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REACTIONS OF THE ROMANIAN ORTHODOX CHURCH TO THE PROPOSED  
LEGISLATION TO LEGALIZE PROSTITUTION

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**Abstract:** This article's main goal is to highlight the conflicts but also the similarities between religion and politics that exists in different subjects, views or situations. This study will have a theoretical part but also an empirical part. The empirical part will be supported by the theoretical part of the study in which we will try to demonstrate the assumptions written above. The empirical part will analyze concrete case being the church's reaction to the legislative proposal of legalizing prostitution. Choosing this topic for discussion, in the context of the relations between the Romanian Orthodox Church and politics, is a scientific approach that aims to highlight and underline the reactions that the Romanian Orthodox Church (BOR) has to the controversial legislative proposals in Romania and elsewhere, such as the legalization of prostitution. Through our research we aim to achieve a brief overview of this topic, analyzing the reactions that BOR has, in the written press in Romania, on the issue of legalizing prostitution. Also, the theme may be considered a good source of knowledge on the Romanian society and how it accepts or not such a legislative proposal.

**Key Words:** political decision, religion, church, communication, involvement, values, conflicts, common point.

## Introduction

Romania unlike other countries from the United Nations, is different when it comes to general belief in subjects such as Church and religion. Polls show that this general belief has down scaled in the western Europe countries, but in Romania this common belief is situated somewhere between 70% and 80%<sup>1</sup>. Moreover, the literature tells us that the influence of religion in European space decreased with the advent of the modern state because „the ideas promoted by the French humanists and afterwards by the American ones who believed in the power of reason as a means of solving all the humankind problems.”<sup>2</sup> Yet today, the same author says that we are witnessing a revival of religion and man's relationship to divinity. Citing Huntington,<sup>3</sup> the author justifies this statement by saying that this is a „reaction against laicization, moral relativism, lack of self esteem, and a reaffirmation of value, order, labour, discipline, mutual help and human solidarity.”<sup>4</sup>

In the Romanian space, we consider that there is a reason of this phenomenon of Romanian collective mind in comparison to central and western European. In the view of the clergy, this issue could be the fact that Romanian people still come to Church because they are more of a believers and also they belief that the national Church, is in fact, the true keeper of faith. This point of view might be correct. From a sociological point of view it might say that 50% of the Romanian population still live in a rural environment thus is easier to keep traditions alive but also because the level of information is very low in such environments. Another view could be expressed in terms of psychology, and in accordance with this there are too many problems that can be overwhelming, so people belief that they can solve their problem turning to God or religion. These are only three points of view regarding the religious phenomenon in Romania but there can be other points of view as well. We wanted to highlight the fact that whenever a society will be confronting a problem or will be searching for answers to a type of question there will be found lots of fields and domains that will express their opinion regarding the subject in matter. This study will concentrate more on the reaction of two fields, being the Church and politics, regarding one of society's problems. Our analysis will be focused on the Romanian Orthodox Church but it does not exclude any other religious cults. We focused on the Orthodox Church because it has the majority of believers but we are well aware of the fact that this represents a limitation in our study. The other domain is the political one that is a extremely powerful one as well regarding the mental belief of the society but not as powerful as the religious field. We associate the word power with the two previously mentioned areas because we believe that these are undoubtedly two poles of power in society, though

not the only pole, as considered by I.M. Danciu: „power takes many forms.”<sup>5</sup>

Using the term religious field we understand a number of representatives of the Romanian Orthodox Church in particular, but we don't want to exclude representatives of other religious groups operating in Romania. The Romanian Orthodox Church is the majority, which is why our focus is on it, yet we are aware that focusing just on the national church is a limit to this work. The other field of discussion is the political one, which summarizes both politicians with different functions in the state and political parties (being in power or in opposition), also a very strong field, in terms of resonance in the outlook, but still not as strong as that of religion.

We have chosen these two fields for our analysis because from our point of view the Romanian society has four big fields: The religious field, The political field, The economical field, The social field. Of all the four domains that have a big importance at a micro and macro climate level, the first two seemed the most important so we decided to analyze them.

The assumption from which we started our scientific project is the reaction of the two fields regarding a society problem. The basic assumption is dictated by our point of view: regarding a certain problem the religious domain will take more caution in dealing with the problem (will be more reserved, more conservative) than the political field, this action might lead to a conflict and antagonistic position between the political and religious domain. We will use an analytical-descriptive scientific way to demonstrate this assumption, and as a method of work we will use the content analysis, our primal focus being on the written press. In our opinion the ties that bind the link between, religion and politics in the beginning of the third millennium have become very powerful and are given by two antagonistic phenomenons:

1. The unity- when dealing with the issue of maintaining the country, the communication between religion and politics bind in harmony, also when dealing with peoples unity (national fiber), keeping tradition, supporting national culture. In all of these cases the political views and religious views are convergent, almost identical.
2. Supremacy- in our point of view (although hidden) a battle for power exist between religion and politics. The cause of this battle is that over course of time, the political field wanted to win over more and more domain and religion, the church in fact, did not want to lose more and more domain.

Based on the two facts above, both fields have antagonistic views over certain problems: the religious domain being more conservative meanwhile the political one being much more liberal.

Based on the facts written above we belief that it is necessary in the pages to come to analyze much more common concepts of political and

religious communication like in matter of: intention, goal, efficiency, target groups.

Concerning intention, we believe most of the forms of communication, and also the religious and political type, use the same matrix of intentionality as considered by Denis McQuail with reference to communication "...a problem correlated with this is that of the intentionality that some definitions include it as a feature of communicative acts."<sup>6</sup>

Both the politician and the priest direct their messages, as eminent people, towards a certain type of public (individual or collective) with the intention to inform or to convince the public. There is no spokesman, in both the fields, that has no clear intention to guide on, when transmitting a message. Although the intentions may seem different (because the fields are totally opposite) as a mechanism they are not that different, whether they inform or convince a certain target groups.

Besides intention, both the political and religious communicator, have a certain goal. When talking about the goal, it can be presumed to be a good one (well meaning one) whether it is a religious or political one. If the intention is considered to be an action, the goal is more as table target that both the fields spokesman's wish to achieve.

Both in politics and religion we can recognize specific goal for each of the two fields but also common goals some of religion's specific goals are: making light in some religious ideas, describing the concept of salvation throw religion explaining the bible, a correct understanding of the redeemer's words and so on. From the specify political communication and PR goals we can highlight creating the politician image, promoting one type of political speech, bringing to the public's eye a certain type of political program, the reaction of other politicians confronting the program. From our point of view underneath all of these specific purposes there is a major common purpose of both fields, and the purpose is convincing a bigger amount of people of the veracity of the words coming from the both fields. A larger amount of people equals a bigger power owned by the ones who lead these people involved. For as long as both domains will exist in the society this voluntary or involuntary battle between the fields, although obvious, if we analyze it throw the mean of the major common purpose of both fields detailed above, the purpose was, is and will be masked by the specific goals of both the domains.

Regarding the target groups, the political communication departs it's self from the religious one throw the approach they use. The religious communications tends to use more the catch all speech patterns, while political communication type (besides the presidential on which use the catch all) as well divide's the basin elections and it addresses more target groups depending on their features. Obviously that in both fields the speech is influenced by the spokesman as well being every politician has his own capacity to communicate and off course every priest has his gift in

communicating with his followers. There are, of course, differences in the type of communication of both parties based on rural or urban location of the target groups. In this case, we can also bring in to discussion the way that the messages are comprehended by a certain target group especially when talking about the expectations of the people.

When talking about efficiency consider that we have similarities and differences between the two forms of communication. Both use the three basic forms of communication to achieve efficiency. The forms of communication are: verbal communication, non-verbal communication and interpersonal communication. Of the three forms of communication, we consider nonverbal communication extremely important because is the most extensive being supported mainly by visual analyzer. According to Melvin L. DeFleur and Sandra Ball-Rokeach nonverbal communication is important because: "non-verbal gestures are often used as words."<sup>7</sup>

From the point of view of Marius Ghilezan "a efficient political communication is the mean to highlight the advantages that we own or the disadvantages that the opponents have."<sup>8</sup> About efficiency and effectiveness in communication (the relationship between administration and public) also speaks Stancu Serb : "any such communication must be good and effective."<sup>9</sup> Referring to the communication process in general Michele Jouve believes that: "a communication is effective when the impact and feed-back are guaranteed."<sup>10</sup>

From our way of viewing it, a efficient religious communication (in the case of pure religious messages) is the way to bring a bigger and bigger number of people's attention and ways towards religion (the right path). The power that religious communication has over the political one is the same that faith has over credibility because faith gives human beings power, gives the priests power and gives religion power. We can not talk about faith in political communication but we can talk about credibility even though credibility is a concept with less resonance in the individual and collective belief than faith.

When talking about the use of communication in both fields (political and religious) we consider that the verbal and interpersonal manifestations are alike when talking about simplicity, opening to relation and information. "Democracy and inclusive policy processes create a platform where religious institutions and actors have a public voice."<sup>11</sup>

The differences appear when we talk about the content of verbal communication (mimics, gestures, clothing) associated with audio background. We can apprehend a clear difference in the paralinguistic language (the tone of voice, vocal label). The religious approach is always more calm, full of compassion and understanding. In view of the church solving a problem does not come through radical projects, but the way proposed by the church is faith, humility and prayers. The political approach in solving a problem can be on a higher voice and less popular measures, and the solutions come from a political plan that explains in a

rational way the solution. Even from the prospective of approach, religion is more powerful than politics, because it does not address the cognitive or rational part of the mind but the emotional side and the person's faith. Man being a complex bio - psycho - social entity, always call to reason, but especially the other aspects of its structure.

As a conclusion of this background we would say that in terms of future plans (entire life that includes political and religious phenomena) the system in which man lives by faith in God can be described as: man does not need rational arguments (yet not excluding them) on his way to salvation but it needs a political achievement, because in his mind a politician to become a credible one. Thus, we would like once again to put out just how powerful and important is faith in man's life.

There are, however some situations, in the religious field, that enter into conflict with people's expectations precisely because of the mistake that the Church makes when entering a more human domain where besides the emotional side or faith.

The links between politics and religion has been the object of many studies along the years, "the tension and affinities between politics and religion has been manifesting along the ages. Between the two separate poles, sometimes the poll of unity holds dominion other times the poll of opposition".<sup>12</sup>

If we are to discuss about the poll of opposition that we mention before, we can say that the tensions between the two fields, the religious and political one, are very much present in our days as well. "It is a self-deceit to belief that the harmony between the political society and religious forces, between the Church, the religious communities and the government, are from now on well established in the democracy. It is well worth it to belief that the main rule is tension."<sup>13</sup>

Even though tension remains the rule we must not forget that the goal of the collaboration, even though a tensioned one, is a noble one being the well-being of the humanity. "The social teachings of the Church offers universal principals of orientations, whose application in different areas of social life, economic, politics, could also be of universal magnitude, or to look upon some places in time, in relation to the circumstances, events, historical content, social and cultural that need normative intervention and special orientation."<sup>14</sup>

The Church assumes the fact that it has ideas and gives directives relating to political decision because "the social condition of life exercises a considerable pressure, to not use the word decisive, the conditioning human behaviors."<sup>15</sup>

„There has been a legal and philosophical trend over the last 60 years to remove more and more religion from public sphere."<sup>16</sup>

The modern society has evolved according to a pile of systems that function in a specific way and are divided by politics, religion, economics, science, education, art and so on. It was needed to "be established in what

shape and after what charts were the procedures and content of communication, was ordered in all of these sectors of existence.”<sup>17</sup>

The religious implications in politics is due to the fact that in many communities religion is considered to be one of the most important reporting factors in making decisions, even when it comes to the political type. So “the religious belief has been politicized”<sup>18</sup> in some aspects of the social life. This type of debates have expended even to a media level so as “the political content become a major factor in religious programs.”<sup>19</sup> In this content religion has sometimes prevailed as a decisive factor in the expression of different political opinions. Of course, not all the political subjects catch the eye of the religious field. Studies have shown that “close connections between religion and politics in subjects such as abortion, religion in schools and equal rights for women, do exist.”<sup>20</sup>

In general, we can say that in controversial and delicate subjects such as prostitution, marriage between sexes, death penalty and so on, that are big subjects in politics; when it comes to legalizing this type of bills, they become subjects that are in the religion’s interest as well.

The religion’s implications in decisions that are of political concern are not resumed, according to literature, at a strict relationship between the political authorities and religious ones. The ones who vote are the citizens. In consequence the discussions are extended to the point that the political decisions taken by the citizens are influenced by religion or not. In general, the decisions of the citizen are based on rational justifications that come from a set of values and beliefs and are formulated in the critical spirit of each and every individual. Therefore “every citizen should search for a public justification for the coercive policies that he or she supports.”<sup>21</sup> For some authors even, such as Huntington<sup>22</sup>, religion, like language are some of the most important elements of a state, being extremely important dimensions (vectors) of any culture and also of any civilization, so that there are chances of religious values and beliefs of citizens of a State to influence at a time, their political decisions. Respect to this, there are other more vehement opinions that say that „the role of religion in the stable Western states is definite: it does not interfere in the state affairs”<sup>23</sup>

The debates on the religious implication in the political decisions are based on many more arguments. Two of them state that: “1. the religious arguments and speech should not play any part in the political decisions and 2. the citizens and officials have no reason to search for religious-political justifications.”<sup>24</sup> Literature underlines the fact that citizens are not discouraged in forming their opinions having religious arguments, but it is expected that the arguments are not exclusively religious. Furthermore the citizens should have attitudes and decisional practices that allow them to be opened to accepting or rejecting some political aspects.

There are two aspects in which the decisional base of the citizens is different:

1. on one side the vision based on the fact that the political decisions involving the citizens are strictly separate from religion, excluding any type of religious arguments as being feasible in the political decision, is discussed; this aspect is called exclusivist and the religious doctrine should not have any part in the process of deciding.
2. on the other hand, the vision based on the fact that the citizens are not forced into looking for any kind of argument or justification for the political choices and decisions they make even though these decisions and aspects are strictly based on religious aspects, is in discussion.<sup>25</sup>

In the opinion of Fish the citizens should make a decision taking into consideration the next aspect: “discover what you think is right and then look around for means to find the truth in this matter.”<sup>26</sup>

Between the two aspects above is found a third aspect that represents the most discussed field linked to the religious position in the political content. The aspect is called inclusionism, this aspect has two primal characteristics: the first one talks about the political decision based on the citizens necessary justification and the second one talks about the commitment to both religious and political aspects. Thus for the inclusionist: “a citizen support based on religious beliefs concerning the decision or political speech is either almost either always permitted and maybe sometimes even encouraged.”<sup>27</sup> Inclusionism has to have two forms: a weak form and a strong form. So the weak inclusionism is referring to the fact that the citizens are sometimes forced to limit their appeal to religious doctrines when concerning political decisions even though rightfully based on religious aspects. In contrast, strong inclusionism states that the citizens do not have to limit their religious arguments when talking about political decisions.<sup>28</sup>

In this content, a part of literature affirms that: “it is morally permitted for a citizen to support or not even though it bases exclusively on rational arguments for this law.”<sup>29</sup> Citizens that lean on biblical aspects in the process of making a political decision have to be opened to the possibility of reevaluating their own religious beliefs and to assume criticism that citizens that have other religious beliefs might make. At the same time, some political decisions might be negatively by strict religious aspects. However, in the case of sensitive social issues such as human trafficking, prostitution, etc. there were situations, even in big states, where political decisions appealed to religious arguments to convince citizens about the negative consequences of their implementation. We can take for example the case of George W. Bush who used his political speech to combating human trafficking, with religious and theological arguments.<sup>30</sup>

To be able to illustrate this interference between the political and religious field as well as the reactions of both fields towards a certain sensitive society problem we considered necessary to demonstrate all the statements made until now, using a practical analysis. In this case we consider that legalizing prostitution is a sensitive problem and we wanted to highlight the political reactions and the Church's reaction when dealing with this problem, the press reflected these reactions along the time.

### **The press review regarding the proposition to legalize prostitution and the Church's reaction towards it**

In September 2010, the MP (member of Parliament) Silviu Prigoana submitted to Parliament a legislative initiative regarding the legalization of prostitution defined as a project called *Authorized sexual activity* that can take place independently or in a organized matter being in a brothel or gentleman's club. According to Mediafax, Prigoana motivated his intention throw a press release: "The motivation to submit a bill that permits prostitution to be exercised in a legal way lies in the need to bring light in the social situation of people that either way practice prostitution (by introducing them into the insurance system, health system, pension and so on) and why not to attempt to increase the economical benefits of the government."<sup>31</sup> The bill, shortly known as ACSA, oversees a activity based on legal regulations regarding the age of the person who can activate in such occupations but also norms of hygiene, aspects regarding their incomes, and so on. As we could aspect the subject raised a lot of powerful reactions from several politicians, but also from the Church. This subject is not a new subject in the Romanian political world. Across time there have been several propositions to legalize prostitution, but have always received the same negative feedback from the population and also from several politicians but mostly from the Church. The Church's reactions have been always considered strong enough to stop these discussions at least for the time being.

The reaction of the Romanian Orthodox Church towards such a controversial matter as this one is no different from the reactions of other Churches from different countries regarding the same matter. "There are few religions that do not consider prostitution a sin. The Buddhists being one of them. Instead Christian religion condemn prostitution and consider it a sin."<sup>32</sup>

Taking into consideration this states of facts and taking into account the fundamental hypothesis from which we parted from and enunciated at the beginning of the study, we consider using a secondary hypothesis referring strictly to the practical part, necessary, hypothesis that is referring to the fact that the relationship between the political and religious fields will always be a tens one in situations that refers to sensitive aspects of society like for example legalizing prostitution.

## Methodological perspectives

Taking into account those presented above, the present research has in mind a press review regarding the subject of legalizing prostitution in the context of the reaction of the Church towards this subject. To gain this goal we use online archives of the top five national dailies (according to the Romanian Audit of Circulation) being *Adevarul*, *Jurnalul National*, *Evenimentul zilei*, *Gandul* and *Cotidianul*. The review target the Church's reaction regarding the matter in discussion. We have to mention the fact that a important limitation is brought by the fact that although there are many articles dealing with this subject, the ones who refers to the Church's reaction are very few.

So between the years 2000-2010, period that we have chosen to analyze, we have identified fifteen articles in the five newspapers. The reason why we limited the period to the years between 2000-2010 is that the internal search engine of the news papers have generated articles viewing this subject beginning from the years 2000 some of them did not have a very well organized archive and so generating only recent articles. Furthermore, it seems like the first proposals regarding the legalization of prostitutions have begun in 2000. This analysis was made based on some common points that were the base of our documentations in every newspaper. So the key-words used in browsing the archives were *legalizing prostitution*. Only afterwards a selection of the articles that target only the reaction of the Church was and also a analysis regarding the content of every article has been achieved.

Chart No. 1: The situation of the articles that talk about the Church's reaction to the bill regarding legalizing prostitution in the five newspapers selected.

| The year of appearance | The title of the article                                                                              | The newspaper |
|------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------|
| 2001                   | The Romanian Orthodox Church is definitely apposite to legalizing prostitution                        | Adevarul      |
| 2002                   | The Romanian Orthodox Church-against legalizing prostitution                                          | Adevarul      |
| 2002                   | The Romanian Orthodox Church: legalizing prostitution could have anti-human and anti-Christian nature | Adevarul      |
| 2003                   | About prayer and libido in the prayer group in Senate                                                 | Adevarul      |
| 2003                   | The Romanian patriarch disfavours the decision of legalizing prostitution                             | Adevarul      |
| 2004                   | The Romanian patriarchy against the libertinism promoted by Basescu                                   | Adevarul      |
| 2010                   | Are we legalizing prostitution or not?                                                                | Adevarul      |

|      |                                                                                                                        |                   |
|------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------|
| 2004 | The Romanian Orthodox Church's protest -Basescu on the bad side of the Church                                          | Jurnalul National |
| 2004 | The MP's are afraid of the Church                                                                                      | Jurnalul National |
| 2009 | The Romanian patriarch, against legalizing prostitution regardless who initiated the proposition                       | Jurnalul National |
| 2009 | Zeus persecutes the Church                                                                                             | Jurnalul National |
| 2009 | Legalizing prostitution, slaving for money                                                                             | Evenimentul zilei |
| 2010 | Are you ok with the idea of legalizing prostitution?                                                                   | Evenimentul zilei |
| 2010 | The Church about legalizing prostitution: it will raise the number of divorces and would degrade the morals of society | Gandul            |
| 2010 | The Church against Prigoana: the law of prostitution equalizes a form of modern slavery                                | Cotidianul        |

As we can observe from the chart, the newspaper that publishes the most articles regarding the reaction of the Romanian Orthodox Church is *Adevarul* with seven articles written in the period 2001-2010, followed by *Jurnalul National* with four articles released two of them in 2004 and two in 2009, and *Evenimentul zilei* with a article in 2009 and one in 2010; the newspapers *Gandul* and *Cotidianul* both have one article published in 2010. The conclusion from the analyses of the number of articles and the period that they were published is that the newspaper with the largest circulation in Romania was the preoccupied with these kinds of discussions, publishing articles from a larger period of time in which the theme of legalizing prostitution was brought up by politicians. Furthermore, taking into considerations the fact that most of the articles found were talking about the subject in a political prospective, we can say that the subject is viewed in Romania more as a political subject than a religious one, a fact confirmed by the small number of articles over a period of ten years in the top papers from Romania.

Taking into consideration the hypothesis written at the beginning of the analysis, the relationship between the Church and politics is a tens one because the subject is a moral one and the reaction of the Church will always be based on moral, religious tradition and the family integrity.

A much profound analysis of the relationship between the content of legalizing prostitution is shown in the next chart:

**Chart No. 2:** The synthesis from all the key-messages from the article we have analyzed.

| Newspapers                                         | Key-messages                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      |
|----------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Adevarul, December 7 <sup>th</sup> 2001            | - the human being can not be, under any circumstances, the subject of economical transaction                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      |
| Adevarul, March 15 <sup>th</sup> 2002              | -legalizing prostitution would undermined the unity and dignity of families as a basic form of society<br>-legalizing prostitution will favor diseases such as AIDS and others<br>- the physical and mental health of women will be jeopardized                                                                                                   |
| Adevarul, November 14 <sup>th</sup> 2003           | - legalizing prostitution has a anti-human and anti-religious character                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           |
| Adevarul, October 29 <sup>th</sup> 2004            | - the Church condemns sin but does not heat the sinner, instead it offers permanent support if he or she manifests the will to change<br>- defending the human dignity, the stability and unity of the family, the moral health of the people and the spiritual rebirth of the Romanian society is the responsibility of each and every one of us |
| Adevarul, September, 12 <sup>th</sup> 2010         | - legalizing prostitution is considered to be a violation of the human being's dignity, a violation of the family and public morality<br>- the bill that was proposed does not resolve a social problem, but will amplify the "slave for economical reasons" phenomenon                                                                           |
| Jurnalul National, September 16 <sup>th</sup> 2004 | - legalizing prostitution has a anti-Christian and a anti-human character because human beings are transforming into objects of pleasure<br>- favors the spreading of venereal diseases                                                                                                                                                           |
| Jurnalul National, September 22, 2009              | - the state institution and the laws have to defend the person's dignity, the family institution and the values of social life                                                                                                                                                                                                                    |
| Jurnalul National, October 13 <sup>th</sup> 2004   | - Basescu's statements have stirred negative reactions from the Romanian Church, whom in a press release expresses it's indignation towards the views of the PD leader regarding legalizing prostitution and support of gay marriages                                                                                                             |
| Jurnalul National, September 24 <sup>th</sup> 2009 | - a irreconcilable conflict has emerged between the presidential administration and the Romanian Orthodox Church, When the proposition of legalizing prostitution and the decriminalization of consuming drugs<br>- the relationship between the president and the Orthodox Church was a oscillatory one and also apparently duplicitous          |
| Evenimentul zilei, March 12 <sup>th</sup> 2009     | - legalizing prostitution will aggravate the problem under the form of a slavery motivated financially                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            |

|                                                         |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            |
|---------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Evenimentul zilei,<br>September 7 <sup>th</sup><br>2010 | - the spokesman of the Romanian Orthodox Church, Constantin Stoica, has declared that the Church is rejecting any kind of initiative regarding this manner                                                                                 |
| Gandul,<br>September 7 <sup>th</sup><br>2010            | - a violation of the human dignity, of the sacred institution of family and of the public moral<br>- the phenomenon will amplify under the form of human slavery motivated financially<br>- damage the physical and mental health of women |
| Cotidianul,<br>September 8 <sup>th</sup><br>2010        | - legalizing prostitution represents a violation of the human being's dignity, of the sacred institution of family and of the public morality                                                                                              |

Even though a simple reading of the articles show the fact that the relationship between the Church and politics, regarding the subject in matter is a tense, because the Romanian Orthodox Church sends clear messages regarding its position towards the proposal of legalizing prostitution, a detailed analysis of the key-messages of this subject will confirm the hypothesis from which we parted from. So the content analysis of the articles highlights the fact that along time the Church's reactions were based on the same arguments: morality, personal and family integrity and dignity as a fundamental base of society.

Thus the articles present different situations in which the Romanian Orthodox Church has reacted, in different periods of time, to the initiative of legalizing prostitution. The Holy Synod of the Romanian Orthodox Church rejects this initiative sustaining that: "the unity and dignity of the family, as a fundamental principal of society"<sup>33</sup> can be seriously affected by this law. Members of the Church consider that legalizing prostitution would not decrease the rate of sexual transmitted diseases and the physical and mental health of those who practice this job would be denigrated in a irreparable way. Furthermore in a open letter, the patriarch Teoctist sent the members of two chambers of Parliament a message in which he expresses his disapproval regarding the legislative project which he considers anti-human. The transformation of humans in objects of pleasure represents in the Romanian Orthodox Church's opinion a act of devoid of all Christian character. The Romanian Church considers that this action will only annul the effects but not the causes why young women are determined to turn to such a practice. Being a moral subject, prostitution can not enter into a debate and Christians to agree with it. Referring to the economical reasons, which could represent an argument in favor of legalizing prostitution, members of the Church consider them as being irrelevant "because the human being can not be a subject of transaction under no circumstances."<sup>34</sup> It is also mentioned the fact that, in a similar situation the government its self will become procurers, a fact that will lead to its defacement. In the articles we find the opinion of the

Romanian Orthodox Church regarding the politicians and public figures that support this kind of initiative, they are thought to be immoral.

The position in which the Romanian Church stands is revealed in other analyzed articles. Thus, we can identify facts regarding the conflict between the Presidential Committee that analysis the social and geographical risks and the Romanian Orthodox Church regarding the subject of legalizing prostitution, the Presidential Committee says that legalizing prostitution is benefic and the reasons were presented earlier. On the other side, the ethical and legal advisory board of the patriarchy “analyzed the report of the Committee and released a press statement in which it rejects the proposal made.”<sup>35</sup> The Romanian Church is scandalized by the fact that the president Traian Basescu supports the initiative to legalize prostitution that he considers that “it would represent a balance for the homes in Romania, thus the legalization of the phenomenon is necessary.”<sup>36</sup> It is noticeable that the difference in the opinions of Traian Basescu and the Romanian Church will only sustain the poor relationship between them. The sociologist Cristian Pârvulescu, cited in the article „Zeus persecutes the Church,” in Jurnalul National from 24<sup>th</sup> of September 2009<sup>37</sup> considers that the opinion of the president is a deficit one because Romanians belief in the Church and this fact needs to be respected by the president. In only one paper, Jurnalul National, is mentioned the tense relationship between the President and the Orthodox Church, so we consider that the discussion of legalizing prostitution is intentionally masked and the accent is being put on the conflict between the president and the Church. The position that the newspaper has regarding the president is already known.

The motivations of the Church along the time regarding this subject have taken different shapes but always had the same principals. The spokesman of the Church, Constantin Stoica has stated in a article that: “We have said it every year. We reject every initiative regarding this matter.”<sup>38</sup> Thus in 2009, when the proposal was made, the Romanian Patriarchy stated that “The institutions of the state and the laws have to defend the person’s dignity, the sacred institution of family and the values of social life. The projects in the last mounts show that the person’s dignity, the sacred institution of family and the values of social life are completely ignored by its authors. In consequence, the Romanian Patriarchy rejects the descriminalisation of prostitution is rejected”<sup>39</sup>. They sustain that legalizing prostitution will not give advantages but will motivate the financial slavery that intensifies the degradation of the morality of the society, the spreading of different diseases and increase the number of divorces. In conclusion, this process will lead to, according to the Romanian Church, to the degradation of the population, regardless the country in which the law passes. A group of people formed by professors, doctors, lawyers, theologians, members of the bioethical committee of the Romanian Patriarchy, of ASCOR and the legion of

students of the University of Bucharest has edited a brochure with the title *The hidden face of legalized prostitution*, that contains results of scientific research (medical, sociological, psychological, theological and so on), made on the phenomenon in the whole world supporting the Church in its actions against legalizing prostitution.

Another idea that results from analyzing the articles in that ONU recommended Romania to legalize prostitution, but the bill is always blocked because the MP's are held back by the reactions of the Church that ignores the recommendation of the ONU. In the Romanian Orthodox Church's opinion, the proposal if accepted will not lead to the fade of the illegal prostitution but will even favor in a subtle way the spreading of venereal diseases. However, the Church maintains its position saying that any legislative proposal must have as a goal the defense of the persons and family dignity, promoting the social values and the common good, and not the deepening of the moral crises that had a part in generating the economical crises in a international scale.

We see as important to note and consider the position of other Christian denominations on this topic. We will discuss the Catholic Church in Romania that in many official statements has expressed their disagreement with the proposal to legalize prostitution: „Roman Catholic Archdiocese of Bucharest opposes to the legalization of prostitution and decriminalization of drug use.”<sup>40</sup>

Roman Catholic Archdiocese of Bucharest opposes the proposals, made explicit by President Traian Basescu, on the legalization of prostitution and decriminalization of drug use, which are part of the report *Risks and social inequities in Romania*, made by a presidential commission.<sup>41</sup>

## Final discussion

Taking into account the content analysis that we made on the five newspaper with the largest circulation in Romania, the conclusions that we draw are: first of all the subject of legalizing prostitution is very present in the press of Romania but the political view is more present than the religious one. In general, the articles present passages from the legislative proposal but does not mention the Church. On the other hand, the articles that talk about the Church are in very small number and they all have the same key-words: “legalizing prostitution does not solve a serious social problem but it amplifies the problem under the form of social slavery motivated financially. At the same time, legalizing prostitution intensifies the moral degradation of society, contributes to the spreading of different diseases and increases the number of divorces; the women that are part of this slavery will suffer a degradation of mental and physical health but also a degradation of social dignity”<sup>42</sup>. The quote, taken from the press release of the Romanian Patriarchy, is found,

partially or entirely, in all most all the articles that show the reaction of the Church to the proposition of legalizing prostitution. So, we can say that the relationship between politics and religion, in the content of delicate subjects as legalizing prostitution is a tense one. So we can admit that the hypothesis (the secondary one) from which we have departed practically has been validated.

Regarding the fundamental hypothesis of our study we can make some final statements that were highlighted in our theoretic-analytical study and in the practical one. Our study has shown that there is a interference between the two fields in all the periods not just in the ones that highlight a issue or a problem. This conflict between politics and the Church is a beneficial one because it represents a filter that filters a decision at a micro and macro-climate level. The social balance is given by the two visions in the following matter: liberalism, or the social restructures or the innovating ideas of the politic field is sometimes better if it has an opponent in the conservatism based on the traditions promoted by the Church. The transformations in society take place because of the evolution of humanity and mental evolution, but the speed must be carefully calculated so it does not produce any disharmonies. So we tried to demonstrate an idea of the fundamental hypothesis being that the Church will have a more conservative, traditionalist attitude regarding a issue meanwhile politics will be more flexible accepting more easier new ideas coming from, as we mentioned before, from human and mental growth. Yet we consider the fundamental hypothesis only partially valid and we will explain this aspect in the following paragraph. We parted from the idea that the Church will have a more reserved attitude in the moment it has to express a position. The truth is that moderation is a characteristic of the Church and of the religious field in general in most of the cases. When the social changes come in contradiction with the Church's dogmas we observed, as it resulted in the practical analysis, a change in the attitude of the religious filed that transformed its moderation or understanding into a categorical position , sometimes even vehement one. A conclusion of these ideas refers to the fact that, in a problem belonging to the social space of the religious filed will always be impregnated with more conservatism than the political one.

Regarding our study we consider that the existence of the two fields the religious and the political one that have convergent or divergent positions regarding different problems of micro or macro-climate benefits the social upcoming and brings moderation and systematical balance this being so necessary to the evolution of the humanity.

## Conclusions

Referring to the subject of this study we are aware that it is able to lead many comments, pros and cons opinions. We would like to remind

the reader that through this study we didn't wanted to do a debate on the phenomenon in question, we only wanted to highlight the church's reaction against this phenomenon. Thoroughly analyzing this phenomenon as well as public reaction of the church and of some politicians against this phenomenon, although we are not clergymen or doctors, or policemen, neither lawyers or politicians, we believe that in terms of each category of people of the stated above arguments for or against this phenomenon can be made.

For example through the Orthodox Church and especially in terms of moral dogmas promoted by church we believe that the church acted correctly in accordance with its dogmas, when the public reaction was to condemn the act of legalizing prostitution.

From a medical and psychological perspective can be considered that physical and mental health of the population is very important. Thus from this perspective legalizing prostitution would bring a mandatory medical examination of prostitutes, which would not be a bad thing either for them or for those who require their services. Regarding mental health, we believe that it is difficult to determine whether the enactment of this phenomenon would help or harm the improvement of the mental life of the population. Medically, the issue is that without a legal framework for those who are part of this phenomenon they are not obliged to constantly do medical examination, which is not a correct thing and can lead to diseases such as HIV AIDS, diseases that are lethal for humans.

From a police perspective we would be curious to know whether legalizing prostitution would reduce the number of rapes. We believe that this question is also difficult to be answered. However, we believe that the police know that this phenomenon still occurs and a law on this issue would surface the activities of many people involved in prostitution. Therefore, police could more easily control this phenomenon.

From a legal system or from the politician's perspective, legalization of prostitution could be considered a law like any other that could be developed as well as possible.

We have called on these perspectives in order to have an overview of the complexity of this phenomenon and of the many consequences that could result from the approval or disapproval of this phenomenon.

The problem of the society is the fact that this phenomenon exists with or without the consent of the legislature or the church.

From our point of view, human relationships should be based on friendship, communication, mutual respect, understanding and especially love. If these values are under attack it is given a different meaning to human relationships. Regardless of the dogma, economic, political or social situation, we believe that a human being as a whole that include body, personality, psychic, and conscience should not be for sell, nor should be a source of pleasure paid with money. Yet this phenomenon exists and can not be ignored. It is in hand of legislators together with the

church and other decision makers at the micro and macro level to find a solution that could be the best for the health and welfare of the nation.

### Notes:

<sup>1</sup> Sociological Research on the perception Democracy, Citizenship and Civic participation, <http://www.ccsb.ro/projects/Dupa20deaniSondaj.pdf> (accessed March 5, 2011).

<sup>2</sup> Florica Ștefănescu, „Demographic evolutions between religion and politics,” *Journal for the Study of Religions and Ideologies* 8, no. 24 (2009): 284.

<sup>3</sup> Samuel Huntington, *Ciocnirea civilizațiilor și refacerea ordinii mondiale*, (București: Antet, 1998), 142.

<sup>4</sup> Florica Ștefănescu, 284.

<sup>5</sup> Maxim Ioan Danciu, *Mass-media modernitate postmodernitate globalizare* (Cluj-Napoca: Tribuna, 2005), 39.

<sup>6</sup> Denis McQuail, *Comunicarea* (Iași: Institutul European, 1999), 16.

<sup>7</sup> Melvin DeFleur and Sandra Ball-Rokeach, *Teorii ale comunicării de masă* (Iași: Polirom, 1999), 241.

<sup>8</sup> Marius Ghilezan, *Cum să reușești în politică. Manual de campanie electorală* (București: Active Vision, 2000), 97.

<sup>9</sup> Stancu Șerb, *Relații publice și comunicare* (București: Teora, 1999), 36.

<sup>10</sup> Michele Jouve, *Comunicarea. Publicitate și relații publice* (Iași: Polirom, 2005), 110.

<sup>11</sup> Carolina Ivanescu, „Politicised religion and the religionisation of politics,” *Culture and Religion*, 11, no. 4 (2010):309.

<sup>12</sup> Jean-Claude Eslin, *Dumnezeu și Puterea. Teologie și politică în Occident* (București: Anastasia, 2001), 29.

<sup>13</sup> Eslin, 331.

<sup>14</sup> Isidor Martinică, *Cultura și educația în doctrina socială a Bisericii* (București: Editura Universității din București, 2004), 12.

<sup>15</sup> Pierre Letamendia, *La Démocratie chrétienne* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1977), 5.

<sup>16</sup> Stephen Chavura, „The Separation of Religion and State: Context and Meaning,” *Nebula* (2010): 37.

<sup>17</sup> Gianpaolo Romanato, Mario G. Lombardo and Ioan Petru Culianu, *Religie și putere*, ediția a II-a, traducere de Maria Magdalena Anghelescu și Șerban Anghelescu (Iași: Polirom, 2005), 89.

<sup>18</sup> Barry A. Hollander, „The Priming of Religion in Political Attitudes: The Role of Religious Programming” *Journal of Communication and Religion*, 21, no. 1 (1998): 68.

<sup>19</sup> Barry A. Hollander, 69.

<sup>20</sup> A.H. Miller and M.P. Wattenberg, „Politics from the pulpit: Religiosity and the 1980 elections”, *Public opinion Quarterly*, 48 (1984): 70.

<sup>21</sup> James W. Boettcher, „Strong Inclusionist Accounts of the Role of Religion in Political Decision-Making”, *Journal of Social Philosophy*, 36, no. 4 (2005): 501-502.

<sup>22</sup> We mention here that we expose here the personal opinion of the famous author, known for his studies with reference to modern civilizations and their implications on various elements of relationship between the state and its various structures.

- <sup>23</sup> Salahaddin Khalilov, „Religion, Ideology and civilization”, *International Journal of Academic Research*, 2, no. 1 (2010): 202.
- <sup>24</sup> James W. Boettcher, 501-502.
- <sup>25</sup> James W. Boettcher, 497.
- <sup>26</sup> Stanley Fish, *The trouble with Principle* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1999), 456.
- <sup>27</sup> James W. Boettcher, 499-500.
- <sup>28</sup> James W. Boettcher, 499-500.
- <sup>29</sup> James W. Boettcher, 498-499.
- <sup>30</sup> Yvonne Zimmerman, „Religion and Politics, from Busch to Obama. Rethinking sex and religion in the United States` Initiative to Combat Human Trafficking”. *Journal of Feminist Studies in Religion*. 26, no. 1 (2010): 79.
- <sup>31</sup> <http://www.mediafax.ro/politic/silviu-prigoana-a-depus-la-parlament-o-propunere-legislativa-privind-legalizarea-prostitutiei-7130248> (accessed January 20, 2011).
- <sup>32</sup> Lucinda Joy Peacha, „Sex Slaves' Or 'sex Workers'? Cross-cultural and Comparative Religious Perspectives on Sexuality, Subjectivity, and Moral Identity in Anti-sex Trafficking Discourse”, *Culture and Religion*, 6: 1 (2005): 107.
- <sup>33</sup> „The Romanian Orthodox Church: legalizing prostitution could have anti-human and anti-Christian nature,” *Adevărul*, March 15, 2002, [www.adevarul.ro](http://www.adevarul.ro).
- <sup>34</sup> „The Romanian Orthodox Church is definitely apposite to legalizing prostitution,” *Adevărul*, December 7, 2001, [www.adevarul.ro](http://www.adevarul.ro).
- <sup>35</sup> Adriana Duțulescu. „Zeus persecutes the Church,” *Jurnalul Național*, September 24, 2009, [www.jurnalul.ro](http://www.jurnalul.ro).
- <sup>36</sup> Adriana Duțulescu, [www.jurnalul.ro](http://www.jurnalul.ro).
- <sup>37</sup> Adriana Duțulescu, [www.jurnalul.ro](http://www.jurnalul.ro).
- <sup>38</sup> Oana Dan and Andreea Dogar. „Are you ok with the idea of legalizing prostitution?”, *Evenimentul zilei*, September 7, 2010, [www.evz.ro](http://www.evz.ro).
- <sup>39</sup> „The Romanian patriarch, against legalizing prostitution regardless who initiated the proposition,” *Jurnalul Național*, September 22, 2009, [www.jurnalul.ro](http://www.jurnalul.ro).
- <sup>40</sup> Arhiepiscopia Romano-Catolică de București, „Comunicat de presă,” [http://www.arcb.ro/index.php?option=com\\_content&view=article&id=2891:10032009-comunicat-de-pres&catid=154:documentecomunicate&Itemid=416](http://www.arcb.ro/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=2891:10032009-comunicat-de-pres&catid=154:documentecomunicate&Itemid=416) (accessed March 7, 2011).
- <sup>41</sup> Arhiepiscopia Romano-Catolică de București, „Comunicat de presă,” [http://www.arcb.ro/index.php?option=com\\_content&view=article&catid=154:documentecomunicate&id=5090:24092009-comunicat-de-pres](http://www.arcb.ro/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&catid=154:documentecomunicate&id=5090:24092009-comunicat-de-pres) (accessed June 10, 2011).
- <sup>42</sup> We have cited from BOR press release. Can be found here: <http://www.mediafax.ro/social/patriarhia-romana-legalizarea-prostitutiei-reprezinta-o-forma-de-sclavie-moderna-7141470> (accessed June 21, 2011).

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