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**THE RELIGIOUS IMAGINARY FROM THE ROMANIAN SPACE –
A DIFFERENT PERSPECTIVE**

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Abstract: Review of Ioan Chirilă (coord.), *Enciclopedia Imaginariilor din România. IV. Imaginar religios* [The encyclopaedia of the imaginary from Romanian space. IV: Religious imaginary], Iași: Editura Polirom, 2020.

Key words: religion, patrimonial goods, Saints, icons, ecumenism.

Imaginary has always constituted an interesting and investigated topic. In the Romanian space, the complex encyclopaedia dedicated to its different forms, released in 2020 under the coordination of professor Corin Braga from faculty of Letters, „Babeş-Bolyai” University from Cluj-Napoca, comes to prove this aspect. The first volume of the series, coordinated by Corin Braga, speaks about the Romanian literary imaginary (Braga 2020). The second one is published under the coordination of Elena Platon and is dedicated to the relationship between the patrimony and the imaginary linguistic from the Romanian space (Platon 2020), the 3rd one by the historian Sorin Mitu, offers a perspective on the topic from this perspective (Mitu 2020), the fourth one by Ioan Chirilă, who speaks about the religious Romanian imaginary (Chirilă 2020) and the fifth one by Liviu Malița, who presents the Romanian imaginary and artistically patrimony (Malița 2020). The purpose of all the coordinators of the volumes and of the general coordinator, Corin Braga, was, as it can be seen, the one of offering a holistically approach of the imaginary from the Romanian context, underlining its particularities and bringing into attention its diversity.

The fourth volume of it (Chirilă 2020), which will try to present there, is dedicated, as it has been already mentioned, to the religious imaginary and it is coordinated by Ioan Chirilă, priest and professor in the aforementioned university, at the Faculty of Orthodox Theology, a man with an ecumenical openness and literary talent.

Known for the previous books and articles published, and reviewed by the contemporary scientific area, the coordinator of the series, helped by a team of nineteenth specialists, offers a complex perspective on the approached topic, in a chronological structure. Florin Gogâltan, Daniela-Luminița Ivanovici, Cosmin Cosmuța, Stelian Pașca-Tușa, Sorin Marțian, Mircea Gheorhe Abrudan, Elena Dana Preoteasa, Ioan Popa-Bota, Marcel Gheorghe Muntean, Elena Onețiu, Ileana Alexandra Orlich, Teodora Ilinca Mureșanu, David Diosi, Olga Lukacs, Sarolta Pusok, Laszlo Hollo, Josef Marton, Ioan Vik and Cristian Barta, all of them researchers or professors in different centres from the Romanian space, are his collaborators to the present cultural enterprise.

In the introductory study (Chirilă 2020, 13-27), the coordinator of the volume speaks about the religious imaginary, trying to define it and to speak about the multiple forms that it took during the times. He also underlines the fact that: "The presentation of the imaginary elements of religious identity is not only a way of preserving cultural diversity, but also a form of social practice for learning mutual respect, acceptance of difference." (Chirilă 2020, 14).

After this accent, relevant both for the understanding of the religious imaginary, but also for the entire demarche, speaking about the content of the book, about the work done for its accomplishment and about its

practical value, Ioan Chirilă emphasizes in the same thematic unity the fact that the big number of studies brought together in the volume shows the fact that the Transylvanian space is a symphony of identities (Chirilă 2020, 15).

After the introductory part, Florin Gogâltan offers a rich and well-documented about the archeological landmarks of the religious imaginary from the bronze age (Chirilă 2020, 29-43), presenting proofs of the fact that, in those periods people had a deep religious feeling and emphasizing the most important artefacts of the period. His investigation is continued by the one of Daniela-Luminița Ivanovici (Chirilă 2020, 44-62), which brings the discourse in the autochthon space and speaks about Zamolxis and the rites of initiation and by the one of Cosmin Cosmuța (Chirilă 2020, 63-79), who offers an overview of the Paleo-Christian evidences, presenting the main aspects that show that the Romanian people has been born as a Christian and investigating the literature in a critical way.

Stelian Pașca-Tușa comes later to speak about the religious symbolical representations (Chirilă 2020, 80-95). He defines the Christian religious symbols speaking about their meaning and presents some elements that receive new meanings there, like: the fish (Chirilă 2020, 86-87), the pigeon (Chirilă 2020, 87), the peacock (Chirilă 2020, 88), the rooster (Chirilă 2020, 88-89), the dolphin (Chirilă 2020, 89), the pelican (Chirilă 2020, 89-90), the biblical symbols (Chirilă 2020, 90-93), or the gnostic religious symbols (Chirilă 2020, 93-94). Then, Sorin Marțian (Chirilă 2020, 96-110), professor of Biblical Theology in the Faculty of Greek-Catholic Theology from Cluj-Napoca, invites the reader to deepen the meaning of the cult place, understanding its symbolical meanings. His approach is continued by the one of Mircea Gheorghe Abrudan (Chirilă 2020, 111-127), researcher at „George Barițiu” Institute of Romanian Academy from Cluj, who speaks about the fortified religious buildings from the Romanian space and by the one of Elena Dana Prioteasa, specialized in the history of arts (Chirilă 2020, 128-144), who investigates the elements of imaginary from the painting of the churches from the Orthodox and Catholic space and the one of Ioan Popa-Bota from the Faculty of Orthodox Theology in Cluj (Chirilă 2020, 145-159), who speaks about a topic that has not been enough emphasized until now by the contemporary research, namely the imaginary and from the iconic art on glass from the Romanian space. After investigating the most relevant typologies of this category of icons, he also refers to the role played for the Romanian *paysan*, to whom this category of icon was destined. Using references from important contemporary theologians like Fr. Dumitru Stăniloae, he underlines the multiple value of the icon and refers about each one of the purposes that the icon had and has until nowadays (Chirilă 2020,159), in an actual language and with practical examples.

His approach is followed by the one of professor Marcel-Gheorghe Muntean from the same faculty (Chirilă 2020, 160-175), who speaks about

the crucifixes from the Romanian and Transylvanian lands, putting some very good accents and offering not only an interesting, but also a very useful approach. Later, Elena Onețiu from Cluj (Chirilă 2020, 176-192) speaks about the symbolic of the shaft in the Romanian religious imaginary and Ileana Alexandra Orlich (Chirilă 2020, 193-204), offers a complex overview of the religious imaginary from the Romanian diaspora.

The next research, signed by Teodora-Ilinca Mureșanu (Chirilă 2020, 205-220), comes to offer to the reader an inter-disciplinary perspective. The author presents there the text and the liturgical rite from the Christian space in order to show their relationship with the sphere of the imaginary. Using interesting hymns and texts that are still used nowadays in the Orthodox rite inside services like the Liturgy, the Matins or the Vespers, she comes to speak about the way how they were perceived in the cultural imaginary and to emphasize the particularities that they received in the Romanian space. Later, David Diosi (Chirilă 2020, 230-236), approaches, not without bravery, the topic of the aesthetics of the religious cult, defining the keywords of the scientific enterprise and showing how the beauty can contribute to their shift. His investigation is continued by the one of Olga Lukacs (Chirilă 2020, 237-256), who speaks about the figures represented on the churches with painted ceiling, that she argues to be a part of the heritage from the catacombs period.

In order to offer a complex and ecumenical perspective, Sarolta Pusok comes to speak inside her study entitled *Religion and quotidian life* (Chirilă 2020, 257-272) about specific elements of the Reformation like the pulpit and the organ and their relevance for the religious imaginary. It is followed by Laszlo Hallo (Chirilă 2020, 273-290), who offers a well-documented approach on the way how the religious imaginary influenced Churches like the Catholic, the Orthodox or the ones from the Protestant area, in order to define their social discourse, by the one of Joseph Marton (Chirilă 2020, 291-312), who approaches the Christian education, the art that can be found behind it and the tradition of the Catholic schools in Romanian space and in the one of Ioan Vik (Chirilă 2020, 313-328), who brings into attention the deep relationship existing between religion and folklore. The book ends with Cristian Barta's complex investigation (Chirilă 2020, 329-345), which brings into attention the eschatology, a rich segment of the religious imaginary, offering an interesting overview of the topic and its relevance for different Christian traditions.

Bringing into attention a topic that is still actual and has its complexity, the fourth volume dedicated to the imaginary from the Romanian space is not only a useful tool that could surely help a researcher interested to develop a future work dedicated to the religion and its relationship with the topic, but also a book that can inspire and will surely constitute, for any category of reader, an interesting bibliography, making him or her to meditate more than the previous one to some aspects that has always encountered, but never considered to be

so profound. For this reason, the release of the aforementioned book is an editorial fact that worths being presented and suggested as a potential future lecture, both for theologians, philologists, philosophers, historians or psychologists.

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