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***A PSYCHO-SOCIOLOGICAL OVERVIEW OF RELIGIOUS LIFE IN
ROMANIA***

Abstract: The thesis of this research project is that, despite the disappearance of the Communist and secular policy of implementing an atheistic worldview and life, neither the Communist regime, nor the post-socialist Romania have led to a low attendance of religion, as it supports the rational choice theory of religion (TARR), but to a new revival of it. This logic of revival manifests itself especially among younger generations who have been socialized in the new world-a-lifetime post-socialist and takes the form of different beliefs. But this is not so problematic in the last decade as it is the process of secularization that every religion and denomination has to confront. In the post-Communist era, the established church and all other denominations, despite the consolidated political power, did not gain control of the life of the young Romanian generation. In the context of the emergence of a new secular culture that structures the practices and the subjectivities of the younger generations, religious institutions articulate different strategies of counter-secularization and that makes the religious pluralistic dialogue in Romania special.

Keywords: *secularization, church, state, revival, denomination, atheism, religious identity, pluralism, interaction.*

INTRODUCTION

The paper will distinguish between the mere diversity of religious faiths and religious pluralism as a normative ideal but we'll see that this "normative ideal" is also brought from outside of Romania. It is not a concept that emerged from Romanian religious diversity, but still, at some point it was needed due to the situation that emerged in Romania after its borders were open for everyone, after

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December 1989. The idea of religious pluralism becomes a reality when adherents of different faith traditions are free to express their beliefs in ways that uphold the peace and well-being—the common good—of society. Some might say that pluralism is something that is achieved rather than simply given, others that achieving such pluralism entails participating in the very “idea of America” (the United States was founded on the constitutional ideals of religious freedom, liberty and justice for all). But we can all agree that what is best for America doesn’t have to be good also for other countries, as they have completely and totally different traditions, concepts and attitudes.

There are louder and louder voices that speak about pluralism in Romania, but the meaning that this pluralism got in America or even in West Europe doesn’t seem to fit into the Romanian mind and life perception. *For many Americans, however, religious pluralism is not a vision that brings us together but one that tears us apart*¹. In Romania, the religious pluralism has to face a different, stronger believer and a patient people, for its population, Orthodox in majority, believes both in a real, redeemed and full of rewards after-life and also in a way to receive with indulgence the mistakes of others, helping them to overcome them, but guarding themselves not to be compromised in the process of helping them get over the mistakes they made.

Talking about the different understandings of religious pluralism, we can find nowadays opinions from a larger, broader view of it, e.g. Diana Eck stated in her book based on G. Clinton’s words “Religious pluralism in our nation is bringing us together in new and powerful ways” that “our society becomes stronger as each group’s religious freedom is exercised and as people like the Sikhs articulate principles like equality and freedom in their own voice and in their own key”². How this “religious pluralistic movement” did work it out for Romanian and where was the point they have to meet it? It will be one of the sociological questions I will try to answer.

1. A STATE OF DENIAL

As many historians would like to speak about the birth of Romanian, Romanians came to life as a nation and as Christians at the same time. This was possible because the birth of the Romanians (sec. I-II), when the Roman army moved in and blended with the indigenous Dacians, was also the time when two of Jesus Christ’s apostles, St. Paul and St. Andrew, came to the Dacian territories, in the South-east (Dobrogea), and Christianized this people. They stood on the Greek

¹ Diana L. Eck, *A New Religious America. How a “Christian Country” Has Become the World’s Most Religiously Diverse Nation* (San Francisco: Harper, 2001), 7.

² Ibid.

(Orthodox) side of Christianity after the Great Schism (1054). So, Romanians consider themselves as Christians and Orthodox since ever and, during the past two millennia, nothing changed. This is the reason that Romanians do not have a date for their baptism, as all other nations have (e.g. Russians, Hungarians, Bulgarians). This is not the place to bring into discussion the proofs for that, for we don't have even a case to contest the Orthodoxy of Romanians and this is not the main point of this paper.

For its position and Orthodox faith, Romanian people was always threatened to be wiped from this land that was “an island/enclave of Orthodoxy in an ocean of Catholicism”; “even in the nineteenth century, many wanted for Romanians to disappear. But Romanians refused to disappear”, said the American historian Larry Watts³.

Romanians, along with their national established Church (i.e. the Christian Orthodox Church), were not at all prepared to face this kind of “losing its flock, its believers” movement that started along with the December 1989 Revolution. Why is that? Well, although before 1989 Romania was under a socialist system, nevertheless the Orthodox Christian Church was – maybe not encouraged and many times we can say it was even persecuted for its priests were imprisoned for political reasons – but, at least, despite of the many persecutions against the Church, the faith was however tolerated by the Communist state. We will see in the next chapter why this happened. At that point, the faith of the people and of the Orthodox in particular became stronger.

After the Revolution from 1989 and along with the opening of the borders a state of denial was watering down the very meanings that till then make them stronger believers. So, what was happening with the Ceaușescu Communist regime before 1989 is now happening with the established religion in Romania. If at that time Ceaușescu was afraid to lose the population's favor and respect and tried, by all the means a dictator has, to reduce other's influences over population to silence, nowadays another regime took its place and make Romanians face the same problem.

1.1 Demography and sociology of Romanian Religion in the beginning of Romania as an independent State (1859)

On July 12, 1859, the political leader of the new Romania – at that time called “The United Principates of Romania” –, Alexandru Ioan Cuza, signed the Royal Ordinance no. 276 establishing the Central Statistical Office Administration, marking the creation of official statistics in Romania. This act was made after his

³ Larry Watts, *Ferește-mă, Doamne, de prietenii. Războiul clandestin al blocului sovietic cu România* (București: Ed. RAO, 2011).

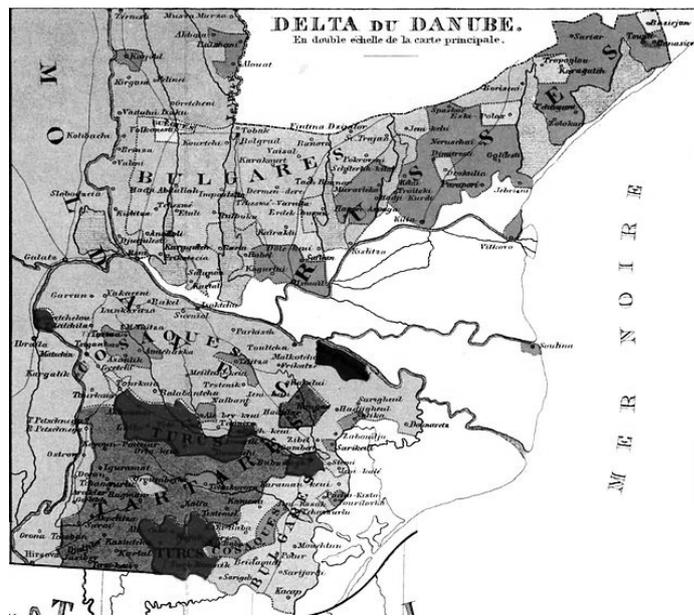
success in uniting the Principalities of Moldavia and Wallachia, on January 24-th, 1859. From that moment, Romania has had at Bucharest the Central Statistical Service led by Dionysius Pop Martian and, at Iași, the Department of Statistics of Moldova, led by Ion Ionescu from Brad. At that point, our first official census began, in 1859-1860, with an unprecedented data, that found out the religious reality of Romania at its beginning as a legal state. In spite of the precarious conditions of this first census (with an amount of only 500 enumerators), its work was successfully completed, the results being presented on 25-th of June 1860 for Wallachia, and in the Summer of 1861, for Moldova. They provided to the government of Prince Alexandru Ioan Cuza significant information regarding the population by sex, marital status, age and infirmity, by nationality and religious, social and media category, by professions and so on, in an arrangement by counties, districts and cities.



Since 1860 until now we had 11 other census that reported a very stable situation in the segment of Orthodox population in the country (**Figure 1**). In 1930, it seems that 31.1% of the population of Transylvania was Greek Catholic and 27.8% was Orthodox. In Crișana-Maramureș, 36.8% of the population was Orthodox and 25.2% Greek Catholic; in Banat, 56.1% were Orthodox and 3.6% Greek Catholic.

The province Dobrogea was not included to Romania until 1878, but its situation is very special in many aspects. That situation is due to the fact that, for Romanians, this region is the cradle of Christianity and Orthodoxy; here, in the year 400 about 14 episcopates were reported, and also from here some official

delegates attended the first four ecumenical councils (4-5th centuries). Even though here we will find the majority being Orthodox, we can also find the most diverse religious presence that came with a diverse ethnicity (see **Figure 2**).



Any census of this area will have no relevance since any political regime that had it under its command (4th-7th century under Barbarians, from 602 under Byzantine Empire, in 681 it became a part of the First Bulgarian Empire; than the Mongol domination and, again, the Byzantine, Bulgarian Empire; between 1352 and 1359, under Tatars, Turks came in 1420 and so on)⁴ removed by any means parts of its inhabitants.

1.2 Religion under the monarchy of Romania (1851 - 1947)

After the abdication of Alexandru Ioan Cuza, in February 1866, the politicians of the time decided to bring a foreign prince on the throne, within a royal house from West. This measure supposed to end the disputes on reign between the old aristocratic families, all related, and also to ensure external prestige for the Principality of Romania.

⁴ See more about Dobrogea in: Valentin Ciorbea, edit, *Dobrogea 1878-2008. Orizonturi deschise de mandatul european* (Constanța Ex Ponto, 2008). And also: C. Brătescu, I. Georgescu, coord., *Dobrogea (1878-1928): Cincizeci de ani de viață românească* (Constanța Ex. Ponto, 2003).

Under the first King of Romania, Carol I, Prince of Hohenzollern-Sigmaringen, on his full name Karl Eitel Friedrich Ludwig von Hohenzollern-Sigmaringen Zephyrinus (born April 20, 1839, Sigmaringen - died October 10, 1914, Sinaia), coronate on 10-th of May 1866 as Principe and on 10-th of May 1881 as King, when he also declared Romania a Kingdom, Romania received its first Constitution (29 June 1866) and had its religion mentioned only in passing. But article 82 of the Constitution put it in a way that everybody could understand that Orthodoxy was strongly encouraged; "His Majesty descendants will be raised in the Orthodox religion of the East"⁵.

We may add here that this was undoubtedly the pledge I've been talking about especially since the wives of the Roman Catholic Romanian kings were Protestant queens and this certainly led to many discussions and conflicts in the royal house, but nevertheless they obeyed the religion of their new people. On top of all that, maybe you will see these conflicts within the royal house as a domestic disagreement that could be peacefully negotiated, but it was not only that. We have to know that, for a Catholic, in order to marry a Protestant, especially for a king, a blessing from the Pope was required and, in all cases, he gave that with an irrefutable condition: his children were to be baptized in the Catholic faith. The Pope had knowledge about the Romanian law, stood it and did nothing to agree with that. "Anxious, Prince Charles gave up waiting. With great difficulty they found a chaplain who agreed to officiate and Roman Catholic ceremony, in addition to the protest blessing. In order to satisfy the Romanians, even the day he returned to Bucharest, the couple made their first trip to the Metropolitan, to obtain the blessing of the head of the Orthodox Church in Romania too"⁶. For King Ferdinand, the situation was even worse, since he was excommunicated, in a particular understanding of it, called "The little excommunication" (meaning temporarily stopping a Catholic to receive the Holy Communion) that was not removed until his death. This kind of story happened for the next kings also.

We have to know that the Orthodoxy was not only a recognized religion for these foreign kings of Romania, but one that suited them and they became so passionate about this deep faith that, after they were banished from Romania with their families, they stood Orthodox; they even went to a monastery becoming known as "Princess and nun". Lady Ileana, Queen Maria's daughter became Mother Alexandra in a congregation of "the Protection of the Theotokos" Monastery in the village of Bussy-en-Othe, France and then moved to America and founded the Orthodox Monastery of the Transfiguration in Ellwood City,

⁵ See Cristina Diac, "Catholic kings, queens Protestant, Orthodox Children," 2008, accessed July 15, 2014, http://www.historia.ro/exclusiv_web/general/articol/regi-catolici-regine-protostante-copii-ortodoc-i.

⁶ Ibid.

Pennsylvania – bringing this faith there as a missionary nun. So, these additional explanations should give us an idea of what the recognized and constitutionally legalized Orthodox faith in Romania meant from the beginning. This was the first English language Orthodox monastery in North America.

1.3 Ceaușescu's Communist regime and religion (1948-1989)

The study of the relationship between Church and State in the postwar period and of the repression directed against the clergy is a difficult undertaking, given the many obstacles that a researcher must face in an attempt to reach the relevant documents. In general, ecclesiastical archives remain inaccessible to all historians and the archives of the State Secretariat for Religious Denominations only recently opened for a significant number of researchers. Even so we don't know for sure if the data are accurate because the Communist regime was always making all up.

The situation of the religious life of Romanian people changed after 1945, when the Prime Minister of the first Communist Party and head of the State, Petru Groza (1884 - 1958), intervened in the religious life of Romania as a deputy in the Synod and in the Congress of the Romanian Orthodox Church (from 1911), a position which would later make him invaluable to a Romanian Communist Party (PCR) that was campaigning to attract the support of the Eastern Orthodox Christians who constituted the most numerous religious group of the nation⁷. On February 10, 1947, Romania signed the Treaty of Peace with the Allied and the Associated Powers. From that moment, Romania fell under the power and the influence of the Soviet Union. Starting with 1945, almost 19 denominations lost their proprieties and many even the worship churches; since that time, the Romanian Communist Party began a campaign of secularization, trying to turn the country into an atheist state.

The practices of the Romanian Communist regime originated in the Leninist-Stalinist model of social engineering⁸. The Communist dogma claimed to be infallible: people could possibly be wrong, but the Party was omniscient. Supremacy ideology was the key to understanding the system. The first generation of Communists in power in Romania fervently embraced the Bolshevik myths: the myth of the revolution, the party of the working class, the classless society. To achieve these goals presumed to be noble, Romanian Communists considered that it was allowed to use the most abject means.

⁷ ***, "Petru Groza of Romania Dies; Chief of State of Red Regime," *The New York Times* January 8, 1958, ProQuest Historical Newspapers - *The New York Times* (1851-2002), 47.

⁸ Martin Malia, *The Soviet Tragedy. A History of Socialism in Russia* (New-York: Free Press, 1994), 136-137.

First of all, shortly after 1945, religious education came under the control of the Communist authorities. A Department of Religious Cults, a government body dealing with religious matters, pre-existing the Communists, continued to exist, but it was transformed into a government agency dealing with the tight control over the religious affairs in the country. The National Security had included a special department for the supervision of religious life, trying to control all the religious activities within Romania.

Religious denominations were persecuted without mercy. Many of them were seen as obscure, harmful and dangerous for the country, so they were to be removed from the social stage of Romanian life. For example, the Greek Catholic Church was suppressed in 1948⁹, and the Roman Catholic Church was pushed to the edge of legality because the State declaimed the Pact with Vatican (signed in 1927) that established the terms for the Roman Catholic Church was of expressing itself in public. After this declaim only the Romanian State was entitle to change its statute; till then the Pope was the one who could create / dissolve / modify the dioceses and the one to appoint the bishops. The Orthodox Church, devoid of moral and material support from outside, could easily be brought under the control of the totalitarian power. Many priests were arrested, convicted, imprisoned and even killed. The regime also led a systematic and intense battle against the Protestant churches and the Evangelical congregations. The battle was to control the soul and mind of the people. Religion, as Marx called it – “the opium for the people” – had to be discredited and abolished. In the prospect of building a Communist society, religion had to disappear, like a blasphemous “private property” of capitalism. This came with the Marxist view about freedom of opinion. For the Communist regime, it was almost the same if you have one or other religious belief; all looked the same and there was a kind of threatening for the position of the government (dictator) to put somebody – even God – above him who consider himself to be the „beloved of them all”, „the hero among heroes” and so on¹⁰.

Regarding the Romanian Greek-Catholic Church, with a majority in Transylvania, where it was born, its breaking was just another goal of the Communist regime. Eliminating and destroying the opposition and the democratic institutions¹¹ were the perfect tools for the Communists to eliminate voices that

⁹ Ioan-Marius Bucur, *Din istoria Bisericii Greco-Catolice Române (1918-1953)* (Cluj-Napoca: Ed. Accent, 2003).

¹⁰ Appellations extracted from a poem to the dictator: http://www.ceausescu.org/ceausescu_media/pcr.html (accessed July 15, 2014).

¹¹ See also: Cristina Păiușan, Radu Ciuceanu (editors), *Biserica Ortodoxă Română sub regimul comunist 1945-1958 [Romanian Orthodox Church under the Communist Regime 1945-1958]*, vol. 1, INST (București, 2001); Olivier Gillet, *Religie și naționalism*.

could discredit or diminish the credibility and popularity among the people. For such reasons, they committed crimes like restriction of religious liberty, infiltration into the clergy of the political police, persecution of the Greek Catholic Church, the arrest and imprisonment of the recalcitrant priests, secularization campaigns, restricting the influence of the Church and even the destruction of the places of worship¹². Another interesting act against religious freedom took place in 1948. It is known that, at the order of Moscow, the Communist regime forcibly integrated the Greek Catholic Church within the Orthodox Church. So, from these political acts, we cannot speak about State-Church separation before December 1989, as we cannot speak after it also.

But this “pact with the devil” – the way population perceived the relation between the Communist regime and the Orthodox Church – is justified today by some as the only way to save what was to be rescued; indeed, the churches were filled with believers during those 45 years of Communism and that was only because in reality the Orthodoxy did not give up on people at all, even if it had to display something else.

Despite of all that, there were certain movements against the atheistic regime. Movements like the Romanian Christian Committee for the Defense of Religious Liberty and Conscience (ALRC) led to the popular rebellion in December 1989, asking for their rights to religious free expression.

2. THE NEW PLURALISTIC ERA IN THE ROMANIAN RELIGIOUS LIFE

Because of the attitude of the Communist regime towards religion and the Orthodox Church, the faith was to be down-watering, the religious sentiment had to be completely vanished and churches were to be irremediably discredited by being transformed into obedient tools of the state. Instead, it was otherwise; there was faith and a strong belief in God. Some of the first acts of political attitude after December 1989 headed towards giving up the religious monopole that the Christian Orthodox Church had at that time. In April 1990, a new decree-law was

Ideologia Bisericii Ortodoxe Române sub regimul comunist [Religion and nationalism. The ideology of the Romanian Orthodox Church under Communism], (București: Ed. Compania, 2001); Cristian Vasile, *Biserica Ortodoxă Română în primul deceniu comunist [Romanian Orthodox Church in the First Decade of Communism]*, (București: Curtea Veche, 2005).

¹² See Ștefan Iloaie, Paul Caravia, Virgil Constantinescu, *Mărturisitori de după gratii. Slujitori ai Bisericii în temnițele comuniste [Confessors of Jail. Ministers of the Church in Communist Prisons]*, (Cluj-Napoca: Editura Renașterea, 1995); Paul Caravia, Virgiliu Constantinescu, Flori Stănescu, *Biserica întemnițată. România, 1944-1989 [The Imprisoned Church. Romania, 1944-1989]*, INST (București, 1998).

issued by the head of the state, Iliescu Ion at that time, through which the Romanian Church United with Rome (the Greek-Catholic Church) was officially recognized; until then it did not have this public state.

Another political act in favoring the religious life in Romania was the reorganization of religious education. The first step was the introduction of religious education in public schools for all pre-university levels. Religion was an optional discipline, to be attended by teenagers belonging to the Church or by those who wished. Those who are atheists or do not want to study religion, can skip this matter. In 1995, a new article (9) was added in order to have religious education obligatory in public schools, optional being only choosing the denomination.

2.1 Demography and sociology

Before talking about the psychological aspects of pluralism, first let's take a look on the movement towards religious pluralism in Romania. Besides the Orthodox Church, the most persecuted religion – not only in Romania, but in the whole world – was Judaism. The Jewish communities on what would later become Romanian territory were attested as early as the 2nd century AD, at a time when the Roman Empire had established its rule over Dacia. A decree of the Roman emperor (397) granted protection to the Dacian Jews and their synagogues (“Cod. Theod. de Jud.” xvi. 8)¹³. Due to their commercial abilities, they were positioned along the Black Sea shore, mostly in Dobrogea. Even if they were poor in number, they were always present in the history of Romania. Minimal until the 18th century, the size of the Jewish population increased after around 1850, and more especially after the establishment of Greater Romania, in the aftermath of World War I. A diverse community, albeit an overwhelmingly urban one, Jews were the target of religious persecution and racism in Romanian society – from the late-19th century debate over the “Jewish Question” and over the Jewish residents' right to citizenship, to the genocide carried out in the lands of Romania as part of the Holocaust¹⁴, but these were rather issues of nationality, acts of war and, in particular, acts of personal vendetta by John C. Brătianu, nominally Liberal, the first anti-Semite of the modern type in Romania. He was called to the premiership in 1866, after the abdication of Al. I. Cuza, and granted the Romanian citizenship exclusively to Christians. Jews were expelled from the country. A number of such Jews, who failed to prove their Romanian birth, were forced to cross the Danube, and when Turkey refused to receive them, they were thrown into the river and drowned. Almost every country in Europe was shocked at these barbarities.

¹³ Gotthard Deutsch, D.M. Hermalin and Joseph Jacobs, “Jews in Rumania”, 1905, accessed July 15, 2014, <http://www.jewishencyclopedia.com/articles/12939-rumania>.

¹⁴ Ibid.

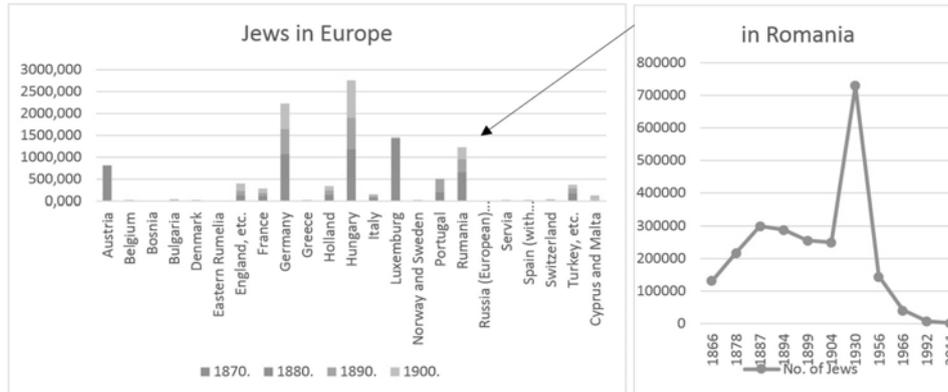


Figure 3: The situation of Jews in Europe and Romania along history

During the Russo-Turkish War (1769-74), the Jews of Romania had to endure great hardships. They were massacred and robbed in almost every town and village in the country. When peace was at last restored both princes, Alexander Mavrocordatos of Moldavia and Nicholas Mavrogheni of Wallachia, pledged their special protection to the Jews, whose condition remained favorable until 1787, when the Janizaries, on one side, and the Russians, on the other, invaded Romania and proceeded to butchering the Jews. But the biggest action against the Jews in Romania was done during John Antonescu's government, when the *Legion of the Archangel Michael*, called the *Legionary Movement* – founded in the interwar Romania, on 24-th of June 1927, by Corneliu Codreanu, on the model of Nazi SA and SS organizations, with a mystical-religious character, violently anti-Communist, anti-Semitic and anti-Masonic – accomplished the order of “cleansing of the land”, by the extermination of the Jews in Bessarabia and Bukovina and the deportation of the rest, again not by a national disapproval of Jews, but for their own pleasure.

Statistically, according to the official statistics of 1878, there were 218,304 Jews in Romania. The excess of births over deaths from 1878 to 1894 being 70,408, the number of Jews at the end of 1894 ought to have been 288,712. But the census of December, same year, showed only 243,225, with 45,487 less than the number expected. In 1904 it was estimated that the number of Jews who were living in Romania did not exceed 250,000. Now, there are 3,519 Jews, living in good understanding with the Romanians and all the other religions of Romania.

Another indigenous faith is Islam. Muslims kept on coming and moving here for almost five centuries (approx. 1418-1878), especially in Dobrogea county,

where it was established an Ottoman administration, considering the potential of Dobrogea for new Muslim colonization. Because of that, in Dobrogea, there is a big religious and ethnic diversity: Muslims and Christians, indigenous and settlers. The last Ottomans established groups including deported people (*sürgün*) and some who voluntarily settled here, attracted by the opportunities of trade: Italian, Ragusa (with communities in Silistra, Varna, Babadag) and Jews. So, Muslims and Jews came together to this region, in the 15th century. Most part of the Muslims, above 85 %, had lived in Dobrogea along with the indigenous population for almost 700 years, in good understanding and mutual help, their interests being represented according to the Law of Religions by the *Muftiyat* of the Muslim Cult of Romania. They are represented in the Parliament by *the Democratic Union of Turkish-Muslim Tartars in Romania*. Nowadays, there are approx. 80 mosques in Romania.

The true challenge of religious pluralism occurred after the 16th century, when the Reformation took place in Europe and Romania was also a place for this kind of refugees. The Greek-Catholic (United with Rome) Church was born in the eighteenth century and contributed to the Romanian people's becoming a modern nation.

The "Romanian Evangelical Awakening" began at the end of the nineteenth century, through the Baptist movement, and it developed in the first half of the twentieth century¹⁵. The first Protestant denomination that came to Romania was the Reformation. During the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, the Protestants in Transylvania frequently tried to convert Romanians to Protestantism. The conversion was not without success, given the existence, mentioned in the documents, of many Protestant pastors, led by two Romanian bishops, Paul Tordas followed by his son, Michael. During the Reformation, in the 16-th century, there were three churches, three Protestant denominations. These are: the Evangelical Lutheran Church, the Reformed Church and the Anabaptist Church.

The Reformed Church spread in Europe during the life of Martin Luther and so it arrived to Transylvania in 1519. The Diet (Parliament) of Hungary banned in 1526 the promotion of the ideas of the Protestants and took drastic measures against protesters, but the military defeat by the Turks, at Mohacs, and the Hungarian king's death on the battlefield made these measures ineffective. Saxon Protestantism spreads rapidly, and, in 1533, Johannes Honnterus, a rich and cultured citizen of Braşov, organizes the Evangelical Lutheran church in Transylvania. This was relatively easy to spread because they were using the methods that the Orthodox Church already had – developing schools within churches, printing books, making out of Brasov a leading cultural center. Their target was simple people, oppressed peasants, the minority of Transylvanian

¹⁵ Mihail Sevastos (1892 –1967). In *Adevărul*, 21 November 1931.

Saxons. Unlike the Transylvanian Saxons who were followers of the ideas of Luther, the great majority of Hungarians became followers of John Calvin. In time, tensions emerged between the branches of the Lutheran and the Calvinist Protestant Church in Transylvania. In 1564, that led to their separation, during the Synod of Aiud. Thus appeared the Reformed Diocese of Transylvania, which included members of the Hungarian followers of John Calvin's theology. A small part of the Hungarian Lutherans decided to remain as such.

Soon, these denominations started proselytizing among Romanians. In order to have their attention, the Lutherans and the Reformed translated books and catechisms into Romanian, consecrated priests and bishops. Many Romanians used these catechisms not for ministry, but for education and, with their use, they also received the Protestant teachings. Romanian Reformed churches continued to exist for some time in Transylvania but eventually disappeared, due to the fact that their members were assimilated into the Hungarian communities. Today, there are no more Romanians in Transylvania as members of the Reformed Church.

Along with the Lutherans and the Reformed, the Anabaptist Church also came. This is a radical branch of Reformation, which, in addition to the principles introduced by Luther and Calvin, reintroduced the adult baptism also, abolished the baptism of the infants, promoted nonviolence and religious freedom. The early Anabaptists appeared in Transylvania, during the time of Principe Gabor Bethlen, who colonized, in 1622, the Lower Vințu¹⁶, now called Alba County. Anabaptists remained in Transylvania until the 18th century, when they were subjected to persecution by the Habsburg authorities and the Catholic Jesuit monks and were forced to immigrate to Russia, in 1782; Alexa Popovici added that they did not have as enemies only the Catholic Church but even by the “compatriots” of the Reform, the Lutherans and the Reformed¹⁷.

The importance of the Anabaptist movement, as a subject of research, results from the fact that they influenced the history of Christianity in our country, where Anabaptists tend to Unitarianism is even clearer by the fact that the promoter of Unitarianism in Transylvania, Francis David, was also the promoter of the Anabaptists. It is interesting to know that he followed an interesting route: he was,

¹⁶ Paul Chiș, “Bisericile Protestante în spațiul românesc. Scurt istoric,” *Clujul Evanghelic*, June 19, 2009. Accessed July 15, 2014, <http://clujulevanghelic.ro/2009/06/19/bisericile-protestante-in-spatiul-romanesc-scurt-istoric-paul-chis>. Instead of this, Alexa Popovici, in *Istoria Anabapțiștilor din România 1527-1768* (Chicago: Editura Bisericii Baptiste Române, 1976), shows that the Anabaptists came to Romania in 1527.

¹⁷ Lăpușean Emanuel-Zaharia, “Review of Alexa Popovici, 1976. *Istoria Anabapțiștilor din România 1527-1768*, 1976,” 2012, accessed July 15, 2014, <http://istoriceevanghelic.ro/2012/05/04/lapusean-emanuel-recenzie-alexa-popovici-istoria-anabaptilor-din-romania/>.

in order, Catholic, Lutheran and then Calvinist, before getting to these other two. What helped Unitarianism – and all other Protestant denominations – spread into the Principality of Transylvania was the *Protocol from Turda* (1568), that gave freedom of expression to every religion within. All 18 religious confessions were given official recognition. Since 1700, the Unitarian Church has had 125 parishes and in 1948 the Uniate Church was compelled to merge with the Orthodox Church; the Uniate clergy who refused to comply faced arrest. Since 2006, there have been only 110 Unitarian priests and 141 places of worship in Romania¹⁸.

Roman Catholicism in Romania. The oldest traces of Roman Catholic activities on present-day Romanian territory were recorded also in Transylvania, in connection to the extension of the Magyar rule and the region's integration into the Kingdom of Hungary, in the 16th century. Throughout the history, there were many attempts to impose this faith to the Romanian population, but it succeeded only briefly and in very few localities. Some of the oldest attempts were when Pope Gregory IX (1227-1241) established the Diocese Milcovia. A Dominican monk, Theodoric, was appointed as its first bishop but it lasted only for 14 years, because of the Tartar invasion.

The Greek Catholic Church was born in Transylvania, in the late 17th century, through the union with the Roman Catholic Church of a part of the Romanian Orthodox Church, when the Emperor Leopold I of the Habsburg Empire recognize the rights of the four imported religions (Roman Catholic, Lutheran, Calvinist and Unitarian) and promised lands and other goods to the Orthodox priests from Transylvania that would convert to Catholicism.

Johan Gerhard Onken (1800-1884), who founded in 1834 the first Baptist church in Germany, started this new faith also in Romania in 1856-1862.

The Pentecostal faith was adopted by a Baptist couple, Gheorghe and Persida Bradin, in the village Păuliș, in Transylvania, in September 1922. Though it was banned in Transylvania in 1924, the Pentecostal faith moved to Bukovina in 1926; it had a large number of start-ups and it became the largest group of Evangelicals from Romania.

The Romanian Union Conference of Seventh-day Adventists is Romania's seventh-largest religious group. It originated in the 19th century and is divided into six local conferences, standing for and named after some of the country's main historical regions. In 1868-69, Michał Belina-Czechowski, a former Roman Catholic priest who had embraced Adventism in the United States, arrived at Pitești and introduced Seventh-day Adventist doctrines into Romania.

¹⁸ Marius Vasileanu, "Culte din România: Biserica Unitariană," *Adevărul*, May 25, 2006, accessed July 15, 2014, <http://www.hotnews.ro/stiri-arhiva-1177299-culte-din-romania-biserica-unitariana.htm>.

Jehovah’s Witnesses began to operate in Romania in 1911, but the first coordination office was opened in Cluj in 1920, when a member offered his house as house of prayer.

An interesting aspect of the new Protestant movement in Romania was the Christian Evangelic Church that, unlike all other denominations, started within the Orthodox Church, when two former Orthodox theologians, Teodor Popescu (priest in Bucharest) and Dumitru Cornilescu switched to Evangelism, in 1920-1924. At the request of the authorities to be distinguished from the fellow Christians, in 1927, the new Christian movement was called “Christians by Scripture” and were officially organized as an association. Prohibited during the war, along with the “Evangelical”, they were allowed, in 1946, to resume work, and, after December 1989, the “General Conference of the representatives of the churches”, held in Bucharest (27 January 1990), decided the separation of the “Christian Worship Gospel” and its functioning as an independent cult, under the name “Romanian Evangelical Church”¹⁹.

Scientology is one of the most controversial religious movements of our days. Since 1954, when the first church of Scientology was founded by Ron Hubbard in Los Angeles, California, this new theosophical-therapeutic vision also arrived in Romania, but it has very few members.

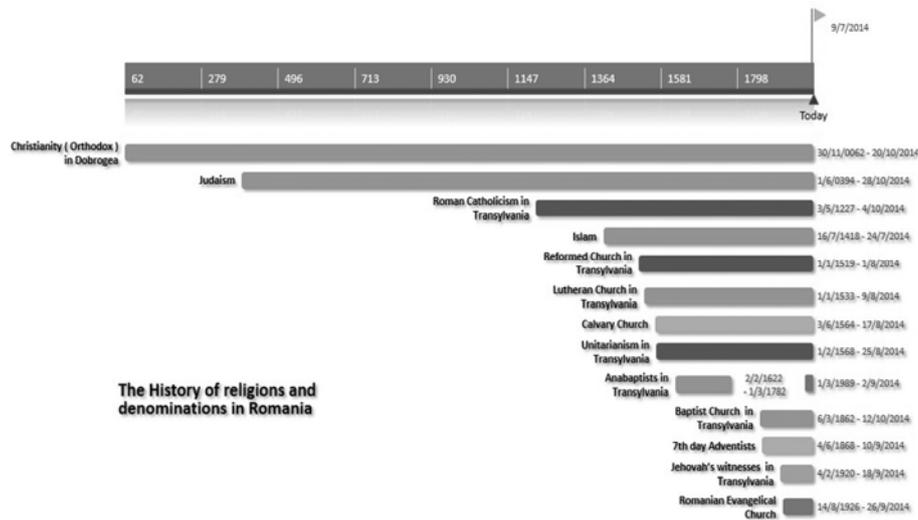


Figure 4. The immigration of the new religions and denominations, in history

¹⁹ “Evangelical Church in Romania,” accessed July 15, 2014, <http://istoriceevanghelica.ro/2009/07/04/biserica-evanghelica-romana/>.

2.2 Pluralism, freedom of meeting the “otherness”

When you are seeing yourself as an open-minded people, who can embrace everybody in this world with their traditions and religions, then we'll end up opening the Pandora's box with every consequence that follows. And this is what happens; following the New World's liberal and democratic path, Romania opens its windows to every influence that came, not being aware of the mistakes that this world has already done. Along with opening the borders, Romanian had also to open its mind.

Accepting someone else's opinion and belief and respecting it as a valid one, with the same right to be expressed as yours, was the new, attractive way of capitalistic progress.

What are the bad elements that came out from Pandora's box after December 1989? Wave after wave of so-called liberation movements of the locked minds; first, it was the secular post-modern movement. Then, other movements followed, like *Zeitgeist Movement Romania* or *Mission Astral Romania*. And a more recent one, the *Secular-Humanist Association in Romania (ASUR)* is trying now (2014) not only to remove religious education from public schools, but also to put it under civil, non-religious intervention and control. They claim that in this way we cannot fall victims of any religious extremism, misbelief and discrimination of any kind. This is the new movement against religion in general that sets upon the public and civil belief that we have to protect ourselves by law from any mistakes that we might have done; there has to be religious education without any religion! Hence, we are back to Marx and Nietzsche's conception about religion, that religion is bad for the people because it infects us with its distorted views about this world as God's creation, that has to be purified from sin. But this concept of salvation of the world brought us to wars, to destruction, to massive killing and to slavery. We have to get released from religion, so we have to speak only about a morality without including any religious concept. And this will be the end of religion, starting from pluralism! Therefore, Romania had to figure it out a way to make it work: keeping both its beliefs and traditions along with pluralism, but to accept this agreement with a minimum damage of the faith.

Despite to all that, the last census conducted in 2011 on a population of 20.121.641 persons, the majority of people expressed their religious affiliation like that:

Figure 5. Religions percentage in Romania

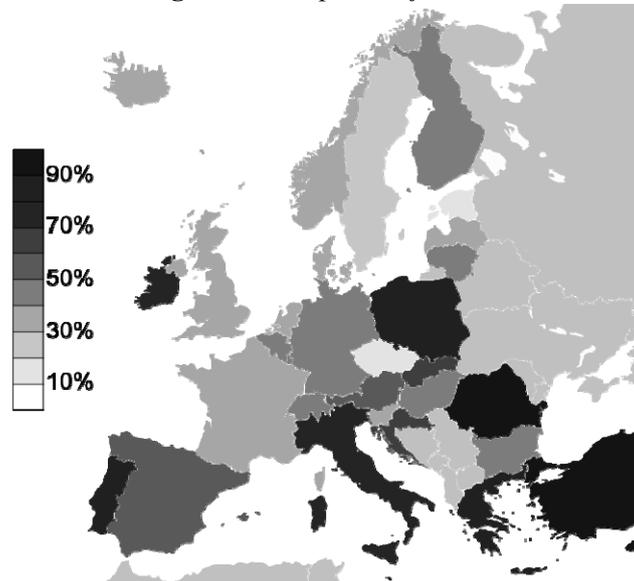
Religion	1866	1930	1992	2002	2011
Percentage	%				
Orthodoxy	42,33	72,59	86,81	86,79	86,45
Orthodoxy (old rite)	?	0,32	0,12	0,18	0,17
Roman Catholicism	1,0	6,83	5,09	4,73	4,62
Reformed		3,94	3,52	3,23	3,19
Baptism	0,7		0,48	0,58	0,60
Pentecostal			0,97	1,50	1,92
7 th Day Adventists	-	0,09	0,34	0,43	0,43
Jehovah`s witness	-	-	-	-	0,26
Greek Catholic	18,86	7,9	0,98	0,88	0,80
Unitarianism	?	0,38	0,34	0,31	0,31
Judaism	?(134,168 persons)	4,19	0,04	0,03	0,02
Muslims	0,03	1,03	0,25	0,31	0,34
NONEs and Atheists	?	0,04	0,11	0,06	0,10
Mans			49,2	48,7	48,65
Women			50,8	51,3	51,4
Under 25 years			42,2	33,2	27,9
Between 25 - 40			19,8	22,1	21,8
Above 40			40	44,7	50,3

3. GOD'S ACTIVE ROLE IN ROMANIA

3.1 Reasons why the majority of Romanians are still religious

First of all, we strongly, deeply believe in God, compared with other regions and countries in Europe. As the Eurobarometer 2005 poll shows in **Figure 6**, more than 75% of those asked by the Eurobarometer 2010 poll expressed a positive "belief in God" in Malta, Turkey, Cyprus, Romania, Greece, and Poland. The 2010 Eurobarometer Poll asked whether the person believed "there is a God", believed "there is some sort of spirit of life force", or "didn't believe there is any sort of spirit, God or life force". For these questions, Romanian had a huge different answer: more than 90% acknowledged God as a Person, and only 7% pointed a Supreme Being, a force or a pantheistic view. That shows that Orthodoxy had a real, vivid effect in the education of the people.

Figure 6. Europe belief in God



3.2 The coexistence of the Church and the state

Why should there be any religion at all in the state or in the civil society? In Romania, there are substantial differences between the denominations, in respect of the advantage that they could get or pretend from the political class. The Orthodox Church, who has now above 86% of the Romanian population as declared members, prove to be the most powerful and influential political actor and, therefore, an indispensable ally for every candidate and political party who sought help and support of any electoral segment. This is not new for Romania or for the world in general, for many states or empires had their political leaders supported by the religious authority. For that reason, the Protestant churches and the new religious denominations which appeared in the 16-th, 19-th and 20-th centuries did not have enough followers to be attractive to politicians and parties and, therefore, rarely played a role in the elections²⁰. But, even if some might maliciously claim that the Orthodox Church did that only for itself, in order to be protected from other denominations²¹, the truth is that the Orthodox church never used its power to overcome other denominations but to empower those who

²⁰ Lavinia Stan, Lucian Turcescu, "Religie, partide si alegeri in Romania postcomunista," *Sfera Politicii* XIV (123-124) (2006): 28.

²¹ As some authors intentionally put it. See, for example, Anca Gorgan, who, by the way, does not reveal her religious identity – "Relația Stat-Biserică în România Postcomunista," *Revista Română de Sociologie* XXIII/1-2 (2012): 142, accessed July 15, 2014, <http://www.revistadesociologie.ro/pdf-uri/nr.1-2-2012/08-AncaG.pdf>.

claimed that would fight for religiousness of the Romanians and for their prosperity as a Christian people, in general (e.g. religious education in public school, access to media for proselytizing, religious holidays etc.). So, it is nothing to be feared about its strong implication in politics.

When the new form of Constitution was shaped in 2013, the representatives of the Romanian Orthodox Patriarchate asked for a reference, in the 1st article, to the role of the Orthodox Church “in building and modernizing the Romanian state”. That is not in any way discriminative against the other religions in Romania, but this “Article proposed for the Constitution, on the role of the Orthodox Church and other denominations in building and modernizing the Romanian state, respects both the historical truth of the major cult and the principle of equality of recognized denominations in Romania”²². That was until now only a tacit contempt of the entire Romanian people, but since a variety of Christian denomination came to this country after 1989 and now they claim not only the liberty of cult expression in the public life, but also that they had an important role in the life of the Romanians, the established church considered that it is time to record its role in a state document. It was not an act of discrimination, as the Seventh-day Adventist Church claimed: “an unnecessary addition, discriminatory and offensive to the other 17 religions and denominations” recognized in Romania. That was a declaration coming from a denomination that had no history within Romania till 1868, as we have seen in chapter 2.

However, the reality of the state-church coexistence has nothing to do with Orthodoxy only, for it acts in the benefit of the Romanian people, in general, and not only for the Orthodox. As an example, one of the latest achievements of the civil religion for the people was that, in the last 5 years, some of the Orthodox holidays – i.e. first and second day of Pentecost, Assumption of the Virgin (2008) and St. Andrew, protector of Romania (2012), along with other days already declared holidays were admitted as state holidays in the Labor Code – rising the free days to 12 – free for all Romanians, with the specification that *persons with other religion than Christianity can take those days off on their own holidays*; so, that is also a display of religious pluralism or mutual understanding that the Orthodox Church shows.

In other public issues that could affect the Romanian people, its traditions and strong beliefs (e.g. homosexuality, same-sex marriage, euthanasia, prostitution, drugs, weapons etc.), even if the Orthodox Church does no longer have ecclesiastical direct involvement in the Parliament, still it uses its public influence

²² Mihaela Stoica, in *Gândul* (02.07.2013), accessed July 15, 2014, <http://www.gandul.info/stiri/bor-biserica-ortodoxa-romana-s-a-nascut-odata-cu-formarea-poporului-roman-adventistii-au-aparut-abia-la-inceputul-secolului-al-xx-lea-11067773>.

and political means to stop any voice or attitude that struggles to alter the traditional mindset of the Romanian people. For that, the Orthodox Church gets support from almost all other denominations and stand together against other *temptations* that support a “*liberal way*” of public life. When the voice of the Church is weak, the mentality of our nation speaks. These voices of the common people, usually spontaneously grouped into street demonstrations, have some influence over the political class due to the democratic elections.

For example, we have an association that stands for gays, lesbians and transsexuals’ rights in Romania (ACCEPT) and they are quite vocal in the last few years, trying to present to the public their liberal views. After three years of public confrontations in the streets of Bucharest, they have now a peaceful Gay Parade. The first one was a real disaster that ended with many casualties and injured; in the years to come, till now, the same response of the population came into the streets along with Gay Fest, but protests were without major incidents. Along with these internal associations the gay community receives help and political support from outside (i.e. the embassies of Great Britain and Netherlands) in a civil struggle to influence a traditional Orthodox people to leave aside its beliefs and embrace the novelty. Gay rights and same-sex marriage issues are tacitly accepted, unlike other Orthodox countries, like Moldavia or Russia. Russia, in the State Court of Moscow municipal government, declared such acts illegal for the next 100 years (from March 2012 until May 2112), with penalties for any kind of display or propaganda.

4 THE ROMANIAN CIVIL RELIGION: DOES IT EXIST OR NOT?

4.1 Rituals and tradition

Why do Romanians attend the established church after December 1989, as they did before? Psychologically speaking we will find three reasons for that behavior.

First of all, it is the human nature that always wants what is forbidden. Under the Communist regime, many people became even stronger believers trying to get back what the regime attempted to take from them: the liberty – of opinion, of choosing, of living one way or another. In other words, they perceived the Orthodoxy as a way to escape the fear, to escape from this never-ending bad story that was in their lives. So, in order to receive peace of mind and also to feel the way that a free person feels, they found in our Orthodox rituals and tradition a way out, an escaping door. That was possible thanks to the spiritual position of both our Orthodox Holy Fathers’ teachings, as well as of the high spiritual engagement that was among many priests at that time. It is a kind of hard to perceive that from the angle of an objective opinion; you will have a picture looking like that: on the one

hand, it was the Communist regime who continually engaged in fighting with people and, on the other, the Orthodoxy was conveying to people its teachings about forgiveness (love your enemy and turn the other cheek to your opponent, according to Matthew 5:39, Luke 6:29 and so on). Their need for internal peace and for an equilibrium in mind and soul was greater than fear.

Christianity was called “a religion for the slaves” and this was applied again to the Romanian people in the Communist era. Christianity was a religion that suffered along with people, cared about their concerns and took into its hands the burden that people had to suffer and, in return, gave them peace, an open path for a better life, without fear, despair and deprivation. That was the salvation, the promise for the enslaved Romanian people: a Savior will eventually come and look upon their sufferings and heal all their wounds. For them, Orthodoxy with its peaceful path was the support they could hang on in need, the very reason that helped them get easily over the daily burdens.

Secondly, knowing that the Communist regime was increasingly struggling to get the church and the faith out of the mind of the people in order to get all their attention and faithfulness, the people, on the other hand, led this battle into their own garden, so to speak. Because of the partnership between people and the Orthodox Church, Romanians always took as a personal affront any initiative against their church; everything against the church was done against the people.

Actually, that was the main reason that started the popular revolution in 1989. All started on December 15, as the population of Timișoara stood in solidarity with the Hungarian Reformed pastor László Tőkés, subjected to persecutions, for reasons where the religious motivations could not be distinguished from the ethnical ones. After everything fell into its place, the new democratic government had to take into consideration this act and the very reasons that led into the battle all the people from all over the country.

After December 1989, religious pluralism started as the natural recognition of the religion of the ethnical groups. As waves of different religions and Christian denominations came to Romania, each ethnic group brought its own mix of ordinary and extraordinary religion, combining local customs with general Orthodox teaching. There were no problems with the ethnics and denominations that were already present in the country when the revolution occurred, but there were problems with the alien denominations and religions that were trying to cut a “piece of the new market”.

And the last, but not least reason, is that nobody can remove religion from humanity! But everyone is entitled to have his own beliefs! The possibility for everyone to have whatever religion and belief they want and to express them accordingly was not so new, for Romanians had some variety in religion even before. The “problem” appeared when this variety was about Christianity, because

in the past Muslims, Jews and Greek-Catholics lived like brothers in the same house, working together for the same benefits.

4.2 Perceptions of religious pluralism

How did Romania receive the religious pluralism after the Revolution, as a pluralism within Christianity? In the beginning clumsily – like any beginning – with emotions, with opposition, with confrontations. But, in time, Romanians realized and accepted that everyone is entitled to be in this world as they are, even if these people seem to be different in some ways.

I said there were three reasons that the Romanian people did not give up on their beliefs or, to put it properly, on their religious disposition; though, I think there are also several other reasons for receiving and trusting what is called a more “visible” religious way, the pluralism. The main reason could be a mixture between the corruption of human mind and its continuous need for what is new, what is different from the old. The corruption of the mind of the Romanians is the first thing that has to be explained here. It was a trend in the ‘90s for persons less close to their churches (beliefs) and willing to have a convenient trade, to give up the baptism that was never activated in order to receive instead a financial help. Without taking any look at the sine qua non condition imposed by this wasteful contract – 10% for life – they went to different denominations. This process languished after the year 2000, when Romanians started to travel to experience more and to know the socio-economic and political realities of the countries from where these denominations were sent to Romania.

The continuous need for what is new in the spiritual world is a kind of habit in human history; everything interests us, but nothing can satisfy this need. All new Christian denominations claimed that this Christian nation needed a revival because it was led by a corrupt church.

There is also a third, more important reason for receiving pluralism in Romania after 1989: that an outer influence occurs only when somebody is less convinced of his own values and then he perceives the other to be more powerful, persuasive and with a more vivid effect. I will support this idea with an example that came from the Muslim world and tradition. The feminist movement could promote itself because there will always be physical attraction and need experienced by men towards women, so, when the woman declines her presence in bed, then men will be more willing to negotiate their rights in the relation between them; in that case “the sexual inequality, based on the belief in women’s biological inferiority”²³ will be overcome by “the male-female dynamics” based by

²³ Fatima Mernissi, *Beyond the Veil. Male-Female Dynamics in Modern Muslim Society* (Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 2011), <http://is.muni.cz/el/1423/podzim2010/>

“relationship stability and sexual satisfaction”²⁴. What was the female discrimination about till the late 19th century? They knew that “All sexual institutions (polygamy, repudiation, sexual segregation, etc.) can be perceived as a strategy for containing their power”²⁵ and that is the reason that even the most radical and stubborn discriminative view in history could be overcome. This is the assimilation explanation, from the sociological point of view, of the influence of pluralism upon the population²⁶.

So, regarding our overview of the religious pluralism that flooded and influenced Romania after 1989, the third reason can be putted this way: it’s all about who’s more willing to give up his understandings, tradition, beliefs and who is more persuasive to convince and influence the other’s mind and life.

CONCLUSION

Why remove religion from the civil or state society?

It was Voltaire who said, “If God did not exist, it would be necessary to invent him”.

If religion is a projection of what is the worst in mankind (carnal, vanities, envy, selfish desires), than religion must be put away. But religion may also be a projection of what is for the better and the very best for mankind – love, peaceful thoughts, wish of serenity, mutual help, looking for other’s need and so on – and, in this case, could we speak any longer of the disposal of this projection?

Could we ask any longer to remove this aspect from our mind and life? At this point, it doesn’t matter anymore if this side of ours is a wonderful work of God in our life or if it is a mere projection of what is the best in us, because the result will be the same. If the effect is good and enough powerful to change man’s heart (his thinking / feeling / wish) and save him from everything that is wrong, replacing every time a wrong thing with a good one, is there anyone who would wish to remove this doing – God’s or man’s?!

Why a country with an established church (religion) has such a pluralism problem?

First of all, there are many voices that are strongly trying not to recognize that this movement is growing among the Romanian people in the last decade with

SAN215/um/Mernissi_-_Beyond_the_Veil.txt.

²⁴ Laurie A. Rudman, Julie E. Phelan, “The Interpersonal Power of Feminism: Is Feminism Good for Romantic Relationships?,” *Sex Roles: A Journal of Research*, Volume 57, Issue 11-12 (2007): 787-799, accessed July 15, 2014, <http://link.springer.com/article/10.1007%2Fs11199-007-9319-9/fulltext.html>.

²⁵ Mernissi, *Beyond the Veil. Male-Female Dynamics in Modern Muslim Society*.

a visibility that cannot be denied. They say that it is only a conspiracy led by other religious leaders from abroad – especially from America – that have to go proselytizing into the “new” old world – post-revolutionary Europe – in order to survive. They are perceived as “the enemies of our nation”. We have to face them as a nation, as strong Orthodox believers.

But somehow this project didn't work out for we are now in the watering down process of our faith, as it can be seen in the report of last three censuses – nobody won, neither the Orthodox defensive nor the Protestant offensive. They tried first to mock on our religious beliefs saying that even if we have been an Orthodox country for two millennium, we still have to be Christianized again, and this time not by the priests, but by the Evangelical denominations. This time the words coming from that side were against the priests of the Orthodox Church, claiming that they are only wolves in sheep skins. Even if you know Jesus, you have actually never met Him because your priests do not allow you to; they stay behind that wall and everything they want is to squeeze all your money, your energy and eventually to let you without redemption – as Jesus once said “You hypocrites! You snakes and children of snakes! You lock the door to the Kingdom of heaven in people's faces, and you yourselves don't go in, nor do you allow in those who are trying to enter...” (Matthew 13: 13-35). With this kind of speeches, every part of the barricade was throwing out rocks to the other one, without thinking that the people were stuck in the middle, and the effect of this fight was not the one that any of the parties expected. The new generations in this country do not follow either their parents' Orthodox beliefs, nor the new evangelical ones. We rather see the beginning of a spiritual, theosophical movement in Romania; from that moment, another movement started to grow, a movement of dialogue between the denominations that stand for a belief in God, as they do within each religions. It was happening after October 2007, when the Muslim community from abroad started a movement of dialogue with Christianity. Over 138 Muslim leaders signed a letter known as “A Common Word Between Us and You”. The reactions to that were very diverse. First, the Evangelical Christian University „Yale Divinity School” published a response of denial in „The New York Times”. But soon after, the letter was also signed by 500 Christian leaders and scholars from 37 countries, among which one was from Romania. Why is this dialogue happening and even growing? Because every church and religion fears another common enemy of faith, and this is secularism. That's why, in Romanian society, we have now a well-known, mediated, non-contradictory and intensive dialogue between the 22

²⁶ According to Ed. Elliott Robert Barkan, *Immigrants in American History: Arrival, Adaptation, and Integration*, vol.1 (Santa Barbara: ABC-CLIO, 2013), 207-208.

denominations. Once again, what makes us different unites us and makes us stronger together!

The conclusion is that we cannot speak of a religious pluralism in the way of a forced tolerance or a fake agreement, but as a interreligious dialogue. The failure of the State to suppress competing faiths, which was clear to everyone many times in the history of the Romanian people, was often due to the engagement of Orthodoxy, that showed respect for those who believe in God, even if they don't share the same faith with the Orthodox majority.

A conception of human perfection involving both formal and substantial elements will not free us from understanding humanity in a more liberal, free way, but it will leave man facing an even worse enemy. That is because "the God of religion" has died in many parts of Europe and not only. However, Nietzsche believed that the idea of God still lingered in a sublimated form, such as in ideals of progress or of the national state. These are themselves ultimately doomed however, leaving us with the problem of 'nihilism' – a world in which we can no longer properly inquire into the meaning of our world²⁷. But a world without God, without His affection and understanding as Creator and Providence, will remain forever meaningless, hopeless and into despair, for man will always need an example of goodness and love, different from himself.

I am aware that this approach of mine does not solve at all the problems of religious pluralism, instead it shows a worse enemy that every religion has to face. Pluralism is justified by the reality of the multiplicity of beliefs and religions. Therefore, we cannot protect our people or children by prohibiting them from meeting diversity, but only with a good example and better explanation of our faith and beliefs. That's why "the market of pluralism does not lead to the end of religious confessions, because religions become stronger and competitive, especially if they give a convincing answer to individual expectations." (Roberto Cipriani).

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²⁷ Adrian Samuel, "Nietzsche and God (Part I)," *Richmond Journal of Philosophy* 14 (Spring 2007), note 9, accessed July 15, 2014, http://www.richmond-philosophy.net/rjp/back_issues/rjp14_samuel.pdf.

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