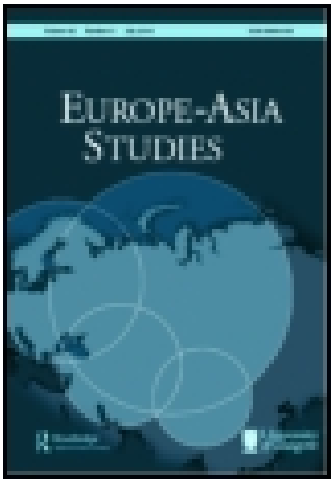

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The Romanian Orthodox Church and Post-communist Democratisation

LAVINIA STAN & LUCIAN TURCESCU

TEN YEARS OF POST-COMMUNISM have made it evident that the kind of democracy Romania will ultimately have will be determined by a number of political actors, including the Orthodox Church, the country's largest religious denomination, claiming the allegiance of four in five citizens.[1] Since 1989 the Church has tried to become one of the dominant forces in transition by imposing its views on democracy through direct and indirect political engagement. This article begins by looking at the Church's pre-1989 position in Romania, and then considers the interplay between the Church and the Romanian state in the democratisation process. We assess the efforts of the Orthodox Church to carve a new role for itself in the new democracy, its political representation, influence on the new educational curricula and homosexual rights, as well as the issue of restitution of property to the Greek Catholic Church.

Church-state relations before 1989

Since its early days the Orthodox Church in Romania has been known for its policy of accommodation with the rulers of the day and silent submission to them. For a long time the Church was in no position to do anything better. Until the middle of the 19th century it was subordinated to a foreign patriarch, most of its wealth and the revenues obtained from its vast lands were directed to the Constantinople patriarchate and Mount Athos, and its hierarchy was filled by poorly educated clergy. During the 16th and 17th centuries half of the Moldovan and Wallachian metropolitans were removed from office by the country's political rulers or the Constantinople patriarch, a pattern continued after the two principalities came under Russian influence in 1812.[2]

Half a century later Church–state relations experienced a sharp intensification when Alexandru Ioan Cuza, the united principalities' first ruler, brought in radical changes. Following a clearer delimitation of the roles and responsibilities of both the Church and the state, and the creation of a national organisational structure, the Church eventually emerged as an autonomous, self-governing patriarchate in the Orthodox world. Cuza nationalised the land controlled by foreign monasteries and stopped the transfer of funds abroad, improved the educational standards of the clergy, made Romanian the liturgical language, and pledged state financial support for church activities and clergy salaries. At the same time the Orthodox Church was brought

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under regular government control, thus succumbing to the politics of the day and losing any autonomous decision-making power in areas ranging from control over monastic revenues to the nomination of its head.[3]

When national consciousness emerged in Eastern Europe the Church joined the bandwagon by positioning itself as pivotal for the very definition of 'Romanianism', a shared identity supposedly superseding Moldovan, Wallachian and Transylvanian regional allegiances. In doing so, the Church borrowed, and eventually monopolised, the Transylvanian Greek Catholics' nationalist discourse centred on the Latin character of the Romanian language and descent. This discourse appropriation gave the Orthodox Church growing moral and political legitimacy in the eyes of the Romanians, and more recognition from the state. Before communism took over the country the constitutional arrangements of the modern Romanian state recognised the Church as the national church, a privileged position which still fell short of full autonomy from the secular power.

After World War II Romania became part of the communist block. Like its East European counterparts, the Romanian Communist Party (RCP) saw religion as a capitalist remnant expected to wither away as its social basis disappeared, but recognised that a Church respected by the bulk of the population could be useful for furthering the party's socioeconomic and political goals.[4] Under communism Church and state established a *modus vivendi* which allowed the Church to be enlisted as an unconditional supporter of communist policies in return for the government's toleration of a certain level of ecclesiastical activity. Until 1965 the communist state made considerable efforts to weaken the Church's role in society and to bring its hierarchy under control by legally depriving the Church of its privileged position among churches and its right to pursue educational and charitable activities.

The RCP also appointed as patriarch Justinian Marina,[5] a former parish priest with socialist political views and a personal friend of the RCP first secretary, Gheorghe Gheorghiu-Dej. Throughout his reign Patriarch Justinian remained a staunch supporter of the communist regime but his cooperation did not spare the Church several waves of persecution, including depositions and arrests of clergy, closure of monasteries and monastic seminaries, and strict control of its relations with foreign churches. Following the 1949 'social reorientation' programmes, numerous priests considered retrograde were arrested. Another wave of arrests took place between 1958 and 1964, when monastic seminaries and monasteries were closed down and some 4000 monks and nuns were jailed or forced to go 'back into the world'.[6] In response, Marina tried to reform the monastic system by introducing the concept of a 'useful' trade that every monk and nun should know, so that monasticism would not be regarded as an anachronism unrelated to the life of socialist Romania.

Instead of publicly denouncing religious persecution, the Church leadership turned a blind eye to it. In 1949, when the communists deposed six Orthodox priests, the Orthodox hierarchy responded by issuing a communiqué denying any form of religious persecution.[7] That was the first in a long series of Orthodox statements condoning the communist regime's actions against the Church. The Church's collaboration with the communist authorities went beyond occasional statements, and included attempts by some of its prominent members to reconcile Orthodox theology with the country's dominant ideology. In *Apostolat Social*, a collection of essays and

speeches spanning most of his reign, Justinian promoted the concept of 'social apostolate', which blended together Marxist–Leninist social analysis and Christian Orthodox theology. The doctrine, whose intrinsic contradictions were never fully resolved, had a major influence on contemporary Romanian theologians, including Metropolitan Antonie Plamadeala of Transylvania.

Although not a member of the Communist Party, toward the end of his rule Patriarch Justinian had become an increasingly skilled player in the Romanian political arena, and was thus able to obtain some concessions for his Church, while continuing openly to support the regime. During 1965–77 the state no longer saw a need to close monasteries, agreed to rehabilitate some formerly imprisoned clergy, and supported financially the restoration of churches of historical importance. Yet the relative thaw in Church–state relations was more the result of President Nicolae Ceausescu's shrewd calculations, using the Church to gain independence from Moscow in order to ingratiate himself with the West, whose financial support he badly needed for his megalomaniac industrialisation projects. At the same time he sought to strengthen his position domestically by appealing to traditional Romanian nationalism, which the Church considered its turf. In 1968 the RCP secretary general acknowledged the role of the Orthodox Church in the development of modern Romania, and in April 1972 he allowed his father's funeral to be conducted according to Orthodox ritual and be broadcast live on radio. Ceausescu also tacitly tolerated the use of the baptism, marriage and burial services by communist officials who considered themselves Orthodox Christians. In May 1974 Marina in turn brought the Church into the front of Socialist Unity and Democracy, a national advisory organisation totally controlled by the RCP.

The thaw in Church–state relations did not outlast Patriarch Justinian, whose death in 1977 coincided with the revival of an East European civil society and the onset of a new anti-Church campaign in Romania. The communists again handpicked subsequent patriarchs. Shortly after his appointment, Patriarch Justin Moisescu, a foremost activist-theologian and ecumenical spokesman of the Church, rendered homage to Ceausescu on the occasion of the latter's 45-year long activity 'devoted to the progress of the Romanian people and fatherland'.[8] Moisescu also praised Ceausescu for 'securing complete freedom for all religious cults in our country to carry out their activity among the faithful'. His successor, Teoctist Arapasu, was a political activist long before assuming the position of patriarch. As a bishop, he served as a deputy in the Grand National Assembly, a participant in the Front congresses, and a key member of the Ceausescu-sponsored National Peace Committee.

By 1979 religious persecution in Romania was on the rise again, and the Ceausescu regime continued its anti-religious policies unabated until December 1989. In contrast to the pre-1965 crackdown on the Church, this time several voices stood up against Ceausescu's blatant infringements on religious freedom. The best known dissenter was Father Gheorghe Calciu Dumitreasa, sentenced in 1979 to prison and later banished into exile for preaching sermons in which he described atheism as a philosophy of despair. Moisescu allowed the Church's ruling council, the Holy Synod, to defrock Dumitreasa and other priests later arrested for anti-communist opposition.[9] Between 1977 and 1989 22 churches and monasteries were demolished and 14 others were closed down or moved to disadvantageous sites.[10] Arapasu also

had to struggle with Ceausescu's desire to demolish the Bucharest patriarchal complex and transfer the see to the northeastern town of Iasi. This did not prevent him from sending the dictator a telegram of support days after the first popular anti-communist uprising started in Timisoara on 15 December 1989.

After the fall of Ceausescu the Church, and Patriarch Teoctist in particular, were strongly criticised for supporting the communist regime to its very end. The Synod's 10 January 1990 response apologised for those 'who did not always have the courage of the martyrs' and expressed regret that it had been 'necessary to pay the tribute of obligatory and artificial praises addressed to the dictator' to ensure certain liberties.[11] It also annulled all the ecclesiastical sanctions previously imposed on some clergymen for political reasons. Faced with increasing criticism, Patriarch Teoctist resigned his office on 18 January 1990, only to return three months later at the insistence of the Synod. Some 136 religious and cultural leaders protested against this 'defiance of the no-confidence vote of the faithful that made [Teoctist] step down',[12] but the Synod opted for continuity in the face of political change and acknowledged the views of the other Orthodox churches, which went on recognising Teoctist as patriarch.

Since 1989 the Church as an institution has avoided any moral self-examination and never openly admitted to willingly collaborating with the communist authorities or the dreaded Securitate. Nicolae Corneanu, Metropolitan of Banat, was the only Orthodox clergyman to acknowledge his efforts on behalf of the communist authorities to infiltrate Romanian communities in Western Europe and North America, and to defrock five priests who denounced 'the Church's prostitution with the communist power, and its hierarchy's involvement with Ceausescu's politics' in a 1981 letter sent to Patriarch Justin.[13] In 1997 Corneanu revealed the extent of the Church's collaboration and named Metropolitan Plamadeala as among the most active promoters of Ceausescu's anti-religious and anti-Orthodox policies. In 1986 Plamadeala had defended Ceausescu's massive church demolition programme by contending that 'city urbanisation and modernisation is a general and inevitable phenomenon [which] unfortunately requires, as everywhere, sacrifices'.[14]

So far, Orthodox clergy accused of having served the communist regime have kept silent on the subject. But Orthodox theologians justified collaboration by resorting to the Byzantine concept of *symphonia*, cooperation between Church and state in the fulfilment of their goals, each supporting the other and neither being subordinated to the other.[15] The concept binds the state and the Church so closely together that the latter becomes a state Church, while other Christian denominations and non-Christian religious enjoy considerably fewer rights. This view is obviously in sharp contrast to the Western notion of separation between Church and state, which implies the independence and sufficiency of the ecclesiastical and political hierarchies. To accommodate a hostile atheistic state, the Romanian version of *symphonia* entailed some theoretical ingenuity and considerable compromises on the part of the Church. Compared with other religious denominations the Romanian Orthodox Church had indeed a privileged position, but continued to be only a privileged servant of the state.

Did collaboration with the communists really help the Church? Orthodox leaders have repeatedly claimed that their political submission helped avoid a more dreadful alternative: obliteration. Indeed, the Church not only admirably evaded the fate of the local Roman and Greek Catholic Churches, which were subjected to

vicious persecution and suppression, but by 1985 managed to become the most vigorous Church in the European communist block. For its anticipated loyalty and services to the communists, it was allowed to take possession of Greek Catholic property. Six Orthodox seminaries and two theological institutes remained open throughout the communist period. Several theological journals, two collections of translations of patristic writings, and the works of Father Dumitru Staniloae (1903–93), Romania's leading theologian, were published during that time. Yet collaboration with the communist authorities failed to prevent persecution of the Church entirely and, more importantly, entailed a Church–state partnership which was no contract between equals but a state-dominated marriage in which Church leaders could seldom, if ever, negotiate where the boundaries of religious activities and freedom were to be drawn. The Church became morally compromised in the eyes of many Romanian Orthodox faithful and intellectuals, international church and ecumenical circles, and Western governments by its refusal to serve as a centre of opposition to the communist regime. Its support for the communist encroachment on human rights was strongly condemned by the Western world, a view shared by influential Bucharest intellectuals who deny the Orthodox Church a positive role in Romania's democratisation efforts.

The Church in post-communist times

After the Ceausescu regime was toppled the Church shared in the wave of enthusiasm which swept across the country, conducting prayers nationwide for the success of the new Romanian leaders, organising religious processions in the main cities, and commemorating those killed in the uprising with memorial services. The end of communism ushered in a new era for the Church and allowed it to function freely for the first time in decades, although its post-1989 presence was initially marred by the controversy surrounding the patriarchal office and its ambiguous relationship with the former communist regime. Shortly thereafter, however, the Church emerged as a powerful political actor and an uncontested source of moral strength, with opinion polls constantly ranking it the most popular institution in post-communist Romania and a vast majority of Romanians stating their full confidence in it. Exactly how this transformation occurred remains subject to debate, though several explanations can be advanced. For many Orthodox Romanians, Patriarch Teoctist's retreat to a monastery and the Synod's partial apology amounted to a long overdue *mea culpa* for his Church's role under communism. With a handful of notable exceptions, each and every Romanian was more or less open to criticism regarding her or his compliance with the communist regime; as such, the average Romanian was willing to overlook the Church's past political conformism without demanding further explanations. Its spectacular comeback was facilitated by a host of Orthodox radio and television programmes in which prominent theologians and clergy glossed over the Church's dubious past performance to present it in a favourable light. The Church also capitalised on other political actors' loss of capital in the face of the hardships of transition. Both the institutions ranking highest in popularity polls, the Church and the army, are non-elected, strictly hierarchical bodies which have neither been involved

directly in the economic life of Romanians nor required to propose concrete programmes of socioeconomic rehabilitation.

No analysis can ignore the Church's skillful use of nationalism to restore its prestige and strike a chord with Romanians. Its post-1989 discourse has underscored the link between Orthodoxy and Romanianism, and the importance of preserving the Romanian nation and identity in the face of growing modernisation, globalisation, secularisation and religious proselytism. Part of the nationalist drive was the June 1992 Synod decision to canonise 19 Romanian saints and to declare the second Sunday after Pentecost the 'Sunday of the Romanian Saints'.[16] The inclusion of historical political figures fostered confusion between saints and national heroes, the more so since some canonised rulers were known more for their intrigues and cruelty than their saintly and Christian life. Half a year later the Church unilaterally re-established two jurisdictions in Bessarabia and Bukovina, areas which belonged to Greater Romania in the inter-war period but are now part of the Republic of Moldova and of Ukraine respectively. A bitter, still unresolved, dispute ensued with the Russian Orthodox Church, to which the Orthodox dioceses in those regions have belonged since World War II.

The Church recently resurrected the controversial project of a gigantic 'National Salvation' cathedral to be built as a symbol of the nation's gratitude to its hero martyrs and reparation for the harm the Church suffered under communism.[17] Responding to criticisms deploring the cathedral's dedication to the nation rather than to a saint, as is customary in the Orthodox world, Archbishop Bartolomeu Anania of Cluj contended that the nation is a socio-historical, 'metaphysical and theological reality', and that salvation cannot be obtained individually, but only collectively, that is, nationally.[18] The assertion fits the bill for what the Orthodox Churches themselves condemned in the 19th century as philetism, the view privileging race, tribe or nation over the religious community in matters of salvation. Bucharest officials refused the Church permission to start construction in Union Square, one of the busiest parts of the city. Nonetheless, without proper authorisation, in 1998 the Church laid the new building's cornerstone in the square in the presence of President Emil Constantinescu. Orthodox theologians promptly warned that, according to church law, those who transferred a plot of land destined for a church to other purposes would be anathematised. Only the Synod could lift the ban. This was the first time in decades when the Romanian Orthodox Church used anathema to quell adversaries but not the first time Orthodox clergymen forcefully designated the location of a new church.

The uneasy Church–state cooperation continued after 1989, with both Church and state drawing hefty advantages from a partnership increasingly standing on a more equal footing. The Church obtained key concessions from the country's political leaders, including some autonomy from the state, reinforced by state financial support, the introduction of religious education in public schools, and a regular presence on the state-controlled national television and radio. Politicians have called on the Church for the purpose of gaining additional legitimacy, consolidating their power, rebuking accusations of communist nostalgia and defining the limits of permissible Westernisation.

Elections and party politics have best illustrated the politicians' readiness to take advantage of Church–state issues, and the Church's eagerness to reassert its promi-

nent role in the country and shape Romanian democracy according to its vision. During the 1990, 1992 and 1996 electoral campaigns candidates of various political persuasions wooed the Church to gain the votes of the country's sizeable Orthodox community. By 1996 religion had moved to the forefront of electoral debates, compelling all contenders to define their position *vis-à-vis* the Church. The 1996 presidential candidates were careful to include visits to Orthodox churches in their electoral itineraries, to show up for religious services on major Orthodox feast days, and to be photographed surrounded by Orthodox icons and symbols. Some made substantial donations for church enlargement and reconstruction, others god-fathered orphans and witnessed marriages in widely publicised ceremonies, and one candidate chose 'He Who Votes for Me, Votes for God' as his electoral slogan.[19] The highlight of the presidential race was the televised debate in which the Christian-Democrat Emil Constantinescu surprised the incumbent Ion Iliescu, a self-declared atheist, by asking him whether he believed in God. In the end Constantinescu won and, in a token of gratitude, became the first post-communist Romanian president to take his solemn oath, hands on the Bible, in the presence of the Orthodox patriarch.

Candidates for the 1996 local and parliamentary elections also sought the support of the Orthodox Church. A written request by Transylvanian leaders of the then ruling Party of Social Democracy (PSD) asking the Church to urge believers to vote for PSD candidates caused much discussion. The letter reminded the Church that 'the PSD government was the first in Romania's history to grant priests bonuses', and claimed that Roman Catholic and Greek Catholic priests actively encouraged believers to vote for the major opposition coalition, the Democratic Convention (DC).[20] Religion seems to have maintained its saliency in 1998, when contenders for the Bucharest mayorship went on record as attending Orthodox religious services and giving alms, and receiving the unusual honour of being invited inside the altar sanctuary.[21]

The Church in turn rushed to follow the pattern of subservience to the state to which it was historically accustomed. Days after Teoctist's infamous letter hit the press and Ceausescu was deposed, the Synod denounced the former 'dictatorship' and reiterated its support for the new leaders. Church leaders advised clergymen to refrain from political involvement and from joining political parties and influencing their parishioners' political options.[22] The same stance was officially adopted during subsequent post-communist elections, but clergymen did not live up to the commitment of political non-involvement and took an active part in political life. Metropolitan Nestor Vornicescu of Oltenia, Bishop Calinic Argatu of Arges, and Archimandrite Simeon Tatu of the Plumbuita monastery were among the sympathisers with the leftist National Salvation Front (NSF), the first incarnation of the PSD. Vornicescu, known for his steadfast support for Ceausescu, agreed to be included on the NSF electoral lists, only to withdraw his candidacy at the last minute because of public protests over his decision.[23] Less intimidated by public resentment, Tatu represented the same party as a senator from May 1990 until his death in 1998. Metropolitan Nicolae Corneanu of Banat joined the pro-democratic Civic Alliance in December 1990. Though not all the Church leaders have become party members, most have been rather open about their political loyalties. Archbishop Pimen of Suceava is an avowed monarchist, and

Vornicescu and Plamadeala voiced support for the nationalist Greater Romania Party (GRP).

While clergy have taken sides in the continuous battle between the leftist and the pro-democratic political forces active on the Romanian post-communist political scene, the patriarchate showed willingness to endorse either of the two, as long as they were in power. Ten years after the downfall of communism and several political regimes later, there is no easy answer to the question whether it was the PSD or the DC that helped the Church the most. The PSD, whose rank and file is dominated by former communists, has feared the Church's ascendancy in society. While party leaders cautiously maintained good relations with the Orthodox hierarchy, they ignored Church demands for parliamentary representation, refused to take sides in the property dispute between Orthodox and Greek Catholics, and kept financial support for church renovation and construction to a minimum. Apparently the Orthodox Church's relations with the major partner in the post-1996 ruling coalition, the National Peasant Party Christian Democrat (NPPCD), are no better. For the Orthodox clergy, the NPPCD is Christian Democrat only in name since, apart from electoral rhetoric and small contributions to church building projects, only the enforcement of religious instruction in school curricula has shown the party's Christian dedication. The heir to the historical National Peasant Party, the NPPCD acquired a Christian Democrat touch only after 1989 and its identity as a Christian party remained ill-defined and poorly integrated into its general, rightist and Western-oriented political doctrine. Moreover, prominent NPPCD leaders are Greek Catholics vigorously supporting restitution of Greek Catholic property by the Orthodox Church.

Defining the church's official status in the new democracy

An understanding of the Church's problematic engagement in post-communist politics and public affairs calls for an examination of the handful of new and old legislative acts that together regulate Church–state relations and the functioning of religious institutions. The most important is undoubtedly the November 1991 constitution, which, as the product of a largely secular society and self-declared atheistic politicians, fails to mention the Orthodox Church but includes several provisions relevant to its activity. References to religion and religious life are made in Article 29, which guarantees the freedom of thought, opinion and religious beliefs when manifested in a spirit of tolerance and mutual respect, allows religions to be 'free and organised in accordance with their own statutes', and prohibits 'any forms, means, acts or actions of religious enmity'. The article further upholds religious denominations' autonomy from the state and pledges state support for religious assistance in the army, in hospitals, prisons, care-homes and orphanages.[24] To steer the Church away from pernicious political influences, the legislators stipulated that statutory rules of religious denominations were organic laws passed by the majority vote of each of the two chambers of parliament (Article 72).

Generally, the 1991 constitution is more permissive than its 1948 and 1965 communist predecessors, which abolished church autonomy and allowed state–Church relations to be supervised officially by the Department of Cults and unofficially by the secret police. But the three documents share the same spirit both

in what they explicitly say and in what they choose to leave out. They all provide for freedom of conscience for citizens and a right for churches to administer themselves. As before 1989, the Church is denied control in schools, and all churches must secure state approval before being allowed to function. More importantly, the Orthodox Church's pre-communist privileged position was not restored, an option showing that post-1989 leaders were prepared to use the Church whenever they wished, but were less enthusiastic about granting it a privileged status.

For this reluctance the 1991 constitution came under heavy criticism. During ensuing parliamentary debates Orthodox sympathisers made several attempts to gain more leverage for their Church in such key institutions as the army and schools, and more recognition for what they saw as the Church's unique position as the spiritual and moral mentor of Romanians. Critics were disappointed that the democratic 1923 constitution, which proclaimed vaguely that Orthodoxy was the 'prevailing Romanian' religion in relation to other religions, was not used as a blueprint for the new basic law.[25] Aware that its calls fell on deaf ears, and encouraged by its increased hold over the Romanian population and politicians alike, in 1994 the Church declared itself the 'National Church', a move strongly criticised by the Roman and Greek Catholic Churches. Trying to allay fears that the Orthodox Church's self-granted new status placed other denominations on a lesser footing, Professor Dumitru Popescu of Bucharest University Orthodox Theology faculty insisted that other registered Christian churches would still enjoy equal rights. In September 1999 the Church moved one step closer to being officially recognised as the 'national church' when the Christian-Democrat Premier Radu Vasile amended the new draft law on religious denominations in favour of the Orthodox Church. Not before the cabinet turned down the proposal, Patriarch Teoctist went on 'strike', and relations between the NPPCD and the Church cooled considerably. The bill is yet to be discussed by parliament.

Romanians only recently learned that during the early 1990s constitutional debates the Church called on the state authorities to recognise all Synod members as *de jure* senators. Bold as it seemed, the idea was not completely new to Romania, but part and parcel of all pre-communist constitutions. (The 1923 constitution granted the same right to Greek Catholic leaders as well.) As local mass media revealed, in mid-July 1990 the Orthodox patriarch and metropolitans met then President Ion Iliescu to discuss what was laconically described at the time as 'the Church's representation in parliament'.[26] When Iliescu rejected the proposal, the patriarchate presented the Synod with a report on amendments 'improving' the draft constitution. The changes related to Article 58.1, which the Church wanted to read: 'The Orthodox patriarch, metropolitans and archbishops or their representatives, together with the leaders of the other Churches recognised in Romania, are senators *de jure*'.[27] The drafters of the 1991 constitution disregarded the suggestions, but the Church did not consider this the end of the story, as we will see shortly.

The new constitutional arrangements are complemented by several older legislative acts pertaining to religious affairs. Parliament has yet to pass a new law on religious denominations, thus Decree no. 177/1948 on the general regime of religious cults and the August 1948 Law on Cults remain effective but hardly appropriate for the new times, since they both define the Church's relations with a repressive state. Eager to improve its relationship with the Church, the Romanian

post-communist state did not avail itself of some of its legislative prerogatives, such as the rights to appoint the patriarch and to control property, its pastoral letters and public statements, and its relations with Churches abroad. But while allowing the Church's emancipation from state appointments and reviews, the state continues to confirm nominations to senior positions in the hierarchy, and state representatives still attend the Synod sessions and the National Church Congress meetings. The traditional subordination of the Church to the state underwent little change, as Church–state relations continue to be supervised by the State Secretariat for Religious Affairs, heir to a governmental agency which, in one way or another, has survived since 1872. The Secretariat remains the manager of the budget, and state contributions are still the main source for the wages of priests and theology teaching staff.[28] Its historical dependence on state funds has made the priesthood a salaried bureaucracy subservient to the state and political interests. It should be noted that the post-communist state's supervision of Romanian religious affairs has not always been detrimental to the Church, however, since the Secretariat apparently adopted some obstructionist tactics favouring the Orthodox Church over other religious groups.[29]

The Church in post-communist public affairs

Encouraged by the post-communist religious revival, the Church proved to be a constant public voice and a strong advocate for religious solutions to various civil issues. Some of the issues addressed by the Orthodox Church during the past decade include parliamentary representation for the Orthodox hierarchy, introduction of compulsory religion courses at all pre-university educational levels, upholding the ban on homosexual behaviour, an anti-abortion campaign, and the restitution of the property seized by the communist state from Greek Catholics and transferred to the Orthodox Church. We will now turn to each of these issues.

Political representation for the Orthodox Church

In mid-1998, years after the Church's failed intervention with President Iliescu to grant Synod members senatorial seats, Archbishop Anania made two public requests. The first asked the Synod to endorse the political involvement of priests as electoral advisers to the public. Dissatisfied with the quality of the country's politicians, whom he called 'the unwanted who rule us', Anania proposed that the Church select candidates for parliamentary mandates, and that priests urge believers during sermons to vote for people whom the Church trusted. Though formulated by one of the most conservative Orthodox leaders, the proposal was endorsed by progressive figures such as Metropolitan Nicolae Corneanu, who agreed that 'the Church cannot support a specific party, since this move would alienate the other parties' followers, but priests may have political preferences and behave accordingly'. Corneanu further explained that the Church 'can neither be apolitical, as some fear, nor involved in political partisanship, as some wish', since it 'must have a word to say in what goes on in the world, society and daily life'.[30] Many Romanians, however, suggested that the Church should stick to religious affairs.

Much more controversial was Anania's second proposal, which reiterated the

Church's earlier request for the state authorities to recognise all Synod members as senators. Orthodox clergy overwhelmingly endorsed the Church's political involvement as natural since, as one clergyman put it, 'the Church was actually never separated from the state. Where the ruler was, there the prelate was too'.[31] Church leaders did not conceal their disappointment when political leaders showed reluctance to embrace the proposal, especially since Orthodox leaders believed that their tacit support had brought the new rulers to power. Bishop Ioachim of Husi insisted that a Church legislative presence was nothing short of a moral obligation for the state authorities.[32] Metropolitan Daniel Ciobotea of Moldova deplored the fact that the Church 'has been supported less by the current regime than by the Iliescu regime'.[33] Critics pointed out that, if adopted, such a proposal could bring considerable damage to the fragile Romanian democracy. Father Ioan Dura maintained that these *de jure* senators would be in fact lifetime senators, since Orthodox priests are not required to retire. The 27-member Synod would be a formidable parliamentary faction with unmatched political influence given by the Church's moral standing and unparalleled village and town penetration, and the growing loss of popularity suffered by political parties and politicians as a result of their perceived inability to solve the country's transition problems. Even commentators usually uncritical of the Church expressed doubts about the proposal. Dan Ciachir wrote that 'the Church should have a voice in parliament, but the proposed solution seems non-viable'.[34]

After Anania first voiced the proposal, in 1999 a group of Orthodox members of parliament have prepared a draft law allowing for Orthodox leaders to become senators. But with less than a year to go until general elections, the draft law was not discussed by the parliament. Corneliu Vadim Tudor, the GRP leader, and Virgil Magureanu, the controversial ex-director of the Romanian Intelligence Service, endorsed the proposal, but more credible Romanian politicians either kept silent on the subject or refused to support it. The party representing the Transylvanian Hungarian community had strong reservations.

The Romanian Orthodox Church and education

The resumption of pre-university religious education after decades of officially backed atheistic propaganda was one of the earliest post-communist demands of the Orthodox Church. At the beginning of 1990 both the new Minister of Religious Affairs, Nicolae Stoicescu, and the Synod stated their decision to encourage the introduction of religious education at all pre-university levels. The same demand was formulated by the Group for Reflection on Church Renewal, set up earlier in an effort to craft a new image for the Church and do away with the conservatism of a hierarchy tainted by collaboration with the communists. An optional religion class, for which pupils were not to be graded, was to be included in the curricula of elementary and high schools. The basics to be taught in class were to be selected by a Synod-appointed mixed commission of clergymen and lay people. Defending the proposal, Stoicescu argued that religious education would contribute to the moral recovery of the nation, and Metropolitan Ciobotea explained that religious education was needed because 'atheistic humanism cannot be replaced by a nihilist, indifferent and confused humanism'. He further claimed that 'teaching religion in schools should be seen as

a chance for broadening one's horizons and improving one's knowledge, not as ideological indoctrination'.[35] But the request was met with mixed feelings outside Orthodox circles. Some intellectuals opposed the idea of compulsory religious education altogether, while others criticised the poor quality of religious instruction and of the related literature.[36]

Compared with what it set out to accomplish, the Church met with limited success in its attempt to institutionalise pre-university religious education. To its chagrin, the July 1995 Law on Education made religion classes optional at the high school level, and compulsory only in elementary schools. But the Church was able to benefit from the legislators' omission to make room for a non-religious or philosophical alternative: financial constraints and lack of specialised teachers have meant that elementary schools offer religion classes mostly taught by Orthodox priests. While this shortcoming ran counter to non-Orthodox parents' right to provide their children with education consonant with their beliefs, it allowed the Church to make its doctrine, history and worldview known to a larger audience. The high school level faces the same practical constraints, but high-school students can refuse to take the weekly religion class, even if this means no religious instruction at all. This has been their preferred choice since September 1997, when religion classes were first offered. While the study of Orthodoxy failed to spark interest among young members of the country's dominant religious community, Protestant and Catholic religion classes have been popular with ethnic Hungarian and German students. Ethnic schools, however, remain subject to restrictions, and confessional schools cannot be set up for the time being. Disappointed that religion was optional in high school, the Church persuaded some deputies to support an extension of the compulsory character of religious study. Parliament has yet to vote on the new law. The Church also convinced the Ministry of Education to allow pupils and teachers, for the first time since 1947, to attend liturgy on the first day of the 1998/99 school year.

Church involvement in education did not stop there. Calls for a revision of textbooks in consonance with Christian values have been heard at times. In 1990 the Group for Reflection on Church Renewal asked for a 'de-Marxisation' of textbooks so that they would adequately reflect the contribution of Orthodoxy to Romanian culture.[37] Three years later Metropolitan Plamadeala called on parliament to adopt educational programmes and literature based on fundamental Christian values and ideals. His position was echoed in 1998 by Ioan Moisin, a NPPCD senator and Greek Catholic priest, who asked the Ministry of Education to set up a commission of 'knowledgeable' Orthodox and Catholics to revise philosophy and biology textbooks to avoid contradictions with religious creationism. The senator complained that pupils were told by their religion teacher that humans were God's creation and by philosophy and biology teachers of Darwinist persuasion that humans came from apes. The proposal also envisioned the formation of a Council of Public Morality, directly subordinated to the presidency and formed by Church and teachers' representatives, which would supervise public education.[38] Neither parliament nor the Ministry of Education seriously considered the proposals.

A spring 1998 incident highlighted the deep divide between Orthodox believers and more secularised societal groups, and raised questions about the limits of religious activity in Romanian universities. The dispute ensued after four philosophy and law

students asked the Bucharest University senate to ban religious activity from the campus and reject a proposal of the Association of Christian Orthodox Students (ACOS) to build a new church in the grounds of the Law Faculty.[39] The university senate initially passed the required resolution but then rescinded its decision in response to a threat that the names of those voting against building the new church would be revealed. For a week the university was covered with posters supporting both sides of the issue. ACOS protesters proclaimed that communist-era religious persecution had returned but the students opposed to the project saw the construction of a place of worship on the campus as a threat to a pluralist and tolerant academic ethos. The latter group also opposed a 1997 decision of the Law Students' League to introduce Orthodox icons in classrooms as infringing the rights of non-Orthodox students. During a roundtable organised by the weekly *22*,[40] Professor Mircea Flonta revealed that a December 1995 proposal envisaged the inclusion in the academic charter of a provision saying that Bucharest University was based on the principles of Christian ethics. When the proposal met a cold response because it could hamper the activity of non-Christian professors, ACOS asked for the recognition of an Orthodox patron saint for the University. The move, according to Flonta, revealed that ACOS viewed the leading Romanian university as a semi-confessional institution. Another round table participant, former anti-communist dissident Gabriel Andreescu, opined that 'by introducing Orthodox and Catholic symbols in university or school, one forces students to study in a religiously-defined atmosphere, a thing which runs counter to their religious freedom'. Construction of the church was halted but it is unclear whether this was due to a lack of necessary funds or a realisation on the part of the university senate that Romanian higher education should remain secular.

The body and society: the Romanian Orthodox Church on homosexuality and abortion

When Romania formally applied for membership of the European structures in the early 1990s, Article 200 of its Criminal Code, punishing sexual relationships among persons of the same sex with prison terms of up to five years, came under heavy criticism. Under international pressure, the government initiated procedures to modify the code in accordance with European standards but it was only after years of bitter arguments that changes partially liberalising homosexual activities came into effect by Law no. 140/1996. Under the new version of Article 200 homosexual activities were punishable with prison terms if they were carried out in public or if they caused public scandal. The article punished those 'inciting or encouraging a person to the practice of sexual relations between persons of the same sex', and 'propaganda or association or any other act of proselytism committed in the same scope'. While apparently more lenient than its predecessor, the new formulation did not specify what exactly constituted a public scandal and where the fine line between private and public behaviour should fall. Some politicians believed that any homosexual act was potentially public because 'what is damaging and immoral on the streets cannot be permissible and moral in intimacy',[41] while others justify their hesitation fully to decriminalise homosexuality by claiming that Romanians regard homosexual relations as abnormal. Indeed, a 1993 opinion poll showed that four out of five Romanians

believed homosexual acts were never justified, and the complete eradication of homosexuality served a legitimate national interest.

A joint Human Rights Watch and International Gay and Lesbian Human Rights Commission report published in late 1998 singled out the Orthodox Church as one of the most formidable opponents to decriminalising homosexuality. True, the overwhelming majority of Romanian denominations came out in favour of the ban, but the Orthodox Church was far more vocal than any other. Patriarch Teoctist repeatedly came out against 'the acceptance of the degradingly abnormal and unnatural lifestyle as normal and legal'. A number of Christian organisations helped sustain within the Church's higher echelons the momentum for an anti-homosexuality crusade. After denouncing homosexuality as 'propaganda for human degenerates', the outspoken ACOS persuaded Teoctist to ask legislators to maintain the ban on homosexuality, and mounted a tireless intimidation campaign against those members of parliament willing to decriminalise such behaviour, accusing them of atheism and immorality. In its fight the Church used state television to criticise the proposed changes to Article 200 vehemently. In a number of religious programmes Orthodox theologians, priests and monks extolled the virtue of the traditional position *vis-à-vis* sexual relations and rejected any 'Westernisation' of Romanians' mores. The Synod secretary, Teofan Sinaitul, attacked liberalisation as fostering confusion between 'normal and abnormal, good and evil', parish priest Sandu Mehedinti deplored it as 'the devil's work' signaling the country's renunciation of its century-old Christian ethics, and Bishop Andrei Andreicut of Alba Iulia accused politicians of 'encouraging societal aberrations'.[42] The most outspoken was Archbishop Anania, who remarked that 'Europe asks us to accept sex, homosexuality, vices, drugs, abortions and genetic engineering, including cloning', and attacked the 'impoverished Europe … built exclusively on politics and economics, lacking any trace of spirituality, culture or religion' Romania was to enter.[43]

In its fight against homosexuality the Church managed to win several political formations. The extremist Party of Romanian National Unity and the GRP, which looked upon Orthodoxy and moral cleanliness as quintessential for Romanianism, proclaimed that Article 200 was too lenient and toleration of homosexuality was damaging to the very national pride. The NPPCD felt compelled to justify its Christian Democratic commitment by adopting a strictly traditional view on the subject. Its leader, Corneliu Coposu, categorically opposed 'sexual aberrations', arguing that the party's Christian moral foundation led it 'to combat every deviation from the law of nature and from the moral principles of a future balanced society'. He further claimed it to be imperative for 'liberty to be blocked by the liberty of others when the collective sentiment of a group or a tradition is injured by some initiative pretending to be "progressive" and modern'.[44] NPPCD deputy Emil Popescu suggested that 'incest was preferable to homosexuality since at least the former preserved the chance of procreation'.[45]

As a result of this campaign homosexuality remains illegal in Romania. The state's reluctance to decriminalise homosexuality contributes to a climate of intolerance. Analysts even argued that the refusal to grant equal space for expression and visibility to all citizens speaks of the country's incomplete democratisation. We can only guess the reasons for the Church's opposition to decriminalising homosexuality. As some

commentators suggested, the Church might have adopted an extreme position *vis-à-vis* homosexuality because public sentiment favouring the liberalisation of abortion after more than two decades of communist pro-natal policies had rendered abortion a highly sensitive issue.

Abortion was prohibited in 1966 by the unpopular Decree no. 770 in order to achieve demographic targets. The decree was abrogated by the post-communist leaders days after the December 1989 uprising, and the sudden liberalisation gave Romania the highest abortion rate in Europe, with over 1.2 million conducted yearly in a population of 23 million.[46] In a January 1994 open letter Orthodox leaders urged the state to take legal action to curb the explosive increase in abortions.[47] The request was reiterated in early 1997 by the Greek Catholic priest and senator Ioan Moisin, but his own party, the ruling NPPCD, refused to support the motion for fear of alienating Romanian women, most of whom strongly oppose any restrictions on birth control.

Given this sensitivity, the Orthodox Church has also avoided formulating an official position toward abortion and contraception. Unofficial as it is, the Church's position can be gauged from a number of statements in which various clergymen have condemned both practices, and from a pamphlet distributed by the Orthodox leadership to Orthodox priests in 1997.[48] Prepared by Father Ilie Moldovan, a moral theology professor at Sibiu Faculty of Theology and the Orthodox Church's leading authority on the subject, the pamphlet virulently condemns abortion. For Moldovan, the main goal of both marriage and sexual intercourse is procreation; a marriage whose main goal is eluded is 'nothing but a legal form of prostitution', and all family planning methods dissociating sexuality from procreation are to be severely condemned. The future child is a person immediately after the egg and the sperm come together, so any attempt to destroy the impregnated egg imperils 'a total human, body and soul', and runs counter to the divine commandment not to kill. Moldovan also contends that abortion remains unjustified and morally sinful even when the pregnancy endangers the mother's life or health. He goes as far as to reject the Ogino calendar-based planning, the only contraception method accepted by the Roman Catholic Church, and that Church's argument that 'for just reasons, spouses may wish to space the births of their children' and that 'the use of infertile periods is in conformity with the objective criteria of morality'.[49] Moldovan's stance relies as much on religious as on ethno-national considerations. For him, abortion is a threat to the very survival of the Romanian nation, amounting to genocide. The author advises his fellow Orthodox priests to refuse to give communion to a woman undergoing such an operation for seven years, and if the woman dies as a result of abortion to refuse to bury her.

Not all the Orthodox leaders agree with such radical views. Father Justin Marchis, who favours the Ogino contraceptive method, attacked the pamphlet on theological grounds and deplored the widespread distribution that this text alone received. Other priests have maintained that the Orthodox Church's traditional non-interference in spouses' intimate relations means that the calendar is tacitly accepted as a contraceptive method, with all other methods being strongly rejected.[50] Metropolitan Corneanu is among the few leaders who have made clear their opposition to any criminalisation of homosexuality and abortion, and publicly stated that women, not some institution, have the right to decide whether or not to end the pregnancy.[51]

Restitution of property to the Greek Catholic Church

Since 1990, when the Greek Catholic Church was recognised, a sour point for the Orthodox Church has been the Greek Catholics' insistence on restitution of their property lost under communism. The Greek Catholic Church was constituted in 1700 in Transylvania when the Habsburg regime, through the skillful mediation of the Jesuits, persuaded the local Orthodox clergy that their acceptance of Catholic dogma and the authority of the Pope would earn them equal status with the Catholic and Protestant clergy.[52] Within a century of this church's inception Transylvanian Romanians 'were transformed from a mute society of serfs and shepherds subservient to the will of Western European regional masters into a vocal class expressing "national" aspirations'.[53] Greek Catholics not only played a major part in the national emancipation of Transylvanian Romanians but, as prominent politicians, they continued to play an important role in inter-war Greater Romania.

The communists disbanded the Greek Catholic Church in late 1948, after the Vatican was denounced by the Orthodox Patriarch Justinian as 'the centre of the oldest imperialist tradition',[54] and the communists announced that they would no longer abide by the Concordat. The Greek Catholic Church was forced to merge with the Orthodox Church, and its priests were promised state-sponsored salaries only if they declared themselves Orthodox. Greek Catholic cathedrals and churches were turned over to the Orthodox Church, and in November 1948 some 600 Greek Catholic priests, including all their six bishops, went to prison. Faced with the alternative of arrest, other clergy and faithful joined the Orthodox Church. The latter supported the merger and saw the Greek Catholics' return to the Church from which their ancestors were separated in 1700 as long overdue reparation of a historical injustice. Until 1989 many Orthodox clergy and theologians sincerely believed that the 1948 suppression of the Greek Catholic Church had put an end to Greek Catholicism in Romania, but the unrecognised Church survived clandestinely until 1990, when it resurfaced. Its current members amount to only a fraction of its pre-communist membership, and 1% of the Romanian population.[55] Though most followers are old, they are vocal defenders of their Church's rights.

Chief among these rights is the return of Greek Catholic property turned over to the Orthodox Church by the communists, including 1800 churches, cemeteries and chapels.[56] In the early 1990s Greek Catholics recovered part of this property. In the southwestern region of Banat, several churches were returned by the Orthodox Metropolitan Nicolae Corneanu, and in several Transylvanian counties local Orthodox leaders voluntarily gave up smaller churches.[57] These agreements, however, were too few to solve the dispute adequately. Most Orthodox and Greek Catholic priests refused to enter into direct negotiations but instead waited for a comprehensive solution to be proposed by their respective hierarchies. As always in Romanian history, decision making was expected to take place at the centre. Instead of examining each case on an individual basis, the two hierarchies have striven for a comprehensive solution.

Negotiations were first stalled by the Greek Catholics' demand for the *restitutio in integrum*, a return of all their former churches and property. Greek Catholics stressed that Romania could become a true *état de droit* only when such core democratic

principles as property inviolability were strictly observed. If the Romanian authorities genuinely respected private property, then they should return the Greek Catholic churches or pay compensation. The Orthodox Church argued that, demographically and historically, integral restitution was unjustified. Demographically, Greek Catholic membership had dwindled so much that many Greek Catholic village communities had entirely disappeared. Church transfer in such villages would mean that Orthodox believers no longer had a place to worship, while the village church stood empty. Historically, the Orthodox Church said, many Greek Catholic churches were in fact pre-1700 Orthodox churches. If restitution was to be carried out, then the Orthodox Church felt entitled to ask for its property turned over to the Greek Catholics by the Habsburg regime. From such uncompromising positions the two Churches managed to strike a deal in 1993, agreeing that they should start from today's realities in their bilateral ties and discussions on church restitution.[58] The declaration seemingly implied that the Greek Catholics would scale down their demands and look for alternative solutions to integral restitution, while the Orthodox would give up historical arguments and recognise the other Church's rights and existence. But negotiations were again thwarted by the Orthodox leaders' unwillingness to pursue the matter further and the Greek Catholics' frustration with such an attitude. In the end, Patriarch Teoctist asked for the conflict to be solved by the country's authorities rather than by church leaders.

In 1997 senator Matei Boila, a Greek Catholic priest and NPPCD member, proposed a law returning Greek Catholic churches in localities where there were at least two formerly Greek Catholic churches and an active Greek Catholic community. This proposal of partial church restitution, which also suggested the joint, alternate use of some churches, was more than reasonable. It responded to earlier Orthodox demands not to deprive the Orthodox of their churches, and at the same time allowed Greek Catholics to have their own church in the localities where they were living. But the draft was met with hostility by the Orthodox Church: the patriarch categorically rejected it and the Transylvanian prelates threatened civil war if the Boila bill were passed.[59] The Affairs Minister of Religions, Gheorghe Anghelescu, took the side of the Orthodox and proposed that the state finance the building of a few new churches for Greek Catholics, while the Orthodox keep the old ones. Unfazed by criticism, in June 1997 the Senate approved the Boila law.

The decision prompted bitter reactions from Orthodox clergy and politicians alike. Patriarch Teoctist voiced 'consternation' at the vote, which maintained 'a climate of religious hatred' with 'utterly unpredictable consequences for Transylvanian peace'. Forgetting his previous call for a state solution to the dispute, Teoctist labelled the decision 'an inadmissible interference in the national church's problems, one that-fully ignores the agreements between the Vatican and the Orthodox Church and the many proposals for dialogue and reconciliation made by the Synod for settling the dispute'.[60] Metropolitan Ciobotea deplored restitution carried out 'by constraint, rather than by goodwill agreement', and blamed Greek Catholics for refusing negotiation. Metropolitan Plamadeala considered the law to be 'an attempt against the life of the Orthodox Church and of our nation'. This view was echoed by Deputy Petre Turlea, for whom state interference in religious affairs was 'undemocratic', with 'immediate negative consequences for the Romanian national unitary state'. For him,

the bill's initiators 'were playing into the hands of those interested in Romania's perishing as a unitary state'.[61]

Orthodox opposition to the Boila law meant that no list of churches designated for transfer could be drafted. In most localities where the law could be enforced, that is, in those villages and towns with active Greek Catholic communities and at least two churches, Orthodox priests refused to vacate any church. The case of the formerly Greek Catholic Cathedral of the Transfiguration in Cluj, the major Transylvanian city, speaks for the great divide between the two Churches. Following a court decision on 13 March 1998 the Orthodox Church had to return the cathedral to the Greek Catholics, who since 1990 had prayed in the nearby Union Square. But after heated discussions with Orthodox clergy and devotees, the court representative refused on technical grounds to enforce the court order. Exasperated by a process with no end in sight and disappointed with the authorities' refusal to return what they considered to be rightfully theirs, Greek Catholic believers entered the church and proceeded to the altar to drive the Orthodox clergy out by force. Inside the church were Orthodox parishioners attending a liturgy the parish priest had deliberately scheduled in the hope of delaying the transfer. It did not take long for the Orthodox to call the Greek Catholics 'traitors' and for the latter to respond by labelling the Orthodox 'communists'. Young seminarians of both sides fought pitched battles inside the church, in the altar and, finally, on top of the holy table.[62]

The violence took the Romanian press and authorities alike by surprise, and they unanimously condemned the lack of true dialogue between the Churches and called for an end to the conflict. The local authorities appealed to believers on both sides to take 'the path of dialogue and compromise' in order to resolve the litigation, and 'not to get involved in inter-confessional conflicts'. Earlier the Cluj city council tried to solve the rift by leasing land for the building of a new Orthodox church in the city's central area. They also asked the two Churches to jointly use the Transfiguration cathedral until the new building was finished but the Roman Catholic Archbishop of Alba Iulia categorically refused to allow the celebration of Orthodox divine service in the cathedral.

The two Churches acknowledged no wrongdoing. Greek Catholic leaders were conspicuously silent on the subject, and the Orthodox patriarch suggested that the confrontation, which 'damaged the image of the two Churches, the country, the state and church authority',[63] proved once again that it was the other Church that refused dialogue. After the incident the Orthodox parish priest decided to relinquish the building and organise divine services at the nearby Orthodox cathedral. One week after the incident, 2500 Orthodox clergy, students and devotees from all Transylvanian counties, led by Archbishop Anania and patriarchal representatives, held a silent demonstration in Cluj. Romanian flags in hand, the participants prayed for the souls of 'the enemies of the Romanian nation', an allusion to the Greek Catholics, and Anania promised to continue the fight for 'the spiritual rebirth of the Romanian nation, disunited in Transylvania three hundred years ago by the establishment of the Greek Catholic Church'.[64]

The open conflict in Cluj led to at least one significant change of attitude in the Orthodox Church. While before the incident the state authorities were called on to solve the dispute surrounding church restitution, once the state put forward proposals

with which the Orthodox disagreed, they were eager to take the matter into their own hands and pleaded with the state not to interfere in a 'strictly religious matter'. A lesser known church figure clearly articulated the Orthodox position on state intervention in the conflict. Bishop Andreicut called for church restitution to be solved by a joint commission of the two denominations, with the consultation of the faithful. Andreicut complained that in Cluj, instead of a joint commission, there was only 'a court dictate motivated by political and confessional interests'.[65] Formal meetings between Orthodox and Greek Catholic bishops resumed in late 1998 and early 1999, allowing some progress to be made. In October 1998 in Blaj Orthodox, Greek Catholic and Roman Catholic bishops sought to establish a climate of trust between the two Churches so that a settlement agreeable to both sides could be drafted. This was followed in January 1999 by a second meeting of Orthodox and Catholic clerics. Participants drafted an agreement to share churches in towns where more than one proper building existed.[66] The Orthodox refusal to return confiscated Greek Catholic churches was a major impediment to a papal visit, but once the visit was accomplished in early May 1999 there were signs that it had inspired concessions on both sides. There are still some 1700 churches to be returned to the Greek Catholic Church.

It would be simplistic to consider the conflict surrounding church restitution and its solution a merely technical, judicial, rather than a fully-fledged political and economic problem. Most political leaders share anti-Greek Catholic feelings, while those sympathetic to the Greek Catholic viewpoint could hardly advance solutions perceived as damaging Orthodox interests. The post-1996 government led by Christian Democrats has ruled by ordinances and decrees. For example, an August 1998 governmental ordinance ordered the restitution of buildings belonging to ethnic minorities, such as the Bacau Jewish schools and the Cluj Presbyterian Theological Institute.[67] However, did not the Christian Democratic government adopt similar measures with regard to the dispute over church restitution.

Concluding remarks

The Orthodox Church's place in the new Romanian political order remains ill defined and subject to much controversy. This is because many Orthodox leaders view democratisation as a threat to their Byzantine view of church-state relations and the state is unwilling to relinquish its traditional centralist coordination of every single aspect of Romanian life, including the religious one. These have not been easy years for the Church, as any narrative of events suggests. Parties with strikingly different philosophies interfered constantly in its life through the passage of laws in which the church had little input. Many Orthodox core demands (such as parliamentary representation for the entire church hierarchy, formal recognition as the 'national church', compulsory religious education at all pre-university levels, and a ban on abortion) have been either disregarded or only partially fulfilled. But by sheer numbers alone the Orthodox Church has managed to maintain a strong political voice that cannot be ignored by the country's political elite.

Is it possible that the future will bring a separation between Church and state in Romania? As early as 1993 the influential Metropolitan Ciobotea came out in favour

of full separation between Church and state and complete depoliticisation of the Church.[68] Not all Orthodox officials felt the same way, and, following the March 1998 controversy over the Cluj cathedral, Ciobotea himself changed his mind and urged the state to support the Orthodox Church more vigorously. This is no small thing since, as Metropolitan of Moldova, Ciobotea is most likely to be the next Romanian Orthodox patriarch. Yet state legislation and increased public financial support must be accompanied by proposals for the Church to change inwardly and renew itself. This will be its challenge for the new millennium.

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[1] According to a controversial January 1992 census reported by Radio Romania, 13 August 1993.

[2] Figures computed from Mircea Pacurariu, *Istoria Bisericii Ortodoxe Romane*, vol. 3 (Bucharest, 1981), pp. 516–526.

[3] George Ursul, 'From Political Freedom to Religious Independence: The Romanian Orthodox Church, 1877–1925', in Stephen Fischer-Galati, Radu Florescu & George Ursul (eds), *Romania between East and West* (Boulder, 1982), pp. 217–244; and Pacurariu, pp. 113–128.

[4] Alexander Webster, *The Price of Prophecy: Orthodox Churches on Peace, Freedom, and Security*, 2nd edition (Washington, 1995); Ronald Roberson, 'The Church in Romania', in *New Catholic Encyclopedia*, vol. 19, Supplement 1989–1995 (Washington, 1996), pp. 331–337; and Catherine Durandin, *Histoire des roumains* (Paris, 1995).

[5] Marina, head of the Orthodox Church from 1948 to 1977, was succeeded by Justin Moisescu (1977–1986). Teoctist Arapasu became patriarch in 1986.

[6] Trevor Beeson, *Discretion and Valor: Religious Conditions in Russia and Eastern Europe*, 2nd edition (Philadelphia, 1982), p. 368.

[7] R. Tobias, *Communist-Christian Encounter in East Europe* (Indianapolis, 1956), p. 349 f.

[8] Webster, p. 111.

[9] *Romania libera*, 10 March 1997.

[10] ROMPRESS, 4 January 1990.

[11] ROMPRESS, 12 January 1990. In an interview with the weekly *22*, Metropolitan Plamadeala defiantly explained that 'You could not be a martyr but once, which was useless [since] the believers needed the life-giving water of God's word'.

[12] Bartolomeu Ananiu, quoted by ROMPRESS, 10 April 1990.

[13] *Romania libera*, 10 March 1997.

[14] Quoted by Webster, p. 114.

[15] Webster, p. 27.

[16] This was the second wave of canonisations carried out by the Orthodox Church. In October 1955 the Church canonised nine Romanian saints, five of whom distinguished themselves in the fight against Uniatism in 18th-century Transylvania. Cf. Pacurariu, pp. 478–479.

[17] The proposal for a 'National Salvation' cathedral was first advanced in 1990, and then again after the 1996 political change. When some observers accused the Orthodox Church of entertaining grandiose projects in an era of acute poverty, the Church explained that it was merely reiterating King Ferdinand's inter-war suggestion of erecting a patriarchal cathedral to commemorate Greater Romania.

[18] Bartolomeu Anania, 'Totul este sa incepem constructia', *Dilema*, 24–30 October 1997.

[19] In August 1996 Emil Constantinescu attended the anniversary of the Simbata de Sus monastery and the Saint Paraschiva wake in Curtea de Arges, while Petre Roman and Gheorghe Funar visited the Nicula monastery in Cluj. One month later, when Roman entered a church in Buzau, the parish priest invited him into the altar, adding; 'Let's give Caesar what is Caesar's'. Adrian Paunescu helped financially an Orthodox church in Tirgu Mures and the Rimet monastery. Constantin Mudava's slogan mentioned here was bitterly criticised by the Church. See the *Adevarul* and *Evenimentul Zilei* August–November 1996 collections for campaign news.

[20] Radio Romania, 10 October 1996. The DC, an umbrella organisation, won the 1996 elections.

[21] *Evenimentul Zilei*, 15 October 1998. Orthodox churches have an enclosure containing the holy table where only clergy and the King have been traditionally allowed to enter.

[22] ROMPRESS, 11 January and 4 May 1990.
[23] The NSF, widely regarded as the heir of the RCP, became the PSD in 1993.
[24] The 1991 constitution refers to religious denominations as 'cults', a term frequently used in Romanian and other East European languages without the negative connotations it has acquired in English. Contrary to the claims of some commentators, the term was not introduced by the communist authorities but was inherited from pre-communist times.
[25] This view deliberately overlooks the privileged position the Greek Catholic Church was granted by Article 22 of the 1923 constitution: 'The Orthodox and the Greek Catholic Churches are Romanian churches. The Romanian Orthodox Church, being the religion [*sic*] of a majority of Romanians, is the dominant church in the Romanian State; and the Greek Catholic Church has priority over other denominations'.
[26] *BOR*, 1990, 7–10, p. 26.
[27] *BOR*, 1991, 10–12, p. 235.
[28] Under the 1948 decree only the clergy of the 15 religions recognised by the Romanian government were eligible to receive state financial support. After 1990 the Romanian state registered 385 other faiths, organisations and foundations as religious associations, thereby entitling then to juridical status and to exemptions from income and customs taxes. Religious associations may not build churches and houses of worship or perform rites of baptism, marriage or burial. *SEIA Newsletter*, 40, 2 March 1999, p. 7.
[29] *Ibid.*
[30] *Evenimentul Zilei*, 12, 14 and 17 April 1998.
[31] Alina Mungiu-Pippidi, 'The Ruler and the Patriarch: The Romanian Eastern Orthodox Church in Transition', *East European Constitutional Review*, 7, 2, 1998, p. 88.
[32] *Evenimentul Zilei*, 4 April 1999.
[33] Mungiu-Pippidi, p. 88.
[34] *Evenimentul Zilei*, 4 April 1999.
[35] Radio Romania, 24 January and 27 June 1990.
[36] *Dilema*, 15–21 September 1995; *22*, 6–12 March 1996.
[37] ROMPRESS, 15 August 1990.
[38] *Evenimentul Zilei*, 18 March 1998.
[39] The letter, addressed to the Minister of Education, Andrei Marga, was published in *22*, 24–30 March 1998.
[40] *22*, 23–29 April 1998.
[41] PNTCD deputy Emil Popescu, quoted in Human Rights Watch and International Gay and Lesbian Human Rights Commission, *Public Scandals: Sexual Orientation and Criminal Law in Romania* (New York, Human Rights Watch and IGLHRC, 1998). This report is also available online at http://www.igc.org/hrw/reports97/romania/
[42] *Evenimentul Zilei*, 15 May 1998.
[43] *Evenimentul Zilei*, 16 April 1998.
[44] Quoted in *Human Rights Watch*, chapter 4.1.
[45] *Evenimentul Zilei*, 15 May 1998.
[46] John Luxmoore, 'Eastern Europe 1995: a Review of Religious Life in Bulgaria, Romania, Hungary, Slovakia, the Czech Republic and Poland', *Religion, State and Society*, 24, 4, 1996, p. 363.
[47] *National Catholic Reporter*, 30, 13, 28 January 1994, p. 4.
[48] Ilie Moldovan, *Darul sfint al vietii si combaterea pacatelor impotriva acestuia—Aspecte ale nasterii de prunci in lumina moralei crestine oriodoxe* (Bucharest, 1997). The pamphlet is the only viewpoint on abortion and contraception to meet the tacit approval of the Orthodox Church, and to be distributed to priests.
[49] *The Catechism of the Catholic Church* (London, 1999), entries 2368 and 2370. Also Pope Paul VI, *Humanae Vitae* 16.
[50] *Dilema*, 5–11 March 1999.
[51] *22*, 28 February 1998.
[52] The Greek Catholic Church is known officially as the Romanian Church United with Rome. Some authors have referred to it as the Uniate Church, but this term is generally considered derogatory. For historical details see Vlad Georgeseu, *The Romanians: A History* (Columbus, 1991).
[53] Denis P. Hupchick, *Conflict and Chaos in Eastern Europe* (New York, 1995), p. 74.
[54] Patriarch Justinian's statement is quoted by Durandin, p. 375.
[55] From a total of 1.4 million followers in the interwar period, the church has today only around 200 000 members (cf. Radio Romania, 18 June 1997). The official Greek Catholic membership in the 1999 *Annuario Pontificio* is reportedly around 1.3 million but local observers consider the figure unrealistically high.

[56] 'La future collaboration entre greco-catholiques et orthodoxes en Roumanie', *Courrier Oecumenique du Moyen-Orient*, 18, III, 1992, p. 24.
[57] *SEIA Newsletter*, 40, 2 March 1999, p. 7.
[58] Radio Romania, 18 June 1997.
[59] See the patriarchate's letter of 5 April 1994 addressed to the Romanian Senate.
[60] *Evenimentul*, *Zilei*, 17 June 1997.
[61] ROMPRESS, 18 June 1997.
[62] Reuters, 13 March 1997.
[63] ROMPRESS, 18 March 1997.
[64] *Adevarul*, 22 and 23 March 1997.
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