ANNALS

OF THE

UNIVERSITY OF BUCHAREST

PHILOSOPHY SERIES

2 0 1 2

Number II

SUMAR • SOMMAIRE • CONTENTS

EDITOR'S FORWARD

This issue is dedicated to the works of an on-going research bilateral project between the Romanian Academy of Sciences and the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences. Part of the Romanian research team is the Faculty of Philosophy of the University of Bucharest. The project subject is "State-Church relationship in the Balkans – History and future."

During the first year of the research project, precisely in June 15-16, 2012, the Romanian team organized at the Faculty of Philosophy a workshop entitled ***Culture and Religions in the Carpatho-Balkanic region: History and Actuality***. The workshop tried to get answers to various questions that confront today's researchers and common people in both countries.

The dramatic political and social changes which took place in Bulgaria and Romania during the last two decades significantly affected religious attitudes of Romanians and Bulgarians. In order to understand the consequences of these changes, we need to get a deeper vision on the fundamental relations between religion and its institution – the Church – and various domains of life: be they political power, social life, economy, or culture. Our research centers on revealing principally the strong connection between religion and culture and how this reflects on religious attitudes. What were the relations between the Romanian and Bulgarian intelligentsia and the Christian Churches, especially the Orthodox one? How was religion perceived by the cultural elites in these two countries? In addition, what cultural role the Church played in the process of creating a cultivated society? We also need to take into consideration the three monotheisms and the fundamental Christian confessions which many centuries ago their believers had in our country. How did this variety of religious attitudes succeeded in living together or, on the contrary, what made them become enemies? Also what were their contributions to the cultural life of the two countries?

Another relevant aspect of this region was, and still is, the rural religious attitude, which includes and maintains active pre-Christian values and traditions.

Taking into consideration such aspects of the religious history of our countries, we could try to get answers that could be useful in understanding the new challenges of our contemporary society. What is the current position of different religious communities in our societies, and what are the consequences of the contemporary globalization process? Could one speak about certain

misuse of religious beliefs by various social and political institutions? Is it also possible that religious institutions themselves misuse their power in our countries?

These questions are those which this research project tries to answer. Being the first research meeting between the two teams and their guests, the workshop of June 2012 did not answer to the many questions raised or not yet have yet to get a satisfactory answer. The future researches and meetings will contribute greatly to a better configuration and deepening of the researches.

These articles represent some of the domains of interest and possible future developments. They treat very different aspects: from theoretical approaches concerning the relationship between religion and culture to definitional and methodological questions in the study of religion and culture, or the relationship between philosophy and religion during the beginning of a cultural life in this region. Other articles treat historical or cultural medieval Byzantine patterns, which influenced the entire Balkanic region.

The great majority of the articles deal with contemporary aspects concerning the minor or major nationalities in the region and their religions (Orthodox, Catholics, Muslims, and Adventists) and their distribution in the two countries. The political changes after 1989 and the challenges of the new society and its process of implementation are also treated in some contributions. It is of course necessary to extend the area of research to all the three monotheistic religions and their believers who lived or are living nowadays in our countries and their cultural contribution to the pluralism of our cultural life. This is necessary for the next research activities included in this project.

MIHAELA POP
Editor

DEFINITIONAL AND METHODOLOGICAL QUESTIONS IN THE STUDY OF RELIGION AND CULTURE IN THE CARPATHO-BALKAN CONTEXT

JOHN FARINA[1]

Abstract

The study of Carpato-Balkan religion presents methodological challenges to researchers. What do we mean by "religion"? How does it differ from other terms such as "spirituality" or "theology"? What methods are available for the study of it all in the context of a particular culture? What special methodological and definitional questions might pertain to the study of Carpato-Balkan religion?

Keywords: religion, methodology, church, spirituality, theology, culture.

Writing some years back, French scholar of religion, Michael de Certeau, commenting on the relationship between religion and culture, noted that we really cannot see religion apart from culture, because all the ways in which religion manifests themselves are products of culture. Sacred music, writings, rituals, spaces, symbols bear the mark of the culture that formed them.[2]

Despite that, certain religious believers wish to claim that their faith is somehow different from any other, because it is the true faith, created by God, and given us by Abraham, Jesus or Mohammed or some prophet sent from on high. The persistence of such claims in today's world where knowledge of other religions has never been higher is as astonishing as it is certain.

The giants of the modern study of religion – and from a Romanian perspective, we must especially remember Mircea Eliade – were motivated by a modern spirit and methodology. They were confident they could abstract certain universals from world religions and study them, free from the passions and deliriums of faith. To them is due a great debt, because before them it was very hard indeed to see religion apart from theological polemics, which did very little to advance our understanding of the role that religion plays in the world's culture.

---

[1]　George Mason University, USA.
[2]　See Michel de Certeau, *La Culture au Pluriel*, Union Générale d'Editions, 1974; *idem*, « *La Fable Mystique* ». vol. 1, XVIe-XVIIe Siècle, Editions Gallimard, 1982.

Today, however, we are in a new moment. Modernity's analytical method sees too cold, too impersonal to explain certain aspects of religion. The demographic, technological, and economic changes that we refer to as globalization, bring with them challenges to individual and social identities. Such moments of transformation in the past most often have led to the rise of new religions. Today it is no different, in as much as there is widespread revival in religious interest around the world, especially in places like Eastern Europe where nations are rebuilding their civil society sectors.

Many years back, when the excitement about the study of spirituality was fresh in the American academy, I offered an analysis of the ways in which the term "spirituality" was being defined and of some of the methodological problems and opportunities that represented.[3] I believe that many of those issues are relevant today for the study of Carpatho-Balkan religion. In the first part of this paper, I will reintroduce that earlier analysis and then, in the second part, I will raise several questions about its application to the Carpatho-Balkan context.

Definitional Questions

What do we mean by "religion"? How does it differ from other terms such as "spirituality," or "theology"? What methods are available for the study of it in the context of a particular culture? What special methodological and definitional questions might pertain to the study of religion? My comments about definition will focus on English language sources.

The first term that must be distinguished is "spirituality." Today growing numbers of people refer to themselves as "spiritual but not religious."[4] This odd creed probably means they are uncomfortable with the institutional and doctrinal dimensions of religion but happy with the experiential. In the Pew poll, ninety-two percent of the "spiritual but not religious" said they believe in God. Sixty-nine percent pray at least monthly; almost half pray daily. Sixty-three percent say religion is very or somewhat important to them.

A closer look at the term "spirituality" will make this clear.

The English word spirituality is derived from the French *spiritualité,* which came into common use in the seventeenth century. In the writings of Bossuet and Fenelon, the word is used to indicate the personal relation between men and women and God. It stresses the subjective aspects of the relation, emphasizing the psychological disposition of the individual. This use contrasts

---

[3] "The Study of Spirituality: Some Problems and Opportunities", *U.S. Catholic Historian*, vol. 8, no 1, Winter-Spring, 1989, pp. 15-31.

[4] For example, see the 9 October 2012 poll by the Pew Forum on Religion in Public Life in Washington, DC, entitled "Religion and the Unaffiliated", www.pewforum.org/Unaffiliated/nones-on-the-rise.aspx.

with the earlier use of the Latin *spiritualitas* dating back to the fifth century, which, in Josef Sudbrack's words, signified "the formal and creative element at the core of Christian existence."[5] During the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries in Europe and North America the term remained the domain of the Roman Catholics. A survey of devotional writing in North America by Jon Alexander showed that the word did not appear in the titles of any of the more popular published works before 1800. Mainline Protestants simply avoided the term, preferring to speak of "devotion," in the fashion of William Law"s 1728 classic *A Serious Call to a Devout and Holy Life,* or "*piety*" in a style made famous by the German Pietists Philipp Jakob Spener, August Hermann Frank, and Nicolas Ludwig Count von Zinzendorf.[6]

In the nineteenth century the advent of the Holiness movement in the United States prompted the use of such words as "inner life" or "hidden life" to describe the divine-human relationship. Thomas C. Upham, for example, wrote in 1845 his *Principles of the Interior or Hidden Life* that was a careful analysis of the spiritual life that certainly would be labeled spirituality today.[7] Even among Catholics, however, spirituality enjoyed little popularity until our own time. Alexander is right, I think, in speculating that the reason for this was a reluctance to conjure up the specter of emotional excess and heterodoxy associated with some of the French writers like Madame Guyon and Jean Joseph Surin who used *spiritualité* to describe what was later branded as Quietism. But with the growing willingness of Catholic theology to incorporate insights from modern psychology, a way was cleared for using the word as did Louis Bouyer in the 1950s to mean "the study of the reactions that the objects of religious faith arouse in the religious consciousness."[8]

During the 1960s and 1970s, the use of the term spread widely in North America. Alexander's study found that the number of books and articles containing spirituality in their titles, listed in six major bibliographic guides to religious literature, rose from eleven in 1960 to forty-two in 1976. With this has come a tendency to use the word in a generic sense, as the following examples illustrate. Hans Urs von Balthasar, in a 1965 American edition of his work, defined spirituality as "the basic practical or existential attitude of man that is the consequence and expression of the way in which he understands his religious or ethically committed existence. The way in which he acts and reacts

---

[5]   Josef Sudbrack, s.v. "Spirituality" in Karl Rahner, ed., *The Concise Sacramentum Mundi*, New York, 1975, p. 1624.

[6]   Jon Alexander, "What Do Recent Writers Mean by Spirituality?", *Spirituality Today 32*, September 1980, pp. 247-256.

[7]   Thomas C. Upham, *Principles of the Interior or Hidden Life Boston*, Boston, 1845.

[8]   Louis Bouyer, *The Spirituality of the New Testament and Fathers*, trans. M. Ryan, New York, 1963, p. viii, in Alexander, p. 250. See also Stephen Rossetti, "Psychology and Spirituality", *Review for Religious*, July-August 1981, pp. 503-527.

habitually throughout his life according to his objective and ultimate insights and decisions."[9] Here the emphasis is clearly on the subject's attitude and the practical acts flowing from those religious commitments or ultimate insights that animate an individual. Gordon Wakefield in the 1983 *Westminster Dictionary of Christian Spirituality* offers a similarly broad description. "Spirituality is a word used to describe those attitudes, beliefs, and practices, which animate people's lives and help them to reach out towards super-sensible realities."[10] In his inimitable style, Raimundo Panikkar pushed the term to its broadest limits by speaking of spirituality as "one typical way of handling the human condition."[11]

Each of these definitions, with its emphasis on non-specific terms like "ultimate insights," "human condition," or "super-sensible realities" begs the question: How is spirituality, thus defined, different from "religion"? With the new awareness of non-theistic religions, such as Buddhism, in the West, the definition of religion has gone through a metamorphosis. Definitions based on specific theological presuppositions that are built into any talk about belief in a divine ruling power are less popular than they were in the 1950s. Definitions based on the etymology of the word are in vogue today. Thus, we often hear religion described as that which binds one to one's origin and goal or that which one constantly turns to, reflecting possible meanings of the verbs *religari* and *relegere*, which are derived from the noun religio.[12] Another common tactic today is to offer only a judgment-free evaluation of the phenomena of religion. Ninian Smart elects in *The Religious Experience of Mankind* not to define but rather to describe six aspects of religion. They are the experiential, the symbolic, the social, the ethical, the institutional, and the doctrinal.[13] William Lessa and Evon Vogt in their reader on an anthropological approach to religion offer what sounds like Paul Tillich socialized: "Religion may be described as a system of beliefs and practices directed toward the ultimate concern of a society."[14] Christopher Dawson's definition, although it is limited to a Western theological perspective, like Lessa's and Vogt's, shifts the emphasis away from the individual's experience to the broader social and institutional dimensions and thus is relevant here.

---

[9]   Hans Urs von Balthasar, "The Gospel as Norm and Test of All Spirituality in the Church", *Spirituality in the Church*, Christian Duquoc, ed., *Concilium*, vol. 9, New York, 1965, p. 7.

[10]   Gordon S. Wakefield, s.v. "Spirituality", *Westminster Dictionary of Christian Spirituality*, Philadelphia, 1984, p. 361.

[11]   R. Panikkar, *The Trinity and the Religious Experience of Man: Icon and Mystery*, New York, 1973, p. 9, in Alexander, p. 251.

[12]   See Norbert Schiffers, s.v. "Religion" in Karl Rahner, ed., *Encyclopedia of Theology*, p. 1359.

[13]   Ninian Smart, *The Religious Experience of Mankind*, New York, 1969, p. 4.

[14]   Wm. Lessa and Evon Vogt, eds*., Reader in Comparative Religion: An Anthropological Approach*, New York, 1958, p. 1.

"The word used to describe man's relation to divine or superhuman powers and the various organized systems of belief and worship in which these relations are expressed."[15] Today it is common for scholars to use the term without attempting to delineate the special domain of spirituality vis-a-vis religion.[16]

Indeed it is difficult to see why Wakefield's or Panikkar's definitions of spirituality, for instance, could not serve well as abstract definitions of religion, or why Smart's description of the "experiential dimension" of religion could not substitute for spirituality. The fact that there is little effort made distinguish between the definitions of these terms is, evidently, due to the overlap of the two. What is not plain in some of the formal definitions is more discernible in what is studied and how it is done. When spirituality is studied, in virtually every case I have seen, the scholar is attempting to highlight the personal, internal dimensions, over against the institutional, external dimensions. Religion no doubt can and does cover those internal dimensions, but it also involves the study of institutions, their polity, their *cultus*, their symbols, and their language. Simply put, spirituality can be seen as a subset within the larger field of religion.

For this reason, definitions like Wakefield's and Panikkar's that avoid using the term religion are needlessly confusing and as such inadequate. Religion has been sufficiently stripped of its theological biases and made serviceable to the broadest constituency by means of the development alluded to above. We need not push its borders out any further by attempting to make spirituality a more inclusive term. Yet even if we let this tentative distinction between religion and spirituality stand, we are confronted with a problem. The primitive experience of the transcendent, which is the focus of spirituality, is doubtless a basis for further religious reflection and action; the generation of a mythology, the development of doctrine, the shaping of rituals, the building of an institution, all begin with the personal encounter of the sacred. Rudolf Otto similarly attempted to isolate the essence of religion in the encounter of the "the holy."[17] Also like Otto, the users of spirituality can be criticized for overemphasizing the psychology of religion to the neglect of other elements such as the moral and the theological. Try as they might, the students of spirituality will soon move from the study of the personal encounter of the numinous to broader areas that are the domain of other specialties. The analysis

---

[15] Christopher Dawson, *Religion and World History*, Garden City, 1975, p. 28.

[16] See for example Edward Kinerk, "Toward a Method for the Study of Spirituality", *Review for Religious 40*, 1981, pp. 3-19; Stephen Rossetti, "Psychology and Spirituality", *Review for Religious*, July-August 1981, pp. 503-527; Richard P. Hardy, "Christian Spirituality Today: Notes on Its Meaning", *Spiritual Life 28*, Fall 1982, pp. 151-159; George Aschenbrenner, "A God for a Dark Journey: Trends and Issues in Spirituality", *Review for Religious*, March-April 1983, pp. 174-191; Thomas Berry, "Classical Western Spirituality and the American Experience", *Cross Currents 30*, Winter 1980-1981, pp. 388-399.

[17] Rudoph Otto, *Das Heilige. Über das Irrationale in der Idee des Göttlichen und sein Verhältnis zum Rationalen,* Breslau, 1917.

of a spirituality that calls itself Christian or Hindu, for example, will demand that some criteria, theological or at least historical, be used to evaluate how faithfully it reflects its tradition. Even the attempt to highlight subjective experience will very quickly force one to look also at the social context in which the subject lives.

Why then use the term spirituality at all? Why not simply speak of religion with its manifold methodologies: psychology of religion, sociology of religion, theology, phenomenology of religion, and the like? It is evident that this could be done, and indeed, is done by some today. Why then does the term spirituality continue to grow in popularity when it, with its imprecise definitions and lack of any special methods, appears to add nothing to our understanding? Spirituality is a term that, at least in our own time, has worked its way into the academy from the grass roots up. It has grown up from the fertile seeds of the Vatican II reform, the catechetical renewal, the Neo-Evangelical and Pentecostal movements, the peace movements of the 1960s and the like. Religion in its modern usage had its origin in the optimistic days of the late nineteenth century during which men like Max Muller looked with great hope upon the new science of the day with the belief that when it applied to the subject matter of traditional religion it could yield a new breakthrough in metaphysical understanding. A vision of a grand Romantic synthesis of science and religion animated the earliest practitioners of *Religionswissenschaft* in a way that is virtually incomprehensible to many contemporaries. The promise of a happy marriage between science and religion was not fulfilled. I would suggest that although *Religionswissenschaft* has yielded useful insights, it has, in the minds of many, taken the heart, or I should say the spirit out of religion by its endless objectification and analysis. For all that it does, it does not deal with the experience of faith in a way that is satisfying to the popular mind. For despite our sophistication and our appreciation of the benefits of scientific inquiry, many sense that there is a dimension of reality that science with its positivistic presuppositions cannot adequately deal with. Ours is an age that has seen the successes of modern science and its failures. Spirituality puts back into religion just what science threatened to remove: "spirit"; what better word is there to signify the numinous, mysterious, transcendent dimension that religion, before Freud, and Marx, and Muller, always represented? The persistence of spirituality, then, is yet another sign of the passing of the modern, or as some prefer, the post-modern age.[18]

However, as much as it is a rejection of *Religionswissenschaft*'s "religion" the popularity of spirituality is not simply a return to a pre-critical religion. This becomes obvious when one looks at the ways in which spirituality is being

---

[18]   On the passing of the modern era see Huston Smith, *Beyond the Post-Modern Mind*, New York, 1982; John Lukacs, *The Passing of the Modem Age*, New York, 1970.

studied. Students of spirituality are using the tools of modern history, theology, and the social sciences, but insisting on speaking of spirituality and in so doing introducing a symbol of the numinous that by its very presence critiques modernity's reductionist tendencies and rejects its claims that its methods yield positive knowledge that is the highest form of human comprehension.

On another level, one that reaches further beyond the walls of academia, there is another reason for the current preference for using spirituality rather than a term composed of the word religion. Religion, simply put, has a public-relations problem in our own day that spirituality escapes. The barbs of early twentieth century scientism were aimed at religion. Marx called religion, not spirituality, the opiate of the masses, Freud wrote *The Future of an Illusion* about religion and H. L. Mencken and numerous other detractors unleashed their tirades against that hallowed term. However, even more to the point, religion, in its popular usage, is inextricably bound to the institutional expressions of the world's great faiths, and this has made it liable to the archetypical disdain for tradition. Religious institutions also have at times, as in the period of the Reformation, demonstrated the ability to place limits on the experience of the numinous in a manner that produces widespread calls for reform and the multiplication of fresh forms of expression for the experience of transcendence. Institutional religion, at such moments, is stripped of its sense of transcendence and mystery.

Karl Rahner insightfully commented on this process in our own times. As he saw it, the contemporary person has difficulty in seeing a definitely articulated religion "with its thousand and one truths, customs, prescriptions, and rules, as the concrete obligation of God's will and the necessary institution for his salvation." People sense and revere the nameless and inexpressible. And for that reason, they find a complicated dogmatic system "too knowledgeable by far, too clever, rationalistic and positivist, too ready to lay down the law." Rahner made this the basis for his argument for the rehabilitation of the concept of mystery in Catholic theology. For him, mystery is not a provisional reality that dissolves as truth is revealed to our reason and that will be wiped away in the *visio beatifica*. Instead he suggests that mystery is the "primordial and permanent" reality and that, rather than explaining it away, we need to be grasped by it and to abide in the positive state of unknowing, which is "constitutive and essential" to true knowledge of God.[19] Rahner's analysis provides yet another reason why spirituality as a symbol of the numinous, which is not wedded to institutional religion, appeals to an age seeking a new entrance way to holy ground.

His analysis also suggests why spirituality is currently more popular than "spiritual theology," a word Pierre Pourrat used synonymously with spirituality

---

[19] Karl Rahner, *Theological Investigations*, Vol. IV, New York, 1982, pp. 36-41.

in his 1920s work on the history of spirituality.[20] Spiritual theology suggests that spirituality is a branch of theology; that suggestion may well be perceived by some as an attempt to capture the mystery of God with a complicated system, "too knowledgeable by far, too clever, rationalistic, and positivist." Although contemporary theology has moved away from those tendencies, as Rahner himself so well exemplifies, spiritual theology is a term from a past when all the trends he castigated were present. Also, the term is unattractive in our age of the dialogue of world religions in which non-theistic religions play such a large part. Those are two formidable obstacles that spiritual theology is hard-pressed to overcome.

If, then, we accept that the common use of the term spirituality emphasizes the fundamental human experience of mystery, what then is the relation of it to "mysticism"? There is a significant body of literature on the subject, with much of the best work being done this century. Harvey Egan's helpful book, *What Are They Saying About Mysticism*, makes clear the broad range of definitions of mysticism.[21] To survey them all would be impossible here. For our purposes, I need only highlight two, and compare them to spirituality. Rahner offered a traditional, closely drawn theological definition of mysticism as a "purely non-conceptual experience of transcendence without imagery."[22] This insistence on the non-conceptual nature of the experience is the basis for the traditional distinctions in the West between meditation and the highest forms of infused contemplation, a gratuitous revelation of God that, in Rahner's words, "destroys the conceptual and categorical insofar as they claim to be ultimate realities."[23] Andrew Louth, author of a work on the origin of mysticism in the West, defines his research as "a study of the supposed essence of religion, or God consciousness that precinds from any particular dogmatic framework."[24] Louth implies that the mystical experience has the non-conceptual character that Rahner stressed. He also adds an important element in his assertion that mysticism forms the essence of religion, an assertion that is not explicitly made by any of the definitions of spirituality considered above. Clearly, Louth's definition focuses more precisely on the fundamental experience of transcendence than does a definition of spirituality as von Balthasar's that speaks only of a "basic practical or existential attitude of man that is the consequence of the way in which he under stands his religious… existence."[25]

---

[20]   Pierre Pourrat, *Christian Spirituality*, trans. W. H. Mitchell, S. P. Jacques, Westminster, M.D., 1953.
[21]   Harvey D. Egan, *What Are They Saying About Mysticism* , New York, 1982.
[22]   Karl Rahner, "Religious Enthusiasm and the Experience of Grace", *Theological Investigations 16*, Baltimore, 1967, p. 47.
[23]   Karl Rahner, *The Dynamic Element in the Church*, New York, 1964, p. 147.
[24]   Andrew Louth, s.v. "Mysticism", *Westminster Dictionary of Spirituality*, p. 274.
[25]   Hans Urs Von Balthasar, as cited in Egan, p. 10.

It would seem, then, that if people today are seeking what I have called a symbol of the numinous to describe the core of religious experience, then mysticism is a better choice than spirituality. It is also evident from a sampling of some of the more popular definitions that numerous attempts have been made to delineate the exact perimeters of mystical experience, attempts that are much more developed than the broad-ranging definitions of spirituality we have seen. William James's famous four marks of mystical experience represent a careful attempt to determine the extent of mystical experience and to place it in and thereby distinguish it from other varieties of religious experience.[26] Although some might find the marks of ineffability, noetic quality, transiency, and passivity either too general or simply inaccurate, at the very least they represent a serious attempt at careful analysis. R. C. Zaehner in his famous work, *Mysticism Sacred and Profane*, challenged the assertion that all mystical experiences are the same. He did so by a penetrating study of mystical experience that discovered no less than three distinct mystical states, only one of which is properly speaking theistic.[27] Evelyn Underhill in her classic work on mysticism spent a major chapter trying to define what she described as one of the most abused words in the English language. After speaking of mysticism as "the expression of the innate tendency of the human spirit towards complete harmony with the transcendental order," she devoted the rest of the hefty volume to the justly famous study of the characteristics of mysticism and the five great stages of the mystical life.[28] One last example will suffice: that of Underhill's mentor, Baron Friedrich Von Hugel. His masterful two-volume study, *The Mystical Element of Religion,* offers an analysis of mystical experience in relation to the intellectual and institutional.[29] The result is a work that, like the other studies of mysticism mentioned, offers a precision and depth that far outweighs anything I have seen written on spirituality.

Mysticism then appears to not only offer us a more clearly defined explanation of the fundamental experience of transcendence, but one that has been studied with much greater precision and comprehensiveness than spirituality. Why then does the latter term continue to grow in popularity? Why not instead speak of mysticism? First, it should be noted that some people have done just that. Bernard McGinn, for example wrote a history of Christian mysticism, and the series that I edited was originally called the Classics of Western Mysticism until marketing research indicated that Spirituality would be

---

[26] William James, *The Varieties of Religious Experience*, New York, 1902.
[27] R. C. Zaehner, *Mysticism Sacred and Profane*, rpt. New York, 1961.
[28] Evelyn Underhill, *Mysticism*, London, 1911, part 1, chap. 1.
[29] Frederick von Hügel, *The Mystical Element of Religion: As Studied in the Lives of Catherine of Genoa and Her Friends.* 2 vols, New York, 1908.

a better choice.[30] This latter fact is interesting, because it is a clue to one of the reasons why mysticism is not as popular a term, at least in the U.S.A. It is beyond dispute that Protestantism, especially in the forms that have had the greatest impact on America, has an aversion to the term mysticism. Reformed piety, which formed the bedrock of the dominant cultural and religious force of the U.S. Puritanism stressed the demystification of religion and hence had no interest in using the word mysticism except to debunk Catholicism. The stark Puritan churches of New England with their large clear windows and plain white walls are a testimony to a piety that celebrated the light of the Reformation in which God in Christ shown plainly for all to see. No "hocus pocus," no shadowy rituals in an unknown tongue, and no priestly caste to mediate God's presence were tolerated. God had revealed Himself in the Scriptures where all could plainly learn His ways. Outside of the Reformed tradition, this disdain for mystery was also present among the Methodists, who along with the Baptists became the dominant forces in the religious life of rural and frontier Americans in the nineteenth century. Wesley, himself was first attracted to the mysticism of Gregory of Nyssa, George Lopez, and Fenelon, but later repudiated mystical experience as a "trap" that lulled Christians into passivity and made them neglect their duties to preach the gospel and do good works. An apt illustration of the attitude toward mysticism in nineteenth-century American Protestantism comes from the life of Orestes Brownson. Raised as a Congregationalist, he was in turn a Unitarian, a Universalist, and the founder of his own Church of the Future before becoming a Catholic. He can lay claim to having had one of the most astute philosophical and theological minds in his day, yet, while on the verge of converting to Catholicism in 1843, he counseled a young friend with mystical leanings, named Isaac Hecker. He encouraged him to join the church or risk being deceived by his enthusiasm and fertile religious imagination. "You must either become a Catholic or a mystic," he warned, fully oblivious to the possibility of being both, since "mystic" then connoted a confused, vague-thinking enthusiast with serious emotional imbalances.[31] Protestantism in America has not lost its distaste for the word, and hence, spirituality is preferred by Protestants and by others wishing to work in an ecumenical atmosphere.

However, there is yet another reason why mysticism is not a popular one that centers on an ongoing debate about the relationship of mystical experience to Christian perfection, a debate that lasted over the centuries among Catholics. The classical distinction between ascetical and mystical theology brings the

---

[30]   Bernard McGinn, *The Foundations of Mysticism*, New York, 1991; idem, *The Flowering of Mysticism*, New York, 1998. The series I edited is *The Classics of Western Spirituality,* New York, 1979-present.

[31]   For example see Wesley's critique of Moravian Quietism in his Journal, Nov. 1, 1739 and Sept. 3, 1741, in Albert Outler, ed., *John Wesley*, New York, 1964, pp. 254-376. 24. Brownson to Hecker, June 6, 1844, ms., Paulist Fathers Archives, Washington, DC.

issue into focus. Some like A. A. Tanquerey in his *The Spiritual Life* argued for a basic discontinuity between the ordinary spiritual life of asceticism and the extraordinary mystical life that involved special graces and experiences limited to a few.[32] Others, like Reginald Garrigou-Lagrange in his *The Three Ages of the Interior Life*, stressed the continuity of the ascetical and mystical lives, emphasizing the commonality and accessibility of mystical experience.[33] Although the latter view seems to be more prevalent today, there still linger certain misgivings. However much one might wish to stress that in some sense all Christians are mystical, the idea simply does not have the cogency to stick, since the term mystic, when used either in its laudatory or pejorative senses, has so often been reserved for a person who had extraordinary experiences; most folks do not want to place themselves in that category any more than they wish to refer to themselves as "saintly," even though certain Protestants insist that all true believers are saints.

For these reasons, then, spirituality has won the popularity contest at least for the time being over the analogous terms, e.g. Spiritual theology, mysticism, and religion. It remains for us to consider some of the special problems confronted in studying spirituality, the opportunities created by the current situation, and the implications for Carphato-Balkanic religion.

Two More-Recent Methods

Currently numerous methods are being used to study spirituality many of which are eclectic. I would like to look at two different approaches, as used in recent studies. The first approach looks at historical manifestations of specific examples of spirituality in America. The second attempts to draw on history and observation of current trends as a basis for making statements about general characteristics of "American spirituality."

Historians are by nature jacks-of-all-trades and commonly use methods from the social sciences and theology when analyzing spirituality. Charles Hambrick Stowe's *The Practice of Piety: Puritan Devotional Disciplines in Seventeenth Century New England* is a good example of this. He took as his subject "the form, content, and spiritual impact of the worship and private devotional activity" of seventeenth-century New Englanders. In a skillful fashion, he blended a theological-historical approach with a social history methodology, influenced directly by recent developments in American studies that have highlighted the importance of borrowing techniques from

---

[32]   Adolphe Tanquerey, *The Spiritual Life: A Treatise on Ascetical and Mystical Theology*, Tournai, Belgium, 1932.

[33]   Reginald Garrigou-Lagrange, *Trois ages de la vie interieure. English*, tr. by Sister M. Timothea Doyle, St. Louis, 1947-1948.

anthropology, sociology, and economics. Typically, Hambrick-Stowe looked for new data, which would bring to light the people's devotional experiences better, perhaps, than the much-studied sermons and tracts. This he found in devotional manuals. By looking at the actual practice of devotion and by using neglected sources, he was able to draw certain conclusions with implications for our understanding of Puritan theology. Perry Miller's implication that Puritanism stressed rationality above affectivity appears dubious when the numerous devotional practices of the people are studied. Present from the beginning of Puritanism in New England, they were not desperate late seventeenth-century inventions; nor were Puritans only interested in conversion to the neglect of the ongoing journey. Contrary to some commonly held notions, Hambrick-Stowe found that: "salvation in Puritan spirituality was not a fully achieved state but always a journey and a goal."[34]

Another work on the history of spirituality in America that deserves mention is Joseph P. Chinnici's *Devotion to the Holy Spirit in American Catholicism*: *1875-1901*. In this work, Chinnici attempts to trace the development of the devotion among American Catholics during the last quarter of the nineteenth century. He focuses on the emergence of two distinct traditions: one embodied by Isaac T. Hecker in his 1875 *Exposition on the Needs of the Church and the Age,* and the other reflected in Otto Zardetti's *Special Devotion to the Holy Ghost*. Throughout, Chinnici is concerned with the cultural as well as the theological significance of the devotion, mindful of the French structuralist school and the social anthropology of Mary Douglas. He illustrates that "Spirit" functioned as a symbol of synthesis in an age racked by the unsettling forces that threatened to break up the traditional worldview. The development of the Hecker tradition, which stressed the suitability of devotion to the Spirit for all American Catholics, is carefully traced, as is the Zardetti tradition, inherited from Henry Manning and developed as a special devotion for clergy.[35]

The historical approach used in our examples stresses the concreteness of spirituality. It is the phenomenon of the human experience of God, as it is manifested in specific historical situations that the historian seeks. As Michel de Certeau stressed, there can be no separating the phenomenon from its cultural, historical expressions. The structures of society, the terms in which it voices its aspirations, the objective and subjective forms of the common conscience, build up the religious conscience, which in turn manifests them. A culture is the language of spiritual experience.[36] Pierre Pourrat's approach of chronicling the development of major spiritual traditions with little regard to the broader

---

[34]   Charles Hambrick-Stowe, *The Practice of Piety*, Chapel Hill, 1982, p. ix.
[35]   Joseph P. Chinnici*, Devotion to the Holy Spirit in American Catholicism*: *1875-1901*, a volume in the *Sources of American Spirituality*, New York, 1985.
[36]   Michel de Certeau, "Culture and Experience", *Concilium 19*, New York, 1966, pp. 3-31.

cultural context would find little favor among the new breed of historian of spirituality. Just as the history-of-ideas school has been forced to acknowledge the attacks of social historians, so will these new historians critique the old style historians? For example, Andrew Louth's *Origins of Mysticism in the West* when judged by social historical standards offers a picture of ideas functioning in a cultural vacuum.[37] For these reasons, the tendency among some to use spirituality in a generic sense is unsettling to a historian, for without understanding the culture in which a given spirituality was lived, chances are good that we will misinterpret it. A definition historians would like, which avoids the generic problem is offered by Carolyn Osiek: "the experience, reflection, and articulation of the assumptions and consequences of religious faith as it is lived out in a concrete situation."[38]

When we turn to a second currently used approach, we are presented with a distinct methodology. A popular technique is to describe broad general characteristics that are said to be part of what is simply called American spirituality. An example of this is Jean Le Clercq's address delivered at the American College in Louvain in February 1983. He is careful to restrict himself to American Catholic spirituality, which, he argues, is popular, committed, and pluralistic. What was the basis for obtaining these three characteristics? Simply Le Clercq's knowledge of American history, his current observations as a French "lover of America", and a rather casual survey of students and faculty at Fordham who were asked to list what they thought were the main traits of American spirituality. Le Clercq, reflecting on American culture with skill and wit, is part of a long tradition that dates back at least as far as Jean de Crevecoeur's 1782 *Letters from an American Farmer* and has included, most notably, Alexis de Tocqueville's *Democracy in America* and Jacques Maritain's *Reflections on America*.[39] Another example of the same approach is Joseph A. Tetlow's article "American Catholic Spirituality." Maintaining that the American experience has left Catholics with a unique spirituality that shapes public worship, church polity, and individual interior life, he lists the following marks of that spirituality: it is ahistorical, democratic, functional, provisional, therapy-oriented, world-building, and not given to the *via negativa*. In each case his analysis rests on identifying a common trait of the American character and tracing its impact on spirituality. For example, American spirituality is said to be "experiential" because "Americans take 'experience" as one of the primary categories of being and knowing." It is "ahistorical" because "Catholics tend to ignore our history in the United States." It is "experimental" because "American

---

[37] Andrew Louth, *The Origins of the Christian Mystical Tradition*, Oxford, 1981.
[38] Carolyn Osiek, "Reflections on an American Spirituality", *Spiritual Life 22*, 1976, p. 230.
[39] Jean Le Clercq, "The Distinctive Characteristics of Roman Catholic American Spirituality", *Louvain Studies 9*, Spring 1983, pp. 293-306.

life-style was founded in a repudiation of the past."[40] There is doubtless a great deal of truth in the analyses of Le Clercq and Tetlow, and I have at times used a similar method myself.[41] They represent ways of studying the impact of culture on spirituality and certainly, that impact was profound. It is important to note, however, that their method incorporates a use of history as the basis for interpretation. Le Clercq, although he used as a resource his own survey of current trends in American spirituality, clearly pointed to his dependence on history: "the enduring characteristics [of American Catholic spirituality] emerge from roots of American Catholicism, out of its past and present development, and we cannot understand, nor even discern this without recourse to history."[42] Tetlow too harkened back to history in which American Catholics have spent "two-and-a-half centuries struggling to acculturate their tradition into an experiment in nation-building."[43]

The problem is that the analysis of American history on which Le Clercq and Tetlow draw has been cogently challenged. In the 1950s historians such as Henry Steele Commager developed what became known as the "national character" school. His *The American Mind*: *An Interpretation of American Thought and Character Since the 1880s* contended that a thoroughly homogeneous American character had emerged since the late nineteenth century characterized by traits like optimism, belief in progress, pragmatism, and experimentalism.[44] Social historians in the late 1960s, however, began questioning the validity of Commager's analysis. By focusing on the histories of marginalized peoples, they uncovered an array of values and character traits that Commager did not consider. The works of Philip J. Greven, Jr., Eugene D. Genovese, and David Skanner made it increasingly clear that Commager's "American Mind" was the White, Anglo Saxon, Protestant mind of the literate, educated class, and, hence, not necessarily that of poor Irish and Italian immigrants in New York parishes. Jay Dolan, for example, in his social history of nineteenth-century urban Catholicism has illustrated just how much diversity there was within the church and has brought into clear relief the tensions between mainline Protestant values and those of the Catholic immigrants.[45]

---

[40] Joseph A. Tetlow, "American Catholic Spirituality", *New Catholic World 255*, July/August 1982, pp. 152-155.

[41] See my editorial in *New Catholic World* 225, July/August 1982, p. 150, where I used an approach that I would now be critical of.

[42] Le Clercq, p. 2.

[43] Tetlow, p. 152.

[44] Henry Steele Commager, *The American Mind: An Interpretation of American Thought and Character Since the 1880s*, New Haven, 1950.

[45] Philip J. Greven, JR., *The Protestant Temperament*, New York, 1978; Eugene Genovese, *Roll, Jordan, Roll*, New York, 1978; Jay Dolan, *The Immigrant Church*, Baltimore, 1975; David E. Skanner, "American Historians and the Ideal of National Character", *American Quarterly 23*, May 1971, pp. 202-220.

Furthermore, in the years since 1950, the American mind, even that segment of it constituted along the demographic lines implicit in Commager, has changed significantly. In the final section of his monumental *A Religious History of the American People*, Sydney E. Ahlstrom sketched out what he saw as the major factors, which emerged in the 1960s, that resulted in the passing of the Puritan epoch that had held sway over the central religious, political, and intellectual institutions of our country since the seventeenth century. Citing the rise of the antiwar movement, the declining dedication to the doctrinal and moral messages of the churches, the new awareness of pluralism, and the increasing awareness of public violence and environmental exploitation, he observed: "the idea of America as a Chosen Nation and a beacon to the world was expiring. The people had by no means become less religious, and their sense of moral urgency was, if anything, heightened. Yet unmistakably at the heart of the prevailing anxiety was the need for reexamining fundamental conceptions of religion, ethics, and nationhood."[46]

Given our new awareness of the diversity of the American character in the past and the significant changes that have taken place during the last twenty years, how is it possible to speak generally of the characteristics of American spirituality, which are constructed, it appears, by combining past generalizations about the American mind and modifying them on the basis of one's own random perceptions of the present? If any generalizations can be made about religion in America, they are that it is diverse and derivative. This in itself should alert us to the dangers of speaking about an "American spirituality." (Le Clercq, curiously enough, realizes there is more than one American spirituality and indicates that in his description of the pluralistic character of American spirituality. However, he fails to see that that very pluralism raises doubts about the validity of his methodology.) In addition, as we have seen, the term spirituality, when used in a generic sense, becomes vague and problematic. To combine these two words and speak of American spirituality is imprudent, if we mean to connote a common-characteristics approach. I think it wiser and more accurate to talk instead of American spirituality only to connote the many spiritualities of America. The latter usage emphasizes the need to be concrete and specific in discussing historical manifestations of spirituality in America. It also simply reflects the obvious diversity present in the American experience. Does this mean that we can never make any generalizations about spirituality in America? No, I do not think so. What it does mean is that we must make sure that any such generalizations are based on data that can be verified using the best contemporary historiography. If the generalizations Commager made no longer ring true, perhaps there are new ones to take their place, but given the current mood in American history, it might be a long while until that happens.

---

[46] Sydney E. Ahlstrom, *A Religious History of the American People*, New Haven, 1974, p. 967.

Opportunities

Should we, then, go one step further and simply drop the troublesome term spirituality? I do not think so, for despite the problems associated with its use, there are opportunities created by its growing popularity that should be developed. In conclusion, I would like to sum them up. First, as we saw, the term functions as a symbol of the numinous, this is more cogent than analogous terms. As such, it focuses attention on the fundamentals of religious experience. It challenges us, therefore, to rethink many of the old questions in a new light. As Josef Sudbrack pointed out, we are called to develop a new hermeneutic, one that will take into account the new picture of human psychology that has emerged in our century, the new picture of world religions that we see, the new picture of society and the relation of religious consciousness and socio-economic factors that has emerged since Marx. The widespread acceptance of spirituality among Catholics, Protestants, and non-Christians also presents the opportunity to examine the fundamentals of the human experience of God in an ecumenical light. With a richness of resources heretofore unavailable and an irenic attitude that allows mutual learning and exchange, our understanding of spirituality can reach a new level.

Lastly, the final opportunity created by the use of this term arises from the linkage between spirituality and praxis. Whatever it may mean, spirituality is used to connote the way humans live out their faith, or at least their moral commitments. Both the attitudes engendered by their relationship to those ultimate values and the actions that flow from them is the stuff of spirituality. It is for this reason that Josef Sudbrack could say the praxis of theology is spirituality.

Along this line, Matthias Neuman offered a careful attempt to delineate the relationship between a spirituality and a theology. Centering his analysis on the social-phenomenological method of Alfred Schutz, he argued that spirituality and theology each function as distinct sources of religious meaning in a person's life, with spirituality exercising the dominant structuring effect in the awareness of most people.[47] In any attempt to better understand the relationship between religious belief and action and ultimately between religious praxis and theory, the study of spirituality functions as a rich resource.

The Carpatho-Balkanic Context

What are some of the implications of this for the study of religion and spirituality in the Carpatho-Balkanic context? First, the historical differences

---

[47] Matthias Neuman, O.S.B., "The Religious Structure of a Spirituality", *American Benedictine Review 33:2*, 1982, pp. 115-148.

between the American and Carpatho-Balkanic contexts are profound and cannot be easily overstated. In America, the voluntary, denominational model dominated. In that context, there was never a state church. Religion played an important role in shaping the culture, but as an actor in civil society, not as a part of the state apparatus. Persons could elect which religion they would join. Although there might be some pressures on the individual to the contrary, the individual was free to change religions, free to determine his level of participation, and free to end association with the religion of his birth. Religion played a profound role on the person and the society, but never by virtue of a privileged role in the society. In the Carphato-Balkanic context, the dominant religion was a national church that enjoyed a unique relationship with the state historically and that retained that privilege even under communism. The communist regimes, however, while retaining some of the historic trappings of the church-state relationship, radically altered that relationship and became the oppressors, rather than the patrons, of religion. Their attitude toward religion was not merely a secular indifference but an outright hostility, born of a crazed materialistic philosophy that substituted communist ideology for religious creeds and political personality cults for spiritual devotion. The Orthodox churches were cynically infiltrated and corrupted into organs of state control. Yet, even in the midst of this, genuine religious experiences occurred and many members of religious groups found ways to stay true to their beliefs in the face of government hostility.

The result was that religion occupied different places both in public and in private spheres. In addition to the differences in the public space already noted, religion in the individual life of the person functioned differently. The vital link between private and social religious expression was altered under communist regimes. Religion was privatized, but not as a result of indifference but oppression. One implication of that for today is that the currently popular approach to religion of the "spiritual but not religious" might well play out differently in the Carpatho-Balkanic context that in the American. In the former context, religious persons of the last century had to develop two distinct religious behaviors. Publically they had to appear indifferent, while privately they had to work hard to maintain a faith whose social dimension was restricted. Whereas in America, the "spiritual but not religious" drop out of the public expression of religion out of indifference, boredom, or ignorance, in the Carpatho-Balkanic context, the more avid believers were forced to make the transition to public indifference despite their strong inner attachment to the institutional and public dimensions of their faiths.

A similar analysis could be made about "spirituality" versus "religion." As shown, "spirituality" at least in the American context means an emphasis on the inner, experiential, personal dimensions of religion over the institutional, dogmatic, intellectual, and public dimensions. Are persons in the Carpatho-

Balkanic context already accustomed to this approach toward religion? Or has the fall of communism and the return of free public worship and religious expression already vitiated the effects of communism on religious expression?

Another factor differentiating the two contexts is the role that religion plays in nationalism. In the Carpatho-Balkanic context, Orthodoxy and nationalism were often linked. National Orthodox churches presented the folk, the nation. They were not merely voluntary associations. Those national churches stood apart from other Christian churches such as the Roman Catholic Church, which was seen as foreign culturally and politically, and Protestantism, which was viewed in some of the same ways.

Likewise, the role of minority religions is different in the two contexts. In America, minority religions suffered little overt persecution especially from the state, which has preserved neutrality toward religions and incorporated constitutional mechanisms that favor, rather than discourage minority religions. In the Carpatho-Balkanic context, the face of the national church influenced social attitudes towards minority religions.

All of this would suggest the importance of using empirical approaches to the study of religion in the Carpatho-Balkanic context, which take into account the actual lived experience of religious people today. Likewise, approaches that attempt to define the broad characteristics of "Carpatho-Balkanic spirituality" or some such thing would likely not accurately capture the realities of religion in the lives of people today.

CHURCH AND CULTURE IN THE TODAY'S WORLD

ALEXANDRU BOBOC[1]

Abstract

This paper aims to point out some basic ideas concerning the relationship between faith and reason, religion and culture (especially philosophy) and the role that the Christian Church should play in our contemporary diverse society.

Keywords: faith, religion, Church, Christianity, philosophy, language, community of communication, *Weltanschauung*.

1. The end of the 21st century, clearly marked by the confrontation between modernism and postmodernism, appears to have been dominated by a feeling of dissatisfaction, as well as by an excess of historical consciousness, putting into question not only one side or another of the modernity, but even the style of thought and, on a broader plane, the configurations at the level of *Weltanschauung* and life forms. Queries aimed – then as today – the truth, values and technique, in a quite unusual manner: causing concern or at least wonder, sometimes even blockages of communication, arising directly from a disorder of language, but favoring also a sense of human emancipation. As the ancients were saying: *Nondum omnium dierum solem occidisse.*[2]

The decisive step of registration in a new history was made! The necessity to resize the human behaviour, the horizon of life, the truth and the consciousness of perennial values of culture has become imminent. The advice of a great modern philosopher becomes somehow prophetic and resonant: "The man must honour himself and consider himself worthy of what is higher. Regarding the greatness and power of the spirit, his thoughts will never be good enough."[3]

We shouldn't forget that, under these new conditions, a new phenomenon appears, namely, the "*re-enchantment*" of the world, being opposite to what Max Weber called the "*disenchantment of the world*" ("*Entzäuberung der Welt*")

---

[1] Romanian Academy.

[2] Titus Livius, *Ad urbe condita*, 39, 36, 9 ("The sun of all things has not yet set"): The history still hasn't spoken its last word!

[3] G. W. Fr. Hegel, *Logica*, *Enciclopedia operelor filosofice*, Bucureşti, Editura Academiei, 1962, p. 36.

and present in various forms of losing the sense of values and the genuineness: the linguistic degradation of the public discourse; the lack of measurement and nuance in appreciation; the weak concern for identity, ideal and performance in history; the feeling of being "cheated", that something was "confiscated" and, in response, the culpability (sometimes *in corpore*) of others. But the most significant phenomenon is what the tradition of the philosophy of values used to call by the expression "pass someone by": "Many people meet other people. Only few of them really 'see', in an axiological sense… isn't it so absurd that everyone knows what is the other's desire and yet they pass by without seeing that the man remains alone with the hidden pain of his solitude?"[4]

2. However, the retrieval of what is authentic, the return to normality must be still possible! Of course, this may be possible with the help of culture, by promoting the taste for values, past ("the tradition") and contemporary. We should remember Edmund Husserl's advice, who studied the "crisis of European humanity" a century ago, pointing that "the European humanity" has "only two ways out: the European decline and alienation, the abandonment of the rational sense of life and the return to hostility and barbarism, or, the European rebirth through the spirit of philosophy and the heroism of reason".[5]

This moment expresses a significant meeting for the understanding of the phenomena of spiritual life, the meeting between *truth* and *reason*. These two paradigms of thought, whose understanding at the level of contemporary philosophy manage the connections between man, "truth" and "reason" in the forms of culture and according to "the types of experience", lead to a *sui generis* pluralism, which is relevant through the plurality of "experiences of truth" (analyzed by the hermeneutic representatives, particularly by H.-G. Gadamer) and the pluralization (originated in the Kantian philosophy: "pure theoretical reason" and "pure practical reason") of "Reason" seen as "Rationality" (what has sense, what is grounded in knowledge, action – including behavior – and human creation).

In this context, the most significant is the plurality of what is true (*das Wahre*, seen as totality, in the Hegelian hermeneutic): "the total experience which man acquires in the world", "the experience of truth" (*Erfahrung von Wahrheit*), i.e. "the Truth" seen in different "experiences", as Gadamer specified: the hermeneutic procedure aims "to discern, wherever they encounter the *experience of truth*… The sciences of the spirit use other modalities of experience than the scientific experience, namely: the experience of philosophy, the experience of art, the experience of history itself."[6]

---

[4]   N. Hartmann, *Ethik*, W. de Gruyter, Berlin, 1935, pp. 12-13.
[5]   E. Husserl, *Die Krisis des europäischen Menschentums und die Philosophie*, 1935 – trans. *Criza umanitatii europene şi filosofia*, Bucureşti, Editura Paideia, 2003, p. 68.
[6]   H. G. Gadamer, *Wahrheit und Methode. Grundzüge einer philosophischen Hermeneutik*, 4. Aufl., Tübingen, Mohr, 1985, p. XXVII.

Our times have, more than ever, the consciousness of "some types of experience", as the interaction, and implicitly, the consciousness of "the types of rationality" and its formal configuration as a system of culture. "Man – noticed E. Cassirer – lives in a symbolic universe, not in a simply natural one. The language, the myth, the art and the religion are parts of this universe, multicolored aspects that interact in the network of symbols… The man has no longer... a direct relationship with the reality… He lives intensely in the forms of language, in the works of art, in mythical symbols or in religious myths and he can no longer look, nor learn anything outside the interrelationship with these artificial environments."[7]

3. In this moment, we can start the discussion on the relationship (in fact, the differences in unity!) between *faith* and *knowledge* (theoretical and scientific), religion and philosophy (as forms of culture), theology and metaphysics (forms of interpretive approach, whose finality is a world conception) and, the last but not the least, on *the place and the role of Church* in the society and cultural life.

We should notice now some theological arguments, formulated on the background of difficulties and trying to reveal solutions for dialogue and communication.

We live in an era when the idea of cultural pluralism imposes itself (though the philosophy isn't excluded), creating structures for the new training programs, aiming to expose what unifies us in a non-generic universality expressed in multiple forms, both historical and axiological (so their living moment is forever included in the horizon of eternity).

In these conditions, the main advice would imply an universality that brings together the truth and the salvation: God – "Who will have all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth." (1 Timothy 2, 4).

Concerning the sacred message, the theology states: "Every epoch comes with a cultural and specific problem, so the theology is called to find answers to its questions, always relying on the divine Revelation. In this way, the Church is able to carry on its mission in a fruitful manner". More precisely, the theology "can not descend into the sphere of practical relationships... if it does not engage a *dialogue with culture*", to find answers to the problems of Church and to its mission. From this point of view, one could say that the Church is called to permanently renew itself, challenging the culture and the problems of its time.

Nevertheless, the dialogue between theology and culture should be supported by a clear conception of values and their interaction in the cultural space. In fact, this seems to be its propitious comprehension, aiming to acquire

---

[7] E. Cassirer, *Philosophie der symbolischen Formen*, I: *Die Sprache*, 4. Auf., Darmstadt, 1964, p. 11.

"the secularized culture" and its valuable background: a) the position of religious values in the system of cultural values; b) the position of religion inside the fundamental forms (language, myth, art, religion, science, philosophy, technique) of culture and, as a result, the function of the theological approach in the interaction with other types of approaches (especially the scientific and philosophical ones).

Consequently, the process will require a *sui generis* complementarity: a) on the background of the unity between reason and mysticism, distinguishing their different message (form and content, or even the "ontological commitment"); b) by understanding the theocentric and anthropocentric positions, as well as the specificity of the contemporary anthropological vision on the background of the axiological interactions of a dynamic culture; c) by comparing the theological and metaphysical perspectives on transcendence, namely "the theory of the two worlds", trying to avoid the sacralization of the world and its vision.

The boundaries whereof the Kantian criticism is speaking seem to be necessary: "Ich mußte also das *Wissen* aufheben, um zum *Glauben* Platz zu bekommen".[8]

In other words, the discourse focuses on the difference between what is an object of knowledge and what is an article of *faith*, and, according to Kant, it emphasizes the distinction between "Religionsglaube" (seen as a moral entity, on the basis of "practical reason") and "Kirchenglaube" ("the faith being objectified by representation"). This raises the question of the moral autonomy and involves, therefore, the autonomy of the human reason (treated as an object in the dialogue between theology and metaphysics) which becomes intelligible as a consequence of the difference between "knowledge" (*Wissen*) and faith.

4. These theoretical and methodological aspects, analyzing differences or insurmountable oppositions, have a distinct appearance in the relationship with the contemporary society which confronts *crisis* at multiple levels, mostly because the failure of many cultural, educational and political models in nowadays world.

In fact, the consequences of the laicization of culture due to the "modern man" and the "new spirit of science" have been observed since a long time ago. If we perform a simple systematization (hopefully not a simplistic one!), we should pay attention to the following components of this crisis: a) the message of the evangelical openings, honestly received and presenting a remarkable depth, opposed to the new forms of non-receiving (which are increasingly manifested through the dominance of scientism and secular spirit); b) the religious experience, which narrowed its diffusion; c) the other forms of experience, also diminished and even peripheral for most people; d) the contemporary human

---

[8]   Imm. Kant, *Kritik der reinen Vernunft*, Ph. Reclam Jun. Stuttgart, 2003, p. 38.

beings, specific to this epoch, whose spiritual structure is alienated in regard to social, cultural and religious values (in other words, the Christianity is removed but nothing else seems to replace it); e) a low level of religiosity, indicating the lack of values in the structure of human spirituality; f) the spirit of love and joy, so characteristic for the European Christianity, which is now rarely felt in the contemporary world; g) the European alienation in regard to Christianity, which risks to become a loss of self and a death of ego; h) a question that arises more than ever, because it seems to indicate a right formula: "Has the humanity reached an impasse?".

Despite these facts, the augmentation of crisis has a positive side too, most precisely, the new types of values and their evolution, which appeared in Europe at the end of the 20th century. The new direction becomes more and more insistent, and, in the same time, the necessity of a spiritual and moral renewal reveals its importance.

Under these circumstances, our contemporary world requires balance and reposition of normality, especially in the axiological space, concerning the values of culture and the values of faith (these values represent the exponents of the cultural identity in the new world history and determine, in the same time, the European context).

The Church can exercise here its formative mission, seeking "to develop... the sense of order, discipline, research and analysis, which is specific to the Western culture. Because of this spirit, Western culture has been able to accomplish remarkable achievements in science and technology, with benefits for the entire world. And this didn't happen only because of Western culture, but mostly because of God's Spirit that is not the spirit of disorder and turmoil, but the one of the order and mutual communion."[9]

5. That is why God must coordinates everything and, when we examine the mission of Church in the human life and in the contemporary culture, we must situate Him in the center of our activity and thoughts: "In the beginning was *the Word*, and the Word was with God, and the word was fully God. The word was with God in the beginning. All things were created by Him, and apart from Him not one thing was created that has been created." (John1, 1-3)

The assemblies of believers, the totality of those who believe in God and confess Him as a Savior and Christ, or the Church itself is structured as an image of the Holy Trinity or the representation of the supreme love. Accordingly, the Revelation is a main instrument of Church, and the Church keeps itself alive through Revelation. In addition, the real progress of theology represents a fidelity to Revelation, carried by the Holy Scripture and Tradition;

---

[9] D. Popescu, *Teologie şi cultură*, Bucureşti, EIBMO, 1995, pp. 53-54.

their existence is continuously related to the life of Church, becoming a responsibility for believers and their cultural epoch.[10]

The truth preached by the Church of Christ is the testimony of the relationship between God and His creation or the man and the world, confirming the perpetuity of the biblical message, the mission of the Church and its theology in the world nowadays. Therefore, the most important aspects are the efforts of the contemporary ecumenical movement which appeal to different methods for maintaining the Christian unity in the conditions of a historical and cultural diversity.

However, we should take as an example the ontological model of the Trinitarian community. The Church has the mission to contribute to the work of its believers through the unifying force of love; in addition, the cooperation and the dialogue with the followers of other religions or with the people of good faith from everywhere will help to overcome the difficulties that the human spirituality confront in the age of globalization, especially the tendencies to theoretically administer the "end" of diversity, which is an irreducible feature of the humanity.

6. In this point, the discourse returns to the pluralism of values and its role in relation to what is called the "secularized mentality of the contemporary man" or "secularized culture". We should notice that the biblical message becomes efficient inside the cultural space specific to the contemporary man. However, it becomes a reality only if we regard the type of experience where the individual feelings occur.

In this paradigm, we encounter several mentalities (for example, the scientific mentality) for whom the message would require to be released by the sacred shell. Thus we have to introduce the world of textual languages (scientific, philosophical, poetic and so on) which operates with specific semantics and dynamic languages, structurally different from the text of Holy Scripture, whose exegesis imposes an apophatic and reserved attitude.[11]

Being a specific theoretical discourse, theology mainly acts at the level of religious experience, though, because the religion is a form of culture, it interacts with other forms (science, art, technology and so on), so its theological approach (explanatory and interpretative) should take into account the universal cultural context and its interaction with the social life.

In other words, the complexity of the "cultural" phenomenon induces the dialogue and the mutual understanding. In fact, the discourse on *faith and culture is not simple*, but it reveals the unity to the rationality or Logos. What the theology considers as "the unit of Creation in the Spirit of God through the

---

[10] D. Popescu, *Iisus Hristos Pantrocrator*, Bucureşti, EIBMO, 2005, p. 81.
[11] St. Maximus the Confessor, *Ambigua*, 79a, 79b.

universal order of all Creation", a "rational" and unitary order, constitutes in fact a genuine prerequisite for a dialogue of "rationalities": beyond differentiations, the rationality preserves the idea of a "rational and unitary order", even if this process takes places in various systems, having different explanatory values and finalities for the human behavior.

This is the only manner that accomplishes the human needs and ideals, and it cannot be disregarded by any genuine interpretative approach. Therefore, it seems that sometimes we all say the same thing, even if our languages are different. In fact, we adhere to the same stages of rationality to which every individual rationality partakes. In the same time, the parabolic model (so specific to the sacred text) suggests multiple meanings applied to other plans of the discourse.

7. Nevertheless, the most important thing is the opportunity for this kind of meetings and, as a result, the possibilities of communication between different types of thought; anyway, because the cost of living is continuously extending, the oppositions becomes complementary and people start to communicate with each other. In the end, the communion of faith becomes stronger then ever in this "community of communication".

The manner in which such engagement takes place, meeting a form or another of experience, belongs to the human deliberation. The options can be various. The most important thing is where we are in regard to truth, "rationality" and service of good. Here Kant's deliberation acquires a strong sense: „... *der Mensch ist* (von Natur) *entweder sittlich gut oder sittlich böse*. Er fällt aber jedermann leicht bei, zu fragen: ob es auch mit dieser Disjunktion seine Richtigkeit habe, und ob nicht jemand behaupten könne: der Mensch sei von Natur keines von beiden; ein anderer aber: es sei beides zugleich, nämelich in einigen Stücken gut, in anderen böse. Die Erfahrung scheint sogar dieses Mittlere zwischen beiden Extremen zu bestätigen."[12]

Thus, the experience rises to support decision! These are the words of a great theoretician of experience for whom "the dignity of the human being" (*Würde des Menschen*) should be the basic thesis of every thinking under the sign of the triad: human-world-God.

---

[12] Translation: "… *from a moral point of view, man is* (by nature) *either good or bad*. Each of these two can be easily answered: if this disjunction is entitled and unless someone else may state: by nature the man is neither good nor bad; but someone else may say: the man is at once in both ways, namely: in one respect good, in another bad. Only the experience can confirm this mediation between the two extremes."

THE BEGINNING OF THE HISTORY OF ROMANIAN PHILOSOPHY AND THE RELIGIOUS PHENOMENON

VIOREL CERNICA[1]

Abstract

In this research I am interested in the issue of the relationship between the religious and philosophical phenomenon. I think there is a unity of these two phenomena in the beginning of the history of Romanian philosophy; and also, I think, in any beginning of a particular philosophy, be it ancient or modern. I try to formulate, in my paper, arguments for the following two ideas: 1) the beginning of the Romanian philosophy is complex: three works belong, together, to this beginning; 2) each of these works, but also their unity, imply, in a great measure, religion.

Keywords: original topos of the Romanian philosophy, religious phenomenon, operational scenario of philosophy, Nicolae Milescu, Miron Costin, Dimitrie Cantemir.

I. The Original *Topos* of the Romanian Philosophy and Its Hermeneutical Meaning

Firstly, I try to argue and illustrate the unity of three works and its religious aspects that accompany the philosophical ones. This is why I begin with the description of the religious context in which a translation from Greek to Romanian appears, belonging to Nicolae Milescu, one of the most important Romanian writers from the seventeenth century; it is about the text *On masterful reason* (*Pentru sângurul ţiitoriul gând /Despre raţiunea dominantă*), entitled also *Iosip* (or "Maccabees IV"), the final chapter of the *Old Testament*, in the structure of the Bible of Bucharest, 1688.[2] (This text appears also in other editions of the Orthodox Bible, for example, in the canon of the Georgian Bible). In this translation the first definition of philosophy in Romanian appears. Of course, this fact has a direct historical meaning and this characteristic will be firstly illustrated in my paper.

Secondly, I pay attention, in order to describe and depict the relation between the religious and philosophical phenomena in the beginning of the Romanian philosophy, to the philosophical poem *The Life of the World* (*Viiaţa*

---

[1] University of Bucharest
[2] *Biblia de la Bucureşti* (*Bible of Bucharest*), New editions: 1988, 1997, 2003. See Nicolae Milescu (1989), ed. cit.

lumii), that belongs to other important Romanian authors: Miron Costin, from the same period, namely the second part of the seventeenth century.[3]

Finally, with the same goal, I try to interpret the unity of the religious and philosophical meanings in the work of Dimitrie Cantemir, *The Divan or the Wise Man's Parley with the World or the Judgment of the Soul with the Body* (*Divanul sau Gâlceava înțeleptului cu lumea sau Giudețul sufletului cu trupul*).[4] The last work is considered as the first philosophical work in the Romanian culture.

Such a topic refers to history, not directly to the present day. But we essentially belong to tradition, and this is why history continuously remains our main mark in order to define ourselves. Moreover, the moment I talk about represents a good example for the relationship between the two phenomena just because they come to form a unity as such. Researching it or another moment from a particular philosophy where philosophy and religion (and theology, of course) come to form a unity together, we get some senses that can help us in understanding at least three main facts from the history of culture – especially Western, whereto belong both the Romanian and Bulgarian cultures – as shown to us today:

1) the great interest of philosophy in approaching theological themes (for example, the theological turn of phenomenology: Emm. Levinas, M. Henry, J.-L. Marion, J.-L. Chrétien, J.-Y. Lacoste among others);

2) the great interest of the theology for the philosophical studies of the religious problems (for example, dialectical theology – *dialektische Theologie*: Karl Barth, Rudolf Bultmann and others, or "European Society for Catholic Theology": Lieven Boeve as its main representative, or orthodox theology of the person: Cr. Yannaras, I. Zizioulas, especially);

3) the abandonment of the onto-theological model of philosophizing (for example, Heidegger and his followers).

All of these facts prove a continuity of the relationship between the philosophy and religion. I take into account this phenomenon of continuity, but I will try to apply its idea to the Romanian philosophy, especially its beginning. The theoretical space where this phenomenon of continuity appears belongs to the philosophy of religion; and that of the application belongs as well to the history of Romanian philosophy. I don't ask questions about what is religion or philosophy. The meanings of these terms are contextual. However, there will be contexts where some of these meanings have to set out.

In fact, I pay attention to the aspects of the continuity of the relationship between the philosophy and religion because in a hermeneutical attitude – as mine and our attitude is trying to interpret the presence of the religion in our cultures – we participate with our own cultural horizon, which contains the three mentioned facts amongst others, of course. Therefore, I participate with all aspects of my cultural horizon, in the interpretation act, to the horizon to which

---

[3]   See Miron Costin (1991), ed. cit. The philosophical poem was created between 1671 and 1673.
[4]   See Dimitrie Cantemir (1990), ed. cit. First edition: 1698.

belongs the significant tradition concerning the religious phenomenon and its relationship with philosophy. Moreover, without this implication of the main aspects of my cultural horizon in the act of interpretation, any traditional (historical) fact loses its significance. This is why the interpreter is as important as the historical phenomenon that becomes its "object". In the same measure, we would pay attention to the state of tradition, that is, to its changeable nature. The religious tradition is also in this situation, even though it appears to be more constant that other species of culture. In fact (and I quote from a study which belongs to Jayne Svenungsson), "any serious discussion of religion has to admit that religious traditions, by their very nature, are dynamic and self-exceeding".[5]

I think it is necessary to remain at the issues of the continuity of the relationship between religion and philosophy in order to both to understanding this relationship in its historical aspects and to explaining the actual situation of our life considered from the religious and philosophical perspectives. This remaining has a methodological sense, because it establishes our place towards the tradition, religious and philosophical in the same measure. Our position is very important, because any element of the tradition speaks to a (historically) determined "subject". And we can ask the question: how does the first moment of the Romanian philosophy appeal to us and what does it speak to us concerning the relation between religion and philosophy?

This question is not only historical, traditional, but also topical, mainly because it requires our presence with its own cultural horizon that contains existential problems, representations and notions of the past and traditions, goals and ideals, etc. Therefore, what religious significance does the beginning moment of the Romanian philosophy bear? This is my main question in the first part of the study. I don't want to construct a theory on the issue of tradition. But some senses about our attitude towards the cultural tradition must be settled in order to bring it in our neighborhood.

II. The Religious Phenomenon and the Original *Topos* of Romanian Philosophy

II.1. *Religious Context for the First Definition of Philosophy in Romanian: On Masterful Reason (Despre Rațiunea Dominantă) – Nicolae Milescu*

I mentioned that Milescu's translation has a historical meaning. But in our philosophy the construction of a language was – and still is – a grave and serious problem. We were compelled – even in the contemporary philosophy – to take

---

[5] Jayne Svenungsson, *Tradition and Transformation: Towards a Messianic Critique of Religion* (2010), in vol. cit., p. 207.

over many words from Greek, Latin, but also from French, German, English, Russian, etc. in order to constitute a Romanian philosophical language. But some philosophers researched the Romanian traditional language and revealed certain words that can express philosophical thoughts, that is, equivalent expressions for the main categories from Greek, Latin texts, firstly. On this topic, Milescu's translation is very significant. Moreover, this text is in the same measure theological and philosophical; it puts the problem of the relation between reason and passions and formulates a point of view, namely that reason is the master of the passions: a stoic point of view in accord with the Hebraic conception on the relation between reason and passions belongs also to the author, Josephus Flavius (the second century AD). This is why the text was translated into Latin (from Greek) in the beginning of the modern period, in the humanistic context (for example, German *Bible*, Edition 1524), or it was commented and interpreted by some representatives of humanism, for instance by Erasmus of Rotterdam. In our cultural tradition, this text is considered the first philosophical translation in Romanian.[6]

Of course, I don't try to reproduce the definition. In any case, the text it contains is significant only with the other two mentioned texts and in this historical and linguistic perspective. It itself cannot cover all conditions of a beginning of a particular history of philosophy. However, talking about Nicolae Milescu it ought to emphasize his religious preoccupations and, very important for our discussion, the fact that he published an interpretation about the Eucharist in Orthodox Church in a collective volume co-ordinated by two well-known Catholic theologians and logicians, at the end of the seventeenth century: Antoine Arnauld and Pierre Nicole. The volume was published in 1669, at Paris, with the title: *La Perpétuité de la foy de l'Eglise Catholique touchant l'Eucharistie*, *défendue contre le livre du sieur Claude*, *ministre de Charenton.* Milescu's text, in Greek and Latin, *Enchiridion sive Stella Orientalis Occidentali splendens*, was explaining the fact of the transubstantiation, its understanding in Orthodox Church. It represents the first contribution of a Romanian – maybe of an Eastern European – cultural personality to the European theological discussions, after Reformation and Counter Reformation from the sixteenth century.[7]

Beyond these special contributions made by Milescu to the Romanian culture and his presence in the theological debates, remains, from a philosophical perspective, the first definition of philosophy in Romanian, his endeavor for expressing philosophical thoughts in Romanian, chiefly, a definition of this form of intellectual activity. This point of view is sustained by

---

[6] Cf. Virgil Cândea, *Raţiunea dominantă. Contribuţii la istoria umanismului românesc* (*On masterful reason. Contributions to the History of Romanian Humanism*), Cluj-Napoca, Editura Dacia, 1979, Note 80, p. 196.

[7] See Nicolae Spătarul Milescu, *Stella Orientalis. Carte cu întrebări* (1997), ed. cit.

many historians of the Romanian culture, especially by Virgil Cândea, who dedicated a book to the Romanian humanism, where this translation and its philological, philosophical, theological meanings have an important place.[8]

II.2. Religious Meanings in the Content of a Philosophical Poem: "The Life of the World" (*Viiaţa lumii*) – Miron Costin

Miron Costin is, as Nicolae Milescu, very well known in our cultural space, thanks to his own historical works and philosophical poem, *The Life of the World* (*Viiaţa lumii*). But Milescu's translation has only a philosophical context, whereas Costin's poem contains some philosophical meanings. Moreover, the construction of the poem has a philosophical tint. In fact, the main problem concerns the religious phenomenon: the kind of divine existence and the sense of the human life from the perspective of the relationship between God and His creatures, especially man. But the kind in which the problem is formulated, the characteristics of the discourse, some concepts and, of course, terms, and finally the scenario, are all of them, philosophical. I will try to follow the way of revealing the main philosophical aspects mentioned and considered significant for our topic.

In general, starting with the Greeks, the origin of philosophy is the wonder. Plato, Aristotle, for example, affirm this point of view. What does Miron Costin wonder of? In particular, it seems the existence of the world and its beginning is what wonders him, if one takes the poetical discourse from a philosophical outlook. Of course, he accepts that the world is created by God and that man is a being with a double nature, proper human and divine. But if it is really about a wonder, we can understand: why the author accepts as such – somehow, without wonder, indubitably – the fact of the beginning of the world, and even its existence, that is, the "object" of his wonder? God created the world, and this idea is not problematic for Miron Costin. Nevertheless, the author tries to speculate at a symbolic level of the language, on this topic; but, in this way, the topic appears as paradoxical. Perhaps, the wonder of the author focuses to the *reasons of world's existence* and of its beginning, not to the existence or the beginning as such. (Why did God create the world?) This is why a suspension of some of God's characteristics appears. For instance, the absolute – a main characteristic of God from the Christian perspective – is only announced, not affirmed as such. The God's power for creation makes this announce (appeal). But just this suspension of the absolute Divine introduces some apories which refer to the image of the world destined to unfruitfulness or to the lack of fulfillment, even to an existential deficiency. In another way, the

---

[8]   Cf. Virgil Cândea, *vol. cit.*

luck (destiny), that characterizes man's situation in the world in Costin's view, would be impossible. Finally, just the luck of the man that appears in relation with the time as *Kairos* wonders Milescu. This luck (destiny) is changeable. But it is not in the man's power; also, in a way, nor is it in the will of God.

In this scenario, the existence of God himself appears, somehow, suspended. The human's deed becomes significant. Firstly, the whole world degrades thanks to the passage of the time; secondly, God is not active because the man has *liberum arbitrium* (free will); hence, the man is without help. However, the human deed (only) can save man. The absolute divine is something, but it is past its time. The unreligious tint can be recognized here. This fact shows not a weakness of the religious phenomenon, but, perhaps, its availability for a relationship with the philosophy.

A list of the terms used by Miron Costin reveals his philosophical intentions better: beginning (of the world, man, etc.), death, good and evil, time (*vreme*), spirit (*duh*), nature (of man, *fire*), luck (*noroc*). In the same measure the themes in the poem prove a focusing on the philosophical meanings: the existence of God (over the time), the passage of the time, the changing and the death of the things, of creatures generally, the degrading of the world thanks to the passage of time, the sense of the human deed etc. Of course, all of these approached through the idea of the man as being created by God and endowed with free will.

In the philosophical poem there are, on the one hand, clear religious and theological options (convictions of the author): the indisputable existence of God, the truth about the divine man's origin and the free will, etc., all of them being active senses in poem, in a measure. And, on the other hand, there are clear philosophical scenarios: the wonder focused on the man's place in the world and its description, the sense of the human deed in a troubled human life and the relations with the time, which is conceived in two hypostasis: physical time and time as *Kairos* and so on. This double sense together with all the elements of the scenarios abovementioned represents a proof for a philosophical reconstruction that contains in its structure the religious meanings beside the proper philosophical ones. We can accept, finally, that it is about a true unity between the two aspects (religious and philosophical) in the discursive structure of Costin's poem.

This idea of some philosophical meanings of the poem must put aside the idea about the religious context of the first definition of philosophy in Romanian in Milescu's translation. One together with other constitutes a more powerful philosophical reconstruction that can be taken into account when we think about the beginning of a particular philosophy, of Romanian philosophy. I would like also to say the poetic form is historically the first, the original, philosophical form, used by the pre-Socratic philosophers. Nevertheless, this form is not a proof for the dominant literary character in Costin's poem.

II.3. The Unity of the religious and Philosophical Phenomena into an Authentic Philosophical Reconstruction: "The Divan or the Wise Man's Parley with the World or the Judgment of the Soul with the Body" ("Divanul sau gâlceava înțeleptului cu lumea sau giudețul sufletului cu trupul") – Dimitrie Cantemir

The third work that is taken into account in order to discuss about the relationship between religion and philosophy in the first moment of the history of Romanian philosophy belongs to Dimitrie Cantemir: *The Divan or the Wise Man's Parley with the World or the Judgment of the Soul with the Body*. The problems that can eventually refer to it do not have the goal of challenging its philosophical character, because this character is obvious. Moreover, most interpreters and historians of Romanian philosophy recognized this character. It may appear only a problem related to the context in which it is placed: in a philosophical context without other works, in order to solely represent the beginning of our philosophy, or in a cultural context beside other works, in order to constitute, but only together with these, the beginning. Of course, this latter idea represents my option. But, starting from it, we don't understand that proving its philosophical character becomes superfluous. In fact, only through proofs related to its philosophical character it is possible to placing it together with the other works in the beginning of Romanian philosophy.

A possible philosophical scenario, essentially operational, is present as such in Cantemir's work. The three operations that are taken into account as being proper philosophical, the wonder, the speculation, and the aporia, compose the structure of this work. Before I talk about *The Divan or the Wise Man's Parley with the World or the Judgment of the Soul with the Body*, I need to present some aspects of Dimitrie Cantemir's personality.

It is widely known that Dimitrie Cantemir was one of the most important historians from the beginning of the eightieth century on the problem of the Ottoman Empire. But for the European culture he was also one of the most important thinkers, geographers, musicians, writers, politicians, philosophers. The late status is, maybe, that contains all others. In any case, for the Romanian culture this idea is true. Ones of his cultural preoccupations is related with his life situation; for example, the status of historian. He stayed many years at Istanbul (Constantinople), the capital of Ottoman Empire, and he spent the time especially with his preparation in many cultural domains. Moreover, he knew directly the life in the capital of the Ottoman Empire and many political and cultural personalities, and he had access to the historical documents very important for his subsequent scientific preoccupations. Maybe his presence in a centre of culture, as Istanbul, and his relations with ones of the great personalities of that period contributed to the responsible position of Cantemir towards the Romanian culture that is evident in his historical studies from the

Russian period (1711-1723). He is the first Romanian creator who was awarded with the title of "academician": he was member of Academy of Berlin, in 1714. And in order to inform the contemporaries about his origin, Cantemir wrote one of the most known of his books: *Descriptio Moldaviae* (*Descrierea Moldovei / Description of Moldavia*) (1714).

His philosophical interests cover a few disciplines: logics, metaphysics, ethics, philosophy of culture, philosophy of history, even philosophy of religion. Of course, in this presentation I will deal only with his contribution to the constitution of the first moment of the Romanian philosophy. This is why I take into account the work mentioned, *The Divan or the Wise Man's Parley with the World or the Judgment of the Soul with the Body*, not other texts that have philosophical meanings, for instance *Istoria ieroglifică* (*The Hieroglyphic History*) (1705), a literary text mainly, that contains at its beginning a list with many philosophical, logic, historical, scientific terms, ones of them translated directly into Romanian (foreign term – Greek, Latin, Turkish, Arabic, Slavonic, Hebrew, Italian etc. – put in Romanian form), and another ones taken over as such from the Romanian vocabulary.[9]

In Cantemir's language, the Wise Man is the soul, and the World is the body. There is no difficulty to identify the significance of these two terms. The philosophical elements that appear in the scenario of this "judgment" are very important. What wonder firstly the reader represents the world's courage to confront with the Wise Man (the soul) and to formulate and argue its own requirements; but this is the wonder of the author too. The discourse is philosophical at the beginning, thanks to the topics which are drawn in discussion. But the author wonders also about the man's impossibility to catch the perfection and to be as God, that is, to be beyond this world. Even the sin, with all its hypostasis, wonders Cantemir.

In correspondence with these wonders there are, in Cantemir's work, some philosophical techniques and, consequently, some scenarios that are constructed by the author in philosophical ways. On the on hand, the main philosophical techniques are the commentary of the maxim and the counter argumentation; so we have many philosophical elements of context, at the layer of retorts / replies (especially, world's retorts). On the other hand, there is the probative appeal to the authority of The Scripture; it is about a probatory appeal, not an absolute one. The topics are drawn in discussion, according to the plan of the author, and the two characters who take part at the discussion (the soul and the body) observe and formulate proves and weigh them, argue and establish a meaning for a thing that belongs to the human life, a sense of the relationship between the soul and body, a significance concerning God's intervention in the world etc.

---

[9] Cf. Dimitrie Cantemir, *Istoria ieroglifică* (*The Hieroglyphic History*), Iaşi, Editura Junimea, 1988; "Scară a numerelor şi cuvintelor tâlcuitoare", pp. 11-32.

Among these techniques, the counter argumentation is very important, in the first part of the work. The body (the world) doesn't accept any idea of the soul (the Wise Man) as such. Moreover, a body's attitude or, at least, an intention to reject the soul's point of view exists continually in the "judgment". Also, the Wise Man respects the judgment of the World. He sees himself, as a "microcosm", within the "macrocosm", of the World itself. Hence, the body is not completely dominated by the soul; it has its own point of view, even if finally it is defeated, somehow, by the soul. This latter is not failed at the beginning, but only after a confrontation between the two partners, at the court of reason. The ideas from the second part of the work would not be possible, in their "dogmatism", without this confrontation. In the third part, Cantemir imagines the reconciliation between body and soul. The technique used in the sense of reconciliation is the taking over a text belonging to a Unitarian Polish: Andreas Wissowatius. The third book is not important for our topic.

Indubitably, the religious meanings of Cantemir's work catch themselves onto the philosophical scenarios, with its techniques and topics. But the aporia is the most important proof in order to depict the philosophical aspect and, finally, the unity of relation between religion and philosophy phenomena, in this work. There is an aporia that was very much discussed in that period – as it had was discussed before and as it will be discussed after this period – namely the relation between body and soul. It is about a classical problem that is not resolved directly by Cantemir, even if he defends the Christian position, orthodox, precisely. Of course, finally the soul (Wise Man) is the winner; but through the final victory the world is not destroyed; it is integrated in the order of the Spirit. Paradoxically, the "macrocosm" (the world) is contained in the "microcosm" (the soul). But is not about a quantitative relation; it is a qualitative one.

In order to final reconciliation, Cantemir proposes a theory of the ages (of the seven ages), very significant for the topic concerning the relation between body and soul. The religious conviction of the author appears to be dominant. But even in this place we have to do with an affirmation of the unity that marks sufficiently the peace between the body and soul. Therefore, on the one hand, Cantemir affirms that a dominant soul exists (Wise Man; "microcosm") over the body, according to the Orthodox Christian doctrine. On the other hand, the author sustains that the body and soul form a unity that cannot be destroyed in any way. These two senses put in order a "valid" aporia, if I can express in this way. But is this problem resolved in modern period? The most theories on this topic end in aporia. Ones of them take into account this problem in order to reformulate it in cosmological terms, as Cantemir.

Beside a definition of the philosophy in Romanian (in Milescu's translation) and the philosophical senses in a poem about "the life of the world" (in Costin's work), Cantemir's *Divan* assures some conditions for the beginning moment of Romanian philosophy. Of course, to fulfill an argumentation in

favor of this point of view requires much proof. Some of them will be formulated in following research.

III. The Contemporary Philosophy and the Religious Phenomenon

I don't intent to present exhaustively the topic announced in the title. In what follows, I outline the problem concerning the attitude of the contemporary philosophy, through the phenomenology, towards the religion. In this way, I try to prepare some elements in order to continue my research on this topic: the relationship between religion and philosophy.

In fact, I would now observe how the attitude of contemporary philosophers regarding the relation between religion and philosophy is expressed. Of course, there are many forms of manifestation, but a main sense is represented by the reciprocal interest of philosophy and religion concerning some basic understandings of the human being. Both philosophy and religion focus their discourse especially towards the anthropological problematic, even if each of them has its own basis problems. Always this anthropological problematic attracted any science, philosophy, any form of human knowledge, because they are human at the beginning. But is there an accent on this characteristic in the contemporary culture? What we can observe is the fact that the cultural period to which we belong brings a new tint in the problem of the relationship between religion and philosophy. Certain versions of the philosophy pretend they are not classical, for example the phenomenology, keeping their autonomy towards the theology, retakes in discussion the great themes of the religion phenomenon. But even in this way the main religious dogmas are suspended in their formal validity in order to be again found through the life of an individual man. It is true such an attitude can be observed at the theologians too; for example, to the work of Dumitru Stăniloae, one of the most important orthodox theologians in the 20th century. In *The orthodox dogmatic Theology* (*Teologia dogmatică ortodoxă*), the author states that the dogmas are not dead letters, but lived truths.[10] We can say, starting with this fact, that the theology is, as the philosophy, "a daughter of its epoch".

The attitude of contemporary philosophers about the relation between religion and philosophy expressess itself in one of the most important aspects of the religion phenomenon. Firstly, its becoming and relation with the human life. As I have said, dogmas are put in discussion, because only in this way they can be lived. And philosophy, through some versions, participates to this work. If we open the discourse to this theme, we come back again at the main philosophical models that propose certain senses on our topic. A refuge in the

---

[10] Cf. Dumitru Stăniloae, *Teologia dogmatică ortodoxă* (*Orthodox Dogmatic Theology*).

horizon of the contemporary philosophy is natural, because just this represents our own dwell, the place from which we can watch any human phenomenon.

Phenomenology, in the husserlian version, cannot be used as a device for an interpretation of the religion. Husserl himself considered that the phenomenology is absolutely a science critique that puts under analyses anything in order to reach to the subjectivity through the transcendental reduction. Heidegger, although he talks about religion – for example, in the conference *Phenomenology and Theology*, in 1927 – did not recommend the use of phenomenology in religious problems. But especially in the late three, four decades, the phenomenology is used in the approaching of the religious problems. Maybe the most important concepts of this new way of the relationship between religion and philosophy belong to the French phenomenology. Among them there are two of which I want to deal with in the following research: *the saturated phenomenon* (J.-L. Marion) and the *face-to-face relationship* (Emm. Levinas).

The first concept – the saturated phenomenon – makes possible a re-thinking of the divine, so that what is found as absolutely different besides the common phenomenon to be accepted and lived as super-phenomenal or as a saturated phenomenon. The second concept – face-to-face relation – shows us a radical experience: the experience of the pure transcendence. Both of these concepts open the philosophical discourse towards the religious problems, even if their authors had no intention to recommend such a utility. How do these two concepts – and others, of course, from the same phenomenological horizon – open o new way in the relationship between religion and philosophy? Which are the main ideas that can structure a new theory on the religious phenomenon? How these ideas can set up a religious attitude as such? And which can be the element of this approaching that lead to an increase, on the one hand, of the religious life, and the other, of the philosophical experience and knowledge? To these questions I try to respond in my next paper on the theme of our researching project.

Conclusions

I began with a problem concerning the first moment of the history of a particular philosophy in order to enlighten the relationship between religion and philosophy. And I finish with a problem concerning the place of this relation from a phenomenological perspective. Is there a natural link between these two moments? I will respond directly in another paper. But the continuity of this relation is clear. In the sense of this last idea, I interpreted the first moment of the history of the Romanian philosophy. Also, on this basis I showed that we can establish a model of a particular philosophy, and some conditions – even through this model – of a cultural history of a particular philosophy. The

continuity of the relationship between the religion and philosophy can be proved
in the contemporary philosophy. For example, in phenomenology, where some
new theoretical experiences and, maybe, new grounds for a religious experience
that is at the beginning in relation with the philosophy are presented.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Cantemir, Dimitrie, 1990. *Divanul sau gâlceava înțeleptului cu lumea sa giudețul sufletului cu trupul*, Bucureşti: Editura Minerva.
Cândea, Virgil, 1979. *Rațiunea dominantă*, Cluj-Napoca: Editura Dacia.
Costin, Miron, 1991. *Viiața lumii*, Galați: Editura Porto-Franco; Bucureşti: Editura Muzeul Literaturii Române.
Janicaud, D., 1991. *Le tournant théologique de la phénoménologie française*, Combas, Édition de l'Éclat.
Levinas, Emm., 1969. *Totality and Infinity. An Essay on Exteriority*, Pittsburgh: Duquesne University Press.
Marion, J.-L., 2006. *The Erotic Phenomenon: Six Meditations*, University of Chicago Press.
Milescu, Nicolae Spătarul, 1989. "Pentru sângurul țiitoriul gând", in vol. I. C. Chițimia, Stela Toma (coord.) *Crestomație de literatură română veche*, Vol. II, Cluj-Napoca: Editura Dacia.
Milescu, Nicolae Spătarul, 1997. *Stella Orientalis. Carte cu întrebări*, bilingual ed. (Latin and Romanian), Traian S. Diaconescu (ed.), Iaşi: Editura Institutul European.
Stăniloae, Dumitru, 1996-1997. *Teologia dogmatică ortodoxă*, vol. I şi II, Bucureşti: Editura IBMBOR.
Svenungsson, Jayne, 2010. "Tradition and Transformation: Towards a Messianic Critique of Religion", in Jonna Bornemark and Hans Ruin, *Phenomenology and Religion*, New Frontiers, Södertörn University.
***   1988, 1997, 2003. *Biblia de la Bucureşti*.
***   2010. Jonna Bornemark and Hans Ruin (coord.), *Phenomenology and Religion*, New Frontiers, Södertörn University.

INTERRELIGIOUS DIALOGUE AND THE FORMS OF COOPERATION BETWEEN THE STATE AND RELIGIOUS IN BULGARIA

ZHASMINA DONKOVA[1]

Abstract

The question about dialogue and cooperation between different religious institution and communities in Bulgaria and the role of government in this process is discussed during multiple round tables and conferences. Not only organizations from the non-government sector, but also governmental structures are engaged in the accomplishment of the practically efficacious model of interreligious dialogue. The governmental policy on religions in Bulgaria is performed on the grounds of the local regulation and its intrinsic main principles. The support and encouragement of the dialogue between religions is set in the Constitution, where is stated that "The freedom of consciousness and thought and the choice of religion and religious and atheistic opinions are inviolable. The government facilitates the maintenance of tolerance and respect between believers from different religions as well as between the believers and non-believers". (Article 37, Paragraph 1)

Keywords: religions, governmental structures, interreligious dialogue, cooperation, believers, non-believers.

Rationale

The need of a dialogue between different religions results from the understanding that religious doctrines are still occasionally an obstacle to the peaceful coexistence and social binding of the people. The establishment of relations based on respect and the acknowledgment of common values and the respect to differences in religions makes it possible not only to overpass the limits of routine tolerance but also to avoid the danger from religious extremism.

The good knowledge of both your own religious tradition and the rest is an important condition for the effectiveness of interreligious dialogue. Differences should be accepted not tendentiously but the spirit of peace, understanding and respect should be looked for. It is a fact that the presentation of any religion accentuates the pretensions to universality and validity. However, this should not be an obstacle to a dialogue and the full participation in socially important debates over various questions.

---

[1] Bulgarian Academy of Sciences.

The public announcement of religious symbols or celebrating religious holidays of the prevalent religions in separate countries should be considered neither an insult to the importance of the rest religions, nor a threat from social tension between the believers from different religious communities.

The other important condition for the efficacy of a dialogue is that the process of its accomplishment should concern a wide specter of questions but not accentuate only problems related to religious traditions and practices. It should be looked for convergence based on all-human values, but, at the same time, also the questions that lead to disagreement, uncertainty and even a fear from the other should not be neglected.

After the events of 11 September 2001, the questions related to the interreligious dialogue in its social and geopolitical dimensions gained a special actuality worldwide. Due to its multilayeredness, the problem of the interreligious dialogue is examined by different social activists, politicians and scholars in multiple discussions and analyses.

Not only organizations from the non-government sector, but also governmental structures are engaged in the accomplishment of the practically efficacious model of interreligious dialogue.

The dimensions of the intercultural dialogue, which essential part is also the dialogue between various religions, led the European Community to proclaim 2008 the year of intercultural dialogue. Within the frameworks of this initiative, a series of events and meetings, dedicated to the mutual agreement and respect between the representatives of the different religious communities in Europe took place.

European Initiatives for the Encouragement of International Dialogue

Realizing the need of interreligious dialogue, increasingly more religious leaders from Europe omit their own narrow doctrinal restrictions and accept the mission to work together for the encouragement of peaceful coexistence and the prevention of the conflicts based on religion. According to them, the dialogue is important for a peaceful and prospering Europe and therefore the religious leaders of all religious traditions from any part of the Continent must actively participate in the dialogue that is based on the principles of respect to anyone's rights. One of the projects for the accomplishment of this goal is the initiative for the establishment of the union of religious leaders to solve different challenges occurring before the modern European citizen.

After performed meetings and discussions aimed to specify the parameters of the future organization, the European Council of Religious Leaders – Religions for Peace (ECRLRP) was created in Oslo in 2002. It unites the spiritual leaders of traditional religions in Europe – Judaism, Christianity and Islam, and also the

representatives of Buddhism, Hinduism and Zoroastrianism were included as active participants.

One of the goals of this council is to work for the accomplishment of cooperation between all religious persons in Europe for peace and stability by means of dialogue and support. On the Continent, where religion is often considered a source of conflicts and tension, ECRLRP aims to act as one of the resources for the provision and maintenance of peace in the region. In the context of the planned goals and aims, the members of ECRLRP performed a meeting in Berlin – the city symbolizing the history and divide, reconciliation and new beginning in Europe, from 3 till 5 March 2008. During this meeting, the participants declared their readiness to support interreligious dialogue at all levels in the European society. To this purpose, the declaration was prepared and approved that stated that interreligious dialogue should be performed on the grounds of the acknowledgment of human rights, which are set in different religious traditions and objectified in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

In the same context, in May 2009 the Council approved another declaration concerning dialogue between different cultures for the achievement of peace. It states that any separate culture is unique and should be considered the complex of different values and traditions, which determine a worldview and lifestyle. Since religion is closely related with culture and is an essential principle for the encouragement of peace on the grounds of religion, an important condition is to pay sufficiently attention to the cultural dimension of religions.

Dimensions of Interreligious Dialogue in Bulgaria

As the result of the global processes in the sphere of dialogue between religions, a special attention is paid in Bulgaria to this question during the last two decades. The questions that permanently circulate in public sphere are directly engaged with this problematic and refer to the free exercise of the religious rights and freedoms, interreligious dialogue and the place and role of the government in the settlement of these problems.

The question about dialogue and cooperation between different religious institutions and communities in Bulgaria and the role of government in this process is discussed during multiple round tables and conferences. The general opinion is that due to the complexity and delicacy of the problem for interreligious dialogue a serious attention should be primarily paid to the media interpretation of the image representing the different religious traditions in public sphere of our country. It is especially important to show a regular citizen that mutual respect and consideration for anyone's right to profess what corresponds to his own inner convictions and spiritual needs is an inviolable right. The Law on Religions settles the right of religion and juridical state of the

religious communities, institutions and their relations with government (Article 1) according to international directives.

A special place is assigned to the essence and way of exercising an individual right of religion. According to Article 2, Paragraph 2, "*The right of religion includes anyone's right to form freely his own religious convictions and to choose, change and profess – correspondingly to exercise – freely his own religion, personally and collectively, publicly or privately, through worship, education and rituals*". No one can be persecuted or restricted in his own rights dues to his own religious convictions (Article 3, Paragraph 1).

The right of religion is exercised through the formation and expression of religious conviction, establishment and participation in a religious community, organization of institutions in the community, performance or religious education, etc. (Article 5, Paragraph 1). In this connection, the moments, in which the fulfillment of this right can be restricted, are specified (Article 8).

The governmental policy on religions in Republic of Bulgaria is performed on the grounds of the local regulation and its intrinsic main principles. The support and encouragement of the dialogue between religions is set in the Constitution, where is stated that "*The freedom of consciousness and thought and the choice of religion and religious and atheistic opinions are inviolable. **The government facilitates the maintenance of tolerance and respect between believers from different religions as well as between the believers and non-believers**"* (Article 37, Paragraph 1). The same principle is incorporated also in Article 4, Paragraph 3 of the Law on Religions, where is stated that the government provides conditions for free and unhampered exercise of the right of religion assisting the maintenance of tolerance and respect between the believers from different religions as well as between the believers and non-believers.

It is another question that it is impossible to perform this dialogue at all levels. For example, it is not possible to accomplish dialogue at the level of doctrines due to the exclusivism in any religion. An example for this is the inefficiency of the efforts at a theological dialogue on the questions in relation to main doctrinal truths of faith between the three Christian confessions.

In the context of all above, the question about the degree, to which government can participate in such process, arises.

The Directorate of Religions to the Council of Ministers is a specialized division of governmental administration, which coordinates the relations between executive power and religions and assists the Council of Ministers in the performance of the governmental policy on maintaining tolerance and respect between different religions and follows the observance of religious rights and freedoms from assigned officers.

In this regard, I will examine three points from the activity of the Directorate of Religions considering the accomplishment of interreligious dialogue and types of cooperation between the government and religions.

Establishment and Activity of the Expert Consultative Committee

The Expert Consultative Committee (ECC) is a consultative organ on the religious problems established with the Directive 845/2004 of the Council of Ministers on the grounds of Article 21, Paragraph 1 of the Law on Administration associated with Article 35, Point 3 of the Law on Religions. The staff of ECC includes the representatives of Ministry of Inferior, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Ministry of Education and Science, Ministry of Health, Ministry of Finance, Ministry of Culture, Ministry of Defence and Directorate of Religions. The head of the Committee is the director of the Directorate of Religions.

ECC gives opinions, statements, and conclusions on concrete problems of religions and assists the Council of Ministers in the performance of governmental policy on the religious communities in the country.

Performing its functions, ECC contacts and cooperates with governmental and non-governmental institutions and organizations in relation to the harmonization of regulations considering religions. At the same time, it assists the participation of different religions in international organizations, forums and initiatives.

The representatives of both the religions and non-governmental organizations can be engaged in the work of the Committee if required.

An example for this is the examined by the Committee question about the place and role of religious marriage in the modern Bulgarian society, which is one of the problems sporadically set and repeatedly discussed after democratic changes in Bulgaria.

The increasingly immersing crisis in the Bulgarian family and expected changes in the Constitution in relation to entering European Union led the leaders of the Gergiovden Movement Political Party to prepare and introduce in the secretariat of 40 Parliament the draft-law of the change of Article 46, Paragraph 1, which states that only civil marriage is legal in Bulgaria.

The draft-law was introduced in the secretariat of the Parliament in December 2005. With a letter of December 2005, the leaders of the movement asked officially the Directorate of Religions to the Council of Ministers about an expert statement of the question.

In its reply, the Directorate underlines that it principally supports the proposal since it has its rationale but the real transformation of church (religious) marriage into an alternative to the civil one should be a result of the profound discussion over a series of questions. On this occasion, the Directorate referred to question for examination by ECC preliminary sending the text of the

draft-law to the majority of the officially registered religions in the country. The question was discussed during two consecutive meetings of ECC (28 February and 21 March 2006), in which the representatives of different religions participated.

Generally, by means of their representatives the religions expressed satisfaction of the legislative initiative of the Gergiovden Movement Political Party and outlined in their statements the consensus that there is need to align the statutes of the civil and religious marriages and that divorce procedure must be performed by the currently established local procedural order.

Unlike them, separate ministries sent to ECC negative statements by their representatives, the majority of which included the motive that religious marriage has its social role but cannot exist autonomously and raise juridical consequences. The equation of the statutes of two types of marriage will lead to serious legal problems in relation to the arrangement of registries of marital status. According to them, the insistence of civil marriage does not impair the religious feelings of Bulgarian citizens.

No common statement, which can be introduced in the Parliament, was formed due to the differences in the perspectives on religious marriage of the representatives of separate ministries (members of ECC) and religious communities. Nevertheless, the mutual discussion of this law initiative shows the willingness of both the religions and government to pursue dialogue and elaborate such problems. Unlike the preceding governmental regimen, when governmental institutions took one-sided decisions on certain questions, at this stage the government asks also the other part for opinion, in this case – separate religions.

Second, the fact is obvious that in spite of the large differences in doctrinal plan of the participating in the dialogue religions, all they joined together around the idea that religious marriage should gain legal status.

Determination of the Days for Religious Holidays of Religions

Based on Article 173, Paragraph 2 of the Labour Code, which states that the employer must allow the officers and workers, who profess some religion different from Eastern Orthodoxy, to use electively a part of annual paid or unpaid vacation under Article 160, Paragraph 1 for the days of related religious holidays, but not more than the amount of the days for Eastern Orthodoxy religious holidays under Article 154. Similarly, the text of Article 57, Paragraph 2 of the Law on Public Servants states that the hiring authority must allow the public servants who profess a religion different from Eastern Orthodoxy to use a part of the annual paid or unpaid vacation for the days of related religious holidays but not more than the amount of days for Eastern Orthodoxy religious holidays under Article 55, Paragraph 1).

According to Article 173, Paragraph 3 of the Labour code, the Council of Ministers defines the days for religious holidays that are different from Eastern Orthodoxy, at the suggestion of the leaders of the rest religions.

Establishment and Activity of the National Committee of Religious Communities in Bulgaria

In 2007, by the initiative of the House of Lords and the Bulgarian embassy the representatives of government and the religious leaders of larger religions in Bulgaria were invited in London to observe the model of relations between the government and religions and between the religions themselves, and to gain knowledge about the United Kingdom experience in this area.

During this meeting, the members of Bulgarian delegation formed the idea to create union of religious communities on the model of many European organizations, which can propose forum, where the representatives of different religious communities can meet each other on the grounds of equality and participate in discussions on important questions of mutual interest.

Based on the Constitution of Republic of Bulgaria that warrants the rights of freedom of consciousness and thought and the choice of religions and religious and atheistic attitudes and the right to form association and based on the mutual agreement of religious communities in Bulgaria, the National Committee of Religious Communities in Bulgaria (NCRCB), including the representatives of different religions in the country, was established with the support of the Directorate of Religions to the Council of Ministries on 11 August 2008.

The representatives of the Bulgarian Orthodox Church, Muslim religion, Catholic Church, United Evangelical Churches in Bulgaria, Armenian Church and Israelite Spiritual Council were among the founders.

Generally, the aims of NCRCB can be summarized in the dimensions as follows:

(1) To encourage the agreement and mutual relations between individuals with different religious convictions in Bulgaria. It should work primarily for the distribution of knowledge between different religious communities about their principles and values systems, related with establishment of a peaceful and fair civil society in Bulgarian and globally.

(2) To promote the development of dialogue between religious communities and governmental institutions, non-government and volunteer organizations in relation to the questions related with the development of the civil society in Bulgaria.

Conclusion

The short review of the performed initiatives for the accomplishment of interreligious dialogue and the forms of governmental participation shows that a lot of things are still desirable. Generally speaking, this process is already beginning but more resources and the development of new forms for the accomplishment of similar initiatives are required.

Legislative framework in our country clearly delineates the governmental functions and obligations in the process of maintaining the tolerance and respect between believers from different religions. Together with this, the willingness of the government to work on the parameters of interreligious dialogue is observed.

ISLAM AND THE STATE IN ROMANIA AND BULGARIA

BOGDANA TODOROVA[1]

Abstract

This paper aims at pointing out the actual situation of the Muslim community in Bulgaria and Romania and their religious life. It also deals with the phenomena of immigration and migration of people due to various historical and political reasons and the State policy concerning minorities.
Keywords: Muslim, religion, demographic situation, ethnic minority, religious minority, migration.

I. Muslim Populations

Romania

- 67,257 /0,3% of the country's 22 million population
- 31,118 ethnic Turks
- 23,641 Tatars
- 3,310 Romanians
- The main Muslim ethic group follow Sunni Islam

Bulgaria

- 966,978 / 12,2% of the population
- 75,3 % Turks
- 7,7% Alevis
- 13,5% Pomaks
- 10,5% Roma
- 4,500 Tatar community
- The majority of Muslims are Sunnis of the Hanafi School.

---

[1] Bulgarian Academy of Sciences.

According to the 2001 census there are 966,978 Muslims in Bulgaria and the majority of them are Sunnis of the Hanafi School.[2] According to the official census (2002) there are 67,257 Muslims in Romania of whom the 31,118 are ethnic Turks, 23,641 Tatars and 3,310 Romanians.[3]

In the official census a small number of Turks and Tatars declared themselves to belong to religions other than Islam, to be atheists or to have no religion. The constitutions of Romania and special laws have guaranteed the rights of certain religious groups, in addition to Orthodox Christians who represent the majority of the population.

An earlier census (1992) indicated that 7,7% of Muslims in Bulgaria were Alevis (also called Kizilbashi or Aliani). The Turks are concentrate in the South-east and North-east Bulgaria and account for 75,3% of all Muslims in Bulgaria. The Bulgarian-speaking Muslims (also known as Pomaks) are concentrated in the Central and Western Rhodope Mountains in Southern Bulgaria and make up 13,5%.[4]

The tiny Tatar community has some 4,500 members living in North-eastern Bulgaria. Most Muslims live in rural areas but in present days they are under the process of internal or external migration. They have been seriously affected by the economic crisis following the collapse of communism.

II. Immigration/Migration

Romania

- The number of Muslims increased slightly
- 70,000 according to muftiate
- 67,300 according to the State Secretariat for Religious Affairs
- New groups appeared in Bucharest, Iasi, Cluj, Timişoara (Palestinians, Iraqis, Lebanese, Syrians, Kurds)
- New communities did not joined the old Muslim communities

---

[2] http://www.nsi.bg/census_e/census_e.htm.
[3] National Institute of Statistic figures available at
http://www.insse.ro/cms/files/RPL2002INS/vol4/tabele/t5.pdf.
[4] For Pomaks see: Todorova, B., Mizov, M., *The Bulgarian Ethnic Model – Myth or Reality* (2009); Georgieva, Tsvetana, "Pomaks: Muslim Bulgarians" in *Islam and Christian-Muslim Relations*, vol. 12, no 3 (2001), pp. 303-316.

Bulgaria

- The number of Muslims decreased by 143,317
- Huge emigration to:
  - Turkey
  - More prosperous countries
  - New country for immigration/transit station
  - 107,245 immigrants total (Maghreb, Afghanistan, Middle East)

The results of the census showed that the number of Muslims in Bulgaria decreased, which has been explained by the emigration of Muslims to the Western countries and Turkey and by the conversation of some Pomaks to Orthodox Christianity and to the various Protestant denominations. By 2009 the number of Muslims in Romania has increased due to immigration from Middle Eastern countries and conversion. After the fall of Communism in 1989 new Muslims groups appeared in the cities: Bucharest, Iasi, Cluj, Timişoara. They have not joined the old Muslims communities in Romania and the two groups live parallel live.[5] Most Middle Eastern immigrants were of Turkish origin.[6]

Bulgaria is a new country for immigration and is used as a transit station due to its poor economic status. Most of the immigrants from the Middle East are between 25 and 45 years, males are a majority. Immigrants who have arrived in the past 20-30 years have a Bulgarian Citizenship or status of permanent or long-term residents. A typical example is the community of the Syrian immigrants (mainly spouses in mixed marriages or individuals with legal status). The average immigrant in Bulgaria is well educated: most of them have high school degrees (54%), possess a university degree (Bachelor or Master), 2,1% have higher academic achievements and approximately the same percentage are with secondary education. People from the Middle East and Maghreb also have university or high school education.

Muslim immigrants are heterogeneous with regard to their attachment to Islam and degree of observance of rituals. 84,9% of the Arab immigrants declare that they are Muslim, 6,4% are Christians, 7,8% state that they are atheists, 0,9% belong to other denominations.

In the families of 54,7% of the Arab immigrants the children systematically study traditions, rituals and history of Islam and their own ethnic group. Among the Arabs, 62% insist that their children should study their mother tongue. A significant part of the parents (42%) prefer their children to attend the nearest school, while 19% would like to see their kids in the best

---

[5]   See, Grigore, George, *Muslims in Romania*, ISIM Newsletter, 3, July 1999, p. 34.
[6]   http://ori.mai.gov.ro/api/media/userfiles/infoStat_Octombrie_2009_text.pdf.

Bulgarian schools. Arab immigrants from the Middle East do not highlight the typical for the Arab religious remarks. Men wear secular clothes identical with those of the Bulgarians. Muslim elements are stronger with the women. As a rule they carry veils or their modern interpretations. Cultural – religious marks are slightly displayed by or totally missing with children.

There are no elements of assimilation of immigrants in Bulgaria. Children of the second and third generation, who have passed through the Bulgarian educational system, are completely integrated without losing memories of their parents' country of origin.

III. Islam and the State

Romania

- A secular republic without state religion; 86,8% Orthodox Christians
- Islamic faith is one of 18 religious denominations recognized by law /Law 489/2006/
- The muftiate is the only religious institution represents the followers of Islam
- The Synodal Council – mufti,4 members from UDTTMR,4 members from UDTR, 15 clerics & the principal of the Kemal Ataturk Muslim Theological High School
- 73 purpose-built mosques in Dobrudja and 1 in Bucharest /1960/>15

Bulgaria

- A parliamentary republic without state religion
- 82,64% Orthodox Christians
- The Muftiate
- The Movement for Rights and Freedoms /1990/
- The Supreme Muslim Council - 26 members
- 12 regional muftis
- 1,217 mosques
- 240 masjids
- 50 tekes dated at the Ottoman times

In Romania the Orthodox Christians constitute the majority.[7] The Islamic faith is considered a public-utility legal entity. Muslims can receive material support from the State for the maintenance of mosques, monuments and other communal buildings. According to the law only the muftiate has the right to organise pilgrimages to Mecca and Medina.

The "Shura-i Islam" is headed by the mufti and takes decisions regarding the functioning and organization of the Muslim community. The UDTTMR and the UDTR are two of the 19 political parties and cultural associations representing ethnic minorities in the Romanian parliament.

As a good practice we can stress here the condition that t*he mufti must be a Romanian citizen, born in Romania and with no other previous citizenship and a graduate of an Islamic theological institute in Romania.*

In Bulgaria the Constitution designates Eastern Orthodox Christianity as the "traditional" religion (82,64%) of the population belongs to the Bulgarian Orthodox Church. The Directorate of Ecclesiastical Matters of the Council of Ministers provides financial support from the state budget to denominations with a longer historic presence to cover some of their running expenses. Muslims in Bulgaria are presented religiously through the Muftiate and politically by the Movement for Rights and Freedoms. This party was established in 1990 and has been represented in every post-communist parliament since.

The Bulgarian Muslim community, called the Muslim confession, has developed structures and is administered by the Supreme Muslim council. The Chief Muftiate presides over all the Muslims in the country. Twelve regional muftis are responsible for the administration of the community at the provincial level.

IV. Main Muslim Organizations

Romania

- Muftiate together with UDTTMR&UDTR
- Crescent Islamic Cultural Centre Foundation (www.scola-araba.ro)
- Association of Muslims of Romania (www.associatiamusulmanilor.ro)
- Muslim Sisters association (www.surorimusulmane.ro)
- Tuna Foundation (www.tuna.ro)
- Islamic & Cultural League in Romania (www.islam.ro)
- Taiba Foundation (www.islamulazi.ro)

---

[7] National Institute of Statistics figures available at
  http://www.insse.ro/cms/files/RPL2002INS/vol4/tabele/t5.pdf.

Bulgaria

- Muftiate (www.genmuftybg.net)
- Myusyulmansko izpovedanie (Muslim confession)
- Myusyulmansko sunitsko-hanifitsko izpovedanie in Bulgaria (Sunni-hanafi)

In Romania, the traditional Muslim denomination (Sunni) engages in public activities trough the Muftiate together with UDTTMR and the UDTR. We can see here the newly established associations and foundations dominated by immigrants for various ethnic origins. They are translating and publishing religious literature, teaching Arabic, engage with charities.

The most active of them appears to be the Taiba Foundation (a recently appeared website is the Little Muslim – dedicated to children). Tuna Foundation is linked to the Gulen Movement. The mufti considers that many of these associations are harmful to traditional Hanafi Islam in Romania because of their propaganda and conservative views, which come from the Arab schools of Islam.

The long-term period of atheism and religious vacuum in both Romania and Bulgaria allowed the invasion of many different Muslim organizations and foundations.

V. Children's Education

Romania

- In 1995 the law of education introduced religion as a compulsory subject
- Islam is taught in mosques, by religious-cultural associations
- 2009 on-line version of weekend schools
- 1996 Islamic Secondary school – Medgidia
- "*Islam today*" – the first magazine

Bulgaria

- Elective classes in Islam were introduced in 2000
- Islam is taught in the mosques – summer Qur'an courses
- Three Islamic Secondary schools – Shumen, Russe, Momchilgrad
- Higher Islamic Institute, in Sofia

There are three Islamic secondary schools in Bulgaria which follow the general curriculum for state secondary schools. The graduates from these schools can serve as imams or continue their education in any discipline they choose. There is a tendency for imams to pursue higher education in the Higher Islamic Institute in Sofia. Apart from these three state accredited schools the Muftiate organizes Qur'an courses for children every summer. Students use textbooks proposed by the Muftiate and approved by the Ministry of Education.

The Law of Education adopted in 1995 introduced religion as a compulsory subject in public schools in Romania. The curriculum and textbooks are approved by the Ministry of Education. According to the Law of Education (Law 4/1995) any legally recognized ethnic minority can draw up a curriculum for special subject teaching on their history and the traditions, for example Turkish-Tatar Minority.

Islam is taught in mosques and by religious and cultural associations, mainly in weekend schools or within an Arabic language programme. In November 2009 the Association of Muslims in Romania launched an on-line version of such weekend schools.[8] Academic courses on Islam and the Middle East are offered at several universities. There are courses on Arabic language, history of Arab culture and civilization and history of Arab literature. All holders of academic degrees in Islamic theology have studied abroad as no such higher education qualifications are offered in Romania. Diplomas issued abroad are subject to the recognition of the Romanian Ministry of Education after endorsement by the mufti.

In Sofia, there is an Islamic Institute, which was founded in 1991 as a semi-higher institution and became a higher institute in 1998. It offers courses in Islamic theology, history of religion, psychology of religion, Arabic language and literature. According to the Muftiate, a small number of students sent by them have graduated from various Islamic schools abroad. Academic courses on the history and culture of Islam and the Middle East are offered on a regular basis by the Department of Arabic and Semitic Studies at Sofia University.

VI. Interreligious Relations

Romania

- DIR promotes dialogue trough symposia, publications and websites, such as Intercultural calendar
- The Familiar "Others"
- Romania provides an example of religious tolerance and co-existence

---

8   http://www.associatiamusulmanilor.ro.

Bulgaria

- Since 1989, BG progress in the area of interethnic and inter-religious relations
- National Council of the Religious Communities
- The Bulgarian model of religious tolerance

Muslims in Bulgaria have lived here for a number of centuries. The existence of religious symbols never bothered them. Since 1989, Bulgaria made a significant progress in the areas of interethnic and interreligious relation. It has adopted a number of important legislative documents, such as the Council of Europe's Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities and the European Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedom. In 2008, a new association was established – the National Council of the Religious Communities in Bulgaria. The Council pledges to represent the Bulgarian model of religious tolerance to Europe and to the Balkans, to develop interreligious and intercultural dialogue.

The Department for Interethnic Relations and non-governmental institutions (Intercultural Institute Timişoara) are promoting dialogue through symposia, publications, websites (http://www.calendarintercultural.ro/index.php). In Romania there is also a long tradition of coexistence with Muslims. Those who are long-established in Romania are regarded as familiar Others, outsiders are regarded with suspicion.

The big challenges before both Romania and Bulgaria are the shift to Islam and the immigrants' waves.

VII. Challenges

Romania

- Conversion to Islam
- Immigrants

Bulgaria

- Conversion to Islam
- Immigrants

A Proposal for Solution

- To re-formulate the role, place and mission of the Christian tradition as a dynamic tradition
- To discover the value of hermeneutical-communicative model

Our attitude to the culture as a comprehended reality presupposes rationality as a cultural value. The main problem is to combine our values with the values of the other. Are the different cultures incompatible in general? To what extent is possible a cultural synthesis by means of rational ways? Jürgen Habermas speaks about such project – the project for a communicative rationality, in which the people participating in social discussions are engaged. His project assumes that the people accept the rules of a rational discourse, which contradicts to the current situation of the radicalization of controversies. The opposition between the West Christian or the so-called rational culture and the East Islamic or traditional culture is strongly expressed.

One of the main problems today is how to tolerate other cultures and other ritual behavior than those we know from our own tradition. This global problem changes our world as life-world on two levels: *the social-political and existential levels. This entails new ideas*:

A) A new idea how to live together in peace. This life together can be motivated in two radically different ways: by the fear of one's own death as in Hobbes where people originally involved in a fight of all against all accept to live together accordingly in order to avoid to be killed by the other. On the other hand, by wish to live together in order to be enriched by this common life in the same way that Aristotle described the life in the true friendship. Only the wish to be enriched by a life together can create the true peace.

B) A new idea of the social contract. The contract that we know from Hobbes, Rousseau, and Kant cannot exist only as a national contract any more. We must presuppose a global social contract that maintains a global world order valid for every human being. This idea is taken up in our time by Jürgen Habermas.

Philosophical image of the human being might be a mirror of the state of affairs and a guide of humanity. *Interfaith and intercultural dialogue, adequately understood, is the art of being authentically human*.

Conclusion

In Bulgaria and Romania, the process of integration stems from their history: it is not simply a bridge between the East and the West but a bridge

between the tradition and the new European values. Co-existence on equal basis of Christians and Muslims, participation in a common cultural model trough rules and rights, mandatory for both communities, is the common value that the two countries reckon on.

The Balkan space is like a big coffee house and a good example of real dialogue, which can be used by European countries.

The famous German philosopher Kant said there were three big philosophical questions: What can I know? What should I do? What may I hope for? Perhaps a great deal of philosophy in the West can be understood as seeing those three questions as pivotal. *The Europe has to engage both the issues of the moment and the long-term questions of what we can know, what we should do, and what we may hope for!*

IDENTITY AND CONFESSION IN THE BYZANTINE EMPIRE AT THE BEGINNING OF THE MIDDLE AGES

ECATERINA LUNG[1]

Abstract

The correct religious confession resides at the core of the Byzantine identity at the beginning of the Middle Ages, together with the pagan Greek-Roman tradition. Historians and chroniclers from this period use elements with a religious connotation in different proportions in their works, but even those who don't speak openly about Christianity share a Christian identity. There is a tension between the classical tradition of writing history and the Christian doctrine, the historians avoiding Christian terminology because it didn't exist in the works they used as a model. This tension disappears from the 7th century onwards, when the Christianization of the historical terminology becomes the norm.

Keywords: Byzantium, historiography, Middle Ages, confession, heresy.

The aim of this article is to show how the chroniclers and the historians from the beginning of the Middle Ages use religion to forge a specific identity for their own people. I will refer to narrative sources because they help us understand the complex process of the emergence of the new Byzantine identity, heir of the Roman one, but different through the importance of Christian religion and the imposition of Greek language.

The historians and the chroniclers who wrote between the 6th and the 9th centuries in Byzantium were interested not only in the narration of historical events, but also in the creation of a Byzantine identity, even if they continued to use the name of *Rhomaioi*, which means Romans, to designate their compatriots. This identity was defined by reference to the ancient Romans, whom they saw as ancestors, and to the Barbarians, their neighbours, allies or enemies. There are "varied ways in which different late antique groups and communities defined their own socio-political borders and secured in-group identities by means of discourses[2]" about identity, and especially the religious one. Therefore, the historians and chroniclers of this period are advocates of a

---

[1] University of Bucharest
[2] Eduard Iricinschi and Holger Zellentin, eds., *Heresy and Identity in Late Antiquity*. Texts and Studies in Ancient Judaism, 119, Tübingen, Mohr Siebeck, 2008.

new kind of identity, defined firstly by the Roman political heritage and secondly by the Christian faith. As Yitzhak Hen pointed out "the late Roman perception of kingship was highly influenced by Christian and biblical ideas as well"[3]. However, it is true that the importance attributed to the political or the religious dimension differs from author to author and from period to period. On the other hand, each author adds to the identity that he defines some elements related to the ideal of civilization in contrast with barbarians. But finally, the limits of civilization are coincidental with those of the correct, chalcedonian confession.

In the Byzantine period the writing of history continued the late Roman tradition of political and military monograph, on the one hand, and on the other, the universal chronicle. The latter, which started with the Genesis and was more and more interested in contemporary events, became predominant as time went by. The chroniclers are more preoccupied with religious problems than the historians, who used ancient models from the period of Thucydides and often simply ignored religious issues which were not suitable for the classical history they tried to write. Because of this lack of interest in religious problems, which were so characteristic for the period they lived in, modern historians believed that some historians, like Procopius of Caesarea and Agathias were atheist, sceptic or heretic[4]. It is right that Procopius deliberately neglected Christological debates of his time, considering them "vain questionings"[5], and that he also avoided Christian terminology. He spoke about Christians as he was trying to explain, like a contemporary anthropologist, the customs of a not yet studied Amazonian tribe – those temples called churches by the Christians[6] or as "those of the Christians who are more careful in their observance, whom they call monks"[7]. A clear explanation of the deliberate refusal to use Christian terminology is given by Agathias, who told his audience that he prefers not to give a place its contemporary Christian name, but the ancient one, because "such a practice is more in keeping with the style of historical writing"[8]. Procopius and Agathias were, in reality, just as good Christians as Malalas, their superstitious contemporary author of a chronicle. As Averil Cameron had shown convincingly many years ago, the terminology could not be used as proof of the historian's paganism, because the convention of the classical history genre

---

[3]   Yitzhak Hen, *The Uses of the Bible and the Perception of Kingship in Merovingian Gaul*, "Early Medieval Europe", 1998, 7, 3, p. 286.

[4]   A reiteration of this theory in Anthony Khaldelis, "The Historical and Religious Views of Agathias. A Reinterpretation", *Byzantion*, 69, 1999, p. 206-252.

[5]   Procopius, *History of the Wars*, ed. H. B. Dewing, London, William Heineman Ltd., 1919, VIII, III. 9.

[6]   *Ibidem*, II, IX.14

[7]   *Ibidem*, I, VII, 22.

[8]   Agathias, *The Histories*, ed. Joseph D. Frendo, Walter De Gruyter, Berlin, New York, 1975, III, 5,7.

supposed the use of an archaising language forged in the 5th century BC which lacked, normally, Christian concepts[9].

So we can say that the great majority of late antique and early medieval Byzantine historians are laics (with a notable exception – Nikephore the Patriarch) with a strong orthodox Christian faith. Their faith seemed to be as sincere as that of their colleague chroniclers, many of them monks who stressed the importance of Christian religion.

Even if they didn't affirm this directly, the Byzantine chroniclers, and especially Malalas, who offered the model for an entire tradition which came after him, considered that the Romans became a new chosen people when they accepted the Christianity. Beginning with Constantine the Great a strong bond developed between the Roman Empire and Christianity. But even if Christianity became the core of the Byzantine identity, the classical system still coexists with the Christian one. In this classical system an important role is played by pagan values, used by our historians together with the Christian belief to put peoples on a scale of civilization.

The most important differences between the peoples are the religious ones, and their mutual comprehension and collaboration become more difficult when their religion is markedly different. For example, the historians talked about the endless wars fought at the oriental borders of the Empire between the Byzantines and the Persians, their hereditary enemy. The differences emphasized are linked to the ethnic and linguistic specifics of each people, both Byzantines and Persians needed translators when they had to negotiate[10]. Even if the language is a very important component of the identity[11], a source of differences and misunderstandings, the most important and impossible to elude are the religious differences, which are used as a political justification for the wars. The Christian Byzantines couldn't understand Zoroastrianism, a religion with beliefs and rituals considered barbaric and irrational. Agathias is the most representative of this tendency, because he did not understand and openly rejected what he considered as pagan burial rituals of Persians who didn't burry their deceased, but left them to be eaten by savage beasts[12].

We will not find the same rejection of paganism when the Byzantine chroniclers spoke about the Greeks and the Romans, considered their ancestors and their cultural model. The ancient Greco-Roman religion is considered a superstition and the gods from its pantheon are described as being simply

---

[9] Averil Cameron, *Procopius and the sixth century,* Berkeley, Los Angeles, 1985. A different view which affirms that Procopius was a pagan was expressed recently by Anthony Khaldelis, *Procopius of Caesareea: Tyranny, History and Philosophy at the End of Antiquity*, Philadelphia, 2004.

[10] Procopius, Wars, II, 6.

[11] Jean-Philippe Genet, "Identité, espace, langue", *Cahiers de recherches médiévales et humanistes*, 19 (2010), p. 8.

[12] Agathias, *Histories*, II, 31, 5-9.

mortals deified. Malalas offered the inspiration for this treatment when he wrote that Kronos "was a strong man who was the first to practise ruling" as a king in Assyria, and that he "had a son, named Picus, who was called Zeus by his parents"[13]. He was inspired by the rational method of interpretation, later called euhemerism[14], which suggested that mythological characters were at origin humans[15]. This voluntary laicisation of the ancient pagan religion was intended to lead to the exaltation of Christianity, the only true religion, but it never conduced to such a condemnation of Greco-Roman paganism as that of Zoroastrianism. The political allegiance of the chroniclers to their empire and the classical tradition, still alive in their education, didn't allow them to have an aggressive attitude against the religion of "Hellenes", their ancestors.

Another religion that is not accepted by our authors but not entirely condemned is Judaism, a prefiguration of Christianity. The universal chronicle begun always with the stories taken from the Ancient Testament, from Genesis to Moses and the ancestors of Christ, so the Judaic monotheism is situated only a level below the Christian religion. In the chronological scheme so dear to early medieval chroniclers, Moses and the Prophets from the Old Testament lived long before Plato and Aristotle, who have taken their ideas from them. This is why some of the philosophical thinking of the pagan Greeks could still be accepted by the Christians, because they were indirectly inspired by the God of Moses and the Prophets.

The pagan Greco-Roman tradition has also another cultural meaning, even if after Theodosius I the pagan religion became a crime against the state. The pagan works of art were present everywhere in the Byzantine world of our chroniclers, and they seemed quite pleased when some temples were destroyed. But those artistic objects could be acceptable when they were Christianized and placed in a new context. *Chronicon Pascale*, anonymous writing from the first half of the 7th century, has a detailed description of a statue of Apollo taken from Phrygia to Constantinople in order to be reworked to represent Emperor Constantine[16]. Malalas wrote about the wooden statue of Pallas Athena taken secretly by Constantine from Rome, brought to the new capital and buried under the porphyry column made for the statue of the Emperor in the new Forum[17].

Even if those who wrote about these actions were Christian authors, they still believed that the ancient pagan religious artifacts had a certain value and

---

[13] *The Chronicle of John Malalas*, translated by Elisabeth Jeffreys, Michael Jeffreys and Roger Scott, with Brian Croke, Jenny Ferber, Simon Franklin, Alan James, Douglas Kelly, Ann Moffatt, Ann Nixon, Melbourne, 1986, I, 8.

[14] This method was founded by Euhemerus, a mythograph who lived around 300 BC and wrote a *Sacred History* at the court of King Cassander of Macedonia.

[15] Franco De Angelis and Benjamin Garstad, *Euhemerus in context*, Classical Antiquity, vol. 25, nr. 2, 2006, pp. 211-242.

[16] *Chronicon Paschale*, *A.D. 284-632*, ed. Michael Whitby, Liverpool, 1989, p. 528.

[17] Malalas, *op. cit.*, XIII, 320.

signification. Bringing them at Constantinople meant for them a legitimization of the new capital, the ancient Gods transferring their attributes and significations to the Christian god and giving a kind of protection to the Christian emperor.

This relative tolerance of some pagan symbols is however quite rare and it is expressed normally when they are reused in a Christian context. The paganism especially that one of more recent times, after Constantine's reign, is viewed by the chroniclers as an illness which has to be eliminated from the social body. The chroniclers gladly presented the destruction of ancient temples or the change of their destination in a way which desecrated them. For example, Malalas told how Emperor Theodosius II has transformed the temple of Aphrodite in asylum for prostitutes[18]. Of course, the most frequent case is that of temples transformed in churches. Recently, Alan Cameron expressed doubts that the pagan temples were still in use when they were demolished or transformed into churches, but the succession of a Christian building on the pagan site is a reality[19]. The same Malalas wrote about the temple of the Argonauts at Anaplous which became the church of Saint Michael because someone had a vision of the Archangel demanding this transformation[20]. As paganism disappeared from consciences, the ancient temples lost their signification and importance. When Hesychius Milesius wanted to localize an ancient temple of Poseidon in Rome he needed to use the church of Saint Menas as a topographic indication[21].

The historians are less interested in paganism and its avatars because of their choice to write about political and military subjects. Procopius is an exception with the condemnation of the persecution against Hellenes started by Justinian. But even Procopius has shown this interest in his Secret History, a kind of pamphlet, and not in his Wars, the monograph written in classical manner.

Paganism is usually seen as a danger for the elected people of Byzantium, because it could affect the privileged relation with the divinity. The manifestations linked with the paganism are severely repressed, as the practice of magic. Theophylact Simocatta who wrote in the first half of the 7th century presented the case of Paulus, accused of witchcraft, condemned and executed on the order of Emperor Maurice. It seems that Theophylact, as a classical historian, couldn't believe in such practices and he blames this condemnation whose responsibility was not, he said, of the emperor but of the patriarch who influenced Maurice[22].

---

[18]   *Ibidem*, XIII, 345.
[19]   Alan Cameron, *The Last Pagans of Rome*. Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press, 2011, p. 798.
[20]   Malalas, IV, 77-79.
[21]   Hesychius Milesius, *Historia romana atque omnigena,* Fragmenta Historicorum Graecorum, ed. C. Müller, Paris, 1851, vol. IV, fragment 4, 5.
[22]   Teofilact Simocatta, I, 11, 21.

Nikephor the Patriarch believed in the existence of magical practices, only he didn't believe they could be efficient. He presented with consternation the pagan and barbaric practice of the inhabitants of Pergamum who, when besieged by the Persians, cut the womb of a pregnant woman and put the fetus in boiling water. Then they put the sleeves of their clothes in this water, believing that they would be invincible, but God punished them with paralysis, they couldn't use their swords and they were conquered[23].

What gives to the chosen people its special identity is the correct Christian confession which has a structuring role for the community. This is the reason Constantine, who established at the Council of Nicaea the correct, orthodox version of Christianity, is such an important figure in Byzantine chronicles. The history of his conversion is a type story we can find in each chronicle, inspired by the version given by Eusebius of Caesarea and by the legends. All the chroniclers presented the legendary version of Constantine being baptized as an orthodox at Rome by pope Sylvester. Only Theophanes the Confessor, a monk writing at the beginning of the 9th century, has also presented the version of the Arian baptism (historically the real one), but only for rejecting it.

The chroniclers were very attentive to the issue of the Council of Nicaea, where the confession considered correct, the orthodox one, was established. They presented Arianism, the confession condemned at Nicaea, as a danger for Christian community, even if they wrote centuries after year 325. But this condemnation is quite formal because the Arian heresy had long ago disappeared in the period when our chroniclers wrote. It is a paradox that Theophanes the Confessor, who wrote at such a long distance in time of the period when Arianism flourished, offered one of the most virulent condemnations of this heresy. When he showed the danger of Arianism, maybe he was thinking about Islam, seen in his period as a kind of Christian heresy, despite a possible access he could have had at Muslim sources that showed the religious differences[24]. And he was also contemporary with the events generated by another important Byzantine heresy, the Iconoclasm, which was backed during his lifetime by Isaurian emperors, as the Arianism benefited from the support of the successors of Constantine the Great.

*

As a conclusion, in the historical writings we used the religious essence of Byzantine identity was defined mostly in a negative way, by firstly showing the deviations from it. The only authors who seemed obliged to define more

---

[23] Nikephoros the Patriarch Of Constantinople, *Short History*, Text, translation and commentary, ed. Cyril Mango, Washington D. C., 1990, p. 53.
[24] Alan M. Guenther, "The Christian experience and interpretation of the early Muslim conquest and rule", *Islam and Christian–Muslim Relations*, 10:3, 1999, p. 364.

precisely their Orthodox identity were those contemporary with Iconoclasm, because they were involved in a political and ideological struggle against heresy.

Finally, how was the Byzantine identity presented in the historical works from the first medieval centuries? The inhabitants of Byzantium should have thought about God in the manner defined at the Councils of Nicaea and Chalcedon, should have venerated the icons, the Saints, gone to the Church, converted pagan peoples to Christianity. Their Christian essence transformed them in a new Chosen People and gave them an Empire which was protected in a supernatural way by the Virgin and the Saints. At the end of a slow process the concepts of "Roman" that is Byzantine, and of "Christian" became entirely synonymous.

THE CULTURAL POLICY ON THE BALKANS AND THE STUDY OF CATHOLICISM IN BULGARIA

DESISLAVA DAMYANOVA[1]

Abstract

In this paper, we aspire to develop a present-day concept of Catholic confessional identity and to place it in the context of identity construction in the Balkans as a "crossroad of civilizations". The research starts from the premise that understanding confession as a marker of identity can be applied to other identity markers (such as ethnicity, language, cultural heritage, the past) in the 21 century. Our overall objective is to place religion in its broader social and cultural context and to address issues of plurality and accommodation. The process of investigation also invokes a permanent discussion on the topic within a comparative framework and from an interdisciplinary perspective.

Keywords: Catholicism, religious identity, marker of identity, cultural pluralism.

Methodological Approach and Scientific Background

In Europe, the Reformation's identity politics followed Luther's argument that salvation could be achieved only through an inner state of faith, and attacked the Catholic emphasis on exterior conformity to a set of social rules. True religiosity was identified with an individual's subjective state, which lead to the division between real identity and outer practice. As a reaction to the wars of religion in Europe after the Reformation, liberalism established the principle of toleration - the idea that religious goals could not be pursued in the public sphere in a way that restricted the freedom of other beliefs or churches. But while modern liberal ideas advise that state power should not be used to impose religious belief on individuals, it left unanswered the question of whether personal identity and creed could conflict with the rights of people to uphold a particular religious tradition. [Barron, 2007: 87]

Today we live in a global society with very different religious beliefs, political ideals, moral values and community structures. Our primary aim is to transform the theoretical frames and the political practices of interaction between religion and the secular social models, applied to Catholicism. In the modern world the ideas of tolerance and pluralism rest on neo-liberal and post-secular

---

[1]   Bulgarian Academy of Sciences.

ideas of personality and society and still religious identities continue to matter. What we need now is a mutual engagement of different perspectives and a comparative study of heterogeneous traditions: the inter-religious and inter-ethnic dialogue should bring together previously opposing groups by the means of an 'open discourse' and a pluralistic approach to the local discrepancies.

The guiding principle of the new Catholic identity is to build relations of tolerance and understanding between ethnically and religiously opposing forces and to shape a modern European civil society. So we should reconsider the inherited barrier between secular, modern and more traditional religious values. Rather, we have to develop new and creative approach to political orientations of secular modernity on the one hand and religious social practices, on the other. We should combine the global perspective on traditional Catholic thought with a social scientific research on integration and civil society in accordance with the dual sources of religious and secular attitudes.

The current state of Catholic studies in Bulgaria gives priority to developing tolerance and new perspectives on the post-secular overlapping of religion and the public sphere (as well as their secular division). We need a solution to such problems as nationalism, religious intolerance, and chauvinism in attempt to overcome traditional intercultural and ethnical conflicts. From the early 80's the Catholic theme in our country has been actively developed from a folklorist, historical and ethnological perspective. Researchers working in this field have enjoyed popularity and productivity: among these are the present Director-General of UNESCO Irina Bokova, R. Tasheva, N. Rashkova and others.

One of the important issues that traditionally attract the social scientists and philosophers in my research organization – Institute for Philosophical Research[2] – is the current structure and dimensions of religiosity in Bulgaria. Our team established for the study of religion in the *Institute for Philosophical Research* – Desislava Damyanova and Rumen Mudrov (Catholicism), Bogdana Todorova and Zhasmina Donkova (resp. Islam and Protestantism) – is particularly engaged in examining the fundamental assumptions of theologo-political thinking, contemporary religious problems and dimensions, the debates on secularization, etc. The former Bulgarian Ambassador to the Vatican Prof. Vladimir Gradev develops a concept of postmodern religiosity and modes of balance between theology and politics that lead to a radical change in the paradigm of the new millennium, especially the global course of modern Catholicism.

Problem Statement and Expected Results

Nowadays we pay greatest attention to modern confessional identities and communities, so our focus is on religion and our main target group – the Catholic theme juxtaposed to the orthodox Christianity in Bulgaria. In this

---

[2]   IphR, now part of the Institute for the Study of Society and Knowledge.

diverse, but increasingly interconnected world, we need to find ways of peaceful coexistence, especially on the Balkans. The results of our research program will be oriented in resolving the following problems:

- ➢ The nature of the relationship between salvation and faith (theology and politics) is a result of the political processes of secularization in the Age of Modernity; the church-state relations in modern democracy: Catholicism and the debate for the religious roots of Europe. Justification of modern Catholic policy and prevention of fundamentalism and religious violence.
- ➢ We are going to analyze the processes of de-secularization, which initially led to a separation of the political sphere, and then gave the modern Catholic policy its actual explanation. We will examine the growing influence of Catholicism in the stage of world politics at the beginning of the third millennium and its role as one of the traditional denominations in our country. Our research strategy should pay special attention on the continuing scientific debate about the forms and aspects of individual and group identity based on the Catholic faith in the modern era of globalization.
- ➢ The regional relevance of the study of Catholicism has two dimensions: *the first* relates to the actual changes that occur in the identity of Catholics as a result of global transformations, taking place with different intensities in Bulgaria, Europe and worldwide by the end of the twentieth century. This subject is extremely relevant to the post-socialist countries and especially for Bulgaria, which is facing problems of its specific cultural heritage in view of the challenges of its changing socio-political role in the EU.
- ➢ *The second* dimension relates to the analysis of the factors that influence the various forms and manifestations of faith. Maybe we should relinquish the conviction that there is a common meaningful world and to recognize the presence of many 'religious languages' and value paradigms. They tentatively enter into a dialogue with each other and coexist more or less combatively. Our task is very responsible: to find the optimal conditions for mutual understanding and tolerance between distinct denominations, to involve them in the global civilization process.

One important issue we must face, is the following question: what is the specific area within which the subject – a person or a group of persons – should be left to take a stand, act and determine his/her religious position in accordance with his/her own views, without interference by another subject? With the exception of Europe, in most parts of the world the public sphere is not

secularized, religion remains a public and not a private matter, politics are articulated along visions of a 'truth community' and the self is seen as constituted by collective definitions, rather than by purely individual pursuits and interests. Given the continued, if not renewed, salience of confessional identities on the Balkans, as well as the potential of religion to provide legitimacy for existing conflicts world-wide, it is crucial to take it seriously, but not solely as a source of clashes and oppression. In our case study in Bulgaria, this means to see the potential of Catholicism to provide resources for tolerance and mutual acceptance with other faiths that are traditional for our country.

This is no less true of secular communities, which have their own beliefs, codes and myths. By the nature of the case, "communities of belonging" are not universal, but are bounded - they have their own histories and trajectories, their own languages and obligations. They may be more or less open, more or less ascribed, their boundaries - more or less permeable, but they always define some "us" as against some "other". For our specificity is precisely the marker of these different communities of belonging, that define who we are and provide the settings in which we live our lives and where we feel most secure. Our primary aim is to transform the theoretical frames and the political practices of interaction between religion and the secular social models, applied to Catholicism. The fundamental assumptions of theologo-political thinking and the debates on secularization form a balance between theology and politics, leading to a radical change in the paradigm of the new millennium, especially the global course of modern Catholicism.

In today's globalized world reticence and ethnocentrism give way to the dynamic development in comparison with others - not just with neighbors in the region, but with all creeds that co-exist in the local cultural, political and religious communities. Bulgaria has a traditional contribution in these areas, especially in prevention of ethnic conflicts and mutual acceptance of people, belonging to different denominations. During the change of the political regimes in East-European post-totalitarian societies, these processes used to be overshadowed by measures for overcoming the economic crisis.

Today our state is focused more than ever on religious tolerance and the ability to deal with the problems of fundamentalism. Mutual acceptance between the representatives of opposing beliefs is placed in the context of our membership in the European Union. We must face the difficulties in establishing this process by way of comparative analysis and well-grounded evaluation of the abovementioned trends, according to global standards, principles and criteria. This is possible by following the specifics of traditional Catholic communities in our country as well as in the rest of the world, taking into account the present-day condition of the faith.

In Bulgaria the Catholic identity divides into Roman and Greek Catholicism: the *Latin rite* as well the *Uniats* are deeply connected with the

history of our church and state liberation. Traditionally Catholicism used to be the third largest religious congregation in Bulgaria, after Eastern Orthodoxy and Islam. It has roots in the country since the middle Ages and is part of the worldwide Catholic Church, under the spiritual leadership of the Pope and *Curia* in Rome.[3] Common problems of faith and of the Bulgarian Catholic Church are solved by the Episcopal Conference, which includes bishops, chaired by the Apostolic Exarch Hristo Proikov (Secretary-General is Father Srecko Rimats, monk of the Order of the barefoot Carmelite). It is named Inter-ritual episcopal conference in Bulgaria, because the confession of two different rites.[4]

We face serious challenges in clarifying the nature and the trends of the new social phenomena associated with Catholicism in Bulgaria and the manifestations of the Catholic identity within the Balkan people. The judgments and assessments should always be placed in a broader international perspective. The revival of some traditional religious forms and their transformation in modern conditions also require from the inter-confessional dialogue to bring the message of the harmonious reconciliation of different faiths.

The resistance coming from incomprehensible for our traditional worldview cultural keys focuses our attention on the value of religious diversity: the cultural forms rearrange tradition in such a manner that the casual phenomenon suddenly opens a whole cycle of future and manages it with the authority of the established. Europe today is facing simultaneously the challenges of its expansion and the need to act jointly as an actor on the global level. The discourse, referring to the idea of homogeneity and stability of the group belonging, should be rejected and displaced by another, which is suitable for studying the identity dynamics, which is predominantly moving, interactive and shifty. [Joppke, 2004: 239-241]

Without taking into account the specific cultural premises, the post-national dimension of religious policy cannot be fully responsive to societal changes and

---

[3] As an entity, the Catholic Church consists of (1) two dioceses in Bulgaria, the *Roman Catholic Diocese of Sofia and Plovdiv* with Seat in Plovdiv, and the *Roman Catholic Diocese of Nikopol* with Seat in Rouse, for those of the Latin Rite and (2) an *Exarchate* with its seat in Sofia for those of the Eastern Rite.

[4] In Bulgaria in 2004 according to "Annuario Pontificio 2005" there are: Bishops: 3, dioceses: 2. Apostolic Exarchate: 1. Catholics: 79,000 (According to the census of NSI in 2011 – 48945); priests: 52, secular priests: 17, monks-priests: 35; monks: 43, nuns: 87. While Bulgaria was contending with the Greek patriarchate for ecclesiastical autonomy, and the patriarch refused to make any concession, a movement was set on foot among the Bulgarians which pointed towards union with Rome. On 30 Dec.1860, 120 deputies of the people petitioned the Apostolic Delegate to receive them into the Roman Church on condition of the recognition of their language and liturgy, and the appointment of a bishop of their own nationality; almost 60,000 of their fellow-countrymen joined in the request. On 21 January, 1861, Pius IX himself consecrated a priest named Solkolski – the first Vicar Apostolic of Uniat Bulgaria. This movement, however, did not win the support of Catholic Europe, while the greatest obstacles were placed in its way by Russia and the patriarchate of Constantinople (http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/03046a.htm).

responsible for generating a common ground for personal, as well as group identity. The politico-cultural context in which universalistic principles could be applied, include a population accustomed to keeping the institutions of freedom alive and equally respecting the faith of each individual. If citizenship has to preserve its solidarity-building functions, it has to be given a valuable status, associated not only with civil and political rights, but also with the fulfillment of social and cultural rights. [Habermas, 1998: 118-119].

Cultural maintenance for institutionalized ethnic, traditional and religious differences intercepts its course with the national-identity dimension of multiculturalism. That is why we have to build new cultural policies and concepts of confessional identity, inspiring trust and a common store of knowledge across religious communities; to construct a shared frame of reference (to be drawn upon when events that may divide our societies threaten the ability of the faithful to live their differences together). We should also enhance the understanding of what has generally been viewed as a tension between modern secular and more traditional concepts of self and society and to interpret it in a "creative" way, rather than as an unbridgeable obstacle to communication. Hence we need to uphold the religious traditions as well as the modern secular thought and practice, realizing the crucial part that the relation between Church and culture takes in shaping a truly civil society, devoted to tolerance and plurality of human experience. [Joppke, 2004: 247]

For Hegel "the struggle for recognition" between initially equal conflict parties unfolds in an inherently deficient and unstable way. According to Jürgen Habermas "it is very important for different cultural, ethnic and religious forms of life to interact on equal terms within the same political community, which should provide a sufficient stimulus to integration in complex democratic societies." [Habermas, 2002: 128] There is no need for a background consensus based on national homogeneity to act as a "catalyzing condition" for the public opinion, involving the process of deliberation and decision-making, underlying the possibility of a reasonable political understanding even among strangers. In the absence of more substantive commonalities between different faiths, democracy, as a set of procedures can supply the demand for stable legitimacy, securing the social integration on the Balkans.

Conclusion

The very end of the 20th century was a time of severe trials for the Bulgarian people and the Balkan Peninsula as a whole. Our belonging to the European civilization both in geographical and cultural aspect, though historically doubtless, has become a source of identity crisis. Most threatening to the Balkan region today are not the political failures, the economic instability,

nor even the demographic collapse, but the religious clashes and ethnic conflicts. This inter-cultural study is trying to point out why in times such as these, our hidden strength lies in the effort to rediscover the traditional spirit of solidarity, tolerance and charity (which Catholics call *caritas*).

The ideas outlined above can be briefly summarized as the following new trends: a) the establishment of a secularized public sphere within the Catholic community; b) the privatization of religion; c) a politics of rights rather than a politics of the good; d) a post-secular idea of the individual as a self-regulating moral agent. However in many regions of the world these ideas simply do not hold: in most parts of the world the public sphere is not secularized. Religion remains a public and not a private matter, policies are articulated along visions of *the truth* and the self is seen as constituted by collective definitions, rather than by purely individual pursuits and interests. The continued popularity of religious identities world-wide reveals their potential to form a focus of conflict and to provide a dangerous base for existing conflicts. This means that building a new cultural policy and religious politics can develop the potential of Catholicism to provide resources for tolerance and mutual acceptance.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Barron, R., 2007. *The priority of Christ: toward a postliberal Catholicism*, Brazos: MI.

Blond, Ph. (ed.), 2005. *Post-secular Philosophy: between philosophy and theology*, New York.

Eldarov, S. V., 1994. *The Uniat Movement in the destiny of Bulgaria. Historical Outlines of Bulgarian Catholic Church of the Eastern Rite*, Sofia.

Habermas, J., 1998. *Inclusion of the Other: Studies in Political Theories*, C. Cronin and P. DeGreiff (eds). Cambridge: MA: MIT Press.

Habermas, J., 2002. *Religion and Rationality. Essays on Reason, God and Modernity*, Cambridge: MA.

http://www.humanities.manchester.ac.uk/socialchange/research/social-change/summer-workshops/documents/theretreatofmulticulturalism.pdf ; 18.05.2012.

Joppke, Ch., 2004. *The Retreat of Multiculturalism in the Liberal State: Theory and Policy/The British Journal of Sociology* 55 (2).

Katerberg W., (ed.), 2004. *The Future of Hope: Christian Tradition amid Modernity and Postmodernity*, Cambridge.

McDermott, John M. (ed.), 1993. *The Thought of Pope John Paul II: a Collection of Essays and Studies*, Rome: Gregorian University Press.

The Catholic Encyclopedia < http://www.newadvent.org >11.01. 2012.

SOME ASPECTS OF BYZANTINE INFLUENCE ON THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN CHURCH AND STATE IN WALLACHIA DURING THE 16TH CENTURY (A CULTURAL PERSPECTIVE)

MIHAELA POP[1]

Abstract

In this article we are going to analyze how the medieval political power in the Romanian provinces made use of the Byzantine influences in order to articulate a certain model of political leader. We will use for this purpose not only texts but also some other cultural products such as religious references, examples of churches and holy icons.

Keywords: Byzantine influence, voivode, church, political power, religious power, Medieval Ages, cultural mentalities.

In 2007, when Romania and Bulgaria were admitted to the European Union, a large number of polls were conducted in our country. There was a question in one of these polls asking respondents which historical and political figure is in their opinion the best political leader Romania has ever had? The great majority of the answers referred to the voivode Stephen the Great (1457-1504). This provides very strong evidence for the power of the collective mentalities and the historical memory of a nation.

Taking into account this aspect, our purpose is to point out some characteristics of the Romanian medieval relationship between the political and the religious power, between the voivode and the metropolitan bishop. In our opinion these aspects actually manifested not only in medieval times, but their influences could be also traceable even in modern times and nowadays. Taking into account the great deal of research needed for such analysis, we'll restrict our analysis only to the medieval times in one of the Romanian medieval states – Wallachia.[2]

If in 2007 the best model of political leader in Romania still was a medieval voivode, it seems useful to try to identify the fundamental

---

[1] University of Bucharest

[2] Some of these ideas were already mentioned in our book: *Métamorphoses de la Symbolique voiévodale, Etudes des mythes politiqes dans la littérature roumaine des XVIᵉ et XVIIᵉ siècles,* Editions Universitaires Européennes, Saarbrücken, Germany, 2010*,* pp. 113-233.

characteristics of such a leader in order to reveal this archetypal model in the Romanian collective mentality.

Stephen the Great was the warrior voivode archetype, very brave, fighting for his country and people. He was also a model of right judgment, promoting a spirit of equality and respect for the law. A lot of legends revealing these characteristics were mentioned by chronicles and retold afterwards in numerous sources with as many variations. That's how a sort of folkloric *corpus* of poetic works was created, generating thus the imaginary archetype. In fact, in accordance with his imaginary projection, Stephen has all the fundamental features thought necessary, in Romanian mentality, to be a good and faithful political leader: a real, brave, warrior, fighting for his country against the Turks and Tatars and a good and correct judge who, through his judgments, helps poor people to regain their rights and dignity.[3] However, these characteristics are not the only ones a sovereign should have. In fact, the model of the complete political leader is articulated through a complex process of integration of the characteristics of some major rulers of our countries in medieval times.

A contemporary of Stephen the Great, Neagoe Basarab was the ruler of Wallachia between 1512-1521. He embodied all those specific characteristics of a wise and cultivated leader. By his most significant actions, he embodied this side of a complete personality.

Some Biographical Data

Neagoe Basarab belonged to the family of the first voivodes of Wallachia, founded by Basarab I. In the same time, he married Militza Brancovici, a member of an aristocratic Serbian family, descendant of the Palaeologus family, one of the most important imperial families in the Byzantine Empire in the last three centuries of its existence. The Brancovici family had the title of Despotatos, one of the most important aristocratic ranks in the Byzantine hierarchy. Thus, Neagoe Basarab was highly motivated to consider himself as a continuator of a long aristocratic tradition – a local tradition reinforce by an imperial one.

He was also highly educated as he had as tutor the Patriarch of Constantinople, Niphon II. We have to mention that Niphon II played a significant role in the organization of the Orthodox Church especially in the Balkans region. He also contributed to the expansion of the religious movement of hesychasm. This ascetic religious movement was founded by Gregory Palamas during the 14th century and then it rapidly spread out over the entire

---

[3] I. Chiciudean, B.-A. Halic, *Imagologie. Imagologie istorică* (*Imagology. Historical imagology*), Bucureşti, comunicare.ro, 2008, especially pp. 138-203.

Byzantine Empire. In the same century, Gregory of Sinai founded some important hesychast monasteries in the Balkans such as Paroreia, Kelifarevo, Tarnovo. At the beginning of the 15th century, their existence stimulated the foundation of new Romanian monasteries: Bistriţa, Neamţ. Neagoe Basarab stayed in Bistriţa for a while in his youth and then continued to visit occasionally the monastery.

One of the most important religious personalities of those times was the Metropolitan bishop Euthymius of Tarnovo who gained notoriety for his religious commentaries and homilies. He was a promoter of the Hesychastic belief. He also wrote a commentary on *Vita Constantini* written by Eusebius of Caesarea during the 4th century. Euthymius' intention was to revive the archetype of the good Christian king dedicated to his Church and people in accordance with the model of Constantine the Great. This approach was extremely necessary in a period of hard times for the Christians especially in the mid 15th century when the Byzantine Empire crumbled and finally was defeated and Constantinople was conquered by the Ottomans.

We have to mention that, in the Byzantine tradition, founded by Constantine the Great, the emperor played an important role in the State-Church relationship, as he had major responsibilities in regard to the religious life of the Church. He was called an *isapostolos* (equal to the Apostles) and *bishop from outside the church life* (bishop belonging to the laity). These two characteristics seem to have significantly influenced Neagoe Basarab's conception of his role as we shall try to prove in the following pages.

Words and Meanings

As certain researchers have already proved[4], some Romanian voivodes used two Byzantine words having a very important meaning in the context of the post-Byzantine era, dominated by the Ottoman conquests in the region. These words were *basileia* and *autokrator.*

Basileia designated the Byzantine Empire as territory and it also meant political power, political capacity for governing a *basileia* (a state, an empire). The Byzantine emperor was a *basileus.*

Autokrator was the *basileus* as his power was not dependent on any other superior authority; he was considered (since Constantine the Great) God's "lieutenant" in this world. This meant that the emperor had a certain authority even over the ecclesiastical matters. He was the one who summoned the Synods of the Church and had the right to choose between the candidates for the highest

---

[4]   A. Pippidi, *Tradiţia politică bizantină în Ţările române* (*The Byzantine Political Tradition in the Romanian Countries*), Corint, Bucureşti, 2001.

position in the ecclesiastical hierarchy – the Patriarch of Constantinople. After the iconoclastic religious movement, resulting in the defeat of the iconoclasts, the Church of Constantinople succeeded in imposing its right to complete authority over any problem of dogma and increased its role in the religious life but the Byzantine emperors kept their right to choose the Patriarch till the end of the Empire, in 1453. According to the Byzantine documents, the relation between political and religious power is usually defined as a *symphonia* namely equal responsibilities and authority, the Church and the Patriarch having the responsibility to watch over the religious life while the emperor was supposed to ensure the protection of the Church and of the people all over the Empire.[5]

It is quite interesting to observe that many of the Romanian voivodes of the 16th century used the terms *autokrator* and even *basileia* in their official documents. Researchers consider this apparent misuse of the terms as a way of expressing a certain consciousness of the fact that, after the defeat of the Byzantine Empire, the Christian Balkan kings considered themselves the heirs of the former Christian Empire and of its cultural and religious tradition. In fact, the Patriarchate of Constantinople survived and kept imposing its religious authority in the region in competition with the Catholic authority. The formula used in the official documents by the Byzantine emperors was as follows: *En Christo to theo pistos basileus kai autokrator Romaion* (elected and anointed *basileus* by God Himself and *autokrator* of the Romans[6]). Vladislav, one of the first voivodes of Wallachia (during the first half of the 14th century) called himself in the official documents: *megas voyevodas en Christo to theo pistos autentes kai autokrator pases Oungrovlachias* (elected and anointed great voivode and *autokrator* of the entire territory of Ungrovlachia). The term *Autokrator* is translated here in Latin with the meaning of *plenarius possessor, dominus*.[7] It is interesting to mention that this formula was also used by Mircea the Old, Stephan the Great – who also used the term *basileia* for his kingdom – and by some voivodes of the 16th century.

---

[5]   See for instance: M. Anastos, *Aspects of the Mind in Byzantium. Political Theory, Theology and Ecclesiastical Relations with the See of Rome*, Ashgate Variorum, Burlington, USA, 2001.

[6]   Initially, the Byzantine Empire was the Roman Christian Empire organized by Constantine the Great who established its capital at Constantinople in 330. According to the official documents the Byzantines kept this formula till the defeat of Constantinople in 1453. Justinian the Great uses this formula at the beginning of the Juridical corpus: *Ruling through the God's authority the Empire granted to us by His Celestial Grace and Greatness, we are triumphant in wars, we cultivate the arts of peace and defend the Empire*, in G. Dagron, *Empereur et prêtre* (*Emperor and Priest*), PUF, Paris, 1996, p. 156.

[7]   *Dictionar. Instituţii feudale din Ţările Române.* (*Dictionary. Medieval Institutions in the Romanian Countries*), Ed. Academiei Române, Bucureşti, 1988, pp.234-238.

SOME ASPECTS OF BYZANTINE INFLUENCE ON THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN CHURCH AND STATE
IN WALLACHIA DURING THE 16TH CENTURY (A CULTURAL PERSPECTIVE)

81

In the official documents of the Romanian voivode there is a *theophore* mention *Io* which precedes the voivode's name[8] and which seems to be the shortened form of *Ioanes* (John the Baptist) who was considered to be the Forerunner (*Prodromos*), the one who prophesied the coming of Jesus Christ; John the Baptist was also called God's "lieutenant".

Taking into consideration all these details we appreciate that the Romanian voivodes were perfectly aware of their political model – Constantine the Great and his Byzantine successors – and they also borrowed certain political meanings of the official *formulae* even though their kingdoms were not at all similar to the Byzantine Empire.

Neagoe's Works and Their Contribution to the Wise Voivode's Profile

Neagoe Basarab built churches and decorated them with an impressive attention to detail and artistic harmony. He is usually considered a "crowned scholar"[9] as he is also the author of a parenetic text, *Teachings of Neagoe Basarab to his Son Theodosius.* The *parenesis* is a literary species with the aim of educating the young princes, preparing them for their future political position. This literary species has its roots in ancient texts such as Plato's *Republic* or *The Laws.* The tradition was inherited by the Byzantines. Certain emperors wrote such texts for their sons: Leon VI the Philosopher, John VI Cantacuzene, and Manuel II Palaeologus. The most famous writings are the works of Constantine VII Porphyrogennetos, during the 10th century, especially *The Book of Ceremonies.*[10]

Neagoe's Readings – His Library

Neagoe Basarab's *Teachings* were written at almost the same time as Machiavelli's *Prince*. However, the *Teachings* are the expression of a consolidated medieval Byzantine tradition; they are not a product of the Renaissance political emancipation. They include a lot of common themes in such texts (*mirroirs des princes*). There are some evident influences of the hesychastic attitude originated from Euthymius of Tarnovo's texts.[11] Euthymius' works were copied at the end of the 15th century at some Romanian monasteries such as Bistriţa, Neamţ and Putna.

---

[8] *Io, Stephen the Great* (for instance). See *Dictionary, Medieval Institutions in the Romanian Countries*, p. 301.

[9] Udrişte Năsturel in 1629 named him a "crowned scholar", cf. D.H. MAZILU, *Voievodul. Dincolo de sala tronului* (*The Voivode. Beyond the Throne Room*), Polirom, Iaşi, 2003, p. 305.

[10] Constantine VII – Porphyrogennetos, *Le Livre des ceremonies* (*The Book of Ceremonies*), Les Belles Lettres, Paris, 1967 and also E. Barker, *Social and Political Thought in Byzantium. From Justinian I to the last Palaeologus*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1957.

[11] Some of the Byzantine Emperors were strongly influenced by the hesychastic movement among them we can mention John VI Cantacuzene and Manuel II Palaeologus or the Bulgarian Tsar Simeonov.

There are researchers who tried to discover which texts and authors had most influenced Neagoe's writing.[12] In the second half of the 19th century, Al. Odobescu discovered at Bistriţa Monastery 300 volumes. 80 of them were written in Slavonic language and had been brought by Neagoe's family from the Serbian territories and the monasteries of Mount Athos. Here are some names: John Chrysostom, Basil of Caesarea, Macarius of Egypt, and Ephraim of Syria. Neagoe "is not only a diligent pupil and reader who wants to get knowledge of the Christian dogmas, he is a researcher too, searching for ideas and arguments which he uses in order to write his own work" said Nicolae Iorga[13].

Neagoe was deeply impressed by John Chrysostom's rhetoric style. He also used religious texts such as The *Lives of the Saints* and the *Synaxarium*, especially the texts for the months of February and September. The text written by the first hesychast Patriarch, Callistes, *On penitence and humility*, as well as the writing of Ephraim of Syria, *On humility,* and a volume containing the four Gospels and an Introduction (Predoslovy) written by Theophilactos, the archbishop of Ohrid (Albany), were identified as sources used by Neagoe in his writings. There is also an anthology of ancient philosophical texts including fragments from Plato, Aristotle, Pythagora and some other Ancient philosophers. This anthology was very well known in the Byzantine world under the title *Melissa*. It was copied by a Byzantine monk, Anton who finished it on November 23, 1518 as it is mentioned at the very end of the manuscript.[14]

There were also Byzantine legal texts such as: some of Justinian jurisprudential *corpus*, a text written in the 14th century by Mathew Blastaris, *Syntagma*, and also some Serbian legal texts such as the *Zakonikon* of Stephen Dusan. This interesting library included also a number of historical Byzantine chronicles written by George Hammartolos after 1453, or a *Chronography* written by the Patriarch Nikephoros. There were also some popular texts such as the already mentioned *Lives of the Saints* where Neagoe found the legend of *Barlaam and Ioasaph* and *The Physiologus* or *The Alexandria,* as well as the already mentioned *Panegirikon* dedicated by Euthymius of Tarnovo to the Saints Constantine and Helen. According to the researchers, Neagoe visited Constantinople at least once.

<p style="text-align:center">*</p>

Taking into consideration all these aspects we can try to reveal some influences of the voivode – metropolitan bishop relationship in some of Neagoe

---

[12] Al. Odobescu, apud D. H. Mazilu, *Recitind literatura română veche* (*Re-reading the Old Romanian Literature*), vol. I, Ed. Universităţii din Bucureşti, Bucureşti, 1998, pp. 123-278.

[13] Nicolae Iorga, *Bizanţ după Bizanţ* (*Byzantium after Byzantium*), Ed. Enciclopedică Românească, Bucureşti, 1972, pp. 76-80.

[14] D. H. Mazilu, *Literatura română în epoca Renaşterii* (*Romanian Literature in the Age of the Renaissance*), Minerva, Bucureşti, 1984, pp. 152-153.

SOME ASPECTS OF BYZANTINE INFLUENCE ON THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN CHURCH AND STATE
IN WALLACHIA DURING THE 16TH CENTURY (A CULTURAL PERSPECTIVE)

83

Basarab's cultural contributions. We refer especially to the church he built and decorated – the church of Curtea de Argeş Monastery – and to some chapters of his *Teachings*. In the dedication inscription written on the Southern wall of the church of Curtea de Argeş, the voivode stated that he was the founder of the church and called himself *basileus*. It is evident that he took into consideration voievodal origin and also his wife's kinship with the Palaeologus imperial family.

On the other side, in the second part of his *Teachings*, there is a second chapter containing a kind of *oratio* addressed to the Patriarchs and other high priests on a special occasion: the sanctification of the church dated August 15th, when the Orthodox Church celebrates the Ascension of the Virgin Mary. We have to mention that delivering such *oratio* on various religious occasions was a traditional event at the Byzantine Court.[15] During the most important religious events concerning the life of Jesus Christ, the emperor was supposed to deliver his own *oratio* in Saint Sophia. The topic chosen by Neagoe for his oratio concerns the saint icons and the religious duties that a good and faithful king should fulfill and also his strong desire to obey the divine authority, to fear God and also to prove his deep love for Him. Neagoe adopted in this situation the position of the "outside bishop".

The third chapter of the second part of his *Teachings* also contains an *oratio* addressed to all high-ranking ecclesiastical personalities present at the consecration of the monastery. Neagoe used the occasion to re-inhume the bones of his mother and three of his children already dead at that moment of his life. The text should be considered very "modern", expressing a high humanism that suggests a certain interest in the Renaissance ideas. He compares his mother with the Mother of Jesus, Saint Mary and develops a very sensitive discourse on the difficulties that a mother has to go through in order to see her child becoming a young and strong man. This very courageous comparison would be also used later by his wife, Militza Brancovici, who ordered a saint icon representing Saint Mary holding the body of her son, Jesus Christ, after the descent from the Cross. What is really amazing is that, in the same image, there is another mother holding the body of his dead son in her arms. This sad mother is Militza Brancovici herself and her son Theodosius, who was supposed to become voivode after his father's death. The iconographical representation of a sad event of the life of a human being other than a saint was not something usual. Researchers suggested two possible explanations: Militza Brancovici was a member of an imperial Byzantine family thus she had the right to be ichnographically represented and the second explanation refers to the humanist vision proper to the developing Renaissance movement that began to influence the countries of the Eastern Europe even if they were fiercely fighting against

---

[15] J. Kalvrezou, *Imperial Ceremonies and the Cult of Relics at the Byzantine Court* in *Byzantine Court Culture*, Harvard University Press, Harvard, USA, 1997, pp. 135-176.

the Ottomans. Even in these circumstances, the strongest feeling was to defend the orthodox traditions which were endangered and not to encourage "modernist" thoughts as those promoted by the Renaissance.
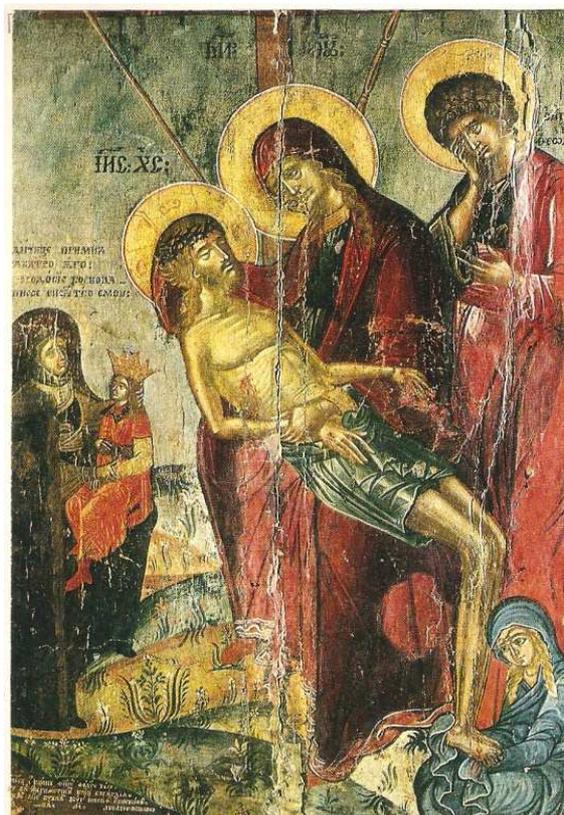
Holy icon painted by Dobromir after Neagoe's death
(*Left side: Militza crying for her dead Thedosius*
in a kind of reversed image of Saint Mary herself)

In the same second part of his *Teachings*, Neagoe wrote a final chapter entitled *When the souls leaves (the body).* It is, in our opinion, the most beautiful medieval text in the Romanian literature. Neagoe is living his last moments. He is addressing his Court asking to be forgiven and to take care of his family after his disappearance. Then he leaves his family reminding them of the good moments that they lived together and the regret that he will not be able to attend his daughters' wedding. Then he leaves the entire material world and all that is in nature. He praises God for the forgiveness of all the faults and sins committed during his lifetime. Finally he addresses his soul, then God asking

for His grace. "My soul does not have any other hope than Your great mercy, please Lord save my soul, my Christ! ...My soul hopes and believes in Your infinite mercy, You, oh, Lord, are a God full of mercy and You said to all the sinners: *Him that cometh to Me I will in no wise cast out.* I, a miserable and unworthy of You, I run to You, my Lord. Do not treat me as the large number of my sins deserve but according to the immensity of Your mercy."[16] In our opinion, this text is not simply a repentance text, but also the expression of a profound meditation on the human condition and glorification of the human being, this impressive creation of God. "I am Your creation and Your house, do not leave me in the arms of the devil"[17] he says. This chapter could be interpreted not only from a religious point of view, but it could also be considered from a modern perspective given by the humanistic vision of the Renaissance exemplified above.

There is another text, the *Life of the Patriarch Niphon II* written by Gabriel Protos, the superior of the Mount Athos monasteries between 1517-1521. He took part in the consecration of Curtea de Argeş Monastery and the inauguration of the new residence of the Metropolitan bishop of Ungrovlachia founded by the same Neagoe Basarab. On this occasion, Neagoe organized the visit of the relics of Saint Niphon of Mount Athos to Câmpulung. The visit of one saint's relics on some special religious occasions was also a Byzantine tradition.

The text written by Gabriel Protos is a hagiographic narration of the life of Saint Niphon. However, it became a panegyric of Neagoe. The model is again Eusebius of Caesarea – *Vita Constantini* and the *oratio* delivered by Eusebius on the occasion of the 30th anniversary of Constantine's reign as Emperor of the Christian Roman Empire, in 336. This text written by Gabriel Protos proves once again the preoccupation with consolidating the image of the political leader within the Balkans region according to the archetype of Constantine the Great during a period in which the Ottoman Empire had already conquered Constantinople and was planning to expand, adding parts of the Northern and Western Europe. The hagiographic text becomes rapidly a historical chronicle of Wallachia. Neagoe's portrait is drawn in bright colours: he is a courageous, wise and good diplomat.

There is also another text dating from the same period. It was written by Maximos Trivalis, a Court poet. It is a poem dedicated to Neagoe who is characterized as a patron of the arts. The researchers mention also another anonymous text, *Ekteny for the Voyvod Neagoe Basarab*. In these two texts the voivode is considered the equal of the Byzantine emperors. It is certainly an exaggeration but we could not exclude a certain preoccupation and consciousness

---

[16] Neagoe Basarab, *Invăţăturile lui Neagoe Basarab către fiul său Teodosie* (*The Teachings of Neagoe Basarab to his Son Theodosius*), Minerva, Bucureşti, 1971, pp. 351-352 (our translation).

[17] *Op. cit.*, p. 353.

of the cultural necessity to maintain the Byzantine tradition. The preservation of this tradition was a form of manifesting one's Christian identity and belonging to a long praxis in contrast to the newcomers who were Muslims and belonged to another cultural background.

In this article we tried to prove that, at the beginning of the 16th century, concurrently to the archetype of the warrior voivode, fair but tough, another archetype of voivode emerged in the cultural mentality of the Romanian people – the figure of the wise and cultivated voivode, dedicated to religious life, the foundation of nice and elegant churches and love and glorification of the human being.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Anastos, M., 2001. *Aspects of the Mind of Byzantium. Political Theory, Theology and Ecclesiastical Relations with the See of Rome*, Burlington, USA: Ashgate Variorum.

Barker, E., 1957. *Social and Political thought in Byzantium. From Justinian I to the last Palaeologus*, Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Basarab, Neagoe, 1971. *Învăţăturile lui Neagoe Basarab către fiul său Teodosie* (*The Teachings of Neagoe Basarab to his Son Theodosius*), Bucureşti: Minerva.

Chiciudean, I., Halic, B.-A., 2008. *Imagologie. Imagologie istorică* (*Imagology. Historical imagology*), Bucureşti: comunicare.ro.

Constantine VII, the Porphyrogenet, 1967. *Livre des ceremonies* (*The Book of Ceremonies*), Paris: Les Belles Lettres.

Dagron, G., 1996. *Empereur et prêtre* (*Emperor and Priest*), Paris: PUF.

Iorga, Nicolae, 1972. *Bizanţ după Bizanţ* (*Byzantium after Byzantium*), Bucureşti: Ed. Enciclopedică Românească.

Kalavrezou, J., 1997. *Imperial Ceremonies and the Cult of Relics at the Byzantine Court* in *Byzantine Court Culture,* Harvard, USA: Harvard University Press.

Mazilu, D. H., 1984. *Literatura română în epoca Renaşterii* (*Romanian Literature in the Age of the Renaissance*), Bucureşti: Minerva.

Mazilu, D. H., 2003. *Voievodul. Dincolo de sala tronului* (*The Voivode. Beyond the Throne Room*), Iaşi: Polirom.

Mazilu, D. H., 1998. *Recitind literatura română veche* (*Re-reading the Old Romanian Literature*), vol. I, Bucureşti: Ed. Universităţii din Bucureşti.

Pippidi, A., 2001. *Tradiţia politică bizantină în Ţările Române* (*The Byzantine Political Tradition in the Romanian Countries*), Bucureşti: Corint.

Pop, Mihaela, 2010. *Métamorphoses de la Symbolique voiévodale, Etudes des mythes politiques dans la littérature roumaine des XVIe et XVIIe siècles,* Saarbrücken, Germany: Éditions Universitaires Européennes.

***   1988. *Dicţionar. Instituţii feudale din Ţările Române* (*Dictionary. Medieval Institutions in the Romanian Countries*), Bucureşti: Ed. Academiei Române.

RELIGION AND CULTURE BETWEEN NATIONALISM AND DEMOCRACY: INTERRELIGIOUS CONNECTIONS FOR PEACEBUILDING IN THE BALKANS

ANDREEA GAE[1]

Abstract

The Balkans have been associated with ideology, political culture, democratization or interreligious dialogue for peacebuilding. The Carpato-Balkanic area is linked to major political and social changes, whose elements can be found in its history. Under these circumstances, the nationalism and the Christian Orthodox Churches have been considered as the fundamental characteristics of Balkan societies, through which culture and religion preserve the national integrity. *Simultaneously,* the Balkans shows a problem of globalisation of their cultural history and religious civilization, often used as an instrument for the accomplishment of political achievements. A controversial vision on political culture and religious democratization emerged after the communist collapse in the modern Balkans. Consequently, religious culture dialogue or interreligious dialogue for peacebuilding mediates the interhuman relations and the social cohesion, integrating cultural and religious identities into intergroup dialogue.

Keywords: religion, culture, Balkans, interreligious, peacebuilding, nationalism, democracy, ideology.

Introduction

The reconceptualising of the Balkans has been constantly associated with the realm of ideology, political culture and democratization or interreligious dialogue for peace building. Additionally, the end of the Cold War political bi-polarization on a global scale and the resurgence of various political and social changes significantly affected the cultural and religious determinations of the new world. Consequently, the Carpato-Balkanic region is linked to major political and social changes, whose characteristics can be identified in its history and actuality. In this context, the nationalism and the Christian Orthodox Churches have been considered as the quintessential features of Balkan societies and as the fundamental institutional frameworks through which culture and religion are to be exposed in countries like Romania and Bulgaria. In these

---

[1] University of Bucharest.

places, cultural life not only reflected the religious attitudes, though it has been utilized as a powerful symbol conveniently located in the process of creating a cultivated civilization, keeping active the Christian values and traditions or understanding the new challenges of the contemporary globalization process.

In other terms, the strong connection between religion and culture in our highly politicized world becomes an important source of motivation and preservation of national integrity. In the recent history of the interreligious dialogue, the human communication between religious institutions (the Church) and culture helped mutual understanding and cooperation between different people who self-identify religiously. On these basic assumptions, the best exemplary practices of cultural and religious dialogue in the Carpato-Balkanic region have been represented when a top-down analysis has been complemented and mixed with interactions between mid-level clergy and laity from the different religious communities, including in particular rural areas or women and youth from the urban areas. In the end, leaders of the religious communities, however important the hierarchical structures are, cannot integrate cultural changes without systematic actions to cooperate with the laity.

The Ideological Realm of the Cultural and Religious Dialogue

Firstly, theoretically speaking, the cultural religion or the cultural and religious dialogue is an actual consequence of the religious pluralism, because we have to admit that in Romania and Bulgaria all the three monotheisms and the fundamental Christian Orthodox beliefs reflected their own attitudes since many centuries ago. This reality conducted to the necessity to understand and respect multiple traditions, to communicate and improve mutual recognition, thereby contributing to peacebuilding and to overcoming common challenges of the political and social history. Clearly, the plurality of religious and cultural identities is not a source of social conflict in the Carpato-Balkanic space. Nevertheless, after four decades of atheistic ideology created and promoted by the communist regimes, intolerance is still present within religious communities and cultural circles in post-communist countries, especially in the forms of dogmatism and fanaticism.

Secondly, the cultural religion is inherently related to the principles of toleration and traditional values. The social actors entertain and respect the value of their differences, trying to promote a positive attitude toward dialogue and to undermine a position of pragmatic non-interference with difference or negative tolerance.

Thirdly, an important obstacle to cultural and religious dialogue remains the inequality in social power and influence (for instance, majority versus minority religions, or rich institutional structures – the Clergy – and poor

communities – the Laity) and the construction of national and cultural identity around religious identification which can also involves politics.

Even though, the Balkan differences cannot simply define the epiphenomena of power politics, otherwise their specific characteristics would have vanished. In this respect, the ideological antagonisms in the Balkans can be represented as virtually mono-dimensional, expressed by the domination of nationalist ideology which is often perceived as religious culture or interreligious dialogue. The Carpato-Balkanic region and the fundamental relations between religion and its institutions, on one side, and various domains of life (political power, social life, economy and culture) on the other side, are conceived as inextricably intertwined in a concrete duality that accounts for nationalism – ordering cultural and religious principle of the history and actuality of the region – and its connections to the specific features that characterize Balkan societies: authoritarianism, the lack of democratic culture and institutions, violence, dogmatism and interreligious dialogue. In the same time, the Balkans display a period of globalization of their cultural history and religious civilization, sometimes used as an instrument for the accomplishment of political achievements. Occasionally, the past still dominates the present reality or the efforts towards liberation and reconciliation.

Political Culture and Religious Democratization in the Modern Balkans

A controversial approach on political culture and religious democratization emerged after the communist collapse in the modern Carpato-Balkanic region. More specifically, the reasons for this failure were identified in the behavioural and subjectivist civic models which were described as being powerless in predicting and explaining the emergence of democratic values and cultural interreligious dialogue in the Communist Bloc after 1987. These practices underestimated the impact of political cultures and interreligious dialogue which didn't follow the dominant civic culture model, and they were, consequently, ill-equipped to recognize the concrete expression of cultural and religious nationalism. Similarly, the political passiveness of the population towards the political system and their increasing interest towards cultural life and religious attitudes were misinterpreted, because it was considered a retreat from politics rather than a defence mechanism of the democratic values and traditions. As a result, competing political cultures were not considered at all and religious approaches in cultural attitudes or beliefs interacting in communist societies were misunderstood.

The development of different political cultures occurred in spite of the absence of autonomous institutions and authentic civil society. In fact, the communism strongly controlled the public life and radically transformed the

social and economic structures of these societies, still they constantly situated themselves in search of new paradigms of political and cultural representations, which increasingly explain why complementary values as traditional culture and historical religion emerged so quickly after the communist collapse.

For instance, satellite states like Romania and Bulgaria achieved great economic growth with high industrial employment between the 1950s and 1970s, whose changes produces radical social and cultural changes as well: the urban population rose because the migration from the countryside was encouraged in order to exploit natural resources or to keep strict control over the population from small towns and villages, disposed to record traditional values. Accordingly, an important number of people had the opportunity to enter higher education, with illiteracy becoming drastically reduced from the 1950s. Simultaneously, this process unlocked the cultural and religious dialogue, despite the political dictatorship and the institutional censorship.

Under these circumstances, the way that historical actuality was transmitted in the Balkans was mediated during communist rule by its perception of traditional values and its ideological commitments, inhibited but not abolished in the state-building experience. Culturally, the values transformation accompanied the ideological inflexibility of the dictatorship, which identified the "capitalist enemy" inside specific political cultures promoting "otherness" or a particular set of attitudes different than the rigid cultural mentality sustained by the ideological homogeneity. We may mention the cases of the "indigenization" of Marxism introduced by Nicolae Ceauşescu in Romania and of the Soviet orthodoxy and criticism towards Titoism in Bulgaria. In other words, despite multiple repressive evolutions, a new intellectual, cultural and religious elite emerged in the development of an underground society, despite its limited membership, anxious to identity, preserve and communicate its traditional values and attentive to Western considerations.

The set of instruments for socio-cultural and religious communication differed as well, being sustained by the development of international contacts, receptiveness towards Westerns trends, the augmentation of social and political structures, and in the end – particularly in the Bulgarian and Romanian cases – by the experience of the Soviet *perestroika*. In terms of religion, the Council of Religious Affairs of the Soviet Union incarnated a powerful state body that was officially intended to represent a connection between the state and the religious groups, in the Communist Bloc. Even though, it was exercising very extensive supervisory functions and it widely interfered in the appointment of the Clergy. In addition, the communist approach to religious manifestations was compulsory attached to an atheistic education and research, organized in several units in a sort of "scientific atheism". This phenomenon created a broad network of Institutes of Scientific Atheism engaged in study, interviews and lectures, involving both cultural and economical effects: the new

atheist intellectuals had to become the "new clergy of the nation", because, if abandoned, thousands workers would have been unemployed.

In the same time, religion appealed to traditional, cultural values, like identity and solidarity, in an attempt to interact with political parties and political cultures. In order to determine again the social thinking, official religious institutions sought to establish new bonds with state, population and territory. This approach was particularly observed in the case of Orthodox Christianity, contributing significantly to the process of historical and cultural re-legitimation and introducing, one more time, the holy and transcendental dimension of the nationalism.

Also, traditional values as national identity and social solidarity were politically encouraged apart from religion: the *zadruga* tradition in Bulgaria and *sat* in Romania, both expressing the rural patriarchal community, were utilized by the communist collectivism to stimulate the regime through loyalty and pride. However, the nationalism was later exploited for mass mobilization against minorities – for example against Romanies, Turks and Hungarians in Romania and Bulgaria – or in order to deny modern and Western economic practices, as privatization. Nevertheless, the end of communism did not necessarily imply the end of religious and cultural discrimination, but it rather involved new ideologies emerged from a severe nationalist political culture. Hence, the display of national symbols in the post-communist democratization. For example, *The Monument to 1300 Years of Bulgaria*, also known as *The Founders of the Bulgarian State Monument*, was built in 1981 on a plateau above the city of Shumen, Bulgaria, to commemorate the 1300th anniversary of the First Bulgarian Empire. Unfortunatelly, the symbol of a nation-state continuity cannot be shared by all the citizens of the country, especially when it was built in a mixed area with large minorities of Turks and Romanies, and becoming, consequently, a source of social suspicions and cultural disloyalties. Similarly, the Vasil Levki's festival, celebrating the Bulgarian revolutionary and national hero of Bulgaria, who was hanged by Turks, does not encourage the principles of freedom and cohabitation between Turkish and Slavic populations.

In summary, the cultural and religious differences have been increased in the Balkans in the last decades, though they are not the basis of a typical patriarchal and dualistic antagonism, as suggested by the nationalist political culture. On the contrary, they persist within social groups and in specific individuals in order to create connections and to express various multi-cultural attitudes.

Religious Culture Dialogue for Peacebuilding in the Balkans

Religious culture dialogue or interreligious dialogue for peacebuilding constitutes a significant approach that situates the practice of communication

and social interactions in the center of political, social, cultural and religious reconciliation. Furthermore, it mediates the interhuman relations and enhances the social cohesion between several different agents, recognizing and integrating cultural and religious identities into intergroup dialogue, both locally and globally.

In this context, the meaning of the "religious culture" implies an emergent, advanced and adaptive structure of cultural and religious symbols (theories, myths, rituals, social practices, traditions, intellectual and ethical values) that configures the network of social and individual thinking in order to discover, record and transmit common acts. Moreover, the interreligious character is significantly linked to the social interactions between distinct human beings having particular cultural lifes and religious attitudes, to overcome conflictual issues and to identify identical, fundamental roots.

Concerning the Carpato-Balkanic space, the development of a political, social and academic study of religions and culture was integrated in the secularization process which accompanied the modernization and democratization of societies after the fall of the Communist Bloc. In this respect, interreligious dialogue in the Balkans cannot be understood excepting historical, economic, social and political circumstances in which it has taken place. The coexistence of the different faith communities – Orthodox Christianity, Roman Catholicism, Islam and Judaism – has created various manners of cultural and religious communication and a certain level of tolerance between them.

Particularly, in the Romanian and Bulgarian case, the fall of communism revealed a type of religious culture situated between theological and sociological polemics. The former, based on their new re-gained, traditional authority, clamed that the influence of religion in society should be performed exclusively by the Christian Orthodox theology, while the latter affirmed that the religious culture dialogue was insignificant in the circumstances of a secularized Romanian and Bulgarian societies. These communication problems are reflected even in the choice of names for the researched subject, from "Orthodox theology" to "sociology of religion". Also, in Bulgaria, the creation of an independent nation state in 1878 provided important repressive actions against religious and ethnic minorities; in Romania too, the situation was characterized by intra-Christian tensions, mostly ethnically represented. This situation is generalizable to the majority of Eastern Europe societies, where traditional theologies are generically complementary with non-confessional, cultural approaches. Generally, the close interaction between religion and culture or the religious culture dialogue in the Balkans persisted and became a key element of the nations.

Country	Religious demography	Law on religion	Restitution of religious communities' property	Confessional religious education in public schools
Bulgaria	7.7 million 82.64% Orthodox 12.2% Muslims (7.7% Alevis) Less than 1% Catholics (including Eastern rite Catholics) Less than 1% Protestants	Denomination Act 2002 No state religion, yet Constitution designates Eastern Orthodox Christianity as "traditional denomination." 100 registered denominations	Slow and partial Restitution Law 1992	Optional classes introduced in 1997 for the Orthodox children and in 2000 for the Muslim children
Romania	22 million 86.8% Orthodox 4.7% Roman Catholics 1% Greek Catholics Frequent instances of anti-Semitism. Law to combat anti-Semitism (2006).	Law on Religious Freedom 2006 No state religion, yet the Romanian Orthodox Church enjoys a *de facto* privileged position. Three-tier system of recognition: – recognized religions – religious associations – religious groups 18 recognized religions	Slow and partial Implementation of Law 501/2002 (religious property) began late, and is proceeding slowly. Greek Catholic Church claims remain unresolved	Optional classes introduced 1990. In 1995 classes were made mandatory for primary schools and in 1997 for all grades. Recognized denominations allowed to offer religion classes.

The statistical data are based mainly on *International Religious Freedom Reports 2008*, with small additions based on other sources, such as national censuses. Ina Merdjanova, Patrice Brodeur, *Religion as a Conversation Starter* (*Interreligious Dialogue for Peacebuilding in the Balkans*), Continuum International Publishing Group, London, 2009.

In the Bulgarian case, all cultural and religious communities were severely oppressed under the Communist Bloc. Finally, after its abolishment, the society started to reconstruct and reorganize its institutional and spiritual connections. Both the Bulgarian Orthodox Church and the Islamic Community suffered several tensions and different structures.

Bulgaria does not have an individual state religion, though the Constitution designates Eastern Orthodox Christianity as the "traditional denomination". In the same time, the Bulgarian state does not present the general intolerant attitude towards the new religious movements which appeared after the fall of communism, on the contrary, religious culture and communities are strongly connected, solving their own conflicts without external intervention.

As for Romania, the Romanian Orthodox Church was actively involved in the post-reconstruction of the Romanian nation and society, benefitting, consequently, from a privileged institutional and social position. During the communist time, the Orthodox Church institutions were strictly controlled by the State, even so its specific religious and cultural activities were somehow tolerated; on the contrary, the Roman Catholic Church and the Greek Catholic Church supported severe repressions, the latter being abolished and obliged to integrate itself in the Romanian Orthodox Church in 1984. After the fall of communism, the relations between the Orthodox and the Greek Catholic Churches were tensioned, several church buildings and properties being still disputed. Anyway, the Romanian Orthodox community expressed their solidarity with the protest of the Hungarian Reformed community in Timişoara, when one of its religious ministers, Laszlo Tokes, was arrested by the communist authorities, just few days before the end of the Romanian dictatorship, in December 1989. Certainly, the Romanian Orthodox Church is defined as one of the major elements of the institutions-state relations, interreligious dialogue and the religious education itself being well represented in the public, secular, democratic space – Romania is the only country in the Balkanic area where the teaching of religion is mandatory for students of all grades. Additionally, Romania became the first predominantly Orthodox country to welcome the Roman pontiff with the 1999 visit of Pope John Paul II, marking a fundamental evolution in the interreligious and cultural dialogue of Orthodox-Catholic Churches.

Conclusions

The process of creating new structures for interreligious dialogue and religious culture in the Balkans has been essential for the social, political and economic cooperation of building a civilization of trusting communication and human connections.

The Carpato-Balkanic region became a dynamical location where various nationalist, cultural and religious ideologies were involved, challenging in multiple manners the functions of culture and religion and giving rise to confrontations expressed through a series of historical, political and social experimentations.

These particular ideological conflicts introduced diverse and competing articulation of the interreligious dialogue which identified its expression in the

terms of the religious culture. Communism, liberal internationalism, modern democracy and nationalism conceived the new historical circumstances and significantly affected the religious and cultural attitude of Romanian and Bulgarian peoples.

To conclude, religion in the Balkans has almost always been correlated with ethnicity, nationalism, traditional and cultural values. Religious paradigms, cultural behaviors and ideologies have represented fundamental elements in various social and political projects. Consequently, the religious culture and the interreligious dialogue can be often considered as real nationalist agents.

Additionally, in most of the Balkan states, Church-State connections already established the general specificity of interreligious relations, in some cases, the cultural and religious cooperation being promoted by the state itself or by the majority community in the respective countries. In Bulgaria, the recent formation of the National Council of the Religious Communities was, for instance, promoted by the Religious Affairs Directorate at the Council of Ministers. In Romania, the cooperation between theological institutions and socio-cultural bodies is initiated through church-related organizations, such AIDRom and several Ecumenical Institutes, as well through individual actions performed by priests and university professors. Also, the absence of a traditional civic engagement or social activism will significantly increase the influence of the religious leaders.

REFERENCES

Merdjanova, Ina, Brodeur, Patrice, 2009. *Religion as a Conversation Starter* (*Interreligious Dialogue for Peacebuilding in the Balkans*), London: Continuum International Publishing Group.

Hatzopoulos, Pavlos, 2008. *The Balkans Beyond Nationalism And Identity* (*International Relations and Ideology*), London: I.B. Tauris & Co Ltd.

Pridham, Geoffrey, Gallagher, Tom (editors), 2000. *Experimenting with Democracy (Regime Change in the Balkans)*, London: Routledge.

Carntichael, Cathie, 2002. *Ethnic Cleansing in the Balkans* (*Nationalism and the destruction of tradition*), London: Routledge

"BYZANTIUM AFTER BYZANTIUM" AND THE RELIGIOUS FRAMEWORK. A CONCEPTUAL ANALYSIS

CONSTANTIN STOENESCU[1]

Abstract

My working hypothesis is that the phrase **"Byzantium after Byzantium"** has multiple meanings which can be revealed by a type of conceptual analysis. I have discovered five constitutive elements: firstly, Iorga wanted to express the paradoxical twinning of historical change and continuity; secondly, he agreed with the rise and fall model of the historical development; thirdly, he conceived the historical process at the level of largest entities, namely, the civilizations understood as complex societies; fourthly, he thought that religion could be a general framework for an explanation regarding the course of events; fifthly, Iorga searched for an explanation in terms of tradition.

Keywords: Nicolae Iorga, "Byzantium after Byzantium", rise and fall, complex societies, Orthodox tradition.

"Byzantium after Byzantium"[2]

The fortunate phrase "Byzantium after Byzantium" ("Bizanț după Bizanț" in Romanian) was used for the first time, or at least it was consecrated by the historian Nicolae Iorga as a book title for one of his many works.[3] His thesis suggests that the cultural forms which have assured and guaranteed the identity of the Byzantine Empire have survived, being preserved in Southeastern Europe for a long time after the fall of Constantinople in the year 1453, especially by the Romanian Principalities, despite the Ottoman suzerainty.

In his book, Nicolae Iorga described in details a lot of facts which happened after the conquest of Byzantium, from the exile of the scholars in

---

[1] University of Bucharest.

[2] Just a few words about the method I used here for the analysis of the phrase "Byzantium after Byzantium". My idea is that the method of conceptual analysis could be applied, in a weak sense, to the social sciences and history, with good results regarding the clarity of these different judgments. I rather think to a connective analysis than to a linguistic one. Therefore, my aim is to reveal the constitutive elements of ideas, to clear up the multiple meanings and to make the connections between concepts and ideas.

[3] Iorga (1972).

Western Europe (especially philosophers and theologians), to the revolutionary beginnings of the 19th century. The chapters VI and VII contain a derivative thesis regarding the continuity of the Byzantine imperial idea in the Romanian Principalities, like Wallachia and Moldavia. The reliable foundation of this historical process was the Orthodox Church and the Christian communities. This explains why so many rulers from the two principalities were not only the main donors for the Christian communities and churches but also their protectors.

I think that there is no hermeneutic risk to say that Iorga discovered the multicultural level as a component of the identity of different communities. However, he usually described the Romanian culture as a mixture or confluence of Eastern Orthodoxy and Roman linguistic heritage.

The purpose of this research is to investigate this theoretical paradigm by extracting the strong presupposition of Iorga's thesis, according to which the Orthodoxy was the main factor for the preservation of Byzantine identity, assuring the continuity of this kind of civilization in a geographic space. Maia Todorova, a contemporary historian, agrees that "Byzantium after Byzantium" understood as a descriptive term, denotes "the commonalities of the Orthodox peoples in the Ottoman Empire concerning religion, private law, music, and the visual arts."[4]

Undoubtedly, Iorga's thesis shows some remains of his ideological attitude and emotions, but I think it has a cognitive content, therefore it could be used as an interpretative tool. Its theoretical core regarding the historical continuity of religion can reject many skeptical replies. Again, the main idea is that a kind of social and economic structure, a type of culture and a dominant religion have joined together for many centuries in a geographic space. But how is such a historical process possible? How should we explain the historical stability? Have we historical cases as good examples? And which is then the role played by the religious framework? Finally, was the Orthodoxy the support for the Byzantine values, mores and folkways common to all peoples in Southeastern Europe? And could we suppose that the main social rules, which assured the stability of economic and social interactions, derived from this ethos?

Rise and Fall

The historians have rather tried to explain the historical change than to show the stability or the slow change. Traditionally, the historians were superior to simple chroniclers of their times, though they were not at all theorists of history. To write about battles and winners, for example, was already a strong engagement in the interpretation of facts. And, as we know, there are no pure historical facts. So, there is always a hidden vision about history behind any chronicle.

---

[4]   Todorova (2009), p. 165.

The expression "Byzantium after Byzantium" was used by Nicolae Iorga as a description for a historical change, having the advantage of suggesting both a sequence and a continuity. His intention was, probably, to embed the seeming paradox that something has changed and simultaneously remained the same into this expression.

It is interesting to mention that this way of speaking was used by some historians in order to describe major historical changes, like the growth of civilizations and empires and their decay. The well-known modern philosopher Giambbatiata Vico reinvented this vision about history.[5] He argued that there is only one universal law in history, whose source and legitimacy reside in God. All these different historical facts are expressions of this law. Vico tried to explain why different societies accomplished this unique law differently.

His answer consists in a theory about the ideal, eternal history which assumes that all nations rise and fall according to a circular motion. Therefore, these historical evidences were considered in the context of some metaphysical claims. The philosophers of the Modern Age, especially those who framed the Enlightenment, associated the idea of progress to these historical sequences. The same vision of history was shared by Dimitrie Cantemir in his *History of the Growth and Decay of the Ottoman Empire* (*Historia incrementorum atque decrementorum Aulae Ottomanicae*).

The cyclical pattern of history was also used by one of Iorga's contemporaries, Arnold Toynbee, in his book *A Study of History*. He identified twenty-one civilizations and described their genesis, growth and decay and finally their disintegration and the new genesis. Briefly, "civilizations rise and fall and, by falling, they give rise to the others."[6] A similar pattern is used in his research on cities and their historical development, in the book *Cities on the Move*. For example, Toynbee tried to explain why the capital of Roman Empire was moved from Rome to Constantinople.

Nicolae Iorga had a similar general vision over historical development, seen as a series of civilizations; in addition, he adopted the same idea of a historical circular motion that interchanges growth and decay. He thought that the civilizations were the greatest historical units and judged their evolution from this point view, trying to find the basic source of unity in the context of evolution. In the same time, by using an idea already theorized in the philosophy of culture, Iorga described the civilizations in their economic, social, cultural and political complexity, as living realities structured by specific forms. I think we have sufficient reasons to say that the phrase "Byzantium after Byzantium" restores the relationship between forms and reality inside the Southeastern European civilization. It is a historical reality that the city of

---

[5]   See Vico (2002).
[6]   Toynbee (1948), p. 15.

Constantinople was conquered in 1453, even though the Byzantine civilization survived in the Balkans many centuries after that military event because the Byzantine "forms" didn't cease to exist. In fact, a historical change presents an association of continuity and discontinuity. "Byzantium after Byzantium" expresses the availability of this idea in the case of the Balkan civilization.

Complex Societies

Let's suppose the unproblematic idea that the Byzantine civilization was a complex society, gradually developed. I prefer to use the term "civilization" to denote the effects of the complex societies. In this sense, the Byzantine civilization produced a complex society which had its own political hierarchy, namely, a bureaucracy and a ruling elite, that social stratification being accompanied by a specialization of some groups and specific ideological or religious identity based on common values and concepts. This "common culture" was also described as "a combination of old habits of thought and folklore"[7]

If a complex society was such a historical entity then its relationship with its evolution must be explained. What do we mean by the growth of a complex society or by its collapse? We don't find many answers or theories regarding this problem, but a starting point is easy to take, at least for the sake of our argument.

Joseph Tainter's approach regarding the collapse and development of societies could be very helpful. He defines collapse as "a recurrent feature of human societies".[8] In the same time, he realizes that this assumption raises at least two methodological questions. Firstly, "the question of whether complexity is a continuum or it is characterized by discrete stages."[9] Secondly, "to explain collapse it will be necessary to discuss (…) alternative general views of how complex societies have developed"[10]. I suppose that a causal explanation of the development and collapse would be the best option for each case. Therefore, a debate on these issues will reveal the hidden causes and powers. But other questions will become legitimate, for example, how do we explain the historical fact that a society remains unchanged for a long time.

The answer to the first methodological question is that a complex society has an identity assured by some deep structures and modes of operation, all of these being doubled by noticeable surface characteristics. In the same time, complex societies increase because they aren't inert entities, so the balance between stability and change reveals equilibrium at the level of complex society seen as a totality. Therefore, complex societies change slowly, but they do.

---

[7] Duțu (1998), p. 139.
[8] Tainter (1988), p. 5.
[9] Tainter (1988), p. 23.
[10] Tainter (1988), p. 22.

Additionally, their collapse is explained through the conjunction of different causes that produce the conditions for a catastrophic change. Except the natural disaster, the main cause of quick changes is, probably, the lack of natural resources.

The methodological conclusion is that, in history, the best explanations describe the genesis and causes of phenomena.

Imagining the Byzantine World

Conceived as a complex society, the Byzantine world is a very interesting historical case because it arises some questions regarding basic structure that assured its identity, and, above all, its long stability and continuity. Its slow decay (one thousand years) from an empire, Eastern Roman Empire, to a town, the city of Constantinople, must be explained. Was this millennium, first of all, a continuous historical decay, or, to the contrary, a surprising period of stability? The decay is obvious, but perhaps the historical showing of its slow evolution is more important than the decay itself. However, the Byzantine world was the best possible word for its inhabitants since they did not want to change anything. In other words, in one millennium, Byzantium lost its political primacy, but it remains almost identical concerning the historical daily life, namely, for all, social, economic and cultural events. The working hypothesis is that the religious faith was the cement of this world.

I think it is useful to mention some historical views regarding this paradoxically slow decrease of the Byzantine world. I chose a well-known historian of civilizations, Arnold Toynbee, and two historians from the geographical area of Byzantium, the Bulgarian Maia Todorova and the Romanian Alexandru Duțu.

Arnold Toynbee is one of those researchers who causally explain the historical development of the Balkan society based on religious grounds. First of all, taking into account the differences between traditions, he divided Europe in two blocks, the so-called Western Christendom and the Orthodox Christendom. The difference between these two worlds is made through different causes and trends, but one of the most important features is the relation between the State and the Church. The Church preserved his freedom in Western Christendom: "Even where the Church has been re-subjected to the secular power in a Western state, this un-Western relation between Church and state has been tempered by the climate of ecclesiastical independence which has been prevalent in Western Christendom on the whole. In the Byzantine world, on the other hand, the successful re-establishment of the Empire in the eight century deprived the Eastern Orthodox Church of the freedom that she, too, had momentarily regained. She did not re-enter the prison house without a struggle. The battle went on for about two hundred years, but it ended in the Church's becoming

virtually a department of the medieval East Roman State; and a state that has reduced the Church to this position has thereby made itself 'totalitarian' – if our latter-day term 'totalitarian state' means a state that has established its control over every side of the life of its subjects."[11] The "peculiar institution" of Byzantine society brought the Byzantine civilization to a premature downfall due to a series of wars, for example, those between the Byzantium and the new Bulgarian state.

Toynbee asserts that this mixture between political power and Church was the main cause of the Byzantine decay: "The medieval Byzantine totalitarian state conjured up by the successful resuscitation, at Constantinople, of the Roman Empire had a disastrous effect on the development of the Byzantine civilization."[12] The effect of this combination was a totalitarian society, having a slow motion and a perpetual reproduction of the same cultural forms. To overcome these boundaries was an individual chance that some persons gained as recognition of their value. As Toynbee wrote, "the rich potentialities of the Byzantine civilization, which the Byzantine state nipped in the bud, are revealed in flashes of originality that burst in regions beyond the range of the East Roman Empire's effective power, or in centuries subsequent to the Empire's effective demise…"[13] Two examples are given by Toynbee himself, the 10th century Sicilian monk Saint Nilus or the 16th century Cretan painter, Theotokopoulos, known as El Greco.

Another way to imagine the Byzantine world assumes the hypothesis of the so-called "Russia's Byzantine Heritage". Remember that for Peter the Great the city of Moscow was "the Third Rome". Toynbee was also very clear: "The Russians have sought salvation in the political institution that was the bane of the medieval Byzantine world. They felt that their one hope of survival lay in a ruthless concentration of political power and worked out for themselves a Russian version of the Byzantine totalitarian state."[14]

Again, a different way to imagine the Byzantine world and the historical sequence (named with Iorga's favorite expression "Byzantium after Byzantium") starts from the relationship between the traditional Byzantine political, cultural and religious space and the extension of the Ottoman Empire. Maia Todorova suggests that the Balkan opposition against the Ottoman Empire must be explained, first of all, starting from the religious background, and secondly, starting from the grounds of the Byzantine Imperial tradition. Moreover, Todorova argued that without an elite it would have been a conflict between the old imperial tradition and the new tradition of the nationalism. On one hand, "the Balkan Christian locals were integrated in the bureaucracy only at the

---

[11]   Toynbee (1948), p. 179.
[12]   Toynbee (1948), p. 179.
[13]   Toynbee (1948), pp. 179-180.
[14]   Toynbee (1948), pp. 181-182.

lowest level"[15], while on the other hand, the political goals of the phanariotes were designed "on an individual basis and not as a social group."[16] Todorova mentions that "the only real exception in this respect was Romania, which had retained its local aristocracy despite a century of phanariote predominance; however, this is to be explained by the special status of the antecedent Danubian principalities as vassal territories, which also account for the peculiarities in Romania's social and economic structure" [17]

A quasi sociological perspective is proposed by Alexandru Duțu. He works with the well-known concept of solidarity and its different forms. For example, the difference between the organic form of solidarity based on family and the organized form of solidarity based on the membership to a wider community could be the *explanans* for the historical events and traditions.

Alexandru Duțu wrote about this complex web of different causal or surface factors: "It is commonly asserted that the new national state appeared in the Southeastern Europe as a consequence of the long fight for independence of people living in this area: a strong accent is put on political impulses and on the common values, necessary for the preservation of the 'nation'. Nevertheless, a closer scrutiny of the mental background would observe that the national identity appeared as a consequence of the transformation of a whole world-view. The progress made by the lay spirit, the transformation of the enlarged families into mono-cellular family, the new relationship established between the man's 'inner' life and his 'outer' life visualized in terms of social existence instead of religious devotion, show us that the national consciousness developed some desacralized forms of solidarity."[18] The religious factor had its own role: "The traditional 'Orthodox Consciousness' that had maintained a form of solidarity between people under the Ottoman domination began to transformed itself into a different form of solidarity mainly inspired by the progresses made in the intellectual field"[19]

Tradition and Trends

One of my hidden, previously assumed suppositions is that we act like some builders who use their available raw materials to raise an edifice when it

---

[15]   Todorova (2009), p. 171.
[16]   Todorova (2009), p. 171.
[17]   Todorova (2009), p. 171. In his "Byzantium after Byzantium" Nicolae Iorga tried to qualify this special status as a mark of historical excellence for Romanian nation. Romania's eccentricity deserves a critical debate. In addition, Lucian Boia recently published a book in which these differences are imagined as some bad deviations from a so-called European historical normality. See Boia (2012).
[18]   Duțu (1998), p. 141.
[19]   Duțu (1998), p. 152.

comes to history writing assignment. We choose how to build according to our previous experiences, architectural imagination and utilitarian interests. This epistemological relativism in the writing of history doesn't mean that our imagination is free to write on history like during a poetic exercise, but it is epistemologically limited by some constraints, first of all, the suppositional context of the research itself.

A metaphor can be understood according to its referential intentionality. In our case, "Byzantium after Byzantium" isn't designed to explain, but only to suggest a way toward a comprehensive and general view of facts. I have tried to deconstruct this metaphor and find its hermeneutic layers. My working hypothesis were five: the first, that Iorga wanted to express the paradoxically twinning of the historical change and continuity; the second, that he agreed with the rise and fall model of the historical development; the third, that he conceived the historical process at the level of largest entities, namely, the civilizations understood as complex societies; the fourth, that he thought that religion could be a general framework for an explanation regarding the course of events and the fifth, that Iorga searched for an explanation in terms of tradition. The last two elements go together though, because the main content of tradition has a religious nature in this case.

To explain historical facts starting from tradition is an epistemologically accepted perspective. Some decades ago the debate about historicism and the possibility of historical laws ended with a cautious conclusion, the one that we can rely on the explanatory power of historical traditions and trends in a rational theory of tradition. There is neither time nor place to talk in detail about all these, so all we can do is to retain the idea that tradition became a favorite *explanans* and a balance between positivism and *presentism*.

Without having any connection with the epistemological roots of the debate mentioned above, Iorga was already convinced that the tradition could be used as an explanatory unit in the so-called *historia rerum gestarum*. His belief had another primary source though, an ideological one: he believed that there is a national tradition, that the national characteristics have an ethnical basis and that the history as a *res gestae*, as a sequence of facts and events, is an expression of this tradition. He supported that thesis in the public life, in his conferences or in different newspapers, first in the well-known nationalist magazine called *Semănătorul*. His theory of tradition was never clearly exposed, but his main intuitions are above all the doubt and they can be comprehended in the Romanian cultural and political context. But again, this paper is not the place to talk in detail about all these problems. I only want to mention that, following a different path, Iorga reached the epistemologically acceptable belief that the historical tradition can explain ordinary facts and events. Indeed, the way to the historical truth could be paved with emotions, feelings and other subjective ingredients.

The tradition sets the framework and the limits of the historical development. Therefore, the historical tradition, understood as a previous condition, becomes the starting point for the real trends. The fact that a social structure, an economic system and a type of culture were reproduced by themselves for many centuries in the Byzantine Empire isn't a mystery, but a consequence of this historical tradition. Using a mechanical metaphor, I'll say that the transitions from one stage to another were very slow too.

Finally, I reassume the thesis that the core of this explanatory tradition is something ineffable, namely, the so-called "Balkan mentality" and its religious components. In fact, the "'Balkan mentality' has been one of the most abused mythologemes in the journalistic and, generally, popular discourse."[20] But it works, I'd say.

REFERENCES

Boia, Lucian, 2012. *De ce este Romania altfel?*, Bucharest: Humanitas.

Duțu, Alexandru, 1998. *Political Models and National Identities in "Orthodox Europe"*, Bucharest: Babel Publishing House.

Iorga, Nicolae, 1972. *Bizanț după Bizanț*, București: Editura Enciclopedică Română.

Tainter, Joseph A., 1988, *The Collapse of Complex Societies (New Studies in Archeology)*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Todorova, Maia, 2004. "Introduction: Learning Memory, Remembering Identity", in Maia Todorova (ed.), *Balkan Identities, Nation and Memory*, New York: New York University Press.

Todorova, Maia, 2009. *Imagining the Balkans*, Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Toynbee, Arnold, 1948. *Civilization on Trail*, New York: Oxford University Press.

Toynbee, Arnold, 1970. *Cities on the Move*, London, New York, Toronto: Oxford University Press.

Vico, Giambattista, 2002. *The First New Science*, Edited and translated by Leon Pompa, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

---

[20] Todorova (2004), p. 5.

THE ANNALS OF THE UNIVERSITY OF BUCHAREST
PHILOSOPHY SERIES

NOTES FOR CONTRIBUTORS

The authors of the articles and book reviews are requested to observe the following publication guidelines:

✓ The articles should be edited in English.

✓ The articles should be submitted electronically (by e-mail or CD) in a WORD format (formats .doc or .rtf).

✓ The articles should contain the author's full name and affiliation, along with the author's e-mail address. The authors are requested to supply an auto-bio-bibliography (approximately 10 lines), in a footnote.

✓ The articles should contain an abstract (10-15 lines), followed by 5-7 Keywords (Times New Roman, 9, single spaced).

✓ All the articles and book reviews must be edited using diacritical marks; if there are special Fonts, these should also be sent.

✓ The page format: paper A4 (no Letter, Executive, A5 etc.);

✓ The page margins: top – 5,75 cm; bottom – 5 cm; left and right – 4,25 cm; header – 4,75 cm; footer – 1,25 cm.

✓ The articles submitted for publication must be typed *single spaced*, in *Times New Roman*, *11*.

✓ *The title* of the article should be centered, bold, all capitals (Times New Roman, 11)

✓ *The author's name* (bold capitals) should be centered, under the title (Times New Roman, 9).

✓ *The abstract* (with the translated title, if the article is written in other language than English; Times New Roman 9, single spaced) precedes the text of the article; the Keywords (Times New Roman 9, bold) follow the abstract and they are preceded by the word *Keywords* (in italics, bold).

✓ *The notes* should be indicated by superscript numbers in the text and typed at the bottom of the page (single spaced, Times New Roman 9).

✓ *The references* or *the quotations sources* should be indicated in the text, following the format: (Author year:(space)page) – (Pop 2001: 32); (Pop/Ionescu 2001: 32).

✓ *The abbreviations* or *abbreviated titles* (RRL, tome L, n[os] 3-4, p. 216) can be used in the papers; they will be included completely in the listed references at the end of the article, as it follows:

RRL – *Revue Roumaine de Linguistique*, tome L, n[os] 3-4, 2005.

✓ *The references* should observe the following styles:

1. **Books** *Basic Format:* Author, A. (, B. B. Author, C. C. Author), Year of publication, *Title of Work,* Location, Publisher.

Kleiber, Georges, 2001, *L'anaphore associative*, Paris, Presses Universitaires de France.

2. Edited Books Basic Format: Author, A. A. (, B. B. Author, C. C. Author)(ed./eds.), Year of publication, *Title of Work,* Location, Publisher (only the name of the first editor inverted).

Zafiu, R., C. Stan, Al. Nicolae (eds.), 2007, *Studii lingvistice. Omagiu profesoarei Gabriela Pană Dindelegan, la aniversare*, Bucureşti, Editura Universităţii din Bucureşti.

3. Articles or Chapters in Edited Book Basic Format:

Rand Hoare, Michael, 2009, "Scientific and Technical Dictionnaries", in A. P. Cowie (ed.), *The Oxford History of English Lexicography*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, pp. 47-94.

4. Articles in Journals Basic Format: Author, A. A. (, B. B. Author), Year of publication, "Title of the article", in *Title of Periodical*, volume number (issue number), pages.

Fischer, I., 1968, « Remarques sur le traitement de la diphtongue *au* en latin vulgaire », in *Revue Roumaine de Linguistique*, XIII, nr. 5, pp. 417-420.

All the bibliographical references should appear in the final bibliography.

All the papers will be peer-reviewed by a committee of specialists in different philological fields: linguistics, literature, cultural studies, translation studies.

The first version of the articles should be submitted to the e-mail address: annals.philosophy@ub-filosofie.ro

PHILOSOPHY SERIES

EDITORIAL BOARD

ANNALS

OF THE

UNIVERSITY OF BUCHAREST

PHILOSOPHY SERIES

EXTRACT