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Doctoral Thesis:

*"The Paschal Mystery of the Death and Resurrection of the Lord - the
kerygma of the spirituality of Saint Symeon the New Theologian"*

(Summary)

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Summary

Keywords: Cross, Resurrection, Symeon the New Theologian, paschal mystery, *kerygma*, *life-giving death*.

I. Introduction

The reasons that have prompted me to address this subject are mainly practical reasons, determined by the needs of the liturgical and spiritual life of the parish, and by the weight of spiritual exhortation.

As a young graduate of theology, a priest in the parish, I have faced certain realities of the liturgical and spiritual life in the everyday life of the parish, due to which my priestly ministry, as I envisaged it by reading patristic writings, would always stumble. My encounter with the writings of Saint Symeon The New Theologian had an illuminating effect, revealing to me many of the flaws of the liturgical and spiritual life to which the customs found in the parish would oblige me, and on the other hand they indicated to me the constellation of liturgical and spiritual values towards which I should aim for so that my priestly ministry could truly be a testimony to Orthodox Tradition.

Among the questions from which I started in my research and to which I found an answer in the writings about God by the inspired Father, I would enumerate: What are the criteria of an authentic priestly ministry? What report should the priest have to the divine services (preparation, commission, etc.)? How to guide the believers and in what direction to guide them? What are the requirements, criteria and characteristics of an Orthodox liturgical life, and how can these requirements be transposed into parochial reality? How can I understand, apply and capitalize the writings of the God-bearer Father in the context of today's life in the parish? Besides these issues, the frequent contacts with young people, especially through confession, have revealed to me that the "infusion" of spiritual teachings taken from the Symeonian writings attracts them to the liturgical life.

The so much controversial work of Saint Symeon The New Theologian was forgotten for almost three centuries, being rediscovered and re-launched by the fourteenth-century Isaiah authors and during the philokalic revival at the end of the 18th century, the prestige of Saint Symeon being defended by Nicodemus Hagioritus under whose guidance and supervision Dionysos Zagoraios will publish in 1790 in Venice the neo-Greek paraphrase of the entire Symeonian corpus.

The printing of the critical edition of Saint Symeon's entire work in *Sources Chrétiennes* collection (1957-1973), edition that provided safe textual sources for his writings, opened on the one hand the gate to modern studies dedicated to the great Byzantine mystic, and on the other hand produced a change of interpretation, shifting the emphasis from a negative interpretation to one in a positive manner, so that today there is no doubt about the fully traditional character of his thinking and teaching.

Summarizing the main monographs and their interpretative lines, we can mention that, internationally, research follows initially the line opened by Irénée Hausherr in a study on the method of hesychast¹ prayer or in the introductory word of *Life of Saint Symeon*², which depicts the image of a Byzantine mystic in conflict with hierarchy. This line is followed in their studies by J. Gouillard³ and Jesuit D. Stiernon⁴. Another direction develops the interpretation of Protestant Karl Holl, that of "Symeon – a Byzantine enthusiast"⁵, as Lutheran K. Deppe did, who interprets St. Symeon half way between the messianic enthusiasm, condemned in the 5th century, and the officialised hesychast in the fourteenth century⁶.

A negative interpretation appears in the Greek Orthodox space of dogmatist P. Trembelas, in a late study that depicts an image of a malignant pathological exaltation at Saint Symeon⁷.

¹ "La méthode d'oraison hésychaste", in *OC*, IX, no. 36, June-July 1927.

² "Vie de Syméon le Nouveau Théologien", in *OC*, XII, no. 45, July-August, Rome, 1928.

³ "Syméon le Jeune, le Nouveau Théologien", *DTC*, XIV/2, 1941, col. 2941-2952.

⁴ "Santo Simeone il Nuovo Teologo", *Biblioteca Sanctorum 11*, 1968, col. 1104-1114.

⁵ *Enthusiasmus und Bussgewalt beim griechischen Mönchtum: eine Studie zu Symeon dem Neuen Theologen*, Leipzig, 1898.

⁶ "Der Wahre Christ. Eine Untersuchung zum Frömmigkeit Verständnis Symeon der Neuen Theologen und zugleich ein Beitrag zum Verständnis des Messalianismus und Hesychasmus", Diss. Göttingen, 1971.

⁷ "Mystikismos apophatismos, kataphatike theologia", *Epistemonike epeteris Theologictou Scholes Panepistemiou Athenon* 19, 1972, pp. 5-98.

But starting with 1973 - as mentioned - the studies and publications on Saint Symeon gain a positive tone, being understood and interpreted in the context of Eastern patristic and spiritual tradition.

In 1974, Lutheran theologian Walter Völker (1896-1988) published a dense monograph on the spirituality of Saint Symeon, which he encloses in philokalic spirituality, being probably the best approach from the area of Protestant theology. The plan of work *Praxis und Theoria bei Symeon dem neuen Theologen. Ein Beitrag zur byzantinischen Mystik*⁸ follows the stages of perfection: cleansing of passion (bodily work), fulfilment of virtues (spiritual work), *theoria* and *theosis* (deification). In 1975, George Maloney was to publish an introduction to the spiritual universe of Saint Symeon in *The Mystic of Fire and Light: St. Symeon the New Theologian*⁹, drawing up a plan depicting the image of spiritual ascension from Baptism to Deity. The merit of this work is to have popularized the work and life of Saint Symeon in the Anglophone west.

The issue of confession and spiritual paternity, aspects of controversial *Epistle of confession*, and the possibility of confession of sins to an un-ordained monk were addressed in various studies, among which I mention: Joost van Rossum, "Priesthood and Confession in St. Symeon The New Theologian "(SVTQ, 1976), V.C. Christophorides, " *He pneumatiké patrotes kata Symeon ton neon Theologon* " (1977), Robert John Beeson, "St. Symeon the New Theologian on Binding and Loosing "(SVTQ, 2013).

A living and objective, well documented image of Saint Symeon's theology is the commented anthology of Archbishop Vasily Krivoşein: *Dans la lumière du Christ. Saint Syméon le Nouveau Theologien. Vie – Spiritualité – Doctrine*, published in 1980 (in Romanian translation 1997, 2005). An investigation into issues of spiritual senses and God's vision, including comparative analyses of eastern spirituality of the third - seventh centuries, to authors such as: Origen, Saint Gregory of Nyssa, *Homilies* of St. Macarius, Diadoch of Foticea, Maximus the Confessor, B. Fraigneau-Julien's dissertation: *Les sens spirituelles et la vision de Dieu selon Syméon le Nouveau Théologien*, published after his death (1985). A complex analysis of spiritual paternity in the spirituality of Saint Symeon comes from a doctoral thesis: *St. Symeon the New Theologian and Spiritual Fatherhood* (1990), signed by H.J.M. Turner, the same

⁸ Steiner, Wiesbaden, 1974, 489pp.

⁹ Denville, New Jersey, 1975, 237pp.

theologian who will critically edit the 4 *Epistles* of Saint Symeon. Also, the studies of Father John McGuckin from 1994 must be considered: "Symeon the New Theologian and Byzantine Monasticism" and 1997: "St. Symeon the New Theologian (949-1022): Byzantine Spiritual Renewal in Search of Precedent", remarkable doctoral thesis supported by hieromonk (nowadays bishop) Ilarion Alfeyev: *St. Symeon the New Theologian and Orthodox Tradition* (2000), in which he will demonstrate that the spirituality of Saint Symeon fully belongs to the Orthodox Tradition or the sustained interest in the life and writings of the divine Father from Professor Hannah Hunt of *Trinity* University - Leeds, interest materialized in 2015 in an excellent informative and powerful, precise and accessible guide: *A Guide to St. Symeon The New Theologian* (2015), an admirable introduction to St. Symeon's spirituality that addresses various aspects: the historical context of Constantinople in the 10th – 11th centuries, the writings of Saint Symeon and his literary genres, the place of Saint Symeon in Eastern monastic theology, the spiritual inheritance of Saint Symeon.

Regarding Romanian research and interest in the work of Saint Symeon, we can notice that his writings penetrate the Romanian space through a series of independent translations among which the integral version of the Symeonian corpus is distinguished in the translation of Isaac the Syrian found in the library of Neamt monastery (No. 60-61-59). To them it is added the selective translation of part of St. Symeon's work by Father Dumitru Staniloae: the 225 *Theological and Practical Chapters in FR. 6* (1977) and the 58 *Hymns* in vol. *Studies of Orthodox Dogmatic Theology* (1991).

Since the 1990s, Deisis publishing house, through the efforts of deacon Ioan I. Ica jr. manages to publish in modern Romanian translation of the entire work of Saint Symeon in four volumes of the Philocalica series, as follows: *Theological and Ethical Speeches (Writings I, 1998, 2001)*; *Catechesis (Writings II, 1999, 2003)*; *Hymns, Epistles and Chapters (Writings III, 2001)*, *Life (Writings IV, 2006)*. There were also a series of studies, even if not equal in value, which helped bring to light the work and life of Saint Symeon in the Area of Romanian Orthodox Theology. We mention some of those who have worked hard to herald the great Byzantine mystic: Ioan I. Bria: "*The Secret Sense of the Experience of Grace according to Saint Symeon the New Theologian*" (*Orth.*, 1956), Dan Zamfirescu: "*Theological and Hagiographical Issues related to the Surname of Saint Symeon the New Theologian*" (*Orth.*, 1958); *Idem*, "*Slavic Manuscripts with Translations from Saint Symeon the New Theologian*" (*Orth.*, 1959); Dumitru Popescu: "*Good Deeds according to Saint Symeon the New Theologian*",

(Ort., 1962); Ilie Moldovan: " *Theology of the Holy Spirit according to the Catechesis of Saint Symeon the New Theologian*", (ST, 1952); Ioan Varlan: " *Teaching of Salvation at Saint Symeon the New Theologian*" (Ort., 1974); Emanuel Banu: " *Work of the Holy Spirit in the Work of Saint Symeon the New Theologian*" (ST, 1980); Liviu Stoina: " *Christian Perfection according to St. Symeon the New Theologian*" (ST, 1980); Ioan I. Ica jr.: " *Theology and Spirituality at Saint Symeon the New Theologian*" (MB, 1987), plus the extensive introductory studies placed at the beginning of each of the four volumes (*Writings I-IV*) which depict in Romanian translation The work and life of St. Symeon; Gheorghe Sima: " *Work of the Holy Spirit in the Sacrament of Repentance according to Saint Symeon the New Theologian*" (ST, 1990); Calin-Ioan Duse: " *Sight of the Divine Light according to Saint Symeon the New Theologian*" (*Teologia*, 2000); Nicholas Mosoiu: " *Baptism in the Holy Spirit in the teaching of Saint Symeon the New Theologian*" (RT, 1995); Ioan C. Teșu: " *Paternity and Spiritual Filiation at Saint Symeon the New Theologian*", *Teologia*, 2004); Nicolae Bolea: " *Saint Symeon the New Theologian, his age and work*" (*Teologia*, 2006).

In addition to this, the works and communications of scientific symposium "The hymns of the divine love of Saint Symeon the New Theologian - 1000 years after their composition" from 2009, whose works were published in volume (2012). Among the signatories included in this volume we mention: Univ. Lecturer Dan Chițoiu, PhD, Univ. Prof. Priest Gheorghe Petraru, PhD, Lect. Priest Daniel Enea, PhD, Prof. Priest Constantin Leonte, PhD, Assist. Researcher Priest Liviu Petcu, PhD, Priest Liviu Popa, etc.

In the field of doctoral theses dedicated to the spirituality of Saint Symeon and appeared in the space of Romanian theology, we mention: *Spirituality and holiness at Saint Symeon The New Theologian*, written by Iuliu Florea (Constanța, 2007); Thesis of Father Dorin-Octavian Picioruș: *God's Sight in the Theology of Saint Symeon The New Theologian* (Bucharest, 2009); *Experience of Grace in the Theology of Saint Symeon The New Theologian* signed by Alexandru Roșu (Bucharest, 2013) and *Spirituality of Light at Saint Symeon The New Theologian*, delivered by Toma Costel (Sibiu, 2014).

Certainly I have done nothing but show the reference works, while at the same time noticing growing interest in the personality and work of the divine Father. At a close look at the general picture of the studies on the personality and work of Saint Symeon, we can see that in most cases the general lines of interpretation emanating from these studies revolve around the same

themes: paternity and spiritual filiation, delicate experience of grace and sight of divine light, the issue of authority to bind or loosing sins, repentance and tears.

In my dissertation, I have attempted a (frail) approach to the teaching and writings of Saint Symeon in the light of the Lord's death and resurrection. For the divine Father theology of light is closely related to theology of the cross. The central themes of his thinking and spirituality mentioned and addressed in previous research are defined and "apply" around the paschal mystery of the Lord's Death and Resurrection, and spiritual life in all its aspects and stages is a permanent experience of the state of sacrifice, of Christ's Passion and continuous Passover, of course ecclesiastically framed and sacramentally substantiated.

I have intended to address the writings of Saint Symeon from the soteriological point of view in order to demonstrate his apostolic (*kerygmatic*) message, his constant challenge to a personal and conscious encounter with Jesus Christ - the Crucified and Risen Lord. I have tried to point out that his spirituality is defined around the paschal mystery of the Lord's Death and Resurrection. Christ is the One who resurrects, spiritually, through the Holy Spirit, those who participate in his death.

I have tried throughout the thesis an "inward" approach to the text (a kind of inner exegesis), without the intention of excluding modern academic and scientific instruments, in order to highlight the fact that by the attachment to the Passion of Christ, the God-bearing Father strives for communion and sight of the eternal glory of the Holy Trinity. Baptism, asceticism and mysticism, the pursuit of the spiritual father, communion of the sacred Mysteries are lived by Saint Symeon as a death and resurrection together with Christ. Specifically, his message would sound like this: he who takes upon himself the cross of Christ on a personal level and struggles without rest against sin and passionate lusts, will live his own resurrection in this life, at the soul level, and then at the body level.

I have also tried a holistic approach to his work, wanting to highlight the fact that his theology is *kerygmatic*. By approaching him on thematic sections, fragmentarily (paternity, light experience, repentance ...) sections, there may be a risk of misunderstanding Saint Symeon and not meeting his message. I do not want to be pretentious in saying I can comprise the profound personality of the God-bearing Father, but I wanted to show the redeeming significance that

Mystery of the Cross and Resurrection of Christ represent for him, the "themes" defining his thinking being contained in the notions of life and death.

The foundation of his soteriology is Christocentrism, in the sense that salvation is possible by imitating Christ in His passion so as to resurrect together with Him. It must be emphasized that Saint Symeon does not "treat" the theme of Death or Resurrection of the Lord but proclaims the necessity of communion with Christ, the Crucified and Risen Lord. He proclaims a new way of existence, a new way of life, in union with Christ. Repentance, tears, breakthroughs, spiritual paternity, the experience of light and the sense of grace that are major topics addressed by previous research are expressions of the personal commitment and experience of Lord's Death and Resurrection.

The spirituality of the Holy Father is defined and applies around the paschal mystery. With Saint Symeon we speak of a spirituality of light, resurrection, conscious experience of glory, but we also speak of a spirituality of sacrifice, asceticism, cross, fasting and restraint, but also of spiritual joy. I will give but one example (the issue is dealt with extensively in the course of the dissertation): Repentance initially lived as a tomb becomes the tomb where the joy of resurrection will spring from. This inner, living link between the cross and resurrection can be seen in all the themes of his spirituality.

I have conceived the demonstration in four chapters preceded by a complex *Introduction*, in which I tried, on the one hand, to contextualize the charismatic and inspiring personality of Saint Symeon in Byzantine society and the monasticism of the 10th – 11th centuries, on the other, a contextualization of his work on the background of several Byzantine theological literary genres (Scriptural comments in the form of *homilies*, *chains*, *florilegia* - collections and anthologies of texts of the Fathers, *polemical writings*, *apophtegmes of the Fathers*, *saints' lives*, *monastic rules*, *catechesis*, *chapters – kephalaia*, *theological poetry*, etc.), trying at the same time to show the importance and timeliness of his writings.

II. Elements of anthropology in the work of St. Symeon

In the first part I stopped on the elements of anthropology from the spirituality of Saint Symeon, elements resumed and inherited from the Greek Fathers. In the *first subchapter* I have analysed man's position between death and resurrection and the potential of acquiring immortality. The hypothesis of man's immortality has in Symeon's view the progressive transformation of the material body into an immaterial one, not in the sense of loss of materiality, but in the sense of acquiring a materialism crossed by the grace of God. After the plan of the Incarnation of Christ, between the perspective of corruption and death and that of incorruptibility and life, man has before him two important factors: the freedom and command of God, which, if fulfilled, man communes with the energies of life. I have shown that this duality of man with potential to death or life is related to the duality of the senses: bodily and spiritual. By purifying the former through the mortification of passion and lust, man develops the second line of senses, spiritual ones, through which he sees the glory of God - the source of his life.

In the *second subchapter* I have analysed the psycho-somatic structure of man, as it emerges from the writings of the God-bearing Father, pointing out that we will not encounter a "schematic" division of the two elements: body and soul, in which the body to be understood only as a material reality limited to biological functions and opposed to it, the soul, with its spiritual functions - the "organ" through which man comes into contact with God. Man can only come to know God in the integrity of his person: body and soul. Thus, in the *third subchapter* I have highlighted and detailed the value that Saint Symeon, in full consensus with the Sacred Scripture and the Fathers, accords to the human body. Symeon's speech insists on the necessity of resurrection of the soul in this life, which is anticipation and pre-tasting of the eschatological resurrection. The Divine Father urges a correct attitude towards the body, denying any inferiority to the soul. It is clear that for him the purpose of the body is to participate with the soul in the glory of God and to rise in righteousness. Also in this subchapter, from the desire to capitalize on the writings of Saint Symeon for the married ones who share family life, I stopped by starting from three coordinates of his thinking: 1) the possibility of deification of man as a consequence of the Incarnation of Christ, 2) the capacity of the body to be a vessel for the Holy Spirit - temple of God, and 3) the possibility of man through asceticism and fulfilment of the commandments to "go beyond the wall of the body" (*Hymn 9*), on certain reflections on the purpose of the body in life spiritual life of the family, pointing out that the body and conjugal

act are not a barrier to man's participation in divine non-suffering. In the family whose life is determined by ascetic and liturgical coordinates, the body becomes a "transparent" of God, a reality full of value and beauty.

In the *fourth subchapter* I stopped on the teaching of Saint Symeon about martyrdom of the will in obedience to the spiritual father. Submission of will, its total abolition before the will of the spiritual father, and thereby entrance into the will of God, is initiation in the Mystery of the Cross, Death and the Resurrection of the Lord.

In the last subchapter of this part I have attempted to represent the "icon" of the man of virtues starting from the body members as the divine Father presents in the fourth *Ethical Discourse*.

The following conclusions can be drawn from the analysis:

- St. Symeon's insistence on the potential of the immortality of man planted by God in nature by creation;
- the decisive role that man's will and freedom have in choosing one of the two dimensions: death or life, both before the fall and after restoration in Christ;
- the positive and spiritual valorisation that the Holy Father grants the human body to participate with the soul in the glory of resurrection.

III. *Life-giving death* - ascetic imitation of Christ's way of existence.

The central idea of the second part of the dissertation highlights the fact that God initially communes an exceptional grace, but those who do not take on the Passion and Death of the Lord, either on the known and beaten path of asceticism, practical creation, or on the extraordinary path of martyrdom, do not enter into eternal life.

In the *first subchapter* I stopped on Baptism, a problem addressed by Saint Symeon in different parts of his writings where he underlines its profound consequences in the lives of Christians, but also the accountability which the Sacrament of Holy Baptism claims. In the Mystery of Baptism, Christ - the New Adam, makes us sharers of His death and Resurrection, makes us share in the triumph of life over death that the human race has inherited from the first Adam.

In the *second subchapter* I have analysed the relationship between the dogmatic consciousness of the Passion of the Lord, the love of God and ascetic realization. Through a beautiful, profound and expressive spiritual and theological tone, Saint Symeon covers the relationship between dogmatic consciousness of the Incarnation of the Lord (a conscious understanding of the plan of salvation, the opposite of spiritual indifference and soullessness), and the love of God embodied in ascetic commitment to His Passion. Incarnation is the acceptance (*ἀναλάβη*) by the Son of God of the human nature and life, its recreation and deification.

The answer of man is acceptance by the mind, commitment (*ἀναλάβη*) to the dogmatic consciousness of Incarnation that brings into the soul of man the longing and the love for God and the desire to follow in His Passion.

In *subchapters three, four, five and six*, as well as in *Part III*, I stopped on the priest's ministry as God's officiating priest, but also as a confessor and shepherd of souls, taking into account, on the one hand, the importance that Saint Symeon grants to this ministry, but also its major implications in spiritual life. The aspects on which I have stopped in the subchapters of Part IV can be summarized as follows:

- Through priesthood and through intercession of the Sacraments, Christians are reborn to a new life. The Christian penetrates into the Mystery of the Church through Baptism and Chrismation - foundations of ascetic-mystic life (according to Deacon Ioan I. Ica jr.), but through the work of priesthood they are initiated in the Mystery of Church;
- The Christian can be partaker of the Resurrection of Christ only in the extent of participation in His Cross and Death through cutting his own will and fulfilling His will. The concrete way of learning and fulfilling the will of Christ is the spiritual father. Submission of will by obedience to the spiritual father becomes a mystical path in the Mystery of the Cross and Resurrection of the Lord;
- *Hymn 55* correlates Baptism, repentance, and spiritual paternity, highlighting the role of mystagogue of the spiritual father on the way of return and restoration in the grace of Baptism;
- The completion of the Mysteries of Christ and service through the word oblige the performer to perfection, determined by the living and personal connection with Christ, a connection that will transform his ministry into a source of grace, outside

which there will be only a genuine definition of mediocrity: “*we are trying to shepherd without Christ, the sheep of Christ*” (Cat. 18).

The priest cannot reach this personal connection with Christ if he burns the stages of practical realization. Discipleship near a father, faith, humility, mortification of the body through effort fortified by asceticism, search of consciousness, acquisition of grace, discernment, boldness, all these purify the mystagogue and initiate him for a personal meeting with Jesus Christ, the Crucified and Risen Lord. This will transfer the life of the priest into the certainty of divine presence, to make Christ known to the people, like to the Apostles.

In *subchapter 7 of the second part* I have analysed aspects of the canon of prayer, of personal prayer rule, which, under the guidance and blessing of the spiritual father, becomes mystagogical pedagogy through which Christ - the Crucified and Risen Lord, "*Last Canon of Church*" (Deacon Ioan Ica Jr.) is born and takes image in us.

A significant term for the spirituality of Saint Symeon: *life-giving death*, which embodies two aspects, a negative and a positive one. On the one hand, mortification of passion, on the other hand, revival of spiritual powers and cleansing of spiritual senses through acquisition of virtues. Thus, the Christian reaches the state of mysterious resurrection together with Christ, and knowledge of God. *Subchapter 8* of Part III deals with the first part of the oxymoron - killing of passion, death by intent, and imitation of the Passion of Christ. In *subchapter 9* I have looked at the issue of repentance. Repentance "conceals" Mystery of the Cross and Resurrection: bitter in the beginning, it becomes joy and path to conscious communion (in relation to the Eucharist) and sight of divine light. Lived in the initial phase as crucifixion and burial, it becomes mystical resurrection with Christ.

The analyses of Part II and III lead to the following conclusions:

- Spiritual life is a permanence of the death and resurrection initiated in Baptism;
- The references to the Passion of Christ abound in the writings of the divine Father, the Cross being a direct and personal reality for him - an example placed in front of every believer;
- Aspects of spiritual life related to bodily work (*ἐργασία σωματική*) and spiritual work (*ἐργασία πνευματική*) help the mind - thus purified - to take on the dogmatic

consciousness of the Incantation of the Saviour and His Passion, which generates the love for God and the desire to follow in His Passion;

- The path of initiation in the Mystery of the Cross and Resurrection of the Lord is for St. Symeon concretized in following and obeying the spiritual father;
- The God-bearing Father testifies to the need for a father to be born of the Holy Spirit.

IV. Spiritual Resurrection

In the first subchapter I stopped on the Divine Liturgy, because in the thinking of Saint Symeon the Liturgy occupies a central place. Following the evangelical and apostolic model, he insists on the coagulation of community around Liturgy and the Eucharist. Participating in the Divine Liturgy and communion with the Holy Mysteries make our assimilation into Christ. The Church is revealed by Divine Liturgy and the Eucharist as the fundamental source of Christian life, the place where life originates - New Eden (*Eth. 1*).

I have tried to point out that spiritual life is unitary. The three dimensions of spiritual life - ascetic, mystical and liturgical dimension - are interwoven into full unity revealing God to the Christian believer, and initiating him into the mysterious wedding chamber of the Bridegroom (*Eth. 6*).

In the *second subchapter* I have tried to develop certain aspects of the Holy Eucharist - the source of our eternal life. God-loving Symeon insists that the Holy Mysteries sanctify the entire man, both soul and body, preparing him for eternal life. The main material elements that support the human life of man become, by the grace of the Holy Spirit, the Body and Blood of the Lord - Bread of Life - by which we become partakers of eternal life (*Eth. 1*).

In his second *Ethical Discourse*, he develops a parallel between the tree of the knowledge of good and evil that was the cause of death and Wood of the Cross - the origin of our lives, and between Adam - who became the cause of death and corruption for all his descendants - and Christ - The Son of God, who through His passion which we commune in the Eucharist is the source of eternal life (*Eth. 2*). Saint Symeon emphasizes that only the one who crucibles and

dies freely to the world, and thus shares the Divine Sacrament, receives the Holy Spirit-the ark of eternal life, sharing for him an "eschatological passover" (Eph 2).

The God-bearing Father strongly supports the fact that as you take on the Cross of the Lord, you imitate his passion and mortify your passion "*and so you will commune with the divine Mysteries, all your life will be a feast, not just a feast, but also an opportunity for feast, and a Passover, passage and departure from those that can be seen towards the spiritual ones*" (Eth. 14).

It should also be emphasized that for Saint Symeon communion with diligence is communion with "twofold senses" (Eth. 14).

V.3. - *The mystical wedding of the soul-bride with Christ the Bridegroom* - the subchapter analyses aspects of the wedding metaphor, which occupies a central place in the writings of Saint Symeon. The goal and purpose of a "life imitating Christ" is the entrance to the wedding chamber and the sight of God's glory (Theol. 1). Ascetic defeat, discipline of passion, obedience of the divine commandments, they are not goals in themselves, but they pursue non-suffering, eternal life, the spiritual chamber and mystical wedding. Paradoxically, the King of Slave shows himself crucified on the Cross, and the fullness of perfection, union and mystical resurrection with Christ is precisely the Lord's cross, "death for Christ and His commandments" (Eth. 14).

In *subchapter 4* I have tried to highlight St. Symeon's insistence that the experience of eternal life and the Kingdom of Heaven is possible in this life. The spiritual and ascetic program of the New Theologian is about experiencing the first resurrection in this life. This is possible when all man's psycho-somatic faculties are governed by God, not by passion.

In order to fully understand his thinking about the aspect under discussion, we need to see *Catechesis 13 and 28*, and *Ethical Discourses 10 and 11* into a coherent and unified manner, which, based on the Pauline text from 22 Co. 4, 8-11: "*Always bearing in the flesh the killing of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus may appear in our body ...*", deal with related themes whose central message states: The resurrection of Christ is the condition of our resurrection, which can start in this life in those who mortify their passion.

Continuous process begun by investment with Christ in the Mystery of Baptism and sustained ascetically-mystically and liturgically-Eucharistically, "deification is truly eschatological" (Norman Russel).

Deification is a permanent process of ontological transformation, without man losing his created nature; he does not become god by nature, but god by adoption. In divinity, he reveals the meaning of *nekrosis*, imitation of the Lord in his Passion, mortification of passion and all ascetic labours. All these aspects have been dealt with in *the 5th* subchapter.

The general conclusions that come out at the end of my research can be summarized as follows:

- the writings of God in the Inspired Father reveal a unitary understanding of the ascetical, mystical and liturgical life;
- the paschal mystery of the Death and Resurrection of the Lord could be presented as the sanctuary of the thinking of Saint Symeon, a binder and "unity factor" of the other themes of his spirituality;
- the divine Father firmly affirms the possibility and necessity of the mystical union with God and of the spiritual resurrection in this life, too, as long as we obey the divine commandments and fight the ascetic struggles in general, by which we make the experience of the cross and mortify the passion;
- we are witnessing intensified attempts and efforts (by many theologians, hierarchs, priests, and confessors) to return to the practice of frequent communion among believers and of creation of Eucharistic communities, meritorious efforts, but which always call attention to the risk that such practice could fall into derision. I consider it revealing how Saint Symeon relates to the Eucharist. Although he reveals the value and central role of the Eucharist in spiritual life, he does not generalise it, but firmly affirms the value of Baptism, faith, Holy Scripture, commandments, asceticism, obedience of the spiritual father, by which the Christian worshipper imitates Christ and enters the communion of the passion (*ἡ κοινωνία τῶν παθῶν*) of the Saviour, becoming a partaker of His glory and His Spiritual Resurrection. Thus, baptism, priesthood, spiritual guidance, effort sustained by asceticism and refraining, scripture, personal canon of prayer, repentance, tears, awakening, vigilance are means and paths of a mystagogous nature whose goal is life of communion with God. They all have the purpose of initiating the mind in the unspoken mystery of divine life;

- the anthropology and ecclesiology of Saint Symeon the New Theologian, as well as his teaching about spiritual life in all its aspects: asceticism, following the father, imitation of Christ, mortification of passion, etc. are enlightened by his eschatological doctrine and find their fulfilment in the second coming of the Lord.

The present work wishes to highlight the prophetic and loving message of Saint Symeon towards his brothers, a message that urges today, with the same warmth and insistence, priests and shepherds, monks and laity to a personal meeting with Christ and to conscious communion of the Holy Mysteries, possible through concrete engagement in spiritual struggle, obedience of a spiritual father, imitation of Christ, through consistent struggle against passionate love for and adherence to the world, and existential return to God from evil, through repentance. Thus lived and centred liturgically, the life of the parish and of the monastic community in their entirety, but also in the particularity of each member becomes "mystical union (with the living God) and eschatological Passover" (*Eth. 14*).

At the same time, the dissertation opens the perspective of further research to highlight the influence of Pauline theology on the spirituality of Saint Symeon, theology whose central message is the preaching of Christ, the Crucified and Risen Lord. Such research would further highlight the *kerygmatic* message of Saint Symeon. Emphasizing the frequency of the use of the Pauline epistles in the writings of Saint Symeon, H.J.M. Turner lists: Rm - 298; I Co. - 340; II Co. - 221; Gal. - 111; Efes. - 199; I Tim. 117; Evr. - 117, totalling 1169 citations.