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Faith Testimonials

The present paper is x-raying a number of three prison testimonies belonging to three Romanian Greek-Catholic prelates: a cardinal, a priest-professor and a simple minister. The testimonies signed by these three are documents of both sufferance and enlightening. These texts depict and revive horrors, but they feed themselves with a certain ethos of sufferance Christification, they would feed themselves with a pious feeling of self-sacrifice and also with a particular devotion of prayer and of enlightening through sufferance..

In 1948, the communist state, recently installed in Romania, would suppress with the use of a governmental decree the Romanian Church United with Rome (the Greek-Catholic Church), a religious denomination that has its roots in the years 1700, when a fraction of Transylvania's Orthodox clergy has crossed over to Catholicism (preserving both the Greek rite and the Eastern spiritual traditions). The official cancellation of The Romanian Church United with Rome would bring about, on one hand, its survival as a clandestine religious movement and, on the other hand, the consequential arrest and imprisonment of a pretty consistent number of priests and believers (including those seven bishops still performing religious mass at that time) who had strongly opposed to the idea of embracing the Orthodoxies instead of Catholicism. In the years following 1989, in other words: at the end of the Romanian communist regime, the Romanian Greek- Catholic Church was partially given back its former legitimate rights and thus acknowledged as an official creed once again. Soon after the communist collapse, many testimonies have been published – in the prison journals or diaries' formula – testimonies containing and uttering the martyring undergone by the prelates, priests and believers of the Romanian Church United with Rome. Their testimonials mark a specific tonality within the generalized testimonial enthusiasm which used to define the very beginning of the post-communist era, an era filled with testimonies of the endured sufferance and injustices. Out of this generous testimonial patrimony, our option concerns a number of three Greek-Catholic depositions, and we have arranged them on a so-called "hierarchical" scale: a bishop (Iuliu Hossu), a priest-professor (Tertulian Langa) and a simple minister (Matei Boila). Their texts are distinct martyring narratives, each individualizing itself both due to their personalized temperament and due to their remembrance process temperature; their common denominator is given by the authors' devotion in confessing their faith and by the Christic ethos of sufferance.

A Cardinal's Will

A pretty consistent volume of testimonies (*Our Faith Is Our Life/ Credința noastră este viața noastră*) signed by Iuliu Hossu, the cardinal, made its public appearance to « Viața Creștină » Publishing House, Cluj-Napoca. According to Letitia Gavrila's editorial

introduction, the volume is structured in three differently sized note-books (as many as Traian, the cardinal's brother, was able to rescue, escaping implicit persecutions); these three note-books contained events belonging to the August-November 1961 temporal frame, a period that the cardinal had spent imprisoned and isolated in Caldarusani Monastery. The events compressed by the cardinal in this book start in 1947 (more accurately, beginning with the exact date of his arrest, October the 29-th, 1948) and stop to November 29-th 1961, when the note-books have been successfully saved from the monastery and well-hidden by the person who much later brought them to their editor. These testimonies' publishing might have represented a sort of *a reminder* of our nation's moral conscience, but in fact their echo was quite discreet. That's why the 2 priests in charge with the volume's motivation, Silvestru Augustin Prunduș and Alexandru Nicula (the first being also responsible for the volume's coordination) were most probably right to complain about "the outrageous delay" of the editing process of these testimonies, a "harmful" delay, in these two priests' opinion (p. 19). The damage extends to several levels: firstly, since it has missed the best responsive moment for such confessions, secondly, since the interest climax for such writings has been already consumed, while their publishing has reached a point when everybody was fed up with them, so everyone became no longer concerned with this typology of writings. Finally, the most appropriate moment for these texts to turn themselves into a persuasive piece de resistance regarding the process of the Greek- Catholic Church's resurrection had been already missed, as well; it failed to be taken into account as a direct document on martyring, a document necessary both for the disputes that Church has engaged itself into over the years and mainly for identifying a departure point, a particular root for either a primary inspiration, or for an enlightening theology on sufferance (and not for a simple rhetoric); the damage is even unpardonable if we are to remember the cardinal's own words often naming his memoirs his «will» - and he obviously did not refer to its legal or secular significance. Furthermore, the testimonials' earlier publishing would have better served the process of the cardinal's sanctification, since his memoirs go beyond their martyr/ witness status and they may most likely be accepted as being uttered by a saint. Romanian testimonies do not generally display so much enthusiasm and humility in holiness.

In this particular respect, the cardinal's testimonies do exclusively resemble N. Steinhardt's *The Journal of Happiness (Jurnalul fericirii)*, a famous book, due to its various translations. Moreover, we may talk about a parallelism in the respect of the authors' spiritual essence and their suffering, implying its inner transfiguration. Obviously we are talking about a mere parallel targeting the nature of the two testimonies, because the cardinal's remembrances do not equal the monk's memoirs in their artistic brilliance or their essayistic gift. No need for such a comparison, certainly. But the cardinal succeeded in turning his remembrances into an intense, sincere and permanent prayer. In this respect, his testimonies are quite unique: never before the confession turned into prayer in such a striking and substantial manner ; never before one's memory knew how to pray so intensely and warmly. Never before one's memory prayed so humbly and passionately. Never before one's memory was so holy and one's sufferance so saint.

His Grace Florentin Crihălmeanu, Iuliu Hossu's successor in the Episcopal chair of Cluj-Gherla region, is totally right when he notices that « the entire text seems to be a dialogue with God and also a pious confession delivered in front of His Glory's Throne » (p.14). Not only is the testimony beginning and ending with a prayer, but almost every page of it – respectively, every remembered sequence – is actually glimmering with this fusion among

memory and prayer. And it's not about the so-called favor-prayers – although there are some, not for him, but for his believers, his church and mostly for the entire Romanian nation – but rather about gratitude-prayers; in other words, it is all about the purest prayer, the one that never asks for anything, the one that merely expresses gratitude for whatever he has been given to endure; the one that gladly accepts everything as part of something already arranged for him, even if he does not fully comprehend its purpose. The praying status is the very equivalent for Iuliu Hossu's primary state of mind, whenever his memory is in question. We are facing a real Christification of both sufferance and remembrance; it is indeed a literal Christification implied, a genuine one. The cardinal's testimony starts with a prayer as if his memoirs were to become a mass (his testimony is actually the bishop's last pastoral letter: "Dear brothers and Beloved faithful sons! I speak to you as I do in all my pastoral letters", p.36); its "themes" would later on reverberate throughout his entire memoirs, they would invade and irrigate all the pages and they would often emphasize themselves within the discourse. Nevertheless, the initial prayer is a synthetic one: "Glory Thou Lord, Glory, for now and for ever and ever, for everything You have blessed me with in my life/ .../ Open, Thou Jesus, my lips for me to herald your light in this will for them, for the clock that You alone master/ .../ I wish to show them, in my own poor words, how kind, merciful and forgiving you've been, on this glorious path, Your Cross's path, on which You've generously called me too in Your vicinity/ .../ Praised be Thy name for ever and ever for everything You've offered us on this dearly beloved path of Yours/ .../ Make these lines empowering and enforcing for everyone dear to me" etc. (p. 35). And this is exactly what his testimonial successfully does: to transform all the endured suffering and injustices into Christic substance, into "comfort and reinforcement". The cardinal is never complaining, although he is accurately recording all the injustices he and the other Greek- Catholic bishops, along with the entire Church, have endured, he would simply express his gratitude for the sufferance proof-test which has been given to him and to the other bishops, to the clergy and to the believers. Nevertheless, the list of such injustices is meticulously compiled and the testimonial's documentary function is rigorously preserved. The cardinal's memoirs would draw a minimal history of the Church's forced migration into catacombs, starting with the first aggressions and continuing then with the bishops' arrest and imprisonment and with the believers' persecution. Since the bishops were held together for a while (the Romanian bishopric office had been, in Iuliu Hossu's bitter words, the very Sighet prison, for five years), the cardinal had the opportunity to find out details related to everyone's arrest circumstances (furthermore, he had enough time at his disposal in order to deliver some concise biographies; some of these biographies would rather turn into funeral epithalamium, since some of the inmates were "buried" right there, in his memoirs). Not even the persistent attempts that have been made "to persuade" him to accept collaboration with the regime in exchange for the position of Moldavia's Orthodox metropolitan bishop are reduced to silence by the cardinal who felt personally offended by them, each time answering in the same pattern: "our faith is our life". The Orthodox Church association to the Greek- Catholic Church's abolition act would fill the cardinal's soul with deep sorrow; it is a fact that his heart and conscience simply fail to accept and thus this particular sorrow becomes a recurrent motif throughout his memoirs: "how are we supposed to comprehend that holy hands are able to suffocate a Christian Church, a Church belonging to brothers" (p. 54). This is probably the cardinal's most excruciating pain, because it is beyond comprehension and it does not belong to the

Christic ethos. Otherwise, the arbitrary injustice of this "union" act has been recognized by Petru Groza as well and he was Romania's prime-minister at that time (the cardinal's memoirs would depict him as quite an intriguing jovial cynic character; he displayed a sort of a sympathy towards those who were prosecuted and arrested as a result of his direct orders; actually, as a sympathetic gesture, obviously, he sent the bishops a photo album with pictures of Mao receiving him!, after they had been released from Sighet prison and while they were treated in a hospital in Bucharest), the very person who was just applying the Greek-Catholic Church's abolition act (although with great sadness or quite impotently): "You are not to blame – he says to bishop Hossu on the occasion of the latter's requested meeting with Petru Groza – but you are the victims of the international turbulences" (p.56). In opposition to the other ministers or Orthodox hierarchs, who allusively courted Iuliu Hossu, the prime-minister Groza would openly propose the cardinal to embrace Orthodoxy from the position of Moldavia's metropolitan bishop and his proposal would be accurately revealed in a vivacious scene, vivacious due to the cynic's off-handedness: "then Mr. Prime-minister tells me smiling: *Would you like to be a metropolitan bishop in Iasi?*; completely shocked, I really did not understand his true meaning and I answered: *Durkovits has the position there, he is a Roman-Catholic; Ah*, Groza answered laughing, *not like this!* Only then did I realize that he was referring to the Orthodox metropolitan bishopric in Iasi, the vacant one; then I told him: *Mr. Prime-minister, our faith is our life*. Hearing this word/ .../ he quietly answered while smiling to me: *If only we were talking about life and nothing else!*" (p. 81) Petru Groza is quite successful in delaying the bishop's arrest, but eventually unable to prevent it, since Iuliu Hossu would be retained while in Bucharest, where he had travelled to present the new version of the Church's regulations to the creeds' minister: "I was apprehended on October the 29-th 1948, at 1,30 in the night, and taken out of my brother's apartment to the Police Headquarters by three agents of the National Security" (p. 116). He would still enjoy propositions to play "a much bigger, greater and historical role", in the minister Stanciu Stoian's words; these propositions would reach him from everywhere: from the government, from the patriarchate, and even from Justinian, the Orthodox Patriarch. But all of them are taken as a cruel offensive to his own faith. The Greek-Catholic bishops were initially imprisoned to various Orthodox monasteries (such as: Dragoslavele, Căldărușani), later on they were taken to Sighet, acting as fragments of a larger group filled with priests. Their reception here reveals everything regarding their later treatment: "We are taking the buffaloes into the stables", these were the first welcome-words heard by the bishop while they were being pulled out of the vans (p. 212). Life in prison is meticulously documented, often quite methodically structured (in chapters: the feeding, the hygiene, "the voluntary" work etc.), but above all, the most recurrent moments would be those relating the sufferance's transfiguration, if not entirely bright, at least enlightening. And, most certainly, bright is strongly attached to all the imprisoned, to all the doomed ones, who are all conjured up on the warmest and the most compassionate tonality throughout the book. In his memoir-writer hypostasis, the cardinal would often try to concentrate the information, the details (he had only three note-books and who knew how much time), he would often try to rigorously relate facts in their chronology, capturing the essence of testimony. (But – once again – his testimonial's essence is the prayer). Thus, he would constantly impose censorship to his own "stream-of-consciousness", although it constantly takes him on a voyage remembering the days and the places of communion with his believers (especially during his country trips in the police van, inferring the fact that he actually travels along the very places where he has

served as a priest; or, later on, during the more permissible years of his imprisonment, when he receives the clandestine visit of one of his believers). But whenever he feels himself facing the danger of detouring and losing himself in too many details throughout his note-books, he would stop and return to a more concise writing, in a total accordance to the facts' reality: "I keep forcing myself not to make a halt on this long road, but to run so I can reach its end safe and sound, but still my soul keeps asking me to sit and talk to you along my journey for a while; that's why I'm going to take a short cut for now; we shall see what the future holds for us, later on" (p. 175). The memoirs' composition is, consequently, severe, precise, concise due to its circumstances: the whole experience had to be tamped in these three note-books. That's why, even if the cardinal "is talking" to his believers, his colloquial speech is rather a fondness sign and not a proof of a digressional style. On the contrary, Iuliu Hossu is accurately describing the story of his Golgotha; nevertheless, his Golgotha is filled with prayer breaks and with prison-breaks into the specific temporal frame of the communion (be it present or past). Once the Greek- Catholic bishops reached Sighet prison, they would suddenly realize that from that moment on the holy sacrament practice was no longer tolerated and this revelation is quite dramatically and symbolically acute: "this was the last sacrament for the following five years, as we were about to see" (p. 213). Still they would always feel deeply connected to God's grace, they would always have the acute impression that God himself was imprisoned with them right there. Thus, it becomes a certainty the mere fact that the bishop is almost enchanting a sufferance hymn resembling a Christic ordeal, a hymn on suffering re-evaluated both as a faith testimony and as a faith trial: "Ah, beloved brothers and sons of Christ, to be incarcerated for your own religious belief, this is the supreme happiness given to us, the unworthy ones" (p.214). "The temptations" would persevere, masking themselves into various messengers, but the answer stays the same: his sufferance increased his motivation, but did not diminish his obstinacy. There is always one request made: "freedom for the Church and its constitutional rehabilitation" (p. 266). Nevertheless, this is the very price that the political regime is not at all interested in paying, that's why the bishops are one by one dying and the rest of the survivors would be eventually released from Sighet prison and taken to some more humane detention establishments (such as: Curtea de Arges monastery, Trivale hermitage, Ciorogîrla, Căldărușani), where they have been pretty frequently visited by Teoctist the dean, the future Orthodox Patriarch. In these more humane imprisonments, the detention conditions may have been slightly improved in comparison to Sighet, but the bishop would soon identify a series of lacks as one of the blessed "happiness" there: "the caress lack! Yes, the absent comfort, one being aware for Who and for what reasons it is burdened; the light that covers all deprivations, all sorrows, that particular light is the one offering comfort, joy and redemption; that light belonging to God/ .../ Yes, my dearly beloved, God was right there" (p. 400). This is the very tonality chosen by the cardinal for Christifying his testimonies, this is the very articulation chosen by him for transforming his sufferance into hymns, as if they were some blissfulnesses rewarded to him.

Martyrology Pages

Tertulian Langa's testimonial, *Stepping beyond the Silence/ Trecînd pragul tăcerii* (Galaxia Gutenberg Publishing House, 2009, second edition) may be also included in a

martyring archive. It is definitely a heritage memoir, along with some others of its kind, starting for instance with N. Steinhardt's *Journal of Happiness/ Jurnalul fericitii*, the best aesthetic achievement and the first chronologically published. Its confession's authenticity, its writing's clearness and thrill, all these qualities recommend father Langa's testimonial as one of the most accomplished Romanian memoirs. Perhaps, it hasn't earned its position due to a pure artistic merit (since, beyond the somehow Latin elegance of its sentences and beyond a certain metaphorical sensibility of the writing, it is rather the testimonial's clearness that has constituted the basic ingredient for such a judgment), but surely its place is a result of its endurance and remembrance process, both expressing authenticity in connection to an injured memory, painfully resuscitated over and over again.

The Foreword accurately reconstructs the testimonial's biography and painfully debates a few poetics and memoirs' ethos issues. The self-confrontation, the hesitations, they all end with the pertinent feeling of being compelled to confess: "I've been forced by my conscience to deliver a confession" (p. 13); this very feeling would invade the entire testimonial and it would be identifiable in a sort of reconstruction's tension, in the anamnesis strain. It is moreover recognizable within the decision to openly and "bluntly" confess, so that it becomes a real "torture", because of its aching sincerity (p. 15). The author is facing all his compunctions and he methodically analyzes each of them, in a self-dialogue. The relation between forgiveness and oblivion, memory and history, truth and confession and so on, they all are either hesitation themes or reflection topics along his decision's path. His testimonial becomes an imperative, while his past a guide: "everything lived inside of me and with me, breathing their lives, but also mine"; "thanks to the registered events, experiences and feelings" my past "would turn out to be my consciousness guidance" (p. 17). The intrusion within the past is so deep, so unsafe, that the temporal frames get mixed up together, while the present of writing often overlaps to the present of suggestiveness; now and then, the remembrance time and that of living become synonyms, this being the case of the episode referring to the ending of some constant torture, extended to a number of days: "here I was still thinking, and I thought I could never use my mind again! How come I was unconsciously still rationalizing? The mere remembrance of You, mysterious Love, was more than enough to make You come inside of me" (p. 151). The spontaneous alternation of tenses, but mostly their merging into the remembrance's present are all signs of an anamnesis temperature so high that it eventually explodes. There is no specific rule (or deliberateness) as far as these passages are concerned; the temporal mergings or the temporal separations preserve the rhythm and the tension of remembrance in its spontaneous parameters; they all circulate without restrictions, depending exclusively on the remembrance's temperature. Nevertheless, this particular spontaneity represents the guarantee for authenticity in the testimonies' case.

Besides, the chronological compunction is almost rigorously applied, although within the contemplative paragraphs, in both the debate's and the reflection's case, which are numerous enough, the present utters the same language as the past; the contemplations display a certain tendency towards timelessness, since they do equally belong to both present and past. The movie of the events is constantly doubled by a self-reflective dimension, since the author keeps examining himself, without mercy, x-raying each of his gestures and demandingly analyzing himself in his determined faith in God hypostasis. He would constantly accuse himself of not living a devoted enough existence, of not completely acting in a Christian pattern. The most insignificant gestures would give him reasons to suspect himself of not being worthy enough, leading him to moments of self-communion and Christ-communion.

For instance, his flying away from Bucharest to Blaj, right before his apprehension, would be initially characterized by self-confidence: "Where did all my previous composedness disappear? How fake may be my trust in God! I did not ask for His mercy, but for my own arrogant mailish ego, under the impression that I can handle anything" (p. 23). This particular lack of self-confidence is actually a result of his enthusiasm, because, otherwise, the author has no doubts whenever God's involvement is in question: "and God did not forsake me" (p. 47) acts as a sort of a leit-motif, be it on a textual, or on a sub-textual narrative level (the stress is rather on the latter one, in our opinion). He is actually experiencing some Christic miracles in his most troubled moments: "I really have no idea what might have happened, I only know I've heard myself crying out loud: Jjesuus! The very next minute there was a terrible silence, so deep that it had no other precedent. A happiness's silence; and not because, since that glorious moment, I did not feel the pain any more; and not because an unuttered peace replaced my horror, but simply because I felt Jesus with me and simply because I felt myself crucified with Him" (p. 53). One of the most touching dimensions of this book (sometimes a firm one, sometimes a fuzzy one) is represented by this particular effort to express the author's gratitude for the offered grace, including or, rather, especially for the sufferance grace. Tertulian Langa would Christically define his life, he would evaluate his life as both divine sign and picture: "This reference to the Holy Heaven was the essential mark to my incarcerated life: I became a political prisoner because this was Holy Providence's destiny for me, nobody made me embrace this destiny, I willingly identified my path and I willingly behaved accordingly" (p. 59). His exigency to consume the complete communion with Christ would be the one in charge of all events and happenings, the very one filling them with significance even when they stroke in their atrocity. Now and then, there is also a confirmation of such a concordance: "And here it is the Holy Providence's work in its sequel... Once again I was taken and incarcerated to Jilava's obscurity" (p. 129). Nevertheless, beyond this absurdity stamping his sentencing, the divine work is hidden, right there, in the brilliant closure of the significance stamped by a tormented existence.

Still the events' atrocity is right there. "The reminiscent" memory would eventually bring them to life in vivid details, apparently motivated by a faultless voluptuous memory. The author is actually reliving his ordeal, he is reviewing the scenes, live; some of them – the majority of them – are striking even the reader with their cruelty, thus surpassing any kind of *horror* fiction. Such an example might be the scene where the prisoner is effectively running up and down his hut in order to escape the cop-dog, Diana, and its ferocious biting (p. 70 sqs.); another appropriate example might be Stratache the guardian and his sadism lessons and demonstrations (p. 370); and there are, of course, many other examples concerning the process of torture or the inhumane labor. The pages reconstructing the horrors would alternate with those of contemplation and of portrayals (portraits of both the fellow-prisoners and torturers), due to his memory's spontaneous effort to protect itself. His memory would calmly breath whenever it starts reconstructing the huts' "conferences", the lectures delivered by all the personalities cramped inside the infernal quods. In such moments, Tertulian Langa proceeds similarly to the antique historians, he is recovering the conferences and the debates on the "trustworthiness" policy. Without questioning his memory's real capacity (given the fact that he knows by heart the holy mass's entire text and also all the poems he has written for himself), we find those discourses merely believable, but not quite authentic.

All the portraits that he has drawn bear the authenticity stamp, as they successfully

recuperate the guardians' brutal language, their lurid slang. Resembling the realist novels, the characters escape their own speech pattern: "Let-let mme see your fa-faces, you bou-bourgeois wre-wrecks... / .../ You, hell-o-hello, yes, you (...) keep your b-back s-straight, or else...!" (p. 96). All the figures populating the author's memory are substantial despite their episodic appearance. Some are simply intriguing due to their psychology and eloquence; a perfect example might be Angheliu, the ex-communist high-official figure, who became Langa's fellow-quod: "I know Suchianu, he wes (was) a petty medler (meddler), (...) but he used Ralea as a background, and Ralea usid (used) to be somebody; but I was not impresid (impressed) by Ralea either. I read him immediately, with his Frenchish (French) big brain. I talked to him for about two hours and I knew what he was made of, as I knew what that narrow-minded sculptor, Gheorghe Anghel, was made of" etc. (p. 270). The psychological insights of the protagonists are displayed with poignancy and refinement, reverberating to each turbulence of the soul, which is caused by brutality; brutality makes it unforeseeable. The humane gestures of some of the guardians are capitalized in a manner resembling the gratitude's thrill among this pretty diverse but still unitary gallery of people, unitary as far as their cruelty vocation is concerned; an appropriate example would be that of "It Is" Commandant, the very one who, when visited in jail by his wife and daughter by the first time, "took the little girl in his arms and crossed it over the fence so I could hold her" (p. 325). Even Stratache, the sadist, shows a moment of humanity when he asks the incarcerated to pray for his sick wife too (p. 420). These "humanizing" gestures would, certainly, be capitalized in the sense of grace's power, since Tertulian Langa's testimonial is also a proof of divine work and plan, not merely about evil's work in history. It is "a document book" doubling its significance.

The publishing-house's idea of emphasizing the "documentary" value of the book by adding and attaching to it the prison poems and the series of reproductions and photos was quite remarkable. These poems deserve a special attention as they reveal all the enlightening moments, all the suffering's levigation and sublimation, with a stress on the atrocious movie, dotted with prayers and self-communions. These are pure "breathings" within hell, some enlightening pain concentrates.

A Jail Breviary

Father Matei Boilă's prison memoires have resulted in a really thin book: *Bars Illuming/ Gratii luminînd* (Galaxia Gutenberg Publishing House, 2004). Its size would not be a big inconvenient, but the volume displays an extremely stern testimony, along with a really ascetic writing, ascetic and uncomplicated, so uncomplicated that it transparently and most accurately reveals everything. It propagates such a sober style that it is neighboring itself to shyness and it practices such a bashful writing that it is neighboring itself to humiliation, it simply displays a constantly en-guard and inhibited style, which paradoxically enough increases its precision. One might say we are dealing with a concise writing; or rather with a mathematic writing. The *Foreword* contains the author's, let's call them: excuses for this kind of stylistic poverty and austerity, blaming both his lack of story-teller gift ("I'm not talented and, mostly, I don't have any story-teller calling", p. 5) and his memory's precariousness ("and my memory does not serve me well whenever facts and people are in question", p. 6)

for his rough confession. These excuses might be true and not merely circumstantial modesties (although talent is not to blame, since such testimonies do not aim as high as literature; and anyway they don't even have to be taken as literature), but they are not definitely supported by the book's texture; on the contrary, the related scenes are substantial and the necessary details are right there; the only trouble is the fact that none of them is used generously and, thus, the text's final impression is that of rigidity.

Nevertheless, Father Boila's book represents an exception among all the other prison memorials, not only due to its confession's austerity and shortness (although these alone should suffice). We are definitely dealing with an exception, an exception by the book. This particular "exceptionality" is rather a direct result of the presented and reminded stuff. This tiny book, this memory's breviary would barely mention sufferings and torments, abandoning them in their innuendo status (and mostly leaving the other authors to underline such disturbing facts) and, instead, he exclusively chooses the very few grace moments, out of the jail nightmares ocean (and the priest has tasted quite a lot of these bad dreams' ingredients). Thus, he would preserve only the very few sequences revealing the miracle's infinite power; some episodes are undeniably attesting the concrete and touchable presence of Jesus right there, in the middle of the communist huts. So, out of the extended ordeal, father Boila has resumed himself in exploiting those few, fully privileged divine moments, and nothing else; he has suspended between brackets the daily sufferance and humiliations. The selected moments for his testimonial are simply the very moments stuck somewhere in the back of his mind, and he openly admits it: "out of this communist hell/ .../ there was nothing left for me but the moments of joy, or, in other words, the moments of light" (p. 6); otherwise, he feels "a little bit guilty" for attaching a positive connotation to sufferance, for exclusively selecting the graceful moments in their progress. But he should not be blamed for this, since his memory has been in charge with the final result: "the light sneaking through the bars" (p. 8). And his testimony concerns that light; the other events belong to people; these are divine acts; and Matei Boila is talking about these, being their witness; he displays, so to say, an Evangelic conduct: he acts as if he were a witness to miraculous deeds inside jail. And since he narrates about miracles, and since he is their *witness*, his stern, sober, simple and pious style proves its efficiency; maybe it was the only possible way to deliver such a narrative. Matei Boila would merely retell events he has witnessed himself; he would not advertize Jesus, he would not advertize miracles, he is not concerned with their rhetoric. But what he is narrating, all of it immediately becomes quite believable, and consequently his tiny book suddenly expands its weight.

Its gained weight is a direct result of the book's proofs of divine epiphany right there, in the center of the communist hell; the book also testimonies for some profound, incorruptible and above all surviving humanity moments. Its gained weight is also a direct result of the book's testimonial on the authenticity and mostly on the communion between man and God under the most inhumane circumstances. And especially for revealing that some facts are simply impossible to be explained and accepted without taking into account the divine intervention. In father Boila's breviary, these particular facts would turn into parables rooted in reality and attesting real manifestations of Christ's work among people. Part of this repentance miracle category is, for instance, the brief story of the lawyer Panaitescu who was suffering from excruciating hunger until "one evening I remembered the words of Jesus: *I am the bread of life; those who come to Me won't be hungry anymore and those who believe in*

Me won't be thirsty any more" (p. 28). Not without hesitations, the lawyer would eventually decide to renounce to half of his ration, which did not suffice him anyway, and to offer it to "someone poorer than myself"; which he eventually does, and "since then 5 months have passed; I was hungry no more, not even for a single day, for one brief moment, for one hour" (p. 29). Belonging to the already mentioned category of the inexplicable repentance miracle, the blessed transfiguration of an ordinary inmate is relevant (Geo Iliescu – who together with his gang and enjoying the support of the jail's wardens – used to terrorize the political inmates); and also, the recovery of the tiny box where the sacrament was hidden (the tiny box is thrown out during some search, by a guardian, but it finds its impossible way back to the inmates hut, all by itself – p. 58-60). Stamped by the same miraculous relevance, the "simple" acts of humanity performed by both prisoners and some guardians are spectacular. Among them, and "the greatest mercy act in my life" (meaning father Boila's life): the toilet's washing out episode (p. 38-41). And especially the communion miracle in Malmaison's jail, where 242 all sorts of inmates were cramped together and not one of them missed the Easter mass officiated by the Greek-Catholic bishop, Iuliu Hirțea. "In that very moment – father Boilă is remembering – something extraordinary happened, something unimaginable in these freedom-free circumstances/ .../ An accomplishment resembling in its glory the very biblical episode of the fish capture ashore the Ghenizaret lake, a fact exclusively explainable by Christ's immense power" (p. 23-24). This Easter episode would stick in their memory for ever, in father Boilă's strong opinion, because "that communion, that warmly invigorating liaison could only be Jesus Christ's work" (p. 25). The entire tiny book signed by father Boilă is actually talking about Christ's miraculous work, in a much more persuasive style than any other religious sermon.

Thus, we are dealing with a concise series of spiritual accomplishments, a mini-series of communion sequences; an enlightenings breviary; in other words, we are dealing with a positive book, since it is displaying so positive moments, almost brimming over with divine presence. On the other hand, there are few books breathing so much and so acute sadness although it exclusively cumulates the enlightening episodes; and this is a direct result of the fact that everything that has been willingly left out of the volume implies sufferance, injustice and humiliation. Hardly has any other book spoken so eloquently about the silenced suffering, entirely focusing itself on grace moments.

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