

## BOOK REVIEW

**IL FUTURO DELL'EUROPA: LE SUE RADICI CRISTIANE (THE FUTURE OF EUROPE: ITS CHRISTIAN ROOTS)** Fontana, Sandro (Ed.) Venice: Marsilio Editori S. p.A. pp. 150.

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(Translated from the Italian original)

At the beginning of the book, Sandro Fontana examines the present situation in Europe and those Muslim countries which would like to be part of it and whose citizens constitute the big postwar migratory flow. He recognises Muslim but secular Turkey's preeminent role and dwells upon the 40plus years of Turkey's efforts to be part of Europe. But he wishes greater democratic development for the new Turkey and her greater adaptation to the spirit of Europe. He sees it as a prerequisite that Turkey find a solution to the Cyprus problem and the Kurdish question, but gives no indication of what these solutions may be. The author hopes that Europe does not push hard on Turkey since Europe needs Turkey and not vice versa.

Without dwelling upon the text by Gian Pietro Callari, which focuses strongly on Christian churches, we found Andreas Riccardi's work (pp.5588) interesting but too long. In fact it is difficult to summarise his work words and understand his ideological position.

Riccardi's work 'Living Together and Conflicts among Religions in the Mediterranean' starts out with a false identification of Islam. It begins with the Crusades but forgets the presence of the Seljuks in history with their religion, ideology and state as a militarypolitical power opposing European Christianity. He elaborates with sympathy the presence in Europe of Hebrew communities, considering them as the only accepted element in the Christian world, which does not accept to live together with other religions.

However it is a pleasant surprise to see that the author recognises that the CaliphSultan had a great deal of religious and administrative tolerance towards his nonMuslim subjects in the Ottoman Empire. Besides, he recognises the political participation of Christian elements in the Republican epoch, giving *megali idea* and the treatment of Turkish Cypriots by Archbishop Makarios as examples in contrast with the situation in Turkey, where a free orthodox community is present.

As the author points out, the Ottoman Empire's tolerance of religious, social, cultural and economic affairs for its nonMuslim communities, was not recognised by European public opinion. The Greek Orthodox population of Istanbul (which always referred to the city as Constantinople) lived and thrived happily in Turkish lands and did not share the artificial calls for freedom, at the expense of the Empire's unity, made by Europe to Christians

A strong contrast emerged between Muslim Ottoman religious tolerance and European intolerance and blindness and the dangerous political intrusion of European powers as false protectors of various Christian churches in the Empire. This intrusion, from France to tsarist Russia in the internal affairs of the Empire between late eighteenth hundreds and early nineteenth hundreds, was also based on the action of foreign missionaries and their schools. There might be also the support of the ideological and political revolts by some Christian communities -

Armenians and other Christian populations which saw Europe as their protector, heart and religious ideal towards the tolerant Ottomans.

It is pointed out that the strongest disagreements started among the different and always rival non-Muslim communities inside the Empire, above all between Christians and Hebrews.

The most serious Christian intolerance starts in the eighteenth century with the newly independent Greece, which is encouraged by anti-Turkish Europe, expelling non-Christians and Muslims, in an effort to eradicate any trace of the Muslim religion within its borders.

The author writes about a lot of minorities and their mutual massacres. He says that the religious and nationalistic ideas coincided in the same picture of Europe and its ex

Ottoman territories, which was not inclined to the thought of the spiritual unity of the continent.

The author does not speak a lot about the Armenian problem but recognises that their Christian belief coincided with their national aspirations. But this was not a commonly accepted line of action by the whole Armenian community. And the massacre of Armenians was not carried out by the whole Turkish population, as it is often believed, but by Kurdish gangs and some Young Turks.

The Hebrew community did not support the Orthodox-Greek idea of taking possession of Istanbul.

Finally, the author speaks about the support of the non-Greek Christian communities for rising Arab nationalism in the Empire. On the other hand, the Armenian nationalistic movement constituted a real danger for the unity of Anatolia. Christian minorities in eastern territories joined this movement.

The author's analysis is detailed but extremely complex: the reader, against his will, grasps the image that the variegated Eastern Christian world, in the various nuances of Christianity, is the origin of exasperated nationalisms and destabilization in the area.

In my opinion the reader can wonder: what does Christian religion in the East mean; what and how many aspects of Christian faith could be traced, which have exasperated nationalisms which were united only when they turned against the Muslim community?

The author says that, "Ataturk's Turkey is created without Christians". Here the reader has the impression that the author forgets Kemal's secularism and that the non-Muslim minorities continued to live, trade, profess their faith and keep their schools in Ataturk's Republic.

Riccardi attributes to Ataturk a dislike for Istanbul because it is a cosmopolitan, multiethnic and multireligious city. It is not possible to sum up the author's thought, which has the merit of a lot of historical research from Western sources, but has also the demerit of research based too much on the Christian-Muslim religious antagonism in Turkey and the Near East.

Ironically, we can wish a more detailed study of the Ottoman and Republican Turkish reality in order to identify what unites instead of what divides.

The author attributes to Muslims the guilt of confusing policy and religion in the twentieth century. But he also says that the Vatican, in the person of Pope Benedict XV, did not share the enthusiasm of many Christians for the conquest of Jerusalem by the troops of the Entente.

The author's analysis, starting from 1948 and in a rather confused manner and always using the yardstick of religious contrasts, concerns the problems of the Arab Near East. More or less openly, it shows an interest in the Hebrew communities of Europe and the Mediterranean. An example of the narrow-sightedness of the author on the problem in the Mediterranean is the citation, which is clearly obsolete today, of Tito's Yugoslavia as a model for the co-existence of ethnic groups, cultures and religions.

My personal commentary to the long historical, religious and political study of Riccardi is that, Turkey is represented very little. With its problems and reasons, in that part of the Mediterranean and Europe, Turkey has a very important presence.

On Cyprus, Riccardi stresses a contrast more religious than ethnic. Speaking about Islam, he says that there are two occurrences of this religion in Europe: historical Islam of the Ottoman expansion and the present one of the Muslim migration in Europe.

As for her request of admission to Europe, Turkey is placed by the author among the Muslim countries.

## **CONCLUSION**

We think that all the work, including the part which reports the judgements of great European and Christian statesmen, is designed more for a small group of experts rather than the general public. Thus, it makes the mistake both of being based too much on the alleged Christian spirit of Europe and of using exclusively European sources without listening to the voice and reasons of a country such as Turkey. It has not mentioned political, diplomatic and bibliographic sources. It is 'Christian Europe', but it is secular, which welcomes and rejects, with nonexpressed traces of mercantilism and ideological supremacy. Also in this book, like in other similar works, today's living Turkey is treated as nonexistent as a ghost.