

# The Visibility of Power, the Power of Visibility: The 2002 Competition for the Romanian Patriarchal Cathedral

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The Romanian Orthodox Church ultimately cancelled the results of the 2002 architectural competition for the Patriarchal Cathedral in Bucharest, the final one of a series whose outcome is still uncertain due to the changing politics of visibility orchestrated by political and ecclesiastical forces. The idea of a national cathedral has a history of more than one hundred thirty years and emerged at the end of the nineteenth century as a means to celebrate the state independence in 1877 and the new Romanian Kingdom founded in 1881. The project was reiterated throughout the first half of the twentieth century in order to embody a much discussed national identity and emphasize the status of the Orthodox Church as the leading Christian denomination in Romania. As all their previous attempts, the post-communist 1999 and 2002 competitions were eventually shelved and the national Orthodox cathedral became a battlefield of ideas between politicians, clergy, architects and civil society. This paper argues that, reflecting the changing balance of power between Church and political forces, the patriarchal cathedral becomes the instrument operated by both the Orthodox hierarchy and the political establishment in order to mutually legitimize their authority. Capitalizing on the high ranking of the Orthodox Church in polls, different governments endorse the idea of building a national cathedral as part of electoral propaganda, whereas the Church counts on political alliances to support its projects.<sup>1</sup>

The narrative of the Romanian cathedral opens multiple directions of study. First, it revisits the broader theme of associating architectural monu-

mentality with power. In an editorial published in 1997 the political analyst Bogdan Ghiu articulates one aspect of this relationship: "The need for monuments is the need for identity. Urban and architectural monumentality can ambiguously imply either a confident or an uncertain identity."<sup>2</sup> Building upon this idea, the cathedral has been interpreted as a mark of national identity whose origins go back to the nineteenth-century century quest for architectural nationalism.<sup>3</sup> However, contemporary examples, such as Richard Meier's Jubilee Church in Rome – a relatively small parochial church – redefine the terms of this relation in a new "power of the powerless" approach.<sup>4</sup> The Romanian cathedral provides an unprecedented opportunity to question and re-interpret conventional links between authority and architectural monumentality.

Second, and perhaps more importantly, this story reveals the moral price of this political game. The major forces involved – the Church, the architects and the political body – lack the moral authority to conduct and support its completion. Although the Orthodox Church ranks very high in polls, its controversial position during the communist regime casts a shadow of doubt over its architectural ambitions. Architects, on the other hand, are generally blamed for not reacting to the mutilation of Romanian cities and villages by the socialist administration. As for political parties and public institutions, studies demonstrate that their repeated failures to fulfill people's expectations have led to a climate of distrust and suspicion.

### BUILDING ROMANIAN NATIONAL IDENTITY

In an article discussing Romanian nationalism and identity issues after the fall of communism Katherine Verdery interprets the post-socialist society as a fragmented body attempting to build its identity by means of opposition with "the other".<sup>5</sup> Whereas "the other", "the enemy" used to be identified with the communist party, "them" being opposed to "us", its dissolution left behind a void that was substituted by the emergence of forces defining themselves in confrontational terms. Verdery describes the categories of "we" and "they" within the socialist world as being "elastic" because their inhabitants could change sides, but the split nevertheless persisted.<sup>6</sup> Verdery argues that after the fall of communism "the enemy became "the *other* others" – other nationalities who existed in greater or smaller numbers in every one of these states" and it is around them that new definitions of national identities will coagulate.<sup>7</sup> The quest for defining Romanian identity has also been echoed, as Romanian architectural critics Augustin Ioan and Carmen Popescu maintain, in the history of the patriarchal cathedral.<sup>8</sup> The nineteenth century nationalist ideologies generated the imperative to build an original Neo-Romanian style in architecture, endeavor that informed professionals' imagination throughout the first half of the twentieth century. In this context, designing new Orthodox churches, including a cathedral in the capital city, was part of a strategy to shape Romanian identity, and after a fifty year communist hiatus, similar ideas are revisited in the recent controversies over the patriarchal cathedral.

This paper builds upon and nuances these different arguments. "The others" are not only "other nationalities", but also different interests groups within the same mosaic. The 2002 architectural competition with the array of heated arguments, public debates, and mutual incriminations that accompanies it reveals the dynamics of alliances among the main players. Based on momentary interests, these temporary coalitions are defined, even if not explicitly as such, in ambiguous terms of "us – the good" and "them – the evil." However, this polarization is more complex since the notions of "good" and "evil" are, in practice, interchangeable. The relevance of the 2002 competition is manifold. As the first site-specific architectural response to a one hundred years history of per-

petual postponements, it confronted the reality of the capital with larger issues that encompass the reevaluation of the city center and contemporary architectural strategies to define national identity. It initiated a public debate with broader implications for the future of the city, since decision making factors such as members of the clergy, politicians, and intellectuals were compelled to articulate their positions and engage into civic actions.

### A HISTORY OF MISSED OPPORTUNITIES

For over a century, the idea of a major church in the capital of the country has been a recurrent theme associated with nationalistic and political ideals, but it has constantly failed to come to completion. Based on centuries-long tradition of Romanian kings and princes dedicating churches in the aftermath of battles, martyrdoms or radical political changes, the Orthodox Church resorts to custom as the main argument in favor of building a national church,<sup>9</sup> maintaining that several major uncelebrated episodes in modern history justify the foundation of a patriarchal cathedral.<sup>10</sup>

The first event that posited this initiative is the union of the two Romanian principalities of Valachia and Moldavia under Alexandru Ioan Cuza in 1859 which creates the premises for the modern Romanian state. After being appointed king of the new state in 1866, the German prince Carol of Hohenzollern-Sigmaringen leads the independence war against the Ottoman Empire in 1877-1878. As the country is declared a freestanding kingdom in 1881, on March 1<sup>st</sup> the Metropolitan of Bucharest invites the key political figures to an open discussion on the necessity of building a representative church in the capital city. When the Romanian Orthodox Church becomes autocephalous in 1885, a national cathedral is now a matter of celebrating both the new Romanian kingdom and its independent Church. A tentative to organize an architectural competition for "the cathedral of the nation" takes place in 1891, but it never comes to completion.<sup>11</sup> In 1900, a conservative government passes the entire responsibility of the project to the Orthodox Church, which raises the protests of the ecclesiastical hierarchy who claims support from the state in compensation for the expropriations initiated by Alexandru Ioan Cuza who had put the Church under governmental control.<sup>12</sup>

No progress is made in the next twenty years, but the end of the First World War, with the geographical and demographical transformations of the Romanian state, opens unprecedented perspectives. Following the Trianon treaty, Romania acquires Transylvania and two-thirds of the Banat from Hungary, Bukovina from Austria, Bessarabia from Russia, and consequently its land mass and population doubles.<sup>13</sup> According to a 1930 census, 29.1% of the population consists of minorities, which confronts a former ethnically uniform country with new identity issues.<sup>14</sup> Against this backdrop, on May 10<sup>th</sup> 1920, the Saint Synod, in response to a royal letter, proposes to form a patronage committee (which apparently never functioned) to support what is now called "The Cathedral for the Redemption of the Nation."<sup>15</sup> The shift from "Christ's Resurrection" as the cathedral's dedication (as stated in 1881 by the Association for the Construction of the Bucharest Cathedral), to the "Cathedral of the Nation" for the 1891 competition, and the "Cathedral for the Redemption of the Nation" in 1920 implies a new awareness of Orthodoxy as an identifier of the Romanian nation.<sup>16</sup> In the aftermath of the First World War, the changes in the ethnicity and, consequently, the religious beliefs of the population have contributed to certain tensions between minorities and a majority that defines itself primarily as Orthodox. Despite a sense of urgency, it takes the creation of the Romanian Patriarchate in 1925 to reiterate the issue of a, this time, Patriarchal Cathedral. Between 1925 and 1929 over twelve possible locations are investigated, and on May 11<sup>th</sup> 1929 a cross is placed at the bottom of the Dealul Mitropoliei (Metropolitan Church Hill) to mark the site for the future cathedral. The international economic crisis and different local priorities will hamper the development of the project and one more attempt is made in 1940, when a proposal for a cathedral of the nation, signed by architect C. Joja, is exhibited during the "Legionary Work in Art" show.<sup>17</sup>

The idea is revived only after the fall of communism, when two architectural competitions are held in 1999 and 2002, respectively. From an ecclesiastical perspective, given the controversial history of the project, this endeavor is no longer a matter of tradition, but it has the aura of a moral debt. The cathedral embodies the symbolic meaning of a necessary expiatory gesture meant to restore

the Orthodox faith of the Romanian people after communism, redeem the sins of those dark years, and construct the image of a renewed country.<sup>18</sup> Invoking the Byzantine tradition of intertwining religious and secular powers, the Church expects the same governmental support whose recipient it has been until the end of the Second World War.<sup>19</sup> Building a representative church becomes imminent when the first Christian committed administration comes to power in 1996. The following year, three major periodicals<sup>20</sup> cover the issue of the cathedral, and in 1999, disregarding the recommendations provided by architects, environmental experts and engineers, the Church officials, supported by political forces (the Town Hall and the Ministry of Public Works), organize a competition in Piata Unirii (Union Square) – one of the lowest areas of the city, with problematical traffic and a high risk of flooding. As the first prize is not awarded, there will be no future development of the project. The support provided by the Christian Democrat party has been criticized as a last attempt to gain electoral sympathy since its tenure ended up in a fiasco despite the initial zeal of the population.

Toward the end of the 2000-2004 term of a different government, whose reserve vis-à-vis religious matters is well known, the Prime Minister Adrian Nastase nevertheless endorses the aspirations of the Orthodox Church, and a second architectural competition is launched in March 2002, on a different site, on the Bulevardul Unirii (Union Avenue). Selected by a predominantly architectural jury, the winning entry authored by architect Augustin Ioan will be shelved a few months later (image1). It is difficult to estimate the real reasons for this shift of the Orthodox Church since no official explanations have been provided. However, media have suggested that the high market value of the land in the area makes it desirable for a more lucrative program, such as a business center, already envisioned in the master plan for the capital.<sup>21</sup>

Throughout the 2004 presidential campaign, Traian Basescu, the democrat mayor of Bucharest at that time, has reiterated his already manifested enthusiasm for the project. As part of his political agenda, he anticipated that the cathedral would eventually become an incentive for the development of the city center.<sup>22</sup> Politicians, however,

are not the only disciples of the idea. Regardless their political orientation, an important number of cultural figures invoke the right of the Orthodox Church as a private institution to raise a representative building for its mission.<sup>23</sup>

### CRITICISM

The opponents to the idea of a national cathedral resort to arguments that revolve primarily around two concerns: on the one hand, the most appropriate use of financial resources in a country that still faces economic challenges might not be a monumental church; on the other hand, the moral status of the parties involved, including the Orthodox Church, whose links with the former communist regime are unclear, raises numerous questions on the legitimacy of the project. These counter-arguments point to other priorities that the Church should focus on before committing to such a heroic task: build smaller parochial abodes to supply the needs of the large-scale urban communities, restore run-down churches and re-construct some of the architectural monuments destroyed by the communist bulldozers.<sup>24</sup> Associating identity issues with monumental architecture is, however, a debatable matter since recent examples show a new propensity for undersized churches as more humble, yet more compelling testimonies of faith. One of the most celebrated churches of the past years is the Jubilee Church in Rome designed by Richard Meier – a small parochial abode raised in a marginal sub-urban community. The Rome Vicariate chose to mark the anniversary of 2000 years of Christianity with a modest gesture instead of a grandiose enterprise. In this context, the Romanian ecclesiastical hierarchy is invited to revisit its triumphal mission, focus on the quality of the clergy<sup>25</sup> and design the cathedral as a public service catering to people in need and possibly located in one of the “black holes” of the city.<sup>26</sup>

A major criticism questions the moral status of the Romanian Orthodox Church whose position during communism is still ambiguous due to its non interventional strategies in moments of crisis or even to a tacit collaboration with the establishment. Its officials never protested against any of the dictatorial measures of the regime, not even when twenty churches have been erased in Bucharest and other eight displaced from their original locations during the massive destruction of the Romanian capital

in the 1980s. Therefore a gigantic representative church appears today as an unqualified claim. In the former Eastern European bloc, the Russian Orthodox Church faces the same moral controversies, but the recent re-construction of the Cathedral of Christ the Savior in Moscow (originally completed in 1860, dynamited in 1931, and rebuilt in the 1990s) has been interpreted as an act of repentance of past communist sins.<sup>27</sup>

Some of the contemporary debates on national identity build upon pre-war polemics polarized between the advocates of westernization and Latinity as a means of development and growth versus those of traditionalism and Orthodoxy. Comparing the Protestant doctrine with the Orthodox one, philosopher Catalin Avramescu considers Orthodoxy an obstacle against progress and emancipation, which implicitly undermines the idea of building a patriarchal cathedral as a symbol of national identity.<sup>28</sup>

### PUBLIC VISIBILITY AND THE STRUGGLE FOR MEANING

The history of the cathedral is also the narrative of the numerous sites identified as potential locations for the national church. When the liberal government made the first steps toward the construction of the cathedral in 1884, the site envisioned, located on the current Ion C. Bratianu Boulevard, would have required extensive expropriations and urban interventions. Therefore, when the issue was revisited in 1898 a new location was suggested, on the site of the former Sarindari Monastery (today the Military Circle). A commission in charge with the development of the project proposed the demolition of the 1656 metropolitan church to create room for a larger cathedral, suggestion that was fortunately rejected by the Metropolitan Iosif Gheorghian.<sup>29</sup> Later on, in 1927 after King Ferdinand's death, the Patriarch Miron Cristea, appointed Regent, demanded the City Hall to indicate the best site for the patriarchal cathedral. Different locations have been publicly discussed during the following two years, and in 1929 a committee assessed twelve sites and made the final recommendations.<sup>30</sup> Three sites were discarded from the very beginning<sup>31</sup> and other six were later rejected based on lack of favorable views or massive expropriations required.<sup>32</sup> The committee suggested three poten-

tial locations: the intersection of Ion C. Bratianu and Carol Boulevards (today the National Theatre and the Intercontinental Hotel), Dealul Mihai Voda (the Mihai Voda Hill), replacing the Arsenal building, and the bottom of the Patriarchal Hill, extending down to the Central Market. The Patriarch decided in favor of the latter, where no expropriations were required, and only the existing vegetable market had to be relocated. Following the Orthodox tradition of consecrating the location of a future church, on May 11<sup>th</sup> 1929 a religious service, attended by politicians, members of the clergy, Army representatives, and Christian believers was held on the site, and a cross was placed to mark the site.<sup>33</sup>

Neither of the two locations proposed for the post-communist competitions entirely fulfilled the expectations of the parties involved. The one in Piata Unirii (Union Square) was dismissed on both symbolic and practical grounds: in addition to traffic constraints and potential floods, a low area such as Piata Unirii was considered inappropriate for the most representative sacred space of the nation. The site of the second competition, located on Bulevardul Unirii (Union Avenue) between Piata Unirii (Union Square) and Piata Alba Iulia (Alba Iulia Square), facing the Parliament building<sup>34</sup>, was ultimately discharged probably in order to allow more economically profitable programs to be developed in the future. Whereas the supporters of this location interpret the vicinity of the Parliament building as an opportunity to symbolically counterbalance the communist evils, the very same proximity implies, for its opponents, an ironic tandem between a contested religious power and the detested communist authority.

The same debate is likely to be continued in relation to the latest location proposed in 2005: Dealul Arsenalului (The Arsenal Hill) (image 2), a vast vacant site in the close proximity of the same Parliament building. After the death of Patriarch Teoctist on July 30<sup>th</sup> 2007, it was unclear what the prospect of the project will be. However, on November 29<sup>th</sup> 2007, the new Patriarch Daniel, supported by President Traian Basescu and government officials, laid the corner stone of the future church on this very site.

The "migration" of the cathedral along so many different settings in the past one hundred fifty

years raises fundamental questions on the nature of a sacred place. According to Mircea Eliade's ontological theories, the sacred nature of a place is an inherent quality that humans can only discover, but not establish.<sup>35</sup> Contemporary scholars in the study of the sacred, such as Edward Linenthal or David Chidester among others, propose a vision of sacrality that resides in the contested character of the site, in controversial incidents such as battles, riots, heroic deaths or sacrifices that generate and inscribe meaning.<sup>36</sup> In other words, a sacred site is a site that celebrates an event. What happens, then, when no particular setting is privileged among others? The case in point is the narrative of the Romanian patriarchal cathedral whose unsuccessful history is partly determined by the arbitrariness of the locations considered.

These ongoing debates reinforce Verdery's study of the split between indistinct "us" and "them" in post-socialist societies, reflecting at the same time strategies of reciprocal legitimization of secular and religious powers. Political decisions have always shaped the destinies of the cities, and the recent urban history of Bucharest parallels the evolution of its administration from a rigid authoritative structure under communism to the *laissez faire* post-socialist governments. During the socialist era, the brutal erasure of entire districts was followed by the imposition of a new rigid urban grid, whereas the post-communist liberalization of the market generated the rampant construction effervescence manifested in the last seventeen years. The dissolution of one single absolutist rule spawned new politics of visibility in the public realm that aim to affirm the identity and power of institutions formerly marginalized or quasi absent in the socialist regime: banks, churches, commercial and business centers. As part of this broader phenomenon, the ongoing saga of the Romanian patriarchal cathedral provides the opportunity to delve into the relations between Church and state and their impact on the development of the city. Undermined by decades of communist propaganda, the Orthodox Church sees unstated political alliances as beneficial for its projects that unfold from retrieving expropriated lands, to building new worship spaces. Conversely, counting on the respectability of the Church as an institution, different political parties have loudly promoted its initiatives, particularly during electoral times, as

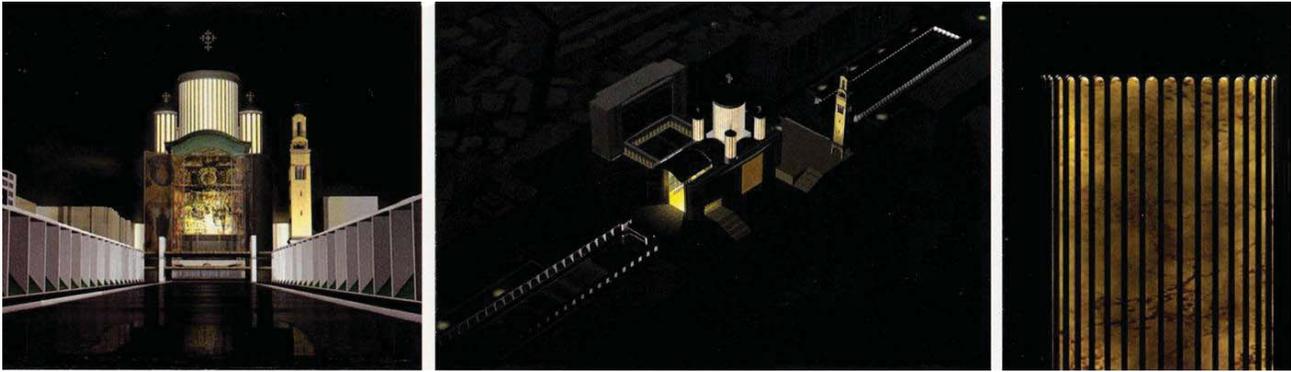


Image 1: Winning entry of the 2002 architectural competition for the Romanian Patriarchal Cathedral (author: architect Augustin Ioan)



Image 2: The latest site for the national church is located behind the Parliament building (picture taken from the Parliament building.)

an attempt to consolidate a meager civil endorsement.

Weakened by its communist legacy, the Romanian society calls for a new political class expected to be honorable and trustworthy, and therefore clergy and politicians invested a huge price in a national church seen as a vehicle employed to construct the integrity of a traumatized society. The Romanian case offers the opportunity to reflect upon the potential of architecture to act as a healing agent, and the role of decision making factors that negotiate the politics of visibility in the

public sphere. While presenting an opportunity to re-evaluate the architectural manifestations of power, it reveals the grounds of political games whose strategies, reflected in the cityscape, aim to secure an image of probity and morality.

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## ENDNOTES

1. According to a survey accomplished by the Audience and Opinion Research Department of the Open Media Research Institute and published in *Transition*, 2 (5 April 1996), 29 there are two institutions that Romanians credit most highly: the Church and the armed forces. (Tom Gallagher, "Nationalism and Post-Communist Politics: The Party of Romanian national Unity, 1990-1996" in Lavinia Stan (ed.). *Romania in Transition*, ( England, 1997), 43.)
2. Bogdan Ghiu, "Argument," *Dilema*, 248, 24-30 Oct. 1997.
3. Augustin Ioan, "Orthodox Architecture and the Theme of Identity" in *Power, Play and National Identity*. 15-46; Carmen Popescu, "Du pouvoir et de l'identité: une cathédrale pour la rédemption de la Roumanie."
4. Vaclav Havel, *The Power of the Powerless: Citizens Against the State in Central-Eastern Europe*, (Palak Press, 1985).
5. Katherine Verdey, "Nationalism and National Sentiment in Post-socialist Romania", *Slavic Review*, Vol. 52, No.2. (Summer, 1993), 179-203.
6. Verdey, "Nationalism and National Sentiment in Post-socialist Romania", 193.
7. Verdey, "Nationalism and National Sentiment in Post-socialist Romania", 193.
8. See Augustin Ioan, *Power, Play and National Identity*, (Bucharest, 1999) and Carmen Popescu, "Du pouvoir et de l'identité: une cathédrale pour la rédemption de la Roumanie" in Catherine Durandin (ed.) *Perspectives roumaines: du postcommunisme à l'intégration européenne*, (Paris, 2004).
9. See, for instance, the official site of the Romanian Orthodox Church, <http://www.patriarhia.ro/Site/Administratia/CMN/cmn.html>
10. Stefan cel Mare (1437-1504), Neagoe Basarab (?-1521), Mihai Viteazul (1558-1601) are some of the most celebrated Romanian rulers known for the churches they founded.
11. Popescu, "Du pouvoir et de l'identité: une cathédrale pour la rédemption de la Roumanie," 193.
12. Lavinia Stan; Lucian Turcescu, "The Romanian Orthodox Church and Post-Communist Democratization," *Europe-Asia Studies*, Vol. 52, No. 8. (Dec., 2000), 1467.
13. Tom Gallagher, *Theft of a Nation*, (London, 2005), 29; Katherine Verdey, *National Ideology under Socialism*, (Berkley, Los Angeles, Oxford, 1991), 43.
14. Ioan Scurtu; Gheorghe Buzatu, *Istoria romanilor in secolul XX*, (Bucuresti,, 1996), 22 quoted in Gallagher, *Theft of a Nation*, 29.
15. The official denomination of the future cathedral still raises numerous questions. Is redemption an individual or a national matter? Could a consecration to a desirable event replace traditional Orthodox modes of dedicating the church to a saint, or the Holy Cross or a biblical episode? To avoid these controversies, the text will refer to this church as the Patriarchal Cathedral, appellation that reflects its main programmatic function.
16. For additional comments, see also Popescu, "Du pouvoir et de l'identité: une cathédrale pour la rédemption de la Roumanie."
17. The Legion of the Archangel Michael, also known as the Iron Guard, was a nationalistic, anti-Semitic political movement that emerged in Romania in the first half of the twentieth century following the model of European fascism. It exalted Orthodoxy and traditionalism as the major features of the Romanian people.
18. Popescu, "Du pouvoir et de l'identité: une cathédrale pour la rédemption de la Roumanie," 189.
19. See the website of the Romanian Orthodox Church <http://www.patriarhia.ro/Site/Administratia/CMN/cmn.html>
20. These periodicals are *22*, *Privirea* and *Dilema*.
21. *Evenimentul Zilei*, 14 July 2004
22. Interview with Traian Basescu, published in *22*, Year XIV (739), 4-10 May 2004.
23. Among the prominent cultural figures that publicly expressed their support for the Patriarchal Cathedral are doctor Constantin Balaceanu Stolnici (see interview published in *Dilema*, 248, 24-30 Oct. 1997), philosopher and art historian Virgil Candea (see interview published in *Dilema*, 248, 24-30 Oct. 1997), architectural critic Carmen Popescu ("Du pouvoir et de l'identité: une cathédrale pour la rédemption de la Roumanie").
24. Constantin Enache, professor, architect and member of the jury for the international urban planning competition "Bucharest 2000" and Alexandru Beldiman, architect and former president of the Romanian College of Architects, support the reconstruction of the Vacaresti Monastery, classified as architectural monument,

built between 1716 and 1736, and demolished in 1986 (see the interview with Constantin Enache in Ioana Iosa, *L'Heritage urbain de Ceausescu: fardeau ou saut en avant?*, (Paris, 2006), 143, and the interview with Alexandru Beldiman published in *Dilema*, 248, 24-30 Oct. 1997).

25. Cristian Tudor Popescu, "Catedrala Mantuirii in tara mantuiei," *Adevarul*, 4268, 23 March 2004; Silviu Petre, "Mantuire de mantuiala," 22, Year XV (870), 10-16 Nov. 2006.

26. Sorin Adam Matei, "Un proiect pentru Patriarhie: o catedrala a iubirii aproape?" *Evenimentul Zilei*, 15 March 2005.

27. Natasha Chibireva, "Airbrushed Moscow: the Cathedral of Christ the Savior," (London, 2002), 76.

28. Catalin Avramescu, "Romania reformata," 22, Year XV (859), 25-31 August 2006.

29. Gheorghe Vasilescu, "O istorie a catedralei mantuirii neamului." *Magazin istoric* Year XXXII, No. 3 (372), March 1998, 73-76.

30. The members of the committee were architect Petre Antonescu, architect Roger Bolomey, architect State Ciortan, engineer Gheorghe Bals, the Minister of Religious Affairs Aurel Vlad, and Dem Dobrescu, the mayor of Bucharest (Vasilescu, "O istorie a catedralei mantuirii neamului," 76) .

31. Piata Romana, Dealul Schitu Magureanu, Dealul Patriarhiei (Vasilescu, "O istorie a catedralei mantuirii neamului," 76).

32. Sos. Kiseleff, near Piata Victoriei, Gradina Cismigiu, near the Medical School, the Carol Park, near Vama Postei, the Sf. Gheorghe Nou Church and the houses surrounding it (Vasilescu, "O istorie a catedralei mantuirii neamului," 76).

33. Vasilescu, "O istorie a catedralei mantuirii neamului," 76.

34. The current Parliament building was formerly known as the House of the People and its construction began during the communist regime. Designed to fulfill the megalomaniac ambitions of the rulers, it has the reputation of being the second largest building in the world after the Pentagon and it was meant to accommodate the political and administrative structures of the socialist power.

35. Mircea Eliade, *The Sacred and the Profane*, (New York, 1959)

36. David Chidester; Edward Linenthal, *American Sacred Spaces*, (Bloomington, 1995)