

Migration of the Evangelical Culture in Romania After the Fall of Communism

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ABSTRACT: The Evangelical churches were established in Romania during the 19th and 20th centuries, but their cultural influence became more prevalent after the fall of Communism. In the first part of this paper, the author analyzes the cultural trends that emerged after the Romanian revolution of December 1989. In the second part, the paper highlights three historical conceptions regarding Christ and culture. In the third part, the paper focuses on the migration of the Evangelical culture in the post-communist Romania. In the last part, the author offers few suggestions on how to extend the impact of the Evangelical culture in the Romanian culture, by the occasional adoption of the concepts “Christ against Culture”, and “Christ the Transformer of Culture.”

KEY WORDS: Christ, Evangelical, culture, Romania, migration.

The Evangelical churches were established in Romania during the 19th and 20th centuries: Baptists in 1850,¹ Open Brethren (known in Romanian as *Creștini după Evanghelie* – Christians According to the Gospel) in 1989,² Pentecostals in 1922,³ and Adventists in 1869.⁴

Before communist period, Evangelicals were focused especially to change the life of individuals, and to establish churches. They could not play a big role in the Romanian society, because they were a very small minority, with small resources, and the Romanian Orthodox Church had then big power, being connected with the state. The Orthodox Church was not only an established religion in Romania; it

was a political force as well. Its dogma was that the Orthodox Church was the only true and legitimate church in Romania.

When the communists took the power in Romania, their first goal was to destroy the ideological opposition, either political or religious. They put in prison political and religious leaders, and then they started to disparage other ideologies.⁵

For almost half of century, Evangelical Christians had to face a double persecution: from the communist authorities, and from the public opinion instigated by the leadership of the Eastern Orthodox Church. The goal of systematic atheist propaganda was to associate in the mind of Romanians crazy cults or sects from the whole world with Evangelicals. And they were successfully, because Evangelicals had not access to mass-media and they could not demonstrate that they were not David Koresh's cult from another continent.⁶

During the open persecution, subtle animosity, and distrust, the church could not become involved in social ministries, and even more, the church itself was pushed at the periphery of the society.

The Evangelicals established in Romania their own subculture. This was not only a reaction against society rejection. It was also a way to protect the members of Evangelical churches against atheism. The narrowest Christians were against the tools of the atheist propaganda: books, radio, television, and even newspapers.⁷ Gene Edward Veith Jr. described this type of community as a "Christian ghetto".⁸ Closed in their subculture, Evangelicals struggled to survive and to share the Gospel to other people through the only method they could apply constantly: evangelism by friendship. Though under persecution, Evangelical churches grew constantly in that period.

Because of the growing number, and of the readiness to suffer for Christ, Evangelicals constituted one of the strongest movement against communism in Romania. But the impact of the Evangelical culture in Romania came after the fall of communism.

1 The Crisis of Romanian Culture after the Fall of Communism

The revolution from December 1989 brought in Romania much more than a change of the political system. It brought a change of

the world view. From an open atheism, many Romanians passed to faith in a Supreme Power who governs the world, known in general as “God”. This change occurred suddenly, starting during the days of revolution. The totally unusual warm weather (50 to 65 F) during Christmas 1989 made possible anticommunist meetings of the large crowds during those days and nights, and in this way the population forced Ceaușescu’s oppressive regime to abdicate. For this reason, even the most skeptical people admitted that God helped Romania during those days.

The political revolution from Romania brought also a cultural revolution. Romanians removed not only the communist symbols (as the communist emblem from the Romanian flag), but also a big part of the monstrous culture created during the communism. A large part of literature, poetry, art, music, but also behaviors, institutions, and organizations were abandoned. These external changes occurred faster than the change of mentality, because everybody was afraid to be identified with the communism which brought so much suffering.

The problem was how it would be developed the Romanian culture? What model must be adopted? Romania tried to find its own way. After the fall of the “iron curtain,” Romania became not only an open country, but much more, a receptive one. In the Romanian society have shown several trends that are presented in the following pages.

1.1 Romania’s Restoration to the Interwar Status

Some Romanians, especially the oldest generation, tried to restore the society as it was before the Second World War. They focused specially to set up again the Monarchy in Romania, by bringing from Switzerland the Romanian king, Michael I. Their cultural model was Romania during the interbellum time, before the communists took the power.

1.2 The Humanistic Culture of Communism

A few people, especially the former communist party nomenclature and their families, were looking back with nostalgia to communism. They did not abandon their communist ideals, and they tried to promote communist ideas in an attenuate form, as socialist

ideology. Their philosophy of life was still the secular humanism, excluding God from their world view.⁹ Their eyes were still oriented toward the big Eastern neighbor of Romania, Russia.

1.3 Eastern Orthodox Church-Centered Culture

The Eastern Orthodox Church tried to restore its reputation destroyed by the compromises its leadership did during the communist period. The intention was to become credible for Romanians, in order to have a political control over Romania. The efforts were not oriented to a Christ-centered world view, but to an Orthodox Church-centered culture. In order to realize this, the Orthodox Church influenced politicians to vote a law to change its status from a denomination equal with the others, to the national church of Romania, with special and unique privileges. This did not happen, and the law of religious freedom no. 489 / 2006 established that all the denominations recognized by the state are equal in Romania and have same rights.

1.4 Romania's Integration into the Global Culture

Many Romanians, especially from the younger generation, were attracted by the Western culture, because of its strong civilization and the success of the Western political system. Without strong convictions, and without absolute values, Romanians had not the discernment or critical thinking, and they accepted everything from the modern Western culture. The capitalist economical system played an important role in this globalization process of the culture.¹⁰

For example, the first five laws established in Romania during the days of revolution certified the freedom of religions, freedom of political opinions, but also freedom for abortion! These five laws were the result of the population will, imposed by the crowds from the street, and not by a legal Parliament. And nobody dared to attack these "human rights" earned by the young Romanian martyrs in December 1989, with their own blood.

Two years later, when Romania applied to become part of European Union, the Western organizations imposed Romania to democratize the Constitution by giving rights to homosexuals. After a long debate, Romanian Parliament gave freedom to homosexuality.

Their justification before the Romanian people was that, though this was contrary to Christian morality and to Romanian culture, the law was only a simple political act to be accepted as a democratic society, and not a change of behaviors. In this way, the political activity demonstrated that was not based on the Bible, or according with the Christian morality.

Romania was invaded by the modern Western culture, and unfortunate, the bad characteristics of this culture were received first by Romanians. The main instruments which facilitated this influence were the modern communications, and mass-media, especially television.

Romanians had in the last years of communism only one TV channel, with three to four hours TV program per day. At least one hour and half from this program was dedicated to the activity of the Romanian dictator, Ceausescu. In general, television was the most powerful medium in the world, but the hunger for television was amplified for Romanians because it was “the forbidden fruit” for long time in the past. Today, television continues its role as “molder of attitudes, of behavior, and of taste”,¹¹ because the majority of Romanians are people with limited resources, and the television is their cheapest entertainment means.

“Television is brainwashing children, young people, and adults to accept an amoral life style.”¹² Television gives good and useful things mixed with violence, unethical behaviors, nudity, and even obscenity and pornography, especially through TV cable.

1.5 Evangelical Christians and the Romanian Culture

What role do the Evangelicals would play in the Romanian culture? What would be the actions of the true Christians when the Romanian society struggle with the crisis of the end of the second millennium? How the Evangelical culture migrated in Romania during the last 26 years? This will be analyzed in the next pages. The study will try also to establish what must be the Christian position regarding culture in Romania. But first of all it will be analyzed the historical point of view adopted by Christians regarding Christ and culture.

2. Christ and Culture: Three Historical Concepts

Professor H. Richard Niebuhr gave in his book *Christ and Culture* five ways Christians related to culture during the history of the church: (1) Christ against culture, (2) Christ and culture in paradox, (3) Christ the transformer of culture, (4) Christ above culture, and (5) Christ of culture. In the following pages we will only present the first three conceptions, because only those were accepted by Evangelicals during the history. “Christ above culture” is the traditional position of Roman Catholic Church and Eastern Orthodox Church. “Christ of culture” is the conception of Gnostics and liberals.

Richard Niebuhr analyzed in his book the relationship of Christ with culture and not of Christianity with culture, because he intended to emphasize the centrality of Christ in Person. He wrote: “A Christian is ordinarily defined as ‘one who believes in Jesus Christ’ or as ‘a follower of Jesus Christ.’ He might more adequately be described as one who counts himself as belonging to that community of men for whom Jesus Christ—his life, words, deeds, and destiny—is of supreme importance as the key to the understanding of themselves and their world, the main source of the knowledge of God and man, good and evil, the constant companion of the conscience, and the expected deliver from evil.”¹³

Jesus Christ is more than a great teacher, lawgiver or religion leader. Jesus Christ is the Creator and the Savior of the mankind, the Son of God and the Son of man. The essence of Christianity is not a sum of beliefs or rituals, but a Person: Jesus Christ. For this reason, the author of this article will use Niebuhr’s terminology *Christ and culture*, and not Christians or Christianity and culture.

The most common definition of culture in Romania is: “Totality of material and spiritual values created by humanity in the process of social and historical practice, including the institutions required by creation and transmission of these values.”¹⁴

Paul G. Hiebert defines culture as: “the more or less integrated systems of ideas, feelings, and values and their associated patterns of behavior and products shared by a group of people who organize and regulate what they think, feel, and do.”¹⁵ This is a good definition,

because expresses the three dimensions of culture (cognitive, affective, and evaluative), and the manifestation of culture in patterns of behavior and products.

2.1 The Radical Model: “Christ against Culture”

This was the earliest position Christians had in church history. The roots of this attitude of Christians are in some texts from the New Testament, and especially in 1 John 2. The Apostle John exhorted us to love God and our neighbor, and especially our brothers in Christ, because God loved us first. But also, the Apostle of love commanded us do not love the world:

Do not love the world or anything in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For everything in the world-- the cravings of sinful man, the lust of his eyes and the boasting of what he has and does-- comes not from the Father but from the world. The world and its desires pass away, but the man who does the will of God lives forever. (1 John 2:15-17).

The term *world* does not mean here the universe created by God or the human race, but “the present condition of human affairs, in alienation from and opposition to God.”¹⁶ Niebuhr wrote:

The world appears as a realm under the power of evil; it is the region of darkness, into which the citizens of the kingdom of light must not enter; it is characterized by the prevalence in it of lies, hatred, and murder; it is the heir of Cain. It is a secular society, dominated by the “lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes and the pride of life.”¹⁷

2.1.1 Prominent Promoters of the “Christ against Culture” position

Tertullian

In the second century A.D., Christians started to believe that they constituted a new race besides Jews and Gentile. Jesus Christ established this new race or society, and He is the King and the Ruler of these new people. The corollary of this conception “was

the thought that whatever does not belong to the commonwealth of Christ is under the rule of evil. This comes to expression in the doctrine the two ways: ... one of life and one of death."¹⁸ This doctrine devised sharply the Christians from the old society.

One of the church Fathers, Tertullian, promoted very much the position "Christ against culture" by emphasizing the authority of Jesus Christ as Lord. "With this concentration on the Lordship of Jesus Christ Tertullian combines a rigorous morality of obedience to his commandments, including not only love of the brothers but of enemies, nonresistant to evil, prohibitions of anger and the lustful look. He is as strict a Puritan in his interpretation of what Christian faith demands in conduct as one can find."¹⁹

Tertullian prohibited implication of Christians in some area as politics,²⁰ military service,²¹ philosophy,²² and arts.²³ Through his teaching, Tertullian put the basis for the radical anti-cultural movement in the church history.

Tolstoy

The famous Russian writer, Lev Tolstoy, though was noble by birth and wealth by inheritance, was unhappy because of the meaninglessness of his existence and the futility of the values esteemed by his society.

Then he had an experience that changed his life and that transformed his disappear into peace. Tolstoy describes in these words his experience:

I have understood Christ's teaching in his commandments and I see that their fulfillment offers blessedness to me and to all men. I have understood that the execution of these commandments is the will of that Source of all from which my life also has come. In its fulfillment lies the only possibility of salvation. I understood and believed that Jesus is not only the Messiah, the Christ, but that he is really the Savior of the world. I know that there is no other exit either for me or for all those who together with me are tormented in this life. I know that for all, and for me together with them, there is no way of escape except by fulfilling those commands of Christ which offer to all humanity the highest welfare of which I can conceive.²⁴

Tolstoy interpreted the Gospel according to Matthew literally, and he believed that Jesus Christ established His Kingdom on earth by abolishing the Law of Moses and giving a new law, having the following five commandments:²⁵

1. Live at peace with all men and never consider your anger against any man justified.
2. Do not make the desire for sexual relations an amusement.
3. Never take an oath to anyone, anywhere, about anything. Every oath is extorted for evil ends.
4. Never resist the evildoer by force, do not meet violence with violence.
5. Not to make distinctions one's own and another nations; not to arm oneself for war.

This interpretation of the Sermon on the Mount guided Tolstoy to the conclusions that:

- Christian faith was incompatible with the state;
- "The churches are anti-Christian institutions" by their "pride, violence, and self-assertion, immobility and death"²⁶.
- Philosophy, sciences and arts are not only useless, but bad, because they rest on falsehood.

Christian Groups

The conception "Christ-against-culture" was taken by medieval mystics, and several groups as Mennonites, Quakers, Amish, and Anabaptists.

Though "Christ-against-culture" was the response of Anabaptists to culture, not this was their intention. Stanley Haurwas was right when he wrote:

The early Anabaptists had no desire to withdraw from the world: They were murdered by Calvinist, Lutheran, and Roman Catholic societies because they attempted to be the church. Their withdrawal came in an attempt to prevent people opposed to them ... from killing their children. The Anabaptists did not withdraw. They were driven out.²⁷

2.1.2 Theological Problems for the Radical Conception

Niebuhr saw four theological problems of conceptions “Christ against culture”.²⁸ The first problem is the denigration of “reason and exaltation of “revelation”. But reason is not in opposition with revelation, and reason goes on outside of the Christian sphere. The second problem is that sin is not only outside of man, in the culture; sin is inside of human nature. The isolation from the world does not give the victory over the world. Thirdly, the emphasis on conduct (to be different than the other people from the world) lead to legalism and to neglect the grace of God. “The knottiest theological problem raised by the “Christ against culture” movement is the problem of the relation of Jesus Christ to the Creator of nature and Governor of history as well as to the Spirit immanent in creation and in the Christian community”.²⁹

2.2 The Dualist Model: “Christ and Culture in Paradox”

This conception is called “dualist” because it tries to hold together Christ and culture, but also to distinguish “between loyalty to Christ and responsibility for culture.”³⁰ This is not the *dualistic* Zoroastrianism of two equal and coexisted from the beginning of two forces: good and evil, symbolized by light and darkness.

The position “Christ and culture in paradox” has the roots in Paul’s letters. The Paulin theology is centered on Christ. The righteousness of man cannot be accepted before the Holy God. And the righteousness of Jesus Christ had brought to light the sinfulness of man who tried to please God by his human efforts. For this reason God gave in Christ the perfect righteousness which can reconcile man with God. Identified with Christ in His death on the cross, Paul died to the world and the world died to him. The apostle resurrected with Jesus Christ to live a new life, for the Living God.

All people who had the experience of regeneration constitute a new humanity under the Lordship of Jesus Christ, since the unregenerate mankind, with all their cultural institutions are under the control of sin. But the Christians do not live in isolated communities of the saved. They live among the other people, witnessing to them by the proclamation of the gospel, by a redeemed

life and by non-participation in actions and customs as those described in Galatians 5:19-21:

The acts of the sinful nature are obvious: sexual immorality, impurity and debauchery; idolatry and witchcraft; hatred, discord, jealousy, fits of rage, selfish ambition, dissension's, factions and envy; drunkenness, orgies, and the like. I warn you, as I did before, that those who live like this will not inherit the kingdom of God.

The Apostle Paul focused exclusively to the relationship of man with God through Jesus Christ, rejecting any other ways.

The expansion of the new humanity living for God was not past or it still to come: it is now going on. And it is only one way to become member of this new humanity: by salvation in Jesus Christ, and not by changing cultural customs or political system. Paul explained explicitly that the political authority's task from God is not to save men from the sin slavery, but to restrain and expose the sin. In this way Paul is dualist because there are two ethics not necessary contradictory: "the ethics of Christian culture and the culture in which Christian live."³¹ As long as we live on the earth, we need the cultural institutions not because they help us in our life with Christ, but because "they restrain wickedness in a sinful and temporal world."³² But this two ethics cannot be equal in value: one is temporal, another is eternal.

2.2.1 Prominent Promoters of the "Christ and Culture in Paradox" position

Marcion

In the second century, Marcion tried even to eliminate the Old testament in his effort to dissociate Christian faith from Jewish culture. "He recognized two moralities, the ethics of justice and the ethics of love; but the former was inextricably bound up with corruption, and Christ lived, preached, and communicated only the latter."³³

Luther

The great reformer Martin Luther is the most prominent representative of this position through his writings: *Treatise on Christian Liberty*, and *Against the Robbing and Murdering Hordes of Peasants*. The duality is evident in Luther's thinking when he wrote:

From faith flow forth love and joy in the Lord and from love a joyful, willing and free mind that serves one's neighbor willingly and takes no account of gratitude or ingratitude, of praise or blame, of gain or loss... For as his Father does, distributing all things to all men richly and freely, causing His sun to shine upon the good and upon the evil, so also the son does all things and suffers all things with that freely bestowing joy which is his delight when through Christ he sees it in God, the dispenser of such great benefits.³⁴

On the other hand he wrote: "A prince or a lord must remember that he is God's minister and the servant of His wrath to whom the sword is committed for use upon such fellows. Here there is no time for sleeping; no place for patience or mercy. It is the time of the sword, not the day of grace."³⁵

Luther did not divide the life in Christ and the life in culture, the Kingdom of God and the Kingdom of the world. Though one of the two spheres (church and state) originated in God was perverted by sin, Christians have to live in both spheres, because Christ is absolute Lord, He is Lawgiver as well as Savior, Master as well as Redeemer.

The practical consequences are that the Christians may and must be involved in philosophy³⁶, in arts³⁷, in commerce³⁸, political activities³⁹, and even military career⁴⁰. Luther limited the usage of the force for Christians only to defend the neighbors when they have been entrusted with care of others as fathers or governors.

2.2.2 Theological Problems for the Dualist Conception

The dualist conception integrated well the dynamic character of God, and the biblical truths about man, grace and sin. With this understanding of the dynamic existence, the dualists revitalized

both: Christian knowledge and Christian action. The dualists were accused that they relativized all the laws of society or of reason.

Another objection was that the conservatism is the logical consequences of seeing state only as a restraining force against sin, without positive institutions. The wrath of God is revealed not only against the sin, but also against the entire world with its temporal institutions. For this reason, the Christians are not motivated to be very much involved in this transitory and dying world.

2.3 The Conversionist Model: “Christ the Transformer of Culture”

The conversionist point of view has many similarities with the dualist conception, but there are also some differences. “What distinguishes conversionists from dualists is their more positive and hopeful attitude toward culture.”⁴¹

The conversionists are not concentrated only to the redemption in Christ as dualists do, but also on the creation, because Christ is not only the Savior, but also the Creator. The Apostle Paul wrote: “For by him all things were created: things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or powers or rulers or authorities; all things were created by him and for him. He is before all things, and in him all things hold together.” (Col. 1:16-17). And the Apostle John told us that “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was with God in the beginning. Through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made.” (John 1:1-3). Later, “the Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us.” (John 1:14)

Another theological conviction specific to conversionists is the better understanding of the fall. The consequence of the fall is not that man became evil, but he became corrupted. His good nature from the creation became a perverted, a twisted, and misdirected nature. For this reason, culture is corrupted, not evil. Culture must be converted, not replace.

The third characteristic of the model “Christ the Transformer of culture” is the view of history under God’s control:

For the exclusive Christian, history is the story of a rising church or Christian culture and a dying pagan civilization; for the cultural Christian, it is the story of the spirit's encounter with nature; for the synthesis, it is a period of preparation under law, reason, gospel, and church for an ultimate communion of the soul with God; for the dualist, history is the time of struggle between faith and unbelief, a period between the giving of the promise life and its fulfillment.⁴²

The conversionists defend their position with many biblical passages, but the most conversionist document seems to be the fourth Gospel. They state that the Apostle John is a conversionist.⁴³

2.3.1 Prominent Promoters of the “Christ the Transformer of Culture” position

Augustine

Augustine expected that human society to be regenerated by the replacement of the pagan by the Trinitarian principles. His theology influenced the history, helping the conversion of the Roman Empire from a Caesar-centered society, to a medieval Christendom.

Christ is the transformer of culture for Augustine in the sense that he redirects, reinvigorates, and regenerates that life of man, expressed in all human works, which in present actuality is the perverted and corrupted exercise of a fundamentally good nature; which, moreover, in its depravity lies under the curse of transience and death, not because an external punishment has been visited upon it, but because it is intrinsically self-contradictory.⁴⁴

Calvin

The position of the great reformer John Calvin was very similar with Augustine's conception. For Calvin, the fallen and perverted human nature corrupted culture and made human society a means to transmit this depravity.

The church and state came from God. The state is God's minister not only with a negative role, to restrain evil, but positively

in the promotion of welfare. Human society is corrupt, but it must be influenced by the church, to become God's kingdom. This is an eschatological hope that Christ will transform human culture in the new creation.

3. Evangelicals and Culture in Post-Communist Romania

Prior to the Revolution of December 1989, the Evangelical churches adopted firmly the position "Christ against culture". The new religious freedom from December 1989 became a precious opportunity for Christians to share the gospel. The Evangelical movement knew a rapid expansion because Romanians were hungry for the Word of God and many of them received Jesus Christ as their Savior.

3.1 The "Migration" of the Evangelical Culture into the Romanian Culture

The doors which were once closed during communism now opened widely to the Evangelicals. Christians became involved in education, legislation, management and even politics.⁴⁵ This active presence was beneficial for the Christianity, because more and more people heard the gospel.

In the first years of freedom, Evangelicals had to explain to the Romanians that "bourgeois democracy was established primarily to give the individual freedom from the traditional cultural, social and political restraints of the feudal-medieval world."⁴⁶ In democracy, the majority must respect the rights of the minority. The change from Marxist collectivism to democracy gave Christians the opportunity to present Evangelical movement as a distinct component of the Romanian culture. Evangelicals are not a threat for the Romanian culture; on contrary, their pleading in public debates was that Evangelicals enrich the cultural spectrum of Romania by the Reform heritage.

The religious freedom was used by Evangelicals to help Romanians to turn back to God. They started in a short period of time numerous new churches, and missions. In Christian publishing/printing houses they printed Christian books, magazines, and

newspapers. In the new Bible institutes they train many ministers. In schools organized according to western colleges, students learn how to do social work as a ministry. The Christian orphanages and Christians medical clinics opened in Romania were very appreciated by society.

In the Christian universities established by the Evangelical denominations, students learn how to teach Christianity in public schools. In the academic world, Evangelicals started to bring their contribution, enriching the Romanian culture.

The most powerful instrument to penetrate the Romanian society was the Evangelical radios and televisions. Also, the internet became a very good instrument to promote the Evangelical culture, through the dedicated pages for theology, education, apologetics, and by broadcasting live the church services.

The result was that the value of the Evangelical culture became to be appreciated by the society. For example, in 2016, Evangelicals and the Orthodox Church worked together to change the article 48 from the Romanian constitution, in order to specify that the marriage is the union between a man and a woman. As a result, over 3 million people signed this improvement of the constitution. Also, in 2015 and 2016, in many places, Evangelicals worked together with the Orthodox Church to help the Budnariu family from Norway take back their children, and other families abused by Norway authorities.

3.1.1 Looking Forward

All these goals were achieved in two decades, with a tremendous effort of Christians, and without a well-defined strategy from the beginning. The Evangelicals were in this time of religious freedom as culturally conquerors in a territory that was hostile for long time.

Now it is time to organize and to establish strategies. One of them is what would be the relationship between Evangelicals and culture. The author of this article agrees with Dr. Okholm opinion that “the church is to be both transformationist *and* counter-culture”.⁴⁷ The “traditional” tendency is to be radical. But in some situation Evangelicals must have the conception “Christ against culture”, in other domains the conceptions “Christ the Transformer of culture” is biblical.

But what do Evangelicals have to do practically: In the author's opinion, Evangelicals from Romania must focus their efforts toward a few directions.

3.2.1. Lifestyle

Evangelicals must live a holy and humble life as Jesus Christ did. The church must remember what was good in the Evangelical traditions of Pietism and Puritanism. Useful distinctions did the Consultation on Simple Lifestyle from Hoddesdon, England, on March 17-21, 1980: "We also accept the distinction between necessities and luxuries, creative hobbies and empty status symbols, modesty and vanity, [...] and between the service of God and slavery to fashion".⁴⁸

This lifestyle will be a strong base to promote Christ in the Romanian culture. By being salt and light (Matthew 5:13-16), Evangelicals promote the conception "Christ against culture" in the domain where the Romanian culture is dominated by moral corruption and spiritual darkness, avoiding syncretism and compromise.⁴⁹

3.2.2. Promoting Evangelical Christianity as part of the Romanian Culture

The Romanian culture has some characteristics so different from the Bible that some characteristics of the Christian lifestyle are strange for them. For this reason, Evangelicals must continue to promote biblical culture as a distinctive and legitimate part of the modern multicultural Romanian society.⁵⁰ They must do this not in order to promote Evangelicals in the country, but to have freedom to present the Christ of the Bible to the Romanians.

In this way, Evangelicals will not struggle with the strong opposition from the public opinion which considers them cults.⁵¹

3.2.3. Contextualization

Though Evangelicals came in Romania more than one and half century ago, the effort to contextualize the gospel was almost totally neglected. For this reason, an Evangelical American feels more at home in an Evangelical church than in secular Romania. In worshiping God in churches built according to the western model, Evangelicals sing German or English songs, and they teach American theology.

In order to contextualize, Evangelicals started already to also use in their services Romanian music for the Christian songs, but they must change more than that. This contextualization must come not from foreign missionaries (they are happy that we are how we are), but from the Romanian Evangelical church itself, to be more relevant in the country. They must have the good balance stated in *The Lausanne Covenant*:

Because man is God's creature, some of his culture is rich in beauty and goodness. Because he has fallen, all of it is tainted with sin and some of it is demonic. The Gospel does not presuppose the superiority of any culture to another, but evaluates all cultures according to its own criteria of truth and righteousness, and insists on moral absolutes in every culture.⁵²

3.2.4 Socio-Political Involvement as Christians

Christians who are called to be involved in politics must stand for Christian values, and especially for righteousness, during this time when the moral issues have increasingly moved into the political arena, and when in Romania many laws are changed.

"We affirm", declared *The Lausanne Covenant*, "that God is both the Creator and the Judge of all men. We affirm that evangelism and socio-political involvement are both part of our Christian duty. For both are necessary expressions of our doctrines of God and man, our love for our neighbor and our obedience to Jesus Christ."⁵³

The church itself should be involved in social work, not only Christian organizations or individual Evangelicals. The church must be involved first of all in social work toward its members. In Romania, the poverty affects the life of a large part of population.

Though individual Evangelicals can be involved in politics, the church must remain separate from state, and play its vital role in society by fulfilling its spiritual purpose. The primary task of church is to preach and teach the eternal Word of God, not to deal with temporal issues of politics which can alienate people who think differently in political matters. In moral and spiritual issues, the church should critique society, without seeking political power.

3.2.5 Evangelical Education

Evangelicals must continue to extend the Christian formal education from the kindergarten, elementary school, till university level, in order to equip people with the Christian eternal values. The benefits will be manifested in the next generations.⁵⁴ R. C. Sproul wrote that Christians must invest not only in theological education, but also in science, because "our world cries for talented Christian scientists!"⁵⁵

Evangelicals have to remember that Christ transforms the Romanian culture by saving persons individual, one by one.

NOTES

¹ Daniel Maris, "Human Rights within a Large Orthodox Post-Communist Country," *European Journal of Science and Theology* (October 2013): 73-80.

² Ieremia Rusu, *Ecclesiology of the Romanian Open Brethren* (Cluj-Napoca: Risoprint Publishing House, 2015), 33.

³ <http://www.cultulpenticostal.ro/despre-noi/> (Last accessed August 10, 2016)

⁴ Ioan-Gheorghe Rotaru, Dan Iulian Opreș, Benjamin Roșca-Năstăsescu, *O istorie a adventismului de ziua a șaptea din România. Premise*, vol. I, (București: Casa de Editură Viață și Sănătate, 2009), 324.

⁵ Romania became a communist country under the threat of the Soviet tanks, and not through an electoral process, because the Romanian Communist Party had in 1945 less than 1,000 members.

⁶ Furthermore, the communist propaganda accused the Evangelicals to be foreign spies. The reason for this was the solidarity shown by the Christians from Western countries with the Romanian Christians persecuted for their faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. The political pressure exerted by the Western countries, especially by U.S. upon the Romanian government to stop the religious persecution, created big problems to communists.

⁷ Many parents, in order to protect their children against the atheist propaganda, did not allow a TV set or a radio in their home.

⁸ Gene Edward Veith Jr., *Postmodern Times: A Christian Guide to Contemporary Thought and Culture*, (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 1994), 210-211.

⁹ Ioan-Gheorghe Rotaru, "Aspecte ale secularizării și ale omului secularizat", *Studia Universitatis Babeș-Bolyai, Theologia Orthodoxa*, (2006), L-LI, nr.1, Cluj-Napoca, Cluj University Press, 251-266.

¹⁰ Anthony King, in his article "Architecture, Capital and the Globalization of Culture" (*Global Culture*, edited by Mike Featherstone, London: SAGE Publication,

1990), wrote on page 409: "... there is indeed a world or global culture which is largely the product of a world political economy of capitalism, as well as being the outcome of its technological and communicative effects."

¹¹ Jerry Falwell, *Listen America* (New York: Doubleday, 1980), 187.

¹² *Ibidem*, 192.

¹³ Richard H. Niebuhr, *Christ and Culture*, (New York: Harper Torchbooks, 1956), 11.

¹⁴ *Dictionarul Explicativ al Limbii Romane*, (Bucharest: Editura Academiei, 1984).

¹⁵ Paul G. Hiebert, *Anthropological Insight for Missionaries*, (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1985), 30.

¹⁶ W. E. Vine & F. F. Bruce, *Vine's Expository Dictionary of Biblical Words*, Electronic Edition (Old Tappan, NJ: Logos Research Systems, 1996).

¹⁷ Niebuhr, *Christ and Culture*, 48.

¹⁸ *Ibidem*, 50.

¹⁹ *Ibidem*, 52.

²⁰ Tertullian, *Apology*, XXXVIII. "As those in whom all ardor in the pursuit of honor and glory is dead, we have no pressing inducement to take part in your public meetings; nor is there ought more entirely foreign to us than affairs of state."

²¹ Tertullian, *De Corona*, XI. "How shall the son of peace take part in battle when it does not become him even to sue at law?"

²² In *Prescription Against Heretics*, VII, Tertullian wrote against the Christians who tried to establish a connection between Christianity and the Greek philosophy: "Away with all attempts to produce a mottled Christianity of Stoic, Platonic and dialectic composition. We want no curious disputation after possessing Jesus Christ. With our faith we desire no further belief"

²³ Tertullian, *On Idolatry*, X. "Learning literature is allowable for believers", but teaching it not, because it is impossible for a professor of literature to avoid teaching "the praises of idols".

²⁴ Tolstoy, "What I Believe", *Works*, Vol. XI, 447-448.

²⁵ *Ibidem*, 163-167.

²⁶ Tolstoy, "The Kingdom of God is Within You", *Works*, Vol. XX, 82.

²⁷ Stanly Hauerwas & William Willimon, *Resident Aliens* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1989), p. 40.

²⁸ Niebuhr, *Christ and Culture*, 76-82.

²⁹ *Ibidem*, 80.

³⁰ *Ibidem*, 149.

³¹ *Ibidem*, 166

³² *Ibidem*, 167.

³³ *Ibidem*, 169.

³⁴ *Works of Martin Luther* (Philadelphia, 1915-1932), Vol. II, 338.

³⁵ *Ibidem*, Vol. IV, 251.

³⁶ Niebuhr, *Christ and Culture*, 174: "In a person regenerate and enlightened by the Holy Spirit through the Word, the natural wisdom of man is a fair and glorious instrument and work of God."

³⁷ *Ibidem*, 175: “Music, said Luther, is a noble gift of God, next to theology. I would not change my little knowledge of music for a great deal.”

³⁸ *Works of Martin Luther* (Philadelphia, 1915-1932), Vol. IV, 13. “Commerce is open to the Christians for buying and selling are necessary. They cannot be dispensed with and can be practiced in a Christian manner.”

³⁹ *Ibidem*, Vol. III, 230 ff. “Secular Authority: To What Extent It Should be Obeyed”.

⁴⁰ *Ibidem*, Vol. V, 34 ff. “Whether Soldiers, Too, Can Be Saved”.

⁴¹ Niebuhr, *Christ and Culture*, 191.

⁴² *Ibidem*, 195.

ibidem, 196-206.

⁴⁴ *Ibidem*, 209.

⁴⁵ Immediately after revolution, people had chosen their leaders. They tried to find trustful and uncorrupted persons to lead them, and Evangelicals were such of people. Many Evangelicals became in this way involved in politics or in local leadership of communities, as mayor for example.

⁴⁶ Reinhold H. Niebuhr, *The Children of Light and the Children of Darkness*, (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1972), 42.

⁴⁷ Dennis Okholm, *Culture against Christ*, Wheaton College.

⁴⁸ *An Evangelical Commitment to Simple Lifestyle*. Hoddesdon, Englad, March 17-21, 1980, Art.5.

⁴⁹ Timothy Keller, *Center Church*, (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2012), 230-232.

⁵⁰ Ioan-Gheorghe Rotaru, “Religious Freedom and the Spirit in Which it Should Be Defended”, *Liberty Today – Trends & Attitudes*, nr. 1/2014, Bern, Switzerland, 61-63.

⁵¹ The conversions transform not only the inner life of the people, but also many of their customs and behaviors. Orlando E. Costas wrote in his article *Conversion as a Complex Experience*: “It is true that the Gospel frees Christians to fully identify with and participate in the joys and hops, the values and life struggles of their society, but at the same time, they must maintain a critical distance so as to be able to detect any form of idolatry or any attempt to absolutes a given practice, person, group, institution or vision.”

⁵² *The Lausanne Covenant*, July 1974, Art. 10.

⁵³ *Ibidem*, Art. 5.

⁵⁴ Albert R. Mohler, Jr., *Culture Shift: Engaging current issues with timeless truth*, (Colorado Springs, CO: Multnomah Books, 2008), 65-72.

⁵⁵ R. C. Sproul, *Lifeyes: Make a Christian Impact on Culture and Society*, (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1994), 169-170.