THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE EUROPEAN AND CHRISTIAN IDENTITY FROM AN ORTHODOX MORAL PERSPECTIVE

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Abstract: God's thoughts and actions are not the same with the worldly ones (Isaiah 55, 8-9), proving the smallness of this world's wisdom (I Cor. 3, 18-20). By virtue of these aspects, the vocation of the nation always remains the same, and its role is a durable one, reason for which God does not cancel it but is permanently updating it, making it appropriate for the spiritual degree in which its representatives are. The continuous and immutable advancement of the spiritual beings towards God through the three continuous phases: purification, illumination, completeness, brings about the endowment of the nation with new graces without making the old ones disappear. Thus, the nation itself becomes a spiritual thesaurus summating values offered by God, values which are intimately revealed in the nature of those who share their life with Christ's.

Keywords: Christianity, European Identity, Orthodox, Church, Moral.

1. Introduction

Some contemporaneous occidental literates, whose ideas have been mostly used by the Romanian authors, try to identify, through different definitions and nuances, the Christian roots of Europe. Therefore, Theodor Heuss (1884-1963), an important politician and president of the former Federal Republic of Germany in 1949-1959, wishing to express in a single phrase the origins of Europe, declared: „*The destiny of Europe has as starting point three hills: Acropolis, Capitol and Golgotha*"[1]. Robert Schuman (1886-1963), "the founding father" of the European Union, in his work, *„For Europe*", taking up the idea of the papal universalism, describes Europe as „*the making of a generalized democracy in the Christian meaning of the word"*[2].

Pope Benedict XVI (at that time, Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger) connects the European idea to the imperative of obeying the law: *„Without the Unconditional notion, Europe remains just another simple geographic notion; a name for the place in which the human being was abolished"*[3]. An exponent of the western exclusivist concepts, the philosopher Remi Brague, in his book, „*Europe, the Roman Path*", reduces the Christian fundament of Europe to the Carolingian legacy[4] and implicitly, to the Western specific, excluding Orthodoxy and the people

[1] W. Waldstein, *Il compito del diritto romano nell'Europa d'oggi,* in *Scienza e cultura in Europa oggi*, Bozen, 1985, p. 101.
[2] Robert Schuman, *Pentru Europa,* Regia Autonomă „Monitorul Oficial", Bucureşti, 2003, transl. Pompilius Celan, p. 41.
[3] Cardinal Christoph von Schonbrun, *Oamenii, Biserica, Ţara. Creştinismul ca provocare socială*, Ed. Anastasia, Bucureşti, 2000, transl.Tatiana Petrache, Rodica Neţoiu, p. 64.
[4]Alin Tat, *Idei despre Europa, Creştinism şi Romanitate*, in vol. *Un suflet pentru Europa. Dimensiunea religioasă a unui proiect politic*, Ed. Anastasia, Bucureşti, 2005, p. 108.

of this confession from the European belonging[5]; Europe is seen as an exclusively cultural concept[6]: „*Europe is not only Greek, only Hebrew and not even Greco-Hebrew. It is equally Roman...In my radical opinion, we are not and we cannot be "Greeks" and "Jews" because we are, first of all,* ***Romans****"*[7].

A totally different vision belongs to the cardinal Cristoph von Schonbron, Archbishop of Vienna. He states the truth: „*The Europe which we all come from has in its centre neither a theory nor an ideology but the very Face of Jesus Christ"*[8]. Having as starting point this last statement, we can extract the main affirmations with which we can agree, from the Moral point of view.

2. The Pentecost, Basis of the European Christianity

The European Christianity has had from the early beginning a vivid doctrine, a strong stable sense of morality and it was a cult instituted by The Son of God, Who was Crucified and then Resurrected, through the Scripture of Whom, the Apostles preached to *„all nations"*(Mat. 28, 19-20) the Truth[9]. But Europe, and especially the humanity, generally speaking, would not have had the opportunity to find the Truth that is Christ (John 14, 6), Prototype of the existence Himself (Col. 1, 16-18), if it weren't for the permanent work of the Holy Spirit in and through the Church of the Truth[10]. By living within the Orthodox Church, The Spirit of the Truth fulfills and maintains the continuity of the Pentecost of Christ[11], in other words, God becomes human through the person of the Savior and reaches the maximum level of human nature which culminates with the special moment of His Sacrifice „*for us men and for our salvation"*[12].

On one hand, the Savior purifies and sanctifies the Church, continuously preparing it for being the Body of the Lord and home for the Holy Trinity, as Saint Simeon of Thessalonica says: "*...Therefore we do not call it simply a house, but a Holy place, sanctified by the Holy Father, together with the Holy Son through the Holy Spirit, home for the Trinity."*[13] In the same time, the Holy Spirit does not abandon the rest of the existence, but exerts a power of attraction on it, by calling it continuously towards accomplishment of a peaceful unity with Christ within the Church: „*Also, the communion of the calling leads towards peace, because those who were at some point against each other will get used to love one another through the Church"*[14].

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[5] Remi Brague, *Europa, calea romană,* Ed. Idea, Cluj Napoca, 2002, transl. Gabriel Chindea, p. 24.
[6] *Ibidem*, p. 132.
[7] *Ibidem*, p. 31.
[8] Cardinal Christoph von Schonborn, *op. cit*., p. 65.
[9] Daniel, The Patriarch of the Romanian Orthodox Church, *Comori ale Ortodoxiei – Explorări teologice în spiritualitatea liturgică şi filocalică,* Ed. Trinitas, Iaşi, 2007, p. 154.
[10] Fr. Prof. Dr. Dumitru Stăniloae, *Teologia Dogmatică Ortodoxă*, vol. II, Ed. IBMBOR, Bucureşti, 1978, p. 196.
[11] Fr. Prof. Dr. Ilie Moldovan, *Teologia Învierii în opera Sfântului Maxim Mărtirisitorul,* in *ST*, no. 7-8, 1968, p. 522.
[12] *Idem*, *Învăţătura despre Duhul Sfânt în Ortodoxie şi preocupările ecumeniste contemporane*, doctoral thesis, extras from *MA*, XVIII, no. 7-8, 1973, p. 114.
[13] Sfântul Simeon al Tesalonicului [Saint Simeon of Thessalonica], *Despre Sfânta Biserică* [*On the Holy Church*], in *Tratat asupra tuturor dogmelor credinţei noastre ortodoxe* [*Treaty on All the Dogmas of Our Orthodox Faith*], Bucureşti, 1865, transl. Toma Teodorescu, p. 120.
[14] Sfântul Vasile cel Mare [Saint Basil the Great], *Tâlcuire duhovnicească la Psalmi* [*Spiritual Interpretation on Psalms*], Ed. IBMBOR, Bucureşti, 2000, transll. Fr. Prof. Dumitru Fecioru, p. 199.

The Orthodox faith, this Christianity from the beginnings[15] which is indeed a certainty of the European civilization[16], preaches the return of the entire humanity to the "*paschal joy*"[17], which cannot be done otherwise than in connection with the Holy and Godly Liturgy[18], in which God is received by the community through the Eucharist. „*No other Eucharistic Liturgy expresses in a more intense way the hidden yet vivid and active presence of Christ in the Eucharistic community than the Orthodox Liturgy. This is why it is called the "Holy and Godly Liturgy"*[19].

Through the power of the Spirit, the members of God's people (the Church)[20] , surpass any conventional obstacles and transmit to the world the spiritual rays of the Holy Mysteries/ Sacraments (Ps. 18, 4) so that the entire created humanity startles and becomes happy feeling the call towards the „*peace of the entire world, the welfare of God's Holy Churches and the unity of everyone"*[21].

The peoples of Europe have been amongst the first beneficiaries of the call towards „holiness through faith" in Christ, but, with the passing of time, a great part of them have abandoned the Christian dignity which they received in the first millennium, by seeking mostly, a religious identity of their own, parallel with Orthodoxy. This is why, today, „*the self orthodox conscience does not allow us to overcome the fact that Orthodoxy, together with the Western Christianity cannot be a <<Christian, unitary identity>>, but, on the contrary, our conscience forces us to reveal the fact that Orthodoxy is the primary faith of Europe, forgotten by it, faith which, at some point, will have to represent, once again, its Christian identity"*[22].

The nations spring from God, as a gift for the humanity; the reason for which they exist lays in the eternal advice and caring of the Holy Trinity. For the same reason, **of His love**,God decides: „*Behold, the people is one, and they have all one language; and this they begin to do: and now nothing will be restrained from them, which they have imagined to do. Go to, **let us go down**, and there confound their language, that they may not understand one another's speech*" (Gen. 11, 6-7).

The appearance of nations as concrete entities was necessary, as it was the leash that God gave man in order for him not to deepen himself in his love for substance and thus, not to lose the intimate, existential sense and the hope of redemption, which were to be fulfilled through the *descent* of God's Son: „*Who **for us men** and **for our salvationcame down** from heaven..."*[23] because Christ came as "*a light to lighten the Gentiles*" (Luke 2, 32). Having been offered as a blessing by God, the leash that a nation has over its members, has not been an external imperative, with no connection to freedom, but rather an emphasizing of the natural powers of

[15] Daniel, The Patriarch of the Romanian Orthodox Church, *Comori ale Ortodoxiei...op. cit., p. 22*.
[16] One of the catholic theologians, cardinal Cristoph von Schonborn affirms that Europe cannot be complete without Orthodoxy, in *KNA-OeKI*, 4, 18 Januar 2000, p. 6; apud Radu Preda, *Bisericile Ortodoxe în Europa „celor 27", provocări şi perspective*, in vol. *Biserica în era globalizării*, Ed. Reîntregirea, Alba-Iulia, 2003, p. 291.
[17] See Tomas Spidlik, *Spiritualitatea Răsăritului Creştin, I. Manual Sistematic,* Ed. Deisis, Sibiu, 2005, transll. Deac. Ioan I. Ică Jr., pp. 57, 225, 256.
[18] Fr. Prof. Dr. Dumitru Stăniloae, *Spiritualitate şi comuniune în Liturghia Ortodoxă*, Ed. Mitropoliei Olteniei, Craiova, 1986, p. 7.
[19] Daniel, The Patriarch of the Romanian Orthodox Church, *Comori ale Ortodoxiei...op. cit., p. 27.*
[20] Anthony M. Coniaris, *Introducere în credinţa şi în viaţa Bisericii Ortodoxe*, Ed. Sophia, Bucureşti, 2001, transll. Constantin Făgeţan, p. 16.
[21]*Liturghier*, Ed. IBMBOR, Bucureşti, 2000, p. 126.
[22] Archim. Gheorghe Kapsanis*, Ortodoxia, nădejdea popoarelor Europei*, Ed. Evanghelismos, Bucureşti, 2006, transll. Ieroschim Ştefan Nuţescu, p. 5.
[23] The Symbol of Faith/Creed.

man, and of the intimate impulse, with which he has been gifted since his creation, towards Christ, the Archetype of man[24].

If in the Tower of Babel the nation came as a *blessing* and as a *cure for the wound*, through a *descent of God*, at the Pentecost, the other *descent of God*, they were not united again, but they were added a new glow: in their quality of continuators of the people of Adam they were put again on the path of fulfilling the destiny which they first appeared for, by giving them the power to become eternal in Christ, through the Most Holy Mystery/Sacrament of the Eucharist, administered by the Church.

The Pentecost unifies the people in itself, and calls for unity among all nations, by confessing the *same Truth* and by sharing the *same Chalice*, but it does not subordinate one another, does not merge them by force, and does not want to destroy their particular identity, which, all in all, is not even their own but is rather an icon received from He through which „*were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers: all things were created by him, and for him: And he is before all things, and by him all things consist. And he is the head of the body, the church: who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead; that in all things he might have the preeminence"* (Col. 1, 16-18).

The fact that among the three thousand souls (Facts 2, 41) newly baptized at the Descent of the Holy Spirit, there were the first Christian Europeans, called „*Romans*" (Facts 2, 10) in The Holy Scripture, represents an early participation – since the beginnings of the Church – of the European component to the communion of the Miraculous Eucharist.

3. The Role of Christendom in the Shaping of a Common European Conscience

The scientific affirmation of the European identity based on a cultural thesaurus or on a religious and humanist common legacy[25] is an extremely difficult mission. First of all because of the concept of the culture itself – as this is perceived in numerous ways. So far, we have no knowledge of any complete unselfish hero who would have accomplished a detailed research of the History of every European people, in order to identify this common European legacy to which the founding documents of the European Union refer to. The only logical explanation for the lack of a well-defined European identity is the fact that it was waited for a clear definition of the limits of Europe, fact which has not been even to this day entirely clarified[26].

Until the Renaissance, Europe has been almost entirely a cultural and a religious concept[27], while geopolitics was a fluctuant term perceived mostly in relation with the migratory and dependently towards them. It is a highly spiritualized Europe, vivid, compressed in its most important values, reunited under the communion of Christ, fighting with its sharpest weapon – the word – in order to defend not the ostentatious authority, the people's racial superiority, the obsession of the most favorite place, richness, privileges, food and drink, not even a physical way of being, but its very soul. „*Europe begins in 325 with the Council of Nicaea. It offers a pattern. The faustian Europe will perish, as it has been said, but that belonging to the one-essence*

[24] Panayotis Nellas, *Omul – animal îndumnezeit*, Ed. Deisis, Sibiu, 1994, transll. Deac. Ioan I. Ică Jr., p.7 ș.u.
[25] Convenţia Europeană [European Convention], *Proiect de Instituire a unei Constituţii pentru Europa* [*Project of Establishment of an European Constitution*], Roma, 18 iulie 2003, rom. transl., p. 5.
[26] Ingo Friedrich, *Quo Vadis? Europe's role in a Globalised World*, in *European View*, vol. 2, Bruxelles, 2005, p. 54.
[27] Designating the Europe of the Seven Ecumenical Synods.

plurality will not. The Nordic peoples have substituted Europe in the year 1000 and have galvanized it. However, it remains a faithful Trinity-oriented one. It operated in substance. Christianity is the "religion of religions" and Europe is the <<culture of cultures>>"[28]. There, in the ancient world of Thracians, of the mythical Trojans and of the Greeks, it was the most appropriate climate for all the peoples of Europe and of all known world to gather and to make a confession of belonging to an actual and in the same time prophetical spirit imbued with the grace of The Holy Spirit of God. Modern science has to take into consideration the fact that no attempt to the rediscovering of the European soul can be dissociated from the humility – indeed, seen today as religiously, financially and politically obsolete – of the Thracian-Greek Europe, in which there still exists, shabby but yet vivid, the authentic matrix of a soul that has been Faust-like alienated by Occident. „*It all began in 325 with the Council of Nicaea, summoned by the Emperor, which was followed by six other meetings spread until 787. Let us leave aside the material and civilization factors; that for centuries the Christian world has been able to organize - on the edges of a Europe plagued by chaos and nomadic Arabs - meetings such as these, that assembled spiritual leaders from as far as Spain or even France, achievement which only serves as proof of the existence of a secure system of contacts and communications, road control, good administration and bureaucracy, that is to say the civilization that the West would end up flaunting in later years. Let us spare a thought, however, for the debate of ideas, which at that time had, naturally, a purely religious character, but whose reverberations, albeit philosophical at first, were passed on to the whole European culture, even through unknown means, to the systems of profane and anti-religious values, fact which gives us authorization to assert that the year 325 marked the birth of a new culture*"[29].

The reinvention of the concept of "*europaeus"* is attributed by the literates[30] to the Renaissance scholar Aeneas Silvius Piccolomini, who became a Pope under the name of Pius II (1458-1464). Piccolomini, whose thinking has deeply influenced the modern European concept, saw the little Greek-Thracian triangle[31] as the mythical place of provenance of the civilization and culture of all the nations from our continent. His references to a possible union of the European states having as a leader, the pope, who was to liberate Constantinople and chase the Turks out of Europe, are very often. Europe started forming itself as a dual conscience: on one hand as a **permanent ideal** of the Occident in search of its lost origins – a sum of philosophic-artistic mainly Christian ideas[32], and on the other hand **as antithesis** towards the cultural foreigner, the new barbarian, the savage „Scythian" (Turk) [33]. In the struggle for the re-conquer of the world, Piccolomini separates *Europe* from *Respublica Christiana* transforming Christianity into one of the European values, later seen as a disposable one, as History since 1700 demonstrates, and Europe into a mere tool of the horizontal expansion of the humanistic papal Christianity.

[28] Constantin Noica, *Jurnal de idei* [Diary of thoughts], Ed.Humanitas, București, 1990, p.337.
[29] *Idem, Modelul cultural european*, [The European cultural model] Ed.Humanitas, București, 1993, p.64.
[30] Acad. Răzvan Theodorescu, *Cultură şi civilizaţie europeană*, Ed. Fundaţiei *România de Mâine*, Bucureşti, 2003, p. 7.
[31] The old East-Roman province of Europe, with the capital in Constantinople.
[32] Constantin Noica, *Jurnal de idei*, Ed. Humanitas, Bucureşti, 1990, p. 337.
[33] Nancy Bisaha, *Creating East and West: Renaissance humanists ant the Ottoman Turks*, University of Pennsylvania Press, Philadelphia, 2004, pp. 76-78.

4. The Temptation of the Caliphate

The dispute for the supremacy of the European world among the three great civilizations: the synod-byzantine civilization, the frankish-papal one and also the Saracen Islamic one[34], as well as the complicated game of diplomatic, politic, religious, cultural arguments and, maybe the most decisive of all, the argument of the sword, have created in the souls and harts of the members of each of those communities, a certain behavior, later defined as „European", to which it would most certainly not have been reached without a significant contribution from the other two ideological rivals.

The spaces where the Greek culture has been transmitted to the West, through the Muslim vector were the Iberian Peninsula and Sicily. A rural Occident, only half liberated from barbarism[35], will unleash its student cohorts beyond the Pyrenees, towards the backyards of its powerful Muslim neighbors. A real rush for the old, Arab culture takes place. Besides the hundreds of manuscripts purchased from the Spanish emirates[36], which the patient scribe monks will try to translate and spread throughout the entire West, the Western intellectuals, mostly clerics, will gain an interesting personal experience regarding the much more developed – at that time at least – Islamic civilization.

The cultural contiguity between Occident and Islam has easily been made, because their political-religious systems, despite the warring declarations and the antagonist position of the two, were structurally compatible[37]: both the caliph[38] and the pope were titular of the scepter of kingdoms with universal pretentions, they were both *pontifex maximus* of their faith and infallible executors of the divine will upon the herd of nations they ruled over.

Both the western Christianity and the Islamism were pragmatic doctrines[39] adapted to territorial and warrior kind of thinking, the Germanic and Arab-Berber masses having an indubitable militarist tradition[40]. Imitating certain characteristics of the Islam and implementing them in the Frankish kingdom and in the papal court, the occidental literates will, consciously or not, set the basis of a certain vision on the Christian faith, with later repercussions impossible to control: a new Europe. Alongside the reintroduction of the classical Greek philosophy and, implicitly, of the first humanistic phase in the western thinking, there was also the penetration through the papal Christianity to its very constitutive elements, of hermetism, alchemy, neo-Platonism, Gnostic esotericism, kabala, all of which were preparing the implementation of the Renaissance principles: *reformatio mundi* and *homo triumphans*.

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[34] Edward Gibbon, *Istoria declinului şi a prăbuşirii Imperiului Roman*, vol. III, Ed. Minerva, Bucureşti, 1976, transll. Dan Hurmuzescu, p. 93.

[35] Lect. Univ. Dr. Marius Telea, *Orient, Occident și lumea islamică. Conflicte și încercări de refacere a vechii unități romane,* in vol. *Biserica în era globalizării*, Ed.Reîntregirea, Alba Iulia, 2003, p. 553.

[36] Jaques Le Goff, *Civilizația Occidentului Medieval,* Ed. Ştiinţifică, Bucureşti, 1970, transll. Maria Holban, p. 25.

[37] Martin Luther, *Tischreden*, Weimar ed., 3, no. 3130, Luther's *Works*, Weimar ed., 28, 365*f*; 30 II, 195; 47, 175. Apud Rev. Prof. Dr. Francis Nigel Lee, *Luther on Islam and the Papacy*, Brisbane, 2000, sursă electronică on line: *http://www.historicism.net/readingmaterials/loiatp.pdf*. (accesat: 14 ianuarie 2010).

[38] Being a caliph (*khalifatu rasul Allah*) represented a sum of attributions: follower and replacement for the Prophet, supreme imam and emir of the right faithful ones. Later, the title of *pontifex maximus* for entire Islam has been taken also by the Turk sultans (source: *Oxford Islamic Studies Online-http://www.oxfordislamicstudies.com*, accessed on: 16th August 2018).

[39] Mircea Eliade, *Istoria credinţelor şi ideilor religioase*, vol. III, Ed. Ştiinţifică şi Eciclopedică, Bucureşti, 1988, transll. Cezar Baltag, pp. 74-75, 116-120.

[40] St. Nikolai Velimirovici, Mai presus de Răsărit şi Apus, Ed. Sophia, Ed. Cartea Ortodoxă, Bucureşti, Alexandria, 2008, transll. Gheorghiţă Ciocioi, p. 63.

According to the Christian wise men of that time, such as Erasmus of Rotterdam, the Christian Occident was suffering an ontological mutation: the transformation of the western Christianity into a giant secular force, which, once started would become impossible to stop. The horrors which began during the Renaissance, the inquisition, the colonialism, the staged trials, the torture, the love for richness seen as a virtue, the imperialism, the continuous fights and disputes between the popes and the princes[41], prove the fact that the Church of Rome, together with its direct consequence – the Protestantism[42], has distanced itself quite a lot from its evangelical roots. Through Christianization Europe has truly received a new soul, but through the resurrection of the syncretic paganism, its soul has been stolen away from it and left it only with the body. As a glorification of its own death, it persists in refusing to take the only path towards the rediscovering of its lost soul. Therefore, we assist to the delineation of the two Europes which exclude one another, which pulse, ever since then, two different fluxes of values: the Christian Europe and the humanistic one[43].

5. The Moral Errors of Philetism and Imperialism

The national extremism, the imperialism and the racism, generically defined through the term „philetism", have been officially condemned by the Orthodox Church ever since 1872, through a decision of the local Synod in Constantinople[44]. Philetism does not mean, as some may believe, the identification of the ethnicity or the nation with Orthodoxy[45], but only its extreme forms[46]. „*Philetism in which we see the autocephaly as a result of ethnic egoism, fighting other egoism of the same nature, has been rightfully condemned by a local synod in Constantinople because it truly represents a religious-moral heresy. It is also argued as a value by the most authentic spirit of Romanian Orthodoxy"*[47]. Despite all the challengers of the idea of identifying a certain people or nation with Orthodoxy, most of which have tasted the generous springs of knowledge the „*occidental caliphates*"[48] have offered, we strongly affirm that the Church has never had the purpose to provoke, in any way the deletion of the national identity of its faithful ones, in the name of a badly understood universalism. Moreover – and this is an unquestionable fact – the Orthodox Church has ensured the survival of the nations it had previously sanctified

[41] Sfântul Iustin Popovici [Saint Justin Popovich], *Biserica ortodoxă şi Ecumenismul* [*The Orthodox Church and the Ecumenism*], Ed. Mănăstirea Sfinţii Arhangheli, Petru Vodă, transll. Adrian Tănăsescu, p. 95.
[42] *Ibidem*, p. 94.
[43] The essay *Europa politicului, Europa spiritului* [*Europe of politics, Europe of spirit*] represents a broad reference for the subject of the two, antagonic rather than complementary entities, which are the bearers of the same name „Europe". See: Ioan I. Ică Jr., *Europa politicului, Europa spiritului*, in vol. *Un suflet pentru Europa... op. cit*., pp. 23-85.
[44] Constantin Rus, *Caracterul naţional în Biserica Ortodoxă*, in *Ortodoxie şi globalizare*, vol. cit., p. 466.
[45] Horia-Roman Patapievici, *Biserica Ortodoxă Română şi modernitatea (I)*, in *Dilema veche*, no. 331, 11-17 iunie 1999; source: *http://arhiva.dilemaveche.ro/old/arhiva_dilema/fw.htm?current=numant1.htm.*
[46] Father Efrem, the superior of Vatoped Monastery, *Noi, în Sfântul Munte, ne rugăm pentru fraţii noştri români*, interview in *Lumea Credinţei*, year V, no. 7 (48) iulie 2007, source: *http://www.lumeacredintei.com.*
[47] Fr. Prof. Dr. Ilie Moldovan, *Etnicitate şi autonomie bisericească. Consideraţii de ordin teologic-moral*, in vol. *Centenarul autocefaliei Bisericii Ortodoxe Române 1885-1985*, Ed. IBMBOR, Bucureşti, 1987, p. 239.
[48] Christos Yannaras, *Adevărul şi unitatea Bisericii*, Ed. Sophia, Bucureşti, 2008, transll. Ierom. Ignatie (Ilie) Trif şi Uliniuc Ionuţ Dumitru, pp. 244-245.

their spiritual way of being: „*The entire tradition, civilization and culture of a nation are incarnated in the life of the Church"*[49].

The natural question for any of us is whether the people represents an element of interiority of the human being or an exterior element. Is people, from an orthodox point of view, a mere association of those sharing the same language and blood, a social disposal or an assembly of traditions and laws which those sharing the same language and blood have received and shaped in more or less appropriate ways? Is the occurrence of ethnicities just a punishment for a sin? There is one thing we know for sure and from this idea we will start our quest in finding an answer: "*Yea, surely God will not do wickedly, neither will the Almighty pervert judgment*" (Job 34, 12).

If the root of human peoples would be a mere retribution for a sin – the construction of Babel Tower (Gen. 11, 4) – then we cannot identify the reason for which people exists in the angel's world as well. Angels have not had a Babel Tower, they only do good[50] and they permanently contemplate God (Job 38, 7). The Lord Himself looks after them (Ps. 103, 4) so they do not have an exterior „social need" to be grouped in peoples. They are already in the *aeon*, in the eternal time[51]; they are filled with godly grace and deepen themselves infinitely in the knowledge of God through love. Apparently, the people would be of no use for the angels, if it were something exterior. Nevertheless, angelic various peoples keep on existing within the love of god, according to the godly plan: "*There are Angels, Archangels, Thrones, Dominions, Principalities, and Powers. Still, the heavenly beings are not only these but also infinite peoples, unspoken races that no word can describe, as resulted from the words of Paul (Ephes. 1, 21), whose names will be descovered in the future, but still unknown in the present"*[52].

The people is neither a self-thinking existence, as romantics considered it, nor a multi-cellular, unconscious, spiritless being, as materialism affirms, but rather a charismatic community, whose destiny is and remains Christ. The only explanationfor the state of the peoples of angels and also for the state of human peoples, consist in the love of God (I John 2, 5). He decided that the unseen world as well as the seen one to be covered in an infinite variety[53] so that His endless creative power and the eternal gratefulness of His love's Son be mirrored in them (Colos. 1, 13).

The ethnicity works as a conductor of the spiritual warmth from God towards persons but it is also a rational bridge of sincerity and love of the creature towards its Creator. On one hand, the ethnic characteristic is also a gift offered to the rational beings in order to obtain their plenitude in communion with God, but on the other hand, through it a progressive dialogue in love is accomplished, because it is an offering brought by the sons for their Father as firstfruits of their spiritual life.Saint Paul reaches the profundity of the offering of the peoples in the Letter to the Romans: "*That I should be the minister of Jesus Christ to the Gentiles, ministering the gospel of God that the offering up of the Gentiles might be acceptable, being sanctified by the Holy Spirit"* (Rom. 15, 16). Therefore, in the interest of their spiritual growth, both man and the angel proceed to the continuous dedication of their own people to God, by this holy offering becoming

[49]*Idem,Conştiinţa eclesială*, in vol. Fr. Dr. Constantin Coman, *Ortodoxia sub presiunea istoriei*, Ed. Bizantină, Bucureşti, 1995, pp. 50-51.
[50] Fr. Prof. Dr. Dumitru Stăniloae, *Teologia Dogmatică Ortodoxă*, vol. 1, op. cit., 429.
[51] Fr. Prof. Dr. Dumitru Stăniloae, *Teologia Dogmatică Ortodoxă*, vol. 1, op. cit., 422.
[52] St. John Chrysostome, *Despre Dumnezeu cel necuprins* [*On the Inexhaustible God*], 4, par. 2, in *PG* 48, 729. *Apud* Fr. Prof. Dr. Dumitru Stăniloae, *Teologia Dogmatică Ortodoxă*, vol. 1, *op. cit*., p. 425.
[53] Fr. Prof. Dr. Dumitru Stăniloae, *Teologia Dogmatică Ortodoxă*, vol. 1, op. cit., 425.

spiritually richer. Because God blesses the sacrifice through a new offering, more advanced than any before, infinitely enlarging the charismatic richness of the people and the knowledge of the Truth. „*The paradox can be explained through the fact that the received and then reverted gift brings persons closer in such a manner that the object of the gift becomes the transparent mean of reaching the highest level of communication among those persons. Not only common, but also enriched through the life that the persons share through the love shown within the gift they make one another; through this, persons offer themselves and so, they enrich their spiritual life"*[54].

The purpose of this permanent communion in the dialogue of the godly gift is, as well as it is with angels, the search of the native godly pattern that lays in the Word of God, Jesus Christ, as well as the endeavor of the members of the people, thus, the endeavor of the people itself, to become a most truthful icon of Him. Therefore, the people is the gift of the Word of God which enlightens, gives wisdom and joy to our life (Eccl. 1, 26; 2, 13).

Because the nation cannot offer itself, as it is not self-thinking, the Orthodox Church, having Jesus Christ as Unique Leader, takes upon the duty of sending the offering of the people back to God, sacrifice which is nothing more or less than the very spiritual life of the faithful ones, who are also elements of the nation.

The intellectual's ancestral fear towards the national aspect of Orthodoxy represents the real source of artificiality of present Romanian thinking in what the right faith is concerned. Losing touch with the spiritual Orthodox reality which is in a natural relation with the life of the people, they bring about themes of debate which come to separate what cannot be separated, all this because they fear who knows what generalized inquisition, which, if they want, they can easily find, but in a totally different place than the Orthodox East. In other words, from the perspective of modernism, there is a wish to exclude most of the sacramental part of the Church, too weak to dominate the political system, oscillating between nationalism and superstition, and to replace it with a social functionality, easier to control and having no unforeseen attitudes.The fact that, as helpless as it has always been, weakened by ecclesiastic and laic profiteers, subjected to the demolishing fire of certain literates in a more or less intense way, humiliated by both Nazi and communists, the Church has not detached itself neither of its Head, Jesus Christ (Ephes. 1, 22-23), nor of the people within which, it has the vocation of drawing, through the Mystery of Eucharist and through the other Mysteries, the face of Christ, till the end of times, has been omitted. „*Every orthodox people has its specific spiritual gifts from God, and can help other peoples within a reciprocal pan-orthodox spiritual enrichment. There are saints in all orthodox peoples, there are monasteries in all orthodox countries, and there are holy places and theological culture all over. We have to offer each other all these things, so that we can intensify our faith and enlarge our spiritual inheritance, but also to live within the pan-orthodox unity"*[55].

The danger of nationalism as it is understood in politics, aims at destabilizing the unity of the Church. Consequently, the Church has always avoided philetism, even though some of its important members have let themselves drawn by it[56]. Globalization, a disguised form of imperialism, forcefully influences all the sectors of our humanly life, eradicating the natural. To this, the Orthodox Church answers with dignity and courage, that the peoples are not mere

[54] Fr. Prof. Dr. Dumitru Stăniloae, *Teologia Dogmatică Ortodoxă*, vol. 1, op. cit., p. 340.
[55] Archim. Gheorghe Kapsanis, the superior of Grigoriu monastery, interview in the volume coordinated by archim. Ioanichie Bălan, *Convorbiri duhovniceşti...op. cit*., p. 10.
[56] *Ibidem*, p. 11.

statistics, but vivid realities upon which God sends His gifts[57]. God's kingdom is not something exterior to man, a cold entity, overlapped and destructive for any organic structures of man. The kingdom of God is also the kingdom of heavens (Mat. 3, 2) nevertheless, it is within us (Luke 17, 21).

6. Conclusions

The temptation of implementing a "caliphate" in Christianity has started from the very desire of the so called "sacred languages" to lead the people of God towards a disfigurement of the primordial ethnic diversity, in the sense of a pandemic uniformity. The adepts of different tendencies – Judaism, Hellenism, Latinism, and later Slavism – have often distanced themselves from the godly principles of the Universal Church. Frequently throughout history, especially when doubled by the political-military intrusion, the unilateral so called „love" of those pan-trends, one against each other but mostly against the particular cultures of the countries which have no political influence, has transformed into a choking embrace, killer by its methods and by its practices.

Modern society, to which the spiritual and cultural values are not something necessary, has made itself a material ideal, pushing man towards isolation, dissolving his uniqueness in the hot ocean of illusion-negation so that under the generous term of „common cultural values" we can easily identify the obsession of Midas' welfare and also the legendary Croesus' self-sufficiency.

From our point of view, any attempt to set a community of values, meaning a European identity which excludes Orthodoxy, is doomed to failure. In a context where the identification of the common thesaurus of values of the European continent is still awaited, any attempt to put together the most precious characteristics of every European nation's soul, so that the shinning of several transmitters to concur and provide a single ray of spiritual light, as laudable this initiative may be, it remains an utopian desiderate.

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