

## **Ecclesia vs. Religion: the View of Ch. Yannaras**

**Lecturer PhD DANIEL LEMENI,  
University of Timișoara,  
dlemeni@yahoo.com**

### **Abstract**

In a recent book called “Against Religion” Ch. Yannaras elaborates on two modes of practicing Christianity: one grounded in the universal anthropological category of religion and one, in what he calls, the ecclesial event. Religion as a universal category represents an instinctual need to self-protection and self-preservation that exist in all cultures and all societies. In short, the religious instinct is a manifestation of the instinct of self-preservation. The original Christian movement, according to Yannaras, was constructed in total opposition with this universal mode of religion. Christianity generated a new mode of being that was centered on the articulation of a new type of community in which the inclusion was primordial. Yannaras labels this new mode the “ecclesial event” and contrasts it with the universal anthropological category of religion.

The religion is an instinctive need, naturally, not just one a spiritual one. To be faithful means something different from a natural instinct. This means above all to trust someone, to have a personal relationship that involves the communion. Discrediting de plano any form of religion, Yannaras deliberately ignores the positive of Christian anthropology (the concepts of “natural revelation”, “ontology iconic”, “creative reasons”, “image of God” and so on) that make possible some dialog/connection (lat. re-ligare) between man and God. In short, the Christianity is not a religion, but a new way of living. I would like to argue that this reductionism operating by Yannaras to make stronger a “specific difference” of Christian Revelation against the natural religiosity. In this respect, Yannaras’s approach can be considered prophetic. Finally, the difference between ecclesia and religion is the foundation for a proper understanding and practice of Christianity.