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CHURCH, RELIGION AND BELIEF:  
PARADIGMS FOR UNDERSTANDING  
THE POLITICAL PHENOMENON IN  
POST-COMMUNIST ROMANIA

Starting from the hypothesis that the predominant church, religion and belief in Romania (i.e. the Romanian Orthodox Church, the Orthodox religion and the Orthodox belief) are paradigms that help understand politics, we will highlight in the present article three major aspects of the political phenomenon in post-communist Romania: de-symbolizing the democratic function, institutionalizing “democratism” and manifesting integralism in the public space.

Our analysis is based on a communicational approach which postulates the conceptual oppositions as a fundament of understanding. The interpretation of these oppositions has lead us to discovering a series of coherent actions, behaviors, facts, etc., but also a series of incoherent, at some point irrational situations in the relation between the religious and the political spheres. The importance of this article lies in the fact that, once highlighted, these structures allow us to take into consideration the possibility of analyzing the meaning of the relation between the religious and the political spheres.

The religious and the political represent areas whose way of functioning is fundamentally determined by their positioning in the field of the symbolic<sup>1</sup>. If originally this positioning can be rational, its later developments in practical contexts – especially those of scientific interpretation, meant to “facilitate explanation”<sup>2</sup> – inevitably introduce irrationalities which disturb the process of sense development. But the scientific difficulty in understanding the relationship between religious and political spheres can also take rational forms, one of the most frequent and damaging of which, from an epistemological point of view, being the lack of unconditioned and permanent consideration of the concept distinction between the categories of “Church, religion, belief, politics”<sup>3</sup>. In

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**Key Words:**

de-symbolizing, Orthodox Church, religion, post-communism, democratism, public space, integralism, clergy, politics.

other words, the rationality of the relations between the religious and the political is not connected to sociological or economic evidence, nor to political or historical evidence, nor to anthropological or theological evidence, but it is subjected to rational structuring of concept production.

Starting from this hypothesis, according to which the predominant church, religion and belief in Romania – meaning the Orthodox Church, the Orthodox religion and the Orthodox belief – are paradigms that help understand the political, we will highlight in the present article three major aspects of the political phenomenon in post-communist Romania: de-symbolizing the democratic function, institutionalizing “democratism”<sup>4</sup> and manifesting integralism<sup>5</sup> in the public space.

### De-symbolizing the democratic function

First of all, if we start with the statement – considered to be a correct one – according to which managing the affairs of the Citadel (i.e. *polis*) is the task of the politicians and managing the Church affairs is the task of the clergy on the one hand, and that the politicians are bound to obey the law, meaning the law of the Citadel, while the clergy is bound to obey the rules of God on the other hand, then we are forced to admit the fact that not managing the problems of the Citadel proves fundamentally incoherent, a fact which interferes with the actions of politicians. This is also a valid phenomenon in the case of the clergy who do not perform their duties with regard to Church affairs. According to the same logical pattern, the political coherence resides in taking into consideration the voice of the people, while the coherence of the clergy is not a result of taking into consideration the wishes of the believers, but of performing God’s will. This first dissymmetry does not necessarily produce “harmful” effects on the rationalities implied in the above-mentioned conceptual opposition. On the contrary, the problems in the conceptual coherence start appearing when the objective reality (not only the rational one) highlights the fact that the politicians manage church affairs or that the clergy manage the affairs of the Citadel. Understanding the relation between the religious and the political becomes difficult to the researcher when, in the practical context of democracy, the coherence of the politicians and of the clergy decreases due not to the influence of an expansion or a modification of the exercise of power, but to the expansion or modification of the field of authority. In other words, it occurs when the politicians listen not only to the voice of the people, but also to the voice of the church, or when the clergy do not only obey God, but also *vox populi*. It is a kind of *tautism*<sup>6</sup>, meaning a situation in which the religious and the political are mixed according to the interests of power, thus transforming the “public space” into the most desired place for the political “legitimization” of the process of de-symbolizing the democratic function itself. This process of de-symbolizing is one of the most fundamental characteristics of post-

communist Romania, becoming obvious once we start observing the relations between the political and the religious spheres. The preeminence of the public space is not a constraining factor to exerting the representative function and, furthermore, it does not impose a certain precise version for it. For the Romanian politicians and clergy it is not clear, even on a theoretical level, the fact that the Romanian state is nothing more than an instrument meant to serve the civil society and that it has no other legitimacy than the one conveyed to it by the will of the citizens. In real terms, the expansion of the clerical representation towards the field of the political representation, and the other way round, is for the Romanian population a simple transfer rather than a transmutation. This expansion or shifting of the exercise of power is not sanctioned by the citizens as being a mix between the higher levels of collective decision subjected to inherent logic by the very purpose it pursues, meaning the sovereign power of the political corpus over its own self. The political representation in the context of Romanian post-communism does not require the Orthodox clergy, seen here as organized elements of the civil society, to rise above themselves and accept to suppress a part of themselves. Thus, the political representation in post-communist Romania does not mean the transformational rising of the society to the rank of a state. In any case, the political does not impose the law upon the Orthodox clergy in post-communist Romania, it enforces it only to the extent it is convinced that the clergy is also interested in accepting it. This situation leads to a perpetuation of “tradition” into the postmodern era: the identity of the collectivity with itself and with the way it disposes of itself does not stand in connection to the difference between the state seen as a set of instruments and the state seen as an instrument in itself, which imposes its rules as long as it has the approval of its citizens and not of its believers.

From the other point of view, – the one of the clergy –, by losing symbols of the representations of power, in order to confound or transform the citizen into a believer, the church “compels” the politician to obtain its blessing. This unacknowledged pressure is perfectly normal in post-communist Romania. It camouflages the crisis of the political representation in Romania in relation to the civil society, thus “legitimizing” a sort of extra – institutionalized siege over the political power by various forces: economic and particularly ecclesiastical, in order to bring the political closer to the public space. Indeed, for the Romanian Orthodox clergy, the place of the Church in the public space is that of an institution of public interest, and this in an extensive, rather than a restrictive manner: they accept as obvious the fact that the clergy has inner autonomy<sup>7</sup>, but call into question “the division of roles” and promote the intrusion of the Church into the affairs of the Citadel<sup>8</sup>. They openly claim the direct involvement of the church in politics and ask for access to power, by creating Christian parties, unions or pressure groups. In this respect, they conjure “the right of the people”, the responsibility of the

church in tackling general issues of society and of the political sphere, in controlling agents of the state, applied policies, or political forces, but most importantly, in judging European matters<sup>9</sup>. Thus, the church creates a convenient confusion between the right to freedom of speech, which is the right of every citizen, and their status as clergy, according to which they act as “public persons”. The clergy are, therefore trying to “bind” the political competence of the citizen to their status as priests. “The priest citizen” is thus transfigured into a “political priest”, the patriarch being foremost a “political” patriarch, with the “blessing” of the political. De-symbolizing the democratic function is clearly stated in the political objectives of the Orthodox clergy. According to this objective, the church, with its status of institutional agent and guardian of communism-free Romanian Orthodoxy, must be legitimized in its role as authentic expression of the concepts of nation and its objectives, in its role as undisputable judge of the extent of everyone’s involvement. Thus, as long as the nation incarnates the supreme value and the finality of the state, and as long as the Church is the guardian of the nation’s most important element – the Orthodoxy – one can draw the conclusion that the Church has symbolically entered the collective consciousness as the supreme authority of the nation, a status which conveys to it the “right” to outline the boundaries of state policies and control them. In other words, it is not enough to be a Christian in the Romanian public space, but you have to symbolically recognize the church as being the nation’s most important institution<sup>10</sup>.

This de-symbolizing orientation of the Romanian Orthodox Church is accompanied, in overlapping of the concepts of state and nation, by the legitimization conveyed by the modern or primary anthropocentrism to totalitarian enclaves within the civil society. To be more accurate, as long as the anthropocentric constraints of the Romanian Orthodox Church have not allowed or favored an institutional presence powerful enough in the civil society, the Church hierarchy has concentrated its efforts on political influence, directly crystallized in the election process. The continuous overturns in the Romanian post-communist society regarding the presence of the Orthodox clergy on election lists perfectly illustrate this phenomenon.

The Romanian democracy does not seem to be capable of giving a satisfactory answer, at the end of this first decade of the 21<sup>st</sup> century – in the European context – to the question regarding the factors defining the regulation frame of religion and the position of the individual in this frame. It only settles for reproducing the logic of institutionalization in terms of sovereign power of politics and, according to this logic, it is not a surprise that the political leaders can suggest taking over certain tasks – especially social ones – from a ministry and transferring them to the Orthodox Church<sup>11</sup>. In fact, to the extent to which the purpose of this democratic system does not consist of acknowledging the fact that the

society is endowed with political competence, the issue here is an arrangement of powers meant to avoid excessive power concentration at the level of the state. The issues placing the church, a totalitarian institution by definition, in the midst of the civil society, in contexts which transform it into a state within the state, elude for the moment *de facto* the competence of Romanian politicians: to maintain the church in the field of the public space in terms of relative autonomy or under the direct authority of a public institution is an alternative which does not answer the fundamental problem of the totalitarian nature of the Church. But this weakness of the political, synonymous, from a hermeneutic point of view, with incoherence, does not have consequences in a context of de-symbolizing the democratic function. Evidence to this is the fact that the presence of a totalitarian institution with theocratic references and secular exigencies in the public space not only does not bother the Romanian citizens, but benefits of full legitimacy offered by them<sup>12</sup>.

### Institutionalizing “democratism”

If we accept as political and religious rationality the institution of the citizenship by the politicians and the institution of the belief by the believers, we can immediately observe the fact that these rationalities mark a serious ontological problem. As far as the believer institutes belief, he is fundamentally political, because: “The political institutes, while the religious institutionalizes. The political institutes in a primary form, in which it allows a community to exist in its own specific way of being. This is not an organism with prior natural cohesion, nor does it result from a contract consciously undertaken by its members. It is connected to institution, meaning that it produces its own cohesion and identity and it reproduces them constantly. This effort of institution undergoes a series of separations which connect it to itself and which physically constitutes the political”<sup>13</sup>. Thus, tackling these rationalities in an indirect way leads to the conclusion that the coherence of the actions performed by the politicians is valid only to the extent in which they do not institutionalize citizenship. This is also valid for the believers. In other words, the coherence of their actions is valid only to the extent in which they do not institutionalize religion. The intertwining of these two rationalities gives birth to two more. First, in order not to act as believers, i.e. not to become incoherent and not credible, the politicians will stop institutionalizing and instituting belief. On the other hand, according to the same logical pattern, the believers will stop institutionalizing and instituting citizenship. On the contrary, the relations between the religious and the political field become incoherent as soon as the politicians do not institute citizenship or, worse, they institutionalize it. Also, incoherence can appear in the actions which are the base of the religious and political sphere in case the believers do not institute belief – when their primary function is that of instituting

belief – or do exactly the opposite of their functional determination, by institutionalizing belief. The lack of total understanding, with its socio-cultural, legal and economic consequences, intervenes with full brutal incoherence when the politicians institute religion or the other way round, when believers institute citizenship. A situation in which irrationalities are at the same time completely reverted becomes a case in which the meaning of the socio-political actions pales in favor of the transposition of the *objective attitude* (civic duties) into *subjective attitude* (cult, adoration etc.) and the other way round, but also in favor of permutation between the *objects* targeted by these two attitudes, meaning the *historical reality* and the *eternal reality*.

Of course, in reality this situation has never been reached in post-communist Romania, but all the prior conditions already exist: the politicians institutionalize religion and / or the believers institutionalize citizenship. It is a situation in which the real public debate is abolished or becomes a mockery, which corresponds to actions emptying the meaning of the notion called public space referred to in different political speeches. The basic characteristic of the Romanian political speech in the post-communist era consists in the founding of double legitimacy, temporal and spiritual, the first being unable to cut loose from the second, being partially dependent on it. There is no doubt that Romania's (and also Bulgaria's) tardy joining of the European Union can be explained to a certain extent by this resistance to any "compromise" with the European modernism. But the Romanian politicians apparently continue to ignore this aspect so full of consequences in terms of democratic practices<sup>14</sup>. In a more profound way, this double legitimacy – temporal and spiritual – raises the issue of the relation between the politician and the orthodox believer. In post-communist Romania, the presence of the orthodox believer next to the politician is a reality, the first playing most often the role of a counselor or guide, without hesitating to become an agent of domination or subjection. Undoubtedly, we are talking about an unstable balance which sometimes shifts in an obscure way – sanctioned by different relations – but excluding, generally speaking, desertion or the total transfer of sovereignty from the spiritual to the temporal. It must be underlined that the post-communist Romanian politician considers it is a necessity – without clearly stating or dissimulating it – to make use of his position as a *chosen* believer – in the Orthodox sense of "Holy Spirit anointment" – over the status of being God's *protégée*, which is being enjoyed by the clergy. The political participation in the election of the patriarch of the Orthodox Church is eloquent from this point of view<sup>15</sup>. Such actions prove in most cases a loss of political landmarks which make possible the distinction between public and private. As a consequence, even if priests do not theoretically dispose of monarchic, autocratic or legal power in the Romanian public space, they are rewarded for providing the service of conciliatory unification. Today's "presidents" elected based



on the “democratic” foundation, as an expression of the sovereignty of the people, have received a para-democratic “aura” as an inheritance of the patriarchal “anointment”. One can observe a “theocratic change” of democracy in the Romanian public space, according to which the legitimization by anointment gives a certain free space to the orthodox believer, *the freedom of common consciousness*, which suggests and allows him to check if the politician is always *the protected* and *the chosen* one. If the latter proves to be unworthy, the institution of the two not necessarily distinctive legitimacies has as a consequence blocking the rise of one power over the other. This creates a remarkable illusion of “a la carte” democracy, often assimilated to a sort of balkanization of democracy, an illusion we here call “democratism”.

The way in which this Romanian “democratism” relates to the notion of fundamental right is rich in political consequences. The concept of fundamental right has been at the center of discussions and stipulations preceding Romania’s joining the European Union<sup>16</sup>. To be more precise, this “democratism” has not escaped the eyes of the European observers except to the extent in which the author of the fundamental right must be legitimate and must benefit from a consensus, even if this is not the expression of a will due to universal vote. The existence of two legitimacies has led in the Romanian public space to the idea of double legality, or at least of double perception of the law, often translated in the notion of corruption<sup>17</sup>. Of course, the politicians are the ones officially setting the rules and norms. But the presence of spiritual legitimacy which works in parallel with the temporal legitimacy gives the orthodox believer liberty to appreciate, a liberty of the conscience which allows him to judge all by himself and to submit himself, freely or by force, to the civil law and also to appeal in a mystical way to democracy which can be changed, according to circumstances, with authoritarianism or with anarchism<sup>18</sup>. In short, the interactive dualism has not favored the true assertion of a natural right, nor the assertion of the human rights, not even the assertion of the positive right, which imposes itself over everyone, the principle of the utmost importance of the right itself. The debate concerning the elimination of the religious icons from public schools is eloquent from this point of view<sup>19</sup>. But, beyond the great debates of public scandals, “to have connections”, “to know somebody” are day-to-day realities of post-communist Romania, which perpetuate in the public space, as they both translate transgression as well as “applying” the law. This can be explained by the fact that the tradition of the Romanian orthodox believer does not acknowledge either the principle of contract rights, not the principle of natural rights, but only – vaguely and partially – the “Decalogue”, the first book of rights, which institutes more duties than rights. In this way, after 1989 the Romanian orthodox believer has rather developed a psychology of duty, based on the principle of repentance for the “sinful” nature. In the best case, for him, the meaning of justice and of law is that of the

consciousness – “I am only afraid of God” – and not that of the "reason", far too human. This means that the idea of the natural right is not obvious in post-communist Romania; in what concerns the positive right, it is even harder for it to find its expression, as it can only be the result of reason. But, for the Romanian politician, reason – which has profoundly marked the western culture starting with Thomas d'Aquino – is not reasonable<sup>20</sup>.

## Integralism in favor of the public space

Clearly, two other rationalities are of importance when we try to understand the relation between the religious and the political: politicians subject themselves to civism, believers subject themselves to belief. This coherence, theoretically synonymous to the absence of the intelligibility conflict, is applied to political actions which are not in contradiction to civism and to the deeds of the believers which are not in contradiction to belief. It would be totally incoherent if the politicians violated the rules of civism and/ or if the believers broke the rules of belief, such a situation would represent total abdication from the rationality which is the basis of the very objective reality marking the difference between “politician” and “believer”. We are talking about irrationality which can be indirectly expressed both by actions of politicians who do not obey civism, and/ or by actions of believers who do not obey belief. The traditional Romanian Orthodoxy, as an ideological interpretation of Orthodox belief in an ethnical-national perspective, is the classical illustration of this aspect<sup>21</sup>: “the belief sacralizes the nation and the nation protects the religion”<sup>22</sup>. On the other hand, even if this can become a true source of conflict, the rationalities of the politicians and of the believers are intact when politicians stand against belief and/or when believers stand against civism. In other words, there is no rational inconvenient if it is ascertained that the politicians contravene belief and/or the believers contravene civism. The irrationalities and of course the major problems appear when, on the contrary, politicians obey belief and/ or believers obey the laws of civism. This functional misuse of both categories represents the fundamentals of beliefs and political cultures which, even if secularized, are positioned to the opposite of the most elementary democratic values. It works strongly linked to its indirect forms, less institutionally connoted and “smoother” from a social point of view, corresponding to actions according to which politicians are not in contradiction with belief and/or the believers are not in contradiction to civism. Thus both categories somehow set aside their most important convictions which would rationally have created the fundamentals of their actions. This corresponds in Romania to post-communist orthodoxy, “Europeanized” orthodoxy, a paradoxical situation of reciprocal contamination, of misuse of the objective realities, a process of filling the public space with ideology to the detriment of the public space, but also a secularization of belief by the means of belief.



We can thus distinguish a first type of post-communism orthodoxy, which can be identified with the rightist politicians, which is defined by the political receiving and transmitting of a set of beliefs perceived as traditions, interpreted according to personal understanding, corresponding to a unique relation between God and his servant. Politics means absolute adhesion to the church tradition, understood as an objective truth and being external to the subject which conveys meaning to the integrality of the world. Starting from here, there is no imaginable separation between belief and gestures, the cultural practice being the central expression of belief in politics. In his discourse, the politician transforms a “savage” vision of capitalism – to which he secretly adheres – into an image in which the world seems somehow devalued, being considered materialistic and shallow (in order to highlight the breach from the recent communist past) and in which people regret the former religious unanimity (an intrinsic nostalgic reference to the orthodoxy prior to the Second World War), from the times when belief embraced the whole of the individual and social life. Politics is thus depreciated, it appears as the expression of division and façade, it is the hyperbole of a treacherous and illusory mundane reality. Unintentionally, these politicians give a personal and spiritual dimension to the common goals, of utmost importance being the change of hearts and not that of the structure of the world. A second type of post-communist orthodoxy, which is much alike to the left-type policies, is characterized by two major features: a) the feeling that the orthodox belief is part of a historical “us”, in a collective history and b) the conviction that this traditionally collective history must be built, in the process of democratization of Romania, on a personal involvement. The human ensembles, in relation to which one can build a political identity, are always wide and constitute the basis of the individual consciousness and will. The orthodox belief claimed by the politicians does not depend on fragile subjectivity, but it is based on collective experience which cannot be detached from the faith of the others. In politics, of top importance is the sharing of civic experience which authenticates the orthodox belief, and not the conservation and transmittal of tradition and of unquestionable transcendental truth. Belief is not to be received in a ready-made form, it is practiced, it is a dogma to look for, to build in the political dialogue, and is discovered in the mutuality of political actions. The politicization of the orthodox traditions means, for the politician, accepting all points of view, as there is only one truth which is only born from the summing of a multitude of unique and different opinions. Without a doubt, the political preoccupation for accepting the difference can be explained by the political willingness towards openness, to europeanization and globalization. And finally, the third type of post-communist orthodoxy is defined by intention, consciousness, will, somebody’s decision to be an orthodox regardless of the incoherence of the inherited tradition and the weight of personal history. These

politicians have a paradoxical discourse. They insist both on the wholeness of their faith – the orthodoxy is the political identity which determines their options – as well as on the contingent character of their reference to orthodoxy. They are orthodox because, being Romanians, this suits them best, but they could as well have adopted any other religion, had they lived some place else. We are talking here about a unique association of integralism and relativism which is connected to two different ways of thinking, originally apart from each other: a) religious logic, which consists of relating everything which can be related, unifying the world through consciousness and b) political logic of the liberal individualism, for which the autonomy of the subject is the basis for any vision of individual and social life. This religious integralism is more radical than any other of the previous types of post-communist orthodoxism: we are talking about the refusal of making the distinction between sacred and profane, the refusal of giving palpable forms to the relation between religion and day-to-day political reality. These orthodox politicians influence the political area by non-violent attitude, which for them means personal testimony and involvement. They address to an electorate who might lack interest in the democratic participation in debates, but who perceive politics as a necessary development of the gospelly attitude of solidarity to the poor<sup>23</sup>.

To conclude, if one takes into consideration these three types of integralities, one can notice the fact that the relations of the Romanian politicians to orthodoxy are marked by the breach between integralism and religious intransigence. Despite the facades displayed in the media, the Romanian orthodox Church, with its political-doctrine reformations after 1989, has cut loose from its traditional intransigence, more precisely from its will not to open towards the values of the liberal modernity, especially towards the individual freedom and separation of areas. It is clear though – even in the most recent texts, which are more open towards contemporary reformulations – that, after 1989, the Orthodox Church has not abdicated from its historical reputation of integrating other traditions into its own, in this case, the tradition of the western liberalism. In the present Romanian public space, the association between the religious beliefs and political choices is most frequently undertaken. To be more precise, orthodoxy transcendentally establishes the political choices<sup>24</sup>, even if these have originally been induced by social solidarities and ideological itineraries. But the suggestiveness of the contents of the orthodox religion is large enough to justify, in case of the politicians, opposite political options, displayed in various moments of their activity. This situation could be considered the display of a sort of victory of the religious reference, always present, no matter of the social trajectory and political options it finds reference to. This assertion needs to be further developed, in order not to neglect the other aspect of the relation between the Romanian orthodoxy and its political involvement: the preeminence of the liberal issue not only in the context of a market economy, but also in

the context of the public space as a place of exchange and communicational action, which allowed every citizen, after 1989, to express opinions in any area, to put the political and religious choices under the flag of the supreme sacredness of the freedom of choice.

## Conclusions

The present analysis highlights the fact that the initial hypothesis were possible due to a communicational approach (based on the mechanisms of production of meaning) which postulates the conceptual oppositions as the fundamentals of understanding. In our case, these conceptual oppositions are absolutely necessary from the methodological point of view, since denying them would eventually mean denying the distinction between the religious and the political. Furthermore, denying this distinction would have as an immediate consequence the impossibility to perceive the relations between the religious and the political, since the religious and the political share the same fundamentals. On the contrary, nothing intervenes against the alteration of this distinction in practical contexts – thus leading us to the second conclusive observation. As a consequence, the interpretation of these oppositions has lead us to the discovery of a multiple series of coherent actions, behaviors, deeds, etc., but also to a strain of incoherent, at some point irrational, series of situations in the study of the relation between the religious and the political. The target of this approach is the fact that, once highlighted, these structures allow taking into consideration the possibility of analyzing the production of meaning in the relation between the religious and the political.

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## Notes

<sup>1</sup> Camille Tarot, "Les lyncheurs et le concombre ou de la définition de la religion, quand même", *Revue du MAUSS*, 22, 2003: 269-297.

<sup>2</sup> Michel de Certeau, *L'invention du quotidien. Arts de faire* (Paris: Gallimard, 1990).

<sup>3</sup> This critique is not avoided, either, by socio-historical approaches (cf. Jan Lauwers, "Les théories sociologiques concernant la sécularisation", *Social Compass* 20, 4, 1973: 535-551; Willaime, Jean-Paul. *Europe et religions. Les enjeux du 21<sup>e</sup> siècle*. Paris: Fayard, 2004.), or political approaches (cf. Marcel Gauchet, *La religion dans la démocratie*, Paris: Gallimard, 1998; Pierre, Bréchon, Bruno, Duriez and Jacques Ion (eds), *Religion et action dans l'espace public*, Paris: l'Harmattan, 2000; Jacques Rollet, *Religion et politique. Le christianisme, l'islam, la démocratie*, Paris: Grasset, 2001; Georges Contogeorgis, "Religion et politique dans le monde hellène. Le paradigme grec et les églises 'occidentales' et slaves", *Pôle Sud* 17, 2002: 5-20; Jean-Luc Chabot, and Cristophe Tournu, *L'héritage religieux et spirituel de l'identité européenne*, Paris: l'Harmattan, 2004), or economical approaches (cf. Georges Corm, *La question religieuse au 21<sup>e</sup> siècle*, Paris: La Découverte, 2006), or by anthropo-theological studies of the phenomenon (cf. Pierre Gisel, Jean-Marc Tétaz, and Valérie Nicolet Anderson, *Théories de la religion: diversité des pratiques de recherche, changements des contextes socio-culturels, requêtes réflexives*, Genève: Labor et Fides, 2002), and by case-studies such as those dedicated to post-communist Romania (cf. Lavinia Stan, and Lucian Turcescu, *Religion and Politics in Post-Communist Romania*, Hardback, 2007).



<sup>4</sup> I.e. doctrine based on social equality or on the right of all people to participate equally in politics according to “Merriam - Webster's Dictionary” in *Encyclopedia Britanica*, 2005.

<sup>5</sup> Integralism is a perspective according to which society is an organic unity (see “Merriam - Webster's Dictionary” in *Encyclopedia Britanica*, 2005).

<sup>6</sup> Lucien Sfez, *Critique de la communication*, Paris: Seuil, 1988.

<sup>7</sup> See Law no. 489/2006, regarding the freedom of religion and the general regime of denominations, *Monitorul oficial*, Partea I, nr. 11/8.01.2007.

<sup>8</sup> For instance, through the Decision of March 6, 2008, which officially authorizes priests' running for local offices, the Synod of the Romanian Orthodox Church formally manifests its will to intervene in proximity matters.

<sup>9</sup> See the Representation of the Romanian Orthodox Church to the European Institutions (<http://www.orthodoxero.eu>, accessed March 12, 2009).

<sup>10</sup> A remarkable illustration of this fact is the widely-publicized pre-eminence of the political representatives' presence at Patriarch Daniel's enthronization ceremony: “The first to arrive at the ceremony, one hour prior to its start, were former chiefs of state Ion Iliescu and Emil Constantinescu. They were joined by Corneliu Vadim Tudor, president of the Great Romania Party, (...), prime-minister Calin Popescu Tariceanu and members of the Government, the presidents of the two Chambers of the Parliament, members of the Parliament and high public officials. Shortly before the beginning of the ceremony, the president Traian Basescu arrived as well” (*Jurnalul Național*. “Ceremonia de întronizare ca patriarh al Bisericii Ortodoxe Române a PF Daniel”. [www.jurnalul.ro/stire.../ceremonia-de-intronizare-ca-patriarh-al-bisericii-ortodoxe-romane-a-pf-daniel-104254.htm](http://www.jurnalul.ro/stire.../ceremonia-de-intronizare-ca-patriarh-al-bisericii-ortodoxe-romane-a-pf-daniel-104254.htm), accessed March 15, 2009).

<sup>11</sup> For instance, Emil Boc, the current prime-minister, stated that “In nowadays Romania, if you allocate 10 lei as social assistance, only 4-5 lei reach the beneficiary, because 5-6 lei get lost in the thicket of bureaucracy and corruption. If you give the same 10 lei to the Church to manage the money, you can be sure that the whole sum will reach those in need of help” (cf. Ciprian Stoleru, “Traian Bănescu militează pentru un rol tot mai activ al Bisericii Ortodoxe în societatea românească”, *Ziua*, <http://www.ziua.ro/mail.php?f=news&id=13659&data=2008-10-01>, accessed March 7, 2009).

<sup>12</sup> Which does not, necessarily, means “legitimacy”.

<sup>13</sup> Marcel Gauchet, “La politique et la religion”, *Revue du MAUSS* 22, 2003: 5-30.

<sup>14</sup> In his anniversary speech on the occasion of the enthronisation of the Patriarch, the President of Romania expressly states the political role of the Romanian Orthodox community in the European Union: “The organizing of new dioceses and parishes in the diaspora, from Spain to Australia and Sweden, in Italy, represented a priority emphasized in this first year of your Holiness's patriarchate. I must underline the importance of the existence of these parochial centres abroad in forming the Romanian communities, in strengthening their connection to the Romanian country, traditions and realities. This new presence abroad also befits the role the Romanian Orthodox Church can have in Europe, since it constitutes the largest Orthodox community in Europe” (“Mesajul președintelui României, Traian Bănescu, cu prilejul aniversării întronizării Preafericirii Sale Daniel, Patriarhul Bisericii Ortodoxe Române, Palatul Patriarhal, 30 septembrie 2008”.

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<sup>15</sup> The Romanian Patriarch was elected by 107 members of the clergy and 88 laypersons, of which 63 are connected to the political. Some of them are civil servants: inspectors, prefecture secretaries, museum directors, professors in State Universities etc. Among those who, by secret vote, elected the Patriarch of the Romanian Orthodox Church, are controversial people, some of them legally investigated for corruption. It is the case of Teodor Maghiar, former rector of Oradea University and prominent member of the Social Democratic Party. Others have strong connections with the President, such is the case of Dorel Onaca, PD Senator from Constanta, former Great Romania Party Deputy. The Liberal Party was also represented by Deputy Cornel Popa or by mayor of Giurgiu, Lucian Iliescu, etc.

<sup>16</sup> See “European Council, The Group of States against corruption, 1st General Directorate –

Judicial Affairs. First set of evaluations. Report on Romania”, passed by GRECO on the occasion of the eighth plenary Session (Strasbourg, March 4-8, 2002). The debate is far from over yet. See, in this regard, the intermediate Report of the Commission, concerning the progress of Romania with respect to the cooperation and verification process, February 12, 2009. (<http://www.diploweb.com/forum/verluisse06031roum.htm>, accessed March 12, 2009).

<sup>17</sup> See Mirel Bran, “L’Europe ou le bakchich, un dilemme pour les Roumains”, *Le Monde*, september 30, 2005; Rafaële Rivaïs, “Bruxelles menace de retarder l’adhésion de la Roumanie et de la Bulgarie”, *Le Monde*, January 12, 2005; Valerian Stan, “La corruption en Roumanie: un mal systémique”, *Géopolitique*, 90, 2005: 73-78.

<sup>18</sup> Cf. Serge Boulgakov, *L’Orthodoxie*, Lausanne: l’Age d’Homme, 1980.

<sup>19</sup> Through Decision no. 323/21, of December 2006, The Fight against Discrimination National Council (DNC) recommended the Ministry of Education and Research (MER) to forbid religious icons in schools. In January 2007, the Education Commission of the Chamber of Deputies recommended MER, the only institution with attributes to decide on this issue, to leave the presence of religious symbols and icons in schools to the choice of local communities and parents. In light of this recommendation, MER refused, until now, to offer an executory form to the Decision 323 of DNC and appealed to the Parliament to solve the situation.

<sup>20</sup> Jean Gueit, “A propos du christianisme orthodoxe”, *Pouvoir et religion*. Bruxelles: Facultés universitaires Saint-Louis. [http://mediatheque.territoires-memoire.be/opac\\_css/index.php](http://mediatheque.territoires-memoire.be/opac_css/index.php) (accessed March 16, 2009).

<sup>21</sup> On this subject, see Olivier Gillet, *Ecclesiologie Orthodoxe et Nationalisme en Roumanie*, Institutul Memoriei Europene, available on the internet,

<http://european.memory.free.fr/Textes/roumanie.html>, Constantin Radulescu-Motru, “Diferența fundamentală între Biserica ortodoxă și Biserica din Apus”. In *Dreptul la memorie în lectura lui Iordan Chimet*, vol. IV, Certitudini, îndoieli, confruntări. Cluj-Napoca: Dacia, 1993: 236-258, and the article signed by Emil Marinescu, and Vincent Cernea, “L’espace religieux roumain”. In *La Roumanie contemporaine. Approches de la «transition»*, edited by Nicolas Pélissier, Alice Marrié, and François Despres, 195-263. Paris: L’Harmattan, 1996.

<sup>22</sup> François Thual, “Dans le monde orthodoxe, la religion sacralise la nation, et la nation protège la religion”, *Le Monde*, January 20, 1998.

<sup>23</sup> Cf. note 7.

<sup>24</sup> Patriarch Daniel states: “it matters tremendously, as well, what kind of pastoral activity, of Christian awareness, the Church employs regarding the political figures. These figures, among the political ones, who visit the Church more often know better the needs of the Church and help it more. So, we must not expect the start of the election campaign for the political figures to help the Church, but, instead, we must inform them permanently about the problems and activities of the Church” (Interview with His Beatitude Daniel, 2007, [www.patriarhia.ro/ro/patriarhul/interviuri\\_2.html](http://www.patriarhia.ro/ro/patriarhul/interviuri_2.html), accessed March 9, 2009).