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JAROSLAV PELIKAN AND THE ROAD OF THE HISTORIAN TO THE
CHURCH

(through Tradition to Orthodoxy)

Theodor Assenov Avramov

A B S T R A C T

Scientific advisor: prof. Pavel Nikolov Pavlov, PhD

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Introduction

„*Cor ad cor loquitur*“¹

What do we mean when we talk about Tradition? Is it possible to identify and prove the existence of a living, coherent and internally connected phenomenon that corresponds to the concept? These questions are fundamentally new and were first explicitly formulated by John Henry Cardinal Newman in his famous essay². His text does not simply pose the question, but sets the stage for the treatment of Tradition as an object of theological study, and not simply a given.

In more recent times, we observe the ever-deepening attention and development of the discourse on „traditional values“, from where the question of Tradition appears in a very urgent, albeit invisible, way. The popularization of narratives about convert public figures is not a new phenomenon, but their construction is usually dominated by a triumphalism on the part of the receiving community against that from which they have departed. Orthodoxy, especially in the English-speaking world, has not been left behind in this regard, and very often, especially in the second half of the last century, it became a new home for the more traditionally minded members of other communities. In most cases, however, the new converts very quickly acquire a great deal of publicity *ad extra*, and the image of their new home that they present becomes almost incomprehensible to those who grew up therein. In this way, an ideological fortress is being built, identified with the Orthodox Church, which is being connected precisely with ideologies that fundamentally have no place there. This broader framework is a contributing factor to the **study's relevance**. Our approach here will not be a direct polemic, but rather an attempt at an alternative narrative based on a specific person – Jaroslav Pelikan – who, in addition to an example of a conversion path other than the above, also spent his entire life studying and following the Tradition.

¹ „Heart unto heart speaketh.“ The words on the coat of arms of John Henry Cardinal Newman.

² Newman, John Henry. *An Essay on the Development of Christian Doctrine*, London: Longmans, Green, 1920.

In this way, we also formulate the **object** of the study – Jaroslav Pelikan's path to the Orthodox Church in the diversity of his steps. The **subject** of the research is the bibliographical corpus of Pelikan, as well as its immediate context.

Given the not particularly large access to Pelikan, bibliographically and biographically, in Bulgaria, the goal is to present him, but also to analyze his works as particularly contributing to the construction of his theological-historical method, which with him, as it often happens, it is an invariable part of his personal life as well.

For the tracing of his path, the presentation of his methodology, academic and life, the **tasks** stand out, which, contrary to good academic tradition, do not coincide with the structure of the study directly. They are: 1) creating a detailed biography of the early period of Pelikan's life, allowing to understand the context in which he grew up; 2) study of the scholars who had a leading role in his development and tracing the resulting eastward movement; 3) presentation of his most significant work „The Christian Tradition“³; 4) a study of newly discovered and unexplored source documents that continue the biographical narrative and highlight his relationship with some leading researchers; 5) the creation and contextualization of Pelikan's biography for the period before his acceptance into communion with the Orthodox Church; 6) analyzing his conversion and the reception of this event; 7) the creation of a short and schematic biography and a complete bibliography. The last task, present not particularly explicitly, is the positioning of Pelikan among Orthodox theologians in the English-speaking world.

The methods used to conduct the research, like the tasks, are not isolated in the individual parts of its structure. They include: historical, historical-analytical, comparative-analytical, prosopographical, systematic. Due to the multitude of sources and springs, their intertwining and joint use is often necessary.

Due to the peculiar nature of the state of Pelikan research, the classic elements of a dissertation, such as an analysis of the literature on the topic or primary authors who have worked

³ Pelikan, J. The Christian Tradition: A History of the Development of Doctrine, Vols. 1–5. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1971–1989.

on the topic, are not included here. The main reason for this is that presenting them fully would take little more than a few footnotes.

The structure of the dissertation consists of a Preface, Introduction, Three chapters with subchapters, Conclusion, References (a total of 155 books, of which 19 in Cyrillic, 135 in Latin, as well as 4 archive units) and Appendices.

Exposition

The **Preface** briefly presents the history of the study. The **Introduction** presents the reasons for choosing the topic, its relevance, the subject, the goals, the tasks and the methodology that determine the structure of the work, as well as a concise presentation of the research devoted to the topic.

1. Jaroslav Pelikan as student

The **first chapter** – „The Student“ – traces the immediate family history of Jaroslav Pelikan and presents the first period of his life, from 1923 to 1962. The sub-chapters, seven in number, contain the unfolding of various aspects of his background.

Jaroslav Pelikan's father, Jaroslav Pelikan Sr., was born in Czechoslovakia in 1899, but emigrated to the United States soon after with his father, Jan Pelikan. His teacher was Theodosius Harnack, the father of Adolf von Harnack. Around 1899 he moved to Ohio, USA. There he became one of the founders of the Slovak Evangelical Lutheran Church of the Augsburg Confession in the United States of America. This community was formed by emigrants who moved to the USA between 1848 and 1890 and is known for its conservatism and liturgically-rich rite. His mother, Anna Buzekova Pelikan, was born in Šid, Vojvodina, modern day Serbia. She emigrated to the United States in the same wave as her future husband and settled in New Ulm, Minnesota, where she graduated from Dr. Martin Luther College and worked in a Sunday school for a parish belonging to the Lutheran community, which was led by her future father-in-law. They mostly speak Serbian, but from an early age, Jaroslav Pelikan grew up in a polyglot family and environment. They are also his first teachers of theology, a frequent topic of conversation at home. From them he acquired a „joyful view of the world and seriousness in affairs“, „an iron sense of duty“ and „simple Slavic piety“ characteristic of his mother, and from his father's side – „attitude towards Creation, high energy, capacity for long intensive work, as well as the ability to fall asleep almost instantly“⁴, the latter of which is a special gift for those aiming for serious academic work.

⁴ Pelikan, J. „A Personal Memoir“. p. 35.

Pelikan received a classical German education for the period in schools associated with the church structure in which his father served. From a very early age, he showed a special affinity for languages, especially classical, and in his student period – also modern ones. In the fall of 1942, when Jaroslav Pelikan entered Concordia Seminary, he received support from two of his professors at the Seminary, who allowed him to conduct his own research. His parents realized that he was suited for academic work rather than pastoral ministry. In the Seminary, the teachers were divided into two „schools“ - one aimed at and emerging from a high academic tradition, and the other at a more conservative Lutheran tradition. Pelikan had an interest in the history of dogma, for which he was referred to professors Matthew Spinka and Wilhelm Pauk at the University of Chicago. He began the university's doctoral program at the age of twenty, while still a sophomore at the Seminary. His initial interest in that field takes a back seat when he is forced, due to the former's departure, to work under latter. He also became Pelikan's primary teacher until at least the early 1950's. In this early period, Pelikan's attention was directed almost entirely to the Reformation and Martin Luther's contacts with the successors of Jan Hus. Matthew Spinka, Pelikan's first-choice academic mentor, has an entirely different focus. He is one of the few in-depth church historians dealing with Orthodoxy and especially in its Slavic manifestations. This is indicative of Pelikan's unfulfilled early interests.

He completed his bachelor's degree⁵ in 1946, and in the same year defended his doctoral dissertation⁶ from the University of Chicago. Immediately after that, he was recruited as a teacher at Valparaiso University, and three years later at Concordia Seminary. In both places he first turns to history, but later to more philosophical disciplines or those directly related to the intellectual history of the Reformation. In this period, he wanted to be a scholar „under the direct appointment of the church“⁷. This, later, will prove impossible. At Concordia, he also had administrative duties, and often has to fill in for Otto Kretzmann, the university's President, at official events. Both of the places where Pelikan teaches are under the direct leadership of the

⁵ The Bible of Kralice. B.D. thesis, Concordia Theological Seminary, 1946. (непубликувана).

⁶ Pelikan, J. Luther and the Confessio Bohemica. PhD diss., University of Chicago, 1946 (непубликувана).

⁷ Pelikan, J. „A Personal Memoir“. p. 38.

Lutheran Church Missouri Synod (LCMS), and at this time a conflict is brewing in the synod that will make Pelikan's desired path impossible. The main conflict results from the two schools, conventionally – the traditional and the historical-critical – for whose representatives it becomes impossible to work together, mainly because of the conservative approach of synod.

This conflict is also the background of the first manifestation of Pelikan's critical attitude towards the tradition in which he grew up and can clearly be seen in his interpretation of the Law and Gospel as theological loci in the Lutheran system. His short research on the topic is also his first published text⁸ that is not directly related to his dissertation. The article itself is a sharp criticism of the traditional understanding of the problem in Lutheran circles and is directly related to the entry of different ideologies. After seven years in both teaching positions, Pelikan moved to the University of Chicago, where he found the academic freedom, he had long sought. It was there that he turned his attention to teaching and researching Christian thought more broadly. He is no longer constrained by the methodological framework of his previous environment and devotes more attention to the study of the East. He offered a lecture course on the History of Christian Thought, which he sees as a reworking of the idea of Dogmengeschichte inherited from Harnack. He also organizes four seminars a year that study specific ideas through individual personalities, such as comparing Anselm Canterbury's *Cur deus homo* with St. Athanasius the Great's *De incarnatione verbi dei*. His move to the University of Chicago gave him the opportunity to direct students' attention to areas of Christian thought that might have been viewed as questionable or even apostate in his previous environment. During this time, he insisted that the newly built chapel be dedicated to St. Gregory of Nyssa, which it is to this day. This period is a time in which Pelikan devotes more and more attention to the study of the patristic heritage.

It is here that the role clearly stands out for the first time prot. Georgi Florovsky and his relationship with Pelikan. The context of their first meeting is their work in the commission on „Tradition and Traditions“ of „Faith and Order“ at the beginning of the second half of the last

⁸ Pelikan, J. „History as Law and Gospel I“. *The Cresset*, 12:4 (1949), 12–17.

century. In this commission are brought together, besides others, Pelikan, Pauck, and prot. Florovsky. Their work is aimed at understanding and exploring the role of Tradition. In the following years Pelikan increasingly recognizes prot. Florovsky as a co-thinker, teacher and provocateur. Their work together turns out to be fruitful. The report⁹ prepared by Pelikan on the work of the commission becomes its official one, and also marks a moment of change in the work of its author. Two nuances in this text are important. The first, less explicit, is Pelikan's delicate critical attitude towards the Lutheran heritage of historical theology. The second, quite obvious, is his focus on the role of history in theology.

Shortly after the publication of this text, Pelikan moved from the University of Chicago to Yale as Titus Street Professor of Church History. This change is significant because it is part of the trajectory already noted, moving the Pelikan away from its original environment. In „Concordia“ and „Valparaiso“, as well as in the University of Chicago, the disciplines that he teaches are found in the analogous Theological Faculty in the respective institutions. At Yale, however, he spent only three years in the university's Divinity School before moving to the Faculty of Arts and Sciences. The shift to secular chairs and teaching roles is significant because Pelikan was one of the most ardent, and later among the most arduous apologists for the place of denominational theological education for the benefit of the wider public.

The deteriorating situation in the LCMS was probably one of the main factors contributing to his acceptance of the post at Yale. This post involves leaving the two permanent places Pelikan had up to this point in his life – the Midwest and the LCMS, or rather the ecclesiastical educational institutions belonging to it. The first location has been replaced with a new refuge in New Haven, a quiet university town on the US East Coast that provides good living conditions for his family and easy access to the libraries of some of the best universities in the country. The second place has been changed to a secular university. Pelikan's position at Yale, as well as at other non-church institutions, would be the catalyst for some of his most influential positions on the relationship between theology and the university, as well as his path to the Church. This

⁹ „Overcoming History by History“. – In: Lampe, G. H. *The Old and the New in the Church: Studies in Ministry and Worship of the World Council of Churches*, London: SCM Press, 1961, 36–42.

literal transition also accompanies the metaphorical path, at this stage of approach, to the East and Orthodoxy. He is most adequately traceable, chiefly in the absence of other sources, by a general glance at his bibliography for the period.

The first of the important texts of the period is „The Shape of Death“¹⁰, which is Pelikan's first scholarly return to the early Church and the patristic heritage. Relatively concisely, the author examines four ideas of death in Christianity, starting with Tatian, through St. Cyprian of Carthage and Origen, to St. Irenaeus of Lyons. It's interesting in its own right, but not particularly relevant to the present study other than revealing Pelikan's changing interests and direction.

„The Light of the World“¹¹ - the second important text - continues this direction, but demonstrates a particular approach of Pelikan - the tracing of a specific idea, image or approach in the diversity of its manifestations in a specific period of the history of the Church. It is not radically new, but it is persistent. Here it is the image of light in antiquity, often criticized for sun worship, but interpreted by Pelikan as the liturgical root („Svete Tikhii/Phos Ilarion“) and St. Athanasius' counter-Arian understanding of Christ as the radiance of the Father¹². There is also a developed sensitivity to iconography in this text, but it is not expressed particularly distinctly¹³.

The next four texts, which mark this change and express further aspects of Pelikan's estrangement from his native background, are articles. The first¹⁴ contains an appeal to the change in the consideration of Luther, and the overall heritage of the Reformation, as having its basis in the earlier heritage of the Church. He addresses this topic long enough so that the main

¹⁰ Pelikan, J. *The Shape of Death: Life, Death, and Immortality in the Early Fathers*. New York: Abingdon Press, 1961.

¹¹ Pelikan, J. *The Light of the World: A Basic Image in Early Christian Thought*. New York: Harper, 1962.

¹² Ibid. p. 33–55. Even a cursory knowledge of the works of Prot. G. Florovsky it is enough in the above-mentioned interpretation to clearly see the influence of several texts: Florovsky, G. „Creation and Creaturehood“ –In: *Collected Works of Georges Florovsky*, Vol 3. 1976, p. 43–78; Originally published as Florovsky, G. *Creation and creatureliness*. – Флоровски, Г. „Тварь и тварность“. –В: *Православная Мысль. Труды Православного Богословского института в Париже*, вып. 1, Париж, 1928, с. 178–212, as well as others.

¹³ Ibid. p. 31.

¹⁴ Pelikan, J. „Fathers, Brethren and Distant Relatives“. *Concordia Theological Monthly*, 33:12, (1966), p. 710–718.

focus is not too obvious: a return to the Fathers, academically and spiritually, as the right step in the common work of all theologians. He elaborates on this and presents three criteria necessary for „doing“ theology: serious attention and attitude to the theological tradition; fraternal attitude towards the theological contemporaries and cohabitants; and an attitude to extra-ecclesial and theological thought. In short – fathers, brethren and distant relatives.

The second article¹⁵ is a traditional historical study of the fate of monastics and monasteries after the Reformation in Western Europe. In tracing the results of the abolition of the ascetic tradition in Protestant communities, he is more than critical, emphasizing the failure of the Reformation to provide an alternative. The article was written on the occasion of 450 years since the Reformation and complements his critical attitude towards it.

The third article¹⁶ is an expanded version of his speech at the graduation ceremony in Valparaiso. In it he uses Arianism as an example of an incorrect approach to maintaining the relationship between orthodoxy (*Pravoslavie*) and freedom. From there, he derives another opposition in his time – the blind following of teachings and dogmas, on the one hand, and on the other – the free denial and change of everything inherited. Both, unspoken, are directed against the developing conflict in the LCMS during this period. In all these articles, for the first time, concrete attention to the ascetic tradition, the liturgical corrective, Christian Hellenism (at a distance) and the patristic heritage under Pelikan is evident. These elements would become prominent from here on, especially in his capital work, „The Christian Tradition“¹⁷.

All these articles are important not only because they reveal Pelikan's Eastern Slope, but also because they mark some of his last academic contacts with the publishing houses and institutions where he began his academic life.

¹⁵ Pelikan, J. „After the Monks–What? Luther’s Reformation and Institutions of Missions, Welfare, and Education“. *Springfielder*, 31 (1967), 3–21.

¹⁶ Pelikan, J. „Orthodoxy and Freedom“. *The Cresset*, 30:8, (1967), p. 14–17.

¹⁷ Pelikan, J. *The Christian Tradition*, 5 Vols. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1971–1989.

The last book¹⁸, which unites in itself all the aspects discussed so far under the general structure of the story, is of great importance. It methodologically reinforces the approach in „The Light of the World“, but this time it focuses on the understanding of the Lord Jesus Christ and his role in history, as expressed in Tertullian, Origen, Donatism, Montanism and Eusebius of Caesarea. Particularly important in it is the understanding of the task of history in a Christian context, which is only hinted at here, but at a later stage receives significant development. Completing this study, Pelikan brings out the methodological significance of Eusebius' Church history, as the passage from local history, through common to Catholic, conciliar history - affecting, justifying and commemorating Christ everywhere and always¹⁹.

The threads presented thus far outline the first stage of Pelikan's path to the Church, which still only hints at its final direction. The underlined theological loci give a good opportunity to follow them in development. Interpersonal contacts, especially those with Pauk and others. The link to Florovsky marks another trajectory and element of change that will receive its fulfillment later.

2. Jaroslav Pelikan as teacher

The second period of Pelikan's life, tentatively beginning here in 1969, is not separated because of a changed administrative position, but because of the work that stands at its center – „The Christian Tradition“. It is one of Pelikan's greatest contributions to the academic world, and not only that, but also a cornerstone in his path to the Church. This is presented within Chapter Two of the study, but before examining Pelikan's magnum opus, two other books that are also preparatory to it provide a very good opportunity to consider another aspect of Pelikan's thought that is of enormous importance – history and its relationship with theology.

The first of them²⁰ is a preface to the entire project. Its inspiration - John Henry Cardinal Newman – occupies a leading position in shaping the conception of the author, to whom

¹⁸ Pelikan, J. *The Finality of Jesus Christ in An Age of Universal History: A Dilemma of the Third Century*. *Ecumenical Studies in History*, 3. London: Lutterworth, 1965; Richmond: John Knox Press, 1965.

¹⁹ *Ibid.* p. 56.

²⁰ Pelikan, J. *Development of Christian Doctrine: Some Historical Prolegomena*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1969.

Harnack is the main opposition. The book begins with a comparative analysis of the theological positions regarding the development of the Church's teaching under Protestantism and Roman Catholicism, with the author presenting the Roman Catholic arguments in an apologetic manner, but refraining from polemics. However, most of the positions he supports can also be attributed to Orthodoxy. The second part of the book is the most voluminous and contains three different but methodologically related studies of key teachings in the history of the Church from the first millennium, each of which is a point of conflict between Orthodox, Roman Catholics and Protestants.

Pelikan discusses Hellenization as a topic related to Church teaching. He compares two positions, one of Harnack, who sees Hellenization as the decline of Christianity, and the other of Leslie Dewart²¹, who sees it as a natural development in the past, but no longer important. Pelikan formulated a principle that distinguished heretical systems from orthodoxy through commitment to the past and the present. The conversation about the development of the Church's teaching is a pressing issue for Pelikan, as Newman's understanding of teaching has come under criticism. He used historical understanding to resolve the case for the ascension of the Virgin expressed as a dogma of the Roman Catholic Church.

Pelikan identifies the search for meaning in the formula of St. Vincent of Lerins as a key problem in theology. He sees the task of historical theology as a kind of cartography of the problem and emphasizes the importance of listening and harmonizing one's own discoveries with people, not just solo performers in history. Pelikan criticizes the scholastic notion of Dogmengeschichte and draws attention to the history of learning as a discipline that balances without going to extremes. To do this, she and her practitioners must cultivate a special sensory

²¹ There are several points of departure that Dewart makes about the specific condition of the modern world, in which „Christians can finally combine doctrinal immutability and development“. Cf. Dewart, L. *The Future of Belief*, New York: Burns & Oats, 1967, p. 142. This position is criticized by Pelikan, who questions the fundamental value and right of the present state of the world. „But if the main problem is an understanding of Christian teaching that absolutizes the past, is the modern view that absolutizes the present really an improvement.“ Pelikan, J. *Op. cit.* p. 30.

apparatus, sensitive not only to changes, but also able to recognize the continuity inherent in the various teachings of the Church and in her own life.

The history of the teaching of the Church is different from the history of the Church as a separate discipline and must be balanced without going to extremes. For Pelikan, the focus should be on the development of learning, not on the boundaries or general legitimacy of development. The potential for ending the controversy rests on the study of the development of the doctrine, not on the question of its boundaries or legitimacy. The history of the dogmas and the development of the Church's teaching should not be simply a textbook of inter-Christian disputes but should be studied with a special emphasis on continuity.

The next book²² contains an uncharacteristic and barely perceptible polemic. It is an elaborate argument for „doing“ theology through historical theology. The two together reveal a certain tension – that between history and theology, especially in the context of the study of the development of the teaching of the Church. Throughout the study, the Anglophone conception of historical theology predominates, which deals almost entirely with the history of the Church's teaching. Its development is a leading category. Pelikan presents several models for tracking this development and gives historical examples for each. Everywhere he mainly emphasizes continuity as the main characteristic of the correct understanding of development, if it is assumed that there is such a thing.

Pelikan's magnum opus „The Christian Tradition“ is his particular contribution and a vivid exponent of his methodological positions. The first and second volumes, being more closely related to what is under consideration here, are subject to more detailed presentation and study, while the others are rather relegated to the background. The definition of what was studied by Pelikan is also important: „What the Church of Jesus Christ believes, teaches and confesses on the basis of the Word of God: this is Christian doctrine“²³. With it, he opposes

²² Pelikan, J. *Historical Theology: Continuity and Change in Christian Doctrine*. New York: Corpus Books; London: Hutchinson, 1971.

²³ Pelikan, J. *The Christian Tradition*, Vol. 1, p. 1.

several directions of research, but above all, he tries to confirm the Church as the place of research of its teachings.

One of the ways in which Pelikan's ecclesiological view contributes to his theological-historical enterprise is through the inclusion of liturgical and doctrinal elements in the definition. However, the emphasis is always on the Church as a serving and worshiping community. For Pelikan, scripture is unfolded and interpreted after it is read in the liturgy, and the Gospel is preached together with pastoral prayer. He believes that the young are taught in piety at least as much as they are taught the dogmas of the Church. Thus, the historian of Church teaching must try to reach what is believed, as the „hidden meaning“²⁴ of what is professed. This clarification complements the observations already made and demonstrates the practical nature of Pelikan's understanding of the Church as a living organism, and not simply as an institution for the promulgation of dogmas. Despite the risk of exaggerated biological imagery, the Church's liturgy, in a non-strict liturgical sense, best demonstrates its life and principle of existence. This is exactly what Pelikan is leading to. He can interpret and describe the teaching of the Church in a different way, which later in life will bring him to her doorstep.

The topics covered by Pelikan in the first volume complete the definition. In the first part, called „*Preparatio Evangelica*“ Pelikan covers the main theological processes that took place in the first century of the Church's existence, including those concerning the conceptions of the „true Israel,“ the problem of the conversion of Gentiles into Christianity, the conflicts between Christianity and classical philosophy, and the ways in which the early Church interpreted Scripture. In the second chapter, Pelikan presents the development of the teachings of all the groups that would later be defined as heretical, covering the period from the end of the first century to the middle of the third. He emphasizes the importance of considering these systems as primarily parts of ecclesial communities and avoiding simplistic naming of large currents. The end of the chapter includes an exposition of the criteria for apostolic succession

²⁴ Pelikan, J. *Historical Theology*, p. 109.

and an emphasis on episcopal ministry as an important factor in the authenticity of a given teaching.

The next three chapters of the book are devoted to the classic themes of Dogmengeschichte, namely the dogmas and creeds adopted by the first four Ecumenical Councils. Instead of accepting the dogmas in their final form and thereby deploying their opposing positions, Pelikan begins with the latter, leaving ample space to describe their internal logic and coherence, all in a non-apologetic tone. In the presentation of the Orthodox visions, the inclusion of the liturgical tradition and practice of piety of the Church become decisive factors, although purely theological arguments also have their place. Thus, the definition of the church's teaching complements the history of its development and allows a focus on the full picture, instead of the fragmented one, which can be an easy victim of tendentious attacks. The last two chapters of the book deal with topics that are rarely discussed in the studies of the history of the teaching of the Church. One of them is the division between nature and grace, which requires a careful study of Eastern anthropology.

The last two chapters cover topics not often discussed in attempts to examine the history of Church teaching, at least in the East. One of them is the division between nature and grace, which has become especially relevant in the last thirty years. This is one of the points that connects Pelikan with a teaching that is markedly antithetical to his early years in the LCMS. The influence of his teacher – prot. Georges Florovsky, is clearly visible even in topics that are not most often associated with his name.

Incorporating the development of the doctrine of nature and grace has a dual function. First, it completes one of the main missing parts in the expression of anthropology after the formulation of the Christological Chalcedonian Creed. Second, Pelikan directs readers' attention to a rich Eastern anthropology forgotten in the West, which opens doors for him to authors who are not central to the expression of this teaching, unlike the Augustinian system. This contributes to the critique of neo-Thomism that dominates Pelikan's theological world, and further strengthens the Eastern slant of his work.

The second volume of *The Christian Tradition* is of great importance to Orthodox theology in the West. Its subtitle „The Spirit of Eastern Christendom“ and its publication at a time of bibliographic vacuum make it an important factor in Pelikan's work as well as in the academic paradigm in the West, especially after Harnack. The book is divided into six chapters, the first being a methodological introduction to the others, which concentrate on unity and division in Christ, the iconoclastic controversy, the challenges of the Latin church, the debate about the God of the philosophers, and Orthodoxy before the second fall of Constantinople.

Pelikan provides a brief description of the topics covered in his work, which helps to trace the periods he covered. It includes all the important theological loci for Orthodox theology *ad intra*, which distinguishes it from the English-language works written up to that time in this field. The author chooses to focus on topics that are directly related to his vision. He shows a deep interest in the patristic heritage, the abridgments of the patristic sources used alone numbering fifteen full pages. At the beginning of his introduction, Pelikan expresses his response to Harnack and Gibbon, whose attitude exemplifies the canonical attitude of Western historiography to the history and teachings of Eastern Christianity. He also mentions the „romantic longing for the East“ that is evident in the work of some Roman Catholic and Anglican theologians. In his project, Pelikan focuses on tracing the development of the Church's teaching, noting the criticized claim that Orthodox teaching has no exact history, but has been unchanged from the beginning. He also emphasizes the liturgical aspect in shaping and expressing the teachings of the Church.

This volume also explores Christian Hellenism, which Pelikan sees as an intellectual substrate. He connects this Hellenism with St. Patr. Photius, noting that it is one of the many factors that make this volume particularly suitable for Western readers. The second volume can be read as an attempt to correct prevailing opinions about the East, and as arising not only from the traditional patricidal tendency, but from Pelikan's personal life and experience. This volume explores key topics such as patristic theology, deification, and apophatic theology. Pelikan presents them as a thread of tradition, as the „immutable truth of Salvation“ and as possibilities for the expression of the „knowledge of the unknowable“.

Before the final chapter of his book, Pelikan presents a new interpretation of Christian Hellenism that focuses on the relationship between Platonism and Orthodox theology in the eleventh century. This understanding is different from the general idea of Hellenism as a common stratum and is more specifically aimed at these interrelationships. Pelikan examines these relationships, primarily through Michael Psellus, and notes that they were complicated by the use of common philosophical systems and language by Islamic apologists. Platonism figures prominently in this understanding of Hellenism, but Pelikan insists that this is not an internal betrayal of the Church, but that one is faithful to God when he preaches the dogma of the Holy Trinity as handed down by the Fathers and based on New Testament. Thus the dogma becomes the final justification of all good, available not only in philosophical schools, whether ancient or not, because it alone unites all good and true teachings. Pelikan notes that the „last flowering of Byzantine Orthodoxy“ includes themes that are markers of Orthodox theology in exile.

In the theological debates between the East and Old Rome, as well as in the second fall of Constantinople, the basis for the systematization of Byzantine teaching was laid. This systematization was inspired by the theological disputes surrounding the Reformation and is part of the history of Byzantine teaching. It is an expression of acceptance before and after 1453 and is seen as a second flourishing or „transplantation“ on Slavic soil, which is a sign of a living tradition. In tracing theology in the last three centuries of the existence of the Eastern Roman Empire, mysticism is used as a marker of a sound theological-ascetic tradition and a leading voice in the formulation of the Tradition. Ascetic practices combined with liturgical life are linked and designated as guiding lights. The teaching of the Church, not only in a dogmatic sense, is reflected and reflects the practice of the ascetics - from St. Macarius the Great, Origen and St. Dionysius the Areopagite through St. Simeon the New Theologian to St. Gregory Palamas. Pelikan emphasizes the role that not only the ascetic tradition but also individual ascetics played in the preparation and realization of the flowering of Byzantine theology. He emphasizes the leading role of Western and Eastern liturgical practice and an understanding of the relationship between the words of establishment and epiclesis, the latter of which Pelikan sees as

the mark of authentic Tradition. The author articulates these elements in a chapter called „The Definition of Eastern Particularity,“ where „particularity“ can also be translated as concreteness.

The next two volumes present the development of learning in the West before and after the Reformation, respectively. The first of these is more like an extended essay text than a systematic presentation. The focus is on the relationship between practice and theory, and emphasis is placed on continuity and consensus rather than controversy and disagreement. This was done in order to correct the „over-emphasis on medieval philosophy“ as well as to counteract the lack of attention to the „continuity between the patristic and scholastic periods“²⁵. Its emphasis has been subject to isolated criticism, mainly because of the lack of a rich presentation of the theology of Thomas Aquinas, but this can be attributed to the growth of neo-Thomism in the period in which Pelikan wrote it.

The second volume, in which Pelikan is entirely on familiar ground, continues to trace the history of the doctrine to 1700, with one skip. The final chapter of this volume is an extended exposition, resembling an essay, of the author's position on „denominational dogmatics in a divided Christendom“ and the situation at the beginning of the nineteenth century, which is the final point of the volume. In this situation, the fragmentation and loss of individuality of dogmatic tradition becomes the new norm. It forms the compact body of the entire volume, which seeks to take the narrative to the recent past and the present, which at the time of writing continues to accept such diversity in learning as something that is not merely normal but normative. The context of St. Louis further reinforces this, and from the very beginning of Pelikan's life makes the solution of this problem an essential task for theologians.

The fifth volume, particularly interesting because it is almost entirely omitted in this type of study, attempts to trace the development of the doctrine up until the mid-twentieth century. There are several elements in it that are important to note. The first of them is the idea of Tradition and traditions in a broader cultural plan, but also in a specifically ecclesiastical one. He uses the figures of John Henry Cardinal Newman and Ralph Waldo Emerson to epitomize

²⁵ Pelikan, J. *The Christian Tradition*, Vol. 3. p. i.

the two directions in which this developed in the 19th and 20th centuries. Another element is Faust's articulated approach to history and heritage, which for Pelikan is the watershed between the correct approach to Tradition and the alternative one, which inevitably ends in its denial. The last of the elements that we will note here is his use of the term „sobornost“ as the best approach to ecclesiological cases in a global plan, as well as in the ecumenical enterprise. Along with this, some of the main approaches within the same endeavor to win this unity by skipping over the question of theology and doctrine and going directly to a joint social ministry are also criticized.

When he became a member of Yale's academic community, Pelikan was appointed the Titus Street Professor of Ecclesiastical History at Yale Divinity School and taught there for nearly ten years. In 1972, a change took place that moved the structure analogous to the Faculty of Theology within the Faculty of Arts and Sciences. Pelikan not only moved, but also received the most prestigious academic position at Yale – „Sterling Professor“, which is awarded only to researchers recognized as the best in their field, usually just one occupies it at a time. He continued to lecture on the history of Church teaching, but his teaching was interrupted when he was elected Dean of the Graduate School of Arts and Sciences in 1973, for one year. In this role, he handled administrative duties and management of the doctoral program. After a year in the interim position, he was elected permanent Dean and remained in that position until 1978. Despite administrative responsibilities, Pelikan continued to be actively engaged in research work. Separation from the auditorium does not separate him from the libraries, and he continues his active work in them, albeit with a reduced intensity. This period can be defined as the calm before the storm. It was during this time that he completed the second volume of his magnum opus, which most strongly emphasizes his eastern setting.

The letters found in the archives of Princeton²⁶ and Southern Methodist University, between Pelikan, prot. Florovsky and Albert Outler, reveal and prove what has already been

²⁶ Jaroslav Pelikan Correspondence, Albert C. Outler Papers, Bridwell Library Special Collections, SMU, Box 1146B, Folder 1; Georges Florovsky Correspondence, Albert C. Outler Papers, Bridwell Library Special Collections, SMU, Box 1137A, Folder 23; Pelikan, Jaroslav; Georges Florovsky Papers, C0586, Manuscripts Division, Department of Special Collections, Princeton University Library.

outlined here. In the letters between Outler and Pelikan, the main line takes their joint work within the framework of „Faith and Order“, as well as their common acquaintance and concern for Prot. Florovsky, especially clear when the two discuss his funeral²⁷.

In the letters between Outler and Prot. Florovsky, on the other hand, reveals a less visible side of the latter - the concern for the place of theology in their general endeavor, as well as the sharp criticism of the silence of some of the representatives of the WCC regarding the state of Christianity in the East.

The letters exchanged between Prot. Florovsky and Pelikan, of which only Pelikan's writings have been found, reveal the early stage of their relationship, as well as the active scientific and creative work they both planned but failed to complete. The influence, both methodological and spiritual, of some prot. Florovsky has on Pelikan, which, however, he himself announced much later. As the end of the second period of his life we take the publication of the last volume of *The Christian Tradition*.

3. Jaroslav Pelikan's move to Orthodoxy

The information presented so far should give a basic idea of the geographical, academic and intellectual changes in the life of Jaroslav Pelikan. These changes begin with the acceptance of the spiritual heritage in his native home and continue with his research development in a different field from the one he originally chose. Subsequently, he discovered the new direction and focused on the study of the Tradition of the Church under the guidance of Prot. Georges Florovsky. Pelikan's magnum opus fundamentally changes the approach to the history of the Church's teaching, primarily reversing the paradigm established by Harnack and his successors.

In this chronological framework, we clearly notice sympathies and interest in Orthodoxy on the part of Pelikan. Together with them, one can notice in him a growing attention, a kind of return, to history and the task of the historian. In the last decade as a faculty member at

²⁷ Letter, Pelikan – Outler, 14.08.1979 r., Jaroslav Pelikan Correspondence, Albert C. Outler Papers, Bridwell Library Special Collections, SMU, Box 1146B, Folder 1.

Yale, he has focused on developing various aspects of his work that until now have been entirely focused on his grand project.

Several texts mark not only his return but also his connection with Prot. Florovsky. One of them²⁸, written in honor of Prot. G. Florovsky, addresses the issue of continuity and Tradition, as well as the key role that history has in acquiring this Tradition from communities that have voluntarily separated themselves from it. Here the acquired methodology from prot. Florovsky is apparent, but they are not particularly original in themselves. Two other texts, however, are developments of themes implied by Prot. Florovsky.

The first of these²⁹ is one of Pelikan's rare texts focusing on methodological issues. In it, he develops the main line of thought in „The Difficulties of the Christian Historian“³⁰, but in dialogue with the idea of the neopatristic synthesis. This topic is large and important to discuss, but at the same time, it does not fall within the scope of the present study. In the text, Pelikan insists on the need for (at least) bilingualism of history researchers, not in a purely linguistic sense, but also in their sensitivity to the past and the present.

The second³¹ is a direct continuation of the article of the same name by Prot. Florovsky. The biographical notes in it are some of the most valuable. Moreover, it is a careful address to certain aspects of Harnack's work, mainly in a critical tone, which makes it a kind of preparation for the rethinking of Pelikan's life and work, which he then begins. It is also an apology for the role and importance of historical theology.

Pelikan's conversion itself, his acceptance into full sacramental communion with the Orthodox Church, is the result of the threads already mentioned, but must be seen as a return through continuation. The information available for this period is very limited and not

²⁸ Pelikan, J. „Puti Russkogo Bogoslova: When Orthodoxy Comes West“. – In: Schatkin, M. (ed.). *The Heritage of the Early Church: Essays in Honor of the Very Reverend Georges Vasilievich Florovsky. Orientalia Christiana Analecta*, 195. Rome: Pontificale Institutum Studiorum Orientalium, 1973, 11–16.

²⁹ Pelikan, J. „Historian as Polyglot“. *Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society*, 137 (1993), 659–668.

³⁰ 12. Флоровски, Георги. „Затрудненията на християнина историк“ – В: Християнство и култура, София: „Библиотека Православен калейдоскоп“, 2006, 37–68.

³¹ Pelikan, J. „The Predicament of the Christian Historian“. *Reformed Review*, 52 (1998), 196–211; *Reflections: Center of Theological Inquiry*, 1 (1999), 26–47.

sufficient to form a complete or even rough picture of his life. At the age of 75, Pelikan and his wife Silvia were received into the Orthodox Church after being chrismated by Metropolitan Theodosius (Lazor), Primate of the Orthodox Church in America (OCA) and Metropolitan of Washington. This happened on the feast of Annunciation in the church „St. Three Hierarchs“ in the Seminary „St. Vladimir“, in 1998. The few available testimonies from the period reveal this precisely as a reversal and completion of a move that began much earlier.

In all his studies on Tradition and the history of the Church, Jaroslav Pelikan emphasized the continuity in the life and faith of the Church, and this was the root of his conversion to Orthodoxy. Nothing new or different happened in his life or faith. Simply the final step back to the starting point was taken. Consequently, nothing external in his life changed. He continued to attend services as he had been doing up to this point. His work also did not change. He remained one of the strongest supporters of Orthodoxy in the West and emphasizes the place of Tradition in history and the cruciality of worship *for* and *in* this Tradition.

After his conversion, the church „St. Three Hierarchs“ became the parish church for Pelikan and his wife, and he remained on the board of the Seminary for the rest of his life. At the same time, his engagements in various public and even state positions replaced his lectures, and some of his books were translated into different languages. In 2000, Pelikan was named a „Living Legend“ by the Library of Congress, and while receiving this award, he gave a short speech in which he compared libraries to therapeutic institutions related to his personal experience. The Living Legend Award is presented by the Library of Congress to individuals whose professional achievements and dedication serve as examples of distinction and have contributed to the enrichment of the nation in multiple ways.

Towards the middle of 2004, he was diagnosed with lung cancer, with which he continued to fight while finishing his last work – an interpretation of the book „Acts of the Apostles“³². After a long battle with cancer, Jaroslav Pelikan succumbed to his illness after seventeen months.

³² Pelikan, J. Acts. Brazos Theological Commentary on the Bible. Grand Rapids, MI: Brazos Press, 2006. p. 13.

On May 13, 2006, he passed into the Lord surrounded by his family at his home in New Haven. The funeral was held the same day in the evening in the church „St. Three Hierarchs“ at „St. Vladimir’s“. The next day, a requiem Mass was celebrated in his memory. He was buried in communion with the Orthodox Church and as an Orthodox Christian, spending the last decade of his life as such and probably, not directly, a much larger portion of it.

On October 10 of that year, a vigil and memorial service was held at Yale’s Bethel Chapel. At Pelikan's request, an excerpt from „The Grand Inquisitor“ was read and the Yale Russian Choir performed „The Virgin“ from Rachmaninoff's Vespers. Deep connections with the East and the continuity of Slavic roots are the great themes that run through Pelikan's life, in its beginning and ending. After his death, there are few commemorative texts that question or criticize his conversion.

Actions, as has been said repeatedly and bordering on cliché, but no less true, speak louder than words. In Pelikan's case, the central deed, meaning, fulfilling and realizing all his others, is sealed with the holy peace and the „gift of the Holy Spirit“ in full communion with the Orthodox Church, in whose arms he rests, and in which, but not only, the memory of him is preserved. The current text is a small attempt to contribute to this memory.

Conclusion

Throughout Pelikan's life, he explored chiefly two things – continuity and change. They are vividly expressed in a different way in the faces of prot. Georges Florovsky and Adolf von Harnack. Continuity and change are visible in various historical situations and are constantly present in some aspects of his life. Pelikan’s latest works represent a rethinking of his early themes. The changes include his transition from theology to history and to historical theology. Paradoxically, this transition is also a transition from religiously bound educational institutions to secular universities. All of these are part of his great transition from a Lutheran pastor to a university professor and church worker in Orthodoxy – gradual, but alive and meaningful through his entire work and life. The changes are noticeable, but the same continuity to which he dedicates his life is more vivid.

History and traditions, especially authentic ones not subject to marketing strategies, were unpopular during the period in which he worked. His work and teaching positions reflect the shift in his life from theology and philosophy to history and back to history and theology. His first book³³, begun while teaching philosophy at Valparaiso but completed while teaching systematic theology at Concordia, expresses this development.

Then, for the next three decades, Pelikan presented himself as a historian of Church teaching and, after 1970, simply as a historian of ideas. This transition comes very close to Harnack's own. His motivation for this approach had to do with developing a broader understanding of the task of theology, especially among the more conservative circles of the LCMS. Such an approach, freed from the constraints of a particular community, can be seen as a departure from the established truth in it, but in Pelikan's case it is a step towards the truth.

Pelikan's fascination with the study of the Church's teaching extends to a recognition of the role of the history of Christianity in the wider culture. It represents a further development of the previous approach and at the same time serves as an apologia for both the method and the belief in a global plan. The most accurate, but not the clearest, way to describe this approach is non-apologetic apologetics. Pelikan simply traces the articulation of particular aspects of the Church's teaching, presenting them as much more than static dogmatic systems that emerged at a particular moment. With such a view, they are understood as a living faith and a living Tradition.

Much of Pelikan's work is directed toward the study, understanding, and transmission of the history of Christianity. Continuity is part of his very self-definition as a person: „... the child is indeed the father of the man, and in the first book (including my own) may be found random comments and notes which, no doubt unconsciously, are forebodings of future ideas and developments“³⁴.

³³ From Luther to Kierkegaard: A Study in the History of Theology. St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 1950.

³⁴ Pelikan, J. „Amnesia, An Occupational Disease of Professionals – and Its Antidote“. New Haven: Video Production Services, Yale University School of Medicine, 1995.

The neopatristic synthesis and Christian Hellenism, one of the most famous ideas developed by Prot. G. Florovsky, are also the most criticized. In some cases the criticisms are justified, while in others it can be assumed that there is less academic honesty behind them. In the early years of these criticisms, Pelikan was alive but did not write an apology or a response. This is because he himself is the apology. The fourth part, the future stage of this study, will have to focus on Pelikan, who takes and modulates the main theme of the Neopatristic synthesis and develops it throughout his work, which is a good model for the whole theological enterprise.

From the point of view of the home school, in which the Department of Historical Theology, independent again for two years, is building or returning to its methodology, this synthesis is of key importance for preserving the balance between the two concepts that it bears in the its name. Pelikan's work is only one aspect of historical theology, but one of the most important, because of his understanding of history as a step of faith towards the world, or as Prof. Pavlov calls it – the crutch of theology in the academic community and not only in her, words that remain unwritten.

From the very beginning of his life, Jaroslav Pelikan devoted himself to the study and transmission of the Tradition. It is a difficult but noble task that changes him and leads to personal change. His transition to the Orthodox Church is the formal completion of a long process, which is one of the main arguments of Prot. Florovsky and the many well-intentioned Orthodox theologians for the participation of the Orthodox Church in inter-Christian dialogue. Pelikan is proof of the benefits of this. His entry into the Church was due to his entry into the theological understanding of history. One of its main inspirations, Cardinal Newman, in his famous „Essay“ insisted that „everyone who is deep in history ceases to be a Protestant“³⁵. Pelikan is a good example of this, but his path outlines a better methodology.

³⁵ Newman, John Henry. *An Essay on the Development of Christian Doctrine*. p. 12.

Self-evaluation of contributions

1. The study is the first attempt made to create a general biographical sketch of Jaroslav Pelikan's life. It is also the first instance in which the main lines of Pelikan's thought are related to the context and interpersonal relationships of his academics.
2. For the first time, Pelikan's key works leading to a rethinking of historical theology in the West are analyzed within the framework of his entire body of work and his personal family and academic continuity.
3. Previously unexplored archives have been researched and interpreted, revealing Pelikan's relationship with prot. Georges Florovsky, and also discover fragmentary aspects of the latter's work.
4. Through the translated fragments and the presented analyses, the work of Jaroslav Pelikan was made a little more accessible to the native school. A full bibliography was also produced by and partial to him, illuminating his legacy.
5. Next research steps were outlined, and specific Pelikan works to be translated were selected and argued for.

Scientific publications on the topic

Аврамов, Т. „Ярослав Пеликан и историята на богословието“. *Богословска мисъл (Forum Theologicum Sardicense)*, 24:2 (2019), 155 – 164.

Аврамов, Т. „Ярослав Пеликан: Към Православието чрез Преданието, Опит за кратко животоописание“. *Християнство и Култура* 158 (2021), 29-41.

Аврамов, Т. „Затрудненията на християнските историци?“. *Богословска Мисъл (Forum Theologicum Sardicense)* 26:1 (2021), 86 – 96.