

Article

Encountering the Other. André Scrima's Hermeneutics of Spiritual Hospitality †

Bogdan Tătaru-Cazaban 

Institute for the History of Religions, Romanian Academy, 050711 Bucharest, Romania; tatarucazaban@gmail.com

† This is an entirely revised version of the paper I presented in French at the European Association for the Study of Religions Conference in Pisa, on the 1st of September 2021.

Abstract: A key figure in the ecumenical dialogue in the second half of the 20th Century, Fr André Scrima was also involved in the academic and interreligious life in Lebanon as a co-founder of the Institut d'Études Islamo-Chrétiennes at St.-Joseph Catholic University. In his courses, articles, and occasional papers, he developed a hermeneutical method to study the diversity of religious traditions, especially of the three Monotheisms, and to make possible the encounter with the religious otherness. This article aimed to shed light on hospitality as a hermeneutical category and spiritual practice in Scrima's thought, having as a background Louis Massignon's intellectual and mystical perspective on the relations between Christianity and Islam.

Keywords: André Scrima; hospitality; otherness; Louis Massignon; resilience; Lebanon

1. Introduction

In the last couple of years, the personality and theological contribution of Fr André Scrima (1925–2000) have become the subject of various articles and books (See [Boicu \(2020\)](#); [Cioveie \(2017\)](#); [Coman \(2020, 2021a, 2021b\)](#); [Dumbravă \(2017\)](#); [Dumbravă and Tătaru-Cazaban \(2019\)](#); [Sibişan \(2017\)](#); [Tofan \(2019, 2021\)](#)). Fr Scrima was not an ordinary author: most of the time, he refused to assume the quality of “theologian” ([Vasiliu 2004](#), p. 220; [Vasiliu 2017](#), p. 9) and only wrote in response to invitations and opportunities he deemed spiritually significant ([Manolescu 2020](#)).¹ Throughout his itinerant life, he embodied the figure of the mediator or what the French call a “passeur”: a man that builds bridges, engenders conversions, and awakens the spiritual consciousness of his interlocutors. Heir to an old hesychastic tradition, within which he was welcomed from his youth, and entering the monastic life, in an age that was implausible for such a vocation, Scrima was to have many “wondrous encounters” from India to the USA and contributed to the dynamics of the ecumenical and interreligious dialogue in the 6th–8th decades of the previous century ([Pleşu 2000](#); [Manolescu 2006–2007](#); [Manolescu 2018](#); [Tofan 2021](#)).

His religious conversion was the result of the encounter, at the Antim Monastery in Bucharest, with the living tradition embodied by a spiritual father coming from Optina: John “the Stránnik” (the “Stranger”), a wanderer and a bearer of the Prayer of the Heart, who was able to sow in others what he had himself received ([Băncilă 2019](#)). According to his testimonies, Scrima lived at the time an intense spiritual experience that would constitute the nucleus of his entire life and his source of inspiration ([Scrima 2000](#)). His condition *par excellence* will be that of a permanent receptivity towards God's unpredictability, living among people, and yet remaining “alone and a stranger”, as he prayed for ever since his youth ([Pleşu 2000](#), p. 7; [Vasiliu 2004, 2010](#)).

After participating in the Second Vatican Council, where he efficiently played the role of promoter of the unity between the Orthodox and the Catholics, in the capacity of archimandrite of the Patriarchate of Constantinople and personal representative of the patriarch Athenagoras ([Tătaru-Cazaban and Tătaru-Cazaban 2019](#); [Coman 2020](#)), Scrima



Citation: Tătaru-Cazaban, Bogdan. 2022. *Encountering the Other. André Scrima's Hermeneutics of Spiritual Hospitality*. *Religions* 13: 671. <https://doi.org/10.3390/rel13080671>

Academic Editor: Stefan Tobler

Received: 20 June 2022

Accepted: 18 July 2022

Published: 22 July 2022

Publisher's Note: MDPI stays neutral with regard to jurisdictional claims in published maps and institutional affiliations.



Copyright: © 2022 by the author. Licensee MDPI, Basel, Switzerland. This article is an open access article distributed under the terms and conditions of the Creative Commons Attribution (CC BY) license (<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>).

begins an intense period of professorship at the Catholic universities in Beirut. In his biography, Lebanon occupies a place of predilection (Scrima 2005b; Tofan 2021, p. 109). The first means of acquaintance with the Lebanese religious and cultural space was connected to the invitation that Scrima received to offer spiritual direction to the monks of Saint-Georges Monastery of Deir-el-Harf at the end of the '50s. Here he discovered himself as a “maître spirituel”, commenting on the Scriptures according to the *Lectio Divina* method (Scrima 2017), formulating the rule of the monastic community, and practising the art of soul guidance. This mission, in direct continuation with the experience undergone while in Romania, has as a correspondent in the interreligious field the activity performed at Saint-Joseph University, where he participates in founding the *Institut d'Études Islamo-Chrétiennes* and elaborates his thought on religious pluralism, especially on the relationship between Christianity and Islam.

Between 1977 and 1979, Scrima teaches two courses on the “Spiritual experience and its language” for the attendees of the recently created department (Scrima 1977–1978; Scrima 2008; Nashabé and Tour 2005, p. 35). The first course is dedicated to the Christian tradition, while the second will probe the relationship between Christianity and Islam based on a hermeneutic approach to the spiritual experience, whose categories and major themes are the status of The Book, the relationship between letter and Spirit, itinerancy and *stabilitas*. The notes taken by students during the lectures have fortunately been kept in the De Menil Foundation archives and the archives of the Institut d'Études Islamo-Chrétiennes. A copy is also currently available in the “André Scrima” archives at the New Europe College in Bucharest. Although not directly written by the author, the text bears the mark of his thought, a fact that can easily be tested if these notes are compared with the published texts from the same period. In this sense, it is very instructive to also analyse *The Report on the Faculty for Religious Sciences in the human and cultural space of Lebanon and the Near East*.² For the previously mentioned texts, I would like to add as a main reference an article written at the end of the 70s, at the invitation of the Dominican theologian Claude Geffré (1926–2017), and published in the review *Concilium*: “Jérusalem: réflexion sur une cité unique et universelle pour les trois religions monothéistes”, one of Scrima’s major works, but one that he nonetheless refused to sign, preferring instead to mention that his writings have a “coactive character” and that the author was engaged “in current confrontations between the three main religious traditions”, which the article spoke of (Scrima 1980, p. 117). The editors of *Concilium* respected his decision in its entirety. A couple of years after the death of Fr Scrima, Fr Claude Geffré decided to attend in person a colloquium organized at New Europe College in Bucharest to speak about his friend and to bear witness to the profound impression that Scrima’s article on Jerusalem had had on its first readers.³

In this article, I aim to discuss, starting from the mentioned texts, how Fr Scrima tried to analyse—through the common theme of hospitality—the possibility of an encounter between Christianity and Islam. Anca Manolescu, who coordinated the Romanian edition of Scrima’s writings, shed light for the first time on the place hospitality occupies in his thought on religious diversity.⁴ In this contribution, focused on the relevance of André Scrima’s considerations of hospitality for the interreligious dialogue in Lebanon, I would like to propose a series of reflections that are to be taken as complementary to the previous interpretation. At the same time, I believe that a potential intellectual and spiritual filiation of Scrima’s thought on this theme can be found in Louis Massignon’s oeuvre (1883–1962), especially through his method of understanding Islam from “the inside”.

2. Hospitality—A Hermeneutic Category

From *The Epic of Gilgamesh* to Brahmanical literature (Bornet 2010, pp. 172–75), and Homer’s *Odyssey*, hospitality appears as a sacred duty and ceremonial practice.⁵ The scene of philoxenia at the Oak of Mamre (*Genesis* 18, 1–15) has paramount importance for Judaism and Christianity and forever ties the meaning of hospitality to the figure of Abraham, who also becomes essential in Islam (Monge 2008). Writing before the widespread studies on this theme,⁶ but having as prestigious background Louis Massignon’s reflections and

meditations, André Scrima privileges a perspective on the common Abrahamic heritage of Judaism, Christianity, and Islam, instead of the historically divergent and mutually exclusive interpretations (Stroumsa 2017, chp. I). He prefers the expression “Abrahamic traditions,” but uses also the concept of “Monotheism” regarding all three religions mentioned above. In this sense, he participates in the relatively recent process of forging the idea of the “Abrahamic religions”, remarkably illustrated, as G.G. Stroumsa put it, by Massignon’s *Trois prières d’Abraham* (Massignon 1997; Stroumsa 2017). What relates even more closely to Scrima’s and Massignon’s approaches⁷ is the centrality of hospitality as a spiritual experience, as well as a hermeneutic category applied to the study of religious otherness. This method, focused on reciprocal receptivity, which is defining for the experience of hospitality, would also be an instrument, especially in Lebanon, for the consolidation of resilience in a world confused by crises and conflicts. Scrima takes over and deepens some of Massignon’s intuitions and reflections, and shares with him and his disciples⁸ the importance of the eschatological perspective, inspired by the Muslim traditions, on the “Abrahamic” differences and convergences. His academic teachings, besides their conceptual and methodological traits, were oriented to the “theological” understanding of spiritual experiences. Scrima often makes the distinction between the “theological” and “theological” approach, where “theological” means an inner way of accessing the transcendent reality and expressing this relation that exceeds the boundaries of common knowledge and language.

The theme of hospitality emerges in the course Scrima taught on *The Christian Tradition*, where he considers the itinerant meaning of Pentecost as the inner horizon of Christianity. By receiving the Holy Spirit in Jerusalem, the apostles of Christ are propelled towards “the infinite plenitude of the experience of God” (Scrima 2008, p. 169), which surpasses geographic limits and history. What is born out of this overwhelming experience is the primary Christian vocation to itinerancy as a response to God’s call. Wandering in the world to proclaim the Word of God, without letting oneself be captured by a place and claim ownership of it, is also an inner itinerancy, perpetual self-renunciation, and renewed receptivity towards the divine grace (Vasiliu 2004, p. 213). For Scrima, a Christian is always on the way and towards the risen Christ, and “everywhere in a state of hospitality” (Scrima 2008, p. 169). This pneumatological nomadism represents the deepest dimension of the Christian faith, complementary to the earthly sedentariness present throughout history, and creates a space of encounter with other instances of “the tradition of itinerancy” in Judaism and Islam (Nashabé and Tour 2005, p. 44). Scrima sees in the experience of the desert, taken as the birthplace of Islam, the possibility of a mutual understanding with pneumatological Christianity, that is, with Christianity as permanently invited—especially when historical circumstances demand it—to discard its too-earthly attachments, institutionalized habits, and mental reflexes, and to be more faithful to its primordial universality.

Scrima underlines numerous times the fact that the true significance of hospitality is discovered only in the itinerant life, firstly concrete, according to the paradigmatic experiences conveyed by the Jewish and Muslim traditions, and then spiritual. The experience of hospitality does not only mean welcoming the other, especially when he is a foreigner, a pilgrim, or finds himself in need⁹, but, before anything else, it implies being welcomed by that who is welcome. It speaks of sharing the same condition. When one lives in the desert, welcoming the other means honouring him and freely offering him all of one’s best, as Abraham did, because God manifests his presence under the image of the other and summons one to an wandering faithfulness.

In Scrima’s phenomenological and theological approach to the theme of hospitality, one could identify significant convergences with Louis Massignon’s reflections, which Scrima cites on other occasions (Scrima 2004, p. 65; Scrima 2008, p. 155), albeit quite rarely. For both, hospitality has profound biographic roots: Massignon converted in the aftermath of a dramatic mystical experience that he would call “visitation de l’Étranger” (Massignon [1955] 2009c, pp. 6–7), while Scrima had an essential encounter with a spiritual father who called himself “the Stranger”. Massignon lived his conversion amongst Muslims and

owes his life to their practice of sacred hospitality,¹⁰ which he would always eulogize and in which he would observe the nucleus of a potential reconstruction of the relationships among men and peoples, undermined as they were by betrayals and wounded by wars.¹¹ Scrima undertook the experience of religious alterity throughout his life and would thoroughly develop the meaning of hospitality starting from the encounter with the other, as a rediscovery of brotherhood in faith or humanity (Tătaru-Cazaban and Tătaru-Cazaban 2019; Tofan 2019, pp. 113–26). For both, hospitality is thus an existential and spiritual experience that inextricably intertwines one's condition as a foreigner or traveller with the revelation of God through the person of the foreigner or of he who asks to be welcomed. The sacred character of hospitality resides, according to Massignon, in its capacity to reveal the presence of the divine amongst people (Massignon [1956] 2009d, p. 802). Hospitality is thus practised as receptivity towards the unpredictable manifestation of God, so that, at the moment decided by the visit of The Stranger, who is *das Ganz Andere*, the life of the one who offers hospitality will become a recipient of transcendence.

This experience nourishes, in both Massignon and Scrima, a hermeneutics of religious hospitality. Massignon proposes an inner understanding of Islam, an “intellectual decentring” that prevents appropriating the other.¹² As well as for Fr Scrima, this comprehensive approach is a spiritual one, since it means not only the renunciation of the claims of scientism but also an attitude that grants priority to the other, honours him, and recognizes his dignity. Moreover, according to Massignon, to understand the other, it is necessary not only to respect his dignity but also to become his guest (“hôte”). As a method, the hermeneutics of hospitality is analogous, both for Massignon and Scrima, to learning and practising the language of the other, without which there is neither communication of the self, nor the possibility of knowing one that is different (Massignon 1969, p. 631; Leroux 2020, pp. 57–60).

Massignon stresses, on the basis of the Muslim mystical tradition he privileges, but also in the descendance of Charles de Foucauld, the merciful and sacrificial dimension of hospitality: “Il n’y a pas au fond plusieurs œuvres de Miséricordes, il n’y en a qu’une, c’est l’hospitalité sacrée, qui fait foi à l’hôte, cet étranger, cet inconnu mystérieux qui est Dieu même venant se mettre à notre merci, désarmé” (Massignon [1956] 2009d, p. 800; see also Massignon 2011, p. 142). He who receives hospitality finds himself in a state of radical fragility and exposes himself in order to allow the one offering him shelter and protection to reveal his humanity and to be exposed in his turn. For Scrima, hospitality is an inward attitude towards religious otherness from an eschatological perspective.¹³ In this way, hospitality is freed from prejudice and historical residue (one could say: from the ballast of the past), to allow the present to be oriented towards the endpoint of history, that is, towards what transcends and completes history: the living presence of God.

Compared to the “decentring” necessary for the inner understanding of the other that Massignon talked about, Scrima’s approach is complementary and insists on the necessity of the *place* of hospitality, which is one’s religious tradition. The other, the brother on the way, is received in this *place*, which is un-bordered through the receptivity towards the presence of God manifested in the traveller, in the foreigner, or in the poor. Responding in 1985 to a report of the French theologian Joseph Moingt (1915–2020) on “Religions de salut et salut en Jésus-Christ”, Scrima explicitly notes: “It is obvious we cannot constitute a valid response in the matter (...) without discovering from within our *theological place* the paths of surpassing without negation” (Scrima 2004, p. 90; 2005c).

3. Jerusalem’s Vocation for Hospitality

The connected themes of hospitality and Abraham as an original figure of faith for the three Monotheisms are to be found in Fr Scrima’s article on the uniqueness and universality of Jerusalem. The meaning of the Pentecost is explicitly defined here in terms of “God’s hospitality”: “the explosion in the Holy Spirit of the earthly Jerusalem is equivalent to an extension of God’s hospitality to the ends of being” (Scrima 2004, p. 56). According to Scrima, this is the universal perspective belonging to Christianity. But hospitality and

itinerancy in the Holy Spirit were inaugurated as an experience of faith through the act of Abraham answering God's call and "abandoning [himself] to the divine unpredictability" (Scrima 2004, p. 57). This Abrahamic meaning of itinerancy in Judaism is connected with the memory of the original wandering (Deut. 26:5) that implies the sacred duty of hospitality. On the other hand, Fr Scrima sees in the Muslim interpretation of Abraham as a guide for all believers an open space towards Abrahamic universality, and a possibility of an encounter between the three Monotheisms. In his opinion, the direct consequence of the place of Abraham in Islam could only be the "non-exclusion" of the other traditions rooted in the faith of Abraham, which passed the test of hospitality that constitutes an event of Revelation and is not at all reducible to brotherly charity, but designates "an unprecedented openness towards the unpredictable presence of God, free from any limitation, even from that of an earthly Jerusalem", whose vocation can only be that of hospitality:

"The Jerusalemite equivocate mostly lies—I have often recalled—in the political-religious compulsions of exclusive rule over a city signifying a universality of another order. Is a city open or closed? Hospitable or inhospitable? Based on the whole Abrahamic tradition, it becomes quite clear that the answer relies on the welcoming, in the space of the earthly city, of the Jerusalem that is to come". (Scrima 2004, p. 55)

The tension that Scrima highlights regarding the universality of Jerusalem is that between the earthly and heavenly city, or between history and eschatology. For the traditions stemming from Abraham, the centrality of Jerusalem works as an *inter-sign* (Tofan 2021, p. 134)—a concept used also by Massignon —, which is a revelatory instance, just like, in Jerusalem itself, there are inter-signs as witnesses not only to the historical co-presence of multiple traditions but also to their aspiration of welcoming one another in an eschatologically oriented space of hospitality. Only the fidelity to the heavenly Jerusalem will allow the earthly and troubled city to become truly hospitable and thus reflect the universality of the Revelation (Manolescu 2005b, pp. 40–53; Geffré 2019, pp. 144–45).

André Scrima's view of Jerusalem's vocation for hospitality is much more than a necessary plea for reconciliation within the city that stands at the symbolic centre of the three Monotheisms.¹⁴ Fully aware of the difficulty of securing peace in history, as well as of the human suffering caused by the perpetuation of conflict, Scrima proposed a perspective that forged a somewhat paradoxical relationship between hospitality and the lack of permanence in a specific place, be it as prestigious and disputed a place as Jerusalem. In his article, he points to the fact that in all the three Abrahamic traditions, revelation includes an essential dimension that has to do with being on the way. Alongside the memory of the wandering in Deuteronomy 26:5, he evokes Mohammed's prophetic investiture, which takes the form of a nocturnal journey towards the heavenly Jerusalem, to which he adds, from the Christian tradition, the episode of the walk to Emmaus and the meeting with Christ outside the city (Vasiliu 2004, pp. 215–17).

The interpretation of this episode had already taken shape in Scrima's course on spiritual experience, where he made the explicit connection between the revealing of Christ as a wayfaring companion of those who are on the way, and as being bound to no place after the Resurrection: "Christ could only be perceived, recognized, known by he who was in a state of wayfaring, moving in the Holy Spirit's limitless amplitude" (Scrima 2008, p. 170). "Art thou only a stranger in Jerusalem?" (Luke 24:18): according to Scrima, this question, asked by the disciples, illuminates the singularity of the transcendent's presence in history as a stranger, but also as a proximity that reveals itself as such with the "breaking of the bread"—the sign of its sacrificial and salvific universality (Scrima 2008, pp. 169–70).

The consequence that such an understanding of both Christian revelation and the other monotheistic traditions has for the meaning of Jerusalem is first and foremost the rejection of any expression of power over or exclusive ownership of a space that asserts its centrality at a symbolic level, that is to say, via the link to its invisible, transcendent side. "Those who truly honour Jerusalem are those who know themselves to be part of the distance it takes from everyone and everything" (Scrima 2004, pp. 30–31).¹⁵ The earthly

Jerusalem is thus taken to be a point of ‘passing’ or ‘surpassing’ towards the heavenly (Manolescu 2005b, p. 41); a space in permanent aspiration towards the promise of God’s presence as universal peace. From this perspective, Jerusalem’s historical hospitality has an essential eschatological dimension, as if every tradition, in its historical partiality, comes before God together with all the others, without which it cannot find its fullness of meaning. Anca Manolescu has brought clear light on the way the temporal sequence of the birth and development of the monotheistic religions is surpassed through their co-presence in Jerusalem (Manolescu 2005b, pp. 41–45), as well as on the role of Melchizedek, the king of Salem, as a sign of universality prior to Abraham and Jerusalem (Scrima 2004, pp. 39–42; Scrima 2008, pp. 145–55). What I would add to this is the eschatological orientation of Fr Scrima’s vision, according to which the historical itinerary of the three Abrahamic traditions is at the same time, paradoxically, a spiritual extension of Jerusalem, and the real and earthly hospitality of the “unique and universal city” is a sign of the future world. This is why Jerusalem becomes a parable of the encounter with the other that entails not only proximity but, before anything else, a reciprocal hosting. Those who grant each other hospitality are saving an inner space for the other, not so much for the truth of the other as self-affirmation, but rather so that the truth, for each of them, can be brought to light in this space of silence, that allows God to manifest Himself. This hospitality is a spiritual virtue, an exercise of non-idolatrous faith, which is not fixed in rigid concepts.

4. Hospitality and Resilience in Lebanon

In the preamble of the report on The Faculty for Religious Sciences, a very significant document for the way Fr Scrima approached the situation he was involved in, one finds an analysis of the crisis Lebanon was undergoing in the middle of the 70s. André Scrima and Augustin Dupré la Tour capture a historical and geopolitical panoramic picture of the complex situation they consider both “objective” and “subjective” (Scrima 2004, p. 162). Their starting point is the exceptional historical condition of Lebanon, and its ethnical, cultural, and religious diversity, so that they can afterwards underline the tensions and contradictions inherited from the past, as well as those generated by the modernization of this society in the 20th Century. Scrima and Dupré la Tour see in the constitutive pluralism of the country both a *chance* and a *deadlock* (“*impasse*”), which have to be understood and overcome.

Despite the veiled style, with various precautions and circumventions, the authors do not hesitate to note multiple inconveniences of the religious Lebanese landscape at the time: for instance, a certain opacity towards the decisions of the Second Vatican Council, especially regarding ecumenism, then a certain societal insensitivity towards the cultural and religious movements that aimed to react to the “signs of the times”; generally, a blockage in ethnic-confessional behaviours, which contrasts with “the dynamics of spirit and faith” manifested by the spiritual itinerancy discussed above. This analysis sees the tragedy of civil war as the result of systematic societal blindness to “the reality that does nothing but explode with blind violence” (Scrima 2004, p. 177).

Scrima supported by all available means the project initiated by the Jesuit Augustin Dupré la Tour along with the Muslim professors Yusuf Ibish and Hisham Nashabé, a project that entailed the creation, in the new Faculty for Religious Sciences, which replaced the Faculty of Theology after a reformation of theological studies in Lebanon, of a Department of Islamic-Christian Studies, which would become an Institute (Nashabé and Tour 2005). Through this academic construction—which aimed to offer a complement to the theological formation through the comparative study of religions—, Scrima and his friends answered, in both intellectual and spiritual solidarity, to the complex challenges of the situation in which they lived. For founding an educational institution based on a multidisciplinary approach to the religious phenomena and on methods that Western scholars were preoccupied with during those times (semiotics, structuralism, etc.), was not only an academic feat but—as Scrima underlines many times—a courageous spiritual experience or an “itinerary shared

in the most profound respect for the truth of each tradition” (Scrima 2004, p. 186; Dumbravă 2013).

One can notice how Andrei Scrima, faithful to his vision of hospitality, inserted in the institutional reconstruction project the spiritual message that he felt compelled to actualize everywhere and which he manifested especially as a spiritual father for the monks of Deir-el-Harf. Although he taught multiple disciplines connected to the comparative study of religions, he did not present himself as a specialist, but as a promoter of research that stemmed from the language of different spiritual experiences. He considered that the challenges the Lebanese society had to face at that time were an opportunity to be capitalized on in order to put together “the essential elements of the religious traditions” that coexisted in the same space (Scrima 2004, p. 186). He was driven by the conviction that this historical co-presence, although difficult, represented a calling to hospitality for the spiritual life—hospitality which was a research method and demanded, before anything else, attention to what the other desires to say, and especially to the meaning that transcends his language. This hospitality was fundamentally a spiritual experience, an answer to what Scrima named “the most profound interrogation of faith” (Scrima 2004, p. 180), that is, as was noticed before, one that consisted in making space in oneself for the other and having the conscience of being together on the way, in front of the “divine unpredictability” in history.

5. Conclusions

André Scrima’s theological work mainly followed two directions: the ecumenical dialogue, especially with the Catholic Church, during and following the Second Vatican Council, and the hermeneutic approach to religious plurality, which he shaped throughout his Lebanese professorship. In the ecumenical field, he proposed a *method* to encounter the other and “actualize” the unity, in complete syntony with the Patriarch Athenagoras (Clément 1969, p. 389; Tătaru-Cazaban and Tătaru-Cazaban 2019). In a larger sense, religious diversity was for him a subject of keen interest ever since his early years of formation. If the Indian period of his life was reflected in several papers written in the 50s, the Lebanese years prompted him to elaborate—among very few orthodox colleagues at the time—¹⁶ a “theological” perspective on the “Abrahamic traditions”, which did not lead to a systematic theology of religious plurality.¹⁷ Even in his formal educational commitment, Scrima preferred to remain a witness to a spiritual experience that makes possible the encounter with the other in mutual hospitality.

The notion of hospitality is common to Scrima’s ecumenical and interreligious approaches but seems to be more instrumental in the latter. Its Christian ethical and liturgical meanings serve as background and inspiration for a renewed practice where the ancient “integrative” dimension of hospitality (Bornet 2010, p. 242) will be surpassed by a spiritual receptivity that preserves the difference of the other. In this sense, hospitality includes the concrete or “compensatory” aspect, consisting of the immediate assistance provided to others, as well as the transformation of the experience of nomadic life into an interiorized spiritual practice.

In the intellectual and social context of Lebanon in the 70s, it is very significant that Scrima’s approach to further the meaning of co-present Christian and Muslim traditions starts from what Modernity could offer as a method and as a result of research on the religious phenomena. This is because Scrima was convinced that being faithful to the Spirit means rejecting “repetitive conservatism” (Scrima 2004, p. 122) and discerning the “signs of the times”. He was not adept at syncretism, although he would occasionally borrow Guénonian expressions and remarks (Tătaru-Cazaban 2020). His perspective remains rooted in the mystagogical, ascetic, and ecclesiological expression peculiar to Eastern Christianity (Scrima 1980, pp. 123–24), and always open towards the other and his capacity to share an experience of faith.

Funding: This research received no external funding.

Conflicts of Interest: The author declares no conflict of interest.

Notes

- ¹ Scrima's writings were rediscovered mostly in manuscript form or as scattered across publications from Romania, France, Italy, Germany, Lebanon, the USA etc. A Romanian edition in several volumes was published between 2000–2011 and coordinated by Anca Manolescu at Humanitas Publishing House (Bucharest).
- ² The text can also be found in the "André Scrima" Archives at New Europe College, neither dated nor signed, but corresponds perfectly to the themes of Scrima's courses. It was published in 2004 in Romanian translation (Scrima 2004, pp. 161–88) and in 2005 in French, co-signed by Fr Augustin Dupré la Tour (Scrima 2005a).
- ³ Claude Geffré's contribution was published in 2005 in Romanian and 2019 in French: see Geffré 2019. He noticed for the first time, as far as I know, an affinity between Louis Massignon's approach to Islam and Scrima's theological views (Geffré 2019, p. 143). See also Monge 2008 who cited and integrated Scrima's views in his "Epilogue" on Jerusalem (pp. 600–6) but did not identify the author of the article; Tofan (2019, pp. 100–12).
- ⁴ Manolescu (2005a, 2005b, Manolescu 2006–2007), especially Manolescu (2005a, pp. 192–98). Anca Manolescu prefers to define Scrima's view on hospitality as a "metaphysical" one (see Manolescu 2005b, pp. 50–52), focusing on the spiritual traditions as "possibilities of the unique Infinity". I consider that the eschatological perspective on the three Monotheisms, explicitly mentioned in Scrima's texts, should be complementarily emphasized because of its Christological and pneumatological significance.
- ⁵ See, for an overview, Koenig (1987), and the series of contributions in different fields of study coordinated by Montandon (1999, 2001, 2004).
- ⁶ See, for example, several contributions available before the 70s and that might influence Scrima's approach: Marty (1939); Daniélou (1953, chp. IV); Moubarac (1958); Kritzeck (1965); Martin-Achard (1969).
- ⁷ On hospitality in Massignon, see Massignon (1987); Laboulaye (1987); Pénicaud (2020, pp. 24–27); for a philosophical reading of the relationship between hospitality and substitution, see Leroux (2020, pp. 119–33).
- ⁸ A close approach to Massignon is Moubarac (1958). Fr Moubarac noted in an autobiographical list of papers that he was working in 1968 on two related projects: a volume of Fr Scrima in French and one volume of Massignon in English.
- ⁹ For an overview on the different practices of hospitality, see Montandon (2001). Scrima's approach on this topic is pre-eminently theoretical.
- ¹⁰ For a comparative analysis of the Christian and Muslim uses of hospitality, see Siddiqui (2015): "If the structural context implicit in the devotional vocabulary of Christianity is different than that of Islam, the practical obligation to show care and hospitality remains the same. I would contend that offering hospitality as a way of imitating the divine, as well as being obedient to God, is embedded in the rich vocabulary of charity, generosity, mercy and compassion which permeates the entire Qur'ān and is found in so many of the *hadiths*." (pp. 124–25)
- ¹¹ "J'ai moi-même bénéficié, comme hôte, du droit d'asile qui, chez les Arabes, est sacré. J'ai été sauvé par mes amis arabes, à Bagdad. C'est au moment où je me trouvais en prison que j'ai recommencé à croire à la fois en Dieu et en l'amitié des hommes, de ces musulmans pour qui j'étais un étranger mais qui m'avaient sauvé au péril de leur vie, par le droit d'hospitalité. Voilà une véritable expression de charité pour l'autre, c'est-à-dire de respect de l'homme au nom de ce qu'il y a de sacré en lui et de ce qu'il y a de divin au-dessus de tous les hommes" (Massignon [1959] 2009e, p. 57). See also Massignon ([1949] 2009a, p. 723; Massignon [1952] 2009b, p. 787; Massignon [1961] 2009f, p. 34).
- ¹² "Hallaj le disait: Comprendre quelque chose d'autre ce n'est pas s'annexer la chose, c'est se transférer par un décentrement au centre même de l'autre; c'est comme dans le système de Copernic, quand on l'a substitué au système de Ptolémée; nous nous croyions le centre du monde sur la terre, il a fait un décentrement. L'essence du Langage doit être une espèce de décentrement, nous ne pouvons nous faire comprendre qu'en entrant dans le système de l'autre, comme disait Péguy: *Celui qui aime entre dans la dépendance de celui qui est aimé*. Le Christ est venu pour servir." (Massignon 1969, p. 631). See Rocalve (1993, pp. 99–109); Krokus (2017, pp. 19–30); Pénicaud (2020, pp. 194–99).
- ¹³ A perspective inspired by the study of Islam and shared by Massignon.
- ¹⁴ As origin and telos of eschatologically oriented history, Jerusalem had—for fr. Scrima's ecumenical activity—the evidence of an epiphany, thanks to the event of the first meeting, in 1964, between Patriarch Athenagoras and Pope Paul VI, in the organization of which Scrima was a direct participant. Jerusalem has remained a topic of theological reflection both for the ecclesiology of communion, as rightly noted by Claude Geffré (2019, p. 144), and within the wider horizon of the three Monotheisms, from the perspective of Christianity's pneumatological nomadism.
- ¹⁵ The presuppositions and possible political significations of this view on Jerusalem's hospitality are not our theme here, but are discernible in some of Scrima's articles (partially republished in Nashabé and Tour 2005), as noted by Tofan (2021, pp. 126–32). Here, too, despite their different individual experiences, Scrima's and Louis Massignon's views are convergent to a certain extent. See Pénicaud (2020, pp. 342–54). The most distinctive for Scrima's approach is the pneumatological dimension of hospitality.
- ¹⁶ See the works published mostly in Greek by Anastasios Yannoulatos.

- ¹⁷ For a theological use of hospitality in the interreligious dialogue, see [Moyaert \(2011\)](#). Scrima's approach could be influential in this perspective.

References

- Băncilă, Ionuț-Daniel. 2019. André Scrima's Elusive Master: Father John Stránnik. In *André Scrima: Expérience Spirituelle et Langage Théologique. Actes du Colloque de Rome, 29–30 Octobre 2008*. Edited by Daniela Dumbravă and Bogdan Tataru-Cazaban. Orientalia Christiana Analecta 306. Roma: Edizioni Orientalia Christiana, pp. 227–40.
- Boicu, Dragoș. 2020. Epiphany and Otherness in the Vision of the Father André Scrima. *Review of Ecumenical Studies* 12: 439–57. [[CrossRef](#)]
- Bornet, Philippe. 2010. *Rites et Pratiques de L'hospitalité. Mondes Juifs et Indiens Anciens*. Stuttgart: Franz Steiner Verlag.
- Cioveie, Valentin. 2017. Teologia religiilor necreștine—Abordarea răsăriteană. *Hermeneutica Părintelui Andrei Scrima. TABOR. Revistă de Cultură și Spiritualitate Românească* 9: 83–95, 91–103.
- Clément, Olivier. 1969. *Dialogues Avec le Patriarche Athénagoras*. Paris: Fayard.
- Coman, Viorel. 2020. André Scrima's Contribution to the Ecumenical Turn in Orthodox-Catholic Relationships: A Historical Reconstruction (1957–1967). *Orientalia Christiana Periodica* 86: 571–95.
- Coman, Viorel. 2021a. Mary as Mediatrix: André Scrima's Contribution to the Mariological Chapter of *Lumen Gentium*. *Journal of Eastern Christian Studies* 73: 291–316.
- Coman, Viorel. 2021b. André Scrima's Ecumenical Vision and Its Relevance for the Post-Conciliar Orthodox Church. *St. Vladimir's Theological Quarterly* 64: 181–210.
- Daniélou, Jean. 1953. *Essai sur le Mystère de L'histoire*. Paris: Seuil.
- Dumbravă, Daniela, and Bogdan Tătaru-Cazaban, eds. 2019. *André Scrima: Expérience Spirituelle et Langage Théologique. Actes du Colloque de Rome, 29–30 Octobre 2008*. Orientalia Christiana Analecta 306. Roma: Edizioni Orientalia Christiana.
- Dumbravă, Daniela. 2013. Theology and History of Religions in the Middle East. A Brief Account: Fr. André Scrima, spiritual and peace mediator in Lebanon (1970–1980). Paper presented at 9th EASR Conference and IAHR Special Conference, Messina, Italy, 14–17 September 2009; *Biblioteca dell'Officina di Studi Medievali* 16. 1/2. Palermo: Officina di Studi Medievali, pp. 597–610.
- Dumbravă, Daniela. 2017. "Rivelazione e religioni" secondo Andrei Scrima. In *Quaderni di Studi e Materiali di Storia delle Religioni. Supplemento 18—La Storia Delle Religioni e la Sfida dei Pluralismi*. Edited by Sergio Botta, Marianna Ferrara and Alessandro Saggiore. Brescia: Morcelliana, pp. 568–80.
- Geffré, Claude. 2019. Jérusalem comme ville sainte pour les trois monothéismes dans la pensée et la spiritualité d'André Scrima. In *André Scrima: Expérience Spirituelle et Langage Théologique. Actes du Colloque de Rome, 29–30 Octobre 2008*. Edited by Daniela Dumbravă and Bogdan Tătaru-Cazaban. Roma: Edizioni Orientalia Christiana, pp. 141–48.
- Koenig, John. 1987. Hospitality. In *Encyclopedia of Religion*. Edited by Mircea Eliade. New York and London: Collier Macmillan Publishers, pp. 470–73.
- Kritzeck, James. 1965. *Sons of Abraham: Jews, Christians, and Moslems*. Baltimore: Helicon.
- Krokus, Christian S. 2017. *The Theology of Louis Massignon. Islam, Christ, and the Church*. Foreword by Sidney H. Griffith. Washington, DC: The Catholic University of America Press.
- Laboulaye, François, ed. 1987. L'hospitalité dans la pensée et l'œuvre de Louis Massignon. In *Présence de Louis Massignon. Hommages et Témoignages*. Textes réunis par Daniel Massignon. Paris: Maisonneuve & Larose, pp. 139–48.
- Leroux, Georges. 2020. *Hospitalité et Substitution. Derrida, Levinas, Massignon*. Québec: Les Presses de l'Université de Montréal.
- Manolescu, Anca. 2005a. *Europa și Întâlnirea Religiilor. Despre Pluralismul Religios Contemporan*. Iași: Polirom.
- Manolescu, Anca. 2005b. André Scrima și sensul metafizic al ospitalității. In *André Scrima. Ogândire Fără Țărmuri. Ecumenism și Globalizare*. Edited by Anca Manolescu. București: Humanitas, pp. 35–54.
- Manolescu, Anca. 2006–2007. André Scrima, herméneute de la convergence des religions. In *L'Orient des Dieux. Revue du Département des Sciences des Religions*. Beyrouth: Université Saint-Joseph, vol. 6–7, pp. 83–102.
- Manolescu, Anca. 2018. André Scrima (1925–2000) ou la *stabilitas in peregrinatione*. *Contacts* 261: 21–27.
- Manolescu, Anca. 2020. André Scrima: Orality and Writing. *Review of Ecumenical Studies* 12: 395–411. [[CrossRef](#)]
- Martin-Achard, Robert. 1969. *Actualité d'Abraham*. Neuchatel: Delachaux et Niestlé.
- Marty, Jacques. 1939. Sur le devoir chrétien de l'hospitalité aux trois premiers siècles. *Revue d'Histoire et de Philosophie Religieuses* 19: 288–95. [[CrossRef](#)]
- Massignon, Louis. 1969. *Opera Minora*. Textes recueillis par Y. Moubarak, t. II. Paris: Presses Universitaires de France.
- Massignon, Louis. 1987. *L'hospitalité Sacrée*. Textes inédits présentés par Jacques Keryell, préface de René Voillaume. Paris: Nouvelle Cité.
- Massignon, Louis. 1997. *Les Trois Prières d'Abraham (1912–1962)*. Paris: Cerf.
- Massignon, Louis. 2009a. La paix dans la justice en Palestine. In *Écrits Mémorables*. Textes établis, présentés et annotés sous la direction de Christian Jambet, par François Angelier, François L'Yvonner et Souâd Ayada, t. I. Paris: Bouquins Laffont. First Published 1949.
- Massignon, Louis. 2009b. Le respect de la personne humaine en Palestine et la priorité du droit d'asile sur le devoir de la juste guerre. In *Écrits Mémorables*. t. I. Paris: Bouquins Laffont. First Published 1952.

- Massignon, Louis. 2009c. Réponse à l' « Enquête sur l'idée de Dieu et ses conséquences ». In *Écrits Mémorables*. t. I. Paris: Bouquins Laffont. First Published 1955.
- Massignon, Louis. 2009d. La signification spirituelle du dernier pèlerinage de Gandhi. In *Écrits Mémorables*. Textes établis, présentés et annotés sous la direction de Christian Jambet, par François Angelier, François L'Yvonner et Souâd Ayada, t. II. Paris: Bouquins Laffont. First Published 1956.
- Massignon, Louis. 2009e. Islam et Chrétienté. In *Écrits Mémorables*. t. II. Paris: Bouquins Laffont. First Published 1959.
- Massignon, Louis. 2009f. L'honneur des camarades de travail et la parole de vérité. In *Écrits Mémorables*. t. I. Paris: Bouquins Laffont. First Published 1961.
- Massignon, Louis. 2011. *Badaliya, au Nom de L'autre (1947–1862)*. Présenté et annoté par Maurice Borrmans et Françoise Jacquin, préface du cardinal Jean-Louis Tauran. Paris: Cerf.
- Monge, Claudio. 2008. *Dieu Hôte. Recherche Historique et Théologique sur les Rituels de L'hospitalité*. Bucharest: Zeta Books.
- Montandon, Alain, ed. 1999. *Mythes et Représentations de L'hospitalité*. Clermont-Ferrand: Presses Universitaires Blaise Pascal.
- Montandon, Alain, ed. 2001. *Lieux D'hospitalité. Hospices, Hôpital, Hostellerie*. Clermont-Ferrand: Presses Universitaires Blaise Pascal.
- Montandon, Alain, ed. 2004. *Le Livre de L'hospitalité. Accueil de L'étranger dans L'histoire et les Cultures*. Paris: Bayard.
- Moubarac, Youakim. 1958. *Abraham Dans le Coran. L'histoire d'Abraham Dans le Coran et la Naissance de l'Islam*. Paris: Vrin.
- Moyaert, Marianne. 2011. *Fragile Identities. Towards a Theology of Interreligious Hospitality*. Amsterdam and New York: Editions Rodopi.
- Nashabé, Hisham, and Augustin Dupré la Tour. 2005. L'Institut d'Études Islamo-Chrétiennes de Beyrouth. In *Intersignes. À la Mémoire du Père André Scrima*. Textes rassemblés et présentés par le Père Augustin Dupré la Tour et le Docteur Hisham Nashabé. Beyrouth: Dar el-Machreq—Université Saint-Joseph, Institut d'Études Islamo-Chrétiennes, pp. 33–44.
- Pénicaud, Manoël. 2020. *Louis Massignon. Le "catholique musulman"*. Paris: Bayard.
- Pleșu, Andrei. 2000. Prefață (1996). In *André Scrima, Timpul Rugului Aprins. Maestrul spiritual în tradiția răsăriteană*. Edited by Anca Manolescu. Bucharest: Humanitas.
- Rocalve, Pierre. 1993. *Louis Massignon et l'Islam*. Place et rôle de l'islam et de l'islamologie dans la vie et l'œuvre de Louis Massignon. Books Openedition. Damas: Presse de L'institut Français du Proche-Orient.
- Scrima, André. 1977–1978. *Expérience Spirituelle et son Langage. La Tradition Chrétienne*. Unpublished course in French, "André Scrima" Archives. Romanian Translation: Scrima 2008. Bucharest: New Europe College, pp. 20–193.
- Scrima, André. 1980. Jérusalem: Réflexions sur une cité "unique et universelle" pour les religions monothéistes. *Concilium* 155: 117–29, Unpublished longue version in "André Scrima" Archives, New Europe College, Bucharest. Romanian Translation: Scrima 2004, pp. 29–72.
- Scrima, André. 2000. *Timpul Rugului Aprins: Maestrul Spiritual în Tradiția Răsăriteană (1996)*. Edited by Anca Manolescu. Bucharest: Humanitas.
- Scrima, André. 2004. *Teme Ecumenice*. Edited by Anca Manolescu. Bucharest: Humanitas.
- Scrima, André. 2005a. Une Faculté de Sciences Religieuses dans l'espace humain et culturel du Liban et du Proche-Orient (1978). In *Intersignes. À la Mémoire du Père André Scrima*. Textes rassemblés et présentés par le Père Augustin Dupré la Tour et le Docteur Hisham Nashabé. Beyrouth: Dar el-Machreq—Université Saint-Joseph, Institut d'Études Islamo-Chrétiennes, pp. 15–32, Romanian translation: Scrima 2004, pp. 161–88.
- Scrima, André. 2005b. Le Liban introuvable. Le Liban dans son histoire et ses histoires (1976). In *Intersignes. À la Mémoire du Père André Scrima*. Textes rassemblés et présentés par le Père Augustin Dupré la Tour et le Docteur Hisham Nashabé. Beyrouth: Dar el-Machreq—Université Saint-Joseph, Institut d'Études Islamo-Chrétiennes, pp. 55–66.
- Scrima, André. 2005c. Réaction au texte du P. Moingt sur "Religions de Salut et Salut en Jésus-Christ" (1985). In *Intersignes. À la Mémoire du Père André Scrima*. Textes rassemblés et présentés par le Père Augustin Dupré la Tour et le Docteur Hisham Nashabé. Beyrouth: Dar el-Machreq—Université Saint-Joseph, Institut d'Études Islamo-Chrétiennes, pp. 165–74, Romanian Translation: Scrima 2004, pp. 88–103.
- Scrima, André. 2008. *Experiența Spirituală și Limbajele ei*. Edited by Anca Manolescu. in collaboration with Radu Bercea. Bucharest: Humanitas.
- Scrima, André. 2017. *L'Évangile de Jean. Un Commentaire*. Traduction de Marcel Pirard et Anca Vasiliu, introduction par Anca Vasiliu. Paris: Cerf.
- Sibișan, Cristian. 2017. *Theanthropologie—Grundzüge der Anthropologie und Christologie André Scrimas*. Hamburg: Verlag Dr. Kovač.
- Siddiqui, Mona. 2015. *Hospitality and Islam. Welcoming in God's Name*. New Haven and London: Yale University Press.
- Stroumsa, G. Guy. 2017. *Religions d'Abraham. Histoires Croisées*. Genève: Labor et Fides.
- Tătaru-Cazaban, Bogdan. 2020. The Inner Dimension of the Orthodox Tradition and the Traditionalism according to André Scrima's Hermeneutics. *Review of Ecumenical Studies* 12: 485–96. [\[CrossRef\]](#)
- Tătaru-Cazaban, Bogdan, and Miruna Tătaru-Cazaban. 2019. L'Unité des chrétiens et son langage. Fragments d'un *Journal* orthodoxe du Concile Vatican II. In *André Scrima: Expérience Spirituelle et Langage Théologique*. Edited by Daniela Dumbravă and Bogdan Tătaru-Cazaban. *Orientalia Christiana Analecta* 306. Roma: Edizioni Orientalia Christiana, pp. 123–40.
- Tofan, Ioan Alexandru. 2019. *André Scrima și Fizionomia Experienței Spirituale*. Bucharest: Humanitas.
- Tofan, Ioan Alexandru. 2021. *André Scrima, un "Gentleman Creștin". Portret Biografic*. Bucharest: Humanitas.
- Vasiliu, Anca. 2004. André Scrima, l'étranger. *Contacts* 207: 211–22.

Vasiliu, Anca. 2010. André Scrima: La vie philosophique d'un moine pèlerin contemporain (équivocité et paradoxe du témoignage). In *Vie Philosophique et Vies de Philosophes*. Textes réunis et présentés par Bruno Clément et Christian Trottmann. Paris: Sens & Tonka, pp. 95–106.

Vasiliu, Anca. 2017. Evocation. In *L'Évangile de Jean. Un Commentaire*. Edited by André Scrima. Paris: Cerf, pp. 7–10.