Christianity - An Integral Part of European Culture and Identity

Cristinel-Mugurel POPA

PhD(c), Doctoral School of Theology and Religious Studies,
University of Bucharest, Romania, crispopa73@yahoo.ro

ABSTRACT: Regardless of the point from which we viewed or felt the unfolding of the events of history, we found ourselves in a space where we coexisted socially, politically, or religiously. No part of our continent was more European than another. In this evolution of the new European identity, all the members participated and felt each new stage. Thus, European current affairs are, to the same extent, part of the European's concerns, and the upheavals, tensions, transformations are common aspects that correspond to the space of the "old continent." The calling card of Europe bears the signature of Christianity, which has made its way as a religion that has influenced social, political and religious life, with wide implications in areas of universal interest. The evolution of Christianity in history intersects with the historical evolution of Europe, an evolution that changed the whole world.

KEYWORDS: Christianity, Culture, European identity

1. Introduction

Europe was born, grew, developed and, in turn, formed other civilisations (Rotaru 2023a, 62-79). It presents itself as a model of integration because it has opened up to all. In this evolution of the formation of the new European identity, all its members have participated and felt each new stage. Thus, the current European situation is also part of the concerns of Europeans, and the fragmentation, tensions and transformations are common aspects that correspond to the "old continent".

European identity can go a long way hand in hand with Christianity. The present research does not aim to dismantle reality, but rather to establish whether - after decades in which Romanians have looked full of dreams and aspirations towards the European West and joined in 2007 within the European Union - the Europe we have found is the one we expected to find (From the conference held by Horia-Roman Patapievici on "The Suicide of Europe?" followed by a dialogue with Gabriel Liiceanu, event held as part of the conferences entitled: "About the world we live in").

European Christianity remains quite visible in the public arena, but any Christian familiar with the text of Scripture can see that there are differences between what the teaching and practice of Christ and his apostles meant and what the Church has carried out over time in its institutional form. In today's European context, a fairly common issue is the level and quality of the relationship between religion and the public sphere, or the Church-State relationship (Rotaru 2022, 585-595). Part of secular Western history and the experience of secularisation is tending to make more and more room for itself in Eastern Europe.

The increasingly frequent interventions by the Church and public opinion against certain decisions of the political apparatus, the forms of dialogue that have brought together representatives of the Church and of various minorities, maintain the image of the Church

as an institution present in society. Without setting out in negative terms the path of separation from traditional Christianity, Europe is also wearing the mantle of spirituality and a secular view of the world and life. The place of God is generic, but the dominant image of divinity is that of a personified portrait, associated with what society believes about God rather than what divinity reveals about itself.

Europe's calling card bears the signature of Christianity, and it has made its way as a religion that has influenced social, political and religious life, with broad implications in areas of universal concern. The evolution of Christianity in history intersects with the historical evolution of Europe, an evolution that has changed the whole world.

2. A brief history of the formation of Europe

The charm of Greek mythology takes us in the footsteps of the Phoenician princess Europa, daughter of King Agenor, a young girl whose beauty attracts the attention of Zeus. Zeus transforms himself into a proud bull to make it easier for him to kidnap her, and takes her to the island of Crete, where, having regained his godlike appearance, he seduces the young woman whose name will be linked to this new continent. Once she learns the truth about the handsome man's identity and marital status, the young Europa decides to commit suicide by throwing herself off a cliff on the island. Aphrodite, the goddess of love and beauty, saves the princess, and the land she will take her to live on will bear her name.

However, it is not the mythical aspect of the legends of Olympus, not the deeds of capricious gods, but the visible and genuine part of a footprint that can be found from one end of the continent to the other, in the form of the arts discovered in today's world in literature, music, painting or architecture. So, whether we stay in the Byzantine area, and admire what is today Hagia Sophia, built by Emperor Justinian, and St Basil's Cathedral in Moscow, or whether we travel through central and western Europe to St Stephen's Cathedral in Vienna, the Cologne Dome, Notre-Dame de Paris, St Paul's Cathedral in London, or down to the Iberian peninsula, in Barcelona, to the Sagrada Familia, whose construction we can still see, and then to the Italian peninsula, with Santa Maria del Fiore, the Duomo in Milan and finally the Pope's residence in the Vatican, to see the Basilica of St Peter, all of which, and more, are the facade of a territory touched by a common element, Christianity.

The fascination of Europe with all its range of events and cultures, with all its spiritual births awaiting the uplifting moment of triumphs, but also the torments of its sufferings, with all its troubled course, but at the same time with its lines of relaxation, offers the image of a work whose introductory part comes to trace the overall picture of a construction that is to unfold majestically. The joy of discovering its mysteries is left to every European interested in his or her roots of identity, but it is also open to anyone who wants to enter the friendly door of Europe to get to know it and seek its specificity within its borders. The image that is revealed before them is the one carved by the paths of peoples who have had and still display differently nuanced cultures, but who support Christianity. This ensemble adds to the image of a Europe that does not need gratuitous artificial presentations of a unit that has earned the right to exist and, moreover, the right to become the standard bearer of humanity's civilisation. As Noica (1993, 35) remarked: 'Europe owes its justification in law to what it has in fact become: the spokeswoman of the globe'. The history of Europe records what Horia Roman Patapievici calls the "European exception", referring to the role or impact of Christianity on its development. Patapievici also states that, "just as Egypt could be seen as a gift of the Nile (the expression belongs to Herodotus), Europe can be thought of as a gift of Christianity" (Guéritée 2015, 23). Thus, Christianity as a religion cannot be bypassed when trying to establish the origins of Europe, nor can its influence and contribution in establishing moral-spiritual values and social relations be

overlooked. Noica considers the starting point for the formation of Europe an event in the common history of Christians, namely:

> The year 325 AD, at the Council of Nicaea, convened by the emperor, continuing with 6 other meetings until 787 AD [...] meetings that brought together spiritual leaders even from Spain or France, which proved the existence of a system of contacts and communications, control of roads, good administration and bureaucracy, in a word the civilization that the West would later make so much of (Noica 1993, 67).

This evolution on the map of European history would not have been possible without what Valéry (2016, 260) calls "the three essential conditions that can define the true European, a man in whom the European spirit can dwell in all its fullness." In attempting to define Europe, he links Christianity to two other conditions that contribute to what Christianity was to develop over the European space. Valéry cannot exclude the presence of two influences that he considers inseparable in this evolutionary process, which all peoples have endured and whose path has been marked by them. Thus, he says that "every race and every land that has been successively Romanized, Christianized and subjected to the spirit of the discipline of the Greeks is absolutely European" (Valéry, 2016, 260). However, the striking factor in this set of exceptions, as Patapievici calls it „the Greek exception, the Roman exception, the Jewish exception and the Christian exception" (Guéritée 2015, 24), is Christianity, which makes what we know today as Europe to have been called, for almost 1600 years, Christianity (Guéritée 2015, 49). Theodorescu (2018, 32) creates the European space with its origins "at the foot of the Athenian Acropolis in the heart of the Balkan East [...] of the union of the Eurasian space with the Euro-Atlantic space, the Black Sea with the Rhine, the Mediterranean with the German world." The formation of Europe was by far the normal course of a revolution in terms of sharing common elements of religion, Roman law and an influential Greek culture. These elements were then voluntarily assimilated within the Roman Empire, which could ensure and contribute to their development.

3. The spread of Christianity in the Roman Empire *(from Pentecost to Constantine's decree)*

In the Great Commission, Christ commissioned the disciples to spread the message of the Gospel to every creature, and this message was to spread throughout the Romanised world, as was also announced before his ascension: "witnesses to the ends of the earth" (Acts 1:8). The message of the Gospel was to be indiscriminate, universal, equally addressed to all people. The way this message would be perceived would change the face of the continent and the world. Christianity was never intended to be a state religion, encompassing only one nation, one language, but in His plan God had in mind people of every nation and language, thus reaching all spheres of humanity. The presence of the apostles after the outpouring of the Holy Spirit, however, is a local one, although Christ had anticipated the missionary process in which they were to be part, a process which was to reach "the ends of the earth" (Acts 1:8).

    The appearance of events in the apostles' routine means that, in the path of the message they preached, especially to the Jews, there are also episodes in which groups of Samaritans, an Ethiopian famen, a Roman centurion accept the message of the Gospel and of faith in Jesus Christ as the Son of God. Acts 9 already points to an extended Church community in Judea, Galilee and Samaria. Paul's encounter on the road to Damascus, commissioned to bring bound to Jerusalem those who were walking the Way of Faith (Acts 9:1, 2), opens a new chapter in the life of one who had an impressive biography in what he calls "the religion of the Jews". From a persecutor of the Church, God transforms him into one of the Church's most passionate servants. His mission was to fulfill God's intended

missionary purpose throughout Scripture: to "bring [Christ's] name before the Gentiles, before kings and before the children of Israel" (Acts 9:15). Biblical scholar Thomas R. Schreiner sums up Paul's life this way:

> The prophecy that the Gentiles would be blessed in Abraham was not fulfilled in the days of David, Isaiah or Jeremiah. Now that the Messiah Jesus has come, these prophecies have found their fulfillment. Paul was called by God to advance God's mission in the world, especially by extending God's saving grace to the Gentiles. To support his mission, Paul had to demonstrate theologically that the mission to the Gentiles was the fulfillment of the Scriptures (Schreiner, 2001, 85).

The church in Antioch bears the mark of a Christian community with missionary perspectives, and Antioch becomes a missionary centre, with a predilection for the evangelization of the Gentiles. The Church of Antioch stands for all time as an example of an effective local church. The mission's success in evangelizing the Gentiles marked a turning point in history. The true Church of Jesus Christ on earth today is the spiritual legacy of this mobilization (MacArthur 1996, 11).

The spread of Christianity in Europe in the first century took place under the influence of Judaism. Schmidt (2018, 29) says that "before 64 AD, the Romans did not distinguish between Christians and Jews. The former were regarded as a Jewish sect and thus tolerated along with the Jews." The persecutions that followed were motivated by Christians' refusal to comply with official practices within Roman institutions. For example, Christians suffered for refusing to grant the emperor the title of Lord (and by implication worship), or for the simple fact that their lives were morally different. Persecutions did not thwart the spread of Christianity, but actually led to an increase in the number of Christians, which led Tertullian to state that "the blood of the martyrs is the seed of the Church" (Schmidt 2018, 37). Schmidt reinforces Tertullian's words, and points out that "many pagans became Christians only after seeing the death of the martyrs" (Schmidt 2018, 37).

In 311 AD, Emperor Galerius signed an edict of tolerance to end persecution of Christians. Then, in 313, Emperor Constantine issued *the Edict of Milan,* in which the two provincial emperors, Constantine and Licinius, decided to stop all persecution of Christians. The Edict guaranteed full freedom of service to all, Christians and pagans, throughout the Roman Empire. It also retroceded confiscated churches and lands without delay and without cost" (Schmidt 2018, 42). The freedoms gained by the Church as a result of its relationship with Emperor Constantine allowed the Church to flourish, to gain more and more authority and influence, to expand territorially, but at the same time gave way to numerous gaps and mismatches between what should have been the message of the Gospel of Christ and the life of the Church seen as an institution. Christianity has become expansive, but it has lost the original character that defined it. The acceptance of nominal faith has been imposed at the expense of an inner life transformed by the Gospel. All this could not stand as a bulwark against attacks on the new religion. However, Christ's promise to His Church that "the gates of the tabernacle of the dead shall not prevail against it" (Matthew 16:18) was to be fulfilled in the course of history.

4. The influence of Christianity on European culture and identity

It can be said that Christianity enriched European culture and shaped its identity. It also provided the spirituality around which European culture was woven and developed, with all its diversity as a unity of material and spiritual values. It is Christianity that is actually changing the face of Europe, and giving new meaning to a community that is developing on the basis of common elements and values. The image of spirituality is the one around which the "way of living in community with the Spirit" is rediscovered (Boari 2018, 23) and implicitly the acceptance of the existence of a reality called "spirit". In context, „the word

spirituality, when it concerns the field of religion, signifies [...] both a certain religious attitude, a way of living the relationship with God, as well as a set of practices aimed at fostering or nurturing this relationship" (Boari 2018, 23) The continuation of this first step of accepting spiritual reality leads to the existential experience of this reality that humanity can express as a factor of religious experiences. The fact for which, Veilleux concludes:

> If these premises are accepted, it follows that all spiritualities will correspond to a way of living this spiritual experience, of expressing it in concepts, of preserving its memory in religious traditions and customs, and of interpreting it within various systems of thought (Boari 2018, 24).

The image of Christianity and its contribution to the overall European identity should not be seen as additional elements added to a system that could function without its implications. On the contrary, everything that is built up as a system of thought, moral and spiritual values, the profile of freedoms of thought and expression come as a result of the evolution of a European culture in its spiritual development. With its evolution, Christianity assimilated European culture and thus created multicultural diversity and intercultural variety. Infiltrated into the spheres of European mixed culture, Christianity has made itself felt without annihilating its senses and reason, which leads Andrei Marga to state that „it is not faith that paralyses the will, nor the hope that simple faith solves everything" (Marga 2016, 290). What Christianity brings new in all this framework in which it contributes significantly to the formation of the European identity space is this proposal that Christianity makes and that is imprinted in all areas of European life. In the words of Valéry:

> Whether it is about the value of testimonies, the criticism of texts, the sources and guarantees of knowledge, whether it is about the distinctions between reason and faith, acts and works, whether it is about freedom, servitude, grace, about spiritual and material powers and their mutual conflict, about equality between men, about the condition of women - and much more - Christianity educates, impels, makes act and react millions of minds in the succession of centuries (Valéry 2016, 257).

The course of Christianity in Europe lies not only in the transcendent profile, i.e. of the relationship with God from which realities of faith experience or congruent values set in the right spheres of thought or cultural unity are derived, but also in the fact that:

> The Church gave Western Europe a common language (Latin) and doctrine, as well as a common liturgy [and] the sense of belonging to a community was born out of the fact that the institutions throughout Europe were very similar. Especially the ecclesial network, with bishops, archbishops, etc., a structured Europe, from the Scandinavian world to the Mediterranean (Willy 2015, 76).

Even if it occurs sporadically, this refusal of association with Europe's original roots are origins, influences, results that cannot be denied or ignored. Such a refusal can be considered an abuse of one's own foundations and a denial of one's own identity. Romanian analysts point in turn to the influence of Christianity. Tătaru-Cazaban (2015, 91) believes that "Europe cannot fail to recognize its historical originality: it owes to Christianity both the principle of unity (especially visible in the first millennium) and the current confessional division," and Theodorescu insists that "the unity of our continent resides in a single point, which is also the only bond: It is its traditional Christianity" (Theodorescu 2018, 24), Europeanness remaining above all the belonging to the traditions of the Church (Theodorescu 2018, 25).

European Christianity has not only given rise to a specific spirituality. An important contingent that the Church had was in the social field through the emergence of hospitals, universities, the development of science and the arts in deciphering the social status of

minorities. Epistolary writings refer to overcoming ethnic, racial or gender barriers. The Apostle Paul concludes this aspect of equity in his epistle to Galatians 3:28: "There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor slave-owner, there is neither male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus." Christ's message has always been about the marginalized of society, the sick and the powerless. The early church took up Christ's model by extending social ministry among ordinary people. "Whether we are talking about founding hospitals, creating hospices, professionalizing health care, or establishing the Red Cross, behind all these humanitarian achievements lie the teachings of Christ" (Schmidt 2018, 234). In Boari's synthesis, "Christianity has given a profound spiritual, cultural and moral identity to two continents: Europe and North America, continents that have played an essential role in human culture and history" (Boari 2016, 86). The difference between Christian doctrine and other doctrines or forms of political ideology that have influenced the course of European history is that the roots of this form of spirituality stem from the Christian's relationship with Jesus Christ. Christianity has always had at its centre man's relationship with his Creator.

5. The first signs of Europe's secularisation: the Enlightenment

The image of Europe and its epochal destiny can be disseminated in the distribution of forms of thought, cultural values of identity with the preservation of authenticity and national uniqueness. At the same time, the distinctive mark of Christianity as an unmistakable signature of European identity has been preserved. But something fundamental changed with the emergence of the Enlightenment.

The Enlightenment or Age of Enlightenment is an ideological, cultural and philosophical movement that developed during the 17th-18th centuries (Rotaru 2005, 350). The emergence of the Enlightenment was preceded by the presence of philosophers such as Francis Bacon, René Descartes and John Locke, whose ideas formed the basis of the new ideology. The Enlightenment movement, which gained ground especially among the bourgeoisie in England and France, mainly, „considered religion a form of superstition and ignorance that would disappear with the spread of culture and science" (Boari 2018, 23).As part of modernity, the Enlightenment carries forward the philosophy that conveys the need to break away from a defining past, to abandon the foundations that existed and generated traditions. Max Weber was one of the renowned classics who made a significant contribution through the amount of sociological research on the study of religions and their influences on society. He is also the one who introduces the term 'secularisation' into the discipline, and sets out three definitions:

> The first would see secularisation as the loss of control by religious bodies over certain sectors of social life. Second, secularisation would mean the shift of a group from its religious version to its secular version. Last but not least, secularization would be identified with the overall diminution of the religious character of society (Mandache 1999, 3).

The Enlightenment, as an imprint of secular thought, also developed against the background of some shortcomings of manifestations present within the Church, which makes the beginning of a transfer from a mystical way of thinking to a logical way of thinking, based on rational arguments. Criticism of the Church, and particularly of its officials, was directed at the opulence of the clergy, their morality and questionable culture; objections were also made to freedom of thought and the way in which the lives of the faithful were controlled. Religious forms, obscurantism, mysticism were seen as obstacles to the acquisition and realisation of a society based on freedom and equality. These points will also be found on the agenda of the relationship between secularisation and religion, but this time in the form of denominational tolerance and acceptance. Given that everything can be explained

rationally, God Himself becomes the subject of investigation in which, although His existence is not suppressed, He is given qualifiers such as tolerant, forgiving, the One who ensures happiness and earthly good. The Enlightenment, then, was not anti-religious, but offered Christianity a space outside the social framework. This is why some Enlightenment thinkers embraced the deist theory, in which God is seen as the Creator but is not involved in the life of creation. Or, faced with two realities, one reality present in "the world of phenomena, of things, of being, and on the other hand the world behind the phenomena, considered to be the true world, of essences, of being and of the concepts of the intellect" (Adorno 2001, 2). Nietzsche, was to accuse metaphysics as, "a second world, lying behind this world, the *Hinterwelt*" (Adorno 2014, 44).

Concern for the common good, equality and the guarantee of people's liberties are found, for example, in Montesquieu's statements (Rotaru 2023b, 825-874). They can be ensured by a political system in which powers in the state are divided to such an extent that they are opposable precisely in order to limit corruption and abuse of power. While Montesquieu emphasizes aspects of governance, Jean-Jacques Rousseau considered that the starting point for a society governed by harmony and well-being starts from equality among people, from "a communion of citizens united in a social body for the establishment of the common good" (Stoica 2015, 156). Here, „the natural state described by Rousseau is one of harmony, prosperity and perpetual happiness, in which people are kind, candid and manifest feelings of compassion towards one another" (Stoica 2015, 156).

The particularity of the Enlightenment is also due to technological progress, industrial revolutions, agrarian development, discoveries, science, urbanisation, access to books and therefore to education - all of which developed the critical apparatus. These new aspects established new rational benchmarks with logical answers to life's problems. For this reason, the Enlightenment has also been called the Age of Reason. But what is notable, for Gabriele Kuby, is that "the French Revolution elevated autonomous reason to the status of a goddess, an emancipated woman who freed herself from God and his orders. The people were baited with beautiful words that targeted desires that everyone nurtures: *liberté, egalité, fraternité* - liberty, equality, fraternity" (Kuby 2014, 43).

The feeling that was conveyed was that all the Church could do over time was to slow down any process that was meant for human evolution. The new Enlightenment movement gained more and more ground, and people looked towards a future that opened up to happiness, but without religious concepts, without being influenced by the pressure of religion or the Church. Against the background of such premises, the distance between Church and State began to grow, and the effects were to be felt in both institutions. This move was also called *exit from religion* or *secularisation* (Rotaru 2006, 251-266).

> The specificity of the French Enlightenment has always been its orientation against priests and the Church, not necessarily against Christianity as a religion. [...] At stake is a consistent *transfer of power* from the Catholic Church/Protestant churches to the secular republic. The latter is destined to be marked by the *myth of infinite progress*, the *fetishisation of science* and *hatred of the French clergy*. The power of French laïcité has so profoundly imposed itself in the collective mind of generations of French people (and Europeans educated in this spirit) thanks to the decisive contribution of two fundamental instruments: the *state educational system* and the *social influence of Enlightenment intellectuals* (Gavriluță 2018, 29).

The Enlightenment concentrated all potential in man, capable of achievement and progress on the stage of earthly fulfilment and happiness. The idea of freedom and the construction of a society in which reason becomes normative and prominent places the European citizen in the position of being increasingly alienated from his Christian heritage, and by extension from God.

6. Clashes between Christian and secular institutions in Europe today

The emergence of the two opposing institutions, the State and the Church, has set the tone for debates that come to legitimize and authorize the importance of each in transmitting authority and sphere of influence in such a way as to shape conceptions of the world and life. The analytical development of the topics under debate has led to the formulation of views in which the institution of the Church and secular institutions often come into conflict. It all has to do with the sources of authority invoked. In fact, an analysis of common concepts will summarise that both institutions come with platforms designed to uphold the human good. The biblical Christian perspective clearly recognises the importance of the State. Vasile Boari says:

> In the Christian view (doctrine), the duties of political authorities and politicians are established by God. These are two crucial tasks. The first is the good of the subjects. The political authority and the politician are in the service of God to do good to the subjects. The second task is to punish those who do evil by refusing to obey public authority (Boari 2016, 97).

The message relayed from the Christian perspective is not so much in the form of helpless docility, but rather an understanding of the relationship between Church versus State, precisely because the two have distinct missions and responsibilities. The signals given by the Enlightenment and the growing consolidation of distinct points of view are becoming increasingly strong in European culture, which is moving from a mentality imposed by faith to an individualistic psychology based on personal and rational functions.

The contemporary period is setting new coordinates in the context of these institutional relationships. These relations are seen differently, on the one hand because of the political periods, but also from an ideological point of view, issues that European countries have faced under different political regimes. These indicators lead to different forms in which these relations have manifested themselves. Democratic regimes have favored freedom of expression for the masses, and the relationship between state and church has begun to take on new epistemological contours. In this sense, the definition of the existence of evil in the world comes to be seen no longer as a consequence of sin, but rather as a result of human action. This is what Hans Blumenberg says:

> The concept of evil present in the world has receded and continues to recede to this day: the evils of the world appear less and less as physical shortcomings of nature and more and more clearly as the results of human actions, justified by technique. In this way, the history of philosophy reflects a situation in which man suffers less and less from the shortcomings of creation and more and more from the creations of his fellows (Blumenberg 2019, 67).

On the other hand, totalitarian political systems, promoting Marxist ideology - strongly marked by atheism and dialectical materialism through the founders of this philosophical concept, Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels - conspire to eliminate any state religious elements, and thus the concept of the Christian state. In this view, progress is achievable with the removal of any notion of faith from the collective consciousness. The Church, and religion in general, is a factor in thwarting the progress of humanity, and only the removal from society's consciousness of any notion of God and faith could bring prosperity to mankind. "In the case of totalitarian Marxism, it began as a political ideology, paradoxically metamorphosing into a secular religion (pseudo-religion) that is often more dogmatic and violent than many forms of traditional religious fundamentalism" (Rogobete 2016, 34).

The framework of relations between religion and state has improved in terms of mutual influence with the removal of what Winston Churchill metaphorically called the *Iron Curtain*, i.e., the states in Central and Eastern Europe. Apparently, in the democratic

apparatus, the State seems to make concessions and favors to the Church, and the Church seems to be satisfied with the role of manager of the power it has lost, while the State shows its powerlessness as an absolute authority. Although the extent of this relationship could easily be generalized to the European level, the relationship between the institutions remains a particular one, caused by their own national individuality.

> We cannot talk about the role of religion in today's Europe without answering the question of whether there is a European model of state-church relations or whether, on the contrary, we are in the presence of models practised at national level which have their own individuality and are in no way harmonised at European level (Carp 2009, 79).

In relation to this European model of the relationship between Church and State, to which Carp refers, the presence of the three monotheistic religions must be taken into account, together with the major confessions present in the area of the Christian religion. The dialogue that is emerging in such a context must be able to respond to the diversity that is emerging in the religious sphere. But, as Rogobete points out, establishing criteria for assessing relations between religion and the state, between secular institutions and the Church, could sometimes be premature or even difficult to establish. The reason for such vagueness is the lack of a politico-religious analysis, which diagnoses the level of perception of the religious factor according to atheistic or fundamentalist policies. Here's what it says:

> ...we do not have [...] articulate analyses of secularization in its radical forms practiced by communist-atheist regimes, not enough has been said about post-secularization. We do not have studies on the impact of forced atheisation on beliefs and behaviours in the post-communist spaces of united Europe. We do not have empirical studies of how regenerated religious beliefs in these spaces influence the political factor, electoral processes, elite behaviour, constitutional construction, educational systems, respect for human and minority rights, etc (Rogobete 2016, 34).

For this very reason, the existence of a European model that expresses the voice of a single European authority in matters of religion is considered unjustified and, at the same time, inappropriate, so the European Union positions itself as a representative identity in terms of transparent dialogue and permanent cooperation with churches and Christian organizations, while respecting the specific features of the Member States.

7. Conclusions

The challenge of the present time is built around concepts that, although they bear Christian undertones, are global influences. Thus, around Christianity, a series of other currents and ideologies are taking shape which, without much effort, are being assimilated under common aspects that give Christianity equal forms or at least promote the same goals with similar values. The uniqueness of Christianity, which has inspired cultural, social and religious life while marking the passage of the stages of history and preserving its transcendent unified meaning, remains Europe's calling card, despite the evolution of European society open to a diversity which gives religion a generic term.

European society is undoubtedly subject to the changes that have occurred with the transition from ecclesial authority to authority transferred to the State. The institution of the Church may gather a number of criticisms and disapprovals of many of the decisions to which the critics refer, particularly concerning the practice of the Church, but history confirms the impact that Christianity has had in all spheres of European society. That is why we believe that when we refer to Christianity we are referring to the whole system of

values and traditions that are specific to the Christian message and to which we must relate without any apology and without hesitation. Scripture remains the only source that transcends time and civilizations, with a message that comes from the nature and holiness of God. Its quality remains unchanging, without the need for adjustment or adaptation to changing times. This is why we have the presence of the Christian message that transforms culture and not a culture that borrows Christian values.

References

Adorno, Theodor W. 2001. *Metaphysis: Concept and Problems*. Stanford, California: Stanford University Press.

Blumenberg, Hans. 2019. Secularizare și autoafirmare [Secularisation and self-affirmation]. Cluj-Napoca: Tact Publishing.

Boari, Vasile. 2018. Religie și democrație în Europa la începutul secolului XXI [Religion and democracy in Europe at the beginning of the 21st century]. Iași: Institutul European Publishing.

Boari, Vasile. 2016. *Religie și politică [Religion and politics]*. Iași: Institutul European Publishing.

Carp, Radu. 2009. Dumnezeu la Bruxelles, Religia în spațiul public european [God in Brussels, Religion in the European Public Space]. Cluj-Napoca: Eikon Publishing.

Gavriluță, Nicu. 2018. Noile religii seculare. Corectitudinea politica, tehnologiile viitorului și transumanismul [New secular religions. Political Correctness, Future Technologies and Transhumanism]. Iași: Polirom Publishing.

Guéritée, Iulia Badea and Alexandru Ojică. 2015. Dialogul religiilor în Europa unită [Dialogue of religions in a united Europe]. Iași: Adenium Publishing.

Kuby, Gabriele. 2014. Revoluția sexuală globală. Distrugerea libertății în numele libertății [The global sexual revolution. Destroying freedom in the name of freedom]. Iași: Sapienția Publishing.

MacArthur, John. 1996. The MacArthur New Testament Commentary, Acts 13-28. Chicago: Moody Publishers.

Mandache, Mircea. 1999. "Procesul de secularizare și modernizarea societății europene." Accessed February 28, 2024, https://www.revistadesociologie.ro/pdf-uri.

Marga, Andrei. 2016. *Societatea nesigură [Unsafe society]*. Bucharest: Niculescu Publishing.

Noica, Constantin. 1993. Modelul cultural European [The European cultural model]. Iași: Humanitas Publishing.

Rogobete, Silviu E. 2016. "Religie și politică: Paradigme interpretative" [Religion and Politics: Interpretative Paradigms]. In *Religie și politică*, edited by Vasile Boari, 15-34. Iași: Institutul European Publishing.

Rotaru, Ioan-Gheorghe. 2005. Istoria filosofiei, de la începuturi până la Renaștere [History of philosophy, from the beginning to the Renaissance]. Cluj-Napoca: Cluj University Press.

Rotaru, Ioan-Gheorghe. 2022. "Aspects of the Relationship between Church and State." *Jurnalul Libertății de Conștiință [Journal for Freedom of Conscience]* 10(2): 585-595.

Rotaru, Ioan-Gheorghe. 2023a. "Aspects of Biblical Philosophy on the Development of World Civilizations." *Scientia Moralitas. International Journal of Multidisciplinary Research* 8(1): 62-79.

Rotaru, Ioan-Gheorghe. 2023b. "A look at how the concept of human rights has evolved over time." *Jurnalul Libertății de Conștiință [Journal for Freedom of Conscience]* 11(2): 825-874.

Rotaru, Ioan-Gheorghe. 2006. "Aspecte ale secularizării și ale omului secularizat" [Aspects of secularisation and secularised man]. *Studia Universitatis Babeș-Bolyai, Theologia Orthodoxa* L-LI, 1: 251-266.

Schmidt, Alvin J. 2018. Cum a schimbat creștinismul lumea [How Christianity changed the world]. Alba Iulia: Reîntregirea Publishing.

Schreiner, Thomas R. 2001. *Paul – Apostle of God`s Glory in Christ*. Illinois: Intervarsity Press.

Stoica, Adrian Claudiu. 2015. Europa la apogeu. O viziune istorica asupra lumii moderne europene [Europe at its best. A historical view of the modern European world]. Târgoviște: Cetatea de Scaun. Publishing.

Tataru-Cazaban, Bogdan. 2015. "Sufletul Europei": memorie și responsabilitate" [The Soul of Europe: Memory and Responsibility]. In *Dialogul religiilor în Europa unită [The dialogue of religions in united Europe]*, edited by Iulia Badea Guéritée, 90-92. Iași: Adenium Publishing.

Theodorescu, Răzvan. 2018. *Cele două Europe [The two Europe]*. Bucharest: Ideea Europeană Publishing.

Valéry, Paul. 2016. Criza spiritului și alte eseuri [Crisis of the spirit and other essays]. Iași: Polirom Publishing.

Willy, Craig. 2015. "Credem în Euro: Unitatea europeană pe post de religie civilă urmașă a creștinătății" [We believe in the Euro: European Unity as the civil religion successor to Christianity]. In *Dialogul religiilor în Europa unită [The dialogue of religions in united Europe]*, edited by Iulia Badea Guéritée, 70-77. Iași: Adenium Publishing.