

# THE EUROPEAN CONSTRUCTION AND ITS CHALLENGES

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***Abstract:***

*The construction of a united Europe represents the ideal of the Europeans and not only. Such ideals require both responsibilities and risks. Unfortunately, the issue of the European construction is more approached from a political and economical point of view. The cultural dimension of the European construction is marginalized, that also happening to its spiritual dimension.*

*The European Union is not only a place for changing merchandise, but also for common ideas and values. Europe is more than a European Union reduced at the dimension of an economic market. This construction must also be understood from its spiritual perspective. The European 'body' also needs a generous spiritual 'soul'.*

***Keywords:*** European construction, common ideals, spiritual values

An important process that we face up, is the European construction. The necessity of achieving such a project was generated by the major crises that many times endangered the existence of Europe.

Our continent had to cope with both foreign aggressions and civil or religious wars between the European nations. The climax was the 'civil European war' Between 1914-1945; then it was totalitarianism regime that finished only in 1989-1991. All this period, destructive totalitarian ideologies and utopian ideas floated over our continent.

Refuge in a unitary democratic European reconstruction was obvious. It was possible to get rid of the totalitarian ideologies within Europe after the war due to christian and democratic politicians and theorists: Alcide de Gasperi, Conrad Adenauer, Robert Schuman, Jean Monet, Denis de Rougemont and others. They launched the idea of a christian democracy as an alternative to liberalism and socialism and, proposed the European nations integration and their unity in diversity.

The idea of harmonious life together, giving up enmity and selfishness was a noble one which meets the Christianity, but also requires some risks and responsibilities.

Even if the European construction concerns the political class and the public opinion, but more from a political and economical point of view.

Religion is perceived like a personal business that is related to the emotional life of the individuals. The secularized culture that we face only aims to cast a strong shadow on the spiritual and religious life of the world.

Dumitru Stăniloae, in a study called 'The United States of Europe', showed a kind of relativism related to the construction of the harmonious European construction under a cultural aspect.

If in the United States of America, it is possible to have an organization and unity relatively total, basing on the same language, the same is not possible in Europe. The American citizens are living and merging into a single people of English language.

On the other hand, smaller states can suffer because of the bigger states from an economic point of view.

Anyway, there is a solution that is available to everyone. In case there is a huge moral force to work in each people soul, this would stop from the temptation of economic, legal, spiritual and geographical development in the detriment of smaller states.

”It is a great naivete and a big danger to create an organization not basing on what the man is now, but basing on what you are dreaming to be. Soon, the reality takes its revenge and it sweeps you out with the organization itself bringing then a sense of great disappointment”.<sup>22</sup> Some utopic organizations can result in chaos at the social level.

Thus, we cannot create a healthy European superstate without using the Christian principle; this is an essential element that can bring people closer. Such principles can also contribute in peace keeping.

In order to avoid moral, religious or cultural compromises, the European Union must very clearly show the legal statute of the church.

The Maastricht Treaty in 1992 stipulates the European Union to observe the fundamental rights as they are guaranteed by the European Convention concerning the Human Rights and the Fundamental Freedoms.

There have been voices sustaining the idea of a higher involvement of the religion in politics. The Orthodox Church proved its strong position concerning different problems, but many of these have not been overlooked.

The Orthodox Church sustains the role of the Christianity in building up the European identity, without ignoring other religions and without diminishing the rights of those who are Europeans, but not Christians. The Orthodox Church expressed an official point of view concerning the Preamble. The Holy Synod suggested, within the meeting on 4th March 2003, the following wording: ”The member states and the European Union citizens...(are) aware of their history and the indivisible universal values of the human dignity, equality and solidarity, as well as its preponderant Christian religious heritage”.<sup>23</sup>

In order to make the spiritual values contribution known at building up the European identity, a stronger dialogue between church and state is necessary. This does not mean that the church makes policy. One may observe the church missionary aim and its social dimension. It aims to make society become more human, it aims to maintain the faith and national and European identity.

The church does not mean to get involved in politics. Jesus Christ Himself clearly delimited spiritual and political concerns by saying: ”Render therefore unto Caesar the things which be Caesar’s, and unto God the things which be God’s.”<sup>24</sup>

The church missionary activity must have a spiritual character, not a political one. The church must not get involved in politics but it must lighten with its light.

If politics aim to provide the human progress by economical means, the church aims to provide perfection to its believers by spiritual means.

The church must step into society to save the people, shaken by so many divergences resulting from pride and selfishness, because without church peoples are like being without heart.<sup>25</sup>

The Orthodoxy may positively influence the society, it can stimulate the economical, political and technical progress as long as it is connected to the society realities.

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<sup>22</sup> Stăniloae D. – *Nation and Christianity*, Elion Publishing House, București, 2004, p 100

<sup>23</sup> Tătaru – Cazaban M. (coord.) – *Theology and Politics from the Holy Parents to the United Europe*, Anastasia Publishing House, București, 2004, p.305

<sup>24</sup> *Holy Bible*, International Bible Society, 1984, Luke 20, 25

<sup>25</sup> Popescu D. – *The Rootless Human Being*, Nemira Publishing House, București, 2001, p.79

Many people consider that the technical evolution diminishes the religious dimension which is less and less relevant for the 'new man'. Giving up the religious dimension occurs on a deeply secularized society, the spiritual dimension is replaced by the material one. The vertical evolution is replaced by the horizontal evolution, a simply social one. The human being, despite progress, despite modern and sophisticated means of transport faces up the same mystery of his existence. The technical progress, no matter how big, has its own limits. Despite its advantages, it can bring death and pain, war and injustice, foolishness and enmity.

Even if the relation between church and state seemed not to be of a great interest, we consider it is about a very important one indeed.

The religious aspect is a very important one and we must observe both it and the new social and political fields. The interest of this issue is even more evident on a background of events such as: religious and interethnic conflicts, challenges related to using icons in public schools, religious proselytism and the influence of some denominations in politics and economy, the moral and religious consequences of using the new biotechnology and the genetic experiences.

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It is very important for Europe, that Romania, already member of the European Union not to be only a place of trading merchandise, but a place of common ideals and values. Europe must consider the spiritual values of each member state, it must observe and protect their spiritual identity. Otherwise, there is the risk for Romania to become a strictly economic background.

The European political project is unfortunately unclear concerning the religious aspect. There is no important document of the European Union to clearly specify the status of churches and religious confessions of Europe. From a legal point of view, these are protected by the laws of each country. The European Union issued a series of regulations concerning its relations with different entrepreneurs, partners, manufacturers etc., but not with churches or religious confessions.

The church must have a clear status in connection with the European Union legislation.

In an interview published in the German weekly newspaper (Der Spiegel), the Austrian chancellor Wolfgang Schüssel declared: "God has no need of the Christian roots reference in the European Constitution. Renunciation of such a reference would be a proof of cultural and spiritual poverty for the European issue".<sup>26</sup>

Europe is more than a European Union reduced at the dimension of an economic market. One may observe the cultural and spiritual values of our continent that is in a full process of political, economical and military unification.

On a different religious, ethnical and cultural background, Europe needs to monitorize the sources of identity that we cannot have a dialogue without it, a dialogue with the other elements that appear on its territory.

The European Moslem Allam appreciates: "... Europe owes to the Christianity because it gave a shape, a significance and a value to the continent. Refusing all these would mean to refuse Europe.

The issue of the Christian roots of Europe, in a moment when everybody speaks about the heterogeneous cultures and multiculturalism, leads to other questions: how can we receive the other as long as we deny us? how can an agreement between human communities be possible if Europe refuses to find itself in it?

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<sup>26</sup> Der Spiegel, no. 47, 17 November 2003

The roots go deep down into the ground, where they meet some other roots. If the Christian roots can be found the Hebrew and Greek world, today, it meets the Islam, tomorrow Asia and Africa.

The meeting is possible only if we are all aware of our roots. Thinking about the European roots means thinking about possible extensions of the continent”<sup>27</sup>.

From a similar point of view, Alexandru Paleologu wrote: ” Being Europeans is a much older reality than the European structures. The beginning of the European doctrine does not start with Robert Schuman or with Jean Monnet even if they were remarkable people and did good things. Europe is a Christian construction began more than one millenium ago. Those who do not consider this, risk to have an anti-European position (consciously or unconsciously). Many Europeans are against Christianity in a world created by Christianity ”<sup>28</sup>.

The state must be neutral, that is not to issue statements that are not to its competence. Being neutral does not mean to ignore or to discriminate the values of the other citizens.

No matter how secularized, the contemporary Europe is based on Christian values and principles.

The European of tomorrow, on a democratic background without civic culture and in the context of a political amateurism, confronted with questions related to its existence, despite of the technical evolution, will find references only in a cultural and spiritual background. These references will help him understand his role and meaning within the European Union, in his life and world.

Dialogues between ecclesial and political European structures could keep the balance of the different European creating powers and would correct the tendency to define the unity of the continent only by political and economical terms.

The Romanian Orthodox Church, as well as the whole spiritual heritage of Romania can highly contribute to enrich the Christian soul of Europe. Church has a great responsibility for the future of the Christianity and for the future of the whole world; it has the duty to create the sense of contemporary culture and civilization, assimilating all that is constructive for the human being and for the whole world, giving up all those aspects creating a huge distance between human being and the Real God..”<sup>29</sup>

The European unification is certainly a huge challenge for the Christian churches. The European Union Christianity is deeply affected by the confessional denominations that fissure the whole continent. In fact, they are highly responsible of the negative attitude of modernity to Christianity.

In the context of a political unification, Europe should observe the spiritual references and the recover of the churches by admitting the tradition complementarity and the universal trends according to the mutual abnegation culture and of the communion contained in the Gospel message, not enough used by churches.

The European construction must also be observed from a spiritual point of view. The political Europe must not be separated by the spiritual Europe. The European ’body’ needs a generous spiritual ’soul’ to keep the ’house’ of Europe opened. Europe should be seen from an economical, ecological and ecumenical point of view. It should be a communion between people and communities, between people and nature, between different cultures of the world, all being based on an open God, meaning communion, free and strong love.

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<sup>27</sup> Tătaru – Cazaban M. (coord.), op. cit., p. 324

<sup>28</sup> Paleologu A. – *The European Christian Heritage*, Eikon Publishing House, București, 2003, p. 65-66

<sup>29</sup> Ică I., Marani G. - *The Church Social Way of Thinking*, Deisis Publishing House, București, 2002, p. 6-7

Europe is a political project related to Christianity; it can become an open culture assimilating different traditions and the cultural heritage. It is absolutely necessary to assume the spiritual dimension of the European construction because: 'unless the Lord builds the house, its builders labour in vain'<sup>30</sup>.

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1. *Holy Bible*, International Bible Society, 1984;
2. *Der Spiegel*, no. 47, 17 November 2003.

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<sup>30</sup> *Holy Bible*, Psalm 126, 1