

ABSTRACTS & KEYWORDS

Barbara BAERT

THE JOHANNESCHÜSSEL AS ANDACHTSBILD: THE GAZE, THE MEDIUM AND THE SENSES

The *Johanneschüssel* has a very particular relationship to the material culture of the isolated head in Western Europe. On the one hand, the artefact remained connected to its prototype, the skull relic; on the other, it grew into one of the most important devotional images of the Middle Ages in both sculpture and painting. In this way, the *Johanneschüssel* channelled the cult of the severed male head into the role of the gaze and empathy in the process of looking, the performative activities of processional images and relics, the archetype of the evil-averting visage, the involvement of the entire sensorium in spiritual experience, and, finally, into the role of medium in the transition from the middle ages to modernity. In this article, I propose to see the *Johanneschüssel* as the image at the threshold, at the gate. Metaphorically speaking, the *Johanneschüssel* relates to the archetypal idiom in which images were unmediated and the impact of figurative art was believed to be so great that it could kill (Medusa). But it also eagerly looks forward to the age in which images incarnated by a procreative God.

KEYWORDS: John the Baptist, headcult, senses, *Andachtsbild*, relics.

Ionuț A. TUDORIE

OLD AND NEW IN THE BYZANTINE IMPERIAL CORONATION IN THE 13TH CENTURY

The analysis of the ceremonial of Byzantine coronation during the last centuries of the Empire is focused mainly on the imperial raising on the shield and the physical unction. What is new and what is old in the two moments of Byzantine coronation? If the raising on a shield was practiced continuously between mid-4th century and early 7th century, to be resumed only in 1254, at the coronation of Theodore II Laskaris, in order to express more clearly the prominence of the army for the emperor as well as the Byzantine society at large, we can assert that physical unction is an innovation introduced in this ceremonial in the 12th century. Although both rituals are commonly associated with similar ones, performed in the West, their origin and symbolism were known to the Byzantines long before 12th-13th centuries. Thus, the Western influence so often mentioned in connection with the moments when the two rites were introduced in the coronation ceremonial is actually denied on the one hand by the practice of raising on the shield in a different historical period, and on the other hand by the different motivation and the notable differences in the material used for physical unction.

KEYWORDS: imperial unction, raising on the shield, imperial coronation, *Spiritualia*, *Temporalia*, ceremony.

Daniel BENGA
***DIDASCALIA APOSTOLORUM* AS SOURCE FOR THE TRADITIONS**
AND THE ETHOS OF THE SYRIAC CHRISTIANITY IN THIRD CENTURY.
A METHODOLOGICAL INTRODUCTION

Didascalía apostolorum is an important writing, which belongs to the category “Church Orders” of ancient Christianity, and a fundamental source for the reconstruction of the life of the old Church. The present study analyzes the basic elements of external criticism necessary for an accurate approach of this piece of writing, as a primary historiographical source. Attempting to settle conflicts, to impose old traditions, to organize community life and to propose delimitations to the ancient polytheistic society, *Didascalía apostolorum* gives the competent researcher access to the realities of the life of the Christian communities in the Syrian-Palestinian region. This pseudo-apostolic writing enables the recreation of the interferences between Syrian Christianity and Judaism, as well as between minority Christians and polytheistic majority pagans.

KEYWORDS: *Didascalía apostolorum*, Syria, church orders, ethos, ancient Christianity, pseudo-epigraphy.

Silviu LUPAȘCU
THE SEAL OF PROPHETHOOD:
CONNECTIONS BETWEEN CHRISTIANITY AND ISLAM
UNDER THE ABBASID DYNASTY

The approach to the relationship between Christianity and Islam, under the Abbasid Dynasty, has to deal with the analysis of the legend about Sergius Bahirā, the Arab-Nestorian monk concerning whom Ibn Ishāq (ca. 704-ca. 767-768), Ibn Sa’d (784-845), Ibn Hishām (d. ca. 834) and Al-Tabarī (839-923) declared that he foretold the prophetic vocation of Muhammad and his religious destiny as the founder of Islam. The “Apocalypse of Bahirā” stands as an important primary source concerning the legendary existence of Sergius Bahirā. The “Apocalypse of Bahirā” and the “Apocalypse of Peter” (K) belong to the same literary genre: the apocalyptic-polemical literature of the Christian communities of the Near East after the Arab-Moslem invasion. Consequently, their meaning is not only counter-historical, but also pseudo-theocratic: the narrative, theological and apocalyptic voice of the Christian scribes imitates the omnipotent and omniscient voice of the Abrahamic God in order to counteract the violence of warfare by literary violence, and to substitute an incomprehensible historical reality through the Christian theocratic ideal which reveals the foundation of an “Empire of the Cross” at the end of the historical time. Viewed from this hermeneutical perspective, the Christology and Mariology included in the Qur’ān, as well as the Christian

exegesis of the Qur'ān, show the interpenetration or consubstantiality of the divine languages which founded the Abrahamic religious realms.

KEYWORDS: Christian apocalypses; Islam; Christology; Mariology; Qur'ān; Prophet Muhammad; Sergius Bahirā; "Apocalypse of Bahirā".

Bogdan NEAGOTA

**INITIATIC RITUALITY AND CALENDARISTIC CEREMONIALISATION
IN THE SPRING CUSTOMS FROM TRANSILVANIA:
THE GREEN MAN. ETHNO-ANTHROPOLOGICAL
AND HISTORICAL-RELIGIOUS APPROACHES**

Our paper approaches a ritual-ceremonial complex, largely documented in rural communities from Transylvania (more than 100 villages), during the 20th century: the feast, bearing various names (*Păpălugăra*, *Gheorghe*, *Sângeorzul*, *Mătăhula*, *Burduhoasa*, *Goșoiul*, *Băbăluda*, *Borbotaița* etc.) is performed on occasion of different spring feasts (Saint George/*Sângeorz*, the measuring of milk/*măsurîșul laptelui* (i.e. Saint George according the Julian calendar: *Sângeorzul vechi*), Ascension (*Ispas*), Whitsunday (*Rusaliu*). In the second half of the 20th century, this feast entered its terminal stage. Nowadays, it continues to be performed in a number of villages in the region of Central Transylvania and on the valley of Someș river. Morphologically, the ceremonial has two dominant variants: (1) the linear procession (organized according to the carolling scheme), along the central axis of the village, of a youth dressed in green branches collected from the forest; the procession comprises stopping by virtually every house in the village, like with Christmas carolling, and water being tossed on everyone: masked figure and accompanying party; (2) the dramatized variant, having a complex ceremonial distributions and scenarios.

The custom, widely documented for European popular cultures, is intimately bound to the rites of rain invocation, and with the magic practices of stimulation of germination of all kinds (vegetal, animal, human). Beyond the evident agrarian substratum, the ceremonial is tied, too, to masculine puberty rites, and to the group of youth, respectively: a traditional institution still active in a number of regions in Transylvania.

The ethno-anthropological materials proceed from our field researches (2004-2011) and from classical bibliography. We tried to pass beyond the ethnographical-morphological description, and to assume the deep diachrony of phenomena. In this context, we are using historical-religious methodology as a vessel for exploring long-concealed archaic strata, otherwise unnoticed by modern eye. Passed through anthropological-historical and historical-religious analyses, these rituals work, for the modern researcher, as finest seismographs, best at understanding mental horizons underlying the religious history of profound Europe.

KEYWORDS: initiation, *Männerbünde*, ceremonialisation, invariants, *Păpălugăra*, St. George (*Sângeorz*).

Ana-Stanca TABARASI-HOFFMANN

“HE WHO KNOWS HIMSELF, KNOWS TO THE LAST PENNY HOW MUCH HE IS WORTH”. S. KIERKEGAARD’S MONETARY DISCOURSE ON KNOWLEDGE AND RELIGIOUS TRUTH

S. Kierkegaard uses the money metaphor to designate the “bankruptcy” of contemporary theology, as well as the falsification of the self, of Christianity and of its concepts of religious truth during modernity. In Kierkegaard’s journals, pseudonymous works, upbuilding discourses from 1843-1844 and *The Moment*, the description of false banknotes, worthless coins and inflation is often connected with the problem of trust in God and its loss. When putting these metaphors, as well as the description of the “Christian auditor” who needs to revise the falsified concepts but is a falsifier himself, into their historical context, the impact of the historical-critical method of Bible study and D. F. Strauss’ *Life of Jesus* becomes evident. This article also differentiates Kierkegaard’s implicit view on indirect communication and aesthetics from the previous and later use of the same monetary imagery (by G. E. Lessing and F. Nietzsche). Even if the economic circuit of dealing with worthless money / falsified concepts seems to be perpetuated to no end, for Kierkegaard it is actually abolished by the logic of the good and perfect gift, which is from above. By acknowledging that he is nothing, man can acquire his entire worth from the hands of God.

KEYWORDS: S. Kierkegaard; truth; trust; money metaphor; gift; G.E. Lessing; F. Nietzsche.

Gabriel H. DECUBLE

**MIXING UP THE HOLY WORD.
TATIAN’S MAGNIFICENT FAILURE AS A “HARMONIC EVANGELIST”
IN TERMS OF RELIGIOUS COMMUNICATION**

In most of the recent studies dealing with the same subject, focus has been on what makes up the intrinsic heretical content of the *Diatessaron* and on how Tatian’s heterodox ideas had an impact on both method and structure of it. In order to surpass the delicate but meanwhile redundant issue of Tatian’s doctrinal lapse, which is difficult to commensurate with today’s knowledge of what might have been orthodoxy in the second century, it is argued here that the very attempt to harmonize the Gospels reveals in itself the misunderstanding of the immanent plurality and fragmentariness of the εὐαγγέλιον, thus disregarding one fundamental aspect of religious communication. The present paper aims not to challenge already acquired knowledge in the technical study of the *Diatessaron* – regarding the original language, the provenance, the examination of the witnesses, and so on –, but to slightly refocus the interpretive strategy and enrich it with aspects so far ignored despite their generality.

KEYWORDS: Tatian, *Diatessaron*, Gospels, harmonization, religious communication.

Ionuț Daniel BĂNCILĂ**NEW APPROACHES TO THE HISTORY OF CHRISTIANITY (I)**

Review article of Christoph MARKSCHIES, *Die Gnosis*, München: C.H. Beck, 2010. Christoph MARKSCHIES, *Kaiserzeitliche christliche Theologie und ihre Institutionen. Prolegomena zu einer Geschichte der antiken christlichen Theologie*, Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2009². Christoph MARKSCHIES, Hubert WOLF (eds.), *Erinnerungsorte des Christentums*, München: C.H. Beck, 2010.

This article reviews three books authored or edited by Christoph Marksches (Humboldt University of Berlin), one of the most noted Church historians worldwide. An attempt is made to underline the author's core ideas that structure the handling of topics such as Gnosticism and the formation of the Christian Theology. The bigger picture in which these topics are integrated – a history of the formation of Christian Institutions – permits to envision the first centuries of Christian theology as a great thinking-laboratory, where different models of making the Christian idea accessible to cultivated late Antiquity people were experimented. On the other hand, the book on the Christian places of memory traces the most important landmarks of Christian memory for a present day German.

KEYWORDS: Gnosticism, Christian Theology, Institution, Canon formation, places of memory, European Christianity.

Daniela DUMBRAVĂ**THE CORRESPONDENCE BETWEEN UGO BIANCHI AND IOAN PETRU CULIANU: SOURCES FOR THE ITALIAN HISTORIOGRAPHY OF HISTORY OF RELIGIONS**

The previously unpublished correspondence between Ioan Petru Culianu and his Italian master Ugo Bianchi represents a fundamental source for the Italian historiography of the History of Religions, especially during its post-pettazzonian period. This article emphasizes Culianu's first steps into the field between 1972 and 1975. During that period, he takes a critical stance toward the interpretation of the *Himmelsreise der Seele*: he embarks on monographs dedicated to Hans Jonas and to Mircea Eliade, and undertakes scholarly work close to Eliade at Divinity School of the University of Chicago, where he draws attention to the importance of Gnosticism. Bianchi typically tried to enlarge historical-comparative methodological approaches by creating new cognitive and epistemological surveys into specific topics of the discipline. The letters between Culianu and Bianchi show the methodological and thematic affinities between the two scholars before 1986. At that time, Culianu recognizes in Ugo Bianchi a perfect master for his initiation into Gnostic mysteries.

KEYWORDS: Ugo Bianchi, Ioan Petru Culianu, Mircea Eliade, historiography, Gnosticism, *Himmelsreise der Seele*.

E. CIURTIN

**HANDEL'S MESSIAH AS HISTORY OF RELIGIONS:
WHY EV'RY VALLEY SHALL BE EXALTED**

Handel's *Messiah* (composed 1741, performed since 1742) includes a first aria for tenor, *Ev'ry Valley Shall Be Exalted* (I.3), in which Charles Jennens, Handel's Brit librettist and benefactor, reworked *Isaiah* 40:4 from the King James Bible and Book of Common Prayers (1662 edition). Recently, musicologists suspected some "rejoicing against Judaism" not only in the Christian theological reinterpretation of *Isaiah* in mid-18th century England, but also in Jennens' *libretto* and, more alarmingly, even in Handel's music. On the contrary, I argue, Handel and Jennens were sufficiently skilled for offering a perfect illustration of (and giving musical endurance to) a neglected but crucial topic belonging to the religious history of Europe and Asia. The second part of this note, following contributions by Bruce Lincoln on the "flat earth" (1983, 1989), explores its representations and apocalyptic/eschatological function not only in ancient Judaism and early Christianity, but also in Zoroastrianism, Brahmanism, and (early to mainstream Mahāyāna) Buddhism. The author would also like to illustrate *in concreto* the significance of music for a comparative history of religions as well as the tools historians of religions have for improving their appreciation of Handel.

KEYWORDS: Handel, *Messiah*, Jennens, *Isaiah*, Buddhism, Zoroastrianism, Judaism, Christianity, flat earth.

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