

Mircea Eliade's correspondence with metropolitan Vasile Suciu

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Abstract: Mircea Eliade's correspondence with metropolitan Vasile Suciu. The present study takes into account the epistolary dialogue between Mircea Eliade and the Greek-Catholic metropolitan Vasile Suciu. In fact, we have two letters sent the young philosopher from Bucharest to the high hierarch in order to receive from him the volumes of theology whose author he was. The study analyses the cultural context in which Mircea Eliade was placed in the third decade of the twentieth century, the self-characterization that he presents, but also the way in which he justifies the interest towards studying and knowing the Eastern theology. Moreover, Vasile Suciu's theological work is commented, also investigating its doctrinal identity, which made some intellectuals (among them being Mircea Eliade) believe that it is representative for the theological reflection of the Eastern Church.

Keywords: letters, religious identity, Orthodoxy, Greek-Catholicism, theological work

Rezumat: *Corespondența lui Mircea Eliade cu mitropolitul Vasile Suciu.* Studiul de față are în vedere dialogul epistolar dintre Mircea Eliade și mitropolitul greco-catolic Vasile Suciu. De fapt, este vorba despre două scrisori pe care tânărul filosof bucureștean i le-a trimis înaltului ierarh de la Blaj, cu scopul de a obține din partea acestuia volumele de teologie pe care le publicase. Este analizat contextul cultural în care se plasa în deceniul trei al secolului XX Mircea Eliade, autocaracterizarea pe care acesta și-o face, dar și felul în care își justifică interesul pentru cunoașterea teologiei răsăritene. De asemenea, este comentată opera teologică a mitropolitului Vasile Suciu, fiind sondată identitatea doctrinară a acesteia, care îi făcea pe unii intelectuali să creadă (printre ei, numărându-se și Mircea Eliade) că ea este reprezentativă pentru gândirea teologică a Bisericii răsăritene.

Cuvinte-cheie: scrisori, identitate religioasă, ortodoxie, greco-catolicism, operă teologică

On the 25th of June 1928 after he had just returned to the country after a stage of almost three months in Rome, Mircea Eliade sent metropolitan

Vasile Suciu a reverent letter.¹ Being a final year student of the Faculty of Letters and Philosophy in Bucharest, Mircea Eliade had not been at his first direct intellectual experience in the Italian space. Just a year before, the "Spiru Haret" high school, whose graduate he was, had organized a three week trip to Italy, where some former students had also been invited to take part.² Although that meant bearing a considerable financial effort by the family, the chance had not been missed by the young newly enthusiast of the history of religions, yoga and Oriental studies. He fully capitalized on that opportunity to get to know some of the writers that he was in correspondence with (among them being Giovanni Papini, Ernesto Buonaiuti, Vittorio Macchiario etc.) to visit the remains of a civilization that he was fascinated by, to practice their his Italian language and to enrich himself with readings he had not had access to before. "This first trip to Italy remained in my memory as the most luxurious and most perfect trip from my youth", the memoirist would write down over the years, filled with nostalgia.³

The second Italian experience has been internalized at a level at least equal to the first. On the verge of presenting his dissertation in philosophy, the diligent student was compelling himself to take full advantage of the generosity of the documentary sources available in the Roman institutions of culture. "As I started to study in Rome, I would have never ended anything of what I began. I was aware of the danger, but the temptation was too strong. For the first time, I was *living* (e.a.) in a Western library, among publications which were inaccessible in Bucharest. I would have wanted to see everything, to read everything, to transcribe everything. I was forever taking notes, without conceding to leave untranslated pages I knew that my eyes would never see", Mircea Eliade would recall over time the fervour of those last days of studentship.⁴

Despite endeavors to deplete the sources of his dissertation on the philosophy of the Italian Renaissance (or precisely because of them), Mircea Eliade was unable to complete the thesis and had to postpone its presentation for the fall of 1928. At the moment of his repatriation after the second stage of the research on Italian land Mircea Eliade had two

¹ The entire text of the letter at the Service of National Archives of the Department of Cluj, Personal Fund *Vasile Suciu*, file 30/1928, f. 1r-v (hereinafter, AN SJ Cluj).

² Mircea Handoca, *Viața lui Mircea Eliade*, [Mircea Eliade's life], the third edition, Dacia Publishing House, Cluj-Napoca, 2002, p. 35.

³ Mircea Eliade, *Memorii 1907-1960*, [Memoirs, 1907-1960] revised edition and index by Mircea Handoca, Humanitas, Bucharest, 2004, p. 126.

⁴ *Ibidem*, p. 149.

well-defined possible courses of professional development: either to seek a scholarship at one of the universities in Western Europe, where he wanted to study compared philosophy in order to later dedicate himself to research in the history of religions, either he would study Sanskrit and Indian philosophy at a university in India, pending a response to a request for a scholarship that he had addressed to Maharaja Manindra Chandra Nandy.⁵ The attraction towards Oriental philosophy, namely the Indian one, towards yoga techniques and Asian mysteries were transformed into a real obsession in the last years of his studentship: "I felt that the Orient is to me more than a fairytale landscape or object of study, part of the world that deserves to be known for its secret history or for the greatness of its spiritual creations" was the belief assumed by the young philosopher.⁶ The affirmative response to the request for financial support from the Maharaja of Kassimbazar would widely open the door of the great intellectual and spiritual adventure on Indian land. "I have no doubt that my life would have been different without that letter," Mircea Eliade would confess, strongly, convinced, over the years.⁷ We note that this was not the first scholarship he has been awarded. Being a student he had benefited from another scholarship, along with other colleagues, offered by the League of Nations with the aim of familiarizing young people with the activity and projects mandated to ensure the maintenance of world peace after the war.⁸ But the two months spent on that occasion in the Swiss capital would fade before the three years it would last the *peregrinatio academica* on the land of the Hindu civilization.

Given this versatile intellectual profile of the young graduate of philosophy, it is useful to insist upon the content of the two letters he had sent to Blaj to the primate of the Romanian Greek-Catholic Church at that time. I would firstly note the apparently trivial similarities. Both letters are written on sheets of paper bearing the letterhead of the magazine "Cuvântul" (The Word - translator's note). Was this a deliberate choice to underline the intellectual prestige of the sender? Or a gesture relieved of such a connotation determined by the mere availability of such a piece a paper? It is difficult to answer. The fact is

⁵ *Ibidem*, p. 150.

⁶ *Ibidem*, p. 152.

⁷ *Ibidem*, p. 150.

⁸ About the creation and the activity of the League of Nations, see George Scott, *The Rise and Fall of the League of Nations*, Hutchinson, London, 1973; Frederick Samuel Northedge, *The League of Nations: Its Life and Times 1920-1946*, Leicester University Press, Leicester, 1986.

that in December 1926 Eliade had become editor of the prestigious gazette which had its editorial staff on No 4, Sărindar street, in Bucharest. His approach with this publication led at the time by Titus Enacovici was realized after Eliade had published, in a student magazine, a review that basically abolished the first volume of "Essai de synthèse de l'Histoire universelle" (a Synthesis Essay of Universal History - t/n) by Nicolae Iorga, a critique that added to his intellectual visibility, but which put him on antagonistic, even hostile positions, against the personality of contemporary Romanian culture who served him as a model up until then.⁹ Of no lesser importance near the cultural circle around the magazine "Cuvântul" was the admiration that Eliade had towards some of the collaborators of the publication, especially towards Nae Ionescu, professor of Logic and Metaphysics who he was looking up to. "For me, as for my entire generation, «Cuvântul» was not a gazette like any other. I considered it more a magazine, because the articles that were signed (and there were seven articles only on the front page) and because, in addition to Cezar Petrescu, Nichifor Crainic, Pamfil Șeicaru, Nae Ionescu, Lucian Blaga, Perpessicius, G. Breazul, O. W. Cisek also collaborated as did so many other writers, critics and essayists from the circles of «Gândirea» (the Intellection - t/n) and «Idea europeană» (the European Idea - t/n).¹⁰

The second detail on which I would like to insist is about the address of the sender of the letters, namely No 1, Melody Street, in Bucharest. Following the final moving of the family in the Romanian capital, the building located on this address was the place to which Mircea Eliade has linked the strongest emotions and experiences specific to childhood, an adolescence full of mysteries and crises and emerging adulthood. The house in question had been given to the author to the "Novel of the Myope Adolescent"’s mother by her foster father and had been used as a means to supplement the family income by renting it in the postwar period, when the family resources had been reduced considerably.¹¹ The history of the building comes to an end in the middle of the fourth decade of the last century when, recalls Eliade, the building was demolished, and in its stead a massive block of flats was built.

Going now into the content of the letters, the first of the letters captures the outset with a formula designed to draw attention to whom

⁹ The review, in the publication *Revista universitară*, [The University Magazine] year I, no. 3, March 1926.

¹⁰ Mircea Eliade, *Memorii 1907-1960*, [Memoirs 1907-1960] p. 121.

¹¹ *Ibidem*, p. 67.

he wrote: "Blessed Father, although not having the honor to get to know you, and not knowing the formulas by which a layman and a young should properly address a clergymen, I dare to write to you." A cautious formulation therefore, but still full of politeness imposed by the dignity that the addressee holds: that of a man of the Church ("a Figure of the Church"), a bearer of the bishop's crosier, even. Two details stand out in particular. The first, related to the fact that Eliade was not very familiar with the clerical elements, hence his reluctance regarding the formula to the addressee; secondly, much more important in terms of relations between the sender and the recipient of the letter, is that Mircea Eliade and metropolitan Vasile Suciú did not know each other personally, they had not had this opportunity before. This is why the sender of the letter introduces himself, he wants to delineate the areas of intellectual interest, which justified the request he was going to make, "maybe my name is not entirely unknown to you. I am a student of philosophy and a publicist. This is unimportant. But my inclination towards the history of religions and the love for the Christian experience is. Although I have not yet actually had an Orthodox experience, I came to be philosophically aware of the need for orthodoxy, and I often confessed it." What can one significantly draw from this brief self-characterization? First, the claim that Eliade declares himself to be not just an anonymous figure in the contemporary cultural landscape "maybe my name is not entirely unknown to you. I am a student of philosophy and a publicist". Deservedly, at the 21 years that he had when writing the letter, Mircea Eliade was not just any name in the Romanian cultural space. Since his first article on "The enemy of the silkworm" published in the "Newspapers of the popular science" in May 1920 he managed in only five years' time to be able to celebrate with a few close friends emergence of his hundredth article. This impressive scientific prolificacy was not just keeping up with the "reconversion" of its new areas of interest: from entomology, chemistry-physics and natural sciences to philosophy, Oriental studies and the history of religions. Of course, literature should not be forgotten, many of the works from his youth remaining only as manuscripts or being fragmentarily published in various publications of the time.¹² Recently, Eliade had focused in terms of formative interest in the field of history and philosophy of religions, being interested to unravel the mysteries of Christianity, to go into the depths of Orthodoxy,

¹² It is the case of *Romanul adolescentului miop*, [Diary of a Short-Sighted Adolescent] finished in 1927, but edited only in 1989 by Mircea Handoca. Fragments of the novel had appeared during the author's life.

which, to his own confession, he assumes intellectually, philosophical and less as a way of life, as a lived experience.¹³ Relating to the Orthodox Christianity had become a central point of his reflection at the beginning of the third decade of his life, and its understanding is not possible without taking into account the ideas in which the writer was placing at that time.¹⁴ More specifically, for Mircea Eliade redefining the role of Orthodoxy in the Romanian cultural space came from the major mental mutations that the Great War which has just ended had generated all over the world, including in the Romanian society.¹⁵ In other words, if for the previous generations the national integration had represented an ideal that had fueled a sense of strong solidarity, for the new generations, the fulfillment of that ultimate aim risked of provoke crises in the collective consciousness, general confusion, due to the absence of a great cause, which would gather national energies. "We were the first Romanian generation unconditioned by fulfilling a historical aim" felt Eliade and many of his contemporaries. In addition, the war and its horrors had revived religious life worldwide, causing a rediscovery of religious sentiment and a refreshment of forms in Christian devotion.¹⁶ But not only the "prescribed religion" had a gain after the war and the fear of death that it induced among the masses, but the interest in psychoanalysis, surrealism and Oriental gnoses had also increased. Given that the myth of continuous progress, promising the general welfare and social justice had failed before the cruelty of war, a new binder was needed to cement the societies, to impart the idea of a common destiny and to give them personality.¹⁷ Looking therefore for new spiritual landmarks, the "young generation", which included Eliade, saw Orthodoxy as a basis of new forms of expressing the national solidarity and understanding of the world «for some of the "younger generation" Orthodoxy might provide a total view of the world and the

¹³ The role of the Orthodoxy in Mircea Eliade's philosophical thinking at Aura Al. Constantinescu-Cazacu, „Reflecțiile tânărului Mircea Eliade despre semnificația ortodoxiei”, [The reflections of the young Mircea Eliade about the meaning of Orthodoxy] in *Analele Universității Spiru Haret. Studii de filosofie*, [The Annals of the Spiru Haret University. Studies of Philosophy] no. 10, 2008, p. 35-43.

¹⁴ Vartolomeu Androni, *Mircea Eliade și creștinismul ortodox*, [Mircea Eliade and the Orthodox Christianity], Ramida Publishing House, Bucharest, 1996, p. 3-4.

¹⁵ Aura Al. Constantinescu-Cazacu, *Reflecțiile tânărului Mircea Eliade*, [The reflections of the young Mircea Eliade] p. 36-37.

¹⁶ See Annette Becker, *La guerre et la foi. De la mort à la mémoire 1914-1930*, Armand Colin, Paris, 1994, p. 47-55.

¹⁷ Aura Al. Constantinescu-Cazacu, *Reflecțiile tânărului Mircea Eliade*, [The reflections of the young Mircea Eliade] p. 42-43.

existence and this phenomenon, if realized, will be a new phenomenon in the history of modern Romanian culture».¹⁸ But this view on Orthodoxy assumed by Mircea Eliade, as an intellectual experience and means of asserting the Romanian identity, would be challenged by various people in his circle of sociability, «only by talking to Mircea Vulcănescu and Paul Sterian did I realized how ignorant I was concerning Eastern Christianity and the Romanian religious traditions, not to mention the "Orthodox experience," which I did not have at all. [...] Personally, although I was attracted by this tradition, I did not live it».¹⁹ But the harshest criticism on the vision of Christianity, on Orthodoxy to be precise, would be received by Mircea Eliade from Nae Ionescu, who reproached him that he saw in Orthodoxy a simple Romanian tradition, a mere "spiritual adventure", lacking depth. His mentor had also reminded him that the Romanian Orthodoxy is not simply a cultural element, but is a part of the very essence of the nation, of the definition of being a good Romanian.²⁰ „If you are Romanian, you are born Orthodox", the future ideologue of the Legionary Movement would warn him, highly stressing the intimate connection, the interdependence between the Romanian nationality and Orthodox faith.²¹

Going back to the content of the letter, Eliade was still revealing his intentions regarding the continuation of his studies: "I will leave in the fall in India, then England and Germany. I would not like, however, not to thoroughly master the information on the Eastern theology, before I go "states programmatically Mircea Eliade. It stands out the author's thought to blend in his formation the career projects mentioned above, namely the Oriental academic experience, which he possessed, given the promise obtained from Indian prince to support his studies at the University of Calcutta under the guidance of Surendranath Dasgupta respectively perfecting himself at the top European universities. But the immediate priority appears to be mastering the dogmatic content of Orthodox theology given, as we have seen, his own beliefs, but also those inspired by his master on the role of Orthodoxy.

¹⁸ Mircea Eliade, *Memorii 1907-1960*, [Memoirs 1907-1960] p. 137.

¹⁹ *Ibidem*.

²⁰ About this relationship, nationality and Orthodoxy at the Romanians, see Olivier Gillet, „Orthodoxie, nation et ethnicité en Roumanie au XXe siècle: un problème ecclésiologique et politique”, in vol. *Ethnicity and Religion in Central and Eastern Europe*, edited by Maria Crăciun, Ovidiu Ghitta, Cluj University Press, Cluj-Napoca, 1995, p. 349-350.

²¹ Vartolomeu Androni, *Mircea Eliade și creștinismul ortodox*, [Mircea Eliade and the Orthodox Christianity] p. 7.

The letter continues: "I have read many books. Father Korolevski in Rome, praises Your Excelency`s volumes. Now I see them in bookshop windows. As I am a poor student, please, Your Holiness, gift me with that tome of Dogmatic or Theology to enlighten me on the substance of Eastern Orthodoxy. It is of utmost necessity for my theological culture, watered so far from Western sources." The fragment we have just quoted reveals the motivation of the epistle by Eliade and the favor he asked Vasile Suciu, the metropolitan from Blaj. But it tells us more than that. First, about the author of the letter, we learn that, being in Rome, Kiril Korolevski, one of the most brilliant specialists in those days in the problems of the Eastern Churches,²² recommended him to consult volumes of theology published by the Romanian Greek-Catholic metropolitan after his return from studies from the world capital of Catholicism which, in 1927 had been re-edited. Interestingly, Eliade asks a Greek-Catholic bishop for the theological volumes written by him, expecting to find in them "the substance of Eastern Orthodoxy." In other words, for Mircea Eliade the theological work of metropolitan Vasile Suciu had to complement the theological culture that the literary philosopher had appropriated so far, namely the Western culture ("watered so far from Western sources"). In fact, who was this high prelate, primate of an Eastern rite church in communion with the Holy See, whose theological work was seen by some as being so representative for the Orthodox theological thinking?

Vasile Suciu was the fourth bishop of the Romanian Greek-Catholic Church, who had the difficult task to navigate on the ship of the Uniate Church from the confessional political horizon of the Hungarian state and to set anchor on the Romanian coast.²³ Born on January 13, 1873 in the border guard village Copăcel (Kopacsel) in the county of Fagaras, he began learning in his village subsequently at the Gymnasium of Blaj. Very close to pursuing a career in law, he came to study at the "St. Athanasius" College and at Urban College in Rome, obtaining a doctorate in theology and philosophy. Also in the capital of the Catholic world he received sacrament of priesthood by the hand touch from the

²² About Kiril Korolevski and his ties with the Romanian Greek-Catholic Church in Nicolae Brânzeu, *Memoriile unui preot bătrân*, ediție, prefață și note de Pia Brânzeu, [The memoirs of an old priest, edition, preface and notes by Pia Brânzeu] Marineasa Publishing House, Timișoara, 2008, p. 353, note 1.

²³ Details about the Vasile Suciu's life and pastoring at Lucian Turcu, *Arhidieceza greco-catolică de Alba Iulia – Făgăraș în timpul păstoririi mitropolitului Vasile Suciu (1920-1935)*, [The Greek-Catholic Archdiocese of Alba-Iulia – Fagaras during Vasile Suciu's pastoring 1920-1935] Ph.D thesis, Cluj-Napoca, 2013, p. 264-343.

Archbishop of Philippi, Sthephanos Sthephanopoli.²⁴ After his graduation in the summer of 1898, Vasile Suciu returned to Blaj, where he held various responsibilities, in particular in the field of education. He was, to start with, spiritual at the Seminary in Blaj, then professor of dogmatic theology and prefect of studies within it. He assumed the role of Religion teacher at the local Gymnasium, also being an editor-journalist at the gazette "Unirea" (The Union - t/n), subsequently occupying the post of curator of the Archdiocesan Library. During 1904 Vasile Suciu had requested the church authorities to be relieved of the role of prefect of studies at the Seminar. The reason for demanding that favor was a laudable one: he wanted to devote himself to the work of composing a work of dogmatic theology, a project that began four years ago, based on the fact that finding specialized works was difficult, and the existing ones "no longer meet the requirements of our time." The respective work appeared in 1907 at the printing press of the Archdiocesan Seminary in Blaj, in two sizeable opuses at the expense of the Congregation for the Oriental Churches, who supported his former alumni project with a subsidy of 300 Italian liras. But, as we shall see, this was not the first work that had been authored by Vasile Suciu. Another office which he has fulfilled was that of ordinary assessor at the archdiocesan tribunal of second instance, an office with which he has been entrusted with since February 1906.²⁵ Also, Emil Viciu's waiver, for health reasons, to the post of rector of the Vancean boarding school for boys, caused the bishop at the time, Victor Mihályi, to consider that the best replacement for the resigning rector was Vasile Suciu.²⁶ But the most important position in Vasile Suciu's career path would intervene in the year 1910. Augustin Bunea's disappearance in November of the previous year prompted the vacancy of a post in the Metropolitan Cathedral Chapter, whose member he had become since 1895. After the redistribution of canonical degrees ("gradual promotion"), the members of the Bobian chapter held on March 20 a meeting to elect a new canon, and the one with the most votes was Vasile Suciu.²⁷ He would occupy the rank of canon theologian, metropolitan Mihályi's decree by which he was canonically "named and constituted" praising his "eminent qualities, knowledge, dexterity, exemplary mores and other laudable qualities and

²⁴ A.N.S.J. Cluj, Fond *Biblioteca Centrală Blaj*, [The Central Library of Blaj Fund] file no. 54/1873-1929, f. 5r.

²⁵ A.N.S.J. Cluj, Fond *Biblioteca Centrală Blaj*, file no. 54/1873-1929, f. 14r.

²⁶ A.N.S.J. Cluj, Fond *Biblioteca Centrală Blaj*, file no. 54/1873-1929, f. 15r.

²⁷ A.N.S.J. Cluj, Fond *Biblioteca Centrală Blaj*, file no. 54/1873-1929, f. 17r.

distinct virtues." Appointed on Palm Sunday formally in the Metropolitan Cathedral, Vasile Suciuc became the occupant of the lowest of all the 10 positions of the metropolitan chapter. The new position as a member of the College of metropolitan Canons prompted Vasile Suciuc to request his release from his post as professor of dogmatic theology at the Archdiocesan Seminary. The year 1911 will bring Vasile Suciuc a new important nomination, a recognition of his merits in the Romanian theology and culture in general. He would be vice-president of ASTRA (the president was Andrei Bârseanu) a position obtained during the congress held between 28 and 30 August of that year.²⁸ Since 1913, Vasile Suciuc asked his superiors to be remitted from the office of Rector of the Vancea boarding school from the post of professor of religion at the upper grades of the Gymnasium of Blaj, citing a desire to devote himself more intensely to the responsibilities he held at the archbishop Curia.²⁹ This is Vasile Suciuc's career course and the enumeration of his attributions performed by him until the last year of the war, when he became vicar capitular (temporary manager of the archdiocese until the appointment of the new metropolitan), and then, in the council from May 9, 1918 held at Blaj Ihe was credited with the highest trust by the elector priests to become the new bishop of the Romanian Greek-Catholic Church.

Therefore, we have a *cursus honorum* which is varied and honorable for Vasile Suciuc, until the age of 45, when he was called to be the head of the Romanian Greek-Catholic Church. The profound upheavals produced by the war, which led to the redrawing of the European political geography also affected the Romanian Greek Catholic Church, which was made active, for the first time in history since its establishment, within the framework of a Romanian state. Which is why, the 15 year pastoring (until 1935) by metropolitan Vasile Suciuc meant a

²⁸ Archivio della Congregazione per le Chiese Orientali, *Romeni. Affari generali*, 1129/28, f. 32r-v (hereinafter A.C.C.O.). Vasile Suciuc has had this position until 1922; after the president of the Association's death, he refused the proposition to candidate as head of the organization, saying that his priority was the Church. He continued to be active inside the Association until 1930 when he retired from medical reasons: Valer Moga, „*Astra*” și societatea 1918-1930, cu o prefață de Marcel Știrban, [Astra and the society 1918-1930, with a preface by Marcel Știrban], Cluj University Press, Cluj-Napoca, 2003, p. 81, 104, 147.

²⁹ A.C.C.O., *Romeni. Affari generali*, 1129/28, f. 36r-v.

great deal of work on his part to identify the place and role of the Romanian Greek-Catholic Church in the Greater Romania.³⁰

Regarding the theological work of Vasile Suciu, it deserves some special considerations. The first mention to be made is that it was published over half a decade, until its author assumed the canonical function in the chapter of the Blaj cathedral. Thematically diversified, and especially consistent in terms of content, the theological works that Vasile Suciu placed his name upon were the result of personal reflection, of the horizon of books that he had acquired until their composition, some may be framed in the debates of ideas of the moment, others aiming simply to renew the theological literature or to cover the gaps found in books from specialized bookshelves.

The first opus to bear Vasile Suciu's signature which came out 8 years after his return from the studies in the capital of the unified Italy attacks with the courage of a young man driven by strong convictions, tributary to the cultural environment of the Christian spirituality, themes that had a large public, indistinct in terms of confession, but intent on extrasensory experiences, to whom the generalized optimism, technological or intellectual or artistic emulations that have characterized "la belle époque" could not provide a complete satisfaction.³¹ It's about the "inventions of our times," as the author called them, such as hypnotism and spiritualism, which "had begun to settle in our cities and towns".³² Originally published as a river study in "Unirea", the work in question was meant to be a guide for any reader of good faith on the two phenomena which disturbed people's minds and threatened to weaken the faith through the sensationalism that characterize them. Wanting to demonstrate the fundamental errors that were based on the two psychic experiences of the modern world, Vasile Suciu subjected them to thorough analysis from the perspective of the teachings of faith and true Christian values, articulating text around a few referential points: the emergence of the two concepts, the phenomenology, their consequences, focusing on confuting the two phenomena based on the teaching of faith of the Catholic Church. The conclusion stated by Vasile Suciu at the end of the analysis was unequivocal: any genuine Christian was obliged to abandon immediately the practice and popularization of the two great

³⁰ For details, see Lucian Turcu, *Arhidieceza greco-catolică*, [The Greek-Catholic Archdiocese] p. 44-216; 344-569.

³¹ Maurice Larkin, *Religion, politics and preferment in France since 1890. La Belle Epoque and its legacy*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1995, p. 53-67.

³² Vasile Suciu, *Hipnotism și spiritism. Studiu critic-teologic*, [Hypnotism and spiritism. A critical-theological study] Tipografia Seminarului arhidiecezan, Blaj, 1906.

errors of those times, assimilating them to "very dangerous superstitions, who put many believers on the way of human and devilish deception."

A second work by Vasile Suciú published in two volumes in the spring of 1907 with the material support of the Congregation for the Oriental Churches, as we have seen, was one of fundamental dogmatic theology.³³ Observing the lack of such works, given that the similar writing that was authored by Simeon Micu was obsolete at that time and even old in terms of language, Vasile Suciú took the initiative of renewing the theological literature by laying on paper the lectures presented before the archdiocesan seminary students from Blaj. The task was easy, as the writer confesses in the preface to the first volume. Specifically, Vasile Suciú believed that in order to debate capital themes from the inventory of the Catholic faith pedagogy, "man has to rise above the hardships and daily harassments, he needs to be stripped of all that he has and seek the truth." Another difficulty lay in the pluralization of the perspective on the subject treated. More specifically "today, thanks to their sects and systems, it's not enough for one who writes books of theology to know about approaching religious truths, but he must also know the beliefs of other religions or denominations." Other obstacles that the author had to face in drafting the treaty of fundamental theology concerned the lack of specialized terminology in Romanian ("we do not find two or three authors who express a concept in the same words, but one uses Greek terms, another uses Latin Latin and the third Slavonic words"), but also the lack of a public to be interested in the work of theology, given that "our clergymen, who can and want to study theological sciences are very few". Therefore, Vasile Suciú's purpose by drafting the Treaty of fundamental theology was double: one was to give those who studied theology a handy tool for the specialized literature was meager consisting most often in translations or compilations and the other was to make available to the general public "an aid for the personal study", which is why the actual text was accompanied by explanatory notes and bibliographical references. Writing above all "a didactic book," Vasile Suciú tried to innovate methodologically, so that the content be learned easily and efficiently. More specifically, at the beginning of each chapter or subchapter he expounded the doctrine of faith of the Church and the contrary opinions on the subject he approached, after which the

³³ *Idem, Teologia dogmatică fundamentală, vol. I. Apologetica creștină*, [The fundamental dogmatic theology, Vol. I, The Christian apologetics] Tipografia Seminarului arhiepiscopesc, Blaj, 1907; *vol. II. Tradițiunea și Biserica*, [Vol. II Tradition and Church] Tipografia Seminarului arhiepiscopesc, Blaj, 1907.

author formulated a sentence with hypothetical value extracted from the precepts of the Church, and the demonstration was based on the initial sentence, the arguments being taken from the same field of faith from teachings of the Church, so that the final part was reserved for "more difficult objections" on that theme. Each of the two volumes was abundant with topics related to the theology of divine revelation, its ways of expression, the content transmitted and its significance for the history of the human salvation.³⁴

The following spring, a new ample work appeared signed by the same passionate teacher from the Archdiocesan Seminary from Blaj. This time it was a treaty of special dogmatic theology, in turn made of two large parts.³⁵ Encouraged by the positive feedback he had received after

³⁴ The issues of terminology, the relation between theology and the broad spectrum of modern sciences, the semantics of the term "religion", the man's intrinsic need to believe, the usefulness of religion for societies and modern states, the specifics and means of manifestation of the supernatural revelation, the concept and the phenomenology of the divine miracles, the characteristics of the prophecies, the divinity of the Christian religion, the relationship between reason and revelation, veracity of Christianity in relation to other religions and systems of religious belief (Confucianism, Zoroastrianism, Brahmanism, Hinduism, Buddhism, Judaism, Islam), the similarities and especially the fundamental differences between Christianity on the one hand and the pagan beliefs and conceptions on the other, the divine character of the Christian revelation, the veracity of miracles performed by Jesus Christ, the messianic prophecies and their fulfillment in the person of the Savior, the spread of the Christian religion and the emergence of the first generations of martyrs of Christianity, the Sacred Tradition and the Sacred Scripture as instruments for transmitting God's revelation, the founding of the Christian Church and its meanings, the properties and prerogatives of the Church (the unity, holiness, catholicity, apostolicity, infallibility), the concept of "true Church", the doctrine of St. Peter's primacy of jurisdiction over the apostolic college and over the Church and the perpetuation of the primacy by his successors to the episcopal see of Rome, the nature of the Pope's primacy and the dogma of papal infallibility are the most important themes that Vasile Suciu develops in over 700 printed pages of the two volumes that make up his treatise of fundamental dogmatic theology.

³⁵ Vasile Suciu, *Teologia dogmatică specială, vol. I. Dzeu-Unul, S. Treime, Dzeu-Creatorul, Întruparea Dlui și Grația. Cu binecuvântarea Excelenței Sale Preasfințitului Domn Dr. Victor Mihályi de Apșa, arhiepiscop și mitropolit de Alba Iulia și Făgăraș*, [The special dogmatic theology, 1st volume: God, the Holy Trinity, God the Creator, The Incarnation of God and the Grace. With the blessing from his Excellency and Holy Dr. Victor Mihályi of Apșa, archbishop and metropolitan of Alba Iulia and Făgăraș] Tipografia Seminarului arhidiecezan, Blaj, 1908; *vol. II. Sacramentele în general, sacramentele în special și eshatologia. Cu binecuvântarea Excelenței Sale Preasfințitului Domn Dr. Victor Mihályi de Apșa, arhiepiscop și mitropolit de Alba Iulia și Făgăraș*, [vol. II: The sacraments in general, the sacraments particularly and eschatology. With the

the publication of the fundamental dogmatic theology work, Vasile Suciuc decided to also print the special dogmatic theology lectures which he taught to the seminarians. He used the same method he had used for the earlier treaty, highlighting the fact that he had written "a book of teaching" in which was tried to present "dogmatic truths, clearly, accurately and in detail." He frequently cited, in developing the topics, well-known authors, "and at the same time I looked for the sources themselves and I took into account our own church books," the prolific author confessed.³⁶

Vasile Suciuc also distinguished himself as the author of religion textbooks for secondary school education. Two such works that had his signature appeared in the autumn of 1909 at the request of the Archbishop Consistory. The first one,³⁷ with an introductory character in

bleasing from his Excellency and Holy Dr. Victor Mihályi of Apșa, archbishop and metropolitan of Alba Iulia and Făgăraș] Tipografia Seminarului arhidiecezan, Blaj, 1908.

³⁶ The first volume of special theology focuses on the following topics: demonstrating the existence of God by cosmological, teleological historical arguments; the essence or nature of God (the simplicity, perfection, goodness, immensity, or the immutability, eternity, unity); the inner workings of the divine nature; the understanding of God and the doctrine of faith about the three persons of the Holy Trinity, with a substantial chapter dedicated to the origin of the Divine Persons, especially the demonstration on the origin of the Holy Spirit from both the Father and the Son, the equality of the divine persons, the dogma on God-Father or Creator, including a short treaty of angelology; the origin of man and his primordial condition, the nature of the human soul (the spirituality, immortality, unity, divine origin), the fall of man and the nature of human into the sin, the dogma of the immaculate conception of the Virgin Mary, the dogma of God-Son and the Redeemer (mystery of the Incarnation, the dual nature, divine and human, of the Savior, the perpetual virginity of the Mother of God, the unity of the person of Jesus Christ, including all the theological error occurred on the dogma over time, the mystery of the salvation, the intercession, worship and invocation of the saints, the veneration of icons and relics, the dogma about God-Holy Spirit or Sanctifier, with a particular emphasis on the concept and manifestations of the divine grace. the second volume is built around the sacraments (the existence and efficacy of the sacraments in the old law, the essence of the sacraments according to the new law), the matter and the form of the sacraments, the ceremonies or the sacramental rites, the effects of the sacraments, their conditions of acceptance, a detailed presentation of each of the seven great mysteries of the Church (the baptism, Confirmation, Eucharist, penance, ordination, marriage and the last anointing), the final part being reserved for a detailed presentation of the Church`s teaching related to eschatology.

³⁷ Vasile Suciuc, *Principiile fundamentale sau generale ale religiei creștine pentru școlile medii și instituttele pedagogice*, [The fundamental or general principles of the

the fundamental issues of Christianity, was originally designed as a revitalized edition of the similar work of Ioan Ratiu³⁸ but as Vasile Suciu confessed, "as I relied on some long praxes I knew well the good parts and the weak ones of the edition, and I considered it would be suitable that instead of a new edition I give the students the present textbook". The work proposed by Vasile Suciu differed from the former theology professor's book by reducing the number of arguments that came to support the themes contained in the manual, wanting it "to ease the study of religion and to make sure that what is learned is done so learn with cause". The second handbook was one of Christian morality,³⁹ drafted at the request of the same church forum, and this time opting for an "accurate and easy" approach, for easier but certain understanding by students of the fundamental issues that were dealt with. "For this purpose I explained all the expressions whose understanding seemed to me that could bring difficulties, I always avoided too brief statements" were just two of the distinctive notes of the book that its author wished to mention. In addition, he dared to give all the learners who would use the manual a piece of advice, namely: "the principles of Christian morality developed in this book should not remain only theoretical (e.a.) and moral principles, but should turn in the students' hearts into practical (e.a.) principles of Christian morality."

Vasile Suciu's theological work has sparked numerous echoes immediately after its publication. The response it received from the Congregation for the Oriental Churches, which supported it, has been positive, as in Velehrad, in 1909, where he was sent to represent the Romanian Church at the Unionist congress which was organized there, Vasile Suciu was highly congratulated for his work by the Italian Orientalist Aurelio Palmieri, a renowned dogmatician at the time, concerned about the situation of the Russian Church and especially of examining the theology of the Eastern Churches in the light of the Catholic doctrine.⁴⁰ It seems that the author of the dogmatic treaties that

Christian religion for the medium schools and pedagogy institutes] Tipografia Seminarului teologic greco-catolic, Balászfalva, 1909.

³⁸ Ioan Rațiu, *Principiile fundamentale ale religiunii creștine*, [The fundamental principles of the Christian religion] Tipografia Seminarului arhidiecezan, Blaj, 1872.

³⁹ Vasile Suciu, *Principiile morale sau etice ale religiunii creștine pentru școalele medii și instituturile pedagogice*, [The moral and ethical principles of the Christian religion for the medium schools and pedagogy institutes] Tipografia Seminarului teologic greco-catolic, Balászfalva, 1909.

⁴⁰ The main works by Aurelio Palmieri were: *La Chiesa russa: le sue odierne condizioni e il suo riformismo dottrinale*, Firenze, 1908; *Dositeo, patriarca greco di Gerusalemme (1641-*

were printed in Blaj held hopes for receiving a distinction from the Romanian Academy.⁴¹ Besides the positive feedback there were analyses which have tried to balance the qualities and "drawbacks" of the two major treaties of dogmatic theology. One of those who had dared to look into the works of theology of the teacher from Blaj was Nicolae Brînzeu, then a newly graduate of theological studies in Vienna, where he had managed to get a doctorate.⁴² Intrigued, by his own confession, that a work so consistent as the young professor's from the seminary of Blaj did not draw more discussion within the Romanian ecclesial medias, except for the laudatory references in various Transylvanian journals, Nicolae Brînzeu made the decision to open a debate himself, around the Greek-Catholic theological literature, beginning of course, with the latest writings in the field. "With the boldness prior to the youth and with the confidence of a fresh doctor from Vienna I have decided to start a discussion," recalled the canon priest from Lugoj.⁴³ He even sent to the editorial office of "Unirea" an article entitled "Critical studies in dogmatic theology", which appeared in one of the following issues of the publication.⁴⁴ In that text Brînzeu, in addition to the remarks he made to the work signed by Vasile Suci, expressed his reservations towards the abuse of the method syllogistic which the argumentation of major topics of dogmatic theology was based on, reproaching the author that he had omitted the latest references in the field or even that the work lacked an alphabetical index. These observations were apparently not fully agreed by the ecclesiastical media from the capital of the Romanian Greek-Catholicism, the editors of the Blaj gazette refusing to edit the review written by Nicolae Brînzeu. The objections made by the latter did not remain without a reaction. It came from the author of the criticized work himself, through a personal letter to Nicolae Brînzeu, after he had taken note of the observations that the first part of the continuation of the already published material contained. The content of the letter of response is relevant not so much by its polemical nature, and especially because it reveals the ideas that led the writer to publish the two treaties.

1707): *contributo alla storia della teologia greco-ortodossa nel secolo XVII*, Firenze, 1909; *Il progresso dommatico nel concetto cattolico*, Firenze, 1910; *Theologia dogmatica orthodoxa (Ecclesiae Graeco-Russicae) ad lumen catholicae doctrinae examinata et discussa*, Florentiae, 1911.

⁴¹ Nicolae Brînzeu, *Memoriile unui preot bătrân*, [The Memoirs of an Old Priest] p. 185.

⁴² *Ibidem*.

⁴³ *Idem*, „Dr. Vasile Suci în literatura teologică”, [Dr. Vasile Suci in the theological literature] în *Blajul*, II, nr. 2/1935, p. 78.

⁴⁴ *Unirea*, XIX, nr. 9/1909, p. 3.

Vasile Suciu noted that dogmas were fixed and could be known from the sources that they have generated and any author of treaties of dogmatic theology was forced to appeal to them. "The authors of "Dogmatic" cannot add through their writings a new authority to the dogmas because their authority as well is based on the evidence that they appeal to." Regarding the absence of references of some recent works of some German authors, essential, in Nicolae Brînzeu's opinion in any treaty of dogmatic theology, Vasile Suciu believes that those writings, published mostly in journals abroad, were difficult to access, and they only nuanced ideas which were already known and accepted. Furthermore, Vasile Suciu believed, "they are useless to the provincial seminars, where the students must learn it, so do not you have time for any theological things". But not just building a clear theological discourse, to exclude the risk of appearing, among young people preparing for ministry, confusing ideas or even ideas contrary to the teachings of the faith of the Church was a motivation for creating the voluminous theological opuses. Vasile Suciu's original thought was the one to write a "Romanian Greek Catholic dogmatic, and so one should always regard to demonstrate the Catholic dogmas and to give them the shape on the beliefs and traditions of the Greek Church and especially the Romanian Church". Regarding the absence of an alphabetical index at the end of its work, Vasile Suciu admitted that he intended to introduce such an instrument, "but he could not". He introduced in exchange an analytic index "in order to facilitate students in revising the material", but also "because whoever would have liked to know how the author treated a certain topic would not have been compelled to read the whole thing but he/she should be able to reach his/her purposes only from reading index". Vasile Suciu also stressed that the main character of his books was a didactic one, which is why he resorted to some techniques, such as using templates to facilitate learning the content by seminarians. The two dogmatic theology treaties were re-edited by their author in a second edition, in the year 1927 the revision putting an emphasis on doctrinal differences between the Catholic and Orthodox.⁴⁵

The last important work developed by Vasile Suciu before being absorbed by the church administration is an analysis that is centered on

⁴⁵ *Unirea*, XXXIX, nr. 4/1929, p. 3. The periodical gives the review to the two works in *Orientalia Christiana*.

the religion-science-society triad.⁴⁶ Appeared at a time when the Romanian society began to slide down the slope of materialism and secularization, the volume in question was meant to be a replica in the Christian spirituality matrix to the aggressive currents of ideas questioning the place and role of faith and church in people's lives during those times. Vasile Suciú noted from the start that for the Romanian society this was a new problem considering the fact that the Romanian intellectual elite was mistaken for a long time with the representatives of the church, and when this did not happen anymore, the secular intellectuals continued to bear a special respect to the values promoted by the church and understand the social role which it had. What triggered the analysis of the author was a newspaper article entitled "The Anarchist" first appeared in "Gazeta Transilvaniei", later picked by other journals, in which a young graduate of the University of Budapest formulated a series of statements insulting the faith of the Romanians.⁴⁷ It was not the only example of "mental myopia" as the author of the reply book intransigently qualified it. Similar or even harsher speeches proliferated at that time in the Romanian Kingdom's academic environment, particularly in Iasi. Professors Thiron C. and A. C. Cuza had already launched attacks against the religious beliefs of their fellow countrymen advocating the total separation of the state from the Church, following the example of the French, or even to suppress the ecclesial institution. The premise from which Vasile Suciú proceeded to explain the "persecution" against the faith which had its place among the Romanian learned men began from the fact that they were bothered by "the moral and the teachings of Christianity" being most often tributary to atheistic beliefs. Based on this finding, the author opened the three major thematic discussions examining the relation between religion on the one hand and science, philosophy and society on the other. Regarding the first, Vasile Suciú presented the names of the clergymen who have made the most important discoveries in science or art, stating that the Church has encouraged at least since modern times, the development of science and increased the level of knowledge about the world in general. But no matter how much science would progress, there are still many areas which are impossible to cover through reason and

⁴⁶ Vasile Suciú, *Raportul dintre religie, știință și societate*, [The rapport between religion, science and society] Tipografia Seminarului teologic greco-catolic Printing Press, Blaj, 1910.

⁴⁷ Nicolae Brînzeu, Dr. Vasile Suciú în literatura teologică, [Dr. Vasile Suciú in the theological literature] p. 76.

technique developed by man, believed the author. These ultimate truths and their main cause fall in the religious sphere, which provides an understanding key complementary to that proposed by the various branches of science "in consistency, there are facts relating to the unseen world and especially to the prime cause that today we do not know and we cannot know. And we will never know them, no matter how advance the human mind is, because we will forever miss the mean to know them, the manifestation of the entire perfection of the prime cause, in creatures". Regarding the relationship with philosophy, religion was superior to it by the fact that, argued Vasile Suciu, only it could "satisfy the human desire to forever exist and to be happy. " This was not the only asset that religion had with systems of philosophical thought. It also had the privilege of fulfilling man's desire for justice ("to reward the good and punish the evil") or his inclination to obey a superior force ("the requirement to worship ") or to have a ceremony. But the supreme advantage which religion offered his followers was the possibility of obtaining redemption, which entitled the Vasile Suciu to say that "the religion, with its teachings and caresses is wanted by the human nature. It must be, and if it is not, it is made". Finally "the purpose of religion to society" is analyzed. The interrogation from which the author of the opuses starts is whether the state can exist without religion. After a thorough analysis of the dynamics of relations between religion and state power from ancient times to modernity, which highlighted the gradual reduction of the role of religion in society from one in which it was mixed with the temporal power, legitimizing it, to a simple reservoir of collective morality, Vasile Suciu concluded that "it is clear that the state cannot exist without religion, morality only the independent morality. Therefore, the free thinkers, by their desire to kill off religion are unconsciously the biggest and most dangerous enemies of the state because they are destroying its foundation".

Knowing the profile of metropolitan Vasile Suciu's theological work we can ask ourselves to what extent could Mircea Eliade find the answers to his questions by consulting it? In other words, was the Romanian high priest's theological work, meaning the volumes of fundamental dogmatic theology, namely those of dogmatic theology suited for knowing the dogmas and teaching of the Orthodox faith, as their requester expected? The answer to these questions tends to be a rather nuanced. I say this because, as it is clear from the content of the two works and from the response to the criticisms formulated by Nicolae Brinzeu on them, the author has chosen to present the "dogmatic truths" of the Catholic Church, but taking into account the "beliefs and traditions

of the Greek Church and especially of the Romanian Church". From this point of view, the Romanian Greek-Catholic Church was assuming the identity physiognomy that was specific to a church that resulted after a Florentine ecclesiastical union,⁴⁸ combining the Oriental tradition with elements from the inventory of the Catholic faith's pedagogy.⁴⁹ This combination of the two pillars identity of the Romanian Greek-Catholic Church is faithfully reflected in the massive theological works published by the high hierarch from Blaj and redited two decades apart. One can most obviously observe the influence of the Catholic Church on the uniate Romanians' Oriental faith in a series of dogmatic points, which are all examples of divergent evolutions of the Western theological thought in relation to the Eastern one. Among these, those debated by Vasile Suciuc debated in his volumes are related to the concept of "true Church", the primacy of St. Peter's jurisdiction over the apostolic college and the Church; to the nature of the Pope's primacy and the dogma of papal infallibility; to the teaching about the Holy Spirit's origin from the Father and the Son (Filioque); to the dogma of Virgin Mary's immaculate conception, to the matter and form of the sacraments, to the Church's teaching related to eschatology etc.

Despite such a content, between the Byzantine theological heritage and the Catholic doctrinal culture, Vasile Suciuc's works were rather placed, as we have seen, in the sphere of thought which was specific to the Eastern theological universe. Even so, getting them seems to have been crucial to Mircea Eliade, who, in order to achieve this goal did not hesitate to resort to a little trick, that of highlighting the behavior of other authors in similar circumstances: "For many years I am in correspondence with various Christians and experts in the history of Christianity in the West; they sent me their books and directed me towards the current Catholic-religious production" he wrote. To be even more persuasive and to underline even more the importance that the

⁴⁸ For the principles of the Florentine Union, see Josef Macha, *Ecclesiastical Unification. A Theoretical Framework together with Case Studies from the History of Latin-Byzantine Relations*, Pont. Institutum Orientalium Studiorum, Roma, 1974, p. 11-16. The author takes and adapts the conceptualizations made by Amitai Etzioni, *Political Unification. A Comparative Study of Leaders and Forces*, Holt, Rinehart and Winston, New York, 1965, applying them in the analysis of the inter-ecclesiastical rapports.

⁴⁹ About the identity of the Romanian Greek-Catholic Church until the middle of the XIXth century see Ciprian Ghișa, *Biserica greco-catolică din Transilvania (1700-1850). Elaborarea discursului identitar*, [The Greek-Catholic Church from Transylvania (1700-1850). The elaboration of the identity discourse] Cluj University Press, Cluj-Napoca, 2006.

volumes he had requested had in enriching his theological culture, Eliade concluded his brief epistle as a professional commitment, "for that matter, my life will be dedicated to the research of religions and deepening the Christian sources".

More than a month after Mircea Eliade wrote the letter, the metropolitan Vasile Suciu would answer him. We know this from the fact that on the letter received from Eliade, the high priest from Blaj had written the following resolution, with a purple pencil, often used in his pleadings: "I sent on 28/VII/928 a letter and all four volumes "for the mentioned reasons" in this letter". Without, unfortunately, having the content of the letter sent by the metropolitan Suciu, we surely know that the four volumes have been sent to young graduate of philosophy in Bucharest, as his name appears on the lists to whom copies of the second edition of the two works were donated.⁵⁰

We do know, fortunately, the response letter from Mircea Eliade to the gesture of munificence shown by the Greek-Catholic hierarch. Written at August 1st on a sheet of paper bearing the same header as the first, the letter surprises by the title of the addressee, even if not perfectly proper to the ecclesiastical dignity of the addressee, still more suitable than the previous one: "Most Holy Father". The sender is not reluctant to showing his satisfaction from the gift he had received: "Your Holiness' letter, and the books gave me a vivid and unspeakable joy. The gift is, indeed precious. "Having probably the time to look into them, Eliade added: "the four volumes will solve many of my theological enigmas." But the following mention can be considered not only as a genuine profession of faith, a proof of membership to his confession, but also a statement that betrayed the need to seek answers elsewhere: "although I, being and remaining Greek-Oriental, not all ... ". Revealing his working method he intended to use, Eliade added: "I will compel myself to read and meditate suitably with a book of thought and teaching. I have researched so far the clues, have worked thoroughly like any man of study". The letter ended this time with a formula that expresses the full gratitude of the writer, but also with his intention to address new messages to his illustrious correspondent "should a problem not be solved".

Thus ends a short but, as we could see, consistent ideational correspondence between Mircea Eliade and metropolitan Vasile Suciu. Without knowing, unfortunately, the letter from the high priest from Blaj to the young philosopher from Bucharest, we know that between the two

⁵⁰ AN SJ Cluj, personal fund *Vasile Suciu*, file no. 91/1907-1925, f. 21r, 22r.

there was a bond, albeit not a direct, personal one, but rather one of conjuncture, of circumstances. But the exchange of letters between the two assumes another significance, not at all negligible. It's about the respect from a distance, the esteem imposed by the recognition of authority that a young man, passionate about the history of religions and the dogmas of Christianity had towards his contemporary, whom he did not have the opportunity to know, to meet. Even so, what mattered more was that between them there was a bridge, created from the books written by the elder and the reading passion and thirst for knowledge of the younger.