

NICHIFOR CRAINIC'S EUCHARISTIC VIEW REFLECTED IN HIS POETIC AND PHILOSOPHICAL WORK

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Abstract

This research is based on Nichifor Crainic's poetry and philosophy and reflects his view upon the central element of Christian Theology, the theosis, and on the role of the Eucharist in the epectasis. The authors analyse a series of poetic texts with Christian value – such as *Cântecul potirului [Song of the Chalice]*, as well as mystic ones, most of which were written during Nichifor Crainic's activity as a teacher of mysticism, but also philosophical extracts, part of his more extensive compositions or articles published in magazines such as *Gândirea*, which was founded by him. Having these extracts as a starting point, the authors illustrated Nichifor Crainic's philosophical language, extremely profound, yet clear and concise in revealing fundamental Christian truths, of an apodictic importance to the Eastern Christianity and spirituality. As one can observe, the Eucharist is at the core of these beliefs, as it represents the sacrament by which Christ offers Himself as bread and wine, while Christians receive the communion. Given its importance, it comes as no surprise that the philosopher allotted great attention to this act in his works (although he does not offer this subject very much space in his writings). In point of fact, the excerpts which make up the philosopher's aforementioned mysticism course – and which will be used in their printed form, supervised by archdeacon Dr. Ioan Ică jr., as well as in a new form, typed by several of the philosopher's students who assisted to some of his lectures – are centred around the Eucharist, presented in its Christological context, thus valuing both its sacramental dimension and its soteriological role in the life of a Christian. It is also interesting to analyse the manner in which Nichifor Crainic links the notion of Eucharist with that of martyrdom in the poem *Cântecul potirului [Song of the Chalice]*. Here, the author makes a connection between the theology of beauty, the assumption of martyrdom and the intense experience of the mystic ideals of Orthodoxy. Thus, considering the importance of Nichifor Crainic's view of

the Eucharist and its reflection in his poetic and philosophical creation, we believe it is important to have an exegetic approach to this segment of his work. We also have faith that such an undertaking would encourage further research on this subject, standing as a useful tool to those who may take interest in the personality and activity of the reputable philosopher. Naturally, those who wish to analyse our research and extend on it are encouraged to resort to a rich specialized literature, be it Romanian or foreign, even if it touches only tangentially on the subject. This could consist of the philosopher's works or of related exegesis papers, from a Romanian or Western context. The use of appropriate methodological instruments represents a great asset.

Keywords: Song of the Chalice, nationalism, Eucharist, Orthodox Mystic

Nichifor Crainic¹ is among the controversial characters that hall-marked the history of pre- and interwar Romania. Philosopher, poet, theologian, politician and memorialist, he made an impression in our times both by his prodigious work, covering multiple areas of scientific and literary creation and by the extensive political and cultural activity.

The Christian and the nationalist veins that run through his entire work make it stand out among the works of his contemporaries². It is the former of the two veins that we will focus our analysis on, and we will try to present how the Eucharist view of the author is reflected in his poetic and

¹ We will not insist here on his biography, as it is not the object of our research. For more information on this, see: Geta Marcela Pârvulescu, *Nichifor Crainic- monografie*, Deva, Editura Emia, 2010; Stelian Spânu, *Nichifor Crainic – lumini și umbre. O biografie*, București, Editura Saeculum Vizual, 2013; Răzvan Codrescu, *Nichifor Crainic – schiță de portret*, in "Tabor" 3.10 (Ianuarie 2010): 81-86; Laura Bădescu, *Observații asupra autocenzurii în totalitarism. Cazul Nichifor Crainic*, in "Tabor", 3. 10 (Ianuarie 2010): 71-76.

² His nationalist view was, in fact, what brought him criticism as well as praise. For more information, see: Cristian G. Romocea, *Church-State Relations in Post-1989 Romania*, in "Journal of Church and State", 2. 53 (Spring 2011): 269-270; Keith Hitchins, *Historiography of the Countries of Eastern Europe: Romania*, in "The American Historical Review", 97. 4 (October 1992): 1074; Roland Clark, *Orthodoxy and nation-building: Nichifor Crainic and religious nationalism in 1920s Romania*, in "Nationalities Papers", 40. 4 (July 2012): 525; Eugen Lovinescu, *Istoria literaturii române contemporane (1900-1937)*, București, Editura Librăriei Socec, 1937, 92-93; Mihaela Albu, *Dialogul știință-religie oglindit în literatura română (poezia Gândirii: între încifrare și revelație)*, in "Studii de știință și cultură", 5. 4 (Decembrie 2009): 90; Ov. S. Crohmălniceanu, *Literatura română între cele două războaie mondiale*, vol. II, București, Editura Minerva, 1974, 311; Călin Sărmăghitean, *Forma poetică a dogmei la Nichifor Crainic - o încercare de aplicare a perspectivei lui E. Coșeriu asupra limbajului poetic-teologic și asupra modalității de exprimare a dogmei creștine*, in "Antropomedia", 1. 2, (Iulie 2010): 54.

philosophical work. In our analysis we will consider his poetic work, spread both in the pages of periodicals such as *Gandirea*, *Manuscriptum*, *Transilvania*, *Neamul Românesc* or *Ramuri*, and in volumes of poetry signed by him³, or in posthumous anthologies that consider his poetic work in its entirety⁴, or his prison poetry⁵, as well as his philosophical work, spread both in the above-mentioned periodicals and in volumes published by him.

From the very beginning it should be noted that the Sacrament of the Eucharist, the centre of the Christian religion from its inception until today⁶, is not one of the themes constantly tackled by Nichifor Crainic, which explains the shortage of documents devoted to the author on this subject. As a matter of fact, this shortage could be explained if we consider the fact that he provides a pragmatic theology where the mystical experience is an empirical one and is connected to the national view, and if we consider his ideas, which mainly centre around issues with practical applicability and not around philosophical speculation that cannot be considered fruitful in terms of usefulness in everyday life.

Within this poetic work, characterized by rhetoric, tendency towards abstractization and cerebralism⁷, where he develops a poetic language based on a symbiotic terminology consisting of national and theological elements alike⁸, and which has a Christological centrality, we can distinguish, from a chronological point of view, two phases⁹, each with specific characteristics in terms of message and content: the pre-prison phase and the prison phase.

³ Nichifor Crainic, *Darurile pământului, poezii*, Editia a III-a, București, Editura Cartea Românească, 1929; Idem, *Cântecul patriei*, București, Editura Cartea Românească, 1926; Idem, *Poezii*, ed. Aureliu Goci, București, Editura Gramar, 1998; Idem, *Poezii alese 1914-1944 – in selecția autorului*, București, Editura Roza Vânturilor, 1990; Idem, *Șoim peste prăpastie. Versuri inedite create in temnițele Aiudului*, ed. Nedic Lemnaru, București, Editura Roza Vânturilor, 1990.

⁴ Such as: Idem, *Țara de peste veac. Poezii antume (1916-1944)*, ed. Ioan Cracă, București, Editura Eminescu, 1997.

⁵ Ioana Cistelean, *Antologia poeziei carcerale*, Cluj-Napoca, Editura Eikon, 2006; Cf. Ion Buzași, *Poezia religioasă românească*, Ediția a II-a, Cluj-Napoca, Editura Dacia XXI, 2011, 153-180.

⁶ Cf. Karl Christian Felmy, *Dogmatica experienței eclesiale- innoirea teologiei ortodoxe contemporane*, trad. Ioan Ică jr., Sibiu, Editura Deisis, 1999, 253.

⁷ Dumitru Micu, *Istoria literaturii române: de la creația populară la postmodernism*, București, Saeculum, 2000, 307.

⁸ For more information on the language of his poetry, see: Laura Bădescu, *Retorica poeziei religioase a lui Nichifor Crainic*, București, Editura Minerva, 2000; Constantin D. Ionescu, *Două biruințe tradiționaliste*, in "Gândirea", 10. 3 (Martie 1931): 398-400.

⁹ An influence on this differentiation being probably, as rev. Dumitru Stăniloae noted, his age, which leads to poetic and spiritual maturity of the author. Cf. Dumitru Stăniloae, *Poezia creștină a lui Nichifor Crainic*, in Nedic Lemnaru, ed., "Nichifor Crainic, Șoim peste prăpastie. Versuri inedite create in temnițele Aiudului", București, Editura Roza Vânturilor, 1990, 10.

Both phases are impregnated with the mystical thrill, but the different context in which the poems are written and the extrinsic and intrinsic factors that influence the effect of inspiration give rise to some differences in his poetic work. Thus, whereas the poems written before the imprisonment stand as a poetic expression of freedom, the ones written in prison, impregnated by an intense mystical power, are special both because they were a way of survival¹⁰, as poetry was a survival form for other great poets who have gone through similar situations, and because they express the deepest and the most sincere feelings of the author, who will abandon himself through his works, *thanks to the divine power*, as it was nicely put by abbot Bremond when talking about poetry of this kind¹¹.

An important part of Crainic's pre-prison poetry is to be found in the *Gândirea* magazine, where he conducted his activity for more than two decades, an extensive activity within which he presents both issues related to cultural tendencies of the time as well as inset portraits and evocations, philosophical, political or theology materials. Here, in the religious poems, he often represents the summer sun as a metaphor for God¹², he shows his love for Him as a superior feeling¹³, and he speaks about the hope for a reunion with the Creator in an eschatological dimension¹⁴. Also in this periodical, Crainic presented, in the philosophy and theology articles, his interesting views on the Eucharist. Thus, for instance, talking about the superiority of Christianity over paganism, and about the fact that the highest intensity moment throughout history was the Incarnation, he briefly addresses the issue of the Eucharist, highlighting the reality and importance of this Sacrament to Christian life:

*"Christians who approach the Holy Chalice take bread and wine, given within the eternal Last Supper of his mystical being."*¹⁵

On another occasion, he links the Eucharist with the prayer of the heart, insisting on the interdependence between the two and showing that *"contemplation is in itself an immaterial Eucharist."*¹⁶ Also, when presenting the theological work of St. Dionysius the Areopagite, in an inset portrait in

¹⁰ Cf. Valeriu Anania, *Memorii*, Editura Polirom, Iași, 2008, p. 325. Moreover, Metropolitan Bartolomeu experiences in prison a moment of maximum poetic fecundity; he created and memorised the 12000 poetic lines and other literary works, which will be published later, after his release (A/N).

¹¹ Henri Bremond, *La poesie pure. Avec un debat sur la poezie par Robert de Sauza*, Paris, Bernard Grasset, 1926, 16.

¹² Idem, *Cântec de seară, Cântec de seară*, in "Gândirea", 3. 3-4 (Iunie 1923): 45.

¹³ Idem, in *Elegie*, in "Gândirea", 3. 6 (Novembre 1923): 116.

¹⁴ Idem, *Sonetul euthanasiei*, in "Gândirea", 3. 7 (Decembrie 1923): 149.

¹⁵ Idem, *Ortodoxie*, in "Gândirea", 16. 1 (Ianuarie 1937): 4.

¹⁶ Idem, *Rugăciunea lui Iisus*, p. 221. Cf. Idem, *Teologie și filosofie. Publicistică (1922-1944)*, p. 39.

the magazine, he reiterates its grounds and talks about the concelebration between angels and men within the Divine Liturgy:

*"The Liturgy officiated in the altar, whose core is Messiah's sacrifice symbolized in the Sacrament of Holy Eucharist, is seen as happening at the same time with the eternal angelic liturgy, rendered, in parallel, in the painting of the great dome."*¹⁷

In another periodical, where both poems and essays of the author can be found, he also touches on the topic of the Eucharist in the two lyrical works impregnated with an intense mystical power. In the first one, entitled *La rascruce [At the Crossroads]*, he presents the itinerary of the human life as a journey of discovering God. The comparison between the chalice and the heart present here¹⁸ suggests the reason for the Eucharist, just as the search itself is oriented towards the communion with Christ, who, in His telluric phase, can be known and experienced by the Sacrament.

The same idea is found in the poem entitled *Aproape [Close]*¹⁹, where, unlike the other work, the intrinsic tension is not generated by the difficult and unsuccessful quest for the divine, but by His overwhelming presence in the proximity of the subject and by the latter's inability to open up before the grace and the transcendent experiences and to become a receiver and a transmitter of the divine message and presence:

*"There are moments when I feel you above me/ Like a branch in bloom. With the longing of having you, / My heart is a spring fountain,/ It escapes from depths of silence,/ And casts away the seething bindweed./ .../ You are close to me... If only you obeyed.../ But I know: getting to you would be a victory/ Which is not mine and not anyone's."*²⁰

The acquiescence of his weakness brings forth the cauterization of the wounds caused by the sin and eliminates the weakness²¹. The reason for the Eucharist is shown here by the words of the last two tersedals, where, just as in *Izvorul captiv [The Captive Spring]*²² of the former Metropolitan, Metropolitan Bartolomeu, an admirer of Crainic, the fulfilment of the poet's longing is achieved by the descent of the divine from the heavens and bestowing of his gifts on the subject, a phenomenon which produces a strong

¹⁷ Idem, *Dionisie Areopagitul*, p. 193. As a matter of fact, this reason is often found in religious books where it might have entered via a Dionysian channel. Cf. ***, *Molifelnic*, Editura Institutului Biblic și de Misiune al Bisericii Ortodoxe Române, București, 2002, p. 157.

¹⁸ Nichifor Crainic, *La răscruce*, in "Ramuri", 14. 1 (Ianuarie 1920): 3.

¹⁹ Idem, *Aproape*, 188.

²⁰ *Ibidem*, 188.

²¹ Cf. Andrei Andreicuț, *Principii de morală creștină*, Cluj-Napoca, Editura Renașterea, 2011, 129.

²² Valeriu Anania, *Poeme alese*, Cluj-Napoca, Editura Dacia, 1998, 26.

impression on him, and which is rendered by a symphony of figures of speech:

"*You lean towards my hungry seethe,/ You – branch over the spring fountain,/ And dissuaded by my barren doom,/ You let your mercy fall like a flower/ On the pounded water top.*"²³

Beautiful and dense ideas on our subject can also be found in the few poems scattered in the pages of the *Transilvania* magazine, where the author gives a Eucharistic connotation²⁴ to the reason for the sacrifice in *Patria [The Nation]*, as well as in the poem entitled *Manastirea [The Monastery]*, where the bread of the eternal life²⁵ is offered as an antidote for the quest that hounds the athirst soul.

The sacrifice of Christ is, according to the philosopher, that which gives colour and personality to the world²⁶, and the Christians must approach it with the utmost seriousness and piety²⁷, to cleanse and refresh their souls²⁸. It reiterates, in a liturgical setting, the unique and unrepeatable sacrifice by which Christ achieved his saving work, as the author shows in the poem entitled *Cântec evanghelic [Gospel Song]*²⁹, the wheat and the wine, common motifs in his poetry³⁰, representing the symbols of His body and blood, which transubstantiate, in actual fact, in the two elements, within the ritual of the Holy Liturgy.

These are the main exponents of Crainic's pre-prison poetry that provide information on the author's conception of the Eucharist. The poetry written during detention, denser in terms of theological content and mystical substrate, offers, unlike in the previous phase, more and richer information on our subject.

Sometimes the poems written during this period describe the state of imprisonment and the accompanying inner feelings (e.g. fear or depression), while other times, they focus on the violence³¹, on some moral sentiments

²³ Nichifor Crainic, *Aproape*, 188.

²⁴ Cf. Idem, *Patria*, 321. Here, the Eucharist reason is related to the ethnocentric one, this view actually being found in other poems such as *Cântecul potirului*, as we shall see below (A/N).

²⁵ Idem, *Mănăstirea*, 286.

²⁶ As it was beautifully illustrated by Crainic in the poem entitled *Cântece evanghelice*, published in the journal *Neamul românesc*: cf. Idem, *Cântece evanghelice*, in "Neamul românesc", 13. 27 (Ianuarie 1918): 1.

²⁷ Cf. Idem, *Darurile pământului, poezii*, 62.

²⁸ Cf. *Ibidem*, 157-158; Andrei Andreicuț, *Morala împărăției întemeiată pe Sfânta Scriptură și Sfinții Părinți*, Cluj-Napoca, Editura Renașterea, 2011, 35.

²⁹ Nichifor Crainic, *Cântec evanghelic*, in "Neamul Românesc", 13. 17 (Ianuarie 1918): 1.

³⁰ Cf. Idem, *Țara de peste veac. Poezii antume (1916-1944)*, 17, 98.

³¹ Cf. Ioana Cistelecan, *op. cit.*, 8.

such as pity, on the way in which the human being experiences suffering³². As a matter of fact, the poet, just like his verse, is no longer the same with the man that he was before the prison experience. Transformed by this, he becomes meditative, realizing the joy that the gift of existence produces³³ and living in harmonious communion with the living and the departed, who are present in his prayer³⁴.

The suffering caused by hunger, common in the lives of those persecuted in totalitarian regimes, is often an inspirational opportunity for the works of those who experience it. In Crainic's work, it is, beyond the natural phenomenon that affected him³⁵, an occasion for contemplation and elevation of the mind into the highest spheres. An example of this is the *Cântecul foamei [Hunger Song]*:

"Whereas I was once a cluster/Am now a berry crushed in press,/ In my starvation/ Pour some juice and I'm reborn".³⁶

Here, the cluster, beyond the metaphor aimed at highlighting the sufferings hunger had caused to those incarcerated, on which those who dwell on this poem deeply meditate³⁷, has a Eucharistic connotation. As a matter of fact, in prison, hunger often leads to a series of bigoted reactions such as contemplation of bread which he speaks about in his memoirs³⁸ with a mystical ground. The fact that the cluster is accompanied by the idea of rebirth towards the end of the first stanza of the poem reinforces this assumption, because the Eucharist is a sacrament of spiritual renewal of the one who is subject to it³⁹.

Nevertheless, the quintessence of Eucharistic theology found in the poetic work of Nichifor Crainic can be considered the work entitled *Cântecul potirului [Song of the Chalice]*. Here, in a language that combines playfulness with metaphor, philosophy with theology, a language islanded with provincialisms through a number of motifs such as that of the *wheat*,

³² Cf. Alexandru Condeescu, „Nichifor Crainic sau speranța în Dumnezeu”, in vol. *Nichifor Crainic, Spiritualitatea poeziei românești*, Editura Muzeului Literaturii Române, București, 1998, 8.

³³ Ioana Cistelean, *op. cit.*, 61.

³⁴ As our author does in *Rugăciunea din amurg*. Cf. *Ibidem*, 58.

³⁵ Cf. Idem, *Pribeag în țara mea. Mărturii din închisoare. Memoriu –răspuns la actul meu de acuzare*, București, Editura Muzeului Literaturii Române „Orfeu”, 1996, 162-168.

³⁶ Ioana Cistelean, *op. cit.*, 70. Cf. Nichifor Crainic, *Șoim peste prăpastie. Versuri inedite create în temnițele Aiudului*, 145.

³⁷ Ioana Cistelean, *op. cit.*, 8.

³⁸ Idem, *Pribeag în țara mea. Mărturii din închisoare. Memoriu – răspuns la actul meu de acuzare*, 162.

³⁹ Cf. Dumitru Stăniloae, *op. cit.*, 9.

which foreshadows the image of Christ, the ecclesiastical community⁴⁰, and which turns into the bread that will then transubstantiate into the body of Christ, or through the motif of the grape, with a similar symbolism, he presents the truth of faith regarding the Sacrament of the Eucharist. Here is its text:

*"When the reaped harvest was ready/ Grandfather and father/ Left a sheaf standing/ Piously tying it with a chicory;/ And the ears were shining like silk in the sun/ To render the beard of Christ./ When the bread in the oven resembled the brass/ Grandmother and mother/ Bashfully taking it out while crossing themselves/ Were seemingly carrying fair and glossy relics/... And, behold, the chalice brings Thou to my mouth,/ Jesus Christ, sacrificed on the cross,/ Feed me, holy mother of God./ Like grain in the ear and juice in cluster/ Thou are all in all and all in you,/ Thou my people's bread for aye./ .../ Water me, thou, holy God juice./ Like grain in the ear and juice in cluster/ Thou are all in all and all in you,/ Thou my people's wine for aye./ Rich vineyards and fertile fields./ This earth, Jesus Christ,/ Is the heaven where God wanted us./ Watch thyself in the vine and see thyself in the grains/ And bleed in the grapes and break thyself in the bread,/ Thou, my people's life for aye."*⁴¹

Beyond the process of production of material elements underlying the Sacrament, and beyond the display in a vivid but accessible language of the doctrine of faith, the reading of poetry also reveals some ideas specific to the author's view on religion and nation. Thus, using the metaphor *my people's bread for aye* he links the national notion with the Eucharistic one; the national notion will often be found in his works⁴² as having a Eucharist foundation. In other words, Eucharist Christ Himself is at the centre of the national idea conferring it value and foundation. This view that links nationalism to Christianity in its very essence is unique and therefore characteristic for the author, these poems being the only place in his whole work where it is found. Later, in his other poems, other elements regarding the Eucharist will be found; they reiterate the ideas presented here, but often in a toneless way, and emphasise the importance of leading a Eucharist

⁴⁰ Metaphor found from ancient times as early as the second century. Cf. ***, *Învățătură a celor doisprezece apostoli*, trad. Dumitru Fecioru, in vol. "Scrierile Părinților Apostolici", colecția „Părinți și Scriitori Bisericești” (hereafter: col. PSB), vol. 1, București, Editura Institutului Biblic și de Misiune al Bisericii Ortodoxe Române, 1979, 29; Sfântul Clement Romanul, *Epistola către Corinteni*, trad. Dumitru Fecioru, in vol. "Scrierile Părinților Apostolici", col. PSB, vol. 1, București, Editura Institutului Biblic și de Misiune al Bisericii Ortodoxe Române, 1979, 76-77; Idem, *Prima scrisoare a lui Clement*, trad. Cristina Ciubotaru, Micolae Mogage, Dan Batovici, in vol. "Părinții Apostolici – Scrieri I", Iași, Editura Polirom, 2010, 129-131.

⁴¹ Ioana Cistelean, *op. cit.*, 63-64; Ioan Buzași, *op. cit.*, 153.

⁴² Cf. Nichifor Crainic, *Ortodoxie și etnocrație*, București, Editura Cugetarea, 1930.

Christian life⁴³ insisting on the moral reverberations of the Eucharist in the Christian's life.

His philosophical works though, even if fewer texts concerning the Sacrament of the Eucharist are found here, are denser in terms of content than the lyrical texts and provide much clearer and better articulated doctrinal information. An example is the afore-discussed article pertaining to St. Dionysius the Areopagite.

Another example is the information contained in the pages of the philosopher's mysticism courses that blend theology with philosophy, showing that the Orthodox mystic is by nature a Christocentric one⁴⁴, characterized by tension generated by the intensity of living the truths of faith⁴⁵ and thus highlighting the value of the Eucharist in the Christian perfection process⁴⁶. The dialogue on the Sacrament is framed within the liturgical mystic⁴⁷, emphasizing the community dimension of the Church and of the mystic alike and the transubstantiation of bread and wine⁴⁸. It has a special meaning within the final stage of the process of perfection, the union⁴⁹. Taking this as a starting point, the author presents it in the context of the mystical ascent towards perfection⁵⁰ along with the other two Sacraments performed at an early stage in the Christian life⁵¹, namely the Baptism and

⁴³ Ioana Cistelecan, *op. cit.*, 65. Cf. Nichifor Crainic, *Ortodoxie și etnocrație*, 10; Aurelia Dumitrașcu, *Atelier poetic*, in "Manuscriptum", 26. 98-101 (Ianuarie-Martie 1995): 20-21.

⁴⁴ Nichifor Crainic, *Sfințenia – împlinirea umanului (curs de teologie mistică)*, ed. Teodosie Paraschiv, Iași, Editura Mitropoliei Moldovei și Bucovinei, 1993, 169; Cf. Iustin Popovici, *Omul și Dumnezeu-om. Abisurile și culmile filosofiei*, trad. Ioan Ică, Ioan Ică jr, Sibiu, Editura Deisis, 1997, 119-120; Cristinel Ioja, *Rațiune și mistică în Teologia Ortodoxă*, Arad, Editura Universității „Aurel Vlaicu”, 2008, 208-209.

⁴⁵ Regarding this and the relationship between dogmatic theology and mystic, see: Nichifor Crainic, *Curs de mistică germană. Meister Eckhart și școala sa (1936-1937) – prelegerea I inaugurală*, in "Tabor", 3. 10 (Ianuarie 2010): 7; Jurgen Henkel, *Nichifor Crainic și teologia mistică*, in "Tabor", 3. 10 (Ianuarie 2010): 46.

⁴⁶ Andrei Andreicuț, *Spovedanie și comuniune*, Alba-Iulia, Editura Arhiepiscopiei, 1998, 75.

⁴⁷ Nichifor Crainic, *Cursurile de mistică*, ed. Ioan Ică jr, Sibiu, Editura Deisis, 2010, 251.

⁴⁸ St. Iustin the Martyr and Philosopher, *Apologia întâi în favoarea creștinilor*, trad. Teodor Bodogae, Olimp Căciulă, Dumitru Fecioru, in vol. "Apologeti de limba greacă", col. „Părinți și Scriitori Bisericești”, vol. 2, București, Editura Institutului Biblic și de Misiune al Bisericii Ortodoxe Române, 1980, 70.

⁴⁹ Cf. Andrei Andreicuț, *Repere de morală creștină*, Alba-Iulia, Editura Reîntregirea, 2007, 9.

⁵⁰ Cf. Jean Daniélou, *Mystique de la ténèbre chez Grégoire de Nysse*, in "Dictionnaire de spiritualité, ascétique et mystique, doctrine et histoire", Tome II, Deuxième partie, Paris, Beauchesne, 1953, 1882.

⁵¹ See: Paul Evdochimov, *Ortodoxia*, trad. Irineu Ioan Popa, București, Editura Institutului Biblic și de Misiune al Bisericii Ortodoxe Române, 1996, for a more detailed presentation of the Sacraments of Initiation packet.

the Chrismation. In his argument, the author uses the words of St. Nicholas Cabasilas, who he often mentions and takes as a yardstick⁵².

When presenting the stage of enlightenment, the third stage of the mystical ascent, he stresses that this can only be achieved within and by the Eucharist⁵³:

"Therefore, the Sacrament of the Holy Eucharist is the fire seed of the Orthodox religion. It is the mystery of turning created nature into divine nature. Wine and water transubstantiated into Messiah's blood, bread transubstantiated into His flesh are the pure nourishment that change created nature into divine nature. The practical and real essence of our religion is this mysterious feast in which Christ, the true flesh and blood⁵⁴, offers Himself as food to the Christians. And whereas the divine blood and flesh retain the wine and bread image, John Damascene, based on Gregory of Nyssa's ideas, explains that this is a concession God makes to human helplessness."⁵⁵

The biblical model of this union is the Tabor⁵⁶, which transforms and recreates, the Holy Spirit having a significant contribution here⁵⁷ in achieving the *sinaxis*⁵⁸. Starting from this premise, Nichifor Crainic shows how the Eucharist means spiritual recreation of man through the deified body

⁵² Cf. St. Iustin Martyr and Philosopher, *op. cit.*, 251.

⁵³ His idea is reflected even in the western theology. Cf. ***, *Dictionnaire de spiritualite, ascetique et mystique, doctrine et histoire*, Tome IV, Deuxieme Partie, Paris, Beauchesne, 1961, 1571. According to his view, the Eucharist contributes, along with the Chrismation, to the discovery and thorough activation of the baptismal grace that dwells in man after receipt of the first sacrament. Cf. Vasile Gordon, *Nichifor Crainic – nume de cinste pentru o „Antologie românească a pedagogilor laici ortodocși*, in “Tabor”, 3. 10 (Ianuarie 2010): 42; Cf. Andrei Andreicuț, *Nevoințele desăvârșirii*, Cluj-Napoca, Editura Renașterea, 2011, 9.

⁵⁴ Cf. St. Nicholas Cabasilas, *Tâlcuirea dumnezeieștii liturghii*, trad. Ene Braniște, București, Editura Institutului Biblic și de Misiune al Bisericii Ortodoxe Române, 1989, 47.

⁵⁵ *Ibidem*, pp. 275-276. Cf. Sfântul Ioan Damaschin, *Dogmatica*, trad. Dumitru Fecioru, Ediția a III-a, București, Editura Scripta, 1993, 143.

⁵⁶ Cf. Ioan Gh. Savin, *Mistica și ascetica ortodoxă*, Sibiu, Editura Arhidiecezana, Sibiu, 1996, 133. Cf. Andrei Andreicuț, *Spiritualitate creștină pe înțelesul tuturor*, Alba-Iulia, Editura Reîntregirea, 2002, 186-190; Idem, *Dinamica despățimirii*, Alba-Iulia, Editura Reîntregirea, 2001, 11.

⁵⁷ And this, because He is the one who transubstantiates the Eucharist bread and wine into the Lord's Flesh and Blood. Cf. ***, *Dictionnaire de spiritualite, ascetique et mystique, doctrine et histoire*, Tome IV, Deuxieme partie, 1571.

⁵⁸ Term that Dionysius uses to define the Eucharist. Sfântul Dionisie Areopagitul, *Opere complete*, trad. Dumitru Stăniloae, București, Editura Paideia, 1996, 75; Cf. Andrew Louth, *Dionisie Areopagitul – o introducere*, trad. Sebastian Moldovan, Sibiu, Editura Deisis, 1997, 99.

and blood of Christ, through which He assimilates those who commune⁵⁹. In this regard, he states that:

*"The Eucharistic food, obtained by the mysterious transformation of the elements of the created nature aims not to assimilate Christ to our nature, but to assimilate our nature to Christ."*⁶⁰

Due to the assimilating work status of the ecclesial community with the purpose of its christification, the communion is a way by which Christ helps his limbs created through Baptism and strengthened through Chrismation, to reach the ultimate goal of their life within the second creation of the world, the Christianity⁶¹. In this regard, St. Nicholas Cabasilas, in order to strengthen the assertions of the quoted author, says:

*"First, by Baptism Christ creates his limbs, by Chrismation He strengthens them through the Holy Spirit, and by the Eucharist He is present in them helping them to achieve victory."*⁶²

We see therefore how important the Eucharist in the life of Christians of all times is and how it is reflected in the poetic and philosophical work of the theologian, philosopher and journalist Nichifor Crainic. Although it is an almost marginal topic, because the author has focused his research primarily on pragmatic issues of theology, it is found in poems impregnated with a strong spiritual power, the author highlighting its features, projecting and presenting it from an Orthodox perspective. Particularly interesting is the correlation between the Eucharist and the nation, the first being, in his view, the epicentre of the second, which is Christological centred, and whose existence is a theandric one⁶³. As a matter of fact, by this view, the author stands out among theologians and among philosophers preceding him, contemporary or posterior to him.

His philosophical work, although in terms of quantity contains less information regarding Crainic's Eucharist views, provides a denser and more theologically articulated image of the central Sacrament of Orthodoxy.

⁵⁹ Cf. Ioan Ică jr., „Nichifor Crainic și redescoperirea misticii în Ortodoxie în prima jumătate a secolului XX”, in vol. *Nichifor Crainic, Cursurile de mistică*, Sibiu, Editura Deisis, 2010, 52.

⁶⁰ Nichifor Crainic, *Cursurile de mistică*, p. 276. Cf. Sfântul Nicolae Cabasila, *Despre viața în Hristos*, trad. Teodor Bodogae, Editura Institutului Biblic și de Misiune al Bisericii Ortodoxe Române, București, 1997, pp. 106-107.

⁶¹ Nichifor Crainic, *Modul teandric*, in “Gândirea”, 19. 1 (Ianuarie 1940): 1.

⁶² Idem, *Cursurile de mistică*, 277. Cf. Sfântul Nicolae Cabasila, *Despre viața în Hristos*, p. 108; Andrei Andreicuț, *Spovedanie și comuniune*, p. 75; Alexander Golitzin, *Mistagogia, experiența lui Dumnezeu în Ortodoxie. Studii de teologie mistică*, trad. Ioan Ică jr., col. „Mistica”, Sibiu, Editura Deisis, 1998, 73-74.

⁶³ Cf. Teofan Popescu, *Modul teandric în gândirea lui Nichifor Crainic*, “Tabor”, 3. 10 (Ianuarie 2010): 50; Sandu Frunză, *O antropologie mistică – introducere în gândirea părintelui Dumitru Stăniloae*, Editura Omniscope, Craiova, 1996, 87-90.

Paradoxically, here, the pragmatic author makes a presentation aimed at speculative theology and rooted in the church dogma, emphasizing the reality of the communion with the Flesh and Blood of Christ in the Liturgy and holding on the quality of this Sacrament to make those who receive it the sons of God according to the flesh⁶⁴.

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⁶⁴ Cf. Nichifor Crainic, *Sfințenia – împlinirea umanului*, 113-114.

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