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DIALOGUES AND MONOLOGUES: HOW TO WRITE THE HISTORY OF THE GREEK CATHOLICS UNDER COMMUNISM

The history of the relationship between the two Romanian churches in Transylvania,¹ the Orthodox and the Greek Catholic, is a complicated account of entanglements, collaborations, negotiations, ruptures, conflict, dialogue and its absence. The relationship was constantly refashioned, and influenced by each new social, economic or political context. Since its inception, the political, rather than religious project of the Habsburgs² in their newly acquired province redesigned its religious landscape to favour the Catholics. Applying the counterreformation pattern already functional in L'viv (at the time known as Lemberg),³ the Austrian monarchy redrew the confessional map of Transylvania by unifying a part of the Orthodox Church with the Roman Catholic Church. The clear lines of ethnic segregation based on religious affiliation became murkier, with a large part⁴ of the Romanian community of Transylvania now inside a larger Catholic community. The now religiously segregated Romanian community developed differently within the bounds of the two churches: the old Orthodox and the new Greek Catholic. The Greek Catholic community played an important role in the modernization of the Romanian community in Transylvania from its inception in the eighteenth century to 1918 and the unification of the country especially in the national awakening process during the nineteenth century; the Greek Catholic personalities, for example, had an important role in the unification process with the Romanian Kingdom in 1918.

The expectation was that after the unification of the country in 1918, the Romanian churches would also unite to reach the concept of 'one church one nation'.⁵ Instead, in the 1923 Constitution, the state compromised and sanctioned both churches as national churches. A competition between the two Romanian elites in Transylvania for legitimacy in the newly created state ensued, and with it a competition for survival for both these churches in the 1920s and 1930s. For the Greek Catholics it was

about surviving in the bounds of a different structure that legitimized and formed the national elite. For the Transylvanian Orthodox the legitimacy fight was around entering in a Romanian structure, a discursive corpus where the highest authority was represented by the Orthodox Romanians, where the authenticity of their orthodoxy was discussed and questioned. For the Transylvanian Orthodox as well this was a strategy for survival in a foreign (albeit Romanian) ensemble with different norms and religious practices, a distinct hierarchy and a new decision-making centre. The Greek Catholics, meanwhile, had to integrate their history into a larger national narrative. The Transylvanian Orthodox strove to save their history from being engulfed by the history of the mother institution (the Romanian Orthodox Church) they joined after the union of 1918. Both the Greek Catholics and the Transylvanian Orthodox competed in Transylvania to offer their own solution to constructing the nation at the regional level.⁶

The Greek Catholics drew on their particularities in the process of constructing the Romanian nation in Transylvania, a process they helped jumpstart. Their discourse used motifs like the Latin base of the language and the Roman origin of the Romanian people as arguments for what should describe the nation thus making use of their connection to Rome. The Orthodox elite looked towards integration into the mother church, the one religion that represented Romanians working on a link between ethnicity and religion that was developed discursively around the same period in the Orthodox environments of the Old Kingdom.⁷ The Greek Catholics brought in their specificity: a Latin Church that would offer a strong boost to the *Latin heritage* of the Romanians, a particular and unique church singular in the East Central Europe that would better serve the task of defining the nation. They argued that the Orthodox Church would not be able to help define the nation in opposition to Romania's neighbours (Bulgarians, Serbs, Greeks, Russians), with which the Orthodox shared religious affiliation.

After the unification of the country, the Transylvanian Orthodox put forward several offers and designed a number of plans for the unification of the two churches, as a *natural return to the mother church*. The unification of the nation meant that the church serving the nation had *to become one again*. The response was a Greek Catholic unification project: by making Greek Catholicism the sole valid means of unifying the two churches.⁸ Variants of unifications were circulated between the two communities throughout the whole interwar period, and articulated by historians coming from within the church environments. Most of the arguments in support

of the unification projects came from the history of the two churches and were included in a larger historiographical debate between historians of the two confessions. The debates were predictably fierce. A positivist turn with regard to research and the use of the historical document as 'proof' in the dialogue of the two historiographical sides was brought in the Transylvanian public debate by a young historiographical school educated abroad (Rome, Vienna, and Budapest). This Transylvanian history school regionalized the subject. While discussing integration and constructing the nations and arguing for change within the national historiographical canon, one that advocated including of the history of both Transylvanian churches, all the same neither side involved the other's legitimating institutions at the national level.

The present essay follows this historiographical debate after the forceful reunification of the two churches in 1948 and the influence that this *unification* had on the historiography of the Greek Catholic Church. It is based on an analysis of the texts produced in the communist period by Church and lay historians on the history of the Greek Catholic Church in several religious journals (*Mitropolia Ardealului* (MA), *Ortodoxia*, *Biserica Ortodoxă Română* (BOR), *Studii Teologice* (ST)) and in various books and collections of articles. This analysis is supplemented by archival research in the archives of the State Secretary for Religious Denominations in Bucharest.

In observing this process of writing and re-writing history I will also offer an insight into the complicated relationship between the communist state and the Greek Catholic and Orthodox Churches in Romania. The association between the communist state and majority/ national religious denomination, adopting the soviet model of compromise and instrumentation of the Church in solving the national problem, the use of the Church as *port-parole* for the state's policies, was the model on which the relationship between the Romanian Orthodox Church and the Romanian communist state was based. It is this model of compromise and association that was adopted by the new 'people's democracies' with variations that respond to specific contexts.⁹ An interesting side of the relationship between the communist state and the majority Orthodox Church was the Greek Catholic solution. As Pedro Ramet notices the Greek Catholics and Jews were particularly targeted for suppression and extirpation.¹⁰ In the Greek Catholic case, he notices that the policy towards them in Ukraine and Romania is closely connected to their respective nationalist policy. The forceful unification with the Orthodox

Churches could be seen as part of the compromise and association type of relationship between the communist administration and the Orthodox Church as recompense for the Church's compromise with the demands of the new regime. The involvement and cooperation of the state administration and the Orthodox Church in bringing the Greek Catholics inside the mother church is notable even in this exercise of writing and re-writing their history to fit the new situation.

The historiographical process of writing and canonizing Greek Catholic history by Orthodox Church historians can be seen more broadly as an exercise in re-writing history to serve numerous purposes. First, it was used to legitimize and prepare for the November 1948 act of *unification*. This process evinced a need to justify historically the religious return of the Greek Catholic believers to the mother Church (the Romanian Orthodox Church). Throughout the communist period it also served a propaganda purpose in helping integrate the former Greek Catholic believers. Secondly, one can also see in this historiographical endeavour a chance for Orthodox Church historians to settle the interwar debate with Greek Catholic historians. Themes and figures from this period were transferred to the present-day historiographical canon, but of course without being challenged by the erstwhile opponent. The third but not least important reason was the attempt to centralise the position of the Transylvanian Orthodox Church for the Romanian community in Transylvania, especially when this position was challenged by the Greek Catholic Church. This was done by emphasizing certain subjects over others. The focus was now on the reactions to the 1678 union, the rebellions against it, the preservation of the Orthodox faith. It was also done by bringing out certain Orthodox personalities in the foreground thus counterbalancing Greek Catholic ones.¹¹

After the union

Following the Soviet model of dealing with the Greek Catholic Church in Ukraine by offering the Romanian Orthodox Church national status, the unification of the Romanian Orthodox Church with the Romanian Greek Catholic Church had a significant impact on the religious scene in communist Romania.

While talking about the religious denominations in Transylvania during communism, many of the churchmen I interviewed drew attention to

an intriguing situation: the overlap between religious denomination and ethnicity.¹² Transylvania was and still is a place where several cultural, religious and ethnic identities “clash.” This is a region where the branches of traditional Christianity confronted each other throughout centuries. Orthodoxy, Protestantism and Catholicism responded to the pressures of history with segregation. Traditionally the relationship between these three Christian churches in Transylvania was based on the characteristics of the relationship between their ethnic components. The term ‘national church’ could in fact be used for several of the denominations in Transylvania. When employing the term “national” church, I am not referring only to the same ethnic background the believers of a specific denomination share but also to the contributions that a church has in preserving the cultural, historical, and political traditions of their believers. With two exceptions the spiritual patronage of the churches in Transylvania was directed towards specific nationalities. The Unitarian Church administered Hungarian believers, as did the Reformed and the Evangelical Synod Presbyterian Churches. The Evangelical Augustan Confession Church (Lutheran) administered the German believers.¹³ The exceptions were the Roman Catholic and Greek Catholic Churches. The former shared believers from the three ethnic groups; and while the number of Romanian adherents to this faith was rather small in Transylvania, the Catholic Church administered a larger community of Romanians in Moldavia and the Southern part of the country. Their believers were thus Romanians, Hungarians and Germans. The Greek Catholic Church segregated the Romanian community, which was placed under the spiritual supervision of two Churches.

The communist regime regarded the Greek Catholics as a potential problem for several key reasons: important among these were the subordination to the external administration body of a large part of Romanians from Transylvania, and the relative political independence of the hierarchy of the Greek Catholic Church, part of the Romanian elite in Transylvania. The solution of the union with the Romanian Orthodox Church had Soviet lineage yet it brought important local gains. It provided the Romanian state with a united and compact group of Romanian believers, subject to one church and one discourse.

The unification of the two churches, prepared for several years, was predictable in light of the propaganda issued by the state. The Orthodox Church, which had been engaged for several decades in the pro-union debate with the Greek Catholic elite, realized that the state might become

involved with the Greek Catholic problem from 1946 onwards, once the dissolution option had been applied to the Greek Catholic Church in West Ukraine.

In applying its policy, the State co-opted the Orthodox Church, which had in turn advertised the dissolution of the Greek Catholic Church as a long-awaited reunion between the two Romanian churches, thereby conforming to the state's line of propaganda that focused on nationalist ideals. The unification project was labelled *Revenirea Bisericii Greco-Catolice în sânul bisericii mamă – Biserica Ortodoxă* (The Return of the Greek Catholic Church to the Mother Orthodox Church).

A serious campaign to bring the Greek Catholic Church 'back to the bosom of the mother Church' was organized only after the L'viv synod act of 1946. In reaction, that same year Iasi-based university professor Milan Şesan (1910-1981) published an article,¹⁴ later included in a book with the same title, *De ce Uniunea?* (Why did Unification Happen?). Already in the preamble, he states that one of the reasons for writing the book was the denunciation by the Greek Catholic Archbishop of Western Ukraine of the 'confessional union with Rome, realized at the famous Brest-Litovsk synod in 1596.'¹⁵ The article is a *histoire evenementielle* of Greek Catholicism in general with just a few mostly incidental references to the Transylvanian case. Şesan describes the different types of church unions, plus the motives behind them and their sponsors. He carefully inserts biblical and canonical precepts in his argumentation for the religious union that solicit the existence of one united church and one truth. However, there are some remarks with obviously tendentious implications. For instance, he talks of the unification of the two churches at the local level and states that:

Every act of union is connected in almost every case with a moral violation, as objectively historiographical monographs should record. Dissatisfaction and splits between believers accumulate and Greek Catholicism becomes a refuge for the crowd of those dissatisfied with the Orthodox believers, and is left by all those embittered by *equivoque*.¹⁶

This particular type of article that prepared the religious union can be found throughout 1947, though most of them lose their propaganda hint seen in Şesan's article.

Following these developments and debates, the constitution of 1948 stipulated that the state guaranteed freedom of religion and conscience and that all religious denominations were free and equal under the law.

The same was stipulated in the Law of Religious Denomination issued in August 1948. The Greek Catholic Church complied with this law's requirement that all religious denominations submit a statute of faith, and the church was thereby recognized by the Romanian state. Events unfolded rapidly thereafter, beginning with the Autumn 1948 gathering of 38 Greek Catholic archpriests [protopopi] in Cluj-Napoca to sign the act returning the Greek Catholic Church to the Orthodox Church. This date coincided with the anniversary of the Greek Catholic Church, marking 250 years since the 1698 unification signed by 38 Transylvanian archpriests. The act of *reunification* was therefore laden with symbolism: signed on the same date and by as many archpriests as the union with the Roman Catholic Church in 1698 which helped create an aura of legitimacy for the Romanian Orthodox Church's actions. Six days later, the Holy Synod of the Romanian Orthodox Church blessed the reunification of the Romanian Church from Transylvania and signed the synod act that made official the re-uniting of the two churches. On 21 November in Alba Iulia, a religious ceremony was to bestow a divine and popular blessing on the event, and notably large numbers participated: 100,000 and 150,000 according to estimates in official reports and Orthodox Church documents.¹⁷

At the end of the year, the communist regime used the union to dissolve the Greek Catholic Church on the basis of its alleged obsolescence: supposedly now lacking believers and priests, all its material patrimony had in any case already been entrusted to the Orthodox Church.¹⁸ The Greek Catholic hierarchy that had opposed unification was imprisoned, and believers that remained faithful to their religion were either forced to practice it in secret or to join the Roman Catholic Church.

The events, which had indisputably important consequences for the mass of Transylvanian believers, were followed on the pages of Orthodox religious journals, and the Romanian Orthodox Church dedicated several books to the November 1948 event. The articles were pitched somewhere between straightforward apologias, more subtle justifications and historical research aspiring to wider credibility. Published by religious journals such as *Biserica Ortodoxă Română*, [The Romanian Orthodox Church] *Ortodoxia*, [Orthodoxy] *Studii Teologice* [Theological Studies] and *Revista Teologică* [Theological Journal] these articles offer a broad understanding of the discourse within the Orthodox Church at the time. They can be divided into three categories: articles that celebrate the event, articles that tried to understand Romanian Greek Catholicism both from a theological and a historical perspective, and articles that criticize Greek

Catholicism and Roman Catholicism. The religious journals depicted the reunification moments with surprising accuracy and an almost complete lack of interpretative gloss. The authors behaved like field reporters. The text of speeches they delivered and documents cited as evidence were presented in full; events were treated chronologically, impregnated with biblical quotations.¹⁹

Resistance to the union is not mentioned since “the population met unification with their Orthodox brothers with a spiritual openness”. Still, it was D. V. Sădeanu, a Greek Catholic priest who after unification mentioned the the Greek Catholic Hierarchy’s resistance to the union. He based this resistance on the promises of material gains made by the Vatican. His article discussed the Vatican propaganda in the Romanian People’s Republic.²⁰ Religious journals were deployed to explain these events, which had an impact not only on the religious hierarchy of both these churches, but also on the vast majority of the population.

Throughout the 1950s, the Romanian Orthodox Church worked alongside the state to strengthen the union. In practice, the process of turning the Greek Catholic believers and clergy into Orthodox ones required consistent efforts both at the local and at central level. Satisfied in 1948 with simply a name change, representing only a superficial union, the Romanian Orthodox Church became increasingly aware of the complications as time passed. In the 1960s, the Romanian Orthodox Church was still in the process of strengthening the *religious union*. The process of “publicizing the *re-unification* act” was part of a complex activity of bringing the Greek Catholics back into the fold that was sometimes jointly designed by the Romanian Patriarchate and the Ministry for Religious Denominations. This process included schooling former Greek Catholic priests and swapping parishes with Orthodox priests in the Old Kingdom. The result was an influx of young theology graduates in former Greek Catholic parishes. These were corroborated with a brutal campaign of destroying the Greek Catholic opposition, involving the imprisonment of hierarchs, priests and believers. The historiographical project²¹ was thus part of a larger set of activities that took place throughout the 1940s and 1950s. The project preceded, paralleled and followed the events that took place at the end of the 1940s.

The authors that were entrusted with writing the new history of the Romanian Church came from different backgrounds. The first principal group comprised historians that made the transition from the interwar period. They were Church historians, specialists on the history of the

Church in Transylvania part of the interwar historiographical debate with the Greek Catholic historians like Ștefan Lupșa or Silviu Dragomir. They continued an existing body of research that was done after 1918. Other contributions came from Transylvanian Orthodox Hierarchs like Archbishop Nicolae Bălan, Bishop Nicolae Mladin, and former Greek Catholic priests turned Orthodox in 1948 like Traian Man. Other authors came with distinct interpretations that differed from the work they had carried out previously, as for instance in the case of father Dumitru Stăniloai; others came to the subject accidentally, as with the writing on *Școala Ardeleană* [The Transylvanian School] or the contribution to the subject by historian David Prodan.²²

Several documents in the archives of the State Secretary for Religious Denominations highlight the central role of ministry personnel in setting the content and directing the tone of the research articles, allowing various church historians to publish their articles. Interference in the research findings, creating agendas for research and censoring findings were familiar to researchers in the period. The compromise that allowed them to write on their topics had in many cases to do with national/ regional policy requirements that the communist administration wanted to put in practice. By way of illustration, in a report issued by the Department for religious denominations on the state of affairs regarding the unification of the two churches, one could clearly see the direct involvement of the department in the unification process in painstaking detail.

Taking into consideration the research done in history, literature and culture in general, to eliminate those old tendencies that wanted to give the impression that the Greek Catholic Church played an *avant garde* role in some Romanian actions of national importance. More attention should therefore be given to how the cultural activity in Transylvania between the 18th and the 19th centuries is researched. There is a tendency to consider that all the contribution of the Greek Catholic intellectuals or of those that studied at Greek Catholic schools would not be due to their patriotism and realism but to the Greek Catholic Church and their allegiance to Rome. The fact that they studied in Greek Catholic schools does not mean that their political and social attitude was borrowed from there. Through journal articles one should point out clearly that the Greek Catholic Church opposed the tendency of national awakening and of national independence of the Transylvanian Romanians, that many of the Transylvanian intellectuals of Greek Catholic belief were persecuted, sometimes by their church for the way in which they supported the noble

interests of the Romanian people. It is not difficult to point out that Rome – and via Rome the Greek Catholic Church – came against that Romanian people – although this was not always visible in every decisive moment of our history, in 1848, in 1918 and more recently during the 1940 Vienna Diktat.²³

The religious journals were controlled by the ministry. The subject of the articles was decided in the ministry as seen in the above policy document. Themes including the idea that ‘we were all once as one’, the preservation of the Orthodox faith throughout the 18th and 19th centuries even by the Greek Catholic Church personalities, the infamous role of the Roman Catholic Church and Vatican, the fight for Orthodoxy by Romanian believers in eighteenth century Transylvania, repairing a wrong doing were all first introduced in the speeches of Orthodox Church hierarchs immediately before and after the 1948 event. They were immediately picked up by articles in the religious journals and later translated into research articles by historians with their focus on subjects like the Orthodox rebellions in the 18th century Transylvania,²⁴ Greek Catholic personalities fighters for Orthodoxy²⁵ and so on.

Several favoured themes dominate studies on the history of Greek Catholicism. There is a concentration of articles dedicated to the history of the union. These range from simple narrative histories that take the reader through the events of the 1697/1698 – 1701 unification process, biographies of the main characters, to controversial research themes like the exact date of the unification. Silviu Dragomir is probably the most important historian that worked on this topic. He used the new situation created after the *unification* with the hierarchy and public figures of the Greek Catholic Church imprisoned or extinct to settle maybe one of the most incendiary controversies in the interwar historiographical debate: who came first in the unification process, Bishop Atanasie Anghel or Bishop Teofil. Settling the debate is used here ironically since the debate is no longer live given that the interlocutors are all deceased or imprisoned by the communists, and the findings of Silviu Dragomir are canonized used without critical examination by Orthodox historiography afterwards.²⁶ To Dragomir’s credit, although Augustin Bunea was no longer alive and Zenobie Pâclișanu was imprisoned, they are still present in a false debate through his arguments. They are quoted, argued with, and contradicted in something that is more than a mere use of secondary sources and rather a continuation of a historiographical battle. Dragomir won the ‘debate’, or,

put differently, the false monologue, but only because the former partner never challenges his findings. Some challenges occur later in the 1960s from secular historians that treat his conclusions carefully.²⁷

Silviu Dragomir's study *Istoria desrobirei religioase a românilor din Ardeal* (The history of the religious emancipation of the Romanians in Transylvania) published in the 1920s and 1930s was used as bibliography for any study on the religious union of 1687/1698-1701 published between 1947 and 1960. Some used the documents published in the book many still for his interpretations on the religious union. Dragomir could be considered as a standard source of reference. *Istoria desrobirii religioase* is an interpretation of the events of the eighteenth century based on original sources that he presents in their entirety in the second part of the book, a partisan interpretation that doubts the authenticity of documentation of the union and that he moulds in support of his own ideas. Talking for instance about religious union in the period of Bishop Teofil (this would have placed the act of unification a year earlier than Dragomir and other church historians), and about the acts of the 1697 Sinod, he states: 'but it is so obvious that these acts were forged [ticluite] by the Jesuits that it is not worth wasting time with them.'²⁸ And indeed he does not do so. His style is also highly specific. Dragomir is ever-present in the text; he also uses an abundance of rhetorical questions,²⁹ has romantic interpretations and poetic passages.³⁰ Despite its oddities, the book marks an important moment in the historiography of the union.

When Dragomir resurfaced in the late 1950s with two studies on the religious union only a few years after his release from communist prison, he rounds up a decade of historiographical legitimization of the 1948 act. One can suspect also a manipulation on the part of the communists in using his name and reputation to give their venture the gloss of legitimacy by publishing his articles. Two of his studies, one published in a historical journal and the other in a religious one, also mark the subject's introduction into secular historiography, where it followed an intriguing path during the 1960s. The first of these works, 'Transylvanian Romanians and the union with the Church of Rome' which appeared in 1958 in *Studii și Materiale de Istorie Medie* [Studies and Materials in Medieval History] is dedicated to the revolt by the Romanian population of Transylvania in the years following the religious union 'against the Habsburgs and against the clergy that betrayed its own people'.³¹ It discusses the 1744 – 1762 events arguing that without the religious movements one could no longer talk about the later social movements. Dragomir pointed out the anti-feudal, anti-

Catholic and anti-royalist traits of the religious movement in Transylvania and named the period as the one in which the Transylvanian Romanians woke up from 'their illusions of the "good Emperor"'.³² The conclusion, naturally, reads as follows: 'in the light of so much new information the **historic truth** [underlined by author] becomes evident, the union with the Church of Rome was executed through force, terror and lies, it never was accepted by the population and therefore was removed through violence by the masses as a foreign element in close connection with the interests of the occupiers.'³³

The second study published by *Biserica Ortodoxă Română* [The Romanian Orthodox Church] in 1962, and republished in 1990, *Românii din Transilvania și unirea cu Biserica Romei* (The Transylvanian Romanians and the Union with the Church of Rome) became a landmark for the historiography of the Romanian Orthodox Church regarding the union with the Roman Catholic Church. It continues to be used as a bibliography on history courses, for further research in the history of the Greek Catholic Church, and it unarguably constitutes the official version of the history of the Greek Catholic Church, as written by an Orthodox Church historian. The study is based to a not insubstantial part on documents relating to the period 1697-1701. The documents fall into into three distinct categories: the acts of Bishop Teofil's Sinod, the Book of Confession of the Romanian clergy, signed on 7 October 1698, and the documents of the Sinod on 5 September 1700.³⁴ After comparing signatures, writing samples or invoking the lack of original documents, Dragomir concluded that the first category comprises entirely false documentation, with some of the documents in other categories being partly falsified. Concluding, he places the union in the time of Bishop Atanasie Anghel (?-1713) metaphorically speaking, so ends a chapter on the religious union in Orthodox historiography that, from that point on, accepted his findings without questioning. Moving the event of the union one year forwards or backwards, placing Teofil or Atanasie in the foreground of the unification, were contested in the interwar debate by an array of historians, using the same documents, reaching opposing conclusions. The version of the Orthodox Church historians became official only well into the 1950s.

And yet there were historians that contested Silviu Dragomir's conclusions. They were expressed in the 1964 *History of Romania* by David Prodan in his chapter on the religious union. Prodan challenged Dragomir's interpretation of the official documents of the union and brought the union back one year to Teofil's age.³⁵ Prodan's interpretation

on the union included in both editions of his book *Supplex Libellus Valachorum* (1948, 1964) is considerably more subtle than that of his colleagues. He integrated the union into a larger political, social, cultural and religious context. He challenged in a concise version in 1948 and then in a more extensive historiographical exercise in 1964 the interpretations of various church historians that talked about an 'Orthodox conscience legitimating the Transylvanian Romanian peasants' rebellions in the eighteenth century, their acceptance or refusal of the union with the Roman Catholic Church.' He also considers the explanation of peasant resistance to the union on the grounds of their basic incapacity to foresee its benefits to be an exaggeration, a deep ignorance.³⁶ The religious union of the eighteenth century is part of a larger web of diplomatic activity. 'Greek Catholicism is', Prodan suggested, 'placed between two Empires with different political interests. The union becomes part of a European political movement as well as a religious one.'³⁷

This period also witnessed a change in the interpretations offered by Orthodox Church historians. A change of interpretation regarding several Greek Catholic personalities, admitting that there were positive aspects related to the activity of the Greek Catholic Church in Transylvania. All these make for a more nuanced version though the major breakthroughs remained unchallenged by the new research (the interpretation of Silviu Dragomir for instance). I argue that this refinement in interpretation responded to the external influence of the development of national communism. The change in the national historiographical canon of Romania³⁸ brought changes in the Orthodox one. Having been received into Orthodox historiography, the Transylvanian Greek Catholic prelates who were contested personalities in the 1950s were able to enter historical discussion. The figures of the Greek Catholic pantheon, Petru Maior, Ion Inochentie Klein, Gheorghe Şincai, and many others became national heroes, fighters for Orthodoxy, forerunners in the future unification of the Church in Transylvania. Against the backdrop of this refinement of interpretation one still finds the Romanian Orthodox Church struggling to integrate the former Greek Catholics, some twenty years after the 1948 *reunification*.

Conclusion

The segregationist Transylvanian debate during the interwar period on which was the best suited religion to serve the new nation turned into a strict historiographical monologue controlled by the communist state and designed from within the Ministry for Religious Denominations, whose task was to legitimize the new Romanian Church of Transylvania. During the 1960s this regional debate became national when the history of this particular church entered a rewritten national historiographical canon. Paradoxically, this happened when the communist historiography of the 1960s, responding to various external stimuli, especially with regard to national policy, introduced the subject into the national canon via the Orthodox Church interpretation.³⁹ The Greek Catholic historical pantheon was thereby engulfed by the Orthodox one. The controversies were settled and the new hypothesis tested. The return to the 'mother church' was the finitude of its historical existence.

The historiographical canon as set at the end of the 1960s is still preserved today. One can observe a closing of the canon and its institutionalization (it is taught in the Church history courses in the Theology faculties in the country). The debate was no longer rekindled after 1990 and the new historiographical input brought about by various historians is ignored. Maybe the best example of this attitude is the republication in the early 1990s of Teodor M Popescu's 1948 article on the Greek Catholic Church, 'Uniația în lumina adevărului istoric. Cauzele ei sociale și politice' (The Union in the Light of Historical Truth. Its Social and Political Causes) in *Biserica Ortodoxă Română* [The Romanian Orthodox Church] highlighting the reluctance to re-interpret the historical narrative developed after the union by the communist regime.

NOTES

- 1 The Greek Catholic Church in Transylvania has a rich history. It was created mainly for political reasons by the Austrian monarchy as a response to the Protestant majority of the Hungarians in Transylvania at the end of the 17th century. The Church comprised a large part of the Romanian population. Less an ecumenical act of Christian unity - though several attempts to argue this approach were made - and more a political and a national one from the Romanian part the Greek Catholic Church this act was the instrument for the national revival of the Romanians in the late 18th and 19th century. Also an important factor in the unification of the country in 1918 the Greek Catholic Church was recognised alongside the Orthodox as a "national" church during the inter war period.
- 2 For a look into the history of the Transylvanian Romanian religious and political life in the 17th and 18th centuries see Mathias Bernath, *Habsburg und die Anfänge der rumänischen Nationsbildung* (Leiden: Brill, 1972); Keith Hitchens, *A Nation Discovered: Romanian Intellectuals in Transylvania and the Idea of Nation, 1700-1848* (Bucharest: Encyclopaedic Publishing House, 1999)
- 3 Research into the unification of the Orthodox and Roman Catholic Churches in 18th century concludes that the counter-reformation actions in the spirit of church union initiated by the Council of Florence in 1439 in Eastern Europe that were finalized with the partial unification of Brest in 1596 was used as model by the Habsburgs for the union in Transylvania, see Pompiliu Teodor, 'Introducere,' (Introduction) in Mathias Bernath, *Habsburgii și începuturile formării Națiunii Române*, Cluj-Napoca: Dacia, 1991, p. 5-7.
- 4 A statistic of the Romanian clergy in Transylvania in 1716 registers over 2200 Uniate and 456 Orthodox priests, but this is to be carefully read since most of the population could not tell the difference between the two churches the Greek Catholics having preserved the Byzantine rite and the calendar, see David Prodan, *Supplex Libellus Valachorum*, Bucharest: Editura Enciclopedică, 1998, p. 179; In the interwar period the Romanian statistic yearbook finds 58,2% Orthodox and the rest Greek Catholics among the Transylvanian Romanians, see Irina Livezeanu, *Cultura și nationalism în România Mare, 1918-1930*, (Cultural Politics in Greater Romania, 1918-1930) Bucharest: Humanitas, 1998, p. 164.
- 5 Cristian Vasile, *Între Vatican și Kremlin. Biserica Greco-Catolică în timpul regimului comunist*, (Between the Vatican and Kremlin, The Greek Catholic Church during the communist regime), Bucharest: Curtea Veche publishing house, 2004, pp. 68-76.
- 6 See Keith Hitchens, *A Nation Affirmed: The Romanian Movement in Transylvania 1860-1914*, Bucharest: Encyclopedia Publishing House, 1999
- 7 Several key intellectuals argued in the period for a link between religion and nation leading to the famous quotation by Nae Ionescu that to be a Romanian is to be Orthodox, and to be Orthodox is to be Romanian. Ionescu was not the only one to develop arguments for a *theology of the nation*. See Ionuț

- Biliuță, 'Nichifor Crainic and „Gîndirea”. Nationalism and Ortodoxism in Interwar Romania' (I), in *Historical yearbook* Romanian Academy „Nicolae Iorga” History Institute, Volume IV (2007), pp. 86-96, and 'Nichifor Crainic and „Gîndirea”. Nationalism and Ortodoxism in Interwar Romania' (II), in *Historical yearbook* Romanian Academy „Nicolae Iorga” History Institute, Volume V (2008), pp. 67-84. See also the chapter on the grand debate in Keith Hitchins, *Romania 1866-1947*, Bucharest: Humanitas, 1998, pp. 297-317.
- ⁸ Cristian Vasile, 2004, pp. 68-76.
- ⁹ See Tatiana A. Chumachenko's interpretation in Tatiana A. Chumachenko, *Church and state in Soviet Russia: Russian Orthodoxy from World War II to the Khrushchev years* (New York: M.E. Sharpe, 2002).
- ¹⁰ Pedro Ramet, *Cross and Commissar. The Politics of Religion in Eastern Europe and the USSR*, Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1987, p. 17.
- ¹¹ An emphasis on the Orthodox Archbishop Andrei Șaguna's activity in the nineteenth century in Transylvania to counterbalance the Greek Catholic Archbishop Alexandru Șterca Țuluțiu, the sanctification of three Transylvanians that fought against the union with the Greek Catholics in the early 1950s all show the effort put into finding Orthodox Transylvanians that would stand in for the Greek Catholics that were on the wrong side of history.
- ¹² Conversation with the Secretary of the Romanian Orthodox Church Patriarchy Synod, 26 January 2005, Antim monastery, Bucharest, Romania. During the interview, the churchman implied that the entire policy of the Romanian Orthodox Church during communism was founded on the ethnic and religious segregation Transylvania's populace.
- ¹³ With regard to the two Evangelical confessions the documents found in the Archives of the Department for Religious Denominations noticed that the two Churches are different only in the language they practice their confession in (Hungarian or German). Still these two Churches in Transylvania have a separate hierarchy and administration. They are also structured differently and in the 1960's they even split their educational centres.
- ¹⁴ Milan Șesan, 'De ce Uniția?', in *Candela* (The candle), Year LVI, 1946, pp. 273 – 293.
- ¹⁵ Milan Șesan, *De ce Uniția?*, (Iasi, 1946), p. 3.
- ¹⁶ Șesan, p. 21
- ¹⁷ Nicolae M Popescu, "In Alba lulia odinioara 1698 si acum 1948"(In Alba lulia then 1698 and now 1948), *Biserica Ortodoxa Romana* (The Romanian Orthodox Church), Issue 11-12 (November-December 1948) p. 613.
- ¹⁸ The decree that dissolved the Greek Catholic Church stated: "After the reunion of the Greek Catholic Church with the Romanian Orthodox Church and according to the Article 13 of the Decree No. 177/1948 the central and statutory organisations of this denomination, such as metropolitan sees, bishoprics, orders, congregations, archpriests, monasteries, foundations, associations and any other institutions under any other name shall cease to exist." *Monitorul Oficial*, Issue 281, Bucharest, (December 2, 1948).

- ¹⁹ See Nicolae M Popescu, p. 608.
- ²⁰ D.V. Sadeanu, "Aniversarea unui an de la actul Reintegrării bisericii romanesti din Ardeal", in *Biserica Ortodoxa Romana*, issue 11-12 (November-December 1949) p. 309
- ²¹ I use the term project because in retrospect the articles and books, the work of the Church historians followed a planned pattern.
- ²² David Prodan (1902-1992), important Romanian historian specialized in social history and in the history of Transylvania. While working on the eighteenth century Romanian political revival in Transylvania he offers in the 1960s a new look into the Transylvanian Greek Catholic elite that is later used in the larger project started by the Romanian Academy on the History of Romania. He points out the importance of the Greek Catholics in the history of Transylvania. None of the general histories of Romania during the communist regime include parts acknowledging the Greek Catholic Church except as consequence of an imperialist act of the Habsburgs designed to keep the Romanian peasants as serfs and attract with material goods the Orthodox Church, see Mihail Roller, *Istoria României, manual unic pentru clasa a XI-a medie*, (The History of Romania, textbook for the ninth grade) Bucharest, 1948, p. 107.
- ²³ Departament Culte, Direcția Studii, File Bartolomeu Anania/ The Patriarchal Administration, not processed in the archives, 1966, Arhivele Secretariatului de Stat Culte, Bucharest, Romania, pp. 11.
- ²⁴ See Liviu Patachi and his interpretation of the Romanian presence in the Rakoczy rebellion. Being interested in the religious aspects of their collaboration with the Hungarians and arguing that it is the fight against Roman Catholicism and the preservation of the Orthodox faith that joins the Romanians to the Rakoczy army he used Marki's interpretations that allowed him, much like Lupșa to present the Habsburgs as the *guilty party* in the unification process. He gives precedence in his arguments to religious motives over economic or social ones in the Transylvanian Romanians joining the Rakoczy rebellion thus emphasizing the injustice and the enforcement of the Religious Union act in the beginning of the 18th century. Among the causes of the participation Patachi highlights the fight against the religious union of the Orthodox Transylvanian Romanians. Liviu Patachi, 'Românii ortodocși în revoluția rakociană - cauzele religioase ale participării lor,' (The Orthodox Romanians in the Rakoczy revolution – the religious causes behind their participation) in *Revista Teologică*, Year XXXVII, Issue 1 - 2, (Jan - Feb 1947), p. 421.
- ²⁵ See for instance Grigore T. Marcu, *Lupta lui Petru Maior împotriva papalității*, (Petru Maior's fight against the Papacy) in *Ortodoxia*, Issue 3-4, July – December 1952; or *Petru Maior precursor al unificării bisericești a românilor din Ardeal*, (Petru Maior, forerunner of the religious union of the Transylvanian Romanians) in *Mitropolia Ardealului*, Issue 9 - 10, (September - October, 1958)

- 26 See how Silviu Dragomir was used by Mircea Păcurariu, one of the official church historians in the 1970s and 1980s, Mircea Păcurariu, *Istoria Bisericii Ortodoxe Române. Manual pentru Seminariile Teologice*, (The History of the Romanian Orthodox Church. Textbook for the Theological Seminaries), Sibiu, 1972, pp. 202-224.
- 27 See for instance David Prodan's contesting Dragomir's findings and requesting a more neutral tone in discarding the importance of the Greek Catholic Church for the history of Transylvanian Romanians in ***, *Istoria României*, vol. III, Bucharest, 1964, p. 240.
- 28 Silviu Dragomir, *Istoria desrobirii religioase a românilor din Ardeal în secolul XVIII*, vol. I, (Sibiu, 1920), p. 11.
- 29 „Ce să facă? Încotro s-o apuce? Să rămână pe o cale veche a nevoii și umilinții? Ori călcându-și jurământul să prindă norocul privilegiilor și onorurilor?“, [What to do? Where to go? Stay on an old path of needs and humiliations? Or going back on their word to catch up with fortune and honours?] in Dragomir, 1920 p. 12.
- 30 „Activitatea episcopului Ion Inochentie Klein nu se strecoară deci lin și pașnic, ci în mers grăbit ca apa râului de munte care trece prin satul său natal,“ [The activity of Bishop Ion Inochentie Klein does not smoothly and peacefully envelopes but, as the waters in his native village it is rushed] in Dragomir, 1920, p. 127.
- 31 Silviu Dragomir, *Românii din Transilvania și unirea cu Biserica Romei*, (The Transylvanian Romanians and the union with the Church of Rome) în *SMIM*, vol. III, Bucharest, 1959, p. 324.
- 32 Dragomir, 1959, p. 332.
- 33 Dragomir, 1959, p. 335.
- 34 Silviu Dragomir, *Românii din Transilvania și unirea cu Biserica Romei*, (Cluj, 1990), pp. 5 – 6.
- 35 ***, *Istoria României*, (History of Romania) vol, III, (Bucharest, 1964), p. 240.
- 36 David Prodan, *Supplex Libellus Vallachorum*, (Cluj - Napoca, 1948), p. 123.
- 37 David Prodan, 1948, p. 124.
- 38 The most important historiographical project undertaken under the academic umbrella of the Romanian Academy of Sciences, the history of Romania witnesses this national turn in the history writing.
- 39 After the Greek Catholic Church re-entered among the topics of research either by a focus on its personalities, intellectual elite, the Transylvanian national movement in the nineteenth century, research carried on by the church historians, the subject appears in the Romanian newspapers for the Diaspora signalling a slight liberalization of the historical writing in the 1960s. It is tangentially touched upon in research on the Transylvanian School, the 1918 unification of the country, economic history (see Mihai Drecin, *Banca Albina din Sibiu*, Cluj Napoca: 1982), Transylvanian political history. The third volume of the History of Romania offers an official interpretation on the history of the Greek Catholic Church written by David Prodan.