Ion Petrică Felicia Andrioni

Aspects of Religiosity in the Social Institutions Operating in the Romanian Public Space

Religio means: to reconsider what you are doing, to notice again through thought and reflection, to double your attention and effort.

Ion Petrică

Lecturer at the Faculty of Social Sciences, Eftimie Murgu University of Reşiţa, Romania.

Felicia Andrioni

Lecturer at the Faculty of Social Sciences, University of Petroşani, Romania.

Introduction

HE NEW European policies have succeeded in uniting many countries under the heading of the European Union. This economicpolitical movement has also brought about many upheavals. One of the great upheavals of the past few years concerning the European Union, in relation to the importance of Europe's Christian roots, was occasioned by the drafting of the European Constitution. Several thinkers, politicians, and researchers, among others, brought an amendment to the European Constitution precisely on account of the fact that the Europeans had denied the Christian origins of this continent.¹ Most of the adverse reactions to the European Constitution came from the Eastern European countries, where, unlike in the West, the states are not defined as secular and where religiosity is much higher, as their citizens either practice Christianity intensely or are self-avowed Christians, in their vast

majority. After the legacy of Antiquity, Christianization was the second decisive layer for Europe,² as Jaques Le Goff stated. The formation of the European nations was ultimately predicated on a strong Christian influence.³

We may ask ourselves: what has become of religion in modern society, where its role appears to be ever more isolated? This question may be approached starting from attempts to analyze what is known as the "new religious movements." They first appeared in the Us in the 1970s, where the counter-culture fostered a renewal of religious interests in a research on what might be called a "new consciousness." "These new religious movements evinced, in any case, a great diversity, following four main directions:

• the rapid expansion of the Protestant Evangelical and Pentecostal sects and churches;

• an enthusiasm for Eastern religions, reintegrated into American culture;

• the development of movements aimed at highlighting the 'human potential,' in such a way as to integrate the contributions of philosophy and to adapt certain religious 'technologies' (meditation, asceticism, etc.), in order to free the individual from his inhibitions and restore his ability to live together with the others;

• the appearance of authoritarian sects and cults centered on the personality of a charismatic leader."⁴

Compared with the United States, the Christian churches in Europe underwent, starting from the early 19th century, a profound process of secularization.⁵ There was clear evidence of secularization, in the sense that membership and participation in Christian churches registered a decline.⁶ Still, religious identity continued to play an important role in national identity and consciousness, in Ireland and Poland, for example. Ernst Troeltsch⁷ argued that the oscillation between church and sect that had shaped much of the history of Europe ended with the final collapse of the universal church, while the sects continued to flourish. There is overwhelming evidence attesting the institutional decline of mainstream Christianity.⁸ Within this general pattern of decline, there are obvious differences between the predominantly Roman Catholic and the Protestant regions and states.⁹

Based on these considerations, what really draws the attention of most thinkers "is the fact that the aspects of Christianity and the Christian values that have contributed tremendously to the development of European civilization and culture are not mentioned at all in this fundamental law of the European Union, which is the European Constitution."¹⁰

A Sociological Approach to Religion in a Modern and Secularized Europe

social life of the European peoples should be carried out according to the rules imposed by sociological research.

The sociological—and, more generally, the rational—analysis of religion or of the religious face a major difficulty deriving from the very nature of its object. This problem can be most easily detected in the opposition between the sacred and the profane, which seems to enjoy the adherence of all the specialists. It is an opposition that, as everyone agrees, is placed at the heart of religiosity. It appears because scholars are not only by definition on the side of the profane, but they must also reduce the sacred to the profane if they wish to address it rationally. In any case, if the sacred is perceived as profane, it ceases to belong to the religious sphere and the science of the religious misses its object.¹¹

To penetrate deeper into the theoretical foundations of this work, we will focus on several etymological aspects of the word religion. The etymology of the word *religion* is interesting. This word may have come from the Latin word *ligare, religare*, which means to bind, to unite. "Religion should then be that which binds, which connects people amongst themselves and people to the divine, to the heavens. But *religion* could also derive from the Latin verbs *legere*, meaning to collect, and relegere, which means to collect again, to recollect."¹² According to Emile Benveniste,¹³ *religio* means: to reconsider what you are doing, to notice again through thought and reflection, to double your attention and effort. "This attention granted to the etymology of the word presses the need to distinguish between the societies in which the word itself exists to designate certain beliefs and certain rites and which have isolated sacredness from a sociality called, at that time, profane, and the societies that are not accustomed to this distinction."¹⁴

Another approach considers that religion "refers to those processes and institutions that make the world social and intelligible and that authoritatively link the individuals to the social order. Religion is, therefore, a matter of central importance for sociology. Writing in a sociological manner inevitably entails working in a specific tradition, which has identified in advance certain issues and themes that are typical for defining the social phenomenon."¹⁵ This approach to religion as a social phenomenon is very interesting because a classical sociological tradition that has already defined the domain in advance seems to be particularly important in the case of religion.¹⁶ In a sociological approach to religion, special attention should be paid to the first sociologists who addressed the religious from a perspective that is close to religious life, rather than merely tackling it as a social phenomenon. Emile Durkheim¹⁷ and Max Weber¹⁸ defined the main problems in the field, taking a keen interest in the analysis of the sacred and of charisma.

The sociology of religions studies the diversity of religious phenomena, as well as the many world views they have developed, and examines the relations with society as a whole.¹⁹ The objects and fields of study pertaining to the sociology of religion are also determined by the various conceptions of religion espoused by its researchers. It is possible to distinguish at least seven different conceptions of religion: religion as a primitive stage of social evolution (Comte); religion as a study of the evolution of the individual psyche (Freud); religion as an ideological tool in the relations of domination (Marx, Horkheimer and Adorno); religion as a means of satisfying the cultural needs of society (Thomas Luckmann); religion as an institution that regulates various spheres of behavior (Durkheim and Robert Bellah); religion as a determined historical and cultural manifestation of the supernatural dimension (Max Weber); religion as the basis of symbolic elements that are present in every culture (Edward B. Tylor, Clifford Geertz).

In addition to these, approaches to the influence of religious phenomena on social life are also found in numerous studies, such as those of A. Oberschall²⁰ in the field of social movements, of A. O. Hirschmann²¹ and H. Mendras²² in the field of development, of J. March and H. Simon²³ or M. Crozier²⁴ in the sociology of organizations, of M. Olson²⁵ in the area of collective actions, of R. Boudon²⁶ and M. Cherkaoui²⁷ in that of stratification and mobility, of R. Horton²⁸ in the sociology of religion, of Thomas S. Kuhn²⁹ in the sociology of science, all inspired by the principles of the sociology of action, which see any social phenomenon as the result of individual actions inspired by comprehensible motives, in relation to the social and historical context to which they belong.

The processes of modernization, industrialization and urbanization that have occurred in the European countries over the past few centuries have diminished the role that religion plays in social life.

Challenged by some, supported by others, the thesis of the secularization undergone by the European societies is, however, strongly supported by the findings of the numerous studies dedicated to religiosity. Unlike in Western societies, where the diminishing social role played by religion was a natural consequence of the modernization process, in the Central and Eastern European countries, which were under Soviet influence in the 20th century, religious persecution and the attempt to impose Marxist ideology mattered very much in the evolution of the religious field. After at least five decades of atheism imposed by the communist power, religion plays a different role in the societies of Central and Eastern Europe. Thus, in the Czech Republic and in Eastern Germany, secularization is rather well entrenched, and few are those that still profess to be religious, while in Poland, religious values continue to strongly influence people's lives.³⁰

According to sociological surveys and the censuses of recent years, Romania is one of the most religious countries in Europe, regardless of whether we define religion in terms of affiliation, religious practice or subjective religiosity.³¹ As a specifically Romanian identity marker, the Romanians' religious behavior shows the individuals' degree of religiosity, which varies "depending on a number of socio-demographic factors, and we are justified to expect interdependencies between specific values and the degree of religiosity. In other words, we rely on the idea that people differ among themselves in terms of their individual priority values and, as a result, these priority values are more or less compatible with religiosity and, respectively, with religious teachings."³² For example, the Romanians who, to a vast extent (with the exception of 2%, who are declared without a religion), are dedicated from a religious perspective are likely to lay greater emphasis on the values associated with risk avoidance and are less likely to capitalize on the values associated with individualism and self-achievement, such as, for instance, the freedom of thought and action.³³

"There are also a number of studies that, in addition to the socio-demographic factors — have examined the link between values and religiosity. Based on *Rokeach Value Survey*, there have been highlighted, on the one hand, positive links between religiosity and the preference for moral values, security, forgiveness and, on the other hand, negative associations between religiosity and the preference for values such as pleasure, excitement, independence."³⁴ The relationship between Schwartz's fundamental human values and subjective religiosity has, in turn, been investigated successively in different cultural and religious contexts and the findings of these studies show that religiosity is one of the most important factors determining inter-individual differences in terms of value preferences.³⁵ Schwartz and Huismans and, later, Roccas advanced a series of hypotheses about the association between the ten fundamental values and religiosity.

From among the values of conservatism, religiosity should be most strongly associated with tradition and least strongly (but still positively) with values such as compliance and security. The values corresponding to openness to change should be associated negatively with religiosity, since such values lay emphasis on the acceptance of new, modern outlooks on the world and promote the importance of material needs. For instance, attachment to the family and the importance attributed to the family continue to remain high in Romania (85% of the respondents declare the family as "important" or "very important"), but the percentages are not so high as in some Catholic countries, which are more conservative in axiological terms (Poland, Ireland, Italy), but also more traditionalist (Turkey), where this threshold exceeds 90%. In this symbolic confrontation with other major existential benchmarks, the family ranks first, followed by work, religion, friends, leisure (all over 70%), political life occupying an unimportant position: below 20%.³⁶ Moreover, the pattern described above has been characterized by remarkable stability in time, the "waves of research in the European Values Surveys/World Values Survey (EVS/WVS) from 1993, 1999, 2005 and 2008 indicating a continuation of this referential tendency. Only religion has witnessed a significant increase in the importance it has been given, similar to the importance attributed to work (always occupying the second place in these referential hierarchies), which reflects a general trend at odds with the general European one, where the gradual withdrawal of the Church from public life through the process of secularization is accompanied by a decrease of the symbolic significance ordinary individuals associate with it."37

A study conducted by the Soros Foundation Romania shows that more than half of the Romanians pray daily. Although confidence in the Church is high, the respondents do not approve of the political advice offered by the priest to the faithful. 90% of the respondents attend church at least on the major feast days, 70% contribute with money, and 61% say that prayer is part of everyday life. This proves that religiosity has remained rather firmly rooted among the Romanians at the existential level.

In our research, we will approach the presence of the Church in the public space in Romania, more precisely, the way in which it is present through its symbols, as well as through ritual, in child protection activities. We will undertake a research at national level on the presence of the Church (religious attitude, symbols and rituals) in the GDSACP (General Directorate of Social Assistance and Child Protection), focusing on the existence of a specific place destined for religious activities at the level of the county directorates in Romania. In order to examine in detail the aspect of religiosity in the public Romanian organizational space, we have chosen to carry out scientific testing by administering a standard-ized questionnaire among the employees of an organizational unit in the territory, whose activity consists of social work in the GDSACP cs.

Religiosity at the Organizational Level in the Sphere of Social Work in the Romanian Public Space

S INCE 1997, when GDSACPS were established at the county level, operating in the field of child protection, the relation between the Church and this newly established institution became active and, we might say, complementary. We have no data regarding the presence of priests in orphanages or special needs schools before 1990, but after this year, the presence of the priest started to be felt and many institutionalized children, who came from the former regime, received the Sacrament of Baptism, being Christened and becoming members of the Church. After 1997, the presence of a priest in the GDSACP institution entailed more than the fulfillment of the christening ritual. The Romanian legislation on the conduct of social care activities in the Romanian public space also takes into account the Church.

Our work aims mainly to highlight the existence of religiosity in the social care institutions operating in the Romanian public space through the assumption, both by the beneficiaries and by the employees, of the ecclesial specificities (religious attitude, adherence to the Christian symbols and rituals). Throughout our entire approach we focused on child protection as our field of experimental investigation.

In the scientific approach we have carried out, we have opted for a mixed research, given the need for qualitative research in the first part of this scientific inquiry and for a quantitative research in the second part of scientific testing.

As regards the working methods and techniques, we have resorted to the following: biographical analysis, the analysis of social documents, participant observation, psycho-social investigation (the administration of a questionnaire was necessary for a quantitative measurement of the data), a case study, a questionnaire with closed questions, etc.

The Methodological Design of the Research

Population sample:

a. a psycho-social survey through the application of a questionnaire with • closed questions: 47 GDSACP organizations from Romania, 47 relevant members of the institution;

b. employees (only social workers) of the GDSACP cs apparatus, 120 subjects. The age of the subjects who participated in the survey was between 23 and 60 years. Seniority ranged from 1 year up to 20 years in the field of social

work. As it is a social care institution, most of the employees are of the feminine gender.

2. Procedure: data collection based on a questionnaire with closed questions.

3. *General objective*: to highlight the existence of religiosity in the social care institutions in the Romanian public space through the assumption, both by the beneficiaries and by the employees, of the ecclesial specificities (religious attitude, adherence to the Christian symbols and rituals).

4. Research hypotheses:

Hypothesis 1 (H1): In the child care institutions in the Romanian public space there is substantial adherence to the Christian symbols and rituals, through the creation of special spaces for carrying out the specific worship activities.

Hypothesis 2 (H2): In the GDSACPS, the religious attitude of the beneficiaries and the employees, expressed through their participation in prayer in spaces of worship created on the premises of the child protection institutions and in the specific community locations to which they belong (parish churches) is embraced by the majority of people.

Hypothesis 3 (H3): Among the GDSACP CS employees, the religious attitude is determined by a high religious orientation, through involvement in non-formal community activities.

Data Collection and Answer Reception

To TEST hypotheses 1 and 2 of our research, we collected information through a standardized questionnaire from of the all 47 gdsAcPs in Romania. It should be noted that in each county in Romania there operates such a directorate at the central level, and as regards Bucharest, each sector has such a directorate within the local council. Thus, there are 41 counties including Ilfov County, while at the level of Bucharest there are 6 sectors. All in all, it was necessary to receive information from 47 directorates (gdsAcPs) throughout the country.

What should also be noted is the incidence of the answers received: from all the GDSACPS in the country. The incidence of affirmative answers in the psychosociological surveys conducted in Romania in the years 2000–2010 represents a percentage of 20%–30% at the level of respondents. In our research, the percentage was close to the maximum: nearly all the GDSACPS in the country sent formal and personalized replies (except for those that were contacted by telephone and responses came by fax, without an official address, solely through questionnaire completion: 5 directorates).

For testing scientific hypotheses 1 and 2, Table 1 provides the following data:

County GDSACPS (47) of Romania	Religious attitude Participation in the worship act (ritual) by using Christian symbols				
	The beneficiaries and the employees attend service in a specially designed space for religious service in the placement centers.	The beneficiaries and the employees attend service in the community church	No connection		
Total	16	31	0		

TABLE 1. PRESENTATION OF FINDINGS OBTAINED IN THE RESEARCH AT NATIONAL LEVEL

As regards the second part of our research (the scientific testing of hypothesis 3), we chose to administer a questionnaire with two scales:

A. The assessment scale for the way in which the GDSACP CS employees are involved in community issues outside working hours, achieved sui generis, consisting of 5 items, on a scale from 0 ("not at all") to 5 ("very much"), which describe various actions concerning the subjects' involvement in a series of tasks that do not involve their explicit job requirements, highlighting their willingness to assist "those in need" outside the working hours in the organization. The scale has a very good internal consistency, the Cronbach alpha index being (0.82).

B. *The religious orientation scale*³⁸ is an instrument that measures religious orientation. The authors of this instrument that appeared in 1967 are Allport and Ross. The Ros appeared following Allport's efforts³⁹ to describe mature religious sentiment and, then, to differentiate between the types of religious orientation—intrinsic and extrinsic. The instrument contains 20 items divided into two scales, the extrinsic scale (identifying sources for religious orientation mostly among "external" factors, such as social recognition, prestige, openness to rituals, symbolic rewards for overt religious orientation among integrated self-values, firmly assumed ethical criteria, strong religious beliefs, etc.). The scale of extrinsic orientation includes items 1, 3, 5, 7, 9, 11, 13, 15, 17, 19 and 20, and the scale of intrinsic orientation includes items 2, 4, 6, 8, 10, 12, 14, 16 and 18. For each item there are 5 possible answers, signifying the degree of agreement with each statement (1: very strong disagreement, 2: disagreement).

The Analysis of the Findings and the Validation of the Hypotheses

N TABLE 1, we can see the findings of the research: in 16 GDSACPS, the beneficiaries, together with the employees, have an area destined for the religious ritual, and in 31 of these institutions, the beneficiaries of social services and the GDSACP employees attend religious service at the churches of the community they belong to. According to our research, there are no GDSACPS in which the beneficiaries or the employees are totally devoid of religious attitudes. In percentages, we have the following values: 34% of beneficiaries and employees attend religious service in the dedicated area in the placement centers; 66% of beneficiaries and employees attend religious service at the church in the community; 0% have no connection with religion.

As regards the first hypothesis (H1), according to which in the child care institutions operating in the Romanian public space, there is substantial adherence to the Christian symbols and rituals, through the creation of special spaces for carrying out the specific worship activities, if we examine it carefully, the existing space destined for worship in the organizational framework represents 1/3 of the total, meaning that the existence of such spaces is substantial. Thus, Hypothesis 1 is confirmed.

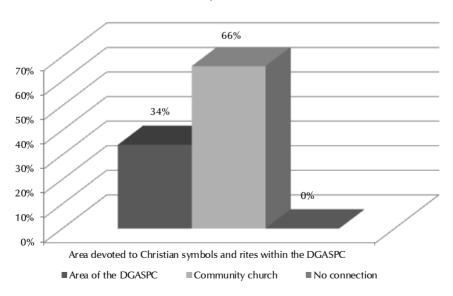


CHART 1. VALIDATION OF HYPOTHESIS 1 Distribution of dedicated worship areas within the gdsacp in Romania

According to the same Table 1, the data also reveal the manner in which the beneficiaries and the employees of the GDSACP organization throughout Romania adopt a religious attitude. Both the beneficiaries of social services within the GDSACPS and the employees thereof are characterized by significant religiosity. The substantial presence of specific ecclesial spaces in the child protection institutions shows their own and their employees' adherence to the Christian ritual and the presence of Christian symbols. If we evaluate the other 2/3 of the answers provided by the GDSACPS concerning the fact that there are no specifically designed areas in the institutions for attending religious service and that the beneficiaries, accompanied by the employees, attend service in the church community, we may see that the beneficiaries and the employees have a relationship with the Church. This presence proves a significant religious attitude in the social institutions of the Romanian public space. This confirms Hypothesis 2: In the GDSACPS, the religious attitude of the beneficiaries and the employees, expressed through their participation in prayer in spaces of worship created on the premises of the child protection institutions and in the specific community locations to which they belong (parish churches) is embraced by the majority.

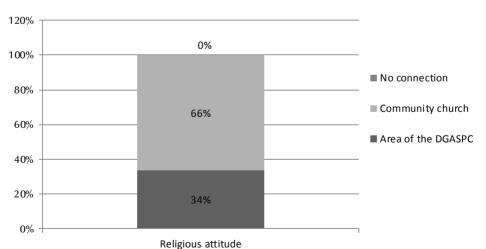


CHART 2. VALIDATION OF HYPOTHESIS 2 Presence of symbols and religious service attendance with the beneficiaries and the employees of the gdsacp in Romania

To see how the aspects of religiosity are valorized at the local level of the GDSACP institutions in Romania, we have chosen to scientifically evaluate such a unit: GDSACP CS. To test Hypothesis 3 (H3. Among the GDSACP CS employees, the religious attitude is determined by a high religious orientation, through in-

volvement in non-formal community activities), we applied the questionnaire mentioned in the data collection and answer reception section to the group of employees participating in our study from within the GDSACP cs. In Table 2, we present the analysis and the findings after data processing in spss.

	Non-formal community involvement	Extrinsic religious orientation	Intrinsic religious orientation	Religious orientation— global
Non-formal community involvement	1.000	.178	.271**	.055
Extrinsic religious orientation		1.000	.277**	661**
Intrinsic religious orientation			1.000	.538**
Religious orientation—global				1.000

 TABLE 2. PRESENTATION OF THE CORRELATION DATA

 BETWEEN RELIGIOUS ORIENTATION AND NON-FORMAL COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT

* p<0.05

** p<0.01

We were able to scientifically ascertain that religiosity is encountered not only at the level of the individual in Romania, or at that of small groups (such as the family), nor is it a feature of the private domain, pertaining to the privations of humans, but also in certain public institutions, such as those that perform social welfare activities, where the proportion of religiosity is significant. We resorted to a standardized scientific research using spss, to see if there is a correlation between the first two hypotheses, which test the religious attitude in the GDSACP institutions, and the third, which tests the intrinsic religious orientation of the employees from a unit in the territory. Table 2 shows that there is a statistically significant correlation between intrinsic religious orientation and non-formal community involvement (r = 0.271, p < 0.01). The fact that intrinsic religious orientation shows a very significant correlation with non-formal community involvement confirms once again what we stated under Hypothesis 1 (H1) and Hypothesis 2 (H2). Religiosity in Romania turns out to be something characteristic even at the level of social work institutions. Involvement in non-formal community activities proves the existence of intrinsic religiosity among the employees, who carry out these activities out of an inner impulse anchored in faith. Thus, Hypothesis 3 (H3) is also confirmed.

Conclusions

N THE early 1990s, atheism in Romania was extremely low: only 6% of subjects in a study stated that they did not believe in God. This is a very interesting aspect because after almost half a century of communism, with the strong wave of freedom and with the desire for renewal among the Romanians, only 6% of the respondents declared themselves as being non-affiliated with any religion. For example, in sociological research on religiosity (Eurobarometer 2000) in countries like Russia, Ukraine, Estonia, etc., ten years after the fall of communism, religious affiliation remained at quite high percentages at the level of the individual: more than 45% in Russia, approximately 42% in Ukraine and up to 75% in Estonia.

Our research shows the presence of religiosity among the Romanians not only at a social, cultural level in the context of deprivation, but also in public institutions. Romanians have outstanding levels of trust in the Church, and this prevents its presence in the public space from being diminished or prohibited by law, as it happens in some European countries. We can even say that its presence in the public space has increased. There are priests who are employees of the Romanian state and who embark on a professional career as a priest in healthcare or military institutions, in hospices and placement centers, in the education system, etc. For instance, priests employed by the Romanian state in these institutions have created specific spaces for prayer, such as chapels, oratories and even churches. We have addressed, in our research, the epistemological aspects of religiosity in the public spaces from public institutions that carry out the activity of social care. The Church is present not only in publicly funded social care institutions, even though we have only focused on child protection, an area in which quite a few reforms have been made, also following the conditions imposed by the European Union with a view to Romania's accession to the great European family.

After the fall of the communist regime, the coordinates of the religious field changed. There occurred a genuine religious liberalization, the restrictions that had been imposed were lifted, and new religious movements emerged. The Romanians continued to consider themselves as a prevalently Orthodox nation. The results of the 2011 census showed that as regards the Romanians' belonging to Orthodoxy, there were nearly 88% Orthodox among the population. Despite the competition on the religious market, the Orthodox Church continued to play a very important role, as also proved by our research.

Insofar as the Romanians' trust in state institutions is concerned, aside from the city halls that registered an increase of the levels of trust vested in them, from 1993 to 2005, almost all the other institutions declined in this respect. Parliament appears to have always represented a reliable institution for at most one-third of the population, which is rather little. Moreover, as regards justice in Romania, it may be noticed that while the year 1997 saw a high of about 60% confidence in this institution, by 2005 it had decreased to around 30%, which signaled a decline of the Romanians' trust in the administration of justice. Since 2005, the Romanians have vested most of their trust in the Church, proving that their society is still imbued with traditionalist values.

The values of our research recorded among the employees of the GDSACP Caraş-Severin reveal a strong link with the values recorded at national level as regards religiosity among the Romanians. We see that it is not by chance that the percentage of religious non-affiliation among the Romanians fell from 6% in 1990, the year that marked the end of the communist period and the recovery of democratic values, to 2% religious non-affiliation among the Romanians in 2000: this was not due to systematic and aggressive influences coming from the Church as an institution, but because of the religiosity the Romanians demonstrated at a personal level, as individual subjects.

Research limitations:

1. the lack of diversification in our research;

2. the tendency to subjectively approach certain aspects, due to one of the authors' double specialization;

3. the lack of standardization in formulating the questions for the psychosocial survey in the first part of the research, which aimed to test the first two hypotheses (H1 and H2).

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Abstract

Aspects of Religiosity in the Social Institutions Operating in the Romanian Public Space

In our scientific approach, we will focus on what already represents an empirical certainty related to the presence of the Church and its involvement, through its specific activity, both at the level of symbols and at that of ritual, in the public domain of social assistance in Romania. In particular, we will focus our research on the field of child protection. The approach we will embark on entails the epistemic knowledge of the manner in which religiosity among the Romanians constitutes a real presence in the social institutions of the Romanian public space, being, therefore, a very topical undertaking, with highly significant outcomes.

Keywords

religiosity, sociology of religion, social work, child protection, Church, religious attitude