

Iuliu-Marius Morariu

The “**CHRISTIAN NATIONALISM**” of  
**Nichifor Crainic**

reflected in his work from the 4th decade of the 20th century



Presa Universitară Clujeană

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# Foreword

I have met our student of the Faculty of Social Studies, Iuliu-Marius Morariu, in 2014, when he attended a Summer school of Political ethics at my former University, organized by the University of Vienna, the Institute of Social Ethics under the leadership of prof. Ingeborg Gabriel. Later, I was attending one of the conferences of the University of Cluj in Beclean, where the Orthodox Faculty of Theology organizes colloquia on the family. We finally met at our Angelicum in 2018.

The topic of his work: The “Christian nationalism” of Nichifor Crainic reflected in his work from the 4<sup>th</sup> decade of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century has been reflecting one of the interests of Morarius’ research for a long time. Since he chose me as the moderator of his work for a graduate degree of Licence, I tried in the first place to explain this concept in more detail. In the meantime, we also worked together in my seminar on Nations, Nationalism and the Common Good, where we tried to explore the positive aspects of

the theory of nations as well as the less positive ones concerning nationalism.

In my opinion, Morariu addressed the topic very well and pointed not only to the historical context of the phenomenon in Romanian history, but also to the broader context of Christian nationalism of the period in the European and Italian contexts.

However, the presented work does not only concern the historical period, but it is also significantly topical, as the problem of Christian nationalism also appears in these difficult days at the beginning of the 21st century. That is why I recommend it for publication to the general scientific public.

Prof. Inocent-Mária Vladimír Szaniszló OP

Angelicum Pontifical University, Roma

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May that God reward all of them and fill them with joy and blessings!



# 1. Introduction

Nationalism was and still is a debated and approached topic in the scientific field. If a few decades ago, most researches convergent on this field were studying the way how it influenced European space, nowadays, there can be found many articles and books dedicated to its forms and influence in spaces like the American (Kieswetter 2012: 43-56), African (Gruchy 1991:228), Indian (Kytheckal 2018:40) or Palestinian (Lybarger 2007:777-813) one or on its pastoral, educational and psychological dimensions (Cox 1997:131-143). One could be therefore tempted to think that in European space there is nothing left in approaching this problem, after the investigations of researchers like Gellner (Gellner1997), Anderson (Anderson 2018), Scrutton (Scrutton 2012) or other authors who investigated the meaning of it trying to underline there its forms. But it not seems to be totally so.

Therefore, through this research we will try to present a different approach on Christian nationalism and its forms. Be-



cause of the fact that one of the areas where there still can be done investigations and offered new information is the one of “case studies” we will try to offer to the reader such an investigation. Our presentation will be dedicated to the way how the Christian-nationalist conception of Romanian theologian, philosopher and politician Nichifor Crainic (1889-1972), is reflected in his publicist work from the 4<sup>th</sup> decade of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Important personality of Romanian political stage from the Second World War, when he was Minister of Propaganda, he also left a rich work consisting in books, studies, articles, poetries, chronicles, meditations and book reviews and memorials (Crainic 34 1991; Crainic 1996). From all this amount of texts, what we consider important for this research are the books and articles published in the aforementioned period. Why? Because we think that by their investigation we can see how his nationalist conception changes during this decade and later how his theoretical conceptions are applied inside his political actions from his ministerial activity. Our previous researches dedicated to some aspects of his life, theological activity or thinking (like: Morariu 2018:54-64; Morariu 2019:93-101; Cășvean and Morariu 2015:56-70; Morariu 2015:29-32; Morariu and Cășvean 2016:281-289) helped us to understand the variety of his thinking and to get in touch with some of his works. But, as it can be seen, there we have most-

ly approached them from a theological point of view or tried to see how his theological ideas have impacted his political activity, while there we propose a new and interesting road towards these texts that will let us to discover the roots of his Christian-nationalism and the way how he understood it.

Of course, following the scientific methods usually used in such a demarche, we will start from the definition of the keywords, presenting the meaning of Christian-nationalism, its forms in European space and inside the confessional spirituality that he is part of, namely the Orthodox one. We will speak there about the way how Kirkegaard sees Christian-nationalism, his critics of the phenomenon, its forms in interwar period in Europe, but also its outcomes during Second World War, emphasizing the influences of different important thinkers, especially from the German space, towards the investigated author. We will underline there the fact that although is a composed term often used in an attempt to correlate spirituality and politics (Valadier 2011:29), Christian nationalism is an artificial construction that in real situation is not possible and a relationship between Christian doctrine and nationalism is not possible because, as it has been mentioned (Zyzkyn 1936:265) any attempt to understand them together brings to wrong interpretations like “philetism.”

Afterwards, we will present the dynamics of nationalism in Romanian space, focusing on the particularities took by it in the 4<sup>th</sup> decade of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, in the 3<sup>rd</sup> chapter of this investigation. In the first one, we will briefly present the landmarks of the life and work of the investigated author and we will speak about the way how Christian-nationalism is seen by him, about the shifting of his conceptions under the influence of different political and cultural factors, and on the way how he influenced important scholars from this geographical space throughout his publications.

Being a case-study, the investigation is a qualitative research. Therefore, we will try to use there the referential sources dedicated either to the topic where he can be circumscribed, namely the Christian nationalism, and to the different works that will help us to define it and to understand its forms in different geographical or cultural spaces, but also its actual dimension. In the same time, we will use historical, philosophical books that will help us to present the landscape of Romanian interwar period and to place the topic investigated in the context and, later, the author and his ideas, between the general aspects of those times. We will use there Romanian and foreigner historiography,<sup>1</sup> dictionaries and encyclopaedias dedicated

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<sup>1</sup> Like, for example, the book of Hitchins, with who's ideas we will argue there. See: Hitchins 1994.

to the period or to the Romanian philosophers, histories of Romanian literature (like: Lovinescu 1937:92-93), but also biographies and articles dedicated to him (for example: Spînu 2013; Hasmațuchi 2011:57-69; Ică jr. 2018:7-22; Pârvulescu 2010) or to some aspects of his research.

Therefore, the research will start with the presentation of the general context of the problem, namely the nationalism with forms like Christian-nationalism from Europe during the interwar period and will continue by presenting the specific Romanian context. Here, during interwar period, there was an increasing tendency for anti-Semitism, instrumented by far-right movement, often motivated using nationalist reasons. In the same time, under king Carol the second and during the period of the “*Legionary national state*”, from 14<sup>th</sup> of September 1940 and 14<sup>th</sup> of February 1941 (Honciuc Beldiman 2005), this nationalism took its highest level. Here, especially in the last period, the rulers tried to use Christian elements as base of their doctrine politics. They have also used writings of important interwar period and the voice of some of the important personalities of the time. Between them, Nichifor Crainic was a refereed author, although he will later try to say that he has never been active part of le-

gionary movement nor joined to their ideas.<sup>2</sup> Therefore, we will try there to see how his ideas from the decade before the Second World War have influenced his ideas and the later evolution of Romanian context or if there was a change in his way of thinking between the period that we investigate it and the one when he became minister of Propaganda during Antonescu dictatorship. As already mentioned, we will use there both his books, articles published in that period, but also the later monographs, books and articles dedicated to him. The contribution of the investigation will consist in the fact that, while the researches coming from the theological Romanian space highlight only his contributions on this area, showing how important were his mystical lectures (Crainic 1993; Crainic 2010) and texts for the development of Romanian research and the historians or the scholars on politics investigates only his far-right deviation and the orientation towards communism in the last part of his life (Morariu 2018:54; Morariu 2019:93), there a researcher with a theological background will not insist only on the theological contributions of the Romanian thinker, but also on his deviation and will also try to see if there can be found in his theological texts aspects of

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<sup>2</sup> Although some of his articles from that period have an anti-Semite content and could be classified as being in concordance with the Legionary doctrine. See, for example: Crainic 1941:209-216.



his Christian nationalism, but also to emphasize the main elements of his conception.

According to the aforementioned information, the main question of the research will be: *how is the Christian-nationalist attitude of Nichifor Crainic reflected in his publications from the 4<sup>th</sup> decade of the 20<sup>th</sup> century?* A secondary one could be considered also: *How this attitude, expressed towards publication, have influenced his later political activity?* and it can be also mentioned a 3<sup>rd</sup> one: *but the Romanian cultural space of those times?* We will try there to give an answer to all of them and to systematise the most important acquisitions connected with the three aspects mentioned there.

From the methodological point of view, we will use the analytic-deductive method. We will read his text with a critical eye, have a critique of his vision where needed, compare his opinions with other authors that might influenced him, being influenced by him or were contemporary with the philosopher (like for example: Emil Cioran, Mircea Eliade, Nae Ionescu and s. o.), and try to provide a landscape of his thinking from the aforementioned period.

One could ask why we limit only to one decade from his life. First of all, because of the space limits of the research that we intend to offer it. Secondly because of the rich work of the investigated author. As we have mentioned before in one of the articles dedicated to his publications (Morariu 2015:29-32), he published only in *Gândirea* (*The taught*) journal, that he directed for almost two decades (between 1923-1944), he published more than one hundred and sixties articles, chronicles, book reviews, religious essays and s. o. (Morariu 2019:93-94). But he also published in other journals of the time, like: *Ramuri* (*Brenches*) (from Craiova), *Telegraful Român* (*Romanian Telegraf*) from Sibiu, *Luceafărul* from the same place, *Semănătorul* from Bucharest, *Cosânzeana* from Orăștie, *Flacăra* (*The Flame*) from Iassy, *Transilvania* from Sibiu, the Jewish journal *Rampa* from Bucharest where, in a moment will defend the Jewish actress Leny Caler who was offended by a student manifestation, *Revista Fundațiilor Regale* (*Royal Foundations Review*) from Bucharest and s. o. There can be found hundreds of texts signed by him. Also, he published during his life 8<sup>th</sup> volumes of poems, 16<sup>th</sup> of essays, 2 anthologies of articles and left to be edited posthumous more than 10 books, were two of them are his memorials. To investigate all his publications and present his Christian-nationalist attitude as it is reflected one needs a huge work and then an enormous space to present the conclusions of

such a research. Therefore, we hope that in the future we will be able to extend our inquiry to all his publications and to present a general landscape of the topic from his publications.

Another so-called limitation of the work come from the fact that, because of the limits of space and time we did not have all enough time to make a deeper comparison with the entire Romanian nationalism from that period and his voices. Maybe in a future research (in one article or, if possible in a later book), we will also try to compare the Christian-nationalist conceptions from the interwar Romania and to see how the authors influenced one another or which were the most used arguments in justifying the need for such a conception.

But, despite all of these, we will try there to offer not only a research that provides to the reader an image of the Romanian nationalism from the 4<sup>th</sup> decade of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, but also to bring into attention an important voice of this conception from that period and to emphasize some aspects of his complex life and activity. We will also try to underline the way how spirituality, philosophy and nationalism interfered in his life and influenced his way of thinking and acting and to show who influenced him and, in turn, whom he influenced.



# **I. Christian nationalism and its landmarks in European space of the interwar period**

## **I. 1. Christian-nationalism – an attempt of definition**

Following the requests of contemporary scientifically research, we will try to start our investigation by defining its keyword. Whereas our keyword is a composed one being formed by “nationalism” and “Christian” and the meaning of its second part is known by almost everybody, we will try there, using dictionaries, encyclopaedias, synthesis and other works to define its first part and eventually to show how political, sociological or philosophical discourses arrived to the use of “Christian-nationalism” in some of the approaches of the exponential authors.



Paradoxically, to define nationalism is in the same time one of the most simple and one of the most difficult activities. It is simple because although there still are some dictionaries and works that should speak about this term and they don't do it (Craig 1998; Melchiorre 2006) or others prefer to speak only about nation, neglecting the derivate forms of it (Lalande 1983:665), the researcher usually finds a rich bibliography dedicated to the topic, which is approached from different points of view (Sugar 1981:67). But it is this very thing the one that makes harder any attempt to define nationalism or to update some aspects of its definition. Taking into account the multitude of definitions, the first challenge that the researcher must face is the one of synthesizing the huge amount of information, the one of comparing the different visions and analysing the elements that makes the researcher to perceive it in different ways trying to offer to the reader a short, clear and updated definition based on the literature read, evolution of his times society and his own beliefs.

Conscious of all these aspects we will try there to emphasize the main aspects of nationalism, its meaning and its forms and to see how, in different moments of the history, Christianity was artificially linked by different thinkers with it for justifying some attitudes from this space.

### **I. 1. 1. Nationalism**

In short, nationalism can be defined as an “ideological current based on the exaltation of national values” (Auroux 1990:1725). If this short definition is seen in the context of nowadays existence of a few hundreds of states, is it easy to understand why, during the history it can be found many forms of nationalisms and each one has its own origins, characteristics or evolution (Mothe 2008:4). Related with the idea of ethnicity (Weber 2007:171; Connor 1994:IX; Sugar 1981:80), it can be for sure defined, as the American researcher Stephen Backhouse underlines, as a “a powerful ideology which harnesses ideals of personal identity, history, race and language, often in order to promote good citizenship or human flourishing, whose values are affiliated to the privileging of a particular cultural-ethnic identity.” (Backhouse 2011:1).

From the historical point of view, the beginnings of nationalism are placed by thinkers as Howsbaum (1990:28) in the eighteenth century (Sillis 1972:63), while other will be more restrictive with the periodisation and accept only the next century as its departure point (Abbagnano 1998:745; Auroux 1990:1725). But despite of its long history, it must be said that nationalism

drawn the attention of the historians only in the First World War when, because of the evolution of the events but also of the Wilson's principle of self-determination (Mediwaka 1924:54), states involved aims were formulated in "nationalist or anti-nationalist terms" (Breuilly 2013:3). This was also, together with the one of the Second World War, the period when the current revealed more visible than ever its destructive potential (Zimmer 2013:414) and when politicians (especially after the last one) started seriously to think about its role and relevance. It must be also mentioned that this century will also be the one of the fall of all nationalisms, as Hobsbawm notes (1995; Gianluca, Colina 2015:390).

From the intrinsic point of view, as John Breuilly underlines, nationalism is a political ideology that claims the existence of a unique nation which "has a special value and therefore right to existence and recognition, and that to secure this right the nation must possess autonomy, often understood as a sovereign nation state." (Breuilly 2013:1-2). Starting from this point of view we can seek for the roots of this socio-political doctrine in the misinterpretation of messianism of Old Testament and to show why religion was such an important tool for its definition. Speaking about a "chosen people" means to consider it as superior to the other nationalities. And this shows on one side that nation-

alism is linked with a specific understanding of the notion of “people” and its meaning (Abbagnano 1998:745), but also that is an exclusivist way of thinking and generates hate between nations (Grosby 2005:5). In other words, nationalism bases itself on the idea of members and no members (Zimmer 2013:415), understood in the light of the exaltation of national values (Auroux 1990:1725).

Of course, when one speaks about a current of thinking, he must distinguish between its theoreticians and the historical evolution of it (Bertrand, Freyermuth 2019:13). From this point of view, according to some authors, because of their contribution to the defining of nationalism, thinkers like Hegel and Mazzini can be placed also between the founders of nationalism (Abbagnano 1998:746), while the abbot Sieyès is considered one of the first who tries to give a Christian justification to the nationalism (Sieyès 1963). Although we do not subscribe to the first idea because we consider it is too early to speak about Hegel like about a nationalist in a context where the idea of nation in its modern understanding was still defining in the German space and the reality was different to the French one, we cannot neglect the second one that we will also analyse in the next chapter.

From the social point of view, it must be surely mentioned that the doctrine is a form of “social idealism” (O’Rourke 1998:9), which explains why its most famous children is the “national-socialism” (Ward 1967:12). It is linked with the idea of social mobilisation (Sylvain 1990:1726) understood as a form of fighting in order to obtain the unrealistic vision of the mind projected in the own mind (Sillis 1972:63).<sup>3</sup> Because of this fact, it manifested in many situations as “an appropriate protest against a universalising uniformity, dominance by the other, but its consequence is too often precisely the imposition of uniformity, a deep intolerance of all particularities except one’s own” (Howsbaum 1990:33-34), had roots in revolutionary thinking (Sylvain 1990:1725), fact that makes researchers to put French Revolution between the first moments of manifestation of nationalism (Sylvain 1991:1725) and later, in the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century and moreover on the first part of the 20<sup>th</sup> one, it will be linked with the claim of young states for the recognition of their independence (Tapie 1958:19).

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<sup>3</sup> Because as Grosby underlines: “Nationalism knows no compromise; it seeks to sweep aside the many complications that always are part of life as it actually is. As a systematic, uncompromising, and unrealistic view of the world, the ideology of nationalism is relatively recent, appearing for example, in the German philosopher Johann Gottlieb Fichte’s *Addresses to the German Nation* (1808) and later in the writing of such authors as the German historian Heinrich von Treitschke (1834-96) and the French journalist Charles Maurras (1868-1952).” (Grosby 2005:18).

As ideological current with political finality and echoes in public life, nationalism was often used in order to justify the requests of the rulers and to bring unquestioned obeisance from the people. This is the reason why it was always related with a dictatorship. Underlining this aspect, but also its complexity and the contradictions that can be found inside of it, a contemporary researcher shows that:

“Nationalism is the ideology that justifies the beliefs and actions of any given nation. These actions can be military, economic, cultural and so on, and can change over time as the aims of a given nation change in accordance with successes, failures, numerous innovations and the shifting relations of the states. Nationalism will alter its teachings accordingly, but will continue to demand the continuing primary loyalty of the nation whose wishes it claims to express.” (Sugar 1999: XI).

In the history of nationalism, a huge relevance has, as it has been already noticed, the idea of “people” (Backhouse 2011:4). But in order to justify the role of people in governing its own country, the theoreticians of nationalisms and the exponential leaders that speak from tribunes, prefer to understand only from its ethnical point of view (Weber 2007:171; Sugar 1981:80).

This is also a reductive vision of people, because they are many nations that can be, from the political and social point of view called people, which are formed by the native ethnics but also by people that receive the citizenship of a certain nation, but they have a foreign nationality. And this brings discrimination and in certain situations, the persecution of the minority from one national territory, seen as an enemy. During the Second World War this was very visible in the attitude of states ruled by nationalist parties like Germany, in their relationship with Jews. In Romanian space, Nichifor Crainic whose thinking we want to investigate there published, at the end of the 3<sup>rd</sup> decade of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, a book entitled *Orthodoxy and Etnocracy* (Crainic 1930) where he puts in the centre of Romanian evolution the ethnical aspect, influenced by far-right thinkers from German space, but also by some authors from the autochthonous one. There will be only one author in a list that, in Eastern and Central Europe will write about this topics and make ethnical aspect as the basis of his nationalist thinking, together with elements like history and religion.

Noticing all these aspects, we can surely say that nationalism is like a big puzzle game where aspects like the aforementioned ones, but also language, symbols are very important and

in the same time, it is linked with economic aspects and material development (McCrone 1998:6). Of course, this partially explains its great spread not only inside European space, where in the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century Bismark will use it in order to consolidate his power and authority and later, in the 20<sup>th</sup> centuries will be behind some dictatorships, but also in American space, where Mexican revolution and other events are based on it. But still, they are also other elements that contributed to this. In an attempt to synthesize them, a contemporary researcher shows that:

“The spread of nationalism on a global scale is a result of Europeanization and modernization of non-Western and premodern societies. As a phenomenon of modern European history, the rise of nationalism is closely linked with the origins of popular sovereignty, the theory of government by the active “consent of the governed,” the growth of secularism; the lessening of the older religious, tribal, clannish, or feudal loyalties, and the spread of urbanisation and industrialisation and improved communications.” (Sillis 1972:64).

Bringing again into attention old mental constructions that it assigns new interpretation, nationalism will succeed to



express itself in many ideologies that will dominate (Howsbaum 1995:34) for a longer or a shorter period the context from a certain space.<sup>4</sup> It will therefore become the content of different forms of government and dictatorship. It will be a real form of metamorphosis from the revolutionary movement used to obtain independence and recognition of new states to the tool that helps people like Hitler to govern a people and to instigate it to hate the ones who are not belonging to it. Its metamorphoses can be also seen in its historically evolution where it starts as an elite movement in its first century of history, continues like a “bourgeois” one in the age when the middle class was the one who became powerful and ended as a movement of masses (Sillis 1972:65).

Taking a look on the nationalism and its forms in the Islamic world, Fr. Joseph Ellul will underline in one of his reflections the fact that:

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<sup>4</sup> Because as David Sillis underlines: “It expresses itself in the most varied and opposite ideologies – in democracy, fascism and communism – as in the search for an “ideology,” be it African personality or Arab unity. The nineteenth century in Europe has been rightly called the age of nationalism; the twentieth century, in which history has shifted from a European to a global basis, may become known as the age of pan-nationalism.” (Sillis 1972:64).

“Nationalist movements in the Muslim world developed the concept of a national identity in the wake of the struggle for independence that they spearheaded in their native countries. What needs to be kept in mind is that nationalism is also conditioned by the boundaries and frontiers that were put in place by the colonial powers as they carved up continents and regions in order to suit their military, political and commercial ambitions. As with the case of Europe, nationhood became a base for statehood.” (Ellul 2019:3).

Taking a look in the Christian European space that we will investigate there, we can only see the common basis and the presence of the main principles there. In Romanian space, where Crainic was for a while member of the Legionary Movement and Minister of Propaganda during the Second World War, this aspect is clearly illustrated, although there is a different context and some aspects of the social reality are not quite exactly the same like in Fr. Ellul’s approach.

Noticing all the aforementioned aspects, we can surely conclude by saying that nationalism is a complex phenomenon that influenced the evolution of society in certain periods of time. An analysis of it must be surely made as a comparative one between the diverse forms that it took during the history (Sillis

1972:63). We can also say that it is linked both with the idea of nation, seen from its ethnical point of view, with political, social and economic life and it is an exclusivist perception that has in as central a “messianic” idea of “the chosen people” that is superior to others and encourages the old mediaeval heroic ideas, seeing the others like enemies and inferior and, in some contexts of the history, prosecuting them. In order to justify this ideology, the theoreticians and leaders of different nationalist currents use historical, linguistic, cultural, religious and social arguments, trying to create the feeling of belonging to an homogeneous community to the people and asking them unconditioned obedience.

### **I. 1. 2. “Christian nationalism”**

After seeing the main elements that define nationalism as political doctrine with relevance for social, economic and religious space, we will try there to see how it arrived to be related by certain authors and thinkers with the idea of religion and moreover, with the one of Christianity.

If one takes today a look on the internet and will search on one engine like google the words: “Christian nationalism,” will

find in 0.48 seconds 21.400.000<sup>5</sup> results. The term which seems to be in trend today has its page of wikipedia<sup>6</sup> and there is even a site dedicated to him by an American organization.<sup>7</sup> Moreover, he will find even important thinkers like Kirkegaard (Backhouse 2011:1-4) speaking about this topic and developing a very original critique to its use and meanings.

Branch of the big tree that “nationalism” can be considered, like ethno-nationalism which puts the accent on the ethnical component (Connor 1994:XI; Crainic 1930; Weber 2007:171) or social nationalism (Smal-Stocki1960:15), “Christian nationalism”, formed by the term that we have presented in the first part of our chapter and “Christian” which was and is an important religious way of thinking and living, expressed through different confessional forms or diverse approaches of spirituality, it was until few years ago linked both with spaces like Europe, Asia, Africa or United States and it seems to continue to increase in the latest destination. Like the other term, its first use is also

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<sup>5</sup> <https://www.google.com/search?q=christian+nationalism&oq=christian+nationalism&aqs=chrome..69i57j69i60l3j0l2.2936j0j7&sourceid=chrome&ie=UTF-8>, accessed 12. 02. 2019.

<sup>6</sup> [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Christian\\_nationalism](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Christian_nationalism), accessed 12. 02. 2019.

<sup>7</sup> <https://www.christiannationalism.com>, accessed 12. 02. 2019.

linked with French Revolution, but in a different way. As Charles Bloomberg shows:

“The term “Christian-National” comes from the nineteenth-century-counter-revolutionary, pro-authoritarian, anti-modernist movements which sought to restore the status quo that prevailed before 1789, which is ordered, hierarchical, and it has a monarchist structure.” (Bloomberg 1989:1).

Of course, in Europe where the Christian roots are not anymore considered as a part of the European Union legacy (Valadier 2011:73) and the role of religion is little by little replaced by consume and marketing, this type of reaction can appear. Therefore, the relationship between religion, understood as spirituality, nation and ethnicity, is very important both for Church and for the understanding of political space, as a contemporary researcher notes:

“Nation, ethnicity, nationalism and religion are four distinct and determinative elements within European and world history. Not one of them can be safely marginalised by either the historian or the politician concerned to understand the shaping of modern history.” (Hastings 1997:1).

Still, the bad understanding of each ones’ role and contribution can generate problems or fake ideologies. One of them can be considered the one that we investigate there, which can make even scholars like Erich Hobsbawm to start from the idea that “nationalism owes much to religion to Christianity in particular.” (Hobsbawm 1990:205) and find sociological backgrounds of it. Part of an artificial construction, “Christian nationalism” links the two concepts and uses the first one to justify the second in political sphere.

It is not only the Christian space the one that knows the effects of relationship between religious and nationalism. Moreover, nowadays in Islamic states (Hobsbawm 1990:202),<sup>8</sup> where the separation between religion and state has not been done yet or is not so visible as in the Christian area, it is even more visible. In spaces of bordure between religions (Lybarger 2007:779) this problematic relationship is even more visible and can constitute the reason for internal conflicts (see the case of Palestine: Lybarger 2007: 777-813).

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<sup>8</sup> Grosby shows also that the religious nationalism is possible also in other spaces: “Some members of that nation have a narrow, intolerant view of their country by insisting that it should have only one religion, Hinduism; while others think that there should be freedom of religion such that Muslims, Sikhs and Christians are rightly members of the nation.” (Grosby 2005:5).

But how can be explained this predilection of nationalism to the religious sphere? Maybe even in the context of the huge diversity of nationalisms it should be taken into account the fact that, as a contemporary researcher underlines: “alongside the extraordinary destructiveness of so much nationalism, it nevertheless offers a vital and quasi-religious integrating force which theologians cannot afford to ignore.” (Chapman 1995:14). Due to this aspect, there were during the history even some attempts to link it with the inter-culturality (Stanislaus, Ueffing 2018:8).

In fact, if one takes a look on the work of the thinkers that represent nationalist thought in the interwar period (for example Crainic that we will later investigate), or on the way how “Christian nationalism” was used in order to justify nationalist actions in spaces like the Serbian one (Howsbaum 1990: 185; 124-147), he will see that the misinterpretation of Christian aspects and transplantation of ideas like the “messianic” one, centred on the idea of “chosen people” and release, which gives to it the revolutionary content are the bases of the conception. In the same time, in order to create the consciousness of belonging, of being an homogenous class (in a similar way how Marx saw the proletariat as a class (Pezzimenti 2013:15), the theoreticians and the representatives of nationalism use elements like language, race, history, territory, literature and re-

ligion (Backhouse 2011:1; Zyzyn 1936:266). Among them, the most important is for sure the last one, because of its capacity to unite people and make share all the other values as their own. Therefore, transforming the necessary relationship between the belonging to a religion and the one to a nation from an inclusive in an exclusive one and replacing the virtue of love and the feeling of acceptance and inclusion that should guide it with the ones of hate and exclusion,<sup>9</sup> nationalism arrives to Christian nationalism.

If we take a look on the history of the term, we will see that, like in case of “nationalism,” its meaning and the attitude towards it changes from the end of the First World War, when it was used with a positive sense, and seen as related with Woodrow Wilson principles of self-determination of peoples to the Nazism, when it has been used in order to justify an ideology based on extermination and racial hate and up to communism or nowadays.

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<sup>9</sup> Because, as researchers underline, religion must be a factor of love that crosses over the borders of a nation and embrace all people making them part of a common house, the kingdom of house. Speaking about this topic in 1924, a researcher was underlining the “de-nationalizing force of religion: “A religion, in other words, that is a de-nationalizing force. Some of our churches give the impression of a chilly arctic landscape planted in a gorgeous tropical land. Ceylon is a tropical land and colours bright and gay meet us at every turn. Our very skins are coloured. Look at the clothes the people wear and enter one of the temples and notice the colour there. Yet Christianity is offered bereft of all its colour and beauty.” (Mediwaka 1924:56).



In the case of “Christian nationalism,” it must be said that in the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century and up to the end of interwar period, it will be often used in East European space together with topics like alcoholism in order to justify anti-Semite attitude based on the fact that the Jews had in many places the monopoly on alcohol stores (Rotar 2008:259-265). Later it will be blamed by communism and after 1990, will be considered as a negative topic and linked with some dark episodes from World history.

In recent times, crises or exile generated the reinforcement of Christian nationalism in some spaces (Williams 2008-2010:45-68) or in situations that request for resistance in front of persecution or inclusion (Stanley 2008-2010:149). In a space like the American one (Whitehead, Perry, Baker 2018:3), which in the last time spoke more than before about its Christian roots<sup>10</sup> it can be also seen in the latest times an increase of nationalism which receives Christian motivations (Kieswetter 2012:43-56).

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<sup>10</sup> “Broadly speaking, nationalism refers to persons’ loyalty and devotion to a larger group—country and state—that shares a common identity, origin, history, and language. Nationalism is also an ideology that holds that the nation is the basic element of social life, taking precedence over other forms of organization and other forms of loyalty. Goldberg (2006) argued that Christian nationalism refers to those who identify themselves as Christian-Americans, and this identification primarily means loyalty and devotion to the United States as a Christian nation.”(Mothe 2008:2).

But there, its philosophy seems to be far from the one of previous “ku klux klan” or other similar forms that can be found in the past (Cox 1997:133). It looks even that the American space contributes to the change of the perception and meaning of this topic, so debated until today.

Inside the discussions related with the investigated topic it is also important to mention the fact that there is a form of Christian nationalism that is related with the elites and their understanding of nation and society (Yang 2008). In Romanian space this can be seen in the fact that thinkers like Nae Ionescu or Nichifor Crainic become, during the interwar period, representative personalities of it, together with the members of Legionary movement and other far-right oriented thinkers. In the German space, Schmitt (1985; Stoeckl, Ingeborg, Papanikolau 2017:12) can be also considered exponential for this situation. It is difficult to say, as a Chinese researcher affirms about his context, that it can be considered a spiritual nationalism (Cao 2012:27-47), mostly due to the practical actions and attitudes taken in this space. Still, some examples can be mentioned as illustrations of the dynamics of this topic that circumscribes, especially in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the relationship between politics and theology (Ricci 2012:5).

Linked with topics like colonisation, war, conflict and exclusion, “Christian nationalism” is there, as we have also tried to underline there, a complex topic. An exhaustive definition is a very difficult fact and, due to the limits of this approach we will not try to do it there. Still it is important to note that it is an artificial construction, because of the total contradiction between “nationalism” and “Christianity” even the etymological area, but it was in many situations a way of understanding a nation, a form of government or dictatorship. Used to justify the pretensions of a nation in matters of revolution, development, expansion or justify a political program, Christian nationalism is based on the misinterpretation of Bible and Christian principles and it can be for sure considered an attempt to create a “secular religion” by bringing together spirituality and politics (Valadier 2011:29). In the centre of this conception there is always a form of messianic thinking which, in the eyes of its theoreticians or leaders, has the role to justify the pretensions of freedom and victory in front of the others, as being part of a promise similar with the one of the chosen people. While at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the idea was, as we mentioned, linked either with the national movements that culminated with the foundation of new modern national states in Europe, or with anti-Semite attitude and it was seen rather as a positive aspect than a negative one, after the Second World War when it was associated

with actions of dictatorships like Nazism or Fascism (or Legionary movement in Romanian space), it received a very negative connotation. Spaces like the exile or populated with people from different religious belonging encourage this type of behaviour, which proves the fact that it is only a small part of the bigger notion of “religious nationalism.”

This could be, in short, defined Christian nationalism, which can be found until today in space like the American one and was very important especially for the interwar period in the European space.

## **I. 2. Christian nationalism and its landmarks in European space of the interwar period**

As we have already seen, speaking about Christian nationalism seems to be even today a complicated task. There are many voices that disagree with a correlation between the two terms and, if one takes a look at the doctrinaire aspects of the different Christian

traditions, will for surely see that there is an ontological contradiction between the universalistic message of the first one and the exclusivist aspects of the second one.

Taking a look on the official documents of different Christian churches, it will surely reveal to the reader these aspects. For example, the document that contains the fundamentals of the social thinking of Russian Orthodox Church from 2000 when speaking about the relationships among state and nation although underlines the universalistic dimension of Christian faith and the relevance of a nation for the faithful, insists on the fact that:

“The Orthodox ethics refuses any distinction among “good” and “bad” peoples and any form of humiliation regarding a nation from the ethnical or civil point of view. Furthermore, all theories that replace the nation to God or reduce faith to a constitutive element of national identity are also contrary to orthodox teaching (Russian Orthodox Church 2011:209).

The message is clear and proves once again the contradiction existing between the Christian message and nationalisms. Of course, in the real life, there can be seen during the 20<sup>th</sup> century different attempts to replace the nation to God or to use the religion as a tool in order to obtain the fidelity of the people in the

Orthodox space too.

This contradiction explains why, in spaces like the Catholic one, although the national rights are well defined (Pontificio Consiglio della Giustizia e Della Pace 2004:84-85) and the nation and national identity are seen as important pillars for the human society, nationalism is seen as a danger for the solidarity among peoples in encyclical letters like *Populum Progressio* (62) and it is condemned by the Popes. Therefore, we will use the term Christian-nationalism in our approach, like we used before, not because we think that it represents a correct definition of a term or that it is possible such an association in normal conditions (as we have already mentioned it is a contradiction between the two terms and only a deficient understanding of the Christian message or its use with political and propagandistic purposes brought us to this notion), but because it is a generically one and it became already used in the scientific field by different researchers that have tried to investigate different forms of nationalism based on its defining elements (Alix 1962:2-3).

Before trying to offer to the reader some information about the way how nationalism influenced the European history during the time, we consider also important to take into con-

sideration an aspect highlighted by a contemporary researcher (Troiani 2019:15-18), that has recently investigated the nationalisms there. He underlines in his article the fact that when speaking about nationalism in this context, it is important to take into account the recurrent use of two important elements, namely the people and the nation:

“Another typical error of the governing nationalism is the continuous evocation, in order to justify its own behaviours, of two abstractions: the people and the nation. The people is not an unitary given, but is various, composed: is formed by people and diverse classes fighting among them, people of different religion and diverse ideologies, in many cases with different origins.” (Troiani 2016:16).

By approaching these two elements, it is generated a specific discourse, defined by elements like closeness, fight and enemy and in the same time, as he will underline too, it makes the leader to confuse fundamental elements like the people and constitution:

“When the nationalist that rules the government affirms to answer for his acts in front of the people, he forgets that he had swerved fidelity not to the abstract people, but to the constitution, that it

is independent of the opinion polls of the electorate, stable in its content and in its authentic interpretation given by the Supreme Court, judges of the law.” (Troiani 2019:16).

In a context like the European one, where the fall of the multinational empires at the end of the First World War will provide the possibility for different nations to get together, based on the principle of self-determination of nations stated by Woodrow Wilson, and having behind a long history of national revolutions (like the events from 1848 for example), notions like people and nation are very important and play a huge role in the understanding of the future evolution of nationalism there.

Together with them aspects like violence or domination<sup>11</sup> are also relevant in the understanding, on one side, of the elements that determined some nationalist attitudes and, on the other side, in the understanding of the attitude of some nationalist leaders from the space that we try to present there. Here, there is not so much the fall of multinational empires like the Austro-Hungarian one which was, from 1867 a dualist one and in

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<sup>11</sup> Because, as a researcher underlines, those are important words for the topic and they can be found in the public discourse of people like Mussolini: “Mussolini also says that: “The fight is the origin of all things” and that “the fascist state is a wish for violence and domination.” (Alix 1962:75).



spaces dominated by Hungarians created ethnical conflicts with neighbours like Croatians or Romanians (Alix 1962:102-104), generated the birth of nationalism and nationalist young states, but rather the fact that during several decades the national feeling increased and was not well managed by the old rulers. Of course, there are different forms of nationalisms: some correlated with the way how a people understood itself, other with the way how the other has been perceived as an enemy, other with economic reasons. Characterising the diverse forms of nationalism in different areas of Europe, Christine Alix will summarize in an old, but well-written and, under certain aspects, still actual research the main aspects of nationalisms from pre and interwar period:

“Irish nationalism, for example, could receive a religious aspect in face of a protestant England. In the same time, the Czech nationalism was one with ethnical dimension, because the Czech language was an element that differentiated the Czechs by the Austrians of German language.” (Alix 1962:51).

Of course, there must not be forgotten the exceptions like the Serbian situation (Milutinović 2010:1-44) with its particular elements, that is still an outcome of the attitude of Austro-Hungarian multinational Empire on one side, and on the other on the

attitude of the weakened Ottoman one. For sure, an important element that must be taken into consideration among the reasons that contributed to the development of nationalism in the period that we investigate, is the desire of the small states, most of them reborn, but having a long history and the memory of a Medieval Empire (like the Serbian, the Polish or the Hungarian one, in the Eastern Europe) not to be anymore under the control of the big and influential powers that were still trying to maintain a kind of *status quo* at the level of influence on the internal policy of them. Therefore, as a Serbian researcher underlined:

“Small peoples are obliged to look over their shoulders to see what “Europe” is thinking, while they are busy furthering their own interests under their own steam, because the success of their endeavours depends on “Europe’s” opinion. And the rules of that game are not of their own making. If they happen to break a moral rule or two in the process, say if they take part in corrupting public opinion in the West, it can give rise to a bitter and ironic comment, but cannot become an occasion for reconsidering the rules.” (Milutinović 2010:25).

Their attitude to resist against them is doubled by the attitude of the former Empires or the big states to keep their mar-

kets, their influence and the capacity to determinate the small states to act according to their wish, for economical, ideological or political reasons. In front of attitudes like pangermanism or other like that, the small states try to transform nationhood in statehood (Ellul 2019:3), they often transform the state in an idol, coming to “statolatry”<sup>12</sup> (Alix 1962:282) forgetting about aspects like Hegel’s “objective spirit” which is an important aspect too in the understanding of the national identity (Szaniszlo 2019:6; Sillis 1972:65; Abbagnano 1998:746).

These would be therefore some aspects that should be taken into consideration when speaking about the European nationalism from the interwar period. Its forms or the relationships that it develops with aspects like religiosity or people may be different. Therefore, as a contemporary researcher shows:

“While the statolatry instituted by the fascism offered an important place to the religion, making Catholicism the religion of Italian state, the national-socialism, inseparable of all racist philosophies, seems to not leave any hope of coexistence.” (Alix 1962:282).

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<sup>12</sup> “The national interest, finally, and it is one of the most dangerous situations, may become a supreme end to which everything must be subordinated. This conception ... The nation become therefore an idol.” (Alix 1962:72).

In states like the Serbian one, the contribution of the Orthodox Church in the recognition of the modern state and its formation was a notable one. Monks like the future bishop Nicolas Velimirovic<sup>13</sup> will be sent in spaces like the English or American one to plead the Serbian cause (Banac 2014:118-122; Radmila 2010; Chapman 2015:385-401) and in the same time to sustain a pacifist discourse (Velimirovitch 2010; Velimirovic 2010; Velimirovic 2008). For this reason, the respect for this institution will increase during the interwar period. Moreover, it must not be forgotten that the Serbian people will keep the nostalgia of the Medieval Empire when, before Kosovopolie battle, their country will not only be an Empire, but also a Patriarchate. Therefore, as Maria Falina will show in an article dedicated to the Serbian nationalism:

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<sup>13</sup> Nicolas Velimirovic (1881-1956) was a Serbian bishop that graduated Saint Sava Seminary from Belgrade, defended his PhD in Bern (1908) with a thesis dedicated to Berkeley philosophy and studied also in Geneva and Oxford. In 1915 he has been sent by the Serbian Orthodox Church in England and United States of America, where he spoke about Serbian Unity and peace. Coming back to Serbia, he was ordained in 1919 bishop of Jjicea. In 1941, he was arrested by the Nazi soldiers and then imprisoned in Liubostina monastery and later in Voilovița Monastery, where he will stay until in 1944. From there, he will be sent in Dachau lager for a few months. In 1946 he will emigrate in United States of America, where he will teach in different Orthodox Theological Schools until his death from 18<sup>th</sup> of March 1956. During his life, he published several books and articles on theology. For more information about his life and activity, see also: von Arx 2006:307-339; Chirol 1914; Cvetkovski 1996:413-419; Bojovic 2014:205-224.

“The Serbian Orthodox Church established a tradition of connecting church and state in a ‘positive’ way: it claimed to occupy a central role in the Serbian national movement and in national life generally. The crucial points in the church’s narrative were the preservation of national culture, identity and history by the clergy, in addition to the indispensability of Orthodoxy for the survival of the nation. The inception and development of this narrative depended, to a large extent, on the social and political status of the Serbian Orthodox Church. The church successfully used all available means to secure its position; thus, the more insecure the position, the more radical the rhetoric.” (Falina 2007:250).

In this context, it is understandable why there the discourses that aimed to wake up the national feeling in the aforementioned country often referred to the Church and used it as a tool to attract the attention or to justify some of their arguments. Leaders like Dimitrije Ljotic and social movements like *Zbor* will use sometimes religious aspects in their discourse or will try to put themselves in continuity with the ideas of leaders like Nicolas Velimirovic. In fact, some of his ideas and controversial formulations will even give, according to the researchers, the base of such attitudes. For example, the aforementioned Serbian researcher underlines the fact that:

“Velimirovic’s attitude towards fascism, totalitarianism and communism also deserves attention. On the one hand, he explicitly disliked all of them, but on the other hand, he also rejected democracy as an appropriate political system. In the mid-1930s, he showed some admiration for the regime established in Germany. As he wrote in a programmatic article from, published in 1935 in *Nacionalizam Svetog Save* [The Nationalism of St Sava]: ‘One must render homage to the present German leader, who ... realised that nationalism without religion is an anomaly, a cold and insecure mechanism.’ (Falina 2007:253).

Taking a look on the work and its content, but also on his biography (Bojovic 2014: 218) could be interesting and useful in understanding the roots of his words. It is difficult to understand how a man who, from 1941 until 1944 was imprisoned by the Nazi regime in different monasteries and later in Dachau lager because he criticised the German “civilization” and way of acting, can express himself in 1935 in such a positive way regarding this regime. In fact, it must be noticed that at that time, there were many other personalities that seemed favourable to Hitler’s policy and attitude regarding economic, social or cultural problems. In that moment, the Anti-Semite politics were not yet put into action, the war was not yet started and, in an European context

where different forms of nationalism were fighting against Christianity, the regime seemed to be quite opened to religion and capable to dialogue with it. It was most probably in this context when Velimirovic expressed his appreciation about this topic. Of course, after realizing the real content of Nazi regime, its nationalist pretentions and the defining aspects of its way of acting, he will protest and will suffer because of his attitude against the ones who occupied his country and started to execute his people. Still, even after this moment, some of his words will be used by political leaders or simply politicians that will try to transform him in a voice of Christian nationalism in Serbian space. Of course, although he was a man with a deeply patriotic feeling, but not a promoter of Christian-nationalism, although some of his ideas were used as tools for developing discourses in this field.<sup>14</sup>

Another term that is linked with Christian-nationalism and that can be found in different countries of Europe during the interwar period is the so called “clerically fascism.” Together with some of Serbian priests, there are also considered to be part of it some of the Lutheran pastors from Sweden (Berggren 2007:303-314), but also other clergyman from spaces like the Western

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<sup>14</sup> Maria Falina insist on the fact that although nationalists like Ljotic tried to use him as a fundement for their doctrine, at the end they will even fill him as an enemy:

Ukraine (Shekhovtsov 2007:271-285). Firstly used by Luigi Sturzo (Scoppola 1971:88), the controversial, complex and difficult to define even today (Falina 2007:249; Shekhovtsov 2007:271), it seems to be linked with the help given by some of the clergyman to different nationalist leaders of parties in order to promote their ideas. About its meaning, its role and the context where it developed and influenced the social life, a contemporary Ukrainian researcher offers more information, underlining the fact that:

"The emergence of modern clericalism understood as a 'socio-political current aiming at the establishment of the primacy of religion and church in social life', seen by clericals themselves as the sole 'condition of humankind's salvation', was the clergy's response to the policy of separation of church and state. Yet at the

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"Coming back to interwar Serbia and the problem of Dimitrije Ljotic and his movement, I would suggest that it was the already-existing tradition of Serbian nationalism to emphasise the role of Orthodoxy in the framing of national identity that prevented Zbor from gaining mass support in the country. There were better 'institutionalised' alternatives sharing a number of ideas with Ljotic's thinking, but these were not purely fascist. Interestingly enough, an ideology (or, at least, set of ideas) which seems to be Zbor's main 'rival' was elaborated by Archbishop Nikolaj Velimirovic, whose teachings inspired, among many others, Ljotic himself. Velimirovic's views themselves, despite the fact that they had inspired Ljotic and his followers - in addition to their striking resemblance to fascism at some points - cannot be labelled as such, for they belong to a different tradition linking religion and nationalism." (Falina 2007:249).



beginning of the twentieth century it was clear that secularising and modernising - and later democratising - processes in Europe led to 'the privatisation of religious beliefs' and left institutional churches little chance to re-establish themselves as a state's principal institution. Hence, clericalism was doomed by the forces of modernity to be private on the political front, in turn supporting more dynamic political units. Yet in the case of 'clerical fascism', this more dynamic political unit was not necessarily fascism, at least as far as the term is understood by Roger Griffin (Griffin 1993:38-39) to be a generic ideology centring upon 'revolutionary palingenetic ultra-nationalism'. Instead, the fascist style of politics and the fascistisation of the political milieu across interwar Europe was that abundant soil in which the seeds of nationalist clericalism sprouted and, in a few cases, turned into 'clerical fascism.'" (Shekhovtsov 2007:271).

If this was the situation in Eastern Europe and in the Nordic countries, in states like Italy Mussolini tried to use religion as a tool that could help him to consolidate his authority and to increase his popularity among the people. Therefore, he will make the Catholicism the religion of Italian state (Alix 1962:282) and to suggest that the Catholic Church agrees with his politics, contributing in this way to an attitude that can be subsumed to the

Christian nationalism. In other spaces, like the French one, the nationalism will have a legal character and will be embodied by a political party like l’Action Francaise (Alix 1962:75). This will also later determinate its condemnation by the Church. In German space, where the Protestant communities were quite important as number of faithful, there will be brought into debate the possible unification under a German national Church by movements like “German Christians.” The fact will raise also, as the researchers show, the interest of Hitler:

“The Nazi seizure of power saw the ‘German Christians’ and their ambitions for a unified and politicized German national Church under their leadership, riding on the crest of a wave, but this euphoria was short-lived, especially following the appointment of Harms Kerri to the position of Minister for Church Affairs in 1935. Hitler and the NSDAP leadership soon lost interest in the project, mainly due to the theological struggle which had started within the evangelical church and which had led to the formation of the Confessing Church, though many ‘German Christians’ survived even after 1945.” (Berggren 2007:308).

In short, this would be the situation of different forms of nationalisms and Christian-nationalisms in interwar Europe. The

fact that there are many forms and motivations of nationalisms there is important. On one side, it shows the fear of the young nations to become satellites of the strong and influential ones and to dilute their national specific. In Eastern-Europe area, Polish, Serbian, Ukrainian or Romanian nationalisms, together with the Central-European Czech space, this is an aspect that contributes to the creation and the increasing of nationalism. The Orthodox confession will be for some of them, an element that can be used in order to unify people and, together with language, territory (Grosby 2005:14) and other similar aspects, could make them conscious and responsible on their national belonging. When it will be linked with the hate for the other, seen as a danger, a threaten to his own freedom, it comes from patriotism to nationalism. On the other side, the Swedish or German models are different, the Italian one has its own pattern, indeed, with influences from the other nationalisms of the time, while the idea of clerically fascism, although it has Italian terminological roots will develop in a phenomenon that can be encountered all around Europe and will take different forms.

In conclusion, it can be said that, due to the historical context, there is a diversity of reasons that brought nationalism and Christian nationalism in interwar Europe. Although each form

has its own specific, there are influences transmitted from one space to other due to the cultural changes or to the social evolution of a certain society. In most of the nationalisms, religion will play an important role, being seen by the leaders of different movements as an instrument that can contribute to the increase of popularity and credibility, but also as an element that give basis and stability to a doctrine. It will be this the reason why many of the leaders will try to use it inside their discourse or to prove that they are in relationship with the national Church of a certain country when they promote their ideas. In Orthodox and Protestant countries this will be easier than in the Catholic space, but even there, in countries like Italy it can be seen the attempt of Mussolini to use Catholicism as an instrument for his reforms.

Romanian situation, that we will present in the following chapter, will be similar with the other ones from some point of view, but in the same case, will have also its own specificity. We will mention there only the fact that the main influence on the Romanian interwar context will come, for the nationalist discourse, from the German space.



## **II. “Christian nationalism” in the Romanian space in the 4<sup>th</sup> decade of 20<sup>th</sup> century**

Speaking about Romanian nationalism in the interwar period is for sure a complicated task for many reasons. We will try there to emphasize from the beginning two of them. First is linked with the local historical context, while the second one is rather a philological question.

From the beginning it must be noticed that in a society like the Romanian one, which became bigger after the First World War thanks to the fact that Transylvania will join, following Woodrow Wilson’s principles to the Kingdom formed in 1859 that become independent from the Ottoman Empire in 1877 and was proclaimed as a monarchy in 1881,<sup>15</sup> there were different forms

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<sup>15</sup> About this topic and its contribution to the development of nationalism, a contemporary author shows that: “These nationalist projects where fuelled, at least in part, by the irredentist nationalism of the defeated states. Thus the biggest benefactors of the post-war settlement – Poland, Czechoslovakia, and Romania – came immediately un-

of nationalism and defining elements of it. There will be a doctrinaire nationalism (Tănăsescu 2017:439-461), a practical one and for both of them there will be representatives that will try to use elements of Christian doctrine or the fact that Romanian has an Orthodox majority in order to make it a Christian-nationalism. In the same time, there will be different attitudes inside the current that can be defined with the aforementioned themes. For example, in Transylvania, where there will be an inter-ethnic and inter-confessional context, the nationalist attitudes will be rather moderate compared with Walachia and Moldavia. A common point of almost all the nationalisms will be the anti-Semite attitude that will increase starting with the second half of the nineteenth century and will arrive to its end in the moment of the cooperation with the Nazi regime (Latham 2010:15; Oișteanu 2012). Of course, there must be said that there will be aspects like the fact that the Jewish people will have in some periods the monopoly on alcohol sales or on the use of old boyars lands and from there they will, in some situations, have attitudes that will make Romanian people to get angry with them. These elements will constitute in fact the main points used also by the leaders of Far-right movements like the legionary ones in order to justify

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der pressure from those states – particularly Germany and Hungary, but also Russia – which sought to revise the territorial status quo.” (Zimmer 2013:416).

their attitude towards the Jews (Morariu 2016:68). It must be also mentioned the fact that, although those attitudes, that can be proved by historical documents were wrong, this does not justify the anti-Semitism and the increase of the number of anti-Semite journals in this space during the interwar period (Clark 2019:3-14). In the same time, due to this hate for Jews, nationalism was related in the Romanian space also with this attitude.

The second aspect related with the Romanian perception on nationalism is rather a philological question. Although the first translation of the Bible in Romanian language was published in 1688 in Bucharest and this can be considered a proof that a language became mature and it has a vocabulary rich enough that allows to develop even a literature, the Romanian language was still in a process of transformation in the following centuries and also during the interwar period, at the level of the use of terms. It was a period when a lot of neologisms, especially coming from the French area, were adopted there and when the sense of some words was, in many situations different from the one of nowadays. Therefore, when one reads the notes of Nae Ionescu, he may be shocked to find there that he considers Nicolae Iorga “his master into constructive nationalism” (Râpeanu 1993:5).



A man like the most important Romanian historian, Iorga (for more information about his life and activity, see also: Adu-mitrăcesei 2019; Berciu 1941), who vehemently criticised the Legionary doctrine ending killed by them, but also criticised other forms of nationalism cannot be considered as part of this current. In his situation it can be at most spoken about patriotism. Therefore, it must be underlined that, in the interwar period there was not a very clear differentiation between nationalism and patriotism at the level of the use of language in Romanian space and this aspect should be taken into account when one speaks about topics like the one approached by us. Still, they were different nuances of nationalism in the public discourse of the intellectuals from that space. Therefore, speaking about the biography of an important interwar personality, a contemporary researcher underlines the fact that:

“It should be mentioned the fact that Nae Ionescu is the first one that in 1928 establishes a demarcation line between the exclusivist nationalism of A. C. Cuza (“I have no one enthusiasm for the theory of the dominant nation”) and the tolerant nationalism of Nicolae Iorga (“I have followed Mr. Iorga who become for us the champion of the spiritual rights of the minorities).” (Râpeanu 1993:6).

In the same time, young people like Mircea Eliade, that will later become one of the most important voices of Romanian culture in the international space, will also note the fact that as soon as the nationalism will have an extremist dimension, it should not be followed. Moreover, he will note the fact that this direction will be against its genuine purpose: “the extremist nationalism of the intellectualist youth has lost more and more the cultural nuance that the current has it on its beginnings.” (Eliade 1926:2).

Therefore, there must be made a clear distinction between the real nationalisms and patriotisms or other forms that define the love of some people for their national identity in the Romanian interwar space.<sup>16</sup> Among the forms of nationalism there must be mentioned also the so-called Christian-nationalism. In Romanian context it must be understood as an important part of the nationalist current that uses the Christian elements as a fundament for their ideas. The fact that Romania was a country with an Orthodox majority and this country had an important

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<sup>16</sup> About this topic and its meaning in Romanian context, Rolland Clark brings also some interesting clarifications: “Nationalism refers to the belief that nations exist, and that they are valid and meaningful collectivises deserving of one’s allegiance. A nation, according to a nationalist, is a community held together by ethnic ties, common languages, and a common history and culture. Nationalists often, though not always, as-

word to say in the context of the events related with the Great Union, they tried to have references to this aspect. Therefore, thinkers like the aforementioned Nae Ionescu (Clark 2009:17) will often use the idea that it cannot be conceived the Romanian identity without the belonging to the Orthodox Church. Another element that was important in the construction of the Christian nationalism in Orthodox countries was the fact that:

“Eastern Orthodox churches are governed according to the notion of *autocephaly*, which literally means “self-headed” and refers to the independence of Orthodox churches within a given locality. Each church governs itself and need not submit itself to any other autocephalous church, but must join with the others, partaking in

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sociate their nations with geographically defined territories. Understood in this weak sense, nationalism is somewhat akin to patriotism, the difference being the uniquely modern conception of nationhood that is promoted by nationalists. Unlike older notions such as *patria*, kingdom, or country, nations are imagined as communities that exist regardless of whether they have formal statehood, and types of government are irrelevant compared to the importance of eternal, exclusive, collective identities. For a nationalist, the suggestion that nationalism is a modern invention often seems ridiculous, and it seems impossible to conceive of people who do not feel their national ties. “An anational sentiment,” Stăniloae argued in 1939, “does not exist.” Nations are supposed to be both ontologically given and ethically desirable. Nationalists conceive of nations as organic political communities, drawing on German idealist thinkers such as Kant, Fichte, and Hegel, who emphasized the potential of nations to shape individuals in the image of God through collective, rational, and cultural activity.” (Clark 2009:4).

an ancient liturgical and doctrinal tradition that all share.” (Clark 2009:5; cf. Zyzkyn 1936:275).

In a certain moment of history, the misinterpretation of this aspect brought to attitudes like the *phyletism*, condemned by the Orthodox Church in the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. In Romanian space, accents of this aspect can be found, but still not with the same meaning and relevance like in the aforementioned current.

Characterising the interwar Romanian situation and underlining the complexity of the behaviours regarding nationalism, a contemporary researcher will show that:

“In Romania, organic nationalism, underpinned by a tradition of popular anti-Semitism, was well established in core Romania even before the First World War. Although the country’s nationalist imperialists welcomed the transition of the old kingdom into Greater Romania, this also created considerable problems in a society as poor and backward as interwar Romania. In particular, the acquisition of substantive minority populations clashed with the organic vision of a state dominated by ethnic Romanians. The Romanian authorities, eager to fight economic backwardness and catch up the West, saw their ambitions undermined by the predominance

of non-Romanians (Jews, Germans, and ethnic Hungarians) in important sectors of the economy, education, and cultural life more generally. Thus while Romania no doubt benefited from the peace settlement, the new multi-ethnic reality was widely seen as a threat to the nation's unity, integrity and prosperity." (Zimmer 2013:423).

The most important Romanian interwar far-right movement that used Christian elements in order to justify its doctrine and in the same time tried to come closer to the Orthodox Church (Morariu 2016:65), seen as related with the Romanian roots of the people was the Legionary movement. In a certain moment of history, using a discourse filled with Christian elements helped its leader, Corneliu Zelea Codreanu, to persuade especially people coming from the countryside, with lacks in education, and a deep feeling of belonging both to the Orthodoxy and to the Romanian nation, to sustain him. Making the two ones as the pillars of his doctrine, he preached the nationalism, speaking not only about its own nation and the need for development, but in the same time about the hate for the other nations and the inter-confessional hate. Still, the main aspect that will define his discourse will be the anti-Semitism. In a certain moment of the history, "Archangel Michael's Legion" as it has been called the movement

that he ruled, had also an important role in interwar Romanian political space. In short, as Roland Clark shows, this movement can be characterised as it followed:

“A fascist movement established by Corneliu Zelea Codreanu in 1927, the Legion had ruled the country from September 1940 to January 1941, and individuals identified with the Legion had been involved in anti-communist activities during the 1940s.” (Clark 2015:182).

Having a short history, the Legionary movement will also succeed to attract among its members important intellectuals from the interwar period. It will be a time when people like Nae Ionescu, Nichifor Crainic, Mircea Eliade, Vintilă Horia (Rotaru 2016:175-196) and many other will be found among its sympathisers. Of course, it must be surely made a clear distinction between the classical membership and the reasons that determined ordinary people like the peasants to involve in its activities and the intellectuals, their affinities and the reasons that made them to see it as a solution or at least to look at it with sympathy in a certain moment of the trembled Romanian interwar history. It must be also mentioned that, during the communist period, the legionary people were prosecuted. Most of them, like Crainic,

that we intend to present there, will be imprisoned and some will also die in prison. This also explains why after 1990, there will be a lot of memorial works glorifying Legionary movement (Aparaschivei 2010:17; Banea 1995:14; Borleanu 2000) and there still is among some people nostalgia for it. It will be thanks to this movement and its actions why, even from the 3<sup>rd</sup> decade of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the meaning of nationalism will start to be reduced from something that, in a language still in process of formation, will receive a more and more negative meaning (Eliade 1926:2). Thanks to the fact that they used the national identity as a leitmotiv of their speech, presenting the others as enemies<sup>17</sup>(especially the minorities and among them, the Jews), and had a very good propaganda machine,<sup>18</sup> that contributed to the creation of an image of protectors of the nation and,

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<sup>17</sup> Because, as the specialists will show: “While the prevalent nationalist doctrines varied from one society to another, nationalists everywhere fostered cultural communities by supplying criteria for the definition of members as well as non-members.” (Zimmer 2013:415).

<sup>18</sup> Therefore, there were many publications paid by the Movement and intellectuals that wrote about the Legionary movement and its achievements in the political space. Roland Clark shows for example what Crainic wrote about this topic in his articles from the end of the 4<sup>th</sup> decade of the 20<sup>th</sup> century: “When they came to power, he accepted the victory of the Legion as a victory for Christ, and the armies of Hitler as God’s soldiers on earth. During the Second World War, he described Antonescu as “the sword of Christianity” and spoke about the “transfiguration” of Romania. His writings never contained the violent racism, incendiary politicizing, or totalitarian tendencies that

sometimes, victims of bad intentioned people, they had also an important public support. Therefore, as a contemporary researcher shows, placing the Legionary Movement among the fascist ones: “In Germany, Hungary, Romania and Italy fascist movements succeeded in mobilizing mass support.” (Zimmer 2013:423).

While in areas like Moldavia and Wallachia the existence of minorities and their activity seen as one against the national development constituted the main elements of nationalist discourse, together with the confessional belonging (oriented towards the fact that being Romanian implies to be Orthodox), in Transylvania, not only “the acquisition of substantial minority populations” (Zimmer 2013:421), but also the fall of the Austro-Hungarian Empire will represent also an important element in the understanding of nationalism and its development. Therefore, as the specialists underline: “From the middle of the nineteenth century, nationalism began to change the ways in which minority populations and imperial states were perceived.” (Zimmer 2013:415; Groza, Morariu, Nisipeanu 2018, where there can be found memorial texts speaking about this topic too).

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were characteristic of Crainic during the 1930s. The fraternal yet critical attitude that Stăniloae took toward fascism suggests that he believed it contained something that could be used for good but needed to be guided upon the right path.” (Clark 2009:11).



Having elements that could rather define it as a form of the national-socialism, like in other European spaces (Rzs 2019:14), that has been since 1931 condemned by Pope Pius XI (Mikrut 2019:18), the Christian nationalism from the Romanian space tried to use more the Orthodox identity and its elements like the ones of the other Christian traditions. Therefore, as the studies will show, Catholics or Lutheran people especially from Transylvanian areas will be discriminate on ethnical criteria. The interesting fact is that sometimes the different religious belonging was also associated with the different ethnical one and was, in certain situations, cause of discrimination. Therefore, in a recently published study, Ștefan Lupu shows that in Iași Catholic diocese, the Romanians from interwar period were often criticised for this reason and considered Hungarians, although they were Romanians (Lupu 2019:812).

The interwar period was therefore for the Romanian space, the one of the development of Nationalism and increase of Anti-Semitism. Among the forms taken by the aforementioned current, Christian Nationalism can be seen there and it is, at the level of doctrine, rather an outcome, a branch of National Socialism, rather than a reality in itself. Here, when one speaks about it, it must understand the problem in a broader context and to see it as

a form of nationalism that uses Christian elements in the public discourse in order to attract adepts. While Romania had in that period a majority of almost 90 per cents of Orthodox people, the references were, almost always, made on the Orthodoxy, seen on one side as an element who could bring credibility in front of the masses and on the other side, as an aspect of unity. This explains why some practically actions were directed by the nationalist leaders towards the Church (building of new Churches, laws related with morals or material help to the Church), but also why the faithful of other confessions where in same situations seen as enemies or prosecuted, being considered Hungarians although they were Romanians.

The Christian-Nationalists will also use religious elements in order to develop anti-Semitism. On one side, moral will be used in a punitive way, due to the fact that in Romania there were many Jews working in commercial space and therefore, in many situations, they had a real monopoly on alcohol, fact that determined nationalists to present them as authors of a social disease, and on the other side, the bad use of biblical information helped them to present Jewish people as the descendants of the ones who have crucified Christ and therefore, worthy to be punished or seen as an inferior human category.

In the 4<sup>th</sup> decade of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, which will be the period before the Romanian entrance in the war and was, on one side, marked by several political crises and the abdication of King Carol the Second on one side and of the development of the economy, industrial activity and the increase of the class of rich and poor people (the middle class being weakly represented), the Nationalism will also increase and, due to the fact that there was an important propaganda of some of the ideas of its leaders, that held newspapers or publishing houses, but also the interest of the state, in certain moments of the history, to use nationalists for their purposes, there will be an important element that will contribute to the increase of their popularity. This explains why intellectuals like Stăniloae, Eliade, Cioran and many others will be in a certain moment of the history, the ones who will greet those movements or praise some of their ideas.

In conclusion, in the 4<sup>th</sup> decade of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, Romanian Christian-Nationalism will know a moment of development, thanks to the increasing of anti-Semitism and also of the one of national movements in other important countries. It will be this the context where Nichifor Crainic who studied in German space and was influenced by the German culture, will activate and write.

### **III. The “Christian nationalism” of Nichifor Crainic reflected in his work from the 4<sup>th</sup> decade of the 20<sup>th</sup> century**

#### **III.1. Nichifor Crainic**

**– life and work –**

#### **landmarks**

After presenting the landmarks of Christian nationalism in Europe and Romanian of the 4<sup>th</sup> decade of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, we consider important to speak about the landmarks of Nichifor Crainic's life and work. This would help the reader who is not yet familiarized with his biography to know him better, to understand the context where he activated and in the same time, to see how

the environment have influenced the Romanian theologian and politician in his work and way of acting.

Due to the fact that he already benefited until now by several monographic evaluations (Pârvulescu 2010; Spînu 2013) together with the republication of his writings, accompanied, most of them, by well-documented introductory studies (like: Crainic 2010; Crainic 1993), or articles dedicated to him (see: Hasmațuchi 2011; Ică 2018; Morariu, Cășvean 2016; Morariu 2018:54-64; Morariu 2019:93-101), we will try to offer only a brief overview of his life and activity, directing the curious reader to complementary sources that could help him to find more about the aspects that he or she wants to deep.

Born in 22th of December 1889, in Bulbucata, Giurgiu Department (Southern part of Romania; [https://ro.wikipedia.org/wiki/Comuna\\_Bulbucata,\\_Giurgiu](https://ro.wikipedia.org/wiki/Comuna_Bulbucata,_Giurgiu), accessed 12. 10. 2019), Nichifor Crainic will receive the name Ion. He will therefore be Ion Dobre until later when, as a publicist, will take the literary pseudonym Nichifor Crainic, that will be the one under which will survive also for posterity.<sup>19</sup> After the graduation of primary school there

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<sup>19</sup> According to Ioan Ică jr. his first publications dating from the high school period will be signed either I.D. Nichifor, or D.I. Crainic (Ică 2018:2). It will be for sure this period when he will start to think about a future name as a writer.

(Spînu 2013:7-12; Morariu 2019:95), he will study at the Bucharest Central Seminary from 1904 and until 1912 and later, until 1916, to the Faculty of Orthodox Theology from the Romanian capital city (Spînu 2013:14; Morariu 2019:96). The period as a student will be one when he discovers Nicolae Iorga and will also start to write, in a cultural environment that will not totally satisfy him.

The graduation year will be an important one, both for Romania who, after two years of neutrality, will finally decide to take active part in the First World War, and for Nichifor Crainic. Summarizing the complex events that will influence his life then, a contemporary researcher will show that:

“1916<sup>th</sup> is both a year of accomplishments, but also of the personal and national catastrophes. He becomes a graduate in theology and publishes the first volume of poetry, *Zâmbete în lacrimi (Smiles in Tears)*. Eager to occupy the Zlătari parish in the capital, he marries quickly. Metropolitan Conon refuses to name him, despite the insistences and pressures. It follows shortly the divorce of the first wife and the entry of Romania into the First World War, the defeat of Romania and the death of the father. He is mobilized sergeant at the hospital in Iași, collaborating regularly with articles and

poems in the Nicolae Iorga's journal *Neamul Românesc* (*Romanian People*). Returning to Bucharest, he becomes editor at *Dacia*, led by Al. Vlahuță and later to *Luceafărul*, moved by Goga from Sibiu to Bucharest." (Ică 2018:2-3).

Later on, in 1920 he enrolled in Vienna Faculty of Philosophy (Morariu 2019:94) that he will graduate in 1922, when he returns in Romania and will start the activity as a teacher, initially in Bucharest Central Seminary and later in the Faculty of Orthodox Theology from Chișinău (Spînu 2013:14). Here he will teach spirituality (Crainic 1991:338). Later, he will develop there the idea of teaching mystics. In fact, in the Romanian context, Crainic will be in fact the first author that will teach Orthodox mystics and the founder of a chair dedicated to this topic in Romanian Faculties of Theology.<sup>20</sup> It will be this that will bring him fame in the future and make him even later to be reprinted (Crainic 2010) and discussed. In the same time, the interest for this topic and for the way how he will link the Orthodox spirituality from Romanian space with the ones of the other Christian backgrounds, will determine also other Romanian faculties of theology to invite him

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<sup>20</sup> His encounter with mystical theology will be, as Roland Clarck shows, in "in Vienna in 1921 through the works of the Russian symbolist poet Dmitri Merezhkovskii and the German poet Rainer Maria Rilke." (Clark 2009:24). It will be after that moment when he will start to deepen this topic and to write about its representative authors.

to provide lectures on the topic. It will be in this context that he will be called in 1936 to offer an inaugural lecture on the German mystique in Sibiu’s faculty (Crainic 2010a:5-14, he will later continue this lecture in 1940-1941) and will start to write not only poetry with Christian message, influenced by authors like Rainer Maria Rilke, but also theological essays and chronicles.

In fact, the interwar period will be the most fruitful for him as an author. After some sporadically publications in journals like *Ramuri*, he will also start to publish different books of poetry (Crainic 1921; Crainic 1929; Crainic 1921a), essays (Crainic 1929a; Crainic 1941; Crainic 1930), monographs (Crainic 1939) and a big number of articles in different journals. Among them, the journal *Gândirea* [*The taught*] will be the one where he will publish the biggest number of texts and where his work will have the greatest diversity.<sup>21</sup> At the end of this period, Crainic will have

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<sup>21</sup> “... his publicist work from *Gândirea* journal, that he directed for almost two decades and where he was an important promoter of young writers from interwar period (like the future metropolitan Valeriu Bartolomeu Anania, Father Dumitru Stăniloae, Ion Barbu, Lucian Blaga, Alexandru Busuioceanu, Radu Gyr, Victor Papilian, Ion Pillat, Tudor Vianu, Vasile Voiculescu, and more others. Here, he published more than 70 titles consisting in poems, essays, philosophical and theological articles, chronicles of events, but also some texts containing his political opinion related to a contemporary moment that he took part in.” (Morariu 2019:96).



almost ten books published, translations<sup>22</sup> and a few hundreds of articles, reviews, chronicles, and theological and political essays published. This explains his notoriety and the fact that he was considered among the most important Christian thinkers from the interwar period. Moreover, his mystical conception, was different from the one of other contemporary writers of those times, like Blaga or Ionescu, fact that made him to be considered exponential for theology. Therefore, as Roland Clark underlines:

“All Crainic’s writing was thoroughly imbued with a vision of a world submersed in the divine. He defined mysticism as “the science of the deification of man,” and it was first and foremost theandric, meaning that “it is composed of a divine element—the grace or the energy of the Holy Spirit—and a human element in its very best form.” The idea that mysticism is deification underpinned Crainic’s whole approach. He contrasted this Orthodox definition of mysticism with that of a number of Western authors,

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<sup>22</sup> Because, for example: “After the Indian mystic Rabindranath Tagore visited Bucharest in 1922, Crainic translated Tagore’s book *Sādhana* (lit. Spiritual Practice), which argued for the wholeness and interconnectedness of all existence, taking a position that was too radically monist for Romanian Orthodoxy, but which resonated with the holistic approach to knowledge that was to become a trademark of Romanian mystical theology.” (Clark 2009:24).

all of whom—like Nae Ionescu and Lucian Blaga—only saw mysticism as “an experimental knowledge of God.” (Clark 2009:24).

As a poet, but also as author of literature, he will initiate as a “traditionalist”, a literary current that used tradition and history as poetical and literary reasons in an attempt to build a national literature and to avoid the creation of imitations from other cultures. In 22th of May 1941 he succeeded to Octavian Goga (a chair held before him also by George Coșbuc) in Romanian Academy’s chair, fact that places him among the “semănătorists,” a category of writers (Hasmațuchi 2011:59), from the late traditionalism that will receive their name from *Semănătorul* [*The Sower*] journal. As an editor, he will later become part of an interesting development of this literary movement called *Gândirism* (from thought), linked with the journal *Gândirea*, where he activated for almost two decades, from 1926 until 1944 (Morariu 2015:29-32) and published more than 70 titles. In the same time, he will also release in 1932, for a short time, a journal called *Calendar* that, as the specialists will underline, will later constitute a proof of his closeness to the far-right Legionary Movement, as the specialists will underline:

“Although he later denied it vehemently, at times during the 1930s, Crainic was at least as closely implicated in Legionary politics as

Ionescu was. Crainic's newspaper, *Calendarul*, publicly declared itself the mouthpiece for Legionary propaganda. He had run as a deputy for the Legion in 1932, had provided international connections for the Legion through his visit to Mussolini's Italy in 1933, and had written the text for Codreanu's first speech in Parliament. But Crainic quarreled with Codreanu in 1933 because Codreanu had preferred Ionescu to Crainic as a mentor. Furious on Codreanu, Crainic bickered with him throughout the decade while at the same time supporting fascist causes whenever he could. He was later appointed minister of propaganda as part of Ion Gigurtu's anti-Semitic government in July 1940." (Clark 2009:25).

His notoriety together with his closeness with the political class, will make him, at the beginning of the 5<sup>th</sup> decade of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, for a short time, Minister of Propaganda in Antonescu's Government (Solonari 2009:18) and later, this will lead to his imprisonment during the communist regime.<sup>23</sup> Unfortunately, about his activity as a Minister of Propaganda there is a lack of information. Crainic himself, after he had got out from the prison, when he writes his memory (Crainic 1992), will try to avoid this

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<sup>23</sup> About this period of his life, authors like Ioan Ică jr. will show that: "On 25<sup>th</sup> of May 1947 (after a period when he run from the authorities, our note), he convince Father Sărmăghițan (who saves his manuscripts), to denounce him, hoping that he will be

period and will offer only a few information about it, insisting on his experience before the trial, when he was hidden and helped by some of his disciples. Imprisoned from 1947 until 1962, when he was granted an amnesty by the authorities, he will have different experiences in prisons like Aiud, one of the most difficult from the communist period. It will be there where he will start to be “convinced” by the regime, about its success and, after he was set free from the prison, he will write propagandistic articles in

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judged and rehabilitated. He is sent to Târgu Mureș and from there to Bucharest, where he is in detention at the Ministry of Internal Affairs and later to Văcărești. His sentence from 1945 is cancelled and the re-judgement of his trial starts again, Crainic being defended by Petre Pandrea (1904-1968), Lucrețiu Pătrășcanu’s brother in law (Pătrășcanu was communist Ministry of Justice and will be also imprisoned in 1948 for nationalism and executed in 1954). On 9<sup>th</sup> of December 1947, it is communicated to Crainic the new accusation act, where he is accused by Legionarism, fascism, Hitlerism, racism class hate, instigation to war against USSR and cooperation with Nazi Germany.” (Ică jr. 2018:20). Origin. 2018. «Pe 24 mai 1947 îl convinge pe pr. Sămărghițan (care-i salvează manuscrisele) să-l denunțe și se predă autorităților în speranța că va fi re-judecat și reabilitat. Este trimis la Târgu-Mureș și de aici la București, fiind deținut la Ministerul de Interne și apoi la Văcărești. I se anulează sentința din 1945 și începe re-judecarea procesului, la care Crainic a fost apărut de Petre Pandrea (1904-1968), cumnat al lui Lucrețiu Pătrășcanu, ministrul comunist al justiției (care avea să fie arestat și el în 1948 pentru naționalism și executat în 1954). Pe 9 decembrie 1947 lui Crainic i se aduce la cunoștință noul act de acuzare, în care se vede acuzat de legionarism, fascism, hitlerism, rasism și ură de clasă, de instigare la război împotriva URSS și de colaborare cu Germania hitleristă.»

*Glasul Patriei [Countrie's Voice]*, a propagandistic journal of the communists destined to the Romanians from the exile.

His closeness to the regime will make him to be considered a controversial person until his death on 20<sup>th</sup> of August 1972. While the legionary that succeeded to run in Occident will consider him a betrayer, communists will always see him with mistrust and will refuse to publish his memorial writings, censored by the author himself. The situation will persist also after the fall of the regime. Then, while some theologians will start to discover again his works, to bring them into debate, reprint or emphasize the actual aspects that can be found there, other scientists will see only the extremist activity and will underline only his far-right affiliation. Still, among the poetries of the authors who suffered during the aforementioned period, his poems will be also included in the anthologies (Cistelescan 2006; Buzași 2011:153-180; Brauner 1999: 24-31), fact that will contribute to his acceptance among the people who suffered during the communist regime for their ideas.

This would be in short the biography of Nichifor Crainic.<sup>24</sup> Theologian, writer, political man and militant, he left to posterity

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<sup>24</sup> As we have already mentioned in other research, after 1940 can be seen as the apogee year for the Romanian philosopher. After this moment, his biography will rather know moments of decrease and compromise while his notoriety will lose its intensity:

a work consisting in more than 40 books (most of them published posthumously), with a rich diversity. Among his articles or books there can be found theological essays, philosophical ones, political, chronicles, research dedicated to the aesthetical aspects, together with poetry or literary criticism. Some of them can and must be criticised, other are rather valuable investigations that could contribute today to the development of the scientific discourse in different areas of research and underline his visionary approaches. From the point of view of the ideas expressed in journals like *Gândirea* but also in some of his books, Crainic can be surely considered part of the Romanian interwar nationalism and of a Christian based one. Therefore, analysing his publications from the 4<sup>th</sup> decade of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, we will try there to bring into attention this aspect and to emphasize the landmarks of his conception.

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“This will be the moment of the apogee of the Romanian philosopher and theologian. After this year, *Gândirea* will start, little by little, to decrease in its importance and in the end of the war, to lose most of his authors, and because of that, he will lose the authority step by step. During the communist period, he will be imprisoned, and then, he censored even his memorial writings, hoping for rehabilitation. 20th of August 1972, we find him alone, old, and somehow forgotten by most of his friends. Still, even during the communist period, there were some authors like Virgil Gheorghiu, wich in literary works will try to portrait him and to underline some of his qualities, creating a legend.” (Morariu 2019:96; Gheorghiu 2011).

### **III.2. Nichifor Crainic between “Christian-nationalism” and ethnocracy: his attitude reflected in his works from the 4th decade of the 20th century**

If one imagines that reading Nichifor Crainic’s work finds there a clear and articulated system of thinking that could offer him an overview of the way how the Romanian thinker understood Christian-nationalism and planned to use it in his context, will be for sure disappointed. Considered an important voice of his time, he divided his time between the activity as a professor of Mystics in different Faculties of Orthodox Theology from Romanian space, the publication of different articles and books, conferences, political activities or the editorial work as a director or editor of journals like *Gândirea* (Morariu 2015:29) or *Călindariul* [*The calendary*] (Clark 2009:25).

This explains why, as a philosopher, he was not a man who left behind him a system. Throughout his works, he offers a partial explanation for the diversity of the genres adopted. In the same time, in the investigated decade, most probably, due to the multiple responsibilities that he had, but also thanks to a current practice of those times, according to which, the writers were “spreading” articles or poetries if they were authors of literature, in different journals of the time, and then bringing them together inside of a book, at a certain period of time, when their number increased enough, Crainic also used this practice. This explains why, excepting some of his theological books (and even there it must be said that many of them have been published posthumously), most of the ones published during his life were anthologies of poetries or of articles with theological, philosophical or political content.

In the decade that we intend to present there, his activity as a writer will be marked by the second edition of the book of poetry *Cântecul patriei* [*Country's songs*] (Crainic 1931, the release of another poetical anthology entitled *Țara de peste veac* [*Contry above the centuries*] (Crainic 1931a). They will be also accompanied by a few essays with philosophical and theological meanings, political articles, book reviews or chronicles, published in differ-



ent journals. It will be this decade when he releases *Căldariul* [*The Calendary*], a journal with a short period of apparition that will determinate the historians to consider him, thanks to the far-right orientation of this publication, as oriented towards this direction of thinking. Unfortunately, nowadays, from unknown reasons, in the catalogues of the most important libraries, it is impossible to find it. Even authors who investigated his work that mention it, never quotes from the articles published there (Clark 2009:25) or offer an overview, fact that determinate us also to think that they have only read about it in other historiographical approaches and they did not see it. The impossibility to have access to this important source represents a lack of our investigation too. But we will try to compensate using the other articles published by him in this period in journals like *Gândirea* [*The thought*], that contains the biggest number of articles published by him.<sup>25</sup> About his activity at the aforementioned journal it must be also mentioned the fact that, most of the articles, poetries, theological essays or philosophical ones will be later published together by the author in his books, many of them, being in fact anthologies. Later, after 1989, some of his disciples or the ones

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<sup>25</sup> In the same time, due to the fact that Crainic also used to publish in different journals the same article in the same time, it is also possible that many of his ideas and texts to be found in journals like *Gândirea* or *Transilvania* from Sibiu.

who will investigate his work will also try to publish anthologies of his works, especially the literary ones, in an attempt to make them more accessible to the contemporary readers or to render them back to the Romanian cultural landscape.

Here, from 1924 until 1944, he published, as it has been already mentioned by the authors who investigated this topic, 94 articles (Morariu 2015:29-32; Pintea 1998). Among them, 45 titles were written and published between 1931 and 1940, the period that we intend to investigate there. The topics approached there are diverse and the diversity also characterises the genres or the categories of the texts published there. Therefore, Nichifor Crainic will criticize some authors coming from literary currents different to his one, will write poetries, essays with theological or philosophical content, will dedicate medallions to important personalities from the cultural space (some of them will also write about his work and contributions, see for example: Blaga 1941:278-288), will write poetries or will develop different arguments with religious or philosophical relevance. He will also not neglect the role of the chronicles. Due to this fact, in the mentioned period, in *Gândirea* there can be found two poems (Crainic 1931b:19; Crainic 1939a:425-226), two chronicles (Crainic 1936:1-11; Crainic 1940:465-469), 4 theological essays (Crainic 1931b:469-

476; Crainic 1931c:455-358; Crainic 1934:65-73; Crainic 1935:57-66), 29 on philology, philosophy or literary criticism (Crainic 1931d:49-53; Crainic 1931e:306-307; Crainic 1937:1-9; Crainic 1937a:97-103; Crainic 1937b: 369-378; Crainic 1938:1-10; Crainic 1938a:161-169; Crainic 1934a:217-224; Crainic 1934b:280; Crainic 1939b:204-210; Crainic 1939c:529-537; Crainic 1940:623-540; Crainic 1931f: 131-132; Crainic 1932:192; Crainic 1935a:113-116; Crainic 1935b:169-175; Crainic 1936a:265-271; Crainic 1936b:355-362; Crainic 1936c:377-383; Crainic 1934c:293-397; Crainic 1939d:225-232; Crainic 1939e:289-297; Crainic 1939f:374-381; Crainic 1939g:529-537; Crainic 1940b:1-7; Crainic 1940c:521-525; Crainic 1940d:405-414; Crainic 1941a:1-8) and eight medallions (Crainic 1931h:372; Crainic 193i:468; Crainic 1932a:322-323; Crainic 1935c:45; Crainic 1935d:389-493; Crainic 1936d:159-160; Crainic 1939h:1-12; Crainic 1939i: 388-395; Crainic 1935e:258-267). Of course, from all this amount of works, there will be only 11th of them that have a content filled with information related with nationalism (Crainic 1931g:131-132; Crainic 1931c:469-476; Crainic 1935:57-66; Crainic 1935a:113-116; Crainic 1935b:169-175; Crainic 1935e:258-267; Crainic 1936a:265-271; Crainic 1938a:161-169; Crainic 1940c:521-525; Crainic 1940:465-469; Crainic 1941:1-8).

Even among the articles that can reveal his conception regarding nationalism or Christian nationalism from this journal, there it is not a clear, systematic or articulated vision on the topic. Moreover, in some articles that look like a literary comment, there can be found also references to his political orientation. Such an example can be considered the one entitled “*The Condemnation of André Gide*” (Crainic 1931d:131-132). Intended to be initially a review of literature whose aim was to synthesise for the Romanian context the ideas of the French writer and to show how they have been understood by the Romanian thinkers like Tudor Arghezi<sup>26</sup> and Pamfil Șeicaru<sup>27</sup>, the text has also some polemical accents. Interesting is the fact that, in his short analysis, Crainic does not focus inasmuch as expected on his literary work and ideas, nor investigates its political belonging or the way

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<sup>26</sup> Tudor Arghezi (1880-1967), on his real name Ion Nae Theodorescu, was an important Romanian writer of the twentieth century, who contributed to the development of Romanian poetry under Baudelaire influence. He wrote poetry, theatre, prose, pamphlets but also literature for children. He was also one of the most contested authors from the Romanian space. For more information, see also: Anghel 2012; Artagea 2009.

<sup>27</sup> Pamfil Șeicaru (1894- 1980) is a Romanian writer, founder of *Curentul* journal (of far-right orientation), considered the most important Romanian journalist and polemist from the interwar period (famous also for the ironical articles and poems dedicated to the communist regime and its representatives from Romanian space). In 1945 he was condemned to death in contumacy by the communist regime. For more information about his life and activity, see also: Frunză 2001; Bichir 2014.

how Gide understands key topics like society, citizen, state or civic attitude, but prefers to criticise his ideas starting from the way how he understands the relationship between the nature and moral. Like in other situations and like other thinkers of the time (for example, Nae Ionescu), Crainic (1931b:132) also perceives the morals as being related with the idea of nation, like he sees the religion (most precisely, a specifically religious confession as being related with the essence of the nation. Due to this fact, he criticises Gide's conception about the nation and moral and also the attitude of the two aforementioned Romanian writers about him and his ideas from this area.

In the same note he will also wrote the article entitled: *Cardinal Points in Chaos* from 1931 (Crainic 1931c:469-476), which will be later included by Crainic in a book with the same title. The text not only does it host a debate with Mihai Ralea,<sup>28</sup> but it also contains an interesting analysis of the Fascism, to which, as it can be seen from there, but also from other articles of the same author, the author subscribes. After bringing again into debate

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<sup>28</sup> Mihai Dumitru Ralea (1896-1964) was a Romanian writer and politician. After joining National Peasants' Party, in 1935 and having a rich activity there, he will later join to the communist one, for being allowed to write and publish, but also for becoming

morals as fundamental elements in the consolidation of a nation and about materialism, idealism and spiritualism as pillars of understanding the contemporary society (Crainic 1931a:469), he refers to Mussolini (that he considers as a model, both for his personal attitude as for his ideas in political life) and quotes the Italian leader in order to justify his ideas regarding the fact that the man is called to dominate the world:

“The man who believes in the spiritual order of the world does not lose its confidence. He knows that the disorder is a passing accident and that the order is given by the intimate nature of this world. Under the times it is destroyed only this part that is useless, it has no base in itself or outside itself. The man of faith, the man of conviction dominates the world: he creates the time, the history. This is why I have told you: I do not think together with the old man Miron Costin that the poor man is under the times; I believe together with Benito Mussolini that the force of the man destroys monsters’ had.” (Crainic 1931c:471).<sup>29</sup>

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a diplomat there. For more information about his life and activity, see also: Anghel 1973; Cobianu 2006.

<sup>29</sup> Origin. 1931c. “Omul care crede în ordinea spirituală a lumii nu-și pierde cumpătul. El știe că dezordinea e un accident trecător și ordinea e dată în natura intimă a acestei lumi. Sub vreme cade strivită numai secătura zeflemistă care nu are razim nici în sine, nici în afară de sine. Omul de credință, omul de convingere, domină vremea: el crează

The call to overpass the contemporary problems and the crisis of the society and to fight against materialism, seen as an important cause of his time diseases,<sup>30</sup> is linked in Crainic's article with a package of values that can be found in political space in two important doctrines. He will use this reference also to synthesize their beliefs or, better said, to present the way how he understands them and to say why he considers them important:

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vremea, el crează istoria. De aceea vă spuneam: eu nu cred cu bătrânul Miron Costin că omul e sub vremi; eu cred cu Benito Mussolini că puterea omului frânge grumazul monstrului.» (Crainic 1931c:471).

<sup>30</sup> "What do we live inside our country? A terrible crisis that, in the exaggerated feelings of the moment, takes the imaginary proportions of a near catastrophe. The political intelligence, versatile and learned with the gymnastics of excitement, has found the explanation: our crisis is produced by the repercussion of the world crisis. Therefore, if we take to look for a culprit in the terrible ordeal we live in, this culprit is none other than the world crisis. In other words: nobody is to blame ... The moral irresponsibility, practiced by materialism, is practiced with orgy by these joint stock companies on actions that are the political parties." (Crainic 1931c:472). Origin. 1931c.: "Ce trăim în interiorul țării? O criză cumplită care, în sentimentul exagerat al momentului, ia proporțiile imaginare ale unei apropiate catastrofe. Inteligența politică, versatilă și deprinsă cu gimnastica excrocheriei, a și găsit explicația: criza noastră e produsă prin repercursiune de criza mondială. Prin urmare, dacă e să căutăm un vinovat al restriștei cumplite pe care o trăim, acest vinovat nu e altul decât criza mondială. Cu alte cuvinte: nimeni nu e de vină... Iresponsabilitatea morală, practică de materialism, e practică cu orgie de aceste societăți anonime pe acțiuni care sunt partidele politice.» (Crainic 1931c:472).

“Between the two materialistic extremes, the attempts of rectification, compromise, synthesis, are not missing. The great German movement of Adolf Hitler is one. Mussolini’s so architecturally built political work is another. What is to be remembered in fascism, with all its decreases, it is the hierarchical system that corresponds to the natural order of things, the effort to rectify the democratic bargain through the corporate parliament and the authority opposed to anarchy, an authority that, though sometimes used as oppression, is still justified by a moral stance and by a fact that saved Italy. Mussolini believes in his homeland, and in this dynamic and creative faith, he knew how to employ the spiritual powers that are an integral part of the Italian people. Mussolini is not a Democrat because he is sincere, but he is a demophile, because he is wise. I do not know if the formula he gave may be the one seeking modern life, but it is doubtful that modern life is seeking a new synthesis that materialistic doctrine cannot give.” (Crainic 1931c:474-475).<sup>31</sup>

It will be later, in 1935, in a middle of a very fruitful decade for Crainic as a writer and author of books and articles, when he writes an essay where he approached the relationship between

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<sup>31</sup> Origin. 1931c.: «Între cele două extreme materialiste, încercările de rectificare, de compromis, de sinteză, nu lipsesc. Uriașa mișcare germană a lui Adolf Hitler e una.



race and religion (Crainic 1935:57-66), and he will speak again about what he thinks regarding the two big far-right regimes of the time: Fascism and Nazism. Interesting in this approach will be not only the way how they will perceive the religion that will determine him to subscribe to their ideas, but also his critics to the last one. He will show then that:

“The new spirit that is blowing across Europe is nationalistic and religious at the same time, meaning it wants to take into account both the organic and diverse realities of the ethnic nation, as well as the transcendent reality of the religion. Italian fascism is nationalist and religious at the same time. But while fascism, which is part of Catholicism, understands that religion has its source in transcendence, national-socialism, through its racist doctrine,

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Opera politică atât de arhitectonic clădită a lui Mussolini, e alta. Ceea ce e de reținut în fascism, cu toate scăderile lui, e sistemul ierarhic care corespunde ordinii naturale a lucrurilor, efortul de rectificare a harababurei democratice prin parlamentul corporativ și autoritatea opusă anarhiei, autoritate care, dacă uzează uneori de opresiune, se justifică totuși printr-o ținută morală și printr-o faptă care a salvat Italia. Mussolini crede în patria lui, și în această credință dinamică și creatoare, el a știut să angajeze puterile spirituale care fac parte integrantă din ființa poporului italian. Mussolini nu e democrat pentru că e sincer, dar e un demofil pentru că e înțelept. Eu nu știu dacă formula pe care a dat-o el, poate fi cea pe care o caută viața modernă, dar e neîndoios că viața modernă își caută o sinteză nouă pe care doctrina materialistă nu i-o poate da.» (Crainic 1931c:474-475).

wants a religion that is the emanation of the national kind. We reject this idea from the outset. Is one of those ideas not to restore the peace of Europe, but to increase the chaos. The peace of Europe means: national land and the common sky. German racism is a theoretical exaggeration of nationalism, it wants national land and national sky. The great phenomenon of German regeneration, we will try to show that this is a misconception. I will indicate the sources of the error.” (Crainic 1935:57).<sup>32</sup>

Religion was a topic often used by the right parties from the Romanian space, but also from other areas in Eastern and Central Europe, in political discourse or in the discourses meant to argue in the matters of nationalisms (Lalande 1983:668; Sugar 1981:69) Therefore it cannot be said that concerning this aspect, Nichifor Crainic is original. In fact, his openness to other cultural spaces like the Italian and Catholic ones is the one who makes him in a certain measure different from other Christian-nationalists from the same space, while his critical attitude regarding the Nazism is also something almost unexpected. Unfortunately, his ideas regarding this regime were not seen by the important people of his time (fact that can explain why was always assimilated

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<sup>32</sup> Origin. 1935: «Noul spirit care suflă peste Europa e naționalist și religios în același timp, adică vrea să țină seama atât de realitățile organice și diverse ale națiunii etnice,

with his supporters, appointed Ministry of Propaganda during the Legionary Government and later prosecuted by the Communist Regime).

In this article, although he remains consequent to the nationalism, that he sees as a basic condition of people rebirth,<sup>33</sup> he criticises the Nazism for its exclusivist nationalism. Crainic will underline then:

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cât și de realitatea transcendentă a religiunii. Fascismul italian e naționalist și religios totodată. Național-socialismul german de asemenea. Dar pe când fascismul, încadrat în catolicism, înțelege că religiunea își are izvorul în transcendent, național-socialismul, prin doctrina sa rasistă, vrea o religiune care să fie emanația genului național. Ideea aceasta noi o respingem din capul locului. Ea e dintre aele idei menite nu să refacă pacea Europei, ci să mărească haosul. Pacea Europei înseamnă: *pământ național și cer comun*. Rasismul german este o exagerare teoretică a naționalismului, vrea pământ național și cer național. Rănindu-ne propria admirație față de mărețul fenomen al regenerării germane, vom căuta să arătăm că aceasta e o idee greșită și să indicăm izvoarele erorii.» (Crainic 1935:57).

<sup>33</sup> “Nationalism is the basic condition of the rebirth of every people, as its absence is the sign of decadence and death. German nationalism is not only the fanatic love of the German soil and nation, it is not only jealousy of the purity and sovereignty of this nation, it is not only the mystical belief in his destiny; German nationalism is a powerful will of power based on the famous theory of the Aryan race, the queen of the races, meant to rule the whole world alone.” (Crainic 1935:58). Origin. 1935: “Naționalismul e condiția elementară a renașterii fiecărui popor, precum lipsa lui e semnul decadenței și al morții. Naționalismul german nu e însă numai iubirea fanatică de pământul și de

“German nationalism is based on this completely arbitrary dogma of the superiority of the German race. Starting from the premises of this theoretical arbitrariness, he interprets the history of Europe in *a sui generis* way and draws a series of consequences whose particularism sometimes goes so far as to be bizarre. The replacement of Roman law with a German law, as well as that of sterilization to obtain a pure race, are among the most curious, but more striking than all is the problem of replacing Christianity with a non-pagan religion which, as a specific product of the German race, would serve exclusively for this race.” (Crainic 1935:58).<sup>34</sup>

Although he can be accused to be a nationalist, his ideas in this area cannot be classified as extremely exclusivist. He rather

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neamul german, nu e numai gelozia de puritatea și de suveranitatea acestui neam, nu e numai credința mistică în destinul lui; naționalismul german e o năprasnică voință de putere întemeiată pe faimoasa teorie a rasei ariene, regina raelor, menită să domine singură lumea întreagă.” (Crainic 1935:58).

<sup>34</sup> Origin. 1935: “Naționalismul german are la bază această dogmă cu totul arbitrară a superiorității rasei germane. Pornind de la premisele acestui arbitrar teoretic, el interpretează istoria Europei într-un mod *sui generis* și trage o serie de consecințe al căror particularism merge uneori până la bizarerie. Chestiunea înlocuirii dreptului roman cu un drept germanic, precum și aceea a sterilizării pentru obținerea unei rase cât mai pure sunt dintre cele mai curioase. Mai uluitoare decât toate însă e problema înlocuirii creștinismului printr-o religie neopăgândă care, produs specific al rasei germanice, să slujească exclusiv acestei rase.” (Crainic 1935:58).

understands the need for the national affirmation as a historical necessity and sees that in an open context. For this reason, he will be open to dialogue with other personalities and will translate important works from foreign cultures (Clark 2009:24), conscious about the fact that they can contribute to the cultural enrichment of his country and the identity can be easily defined in the presence of the otherness. Therefore, he will protest against the exclusivist purpose of the German doctrine and will have a critic view regarding its content. Compared with later theoreticians, he will not understand that, in fact, the difference between Nazism and Communism resides in the way how the two regimes perceive the totalitarianism and put it into action (Dell'Asta, Foa 2019:39), but will, in a certain measure, anticipate it. Still, the arguments used against the aforementioned way of thinking will be the Christian one. Analysing Nazis doctrine through the Christian lengths, the Romanian philosopher will conclude proclaiming the fact that between the two ones is no possible relationship and moreover, there is a contradiction regarding their fundamentals and the fact that Christianity is, without any doubt, a religion that inherited the Judaist background (Crainic 1935:65-66):

“It is almost superfluous to add that this way of thinking is a complete overturn of the Christian judgment criterion. In Christianity,

nothing that is natural has absolute value. Absolutely there is God alone. And the values of this world are more or more little values as it relates positively or negatively to the divine absolute .... German racism, however, as it is conceived today, wants to be the higher the more it will break free of the more radical Christian doctrine ... He’s anti-Christian.” (Crainic 1935:58-59).<sup>35</sup>

Unfortunately, later this article will not be discovered by others in the moment of his process and therefore, will not be used to defend him or his ideas. Most probably, even the author will forget most of the ideas presented there when he is called to act as a politician inside a Ministry coordinated by a Far-right government.

Interesting also in the investigation of Crainic’s ideas from this period, is his perception of the nation. Anderson said that the nations are “imaginary communities” (Anderson 2018; McCrone 1998:3). In his case, this idea is for sure a visible fact,

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<sup>35</sup> Origin. 1935. «E aproape de prisos să adaug că acest fel de a gândi e o răsturnare totală a criteriului creștin de judecată. În creștinism, nimic din ceea ce e natural nu are valoare absolută. Absolut e singur Dumnezeu. Iar valorile acestei lumi sunt mai mult sau mai puțin valori după cum se raportează în mod pozitiv sau negativ la absolutul dumnezeiesc.... Rasismul german însă, așa cum e conceput astăzi, vrea să fie cu atât mai înalt cu cât va isbuti să se desfacă mai radical de doctrina creștină... E anticreștin.” (Crainic 1935:58-59).

and everyone who reads articles like “Nationality in art” (Crainic 1935a:113-116), could easily see it. Here, not only does he quote referential contemporary authors like Dumitru Stăniloae (who will later bring together his articles about the relationship between Orthodoxy and nation in a book; see: Stăniloae 1939) trying to define the nationality as a part of the “mystery of being,”<sup>36</sup> or to speak about the culture as about an element that defines it (Crainic 1935a:114), but he also offers a theoretical definition, that sends us to the Romanticist age:

“What is the nation?” All the individuals of the same blood, forming through their natural cohesion the collective equanimity, with their own organs, which are the social classes and the state, and with the same soul which is the nationality. As in man, the soul is the one that gives the body shape and determines its manifestations, just as nationality gives definite form to the body nation and determines all its manifestations. It’s an organic fatality.”(Crainic 1935a:114).<sup>37</sup>

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<sup>36</sup> “With nationality you are born and you come into the world. It is part of the mystery of our being.” (Crainic 1935a:115). In original: “Cu naționalitatea te naști și vi pe lume. Ea face parte din misterul ființei noastre.”

<sup>37</sup> Origin. 1935a: “Ce este națiunea? “Totalitatea indivizilor de același sânge, formând prin coeziunea lor naturală aceeași ființă colectivă, cu organe proprii, care sunt clasele sociale și statul, și cu același suflet care este naționalitatea. Precum în om, sufletul

Later, in an article dedicated to one of the most important Romanian traditionalist authors of poetry, namely George Coșbuc (Crainic 1935b:258-267), he will also bring into discussion this aspect. Like in his previous books (Crainic 1930), he will emphasize the ethnical dimension as a spiritual principle and will link it with the cultural and artistic creation, in an interesting analysis of the writings of the aforementioned poet, seen as an exponent of the nationalism. He will also suggest the fact that a moderate form of nationalism could constitute an alternative both to a misunderstood liberalism or Marxism. Enthusiastic and claiming that the times that lived in 1935's Romania were the ones of the nationalism, he will say that:

“Our age is the age of nationalism. It asserts itself in opposition to liberalism and Marxism. If these conceptions consider humanity with a horizontal view, cutting it into the social slices of the classes, cut off in the fight for contrary interests, the vision of nationalism on the world is vertical; he looks not at the surface, but at depth and sees the differentiated world not in opposing classes, but in different nations, animated by the contemporary spirit

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e acela care dă forma trupului și-i determină manifestările, tot astfel naționalitatea dă formă definită națiunii trupului și-i determină toate manifestările. E o fatalitate organică.» (Crainic 1935a:114).



... Humanity, that is to say, the various nations that make it, can only regenerate from the sources of its being, which are the ethnic sources.” (Crainic 1935e:258).<sup>38</sup>

Interesting there is the fact that compared with his previous attempts to speak about nationalism and define its Christian face, that he will follow, here the Romanian writer does not make an attempt of definition, but prefers to use rather ambiguous philosophical words. Perhaps, it must be taken into account also the fact that the purpose of this essay was not to speak about nationalism or politics, but to realize an exegesis of the poetry of George Coșbuc.

In the same note will be also a later article entitled “The autochthon spirit” (Crainic 1938a:161-169), where he presents in a more detailed way his conception about the state and its un-

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<sup>38</sup> Origin. 1935e: «Veacul nostru e veacul naționalismului. El se afirmă în opoziție cu liberalismul și marxismul. Dacă aceste concepții considră omenirea cu o vedere orizontală, tăind-o în feliile sociale ale claselor, tăiate încăierate în luptă de interese contrare, viziunea naționalismului asupra lumii e verticală; el se uită nu la suprafață, ci în adâncime și vede lumea diferențiată nu în clase potrivnice, dar în națiuni diferite. Principiul diferențierii în adâncime, ce stă la temelia veacului nou, are o însemnătate covârșitoare în problema regenerării, pe care o agită spiritul contemporan... Omenirea, adică neamurile felurite care o alcătuiesc, nu se poate regenera decât pornind de la izvoarele ființei sale, care sunt izvoarele etnice.» (Crainic 1935e:258).

derstanding of the spirituality for the nationalism. Using certain poetical and exhortative actions,<sup>39</sup> he defines the state underlining the role played by the spirituality in its understanding and linking it with the culture. He says there:

“The state itself would have only biological significance, if the light of the spiritual would not give the depth and profundity to all these works that make up the specificity of national spirituality. It is almost useless to say that the meaning of this personality is an attribute of culture.” (Crainic 1938a:162).<sup>40</sup>

It would be expected there that the author to go deeper into the definition and to explain how he sees the interference between spirituality and the culture in the Romanian context, or even to offer examples or suggestions regarding a possible cooperation, but most probably he prefers to leave that as a task for

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<sup>39</sup> For example, when he says: “Only the kings and poets allow themselves to speak of” my country “,” my nation “,” my homeland “,” as personal property.” (Crainic 1938a:162). Origin. 1938a: “Singuri regii și poeții își îngăduie să vorbească despre “țara mea”, de “neamul meu”, de “patria mea”, ca de o proprietate personală.” (Crainic 1938a:162).

<sup>40</sup> Origin. 1938a: “Statul însuși n-ar avea decât o semnificație biologică, dacă lumina spiritualului n-ar da contur și adâncime tuturor acestor lucrări ce alcătuiesc specificul spiritualității naționale. E aproape de prisos să spunem că sensul acestei personalități e un atribut al culturii.» (Crainic 1938a:162).

his future exegetics or disciples. Still, it is important to say that he displaces the discourse towards an older idea (Crainic 1930), namely the ethnocracy. Compared with his previous mentions, this time, the Romanian writer not only does he mention it, but he also has an attempt of definition. He sees as an element related with the political context and as an alternative to democracy. Debatable, his definition of the democracy underlines an aspect that is rather defining for the socialism, is contrasted, in this article, by the one of the ethnocracy, seen as the dictatorship of the majority, but of the national one.<sup>41</sup> This association between majority and nation, together with the one to the spirituality or the Orthodoxy, brings him extremely closer to the phyletism (Zyzkyn 1936:265). But it has also aspects of originality especially when the author tries to link it with official documents released by Christian authorities. Although he studied in German space

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<sup>41</sup> "We call ethnocracy the political will of the autochthonous race to make the state the expression of its properties and the organ of its mission in the world. If democracy has placed the centre of gravity of the state towards the minority periphery, ethnography is entitled to reshape it into the national personality of the majority that created it." (Crainic 1938a:167). Origin. 1938a: "Numim *etnocrăție* voința politică a rasei autohtone de a face din stat expresia proprietăților ei și organul misiunii ei în lume. Dacă democrația a plasat centrul de gravitate al statului spre periferia minoritară, etnograția e îndreptățită să-l reiazeze în personalitatea națională amajorității care l-a creat." (Crainic 1938a:167).

and seems to be rather linked with the Protestant area, sharing even its ideas in matters of perception of mystical discourse, Crainic is also connected with Catholic space and ideas. Among the most notorious, there can be found the famous encyclical letter *Quadragesimo anno* (Carlen Ihm 1981:415-444), the only pontifical document that offers a third way between capitalism and communism, namely the corporatism. Most probably, in an attempt to place himself in the same line with the pontifical document, but also under the influence of Mussolini’s ideas, who will embrace the idea too and will be one of the main sources of inspiration from this decade for Crainic, he will also see this as a potential solution. The originality of his approach resides there in the idea of “corporate ethnocracy” (Crainic 1938a:167). Without containing a direct reference to his anti-Semite ideas, the formula comes in the context of Jewish monopoly on products like the alcoholic one and on different sectors of Romanian market and it can be seen, like other writings of the time, as an allusion to this aspect and as a call to the Romanian producers to fight against this aspect by forming corporations. Of course, as a general consideration, it must be mentioned that the entire number that contains the article that we presented there, is dedicated to the autochthon spirit and to the ways how it could be used for the national progress. It contains articles signed also by other

Romanian writers with far-right orientation and sympathies like Radu Gyr or Vintilă Horia.

After seeing the philosophical and theological articles that contain information about the way how the Romanian writer sees the Christian nationalism or the nationalism from the ideological point of view, we will try now to investigate the articles that have a more dense political content. Of course, there can be also found there a philosophical approach, due to the formation of their author, but the religious accent is not as strong as in the previous one, and the references to spirituality are also weaker. As a general consideration, it can be affirmed that there it can be seen a continuity in his approach. Therefore, if in 1935, his approaches will be very pragmatically oriented and their author will praise here in a very “committed” way the Fascism (Crainic 1935b:169-175), one year later his discourse will become more abstract and will not be dedicated to a certain regime, although a sympathy for the aforementioned one could be seen, but to the prototype of the heroic man and his value (Crainic 1936a:265-271). When the political situation becomes critical, his pragmatism will not be anymore oriented towards foreign alternatives, but to the local possibilities as he will consider the Legionary Movement (Crainic 1940c:521-525) or the critics of the contemporary reali-

ties (Crainic 1940:465-469) and the reload of the national feeling (Crainic 1941:1-8).

From far, the article that could become surely a head of accusation for Crainic is the one that he dedicated to the Fascist regime with the occasion of its national day from 1935. Apart from the aspects regarding the context of its writing and other formal aspects, the text is a direct and uncensored form of praising the Italian dictatorial regime. Moreover, it is not a simple analysis of some factual realities, but an attempt to justify an ideology and to put it in continuity with important moments from the history. He therefore not only does he see it as a synthesis of the spirit, but also as a continuation of Cesar’s reign, pop ones and even superior to them:

“Fascism, as a totalitarian form of life, is the synthesis of force and of the Spirit. The Roman Caesars represented the force; the popes, the best of them, represented the Spirit. Paganism and Christianity mix and balance their essences in the conception that revived Rome and has made Italy a modern state masterpiece. The state created by Mussolini is the exemplary state. Amidst the continuous and endless ruins of the false political settlements in Europe, Rome erects a form of integral life in which all opposing tendencies

within a people's bosom they appear harmonized and hierarchized under the authority of the spirit." (Crainic 1935b:171).<sup>42</sup>

Moreover, he does not limits to the praise of a regime, but also speaks about his leader, underlining not inasmuch as expected his leadership skills or his way of ruling, but his ability in using the religion as a tool for the accomplishment of his political program,<sup>43</sup> which makes him consequent in the approach regarding the religion and offers a new important detail in the understanding of the way how he sees the aforementioned element in a nationalist context. In the same time, the accent is also put on the need for the Romanian rebirth and on the fact that the main elements of Mussolini's politics can be also important

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<sup>42</sup> Origin. 1935b: «Fascismul, ca formă totalitară de viață, e sinteza forței și a Spiritului. Cezarii romani au reprezentat forța; papii, cei mai buni dintre ei, au reprezentat Spiritul. Păgânătatea și creștinătatea își amestecă și își echilibrează esențele în concepția care a reînviat Roma și a făcut din Italia o capodoperă de stat modern. Statul creat de Mussolini e statul exemplar. În mijlocul ruinărilor continue și fără oprire ale falselor așezări politice din Europa, Roma ridică o formă de așezământ al vieții integrale în care toate tendințele contrarii din sânul unui popor apar armonizate și ierarhizate sub autoritatea spiritului.» (Crainic 1935b:171).

<sup>43</sup> "The Duke of Italy, with his cautious passion, which he extends to fascism, knows how to use with great ability the great vehicle of Catholicism." (Crainic 1935b:172). Origin. 1935b: "Ducele Italiei, cu prudența-i pasiune, pe care o pune în extinderea fascismului, știe să utilizeze cu abilitate unică marele vehicul al catolicismului." (Crainic 1935b:172).

in this context, because they feed with these realities (Crainic 1935b:174-175). Of course, a deeper analysis of these ideas and of the previous ones reveals the existence of a contradiction between the so-praised autochthon spirit that will constitute the basis of the ethnocracy, and the import of foreign ideas, values and even models of political and social organisation of the life.

The fact that he sees the Italian leader as illustrative for the profile of the heroic man (Crainic 1935b:173) puts this article in a relationship of continuity with the one from the next year (Crainic 1936a:265-271), where, he will suggest as a topic of investigation this element. After presenting the fatalism as a disease of the nation (Crainic 1936a:267) and underlining the role of the communion of the leaders with the “nation,” seen as people (Crainic 1936a:266), which, according to his thinking brings to the heroism, he speaks about two factors that could determine the raise of a new heroic generation, namely the education and the apparition of a threaten to the existence of the nation. In order to explain his ideas, he uses as an example the generation of the Great Union of Romanians. He says about its representative personalities:

“Let’s take an example: the great war generation. It is undoubtedly the heroic generation par excellence, because it remains in



history the greatest fact to date of our nation; the unification in a single state of all Romanians. At the time, this generation was nourished, through an immense education, with all the heroic substance and with all the prophetic spirit that unfolded from the reservoir of sacrifices of the past centuries, in a state of obscurity, crushed and strangled as it was under foreign domination.” (Crainic 1936a:268).<sup>44</sup>

Starting from this, he speaks about nationalism as about the soul of the people (Crainic 1936a:269) and insists on the fact that the Romanian elites of his time should not serve anything else than their country’s interest. The spirit and context of the space where he lived will constitute for him, like in other situations, as his exegetics will underline,<sup>45</sup> a motivation for some of his ideas. Moreover, some pragmatic realities will determinate

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<sup>44</sup> Origin. 1936a. «Să luăm un exemplu: generația marelui război. E fără îndoială generația eroică prin excelență, fiindcă pe seama ei rămâne în istorie cea mai mare faptă de până azi a neamului nostru; unirea într-un singur stat a tuturor românilor. La vremea ei, această generație a fost hrănită, printr-o imensă educație, cu întreaga substanță eroică și cu tot duhul profetic ce se desfăceau din rezervorul de sacrificii al veacurilor trecute. În conștiința ei însă, spiritul eroic se contopea cu durerea și revolta că neamul nostru se găsea într-o stare de înjosire, fărâmițat și sugrumat cum era sub dominații străine». (Crainic 1936a:268).

<sup>45</sup> “We must emphasize, with all the needed discretion, that Nichifor Crainic would not be able to arrive to this result without the help of the Romanian spirit and Orthodoxy.

him to embrace a certain opinion and to speak against Jews that will not just threaten the development of the future ethnocracy (Crainic 1930), but through the monopol on topic like the alcohol or different areas of the market, will undermine, according to him, the economy of the state and will block a potential development of an autochthonous culture.

If the education, the important aforementioned element that could contribute to the development of a heroic generation, existed and it was, in many situations, a high-quality one, the question was if there existed also a critically situation that could create the need for heroism. Crainic will show that the problem is not the critical situation, which, at least under the moral aspects, can be easily found, but its awareness. The fight in order to make

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There are proud and exclusivist peoples, peoples with a political prevalence, that do not admit to live free and many aspects.... Those people use God as an appendix and they are capable easily to change their religion. If Romanians would be such a people, it would be difficult for Crainic to see the harmony that must define the relationships between ethnical and religious." (Băncilă 1939:417). Origin. 1939: "Trebuie să menționăm cu toată discreția necesară că, Nichifor Crainic nu ar fi reușit să ajungă la rezultatele la care a ajuns, fără ajutorul spiritului românesc și Ortodoxiei. Există oameni mândri și exclusiviști, oameni dominați de principii politică, care nu admit să fie liberi și în numte aspecte... îl folosesc pe Dumnezeu ca pe o anexă și sunt capabili să își schimbe religia foarte ușor. Dacă românii ar fi fost un astfel de popor, ar fi fost dificil pentru Crainic să vadă armonia care ar trebui să definească relațiile dintre etnic și religios.» (Băncilă 1939:417).

again the heroism a primary social need for the Romanian space must be therefore dedicated to this aspect. According to him, in case of accomplishment, this will lead to the recovery of the national patrimony and the recovery of “people’s soul:”

“A new problem will arise immediately: the transformation of the soul of this people into constructive energy - the only means by which the foreign heritage will become national. The soul of this people has, besides great qualities, undeniable defects. It is today somehow disfigured and abnormally ruled from a way that should bring it to glory.” (Crainic 1936a:270).<sup>46</sup>

In this context, he will use a common idea in any discourse regarding the Parsifal and the need for brave behaviour, namely the one of the sacrifice, as a pillar that could help to overpass the crises and obstacles.<sup>47</sup> But, compared with other situations when Crainic will use this terms with philosophical relevance in order

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<sup>46</sup> Origin. 1936a: O problemă nouă se va ivi imediat: transformarea sufletului acestui popor în energie constructivă – singurul mijloc prin care patrimoniul înstrăinat va deveni național. Sufletul acestui popor are, pe lângă mari calități, și defecte incontestabile. El e azi oarecum desfigurat și cârmuit anormal din făgașul ce trebuie să-l ducă la glorie.» (Crainic 1936a:270).

<sup>47</sup> A double objective is thus revealed in the face of nationalism: the unraveling of foreign heritage and its Romanianization through a work of continuous and methodical

to move the speech from the pragmatic registry to the abstract one and somehow, to escape from the idea of offering a potential solution, he goes again to the one previously presented, namely Mussolini, and briefly describes his activity and suggests it as a potential model. Sacrifice must be seen as an accomplishment of education and in relation with discipline. Starting from this assumption, he speaks about the need for sport (Crainic 1936a:270), and in a repetitive way, goes back to the economical context and anti-Semite need.

Still, his conceptions regarding the use of Christian elements in understanding the nationalism can be found at the end of the article. Here, the professor of mystical theology, like other authors that succeeded him (Savin 1996), will also use elements from other Christian spirituality in order to make more understandable his conception about sacrifice and its role in the history of a nation. In order to offer a definition of demophile heroism, a concept advanced by him in Romanian context, but influenced

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effort. sacrifice, a new generation of heroism... Obstacles require a soul with powers to overwhelm them." (Crainic 1936a:270). Origin. 1936a: «O problemă nouă se va ivi imediat: transformarea sufletului acestui popor în energie constructivă – singurul mijloc prin care patrimoniul înstrăinat va deveni național. Sufletul acestui popor are, pe lângă mari calități, și defecte incontestabile. El e azi oarecum desfigurat și cârmuit anormal din făgașul ce trebuie să-l ducă la glorie.» (Crainic 1936a:270).

also by thinkers from the Italian space, he uses as a comparison the idea of the stigmata. While for other Orthodox theologians, to speak about this topic will mean a great challenge and a reason for an inter-confessional debate (Lot-Borodine 1945:83-89), for him it seems not to be something very sensitive from the theological point of view. Very plastically, the image that he used, comparing Christ's sacrifice with the need of sacrifice that any nation needs, could look today as a blasphemy. It looked most probably in the same way for many people of his time. Still, it has its relevance for the style of the time and for understanding how important was the national idea for a writer like him. We offer below in extenso his ideas about this aspect:

“In Christian spirituality there are people who love Jesus Christ so intensely and plunge so deeply into his suffering that their bodies exactly reproduce the crucifixion drama on the cross. Their arms and legs dripped with blood, as if in them beat the Golgotha's spikes. The forehead gives them red bristles as if it were wearing a crown of thorns. The bloody coast, pierced like the spear of the Roman centurion. The science contests this stigmata phenomenon, but it cannot explain it and it can not show why it makes you one with Christ.

Demophilic heroism plunges so deeply into the love of the nation that the wounds of this nation become the wounds of the nationalists. If we were to gather the prisons made by young warriors lately, from their total hundreds of years I would understand what service by sacrifice means. In the camp of democracy there is no punishment for virtue, not even for the wrongs of the democrats. There is, without a doubt, a Golgotha of the young generation, because in her flesh they bleed the stigmas of an entire nation.

But all world’s Golgotha ends in the light of the resurrection.”  
(Crainic 1936a:271).<sup>48</sup>

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<sup>48</sup> Origin. 1936a: “În spiritualitatea creștină sunt oameni care îl iubesc atât de intens pe Iisus Hristos și se cufundă atât de adânc în suferința lui, încât trupurile lor reproduc întocmai drama Răstignitului pe cruce. Brațele și picioarele lor picură sânge aievea, de parcă în ele s-ar bate piroanele Golgotei. Fruntea le asudă broboane roșii ca și cum ar purta cunună de spini. Coasta le sângerează, străpunsă parcă de sulița centurionului roman. Isus se răstignește din nou în carnea lor. Știința constată acest fenomen de stigmatizare, dar nu-l poate lămuri, e minunea iubirii, care te face una cu Hristos.

Eroismul demofil se cufundă atât de adânc în iubirea de neam încât rănilor acestui neam devin rănilor naționaliștilor. Dacă am aduna închisorile făcute de tinerii luptători în ultimul timp, din totalul lor de sute de ani am înțelege ce înseamnă slujire prin sacrificiu. În lagărul democrației nu există pedeapsă pentru virtute și nici măcar pentru fărâdelegile democraților. Există, fără îndoială, o Golgotă a generației tinere, fiindcă în carnea ei sângerează stigmatele unui neam întreg.

Dar toate Golgotele din lume sfârșesc prin lumina învierii.» (Crainic 1936a:271).

The optimistic from the end of the paragraph makes it to look like a motivational speech. In this context, the use of religious motifs for a society deeply rooted in spirituality and having a great respect for religious aspects, was for sure part of a “captatio benevolensis” technique. Moreover, it helps the author to underline the need for the profundity of the change in the nationalist field.

The same idea will be also found later, in an article written during the Legionary Government in 1940's (Crainic 1940:521-525). Here, as he did it before, when influenced by Catholic social teaching (Carlen Ihm 1981:415-444), offered corporatism as a solution to the social systems of his time (Crainic 1938a:167), the author criticises both capitalism and communism, bringing into attention their weak points (Crainic 1940:524-525). In the same time, he criticises King's Charles the Second attitude (he just abdicated in the context of a political and diplomatic crisis) and praise the Iron Guard who was the new leader of the country. For sure, among the most important reasons that have determined him to write such a text where, together with the ideological ones, reasons of political opportunism. He will have a good intuition because, his fidelity to the regime will bring to his appointment, although if just for a short period of time (Solonari 2009:18).

Speaking about the afore-approached topics like moral heroism, spiritual dimension of the political life or about the intrinsic value of the principles promoted by the Far-right movement, sees its arrival at the power as a consequence of a revolution. In the same time, insists on the fact that the need for heroism brought them there and makes a critic, drawing the attention to the fact that the temptation of power also usually brings the infiltration of people who are not committed to the doctrine of the movement, but they simulate that:

“As much as the historians warn the political revolutions, they are mostly gangs of assassins organized to conquer the privileges that others hold. There are rare cases when a revolution comes in the name of moral heroism. The Iron Guard did not prepare the revolution as a simple *coup d'état*, but it transformed itself, into its people, so that it could morally revolutionize the entire Romanian society. Only if you force the brakes of the harsh renunciations, you have the right to ask others to submit to this serious law of moral discipline. Today, many are simulants, and few legionaries. But those few, whose moral force comes from their own sufferings, but especially from the immense sacrifice of their comrades, have a terrific debt not to be seduced by the spell of political power, but through their own



parable to impose on the whole country the discipline of moral heroism.” (Crainic 1940:524).<sup>49</sup>

How deep was this transformation of the nation’s heart that Crainic praises, it could be seen shortly after. The same thing could be also said about the moral transformation and the relevance of the moral discipline and its deep implantation in the heart of Romanian people. Still, the article is important because it highlights once again his conceptions regarding nationalism and the role of morals in its defining. It also says many things about his consequence in understanding the realities.

The later evolution of the political situation and the fact that Romania will lose Bessarabia, will determine Nichifor Crainic to publish, in 1940 and 1940, two new essays, with a political and philosophical content (Crainic 1940:465-469; Crainic 1941:1-8).

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<sup>49</sup> Origin. 1940: “Oricât ar preamări istoricii revoluțiile politice, ele sunt în majoritate bande de asasini organizați pentru cucerirea privilegiilor, pe care alții le dețin. Sunt nespuse de rare cazurile când o revoluție vine în numele eroismului moral. Garda de Fier n-a pregătit revoluția ca pe o simplă lovitură de stat, ci s-a transformat pe sine, în oamenii ei, ca în urmă să poată revoluționa moralmente societatea românească întreagă. Numai dacă îți impui frâul asprelor renunțări, ai dreptul să ceri altora supunere la această gravă lege a disciplinei morale. Astăzi, evident, simulanți sunt mulți, iar legionari puțini. Dar puținii aceea, a căror forță morală vine din suferințele proprii, dar mai ales din imensul sacrificiu al camarazilor lor, au datori ateribilă să nu se lase

Both of them are related with the topic that we investigate, namely with his nationalist attitude, shifted this time, due to the historical evolution of the things. While the first one only contains a review of the political situation of the time, the second one, dedicated to “demophily” (love for the people), has also some interesting accents with relevance both for political theology or philosophy. Interesting in the first article is not only the way how he sees the loss of Bessarabia and Bukovina and the Jewish quilt in this problem or the critics made to the democracy, to which alternative he will see it still as being the corporatism (Crainic 1940:4656), but the end of the text. Here, in a discourse that would surely is defined today as a populist one (Crainic 1940:466), he asks to the young people to wake up and to develop a national conscience that help them not only to progress as a nation, but also to recover the lost aspects. Like before, in the article dedicated to the heroic man (Crainic 1936a:365-271), he insists on the relevance of the idea of generation and on the fact that acting as an homogenous organism and not through individual actions, Romanians could surely overcome the difficulties of that time, bringing back the lost territories and places his country among the most respected ones in the world.

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seduși de vraja puterii politice, ci prin însăși pilda lor să impună țării întregi disciplina eroismului moral.” (Crainic 1940:524).

The same ideas will be re-used in the article from the next year, having as a main topic the aforementioned territorial lost. Together with these aspects, he will also underline there the fact that the Romanian society of the time started to become, in a certain measure, something that could be classified today as a secularist society, where the religion is excluded from the public space. Maintaining his critics to the democracy, he shows that, in this regime the religious aspect is not relevant due to the fact that the people is not seen as an identitary element of the nation, but as a crowd meant to be exploited by the rulers<sup>50</sup> and therefore sustains that the religion is a pillar that can warrantee the respect for the each individual and the possibility for the affirmation of his identity and originality. His discourse, containing also a review of literature (Crainic 1941:3-5), where the author presents the way how important thinkers like Charles Maurras, Maritain or

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<sup>50</sup> “One of the most cynical ideas in the world is that between politics and morality there would be mutual incompetence (to be read:” incompatibility,” our note) and that religion would be a particular matter, without any interference in the public life. In the long and disastrous democratic experience, indeed neither its moral nor its source, religion, had much interference in the affairs of the state. The rulers, the principles of faith and ethics had nothing to do with politics, because they were uncomfortable, or they belong to a group of lifting the people, with all the means that the state power puts at their disposal, then this policy cannot be taken out of the moral frame, because it is, on the contrary, the art of the superior island of serving the multitude... Theology, which is the science of good and its source from beyond the world, sees and is forced to

the Russian Dostoyevsky saw demophily contains also an interrogation about the reasons that have determined some thinkers to make from religion an element of political fight:

“What pushed the theological element in the wake of these political struggles and what caused him to play a decisive role in the making of the Christian physiognomy of Romanian nationalism? Maybe the selfishness of a light career on behalf of the popular crowds? But all those who, among theologians and clergymen, have thus judged, have deserted from Christian principles and

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see in politics the immense scope of its principles, which must be embodied in the life of the humankind.” (Crainic 1941:2). Origin. 1941: “Una dintre cele mai cinice idei din câte s-au rostit în lume este aceea că între politică și morală ar exista o incompetență reciprocă (a se citi: “incompatibilitate”, n. n.) și că religia ar fi o chestiune particulară, fără niciun amestec în viața publică. În lunga și dezastruoasă experiență democratică, într-adevăr nici morala și nici izvorul ei, religia, n-au avut mare amestec în treburile de stat. Căci din moment ce mulțimea nu era considerată decât ca o pradă de exploatat în folosul conducătorilor, principiile credinței și ale eticii n-aveau ce căuta în politică, fiindcă erau incomode. Criteriul Mântuitorului că după fapte se cunoaște omul, precum pomul se cunoaște după roade, e de o valabilitate veșnică. Dacă politica nu e altceva decât acțiunea unui ins sau a unui grup de a ridica poporul, cu toate mijloacele pe care puterea de stat le pune la îndemână, atunci această politică nu se poate scoate din cadrul moral, fiindcă ea e, dimpotrivă, arta insului superior de a sta în slujba mulțimii... Teologia, care e știința binelui și a izvorului său de dincolo de lume, vede și este obligată să vadă în politică imensul câmp de aplicare al principiilor ei, ce trebuie încarnate în viața omenirii.” (Crainic 1941:2).

joined the democratic clubs, where without risk and without sacrifice they could find what they were looking for.” (Crainic 1941:2).<sup>51</sup>

For him, democracy is therefore a threaten not only to the nation and its evolution, but also to the religion and spirituality. The way how he relates religion and nation and sees their cooperation in the evolution of the society reveals his conception regarding Christian nationalism. Still, there is a contradiction between his writings from the beginning of the 4<sup>th</sup> decade of the 20<sup>th</sup> century and the ones from the beginning of the next decade. If there, Crainic will often speak about the role of religion in shifting the political life and about its potential contribution to the development of national feeling and the creation of a social stability or the conscience of belonging to a generation, here he will see any interference between the two ones as disastrous. Most probably, pragmatic elements like the geo-political situation of the time will determine him to have this attitude. It will be the same aspect the one that, two years later will also make

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<sup>51</sup> Origin . 1941: “Cea a împins oare elementul teologic în vălmășagul acestor lupte politice și ce l-a determinat să joace un rol hotărâtor în făurirea fizionomiei creștine a naționalismului românesc? Poate egoismul unei cariere ușoare pe seama mulțimilor populare? Dar toți acei care, dintre teologi și dintre clerici, au judecat astfel, au dezeratat de la principiile creștine și s-au înscris în cluburile democratice, unde fără risc și fără jertfă puteau găsi ceea ce căutau”. (Crainic 1941:2).

him to come back to better thinking regarding such a potential cooperation.

As we could see in the previous pages, the publicist activity from the investigated decade is a rich one for the Romanian writer. Moreover, it has a genre diversity and there can be seen an evolution of the expressed ideas, but also, in certain points, a contradiction among what he firstly expressed and what will later sustain. Influenced by the far-right currents of ideas of his time, he will remain rather fascinated by Fascism and will even try to suggest a form of organisation of Romanian space based on its principles, seeing the nationalism and the corporatism as solutions to the evolution of the Romanian society. In the same time, like other thinkers from the same space, he will be anti-Semite and will see the monopoly of Jewish people as a threaten to Romanian independence and as a danger and will always underline the fact that religion and spirituality have an important contribution not only in defining the national identity, but also for creating social structures needed in the consolidation of the society and in the preservation of its identity.

## Conclusion

As we have tried to show in our analysis, although he is a controversial personality of the Romanian space, Nichifor Crainic is also a complex author, whose ideas can be discovered and valorised today not only in the theological, philological or philosophical area, but also in the area of political sociology. In the same time, there are aspects of his thinking that can be contested and ideas still used by the new-nationalists from the Romanian context, who tried to re-born the current after 1989, but having only a very small membership.

Like many other thinkers of Romanian space from the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, he will write also articles that contributed to the creation of a “rhetoric of nationalism” (Freyermuth 2019:14). He will also have a far-right orientation, influenced probably by his German studies and the fact that, as a theologian, he tried to get close to a political way of thinking that also included religion and spirituality. It is still interesting the fact

that, at least before 1940's, he will not join the Nazi ideas and will often criticise them for the exclusivist and racist approach (Crainic 1935:58). In the same time, the critics brought by him to this regime will not stop him to have an anti-Semite attitude and to be always suspicious in questions regarding the relationships between Jewish people and the economy or to be opened to the dialogue with other cultures and even translate works from other spaces or write chronicles about the most important events of the time.

Deeply implied in the social life of the time and interested in the evolution of the political space, he will write about topics regarding this area or converging to it. Still, due to his complex activity as a professor, editorialist, poet, literary critic, philosopher or theologian, he will not develop a clear and systematic vision either regarding his ideas from the political space nor in the field of philosophy. This is the reason why, although there are many philosophers that write and publish in this period, the only one who develops a system is Lucian Blaga (1895-1961).<sup>52</sup> But he will be also, in a certain moment of his life, between his supporters and among the ones who praised him (Blaga 1941:278-288). For this reason, namely the fact that he wrote rather dissipated

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<sup>52</sup> For more information about his life and activity, see also: Alucăi 1979.



articles, spread in different journals and later brought together in different anthologies, there can be said that he does not have a systematic and articulated conception regarding the nationalism and its landmarks. If one tries to analyse him comparing his ideas to the ones of Kirkegaard or Hegel, will be surely disappointed, because he will find here some ideas and not a conception clearly defined. Moreover, under certain aspects, contradictions between different elements will be possible to be found too.

For this reason, it is also almost difficult to precise whether he was or not an adept of the Christian nationalism. Compared to other thinkers that were theoreticians, Crainic who was also part of the transformation of his time, seems to be, in many situations, an adept of this way of thinking (Morariu 2016:66). He speaks about the relationships between religion and spirituality and sees the last one as an useful tool in the promotion of the political ideas. Moreover, he sees religion and national identity as the two pillars of the nationalism of the time and as about elements *sine qua non* of the future Romanian development.

Regarding some formal aspects, it must be said that a great minus of his writings is, in many cases, the lack of methodology. He is not doing an analysis based on a structured way of think-

ing or following some steps, but in many cases, just realizes a radiography of the situation. Still, there can be spoken about a certain evolution of the ideas expressed in the articles concerning nationalism in the investigated decade. Therefore, in articles that the one dedicated to the heroic man, that can be surely considered an exhortation to heroism in an age of mediocrity (Crainic 1936a:265-271), he develops ideas previously mentioned in an article dedicated to the national feast of the Fascism (Crainic 1935b:169-175). He does not only speak about Fascism as a model by praising Mussolini, but brings into debate some practical principles of action. Interesting is also the way how, in certain situations, when he can not or does not want to offer practical solutions to a problem or to write about a topic that could disturb the leaders of the time, he avoids this aspect, moving the discourse from the pragmatic ground to the philosophical area, as we have emphasised in the anterior chapter. Therefore, the publicist or ideological one, is an element that also defines his ideas from the investigated decade. Later, after 1941, when he becomes a political personality he will also try to put in application a few of his ideas, but due to the short period of the Govern where he was part of, he had not enough time to do it. Later, after the beginning of the Communist regime, most of the nationalists and “Christian nationalists” will end in prison and therefore,

although there will be a certain “underground” continuity of the current, its effects will not be notable anymore. After 1989, there will be also an attempt to rebirth this current and use ideas like the ones of Crainic as a justification for practical actions, but despite of all the efforts of the exponents of this current, there will be only a small minority that will join it.

Of course, it must be also mentioned the fact that not only the continuity is the one that defines his aspect. If from the point of view of the style and content, there can be spoken about a real eclectic approach, due to the fact that there are so many genres adopted and it is not an uniformity of style, in matters of ideas, there can be also found a contradiction in questions regarding the message. They are influenced, obviously, by the geo-political changes and the re-orientation of Romanian political stage. Therefore, if in the beginning he underlines the need of cooperation between political and religious spaces, in 1941, he will write about the disease that was created by this cooperation in democracy. Still, there will be some constant aspects, like the corporatism seen as a solution to capitalism and communism, the need for morals and spirituality, and the fact that the last one is seen as an outcome of the national being and therefore it cannot be perceived as separated to that one.

From the point of view of the continuity between his ideas from the 4<sup>th</sup> decade and his later actions, it must be mentioned the fact that they are not part of a strategy of the later Romanian politician. A deep analysis will even reveal him as being a man without vision, that defends a few fundamental principles, but does not know how to develop his ideas regarding them nor how to be totally consequent with his ideas or with his attitudes. Ideas like his fidelity regarding the monarchic regime in Romanian space are presented differently, depending on the context. Therefore, if in 1939, he will praise King Charles the Second of Romania in a beautiful prayer-poem (Crainic 1939a:425-426), later when he speaks about the legionary revolution (Crainic 1940c:521-528), he will criticise his weakness.

Speaking about the originality of his ideas, there must be mentioned the fact that, although there can be found many influences in his way of thinking and enouncing different aspects of his thought, Crainic’s work has also many aspects of originality. The ethnnocratic dimension of nationalism is only one of them. The “gândirism” (from “ thought, which in Romanian means “gândire”), an extension of nationalism in Romanian literature, is also one area where he offered important contributions, together with his nationalist conception, which is not as exclusivist as the

Nazi one, offering a criticism to this, incorporates elements of Christian spirituality (from the Orthodox tradition, which was majoritarian in the Romanian context), but is rather influenced by the Fascist one.

Of course, as a conclusive aspect, it shall also be mentioned that among the main limits of this research whose aim was to offer an overview of the way how the Christian-nationalism of Nichifor Crainic is reflected in his publications from the 4<sup>th</sup> decade of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, is the fact that we could not find the *Calendar* that he edited at the middle of the period and he mentioned in his memories (Crainic 1991:123). Researchers that have investigated his work before us had also the same problem (Clark 2009:25). Still, authors like Christopher Clark does not miss the occasion to criticise him, using information from the other authors who pretend to have seen the document. We preferred not to do it and to mention that it is missing from our approach both inside its contents as in the conclusion. Therefore, a potential future research could be determined by the discovery of this document and its investigation. Together with that, outcomes from the space of political theology, sociology, philosophy or at the borders between different topics (interdisciplinary ones) could surely be made in the

future, due to the richness of his works and of the ideas spread in documents like the aforementioned ones.

As a general conclusion it could be said that, despite of the controversies generated by his ideas, Nichifor Crainic’s work is an interesting and a valuable one and it could be used, from a positive point of view for the worthwhile contributions that the author brought in the understanding of some theological and philosophical aspects, and from a negative one, as an argument against negative topics like nationalisms. In the same time, it represents an important historical source, not enough investigated until today, although as we have tried to show also in our research, there are many authors, especially from the Theological area, that use his works and consider him relevant for their research. In the sociological or the historical space, there are also authors from the Romanian space, but also from abroad (see: Hitchins 1994; Clark 2009:25) interested in his ideas, that offered important contributions on the understanding of the nationalism and its potential future negative aspects. Unfortunately, due to the fact that Crainic is not an author that benefited by a translation of his work in a foreign language like the English one, and, like the author of the present rows, to not have access to all the sources (it was impossible for us to find the *Călindariu* as it was

also for Cristopher Clark that mentions it, but as it can be seen from his article (Clark 2009:25) does not know its content).

Therefore, if this research brought into attention a topic that has not been investigated until now, we hope it will constitute only the beginning of new approaches that will contribute to an objective valorisation of his personality and of the value of his ideas. The way how the seeing the nation as a fundamental term and using as an “absolute” notion can bring to nationalism and use of “Christian” aspects in its understanding can be one of them, together with the discover of the lacking sources or the comparative investigation of his ideas and the ones of other important personalities of the time, from the Romanian space (like: Iorga, Eliade or Nae Ionescu for example), or from abroad.

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