

**„BABEȘ-BOLYAI” UNIVERSITY OF CLUJ-NAPOCA
FACULTY OF SOCIOLOGY AND SOCIAL WORK**

Religion and community in the society of the late modernity

Case Study

Cluj-Gherla Greek - Catholic Eparchy

DOCTORAL THESIS ABSTRACT

Doctorate Advisor:

Prof. VEDINAȘ TRAIAN, PhD.

PhD. Candidate:

GĂDĂLEAN DAN ADRIAN

Cluj-Napoca

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The doctoral thesis titled, *Religion and community in the society of the late modernity, Case Study Greek - Catholic Eparchy of Cluj-Gherla*, materializes a research about the relationship between religion and community through the prism of the theoretical approaches related to this theme, corroborated with a case study directed to the Romanian Greek-Catholic Church, mainly to the Greek-Catholic Eparchy of .

In fact, this research pursued to what extent the Church, as social institution and symbol of the transcendent, contributes to the optimization of the community, respectively society life in its whole. Also, the work illustrates the interest and involvement of the surveyed community in the sphere of religion.

Key words: the most important words in the economy of the thesis are: secularisation, globalization, denomination, doctrine, schism, self identification, identity construction, community life, moral community, empirical community, synchronic, social asynchronism.

Theme choice motivation

In the perspective of theology, religion was and still is studied mainly with an accent of the dogma. In the sociology of religion, the relation between religion and community was the center of the concerns of researchers covering several domains: sociology, culture, education, etc. In Romania, empirical researches on this theme are still few.

The exploration of the configuration and intensity of secularization in the communities of parishioners of the Greek-Catholic Eparchy of Cluj-Gherla and the validation of the various theories on the secularization is the context within which the present work is placed.

Secularisation and globalization represent important social and economic problems for modern societies all the more as they present ascending tendencies. The secularization issues generated a rich literature which shows contradictory results related to the secularization sense and intensity. To describe and explain this phenomenon a series of theories were developed, theories which were empirically confirmed to various extents in accordance to the investigated population and ideology (socialist versus capitalist).

Modernity and post modernity were perceived as periods during which the spiritual landmarks almost disappeared and the religion configuration changed significantly. Starting from

this objective reality we have tried to see to what extent the parishioners may live, at and existential level their own religion within the present context of late modernity.

We have collected empirical data which may contribute to the testing of the explicative theoretical models developed in this domain in other cultural areas which we interpreted and analyzed, the result being the wording of applicative recommendations both at the socio-pastoral level as well as in what concerns policies and services. Another reason which counted in the choice of this theme was represented by the personal interest of the author who was involved in several social and educational projects of the Greek-Catholic Eparchy of Cluj-Gherla.

Work hypotheses:

1. The secularization issue involves a changed dynamic within the context of the relation between the church and the community in the society of the late modernity.
2. In minority religious communities characterized by the decreased weight of the population, formal or informal policies may be developed to organize community life, more coherent and elaborate than in majority religious communities, achieving the identity conservation and preservation.
3. On the one hand, in the society of the late modernity, the Church develops mechanisms and new processes within the context of its community functionality whilst the community, on the other hand, manifests new requirements and references in relation to the Church.

Objectives:

Objective 1: Determination of the religious practices, of the connection between the believers/parishioners and the Church within the contemporary context of late modernity.

Objective 2: Determination of the socio-religious needs that the members of the believers' community have in relation with their Church.

Objective 3: Determination of the resources which the Church and the believers may engage in order to solve the believers' socio-religious needs.

Objective 4: Exploration of the configuration and intensity of the secularization in the parishioners' communities.

Methodological design of research

Chapter 5 of the thesis defines the conceptual framework of research. In terms of methodology I used an arsenal of research including research methods and techniques heretofore used in studying phenomena investigated. I combined quantity approach (based on figures and statistical methods) and qualitative (focus on discursive methods, thematic analysis, comparative analysis and content analysis). In research on the impact of secularization upon the faithful of the Greek Catholic Diocese of Cluj-Gherla I used sociological survey based on questionnaire. Afterwards I extracted concepts that I have worked analytically. Semi-structured interviews conducted by I was able to get into and understand the depth of the subject the problem investigated. I referred to the motivations, aspirations, attitudes, values, the culture, previous life style, religious and social behavior in which I tried to play as precisely these characteristics and behaviors.

Another method proper for intensive study of the of socio-religious communities it was participant observation associated with group interviews, analysis of documents and informal interviews.

The survey was conducted on a sample of 425 people belonging to the of the Greek Catholic religion structured according to the main demographic criteria. The questionnaire had a 55 items. For 19-item I used Likert scale with 5 points. I have formulated 26 questions closed - choice response predetermined, 10 item are open questions, giving respondents the opportunity to freely express their opinions or to express their knowledge, especially in relation to religious belief and practice. Socio-demographic variables are of type: nominal, ordinal and metric. I used bivariate analysis (association of two nominal variables or two ordinal variables). The data were processed in SPSS.

I used multistage sampling selection, combined with stratified sampling. For larger coverage as I selected in the Eparchy 5 counties: Cluj, Bistrița-Năsăud, Maramureș, Alba și Sălaj. Of the 14 deaneries I selected seven respectively by at least 2 each deanery parishes. For a better representation how I chose samples from urban and rural areas in total 21 parishes.

Structure

The PhD thesis includes two parts:

- first one about theoretical and conceptual fundamentation where I presented relevant scientific state of knowledge

- the second about empirical research in which I presented the way which I had conducted field research, the results that I got, instruments and strategies for the settlement of all the objectives proposed

In the first part I presented the phenomenon of secularization and globalization research, the problems related to these themes concepts and ideas developed by various social researchers. I referred to the concepts of religion or community and interfering elements, ideas and concerns of renowned sociologists studying communities, both in our country and abroad. Then I made an inventory of theories about identity, the roots of essentialism and constructivist theories of identity, identity in perspective of essentialist and constructivist, collective identity and individual identity, aspects of the institutional evolution of the United Church of Romania and permanence in time of the identity of greek catholic discourse and strategies for building identity. I presented the general definition of the phenomenon of identity, I explained the distinctions between terms. I realized these with a incursion into literature; I have presented not only the views of the authors but I tried and comparisons with examples and analysis. I started from concepts and theoretical models with reference to the issues studied, I criticized myself theories I applied the empirical research.

The first part of applied research - includes aspects of religious practice in the contemporary context of late modernity. I captured defining elements about greek catholic religion as a whole, the parishioners religious practice and how it relates to divinity. I addressed the issue of socio-religious needs of communities believers in the Eparchy of Cluj - Gherla followed by an analysis of the resources the Church and the believers mobilize them to solve of socio-religious needs. Then I explored the configuration and intensity of secularization in the communities of parishioners.

The next chapter was concentrated on the social relations at Community level of the Eparchy of Cluj - Gherla considering several lines of analysis with emphasis on inter confessional relations of greek catholics parishioners with protestants and orthodox. These matters involve a number of economic problems, canonical, doctrinal, ritual and reveal a side of the relationship with the State. Then comes an important chapter in the economy thesis, which deals with the question of identity, the mechanisms by which members of the ecclesial communities of the Diocese Greek - Catholic Church of Cluj - Gherla is identified. The next chapter contains an assessment of the efficiency of Greek - Catholic Church as viewed

from the perspective of the parishioners and representations on the strengths and successes and weaknesses and insufficiencies portrayal on a comparative study of the Greek Catholic Church in antithesis to other denominations. and SWOT analysis. I developed an estimate on the prospects of development of the parishes and Eparchy Greek - Catholic Cluj-Gherla, by outlining two scenarios, optimistic versus pessimistic as alternative community development and organizing aspects of Eparchy. The antepenultimate chapter is very important in the economy of this thesis because here we find the research hypothesis testing. The last two chapters include elements related to the assessment and results achieved respectively synthetic conclusions and recommendations applicative.

Personal contribution and originality

I show briefly how I conducted qualitative research and the results that I got. For qualitative research I used: Thematic analysis and content analysis.

Thematic analysis: I set the central theme that the impact of secularization on Greek Catholic of the parishioners of the Diocese of Cluj-Gherla. Complementary I realized a content analysis of responses to the open questions in surveys that we subsequently codified and interpreted. Life circumstances that contribute to the development of religiosity of the parishioners, as is clear from the content analysis are: living in a religious family environment, are rigorous with regarding to religious routines, spiritual affinities, cultural, moral they are altruistic. Qualitative research also revealed negative aspects such as stigmatization, the restitution problem, the lack of priests or modest prestige of priests, lack of activities for young or weak force for attracting new believers Specific these communities towards their development, is feeling high of religious affiliation. This feeling is present mainly in older people. The age variable is positively associated with religiosity. Older people are more dedicated to internalize their religion and doctrine and his teachings. They have a higher level of religious commitment associated with higher levels of involvement in religious activities organized by the church, they come with innovative ideas and suggestions. The variables that have proven significantly associated with religiosity relates to education and religious identity respectively level of education and how it identifies. What distinguishes the most religious of those who are less religious is religious education early (how they were raised) completed the spiritual formation and specialized / professional. Then trust in the doctrine and leader Pope. What does it matter when we differentiate the most religious of the least religious is the type of motivation. The former are

more motivated by the belief in salvation, others are more elusive. Also what distinguishes the most religious of those who are less religious is discipline and that have a high self-esteem and the confidence in her good opinion about themselves. The subjects studied predominantly elderly, not only interprets the circumstances in which they lived, but also acting in response to circumstances in the sense of a positive affirmation of church in socio-cultural way. Their strategy is in response to a relatively hostile environment that surrounds them. But at issue is the conservation and preservation of the identity of potential for growth, given the aging population so high average age. In the restitution problem is being discussed a 'timorare' leadership Eparchy, a weak involvement in solving this problem.

According to our analysis at desirable social change in the Greek-Catholic Diocese of Cluj-Gherla can be made on three pillars:

- Education and training;
- Solidarity;
- Social Justice.

Also, I made a profile adaptive / maladaptive Greek Catholic Church member who may be a guide, " mirror " for existing communities towards development of other communities / parishes. Also, based on the suggestions I have outlined a profile of the parishioners of the priest " ideal ", which can serve as a model of spiritual leadership for current and future priests.

The hypotheses:

In the first part of our research we operational zed with the subjective religiosity, the manner in which individuals evaluate themselves as a then religious dimension of religiosity seen by the parishioners. The results show an obvious contradiction between the self-assessment religiosity and external assessment by the community.

In testing this hypothesis I operated through the following concepts: faith in God, frequency of Church, prayer frequency, the frequency of confession, the sacrament frequency.

Following statistical analysis expressed by Pearson correlation coefficient I noticed that the importance given to faith in God is negatively correlated with the religious practices of the parishioners that: the practice of prayer, $r = -0.25$, $p < 0.01$ and positive $r = 0.47$ Church attendance, practice confession $r = 0.45$, $r = 0.73$ sacramental practice, practice fasting $r = 0.32$ $p < 0.01$. I note that given the importance of faith in God positively correlated in different

situations: Before meals, $r = 0.15$, $p < 0.01$; Before bedtime, $r = 0.30$, $p < 0.01$ When I realized an important action, $r = 0.45$, $p < 0.01$

I also noticed a negative coefficient, $r = -0.61$, $p < 0.01$ in respect of the relationship with God in everyday activities. In most cases, morning prayer is skipped and we can think of awakenings morning rush and going on the job.

We note that the dynamics of religious life goes on a negative trend in terms of spiritual growth, attracting new believers in the community and religious services. Given the significance of statistical values may conclude that the first hypothesis is confirmed in full.

For testing the hypothesis 2 I investigated the relationship between community involvement (dependent variable) and independent variables: gender, education and occupation training, and the relationship between the two independent variables on the image of the community. I noted that a significant main effect of the gender and age variable in terms of community involvement. At community level cooperation in small communities it is direct and personal. In larger communities it is impersonal and symbolic, cooperation is minimal. The concept of minority active in social and religious is more common in small and medium communities. The factors that determine socio religious involvement varies from one community to another and depends on the ability of organization and leadership. Also in communities with an extensive hierarchical organizational decisions are difficult, there are too many opinions, too many alternatives for a purpose, a permanent reflection, decisions often come too late to be put in practice.

Pearson correlation coefficient shows that there is a significant and positive correlation between membership in the Greek Catholic Church and the satisfaction of religion to the Greek Catholic Church $r = 0.54$ and $p < 0.01$.

The vast majority of greek catholic believers expresses, through their behavior throughout unequivocally belong to the Greek Catholic Church. This reality can be quantified by some concrete dimensions, such as the option for Papal primacy and membership of the Church of Rome, steps taken to conduct religious services in the Latin rite, groups of friends attending groups both greek catholics and roman catholics.

Negative correlations I found in terms of the trust of the parishioners in church and community development and relational atmosphere: $r = -0.63$, $p < 0.01$ respectively of the parishioners confidence in the development of the Church and belonging to the community $r = -0.13$, $p < 0.01$.

Given the significance of statistical values may conclude that the second hypothesis is confirmed.

For testing the hypothesis 3, I investigated the relationship between the three church image (dependent variable) and sex, age (independent variables) and the possible impact of this relationship results from the interaction between the two independent variables age –gender . I noticed a significant negative correlation between confidence of the parishioners in church development and its ability to respond to moral issues of of the parishioners, $r = - 019$, $p < 0.01$, Statistical analysis of correlation expressed by the correlation coefficient Pearson shows a positive correlation between confidence in the development of the church and quality of of priests who serve in the church, $r = 003$, $p < 0.01$ between confidence in the development of the church and aid from church $r = 052$, $p < 0.01$. significant and negative between confidence of the parishioners in the development of the church and its ability to respond to moral issues of of the parishioners, $r = - 021$, $p < 0.01$, also a negative correlation between confidence of the parishioners in the development of the church and its ability to meet the spiritual needs of of the parishioners $r = -026$, $p < 0.01$.

Therefore we have a Church where a significant part of parishioners did not find answers to their searches or troubles. As their dissatisfaction will grow more and more, they will lose confidence in the infallibility of the Church will worship begins to lose more and more adepti. According data the role of the church in defining moral values of society has diminished. Given the above correlations and their statistical significance we conclude that the third hypothesis is not confirmed.

The Ph.D thesis includes the following original contributions:

The thesis presents a quantitative and qualitative diagnosis of the state of the investigated area, while providing premises for community development. Focus is on family and religious education in the formation of the religious feeling. Also, encourage participation in religious services that we consider beneficial psychological and emotional of the balance, self-knowledge, socialization and socio-professional integration It presents a profile adaptive / maladaptive the church member in the Eparchy, which may serve as a guide, "mirror" for existing communities

and the development prospects of other communities / parishes also a profile of the priest "ideal" that can serve as a model of spiritual leader for present or future priests.

The contribution of this research consists in understanding the knowledge resources and coping strategies support of greek catholic parishioners undercurrent changing at global level. The research also evaluates the need for community developing a development according to the social, economic and cultural needs both of greek-catholic community and other community or persons, including those unaffiliated religious. This thesis will lead hopefully to a growing interest and involvement of community leaders and the large community in community development by successful models presented while allowing correction and intervention efforts towards a better use of resources and constructive cooperation. Also, this research is relevant for theologians and teachers who provide training for younger generations that are to integrate into society and contribute to its development on the basis of socio moral the principles clearly defined.

For designing and implementing this research I consider right from the beginning not only research of social realities, but also making recommendations of applied through the strengths and opportunities and eliminate or mitigate the weaknesses and threats. In particular they refer to:

1. training of clergy and specialists from different fields (education, health, social, etc.);
2. engaging person with a higher level of skill and vocation able to mobilize the community;
3. correlation of religious and socio-economic services with demand / needs of parishioners;
4. improving the quality of existing services;
5. developing and implementing unique and attractive activities in both the spiritual and socio-cultural;
6. attracting European funds, working with consulting firms specializing in European funds, pay "success fee";
7. widening of relations and inter-institutional cooperation;
8. promoting altruism and generosity characteristic of religious groups;
9. promote effectively Diocese programs;

10. preventing phenomena that cause functional disorders (poor communication, poor organization, bureaucracy, "favourite ");

11. the existence of a register of complaints and suggestions in each parish;

12. preventing social phenomena that produces tensions;

13. publicizing positive actions deserves to be extended or generalized;

14. sociological research development segment sociology of religion;

The key chapter of this paper is to define two scenarios as alternative of communities development for Greek Catholic Eparchy of Cluj-Gherla.

First pessimistic scenario, address the following topics:

- the demographic aging process correlated with low birth rate
- negligence against to the current religious practices,
- diminishing religious manifestations and traditions
- the competition of sects or other confessions,
- inadequacy of communication with surrounding parishes
- partisan political involvement of the church
- failure to solve the Patrimonial issues
- Low standard of living

About secularization in the area investigated I have a complementary perspective to that of the great classical theorists in the sense that this trend is increasing for at least two reasons.

Firstly because it has taken over the first argueable European values.

Secondly is increasing more and more the individualism, more frequent attitude which a more general definition of subordinate subordinated the interests of the community for personal interests.

All described above are not simply accidents, they are becoming more and more the norm. Therefore are missing key elements of religion for example values, norms and ideals that create a common identity. Also a low membership and low religious practice, sometimes formal in places act that the overwhelming majority did not identify them as members of the religious community.

The second optimistic scenario, address the following topics:

- attracting young people by offering educational, spiritual and social diversified program
- training and personal development for religious leaders

- increase tolerance and reducing the discrimination
- recovery of heritage
- promoting cohesion parishes and deaneries in the Eparchy through the rational use of existing resources
- economic and social action projects combined with employment measures

Conclusions

According to our analysis we may conclude that the secularization phenomenon in the Greek-Catholic Eparchy of Cluj-Gherla is in progress. In the surveyed area, the secularization does not take the shape of the “separation from the State”¹ just as it was seen by Emile Durkheim or “the process due to which the institution lose their social importance (significance)”² just as Brayn Wilson (1966) presented. Even if the Church monopoly crashed, the influence stayed. In Romania there is no law on the Church separation from the State, quite on the contrary, the State supports the Church and the latter has its “election” role.

Also, in our case, we cannot speak about „a disappearance of the religion from the social level” in the sense of the secularization as it was seen by the Marxist sociologists, but we may see a decline of religiousness and, moreover, in Romania, a “de-Christianization”, as the census of 2011 showed a percentage of 0,2% of persons „without religion” or „atheists”.³ Here we may question the denominational loyalty of the great majority of the Greek-Catholic parishioners who, at the time the Greek-Catholic Church became illegal on the 1st of December 1948, passed on, more or less willingly, to the Orthodox confession, of course, on the basis of persecutions of an economic, social and political nature, including imprisonment. What is to be noticed is the fact that after 1990, few came back to the Greek-Catholic religion, a fact owed to internal factors and external ones to which we made reference in the work.

Coming back to the secularization phenomenon, it can be easily seen not only by researchers by analogy with the classic theories of the secularization, but by the ordinary community people. Parishioners feel the need of a change but the word "reform " is too tough and reminds about the failure of the protestant reform and its evolution in the process of

¹ Durkheim Emile (1995), *Formele elementare ale vieții religioase- Elementary forms of religious life*, translation Magda Jeanrenaud and Silviu Lupescu, Iași, Polirom Publishers, p.53

² Brayn Wilson (1966), <http://www.rasfoiesc.com/educatie/psihologie/sociologie/INSTITUTII-SOCIALE17.php>

³ http://www.insse.ro/cms/files/publicatii/pliante%20statistice/08-Recensamintele%20despre%20religie_n.pdf

secularization in Western European countries. A solution comes from the Roman-Catholic Church, the place where the "aggiornamento" was born. The Greek-Catholic Church needs an "aggiornamento" i.e. the adaptation of the religious message to the issues of the time they live so that it may bring answers to the man confronting the issues of globalization.

I believe that the strengths of the doctoral thesis are the solid documentation, consistent hypotheses, the well conceived and well put to practice research methodology and the applicability of the obtained results. I have managed to contour a model of community and positive social change as well as the profile of the parishioner of the community and of the leader who can make this change.

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