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## EUROPE OF PILGRIMAGE ROUTES

In all cultures, the meaning of *road* extends beyond the idea of an actual path to cover a wide variety of concepts. We talk about life's road, the right road, etc., and in all the major religions the word has a figurative sense. For example, the concept is to be found not only in Buddhism and Islam but also in Greek thought, especially in Plato and later, Hesiod. The latter speaks of two roads, one of which is arduous and leads to virtue, the other being easy and leading to pleasure. The conceptions were close to the meaning of *road* or *way* in the Old and New Testament<sup>1</sup>.

### 1. Pilgrimages in the Bible

Pilgrimages have a long history in the ancient Near East among Semitic peoples. They are as old as the sacred shrines uncovered by archaeologists. To these various cultic centers the common man carried a part of the fruits of his land and livestock to offer it to the gods in homage and thanksgiving. The sanctuaries were places believed to be chosen by the gods as special abodes and manifested as such by peculiar natural phenomena (a height, a spring, a tree) or by a theophany, e.g. Jacob's dream (Gn 28,10-22). The custom of sacred pilgrimages was affirmed in ancient Israelite legislation concerning the religious feasts. The three hag (pilgrim) festivals, the Feast of Passover, the Hebrew Feast of Pentecost, and the Feast of Booths (Tabernacles), were times when the Israelites were commanded to appear before the Lord (Ex 23,14-17; Dt 16,16), a practice parallel to the Arabic *hajj*<sup>2</sup>.

Israelite religious pilgrimages continued during and after the exile (Ps 42). Josephus speaks of large gatherings at Jerusalem to celebrate the feasts of Yah-

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<sup>1</sup> M. ROBINSON, *Sacred Places, Pilgrims Paths. An Anthology of Pilgrimage*, London 1998, 30-31; See also: A. DUMOULIN, *Towards a Psychological Understanding of the Pilgrim*, „Lumen Vitae” 32 (1977), 112n.

<sup>2</sup> C. LALOUILLE, *Sagesse sémitique*, Paris 1998, 189 ; A. MOUSSALI, *Judaïsme, christianisme et islam. Etude comparée*, Paris 2000, 344n.

weh. Evidence for them in the New Testament is found in Lc 2,41-41; Jn 2,13; 5,1; 7,2-10; 12,20; Ac 2,1-11<sup>3</sup>

Jesus is the Pilgrim *par excellence*. Already in the infancy narratives, the Gospels endeavour to demonstrate this. In Luke (1-2) we find Jesus constantly travelling to and fro, between Nazareth in Galilee, Judaea with Bethlehem the city of David, and Jerusalem with its Temple. In Matthew, the holy family recapitulates the whole journey of its ancestors descent into Egypt and the return to the land of Israel (Mt 2,14-20).

The very structure of the Gospels is dictated by notion of pilgrimage. The Synoptists see Jesus public life unfolding in two stages: first, an itinerant ministry in the villages and rural areas of Galilee, then a long ascent (particularly developed in Luke) to the Holy City, „since it would not be right for a prophet to die outside Jerusalem” (Lc 13,33). John, in his own inimitable way, looks at the situation from a higher vantage point: Jesus is a pilgrim because he is not of this world (Jn 8,23); he has come from heaven, that is to say from God („He who sent me”), in order to give life to the world (Jn 6,33, 8,42). John sums up, perhaps unknowingly, the two stages of the Synoptic Gospels in a short and remarkably profound phrase uttered by Jesus just before his death: „I came from the Father and have come into the world, and now I leave the world to go to the Father” (Jn 16,23).

A pilgrim with no fixed abode in this world, Jesus is far more than a „new Abraham” or a „new Moses” These typologies, though present in the Gospel portrait of Jesus, do not yield the key to his identity. At a first level, Jesus is certainly the man who answers God’s call and sets out to follow in his footsteps. But he fulfils this mission in a unique way, because he is primarily the one who comes into the world to call men: like the *Shekhinah*, he comes to chart God’s path in the heart of our history. In the context of the story of Abraham, we may liken him first to the pilgrim-God who speaks, and only then to the human being who hears the divine Word and conforms his existence to it<sup>4</sup>

## 2. The Origins of European Pilgrimage Routes

The idea of pilgrimage is much older than Christianity, but always it has been an expression of the same two main concepts: that of making a pilgrimage by travelling to a specific geographical site, and that of being on a perpetual pilgrimage; the journey is life itself. Both are the pursuit of a greater good than mere existence, and both involve discomfort and hardship, if not a much-

<sup>3</sup> BROTHER JOHN OF TAIZE, *Pilgrimage Seen through the Bible*, „Lumen Vitae” 39(1984), 388n.

<sup>4</sup> J. CHABBI, *Le Seigneur des tribus*, Paris 1997, 313-336; A. MOUSSALI, *Judaisme, christianisme et islam*, 336n.

overworked word, peril. To view life as a pilgrimage is, in part, a description of life as the result of living it.

The Old Continent is full of existing pilgrimage routes. Pilgrimages have been creating Europe from the very beginning. Its very name, identified often with a mythological name of king of Tyr, Cadmus's daughter, carries a sign of voyage. This legendary *Europe*, walking by the coast of Phoenicia, was enchanted by Zeus and brought to Crete. The capture of the beautiful princess from the area of present day Southern Lebanon, taking her to one of the islands on Aegean Sea is a metaphor of the journey. The journey also stands for quite considerable transfer of achievements civilization from Asia to the so-called „wide world” Thus, the Greek word „europe” could etymologically be derived from – „broad face” (wide area). Direction of mythical Europe also signifies the close connection of ancient Egypt (Phoenicia was within that zone of influence) with ancient Greek<sup>5</sup> Transfer of specific values was ongoing from east to west. This idea is the basis of another explanation of the name of the Old Continent. It would originate from the Semitic „erib” meaning darkness or sunset. Here also some references to a legend are made. According to the legend, the sun, as a fiery chariot, is pulled by invisible horses. They travel from the hidden stables in the east to the place of rest behind the western horizon. Consequently, Asia was seen as the country of sunrise and Europe was called the land of sunset.

The legendary route from East to West became the key to understanding the identity of the peninsula spreading from the hills of Ural to the coasts of East Atlantic. This area, a civilization formed by perpetual journey, witnessed incredible transfer of values. This movement went in two directions. The conviction about the light coming from the east (*Lux ex oriente*) was not passively awaited. Quite to the contrary, the voyage to the Orient was undertaken with growing courage. Participants of such journeys were referred to as pilgrims. The Latin word „pelegrinus” or the earlier „peregrinus” meant (as long as in the 11th century) someone who was not a citizen, a visitor from abroad, a stranger. During the period of crusades, pilgrims perceived as journeymen looking for holy things the decision to leave one's own space and time was not caused by commercial, political or cultural reasons but by a specific vision of sacrum, a hierophanic horizon, the necessity to meet something „totally different” A such journey was usually undertaken to a sanctuary, i.e. an area transformed by ritual consecration into an excluded, holy land, exclusively sacrificed to God.

The extraordinary character of such is emphasized by temples. Also, the presence of pilgrims confirmed the conviction about the sense of development and strengthening of the existing cult. However, such sanctuaries were not wanted to be the very aim in themselves. They were not to be the end station.

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<sup>5</sup> Ancient artists tried to picture the legendary route from East to West, travelled by mythological Europe, on Grecian vases found in Pompeii. It later became a topic for paintings of Titan, Rembrandt, Rubens, Veronese, Lorraine and Boucher.

Rather, they became meeting places: sacred with profane, heaven with earth, the earthly with the supernatural. They let pilgrims touch the sacred zone, endowing them with power to return to another reality. One can observe here centrifugal-centripetal movement, Pilgrims who set out on their journey want to reach such places as Jerusalem, Rome or Mecca. They do it in order to return with stronger consciousness of participation in a particular religious group, strengthened their relationship with God and committed to defend specific values. Such concentration on important ethical and religious values might be understood to be similar to certain military expedition which were undertaken to defend holy places.

Time and form of pilgrimages to holy places rebuild and strengthen social and religious identity of the participants. It is important to both the micro and macro structures of social and cultural aspect. In its broad meaning, it could signify that civilization identity of many areas was created on the basis of pilgrimage routes. It also largely refers to the Old Continent.

Europe owes its Judeo-Christian character to activity of two primary pilgrimage centers: Jerusalem and Rome. Even the double destruction of the Holy City (70; 132-135) did not discourage those who wanted to touch traces of the history of the Chosen People, or see the places which commemorated the life and work of Jesus Christ. A stay in the Holy Land gave them strength to build the Church in their environment.

### 3. The Pilgrim's Progress in Europe

The beginning of the 4th century, after the Edict of Milan, saw an intensification of pilgrimages to the graves of Princes Apostles. Rome, which concentrates values of Greek and Roman civilization. These graves provided an opportunity for people from diverse social and cultural centers to meet there who founded their place in the Church.

The figures of Peter and Paul symbolize two basic directions of conversion: *ex gentibus* and *ex circumcissione*. Two basilicas founded on the spot of the deaths of the two Apostles (on the Vatican Hill and by Via Ostiensis) stimulated origin of pilgrimages called *ad limina Apostolorum*. Initially, it was enough to reach the door of basilicas, where the relics of holy men were located. A pilgrimage was ended with the paying a tribute to the relics. In time, Roman churches filled with various reliquaries. Although growing fears of their falsification appeared new pilgrimage centers were created, at such places of tribute to many saints.

Thus, in the map of Europe, new pilgrimage centers appear as, for example, Tours (St. Martin), Compostella (St. James), Padua (St. Anthony). Pilgrims travelling on old and new routes have been under the protection of an Apostolic Capital since the Middle Ages. This kind of protection was including the person and his belongings. A recommendation letter issued by civil and religion

authorities guaranteed protection and material support during pilgrimage (shelter, warmth, bread and water). In order to secure accommodation and shelter for pilgrims, hospices, schools (for various nationalities) and xenodochia (hospitals in vicinity of sanctuaries) were built.

The medieval system of protection of the growing pilgrimage movement seems to be the model until today. It lend to Europe were covered with pilgrimage routes from north to south and from east to west. Contemporary tourist guides try to rediscover these routes<sup>6</sup>, however they do not always remind the participants that pilgrimages are one of characteristic features of Judeo-Christian civilization of Europe. However, the lack of such information does not stop the revival of tendencies to walk the old routes to the well-known sanctuaries. As the critical writings of reformers (Luther, Erasmus, Calvin) did not liquidate the will to go on pilgrimages, so the contemporary attempts to ignore the religious aspects of these routes cannot make them easy and pleasant tourist routes.

For many contemporary pilgrims, the journey on an ancient pilgrimage route is not only the possibility to obtain indulgence or try one's physical condition. The hard journey down the pilgrimage route is an opportunity to improve one's memory about the identity Europe. It has been created from the very beginning by movement which causes continuous transfer of values which strengthen Europe's identity. A map of Europe with numerous sanctuaries illustrates its spiritual roots. There are the sanctuaries inviting and almost asking us to reach these places physically. However they do not want to keep a pilgrim longer. These places send a pilgrim to learn to concentrate on real values of his daily life.

The metaphor of journey and travel which has a religious basis, is understood by many believers of various European religions. So, as the ritual journey to Jerusalem (Hebrew *hag*) for a Jew, and an annual pilgrimage to Mecca for a Muslim, seems to bear many analogies with hardships of a Christian travelling to Rome, Compostella or Częstochowa. Each of these pilgrimage types hide a longing to reach the promised place of destiny. Places of earthly pilgrimages, in spite of not keeping travellers permanently, could give an illusion of the searched end of a journey. They remind us of those who created the route, bringing hope of participation in a community unified by the power of „Spirit and Truth”.

#### 4. Conclusion

Historically, pilgrimage has involved physical movement to a numinous location: the performance there of certain acts and attitudes of piety, perhaps focusing an intrinsic aspect of professed faith of the pilgrim: and a return in

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<sup>6</sup> An example could be the pilgrimage route to Santiago di Compostella, revived in the territory of present France and Spain. See: COUNCIL OF EUROPE CONGRESS, *The Santiago de Compostella Pilgrim Routes*, „Architectural Heritage Reports and Studies” 16 (1989), 57n.

a fulfilled state of mind. Not as much attention has been devoted to what might be termed pilgrimage-in-imagination: where soul, as it were alone, moves out and away in pursuit of that-which-beckons. Some hints may be sufficient<sup>7</sup>.

However, such a case does not really take account of the clear difference between the pilgrim and the tourist. The pilgrim seeks to be changed by the experience of pilgrimage. Even when modern pilgrims utilize the convenience of mass transportation rather than walking, the journey is as important as the arrival. It could be argued that tourists do not seek to be changed by their holiday. For the tourist, except in unusual cases, the journey is almost always not part of the experience but merely an inconvenience to be overcome. Tourists tend to change the landscape that they visit rather than be changed by their destination. The growing popularity of pilgrimage in Europe recovers when possible the experience of the journey as well as the arrival. The ranks of devout pilgrims are currently being swelled by the presence of those who would not call themselves believers. For some of these, the journey is all important and important and the arrival almost incidental, if not disappointing.

## Europa szlaków pielgrzymich

### Streszczenie

Stary Kontynent jest pełen szlaków pielgrzymich. Pielgrzymowanie bowiem od dawna współtworzyło Europę. Już w samej nazwie tego kontynentu kryje się idea wędrówki. W większości prób wyjaśnienia znaczenia słowa „Europa” pojawia się wątek transferu wartości ze wschodu na zachód. Legendarna droga ze Wschodu na Zachód stała się kluczem do zrozumienia tożsamości półwyspu rozpościerającego się od wzgórz Uralu po brzegi wschodniego Atlantyku. Ten obszar, cywilizacyjnie ukształtowany dzięki permanentnej wędrówce stał się świadkiem niebywałego transferu wartości. Ruch ten zasadniczo przebiegał w obu kierunkach. Albowiem przekonaniu o świetle przycho-dzącym ze wschodu (*lux ex oriente*) nie towarzyszyło bierne wyczekiwanie. Przeciwnie, coraz odważniej podejmowano trud drogi w stronę „orientu”

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<sup>7</sup> T. HAMILL, *Pilgrimage*, „The Furrow” 16 (1990), 228n.

Uczestnika tego rodzaju wyprawy z czasem zaczęto nazywać pielgrzymem. Jako punkt docelowy pielgrzymek stają się raczej miejscem spotkania: sacrum z profanum, nieba z ziemią, doczesności z nadprzyrodzonością. Pozwalając dotknąć przestrzeni sakralnej, wyposażają pielgrzymów w odpowiednią moc dającą szansę powrotu w inną codzienność. Mamy tu do czynienia z ruchem dośrodkowo-odśrodkowym. Wyruszający w drogę pielgrzymi pragną dotrzeć do takich miejsc, jak np. Jerozolima, Rzym czy Mekka. Czynią to, aby wrócić z mocniejszą świadomością swojej przynależności do określonej grupy religijnej, by ugruntować swoją więź z Bogiem, a także wyzwolić moc do obrony konkretnych wartości. To co może mieć znamiona ekspansji, czasami zbrojnej wyprawy w obronie miejsc świętych, powoduje jednocześnie koncentrację wokół istotnych walorów etyczno-religijnych, weryfikowanych w zwykłej codzienności.

Czas i forma pielgrzymowania odbudowują i ugruntowują tożsamość społeczno-religijną uczestników wyprawy do miejsc świętych. Ma to znaczenie zarówno dla mikro- jak i makrostruktur socjokulturowych. W swym szerokim odniesieniu może to znaczyć, iż tożsamość cywilizacyjna wielu obszarów tworzyła się w oparciu o szlaki pielgrzymie. W dużej mierze dotyczy to również Starego Kontynentu. Swój judeochrześcijański charakter Europa zawdzięcza żywotności dwóch centrów pielgrzymkowych: Jerozolimie i Rzymowi. Nawet podwójne zburzenie Miasta Świętego (70 r. oraz 132-135 r.) nie odstraszyło tych, którzy chcieli dotknąć śladów historii Narodu Wybranego, zobaczyć miejsca upamiętniające życie i dzieło Jezusa Chrystusa. Pobyt w Ziemi Świętej mobilizował ich po powrocie do budowy Kościoła w swoim środowisku.

Dla wielu dzisiejszych pielgrzymów wyjście na dawno wytyczony szlak pielgrzymkowy oznacza nie tylko możliwość zyskania odpustu, czy też spróbowania swoich możliwości kondycyjnych. Wysiłek podążania dawną drogą pątniczą daje okazję do pogłębienia swojej pamięci o Europie. Od samego początku tworzy ją ruch, mocą którego ma miejsce ustawiczny przekaz wartości służący ugruntowywaniu jej tożsamości. Mapa Europy usłana licznymi sanktuariami uzmysławia jej duchowe korzenie. Jeżeli kryje w sobie zaproszenie, czy wręcz pokusę fizycznego dotarcia do tych ważnych miejsc, to jednak nie chcą one zatrzymywać na dłużej. Odsyłają pielgrzymy, aby siłą ekspansji nabył też zdolności do koncentracji na prawdziwych wartościach w swojej codzienności.

Metafora drogi i podróżowania, mająca podłoże religijne, jest czytelna dla wyznawców wielu tradycji religijnych współtworzących Europę. Tak jak rytualne kroczenie ku Jerozolimie (hebr. *hag*) dla Żyda, tak też doroczna pielgrzymka do Mekki dla muzułmanina (arab. *haji*), zdaje się posiadać wiele analogii z pielgrzymim trudem chrześcijanina zdążającego do Rzymu, Compostelli czy Częstochowy. Za każdym z tych typów pielgrzymowania kryje się tęsknota dotarcia do obiecanego miejsca przeznaczenia. Punkty docelowe ziemskiego

pielgrzymowania mimo że nie chcą zatrzymywać na stałe przybywających, mogą dawać przedsmak tegoż poszukiwanego kresu wędrówki. Przypominają o tych, którzy współtworzyli wyznaczoną drogę, napawają nadzieją uczestnictwa we wspólnocie zjednoczonej siłą „Ducha i Prawdy”.