

Fr. Dr. Artur Aleksiejuk PhD.
Christian Theological Academy in Warsaw
Faculty of Education

The Vision of Integrated Man in the Homilies of St. Grigol Peradze

The figure of St. Grigol Peradze, Arichmandrite (1899-1942) is most often associated with his important academic achievements in the field of history.¹ He was an outstanding expert of Old Georgian and early Christian literature, historian specializing in the Church history and the history of Georgian monasticism, Patristics lecturer at the School of Orthodox Theology at the University of Warsaw from 1933 to 1939, polyglot and poet; however, he never considered himself as a theologian. He wrote of himself: „In fact, I am not a theologian. I have never focused on studies that were strictly theological. I studied Dogmatics only because I had to pass an exam. In addition, the problems of the conflict of the Christian worldview with other religious and modern spiritual movements – defined as apologetics – were never close to me. I never felt great affection for Systematic Theology”.²

Actually, Grigol Peradze never wrote a strictly theological tract. This does not mean, however that his work lacks theological value. His homilies and poetic work were saturated in a particular way with theology. The academic initiatives that the Archimandrite undertook also witness to his great engagement in striving to reveal truth, which is the calling and task of every theologian. Discovering historical truth and preaching God’s truth about humankind are closely connected themes in the work of the Georgian martyr of Auschwitz. They are an example of the phenomenal ability to listen attentively to both the echo of historical events and also discerning God’s voice present in human hearts³. Of key importance here is the vision of man, who becomes an integrated human only when he fulfills God’s calling in his life. Only such a person can become „a peacemaker” (see Mt. 5:9)⁴, a witness of Christ’s Gospel, who brings peace to all.

¹ See. *Żywot świętego ojca naszego kapłana-męczennika archimandryty Grzegorza Peradze* [The Life of Our Father Among the Saints Archimandrite Grigol Peradze, Priest and Martyr] In “Pro Georgia”, no. 14 (2006), pg. 5-20. Since 2010, The Department of Eastern European Studies of the University of Warsaw has published *Selected Works* (Dziela zebrane) of St. Grigol Peradze, academic editing by Fr. Henryk Paprocki (G. Peradze, *Dziela zebrane* (academic editor Fr. Henryk Paprocki), v. 1-3, Department of Eastern European Studies of the University of Warsaw, Warsaw 2010-2012). To present, three volumes have been published. Two further volumes are in preparation, including juvenilia.

² Grigol Peradze, *W służbie kultury gruzińskiej* [In Service to the Georgian Culture], In *Dziela zebrane* [Selected Works], v. 1, pg. 52.

³ Compare *Żywot świętego...*, *ibid.* pg. 10-11.

⁴ All biblical quotations are taken from the Revised Standard Version.

Integrated Man in the Homilies of St. Grigol Peradze

St. Grigol's reflections on man, the sense, purpose and means of human existence are found in his various works. They are most often found in *The Commentary to the Lord's Prayer* entitled *The Sense of True Citizenship*⁵. The *Commentary* is a collection of eleven homilies delivered by the Georgian Archimandrite on various occasions between 1932-1933. Many of the theological and anthropological themes found there have already been indicated in his earlier *Homily*, which was preached on May 31, 1931 in Paris at the first Liturgy he celebrated in the Georgian language.⁶ One could risk stating that the Parisian Homily was a specific manifestation of St. Grigol's academic and pastoral activity. He remained faithful to the priorities outlined in the homily up to his death in Auschwitz. It is also possible to find several interesting and inspiring themes about man in a homily dedicated to the memory of Shota Rustaveli, the great Georgian medieval poet, which was delivered on the Cathedral of St. Mary Magdalene in Warsaw on December 11, 1937, on the occasion of the 750th anniversary of the writing of the poem entitled *The Knight in the Panther's Skin*.⁷ One should also draw attention to *The Homily for Christmas Day*, because the homilist himself states – „in its centre is found not man, not human life, but Christ himself”,⁸ in other words, the Incarnation of the Son of God, which begins a new era of human history and also a new era for the life of humankind.⁹

It is worth noting that St. Grigol Peradze's reflections about the human person are not systematic in nature. They rather reflect the character of Orthodox anthropology which is unwilling to view man in a fragmented manner. „In Orthodox understanding – states Fr. Henryk Paprocki – the task of anthropology is not to defend man and his dignity. The problem of man plays a central role in the consciousness of our era, however, Orthodoxy does not strive to obtain a uniform solution to this problem”.¹⁰ Grigol Peradze also does not strive for such a solution. His reflections refer to the personal *humanitas* of man, that is the holistic

⁵ See Grigol Peradze, *Sens prawdziwego obywatelstwa* [The Meaning of True Citizenship] In *Dziela zebrane* [Selected Works], v. 3, pg. 193-228.

⁶ See Grigol Peradze, *Kazanie wygłoszone w Paryżu podczas pierwszej liturgii w języku gruzińskim* [Homily preached at the First Liturgy Served in the Georgian Language in Paris] (May 31, 1931) in G. Peradze, *Dziela zebrane*, vol. 3, pg. 187-191.

⁷ See Grigol Peradze, *Kim jest dla nas Szota Rustaveli* [Who Shota Rustaveli Is For Us] In *Dziela zebrane* [Selected Works], v. 3, pg. 151-152.

⁸ G. Peradze, *Kazanie na Święto Bożego Narodzenia.*, Grigol Peradze, *Kazanie na Święto Bożego Narodzenia* [Homily for Christmas Day], in G. Peradze, *Dziela zebrane*, t. 3, s. 229.

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ H. Paprocki, *Prawosławna koncepcja człowieka* [The Orthodox Concept of Man], *Elpis* 6 no. 9-10 (2004), pg. 27.

view of mankind, created in the image and likeness of God „with soul and body, mind and will, able to make conscious choices and exceed his own nature, in order to unite himself with God”.¹¹ This *humanitas* manifests itself in the daily decisions people make in their personal, family and professional lives. Man – as Nikolai Berdyaev claimed – can’t obtain salvation alone.¹² The space in which the human icon aspires to its Archetype is also communal: in the Church, society and nation. In order for this to be possible, one must learn to „recognize the mystery of God in the face of his neighbour”.¹³ St. Grigol spoke of a similar program of action as a priest and pastor and program of teaching of „recognizing the mystery of God in the face of others”, in the above mentioned *Homilies* given in Paris. This idea was also developed in the *Commentary to the Lord’s Prayer*. It is nothing more than a building an integrated man, in other words a man desiring to realize the ideal of salvation and the bringing peace of his calling to be human and divine.

In the first sentences of the Homilies, while making reference to a series of homilies about the Lord’s Prayer, Archimandrite Grigol states, „The subject of the previous homilies was man, the characteristics of his life, which, although it wasn’t and is not inhumane, it nevertheless was not Christian, in other words that, which the Saviour indicates to us, His Gospel and Holy Church. Also, for this reason, such human life did not bear fruit, dignity and eternal life, it therefore did not have a strong foundation. I attempted to show before your eyes the life of such a man, not in a theoretical manner, but on the basis of clear examples. I’ve only said that, which could find an echo in your soul or life”.¹⁴ Although the words cited above were directed to Georgians living in emigration in France in the mid 1930’s, the Archimandrite’s diagnosis is universal in character and applies to the spiritual condition of modern man. The statement that human life, although it cannot be called inhumane, and at the same time, does not deserve to be called Christian, sounds alarming. As Tertullian wrote, „Since every soul is Christian in its nature”¹⁵, then those, who are called Christian, but do not live in a Christian manner, commits auto-destruction. „If a kingdom is divided against itself, that kingdom cannot stand. And if a house is divided against itself, that house will not be able to stand” (Mk 3:24-25).

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² „Спасаться нельзя в одиночку, невозможно изолированное спасение. Спасаться можно только с ближним, с другими людьми и миром.” (М. Бердяев *Дух и реальность. Основы богочеловеческой духовности*, глава I, 1, in <http://www.magister.msk.ru/library/philos/berdyaev/berdn014.htm#07>, Accessed April 25, 2013.

¹³ O. Clement, *Trzy modlitwy* [Three Prayers] trans. K. Łukowicz, Wydawnictwo WAM, Kraków 1997, pg. 18.

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ See. Tertullian, *Apologetyk* [Apologetic] XVII, 6, trans. J. Sajdak, POK, vol.. XX, Księgarnia Akademicka, Poznań 1947, pg. 79.

When preaching about integrated man, Archimadrite Peradze states above all that human activity bears fruit only when they are established on the firm foundation on which our whole humanity is built. Integrated man is authentic and actualizes the peace of God within himself when he acts in accordance with his nature. His actions are in harmony with the will of God; and, therefore are effective. A synergy takes place, a realization of human-divine action. Only this kind of person becomes „a peacemaker”, because he is able to cooperate with God in obtaining internal peace and participating in His creative energies. As a result, one obtains „the power to act, wisdom and understanding, humility and determination, love even of enemies, understanding and acceptance of your neighbour, (...) gives the possibility to discern that what is immortal from that which ends in death, the temporary from the everlasting, concerns worthy of fighting, aspiration and sacrifice from concerns unworthy of fighting, aspiration and sacrifice”.¹⁶ Then one becomes a witness and „stream of living water out of him” (J 7:38). One of those streams is the message of peace built on faith in God, peace „in Spirit and Truth” (J 4:23). For this reason the Archimandrite attempts „to show the life of such a person (...) in a theoretical way, but on the basis of clear examples”.¹⁷ The model of the Holy Fathers of the desert, in the simplicity of their message, make an accurate diagnosis of the spiritual condition of man. As he himself stresses, not by theorizing, but by making reference to the practical side of life and is convinced that only evangelical witness authentically speaks to people.

St. Grigol steadfastly maintains that human actions bear witness to the manner in which one interprets this mystery of his own humanity. Through actions one’s faith and readiness to receive God’s truth and to follow it is manifested. Orthodoxy without orthopraxy is inefficient, because „faith without works is dead” (James 2:20). In a certain sense, the measure of human integration is therefore the level of faith in Christ, which is an expression of witness of Him, not only in and of itself. Man, being a lamb in the pasture of sheep of Christ, increasingly becomes aware of his role and calling to transform the world in accordance with God’s plan. He becomes – as Marin Heidegger said – „a pastor of being”¹⁸, that is a mindful and guardian of his own and other’s existence in cooperation with God – of the existence understood as the revelation of God’s glory.¹⁹ In this context, St. Grigol’s reference to the figures of the shepherds of Bethlehem, who were the first witnesses of the

¹⁶ Grigol Peradze, Kazanie wygłoszone w Paryżu [Homily Given in Paris], pg. 188-189.

¹⁷ Grigol Peradze, *Kazanie na Święto Bożego Narodzenia* [Homily for Christmas Day], pg. 229.

¹⁸ M. Heidegger, *List o „humanizmie”*, trans. J. Tischner in G. Peradze, *Znaki drogi*, collective translation, Fundacja „Aletheia”, Warszawa 1995, pg. 151.

¹⁹ According to St. Irenaeus of Lyons (cir. 140-202) “The glory of God is a living man” (St. Irenaeus of Lyons, *Against Heresies*, IV, 20, 7 in <http://www.ccel.org/ccel/schaff/anf01.ix.vi.xxi.html>, Accessed June 23, 2014.

birth of our Saviour. He wrote, „The shepherds were the first to perceive, see, understand and follow the angelic singing. (...) The shepherds heard the angelic song „Glory to God in the highest and on earth peace among those whom He favours” – and then thought people this song. Every letter of this song is extremely important. Its deep sense and greatness, penetration and strength, form and transform man and human society”.²⁰

That „perception” which the martyr writes about and „hearing” the angelic singing is an open heart and mind to God’s truth revealed to the world. It is a challenge to become a „pastor of being” in the image of Christ, a „peacemaker”, being of „good will”. Such a person can teach other people to sing the song of God’s praise and to awaken in them the consciousness that each of them is a crown of creation created in the image and likeness of God, and therefore the most beautiful divine song – the Song of Songs. Striving to be such a song is the path of becoming an integrated person. „The life of a pastor is a song and original poetry, which the Church placed in the canon of holy books and called The Song of Songs”²¹. Teaching people the „song of God”, the song of peace, is one of the most important aspects of St. Grigol Peradze’s pastoral program. By virtue of the universal priesthood of all believers, this is also the goal of Christian life in the world. „Jesus Christ approaches the heart of every man and asks for a place to stay. (...) This is the joy that is experienced by people who understand Jesus and open the doors of their hearts to God’s word, and thus make God his friend and companion in life”²².

Very often the words of the song of God’s praise are the words of prayer for St. Grigol. The one who prays, becomes prayer. „Prayer – he wrote – is a whole world in and of itself, and the one who has a home in this land knows that without prayer, the spiritual existence of man is impossible just as physical existence is impossible without bread or oxygen. A person who does not pray and is not prayed for will be destroyed and crushed, will fall and become a victim of the passing age and dust of the earth.”²³ In the Holy Martyr’s opinion, prayer leads to self-knowledge and recognition of the complex plan of God in man²⁴. „I ask you – the homilist turns to the faithful – that you pray for me, that I would be able to achieve this goal with my limited strength, even in a small way, that the Lord God would help

²⁰ Grigol Peradze, *Kazanie na Święto Bożego Narodzenia* [Homily for Christmas Day], pg. 229-230.

²¹ Ibid, pg. 230.

²² Ibid, pg. 231.

²³ Grigol Peradze, *Sens prawdziwego obywatelstwa* [The Meaning of Real Citizenship], pg. 195.

²⁴ Ibid.

me when the human moments of doubt and strife embrace me, that he would give me the spirit of love, the spirit of patience and the language which will kindle within you fire”²⁵.

The Key to discovering the truth about man is also coming to know the revealed truth about God. The relation of man to his Creator is a mystery that is peculiar and difficult to understand, one that is found in the image and likeness of God in man. Just as the patristic Fathers, St. Grigol adopts an attitude characteristic of apophatic theology in this issue. He delights in people and the abilities they possess, thanks to which they can strive for perfection, a plan well pleasing in God’s sight. The delight over the attitude of the heroes of Shota Rustaveli’s poem entitled *The Knight in Panther’s Skin*, of whom he wrote „They are not only physically beautiful humans, or spiritually beautiful, but despite this beauty of soul they strive for even greater perfection, to higher levels of spiritual development. The ideal given to us in the Gospel by our Lord Jesus Christ – ‘Be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect’ (Mt. 5:48) – is woven like a red thread through the whole poem”²⁶. In yet another place he stated: „The spirit of man, eternal spirit, for which there is no boundaries or hindrances, lives by the same conditions and draws from the same source: it searches for God, His eternal truth and applies that truth in everyday life”²⁷. Here, as in *The Homily for Christmas Day*, one can notice praise for striving to harmoniously sing the Song of God about man and creation. The search for God and His truth appears is the goal and task of every person. Only in God can one integrate himself and unite himself with other people. Once man has entered into the mystery of salvation prepared for him, in the light of God’s truth,²⁸ he is no longer an isolated and lost individual. His powers are not divided one from another and shaken. In St. Grigol’s opinion, the quest for perfection is a religious experience and „a close look into one’s own soul”, which should be accompanied by humility, „a sense of one’s own nothingness, inability to do anything without the Grace of God, which fills our void and dries the desert within us”²⁹.

In the words cited above about the spirit of man, which is eternal and is not limited by boundaries, Archimandrite Grigol Peradze states that man cannot be defined in human terms. Man does not guarantee his own integration, but God, who placed within him His image. For this reason, when one turns away from God, he loses control over his own nature and

²⁵ Grigol Peradze, *Kazanie wygłoszone w Paryżu* [Homily Given in Paris], pg. 189.

²⁶ Grigol Peradze, *Religia Szoty Rustawelego* [The Religion of Shota Rustaveli], In *Dziela zebrane* [Selected Works], v. 3, pg. 153.

²⁷ *Ibid*, pg. 154.

²⁸ See *The First Prayers of the Faithful In Boska Liturgia świętego ojca naszego Bazylego Wielkiego* [The Divine Liturgy of Basil the Great], Warszawska Metropolia Prawosławna, Warsaw 2005, pg. 61.

²⁹ Grigol Peradze, *Kazanie wygłoszone w Paryżu* [Homily Given in Paris], pg. 188.

becomes an individual – *atomos*, whose nature is shattered. In other words, such a person experiences ontological disintegration, which he then imposes on society. In the homily *Who is Shota Rustaveli For Us* Grigol Peradze wrote: „Striving for greater perfection, affection for light, the sun and truth, (...) love for divine realms, is the richness of every person. They refine not only citizens of an imperium, but also the one who has no possessions. (...) They make such a person, poor and without possessions, more precious in the eyes of God and honest people, than someone who is full of pride and mockery, who thinks that he possesses something, but rather ruins what he has by his behaviour. (...) A dishonest and hypocritical person is not only not an inheritor of the Kingdom of Heaven, but also does not create anything great, powerful or lasting. God has yet to use hypocritical people; such people have never been made worthy of His goals, mission and truth”³⁰.

Native Land and Nation – the environment of man’s integration

Archimandrite Grigol Peradze’s thoughts on man are always set in a specific situational or historical context. In his homilies, he most often addressed problems, which Georgian society in diaspora struggled with abroad. As a pastor to his émigré flock, he was strongly engaged in the issues of his Church and nation. He called for spiritual renewal and emphasised the indissoluble link between nation and Church. “When the Church prays or speaks of the native land, it does not think primarily of the church building, Georgian sun, mountains or fields, but man and his good will, which creates, protects, spiritualizes, guards and defends that. When the Church speaks of man, above all it has in mind his person, which hears his ancestor’s testament and understands the language of his native land, which also indicates his own responsibility towards life, the testament. In his development, he strives to move forward by one step to prove this responsibility. The Church upholds such a person and helps him to carry out this testament: by searching for God, His kingdom and His light in this world”.³¹

With these words, the Archimandrite tried to pull his fellow citizens out of lethargy and to awake in them the spiritual strength, which allows Georgians not only to endure, but also to cultivate their national heritage while away from their homeland. “When living in emigration – he underlined – one is always led to the conclusions of the spiritual life of a nation. Let us take for example the Georgian emigration in Moscow, which gave our nation

³⁰ Grigol Peradze, *Kim jest dla nas Szota Rustaweli* [Who Shota Rustaveli is For Us], pg. 152.

³¹ Grigol Peradze, *Sens prawdziwego obywatelstwa* [The Meaning of True Citizenship], pg. 200.

the Bible, a great cultural work of the 18th century.³² (...) The Jews in the Babylonian Captivity gave their nation the law of the Old Testament, which means that they summed up the entire cultural work of the previous era. The Greeks created their philosophy while in emigration (...), which made them immortal. Emigration does not have creative potential, it is a summary, a synthesis of the entire work, which was carried out earlier in the homeland.”³³

In order to reach the hearts of his fellow citizens, the Holy Martyr spoke and wrote a lot about the homeland, he told of the beauty of the Georgian land and was filled with admiration for the Georgian language. He often made reference to historical events, the entirety of the Georgian inheritance and spiritual richness of Georgia.³⁴

In his reflections about the homeland, he always aimed to show a wide theological and anthropological perspective. The homilies from *The Meaning of True Citizenship* series demonstrate that hard labor for one's earthly homeland is fruitful only when he realizes his call to be an icon of the Holy Trinity in his actions. For the Holy Martyr, the earthly homeland is the environment in which realizes integrated humanity, that is humanity understood in a godly manner. He explains, “the greatest suffering is not that you were banished from the homeland, that is not the more severe of God's punishments, but that, when you deprive yourselves of human dignity and honour.”³⁵ The one who really loves his homeland and considers himself a patriot should build on the foundation which guarantees not only its duration, but also its development. That rock is God and His truth. “The first word of the prayer of Jesus Christ is ‘God’, just as the first word of the pasture of Jesus Christ should be the word ‘God’, because the goal of a citizen's live and citizenship should be God. (...) If the first word of a person or a nation's prayer is something else, even something such as homeland, patriotism, work or fight for freedom and economic development, it is not the

³² *The Holy Scriptures* published in New Georgian in Moscow in 1743 (see J. Woźniak, *Biblia Gruzińska* [Georgian Bible] in “Pro Georgia” 19 (2009), pg. 104.

³³ Grigol Peradze, *Sens prawdziwego obywatelstwa* [The Meaning of True Citizenship], pg. 201.

³⁴ “The heart and blood of every Georgian are stirred at the sound of the word – Homeland! At the sound of that work, the homeland, the sky looking down at Georgia, the mountains, forests, meadows on its villages and cities, at its wonderful monasteries, at the destroyed and forgotten fortified towers (...) A certain poet once compared the sky which looks at Tbilis with a precious stone, turquoise. The sky, which looks at Tbilisi, another Georgian compared with an iconostas, that is with a partition altar, adorned with icons in the temple, before which the faithful light candles and kiss icons. (...) How much the earth, on which we tread, can tell us, which is our warm prayer, our breath, our tears and our own blood. The fortresses tell us of the heroism of our ancestors, of their steadfast love of freedom, of their battles in defense of their homeland. The churches and monasteries tell us of our ancestor's spiritual quest, of their thirst for God, of our ancient cultural life. The voice and echo of those who hid themselves in the forests and valleys during the attacks of enemies, in order to save themselves for the homeland are preserved there. The whole ... nature of our country and the song of the stones are a second chronicle of our homeland (...). Nature speaks through philosophy, poetry, the religion of our ancestors, while the recorded chronicle is merely chronology, encyclopedia and dry history” (Grigol Peradze, *Sens prawdziwego obywatelstwa* [The Meaning of True Citizenship], pg. 197-199).

³⁵ Grigol Peradze, *Kazanie wygłoszone w Paryżu* [Homily Given in Paris], pg. 190.

appropriate word. For this reason, in order for life and success, and also the success and prosperity of his homeland – were fruitful, authentic and lasting, one should conform his aspirations to higher principles. In this case, that higher principle is God. Man should place his life in that great conception and conform his actions and life to that conception, of which good and evil have no boundaries, of which heaven covers the whole earth, which gives man's every goal universal and eternal meaning regardless of his location and limitations. Man and nation, which act in this way, find the purpose of their life and activity (...), and the worldview of that nation and its point of view ascend above the trifle and secondary issues, and that worldview lifts up and refines even the minor details of life³⁶.

People who truly love their homeland, cannot therefore depreciate good feelings and longings of a member of another nation. They should rather strive to understand and respect them, since "other countries also have their own beauty, indescribable spiritual beauty, which is felt, seen and experienced only by the one who calls that country his homeland."³⁷ In terms of interpersonal relations, love of one's homeland and nation is therefore authentic only when it is accompanied by love to one's neighbor, a member of another nation. Only such a person, who loves, that is "carries within himself the fire of God"³⁸, is able to proclaim and make peace. The fulfillment of this "testament of love and peace", which "is above all spiritual, religious and cultural in nature"³⁹, was, in the Holy Martyr's opinion, the passport of heavenly and earthly citizenship. Such holy citizenship "requires awareness and respect, demands understanding, thought, courage, humility, not as a slave, but as an enlightened person, understanding of other's thought and ability to search for and appreciate in others their humanity."⁴⁰ The witness of such a citizen often requires sacrifice, in which Archimandrite Grigol also took part in the Nazi concentration camp in Auschwitz. "Citizenship, he prophetically wrote, is offering oneself in sacrifice, burning oneself in order to give light to others (...) when others would rather remain in darkness and mud. (...) The content of citizenship is life, authentic life and Jesus Christ came into the world for that purpose, in order to teach man life and how to use that which we possess."⁴¹ In other words, the Saviour came to teach us how to be integral people able to realize the call to transfigure oneself and the surrounding world in accordance with the plan of God. Such a person, he wrote, possesses not only a homeland, geographically limited, but also a homeland that everyone of us carries

³⁶ Grigol Peradze, *Sens prawdziwego obywatelstwa* [The Meaning of True Citizenship], pg. 202.

³⁷ Ibid, pg. 197.

³⁸ Ibid, pg. 205.

³⁹ Ibid, pg. 200.

⁴⁰ Ibid, pg. 210-211.

⁴¹ Ibid, pg. 211.

within himself, which is hidden more and requires constant care”⁴². It is our humanity, created in the image of God. St. Grigol goes on to say: “If one guards himself, he also guards his homeland. Such a person has not only a religious calling to become God’s subject, to verify his life and citizenship, to give his small life great features. Such a person also carries peace and other treasures”⁴³.

The Priest-Martyr Grigol Peradze – a man of integration and reconciliation

Grigol Peradze’s whole life and academic work is a witness to obedience to the will of God. God calls man into existence and opens before him the possibility of acting in circumstances, in which his witness can show to be most useful, strengthen faith and increase love between people. It is astonishing and testimony to the power of God’s providence, that people appear in the appropriate time and place, who can speak of and witness to the plan that the Creator undertook in relation to man, in a simple manner using courageous words and not trying to be original nor following the prevalent style. Undoubtedly, this was God’s plan in Archimandrite Grigol Peradze’s life, when he led him out of Georgia as a young man, and through Germany, Belgium and France brought him to Poland already as a priest and monk, so that in this country, which became his second homeland, he could end his life as a martyr. Certainly, the Creator had a similar plan in the lives of St. Maximilian Kolbe, St. Theresa Benedict of the Cross (Edith Stein) and many others, less known priests, monks and nuns and also theologians such as Dietrich Bohnhoeffer, who also bore witness to the faithful truth in Jesus Christ. All of these witnesses, who by their attitude realized the idea expressed by another martyr of the Orthodox Church in Poland, St. Maksym Sandowycz, Priest – “My policy is the Holy Gospel”, in the dark times of war and hatred, they were rays of God’s peace and love penetrating right through humanity, despite his fall, enslavement and death.

Since the beginning of Christianity, followers of Christ have sacrificed their lives for their faith. The history of the Church is marked with the blood of the martyrs. Over the centuries, for believers, martyrdom has not meant a sentence of fate, which was unavoidable in certain periods of history, nor withstanding pointless suffering, which did not do any good for anyone. It was understood rather as an ideal, the most radical possible way of imitating Christ. The object of martyrdom in Christian understanding is therefore the person and actions of Jesus Christ, for whom this martyr voluntarily gave up his life. Christ, the first martyr, willingly gave himself up to death, and the following martyrs, are called to do

⁴² Ibid, pg. 206.

⁴³ Ibid.

likewise as a “second Christ”. Jesus Christ, being both truly God and truly man, became the sacrifice of reconciliation of God with man (see Rom. 5:10; 2 Cor 5:18; Col 1:20-21). The martyr, as “the second Christ”, becomes a sacrifice of reconciliation of man with his neighbor. Fr. Józef Tischner, when writing about martyrdom states: “How is it possible to spoil the image of a sacrifice, blur its meaning and cause that it become incomprehensible? We destroy the image of the sacrifice, when we keep the image of only destruction, and we blur the essence of the occurrence (...). A sacrifice is much more than cruelty. It shines with an additional radiance and throws light on consecration, which became a great possibility of man. Sacrifice is pain and death with meaning. Sacrifice rises above cruelty because of this meaning. Man is a creature able to sacrifice (...). But the idea of sacrifice is not everything. The shade of evil, which ruined creation, does not permit seeing reality. The essence of sacrifice is not therefore that it hurts, (...), that one dies from it. The essence of sacrifice is a gift. The point is to offer oneself and to retrieve oneself in that gift: “He who loses himself, saves himself”.⁴⁴ In this context, the words of the poem entitled *The Cherubic Hymn* by St. Grigol Peradze, where he described his mystical experience during a serious illness in Bonn in 1930, when he, as he testifies, nearly died.⁴⁵

“And today I understood, today I experienced
An amazing joy and astonishing praise!
A sinful heart fluttered – full of blood offering itself in sacrifice!
Frozen consciousness, a tongue fallen silent, (...)
Coldness overwhelmed the body, and then eternal warmth warmed it.
And I touched the sky like an arrow, and the earth which was under me.
The whole earth was then understandable, the vanity of humanity,
The root and meaning of human sin. (...)
Then at that moment I heard a voice from heaven:
“Where are you going, O poor servant?
Stay with your people, become a bridge to heaven,
Don’t measure the world with handfuls!
Love and care for it,
Find within it the plan of God!”⁴⁶

⁴⁴ J. Tischner, *Ksiądz na manowcach* [Priest Led Astray], „Znak” Publishers, Cracow 1999, pg. 93-94.

⁴⁵ See Grigol Peradze, *W służbie kultury gruzińskiej* [In Service to Georgian Culture], pg. 61.

⁴⁶ Grigol Peradze, *Hymn Cherubinów* [Cherubic Hymn] In *Dzieła zebrane* [Selected Works], v. 3, pg. 140-141.

St. Paul says: “Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has passed away, behold, the new has come. All this is from God, who through Christ reconciled us to himself and gave us the ministry of reconciliation; that is, in Christ God was reconciling the world to himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and entrusting to us the message of reconciliation” (2 Cor 5:17-19). A martyr is therefore a propagator of peace and as “one making peace” he becomes “a new creation” – a person worthy of the name son of God, as Jesus Christ proclaimed in the *Sermon on the Mount*. The grace of martyrdom is therefore a deifying grace, by which a person becomes a human hypostasis – an integrated person. While making reference to St. Maximus the Confessor’s *Amiqurum Liber* St. Grigol writes, “this surpassing oneself, exceeding beyond humanity, and in this sense a person forms himself to the degree that he surpasses himself. (...) A person – *prosopon* – is called to become a hypostasis, so as to unify the created nature with the uncreated through love thanks to being filled with grace (...). By grace, people unite that which is of God with that which is human in their own hypostasis in the image of Christ and become “a created God” – God by grace. (...) A hypostasis is therefore a Christian’s only personal and unique way of existence⁴⁷.

When St. Grigol Peradze gave his life up for the life of others, he testified to the fact that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God and in His name sins are forgiven. In this way, he witnessed to his faith in God and man, who is created in the image and likeness of God. He also bore witness to the fact that the one who realizes his calling to holiness and *theosis* becomes an integrated person. St. Grigol Peradze, the priest-martyr and professor of the University of Warsaw wrote, “There is only one value, which is priceless and incorruptible, for which the Son of God, Our Saviour Jesus Christ sacrificed His life – man’s dignity and his eternal soul. We should serve this soul, which is whiter than the angels, here, in order to preserve it innocent and pure throughout thousands of trials.”⁴⁸

⁴⁷ P. Evdokimov, *Kobieta i zbawienie świata* [Woman and the Salvation of the World], trans. E. Wolicka, “W Drodze” Publishers, Poznań 1991, pg. 56-57.

⁴⁸ Grigol Peradze, *Kazanie wygłoszone w Paryżu* [Homily Given in Paris], pg. 190-191.