Lavinia Stan and Lucian Turcescu

Church, State, and Democracy in Expanding Europe

Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011. 287 pages. ISBN: 978-0-19-533710-5. US$ 65 (hardback)

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The downfall of the communist regimes in Central and Eastern Europe in 1989 has had long-term consequences that influenced the very evolution of the European Union (EU). The former satellite countries of the Soviet Union presented themselves as candidates for membership in the EU, thus demonstrating, to both internal and external observers, their will to consolidate their democratic maturation. After a long and arduous process, ten of these countries were accepted into the EU. The integration of these countries into the European Union took place in two waves, determined particularly by the respective level of economic and democratic development of each country. In 2004, eight countries become members of the EU (the Czech Republic, Slovakia, Hungary, Poland, Latvia, Lithuania, Estonia, and Slovenia); another two (Bulgaria and Romania) joined them in 2007.

While these countries share a certain communist experience, each has a specific history. Therefore, they did not follow the same patterns in dealing with the complex problems of the transition period after the fall of communism. One of the new aspects of public debate in these countries had to do with religion. The political scientist Lavinia Stan and the theologian Lucian Turcescu focus their study on the debate over the question of the place of religion in society, a debate over the kind of relation that could be constructed between church and state without hindering the democratization process. The two researchers centre their analysis on the multiple negotiations that took place, and indeed, that continue to take place, among the church, the state, and civil society, and that worked to end the marginalization of the church by communist regimes, while at the same time preventing a return to the situation of the interwar period, where in some particular cases, the predominance of the church was associated with controversial political stances. Stan and Turcescu work to understand, in their words, "the ways in which church and state, religious and political actors have come together" in the new member states of the EU "after the collapse of the communist regime, during their transition to democracy, and during the first year after they joined the EU" (Stan, Turcescu, 2011: 182).

Stan and Turcescu construct their analysis on two levels. The first level is descriptive and tries to identify models of church–state relations that could function to map possible interactions between new democratic states and religious groups. A chapter is dedicated to each newly admitted EU member. The chapters are organized in alphabetical order, and each chapter gives a historical overview and discusses the post-communist legislative framework, the relation of religion to party politics, the place of religious education in public schools, and the relationship between religion and sexuality. The second level is analytical and investigates two problematics. On the one hand, the authors ask if national models of church–state relations fulfil the minimal democratic requirement of the concept "twin toleration", as framed by Alfred Stepan, where the state and the church do not seek to control each other. On the other hand, they compare these church–state models in an effort to identify successful patterns, and thus, to articulate what can be changed in order to democratize these post-communist states fully.

Through an analysis based on elements such as the political representation of church leaders, the use of religious symbols by political actors and parties, the level of governmental subsidies, registration of religions by the state, religious instruction in public schools, and the

role of churches in shaping legislation on sexuality and the body, the authors identify three models of church–state relations. In the *church–state separation model*, religion and politics are distinct areas with no denomination supported by the state and no religious instruction in public schools (Czech Republic, Slovenia). In the *pluralist model*, the state treats selected denominations equally, and all have the support of the state (Hungary, Bulgaria, and Latvia). In the *pluralist model*, religion is not part of public school curricula, but students may enrol in extracurricular religious education classes. In the *dominant religion model*, the majority religious group has a privileged status, which allows the dominant religion to engage in a country's political life, to be present in public schools, and to receive subventions from the state (Poland, Romania, Slovakia, Estonia, and Lithuania).

Through a comparison of these models with the concept of "twin toleration", along with careful attention to Western democratic systems, the authors establish a more flexible definition of "twin toleration". Given that for Stan and Turcescu, the key "to a stable democracy is a commitment on the part of political and religious actors to tolerate and respect one another" (2011: 12), democracy can also be compatible with systems other than the one maintaining a clear-cut separation between church and state. Democracy is compatible with the *pluralist model* (Hungary and Bulgaria in Eastern Europe; The Netherlands in the West), but also with the *dominant religion model* (Poland, Romania, Lithuania in post-communist Europe, as well as Greece, Scandinavian countries, and England). The Western democracies serve as examples: "[...] post-communist EU members' progress toward implementing democratic church–state relations should not be judged by their acceptance or rejection of a specific model like strict separation, since older EU members are embracing a plurality of models, including the established church (as in England) and managed pluralism (as in the Netherlands)" (2011: 209).

The book is well researched, and the authors appeal to a variety of sources and to a multitude of methods of both data analysis and interpretation. They also give voice to both state and religious actors. Stan and Turcescu write in their introduction that their methodological approach is anchored in an interpretative and structuralist tradition, which allows them to interpret archival data, legislation, governmental and press reports, and historical materials pertaining to church–state relations and to examine the national and international contexts in which they were formulated (2011: 14-15).

The question at the centre of this book is large and complex, which makes it no easy task for the two authors. The strong point of their analysis is their reading of the interaction of religion and politics at the legislative level; however, the analysis slightly overlooks the political and religious actors and the way in which they negotiate their relation and positions at a societal level. For instance, the intriguing process that makes the Czech Republic, "one of the most secularized post-communist countries" (2011: 35), introduce religion into the public schools and fund eighty church schools, which serve as "elite public schools" (2010: 46), is not tackled. Likewise, the large area of the topics analysed tends to somewhat erase the nuances that differentiate countries that are placed in the same category, as in the case of the Czech Republic and Slovenia, or Poland, Romania, and Lithuania.

Despite some shortcomings, Lavinia Stan's and Lucian Turcescu's book represents an important contribution to the documentation of the evolution of the relations between church and state in Central and Eastern Europe after the downfall of the communist regimes. Stan and Turcescu both offer a valuable working tool and provide scope for future research on post-communist countries. The book ends on an optimistic note, in the hope that the post-communist countries will redouble their efforts, "protecting religion from politics, and the state from the church" (2011: 210).

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