"Diary of happiness" – Hypothesis of the Christian Completion

Maria-Carmen BOLOCAN

The paper examines one the most interesting autobiographical works in the Romanian culture, the Diary of happiness, written by Nicolae Steinhardt, the monk Nicolae of Rohia, one of the survivors of the communist political prisons.

On the 29th of July 1912 in the commune Pantelimon, near Bucharest, in a Jewish family, is born the one that would later on become one of the most outstanding personalities of the Romanian culture and orthodoxy of the 20th century, Nicu-Aurelian Steinhardt. His father, the engineer and architect Oscar Steinhardt, owned a small timber factory, and during the First World War, as an officer of the Romanian army, he had been decorated with many orders and medals, among which the "Military Virtue". Thus, little Nicolae Aurelian is brought up in a family who was actively implicated in Romania's social and historical life. The environment in which he spends his childhood brings him close to both the Romanian people and the orthodoxy, as he himself confesses: "The bells were, thus, the first signal, the initial releaser of my spiritual fate. The bells of the nearby church «Capra» attracted and enchanted me as soon as I was able to distinguish their individuality from the mixture of the background noise that sorrounded me (…) for me Christianity is identical with a love story: a double falling in love with the Christian church and with the Romanian nation"[1].

Between 1919 and 1929 he attends the classes of the primary school "Clemența" and of the highschool "Spiru Haret", where he is the only of the four Jewish students to take religion classes from the reverend teacher Gheorghe Georgescu from the church of St. Silvester. Among his collegues at "Spiru Haret" are Mircea Eliade and Constantin Noica, with whom he will cherish a close friendship and whose names will show up very often in the "Diary", Alexandru Paleologu, Dinu Pillat and Marcel Avramescu, all of them being mentioned in Steinhardt's fundamental work. He passes his baccalaureate in 1929, and then attends the classes of the Faculty of Law and Letters, which he graduates in 1932.

[1] N. Steinhardt, *Jurnalul fericirii*, afterword and bio-bibliographical notes by Virgil Bulat, the publishing house of Rohia Monastery, 2005, p. 424.

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From this period dates his friendship with Monica Lovinescu and Emanuel Neuman (Manole from the "Diary").

In 1936, while in Bucharest, he takes his PhD in constitutional law and between 1937-1939 he travels to Switzerland, England and France where he continues his studies.

He refuses, as most of the Romanian intellectuals did, to take part in the new regime, and for this reason he suffers a series of privations during 1948 and 1959. In 1958 Constantin Noica is arrested along with his group of friends amongst which Nicu Steinhardt, Dinu Pillat, Alexandru Paleologu, Vladimir Streinu, Păstorel Teodoreanu, Marieta Sadova, Dinu Ranetti and others. On the 31st of December 1958, Steihardt is called to the Department of Security as a witness of the prosecution in the trial against Constantin Noica and the group of "mystical-legionary intellectuals". As expected, Steinhardt refuses to betray his friends even if this fact couldn't help them, and he too is included in the "Pillat-Noica" group, being thus sentenced to 13 years of hard labour under the accusation of "crime of hatching plots against the social order".

While in prison, he finally does what he didn't have the courage to do when he was free, namely to get baptized, and thus he no longer postpones his passing to the Christian religion which he loved ever since his childhood. He is afraid of not being able to come out of the prison and he baptizes on the 15th of March 1960, in Jilava prison, by the moldavian monk Mina Dobzeu, having Emanuel Vidraşcu as godfather (a member of the group and principal secretary of marshal Antonescu) and two Roman-catholic priests as witnesses, one of them his Emnence Ghica, Alexandru Paleologu, two priests of the Uniate church and a protestant priest[2].

He is released from prison in August 1964, after enduring for more than six years the horrible conditions of the comunist prisons: tortures, beatings, insults, deseases, cold, hunger, dirt, lock-up. Soon after his release he completes the Sacrament of the Baptism that he received while in prison, at Darvari Hermitage in Bucharest, where he also receives the Sacraments of Chrismation and Eucharist[3].

Not even after being released from prison he doesn't agree to colaborate with the Securitate. He works as a loader-unloader on a truck owned by "The food Shop", until he is badly injured in a car accident, in 1968, thus being forced to stay in the hospital until 1969. Then, insistently asked by his friends, he re-enters literary life and publishes translations, insets, small essays in "The 20th century", "The Romanian Life" and other magazines.

After his father's death (1967) he starts looking for a monastery. In 1975 he comes to the monastery where Mina Dobzeu was living, but the bishop Partenie refuses to let him stay, and thus father Mina sends him to the archbishop Teofil Herineanu from Cluj-Napoca and to the bishop Justinian Chira Maramureşanul. But, in 1976, Constantin Noica meets Justinian Chira, a good friend of Ioan Alexandru and of all writers, at a book release in Cluj-Napoca, by chance. Soon

[2] *Ibidem*, p. 426.
[3] *Ibidem*.

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after, Noica goes to Rohia Monastery at the invitation of Justinian Chira, and remains there for three days. Both the natural environment and the vast library impress the great philosopher who tells Steinhardt about them, knowing that he was looking for a monastery to go to.

In 1978, Steinhardt spends his summer at Rohia and the next year he settles there as a librarian, having the approval of bishop Justinian. On the 16th of August 1980 he becomes a monk at Rohia Monastery with the blessing of the bishop Justinian Chira and of the archbishop Teofil Herineanu[4], whose protégé he becomes. The archimandrite Serafim, the abbot of Rohia Monastery, integrates him in the monastery's community. There he arranges over 23.000 volumes of the monastery, he integrates in the monastery's life (participates to the offices, gives advice to the pilgrims, preaches), all these while intensifying his literary activity. The volumes he publishes during this period are the following: *Geo Bogza – a Poet of the Efects, Exaltation, Greatness, Solemnity, Exuberance and Pathos* (1982), *Critique on the first Person* (1983), *Stop-overs in Time and Space* (1987) and *Through Others to Self* (1988). The volumes impose him as an outstanding esseist of the Romanian literature.

In March 1989 the angina pectoris of which he was suffering agravates and N. Steinhardt decides to leave to Bucharest to see a specialist. He travels to Baia Mare with father Mina Dobzeu, to whom he confesses: "I'm very upset by these thoughts that God hasn't forgiven me for the sins of my youth". And father Mina answers him: „Satan who sees that he can no longer drive you to sin, upsets you with your past. So, to you, who converted to Christianism and baptized, God forgave personal sins and the original sin. You confessed, you entered monachism, which is also a baptism which forgave all your sins. Stay calmfor this is a challenge from the evil, who brings you confusion so that you cannot be in peace". The illness agravates and he is forced to interrupt his travel and he is admitted to the hospital in Baia Mare, where he dies a few days later, Thursday on the 30th of March 1989.

The day before his death, Ioan Pintea and Virgil Ciomoş passed by the monastery and recovered from the cell of the monk-writer a great part of his works. These and also other texts recovered from publishing houses or from friends have been published posthumous.

At the funeral of the monk Nicolae of Rohia, rigurously supervised by the Securitate, came his best friends with whom he had suffered the unjustices of the comunist regime. The restrictions imposed by the Securitate at the funeral of the great man of culture were compensated by a splendid service officiated by an impressive group of priests, abbots, monks conducted by bishop Justinian Chira Maramureşanul[5].

In this way went away from this world the monk Nicolae from Rohia or Nicolae Steinhardt. He remains in the memory of the Romanians who love the culture and authenticity of our spirituality as a real saint, who carried his cross with discretion

[4] *Ibidem*, p. 427.
[5] *Ibidem*, p. 432.

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and dignity, who never hid but proved in any situation what the joy of being a Christian means, what it means to have Christ as the only goal and refuge in life.

"**The Diary of Happiness" – possible hypothesis of love**

"The Diary of Happiness" should be one of the fundamental books for the Chritians, because apart from the confessions of the experiences from prison, it represents a real treatise of theology, of authentic, real Christian living manifested through simple words, that everyone can understand, yet original through their sometimes paradoxical profoundness.

Written at the beginning of the '70s, the first version – about 570 typed pages – is confiscated by the Securitate in 1972 and would be restored in 1975 after many interventions at the Association of Writers. Meanwhile, the author finishes a second version, ampler, of about 760 typed pages. "The Diary of Happiness" is confiscated for the second time in 1984. During all this time several versions are written and taken out of the country secretly, two of them coming into the possesion of Monica Lovinescu and Virgil Ierunca in Paris. The book circulated in samizdat among the intellectuals of the time. Monica Lovinescu broadcasts it as a serial on radio "Free Europe" (Europa Libera) during 1988 and 1989.

Being afraid of new interventions on behalf of the Securitate, Nicolae Steinhardt appeals to his youger friend Virgil Ciomoş to save his manuscripts. The latter publishes "The Diary" in 1991, and in 1992 the book receives the prize for the best book of the year.

Words are too scarce to describe the beauty of this Christian masterpiece, which Dan Chelaru considered to be a book that "can create destinies, and can change thos already created"[6]. The work describes and analyses "gradually and piece by piece"[7] the contemporary existential problems. Thus, the main meditation themes are the continuous degradation of the human condition and the depreciation of the scale of values under the pression of the forces of evil characteristic for the totalitarian regims: opression of the liberty of expression, hypocrisy, lie, arbitrary, stupidity, brutality, physical and psychic torture, all raised up to the rank of values of the society, the penitentiary system diabolically extended to the dimmension of an entire country[8]. Steinhardt proves through his life and works that the one who manages to overcome his fear, to oppose and resist by all means against the most terrifying methods used by a regime that combines crulety with refinement to destroy its victims, that person succeeds in breaking away from terror, in defeating the forces of evil that become harmless. But in order to accomplish such a thing courage and intelligence are needed, virtues that are utterly Christian, essential to the one who wants to follow the way of Christ. It takes courage to confess the truth, no matter the conditions or the consequences, for Christ is the Truth. The lie and betrail bring a fake welfare that lasts only for a moment, while the torture of the

[6] Dan Chelaru, in the weekly magazine "România liberă", 1991, apud N. Steinhardt, *op. cit.*, p. 438.

[7] Virgil Bulat, *Lecția Jurnalului fericirii*, in N. Steinhardt, *op. cit.*, p. 441.

[8] *Ibidem*.

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conscience is endless, as the father of the writer says when he urges his son not to betray his friends by declaring against them: "It is true, says father, that you will have very bad days. But you wil have peaceful nights, you will spleep tight. Whereas if you accept to be a witness of the prosecution, you will have indeed prety good days, but the nights will be terrifying. You won't be able to sleep at all. You will have to live only with spleeping pills and sedatives; brutalized and dozing all day long and at night painfully awake. You will torment like crazy. Mind your own business. Come on, stop hesitating. You have to go to prison. My heart also breaks but you have no other way"[9]. Consequently you need courage, boldness to keep your soul pure, to tell the truth, to follow Christ's words: "In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world".

For Steinhardt, intelligence, the talent of wisdom which must be multiplied and fully used, is as important as courageously confessing the truth. The greatest sin is stupidity and ignorance. There is no excuse for these and Steinhardt vehemently criticizes those who consider Christianism a religion of naivety extended to the state of stupidity: "The helpless and powerless Christianism is a heretical conception because it disregards God's words (Mathew 10,16: «so be wise as serpents and innoent as doves») and passes over the texts of Saint Paul (Ephesians 5,17: „Do not be foolish, but understand what the will of Lord is"; 2 Timothy 4, 5: «As for you, always be sober-minded…»; Titus 1, 8 «be...upright» and especially 1 Corinthians 14, 20: «Brothers, do not be children in your thinking. Be infants in evil, But in your thinking be mature»). Never and nowhere has Christ ever asked us to be stupid. He calls upon us to be dull, honest, humble in our hearts, but not idiots. (Only about our sins it is written in Sayings of the Desert Fathers to „blunt them". How could The One who advises us to be always awake so as not to be caught by satan praise stupidity? (…) The Lord loves innocence, not ibecility (…) for imbecility generates much more evil than malice. God, among other things, urges us to be wise. (For those who have the gift of understanding, stupitdity – at least from one point – is a sin: a sin of weakness and idleness, of not using one's talent)"[10].

Man must have the wisdom of hearing and understanding God's call, call that is always at the beginning of the road towards fulfillment, but it is not always heard from the start: "The call is always anterior – no matter how deep, how subtle, how skilfully it is hidden (…) Always misinterpreted: you look for what you have been prepared, you fiind what it has been prepared, you even have been given"[11]. God calls unpon all of us to to meet Him, to accept Him, we have to reach our hands to look for what we are looking for. Christ waits for us to see that His crucifiction and death were as real as they could be, that we are privileged by the very liberty that we have been given to understand that "God, as Kierkegaard says, is not a huge red

[9] N. Steinhardt, *op. cit.*, p. 32.
[10] *Ibidem*, p. 26-27.
[11] *Ibidem*, p. 26.

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parrot"[12] an for this reason he didn't come down from His cross, to convert man under the compulsion of an exterior and obvious miracle, for thus believing would be much easier, and man would only be compelled to admit and to bow in front of the obvious reality, to note a simple fact. The liberty to believe against all impediments, doubts, obstacles provoked by the world's meanness, by vileness, by betrayal, by all that tries to prove the inutility of our faith would disappear. "The paths that leand to belief have all the same name: bet, adventures, incertainty, a fool's thinking"[13]. So, Chritsianism is „paradox and madness"[14], for on the one hand Christiniasm is the joy of being with Christ, of sharing love and happiness to the world, and on the other hand it is sacrifice, suffering, pain. To be a Christian means to sit "[…] at the shadow of the cross, of a torture instrument from which blood drips, on which hangs a man whose lungs, bowels, kidneys are falling apart and he is not just slowly tortured and killed but also insulted, especially insulted – and especially killed, as a sacrificed animal, as a killed hacked into pieces with a meat chopper by a ripper. Tore intestins, sweat, blood, humiliation, nails. This is Christianism, boy. Not the bells of the church from Pantelimon on Sundays and on holidays, not the Christmas Tree from the beautiful house Şeteanu, not general Zossima's beard, not the candies of old lady Eliza Boerescu, the widow of Costică, brother of Vasile Alexandru Ioan Cuza's minister, not the wise jokes of the funny father Georgescu-Silvestru, not the baptism from cell no. 18 – so humble and so imposing, so hidden and so brightful – not the ecumenism promised so soon, not the reconciliation gestures so easy in fact, and anyway generators of peace, quiet and undeground pride, but this: the real, huge, stinky, indiferent cross; dirt, disgust…"[15].

The author's opinion is certainly well-founded if we think of the millions of martyrs of the Church, of all those who have dedicated their lives to the needy, the suffering, the ill, to those who carried on their shoulders both their cross and other's cross. If we think about the fact that Steinhardt spent six years of his life in the most horrible comunist prisons, we can intuit that the author spoke about Christianism from this point of view. Either way, this terrible experience of Christianis is opposed to one of the leitmotifs that go through the entire literary work of Nicolae Steinhardt: Christ's image as "boyard and nobleman", and the situation of christians is considered to be the same with that of an aristocrat: "This may be pure blasphemy, but I have my theory, according to which Christ appears to us from the Gospels only as good, kind, righteous, without sin, gracious, powerful and so on and so forth. From what Gospels tell – without exception – He also appears gifted with all the beautiful qualities of a gentleman and chevalier. First of all because he waits at the door and he knocks; he is discreet. Then, he trusts people, he is not suspicious. And trust is the first quality of the nobleman and

[12] *Ibidem*, p. 70.
[13] *Ibidem*, p. 71.
[14] *Ibidem*, p. 63.
[15] *Ibidem*, p. 37.

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of the chevalier, while suspicion is, on the contrary, the main feature of the sly. The gentleman is the one who – until the repealing contrary evidence – trusts everyone and is not hasty, with avidity, to believe the slander put in edgeways about one of his friends. When talking about slys and sleaze their number one reaction is always suspicion, and the peerless satisfaction – the ability of knowing that their fellow is as dirty as they are. More over, Christ forgives easily and wholly. The sly never forgives, or, if he is finally convinced to forgive, he bearly does it, most reluctantly, little by little. Whereas God: «I don't condamn you either. Go and sin no more». He is at all times ready to help, this is all he waits for. He is compassionate. The Nain widow, the blind, the bent woman, He takes pity on them without them asking for something. (…) And each time He gives, he gives abundantly, more than He is supposed to, lordly. (…) Trust in people, courage, detachement, goodwill for those oppressed from whom one cannot draw any profit (ill, strangers, imprisoned), a steady sense of greatness, predisposition for forgiveness, and contempt for those who are cautious and greedy: all these are qualities of the gentleman and the chevalier"[16].

The portraits that Steinhardt sketches both for his father and for some of his friends from prison are equally interesting. His father's portrait can be deducted both from his deeds and from the author's direct characterization: "My father is a small man, rather chubby, with one of hbis shoulders a little wry and he walks with difficulty. He has been an engineer and worked until he was 70, in 1965, in a factory, not in an office. (…) He fought in the War as an officer and he has been decorated. He achieved citizenship through a special law voted by the Parliament before 1914. but, after all, what and who is he? An old Jew, from Bucharest, a tiny pensioner, a few memories, a few friends, a few decorations hidden in a small box, a son. We both live in the same room. I have never been noughty my entire life: he's not a bad boy, he says, but he is an old child"[17].

The father of Nicolae Steinhardt seems to have the same courageous and decided personality as his son; he doesn't comply with compromises and betrayal. When talking about portraits that Steinhardt sketches for his fellow collegues from the comunist prisons through which he passes, that of Paul Dimitrescu draws our attention: "He is calm, he speaks emphatically and rare, with the ease of an old convict, with the cold politeness of the fallen angel or of the cleaned aut but proud nobleman. As opposed to us, the ones in the dock, he has already spent a few years in prison, and this time he has been arrested for some time"[18]. In this portrait, Steinhardt catches very well a detail of the life in prison, namely the fact that each of those wrongfully convicted managed to fiind a way, a formula of behaviour that could make them immune when facing the investigators, sometimes even mocking the latter for they could no longer scare them with anything. But Steinhardt also bears in mind the figures of the guards or of the officers which he faithfully

[16] *Ibidem*, p. 109-110.
[17] *Ibidem*, p. 51.
[18] *Ibidem*, p. 66.

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portrays: "Leutenant Ştefan is receiving us, silhouette of a primate, face of an anthropoid, gestures and look of a sergeant of penitentiary colony in a dark movie. He enjoys himself very much, he plays his role in slow motion, as if cheking his cards as a gambler"[19].

On another page he describes the cruel way in which the guards insult the prisoners' sufferance: "They sit us on long parallel benches, one at every bench at the extremity, as if we were to take a test and they are afraid that we might cheat. We are forbidden not only to talk to each other but even to look at each other. It's cold and we are hungry. We wait for a while that seems to be unbearably long, then tha guards – it was, you see, lunch time – take aut their snaks. They swalow greedily, champing and mumbling; a heinous hunger overcomes me and I can guess the same humiliating sensation in the others too 'cause we all stare at the peaceful consumers with eager longing. We are allowed to look at them. It's the sensation of a skinny animal in a cave. (Except for the fact that we cannot walk from one end of the cage to another, nor can we come close to the bars like an animal)"[20].

This episode is opposed to the ideas about suffering that Steinhard draws from Balzac's work. He shows that the great French novelist portrayed the Christian compassion as a helplessness and a refusal to mock someone else's suffering even when this is not helpful to the one in pain. Thus, the guards' attitude, who eat greadily in front of the hungry prisoners, is eloquent for the vileness and cruelty of the comunism, as opposed to Christian recommendations.

But Steinhardt describes not only the degradation of the comunist regime, but also the ridicule that the regime proves in certain situations. Such a circumstance is the trial of the group of intellectuals in which Steinhardt was a member: "The first group is ours, of the prisoners from the box, a number of 25, gathered on benches, looking straight ahead (again, we are not allowed to look somewhere else and especially not at each other), sorrounded – such as the electronic orbits from the periphery of the atomic nucleus – by a circle of term soldiers, all of them equipped as if they were on a battle field, with automatic rifles that they keep pointed to us, making every effort to stare fiercely. The hall is sullen, the tones are dark, everything is strange, but the presence of the soldiers – in a fire position, as fi they were guarding the gang of Terente, Coroi, Brandabura or Zdrelea, and even caught in the act at midnight and in the middle of the woods or thicket, and not just a small group of intellectuals pale, skinny, dressed in some cloths irond by circumstance with the iron from de Scurity's laudry, tired, who have not splet enough, ringed, many of them passed by their life's afternoon, almost all of them ill of one of the sedentary illnesses of inhabitant of a big city: colitis, rhinitis, constipation, tuberculosis, biliary calculi – it seems like a mistake of the scenario, an exageration with a tone of ridicule"[21].

[19] *Ibidem*, p. 65.
[20] *Ibidem*, p. 72.
[21] *Ibidem*, p. 73.

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Although Steinhardt discovers the joy of confessing Christ in prison, of suffering with the others for the truth, one cannot spak about "The Diary of Happiness" without reminding the moment of the baptism,maybe the most important moment of the book and, in fact, generator of the "Diary". Steinhardt's baptism took place in the Jilava prison, in the cell number 18, the place which Steinhardt considers to be that in which he has descovered the true and supreme happiness. The baptism was officiated by the monk Mina Dobzeu who was imprisoned because he had protested against the closing of the hermitage in which he lived. He met Steinhardt in the cell from Jilava. The author describes the moment of their meeting: "I'm strating to shiver, stuck scantily dressed, with my bundle in my right hand, blind because of the bright light. Breaths are different and disonant. I stand like that a long time and wait, but I cannot notice any movement. I look for a place where I could refuge, where I could go to sleep. I can see none. And no one sees me. (…) Suddenly, up high, on the left, on the highest row, a hand raised a finger and calls me to go up there. To climb – but how? That hand – which obviously has the ability to see and understands that I am looking for a way to get there – is joined by a second one, which must be her sister. They sketch a climbing. With my bundle, poor me, with scared gestures, chattering with my teeth, I fiind myself to be monkey enough to climb up grab on the iron beds. A muffled up creature, short and terribly skinny, of a pallor that might belong to another chromatics than that of our universe, moves closer to another mummy and urges me silently to lie down next to her; covers me with a half of worn out blanket. And whispers to me: sleep a little while for there is notmuch time"[22].

Speaking about father Mina, Steihardt also says: "My monk is moldavian. He is a young man, sentenced because he had some visions and he sent to the Department of Cults a letter in which he protested against the decision to dissolve the hermitage where he had lived. I barely have time – I make hay while the sun shines – to tell him that I'm a Jew and that I want to baptize that he already agrees. He is gentle and quiet, with soft gestures"[23]. After a few lessons of catechism which he takes with father Mina, Steinhardt is secretly and quickly baptized: "When the torrent of people comes back with a loud noise, (..), father Mina, takes off his coat, rushes to the single cup from the room – it is a red cup, with the enamel broken, greasy and repulsive – and fills it with vermiculate water that he has just brought together with another prisoner in a «tank». My godfather and the two Greek-catholic priests come to my bed. I have chosen to be my godfather Em. V. (Emanuel Vidraşcu) a few days earlier, former attorney and professor, who knows very well Greek and Latin. (…) Two of the convicts, accomplices, go to the peep hole to cover it. The guard might come at any time to look, but now, when all the cells, one at a time, are taken out to walk or taken back in, such a thing is barely possible. In a hurry – but with that ability that priests have, when the quickness doesn't impose on the clear diction – father Mina says the right words, marks me

[22] *Ibidem*, p. 85.
[23] *Ibidem*, p. 86.

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with a cross, pours on my head and my shoulders the content of the pot (the cup is a sort of blunt pot) and baptizes me in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost. I confessed summary: the baptism erases all the sins. I am reborn from vermiculate water and from rapid spirit"[24].

This modest, humble baptism performed secretly, with "vermiculate water", represents the happiest moment in the life of Nicolae Steinhardt, because it is the moment he had been impatiently and feverishly looking for so many years, the moment in which he became a servent of Christ, the moment of renewal, when he got rid of all the doubts.

This is "The Diary of Happiness": a book that speaks about the huge happiness that every Christian must feel in his heart in order to have a chance to have the Truth, to have Christ. It represents a work that portrays a way that leads to holiness, because the author, even under the most horrible conditions dicovers only the positive aspect of all things, he doesn't judge, but understands, forgives and justifies, puts the inteligence he received as a gift from God at His service and at the service of those who suffer. He suffers all with joy because, while in prison, he finds the single thing that he needed to be in peace, he finds Christ: "I'm strating to sense that Christ is present in prison. I cannot believe that everything can be so complete, that I experience so much blessed luck"[25].

The book is impresses through the fact that, although it contains testimonies from the comunist prisons, it doesn't cause in the heart of the reader the feeling of terror, of repulsion for the dreadful facts described, but generates the feeling of peace, quiet, fulfilment and meeting with Christ in the most horrible hypostasis of the human degradation. It is a book centred not on the description of the tortures and atrocities happened in the comunist detention camps, altough the reader discovers them, too, between the lines, but on on rendering a positive aspect of a traumatizing experience. Steinhardt passes easily over the beatings, unjustices, humiliations, tortures, justifies some of them, and forgives them; in some of the guards he sees a human face. In exchange, he insists upon all the good things he has learned during the detention: "In prison, towards the end, I learned what kindness, decency, heroism, dignity mean. Great words! Meaningless words! Great and meaningless words for slys and for denunciators: great words and useful and full of meaning when you feel their freshness in the fire lake and you can taste their experimental charm"[26].

Virgil Ciomoş[27] said: "The world of «The Diary of happiness» proves to be that of a happy meeting with Christ. To remember means not to become estranged. Not to become estranged means for the author to have Christ always in your mind".

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[24] *Ibidem*, p. 91.
[25] *Ibidem*, p. 66.
[26] *Ibidem*, p. 88.
[27] Virgil Ciomoş, apud Aurelia Iordache, *Eseuri - Cioran, Noica, Zarifopol; Jurnalul, memorialistica, Steinhardt*, Sarmis Publishing House, Craiova, p. 92.

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And Eugen Simion[28] said: "It is the first Romanian diary of detention that I like, easthetically and morally, in its whole. It is before anything aelse, the diary of a man who found his faith and who judges the world in the terms of suffering and love. And, how curiously, from this point of view, the social evil is infinitely better seen than in ten pamphlets against communist evil, repression. It is enough for the author to present in a half of page the atmosphere from the penitentiary's infirmary at the beginning of the '60s to understand, trembling, how low can a man fall in the conditions of detention, how fruitful suspicion is here, and what savage hate can the humiliation and the desperation of an individual provoke. About all these, N. Steinhardt speaks but with love and understanding. He doesn't blame the man who suffers, he forgives in advance his weaknesses, his falls and thinks, the way Kierkegaard does, that the opposite of sin is liberty. Give man liberty and he will be less sinful. The author of "The Diary of Happiness" adds, to Kierkegaard's position, the suggestion of faith. The man isn't happy with his freedom, his intelligence and his knowledge, unless he has faith within. And to have faith, he must know hoe to look for it, and when he finds it, he prays to God to help his disbelief. This is why "The Diary of Happiness", which is essentially the diary of a religious convertion, begins with the words of the Gospel of Saint Mark: «I do believe; help me overcome my unbelief!»".

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[28] Eugen Simion, *Ibidem*, p. 92-93.

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