

Cultural Heritage and Religion

Patrimoine culturel et Religion

Proceedings of the XXXVIth Annual Meeting
Sibiu, 10–12 October 2024

Actes du XXXVI^{ème} colloque annuel
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EMANUEL TAVALA
RAZVAN POP
(eds.)

EUROPEAN CONSORTIUM FOR CHURCH AND STATE RESEARCH
EDITORIAL COMARES

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The European Consortium for Church and State Research dedicates these proceedings to Francis Messner, in honour of his active membership in the Consortium (1996-2023).

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Le Consortium européen pour l'Étude des Relations Églises-État dédie ces actes à Francis Messner, en hommage à son investissement en tant que membre du Consortium (1996-2023).

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PREFACE

This volume brings together the national reports prepared for the 36th Conference of the European Consortium for Church and State Research, devoted to ***the legal protection of religious heritage in Europe***. The conference, hosted in Sibiu, provided a forum for scholars from across the European Union to examine the legal, historical and social dimensions of religious heritage and the role of the state in its preservation.

The choice of Sibiu as the venue of the 36th Conference of the *European Consortium for Church and State Research* is particularly meaningful in the present European and international context. Few places illustrate more clearly the historical depth and the living character of Europe's religious heritage. Shaped over centuries by the coexistence of different religious traditions, Sibiu reflects the plural religious landscape that constitutes one of the defining features of European civilization.

Situated at the intersection of Central and Eastern European historical experiences, Sibiu provides a perspective that complements those of Western Europe. While in many Western countries the main challenge today concerns the redundancy and adaptive reuse of religious buildings in increasingly secularized societies, in much of Central and Eastern Europe the protection of religious heritage has been closely linked to the recovery of historical memory after the political ruptures of the twentieth century. Bringing together these perspectives is essential for a comprehensive understanding of religious heritage in contemporary Europe.

In an international context marked by renewed concerns about the destruction and vulnerability of cultural and religious heritage, the reflection undertaken in Sibiu acquires a particular relevance. Religious heritage stands at the intersection of cultural identity, religious freedom and public responsibility, and its protection requires a delicate balance between respect for sacred traditions and the principles of pluralism and state neutrality.

The historical experience of Sibiu and its tradition of interconfessional coexistence, symbolically expressed in the *Third European Ecumenical Assembly (2007)*, made the city an especially appropriate setting for a scholarly reflection on the place

of religious heritage in Europe. As a city where religious monuments continue to serve both as places of worship and as elements of a shared cultural landscape, Sibiu offers a compelling example of religious heritage as a living reality at the heart of European society.

Religious heritage occupies a distinctive place within the broader framework of European cultural heritage. It is at once material and immaterial, historical and living, cultural and spiritual. Unlike many other forms of cultural heritage, religious heritage often consists of places and objects that continue to serve their original purposes, remaining embedded in the liturgical and communal life of religious communities. At the same time, these same sites attract the interest of visitors whose motivations are primarily artistic, historical or touristic. The coexistence of religious and cultural functions gives religious heritage a particular complexity and raises questions that cannot be addressed solely within the traditional frameworks of cultural heritage law or church–state relations.

The national reports collected in this volume were prepared on the basis of a common thematic framework designed to facilitate comparative analysis. This methodological unity makes it possible to identify both the diversity of national solutions and the underlying patterns that characterize the protection of religious heritage across Europe.

A central theme of the volume concerns the very definition of religious heritage. The reports explore how religious heritage is conceptualized in international instruments, European norms and national legislation, and how the notion extends beyond places of worship to include sacred sites, movable goods, memorial heritage, religious music and intangible traditions. The complexity of these elements makes clear that religious heritage cannot be reduced to a single legal or cultural category, but rather forms a multidimensional field shaped by historical experience and religious diversity.

Another major focus of the studies is the relationship between the religious and the cultural dimensions of heritage. In many European countries, religious buildings represent a substantial part of the protected cultural heritage, yet they remain primarily spaces of worship. The need to reconcile liturgical use with cultural access and touristic promotion has led to a variety of legal and practical arrangements, reflecting different historical traditions and models of cooperation between public authorities and religious communities.

The reports also address the evolving role of the state in the protection of religious heritage. Even in legal systems characterized by institutional separation between state and religion, public authorities play an essential role in listing monuments, financing restoration works and ensuring access to cultural goods. The protection of religious heritage therefore illustrates particularly well the notion of *res mixtae*, areas in which the interests of religious communities and those of the broader society inevitably intersect.

Contemporary challenges affecting religious heritage form another important thread of the volume. Processes of secularization and demographic change have transformed the social environment in which many religious buildings exist, leading in some cases to redundancy and adaptive reuse. At the same time, increasing attention to heritage has reinforced the perception of religious buildings as repositories of collective memory. The transformation of places of worship into cultural venues or tourist destinations raises fundamental questions about the meaning of sacred space in contemporary Europe.

The studies also consider the place of minority religions within the concept of European religious heritage and the implications of pluralism and state neutrality for heritage policies. Issues of security, protection of sacred sites, and the preservation of religious identity in historically significant areas further illustrate the complex interactions between religious freedom, cultural policy and public order.

Finally, the volume explores future developments in the protection of religious heritage, including questions of ownership, responsibility for maintenance, public and private funding and the role of European programmes. These perspectives highlight the importance of sustained cooperation between states, religious communities and civil society in ensuring the preservation of religious heritage for future generations.

By bringing together national experiences within a shared analytical framework, this volume seeks to contribute to a deeper understanding of the place of religious heritage in contemporary Europe. It is our hope that the comparative insights offered here will prove useful not only to scholars of church–state relations, but also to policymakers and religious communities engaged in the protection of Europe’s religious heritage.

EMANUEL TAVALA AND RAZVAN POP

This volume brings together the national reports prepared for the 36th Conference of the European Consortium for Church and State Research, devoted to *the legal protection of religious heritage in Europe*. The conference, hosted in Sibiu, provided a forum for scholars from across the European Union to examine the legal, historical and social dimensions of religious heritage and the role of the state in its preservation. A central theme of the volume concerns the very definition of religious heritage. The reports explore how religious heritage is conceptualized in international instruments, European norms and national legislation, and how the notion extends beyond places of worship to include sacred sites, movable goods, memorial heritage, religious music and intangible traditions. Another major focus of the studies is the relationship between the religious and the cultural dimensions of heritage. Contemporary challenges affecting religious heritage form another important thread of the volume. Finally, the volume explores future developments in the protection of religious heritage, including questions of ownership, responsibility for maintenance, public and private funding and the role of European programmes.

