

## ROMANIAN SPIRITUALITY IN VATICAN RADIO BROADCASTS (1969-1970)<sup>21</sup>

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**Abstract:** *This study brings into focus some thematic programs where Romanian spirituality is present in the Romanian language program of Vatican Radio during the years 1969-1970. Much of the lectures are supported by Monsignor Octavian Bârlea, priest Flavius Popan or teacher Mircea Popescu. The themes are current, meditative, and full of spiritual meanings.*

**Key words:** *Vatican Radio, spirituality, Romanian.*

Vatican Radio was founded to be in the service of the Pope, the Church and humanity. Therefore, it has a function of religious communication intended for religious Catholic Church, but his service always covered much wider horizon of issues, with particular attention to the issue of peace, religious freedom, human rights, dialogue between religions and the Christian confessions.

Being a bridge of communication with the world, Vatican Radio is a "forum for meeting and exchange of views in which people have to find their own place so they can speak."

The primary purpose of Vatican Radio is to promote the biblical message in social plan in the whole world, to highlight and contextualize shades reported to cases, specific events of communities, countries, regions of the Christian world, constantly emphasizing the authority of the Holy See through the legitimate voice of the Pope.

Romanian spirituality emerges through the programs which were broadcasted on Vatican Radio ever since March, 1947, when it is established the department in Romanian. It was among the top ten linguistic programs which transmitted religious programs, but also programs which promoted Romanian socio cultural subjects.

Over time, the editorial in Romanian imposed the thematic change of the programs, depending in the internal policy of the radio which was based on the general socio-political context. During this time editor was Monsignor Octavian Barlea (referential name of the Romanian diaspora in exile) with Professor Mircea Popescu, priest dr. Flavius Popan, or Menchinelli, Pittini (persons who ensured the transmission).

We selected several broadcasts that can shape the Romanian spiritual message of the speech. Thus, on August 6, 1969, Vatican Radio station in Romanian, transmitted, at 19.30, through parent dr. Flavius Popan

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helped "beyond the desktop" by Menchinelli and Pittini, the program which had as a main theme the substrate of the Romanian Christianity. It is interesting how, in a few words, they try to explain the origin of Christianity in Romania, through one good example. The existence and persistence of the Romanian people on the edge of Europe's most endangered are a mystery and a historical miracle, no less miraculous is the persistence of the Romanian Christianity, despite much adversity, yesterday and today. The foreigner who goes to Romania comes back with the impression that he met a people really Christian, who knows how to resist against the state atheism and its campaign against religion. A lot of explanations can be said to this country. One of these explanations is given by a writer and critic who was not religious at all, namely G. Calinescu.

He begins his history of Romanian literature from its origins to the present with a proud claim of Romanian antiquity civilization. Speaking about the Getae, he praised their religiosity, in other words, the substrate that was built on then, as a fruitful field, the seed of Christianity. The Christianity brought by the Romans in Dacia found a fertile ground and while many people in central Europe became Christians, Dacian imperial steals Christians very soon. The cult of death and eternal life thirst immediately headed to his new religion - writes G. Calinescu.

In the issue of August, 18, it is informed that the Congress of the Romanian Academic Society took place. At the American Catholic University in Washington, the XIII International Congress of the Romanian Academic Society inaugurated its work with the general theme: "Romania and universal culture" The work lasted two days. The next day, the Congress moved to Cleveland and Detroit, where there were strong Romanian communities, who asked for this visit.

Convincing was the inaugural session proceedings of the XIII Congress. After the opening speech of the host, the University rector, spoke Father Nivard Scheel, Bishop John Spence and Romanian Bishop Valerian Trifa. All items had more or less an ecumenical character. The last word had the President of the Romanian Academy Society, Monsignor Octavian Barlea, a prelate from Transylvania and distinguished scholar who insisted deeply on the Christian nature of the Romanian culture.

Two days later (August, 20), Mircea Popescu summarizes the events that have taken place after the completion of the work of the XIII Congress of the Romanian Academic Society. The participants, Romanians and foreigners, visited various important Romanian communities in the United States, who organized receptions in honor of the guests, after a beautiful custom, both Romanian and American. Regarding the Congress, was underlined the significance of a series of communications. An entire session was devoted to religious issues in the Division of theological and philosophical Academic Society. The religious life of Romanians in America was described with impressive and suggestive data by the Father Basil Hategan from Cleveland. While the Bishop Trifa spoke about the Orthodox Church in America and the ecumenical movement noting a number of initiatives within the meaning of ecumenism and Romanian Christian

reunification. The same problem was treated by Father Peter Smith, from Montreal (Canada), who illustrated the Orthodox position regarding the attempts to restore Christian unity; and Monsignor Barlea, who treated the theme of Christian ecumenism predecessors in the history of the Romanian people. Father Adrian Ghinescu examined the relationship of media and religion in Romania before the Second World War.

One of the first conference, that of Professor Nicolae Iliescu, from Boston University, watched with great acumen, European and Christian essence of Romanian culture; and Professor Uscătescu, in Madrid, speaking about the Romanian humanism characters, emphasized especially the Christian character of this humanism. Another communication in this context was that of Mr. Amzar, from Wiesbaden, who spoke of order, as the law allowed to the world by God. Another interesting issue is dated October, 8 1969 (19.30), presented by Mircea Popescu which had the theme Romanian language formation.

In its current formation, the Romanian language has a religious origin. Basic religious terminology is Latin, but the literary language, one that eventually won and defeated, is purely ecclesiastical origin. We know what influence had the printings in Brasov, Coresi deacon's printings, on completion of the Romanian language. Metropolitan Barlaam "Educational book", "Psalter in verse", of Dosoftei, "New Testament" of Metropolitan Simion Stefan (all three prelates of the Church) contributed to strengthening the literary language. Then in 1688, the Bible of Serban Cantacuzino put a final stamp on the only vital Latin languages in Eastern Europe. From Coresi to Bucharest Bible: a continuous process of development and improvement of the Romanian language by the church. On October 22, 1969 (19.30), the show presented by Mons. Octavian Bârlea, and Mircea Popescu had the following theme: A small Romanian poetry anthology. It is a Romanian poetry volume appeared between the two wars in the well known Romanian magazine of Christian and nationalist inspiration "The thinking", under the direction of Nichifor Crainic. The poems have been translated into Italian by prof. Camilucci Marcello in Rome (Italian journalist and writer), dealing especially Panait Cerna's religious poetry (he wrote a monograph in 1927).

Poets translated by Nichifor Crainic - Lucian Blaga, Ion Pillat, Vasile Voiculescu, Vintilă Horia, Stefan Baciuc - remain among the most expressive voices in poetry of the "Eastern Latins" - writes prof. Marcello Camilucci. Become collaborator at the Roman Observatory, ie. the official newspaper of the Holy See, prof. Marcello Camilucci mentions in a brief preface of a Christian inspiration magazine "The thinking" that he has always found a strength point in religiosity and national traditions of the Romanian people.

On 5 November 1969 19.30 Mircea Popescu discuss the topic: *Pârvan and cult of the dead*

The cult of the dead is a noble cult because establishes the link between generations, between parents and children; mankind's relationship continuity; and not only of of a people. Who better understood and sought the meaning of this cult of the dead, in Romanian culture was Vasile Parvan

- mystic scholar who has always hinted the problem of death. The field itself, in which he worked and won, archeology and history, gives an exceptional meditation material.

"Memorials" of Parvan can be defined as a hymn of death. Here's lyrical overture "Worship Emperor Trajan in eighteen centuries of death." It's from 1919. I am Parentalia. The living mention the dead; a duty which mortals have settled it. Where conclusion: To commemorate the founders. And Trajan's founder by excellence, the great king of the origin of the Romanians.

No less inspired pages are *In mortem camilitamoum* which states that one can only die with the body. And beyond, only souls can not be dead. In the issue of December 1, 1969, 19.30, Vatican Radio, presented by Octavian Bârlea was tackled the theme: Culture and sizes.

*French episcopal conference, held in November 1969 at Lourdes, characterized by a wide horizon included the problems dealt with in relation to education, and culture. For French education in public schools had words of esteem 'Public school has the right to respect for Catholics and their pastors "- says the statement bishops.*

Octavian Bârlea makes a brief overview of education in France, to refer then to the culture. As you know, education in France was divided into two groups: state schools and schools of the Catholic Church. *Until this year, the French episcopate, formally insisted on Catholic schools, which are considered as the most appropriate institutions to give a true human formation. Now, for the first time, the episcopate embraced with the same love Catholic school and public school. It's not a renunciation of the Church's mission, but the elimination of the atmosphere of mistrust, or even aversion from the past to public education.* Recent statement favors the formation of a broader spirit in education and thus promoting national unity. The same thing happens, according to O. Bârlea, and in the wider culture. French episcopate say about culture that *true culture is not limited to intellectual activity. It must be thought and action, knowledge and technology, art and reason. Along with scientific and literary forms, there is in the national heritage genuine and cultural expressions developed by the rural world and the world working class.*

So, according to the Episcopal Conference of Lourdes, O. Bârlea identifies three sources of cultural creations: the literary world and the scientific world, the world of peasants and the world of workers - which proves that reducing a culture to the culture of a social class, whatever it is, includes a mutilation of the nation's culture.

In recognition of this plurality of cultures from the French episcopate, it follows, therefore, that none of them includes all the values of other cultures. Between a culture and another there is a continuous exchange of ideas, leading to the enrichment and strengthening of them. The conclusion reached by Monsignor O. Bârlea is that starting from the recognition of the French episcopate of the three sources of culture, should be emphasized the truth that religion must be the soul of each culture. Monsignor O. Bârlea states that the basis of any genuine culture must stand the attitude towards

God, that is religion. A culture without religion is meant either to change or sooner or later to disappear.

In the issue of December 15, 1969, 19.30, Vatican Radio, presented by Mons. Octavian Bârlea was approached the theme: Culture and religion In France the French episcopate, which always distinguished by its value, religious and intellectual, spoke of cultural values from three groups: the intellectuals, the workers and the peasants. In the enumeration was not pointed out the religion. *Is religion a part of the culture?* - O. Bârlea wonders. It's a problem that His Excellency has, in the programs of Radio Vatican. French episcopate not expressly mentioned religion, because religion is supposed to be present everywhere: in the intellectuals class, workers class and in the rural class.

The first minister of culture in Europe was French. It includes sections on art, literature, theater, music, museums, national monuments, public buildings, films, radio and television. The purpose of this ministry, according to the first named head of this ministry, Malraux, would provide the most important works of mankind, in the first row to France and to a larger number of French.

Culture means care, promotion, upgrading of the human spirit, is primarily a spiritual phenomenon of vast proportions. Culture can include philosophy, art, science, politics, manners, but also includes religion. A true culture appears, according to Monsignor always in relation to religion, or religion always developed with a culture, according to Elliot. There can't be culture and cultural development without religion. Culture and religion are two aspects of the same thing. The soul of a culture is the culture of the soul - as Cardinal Faulhaber said - by which is meant primarily religion. *It would be a mistake if they say that religion and religious life would not need culture and cultural life ... Religion gives life forms of a people, favors growth.* But these are also forms of life and culture. Culture embodies religion, gives concrete forms adapted to a nation. O. Bârlea insists on the relations between culture and religion, believing that the highest form of cultural represents Christianity.

For 1970 we have selected a few texts which have attracted attention by messages that highlight how to promote Romanian publishing (through the magazine *Annunciation*) or a Romanian personality becoming in exile, reputation, Eugen Ionescu.

Thus, in the program of January 24, 1970, Flavius Popan makes a review of the numbers 3-4 of the magazine "*Annunciation*", from the year 1969. In the magazine, which has a remarkable longevity, we find articles, studies, reviews, and a rich entry criticism of the Romanian publications in the free world, arrived at the office. Those who published in the magazine are referential names of Catholic Romanian diaspora: Flavius Popan, Traian Crișan, Pamfilu Cârnațiu Peter Herman, Aloisiu Tăutu.

In the same number, two initiatives are absolutely unique. For the first time, a scholar, working in the country at that time, Professor Ștefan Manciuș, collaborates with an article about the commemoration of the great historian and theologian figure of Blaj, Augustin Bunea. The second

unique thing for the "Annunciation" magazine is the collaboration with two Orthodox priests: Father Petre Popescu, a Canadian doctor, who signed the study "Orthodoxy face to face with the problem of restoring Christianity unity", and the parent teacher Adrian Ghinescu, from United States writes about "Media and religion in Romania of another time."

In the issue of October 16, 1970, Flavius Popan makes the review of the third number of the "Annunciation" magazine which appeared for the months from July to September (1970). The article "The love of the enemies" is signed by Vasile Cristea and about the Romanian cultural spirituality, professor Dumitru Marin, from University of Bari, is in charge with the Italian literary criticism observations about Eminescu. Does not agree with Rosa del Conte, a famous Italian professor, who claims in "Eminescu or about the absolute" that thirst for absolute of Eminescu and his philosophical ideas form the most beautiful and essential part of his poetic work. Professor Marin sees the lyrical centre of Eminescu in the spirit of the popular compositions, "from fairy tales to riddles, from the old song to Doina". The magazine also includes an interesting article signed by Ion Chiropol, "Meeting with Vintilă Horia" pausing particularly on the volume that had won the Prix Goncourt "God was born in exile" and "a woman for the Apocalypse".

Mircea Popescu in the program of November 10, 1970 tried to outline a profile of Eugen Ionescu to discover the spiritual side of it. We find that in Italy is known well enough Ionescu's theater.

Recently, a large publishing house published pages from the diary of the "Romanian-French" writer. Also in this issue, Mircea Popescu commented on a statement by Eugene Ionesco: "Our era is an era of disappointment, because it has replaced the interest for Absolute with the political problems, with the political furor; when the man does not care about the problem of the close purposes, when is not interested in something else but the fate of a political state or the economy, when metaphysical problems are no longer a cause of the suffering, the humanity is degraded, it became beastly".

In fact, it is the view of a scholar, a creator of art, who realize that immanentism is sterile, it just does not give valid answers to the great questions which characterizes the man. To exculpate, somehow, Mircea Popescu argues that atheism is a sign of poverty of spirit, soul underperformance. However, Eugen Ionescu says he's not quite as gifted as he may believe, but he did "not broke the bridges with God."

All Ionescu's last opera, especially after the "Rhino" tends toward an Absolute that can give meaning to the actual world. Popescu is optimistic and believes with certainty that "the future work of comedy, if it continues, as it is natural, on the way of deepening feelings will reserve even more beautiful surprises". In the programs transmitted at Vatican Radio, in romanian, during the years 1969-1970, it can be seen that under various forms of the text, of the message sent, Romanian spirituality is present, trying to shape the identity of Romanians in the Diaspora in a virtual space.