

of commendations to regrets for having spent money to purchase the book. This author is inclined to agree with those who believe that the book does not live up to the honor of its author. Moreover, how much can be expected of a book for which its own author says in the preface, "In this book I have relaxed and I have probably made so many mistakes that it is impossible to count them... It is better to be wrong, then to be boring..." (pp. 10, 11). The book that is intended for the "average reader who might not know much about the Reformation" (p. 11) actually implies a substantial foreknowledge of the subject without which it is impossible to follow and understand. The work is almost void of organization (apart, perhaps from chapter titles). The absence of notes in particular places can really cause frustration because some of the significant historical persons are discussed almost like a quiz where one must guess about whom the author is speaking (for example, the sentence begins, "In the words of a Scotsman from that time..." (p. 163). While on some issues he offers unnecessary details (for example, telling about the place where Luther picked strawberries as a young boy), Collinson leaves some major themes of the Reformation vague (if mentioned at all!), and he often even trivializes them (at least it seems so) with "humorous" jokes and comparisons. In addition to all that was mentioned and not mentioned, it must be said that even the translation is not the most advanced.

Therefore, this book has no one to whom it can be recommended (it is rather demanding, unsystematic, etc., for beginners, and rather frivolous and shallow for students and experts). However, the publishers of the Croatian translation should be recognized for the desire to enrich the Croatian readership with yet another book representing the almost unfamiliar subject of Protestantism. May this book and this honest review serve as a warning to all who wish to engage in the responsible editorial task of choosing books for translation in the future, as well as an encouragement to "examine" the quality of the books beforehand. It is obvious that a great name does not guarantee quality at the same time. Or, is it about an exception that proves the rule?

Tomislav Vidaković

Translated by Ljubinka Jambreč

Gianni Vattimo,

Vjerovati da vjeruješ (To Believe that You Believe)

Fedon, Beograd, 2009, 138 pages.

This interesting publication which was translated by Mario Kopic, was originally printed in Milan in 1996 with the title, "Credere di credere". Gianni Vattimo (born in 1936) is one of the leading Italian philosophers of the second half of

the twentieth century, and a representative of the postmodern school of “weak thought” (*il pensiero debole*). As a young man, he was an ardent Catholic, but as a philosopher, and because of other personal reasons, he separated from the Catholic Church; he worked in politics, and is currently a member of the Italian Communist Party which he represented in the European parliament from 1999 to 2004. In recent years, he has already, on two occasions, been to places where Croats live, namely in Zagreb in May, and in Kotor in August, attending conferences on philosophy. His publication consists of an essay by which the book is entitled (see pages 7-124), and which is divided into twenty-one chapters. Along with the essay, there are also appendices about which there will be further comment later.

At the beginning of his essay, Vattimo states that God is often connected to the negative aspects of life; when something bad begins to happen, God's will is automatically linked to that event, and conversely, when something good begins, God is not mentioned. He believes that the concept of God is too closely linked to the gods of natural religions (the lord of natural disasters), to the neglect of Jesus' declaration, “I no longer call you slaves, but friends” (John 15:15). However, in pushing God out of modern society, God has returned through politics (the political moves of Pope John Paul II, but also the Islamic awakening), and through a type of crisis in the great modern ideologies which has become apparent in postmodernism. Vattimo believes, as a follower of Nietzsche and Heidegger, that metaphysics is on its way out. But what sets Vattimo apart from other contemporary philosophers is his admission that western culture has undeniable roots in Christianity: “I think that the Christian heritage needs to be discussed as a much broader concept, a concept which has to do with our cultures in general: culture has become what it is, above and beyond, by way of intimately ‘converting’ and forming to the Christian message, generally speaking, to biblical revelation (the Old and New Testaments)” (pp. 21-22). With his self-sacrifice, Jesus Christ ended the violent custom of offering sacrifices as found in natural religions, thus abolishing it. Vattimo, referring to Rene Girard, explains that Nietzsche's death of god is actually the death of the god of metaphysics and natural religion. With his incarnation, or by lowering himself to the level of humanity, Christ supersedes the image of a violent God, and Vattimo connects this with Paul's notion of *kenosis* (which Kopic defines as “God's depletion or humiliation in incarnation”, p. 28), which can again be associated with a tendency to devitalize, as asserted by the philosophy inspired by Heidegger, which concludes with the end of metaphysics. With the association of these elements, Vattimo comes to a staggering conclusion: “If the history of the West could be interpreted (reasonably interpreted) as nihilism, then Heidegger would not be just an author of a substantive autobiographical novel. A history of the Christian religion is not only an element, but a

guideline of sorts to the Christian West” (p. 29). Secularization is not something negative, but is actually a positive outcome of Christianity; the church’s power structure weakens to more closely approximate the Scriptures with an emphasis on charity as is apparent in Vattimo’s philosophical direction: “Christian heritage, which reflects the weak thought, is (above all) also a heritage of commandment to Christian charity and its rejection of violence” (p. 33). Such secularization is advancing towards the weakening of the structure, but does not dissolve the truth of Christianity that, for Vattimo, revolves around the concept of *kenosis* which is the “abasement of God, denial of ‘natural aspects’ of divinity” (p. 37). Salvation history and the history of the interpretation of the Scriptures go hand in hand, and Vattimo immediately recognizes such a correlation in Jesus’ interpretation of the Old Testament with the fact that the New Testament, to a greater extent, gives attention to God’s mercy for people which, consequently, leads to the notion of *kenosis* and the fact that God exposes himself as a friend. The author criticizes the theology of the twentieth century and its tendency to demystify the Scriptures: “The only great paradox and scandal of the Christian revelation is precisely the incarnation of God, *kenosis*” (p. 45). The Scriptures should be freely read, a point for which Vattimo refers to Martin Luther, but he believes that one should not lose touch with the community of church while reading; for the author, salvation goes through reinterpretation, and the text of the Gospels needs to be carefully understood for one to know how to implement it in practice, making hermeneutics significantly actual (Vattimo is a student of Hans Georg Gadamer), with a priority on personal interpretation that brings us back to the very Scriptures themselves. Vattimo believes that the rediscovery of the teachings about salvation, through the *kenosis* (which is not the negation of God), and secularization, are not something permanently defined by a dogma, but are critical principles of orientation in relation to the world, but also to the church. One should “seek to understand what the Gospel texts mean for me, here and now; in other words, one should read the signs of the times without any brackets except the commandment to love” (p. 58) - this commandment does not subject itself to secularization, but is comparable to Kant’s categorical imperative. For the author, the commandment to love/show compassion is the final truth. Despite all that is mentioned, Vattimo claims that he upholds a friendly attitude towards Christian tradition. It is interesting that between the *sola Scriptura* and the system of two sources (Scripture and Tradition), Vattimo considers the latter to be more acceptable, but stresses that, to him, it is not acceptable “that the legacy of the Church is simply equated with the teaching of the Pope and the Bishops” (p. 79). The essay ends with Vattimo’s perspective on sin which he perceives to be a “missed opportunity, a friendship that ceased, and even (in a broad sense), the finality of all that is precious to us and what we are bound to” (p. 81), a definition with which most scholars would not agree.

The Appendices include a conversation entitled “The Expected Future for Religion after Metaphysics”, dated 2005, that occurred between Vattimo and Richard Rorty (1931-2007), one of America’s leading philosophers of the second half of the twentieth century, and moderated by Santiago Zabala (born 1975). The second Appendix is Kopic’s rendition of “Vattimo’s Philosophy of Religion.” Mario Kopic (born 1965) is an accomplished translator of the Croatian language (for example, the translations of Giorgio Agamben), but is primarily a philosopher who, in his writings, for example, *pescanik.net*, does not spare religion and Christianity. He writes in a language which could be defined as Serbo-Croatian, using the “ijekavica” dialect with Serbian vocabulary, with the exception of some words, such as: *Židovi* (Jews), *Babilon* (Babylon), *nogomet* (football/soccer), *sudac* (referee), *spolni moral* (sexual morality), and *stoljeće* (century) which do not belong to the Serbian lexicon.

A dialogue between philosophy and theology is a real thing. Theologians often think that they are the only ones that read the Scriptures critically, but this discussion demonstrates that a number of philosophers undoubtedly read the Bible too. It would be a pity if Vattimo’s essay is not printed in a Croatian edition, perhaps in a kind of extended form along with “A Marxist and a Christian: A Dialogue between Prof. Branko Bošnjak and Prof. Mijo Škvorc on Some Topics of the Book, Philosophy and Christianity” dated 1969, with the subtitle, “Philosophical and Theological Commentaries.”

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Translated by Juliana Kovačević

C. Arnold Snyder

Povijest i teologija anabaptizma (Anabaptist History and Theology: An Introduction)

Zagreb, Theological Faculty „Matija Vlačić Ilirik“, 2009., 507 pages.

The book *Povijest i teologija anabaptizma* written by C. Arnold Snyder was published in December 2009., as the 9th volume of the “Bibliotheca Flaciana” of the Theological Faculty “Matija Vlačić Ilirik”. The book was excellently translated by the untimely deceased dr. Davorin Peterlin from the original text under the title *Anabaptist History and Theology: An Introduction* (Kitchener, Ont: Pandora Press, 1995). Reviewers dr. Antonia Lučić Gonzalez and dr. Zrinka Nikolić Jakus gave their positive opinion of the translation of the book, and dr. Lidija Matošević is signed as the editor.

After the translation of the book *The Anabaptist Story* (Istina je neuništiva, Novi Sad, 1977) by W. R. Estep, and occasional articles in the baptist journal