

CHRISTIAN BIOETHICS IN THE CONTEMPORARY WORLD

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Abstract: As a domain of competence, bioethics deals with any significant intertwining between biology or medicine and ethics or morals. These significant interconnections (among which there are those we shall approach in our study: abortion, cloning, homosexuality and euthanasia) have generated discussions, bringing under the scrutiny of the international scientific world the issue of the ethics of different bio-medical techniques. These problems occurred mostly during the twentieth century, being simultaneous to the unprecedented technical progress, also because the contemporary man declares himself autonomous from God, denies God and claims to be His substitute. From the perspective of the Christian anthropology, bioethics is not the ethics of the body for the sake of the body, but of the body for the sake of the soul. This aspect distinguishes theological bioethics from the numerous discussions of the bioethics of the body for the sake of the body and its sinful and selfish pleasures.

Keywords: bioethics, abortion, homosexuality, cloning, euthanasia

Introduction

Due to technical development, man has come to master the nature of creation in an unprecedented degree, for example compared to what happened in the 19th century. The problem is not that man has this power over life (and, to a certain extent, over death, although the elusion of this divine law meant to redeem our souls for a superior life is, evidently, an illusion) but that he makes use of his capacities in order to obtain personal, selfish satisfactions (possessions, prestige, control) or even to increase his carnal pleasures, but not to help the course of nature unfold for the protection of life.

According to our study, such abuses against divinity are as follows: a) abortion on request (with no medical reason, like endangerment of the mother's life) because a brutal interference in the course of nature occurs, by the killing of a human being; b) cloning, because we are dealing with an increased degree of randomly, selfish, or eugenic selection; c) homosexuality, because it represents a deviation from the real goal of the carnal pleasures, namely that of procreating; d) euthanasia on request, because it shows disrespect for the divine gift of life.

Thus, in the contemporary society we encounter a weakening of the state of communion, which leads to isolation, individualism, selfishness and has, as implications, the disintegration of the family and of the society, facilitating the appearance of these practices (abortion, cloning, homosexuality, euthanasia), which endanger man's life and degrade human life, in general.

Abortion

The practice of abortion is present throughout history. The use of herbs that provoked abortion has been known everywhere. "Yet, the attitude towards abortion, oscillated from

an era to the other in time. Thus, the ancient societies of Greece and Rome were tolerant to abortion, and in the Roman society, it was allowed during any period of the pregnancy¹. Also, in the modern societies, abortion was sometimes forbidden, at other times tolerated, by virtue of the “respect for the human rights”. Until the 17th century, in Europe the laws did not incriminate abortion. It was not until 1803 in England that the first law considering abortion a murder appeared. The punishment was applied depending on the moment when the fetus began to move inside the uterus, being less severe for the abortions carried out before that moment. America followed, in fact, the English model and, as a result, a law that was into force during the 17th and the 19th centuries considered the abortions carried out before the fetus’ first moves inside the uterus, as minor crimes. The abortion was legal if it was required by therapeutic reasons, but it needed the recommendations of two doctors². Nowadays, abortion is allowed up to the 22nd week of the pregnancy in England, up to the moment of birth in the United States of America and, since 1996, up to the 14th week in Romania³.

Yet, according to genetic studies, it clearly results that life begins at the moment of the conception and that the destruction of a future child, at any moment after his conception, “is equivalent to the killing of a human being”⁴. From an Orthodox perspective, it is obvious that the human being, namely the person, has existed ever since the very moment of its conception. The Western scholasticism, influenced by the ancient pagan thinking, considers that the soul is the shape of the body, and therefore, that the embryo gets the features of humanity only a few weeks later, when the body acquires a human shape. Thomas Aquinas asserted that God gives the soul to the fetus 40 days after its conception, if it is a boy, and 80 days after its conception, if it is a girl. Thus, the killing of a fetus of less than 40 days of age was neither abortion, nor murder, according to the vision of the Roman-Catholic theologian. Starting with the middle of the 19th century, the pontiffs started to condemn abortions using more and more vehement expressions, partly due to the fact that the scientific evidence had begun to discredit Thomas Aquinas’ vision on the receiving of the soul. While the medical biology was bringing to light the mechanism of the appearance of life, the Roman-Catholics were beginning to assert that the human being starts to exist since the moment of its conception. An exception were the cases of ectopic pregnancy (when the embryo develops in the fallopian tubes) or the cases of uterine cancer (when the uterus must be removed, sacrificing the conception product). In both cases, the *double effect doctrine* allowed doctors to save the mother to the detriment of the fetus. It was considered that an action with a double effect - a good one and a bad one - was allowed from a moral perspective if the intention itself was good, if the positive effect of the action justified it at least just as much as the avoidance of the negative effect, if only the obtaining of the positive effect is intended⁵.

¹George Stan, *Teologie și Bioetică*, Editura Biserica Ortodoxă, Alexandria, 2001, p.13.

² Diana Bulgaru, Beatrice Ioan, Cristina Gavrilovici, Vasile Astărăstoae, *Avortul – o dispută etică de actualitate*, în vol. „Medicii și Biserica”, vol. IV, Editura Renașterea, Cluj-Napoca, 2006, p. 182.

³ George Stan, *op. cit.*, p. 13.

⁴ Meletios Kalamaras, Mitropolit de Nikopole, *Avortul*, București, 1996, p.3.

⁵Diana Bulgaru, Beatrice Ioan, Cristina Gavrilovici, Vasile Astărăstoae, *op. cit.*, pp. 189-190.

The Holy Scripture does not separate the soul from the body. In the Bible, just as in the patristic writings, the human being exists since the moment of its conception. There is no soul without a body, and no body without a soul. “Just as the body does not begin to take shape from itself, or through a previous process, but it has - from the very beginning - the soul in itself, as a factor distinguished from its nature, similarly the soul does not exist before the body corresponding to it starts to take shape. The concomitant beginning of their existences supposes a very intimate intertwining of the soul and the body, which makes it impossible to understand a soul separately and a body on its own”⁶. The soul is created by God from the moment when the fertilization occurs. The conception takes place by the work of God, in collaboration with the work of man. Saint John Chrysostom writes that the conception is not the fruit and result of nature and of mating, but of the divine providence: “Birth has its beginning from the Divinity, from the providence of God, and not from the woman’s nature or from the mating act or from any other independent factor”⁷. Today’s science similarly insists on the fact that the genetic program of an individual appears from the moment of the fusion of the parental cells. “The child does not belong to his parents, he belongs to God”⁸.

Matrimonial love materializes in procreation, this being one of the beautiful parts of marriage. Parents conceive and God offers, develops and supports the life of the new man. When the love between husband and wife is missing or is deteriorating, unhappiness occurs, leading, more often than not, to family dissolution.

One of the most severe and inhuman acts of extermination of the love between husband and wife is *abortion*. Through abortion, man does not give any chance to the image of God in man, but sets himself free from the consequences of concupiscence, through a criminal act. The people who commit abortion or make use of abortive practices demonstrate selfishness and cowardice.

Even before birth, a baby perceives danger when he is threatened and tries to defend himself and scream (by a silent scream). “The Silent Scream” is a documentary film, made and presented by Dr. Bernard N. Nathanson, a declared atheist, the director of one of the biggest clinics in New York, a founder of the NARAL organization, who helped legalize abortion in the U.S.A. and who, later on, became a great pro-life militant. The film does not present his personal convictions, but explains the ultrasound recording of an abortion through aspiration, for a three-month pregnancy (12 weeks). The recording is one of the most dramatic scenes ever captured. The image of the unborn child defending himself from the scoop and opening his mouth in a “silent scream”, in the attempt of escaping from the killing instrument, proves the fact that abortion does not remove a mass of tissues or cells, but kills a living human being. The conclusion of the documentary is that abortion does not mean “a woman’s right to choose”, but a “legally” committed murder against a defenseless human being.

⁶ Dumitru Stăniloae, *Teologia Dogmatică Ortodoxă*, vol. I, Editura I.B.M. al B.O.R., București, 1978, p. 259.

⁷ Hierotheos Vlachos, *Bioetică și bioteologie*, trans. by Teofan Munteanu, Editura Christiana, București, 2013, p. 128.

⁸ Olivier Clement, *Înteruperea voită a sarcinii*, trans. by Nicoleta Petuhov, în vol. „Bioetica și taina persoanei. Perspective ortodoxe”, Editura Bizantină, București, 2006, p. 108.

The increase of the number of abortions expresses, on the level of the body, the contemporary nihilism. The body must be cured in its very essence, not through interdictions presented as imperatives with no existential support, but being witnesses, on our own and along with others, of the Resurrection, acknowledging the religious grounds of the biblical commandment: “*Do not kill*”. “Actually, we should not forget that a woman is not meant to kill; she is consecrated, with her entire being (along with her partner, even more than we usually believe) to the receiving of the little unknown guest”⁹.

Referring to the fact that the guilt for the sin of infanticide belongs equally to the two spouses, since it is committed in the family, Blessed Augustine is very radical: “this voluptuous cruelty or this cruel voluptuousness goes up to the administration of medicine for barrenness and, if it is not sufficient, up to the annihilation one way or the other and the killing of the conceived fetus in the uterus, so that he should not be given birth. Certainly, if both are like that, we cannot call them spouses; and if they are so, then they got united in marriage for sexual immorality”¹⁰. Their complicity to abortion is complicity to murder.

Homosexuality

God created Eve not only to be of help to Adam, but also for him not to be alone. The man and the woman offer themselves to each other to find the image of God, from each other’s person. This thing is related to the meeting that takes place in the case of the icon. Iconography involves an art. Marriage also involves an art. Love is not a simple act; it is an art. “The goal of this art of love – as in iconography – is to transfigure each other, to see each other as a manifestation of the divine Beloved”¹¹.

Homosexuality “consists of an erotic desire for an individual of the same gender”, which desire goes “from an intensively erotized friendship, up to sexual practices between two partners, where one of them plays the role of the other gender. *In case of men, this is called pederasty, and in case of women it is named lesbianism*”¹².

We encounter homosexuality throughout history, being, in most cases, condemned. During the Middle Ages, for example, it was sanctioned by the capital punishment. However, the difference between the homosexuals of the ancient times and the contemporary ones consists in the fact that the latter want to have their sin “legalized, legislated, institutionalized, accepted or even imposed on the society, as being normal behavior”¹³, as it was considered by Voltaire, Jean-Jacques Rousseau and especially Charles Darwin, who - regarding man as a product of evolution and not created by God - believed that man had no one to justify himself to.

⁹ Olivier Clement, *Tehnici ale morții, tehnici ale vieții*, trans. by Nicoleta Petuhov, în vol. „Bioetica și taina persoanei. Perspective ortodoxe...”, pp. 118-119.

¹⁰ Georges Habra, *Iubire și senzualitate*, trans. by Dora Mezdrea, Editura Anastasia, București, 1994, p. 106.

¹¹ Ioannis Chryssavgis, *Iubire, căsătorie și sexualitate*, trans. by Nicoleta Petuhov, în vol. „Bioetica și taina persoanei. Perspective ortodoxe...” ,p. 99.

¹² George Stan, *op.cit.*, p.128.

¹³ Claudiu Drumea, *Omul între „a fi” sau „a nu fi”*, Editura I.B.M.B.O.R., București, 1998, p. 25.

The position of the Orthodox Church is firm in this concern: “all homosexual acts are unacceptable, since they distort the goal and the natural functioning of the bodily organs; they have no procreating value and represent a parody of the union in a single body”¹⁴.

In the Holy Bible there are numerous texts, both in the Old Testament and in the New Testament, condemning *sodomy* (another name for homosexuality): *Genesis* 9: 4-11: the men of Sodom try to rape Lot’s guests; *Leviticus* 18:22 : “You shall not have sexual relations with a man as one does with a woman; that is detestable”; *Romans* 1:26-27: men gave up the natural relations with women, “committing shameful acts with men and suffering in their own bodies *and* personalities the inevitable consequences *and* penalty of their wrong-doing *and* going astray, which was [their] fitting retribution”; *1 Corinthians* 6: 9-11: among those who shall not inherit the kingdom of God are enumerated the idol worshippers, the adulterines and the sodomites.

This deviation of the human being, together with other deviations, leads man to perdition, makes him more prone to pain, to the diseases of the body, not to mention those of the soul, which he might probably no longer feel anymore. *Sexual immorality* (the set of sinful passions related to sexuality) leads man to ruin, to de-humanization, to indifference to the goal of the creation.

Cloning

The contemporary autonomous godless man believes that he himself can create a being like him. That is why, for some decades, he has been obsessed by the *cloning* idea.

The term *cloning* comes from the Greek word κλώνος, which means offspring, fresh branch and expresses the asexual procreation of the same body, as it happens with the branch cut off a tree, which, planted in the ground, can produce similar plants. From a biological perspective, a clone represents a “lot of genetically identical organisms or cells, coming from a single individual”¹⁵.

Cloning or the way people attempt to copy life is the technique by means of which one can produce in an asexual manner identical cells or organisms, coming from a single cell or from a single organism. But cloning is not, first of all, an invention of man’s mind, because it has existed since the beginning of the world. Man can only be proud of the more sophisticated techniques by means of which he wants to imitate the Creator, since he cannot create life, he himself being a creature of God.

What the scientists are developing today within this process is called *artificial cloning*, since it does not occur naturally, but is caused by scientists. Artificial cloning may refer to DNA and genes, to cells or entire organisms (for example, Dolly the sheep and other cloned animals).

The year 1996 became a turning point concerning the matter of cloning, since on July 5, the first cloned mammal was born - a sheep, the famous Dolly. Dolly was born in Roslin Institute, Scotland, after 276 failed attempts. Three years after its birth, the researchers began to notice that Dolly was getting older faster than normally for its age, thus at the age

¹⁴ John Breck, *Darul sacru al vieții*, trans. by Irineu Pop Bistrițeanul, Editura Patmos, Cluj-Napoca, 2001, p. 144.

¹⁵ Hierotheos Vlachos, *op. cit.*, p. 90.

of 6 years and a half, the cloned sheep died. The researchers realized the fact that Dolly's DNA was actually as old as the sheep that had been cloned. The so-called *telomeres*, or end of the chromosomes contained in the nuclei of the cloned cells, were shorter than the normal ones, indicating an early aging. *Associated Press*, in their report on Dolly's death, declared that the case "*raised problems regarding the practical possibility of copying life*"¹⁶. Many scientists assert that the cloned animals have their "parents" age. Indeed, by observing Dolly, we draw the conclusion that "Dolly's death age, plus the age of its mother, when the latter offered the genetic material, gives the age at which a sheep usually dies". We can notice that Dolly's biological age was higher than the chronological one, so, for a good reason, it was said that "it was born mature, it died young". "After the announcement of Dolly's cloning, the paper *Allgemeine Zeitung* in Frankfurt wrote: «*Copernicus sent the man off the heart of the universe, Darwin sent him off the bosom of nature, and genetics is getting ready to push him out of himself*»"¹⁷.

Referring to the early death of the cloned sheep, John Breck says: "*Goodbye, Dolly*", highlighting the fact that in English, the dictionary notes that the expression of "goodbye" or "goodby" entered the current speech by mid-16th century as an abbreviated form of the expression: "*God be with you*" and the above-mentioned theologian continues: "With Dolly's premature demise, and the increasing threat that cloning poses to human as well as animal life, we would do well to return to the original sense of that expression. As we say goodbye to Dolly, may we pray that God will be with us, to make effective and lasting our efforts to insure the integrity and well-being of human life at every stage of its existence, even from its very beginning"¹⁸.

By allowing the reproduction starting from a single person, human cloning breaks at least three major norms resulted out of the fact that reproduction has been established within the union between husband and wife: a) cloning involves the reproduction outside the bodily union of the spouses, annulling the blessing given by God for the reproduction of the human race (*Genesis* 1:27-28; 2:24; *Mathew* 19:5; *Mark* 10:2-8); b) cloning is an asexual reproduction, not involving the combination of the genetic material from husband and wife in the procreation process; c) the spouses were not meant to reproduce by themselves, as Saint John Chrysostom highlights in the explaining of the Letter to the Ephesians: "*He did not make a woman to be able to give birth to children with no man, since in such case she would have been sufficient to herself*"¹⁹.

The Orthodox theologians are against the genetic manipulations that modify the human genome (thus harming the human nature as defined by God) and cloning (harming the person in its absolute uniqueness, disturbing the conscience of identity in relation to one's parents)²⁰. The cloning aimed at reproduction is hard to accept, even unacceptable, all the

¹⁶ John Breck, *Dorul de Dumnezeu*, trans. by Cezar Login și Codruța Popovici, Editura Patmos, Cluj-Napoca, 2009, p. 98.

¹⁷ Claude Hiffler, *Medicul în fața bolii și a morții. „O poartă deschisă către lumea nevăzută”*, trans. by Nicoleta Petuhov, în vol. „Bioetica și taina persoanei. Perspective ortodoxe...”, p. 210.

¹⁸ John Breck, *Dorul de Dumnezeu...*, p. 100.

¹⁹ H. Tristram Engelhardt jr., *Fundamentele bioeticii creștine. Perspectiva ortodoxă*, trans. by Mihail Neamțu, Cezar Login și Ioan I. Ică jr., Editura Deisis, Sibiu, 2005, p. 345.

²⁰ J.-C. Larchet, *Creștinul în fața bolii, suferinței și morții*, trans. by Marinela Bojin, Editura Sophia, București, 2004, pp. 36-37.

more so as from a biological perspective, it has great unknowns, and from a theological perspective it is a serious and harmful deviation from the relations established between man and his Creator. The contemporary scientists use an artificial differentiation, speaking about *reproductive cloning and therapeutic cloning*, stating that in the case of therapeutic cloning – when an embryo is used for therapeutic reasons – it would have a positive direction.

Should God allow the cloning of man, we do not know what this man's ontology could be like. However, what is certain - speaking of a created being - is that this being will be subjected to rottenness, perhaps even much faster, as it happened with Dolly the sheep.

Yet, in the Church, we speak of another “cloning”, which science cannot offer man. Through the incarnation of Jesus Christ, what is created got united with what is uncreated. Thus, each man has been given the power to experience the unification through grace of his created nature with the uncreated energy of God in Jesus Christ. The saints have acquired the experience of becoming gods by grace, by allowing the uncreated and deathless to get inside them and so they have gained the experience of eternal life even since this earthy life.

Euthanasia

The term *euthanasia* comes from the joining of two words *eu* (εὖ) and *thanatos* (θάνατος) having the meaning of *good death*; we deduce that the term *euthanasia* is differently interpreted by the contemporary science and by theology. The contemporary science wants to define by this term a painless death, while theology understands by euthanasia the good death, which comes after repentance and after prayer. In the case of science, life is understood as one and the same thing as the biological life, while in the case of theology, death is the completion of life but not the end, since man has been given the possibility to move on to another way of living.

Originally, euthanasia meant the spiritual and moral state of the dying man of getting close to death and of receiving it in full peace and serenity, therefore – “beautiful death”. The secret of dying beautifully consists, according to the ancient Greeks, in the cultivation of an orderly moral life.

Yet, nowadays, euthanasia has changed its original meaning, as it has come to signify “the method by which a doctor causes an early, painless death to an incurable patient, in order to end his hard and long suffering”²¹. Anyway, by swearing to respect Hippocrates' oath, doctors commit themselves to saving people's lives not to killing them; even if this killing is considered as done out of “compassion” it is contrary to the mission of the medical profession.

The death of a man reminds his family of their own death. Frequently, somebody's death and suffering are hard to bear for us, and the desire to shorten this suffering sometimes acquires an unclear character, so that we sometimes wonder who we want to spare sooner from suffering, ourselves or the dying person? Yet, we must understand that the moment of death is the decisive moment when a window opens towards the Absolute. It is the moment when the meeting with God is close, it is the moment when the connection with the

²¹*Mic dicționar enciclopedic*, București, 1978, p.356.

ordinary things and the painful monotony is undone, in the sense of Berdyaev's statement that "life is ennobled by death"²².

Euthanasia may be active and passive. Passive euthanasia means interrupting the treatment and disconnecting the patient from the medical apparatuses, and active euthanasia means the killing of the patient by the doctor, who, on the sufferer's request, gives him an injection triggering a quick death.

The revealed theology of the Orthodox Church gave clear answers, showing that life is a gift of God for man, is the result of God's life-giving act, and death is a state against nature, a consequence of Adam and Eve's fall into sin. Our biological life must not be considered all that there is, this being only a dogma of the contemporary secularized society, which does not believe in man's communion with God both in the earthly life and after the end of this biological life. "We know that man's history does not end at the moment of death – as the Greek Metropolitan Bishop, Hierotheos Vlachos mentions – but continues beyond it as well and we can accentuate that life after death has great value and significance"²³. Certainly, all of us are as different in death as we are in life. Some would prefer a sudden death, others a deferred one. Some prefer to die quietly, with as little medical intervention as possible. Others would prefer to fight until the end to sip even the last drop out of life.

When our Savior Jesus Christ met ill and suffering people, He stopped, lovingly, to heal them and not to kill them. Life being a gift from God, we have no right to do whatever we please with our lives and the lives of those beside us. For a Christian, suffering and illness have a meaning. They do not scare the real Christian. The Holy Fathers advise us not to be worried first of all about the causes of the disease and suffering or the means of curing them "but to understand the significance they acquire in our relationships with God and to highlight their potentially positive role from the perspective of our salvation"²⁴.

Euthanasia, as a direct triggering of the death of a seriously ill patient in a terminal stage erupted as a social and collective phenomenon during the last decades of the 20th century and is based on the secularist thinking that denies any transcendent sense to the human life, which is reduced, according to this thinking, only to the biological life; from this perspective, death becomes a banal interruption of the functioning of a body. Yet, the contemporary society has a terrible fear of death (an indicative example in this respect is that the graveyards are surrounded by high walls for the people outside not to see inside) and, then, people try to defend themselves; it is here that we can find the sense of euthanasia - for the contemporary people with no faith in God - being defined as a painless death that does not cause suffering to the others.

According to the Christian teaching, the care provided to the terminally ill patients is a gift and a mission. The basis of such an attitude of human concern for a man in the key moments of his life is found in the Holy Bible. The Holy Apostle Paul states that an organism is made, in its entirety, of different parts that compose it and which are, ontologically, closely connected, the communication which they initiate or further transmit

²²Claude Hiffler, *op. cit.*, p. 210.

²³ Hierotheos Vlachos, *op. cit.*, p. 284.

²⁴ J.-C. Larchet, *op. cit.*, p. 58.

determining the importance of the part within the whole (*1 Corinthians* 12:12-25). But suffering itself becomes common, for all organs, when one of them suffers, as they all rejoice when one of them is fulfilled (*1 Corinthians* 12:26).

The Church advises the suffering person to discover the meanings of his trial, disease, suffering, of life itself and by no means to give up this great gift of life, given by God to him, when he goes through hard moments. The pain gives the patient a more acute attention to his helplessness. The disappearing of his state of health and of the “comfort” induced by it also triggers the acceptance of the truth that the body is limited in its manifestation and that the earthy life shall come to an end one day. Thus, pain represents man’s meeting with himself, yet by means of God “in difficult events, in crucial situations, man has to face the reality, the imperative presence and the calling of the Meaning of Life as both a supreme and human Person... While dealing with these pressing events and experiences, man meets Jesus Christ, he runs into Him. Thus, during a whole life, nobody can avoid Him, unless they avoid themselves”²⁵.

By sensitively getting close to our neighbor who is about to come to the end of his life we get the opportunity of helping him to use his time – now, acutely perceived as limited – for strengthening him spiritually, for strengthening his belief that life has already shown its “fruit” and that the satisfaction for the achievements – be they many or few - may set in, also with the aim of the realization, by the patient, of a track record of his life, as he is ready – now more than ever – to present this record to God²⁶. “The patient... suffering and facing a death that he feels close finds himself, if he has faith, in front of his God, with Whom he establishes a close relation, namely that relation interweaving the created being and his Creator. This last confrontation is beyond any dogmata, simply being part of the space of life, with its most intimate elements, of the space of the love between God and man”²⁷.

The moments of physical suffering and pain of the dying patients can be accepted and are easier to bear as long as they are shared with family and friends, and not being alone, in a hospital bed or in an asylum, far from the eyes of our family and friends. Thus, the communion with God and our fellows is a cure against euthanasia and a reason for chasing away any thoughts of ending the earthy life.

Conclusions

Lately, we have noticed, increasingly obviously, that people are trying, at all costs, to prove that they have freedom. This is why man considers himself as an umpire of good and evil, and, at the same time, he is trying to have in view only the temporary values of this world. However, in this context, man causes numerous wounds to the human life itself (because he no longer has in view the divinity, transcendence and eternity), like abortion, cloning and homosexuality.

²⁵ George Remete, *Suferința omului și iubirea lui Dumnezeu. O introducere*, Editura Reîntregirea, Alba-Iulia, 2006, p. 46.

²⁶ Ștefan Iloaie, *Îngrijirea duhovnicească la sfârșitul vieții: dar și misiune*, în vol. „Medicii și Biserica”, vol. X, Editura Renașterea, Cluj-Napoca, 2012, p. 86.

²⁷ Dominique Beaufile, *Perspectiva creștină asupra acompanierii bolnavilor în faza terminală a vieții*, trans. by Nicoleta Petuhov, în vol. „Bioetica și taina persoanei. Perspective ortodoxe...”, pp. 222-223.

The contemporary man sees himself only as a social being, losing the conscience of his own person and of his own value, which leads to desecration. Man, sending God away from his life, excluding His presence and action from his life and the society's life – transforming himself and the world he lives in according to his tendency towards satisfaction and happiness – is realizing that his life is represented by a diversity of utopian preliminary projects. All these finally turn the man of our century – a man otherwise willing to get total control over the world he lives in – into a neurotic, isolated, disease-prone being, subjected to suffering and fear.

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