

**THE ROOTS OF ETERNITY  
OR THE TRACES OF THE PRIEST IN THE WORLD**

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Ioan Chirilă, *Rădăcinile veşniciei*

[Roots of Eternity]

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Behind the carpenter there is furniture, behind the builder there are houses, but what does the priest leave after his ephemeral passage through the world? His remains are not those that can be seen, nor do they belong to those that can be measured with human measures. After a life dedicated to the unseen, the books are inevitably the confession of one who has heard the confession of our sins, of those gathered under the Church's protection. This is why we must consider Reverend Ioan Chirilă's book as a coagulation not only of texts scattered over time but of uninterrupted experiences.

The work published by "Şcoala Ardeleană" Publishing House is testimony to the fact that the priest and the writer can coexist in the same person, and if they do not overlap (because one does not need both vocations to fulfil one of them thoroughly), at least they meet. Almost sixty texts, just as many encounters, because the writer does not forget the priest, and the priest happily fulfils and orders the writing. All this under the graceful sign of service, on three levels organised top-down: a first quasi-liturgical part, called Birth – Resurrection – Transfiguration, calligraphed on a corner of the altar, in the fragrance of incense and psalmody, this being the service of the sacred, a second part of chronicles and reviews of theological-ecclesiastical books, the service of the labouring in the holy, and a last part of essays called History – Culture – Life, the redemption of the age by serving both the Divinity and one's neighbour.

Writing about a Christian holiday, even in a periodical such as "Renaşterea" [Renaissance], which is aimed at an informed public, is a task fraught with paradoxes. What can you say to those who (think they) know everything? How can you say something correctly, knowing that you are in the shadow of two thousand years of theological reflection, without having the air of repeating yourself? And above all, how to say something new about eternity? These are not just rhetorical anxieties.

Father's writing responds by banking on the ineffable, embodying in the flow of words a discreet and refined doxology. The reader who allows himself to be carried away by the text comes out of "the captivity that habit gives you", out of "going under the weather", out of "not being satisfied", meeting the great moments of the descent of the Logos, but not through a return to the sharp edge of History, but by entering a super-reality of instantaneity and the concomitance of the transcendent. The book is meant to be read eucharistically, with Father's voice ringing in the ear, for those privileged to know his timbre, in an agapic state of liturgy after liturgy.

To lean over the writings of one's confreres, "feeling for meanings" that can be articulated in a review, is an act of service to the reader and patronage of the intellectual. Whether it is the diortoses of the Bible left to us by the worthy Metropolitan Bartholomew of Cluj (Romania), to which the Father returns again and again, or the evocation of Nicolae Steinhardt, the monk of Rohia Monastery, the Jew who met Christ in Jilava Prison, or the beautiful panegyric dedicated to the Orthodox theologian Olivier Clément, in these and in the others not mentioned here, there is a lively concern for beauty of traditional origin, the cultivation of the person at the expense of the individual, in the light of high theology.

Father doesn't go in for much criticism of the modern world. It is a temptation to which those who love it from the outside succumb. Not that he doesn't know "the cruelty of its entropy", "the idealistic, pseudo-spiritual and materialistic libertinism of contemporaneity", "the scientific discoveries that animate the age of techno-idolatry", far from it. Over these spirits of evil oppressed in the heart of the age we are urged to pass diaphanously, reserving our pressing footing for our role and vocation in the world: the passage from the image to the likeness of God, the actualization of all the potentialities planted by the Creator in us, in "longing after the Christ-Image". That is, "the real chenetotic act, the emptying of solipsism and the incarnation of the mind of God", as Father wonderfully puts it.

Why would anyone nowadays write a text about a spiritual pressure? But are the days, in their monotonous flow, really ours? From the manifest hope of a Don Quixote (and Father Ioan Chirilă is one of the Church's many spiritual knights) that "all men may be of the world and in the world as in the Church". How big is the dream? As big as the whole world, with all the troubles that are upon people, as an Ardelen proverb echoes the Book of Job. But can it be realised? The Talmud says that "he who saves one life saves the whole world". This dream is fulfilled with every man who comes out of his

wandering, in whose heart Christ, the Son of God, is eternally born. The mission of the priest is not a percentage of spiritual awakenings listed in a table, but the salvation of the world with each individual person, by returning to the liturgical dimension of being and to the eternal joy of the Father.

And the key is to get out of Time, to lift the spiritual sons and daughters from the burden of one of the conditions of our world. There is no deification without a virtuous return to the heavenly condition. Moreover, in our times, the exit from modernity and the assumption of the “ecclesiastical winepress” precede the steps of holiness that we are called to climb. The one who is worthy of the Blessed Virgin once was the one who can say like the Apostle of the Gentiles: *Come, O Lord* (1 Cor. 16:22), he escapes from the past and the future, eliminating the dimensions of temporality from his life through Christ, our peace. And the world, attacked in its very heart, falls apart like a dragon with no heads left.

The priest is a sower of the seeds of eternity. When these sprouts, Axis Mundi orders the mind and soul of the spiritual son, the elemental tree with branches down and roots watering directly from heaven. The one sheltered in God, where “there is neither yesterday nor tomorrow”, the anastasic creature whose cogitation is anchored in the transtemporal, in the meta-historical, becomes such a root of eternity, “God’s whistle” like the prophets of old. Christified, for he no longer lives, but Christ lives in him, as the Apostle says, he “validates by personal example the way of life proposed by Christ.”

The roots of eternity are the very footsteps of the priest in the world.