

Religious Identity, Regional Identity

The Pentecostals of Arad County

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THE FOLLOWING lines are the first conclusions of the fieldwork of September 2011,¹ in the villages of Bata and Zăbaț,² in the Arad County, Romania. The specificity of that area is that, along with a mostly Orthodox population, we identified a Pentecostal community who grew specific traits in each of the two villages. In the Arad County, live many neo-Protestant believers, such as Pentecostals, Baptists, Adventists etc.³ In the same area, more specifically in Păuliș, history records the emergence of the first Pentecostal community, at the beginning of the 1920's.

Our intention consisted in outlining the profile of a group belonging to a collectivity considered not so long ago a religious minority, which, after the events of December 1989, is consolidate and fast growing.⁴ The 1989 change of political regime extended freedom to the religious cults of Romania, other than the Orthodox one. Commonly known as “pocăiți”⁵ (the repented), the Pentecostals are generally identifiable by several particular elements, among which is the baptism with the Holy Spirit, i.e. the “speaking in thongs” (or “glossolalia,” from the Greek γλωσσολαλία), prophesying and interpreting. Through the last decade, the cult has drawn in new followers, what is more, there has been recorded some migration of Baptist believers towards the Pentecostal churches.⁶

In Bata, the population exceeds 700 inhabitants, of which approximately 60 Pentecostals: “about 12 families, at most 10 young Pentecostals.”⁷ In Zăbaț, according to the data provided by the village priest, are 117 Orthodox believers and 60 Pentecostal. In contrast to Bata, where the vast majority of the Pentecostals came from Bistrița-Năsăud County and settled in the village in the last 20 years, in Zăbaț, they are natives, who were born either in Orthodox or Baptist religion. In Bata, religious identity overlaps the regional identity, which makes the locals—migrants rapport fairly limited, and the number of mixed marriages, small. In Zăbaț, where only a few Christians from Bistrița settled, the religious identity, which was not doubled by a local one, lead to the formation, in time, of heterogeneous families. In most of

these families, there are members of both religious denominations between which tension exist, in various degrees of intensity, depending on specific cases.

In sociological-economic terms, the population from the area goes through similar problems of the Romanian rural environment. The prevalence of the elder segment translates into a subsistence economy; the resources are, generally, represented by small pensions gained from the work in the collective communist farms and by household animals. Most farmlands remain unworked; those who could make it productive have emigrated to the city or, a smaller number, to foreign countries. In fact, the labour force mobility has started half a century ago, through the relocation of locals to Arad, Deva, and Hunedoara. The 1990's brought other migration waves, this time towards Bata and, on a smaller scale, towards Zăbalț. Arriving especially from Parva and Rebra,⁸ communities with consistent Pentecostal believers, "bistrițenii," the people of Bistrița, appellative that received an ethnonymic function came to look for better living. The migration was caused by difficulties faced at home: large families, small lands, placed in mountain areas. Settled down in large number in Bata village, most of them with neo-Protestant beliefs, the newcomers formed a double enclave, regional and religious. Partially, the reawakening is granted by their demographic contribution, i.e. the large size of the families, abortion being a practice condemned by the Pentecostals, as well as through working the land bought from the locals. However, the locals do not value enough the changes, some of the locals perceive them still as strangers. Repopulation is not perceived as an advantage to the local community, probably also because of the fact that—before the settling of the people of Bistrița—the community started to dissipate, along with the departure of many residents towards the cities nearby, Lipova, and Arad. It may be speculated that the next generations will be easier accepted, but, for the moment, the number of mixed marriages remains low (the main cause is religious difference), and the mentalities sluggishly change in the rural space.

The similarity with the early Christianity of the Pentecostal congregation confuses somewhat the locals. What is different, especially about religion, one of the most powerful identity markers, leads to mistrust, and, in some contexts, generates rather harsh verbal reactions. Whilst the neo-Protestants discursively punish "those of the world" for the deviation from God's Word, the Orthodox Christians condemn the way the others express their religious feelings, and also the decision, in the case of those who have gone to the "pocăiți," to leave their traditional religion. Moreover, the accusations point to the allegedly false repentance of those who are not as pure as they pretend, as well as the ones who were not converted because of spiritual reasons, but of sole material reasons, hoping to receive help, as some neo-Protestant communities were/are visited by foreigners, who donate different kinds of goods.

The distinction between the two groups is bound to the way of recruiting parishioners. In the creed of the Pentecostal Church, its social role is clearly defined: "The Church has the calling to influence the human society in which it is set, at the level of the family, the community, and other local churches."⁹ In this situation, the Church

has the duty to address to each individual and to call him or her onto salvation. "At the same time, the Romanian Pentecostal Church is, at present, an uncontested instrument for saving the souls lost in the Romanian society."¹⁰ The Pentecostals are known for actions of devotion; in the places we researched, the Orthodoxy has been passed somehow inertial, from generation to generation, and before the beginning of the past century it did not have any competition, the missionary activity of the minority stands out, sometimes being labelled as aggressive: "They would want to make you like them! Well if you don't want to go, why won't they leave you alone? I don't like it. If you meet them: 'When will you come to us? Why won't you come to us? Come to us! Come to us!'"¹¹ To others, it counts less who says it, but what he preaches: "Where's the word of God, it is good! I don't care if whether they were Pentecostals, or Greek Orthodox Christians, or Adventists, what do I know, Baptists. But where is the Word of God, it is good all over the place."¹² Tolerance comes from the patience to listen to the other and to respect his or her personal creed, even if he or she is convinced of his own undisputable truth: "But they have a flaw too: they're too...how to say this? 'It's like that!' [the way they say it]. And they talk like that, as if . . . and sees what he is saying!"¹³ On the other side, the one who is convinced of having found God and wants to follow His path finds himself or herself in a permanent fight with the others' mistrust, but also with the temptations and their own fears. "And I told him about the faith too, to keep it, to do it, for before God, it doesn't work like that. From people you hide, but from God you cannot . . . you cannot hide. And to strive, to go [to the gathering] like that too. . ."¹⁴

The appearance of early Christian community to which the gathering of the Pentecostal believers resembles conveys a feeling of communion, of sharing, which, seemingly, the converted did not experience in their old religion. The gathering functions as a place of public confession, through which each participant has the chance to tell, to unburden, to expose a cause and to propose a specific prayer request. Thus a familiar atmosphere is created, as the believers feel surrounded by friends, as in a big family. It is too a reason for the reproach by Orthodox believers, who evaluate the attitude of the Pentecostals as trivial, by bringing up personal, mundane problems in place of the aspects which pertain strictly to religion. *The other* is being judged by difference, not by similitude, via the typical religious service, without taking into account a *different* kind of spirituality, of the simple fact that the Church is composed of humans, and, inherently, of their feelings and needs. "Pocăiții" value the psychotherapeutic dimension of the communion and communication which arise within the gathering: finally, the one who describes his problems is not among strangers, but among *brothers* and *sisters*; the parishioners can *speak*, not only *listen*.

The different canon of the holy service, the possibility to speak openly, the rhythm and the contents of the song, the type of the prayer, jointly, each uttering at the same time, with a raised voice, their gratitude and prayer, all contribute in creating the feeling of being part of the whole, sensations transferred onto the secular plane of

the group members. This unity is obvious in the eyes of those outside and described, usually, through the phrase “pocăiții help each other.” In fact, we are dealing with a common trait of the marginal groups, may it be ethnic, religious, sexual etc. Especially in the case of religious identities, where “attachment is unconditional,” as Smaranda Vultur says, and the groups are less open, the cohesion of the *in-group* is obvious and therefore the delimitation of the *out-group*.

The Orthodox accepts a differentiation between secular and the spiritual, whilst the whole living of the Pentecostal functions under the divine law. In contrast to the Orthodox interlocutors, the Pentecostals know the Scripture very well. It is quite probable that it has occurred through attending the gatherings, where the type of the religious service imposes the commune lecturing of various versets. Their application experience represents one of the separation elements between the “old” and the “new” faith; the excerpts learned by heart were frequently quoted, in conversation with the researcher, as an explanation to clarify the specificities of the Pentecostal faith, mostly for explaining the “speaking in thongs.”

Faith does not represent one of life’s facets, a marginal aspect, but through it the individual’s entire existence filters. To this is added a real “theology of sin”¹⁵: from there the multiple constraints to which the “repented” subscribe, such as interdiction to wear jewellery, or coffee consumption, perceived by them not as limitations, but memories of life left behind, at the time he or she did not know God. Imposing subordination of the secular, the theocentric vision of the neo-Protestants believers asks severity, permanent wisdom, and perseverance in searching for God. In other words, a lifestyle, which seems hard to follow for those outside the group, since it reclaims radical transformations rules that are most difficult, in a secularised world, and which places the man at the center of creation.

We have some restrictions and some things that . . . not as at the Orthodox believers: freedom is given! To do what you want! To lie, to steal, to cheat, to . . . not to help the poor. If someone comes, get him out, don’t give him. If he comes . . . these are the commands! And much, much more, that we got to do and we don’t do them...If we don’t do one of them!, there is nothing . . . We could be faithful for 20 years, for 10, for 5, for 40, for 100! Because there is nothing at all, if you don’t do what’s written in the Bible.¹⁶

Centered on the idea that a last persecution will unleash against the Christians and only the ones chosen by God will be “abducted,” raised to heaven, the Pentecostal eschatology points frequently out the conversation with the believers. Their affirmations are grounded in history referrals, interpreted in a personal manner:

I know that the eleventh wave of [persecution] comes, this we know that it comes! He comes! (Is that what is written in the Bible?)—It is written in the Bible, yes. The Roman Empire disappeared from the history scene. The Roman Empire is no more. Now it is founded: we have rights too, we work in Austria, we go to the Union, so . . . That’s

*it . . . The European Union is nothing but . . . the Roman Empire rebuilt. And the disaster will come and we have to be prepared. Why, should I be afraid of someone asking me about my faith?! Dear God! This is my belief! I can talk to everyone, my belief is not hidden.*¹⁷

The auto-identification with the first Christians is always cultivated within the Pentecostal teachings. The followers are always mentally prepared, that, regardless the consequences, they will have to prove that they are the children of God, the possible supreme sacrifice—their death—to be rewarded with the greatest recompense, eternal life. “Even if it comes—[persecution]—it does not come from you or from me, it comes because it is meant so. Over the Christians there must be a trial. Here it shows our faith.”¹⁸

The collected interviews, and a series of informal discussions, aided us in formulating some hypotheses on the causes of conversions. In some cases, the tribulations and difficulties of their existence, personal drama, family problems, the death of a family member, lead to the search of a spiritual help, identified, eventually, in the faith of the Pentecostals. Not always, the decision for conversion was accepted by the rest of the family. Sometimes, they consent as time passes by. In other situations, the change is preserved as a reason for separation between family members.

*I stay like this, as I decided . . . we have our Pentecostal church here and I remain at this faith! She [the wife] doesn't want—didn't want to join me back then and maybe . . . If God wants it, she will convert. If not . . . no. I don't know. But my daughter is pocăită, my son-in-law pocăit and in 2006 I made my decision too. She [the wife] was against it. But no, I told her: I had a vision from God Who called me, either you agree or disagree...She calmed down a bit. I had problems because of this with her, because she says 'You have enough time!' Well I am 60! How could I have time . . . [Q: What kind of vision did you have?] The vision that I had, I had to convert; I had to go to this faith of Pentecostal.*¹⁹

The interviewees do not specifically mention a cause-effect relationship: they are more or less conscious of the context which led to the change of religion, or they omit, unintentionally, to formulate a clear and coherent explanation, considering the newness of the interview context.

Another possible reason we have identified is the influence of the “pocăiți” over their family members, who are still Orthodox. The efforts of bringing “to the faith” are channelled towards the neighbours as well. About the “convinced” ones, the priests think that, they are, generally, one of the people “who have not attended [the Orthodox] church.” On the other hand, the conflicts of some Orthodox believers with their own spiritual leader²⁰ generated sometimes, the losing of parishioners, to the neo-Protestants. “According to Weber, when a culture has lost its capacity to supply meaning to its members and when traditional leaders no longer have legitimacy,

revolutionary figures are likely to appear. . . .²¹ In our case we do not have counter-leaders, but “dissidents,” who reclaim a change of his own spiritual culture, as it does not identify any longer with the family inherited tradition. It should be noted that when the leader—i.e. the priest—no longer represents a model to be followed (because of the vices, indecent behaviour etc.), the believers feel somehow justified for a religious reorientation, where they hope they will find models to look up to and learn from. After conversion, the former religious denomination is described as a diluted system in which the customs approved by an institutional structure and not the real longing for God reign. The church itself is seen as a secularised society, the perspective proves the confusion between the Orthodox doctrine and the mistakes made by the believers.

Especially, the evangelisations are an opportunity to attract new believers:

[Q: Why did part of the villagers go over to the Pentecostals?] I don't know, because all of them were baptised here, married here, their parents died here. Why, where from, who convinced them and how. . . I don't know! God knows! It was meant to be like this, they were called, I don't know. They don't keep feasts, no . . . [Q: But have they tried to convert you?] But of course . . . I have neighbours here, 'join us, join us' and I went once, 2 years ago. Let me tell you. I went for an entire week—they had then . . . people who came, guests. [Evangelisation, thus?] Yes, yes. And I went to them; my neighbours gave me a ride, every evening. Well [lowers voice], and I thought that maybe the priest won't find out. And when the Easter week came and I wanted to receive housel, the priest didn't want it anymore. When I went to confess, he said 'You went to the pocăiți.' He said 'you prepare, you fast at Whitsuntide too. . . ' Then, I got upset too; I haven't been since then [at the Pentecostals].²²

Even though the Orthodox Christians take part to evangelisations or participate sporadically at the gatherings, invited by the converted relatives/neighbours, the gesture remains one-sided. “Pocăiții” avoid systematically the church building or the priest, when it comes to family life events, in mixed couples, baptisms, weddings, funerals. A given explanation refers to the presence of the religious icons, condemned by quoting the commandment “Thou shalt not make thee any graven image.” Prejudice manage to undermine good relations, which seem to be only superficial; present on a conversational level, confirmed by both parties, it embodies a slightly vague concept and its definitions depend on the mental profile of each interlocutor, and as well on the rapports with *the other* of a different belief. On the other part, the accusations imply the rejection of the cross: “If they were Christian, it were with cross. The cross means Christianity, doesn't it?”²³ The main elements of one doctrine or another are being manipulated as weapons against the imaginary enemy, the imagined barbarian,²⁴ the members of the two congregations sensing slightly the destructiveness of biased propagation, with a negative impact firstly upon social identity, and, secondarily, upon the cultural-religious identity.

“The cliché helps us to comfortably harness reality” claims Smaranda Vultur. The circulation of the pejorative appellation “pocăiți,” which seems not to be bothering the owners, is a proof that integration/assimilation is being refused by both parties. Separation, cultivated by both parts, can be detected, for instance, at the neighbour relationships level: neighbours who avoid to greet each other or who defame each other. The respective situations exist, undoubtedly, within the same religious, regional or ethnic group, but it seems, at least to the observer arriving for the first time in the community—have increased since the groups have different identities. Equally, we discovered amiable inter-belief rapport, of mutual help, as for example, the farming labour done together. First level analysis starts with the participant observation, where we related the quality of the relationships to the quality of the social actors, with their degree of involvement on the “mined” ground of difference.

It is to be observed that the converted individuals do not mention in their discourse the supposed adverse relationship with the church that they had left. Nonetheless, this institution is the object of their criticism, set in opposition to their new community, a church of choice, and not of an inherited status. From here, the great importance given to baptism, as a personal decision, an action followed necessarily by the insistence in receiving the baptism with the Holy Spirit, fact which certifies the “children of God” quality, the way neo-Protestant believers tend to express themselves. The experience of receiving the Holy Spirit marks intensely the individual: some of our interviewees considered it way too personal to be described; others have shared it with us:

I had been in a prayer house in Sîngeorz, until I got married. And there was persistence for the Holy Spirit—for it is said so. You know, only prayers are being said, one doesn't preach from the Gospel. Only prayers, so it is read from the Bible, we kneel, and if—two hours, three hours, and other times even two hours lasted the prayer, until the soul was endowed by God to receive the Holy Spirit. And I know—I remember, in 2004 . . . like that—when we kneeled and we were around a threshold—like here [points at the threshold of the room]—so much crowd it was, there were so many people, you know, to pray, many people gathered in two chambers. And among the others, I was too on my knees, next to a threshold of a house. And when God let His seeking, through the Holy Spirit, to give us this offering of the Holy Spirit, which is our guide on earth, I woke up, so after I received the Holy Spirit, after I received the speech in another language, I was already some metres from the threshold in the room—that power moves you. So you don't know anymore: you are incorporated by the Holy Spirit, you are connected to God and you forget where you are, the place you are in at that moment. After I received the Holy Spirit, the brothers who were there, who supported us in prayer—are brothers endowed with this power, you know, who had received Holy Spirit a long time ago, helps reaaaaally much! Reaaaaally much! The people who insist before God to receive the Holy Spirit. And we were like this, in front of a table, and we were like this, like we are here [makes gestures, as if to recompose the picture], so got from the threshold, somewhere, 2

metres, like this: I was moved by the force of the Holy Spirit, when I received it. And we were 4 persons at that moment [Q: Did you feel that you move, or you were told by the others?]—No. *The first time you ask power from God, because the first time you have to ask, first, first, first you have to ask for power. Because if you don't ask for power... and the blood, the blood of God, which flew away...thousands of years ago, we have to ask Him through faith. Not that it flows then: that someone says, where do you see the blood of God to flow? No: through faith, through faith alone we ask for the power of God. Many times I have seen the power of God next to me. That is many times. If it wasn't for God, we might have been six feet under many of us. You feel the power of the Holy Spirit, you feel when God observes you, you feel how it moves you. So you feel it! By your earthbound nature, you feel how God lifts you through the Holy Spirit. And when that power descends to give him speech in another language, you are no more! So you aren't anymore connected to those from the earth. You are all together; but you don't know! Who's beside you, you cannot feel. Only the power of the Holy Spirit which descends upon you, it incorporates you like that. And that, that power of faith, the power of the Holy Spirit, says that it must guide us on earth all our lives. [Q: So you felt how you got closer to the table] I felt how, how it moves you, you know? No, I didn't feel, naturally: because naturally I wasn't aware of where I was. But through the power of the Holy Spirit, you feel that you move! And a vessel—not only the prophets: we, the people endowed with the power of the Holy Spirit, we feel when it comes...that gift, the power to pray, you don't feel like getting up from your knees anymore! You'd rather stay in prayer. Only...You know how? It says that—through the Bible, in the Bible it is written—to be tolerant, you know? Not to speak at once two or three languages! To be tolerant with each other.²⁵*

The conversions stories reveal biographies, migration motivations, revelations experienced in private and in group. Moreover, it raises the researcher questions concerning the psychological resorts of the mere act: why the interviewees, as well as other members of the same religious group, confuse repentance or why do they associate it with leaving for a different cult? Why personal repentance needs a public consecration? “Individualization of faith”²⁶ extracts the individual from a community just to move him into a new one,²⁷ where he or she will seek to merge his or her personal destiny with a permanently effervescent entity in order to praise divinity.

From an overall perspective, at a discursive level, reported to an *outsider*, the representatives of the two religions express themselves in similar manner. Both sides avoid affirming their superiority in faith and doctrine. Beyond declarations, reality remains the same, of the churches and the corresponding separate groups. In their self-assigned, the neo-Protestants positively value all who, regardless belief, fulfill the divine commandments and prove a decent behaviour, without vice. But good deeds are not enough, if they are not accompanied by the union with God. Without his Will, no deed as such would be possible, and man is bound to understand and to thank the Creator, to avoid falling into the sin of pride. In the comments

about “them,” (in the reference system of the Orthodox believers, “they” alternate with “pocăiți”), “are people like us,” but in between the evaluated and evaluators the distance is being kept, because of the scarce knowledge between the groups or, expressed differently, the mutual lack of interest to deepen the knowing of *the other*: “Well we don’t have anything against the people! What could we have? They are people like us too. [Q: Do they have other customs than the locals?]
—Don’t know. . . Don’t know. . .”²⁸

THE OPINIONS exposed here only refer to the neo-Protestant group from Bata and Zăbalț, and must be viewed as an extension of the field journal, where from inherent superficial judgement or omissions may be present. As much as we could, we tried to show the exact opinions of the interlocutors, directly or in a commented form. The conclusions of participative observation were less made obvious, because of the relatively short amount of time spent within the communities. Therefore it was emphasized the analysis of material resulted from discussions,²⁹ that helped us to understand how important and decisive is a certain experience, fact, event in a specific moment of existence. Listening life stories, we understand the decision of conversion. In the case of those born in a Pentecostal or Orthodox family, keeping their ancestors religion, the collected testimonials outline a portrait of religious coexistence (with extensions onto the social), even if they are impregnated by a double subjectivity. Obviously, “in a dialogue in which the interlocutor is asked for opinions and impressions . . . , in which is invited to evoke memories left by an individual life experience, it is natural for subjectivity to take over and, not less natural is the answers to provoke, to rouse the consent, admiration, compassion, or, to put it shortly, the empathy of the reader, or, on the contrary, confusion, aggravation or minor idiosyncrasies.”³⁰

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Notes

1. Our research, conducted in 2010–2011 (within a program organized by Arad County Cultural Center) has followed the evolution of some Pentecostal communities, assuming a double minority condition, regional and religious. Our motivation is due to the fact that even after 1989, the interest of the Romanian scientific world for the Neo-protestants communities remains relatively low. For example, the referential for research on Pentecostal cult especially includes religious works and some monographs, depriving the approaches of social and human sciences field.
2. Zăbalț is part of neighbouring village, Ususău.
3. For 2002, the religions of Arad county are: 337747 Orthodox Christians; 46651 Roman Catholics; 28508 Pentecostals; 18240 Baptists; 4720 Seventh-day Adventists; 225 Christian Evangelical Church (Creștini după Evanghelie). Data available at <http://re-ncensamant.referinte.transindex.ro/?pg=9&cid=8>, accessed November 20, 2011.

4. “Between 1992 and 2002 the number of converts increased by around 50%. And the demography of Pentecostalism is working mainly by recruiting converts,” see László Fosztó, “Conversions to Pentecostalism among the Roma in Romania,” Draft paper for the Conference “Religious Conversion after Socialism,” April 7–9, 2005, Max Planck Institute for Social Anthropology, Halle, Germany, available at <http://adatbank.transindex.ro/vendeg/htmlk/pdf5619.pdf>, accessed November 20, 2011, 1. “In the 2002 census, 324462 persons, or 1,5 per cent of the total population declared to belong to the Pentecostal Church. In comparison with their number in 1992 (220824), the Pentecostals registered 50 per cent growth during the first postsocialist decade,” see László Fosztó, “Mono-Ethnic Churches, the ‘Undertaker Parish’, and Rural Civility in Postsocialist Romania,” in Chris Hann, “Civil Religion” Group, eds., *The Postsocialist Religious Question: Faith and power in Central Asia and East-Central Europe* (Münster: LIT Verlag, 2006), 269, note 2. Other sources mention slightly different numbers: “In the 1992 census, 219151 people declared to be Pentecostal, while in the next census (2002) the figure was 330486 (Populație. Structură Demografică, 2002). However, according to the data cited by Cristian Vasile Roske, spokesman of the Pentecostal Cult, of the International Dictionary of Pentecostal Charismatic Movements (published in 2001), their number is 859000, two and a half times more than the figure that came up in the census of 2002,” see Bianca Ioana Rusu, Daniela Tarnovschi, *Pentecostals in Romania*, available at www.edrc.ro/docs/docs/Pentecostals_in_Romania.doc, accessed September 27, 2011, 9. Today, the Pentecostals are the most numerous among the neo-Protestants in Romania, the Baptists coming on the second place with 126639 believers. See *Recensământul populației și locuințelor 2002*, available at <http://www.insse.ro/cms/files/RPL2002INS/vol1/tabele/t48.pdf>, accessed November 20, 2011. According to Pavel Riviș Tipei, the president of the Romanian Pentecostal Union, “the number of Romanian Pentecostal believers is almost 500000, in its 80 years of history” as shown in Bianca Ioana Rusu, Daniela Tarnovschi, “Pentecostals in Romania...,” 5. Moreover, in 2002, Vasile Roske said that, “the New International Dictionary of Pentecostal and Charismatic Movements, brought out by the prestigious publishing house Zondervan (2002), dedicates over 100 pages to Romania, the first country in Europe after to the number of Pentecostal believers,” see Bianca Ioana Rusu, Daniela Tarnovschi, “Pentecostals in Romania...,” 10.
5. In everyday language, this denomination includes followers of most neo-Protestant religious denominations.
6. In these localities existed, some decades ago, significant Baptist groups, gradually assimilated by the Pentecostals. An explanation is the doctrinal resemblance; on the other hand, their power of persuasion. Nowadays, some of the Baptists who remained in Bata attend the Pentecostal gatherings, not because they lack a church, but because of the spirit of the “Pentecostal brothers”: “We come here, because we felt and researched the Scriptures—the Lord says, ‘Study the Scriptures’. You know how? We, the youngsters, as if we want something, something else, something new, something...It seems even when you go into a new house, it seems better than your own house! Even if it’s painted! (Laughs) You know, and where there are many youngsters, it seems that it’s much, much better, so, and here are many of them” C. C., age 35, Baptist, interview by the author, audio recording, Bata, September 13, 2011.
7. R. V., age 17, Pentecostal, interview by the author, audio recording, Bata, September 6, 2010.

8. See statistics available at http://www.prefecturabn.ro/unitati_adm_terit/rebra.pdf and http://www.prefecturabn.ro/unitati_adm_terit/parva.pdf accessed November 22, 2011.
9. Pavel Riviş Tipei, "The Role of the Romanian Pentecostal Church at the Beginning of the Third Millennium: Evaluation and Perspectives" *Cuvântul Adevărului*, 4 (Bucharest, 2002), quoted in Bianca Ioana Rusu, Daniela Tarnovschi, *Pentecostals in Romania*, 5, available at www.edrc.ro/docs/docs/Pentecostals_in_Romania.doc, accessed October 27, 2011.
10. Ibid.
11. M. J., age 74, Orthodox, interview by the author, audio recording, Bata, September 12, 2011.
12. V. J., age 75, Orthodox, interview by the author, audio recording, Bata, September 12, 2011.
13. Ibid.
14. V. J., age 65, Pentecostal, interview by the author, audio recording, Zăbalț, September 13, 2011.
15. Paul Brodwin, "Pentecostalism in Translation: Religion and the Production of Community in the Haitian Diaspora," *American Ethnologist*, vol. 30, no. 1 (February 2003), available at <http://www.jstor.org/stable/3805210>, accessed June 7, 2012, 85.
16. V. J., age 65, Pentecostal, interview by the author, audio recording, Zăbalț, September 13, 2011.
17. V. R., age 65, Pentecostal, interview by author, audio recording, Bata, September 13, 2011.
18. Ibid.
19. V. J., age 65, Pentecostal, interview by the author, audio recording, Zăbalț, September 13, 2011.
20. We were told that such an example was in Zăbalț. In Ususău, some decades ago, the exigent and rigid attitude of the priest rose against him some of the population; their migration to Pentecostalism happened also because of some massive evangelisation actions in the area.
21. Charles Lindholm, *Culture and Identity* (Oneworld Publications, 2007), 58.
22. I. M., age 73, Orthodox, interview by the author, audio recording, Zăbalț, September 14, 2011.
23. T. J., age 74, Orthodox, interview by the author, audio recording, Bata, September 12, 2011.
24. See Tzvetan Todorov, *The Fear of Barbarians: Beyond the Clash of Civilizations* (Chicago: University Of Chicago Press, 2010).
25. I. M., age 36, Pentecostal, interview by the author, audio recording, Bruznic, September 14, 2011.
26. "Generally, the term 'individualization of faith' is used for describing the situation in which the individual discovers 'religion' as a personal experience while its collective, institutional, sacramental, and intellectual expressions are derivative." See Simion Pop, "The socio-cultural space of Pentecostalism in present-day Transylvania: dynamics of religious pluralization in post-communist Romania," *Studia Universitatis Babeş-Bolyai, Sociologia*, LIV, 2 (2009): 144.
27. "Paradoxically, in Pentecostalism the 'individualization of faith' does not produce a radical religious individualism and fragmentation but rather a strong communitarian

spirit that enhances a new form of congregational life different from that of ‘traditional’ churches.” Ibid., 145.

- 28 Anonymous, interview by the author, audio recording, Bata, September 14, 2011.
29. “Interviews are advantageous for eliciting information about personal histories, beliefs and values, and interpretations of events. They are well suited for questions about self-identity and personal experience and can include discussions about friends, family, social networks, and organizations,” see Robert J. Wuthnow, “Taking Talk Seriously: Religious Discourse as Social Practice,” *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion*, vol. 50, issue 1, article first published online: March 2, 2011, available at <http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1111/j.1468-5906.2010.01549.x/pdf>, accessed June 7, 2012, 10.
30. Rodica Binder, “Dreptul de a fi subiectiv,” *Orizont*, 6 (2011): 9.

Abstract

Religious Identity, Regional Identity: The Pentecostals of Arad County

Since 1989, the interest of the Romanian scientific world for the Neo-protestants communities remains relatively low. For example, the referential for research on Pentecostal religious denomination includes religious works and some monographs derives their approaches of social and human sciences field. Our study is focused on several Pentecostal communities (Bata, Zăbaț) in Arad County, a region with significant numbers of Neo-protestant adherents, and it aims at identifying the ways of building their own image and the image of the Other, with a different faith, considering the double minority status, religious and regional. We intended to observe the extent to which regional identity customize faith options and how confession redefines the interplay of social actors, collectively and individually. The collected testimonials outline a portrait of religious coexistence (with extensions onto the social), even if they are impregnated by a double subjectivity, and it also outlines the socio-economic realities in rural area of Arad County.

Keywords

Pentecostals, conversion, coexistence, identity, religious minority