

CONSTANTIN SCHIFIRNEȚ

ORTHODOXY, CHURCH, STATE, AND NATIONAL IDENTITY IN THE CONTEXT OF TENDENTIAL MODERNITY

Constantin Schifirneț

National School of Political and Administrative Studies, Department of
Communication and Public Relations, Bucharest, Romania.

Email: constantin.schifirnet@yahoo.com

Abstract: The article analyzes the interaction of Orthodoxy and the state and its role in asserting national identity in the context of Romania's modernization process. I have developed the concept of tendential modernity for studying the distinctive nature of Romanian modernity. Modernity in Romania focused primarily on national and geostrategic problems, due to the absence of a state encompassing all Romanians. The Orthodox Church had been recognized as a symbol of national identity, therefore it was included among the basic institutions that would support the national project, in order to serve the new purposes imposed by modernity.

In the context of the modernization process undergone by Romanian society, the church is not separated from the state, but becomes a church of the state, a church whose prerogatives are established by the secular power; thus the church is defined as an institution that is embedded in the process of modern change decided by the state. As a matter of fact, modernity itself was ambivalent and ambiguous, which influenced decisively the role of Orthodoxy in the assertion of Romanian identity.

Key Words: church, national identity, orthodoxy, religion, state, tendential modernity

Introduction

This article analyzes the relationship between religion and modernity in a society that underwent a type of modernization process which is different from the one experienced in the developed societies¹. I intend to explain the specific interaction of Orthodoxy and the state and its role in asserting national identity in the context of Romania's historical evolution.

I start with the assumption that, in the twenty-first century, religion is viewed as a condition for the preservation of national identity. Studies on modernity discuss religion as an inherent element to the modernization processes² and acknowledge especially the role of protestantism in starting and sustaining the capitalist development in the Western world. When the discussion turns to other religions, like Orthodoxy, it is considered that they have not played any role or have even hindered the social and economic development of society³.

I attempt a sociological explanation of how the Romanian state, which was bound to pursue the unification of all the Romanian people in a single state (the "national issue") and the preservation of its independence, sustained and promoted the Romanian identity through the actions of the Romanian Orthodox Church. I intend to reveal why Orthodoxy adapted itself to the peculiarities of the processes of social change taking place in the area where the Romanian nation is located.

The relationship between Romanian Orthodoxy and modernity has been discussed especially in terms of the adjustment to the norms and principles of the Western modernity. The thesis of this article is that the specific nature of contemporary Romanian society and culture cannot be understood without analyzing the historical context, namely the way in which national identity and religious identity have conditioned modern social and cultural changes. In other societies located in the same geopolitical area, like Greece, the modernization process within the church and society in the nineteenth century was also influenced by the nationalist ideologies and the impact of foreign forces, while some of the essential factors of Western modernity, for instance the ideas of the Reformation and the Enlightenment, did not play a decisive role⁴.

Any discussion about Romanian modernity must take into account the specific nature of Orthodoxy, which is substantially different from Roman Catholicism and Protestantism. I also have to take into account the ethnic basis of the two Romanian churches – the Romanian Orthodox Church and the Greek Catholic Church –, both of whom have promoted the national idea and the unity of all Romanian people in one state.

The first section of this article examines the increased role of religion in contemporary society, and the simultaneous recognition of its role in the public sphere. Then, I will highlight some elements of the relationship

between Orthodoxy and modernity. The final part of the article discusses the distinctive nature of Romanian modernity, introducing the thesis of tendential modernity, that served primarily to create the framework for preserving national identity and ensuring an independent state.

I would like to stress out from the very beginning the sociological and anthropological nature of this study, which treats the church and Orthodoxy as institutions and social facts. My previous studies have approached national identity as related to religion and especially to Orthodoxy, as well as the relationship between the church and the state⁵.

Religion and church in contemporary society

For a long period of time, it was suggested that religion and modernity exclude each other. In this view, secularization means the inevitable decline in social significance of religion as a consequence of the processes of modernization: “Secularization was a necessary part of modernization and as the world modernized, it would automatically secularize.”⁶ Secularization stems from the need for autonomy of the modern man, who rejects the influence of the church on his own way of thinking and acting. Furthermore, secularization spreads from the European countries to all parts of the world, becoming a vehicle of modernity: “The export of secularization remains unquestioned in so far as most Europeans assume that as the world modernized, it would necessarily secularize, a connection profoundly embedded in the modern European consciousness.”⁷

Many studies have shown that industrialization, urbanization, and rising levels of education and wealth greatly reduce the influence of religious institutions on people living in developed societies:

“The death of religion was the conventional wisdom in the social sciences during most of the twentieth century; indeed it has been regarded as *the* master model of sociological inquiry, where secularization was ranked with bureaucratization, rationalization, and urbanization as the key historical revolutions transforming medieval agrarian societies into modern industrial nations.”⁸

Jürgen Habermas advanced similar ideas as he wrote about the coexistence of religions. The German philosopher argued that the state founded on liberal principles should not transform the necessary institutional separation of religion and state into undue mental and psychological difficulties for those citizens who follow their faith:

“Under unfavorable circumstances, capitalist modernization penetrating these societies from the outside then triggers social uncertainty and

cultural upheavals. What is more surprising is the political revitalization of religion at the heart of the United States, where the dynamism of modernization unfolds most successfully. Certainly, in Europe ever since the days of the French Revolution we have been aware of the power of a religious form of traditionalism that saw itself as counter-revolutionary.”⁹

A study conducted in 152 states revealed that none of these countries, except the United States, had an absolute separation of state and religion, to the effect that the state would give no support to religion. On the contrary, it was noted that the involvement of the state in religion was increasing. It turned out that the separation of state and religion was not an essential dimension of democratic societies. The prediction according to which religion would cease to play an important role in any state was proven wrong; on the contrary, religion has a prominent presence in the public sphere¹⁰.

The evolution of religion has marked a change in the outlook and conduct of the modern man in the twenty-first century, bringing to the fore religious practices that are no longer opposed to modernity. In the Catholic countries, for instance, while Catholicism is declining, modernity generates its own forms of religion, since modernity stimulates expectations that cannot be met without stimulating religious imagination¹¹. Religious pluralism is considered a hallmark of modernity. The modern state contributes to the pluralization of the religious sphere, that is to say it permits religious organizations to enter its territory, it controls them by granting rights and establishing obligations, it creates the framework for the peaceful coexistence of various religious groups, it regulates the religious sphere¹². The state defines the standards of legitimacy for religion in society. In turn, the religious institutions adopt the principles of bureaucracy that characterize the modern state.

It is significant that, while there is religious pluralism in the United States, the American people explicitly adhere to one religion, namely Christianity. Furthermore, America’s national identity is understood as belonging to Christianity as the dominant religion: “Rather than merely describing the demographic status quo, statements like ‘America is a Christian nation’ represent a discursive practice that seeks to align the boundaries of authentic national belonging with adherence to the dominant religious faith.”¹³ Therefore, it has been said that America is an atypical example, because the modernization of society coexists with high levels of religious involvement: “religiosity appears to have remained stable in the United States”¹⁴.

The debate about religion, modernity, and secularization is livelier than ever since the advent of the secularization theory¹⁵. P. Berger, who advocated secularism in the 1960s, considers the decline of the churches in

many Western European countries the exception rather than the rule¹⁶, a thesis opposite to the idea about the marginalizing of Christianity in a pluralistic society¹⁷. He has explained why his theory of secularization had changed:

“Today you cannot plausibly maintain that modernity necessarily leads to secularization: it may – and it does in certain parts of the world among certain groups of people –, but not necessarily. On the other hand, I would argue that modernity very likely, but not inevitably, leads to pluralism, to a pluralization of worldviews, values, etc., including religion, and I think one can show why that is. It’s not a mysterious process. It has to do with certain structural changes and their effects on human institutions and human consciousness.”¹⁸

Mircea Eliade had argued as early as 1957, in his work *The Sacred and the Profane*, that the areligious man is a rare phenomenon even in the most desacralized of modern societies. The modern man, who claims to be areligious, still carries within himself an entire hidden mythology and a myriad of degraded ritualisms. Mircea Eliade conceives the sacred as an inherent element to consciousness, which denies the rationalist approach that considers the phenomenon of religion to be a prescientific stage of human evolution. Religion, says Eliade, presumes and asserts the profane, giving man the possibility to perceive the sacred¹⁹. It is not without interest that any religious belief manifests itself as a way of building one’s identity in relation to reference groups. Indeed, the sacred, an immanent dimension of the human being, reverberates throughout the human world, including the social world: “Religion is a powerful reservoir, as religious revelations are turned into national shrines, religious miracles become national feasts, and holy scriptures are reinterpreted as national epics.”²⁰

Although the thesis of religious pluralism had already emerged in the 1980s, Huntington continued to approach the religious life of the former Communist countries by relating it to Western modernity²¹. Huntington’s idea is invoked as an argument of the religious differentiation between Eastern and Western Europe:

“Casual observers often notice a divide between a religious East and a secular West, and many European politicians have pointed to the public piety of Hungarians, Slovaks, or Poles as a marker of backwardness, an indication that they are not quite ready for full European status. Just as it was once common to speak of a distinctive (and pathological) ‘Eastern’ form of nationalism, so today many

commentators perceive a unique, atavistic, not-quite-European form of public religiosity in the new member states of the EU!”²²

Peter J. Katzenstein introduces in the study of religion the concept of „multiple modernities”, coined by S. Eisenstadt, bringing forth arguments against the so-called increase in secularism in present-day society:

“Multiple modernities disappoint those searching for one dominant narrative, such as the growth of secularism or the inescapability of civilizational clashes. They are expressed in a variety of cultural programs that reinvent themselves continuously in history. These programs adapt themselves to (and also modify) large-scale historical processes such as modernization, secularization, industrialization, and democratization.”²³

Recent research indicates a revival of Christianity and an increase in the number of persons “believing without belonging”, both of which occurs more often among young people:

“In fact, for the status of religions and Christian denominations in Europe, the tendency in the last twenty years has been a reduction of the extremes: the most secularized countries, such as France, are tending to grant more recognition to religion (denominational schooling under state contract, school curricula content, ethics committees, etc.), while at the other extreme, official religions, in countries that have one, are less marked denominationally.”²⁴

The explanation for the revival of religious feeling within the context of modernity can be found in facts and events caused by risks derived from the evolution of contemporary society:

“It is said that we have passed from triumphant modernity to disenchanting, relativized modernity, unsure of itself, devoid of collective hope (collapse of the ‘great narratives’), threatened by economic insecurity, ecological dangers, and the spread of nuclear weapons; modernity that, under these conditions, is making a return –selectively – to traditions and the contributions of great civilizations (other approaches to medicine, other forms of wisdom and religion, etc.).”²⁵

Orthodoxy and national identity

From my analysis above I conclude that religion has a strong presence in any contemporary society, be it a developed and modern one or an emergent one. Undoubtedly, religion occupies a dominant position in the traditions of a nation, as one of the components of national identity²⁶. It is significant that the Romanian national identity comprises the European, as well as the Christian dimension. Therefore, it is considered that the Church served primarily the interests of the nation and not the interests of the society and of its every people²⁷. From the Orthodox point of view, the ideal of the nation can be completely integrated in the Christian ideal²⁸. Christianity is perceived in Romania as inextricably linked to nationality²⁹.

The fall of Communism in 1989 restored hope for an evolution towards modernity that would remove the obstacles to economic development and to the improvement of life conditions in the post-communist countries. The subsequent evolution of these countries has not led to economic performance, but has strengthened the role of religion in asserting national identity. Orthodoxy continues to give voice to national identity in the countries where it is a dominant force. Consequently, Orthodoxy is part of the religious revival in society today. In this context, one can say that Orthodoxy has adapted itself to the social changes. As a matter of fact, this is openly acknowledged: "Orthodoxy is not a static and changeless system, as many Orthodox like to present it. It can very well endorse and promote various changes, despite internal criticism and reactions"³⁰.

Religious, cultural and national identity is associated with the ideals of independence and sovereignty both in the Church and in the state affairs, therefore Eastern Orthodoxy is considered more nationalist than other Christian denominations³¹.

National identity expresses attitudes, mentalities and collective behaviors of the individuals belonging to a national state. National identity is defined by the distinctive, even unique features of a nation, such as language, culture, religion, but also by the observance of customs, traditions, and conventions which are specific to a national community³². National identity in many European countries expressed their objective existence and the essence of what their people did in order to be recognized as modern nations. Among the consequences of this process we mention the sense of belonging to a national community and the edification of a unique, i.e. national culture, protected from foreign influences. Today there is a crisis of identities, determined by the redefinition of cultural identities along different lines than those typical of the modern period³³.

During the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, religious identity in South-Eastern Europe derived from a synthesis between Orthodoxy and

nation, which led to a merger between local and national traditions, on the one hand, and Orthodoxy, on the other hand. This identity is part of the historical trajectory of a mostly Orthodox modernization of South-East European societies³⁴. It is a close relationship in many cases, between ethnic origin myths and religious belief³⁵.

The study of the evolution of Romanian identity brought about by Orthodoxy takes into account the actual social and historical context in the regions inhabited by Romanians. Thus, while in Wallachia and Moldavia the Orthodox Church was dominant, though not autocephalous, in Transylvania, the Romanians being Orthodox, were merely tolerated as an ethnic group³⁶. Until the second half of the nineteenth century, the Orthodox Romanians in Transylvania were under the canonical rule of the Serbian Patriarch of Karlowitz. In the official documents of the period, the formula “Orthodox” was not admitted and was replaced with the term “not united”.

For the Romanian people, Orthodoxy represents more than a Christian denomination; it is, in fact, identified as belonging to Romanian ethnicity: “In other words, a Romanian was someone who was Orthodox. But Orthodoxy was not only a body of doctrine. Rather, it was an amalgam of faith and religious practices intertwined with ancient folk customs and beliefs that had been passed down from generation to generation.”³⁷ According to Keith Hitchins, the process of modernization has not led to the creation of the nation in the areas inhabited by Romanians, since the nation existed as such before the beginning of modernization:

“The nation discovered and affirmed by Romanian elites was not a construct; it was not simply an entity they imagined as a response to the economic and social imperatives of the modern age. Rather, the elites of the eighteenth century built on a sense of community that was already strong in 1700: the memory of shared experiences in the past, the folk customs and myths, the language, the Eastern Orthodox religious tradition, and the social and political exclusion that drew the community together.”³⁸

From here I can conclude that the nation already existed in the three Romanian principalities, which were agrarian societies that embarked on the path to modernity much later than the Western countries:

“The elites’ idea of nation thus had strong roots in the past. There is other evidence, too, that the idea of nation was not wholly a product of modernity. Romanian society and Transylvanian society, in general, in the eighteenth and the first half of the nineteenth century were agrarian. They were not

by any definition capitalist and industrial, even though changes in the economy of the principality were accelerating after 1800.”³⁹

Unlike Western modernity, which separated the evolution of the nation from that of the church, in Eastern Europe, including Romania, modernity has cemented the unity of church and nation. It is significant that Orthodoxy has been named a Christian denomination of Greek origin⁴⁰. Orthodoxy was adopted by nations forced to survive under the domination of empires, while Catholicism belonged to independent and economically powerful nations. This disparity is responsible for the different social and economic foundation of each Christian denomination.

To belong to Orthodoxy means to have, by birth or choice, a linguistically, geographically, culturally, and mentally determined identity. In other words, you cannot simply be an Orthodox, but you can be a Russian Orthodox, a Romanian Orthodox, or a Greek Orthodox⁴¹.

In the Orthodox countries (Russia, Georgia, Romania, Serbia, Bulgaria, Greece), the modern development and industrialization occurred two centuries later than in the West. Therefore, capitalism was never a dominant economic force in those countries. This explains why Orthodoxy was and remains culturally and theologically different from Roman Catholicism and Protestantism:

“For all these and other historical reasons Orthodoxy was and remains culturally and theologically different from both Roman Catholicism and Protestantism. For the same reasons the relationship of Orthodoxy to modernity and to secularization is specific and ambivalent. Orthodoxy is premodern not only in a historical sense but also in the sense that it transcends Western rationalism and rationalization”⁴².

This difference between Orthodoxy and the other Christian denominations leads to a distinctive evolution of modernity.

In our discussion, I put Orthodoxy on the same level as the other Christian denominations, considering that they form together the unity of the Christian world. More often than not, the focus is on the dichotomy between Christianity in Eastern Europe and Christianity in Western Europe, with the sole purpose of highlighting certain political differences, for example the attitude towards civil society. It is said that, rather than being part of civil society, the Romanian Orthodox Church has remained an ally of the state: “Therefore, instead of positioning itself in the ranks of civil society and thus contributing to the consolidation of democracy in Romania, after 1989, the ROC made constant attempts to ally with the state and to receive advantages from this alliance”⁴³. If I could say that the ROC is part of the civil society, we should ask ourselves if there is a civil society

in Romania. In fact, the Romanian Orthodox Church is not an ally of the state, but an institution which, in its historical tradition, has cooperated with the state in spiritual and national matters.

The Romanian public sphere is characterized by a resurgence of religion and by the omnipresence of religious ideas in a space that pretends at the same time to be inspired by the ideal of modernization. I can see this dual presence of religion: on the one hand, a massive presence in the public sphere, on the other hand, a discourse about the failure to cultivate Christian morality⁴⁴.

Furthermore, European integration can be perceived as a threat to the national identity of the new member states, in view of the fact that national identity and Orthodox identity partially overlap: “the Romanian Orthodox Church constructs itself as the true and only carrier of Romanian national identity, defined dialectically by opposition to the cosmopolitan identity of Western Europe”⁴⁵.

Recent research has advanced the idea that, in Romania’s case, the church replaces the political institutions that should bring democracy closer to citizens⁴⁶. In the present-day Romanian society, traditional lifestyles and perspectives persist despite modernization trends in society⁴⁷.

Various Romanian authors have studied Orthodoxy and its role in social life. Among them, I mention N. Iorga, S. Mehedinți, C. Rădulescu-Motru, L. Blaga, Nae Ionescu, Nichifor Crainic, V. Băncilă, M. Vulcănescu, Mircea Eliade, R. Dragnea, D. Stăniloae. In their endeavors to shed light on national specificity, they looked for those areas that could be relevant to ethnic particularity. In their writings, the authors mentioned above have addressed key issues of Orthodoxy and national culture: the religious character of the old Romanian culture, the role of a protector of Orthodoxy assumed by the Romanian provinces after the fall of the Byzantine Empire, the donations made by Romanian rulers to the monasteries of Mount Athos, their concern for monasteries and other social institutions in the Romanian regions, the Romanian participation in coalitions against the enemies of Christianity, the relationship between religion and nation, the virtues of the ancestral church.

At the same time, it was noted that, with the advent of modernization, Romanian intellectuals became increasingly estranged from the Orthodox tradition:

“The break of our intellectuals with the Orthodox tradition, which had been followed by the Romanian people in the spirit of the *Philokalia*, occurred in the previous century [nineteenth century] and was caused by a brutal, hasty and in many ways damaging modernization that affected society, and especially thinking, ethics, human relations. Even before the Revolution of 1848, the

desire to introduce quickly the values of foreign civilization led to the abandonment of the spiritual tradition, so that the Romanians parted ways: on the one hand, the monks, the villagers and the simple people living in town continued to live according to the tradition; on the other hand, a minority embraced the West and used its cultural, political and economical power to trigger a new development in the country for more than a century. This minority is responsible for the secularization of our society, for its weakening on a spiritual level, for its alienation from roots and past.”⁴⁸

It is obvious that Orthodoxy followed another path to modernity than the Western Christian denominations: “The inner spirituality of the Orthodox people can still be expressed in traditional forms, because it is still there, available, not disenchanting. In this respect, the Orthodox religion could be called a post-modern religion.”⁴⁹ This statement needs to be amended. Orthodoxy has not been part of the Western modernity; it has filtered the elements of modernity imported into the countries of Eastern Europe, though it has not resisted the process of modernization. The latter is proved by the fact that many Orthodox hierarchs and exegetes studied in the West. Of course, there are not many Catholic bishops who choose to study at universities in Eastern Europe.

The intensity of religiosity in a certain society is not necessarily the result of insufficient modernization. The statement that “Romania is one of the most religious countries in Europe precisely because it has one of the least modernized social systems on the old continent”⁵⁰ overlooks the resurgence of religion in countries that underwent modernization a long time ago and where the separation of church and state was enacted as a result of secularization. This has already been discussed above. In fact, the attempt to derive from the comparison with Western modernization conclusions about an insufficient modernization in Romania is unproductive. I cannot compare the reflexive modernity that prevails today in the Western countries with the Romanian modernity, which is oriented towards different types of change.

It has been said that there exists a modernization without modernity, ultimately representing the paradox of the Orthodox world⁵¹. I argue that Romania has been experiencing a type of modernity, namely a tendential modernity, which can be also characterized as a “survival modernity”. Unlike Western modernity, oriented towards development, emancipation, economic and social progress, modernity in Eastern Europe was adopted as a way to preserve cultural, national, and religious identity, in view of the pressure coming from outside. Romanian Orthodoxy was a pillar of

this survival modernity, which laid emphasis on the modern forms needed to support the internal foundation.

Employing a sociological approach, I try to explain how tendential modernity has supported the role of Orthodoxy in an agrarian society, where the fundamental factor with direct influence on modernity is the perpetuation of a rural civilization and culture which resists solvent modern values, as well as modernization patterns contrary to the communitarian spirit of the countryside. Romanian Orthodoxy exists in a society that still has a strong rural character, therefore this Christian denomination retains essential rural and popular traits. Almost half of Romania's population today lives in rural areas, and some of these regions have a lifestyle similar to that of the early twenty century.

The church encounters modernity. The relations between church and state.

The study of the relationship between state and church in the Romanian society reveals a symbiosis of secularity and religiosity, necessary for preserving national identity. How can I explain the cohabitation of these two entities? The answer to this question lies in the historical and geopolitical context of the area inhabited by Romanians, essential in the evolution of modernity. Compared to Northern and Western Europe, the Romanians have lived in an area with different economic and social rules, where the modernization of society has not yet been completed and advances slowly, discontinuously, and unsteadily. To denote this process, I have introduced the term "tendential modernity"⁵².

The modernization processes were carried out, for different reasons, by adopting Western laws and imitating Western institutions, without a critical evaluation of the specific situation of the Romanian society. The idea of a model of development that should be followed by other countries proved to be unproductive, because "nothing is so rooted in the historical particularities as institutions and political actors"⁵³.

Due to the shortage or lack of domestic resources for modernization (human, economic, administrative, financial, cultural resources), tendential modernity is an asymptotic form of modernization, that does not achieve the standards of modernity, even though it may appear to come very close. As a tentative state of society, modernity does not impose itself as a certainty at each level of the social organism, because it is inconsistent and proceeds unevenly in different areas. Therefore, while there is modernity in Romania, the modern man is present only to a certain degree.

One of the causes of tendential modernity is the democratic deficit resulting in a lethargic attitude of the Romanian population, which still has not outgrown the mentality of expecting aid from the state and the power groups. The fragility of political life and parliamentary democracy,

the lack in civic engagement of a large part of the population, the internal and external constraints to which the society and its leaders must find solutions, all these are historical legacies. Modernization in Romania could not rely on a civil society with a genuine capacity for action.

The state only managed to lay the foundations of a tendential, formal, and politicianist democracy. Tendential modernity is a modernity accepted by the legal system of society; formally, it includes the direction to democratization, but the process of modernization is constantly hindered and blocked by the traditional circumstances, which are more stable and have a stronger influence on the real workings of society.

In Romania, the modern development was imposed by the state through its institutional structures, because modernization can take place only within a centralized state. The modernization of society meant to create the institutional framework required for the strengthening of the Romanian nation, which, for various reasons, had not yet managed to include all the people that identified themselves as Romanians in one state. The state used modern institutions to accomplish its goals, such as gaining recognition as an independent country and achieving the unification of all the Romanian people, it gave priority to the national project, whereas issues regarding the economic and social development were postponed.

To support my ideas about tendential modernity, I will bring arguments pointing to the involvement of the Romanian state in the administration of religious affairs. Therefore, I will discuss the evolution of the relationship between state and church in the period following the establishment of the Romanian national state.

Modernity in Romania focused primarily on national and geostrategic problems, due to the absence of a state encompassing all Romanians. To achieve modernization, the state made use of the administrative apparatus, the army, the police and the educational system, evidently in order to create conditions for the development of capitalism and the bourgeoisie. The Orthodox Church had been recognized as a symbol of national identity, therefore it was included among the basic institutions that would support the national project, in order to serve the new purposes imposed by modernity; the church did not take actions to bring about the restructuring of society, but it endorsed the new concept.

The Romanian Orthodox Church had to go through various critical situations, as did the Romanian society. Due to the precarious social and material conditions of the majority of the population, the Romanian Orthodox Church faced financial and economic difficulties that prevented it from achieving independence from the state. Moreover, the Romanian state provided in the past financial support to the church and continues to do it today, so that the state has become, in fact, a protector of the ROC.

Shortly after it came into being in 1959, the Romanian state took measures in order to clarify its relationship with the Orthodox Church, due to the necessity to unify religious affairs in the two principalities – Moldavia and Wallachia –, as well as to regulate relations between the state and its institutions, including the church. Social actors that lacked the skills to manage a modern national state found themselves under pressure to make fast decisions, which had important implications for the regulation of religious affairs.

I will refer briefly to regulations that were essential to the formation of the Romanian modern state, in order to highlight the accelerated pace of social change claimed by modernity, which set the framework for solving the national problems and for achieving state independence. As noted, the laws governing religious affairs issued by the ruler Alexandru Ioan Cuza were required by the deep changes occurring in the country⁵⁴.

The cooperation between the state and the Orthodox Church is rooted in the effort to preserve the nation. The modern period brought political reorganizations that profoundly affected the old status of the church and inaugurated new types of relations between the church and the state. Alexandru Ioan Cuza's reforms were intended to promote the national idea with the support of the Orthodox Church, strengthening its role as a national institution, independent of any power outside the country, starting from the fact that historical experience had consolidated the role of the church as a guarantor of national identity.

The indisputable expression of the regulatory intervention of the Romanian state in religious affairs is the law on the secularization of monastery estates, which, together with the land reform, was one of the reforms that made a crucial contribution to the modernization of Romania. Starting with 1859, the Cuza regime began to draft a legislation that would allow the transfer of church properties to the state. In the same year, the estates of the monasteries Neamț, Secu, Agapia, Văratec, Adam, and Vorona were put under the administration of the Ministry of Religious Affairs. The law on the secularization of monastery estates, issued on December 17/29, 1863, proclaimed that the properties of the submitted churches and monasteries in the country, as well as other gifts or properties transferred by testamentary disposition “belong to the Romanian State, and revenues generated by these establishments will be included in the general budget of the state”⁵⁵. The state established in 1859 had to issue this law in order to assert its national identity. A quarter of the country's arable land belonging to the Romanian monasteries, which were primarily under Greek influence, became the property of the Romanian state. In this way, foreign monks had to comply with Romanian laws. The secularization law was not accepted by the Patriarchate of Constantinople who found strong supporters in Turkey and Russia. For the Romanian state, the takeover of these properties meant annual revenues of approximately 7 million francs delivered to its budget, a clear sign that

the state exercised control over the revenues belonging to its territory. These revenues provided some of the resources needed for the modern development of the country. Unlike other countries, the Romanian state had only internal resources for its projects of modernization. An aspect worth mentioning is the failed proposal that the Romanian state should provide financial compensation only for the secularized estates of the submitted monasteries. The refusal to provide compensation for the secularized estates of the submitted and indigenous monasteries expressed the will of the Romanian state to decide autonomously on all matters of the country, including religious ones. This attitude illustrated the existence of a modern Romanian statehood.

During the rule of Cuza, the country witnessed the enactment of the first laws to establish the governing structure of the Orthodox Church within the Romanian state, protecting their autonomy against any foreign power. The Organic Decree adopted on December 3, 1864, and promulgated three days later by Cuza laid the legal basis for a central ecclesiastical authority; this act established the United Synod of the Churches in Moldavia and Wallachia and created the conditions for the appointment of a primate metropolitan as head of the Romanian Orthodox Church⁵⁶. In Article 1, the new law stipulated: “The Romanian Orthodox Church is and remains independent of any foreign ecclesiastical authority in matters of organization and discipline”. Thus, the autocephaly of the ROC was officially proclaimed. Article 3 of the same law stated the following: “The General Synod of the Romanian Church maintains the dogmatic unity of the holy Orthodox faith with the Great Eastern Church by agreement with the Ecumenical Church of Constantinople”. On January 11, 1865, the Metropolitan of Wallachia gained the title of primate metropolitan; the new status of the highest hierarchy of the Romanian Orthodox Church played a key role in the unification of the church administration within the framework of the Romanian national state.

The law concerning the appointment of metropolitan and diocesan bishops, promulgated on May 11, 1865, served to further strengthen the authority of the state. Article 1 stated:

“The metropolitan and diocesan bishops in Romania are appointed by the Prince, following a presentation of the Ministry of Religious Affairs, after deliberations of the Council of Ministers”. This regulation put an end to the old canonical election of bishops. In order to impose as quickly as possible the new Romanian national identity, it was decided that the bishops would be invested by direct appointment. The Romanian state took no measures to separate itself from the church, as did European countries in the nineteenth century, but intervened in the organization of the church. The

protest of the clergy against this decision was called “the struggle for canonicity”⁵⁷.

In March 1863, a new law established the compulsory use of the Romanian language in all churches. The Council of Ministers decided that the church service should be celebrated in the national language, which had been replaced over time by Slavonic or Greek. In this way, the Romanian identity was directly expressed by the church through the official language of the state. I should also mention the reorganization of theological education. The Public Education Act of 1864 transformed the theological seminaries in state institutions. It is no exaggeration to say that the church represented in the nineteenth century an important channel of public communication in the Romanian language. Thus, the Romanian people found themselves in a position to assert their national identity, in a context very different from the past, when the Romanian elites had a cosmopolitan attitude towards foreign languages and cultures, to the detriment of the Romanian language: until 1700, the official language used in administration and church was the Slavonic language, between 1711 and 1821 its place was taken by Modern Greek, which also became the language of salon gatherings, and in the second half of the nineteenth century, French became the language used in the salons and also, to a certain extent, in the press and the theatre.

In order to consolidate its position in the modernization process, the state took over institutions and missions that had belonged to the ROC:

“the transfer of ecclesiastical education under the guidance of the state; the taking-over of the registry papers from the Church, transferring them to the city halls, the religious marriage ceasing to be compulsory, including the reduction of the kinship degree (from VI degree to IV degree) at the contract of the marriage; the transfer of the divorces from the jurisdiction of the Church courts to that of the civil courts; the involvement of the state in the naming of metropolitan and diocesan bishops”⁵⁸.

The intensity of monastic life decreased after the secularization of monastery estates (1863) and the enactment of the decree (late 1864) that regulated the monastic problem and imposed limits on the number of monks in each monastery⁵⁹, meaning that only those having theological studies and vocation could become monks, providing the basis for selecting the members of the high clergy. Men aged at least 60 and women aged at least 50 were excepted from this rule and could become monks or nuns undergoing certain formalities. These decisions aimed to create an educated and trained Orthodox clergy.

Through his actions, Cuza pursued the goal of transforming the Orthodox Church into an advocate of the national interest and a carrier of ethnic identity; the state controlled religious affairs in order to block the interference of foreign powers (Russia and the Ottoman Empire) in Romanian politics. The political independence pursued by the new Romanian state needed to be augmented by a canonical independence from the Ecumenical Patriarchate of Constantinople, regarded solely as an instrument of the Ottoman Empire. Cuza tried to reorganize the church by obvious state intervention. There is no doubt that the political power exercised its control over the church, leading ultimately to the appointment of the bishops by the Prince, but this way of acting must be judged within the context of the time. The Romanian Orthodox Church did not have the necessary power to achieve on its own independence from the Ecumenical Patriarchate. With the support of the state, the ROC gained its autocephaly, an indispensable condition if it was to become a national institution capable of promoting the Romanian identity. In February 1885, the Ecumenical Patriarchate recognized the autocephalous status of the Romanian Orthodox Church.

The Cuza regime set a framework for organizing and conducting religious affairs that would provide the basis for all subsequent regulations in this area. All these regulations are a further proof that the new state, established in 1859, had to develop its own institutions in order to gain internal and external legitimacy. Unlike previous periods, for instance the Middle Ages, when the ruler and the church were the two major factors of power, after 1859 the church no longer had the power in the state.

Over the following years, religious affairs in Romania were subject to further regulations. The status of the ROC was regulated in the first Romanian Constitution (1866), in Article 1, paragraph 4: "The spiritual, canonical and disciplinary affairs of the Romanian Orthodox Church will be subject to regulation by a single central ecclesiastical authority, according to a special law", and Article 1, paragraph 5: "The election of the metropolitan and diocesan bishops follows a procedure set out in a special law".

The year 1872 witnessed the promulgation of the Organic Law for the election of metropolitan and diocesan bishops, as well as for the establishment of the Holy Synod of the autocephalous Romanian Orthodox Church. This law stipulated that metropolitans and bishops will be elected by the members of the Synod and by all incumbent deputies and senators of Orthodox religion, which created discontent among the hierarchs. The participation of the Orthodox deputies and senators in the election of the hierarchs further demonstrates the direct involvement of the state in religious affairs. The appointment of hierarchs by decree was a practice that had emerged before the second half of the nineteenth century. I can see here a perpetuation of an older tradition, which entitled the Romanian

rulers to confirm the election of metropolitans in Moldavia and Wallachia by handing the crook – the symbol of investiture. The Ecumenical Patriarch of Constantinople approved the nomination by giving his blessing. The metropolitan, as head of the Church, could be appointed or discarded by the Prince, if his actions were hostile to the secular power. The state intervened directly in the nomination of hierarchs to make sure that they would be faithful to the process of modernization needed to sustain the nation.

The Romanian Orthodox Church came into being in 1872, when the Holy Synod was established in Bucharest. This event marked the transformation of the Romanian metropolises and bishoprics from entities belonging to the Patriarchate of Constantinople to constitutive parts of the new autocephalous ecclesiastical structure⁶⁰. The metropolitan of Ungro-Wallachia, who was also archbishop of Bucharest, was elevated to the rank of primate metropolitan of Romania. Fitting into the modern paradigm of autocephaly, the canonical independence of the ROC was accepted by the clergy and state authorities as a prerequisite for political independence. The separation of church and state was not possible in Eastern Europe due to two historical legacies: the Byzantine tradition and the experience of Ottoman domination⁶¹. Without the support of the modern state, the Romanian Orthodox Church could not have gained its autocephaly.

The great Romanian reformer Spiru Haret has made fundamental contributions to the regulation of the relations between state and church. We should mention in passing that the studies in the history of the Romanian Orthodox Church do not discuss the measures taken by Haret to regulate religious affairs.

Spiru Haret has a distinctive approach to modernization; he does not share the perspective that modernization is a process imposed in a top-down fashion by elites and political parties – a perspective that led to a partial and limited modernity, which had no real effects on society and especially on the peasantry. The actions undertaken by Haret are based on the assumption that the path towards modernization starts from the village and its peasantry, where he discovers the capacities required for modernization⁶².

In Haret's view, the church is an institution of the Romanian state, and both the autonomy of the church in front of the state and the support given by the latter derive from the coexistence of church and state. The autocephaly and autonomy of the church in terms of organization and operation are reinforced by its relationship with the state:

“The church is an organism of the state, the most important one; the church exists together with the state, contributing to its life, receiving at the same time support from the latter. Hence, one cannot conceive a total divorce between the two; this

would be called the separation of church and state, and we don't have it, and should not have it. There are circumstances when the church must work hand in hand with the state, especially in difficult moments"⁶³.

Spiru Haret introduced the law on the establishment and organization of the House of the Holy Autocephalous Romanian Orthodox Church, which was promulgated through the Royal Decree no. 255 on 21st January 1902. Following the pattern of the law on the House of Schools, this act stipulated the founding of an institution for supervising the administration of the assets of the Church and religious establishments, as well as the administration of the funds granted to the Church in the state budget. This law shows clearly that the state assumed, through one of its institutions, unconditional control over the religious patrimony, excepting the funds of large trusteeships⁶⁴. Article 11 stipulated that the House of the Church would use its own funds to provide aid to the poor churches, if these were unable to bear the costs required for their maintenance. Haret's undertakings aimed at strengthening the position of the main agents of modernization in the Romanian villages. Along with teachers, priests were designed to play an important role in the act of culturalization in the countryside, because their words "were listened to even more than the words of the teacher"⁶⁵; thus, Haret attempted to create conditions that would bring the servants of the church closer to the people.

Moreover, he asked the king to sign the draft decrees by which certain teachers and priests were awarded the medals "Merit for Services to the School" and "Merit for Services to the Church", for the way they had acted during the Peasant Revolt of 1907. Spiru Haret noted that the 1907 revolt showed the big mistake made by ignoring the social role of teachers and priests and by failing to take into consideration their state of mind.⁶⁶

As a matter of fact, Haret wrote about the role of the church in elevating the cultural level of the peasants⁶⁷.

In order to democratize religious life and the relations between clergy and believers, Haret proposed the modification of the Synodal Law, drawing on the Organic Statute of the Romanian Orthodox Church in Transylvania, imposed by the Metropolitan bishop Andrei Șaguna. It is not without interest that, while Al. I. Cuza legislated the relations of the Romanian state with the Orthodox Church, in Transylvania, Andrei Șaguna achieved on December 24, 1864, the re-establishment of the old Metropolis of Transylvania, dissolved in 1701. In the fall of 1868, Șaguna convoked a national ecclesiastical conference in Transylvania, which discussed and approved the draft for the Organic Statute of the Transylvanian Orthodox Church. The power of the constitution of the Transylvanian Orthodox Church lies in its modernity and democracy,

based on the “synodality” (collaboration) between clerics (1/3) and laymen (2/3) in all the three administrative areas – parish, archpriestship and diocese –, in the following fields: ecclesiastical, educational and economic⁶⁸. All this shows the social transformations that were occurring in the regions inhabited by Romanians. These principles provided the foundation for the organizational statutes of the entire Romanian Orthodox Church in 1925 and in 1948.

In the first version of the bill on the modification of the Synodal Law of 1872, Haret envisioned a composition of the Synod resembling that of the Transylvanian Orthodox Church⁶⁹. But he soon realized that it was not possible to absorb the ideas of the Metropolitan bishop of Transylvania, because the conditions were not favorable for the participation of laymen in the life of the church⁷⁰. Haret wished to revise some of the provisions introduced by the law of 1872 in order to democratize the relationships within the church, investing the lay clergy with a social status – a proper thing to do in a modern state:

“Let us try to transform the clergy into a social power, alive and active, in the service of the nation; let us try to bring the upper clergy and the lower clergy as close as possible in order to facilitate their common action, allowing them to know and appreciate each other better, enhancing the authority of the former and the self-assurance of the latter.”⁷¹

Haret expressed clearly the difficulty of harmonizing the ideas and patterns of behavior found in the Old Kingdom with those prevailing in the other Romanian provinces, an argument that supports the discriminative view on the modernization processes occurring in the regions inhabited by Romanians, even in a common area, i.e. the relationship between the Romanian Orthodox Church and society.

According to Haret’s bill, the Episcopal Synod would decide on all dogmatic and ritual problems, leaving the decision on other matters to a mixed Synod (comprising the Episcopal Synod, representatives of the secular clergy, a delegate of the Faculty of Theology, and two representatives of the monasteries). This mixed Synod was supposed to be the “Upper Ecclesiastical Consistory”. The bill enlarged the circle of the persons eligible for the positions of a bishop or metropolitan. Haret pointed out that by establishing the Consistory he wished to provide a way for bringing together all the levels of the Romanian clergy in religious affairs, so that there would be not only hierarchical relations between shepherds and flock, and they would come and talk to each other about the problems that concern the entire Church, maintaining, of course, the rights reserved exclusively by the bishops, according to the canons.⁷²

The bill on the modification of the Synodal Law, promulgated in March 1909, was supposed to come into operation. The Synod elaborated the regulations of the Consistory in May 1909, but on October 6, 1909, the Bishop of Roman, Gherasim Safirin, presented a memorandum to the Synod, claiming that the new law “overthrew the doctrine of ecclesiastical hierarchy, the doctrine of the relationship between bishops, priests and deacons, the doctrine of the center of Church authority” and announcing that, “if his brothers in God will persist in contesting the doctrines”, he would apply Canon I of the Seventh Ecumenical Council, namely “I will break any canonical relationship with them, I will ban them, I will anathemize them as if they were heathens and publicans”.⁷³ Because of the bishop’s persistency in refusing the Consistory and of the support given to him by the Conservative opposition and also by various representatives of the upper clergy (although the latter initially had supported the minister), the act on the modification of the Synodal Law did not come into operation. The act was amended during the 1911-1912 parliamentary session, on the initiative of the Conservative minister C. C. Arion, by eliminating Article 20, which stated that the members of the Upper Ecclesiastical Consistory could only be judged by the Consistory.

In the period 1909-1911, the church went through a crisis, leading to conflicts between the state and the clergy and to the resignation of two primate metropolitans and a bishop. The political class and the press proceeded to inflame the conflictual state, being not interested in the principle of the separation of church and state, but in political partisanship.

In short, the hierarchs and the political class refused a modern provision stipulating a communion between the hierarchs and the secular clergy, that would have met the needs of the Romanian state and society and would have actually *strengthened the national edifice of the Romanian Orthodox Church*⁷⁴. Haret argued for a cooperation of state and church, but not for an autonomy of the church to the prejudice of the state.

As a reformer, Haret understood that, since the critical mass sustaining modernization in Romania was rather precarious, the church had an essential role. In the absence of a bourgeoisie in towns and villages, modern transformations could be accomplished only by the social groups available in Romanian society; notable among them were the teachers and the priests. Haret never denied the principle of church autonomy in ecclesiastical matters, but, at the same time, he noticed the negative effects of a separation of church and state, “if it [the church] would not acknowledge the great services rendered by the state on numberless occasions, and especially in the most difficult moments”⁷⁵.

Haret insisted that the measures taken by the state were meant to support the church, and this idea was, in fact, a guiding principle of his project to modernize the Romanian society, a project that revolved around the reformation of rural society. Referring to those who advocated the

separation of church and state, he blamed them for imitating a concept taken over from other cultures: “They heard this phrase elsewhere and thought that repeating it here would be a smart thing to do.”⁷⁶ Haret considered that the separation of church and state was a “phantasy”.

The specific conditions of Romanian culture and history made it impossible to accept a separation of church and state:

“We must keep a just measure and beware of going beyond certain limits; the collaboration between state and church is fateful and inevitable, as long as they meet on common ground, as long as the state and the church have the duty to work for the people and for their well-being. This collaboration must be coordinated through comity between the two factors, and therein lies the intimate relationship that should exist between church and state. Once this relationship no longer exists, antagonism comes in its place, and it is a historical truth that, whenever the church was not with the state, it was against the state. No reasonable man could wish this.”⁷⁷

Haret recognizes the particularity of the transformation processes that take place within the institutional frameworks of the church: “By its own nature, the church does not adapt to frequent changes; therefore, if a change must be made, it should be made so that you don’t need to get back to it any time soon.”⁷⁸

After the establishment of the national unitary state on December 1, 1918, the next step was to unify, in spring 1919, the ecclesiastical structures by admitting the hierarchs from the newly integrated provinces to the Synod of the Romanian Orthodox Church. It must be emphasized that it was imperative to strengthen the unification accomplished in 1918. Along with political and economic emergencies, it was necessary to achieve spiritual solidarity in order to consolidate the Romanian state, which governed now a larger territory and population, with an ethnic, religious, economic and cultural composition different from that of the Old Kingdom.

In the context created after the Great Union of 1918, the church continued to assert and promote national identity, but its involvement in this process required new strategies, because society itself had been liberated from the effort that went into achieving the ideal of reuniting all the Romanian provinces. The discourse on national identity claimed a more direct communication with all social actors and agents. First of all, the country’s elite had to be convinced to continue to identify itself with Orthodox spirituality in the new context. The view on the role of the Orthodox Church was integrated into the broader concept of the modern

development of the country after World War I. As in other historical moments, the Romanian elite, especially the intellectuals, had not developed alternative programs before the unification of 1918. The prevailing view was that everything would sort itself out, that the administrative organization of the state could be easily achieved because the population, consisting mainly of Romanians, not only belonged to the same ethnic group, but also had a common spirituality that would quickly remove the differences between the Romanian provinces, which had been influenced over the centuries by various cultures and civilizations.

The followers of secularization, especially those living in some of the provinces integrated in the new Romanian state, were clearly interested in clarifying the status of the national church. Moreover, the existence of other denominations within the Romanian state was an opportunity to debate the religious issue considering the status of all denominations operating in Greater Romania. Among other things, this new situation aroused negative opinions regarding the idea of a dominant church, resulting also in a critical, even disparaging attitude towards Orthodoxy. After 1918, the Romanian state was facing a new problem, that was difficult to solve with the concepts and methods of government of the Old Kingdom. In the fall of 1920, Octavian Goga, the Minister of Religious Affairs, submitted to the Parliament the draft law and statute for the organization and operation of the Romanian Orthodox Church, but the deliberations on the bill were postponed because the Metropolitan of Transylvania, Nicolae Bălan, requested a special law, wanting it to be specified in the new Romanian Constitution. Indeed, the Constitution of 1923 provided in the last paragraph of Article 22 for the enactment of a special law for the organization and operation of the Romanian Orthodox Church. The representatives of the denominations accepted the legal regulation of their relations with the Romanian state after the new Romanian Constitution was adopted in March 1923, assuring that the special religious legislation was based on the principles enshrined in the fundamental law of the state, the most important of which was the principle of the autonomy of the church; the stipulation of the “dominant” character of the Orthodox Church and the reference to the participation of laity in church administration, next to the clergy, were also important⁷⁹.

The regulation of the relations between the state and the ROC was done in a certain order of priority. *The Law and Organizational Statute of the Romanian Orthodox Church* were promulgated on May 6, 1925, recognizing the ROC as the dominant church in the Romanian state. The establishment of the Romanian Patriarchate was decided by the Holy Synod⁸⁰ and then passed by the Parliament.

The investiture of the first patriarch was staged as a reinforcement of the close association between church and state. The investiture of Patriarch Miron took place at the Royal Palace, not at the Patriarchate’s Hill. King Ferdinand pronounced the solemn words: “I entrust you with

the crook of Patriarch, so that you will shepherd the flock of the Romanian Patriarchate.” In his speech, the Patriarch Miron stated that a direct support from the state was important for a flourishing religious life within the new organizational structure of the church. The same idea can be found in King Ferdinand’s speech, who stressed the centuries-old bond that enabled the state to grow together with the Church. The voivodes were defending the Church, and the Church was the comfort and encouragement of the voivodes. The language was created, unseparated, through the Church and across temporary boundaries... And the national spirit followed this unitary development of language and culture [...]. The great national works in thinking and feeling arise out of the unification of the souls, and our Church, which will help the people to achieve this earthly goal, will receive its well-deserved reward.⁸¹

Once the position of the ROC had been clarified, the next thing to do was to establish a unitary regime for the minority religious groups, which were so diverse in terms of religious doctrines, rituals and interests as to constitute a genuine challenge for governmental politics. In 1928, the following historical religious groups existed in Romania: the Romanian Greek Catholics, the Catholics of Latin, Greek and Armenian rite, the Calvinists, the Lutherans, the Unitarians, the Jews, and the Mahomedans. The sovereign and independent Romanian state had to regulate as soon as possible the status of this wide range of religious groups. Al. Lapedatu, the Minister of Arts and Religious Affairs, expressed this idea very clearly when he presented the reasons for the new law: “Now that the law for the organization of the Orthodox Church has been passed, the task to establish a unitary regime for the other religions in the country has become a matter of great importance in our effort to further organize the state, a matter that requires without delay a legislative solution.”⁸² Therefore, in the period 1926-1928 the Romanian government sought to regulate the status of the other denominations in Romania by following the principles of sovereignty and commitment to democracy, as laid out in the Romanian Constitution of 1923. On this basis, Lapedatu said:

“The Romanian state wants to establish a new regime for the denominations. This regime cannot be that of states long gone, of medieval and clerical nature, but must take the form of the Romanian state and of the principles of freedom, nationality and democracy that emerged in revolutionary Europe in the first half of the nineteenth century. The organization of the new Romanian state builds on its old traditions, for these were and still are the basis for the political and historical development of the Romanian nation. We must bear this in mind when we elaborate the new Romanian legislation. We are not the repositories of someone else’s past

and destiny, but the repositories of our own past and destiny.”⁸³

Lapedatu expressed plainly the will of the Romanian government to establish the legal framework for the denominations in accordance with both the national traditions and the imperatives of the age.

The state was also facing some international pressure to adopt the Denominations Act. I may mention here the Concordat between the Holy See and the Kingdom of Romania signed on May 10, 1927, or the insistent demands of the Baptist church that the Romanian government legally recognize this denomination – to achieve his goal, the Baptist church asked N. Titulescu for support, the representative of Romania to the League of Nations.

The Denominations Act of 1928 contained the following provisions: the state shall assure that the activities of the denominations will not endanger the public order and the safety of the country; the heads of the denominations shall be recognized only after approval by the King of Romania; state control over funds allocated from the budget to ensure that the funds were spent appropriately; regulation of the status of religious orders and congregations; mandatory use of the Romanian language in all correspondence between church representatives and state authorities; mandatory study of the Romanian history, language and literature in denominational educational institutions. The Denominations Act regulated the relations between the state and all religious minorities in Romania, so that the existence of these religious groups would not jeopardize the normal functioning of society. Note that the state exercised important prerogatives, being the fundamental institution governing the relationship between the denominations and the authority that controlled the activities of religious groups in accordance with legal norms. The Denominations Act of 1928 was a modern law, based on the historical, spiritual and religious realities of Romania and on the rules of international law. Although the Act was permeated by the national spirit and increased the prerogatives of the state, the Orthodox Church was dissatisfied with it, claiming that the Act did not take into consideration its legitimate demands: “A new opportunity for doing injustice to the Orthodox Church came in 1928, when the Parliament passed the *General Denominations Act*. This act also created a system favoring the other denominations in the country, especially the Catholic one.”⁸⁴

The deliberations leading to the passing of the General Denominations Act in 1928, illustrate the state’s ability to meet the claims of modernity, coming from religious minorities supported by institutions and groups from abroad. Although in itself it was a modern law, the state encountered difficulties in the actual application of its provisions because of local religious traditions.

The Communist regime abrogated the 1928 *Law on the Status of Denominations in Romania*, as well as the *Law for the Organization of the ROC*.

On August 4, 1948, the authorities promulgated the *Law on the General Status of Denominations*, which provided the basis for the *Organizational Status of the Romanian Orthodox Church*, elaborated by the Holy Synod in October 1948⁸⁵. The law promulgated in 1948 did not recognize the Greek Catholic Church.

In 2006, the Parliament of Romania adopted Law 489/2006 on the Freedom of Religion and on the General Status of Denominations, which recognizes in Article 7 the standing of the Orthodox Church: “The Romanian state acknowledges the important role played by the Romanian Orthodox Church and by the other recognized churches and denominations in the national history of Romania and in Romanian society.”

Conclusions

The evolution of the relations between church and state in the modern period highlights the involvement of the state in religious affairs, so that in Romania I cannot speak of a separation of church and state, as has happened in France in 1905. It is therefore difficult to accept the idea of secularization in Romanian society, except for the Communist era, when the state formally declared itself atheistic, but at the same time approved the nominations of the hierarchs, including the Patriarch.

In the context of the modernization process undergone by Romanian society, the church is not separated from the state, but becomes a church of the state, a church whose prerogatives are established by the secular power; thus the church is defined as an institution that is embedded in the process of modern change decided by the state. As a matter of fact, modernity itself was ambivalent and ambiguous, which influenced decisively the role of Orthodoxy in the assertion of Romanian identity.

Notes:

¹ This text is part of a more extended paper, elaborated in the framework of the program „Comunicarea interculturală în context european. Construcția unei paradigme conjunctive privind noile raporturi dintre culturile naționale și emergența identității culturale europene”, CNCSIS code 1406.

² Bryan S. Turner, *Religion and Modern Society: Citizenship, Secularisation and the State* (New York: City University of New York, 2011).

³ “Developments in the post-communist societies of Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union are shaped by their civilizational identities. Those with Western Christian heritages are making progress toward economic development and democratic politics; the prospects for economic and political development in the Orthodox countries are uncertain; the prospects in the Muslim republics are bleak.” Samuel Huntington, *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1996), 29.

⁴ Nikos Kokosalakis, "Religion and Modernization in 19th Century Greece", *Social Compass* Vol. 34, No. 2-3, (1987): 223-241.

⁵ "O concepție teologică despre etnic și națiune", studiu introductiv la Nichifor Crainic, *Ortodoxie și etnocrație*, (București: Editura Albatros, 1997), V-XXXII; "Cultură și națiune în gândirea lui N. Crainic", studiu introductiv la N. Crainic, *Puncte cardinale în haos*, (București: Editura Albatros, 1998), V-XXVIII; "O concepție antropologică creștin-ortodoxă despre națiune", studiu introductiv la Dumitru Stăniloae, *Ortodoxie și românism*, (București: Editura Albatros, 1998), V-XXXVI; "Biserica, stat și națiune", studiu introductiv la *Biserica noastră și cultele minoritare*, (București: Editura Albatros, 2000), V-XXXII; "D. Stăniloae despre fundamentul creștin al națiunii", studiu introductiv la D. Stăniloae, *Creștinism și națiune*, (București: Editura Elion, 2003), V- XXII; "Religie și tradiție", *Revista Română de Sociologie*, nr.1-2, (1999): 55-72; "Comunicarea didactică în educația religioasă", în *Religia în societate la început de secol XXI. Tendințe europene*, coordonatori IPS prof. dr. Nifon Mihăiță, Pr. Lect. Dr. Florea Ștefan, (Târgoviște, Valahia University Press, 2006).

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¹⁰ Jonathan Fox, "World Separation of Religion and State into the 21st Century", *Comparative Political Studies*, Volume 39, Number 5, (June 2006): 538.

¹¹ Danièle Hervieu-Léger, "Religion and modernity in the French context: For a new approach to secularization", *Sociological Analysis*, 51, (Special Issue) (1990): 15.

¹² Pauline Côté, "Autorité publique, pluralisation et sectorisation religieuse en modernité tardive", *Archives de sciences sociales des religions*, 121 (Janvier-mars 2003): 22.

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¹⁴ Pippa Norris and Ronald Inglehart, *Sacred and Secular. Religion and Politics Worldwide* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 30.

¹⁵ Dick Houtman and Stef Aupers, "The Spiritual Turn and the Decline of Tradition: The Spread of Post-Christian Spirituality in 14 Western Countries, 1981-2000", *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion*, Vol, 46, No. 3 (2007): 305.

¹⁶ Peter Berger, "The Desecularization of the World: A Global Overview" in Peter L. Berger (ed.), *The Desecularization of the World, Resurgent Religion in World Politics*, Ethics and Public Policy Center, (Washington, 1999), 10.

¹⁷ Peter L. Berger, *The Sacred Canopy: Elements of a Sociological Theory of Religion* (Garden City: Doubleday, 1967).

¹⁸ Charles T. Mathewes, "An Interview with Peter Berger," *The Hedgehog Review*, 8 (Spring/Summer 2006): 152-153.

¹⁹ Mircea Eliade, *Sacrul și profanul*, Trans. Rodica Chira (București: Editura Humanitas, 1992), 108.

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- ²⁹ Nicolae Păun, Georgiana Ciceo, Dorin Domuța, „ Religious interactions of the Romanian political parties. Case study: the christian democratic connection”, *Journal for the Study of Religions and Ideologies*, vol. 8, Issue 24 (Winter 2009): 109.
- ³⁰ Vasilios Makrides, "Orthodox Christianity, Rationalization, Modernization: A Reassessment", in *Eastern Orthodoxy in a Global Age. Tradition Faces the Twenty-first Century*. (Eds.) Victor Roudometof, Alexander Agadjanian and Jerry Pankhurst (Oxford: AltaMira Press, 2005): 196.
- ³¹ Perica Vjekoslav, "The politics of ambivalence: Europeanization and the Serbian Orthodox Church", in Byrnes, Timothy A. and Katzenstein, Peter J. (eds). *Religion in an Expanding Europe* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 178.
- ³² Constantin Schifirneț, „Identitatea românească în contextul modernității tendențiale”, în *Cine sunt românii? Perspective asupra identității naționale*, Coord: Vasile Boari; Natalia Vlas (Cluj-Napoca: Editura Risoprint, 2009): 31-32.
- ³³ Grigore Georgiu, *Comunicarea interculturală. Probleme, abordări, teorii*, (București: Editura Comunicare.ro, 2010).
- ³⁴ Victor Roudometof, "Greek Orthodoxy, Territoriality, and Globality: Religious Responses and Institutional Disputes", *Sociology of Religion*, Vol 68, No.1 (2008): 67-91.
- ³⁵ Anthony D. Smith, *The Ethnic Origins of Nations*. (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1986), 34-37.
- ³⁶ Keith Hitchins, "The Idea of Nation among the Romanians of Transylvania, 1700-1849" in *Nation and National Ideology Past, Present and Prospects* (Bucharest: The Center for the History of the Imaginary and New Europe College, 2002), 80-81.
- ³⁷ Hitchins, 83-84
- ³⁸ Hitchins, 109.
- ³⁹ Hitchins, 109.
- ⁴⁰ This thesis is endorsed, for instance, by Katzenstein: „Many radical monks and theologians in the Orthodox Church are educated in Greek seminaries and monasteries. Yet as the oldest carrier of the Byzantine tradition of Caesaropapism, or Church-state collaboration, Greek bishops know how to act as a moderating force and thus reinforce the general effects of Greece's EU membership”, Peter J. Katzenstein, "Multiple modernities as limits to secular

Europeanization?”, in Byrnes, Timothy A. and Katzenstein, Peter J. (eds). *Religion in an Expanding Europe*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 13.

⁴¹ Radu Preda, “De la autonomie și autocefalie la unitate canonică și etică. Dileme social-teologice ale ortodoxiei actuale”, *Studia Universitatis Babeș-Bolyai, Theologia orthodoxa*, LV, 1, (2010): 112

⁴² Nikos Kokosolakis, “The Historical Continuity and Cultural Specificity of Eastern Orthodox Christianity”, in Roberto Cipriani (ed.), *Religions Sans Frontières? Present and Future Trends of Migration, Culture and Communication*. (Roma: Presidenza del Consiglio dei Ministri, 1994): 127.

⁴³ Natalia Vlas, Sergiu Gherghina, “Convergence or replacement? Attitudes towards political and religious institutions in contemporary Romania”, *Journal for the Study of Religions and Ideologies*, 8, 24, (Winter, 2009): 74.

⁴⁴ Mihaela Frunză, Sandu Frunză, „Ethics, Superstition and the Laicization of the Public Sphere”, *Journal for the Study of Religions and Ideologies*, vol. 8 issue 23 (Summer 2009): 14.

⁴⁵ Bogdan Mihai Radu, “Young believers or secular citizens? An exploratory study of the influence of religion on political attitudes and participation in Romanian high-school students” *Journal for the Study of Religions and Ideologies*, vol. 8 issue 25 (Spring 2010): 167.

⁴⁶ Natalia Vlas, Sergiu Gherghina, 75.

⁴⁷ Lavinia Stan, Lucian Turcescu, *Religion and Politics in Post-Communist Romania*. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 16.

⁴⁸ Virgil Căndeia, [Cuvânt de omagiere], în *Persoană și comuniune. Prinos de cinstire preotului profesor academician Dumitru Stăniloae*, Volum tipărit cu binecuvântarea I. P. S. Dr. Antonie Plămădeală, Mitropolitul Transilvaniei, din inițiativa, Pr. prof. decan Dr. Mircea Păcurariu, sub îngrijirea, Diac. asist. Ioan I. Ică jr. (Editura și tiparul Arhiepiscopiei Ortodoxe Sibiu, 1993), XVIII.

⁴⁹ Dan Dungaci, “Alternative Modernities in Europe. Modernity, Religion and Secularization in South-East Europe: the Romanian case”, Halle/Saale: Max Planck Institute for Social Anthropology (Working paper, no. 68) (2004): 8.

⁵⁰ Sorin Gog, “The construction of the religious space in postsocialist Romania”, *Journal for the Study of Religions and Ideologies*, 15 (Winter 2006): 51

⁵¹ Preda Radu, ”Ortodoxia post-comunistă și modernitatea. Prolegomene social-teologice”, *Analele științifice ale Facultății de Teologie Ortodoxă XII* (2009): 238

⁵² I present here a few ideas on tendential modernity advanced in Constantin Schifirneț “Modernitatea tendențială”, *Sociologie românească*, Vol. VII, 4 (2009): 80-97. Constantin Schifirneț, “Tendential Modernity”, *Social Science Information*, vol. 51, No.1 (March 2012): 22-51.

⁵³ Manuel Castells, *Le pouvoir de l'identité*, Traduit de l'anglais par Paul Chemla (Paris: Fayard, 1999), 377.

⁵⁴ Mircea Păcurariu, *Istoria Bisericii Ortodoxe Române*, compendiu ediția a II-a, revăzută și întregită, (Sibiu: Editura Andreiană, 2007).

⁵⁵ For information on state regulation of religious affairs, I used Mircea Păcurariu's study, *Istoria Bisericii Ortodoxe Române*, compendiu ediția a II-a, revăzută și întregită, (Sibiu: Editura Andreiană, 2007).

⁵⁶ Mircea Păcurariu, 336.

⁵⁷ Mircea Păcurariu, 336.

⁵⁸ Ion Vicovan, “Al. I. Cuza's 1864 Decree and the Decree No. 410 of 1959 – comparative overview: context, content, consequences”, *Analele științifice ale*

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⁵⁹ Mircea Păcurariu, Romanian Christianity, in Parry, K. (ed.), *The Blackwell Companion to Eastern Christianity*, (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2007), 198.

⁶⁰ Vezi Mircea Păcurariu, *Istoria Bisericii Ortodoxe Române*, compendiu ediția a II-a, revăzută și întregită, (Sibiu: Editura Andreiană, 2007).

⁶¹ Perica Vjekoslav, 176.

⁶² Constantin Schifirneț, “Spiru Haret, reformatorul societății româneșeti”, studiu introductiv la *Operele lui Spiru Haret*, vol. I, (București: Editura Comunicare. ro, 2009), 13-42.

⁶³ Spiru C. Haret, “Criza bisericească”, în *Operele lui Spiru C. Haret*, vol. IX (București: Editura Cartea Românească, f.a.), 124.

⁶⁴ Article 1 of the law on the establishment and organization of the House of the Holy Autocephalous Romanian Orthodox Church illustrates the role asserted by the state in administering the patrimony of the church: “There is hereby established the House of the Holy Autocephalous Romanian Orthodox Church, belonging to the Ministry of Public Education and Religious Affairs and functioning under the authority of the minister, with the following attributions:

a) To administer all funds created by the present law or by other laws, in order to contribute to the flourishing of the Church; to assure the proper functioning and maintenance, the welfare and preservation of the holy churches, monasteries, hermitages, and dwelling places with all that is necessary;

b) To assure the preservation of the movable and immovable assets of the churches, monasteries and hermitages existing today, of parish and filial churches, and of all religious establishments, present-day and future;

c) To control the administration of the fortune of the churches, monasteries, and religious establishments, regardless of the origin of these assets or of those assigned to administer them: trusteeships, economic councils, tutors or testamentary executors. The control exerted by the House of the Church will make sure that these assets are administered in compliance with the existing laws and rules and with the will of the bequeathers, to the benefit of the respective churches and monasteries. The control of the town halls over the administration of church trusteeships, as instituted by various previous laws, is hereby ended with immediate effect.

The religious funds administered by the trusteeship of civil hospitals in Bucharest, the trusteeship Sf. Spiridon of Jassy, the trusteeship of Brancovenesc establishments, and the trusteeship of the Madona Dudu church in Craiova are exempted from the provisions of this paragraph;

d) To administer all ecclesiastical and religious assets that do not fall under the authority of other administrative bodies, as well as the funds put directly at its disposal through laws, donations, wills or otherwise;

e) To administer, in conformity with law, all the funds assigned in the annual state budget to the church administration and the maintenance of the Christian Orthodox denomination;

f) To administer all ecclesiastical and religious affairs stipulated in Article 7 of the law on the organization of the central administration of the Ministry of Public Education and Religious Affairs of 9 July 1901.

All the decisions made by the House of the Church concerning clerics in the exercise of their purely spiritual duties, ecclesiastical objects or purely spiritual

services will be carried out after procuring the notification of the respective diocesan bishop.” Cf. *Operele lui Spiru C. Haret*, vol. III, (București: Editura Cartea Românească, f.a.), 162.

⁶⁵ *Operele lui Spiru C. Haret*, vol. I, (București: Editura Cartea Românească, f.a.), 309.

⁶⁶ *Operele lui Spiru C. Haret*, vol. III, (București: Editura Cartea Românească, f.a.), 23.

⁶⁷ Spiru C. Haret, “Criza bisericească”, în *Operele lui Spiru C. Haret*, vol. IX (București: Editura Cartea Românească, f.a.).

⁶⁸ For the debate surrounding the bill on the participation of laymen in the life of the church, see George Enache, “Problema autonomiei în dezbaterile parlamentare din 1925, privitoare la Legea pentru organizarea Bisericii Ortodoxe Române, *Inter. Revista română de studii teologice și religioase* I, 1-2, (2007): 302-313.

⁶⁹ Gh. Adamescu, “Introducere. Activitatea parlamentară a lui Spiru Haret în anii 1907-1911 și împrejurările în care ea s-a desfășurat”, în *Operele lui Spiru C. Haret*, vol. VI (București: Editura Cartea Românească f.a.), 25.

⁷⁰ “Statutul organic al Bisericii greco-orientale române din Ungaria și Transilvania, cu un Suplement. A patra edițiune oficială autentică, procurată în urma concluzului congresual din anul 1878, nr. 247, Sibiu, 1910”, în *Inter. Revista română de studii teologice și religioase* I, 1-2, (2007): 273-301. Vezi și Paul Brusanowski, “Actualitatea Statutului Organic din Ardeal”, in *Inter. Revista română de studii teologice și religioase* I, 1-2, (2007): 260-272.

⁷¹ *Operele lui Spiru C. Haret*, vol. IX (București: Editura Cartea Românească, f.a.), 47.

⁷² *Operele lui Spiru C. Haret*, vol. VI (București: Editura Cartea Românească, f.a.), 330.

⁷³ Cf. Gh. Adamescu, 27-28.

⁷⁴ The young clergyman Gala Galaction pointed out that, given the state of the clergy, it was advisable to modify the Synodal Law: “Even if the arguments presented by Bishop Gherasim were completely valid, we cannot share his conclusion and reject the bill, because the state in which the *speaking flock* finds itself is so sad that we cannot stay the same.” Galaction noted that the tyranny of some canons reflecting the needs from centuries ago cannot last indefinitely, for we “must walk towards the light, and not towards the letter that kills”. Gala Galaction, *Apologia unei legi si mai presus de ea: a unui principiu* (Bucuresti, 1909) Apud Gh. Adamescu, 28.

⁷⁵ *Operele lui Spiru C. Haret*, vol. IX (București: Editura Cartea Românească, f.a.), 64.

⁷⁶ *Operele lui Spiru C. Haret*, vol. IX (București: Editura Cartea Românească, f.a.), 64-65.

⁷⁷ *Operele lui Spiru C. Haret*, vol. IX (București: Editura Cartea Românească, f.a.), 64-65.

⁷⁸ *Operele lui Spiru C. Haret*, vol. IX (București: Editura Cartea Românească, f.a.), 66.

⁷⁹ Article 22 of the 1923 Constitution of Romania regulates the statute of the church in Romanian society: “The Christian Orthodox Church and the Greek Catholic Church are Romanian churches. Being the religion of the great majority of the Romanian people, the Romanian Orthodox Church is the dominant church in the Romanian State; the Greek Catholic Church takes precedence over other religions. The Romanian Orthodox Church is and remains independent of any foreign ecclesiastical authority, but maintains the unity with the Eastern Ecumenical Church in matters of doctrine. Throughout the Kingdom of Romania, the Romanian Orthodox Church will have a unified organization, with the participation of all its constituent elements, clergymen and laymen. A special law

will establish the fundamental principles of this unified organization, as well as the procedures by which the Church will regulate, manage and administer, through its own agencies and under the control of the State, its religious, cultural, foundational and trusteeship matters. The spiritual and canonical issues of the Romanian Orthodox Church will be regulated by one central synodal authority. The metropolitans and bishops of the Romanian Orthodox Church will be elected according to a unique special law.”

⁸⁰ On February 4, 1925, in the palace hall at Antim Monastery, the Holy Synod of the Romanian Orthodox Church adopted the following decision: “Seeking to raise the maturity and power of the Romanian people, which have grown today, by the grace and power of God, into a free and united nation, seeking to promote the mission of these people to make the most of their maturity and power by any means and institutions they deem necessary to this end, for the progress and civility of mankind, and mostly by virtue of our ecclesiastical autocephaly, meaning that the Romanian Orthodox Church has the right to freely dispose of itself, excepting, of course, the doctrines, moralities, acts of worship and canons in connection with the reservoir that is common and indispensable to all the churches of the Orthodox people, the Holy Synod of the Romanian Orthodox Church has decided at its meeting today, February 4, 1925, with the consent of the Honorable Government, the establishment of the Romanian Patriarchate, so that the head of the Romanian episcopal college will take in future the title of Archbishop of Bucharest, Metropolitan of Ungro-Wallachia and Patriarch of Romania.” Cf. pr. dr. Florin Șerbănescu, “Patriarhia Română - 85 de ani de la proclamarea de către Sfântul Sinod a înființării sale”, *Ziarul Lumina*, 4 februarie 2010.

⁸¹ Cf. pr. dr. Florin Șerbănescu, Patriarhia Română - 85 de ani de la proclamarea de către Sfântul Sinod a înființării sale”, *Ziarul Lumina*, 4 Februarie 2010.

⁸² Quotes without a specified source are from *Biserica noastră și cultele minoritare*, (București: Editura Albatros, 2000).

⁸³ Cf. „Viitorul”, 7 aprilie 1928

⁸⁴ Mircea Păcurariu, *Istoria Bisericii Ortodoxe Române*, (Galați: Editura Episcopiei Dunării de Jos, 1996), 438.

⁸⁵ Mircea Păcurariu, 456.

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