

BOOK REVIEWS

Gheorghită Ciocoi, *Orthodoxy and Schism. Russia, Ukraine, Constantinople, The World of Faith Publishing House, Bucharest, 2019, 192 pp.*

The theme of Gheorghită Ciocoi's work entitled *Orthodoxy and Schism. Russia, Ukraine, Constantinople* is a very current and at the same time problematic one, because it refers to the difficult relations between the Orthodox Churches of Eastern Europe in a new political context characterized by the dismantling of the former Soviet bloc and the political and social settlements that determine the spheres of influence that are being drawn now. In all these geostrategic realities, in this collision of the tectonic plates of world politics in Eastern Europe, the Church, unwillingly, must participate by being a leading social actor.

The inter-Orthodox problems are treated with great lucidity, the author correctly capturing the great blocks of problems that test the unity between the Orthodox: the Holy and the Great Orthodox Synod of Crete, the Ukrainian problem and the relations between the Ecumenical Patriarchate and the Russian Patriarchate. The articles appeared in the publication *The World of Faith* over time, now being gathered in volume; the author, knowing the Russian and Bulgarian languages, had direct access to information sources in the respective countries and to comments on these hot topics.

The preface *Moscow does not believe in tears. In others...* (pp. 5-9), signed by Răzvan Bucuroiu and written in an inspirational way, shows that under the "tectonic plates" of the Orthodox states, the interests of the various world-political, military and economic alliances clash, and the Churches are trapped at the heart of this strategic game, their unity being called into question: "The world disturbances are felt by our national Churches in a concrete way, sometimes painful. The Byzantine model of the worldly and celestial kingdoms, which would harmonize in the symbolism of the bicephalous eagle seems to be - somehow - outdated. Christians no longer live in the kingdom, in their city or in their village, but live with their bodies wherever they want, seasonally, annually or even longer, and with their minds they roam virtually in the entire world" (p. 5).

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The first thematic block, the Holy and the Great Orthodox Synod, are devoted to several articles, such as: *The Great Orthodox Synod in search of the first without equal?* (pp. 18-21); *The Holy and Great Pan-Orthodox Synod* (pp. 29-33); *The Holy and Great Orthodox Synod of Crete* (pp. 53-58); *The Great Synod of Orthodoxy: controversy before the meeting in Crete* (pp. 62-66); *The Great Synod of Orthodoxy in Crete - the state of affairs* (pp. 66-69).

In these articles, the author presents the preparations made for the reunion of the bishops of the Orthodox world, preparations in which he felt the tension between the different patriarchs. For example, on March 9, 2014, Patriarch John X of Antioch announced his intention not to participate because of the non-canonical mixture of the Patriarchate of Jerusalem in Qatar (p. 18). There was also the question of the participation of Patriarch Kiril of Russia. The ecclesiological and theological primacy in the Church was discussed between Moscow and Constantinople. During the preliminary meetings, the topics to be discussed in 2016 were proposed during the synodal meeting (pp. 29-30) and the opportunity to convene the synod after 1200 years from the last ecumenical synod was discussed, especially that the ecumenical councils were only summoned when the heresies threatened the unity of the Christian world, which is not the case now. Given the discussions from the pre-Synod meetings on the recognition of the Synod in Crete as ecumenical, His Beatitude Father Patriarch Daniel stated that synodality “should become a norm, a rule of Orthodoxy” (p. 54), only a zero point of the Great Synods from the future. There was also the question of representativeness in case the delegations were not made up of all the bishops from the respective Orthodox countries (pp. 62-63), the author describing the state of affairs during the synod, the distrust among the believers (pp. 66-67).

The second thematic group refers, in several chapters, to the Ukrainian problem, to the struggle of this local Church for the acquisition of autocephaly status and to the interests that intersect here, some of them western and others Russian, besides the national ones. In this regard, Ghe. Ciocoi exposes the Ukrainian theme in articles such as: *The Kiev baptism and the Russian peatiletka* (pp. 14-18); *Euromaidan: Whose will Ukraine be?* (pp. 24-29); *Believers in Ukraine at the crossroads* (pp. 33-37); *The baptism of Kiev and the bath of the Three Rome* (pp. 73-78); *Autocephaly in 2018 for the Church of Ukraine?* (pp. 135-139); *The Ecumenical Patriarchate - to the end in granting the autocephaly of the Ukrainian Church?* (pp. 139-143); *The Kiev tomos and the war of canonical jurisdictions* (pp. 156-160); *The New Autocephalic Church in Kiev in the*

“*War of the Worlds*” (pp. 164-170), etc. These articles capture step by step, we could say, the evolution of the Ukrainian crisis and the open conflict between the Moscow Patriarchate and the Ecumenical Patriarchate in the context of the right to offer autocephaly and the recognition of the autocephaly of the Ukrainian Church.

In an article from 2013, the author surprised the celebration of 1025 years since the baptism of Kiev Russia, in three of the great Slavic countries resulted from the former U.R.S.S.: Russia, Ukraine and Belarus. Unfortunately, the absence of the top representatives of half of the Orthodox countries was noted (pp. 14-18). Whose will Ukraine be? Russia’s or the West? And why does it have to belong to anyone? - asked the author of the book in an article from March 2014, during the riots in the neighboring country. It is mentioned, on this occasion, the involvement of the Church through prayers, through pilgrimages with the relics of saints or with the gifts of the magicians from the East, in extinguishing the conflict (pp. 24-29). Metropolitan Antonie also appealed to the children’s prayer for peace: “We hope that the clean and warm prayer of the children will stop the elders from committing irreparable mistakes... (p. 26)”. At that time, Russian propaganda saw the battle for Ukraine as a battle for the reunification of the Slavic people, and the Russian tanks adorned with icons that entered Ukraine were merely a means of putting this theory into practice (p. 34). Against the background of the conflict with Russia, Kiev will increasingly demand the Ecumenical Patriarchate to grant autocephaly to the Church of Ukraine, the Supreme Rada asking Constantinople on several occasions to solve the thorny ecclesiastical problem (p. 75). Who gives autocephaly? Only the Patriarchate of Constantinople, as before or should the Tomos be signed by all the leaders of the local Churches? - formula proposed by Moscow. The last chapters (including articles published in the years 2018 and 2019) of the book refer to the entire approach and the history of granting the autocephaly of the Ukrainian Church by the Ecumenical Patriarchate, with the discussions that took place between the Ukrainian state and the Patriarchy, but also with the harsh reaction of the Moscow Patriarchate (pp. 135-170). In the last chapter entitled: *The schism between Moscow and Constantinople in journals* (pp. 170-189), the author unfolds the film of the schism between the two Churches, starting with June 20, 2018 and ending with January 22, 2019, a very painful moment from the recent history of the Orthodox Church.

The third type of article concerns the Russian Church and the relations between the Ecumenical Patriarchate and the Russian Patriarchate, with the following titles: *Russia, the center of the Christian world* (pp.

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9-14); *Stalin's Calendar* (pp. 21-24); *Putin and the Koran* (pp. 44-48); *Kremlinology and contemplative Orthodox republics* (pp. 58-62); *The Stone Moscow* (pp. 78-82); *Moscow's "Orthodox Vatican"* (pp. 88-94); *Red Square without Lenin?* (pp. 94-99); *100 years since the restoration of the Patriarchate in the Russian Church* (pp. 117-123); *Putin and the Orthodox theology* (pp. 123-129); *Russian Orthodoxy and geopolitics* (pp. 129-135), etc. In these chapters, the author captures the specificity of the Russian church policy, as well as the spiritual specificity of a faithful people, liberated not long ago, from an atheist dictatorship, he describes "the way of man without God, to whom everything is allowed, to the man of God" (p. 9), "the creation of the new man, this time a Christian" (p. 10). Russia recently announced the inauguration of a new Christian era, tired of so much helplessness promoted by a crumbling West, "The Great Russia is called to become the center of the Christian world" (p. 11), wishing to be considered from now on. the defense of Christian ideals and traditional morality" (p. 11), the Russian penal code being also amended by Putin, who signed several articles aimed at "counteracting insults that undermine religious beliefs and citizen feelings" (p. 12). However, there is still much confusion and mixing of plans in contemporary Russia, the typography of the Russian Patriarchate for many years printing a biographical calendar dedicated to Stalin, the executioner of the people, many "believers" demanding his canonization (p. 21). The issue of the presence of Islam in the Russian capital and tolerance for Muslim religious customs, a sign of the presence of religious freedom (pp. 44-48), as well as the inauguration, on September 23, 2015, of the large mosque built in Moscow, is also discussed. The author also presents the agenda of Russian ecclesiastical policy with irradiation in the former Soviet states, such as Basaraia, for example, kremlinology still being a current policy in these new, so-called independent countries (pp. 58-62).

The present book is an interesting one with the current theme, because it deals with the pressing problems of the Orthodox world in recent years and is particularly courageous and critical in many respects, as it refers to the difficult relations between the Orthodox countries at present, some regarding the church policy, but in which there interferes a lot of other divergent geostrategic interests, promoted by the great powers and political-economic blocks. On the other hand, the author has access to a bibliography that few of us have, because he is fluent in Slavic languages. For all these reasons and for the pleasure of reading it, we recommend it to our readers.

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