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## ***Religion and everyday life. An interdisciplinary perspective***

(Ioan Chirilă, *Rădăcinile veșniciei – eseuri* [*The Roots of the eternity – Essays*], Cluj-Napoca: Școala Ardeleană, 2022, 286 p.)

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Ioan Chirilă is one of the important names of the theological scholarship from Cluj-Napoca centre and from the Romanian space. As a professor of Biblical studies he published valuable synthesis dedicated to his research field (Chirilă 2000; Chirilă 2010; Chirilă 2020; Chirilă, Ioan, Pașca-Tușa, Stelian, Popa-Bota, Ioan, Trif, Claudia-Cosmina, 2018: 96-108). During the years, he also proved a real talent both for literature (Chirilă 2010; Chirilă 2014) and for the interview (Chirilă 2017a; Chirilă 2017b; Morariu 2019:218). Other scholars like Sandu Frunză (Chirilă 2019) questioned him about different projects or about his travels (Chirilă 2017; Frunză 2017) or invited him to offer a professional opinion on a complex topic. The way how he knew to realize a theological analysis without avoiding the actuality can be for sure considered among the main reasons that determined him to be often reviewed and quoted.

In the recent book entitled *The Roots of the eternity* (Chirilă 2022), the theologian brings together a series of essays published previously in the monthly journal of the Bishopric of Cluj where he approaches both specifically topics from the field of biblical theology, but also realizes critical evaluation of different books or speaks about the values and their relevance. As the author himself says in the foreword of the *démarche*:

"The essays hosted in this book are the fruit of a continuous search for holiness, first in the Scriptures, then in people and, last but not least, in the concrete experience of life. These laudatory reflections were written in turn, for twenty years (1990-2010), in *The Renaissance*, the monthly journal of the Archdiocese of Cluj. I grouped them in three big steps. In the first of these I focused my attention on the Holy One of God, the Source of our holiness. I saw him incarnate from the Holy Spirit, born of the Virgin, adored by the shepherds, glorified by the angels, glorified by the wise men from the East, proclaimed by the Baptist, crucified by men, resurrected as

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a testimony, raised in glory, and transfigured in appearance. In this way I captured the mystery of our salvation and, implicitly, the call to be like Him. The second step was dedicated to the spiritual struggle that man has to fight when he wants to get from the image to the likeness of his Prototype. I evoked the faces of those who constantly sought God, from Saul of Tarsus, who saw the Light of the world on the way to Damascus, to Olivier Clément, the one whose "eyes of fire" bear witness to the filling of the creature with Pentecostal fire. Among the illustrious men, whose example the Holy Scripture urges us to follow (Heb 13, 7), I mentioned N. Steinhardt, Metropolitan Bartholomew, Philippe Nouzille, etc. The last step is itself a plea for the sanctity of life, both in the family and in monasticism. Both are meant to sanctify man and place him in a living dialogue with the Word that sanctifies us all (Hebrews 2:11), which remains with us until the end of time (Mt 28:20)" (Chirilă 2022: 10-11).

The démarche therefore offers a complex perspective on religion and everyday life in the contemporary society. Ioan Chirilă manages on one side to bring into attention the relevance of the Christology and the role of Christ in the life of the contemporary Christian, but also in the field of the dialogue between theology, philosophy and religion in the first section of the book. Entitled, „Birth – Resurrection – Transfiguration” (Chirilă 2022: 15), the beginning section contains both theological studies, reflections and meditations on topics like Christmas, universal salvation, and the implications of these events, fact that brings him close to other theologians like Dumitru Stăniloae (Frunză 2016) (later he will even come to speak about him in the book review dedicated to the Catholic Benedictine Maciej Bielawski from the Gregorian Pontifical University in Rome (Chirilă 2022: 209-210), the theology of carols, Length, the feast of Resurrection and its Eucharistic dimension and s. o. The actuality of the approach can be seen in the way how he correlates the aforementioned Christian feast with aspects like the love (Chirilă 2022: 116-110), the universal salvation, or the Transfiguration and its relevance for the mental practice of the theology (Chirilă 2022: 139-141).

Later in the second part of the book he will use books like the one of Bartolomeu Valeriu Anania as a pretext to speak about the relevance of the Biblical text for the contemporary society, to emphasize the actuality of the poetry of books like the Psalms (Chirilă 2022: 167-170), about the literary role of the aforementioned author who translated the Bible in the Romanian language (Chirilă 2022: 171-178), or about the pastoral care, the relevance of the fathers in the understanding the spiritual life or the one of the lecture in the spiritual self-development. In the same time, the models are not avoided. Portrait like the ones of N. Steinhardt (p. 187-190), come not only to repeat biographical data that could be found with a simple click on any motor like Google, but to emphasize the persistence of the message

of their authors, to emphasize examples of valuable Christian art like the one of Sorin Dumitrescu (Chirilă 2022: 201-24), to speak about the monastic theology and its relevance for a life of individualism, production and material roots, like it was, in many of its aspects the one of the people from the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century and the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> (Chirilă 2022: 211-213), or to show why Olivier Clément, one of the most important voices of the Orthodox theology from France must be listened, read and followed (Chirilă 2022: 214-224).

The third part moves the accent from the inside theological approach thorough the sphere of the interference between theology and culture. As expected, it is the one that realizes in a diachronically way the transition to the contemporary events. Thus, the example of bishop Nicolae Ivan (Chirilă 2022:230-232), who in 1921 started a renewal process of the Romanian Orthodox Diocese of Vad, Feleac and Cluj is brought into attention together with interesting meditation dedicated to the family and its role in the society, toe relevance of the young one and the role of the priest in his formation, the need for sense, the relationships between fear and happiness, love as a virtue and the real Word, seen as *Logos*.

Using a complex terminology that is still available to any kind of reader, Ioan Chirilă therefore manages not only to invite his reader to a journey in the world of the Bible, but in the same time to show them how lively is the theology and which are some of the aspects that define it, that can be considered actual. In the same time, his book is not only an invitation to lecture, but to action. Bringing into attention examples like the one of Bartolomeu Valeriu Anania or N. Steinhardt and speaking about the youth not only does he try to offer an overview of a historical aspect that has its relevance, but also to instill the desire to actively participate in the spiritual reform of a society that, once lost the metaphysical dimension, is, increasingly empty of philosophy, axiology and floats as if in the search of a meaning.

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