

Orthodoxy and Democracy in Romanian Theology

Lucian Turcescu

Introduction

Democracy came rather abruptly to Eastern Europe during the course of about six months in 1989, with the collapse of the communist regimes in a quick succession one after the other, like in a game of dominoes. It all started with Poland in June 1989 and ended with Romania in December 1989. The dismantling of the Soviet Union followed in 1991. People in the region opted for a Western-style capitalist democracy that defended private property and individual (as opposed to economic and communal) rights. The 1990s were a rather painful decade in much of the region due to the transition from a state-owned to a private economy, the loss of guaranteed markets for selling one's economic output in the former Soviet bloc countries, a worsening of living standards due to the loss of guaranteed employment, and the absence of legislation that would properly regulate the economic, political and social situation. Things were further complicated depending on whether a country adopted a "piecemeal" slow transition or "shock therapy" fast transition. Romania chose a "piecemeal" approach, while Poland, Hungary, and Czechoslovakia went for "shock therapy." In 2004, a majority of the Eastern European countries were admitted into the European Union, and the predominantly Orthodox Romania and Bulgaria were also admitted in 2007, thus contradicting Samuel Huntington's controversial theory of the clash of civilizations that predicted in 1996 that Eastern Orthodox "civilizations" would never make it into a Western-style civilizational bloc.

In reaction to the arrival of democracy in Eastern Europe, churches in the region had to "hit the ground running," that is, adapt rather quickly to the new market mentality of competition. Most chose to avoid a passive attitude that would just allow democracy to happen and decided to be involved in shaping it. Demands for increased religious freedom, legalization of churches banned under communism (e.g. the Greek Catholic Church), restoration of religious rights and freedoms, as well as calls for reparations for the persecution and damages they sustained during communism began to be heard from many religious groups, small and large. One such demand included the introduction of religious instruction in public schools, due to the fact that such instruction was forbidden under communism. Churches justified it by attempting to fill the

void left in the children's education by the atheistic, corrupt morality that was allegedly spread under communism. Communism had used lies to promote an imaginary happy society existing in an undetermined future, while the population suffered crisis after crisis and privation after privation in an unhappy, never-ending present.

In this contribution, I would like to focus on the Romanian Orthodox Church (hereafter: RomOC) and its interaction with democracy. I will focus specifically on the participation of priests and bishops in politics; the support given by the church to various political candidates during electoral campaigns, as well as pronouncements by the Holy Synod on such participation; the protocols of collaboration between RomOC and government; and evolving models of church-state relations that RomOC experienced during the past three decades since the collapse of communism.

Participation of Priests and Bishops in Politics

One way in which the RomOC manifested its attitude towards the new democracy taking root in the country was in regard to elections and clerical participation in politics. Many Romanian politicians sought electoral support from the RomOC during electoral campaigns. During local and national elections, politicians of all ideological persuasions and religious leaders from Orthodox, Catholic, Greek Catholic, and Protestant denominations closely cooperate, continuously forging new ties and renegotiating old ones to fit their respective goals. First, when it comes to populist Romanian politicians seeking support from the RomOC during the electoral campaigns, several examples can be mentioned. Ion Iliescu is a former communist apparatchik and one-time collaborator with Nicolae Ceausescu, and his National Salvation Front is a large umbrella organization that brings together second-echelon officials of the Communist Party. The party is known today as the Social Democratic Party (PSD, to use the Romanian acronym). A convinced communist who seemed to share Marx's belief that religion is the opium of the masses and who blamed Ceausescu more than the communist ideology for the country's bankruptcy, Iliescu initially refused to employ religion as an electoral instrument, convinced of its lack of importance for the Romanian electorate in the post-communist context. The highlight of the 1996 presidential race was the televised debate in which the Christian Democrat Constantinescu surprised the incumbent Iliescu, a self-declared atheist, by asking him whether he believed in God. Iliescu tried to affirm his Freethought convictions while

emphasizing his membership in the Orthodox Church through his baptism as an infant.¹ As a well-known Communist official who had served a regime that had engaged in religious persecution, Iliescu was unable to pose as a pious candidate who embraced the religiosity of most of the Romanian electorate. In the end, Constantinescu won and, in a token of gratitude, became the first post-communist Romanian president to take his solemn oath, hand on the Bible, in the presence of the Orthodox patriarch. Since then, the patriarch has opened every legislative session by encouraging senators and deputies to fulfill the mandate entrusted to them by the electorate.

Ever since 1996, religion has unexpectedly become important in electoral campaigns. Other candidates for the presidency, parliament and local government also discovered that an electoral win was difficult, if not impossible, if they did not appeal for the support of the country's powerful Orthodox Church. As a result, many of them have tried, at least during electoral campaigns, to include visits to Orthodox churches in their itineraries; to show up for religious services on major Orthodox feast days; to be photographed and filmed surrounded by Orthodox icons, calendars and other religious symbols; to make donations for church buildings; and to become godfathers for orphans and witnesses for weddings in public ceremonies.²

Not even Traian Basescu, whose religiosity has proven lukewarm at best, dared to ignore religion during his bid for the Romanian presidency in 2004. Among Romanian politicians, Basescu was an exception both because of his lack of a well-planned strategy regarding the Orthodox vote and his generally lukewarm support for the majority church and its most cherished projects. Indeed, while he was the mayor of Bucharest (2000–2004) and leader of the opposition Democratic Party, Basescu constantly resisted Patriarch Teoctist's plans to erect a monumental National Salvation Cathedral in downtown Bucharest. Even after the Social Democratic government transferred a plot of land located in Carol Park for the use of the Orthodox Church in 2003, Basescu flatly refused to give approval for construction. Basescu also criticized the allocation of public funds for the project, reminding the church of its pledge to finance the cathedral exclusively from donations. To block the project, Basescu launched public debates via the mayor's official website and asked residents to vote against locating the cathedral in the park, one of Bucharest's few

1 See "Constantinescu: Credeți în Dumnezeu, domnule Iliescu?" www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ik8irXN7pCQ (accessed 12 June 2017).

2 Lavinia Stan and Lucian Turcescu, *Religion and Politics in Post-Communist Romania* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007), 135; Lavinia Stan and Lucian Turcescu, *Church, State, and Democratization in Expanding Europe* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), 203–4.

remaining green oases.³ As a nominal Orthodox believer, Basescu's opposition stemmed from concern with the many technical deficiencies of the project more than any rejection of Orthodox principles as such. He insisted that he opposed the cathedral, not the church, but the statement was interpreted by the Orthodox leaders as a declaration of war, and they were further enraged when Basescu voiced support for homosexual marriages and the legalization of prostitution in mid-2004. Basescu's determination weakened as the 2004 presidential elections approached, and he understood that he would be unable to win the presidency without the Orthodox vote. Hours before the vote, Basescu did what all other presidential candidates did before him: attended mass, mumbled the Our Father, made the sign of the cross, and pledged to return property to the Orthodox Archbishopric of Suceava. This display of religiosity may have helped Basescu win the presidency. After assuming the office of president, Basescu paid lip service to the Orthodox Church and Orthodox religious rituals, admitting that the Orthodox Church is "our national church" and accepting the church's highest medal, the Patriarchal Cross, but he did not openly support pro-Orthodox legislation or make frequent use of religious symbols.⁴

In the country's presidential elections of 2014, populist politicians like Victor Ponta tried to rally the support of the RomOC for his presidential bid. Several bishops and priests responded to the call and openly supported his bid and encouraged their parishioners to do so as well.⁵ Romanians living in the diaspora became the new frontier that a number of candidates attempted to conquer. Ponta sent two of his representatives to make electoral promises in the main Romanian Orthodox church in Paris. But in the end, it was a non-Orthodox, non-ethnic Romanian, the German-speaking Lutheran mayor of Sibiu, Klaus Iohannis, who won the presidency. In a rather obscure message around 12 noon on the Sunday of the elections, Patriarch Daniel himself, urged voters to vote for Iohannis. Iohannis was re-elected president in November 2019. In return for politicians courting the powerful Orthodox church, the RomOC has used the support given to politicians to pursue its own interests: covering

3 Lavinia Stan and Lucian Turcescu, "Politics, National Symbols and the Romanian Orthodox Cathedral," *Europe-Asia Studies* 58, no. 7 (November 2006): 1119–39.

4 Lavinia Stan and Lucian Turcescu, "The Romanian Orthodox Church and the Government," in *Romania under Basescu: Aspirations, Achievements, and Frustrations during his First Presidential Term*, ed. Ronald King and Paul Sum (Lanham MD: Lexington, 2011) 203–19.

5 Claudiu Pădurean, "Dovezile vânzării Bisericii Ortodoxe către Ponta. Reprezentanții Bisericii promit cercetări. Vor fi și sancțiuni?" *România curată* (12 November 2014), <http://www.romaniacurata.ro/dovezile-vanzarii-bisericii-ortodoxe-catre-ponta-video-reprezentantii-bisericii-promit-cercetari-vor-fi-si-sanctiuni> (accessed 12 January 2020).

up its own past of collaboration with the communist regime, property restitution, obtaining state funds for the construction of numerous churches, salaries for the clergy, support for its policies against abortion and homosexuality, and limiting other religious groups' abilities to pursue their religious missions in the country.

The other aspect of elections and religion is the direct participation of clergy in the country's political life, and this is where the views of the Orthodox Church are officially represented. As citizens, clergy themselves would have the right not only to vote but to participate in the country's political life, which is what some of them have done right since the early 1990s. The political involvement of religious leaders is not a novelty to Romania. In pre-communist times, the clergy were actively involved in elections, advising parishioners to vote for certain candidates, blessing electoral banners, and praising their favorite parties from the pulpit. For a brief period, the RomOC's first Patriarch, Miron Cristea (1925–1939), was a member of the regency that ruled the country on behalf of the child King Michael, and became the country's Prime Minister in 1938–1939. In the interwar period, many Orthodox priests joined the fascist Iron Guard and the Legion of Archangel Michael, a paramilitary fascist organizations opposing Soviet communism and extolling Orthodoxy as central to Romanian identity. After 1989, the Orthodox Church leaders advised clergymen to refrain from participating in politics, joining parties, running for public office, and influencing their parishioners' political options. At a January 1990 meeting, the Synod banned priests from engaging "in any form of political partisanship," including party membership, allowed bishops to sanction politically active priests and monks, and obliged priests holding public office to cease their priestly activity for the duration of the political mandate. This latter provision forbade priests from collecting a salary from the church while receiving wages for performing the duties of public office. But at a time when the Orthodox leadership was vehemently opposed by various intellectuals because of its collaboration with the previous communist regime and the Synod was divided between reformers and conservatives, most priests and monks disregarded the recommendation. The Synod Decision no. 1066 of 1996 reiterated that "according to canon law [canon 6 Apostolic, canon 7 of the 4th Ecumenical Synod, canon 10 of the 7th Ecumenical Synod, canon 11 of the local synod of Cartagena], bishops, priests, deacons, and the spiritual fathers of all faithful will abstain from running in elections to become deputies or senators. Priests and monks are called to fulfill their spiritual mission, which is incompatible with a systematic party engagement." The decision banned clergy from becoming active party members, but left the door open to political involvement by permitting priests to run in elections as independent candidates. Several times during electoral years,

the Synod reminded priests that they could run in local but not general elections and only as independent candidates if they secured the approval of their superiors. The Orthodox leadership further specified that, in light of canon law on political neutrality, clergy should abstain from openly supporting parties and candidates. Because of its vague formulation and lack of sanctions, the decision was treated as a mere recommendation. Bishops failed to sanction politically active priests and allowed priests holding public office to perform the liturgy, religious services like marriage and baptism, preaching, and hearing confession. By design or accident, the decision offered priests the possibility of contributing to politics in the hope of obtaining tangible advantages for the Orthodox Church or their parish, while showing society, the political class and other religious denominations that the Orthodox Church as an institution opted for political neutrality. Many priests and even bishops joined political parties and some even gained seats in parliament or even as government ministers. Some bishops, such as the powerful Metropolitan Bartolomeu Anania of Cluj – a counter-candidate of the current Patriarch Daniel Ciobotea for the patriarchal see in 2007 – expressed official opposition to the Synod decisions and insisted that political participation is important for the RomOC.

In 2008, less than a year after he became patriarch, Daniel Ciobotea decided to call everybody to order and enforce uniformity in his church. Thus, on 7 March 2008, the Holy Synod issued its Decision no. 1676 concerning the Issue of Priestly Participation in Politics. This Decision re-examined and maintained the previous recommendations of 1996 and 2000, as well as Decision no. 410 (12–13 February 2004), on the non-participation of clergy in party politics, while allowing priests (with the approval of their bishops) to participate in the political life of their community as an independent city, county or village councilors. However, the Decision refers to participation as a councilor in the life of the community as a necessary dispensation (economy) until “Orthodox lay members will be found who will properly represent the interests of their local community in which there are also Orthodox believers.”⁶ This last comment about laypeople is quite insulting of their intelligence, as many of them throughout Romania are already well prepared to properly represent their community politically. But perhaps some justification needed to be provided about the exceptionalist character of priestly participation as a low-level politician.

6 “Decizia Sf. Sinod privind problema implicării preoților în politică” (7 March 2008), <https://basilica.ro/decizia-sf-sinod-privind-problema-implicarii-preotilor-in-politica> (accessed 12 January 2020).

Models of Church-State Relations

My book, *Religion and Politics in Romania* (Oxford University Press, 2007) identified several models of church-state relations that various groups were promoting in the country as a new approach to understanding the relationship between religion and politics in the country. While the political elite traditionally embraced a managed quasi-pluralist model of church-state relations, after 1989 prominent political actors were tempted to codify into law the privileged position they were ready to grant to the powerful Orthodox Church. Those attempts were rapidly quashed under pressure from other religious groups, the local civil society, and the EU in which Romania sought acceptance as a full member. Until 2007, the RomOC advocated an established church model that recognized its role as defender of Romanian identity, qualified it for record levels of state financial support, and guaranteed its formal representation in the national legislative assembly. This model was proposed with an eye to the (semi)established church model upheld in the United Kingdom, Norway, Sweden, Denmark, and Greece. My book provided numerous examples to support the argument about this model, and I will not repeat them here.

The established church model advocated by the RomOC and some politicians came under attack from religious minorities favoring a pluralist model firmly grounding all denominations outside the state and in civil society and recognizing religious minority and majority groups as equal before the law. Some intellectuals who represent the best organized and most vocal segment of the local civil society have countered the unprecedented levels of religiosity and the growing reliance of the political elite on religious symbols by way of articulating a model calling for the strict separation of church and state. Eventually, the long-awaited Law on Religious Freedom and the General Regime of Religious Denominations 489 of 28 December 2006, agreed upon days before the country was officially admitted into the EU on 1 January 2007, confirmed the pluralist model as the one the country embraced.⁷ So, neither the separation model nor the established church-state model was adopted by Romania. After the death of Patriarch Teoctist, the new Patriarch Daniel has seemingly abandoned the search for an established church model in which the Orthodox Church would be the state church. Instead, with an eye to Germany, Patriarch Daniel has pushed for a model of partnership between church and state.⁸ According to Monsma, den Dulk and Soper:

7 "Decizia Sf. Sinod privind problema implicării preoților în politică."

8 For the German model of partnership between church and state, see J. Christopher Soper, Kevin R. den Dulk, and Stephen V. Monsma, *The Challenge of Pluralism: Church and State in Six Democracies*, 3rd ed. (Lanham MD: Rowman and Littlefield, 2017), 193–228.

Under this model the state and the church form a partnership in advancing the cause of religion and the state. Church and state are seen as two pillars on which a stable, prosperous society rests. The state provides the church with recognition, accommodation, and often financial support; the church provides the state with an aura of legitimacy and tradition, recognition, and a sense of national unity and purpose.⁹

In Germany, “There indeed is a nonprofit-government partnership in providing important social and health services, a partnership that includes the major religiously based organizations as full partners.”¹⁰ Autonomy is also a valued principle in Germany:

The concept of church autonomy is important for understanding the degree of freedom religious nonprofit service organizations have in pursuing their religious missions, even when working as partners with the government in providing services. The concept of church autonomy includes religious service organizations.¹¹

Similarly, Patriarch Daniel has promoted partnership with the state and autonomy from it. This is perhaps due to his familiarity with the German model. Although born and educated in Romania, in 1979, Daniel obtained a doctorate in theology from the University of Strasbourg (France), after having done graduate-level work in both France and Germany for four years. Starting in 1980, he served as a lecturer at the Ecumenical Institute in Bossey (Switzerland) and as its associate director (1986–1988), while being an adjunct professor at the Universities of Geneva and Fribourg (Switzerland). In an interview granted to me in 2004, when he was still Metropolitan of Moldova and Archbishop of Iași, Ciobotea approached the topic of partnership between church and state and indicated his admiration for the German model. When asked to comment on the Byzantine model of church-state *symphonia*, he indicated that this outdated model should be replaced by collaboration between church and state and active participation by the RomOC in the social life of the country. He added that

democracy as we experience it today is a Western invention that relies a lot on respect for freedom, respect for human rights, institutions, as well as on a contractual understanding of human relations. One has to abide by contracts, respecting their deadlines and obligations. Unfortunately, that is not how Romanian society and Orthodox societies in general have functioned so far. Therefore, democratization presents a challenge for the Romanian society and

9 Soper, den Dulk, and Monsma, *The Challenge of Pluralism*, 10.

10 Soper, den Dulk, and Monsma, *The Challenge of Pluralism*, 219.

11 Soper, den Dulk, and Monsma, *The Challenge of Pluralism*, 219.

the Orthodox Church in the sense that they have to adapt to the new contractual nature of democracy.¹²

The current patriarch is also better fit to lead the church into the 21st century. In contrast with the previous patriarch, Daniel no longer seeks to obtain privileges for his church from the state, by forcing undemocratic legislation that would guarantee the RomOC a leading position. Instead, he is aware that he must build an image of his church as an important social player and make it known inside and outside the country. Whereas the previous patriarch did little to promote his church, while he was still Metropolitan of Moldova, Daniel founded the radio station Trinitas, which broadcasts live 24/7. Since 2007 he has expanded the station to cover the entire country and to also broadcast on the internet, began the television station Trinitas TV, a news agency Basilica (also with a strong online presence), and the newspaper *Lumina*.

Two important protocols signed by the RomOC and the Romanian government testify to the desire of the RomOC to serve as an important social partner in the country and therefore they support the new model of church-state relations of partnership that we propose here. These documents are the Protocol of Cooperation in the Area of Social Inclusion, and the Collaboration Protocol regarding the Social Assistance Partnership.

On 2 October 2007, just days after his ascension to the patriarchal throne, on behalf of the RomOC, together with Prime Minister Calin Popescu-Tăriceanu Patriarch Daniel signed the Protocol of Cooperation in the Area of Social Inclusion.¹³ This protocol is meant to simplify the procedures of collaboration between church and state when dealing with social projects, especially those dealing with disadvantaged persons and minorities such as the Roma. In 2007, over 300,000 persons received some form of assistance from the RomOC.¹⁴ The purpose of the ten-year protocol is cooperation between the two parties in strengthening the social inclusion mechanism in Romania, the promotion of social dialogue for the improvement of the national legislative and institutional framework with regard to social inclusion and participation in common projects meant to meet the needs of people in difficulty. One substantial role in this regard is to be played by graduates in Orthodox theology who major in

12 Daniel Ciobotea, Metropolitan of Moldova and Archbishop of Iași, personal interview conducted by Lucian Turcescu, Iasi/Romania, 11 June 2004.

13 Protocol de Cooperare in Domeniul Incluziunii Sociale intre Guvernul Romaniei si Patriarhia Romaniei, 2 October 2007, <https://basilica.ro/protocol-de-colaborare-in-domeniul-incluziunii-sociale-intre-patriarhia-romana-si-guvernul-romaniei> (accessed 21 December 2020).

14 Protocol de Cooperare in Domeniul.

Social Theology, church-endorsed non-governmental organizations, as well as priests who are to identify individuals in their parishes needing assistance so they can be directed to the resources available from the government.

An important practical application of the Protocol on Social Inclusion was a symposium organized by the Ministry of Labor, Family and Equal Opportunities in partnership with the RomOC in Bucharest on 9–10 December 2008. Entitled “Family Violence and its Social Consequences,” the symposium was meant to address family violence toward women and children, a discussion that is usually avoided in Romania and for which there are really very few resources. In Romania, only a handful of centers, usually maintained and run by various churches, offer women protection from family violence. In his own presentation to the symposium, Patriarch Daniel reminded participants that the RomOC remains an active partner of the government in social affairs. The symposium was preceded by a national campaign for combating family violence against women called “Stop Domestic Violence against Women” that took place from 28 November to 10 December 2007 period. The organizers of the campaign were the Information Bureau of the Council of Europe in Bucharest and the National Agency for the Protection of Family, which represented the Ministry of Labor. The RomOC and the Roman Catholic Church in Romania were both actively involved in conveying the message of the campaign in their parishes and media outlets.¹⁵

The second partnership, signed by the Patriarchate and the Ministry of Public Health on 7 October 2007, was a “Collaboration Protocol regarding the Medical and Spiritual Assistance Partnership.”¹⁶ By virtue of this document, the two parties agreed to coordinate their actions regarding medical assistance and to integrate medical, social and spiritual assistance. The purpose of the collaboration protocol is to achieve “a community that is healthy from physical, mental, social, and spiritual points of view by increasing one’s awareness and involvement in actions of prevention and treatment of the practices that are damaging to one’s health.”¹⁷ This is to be done through collaboration in the implementation of programs that would increase the quality of life through the development of a healthy lifestyle and by facilitating access to medical, social, and spiritual assistance in Romania. Besides regular medical education

15 “Lansarea Campaniei Naționale de Combatere a Violenței in Familie față de Femeie: ‘Opriti violența domestică împotriva femeilor,’” <http://www.coe.ro/stire.php?id=662> (accessed 19 November 2009).

16 Protocol de Cooperare privind Parteneriatul Asistența Medicală și Spirituală, 25 July 2008, http://www.basilica.ro/_upload/doc/1216886201076490400.pdf (accessed 17 October 2009).

17 Protocol de Cooperare privind Parteneriatul, 1.

and prevention, the promotion of health is to be achieved through “religious education conducive to the adoption of a healthy lifestyle,” the reduction in the consumption of health-threatening products such as tobacco, alcohol, and drugs, the general improvement of social and environmental conditions, the promotion of increased awareness about the “important role played by children in the health of the family and society,” as well as “integrated services that would assist medically, socially, and spiritually” in the case of natural and unnatural disasters.¹⁸

In 2000, while still Metropolitan of Iași, Daniel began the Proviđența Medical Center. Based in Iași, the largest town of Moldova, the ambitious project was designed as a complex combining ultramodern medical expertise with spiritual care. Specifically, the Proviđența Complex comprises the Centre for Diagnostic and Treatment Proviđența, the Centre for Medical Education and Information Proviđența, and the Peter and Paul Medical Clinic, as well as a 43-bed hospital. The Centre can host conferences, colloquia, launches of medical literature, as well as training sessions. More importantly, diagnostic and treatment is provided by the clinic and the hospital that operate on a day-treatment basis. These services are offered for free to patients who are poor or come from large families, to handicapped children, and to monks and nuns from poor monasteries, all of them financed from funds coming from the RomOC. A substantial financial donation to kickstart the project was made to the Metropolitanate by a Swiss citizen in 1998.¹⁹ According to Father Dan Sandu, the current Metropolitan of Iași, Teofan, has also been enthusiastically involved in the completion of the project after Daniel became patriarch.²⁰

Article 29 of the Romanian Constitution deals with freedom of conscience, stating that “religious denominations are autonomous in relation to the state and enjoy its support, including the facilitation of religious assistance in the army, hospitals, prisons, elderly care homes, and orphanages.”²¹ According to Article 7 of the Law on Religion

the Romanian State recognizes the denominations’ spiritual, educational, social-charitable, cultural and social partnership role, as well as their status as factors of social peace. The Romanian State recognizes the important role of the

18 Protocol de Cooperare privind Parteneriatul, 1.

19 Proviđența Medical Centre, <http://proviđența.mmb.ro> (accessed 21 December 2020).

20 Father Dan Sandu of Iași, e-mail to author, 11 November 2009.

21 *The Constitution of Romania*, 1991. It was amended in 2003, but Article 29 did not undergo any revision. See *The Constitution of Romania*, 1991, <http://www.cdep.ro/pls/dic/site.page?id=339> (accessed 20 March 2009).

Romanian Orthodox Church and that of other churches and denominations as recognized by the national history of Romania and in the life of the Romanian society.²²

Moreover, there is no state religion in Romania, according to Article 9 of the Law on Religion; rather, the state strives to maintain its neutrality toward religion. Article 10.7 of the same Law on Religion stipulates that “the State shall also support the activity of recognized denominations in their capacity as providers of social services.”²³ These important pieces of legislation have opened the way for further collaboration between the dominant Orthodox Church and the state.

22 “Law on Religious Freedom and the General Regime of Religious Denominations,” no. 489 (28 December 2006), <http://www.cdep.ro> (accessed December 21, 2020).

23 “Law on Religious Freedom.”