

"BABEŞ-BOLYAI" UNIVERSITY
FACULTY OF ORTHODOX THEOLOGY
"ISIDOR TODORAN" DOCTORAL SCHOOL

DOCTORAL THESIS

-SUMMARY-

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**THEOLOGY AND POLITICS IN UNITED EUROPE
TODAY**

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Argument

Keywords: Christianity, Orthodoxy and the challenges of postmodernity, orthodox spirituality, divino-humanism, terrorism, migration, political correctness, European Union, Great Britain Brexit.

The fall of communism, the process of European enlargement and integration, as well as the new events taking place today on the old continent, bring to the United Europe the most diverse challenges. From a political, religious, economic and social point of view, the situation in Europe is a complex one. In the field of politics, the European Union is facing new situations to which it is called upon to respond as effectively as possible. After six decades in which the European Union has become what it is today, through a sustained process of enlarging and deepening the mechanisms of European integration, today it is called upon to manage in the most efficient way the departure of the community bloc from the United Kingdom. This situation is overshadowed by new visions and paradigms regarding decision-making in Brussels as well as the process of monetary union and European integration, and today there is more and more talk of a two-speed Europe. To these situations are added the growing concerns about national security, employment and tomorrow day, with all that entails.

In addition to the challenges in the political, economic and social spheres, the situation of not resorting to the Christian foundation and Christian spirituality causes Europe to give up its own identity. Christianity is one of the essential components of European identity. Christianity, in its two millennia of existence, has visibly and indisputably left its mark on European culture and history. Through this it becomes the business card and identity of Europe. Moreover, Christianity represents the "soul" and the transfiguration of the "turmoil" or the New Europe. Here the "turmoil" represents the whole of Europe, with its minuses and pluses, with the peaks and abysses of its own conquests. Once Christian spirituality is no longer taken into account and God is taken out of the preoccupations of contemporaneity, the challenges to which Europe is currently subjected are practically impossible to assimilate and overcome, in the sense of their transfiguration by imprinting an eschatological character.

Orthodoxy aims to transfigure the whole of human existence by imprinting a Christ-thought, a Christ-consciousness, and a Christ-action. Therefore, she wants the human person to assume a Christlike existence. Only this Christlike existence can give postmodern man the

peace, dignity, and freedom he so earnestly seeks. Our assertion contradicts what J.P. Sartre argued in his works, that God, if he existed, must be removed, because the idea of Him contradicts human freedom¹. In this context, the following question arises: with what kind of human freedom does the idea of God contradict? In the way postmodernity manifests itself, the freedom that contradicts the freedom offered by God is the one that results from a perfectly autonomous and self-sufficient reason.

The actuality, novelty and relevance of the research are provided by some essential aspects. First of all, the actuality, novelty and relevance of the thesis consists in affirming Orthodox spirituality as a remedy for the existential pathologies of postmodern European, as well as in understanding, assuming and overcoming the challenges that contemporaneity brings to the fore through and with the help of Orthodoxy. The thesis is an invitation to dialogue and mutual knowledge, but also to an inter-disciplinary and inter-religious deepening of the topics analyzed in our research. Secondly, the actuality, novelty and relevance of the thesis, at least for the field of Romanian Orthodox theology, consists in the fact that this paper brings together in one research the major themes and issues on the agenda of the European Union: Brexit Great Britain, the process of European integration, terrorism, migration, political correctness and, currently, the new coronavirus. Moreover, the relevance of the thesis is given by the analysis and the orthodox perspective on the events currently taking place within the European Union. We are not aware that in the Romanian Orthodox theological space there is a research that brings together current European issues and analyzes them from an Orthodox perspective. In other words, our research work belongs to both the theological field and the field of political science or European studies.

Third, recourse to the teaching of the Church Fathers as support for an argument of ours, proving relevant for research. The authority of the Fathers consists not only in the depth of the theological works, but also in the fact that they were before all men of direct and unmediated prayer and spiritual experience with God. Fourthly, the topicality, novelty and relevance of the research consists in capitalizing on the bibliography and the Romanian authors who focused on studying and highlighting the Christian foundations of Europe on the one hand, and on the other hand sought to highlight spirituality orthodox as a way of life whose purpose is the transfiguration of the human being, of his own existence, as well as of the whole creation by anchoring in the transcendent.

¹ Nicolae Achimescu, *Religie, modernitate și postmodernitate*, Editura Trinitas, București, 2013, p. 267.

The actuality, novelty and relevance of the research also consists in the use of the latest and current bibliography, both in Romanian language and in English. Thus, the inter-disciplinary and inter-religious openness of the thesis consists in the use in argumentation in order to support opinions of many secular authors or theologians who belong to the Catholic and Protestant Church and who come from both Europe and the United States. At the same time, we mention that, regarding the treated issues, our research does not exhaust the entire content, it not having an exhaustive character but, rather, an initiatory one, especially regarding the affirmation of Orthodoxy in contemporary Europe. Thus, the thesis leaves room for new arguments and improvements depending on the historical period and the challenges it has to manage a united Europe.

The doctoral thesis is structured in five chapters. This structuring of the thesis also highlights a gradation of the treatment of the chapters, in terms of their scope. The first chapter of the thesis entitled *The European Union between desideratum and actuality*, captures the emergence and development of the European Union, the policy of enlargement and deepening of the integration process, as well as the institutions of the European Union. In the last subchapter we tried to capture as accurately as possible, based on the data we currently have, the implications of leaving the community bloc by the United Kingdom. Thus, we tried to analyze Brexit from the perspective of social, economic and political implications. The analysis of the second chapter of the thesis, called *Modeling the New Europe*, was made from a double perspective: historical-philosophical and from the perspective of Christian theology. The central theme of the second chapter is the reaffirmation of the Christian heritage of Europe, as well as our attempt to offer a different perspective on the modeling of the New Europe, a modeling that focuses on the Eucharist and the Church Fathers.

The third chapter of the thesis is dedicated to the analysis of the presence of christianity in contemporary society, as well as the connection between the Eucharist and the confession of faith. Thus, we have analyzed the way in which today the Divine Eucharist is received and understood. Unfortunately, the mutations that take place in society negatively influence the relationship to the Eucharist. These mutations inevitably lead to an alteration of the understanding that the Divine Eucharist has in the life of every human being, as well as in society. Moreover, we have tried to emphasize the fact that, in postmodernity, the confession of faith is an act of courage and a martyrdom, literally. In the same chapter, we dedicated a consistent space to the presentation of divine-humanism or divine-human civilization as a

plenary way of existence, as well as an alternative to what we call today European civilization, determined by obscurantism, self-sufficiency and self-determinism.

Chapter four, entitled *Spirituality and Civilization in a united Europe today*, draws attention to the connection between Christian Orthodox spirituality and civilization in a united Europe. Chapter four also includes the presentation of Orthodox spirituality and theology as a solution to the nihilism and existential pathologies of contemporary European. An important theme of this chapter is the presentation of Orthodoxy as a "gift" and a "becoming" for Europe. The research carried out in this chapter aims to highlight the fact that Orthodoxy should no longer be seen as a spirituality distinct from Europe, just as the countries in which it is the majority should not be seen as a "neighboring" space of Europe.

Chapter five of the thesis, *Christianity and Security in a united Europe today*, deals with the connection between Christianity and security in a united Europe, representing also the broadest chapter of the paper. In this chapter we have tried to capture the implications and consequences that terrorism brings to society in general, but especially in Europe. Moreover, starting from Orthodox spirituality and theology, we have tried to formulate an orthodox position or point of view on what terrorism represents and implies. The second topic I addressed in this chapter is the issue of migration and the impact that the massive wave of population coming to Europe has on communities. Another subject under analysis is the presence of God and Christianity in the European public space and in the European institutions of the present, while also presenting the characteristics of Euro-secularization or what makes the difference between Europe and the rest of the world in terms of religious assumption and relationship, essentially to Christianity. The last chapter of the research also includes an analysis of political correctness from an Orthodox perspective. Political correctness, becoming the new political ideology adopted by several countries in the European Union, is represented by the "values" proposed by a truly destructive ideology. The subtle way in which it is imposed, but also the change of message adopted by political correctness, make it the new ideological utopia. The last subject treated in chapter five as well as in the doctoral thesis is the affirmation of the beauty of Christianity in front of the illusion brought by postmodernity. Or, the beauty of Christianity that transcends all the "beauties" of contemporaneity is represented by holiness.

Conclusions

From the point of view of its cultural and civilizational development, Europe has a specificity that is unique to it. This specificity stems from the fact that Europe has a threefold foundation: Greek culture, Roman law and Christian spirituality. For about fifteen centuries, Christianity was the binder and matrix in which the personal and community life of the European and society of those times took place. With Humanism and the Renaissance, but especially through the values proposed by the Enlightenment, Europe returns to its roots, but takes out of the equation the contribution of Christianity to what Europe represents today.

The first conclusion of our research highlights the fact that today's Europe, through its call for its religious neutrality and in the name of respect for religious freedom, achieves nothing but a deliberate renunciation of Christian spirituality which for centuries, wrote destiny to such an extent that it has become what it is today. We reaffirm a position that we have also expressed in the content of research, namely that in no part of the world has Christianity contributed so much to a cultural and civilizational development as in Europe. We therefore have an affinity and an intrinsic connection between Christian spirituality and Europe.

The second conclusion of our research captures the reality that the European spirit referred to by European and national institutions, various NGOs and each of us is the creation of the three factors mentioned above: Greek civilization, Roman law and Christian spirituality. It is practically impossible to define and understand the European spirit without reference to Christianity, which for centuries has shaped and permeated the depth it has today. The third conclusion highlights the contemporary reality according to which Christianity is the most persecuted religion in the world. Through the labyrinth of different ways of relating to everyday realities, the confession of faith through word and deed is a real martyrdom. Thus, the resistance to these challenges marks a real moral martyrdom, of conscience and, last but not least, an existential one.

The fourth conclusion of the research states that divino-humanism in its capacity as a civilization whose foundation and target is Christ proposes itself to today's Europe as an integrative way of existence whose purpose is both to transfigure the way man relates to realities immanent of its existence as well as to the spiritual realities. In this way, divine-humanism offers the contemporary European a new vision on how to do politics, to carry out

the act of justice, as well as to relate to his fellow man and to his own existence. The fifth conclusion is to highlight the fact that Orthodoxy is not something foreign to Europe. Although it is perceived by many Europeans as a neighboring space that differs radically from postmodern thinking and action, Orthodoxy, through its specificity, offers man the possibility of placing it in the nature of its nature. It does not ask the human being to deny his own existence, but aims at its transfiguration through the Eucharist. Orthodoxy does not come and is not offered to the human being in a totalitarian way like political regimes, but is given in a humble and mysterious way, through the gracious experience.

From what was stated in the previous passage, a new conclusion emerges, namely that Orthodoxy is a gift and a becoming for Europe. Therefore, the gift of Orthodoxy for Europe is its rich and profound spirituality, and the becoming of Europe consists in the Orthodox vision, in the embodiment of this spirituality. The seventh conclusion we draw from our research is that Orthodoxy, given the new social, economic, political and security challenges facing Europe today, has the potential to impose itself as a mobilizing and stimulating factor. Moreover, through its millennial experience, the Church is able to provide support to contemporary European society to meet the challenges arising, for example, from terrorism and migration, as well as the unrest caused by Brexit. The help of the Church can be materialized, for example, through a well-articulated message, but also through concrete actions at parish and central level.

Through action and message, the Church and theology impose themselves as a new way of life that describes a new existential reality, namely, holiness. This is the perfect beauty that Orthodoxy offers to the world. Holiness is realized, verified and updated permanently and perfectly only in the Chalice through the Divine Eucharist. The Chalice represents the quintessential environment for man's encounter with God, as well as the topos from which all the rays of divinity spring. In the Chalice, therefore, the experience of the viability of theology and Christian spirituality is realized in front of all the other realities of the immanent.