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New Europe College
Str. Plantelor 21
023971 Bucharest
Romania
www.nec.ro; e-mail: nec@nec.ro
Tel. (+4) 021.307.99.10

GIUSEPPE TATEO

NEC UEFISCDI Award Fellow

Affiliation: Assistant Professor, Department of Humanities, Roma Tre University

Biographical note

PhD in Social Anthropology, Max Plack Institute for Social Anthropology. Dissertation: "Under the Sign of the Cross. The Politics of Church-Building in Post-Socialist Romania"

He has participated in major international conferences in Germany, Croatia, Poland, Hungary, Sweden, Italy and Spain and has delivered invited talks at the University of Prague and the Lviv Center for Urban History of East and Central Europe. Giuseppe's research interests focus on the link between political authority and religious architecture in post-socialist Europe with a specific focus on Romania. Among his publications: *Under the Sign of the Cross: The People's Salvation Cathedral and the Church-Building Industry in Postsocialist Romania* (Berghahn Books, 2020) and "The Orthodox Charismatic Gift" (*The Cambridge Journal of Anthropology*, 2022).

A FEW THINGS THE CHURCH-BUILDING INDUSTRY TELLS US ABOUT CONTEMPORARY ROMANIA[1]

Giuseppe Tateo

Abstract

Based on a central survey published by the SSRA in 2016, this article reflects on the construction of religious infrastructure in Romania after 1990. Two aspects are given special attention: the nationalist orientation of the Romanian Orthodox Church (ROC), which seems to replace spiritual and theological symbolism, and the relevant role of state authorities in providing favorable legal measures and generous public funding to religious groups. In this light, I look skeptically at the paradigm of religious revival and propose alternative avenues of research: the organizational revival of the ROC, the de-secularization of property, and the privatization of faith among younger generations.

Keywords: religious infrastructure, People's Salvation Cathedral, Postsocialist Romania, nationalism, religious revival, Romanian Orthodox Church

This paper examines the social significance of the construction of religious infrastructure in Romania since 1990. If "infrastructure" is understood as "the basic systems and services that a country or organization uses in order to work effectively",[2] the term "religious infrastructure" refers not only to houses of worship, but also to sanctuaries, monasteries, the administrative buildings that allow religious organizations to function, and religious monuments. As I will argue, the construction of religious infrastructure is far from limited to liturgical necessities. Rather, it is a valuable vantage point from which to view three decades of societal change brought about by postsocialism.

In the first section, I will discuss a centralized survey by the State Secretariat for Religious Affairs (SSRA), which compiles the data provided by the 18 religious groups recognized by the state. The impressive number

of places of worship built in recent years reveals the existence of an industry working at full speed, encouraged by generous public funding and some legal measures adopted in the 2000s. What theoretical lens better captures the emergence of this highly visible religious infrastructure? I will try to answer this question by offering a brief overview of the sociological and anthropological literature that deals with the comeback of religion in the public arena after the collapse of socialism.

Focusing on the Romanian Orthodox Church (ROC), the paper examines the political relevance of the church building industry beyond its strictly liturgical and pastoral functions. The nationalist and exclusivist overtones of the new Orthodox cathedral under construction in Bucharest (Catedrala Mântuirii Neamului, CMN), for example, suggest a certain continuity with the socialist and pre-socialist past. Similarly, the legislation behind the booming religious infrastructure reflects new patterns of church-state interaction: Stan and Turcescu (2012) spoke of "partnership" – in light of a series of protocols signed in the 2010s – but more broadly, the term could designate the transfer of state property to the ROC and the other religious groups favored by Laws 261/2005 and 239/2007. The paper concludes by reflecting on a paradox that has emerged in the last two decades: at a time when religious infrastructure is once again one of the main elements of the urban built environment, the authority of the clergy in society is waning, and younger generations tend to understand faith as a private matter, distancing themselves from communal religious life (Gog 2007).

1. Introduction. A few numbers on the church-building industry

In 2016, the State Secretariat for Religious Affairs published the results of a survey that reported the number of houses of worship owned by each of the 18 recognized religions in Romania. It turned out that almost ten thousand places of worship had been built in the 26 years following the fall of socialism, more than one per day (see Appendix 1). This also means that more than 30% of the religious buildings in Romania were built in the postsocialist period. The data reveal a process of great importance, namely the boom of the church building industry.

Appendix 1 shows that the denominations most active in building houses of worship are the Baptist, Adventist and Pentecostal churches. The Pentecostal and Adventist churches now own 10.68% and 4.63% of

the houses of worship, although they represent only 1.92% and 0.43% of the population, respectively. At first glance, these figures contradict those who accuse the ROC of building too many houses of worship, since the Orthodox Church has built as many churches as the Roman Catholic Church and far fewer than the neo-Protestants. According to the 2011 census, the ROC represents 86% of the religious population, but owns only 60% of the houses of worship: in 1989, before the postsocialist religious pluralization, it owned 70% of them.

The return of a few hundred churches to the Greek Catholic Church and, above all, the boom of the neo-Protestant churches mentioned above help to explain this change. However, in order to understand such discrepancies, we need to take a step back and look at how the state finances recognized religious groups. According to the Romanian Constitution and Law 489/2006 on Religious Freedom, there is no state religion in the country. Law 489/2006 states that the Romanian state is neutral in matters of religion, but encourages religious expression, affiliation and practice. This means that it tries to guarantee equal treatment to all recognized religions and supports them financially. At the national level, religions are financed by the SSRA, which is a government agency. It receives funds from the state budget (and from the state reserve funds) and redistributes them according to the number of believers belonging to each religious group. Thus, the ROC should receive 86% of the SSRA's annual budget, the Roman Catholic Church 4.6%, and so on.

The expansion of the church-building sector is a direct consequence of the substantial economic support provided by public institutions. The government funds channeled by the SSRA to the 18 religious groups have increased year after year, reaching a new record in 2018 after a predictable decline due to the economic crisis (see Table 1 below).

Year	Total	Support for salaries	Building and repairs
1990	16,814	15,694	1,120
1991	32,661	29,231	3,430
1992	141,008	118,338	22,670
1993	629,370	575,350	54,020
1994	2,002,697	1,731,167	271,530

1995	2,705,743	2,290,452	415,291
1996	4,165,736	2,997,036	1,168,700
1997	8,809,587	7,369,437	1,440,150
1998	10,947,815	8,347,875	2,599,940
1999	26,256,196	17,188,236	9,067,960
2000	68,434,671	40,447,371	27,987,300
2001	84,285,808	67,693,308	16,592,500
2002	62,630,921	51,181,321	11,449,600
2003	94,994,803	69,316,363	25,678,440
2004	108,881,385	90,751,585	18,129,800
2005	141,890,789	111,122,500	30,768,289
2006	178,484,990	132,502,990	45,982,000
2007	314,729,598	151,298,543	163,431,055
2008	351,373,638	83,949,388	267,424,250
2009	367,700,856	261,451,356	106,249,500
2010	322,231,883	238,478,383	83,753,500
2011	321,819,440	236,012,375	85,807,065
2012	314,158,126	249,894,126	64,264,000
2013	344,843,488	275,640,988	69,202,500
2014	426,715,194	277,452,694	149,262,500
2015	464,167,780	286,199,396	177,968,384
2016	477,065,515	355,952,640	121,112,875
2017	564,008,599	492,614,865	71,393,734
2018	803,107,368	588,746 441	214,360,927
Total	5,867,232,479	4,101,369,449	1,765,863,030

Table 1 Amount of money allocated from the state budget for the salaries of the clerical staff of religious units and for the construction and repair of places of worship between 1990 and 2018 (in Romanian lei).

The last column of the table covers the construction and renovation of houses of worship. The money is still redistributed in proportion to the number of believers, but the units applying for funding are not the religious organizations themselves, but each administrative unit alone. In the case of the ROC, each bishop submits a list of parishes in his diocese that are applying for funding. It is up to the bishop to decide which parishes will be placed at the top of the list. In 2015, the SSRA received 1,600 applications and accepted 1,450 of them, so not all applicants will receive funding from the state budget. The government reviews the applications through the SSRA and allocates a sum of money in two tranches, in the first draft of the state budget and then in the budget amendment. When it comes to renovating cultural monuments such as wooden churches or monasteries, churches can also apply for funding from the European Union and the Romanian Ministry of Culture. However, the renovation of cultural monuments does not seem to be a priority for the ROC, which instead used a large part of the SSRA funds to build the new national cathedral.

Churches are also funded by regional and local councils, which are independent of the government and thus not bound by the SSRA's redistribution principle. But if most public funds are distributed according to the principle of proportionality, how can we explain such a big difference in the number of churches built by neo-Protestants compared to other churches? The impressive growth of neo-Protestantism in many parts of the world is now a well-known fact, as it has been extensively studied in the anthropology of Christianity in general. As reported in some studies carried out in Romania (Pop 2009, Cingolani 2009, Fosztó and Kiss 2012), these denominations have grown by filling a gap in the religious market, by finding new ways of conceiving community life, faith and prosperity in a period of extreme social and economic precariousness, such as the postsocialist restructuring. In less than three decades, they have managed to expand their network of parishes, relying on funds from abroad and combining economic capital and volunteer labor in a very efficient way.

However, the data circulated by the SSRA does not distinguish between a small chapel and a monastery or a whole religious complex. If the ROC owns only 60% of the churches today, it is because of the way it has used public funds. Instead of continuing to build neighborhood churches, the ROC used a large portion of the public funds it received to build more than thirty cathedrals throughout the country. The tallest of these is the national cathedral, currently under construction on Arsenal Hill in central Bucharest. Some others are being built in small towns (Voluntari, Fălticeni),

and in many cases the work began in the early 1990s (see Appendix 2). On the one hand, this can instantiate the desire to build new places of worship after decades of state atheism. On the other hand, it reveals the ambitions of local politicians to host major works, the opportunity for construction companies to make handsome profits, and the inclination of local clergy to erect imposing religious edifices. When it comes to renovating cultural monuments such as wooden churches or monasteries, churches can also apply for funding from the European Union and the Romanian Ministry of Culture. However, the renovation of cultural monuments does not seem to be a priority for the ROC, which instead used a large part of the money from the SSRA to build the Bucharest cathedral.

Therefore, the ROC has built fewer, but much larger churches. There are two reasons for building such impressive cathedrals. The first is "organizational" so to speak. It is the strengthening of the ROC as an organization that helps us to understand the high number of new cathedrals built after 1990. In general, churches and cathedrals differ not only in size but also in function: only those houses of worship that contain the seat of the local metropolitan, archbishop or bishop are considered cathedrals. As a clergyman who is a member of the Romanian Patriarchate explained to me, the plan for territorial administration developed by the Holy Synod in the 1990s originally called for the creation of one diocese for each county. This must have sounded like an ambitious plan, since Romania was then organized into 41 counties and only 15 dioceses.

The fact that each diocese must have a representative cathedral within its borders helps to justify the construction of 34 cathedrals in 30 years and the construction of new administrative buildings *(centre eparhiale*). The ROC is organized in Romania (excluding its dioceses abroad) into 29 dioceses, of which 14 have been created since 1990 (seven have just been re-established after being dissolved by the communist leadership, and another seven have been newly created). Furthermore, in order to provide pastoral care for the many Romanians who have emigrated, the ROC has launched a program of administrative and infrastructural expansion throughout the world: among the dozens of new churches and administrative buildings, it is worth mentioning the two cathedrals under construction in Madrid and Munich.

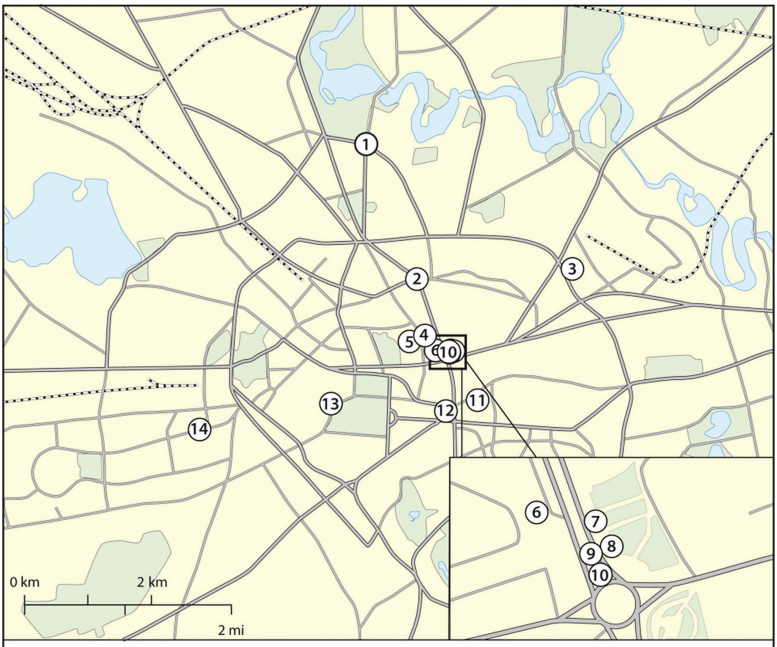
The second reason for the multiplication of imposing cathedrals is symbolic: building on a large scale is a way 'of reaffirming one's presence in an age of religious pluralization. In addition to the impressive data of the neo-Protestant churches, the comeback of the Greek Catholic

Church is another motive for the ROC to reassert its importance. The Greek Catholics are the only other denomination building a cathedral: in fact, the cathedral of the "Martyrs and Confessors of the 20th Century" in Cluj, which is intended to be a "manifesto of the presence of Greek Catholicism", is nearing completion.[3]

Since the birth of Greater Romania, Transylvanian cities have been used as a kind of interdenominational battleground: already in the interwar period, the construction of the Orthodox Cathedral of Cluj was meant to "visibly mark that Transylvania belonged to [Orthodox] Romania", as if the Greek Catholics were not part of it (Iuga 2015: 96). Similarly, it is no coincidence that one of the largest Orthodox cathedrals currently in the country is the one inaugurated in 2016 in Baia Mare (northern Transylvania).

The construction of Orthodox cathedrals throughout the country, I argue, must also be read through the lens of inter-religious competition.[4] In a comparative analysis of how rival groups challenge each other in a context of religious plurality, Hayden and Walker identify two basic criteria for indicating dominance: perceptibility and centrality (Hayden and Walker 2013: 413–414). The former is measured by the visibility, audibility, and massiveness of religious sites. The latter refers to the "location of important economic or political activities" (ibid.: 414). If all cathedrals – not only Orthodox ones – aim to be as central and visible as possible, only one can claim to fulfill the criteria of dominance properly. The one being built in Bucharest is the highest Orthodox cathedral in the world, located in the center of the capital, on one of the 'highest points of the city (Arsenal Hill), perceptible not only visually but also acoustically thanks to the 15 km range of its bells, and only a few hundred meters away from the Parliament, the Ministry of Defense and the Romanian Academy of Sciences.

Finally, in addition to the construction of new churches and cathedrals, the transformation of the religious infrastructure also includes crosses and cross-shaped monuments, which have multiplied in Bucharest since 1990. Sociologist Irina Stahl mapped all the crosses present in the city before 1989, and then those installed in the 1990s and 2000s (Stahl and Jackson 2019). She counted nearly 200 crosses installed between 1989 and 2009. There are two main motivations for placing crosses, she explained. First, relatives or friends would place a cross to commemorate their loved one. Second, crosses should protect the dead who died without receiving the



1. "Cross of the century" (currently displaced)
2. Wooden celtic cross in memory of the 1989 revolution (troița maramureșeana)
3. Stone Cross in memory of the 1877 war of independence
4. Cross of the "Memorial of Rebirth" (bidimensional)
5. Corneliu Coposu Bust (cross shaped)
6. Small steel cross for the Heroes of the December 1989 Revolution
7. Marble cross in memory of the anticommunist songwriter Cristian Paturca
8. Marble Cross in memory of the victims of the 1990 Mineriad
9. Stone cross "To the heroes of the Romanian revolution"
10. Complex of six crosses for the Heroes of the December 1989 Revolution
11. Cross in memory of the demolition of the Sf Vineri Church (Holy Friday Church)
12. Marble Cross for the construction of the "Cathedral of Salvation of the Romanian People"
13. Wooden cross in memory of a demolished church
14. Carved cross in memory of "the anti-terrorist fighters" (Romanian Intelligence Service)

Cartography: Jutta Turner Ascertained data: Guiseppe Tateo Base map: openstreetmap.org
© Max Planck Institute for Social Anthropology, Halle/Saale, Germany

Map 1. Map of crosses and cross-shaped monuments placed in Bucharest by state authorities and civic associations between 1990 and 2016

sacraments of confession and anointing (that is, whose death was not properly celebrated according to religious practice).

If small crosses are erected by ordinary citizens and have no political overtones, cross-shaped monuments are inaugurated by state institutions or civic associations and constitute what I have called the monumentalization of the cross (Tateo 2020: 177–188). This is a process whose religious character is also linked to the commemoration of the dead, but it is also an act of symbolic purification of space charged with political meaning. Such interventions are also a tool for certain authorities and public figures to whitewash their image by jumping on the bandwagon of the dominant anticommunist discourse. The Ministry of Culture, the ROC and the Romanian Intelligence Service have installed cross-shaped monuments in the capital not only to commemorate the dead or the demolition of churches, but also to place themselves on the right side of history.

2. Theoretical frames: religious revival, postsecularism, re-consecration

The comeback of religion in the public space of postsocialist cities and towns unfolds through permanent (churches, crosses, cathedrals) or temporary (public rituals, processions, pilgrimages, etc.) means and has been interpreted by social scientists as evidence of religious revival (Tomka 2011, Voicu 2007, Voicu and Constantin 2012), sacralization (Kiss 2009), revitalization (Pickel 2009), or renewal (Heintz 2004). A first problem with this strand of research is that it tends to equate state policy with everyday practice, assuming that state atheism in Romania produced atheist citizens who, once socialism collapsed and churches reentered the public sphere, became religious subjects. Moreover, terms such as "religious revival" and "sacralization of space," which are widespread in the above-mentioned literature, tend to associate the visibility of religious symbols and buildings with an increase in belief, belonging, and practice, but ignore that they are – at the same time – charged with moral and political significance. Talk of sacralization can be highly misleading when newly constructed religious sites are contested. The national cathedral has been recently inaugurated, many churches have been erected and crosses placed, but this does not necessarily mean – or at least not only – that religiosity is higher or more widespread than before 1989. All this is accompanied by unprecedented critiques, inchoate forms of anticlericalism, and new modes

of coexistence between secularist sentiments, religious identification, and spiritual practice (Gog 2007, 2016).

In an attempt to look beyond apparent ruptures to find actual continuities –, an approach I sympathize with –, Tamara Dragadze (1993) showed that ritual activity and religious literacy survived Soviet atheism in Georgia through domestication (i.e., in the home environment). However, as Agnieszka Halemba pointed out, survival does not necessarily mean stagnation: anthropological work on religion after socialism revealed deep changes in the way people understood religious organizations and their role in the public sphere (2015: 24).

In Romania, state atheism did not translate into the eradication of religion, but rather into its ideological appropriation and seclusion in the private sphere. It is not surprising, then, that the right to manifest one's faith in public was enthusiastically exercised in the early 1990s: it was during this period that the foundations were laid for many churches and cathedrals, some of which turned out to be overly ambitious projects that are still under construction.

I argue that in the Romanian case, speaking of religious revival can be misleading unless it is limited to the early years of the 1990s and revival is understood "first of all [as] a return to tradition" (Borowik 2002: 505). The project of the new Bucharest cathedral – its name, architecture and symbolism – instantiates the ROC's intention to regain a dominant position in a pluralized religious market and the role of privileged interlocutor with the state. The interwar period has a special place in the collective memory of many Romanians, as it coincided with the country's maximum territorial expansion. This is also true for priests and bishops who, in the conversations and interviews I had with them during my fieldwork, referred to it as a glorious epoch for the church. For example, some found it strange to apply "secularist" measures, such as preventing clergy from running in local administrative elections, when between the two wars the Patriarch was even briefly appointed Prime Minister and episcopes were senators.

When understood as part of a more general trend not limited to postsocialism, religious visibility in urban contexts has also been read as the sunset of the secular age (Berger 1999) or the dawn of a new post-secular era (Beaumont and Baker 2011, Habermas 2008). Interestingly, the lens of the post-secular has been used by Sergiu Novac (2011) to interpret the case of the People's Salvation Cathedral. As new houses of worship proliferated in the country after decades of forced socialist secularization, it may seem reasonable to resort to the concept

of post-secularism. However, the postsecular city as Beaumont and Baker understand it – inspired by Habermas – emerges "by contrast to the utopian liberal uplift of the secular city (in which the role of the church and theology is to act as force of social progressive change and a cultural exorciser against all oppressive practices which reinforce hierarchies of power and dependency)" (Beaumont and Baker 2011: 2). I would argue that such a description would hardly fit any Christian Orthodox context, where church-state relations have evolved differently from Western Europe. The principles of symphonia and partnership – or the ideological subjugation of Orthodoxy under socialism – seem to contradict a scenario in which the church acts as an anti-hierarchical force.

In conclusion, an anthropological analysis of postsocialist religious infrastructure in Romania should avoid out-of-context and far-fetched generalizations, as is the case with the adoption of post-secularist theories. Those approaches that insist on a religious revival or re-enchantment of postsocialist countries are equally problematic, as they fail to represent not only the political and instrumental use of religion, but also the voices that contest such a powerful resurgence of public religions. My suggestion then is to read the booming of religious infrastructure in Romania as a form of "re-consecration", as this term is less value-laden and comes from what is undeniable: that rituals of consecration were performed for rising churches and placing crosses. These are to be understood as acts of re-signification of public space after decades of state atheism. Re-consecration is a specific way of giving new meaning to space, which is related to the use of religious buildings, symbols, monuments, rituals and practices.

In other words, the visibility of religious signifiers should not be directly linked to an increase in religiosity and church attendance. Newly built religious infrastructure does not have a simple pastoral and liturgical function, nor is it solely the opera of grassroots action. On the contrary, the boom in this sector would not have been possible without the generous funding of the SSRA and the lobbying of state authorities by the ROC. In the following sections, the symbiosis of (Orthodox) church and state is examined from two privileged angles: the nationalist symbolism of the People's Salvation Cathedral, and the legal measures adopted in the 2000s regarding the financing and transfer of property to churches. In this light, I argue that it is misleading to speak of a religious revival: the real revival concerns the ROC as an organization capable of building over 30 cathedrals, multiplying its clerical and lay personnel, and expanding its pastoral activity abroad.

3. Church building as nation building

The consecration of the newly built cathedral of the Russian Army in Moscow in June 2020 has once again drawn media attention to the merging of state authority, public resources, national symbolism, and Orthodox identity in post-Soviet Russia. The cathedral was built on the occasion of the 75th anniversary of the victory over Nazi Germany. This is not surprising, because if we look at all the large cathedrals built in the post-socialist space in the last three decades, we soon realize that they often organize their symbolic structure not according to strictly spiritual or theological principles, but according to some fundamental moments in the history of the nation-state. New, imposing cathedrals built in recent times were originally meant as a "thanksgiving" to God for military and territorial victories against the Ottomans (the CMN in Bucharest), for a desperate victory over the French invader (Moscow's "Christ the Savior"), and to celebrate the country's first constitution (Warsaw's "Temple of Providence").

During the keynote lecture at the European Academy of Religion 2020 conference, sociologist Kristina Stoeckl interpreted the case of the Russian Army cathedral using the familiar paradigm of "civil religion," coined by Robert Bellah in 1967 to describe not simply "the worship of the American nation, but an understanding of the American experience in the light of ultimate and universal reality" (Bellah 1967: 20). "Civil religion" means the adoption of religious attitudes toward civil and national symbols and institutions. However, the symbolic organization of the new cathedrals that emerged after socialism indicates something different: not the glorification of the nation through religious signifiers, references, and sentiments, but the identification of the church of the majority with the nation-state.

Let us take the case of the CMN by analyzing its intended "public function",[5] its name, and its architecture. As already suggested by Stoeckl, the juxtaposition of the American civil religion with the nationalist orientation of the Orthodox churches may sound bold at first, but it is not without foundation: the ROC itself found inspiration in the US while working on the new People's Cathedral. As former ROC spokesman Fr. Constantin Stoica explained to me in 2016: "We are now trying to impose the label 'National Cathedral', just like Americans have the Washington national cathedral … and like in all other European countries which have a representative cathedral for the religion of the majority. Not just Rome, the Vatican, St Peter … see also St Stephen's Cathedral in Vienna or St Paul's in London".[6]

The reference to the USA is not Father Stoica's personal interpretation, but was explicitly mentioned by the National Church Council. The choice of the ROC to justify new branding strategies by looking to the near or far West indicates a versatility that has too often been denied by visions of Orthodoxy as anti-modern, stuck in the past, hostile to Western Christianity, and lacking in adaptability. In this particular case, the ROC is attracted to the Washington cathedral model because it serves as a "national house of prayer," i.e., it is used for state funerals of US presidents and memorial ceremonies (Nelson 2010: 70). The fact that this cathedral formally belongs to the Episcopal Church is irrelevant compared to its privileged relationship with state institutions and national identity. The new cathedral in Bucharest aims to fulfill similar functions, such as the celebration of the dead soldiers and national heroes who died in the war. By changing the name to "national cathedral", the emphasis was shifted from the theme of salvation to that of national belonging.

After the completion of the cathedral, the national heroes of all times will be honored every year on two special occasions: the national day – 1 December – which celebrates the Great Union declaration of Alba Iulia and falls one day after the day of the cathedral's patron saint, and Ascension Day. In fact, in 1995, the Parliament passed a law stipulating that national heroes should be commemorated on the same day as the Feast of the Ascension. Changing the calendar is rarely a neutral operation, as states have used this tool for social engineering purposes or ideological agendas. Such practices have not stopped in contemporary Romania, as shown by the decision to celebrate a religious holiday and a uniquely national one on the same day.

The second aspect I would like to discuss is the name of the cathedral. The formula "People's Salvation Cathedral" appeared for the first time on 10 May 1920, when Metropolitan Miron spoke in favor of the construction of a new national cathedral to celebrate the birth of Greater Romania. "The Cathedral of the People *(Catedrala Neamului)*," he said before the Holy Synod and King Ferdinand, "will prove to be ... a visible symbol of our unity in faith and law" (Noica 2011: 47). After him, King Ferdinand spoke. In naming the future cathedral, he used a different phrase, "Church of Salvation *(Biserica Mântuirii)*," while it was Metropolitan Pimen who first spoke of a "Church of Salvation of the People" (Vasilescu 2010: 502). This formula brings together religious identity and nation-building strategies, suggesting that the annexation of regions populated by ethnic

Romanians, accomplished through the Trianon pact of 1920, was the manifestation of God's will.

The word *neam* is difficult to translate into English, as the term "people" does not properly convey the sense of unity of blood and descent that *neam* suggests, and it is perhaps better expressed by formulas such as "kin" or "ethnic nation". The close relationship between nationalism and kinship has already been explored in the Romanian context by Verdery, who suggested bringing "national identities into the larger category of social relations within which […] they belong: kinship […] Nationalism is thus a kind of ancestor worship, a system of patrilineal kinship in which national heroes occupy the place of clan elders in defining a nation as a noble lineage" (Verdery 1999: 41). In his speech to the Holy Synod in 1920, King Ferdinand provided a perfect example of what Verdery meant: in explaining the reasons for the construction of the national cathedral, he drew inspiration from "our good ancestors: Stephen the Great ... Michael the Brave ... Matei Basarab ... up to King Charles I." Foreign kings such as Charles and Ferdinand Hohenzollern – whose family came from what is now Baden-Württemberg – became part of the patrilineal lineage that constitutes the Romanian ethnic nation. Against this background, the decision to name the new cathedral after the salvation of the Romanian people becomes clear: to celebrate Greater Romania as the realization of a national project aimed at territorial, religious and ethnic homogeneity.

The choice of such a name in the 1920s – in the context of a monarchical state that sought legitimacy for its new borders also through the church – probably did not cause any misunderstandings. Almost a century later, however, it did. As early as June 1990, church leaders proposed to Prime Minister Petre Roman that discussions on the construction of the national cathedral, whose official name remained unchanged, should be resumed.[7] The decision to leave the name of the cathedral untouched, to establish a bishopric in each county, to allow clergy to enter politics, to teach religion in public schools, and to obtain the status of official religion reveals the ROC's goal after the end of socialism: to regain the privileged status it enjoyed during the interwar period.

Like *neam*, *mântuire* is also a complex term that requires explanation. Although it is commonly translated as "salvation," it retains a spiritual nuance that makes "redemption" a good alternative. It is this latter connotation that most people have understood since the project was revived by Patriarch Teoctist in the 1990s. "Salvation" or "redemption" was meant in a purely theological sense, not in a geopolitical or national sense.

After all, who would think of the Romanian nation's salvation from the threat of neighboring enemy empires more than 70 years after World War I? Church leaders decided to keep the name conceived in 1920 for the sake of continuity with the interwar period, thus demonstrating their "utopian and static theology of history",[8] but ended up being misunderstood by the general public and criticized by the country's most famous Christian Orthodox intellectuals and theologians.

Teodor Baconschi is a renowned theologian and former Romanian ambassador to the Vatican. After the 1989 revolution, he was part of the "Group of Reflection for the Renewal of the Church", along with Patriarch Daniel (then Archbishop of Moldova) and other prominent Orthodox clergy and laity. Until recently, he was also a conservative politician with reactionary and Islamophobic tendencies. According to him, the 'name of the cathedral is "a "manifesto of ethnophiletism",[9] which accepts the territorial organization of the church on an ethnic basis. Thus, salvation is no longer a matter of personal interaction with God, but can be achieved by an individual as part of a collective, be it a nation, *ethnos*, or tribe (the English translation of the ancient Greek *fulé* from which the term comes). It has been considered a heresy since 1872, when the Council of Constantinople intervened against the self-proclaimed independence of the Bulgarian Orthodox Church from the Constantinople Patriarchate (Gillet 1997).

A position similar to Baconschi's is taken by Adrian Papahagi, a Cluj-based philologist and former politician known for his conservative Christian and neoliberal stance. Beyond the inadequacy of the name from a strictly theological point of view, Papahagi focuses on the sheer continuity of the nationalist rhetoric endorsed by church leaders during and after the Ceaușescu regime. Papahagi supports the building of a national cathedral, but its name, location, and architectural style make the current project an "unfortunate encounter between nationalist and communist ideology."[10] Thus, the name of the cathedral is not only a reference to the original project elaborated in the 1920s, but also reflects the more recent socialist past, as it seems to reuse some of its nationalist tropes (a view shared by Stan and Turcescu 2007). Indeed, it is striking that even conservative figures like Baconschi and Papahagi, who had no reason to criticize the project and are often apologetic towards the ROC, found the name of the cathedral totally inappropriate.

For Petre Guran, a well-known Byzantinist and former state secretary of the Ministry of Culture, "this name is subject to nationalist

interpretations nowadays. Which nation or *ethnos* should be represented by this monument?" (Guran 2007: 55). In contrast to the aforementioned intellectuals, Guran 'not only criticized the ethnophile thrust, but also noticed the exclusivist danger lurking behind the name of the new cathedral, defining as anachronistic the decision to propose the same name despite a completely different historical context.

Between the two world wars, the school of thought of the philosopher Nae Ionescu influenced young students who later became influential Romanian thinkers of the twentieth century, such as Emil Cioran, Constantin Noica, and Mircea Eliade. Drawing on mysticism and spiritual practice, Ionescu sought to create a Romanian philosophy, using Orthodox identity as a founding element. However, nationalism and Orthodoxy evolved in his thinking into discrimination against ethnic and religious minorities. For Ionescu, only Orthodox Romanians were to be considered true Romanians, while Romanians belonging to other religions or denominations were assigned a lower status and could at best aspire to be "good Romanians" (Ionescu [1937] 1990: 201).

A theological interpretation of the cathedral's name 'is reminiscent of Ionescu's thinking (as it combines ethnic and religious identity, excluding non-Orthodox ethnic Romanians), and even if it was somehow understandable at the time, it cannot help but provoke criticism today. 'For Father Daniel Avram, spokesman of the Greek Catholic bishopric of Cluj-Gherla, leaving the name of the cathedral untouched means promoting an exclusivist ideal: if the Romanian *neam* corresponds to Christian-Orthodoxy, what is the place of non-Orthodox ethnic Romanians? On the other hand, the Greek Catholic Church is also building a cathedral in Cluj, whose name "Martyrs and Confessors of the 20th Century" emphasizes the persecution suffered during the state atheism by religious groups, "all of them," Father Avram stressed during our brief interview. For Avram, however, this was the only controversial aspect of the CMN: he did not object at all to the idea of building a new Orthodox cathedral, probably because the Greek Catholic Church was also building an imposing one. There are long-standing disputes between the two churches, from legal disputes over property rights before 1948 to their competing historiographies of the formation of the Romanian state and national identity, but the recent flourishing of the church-building industry reveals a common interest: to assert their right to visibility in the public sphere after decades of state atheism. Moreover, as I have said before,

when more money flows from the government to the ROC, it means that all the other denominations also receive more money.

Let us return to the name of the cathedral. When I asked Orthodox clergy about the 'official name of the cathedral, they usually agreed with the idea that even though salvation is an individual matter, it also concerns 'one's ethnicity. Father Horia is a priest in his sixties who leads a parish in the west of the city. He had worked in the Chancellery of the Romanian Patriarchate in the past, which was no surprise considering how elaborate his language style was (so much so that I had to ask for explanations a few times). During one of our conversations, we were sitting on the veranda of the parish house, drinking some homemade *horinca*,[11] he told me that the salvation of whole ethnic groups was acceptable theologically, because "at the crack of doom every *neam* will be in front of God … And I imagine it like this, with Jesus' words from John's Apocalypse: 'My Father's house has many rooms'." Therefore, it is not heresy for Father Horia to say that each *ethnos* has its own place in heavenly kingdom.

Clerics justify collective salvation by referring to the Gospel, as in this last case, or in a more patriotic way not directly inspired by Scripture. "God will also judge us according to our ethnic belonging, considering how much we loved and defended our country," a young monk in a monastery in northern Romania told me. Another priest in Bucharest told me that "salvation is individual. But each kin has its own heritage. Just like the Lord speaks to the people of Israel, He can speak to every kin." Therefore, regardless of how convinced they were of the current name of the cathedral, many priests I met understood it in a purely theological sense. Therefore, it was with great surprise that I read the interview published by ROC spokesman Vasile Bănescu in October 2016, in which he stated:

> "Only in the unfortunate case of theological illiteracy could one believe that ethnic groups receive salvation collectively, therefore it is not a matter of a group salvation of the entire Romanian *neam* ... Such an expression strictly refers to the salvation of our country, of our *neam*, using the terminology of that time, from foreign domination. We are talking about the War of Independence, which led to the independence of the united Romanian principalities, the future Romanian state."[12]

My first impression was that the ROC spokesman had just defined as "theologically illiterate" some of the most respected Orthodox intellectuals and theologians of contemporary Romania, not to mention all the

Orthodox clergy who have interpreted and supported the title of the Cathedral in theological terms. Moreover, Bănescu's statements confirm the strategic turn taken by the ROC. In February 2016, as a (silent) response to the growing criticism, the National Church Council equated the name "Cathedral for the Salvation of the People" with "National Cathedral" (Nicolae 2016).

In addition to its name, the CMN project is nationalist in its architectural design. In December 2009, the Patriarchate organized a meeting to discuss the project of the future cathedral. During this meeting, Patriarch Daniel clearly stated that the new religious complex should condense autochthonous stylistic elements: "we don't wish a building whose style has never been built on Romanian soil... The new cathedral should be a Latin-Byzantine basilica, traditional, especially in the interior, but with a Romanian taste, a point of connection between East and West" (Vasilescu 2010: 538). The winning project of the 2010 competition was chosen because it followed the church's wishes very 'closely. The chief architect, Constantin Amaiei, described it as a combination of the Byzantine style – vaults, domes and pendentives – with specifically Romanian features (the so-called Brâncovenesc style, represented by arcades, colonnades, cornices and niches), respecting tradition and not adding any modern element. He condensed the project into three concepts: Orthodox space, Byzantine tradition, and national culture.[13] In line with the ROC's current nationalist aspirations, the concept of a "Romanian-Byzantine style", to which Amaiei refers, first became popular in art historiography at the turn of the twentieth century as an attempt to reconcile two seemingly opposing paradigms: continuity with Byzantine and Paleo Christian art on the one hand, and the glorification of specifically national traits on the other.

Finally, as further evidence of the nationalist agenda of the ROC leaders, one could point to the extensive canonization program of Romanian-born saints after 1990. Probably because of the lack of local saints (the most popular saints are all from modern Turkey or the Balkans, from Saint Nicholas to Saint Parascheva, from Saint Filofteia to Saint Dimitrie) and the competition with the other Orthodox churches, an increasing number of Romanian saints have been promoted both in liturgical hymns and prayers and in the iconographic plan of newly built or renovated churches.

The presence of nationalist symbols, discourses, and practices within the walls of Orthodox churches is widely acknowledged and has been an element of continuity throughout the history of the Romanian nation-state. However, in post-socialist Romania, the boundaries between the

Romanian state, the nation, and Orthodoxy continue to blur, as evidenced by the realization of a major religious project financed almost entirely with public funds, for which ad hoc laws have been promulgated, whose location is right between the Palace of the Parliament and the Ministry of Defense, and whose name has no theological connotation but honors the memory of national heroes.

Benedict Anderson's famous definition of nationalism as "chance turned into destiny" (Anderson 1983: 12) seems to have been coined for the recent trajectory of the Bucharest cathedral. The convergence, after 1990, of political actors willing to do anything to win the support of the church, with the election of a young, ambitious and determined Patriarch like Daniel Ciobotea; the ability of the ROC to inscribe itself at the center of the postsocialist agenda; the approach of the centenary of Greater Romania: all these circumstances were turned into destiny by the Church, which described the realization of the national cathedral as a project of indisputable national interest, postponed only by a chain of misfortunes. It took postsocialism and a peculiar alignment of political interests to bring it back to its destiny.

4. Church-state partnership and the de-secularization of property

The collapse of the Socialist Republic and the establishment of the current democratic polity marked a new phase in the historical trajectory of church-state relations. This is especially true when we look at the role of the state in building the infrastructure of religion. As early as January 1990, the Holy Synod set out a series of political demands to be discussed with Prime Minister Petre Roman, including "the restoration of the right of archbishops to be members of the Senate, the presence of the ROC in the Constituent Assembly, and the inclusion of a reference to God in the text of the Constitution" (Conovici 2009: 78). The term "partnership" (Stan and Turcescu 2012), coined to describe the formal and informal exchanges between state authorities and church leaders after 1990, replaced the long-standing symphonic paradigm, which was considered outdated not only by scholars but also by Orthodox hierarchs and theologians. In the context of the high political instability typical of postsocialist restructuring, political parties – regardless of their ideological orientation – often sought the patronage of the church in order to gain electoral support. In turn,

after decades of illiberal conditions, churches finally had the opportunity to re-enter the public sphere. This was true for the ROC as well as for its competitors, especially those that could benefit from foreign economic support, such as the Pentecostal Churches.

The liberalization of the religious market pushed the Orthodox Church to secure its dominant position, from lobbying for legislation on religious freedom and public funding of religion to acquiring real estate and privileged access to public institutions such as hospitals, army units, prisons, and schools (G. and L. Andreescu 2009). Thus, since the end of socialism, the ROC has sought to regain its role as the main public religion, that is, to reassert its presence in all three spheres of the polity identified by Casanova (1994): the state, political society, and civil society. While Stan and Turcescu (2012) used the concept of "partnership" to define this strategy, especially in light of the protocols of cooperation in social work and public education signed at the end of the 2000s, I will rather use the construction of places of worship to illustrate the modes of interaction between state and church authorities at different levels, and try to offer a perspective that looks at the resurgence of the ROC without focusing exclusively on religiosity.

The transfer of the land on Arsenal Hill to a private, non-state organization such as the RP is the most obvious case of the process of "de-secularization" of property brought about by laws such as the aforementioned 261/2005 and 239/2007. The latter ratifies that real estate granted as a free loan to religious denominations can become the property of the respective denomination upon request. It is up to the state authorities to examine and possibly accept such requests. By "de-secularization of property" I am provocatively alluding to the so-called "secularization" of church property initiated by A.I. Cuza in 1863, when real estate belonging to Orthodox churches and monasteries became state property. Going in the opposite direction – i.e. giving state property to religious organizations for free – the body of legislation analyzed in this section represents a new stage in the history of church-state relations in Romania.

Let us take another example of the "de-secularization" of property: in the last fifteen years (2004–2019) social democrats have tried several times to transfer the ownership of thousands of hectares of Romanian forests to the Archbishopric of Suceava and Rădăuți, on the pretext that the ROC had already managed forests in Bukovina during the interwar period. Although such attempts were deemed unconstitutional, and although the church lost a long legal battle against Romsilva, the state-owned company

in charge of managing national forests, in 2017, social democrats again tried to privatize woodlands in favor of the ROC.[14] Most of the time, such favors to the Orthodox Church are linked to elections, as if the in-kind transfer of real estate, financing, or land would constitute electoral support.

In the 2000s, a number of laws, government resolutions, and emergency decrees laid the groundwork for Christian denominations to engage in hectic church-building activities with public funding or to legally acquire state property. As far as the ROC is concerned, the legal framework discussed here underpins the 'powerful organizational revival of the church. Similarly, the realization of the highest Orthodox cathedral in the world has been facilitated by the legislation produced during these years. This legislation, which has favored the de-secularization of state property, has occurred regardless of the political hue of the governments involved; such laws have been enacted by cabinets led by liberals such as Călin Popescu Tăriceanu as well as by social democrats such as Adrian Nastase. In particular, the neoliberal blueprint launched by Tăriceanu included a widespread privatization program that included concessions to the ROC and other religious organizations. Since it is not related to the legitimate restitution of church property confiscated by the communists, the de-secularization of property is only one aspect of the widespread privatization of state assets, which in turn is one of the main features of neoliberal regimes in postsocialist Romania (Ban 2014, 2016).

5. Conclusion: churches go public, but believers go private?

If the religious revival is indeed a return to tradition, the postsocialist era can be defined not as the reawakening of religious life after decades of state atheism, but as the ROC's attempt to regain its privileged role vis-à-vis the nation-state, as it was in pre-socialist Romania. According to the same logic, the re-consecration of public space by church-building and cross-placing activities is performed by the Orthodox church both as compensation and as purification after the forced socialist secularization, although the relationship between the ROC and the socialist power was more ambiguous than the church presents it.

Based on a central survey published by the SSRA in 2016, in this paper I have discussed some aspects of the construction of religious infrastructure in Romania after 1990. Against the background of more than ten thousand places of worship built, the ROC stands out not for the

number of churches built (about four thousand), but for the more than 30 cathedrals that have been erected all over the country. These new cathedrals represent an ambition for symbolic dominance in a context of pluralization of the religious arena, are inspired by a nationalist and exclusivist orientation, and instantiate the territorial restructuring of the ROC as an organization that aims to create a diocese for each county. It is in this latter sense that I have proposed to focus on the revival of the ROC as an organization, rather than on a supposed revival in terms of religiosity and church attendance.

The boom in the church construction industry is based on the system of public funding of religious groups, which in recent years has been heavily influenced by the construction of the People' Salvation cathedral: the need to complete this magnificent project has led the SSRA to channel more and more money into it. Since the funds provided by the SSRA are distributed to the denominations in proportion to the number of believers, all religious groups have benefited from the generosity of the state. In other words, the renewed visibility of the religious infrastructure is primarily due to the involvement of the state through new legal measures and increasing public funding. In this sense, both scholars (Stan and Turcescu 2012) and investigative journalists (Stoicescu and Oncioiu 2019) have characterized the evolution of the relationship between the ROC and the state as a form of "partnership".

At a time when the consecration of the new Bucharest cathedral testifies to the identification of Orthodoxy with the Romanian nation, and religious signifiers are again multiplying in cities and towns, recent sociological analyses (Gog 2007, 2016) report the progressive privatization of religious life among the younger generations. The privatization of religion – i.e. the tendency to develop one's own religious activity outside the broader religious community, thus following a self-made mode of religious practice and identification – goes hand in hand with the "pluralization of life-worlds" (Gog 2007: 796) and the process of individualization that regulates the lives of urbanites in capitalist and liberal societies. The rise of anticlerical sentiments, the diminished authority of the clergy, and the plight of the ROC are to be understood within a broader process of erosion of traditional religions that has been developing in Romania over the last three decades: while magnificent cathedrals are inaugurated and the ROC asserts its public presence, younger generations tend to replace institutionalized religion with new spiritualities, and private faith is preferred to communal religious life.

Endnotes

1 This paper interpolates material from a monograph I have recently published, whose main case study is the newly-built Orthodox cathedral in Bucharest (Tateo 2020). The interviews here reported were collected during my fieldwork in Bucharest in 2015 and 2016.

2 Cambridge English Dictionary. (n.d.). Infrastructure. Dictionary.Cambridge.org. Retrieved on 1 July 2020 from https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/infrastructure.

3 Interview with Daniel Avram, spokesperson of the Greek Catholic diocese of Cluj-Gherla.

4 The political will to finance the CMN became particularly urgent in recent years, as the cathedral was to be inaugurated in November 2018, coinciding with the centenary of the Declaration of the Great Union of Alba Iulia. However, this has meant that not only the ROC, but also all the other religious groups have benefited from the generosity of the government. If the reader wondered why the new National Cathedral was not really challenged by other religious competitors, this is one of the reasons. One could easily say that the CMN project has forced the government to channel more public funds to the SSRA, which in turn has broken all records in financing religious buildings. When more money goes to the ROC, it means more money for everyone.

5 "The cathedral will host events of national relevance. The public utility of religious organizations is ratified by the law on religious freedom 489/2006 and consists also in celebrating feasts of national and civil significance. Religious ceremonies of public and national relevance, like the commemoration of the heroes of December 1989 and the celebration of the Great Union Day, will be held in the new cathedral, which will also host exhibitions, cultural events and anniversaries of national relevance in the adjacent six-hectare park." Retrieved on 15 July 2020 from http://catedralaneamului.ro/simbolism-teologic/, my translation.

6 Father Constantin Stoica, interview with the author.

7 Decision of the Holy Synod of the Romanian Orthodox Church, 1990, CVIII (11–12): 177–178.

8 This is the definition that Radu Preda, one of the most well regarded Romanian contemporary theologians, gave during our interview.

9 . Theodor Baconschi, interview with the author.

10. Adrian Papahagi, interview with the author.

11 A brandy made with plums and distilled twice to increase the alcohol content.

12 'INTERVIU: "Se vor face multe teze de doctorat despre construcția Catedralei Mântuirii Neamului", *Digi24.ro*, 7 October 2016. Retrieved on 15 December 2017 from http://www.digi24.ro/stiri/actualitate/social/interviu-se-vor-face-multe-teze-de-doctorat-despre-constructia-catedralei-583785.

[13] Constantin Amaiei, head architect of Vanel Exim company, personal communication by email.

[14] "Cadoul PSD pentru Biserică: Dragnea vrea să facă, prin lege, Arhiepiscopia Sucevei și Rădăuților proprietară peste pădurile pe care le-a pierdut, definitiv și irevocabil, în instanță", Hotnews.ro, 7 June 2018. Retrieved on 8 October 2019 from https://www.hotnews.ro/stiri-esential-22495609-cadoul-psd-pentru-biseric-dragnea-vrea-fac-prin-lege-arhiepiscopia-sucevei-ilor-proprietar-peste-durile-care-pierdut-definitiv-irevocabil-instan.htm.

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Appendix 1. Houses of Worship in Romania (updated to 31 December 2015)

No	DENOMINATION	Houses of worship in usage before 1989	Houses of worship built after 1989	Houses of worship still under construction	Total number of houses of worship	Percentage of believers according to the 2011 census	Percentage of houses of worship owned	Number of believers according to the 2011 census	Number of believers for every house of worship
1	Biserica Ortodoxă Română	12,134	3,191	1,078	16,403	86.45%	59.90%	16,307,004	994
2	Episcopia Ortodoxă Sârbă de Timișoara	58	3	2	63	0.08%	0.23%	14,385	228
3	Biserica Romano-Catolică	1,241	351	40	1,632	4.62%	5.96%	870,774	534
4	Biserica Română Unită cu Roma, Greco-Catolică	0	334	79	413	0.80%	1.51%	150,593	365
5	Arhiepiscopia Bisericii Armene	22	0	0	22	0.002%	0.08%	393	18
6	Biserica Creștină Rusă de Rit Vechi din România	46	20	1	67	0.17%	0.24%	32,558	486
7	Biserica Reformată din România	998	314	40	1,352	3.19%	4.94%	600,932	444

8	Biserica Evanghelică C.A. din România	246	0	0	246	0.03%	0.90%	5,399	22
9	Biserica Evanghelică Lutherană din România	39	6	2	47	0.11%	0.17%	20,168	429
10	Biserica Unitariană Maghiară	131	15	1	147	0,31%	0.54%	57,686	392
11	Cultul Creștin Baptist	735	790	46	1,571	0,60%	5.74%	112,850	72
12	Biserica Creștină după Evanghelie din România	170	272	17	459	0,23%	1.68%	42,495	93
13	Biserica Evanghelică Română	192	20	2	214	0,08%	0.78%	15,514	72
14	Cultul Creștin Penticostal	793	1,950	182	2,925	1.92%	10.68%	356,314	122
15	Biserica Adventistă de Ziua a Șaptea	424	762	83	1,269	0.43%	4.63%	80,944	64
16	Federația Comunităților Evreiești din România-Cultul Mozaic	103	0	0	103	0.02%	0.38%	3,519	34
17	Cultul Musulman	61	17	3	81	0.34%	0.30%	64,337	794
18	Organizația Religioasă Martorii lui Iehova	0	368	2	370	0.26%	1.35%	49,820	135
TOTAL		**17,393**	**8,413**	**1,578**	**27,384**			**18,785,685**	

Source: State Secratariat for Religious Affairs, updated to 31 December 2015.

Note: Houses of worship include churches, monasteries, skites, chapels, synagogues, mosques, etc. Administrative buildings were not taken into account.

Appendix 2. New Orthodox Cathedrals in Romania, 1990–2019

	Name	City, County	Construction time
1	**Catedrala Mântuirii Neamului**	București, Ilfov	2010–under construction
2	**Catedrala Înălțarea Domnului**	Zalău, Sălaj	1990–under construction
3	**Catedrala Sfânta Treime**	Arad	1991–2008
4	**Catedrala Învierea Domnului**	Oradea, Bihor	1995–2012
5	**Catedrala Nașterea Domnului**	Suceava	1991–2015
6	**Catedrala Episcopala Sfânta Treime**	Baia Mare, Maramureș	1990–under construction
7	Catedrala Înălțarea Domnului	Bacău	1991–under construction
8	Catedrala Sfântul Ioan Botezătorul	Fagaraș, Brașov	1995–under construction
9	**Catedrala Învierea Domnului**	Caransebeș, Caraș-Severin	1997–under construction
10	Catedrala Pogorârea Sf. Duh	Onești, Bacău	1990–under construction
11	**Catedrala Episcopală Sfântul Mare Mucenic Gheorghe**	Drobeta Turnu-Severin, Mehedinți	1994–under construction
12	**Catedrala Înălțarea Domnului**	Buzău	2002–2009
13	**Catedrala Înălțarea Domnului**	Slobozia, Ialomița	1996–2004
14	**Catedrală Arhiepiscopală și Regală**	Curtea de Argeș, Argeș	2009–under construction
15	Catedrala Ortodoxa Învierea Domnului	Fălticeni, Suceava	1991–under construction
16	Catedrala Intrarea Domnului Iisus în Ierusalim	Voluntari, Ilfov	2007–under construction
17	Catedrala Nașterea Maicii Domnului și a Sfintei Cuvioasei Sfintei Parascheva	Focșani, Vrancea	2000–2019
18	Catedrala Eroilor	Hunedoara	1999–2010
19	Catedrala Nașterea Domnului	Brăila	1996–under construction

20	Catedrala Sf. Ioan Botezătorul	Craiova, Dolj	1990–under construction
21	Catedrala Pogorârea Sfântului Duh	Pașcani, Iași	2002–under construction
22	**Catedrala Înălțarea Domnului**	Slatina, Olt	1994–2009
23	Catedrala Sf. Împ. Costantin și Elena	Rămnicu Sărat, Buzău	2009–under construction
24	Catedrala Sf. Împ. Costantin și Elena	Urziceni, Ialomița	1996–2002
25	Catedrala Nașterea Maicii Domnului	Gura Humorului, Suceava	1995–2004
26	Catedrala Sfânta Treime	Vatra Dornei, Suceava	1991–2002
27	Catedrala Sfântul Gheorghe	Topoloveni, Argeș	2003–2008
28	Catedrala Sfântul Gheorghe	Nehoiu, Buzău	1991–2008
29	Catedrala Sfântul Sava	Buzău	1993–2015
30	Catedrala Eroilor	Târgoviște	1991–2005
31	Catedrala Înălțarea Domnului	Râmnicu Vâlcea	1992–2007
32	Catedrala Sfânta Teodora de la Sihla	Sihastria Monastery, Neamț	1995–2004
33	Catedrala Eroilor Tineri	Ploiești,	1992–1999
34	Catedrala "Sfânta Treime" și "Sfânta Cuvioasă Parascheva"	Motru, Gorj	1996–2004

Note: I would like to thank the journalists Alex Nedea and Diana Oncioiu for their crucial support during the data collection process.

Key: Cathedrals in **bold**: housing the seat of an eparchy (archbishopric or bishopric). The other cathedrals included in the list are defined as such by the RP but host no eparchial seat. In such cases the term "cathedral" rather stands for a particularly important and imposing church in a specific area.