

**UNIVERSITY OF CRAIOVA**  
**PhD SCHOOL OF SOCIAL SCIENCES**  
*FIELD OF SOCIOLOGY*

# **ABSTRACT**

## ***DOCTORAL THESIS*** **RELIGIOSITY IN THE PRESENT** **ROMANIAN SOCIETY**

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A transformation of religion is noticed worldwide, professional studies support the existence of religious vitality in most countries of the modern world. In this global trend of increased religiosity, according to Grace Davie, the European continent becomes an exception, religion being described as an iceberg: “the biggest part of what is interesting is under water and is being invisible”.

Europe’s religious situation is presented from the perspective of a worldly continent, where religion plays a major role in constructing and legitimizing individual and social identity, as well a continent dominated by a revival of religiosity. Thus, there are differences between the Nordic countries, heavily worldly and southern ones, strongly religious, between Protestant countries, dominated by religious indifference and Catholic ones, characterized by high levels of religious involvement; between Eastern Europe, closely connected to religion and the Western ones, worldly, eroded by religious practices and beliefs.

Actual changes in the rate of decline or increase in religiosity suggest that, in European countries, there are new manifestations of religiosity. This prompted sociologist Yves Lambert to say that in Europe, “God is not as dead or as alive as some say now.”

Thus, in Western Europe there is an erosion of religious practices and a gradual decrease of the influence of faith institutions both individually and socially. Church was excluded from the political, economic and social aspects, being limited its speech to a number of issues that are peripheral to the future development of society.

Also, the guarantee of religious freedom in Europe, namely the right of every individual to choose their own religion and build their own religious vision, has caused a destabilization of the church and a decrease in religious practice. Besides the crisis of member recruitment which religious organizations are facing, there is also a diminishing of religious beliefs and replacing of ethical standards imposed by religion, with a moral individual conscience.

While most people in Protestant countries, particularly in Scandinavia, fall into the category of “marginal members”, that although have a religious membership, rarely go to church, Catholic countries show elevated values among those who go to church at least once a month.

Even if church attendance is declining, wider spiritual concerns do not disappear, noticing a revival of alternative spiritual practices (meditation, astrology, medical practices

outside conventional medicine). As Norris and Inglehart say, their occurrence is determined by a high level of socio - economic development. Thus, in rich countries, citizens can also turn their attention to fulfill other spiritual needs, besides the basic ones, among the individual's survival. At the same time, these societies do not support the traditional religious authorities, forms of institutionalized and hierarchical religion or stable religious practices.

The role of the church is reduced to the status of "advisor" in certain moral issues, without accepting its authority. This does not mean that churches have lost their meaning of religious identity markers, they can operate only indirectly or through delegate (vicariously religion). Although, Gracie Davie claims, "church structures are not able to discipline the behavior and beliefs of Europeans, they remain with great public utility, because they incorporate moral codes and provide a space for public debate."

In Central and Eastern Europe, professional studies provide a contradictory picture of the status of religion and religiosity: there is signaled both a revival of religion, which is a notable increase in the various aspects associated with religiosity, and a beginning of the secularization process, which is likely to follow the trend of Western Europe.

In this context, the communist regime is referred to as having a special role in shaping the religious life of the Central - Eastern part of the continent. From country to country, in varying degrees, persecutions were directed against the church and implicitly religion because it encouraged beliefs, but also limited the state's role and authority.

It is noted how the communist regime had a greater impact on religious institutions than on personal religiosity. This situation is explained, either because the regime that has contributed to the preservation of traditional religious beliefs and opposed religious privatization and liberalization of social values, either due to post-communist societies that have not reached an adequate level of modernization when the process of privatization of religion has begun.

Since there are views that see in the phenomenon of European secularization an indicator of what will happen to other companies subject to the modernization process, it becomes important to understand Romania's religious life and predict whether secularization will become a relentless reality with negative effects on the spiritual life or is the step required by the evolution of modern society of the third millennium.

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Nationally, the latest research reveals the existence of a strong religiosity among Romanians: over half of the population pray daily and go to church at least once a month. These data oppose the general trend in the rest of European societies, trend given by the strong religious revitalization and place our country on top of the continental hierarchy.

Therefore, the present study aimed to know the status of religiosity in current Romanian society and its development trends after 1990. More specifically, sought to answer two fundamental questions: *Are Romanians more religious today than they were two decades ago? Is religious life in Romania subject to a process of religious transformation or is it characterized by stability?*

**A first objective** of this study was to identify the degree of religiosity of the population in Romania by analyzing the characteristics and dynamics of faith, religious practice and values. Combining these three dimensions has helped the description of private and public religiosity of individuals.

**A second objective** was to identify the forms of manifestation of religiosity by analyzing the evolution of Romanian religious life after the fall of the communist regime. Thus, I focused on determining the religious stability or change elements and how they build religious image of current Romanian society.

In addition, *two hypotheses* have oriented the analytical approach of the paper: while the first hypothesis questions the weak influence of the modernization process on the state of religiosity, the second hypothesis refers to the religious involvement of the Romanians, who due to weak modernization process, is approximately equal in private and public sphere.

The information sources used are varied and aim to surprise religious change and its impact on societies in Europe. The most relevant source of information was represented by the European Value Study - EVS, a transnational program of longitudinal research of fundamental human values and an important information base for research on the ideas, beliefs, preferences, attitudes, and opinions of citizens in European countries.

To highlight the state of religiosity at European and also national level, the data were downloaded in the form of some SPSS models, from the European Values Survey website: *individual models of the European countries* included in the latest research wave of 2008 - 2010 and *EVS longitudinal data file*, ie the set of data cumulated for all research waves during

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1981 - 2010. I used the obtained information in Chapters III and V, processing those questions that allowed me to assess the level and trends of evolution of religiosity in Romania and Europe.

To argument the paper, I used the results of opinion polls conducted by the Pew Research Center's Forum on Religion and Public Life and built maps to reflect the religious distribution of the population religiously afiliated both globally and at European level. They helped me form an accurate picture of the religious affiliation of the population, the differences in the degree of religiosity of various peoples and identify the causes which have determined them, especially in former communist countries, such as Romania.

Also, there were consulted books and professional articles in the area, but also statistical data provided by international institutions (*United Nations Statistics Division and the Statistical Office of the European Union, ARDA - Archives of statistic data on religion, MIDSS - Database Measurement Instrument for Social Sciences*) but also national (National Institute of Statistics, Romanian Patriarchate, Quality of Life Research Institute, SOROS Foundation, the National Authority for Scientific Research of Romania, Romanian Institute for Evaluation and Strategy).

An important part of the doctoral thesis includes a research focused on applied analysis of the theory of religious commitment. In this respect I have initiated a quantitative research based on questionnair, administered to people religiously employed in Craiova.

Assuming that individuals who attend Orthodox churches are practitioners with higher levels of religious involvement, I opted to apply questionnaires to the Orthodox churches in Craiova, among people who were at the religious services on Sunday or during the week.

The research was based on six hypotheses, which aimed to investigate various aspects of religiosity of the respondents, as well as the acceptance level of the principles of faith, religious behavior of faithful practitioners, strong feelings, perceptions, sensations of the people in communion with divinity and the level of information on religious dogma:

- If people are strongly dedicated to religion would then they will be subject to the rules of conduct of religious faith and will internalize the doctrine and its teachings;
- Higher levels of religious commitment are associated with higher levels of involvement in religious activities organized by the church;

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- Believers religiously employed evaluate society according to religious dimensions based on their religious values;
  - It is expected that a high level of religious involvement to depend on older age, poor labor market involvement and religious socialization in childhood;
  - Religious activities within the family exert a strong influence on the religious development of individuals and implicitly build their religious commitment;
  - There is a close correlation between religious involvement of parents and children.

*Hypotheses were linked to several objectives:*

- analyze the religious commitment and involvement of Orthodox practitioners;
- identify the levels of religious involvement among Orthodox practitioners;
- Identify how Orthodox practitioners relate to aspects of everyday life;
- know the factors that contribute to the increase of religious commitment level;
- identify how religious practices, both formal and informal, developed in the context of family, determine the religious involvement of the Orthodox believer;
- establish the family influence in the religious socialization process of children.

The paper is structured in seven chapters: the first two chapters delimit the thematic universe and theoretical analysis aspects of the process of religiosity, while the following five chapters set the reference and build an accurate picture on the prevalence, evolution and impact of religiosity, both nationally and internationally.

Chapter I, *Analysis theoretical and methodological premises of religiosity*, is dedicated to understanding the term religiosity, by presenting a more precise definition of it. Thus, religiosity is described as a commitment to a symbolic representation of supernatural powers, ranging from institutional religiosity and alternative spiritualities but also internal differences on the intensity of the commitment, for example, between devout and moderate believers.

Also, it becomes necessary to delimit the term religiosity from religion: *religion refers to the symbolic representations of divinity and offers answers to everyday human doubts and religiosity becomes a personal adaptation of symbolic representations of the transcendental.*

Here there are also discussed the dimensions of religiosity as well as its methods of investigation and measurement. Taking into account the many aspects of religious activity,

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there were identified variations in the content and number of reported dimensions, as well as among the methods of investigation.

We should remember that the original sociological studies used a single criterion to determine the degree of religiosity of a person, such as church attendance, religious affiliation or the importance of religion in everyday life. Later, this unidimensional approach was often contested being regarded as an imprecise predictor of religiosity as it used incomplete data and promoted the wrong results. For example, a person can attend a place of worship for different reasons, not necessarily involving a high level of religious commitment. We can talk about a way to dominate others through a prestigious action, avoid social isolation, obtain a benefit (to recover) or to please family / friends.

Therefore, in order to present dimensions of religiosity, reference is made to the contributions of Joseph Fichter, Fukuyama, Gerhard Lenski, Charles Glock, Rodney Stark, DeJong, King, Allport and Ross etc. Then, the basic dimensions and components of religiosity suggested by all these authors were grouped into four conventional dimensions:

- *Faith* (in divinity, God or supernatural beings) - a clear indicator of religious involvement, which transforms the individual into a powerful or no religious being;
- *Religious knowledge* - refers to information that a person has on their faith;
- *Religious experience* - is concerned with mental and emotional inner world of the individual. This includes the desire to believe, as well as a constant sense of well - being that derives from faith.
- *Religious behavior* - involves a religious activity that takes place over a long period of time (be it prayer or attending religious services). Within this dimension, it can be also be analyzed and *religious affiliation* as a double indicator of religiosity, both through the individual's relationship with a particular religion, as well as by identifying the number of those who declare no religious affiliation.

In the last part of the chapter there are highlighted the main steps and ways to measure religiosity. It is underlined the general trend to develop more sophisticated instruments of individual assessment of the degree of religiosity, given a series of indicators covering practice, belief, formal and informal membership to a religious cult, religious affiliation, ritual activity, doctrinal education or basic values.

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Thus, references are made to the most relevant sociological research tools of religiosity: *Questionnaires measuring religiosity of Glock and Stark, but also Rohrbaugh and Jessor, Religious Orientation Scale (ROS) by Allport and Ross, Religious Commitment Inventory of Worthington and its collaborators, Religious involvement scale by Pleifer and Waelty, Religious emphasis scale (RES) of Altemeyer, Unit measure of the religious character of Sethi and Seligman, Accentuation on the religious commitment scale of Roof and Perkins, Inventory of religious involvement by Hilty and Morgan, Scale of faith and noologic power by Ilie Bădescu.*

Chapter II, *Factors influencing religiosity*, makes an overview of the main factors influencing religiosity: *economic development, modernization with processes related to globalization, science and technology, rationalization, development of capitalism, functional differentiation, secularization and religious pluralism.*

In analyzing the relationship between economics and religion there were considered the main theoretical approaches of the main researchers in the area. At one extreme there is Adam Smith's view of rationalizing the choice of activities and religious beliefs and how people predictably react to the costs and religious benefits, while the other extreme there is the concept of theologian John Wesley about how the accumulation of material goods weakens the degree of religiosity of the individual.

Causal link existing between modernization and religiosity is evidenced by identifying the specific features of religion in modernity, the impact of modernization on religion and the transformations taking place in the religious life. Based on the explanations given by Norris and Inglehart on reducing the role and importance of religion in developing countries and dominated by high levels of existential security, it was concluded that, the spread or growth of modernization has produced fundamental changes in the religious landscape through the subversion of the power beliefs, behavior and religious institutions.

In this subchapter there were presented, at the same time, the influence of the processes underlying the religious effects of fundamental characteristics of modernization: *globalization, science and technology, rationalization, development of capitalism, functional differentiation.*

Finally secularization and religious pluralism are mentioned as typical effects of the modernization process. In general, the secularization describes the process specific to the

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contemporary era, which is the tendency to reduce the role of religion in social life and replace traditional religious beliefs and values with those promoted by a society subordinated to science and industrialization. From an institutional perspective, religion is no longer a dominant institution, as it loses its influence on politics and government of states as well as other social institutions. As global phenomenon, is found to be prevalent in developed societies exposed to low social risks, while poor societies, with a high proportion of employment in agriculture and for which social environment is very predictable, subordinate to a religious authority that assures them a better life and keeps them from risks.

On the other hand, religious pluralism is analyzed based on two diametrically opposed viewpoints: religiosity is positively associated with religious diversity and religious pluralism causes a decrease in the degree of religiosity of a society.

While competition between religious groups appears as a way to increase the quantity and quality of religious products available to consumers and, implicitly, the total amount of religion that is consumed, the greater religious diversity in a society can be associated with less plausible visions of the world that determines low levels of faith and religious activity.

Chapter III, *Religion and religiosity in Europe*, presents Europe's spiritual composition, mentioning the main evolution trends of religiosity. The religious situation in European countries has been described both in terms of reducing the role of religion in daily life as well as from the prospect of a strong revival of major religions. Thus, on one hand there was a decline of beliefs, mass religious practices and participation to services, particularly in Western Europe, but also an "awakening" of religion, in the private space, especially in Eastern Europe. In Western European countries there is a dramatic decline of faith, manifested in particular by a reduction of public participation as well as decrease of participation in parish activities. However, despite their status as "non-religious", most of them claim to be strongly religious or spiritual on a personal level.

Chapter surprise the "exceptionality" of Europe, by comparing the level of religiosity between Western and Central - Eastern Europe, highlighting the evolution trends of religious life. The impact of the different modes of religiosity in the development of religious life in European societies is analyzed by the empirical data obtained by processing SPSS models, during 1981 - 2010, of field research conducted by the European Values Study. Europe's

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current religious situation is constructed by comparing the religious beliefs, attitudes and behaviours among countries, as well as by determining the continent's degree of homogeneity in terms of religiosity.

Also, in chapter there are presented three theoretical perspectives that provide an adequate understanding of the religious differences and transformations in European countries: the *secularization theory*, the *individualization theory* and *religious market model*. The explanations are constructed based on ideas exposed by major theorists of each approach, specifying the direction of evolution of religiosity in Western and Eastern Europe.

The *secularization theory* emphasizes that religion plays an increasingly lower role in the development of society and, with the spread of modernization, religious institutions will disappear and religion will be removed from the public sphere. The theory's promoters (Peter L. Berger, Steve Bruce, Brian Wilson, Ronald Inglehart) argue that while the countries of Western Europe will experience a steady decline of all dimensions of religiosity, some Eastern European nations are living a process of religious revival and in others, depending on the nations' degree of modernization, all forms of religiosity are diminished.

The *religious individualization thesis* focuses on the difference between a person's individual and public religiosity. While the personal level of faith is understood as part of the individual's nature because human's religious beliefs are inherited, the manifestation of public religiosity, as a specific aspect of religion may be lost, depending on context and social relevance. The expectations of specialists (Gracie Davie, Thomas Luckmann) for Western Europe aim a decline in the institutional form (church's involvement), but also a balance of the individual religious beliefs, in Eastern Europe they expect a decline in the institutional form, but also a revival of personal religiosity.

The *religious market model* emphasizes the role of competition between the producers of religious goods. Basically, the approach takes into account the supply's part (religious service providers) because the demand's part (solicitors and the demand for religious products) remains constant. The competition between religious service providers requires greater effort on their part to keep both members and to attract new followers. Therefore, it results a greater interest from suppliers in meeting the needs of the members of the religious group to which they belong. The supporters of the thesis (Rodney Stark, Laurence Iannaccone,

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Roger Finke) believe that, in the case of Western Europe, the level of religiosity depends on the religious market demand, while in Eastern Europe it is sought a revival of religiosity following the fall of totalitarian regimes and the increase of religious pluralism.

Chapter IV, *Religion in contemporary Romania: historical and socio - cultural aspects*, makes a description of the evolution of religious life and religious phenomenon in Romania, reflected largely in institutional and organizational dynamics of religious worships in the country.

In this chapter I mentioned the population structure in terms of religious affiliation, highlighting religious affiliation in macro - regions, regions and counties, but also the demographic composition of religious life, ie its distribution by gender and age.

It is noticed that, with the population decrease in recent years in Romania, religious trends have undergone small changes, the most prominent being the period from 2002 to 2011. Therefore, religions with a significant number of members like Orthodoxy, Greek Catholicism and Roman Catholicism, recorded a decline in the number of followers, while minority religious groups, such as neoprotestant (Pentecostals, Seventh Day Adventists and Baptists) have attracted more and more members.

In fact, during 1992 and 2011, the largest increase was observed among Pentecostal believers, whose number has doubled. The same upward trend is noticed in the case of atheists, irreligious people and those with undeclared religion, which has increased by 87,083 people during 1992 - 2011.

However, Orthodox religion remains a defining characteristic of our country's population, at the 2011 census, about 86 % of people declaring themselves Orthodox Christians.

In the chapter there are also presented the 18 nationally recognized religions and religious sites existing in the country, showing at the same time the main directions of evolution in the past 23 years. Therefore, at the 2011 census, there is a nominal absence of more than half the religions mentioned in previous censuses, ie religious worships not exceeding 85,000 members (Unitarian Church, Armenian Church, Old Rite Christian Church, Evangelical Christian Church, Augustan Confession Evangelical Church, Evangelical Church, Muslims, Mosaics, and Jehovah's Witnesses).

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At the same time, it was included for the first time in the census, the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Romania, the Orthodox - Serbian, Armenian worship and Jehovah's Witnesses, but also the disappearance followers of the Synod - Presbyterian Evangelical Church and the Orthodox old style Church.

Romania's Christian predominance is proven by the existence of places of worship, those belonging to the Christian religion for more than 98 %. According to data provided by the Ministry of Culture, nationally there are 18,425 places of worship, the highest proportion (70 %) belongs to the Orthodox religion, the difference of about 30 % being made up of other nationally recognized churches.

In the final part, it was made a description of the institutional framework of Romanian Christian Churches, the first three as number of members: Romanian Orthodox Church, the Roman Catholic Church, Romanian United with Rome Church, Greek - Catholic Church. Since the majority of people in Romania declare themselves Orthodox Christians (86 %), I have described the evolution of Christianity, implicitly Orthodoxy in Romania and the central organization of the Orthodox Church. Finally I developed a case study of Metropolitan of Oltenia, which included the administrative - territorial organization of the Orthodox Church in Oltenia, activity, monastic life, issues and concerns on places of worship, editorial, missionary and pastoral work, as well as the training activity and clergy's improvement.

Chapter V, *Religious status of the population in Romania*, is divided into two parts. The first part presents the state religiosity of the population of Romania by analyzing the characteristics and dynamics of faith, religious practice and experience. Combining these three dimensions helps to describe the private and public religiosity of individuals.

The second part follows the evolution of national religiosity, highlighting the transformations undergone by Romanian religious life after 1990. The data obtained are compared with those from Europe to consider the forms of manifestation of religiosity in relation to other European countries. The main objective is to identify the religious stability or change elements and how they build the religious image of the current society.

In order to identify the state of the Romanian people's religiosity, the research focused on the analysis of two fundamental dimensions: *religious belief and religious behavior*. The option for these components is not random, they are frequently explored in the professional

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literature as private and public dimensions of religiosity. In highlighting these two dimensions there are selected questions covering : the distribution of religious beliefs and values (people's religious self - perception, the importance of religion, belief in God, Heaven, Hell, life after death, sin, telepathy, reincarnation) and the evolution of religious behavior (participation in religious services, frequency of prayer or meditation moments, religious affiliation).

The chapter ends with reporting the issues associated with the process of modernization, those which have led to significant social changes at the level of society. Under the influence of these changes, the current religious landscape changes. Therefore, based on the results of empirical research, the religious situation in Romania can be described as stable and balanced, strong religiosity being an important characteristic of society. Thus, among the population, we find elevated values in most dimensions of religiosity: religious practice, faith and affiliation.

Chapter VI, *Sociological explanation of Romanians' religiosity*, sought to offer an explanation on the Romanians' high degree of religiosity, based on three perspectives: *religiosity as value, faith, religious practice and identity in communist Romania and the influence of Orthodoxy peculiarities on religiosity*.

In investigating the relationship between religiosity and values it was taken into account Romania's position on the "cultural map of the world" made by Ronald Inglehart and Welzel Chris and testing, in the case of our country, the ten values model proposed by Shalom Schwartz.

World Values Study Cultural Map of the World 2005 - 2008 reflects the fact that a large number of basic values are closely related and can be described by reference to two axes: *traditional values or secular - rational values* and *survival values or self - expression values*. Countries are arranged according to the values of their citizens, not by geographical proximity, that is why Belgium, France, Luxembourg, Italy are cultural neighbors. The same applies to the United States of America, Australia and Canada or Serbia, Latvia, Montenegro and Belarus.

Traditional and secular - rational values located on the same axis, but at opposite poles, present both societies where religion plays a very important as well as those in which it has an insignificant role. On the other hand, the second dimension discusses the difference between the survival and self - expression values, that is between industrial and post - industrial

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societies. With the economic development, say the authors, nations have turned their attention to other concerns than those aiming to ensure food and existential security. Therefore, having already secured the survival problem, people have sought to prioritize their welfare, quality of life and self - externalization.

Based on this differentiation, Romania is indicated as the country with a high degree of religiosity, dominated by strong traditional values. In this category there are included Spain, Croatia, Macedonia, Italy, Serbia, Ukraine, etc. Higher scores of secular - rational values were obtained by Sweden, Germany, Norway, Czech Republic, Bulgaria.

The relationship between values and religion has been empirically examined, over time being proposed different theories and models of analysis. The 10 values model proposed by Shalom Schwartz in 1992 (ten values being *benevolence, conformity, tradition, security, performance, power, hedonism, stimulation, self - direction and universalism*) was considered as definitive in investigating the relationship between religiosity and basic human values, being described as a cross - cultural model that can predict a number of external constructs .

These ten values were included in two axes, whose extremes are opposed and build distinct value plans: a first axis contains *self transcending values* and those of *self - achievement*, and the second axis include *values of conservation* and those of *openness to change*.

*Self transcending values*, focusing on equality between individuals and their welfare oppose the *self - achievement* values, which pursue their own success and domination of others. The second dimension opposes the *conservation values*, which refer to the stability, limitation or restriction their freedom and preservation of traditional practices, to those of *openness to change*, which accept change and action on their own independent initiative.

In Romania's case, the results on the association between values and religiosity indicate high percentages among respondents, for the values of conservatism and self- transcendence. Therefore, value priorities among Romanians aim security, universalism, conformity, benevolence and tradition.

The chapter continues to study how communism influenced Romanian's religiousness, addressing the relationship between State and Church, especially the Christian Orthodox one,

in the socialist period, but also the methods of implementation of atheism, for the entire society.

The instauration of the communist regime in Romania determined the assessment of the atheistic principle as state religion, turning its attention to the final eradication of religious beliefs. Religion was understood as one of the “bitter enemies” of the state and therefore there were used various means of oppression designed to annihilate its influence and strengthen the ideological power of the new regime: abolished religions, destroyed places of worship, arrested clerical staff, persecution of believers, constant supervision and control of church activity.

During this period, the Romanian Orthodox Church reached an impasse because it had to do with a hostile social and political partner and, due to the need to avoid an irremediable conflict with the state, the Church decided not to openly oppose the regime, but rather to create a spiritual resistance. Its decision left from the conviction that, the official attitude towards regime’s decisions would be jeopardized its existence and possibility to continue, in any form, its mission of spiritual training and guidance of the people.

As a result of this attitude, the people kept faith in the institution of the church, which became a refuge from the realities of that time characterized by violations of expression and confessional freedom, invasion of private life, low living standard.

Finally it is mentioned the role of Orthodox religion specific features in maintaining an active religious life, pursuing the theological foundations of religion, its political involvement over time, the cultural and educational activity of the church, its own way of organizing time and space on residence environments, but also the particular elements of identification of Orthodoxy.

Throughout the centuries, the Orthodox Church of Romania had a fundamental role in the preservation of Romanian culture, maintaining its status after the fall of the communist regime. Also, it showed tolerance towards other religions and, despite its national character and its status as the national and majority church.

How do we explain the persistence and vitality of Orthodoxy in modern Romania and the impulses they give to the religious life?

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Christian Smith will focus on the content of the Christian faith that gives rise to specific practices and experiences, especially emotional ones, which most people find very compelling, convincing and persuasive. The internal logic of Christianity, suggests the author, produces - within and through people - events, interactions and feelings sufficiently strong to maintain a thriving tradition, despite other countervailing forces. Also, Christian reality seems more compelling in that it provides believers a warm, welcoming and personal universe, whose existence is protected by a God who gives, understands and helps.

The Romanian Orthodox Church has always been represented as an element of national consciousness, its historical, social and cultural roles have contributed to its integration in the society's life. As it makes its presence felt since the formation of the Romanian people, the Orthodox Church, as the poet Mihai Eminescu has argued, acquires the quality of its "spiritual mother", being also the one which contributed to the nation's spiritual structure regeneration.

Chapter VII, *Research on the religious commitment Orthodox practitioners*, is dedicated to an empirical research aiming to determine the level of religious commitment among Orthodox practitioners.

In arguing the research materials were consulted about the dimensions and measuring of religiosity, but also other professional sources in the area. For the analysis of religious commitment there were pursued four research dimensions: *the ideological dimension, the practice dimension, the experience dimension and the knowledge dimension*.

The idea of field research left from the observaiton that, some people perceive themselves to be highly religious, but for whatever reason, they are not behaviorly expressive in their beliefs. For example, they rarely attend church, do not regularly pray or make money donations to it. Some people may be motivated to generously give money and time to religion by appealing to their need for prestige and social appearances, while they do not strongly aspire to religious precepts. Other people attend church regularly, but without knowing the Church dogmas, having an adequate private religious behaviour and leading their existence in accordance with the holy teachings.

Respondents were selected among those present at religious services on Sundays or during the week, from the churches included in the sample. The questionnaire comprised 36 questions with free and pre - formulated answers and was applied on a sample of 252

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respondents, with ages over 18 years, among people who use to attend the Orthodox churches in Craiova.

The originality consists in constructing a questionnaire to adapt to the Orthodox religion. Also, given the relevance of professional studies, I chose to introduce a few questions in the questionnaire from two fundamental instruments for measuring religious involvement: Glock and Stark's *Questionnaire for measuring religiosity* and the *Religious commitment inventory - 10* (RCI - 10) developed by Worthington and his collaborators.

The research results have highlighted a strong private and public religious practice among respondents, with high values for questions covering religious behavior, ritual and forms of devotion.

In the thoroughgoing study of spiritual life, respondents have assimilated the importance of making some ceremonial acts prescribed by the church. Repeating rituals like chrisim, confession, communion, akathist or diptych inspires values and attitudes in the lives of believers.

In the mass, respondents acknowledged that they have religious items at home, the mentioned response options having similar percentages. Therefore, icons, the prayer book, the Bible and incense are among the most common religious symbols found in the homes of the respondents.

The results of the questions that capture the dimension of the religious experience of the respondents outline the image of devout believers who through strong religious emotions build their direct knowledge of divinity. Around 55 % of the respondents indicated the feeling of ever being in the presence of God, 81 % say they have been helped by God, over 60 % say they have experienced a sense of adoration or special spiritual experience, and 58 % stated that they were tempted by the devil.

There were noted subjective experiences among those interviewed, ways to get in touch with a transcendent reality, ie knowledge or unification with divinity. Approximately 80 % of the respondents support the need to spend periods of time in private religious thought and reflection, while 50 % spend time wanting to understand the mysteries of the Orthodox faith.

From the perspective of the ideological dimension elevated values were surprised. The respondents' adherence to the main beliefs of religion applies to 90 % of those involved in the study, which doubtlessly claim to God's existence, and 92 % who declare their faith in Jesus Christ as the Son of God.

Regarding the biblical truths, more than half of Orthodox practitioners believe strongly in them, which shows a high spiritual level of the individual. The most popular truths, in which the respondents believe to a great extent, were those concerning: the human nature of Jesus (*Jesus Christ was born from a virgin*), the origin of the world and man (*God created the world and all beings as they are today*), the role of saints in the life of people (*the saints are intercessors/supplicants for people before God*).

Orthodox practitioners illustrate an extreme conservatism on behaviors considered inappropriate and rejected by the Church, such as: homosexuality, abortion, divorce, suicide, prostitution, concubinage, adultery and euthanasia. Strong religiosity was observed in the high number of people who declare themselves totally against these behaviors, high values being observed especially in the case of response options aiming organ donation, divorce and concubinage.

Some of the members of the church can be quite ignorant of the contents of the Bible and the official teachings of their church. Thus, a substantial proportion of those who claim to believe in the Ten Commandments can not tell them with exact words (46 %) or they can not remember all of them (43,7 %). Also, only about half of the respondents correctly identified the birthplace of Jesus Christ. Instead, significant values for the knowledge dimension were observed to the questions aiming the Holy Trinity, the first book of the Bible and the Orthodox teaching about the bread and wine used in Communion.