incarnation through human nature is that which makes the healing of the human being possible. Through the human nature assumed by Christ, He heals all of humanity, because it organically touches the divine nature.

The entrance into the ecclesial space through faith and the Holy Mysteries makes the Christian unknown to the world, and he lives in this paradox in the world, knowing the world but not being known by it. ***Therefore the world does not know us, because it did not know Him (1 John 3:1).***

Through baptism the Christian's body becomes Christ's member (*1 Corinthians 6:15*). There is a consubstantiation of bodies "in Christ" which makes them suffer or rejoice together in ecclesial space and time: ***And if one member suffers, all the members suffer with it; or if one member is honored, all the members rejoice with it (1 Corinthians 12:26).***

The heart is the organ in which salvation or perdition is wrought in man. It is mentioned 739 times in the Old Testament and 169 times in the New Testament. The Holy Fathers were greatly occupied with the theme of the heart. They say that everything *exists* in the heart, everything *comes* into the heart, everything *comes from* the heart and everything *passes through* the heart. Spiritual health, that is, *a heart without passions* sustains *bodily life (Proverbs 14:31)*. It is a method through which the entire body is healed as the heart is purified of passions.

This verse explains the phenomenon reversely: the multiplication and aggravation of bodily illnesses during periods of great moral fall. The pathology of the fall, which installed itself in the human being after the temptation in Eden, is a pathology of the heart, since then the mind

departed from the heart and the man began to be at enmity with himself and separated from the Creator.

Now, in this era of the fall, the heart faithfully follows the mind, which actually represents a risk, since the mind can easily slip, through imagination, wrath and the lustful aspect: ***For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also*** (Luke 12:34).

True and profound knowledge of man is acquired by searching the heart: ... ***man looks at the outward appearance, but the Lord sees into the heart*** (1 Kingdoms 16:7). The heart reflects its condition on man's face: ***A merry heart makes a cheerful countenance*** (Proverbs 15:13). Sadness of the heart affects the *spirit's courage*, which means that the very *work* of man in life, the very human manifestation in the world is affected by what is in the heart (Proverbs 15:13).

There is a power of the word that rules that of the heart: ***Four types of things appear as a clue to a change of heart: good and evil, life and death; and it is the tongue that continually rules them*** (Wisdom of Sirach 37:17-18).

Attentively analyzing the text of Ecclesiasticus, we understand that there are several types of joy, but ...***there is no gladness above joy of heart*** (Wisdom of Sirach 30:16). In the same way, there is no wound like ***a wound of the heart*** (Wisdom of Sirach 25:12).

Man communicates with God through the heart. To be alive in the heart means in fact to be searching for the Lord: ***My heart said to You, "Your face, Lord, I will seek"*** (Psalm 27:8) and ...***those who seek Him will praise the Lord. Let your heart live forever!*** (Psalm 22:26).

The heart has impenetrable depths, that is, it is the seat of the spiritual subconscious. ***You cannot plumb the depths of the heart of***

man, nor grasp the thoughts of his mind (Judith 8:14). Perhaps that is why Jeremiah says that *The heart is deceitful above all things...* and only the Lord *can know it* (Jeremiah 17:9-10).

Man's healing must begin with healing of the heart, for *out of the heart of men proceed evil thoughts, adulteries, fornications, murders, thefts, covetousness, wickedness, deceit, lewdness, an evil eye, blasphemy, pride, foolishness* (Mark 7:21-22).

David speaks about the heart as being something else and even more than the body: *My heart and my flesh greatly rejoice in the living God* (Psalm 83:2). If we hide His words in our hearts (Psalm 118:11), He *will shine... in our hearts* (2 Corinthians 4:6).

The seat of the spiritual heart is the bodily heart itself. Satan attacked Ananias, lying to the Holy Spirit (Acts 5:3) and to Judas, *having already put it into the heart of Judas Iscariot... to betray Him* (John 13:2).

The human person is identified with the heart, the heart being the spiritual place where God reveals Himself to man.⁴⁵

Metropolitan Hierotheos writes that "divine grace abides in the center of the heart, while the devil works outside of it."⁴⁶

All people have body and soul – human being's amazing composition. But Christians especially place a great value on the soul's movements and operation: *For what will it profit a man if he gains the whole world, and loses his own soul?* (Mark 8:36). Spiritual healing is not difficult, because man bears in himself the intention towards

⁴⁵ H. Vlachos, *Orthodox Psychotherapy*, op. cit., pp.186-187

⁴⁶ Ibid., p. 189

imperishability with which the Lord created him. *For God created man for immortality* (Wisdom of Solomon 2:23).

Thirst for God is natural for the psalmist, as for the Christian: *My soul thirsts for the living God* (Psalm 41:3).

In the *Psalm 138* we understand that the soul is capable of both knowledge and self-knowledge: *I will give thanks to You, for I am fearfully and wondrously made; marvelous are Your works, and my soul knows this very well* (Psalm 138:14).

Anti-Christian persecution that has been taking place throughout the centuries is in fact a persecution against the soul. That is why if the soul is lost in this world (that is, if it is forcefully separated from the body), it will evolve as saved into eternity: *...he who loses his life for My sake will find it* (Matthew 10:39).

The faith that our soul is always in God's hand has a bracing, preventive effect, generating humility, holy fear, hope and power: *My soul is always in Your hands* (Psalm 118:109).

The life of the soul is the sum of operations – the psychic energy of man (thought, sentiment, desire, memory, imagination, the unconscious.⁴⁷ This is the field for diagnostics and therapy of the Christian psychology founded on biblical texts, the writings of the Holy Fathers and the living experience of the Church.

The Christian anthropological model with the maximum chance for salvation that has to be followed is **the child**: *...for of such is the Kingdom of God* (Mark 10:14).

There is an amazing antinomy that expresses an anthropological reality with spiritual, moral and dogmatic consequences: the existence

⁴⁷ V. Thermos, *Man in Sight! Orthodox Psychology and Psychiatry*, op. cit., p.42

and movement of the human being between liberty and membership: *therefore glorify God in your body and in your spirit, which are God's* (1 Corinthians 6:20).

Christian anthropology accords great importance to the notion of **person**. Hierotheos Vlachos, taking up the texts of the Holy Fathers, teaches us that the person is an "essence with specific characteristics."⁴⁸ He is identified with the hypostasis.

The Christian psychotherapist investigates the human soul, its experiences and its apparent manifestations.

Saint John Chrysostom speaks of the diversity and the dynamic quality and interpenetrating levels of virtue, sin and asceticism: pure and righteous in some, stained and unrighteous in others, one "merciful but without discernment, another with discernment but unmerciful."

The spiritual therapist remembers St. Basil the Great who wrote that "it is impossible to contain in a single law all those who practice piety."⁴⁹

The identity of my own person is certified by consciousness, that is, by "the certainty I have that it exists and that I am that which exists."⁵⁰

A person is an ecclesial hypostasis since in the Church he reflects his fundamental attributes: liberty, love, the decision to progress towards God.

At the same time the person is perfected in ecclesial space, in communion with his peers, since "the human person does not know solitude."⁵¹

⁴⁸ Hierotheos, Metropolitan of Nafpaktos, *The Person in the Orthodox Tradition*, Bunavestire Publishing, Bacău, 2002, p.64

⁴⁹ V. Themos, *Man in Sight! Orthodox Psychology and Psychiatry*, op. cit., *Man in Sight! Orthodox Psychology and Psychiatry*, op. cit., p.38

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, p.77

We can also speak about *the person's becoming*, that is, man's evolution from image to likeness. The beginning of this process is obligatorily the desire and exercise of knowing himself.

The human person has his beginning in erotic love – if he were to remain as merely the consequence of bodily birth, he would have a tragic destiny.

Knowledge of self through asceticism and prayer and the knowledge of others through love develop and fulfill a person as a hypostasis capable of evolving from image to likeness.

Each man that is born has to fight with the fall from Eden. *Now I also am a mortal, the same as all men, and earthborn, a descendant of the first-formed man... When I was born, I breathed the common air, then fell upon the earth the same as all; and as my first sound, I cried like everyone else* (Wisdom of Solomon 7:1-3). This cry of the first sound itself evokes the fall of the forefathers.

Man evolves from *my first sound*, which is *my cry*, to *rejoice always* and to *the hope of resurrection*. Man is assisted to continue to ascend: "God descends through His energies and operations in the world, which stimulates on man's behalf that desire for ascension, for raising..."⁵²

Evagrius states that perfection exists in each person in a potential manner, that ancestral sin did not succeed in destroying this potentiality. This is because creation was perfect, brought into existence by the God

⁵¹ Ibid., p.82

⁵² Ioan C. Teșu, *The Theology of Trials*, Christiana Publishing, Bucharest, 1998, p.19.

of perfection. That is why there is a real chance for healing in each person and it can be efficiently activated in ecclesial space.⁵³

When we help man to be healed we are treating in fact the person – "God's true part inside each of our neighbors."

When the Christian psychotherapist draws near to the patient he must never forget for an instant that he works in the perspective of eternal life which stands before the patient and he himself. *And this is the promise that He has given us: eternal life.* The therapist becomes infinitely more responsible, more thoughtful, more preoccupied with the patient's chance. He becomes aware that investigating the soul, which is immortal, he has the opportunity offered by God to investigate it with the same piety with which he investigates eternity.

IV. The Psychological Processes Mentioned in the Holy Scripture

*So the Lord God called Adam and said to him,
"Adam, where are you?" He replied,
"I heard Your voice as You were walking
in the garden, and I was afraid..."*

(Genesis 3:9-10)

Larousse defines the psychological process as "the ensemble of events carried out in time, considered unitary and organized."⁵⁴ The same dictionary gives other definitions as well: "The elementary unity of mental functioning, which according to a model is susceptible to being

⁵³ Patriarch Iustin, *Evagrius of Pontus*, op. cit., pp.127-128

⁵⁴ Larousse, *The Great Dictionary of Psychology*, Trei Publishing, Bucharest, 2006, p.931

associated with others, in order to give birth to unity of superior order"⁵⁵; "The way in which the mental system functions."⁵⁶ The authors also give examples of psychological processes: "the process of development," "the process of perception," "the process of understanding."⁵⁷

The Cartier Dictionary says that "the emotional process is a psychological process through which man's attitude towards reality's objects and phenomena is reflected."⁵⁸

We prefer to use the term *psychological process* with a more general sense for all of the interior emotional, sensory, rational and behavioral states which the patient or the diagnostician can identify within clear parameters and can recognize them as identical if they repeat.

The Holy Scripture abounds with references about the psychological, physiological and pathological processes.

Love

The New Testament is a testimony of love. ***God is love (1 John 4:8).***

God's love is "like a gift and like parents' call to their children."⁵⁹

In the love for God – ***with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind*** – and for your neighbor – ***as yourself – all the Law and the Prophets*** are contained (*Matthew 22:37-40*).

⁵⁵ Ibid.

⁵⁶ Ibid.

⁵⁷ Ibid.

⁵⁸ Encyclopedic Dictionary, Cartier Publishing, Bucharest, 2003, p.737

⁵⁹ Ioan Mircea, *Dictionary of the New Testament*, BMIROCPH, Bucharest, 1984, p.121.

To those who believe in Jesus Christ, God shares His love through *the Holy Spirit* (Romans 5:5).

Love is difficult to define; we can more readily define it through its effects:

- the disposition for sacrifice;
- a fire burning evil effects and thoughts;
- the inheritance of eternal life (Luke 10:28);
- goodwill (1 Corinthians 13:4);
- humility (1 Corinthians 13:4);
- the joy of the truth (1 Corinthians 13:6);
- generosity;
- suffering, patience (1 Corinthians 13:7);
- covering a multitude of sins (1 Peter 4:8).

The perfect Christian loves all people to the maximal extent.

The true Christian also loves his enemies (Luke 6:35). This is the superlative of the Christian faith.

The therapist loves all of the patients. If he does not love them, he cannot help them.

Love is eternal, it *never fails* (1 Corinthians 13:8). God addresses through Jeremiah the *virgin of Israel: I have loved you with an everlasting love* (Jeremiah 31:3-4).

Love has a redeeming effect, since *Love has been perfected among us in this: that we may have boldness in the Day of Judgment...* (1 John 4:17).

If we believe that God loved us first – and sacrificed Himself for us – then we also love Him (1 John 4:19).

Love is greater than gnosis, since *Knowledge puffs up, but love edifies* (1 Corinthians 8:1).

The Holy Apostle Paul says that love is a path that surpasses all (1 Corinthians 12:31). Let us understand from this that *to know* and *to act* can be beneficial or can attain their ideal through the path called love.

If somebody loves God he is known by Him, that is, God investigates him, and if He investigates him, He defends him, teaches him, inspires him, helps him, urges him, calls him...

Love is a hard rock which the truth comes up against. We have the right and the duty to speak *the truth*, but only *in love* (Ephesians 4:15).

Truth without love kills.

The Gospel speaks of two measures (steps) of love towards our neighbor:

I) *as yourself* (Mark 12:31)

II) *A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another as I have loved you* (John 13:34)

Our love for God and for people is not a theoretical or platonic norm. It has a precise content, it is founded on effort, on labor that lasts as long as our life... *This is love that we walk according to His commandments* (1 John 1:6), since there is also *a labor of love* (1 Thessalonians 1:3) that is, to love *in deed and in truth* (1 John 3:18).

The Savior's love is the victory: *For I am persuaded that neither death nor life, nor angels nor principalities nor powers, nor things present nor things to come, nor height nor depth, nor any other created thing, shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord* (Romans 8:38-39).

The biblical and patristic basis speaks about three kinds of love:

Love of self or so-called spiritual philautia. It excludes egotistical and passionate love of self which is profoundly anchored in the body. Love of self means love for the image of God in us, it means transparent openness to His uncreated energies,⁶⁰ it means at the same time care and effort to purify ourselves of sins, to surrender ourselves to divine providence.

Love of neighbor is the "love of all people without any distinction,"⁶¹ of family members, of Christians, of pagans, of heretics, of atheists, of enemies.

We learn love for all people from God, Who loves the entire race of man and all of creation.

Jean-Claude Larchet quotes Maximus the Confessor: "the friends of this world neither love all nor are they loved by all"; Christ's friends "preserve love unabated to the end."⁶²

Love for neighbor also consists of care not to do to anyone something that you yourself hate (*Tobit* 4:15).

To love your neighbor means to follow God in the Trinity, as much as man can. To imitate the Lord is a sufficient motive for us to love our peers.

The love that is poured out upon all our peers should be born and traverse God's love for them, that is, we must love them in His name.

"Love is fundamentally *one* according to its nature, origin and final goal."⁶³

⁶⁰ J.-C. Larchet, *The Therapy of Spiritual Illnesses*, op. cit., p.606

⁶¹ Ibid., p.607

⁶² Ibid., p.608

⁶³ J.-C. Larchet, op. cit., p.614

The capacity to love springs forth from God's image, it is incorruptible in its essence; even when due to our fall it does not become manifest, potentially it exists and we owe it to God.

Love of God: You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind (Matthew 22:37).

Love of God is a power that moves the entire being and transfigures the human person. It sheds light on all of the virtues.

Just as the passions distance man from God, dispassion leaves room to work progress for love of God.

Love of God draws man closer to his first condition, the "original health"⁶⁴ when love was natural.

Love of God and people has a therapeutic effect upon us and upon our peers. That is why the Apostle Paul cries out with strength: ***Pursue love (1 Corinthians 14:1).***

Joy

This is the sentiment that accompanies and dominates Christian's life. In the Epistles we frequently find the urge "Rejoice!" – it is almost like a command on the lips of the Holy Apostles.

The faithful man – as opposed to the atheist or pagan – has profound motivation to experience continuous joy:

- the revelation of faith: ***I inherited Your testimonies forever, for these are the exceeding joy of my heart. (Psalm 118:111);***

⁶⁴ Ibid., p.522

- there is a kind of joy experienced together with the holy fear in God's service, which the psalmist addresses *the emperors* that *judge the world: Serve the Lord with fear and rejoice in Him with trembling* (Psalm 2:11).

Joy has a therapeutic effect and this effect must be used by the healer. Of course, it concerns *the joy of the heart: A cheerful heart makes a man healthy...* (Proverbs 17:24).

The motive for the sentiment of joy of a nation or community has significance for the respective people: Nehemiah was asked by the King Artaxerxes why he had a sad face. Nehemiah answered, *Why should my face not be said, when the city, the home of the tombs of my fathers, lies waste, and its gates destroyed by fire?* (Nehemiah 2:3). And after Jerusalem was rebuilt and the New Testament was sealed, ...*God had made them rejoice with great joy; the women and the children also rejoiced, so that the joy of Jerusalem was heard afar off.* (Nehemiah 12:40). The occasion for joy was the rebuilding of the holy city, the rebuilding of the organic connection with the tombs of their forefathers.

The unique God of Israel is not like the gods of the pagans (that are nothing). The God of Israel is the God of power and joy: *Glory and praise are before Him; strength and rejoicing are in His place* (1 Chronicles 16:26).

The discovery of His words generates great joy: *I shall greatly rejoice in Your teachings, like one finding great spoil* (Psalm 118:162).

Sadness could be cast out from the heart if man recognized and believed in the Lord's judgments: they *are right, rejoicing the heart* (Psalm 18:9).

David gave a commandment and a strong urge: *Serve the Lord with gladness; come before Him with great joy (Psalm 99:1)*. We find the explanation and motivation a few verses lower: *His mercy is everlasting, and His truth is from generation to generation (Psalm 99:5)*.

Judaism and Christianity are, in their essence, optimistic religions. The discovery of unique God, of the Holy Trinity, of the Savior's sacrifice, of the truth and mercy that flow forth from the Holy Trinity and pour out continuously in humanity is an action that generates uncontrollable joy, which contains in it the certitude of blessed evolution towards the bosom of the holy Trinity, the certitude of healing.

The first word that the Savior uttered after the resurrection was *Rejoice!* (*Matthew 28:9*).

And after He blessed the apostles and ascended into heaven they returned to Jerusalem *with great joy (Luke 24:52)*.

The New Testament could be named "the good news" and "the testament of joy" for the resurrection is an occasion for continuous joy:

– *Rejoice with me, for I have found my sheep which was lost!* (*Luke 15:6*);

– Zacchaeus the tax collector *received Him joyfully (Luke 19:6)*;

– *Rejoice with those who rejoice (Romans 12:15)*;

– *...rejoice, though now for a little while, if need be, you have been grieved by various trials, that the genuineness of your faith... tested by fire, may be found to praise, honor, and glory...*

(*1 Peter 1: 6-7*);

– Rejoice *in hope (Romans 12:12)*.

The Apostle Paul speaks only about *joy in the Lord* that the Christian must live as his own lifestyle, as a state in which there is no place for worldly joy. The apostle's urge is insistent, as having special importance: ***Rejoice in the Lord always. Again I will say, rejoice!*** (*Philippians 4:4*).

The resurrection and faith lead to eternal joy: ***...and your joy no one will take from you*** (*John 16:22*).

The Gospel of John also speaks of the Savior's joy which He asks the Father for in prayer: ***...that they may have My joy fulfilled in themselves*** (*John 17:13*). Thus, the Savior reveals himself as a spring of joy for those who are still in the world.

The Holy Fathers speak of "joyful sadness" and "joyful mourning" – of philokalic essence, and which, paradoxically, generate joy:

- joyful mourning for experiencing repentance – as the first step of spiritual ascent
- joyful sadness for our and all people's fall and because we would like to be more quickly with the Lord.

St. Eusebius, quoted by Spiridonos Logothetis, said that "where there is joy in God, depression cannot express itself."⁶⁵

⁶⁵ Spiridonos Logothetis, *Depression and Its Healing*, Sophia Publishing, Bucharest 2001, p.104

Faith

Many biblical verses associate the notion of *faith* with that of *hope*, they cannot be separated; they are organically united and only together obtain comprehensive meaning.

Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen (Hebrews 11:1).

By faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God, so that the things which are seen were not made of things which are visible (Hebrews 11:3).

Faith in the unique God of Israel, in Jesus Christ incarnate as the Son of God and in the Holy Spirit "He who comes from the Father" as "the Spirit of Truth" – changed the history of humanity. It changed personal and collective decisions and consciousness – *...for he who comes to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him (Hebrews 11:6).*

Faith helps man to see *things not yet seen (Hebrews 11:7)*, for Noah, *moved with godly fear, prepared an ark for the saving of his household (Hebrews 11:7); Abraham obeyed when he was called to go out to the place which he would receive as an inheritance. And he went out, not knowing where he was going (Hebrews 11: 8)*; also through faith Sarah *received strength to conceive seed, and she bore a child... (Hebrews 11:11)*; Moses esteemed *the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt (Hebrews 11:26)*, and *by faith they passed through the Red Sea as by dry land (Hebrews 11: 29)*. And the Apostle Paul says about Gideon, Barak, Samson, Jephthah, David, Samuel and the prophets that *through faith [they] subdued kingdoms, worked*

righteousness, obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lions, quenched the violence of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, out of weakness were made strong, became valiant in battle, turned to flight the armies of the aliens (Hebrews 11:33-34).

In the letter to Timothy, the Apostle Paul shows how great the mystery of faith is: *God was manifested in the flesh, justified in the Spirit, seen by angels, preached among the Gentiles, believed on in the world, received up in glory (1 Timothy 3:16).*

Faith in Jesus Christ as the Son of God makes man a conqueror of the world and confers to him the status of *born of God (1 John 5:4).*

Sometimes the Lord sends material signs for strengthening the faith. It is important to see them and to understand them as such:

- Moses' rod turns into a serpent (*Exodus 4:2-3*);
- Moses' hand becomes leprous and is suddenly healed (*Exodus 4:6-7*);
- the water of the river turns into blood (*Exodus 4:9*);
- *Believe Me that I am in the Father and the Father in Me, or else believe Me for the sake of the works themselves (John 14:11)*;
- the healing of bodily illnesses, as is the case of the man born lame: *...through faith in His name, has made this man strong, whom you see and know. Yes, the faith which comes through Him has given him this perfect soundness in the presence of you all (Acts 3:16).*

The faith of man draws God's sanctifying action upon him; Jesus Sirach speaks about Moses in this way: *He sanctified him because of his faithfulness and gentleness and chose him out of all flesh. He caused him to hear His voice, then led him into the darkness and gave him the*

commandments face to face: the law of life and knowledge... (Wisdom of Sirach 45:4-5).

Faith is a virtue that works in the world, defending against enemies and dangers, and fulfilling miraculous healing: *And these signs will follow those who believe: in My name they will cast out demons; they will speak with new tongues; they will take up serpents; and if they drink anything deadly it will by no means hurt them; they will lay hands on the sick, and they will recover* (Mark 16:17-18).

Faith is not a magical action.

To work "in the Savior's name" means in essence to do His will, to fulfill His commandments, to believe in the His Resurrection, to love the world with the love that He commanded.

Faith – in order to work efficiently in the world – must be accompanied by good deeds: *For as the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is dead also* (James 2:26). And *by works faith was made perfect* (James 2:22).

Through the words of John the Evangelist, the Savior reveals to us in essence God's work *...that you believe in Him whom He sent* (John 6:29). Whoever refuses to believe in Christ, in fact rejects *God's work*.

To believe also means to be *appointed to eternal life* (Acts 13:48).

The ideal of Christian life is *repentance toward God and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ* (Acts 20:21).

Lazarus's resurrection is marked by the Savior's words: *Did I not say to you that if you would believe you would see the glory of God?* (John 11:40).

It is a time and place where the soul that believes ascends, since *the end of your faith is the salvation of your souls* (1 Peter 1:9)

Faith in Jesus cannot be conceived without faith in His resurrection: ***When they saw Him, they worshiped Him; but some doubted*** (Matthew 28:17).

Faith is eternal: what is from the earth returns to the earth, what is from the water returns to water, ***Every bribe and wrongdoing will be blotted out, but faithfulness shall stand forever*** (Wisdom of Sirach 40:12).

In the world are always ***unreasonable and wicked men; for not all have faith*** (2 Thessalonians 3:2).

The benefits of faith:

- ***the unbelieving husband is sanctified by the wife, and the unbelieving wife is sanctified by the husband*** (1 Corinthians 7:14).
- all things are possible to him who believes (Mark 9:23)
- salvation (Mark 10:52)
- obtaining the Spirit (Galatians 3:2-5)
- the forgiveness of sins (Luke 5:20)
- healing (Matthew 8:13)
- the Lord's blessing (Wisdom of Sirach 11:24)
- the forgiveness of sins (Mark 2:5)
- the Lord reveals Himself to those who have faith in Him (Wisdom of Solomon 1:2).

Exhortations to faith:

- ***...above all, taking the shield of faith with which you will be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked one*** (Ephesians 6:16);

- ...*that you stand fast in one spirit, with one mind striving together for the faith of the Gospel* (Philippians 1:27);
- *Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and you will be saved, you and your household* (Acts 16:31);
- *you believe in God, believe also in Me* (John 14:1);
- *Believe in Him and He will help you* (Wisdom of Sirach 2:6);
- *Be faithful until death, and I will give you the crown of life* (Revelation 2:10);
- ...*you may wage the good warfare, having faith and a good conscience* (1 Timothy 1:18-19);
- *Do not be afraid; only believe* (Mark 5:36).

The collective prayer of the apostles was for the growth of faith. When the Savior spoke to them about folly and forgiveness, they felt that they needed great faith and they asked this also of Him, pointing their own faith towards its very source: *And the apostles said to the Lord, “Increase our faith”* (Luke 17:5).

There are *many levels*⁶⁶ of faith between “awakening to faith” and “perfect faith”.

It is sustained and in turn sustains man's will and desire to draw near to God.

⁶⁶ J.-C. Larchet, *The Therapy of Spiritual Illnesses*, op. cit., pp.283-288

Movement towards God through faith eases and perfects the process of knowledge, man's soul opens itself up towards acts of salvation and man rediscovers his liberty.⁶⁷

Faith in Jesus Christ the Lord helps man to make certain decisions and only those decisions that have an organic connection with the chance and hope for salvation, just as faith helps him to never make those decisions that would put his salvation at risk.

Conscience

"Is a complex psychological process that contains in itself the reflection or intuition of the truth that the human person exists; the notion also has a powerful moral sense that distinguishes bad from good and of moral judgment that determines man to avoid evil, to regret it, to repair it and to search for good."⁶⁸

In biblical verses the notion sometimes appears expressed through the word "conscience", other times through the word "thought", and other times through "the accusation of the soul."

– *Blessed is he whose soul does not condemn him...* (Wisdom of Sirach 14: 2).

– *Men and brethren, I have lived in all good conscience before God until this day* (Acts 23:1).

In this case the “good thought” is a *pure conscience*.

⁶⁷ Ibid.

⁶⁸ DEX, Univers Enciclopedic, Bucharest, 1998, p.217

– Conscience reflects the sense of moral power in relation to both God and man: ***This being so, I myself always strive to have a conscience without offense toward God and men*** (Acts 24:16).

– Conscience is a spiritual manifestation older than the revelation of the monotheistic laws and even older than the Christian faith: ***for when Gentiles, who do not have the law, by nature do the things in the law, these, although not having the law, are a law to themselves, who show the work of the law written in their hearts, their conscience also bearing witness, and between themselves their thoughts accusing or else excusing them*** (Romans 2:14-15).

– If through our behavior we wound the weak conscience of our brothers, we sin before Christ (*1 Corinthians* 8:12).

– If we are called by the unfaithful, we must eat whatever, asking "no questions for conscience' sake." But if they tell us that the food is from sacrifices to idols, then we must refuse it "for conscience' sake" (*1 Corinthians* 10:25-28).

– A single praise is permissible for the apostle: ***the testimony of our conscience that we conducted ourselves in the world in simplicity and godly sincerity, not with fleshly wisdom but by the grace of God*** (*2 Corinthians* 1:12).

– The apostle preaches by ***manifestation of the truth commending ourselves to every man's conscience in the sight of God*** (*2 Corinthians* 4:2). In other words, the interpersonal relationship consists of the reciprocal relationship of consciences.

– The very ***purpose of the commandment is love from a pure heart, from a good conscience, and from sincere faith*** (*1 Timothy* 1:5).

- You must answer about your hope *with meekness and fear; having a good conscience, that when they defame you as evildoers, those who revile your good conduct in Christ may be ashamed (1 Peter 3:15-16).*
- Baptism is the opening of good conscience towards God (*1 Peter 3:21*).
- ...*let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience...* (*Hebrews 10:22*).
- The Eucharist ...*shall...cleanse your conscience from dead works to serve the living God (Hebrews 9:14)*. This is the most efficient therapeutic method for healing the conscience.

The conscience can be taken as a witness:

- *I tell the truth in Christ, I am not lying, my conscience also bearing me witness in the Holy Spirit (Romans 9:1).*
- We must do good to our leaders also *for the sake of conscience (Romans 13:5)*.
- The deacons must hold *the mystery of the faith with a pure conscience (1 Timothy 3:9)*
- Liars have *their own conscience seared (1 Timothy 4:2)*.
- The Apostle Paul serves God ...*with a pure conscience, as my forefathers did (2 Timothy 1:3)*.

Abba Dorotheus characterizes conscience as "something divine, as a thought that has in itself [something like] a spark, and light, and heat..."⁶⁹

A woman was caught in adultery and brought as accused before the Savior; the Savior answered the Pharisees and the scribes who accused this woman and insisted on asking Him: *He who is without sin among you, let him throw a stone at her first.... Then those who heard it, being convicted by their conscience, went out one by one...* (John 8:7-9).

This event has a triple significance:

- in the Savior's presence conscience worked like a court;
- the accusers were in the impossibility of “lying” and “lying to themselves”;
- because they were only *convicted by their conscience*, they left *one by one* and departed from the Savior; had they experienced the level of repentance as well (the next level), they would have remained there, with the Savior.

A sleepy conscience is a great fall and generates evil, both for oneself and for those nearby.

The divine spark in man, God's image in him, is his very conscience, which can never be completely corrupted or altered and before death at the latest it opens strikingly towards recuperating repentance and increasing the soul's chances for salvation.

Conscience is God's gift for man – pagan, Jew, Christian – which determines him to cry out: *Lord, I believe; help my unbelief!* (Mark 9:24).

⁶⁹ K.V. Zorin, *Arise and Walk! Steps towards Healing*, op. cit., p.184

Happiness

In biblical definitions *happiness* is a notion that contains in itself exclusively the relationship with God. ***O Israel, we are blessed, for what is pleasing to our God is known to us (Baruch 4:4).***

None of the biblical definitions of happiness refers to any worldly joy (without God).

Moreover, even troubles, rebukes and persecutions for God hide and give birth through their endurance to future (eternal) blessedness:

– ***Blessed are you, O Israel. Who is like you, a people saved by the Lord. Your Helper will defend you as with the shield; and the sword shall be your boast (Deuteronomy 33:29).***

– ***Blessed are those who love You. They will rejoice in Your peace. Blessed are the many who grieved over all Your scourges, for they will rejoice when they see all Your glory and will rejoice forever (Tobit 15-16).***

– ***But blessed is the man whom God corrects; therefore, do not reject the chastening of the Almighty (Job 5:17).*** In the book of Job we are also told that the one who does not disregard the Lord's chastisement ***Six times He shall deliver you out of troubles, and in seven no harm shall touch you (Job 5:19).***

– ***Blessed is the man who walks not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor stands in the way of sinners, nor sits in the seat of the troublesome; but his will is in the law of the Lord, and in His law he meditates day and night (Psalm 1:1-2).***

- *Blessed are all who trust in Him (Psalm 2:12).*
- *Blessed is he who understands the poor and needy (Psalm 40:1).*
- *Blessed is the man whose help is from You, O Lord (Psalm 83:6).*
- *Blessed are those who keep His judgment, and do righteousness at all times (Psalm 105:3).*
- *Blessed are the blameless in the way who walk in the law of the Lord. Blessed are those who search out His testimonies (Psalm 118:1-2).*
- *Like arrows in the hand of a warrior, so are the children of one's youth. Happy is the man who has his quiver full of them (Psalm 127:4-5).*
- *Blessed are all who fear the Lord, who walk in His ways (Psalm 127:1).*
- *But rather, blessed is the people whose God is the Lord (Psalm 143:15).*
- *He who heeds the word wisely will find good, and whoever trusts in the Lord, happy is he (Proverbs 16:20).*
- *Blessed is the man who does not slip and fall because of his mouth, and is not stung with pain caused by his sin (Wisdom of Sirach 14:1).*
- *Blessed is he whose soul does not condemn him, and who has not fallen away from his hope (Wisdom of Sirach 14:2).*
- *Blessed is a rich man who is found blameless and does not chase after gold (Wisdom of Sirach 31:8).*

- *Blessed are those who saw you and who fell asleep with love... (Wisdom of Sirach 48:11).*
- *Blessed are the poor in spirit (Matthew 5:3).*
- *Blessed are those who mourn (Matthew 5:4).*
- *Blessed are the meek (Matthew 5:5).*
- *Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness (Matthew 5:6).*
- *Blessed are the merciful (Matthew 5:7).*
- *Blessed are the pure in heart (Matthew 5:8).*
- *Blessed are the peacemakers (Matthew 5:9).*
- *Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake (Matthew 5:10).*
- *Blessed are you when they revile and persecute you, and say all kinds of evil against you falsely for My sake (Matthew 5:11).*
- *And blessed is he who is not offended because of Me (Luke 7:23).*
- *More than that, blessed are those who hear the word of God and keep it! (Luke 11:28).*
- *And remember the words of the Lord Jesus, that He said, 'It is more blessed to give than to receive' (Acts 20:35).*
- *...just as David also describes the blessedness of the man to whom God imputes righteousness apart from works (Romans 4:6).*
- *Blessed is the man who endures temptation... (James 1:12).*

– *But he who looks into the perfect law of liberty and continues in it, and is not a forgetful hearer but a doer of the work, this one will be blessed in what he does (James 1:25).*

– *But even if you should suffer for righteousness' sake, you are blessed (1 Peter 3:14).*

– *If you are reproached for the name of Christ, blessed are you, for the Spirit of glory and of God rests upon you (1 Peter 4:14).*

– *Blessed is he who reads and those who hear the words of this prophecy, and keep*

those things which are written in it; for the time is near

(Revelation 1:3).

– *'Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord from now on.'* “Yes,” says the Spirit, *“that they may rest from their labors, and their works follow them” (Revelation 14:13).*

– *Blessed is he who watches, and keeps his garments, lest he walk naked and they see his shame (Revelation 16:15).*

– *Blessed are those who wash their robes, that they may have the right to the tree of life and may go through the gates into the city (Revelation 22:14).*

Blessedness *in* God and that *from* God and that *for* God is organically and synergistically connected to present and future benefits.

– Those who do not despise the Lord's chastisement and are joyful when they are corrected, the Lord protects them from *famine, the power of the sword, the scourge of the tongue, the wild animals of the earth (Job 5:17-22).*

– The blessed man, who has not walked in the counsel of the wicked and in the way of the sinners and has not sat in the seat of scoffers, *he shall be like a tree planted by streams of waters, that produces its fruit in its season; and his leaf shall not wither, and whatever he does shall prosper (Psalm 1:3) ...Blessed is he who understands the poor and needy; the Lord will deliver him in an evil day (Psalm 40:1).*

– The man who is helped by the Lord *he purposed ascents in his heart (Psalm 83:6).*

– The man with many children *shall not be ashamed, when they speak to their enemies at the gate (Psalm 126:5).*

– Those who fear the Lord: *You shall eat the fruits of your labor; you are blessed, and it shall be well with you (Psalm 127:1-2).*

– The kingdom of heaven is for those who are poor in spirit (*Matthew 5:3*).

– Those who mourn shall be comforted (*Matthew 5:4*).

– The meek shall inherit the earth (*Matthew 5:5*).

– Those who hunger and thirst for righteousness shall be filled (*Matthew 5:6*).

– The merciful shall obtain mercy (*Matthew 5:7*).

– The pure in heart shall see God (*Matthew 5:8*).

– The peacemakers shall be called sons of God (*Matthew 5:9*).

– The kingdom of heaven is for *those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake (Matthew 5:10).*

– *...great is your reward in heaven* when they revile and persecute you (*Matthew 5:11-12*).

– The man who bears temptation will be clarified, ***he will receive the crown of life*** (*James 1:12*).

– The deeds of the dead in the Lord ***follow them*** (*Revelation 14:13*).

"You are blessed, Abba Arseny, because you mourn for yourself in this world."⁷⁰

Fear of God

The fear of God is a psychological process with lofty positive, tonic, and beneficial significance. There is nothing negative in it like the fear of men, of the unknown, or of the movements of the surrounding universe. Fear of the Lord is holy. It expresses the special care of man to not err before the Creator and the continuous joy that springs forth from divine providence – which preserves man in his being and in bodily and spiritual health.

Nehemiah speaks about ***Your servants who desire to fear Your name*** (*Nehemiah 1:11*).

Jesus Sirach says that ***There is nothing better than the fear of the Lord*** (*Wisdom of Sirach 23:27*).

The fear of the Lord ***is instruction and wisdom*** (*Proverbs 15:38*) and ***the beginning of wisdom*** (*Proverbs 9:10*).

The Apostle Paul reveals to us the fact that those who fear God are sent ***the word of this salvation*** (*Acts 13:26*).

⁷⁰ Quote from *The Sayings of the Desert Fathers*, in I. Hausherr, *Weeping and Piercing of the Heart at Eastern Fathers*, op. cit., p.9

We do not find the fear of the Lord in the New Testament motivated by harsh judgment, but rather the fear of God is born and is associated with the astonishment of the people *at His teaching* (Mark 11:18), or because *We have seen strange things today* (Luke 5:26). And the following verse from the Old Testament has the same meaning: *Those who fear the Lord will prepare their hearts and will humble their souls before Him*, saying: *We will fall into the hands of the Lord and not into the hands of men* (Wisdom of Sirach 2:17-18).

The fear of the Lord is a help towards salvation:

- *... he who fears the Lord will return to Him with his heart* (Wisdom of Sirach 21:6).
- The fear of the Lord lifts up the heart (Wisdom of Sirach 40:26).
- He who fears the Lord will do good (Wisdom of Sirach 15:1).
- *Those who fear the Lord will discover judgment, and like the light they will kindle righteous deeds* (Wisdom of Sirach 32:16).
- *By humility and the fear of the Lord are riches and honor and life* (Proverbs 22:4).
- *Who is the man who fears the Lord? He will instruct him in the way He chooses* (Psalm 24:12).

This verse reflects the liberty with which man was endowed. He is free to choose his path, but the fear of the Lord lets the Lord place His law in the very path which man himself has chosen. The multiple paths of evolution of the

human person correspond to the multiple laws of the Lord which come in assistance upon each person's path.

Here is the word that the Lord has for those who fear Him:

- *They shall be mine ...in the day that I make them My possession, and I will choose them as a man chooses his own son who serves him (Malachi 3:17).*
- *But to you who fear My name the Sun of Righteousness shall arise with healing in His wings (Malachi 3:20).* The prophecy concerning the Messiah and His coming for those who fear the Lord is clear here.
- *The Angel of the Lord shall encamp around those who fear Him, and He will deliver them (Psalm 33:8).*
- *Behold, the eyes of the Lord are on those who fear Him, on those who hope in His mercy, to deliver their souls from death and to keep them alive in famine (Psalm 32:18-19).*
- Simeon “the God bearer” *was just and devout... and the Holy Spirit was upon him (Luke 2:25).*
- *And it had been revealed to him by the Holy Spirit that he would not see death before he had seen the Lord's Christ (Luke 2:26).*
- *...no one spoke ill of her, for she feared God and was devoted to Him (Judith 8:8).*
- *...he who fears the Lord is great in all things (Judith 16:16).*
- *The fear of the Lord increases days (Proverbs 10:28).*

- *The Lord is pleased with those who fear Him...* (Psalm 146:11).
- The fear of the Lord is the condition in order to evolve towards the Promised Land (*Deuteronomy 8:6-7*).
- The fear of the Lord is organically united to hope in Him (*Psalm 113:19*).
- *The spirit of those who fear the Lord will live*, because their hope is in salvation (*Wisdom of Sirach 34:13*)
- The one who fears the Lord is greater than the great men and the powerful judge (*Wisdom of Sirach 10:24*).
- The fear of the Lord has a communal effect; the whole community benefits when this virtue is practiced by a few: *because the midwives feared God, He provided households for them* (*Exodus 1:21*).
- *The fear of the Lord leads to life...* (*Proverbs 19:23*).
- The fear of the Lord is a gift from God and guides man upon the paths of love (*Wisdom of Sirach 1:9-10*).
- We must approach the fear of the Lord with a pure heart, since otherwise what we have which is hidden will be revealed and in the midst of the assembly we will be humiliated (*Wisdom of Sirach 1:25-27*).

Both the Old Testament and the New Testament imperatively urge us towards the fear of God:

- *Nail my flesh with the fear of You...* (*Psalm 118:120*).

- *...submitting to one another in the fear of God (Ephesians 5:21).*
- *Fear God (1 Peter 2:17).*
- *Fear God and give glory to Him, for the hour of His judgment has come; and worship Him who made heaven and earth, the sea and springs of water (Revelation 14:7).*
- *You who fear the Lord:*
 - *wait for His mercy, and do not turn aside, lest you fall*
 - *believe in Him, and your reward will not fail*
 - *hope for good things and for everlasting gladness and mercy (Wisdom of Sirach 2:7-9).*

The fear of God leads man where he *will fear nothing, and he will not be cowardly, for the Lord is his hope (Wisdom of Sirach 34:14).*

The fear of the Lord is a tonic feeling, comfortable, because it awakens repentance, correction, keeping the commandments, love and – paradoxically – great courage in times of peace and persecution, or in the battle against suffering.

Thought

Thought is a complex psychological process difficult to define in all of its complexity.

A generally accepted definition, which still needs to be enriched, sounds like this: “generalized and mediated reflection of objects and phenomena and their relationships.”⁷¹

Thought is a quasi-continuous process fed and catalyzed by the sensory system, by spontaneous or willed reactivation of memory, by intentional actions.

Man thinks of “what he wants”, and the content of his thought determines the voluntary actions of verbal expressions and bodily movements, and the evolution of interpersonal relationships.

There are enough situations when man does not think of what he wants. This is the case with pathological psychological manifestations and with the court of conscience.

The mind moves:

– *against nature*, when it fights with people, considering itself always wronged. Then the mind "is scattered into creation by means of the senses";

– *according to nature*, when it does not accuse others, but "considers itself to be the cause of evil thoughts";

– *above nature*, when it is "illuminated and united with God, that is, it is freed from images, imaginations, and diabolical thoughts."⁷²

“Consider the time when you do not think of the Lord to be lost time”, says Sextus.⁷³

⁷¹ Alexandru Roșca (under the editorship of), *General Psychology*, Didactic and Pedagogical Publishing House, Bucharest, 1975

⁷² H. Vlachos, *The Illness and Healing of the Soul in the Orthodox Tradition*, op. cit., p.80

⁷³ *The Sayings of the Holy Fathers*, op. cit., p.49

The biblical verses teach us to direct our thoughts towards the Lord and His commandments, which must dominate thought temporally and spatially:

– *Affliction and trouble found me, but Your Commandments are my meditation* (Psalm 118:143).

– Man cannot hide his thoughts from his Creator: *You understand my thoughts from afar* (Psalm 138:2).

– *Woe to those who devise iniquity, and work out evil on their beds!* (Micah 2:1).

What is wrong thought? To think that

- our life is short;
- man cannot escape death;
- we have come to be as we are by chance;
- after this life we will be as if we had never been;
- the body will become ashes;
- the spirit will scatter like weightless air;
- we must feast on the good things that are here now and take advantage of creatures with all ardor of youth;
- we should leave signs of our happiness everywhere;
- we should hunt the righteous, because they hamper us.

These are the thoughts of those who have wrong thinking, who deceive themselves, *for their malice blinded them* (Wisdom of Solomon 2:21). Those who think in this way *did not know the mysteries of God, nor hope for the wages of holiness, nor judge the reward of blameless souls* (Wisdom of Solomon 2:22).

– In another section Solomon speaks about the imperfection of human thought: *For the reasoning of mortals is cowardly, and our intents are unsafe* (Wisdom of Solomon 9:14).

– From Solomon's prayers: *May God grant me to speak according to His purpose and to think worthily of what I was given* (Wisdom of Solomon 7:15).

– *Great are Your judgments and hard to explain; therefore, ignorant souls have gone astray* (Wisdom of Solomon 17:1).

– *Set your mind on the ordinances of the Lord and practice His commandments. He will strengthen your heart continually, and the desire for wisdom will be given to you* (Wisdom of Sirach 6:37).

– The therapist must listen with maximum attention, for *a man's reasoning process reveals his heart* (Wisdom of Sirach 27:6).

The entire history of the human race's salvation exposed in the Old and New Testament cannot be understood if the Lord does not open man's mind to *comprehend the Scriptures* (Luke 24:45).

Let your thought be on these:

- *whatever things are true*
- *whatever things are noble*
- *whatever things are just*
- *whatever things are pure*
- *whatever things are lovely*
- *whatever things are of good report*
- *any virtue*
- *anything praiseworthy* (Philippians 4:8).

– *Set your mind on things above, not on things on the earth*
(Colossians 3:2).

Hierotheos Vlachos has a lot of texts with references to the Holy Fathers, about the reasoning process: oftentimes *mind, heart, thought, soul, reason* are identical as meaning or as activity, as substance or as energy.⁷⁴

At every moment there is the danger for our thought to slip towards evil things. That is why *at each moment* we must exercise thought of God, discover the spiritual reasons of things, cast away our vain and impure thoughts, use ceaseless prayer in order to purify the area of our thoughts.

St. Theodore the Studite, quoted by Jean-Claude Larchet, says, "The beginning and root of the sins we do are our evil thoughts."⁷⁵

The origin of evil thoughts is double: man's inclination and demons' activity (which attacks the soul either indirectly, through the movements of the body, or directly, through memory and imagination).⁷⁶

The word "watch" often appears in the Bible and means "be attentive", that is, exercise good thought, develop thought towards the interior spiritual things, not towards the outside world.

The prayer of the heart practiced tenaciously for two millennia in Eastern Christianity means "to send the mind into the heart", "to think, to interpret and to decide with the heart."

Thoughts come over man like waves: man cannot impede them from rushing in, but can accept or reject them according to his will.

⁷⁴ H. Vlachos, *Orthodox Psychotherapy*, op. cit., pp.140-179

⁷⁵ J.-C. Larchet, *The Therapy of Spiritual Illnesses*, op. cit., p.414

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, p.424

Man is not guilty for the attack of sinful thoughts, but is lacking virtue if he receives them and feeds them.

Memory or remembrance has been given to man's nature, for him to remember God, His benefits, His sacrifice, and His love.

Forgetting God is the equivalent – according to the Scripture and the Holy Fathers – to death of the soul, and this was the cause and the beginning of the ancestral fall.

Thought of God increases the thirsts to know Him and to be known by Him.

Mental health (that is “to work the mind according to nature,” as stated by the Holy Fathers quoted by Hierotheos Vlachos) means:

- to submit to suffering (Maximus the Confessor);
- to contemplate the reasons for created things bringing them into connection with God (Maximus the Confessor);⁷⁷
- to attain the stage of dispassion, that is, raised higher than sadness and joy (Nichita Stithatos);⁷⁸
- the dispassionate man does not annihilate the passionate part of his soul, but keeps it alive and active, killing only its connection with evil things, completely turning it towards God's love (Gregory Palamas).⁷⁹
- to assume the conviction that "he is obligated to have trials for his neighbor" (Mark the Ascetic).⁸⁰

When one of the soul's powers becomes defiled and sickens, its other powers will be defiled and sickened because *the soul is unique*.

⁷⁷ H. Vlachos, *Orthodox Psychotherapy*, op. cit., p.147

⁷⁸ Ibid., p.166

⁷⁹ Ibid., p.345

⁸⁰ Ibid., p.352

That is why it is especially important for us to be occupied with the mind, and most of all, to be occupied with its movements and ascent.

Imagination

Imagination is a psychological process with powerful negative connotations in Christian psychological conception.

The Philokalic fathers fought their whole life “to not imagine” anything, considering imagination an impediment to spiritual ascent.

In his primordial condition, man only had “righteous imagination,” that is, he projected the creatures of the surrounding universe only in their spiritual sense.

The ancestral fall led to the growth of imagination without God, since the soul, "unable to remain still,"⁸¹ pointed its capacity for representation towards the created universe, especially towards the passionate sense in created things.

"Christ's mind was not dependent on imagination. This shows that imagination is a phenomenon from after the fall."⁸²

Imagination – working freely in man's mind – is "a bridge between demon and man;"⁸³ the demon penetrates much more easily where *the thought of Christ* is missing.

There are many kinds of imagination:

– visions (images) connected with bodily passions;

⁸¹ J.-C. Larchet, *The Therapy of Spiritual Illnesses*, op. cit., p.95

⁸² H. Vlachos, *Orthodox Psychotherapy (sequel and debates)*, op. cit., p.91

⁸³ *Ibid.*, p.94

– dreams or reveries connected with the real, material world, its riches that man lacks, even though he desires them greatly;

– "theological creation" – a pretentious name given to thought's tendency toward penetrating divine mysteries.⁸⁴

Hesychius the Priest, quoted by H. Vlachos, says that since visions are a bodiless phenomenon, it is the devil's territory, since he too is bodiless and acts here "as if he were at home."⁸⁵

Pathological imagination dangerously slides toward sin, and is generated and maintained by sensations and perceptions, by passions which are either newly born or embedded in our nature through pride that feeds and is fed by visions.

The consequences of morbid imagination are devastating on the spiritual level: fiery prayer is gradually replaced with transcendental meditation, humility with pride, right faith with heretical teachings.

"The prophets theologized not through imagination, but through the discovery of God in their heart."⁸⁶ This discovery comes to humble hearts, free of imagination.

The Holy Fathers call imagination "cursed imagination"⁸⁷ as because of it many monks wandered from the truth and from monastic vows. Orthodox asceticism is incompatible with the phantasms of imagination.

⁸⁴ Ibid., p.95

⁸⁵ Ibid., p.97

⁸⁶ Ibid., p.104

⁸⁷ Ibid., p.105

⁸⁸ H. Vlachos, *The Illness and Healing of the Soul in the Orthodox Tradition*, op. cit., p.75

⁸⁹ Philotheos Pharos, *The Dialogue in Orthodox Psychotherapy*, Sophia Publishing, Bucharest, 2010, p.21

Imagination is a phenomenon from after the fall.⁸⁸ It was born from “knowing the good and the evil from after the fall.”

Doubt

In the concept of Christian psychology, doubt is a profoundly negative process, sowed by demons, affecting man's personality and shaking faith in God's promises and commandments.

The Fathers draw our attention to the fact that man is permanently subjected to choosing between two decisions, with the risk of regretting that which he did not choose. An anamnestic investigation of this indecision is required, since it comes from "the pathology of thoughts and of imagination" and from the ontological reality of the battle between good angels and evil angels that are above our heads – whether or not correlated with our own decision.⁸⁹

Before the Edenic fall of our first parents the doubt sowed by the serpent worked for a few moments in Eve's heart: *Has God indeed said, ‘You shall not eat from every tree of the garden’?* (Genesis 3:1).

After the doubt born in Eve and her fear that she would die if she tasted of the tree, the serpent came with certainty, which was in fact a lie: *You shall not die by death* (Genesis 3:4).

A doubt about the truth and certainty about a lie – this made mankind fall: *Then the Lord God said, “Behold, man has become like one of Us, knowing good and evil. Now, lest he put out his hand and take also of the tree of life, and eat, and live forever” – therefore the Lord God sent him out of the garden of pleasure...* (Genesis 3:22-23).

They tasted in doubt; and by tasting, fell; fallen and being sinful, they were thrown out of paradise and became mortal, in order not to taste of the tree of eternal life and so that sin would not become eternal...

In the 13th and 14th chapters of *Numbers* an entire deployment between the demon of doubt and the certainty of faith unfolds. Some of the spies sent by Moses to the Promised Land returned and frightened the people, urging them not to advance towards Canaan:

Would we had died in the land of Egypt... Let us select a ruler and return to Egypt... (*Numbers* 13:1-34; 14:1-4).

Then Moses and Aaron fell on their faces before all the congregation of the children of Israel (*Numbers* 14:5). *Then the Lord said to Moses, "How long will these people provoke Me? How long will they not believe Me, with all the signs I performed among them?"* (*Numbers* 14:11).

Then the Lord promised that all the men who had seen His glory and had doubted tempting Him, would not enter the Promised Land, only their children, who *do not know good nor evil...* (*Numbers* 14:22-23).

Christianity desires straightforwardly that man be healed of his doubts. That is why the apostles did not throw out Thomas because of his lack of faith and accepted him in their midst for yet a week, until Thomas was healed of his doubts and cried out: *My Lord and my God!* (*John* 20:28).

The atheist has no doubts. Doubt is the devil's poisonous dart for the faithful people. He takes advantage of the tribulations that the faithful man is not capable to take upon himself or of misinterpreting dogmas.

In clinical psychology doubtful people are labeled as having personality disorders. They are greatly tortured, because they live in

proximity to the truth, but never in the truth; they touch it, but they do not possess it; they search for it and they lose it at the same time.

Godly Sorrow

The words “sorrow,” “sadness,” “despair” appear many times in the Holy Scripture. Their meaning does not always refer to “depression,” as we understand it in medical terminology. Moreover, there are two different notions:

- *sadness as depression*;
- *godly sorrow*, which is a “positive” psychological process which heals other psychological ailments.

In this chapter we will deal with the latter.

Godly sorrow gives birth to *sorrow towards repentance without regret*, which in its turn is for *salvation* (2 Corinthians 7:9-10).

In the next verse (2 Corinthians 7:11) the apostle reveals all of the benefits that godly sorrow leads to:

- diligence;
- vindication;
- vehement desire;
- fear;
- zeal;
- indignation;
- atonement;

The Holy Fathers speak about “*interior*” sorrow, united with spiritual joy and with yearning for God, and “*exterior*” sorrow, born from unsatisfactory fulfillment of passions.

Maximus the Confessor says that godly sorrow is "an un-mourning ruler of the passions."⁹⁰

The righteous Nikitas Stithatos wrote that godly sorrow "heals and brings the powers of the soul back to their normal condition."⁹¹

The practicing Christian experiences repentance as a “physiological condition”. Repentance accompanies the practicing Christian until the end of his days. If that is how it is, then "the Christian's life is a continuous blessed sorrow."⁹²

Godly sorrow is also the expression of the Edenic fall acknowledged by man's soul throughout the centuries and associated with nostalgia for heaven. This sorrow pushes man towards the exercise of repentance and confession, it convinces him that he must treat his sliding.

According to St. Barsanuphius, godly sorrow "should not be for anything of this world, but only because of sin."⁹³

Mark the Ascetic, quoted by Irénée Hausherr, recommends that "godly sorrow" should go hand-in-hand with "the pierced-soul thankfulness for all of the good things received," because, "without thankfulness weeping would be nothing more than despair and without repentance thankfulness would be nothing more than proud imagination."⁹⁴

The fact that Christ did not say "Blessed are those who have mourned," but "Blessed are those who *mourn*" shows the need for a continuous present when it comes to repentance, of true *penthos*, that is, mourning for the lost salvation."⁹⁵

⁹⁰ I. C. Teșu, *The Theology of Trials*, op. cit., p.94

⁹¹ Ibid., p.199

⁹² Simeon Kraiopoulos, *The Mystery of Suffering*, Bizantină Publishing, Bucharest, 2007, p.37

⁹³ I. Hausherr, *Weeping and Piercing of the Heart in the Eastern Fathers*, op. cit., p.36

⁹⁴ Ibid., p.38

⁹⁵ Ibid., p.42

We conclude with a quote from Logothetis: “The distance between sadness and joy is very small for the one who weeps for God... For the Orthodox Christian sadness and joy are not two different things, but a single one. This is given by the Orthodox tradition the name of *joyful sadness*.”⁹⁶

Pride

Biblical statements that define pride:

– The one who behaves *with excessive pride* is ***rash, arrogant and boastful*** (*Proverbs 21:23*).

– ***A high minded man is bold-hearted in his arrogance, and the lamp of the ungodly is sin*** (*Proverbs 21:4*).

– ***Every high-hearted man is unclean before the Lord, and... will not go unpunished*** (*Proverbs 16:2*).

– Moab is characterized as having ***greatly increased his insolence and arrogance, and exalted his heart. ...his works ...are not yet sufficient for him, to satisfy his haughtiness. Therefore, cry aloud on all sides against Moab*** (*Jeremiah 31:29-31*).

– ***For the beginning of arrogance is sin, and he who takes hold of it will pour out an abomination. Therefore the Lord will bring them***

extraordinary distress and completely destroy them (Wisdom of Sirach 10:13).

– *Mockery and abuse come back on an arrogant man, and vengeance lies in wait for him like a lion (Wisdom of Sirach 27:28).*

– *Arrogance is hateful before God and man (Wisdom of Sirach 10:7).*

– *The beginning of a man's arrogance is to depart from the Lord, for his heart withdraws from the One who created him (Wisdom of Sirach 10:12).*

⁹⁶ S. Logothetis, *Depression and Its Healing*, op. cit., p.43

– *The heart of an arrogant man is like a decoy partridge in a cage... For he lies in wait and turns good into evil, and he will attach blame to the good one chooses (Wisdom of Sirach 11:28-29).*

– *a proud man is not daunted with fear, even when of himself he hath done without counsel (Jesus Sirach 32:18).*

– *Drunkenness increases the anger of the senseless men who are ready for blows (Wisdom of Sirach 31:30).*

– Because of haughtiness of heart and great arrogance, Antiochus wanted *to sail on the land and walk on the sea...* (2 Maccabees 5:21).

– *You are those who justify yourselves before men, but God knows your hearts. For what is highly esteemed among men is an abomination in the sight of God (Luke 16:15).*

– *For if anyone thinks himself to be something, when he is nothing, he deceives himself (Galatians 6:3).*

– *If anyone teaches otherwise and does not consent to wholesome words, even the words of our Lord Jesus Christ, and to the doctrine*

which accords with godliness, he is proud, knowing nothing, but is obsessed with disputes and arguments over words, from which come envy, strife, reviling, evil suspicions, useless wranglings of men of corrupt minds and destitute of the truth, who suppose that godliness is a means of gain. From such withdraw yourself (1 Timothy 6:3-5).

– The prophet Jeremiah suffered because of the people's pride who *are unwilling to obey My words, and who walk after foreign gods*. The prophet cried out to the proud people: *Listen and give ear. Do not exalt yourselves... Now if you will not hear, your soul will weep secretly because of your insolent countenance, and your eyes will bring forth tears, for the Lord's flock is broken apart (Jeremiah 13:10-17).*

– Blasphemy and cursing stem from pride. Pride is gravely punished and divine pedagogy intervenes correctively, sometimes painfully, in order to heal it: *The arrogance of Israel shall be brought low before His face (Hosea 5:5); The pride of your heart has deceived you (Obadiah 1:3); ... arrogance brings destruction and great disorder (Tobit 4:13); If God will not withdraw his anger, the proud helpers do stoop under him (Job 9:13).*

– Emperors “full of pride” become *bound in fetters* and *held in the cords of affliction*. The Lord reveals their deeds and if they are not healed of their pride, *they shall perish by the sword, and they shall die without knowledge (Job 36:7-12).*

– *Arrogance humbles a man, but the Lord supports the humble-minded with glory (Proverbs 29:23).*

– *Arrogance goes before destruction and folly before a fall (Proverbs 16:16).*

– *Wherever arrogance enters, there also is dishonor...* (Proverbs 11:2).

– The Lord punished the King of Assyria because of his *arrogant heart* and *his haughty looks* (Isaiah 10:12).

– The day is coming when *all the arrogant and all evildoers* will burn like stubble *leaving them neither root nor branch* (Malachi 3:19).

– *The quarreling of the arrogant leads to bloodshed...* (Wisdom of Sirach 27:15).

– *...whoever exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted* (Matthew 23:12).

– *He has scattered the proud in the imagination of their hearts* (Luke 1:51).

– Praised by people, Herod died struck by an angel *because he did not give glory to God* (Acts 12:21-23).

– Babylon – the queen that has glorified herself and says in her heart that *I... will not see sorrow*, is punished with *plagues... death and mourning and famine* (Revelation 18:7-8).

– *God resists the proud, but gives grace to the humble* (1 Peter 5:5).

Healing of pride:

– *Hezekiah was humbled because of this exalted heart, he and the inhabitants of Jerusalem, but the wrath of the Lord did not come upon them in the days of Hezekiah* (2 Chronicles 32:26).

– *You will say, 'He behaved arrogantly, but he humbled himself, and He will save him who bows down with his eyes'* (Job 22:29).

– *You humbled the arrogant man as though he were wounded* (Psalm 88:11).

– The Lord rebukes the insolence of those who know His power (Wisdom of Solomon 12:17).

– The New Testament offers us a Christic solution: ...*casting down arguments and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God, bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ* (2 Corinthians 10:4-5).

There is prevention for pride:

– ...*to judge the orphan and the humble, that man may no longer increase his great boasting upon the earth* (Psalm 9:39). The great cedar – that became proud and raised itself up – was cut down and collapsed so that the other trees around him would not be proud (Ezekiel 31:3-18).

– The Apostle Paul's case: the Lord permitted a bodily illness which prevented pride (the most grave spiritual illness): *And lest I should be exalted above measure by the abundance of the revelations, a thorn in the flesh was given to me, a messenger of Satan to buffet me, lest I be exalted above measure* (2 Corinthians 12:7).

The urge not to be proud is strongly pronounced, it is even a commandment:

– *Listen and give ear. Do not exalt yourselves, for the Lord has spoken. Give glory to the Lord your God before it grows dark...* (Jeremiah 13:15).

– ...*do not sin by speaking arrogantly* (Wisdom of Sirach 32:12); *Do not brag on yourself in the presence of the king, neither stand in the places of princes* (Proverbs 25:6); ...*and when your cattle and sheep*

multiply, and your silver and gold are multiplied, and all you have is multiplied, when your heart is lifted up... remember the Lord your God... (Deuteronomy 8:13-18).

– ... *you stand by faith. Do not be haughty, but fear (Romans 11:20).*

Sextus, quoted in *The Sayings of the Holy Fathers*, doubts that the divine message could represent certainty for the proud man: "It is not a sure thing for those ruined by glory to listen about God."⁹⁷

Pride begins through someone considering himself superior to other people and ends through thinking and doing everything "as if God did not exist."

St. John Cassian made a history of this spiritual illness starting with the very fall of Satan: he believed "in the strength of his own nature" and forgot the fact that initially "he radiated light through the Creator's generosity."

This passion is especially deceptive through its nesting in the soul because there is a risk to conquer the man as he practices goodness and the virtues ever more efficiently.

The Holy Fathers believe this passion more dangerous than any other. They call it "terrifying," "great beyond measure and very cruel," "murderous," "the loss of virtue," etc.⁹⁸

Pride appears when man begins to abandon God. He departs through his own will from His protecting, humility-inspiring grace, and in this way, the demon of pride sets in as the Spirit withdraws.

In fact, when the proud man departs from communion with the heavenly powers and the saints "he withdraws into himself and closes himself in the limited world of his ego."⁹⁹ From here there is but one step

to the pathological manifestation of madness (paranoid behavior, the illness of “interpretation”, delusions of being stalked, syndrome of permanent vindication, etc).

Pride is a permanent reason for conflict with others and a source of one’s own suffering, without being able to see any therapeutic possibility. A haughty person is triumphant and sometimes aggressive towards peers; and from his interior life comes the suffering that his merits are not acknowledged, that others are guilty for all his failures.

⁹⁷ *The Sayings of the Holy Fathers*, op. cit., p.67

⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, p.215

⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, p.219

Konstantin Zorin quotes St. John Climacus: "the punishment for the haughty is his fall, his oppressor is a demon, and the sign of his being abandoned by God is losing his mind."¹⁰⁰

The same Holy Father, quoted by H. Vlachos, says that "most of the haughty do not know themselves; they imagine themselves to be passionless, barely at the moment of their death do they see their poverty."¹⁰¹

The proud, and especially those mastered by vainglory, want to "obtain fame, to be applauded and adulated both for their trials in the world, and for their successes and failures."¹⁰²

The passion of pride requires special attention and watchfulness. It is extremely deceptive, because its seed has existed since the darkness of the Edenic fall. It is like the serpent, because for a long time it justifies its actions through pseudo-rational arguments. Ignatius Brianchaninov quotes St. Macarius the Great: “the most pure and perfect man has something haughty in him” (Homily 7, chapter 4).¹⁰³

Anger

There is anger of man, and there is anger of God.

Man's anger is the manifestation of the irascible part of his conscience.

No anger is justified, because "there is no anger against one's neighbor that can be righteous."¹⁰⁴

Man's wrath *does not produce the righteousness of God* (James 1:20).

Even more, *unjust anger cannot be justified* (Wisdom of Sirach 1:19).

¹⁰⁰ K. V. Zorin, *Arise and Walk! Steps towards Healing*, op. cit., p.85

¹⁰¹ H. Vlachos, *Orthodox Psychotherapy*, op. cit., p.351

¹⁰² Nicholas, Metropolitan of Alma-Ata and Kazakhstan, *The Human Soul between Illness and Healing*, op. cit., p.87

¹⁰³ Ignatius Brianchaninov, *On Deception*, op. cit., p.110

¹⁰⁴ Nicholas, Metropolitan of Alma-Ata and Kazakhstan, *The Human Soul between Illness and Healing*, op. cit., p.67 (quoted by Ioan Cassian)

The Old Testament links the definition of anger with that of madness, when man makes decisions stretching forth his *hand with contention* (Proverbs 30:34).

According to the strength of a man, so his anger shall be; and according to his wealth, he will increase his wrath (Wisdom of Sirach 28:10).

...hardness and your impenitent heart store up anger for the Day of Judgment (Romans 2:5).

The effects of anger are disastrous:

– *For wrath destroys a foolish man, and envy slays one who is deceived (Job 5:2)*

– *...the forcing of wrath produces strife (Proverbs 30:33).*

The Lord's anger is aimed at those who obey unrighteousness:

– *...but to those who are self-seeking and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness – indignation and wrath (Romans 2:8)*

– *For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who suppress the truth in unrighteousness (Romans 1:18)*

Biblical verses also offer us a solution for healing the angry man:

– *There is prosperity for kings in patience, and a mild tongue breaks bones (Proverbs 25:17).*

– *...do not let the sun go down on your wrath (Ephesians 4:26).*

– *Do not be a companion to an angry man and do not associate with a quick-tempered friend, lest you learn his ways and receive a snare for your soul (Proverbs 22:27-28).*

– *...let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath (James 1:19).*

– *Much more then, having now been justified by His blood, we shall be saved from wrath through Him (Romans 5:9).*

Anger expresses "the hidden inclination towards self-satisfaction."¹⁰⁵ It especially dominates vain people, who always desire to impose their will.

The Holy Fathers believed this passion "always unrighteous" and disastrous on the spiritual level, since every time it manifests itself the most important Christian virtues are uprooted from the heart: "the love of God and neighbor, patience, gentleness, humble thought, mercy..."¹⁰⁶

According to the Philokalic Fathers there is blessed anger: *anger at ourselves* for our sins. If we were to practice it, then our anger would no longer hurt those around us.

St. Gregory the Great describes anger as a form of madness: "Pushed by the boldness of anger, the heart struggles, the body trembles, the tongue stutters, cheeks catch fire, eyes flare, man becomes unrecognizable even for those who know him. Someone like this speaks without knowing what he says. How is this man different from a madman?... His mind is no longer in the condition to hold its reins, because he has become complacent for foreign powers and if fury moves man's limbs making him strike, this happens because inside of him disorder has enslaved his soul, withdrawing his natural power of control."¹⁰⁷

Anger is a passion through which man risks his salvation; it has complex causes, manifestations and consequences:

– it manifests itself more in proud people, those who cannot satisfy their will, those who are very tied to material and social values of the world, those who are dominated by other passions;

– the clinical manifestation is very close to madness; it is a pathological hyperactivity with aggressive psychosomatic expressions: psychomotor agitation, complete deformation of thought, altered reasoning, impulses that have escaped the control of reason, accusatory delirium, the lack of sentiments of guilt;

¹⁰⁵ Nicholas, Metropolitan of Alma-Ata and Kazakhstan, *The Human Soul between Illness and Healing*, op. cit., p.62

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, pp.66-67

¹⁰⁷ J.-C. Larchet, *The Therapy of Spiritual Illnesses*, op. cit., p.179

– anger weakens "the virtuous aggressiveness of the soul, given to man to fight against sin";

– oftentimes fits of anger are followed by falls into depression, loss of discernment, loss of social connection, and finally by an anxious syndrome which leads man to isolation and antipathy of those who are around him.

Memory

Memory is a psychological process often invoked in the Bible under the expression "remember." Biblical verses urge us to reactivate a certain memory:

Remember the days of old, consider the years of many generations. Ask your father, and he will tell you; your elders, and they will tell you: When the Most High divided the nations, when He scattered the sons of Adam, he set the boundaries of the nations by the number of God's angels (Deuteronomy 32:7-8).

There is a command for the people of Israel, which is repeated many times in the pages of the Holy Scripture; the discovery and the beginning of monotheism must not be forgotten, but continuously remembered:

– *Moses then said to Aaron, "Take a golden pot, put one full omer of the manna in it, and lay it up before God to be kept for your*

generations” (Exodus 16:33); Only take heed to yourself and diligently guard your soul, lest you forget all the things your eyes saw, and lest they depart from your heart all the days of your life; and you shall teach them to your sons and the sons of your sons (Deuteronomy 4:9).

– Remember your Creator in the days of your youth, before the difficult days come and the years arrive when you say, "I have no will to face them" (Ecclesiastes 12:1).

– ...you must... remember the words of the Lord Jesus, that He said, "It is more blessed to give than to receive" (Acts 20:35).

– Remember my chains (Colossians 4:18).

– ...greatly desiring to see you, being mindful of your tears, that I may be filled with joy (2 Timothy 1:4).

– ...when I call to remembrance the genuine faith that is in you (2 Timothy 1:5).

– Remember the prisoners as if chained with them – those who are mistreated – since you yourselves are in the body also (Hebrews 13:3).

The triumphal entry into Jerusalem was not understood by the disciples until after His glorification. The resurrection – this truth so hard to understand – reactivated the apostle’s memory and helped them to correlate it with the Old Testament prophecies. Likewise, the descent of the Holy Spirit upon the nations made Peter say:

– Then I remembered the word of the Lord, how He said, "John indeed baptized with water, but you shall be baptized with the Holy Spirit" (Acts 11:16).

– *Remember that Jesus Christ, of the seed of David, was raised from the dead according to my gospel (2 Timothy 2:8).*

Peter, who saw the Transfiguration, announces his own end. But before that he shows the ladder of Christian virtues *to those who have obtained like precious faith with us:*

*giving all diligence
add to your faith virtue,
to virtue knowledge,
to knowledge self-control,
to self-control perseverance,
to perseverance godliness,
to godliness brotherly kindness,
and to brotherly kindness love.*

For this reason I will... remind you always of these things (2 Peter 1:5-12).

And in the verse 15, the apostle believes these to be so important for salvation that he will announce them even after his death: *Moreover I will be careful to ensure that you always have a reminder of these things after my decease (2 Peter 1:15).*

Repentance is founded on the exercise of memory:

– *Remember therefore from where you have fallen; repent and do the first works, or else I will come to you quickly and remove your lampstand from its place – unless you repent (Revelation 2:5).*

– *Watch yourself, that you do not forget the Lord your God (Deuteronomy 8:11).*

– To not forget that the land of slavery from which God has taken us, for Jews, also has a literal meaning because the Lord took them out of Egypt. For us, for Christians, it has a profound meaning, because by Egypt we understand the condition before Baptism and any fall after that: *And you shall remember you were a servant in the land of Egypt...* (*Deuteronomy 16:12*).

Memory is a psychological process that helps us to obtain salvation, if we use it well:

- we can remember the Lord;
- in our memory we can actualize the sins we performed, for repentance;
- we can remember our brothers' tears;
- we can remember those in prison.

Let us not forget that today the saints remind us from eternity and urge us to practice virtue (*2 Peter 1:15*).

Conversely, being in the other world, Abraham told the unmerciful rich man, awakening in him the memory of this world: *Son, remember that in your lifetime you received your good things...* (*Luke 16:25*).

The Holy Fathers urge us all the time to weep for our sins (that is, to remember that we have erred and to repent), but not to remember evil.

The memory of a Christian is like a river that springs from the moment and the act of creation and heads towards the Creator, transmitting each future moment into the present and each present moment into the past.

The Old Testament prayers, just as the Church's prayers, often evoke the past as a certain identity: *Again Jacob said, "O God of my*

father Abraham and God of my father Isaac, the Lord..." (Genesis 32:9).

At the gate called Beautiful, *a man lame from his mother's womb* was healed through the Apostle Peter's hand. He explained this healing to the *men of Israel: The God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, the God of our fathers, glorified His Servant Jesus, whom you delivered up and denied in the presence of Pilate... and killed the Prince of life, whom God raised from the dead, of which we are witnesses. And His name, through faith in His name, has made this man strong, whom you see and know. Yes, the faith which comes through Him has given him this perfect soundness in the presence of you all* (Acts 3:1-16).

Hope

Hope is a powerfully active condition through which the human person anchors himself in the unseen things of God: sure help in need, prevention of misfortune, certainty of resurrection, divine providence manifested as God's care for man, faith that heavenly powers help us and that the good, that is, help from God, is more powerful than the evil that takes place in the world.

– Hope is born from faith: the poor man has hope when the Lord saves him from the hand *of the crafty* and *of the cunning* (Job 5:12-16).

– For the ungodly *hope is to breathe their last* (Job 11:20).

– Hope crosses over beyond this world: *...all who hope in You... will greatly rejoice forever, for You will dwell in them* (Psalm 5:12).

– Another definition of hope: *I believe I shall see the Lord's goodness in the land of the living* (Psalm 26:13).

– Hope is experienced in the heart: *in Him my heart hoped, and I was helped* (Psalm 27:7).

– When *many who dwell round about... were gathered together against me... But as for me, I hope in You, O Lord; I said, "You are my God"* (Psalm 30:14-15).

– *In God I hope; I will not be afraid; what will man do to me?* (Psalm 55:12).

– *The Lord is pleased with those who fear Him, and with those who hope in His mercy* (Psalm 146:11).

– Fear of God is associated in a blessed way with hope, with His mercy that *will not depart from you* (Proverbs 23:17-18).

– There are two kinds of hope: of the righteous, which is *gladness*, and of the ungodly, which *perishes* (Proverbs 10:29). But more so, *when a righteous man dies, his hope does not perish*, but at the death of the ungodly it *perishes* (Proverbs 11:6).

– *He who trusts in an arrogant heart, such a man is without discernment* (Proverbs 28:28).

– But he who puts his trust in the Lord *shall be saved* (Proverbs 28:28).

– *...those who wait on God shall renew their strength... they shall run and not be weary* (Isaiah 40:31).

– *...the man who puts his trust in the Lord...shall be like a... tree alongside the waters, which will not fear when the burning heat comes... and does not cease yielding its fruit* (Jeremiah 17:3-4).

– *You are my hope in the day of doom* (Jeremiah 17:17).

- Worshiping idols affects the community’s hope in the Lord:
But we know no other god but Him; therefore we have hope He will not disregard us nor any of our nation (Judith 8:18-20).
- The unfaithful do not know *the mysteries of God, nor hope for the wages of holiness...* (Wisdom of Solomon 2:22). But more so, *the hope of the ungodly man is like dust carried by the wind... and it passes like the remembrance of a guest who stays only one day* (Wisdom of Solomon 5:14), *for the hope of an unthankful man will melt* (Wisdom of Solomon 16:29).
- It is good to move one's hopes from men to God (2 Maccabees 7:14).
- Having the first fruits of the Spirit ...*we ourselves groan within ourselves, eagerly waiting for the adoption, the redemption of our body. For we were saved in this hope...* (Romans 8:23-24).
- Christian virtues: *faith, hope, love* (1 Corinthians 13:13).
- *If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men the most pitiable* (1 Corinthians 15:19).
- To put your hope in God the living one means “to labor,” “to suffer reproach,” “to struggle” (1 Timothy 4:10).

Hope generates benefits on every level of existence:

- *...all who hope in Him shall not go wrong* (Psalm 33:23).
- *...he who trusts in the Lord will not suffer loss* (Wisdom of Sirach 32:24).
- *Blessed is the man who hopes in Him* (Psalm 33:9).

– The Lord delivers *from death...* the souls of *those who fear Him*, of *those who hope in His mercy* (*Psalm 32:18-19*).

– *...he who hopes in the Lord, mercy shall encircle him* (*Psalm 31:10*).

– The one who places his hope in Him *purifies himself* (*1 John 3:3*).

– The sons of Judah became powerful *because Judah relied on the Lord God of their fathers* (*2 Chronicles 13:18*).

Both the Old and the New Testament abound in appeals for hope:

– *Offer the sacrifice of righteousness, and hope in the Lord* (*Psalm 4:6*).

– *Reveal your way to the Lord, and hope in Him; and He will do it* (*Psalm 36:5*).

– *...be sober, and rest your hope fully upon the grace that is to be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ* (*1 Peter 1:13*).

As we can see, the apostle asks perfect hope of us when he speaks about the grace that will be given to us in eternity, at the revelation of the Lord:

– *For whatever things were written before were written for our learning, that we through the patience and comfort of the Scriptures might have hope* (*Romans 15:4*).

– *Trust in God with all your heart, and do not exalt your own wisdom* (*Proverbs 3:5*).

The Apostle Paul calls the Lord, *the God of hope*, and his salutation is: *...may the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in*

believing, that you may abound in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit (Romans 15:13).

"Sinners that hope in God's mercy are not depressed."¹⁰⁸ This is an important remark, worthy of being retained by the psychotherapist, since in this way the sentiment of guilt over mistakes does not have a pathogenic effect if the therapist succeeds in inspiring hope into the sick person's heart.

All of the biblical verses quoted present hope as an immense power, with the ability to manifest itself in historic space and time, just as in eternity.

Hope is not an abstract force, it is born and grown from faith and it bears fruit, because the meaning of the resurrection that works in it calls us to the Lord.

Jesus Messiah came to greet our hope and became incarnate fulfilling the prophecy and the hope of those who awaited Him. The moment of incarnation was the fulfillment of time and of hope, and opened a higher level: the hope of the resurrection; hope upon hope until the moment of salvation.

¹⁰⁸ Spiridonos Logothetis, *Depression and Its Healing*, op. cit., p.64

Repentance

The biblical elements that define repentance are:

– Ezra *sat down astonished* because of the sins of the people – *and sat astonished until the evening sacrifice*. But at the time of the

evening sacrifice he arose from the place of his lamentation, fell on his knees and stretched out his hands towards the Lord God, saying: *O Lord, I am too ashamed and embarrassed to lift up my face to You, for our iniquities have multiplied above our heads, and our guilt has grown up to heaven. Since the days of our fathers to this day we have been very guilty* (2 Ezra 9:3-7). As can be seen, he assumed the sins of the present generation and of past generations. Repentance has a *community* dimension, because *everyone who trembled at the words of the God of Israel assembled* (2 Ezra 9:4) around him.

– Ezra speaks in the plural, in his people's name: *For we have forsaken Your commandments* (2 Ezra 9:10). He acknowledges that the Lord is *righteous* (2 Ezra 9:15), but *we are in Your presence in our trespasses, though it is not possible to stand in Your presence because of this!* (2 Ezra 9:15).

– Before lamentation, Ezra acknowledges the Lord of Israel like this: *O Lord the God of Israel, You are righteous, for we remain, being preserved to this day.* The sentiment of guilt and feeling regretful is expressed like this: *Behold, we are in Your presence in our trespasses, though it is not possible to stand in Your presence because of this!* (2 Ezra 9:15).

– Nehemiah repented not with a conscience for his own salvation, but for the people who were *in great distress in reproach, and the wall of Jerusalem is also broken down, and its gates are burned with fire.*

Nehemiah's repentance began with weeping, sadness and then prayer (*Nehemiah* 1:2-4).

– The people acknowledge that they erred against God and Moses (the man of God) (*Numbers 9:12-24*).

– The expression *Father, I have sinned against heaven and in your sight* means recognition of errors against people and against God (*Luke 15:13-32*).

– *...the tax collector, standing afar off, would not so much as raise his eyes to*

heaven, but beat his breast, saying, "God, be merciful to me a sinner!" (*Luke 18:13*).

– When Peter realized the fulfillment of prophecy that he would betray the Savior, he *went out and wept bitterly* (*Luke 22:62*).

– Repentance is for everyone, because the Lord overlooked the times of ignorance and *He has appointed a day on which He will judge the world in righteousness...* He *now commands all men everywhere to repent* (*Acts 17:30-31*).

The effects of repentance:

– *...when in their trouble* the people *turned to the Lord God of Israel and sought Him, He was found by them* (*2 Chronicles 15:4*).

– If you turn to the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul, you will return to your country. *If any of you are scattered from one end of heaven to the other end, from there the Lord your God will gather you, and from there the Lord your God will bring you... The Lord your God will purify your heart and the heart of your seed to love the Lord your God from your whole heart... The Lord your God will take great care of you and all the work of your hands, in the offspring of your womb, in the*

produce of your land... For the Lord will again rejoice over you... (Deuteronomy 30:1-10).

– *But if a lawless man turns from all the lawless deeds he commits, keeps all My*

commandments, does righteousness and shows mercy, he will surely live and not die (Ezekiel 18:21).

– *Return, O sons who have turned away,... I will give you shepherds according to My heart, and they will thoroughly shepherd you with knowledge (Jeremiah 3:14-15).*

– *“Return, O sons, return, and I will heal your ruin.” “Behold, we will be Your servants, for You are the Lord our God” (Jeremiah 3:22-23).*

– *If you return, I will restore you, and you shall stand before My face (Jeremiah 15:19).*

– The forgiveness of sins: *John came baptizing in the wilderness and preaching a baptism of repentance for the remission of sins (Mark 1:4).*

– It is a gift offered by God to all people: *then God has also granted to the Gentiles repentance to life (Acts 11:18).*

Repentance has a powerful therapeutic effect:

– *...whoever confesses and forsakes his sins will have mercy (Proverbs 28: 13)*

– The Lord gave his sons good hope, *by offering them repentance over their sins (Wisdom of Solomon 12:19).*

– Similarly... *You overlook the sins of men to bring them to repentance (Wisdom of Solomon 11:23).*

There are large areas in the Old and New Testament that urge us to repent:

– *Now therefore, make confession to the Lord God of your fathers, and do His will (1 Ezra 10:11).*

– *Be angry, and do not sin; have remorse upon your beds for what you say in your hearts (Psalm 4:5).*

– *“Return to Me, O habitation of Israel,” says the Lord (Jeremiah 3:12).*

– *...realize your wrongdoing... (Jeremiah 3:13).*

– *Now says the Lord your God, "turn to Me with all your heart, with fasting and wailing and with mourning; rend your heart and not your garments..." (Joel 2:12-13).*

– *Return to Me, and you shall be saved, you who are from the ends of the earth (Isaiah 45:22).*

– *Return... from all your ungodliness, and it shall not be to you as a punishment (Ezekiel 18:30).*

– After *He opened their understanding, that they might comprehend the Scriptures (Luke 24:45)*, the Savior told the apostles that *“Thus it is written, and thus it was necessary ... to suffer and to rise from the dead... and that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in His name to all nations...” (Luke 24:46-47).*

– *Therefore bear fruits worthy of repentance... (Luke 3:8).*

– *The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand. Repent, and believe in the gospel (Mark 1:15).*

– *...the goodness of God leads you to repentance (Romans 2:4).*

The commandment for repentance is accessible to every soul. The commandment to return *is not too burdensome for you, nor is it far off. It is not in heaven above... Nor is it beyond the sea... But the word is very near you, in your mouth, in your heart, and in your hands, that you may do it* (Deuteronomy 30:11-14).

The most powerful motive that imperatively imposes repentance is expressed in *The Gospel of Matthew: Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand!* (Matthew 3:2).

Irénée Hausherr depicts two opinions of two great saints.

St. Cyril of Jerusalem: “The shadow of sins remains in the body... But the imprints of the nails remain in all.”

St. John Chrysostom: “When God erases sins, not one scar is left... But together with health He also brings beauty.”¹⁰⁹

In order to wipe away sin, to repentance "must be added love for people and the endless goodness of God."¹¹⁰

¹⁰⁹ I. Hausherr, *Weeping and Piercing of the Heart at Eastern Fathers*, op. cit., p.41

¹¹⁰ Ibid., p.42

Piercing of the heart is something even more intense, more dramatic and more uplifting than repentance.

The continuous present in *Blessed are those who mourn...* shows that repentance and piercing of the heart represent a continuous regret for

the primordial health. Regaining it is granted, paradoxically, to those who mourn.¹¹¹

Father Arsenie Papacioc said that, in prison, the inmates often expressed the desire and prayed to live one more “day.” In the proximity of death they felt what the Holy Fathers experienced in their asceticism: “through repentance, in one single day, it is possible that man make peace with God.”¹¹²

"The beginning of repentance is acknowledging sins" through "methodical examination of the conscience."¹¹³

Through repentance man sees himself shrinking, "he always sees himself far-off, of the measure of perfection" and because of that "he never stops" the spiritual ascent, but even feels a more acute need "to always progress."¹¹⁴

Absolutely all people have a need for repentance, since no one is without sin (*Romans* 3:23).

Repentance is the cure for the soul's illness and is a gift from God; in the Orthodox faith it is a common thing to say: *We thank You, Lord, for having placed repentance at hand.*

Despite the tears that flow, the man who experiences repentance finds "inner peace,"¹¹⁵ because he – with each tear for feeling sorry [about sin] – throws past sins into nonbeing, their wounds, their memories, and their obsessions.

¹¹¹ Ibid.

¹¹² Ibid., cited from PL 73, 1645 D.

¹¹³ J.-C. Larchet, *The Therapy of Spiritual Illnesses*, op. cit., p.293

¹¹⁴ Ibid., p.295

¹¹⁵ Ibid., p.298

I went astray... Seek Your servant, for I have not forgotten Your commandments (Psalm 118:176). Authentic repentance towards true spiritual health springs from the unrest of conscience that judges itself for its real errors and sins.

There are also false sentiments of guilt, which are born and manifest themselves through exaggeration of the errors that were made or through delusional experiences (melancholy or depression) of imaginary sins. Sometimes behind these symptoms there is a hidden desire to impress friends or for self-victimization.

Humility

Humility is a psychological process to the extent that the human person makes efforts (exercises) in order to "become humble." However, it can also be considered a personality trait of certain people "more humble than others."

Its definition is difficult to give. At first glance it seems to be a state (a sentiment) of humiliation, of modesty before the Creator and peers. In reality, the notion is quite rich, loaded with great meaning and greatly analyzed and cultivated in the works of the Philokalia. In order to be understood better, it often appears as antinomic with pride.

In the history of the creation of the visible and unseen world, we discover that Lucifer rebelled against the Creator out of pride. He fell, and then pulled down man along his course, who also fell. That is why the whole history of the human race's salvation, the purification of the

human person of sin, illumination, deification cannot be obtained without practicing authentic humility.

The Holy Fathers say that the devils do not have any kind of success over the humble (since this is exactly the characteristic that they cannot have).

God created the world out of nothing and if he were to withdraw His protective providence from the world, the world would return to nothing. It is absolutely natural that the human being realizes its powerlessness and dependence on its Creator: *Because the entire world before You is like a small additional weight on scales, and like a drop of dew early in the morning* (Wisdom of Solomon 11:22).

If you humble yourself truly, then the riches of the world lose their value and you are no longer tied to their worth: *If you return and humble yourselves before the Lord, you have caused wrongdoing to be far from your dwelling. Then you will lay up treasure for yourself like a mound on a rock, and you shall be like the gold of Ophir* (Job 22:23-24).

Humility is the condition for salvation; that is why divine pedagogy is always against pride: *For You will save a humble people, and You will humble the eyes of the arrogant.* (Psalm 17:28). *The Lord is near those who are brokenhearted...* (Psalm 33:19). *The fear of the Lord and riches and glory and life are the offspring of wisdom* (Proverbs 22:4).

Humility has a therapeutic effect even on bodily illnesses: Hezekiah was mortally ill, and prayed, the Lord heard him and *gave him a sign. But Hezekiah did not repay the favor shown him, but exalted his own heart, and His anger came upon him, and upon Judah and*

Jerusalem. Hezekiah was humbled because of his exalted heart, he and the inhabitants of Jerusalem, but the wrath of the Lord did not come upon them... (2 Chronicles 32:24-26).

There are numerous effects of the quality of being humble:

– *The prayer of a humble man passes through the clouds, and he will not be*

comforted until it reaches the Lord (Wisdom of Sirach 35:17).

– *He has put down the mighty from their thrones, and exalted the lowly (Luke 1:52).*

– *...for everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted (Luke 18:14).*

– *He gives grace to the humble (Proverbs 3:37).*

– *God, who comforts the downcast (2 Corinthians 7:6).*

The greatest kings of Israel were examples of humility. When Shimei cursed King David, he said: *May the Lord somehow look on my humiliation, and may He turn his cursing of me this day into good (2 Kingdoms 16:12).*

Then King David went in and sat before the Lord, and said: "O Lord God, who am I? And what is my house, that You have loved me forever? (1 Chronicles 17:16).

When Jeremiah prophesied the slavery of the Jews: *Say to the king and the nobles, "Humble yourself and sit down, for your crown of glory is removed from your head" (Jeremiah 13:18).*

Solomon begins to reign with a humble verse: *Now, O Lord my God, You made Your servant king in place of my father David, but I am a little child; I do not know how to go out or to come in (3 Kingdoms 3:6).*

The Savior himself, at each healing taught us humility, because each time He told the sick people that they were healed by God. But the sick people announced Him as the healer and faith in Him grew. After the healing of the possessed man in Gadarenes: ***“Return to your own house, and tell what great things God has done for you.” And he went his way and proclaimed throughout the whole city what great things Jesus had done for him (Luke 8:39).***

The Savior asked a different sick person to keep the healing secret; this was the case of the leprous man who was healed: ***And He charged him to tell no one... (Luke 5:14).***

The glorious entrance into Jerusalem on ***the foal of a donkey*** is another sign of humility that was prophesied in the Old Testament (***Matthew 21:5***).

After the healing of the deaf and dumb man, ***He commanded them that they should tell no one; but the more He commanded them, the more widely they proclaimed it (Mark 7:36).***

The greatest act of humility that has taken place in creation is the very incarnation of the Savior: ***who, being in the form of God, did not consider it robbery to be equal with God, but made Himself of no reputation, taking the form of a bondservant, and coming in the likeness of men. And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself and became obedient to the point of death, even the death of the cross (Philippians 2:6-8).***

God is the protector of the humble: ***The Lord, the Most high who dwells on high forever, the Holy One among His saints, whose name is the Lord Most High, who rests among His saints, and who gives***

patience to the fainthearted and life to the broken-hearted... (Isaiah 57:15).

The centurion who, through his humility, obtained the healing of his servant, proved to the others, in front of the Savior, that humility is founded on great faith, since he was convinced – though a pagan – of the healing power of the Word: *Lord, I am not worthy that You should come under my roof. But only speak a word, and my servant will be healed (Matthew 8:8).*

Also through the practice of profound humility, the Canaanite woman obtained healing of her daughter. She asked the Savior to cast out the demon from her child. The Savior subjected her to an acid test, since she was from a different ethnic stock: ... *"it is not good to take the children's bread and throw it to the little dogs."* But her answer led to her daughter's healing: *"Yes, Lord, yet even the little dogs under the table eat from the children's crumbs." Then He said to her, "For this saying go your way; the demon has gone out of your daughter"* (Mark 7:27-29).

Another possessed child was also healed through the authentic humble attitude of the father, expressed through one of the beautiful biblical antinomies, since he *cried out and said with tears, "Lord, I believe; help my unbelief!"* (Mark 9:24).

Before the great events in the Old Testament, the leaders commanded fast and humility to obtain success: *Then I proclaimed a fast there at the river Ahava, that we might humble ourselves before our God, to seek from Him the right way for us and for our little ones and all our possessions (2 Ezra 8:21).*

Humility is obtained by pondering over it and through prayer: ***O Lord, Father and the God of my life, do not give me haughty eyes*** (*Wisdom of Sirach 23:4*).

The humble one should expect the resistance and indifference of those around him. It is a stumbling block for his humility: ***If a humble man falls, they criticize him further; and when he speaks with intelligence, no place is given to him*** (*Wisdom of Sirach 13:21*).

There are many biblical verses from which the meaning of humility can be easily drawn:

- the greatest – is a servant of the least (*Matthew 23:11*);
- I am not worthy for the Lord to come under my roof (*Matthew 8:8*);
- to become great – you must become small (*Wisdom of Sirach 1:24-27*);
- we are the servants of God (*2 Ezra 5:11*);
- if you wish to be the first, be the last (*Mark 9:35*);
- the great in the kingdom of heaven means to become like an infant (*Matthew 18:4*);
- we are unworthy servants because ***We have done what was our duty to do.*** (*Luke 17:10*);
- ***Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord*** (*Luke 5:8*);
- ***...he who is least among you all will be great*** (*Luke 9:48*). (For the psychotherapist's neutrality and fairness this verse is very important. The notion refers to both self-awareness – he believes himself to be someone, and to collective perception – the sick person is perceived by society as being "someone" but in reality he is not);
- ***...my existence is as nothing before You*** (*Psalms 38:6*);

– examining your own actions can be an occasion for praise ...***in himself alone, and not in another*** (*Galatians* 6:4);

– the apostles had the awareness that not one healing that took place through their hands was performed through their ***power or godliness*** (*Acts* 3:12), but always ***through faith in His name*** (*Acts* 3:16);

– authentic humility is proven through great trials: ***gold is tested in fire and acceptable men in the furnace of*** (*Wisdom of Sirach* 2:5). These trials are either thoughtless praise and adulation on behalf of people, or humiliations, unfairness and blight to the limits of responsibility

– the ***Lord and Teacher*** washed his disciples' feet. Then he said: ***you should do as I have done to you*** (*John* 13:15).

It is worth remembering that when He put his hand on the whip and cast out those who were defiling the temple, he did not say, "do as I have done" (*John* 2:14-16).

For a Christian psychotherapist it is worth remembering the content of the verse from Jesus Sirach: ...***mysteries are revealed unto the meek*** (*Wisdom of Sirach* 3:19).

The Christian, and especially the monk, must be trained in a continuous exercise of humility, since, ***there is a loss because of glory, and there is a man who raises his head from a humble state*** (*Wisdom of Sirach* 20:11).

Ignatius Brianchaninov says that authentic humility is not revealed to the world, and "false humility loves theatrics."¹⁶

The truly humble person, the deeper he gets in this virtue, the poorer he believes himself to be.

Seeing God, Job believed himself to be ***dust and ashes*** (*Job* 42:5-6).

"Humility does not let itself in sorrow's will, and is not afraid of anything."¹¹⁷

Abba Sisoë answered a youth who was passing his time in "the remembrance of God:" "It is nothing great to be with your mind on God, but it is a great thing to see yourself lower than all of Creation."¹¹⁸

The humble man draws close to knowledge of the infinite.

"Humble thought establishes true spiritual order."¹¹⁹

The angels' fall took place out of pride, which is why humility is so important.

The more we humble ourselves under the mighty arm of divine glory, the more we progress towards this glory.

Just as the Spirit withdraws from the proud man, the Spirit comes to the humble man and teaches him first of all discernment with regard to his own being,¹²⁰ Secondly, it brings to fruition the gift of discerning spirits; and finally, mysteries are discovered in humble thought...

¹¹⁶ Ignatius Brianchaninov, *On Deception*, op. cit., p.113

¹¹⁷ Ignatius Brianchaninov, op. cit., p.115

¹¹⁸ Cited by I. Hausherr in *Weeping and Piercing of the Heart at Eastern Fathers*, op. cit., p.72

¹¹⁹ I.C. Teşu, *The Theology of Trials*, op. cit. p.123

¹²⁰ Ibid.

Wonder

The psychological process called wonder is a complex and overwhelming experience, rich in nuance and significance, which can never be rendered precisely enough to be understood by those who have not experienced it.

Wonder is a personal experience difficult to share with peers in semantic communication.

Ezekiel had an experience described in this way: *and I sat where they sat, and remained there astonished among them seven days* (Ezekiel 3:15). But this time of wonder was lived in between two other transcendent experiences: preceded by *the Spirit moved me and raised me up*, and *...the hand of the Lord was strong upon me* (Ezekiel 3:14) and followed by the Lord's call, *Son of man, I made you a watchman for the house of Israel* (Ezekiel 3:17).

The New Testament is imminently the time of wonder, since the Son of God descended among men *so that all were amazed and glorified God, saying, "We never saw anything like this!"* (Mark 2:12).

The Savior's resurrection generates *fear and amazement* (Mark 16:8).

After the Transfiguration, the Lord healed a demon-possessed child whom His disciples had not managed to heal: *And they were all amazed at the majesty of God* (Luke 9:43).

In this condition of amazement Christ announced to them that *"...the Son of Man is about to be betrayed into the hands of men."* *But they did not understand this saying, and it was hidden from them...* (Luke 9:44-45).

Experiencing the sentiment of wonder is favorable for opening one up towards faith: *For the Father loves the Son, and shows Him all things that He Himself does; and He will show Him greater works than these, that you may marvel* (John 5:20).

The healing of the lame man at the Beautiful Gate awakened the same amazement in the people that were witnesses to the healing.

Peter responded to the people: *Men of Israel, why do you marvel at this? Or why look so intently at us, as though by our own power or godliness we had made this man walk?* It is still now an opportunity for preaching associated to healing and amazement: *And His name, through faith in His name, has made this man strong, whom you see and know. Yes, the faith which comes through Him has given him this perfect soundness in the presence of you all* (Acts 3:12-16).

At the second coming the Messiah will be regarded with wonder... by all who have believed (2 Thessalonians 1:10).

The biblical text shows us that there is also amazement without God, generated by false miracles or by lack of knowledge about faith: the people were amazed by Simon's sorcery, and Simon was amazed by *the great signs and wonders* that took place through Philip's hands.

Simon wanted to pay money to obtain the gift of the Holy Spirit because he did not understand the new faith. But the Apostle Peter answered him: *Repent therefore of this your wickedness... For I see that you are poisoned by bitterness and bound by iniquity.* Because he thought that *the gift of God could be purchased with money* (Acts 8:11-23).

Hatred and Evil

The feeling of hatred characterizes some people or at least moments or stages of their lives.

The DEX defines hatred as a feeling of enmity towards someone or something.¹²¹

We will present a few biblical citations:

– *Every evil man stirs up controversy, but the Lord will send him a merciless messenger (Proverbs 17:12)*

– Man's hatred pollutes emotionally the physical world too: *Better is a dinner of herbs with friendship and grace than a fatted calf with hostility (Proverbs 15:18)*

¹²¹ DEX, op. cit., p.1138

– Jesus Sirach has given us a definition of the evil man:

- *he who envies with his eye;*
- *he who turns away his face;*
- *he who despises souls (Wisdom of Sirach 14:8).*

– the evil *are as thorns thrusting outward*, they can be taken only *with iron and the shaft of a spear*, and are *burned with fire* (2 Kingdoms 23:5-7).

– *A man in his malice kills another, but he cannot bring back a departed spirit nor return a soul that is taken (Wisdom of Solomon 16:14).*

– those who love evil *are fit* to have *the hope of fools* (Wisdom of Solomon 15:4-6).

– *evil men do not understand judgment (Proverbs 28:5)*

– the one who hates tries to pretend, but *there are seven vices in his soul... he exposes his own sins (Proverbs 26:26-27).*

– *...he who hates his brother is in darkness and walks in darkness (1 John 2:11).*

– *Whoever hates his brother is a murderer, and you know that no murderer has eternal life abiding in him (1 John 3:15).*

The consequences of actions that are loaded down with hatred are disastrous:

– *It is a great snare to a man when he sins (Proverbs 29:6).*

– *...wrongdoing dries up the soul (Wisdom of Sirach 14:9).*

– *If a man does evil to himself... he will not rejoice in his wealth (Wisdom of Sirach 14:5)*

– the light is removed *from the ungodly* and *the arm of the arrogant* is crushed (*Job 38:15*).

The biblical counsel is for us to avoid the evil people: *Do not dine with an envious man...* (*Proverbs 23:6*).

Evil – as a psychological activity – comes from the irascible part of the human being. Initially this irascible part was used in the battle with temptations and spirits, in order to hinder anything that could separate man from God and to fight to obtain spiritual goods which his very nature tends towards.¹²²

Through sin, this fiery nature is used unnaturally, that is, to develop malicious feelings towards neighbors, to corrupt the material and biological universe and sometimes for the foolishness of rising up against God.

The Holy Fathers say that there is a single irascible, aggressive force in man; but it can be directed in different ways towards doing evil or towards *the good fight*.

What is important is our attitude towards evil people and their actions. We should not judge them, but rather avoid them; God will judge

them, *for He makes His sun rise on the evil and on the good* (Matthew 5:45).

Visions and Dreams

The concept of Christian medicine must distinguish hallucinations (as a pathological phenomenon) from dreams and visions and ecstasy, which appear in the Holy Scripture abundantly.

Lay psychology and psychiatry put these phenomena in connection with the subconscious, that is, with the lower levels of emotional life (which in their conception exist).

The concept of Christian medicine links these phenomena to the intervention of heavenly powers and the preoccupations of the person who dreams.

Here are the terminology and the study of dreams and visions in conformity with Christian Orthodox teaching:¹²³

Dream – movement of the mind during sleep; it disappears quickly after awaking.

¹²² J.-C. Larchet, *The Therapy of Spiritual Illnesses*, op. cit., pp.72-73

¹²³ P. Chirilă, M. Valică, *The Christian Hospital*, op. cit., pp.84-98

Visions – apparitions received in reality or in a state of watchfulness, in deep or shallow sleep, in the state of ecstasy or wonder; mysteries are revealed in visions; they persist in the memory for a long time.

Revelation – is something more than vision, because it shows things that are deeper than what can be seen; they can transform us and cast us up from the earthly things to the spiritual.

Clairvoyance – seeing certain things or happenings that take place at great distance.

Mission – viewing things that are about to occur.

Ecstasy – man in ecstasy does not realize whether he is in the body or outside of the body; only the breath remains in man; it is divine rapture and it is produced through divine grace.

Interpreting dreams

- When they appear repeatedly – is a sign that God hurries for them to be fulfilled: *Now the dream was repeated to Pharaoh twice because the thing is established by God, and God will shortly bring it to pass* (Genesis 41:32).
- If the dream has a predictive character, and its fulfillment leads to the loss of faith or wandering from the true faith, it must be rejected, as a murderous dream: *If a prophet or a dreamer of dreams arises among you, and he gives you a sign or a wonder today, and the sign or the wonder he spoke to you comes to pass, saying, 'Let us go and serve other gods' you have not known, you shall not listen to the words of that prophet or dreamer of dreams; for the Lord your God is testing you to know whether you love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul* (Deuteronomy 13:2-4).

- When the Lord reveals himself in dreams and invites us to ask something from him, we must ask for wisdom, as Solomon did: *The Lord appeared to Solomon [at Gibeon] in a dream by night, and the Lord said to him, “Make a particular request for yourself.” Solomon said, “You have shown great mercy to Your servant David my father, because he walked before You in truth, and with You in righteousness and uprightness of heart. You have continued this great kindness for him, and gave him a son to sit on his throne, as I do today. Now, O Lord my God, You made Your servant king in place of my father David, but I am a little child; I do not know how to go out or come in. Your servant is in the midst of Your people whom You chose, a great people, who will not be numbered. Therefore give Your servant a heart to hear and judge Your people in righteousness, and to discern between good and evil. For who can judge this great people of Yours?” The Lord was pleased that Solomon asked this (3 Kingdoms 3:5-9).*
- The transmission of certain teachings, frightening through dreams so that God could turn people from evil and humble them: *For when the Lord speaks once, or in another time in a dream, or in a meditation of the night (as when dreadful fear falls upon men while slumbering on their bed), then He unveils the hearts of men and frightens them with such fearful visions so as to turn man from his wrongdoing; thus He delivers his body from a fall. He keeps back his soul from death (Job 33:14-18).*

- Dreams appear from having many cares: *For in a multitude of dreams there are vanities and many words, but you should fear God* (Ecclesiastes 5:6).
- Dreams make the unwise lose their self-control: *Vain hopes and lying belong to a man without understanding, and dreams give wing to senseless men* (Wisdom of Sirach 34:1).
- There is also vanity in dreams: *Divinations, omens, and dreams are worthless; and like a woman in the pains of childbirth, the heart becomes visible. Unless visions are sent from the Most High in a visitation, do not give your heart to them* (Wisdom of Sirach 34:5-6).
- Do not put your hope in dreams, so as not to fall: *For dreams have deceived many, and those who hope in them have fallen away* (Wisdom of Sirach 34:7).
- Precise messages from God:
 - in order to disperse Joseph's doubts about taking Mary: *But while he thought about these things, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream, saying, "Joseph, son of David, do not be afraid to take to you Mary your wife, for that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Spirit"* (Matthew 1:20);
 - refuge in Egypt: *Now when they [the Magi] had departed, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream, saying, "Arise, take the young Child and His mother, flee to Egypt, and stay there until I bring you*

word; for Herod will seek the young Child to destroy Him (Matthew 2:13);

– warning of the Magi: *Then, being divinely warned in a dream that they should not return to Herod, they departed for their own country another way (Matthew 2:12);*

– return from Egypt: *Now when Herod was dead, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared in a dream to Joseph in Egypt, saying, "Arise, take the young Child and His mother, and go to the land of Israel, for those who sought the young Child's life are dead" (Matthew 2:19-20);*

– Pilot's wife's dream, in which she suffered for the Lord: *While he was sitting on the judgment seat, his wife sent to him, saying, "Have nothing to do with that just Man, for I have suffered many things today in a dream because of Him (Matthew 27:19);*

– Saul's vision on the road to Damascus; his conversion: *As he journeyed he came near Damascus, and suddenly a light shone around him from heaven. Then he fell to the ground, and heard a voice saying to him, "Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting Me?" And he said, "Who are You, Lord?" Then the Lord said, "I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting. It is hard for you to kick against the goads." So he, trembling and astonished, said, "Lord, what do You want me to do?" Then the Lord said to him, "Arise and go into the city, and you will be told what you must do." And the men who journeyed with him stood speechless, hearing a voice but seeing no one. Then Saul arose from the*

ground, and when his eyes were opened he saw no one. But they led him by the hand and brought him into Damascus. And he was three days without sight, and neither ate nor drank (Acts 9:3-9);

- Ananias' vision in connection with Saul's conversion: *Now there was a certain disciple at Damascus named Ananias; and to him the Lord said in a vision, "Ananias." And he said, "Here I am, Lord." So the Lord said to him, "Arise and go to the street called Straight, and inquire at the house of Judas for one called Saul of Tarsus, for behold, he is praying. And in a vision he has seen a man named Ananias coming in and putting his hand on him, so that he might receive his sight." Then Ananias answered, "Lord, I have heard from many about this man, how much harm he has done to Your saints in Jerusalem. And here he has authority from the chief priests to bind all who call on Your name." But the Lord said to him, "Go, for he is a chosen vessel of Mine to bear My name before Gentiles, kings, and the children of Israel" (Acts 9:10-15);*

- signs of the end times; the fulfillment of Joel's prophecy: *But this is what was spoken by the prophet Joel: 'And it shall come to pass in the last days, says God, that I will pour out of My Spirit on all flesh; your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, your young men shall see visions, your old men shall dream dreams...' (Acts 2:16-17);*

- There are also visions from the false prophets:

- *Then the Lord Said to Me, "The prophets prophesy lies in My name. I have not sent them, nor commanded them; nor have I spoken to them. Because of false visions, divinations, prophesying by the way of birds, and by the purposes of their hearts, they prophesy to you" (Jeremiah 14:14).*
- *"Behold, I am against the prophets," says the Lord, "who use their tongues and say, 'He says' (Jeremiah 23:31).*
- *"Behold, I am against the prophets who prophesy false dreams, and they relate them. They lead My people astray with their lies and in their deceits. Yet I did not send them or command them. Therefore, they shall not profit this people at all (Jeremiah 23:32).*
- *They see lies and prophesy vain things. They say, 'The Lord says,' but the Lord did not send them; yet they begin to establish the word (Ezekiel 13:6).*
- *The Lord asks: Have you not seen a futile vision, and have you not spoken false divination? You say, 'The Lord says,' but I have not spoken (Ezekiel 13:7 NKJ).*
- *"Therefore say, 'Thus says the Lord: "Because your words are lies and your prophecies are worthless, therefore I am against you," says the Lord'" (Ezekiel 13:8).*
- *Your prophets have seen for you false and deceptive visions; they have not uncovered your iniquity, to bring back your captives, but have envisioned for you false*

prophecies and delusions (Lamentations of Jeremiah 2:14 NKJ).

Therefore, in essence:

- there are dreams from good angels;
- there are deceptive dreams from fallen angels;
- there are dreams for trying our faith;
- there are dreams caused by the multitude of our cares (neuroses, anxiety, consequences of psychological trauma or conflicts, physical and intellectual overload);
- saints perceive dreams with the mind, with the heart; people burdened by many sins perceive dreams carnally, with the important participation of the senses.

Dreams sent to the soul out of God's love

- do not change from one appearance to another;
- do not horrify senses;
- do not lead to sudden laughter or weeping;
- they generate spiritual joy through gently approaching the soul;
- after waking, the soul longs for the dream;
- after waking, pride and vainglory are not born in the soul;
- to those who have become deeply spiritual even the good dreams lead to sweet sorrow and tears without pain, since they "see dreams as vain things that no longer trouble them" (Maximus the Confessor);
- revelations from God contain lofty, pure teachings; they have great power to change people for the better;

- after dreams of condemnation and judgment, upon awakening we tremble and have a certain sadness (of repentance);
- they rarely appear, and when they appear they are sent for the good of the community (Gregory of Nyssa);
- as a rule, they appear to spiritually advanced people: when man is shaken by the Lord's teaching and appearance *so as to turn man from his wrongdoing; thus He delivers his body from a fall. He keeps back his soul from death...* (Job 33:15-18).

Dreams from the fallen angels or from our passions

- a rapid change of images (for brief moments they even borrow beautiful images, which are not of their own nature);
- turbid forms or diverse forms, but with the sensation of materiality;
- threats;
- terror;
- crying out in the soul;
- a pure mind quickly wakens the body from such a dream;
- the appearance of certain symbols such as: animals, pagans, gold, erotic scenes, lofty thrones, flight or motion through the air;
- after dreams of condemnation and judgment hopelessness overtakes us;
- reddish light with smoke which is felt physically in the dream;

- appearing at heights;
- telling the future;
- upon awaking, pride appears from what has been foreseen.

Our attitude towards dreams

- because the devil can take the appearance of an angel of light, we should reject every dream;
- we should not forget the fact that dreams appear more frequently with the people who believe in the pitfall of their opinion about themselves;
- man is not able to see his own soul, let alone "immaterial reality" (Peter Damascene);
- when we begin to believe the demons in dreams, they mock us while we are awake as well (John Climacus);
- he who believes in dreams is *like him who grasps after shadows and chases the wind* (*Wisdom of Sirach* 34:2);
- we must always believe ourselves to be unworthy of seeing an angel of light. In *the Paterikon*, on page 318, the devil says in dream to a brother: "I am Gabriel and have been sent to bring you good news." The brother says, "Look, perhaps you have been sent to someone else, because I am sinful and I am not worthy to see an angel of light;"

the Council of the Holy Fathers gathered at Carthage in the year 418 established through Canon 87: " that the remains of idolatry notonly in images, but in any places whatever or groves or trees, should altogether be taken away."

- when there is a nightmare, a torturous or foreboding dream, the only thing that should determine our attitude is this: that

we must pray more, so that Lord protect us from all ill fortune.

Visions in the biographies of the saints

Type of vision

- the Lord;
- the Mother of God;
- Archangels;
- Cherubim;
- Seraphim;
- Angels;
- Saints (living or reposed);
- lights;
- fire;
- fragrances;
- voices;
- icons;
- roads;
- cross;
- signet ring;
- rainbow;
- balls of incense;
- flight;
- news;
- erotic dreams; lay fantasies;
- churches in the sky;
- relics.

How often the Lord, the All Holy Mother, Archangels, Prophets, Apostles and Saints appear in dreams and visions

Personage	Number	%
The Lord	68	14.8
The Mother of God	39	8.5
St. John the Baptist	6	1.3
St. Peter the Apostle	9	1.1
St. John the Theologian	3	0.6
St. Paul the Apostle	7	1.5
The Holy Archangel Michael	7	1.5
The Prophets	8	1.7
The Holy Apostles	10	2.1
Angels	160	34.9
Living Saints	11	2.4
Reposed Saints	64	13.9
As a radiant man	31	6.7
As an all radiant youth	20	4.3
As [a few] virgins	6	1.3
As frightened men	3	0.6

Circumstances in which visions appear:

- illnesses;
- baptism;
- at the end of life;
- in prison;
- during the tortures of martyrdom;
- as a saint is being invested with power over the devil;
- during the construction of monasteries;
- the translation of relics;

- prayer;
- the birth of a saint;
- confrontation with heretics;
- receiving spiritual gifts;
- trials;
- serving at the altar;
- announcing about the future;
- shipwreck;
- during the punishment of a ruler.

The Message

The Lord

- revealed Himself to a saint in the form of a poor man to whom he had shown mercy;
- rebuked a shepherd for abandoning his flock because of gossip;
- urged people to pray for their enemies;
- healed martyrs in prison;
- delivered the news of suffering for His sake;
- strengthened the saints for future martyrdom;
- gave a cross for healing;
- revealed Himself to the martyrs, telling them that the one who endures until the end will be saved;
- gave the prophets His words;
- called the Saints to daily crucifixion together with Him;
- revealed Himself to the martyrs, promising them crowns;
- shows the saints that their prayers have been heard.

The Mother of God

- delivers saints from prisons;
- prayed for a righteous man's lengthening of life;
- defended the Christian city;
- tells the saints that their repentance has been received;
- gives advice to monastics;
- announces a hasty journey to heaven;
- gives guidance for building monasteries;
- helps in the struggle with enemies;
- revealed herself to a monk, but did not enter his cell because he had a book with two blasphemous words towards her;
- visits those who pray.

An Angel and Angels

- rolled back the stone from the Savior's tomb and was seen by the myrrh bearing women;
- send the saints to a certain place to convert people;
- strengthen faith;
- reveal relics;
- encourage people towards the monastic life;
- defend in times of danger;
- heal saints in prison;
- appear lifting up the souls of the saints into the heavens;
- glorify God;
- blinded the unfaithful with their light;
- protect wedlock without blemish;
- aid during baptism;

- offer saints food in prisons;
- strengthen the saints during the time of martyrdom.

The Holy Apostles

- send to baptism;
- help the saints in preaching against the heretics;
- encourage the destruction of idols.

Archangels

- help those in danger;
- help and nourish the Mother of God;
- announce the birth of children;
- visit those who pray.

St. John the Baptist

- announces the birth of a child;
- intercedes for saints.

Other messages and works accomplished through saints' visions

- the holy angels reveal themselves with meekness, bringing joy and boldness to the soul;
- a saint saw in a vision some souls borne up by angels, and others borne away by demons;
- they foresaw the persecution of the Church;
- through a vision one person understood that due to pride an illness had returned;
- commanded a righteous man to depart into the wilderness;
- commanded someone to enter into monasticism;

- gave the command to a monk to go out to preach;
- it is better not to receive alms from those who do evil;
- a divine revelation coming after a 40-day fast;
- a rich man was investigated because he had not helped a pious woman;
- a nobleman was rebuked in the vision because he had not kept his promise;
- those who torture Christians receive warnings in visions;
- bring a message to not forget the 40-day commemoration service after death;
- diabolical visions before death.

The Orthodox tradition often speaks about the manifestation of visions at the end of life, a little before the onset of biological death (which coincides with separation of the soul from the body).

Oppressors' visions before death were *to make known to them the reason they were dying* (*Wisdom of Solomon* 18:18). This is a verse that teaches us how to spiritually assist someone with an incurable illness, moribund in his bed of sufferance or in an institution for palliative care.

Before death it is possible for both saints and the glorified heavenly powers (the Lord, the Mother of God, angels, archangels), and the fallen ones (demons) to appear.

The moribund person should be continuously accompanied.

Will

Will is a psychological process that begins the restoration of the human being, since it extracts its vigor from the liberty that we were endowed with at creation.

The Holy Fathers say that a man who has fallen into spiritual illness does not want to be healed, God cannot force him. In other words, if he, under no circumstances wants to be saved, he will not be saved.

He Himself created man in the beginning and left him in the counsel of his will. If you will, you will keep the commandments and faithfully do His good pleasure. He has set before you fire and water; if you will, stretch forth your hand (Wisdom of Sirach 15:14-16).

This verse – *if you will, you will keep the commandments* – shows that personal decision is the beginning of conscious connection with God.

The leper, drawing close, *worshiped Him, saying, “Lord, if You are willing, You can make me clean.” Then Jesus put out His hand and touched him, saying, “I am willing; be cleansed.” Immediately his leprosy was cleansed* (Matthew 8:2-3). It can be seen here how the sick man's *will* met with the Savior's *will*, which produced healing.

The Savior asked Bartimaeus, the blind man in Jericho, *“What do you want Me to do for you?” The blind man said to Him, “Rabboni, that I may receive my sight.” Then Jesus said to him, “Go your way; your faith has made you well.” And immediately he received his sight and followed Jesus on the road* (Mark 10:51-52).

Man's will is tried in the war between the *inward man* and *another law in my members*, because *For the good that I will to do, I do not do; but the evil I will not to do, that I practice* (Romans 7:19-23).

In other words, "to will" is found in my soul, but "to will not" – in my flesh.

In verse 23 of chapter 7 in the *Epistle to the Romans*, the Apostle Paul speaks of two laws – one of the mind, the other of the members – which war against each other. ***O wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death?*** (*Romans 7:24*).

Salvation comes through the Savior, ***for the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has made me free from the law of sin and death*** (*Romans 8:2*).

The following verses from the *Epistle to the Philippians* have profound meaning regarding the will of a man who has entered the Church of Christ: ***for it is God who works in you both to will and to do for His good pleasure. Do all things without complaining and disputing, that you may become blameless and harmless, children of God without fault in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation, among whom you shine as lights in the world...*** (*Philippians 2:13-15*).

In the preceding verse, the apostle urges us ***with fear and trembling*** to work out our salvation, since in this way God works in us both "what we should will" and "what we should do," that is, the synergy of divine grace comes to help us when we decide to work on our salvation.

To work out our salvation ***in fear and in trembling*** means to draw down upon ourselves this power and synergetic action, to surrender without doubt to Him, the One Who works ***according to His good pleasure***.

Great faith allows God to work in us not only "to perform" but also "to will" ***according to His good pleasure***.

It is the fulfillment of the maximal character of the Christian faith in the ascent towards salvation, when man works synergistically with divine grace and salvation is closer and closer to him.

The Holy Fathers emphasize in their writings the "liberty to will" and "the liberty to not will" healing.

Healing as a gift is not a magical act, but the consequence of our will to be healed, which springs from the faith that Christ can and wants to heal us.

Man's will to heal himself meets with God's love for man and the ecclesial therapeutic action performs healing.

V. Psychopathology

The fool says in his heart,

"There is no God."

(Psalm 13:1)

In this chapter we will render the pathology of both psychological and spiritual disorders, while mentioning that for the most part they can be separated only conventionally.

Some pathological symptoms and feelings become at the same time pathogenic factors that generate more suffering, passions and sins.

We will mention that sometimes, that which in classical (scientific) medicine and psychology is considered and perceived as an absolutely normal phenomenon (feelings, manifestations and hedonistic

dependencies) could become pathological in the concept of Christian psychology.

Pathological Fear

Psychological dictionaries make a distinction between anxiety and fear. Anxiety is fear without an object, while fear has a precise cause (afraid of...).

There is non-pathological fear that could strike anyone in certain situations (an imminent danger of accident, burial, a person's aggression, grave illness, etc.). Anxiety or pathological fear does not have an apparent justification or appears due to imaginary, alleged causes.

Psychology dictionaries do not speak about the spiritual component in conditioning anxiety.

Solomon defines fright as *nothing but the betrayal of the assistance that comes from reasoning* (*Wisdom of Solomon* 17:11).

It is self-evident that one must believe in *proper judgment*, and not only in the forgiving, unconditional, infinite mercy of God.

In many other verses the cause of fear is little faith, the lack of faith, or the lack of love:

- *Why are you fearful, O you of little faith?* (*Matthew* 8:26).
- *They were in great fear where no fear was* (*Psalms* 13:1-5). The text refers to the atheist whom the psalmist calls mad because he said in his heart: *There is no God* (*Psalms* 13:1).
- *There is no fear in love...* (*1 John* 4:18).

- The word "fear" is mentioned for the first time after the fall, when the Lord calls out, "*Adam, where are you?*" He replied, "*I heard Your voice as You were walking in the garden, and I was afraid...* (Genesis 3:9-10).
- Because of their iniquity, Joseph's brothers were *dismayed in his presence* (Genesis 45:3).
- The appearance of an angel is another cause for fear: *And when Zacharias saw him, he was troubled, and fear fell upon him* (Luke 1:12).
- This text from Luke also speaks of the fear at the Savior's second coming: *...men's hearts failing them from fear and the expectation of those things which are coming* (Luke 21:26).
- The pagans became afraid when Paul spoke to them about *righteousness, self-control, and the judgment to come* (Acts 24:25).

Events that demonstrated the defeat of laws that govern the physical and biological universe generated fear in the people, and were perceived as hard to explain miracles: *Now all the people witnessed the thunderings, the lightning flashes, the sound of the trumpet, and the mountain smoking; and when the people saw this, they trembled and stood afar off* (Exodus 20:18).

Moses explains this event: *Be of good courage, for God is come to test you, that His fear may be among you so you may not sin* (Exodus 20:20).

Seeing the paralytic's forgiveness of sins and healing, the multitudes *became frightened and glorified God* (Matthew 9:8).

The same sentiments tried the multitudes when they saw the widow's son resurrected at Nain: ***Then fear came upon all, and they glorified God (Luke 7:16).***

On Tabor the apostles ***were fearful as they entered the cloud (Luke 9:34).***

When the manifestations of the material universe were subdued and calmed by the Savior, the apostles ***feared exceedingly, and they said to one another, "Who can this be, that even the wind and the sea obey Him!" (Mark 4:41).***

Fear has disastrous effects on personal and community level:

- ***What man is there who is fearful and fainthearted? Let him go and return to his house, lest the heart of his brethren faint like his heart (Deuteronomy 20:8).***
- ***...fear involves torment (1 John 4:18).***
- ***...a broken spirit dries the bones (Proverbs 17:22).***

We could say that there is a *holy fear*, the fear of God, inspired by our faith and by the angels:

- ***Do not be so confident of atonement that you add sin to sin (Wisdom of Sirach 5:5).***
- ***He who fears the Lord will fear nothing, and he will not be cowardly, for the Lord is his hope. Blessed is the soul of a man who fears the Lord (Wisdom of Sirach 34:14-15).***
- ***...work out your own salvation with fear and trembling (Philippians 2:12).***

- *...the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were greatly afraid (Luke 2:9).*
- *Come, you children, listen to me; I will teach you the fear of the Lord (Psalm 33:12).*
- *The fear of the Lord is pure, enduring unto ages of ages (Psalm 18:10).*
- *The beginning of wisdom is the fear of the Lord (Psalm 110:10).*
- *He who fears the Lord will fear nothing (Wisdom of Sirach 34:14)*
- *And if you call on the Father, who without partiality judges according to each one's work, conduct yourselves throughout the time of your stay here in fear (1 Peter 1:17).*

The miraculous spiritual and bodily healing of the paralytic generated a holy fear in people, since they were amazed, they gave glory to God and they *were filled with fear, saying, “We have seen strange things today!” (Luke 5:26).*

But there is also a pathological fear inspired by demons in people weak in faith or in atheists. The prophets, the Savior and the apostles spoke frequently against this pathological fear.

- *The Lord is my light and my savior; whom shall I fear? (Psalm 26:1).*
- *In God I hope; I will not be afraid; what will man do to me? (Psalm 55:12).*

- *If you have made your heart pure and stretch out your hands toward Him, if something lawless is done by your hands, put it far away from you; and do not let any wrongdoing lodge in your dwelling. For in this way, your face will shine forth like pure water, for you will cleanse away the filth. You will not fear (Job 11:13-15).*
- *Do not fear, little flock... (Luke 12:32).*
- *Do not be afraid, Zacharias, for your prayer is heard (Luke 1:13).*
- *Do not be afraid. From now on you will catch men (Luke 5:10).*
- *It is I; do not be afraid (John 6:20).*
- *...do not be afraid... of the attack of the ungodly when it comes at you (Proverbs 3:28).*
- *...do not be afraid of their threats, nor be troubled (1 Peter 3:14).*
- *Do not be afraid, but speak (Acts 18:9).*
- *There is no fear in love; but perfect love casts out fear (1 John 4:18).*

Referring to the act of creation, there should not have been pathological fear in the world, since *God has not given us a spirit of fear (2 Timothy 1:7).*

Instead, immediately after the fall, when the Lord God cried out to Adam: *Adam, where are you?* he replied: *I heard Your voice as You were walking in the garden, and I was afraid (Genesis 3:9-10).* So the origin of pathological fear is in the fall, that is, in the knowledge of evil (since this led to tasting the forbidden fruit).

Woe to cowardly hearts (Wisdom of Sirach 2:12).

They are tripped up, because they fear and stand in awe of men (Proverbs 29:25).

They were in great fear where no fear was (Psalm 52:6). This psalm refers to the atheists who, as we can see, have an imaginary fear.

This pathological fear, inspired by confrontation with the world, fear which causes great evil through indifference, exaggerated prudence, through lack of implication, through omitting the truth, belongs to the fearful to whom the apocalyptic text refers, according to which the fearful reach hell before the unfaithful and the defiled (*Revelation 21:8*).

The therapy for fear has been written in scriptural verses:

- hope in God (*Psalm 55:11*)
- faith (*Luke 8:50*)
- the Lord is the healer of fear (*Luke 1:74-75*)
- prayer (*Job 11:13*)
- by not enduring injustice (*Job 11:14*)
- by withdrawing your hand from unrighteousness (*Job 11:14*).

The Savior's advice – He, Who was not afraid to die upon the cross – is consistently the same:

- *Do not fear, little flock... (Luke 12:32).*
- *It is I; do not be afraid! (John 6:20).*
- *...do not be afraid... of the attack of the ungodly when it comes at you (Proverbs 3:28).*
- *Do not be afraid, but speak, and do not keep silent (Acts 18:9).*

The Apostle Paul writes to Timothy encouraging him to stir up *the gift of God* (2 Timothy 1:6) which is in him: *For God has not given us a spirit of fear, but of power and of love and of a sound mind* (2 Timothy 1:7).

Based on the writings of the Holy Fathers, Jean-Claude Larchet writes that man has a fear of "losing his soul and body," hence a fear "that keeps man attached to himself," and so, a fear "as a consequence of original sin," "attachment to this world."¹²⁴

If man were to spiritually feel the fear of losing God, he would no longer be overcome by the pathological fear of losing the values of this world.

Imagination, which deforms reality and hyperbolizes everything, also works at amplifying pathological fear.

St. Isaac the Syrian, quoted by Jean-Claude Larchet, says that "the proud soul is a slave to fear, because he relies on himself and is afraid of the sounds of things and shadows,"¹²⁵ and St. John Chrysostom says, "The one who lives in sin is always afraid."¹²⁶

A fear (which has in it something of "falling on the right hand" is the fear of making mistakes, more recently called *pusillanimity* – a destructive sentiment that undermines all of a person's good initiatives.

¹²⁴ J.-C. Larchet, *The Therapy of Spiritual Illnesses*, op. cit., pp.186-187

¹²⁵ Ibid., p.191

¹²⁶ Ibid.

Every tragic event gives birth to fear in man, which in turn leads to more suffering. Zorin quotes an Arabic parable according to which a traveler meets with the plague, which tells him that it is going to Baghdad to kill 5000 people. After a while the traveler meets it again and asks, "Why did you kill 50,000?" The plague answers, "Not I, just as I promised, I reaped 5000. The rest died of fear."¹²⁷

Monk Moses the Athonite describes the clinical manifestations of anxiety with the accuracy of a doctor:

- sadness
- fear
- discord
- darkness
- anger
- fury
- fatigue
- indifference
- melancholy
- feelings of guilt
- regret
- suspicion
- memory disorders
- insomnia
- anorexia or bulimia
- psychomotor agitation
- abulia

- indecision

¹²⁷ K. V. Zorin, *Arise and Walk! Steps towards Healing*, op. cit., pp.96-97

- overly heightened sensibility¹²⁸

The same author identifies passionate attachment to the goods of this world as being among the causes of anxiety (gamblers, drunkards, slaves of bodily passions, of the stomach and of money, drug addicts and the lovers of vainglory), because passions "give birth to and nurture anxiety."¹²⁹

The consequences of anxiety are paralyzing in several ways, psychologically, spiritually and existentially; a person may:

- refuse or neglect the mystery of confession;
- feel or believe himself asthenic, refusing physical and intellectual activity;
- emphatically solicit the assistance of those who surround them, and if they do not obtain it, they could feel themselves abandoned and treated unjustly;
- interpersonal relationships become troubled;
- place their own responsibility on others.¹³⁰
- "Anxiety may only appear in the life of the faithful if faith weakens."¹³¹

Fear can be treated spiritually in this way:

- to help the person, or better said to ***learn to fear the Lord his God and be careful to observe all these commandments*** (of the Holy Scripture) (*Deuteronomy 17:19*);
- to urge him towards faith, since the lack of faith gives birth to fear;¹³²

- to urge him to love all his peers, as *there is no fear in love* (1 John 4:18).

"Through renouncing your own will, through humble thoughts, wherever you will be, anxiety will have no power over you."¹³³

¹²⁸ Monk Moses the Athonite, *The Sorrow of Anxiety and the Joy of Hope*, Sophia Publishing, Bucharest, 2005, pp.11-12

¹²⁹ Ibid., p.14

¹³⁰ Ibid., p.16

¹³¹ Ibid., p.16

¹³² J.-C. Larchet, *The Therapy of Spiritual Illnesses*, op. cit., p.545

¹³³ Ibid.

Despair. Depression

Depression is in second place after anxiety in contemporary mental pathology. It is estimated that 3% of the global population is more or less depressive.

The Great Dictionary of Psychology defines it as follows: "the mental illness characterized by profound modification of thymus state, of the disposition towards sadness, suffering of the morale and a slowing of the psychomotor operations."¹³⁴

It is accompanied by fear, sentiments of guilt and regret, anger, hate, boredom, fatigue, disgust, discouragement, desperation, spiritual pain.¹³⁵

There are two classical forms of depression:

- *endogenous*, without evident connection to patient's social environment or other pathology. It manifests itself as a more serious form of loss of self-respect, thoughts of or attempts

at suicide, loss of the meaning of existence and a series of accompanying symptoms (including somatization): anorexia, insomnia, loss of weight, apathy, areactivity, emotional anesthesia;

- *psychogenic*: includes reactive depressions, the consequences of certain stresses or permanent dissatisfaction or accompanying more or less serious somatic illnesses; it is a less serious form than the first.

In the Holy Scripture we often find the words *despair* or *sorrow* or *sadness*.

Through its development, despair can separate man from God, therefore theology considers it to be a sin, that is, more than just an illness, and the Holy Fathers accord it a lot of space in their descriptions and treatises. Here are some “biblical” causes.

¹³⁴ Larousse, *The Great Dictionary of Psychology*, Trei Publishing, Bucharest, 2006, p.326

¹³⁵ S. Logothetis, *Depression and Its Healing*, op. cit., p.11

- Because the Lord did not look towards Cain's face and his gifts, ***Cain was extremely sorrowful, and his countenance fell*** (*Genesis* 4:5).
- Nehemiah is sad because his people are ***in great distress and reproach. The wall of Jerusalem is also broken down, and its gates are burned with fire*** (*Nehemiah* 1:3).
- The King Artaxerxes diagnosed him with reactive depression: ***Why is your face sad, since you are not sick?***

This is nothing but sorrow of heart (Nehemiah 2:2). My heart is grieved by two things... a man of war in want because of poverty; men of intelligence who suffer contempt (Wisdom of Sirach 26:19).

- In the garden of Gethsemane, before his arrest the Savior speaks to the apostles about the soul becoming sorrowful: *My soul is exceedingly sorrowful, even to death (Matthew 26:38).*
- In *The Gospel of Mark* sorrow is accompanied by being *troubled and deeply distressed (Mark 14:33-34).*
- To be at a loss is not, nor should it be to be in despair: *we are perplexed,¹³⁶ but not in despair (2 Corinthians 4:8).*
- Pharaoh's eunuchs were sad because they could not interpret dreams (*Genesis 40:7-8*).
- The false prophets, with lies *have made the heart of the righteous sad, whom I have not made sad (Ezekiel 13:22).*

Today we observe the induction of sadness, the promotion of the negative states – a phenomenon characteristic of the media, which has a special cult for bad news and negative information.

The young man in *The Gospel of Matthew* wanted to obtain eternal life. He had fulfilled all of the commandments of the Old Testament, but felt that he was still missing something.

¹³⁶ [Translator's note] Perplexed is the translation of ἀπορούμενοι (ἀπορέω), which can also be translated more literally, *at a loss*.

Jesus said to him, "If you want to be perfect, go, sell what you have and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come,

followed Me.” But when the young man heard that saying, he went away sorrowful, for he had great possessions (Matthew 19:21-22). This is a typical case of "worldly sorrow."

Complications of depression are disastrous – more on the spiritual level than on the psychological level:

- *...the speeches of a desperate one... are as wind (Job 6:26).*
- *...but the sorrow of the world produces death (2 Corinthians 7:10).*

Therapy for despair:

- Seeing Cane’s sadness, the Lord said to him, *And if you do not do well, sin lies at the door. And its desire is for you, but you should rule over it (Genesis 4:7).*
- Wine can be a remedy for *those in sorrow (Proverbs 31:6-7).*
- Prayer is the absolute remedy for despair: *Stay here and watch with Me (Matthew 26:38).*
- The reconstruction of Jerusalem was celebrated through a special day: repentance, confessing sins (by the entire people), reading of the law, and the blessing: *This day is holy to the Lord your God; do not mourn nor weep... Do not sorrow, for the joy of the Lord is your strength (Nehemiah 8:9-10).*

Madness

The word *madness* does not sound good to psychologists' and psychiatrists' ears in contemporary society, nor does it sound good to those mentally ill. Nevertheless, it is often used in the Bible, sometimes with meanings radically different from its secular use.

The Great Dictionary of Psychology accords it restricted space, defining it as "a malady of the spirit" or "irrationality or the absence of reason and that which escapes its control."¹³⁷

In the secular psychiatric literature the word "madness" has the meaning of estrangement, but in a sociological context it is also indicative of an extreme non-conformism "which borders on the pathological."

Some insane people easily insert themselves into society until the end of their days, while others must be at least temporarily isolated.

We will present a few meanings of "mad", "madness", "foolish", "foolishness", "without discernment", as they appear in the Holy Scripture:

- Kind David *was very much afraid of Achish the king of Gath*, so he *pretended madness in their hands*:
 - he feigned madness
 - scratched on the doors of the gate
 - let his saliva fall down on his beard (*1Samuel 21:12-13*).
- Seeing his suffering, Job's wife urged him on to an act of spiritual euthanasia (to curse God and die). But Job replied: *You have spoken as one of the foolish women speaks* (*Job 2:9-15*).
- Lack of faith, according to the psalmist, is foolishness: *The fool says in his heart, "There is no God"* (*Psalm 13:1*).

- The same meaning is presented in Psalm 93: *...all you fools, at length be discerning. He who planted the ear, shall He not hear? Or He who formed the eye, shall He not see? (Psalm 93:8-9).*
- *...he who is impulsive exalts folly* (Proverbs 14:29).
- Because of lack of discernment *a fool rages and is self-confident* (Proverbs 14:16).

¹³⁷ Larousse, *The Great Dictionary of Psychology*, op. cit., p.791

- sometimes madness is associated with arrogance (*Proverbs 14:3*).
- *...whoever spreads slander is a fool* (*Proverbs 10:18*).
- *...he who hates correction is without discernment* (*Proverbs 12:1*). The teaching of this verse has psychotherapeutic effects.
- *He who replies to a word before he hears it lacks discernment, and this is a reproach to him* (*Proverbs 18:13*).
- *A son without discernment treats the instruction of his father with contempt* (*Proverbs 15:5*).
- *...any fool can start a quarrel* (*Proverbs 20:3*).
- *A fool has no delight in understanding, but in expressing his own heart* (*Proverbs 18:2*). Based on other biblical verses, we can say that this verse refers to expressing our thoughts publicly, without discernment.
- Madness is also called complete trust in "your own way" and rejecting advice: *The ways of undiscerning men are*

right in their own eyes, but a wise man hearkens to counsels (Proverbs 12:17).

- Those without discernment despise, *wisdom and instruction (Proverbs 1: 8).*
- *He who trusts in his own heart is a fool... (Proverbs 28:26).*
- Isaiah characterizes the fool as one who:
 - speaks foolishness;
 - his heart will think vain things to practice lawlessness,
 - to speak error against the Lord,
 - to scatter hungry souls,
 - and to make thirsty souls empty (*Isaiah 32:6*).
- The one who is out of his mind views askance the evolution of the righteous man's soul from this world towards eternity: *In the eyes of the undiscerning they seemed to have died, and their departure was considered to be misfortune (Wisdom of Solomon 3:2).*
- The family of a man who is out of his mind must be understood if it is difficult for them to live with him: *Sand, salt, and a piece of iron are easier to bear than a senseless man (Wisdom of Sirach 22:15).*
- *...a cowardly heart in the thought of a fool cannot stand firm against any kind of fear (Wisdom of Sirach 22:18).*
- The heart of a fool is led by a power to which he has no access: *The heart of a fool resembles a wagon wheel, and*

his reasoning is like a turning axle (Wisdom of Sirach 33:5).

- *The inner workings of a fool are like a broken vessel, for he will not hold onto any knowledge* (Wisdom of Sirach 21:14).
- Instability and doubt characterize the fool: *...a fool changes like the moon* (Wisdom of Sirach 27:11).
- Insults and remonstrations characterize the fool (Wisdom of Sirach 18:17).
- A fool *will not keep a matter confidential* (Wisdom of Sirach 8:17).
- *The lips of gossips repeat the words of others...* (Wisdom of Sirach 21:25).
- Another definition of foolishness:
 - *Without examination*
 - *or knowledge of the evidence* (Susanna – Daniel, Preamble 48)

Christ's communication to the Pharisees is harsh, calling them fools who *make the outside of the cup and dish clean*, but their *inward part is full of greed and wickedness* (Luke 11:39-40).

If we *give alms* from the things that are inside of us, then *all things are clean* (Luke 11:41).

The rich man whose land bore rich harvest was a fool because he imagined that his soul could rejoice in earthly values: *And I will say to my soul, "Soul, you have many goods laid up for many years; take your ease; eat, drink, and be merry."* *But God said to him, 'Fool! This night*

your soul will be required of you; then whose will those things be which you have provided?" (Luke 12:19-20).

Unrighteous mammon can be a cause of madness (*Jeremiah 17:7*).

The New Testament fundamentally overturns the notion of "madness."

It appears as meaning of an absolute misunderstanding between two worlds: ***For the message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God (1 Corinthians 1:18).***

The Christian people appeared referring their entire existence to eternity. This is an "existential physiological action." On the contrary, *those who perish*, those who have no hope of resurrection, see the cross "in a foolish way", that is, as something which suppresses their only existence.

That is how the meaning of the following verses is explained:

- ***Where is the wise? Where is the scribe? Where is the disputer of this age? Has not God made foolish the wisdom of this world? (1 Corinthians 1:20).***
- ***...but we preach Christ crucified, to the Jews a stumbling block and to the Greeks foolishness (1 Corinthians 1:23).***

The incarnation, crucifixion, resurrection and ascension are the Lord Christ's saving actions, which could not be understood by the human reasoning of the Old Testament. Only the prophets understood "the things which cannot be understood," but people did not believe them. That is why ***the foolishness of God is wiser than human wisdom (1 Corinthians 1:25).***

So that our amazement be complete and for us to understand that among other things Christianity means the radical change of the value system, *God has chosen the foolish things of the world to put to shame the wise, and God has chosen the weak things of the world to put to shame the things which are mighty* (1 Corinthians 1:27).

Life in Christ presupposes the lifting up of the *natural man* to the *spiritual man*. For the natural man there is even the risk that he will not receive the things of the Spirit of God, *for they are foolishness to him; nor can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned* (1 Corinthians 2:14).

The dialogue between Festus and the Apostle Paul shows the chasm between the pagan and Christian world. When Paul speaks to him about resurrection, Festus answers: *“Paul, you are beside yourself! Much learning is driving you mad!” But he said, “I am not mad, most noble Festus, but speak...”* (Acts 26:24-25).

In the *Second Epistle to Timothy* we find another complex description of the fools:

boasters,

proud,

blasphemers,

disobedient to parents,

unthankful,

unholy,

unloving,

unforgiving,

slanderers,

without self-control,

*brutal,
despisers of good,
traitors,
headstrong,
haughty,
lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God,
having a form of godliness but denying its power,
always learning and never able to come to the knowledge of the
truth,
resist the truth,
men of corrupt minds,
disapproved concerning the faith.*

*They will progress no further, for their folly will be manifest to
all...*

The apostle says that this kind of foolish people will come *in the last days*, when there will be *perilous times* (2 Timothy 3:1-9). During these times there is the greatest risk of deception, because these people have the appearance of true faith but deny its power.

The consequences of manifesting foolishness are disastrous:

- their legacy is shame (*Proverbs 3:35*);
- *A man's lack of discernment maltreats his ways* (*Proverbs 19:1*);
- *The lips of the man without discernment lead him into evil things* (*Proverbs 18:6*);
- *The mouth of a man without discernment is destruction to him and his lips are the snare of his soul* (*Proverbs 18:7*);
- *Fools mock at the sacrifice for sin* (*Proverbs 14:9*);

- *...a man without discernment will be servant to one with discernment (Proverbs 11:28);*
- *...wrath destroys a foolish man (Job 5:2).*

The Holy Scripture also teaches us through a few verses what attitude we should have towards a foolish person:

- *Do not consult with a fool, for he will not keep a matter confidential (Wisdom of Sirach 8:17);*
- *Do not subject yourself to a foolish man (Wisdom of Sirach 4:27);*
- *Do not hold a conversation with a fool (Wisdom of Sirach 22:13);*
- *He shall drink reproach at his own feet who sends a word through an undiscerning messenger (Proverbs 26:6).*

Foolishness therapy is not a simple thing: *Folly fastens itself to the heart of the child, for the rod and instruction are far from him (Proverbs 22:18).*

Insomnia

In the Bible there are a few passages that speak of "losing sleep" and "getting sleep."

These are the causes of insomnia as they are found in the Holy Scripture:

- the cares of the rich *removes sleep (Wisdom of Sirach 31:1);*
- *Sleepless anxiety will drive away slumber, and severe illness makes an end to sleep (Wisdom of Sirach 31:2);*

- remembering the evils one has done (*1 Maccabees* 6:9-13), that is, having taken the silver and gold vessels from Jerusalem and having murdered those in Judah.

In the case described in Maccabees, insomnia is associated with grief which devastates the heart.

So, three major causes for insomnia appear:

- The first cause: passionate attachment to this world, its riches, and the risk of losing them; it is an unspiritual vigil for material things as an idol.
- The second cause is one's own judgment of conscience which works in man. It is in fact the living image of God in man which works towards his correction. Antiochus Eupator, taking the vessels and laying waste to those in Judah, committed a profoundly fleshly action. Now, in *a foreign land*, his conscience reminds him also through a fleshly sign: insomnia accompanied by a devastated heart. What is important is that Antiochus Eupator, through his conscience, realizes for himself the spiritual cause of his illness: ***I know that because of these things, evils have found me...***(*1 Maccabees* 6:13). Perhaps that is precisely why he has insomnia, since he himself realizes the cause.
- The third cause is ***severe illness*** (*Wisdom of Sirach* 31:2).

Suicide

Committing suicide is not a simple act of depression, as it appears at first glance.

The apparent reasons never justify the dissolution of the resolute human person who has programmed and convinced himself.

In the Holy Scripture a few cases of suicide are described:

- Saul, defeated in the battle against the Philistines, throws himself upon his sword and dies *for his lawlessness which he committed against the Lord, according to the Word of the Lord, because he did not keep it...* and because he *sought counsel of a wizard...* (I Chronicles 10:4-13). Saul had his own argument which he used to ask his armor-bearer to kill him (a kind of masked suicide): *Do not let these uncircumcised men come and thrust me through and abuse me* (1 Kingdoms 31:4).
- Ahithophel devised a plan so that Absalom, David's son, could catch his father. But because his plan was not followed he hanged himself (2 Kingdoms 17:23).
- Zimri killed himself by setting the house on fire, where he also died, because he had led Israel into sin *walking in the way of Jeroboam* (3 Kingdoms 16:18-19), that is, worshiping the foreign gods and turning aside from the True God (1 Kings 14:9).
- Razis preferred to kill himself than to fall into the hands of Nicanor who, wanting *to make obvious his ill-will for the Jews*, sent *more than five hundred soldiers to* catch him (2 Maccabees 14:37-42).

Judas' betrayal and suicide were as follows:

...the devil having already put it into the heart of Judas... to betray Him (John 13:2).

While taking *the piece of bread* at The Mystical Supper (that is, the first Eucharist), *after the piece of bread, Satan entered him (John 13:27).*

Then Judas... seeing that He had been condemned, was remorseful and brought back the thirty pieces of silver to the chief priests and elders, saying, "I have sinned by betraying innocent blood."...Then he threw down the pieces of silver in the temple and departed, and went and hanged himself (Matthew 27:3-5).

The causes for suicide in these cases are:

- the betrayal of faith, betraying God, turning towards other gods;
- turning against a man of God, against one of God's anointed;
- in order to avoid dishonor dying at the hands of those who hated the Jews.

The cases described were not atheists, but people who knew God and betrayed Him.

Judas "repented" but he did not return to Christ to ask for forgiveness.

Demonic assault. Possession

The teaching of the Orthodox faith speaks of *demons* and *possession*. This phenomenon has been possible ever since our first parents fell into demonic deception.

- Saul erred by not listening to the Lord and took the plunder from Amalekites under the pretext that he would offer them up as a sacrifice. Through Samuel’s mouth, the Lord announced to him that he would lose the throne. David was anointed king and immediately *the Spirit of the Lord departed from Saul, and an evil spirit from the Lord, tormented him* (1 Kingdoms 16:13-14).
- Falling into idolatry means in fact *sacrificing to demons* (Baruch 4:7).

The devil is an unclean being and that is why Jesus Sirach asks himself: *What will be cleansed from an unclean thing? And what will be true from a false thing?* (Wisdom of Sirach 34:4).

Through exorcism demons departed from man and entered pigs: *So the demons begged Him, saying, “If You cast us out, permit us to go away into the herd of swine.” And He said to them, “Go.” So when they had come out, they went into the herd of swine. And suddenly the whole herd of swine ran violently down the steep place into the sea, and perished in the water* (Matthew 8:31-32).

The clinical aspects of the possessed are:

- the possessed came out of the tombs;
- they were exceedingly fierce, so that no one could pass that way (Matthew 8:28);
- the demons recognized the Savior: *What have we done to You, Jesus, You Son of God? Have You come here to torment us before the time?* (Matthew 8:29);

- a man with an unclean spirit *cried out* loudly (*Mark 1:23-24*);
- *And when the unclean spirit had convulsed him and cried out with a loud voice, he came out of him* (*Mark 1:26*);
- *... who had his dwelling among the tombs; and no one could bind him, not even with chains, because he had often been bound with shackles and chains. And the chains had been pulled apart by him, and the shackles broken in pieces; neither could anyone tame him* (*Mark 5:3-4*);
- *And always, night and day, he was in the mountains and in the tombs, crying out and cutting himself with stones* (*Mark 5:5*);
- *a mute spirit* (*Mark 9:17*);
- it throws (the sick person) to the ground;
- foaming at the mouth;
- gnashing teeth;
- becoming rigid (*Mark 9:18*);
- the symptoms aggravated in the presence of the Savior:
Then they brought him to Him. And when he saw Him, immediately the spirit convulsed him, and he fell on the ground and wallowed, foaming at the mouth (*Mark 9:20*);
- They throw the sick person into fire and water to destroy him (*Mark 9:22*);
- the deceivers and the antichrist *do not confess Jesus Christ as coming in the flesh* (*2 John 1:7*).

According to the biblical texts, there are weak and sick people who are controlled by the demons (as a distinct category) (*Matthew 10:8*).

Other times demons dwell in the sick people (*Luke 4:40-41*).

The demons recognize the Savior and feel themselves perishing. The Savior casts them out with His word.

Evagrius Ponticus says that demons have the role of tying man's soul to earthly values, working through sensations and perceptions.¹³⁸ Those who suffer severe illnesses, those near death, "the devil attacks more powerfully, because he has less time available."¹³⁹

Hierotheos Vlachos says that the devil is allowed to upset us in order for the Lord to test our liberty.¹⁴⁰

There are several different situations between "being attacked by demons" and "being controlled by demons." This latter condition we recognize through the blasphemous attitude of the sick person: he utters words of blasphemy.

The demons are cast out through faith, prayer and fasting.

¹³⁸ Justin Moisescu, *Evagrius of Pontus*, op. cit. p.148

¹³⁹ Ibid.

¹⁴⁰ H. Vlachos, *Orthodox Psychotherapy (sequel and debates)*, op. cit., p.241

Dependence

The notion of *dependence* is very comprehensive in biblical medicine.

Attachment to the world has vainglory as its root, along with mediocre satisfactions. There is attachment to the social values of the

world (social position, the desire to be a leader, the desire to be appreciated, the desire to impose one's opinion) and attachment to the material values of this world (wealth, extreme convenience).

The risk for those who are powerfully attached to the world is expressed through the risk of not being able to receive good teaching, which is salvific teaching.

The seeds that *fell among thorns are those who, when they have heard, go out and are choked with cares, riches, and pleasures of life, and bring no fruit to maturity* (Luke 8:14).

The rich cultivate the risk of *losing their consolation* (Luke 6:24).

Worldly power does not confer any assurance from the perspective of salvation. *A king is not saved by his large army* (Psalm 32:16), since *a horse is a false hope for salvation, and it shall not be saved by its enormous power* (Psalm 32:17).

A miserly man is compared with *the clouds and wind without rain* (Proverbs 25:14), that is, a creature without fruit. In another part it says that *Wealth is not fitting for a small-minded man*, because *to what end is wealth for an envious man? For he who gathers for himself, gathers for others and others will live in luxury with his goods* (Wisdom of Sirach 14:3-4).

The one who seeks to get rich risks a fall: *Many are driven to calamity for the sake of gold...* (Wisdom of Sirach 31:6).

Greed also gives birth to other evils:

- a greedy man *stirs up strife* (Proverbs 28:25) and
- *does not consider that poverty will come upon him* (Proverbs 28:22).

The bible offers us numerous passages that reflect the unhappiness of those attached to this world:

- Adam and Eve fell from heaven because they were attracted to the forbidden fruit: *So when the woman saw the tree was good for food, was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree beautiful to contemplate, she took its fruit and ate. She also gave it to her husband with her, and he ate* (Genesis 3:6).
- The manna in the wilderness had to be gathered for just one day, since the Lord gave them one omer a day. Only on the sixth day did He give them double, so that they would not have to gather anything on the seventh. But they collected some for the second day and it bred worms, and they went out to collect on the seventh day and found nothing. And the Lord was angry with them (Exodus 16:14-30).
- Babylon fell because of its covetousness: *O you who dwell by many waters, abundant in treasures, your end has come, the measure of your covetousness* (Jeremiah 51:13).

Attachment to this world is reflected symbolically as well through Hebrews' exodus, from brick makers in Egypt towards the Promised Land. This exodus is an intense trial, since they were always attracted towards Egypt, the land of their slavery. They were attracted by their body to Egypt, more than they were attracted to Canaan with their soul. The Lord, however, through the hand of Moses, and through punishments, led them to the Promised Land. They missed the meat, fish,

cucumbers, melons, onions, leeks and garlic. The Lord sent them meat in the form of a cloud of quail. ***But while the meat was still between their teeth, before it was chewed, the Lord's anger was aroused against the people, and the Lord struck the people with a very great plague. So he called the name of that place Graves of Lust, because there they buried the people who lusted*** (Numbers 11:1-34).

A dependency that the Holy Scripture mentions, that is still very current, is dependency on alcohol. Alcoholism is described in the Old Testament as follows:

- woe;
- contentions;
- sorrow;
- wounds without cause;
- redness of eyes (*Proverbs 23:29*);
- those dominated by alcohol err in vision;
- they stumble in judgment (*Isaiah 28:7*);
- wine turns friends and brothers against each other (*I Ezra 3:22-23*).

Ecclesiasticus characterizes wine and drunkenness in chapter 31:25-31:

- deception;
- irritation;
- destruction;
- tests hearts... of the arrogant;
- bitterness of soul;
- quarrels;

- stumbling and falling;
- increases the anger of a senseless man to his own hurt;
- reducing his strength;
- adding to his wounds.

The Apostle Paul says that drunkenness is a work *of the flesh* (*Galatians* 5:19-21) and that in *wine... is dissipation* (*Ephesians* 5:18). Peter places drunkenness alongside the greatest sins: lewdness, lusts, unforgiveness, serving idols (*1 Peter* 4:3).

Of course, there are other pathological manifestations of the lustful part that transform into dependence:

- bodily pleasures – “those of the belly, and from under the belly”;
- dependence on active pharmacological substances – hallucinogenic drugs that induce carnal pleasures and phantasies of false mysticism;
- dependence on image which has disastrous effects on behavior, intellectual performance and psychosomatic manifestations;
- dependence on medicines;
- dependence on money and belongings.

“In man’s nature there is only one desiring power.”¹⁴¹ This power can be completely, or more or less focused towards God or the world. Through the fall of our first parents, the desiring power has been scattered out towards the senses. It gets pleasure through the senses instead of obtaining joy in

God. The tragedy of the fallen man is that the pleasure obtained through senses is accompanied by feeling bad about oneself and is followed by pain. The human person is torn by the fall, since his desire cannot at the same time accede to God and the world.

The fallen man employs delight “outside of God,” acting out “against nature,”¹⁴² suppressing his own energy, idolatrizing and consuming the fallen part of man, to which he becomes a servant, that is, dependent.

Argyrophilia and pleonexia, since that is what the passion for money and wealth are called, blind man, and also alter relationships with his peers due to whom he has become rich.

They are the addictive things which increase unrest, lead to insomnia and, most seriously, make man insensible to the suffering of others.

The world must be approached theologically and Eucharistically, not passionately. Discovering the spiritual meaning in things, their use as “steps towards perfection” and as a “school for the soul”¹⁴³ in order to lead man towards knowledge of God, is the target and logic of the relationship between man and the created universe.

¹⁴¹ J.-C. Larchet, *The Therapy of Spiritual Illnesses*, op. cit., p.59

¹⁴² Ibid., p.63

¹⁴³ I.C. Teşu, *The Theology of Trials*, op. cit., p.31

Solomon only asked God for wisdom, the source of knowledge of God. But the Lord also gave him the things of this world (wealth, glory, length of days) precisely because he did not ask for them (2 *Chronicles* 1:11).

The rich young man asked the Savior what he should do to gain eternal life. The answer was: ... *if you want to enter into life, keep the commandments... If you want to be perfect, go, sell what you have and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, follow Me* (Matthew 19:16-21).

In other words, perfection cannot be obtained before healing every dependency.

Deception

Living in deception is a continuous drama.

There is a kind of deception between people: one person deceives another. There is also a kind of universal deception of faith: the heretical person and the person who has lost his faith are deceived people.

Faith does not need proofs that others bring to it; the faithful man begins to have and discover his own proofs and signs.

An evil and adulterous generation seeks after a sign... (Matthew 12:39). When an unclean spirit is cast out of a man and wants to return to him, if he finds the house empty, swept, and put in order. Then he goes and takes with him seven other spirits more wicked than himself, and they enter and dwell there; and the last state of that man is worse than the first. So shall it also be with this wicked generation (Matthew 12:44-45).

A Christian's fall into sin and heresy is graver than that of one who did not know faith. *For if, after they have escaped the pollutions of the world through the knowledge of the Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, they*

are again entangled in them and overcome, the latter end is worse for them than the beginning. For it would have been better for them not to have known the way of righteousness, than having known it, to turn from the holy commandment delivered to them (2 Peter 2:20-21).

The Apostle Paul teaches us to “test the spirits,” because *many false prophets have gone out into the world (1 John 4:1)*. The world is haunted by deceptive spirits. The false prophets are *of the world* and *speak as of the world, and the world hears them (1 John 4:5)*.

Faith in Jesus Christ the Incarnate One forces the Apostle John to tell the faithful: *You are of God, little children, and have overcome them, because He who is in you is greater than he who is in the world (1 John 4:4)*.

Another deception can come from “hardening of the heart”, that is, when a miracle (proof) is produced even on the physical, material level, but the hardness of heart is so great that man cannot believe and remains in deception. This is the case with the multiplication of the loaves, an event lived by the disciples “right there”: *For they had not understood about the loaves, because their heart was hardened (Mark 6:52)*

The heretic is deceived and is a deceiver. *Reject a divisive man after the first and second admonition, knowing that such a person is warped and sinning, being self-condemned (Titus 3:10)*.

Deceit is another kind of deception which some that come “in the name of the Lord” practice: *Take heed that no one deceives you. For many will come in My name, saying, ‘I am the Christ,’ and will deceive many (Matthew 24:4-5)*.

The case of the first martyr, Stephen, is typical of deception through lack of faith. Even though the whole Sanhedrin that judged him

saw his face as the face of an angel, they all condemned him to death (Acts 6:15).

The Apostle Paul warns us against a maximum possible deception *...for Satan himself transforms himself into an angel of light... and his ministers also transform themselves into ministers of righteousness...* (2 Corinthians 11:14-15).

Ignatius Brianchaninov says that ever since the primordial fall all of mankind has been in deception. “The greatest deception is to think you are free of deception.” He defines deception as being “damaging to human nature through lies”¹⁴⁴ It is described with the words “carnal mind” (Romans 8:5-6), “profane and idle babblings” and “falsely called knowledge” (1 Timothy 6:20).

Deception has its very beginning in the devil’s work in heaven with our first parents Adam and Eve. Satan tricked Eve, and Eve tricked Adam. After they believed Satan and fell, they began to believe their own opinions about themselves, as a continuous deception.

Healing deception starts with repentance and the awareness of the fact that we have been deceived.

Humble people are powerfully protected from deception, since they do not rely on their own opinion about themselves (as the proud do), and they are open to the protection that comes from above, since the heavenly powers naturally come to the humble soul but distance themselves from the proud.

Distancing Oneself from God

Even though today, in the secular conception of psychopathology, no one that has distanced himself from God is considered a pathological case, in the Christian conception of medicine and psychology distancing from God is an unfortunate spiritual condition which brings about other possible suffering:

- *O Lord, the hope of Israel all who forsake You shall be ashamed. "Those who depart from Me shall be written in the earth, because they have forsaken the Lord, the fountain of living waters" (Jeremiah 17:13).*
- *What transgression have your fathers found in Me, so as to go far from Me, to follow after vain and worthless things? ...But My people changed their glory to a glory from which they will not profit (Jeremiah 2:5-11).*

¹⁴⁴ Ignatius Brianchaninov, *On Deception*, op. cit., p.7

- Those who worship idols hurt themselves, *to the shame of their own faces (Jeremiah 7:18)*

To want to return to Egypt means distancing yourself from the Lord and traversing a path in the opposite direction of an evolution towards the Promised Land. That is why the Lord told the people through the voice of Jeremiah: *...Do not go to Egypt! Know certainly that I have admonished you this day (Jeremiah 42:19).*

Envy. Jealousy

Envy or jealousy is a very ancient pathological emotion. The first victim of this

spiritual illness was Cain, who out of jealousy killed his brother Abel (*Genesis* 4:8). It is a severe illness because it is born of the most terrible passion, which is pride.

The envious person is always sad because of the happiness of others. Saint Basil the Great, as quoted by H. Vlachos, describes the physical manifestations of an envious person:

- a dry and dull look in the eyes;
- fallen cheeks;
- a weary brow;
- a troubled soul that has abandoned the “criterion of truth.”

The Apostle Paul says that envy is a “work of the flesh” (*Galatians* 5:19-20).

Envy slowly cools faith and love and like a woodworm eats away the body of the one who manifests it.

The originator of this human passion is the devil himself.

Envy has a destructive effect on those who are attacked by it.

The only healthy restriction against its arrows is our patience, which makes the passion of no avail.

VI. Etiopathogeny

*“People do not act irresponsibly
because they are ill, but they are ill
because they act irresponsibly.”
(Philotheos Pharos)*

Hierotheos Vlachos, quoting Zizioulas, makes a profound analysis of the phenomenon “illness-health-healing,” revealing the disastrous pathology into which modern human civilization has fallen:

- Illness is the result of Adam’s sin, not man’s natural condition from creation.
- Sin and illness have become a universal reality which human liberty cannot combat. This is because through sin, after illness, death has penetrated man’s inner self. After the fall all die, the sinners and the saints.
- There has been no perfect human therapy, since the mortal, corruptible nature and illness are inherited biologically.
- Primordial health can only be recreated in the Savior’s person, “because he united human nature to the divine nature in His Hypostasis and conquered death and corruption,” that is why the healthy man is one that has bound himself to Christ.
- Freedom has an essential role in therapy. Since illness came into human existence through freedom, it is also through freedom that it can be overcome.¹⁴⁵

This chapter describes the causes of psychological suffering as they are found expressed in the biblical texts.

¹⁴⁵ H. Vlachos, *Existential Psychology and Orthodox Psychotherapy*, op. cit., pp.104-110

Didactically speaking there are:

- exogenous causes – those from “outside”
- endogenous causes – practiced by the sick person himself.

Exogenous Causes

Misfortune. Trials. Stress

There are great, “unique” misfortunes that leave deep wounds. But there are also misfortunes that repeat themselves. Jesus Sirach says that a permanent misfortune *is worse than death* (*Wisdom of Sirach* 38:20-21).

The majority of the texts describe misfortune as a kind of trial, as training, like a test: *who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able...* (*1 Corinthians* 10:13) or *...let us be thankful to the Lord our God, who is testing us just as he did our fathers* (*Judith* 8:25).

The Maccabean tortures *were for the discipline of our people, but not for their destruction* (*2 Maccabees* 6:12). The same text from the Maccabees says that when the Lord loves a people He quickly brings them misfortunes when they err, He does not wait *until they attain the completion of their sins* (*2 Maccabees* 6:14).

Paul’s misfortunes and trials for faith:

- *labors;*
- *in prisons more frequently;*
- *in stripes above measure;*
- *in deaths often;*
- *five times I received forty stripes minus one;*
- *three times I was beaten with rods;*

- *once I was stoned;*
- *three times I was shipwrecked;*
- *a night and a day I have been in the deep;*
- *in perils of waters;*
- *in perils of robbers;*
- *in perils of my own countrymen;*
- *in perils of the Gentiles;*
- *in perils in the city;*
- *in perils in the wilderness;*
- *in perils in the sea;*
- *in perils among false brethren;*
- *in hunger and thirst;*
- *in cold and nakedness (2 Corinthians 11:23-28).*

Despite all of this, Paul was never in despair, never hated anyone, and he composed the hymn of love, addressed to the Corinthians; furthermore, he rejoiced because he had suffered for the Lord. He took everything as a trial for faith and as the Lord's examination.

Misfortune for the faith are common for the Christians who come from the Jews: *For you also suffered the same things from your own countrymen, just as they did from the Judeans... (1 Thessalonians 2:14).*

For Gentiles misfortune is a test as well:

- *...at the destruction of their firstborn, they acknowledged the people to be God's son (Wisdom of Solomon 18:13).*
- *Many are the afflictions of the righteous, but He will deliver them from them all (Psalm 33:20).*
- *But blessed is the man whom God corrects (Job 5:17).*

Suffering for Christ is even a gift, as faith is: ***For to you it has been granted on behalf of Christ, not only to believe in Him, but also to suffer for His sake (Philippians 1:29).***

The signs before the second coming:

- beaten in the synagogues;
- brother will betray brother to death, and a father his child;
- children will rise up against parents and cause them to be put to death;
- you will be hated by all for My name's sake.

All these misfortunes have but one significance: ***he who endures to the end shall be saved (Mark 13:9-13).***

The greedy stir up conflict (Proverbs 28:25).

The Mother of God intervened in the plan for the world's salvation not only by giving birth to the Savior, but also by suffering ***a sword*** through her ***own soul... that the thoughts of many hearts may be revealed (Luke 2:35).***

The saints know the glory of God and faith in it accompanies them in overcoming all misfortunes: ***We are hard-pressed on every side, yet not crushed; we are perplexed, but not in despair; persecuted, but not forsaken; struck down, but not destroyed (2 Corinthians 4:8-9).***

These biblical texts reflect the truth that the faithful man's misfortunes, and especially those that try his faith and those born in patience for others' instruction, are well tolerated, do not leave scars and are not pathogenic (stress) factors for more suffering.

There are also trials “of the world” but about these the Savior said: *In the world you will have tribulation; but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world* (John 16:33).

Guile

The heart gives birth to guile since, *the heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked* (Jeremiah 17:9). Knowing it is almost impossible. But the Lord searches the heart and tests the mind in order *to give every man according to his ways, according to the fruit of his doings* (Jeremiah 17:10).

For from within, out of the heart of men, proceed evil thoughts, adulteries, fornications, murders, thefts, covetousness, wickedness, deceit, lewdness, an evil eye, blasphemy, pride, foolishness (Mark 7:21-22), but the Lord is the One Who *frustrates the counsels of the crafty* (Job 5:12).

A man who deceives his friend is like someone who throws *firebrands, arrows, and death* (Proverbs 26:18-19).

God's enemies conspired to work evil against his saints, to destroy them *from among the people* (Psalm 82:2-5).

Some of the scribes and Pharisees asked for *a sign* from Him. Because of their lack of faith *...He answered and said to them, "An evil and adulterous generation seeks after a sign..."* (Matthew 12:38-39).

The high priests and the elders of the people *...assembled... and plotted to take Jesus by trickery and kill Him* (Matthew 26:3-4).

Because Elymas the sorcerer sought to turn the proconsul away from the faith, perverting God's paths, the Apostle Paul called him *son of*

the devil, ...enemy of all righteousness, ...full of all deceit and all fraud. Because of this he was punished with blindness *for a time* (Acts 13:8-11).

There were some who, *although they knew God, they did not glorify Him as God, nor were they thankful... and changed the glory of the incorruptible God into an image made like corruptible man – and birds and four-footed animals and creeping things.*

And even as they did not like to retain God in their knowledge, God gave them over to a debased mind, to do those things which are not fitting; being filled with all unrighteousness, sexual immorality, wickedness, covetousness, maliciousness; full of envy, murder, strife, deceit, evil-mindedness; they are whisperers, backbiters, haters of God, violent, proud, boasters, inventors of evil things, disobedient to parents, undiscerning, untrustworthy, unloving, unforgiving, unmerciful (Romans 1:21-31).

The Lord *gave some to be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers... that we should no longer be children, tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, in the cunning craftiness of deceitful plotting, but, speaking the truth in love, may grow up in all things into Him...* (Ephesians 4:11-15)

The word of the apostle and his exhortation *did not come from error or uncleanness, nor was it in a deceit...* but *even so we speak, not as pleasing men, but God who tests our hearts* (1 Thessalonians 2:3-4).

Of course, the greatest deceiver was the devil when he said to Eve in Eden: *“Has God indeed said, ‘You shall not eat from every tree of the garden’?”* (Genesis 3:1). Through Adam and Eve mankind was

deceived and the predisposition towards deception was transmitted. But as the True Christ came and we saw Him in the flesh and the Eucharist, we were healed of deception.

The Lord addressed himself to the prophet Jeremiah: *Your dwelling place is in the midst of deceit; through deceit they refuse to know Me* (Jeremiah 9:6). Here then is how guile makes the knowledge of God impossible.

Envy

In dictionaries the word is defined as jealousy, hatred, spite, cruelty towards someone because of his accomplishments.

The first case described in the Bible is Cain's envy towards his brother Abel because the Lord respected Abel's sacrifice but did not respect Cain's sacrifice. Cain killed Abel and this first murder has been associated with a lie: *Then God said to Cain, "Where is Abel your brother?" He replied, "I do not know"* (Genesis 4:3-15). So Cain's jealousy generated murder, lies and curses (verse 11).

In Solomon's *Proverbs* it is suggested that jealousy is worse than provocation and wrath: *Wrath is merciless and anger passionate, but jealousy supports nothing* (Proverbs 27:4).

The Jews, seeing the multitudes that gathered for Paul's preaching *...were filled with envy; and contradicting and blaspheming, they opposed the things spoken by Paul...* And they *stirred up the devout and prominent women and the chief men of the city, raised a persecution against Paul and Barnabas, and expelled them from their region* (Acts 13:45-50). In this case, jealousy provoked blasphemy and persecution.

James says in his epistle that *where envy and self-seeking exist, confusion and every evil thing are there* (James 3:16).

Saul was full of envy for David, since the women cried out: *Saul slew his thousands, and David his ten thousands* (1 Kingdoms 18:2). Then, one day, *an evil spirit came from God upon Saul as he was resting in his house with a spear in his hand, and David was playing the harp. And Saul sought to strike David with his spear, but David slipped away from him as he drove the spear into the wall. David fled and escaped* (1 Kingdoms 19:9-10).

Vengeance

All of the biblical passages that speak about vengeance imperiously advise that *we should not take revenge*:

- *You shall not take vengeance, nor bear any grudge against the children of your people, but you shall love your neighbor as yourself: I am the Lord* (Leviticus 19:18).
- *Do not say, "I will avenge myself on the enemy," but wait on the Lord, that you may be helped* (Proverbs 20:12).
- *To him who strikes you on the one cheek, offer the other also* (Luke 6:29).
- **Beloved, do not avenge yourselves, but rather give place to wrath** [of the Lord]; *for it is written, "Vengeance is Mine, I will repay," says the Lord* (Romans 12:19).
- *See that no one renders evil for evil to anyone, but always pursue what is good both for yourselves and for all* (1Thessalonians 5:15).

Revenge is the effect of anger, hatred, evilness – par excellence emotions that generate stress in the world.

Accusations

The king became enraged. Provoked by the false accusations of that depraved man, he wrote to Nicanor that he was most displeased with the treaty and ordered him to send Maccabeus as a prisoner to Antioch at once (2 Maccabees 14:27).

The multitudes began to accuse the Savior before Pilate: *And they began to accuse Him, saying, “We found this fellow perverting the nation, and forbidding to pay taxes to Caesar, saying that He Himself is Christ, a King” (Luke 23:2).*

Tertullus the rhetorician accused Paul before Felix saying: *For we have found this man a plague, a creator of dissension among all the Jews throughout the world, and a ringleader of the sect of the Nazarenes (Acts 24:5).*

The great accuser is fated to perdition: *So the great dragon was cast out, the serpent of old, called the devil and Satan... for the accuser of our brethren, who accused them before our God day and night, has been cast down. And they overcame him by the blood of the Lamb (Revelation 12:9-11).*

The one who accuses is of the devil. The King had his fill of accusations, the multitudes accused even their own Creator, Paul the Judeo-Christian was accused by a Jewish rhetorician before Gentiles, hoping that they would condemn him.

It is only conscience (its awakening) that can heal man of this sin.

Bad News

Eli was a judge in Israel. The Philistines fought against the Israelites. Eli's sons fell in battle and the Lord's ark was taken. A man of Benjamin brought Eli this news: *And it came to pass, as Eli remembered the ark of God, he fell backward from the seat by the side of the gate and broke his back and died, for the man was old and heavy... Now Eli's daughter-in-law... crouched down and gave birth, for her labor pains came upon her... And... when she was at the point of death... They said, "The glory in Israel is exiled from its home, for the ark of God is taken"* (1 Kingdoms 4:18-22).

Something amazing can be seen from these verses: how precious the Lord's ark was for the monotheistic people of Israel.

Gossip

To gossip means to slander, to persecute, to defame, to speak evil of others.

Father Sophian said that – at confession – it is the most frequently confessed sin.

The biblical texts condemn gossip, defaming. It provokes and maintains arguments:

- *...no slanderer, and quarrelling dies down* (Proverbs 26:20).
- *The words of a slanderer are tasty morsels that go right down into the belly* (Proverbs 26:22).

The prophet Jeremiah decries his people's plight and calls them *an assembly of treacherous men*, because they had fallen into the condition where *every brother will utterly deceive, and every friend will walk treacherously*.

All of these things bring about or are associated with:

- the lack of knowledge of God: *“They are unwilling to know Me,”* says the Lord;
- deceiving friends;
- lies;
- deceit;
- unrighteousness (Jeremiah 9:2-8).

...a slanderous and deceitful man... has destroyed many who were at peace (Wisdom of Sirach 28:13).

Slander has unsettled many and scattered them from nation to nation; and it has destroyed strong cities and overturned the houses of great men. Slander has driven away courageous women and robbed them of their labors. He who devotes himself to slander will not find rest, nor shall he dwell in quietness (Wisdom of Sirach 28: 14-16).

Many have fallen by the edge of the sword, but not so many as those who have fallen because of the tongue (Wisdom of Sirach 28:18).

Solomon says that *the scoffer is an abomination to men* (Proverbs 24:9).

An angry countenance has he who listens to *a backbiting tongue* (Proverbs 25:23).

Many biblical verses give advice against slandering or interdict slandering: *You shall not go about deceitfully among your people* (Leviticus 19:16).

Most of the time, the evil that the slanderer does cannot be known completely, nor the end of its road, nor how long it will keep going.

Endogenous Causes

These are causes (sins, vices, iniquity) enacted by people, which function (turn) against themselves. They come from the inside, through their own liberty and will, but they return inwardly and provoke suffering.

Iniquity

This is a large category that contains breaking the Commandments of God.

In the Old Testament iniquity referred first of all to breaking the Ten Commandments written upon Moses's tablets: *Now the Lord spoke all these words, saying: "I am the Lord your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage. You shall have no other gods before Me.*

“You shall not make for yourself an idol or a likeness of anything in heaven above, or in the earth beneath, or in the waters under the earth. You shall not bow down to them or serve them, for I, the Lord your God, am a jealous God, recompensing the sins of the fathers on the children to the third and fourth generation of those who hate Me; but showing mercy to thousands, to those who love Me and keep My commandments.

"You shall not take the name of the Lord your God in vain, for the Lord will not hold him guiltless who takes His name in vain.

"Remember the Sabbath Day, to keep it holy. Six days you shall labor and do all your work, but the seventh day is the Sabbath of the Lord your God. In it you shall do no work: neither you, nor your son, your daughter, your male servant, your female servant, your cattle, nor your stranger who sojourns with you. For in six days the Lord made heaven and earth, the sea, and everything in them, and rested on the seventh day. Therefore, the Lord blessed the Sabbath Day and hallowed it.

"Honor your father and mother that it may be well with you, and your days may be long upon the good land the Lord your God is giving you.

"You shall not murder.

"You shall not commit adultery.

"You shall not steal.

"You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor.

"You shall not covet your neighbor's wife or his house, and neither shall you covet his field, nor his male servant, his female

servant, his ox, his donkey, any of his cattle, or whatever belongs to your neighbor" (Exodus 20:1-17).

"Whoever is against the law is also against God, the law giver."¹⁴⁶

The term also has in view those "false prophets," Pharisees, and scribes of Israel who opposed Jesus and His correct salvific teaching (cf. *Matthew* 7:15-23; 24:12-24), as well as the "false teachers" and the thieves on the cross¹⁴⁷ and the Gentiles.

Whoever commits sin also commits lawlessness, and sin is lawlessness (1 John 3:4).

In this way, the New Testament extends the meaning of iniquity to include breaking the law of love.

Destruction shall entertain the ungodly (Proverbs 21:6). In this way they attract suffering to themselves: *The eyes of the Lord preserve knowledge, but He overthrows the words of the faithless* (Proverbs 22:14).

The one who performs lawlessness is full of anguish:

- *An ungodly man flees when no one is pursuing, but a righteous man is confident as a lion* (Proverbs 28:1).
- *...the ungodly shall weaken in evils* (Proverbs 24:16).
- *...the ungodly shall experience the punishment they themselves plotted, they who rejected the righteous man and rebelled against the Lord* (Wisdom of Solomon 3:10).
- *But the prolific multitude of the ungodly are useful to no one, and none of their illegitimate seedlings will grow a deep root or establish a sure footing* (Wisdom of Solomon 4:3).

¹⁴⁶ I. Mircea, *Dictionary of the New Testament*, op. cit., p.158

¹⁴⁷ Ibid.

- *The assembly of the lawless is like a bundle of kindling whose end is a flame of fire (Wisdom of Sirach 21:9).*
- *...whoever shall keep the whole law, and yet stumble in one point, he is guilty of all (James 2:10).*
- *...the ungodly who refused to know You were flogged by the strength of Your arm (Wisdom of Solomon 16:16).*
- *...but the lawless shall act lawlessly (Daniel 12:10).*
- *He who turns away his ear so as not to hear the law, he also makes his prayer repulsive (Proverbs 28:9).*
- *The wicked are overthrown and are no more (Proverbs 12:7).*
- The lawbreaker is pressed by two other sins: lack of faith and lack of fear of God (*Psalm 35:1-4*).

Gossiping One's Neighbor

Therefore keep yourself from useless murmuring and refrain your tongue from evil speech; for no secret word will go unpunished, and a lying mouth will destroy one's soul (Wisdom of Solomon 1:11).

The whisperer defiles his own soul and will be hated in his own neighborhood (Wisdom of Sirach 21: 28).

Envy

He who envies with his eye is evil (Wisdom of Sirach 14:8).

The evil eye of a man envious over his bread; thus it is lacking at his table (Wisdom of Sirach 14:10).

Envy and anger will shorten your days... (Wisdom of Sirach 30:24).

Because of his envy and brother's murder, Cain was *cursed from the earth, which has opened its mouth to receive your brother's blood from your hand* (Genesis 4:8-12).

Blasphemy

Blasphemy is a shame, insult, defamation of holy things.

Throughout the Scripture it is considered a grave sin. It is close to demon possession or is born of possession.

In the Old Testament the blasphemer was stoned to death.

"Blasphemy is any curse towards God, Christ, the Cross, the Church or any other holy thing or person such as the Mother of God."¹⁴⁸

"Blasphemy towards Christ is not only rejection of His person, but also hostility towards His word and teaching, proclaimed by Him and then by His apostles."¹⁴⁹

During the time of His incarnation, the Hebrews had fallen into the greatest deception, having been convinced that the Savior's new teaching was blasphemy against Moses's teaching.

Among the sinful people of "the end times," the Apostle Paul enumerates blasphemers (together with the boasters, arrogant, unthankful, gossips, cruel, un-self-disciplined, etc.). *These also resist the truth: men of corrupt minds, disapproved concerning the faith; but they*

will progress no further, for their folly will be manifest to all... (2 Timothy 3:1-9).

...those who walk according to the flesh in the lust of uncleanness and despise authority. They are presumptuous, self-willed. They are not afraid to speak evil of dignitaries (in the heavens), and for this reason speak evil of things they do not understand, and will utterly perish in their own corruption (2 Peter 2:10-12).

¹⁴⁸ Ioan Mircea, *Dictionary of the New Testament*, op. cit.

¹⁴⁹ Ibid.

Before his conversion the Apostle Paul blasphemed, he even forced *many of the saints... to blaspheme* (Acts 26:11). He himself acknowledges this sin: *I was formerly a blasphemer, a persecutor, and an insolent man (1 Timothy 1:13).*

His conversion completely and definitively healed him, as he himself confesses: *And I thank Christ Jesus our Lord who has enabled me, because He counted me faithful, putting me into the ministry... I obtained mercy because I did it ignorantly in unbelief (1 Timothy 1:12-13).*

Lying

Christ says in *The Gospel of John* that the devil is *a liar and the father of it... a murderer from the beginning, and does not stand in the truth* (John 8:44).

God is not like a man, to be deceived... (Numbers 23:19).

The first lie mentioned in the Old Testament is the serpent's: ***You shall not die...*** (*Genesis 3:4*).

Believing it, Eve fell; then Adam fell and through them all of mankind.

He who produces treasures with a lying tongue pursues worthless things upon the snares of death (*Proverbs 21:5*).

The law cannot be fulfilled in the presence of lies (*Wisdom of Sirach 34:8*).

A lie is an evil disgrace in a man; it will continue on the lips of the ignorant (*Wisdom of Sirach 20:24*).

Now the chief priests and all the council sought testimony against Jesus to put Him to death, but found none. For many bore false witness against Him... (*Mark 14:55-56*). Thus, lying can have murderous effects.

But in the case of Ananias and Sapphira the lie they told in the context of the first Christian community killed them: ***Ananias, why has Satan filled your heart to lie to the Holy Spirit and keep back part of the price of the land for yourself?... You have not lied to men but to God. Then Ananias, hearing these words, fell down and breathed his last*** (*Acts 5:3-5*).

The lying person is punished with suffering and evil:

- The people who spread evil rumors about the Promised Land, ***died by the plague before the Lord*** (*Numbers 14:1-37*).
- To the false witness, ***you shall do... in the manner he maliciously intended to do to his brother; so you shall put away the evil from among you*** (*Deuteronomy 19:16-19*).

- The false prophets, that is, those who *devised inventions in their hearts, and placed before their face the stumbling block of their wrongdoings*, the Lord will *make him desolate and ruined, and remove him from the midst of My people*. In addition, *the one who inquired shall bear his wrongdoing according to his wrong, and likewise it shall be for the prophet* (Ezekiel 14:3-10).

Lying is associated with dishonesty and deceit (*Proverbs 6:12*).

There are six things that the Lord hates, actually seven which disgust His mind: among them are *A heart that devises wicked plans* and *a false witness who speaks lies* (*Proverbs 6: 16- 19*).

The character of a liar brings dishonor, and his shame is continually with him (*Wisdom of Sirach 20:26*).

As the end of the world draws closer, there will be not only false prophets but even false christos who *...will rise and show great signs and wonders to deceive, if possible, even the elect... do not believe it* (*Matthew 24:23-24*).

The Apostle Peter speaks about false prophets who had already been and about *false teachers among you, who will secretly bring in destructive heresies, even denying the Lord who bought them, and bring on themselves swift destruction* (*2 Peter 2:1*).

The Antichrist is the *liar* who denies that *Jesus is the Christ*; he *denies the Father and the Son* (*1 John 2:22*).

Lying is a kind of etiopathogenic factor that gives birth to an infinite number of psychological, moral and physical sufferings, which

the mind is not even capable of enumerating in one lifetime or even in history.

That is why in *Exodus* it is written: ***Keep yourself far from every unjust matter (Exodus 23:7).***

Theft

Judas' case is significant, about whom the evangelist says: ***he was a thief, and had the money box; and he used to take what was put in it (John 12:6).***

And the Apostle Paul writes: ***...nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners will inherit the kingdom of God (1 Corinthians 6:10).***

In the last chapters of *The Gospel of Matthew*, we see how sins determine themselves, sustain themselves and mingle with one another.

Even though during His preaching the Jews never believed in the Savior's resurrection, after his crucifixion they were afraid that the resurrection would happen and asked Pilate for reinforcements. When those who were on watch announced the resurrection to the high priests, ***when they had assembled with the elders and consulted together, they gave a large sum of money to the soldiers*** to lie and to say that His disciples stole him while they were sleeping. The high priests also promised them protection from the rulers if they were to find out about it (*Matthew 27:62-66; 28:12-15*).

In a short time, in the most dramatic, uplifting and salvific moments of the history of mankind's salvation, they spread faithlessness, blasphemy, bribery and lies.

But Christ was victorious through the Truth of the Resurrection.

Idolatry

Idolatry is betrayal of God.

Since our first parents' fall, when they listened to the serpent, sliding towards idolatry has been easy.

The greatest and most painful punishments against the chosen people were for idolatry:

- because Moses tarried on the mountain where he was speaking with God and receiving the tablets of the Law, the people, being *unrestrained* and *stiff-necked*, made for themselves an idol of a golden calf, for which reason God said: *Whoever has sinned against Me, I will blot him out of My book* (*Exodus 32:1-35*);
- idolaters that *...served the Baals and the sacred groves... forgot the Lord their God* (*Judges 3:7*);
- because of idolatry they fell into slavery *for eighteen years* (*Judges 3:12-14*);
- the Promised Land is lost both literally and symbolically if you *make for yourselves a carved form of any image* (*Deuteronomy 4:14-16*);
- idolatry is compared to adultery (*1 Chronicles 5:25*);
- the threat for idolatry: *I will remove you [Israel] from the land I gave them* (*2 Chronicles 7:19-20*);

- *I will speak to them with judgments... because they forsook Me, burned incense to foreign gods, and worshiped the works of their hands (Jeremiah 1:16);*
- wrath will fall on the house of Israel because *they said to a tree, 'You are my father,' and to the stone, 'You have begotten me' (Jeremiah 2:26-27);*
- one of the punishments for idolatry is slavery in a foreign land and the characterization of the people as *foolish and heartless (Jeremiah 5:19-21);*
- another punishment for idolaters: *...I will feed them, this people, with wormwood, and give them water of gall to drink. I will scatter them also among the Gentiles, whom neither they nor their fathers have known (Jeremiah 9:15-16);*
- because the Chaldeans are *...the land of carved images, and they are insane with their idols*, the Lord punishes them: *a sword is against the Chaldeans, and a drought is against her waters... (Jeremiah 50:35-38);*
- *...because you have defiled My sanctuary with all your...abominations, therefore I will also diminish you (Ezekiel 5:11);*
- *"But as for the heart set upon their abominations and lawlessness – as their heart went after these things – so I have recompensed their ways on their own heads," says the Lord (Ezekiel 11:21);*
- the word of the Lord came to Hosea: because the sons of Israel *worshiped by kissing the golden calves*

- *they shall be like the morning cloud*
- *like the early dew that passes away*
- *like chaff blown off from a threshing floor*
- *like smoke from a chimney (Hosea 13:3).*

Those who make idols and those who desire and worship them are characterized in the following manner:

- fools yearning and hankering for the lifeless form of an unbreathing image;
- lovers of evil;
- worthy of such hopes;
- making idols is an ill-spent effort;
- his strength weakens;
- ashes, his heart;
- more vile than earth, his hope;
- more wretched than clay, his life;
- he has misconceived the One who has modelled him, who breathed an active soul into him and inspired a living spirit;
- He, more than any other, knows he is sinning;
- most foolish, more pitiable even than the soul of a little child;
- subject to death, his impious hands can produce only something dead;
- are the people's enemies and tyrants (*Wisdom of Solomon 15:1-17*).

One is punished by the things by which he sins (Wisdom of Solomon 11:15-16). This passage is about those who honored animals which cannot speak and were punished by *irrational animals* that were sent against them.

Idolaters will be punished on two accounts:

- *because they thought wrongly about God;*
- *and by treating holiness with contempt they swore unjustly in deceit* (Wisdom of Solomon 14:30).

The New Testament is imperatively against serving idols:

- *...that you abstain from things offered to idols...* (Acts 15:29);
- *...flee from idolatry* (1 Corinthians 10:14);
- *Little children, keep yourselves from idols* (1 John 5:21).

Complaining

Complaining means to always express your ungratefulness.

In the religious sense of the word, complaining presupposes a fall from faith, a lack of trust in God's promises.

Even though Moses proved to them the power of God when they complained that they had no water at Mara and he miraculously purified the water, they went further into the desert of Sin, where they complained again and longed for Egypt's warm food with meat.

At Rephidim they were thirsty again and, *the people contended with Moses... So Moses cried out to the Lord, saying, "What should I do with this people? They are almost ready to stone me."* (Exodus 17:2-4).

From Mount Hor they departed by the way of the Red Sea and they complained again: ***So the people spoke against God and against Moses*** (Numbers 21:5). And for this complaining against God and Moses they were punished by venomous serpents that ***bit the people; and many of the children of Israel died*** (Numbers 21:6).

Witchcraft

Any kind of witchcraft is forbidden, condemned and punished according to biblical texts:

Give no regard to mediums and familiar spirits; do not seek after them, to be defiled by them (Leviticus 19:31); ***you shall not... practice divination or soothsaying*** (Leviticus 19:26).

When Saul went to the sorcerer of Endor to call Samuel back from the dead, he answered: ***"Why did you trouble me...?"*** (1 Kingdoms 28:15).

The sorcerer Elymas sought ***to turn the proconsul away from the faith***, and was punished with blindness ***for a time*** because he was ***full of all deceit and all fraud... son of the devil... enemy of all righteousness... perverting the straight ways of the Lord*** (Acts 13:6-11).

Enchantment, even though it seems as if it comes from "beyond the senses", in reality is part of the ***works of the flesh*** alongside ***idolatry, hatred, dissensions, heresies...*** among other things for which ***those who practice such things will not inherit the kingdom of God*** (Galatians 5:19-21).

Anger

...a humble answer turns away anger, and a grievous word stirs up wrath (Proverbs 15:1).

An angry man stirs up contention (Proverbs 15:19).

A patient man is better than a strong man, and he who controls his temper is better than he who captures a city (Proverbs 16:30).

He who believes in the Son has everlasting life; and he who does not believe the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abides on him (John 3:36).

For God did not appoint us to wrath (1 Thessalonians 5:9).

And you, fathers, do not provoke your children to wrath (Ephesians 6:4).

...for the wrath of man does not produce the righteousness of God (James 1:20).

Envy and anger will shorten your days (Wisdom of Sirach 30:24).

Anger is born from the feelings of hatred and manifests itself through words and physical actions against one's peers.

Betrayal

Peter denied the Savior for a few moments. He was accused by a servant girl, then a different servant girl and by *those who stood by*, saying to him: *Surely you also are one of them*. The fulfillment of this

betrayal prophecy and Christ's stare made him remember so ***he went out and wept bitterly*** (Matthew 26:69-75). Later he was able to die for Christ.

Judas is the greatest betrayer in history and among biblical citations. He drew near to the Savior kissing Him and saying to Him: ***Greetings, Rabbi!*** (Matthew 26:49). He the next day, ***seeing that He had been condemned, was remorseful... saying, "I have sinned by betraying innocent blood"*** (Matthew 27:3-4). Again with money, he tried to resolve the problem with his conscience; that is, giving the money back and then throwing it in the Temple. Judas' betrayal came to a close with suicide: ***...he... departed, and went and hanged himself*** (Matthew 27:5).

Abandoning the faith will be the last great betrayal before the coming of *the day of the Lord*: this abandoning of faith is accompanied by the open exposure ***of the man of sin, the son of perdition*** (2 Thessalonians 2:3-4).

The Holy Apostle Peter announces the coming of ***false teachers*** who will deny even ***the Lord who bought them***, bringing onto themselves ***swift destruction*** (2 Peter 2:1).

Deceit

Deceitfulness has a disastrous effect on the deceiver, not only on the one deceived:

He who has a deceitful heart finds no good, and he who has a perverse tongue falls into evil (Proverbs 17:20).

May the Lord destroy all deceptive lips (Psalm 11:4).

What should be given you, and what added to you, against a deceitful tongue? The arrows of the Mighty One are sharpened with hot coals from the desert (Psalm 119:3-4).

Those who are of a perverse heart are an abomination to the Lord... (Proverbs 11:20).

...the way of the unfaithful is hard (Proverbs 13:15).

Thorns and snares are in the ways of the crooked (Proverbs 22:5).

For dishonest reasoning separates people from God (Wisdom of Solomon 1:3).

For a holy spirit of discipline flees from deceit (Wisdom of Solomon 1:5).

For their malice blinded them (Wisdom of Solomon 2:21).

Out of your own mouth I will judge you, you wicked servant (Luke 19:22).

Injustice

He who judges the unrighteous as righteous, and the righteous as unrighteous, he is unclean and abominable before God (Proverbs 17:16).

An abomination to the righteous is an unrighteous man, and the upright way is an abomination to the lawless (Proverbs 29:28).

He who sows iniquity will reap sorrow, and the rod of his anger will fail (Proverbs 22:7).

The New Testament texts recommend the Christian to bear injustice (*1 Corinthians 6:7*), because peace is higher than all. Nevertheless, each one should not forget that *the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God* (*1 Corinthians 6:9*).

Not doing the good that you know you should do

Discovering and studying to do good is a holy obligation, but we must also do it.

The Christian religion views this reality in this manner: *Therefore, to him who knows to do good and does not do it, to him it is sin* (*James 4:17*).

Those who have not attempted to have God in their conscience

They are full of:

- *all unrighteousness,*
- *sexual immorality,*
- *wickedness,*
- *covetousness,*
- *maliciousness,*
- *envy,*
- *murder,*

- *strife,*
- *deceit,*
- *evil-mindedness;*
- *whisperers,*
- *backbiters,*
- *haters of God,*
- *violent,*
- *proud,*
- *boasters,*
- *inventors of evil things,*
- *disobedient to parents,*
- *undiscerning,*
- *untrustworthy,*
- *unloving,*
- *unforgiving,*
- *unmerciful.*

These, *knowing the righteous judgment of God, that those who practice such things are deserving of death, not only do the same but also approve of those who practice them (Romans 1:29-32).*

Hatred. Evil

All of them are as thorns thrusting outward, for they cannot be taken by the hand. And a man will not labor among them, unless armed with iron and the shaft of a spear, and to their dishonor, they shall be burned with fire (2 Kingdoms 23:6-7).

Every evil man stirs up controversy, but the Lord will send him a merciless messenger (Proverbs 17:12).

Evil men do not understand judgment (Proverbs 28:5).

Idolaters love evil and *are fit for such objects of hope*, that is, to create a *desire in fools* (Wisdom of Solomon 15:5-6).

Whoever hates his brother is a murderer, and you know that no murderer has eternal life abiding in him (1 John 3:15).

But he who hates his brother is in darkness and walks in darkness, and does not know where he is going (1 John 2:11).

Disobedience

Disobedience was manifested from the very day that God revealed Himself to his chosen people: *I will take you as My people and be your God. Then you shall know I am the Lord your God who brought you out from under the Egyptian tyranny. I will also bring you into the land I swore to give Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and I will give it to you as a heritage: I am the Lord.* Thus Moses spoke to the children of Israel, *but they paid no heed to Moses because of their faintheartedness and cruel bondage* (Exodus 6:7-9).

The prediction against the kingdom of Judah, because of disobedience: *Thus says the Lord: 'In this manner I will destroy the insolence of Judah and that of Jerusalem. The great insolence of those*

who are unwilling to obey My words, and who walk after foreign gods... (Jeremiah 13:9-10).

For I spoke to you concerning your transgression, but you said, 'I will not hear.' This has been your way from your youth. You do not hear My voice (Jeremiah 22:21).

The wind will drive all your shepherds away, and your allies will go into exile. Then you will be ashamed and disgraced because of all your wickedness (Jeremiah 22: 22).

The Apostle Paul speaks about the disaster of the first disobedience mentioned in the Bible: through an accident, that is, through *one man's offense death reigned through the one... and many were made sinners... (Romans 5:17-19).*

Before discovering faith, people *walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit who now works in the sons of disobedience (Ephesians 2:2).*

Let us therefore be diligent to enter that rest, where the word preached to be mixed with faith ...lest anyone fall according to the same example of disobedience (Hebrews 4:2-11).

Pride

Pride does not only do other people evil, but first of all it does evil to the person who bears it.

Arrogance goes before destruction and folly before a fall (Proverbs 16:16); He has scattered the proud in the imagination of their hearts (Luke 1:51); God resists the proud, but gives grace to the humble (James 4:6).

Pride is an illness of the soul very difficult to heal. It sometimes haunts the faithful people too, “just because they are faithful”.

These deep roots of pride – as risk of falling – can be explained, since pride was the cause for the first fall, the fall of Lucifer.

The two verses that follow are significant:

- *For to him who disbelieves the perfection of Your power, You show forth Your strength and rebuke the insolence among those who know it (Wisdom of Solomon 12:17).*
- *...you stand by faith. Do not be haughty, but fear (Romans 11:20)*

According to the verse from Jesus Sirach, we should not boast either in the day of honor (*Wisdom of Sirach 11:4*), or in the day of poverty (*Wisdom of Sirach 10:31*).

Passionate attachment to this world.

Dependence

Attachment to this world is not only suffering, it is also the cause for sufferings.

Those who are organically attached to the material and social values of the world and to the values of the body risk forgetting God. And he who forgets God is like *papyrus...without water* and like *reeds...without moisture*, that is, he withers *while it is still on the root and not yet harvested (Job 8: 11-13)*.

Vainglory

From the spiritual point of view, vainglory is a spiritual illness. But it is also the root of suffering on psychological level, even though the sick person does not realize this.

Before its destruction, the heart of a man exalts itself, and before its glory, it humbles itself (Proverbs 18:12).

The scribes, who desire to go around in long robes, love greetings in the marketplaces, the best seats in the synagogues, and the best places at feasts, ...and for a pretense make long prayers... will receive greater condemnation (Luke 20: 46-47).

The Christian is organically integrated in the ecclesial therapeutic act, that is, in the Church's salvific work. That is why he speaks and acts ecclesially – if he is truly integrated in the Church's unity, and always seeks the Church's glory, since *He who speaks from himself seeks his own glory (John 7:18).*

The greatest risk of the vainglory bearer is atheization. The Savior warns us: *How can you believe, who receive honor from one another, and do not seek the honor that comes from the only God? (John 5: 44)*

Vainglory is in fact the glory received *from one another*, the glory that appears *when all men speak well of you ... Woe to you (Luke 6:26)*, says the Savior.

The greatest danger for the man who has fallen into this passion is subordination and distortion of reality in order to stimulate the pathological pleasure of vainglory. Such a man is psychologically satisfied and spiritually torn apart; therefore, the more he delays healing, the more he risks a split between the two levels and *schizoidization* of his emotional universe.

Receiving Communion Unworthily

It is the spiritual cause for certain types of suffering.

The man who enters the Church is comprised in the healing process. Since he is subject to downfall, he has only one chance to ascend in his relationship with God: profound, authentic repentance, experienced within the depth of his heart.

In the chalice of the Orthodox Christian are the Savior's body and blood. Receiving Him unworthily, that is, without performing repentance within the heart, is a risky gesture for bodily and spiritual health:

Therefore whoever eats this bread or drinks this cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner will be guilty of the body and blood of the Lord. But let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of the bread and drink of the cup. For he who eats and drinks in an unworthy manner eats and drinks judgment to himself, not discerning the Lord's body. For this reason many are weak and sick among you, and many sleep. For if we would judge ourselves, we would not be judged. But when we are judged, we are chastened by the Lord, that we may not be condemned with the world (1 Corinthians 11: 27-32).

From this last verse we understand that he who has joined the Church through Baptism has the chance to be *chastened*, but not *condemned* with the world.

Possession

According to the biblical texts, as in other situations, demonic possession is a type of suffering that has distinct clinical manifestations,

as we have seen in the chapter on “Psychopathology”, but it is also a cause for suffering, since the devil is a bodiless being that attacks people. He attacks both the Christians with very good performance on the spiritual level and the vulnerable ones, that is, those whose faith weakens and who do his will.

The parable of the sower teaches us that the devil sneaks in between the moment of “hearing the word” and “believing” and ***takes away the word out of their hearts, lest they should believe and be saved*** (Luke 8:12).

In one of the parables of the Kingdom of Heaven, Matthew speaks about the enemy who ***sowed tares among the wheat and went his way... while men slept***. The master does not permit the servants to pull up the tares ***lest while you gather up the tares you also uproot the wheat with them***. So, they will grow together until the harvest. This parable opens our eyes to the enormous importance of watching in the spiritual sense of the word, for the one who sowed the tares is the *devil*, and the tares are *the sons of the wicked one*. At harvest time the ***angels... will gather out of His kingdom all things that offend, and those who practice lawlessness, to cast them into the furnace of fire***. The sons of the wicked one may be sowed unless we watch spiritually. (Matthew 13: 24-42).

In *Acts* we also find the expression ***oppressed by the devil***, and Jesus healed them ***all*** (Acts 10:38).

Amongst some verses that speak about sins that man may commit and some urges not to commit them, the Apostle Paul commands: ***...nor give place to the devil*** (Ephesians 4:27). In other words, any mistake makes the devil’s access into our existence easier and we must avoid this:

lest being puffed up with pride he fall into the same condemnation as the devil ('he' refers to the candidates to the position of bishop who had been recently baptized) (*1 Timothy 3:6*).

According to the Apostle John, *He who sins is of the devil* (*1 John 3:8*).

In conclusion, in the biblical texts we find the following meanings of "possession":

- taking away the word from their hearts;
- being oppressed by the devil;
- being possessed;
- committing sin is of the devil;
- the snare of the devil (*2 Timothy 2:26*);
- Satan entered him (*John 13: 27*);
- a spirit of infirmity (*Luke 13:11*);
- having demons (*Luke 8:27*);
- sowing tares (*Matthew 13:25*).

Demons are fallen angels. They are persons. They attack people in different ways:

- they attack people openly;
- they attack chiefly those who are praying and those who are fighting against passions;
- as long as "we are slaves of the passions, they do not become overly worried";¹⁵⁰
- they hate people;
- they accuse people;
- they attack people:

- through desires;
- through imaginations and thoughts;
- through senses;
- announcing bodily things;

¹⁵⁰H. Vlachos, *Orthodox Psychotherapy (sequel and debates)*, op. cit., p.245

- through sadness and temptation;
- through fears;
- through dreams, scare and hallucinations;
- through snares and deception;
- when waking up;
- through snares on the right hand;
- through attacks on the body;
- through lies;
- he attacks the severely ill more powerfully, “as he does not have much time.”¹⁵¹

We cast out the devil:¹⁵²

- through faith;
- through prayer;
- through fasting;
- through the prayers of the spiritual father;
- through watching;
- by “not becoming troubled”;
- by fighting;
- through patience;

- through asceticism;
- by discerning and by “examining spirits”;
- by refusing dreams and visions and examining them;
- through liturgical life in the Church.

¹⁵¹ K.V. Zorin, *Arise and Walk! Steps towards Healing*, op. cit., p.45

¹⁵² H. Vlachos, *Orthodox Psychotherapy (sequel and debates)*, op. cit., p.246

Etiopathogenic Mechanisms

The Holy Fathers say that the devil has been like a chained dog ever since the Savior came to Earth, and bites you only if you enter his range of action.

Below there are a number of verses that express etiopathogenic mechanisms; some are specific, others are general, suggesting in their profound meaning various significances and mechanisms that lead to illness.

...blood is now required... (*Genesis 42:22*).

Destruction of Sodom because of the sin of homosexuality
(*Genesis 19:1-29*).

We are truly guilty concerning our brother, for we saw the anguish of his soul when he pleaded with us, and we would not hear; therefore this distress has come upon us (*Genesis 42:21*).

...a bribe blinds the eyes and corrupts just pronouncements
(*Exodus 23:8*).

Faintheartedness and cruel bondage lead to disobedience
(*Exodus 6:9*).

Bearing false witness is a sin (*Leviticus 5:1*).

The wages of him who is hired shall not remain with you all night until morning (Leviticus 19:13)

The punishment for the one who has cursed his father or mother (Leviticus 20:9).

Whoever curses God shall bear his guilt (Leviticus 24:15).

I am the Lord your God, who brings you out of the land of Egypt, that you should not be their servants; I broke the bands of your yoke and made you walk with confidence. Now if you do not obey Me, neither do all these ordinances, but your soul disobeys them and despises My judgments, so as not to do all My commandments but to shatter My covenant, I also will do thus to you: I will bring difficulty upon you, both the itch, the jaundice, the gangrenous eyes, and the withering away of your life. You shall sow your seed in vain, for your enemies shall eat it. I will set My face against you, and you shall fall before your enemies. Those who hate you shall pursue you, and you shall flee when no one pursues you (Leviticus 26:13-17).

Now the people were grumbling evilly before the Lord, and the Lord heard them and was provoked to anger (Numbers 11:1).

Miriam ***spoke against*** Moses and became leprous (Numbers 12:8-15).

The Promised Land, which metaphorically means access to salvation, is not given to those ***who are seeing My glory and signs, ... and put Me to the test now these ten times, and did not heed My voice...*** Only the children who ***do not know good nor evil, every inexperienced youngster*** shall see the Promised Land (Numbers 14:22-23).

In the desert will perish all those who have complained and wanted to return to Egypt (to be read “the land of slavery”) (Numbers 14:35).

Doubt is an etiopathogenic factor: ***But the Lord spoke to Moses and Aaron, “Because you did not believe Me, to sanctify Me before the children of Israel, therefore you shall not bring this congregation into the land I am giving them.”*** (Numbers 20:12).

There are also community etiopathogenic factors, when one person suffers because of the community: ***The Lord was also angry with me for your sakes...*** (Deuteronomy 1:37).

Idolatry (following other gods) is one of the most serious sins, which kindles ***the anger of the Lord*** (Deuteronomy 6:14-15).

In their relationship with the Gentiles, God’s people got the following commandments:

- do not mention the name of their gods;
- do not bow before them;
- do not serve them;
- do not worship them!

If the people of God do not abide by these commandments, then the punishment is as

follows: the Gentiles will be for the chosen people:

- ***snares and traps;***
 - ***nails in your heels;***
 - ***darts in your eyes*** (Joshua 23:7-13);
- ...and the one who despises Me shall be dishonored*** (1 Kingdoms 2:30).

But if you do not obey the voice of the Lord, but resist the words of the Lord, then

the hand of the Lord will be against you (1 Kingdoms 12:15).

It is a sin not to pray for your peers: *Far be it from me to sin against the Lord in ceasing to pray for you... (1 Kingdoms 12:23).*

...for the Lord searches all hearts and understands every thought. If you seek Him, He will be found by you; but if you forsake Him, He will forsake you forever (1 Chronicles 28:9).

Sennacherib despised the help received by the Jews from their God and because of that he lost and perished (2 Chronicles 32:1-33).

Because Hezekiah exalted in his heart and was not grateful for the good that had been done to him, *the Lord turned His anger against Judah and Jerusalem (2 Chronicles 29:7-8).*

Because sermons were no longer held in the temple, the Lord *gave them up to terror, to desolation, and to jeering (2 Chronicles 29:6-8).*

And he did evil because he did not direct his heart to seek the Lord (2 Chronicles 12:14).

Upon those who forsake the Lord are *His power and His wrath (2 Ezra 8:22).*

...those who plow harmful things and those who sow them will reap pain for themselves (Job 4:8).

Yet man is born for trouble as the young bird is born to fly to high places (Job 5:7).

Take heed, do not turn to iniquity, for you have chosen this rather than affliction (Job 36:21).

...the way of the ungodly shall perish (Psalm 1:6).

...Nor shall the evildoer dwell with You (Psalm 5:5).

Their foot is caught in the trap they hid (Psalm 9:16).

May the Lord destroy all deceptive lips and the tongue that speaks boastful things (Psalm 11:4).

Their diseases were multiplied; they hastened after these things [other gods] (Psalm 15:4).

The *tongues* of the deceitful ones *were utterly weakened in them (Psalm 63:9).*

You set at naught all who departed from Your ordinances, for their thought is unrighteous (Psalm 118:118).

My eyes poured down streams of tears because they did not keep Your law (Psalm 118:136).

But the ways of the ungodly are dark; they do not know how they stumble (Proverbs 4:18).

...if you prove to be evil, you alone will go through troubles (Proverbs 9:12).

Hatred stirs up strife (Proverbs 10:13).

...instruction incapable of criticism goes astray (Proverbs 10:18).

...the hope of the ungodly perishes. The fear of the Lord ... destruction is for those who work evil (Proverbs 10:29-30).

Hope deferred makes the heart sick (Proverbs 13:12).

Wherever arrogance enters, there also is dishonor (Proverbs 11:2).

There is deceit in the heart of a man who devises evil things (Proverbs 12:22).

...perverseness of the tongue breaks the spirit (Proverbs 15:4).

Dishonoring your parents and pushing them away brings about *shame and reproach (Proverbs 19:26).*

The sacrifices of the ungodly are an abomination to the Lord
(Proverbs 21:26).

...destruction will come to the workers of iniquity (Proverbs
21:15).

The fear of the wicked will come upon him (Proverbs 10:24).

The lips of a man without discernment lead him into evil things
(Proverbs 18:6).

...he who walks with those without discernment will be known
(Proverbs 13:22).

...he who seeks evil, it will capture him (Proverbs 11:26).

...the complacency of fools will destroy them (Proverbs 1:32).

By the sin of his lips a sinner falls into snares (Proverbs 12:14).

...a sensual heart is the moth of the bones (Proverbs 14:31).

That who does not fear the Lord has *a defiant and rebellious heart*
(Jeremiah 5:22-24).

For not heeding God's words and for rejecting His Law, the Lord
will bring evils upon this people, the fruit of their turning away
(Jeremiah 6:19).

When man worships foreign gods, he hurts himself (Jeremiah
7:17-18).

"Through deceit they refuse to know Me," says the Lord
(Jeremiah 9:6).

I will pour out their evils upon them (Jeremiah 14:16).

Punishment because he trusted in his *works and treasures*
(Jeremiah 48:7).

Exiled because they did not want to receive the Lord's teaching
(Jeremiah 32:23).

Punishment because *I have spoken to them but they have not heard, and I have called to them but they have not answered* (Jeremiah 35:17).

Silver and gold *became their stumbling block of wrongdoings* and *their souls will not be satisfied, nor their stomachs filled* (Ezekiel 7:19).

The false prophets, who *have turned aside the heart of the righteous man unjustly*, and *strengthen the hands of the lawless man, ...shall no longer see false visions, nor utter prophecies* (Ezekiel 13:22-23).

The son shall not bear the wrongdoing of his father, nor shall the father bear the wrongdoing of his son. Each soul will be punished for its own transgression. (Ezekiel 18:20).

The Philistines get hard punishment and great revenge from the Lord because they *exacted vengeance and raised up vengeance, rejoicing in their souls* (Ezekiel 25:15-17).

The ruler of Tyre is punished because he has likened himself to God and because his mind was lifted up with his wealth (Ezekiel 28:1-10).

The Lord also says about the ruler of Tyre, through Ezekiel's words: *By the abundance of your trade, you filled your secret rooms with lawlessness; thus you sinned. ... Your heart was lifted up because of your beauty. Your knowledge was corrupted with your beauty. ... So you were cast wounded from the mountain of God, and the cherub brought you out from the midst of the stones of fire.* (Ezekiel 28:16-19).

Every moment we must be careful not to fall, as *The righteousness of a righteous man will not deliver him in the day he goes astray* (Ezekiel 33:12).

O shepherds of Israel who feed themselves (Ezekiel 34:2).

But when his heart was lifted up and his spirit was hardened with arrogance, he was deposed from his kingly throne, and his honor was taken from him (Daniel 5:20).

Defamers are punished (*Daniel 6:25*).

Those who have transgressed the covenant will be corrupted with flattery (*Daniel 11:32*).

There is no truth or mercy or knowledge of God in the land. Cursing and lying, murder and theft and adultery gushed forth in the land, ... Therefore the land shall mourn and be diminished with all the things that dwell in it (Hosea 4:2-3).

Their deliberations did not allow them to return to their God (Hosea 5:4).

For they have forsaken the Lord because strange children have been born to them (Hosea 5:7).

“Woe to them, for they have turned away from Me! They are cowards, for they have committed impious deeds against Me. Yet I redeemed them, but they spoke falsehoods against Me. Their hearts did not cry aloud to Me,” says the Lord (*Hosea 7:13-14*).

The *pastures* (wealth), being *completely filled* (greed of the belly), and their *exalted hearts* made Israel forget the Lord (*Hosea 13:6*).

Because they ordered the prophets not to prophesy, the Lord weighs them down (*Amos 2:12-13*).

The leaders and judges *despise judgment*, the *priests give answers for pay*, and the *prophets prophesy for money*. For this reason *Zion shall be plowed as a field* (*Micah 3:9-12*). This verse shows leaders' responsibility and how a city may be punished for their iniquities.

Punishment for *scheming evil on their beds* (Micah 2:1).

Punishment for wrong counsel (*Habakkuk*) 2:10).

The Lord made the priests *contemptible and disregarded before all nations, because you have not guarded My ways but have shown partiality in the law* (*Malachi* 2:9).

...arrogance brings destruction and great disorder... (*Tobit* 4:13).

...those who sin are enemies of their own life (*Tobit* 12:10).

Because of sins: they were slaves instead of masters (*Baruch* 3:8).

Sacrificing to demons and forgetting Him who created us is the same as selling ourselves to the (pagan) nations (*Baruch* 4:6-8).

Do not be zealous for death by the deceit of your life, nor bring destruction upon yourself by the works of your hands (*Wisdom of Solomon* 1:12).

For righteousness does not die (*Wisdom of Solomon* 1:15).

But the ungodly summoned death by their words and works (*Wisdom of Solomon* 1:16).

For envy arising from lack of judgment obscures what is good, and a whirling of desire undermines an innocent heart (*Wisdom of Solomon* 4:12).

For the invention of idols was the beginning of fornication, and the conception of them the corruption of life (*Wisdom of Solomon* 14:12).

And the expectation from within considers itself to be weaker than ignorance of the cause which supplies the torment (*Wisdom of Solomon* 17:12).

The ungodly are drawn to their deeds by the punishment they deserve (*Wisdom of Solomon 19:2-5*).

Woe to you who have lost your patient endurance! What will you do when the Lord visits you? (*Wisdom of Sirach 2:14*).

Speculation has led many astray (*Wisdom of Sirach 3:23*).

A hard heart will suffer ruin in the end (*Wisdom of Sirach 3:24*).

An evil soul will destroy him who possesses it and make him an object of malignant joy to his enemies (*Wisdom of Sirach 6:4*).

...a grievous condemnation will come upon a double-tongued man (*Wisdom of Sirach 5:14*).

...useless wrongdoing dries up the soul (*Wisdom of Sirach 14:9*).

Blessed is he whose soul does not condemn him, and who has not fallen away from his hope (*Wisdom of Sirach 14:2*).

The Lord left man ***in the counsel of his will*** (*Wisdom of Sirach 15:14*).

The Lord has given no one license to sin (*Wisdom of Sirach 15:20*).

In the congregation of sinners, a fire will be kindled, and in a disobedient nation, wrath is kindled (*Wisdom of Sirach 16:6*).

Wine and women will draw away intelligent men (*Wisdom of Sirach 19:2*).

Panic and violence will lay waste to wealth (*Wisdom of Sirach 21:4*).

...there is an astuteness that increases bitterness (*Wisdom of Sirach 21:12*).

If you open your mouth against a friend, do not worry, for reconciliation is possible. But as for reviling or arrogance or revealing

secrets or a treacherous blow – with behavior like this any friend will flee (Wisdom of Sirach 22:22).

He who seeks revenge will find it from the Lord (Wisdom of Sirach 28:1).

He who reveals secrets destroys his credibility, and he will not find a friend for life (Wisdom of Sirach 27:16).

He who throws a stone into the air throws it on his head (Wisdom of Sirach 27:25).

He who does evil things will have it roll back on him, and he will not know what hit him (Wisdom of Sirach 27:27).

Those who rejoice at the fall of the godly will be caught in a trap, and pain will consume them before their death (Wisdom of Sirach 27:29).

Envy and anger will shorten your days, and worry will bring premature old age (Wisdom of Sirach 30:24).

Losing sleep over wealth wastes away the body, and anxiety about wealth removes sleep (Wisdom of Sirach 31:1).

He who loves gold will not be called righteous, and he who pursues profit will be led astray by it (Wisdom of Sirach 31:5).

Evil will not befall the man who fears the Lord, but in trial He will deliver him again and again (Wisdom of Sirach 33:1).

...a grief-stricken heart will sap your strength and cause death (Wisdom of Sirach 38:18).

The mourning of men is about their bodies (Wisdom of Sirach 41:11).

Antiochus admits that he has fallen ill and is about to die because he defiled the temple and *sent to destroy those who lived in Judah for no good reason* (1 Maccabees 6:1-13).

...he was shocked and greatly shaken. He fell upon his bed and was sick with grief, because matters had not gone for him as he hoped (1 Maccabees 6:8).

...success against his kinsmen was his very unlucky day (2 Maccabees 5:6).

So he who cast out many without a burial was unmourned, for he had no funeral of his own, nor did he share a place in the tomb of his fathers (2 Maccabees 5:10).

The difference between the Christians and pagans: *we are suffering because of our sins* and the Lord *will again be reconciled with His own servants*, but the pagans will be chastened because they are against God (2 Maccabees 7:18-35).

Under the clothes of those killed in battle they found things devoted to idols, so Judas Maccabeus understood that was the reason why they had died in battle (2 Maccabees 12:40).

Those who betrayed their faith were deprived of *friendship and assistance* (3 Maccabees 2:33).

But whoever causes one of these little ones who believe in Me to stumble, it would be better for him if a millstone were hung around his neck, and he were thrown into the sea (Mark 9:42).

But he who denies Me before men will be denied before the angels of God (Luke 12:9).

...to him who blasphemes against the Holy Spirit, it will not be forgiven (Luke 12:10).

Relapsing into sin brings about something worse (*John 5:14*).

Being asked about the man who was born blind, Jesus answered:

Neither this man nor his parents sinned, but that the works of God should be revealed in him – and so it was through his miraculous healing (*John 9:1-3*).

There is also *sickness* that ***is not unto death, but for the glory of God, that the Son of God may be glorified through it*** (*John 11:4*).

The state of *carnal* man generates *envy, strife, and divisions* (*1 Corinthians 3:3*).

If anyone defiles the temple of God, God will destroy him. For the temple of God is holy, which temple you are (*1 Corinthians 3:17*).

Because they:

- lusted after evil things,
- were idolaters,
- committed sexual immorality,
- tempted Christ,
- complained, were scattered in the wilderness (*1 Corinthians 10:1-11*).

The enemies of Christ's cross:

- ***...whose glory is in their shame – who set their mind on earthly things. ...whose end is destruction*** (*Philippians 3:18-19*);
- those ***forbidding us to speak to the Gentiles that they may be saved, so as always to fill up the measure of their sins; but*** [God's] ***wrath has come upon them to the uttermost*** (*1 Thessalonians 2:16*);

– *...because they did not receive the love of the truth ...God will send them strong delusion, that they should believe the lie (2 Thessalonians 2:10-11).*

For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil, for which some have strayed from the faith in their greediness, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows (1 Timothy 6:10).

If we deny Him, He also will deny us (2 Timothy 2:12).

But shun profane and idle babblings, for they will increase to more ungodliness (2 Timothy 2:16).

...all who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will suffer persecution (2 Timothy 3:12).

For if we sin willfully after we have received the knowledge of the truth, there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins, but a certain fearful expectation of judgment... (Hebrews 10:26-27).

But each one is tempted when he is drawn away by his own desires and enticed. ...desire ... gives birth to sin; and sin ... brings forth death (James 1:14-15).

Where do wars and fights come from among you? Do they not come from your desires for pleasure that war in your members? (James 4:1).

...to him who knows to do good and does not do it, to him it is sin (James 4:17).

...the wages of the laborers, ...which you kept back by fraud, cry out to the Lord (James 5:4).

Etiopathogeny of the soul and bodily illnesses are essentially expressed through a few words: the fall from Eden by disobedience and

the inclination of human nature towards what is contrary to the reasons for which it was created.

Jean-Claude Larchet quotes Gregory of Nyssa: “man is born of man, the passionate of the passionate, the sinner of the sinner”¹⁵³ “All we have inherited is Adam’s death.”¹⁵⁴

¹⁵³ J.-C. Larchet, *The Therapy of Spiritual Illnesses*, op. cit., p.224

¹⁵⁴ Ibid., p.225

In other words, Adam’s predisposition to fall and the tragic reality of death ensuing from disobedience does not determine our own fall, since transgression of the commandments always has a **profound personal character** and we become part of Adam’s nature only to the extent that we fall and do not heal. The nature that we inherit has a certain tendency (predisposition) towards sin. To not be sinning means starting the battle against our own nature; to be falling means losing this battle.

“Suffering is unfamiliar to God’s plan and was not created by Him,”¹⁵⁵ since in heaven, before the fall, man did not know what suffering was.

“Man’s passionate side is a propitious field for the work of the devils”¹⁵⁶ that creep in between the desire for pleasure and the fear of sorrow, in order to make man fall.

“...he who speaks evil against someone else will himself suffer.”¹⁵⁷

Zorin quotes a statistics of the World Health Organization. The etiopathogenic factors are classified as follows:

- 50-55% - life style errors;
- 10-15% - environmental factors;

- 10-15% - activity of medical institutions (deficiencies or iatrogenics).¹⁵⁸

Just as there are various spiritual and biological causes for illnesses, there are various mechanisms of developing an illness, which sometimes work alone, and other times work synergistically or by summation.

It is good to know that illnesses do not appear exclusively because of sins. This prevents a pathological syndrome of guilt that may sometimes appear with in sick people if therapists insist aggressively on this idea.

¹⁵⁵ J.-C. Larchet, *Suffering Is Not God's Will*, Sophia Publishing, Bucharest, 2008, p.13

¹⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, p.55

¹⁵⁷ *The Sayings of the Holy Fathers*, op. cit., p.178

¹⁵⁸ K.V. Zorin, *Arise and Walk! Steps towards Healing*, op. cit., p.93

The pathological guilt syndrome appears mainly with practicing Christians who do not make a complete confession, or who do not know the Orthodox dogma according to which a confessed sin no longer exists.

My son, if you draw near to serve the Lord, prepare your soul for temptation. Set your heart right and be steadfast, and do not strive anxiously in distress. Cleave to Him and do not fall away, that you may be honored at the end of your life. Accept whatever is brought upon you, and in exchange for your humiliation, be patient; because gold is tested in fire and acceptable men in the furnace of abasement (Wisdom of Sirach 2:1-5).

The Christian person may have misfortunes, diseases, anatomical imperfections, suffering of the soul, blight. However, he must not fall into depression, but assume any suffering patiently, without complaining.

The righteous Paisios says that the Lord does not allow any temptation upon man unless something good comes out of it. *And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are the called according to His purpose (Romans 8:28-30)*. In other words, anything that happens to a man who has joined the Church is for his spiritual good.

In order to decipher these mechanisms we must search the biblical text correlated with the patristic literature and the living experience of the Church:

1. Most maladies develop from the soul towards the body, as the soul “fell” first by disobeying and by losing communion with God; then the body “fell” too.

The reasons why Adam and Eve tasted the forbidden fruit: they thought that *the tree was good for food, was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree beautiful to contemplate*. After this crucial moment *they heard the voice of the Lord God... and Adam and his wife hid themselves within the tree in the middle of the garden from the presence of the Lord God (Genesis 3:6-10)*. Now appears the first psychological symptom – fear.

Before long punishment also appears in the form of the first bodily symptom: *...in pain*

you shall bring forth children (Genesis 3:16).

The fall of our first parents had a discordant effect; it generated enmity inside the human person: man distanced from God, mind left the soul and, exactly as “the soul had not listened to the Lord,” the body no longer listened to the soul.¹⁵⁹

The Metropolitan of Alma-Ata cites St. John Chrysostom:

“Without the soul the body is not in the condition to do anything bad, whereas the soul can do a lot of evil things without the body.”¹⁶⁰

Even when medicine does not see an apparent connection between the spiritual cause and the bodily illness, the concept of Christian medicine believes it is fundamental to take into consideration and research this connection.

Lack of love, lying, hatred, atheism, blasphemy, fear, complaining, idolatry, anger, worry, guile, envy, despair, as well as bodily temptations first appear in our emotional life and extend psychosomatically.

2. The Holy Scripture speaks about distinct categories: sick people who are weak, lunatic, possessed by demons. In other parts we learn that the demon, *blind and mute*, comes out of some sick persons (*Matthew* 12:22).

The demon is an “instrument” that provokes suffering. He attacks:

- sinners who already are in his hand;
- saints, to make them sin;
- those who get close to his snare through weakness before temptations, or through loss of faith.

As he attacked our first parents through lies, he is now using the same weapon: deceit, distortion of reality, permissiveness of moral norms, relativization of original dogma.

¹⁵⁹ Nicholas, Metropolitan of Alma-Ata and Kazakhstan, *The Human Soul between Illness and Healing*, op. cit., p.15

¹⁶⁰ Ibid., p.41

According to Christian dogma, the devil is not an embodiment of evil, but a concrete individual, a person belonging to concrete existence.”¹⁶¹ Christ revealed this: ***I saw Satan fall like lightning from heaven (Luke 10:18).***

The devil is an enemy of salvation and of the work for man’s salvation. He was an angel and through haughtiness he tried to obtain God’s grace. He is the ***accuser (Revelation 12:10)***, the ***deceiver (Revelation 12:9)***, the ***adversary*** and the ***roaring lion (1 Peter 5:8)***, the ***murderer (John 8:44)***; ***...the devil has come down to you, having great wrath, because he knows that he has a short time (Revelation 12:12).***

Saint Gregory of Sinai (quoted by Hierotheos Vlachos) says that the Lord allows the devil to upset us so that He can test our liberty. In other words, we are free to react to the demonic attacks, or to let ourselves dragged into their temptations.

We should not rise up against God, nor blame the devil, but examine our life and our secret in order to fulfill the virtue and the law of love.

3. Another mechanism of developing an illness: to show God’s work through illness and healing (cf. *John 9:1-41*).

4. Illness to the glory of God, so that God's Son be glorified through it (cf. *John* 11:45).

5. Prophylaxis of pride. It is the case of a bodily illness through which prophylaxis of an illness of the soul is performed (pride is the most serious of all spiritual illnesses). These situations are typical of the benefic effect of falling ill.

6. Jean-Claude Larchet identifies in the writings of the Holy Fathers *eight causes for which saints fall ill*:

¹⁶¹ H. Vlachos, *Orthodox Psychotherapy (sequel and debates)*, op. cit., p.239

- lest their virtues and asceticism inspire vanity;
- to be honored with the honor men are meant to have, nothing more;
- so that God's power may shine even more, as it reveals itself in weakness;
- so that humankind may understand that saints do not serve God because this is in their interest; they are continually devoted to Him, even in times of misfortune;
- so that the sick who know them may be comforted and strengthened seeing that even the greatest saints have suffered in the same way;
- to make us think of death and judgment, seeing them suffering;

- so that people can understand that the amazing acts of the saints were accomplished from a nature identical to theirs, and that they can be imitated;
- so that humankind may understand that the true happiness is communion with God in any condition, even when we are ill; and the true misfortune is the separation from God in any condition, even when we are healthy.¹⁶²

7. Christians also have a specific mechanism of falling ill: receiving communion

unworthily. There is a prophylactic method by which the Christian who joined the Church through Baptism at the highest level of ecclesial existence, must be cautious and watchful so as not to fall from this state or, if he has fallen, to rise to this dignity through the mystery of repentance.

8. Testing the faith is a pathogenic mechanism impressively, movingly described in *The Book of Job*. It is the almost superhuman example of a man who is struck “out of the blue” by illness and is deprived of his possessions, but being *true, blameless, righteous, and God-fearing*, and abstaining *from every evil thing*, he is steadfast in his faith, without complaining or cursing, assuming suffering (*Job* 1:1-22).

¹⁶² Jean-Claude Larchet, *The Theology of Illness*, “Oastea Domnului” Publishing, Sibiu, 1997, p.47

9. Some people fall ill when they feel that the love of the peers around them has been quenched. It is natural to be that way; an old

saying in our religion says that *love is stronger than death*. Lacking the love of those closest to them, they become anxious and dejected.

10. Not practicing virtues is a multiple risk of falling and developing an illness:

- *Therefore, to him who knows to do good and does not do it, to him it is sin (James 4:17)*
- "... the mind is used to being betrayed by the lack of virtue."¹⁶³

11. Exaggerated love of self, of one's body and of material things is the main cause for falling and suffering.¹⁶⁴

12. Imagination is a dangerous trap for mental suffering because it is an incessant fountain of slipping towards what does not exist, that is, towards the untruth.

The Holy Fathers, in their ascetic effort towards deification, developed a real strategy to block, cast away or destroy imagination. In their view, imagination is the devil's territory where, if we enter, we lose the precious time we have for ascending towards God and we become the victims of self-scattering.

H. Vlachos says that imagination is a phenomenon from after the fall; angels do not have imagination, only people and demons do.¹⁶⁵

13. There is also a mechanism of illness that develops from the body towards the soul.

This is the prototype of idolatry, when the soul falls under the control of the body or worships

¹⁶³ Evagrius, Cited by I. Hausherr in *Weeping and Piercing of the Heart at Eastern Fathers*, op. cit., p.63

¹⁶⁴ I.C. Teşu, *The Theology of Trials*, op. cit., p.66

¹⁶⁵ H. Vlachos, *The Illness and Healing of the Soul*, op. cit., p.75

idle things. That is why some biblical verses suggest that debauchery is a kind of idolatry. In the body are the idols of life, which the soul worships, and in this way it becomes a soul sick with suffering and addiction: gastrimargia, fornication, love of money.

14. A frequent mechanism of falling ill is the passionate perception and understanding of the creatures, of the physical and biological universe; the significance of the things around us is debatable and risky for the atheist, as he sees the passionate or materialistic sense and does not understand spiritually the reason for which things exist. For the man obsessed with consumption and pleasure, the insatisfaction generated by not reaching the object is a cause for suffering. The abusive use and corruption of the material and biological universe by tainting or poisoning it generates new afflictions.

15. There is a mechanism of falling ill worked by the demons through arousing a feeling of pathological guiltiness, that is, unspiritual, that brings suffering on spiritual level.

This feeling of guiltiness appears like a trap with people guilty of certain sins that have not been sincerely confessed. Since sincere

repentance and confession bring peace to soul, not anxiety and obsessive concerns.

16. Some patients, unaware of their limits and weaknesses, out of excessive zeal or pride, pray for a transfer of suffering that may also be a transfer of demons and they fall into clinical mental manifestations difficult to interpret in a nosological framework.

17. There is also a “circular” determination: sin brings about more or less serious illnesses; illness brings about despair; despair easily brings about other diseases and sins.

18. Sinning after being healed leads to greater suffering than at the beginning.

19. Deceit, envy, anger, worry, greediness shorten man’s days.

20. Those who fall ill and cannot recover:

- Ahaziah, who asked other gods about his illness but did not ask the Lord (cf. *4 Kingdoms* 1:1-6);

- the one who had been punished for a long time and who remained stiff-necked (cf. *Proverbs* 29:1);

- Egypt, that is, the *noise* that *has passed by the appointed time!* (*Jeremiah* 46:17);

- Babylon that says is queen *and will not see sorrow* (*Revelation* 18:1-24).

The human person's illness has complex and intricate causes and mechanisms. The fall of our first parents seeded in us the predisposition to falling ill. Sins, testing the faith, prophylaxis of some spiritual illnesses through bodily suffering, illness – as opportunity for conversion – all these determine illness born from predisposition, the exogenous and endogenous factors.

Illness is a suffering that may either complicate with a new illness and with losing salvation of the soul, or be a type of suffering with benefic effects in the act of salvation and evolution of the soul towards the Creator.

The living experience of the Church has proved that – after Baptism – absolutely everything that happens to a Christian is only for his soul's correction and salvation. One single condition is required: that man does not refuse God's plan for salvation.

The righteous Paisios says that God does not allow a temptation unless something good comes out of it.

VII. Lifestyle – the True Prophylaxis

Do not withhold a word in time of need

(Wisdom of Sirach 4:23)

There is a principle proven by age-old medicine: illness prevention should not be carried out with active pharmaceutical substances since

these, taken for a long time, repeatedly, may provoke side effects or “parasite” symptoms that create confusion regarding the initial diagnosis.

In the Holy Scripture there is a verse saying that *those who are well have no need of a physician* (Mark 2:17). This verse pleads powerfully against prophylaxis using active pharmaceutical substances.

In modern medicine there are numerous experiments that demonstrate the mistake of doing prophylaxis by means of medicines: worldwide salt iodization, which has increased the rate of thyroid cancer and Basedow’s disease; abusive vaccination, which has plummeted immunity against infectious agents for which there are no vaccines; nutritional supplements and all medicines taken over a long period of time, repeatedly, which have innumerable side effects.

The true prophylaxis is based on the principle that most people are born healthy and they must maintain their health through a healthy lifestyle.

The Holy Scripture abounds in verses that teach us how to live, what to do and especially what not to do in order to maintain the health of our body and soul.

Just as in the Old Testament fruit ripening was a gift from God, our first thought in the morning must be given and directed to God.

Here are the main verses that teach us the prophylaxis of bodily and soul illnesses:

So you shall serve the Lord your God, and He will bless your bread, wine, and water; and I will take away sickness from you (Exodus 23:25).

You shall not follow a crowd... nor ...turn aside with the majority to pervert justice (Exodus 23:2).

You shall not show partiality to a poor man in his dispute
(Exodus 23:3).

Now you shall not circulate a false report. Do not agree with the wicked man to be an unrighteous witness (Exodus 23:1).

Moses took the bones of Joseph with him (from Egypt) to respect the desire of the reposed one (Exodus 13:19).

Do not drink wine and strong drink ... when you go into the tabernacle of testimony ... that you may distinguish between holy and unholy, and between unclean and clean (Leviticus 10:9-10).

Do not follow idols, nor make for yourselves molten gods: I am the Lord your God (Leviticus 19:4).

...if you hear Me ... there shall be no new god among you
(Psalm 80:9-10).

You shall not treat your neighbor unjustly, nor rob him
(Leviticus 19:13).

You shall not go about deceitfully among your people (Leviticus 19:16).

You shall not hate your brother in your mind. You shall surely rebuke your neighbor, and not bear guilt because of him (Leviticus 19:17).

You shall not take vengeance, nor bear any grudge against the children of your people, but you shall love your neighbor as yourself
(Leviticus 19:18).

You shall not eat anything with the blood, nor shall you practice divination or soothsaying (Leviticus 19:26).

You shall not make any gashing on your bodies (Leviticus 19:28).

You shall not ... attach yourselves to enchanters (Leviticus 19:31).

You shall do no injustice in judgment, in measurement of length, weight, or balances (Leviticus 19:35).

When you reap the harvest of your land, you shall not wholly reap ... your harvest ... nor shall you gather every grape of your vineyard; you shall leave them for the poor and the resident alien (Leviticus 19:9-10).

You shall not curse the deaf, nor put a stumbling block before the blind (Leviticus 19:14).

You shall not let your cattle mate with a different species, you shall not sow your field with mixed seeds (Leviticus 19:19).

Do not defile your daughter, to cause her to commit fornication, lest the land fall into fornication, and the land become full of lawlessness (Leviticus 19:29).

You shall ... honor the presence of an old man (Leviticus 19:32).

If you walk in My ordinances and keep My commandments, and do them ... I will look upon you and make you fruitful... I will walk among you and be your God, and you shall be My people (Leviticus 26:3-13).

Moses asked the Lord regarding any personal or collective problem of the Jewish people. This was a natural relationship of the chosen people with God (*Numbers 27:5*).

You shall not add to the word I command you, nor take from it (Deuteronomy 4:2).

'I am the Lord your God who brings you from the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage. There shall be no different gods before

My face. You shall not make for yourself an image, neither any likeness of anything in heaven above, or in the earth beneath, or in the waters under the earth; you shall not bow down to them nor serve them, because I am the Lord your God, a jealous God, repaying the sins of the fathers upon the children to the third and fourth generation of those who hate Me, but showing mercy to thousands who love Me and keep My commandments.

You shall not take the name of the Lord your God in vain, for the Lord will not cleanse him who takes His name in vain.

Observe the Sabbath day to keep it holy, as the Lord your God commanded you. Six days you shall labor and do all your works, but the seventh day is the Sabbath to the Lord your God. In it you shall do no work – you, your son and your daughter, your male servant, your female servant, your ox, your donkey, and all of your cattle, and your resident alien dwelling among you; that your male servant and your female servant may rest as well as you. Remember, you were a servant in the land of Egypt, and the Lord your God brought you out from there by a mighty hand and by an outstretched arm; therefore, the Lord your God ordered you to guard the Sabbath day and to sanctify it.

Honor your father and mother in the manner the Lord your God commanded you, that it may be well with you, and you may be a long time in the land the Lord your God is giving you.

You shall not murder.

You shall not commit adultery.

You shall not steal.

You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor.

You shall not covet your neighbor's wife; and you shall not covet your neighbor's house, neither his field, his male servant, his female servant, his ox, his donkeys, or his cattle, or anything belonging to your neighbor.' (Deuteronomy 5:6-21).

Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God is one Lord. You shall love the Lord your God from your whole heart, from your whole soul, and from your whole power (Deuteronomy 6:4-5).

So these words:

- *...shall be in your heart and in your soul.*
- *You shall teach them to your sons,*
- *and shall talk of them when you*
 - *sit in your house,*
 - *walk by the way,*
 - *lie down,*
 - *rise up.*
- *You shall bind them as a sign on your hand, and it shall be immovable before your eyes;*
- *and you shall write them on the doorposts of your houses and on your gates ... lest you forget the Lord*
(Deuteronomy 6:6-12).
- *You shall not tempt the Lord your God* (Deuteronomy 6:16).

So you shall do what is pleasing and good before the Lord:

- *that it may be well with you;*
- *to chase out all your enemies from before your face, as He said* (Deuteronomy 6:18-19).

So now, O Israel, what does the Lord your God require of you, but to fear the Lord your God, to walk in all His ways, to love Him, to serve the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul, and to keep the commandments of the Lord your God and His ordinances I command you today for your good? (Deuteronomy 10:12-13).

You shall not at all do as we are doing here today – every man doing whatever is right in his own eyes (Deuteronomy 12:8).

The judges shall not... take a bribe; for a bribe blinds the eyes of the wise and twists the words of the righteous (Deuteronomy 16:19).

You shall not remove your neighbor's boundaries... (Deuteronomy 19:14).

If you go near a city to fight against it, then proclaim an offer of peace to it (Deuteronomy 20:10).

Do good (Deuteronomy 22:1-4).

See, I set before you today life and death, good and evil ... blessing and cursing. ... choose life, that both you and your seed may live (Deuteronomy 30:15-19).

Ascribe greatness to our God (Deuteronomy 32:3).

Now therefore, fear the Lord, and serve Him in justice and righteousness (Joshua 24:14).

Let not the man of learning boast in his understanding, nor let the man of might boast in his might, nor let the man of riches boast in his riches. Only let the one who boasts boast in this: to understand and to know the Lord and to do justice and righteousness in the midst of the earth (1 Kingdoms 2:10).

The Mighty One who strengthens me with power, who has prepared my way blameless (2 Kingdoms 22:33).

Remember His remarkable works which He has done, His wonders and the judgments of His mouth (1Chronicles 16:12). He is the Lord our Lord; His judgments are over all the earth (1 Chronicles 16:14).

Declare His glory among the nations, His wonders among all peoples (1 Chronicles 16:24).

If we accepted good things from the Lord's hand, shall we not endure evil things? (Job 2:15).

Job lost everything, but he *did not sin against the Lord or charge God with folly (Job 1:22).*

But as for me, in the fullness of Your mercy I will come into Your house; in fear of You I will worship toward Your holy temple (Psalm 5:8).

For there is no remembrance of You in death (Psalm 6:6).

O Lord, who shall dwell in Your tabernacle? Who shall live in Your holy mountain? He who walks blamelessly, and works righteousness, and speaks truth in his heart, who does not deceive with his tongue, neither does evil to his neighbor; and does not find fault with those nearest him (Psalm 14:1-3).

That my mouth might not speak of the works of men, I held to hard ways because of the words of Your lips (Psalm 16:4).

Rich men turned poor and went hungry; but those who seek the Lord shall not lack any good thing (Psalm 33:11).

Shun evil and do good; seek peace and pursue it (Psalm 33:15).

Wait on the Lord, and keep His way, and He shall exalt you to inherit the earth (Psalm 36:34).

Reveal your way to the Lord, and hope in Him; and He will do it (Psalm 36:5).

Submit to the Lord, and supplicate Him; do not be envious of him who prospers in his way, nor of him who transgresses the law (Psalm 36:7).

Do not be envious of those who do evil, nor be jealous of those who work lawlessness (Psalm 36:1).

Cease from wrath and forsake anger; do not be envious so as to do evil (Psalm 36:8).

But I cried out to God, and the Lord heard me, evening and morning and midday, I shall tell; I shall proclaim, and He will hear my voice (Psalm 54:17-18).

Cast your care upon the Lord, and He shall support you (Psalm 54:23).

My enemies shall be turned back in whatever day I may call upon You (Psalm 55:10).

...until now I will proclaim Your wonders (Psalm 70:17).

My tongue shall meditate on Your righteousness (Psalm 70:24).

My mouth shall proclaim Your righteousness (Psalm 70:15).

Give glory to God (Psalm 67:35).

Rejoice in God our helper (Psalm 80:1).

So make known Your right hand to us, that we may number our days, and our heart may be bound with wisdom (Psalm 89:12).

Sing to the Lord; bless His name (Psalm 95:2).

Seek the Lord... (Psalm 104:4).

...fear God, and turn away from every evil. Then there shall be healing for your body and care for your bones (Proverbs 3:7-8).

Keep your heart with all watchfulness, for from these words are the issues of life

(Proverbs 4:22).

Let your eyes look straight forward (Proverbs 4:24).

He who finds grace from the Lord becomes better (Proverbs 12:2).

The eye that beholds good things gladdens the heart, but a good report enriches the bones (Proverbs 15:36).

The one who has mercy on the poor lends to God, and He will repay him according to his gift (Proverbs 19:17).

...the man who hears him will speak endlessly (Proverbs 21:28).

Do not rob the poor... (Proverbs 22:25).

If you are poor, do not measure yourself with a rich man, but keep away from this in your thinking (Proverbs 23:4).

If your enemy falls, do not rejoice over him... (Proverbs 24:17).

Do not boast about tomorrow, for you do not know what the next day will bring forth (Proverbs 27:1).

...those who seek the Lord shall understand it in everything (Proverbs 28:5).

...obey the voice of the Lord... So it shall be well with you (Jeremiah 38:20).

Flee from the midst of Babylon ... Do not be cut off in her iniquity (Jeremiah 51:6).

Let him sit alone and keep silent, because God has laid it on him (Lamentations 3:28).

Let us search out and examine our ways, and turn back to the Lord (Lamentations 3:40).

Let us know, let us pursue that we might know the Lord. We shall find Him ready as the daybreak (Hosea 6:3).

Sow for yourselves righteousness; reap in mercy (Hosea 10:12).

To fulfil a law of the body means to protect your soul (Tobit 1:11).

My son, remember the Lord our God all your days... (Tobit 4:5).

Be merciful and righteous, that it may be well with you (Tobit 14:9).

It is noble to keep hidden the secret of a king, but glorious to unveil the works of God (Tobit 12:7).

Do not keep overnight the wages of any man who works for you (Tobit 4:14).

...Because He is found by those who do not tempt Him, and He is manifest to those who do not disbelieve Him (Wisdom of Solomon 1:2).

For the fruit of good labors is of good report... (Wisdom of Solomon 3:15).

...one must get up before sunrise to give You thanks, and to intercede before You at the dawning of the light (Wisdom of Solomon 16:28).

My son, if you draw near to serve the Lord, prepare your soul for temptation. Set your heart right and be steadfast, and do not strive anxiously in distress. Cleave to Him and do not fall away, that you may be honored at the end of your life. Accept whatever is brought upon you, and in exchange for your humiliation, be patient (Wisdom of Sirach 2:1-4).

Do not meddle in what is none of your business... (Wisdom of Sirach 3:22).

...you do not need what the Lord keeps hidden (Wisdom of Sirach 3:21).

Deliver a person who has been wronged from the hand of the wrongdoer (Wisdom of Sirach 4:9).

Do not set your heart on your possessions... (Wisdom of Sirach 5:1).

Be established in your understanding and let your word be consistent (Wisdom of Sirach 5:10).

Do not get carried aloft on the wings of passion (Wisdom of Sirach 6:2).

Do not desire to tell any lie... (Wisdom of Sirach 7:13).

...do not forget the birth pangs of your mother (Wisdom of Sirach 7:27).

Fear the Lord with all your soul and honor His priests (Wisdom of Sirach 7:29).

With all your words, remember the time you will die, and you will never sin (Wisdom of Sirach 7:36).

Do not contend sharply with a talkative man... (Wisdom of Sirach 8:3).

Do not praise a man for his good looks, and do not detest one because of his appearance (Wisdom of Sirach 11:2).

...do not interrupt someone while he is talking (Wisdom of Sirach 11:8).

My son, do not let your business involve too many things (Wisdom of Sirach 11:10).

Be content with little or much, and you will not hear your guest insulted (Wisdom of Sirach 29: 23).

Do not give yourself over to sorrow, and do not distress yourself deliberately (Wisdom of Sirach 30:21).

Healthy sleep depends on moderate eating (Wisdom of Sirach 31:20).

Do nothing without counsel, and when you have acted, do not regret it (Wisdom of Sirach 32:19).

While you are still alive and there is breath in you, do not change places with anyone (Wisdom of Sirach 33:21).

...it is good to follow the Lord (Wisdom of Sirach 46:10).

Have regard for your name, for it will remain with you longer than a thousand great chests of gold (Wisdom of Sirach 41:12).

The greeting: ***“The Lord be with you!”*** And the reply: ***“The Lord bless you!”*** (Ruth 2:4).

...what God has joined together, let not man separate (Mark 10:2-12).

He who is from God surrenders himself to God’s will and care:

Take this cup away from Me; nevertheless, not what I will, but what You will (Mark 14:36).

Take heed that you do not despise one of these little ones, for I say to you that in heaven their angels always see the face of My Father who is in heaven (Matthew 18:10).

For whoever gives you a cup of water to drink in My name, because you belong to Christ, assuredly, I say to you, he will by no means lose his reward (Mark 9:41).

But take heed to yourselves, lest your hearts be weighed down with carousing, drunkenness, and cares of this life... (Luke 21:34).

The brother who has erred must be forgiven, even if *he sins against you seven times in a day*. And if *seven times in a day returns to you, saying, 'I repent,' you shall forgive him (Luke 17:3-4).*

You shall not tempt the Lord your God (Luke 4:12).

And just as you want men to do to you, you also do to them likewise. But if you love those who love you, what credit is that to you? For even sinners love those who love them. And if you do good to those who do good to you, what credit is that to you? For even sinners do the same. And if you lend to those from whom you hope to receive back, what credit is that to you? For even sinners lend to sinners to receive as much back. But love your enemies, do good, and lend, hoping for nothing in return; and your reward will be great, and you will be sons of the Most High. For He is kind to the unthankful and evil. (Luke 6:31-35).

Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, bless those who curse you, and pray for those who spitefully use you (Luke 6:27-28).

Give, and it will be given to you... For with the same measure that you use, it will be measured back to you (Luke 6:38).

Whoever comes to Me, and hears My sayings and does them ... is like a man building a house, who dug deep and laid the foundation on the rock. ... But he who heard and did nothing is like a man who built a house on the earth without a foundation (Luke 6:47-49).

For whoever is ashamed of Me and My words, of him the Son of Man will be ashamed when He comes in His own glory, and in His Father's, and of the holy angels (Luke 9:26).

Then He said to them all, "If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow Me..." (Luke 9:23).

...Therefore take heed that the light which is in you is not darkness (Luke 11:33-35).

...there is nothing covered that will not be revealed, nor hidden that will not be known (Luke 12:2).

For everyone to whom much is given, from him much will be required; and to whom much has been committed, of him they will ask the more (Luke 12:48).

Strive to enter through the narrow gate... (Luke 13:24).

And whoever does not bear his cross and come after Me cannot be My disciple (Luke 14:27).

He who has My commandments and keeps them, it is he who loves Me. And he who loves Me will be loved by My Father, and I will love him and manifest Myself to him (John 14:21).

The first Christians were steadfast:

- *in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship*
- *in the breaking of bread, and in prayers (Acts 2:42).*

Before the Eucharist, *let a man examine himself (1 Corinthians 11:28).*

Therefore judge nothing before the time, until the Lord comes, who will both bring to light the hidden things of darkness and reveal the counsels of the hearts (1 Corinthians 4:5).

...none of you may be puffed up on behalf of one against the other (1 Corinthians 4:6).

...it is already an utter failure for you that you go to law against one another. Why do you not rather accept wrong? Why do you not rather let yourselves be cheated? (1 Corinthians 6:7).

Therefore, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God (1 Corinthians 10:31).

For you, brethren, have been called to liberty; only do not use liberty as an opportunity for the flesh, but through love serve one another (Galatians 5:13).

I say then: Walk in the Spirit, and you shall not fulfill the lust of the flesh. For the flesh lusts against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh (Galatians 5:16-17).

Let us not become conceited, provoking one another, envying one another (Galatians 5:26).

Bear one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ (Galatians 6:2).

Let no corrupt word proceed out of your mouth... (Ephesians 4:29).

Let all bitterness, wrath, anger, clamor, and evil speaking be put away from you, with all malice. And be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God in Christ forgave you (Ephesians 4:31-32).

Do not name among you:

- *fornication,*
- *all uncleanness,*
- *covetousness,*

- *filthiness,*
- *foolish talking,*
- *coarse jesting (Ephesians 5:3-4).*

Speak to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord, giving thanks always for all things to God the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ... (Ephesians 5:19-20).

And you, fathers, do not provoke your children to wrath, but bring them up in the training and admonition of the Lord (Ephesians 6:4).

Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil (Ephesians 6:11).

Let nothing be done through selfish ambition or conceit, but in lowliness of mind let each esteem others better than himself (Philippians 2:3).

Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God (Philippians 4:6).

Therefore put to death your members which are on the earth: fornication, uncleanness, passion, evil desire, and covetousness, which is idolatry. Because of these things the wrath of God is coming upon the sons of disobedience (Colossians 3:5-6).

But now you yourselves are to put off all these:

- *anger,*
- *wrath,*
- *malice,*
- *blasphemy,*

- *filthy language out of your mouth.*

Do not lie to one another, since you have put off the old man with his deeds (Colossians 3:8-9).

Therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, put on tender mercies, kindness, humility, meekness, longsuffering; bearing with one another, and forgiving one another, if anyone has a complaint against another; even as Christ forgave you, so you also must do. But above all these things put on love, which is the bond of perfection (Colossians 3:12-14).

And whatever you do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through Him (Colossians 3:17).

Children, obey your parents in all things, for this is well pleasing to the Lord (Colossians 3:20).

Fathers, do not provoke your children, lest they become discouraged (Colossians 3:21).

...you also aspire to lead a quiet life, to mind your own business, and to work with your own hands, as we commanded you (1 Thessalonians 4:11).

And we urge you, brethren, to recognize those who labor among you, and are over you in the Lord and admonish you (1 Thessalonians 5:12).

Now we exhort you, brethren, warn those who are unruly, comfort the fainthearted, uphold the weak, be patient with all. See that no one renders evil for evil to anyone, but always pursue what is good both for yourselves and for all. Rejoice always, pray without ceasing, in everything give thanks; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for

you. Do not quench the Spirit. Do not despise prophecies. Test all things; hold fast what is good. Abstain from every form of evil (1 Thessalonians 5:14-22).

And those who have believing masters, let them not despise them because they are brethren... (1 Timothy 6:2).

But those who desire to be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and harmful lusts which drown men in destruction and perdition. For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil, for which some have strayed from the faith in their greediness, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows. But you, O man of God, flee these things and pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, patience, gentleness. Fight the good fight of faith, lay hold on eternal life, to which you were also called and have confessed the good confession in the presence of many witnesses (1 Timothy 6:9-12).

Command those who are rich in this present age not to be haughty, nor to trust in uncertain riches but in the living God, who gives us richly all things to enjoy. Let them do good, that they be rich in good works, ready to give, willing to share, storing up for themselves a good foundation for the time to come, that they may lay hold on eternal life (1 Timothy 6:17-19).

O Timothy! Guard what was committed to your trust, avoiding the profane and idle babblings and contradictions of what is falsely called knowledge – by professing it some have strayed concerning the faith. Grace be with you. Amen (1 Timothy 6:20-21).

...to speak evil of no one, to be peaceable, gentle, showing all humility to all men (Titus 3:2).

Let us therefore come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need (Hebrews 4:16).

Do not forget to entertain strangers, for by so doing some have unwittingly entertained angels (Hebrews 13:2).

Therefore lay aside all filthiness and overflow of wickedness, and receive with meekness the implanted word, which is able to save your souls. But be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves. For if anyone is a hearer of the word and not a doer, he is like a man observing his natural face in a mirror; for he observes himself, goes away, and immediately forgets what kind of man he was (James 1:21-24).

For we all stumble in many things. If anyone does not stumble in word, he is a perfect man, able also to bridle the whole body (James 3:2).

But He gives more grace. Therefore He says: “God resists the proud, but gives grace to the humble.” Therefore submit to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you (James 4:6-7).

Do not speak evil of one another, brethren (James 4:11).

Come now, you who say, “Today or tomorrow we will go to such and such a city, spend a year there, buy and sell, and make a profit”; whereas you do not know what will happen tomorrow. For what is your life? It is even a vapor that appears for a little time and then vanishes away. Instead you ought to say, “If the Lord wills, we shall live and do this or that.” (James 4:13-15).

But above all, my brethren, do not swear, either by heaven or by earth or with any other oath. But let your “Yes” be “Yes”, and your “No,” “No,” lest you fall into judgment (James 5:12).

Honor all people. Love the brotherhood. Fear God. Honor the king (1 Peter 2:17).

But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts, and always be ready to give a defense to everyone who asks you a reason for the hope that is in you... (1 Peter 3:15).

...nor returning evil for evil or reviling for reviling, but on the contrary blessing, knowing that you were called to this, that you may inherit a blessing (1 Peter 3:9).

...having your conduct honorable among the Gentiles, that when they speak against you as evildoers, they may, by your good works which they observe, glorify God in the day of visitations (1 Peter 2:12).

For this is commendable, if because of conscience toward God one endures grief, suffering wrongfully. (1 Peter 2:19).

Live ...as free, yet not using liberty as a cloak for vice, but as bondservants of God. (1 Peter 2:16).

...what manner of persons ought you to be in holy conduct and godliness, looking for and hastening the coming of the day of God (2 Peter 3:11-12).

...you, who are kept by the power of God through faith for salvation ready to be revealed in the last time. In this you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while, if need be, you have been grieved by various trials, that the genuineness of your faith, being much more precious than gold that perishes, though it is tested by fire, may be found to praise, honor, and glory at the revelation of Jesus Christ... (1 Peter 1:5-7).

And now, little children, abide in Him, that when He appears, we may have confidence and not be ashamed before Him at His coming (1 John 2:28).

Now this is the confidence that we have in Him, that if we ask anything according to His will, He hears us. And if we know that He hears us, whatever we ask, we know that we have the petitions that we have asked of Him (1 John 5:14-15).

Behold, I am coming quickly! Hold fast what you have, that no one may take your crown (Revelation 3:11).

VIII. Therapy

*O Lord my God, I cry to You,
and You will heal me
(Psalm 29:3)*

The Christian therapeutic act is based on two pillars:

- A diagnosis established as accurately as possible by thoroughly examining the patient who addresses us. It is possible to get to know his soul only if we love him as we love our own brother, if we do not judge and despise him for his fall or suffering. If the diagnostic examination “in the name of Christ” meets with the symptoms of the patient “in whom Christ suffers” – we have complete knowledge of the patient.

- A therapeutic method developed “ecclesially,” that is, asking for God’s help in the Church, since He is the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, *the Father of mercies and God of all comfort* (2 Corinthians 1:3). God sent His Son to save (heal) the world. Isaiah speaks about Messiah like this: *He was a man in suffering and knew how to bear sickness* (Isaiah 53:3), to whom the Lord God gave *the tongue of the learned, so as to know when to speak a word at a fitting time* (Isaiah 50:4). *By His knowledge My Righteous Servant shall justify many, for He shall bear their iniquities* (Isaiah 53:11).

Prayer, fast, love, repentance, and Christian virtue practiced in the name of the Savior

have therapeutic effect.

The New Testament depicts numerous cases of miraculous healing. They show us God’s power, as the verse from Luke says: *...the power of the Lord was present to heal them* (Luke 5:17). And *to know Your might is the root of immortality* (Wisdom of Solomon 15:3).

The Christian medical act is an ecclesial act because Christ suffers in the sick person, Christ works in the doctor and Christ unbinds through the priest.

Man cannot heal himself alone; nor can the “human method,” that is, the *empty deceit, according to the tradition of men*. This happens because man is a being dependent upon the Creator and upon obeying Him: *You cannot plumb the depths of the heart of man, nor grasp the*

thoughts of his mind (Judith 8:14) That is why any therapy on the soul that does not include God is limited and bound to fail.

Christ is the absolute healer because human nature, in order to be healed, has touched divine nature in Him, and because Christ heals in eternity, not only today.

The Apostle Paul urges us to watch: ***Beware lest anyone cheat you through philosophy and empty deceit, according to the tradition of men, according to the basic principles of the world, and not according to Christ*** (Colossians 2:8).

Maximus the Confessor, cited by Jean-Claude Larchet, says that man suffers from “not knowing his cause,” that is, he suffers from not knowing God. That is why a psychotherapeutic system built on atheism cannot heal.

The Church is a hospital where the people who are in the process of healing come and live.

Healing through the Christian Church is a process founded on the traits of *God’s image in man* (cf. Genesis 1:27) of remaining incorruptible and indestructible.

No matter how much of his likeness with God man has lost through downfall and wrongdoing, the healing potential in man is still there and it must be helped to operate.

Moreover, the Christian therapist finds his calling on his belief in biblical texts: several verses speak about the *divine providence*, that is, God’s care for man.

Since God created the world *out of nothing*, it means that if He withdrew His providence, the world would return to nothingness. Or,

existence itself proves in essence that God works in the world keeping its laws, life, movement, its evolution towards salvation:

If He should wish to hold and restrain His breath within Himself, all flesh would die together, and every mortal would return to the ground (Job 34:14-15).

You have granted me life and favor, and Your care has preserved my spirit (Job 10:12).

For the whole creation in its kind was fashioned again from above to serve Your commands, that Your servants might be kept unharmed (Wisdom of Solomon 19:6).

...for in Him we live and move and have our being, as also some of your own poets have said, 'For we are also His offspring.' (Acts 17:28).

...who being the brightness of His glory and the express image of His person, and upholding all things by the word of His power (Hebrews 1:3).

...teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age. Amen (Matthew 28:20).

Healing takes place through the sick person's faith and prayer or /and through the faith and prayer of the Church.

That is why therapy through the Church relies on old, tested, solid principles:

- bringing the patient round to faith and practice of virtues;
- the prayer of the Church for the patient;
- loving the patients and sacrificially caring for them;

- all these works are carried out in the name of the Savior Jesus Christ.

We benefit from the healing work of the Church because we believe that Jesus Christ, the head of the Church and *the chief cornerstone* is the Great Healer, as the psalmist says: ***But You do see, You do perceive the suffering and pain, that You might deliver them into Your hands (Psalm 9:35).***

Above all, in Psalm 102 God is named: ***Who heals all your diseases (Psalm 102:3), and in Psalm 146: He heals the brokenhearted (Psalm 146:3).***

The moment when the sick person discovers that Christ is the bearer of our diseases is crucial for him, because the evolution of the disease takes a different course then, the subjective and objective suffering decreases, as Christ Himself comes on the patient's cross and assumes his pain.

He bears our sins and suffers for us, yet we considered Him to be in pain, suffering, and ill-treatment. But He was wounded because of our lawlessness, and became sick because of our sins. The chastisement of our peace was upon Him, and by His bruises we are healed. All we like sheep have gone astray. Man has gone astray in his way, and the Lord delivered Him over for our sins (Isaiah 53:4-6).

When evening had come, they brought to Him many who were demon-possessed. And He cast out the spirits with a word, and healed all who were sick, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by Isaiah the prophet, saying: "He Himself took our infirmities and bore our sicknesses." (Matthew 8:16-17).

...who Himself bore our sins in His own body on the tree, that we, having died to sins, might live for righteousness – by whose stripes you were healed (1 Peter 2:24).

Healing has a paradoxical character in the concept of Christian medicine and psychology, which cannot be found in other therapeutic systems – the salvific effect of the cross: *...the message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God (1 Corinthians 1:18).*

The Cross means suffering and salvation at the same time, through God's power. It is a meaning not easily accessible to a man outside of Christ's Church.

That is why healing also means assuming incurable suffering that is the cross through which salvation is performed.

Illness can help us to see that God is the fountain of life.

There are numerous passages referring to diseases and suffering in the New Testament. The evangelical message is the divine pedagogy that accompanies suffering; illness is not just punishment and never remains at the stage of punishment; it is the cross that determines the sick person's way towards self-examination, towards healing, towards the Kingdom.

Man may have various attitudes in front of illness:

- examination of own thought, repentance, drawing close to God and looking for communion with peers in the Church;
- hardening of the heart, religious indifference;
- despair, complaining, revolt, faithlessness.

The first attitude leads to healing of the soul, even though the bodily illness is incurable.

The other two are aggravating circumstances of evolution, worsening suffering on earth or even making it eternal in hell.

The Mystery of the Holy Cross present in the Christian's heart and exalted by the Holy Mysteries make the sick Christian to endure his illness with the patience of the one who feels the life beyond in the suffering assumed with faith and humility; the presentiment of the life beyond begets a joy that does not belong to this world in the sick Christian.

Suffering, paradoxically, has positive contributions, which are beneficial in pursuing salvation:

- it helps man to discover himself as person, that is, to discover his mystical dimension, that of communication with God in spirit and truth;
- it helps him to become aware of the dependence on God and the social dependence (the community dimension of existence);
- it helps him to become aware of the anatomical and physiological limits of man, but also of the strength that can be seen in weakness;
- it brings forth the need for communication.¹⁶⁶

The blueness of a wound cleanseth away evil (*Proverbs 20:30*) – is a verse with both diagnostic and therapeutic value.

Diagnostic – because we understand the spiritual cause of the sick person's suffering: the *wound* can denote either bodily illness or illness of the soul.

Therapeutic – because we must help the sick person to assume this *wound*.

Jesus Sirach urges: ...*when you are sick ... pray to the Lord* (*Wisdom of Sirach 38:9*).

D. Avdeev proposes a hierarchy of purposes, from comforting and ingraining hope to inner growth and **return to the everlasting values**.¹⁶⁷

In the concept of Christian psychology, the meeting with the sick person is not something that happens by chance;¹⁶⁸ a medical examination is a meeting with Christ, since Christ suffers in the sick person and it is also Christ who works in the therapist.

¹⁶⁶ P. Chirilă, M. Valică, *The Christian Hospital...*, op. cit., pp.12-13

¹⁶⁷ D. Avdeev, *When Soul Is Sick*, op. cit., p.95

¹⁶⁸ Ibid., p.93

The concept of Christian medicine states that Christian virtues have therapeutic value and effect.

Furthermore, prayer and fasting are valuable therapeutic means available to the Christian and the Church.

Prayer

Prayer is the power that keeps man close to God. It expresses man's faith in God and the living memory of the heaven lost through the fall. At the same time, it is the supreme proof that there was a time when man communicated unmediatedly with his Creator.

“Life without prayer is like body without soul.”¹⁶⁹

According to its nature, prayer is “the union of man with God,” and according to its action, “the upholder of the world.”¹⁷⁰

The prophets, the Savior, the apostles and the saints have taught us how to pray.

One of the first prayers in the Old Testament was said by Abraham: ***O Lord, if I have now found grace in Your sight, do not pass by Your servant*** (Genesis 18:3).

It was Abraham's desire not to be disregarded by the Holy Trinity at the oak of Mamre.

Samuel the prophet, when he is no longer judge over the people, tells them: ***Far be it from me to sin against the Lord in ceasing to pray for you...*** (1 Kingdoms 12:23).

The expression ***to You all flesh shall come***, preceded by ***hear my prayer*** (Psalm 64:2) implies that in reality we can never depart from God in other ways than through intention and conscience. The psalmist asks the Lord to listen to his prayer, as all bodies are born, exist and evolve organically towards God.

¹⁶⁹ I.C.Teşu, *The Theology of Trials*, op. cit., p.130

¹⁷⁰ Ibid., p.132, cited from St. John Climacus, Step 28 (*The Ladder*)

We have all trust to pray to the Lord, since He says to His people: ***For I know the thoughts that I think toward you, says the Lord, thoughts of peace and not of evil, to give you a future and a hope. Then you will call upon Me and go and pray to Me, and I will listen to you. And you will seek Me and find Me, when you search for Me with all your heart*** (Jeremiah 29:11-13).

Luke the Evangelist urges us three times: *...ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you* (Luke 11:9).

All these three commandments enable and urge us to pray.

If you then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask Him! (Luke 11:13).

Prayer is the beginning, the middle and the end of each moment of our life. In the Holy Scripture there are numerous prayer-verses in order for our prayer to be heard:

Have mercy on me, and hear my prayer (Psalm 4:1).

Give ear to my words, O Lord, hear my cry (Psalm 5:1).

Look upon me and hear me, O Lord my God; enlighten my eyes, lest I sleep in death (Psalm 12:4).

Hear the voice of my supplication when I pray to You and when I lift up my hands toward Your holy temple (Psalm 27:2).

Hear my prayer, O Lord, and give ear to my supplication; do not be silent at my tears (Psalm 38:13).

Hear us, O God our savior, the hope of all the ends of earth and of those far off at sea (Psalm 64:6).

The Lord allows the will of men to be done, giving them a king. But Samuel the prophet gives them a sign right away that they have erred (*1 Kingdoms* 12:1-25).

That is why our prayer must be offered *in Your righteousness* (Psalm 70:2).

The Holy Fathers insist that in the process of healing “the evolution of the soul should be parallel”¹⁷¹ and consistent with that of the body, so that no slipping and discrepancy may appear.

Prayer Methodology

The Holy Scripture teaches us how to pray because praying is an organic part of the faithful person’s life.

Anthropologically speaking, since the human person is made up of body and soul, prayer must be performed by our body and soul. That is why the Holy Fathers speak about a prayer of the body and a prayer of the heart or the soul. They are not separate, as it might seem at first glance.

We will present a number of verses that speak about both prayers:

When Joshua fought with the Amalekites Moses ***held up his hands*** towards the sky (*Exodus 17:11-12*).

Daniel prayed and praised God in his room where the window facing Jerusalem was open (*Daniel 6:11*). He was in exile, but the spiritual center of his existence was Jerusalem, of which he could not detach himself because it was ***called by God the Peace of Righteousness and the Glory of Godliness*** (*Baruch 5:4*).

Personal prayer should not be performed ostentatiously in public: ***But you, when you pray, go into your room, and when you have shut your door, pray to your Father who is in the secret place; and your Father who sees in secret will reward you openly*** (*Matthew 6:6*).

The Savior would pray either *on the mountain by Himself* (*Matthew 14:23*), or in *a solitary place* (*Mark 1:35*), and in the Garden of Gethsemane, *He went a little farther and fell on His face* (*Matthew 26:39*).

¹⁷¹ H. Vlachos, *The Illness and Healing of the Soul in the Orthodox Tradition*, op. cit., p.62

In His conversation with the Samaritan woman we learn the following: *Our fathers worshiped on this mountain, and you Jews say that in Jerusalem is the place where one ought to worship. Jesus said to her, “Woman, believe Me, the hour is coming when you will neither on this mountain, nor in Jerusalem, worship the Father. You worship what you do not know; we know what we worship, for salvation is of the Jews. But the hour is coming, and now is, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth; for the Father is seeking such to worship Him...”* (*John 4:20-23*).

The Apostle Paul writes to Timothy: *I desire therefore that the men pray everywhere, lifting up holy hands, without wrath and doubting* (*1 Timothy 2:8*).

Kneeling down is the natural posture for praying: *But Peter put them all out, and knelt down and prayed. And turning to the body he said, “Tabitha, arise.”* (*Acts 9:40*).

Paul *...when he had said these things, he knelt down and prayed with them all* (*Acts 20:36*).

The Holy Tradition of the Church also speaks about other “prayers of the body:”

The sign of the cross – a gesture for confessing the Orthodox faith, for praying and for casting away demons. Many have died for this sign during persecutions.

Metania – bending the body by kneeling down and touching the ground with the forehead, while we are saying a prayer having our mind in our heart. This kind of worship is generated by complex movements that engage almost all members of our body.

In *Psalms 29*, David convinces us that healing is possible through praying: ***O Lord my God, I cry to You, and You will heal me (Psalm 29:3).***

We should also know that “God does not listen to that who indulges in pleasures”¹⁷² and Nilus of Ancyra’s words: “Never overlook a poor man who is weeping, so that the tears of your prayer will not be overlooked.”¹⁷³

¹⁷² *The Sayings of the Holy Fathers*, op. cit., p.50

¹⁷³ *Ibid.*, p.169

The Holy Fathers, inspired by the biblical texts, have left for us wonderful rules on which prayer is built and practiced.

At the beginning we say: ***in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit (Matthew 28:19). Amen (Matthew 6:13).***

Then we offer a hymn of praise:

Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, goodwill toward men!” (Luke 2:14).

And a blessing:

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ (Ephesians 1:3).

Hosanna! 'Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord!' Blessed is the kingdom of our father David that comes in the name of the Lord! Hosanna in the highest! (Mark 11:9-10).

Blessed are You, O Lord my God. Blessed is Your holy and precious name unto the ages. May all Your works bless You forever (Tobit 3:11).

Blessed are You, O Lord God of Israel, our Father, unto the ages of ages (1 Chronicles 29:10).

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and God of all comfort (2 Corinthians 1:3).

Expressing gratitude:

We give You thanks, O Lord God Almighty, the One who is and who was and who is to come, because You have taken Your great power and reigned (Revelation 11:17).

O Lord, I am shamed and hesitant before Your face. For our sins abound far above our heads, and our ignorance has risen up to heaven (1 Ezra 8:71-72).

...and I will praise you continually all the days of my life. For all the host of heaven sings your praise, and yours is the glory forever. Amen. (Manasseh 1:15).

I am not worthy of the least of all the mercies and of all the truth which You have shown Your servant (Genesis 32:10).

Then we ask the Lord for blessing:

May God, our God, bless us. May God bless us, and let all the ends of the earth be in fear of Him (Psalm 66:7-8).

And we make requests for spiritual things:

Increase our faith (Luke 17:5).

Lord, I believe; help my unbelief! (Mark 9:24).

O Lord, if I have now found grace in Your sight, do not pass by Your servant (Genesis 18:3).

I am a sojourner on the earth; do not hide Your commandments from me (Psalm 118:19).

Guide me in the path of Your commandments, for I desire it (Psalm 118:35).

Nail my flesh with the fear of You, for I fear You because of Your judgements (Psalm 118:120).

So make known Your right hand to us, that we may number our days, and our heart may be bound with wisdom (Psalm 89:12).

O Lord, my Father and Master of my life, do not leave me at the mercy of my own words; do not let them cause my downfall (Wisdom of Sirach 23:1).

Unveil my eyes, and I shall understand the wonders in Your law (Psalm 118:18).

Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me. Do not cast me away from Your presence, and do not take Your Holy Spirit from me (Psalm 50:12-13).

Incline my heart to Your testimonies and not to greediness (Psalm 118:36).

Test me, O God, and know my heart; examine me, and know my paths, and see if there is a lawless way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting (Psalm 138:23-24).

O Lord, do not remove Your compassion from me; may Your mercy and Your truth take hold of me continually (Psalm 39:12).

Send out Your light and Your truth; they guided me and led me to Your holy mountain and to Your tabernacles (Psalm 42:3).

O Lord, I said, "Have mercy on me; heal my soul, for I have sinned against You." (Psalm 40:5).

Teach me to do Your will, for You are my God; Your good Spirit shall guide me in the land of uprightness. For Your name's sake, O Lord, give me life; in Your righteousness You shall bring my soul out of affliction (Psalm 142:10-11).

Lead me in Your way, O Lord, and I will walk in Your truth; gladden my heart so as to fear Your name (Psalm 85:11).

Cause me to hear Your mercy in the morning, for I hope in You; make me know, O Lord, the way wherein I should walk, for I lift up my soul to You (Psalm 142:8).

Have mercy on me, O God, according to Your great mercy; and according to the abundance of Your compassion, blot out my transgression. Wash me thoroughly from my lawlessness and cleanse me from my sin. For I know my lawlessness, and my sin is always before me. Against You only have I sinned and done evil in Your sight; that You may be justified in Your words, and overcome when You are judged. For behold, I was conceived in transgressions, and in sins my mother bore me. Behold, You love truth; You showed me the unknown and secret things of Your wisdom. You shall sprinkle me with hyssop,

and I will be cleansed; You shall wash me, and I will be made whiter than snow. You shall make me hear joy and gladness; my bones that were humbled shall greatly rejoice. Turn Your face from my sins, and blot out all my transgressions (Psalm 50:1-11).

Have mercy on me, O Lord, for I am weak; heal me, O Lord, for my bones are troubled; and my soul is greatly troubled (Psalm 6:3-4).

Save me, O God, in Your name, and judge me in Your power (Psalm 53:3).

Heal me, O Lord, and I shall be healed, save me, and I shall be saved, for You are my boast (Jeremiah 17:10).

Lord, remember me when You come into Your kingdom (Luke 23:42).

Amen! Blessing and glory and wisdom, thanksgiving and honor and power and might, be to our God forever and ever. Amen (Revelation 7:12).

Now to Him who is able to do exceedingly abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that works in us, to Him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus to all generations, forever and ever. Amen (Ephesians 3:20-21).

Even the secret prayer can be a cry: *Cry out to Me...* the Lord commands Jeremiah (*Jeremiah 40:3*).

Our fathers are invoked in prayer like a continuous chain of souls to whom the Lord revealed Himself and in Whom they believed:

Do not withdraw Your mercy from us for the sake of Abraham...of Isaac...of Israel (Daniel 3:35).

Do not remember the wrongdoings of our fathers... (Baruch 3:5).

O Lord God of Abraham, Isaac, and Israel... Hear me, O Lord
(3 Kingdoms 18:36-37).

So Tobias began to pray, saying: "Blessed are You, O God of our fathers..." (Tobit 8:5).

Prayer begins with repentance: ***O Lord Almighty, the God of Israel, a soul in straits and a spirit of weariness cries out to You. Hear, O Lord, and have mercy, for we have sinned against You*** (Baruch 3:1-2).

Prayer is accompanied by fasting, almsgiving, righteousness: ***Prayer is good with fasting, almsgiving, and righteousness*** (Tobit 12:8).

Nehemiah prays to the Lord to listen to the prayer of those ***who desire to fear Your name*** (Nehemiah 1:11).

The prayer of a person ***whose service is pleasing to the Lord ...will reach to the clouds***, and that of ***a humble man passes through the clouds*** (Wisdom of Sirach 35:16-17).

Faith is organically linked to prayer: ***And whatever things you ask in prayer, believing, you will receive*** (Matthew 21:22). ***Therefore I say to you, whatever things you ask when you pray, believe that you receive them, and you will have them*** (Mark 11:24).

Prayer is efficient provided that we forgive people their errors: ***And whenever you stand praying, if you have anything against anyone, forgive him, that your Father in heaven may also forgive you your trespasses*** (Mark 11:25).

Prayer must be continual: ***Watch therefore, and pray always that you may be counted worthy to escape all these things that will come to pass, and to stand before the Son of Man*** (Luke 21:36).

The Apostle Paul prays with joy: ...***always in every prayer of mine making requests for you all with joy*** (*Philippians 1:4*).

Prayer has a healing effect: ***Is anyone among you suffering? Let him pray*** (*James 5:13*).

In the prayer methodology we could see the subject (content) of prayer.

We present below more verses that express the nature of request made through prayer:

- ***Seek Your servant...*** (*Psalm 118:176*);
- ***keep under guard these things in the thoughts of the heart of Your people forever, and lead their heart toward You*** (*1 Chronicles 29:18*);
- ***Test me, O God, and know my heart*** (*Psalm 138:23*);
- ***May God grant me to speak according to His purpose*** (*Wisdom of Solomon 7:15*);
- ***You shall treat my soul with great care in Your power*** (*Psalm 137:3*).

Solomon asks for wisdom:

- an understanding and wise heart
- to hear and judge his people
- to discern between good and evil (*3 Kingdoms 3:4-11*).

Judith's prayer: make everyone know that ***You are... the God of all power*** (*Judith 9:14*).

Healing and salvation are close: ***Heal me, O Lord, and I shall be healed, save me, and I shall be saved, for You are my boast*** (*Jeremiah 17:10*).

And here is one of the most beautiful penitential prayers:

O Lord, Almighty God of our fathers, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and of their righteous seed; who hast made heaven and earth, with all the ornament thereof; who hast bound the sea by the word of thy commandment; who hast shut up the deep, and sealed it by thy terrible and glorious name; whom all men fear, and tremble before thy power; for the majesty of thy glory cannot be borne, and thine angry threatening toward sinners is importable: but thy merciful promise is unmeasurable and unsearchable; for thou art the most high Lord, of great compassion, longsuffering, very merciful, and repentest of the evils of men. Thou, O Lord, according to thy great goodness hast promised repentance and forgiveness to them that have sinned against thee: and of thine infinite mercies hast appointed repentance unto sinners, that they may be saved. Thou therefore, O Lord, that art the God of the just, hast not appointed repentance to the just, as to Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, which have not sinned against thee; but thou hast appointed repentance unto me that am a sinner: for I have sinned above the number of the sands of the sea. My transgressions, O Lord, are multiplied: my transgressions are multiplied, and I am not worthy to behold and see the height of heaven for the multitude of mine iniquities. I am bowed down with many iron bands, that I cannot lift up mine head, neither have any release: for I have provoked thy wrath, and done evil before thee: I did not thy will, neither kept I thy commandments: I have set up abominations, and have multiplied offences. Now therefore I bow the knee of mine heart, beseeching thee of grace. I have sinned, O Lord, I have sinned, and I

acknowledge mine iniquities: wherefore, I humbly beseech thee, forgive me, O Lord, forgive me, and destroy me not with mine iniquities. Be not angry with me for ever, by reserving evil for me; neither condemn me to the lower parts of the earth. For thou art the God, even the God of them that repent; and in me thou wilt shew all thy goodness: for thou wilt save me, that am unworthy, according to thy great mercy. Therefore I will praise thee for ever all the days of my life: for all the powers of the heavens do praise thee, and thine is the glory for ever and ever. Amen (Prayer of Manasseh 1:1-15).

Prayer for the dead:

But since he was looking to the reward of splendor laid up for those who repose in godliness, it was a holy and godly purpose. Thus he made atonement for the fallen, so as to set them free from their transgression (2 Maccabees 12:45).

Prayer for the temple and the city:

They invoked the Lord to look upon the people, who were trampled underfoot by all, to have compassion on the temple, which had been profaned by ungodly men, to have mercy on the city, which was being destroyed and was about to be leveled to the ground, and to hearken to the blood that cried out to Him (2 Maccabees 8:2-3).

O Lord, Father and the God of my life, do not give me haughty eyes, but turn me away from evil desire (Wisdom of Sirach 23:4-5).

Establish me in Your words (Psalm 118:28).

O Lord, deliver my soul from unjust lips and from a deceitful tongue (Psalm 119:2).

Cleanse me from hidden sins (Psalm 18:13).

*Do not remember the sins of my youth, nor of my ignorance
(Psalm 24:7).*

*Lead me in Your truth and teach me, for You are the God of my
salvation, and on You I wait all the day (Psalm 24:5).*

O Lord, do not be far from me (Psalm 34:22).

O God, do not abandon me (Psalm 70:18).

Do not abandon me in the time of old age (Psalm 70:9).

Extend Your mercy to those who know You (Psalm 35:11).

*I declare my life to You; You set my tears before You... (Psalm
55:9).*

Give me life in Your righteousness (Psalm 118:40).

Ransom me from the slander of men (Psalm 118:134).

O Lord... hear the prayer of the dead... (Baruch 3:4).

When he is announced that he will die, Moses asks the Lord to
appoint another ruler (*Numbers 27:16:23*).

Prayer for journey, both when traveling and resting (*Numbers
10:35*). There are such prayers in the New Testament: ***Lord, save me!***
(*Matthew 14:30*).

***Our Father in heaven, hallowed be Your name, Your kingdom
come, Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us day by day
our daily bread. And forgive us our sins, for we also forgive everyone
who is indebted to us. And do not lead us into temptation, but deliver us
from the evil one (Luke 11:2-4).***

Pray that you may not enter into temptation (Luke 22:40).

When we want to do good, we must pray that our ***service...may be
acceptable (Romans 15:30-31)*** and implore ***that we would receive the***

gift and the fellowship of the ministering of the saints (2 Corinthians 8:4).

The Apostle Paul prays for the Ephesians:

- to receive *the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Him*
- that the Lord enlightens *the eyes* of their *understanding*, so that they may know *what is the hope of His calling* (Ephesians 1:17-18).

And for the Thessalonians he prays thus:

- *that our God would count you worthy of this calling, and fulfill all the good pleasure of His goodness and the work of faith with power,*
- *that the name of our Lord Jesus Christ may be glorified in you, and you in Him, according to the grace of our God and the Lord Jesus Christ* (2 Thessalonians 1:11-12).

Wisdom can be achieved through prayer:

If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God, who gives to all liberally and without reproach, and it will be given to him. But let him ask in faith, with no doubting, for he who doubts is like a wave of the sea driven and tossed by the wind (James 1:5-6).

The Apostle Paul's urge has become almost a greeting for the Christians when they meet and depart:

- *Pray for us* (Hebrews 13:18).
- *...praying always...for all the saints* (Ephesians 6:18).

In the Old Testament we find explicit references to the prayer for enemies:

- Baruch urges the Jewish people to pray for Nebuchadnezzar (*Baruch* 1:11).
- ***And seek the peace of the city where I have caused you to be carried away captive, and pray to the Lord for it; for in its peace you will have peace (Jeremiah 29:7).***

The New Testament brings forth the commandment to love all people and all enemies unconditionally.

...pray for those who spitefully use you and persecute you (Matthew 5:44).

St. John Climacus shows us why some of the requests made to the Lord are not fulfilled:

- we either asked too early;
- or we asked unworthily;
- or because if it were fulfilled we would boast;
- or because if it were fulfilled we would become idle.¹⁷⁴

It is good to know that prayer has therapeutic effect, but it also has diagnostic value of a worshiper's condition.

In St. Maximus, cited by H. Vlachos, we find the sign of worshiper's release from passions: "When during prayer no conceptual image of anything worldly disturbs your intellect, then know that you are within the realm of dispassion."¹⁷⁵

¹⁷⁴ St. John Climacus, cited by H. Vlachos in *Orthodox Psychotherapy*, op. cit., p.357

¹⁷⁵ H. Vlachos, *Orthodox Psychotherapy*, op. cit., p.350

When the fall took place, the mind came out of the heart, that is, reasoning detached from emotion and emotion from reasoning. Healing, salvation, is the historical, personal and ecclesial effort to bring mind back into the heart, to understand the spiritual reason in things, to cleanse oneself of the passionate attachment to this world, to ascend towards the knowledge of God.

For this reason, without getting into too many details and the infinite richness of exegeses on the **Jesus Prayer**, we present a synthesis for those who do not know it.

Mind's path towards God goes neither through senses, nor through the world, but through the heart, from where it ascends to God.

What it is? It is this utterance: *Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God, have mercy on me, a sinner*. Why is this prayer so precious?

Because it is a complete prayer through which God is asked for *help, mercy, and forgiveness* at the same time; it comprises “in essence the evangelical formulations of the ten lepers’ prayer (*Luke 17:13*), of the blind man of Jericho (*Luke 18:38; Mark 10:47*) and of the two blind men” (*Matthew 20:31*).

- Because it acknowledges the state of fall, of sinfulness, acknowledgement without which we could not rise;
- Because it is a prayer that expresses the Church dogma in its essence, and through this very cry it protects us from falling, helps us to remain in the “right faith”:
 - by saying “have mercy on me,” we affirm that Jesus Christ is the Savior;
 - by saying “Lord,” we affirm the unity between the person and His divinity;

- by saying “Jesus” we acknowledge His human nature;
- by saying “Christ” we acknowledge His divine and human nature united in one single person;
- by saying “Son of God” we acknowledge God the Father and Jesus Christ as the Son of God;
- as no one can say that *Jesus is Lord except by the Holy Spirit* (1 Corinthians 12:3) we acknowledge and comprise the Holy Spirit too in this prayer;
- Jesus’ name gets its power from His power; it makes the Savior be present because we say it, as it is *a name which is above every name* (Philippians 2:9). It has power over man’s enemies.
- Because it is a short prayer, easy to learn in times of peace, work, persecution, in the open and in secret.

The Jesus Prayer has been practiced through bimillennial experience, engaging the body too, as it is also a prayer of the body.

The Holy Fathers understood that breathing is a vital function of the human body, to which man has partial access through his will. By saying the prayer in the rhythm of breathing, modelling the breathing rhythm and focusing it on the prayer, the body submits itself to the spirit, that is, to the energy of the soul, to prayer, disciplines itself, becomes strong and follows the soul. This is the most efficient method for engaging the whole being in prayer and obtaining quick spiritual progress.

This prayer is also called “The Prayer of the Heart” or “The Prayer of the Mind” because, if it is practiced with great watchfulness and zeal,

it brings the mind into the heart – that is, it heals the human person of alienation and recreates the icon he had before the fall.

An essential rule for those who progress in prayer is revealed to us by Ignatius Brianchaninov, from the Holy Fathers: while praying we must cast away any “illusion or fantasy” that might be brought forth “through the power of imagination.”¹⁷⁶

Mercy

Mercy is a sentiment that stems from love. Mercy is applied love and in case of a godly man it is characterized by high spontaneity, sudden, imperious, conscious, almost involuntary need to help a man in necessity, to do good.

¹⁷⁶ Ignatius Brianchaninov, *On Deception*, op. cit., p.69

Mercy is the transposition of love into deeds.

Have mercy on me and *Have mercy on us* is the prayer infinitely repeated, which has been filling the universe for centuries: **Jesus, Master, have mercy on us!** (Luke 17:13).

Mercy triumphs over judgment (James 2:13), for the Savior ***went out and saw a great multitude; and He was moved with compassion for them, and healed their sick*** (Matthew 14:14).

God descended to us out of mercy.

Almsgiving

Almsgiving is the sick person's gesture of giving, which helps the healing of body and soul.

The doctor also has to be merciful, first of all with the sick.

The deeds of bodily mercy:

- visiting the sick;
- giving to drink to the thirsty;
- feeding the hungry;
- visiting those in prisons;
- clothing the naked;
- accommodating the strangers;
- burying the dead;
- giving away one tenth of one's income (The Old Testament)
(Malachi 3:8);
- giving away half of one's possessions (The New Testament)
(Luke 19:8);
- ***giving a cup of cold water in the name of a disciple***
(Matthew 10:42).

The beneficiaries of Christian philanthropy (biblical basis):

- first of all the Christians, members of the Church (*Romans 12:5*);
- the servants (*Deuteronomy 15:12-14*);
- the poor (*Luke 3:11*);
- the widows (*Deuteronomy 14:29*);
- the orphans (*James 1:27*);
- the enemies (*Romans 12:20*);
- all people (*Galatians 6:10*);

- the sick (*Matthew 25:34-40*);
- those in prison (*Matthew 25:34-40*);
- the naked (*Matthew 25:34-40*);
- the thirsty (*Matthew 25:34-40*);
- the hungry (*Matthew 25:34-40*);
- the strangers (*Romans 12:13*).

The Church, inspired by the Holy Scripture and by its own living experience, still helps

and prays for:

- the despaired;
- the moribunds;
- those in danger;
- those despised;
- the forsaken;
- the enslaved;
- those invaded;
- those robbed;
- those in wars;
- those in perils;
- those who cry;
- those persecuted for righteousness;
- those who have been wronged;
- the brokenhearted;
- the weak;
- the impoverished;
- those attacked or possessed by demons;

- those bearing afflictions;
- Your servants hidden in the middle of the world;
- those who fight the good battle;
- those oppressed in judgment;
- those who have just received bad news;
- those who take on the crown of martyrdom;
- those burdened with tribulations;
- those who bear their cross;
- those troubled by enchantments or seized with hallucinations;
- those who face times when faith is reviled;
- those who bring forth children;
- those whom no one loves;
- those who have not known You yet;
- our spiritual masters.

Humility

The sick person's humility is the only reliable method through which those suffering from pride and those whose illness is a consequence of pride can be healed.

A doctor's humility is absolutely necessary in practicing medicine. A healing spirit does not work in proud doctors. We should stay away from them.

In the New Testament the bodily doctor is humiliated, being mentioned just once, when he attempted to heal the woman with a flow of blood and took all her wealth.

Repentance

As long as man is far from God, his interior is full of “this distance.”

“By acknowledging and accepting his sin, man discovers the inner void of his life and existence.” This “painful” finding has a therapeutic reverse, for “it makes him throw himself into the arms of love for God, to seek salvation in Christ, the One Who takes on Himself the void of human existence.”¹⁷⁷

The therapist cannot fundamentally change the anthropological structure of the human person unless he manages to begin the therapeutic process with the birth of repentance; even though the sick person “does not transform his character in its essence, the capacities of his soul are purified.”¹⁷⁸

Repentance is mentioned in both the Old Testament and the New Testament.

Disobedience in Eden was a fall without repentance, the woman blamed the serpent and Adam blamed the woman. This lack of repentance was of no avail to them (*Genesis* 3:11-13).

All downfalls on the road of exodus and in the tempestuous history of Israel were healed through repentance.

When the Lord no longer accepts your sacrifice, ***cover the altar of the Lord with tears*** (*Malachi* 2:13).

In the New Testament the Savior urges us: ***Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand*** (*Matthew* 4:17) and for those who have not truly repented there is the risk of not entering it.

¹⁷⁷ Ch. Yannaras, *The Truth and Unity of the Church*, op. cit., p.38

¹⁷⁸ V. Thermos, *Man in Sight! Orthodox Psychology and Psychiatry*, op. cit., p.3

...the goodness of God leads you to repentance (Romans 2:4).

And thus the Lord speaks through the prophet Jeremiah: ***If you return, I will restore you...*** (Jeremiah 15:19).

Repentance leads you in a blessed way to confession of sins. And confession of sins has a double therapeutic effect:

- forgiveness of sins;
- cleansing ***from all unrighteousness*** (1 John 1:9).

“The devil hates man’s soul like poison. The evil worked by the devil in the world is limited by man’s repentance. Man’s repentance makes the demon powerless for the very reason that he cannot repent.”¹⁷⁹

Faith

The therapeutic effect of faith can be seen in the fact that it is the generator of all virtues.

Healing is obtained through the sick person’s and the doctor’s faith.

Faith leads man to the Eucharist. And the Eucharist helps him to know Christ-God. On the road to Emmaus, Luke’s and Cleopas’ hearts burnt within them, but they knew Him only when He broke the bread, ***and gave it to them*** (Luke 24:30-32).

The Canaanite woman asked the Savior insistently and humbly to heal her daughter oppressed by a demon. The Savior answered: **“O woman, great is your faith! Let it be to you as you desire.”** *And her daughter was healed from that very hour* (Matthew 15:22-28).

In another section, before the healing took place, the Savior asked: **“Do you believe that I am able to do this?”** *They said to Him, “Yes, Lord.”* **Then He touched their eyes, saying, “According to your faith let it be to you.”** (Matthew 9:28-29).

¹⁷⁹ H. Vlachos, *Orthodox Psychotherapy (sequel and debates)*, op. cit., p.246

Jairus asked the Savior to heal his daughter who was **at the point of death**; Christ answered: **Do not be afraid; only believe** (Mark 5:22-23; 36).

Love

This virtue must be practiced by both the therapist and the sick person.

The Holy Fathers say that the doctors who have no feelings of love for their patients cannot help them. The gift of healing is given to those who are able to love their peers.

The Savior speaks about three ways of “loving:”

- ***You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind*** (Matthew 22:37).
- ***You shall love your neighbor as yourself*** (Matthew 22:39).

- *A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another; as I have loved you, that you also love one another (John 13:34).*

Christian dogma requires and urges a therapist to love the sick who come to him.

However, according to the law of liberty, the sick person is free to refuse his love. This is not the therapist's problem though, but the patient's.

Watchfulness

Watch and pray, lest you enter into temptation. The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak (Matthew 26:41).

Watching also means thinking incessantly of God, of His providence, His care for us, His righteousness, His mercy.

Hope

Hope in God bestows man a new power, inexplicable to those around: *...prevailed, because they relied on the Lord God of their fathers (2 Chronicles 13:18).*

Hope has a prophylactic role, as it protects man from errors: *...all who hope in Him shall not go wrong (Psalm 33:23).*

At the same time it has a therapeutic effect: *Behold, the eyes of the Lord are on those who fear Him, on those who hope in His mercy, to*

deliver their souls from death and to keep them alive in famine (Psalm 32:18-19).

God... saves those who hope in Him (Susanna – Daniel, Preamble 60).

However, we should not forget that *the hope of the righteous will be gladness, but the expectation of the wicked will perish (Proverbs 10:28)*. The psychotherapeutic meaning of this verse is the necessity to become righteous before we dare to hope in healing. Otherwise, there is the risk for hope (associated with lawlessness) to fail deplorably in complaining or despair.

Religious psychotherapy must research the patience and comfort that come from the Scripture and in those to *have hope (Romans 15:4)*.

The therapeutic effect of hope also appears in the words of the Apostle Peter: *And everyone who has this hope in Him purifies himself, just as He is pure (1 John 3:3)*.

One of the methods used to encourage the sick person is that of “satisfying his need *to feel that he is valuable*.”¹⁸⁰ This probably because many persons with mental disorders are marginalized.

¹⁸⁰ Philotheos Pharos, *The Myth of Mental Illness*, Egumenița Publishing, Galați, 2009, p.47

Chastisement

The Holy Scripture speaks about a “therapeutic chastisement:”
And Jesus rebuked the demon, and it came out of him; and the child was cured from that very hour (Matthew 17:18).

So He stood over her and rebuked the fever, and it left her. And immediately she arose and served them (Luke 4:39).

Whose chastisement is directed to:

- those who came up from the land of slavery and refused to enter Canaan (*Numbers 32:6-15*);
- **Show mercy to those who have doubts** (*Jude 1:22*).
- he who **forsakes the way** (*Proverbs 15:10*);
- for sins (*Jeremiah 17:3-4*);
- **Chasten your son while there is hope** (*Proverbs 19:18*);
- a rod is good **for the fool’s back** (*Proverbs 26:3*);
- those who lack wisdom (*Proverbs 29:15*);
- the arrogant (*Psalms 118:21*).

Chastisement Methodology:

- The Lord disciplines the Jews (as chosen people) at the beginning of their sinning, and this is **an act of great kindness**, but with other nations, he waits until **the completion of their sins** to punish them (*2 Maccabees 6:13-15*);
- The father who loves his son **disciplines him promptly** (*Proverbs 13:24*);
- The righteous man reproves **with mercy** (*Psalms 140:5*);
- **Question your neighbor before you threaten him** (*Wisdom of Sirach 19:17*);

- *Open reproofs are better than hidden love (Proverbs 27:5);*
- *Do not find fault before you examine a situation (Wisdom of Sirach 11:7);*
- The Holy Apostle Paul to Timothy: *Convince, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and teaching (2 Timothy 4:2);*
- *Those who are sinning rebuke in the presence of all, that the rest also may fear (1 Timothy 5:20);*
- *Do not rebuke your neighbor at a wine party, and do not despise him when he is enjoying himself. Do not speak a word of insult against him, and do not afflict him by making demands of him (Wisdom of Sirach 31:31).*

Benefits of chastisement:

- *And Your instruction restored me to the end; and Your instruction will teach me (Psalm 17:36).*
- *Your rod and Your staff, they comfort me (Psalm 22:4).*
- *...he who heeds rebuke gets understanding (Proverbs 15:32).*

Forgiveness

Man cannot heal and his prayer is not listened to unless he forgives those who have sinned against him.

Forgiveness towards our neighbor must be:

- unlimited, that is, *up to seventy times seven (Matthew 18:22);*

- from one's heart (*Matthew* 18:35);
- accompanied by kindness and tenderheartedness (*Ephesians* 4:32);

If we do not forgive we cannot be forgiven: ***But if you do not forgive men their***

trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses (*Matthew* 6:15).

Fasting

Refraining, that is, disciplining the desirous part is the beginning of any healing and the beginning of the awareness that “it takes away devils’ power of tempting the soul, whether it is awake or is sleeping” (Maximus the Confessor).¹⁸¹

Fasting has therapeutic effect on both the body and the soul.

It is desirable that we do not mistake religious fasting for abstinence from food done for reasons that concern strictly bodily health, without spiritual involvement.

Larousse defines fasting as “ceasing food consumption completely, while maintaining or not consuming water.”¹⁸²

The teaching of the Orthodox faith has a definition totally different from this: “Fasting is refraining from all foods, or in case of illness only from certain foods; it also means refraining from drinks, from all worldly things and all evil desires, so that the Christian can pray more easily. And so as to kill the desires of the flesh and receive the grace of God.”¹⁸³

The teaching of the Orthodox faith sees fasting as an exercise in refraining, in strengthening the will, a form of repentance, a religious act of praising God through its sacrificial character, of renouncing what we are allowed to do willingly. Fasting is also a sign of our zeal towards our likeness with God and the angels, who need no food.

Christian fasting is a weapon, not a virtue.

The Old Testament recommends fasting (*Exodus* 34:28).

The New Testament recommends it too.

The Savior fasted for 40 days before He began His mission on earth (*Matthew* 4:2).

The Holy Apostles and their disciples would fast as well.

¹⁸¹ J.-C. Larchet, *The Therapy of Spiritual Illnesses*, op. cit., p.377

¹⁸² Larousse, *Medical Dictionary*, Univers Enciclopedic Publishing, Bucharest, 1998

¹⁸³ *The Teaching of the Orthodox Faith*, 2nd ed., Renașterea Publishing, Cluj-Napoca, 2001

...when you fast, do not be like the hypocrites, with a sad countenance (*Matthew* 6:16).

God's saints presented themselves as **ministers of God: in much patience, in tribulations, in needs, in distresses, in stripes, in imprisonments, in tumults, in labors, in sleeplessness, in fastings** (2 *Corinthians* 6:4-5).

Fasting is accompanied by prayer (*Luke* 2:37), by confessing sins (*Daniel* 9:3-6), by humility (*Deuteronomy* 9:18), by returning to God (*Isaiah* 58:6), by showing mercy (*Zechariah* 7:5-10).

When we study the lives of the saints we learn that religious fasting has a communal dimension as well; those who keep the fasts ordered by the Church are in unity with all Christians, exactly as they are in unity through prayer.

From the lives of the saints, which reflect the tradition of the Church, we also find out the motivation for fasting and oftentimes its character of request, of fasts dedicated for a spiritual goal:

- the Christians would fast so that their city was protected against the pagan king;
- fasting is used against any danger of the soul;
- evil thoughts are healed through fasting;
- devils flee from fast and difficulty;
- repentance and fasting lead to forgiveness of sins;
- they fasted in Gaza for the election of a bishop;
- fast is kept before receiving Baptism;
- a saint fasted after having healed an illness;
- other saints fasted for their own or other people's healing;
- to fast in order to receive from God the news about His will;
- entering into monasticism is tested through fasting;
- a ruler used to go on absolute fast for three days before he fought with the Gentiles;
- an icon painter would always keep absolute fast while painting;
- when searching a vision fasting is required.

The rules of fasting

- a fast is kept with a blessing or as a canon;
- a fast is kept from one to forty days, according to each person's strength;

- a fast is kept in secret, with humility, apart from the fasts ordered by the Church, which can be known openly;
- fasting is accompanied by spiritual labors: prayer, care for the people, the poor, widows, strangers, vigil, tears, cleanness, humility, refraining, patience, kindness, obedience, love;
- bread and water are the essential foods that strengthen the body weakened by fasting;
- the long harsh fasts are interrupted on Saturdays and Sundays to have some food together with brothers;
- fast without prayer causes suffering and death¹⁸⁴

St. John Climacus on fasting, fasting is;

- casting away evil thoughts;
- liberation from dreaming;
- protection for the mind;
- a humble sigh;
- easiness of sleep;
- bodily health¹⁸⁵

There are demons that *come out by nothing but prayer and fasting* (*Mark 9:29*).

¹⁸⁴ P. Chirilă, M. Valică, *The Christian Hospital*, op. cit., pp.48-49

¹⁸⁵ Ibid., p.48

The angels are ministering spirits of God, capable of doing only good (*Hebrews* 1:14). They carry out God's will and judgments.

The angels announced conception (*Luke* 1:31), birth (*Luke* 2:10-12), resurrection (*Matthew* 28:5-7), ascension and the second coming of the Savior (*Acts* 1:11).

They will separate the righteous from the sinners on Judgment Day (*Mark* 13:27).

The angels are ...*ministering spirits sent forth to minister for those who will inherit salvation* (*Hebrews* 1:14).

After the resurrection of all who have ever lived, the righteous will be *like angels of God in heaven* (*Matthew* 22:30).

People are examined by angels in this life, announcing them their salvation or offering help:

- Zacharias the priest (*Luke* 1:11-20);
- the shepherds (*Luke* 2:8-15);
- Mary Magdalene (*Matthew* 28:1-7);
- the apostles (*Acts* 1:10-11; 5:19-20);
- Paul to whom the angel said: ***Do not be afraid, Paul*** (*Acts* 27:23-24).

"The angels protect people and strive to guide them only on the path of the good."¹⁸⁶

The path of salvation is difficult, covered with impediments, trials, deceit, fears.

The way between birth, discovery of faith and detachment of the soul from the body is risky and subjected to continual labor.

But Christians must arm themselves with the conviction that God protects them, supports them, shows them the way, and fights for them against all seen and unseen enemies.

¹⁸⁶ Patriarch Iustin, *Evagrius of Pontus*, op. cit., p.136

The angels join us, as it happened in *Exodus: And the Angel of God...came between the camp of the Egyptians and the camp of Israel. Thus it was a cloud and darkness to the one, and it gave light by night to the other, so that the one did not come near the other all that night* (*Exodus 14:19-20*).

The way of the Lord is strength for the upright, but destruction will come to the workers of iniquity (*Proverbs 10:29*).

The Church

The Church is a theandric divine-human work, a place and time of healing, of man's progression towards God, a place of salvation.

The Lord's ark and the Temple of Solomon are prefigurations of the Church.

Christ's Church was born on the Day of Pentecost, when the Holy Spirit descended upon the assembly: *When the Day of Pentecost had fully come, they were all with one accord in one place. And suddenly there came a sound from heaven, as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled the whole house where they were sitting. Then there appeared to them divided tongues, as of fire, and one sat upon each of them. And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit...* (*Acts 2:1-4*).

The Church of a certain people is associated with the glory of that people: *The glory of Israel is exiled from its home, for the ark of God is taken* (1 Kingdoms 4:22).

The whole world and its history are recapitulated in sacerdotal priesthood: *For the whole world was on his long robe, and the glories of the fathers were a carved work arranged in four rows of stones; and Your majesty was on the diadem on his head* (Wisdom of Solomon 18:24).

The assembly of those who rebuilt the temple of Jerusalem consisted of *men and women and all who could hear with understanding* (Nehemiah 8:2).

The Lord Himself explains what the temple means to the people: *Speak to the house of Israel, 'Thus says the Lord God: 'Behold, I will profane My sanctuary, your arrogant boast, the desire of your eyes, the delight of your soul...'* ” (Ezekiel 24:21).

The Church is eternal and invincible: *...the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it* (Matthew 16:18).

The Church “extends the event of the Lord’s Incarnation in history, to the end of the age.”¹⁸⁷

The Church comprises all those who have been baptized and believe in Christ as God and Human.¹⁸⁸

Incarnation, Crucifixion, Resurrection and Ascension of the Lord extend and dwell in the members of the Church through the Holy Mystery of the Eucharist, cleansing and sanctifying the people of God.

The Foundation, the Head, and the Chief Cornerstone of the Church is Christ Himself.

The Church manifests itself *in two or three* people assembled in the name of the Savior: ***For where two or three are gathered together in My name, I am there in the midst of them*** (Matthew 18:20).

The Christian who abides sincerely in ecclesial space is accustomed to assuming sufferings and does not blame anyone for his suffering.

Job is the image of the “righteous”, “pure” man, who suffers because of devil’s hatred, not for his sins. He is the paradigm of ideal Christian, who does not blame God for his suffering.

The Church is:

- the unity of Christians of all times (those who were, who are, and who will be) (*Hebrews 12:22-23*);

¹⁸⁷ I. Mircea, *Dictionary of the New Testament*, op. cit., p.57

¹⁸⁸ Ibid.

- the city of God (*Revelation 3:12*);
- ***pillar and ground of the truth*** (*1 Timothy 3:15*);
- the co-working of the apostles, prophets, teachers, those who work miracles, healers, helpers, rulers, interpreters (*1 Corinthians 12:28*);
- ***one body*** since ***by one Spirit we were all baptized and have all been made to drink into one Spirit*** (*1 Corinthians 12:13*).

The Church has the therapeutic means and the methodology for healing the soul in

the first place and the body in the second place.

Healing presupposes an effort, a coordinated travail:

- the work of reasoning is to move towards “fighting the inner battle, towards self-purification”;
- the work of wisdom is to focus reason towards watchfulness and spiritual contemplation;
- the work of righteousness is to guide desire towards virtue and towards God;
- the work of manliness is to control and govern the five senses.

The evolution of the soul in eternity is that which defines the evolution of the person in eternity.

H. Vlachos summarizes essentially the methodology of healing the soul:

- abstinence;
- love;
- prayer;
- protection of the mind against Satan’s temptations that wind through evil thoughts.¹⁸⁹

¹⁸⁹ H. Vlachos, *Orthodox Psychotherapy*, op. cit., p.36

The Therapist

Ever since the Old Testament, God has been seen as the one *who heals all your diseases*... (*Psalm 102:3*).

Jesus (Yeshua) means “Yahweh is salvation”¹⁹⁰, that is, He “releases”, “heals”, “saves from danger.”

In order to heal man, Christ assumed his nature – apart from sin – and his suffering, since “what is not assumed cannot be healed.”¹⁹¹

Jesus Christ is the great healer; as He is the foundation, the pillar and the head of the Church, He works the therapeutic act through the members of the Church, through priests, through those who have the gift of healing, through any member of the Church.

The Holy Scripture expresses in its verses the healing power of the Christian religion.

Doctors treat, God heals.

“How could a mortal treat a mortal? – we ask ourselves on the basis of the biblical texts and the Holy Tradition, where we see that all healings have been done “in His name” and “by Him,” through requests and prayers, and through faith in Him: *Stop trusting in mere humans...* (*Isaiah 2:22*).

Christ – the Great Doctor

God *has delivered us from the power of darkness and conveyed us into the kingdom of the Son of His love...* (*Colossians 1:13*).

He “gives energies to His creatures, to the extent of their power of receptivity.”¹⁹²

¹⁹⁰ cf. *Matthew* 1:21

¹⁹¹ St. Gregory of Nazianzus, cited by J.-C. Larchet in *Suffering Is Not God's Will*, op. cit., p.80

¹⁹² Hierotheos, the Metropolitan of Nafpaktos, *The Person in the Orthodox Tradition*, op. cit., p.148

From the verse ***in Him dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily*** (*Colossians* 2:9) we understand that our earthly nature assumed by the Savior in His body is attained in His person by ***the fullness of the Godhead*** and by the absolute chance of healing.

Christ is a healer also because ***All things were created through Him and for Him*** (*Colossians* 1:16) and because He knows ***their thoughts*** (*Matthew* 9:4) and because ***He taught them as one having authority*** (*Matthew* 7:29).

God Himself tells us: ***“This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased. Hear Him!”*** (*Matthew* 17:5).

Christ is the unique Savior and Mediator, that is why it is tragic and it is even a sin to look for someone else:

Nor is there salvation in any other, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved (*Acts* 4:12).

Christ is ***far above all principality and power and might and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this age but also in that which is to come*** (*Ephesians* 1: 21).

And if anyone sins, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous (*1 John* 2:1).

His divine power has given to us all things that pertain to life... (*2 Peter* 1:3).

By the expressions ***I am the light of the world*** (*John* 8:12) and the Lord ***has...brought life and immortality to light*** (*2 Timothy* 1:10) we understand that Christ has revealed the mysteries of this world for us to know and has also given the light of eternity for us to desire.

Jesus is Savior, that is, healer:

And Jesus came and spoke to them, saying, “All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth....” (Matthew 28:18).

...and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age (Matthew 28:20).

I am He who searches the minds and hearts (Revelation 2:23).

I am the way, the truth, and the life (John 14:6).

The Spirit of the Lord is upon Me, because He has anointed Me to preach the gospel to the poor; He has sent Me to heal the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed, to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord (Luke 4:18-19).

Verses that illustrate the Savior’s healing power and the healings performed by Him, before and after His Ascension, *that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by Isaiah the prophet, saying: “He Himself took our infirmities and bore our sickness.” (Matthew 8:17).*

And when Jesus went out He saw a great multitude; and He was moved with compassion for them, and healed their sick (Matthew 14:14).

Jesus rebuked the demon and the demon came out of the sick person (*Luke 4:35*).

And as many as touched Him were made well (Mark 6:56).

...let it be known to you all, and to all the people of Israel, that by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom you crucified, whom God raised from the dead, by Him this man stands here before you whole (Acts 4:10).

After the healing of the lame man, Peter explains to the people the mechanism of healing: ***And His name, through faith in His name, has made this man strong, whom you see and know. Yes, the faith which comes through Him has given him this perfect soundness in the presence of you all*** (Acts 3:16).

And Peter said to him, “Aeneas, Jesus the Christ heals you. Arise and make your bed.” Then he arose immediately (Acts 9:34).

...who gave Himself for our sins, that He might deliver us from this present evil age... (Galatians 1:4).

There is therefore now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus...For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has made me free from the law of sin and death (Romans 8:1-2).

I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me (Philippians 4:13).

...who Himself bore our sins in His own body on the tree, that we, having died to sins, might live for righteousness – by whose stripes you were healed (1 Peter 2:24).

For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that He might destroy the works of the devil (1 John 3:8).

The healings performed by the Savior are wonderful teaching to us: ***And the power of the Lord was present to heal them*** (Luke 5:17):

- On the occasion of each healing the Savior humbled Himself for our teaching, asking the patient to keep the healing secret or to tell how much good God had done to him. But every time the patient promoted the Savior, saying how much good Jesus had done to him (Matthew 9:27-31).

- The healings were performed with the word, by touching, with elements of the material universe (mud, pool, saliva).
- Jesus healed Jews, strangers (the servant of the Roman centurion), poor people, enemies (the ear of the servant of the high priest of Gethsemane or the daughter of Jairus, the head of the synagogue).
- In His work Jesus accomplished at once the healing of the body and soul, forgiveness of sins and proclamation of the Gospel.
- Christ's gift for us is the endowment of the apostles and their followers with the power of healing in His name, through which grace and truth came (*John 1:17*).
- From the healings of the possessed mentioned in the New Testament we understand clearly that Christ came into this world to destroy the devil's power and release man from his oppression. Even the demons understood this, for, from within a patient, he addressed Him: ***What have we to do with You, Jesus, You Son of God? Have You come here to torment us before the time?*** (*Matthew 8:29*).
- The healing of those possessed “are the expression of eschatological destruction of devil's power,”¹⁹³ for ***grace and truth came through Jesus Christ*** (*John 1:17*).

The Doctor

There is “a strong attraction between a pure mind and the knowledge of God.”¹⁹⁴ This attraction reveals both the mysteries and the

enemies, that is why the Christians must practice virtue all the time in order to help their sick.

“By purifying our mind, we obtain self-knowledge as well.”¹⁹⁵

The doctor is a biblical character, mentioned by the Holy Scripture a few times.

In Egypt the doctors took care of the lifeless body too, as they also embalmed the dead (*Genesis 50:2-3*).

In the Old Testament it is said that the physician must be honored *for the Lord created him ... for you need him* (*Wisdom of Sirach 38:1-15*).

The role of the bodily doctor should not be absolutized because he cannot always heal:

There is a time when success is also in their hands (*Wisdom of Sirach 38:13*).

There is a risk for the therapist to fall into the trap of dangerous idealization. Even the patients depart from reality and if the therapist does not answer promptly, he immediately falls into the snare of arrogance.

We can mention here the case of the Apostle Paul and Barnabas, who were taken for gods by the Lycaonians who – in their infantilism and paganism – attributed them qualities of gods. Had the Lycaonians sought the Kingdom of Heaven, they would have recognized in the two persons the messengers of Christ. Paul and Barnabas reacted promptly: *...they tore their clothes*

¹⁹³ H. Vlachos, *Orthodox Psychotherapy (sequel and debates)*, op. cit., p.267

¹⁹⁴ H. Vlachos cites Maximus the Confessor in *Orthodox Psychotherapy (sequel and debates)*, op. cit., p.67

¹⁹⁵ Ibid.

and ran in among the multitude, crying out and saying, “Men, why are you doing these things? We also are men with the same nature as you...” (Acts 14:11-15).

The therapist (through his posture, gestures, physiognomy, position) should not appear before the patient as “perfect”, as a superman.

On the contrary, it is desirable for the patient to understand that the therapist has also been through “similar errors and sufferings.”

Doctors praying for their patients was a common practice in the Old Testament: ***For they will pray to the Lord to give them success in bringing relief and healing, for the sake of preserving your life (Wisdom of Sirach 38:14).***

The expression ***those who are well have no need of a physician (Mark 2:17)***, which we find in the New Testament, has an enormous value nowadays against prophylaxis with active pharmacological substances.

The doctor as therapist is humbled by the New Testament, being mentioned just once, as being helpless, for the woman suffering from bleeding ***had suffered many things from many physicians. She had spent all that she had and was no better, but rather grew worse (Mark 5:25-26).***

Finally, an emblematic and beautiful thing about the medical profession is the fact that one of the evangelists was a doctor: ***Luke the beloved physician... greets you (Colossians 4:14).***

When a psychotherapist wishes to become a Christian psychotherapist, he must ponder upon Hierotheos Vlachos' words

referring to the notion of “theologian:” “Therefore, theology is not an intellectual discipline, but the fruit of man’s healing from passions. Only he who has purified himself of passions, or is about to, can be initiated in the ineffable mysteries and in its great truths or is worthy of revelations that he may impart to his peers.”¹⁹⁶

¹⁹⁶ H. Vlachos, *Orthodox Psychotherapy*, op. cit., p.42

The Priest

“The mission of the bishops, priests, spiritual fathers is to take the faithful out of Egypt and guide them towards the Promised Land.”¹⁹⁷

The priest is invested to perform the Holy Mysteries for the soul and bodily healing of the faithful, to pray for the sick, and to confess people’s sins.

The Holy Mystery of Confession is not a simple “relief” of conscience.

The spiritual father goes down – like Christ – to the hell of the patient’s bodily and spiritual sins, temptations and sufferings, raising him to the haven of the holy fear of God and of his spiritual restoration.

The priestly paradigm is the Savior, and there could be no other.

As *the Son of Man has come to seek and to save that which was lost* (Luke 19:10), so the priest is support and help to the one who is lost.

His mission is to help people to receive the word before Satan comes to take away *the word that was sown in their hearts* (Mark 4:15-20).

The priests *who labor in the word and doctrine* should *be counted worthy of double honor* (1 Timothy 5:17-18).

Therapy (and especially psychotherapy) is founded on what the Lord has given to us: *not...a spirit of fear, but of power and of love and of a sound mind* (2 Timothy 1:7).

The flock must be shepherded *not by compulsion but willingly...* (1 Peter 5:1-4).

Psychotherapy (like therapy in general) is based on the faith in the verse of the Apostle and Evangelist Matthew: *And when He had called His twelve disciples to Him, He gave them power over unclean spirits, to cast them out, and to heal all kinds of sickness and all kinds of disease* (Matthew 10:1). *...whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven* (Matthew 18:18).

¹⁹⁷ Ibid. p.68

But the verses that follow speak about the worthiness or unworthiness of those who welcome the apostles and the fact that the apostles' peace will not remain over those who do not welcome it.

The apostles, the bishops, the priests – as therapists – help people to heal because *he who believes in Me, the works that I do he will do also; and greater works than these he will do...* (John 14:12).

The therapist has special power and charisma: due to his worthiness a whole community is saved; so it happened during the Apostle Paul's shipwreck on his way to Rome:

For there stood by me this night an angel of the God to whom I belong and whom I serve, saying, 'Do not be afraid, Paul; you must be

brought before Caesar; and indeed God has granted you all those who sail with you’ (Acts 27:23-24).

This because “a single member of the Church can save through his own person, and can embody in his own life and reason, the plenitude of faith and truth, the whole Christ, the communal way of existence of the Church.”¹⁹⁸

H. Vlachos says that an unworthy priest can forgive sins by virtue of his capability to loose (*John 20:21-23*), but cannot heal because he himself is not healed (*Luke 4:23*), that is, he has not put into his work “the gift of Baptism – the heavenly gift of grace.”¹⁹⁹

The author speaks about the *spiritual priesthood* rather than “universal” or “lay” priesthood and states that it is accessible to all those who are baptized, but it is reached only by “those who have gained the precious gift of praying for all the people; ...the prayers of such believers, who sacrifice themselves praying for the whole creation of God are those which sustain the world and heal people.”²⁰⁰

¹⁹⁸ Ch. Yannaras, *The Truth and Unity of the Church*, op. cit., p.60

¹⁹⁹ H. Vlachos, *Orthodox Psychotherapy*, op. cit., p.95

²⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, p.104

When man has purified his mind, when he has been released from the slavery of dark thoughts and has become an abode for the Holy Spirit, he has truly reached the spiritual priesthood. From this moment on, he will “accomplish a mystical liturgy in his soul’s church and will commune in betrothal with the Lamb of God.”²⁰¹

The Book of Acts also tells us how the priest (therapist) *should not* be:

- Simon Magus, after being baptized, tried to purchase the gift of priesthood with money, but Peter answered to him: ***You have neither part nor portion in this matter, for your heart is not right in the sight of God*** (Acts 8:21).
- the ***seven sons of Sceva*** were ***some of the itinerant Jewish exorcists*** who ***took it upon themselves to call the name of the Lord Jesus over those who had evil spirits, saying, “We exorcise you by the Jesus whom Paul preaches.”... And the evil spirit answered and said, “Jesus I know, and Paul I know; but who are you?” Then the man in whom the evil spirit was leaped on them, overpowered them, and prevailed against them, so that they fled out of that house naked and wounded*** (Acts 19:13-16).

It is a typical case of punishing those who tried to use the Savior’s name in a magical way, without trusting in Him.

Healing is a continuous process, including the day of rest in the Old Testament, ***For the Son of Man is Lord even of the Sabbath*** (Matthew 12:8).

The man with the withered hand (Matthew 12:10-14), the woman who had been bent over for 18 years (Luke 13:11-17), the man suffering from dropsy (Luke 14:1-6), the man blind from birth (John 9:1-41) and the paralytic at Bethesda pool (John 5:27) are all healings performed on Saturdays.

²⁰¹ Ibid., p.106

Healing also means learning and knowing all through *the anointing...received from Him* (1 John 2:27) and not forgetting that *He who has the Son has life* (1 John 5:12).

The priest therapist should not forget that his vocation is born from his quality of *bondservant of Jesus Christ* (Romans 1:1) and his commitment as mediator is possible and efficient only *on Christ's behalf* (2 Corinthians 5:20) and that *We...who are strong ought to bear with the scruples of the weak, and not to please ourselves* (Romans 15:1).

Laying on of hands in the chain of apostolic succession is not a magical act, it is not sufficient to heal. Continuous ascetic and spiritual growth is necessary. The Apostle Paul wrote to Timothy: *Therefore I remind you to stir up the gift of God which is in you through the laying on of my hands* (2 Timothy 1:6).

This is what the therapist's perfection consists in: to not err in word, *For we all stumble in many things. If anyone does not stumble in word, he is a perfect man, able also to bridle the whole body* (James 3:2).

In order to help others to heal, the Orthodox psychotherapist (doctor or priest) must himself be healed and humble. Healed since, if he does not know the heavenly dimension of healing he cannot impart it to others. On the other hand, if he himself has not gone through the ascetic steps of therapy, he cannot recognize the level at which the penitent (patient) lives or comes to him. In the third place, *God resists the proud, but gives grace to the humble* (1 Peter 5:5).

“The Holy Spirit – or generically, the grace of the Holy Trinity – is the One Who performs the healing of the Christians suffering from

passions, the priest being just a servant of this healing. The whole iconomy of the Church is divine-human, the divine grace abiding mystically in the priest, who knows from his experience this mysterious work of grace.’’²⁰²

²⁰²H. Vlachos, *Orthodox Psychotherapy*, op. cit., p.73

Practicing Orthodox psychotherapy with honor and piety is at the same time a way of personal salvation.

Brethren, if anyone among you wanders from the truth, and someone turns him back, let him know that he who turns a sinner from the error of his way will save a soul from death and cover a multitude of sins (James 5:19-20).

IX. The Principles of Christian Psychotherapy

1. The therapist is a faithful person. He believes in the Unique God of Israel, as God the Father, in the Holy Spirit Who also comes from the Father unto Jesus Christ the Savior, the Holy Trinity that is the creator and healer of the humankind.

The Christian therapist should never doubt the dogma he professes, *for he who doubts is like a wave of the sea driven and tossed by the wind (James 1:6).*

The therapist who does not know *the Scriptures nor the power of God* (Matthew 22:29) goes astray.

That is why the systematic study of the Holy Scripture and the advice of good teaching is a sacred duty of any therapist.

According to Mark's verse, the New Testament is *a new doctrine* (Mark 1:27).

The Orthodox psychotherapist always tries to maintain the verse from Apostle Paul, *2 Corinthians: for...casting down arguments and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God, bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ* (2 Corinthians 10:4-5).

Jesus Christ came *teaching... preaching... healing all kinds of sickness and all kinds of disease among the people* (Matthew 4:23).

You do perceive the suffering and pain, that You might deliver them into Your hands (Psalm 9:35).

The true therapist in Christ is motivated in his work – after the Christic model – by an intense sentiment of mercy when he treats the sick.

At the same time, the therapeutic act takes place only in the truth of faith.

All advice, motivation and interpretations of the sick person's suffering should not distance him from the Truth: *Let not mercy and truth forsake you; bind them around your neck, write them on the tablet of your heart* (Proverbs 3:3).

Mercy is beautiful in the time of His affliction (Wisdom of Sirach 35:24).

The Christian psychotherapist is highly preoccupied with the Truth, starting from the finding that “refusing reality is a feature common to all persons with mental disorders.”²⁰³

In the concept of Christian medicine and psychology the Truth is Jesus Christ Himself, and who is in Christ, that is in the Truth.

Being in the Truth is necessary from both the diagnostic and therapeutic standpoint.

The psychotherapist pays maximum attention to the sick person’s discourse and to his own discourse, so as not to retract or change some statements or interpretations of suffering.

Saying “Yes and No” to a decision that was “Yes” is defined by the Apostle Paul as a “decision of the flesh” (2 *Corinthians* 1:17).

2. The therapist is continuously perfecting through learning, asceticism, humility and love for his peers, the confession of our Lord, the stirring up of the gift in order to be able to ask for and receive the healing of those who look to him (2 *Timothy* 1:6).

He asks for wisdom in his prayers, as *the tongues of the wise heal* (*Proverbs* 12:20).

3. The therapist is required:

- To live in constant watchfulness, to be close to God all the time, since “for he who has distanced himself from God, the human nature remains obscure.”²⁰⁴ On the other hand, *those who seek the Lord shall understand it in everything* (*Proverbs* 28:5).

- To be *quick to listen and give his answer with patience* (*Wisdom of Sirach 5:13-14*).
- To have self-control, for *he who controls his temper is better than he who captures a city* (*Proverbs 16:30*).
- To examine himself *as to whether* he is *in the faith* (*2 Corinthians 13:5*).
- To examine himself, so as to *understand the things of your neighbor by your own* (*Wisdom of Sirach 31:15*).
- If *you stand by faith... do not be haughty, but fear* (*Romans 11:20*).
- To ask for advice: *There are many thoughts in the heart of a man, but the counsel of the Lord abides forever* (*Proverbs 19:21*).
- To approach the sick person *speaking the truth in love* (*Ephesians 4:15*) and, at Peter's command, purifying *your souls in obeying the truth... in sincere love of the brethren* (*1 Peter 1:22*).

It is the only way through which the sick person's soul can be truly examined, a fallen soul perhaps, but a soul that must be helped to rise.

The Lord is close *to all who call upon Him in truth* (*Psalms 144:18*).

If the therapist is "in the truth" and the sick person is "in the truth," they have a

²⁰⁴ H. Vlachos, *Orthodox Psychotherapy*, op. cit., p.151

collaborative and efficient relationship in healing, since they have become *free*: ***If you abide in My word... you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free*** (John 8:31-32).

In fact, the deontology of the Christian psychotherapeutic act forces the therapist from the beginning of his profession to always remember the verse of the Apostle Paul: ***For we can do nothing against the truth, but for the truth*** (2 Corinthians 13:8).

Optimism is the essential substance, the valuable gemstone, the purpose of each appointment between the Orthodox psychotherapist and the sick person.

This message is based on the image of God in man, who knows his origin, that is, the Land of Hope and Promise; and knows that, no matter how heavy the chains of suffering are, there is a shred of liberty in the sick man's soul that makes him participate in the psychologist's therapeutic effort.

4. What the therapist should not do: *Do not praise a man before he reveals the way he reasons, for this is the way a man is tested* (*Wisdom of Sirach 27:7*).

The therapist – more than anything else – must heal, not judge. There should not be the slightest trace of accusation or contempt for those who have come to ask you for help, because a soul might go astray: ***Do not trouble a heart that was made resentful*** (*Wisdom of Sirach 4:3*). It is not the right moment to disclose your opinions.

To not condition the therapeutic act on material reward: *Let the kindness of giving be shown in the presence of all the living* (Wisdom of Sirach 7:33).

Do not grieve a hungry soul; this refers, of course, to the spiritual hunger and search.

Do not rebuke an older man... (1 Timothy 5:1).

The Christian therapist does not approve of and does not credit the moral falls of the sick person, nor his dogmatic falls if he is a Christian. But he does not judge him and does not talk to him in a reproving way, he just reminds him what is good and what is evil, that is, he talks to him about “not doing certain things,” for even in Eden there were interdictions for the good of our first parents: *...from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you may not eat; for in whatever day you eat from it, you shall die by death* (Genesis 2:17).

5. The therapist prays.

A Doctor's prayer for his patients:

In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen!

Lord Jesus Christ, Son and Word of God, You Who incarnating took upon Yourself our weaknesses, and our illnesses You bore, You Who in Your great mercy and as a sign of the coming of Your Kingdom have been healing the multitudes, the weak and the sick, and those possessed by demons, come with Your all-healing power and heal the sick who ask for healing, for You are the One who said: *Without Me you can do nothing.*

O Lord, reveal through the Comforter Whom the Father sent into the world through You, the cause of Your servants' illness, give them repentance, peace, patience and the joy of the soul tested during Your visitation. And reveal, Lord, to Your servants, that You are the Master of life and healing, Master over any mortal flesh and any eternal soul. Stretching out Your right hand to heal, O Lord, do so that Your servants' illness be a chance for healing their soul, for increasing their faith, hope and love.

As for me, Your slave, doctor of mortal flesh and unworthy servant, help me to learn good medicine that does no harm, and to make known to the sick who come to me the Way towards You, for You are the Healer of our souls and bodies and to You we sing our praise, to the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, now and forever. Amen!

For the prayers of Your Holy Mother and of all Saints, Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God, have mercy on us. Amen!

In addition to the prayer for all the sick, the therapist prays for each sick person he meets: *Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God, heal Your bondservant... (Christian name).*

The prayer of request intertwines continually with the thanksgiving hymn. The request alone is like a prayer with a single wing:

He who returns a kindness offers fine wheat flour (Wisdom of Sirach 35:2).

And whatever you do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through Him (Colossians 3:17).

Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom, teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord (Colossians 3:16).

6. If the patient is a faithful person, he must be urged to pray:
...pray to the Lord and He will heal you (Wisdom of Sirach 38:9).

If the patient is an atheist, we still can examine his soul through *their conscience* and *their thoughts accusing or else excusing them*, for the *Gentiles* have *the work of the law written in their hearts...* (Romans 2:14-15).

In fact it is a good thing for any man to be examined – diagnostically – from the point of view of his guilt before God and – therapeutically – from the point of view of his awakening and experiencing repentance, the certain way towards healing.

We must *receive one who is weak in the faith, but not to disputes over doubtful things* (Romans 14:1).

7. The therapist must fast because some demons come out *by nothing but prayer and fasting* (Mark 9:29).

If the patient also fasts, all the better.

It is a Sabbath of Sabbaths... and you shall humble your souls (Leviticus 16:31).

8. The therapist – if he is a layman – appeals to the priests of the Church, the apostles' followers:

Then He appointed twelve... to have power to heal sicknesses and to cast out demons (Mark 3:14-15).

Is anyone among you sick? Let him call for the elders of the church (James 5:14).

9. The spirit of gentleness may govern the therapist (*Galatians* 6:1). At the same time he should, *...comfort the fainthearted, uphold the weak* (*1 Thessalonians* 5:14).

10. The therapist must be filled with and dominated by *compassion* and *the will* to heal the sick (*Mark* 1:40-42).

11. *Do not withdraw yourself from those who weep, and mourn with those who mourn* (*Wisdom of Sirach* 7:34). *Rejoice with those who rejoice, and weep with those who weep* (*Romans* 12:15).

One of the aims followed by the psychotherapist in his endeavor is *to turn the hearts of the fathers to the children* (*Luke* 1:17); that was one of the works of the Forerunner, as it is well known that *whoever does not receive the kingdom of God as a little child will by no means enter it* (*Mark* 10:15).

This also correlates with the text in *Numbers* that explains what being a child means: the Promised Land will be seen by the children and youngsters, who *do not know good nor evil* and do not judge (*Numbers* 14:23).

There is a time when the therapist keeps quiet: Eliphaz, Bildad and Zophar, *each one came... from his own place...to visit and comfort* Job; and after *they cried with a loud voice and wept ...they sat down with him on the ground seven days and seven nights, and no one spoke to*

him, for they saw that his affliction was terrible and very great (Job 2:16-18).

12. The therapist returns to examine his brethren (*Acts 15:36*).

The second and the subsequent examinations are very important.

13. Examining the patient:

a) And he speaks about faith and about God's power to heal him.

Draw near to God and He will draw near to you (James 4:8).

The Lord is good to those who wait for Him, to the soul who will seek Him... (Lamentations 3:22).

You granted in our hearts the fear of You, to call upon Your name (Baruch 3:7).

And you will seek Me and find Me, when you search for Me with all your heart (Jeremiah 29:13).

b) If he understands all this, he urges the sick person to pray (*1 Thessalonians 5:17*).

...whoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved (Joel 3:5)

c) *Let everyone who names the name of Christ depart from iniquity (2 Timothy 2:19).*

d) To refrain, for *the careful man will prolong his life (Wisdom of Sirach 37:31).*

e) The therapeutic process begins with the effort of sanctifying ourselves: *Therefore, you shall be holy, for I the Lord your God am holy (Leviticus 20:7).*

Therefore if anyone cleanses himself from the latter, he will be a vessel for honor... (2 Timothy 2:21).

...*make yourself ready to call upon your God, O Israel!* (Amos 4:12).

f) If the man can bear it, explain to him that he comes from a fallen being and because of this neither is he perfect and his imperfection prevents him from being healed.

In the healing process we must pay special attention to the body.

The exercise of refraining, of disciplining the body, of asceticism is precious for the healing of the soul, for the Apostle Paul regards as *works of the flesh* even more of the soul's manifestations: *idolatry, sorcery, hatred, contentions, jealousies, outbursts of wrath, selfish ambitions, dissensions, heresies, envy...* (Galatians 5:19-21).

At the very beginning of any healing process we must admit our imperfection and confess our sins (Wisdom of Sirach 4:25-26), clean from hidden sins (Psalm 18:13), *for there is nothing hidden which will not be revealed* (Mark 4:22). The Savior, when He healed the man with the withered hand, first commanded him: "*Step forward,*" then: "*Stretch out your hand.*" *And he stretched it out, and his hand was restored as whole as the other* (Mark 3:3-5).

g) If the sick person is caught in the trap of a city of sin, pride and iniquity, Jeremiah urges: *Flee from the midst of Babylon, and every one save his life! Do not be cut off in her iniquity* (Jeremiah 51:6).

h) *In all your ways acknowledge Him...* (Proverbs 3:6), for *mercy and truth belong to those who devise good* (Proverbs 14:22).

i) healing is not possible unless the sick person comes to terms with people (Luke 12:58-59).

j) *...almsgiving rescues one from death, and it will wash away every sin* (Tobit 12:9)

In the act of almsgiving Christ identifies Himself with the one to whom we have given alms (*Matthew 25:34-40*).

k) Sometimes the battle through which illness is overcome has a defensive sense: patience, patience, patience...(*Luke 21:19*).

l) We urge the sick person to examine his own thought: **...the test of a man is in the way he reasons** (*Wisdom of Sirach 27:5*).

For evil is a cowardly thing, and condemned by its own conscience. It always welcomes things full of trouble (*Wisdom of Solomon 17:10*).

m) Sorrow can be cast away if the sick person remembers **the end of life**, that is, at the end of his life (*Wisdom of Sirach 38:20*).

n) Fear can be easily healed knowing that **God has not given us a spirit of fear, but of power and of love and of a sound mind** (*2 Timothy 1:7*).

o) In order to heal it is absolutely compulsory to know **the cause which supplies the torment** (*Wisdom of Solomon 17:12*), for **when our enemies heard their plan was known to us... God brought their plot to nothing** (*Nehemiah 4:9*).

Orthodox psychotherapy is based entirely on the “discovery of the fall”, on the discovery of that **I heard Your voice... in the garden, and I was afraid because I was naked; so I hid myself** (*Genesis 3:10*).

Ever since the fall, man has been hiding **opposite** the garden of Eden... **to cultivate the ground from which he was taken** (*Genesis 3:23-24*).

The Orthodox psychotherapist knows the truth that man heals not by bringing new energies and powers into him, but by converting the same powers that led to his fall.

Healing is a continuous process of **returning to God**.

The Orthodox psychotherapist helps the patient so that his power of reasoning, his power of desiring and his power of reacting (agility) turn towards repentance, refrain, asceticism, love, virtue.

The Orthodox psychotherapist knows that any sin that is discovered and any pathogenic mechanism that is deciphered are destroyed through their very discovery.

The Exodus from Egypt, the land of slavery, to Israel, the Promised Land, is diagnosis, knowledge, education, and therapy all at once. It is good for the Christian therapist to know what *Deuteronomy* says about this way that lasted 40 years: ***Now you shall remember the whole way the Lord your God led you in the desert, to deal harshly with you and test you, to know what was in your heart, whether you would keep His commandments or not (Deuteronomy 8:2).***

14. Reproof has therapeutic effect provided that:

- it is addressed the wise man (*Proverbs 17:11*);
- it is performed because of unbelief and hardness of heart (*Mark 16:14*);
- it is given to sons (*Wisdom of Sirach 30:7-13*) and to those ***who are unruly*** (*1 Thessalonians 5:14*);
- comes from the Lord (*Proverbs 3:11-12*);
- it is performed ***boldly***; then it ***makes peace*** (*Proverbs 10:10*);
- it is performed with mercy (*Psalms 88:32-34*).

15. *Sweet tongue* is mostly often the first or the only way of communicating with the patient.

We ...*comfort those who are in any trouble, with the comfort with which we ourselves are comforted by God* (2 Corinthians 1:4).

...*a mild tongue breaks bones* (Proverbs 25:17).

...*a humble answer turns away anger* (Proverbs 15:1).

Pleasant words are like a honeycomb, sweetness to the soul and health to the bones (Proverbs 16:24).

16. In the psychotherapist's gestures and on his face the patient must read joy for meeting him and compassion for his suffering: *A cheerful heart makes a man healthy* (Proverbs 17:24).

17. Melotherapy is part of the patient's therapy. The evil spirit would depart when David would play the harp (*1 Kingdoms* 16:23).

18. The Orthodox psychotherapist must know that there are afflictions and demonic attacks more difficult to decipher, which come from *spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places*, from *flesh* and *blood* (*Ephesians* 6:12).

In these cases, there is where we have to fight our battle too.

Revealing the thoughts and the struggle against morbid imagination is one of the aims of psychotherapy sessions.

The sick person must be helped to discover his thoughts, as many of them come from our inner inclination and tendency, and others from demons.

Revealing the thoughts should be an easy, natural, smooth phenomenon, without soul disturbance, without fear, without embarrassment, in a natural, empathetic dialogue.

It is a good thing to “uncover” the obsessive, repetitive thoughts that generate psychological discomfort and apprehension of the soul, which disturb conscience; it is a process that develops spontaneously, with no tinge of “inquest.”

The beginning of healing or amelioration is a process that takes place once thoughts have been revealed.

19. The conscience of faithful people, who already know Orthodox dogma, can be awakened by the psychotherapist through understanding of the *Epistle to Timothy: Some men’s sins are clearly evident, preceding them to judgment, but those of some men follow later (1 Timothy 5:24).*

This means that if the effects of people’s evil works still manifest themselves after their death, their souls continue to be burdened with sins until the Universal Judgment.

Likewise, the good works of some are clearly evident (1 Timothy 5:25); which means that the effects of good deeds that work after the person’s death are also added for the salvation of the soul that awaits the Universal Judgment.

20. Healing is not a passive process. Physiologically, metabolically, psychically, organically – healing is a travail and a struggle in the most beautiful sense of the word: “The feeling of being at war is absolutely necessary...”²⁰⁵

Healing is a continuous process. Doctors treat, God heals. The absolute, primordial health existed in heaven and it will exist again when there is *a new heaven and a new earth*, when *God will wipe away every tear from their eyes; there shall be no more death, nor sorrow, nor*

crying. There shall be no more pain, for the former things have passed away (Revelation 21:4). Then we will be able to say: For You, O Lord, are my lamp (2 Kingdoms 22:29).

Illness is a *tribulation in the world* and Christ urges us: *...be of good cheer, I have overcome the world (John 16:33).*

²⁰⁵ H. Vlachos, *The Illness and Healing of the Soul in the Orthodox Tradition*, op. cit., p.143

As the patients are approached in this way and learn about the Christians who enlightened our Church, some will understand that there were saints who – being in the flesh – were close to or even attained healing when they were still in this world. They are a proof and an exhortation for those who wish to heal and ask the Lord for healing.

“To not grow naturally is lack of health,”²⁰⁶ says Irénée Hausherr.

That is why healing has a beginning, but has no end in this world.

Healing Methodology

It is followed “like a red thread” by the Orthodox psychotherapist:

I. To become aware of the fact that you are ill.

II. To desire and want to be healed.

III. To ask the Church for help.

IV. To discover, accept and understand, no matter how painful it would be, that there are spiritual causes of illnesses. These causes refer to man’s relationship with God.

V. To operate the change. To wish, after having known transgression, to practice repentance, virtue, asceticism and the gospel of love.

VI. To assume all curable and incurable illnesses. To understand that some bodily illnesses are prophylactic for some illnesses of the soul, which are much more serious, and that some bodily illnesses even heal the illnesses of the soul.

²⁰⁶ I. Hausherr, *Weeping and Piercing of the Heart at Eastern Fathers*, op. cit., p.65

VII. To understand that any fall *after having known the truth* is graver than if you had not known it.

VIII. To understand and believe in the Savior's words: *...without Me you can do nothing* (John 15:5).

X. Talking with the Patient

Think that God takes heed of you
(Isaiah the Hermit)

The righteous Isaiah the Hermit, cited by I.C. Teşu, says, referring to meeting and talking with people: "Think that God takes heed of you."²⁰⁷

Philotheos Pharos says that anamnesis is not a simple dialogue but the true “substance” that reflects the appreciation that the therapist gives to meeting with God’s image in the man he has decided to help.”²⁰⁸

The Orthodox psychotherapist must be open, deferential, fraternal, empathetic, paying maximum attention to the sick person before him, as if he were the only person he has met on his way. On the therapist’s face there should be: joy because he has the opportunity of helping him and sorrow because his peer is suffering.

There should be a lot of light and peace around him.

The questions are gentle, harmonious and tender, like caressing waves. They have nothing linked to judgment, interrogation, or morbid curiosity.

²⁰⁷ I.C. Teşu, *The Theology of Trials*, op. cit., p.216

²⁰⁸ P. Pharos, *The Dialogue in Orthodox Psychotherapy*, op. cit., p.13

During anamnesis we should have no tone, nor intention, nor tinge of judgment, for “the danger is greater for he who judges than for he who is judged” (Sextus).²⁰⁹

Politeness, profound respect.

When doing the sick person’s anamnesis, the therapist should not forget that *the eye that beholds good things gladdens the heart* (*Proverbs 15:36*).

The Holy Scripture teaches us to pay maximum attention to the word: reading every verse carefully, correlating it with preceding and following verses and with prayer to enlighten our understanding is a methodology that the Christian psychology must apply to man as well, that is, to examine his words and the correlation between them with

maximum consideration, for *a man's reasoning process reveals his heart* (*Wisdom of Sirach 27:6*).

Philotheos Pharos considers that in the psychotherapist-patient dialogue the emphasis and insistence must be laid on *today*. He is probably inspired by the healing of the thief on the cross, to whom the Savior said: *Assuredly, I say to you, today you will be with Me in Paradise* (*Luke 23:43*), without evoking his past in a judgmental manner.

When the patient has said his Christian name, we pray for him silently: "O Lord, heal him."

Anamnesis has first of all a diagnostic purpose, but it implicitly has a therapeutic purpose and effect, obtained from questions, physiognomic reactions, gestures, intonation.

Anamnesis is focused on three aspects:

- subjective symptoms;
- possible exogenous causes, that is, the context in which the illness appears and the exterior conditions that may aggravate or alleviate symptoms;
- deciphering the "interior", that is, passions, dependencies, the faith, religious beliefs, the relationship with God and with people.

²⁰⁹ *The Sayings of the Holy Fathers*, op. cit., p.57

Anamnesis takes place with a clear message:

- goodwill;
- solicitude;
- without judging;

- without insisting on intimate things;
- mild or very mild reprimand;
- investigating man's relationship with God;
- going with the patient as deep as necessary;
- without insisting with questions in order to obtain an answer by any means at the first appointment.

During the dialogue with the patient we should not forget the following:

- fear; whether he has any fears or not; who he is afraid of – people, God, death, illness, movements of the surrounding universe, etc.?
- the notion of “good” and “evil”; the values he relies on;
- his opinion about himself;
- what he thinks about the causes of his illness; is he guilty for it or are others?;
- has he ever erred in his relationship with people and God?;
- his faith, religious beliefs and sentiments;
- practice of a teaching of faith;
- to what extent his need of loving and being loved is achieved and satisfied;
- to what extent the patient feels that he “is valuable,” that is, to what extent his “virtuous philautia,” his self-esteem, which makes man love his neighbor “as himself” is fulfilled.²¹⁰

²¹⁰ Philotheos Pharos, *The Myth of Mental Illness*, op. cit., p.47

Reasons for the appointment with the doctor:

- asthenia;
- fear, panic attacks;
- despair;
- anxiety;
- hallucinations;
- insomnia;
- nightmares;
- addiction to alcohol, drugs, etc.;
- memory disorders;
- obsessions;
- idea that he is being stalked;
- psychomotor agitation;
- behavioral disorders;
- cephalalgia;
- constipation;
- disorders of body representation;
- paresthesia, etc.

Illness history

- illness onset;
- evolution;
- treatments;
- complications;
- aggravation modalities;
- alleviation modalities.

Personal pathological antecedents:

- somatic diseases;
- mental disorders;
- accidents;
- abortions.

Personal physiological antecedents:

- childhood;
- adolescence;
- menstruation cycle;
- pregnancies;
- childbirths.

Heredocolateral antecedents:

- somatic diseases;
- mental disorders;
- deceases in family;
- suicides.

Lifestyle:

- circadian rhythm and program;
- food;
- sleeping hours;
- quality of sleep;
- dreams, nightmares;
- work, physical and intellectual effort.

Stress. Tribulations

- at workplace;
- at home;
- major stress over the past year.

Overstrain

- physical;
- intellectual.

Discontent. Dissatisfactions:

- old;
- new.

Induced pathogenesis

- medicines;
- drugs;
- medicinal herbs;
- unilateral or abusive feeding.

Moral life, to the extent that the patient wants to confess:

- anger, hatred;
- lying;
- arguments, conflicts;
- pride;
- vainglory;
- envy;
- abortions;

- gossiping one's neighbor;
- thefts;
- fornication.

Spiritual life:

- faithfulness;
- atheism;
- idolatry;
- sorcery, fortune telling, magic;
- blasphemy.

Tribulations caused by peers:

- conflicts;
- persecution;
- imprisonment;
- aggression;
- blight.

Emotional predisposition:

- rather optimistic;
- rather pessimistic;
- rather anxious;
- affective hypoesthesia or anesthesia.

Dominant personality trait:

- proud, vain, authoritative, leader, man of action;
- humble, reserved, meditative;

- asthenic, apathetic, slow;
- good executant, lacks initiative.

There is an old saying: If the patient does not laugh or weep during the conversation, it means that anamnesis is not yet successful.

XI. Psychological Processes in Extreme States

For I am persuaded that neither death nor life, nor angels nor principalities nor powers, nor things present nor things to come, nor height nor depth, nor any other created thing, shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.
(Romans 8:38-39)

Martyrdom

The martyr is the man who dies for Christ, for asserting his faith in Him, for refusing to give up his faith in Him.

The martyr is – in the old sense of the word – a *witness* who sustains the truth, that is, what he has seen and heard, until death (at the cost of his life).

The martyric attitude is expressed in the pages of the New Testament:

- the blessedness of the disciples who will be persecuted for the name of Christ (*Matthew* 5:11);
- the promise of eternal life to those who will lose their life for the Lord (*Matthew* 16:24-26);
- the joy of being *worthy to suffer shame for His name* (*Acts* 5:41);
- the joy of partaking *of Christ's sufferings* (*1 Peter* 4:13).

Analysis of the *Acts of the Martyrs* reveals the martyrs' psychological state:

- courage;
- patience
- love of God;
- foreseeing that which is to come;
- they despised the afflictions of this world;
- during their martyrdom "they were no longer humans, but angels."²¹¹

Clement of Alexandria defines martyrdom as "cleansing of sins in glory."²¹²

St. Basil the Great says that "Man represents nothing or almost nothing through himself, he is great through the honor that God has bestowed him."²¹³

The heroism and endurance of martyrdom can be explained through its capacity to discover "the honor that God has bestowed it."

This finding comes from infinite faith. That is why an “ordinary” man (incapable of dying for Christ) cannot understand the martyr.

The martyrs were convinced that the name of Christian placed them in a different state of being and it represented *a beginning of their life*.

St. Dasius was asked by Bassus the judge: What is your status and what is your name? And the Saint replied: “...according to status – a soldier... according to the name my parents gave me – Dasius, and *my chosen name is that of Christian.*”

²¹¹ *The Martyrical Acts*, BMIROCPH, Bucharest, 1997, p.32

²¹² *Ibid.*, p.19

²¹³ *Studia Basiliana*, I, Basilica Publishing, Bucharest, 2009, p.484

Here are a few quotations from the *Acts of the Martyrs* that express the martyr’s psychological state:

- Sanctus, the martyr of Lyon, “had lost his previous human look” (because of tortures), but he proved that there was nothing to be afraid of where the love of the Father was and nothing painful where was the glory of the Son.”²¹⁴
- When the martyrs of Lyon passed by, they “walked joyfully, their faces full of glory and joy, and the chains surrounded them like a beautiful adornment, as is the golden embroidery on the border of a bride’s dress.”²¹⁵
- As St. Sabina was heading towards death smiling, the watchman of the temple asked her: “Are you joyful?” And she answered: “Yes, if God wants; because we are Christians.”²¹⁶
- Visions before martyrdom:

- three days before martyrdom St. Polycarp had dreamed that his pillow had caught fire, then he was burnt alive;
- St. Perpetua dreamed she was fighting with the devil (in the form of a dragon), defeated him and she entered paradise triumphantly.

Visions operated with symbols: “walls of light”²¹⁷, “ladder”, “a kind of garden with trees and roses”²¹⁸, “dragon”²¹⁹, “Egyptian”²²⁰.

²¹⁴ Ibid., p.70

²¹⁵ Ibid., p.72

²¹⁶ Ibid., p.146

²¹⁷ Ibid., p.123

²¹⁸ Ibid., p.116

²¹⁹ Ibid., p.117

²²⁰ Ibid., p.121

The martyrs had perfect self-control before martyrdom and this proves their strong, rock-like character.

They were all meek when answering judges, but very tough, even intransigent, when defending the dogma and the person of the Savior.

The prevailing psychological states throughout the martyrdom process were:

- joy;
- courage;
- pride in being a Christian;
- hope that they would join the cohorts of saints;

- hope of resurrection;
- conviction that Christ was helping them in those moments and took their suffering upon Himself.

Incarceration Phenomenon

This refers to those who spent many years in prison or exile for their Christian religious beliefs and for belonging to the Christian religion.

For exemplification we present the text of some Swiss journalists who went to Father Gheorghe Calciu-Dumitreasa's place in 1984, the year of his laicization, after having spent 21 years in prison:

“A few minutes later Father Calciu, very weak, with gray hair and trembling hands, entered the room.

His *warm embraces and joyful laughter* showed us immediately that we were in the presence of an *exceptional personality... Christian humility, joy and an immense sincerity* could be seen on his gaunt face.”

The Christians in prison confessed that psychological torture and reviling of holy things were much more difficult to bear than physical torture.

A feeling of liberation characterized those who had spent many years in prison: they did not desire revenge and did not rejoice in their persecutors' misfortune.

A tonic feeling of great safety dominated them during incarceration and after being released from prison they felt “almost physically” the divine providence, God's care for man.

This state can be better analyzed in patients suffering from chronic illnesses, those who agonize or have an illness that slowly leads them to death.

The psychological states and their phases of evolution are complex:

- psychomotor agitation;
- anguish, panic attacks, fear of death;
- revolt;
- depression;
- insomnia;
- hallucinations;
- behavioral disorders;
- repentance.

Progression towards biological death, that is, towards separation of the soul from the body, is dominated by a feeling of time dilation – so necessary for experiencing repentance – and the sensation of space rarefaction, of its blurred tridimensionality – so necessary for the painless separation of the soul from this world.

This is the moment when talking about Christ becomes redeeming.

Foolishness for Christ

*But God has chosen the foolish things
of the world to put to shame the wise...
(1 Corinthians 1:27)*

This is a new notion, not known in the nosological framework of medicine, nor of theology at the time of the Old Testament.

It is a notion difficult to define and characterize, but it is easier to describe its symptoms.

H. Vlachos even draws attention to the fact that “a lot of gifts from God is necessary in order to be able to evaluate a fool for Christ.”²²¹

Difficulty stems from an ontological reality: Christianity overturned a series of values and restored a series of values. The true Christian, in the evolution of his soul towards God, relates more and more to the eternal values and eschatological references and neglects, also as derisory, the ephemeral values of this world.

As he progresses along this path, the man of God becomes more and more difficult to understand by those around.

The Apostle Paul explains this in *The First Epistle to the Corinthians: ...the message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God (1 Corinthians 1:18); ...we preach Christ crucified, to the Jews a stumbling block and to the Greeks foolishness (1 Corinthians 1:23).*

Certain prefigurations of fools for Christ appear in the New Testament: *For I think that God has displayed us, the apostles, last, as men condemned to death; for we have been made a spectacle to the world, both to angels and to men... fools for Christ's sake... weak...*

dishonored... we both hunger and thirst... poorly clothed and beaten, and homeless...

²²¹ H. Vlachos, *The Person in the Orthodox Tradition*, Bunavestire Publishing, Bacău, 2002, p.323

reviled... persecuted... defamed... We have been made as the filth of the world, the offscouring of all things until now (1 Corinthians 4:9-13).

Foolishness for Christ is the manifest of liberty in a pure theological, not sociological sense.

The fool for Christ can be characterized as follows:

- he has strong faith in Christ, in resurrection, in dogma, in Christian morality;
- he has bizarre manifestations, behavioral disorders that do not contradict and do not harm at all the teaching of faith; he “feigns madness”;
- he leaves the wilderness in order to “be disgraced by the world”²²²;
- he tricks people and cheats the devil;
- in the presence of the fool for Christ the community is divided in two: some who are convinced that “he is mad”, and others, more spiritual, who understand the “profoundness of his deeds”²²³;
- what surprises the people is that many, including those who think he is mad, realize that his words are wise, that they have a precise, powerful message and, once they have been heard, they bring forth the need to listen to the “madman” again;

- the command to leave the state of peacefulness and expose himself to worldly dangers comes from the Lord, not from his own initiative; the saint “takes the image of the world” in order to “lead it to salvation.” Just as the Lord took the image of a slave, “the fool for Christ imitates Christ the Lord and His Master, sacrificing his body and soul for other people’s salvation”²²⁴;

²²² Ioan Kovalevsky, *The Happy Fools for Christ*, Anastasia Publishing, Bucharest, 1997 p.125

²²³ H. Vlachos, *The Person in the Orthodox Tradition*, op. cit., p.325

²²⁴ Ibid., p.330

- behavioral manifestations of foolishness for Christ:
 - comical punishments;
 - miracles;
 - behaving foolishly;
 - scolding the emperor in public, or officials of the city, promiscuous women, threatening them with hell and urging them to become righteous;
 - when people guess that the “madman” before them is a saint, he often leaves in a hurry, until they lost track of him;
 - in the presence of those who knew his real identity, the saint no longer plays the fool, behaving like a “normal saint.”

Metropolitan Hierotheos Vlachos identifies the purpose for which fools for Christ appear:

- their brethren's salvation;
- to ridicule shallow, hypocritical society;
- promotion of inner spiritual life;
- derision of the devil;
- heretics' return to Orthodoxy;
- to take upon themselves other people's errors;
- to teach humility, the fact that man must keep his virtues secret.

Fools for Christ foresee their death. St. Andrew the Fool-for-Christ
“died praying for all
humankind.”

The world does not have perfect criteria to evaluate Christians' holiness.

The Jews said about Christ Himself that He was foolish.²²⁵ Festus told Paul the same thing: *Paul, you are beside yourself!* (Acts 26:24).

Everything a true Christian does, thinking of death and resurrection, thinking of “running away from this world” and its maculation, seems bizarre and incomprehensible to the people who “buy and sell” all day long, all their life, without being touched by “Christ's thought.”

The fools for Christ – through their attitude and behavior – defy the world overwhelmed by conformism and self-importance. They get into “the world”, amongst sins, dependencies, the snare of worldly bonds and vainglory and riches, amongst proud, bellicose and vain people; they

give the impression that they “belong there,” but in reality they awaken them from their drowsiness, or sanctify them through their asceticism.

Until the end of their life society marginalizes them, they let themselves be scorned, but their memory is updated in history, as the memory of all other saints is.

Asceticism

Although the notion of asceticism is not explicitly mentioned in the Holy Scripture, there are numerous implicit references to it both in the New and the Old Testament. This because according to the Holy Scriptures the man created by God becomes ill after falling into sin: the law of corruption becomes his second nature that estranges him from God and leads him to eternal perdition if he does not resist it.

O wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death? (Romans 7:24).

For the good that I will to do, I do not do; but the evil I will not to do, that I practice. Now if I do what I will not to do, it is no longer I who do it, but sin that dwells in me (Romans 7:19-21).

²²⁵ Ibid., p.330

The divine word revealed in the Holy Scripture shows us asceticism as the only way towards healing – through which the fallen man can regain his integrity, can unite again with his heavenly Father and drive away Satan, to whom he served by submitting to the law of corruption.

...just as you presented your members as slaves of uncleanness, and of lawlessness leading to more lawlessness, so now present your members as slaves of righteousness for holiness (Romans 6:19).

Shun evil and do good (Psalm 33:15). Who is wise... shall keep these things, and shall understand the mercies of the Lord (Psalm 106:43), so that mortality may be swallowed up by life (2 Corinthians 5:4).

In order to understand the notion of asceticism in the spirit of the Orthodox tradition as comprehensively as possible it is necessary to highlight two of its aspects:

1) the “negative,” practical aspect: asceticism presupposes man’s resistance to sin and passions.

a) Man’s effort to cleanse himself takes the form of ascetic practices, the most important of which are the following three:

- **abstinence (fasting):** because death entered the world by tasting from the fruit of disobedience, fasting is the absolutely necessary bridle for that who desires to cast aside corruption.

And everyone who competes for the prize is temperate in all things (1 Corinthians 9:25).

St. John Climacus enumerates the different forms that fasting takes, pointing out its

wonderful fruits as well: “Fasting is the coercion of nature, the cutting out of all delight of the palate (*scil.* removing everything that might satisfy greed), the suppression of lust, uprooting of bad thoughts, release from the tyranny of dreams, purification of prayer, illumination of the soul, guard of the mind, deliverance from hardness of heart, gate to

humility, humble sighing, joyful sadness, cessation of babbling, generator of soul tranquility, guard of obedience, lessening of sleep, health of body, deliverance from passions (dispassion), forgiveness of sins, a gate to heaven, and an entirely holy delight. ”²²⁶

- **watchfulness:** it is befitting that man should relentlessly take care of his own salvation through watchfulness and patience.

Keep your heart with all watchfulness (Proverbs 4:22).

Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil walks about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour (1 Peter 5:8).

- **prayer:** is the culmination of all ascetic efforts; on the one hand, it is the core from where any other work starts and takes its energy, and that which gives authenticity to the work; on the other hand, it is that which facilitates the most direct connection with God.

...without Me you can do nothing (John 15:5).

...pray without ceasing (1 Thessalonians 5:17).

Ask... seek... knock, and it will be opened to you (Matthew 7:7).

b) Taking into account the dichotomous constitution of human nature, each of the ascetic efforts mentioned above presupposes fulfilling not only some external, bodily, biological works, but also a moral, spiritual work.

But those things which proceed out of the mouth come from the heart, and they defile a man. For out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies (Matthew 15:18-19).

*How can we guard our hearts, when our mouths and our stomachs are open?*²²⁷

²²⁶ *The Ladder of Divine Ascent*, Step 14, p.217

²²⁷ *The Sayings of the Desert Fathers*, “Abba Tithoes,” ch. 3, Reintregirea Publishing, Alba Iulia, 1999, p.246

Bodily asceticism paves the way for the inner struggle against passions, for engaging in inner asceticism, called by the Fathers of the Church *cleansing of the heart*.²²⁸

*“Mercy heals the impulsive part of the soul, fasting withers lust, and prayer cleanses the mind and prepares it for contemplation of things.”*²²⁹

St. Hesychius of Sinai teaches us that “Fasting, refraining, sleeping on the floor, standing, watchfulness and the other things linked with the body help the emotional (passional) part of the body to not sin by deed... They are a bridle to the exterior man and a guard against passions by deed. Moreover, they protect or prevent us from sinning with our mind; for instance, they deliver us, with God’s help, from envy, anger and all others. Cleansing of the heart, or observing and guarding the mind... cuts out all passions and evil things, uprooting them from the heart.”²³⁰

2) the positive, therapeutic aspect, that is, transfiguration, restoration²³¹ of man through asceticism.

a) deliverance from the tyranny of passions

Before falling into sin man's soul was constantly in communion with God and was feeding on His grace, and his body was fed by the soul full of grace.

Cast your care upon the Lord, and He shall support you (Psalm 54:23).

After falling into sin, the soul separated from God tried to feed itself exploiting the body, and the body, not being able to find life in the soul, turned to those without and became captive of matter.

²²⁸ H. Vlachos, *Orthodox Psychotherapy*, op. cit., p.226

²²⁹ St. Maximus the Confessor, in *Philokalia*, vol. 2 – *Texts on love*, I, ch. 79, Harisma Publishing, Bucharest, 1993, p.74

²³⁰ St. Hesychius of Sinai, in *Philokalia*, vol.4 – *On watchfulness and virtue*, II, ch. 10 and 11, Harisma Publishing, Bucharest, 1994, p.85

²³¹ Iosif Vatopedinul, *Asceticism – the Mother of Holiness*, Bizantină Publishing, Bucharest, 2000, p.25

For the flesh lusts against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh (Galatians 5:17).

If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world—the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life—is not of the Father but is of the world (1 John 2:15-16).

The purpose of renunciation of one's will is to liberate the soul from the dominance of the body, to reestablish the rule of the soul over the body, to submit the body and soul to the spirit.

When the soul is no longer submitted to the body and the worries linked to it, when it no longer uses all its strength to fulfill its desires and does not allow it to suck all its sap, it begins to know a new life, and fulfill its mission in a way befitting its dignity and nature.

As regards the body, the Orthodox tradition is the only tradition that affirms its real value: the body is neither good nor bad by itself, but it can become good through asceticism or bad through the work of passions.²³² Thus, asceticism in no way aims at annihilation of the body, but at its sanctification and deification.

b) cleansing the mind and discovering the depth of the heart – the place where God reveals Himself to man as his Emperor:

For “who has known the mind of the Lord that he may instruct Him?” But we have the mind of Christ (1 Corinthians 2:16).

Freed from all those without and devoid of any imagination, the mind descends in the heart and from there it ascends towards God:

Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God (Matthew 5:8).

They will not just see God, but will have communion with Him and will be reborn as persons, for the person is the secret man of the heart and he carries within himself the likeness of God.

Therefore you shall be perfect, just as your Father in Heaven is perfect (Matthew 5:48).

Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new (2 Corinthians 5:17).

²³² I.C. Teşu, *The Theology of Trials*, op. cit., p.71

Liberty

An unquenchable thirst has been burning in the soul of man throughout the ages: the thirst for liberty.

This finds its most complete explanation in the Christian teaching imparted in the pages of the Holy Scripture: at the moment of genesis, when the first man was created, together with the breath of life, God seeded in the depth of His most beloved creation divine traits, bestowing him – though a created thing – the worthiness of being in the image and likeness of God. Among these divine traits, freedom has a place of honor.

For you, brethren, have been called to liberty (Galatians 5:13).

In the natural state that was at the beginning, man's liberty was similar to that of God; it included the power of mastering his own will, of influencing his own being at all levels, independently, without any constraint or limitation;²³³ in other words, of always choosing the good, of always choosing God. Endowed with free will, man had at the same time the possibility to turn away from good and do evil.

So, the liberty of the first created man was founded on three principles that included each other, having in fact the same significance:

- likeness of God;
- virtuous life;
- conformity with nature.

The fall into sin could not wipe the divine seal out of man's soul but, by darkening the mind, it entailed their misrepresentation. In this way, liberty began to be misunderstood and wrongly used.

For great is the wisdom of the Lord... He has commanded no one to be ungodly, and He has given no one license to sin (Wisdom of Sirach 15:18-20).

²³³ H. Vlachos, *The Person in the Orthodox Tradition*, op. cit., p.278

For you, brethren, have been called to liberty; only do not use liberty as an opportunity for the flesh, but through love serve one another (Galatians 5:13).

All things are lawful for me, but all things are not helpful (1 Corinthians 6:12).

So speak and so do as those who will be judged by the law of liberty (James 2:12).

Having fallen into sin, man began to use the liberty that he had been granted to head freely towards God in a pathological way.²³⁴ Thus, his liberty gained a new significance, that of **deliberation**; but deliberation is an altered form of the liberty that he had at the beginning. Estranged from God, the Fountain of Good, and from his own nature, man no longer moved by his own will, as he should have, but began to be driven by that which was unknown to him, “borne away” towards things contrary to nature. The law of sin and the forces of evil, the demons, oppressed him and enslaved his soul.

...whoever commits sin is a slave of sin (John 8:34).

You are of your father the devil, and the desires of your father you want to do. He was a murderer from the beginning... (John 8:44).

Due to God’s mercy, the great drama of man’s fall did not change into tragedy, because the Good Father, not bearing the disfigurement of His most beloved creation’s image, sent His Own Son into the world to redeem the human race – and, along with it, the whole creation – from the bondage of sin: *You were bought at a price (1 Corinthians 7:23).*

The Savior's coming was awaited by the whole earth and announced beforehand with amazing precision by the prophets in the Old Testament.

I, the Lord God... give You as the covenant of a race... to bring out prisoners who are bound, and those who sit in darkness from the prison house (Isaiah 42:6-7).

The Spirit of the Lord God is upon Me, because the Lord has anointed Me... to proclaim liberty to the captives, and release to the prisoners (Isaiah 61:1).

²³⁴J.-C. Larchet, *The Therapy of Spiritual Illnesses*, op. cit., p.83

The liberty to which fallen man is called back is somehow different from initial liberty. It gets a new meaning, that of **release from slavery**:

- release from the bondage of sin and death

Do you not know that to whom you present yourselves slaves to obey, you are that one's slaves whom you obey, whether of sin leading to death, or of obedience leading to righteousness? (Romans 6:16).

For if you live according to the flesh you will die; but if by the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body, you will live (Romans 8:13).

For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has made me free from the law of sin and death (Romans 8:2).

- release from devil's oppression

He who sins is of the devil, for the devil has sinned from the beginning. For this purpose the Son of God was manifested (1 John 3:8), so that people may escape the snare of the devil, having been taken captive by him to do his will (2 Timothy 2:26).

The true liberty is not the social, individual, national, economic, etc. liberty; it is inner liberty, which is gained by struggling against passion, and by serving God in love.

Let each one remain in the same calling in which he was called. Were you called while a slave? Do not be concerned about it; but if you can be made free, rather use it. For he who is called in the Lord while a slave is the Lord's freedman. Likewise he who is called while free is Christ's slave (1 Corinthians 7:20-22).

The Holy Apostle Paul illustrates in words masterfully the amazing way in which he understands serving God and teaches us that the only expression for manifesting liberty, in an ontological sense, is love.

For though I am free from all men, I have made myself a servant to all, that I might win the more; and to the Jews I became as a Jew, that I might win Jews; to those who are under the law, as under the law, that I might win those who are under the law; to those who are without law, as without law (not being without law toward God, but under law toward Christ), that I might win those who are without law; to the weak I became as weak, that I might win the weak. I have become all things to all men, that I might by all means save some (1 Corinthians 9:19-22).

It is only by attaining such a level of sacrificial self-denial that man can exclaim, together with the Apostle of God: ***For why is my liberty judged by another man's conscience? (1 Corinthians 10:29).***

By fulfilling God's will, by following Christ, man will regain his absolute liberty and enter a new life: ***Therefore you are no longer a slave but a son, and if a son, then an heir of God through Christ (Galatians 4:7).***

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Contents

Foreword (Metropolitan Hierotheos Vlachos)

Foreshadowing (The authors)

- I. The Plea for Orthodox Psychotherapy
- II. Orthodox Christian Teaching
- III. Christian Anthropology. The Biblical Basis

IV. The Psychological Processes Mentioned in the Holy
Scriptures

V. Psychopathology

VI. Etiopathogeny

VII. Lifestyle – the True Prophylaxis

VIII. Therapy

IX. The Principles of Christian Psychotherapy

X. Talking with the Patient

XI. Psychological Processes in Extreme States

Bibliography