

THE MONK AND THE WHITE SHAMAN.
COMPETITIVE DISCOURSES AND CONSPIRACY
THEORIES AROUND THE REINTERPRETED CULT OF
BLESSED EUSEBIUS

Abstract: In the past two decades a Hungarian neo-mythology appeared and is being shaped with amazing speed. It comprises partly neopagan and partly Christian, neo-nationalist elements and one of its prominent segments is the re-interpreted cult of Blessed Eusebius (c. 1200-1270). In this invented mythology, Blessed Eusebius and the Pauline Order he established becomes a white shaman and the guardian of the ancient Hungarian religion. The image of the Paulines in the invented mythology gained considerable popularity, mainly in non-Catholic circles. The main aim of the study is to show the origin of the mythology, its elements and the characteristics of the changing cult.

Keywords: devotion, syncretism, vernacular religiosity, Blessed Eusebius of Esztergom, Order of Saint Paul the First Hermit

Religion and religiosity are not static phenomena, the various cultural, economic and political processes can all influence the religious dimension.¹ Some dimensions, such as the artistic, respond more quickly to changed external circumstances,² while others, such as the ethical and legal dimension, change much more slowly. The changing social and religious demands can be clearly observed also in the case of the cult of the saints.³ Every historical period created its own ideal heroes, among them the saints, who not only provided a point of reference for believers in religious life, but also expressed the characteristics, shortcomings and desires of the given period and society. Parallel with these processes we can also observe how different aspects were emphasised in veneration of the saints in the different historical periods. As Anttonen has shown, this kind of partial reinterpretation can result in the emergence of even several, contradictory discourses, making it possible for the cult of the given saint to be used not only for religious but also for secular purposes.⁴ Such processes can be observed

1 This article was written and the research carried out with the support of the National Research Fund (OTKA) Grant NK81502.

2 On the functioning of religious music as a new religious language, see POVEDÁK K. 2013.

3 MARGRY 2002; BARNA 1994.

4 This could be observed for example, at the time of Finnish nation building, when Bishop Henrik began to be presented as one of the symbols of nationalism. ANTTONEN 2004, 2012.

in Hungary too at the present time in the cult of Blessed Eusebius, founder of the Pauline Order; we can witness the birth of a neo-mythology around his person, far removed from both the religious and historical aspects of the original legend. The aim of this article is to present the ambivalently judged phenomenon existing in vernacular religiosity, to show the characteristics and directions of remythologisation, to analyse the most important elements of the created new myth, and the wider driving forces behind the phenomenon.

The original legend

In order to examine the contemporary trends and changes in the shaping of the cult, we need to know the main motifs of the original legend that will enable us to position and evaluate the transformation.⁵

Eusebius was born around the year 1200 in Esztergom, capital of Hungary at that time, probably in a noble family. His life was recorded by the Pauline historian P. Gergely Gyöngyösi around 1520.⁶ He was ordained a priest, then became a canon. He was well known for his pious religiosity and his goodness of heart. He devoted all his income to serving the poor, and in this way came to be known by the penniless hermits living in the surrounding mountains. After the destruction by the Mongols in 1241-42 he distributed his wealth among the poor and withdrew into the neighbouring mountains, into the Hármas (Triple) cave as a hermit, to ask for a better fate for his nation with prayer, fasting and atonement.⁷ The figure of Blessed Eusebius basically stands on the grounds of reality, it is not wound about with threads of legend. Nevertheless, on one occasion he received a miraculous vision that determined the further course of his life. One night, as he was praying at the cross erected at the entrance to his cave, he glimpsed many tiny flames deep in the forest. The flames were all converging, and finally joined in a pillar of fiery light in front of Father Eusebius's cross. He felt that this strange phenomenon was a sign from heaven, a warning that he should gather the flames of the scattered hermits into a community. Together with the companions who joined him, he built a monastery beside the cave in 1250. They chose Saint Paul the Hermit as the heavenly patron of their community, and called themselves "Brothers of Saint Paul the First Hermit". In 1262 Blessed Eusebius travelled to Rome with a few companions to obtain the approval and confirmation of the Holy See for the establishment of the order. The Pope gave his approval of the new order, but he did not allow them to adopt the rule of Saint Augustine because the necessary financial conditions were not ensured. It was only in 1308 that Rome gave official approval of the Order. Blessed Eusebius died on 20 January 1270 after a serious illness. The Pauline Order he founded (OFSPPE) is still the only male monastic

⁵ I have summed up the most important elements of his career from TÖRÖK – LEGEZA – SZACSVAY 1996.

⁶ GYÖNGYÖSI, Gergely: *I. Remete Szent Pál Remete Testvéreinek Élete. Varia Paulina III. [Life of the Fathers of Saint Paul the First Hermit. Varia Paulina III]*. Fráter György Alapítvány, Pilisszántó, 1998. Translated by: P. Vince Árva OSP, Béla Csanád, Ferenc Csonka

⁷ In 1241-42 the Mongolian Tatars invaded Hungary, causing the death of 20-50% of the population.

order to have been established in Hungary. Over the centuries the Order's popularity and estates grew. A major break occurred in its history in 1786 when Joseph II disbanded the Paulines and confiscated their property (381 houses) under his Edict of Tolerance. The centre of the Pauline Order moved to Poland and it was only in the interwar years, in 1934 that it again settled in Hungary. However, they were unable to put down lasting roots because the communist dictatorship banned all monastic orders in 1950 and they were not established again until 1989.

Legendarium of the Pauline neo-mythology

The source of the remythologisation reinterpreting the history of the Pauline Order and through it also the life of Blessed Eusebius can be identified as Vince Árvá, a former Pauline father and his *theory of two Pauline Orders*.⁸ In essence, according to Árvá Pope Pius VI in a papal brief *Apostolicae Sedis auctoritas* issued on 3 December 1784, two years before the dissolution of the Paulines by Joseph II, in practice created a new Pauline order in Poland. Árvá stressed that this new order was not the same as the Pauline Order that had operated up to then in Hungary and as a result the Pauline Order that had transferred its seat to Poland and still operates there is not the same as the Pauline Order established by Blessed Eusebius in 1250. Vince Árvá named himself as the last member of the original *Ancient Pauline Order*. "Rome accepted my submission. Hence I am the only member of the Ancient Pauline Order ... Incomprehensibly, the Hungarian Bench of Bishops did not authorise the reorganisation of the Ancient Pauline Order."⁹

Vince Árvá's theory fits into the series of contemporary conspiracy theories; their common characteristic is the creation on the basis of bipolar oppositions of an alternative view of history and interpretation of reality that questions the mechanism and order underlying the given existing system. Árvá's theory focuses on a single event, the dissolution in the late 18th century, but by branding the subsequent period as false, it become possible to transform it into the founding myth of a Pauline neo-mythology based on a complex, alternative world view.¹⁰ This is also facilitated by the two facts that we have only incomplete information of

8 From 1961 Vince Árvá (1932-2008) was the leader of the Paulines operating in secret during the dictatorship. From 1982 he was the superior delegate at the head of the Hungarian section. He was the postulator in the beatification procedure for Eusebius. His relations with the Pauline Order deteriorated after he made public his views on the theory of the two Pauline orders. In 2004 he was excluded from the Pauline Order, after that he became chaplain in Székesfehérvár.

9 Árvá 2003. Vince Árvá's views are refuted, among others, by KERTÉSZ – BAKOS 2012. 75.

10 In 2011 a film was made; the Hungarian Pauline Order protested against its ideology in a number of forums. "The Hungarian Pauline Order fully dissociates itself from the content and nature of the film titled *Pálosok - az ősi magyar rend* [Paulines – the ancient Hungarian order] published in spring 2011 on DVD (director: Tamás Császár and producer Gábor Góbl). The film radically distorts the history and mission of the only male monastic order established in Hungary, that is closely connected to Christianity and, within it, to the Catholic Church. We ask all persons of good intentions to take this declaration into account in their attitude to the above DVD film and to pray for its intention to defend the Catholic faith. On behalf of the Hungarian Pauline Order: Botond Bátor Provincial." <http://www.palosrend.hu/nyilatkozat.htm> Last access: 20 January 2013.

events that occurred before the focal point,¹¹ and that Árvá's theses also question the credibility of events that happened after the focal point. In the neo-mythology that uses the ideas of Vince Árvá as its basis, in the minds of some the Paulines become white shamans,¹² but they can also be the "heart centre" of the Pilis¹³ and the guardians of the Holy Grail.¹⁴ Then, on the basis of this invented mythology, the institutionalised organisation of the Ancient Hungarian Pauline Order (more recently the Ancient Pauline Fraternity) also takes place.¹⁵

In the light of this background it is worth examining which elements in the Pauline neo-mythology become emphasised, which are neglected and what new motifs appear.¹⁶

1. Life and calling of Eusebius

The remythologisation of the life of Blessed Eusebius is based on the involvement among the conspiracy theories of the most important relevant historical source, the writing of Gergely Gyöngyösi, as a work that had been falsified in earlier periods. As Lajos Szántai, perhaps the most important ideologist of the Pauline neo-mythology stresses:

"We do not know this work in its entirety because it has not survived. We know a copy, but it is incomplete because it can be felt that at the most important parts the copyists have left out parts of sentences or even whole pages, either by chance or intentionally."¹⁷

From here the life of Blessed Eusebius can be shaped at will and within the frames of the neo-mythology it is undergoing considerable simplification and invented new elements are appearing in it. They regularly refer to his noble and in places even aristocratic origin, calling him a grand master of the Knights of Saint Stephen. However, this latter fact does not stand alone but is linked to his recognition of a kind of national mission.

"Eusebius was the Hungarian grandmaster of a Hungarian 'knighthood'. In spite of all the mystification of later ages, the aim

11 As Voigt stressed, incomplete knowledge promotes mythification. VOIGT 1980.

12 "There is every indication – and opinions on this are unanimous – that the ancestors of the Paulines were white-robed hermit saints who were at the same time shamans, a community of shamans." Szántai 2001, and <http://www.szkosz.com/node/1652> Last access: 20 January 2013

13 For more on this see, among others, the article by Csaba Baráz.

<http://www.mariaorszaga.hu/index.php?menu=bovebben&tipus=tortenelem&kod=240&kat=1&HPSESSID=bc85d2e089492c7c12c2db539230a5>

14 <http://www.magtudin.org/gral.htm> Last access: 20 January 2013.

15 <http://www.palosrend.eoldal.hu/> Last access: 20 January 2013.

16 I have used for the analysis books serving as the basis for the Pauline neo-mythology, studies, online material and interviews.

17 SZÁNTAI 2010.

of the knighthood ... was no other than to preserve Hungarian noble and national tradition, ancient tradition ... And this something had to be ancient, Hungarian and definitely 'pure'..."¹⁸

"He [Vince Árva- I.P.] recounted on a number of occasions that the present researches – this refers to searches in the archives – that were carried out in Esztergom in the archives, have slightly reshaped the person of Eusebius. It was quite clearly found that Eusebius was not only episcopal canon, but above all grandmaster of the Knights of Saint Stephen."¹⁹

The element in the legend of Eusebius that his thirst for knowledge was awakened already in childhood and that he preferred reading to play is given a strong reinterpretation by Szántai, comparing him to the mythical hero of tales Fehérlófia (Son of White Horse),²⁰ and at the same time raising him to astrological level.

"He began to study and love wisdom before he was even weaned from his mother's breast. This means that he was still nourished by his mother's milk but he had already »begun his studies«, and one can wonder about what wisdom could have come to him through the milk. This is not just ordinary wisdom, it is the kind of knowledge that is characteristic in our folk tales of Son of White Horse, who grows in strength and thrives because his mother breast fed him for years. Thus the wisdom and knowledge of Eusebius is linked to a heavenly quality, to the Milky Way."

Building on this, from being originally a hermit praying for his nation after the Mongolian invasion, in the neo-mythology Eusebius becomes a person with special abilities who can see into the future, "as in some way they were capable of seeing into the future too".²¹ And the tragedy that evokes his sense of mission is no longer the earlier Mongolian invasion, but is transposed from the 13th century to the future, to our present time in the 21st century, a move that also makes it easier to embed him into contemporary culture.

"Eusebius seems to have felt that this tradition would be threatened in time by some terrible danger. Indeed, in the case of the Hungarian people this tragedy would be one of exceptional gravity. If the Hungarian myth and mythology brought from far back in time is lost for ever, the line of kings of the Árpád dynasty will be broken,

18 GÖNCZI 2012. 25.

19 SZÁNTAI 2001.

20 Son of White Horse is a mythical hero with exceptional strength, descended from his animal mother of supernatural origin, who breast fed him for seven years. See the relevant entry in *Néprajzi Lexikon* [Encyclopaedia of Ethnology] : <http://mek.niif.hu/02100/02115/html/2-154.html> Last access: 30 September 2014

21 PRENOSZIL s.d.

we will forget (or be made to forget) our ancient past, making us rootless and easily manipulated ...”²²

It is not by chance either that the location is the Pilis mountains²³ that have become known as a “sacral centre’ in contemporary Hungarian neo-mythology. According to alternative historians and self-appointed researchers of “sacral geography” “the Pilis is a place of sacral power and mythical knowledge, this sacred Hungarian empire that has come down from the heavens, the spiritual but nevertheless tangible landscape of dense forests, a living, breathing, organic, secret world born of nature, with its special, hidden Hungarian paths, whose light reaches as far as Egypt.”²⁴ According to Szántai and others, the Pilis was a Scythian-Hun-Hungarian centre of initiation and rule, the “coronation place of the early Hungarians”, where the Paulines joined up the caves to create a whole city and castle that functioned as the country’s sacral centre.²⁵ Gönczi emphasises that on the basis of “sacral geography”, the Hungarians have an intellectual, spiritual and geographical centre in the Pilis and the Paulines “wanted to bring this sacral power into operation again”.²⁶ The Pilis neo-mythology itself acquired its final meaning through remythologisation that can be linked to the Paulines. Szántai and Gönczi – referring to Gergely Gyöngyösi – wrote that the Paulines were looking for something in the Pilis that was none other than the “lost Hungarian ancient tradition” the “ancient religion”.²⁷

2. *Initiation of the Paulines*

The construction of neo-mythology and within it of the Pauline mythology using elements taken from a number of cultural canons and mythologies of various ages and regions in a way that parallels the operating principles of à la carte bricolage religion can be observed in contemporary society. In essence this process links incompatible elements into a seemingly organic whole, ignoring the anomalies below the surface.²⁸ It is in this way that astrology can be combined with Jesus, with shamans, with acupuncture in contemporary bricolage religion, and the same principle applies to the reinterpretation of the legend on the initiation of the Paulines. As a first step in building up the myths on the “mystical”

22 GÖNCZI 2012. 26.

23 In contemporary Hungarian neo-mythology the majority of legends and conspiracy theories are linked to the Pilis mountains north-west of Budapest. See, among others, BORN 2008, GÖNCZI 2012, SZÁNTAI 2008. According to the most widespread view, the Dalai Lama declared that the heart chakra of the Earth is located in Hungary, in the Pilis Mountains. When he visited Hungary on 15 December 2010 the Dalai Lama refuted this, but that did not affect the spread of the legend. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=b7zOw2diQlg> Last access: 30 September 2014

24 GÖNCZI 2012. 31.

25 GÖNCZI 2012. 51.

26 GÖNCZI 2012. 55, 71. The sacral geography and the Hungarian neo-mythology built around its geographical theses have been refuted, among others, by Keményfi. KEMÉNYFI 2008.

27 GÖNCZI 2012. 61-65.

28 For more details, see SZILÁGYI – SZILÁRDI 2007; POVEDÁK 2014.

innovation, the one-year period as a candidate that is customary in all monastic orders is presented as an exceptional phenomenon that is principally necessary so that the candidate can decide whether he accepts the extraordinary state that accompanies initiation: death and resurrection from it.

“The admission ceremony was performed only after a year, until then the candidate could live without any obligation, then he had to decide whether to enter or not, because if he did: he really had to lie in the stone coffin to experience death... the candidate dies symbolically (or perhaps in reality?), his soul flies up to Heaven, and after it has travelled ‘the path of eternal wisdom’, returns, and now as an initiate, a reborn, in possession of gnosis it performed its earthly task. The ceremonies held in the hidden caves of the Paulines were in practice the same as those undergone by the great initiates of mankind. The roots of the ceremonies reach back to a period thousands of years ago, just as the knowledge or ideal of the Paulines does.”²⁹

“This initiation was a very similar ceremony to that used by the priests in Egypt. According to the descriptions, those awaiting initiation had to lie in a stone coffin deep in a cave and had to spend a certain period of time there in a meditative state. If the initiate’s »light« passed through the stone coffin, the initiation had succeeded and he became a full member of the Pauline Order. And he had to achieve on Earth what he had seen in a state of trance (in Heaven). In Egypt this same initiation was held in the pyramids.”³⁰

“Something really opens up in this stone coffin. The heavens open up, the soul of the Pauline Father rises up, breaks through the stone roof, the spheres of the Earth – and this is the essence of initiation in the cave – for if he could not step out from the depths of the cave, from the closed world, the candidate would not be accepted into the Order.”³¹

3. *The immortality of the Paulines*

The extension to all Pauline Fathers of the incorruptibility of the body after death, an element that can be read in numerous places in the legends of the saints, sums up all this, the experience of the otherworld and resurrection from death, as though in a frame.

“In the Middle Ages the Paulines could be recognised from the fact that they did not leave behind after death a body that could

29 BUNYEVÁ CZ s.d.

30 PESZENOVIC s.d.

31 SZÁNTAI 2010.

decay, because true initiation had happened in the depths of the caves. The Pauline knew death in reality, he had faced death, his soul had flown up to Heaven which meant that he came back to Earth armed with heavenly powers, he brought back the heavenly body into the earthly body and so his dead body remained incorruptible. This was so well known in the Middle Ages that it has survived even through folk tradition."³²

Characteristics of the Pauline neo-mythology

As already mentioned, the basis of the Pauline neo-mythology is the work of Vince Árvai that also created the possibility for the remythologisation of the earlier periods. All these invented historical myths have the following common characteristics.

1) *Emphasis of the sense of a national mission*

In the case of Szántai this culminates in the notion of "Pauline – pairs" history ("the Paulines have not one but a pair of life careers")³³ according to which the history of the Paulines is parallel with the fate of the Hungarian kings. This means on the one hand that the fate of the Pauline Order and the Hungarian kings was intertwined.

"When Eusebius died in 1270, King Béla IV also died in the same year, on the day of the discovery of the Holy Cross ... Eusebius is followed in the chair of general by Benedek, who died in 1290. And in that year our King Ladislaus IV the Cuman also died. Thus we are on the level of a live together, die together way of life. The Hungarian kings and the Paulines are bound together in this way too."³⁴

On the other hand, the establishment of the Pauline Order is reinterpreted in this mirror. According to Szántai, Eusebius founded his order in a period when the Árpadian dynasty³⁵ was already in mortal danger.

"When the house of Árpád dies out, that is, when we reach the period that can be known precisely from the portents, that the Turul

32 SZÁNTAI 2010.

33 SZÁNTAI 2010.

34 SZÁNTAI 2010. On the same subject see: GÖNCZI 2012. 179-181.

35 The kings of the House of Árpád, direct descendants of Árpád the chieftain who led the first settlement in Hungary, ruled Hungary from 1000-1301. Ideologues of the Hungarian neo-mythology often refer to the Árpadian dynasty as the Turul dynasty, named after the Turul bird, the mythological ancestor of the Árpadian dynasty, thereby stressing the pre-Christian mythological connection.

tribe is coming to the end of its time on Earth, then a certain body of knowledge has to be passed on like a torch, and the Paulines are launched within the Pilis mountains. It is as though a flame is dying down, but someone must carry on that flame."³⁶

2) *Conspiracy of foreign powers to suppress the Hungarian people*

As Gönczi stresses, this could be observed already at the time of establishment of the order. In his opinion this was the main reason why authorisation for the Pauline Order dragged on from 1262 to 1308.

"In Rome the matter was not seen as so urgent. The Holy See was not pleased by the idea of a new monastic order strongly linked to a nation an ancient Scythian tradition that was almost certainly an important part of the ancient Hungarian spirituality was part of the spirituality of the ancient Hungarian Pauline Order created by Eusebius. However much this sacral national tradition and ancient Hungarian spirituality was part of the spirituality of the Pauline Order, it was almost certainly obvious to the official Catholic clergy."³⁷

But this same anti-national idea can be found in the theory of Vince Árva regarding the edict of Joseph II, and the obstacles raised to re-establishment of the order in the course of the 19th century,³⁸ and is also found in the contemporary processes, together with the anti-globalisation and xenophobic attitudes that have strengthened as a result of political happenings in the recent past. As a consequence great emphasis is placed in the Pauline neo-mythology on the famous lines of Péter Pázmány, a leading figure of the Hungarian Counter-Reformation,³⁹ drawing a parallel between the fate of the Paulines and the fate of the nation.⁴⁰ In this way, the era of Joseph II mentioned by Vince Árva as the beginning of the "falsified Pauline history", in the writings of the other ideologues (Szántai, Gönczi) becomes the culmination of an international conspiracy to suppress the Hungarian people. It is only now, as a consequence of their recognitions, that the possibility arises after more than two centuries of awakening "from the false consciousness".

36 SZÁNTAI 2010.

37 GÖNCZI 2012. 133.

38 BAKK s.d.

39 Péter Pázmány (1570-1636) was the Archbishop of Esztergom and the Primate of Hungary between 1616-1637. He was the soul of the Catholic Counter-Reformation in Hungary.

40 "If you wish to know the fate of the country, turn your regard to the Order of Saint Paul the Hermit. If you see their numbers dwindling, know that the country is in a bad state, if you see them grow, you must know that the country is also ascending."

3) *Emphasis on the so-called ancient Hungarian Christianity, or Scythian-Hungarian Christianity*

This characteristic is the clearest indication that the entire Pauline neo-mythology is basically not part of vernacular religion linked to Roman Catholic Christianity, but is a syncretic “cultural Christianity” placing the focus on sacralisation of the nation. A widespread element in the invented new Hungarian mythology is also related to the Paulines; it is essentially the conspiracy theory that in practice questions the authenticity of the entire existing Christianity. The bases of the ideology can be linked to the activity of Badinyi Jós, who has described the historical Christian churches as *Judeo-Christian*,⁴¹ while he regards the ancient Hungarian Christianity as the true continuation of the legacy of Jesus. In addition to his theory of the Parthian origin of Jesus,⁴² Ferenc Badinyi Jós has also written about Hungarian, Chaldean or Scythian Christianity and he has attempted to prove that Jesus and his followers were not of Jewish origin.⁴³ The work of Badinyi Jós became the unquestionable, canonised ideological basis of those who believe in the alternative origin and prophetic consciousness of the Hungarian people; it is therefore not surprising to see that the creators of the Pauline neo-mythology also apply it to the Paulines who they regard as the continuers of this ancient Hungarian Christianity.

“Because it was not the Roman Catholic religion that they introduced and spread here. This religion too is called Catholic, but it has no attribute, it is not Roman, not Byzantine, but Catholic which means universal, general and eternally valid. And the ideology of this religion is summed up in the Holy Crown.”⁴⁴

However we do not learn what else this Pauline neo-mythology contains, what the principal tenets of the redefined Pauline order are. All we are told is that the Paulines wanted to preserve some kind of ancient Hungarian religion, the legacy of the shamans, that is closely intertwined with the fate of the Hungarian people. It is quite clear that although the Pauline neo-mythology reinterpreted a number of elements from the original legend of Blessed Eusebius and the history of the Paulines and added to this a number of invented elements, one thing it left

41 The description of Christianity as Judeo-Christianity implies an anti-Semitic attitude.

42 BADINYI JÓSI 2002, 2003, 2005.

43 For further details, see, among others: Lajdi, Tamás: A Magyar Apostol Nemzetség vallása [The Religion of the Hungarian Apostolic Nation] in which he sums up the basic principles of Scythian-Hungarian Christianity. <http://magunk.hu/>. Last access: 20 January 2013. The ideology also clearly functions as a counter-culture: “We are not interested in whether the State recognises us or not, supports us or not, we have not asked for and do not expect such recognition and support since we have nothing to do with this state form, the republic. Since for our part we do not recognise the state forms existing in Europe today, we do not ask them to recognise us ... we do not recognise the existence of the present statehood in Europe, and especially not its existing form in Hungary. We live within the frames of the Holy or Divine Kingdom despite the fact that the life around us legislates in a distorted state form and on the basis of an anti-humane constitution.”

44 SZÁNTAI 2001.

out almost entirely is the tenets, the religious content. It is this lack that created the receptive base of the mythology and at the same time also explains why the invented mythology and its ideologues keep coming into conflict with the Pauline Order. It is inevitable that an invented mythology without Christian tenets, that questions the identity of the existing Pauline Order, can become popular in a circle for which it is not the missing Christian elements that are important but the elements present linked to neo-nationalism. This broad stratum known in the sociology of religion as those “religious in their own way” represents a segment of society not precisely definable whose superficial “cultural Christianity” finds the sacral bases of its own identity in an invented mythological world-view.⁴⁵ All this fits well into the post-socialist national discourse described by Niedermüller, the main aim of which is the symbolical recovery of national history that had been silenced or suppressed for ideological reasons. As Niedermüller notes, this aim is basically achieved through an “anti-modernisation” strategy aimed at emphasising the naturalness of social and cultural phenomena, above all the nation, the national culture and tradition, and through this the unnatural nature of all phenomena wishing to change this natural culture.⁴⁶ On the basis of this principle, the preservers of tradition become the actors in an anti-national conspiracy theory and thus representatives of foreign powers bent on destroying the nation.

The changing Pauline cult

Among the varied manifestation forms of the Pauline neo-mythology, the narrative dimension is undoubtedly the most important, but it is not limited to the ideological works mentioned here. We can also list here the websites that provide scope for the expression of opinions and views of the base receptive of the mythology, as well as the sites where visitors can get to know the religious experience and religious messages linked to the mythology.

1) Contemporary visions

A number of new elements are being built on the sense of a national mission and on the idea that the “false world view” in conspiracy theories can be unveiled in our own age. Of particular note among these are the visions of Katalin Lendvai Fekete originating from Eusebius that she has also posted on various websites.⁴⁷

⁴⁵ It is an indication of the inadequate knowledge about him (and of the superficial knowledge individuals have of vernacular religion) that Blessed Eusebius is frequently mentioned as Saint Eusebius. For example: <http://www.halas.net/component/content/article/5266>; www.szentozseb.hu/; <http://www.enkarapilisszanto.eoldal.hu/>. Last access: 30 September 2014. The title Saint Eusebius quite clearly refers to Blessed Eusebius and not to Saint Eusebius of Vercelli (bishop).

⁴⁶ NIEDERMÜLLER 2002. 145.

⁴⁷ <http://magokvagyunk.blogspot.com/p/magyarok-taltosok-palosok-magosok.html> Last access: 30 September 2014.

In visions Blessed Eusebius entered into direct contact with the woman, through her he sent messages to the Hungarians of today, all reflecting a view proclaiming the end of the paradigmatic change of era, the end of the “false period” and the beginning of the period of national rebirth.

“You must care for the future! The future that is blessed is placed in your hands! Your fate, the fate of your country depends on you...! The time has come for change, to take a stand, for the beginning of a new process that brings the country together in UNITY and does not allow it to be dragged to the brink of ruin! But for this my children you need courage – FAITH, TRUST and HIGH IDEALS! It is not enough to pay attention to your own affairs, the Homeland is your affair now, the affair of you all! The Homeland must be set on a path that writes a New Reality! From which and in which it again becomes a nation with the fate of Christ! In which Christ shows the way with his love, and rallies it around him, and rallies the nations living around him and raises them up to the Lord, and sets an example for them!...”

“– *I beg you Eusebius, tell me what we should do to become victorious?* Do not put up with it any longer, do not allow yourselves to be enslaved! Obey the Law of the Lord, that he has left for you over the millennia! Only in this way can you again become a nation with a pure fate! ... Put the past in its place, renew it in the present! Open up the Sacred Codes that you brought with yourselves! Pay more and proper respect to the majesty, mystery and teachings of the Holy Crown!... Hungary is undergoing a purification without parallel in recent history.”⁴⁸

2) *The Ancient Pauline Order*

It is also worth mentioning that the Ancient Pauline Order, an institutionalised organisation based on the Pauline neo-mythology, has been set up. However, the operation of the seemingly religious community appearing in a religious guise, like the whole Pauline neo-mythology, goes beyond religious frames and can be defined as a kind of neo-nationalist counter-culture group. The fact that the content of the website is not primarily religious but is associated to national consciousness is proof of this. On the home page they ask “those who love our nation and wish to act for the country of the Holy Crown” to help their work. Among the news on the website we find an item on the “Constitution of Hungarian Freedom” they proclaim, that can be regarded as their confession of faith. It reflects the prophetic consciousness of the Hungarian people, a chosen people: “...the mercy of

⁴⁸ <http://magokvagyunk.blogspot.com/p/magyarok-taltosok-palosok-magosok.html> Last access: 30 September 2014.

the Creator made the universal Hungarian people share in the task of the Mother of God with the Holy Crown ... with the recognition that the violence that prevents us from performing the tasks given to us by the grace of the Mother of God places our nation and mankind in mortal danger ..." The "Constitution of Hungarian Freedom" uses both Christian actors (it once mentions the Blessed Lady and Christ, in the introductory section it mentions the Creator and Mother of God three times) and speaks of the Light of the Soul, of universal love reflecting a pantheist character, and attributes a personified, supernatural nature to the historical Holy Crown, calling Hungary the Country of the Holy Crown and those living in the territory of the country members of the Holy Crown. It can be clearly felt that the main driving force of the phenomenon is not religion, not the continuation of religious tradition, but creation of the sacral foundations for the reshaping of the national identity and placing it in the sacral dimension. The historical Pauline Order rejects the Ancient Pauline Order that shows features of chauvinism.

3) *Vince Árva, the last true Pauline hero*

It can be clearly seen that the construction of the Pauline neo-mythology is the foundation myth of a complex identification reconstruction process. However, all myths necessarily contain heroes who show the way to ordinary mortals with their deeds and thoughts. We encounter two such heroes in this Pauline mythology: Blessed Eusebius reinterpreted in the remythologisation, and Vince Árva founder of the entire Pauline neo-mythology. Even the leading ideologues of the trend treat Árva's words and views as axiomatic. "I refer to Vince Árva, the past great director and governor of the Pauline Order, who directed the order when he was in illegality, so his information is certainly reliable".⁴⁹ Vince Árva became an iconic figure representing an invented Hungarian neo-mythology, whose deeds and thoughts represent the ancient, pure, unspoiled past conception of an idyllic Hungarian Christianity. He is an unconditionally positive hero whose death, like the death of heroes of legend, could not be a natural one, it could only be the result of some kind of plot.⁵⁰ It can be seen that Árva's study launched an avalanche of transformation in which a conspiracy theory concerning the modern history of the Pauline Order created a complex remythologisation matrix, absorbing also stories arising around the person who invented it. A cult has been built up around

⁴⁹ SZÁNTAI 2001.

⁵⁰ It is important to note that countless conspiracy stories arose around the death of Vince Árva too. According to some he did not die a natural death. <http://mkh.valosag.net/index.php/temakeroek/magyarsag/1602-ilyen-volt-a-mi-papunk-in-memoriám-p-arva-vince-anya> Last access: 30 September 2014.

The majority of his followers took it as a fact that in his last will Vince Árva declared that he would like to be buried in Pilisszántó not in Székesfehérvár where he had been a priest since 2004. A movement was launched for his funeral. The Bishop of Székesfehérvár, who took Árva into his diocese in his old age, did not know about such a will. <http://szentlaszloiskola.hu/hirek/egyhazi-megyei-nyilatkozat-arva-vince-anya-temetesevel-kapcsolatban2009-01-03-20090105>. Last access: 30 September 2014. A more detailed description of the conflict would exceed the limits of the present study.

his person, his name is used as the stamp of true knowledge, an authenticating brand, with which books could be sold and ideologies confirmed during his life and after his death.⁵¹

Summing up

The described elements of Pauline neo-mythology clearly show that the phenomenon is part of a complex identity reconstruction bringing about a syncretic symbiosis of Christian, neopagan and nation elements. As I have shown in my earlier article giving an overview of the trends in Christian-neopagan syncretism,⁵² like the neopagan orientation its syncretism with Christianity is a very complex phenomenon. Basically, a distinction must be made between its two variants: 1.) the presence of Christian-neopagan syncretism in the vernacular religiosity of Christian believers, and 2.) the trend of the neopagan orientation that draws on Christian symbolism and teachings and wishes to incorporate them into its own theory. At the same time it must be emphasised that in the first case the process of mingling blends with Christianity not neopagan elements in the strictest sense,⁵³ but rather certain chapters in Hungarian history, among them a reinterpretation of the connection of the Hungarian people with Christianity, in which the date and manner of the conversion of the Hungarians is placed in a new light, the role of certain actors is reinterpreted and through this, belief in the chosenness of the Hungarians and their prophetic consciousness appears. The many-branched ideology of the trend and in cases its system of teachings represents a fundamental reinterpretation of Christian tradition or places Christian history on a new basis seen from an ethnic-specific viewpoint through a strong process of remythologisation. The case of the Pauline neo-mythology is not primarily about religious reinterpretation either. We cannot speak of the strengthening of the cult of Blessed Eusebius in a Catholic context, rather neo-nationalism appears linked with an invented new mythology, overstepping religious borders. The Pauline neo-mythology on the one hand represents profanisation, while in other respects it also remains sacral, although not within the frames of Christianity and the concept of sacrality but in a new mythology linked to the "nation-religion".

The phenomenon itself can be compared to the process of the search for a mythology by 19th century Romantic nationalism. The Grimm Brothers, Elias Lönnrot, or in Hungary, among others, Arnold Ipolyi and Kabos Kandra attempted to reconstruct mythologies linked to a particular ethnic group. While in the 19th century this process was not capable of creating a coherent archaic Hungarian mythology from the knowledge preserved in folklore, in the 21st century we find the opposite process. The Hungarian neo-mythology has created, that is, it has

⁵¹ It is a good indication of the transcendent attitude towards him, that at the National Assembly of Hungarians in 2010, two years after his death wine that he had blessed was successfully sold in plastic bottles. See the photo in the annex.

⁵² POVEDÁK 2014.

⁵³ For example, the revival of phenomena related to the shaman tradition.

invented everything that the methodical approach of 19th century folklore and mythology research was unable to do. The reason for this is simple. This is a process with a sense of national mission, a national prophetic consciousness⁵⁴ that predestines the success of the creation of a complex mythology. Failure cannot be tolerated in this process because it would eliminate the sacral foundations of the very sense of a national mission. It must therefore be proven to exist, and for this contemporary myth creation provides everything that the earlier effort could not: sacral mission, sacral actors, world-saving consciousness. In this way it is creating an alternative mythological world, but at the same time it is also blurring the borders between myth and reality, presenting the events of the invented mythology as reality. Unfortunately this is also in line with the demands of our contemporary society where, in many cases, it is not historical authenticity that is important but merely its appearance.

54 HAMMOND 1980.

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Fig. 1 The Pauline Cross Stone
The Stone was excavated at Pilisszántó in 2000. According to some, the stone originally stood on the grave of Blessed Eusebius. The Pauline neo-mythology contains stories about the energy of the stone that has a special effect on people and objects around it, claiming that the Cross Stone could strengthen the positive energies but also cause severe headache for persons arriving with harmful intent. (<http://tudatosebredes.blogspot.com/2011/12/palosok-nyomaban.html>)



Fig. 2 Branding. "Tátos (shaman) and Pauline blessed wine." The wine was blessed by Vince Árva. (Photo: I. Povedák 2010)