

# RETHINKING RECONCILIATION

## Healing of Memories in Transylvania

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**Abstract:** The author discusses the relationship between the Hungarian minority (mostly Reformed) and the Romanian majority (Orthodox) in today's Transylvania, with a short reference to the situation when the minority become a majority in some areas. In European political debates interethnic relations are an extremely controversial issue and in the Romanian political debates, the theme of the relationship between majority and minority communities and their peaceful living together is brought to the foreground only on the eve of elections. The explanation lies in the Romanians' nature itself, always oscillating between inconsistency and sacrifice. The current article proposes a way of mutual dialogue between Churches for promoting a good atmosphere of living fraternally for all people of Transylvania.

**Keywords:** Dialogue, Ethnicity, History, Hungarian, Language, Majority, Minority, Nation, People, Romanian, Transylvania

### 1. Introduction

The Romanians and Hungarians living in Transylvania is dominated by ethnic tensions from time to time. The article starts with a brief account of the history of Transylvania because the process of reconciliation between people of different Christian confessions and ethnic groups, and the healing of

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wounds of the past cannot be done without knowing the historical background. It is mentioned briefly the obstacles which prevent a true dialogue between the Romanians and Hungarians in that province, such as the indoctrination of the children and young people in the family, at school and in the Church with partisan historical 'truths', specially within the Hungarian communities. Then, the essay examines the misunderstandings concerning the meaning of notions: *people* and *nation*, or *minority* and *majority* in the culture and the mentality of both communities - Romanian and Hungarian, and also discusses extensively the importance of the language in the dialogue between Orthodox Church and the other Churches in Transylvania. The language is one of the most effective means of communication and communion among people, but it can become an obstacle when all ethnic groups want to impose their own language over the others. In the Transylvanian situation, the members of different Churches and ethnic communities are challenged to dialogue and to cooperate in a positive manner in the development of particular formulae of living together and sharing the same land and the same democratic values.

In the second part it is proposed a framework for the churches in Transylvania to offer a valuable contribution for developing a climate of dialogue and cooperation in the benefit of all people irrespective of confession, ethnic affiliation or political orientation. The Orthodox Church should be the main 'actor' in this peaceful venture and promote a programme of periodic meetings with the other Churches from Transylvania, to evaluate the social and political options of a regional population, such as Transylvania, to criticize abuses of any kind and offer peace-building solutions. Care should be taken that the ethnical and cultural identity of the Romanians they shepherd should not be transformed into ideology of nationalist integrism, but a balance between universalism and ethnicity is to be promoted. On the other hand, the Hungarian Churches in Transylvania should accept their own history and understand the actual historical context, and fulfil their prophetic mission, rather than giving into political ideologies that promote division and

conflicts. To put differently, all Churches in Transylvania should rediscover within their own theology the social dimension of spirituality, which is able to diminish any kind of tension, as God loves all in the same way, no matter whether they are Romanians or Hungarians.

The current paper invites all Transylvanian Churches to make conscious and concerted efforts in order to create a society in which the Romanians and the Hungarians could live together peacefully as equals before God, free from prejudices and discriminations. I am fully convinced that better cooperation between Christian confessions can have a valuable impact on the substance and quality of interfaith and interethnic dialogue.

## **2. The Pride of Living in Transylvania**

Immediately after the Romanian Revolution of December 1989, a series of extremist manifestations arose which were quite difficult to understand as they came from a tolerant and hospitable Romanian people, especially in areas with different ethnic and denominational configurations, as it is the case everywhere in Transylvania. The largest interethnic confrontation took place in March 1990, in Târgu Mureș. The apparent reason was a controversial decision by the local authorities, who decided to separate the students from two important high schools, ‘Alexandru Papiu Ilarian’ and ‘Bolyai Farkas’ strictly on ethnic criteria. Unhappy with the fact the parents of the Romanian pupils protested against such arbitrary and provocative decision, and the Hungarian pupils together with their teachers and parents also went on strike. Later helped by other locals from Transylvania, the Hungarians organised a march, in which about 100,000 people participated, and presented a series of claims, which proved that it was not just about an isolated action, but represented a very well-established plan. They asked for the re-establishment of the Bolyai University, patrimonial and didactic division of the most important university in Romania, in Cluj-Napoca, with Hungarian becoming the exclusive teaching language, the reorganization of the entire education system according to ethnic

criteria, the establishment of a ministry of nationalities, etc. Also, they ostentatiously flew Hungarian signs and flags on public institutions. The Romanians responded and the march turned into an interethnic conflict, in which five people died and hundreds were injured, some of them remaining mutilated for the rest of their lives.<sup>1</sup> It took the army's intervention to prevent this confrontation from turning into a civil war. Unfortunately, although in recent years the chauvinistic, retaliatory actions of the Hungarian ultranationalists have decreased both in frequency and intensity, they have not disappeared definitively, and only a spark is enough to ignite the fire of hatred and revenge. Moreover, the topic of autonomy is regularly on the public agenda of Hungarian political and cultural associations.

On the other hand, one may observe that, regardless of their nationality or Christian denomination, simple people, who are not involved in the political games live in harmony without problems of communication or collaboration. They do not talk about ethnic autonomy of any kind. There is no interest in this because they live the same realities, confront the same problems, and celebrate the same events in different ways but in the same spirit and mutually share each other's joy. They are proud of living in Transylvania, being citizens of the most developed Romanian province, economically and culturally. There is a kind of regional pride, and nobody wants to give it up.

But then, from where did all this hate burst out, all this segregation and denial of the values of other peoples and the assertion of one's own beliefs as supreme truths, binding for all? From where does this wish to dominate others, by invoking a history that is permanently contested by a part of society or by the majority, come from? From where does this need to prove one's racial superiority based on folk traditions or legends that have nothing to do with reality come? And yet, these attitudes are sometimes found in the life of the *Transylvanians*, and they

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<sup>1</sup>Ioan Aurel Pop, *Transilvania: starea noastră de veghe (Transylvania: Our Wakeful State)*, Cluj-Napoca: Școala Ardeleană Press, 2016, 148-149.

are not aware of them, because they do not belong to them, but are invoked by their leaders, either political or religious.

### **3. The Healing of Wounds**

It is a proven fact that healing the wounds of the past cannot be done unconsciously. It requires knowledge and intentionality. As with the administration of an effective drug it is necessary to know the cause of the disease, so it is with the healing of the traces left behind by reprehensible deeds committed in history by all the ethnic groups. Therefore, it is necessary that Romanians, Saxons, Hungarians, and other ethnic groups living in Transylvania know their true history, as it is presented in the documents and how it is kept in the memory of the people from generation to generation. At the same time, a culture of reconciliation is needed in such a way that the confrontations of the past are treated with objectivity, understanding and spiritual detachment from the events that took place in another historical context, when Europe's political structure and people's mentalities were different. Incognizance, ignorance and the lack of culture are decisive in the appearance of seemingly accidental conflicting situations, but the indoctrination of the children and young people in the family, at school and in the Church with partisan historical 'truths' is dangerous and leads to extremely dangerous confrontations. That is why, before showing the obstacles which prevent a true dialogue between the Romanians and Hungarians in Transylvania, as well as the hopes of a future reconciliation, it is necessary to make a short historical, political and social sketch of the province we are talking about.

### **4. Historical Insight into Transylvanian Complexity**

The history of Transylvania has been and will probably remain for a long time, the grounds for great controversy over its origin, the rights of the one who came first or of the first State formation, the ethnic and religious composition of its population, or of the cultural and economic evolution.<sup>2</sup> After the

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<sup>2</sup>Ioan Bolovan, “Demografia în slujba națiunii: românii din Transilvania în epoca modernă [Demography in the Service of Nation

Roman rule in the early Christian era, there followed a time known as the 'dark millennium' which extended until the documentary attestation of the first form of State organization, at the end of the 9th century, known as the Transylvanian voivodship, led by the Duke, Gelu.<sup>3</sup> This, largely coincided, with the establishment of the Hungarians in Pannonia in 896. At the beginning of the 11th century, Transylvania was conquered and annexed by the King of Hungary. In the following centuries there was a process of strengthening the Hungarian authority on the Transylvanian territory, by bringing Saxon colonists who were meant to defend the Eastern border, but especially through very good administrative, legal and church management. Thus, in a few centuries, the Hungarian (Szekler) and Saxon nobles became privileged classes, while Romanians, despite the fact that they were always a majority, were forced to live without civil rights, without the rights to take part in the political life of the country or to use the Romanian language in public institutions, and as citizens whose Orthodox faith was considered 'schismatic'. In other words, they lived in a state of pseudo-slavery, slaves in their own country.<sup>4</sup> Of course, there were many revolts against the abusive rule of the State, initiated by the Hungarians and Romanians from the lower class, but none of them had among their main objectives, the granting of the same rights to Romanians as those enjoyed by the Szeklers and Saxons. With the onset of the Ottoman military offensive in Europe, during the time of the Sultan Suleyman the Magnificent, there was a political change within the Hungarian kingdom. In 1541, the Principality of Transylvania, recognized by the Ottomans as an independent state, appears on the scene of history, still paying a high tribute to the Ottomans without any

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– Romanians of Transylvania in the Modern Times] in *Demografie și confesiuni în Transilvania (Demography and Confessions in Transylvania)* ed. Mircea Gelu Buta, Cluj-Napoca: Cluj University Press, 2016, 21-37.

<sup>3</sup>Melinda Mitu and Sorin Mitu, *Ungurii despre români: Nașterea unei imagini etnice [Hungarians about Romanians: The Birth of an Ethnic Image]*, Bucharest: Polirom, 2014, 80-84.

<sup>4</sup>Pop, *Transylvania: Our Wakeful State*, 144-145.

improvement in the disastrous situation of the Romanian population. An extremely important moment, which gave hope for the latter, was the union of the three Romanian provinces, Wallachia, Moldavia and Transylvania, in 1599, during the time of the Romanian ruler, Michael the Brave. Even though it was a short reign, it was the first sign that, sooner or later, this would become a permanent situation.<sup>5</sup> At the end of the seventeenth century, Transylvania became part of the Austro-Hungarian Empire. On a religious level, the Romanians were then subjected for several centuries to Catholic and Calvinist proselytism, and in 1698, under the pretext of their cultural emancipation, and especially under the promises that they would acquire the same rights as Saxons and Szeklers, they decided to unite with the Church of Rome, laying the foundations for the Greek Catholic Church. Unfortunately, what had been promised was not accomplished and the Romanians remained in the same state of inferiority compared with the other ethnic groups.<sup>6</sup> It took 150 years to reach the situation in which, in 1918, when, at *the Great National Assembly in Alba Iulia*, the Romanians from Transylvania united freely with the people of the same language, and faith, from Moldavia and Wallachia, forming one country, Romania. The boundary between the Kingdom of Hungary and the Kingdom of Romania was decided by *the Treaty of Trianon*, in 1920, which inaugurated the new geopolitical and economic-strategic situation of Central and Eastern Europe.

The Hungarians in general have never been reconciled with this situation and repeatedly manifested their aversion to all that is Romanian, considering that an injustice has been done to them and that it could be corrected. Thus, during World War II, through the *Vienna Dictate* (30 August 1940), Romania was compelled by Nazi Germany to give to Hungary a large part of

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<sup>5</sup>He was a hero for Romanians, but a demonic person for Hungarians. See the description in the Hungarian historical works in Mitu and Mitu, *Hungarians about Romanians*, 115-121.

<sup>6</sup>For details see in particular Mircea Păcurariu, *Istoria Bisericii Ortodoxe Române [The History of the Romanian Orthodox Church]* vol. 2, Bucharest: EIBMBOR, 1981, 295-324.

the Transylvanian territory, with serious consequences for the Romanian population, which was still in a majority in the new given conditions. Thus, shortly after the implementation of the provisions of the new international agreement, the Hungarian army started retaliations against the Romanians who were in the annexed region, which historically retained the name of Northern Transylvania.<sup>7</sup> Numerous ethnic Romanians were massacred in dozens of localities, the most serious events being those in Moisei (Maramureș), Ip and Treznea from Sălaj County. A large project for the *magyarization* of the Romanians was started, which included among other things the expulsion of the Romanian leaders, the impoverishment of the Romanians and their mobilization in the Hungarian army, their emigration and the colonization of the villages with Hungarian settlers, as well as the *magyarization* of the names of those who remained, in order to change the ethnic composition of the population and so on.<sup>8</sup> All these barbaric acts, committed against the Romanians by the Hungarian authorities just because they were Romanians and belonged to the Orthodox Church, were not publicly acknowledged then or even today. No one apologized, and not even the political leaders has taken responsibility for the consequences of these atrocities, as it should have happened between civilized people as a sign of historical reconciliation.

It was a difficult time for the Romanians in Northern Transylvania. This ended however a few years later, at the end of the Second World War, at the *Peace Conference in Paris* (29 July - 15 October 1946), when the territorial position is returned to its previous state before the Vienna Dictate.

That is why Romanians and Hungarians understand the history of Transylvania differently. The Hungarians believe that Transylvania belongs to them, although it is hard to understand what exactly this phrase means for them and what they hope to

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<sup>7</sup>For the historical and ethno-demographical background to this separation, see Nicolae Edroiu, *The Hungarian Thesis Concerning the "Two Halves" of Transylvania*, Cluj-Napoca: Imprimeria 'Ardealul', 2012, 15-66.

<sup>8</sup>Pop, *Transylvania: Our Wakeful State*, 147-148



happen in the future. The Romanians in turn say that after a long period of oppression justice has been done and they have acquired what they had by birth, the right to live free, equal before the institutions of the State and God, masters in their own country. The Romanians say that Transylvania is their homeland, invoking both the right of antiquity and continuity, being the descendants of the Dacians and Romans from whom the Romanian people were born, and they were always the majority. The Hungarians believe that this argument is not enough and invoke the historical right that presupposes that Transylvania was never part of the other two provinces of Romania, Wallachia and Moldavia, but of the Kingdom of Hungary. Regardless of the interpretation, one thing is certain, Transylvania is not a separate State, not even an autonomous region, but an integral part of today's Romania according to the current Constitution. That is why the discussions on its history should be less tense, less focused on claims to some rights that Romanians and Hungarians have in the same measure, without any discrimination. Moreover, other ethnic groups in Romania live peacefully following the Constitution of the country.

## **5. Terminological Misunderstandings and Discrimination**

One of the major issues arising out of the relationships between Romanian and Hungarian peoples is the issue of terminology.<sup>9</sup> The Romanians believe that the Hungarians are an ethnic group with its historical, religious and cultural specificities, while the

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<sup>9</sup>For the best discussion on these differences over terminology, see the excellent work of Dinu Bălan, “Etnie, Etnicitate, Națiune și Naționalism: Câteva precizări terminologice [Ethnic, Ethnicity, Nation and Nationalism: A Couple of Terminological Clarifications], *Codrul Cosminului* 12, 2006, 93-115. For the relation between ‘nation’, ‘national minority’, ‘historical minority’, and ‘ethnic’/‘ethnicity’ see also Ellis Cashmore, *Dictionary of Race and Ethnic Relations*, London/New York: Routledge, 2002, 97; Gabriel Andreescu, “Cuvânt înainte”, *Legea privind drepturile minorităților naționale și etnice din Ungaria (1993)*[*The Law concerning the rights of the ethnic and national minorities in Hungary (1993)*], Miercurea Ciuc: Editura Caietele Muzeului Haáz Rezső, 1993: 5-7).

Hungarians themselves think they are a people, community and even a nation – just as they were in the good old times of the Austro-Hungarian Empire. Generally speaking, a *people* describes those who comprise a majority in the territory in question (Romania, in our case). On the same territory it may live together (and it usually does so) with *ethnic minorities* and other *ethnic groups* who, being less numerous or too scattered, cannot avail themselves of the minority status.

In general, in Transylvania, the percentage of the Hungarian minority differs from one county to another, but in Covasna and Harghita, where the *minority* becomes a *majority*, and the *majority* becomes a *minority*.<sup>10</sup> If we made a comparison between the status of minority Hungarians in Romania and the Romanian minority in Covasna and Harghita we would discover enormous differences, despite the fact that, regardless of the numerical ratio, they are the ones who *give a name to the nation*, and consequently, they have to enjoy the esteem of the entire Romanian nation, which comprises other ethnic groups.

The abuse undergone by the Romanians is enormous.<sup>11</sup> They are forced to learn the Hungarian language in their own country,

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<sup>10</sup>According to the 1992 census in these two counties, the Romanians are in a numerical minority as compared to the Hungarians and other ethnic groups which comprise an overwhelming majority, Romanians having a 23-25% share in Covasna and a 13-14% in Harghita. It is the most sensitive area in Transylvania, where the Romanian community is religiously, economically, politically and culturally dominated by the Hungarians. The results of the last census of the population (2011) are: 88.6% Romanians, 6.5% Hungarians, 3.25% Roma (Gypsy), and 1.65% the other 18 national minorities; in Transylvania, however, Romanians are 74.4%, Hungarians 18.915%, and the other 18 national minorities 6.65% <<http://www.recensamantromania.ro/rezultate-2/>> (9 May 2016).

<sup>11</sup>While in Romania there are 18 national minorities, having a well-defined status and clearly formulated rights in the national legislation, the Romanian minority in Covasna and Harghita counties is not even acknowledged at a national level. Therefore, for a long time, this minority did not receive any financial support from the Department for Minorities in order to develop its national, ethnic, cultural and

where the official language is Romanian, so they could benefit from the same rights as the others. And this happens because the Hungarians refuse to speak Romanian in general. Hungarian community is the only minority in Romania that does not speak Romanian correctly and also, the only minority living with a permanent tension and suspicion, at least at a declarative level.

Romanians living in that region strongly believe that the Hungarians have the same mentality as 80 years ago that Transylvania belongs to them and that it has always been theirs. This consciousness, they say, is inculcated in the family, schools, cultural institutions and Church through history manuals, literature, etc. The Hungarians say Transylvania is a Hungarian land.<sup>12</sup>

## **6. The Role of Churches in National Reconciliation**

Are the Churches able to settle the tension within Transylvanian territory? Equally, do they wish to be involved in the reconciliation between the Romanians and the Hungarians? It is hard to give an answer as the issues involved are more to do with political than pastoral mission. It is about the different manner in which the Historical Churches in Transylvania

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religious identity. Only after the visit of a governmental delegation they were allotted a subvention in order to support the issuing of some local newspapers in its mother tongue.

<sup>12</sup>See the case of the 15-year-old girl who recited at a reunion of the Hungarian people, a poem, stating, among other things, that “it is hard to be Hungarian in Romania”, “the land of Transylvania is only of Hungarians”, “the map will be reunited again and Transylvania will return at home”, “they will beat and die for Transylvania”, “Transylvania belongs only to the Great Hungary.” <<http://krespy-ro.com/articole/tanara-de-etnie-maghiara-recita-un-poem-antiromnesc-ardealul-apartine-doar-ungariei-mari/>> (17 February 2017).

Similarly Csibi Barna, a Hungarian extremist, who in the framework of a grotesque show, simulated the trial, the death sentence and the hanging of Avram Iancu one of the great heroes of the Romanians from Transylvania, from the 19th century. <<http://www.cotidianul.ro/csibi-barna-l-a-spanzurat-pe-avram-iancu-la-miercurea-ciuc-video-139995/>> (12 January 2017).

understand their part in the mediation between Christians of different confessions and ethnicity.

The Romanian Orthodox Church made a decision in 2004 forbidding any political activity by the priests. In other words, no Orthodox clergy is allowed to be a party member or to be a candidate, even independently, for a place in the Romanian Parliament or for the position of mayor or local counsellor. They are not allowed to bring politics into the church, but only to manifest their options by voting at the right moment. As a consequence Romanian Orthodox Church clergy are not able to be involved in an organized way in the social life, which might lead to communication gap between the members of this community and the church leadership.

This is not the case with the other Churches in Transylvania which, in spite of their openness for dialogue and reconciliation, play a major role in the party politics, which represent their interests to the public institutions in Romania. Actually, the Hungarian Catholic and Protestant priests and bishops have been accused of making politics even in their churches. Some of them are known for their nationalistic positions not only in Romania, but also beyond the frontiers of the country. People that are supposed to follow the evangelic precepts of tolerance, communion and Christian love are giving declarations in total disagreement with the Romanian laws and constitution.

Of course, everybody is free to criticize the things that are unpleasant in their opinion, but respect for the law and for the constitution should be above any irresponsible action that could lead to social riot or even bloody conflicts. There is a feeling of historical distrust between the Orthodox Church representatives (majority in Romania) and those of the Hungarian Church, whether Protestant, Catholic or Unitarian. Those of Hungarian ethnicity receive Orthodox initiatives with high scepticism, leading to continued segregation and distrust.

## **7. Hungarian Language: An Obstacle to the Dialogue**

It is known that one of the most effective means of communication and communion among people is culture. That

is why, where other institutions have failed, or did not manage to achieve their objectives, they are turning to culture because it has no political, ethnic or religious colour. People around the world gather in various places on certain occasions like theatre, film and music festivals, and barriers of language, race, or religion disappear. Culture is the one thing that unites, which makes human beings discover their sensitive and emotional side.

The churches have more recently taken up this method of rapprochement among their faithful and have organized a series of musical performances that to some extent de-stressed inter-confessional relations, because music has within itself an international language. This was not the case when the Orthodox Church, through its theological schools, organized conferences, symposia, seminars or theological congresses and invited the representatives of the Hungarian Churches. They rejected almost all the invitations on the pretext that they only use the Hungarian language, both in cult and in schools, and so would do likewise if they were to present an essay at a scientific event. The Hungarians' refusal to speak Romanian represents an insurmountable obstacle in the way of normalization of inter-ethnic and inter-confessional relations in Transylvania. The situation is more than bizarre because, despite the fact that they say everywhere in the world that they are open to any dialogue, they stubbornly refuse to learn the official language of their country of residence. And then, of course, the question arises: where does this duplicate behaviour begin? In the absence of a logical explanation from them, the Romanians begun to advance several hypotheses that reflect, of course, also their subjectivity. Some of them said that the rejection of the use of the Romanian language is not only a sign of the preservation of ethnic identity, but rather one of a social enclavisation with serious consequences for the Hungarian community in the future. Others believe that, it is a proof of the lack of loyalty to the country they live in, but also a sort of ethnic arrogance that they cannot remove, but rather cultivate it in their family, school, and Church. Others are of the opinion that non-learning and, therefore, the lack of the perfect knowledge of the Romanian

language, show a kind of lack of social culture and a sort of phase-out of the reaction time to Europe's new political and historical realities. Finally, some, who are much more lenient with any kind of attitude towards this matter, believe that the assertion of a hostile attitude of the Hungarians towards everything that is Romanian by definition, is an absurdity, because the vast majority of them are more interested in living their everyday life and attending to their material and spiritual comforts and wellbeing. In other words, their desire, exacerbated by the politicians, to have a kind of cultural and administrative autonomy is an absurdity because, in the absence of a solid financial allocation from the Romanian government, regions with a majority Hungarian population could not survive economically and all their ideals could be irreparably compromised.

No matter how credible these interpretations are, one thing is certain, both in the Hungarian and Romanian communities in Transylvania there is inertia, a kind of tacitly assumed immobility that blocks any real, concrete reconciliation initiative. The same happens to the Churches. The relations between Orthodox bishops and the Reformed Church are commonly frozen. They revert to an exchange of courtesies but they don't lead to anything concrete. The Hungarians leave the impression that they intentionally isolate themselves by pretending that they are marginalised, a thing that doesn't happen to other ethnic groups. The German Lutheran Church is an honest and efficient dialogue partner for the Transylvanian Orthodox Church. The Saxons from Transylvania belonging to the Lutheran Church have not hesitated to collaborate with the Romanian Orthodox people on common projects, most of the times directed towards the Romanian communities. They sincerely enjoy the Orthodox spirituality, traditions and habits. And the Orthodox, do the same. The Hungarian Churches (Reformed, Catholic and Unitarian) have no initiatives in this way, and then leave the impression that they are not even interested in a dialogue or a partnership with the Orthodox Church.

## **8. Orthodox Church and the Social and Inter-Confessional Ecumenism**

The Orthodox Church needs to be the initiator of a programme of periodic meetings with the other Churches from Transylvania. The meetings need not be centred on doctrinal or patrimonial problems, but more on the social problems. Because of some historical sensitivities, the relations between the Churches better could be consolidated around some common projects of the education of the new generation in evangelic spirituality, in which forgiveness and reconciliation would be endorsed and validated by honest Christian love. We cannot speak of collaboration as long as we retain suspicion of personal or ethnic-communitarian interests. Actually, each ethnic or religious group must contribute to developing a peaceful and understanding climate for the good of the entire nation. The youth are the best messengers of this kind of relations and their involvement in common social-missionary activities can be beneficial for the Romanian society.

It is known that the friendships from childhood and youth are the most durable. This is why, on the basis of the characteristic enthusiasm of this age group and their availability for cooperation and dialogue, a greater openness and support from the Churches for starting some common actions is necessary. The youth are less distracted by petty interests, they are aware that the world we live in now is very different from the world of their parents, and that contemporary challenges come from different places than the memory of a past loaded with conflicts and wars. Even though sometimes this leaves the impression of some superficiality, the youth, regardless of their ethnical and religious affiliation, know that they carry the responsibility for the future. The wellbeing and prosperity of a society cannot be based on confrontations or retrograde conceptions, but on the sustaining of common interests.

All the Churches have a duty to guide its sons and daughters to keep alive the faith, tradition and culture and, at the same time, to teach them an ecumenical spirit, respect for other traditions. The national feeling of the youth are to avoid

xenophobia and chauvinism. The Church, whether Orthodox, Catholic or Protestant, is not safe from the crises that grind and disintegrate the Society. This is why their united action could be an example for the civil society. In this way, it is necessary to mention the role played by the associations of Christian students which, beside their confessional programs, should interact and constitute a binding force within the Romanian intellectual world. The creative campuses, the Christian spirituality evenings, the conferences on regional Christian culture themes, religious music concerts, etc. are only a few of the actions meant to bring together the people and the people to God. Besides the youth, the other social categories of people like organized 'brotherhoods', professional organizations, movements of the clergy and laity can also play a role in the creation of a network for effective national solidarity.

### **9. Decentralization of Dialogue**

It has been noticed in the course of time that the Orthodox Romanians and the Catholic or Protestant Hungarians did not have any kind of problems at local levels. There are many mixed communities in Transylvania where the Orthodox, Catholic and Protestant priests share friendship and mutual esteem. All the anniversary events of a community (or of one of the churches) are celebrated together, and their example is closely followed by the faithful they shepherd.

However, things are quite different when it comes to the formal relationships, where the ethnic and religious affiliations prevail against the communitarian affiliation. Both the religious leaders and the political leaders adopt positions that do not promote cooperation among people. It is hard for them to know whether they are more accountable to history for the institutions they run than to the institutions themselves. Or, maybe they are accountable to both. Unfortunately, sometimes, the leaders of the Churches are building for themselves true auras as faith heroes, each claiming to hold the truth, which brings them into opposition with others. A greater flexibility on their part would give an additional impetus to ecumenical relationships among



the Transylvanian Christian communities. Priests and the faithful, regardless of their denomination, must be supported in their actions by their direct leaders. Another type of communication should be established between them, that is more rapid and without bureaucracy.

For instance, if there are joint social initiatives in a mixed community (Romanians and Hungarians, Orthodox, Catholics and Protestants) they should be encouraged without discrimination and without fear. The Transylvanian churches have to let their faithful live in peace and harmony, without any kind of pressure. The esteem that simple people mutually share in a rural community in Transylvania should be promoted against the pompous (and irresponsible) statements of some political and religious leaders who try to gain political capital for themselves. These simple people know what they have to do, and never transform their personal disputes into general disputes, as they also know they could trust each other as their interests are now shared in common.

### **10. The Orthodox Church between Nationalism and Confessionalism**

The Orthodox Church should free itself from any dependence or alliances with the State, and call the public authority to fulfil its own vocation, that is to make justice for all. Its role is not to judge and condemn human, personal and social values, proposed by other Churches or moral and religious authority bodies, but, on the contrary, its role is to revive the community consciousness. It should be able to evaluate the social and political options of a regional population, such as Transylvania, to criticize abuses of any kind and to offer peace-building solutions. Their care for the ethnical and cultural identity of the Romanians they shepherd should not be transformed into ideology of nationalist integristism (the refusal to consider any change to the status quo). On the one hand, as the Church itself has a prophetic mission, it is called to criticize its own nation in particular and judge the society in general, but on the other hand, because it also has a universal mission, it should pass

beyond the frontiers of any ethnic group. Eventually, its goal is to evangelize the society as a whole and not just an ethnic group, avoiding by all means proselytist politics.

Consequently, the Orthodox Church in Transylvania must discover the balance between universalism and ethnicity, as Dumitru Stăniloae said: "This does not mean that individuals can be Christians only together with all their nation, or that all individuals within a nation must be Christian, or belong to the same Church; it does not mean that their Christianity is conditioned by their ethnicity and caused by it."<sup>13</sup> In other words, denominational and cultural affiliation need not at all impede reconciliation among believers of different identity.

## 11. Conclusion

The Romanian Orthodox Church, without renouncing its tradition within the old territory of Transylvania must find, in its inner moral supports, the capacity to assume its own history, and the Hungarian Churches should do the same. All Churches should renounce the triumphalistic character of previous days, and co-operate to discover and establish a common will and political society that would ensure harmony, peace and prosperity for each and all ethnic and religious groups. In other words, the Transylvanian Churches should rediscover within their own theology the social dimension of spirituality, that could diminish tension, as God loves all in the same way, not taking into account whether they are men or women, children or elders, Romanians, Hungarians or Germans.

Also, in order to open the way for a real dialogue among the various Christian denominations in Transylvania and to create a connecting bridge over time, it is necessary for each and every one to confess and take ownership of the truth about the most important moments of its existence, even those that have caused great tribulations, upsets and inconvenience to other traditions, even going so far as to support their abolition or arrest,

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<sup>13</sup>Dumitru Stăniloae, "Universalitatea și etnicitatea Bisericii în concepția ortodoxă [The Church's Universality and Ethnicity in the Orthodox Thinking]," *Ortodoxia* 2 (1977), 150-151.

deportation and condemnation of those who follow it, whether clergy or lay people. All these themes should be discussed openly, without prejudices and disturbances, perhaps only with minimal remorse, because they are undeniable historical facts. The healing of memory does not come from permanent confrontations, but from honest dialogue and mutual appreciation. Even though for some it seems difficult to accept, Romanians and Hungarians, together with other smaller ethnic groups, have contributed throughout history, each after their power and conscience, to the formation of the Romanian people in its cultural, ethnic and religious diversity.

Finally, each Church in Transylvania must find within itself resources of mutual love in order to melt the barriers of distrust and suspicion, and understand that it takes a lot of time for the wounds of a painful past to heal. Romanians have to accept that their bloody history in Transylvania has been unfolded with the permission of God, and the Hungarians need to recognize the fact they have inherited not only the traces of a millennium of life in these regions, but also the present social and territorial circumstances.