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**DEVELOPMENT OF RELIGIOUS EDUCATION IN ROMANIA  
FROM THE COMMUNIST PERIOD UNTIL TODAY**

EXTENDED ABSTRACT  
of a dissertation for the award of PhD

in the professional field 2.4. "Religion and Theology"

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## TABLE OF CONTENTS

I. BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DISSERTATION.....	3
II. GENERAL PRESENTATION OF THE CONTENTS.....	7
1. Education and religiosity in Romania during the communist regime .....	7
2. Religious education in Romania after 1989. Religious pluralism.....	36
3. Attitudes of young people towards religious education in Romania today - a survey .....	74
4. Conclusion... ..	77
III. SCIENTIFIC CONTRIBUTIONS .....	81
IV. PUBLICATIONS RELATED TO THE TOPIC OF THE THESIS.....	82

## I. BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE PHD THESIS

### **Relevance of the study:**

The presented dissertation on "The Development of Religious Education in Romania from the Communist Period until Today" has an interdisciplinary character, considering religious education in the context of theology, history, politics, and pedagogical sciences. It emphatically and clearly stresses the important role of religious education for the spiritual and moral development of man.

The dissertation seeks to present a balanced approach that carefully highlights the main data on spirituality and religious education in Romania and attempts to outline the process by which this education has developed in the country's new history. In this context, an analysis is made of the importance, relevance, and role of religious education for the formation and spiritual-moral development of man, as well as for the cultivation of an authentic spirituality.

Through this interdisciplinary approach, which starts from the historical, theological, and educational situation in Romania, we can glimpse the possibility of a dialogue between religious and secular education in the country, in order to develop an educational process increasingly directed towards the education and construction of the inner life of man with a view to his spiritual growth. Starting from these general data, we will approach the topic proposed for study in this dissertation from a number of perspectives that intertwine into a unified vision of the subject we are examining.

### **State of research**

In Romanian theology there are numerous studies that deal with issues of religious education in the country, most of them dealing with theoretical and methodological aspects, but there has not been one that considers the situation of the period under study from a historical and religious-pedagogical perspective, and from the perspective of the theological paradigm.

In Romania, religious education has been the subject of research in several works that are closely related to the subject of our topic: Constantin Cuceș, *Educația religioasă. Repere teoretice și metodice*;

Cristina Benga, Idealul educațional în pedagogia creștină. Clement din Alexandria, Sfântul Ioan Gură de Aur, Pr. Ion Vicovan, Pr. Paul Cezar Hârlăoanu, Pr. Emilian Iustinian Roman (coord.), Teologie și pedagogie. Identitate specifică și responsabilitate comună în actul educației. Adrian Lemeni, Repere ale educației creștine în teologia Sfântului Ioan Gură de Aur; Dorin Opreș, Monica Opreș (coord.), Religia și școala. Cercetări pedagogice, studii, analize.

### **Objective of the study**

The dissertation aims to present the situation of religious education in Romania from the establishment of the communist regime in the country until today, in the context of the relationship between the state-recognized religious denominations.

### **Tasks**

The objective thus formulated can be achieved through the implementation of the following tasks, which are developed in the content of the individual chapters of the study:

1. To study and analyze the practices of religious education in Romania during the communist regime.
2. To examine the state of religious education in Romania after 1989 in the context of the existing religious pluralism in the country.
3. To study the attitudes of young people in the country regarding the place of religion in their lives and its place within the school system in the country.

### **Field of study**

The field of the study is the history of religious education in Romania.

### **Object of the study**

The object of the study is the development of religious education in Romania during the last two historical periods in the history of the Romanian state.

### **Research hypotheses:**

- Religious education is invariably present in the history of Romanian education. Since Christianity is an important and essential element of the spiritual culture of the Romanian people and of the Romanian national identity, any attempt to replace this identity in different historical periods has also led to a change in

the content or a ban on religious education.

- Confessional religious education does not contradict either the secular character of education or contemporary interreligious, intercultural and ecumenical dialogue in a European context.

### **Research methods**

The following research methods were used in this dissertation:

- Descriptive (exposing and describing historical documents, dogmatic and religious-moral teachings or positions of socio-political and religious establishments necessary to understand the context);

- analytical-interpretive and comparative methods (analysis, interpretation and comparison of documents, teaching material, etc.);

- deductive (using premises and facts to formulate reasoning and conclusions);

- statistical methods (questionnaires, interviews).

### **Structure of the Theses**

The dissertation is structured in three chapters and has the following structure reflected in the table of contents:

Introduction

## CHAPTER I. EDUCATION AND RELIGIOUSNESS IN ROMANIA UNDER THE COMMUNIST REGIME

1. The religious context in Romania in the twentieth century
2. Monasticism in Romania under Communism
  - 2.1. Decree 410/28 October 1959
  - 2.2. Provisions of Decree 410
3. The priesthood during the years of communism in Romania
4. Teachers of theology during the communist period

## CHAPTER II. RELIGIOUS EDUCATION IN ROMANIA AFTER 1989.

1. The beginning of religious education in public schools in Romania after 1989
2. Orthodox education
3. Catholic education
4. Neo-Protestant education

## CHAPTER III. ATTITUDES OF YOUNG PEOPLE TOWARDS RELIGIOUS EDUCATION IN ROMANIA TODAY - A SURVEY

1. Religion and religiosity
2. Attitudes towards own religion/faith
3. Behavioral indicators of religious well-being
4. Religion as a guide to behavior and a guideline for decision making
5. Types of attitudes toward religion
6. Family and religious education. Parents' views
7. The Church: actions in the field of religious and moral education

CONCLUSION

REFERENCED SOURCES

## II. GENERAL PRESENTATION OF THE COMPOSITION

### CHAPTER I. EDUCATION AND RELIGIOSITY IN ROMANIA UNDER THE COMMUNIST REGIME

**The first chapter** covers the cultural, historical, political and religious context before the establishment of the communist regime in Romania, the situation created by the communist coup, the prohibitions and persecutions during this period, and finally the present context, the so-called "transition period", in which new conditions for the life of the churches and the teaching of the subject of Religion emerged.

The experience accumulated in the second half of the 19th century made it possible to organize the first congress of Orthodox teachers of religion (Bucharest, 1912), the aim of which was to clarify the role of religious education in schools, the content of textbooks and the teaching methods used. At the beginning of the congress, it became clear that such annual meetings were particularly necessary, since throughout the 19th century, a hostile attitude towards the Church and religion in general was manifested at the local level. According to studies, the aim of religious education at that time (and not lost its particular relevance today) was the moral and behavioural change of the child in order to enable him to become a good citizen, stressing the importance not only of his formation as a person, but also his task in society. The political and historical results achieved after the Great Union of 1918 and the change in European politics (after the war) led the State to adopt a new constitution in 1923, which is considered to be a one of the most democratic Romanian constitutions. It states that the Romanian Orthodox Church, which is the majority church, and the Uniate Church (a church with a compact mass of believers in Transylvania, the new territory united with Romania) have precedence over other religious communities, and both are

considered Romanian churches. Moreover, the Paris Peace Conference (1919) recognised a number of rights of other minority religions.

The autonomy granted to the Church by the state led to the adoption in 1925 of the Law on the Organization of the Russian Orthodox Church, which provided for its self-government, but under state control, exercised constitutionally through the Ministry of Religious Affairs. In the same year the Romanian Orthodox Church was elevated to the rank of patriarchate, the patriarch being elected by a Great Electoral College composed of members of the Diocese of Bucharest (Bucharest Diocesan Council), members of the Romanian Orthodox Church (National Congress of the Church), and members of the Orthodox government and parliament, so that, as can be seen, the state has a great influence over the Romanian Orthodox Church.

By the Religions Act of 1928, the state was obliged not only to guarantee protection and freedom, but also to provide the material means necessary for the maintenance of the clergy and for covering their cultural and social needs. All this assistance was provided in proportion to the number of Romanian citizens who were members of the various denominations, depending on the total population of the country, its material situation and its real needs. New religious communities may be recognised by the State if the exercise of their faith and their religious and moral principles do not contradict public order and good morals, and if their organizational system of management and administration is in conformity with the Religions Act. The recognition of a religious denomination may be revoked on the same basis if its governing bodies and members manifestly contravene the provisions of State law. In these institutions the study of History, Romanian Language and Literature and the Romanian Constitution is compulsory and is taught according to a curriculum approved by the competent authority of the Church in agreement with the Ministry of Culture and Education in such a way as not to hinder special theological training and to be



compatible with the religious and moral character of these institutions. Diplomas of theological education obtained abroad shall be awarded on the basis of a special examination. Equivalence examinations for diplomas issued abroad are organised by a committee in the theological institutes of the respective denominations, which is attended by a representative of the Ministry of Culture and Education.

In general, the 1928 law, which concerns the general regime of religions, largely meets not only the requirements of the Orthodox state, but also those of other religions, as well as ensuring freedom and the possibility of legalization through equal and non-discriminatory application of the law. In 1933, the theological academies in Transylvania were transferred to the Directorate of Higher Education of the Ministry of Education, thus recognizing their character as higher education, and in 1939 the law on the rationalization of higher education finally recognized it as such.

On the initiative of King Charles II and with the cooperation of his non-political partners, the Constitution of 1923 was amended in 1938, thus attempting to concentrate as much decision-making power as possible in the King's hands. According to the new Constitution, the State guaranteed the freedom and simultaneous protection of all religions, in so far as their exercise did not harm public order, morality or the security of the State. Article 8 states that clergymen of any rite or religion are not allowed to engage in political activities in places of worship or at various religious events. This principle forbids all political propaganda, and King Charles I's fear was well-founded, as the removal of political parties from the political life of Romania and their going underground caused great discontent on the part of the leaders and members of these parties. Although the removal of the clergy from the political sphere was sought, the protests of the Romanian Orthodox Church continued to oppose the Romanian state's policy of concluding a concordat with the Vatican.

This constitution was suspended in September 1940, when the

new military dictatorship of General Ion Antonescu began (September 1940-August 1944), ending in the autumn of 1944 with a Royal Decree No. 1626, signed by King Mihai I (2 September).

During this period, there was a tendency towards the creation of a Romanian school of pedagogy, aimed at developing a theory of education based on knowledge of the specificities of the Romanian people and adapted to them. In essence, it was a school that gave priority to farmers – the only one that preserved national education based on values.

The place and role of religious education in human life is stressed by most Romanian educators, who show that things in this world only make sense through the relationship between man and God, and "all political, national and cultural issues must be linked to the eternal value of religion". It can be seen that, using specific methods, they have analysed various aspects related to this dimension of education - the place of religion in the system of education, the relationship of religion to other disciplines, the way in which it is applied, the relationship between information and training, the training of teachers of religion, the results of the study of the subject of Religion observed over time, and so on.

Priest Mihail Bulacu (1898-1985), one of the most eminent Romanian Christian educators of the inter-war period, came into contact with the European pedagogical my- tude at the beginning of the twentieth century, during his specialization in pedagogy, catechetics and homiletics at the Faculty of Catholic and Protestant Theology in Strasbourg (1924- 1926). In order to get to know the individuality of students, he proposed to combine the methods of Christian pedagogy with those of experimental pedagogy by introducing into the university curriculum of the theological faculties disciplines that provided pedagogical and psychological (theoretical and practical) training for students. The proposal to reform theological education is supported by two arguments: on the one hand, by the fact that many graduates of theological

seminaries enroll for university studies in various theological specialties and refuse to accept the priesthood, and on the other hand, by the fact that some graduates of theological faculties "are not convinced of the Christian ideal because they do not understand it."

As a result of the above-mentioned studies and proposals, a number of conclusions have been drawn, supported by a number of measures, including:

- compulsory participation in religion classes - twice a week (both in primary and secondary schools);
- the possibility of providing religious education;
- double subordination of teachers of religion - to state and church authorities;
- the organisation of religion classes by the priest (as part of his pastoral mission);
- curriculum reform;
- establishment of Christian youth organizations, Christian newspapers, magazines, etc.

A 1944 study on the importance of religion as an educational factor in society said, "To think that the state can replace religion in mass education is a great delusion. Unlike the frequent changes in politics, political regimes and their supporters, only religion can provide an absolute ideal through its universal and permanent value." After 1928, the Primary Education Act decided to entrust the teaching of religion to priests, as "religion in schools is the cornerstone of the educational system". In primary education, according to the Secondary Education Act, religion was taught for two hours a week, and in 1928 the horary was reduced to one hour a week. Finally, by a number of provisions, Religion was dropped from the social-humanities curriculum and included in the group of arts subjects, along with Music, Drawing, Physical Education and Labour Training. However, from the point of view of contemporary perception, the curricula for the subject of Religion in the inter-war period did not respect the basic principles of

education: the so-called concentric education or the principle of simultaneity.

By the end of the Second World War, a number of works appeared on the need to study Religion in schools and on ways to improve the educational process. This was attributed both to ecclesiastics (priests, theologians) and to laymen and specialists in the field of education or child psychology.

In 1933, Fr. Dumitru Culugar (1907-1988), one of the greatest specialists in this field, wrote such a program, which served as the basis for the Religion and Religious Studies textbooks used in the primary and preparatory grades (7 grades). In his view, religious education should embrace the latest effective advances in pedagogy and avoid sterile theory as well as precarious practice, ensuring the teaching and maintenance of religiousness in students. Another author, Jon Guenescule (1859-1949), in his 1923 master-work *Pedagogy*, considered two main aspects in the process of religious education: religious education for the acquisition of knowledge about Christian faith and history, about the teachings of Christianity and the organization of the church, and the inculcation of religious feeling, which gives rise to duties that bind us to eternity. Further, Stefan Bersnescu (1895-1984) in his 1932 book *Pedagogy* says that religious education is absolutely necessary and that its purpose is to inculcate faith in a higher, creative principle that governs the world. Vasile Bencila (1897-1979), a philosopher and teacher, spoke about the importance of religion for children in a series of articles later collected in a posthumous collection. In his view, religion is the medium for the accomplishment of education in all its aspects, and together with moral education is the guide in the social sciences. In his writings, this great pedagogue establishes the connection between the weak influence of religion in society and the lack of religious education in elementary schools.

Aware of the close relationship between religious education and intellectual, aesthetic, moral and even physical education,

Gheorghe Antonescu proposed a solution to the problems of religiosity in schools. According to him, the link between these two fields, which seems difficult to reconcile, is the philosophy of synthesizing scientific data that discuss common issues. Ideally, the religion teacher is familiar with philosophical issues, and in turn, the philosophy teacher should take care of his or her preparation in religious issues. In this context, it should be noted that all writers of the inter-war period argue that religious education should use all the methods also recommended by modern education.

Authors who write about the relationship between religion and other subjects conclude that "religion should occupy a central, not a peripheral, place in the system for the moral and intellectual education of the young generation." A 1930 study warned that "one of the most pressing problems of the Orthodox Church is the need to organize a united front of Christians against the degeneration of souls, a movement that is coming rapidly from the East."

After the incorporation of Transylvania into the Romanian state, following the Great Union of 1918, the Catholic Church became the church of a part of the minority population and functioned together with the dominant Orthodox Church (the church of the government) and the privileged Uniate Church belonging to the majority. While the rights of the latter seem to be settled, the Catholics need immediate help from the Vatican. Against the backdrop of the Vatican's rapprochement with Romania, the papal nuncio Marmagi arrived in Bucharest with the idea that Catholics living within the country's borders (especially Hungarians and Germans) would be an obstacle to close relations between the Vatican and Romania. As a result, the legislation established during the inter-war period concerning teaching and education regulated and marked the stages in the development of Catholic religious education under the guidance of the Catholic Church.

The state has the right to supervise and inspect divinity schools;

minorities have the right to run the schools, and the state is obliged to support them financially. After negotiations with the papal nuncio, it was agreed that minority pupils would be enrolled outside the state schools in confessional schools, which were considered private, as well as in other private schools in accordance with the law.

As for the Neo-Protestant denominations, after the unification of Transylvania (1918) with Romania, all Baptists united and in 1919 established the "Union of Churches in Romania". The Germans had their own associations, and in 1929 the Hungarians in Transylvania and the Russians/Ukrainians in Bessarabia also established their own associations. In many cases, however, Baptist preachers were not allowed "qualified Baptist catechists, and students whose parents were members of associations recognized by the Ministry of Religion were often given poor grades by teachers of other denominations in order to force them to repeat the year." In addition to their great missionary zeal, the Romanian Baptists follow a "Puritan" code of life, completely avoiding tobacco and alcohol, forbidding the use of shorts and strictly observing Sunday as "the Lord's day".

The communists are aware that those who have the power to determine the education of the younger generation will have a long-term influence on the future of society, because once they take power, they cannot immediately act against church institutions, since the population is strongly opposed.

The lack of religious education among children and young people alienates them from moral and religious values and therefore from their cultural and spiritual identity. A number of materialistic, dialectical and atheistic propaganda texts try to show that 'religion hinders children's intellectual development by crippling their judgement'. According to Article 27 of the 1948 Constitution, "no religious denomination, congregation or community shall establish or operate educational institutions, but only schools for the training of religious personnel under the

control of the State".

In the educational reform of 1948, theological and religious education was excluded from the state educational system; the former was left under the management of the Church, controlled and marginalized, and the latter was not only abolished but replaced by "scientific-atheistic" education.

During this period, a number of clichés were used to show the negative characteristics of the Western society that claimed to be Christian (from wars in the name of religion to the plight of children facing work). At the same time, the communists proclaim the socialist system as a paradise on earth, the creation of a perfect society without God, calling it a "golden age". Without faith in God and contrary to its religious principles, the nation, under the leadership of the Communist Party, began to build communism.

In order to ruin the image of religion and religious education, stories are told of children who died during their baptism (by immersion in water), or of believers who thought they had become ill because they did not strictly observe religious practices, or of those who committed suicide in order to meet God more quickly. To St. Communion (because of the spoon) was viewed with hostility because of the danger of epidemics, and fasting was denied as "harmful to health."

An order of the Ministry of Education in 1947 revoked the right of the bishops to appoint teachers in the religious schools, as provided for in the law of 1929.

Even more serious is the problem of the textbooks prepared by the Ministry according to Marxist principles; they have been introduced everywhere, without exception for religious schools. In 1948, with the Law on the General Regime of Religious Studies, many theological schools were closed or relocated, which led some teachers and students to silently oppose the newly introduced communist regime.

Documents in the archives of the National Council for the Study of Security Archives (NCSSA) show numerous actions by

which the Security Department (Securitate) and institutions subordinate to the Communist Party monitored and controlled religious denominations, accusing them of "forms and methods used to indoctrinate, attract, and maintain the religious affiliation of children and youth." It is interesting to note that some of these cases were recorded in places where neo-Protestant sects were actively interested in religious education of children and young people. Nevertheless, the Orthodox clergy continue to conduct various activities to attract young people to the Orthodox Church. By 1989, six Orthodox theological seminaries were functioning: in Bucharest, Buzau, the monasteries of Neamt, Cluj-Napoca, Craiova and Karansebes, which, together with the other two university institutes (Bucharest and Sibiu), contributed, despite all the constraints to which they were subjected, to the training of the personnel needed by the Church.

In the absence of a statute of organization and functioning approved by the Romanian communist state, the Roman Catholic Church applied the provisions of the Code drawn up by the Vatican, paying special attention to the religious education of youth and children. In the Diocese of Alba Iulia, in particular, the education of children and young people is carried out within the framework of the school system, using specific forms and methods of catechesis, which Securitate identifies as the most effective forms of religious education for children and young people in the country, since they are applied in all Roman Catholic parishes in the form of an educational system organised according to more or less clear pedagogical principles.

The small and scattered number of Protestant believers is not regarded as a particular problem by the institutions of the communist state, and the fact that the number of young people attending religious services is small gives a certain degree of freedom to Protestant communities, since they are not as strictly controlled as other denominations with large numbers of believers.

Judaism is mainly concerned with keeping children in religious



life, but owing to population ageing and emigration the number of young people involved is quite small, and the education that is carried on is aimed at more rather to awaken and maintain a sense of belonging to the Jewish community.

Of all the religious denominations active during the communist period in Romania, the activities of the neo-Protestant communities were the most intensively monitored, as they had the most varied educational activities to attract and maintain children's interest in the faith.

Baptists, like most other evangelical communities in Romania, were subjected to a strict regime of persecution: they were considered traitors and their religious services were closed. Their churches were closed, pastors were threatened, arrested, and prosecuted, they were required to have a special permit, a document giving them the right to preach, Sunday schools for children and young people were revoked or restricted, and lists of candidates for baptism had to be approved in advance by government officials.

In the specialized theological publications of the period, one can read numerous articles involving various ecumenical topics. Numerous presentations from international conferences have also been published by Romanian legal actors. A good example is the article by Fr. Dumitru Culugar in the Romanian Orthodox Church magazine, entitled "Religious Education in an Ecumenical Spirit. Initiatives and achievements of the Romanian Orthodox Church", which presents the qualities of religious education and its advantages when it is ecumenical.

Communism in Romania was largely militant state atheism, the consequences of which are well known: outlawing many activities of the Orthodox, Uniate and Roman Catholic Churches and other faiths, confiscating their property, arresting many Orthodox, Uniate, Catholic, and other hierarchs, the infiltration of the Security Department into the confessions, the destruction of Orthodox churches and the deportation of priests who opposed the

totalitarian regime or their retreat to monasteries. Religious education became one of the greatest dangers for the new totalitarian leadership, with Christian morality in particularly sharp contradiction to the Stalinist-Leninist and then to the "Chaushist" communist doctrine established in Romania until 1989.

Romanian monasticism was not spared from communist oppression either, and soon after the dictatorship was established it became clear that its reformation was required. Yet, if we compare it with later ideas and practices during the communist regime, we see a serious resemblance with the post-war situation. If in 1938 there were 1,638 monks and 2,549 nuns, in 1949 there were respectively 1,528 and 3,807. We must also take into account the mass exodus to the monasteries with the establishment of the communist regime in Romania, and the numbers are much lower for the Antonescu period.

With the coming of the communist power, the Romanian monasticism fell into complete turmoil. The Church was aware that without a monastic foundation it would not be able to resist the intervention of the communist power. A 1945 report by the informant Viator on the monasteries in Romania states:

"Most of them received donations of forest and other areas by a law published in the State Gazette. In addition to their mission of prayer and contemplative life, some monasteries have schools of household management, weaving workshops, orphanages, etc. The monasteries, with few exceptions, are not centres of morality and culture, and what is said about their contribution to Romanian culture and civilisation in the past sometimes borders on myth, so that the state of the monasteries today should not be compared with that of the past, but with what they should be, according to their mission and in order to justify their existence in the state organism". In this way, the repressive organs of the new regime kept a close eye on monastic life in post-war Romania.

Gradually, the "Orthodox problem" was pursued, step by step, with a view to security: "Orthodox monasteries were hotbeds of

counter-revolutionary activity, under the legal cover of monasticism, and created difficulties in terms of extracting information and even taking action. To avoid the vigilance of the authorities, many hostile elements became monks after March 6, 1945. The situation required by Order No. 58869 of May 20, 1949, is only a starting point for informative action in this area," said one of the reports from the security organs.

In this way, Securitate monitored the activity in the monastic environment and tried to control every initiative, as in the case of Mihai Voda Monastery in 1950. In an informal conversation, Patriarchal Vicar Theoctist Boshanyanu mentioned that "one day he was looking at the church of Mihai Voda in the State Archives, after which he went to the Patriarch and suggested that it would be good to establish a monastery there." The Patriarch was ready to carry out this project, moreover, Bishop Theoctist added that the local priest should be replaced by monks "who would lead beautiful services with inspiring sermons and thus a new monastic centre would be established in Bucharest". In a September 1948 summary of the CDF on "important events in the field of Orthodox worship", among other things, mentions some monasteries that in one way or another supported the anti-Communist resistance. Anti-Soviet enemy elements grouped around them, escaping from Bessarabia so that they could then time to help the "Church and State". "Eugene Laiu, the new abbot of the Culdarushani monastery in Ilfov, although he tries to demonstrate that he supports the regime, has suspicious links with the Patriarchate's protosyngellos, Damian Punzaru. Damian Punzaru is a former butler to Metropolitan Vissarion Puiu and it is rumoured in monastic circles that the two have a relationship with Vissarion Puyu, from whom they even receive instruction. Bishop Paul Scherpe often visited the Pasarea monastery, accompanied by a crowd of suspicious persons, including elements of the dismissed army cadres. It is alleged that the nuns of this monastery have formed groups which hold subversive meetings and even

propagandise against the government."

A report of the Iasi State Security Service on the persecution of hierarchs in the city area, dated 26 October 1948, mentions some intellectuals, probably suspected by the security forces because of their past, who had retired to various monasteries in Moldova. And all this was done with the blessing of the abbot: "Olga Sturza lived in the monastery of Neamt until 1 October 1948 under the protection of the abbot Melchizedek Dumitru. At that time, Olga Sturza maintained close friendly ties with Archimandrite Vasile Vasilake, a former radio reporter during the Antonescu regime, who, expelled from the Patriarchate, came to the Nyamt Monastery, and the abbot placed at his disposal the old palace of the former Patriarch Nicodemus. While Olga Sturza was staying in the monastery, these people gathered either in the abbey or in Olga Sturza's home and discussed all sorts of issues against the present communist government."

Archimandrite Vasile Vasilake, according to a report of November 6, 1948, "stated that he continued to maintain contacts with Olga Sturza, who had close connections in British circles, and with General Jorgulescu in the capital, whom he informed of the ability of the monks of Neamt to contribute to the resistance movement". For example, in a report of 11 December 1948 of the CSP on the religious unrest in the country during the period 1-10 December, it says, among other things: "The Orthodox monasteries and sketes pro- duct to be centres of resistance and cover for the legionaries: thus the abbess Elena Theodora Voloshenko of the Guranda monastery in the municipality of Truesesti, reg. Botosani, makes propaganda against our republican regime, always mentioning the former king, and at the same time stating that her nuns, following the example of one of them, would rather be tortured than denounce "brother legionnaires", and will continue to help them "as they should".

The same report tells how the Archbishop of Craiova, Firmilian Marin, "sent priests and missionaries throughout Oltenia to

distribute and sell the 1949 religious calendar and in order to keep alive the fervour of the Romanian faith".

In a report of the CSP of 13 December 1948. It mentions how Archbishop Paul Scherpe, exarch of the Ungro-Vlachia diocese, while Patriarch Justinian was at the All Orthodox Congress in Moscow, allowed "Vasile Kaligariu, a former active military man, dismissed from the army, residing in Bucharest, to live for 30 days with his wife without paying food and rent in the Pasarea monastery". The report of 25 March 1949 is categorical: "There are 206 monasteries and convents in the country with 5,564 monks and nuns, brothers and sisters, located mainly in mountainous areas and difficult to observe. If this location of the Orthodox monasteries and sketes is due to the fact that they once served as a refuge in the event of a military invasion, it is now a serious concern for the authorities because links are always found between monks and nuns on the one hand and subversive elements on the other."

The document goes on to give examples of "subversive activity in the last eight months alone", i.e. between August 1948 and March 1949, in which seven categories are found, viz: "anti-communist or legionary propaganda" (presumably sermons with anti-communist convictions) in the cases of monk Dosoftei Moraru of the monastery of Sihastria, abbot Makari Brebete of the monastery of Ruska Banya or abbot Ilie Cleopa of the monastery of Sihastria; the harbouring of "legionary elements" by the former abbot Damaskin Doros of the Kokos monastery, who "hid legionaries from Braila and Galati", or by the abbess Magdalena Penku of Passau, who hid "the wife of the war criminal Platon Kirnoaga"; the concealment of weapons and "armed elements" or those "of the resistance", as in the case of the monastery of Govanul of "unidentified armed elements", the concealment in the monastery of Neamt of weapons by Dionisie German, or by the hieromonk Victor Ignat, who "hiding weapons for a subversive organisation in the Bogdana - Bakau monastery"; holding "secret"

meetings or meetings "with legionary elements", in the case of the monastery of Antim "before its dissolution, where meetings with legionary elements were held", or at the monastery of Predel, where the abbot Dionysius Velya (transferred by Patriarch Justinian as the first priest to the Patriarchal Cathedral) "allowed the monk Nikandru Prodan to bring legionaries for secret meetings and to shelter the remains of Nikoleta Nikulesku, holding special services for her"; not revealing "hidden legionaries" or legionary demonstrations, as in the case of a nun from the Guranda-Botoshani monastery who, when investigated by the security services "did not expose the legionaries she was hiding"; hiding legionary materials, as in the case of the monk Makari Boukour of Cholanu-Bouzau, who "kept the portrait of Corneliu Zelia Codreanu and contacts elements from the Bu- vin Mountains, through the monk Zosima Tarala from the monastery of Dulhaucu-Ramnicu-Sarat"; and collecting aid for the arrested or for the "unfortunates who are right", as in the case of the monks Arsenije Boca from Sumbuta de Sus and Adrian Făcăcănu from Govora, who "collect aid for the legionaries who come to visit them"; with the monk Nicodemus Munteanu from Bist- rica-Neamt, who in January 1949. "Collecting aid for the imprisoned monks and resistance elements".

In briefly reviewing this information obtained and used by the security authorities, it must be said that many of these "realities" are exaggerated, given that everything is based on how both the informants and the security authorities saw them. As in the case of the "480 pamphlets and books of a monarcho-fascist and legionary nature found in the search of the Tismana monastery, books that had in fact been brought to the monastery earlier by Antonescu missionaries from the Presidium of the Council of Ministers in the spring of 1944." In the case of the anti-communist or legionary propaganda, the case of Father Ilie Cleopa, who on May 21, 1948, is significant, on the feast of the "Holy Kings Constantine and Helena", delivered a sermon in which, among other things, he said:

"May God grant our present leaders to be like the holy kings Constantine and Helena, so that the Church may remember them in the centuries to come!" I was not even able to undress because a car came and they told me to go with them. They took me to Targu-Neamt and there they put me in a basement where there was only a cement bed. Then they interrogated me for five days, keeping me without food and water."

It is worth noting that in this first communist period, monasteries were places of refuge, of waiting for and recovering the forces meant to support the Anglo-American troops who were waiting to come against the Russians. Many soldiers retreated to isolated monasteries for the simple reason of gathering resources to start a war. After believing for so long, some members of the anticommunist resistance finally realized that the West would not intervene, but they were now forced to remain underground. Thus, for example, after Tito's secession and in the event of a Yugoslav-Soviet conflict, the resistance group "Parajin" in the mountains of Vrancea must act "armed behind the Soviet front." However, "since Stalin has withdrawn with his tail wagging from Banat", it remains for them to resist "communism and communisation mainly on the spiritual and ideological front", which means using prayer as a weapon, and politically joining the legionary movement passively.

The clergy also suffered during the communist period. The training of priests was placed under the control of the Securitate. In reviewing the priests' courses, we find that they were initiated by Patriarch Justinian in 1949 to refresh the missionary zeal of the servants of Christ's Church, to establish a closer relationship between the priests and the Patriarch, who steered the ship of faith in the difficult times imposed by the communist regime. The first missionary courses began to be held in the building of the Theological Institute in Bucuresti (formerly the Central Seminary) in January 1949, where 522 priests from Moldavia, Oltenia, Muntenia and Southern Bucovina participated for 60 days. The

inauguration was carried out personally by Patriarch Justinian, with the participation of the Minister of Religious Affairs Stanciu Stoyan and the Rector of the Institute, Deacon Nicolae Nicolaescu. As this is a new event for theological education and the training of priests, several prominent Sebastian Rusan of Suceava, Andrei Majiru of Arad and Joseph Gafton of Rumnik and Arjes, and on Orthodoxy Sunday (the first Sunday of Lent) Patriarch Justinian attended the communion of the students.

During the communist period, 84 conferences were held, 66 of a theological-pastoral nature and 18 of a social nature, to which we can add a number of conferences on various topics and the making of several documentaries. The second series of missionary courses for priests was also held at the Theological Institute in Bucharest and opened on May 4, 1949, in the presence of Patriarch Justinian, Ion Nistor, technical advisor at the Ministry of Religious Affairs, Rector Nicolae Nicolaescu, the teaching staff and 500 priests from the same areas listed above. The Synod organized these courses "to acquaint the priests with the great changes we are going through and to instruct the altar servants to address the workers with all sincerity," says Rector Nicolaescu. "I would like to draw everyone's attention to the nature of our courses. They should not have too intellectual a character, as many of the newcomers might think", because "our concern in these courses should be directed to the pastoral activity of our priests, an activity that should be carried out according to the most appropriate and close to the understanding of the people methods". And the Patriarch says: "In our opinion, as far as the preaching, catechesis, advice and guidance we give to the faithful are concerned, we believe that they should be focused on teaching our faithful to pray, so that they may know our liturgy, learn it and practice it in all the circumstances in which the priest ministers." For this "let us return to the practice of the Church in the early centuries, when the people lived the doctrine of Christ in the songs and psalms of prayer and praise addressed to God, and when the apostles, with



little intellectual training, but with the sacred fire of faith in Christ, warmed, comforted, and won for Christ the souls of Gentiles thirsting for life with God."

The following is the "Ordinance on the Appointment and Transfer of Clergy from Parishes, Examinations for Eligibility, State Examinations, Promotion and Election for Deacons and Priests of the Romanian Orthodox Church for Ministry in the Capital," approved and voted by the Holy Synod of the ROC on February 28, 1950, and approved by the Ministry of Religious Affairs.

All deacons and priests participate in these courses after 5 years of pastoral activity, and attendance is mandatory. The courses are conducted according to a program that is prepared annually by the Department of Religious Education of the Holy Synod and approved by the Patriarch or by a meeting of the Holy Synod. Synod in a reduced composition. After the completion of the courses, the clergy take two examinations: one is oral, to test their knowledge of Orthodoxy and of Sacred Scripture; the second is written and practical, consisting of a sermon, a catechesis, a question of canon law or the administrative regulation of the Church, and liturgical practice. All courses are taught by professors from the theological institutes in the country, depending on the nature of the examinations and the specifics of the metropolises. Thus, the provisions in the regulations provide for theological courses only, without political questions, and the curriculum is approved by the Patriarch or by the Synod in reduced (permanent) session, and probably in most cases approved only by the Patriarch. Interestingly, the ordinance defining the guidelines for these courses was introduced immediately after approval and voting by the Holy Synod on February 28, 1950, although it was not approved by the Ministry of Religious Affairs. The nature of this program can be judged from the speech of the Patriarchal Vicar, Theotist Botoseanu, at the opening of the sixth series of courses for missionary priests:

"If in the five series the program of the courses was rather theoretical, this new program removes the theoretical and places the emphasis mainly on the practical character of the courses..." Moreover, the implementation of the new regulations has apparently alarmed the organs of the security, as we learn from a report of April 29, 1950, prepared by Lt. Dobryanu, which states that:

"At the opening of the sixth series, which took place on April 19, 1950, the Patriarch imposed a program of conferences of an absolutely mystical religious character, although the Ministry of Religious Affairs had presented a table with the program of conferences, including some of a political character, which the Patriarch did not accept. /.../ Mister Stoian Stanciu talked with the Patriarch for several hours, after which they agreed to include in the program some of the topics determined by the Ministry of Religious Affairs," the Securitate official's report reads.

Concerning the sixth series of courses for priestly leadership, priest Kusaru Stefan, protopresbyter in Braila, writes: "Since during the first week there was an absence of political conferences, a delegation of priests presented to rector Nicolaescu a request to change the program of the courses and introduce political and social topics in the spirit of the new times."

Because of the statements, some officials of the Church have been dismissed from their posts. Such is the case of the Patriarchal Vicar, Parthenius Chopron. This is probably not the reason for the attitude of the communist state towards him, but it was decisive, as the report given by the Noel Informator on February 18, 1950, tells us: 'The Patriarchate Office says that Vicar Parthenios Chopron will be dismissed from his post because of the speech he made at the opening of the fifth series of courses for the inter-formation of priests'. Our opinion is reinforced by the report of Lieutenant Dobryanu, mentioned above: 'At the opening of the fifth series, the Patriarch sent in his place the now former Patriarchal Vicar Parthenios Chopron. The latter, in his opening

speech, not only did not speak politically, but also directly attacked the democratic regime, letting the seminarians know that the purpose of the courses was to teach priests how to disguise themselves in today's times." Among other things, the document quotes him as saying, "When I see this great chorus of priests, I remember the words of the Savior to his disciples when he said to them, 'In the world you will have tribulation. That is why the leadership has taken these things into consideration and has created these courses, so that the priests can cope with all the trials and difficult situations in which they are placed.'"

In fact, the theme of war was a constant presence in Bishop Parthenius Chopron's speech, a fact that would lead to his dismissal as Patriarchal Vicar and his exile to a monastery.

However, this was not the only "deviation" of the former military bishop, because he did the same at the opening of the fourth series of lectures on November 4, 1949 – a speech which, despite censorship, was published in its main part in the official publication of the church, the BOR magazine. For example, "At the present time, when great social upheavals are taking place all over the world, when the situation after the last war is still not fully clarified, when almost daily so many problems are being put to solution, it is needless to say that those who are involved in the social life should be the watchmen who have the necessary training. Let us remove every difficulty that comes in our way with our tact and wisdom, with our patience, and with the steadfast affirmation of the Christian faith which has triumphed through the ages and which will remain victorious to the end of time."

In addition to Bishop Parthenios Czopron, who did not speak "politically", Lieutenant Dobryanu mentions in his report the manifestation of Nikolai Popovic, Bishop of Oradea: "Only a seat after the opening of the fifth series, the Patriarch made Bishop Nikolai Popovic of Oradea, known for his frequent anti-democratic manifestations, speak to the priests in the courses. In his speech, he clearly stated that a war against religion had begun in the party and

that priests should prepare to face the enemies of God at the cost of their lives."

In fact, Patriarch Justinian did not make Bishop Nicholas speak, but being present during the feast, the bishop delivered a speech in which he recalled the dialogue between the pagan governor Modestus and St. Basil the Great. The result was unexpected, since "those present in the hall burst into applause", a situation which led the teachers and tutors present to compare what the Archbishop of Ardeal said with the speech of Bishop Parthenius Ciopron at the opening of the fifth series of courses.

In conclusion, the Securitate official stated in his report, "Since the original character of the training courses has been completely changed and they are being used as an ideal centre for covert anti-democratic propaganda, we are of the opinion that these courses should be discontinued."

However, the missionary training courses are still in progress, and the clergy regulations, with all their regulations, has been approved by the Ministry of Religious Affairs, having already been practically implemented by the Church. Yet, although the Ministry of Religious Affairs tries to impose political lectures in these courses, the priest-trainees who take the exam prefer theological rather than "political" topics. Thus, among other things, he says: "In the examinations of the seventh series, priests who attend the training courses of the Theological Institute, out of the 110 sermon topics given by the first commission to the priests of the dioceses of Oltenia and Ungro-Vlachia, none of the candidates wrote on the actual topics: "Address for the Brotherhood of Workers and Peasants," "Address for the 23rd of August," seeking to develop mostly "less compromising" topics, for the preferably theological."

Another report, dated July 1, 1949, expresses the informant's concern that Bishop Antim Nice, and Firmilian Marin, Bishop of Oltenia, were leading examining committees for priests "involved in a course to teach Marxist-Leninist ideology" (4th series), even

though "reports" had repeatedly been made against these bishops for being "legionaries."

More telling is the situation with the examinations of the priests of the fifth series, where the three commissions were headed by Bishops Joseph Gafton, Theoctist Arapaşu (later Romanian Patriarch), and Antim Nice, the informant specifying, that they were composed by Patriarch Justinian, who excluded Justin Moisescu (later also Romanian Patriarch), Nicolae Cicecu, George Moisescu, and the rector Nicolae Nicolaescu, who were considered the "political missars" of the Theological Institute in Bucharest.

In a document of 18 April 1952, drawn up by the Centre for Studies of the Ministry of Religious Affairs, in connection with the differences in the methodology and content of the priestly courses in Sibiu and Bucharest, we find an explanation for the above. While the first part of the lectures is devoted to issues concerning the Church in Russia or the unities in Transylvania, in the second part the lecturers of the theological institutes are obliged to deliver lectures of a purely political nature with historical nuances. Often their lectures were censored by the Ministry of Religious Affairs at the suggestion of its chief collaborator, the Directorate of State Security (Securitate).

On the other hand, we dare say that the religious part is well covered, with rich themes, starting from the Christological, eschatological and pastoral orientations in the theology of St. Ap. Paul's theology, to the doctrinal differences between Orthodoxy, Catholicism and Protestantism, issues that have always been discussed and used for the in-depth training of ministers. As for the differences between the programmes of the two missionary centres, which is the purpose of the above-mentioned document, they begin with those relating to the category of religious themes. We can see that in Bucharest and in Curtea de Arges, the priests' training is focused on the Synoptic Gospels, the Gospel of John, the Council Epistles with their social ideas and the Christian doctrine of man, probably as a counter-argument to the materialist

ideology preached by the Party. In Bucharest, by contrast, the seminars related to training and the special seminars at which the priest could discuss freely were clearly and strictly defined and numbered, with emphasis on the practical side of worship: church singing, homiletics, liturgics. Among the conclusions drawn by the officials of the Ministry of Religious Affairs, the advantages of Bucharest in terms of the religious topics dealt with by the teachers and priests attending the courses are noted. The last part is interesting, because the drafters of the report in question suggest that, after comparing the two programmes, 'a single or almost single draft programme should be drawn up for all the training centres, possibly with the cooperation of the above-mentioned Research Centre of the Ministry of Religious Affairs.

Priestly courses were created to awaken the clergy to the ministry, and because of the politicization imposed by the communist system, they are often discussed by the authorities and often censured (or banned) by the Ministry of Religious Affairs. In the case of Bucharest, where the Patriarch himself is the Kyriarch, the content and duration of these courses are obviously greater than in Sibiu, where the Archpastor is the famous Metropolitan Nicolae Bulan, who is severely persecuted by the Securitate authorities. In spite of the conditions imposed by the ministry (in fact by the Securitate, the Ministry of Religious Affairs being only the instrument through which it operates "officially"), Patriarch Justinian does not fail to encourage the priesthood in its mission of true service to Christ, a service without formalism and ritualism, as he expressed himself in his speech at the opening of the 37th series of courses in Curtea de Arges on 15 March 1962. "A priesthood that is not connected with life is a ritual priesthood. I advised the priests, studying the Sacred Scriptures and the writings of the holy fathers, to gather from them all that informs us to strive for the improvement of the life of our faithful, our fellow-men", and for these courses, in the same vein: "You are here, near the monastery of Arges, and you are here during Lent; use this opportunity to be

with all your heart and mind in the spiritual, forgetting the earthly, so that you may also grow in humility, charity, piety and every virtue."

In concluding our statement on this matter, we think the following passage from the 1950 CDF report on "Patriarch Justinian's Attitude" is pertinent: "At the Divinity Institute in Bucharest, he initiated courses in missionary leadership, implying that these were courses in political leadership, when in fact they were courses in sacred theology according to the old mold. This happens because the professors, even when they are well-meaning, look at the issues incorrectly because they have not received their political education in one of the Democracy parties or their political background weighs them down and does not allow them to see the issues fairly."

Teachers of theology also fell victim to the communist regime. Nikifor Crainic, a Christian theologian, thinker, and poet, was a great personality of the inter-war period who suffered many trials in his earthly life. Together with the great personalities of that time (Nicolae Jorga, Vasile Parvan, Nae Ionescu, Metropolitan Nicolae Bulan of Transilvania), he inspired whole generations. A poet, essayist, journalist and politician, he contributed to prestigious magazines in the country, two of which he himself directed: *Calendarul* and *Gandirea* (1926-1944). Crainic was the prime mover of traditionalism. As a politician, he was secretary-general of the ministry of culture and arts (1926), deputy from Wallachia (1917) and minister of national propaganda (1940-1941), member of the Romanian Academy from 1940. Here he became associated with Fr. Dumitru Staniloae, then a professor at the Theological Academy in Sibiu, who asked him for a literary revision of the texts of the translation of *The Good Beloved*.

On 4 June 1945, Nikifor Crainic was sentenced by the People's Court in Bucharest to "life imprisonment and deprivation of civil rights for 10 years for bringing the country to the catastrophe and for war crimes". The then Minister of Justice, Lucrețiu Patrașcanu,

allowed a retrial, but after nearly a year, when the Minister himself was accused of nationalism and arrested, the trial was terminated. Such was the fate of "the first Romanian theologian in the modern era of our history who took theology out of the narrow and limited circle of specialists, presenting it in an impressive form to the general attention of the intellectual world," as Father Dumitru Staniloae, another eminent representative of Romanian and common human culture, of Orthodox theology, and of the whole of Christianity, evaluated it in 1940. To the work of Fr. Staniloae we must also add his disciples, because above all he formed characters and theological values both in Sibiu and in Bucharest, where he had the opportunity to teach and to be the scientific supervisor of many students.

After completing his studies and obtaining the degree of Doctor of Divinity in Cernovit, Staniloae was sent abroad by Metropolitan Nicolae Bulan to study dogmatic theology and Church history in Athens (1927-1928), Munich, and Berlin (1928-1929). In 1929, he was appointed a professor in the Department of Economic Theology, Dogmatics and Greek and then, in 1932, a professor in the "St. Andrew's Spiritual Academy in Sibiu". In 1946, Dumitru Staniloae retired as rector of the St. Andrew's Academy, a post he had held since 1936.

Recently, Father Mihai Susaujan discovered in the archives of the Sibiu Metropolitanate a commemorative letter, addressed by Metropolitan Nicoale Bulan to the then Prime Minister Petru Groza, concerning Father Dumitru Staniloae. In the report prepared for the position of professor of "Ascetics and Mysticism" at the Faculty of Theology in Bucharest, the members of the committee stressed the following: "This scientific activity is evidenced above all by the more than 24 works in the field of theological science published by Fr. These works, some of them translated, others, and most of them original, are characterized by the spirit of profound insight with which the issues are chosen, examined, and interpreted, by the richness of their scholarly



argumentation, and by the literary elegance with which they are presented. Thanks to the diligence of Father Professor, the Theological Academy in Sibiu made great progress not only in the academic field, increasing the number of departments and courses of study and raising the Academy to the rank of a faculty, but also in the internal organizational field, increasing the capacity of the Academy's boarding house.

Fr. Staniloae's contribution to dogmatic theology was first recognized in the study *La Théologie dogmatique dans l'Eglise Orthodoxe Roumaine des origines à nos jours*, in the collection *De la Théologie Orthodoxe Roumaine*. Professor Nicolae Chiescu, his colleague in the department and one of the compilers of the 1958 textbook, in his study of the Department of Dogmatic Theology at the Faculty of Theology in Bucharest, dedicated to the centenary of the faculty, in 1981, together with Father Dumitru Radu, mentioned among Father Staniloae's works the chapters written for the mentioned textbook on Orthodox dogmatics.

In the study dedicated to the father of Romanian theology, published in the collection *Prinos de cinstire*, Father Dumitru Radu specifies this contribution: 'The Knowledge of God in Orthodoxy; The Being and Uncreated Acts of God; Inter-confessional Differences in Anthropology (in vol. I) and Orthodox doctrine of the subjective conditions of the incarnation in a comparative exposition; Protestant and Orthodox doctrine of the subjective conditions in a comparative exposition; Orthodox doctrine of the Church and some sub-chapters (in vol. II). The same professor, a former pupil of Fr. Staniloae, also explains the reason for omitting Fr. Staniloae's name among the co-authors of the volumes: "The chapters in this university course on dogmatic and symbolic theology which do not mention Fr. Prof. Staniloae among the co-authors are the following. Dumitru Staniloae, then held in Communist prisons as a political prisoner, are based on the same patristic heritage and illustrate the ontological and personalistic dimension of Orthodox teaching." That is, an attempt is made to

erase his name because he is a political prisoner.

The co-authorship of Fr. Staniloae in the two textbooks on dogmatic theology is confirmed by an archival document, the personal file of Fr. Dumitru. This is a 1976 bibliographic list, compiled as a result of a letter sent by the rector of the Theological Seminary in Princeton, New Jersey, USA, following his recommendation that Fr. Staniloae to be awarded the Templeton Foundation Prize for the Advancement of Religion. For this reason, Fr. Professor prepared a memoir accompanied by a list of documents. The list of Father Staniloae's writings, published in the Romanian Orthodox Church News in December 1973 on the occasion of his 70th birthday, was supplemented by a number of early writings by himself.

In this list he states that he co-authored both courses:

"In addition: a course on dogmatics published in 1958- 1959 in two volumes, co-authored with three other Romanian professors, Fr. Staniloae published this year a two-volume Orthodox Dogmatics written by himself." At one of the working versions can be seen the written mass of Fr. Prof. Dr. Dumitru Staniloae". This page is attached to the text of this study. This is a convincing argument to recognize, at least postmortem, his merits and contribution to Romanian dogmatic theology. Unfortunately, Fr. Staniloae was not included among the authors when the course was republished in Cluj.

### **Conclusions and summaries.**

We note that in the inter-war period the right to religious education of the various denominations was respected and attempts were made to adopt international models of religious and educational legislation.

This period (the first half of the twentieth century) was fruitful in terms of research into methods of teaching Religion. Many teachers and priests contributed to the establishment of a system of interdisciplinary religious education, in which they sought to combine religion with the findings of psychology and pedagogy in

order to form in young people high moral and social values.

Both the representatives of the state-recognised religions and the state teachers are concerned about the development of this sector and try to justify the place of religion both among other subjects and as an integral part of the social life of the country. During the communist period, however, religious education was subjected to serious restrictions. Communism left a black stain on Christian education in our country through Marxist-Leninist-Stalinist ideology. All those connected with the Church suffered, from monks to teachers and priests. The Church, however, does not give up its basic mission to care for the salvation of believers, but in view of the new circumstances it changes the methods, forms, ways and means of religious and moral influence.

The Church was in open opposition to the authorities and throughout the whole period continued with great patience and firmness, in spite of restrictions and open persecution, to educate religiously, especially through the excellent training of worthy ministers. This led to the creation of a solid core of pre-clergy and intellectuals, which eventually led to the Revolution of 1989 and whose continuation is the great role of the Church in the cultural and social life of the Romanian state, including in the field of educational policies after the changes.

## CHAPTER II. RELIGIOUS EDUCATION IN ROMANIA AFTER 1989.

**The second chapter** presents the situation in Romania after the fall of the communist regime in 1989 - the beginning of religious education and its spread.

After the fall of communism, in Romania, as in all post-totalitarian countries, there was a significant spiritual awakening for all churches, including the various religious movements that had been harassed, robbed and humiliated by the communist regime, as we have already seen in the previous chapter. This awakening is also largely due to the introduction of religion into the school as a spiritual starting point and existential glue between all the theoretical knowledge acquired through the study of other subjects, which is of particular importance in this period of secularisation of Romanian society.

Religion at school has educational properties through its formative role in the lives of young people, being able to reduce the negative effects of the contemporary crisis of identity and orientation, offering sustainable models of goodness and holiness in the family and society.

The hard years of the communist dictatorship with its degrading atheism, imposed in the public schools against the will of a whole religious people, taught us not to want culture without faith, science without spirituality, objects without spirit, knowledge without communication, Philosophy without the soul and above all school without the soul, in other words, education without religion, especially in the age of existential questions and the spiritual formation of young people, which is to say that "the soul of culture is the culture of the soul." At the Faith and Constitution meeting in Kuala Lumpur in 2004, the Romanian theologian Cosoroab, aptly described the post-communist ethnic situation in Romania, saying that "post-modernism is entering at a high level economically and politically, but a large part of the population is still living in the

pre-modern era."

The churches and their leaders have not created a mechanism to deal with these problems, individual choice of religion has become an obstacle for many, and new trends are becoming a potential source of conflict. During communism the churches were linked together and developed greater solidarity, but after 1989 they began to regain their old status, sometimes even coming into open conflict.

The Romanian educational system aims to contribute, through specific methods, to the maintenance of national identity in the context of European values, by showing in an appropriate way that this national identity has a Christian origin (i.e. here we are back to the fundamental ideas found in the pre-communist Russian pedagogy and education).

The initiative to organize Religion classes in public schools began immediately after the 1989 Revolution, namely in January of the following year, on the initiative of the Minister of Religious Affairs, jointly with the Holy Synod of the Romanian Orthodox Church, to introduce elective classes in the upper year, without grading the students.

It is stressed that the study of Religion cannot be absent from the Romanian school curriculum, precisely because it meets the needs of Romanian society, both locally and nationally, to maintain its spiritual richness and identity and to transmit moral values to the next generation. Although there are discussions 'for' and 'against' the teaching of Religion in public schools, the main argument that led to the introduction of Religion is: "a historical rehabilitation after fifty years of atheistic communism, when the values preached by Religion – tolerance, virtue, universality, love of neighbour, solidarity – suffered an alarming decline in Romanian society".

The first step in introducing the subject of Religion into the school education system was the signing of a protocol between the Ministry of Education and the Orthodox Church in September

1991, which provided for the introduction of "religious and moral education" in the curricula of public schools as an optional and elective subject with ecumenical content.

Although at the beginning one of the obstacles was the lack of qualified personnel to teach in the schools, a solution was found in the possibility of having priests and pastors teach at first and only then gradually filling the places with graduates of the theological seminaries and theological institutes. The possibility of teaching religion in public schools was constitutionally enshrined on 17 December 1991 in Article 32(7) of the first post-communist Romanian Constitution, in which the State guarantees freedom of religious education in public schools, in accordance with the specific requirements of each religion, the teaching being organised and guaranteed by law. The Law on Education was amended in 1999.

Since 2004-2005, religion has been included as part of the common core curriculum in the first years of secondary school (grades 9 and 10), gradually relinquishing its status as a compulsory elective subject in the following years, in response to the specific needs of students and in line with the core competency proposals put forward by the European Union education and training policy for 2010.

Among the skills and attitudes that Religion as a subject should develop, regardless of the context in which it is taught, we will also find points that favour an ecumenical approach: Integration in different communities, respect for the opinions and behaviour of other religions and beliefs, elimination of all forms of violence on religious grounds, mediation of conflict situations that may arise in the community, understanding and acceptance of religious pluralism and support for cohesion, community and social participation.

It has been proposed that the aim of religious education should be correlated with other general education subjects in the school, whose aims have also been revised after the fall of communism,

following the specificities of the national education system and the educational policies supported by the Romanian state.

Attending the opening ceremony of the Third European Ecumenical Assembly in Sibiu (4-9 September 2007), organised for the first time in a country with an Orthodox majority, José Manuel Durao Barroso, President of the European Commission, delivered an important message on the role of religion in the 'architecture' of a united Europe:

"All forms of cultural expression and the spiritual dimension of man must be able to co-exist in Europe".

It was these European values that prompted a study of the teaching of religion in public schools in Romania, to find out whether diversity and tolerance, respect for other cultures, religions and ways of life, the freedom to have or not to have a religion and whether the current teaching of Religion in Romania is what it is supposed to be.

In the latest official reports on European religiosity, Romania ranks among the most religious countries in Europe, both in terms of religious practices and in terms of trust in the Church as an institution, with opinion polls showing that the population places the Church first among the most trusted state institutions, giving it a consistent trust rating of over 80% (1999 - 88%, 2000 - 85%, 2001 - 89%).

The right to teach in Romanian public schools is valid for all denominations recognised by the Romanian State. Each denomination has the right to transmit its teachings using teaching staff trained in its (the denomination's) own higher theological schools approved and accredited by the Romanian State.

The accusation recently levelled by secular, non-governmental, atheist cultural and civic organisations at the teaching of religion in state schools is that the content of religious education is confessional and that the "catechizing dogmatism of religion classes often leads to indoctrination". In response to these accusations, my efforts have been directed towards clarifying the

terminology in the first case, to see if the accusations are justified, so that the issue can be clarified, and then suggestions can be made for finding solutions for ecumenical teaching of Religion. From the outset, it must be stressed that religious teaching is confessional in order to have a concrete identity and to be anchored in the reality of life, supporting the teachings of a church. This does not exclude the possibility of making common lessons where they are not opposed to do not contradict the basic beliefs (biblical, historical, etc.). Confessional does not mean "confessional" or proselytizing, and indoctrination is nothing other than faith without love, a closed catechism that identifies itself only by placing itself in militant opposition to the "other" and in opposition to Christian openness.

Another criticism concerns the status of religion in schools, which is sometimes ambiguous in interpreting state laws in terms of terminology (facultative, elective, or compulsory).

Given Romania's religious diversity, even if students declare their religious affiliation in schools, it is not always possible to transfer a minority religion due to the fact that seventeen students are needed to have a class, so many minority students sometimes become the "audience" of the majority religions that are taught in that school or are located in that region. The Education Act states that a student whose religion is not taught in that school does not receive grades in religion classes. There are also religious communities (such as Adventists) that prefer to offer religious education only in their community, wherever they have places of worship, because they "believe that separation of church and state is a legitimate option."

The status of teachers who teach religion differs from that of teachers of other subjects because of the fact that this status is subject both to the general state requirements for teachers and, on the other hand, to a special regime required by the denomination which gives its approval to their appointment. If a teacher who teaches religion commits serious deviations from the dogmatic and



moral teachings of the denomination to which he or she belongs to and teaches, then the respective denomination may withdraw the contract for teaching religion, resulting in the dissolution of the individual employment contract.

The teaching of religion on denominational grounds has been criticized for not allowing the teaching of a common pre-religion, which was considered a disadvantage for teachers in a 2007 survey conducted by a non-governmental association. Even if the status of a religion teacher is titled, due to the religious freedom guaranteed by the Constitution, its absolute completeness cannot be guaranteed, since at any time a person can change his/her religion or give it up, thus the number of students in the class attending religion classes could theoretically always decrease to the point where the religion group could be closed.

The organisation of specific theological education for the training of ministers and social missionaries, and therefore teachers, for the religions recognised by the State is provided at their request by the Ministry of Education and is proportional to the percentage of representatives of each religion in Romania according to the last updated official census. The ministry has the duty to monitor the quality of teaching in the schools as far as the methodological and pedagogical part is concerned, and the specialised inspection is always carried out jointly with a teacher of methodology from the higher education institution of the denomination.

The churches respected the decisions of the local communities, in accordance with Article 26 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, according to which parents had priority in deciding the type of education to be provided for their children. Discussions also concern the presence of icons in classrooms, which has sporadically sparked protests from various (but minor) groups who feel that they: 'obscure the secular character of public education, discriminate against students of other religions and beliefs and against those who are not followers of any religious group'.

Contrary to the decision of the National Council for Combating Discrimination of 21 November 2006, which foresees the display of religious symbols only during religion classes and in places specifically reserved for religious education, the Ministry of Education, Research and Youth objected in 2007. In 2007, several appeals were lodged with the Supreme Court of Cassation, which overturned the decision of the Council for Combating Discrimination, stating that it was the right of families to educate their children in accordance with their religious beliefs, thus guaranteeing children's freedom of conscience in a climate of freedom and equality.

In this context, we can only recall the meeting of the General Assembly of the Ecumenical Association of Churches in Romania on November 28, 2006, at which representatives of the Orthodox, Evangelical, Reformed, Evangelical Lutheran and Armenian Apostolic Churches agreed on the preservation of Christian symbols in the public space as an expression of religious freedom.

Patriarch Daniel's public intervention created a media campaign entitled "We don't want a high school without God", stating that religion is an integral part of European culture that helps to understand the history and art of the European continent. Patriarch Daniel mentions the principle of "unity in diversity", which preserves the national and traditional identities and values formed over the centuries, without an artificial and sterile standardisation that destroys the intercultural specificity of Europe. For example, the appendices (which are identical) of the third and fourth grade curricula state that they are drawn up in accordance with the education law, which provides for one hour of religion per week and states as a first prerequisite: 'Approach religion from an ecumenical perspective, cultivate interreligious relations and promote respect for other faiths'. The programmes are based on similar ecumenical principles, emphasising the formation of a culture of human rights for minorities, the principle of non-violence and equal opportunities, and the fundamental value of

pluralism in contemporary European society.

A proposal that remains only at the theoretical level, entitled: 'Inter-faith perspectives on the teaching of religion', drawn up by the teacher-training specialist Juliana Barna, aims to achieve an education that recognises and respects the differences inherent in each faith and does not reject or deny their values. An interesting project developed in recent years, which we can point to as an example, is the development of curricula by teachers in collaboration with the Russian Orthodox Church, in order to provide religious education to Romanian pupils in the countries of the Western and Southern European metropolis based in Paris. The fact that public education today promotes a kind of intercultural education can be of great benefit to ecumenical religious education, because starting from the tolerance promoted by the culture, we can move towards an ecumenical love that goes beyond the strict forms offered by culture. In the following three paragraphs we present religious pluralism in Romania, the theological education of the three confessions: orthodoxy, Catholicism and Neo-Protestantism. Each of them has its own specificity in terms of the development of curricula and textbooks for theological education.

### **Orthodox education**

The item is devoted to Orthodox religious education, which is the leading one in our country.

It is of particular priority for the state to see to it that its citizens are healthy and virtuous, which includes religious education in the spirit of the purest religious traditions, writes the Bishop of Alba Julia in the introduction to the textbook on Methods of Religious Education. For example, in the last year of the high school cycle, in the textbook for students, the section entitled "Orthodoxy and Ecumenism," after a brief definition of ecumenism and after a brief history, concludes with the words: "True unity of faith can be achieved only if Christians in the churches of the world confess with one heart and one mouth the true doctrine of the Church as it

is handed down to us in the Creed formulated by the Ecumenical Council of Constantinople in 381. "I believe in a holy, co-ordinate and apostolic Church".

Against proselytism, some textbooks take a firm stand, stating that: "Working for the primordial Orthodox faith, our Church opposes the actions of the sectarians who, with material support from abroad, try to preach among Orthodox Christians (the sectarians want to preach Christ to the Romanian people as if they had not known Him for almost two millennia!").

However, a 2007 report by the non-governmental association Pro Europa states that: "There are orthodox religion textbooks approved by the IOC which cite fundamentalist Orthodox websites as a bibliography for students, presenting virulent attacks against ecumenism and other religions. " In this regard, I quote the Moldovan monk S. Bashtovoi, who, criticizing Andrei Kuraev's Russian textbook "Fundamentals of Orthodox Culture", a textbook that was then in the process of being introduced in the Republic of Moldova, mentions the example of Romania as a secular country, where the religion lessons present the main points of Orthodox faith and life, without influencing children belonging to other religions or without religion.

The first textbook we analyze is authored by Vasile Timis, and was published in 2004. The preface justifies the necessity of the course in religion by pointing out that religious education is an important aspect of the Church's mission in the world and that through this course in religion the Church wants to help society by promoting love, friendship, peace, understanding, mutual help and cooperation among people, i.e. These are the values associated with Christian morality, and "all religious courses should be conducted in the spirit of love and altruism, with complete freedom, in order to prepare the student to know and love God through the formation of Christian virtues."

The first chapter, which contains lessons related to the dogmatic teaching of the Church, begins by showing us who Jesus Christ is,

the third Person of the Most Holy Trinity, the is- tic man and true God, with humanity being prepared for His coming through the idea of the awareness of sin and the need for a Saviour, ideas which are invariably and chronologically present in almost all religions and which were fully embraced by the people of Israel. The salvation of of mankind is achieved through the work of Christ, which is universal, but is also achieved personally for each individual through divine grace, faith, and good works, man being a co-worker with God in the work of his own salvation and the salvation of the world.

The Holy Spirit is the third Person of the Most Holy Trinity, the is- tic God, consubstantial with the other two Persons: "He takes his beginning from the Father by an act called exodus. The descent of the Holy Spirit is the act of passing on the saving work of Christ from Him to the apostles and all believers, the work of the One who prepares and continues the work of the Other: "The relationship of people with the Risen and Ascended Christ can only be accomplished through the 'Spirit of the Son'.

Protestants (Calvinists) regard predestination as the absolute and pre-eternal will of God to elect some to eternal happiness and others to eternal damnation: "The predestination advocated by Calvin does not take into account the work of acquiring salvation, considering all men sinners. The Church is an extension of divine life and grace in human beings, it is a divine-human organism, a supra-historical institution with a dual character, visible and invisible, and it is infallible, a quality that comes from its infallible head, Christ, 'the way, the truth, and the life,' who is the pillar and support of truth.

The Church is unique because it was founded by Christ (Eph. 4:4-6), and then the author of the textbook states that "the unity of the Church is visibly expressed in the dogmatic, canonical, and liturgical unity of the local ecclesial communities, as well as in the unified and supreme conciliar leadership - the Ecumenical Councils."

The last chapter of the first section on dogmatic doctrine in the 11th grade textbook presents briefly the four sacraments of the Church: Baptism, Chrismation, Confession and Eucharist, according to their essence, divinity and necessity. Concerning the number of sacraments, the textbook says: "The number of the seven sacraments is not explicitly stated either in Sacred Scripture or in Sacred Tradition. It is very significant that the ancient Eastern Churches which separated from Orthodoxy in the 5th cent, have all seven sacraments, which is proof that this number existed before the 5th century. "As for the baptism of children, it is performed by the Church on the basis of the apostles' practice in Acts 13 and John 3:5, and the disciples are told that the confession of the godparents can be a guarantee of the Christian education of the newly baptized child.

Then a quotation from St. Irenaeus of Lyons urges parents to baptize children immediately, so as not to give the opportunity for abuse, as is also stated in a canon of the Council of Carthage in 418: "He who denies the un-necessity of the baptism of children, let him be anathema," and only baptism that is not performed in the name of the Most Holy Trinity is re-performed. As a topic for reflection, the authors of the textbook conclude the lesson and the chapter with the words of St. Justin the Philosopher and Martyr: "Only those can participate in the Eucharist who believe in the truth of what we preach, and those who have passed the river of the forgiveness of sins and rebirth, living as it was handed down by Christ."

The education of the conscience in the light of the principles and moral norms of evangelical teaching becomes a duty for every Christian, since, as Blessed Fr. Augustine, "man can escape from everything except his conscience." Freedom of the will is defended from relative indeterminism on the basis of biblical arguments, through a sense of responsibility for our actions and our consciences, as opposed to scientific, psychological, physiological, and fatalistic determinism, which assumes that the human will is

governed by other laws.

The first lesson of the chapter on Christian art is devoted to the dogmatic foundations of the icon, where the elements of religious iconography and painting that support their spiritual and artistic value are highlighted, and there are also lessons on religious arts and crafts, as well as church music and its spiritual message.

Thanks to the historical moment of God's incarnation, it becomes possible to represent Him in a human body, and therefore to paint the visible body of God, rather than an invisible nature that can only be represented by analogy, not as it really is. As far as the West is concerned, after the initial presentation of the early Christian frescoes in the Roman catacombs and the beautiful mosaics in the churches of Ravenna, it is pointed out that: 'the spiritual beauty was soon replaced by the physical, the icon was replaced by religious painting, and this influence, together with the gradual abandonment of tradition, led to a diminution of the spiritual life and a decline in the level of theological studies connected with art'.

In addition, as a topic for reflection and reading at the end of the lesson, the authors of the textbook thought to add the following quote, "In bearing witness to the Incarnation, the icon contrasts the false anthropology of Western creeds with true Christian anthropology."

The Eucharist occupies a central place in the life of the Church because it is the most important sacrament, since it represents communion with the Body and Blood of the Lord, which are present in real form as bread and wine after their transubstantiation at the epiclesis, as the vehicle of eternal life (John 6:55), through the prayer of consecration. Concerning the characteristics of the Church-Eucharist relationship: "The Eucharistic sacrifice is performed only where the Word of God is preached, and the orthodox faith of the Church is confessed. Eucharistic love continues with love of neighbor or "fraternal sacrifice", which is the practical relationship of the Church to man through "service of

neighbour". The reading at the end of the lesson defines love with a quote from Father Dumitru Staniloae: "Love includes all virtues and is opposed to all sins."

The Christian's attitude toward the created world – the backdrop of a Christian ecology lesson – argues to students the obligation to protect the beauty of creation as a gift of God.

The students are also presented with some of the history of a number of Romanian bishops who contributed to the development of the nation's culture, such as Barlaam, Simon Stefan, Dosoftei, Antim Ivirianul, Veniamin Kostki, Gregory Daskullul, Andrei Shaguna and Melchizedek Stefanescu.

Section six of the textbook, entitled: "Sacred Miracles and False Miracles" shows that along with the Church's faith and its miracles, there is a fusion of new beliefs and paranormal phenomena that lead to a "disruption of the unity of faith and orientation through the scattering of believers in the various doctrines that have emerged."

Concerning the possibility of life on other planets, it says: "The question is controversial – Scripture says nothing about extraterrestrials, and for one reason: man's goal is salvation, eternal life in the kingdom of God." After explaining various phenomena such as poltergeists, telepathy, hypnosis, and bio-energy, the textbook's authors point out that the Church forbids such séances "because they are nothing but a way of summoning evil spirits."

After defining man as a free being, self-controlled and capable of fighting temptations and doing good, because God with his love does not want him to coerce, the authors state that in this freedom: "is also held the possibility of renunciation, the possibility of asserting freedom and at the same time, in some measure, of rejecting it, as well as definitively asserting, through freedom, the renunciation of it."

Spiritual corruption occurs when so-called evangelizers, "who first promise or offer material goods and then inculcate the word of



doctrine, which, however, is false," persuade not with truth but with corruption:

"All the forms of religious syncretism that are being proposed today, from the New Age to all- possible combinations between the various Neo-Protestant sects included in the evangelical and evangelistic federations, and which try to confuse us with convenient, often attractive proposals, are all forms and manifestations of spiritual corruption. But the question arises: if tolerance is not desirable in the cases of corruption referred to in the Penal Code, why is it imperative when it comes to cases of spiritual corruption?

The introduction to the Grade 12 textbook, written by the same authors, is identical to the introduction to the Grade 11 textbook, with the first section on dogmatics presenting the Christian doctrine of death and eternal life.

While it is known that both the Orthodox and the Catholic Church teach that through the prayers and intercession of the Church in heaven and on earth it is possible to change the fate of souls in hell, to their universal damnation and even their exit from hell, the Roman Catholic Church, based on the text of I Corinthians 3: 11-15: "formulates a new dogma, namely, that between heaven and hell there is a place and a state after death called purgatory." This doctrine leads to a weakening of the Christian conscience by maintaining the belief that what has not been done in life for salvation will be done after death, so that purgatory is considered by some to be the last chance to obtain salvation.

The authors of the textbook refute chiliasm by explaining to students that the claim of two resurrections is unfounded and that there will be no time between the Second Coming of Christ and the Last Judgment. In the year 999, a large number of pilgrims, misled by those who claimed that the end of the world was coming, lost their possessions, left their professions and families, and headed for the city of Jerusalem, the supposed site of the

second coming of the Lord.

"Seventh-day Adventists are a Christian denomination that emerged in the second half of the nineteenth century, according to which all Christians should prepare for the imminent coming of Christ, which will take place on the Sabbath and who will reign on earth for a millennium. "After their passage into eternity, the saints contemplate God, praise Him, know the needs of men, and pray to God for them, interceding for their salvation. The commemoration of the dead, prayers and acts of mercy (e.g., eulogies, funerals) for them are based on the belief in the existence of souls after death: 'Although we do not know God's judgment on the dead, our Church prays fervently for them, trusting in the mercy and goodness of God, before whom the prayers of the people on earth are mingled with the voices of the saints in heaven.'

This approach demonstrates the ecumenical fullness of the Christian virtues affirmed among young people, who are perhaps best able to approach one another with tenderness and purity. The author of the textbook lays out Christian doctrine to the students, saying that salvation is linked to the gift of life and that only man is capable of suicide, since he is endowed with reason, and free will.

In the eleventh-grade supplementary materials, the lesson on the Protestant Reformation mentions the political, religious (papal supremacy and indulgences), economic, social, and cultural causes of the Reformation and, after a brief biography of the lives and works of the reformers Luther, Zwingli, and Calvin, states that: "Protestants of all faiths differ from the two churches (Orthodox and Catholic) in their doctrines of grace, salvation, the Church, holiness, and the number and substance of the sacraments. The result is a distorted Christianity that is hardly recognizable among the fragments of eternal truth within it, a truth that has been revealed by our Lord Jesus Christ and preserved to this day in the one holy, conciliar and apostolic Church. "As a reflection on the lesson for the disciples, a quotation is offered from the Romanian

Patriarch Daniel, when he was still Metropolitan of Moldavia: "It is our great and holy duty to urge you now to preserve the true faith of our Church. Do not weaken it, do not change it, and do not abandon it, either for material gain or temporary help, or for enticing promises, or for foreign religions or curious novelties from distant lands, for whoever departs from the true faith of the Church, that of Christ, departs from communion with her holy Apostles, Martyrs and Fathers of the Church."

The pupils are then briefly told the historical events connected with Unitarianism, the 1691 Charter of Leopold, the "Four Points of Florence," and the 1698 Manifest of the Union, which is partly forged because the Latin version differs from the Romanian. It was Bishop Athanasius Angelus who signed the second act of the Union in Vienna on March 19, 1701, which provided for the establishment of a Uniate Church, which normally retained the divine service of the Orthodox Church, but whose doctrine was entirely Roman Catholic.

In the description of the churches in Transylvania mention is made of the monastery of Morisena, built by Prince Ahtum about 1002, the church of Densuş and the monastery of Brânkovianu, destroyed in 1785 'on account of the Catholic persecutions, as was the fate of many churches and monasteries destroyed by order of General Bukov'.

For Muntenia, the monasteries of Antim, Cernica, Cozia, Curtea de Arges, Sinaia and Vacaresti, as well as the Stavropoleos or Patriarchal Cathedral, are described as representative monuments; For Moldavia, the textbook mentions the Church of St. Nicholas in Răduţ, which marks the beginning of the Moldovan style, as well as the monasteries and churches built by Stephen the Great in the same style, such as the monastery of Neamt, the monastery of Putna and Voronezh, where the fresco "The Last Judgement, painted on the western outer wall, is considered one of the masterpieces of world art.

The textbook then describes some representative monuments of

European religious art, starting with the Byzantine style and its masterpiece, St Sophia in Constantinople, but also famous monuments such as the Oratory of St Zenon, considered the pearl of oriental art, the Mausoleum of St Constance and the Basilica of Santa Maria Maggiore in Rome.

The description of the Byzantine style continues with the mosaics of Daphne, the churches of Torcello and Murano, the church of St. Mark in Venice, the Baptistery in Florence, the church of St. Sophia in Thessaloniki and the church of St. John in Rome. The church of St. Michael in Kiev. Spain was influenced by Italian art, especially the Baroque style represented by the El Escorial complex, and the Renaissance style by the Valladoides Cathedral, while Russia, influenced by the Byzantine style, experienced a period of flourishing in the 15th century with the Kremlin cathedrals of the Assumption, the Annunciation and the famous St. Basil the Blessed Cathedral.

The section on spirituality and mission describes pilgrimage as an opportunity to elevate the soul to true spiritual virtue, as a path to salvation, as a light for others, with the pilgrim as a champion of the Church and the people. The following is a lesson on Christian asceticism, described as the withdrawal from sins or the freeing of the soul from the more mundane life through fasting, prayer, and charity. After introducing the ways of prayer, it is explained that fasting was established by the Orthodox Church before the celebration of the major Christian feasts (Lent before Pascha, the fast before the feasts of the Nativity, the Assumption and St. Equinox). Depending on its strictness, there is a simple fast or a strict fast; the strict fast consists in a reduction of food, usually dry (bread, seeds, dried fruit), and the simple fast - only without milk, eggs and meat.

After the lesson on Romanian art, in which architecture, sculpture, painting and folklore are described as expressions of Romanian spirituality and religious experience, writers, poets and thinkers of Christian faith are presented, who serve as a guide for

society towards morality and ideals, faith and nationhood, and who illustrate the values of the Romanian people and promote culture and religion. Among them are Nicolae Iorga, Nae Ionesco, Nicolae Steinhart, Valeriu Anania, Nicephore Crainic, Vasile Voiculescu, many of whom were imprisoned in communist prisons for their views and convictions, thus becoming martyrs for the faith.

The last section of the textbook, "Christianity and the Problems of Young People," offers an interdisciplinary approach to a rather delicate topic, the origins of the world in the dialogue between faith and modern science. From the perspective of faith, the creative work of God consists in the creation of the world out of nothing (by the power of God alone), with the book of Genesis revealing the creation of the basic elements of the cosmos (space, matter, and time) to finally create the soul and the "image of God." Scholasticism does not seek to oppose grace to reason; on the contrary, it considers grace to complement nature, but because of the encounter with the Enlightenment, which knows only human reason, the European begins to consider grace as anti-natural, as a violation of the natural order and an assault on freedom of thought.

The textbook ends with a definition of holiness in opposition to secularism. Holiness has Christ as its model and requires individual sacrifice, i.e. man's personal participation in his own salvation. The means of achieving holiness are asceticism and purification of the mind.

The role of ecumenical and interreligious dialogue is presented in a special lesson in the new Orthodox religion textbooks for grade 12, making it clear from the outset that after the Great Schism of 1054 the Christian Church continues to be united as Christ left it. It is mentioned that attempts at unification existed as early as the time of the Byzantine emperors, from the 11th to the 15th centuries, and

"In the first place, all these encounters have been guided by human pride, which has been unwilling to acknowledge the

errors of this or that people in history, errors which have been disastrous for the holy Church. The authors then give the following definition of ecumenism or the ecumenical movement, "The tendency, manifested in the Christian world in the twentieth century, to unite all the churches in order to create one flock and one shepherd appeared first in the bosom of Protestantism, and the desire to unite the churches found a favorable response in the Orthodox and Roman Catholic Churches."

The role of ecumenical dialogue is not only to promote religious discussion, but also to highlight the Church's mission in society by making decisions on important current events that have a direct impact on people and on the future of all humanity. What motivates the churches in their dialogue is the desire for reconciliation and in this sense the participants commit themselves to promote cooperation in all areas, such as: mission, dialogue and respect for the conscience of the other, encouragement of local associations, public institutions and European bodies in their work of reconciliation, cooperation between Christian communities in the preaching of the Gospel and the fight against paganism, better mutual knowledge, the opportunity for other faiths to become acquainted with the Orthodox faith, possible Furthermore, ecumenical dialogue prompts us to cooperate in solving the serious problems of humanity, such as poverty, disease, violence against women, environmental pollution, wars, and cooperation within the framework of the Interreligious Bible Society. Twelve churches and denominations are part of this national.

Society, whose main activity is to spread the word of God in schools, prisons, nursing homes and orphanages, producing joint translations accepted by all members.

In the ecumenical dialogue, Orthodoxy has made a remarkable contribution by emphasizing the necessity and usefulness of Sacred Tradition and by drawing attention to the dogmatic teaching on the veneration of the Blessed Virgin Mary. The lesson

concludes with the following observation about the ecumenical movement, "The ecumenical movement has good intentions, but it should be noted that after more than three-quarters of a century of conferences, meetings, congresses, discussions and assemblies, it seems that the Churches are still far from achieving the unity of the faith in Jesus Christ."

### **Catholic education**

The item is devoted to Catholic religious education in Romania.

The curriculum of Catholic religious education defines the role and objectives of religious education in public schools in accordance with the teachings of the Catholic Church. At the outset, this curriculum is divided into Roman Catholic and Uniate, both traditions having their own specific curricula and textbooks.

The curriculum has been developed in a flexible way, which gives teachers freedom of choice in their approach to teaching, the choice of different methods, activities, and styles, communicating with the particularities of the students and the class, as well as the specific competencies of each level, the manifestation of individual creativity and pedagogical skills through the use of appropriate teaching methods and materials. As regards otherness, a 2007 study on the teaching of religion showed that in two Roman Catholic textbooks for the first and second grades of Hungarian high schools the principles of otherness are respected, firstly, in the teaching of the Roman Catholic religion through the History of Religions textbook, and secondly, by deepening the study of the Bible, in a specific authentic ecumenical spirit.

Atheism is one of the most serious phenomena of our time, and those who preach it, as Pope Paul VI says, do not use their minds according to the natural laws of thought in the search for truth. Christians have an important role to play, for often by rejecting education in the faith, or by misrepresenting doctrine, or even by the moral shortcomings of religious and social life, atheists can be said to accept rather than to expose the true face of God and religion, atheism not infrequently finding its roots and motives not

in the rational but in the moral attitude to the world.

"Indeed, atheism is often not a denial of God's existence, but a form of protest against it, springing from the human mind's inability to reconcile God's omnipotence, goodness, and justice with the evil in the world."

Here we find one of the most important themes for promoting ecumenical Christian education in schools that will provide a response and an example of common life based on behavior, attitude, and brotherly love in Christ for those who support atheism.

A special lesson is devoted to a new religious movement: the New Age, seen as syncretism, according to which around the year 2000 a new post-Christian era will begin that will remove the monotheistic God of the Bible and the Koran

- a theory demonstrated by the analogy of exiting the constellation Pisces and entering the constellation Aquarius.

The infiltration of evil into salvation history began with the idea of original sin, and the pessimistic proclamation of the consequences of that sin, says the author of the textbook, has led to exaggerations in the Protestant world, and "in the Catholic world, Jansenists have been infected to some extent by this pessimistic view, which misunderstands the role of grace, ignoring the participation of man's will in the work of salvation."

The historical accounts of Christ are presented in conformity with the teaching of the Church, which has always affirmed that Jesus Christ is a historical Person, and that the Christian faith is a full surrender to that Person. To the claims that nothing can be known about Christ from a historical point of view, that everything written in the Gospels about Him, especially the miracles and the casting out of demons, are myths and inventions of the early Christian community, the textbook offers an apologetic response, drawing on the work of St. Justin Philosopher and Martyr, who in his Dialogue with Triphone the Jew accuses Jewish scholars of spreading slander and blasphemy against Jesus throughout the



world.

As for the dogma of the Immaculate Conception, the textbook responds with the words of Pope Pius IX that, thanks to the fullness of grace, Mary was conceived without the original sin with which all humans are born. Although:

"The formulation of this dogma has aroused resistance in the non-Catholic world, because it is believed that if Mary was not born with original sin, it means that she is contrary to the teaching of St. Paul. All have sinned in Adam; all are saved in Christ. And if God reserved for the nineteenth century, the age of naturalism, the definition of this dogma, it was only to show that no one, not even the Mother of God, can be saved by his own powers and that all men are saved in Christ alone."

The Assumption was only a consequence of the Immaculate Conception, since she did not reach the point of original sin, her body could not know corruption, and at the end of her life her body was glorified and ascended into heaven: God has preserved the definition of this truth of faith for the twentieth century to show this age, dominated by materialism and debauchery, that the body is for resurrection and glory, already achieved by the body of the Virgin, and therefore to be respected and cared for with love.

The apostles are a hierarchy established by Jesus, and the bishops, by virtue of the divine establishment, follow the apostles as shepherds of the Church, their authority not coming from the people, but as St. Without him there is no Church, and where the bishop is, there is the Church of Christ. The Second Vatican Council, presented in the textbook, clarifies an entity that has remained somewhat in the shadows, namely the college of bishops: "The bishops, led by the follower of the Holy Father, the Pope, form a college that continues the apostolic college."

The next lesson, entitled "Peter and his Successors," begins with the statement that among the apostles "Peter, and among the bishops Peter's successor, the Bishop of Rome, or the Pope, occupies a special place. Christ founded the Church on Peter and

his successors." Undoubtedly in the group of the apostles Jesus is the head, but He prepares another head to replace Him when He is no longer on earth. As for the primacy of the followers of Peter, i.e. of the Bishop of Rome, the Pope, it is considered to be the istine of the faith, confirmed by the Council of Florence and the First Vatican Council, hence, "The Church of Christ is sometimes called one, holy, catholic, apostolic and Roman."

As for the infallibility of Peter, it is said to be personal, given by Christ Himself and received by Peter's successor, the Bishop of Rome, who accepts all the prophecies of Peter and acquires infallibility in matters of faith and morals, because from ancient times: 'all heretics and schismatics have turned to Rome for justification, precisely because they knew that Rome kept the doctrine of Christ intact and without error'. Then he (the Pope) is required to speak from the position of the supreme shepherd who addresses the whole Church, and finally, when he determines a truth of faith, he must invoke the supreme apostolic authority.

The following lesson defines the Church as a mystical Body, of which Christ is the Head, the Holy Spirit is the soul of the Church, and sees to it that the supernatural life of grace is constantly communicated from the Head, from Christ." But "Protestantism, in order to overcome the difficulties that existed mainly because of the scandals in the history of the Church, excluded the social, institutional aspect of the Church, recognizing only the inner, invisible, individual aspect. After a brief review of the three phases or states of the Church (militant, suffering, and triumphant), we are told that "Christians who are in the state of sin are not excluded from the militant Church, except those who are guilty of the sin of heresy, schism and apostasy, but they are like atrophied limbs, like withered branches of a tree from which the sap of supernatural life does not flow."

Since the Church is an extension of Christ, there is no salvation outside her (*Extra Ecclesiam nulla salus*), and the assumption that it is nevertheless possible to be saved expresses the assurance that

it is possible to be saved without Christ. The return, on the other hand, to the one Church of Christ is the mystery of baptism, as long as it is done properly.

The Second Vatican Council teaches, "the separated brothers, op- ordained by the faith received in baptism, are united in Christ and therefore rightly bear the name Christian and are rightly recognized as brothers in the Lord by the members of the Catholic Church. /.../ All who are born into different communities are part of one Church if: they are not guilty of what has happened in the Church in the past, they have the right faith, and they have not by a personal act knowingly rejected the truth of the faith or the authority of the Church."

Heresy or schism always involves a personal, conscious act, so even excommunication declared against those who have created schisms and heresies in the past (e.g., Michael Kerularius, Luther, etc.) does not compromise the current members of that community, since they are not excluded from salvation. And so, we find the two sides of the Church: the visible and the non-visible, of those who have a sincere desire in their hearts and seek to know the truth, earnestly seek God and under the influence of grace seek to have His will discerned in what their conscience dictates.

The Eastern Churches have all the sacraments and the whole faith, except a few points of controversy: 'such as the question of the Filioque, the doctrine of which is accepted, but not its formulation; purgatory (no lack of practice, but a doctrine of purity), indulgences (neglected or rejected), the Immaculate Conception (accepted by many theologians, but rejected by the hierarchy). Nevertheless, there is a certain visible belonging to the Church through the two sacraments they have preserved: baptism and marriage, through faith in Jesus Christ, God and only Saviour of the world, through faith in Scripture, even if in some aspects they misinterpret it."

In a separate lesson for tenth graders, an attempt is made to definitize ecumenism as an opportunity to restore unity among

Christians to full communion in the Church of Christ. From the outset, its aim has been "to create an atmosphere of openness, dialogue and love, as opposed to an environment of distrust, closed-mindedness, contradiction and hatred, in order to dispel the prejudices and offences that have accumulated over so many centuries, to put an end to mutual accusations, so that dialogue on doctrinal issues can be conducted in an atmosphere of calm and sincerity".

Between the lines of the textbook, the author inserts a very explanatory quote from the Second Vatican Council: 'In this one Church of God, from the earliest times, some schisms have arisen which were condemned in strong terms by the apostles, but in the centuries that followed more widespread schisms have arisen and significant communities have separated from full communion with the Catholic Church, sometimes through the fault of people on both sides. In fact, we believe that to the Apostolic College alone, headed by Peter, God has entrusted all the treasures of the New Testament, in order to create the one body of Christ on earth, into which all who in one way or another already belong to the people of God must be fully incorporated.'

The Church is Catholic and aims to bring salvation to all people of all times on the basis of the apostolic teaching preserved and handed down by the apostles and their followers in the college of bishops, "assisted by the priests united to the successor of Peter, the supreme shepherd of the Church".

The final chapter of the high school textbook presents the eschatology of the Catholic Church, explaining through various lessons the doctrines of death, private judgment, the end of the world, the resurrection of the dead, hell, purgatory, and heaven.

Unlike other textbooks, there is a broad presentation and informative approach to the issues, with no exercises or homework after each lesson and no lessons to monitor and assess students' knowledge and skills.

Another fourth grade textbook analyzed, entitled

"History of the Church" and written by the same author, briefly presents events in the history of Christianity and the Catholic Church, beginning with a description of the Jewish environment in which the first Christian community arose.

The foundation of the Church was laid by the Holy Spirit at Pentecost, and the unity of the early Church was in the unity of all Christians around Christ, the Head of the Church, in the teaching of the apostles, in fraternal unanimity in prayer, in the common sharing of goods, and in participation in the Holy Eucharist. According to the textbook, the first expansion of Christianity was triggered by the persecution of the Church in Jerusalem by the Jews, who, as Traditionalists, wanted nothing new: "before being persecuted by the Gentiles, the Church had been persecuted by the Jews who did not believe in Jesus. The separation of Christianity from Judaism took place gradually, since preliminary clarifications were necessary, e.g. as at the Council of Jerusalem, at which it was agreed that Christians among the Gentiles would not be obliged to observe Jewish customs.

The successors of St. Peter's followers realized their authority over the rest of the Christian community, an authority that even ap.

St. John does not dispute, and St. Ignatius states in 110 of the Church in Rome that it is "the first in order of love."

Organizationally, the Church adopts the administrative division of the Roman Empire into provinces and dioceses, with "all bishops grouped around the bishop of Rome because he is the center of Catholic (ecumenical) unity." E.g. t. Cyprian, the Bishop of Carthage, in his texts, referring to the question of the unity of the Church, stresses: "In a local Church, unity is maintained if the priests, deacons and faithful remain united around their bishop".

With the coming to power of Constantine and with the issuing of the Edict of Mediolanum, dictated not only by religious but also by political considerations, Christians were given their own faith and worship. The emperor was a complex and contradictory personality, a proud and cruel man. Among other things, he killed

one of his sons and had his wife killed in the bath. At the same time, he prayed a lot, built many churches, especially in Rome and the Holy Land, and was baptized on his deathbed.

As time went on, Christianity became a wooden religion, and then Caesaropapism was established.

"In the West, the danger was less because of the interference and influence of the popes, unlike in the East, where the Eastern Church, Greek culture, and the state became one. The Council of Constantinople (381) added to that of Nicaea (325): 'And in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the Life-giver, who proceeds from the Father'. The Council does not specify whether through the Son (per Filium), as the Greeks say, and from the Son (Filioque), as the Latins say. If this legitimate addition is not exaggerated, it does not affect the belonging of believers to the reality of the same professed faith, and after explaining what Monophysitism is, it says Syrians (Jacobites), Armenians, Egyptians (Copts),

Ethiopians, chiefly because of Constantine's proclivity for hegemony, accepted the heresy and have remained Monophysites ever since; and Canon 28 of the Fourth Ecumenical Council was challenged by the delegates of Pope Leo the Great, who categorically rejected it.

The beginnings of monasticism are well represented in the description of the lives of great monks, such as St. Anthony, the founder of monasticism, and the representatives of cenobitic monasticism, St. Pachomius, St. Basil the Great, St. Jerome, and St. Benedict. The Golden Age of the Fathers of the Church is also given through examples from the lives and descriptions of the works of St. Athanasius, St. Basil the Great, St. Gregory of Nyssa, St. John Chrysostom, St. Ambrose and St. Augustine. The second part of the Catholic textbook on Church history for the fourth (=VIII - ed.) grade, entitled "The Church in the Middle Ages," begins with a review of the invasions and Christianization of the barbarians through the Benedictine monks, beginning with the Franks, then the Langobards, Saxons, Visigothic Arians, Ireland,

Scotland, various peoples of Germany, Denmark, and Sweden, and finally the Slavonic peoples were converted through Ss. Cyril and Methodius.

In the future, emperors and kings granted protection to the papacy, and it, recognized as the highest authority on earth, conferred rulership and a crown.

The Great Schism is marked by a special lesson: the East is breaking away from the unity of the Church, and this break is due to internal causes, such as the heresies that have herded the East, Caesaropapism, the conflicts between the Eastern and Western peoples; but also to external causes, such as the rise of Islam and its invasion of countries with an ancient Christian civilization. These were not in accord with the supremacy and authority of the Roman popes, who, by virtue of their pastoral mission for the whole Church, intervened and had the final say in matters of faith and discipline even in the East.

One of the paragraphs also mentions "the dissatisfaction of the patriarchates with the glorious Eastern tradition", which considered the Patriarch of Constantinople to be a product of imperial policy, as a result of which the national churches, struggling against "Byzantine hegemony and centralism, adopted various forms of heresy". Eventually a reconciliation was reached, but Fotios' two books, *Against Those Who Say Rome is the First Cathedra* and *Treatise on the Holy Spirit* "spread hatred against the Pope and against the Latins among the people".

The actual rupture occurred when Patriarch Michael I Caerularius, an ambitious man who, "having failed to become emperor, wanted at least to become pope of the East. He began a great campaign of slander against the Pope and the Latins, accusing them of things as petty as they were important: of celebrating Mass with unleavened bread, of fasting on the Sabbath, of not singing the Alleluia during Lent, of priests not having beards and the like. In his letter of reply, Caerularius implies that he considers himself the Pope's equal: "If you will cause my name

to be honored in a church in Rome, I will cause your name to be honored throughout the universe."

On July 16, 1054, the papal delegates went to the church "Hagia Sophia during Mass, speak against the rebellious patriarch and place on the altar the act of excommunication and recall of the patriarch, then leave the church, shaking the dust from their feet and saying, "God sees us and judges us!"

The excommunication, however, was of no consequence, since the delegates had no authority to do so, and meanwhile the Pope had died in Rome four months earlier, so their mission was already over.

Caerularius publicly burns the act of excommunication, calls a council at which he declares the West guilty of deliberate abandonment of the true faith, and declares himself the sole representative of the true Church of Christ. He essentially became the ruler of Byzantium. Because Emperor Michael VI did not sufficiently obey him, Caerularius organized a con- cursion that brought Isaac Comnenus to power, but the new emperor arrested him to put him on trial. Caerularius dies before the trial begins. He was later listed in the Byzantine calendar as a saint."

This rupture will remain as a tragedy caused by the mixing of politics and religion, to which pride on the one hand and cruelty on the other contributed. At the end of the lesson it is briefly mentioned that the lifting of the anathema was carried out in Jerusalem in 1964 by Patriarch Athenagoras and Pope Paul VI.

Students can then read articles 2 and 3 of the Decree on Ecumenism (*Unitatis redintegratio*) of the Second Vatican Council.

The thirteenth lesson in the textbook for the same class, entitled "Islam," describes, "The great event of the seventh century, with enormous consequences for the West and especially for the East for heresies and schisms, was the founding and spread of Islam."

Following the account of Muhammad's life and the Qur'an, the rapid spread of Islam in Asia Minor, North Africa and Spain is



described, making skillful use of religious and ethnic conflicts, as well as existing resentments against Byzantine domination. The papacy, in turn, was at the head of medieval feudal society, in which Popes Gregory VII and Innocent III (whose activities are described in the textbook) played a particularly important role.

These human passions led to the conquest of Byzantium during the Fourth Crusade: 'This provoked great indignation in Pope Innocent III, who strongly condemned and excommunicated from the Church' those defenders of Christ who bathed in Christian blood, although they should only have turned their swords against infidels'. When it comes to the Inquisition, the textbook says: "it evokes horror because of the image created, above all, by the propaganda of the anti-Catholic authorities, who attribute to it atrocities and executions that did not take place in reality. A conflict arose between King Philip the Good of France and Pope Boniface VIII, with the former declaring 'the King has no one on this earth above himself but God' and the latter: 'in order to obtain salvation, every must necessarily obey the Pope'".

The Captivity of Avignon and the Great Schism in the West (1378) are briefly described, and the short-lived union between Rome and Byzantium through the Council of Ferrara-Florence (1439) is said to have failed because of the opposition of the clergy and especially of the orthodox monks.

The spread of Luther's doctrine was due to the fact that the founders of Protestantism accepted the principle of "free interpretation," according to which anyone is free to interpret Scripture without the intervention of an outside authority telling what is true and what is false. God is described as a despot who saves or condemns at his discretion; the Church, according to him, consists of saints, and the rest of men are the mass of the damned to hell.

England seceded from the Catholic Church, not because of her faith, but because of the personal interests of King Henry VIII, a capricious and indecent king, who, although at odds with Luther,

asked the Pope to do the impossible and approve his divorce. Since the pope does not recognize himself as the supreme the chief shepherd of Christ's Church, the Protestant Church no longer has a center of unity, and the principle of free interpretation encourages disunity.

The lesson of the Catholic Reformation begins by defining the Reformation as an internal conversion that became the basis for external and social renewal: "In the fifteenth century, the living forces of Christianity, especially the spiritual and intellectual elite, made great efforts to straighten out the mores of the Church and return to the spirit of the Gospel. Francis de Sales worked as a missionary among the Calvinists in the Geneva region; by his sermons and especially by his gentleness, he succeeded in bringing many of them to the Catholic faith; he implemented in his diocese the reforms recommended by the Council, becoming the greatest spiritual teacher of modern times; he shone by popularizing the religion, especially among the laity and intellectuals."

From the same period the textbook mentions St. In the same year, the Church also mentioned St. Vicentius of Paula, who, in collaboration with St. Lucia of Marillac founded the Sacred Congregation of the Daughters of Charity (the Vincentian Sisters) and St. John Jude, who together with St. Margaret Mary of Alacoque and St. Claudius Colombier was the first in the world to spread the Devotion to the Heart of Jesus.

The Latin Christian missions began in the 12th century with St. Francis of Assisi, but with the discovery of America a huge field of expression opened up for Catholic missions. Through the Franciscans and Dominicans, and then through Pope Gregory XV's creation of the Congregation for the Evangelization of Peoples (*Sacra Congregatio de propaganda fide*), the desire emerged to create a local clergy whose bishops were directly subordinate to the pope.

The beginning of the Enlightenment was due to the influence of Freemasonry, a movement that rejected all dogmas, did not

accepted neither the divinity of Jesus Christ nor Revelation, leaving room for a vague deism, and provoked a bitter war against the Church and the Catholic faith.

Napoleon Bonaparte restored the freedom of the Church in France, but not out of conviction and true faith, but for more lyrical reasons, i.e., out of a desire to restore order in France by means of religion.

In the nineteenth century. The Church experienced an extraordinary flowering, with the appearance of numerous congregations of monks and nuns with specific educational or social activities, such as the Salesians, Notre Dame de Sion, the Congregation of the Verbite Missionaries, etc.

In 1854 the dogma of the Immaculate Conception was proclaimed, and in 1868 the First Vatican Council was convened, at which the dogma of the infallibility of the Pope was accepted, i.e. it was specified as Church doctrine that the Pope does not err in speaking on matters of faith and morals.

Religious liberalism emerged especially in France in the nineteenth century, launched by the priest Felicité Lamennais and supported by the preacher Lacorde, who advocated a threefold liberation of the Church from the heavy guardianship of governments, from the impure interests of money, and from politics, and called for the national liberation of peoples.

In the last section, entitled "The Church in the Twentieth Century," reference is made to the Lateran Treaties of 1929, the persecution of the Catholic Church in Mexico and Spain, Nazism in Germany, and the communism of Lenin and the Soviet Union, which affected the Catholic Church through persecution, forceful destruction, and terror in the Uniate churches, as well as their conversion to the Orthodox churches in communist countries.

In conclusion: this textbook for grade VII, written in 1994, is a very complex, data-rich textbook on Church history, much richer in information than textbooks of other denominations for the same age group. Subsequent versions are simpler and explain the faith

and history of the Catholic Church very well at the secondary school level, while also providing more complete information appropriate to the intellectual and moral development of the students. We have chosen this particular textbook for analysis because it is a landmark in the development of Catholic religious education, and because the textbooks published after it retain in general terms both the structure and the content, only expanding on it.

### **Neo-Protestant education**

This item deals with Neo-Protestant religious education in Romania.

The small number and fragmentation of students belonging to non-Protestant denominations make it difficult to develop a textbook for each denomination, which is why the idea of publishing common textbooks for the churches of the so-called Evangelical Alliance was reached. This alliance consists of the following denominations: Pentecostals, Baptists and Gospel Christians, which according to the 2002 census total 2% of the population of Romania.

According to the ministry, the study of the subject "Religion - Evangelical Alliance" in the upper school is aimed at acquiring a general understanding of the religious field in order to enable pupils to form their own value system with regard to Christian moral virtues, to integrate religious attitudes with moral behaviour and to apply the teachings of faith to individual and public life. Many of the books found in the bibliographic recommendations of Neo-Protestant programs are written by foreigners (usually Americans) and often result in "form without co-holding" because the teaching system and mentality are completely different from country to country. But among these systems we often find methodologies for organizing new Protestant Christian schools (American or European) with a solid biblical foundation for students who have shown excellent results in their behavior and attitudes in various areas of activity and life.

Starting from the idea that exposition should incorporate the Christian view of the world and life, the authors of the textbook develop for students seeking the God who calls us to be his close co-workers the eternal task of humanity (Gen. 1:26-28 and 2:15) to sustain the earth together with the living and loving God. The Great Commission (Matt. 28:18-20) and the Great Commandment (Matt. 22:37-39) should provide public education programs with the principles of love of God, and closeness and tolerance of neighbor as they are universally accepted by all educational systems. The orientation of educational programs should be based on biblical principles emphasized by the Christian teacher, as well as on Christian methods and moral virtues cultivated not by indoctrination through the rejection of all authority except empirical authority (for indoctrination can also be done through science).

The Christian faith is one of the foundations of European culture and students need to know this heritage, which is why lessons in the history of religions must be presented through the prism of the importance of faith in life, thus making religion the key to understanding culture. One example given in the textbook is the presentation to students of the influence of the Roman Catholic Church in Quebec, which has brought more stability to the community than in other parts of North America, or the presentation of the missionaries' compassion for the natives, which cannot be ignored, but also "how churches have caused bitter religious struggles and how missionaries, in their attempts to convert people, have imposed Western cultural imperatives, often with negative consequences."

The Evangelical Alliance group's curriculum states that the subject of Religion was, from the outset, intended to provide students with knowledge of the Christian faith as it is presented in Holy Scripture. The first part gives general information about the Bible, such as its composition, authors and authenticity, gives an overview of biblical discoveries in the field of archaeology,

describes the age of the various manuscripts and the languages in which they were written. After enumerating them, he says: "Some churches also adopt certain doctrines from the apocryphal books, such as: the doctrine of eternal fire, of righteousness obtained by good works, of the sacraments, of services and rites for the dead."

The second chapter, entitled "The Doctrine of the Christian Faith," confronts the student with the great questions of life: what is death, what must we do to be saved, and how can we know God? In the form of exercises, creation and man as the image of God are described, then the Fall and the laws of the Decalogue, followed by the "only solution" against sin – Jesus Christ. And anthropology is considered from the point of view of the trichotomy of St. ap. Paul.

It is worth noting here that interactive lesson models could easily be used in religious education within any denomination.

In what follows, I dwell a little more on the historical lessons, because they are of great importance for our analysis for the reason that they represent the Neo-Protestant view of Church history. The emergence of the Church in the first centuries was formed on the "wounds of Jesus" and in the presence of the Holy Spirit: "Thanks to him, believers form one body, united with God and with other believers. The cure is not to be found in isolation (in monasteries, in isolation from society or in imposing Christianity on others), but in faithful discipleship of Jesus Christ, in constant reading of the word of God". The spiritual wealth acquired by those who withdraw "from the whirlwind of this world" and devote themselves to a life of fasting and prayer, but not outside of society, seeking to fulfill biblical principles, is always evidence of following Christ.

Moving on, we see the textbook seeking to negatively delineate what the Church was in the post-313 period by giving a quote about the Church from E. Schnepel (from "Jesus in the Roman Empire"), where he states:

"The aim was no longer to consolidate it, but to turn it into an

institution, an organ of power which would dominate the whole people."

The Arab invasion in the 7th century expelled the peoples of North Africa, Palestine, Syria, and Asia Minor (from the Eastern Roman Empire), where the mixing of church and state was strongest.

The claim that God punished the two empires because of the institutionalization of the Church is a Neo-Protestant confessional apologetic often used against the ancient churches that today are located on the territory of the two empires: the Orthodox and the Catholic.

After a brief bibliography of Augustine, showing his conversion and his activities as a writer, it is said, "In Augustine are found the roots of the Roman Church, as well as the those of the Evangelical Church. The biblical teachings of ap. Paul does not contradict the tradition that has been preserved from ancient times in the Church, and the cornerstone of every church must be Christ, not the opinion of some divine." According to the textbook, it was the institutionalization of Christianity that led to the first condemnation of Christians to death by other Christians, citing the case of the condemnation to death of the Spaniard Priscillian in 385 in the city of St. John. This was blamed, albeit indirectly, on the Catholic Church.

The accusations of deviation from the true biblical faith continue with a lesson that recounts the first four ecumenical councils of the Church, describing the so-called "essential transformation of Christianity."

"The papacy, which initially wished to maintain the unity of the Church by promoting Christian preaching, soon became a coercive element of the Roman hierarchy through the domination of the clergy. Later on, Christianity came under the strong influence of pagan and secular influences, especially when it became a state religion, in many cases departing from apostolic Christianity.

The last lesson, entitled "The Spread of Christianity in the

Middle Ages", after a brief introduction to the establishment of Christianity in the West thanks to the mission of the Irish monks, introduces us to Charlemagne (768-814), one of the most celebrated figures in German history, thanks to whom Christianity spread throughout Western Europe. During his reign, the textbook says, the Church was subordinate to the state, the Pope became dependent on Charles, Christianisation was achieved through the military power and political power of the nobility, and the sacrament of confession became increasingly important.

The Crusades have been described as military expeditions conducted by the Catholic Church under the pretext of liberating the tomb of the Lord from Muslim occupation, but in reality they were aimed at territorial, economic and political expansion, often waged against Christians considered heretics, such as Albigenses, Cathars, Pathan, etc.

Another textbook of the Evangelical Alliance for the ninth grade is aimed at forming the moral habits of the students, starting from the general topics of the Bible and morality and developing issues such as: the new birth, relationship with God, Jesus Christ, sin, faith, prayer, the Church, the second coming of Christ, integration into the local church, Christian social activities, Christian virtues, a clear conscience, communication with parents, happiness, and his language.

Seven religious services are defined as acts of worship: water baptism, the Last Supper, the blessing of children, the anointing of the sick with oil, marriage, the ordination of ministers (pastors, elders and deacons) and the consecration of places of worship.

Toward the end of the textbook are also presented the changes precipitated by the Second Vatican Council, such as the reading of the Bible by the laity, as well as new attitudes that for the most part stimulated relations with Orthodoxy, Protestantism, and the ecumenical movement that had previously been forbidden in Catholicism.

**Conclusions and summaries:** From the analysis it is clear that



textbooks vary widely across religions. The methods, presentations and exercises for assessment, pro- versation and systematisation of knowledge have different specificities, although they are similar in terms of framework objectives, content and curriculum requirements. Some of them have an undertone of proselytism and can be considered offensive to other denominations (for example, the Pentecostal curriculum, which mentions the veneration of saints and sacred relics) or in blaming the Church of the first millennium for certain historical events that it did not cause.

The way in which confessional differences are presented is very apologetic, in many cases reaching conclusions based on erroneous historical principles.

In some of these textbooks we find biblical themes that are very interesting from the point of view of interreligious and ecumenical dialogue.

## CHAPTER III. ATTITUDES OF YOUNG PEOPLE TOWARDS RELIGIOUS EDUCATION IN ROMANIA TODAY - A SURVEY

**The third chapter** presents a survey based on the attitudes of today's young people towards religious education in Romania.

In designing the questionnaires and interpreting the results, I sought to answer several questions:

- What is the relationship between the value attributed to faith, on the one hand, and adherence to the doctrinal principles and truths of the religion to which one adheres, on the other; or, in other words, to what extent does the stated importance of faith correspond to the strength of religious conviction?

- Secondly, what is the nature of the needs and aspirations that religion satisfies in the first place: spiritual, moral, emotional, or social?

- What is the behavioral effectiveness of religiosity? Whether or not being or claiming to be religious leads to greater morality or social solidarity? Or does it come about through more frequent participation in ritual life, as prescribed by religious norms, and by accepting them as a guide to practical existence?

Or, to reformulate this series of questions in a synthesized way: is faith only an affirmed, conscious, latent value, or is it truly operative?

- Finally, to what extent does openness to other religions/forms of spirituality lead to a softening – and relativizing – of traditional doctrinal rigidity on the question of religious truth?

In addition, to show young people's attitudes towards their own religion as well as other religions or forms of spirituality, we used a number of indicators related to:

- the importance attached to faith, or in other words, the extent to which respondents consider faith to be a value of great importance to their own lives.

- belief in the teachings of religion – the extent to which these teachings correspond to personal belief systems.

- the efficacy of religion, both in broad terms (areas of

predominant action) and in intensive terms (functions of religion – given that the function ranked first by the respondents corresponds most closely to their deepest needs and aspirations).

- the effectiveness of religion on behaviour, measured in two ways: participation in religious life and orientation of decisions and behaviour towards religious precepts in everyday life.

- the respondents' attitude towards the main thesis of religious traditionalism of the exclusivist type, which affirms the absolute monopoly of the religion of belonging on truth.

- stated interest in other religions, faiths, or forms of spirituality, as well as in formulas of spirituality not dependent on a particular religion.

### **Conclusions of the study:**

- It is clear that the Church, together with the family, is the source of a very strong and determining influence on the religious education of young people, and that there is complementarity and partial compensation between the Church and the school.

- The Church's most effective means of action in the field of religious and moral education are revealed to pupils through religious instruction and through religious services.

- Older adolescents are influenced by religious messages of a rational and profound character rather than by sentimental messages or by conformity to routine or family conformity.

- Among young people there is a high degree of belief in and adherence to their church, but it may be said that about one-third of them also have some hesitation about the degree of confidence in the preached doctrines of the faith professed by their own religion.

- Students claim to be satisfied with the way their religion or creed provides answers to moral questions, problems of family life, or human spiritual needs, but not with the way it addresses the country's social problems. The Church's consciousness of the inadequacy of community problems is emphasized, and the tendency to give only the private and intimate sphere a greater role

is pointed out. Religion tends to leave the public sphere and to "specialize" only for certain types of individual and family needs.

- In the answers to all the questions analyzed in this chapter, there is a clear trend that is reflected in a higher appreciation of religious education and the practices of the Church among schoolchildren and people from rural areas, so that we can conclude a relative feminization and marginalization of religious behavior among schoolchildren.

- The frequency and quality of religious practices are inversely proportional to the age of the young people included in the study.

- Nearly one-quarter of the students consider themselves to be very good practitioners of religion in terms of the quantitative criterion of frequency of religious services, but the majority of them attend church only during the summer holidays.

- The total number of pupils who refuse to contact the Church by attending worship is almost negligible even among the parents interviewed.

- Although they attend church less frequently than their parents, the majority of young people who attend church do so to participate in what is most important from a religious point of view: the "worship service."

Finally, a survey of students shows that the Church is far from having the last word in terms of its influence on young people, as religious faith and practice responds to a deep need in the souls of young people and has an important resonance in their lives.

## CONCLUSION

The teaching of religion in public schools presupposes recognition by the state of the religious values necessary for the social development and education of new generations.

Religious education attempts to offer an alternative to the existing value system in the society in which it originated. Within the educational system, religion, and the Christian education it supports contribute to a new understanding of morality, art and philosophy. Religion and religious education can restore a chaotic world by awakening personal responsibility in all people, regardless of their position.

Today, an increasing number of secular organisations, as well as lone voices in the Romanian Parliament, are advocating the removal of religion from schools, without making any plausible arguments about the 'harm' it brings to the child. The response of the Romanian religions must be shared. Universal Christian values must be passed on to future generations because they define us as a people and give us our identity. The role of religion in the public sphere today is a political issue of the utmost importance. From this point of view, the most sensitive and controversial issue is that of schools. For anyone who influences the education of the younger generation has a long-term impact on the whole of society.

Teaching religion in schools does not mean introducing something new to the Romanian people but strengthening the already existing spiritual formation. The analysis made shows a rich educational activity of churches and religious denominations recognized in public schools in the period before the Great Union and in the inter-war period.

Christian education was supported by the majority of the Orthodox Church as well as by the other denominations in Transylvania, and the legislation was quite favourable to the denominations recognised by the Romanian state, following various European models, even if one of them was considered dominant and the

other privileged.

The current system can be considered favourable for the teaching of religion in schools: the religions are free to choose their subjects, methods, and teachers. We have a system of religious education with government oversight and restrictions on any unconstitutional acts that would violate freedom of expression and civic participation.

Curricula are implemented based on well-established psychological and pedagogical principles, and the denominations merely formulate the doctrinal curriculum content.

As can be seen, controversies have recently arisen in several European countries over the role of religion in the public sphere: the condemnation by the European Court of Human Rights of the presence of crucifixes in classrooms, the banning of minarets in Switzerland, the growing popularity of the anti-Islamic party in the Netherlands and the rise of Islamic religious fanaticism in Western Europe.

All of this is the result of social transformations in Europe that are causing fears, but at the same time require a response from faiths at national, European, and local levels. Religion must fill this gap in the spirituality of a secularised world, precisely in order to rediscover who we are.

Dialogue with the "other" is today more than ever able to provide this answer.

Romania, but also Europe, needs a Christian religious education in order not to forget the past and to be able to define the future. How will this education be implemented? Who will do it? To what extent it will be non-confessional or confessional are questions that every Christian community will have to ask itself.

The teaching of religion in public schools produces to be an opportunity to carry out a mission in society, to spiritualize this secularized world. It is clear from the analysis made of the curricular content of the subject of Religion that the Romanian Orthodox Church, as well as the other denominations in Romania,

use the term "ecumenism" and its derivatives more in the sense of "tolerance of the fact of religious multiplicity".

In conclusion, while science cultivates knowledge of creation, of the physical and social universe, religious faith develops a relationship with the Creator and Savior of the world, giving man and creation eternal meaning and value. From this perspective, the study of Religion becomes a cultural and educational necessity. Without religion, there can be no meaningful culture because secularized society tries to reduce the eternal value of the human person to its utilitarian efficiency. Religious education, as an element of the Church's mission, has as its ideal participation in holiness, the practice of virtues, and has an eschatological perspective. In order to achieve this goal, it is necessary to use specific principles of education and to rethink the mission through education according to the age stages of the students. Therefore, in this dissertation, I have tried to present the situation of religious education in Romania to date, a situation that continues and will continue to change. This was also the main aim of this study.

In the course of the study, the set objectives were also realized, which were consistently revealed in the contents of the individual chapters of the study:

1. The practices of religious education in Romania during the communist regime were investigated and analyzed, and the religious context in the country during the first half of the twentieth century was examined to better clarify the situation of religious education.
2. The state of religious education in Romania after 1989 was examined in the context of the existing religious pluralism in the country. This task was accomplished through a detailed analysis of the subject content of Religion as reflected in the textbooks and teaching aids of the denominations that are nationally represented within the Romanian educational system.
3. A study has been carried out on the attitudes of young people in the country regarding the place of religion in their lives

and its place within the school system in the country. Although the structures of Christian education in each church differ both in terms of the doctrinal content and the pedagogical methodologies used, all denominations together should strive to establish closer links with each other in the field of Christian education, to exchange experiences and new knowledge and to help each other to better understand the meaning of the biblical expression: "Teaching the Gospel".



### III. SCIENTIFIC CONTRIBUTIONS

1. This dissertation is the first study to examine the continuity of religious education within the last two successive historical periods from the perspective of a theological paradigm.
2. For the first time, some archival items related to Romanian history and education during the communist period are promulgated.
3. A detailed comparative analysis is made of the educational content reflected in textbooks of the three main types of confessional education – Orthodox, Catholic and Neo-Protestant.
4. An empirical study has been carried out, from which theoretical conclusions have been drawn about the role of faith and worship as conscious values in the religious formation of students.

#### IV. PUBLICATIONS RELATED TO THE TOPIC OF DISSERTATION

1. Relatia religiei cu educatia (scolara) in timpul regimului communist din Romania – puncte cheie. – In: Mitropolia Olteniei. Nr. 1-4, 2020.
2. The Relationship of Religion with (School) Education during the Communist Regime in Romania – Key Points. – В: Свидетелство, служение и богослужение на църквата, София, 2021.
3. Trilogia entitatilor in educatia religioasa: Biserica, Scoala si Familia. – In: Mitropolia Olteniei. Nr. 1-4, 2021.