

Current Migration Phenomenon and Labor Productivity in Christian Perspective

Adrian Gh. Paul

ABSTRACT: It is often stated that Europe was born in the year AD 325, in Nicaea, with the first Ecumenical Council of the Christian Church, which formulated the fundamental dogma on God and gave the continent a genuine model of faith. In this paper I will focus on the phenomenon of migration from a religious perspective. A special emphasis will be placed on the Orthodox Christian perspectives on labor, productivity, and the general values that characterize Europe as a Christian continent.

KEY WORDS: Migration, productivity, communion, unity, Love, Solitary, solidarity, community.

According to the Romanian Christian thinker, Constantin Noica, Europe was born in 325 AD at Nicaea, with the first Ecumenical Council of the Christian Church who formulated the orthodox creed, fundamental dogma about God as He revealed himself fully in Jesus Christ as Trinity, namely as a communion of love in the ontological unity of the three divine persons: Father, Son and Holy Spirit. In other words Nicaea of the year 325, gives the authentic model of the Christian faith: "Christianity is the religion of religions and Europe is the culture of cultures."¹

In the European world today, especially after the unification of the Member States, the only form of authentic confession is and remains the one of its formation: the personal relationship of man and transfigured–deifying with the ONLY Person in two natures

(divinity and humanity) of Jesus Christ, meaning the promoting of a new way of life, solitary and solidarity, personal and communitary at the same time communion. This convergence between personal and comunitar scored over centuries in the elapsed times the whole history of Europe. For the Church it is precisely the centrality of the human person, that not the man taken in isolation, but of the community from which man belongs, was the principle, the center and the purpose of the society who represented the "Orthodoxy" of the authentic Europe. Only such a man could be seen authentically, in the perspective of personal rights and social equality, of unconditional freedom or of expression of solidarity in the social plan. Conceived in Christian and Orthodox way, the human person could be placed over any system, any isolated logic, any reduction or exaggeration that do not take into account the human being dignity in its relations and integrated into his community.

In this study we will focus on migration phenomenon increasingly hard in the content of developed European states and we will take a religious look, even we will outline a Christian Orthodox vision, over the labor productivity and all the values that have characterized Christian Europe always and today It stands to lose permanently before the started challenges of secularization, profane, globalization and mondialisation.

Terminological Elements

It is known that the term of migration comes both from the French (*migration*) and Latin (*migratio, -onis*) and represents the phenomenon of mass displacement of some populations from one territory to another, displacement caused by various factors, either economic, social, political or religious, ethnic or natural.² Regarding migration one must, however, refer to the two components of it: emigration and immigration. An emigrate is the act of leaving the homeland and to establish (permanently or temporarily) to another country (in fr. *émigrer*, lat. *Emigrare*.)³ To immigrate represents the act of coming from a foreign country to settle here (in fr. *immigrer*,

lat. *Immigrare*.)⁴ Talking about the issue of migration, we must distinguish between its forms: internal/external and legal/illegal.

Emigration in the sense of people migration, legal or illegal, to other countries represents a major interest factor for the source State and its institutions. The State interest is acute as it needs a more precise knowledge of the population who emigrate, of the causes that favor or prevent this. These causes are further developed in studies that take into account a variety of factors, from the political–social to the economic, cultural, ethnic, and religious. Based on these studies, it can elaborate prognosis on a short, medium and long term, regarding the demographic aspects on regions, areas and countries, can be grounded normative acts, and also appropriate sectoral policies. The fact that many people are leaving to work abroad has created serious demographic gaps in some areas. There are entire villages in Eastern and Southeastern Europe where there are only elders left, due to the departure to work abroad of the active population, villages with the risk of disappear, with all the ensuing consequences.

Immigration is considering foreigners who, for various reasons, migrate to other states. Is a factor taken into account by local authorities, as the share of those who want to come in the Destination State, are coming from underdeveloped or developing countries. They accede generally, from the same reasons that the nationals are going abroad. Foreigners who migrate generates a series of positive and negative effects, with repercussions on both their selves and on the local population

Besides these terminological clarifications, we must address seriously the legal and illegal migration and overlooking the broad legislative approach to each of them, to correctly understand the current phenomenon of migration in Europe. Legal migration is a solid accepted forme by all European states of the world, because it can be controlled as a number of people, places and work areas and both can be determined over time. In this regard, almost all European states close accords, agreements, treaties or conventions by providing facilities to workers who migrate legally and pledges to respect the legal conditions of employment and social protection as for their nationals.

Respecting the rights and obligations under the agreements, ensure those states' representatives, who, by virtue of their powers vested, may intervene beside the authorities of the state, beneficiary in order to remedy the situation. In this way, migration can be easily controlled by the recipient State of the work performed because it provides only jobs that their citizens do not have dealt (or did not want to deal with) from various reasons.⁵ Therefore, the legal migration allows states to collect their taxes related to gains made by nationals abroad and to quantify these revenues to set them correctly in relation to the budget deficit. It must not forget that after these agreements, the involved countries gains also with cultural, social and technological exchanging, developments taking place between populations that come into contact.

The illegal migration is an alternative commonly used by people who can not use the legal route to go abroad. As a component of human trafficking of all kinds of social manipulation, illegal migration is a scourge increasingly larger and more unmanageable to be controlled through criminal networks implied or ingenuity of criminals. To all this is added the differences in the legislation of source countries, of transit or target that make more difficult the struggle of authorities to combat this phenomenon.

We must not forget the contribution of migrants who, aspiring to fulfill the purpose or threats or indications of traffickers, prefer to remain silent or deny any connection to criminal groups or individuals who help them. In this regard, we underline that there were made statistics of the European United Nations Organization, which reveals that the profits obtained from international traffic of human beings—here entering international procuring, traffic with beggars, disabled, children and illegal migration—since the beginning of XXI century to the present, were higher by almost 50% than the gains from international traffic with stolen cars and approx. 25% higher than those obtained from drug trafficking. That is why the knowledge of illegal migration phenomenon is important for any state.

The modern era, especially contemporary, experienced a diversification of migration phenomenon and a steady growth in the number of migrants.

In the world there have been recorded major migrations, as number of people or period of time. The most famous is the emigration of Jews, who went around the world after the temple from Jerusalem was destroyed by the Romans in the first century AD. Another major migration was the Poles after their state was conquered by neighboring empires, once in the eighteenth century and again during the Second World War. In the latter case, the Soviets expelled over 12 million of Poles from the annexed territories. There was a phenomenon imposed by the political regime and determined by group interests.

But in this case, the migration is a general phenomenon in modern societies today, which has developed especially in the recent decades. Of course, there have been more intense or calm periods, depending on the social, economic and cultural phenomenon, from different eras and historical stages that humanity went through. The globalization of economy and politics, the continuing fusion of cultural factors, shortening the distances through the explosive growth of the media and the availability of quickly and cheaper transportation, make the migration, especially unregulated one, to always be difficult to separate as a regional phenomenon or controlled by national means.

Usually, the causes of migrations today are multiple: looking for a job or looking for a better paying employment, hunger and poor living conditions, political and religious persecutions, ethnic discrimination, unfavorable climatic conditions (eg desertification), natural disasters (floods, earthquakes etc.), wars or conflicts in some regions of the world. But do not forget that as there are factors that push populations to migration from one region to another, there are factors that attract to a specific area, such as: developed industry, better conditions of life, better social protection (the existence of substantial aid for the unemployed, for the maternity, for the pension), personal security, better medical care and optimal education conditions, etc. An important factor that attract is also the state policy regarding the emigration. Developed countries such as Canada, U.S.A., Australia and New Zealand encourage immigration through special programs that provide facilities to migrants.

The Issue of *Social Migration* from the Perspective of the Orthodox Church

We will not stop in our approach to these facilities or major directions which gives rise to the current phenomenon of migration, but we will draw some guidance of religious nature, to highlight the role that the Church holds, for the proper functioning of the community, where the immigrants are installing, and what is its involvement in providing assistance to migrants. For the beginning, we are worth noticing that in the Statute for the organization and functioning of the ROC, art. 5 says: *the Romanian Orthodox Church comprises the Orthodox Christians from the country and the Romanian Orthodox Christians living abroad, and those canonically received in her communities (para. 1)*. And further says: *the Romanian Orthodox Church is national and majoritary according to apostolic age, tradition, the number of believers and its outstanding contribution to the life and culture of the Romanian people (para. 2)*. Therefore, the Romanian Orthodox Church is defined as *the Church of the Romanian people*.⁶

It is known that the idea of “national identity” describes the feeling of indigenous appartenance, intimately to each person, and depends on how the person internalizes its identity the most important landmarks, such as the language, culture and faith. Over time, the expression of national identity had known to many thinkers of Romanian nation, more formulations: *the national specific*, had called it Garabet Ibrăileanu, Mircea Vulcănescu calls it *romanian spirituality* and Nae Ionescu says *romanian spirit* or *national consciousness*.

Others say it *romanism* or *romanian ethnic*—as Constantin Radulescu–Motru says, *mioritic space*—as it appears to Lucian Blaga, the *romanian phenomenon* is the name given by Mihail Ralea, *the orthodoxy* called it Nichifor Crainic, *the romanian soul*—Constantin Noica, or *the national specific*—George Călinescu.⁷

The Priest Dumitru Stăniloae called it *Romanian balance* and showed, in its own way, that the *balance of the Romanian people*, seated, as Mihai Eminescu said,

as an edge of separation, between the storm that is coming from the West to face the one of the East, it has generated a great power of cultural synthesis, defining for the Romanian national identity.

The Priest Dumitru Stăniloae formulated lapidary this Christianized synthesis, saying that we, the Romanians, have a sense of mystery from the Eastern Orthodox Christian tradition and Latin lucidity.

The spirit of complex synthesis of our nation—he says—it does not explain only from its persistence of the immemorial middle ages in the space between West and East, but also in his combining of the Latin character and the Orthodox Christianity. Moreover, our Latin character is no stranger to the age of our being by the Thracians, who never moved from this area between East and West, but also from the combination in himself of the Latin character and the Orthodox Christianity.⁸

In his turn, our national poet Mihai Eminescu, knowing well the life and the history of the Romanian people, and the role of the Church and the faith in the development of culture and the Romanian language, as an alive garment of the teachings of faith and liturgical cult, called the Church as the

spiritual mother of Romanian people, who begot the unity of language and the ethnic unity of the people,⁹

being also the

guardian of the Latin element . . . which established and unified our language in a way so admirably, that we are the only people without proper dialects.¹⁰

In this context, it raises some fundamental questions about how our ancestral Romanian Church can get involved in programs carried internationally, the International Organization for Migration in Romania? Does the National Church has a role in supporting assistance to migrants, whether they be of other religions or

ethnicity? We will say that the Church had, has been and will continue to have an important role in everything that issues the social, cultural and spiritual order for the citizens of the unitary Romanian state.

The Church has always been a unifying element in building and maintaining communities in Romania or in the diaspora. Migration leads to important socio-economic and cultural changes. It changes the perception of migrants and host communities over the world. It generates new social experiences, it transforms the lifestyle and character of the migrant and it has a significant impact on the dynamics of social groups, both over those migrating and those receiving migrants.

In Orthodox Romania, as in most European Union states, there are structures of the Church assisting migrants, legal or illegal, and especially vulnerable migrants: children, single mothers, and migrants with health problems or the elderly. The church can be considered one of the most important partners in assistance programs for migrants, because it has millennial experience of involvement in the phenomenon of social relief and care of the sick, destitute, helpless or foreigners.

These people are in difficult situations, are far from home, from family, they are in an alien space, often in a culture very different from the one they came from, they need support and spiritual comfort that, whatever their religious denomination is, the Church can offer them material support, encouragement and spiritual comfort. Church's involvement in assistance for migrants is, therefore, a prerequisite for the smooth functioning of the entire community in which they arrive.

Her permanent mission is to make society think to the high command of the supreme love of God, *for God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life* (Jn. 3:16), meaning that to deepen the thirst of human solidarity, always recalling the meaning of the Cross of Christ, of the crucified and sacrificial love, the only one that elevates man *from earth to heaven* and raises us *from the grave to life*.

Therefore the Church is the one that is urging all its Christians, filled with the confidence of their faith, to strive hard to develop a renewed reflection on what are called *human rights* in the

contemporary society, being entrusted of the *secret brother*, taught by Christianity and the Church is the most appropriate means to love your neighbor—*as yourself*. That the great commandment of Christ comes down to: *Love each other as I have loved you. Greater love has no one than this: to lay down one's life for one's friends* (Jn 15:12–13).

The authentic Christians, in their capacity of “friends” of Christ, but also with all that sense the real mystery of the individual human being, are urged to dare and say that this world seemingly enclosed was and is open to dawn without sunset of light resurrection of Jesus Christ, themselves being alived in the world like the *light of the world and salt of the earth*. (Mt 5:13–14).

The faithful witnesses of the Church are those who have the duty to reveal to the secular world the actual mystery of life, namely that today we are in this world traveling all of us, like myrrh-bearing women, on the road to Resurrection to seek with our opened and joyful hearts, the One who gave a fuller sense to the whole human existence through His love, to the end we will find a large table with Christ—the fatty Veal, the eucharistic table in Emmaus, which makes our hearts burn “until we fully rest in Him in His kingdom.”¹¹

Thus, the duty of every Christian is to communicate to the European “construction” a renewing breath in the perspective of “divine-humanity”, of the time in which God reveals Himself to man and man is fulfilled in God through the love to fellow-brothers. Therefore, all human works in his work of participation, in everything that is good by nature, in the loving opening to the neighbor, and gradually leads him to participate more deeply to the divine life itself, discovered by the gospel of Christ. The more the man is coming in/to God by using the gracious help of God, the more he becomes more human or more man, where is levying the power of this mutual gift that deifies the man to God, through the love of God, and makes God a man for the man through His love for man, just as through this change God becomes man for the deification of man, and man becomes God by the grace for God's incarnation.¹²

However, this requires an effort, a dynamic activity, openness to the other, a noble work. And we know that labor productivity is the most important manifestation of social capital. Accordingly, the ability of labor to produce and to provide certain services, creates

favorable conditions for economic development of the state and maintenance of the lives of its citizens. The socio-economic existing conditions in our country, it creates some economic pressures for highly qualified labor force. Aged infrastructure, social and economic disparities, high unemployment, lack of jobs and others, are some prerequisites for migration of intellectual capital of the country.

Most young people are attracted by new opportunities in career or profession of other job, the higher wages and better living conditions abroad. Therefore migration, in the context of globalization, characterized brain drain as loss of qualified personnel and increase the number of cheap and skilled labor for the developed countries and higher industrialized in Western Europe. Young people prefer to go abroad; others prefer to come into the country. Church concerns all with the same eye as a good mother, caring for assistance and mutual aid of migrants to come, and worrying for those who are gone and do not always have the spiritual means and religious guidance necessary to maintain, if not increase the value of their spiritual personality.

In this context we are witnessing a reversal of educational values, in which the moral law is discredited and the man tends to become (or even became) a servant of matter, craving for profit and money, cold character, concrete and metallic of technical civilization, stifling in the soul of man the last sigh after God, the Church is called to do Christian education and to direct her spiritual children enrolling them on the path of holy love.

This is because in a desecrated and secular society, like the current one, only the Church can make religious education, because it is the place where believers are sharing the life and truth to God, where they all unite the “mystical body” of Lord, embedding responsible and savior through Holy Baptism and where they receive as food his divine body broken on the cross and His shed blood as a clean sacrifice for them in the deepest humility and love.

In this sense the Church is attentive to migration phenomenon and must remain particularly concerned on moral, behavior and salvation of her children’s souls, the educational issues raised by today’s society; it must remain deeply rooted in the practical life of its members, to those who ask him for support, always gaze directed

toward the divine, developing into the modern man soul of today, always moral and educational values as virtue, developing a sense of duty and responsibility, rendering a fair and honest work, and vigilance in the great problems that arise within the current society: justice, peace, family, person, society, solidarity.

According to Church teaching, before God all people are equal, because we are all creatures of the same heavenly Father, God, made in His image and because they all share the same caring from God. And whereas in everyone dwells an immortal soul, which gives all the quality to be “image” of God, equality means first the spiritual equality, which then must be acknowledged in its outer order, understood as a development of specific own being to achieve its purpose and of a society to which he belongs.

Spiritually, this equality is translated into fact by calling all to salvation: *So in Christ Jesus you are all children of God through faith, for all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ. There is neither Jew nor Gentile, neither slave nor free, nor is there male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus. If you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham’s seed, and heirs according to the promise.* (Gal 3:26–29). Socially, mirroring concrete in our daily life, the equality principle manifests itself as an equality before the laws, the equality before public burdens, the equality in function occupation and public dignity or equality at birth and origin.

All these equalities between people preached by the Christian doctrine are not formal equalities, but fully real. From these principles of equality results the principle of community interests, such as fraternity, as a consequence, if not as a result or aspect of equality.

Fraternity can be defined as the feeling of love and appreciation to our neighbor, whatever it may be, just like our brother by blood, and as external attitude, its surrounding from all acts of brotherly love: *How good and pleasant it is when God’s people live together in unity! It is like precious oil poured on the head, running down on the beard, running down on Aaron’s beard, down on the collar his robe. It is as if the dew of Hermon were falling on Mount Zion. For there the LORD bestows his blessing, even life forevermore* (Ps 133:1–2) or *Come, you who are blessed by my Father; take your inheritance, the*

kingdom prepared for you since the creation of the world. For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you invited me in, I needed clothes and you clothed me, I was sick and you looked after me, I was in prison and you came to visit me. Truly I tell you, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me. (Mt 25:34–40)

Here is where we find and share the blessings of God, eternal life and the inheritance of the kingdom of heaven: in direct relationship with the Christians—brothers. In this respect, it was said that fraternity requires a heart full of love, kindness, patience, forgiveness, benevolence, as only real brothers can have for one another. And this attitude can manifest itself only in the spirit of Christian liberty, which is the right that the man has to act according to his will, externally, but respecting the rights of its neighbors, loving them as brothers. For Christian being, owner of spiritual freedom, promotes the freedom of neighbor, because she is no longer controlled by the old spirit of sin, seeking only his own, but is possessed by the spirit of Christian love, which *Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. It does not dishonor others, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth.* (1 Cor 13:4–6)

Today, on the same grounds, Christian morality and Christ Church are against any form of enslavement of man by man: exploitation, colonialism, neo-colonialism, slavery, etc., ruling firmly for their abolishment. On the contrary, it teaches self-help, Christian socialization, respect for others, tolerance, mercy. Here, in the Church, Christians are not regarded as mere isolated individuals, but as people united to Christ—Head of the Church, and called to unite with fellow—brothers after the model of supreme love of the Holy Trinity. But the living beings, who live their lives in the flesh, Christians are bound in their earthly lives by specific circumstances of their historical existence. Even subjective salvation is achieved by each of them in the world, among their peers rather than outside.¹³

Stressing the importance of peers ministry, the realization of which we are responsible before God, St. Isaac the Syrian says:

*Nothing can close my heart so much of God, as alms.*¹⁴ Charity is the brotherly action full of compassion for the needy. However, this action from the other reveals the mission or the apostolate of the Church.

Christians are the “salt of the earth,” and the “light of the world” (Mt 5:13), meaning those who serve the world’s redemption (1 Pt 2:9). Let’s look at the criteria that universal judgment will consist in the practice or proscribing the love to people, which has its firm foundation in God’s sight by man.¹⁵ Each of us will love Christ fully only when he will love and serve every man, and to serve means working, even salvation, to another.

And not only to work his salvation, but even pro-exist for another, that we want to live in communion of life to enrich us all over each other in sociability. In this respect Saint Basil says so categorically: *Nothing is more nature than our own fellowship and to need one another and to love our neighbor.*¹⁶ Therein lays the true sociability, understood as essential trait of human nature, gained and experienced in the Church—the place of true human and divine-human communion, in which each member achieve their specific responsibility.

To successfully penetrate into the depths of human being, it needs personal relationships that in their highest form it can be found the communion of love between humans. In other words, the deep knowledge of the human being, the fulfillment of person itself, the development and its achievement, includes its relationship with other people. In this sens, the Old Testament psalmist said: *In You is in recess all those who are glad* (Ps 86:6), meaning that God as a supreme personal Being is the deepest source of understanding and fulfillment of human persons created and that the relationship with Him, that man’s participation to the infinite richness of intratrinitarian life of God is the fulfillment of human life in a boundless enrichment.

The Gospel of Jesus Christ establishes love as basic commandment to humans, this is not simply a philosophical or ethical option, but a necessary condition of a normal living state—a condition which corresponds to true human ontology.

Spiritual life is not just a human activity among others, but it is the center and core of the entire human life: *Love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength.* (Mt 22:37; Dt 6:5), for the state of love one discovers his infinity, that longing after absolute and understand that eternity is not only a desire, but a necessity that can be achieved for the human person (*love never fails*—1 Cor 13:8).

Really love is the only state of a person who gives meaning and value to all existences in the world, and in love, the spiritual man is not a man who loves randomly, but for him love becomes a permanent state of life. And the religious and spiritual life is timeless. It is a permanent need for humanity. Since mankind always needs love and communion, neither science nor technology can replace spiritual life.

For this, many serious problems nowadays, such as alienation, nihilism, individualism, lack of sense, fear, anxiety, aggression, divisions and tensions, unfair dividing of world's wealth and others, are largely because of the lack of spiritual maturity, the communion of love. When science and reason work together with the Holy Spirit, everything becomes a means of communion; instead when the reason lies in the service of individual and collective selfish burdens, we are fragmenting our indivisible nature in countless parties, and thereby we are losing the semblance with God and we are disfiguring, once with the divine image in us, even our identity.

This is why they said that *really the rationals proved to be only the saints*, because they have sanctified reason through a pure life in which love for God and neighbor was manifested at the highest level. The spiritual life, makes the individual a person, a society into a communion, a communication into an Eucharist, a word into a prayer, from an activity a famous Liturgy, a stranger into a friend, an enemy into a man, a sinner into a saint, a human into the very image of Christ, a world into a holy Eucharist, a historical reality into one everlasting, opened to life communion and eternal joy.

In order to fit the issue of migration in the approach full of love of the gospel of Christ, we should specify that often was said that the issues of brain drain becomes important for education. This is because the education, as a key of the human development,

is correlating with migration country–abroad and even rural–urban migration, characteristic to the phenomenon of the societies in industrial advancement phase and possible funding.

It appears that young people migrate from rural areas to urban areas, to make studies, to eventually benefit from a well–paid job. This form of mobility increase the level of education of the rural population and it increases the real chances of having well–paid jobs in urban areas. On the other hand, with increasing qualified urban population, it increases the unemployment among them.

Accordingly, the rapid urban agglomeration increases the chances of emigration of the qualified population, in response to excess of qualified and unsolicited labor on the labor market. Thus, the growing unemployment in the urban region correlates with the tempo of international migration. Any young, unfulfilled and unsatisfied economically in the country will take the road to a new horizon abroad.

Therefore, the brain drain seriously affects education system and economic growth by reducing the number of skilled labor. It is therefore necessary to develop correlation policies of the report between the education process and training of youth (including qualified staff) and the requirements of the real economy. Unfortunately we say that, the national higher education system does not cover all the specialties required in the labor market. A number of current professions require specialization that education system does not provide them.

The process of training and professional skills development is performed in general and theoretical terms and the practical appearance is often absent. But what does the process of training with the migration? It has, even if the migration brain drain can not be controlled by the education system, yet the situation of brain drain could be monitored by government policies, oriented to the analysis of migration and education process, through the establishment of appropriate vocational education, by developing policies of correlation with labor market demands with the education sector, which could be able, perhaps the only, to change the real situation of brain drain and as such, the work could be understood and practiced at its true value.

All we have to do at the end of this brief is to restore the Church vision and the Christian faith about work.

Working in Christian Perspective

Work is an organic element of human life. Being created *in our image* (Gn 1:26), working becomes a man's duty. In Genesis it says that in the beginning *there was no one to till the soil* (Gn 2:5); creating the Garden of Eden, God had placed man in it *to work it and take care of it* (Gn 2:15). Work is man's creative process that under its original likeness to God was called to co-worker and co-creator with God.¹⁷ This is because God himself, as Christ the Saviour says, is working: *My Father is always at his work to this very day, and I too am working* (Jn 5:17) and he urges people to work *for the food that endures to eternal life*.¹⁸ (Jn 6:27) This is the first spiritual work of man: to keep the commandments of God or acquire virtues, through which he can reach perfection and union with God.

But after man fell into sin, departing from his Creator, the work nature has changed: *By the sweat of your brow you will eat your food, untill you return to the ground.* (Gn 3:19). Creative component of labor weakened and it became for man a way to acquire the means to stay alive. The notion of "work" lead us today to think of the millions of people across the globe and of all times, who from the moment of man appearance on earth and so far, have testified that human life is an activity, a creative effort.¹⁹ The work is the basic condition of human life and of the social progress, because "a job is not just a means through which you can earn money, but constitutes a fundamental dimension of man on earth."²⁰ We can say that the work has made the man. It is a process between man and nature, because through labor, man enters in contact with nature and uses the latter for its own needs.²¹

Work is an activity with effort, directed towards a purpose. It is the leading driver of human life, without work you can not do anything, without it there is no life. Everything that is big in humanity is the result of work, and the civilization is its product. Man must work, to toil, to make an action to transform nature, to provide a

calculated effort, steadfast, that can produce food, clothing and all others that are necessary for him to live. Work is thus a necessity of human life, but also of the human spirit, because the spirit is activity! From the religious point of view, the work is the condition of our existence as people and also of the entire Universe, as the Creator's work because even the term "creation" requires work.

Work is a human specific process. There is a difference in terms of human labor and animal, because the animal is acting on instinct, while man works as a spiritual-biological being, freely and consciously. The man made a plan in his mind and put a motive to the realization of what he proposes to do, that work not only employs the members of his body, but also spiritual power, that is always active. Man mastered the laws of nature, knowing them. Man adapts not only to the nature, but also act upon it, turning it and mastering it. He therefore is manufacturing tools, improving them continuously in order to be more suited to his purposes. In work manifests the spirit superiority over nature. Man's work is both spiritual and physical, it is the activity of spirit and effort of the body.²² Human work is not purely physical, as is animal activity. Man conquers and transforms the surrounding nature, but he also owns the society and his own being. Labor does not change only nature, but also the society and the man.²³

Man does not only need material goods, but it is conditioned by the spiritual ones, energy without which he is not complete, but both of them procure through work. To do this, in human life is a difference between physical work, which usually produce goods that satisfies the biological needs and intellectual work, or rather spiritual work, producing goods that satisfies the needs and spiritual aspirations. But we must know that both jobs are equally necessary. The two are related to work performed by the one who works physically, not as an animal, but he engages in his work and reason and will, so the intellectually working is committed to his work and physical effort, is committing also the body. Therefore, as man is a psychophysical unity, so his work, be it intellectual, whether physical, is unity of spiritually and physically effort, is the unit of physical and intellectual work. Thus the two kinds of work are complementary,²⁴ and the harmony between them is as natural as possible.

Any real work is holy, it means the sweat of thy face, “sweat brain” and especially the “heart”, it covers the calculations of Kepler, and the meditations of Newton, so all the sciences, all the songs dedicated to the heroes who have ever lived, each feat, each martyrdom, even the *agony of bloody sweat*, which all people have called it divine. Through work, man rules the earth and turns it at his will, in that he always makes progress through work and effort.²⁵

The term “work”, according to the Dictionary of ethnology and anthropology, designate various ways today invented by man to act on its natural environment and to exploit the material resources of its social existence.²⁶ Therefore, work is an individual or collective activity, intentional and non-instinctive, exercised over nature through a succession of operations, with the aim of detachment from the material means to serve to human needs.²⁷ So, work is a vital necessity to human and is the instrument of progress. Through work, man is the creator of culture and civilization and pushes the humanity forward on the path of progress constantly renewed. The whole universe appears, from its beginnings until today, as a large working community, which by its work owns the land and turns it after his liking, progressing from the stage of primitiveness to current stage of culture and civilization.

To understand more clearly the work in its true aspects towards man’s fulfilling and life enriching, let’s see what is the purpose and value of work, and its effects on the one that improves by working.

The Purpose and the Value of Work

It is recognized that work is a part of every human being and the Church always held to highlight the value of work to human. But between this and its dedication and consacration as a measure of human value is a huge gap. Granting full time to work, the exaggerated concern for food and other things proper to biological life, removes man from faith in God and in His care or providence. (Mt 6:24–33). Man shall not live to work, but to work to live, from a Christian perspective for the work itself does not have unconditional value. It is blessed when is in cooperation with God and contribution to the realization of His plan concerning the world and man.

If work serves only the selfish interests of an individual or human community and satisfies the sinful needs of spirit and body, it is not pleasing to God. In this sense, the word of God emphasizes the indispensable need to daily work, but it also establishes a special rate when in the fourth commandment of the Decalogue says: *Remember the Sabbath day by keeping it holy. Six days you shall labor and do all your work, but the seventh day is a sabbath to the LORD your God. On it you shall not do any work, neither you, nor your son or daughter, nor your male or female servant, nor your animals, nor any foreigner residing in your towns. For in six days the LORD made the heavens and the earth, the sea, and all that is in them, but he rested on the seventh day. Therefore the LORD blessed the Sabbath day and made it holy.* (Ex 20:8–11)

It can easily see that by this commandment of the Creator, the human working process is put in relation to the divine creation that gave birth to the world and with man's determination to devote Creator one day a week, "the Lord's day," that the daily worries to not dissuade the man from his Creator and Lord.

It is true, again, that the earth does not give its fruits to man, but with labor. Animal only eats what the earth gives, unprepared. Man has free will and intelligence, and must pay tribute for it, through labor, better said, to develop these abilities through work. Work appears, then, as the will of God, as His first commandment. Do not understand that it occurs only after the fall of man into sin, as a punishment for sin and as a condition of sinning. No, the work does not represent the curse of God on man (Gn 3:17–19), but the effort it is added to it, on the one hand, because after the fall into sin, the nature gives hardly its fruit, on furthermore, for that man feels too much weight on the work in the state of sin or of selfishness and laziness that he fell in.²⁸ We can say that in his being, as ordained by God, there is nothing hard about work, because it is seated next to the joy. Sweat and toil, which are part of the work by the fall into sin, receive for the Christian a positive role, which is to rein in nature and not arouse passions and selfish whims.

This "punishment" for man to work, has two advantages: expiation of sin and means of purification of moral training. So, the work, along with its character of toil, remains a joy, even very large

and profitable to life. So the labor law remains the law of human life, not as punishment, but as destiny.²⁹ This is seen from the *Book of Proverbs* (Prv 6:6–11) is said that the lazy must learn from the ant what working means (Prv 31:10–31) is praised the diligent. Likewise, it must be understood the words of Apostle Paul, who says: *the one who is unwilling to work shall not eat.* (2 Thes 3:10)

After Christian teaching, work is not only a means of self-sustainability, as found in pre-industrial society, where work usually had a productive or manufacturing character and was linked exclusively to the family and social environment of man, but also has a wider social purpose, as one that educates the Christian soul and it strengthens the body, giving him the opportunity to express their faith through deeds pleasing to God—the mercy and love of neighbor: *Thieves should no longer steal. Instead, they should go to work, using their hands to do good so that they will have something to share with whoever is in need.* (Eph 4:28)

Work is not only a divine commandment, by which accomplishment man honors God and nor only a necessary condition of life and welfare, but is the main factor that form, educate man on the line of virtues in direct relation with his neighbor . Therefore it is not necessarily intended the acquisition of wealth, but rather the exercise of love, so we can say that the Christian life is the life of work and that Christianity really is the “religion of labor”. And how love is in close touch with work, for only the diligent really loves, that there is a higher purpose of Christian labor. As love culminates in the sacrifice for your neighbor, so the work finds its highest purpose in *servicing your neighbor*, with a complete self-denial. In this sense St. Basil says: *Everyone should aim in his ministry to serve the poor, and not his own need.*³⁰

Relationship between Work and Profession

The Church blesses any work done for the good of the people and urges every Christian, as his living member, to fit the work towards the moral perfection in Jesus Christ. At the same time, it does not give any preference to any form of human work, if it meets the Christian moral norms and, as such, required the development of society and social-economic progress. But society development, the

economic progress and human welfare and family are strictly related to professional activity or the “profession” of the Christian, whose exercise does not automatize, but fall directly into life in Christ.

In the world and society, the believer is called to practice his profession working *as working for the Lord, not for human masters*. (Col 3:23). Thus is places their work in the perspective of love and prayer. Through the gift of selfgiving in the service of neighbor and prayer man is raised to his divine archetype. Therefore, in the Orthodox tradition, the work remained steadfast subordinated to asceticism and prayer, for the harmonization of intellectual work amid the physical, the Eastern tradition has developed a natural law found in the words: pray and work (*ora et labora*).

Thus, the church practice converted work in prayer, as it understood that work rise from the love of God and neighbor, and the prayer in methodical effort of spiritual perfection as a reservoir of new working forces.³¹ In this context each profession is the domain of cultivation of Christian love and the acquisition of life in Christ by learning the most chosen virtues, which the object “after the flesh” becomes a spiritual content. In this sense St. Ignatius said, *That which after the flesh you do, they are spiritual, if you do them all in Jesus Christ.*³²

Christianity appears as a community of workers whose work is intertwined with moral perfection and spiritual effort. The true Christian can only be a worker, a spiritual worker seeing a true brother in the worker handbook and does not hesitate to do physical work, but also a manual worker who strives to form also spiritually, thus making brother with the spiritual.³³ So, the spiritual and biological forces of the faithful are always engaged in an ongoing effort of a theandric activity, of a creation, as the perfect model of the work of Jesus Christ. For as Christ’s work is one theandric, divine–human, so the human labor is theandric when is directed to do the good, it is because God helps and it supports man in his work, whether it is a good purpose.

As we see fitting the profession of “Christian” or of “good man” in the perspective of life in Christ has existential moral consequences. The Christian can not be indifferent to the consequences of exercising his profession. Exercising its profession, he exercised himself. The

goal is not only economically, but also spiritually. Therefore, when the truth comes into opposition with economic interests is bound to prefer it, because this is spiritual benefit. In this sens St. Clement of Alexandria says, *Knowing the truth, get rich and with the right disposal*.³⁴

But we must point out here and the difficulty that presents the contemporary society, namely that of finding and fighting against the moral consequences of their work. Unceasingly increased, the extensive division of labor and its incessant correlation to the broader goals and mechanisms removes the sense of personal responsibility. The worker, whether faithful or not, is transformed into a simple unit of an anonymous ensemble. The work an impersonal activity within a broader program, and it is usually depersonalized.

This because in today's society, more industrialized and globalized, appeared a certain industry whose purpose is rather not the profession of "Christian" and putting it in the work on the spiritual level, but the spread of vice and sin, and satisfy passions and devastating addictions, such as drunkenness, drug addiction, debauchery and adultery, that no longer save the human person, nor remove or prevent its various distortions, but promotes them with accurately to depersonalization, selfishness, loneliness and suicide. The Church testifies about the sinfulness of such activities, which harshly condemned, as corrupt them not only the workers, but the whole society, and considers that these adverse consequences are due to poor understanding of the profession of work. For depersonalization of human and direct connection of work to the car, reduced its ability to socially approach the people and favored individualism and narrow-mindedness at own self.

The industrial society and the current civil service worker, running a monotonous mechanical work or provide a specific service, is often separated and isolated—at least during the exercise of his work, but not only—to his companions. With more so as contemporary technology and automation becomes possible to increase productivity and also reduce staff by removing the worker from the workplace and rising unemployment.³⁵ The consequence is that work and especially the specialized professional occupation alienates from everyday life, do not given time for family life and

turns into an autonomous activity, an incessant and frenzied running, assumed to cover some needs of living, growing incessantly and look like they never end.

The contemporary man, always in an unceasing tension and a long stress for purchasing the welfare, and pressed under the burden of anxiety and worries caused by lack of insurance for a job, is increasingly under pressure of work and argues that he has not enough time for anyone and anything. The cause of this phenomenon is, on the one hand, the greed of employers, reducing wages and job insecurity in the globalized economy and, on the other hand, man's refusal to dispose of his time in unprofitable activities.

This thing determines the industrialized man to become confused, stressed, dissatisfied and more tired, and during his work very tired, as he stopped largely to bring the joy of personal creation and communication in his business, not talking about the loss of aesthetic sense for the religious element. By removing this dimension—the lack of prayer, fasting and participation to the religious services in the public divine worship of the Church—this *modus Vivendi* becomes destructive of individual privacy, and social health.

The modern man of today, forget that in the Church, his entire time becomes festive, celebrate, that Sunday, holidays and Feasts, when it celebrates the Holy and Divine Liturgy are special days of quiet, soul resting, to noble and holy joy, they are moments devoted to silence and prayer, for better understanding, peace, solidarity and community-agape love with fellow-brothers in the spirit of the Church of Jesus Christ.

In this context, the Church exhorts its spiritual children not to obey their fellow brothers to exploitation, oppression, subjugation beyond their powers or slavery, nor be seized by the evil spirit of greed and dishonest wealth, but to settle how much God gives and if, through their honest and right work, they acquire more than they need, to care of those who, for various reasons can not earn a living—such as the disabled, the sick, refugees, orphans and widows—entrusting that doing so, they will receive “grace upon grace” and *so that the LORD your God may bless you in all the work of your hands.* (Dt 24:19).

Because the Christianity has always condemned a society based on exploitation of any kind and fought for the liberation of work and especially for its full reward. The exploitation of worker and refusal to pay for honest work are placed by Christian morality between the raging sins, considered a crime against man and a sin before God: *Behold the hire of the laborers who have reaped down of yours fields, which you have kept back, shouts and the cries of the reapers have entered into the ears of the Lord of Sabaoth*—says the Apostle James (Jas 5:4) and respects worker rights and the desire to enjoy the fruits of his labor: *Who plants a vineyard without eating any of its fruit? Or who tends a flock without getting some of the milk? . . . because the plowman should plow in hope and the thresher thresh in hope of sharing in the crop.* (1 Cor 9:7–10)

Church always agreed with that spiritual welfare and survival of society are indisputable priority in distributing the material means and that they are possible only if the health care, promoting education, deepening religion and living faith and life insurance and welfare for all citizens will be seriously considered and recognized by society and the State as the highest price values to promote. Societies and nations experience has shown that these are true values that underpin a lasting and happy life.

We can only finally see that in the Christian perspective the current migration phenomenon arouses much interest to all societies and nations of the European world, and therefore Romanian, called to respond promptly to the message of the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ, based on love for others and that work is and remains the “golden bracelet” for those who are into natural human fulfillment and helping those in need. I mean work is not only a means of self-sustainability, but should be seen as social purpose. So once saw St. Anthony the Great, who never wanted to work something that his neighbor to have less advantage than him, because it considers the neighbor’s gain as “best work.”³⁶ Unfortunately this spirit is rarely found in contemporary societies lacking within the doer spirit of Jesus Christ and His pleasing saints.

That is why the Church is called to address such social problems, to connect with real people, who live these problems and they feel their personal responsibility in their capacity as migrants, to extend

helping hand, awakening in the souls of all the sense of social justice, equality and helping when needed. For when someone knows a small minority of humanity has provided the bulk of funds for development and economic assets, while most lacks elementary civilization means and is underfed or even starving, you can not remain indifferent. The identification and awareness of these injustices and social issues constitutes, I believe, the first step in combating it.

The next step is to put into action to restore the social justice, mutual aid, balancing the relationship between the rich and poor, of the weak and the strong, between minorities and majorities in adopting security measures and implementing cohabitation rules and mutual support in society. I think here the Church is called to be at the forefront of these social movements and guidelines aimed at fulfillment and cohabitation of man on the way to the fullness of eternal life.

NOTES

¹ Constantin Noica, *European Cultural Model* (București: Ed. Humanitas, 1993), 64–65.

² Cf. *Explanatory Dictionary of the Romanian Language*, 681.

³ *Ibid.*, 339.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 476.

⁵ Migration Trends in selected EU Applicant Countries, vol. IV—Romania, *More “Out” than “In” at the Crossroads between Europe and the Balkans*, IOM, 2003.

⁶ *Statute for the Organization and the Functioning of the Romanian Orthodox Church* (București: Editura Institutului Biblic și de Misiune al Bisericii Ortodoxe Române, 2008), 14.

⁷ Cf. Constantin Schifirneț, Romanian identity in the context of tendential modernity, in *Revista Română de Sociologie*, New Series (Year XX, no. 5–6/2009): 471.

⁸ Pr. prof. dr. Dumitru Stăniloae, *Reflections on Romanian People's Spirituality* (Craiova: Ed. *Scrisul Românesc*, 1992), 14.

⁹ Mihai Eminescu, *Time*, 14 august 1882, republished in *Mihai Eminescu. Opere* (București: Editura Academiei Române, 1989, vol. 13), 168–169.

¹⁰ Mihai Eminescu “Free Thinker, Free Thought,” in *Time*, February 2, 1879, republished in *Mihai Eminescu. Opere* (București: Editura Academiei Române, 1989, vol. 10), 187.

¹¹ As the Blessed Augustine expresses so happily.

¹² Pr. lect. univ. dr. Adrian Gh. Paul, "Revealing and spiritual meaning to the word 'theology'" in *Ortodoxia Maramureșeană* (year VIII, Baia Mare, No. 8/2003): 231.

¹³ Pr. prof. dr. Petru Răzuș "Christian Responsibility to the World," in *Ortodoxia* (no. 2/1972): 300.

¹⁴ Sfântul Isaac Sirul, *Spiritual Words*, as cited by Paul Evdokimov in *The Ages of the Spiritual Life* Romanian translation by Pr. prof. Ion Buga. (București: Asociația filantropică medicală creștină Christiana, 1993), 95.

¹⁵ Pr. prof. dr. Dumitru Stăniloae, *Orthodox Dogmatic Theology*, vol. III. (București: Editura Institutului Biblic și de Misiune al Bisericii Ortodoxe Române, 1992), 435.

¹⁶ Sfântul Vasile cel Mare, *Regulile Mari*. Romanian Translation in series Părinți și Scriitori Bisericești vol 18. (București: Editura Institutului Biblic și de Misiune al Bisericii Ortodoxe Române, 2008), 225.

¹⁷ Pr. prof. dr. Dumitru Stăniloae, "Christian Teaching On Work" in *Studii Teologice* (No. 1-2 /1953): 24.

¹⁸ Georgios Mantzaridis, *Morala Creștină*, (București: Editura Bizantină, 2006), 277.

¹⁹ Î.P.S. Nicolae Mladin, *Moral Theology Studies*, (Sibiu: Editura Arhiepiscopiei Ortodoxe Române, 1969), 45.

²⁰ Oliviu Felecan, *Work Concept*, (Cluj-Napoca: Editura Dacia & Mega, 2004), 22.

²¹ B. Zaharescu, *Elementary Course of Political Economy*, vol I. (Sibiu: Editura Progresul, 1946), 12.

²² Mladin Nicolae, Bucevski Orest, Constantin Pavel, Zăgrean Ioan, *Orthodox Moral Theology*, Manual for theological institutions, vol II. (București: Editura Institutului Biblic și de Misiune al Bisericii Ortodoxe Române, 1980), 151.

²³ Mladin, 46.

²⁴ Zaharescu, 12.

²⁵ Mladin, Bucevski, Pavel, Zăgrean, 151. In some old ages, the picture of human life is all about "the need to till the land and get fed." Felecan, 24.

²⁶ Bonte Pierre & Michel Izard *Ethnology and Anthropology Dictionary* (Iași: Editura Polirom, 1999), 452.

²⁷ Felecan, 33.

²⁸ Stăniloae, *Christian Teaching...*, 25.

²⁹ Mladin, Bucevski, Pavel, Zăgrean, 152.

³⁰ Sfântul Vasile cel Mare, *Regulile Mari* 42.1. Romanian translation by Iorgu D. Ivan. in vol. *Writings* part II, colecția Părinți și Scriitori Bisericești vol 18. (București: Editura Institutului Biblic și de Misiune a Bisericii Ortodoxe Române, 1989), 285.

³¹ Mladin, 52. Venerable Isaac the Syrian addressed to the monks the following instruction: "Working hand'll be a small thing, to eliminate idleness; One thing that will not disturb your mind. And if you want to work with more manual labor for the sake of charity, know that prayer is above it in her step."

(Sfântul Isaac Sirul, Wrd 33, in romanian transation by Pr. prof. dr. Dumitru Stăniloae, in *Filocalia* vol 10. (București: Editura Institutului Biblic și de Misiune al Bisericii Ortodoxe Române, 1981), 186.

³² St. Ignatius of Antioch, *Ephesians 8:2*. Romanian translation by Pr. dr. Dumitru Fecioru. in *Scrierile Părinților Apostolici* in Părinți și Scriitori Bisericești vol 1. (București: Editura Institutului Biblic și de Misiune al Bisericii Ortodoxe Române, 1979), 173.

³³ Mladin, 51.

³⁴ St. Clement of Alexandria, *The Pedagogue*, 3:11, 78:4. Romanian translation by Pr. dr. Dumitru Fecioru part of colection Părinți și Scriitori Bisericești vol. 4 (București: Editura Institutului Biblic și de Misiune al Bisericii Ortodoxe Române, 1982), 81.

³⁵ Mantzaridis, 278. Viewed from the perspective of Christianity work, unemployment (the fact of not working) is a negative because it injures the man not only economically and socially, but also morally and spiritually. Unfortunately, there is a more assiduous tendency of the society towards deprivation of modern man of labor, deprivation of work related to professional specialization and economic competition, which makes him an easy prey of the antisocial activities and would endanger his existence and social and even biological survival. Therefore, the need to combat the unemployment is imperative.

³⁶ St. Isaac the Syrian, *Word 81*, as cited in Mantzaridis, 281.