As something simultaneously revealed to us and yet transcending all understanding, the doctrine of the Trinity constitutes the foundation, infinite reservoir, power, and model of our growing eternal communion; yet it also spurs us on to grow and think continuously in spirit, and helps us both pass continually beyond any level we may already have reached in our personal communion with God and among ourselves, and also strive for an ever more profound grasp of the mystery of supreme communion.

Dumitru Stãniloae

Denying transcendence means denying that human life finds any point beyond itself. The twentieth century process of denying transcendence has been powerful and effective. It means that man really has become his own measure. We find no meaning in anything above or beyond ourselves. Lived life exhausts itself; it is self-encapsulated.

Jean Bethke Elshtain

The root cause of the social and moral condition of our times rests in philosophy's usurpation of place and near total rejection of metaphysics. Reality has been leveled to a single dimension, the historical, as we have sought to create a universe in which humans hold center stage and as reason has sought its foundation on the imagined surer ground of the empirical. Ironically, however, "in our time," F. Schuon argues, "Man has lost the initiative and is now slipping into a universe - or pseudo universe - wherein only the machine is *real*." And similarly reason finds itself increasingly edged off stage by imagination and sentimentalism.

Bruce K. Hanson

B. Pascal wrote that the tragedy of modern man consists of man's inability to find happiness in an empty room. This remark, in its essence, is related to the discomfort that man manifests before Transcendence.

People accumulate things in order to master them and to have thus a sense of utility, occupation, fulfillment. In other words, man needs a concrete object on which to exercise control. To many, this type of fight is the fight of life.

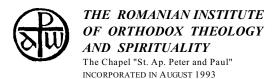
To feel comfortable in the midst of less things, to walk the way backwards: from possession to dispossession requires the courage of standing alone, naked and weak in face of the mystery from outside and from inside, in front of the overwhelming power of Reality, just like the Chinese hero who ten years ago stood by himself alone in front of the advancing tanks: vulnerable and courageous, alone in face of devastation. This way from accumulation to renunciation is the path from *Dubito ergo sum* to *Fiat*.

To accept Transcendence, the Mystery, is a proof of fundamental realism which comes from the right understanding of one's position *coram Deo* and *coram mundo*.

What is Mystery, how do we relate to the divine transcendence, what is its place and role in the everyday life on contemporary man, how far are we from the salutary realism of an adequate relation to this Transcendence, what is its ultimate significance and relevance for the future of humanity?

To all these questions and many others of the kind, the papers and discussions from this Symposium will try to answer.

Th.D.



President: Fr. Dr. Theodor Damian 30-18 50th Street Woodside, NY 11377 Tel./Fax: (718) 626-6013 E-mail: DamianTh@aol.com

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Humanity in the Third Millennium and The Mystery of the Divine

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George Alexe

Senior theologian of the Romanian Orthodox Church, member of the Union of Romanian Writers, director and founder of *Romanian Communion;* chairman of the Romanian Institute of Orthodox Theology and Spirituality: *Humanity in the Third Millennium in the Light of the Divine Mystery*

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Professor of Higher Education Administration, Vice President of Audrey Cohen College, New York: How do we know that we know?

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The Right Rev. Fr. Dr. Vasile Vasilache

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Dr. Elena Bront de Avila

Professor of Sociology, Audrey Cohen College

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Romanian Baptist Church, Ridgewood, NY

Iulia Corduneanu

Holy Cross School of Theology, member of the executive committee of the World Council of Churches