Types of Neo-Protestant Religious Discourse

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Resumé: L'article se propose une description générale du discours et du monde néo-protestant. Parce que le monde néo-protestant est vaste et divers, nous nous sommes arrêtée aux discours pentecôtiste et baptiste. Le cult néo-protestant a une physionomie particulière qui se traduit par le lieu important accordé à la chaire dans l'église. Le centre est le prêche dans le texte biblique de chaque jour. Les discours pentecôtiste et baptiste représentent deux types de discours religieux néo-protestant qui se caractérisent par des rites communs et qui mettent l'accent sur la lecture et l'analyse quotidienne du texte sacre.

Mots clé: néo-protestant, discours pentecôtiste, discours baptiste, rite, glossolalie.

I. The Introduction

This research is about the Neo-Protestant religious discourse, definition and presentation of the features of a different type of religious discourse with comparative-historical method. We further propose a description of the main types of the Neo-Protestant discourse, Baptist and Pentecostal one, and also an analysis of the consequences of cultural, social and economic, planetary exhibited. The Protestantism is a world, a socio-religious universe extremely rich and diverse as you can easily lose in it if you do not have a minimum of guiding info. Understanding the protestant movement means to discover its history, its basic assertions, but also culture and its contribution to society. The Protestantism is

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also a culture, specifically an ethos, that is an original way of living and seeing things, that has made its mark on many human beings and the various societies, a culture that still remains today profoundly rooted in the mentality. The Protestantism is a pluralistic and multiform culture, and the fragmentation of religious and ecclesiastical Protestantism, far from being a flaw, is the manifestation of its refusal to consider a particular ecclesiastical institution that has a monopoly of the Christian truth. The protestant culture is also a culture based on individual freedom and responsibility. This culture has given rise to many denominations, organizations and achievements; and it exerted a certain influence in the economy, politics, education, and all the social sectors of society.

II. The Evangelical Protestantism

The Evangelical Protestantism has seen in recent years a special dynamism in Central and South America, especially Pentecostalism. Submitting a post regarding to the person and its personal problems, evangelical Protestantism is very active in terms of evangelism and social action and also educational of the youth. With its call to conversion, contributes to the discovery of the identity and dignity of persons destabilized social and cultural. In particular, the American evangelical current is distinguished by the impact of using radio and television by the preachers in order to spread the message. Since 1944, The National Religious Broadcasting association of evangelical preachers functioned till nowadays. One can therefore talk about a church-mail to designate millions of believers who gathered to listen to evangelical preachers (Baptist, Methodist or Pentecostal) trough media (like Pat Robertson, Jim Barker, Oral Roberts).

The Evangelical Protestantism is veritable brine, and the analysis tools are frequent. Sébastien Fath[1], together with a group of researchers proposed a method of analysis, the historiography of evangelical Protestantism, which is based on the historiography of the United States where it represents the majority of religious

[1] Sébastien Fath, *La diversité évangélique*, Excelsis, Paris, 2003.

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culture, but there are references to the Canadian, Australian and British Christian conversion. Therefore, if we speak of evangelical Protestantism we find it roots in United States, where this current has developed, and then propagated itself in Europe. To seek to convert people and to create new local churches is that simple way how Americans practiced their religion.

The evangelicals are actually a distinct sub-culture in the midst of the society. They are considered the most solid in their beliefs about sin, salvation and moral authority. They believe that the Holy Bible is literally true, people are sinners, only Christ can save and that there are absolute moral norms. Because they are serious about sin and salvation, also have the advantage to convince others, practicing faith in Jesus, which is recognized as Lord and Savior. If faith issues are an element that distinguishes them, the evangelicals, there are distinctive questions related to language, habit and pattern. Their reserves to the effect of the alcoholic drinks, their language or behaviour pattern, turns them into a guiding mark before you know their faith. The TV, music, cinema and popular culture are outside their field of expertise. They avoid those, considering it worldly temptations. Their clothing styles are perhaps not obvious as they were once (at the time women never wore pants), but remain still conservatives. When they are asked to pray in public, their prayers are often spontaneous and intimate with Jesus to whom they address.

Behind these differences of faith and pattern, no doubt is looming a very important reality: the evangelicals consider themselves different. They believe that their life patterns must be different to the others and that Christian values are bespattered. Some of the evangelicals are concerned because of the external threats, but others often are convinced that there are individuals around them who do not know God and live a life of sin even full of dangers. Because of the wide society, evangelicals are in danger of losing even their place in this whole world.

One of a feature of evangelical Protestantism is the rite of baptism, which is not a way to save and is made only once. The Lutherans and the Reformers practice infant baptism, but many

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Protestant cults are officiating adult baptism, insisting on receiving conscious of this sacred act. In this case baptism is a consequence of conversion of an adult. Today young Protestants often receive baptism at the end of catechesis (after 14 years old). The Pentecostal and Baptist churches practice this kind of baptism by water entry, and also the Holy Spirit baptism in the Pentecostal churches. The Holy Communion is, along with baptism, the only sacrament recognized by Protestants. The sacrifice on the cross was fulfilled once for all by Jesus, thus refusing the Catholic conception of the Eucharist which makes it a sacrifice offered by the Church through the priest.

The reform insistence on preaching the Word of God gave to the Protestant cult a particular physiognomy which is translated by the important place given to the pulpit in churches or Protestant temples: primary is preaching the biblical text of the day and not the Eucharist (Holy Communion), which is celebrated once a month. This does not mean a devaluation of the Holy Communion, but is integrated into a general conception of religion that insists on the fact that God is present through the Word. The religious service is not a miraculous event, a testimony of the priest that he was able to redeem God. Those who officiates the service are given no special quality, or enjoying a power that make them different from other believers. Thereby come in sight the caution in using the protestant ways of forgiving sins or blessing. The Minister is limited to invite believers to receive God's blessing, and this leads to simplify the priest's gestures. The Protestant cult has evolved these last years and today there is manifested an upgrading service, and community and festive aspects are more emphasized.

Therefore, postmodern evangelicals admit that people get the chance to choose in life. They say that the way they inhabit can be rooted in a particular moral community living together, but still different. The Evangelicals are only one voice among many others who seek to trace the institutional and moral borders of modern life. In addition, by their insistence to say that their way of living can survive along with others, they also participate in the

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debate about religion in public life. Less theory, the evangelicals say that life can be valued in terms of religion.

Reality has its force in the evangelical community where every believer belongs to. The vitality of these religious communities gives strength to each parishioner. While each person must take personal decisions, these decisions are taken in the context of a community in which the principles can be obeyed, a community in which discourse is based on assertions about God's action. What evangelicals say about the decadence of the world and about the manner in which they act in the midst of this world is presented as a critique of things as they are. Building up local churches, schools, publishing, radio and television stations, etc., the Evangelicals have formed a world where they can live in an alternative manner, an alternative kind of authorities.

In particular, local churches are public places where believers come to pray and share the experience of an epiphany, they can also use prayer as the most powerful weapon. Whether it is expressed in public or practiced at home, it is an exercise that consists of a speech about the world, but in God's terms. It reinforces the contrast between the manners in which things are the way God wants it to be. The prayer provides a rhetorical exercise, a position outside everyday's reality, a sacred experience. Strictly speaking, the Evangelicals prayers are their denial for the state in which they are. The prayer is the practice to live in a speech that may otherwise, in certain circumstances, that evolves in an institutional side borders. Those who try to understand the evangelicals should give attention to these narrative discourses. There is not sufficiently to form a certain judgment on their vision of God to recognize the true power of the transcendence. So the evangelicals wield a cultural power expressing a critique of modernity and imagining a world that is different. Their effort is an actively one for building the future, they want to change the world and express their demands starting from different institutions. It is unlikely, in most cases, as in the end they clearly dominate the center of our culture. There are other voices who fights for the right to convey their point of view. But the mere indepen-

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dence of the churches and their support chain has created a foundation that will continue to promote their reservations and commitments, and each movement supporting the other.

The Romanian Neo-Protestant Christian Confessions were born mostly in the nineteenth century, coming from the U.S. and Western Europe, being at first religious currents in the Protestant denominations, than turn into independent Protestant churches. They then rapidly spread around the world, obviously with some success in Christian circles, especially in the non-Christian, managing to Christianize many reprobate Buddhist world, Muslim world or in sub-Saharan Africa. The followers of those Christian religions, and the founder of Protestantism, Martin Luther King, lay emphasis on Bible (Sola Bible), renouncing almost in corpore the pre-Christian and unbiblical traditions distinctive for traditional Catholic and Orthodox churches. On the other hand these cults have introduced new elements of ritual taken from the biblical text, to replace the traditional ones. Demotic, the Neo-Protestant religious believers are sometimes pejorative appointed by the Orthodox as penitents. In Romania, most followers of Neo-Protestant denominations live mainly in the former Austro-Hungarian territory (Banat, Transylvania and Bucovina), regions that have previously had close ties with the West, including the United States (before 1918, when seasonal or permanent emigration to that country were more easily for the Austro-Hungarian citizens than for the citizens of the Old Kingdom). Some religious denominations are associated with neo-protestatism: Jehovah's Witnesses, Mormons, Church of Scientology followers, etc., but these religious groups would have their own dogma based only partly on biblical text. Before continuing with the presentation of the main Protestant denominations from Europe and Romania, it should be proper to clarify the name of Neo-Protestant, which occurs only in our country. In Romania, because of the majority Orthodoxy, and becouse the Protestantism entered only in Transylvania, until the late nineteenth century, the Protestantism stages were burned one by one. The Orthodox monk, Dumitru Cornilescu converts and translates King James Bible, the Evan-

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gelical version in 1921, and that moment is recognized as the releaser for the Neo-Protestantism, a different Protestantism from Europe or the United States, where it already take more advanced forms. Therefor we speak of a Neo-Protestantism represented by Baptist, Pentecostal, Christian Gospel, and Adventist denominations.

III. The Baptist Discourse

The Baptist religion emerged as a Christian movement during the Protestant Reformation in Western Europe. First Baptist Church was formed in 1606 in Amsterdam (Netherlands), a separatist group of British immigrants led by John Smyth. Later, Thomas Helwis, Smyth's colleague returned to England and founded the first Baptist church in London in 1611.

The Baptist movement owes much of its heritage of faith to Anabaptist movements that occurred in Europe in XVI-XVIII. For their faith and their drastic pattern, the Anabaptists were persecuted throughout Europe. Some Anabaptist communities have found refuge for a while in Transylvania, where they remained until 1762, when they emigrated to Russia because of the persecution during the reign of Empress Maria Theresa in Austria. The European modern Baptist movement amplified during the middle of 19th century. The German pastor Johann Gerhard Oncken (1800-1884) had a major contribution in the spreading of the baptist movement throughout Europe at that time. In Romania, the origin of the baptist movement is closely tied to the immigration of some German family to Bucharest, in 1856. This family founded the first baptist church, formed by German members. The other origin of the baptists in our country is placed in Dobrogea, independent from the one in Bucharest. The baptist immigrants form the South of Ukraine moved to Dobrogea and founded a baptist church in 1862 in Cataloi, today the village of the commune Frecatei of Tulcea town. With the help of a baptist evangelist from Bucharest, The Baptist Church of Tulcea was founded in 1870. The baptist doctrine was brought to Transylvania by some German and Hungarian missionaries. In 1874 there

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was founded a Hungarian Baptist church in Salonta, a village in Bihor town. The first Romanian baptist church was founded in 1886 in Chesa. The baptist churches spreaded quickly throughout Bihor, Arad and Somesan Plateau. Today, these places are the regions with the most baptist churches in Romania. From Transylvania the baptists spreaded in every town of the country. The constitution of the Baptist Union took place after Greater Romania was formed. After a meeting in 1919, the baptists from Tara Romaneasca and Transylvania decided to form an union. This decision was approved within the framework of the congress in 1920.

After 1989, the climate of religious liberty from Romania brought revival to the chuches and today there are approximately 100 000 baptized baptists and according to the national census in 2002, 130 000 romanian citizens declared that they belong to the baptist denomination. The Baptist Union is well organised and works as an association and regarding the doctrine the baptists declare the unity and their beliefs through the Christian Baptist Confession. The baptists claim that the supreme authority regarding faith and spiritual life belongs to the Holy Bible or the Holy Writ which calls on people to live in attachment for Jesus Christ. Baptists grant the christian credo and believe that the decisions made by the synods and the theological debates have historical value. These writings and decisions possess a normative character for baptits and their beliefs have to be confirmed by the Holy Bible. They emphasize the preaching of the Holy Bible followed by prayer, Holy Bible study and worship through singing and charity. The central piece of the service is the sermon which serves as a confession about Jesus Christ, as an explanation of the Holy Bible, as a challange and guidance for the believers to a special and personal relationship with God. Every Baptist is advised to study the Holy Bible daily, to develop a life of communion with God, practicing in his daily routine the principles found in the holy book. Baptist churches encourage people to maintain a healthy spiritual life and they expect their members to have high moral values.

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One of the most important difference between baptists and other christian denominations is the fact that the baptism according to the New Testament comes through confession of the faith. For this reason infants are not baptised, they can't confess their personal faith. According to Baptist principles, each person has to decide personally, deliberately and freely what faith to embrace. The Baptist Church practices two ceremonials on Christ's command. These are: the Baptism and the Holy Communion. These two ceremonies have a symbolic meaning and it's not an enigma. Baptists celebrate the first day of the week – Sunday – the day of the Resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ. The church represents the voluntarily gathering of those who chose Jesus Christ as a personal Saviour, the Son of God. These people come together to praise God, to enlighten themselves spiritually, to contribute to the spreading of the Message of the Lord and to keep the faith and the Christian principles pure. For this reason, Baptists don't see the church as a territorial entity, as a Parish, in which the members are enrolled by infant baptism. Baptists believe in the priesthood of all believers. This means that every believer has received from God a calling (vocation) to serve the Lord in church and in the world. The personal communion with God is possible without the intervention of another person (like a priest or a saint).

Baptist churches encourage their members to take part in various services according to the gifts they have been given by God. Christian Baptists believe in the concept of separation of church and state, they think that the state should not interfere or obstruct the life of the church or the spreading the Word of God. Therefore, Baptists were the first to introduce and promote the idea of religious liberty. As for the church's structure, Baptists don't have a leading hierarchy. Local churches are independent and they voluntarily affiliate with the Union of Baptist Churches from Romania for representation in front of the authorities and for support in the accomplishment of projects for the benefit of all churches and the society. In the Baptist Union there are various members besides Baptist churches, like Baptist organizations and institutions concerned with helping the churches in their projects.

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The Baptist Union decides upon doctrinaire and principled issues and ensures the maintenance of the Baptist doctrinaire framework for each of its components. Inside the Baptist Union, local churches are organized in territorial associations called communities. Their purpose is to assist and ensure a better cooperation between local churches, to encourage the mutual support and to represent them in front of the local authorities.

Today, Baptist believers from Romania have established more than 1800 churches and local branches, in which serve more than 800 pastors and other religious workers. The educational background of the pastors is provided by various pastoral theology faculties from The Baptist Theological Institute of Bucharest and Emanuel University of Oradea.

The Baptist Union of Romania edits the official magazine of the cult "Crestinul–Azi", a theological supplement of the magazine, as well as various theological and non-theological papers for the cult. The Baptist Union of Romania is part of the Evangelical Alliance of Romania, as well as other denominations like Pentecostals and Christian Gospel and has joint ownership of Radio "Vocea Evangheliei". The Baptist Cult of Romania is also connected to international Baptist organizations, The European Baptist Federation and The Baptist World Alliance, which gathers more than 200 national and regional Baptist organizations from all over the world, containing almost 50 million members.

IV. The Pentecostal Discourse

The biggest surprise of the 20th century is the uprising of the Pentecostal churches, which is certainly noted in the history of the church, because it indicates another landmark in the history of the Christianity. Together with the birth of the ecumenical movement, the creation of these new churches represents one of other major religious events of this century defined by secularization and religious practices. The youth of this denomination and also its changed and informal nature, differentiate Pentecostalism from the classic Protestantism.

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The Pentecostal movement started in 1900, in United States in Topeza, Kansas, in a Bible school founded by the pastor Charles Parham, which became an itinerant evangelist after he was the pastor of a Congregationalist church. The Pentecostal name comes from the Greek word pentecosti which means "pentecost", referring to the event that happened on Pentecost (Rusalii) – the fifth day of Jesus's resurrection, thereby the name "penticostals", borrowed by the new disciples – Fapte, cap. 2) and the sign of the baptism with the Holy Ghost is speaking in tongues (glossolalia). Another source of the Pentecostal movement is the "revival" from Wales in 1904-1905, marked by preacher Evan Roberts, laic Methodist, who had the chance to be baptized with the Holy Spirit, walked through the whole Gaul to convince his audience of the existence of the Holy Spirit. In England, a Norwegian pastor, A.T. Baratt, introduces in 1907 this movement, and in France, an englishman, Douglas Scott promotes Pentecostalism in 1930. Therefore, the baptism with the Holy Ghost is an important characteristic of the Pentecostal doctrine; it does not replace the water baptism but it completes it and marks the new birth of the individual. The experience of the gifts of the Holy Spirit described in Fapte 2: glossolalia, miracles, prophecies and healing, is mandatory for a Pentecostal believer. The Pentecostalism developed a lot 1970s in Latin America; Jean-Pierre Bastien si André Corten[2] followed this phenomenon in many Latin countries.

Harvey Cox feels like Pentecostalism tries a reapproachement to the primitive word. He says that if so many people are touched by the Pentecostals it means that they have renewed something. They allowed the restoration of those three dimensions of the fundamental spirituality: the primitive word, the primitive devotion and the primitive hope. By the word "primitive", H. Cox describes glossolalia or the speaking in tongues or the prayer in the Holy Spirit[3]. This primitive word that is mentioned by Cox is

[2] *Problémes d'Amerique Latin*, No. 24, January-March, 1997.

[3] „In an age of bombast, the rhetoric specialized slang sometimes empty of any content, Pentecostals have learned to speak with a different voice, of the

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simple and lacks any complex theological reference. The primitive devotion represents the archetypal religious expressions, like visions, healing and dreams and the primitive hope references to the refuse of fatality and tradition. The simplicity in the church's structure follows the New Testament's pattern and there are mentioned: apostles, seers, pastors, evangelists, educators and deacon, presbyter[4].

Crossing over the ocean, the Pentecostal movement from the U.S. also spread in Europe, especially in Germany and Norway. Depending on the place where they are located, the numerical quantity of the members or local traditions, the Pentecostals have plenty of labels: Apostolic Faith, God's Gathering Place, God's Church, The Pentecostal Church of Saints, The Church of Full Gospel, Salem Church etc. The first publication "Vestitorul Evangheliei" was edited in Akron, Ohio. The Pentecostal beliefs arrived in our country from Hungary. The first man considered to be the author of Romanian Pentecostalism is Pavel Bundeanu from Arad, who left Romania before 1910 to go to U.S., where he contacted with Pentecostals and embraced their beliefs. Then he returned home and with the help of some wealthy Hungarians, he founded the first community. Among the most important teachings of Pentecostals, besides those mentioned in the beginning and which can be found in every neo-protestant cult, we can specify: the Pentecostal translation of the Holy Bible (Cornilescu's version) the only one admitted, the Holy Spirit as the foundation for the Pentecostal perception and the baptism with the Holy Spirit, which can also be received by the touch of the hands; when receiving water baptism, a single dive is practiced. The Holy Communion is celebrated with unleavened bread and unfer-

heart.", apud Geoffroy de Turckeim, *Comprendre le protestantisme*, Edition Eyrolles, Paris, 2006, p. 80.

[4] „Si El a dat pe unii apostoli; pe altii, prooroci; pe altii, evanghelisti; pe altii, pastori si învatatori" (Efeseni 4:11). "Si Dumnezeu a rînduit în Biserica, întîi apostoli; al doilea, prooroci, al treilea, învatatori; apoi, pe cei ce au darul minunilor, apoi pe cei ce au darul tamaduirilor, ajutorarilor, cîrmuirilor, si vorbirii în felurite limbi" (1, Corinteni, 12:28).

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mented grape juice; they practice "washing feet", the leaders are represented by pastors and deacons, they celebrate Sunday and other holidays, and the salvation comes through Divine Grace, the good deeds (charity) have saving value, they believe in Christ's 1000 years Governance, which will be realized with the faithful believers. They practice glossolalia and interpretation, gifts from the Holy Spirit. The Pentecostal Church of Romania uses as the official media tool, the magazine „Cuvântul Adevarului".

To conclude, we tried to present just the main Neo-Protestant denominations, because they are numerically more important and they have a strong representation in our country.

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