

The Role of Intellectuals in the Religious Education of Children and Youngsters in Communist Romania

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ABSTRACT: Immediately after coming to power, communist regime aimed at creating an atheist society, slowly but surely. As it was an exclusive “religion”, which could not accept another one around it, the communism became “the enemy of any other form of religion, and in particular of Christianity” (Bardyaev 1960, 158). Becoming aware that with adults they could not achieve their goals, communism accepted the idea that it should “bear” the adults’ convictions and mindset and focus on the younger generations to stop the forwarding of religious beliefs.

KEYWORDS: church, neo-Protestant, intellectuals, religious education, communism, children and youngsters, student activities

1. Introduction

This article represents a revised and added subchapter from the Graduate Thesis titled *The Religious Education of Children and Youngsters in the Communist Period*, unpublished, presented in front of the Evaluation Committee at the University of Bucharest, Baptist Theology Faculty, in June 2007, in Bucharest.

The creation of “The new Man” was the motto and the ideal of communists, such as it results from “The July Theses” – 1971 (Popescu, Adam, Abăluță 2001, 33), written by Nicolae Ceaușescu and the “Program” of the Romanian Communist Party, elaborated four years later, where the subject is the “training of youth masses from a professional and political viewpoint, their active participation to accomplish the general goal of the party” (Cernat 2004, 254). In reality, during the Romanian “golden age”, public school was transformed into an incubator and launchpad for future communists.

This article aims to highlight the efforts of the neo-Protestant cults in keeping their children and youngsters in the spirituality sphere while facing the communist powerhouse, accentuating the role of intellectuals and student activities in strengthening, and rejuvenating of their churches. We want to fill a small part of the ample historical void in this period. The uniqueness of this study comes from the fact that it is, mostly, based on unpublished documents from the files of the Archive of the State Secretariat for Cults (A. S. S. C.) as well as on parts of the files from the Archives of the National Council for Studying the Securitate Archives (A. N. C. S. S. A.).

2. Religious education from the perspective of historic cults

In the communist period, The Orthodox Church had an interest in adults, preponderantly, and it did not organize activities for educating the youth (A.S.S.C., no. - /1981, 1), with some exceptions in Banat and Transylvania (Popescu 1986, 14; A.S.S.C., no. - /1971, 3), the catechization of children and youngsters being almost nonexistent (A.S.S.C., no. 103/2 April 1960, 3). Most priests just advised the believers to raise their children in the spirit of the ancestral orthodox belief and to bring the children to church (A.S.S.C., no. 36/1982, 10). It would have been a difficult thing to do since the Church itself was oscillating between collaboration, some priests’ greed, lack of education of some ministers, and even disinterest of priests and parents, children, and

youngsters, all of them being influenced by the attitude of the Church. The few religious activities were organized just to counteract the powerful neo-Protestant influence, the roman-catholic or even the protestant influence over orthodox children and youngsters.

On the other side, the Roman-Catholic Cult was not recognized officially by the state and it followed the provisions of the canonic Codex, elaborated by the Vatican, regarding the religious education of believers, Codex that also comprised special provisions for the indoctrination of children and youth. Thus, canons 1330 and 1331 stipulated that the parish priest should timely and continuously prepare the children throughout many days, every year, to get them ready for the sacraments of penitence and confirmation (it strengthened the grace received when baptized for children older than seven years old). Besides this, the parish priest had to instruct more carefully the children that were to receive the first eucharist. This training took four weeks, a few hours a day, when this ended every child had to know the Confession of faith, a number of prayers and the Ten Commandments by heart.

From the catechization viewpoint, the protestant cults – The Lutherans (of Augustan Confession and Presbyterian) and the Reformed Church, have manifested a long-term pursuit to attract children and youngsters to come to church. It was with great expense that priests had many children prepared for confirmation, which, from a protestant viewpoint, was an official confirmation of the baptism prior to communion.

When comparing the Orthodox and the Roman-Catholic cults to the protestant ones, we notice that the latter had a more intense preoccupation towards teaching the children and youngsters their doctrines. But, as we shall present forward, the neo-Protestant cults put a greater value on catechization, which had a character of schooling and mandatory frequency, as opposed to the protestant cults.

3. Religious education from the perspective of neo-protestant cults

The Neo-Protestant Cults have, during the entire communist period, manifested a great interest in keeping their children and youngsters in church (Petcu 2005, 352). In the majority of cases, children and youngsters' catechization took place in church, on Saturdays or on Sundays, during the religious services, together with the rest of the believers. There were also deviations from this rule, when it was desired to intensify the religious life, and then the catechization happened after the religious services' time, separated from the adults. (A.S.S.C., no. 103/1958, vol. 1, inv. 122, 7 – 8; A.S.S.C., no. 93/1960, vol. 13, inv. 99, 1; A.S.S.C., no. 2573/21 July 1989, 1; A.S.S.C., no. 147/27 June 1989, 1; A.S.S.C., no. 178/3 July 1989, 1).

For Adventist children and youth, there were organized classes of religious education throughout the school year, including holydays, no matter the number of participants. Due to a small number of children and youngsters, some neo-Protestant cults, interrupted the catechization during holydays (A.S.S.C., no. 88/28 June 1989, 1). In most neo-Protestant churches there were special, separated rooms where children and youngsters were taught the spiritual percepts of their religion (A.S.S.C., no. 273/26 June 1989, 3; A.S.S.C., no. 437/12 July 1989, 2). When there were no such rooms in churches, such activities would take place in private houses, and they were very often sanctioned with drastic fines. Although there is no evidence on which cult they belonged to, in March 1972, in Suceava, such a meeting took place and the youngsters there were fined according to Decree no. 153/1970. Also, in October, in the village of Pătrăuți, a gathering with children and youth organized by educator Turtureanu Oltea, was "fined" with the termination of employment for the educator (A.S.S.C., no. 6436/1973, inv. 1783, 3). Similarly, pupils between 7th and 12th grade would gather in some rooms rented by the children of pastor Geabău. Since it was a private house, the cults inspectors knew little about the activities that took place there (A.S.S.C., no. 273/26 June 1989, 2).

The religious education was carried out by pastors mainly, and when necessary by elders and members of local committees (A.S.S.C., no. 2573/21 July 1989, 2). There were, of course, pastors who dodged this type of activities (A.S.S.C., no. - /1989). In some bigger churches, with Adventists and Baptists, the pastors even created groups of scholars – believers that would be responsible with the religious education of children and youth, thus imprinting a scholastic character to the catechization (A.S.S.C., no. 2573/21 July 1989, 2). At the Adventist Church in Urleta, the sub-engineer Popescu Liviu, who worked at the industrial cooperative in the village of Scorțeni, was teaching religious education to school and preschool children. Under his leadership, every Saturday 25-30 children were taught according to their age. In the same church, the music teacher Burciu Valeriu, although a member of the local church committee, who was a corpsman at the dispensary in the village of Bănești, was organizing and training the choir and orchestra groups (A.S.S.C., no. 25/30 June 1989, 6; A.S.S.C., no. 1175/25 April 1980, 2). The same was the situation with the Christian Evangelical Church cult and the Pentecostal cult, besides the members designated to take care of the religious education, the choir conductors were sometimes doing this religious education. However, children by the age of ten were most often taught by young women, members of the local church, appointed by the pastors and local committees to be in charge of the religious education of such children (A.S.S.C., no. 181/3 July 1989, 2). Many times, the wives of younger pastors dealt with Sabbath or Sunday schools and taught children (A.S.S.C., no. 224/3 July 1989, 3). The lessons would also be conducted by former teachers, now banned from teaching because of their religious belief, or by students, all recruited by pastors (A.S.S.C., no. 93/1958, vol. 8, inv. 99, 2). It is worth mentioning that, although they did not have the studies of a pastor, all people who taught neo-Protestant children and youth in church were very well-prepared religion wise (A.S.S.C., no. 103/1960, 2).

When talking about the methods and means of religious teaching for children and youngsters, the communist authorities appreciated that the most well-organized activity was the one of the Adventist cult, followed closely by the Baptist cult (A.S.S.C., no. 1/1989, 1; A.S.S.C., no. 2573/21 July 1989, 1). The other two cults, the Pentecostals and mainly the Christian Evangelical Church cult were less organized on this matter, in some churches the catechization was even done just to fulfill a duty (A.S.S.C., no. 2.573/21 July 1989, 1; A.S.S.C., no. - /1971, 3; A.S.S.C., no. 122/5 March 1980, 3), and this aspect led to a departure from the church of many children and youngsters (especially in the Christian Evangelical Church cult) (A.S.S.C., no. 170/30 June 1989, 8). Things were different in these two cults because, on the one hand, they did not have educational establishments to form pastors, and ministers had to work in different institutions to earn a living (for the religious services receiving a monthly wage between 100 – 300 lei) (A.S.S.C., no. 26/s/10 February 1982, 4), and as consequence they had a poor religious training (A.S.S.C., no. 412/4 June 1973, 6), and, on the other hand, parents were quitters to authorities, and they were happy with giving their children a religious education at home. Following an inspection at the Pentecostal Church in Marginea, it was noticed that they were teaching their children in church. They were announced that neo-Protestants were not allowed to separately teach children from the Scriptures, and the members of the church stopped sending their children to church, saying that: “We are happy to receive such good advice!” (A.S.S.C., no. 109/1961, vol. 1, inv. 103, 34-35).

Some of the particularities of the catechization with the neo-Protestant cults were the scholastic character, the programs, and the mandatory frequency, all this contributing to 100% children and youth participation in the process (A.S.S.C., no. 103/1960, 4; A.S.S.C., no. 103/1969, vol. 11, inv. 143, 1). To prevent some possible repercussions from the state, the catechization instructors avoided to keep evidence or directories or to note down anything and they would change by rotation to give the impression they are not permanent (A.S.S.C., no. 36/1982, 4).

To have an efficient catechization process, different aids were used. Be it the illustrated Bible, or the decoupage Bible, “The Holy Scripture” was the supreme book during catechization hours. There were also used brochures printed in Romanian and illegally introduced in the country (A.S.S.C., no. 273/26 June 1989, 5). Poetry books and religious hymns books were very rare and usually copied by hand (A.S.S.C., no. 5127/1973, inv. 1477, 2). For the religious education lessons there were also used illustrations, albums, drawings specially prepared with different biblical information, filmstrips, slides, stereos, tape recorders and even videos all with religious messages (A.S.S.C., no. 2573/21 July 1989, 3; A.S.S.C., no. 178/3 July 1989, 2). Furthermore, the Adventist Cult used the hymns book for children “Ciripit de păsărele” (Birdsongs), edited in Romania, and the poetry book “Viața lui Iisus” (The Life of Jesus) (A.S.S.C., no. - /1989, 3). The themes in the Baptist Cult were inspired by the magazine „Îndrumătorul creștin baptist” (The Baptist Christian Guide) and the brochure “Mărturisirea de credință” (A Testimony of Faith), also using lessons and lectures from the seminary (A.S.S.C., no. 2.573/21 July 1989, 1 – 3). The Pentecostal Cult was poorer from this point of view; besides the Bible they only used the hymns and the prayers books (A.S.S.C., no. 100/29 June 1989, 5).

It was a routine to give different material incentives to award the diligence of children and youth in learning the biblical knowledge presented in the church. These incentives were awarded according to age, starting with candies, books, pictures or art reproductions, religious paintings, and even sponsoring some trips organized by the church or scholarships some neo-Protestant communities gave to young people accepted at university (A.S.S.C., no. - /1973 – 1974, 20). Some churches gave incentives with the purpose of attracting children and youngsters to attend church (A.S.S.C., no. 78/19 February 1974, 7).

All catechization activities had as main purpose the intensification of religious life and the increase in number of members; and all these were performed using bible study groups, Sabbath or Sunday schools, youth organizations, song learning groups, choirs, instrumental groups, as well as other organizational formats.

4. The role of intellectuals in the catechization of children and youngsters

Among neo-Protestant believers there is a layer of intellectuals, made up of teachers, engineers, doctors, jurists and economists, spread across all sectors of activity. Some of them were in top industrial units, computer centers, design institutes, local state apparatus, sometimes even held top management positions: Team masters, sectors and sections masters, farm heads, etc. Through their social position, but also because they knew very well both the doctrines of the cults they belonged to and the legislation regulating the activity of the cults, they were real leaders when it came to order and discipline in worship. At the same time, intellectuals gave a note of confidence to other believers. Although in church, many of them often behaved as mere believers, not playing an active role, their presence in the church was often a moral obligation to that church for material assistance received during their studies.

Of the 253.000 adult neo-Protestant believers, registered in 1984, 4.500 intellectuals were identified, accounting for about 2% of all believers. Although the data are approximate, at the level of the four NeoProtestant religious denominations the situation of intellectuals is as follows, on the 1st of April 1984:

Cult	Number of believers	Number of intellectuals
Baptist	86.000	2.583
Adventist	50.000	864
Pentecostal	90.000	536
Christian Evangelical Church	27.000	462

As shown in the table above, the highest share of intellectuals in terms of the number of members was registered in the Baptist cult, with 3% of the members of the cult being intellectuals. Then, in descending order, also in relation to the number of members, the Adventist cult with 1.72% intellectual members, the Pentecostal cult with 0.59% intellectual members and the Christian Evangelical Church Cult with 0.17% intellectual members. These studies did not include retired intellectuals, which would have made the number of intellectuals working among the non-Protestant cults much higher.

The activities of intellectuals in churches, but also outside, were multiple and varied.

They were preaching, praying, and leading parts of the religious services. Adventist doctor Andronic Emil, from the hospital in Ocna Mureș, Alba county, was preaching weekly in church, offering ample and substantiated answers to biblical study classes, being an example of religious conscientiousness for other believers (A.C.N.S.A.S., no. 150, vol. 5, 80). At the Baptist cult is noticed Albuț Ioan, a doctor at the "Refractara" company, in Aleșd, Bihor county, who preached at the churches in Aleșd and Tinăud. Also, engineer Mărgăraș Constantin, from the Termoenergetic Equipment Company in Cluj-Napoca, who had given up his membership in the party, would preach and pray almost weekly, being one of the most active members of the Baptist Church (A.C.N.S.A.S., no. 150, vol. 5, 79). Vasile Ioan, an engineer at the company "23 August" in Târgu Mureș, also preached at the Pentecostal Church in the locality, which had more than 600 members at that time. In the Christian Evangelical Church Cult were recognized for the mobilizing preachings, doctors Socoteanu Ion, from the Fundeni Hospital and Sima Ion from the Hospital of Rheumatology, both in Bucharest. The lawyer, Vasilache Mihai, the engineers Ursache Valentin, Chițescu Ioan who preached, even leading evangelization hours (A.C.N.S.A.S., no. 150, vol. 5, 80-81).

The neo-Protestant intellectuals, who were highlighted by the activity within the cult, **were elected and even held leading positions in local churches**, such as: elders, deacons and local officials. In their promotion, in addition to the established religious zeal, some services to the church were also taken into consideration: substantial contributions, assistance to believers, storage and dissemination of illegally introduced in the country religious spreading materials. At the Adventist cult, Gheorghe Paul, a doctor at the Polyclinic in Filipești de Pădure, Prahova county and Stroescu Alexandru, an engineer in Bucharest, were the leaders of the Sabbath School in the respective churches (A.C.N.S.A.S., no. 150, vol. 5, 82). Negruțiu Paul, psychologist, resigned from Hospital no. 6, Oradea, and without the agreement of the Department of Cults, occupies the position of pastor at the Church no. 2 in Oradea. In a similar way acted endocrinologist Gheorghiu Nicolae, from Deva, who starting January 1982 became a baptist pastor, without any approval from the state institutions. Also, the head of the church in Fetești – Gară, Ialomița county, was Vlăsceanu Florin, an economist who had been excluded from the party in 1978 for baptist missionary activity (A.C.N.S.A.S., no. 150, vol. 5, 81). In the Christian Evangelical Church, Vasilache Gheorghe, an engineer in Iași, was for several years now the leader of the local church (A.C.N.S.A.S., no. 150, vol. 5, 83). In the Pentecostal cult, Derechei Iosif, an economist at the National Bank of the Romanian Socialist Republic, in Bihor county, was a deacon at the local church (A.C.N.S.A.S., no. 150, vol. 5, 82).

In order to strengthen the above mentioned things, we specify that in Arad county, more than 60% of neo-Protestant intellectuals were part of the governing bodies of local churches.

They were also traveling to other churches for missionary purposes. It was a form that was growing in scale, and aimed at revitalizing religious life in isolated churches or with a small number of members. The presence of an intellectual in such churches often led to the mobilization of believers from both their own cult and other cults, arousing in those who were visited the feeling of safety and pride of belonging to the said neo-Protestant cult. Many times, the presence of such an intellectual concerned the design of film strips or slides with religious content, the evocation of some memories of that guest about religious life in other

countries, the reading of letters received from emigrated relatives, the training of the members of that church committee on the activity they had to perform. A special case is that of doctor Istrate Petre, from the village of Cruşov, Brastravăţ commune, Olt county, who had set up an "illegal" church in his home, where 25-30 believers of the Adventist cult met. Doctor Istrate and his wife, a pharmacist, were running this church. And Farc Petru, an engineer at "Clujana", a deacon of the Baptist Church no. 1, in Cluj-Napoca, would travel to the churches without a minister in the county, where he would preach and officiate various religious services. Rodilă Constantin, a professor of mathematics, but who had given up the office and worked as a technician at the Small Boiler Plant in Cluj-Napoca, would go almost monthly to the Baptist churches in the county and design slides.

At the same time, some of them **carried out various missionary activities**, exercising their profession. At the Adventist cult, Mureşan Aron, a lawyer in Tulcea town, was supporting low-cost trials for those who were baptized in the Adventist cult. The dentist Fişă Gheorghe, in Dobra commune, Hunedoara county, would approach the patients and invite them to the Baptist Church. Missionary actions while practicing their professions were also performed by Stan Constantin, an engineer at "Electroputere" Craiova and Aninoiu Daniel, a dentist also in Craiova, both members of the Christian Evangelical Church. Lupu Maria, educator at Orman General School, Cluj county, went to the children's homes and, on the pretext of connecting with their parents held pentecostal indoctrination studies with the grown-ups (A.C.N.S.A.S., no. 150, vol. 5, 83- 84).

In addition to these preoccupations, the neo-Protestant intellectuals were particularly interested in **the religious education of children and young people**, with a particular role in organizing and training them in the religious life. To this end, they used their educational and psychological knowledge accumulated in secular education, as well as their prestige and professional authority.

As **instructors of artistic-religious groups**, neo-Protestant intellectuals were implementing their skills by producing literary and musical works, which were included in the repertoire of choirs, orchestras, soloists and reciters. Along with other believers, intellectuals began to assert themselves in organizing separate catechisation courses for children. As a rule, these courses were held in the annexed chambers of the churches, during evangelization hours or during break between religious services. Most of the rooms where such activities took place were equipped with a rich audio-visual teaching material (A.C.N.S.A.S., no. 150, vol. 5, 86).

Since 1977-1978, in Timisoara, the young faithful Baptists from Churches no. 1 and no. 2, gathered separately in the prayer houses, in some days, other than those established by the regulation of the cult (about 250 young people). Following this pattern, from autumn 1981 the Pentecostal youth from Churches no. 1 and no. 2 started to gather together separately (180 young people, students and workers). During these meetings, they preached, sang, recited poems, read and commented biblical verses. Other youth-related actions were also initiated, such as planning trips. Since 1983, a similar group has also been formed at the Baptist Church in Lugoj, and the tendency to intensify such actions was on the rise in the other counties of the country. Going back to the four groups in Timisoara, we must add that they had as leader a number of young intellectuals, of whom we remember in the Baptist Cult – Dronca Nelu, an energetic engineer, Colţ Teofil, mechanical sub-engineer, Doru Mate, engineer and, Craşovan Cornel, constructor engineer, Luca Teodor, mechanical engineer, Frânc Iosif, economist – in the Pentecostal Cult (A.C.N.S.A.S., no. 150, vol. 5, 88).

Most of the neo-Protestant intellectuals, at their request, were not recorded in the members records, which is why they were more difficult to detect. During their student years, many of them had not attended the churches, not even being members of a neo-Protestant cult. Only after employment, they returned to churches with membership. The number of intellectuals in the neo-Protestant cults was on the rise, to be kept in mind the fact that in all university centers in the country there were powerful neo-Protestant churches, with a large

number of believers, but also intellectuals. In Ploiești, Timișoara, Craiova, Cluj, Bucharest, churches were also frequented by foreign students, mostly from Africa (A.C.N.S.A.S., no. 150, vol. 5, 91).

5. Students' activities

During the communist period, the zeal of young neo-Protestants to engage in various activities, whatever their nature, was often blurred by the intervention of the authorities charged with overseeing such activities. However, this has not overturned the spirit of youth, and during this period there have been numerous reports on various activities carried out by young people, with young people or, sometimes, for young people.

The presence in the main university centers of students from especially Adventist and Baptist families has been exploited by these churches and used for the training of choirs, recitators, and orchestras. In order to have an overview, we specify that on March 1st, 1974, 38 students were identified at the University in Cluj-Napoca, most of them students at the Conservatory and the Faculty of Medicine (A.S.S.C., no. 9371/2119/12 May 1975, 10).

Youth meetings were often held and organized in churches, either by young people themselves or by some pastors or by various intellectuals, members of the respective cults. In Timișoara, at Baptist churches no. 1 and no. 2, every Monday evening, between 7 pm and 9 pm, meetings were organized with the youth, explaining texts, and singing religious hymns. On March 12th, 1976, a group of young people from Baptist Church no. 1 from Timișoara went to Church no. 2 and proposed to Pastor Stanca I. that on Monday the young people from the two churches should no longer gather separately, but in one place, perhaps together with those in the Hungarian church. They also expressed their desire to organize the Baptist youth in Romania, first in Timișoara, then in the rest of the country, as it had been organized before (A.S.S.C., no. 13/6/2/1976, vol. 2, inv. 4). In the same year, 1976, Pastor Gheorghită Nicolae, together with other persons, tried to create in Hunedoara county an organization of the Baptist youth, by initiating special programs at the houses of prayer (A.S.S.C., no. - /12 October 1983, 1-2).

At the same time, these youth meetings were mobilizing for missionary activities among young people. Following the visits and preaching of the pastors Iosif Țon and Liviu Olah, in the Baptist Church in Galați, the Baptist youth, who sometimes met for rehearsal on Saturday night, decided to meet regularly, not only every Saturday evening, but also on Tuesday evening, for the purpose of continuous indoctrination and attraction of other young people. As a result of these visits and the urges given by the two pastors outside the church, the young students of the church began to engage in an activity to attract new students to the Baptist faith. At the University of Galați, 20 Baptist students who were intensifying their missionary activity among students were detected. The effort of these missionaries was successfully crowned, so in September 1975 Podaru Sanda and Popalon Zamfira, second year students, sub-engineers at the extraction section, were baptized at the Baptist Church in Brăila. In response to this activity, the Communist Party Committee at the University has undertaken several educational actions, and the management has even taken administrative measures. Thus, on May 7th, 1976, following the missionary actions to distribute some Baptist materials, Podar Sanda and Popalon Zamfira had to move from the student hostel. The head of the Baptist Church in Galați came to the office of the Inspector for Cults, manifesting his indignation in the name of the Baptist believers because on May 8th, the day when the setting up of the Romanian Communist Party was celebrated, the two Baptist students had to evacuate the student hostel (A.S.S.C., no. 13/6/2/1976, vol. 2, inv. 4, 1).

On the evening of October 18th, 1981, on the express train no. 343, Suceava – Iași, two students from Suceava found a map with personal documents and other notes belonging to Muntean

Teodor Miroslav, who was resident in Iași and worked as designer at the Synthetic Fibers Plant in Iași, design department. The investigation subsequently carried out by the Inspector for Cults revealed that Muntean Teodor Miroslav was a Member of the management committee of the Pentecostal Church in Iași. There were also various notes on the meetings he had with students from Iași on October 14th, 1981. This meeting had coincided with the feast day of the Mitropoly of Iași "Cuvioasa Paraschiva", which had been celebrated on Wednesday. On that occasion they analyzed the work they had done so far, discussed future projects, had moments of personal testimony, and the last item on the agenda was the prayers "for the transformation of Iași" (A.C.N.S.A.S., no. 141, vol. 14, 1-3).

There were several occasions when young students, because of their desire, were allowed by the pastors to organize and hold the entire religious service in the church. On November 7th 1954, at the Baptist Church in Nicolae Titulescu street, when about 1.400 believers attended the church, the religious service was held by Chiper, a student at the Faculty of Construction, together with Anei, a student of the Faculty of Medicine. This happened with the approval of pastor Alexa Popovici (A.S.S.C., no. 94/1954, vol. 10, inv. 136).

The special interest of young people in spiritual things has often led the leadership of cults to create the necessary framework and time for such activities. At the meeting of the committee of the Conference of Muntenia, held on 11th and 12th February 1958, it was discussed, in accordance with the directives received from the Union of Conferences, the date when the week of prayer of the young Adventists was to take place. The Inspector for Cults, who was present, specified in his report that he believed that such a separate manifestation of young people should be banned, and could be very well combined with that of the adults, which took place at the end of each year.

The reports of the inspectors for cults recorded, for students' activities also, trips made by the artistic-musical groups. On April 14th, in Petroșani, there was a great religious event, attended by more than 600 people, organized by Ilea Traian. He had invited a group of 20 students from Timișoara on this occasion, including a student from Congo. Another group of students from Cluj-Napoca, all with musical instruments, joined the group, and organized a major musical event. Five students spoke in the church, including the one from Congo. The program lasted for five hours, being broadcast through the amplification station outside the church. Similar events were also held by students at Câmpa and Petrila. These actions delighted some believers who had previously made negative comments on the religious freedom in our country, compared to that in Congo (A.S.S.C., no. 13/6/2/1976, vol. 2, inv. 4, 7).

Besides these actions, we must also mention the intention of young Christian Evangelical Church members in Bacău to organize a conference with young people from several places in the country on the 23rd and 24th August, 1972. Being notified, the Inspector for Cults decided to call, on 2nd August the leading committee of the Christian Evangelical Church in Bacău and to show them they had no right to organize religious services outside the religious regulations. After having read the notification received, the members of the leadership of that church were shown the provisions of the law on the General Regime of Cults, Article 24 and the provisions of the Statute of the Cults concerning the purpose of the religious gatherings. From the discussions held at the time, it became obvious that the idea of such a conference belonged to Gavriiliuc Paul and his father, Gavriiliuc Iftimie, this was understood from their statements and from the fact that order 568, from April 16th 1970, given by the cult's leadership through his three delegates, provisioned religious services also on legal holidays. Starting from the premises, the two considered that it was better to gather young people from several places than to have fun, drink or attend bars and other harmful places. Of course, the committee dissociated itself from the action taken by the two and, as young people from Bacău, Vaslui, Bârlad, Harghita and Pașcani were to come to the conference, they were announced that the assembly had been suspended. The conclusions of that meeting focused on the observance of the existing rules, the non-authenticity of order

568, from 1970, the introduction of discipline and order within Christian Evangelical Churches and the need to not initiate on August 23rd-24th, 1972, any religious gatherings, choir rehearsals or any other activities, these days not being mentioned in the old provisions of religious services (A.S.S.C., no. 325/29 August 1972, 1-3).

Among the large-scale activities organized by the Baptist cult, were the organization of the 3rd and 4th World Youth Congress. The 3rd Congress was held between 25th and 30th July 1953 in Bucharest, gathering over 1.500 delegates, observers, guests of various political and religious beliefs, from all social categories, races and nationalities, representatives of the most diverse youth organizations. It was "the most representative assembly in the history of the entire youth movement". Debating the most pressing issues and demands of youth around the world, this Congress was called the "World Youth Parliament". Luis Jorge, Argentina's Catholic delegate, says: "We came to the Congress to shake the hands of young socialists, Protestants, Liberals, communists, Muslims, young people of all political ideologies, all religions, all intellectual tendencies, to tell them that we do not disagree with anyone when fighting for peace and independence". This Congress brought together, along with democratic youth organizations from around the world, many other political, cultural, sports, religious youth organizations such as the Youth Organization of the Good Templars in Norway, the Catholic Student Action in Belgium, the Organization of Muslim Scouts in Algeria, and the Union of Socialist Students in Iceland (A.S.S.C., no. 84/1953, vol. 4, inv. 130).

Between the 2nd and the 16th August, the fourth Youth Congress was held, Bucharest even being called the "City of Youth". The capital's streets echoed the songs of the choirs and the fanfares. The Congress was attended by young people from more than 106 countries, of different nationalities and languages, totaling about 100,000 people. The Inspector for Cults signaled that he had never seen a city in which so many flags from so many countries could flap together. "These powerful impressions and feelings planted in the soul of young people around the world were to strengthen the hope of the peoples in the victory of understanding, friendship and collaboration, until the final triumph of peace." (A.S.S.C., no. 84/1953, vol. 4, inv. 130).

The students also carried out some rather bold activities for that period, which were, of course, immediately penalized by both the cult leadership and the competent authorities. On June 6th – 7th, 1978, the Baptist Union Committee was held at the headquarters in Bucharest. During the discussions, Mara Cornel reminded of a memoire of young Baptists from Iași who had reached "Free Europe", and read a letter of the Baptist Church in Iași, in which the believers blamed them and disapproved the deed of the young people (A.S.S.C., no. - /7 June 1978, 19).

The Baptist Student Timotei Pop, from the University of Brașov, also multiplied Iosif Ton's speeches and sent them to some people in the country. After the analysis of the situation by the County Committee of the Communist Party, together with the University leadership, he and another student, a Member of the Pentecostal cult, were warned by the competent authorities before their colleagues and those responsible for youth organizations (A.S.S.C., no. 486/15 September 1976, 8).

And in an informative report, with Mitica Popescu as source, the Securitate organs were informed about the "multiplier machine", which has been running since the winter of 1986 at the Conference of the Adventist cult in Cluj-Napoca, 12 Cuza Voda street. It was also reported that the students Marius Jianu, from the Faculty of Construction, originating from Oradea, Turda Grigore, a student at the Faculty of Dentistry, who was originating from Vișeu de Sus and Michel, a student at the Faculty of Medicine, originating from Zambia, knew about this. The son of Nosner Gotfried, a student of no frequency schedule, also knew about this. These students had connections with the people who had access to the multiplying machine. This student had made several exits during 1987 in France and Greece. Jianu Marius

had brought foreign students to the church, and he recently had brought a Jordanian, student in Medicine (A.C.N.S.A.S., no. 141, vol. 14, 1).

Whether it was Ploiești, Timisoara, Craiova, Cluj or Bucharest, the neo-Protestant churches in these university centers were frequented by a large number of students, and the result was the strengthening and rejuvenating of these churches.

6. Conclusions

In parallel to the communist state's attempt to make the entire Romanian society atheist, there were children and young people who, "illegally" most of the time, benefited from the highest religious education. This endeavor, of instilling religious feeling to the younger generations, was a hand-over of joint efforts by parents, pastors, and local churches, from which, with tears, pride, and consistency, over the years, the most beautiful results were collected. Students or workers, intellectuals or not, instructors, who were in charge of conveying information and religious values, were real models, highly trained people of exceptional moral quality, with fear of God and love of people, without whom the Romanian neo-Protestant churches would certainly be different today.

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