

## THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE ORTHODOX CHURCH AND THE GREEK CATHOLIC CHURCH IN ROMANIA – AN OVERVIEW OF THE COMMUNIST AND POST-COMMUNIST PERIOD\*

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**RESUMÉ:** *Les relations entre l'Église orthodoxe et l'Église gréco-catholique en Roumanie - un aperçu de la période communiste et post-communiste.* L'étude présente se concentre sur les relations entre l'Église orthodoxe et l'Église gréco-catholique en Roumanie, en particulier pendant le temps de communisme et après sa chute. Nous utilisons la méthode historique et abordons cette période du point de vue des tensions historiques, des moments d'aliénation mais aussi de ceux de rapprochement entre les deux Églises. L'étude décrit les principaux points de cette relation, les efforts de chaque Église pour préserver son identité en période de pression politique énorme, à une époque où l'État communiste tentait d'anéantir l'Église gréco-catholique et d'instrumentaliser l'Église orthodoxe selon la propagande et ses intérêts. On y analyse également il décrit brièvement la relative ouverture réciproque des deux Églises sœurs survenue après 1989, malgré les tensions existantes et l'interruption brutale de ce processus de rapprochement en 2008. L'apport de cette étude est la proposition de quelques étapes concrètes absolument nécessaires dans le processus de guérison de la mémoire, qui devrait impliquer les deux Églises.

**Mots-clés:** Église orthodoxe, Église gréco-catholique, Patriarche Justinien, réunification, persécution.

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**REZUMAT: *Relațiile dintre Biserica ortodoxă și Biserica greco-catolică din România – o privire de ansamblu asupra perioadei comuniste și post-comuniste.***

Acest studiu se concentrează asupra relației dintre Biserica ortodoxă și Biserica greco-catolică din România în special în perioada din timpul comunismului și de după căderea acestuia. În cadrul său este folosită metoda istorică și abordează această perioadă din punctul de vedere al tensiunilor istorice, al momentelor de înstrăinare dar și al celor de apropiere dintre cele două Biserici. Studiul descrie principalele repere ale acestei relații, eforturile fiecărei Biserici de a-și păstra identitatea în timpuri de presiune politică uriașă, într-o perioadă în care statul comunist a încercat să anihileze Biserica greco-catolică și să instrumentalizeze Biserica ortodoxă în funcție de propaganda și interesele sale. De asemenea, descrie pe scurt deschiderea reciprocă relativă a celor două Biserici surori care s-a produs după 1989, în ciuda tensiunilor existente și a întreruperii abrupte a acestui proces de reapropiere în anul 2008. Principala contribuție a acestui studiu o reprezintă propunerea câtorva pași concreți absolut necesari în procesul de vindecare a memoriei, care ar trebui să implice cele două Biserici.

**Cuvinte-cheie:** Biserica ortodoxă, Biserica greco-catolică, Patriarhul Justinian, reunificare, persecuții.

## **Introduction**

The famous writer William Faulkner once stated: “The past is never dead. It’s not even past”<sup>2</sup>. His saying is more adequate in the case of Church History. For an institution that cultivates more than any other the memory of the past, the recollection of the past has healing powers and contains new visions for the future. This is the philosophical perspective in which is written this study.

In its frame, I will explore briefly the situation of the Romanian Orthodox Church during the time of the communism and after the fall of the Iron Curtain with a special focus on its relationship with the Greek Catholic Church. Of course, it is intended to be an overview of a period of about 70 years, from 1948

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<sup>2</sup> W. Faulkner, *Requiem for a Nun*, New York 1950, 92.

to present. As such, only some historical landmarks, persons and events can be taken into consideration, due to the purpose and epistemological limits of this study. The focus will be on the sufferings of the two Churches in a period of dramatic social and political changes, when one of them, although officially recognised, was persecuted and controlled, while the other hardly survived clandestinely.

These topics are extremely complex because they involve two divergent narratives, corresponding to the historical perspectives of the two Romanian Churches. As it is often the case with the memory of the past, these divergent narratives are charged with human passions, ecclesiastical ambitions and incommode truths for the other side. Beyond times of mutual agreement or alienation between the two Churches, at a deeper, spiritual level, stands the Christian hope for dialogue and harmony. In order to emphasize this hope, I would like to start with an iconic episode for the relationship between Orthodox and Greek Catholics.

This episode takes place in a Communist prison, where people of different faiths suffer for their religious and political convictions, in what I like to call „the ecumenism of suffering”. The date is 15 March 1960. After many years of spiritual journey towards the Christian faith, convinced that he will die in the prison due to the miserable conditions, the Jew intellectual and writer Nicu Steinhardt requires the Orthodox baptism. He will receive it from the hands of the Orthodox monk Mina Dobzeu, in the presence of two Greek Catholic priests, imprisoned too at Jilava. The Christianisation of Steinhardt happened quickly, at the return of the prisoners from a walk, in a moment when the guardians could not see what was going on in the cell and with the plot of his roommates. “I am born again, out of infested water and of quick Spirit”, he confesses<sup>3</sup>. His courage to withstand against a totalitarian ideology, like Communism, is similar to Dietrich Bonhoeffer’s resistance against Nazism. Actually, Steinhardt quotes and admires Dietrich Bonhoeffer<sup>4</sup> in his work.

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<sup>3</sup> N. Steinhardt, *Jurnalul fericii*, Cluj-Napoca 1995, 84-85. In the bio-bibliographical landmarks signed by Virgil Bulat at the end of this journal, he writes that the baptism was performed in the presence of two Roman Catholic priests, two Greek Catholics and a Protestant pastor (p. 419).

<sup>4</sup> N. Steinhardt, *Jurnalul fericii. Manuscrisul de la Rohia*, Iași 2012, 299-300.

This „ecumenism of suffering” is beautifully depicted by André Scrima in his study on the relationship between the Orthodox and the Catholic Church during the time of communism. He writes about “the communion accomplished in sufferings, in prisons and concentration camps, when, tortured, beaten, you pray and you comfort your roommate. Death, the holy death was very close: it was very hard to quarrel over differences and it was, finally, very easy to discover the deep unity”<sup>5</sup>.

### **1. The suppression of the Greek Catholic Church – historical landmarks and divergent interpretations**

Unfortunately, the solidarity of people around Steinhardt’s baptism, which took place “under the sign of ecumenism”<sup>6</sup>, could not be found, as well, among their Churches. Moreover, even in the prisons, according to other authors, the tensions and the theological disputes between believers of different confessions were very frequent. The “deep unity” of the Christians mentioned by A. Scrima was rarely a reality and frequently a remote ideal. The imprisoned, although roommates, gathered in small “churches”, carrying with them the prejudices that divided them outside, in freedom. One of them depicts thus the cell atmosphere at the end of the day: “That evening, in the hour which the priest’s room had set aside for prayer, Catholics collected in one corner, the Orthodox occupied another, the Unitarians a third. The Jehovah’s Witnesses had a nest on the upper bunks; the Calvinists assembled down below. Twice a day our various services were held, but among all these ardent worshipers I could scarcely find two men of different sects to say one prayer together”<sup>7</sup>.

A few years before these episodes, the Romanian communist state decided – under the influence of Moscow and following the pattern used in Western Ukraine, the suppression of the Greek Catholic Church. Among other things that obstructed the achievement of this goal, it was, from the point of

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<sup>5</sup> A. Scrima, *Ortodoxia și încercarea comunismului*, București 2008, 217-218.

<sup>6</sup> Steinhardt, *Jurnalul fericirii* 85.

<sup>7</sup> R. Wurmbrand, *In God’s Underground*, Bartlesville, Oklahoma 2015, 230.

view of the Communist power, the Concordat with Vatican which dated from 1927. This agreement was interpreted as a threat to the national sovereignty due to the vows of the Catholic hierarchs to the Pope, an authority outside the country. As well, the Concordat with Vatican established the membership of Greek Catholic Church to the Catholic Church. Therefore, on 17<sup>th</sup> July 1948, it has been abolished<sup>8</sup>, and thus the Eastern Church was isolated from its Western counterpart. In the Soviet Union, the Vatican was regarded as “the main agency of the Western imperialism” and “the Catholic Church was considered an agency of fascism, that across the centuries sought to dominate politically and religiously the Orthodox Russian people”<sup>9</sup>.

On the 3<sup>rd</sup> of October 1948, the Patriarch Justinian Marina and some members of the Holy Synod received with great joy in Bucharest a delegation of 36 priests (initially 38), former Greek Catholics<sup>10</sup>, obliged to convert to the Orthodoxy. They were representing symbolically the 38 priests that signed almost 250 years before, in Transylvania, the act of unification with the Catholic Church and thus, the foundation of the Greek Catholic Church or the Romanian Church United with Rome. Of course, the signatures of the Greek Catholic clergymen and laymen were the result of a vast campaign carried on by the security which forced and manipulated people to sign the conversion. The government has been always paying attention at how to provide an appearance of legitimacy and democracy even in the case of the most undemocratic and abusive acts. A law, *The General Regime of Religious Cults* (1948) stipulated that if in a community, the majority of the faithful convert to other Church, the building of the church and its patrimony are transferred to the other Church<sup>11</sup>. Despite all this, the Patriarch Justinian used to celebrate each year, on the 3<sup>rd</sup> of October (or 1<sup>st</sup> of December), this event called “reunification” by the Orthodox historiography. The event was painted

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<sup>8</sup> C. Vasile, *Istoria Bisericii Greco-Catolice sub regimul comunist 1945-1989. Documente și mărturii*, Iași 2003, 28.

<sup>9</sup> A. N. Petcu, *Securitatea și Cultele în 1949*, in A. N. Petcu (coord.), *Partidul, Securitatea și Cultele 1945-1989*, București 2005, 144.

<sup>10</sup> M. Păcurariu, *Istoria Bisericii Ortodoxe Române*, București 1994<sup>3</sup>, 490.

<sup>11</sup> F. Băltăceanu / M. Broșteanu, *Martori ai fericirii. Șapte vieți de sfinți români*, București 2019, 42.

in the Sinodal chamber of the Patriarchal Palace<sup>12</sup>. On the 1<sup>st</sup> of December 1948 the newly installed communist state proclaimed through decree nr. 358, the dissolution of the Greek Catholic Church.

From the Orthodox point of view, the integration of the Greek Catholic Church in the Romanian Orthodox Church was an act of historical justice. It meant nothing else than the restoration of its unity, broken in 1698-1700 by their brothers from Transylvania, which tried by uniation to improve their material, political and social conditions under the harsh circumstances of the Habsburg Empire. By then, the Romanian people were considered only “tolerated” in their own lands by the Habsburgs and lacked completely any civic or social rights, including the right to vote or access to education. So 3<sup>rd</sup> of October 1948 was considered a healing of an old wound in the body of the Orthodox Church and of the country.

From the Greek Catholic point of view, the suppression of their Church meant nothing else but a political decision, taken at Moscow for a better control of the religious life in Romania and implemented with brutality. In this way, 250 years of considerable contribution to the identity of the country and the attempt to repair partially the Schism of 1054 through union with Rome ended dramatically.

## **2. The consequences of the “reunification” for the Greek Catholics**

The Romanian Orthodox Church was considered the moral author of this operation<sup>13</sup>. All the six Greek Catholic bishops were arrested and pressed by security and the authorities of the Orthodox Church to agree with the liquidation of their Church and to convert. The regime had a desperate need for legitimisation. None of them surrendered. Four of them died in prison: Vasile Aftenie, Valeriu Traian Frențiu, Ioan Suci, Alexandru Rusu. Besides,

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<sup>12</sup> G. Enache / A. N. Petcu, *Patriarhul Justinian și Biserica Ortodoxă Română în anii 1948-1964*, Galați 2009, 122.

<sup>13</sup> C. Vasile, *Biserica Ortodoxă Română în primul deceniu comunist*, Bucharest 2005, 206. See also C. Vasile, *Istoria Bisericii Greco-Catolice sub regimul comunist 1945-1989. Documente și mărturii* 27.

Tit Liviu Chinezu was ordained a bishop in the prison where he died. The other two, Ioan Bălan and Iuliu Hossu survived the incarceration but died in the monasteries where they have been placed under house arrest<sup>14</sup>. They are the seven martyrs beatified by Pope Francis in June 2019, during a Divine Liturgy in the city of Blaj, in Transylvania.

But the majority of their priests accepted the new situation created by the communist government and tried to survive in a period of harsh times. They converted and served in Orthodox parishes. Some of them, of course, went to prison or tried to work clandestinely until 1989. “Gradually – writes Marius Oprea – the majority of the hierarchs and of the clergymen belonging to the Eastern Church United with Rome went in prison, in the labour camps and under house arrest. In better situations, some Greek Catholic priests could preserve their freedom, concealing carefully their past, their religious identity, choosing a modest profession and even changing their names in order to serve, as priests of their confession, in the houses of some of the most truthful and trustworthy faithful”<sup>15</sup>.

Nevertheless, many of them were aware of the common theological and ecclesiastic heritage of the two sister Churches – as sometimes they are called. I had a discussion with such a retired priest, Fr. Iuliu Crișan, in 1996, a few years after the fall of Communism, in full freedom. I asked him how he sees the differences between the two Churches. He answered that basically they share the same faith, with the most important difference that the Greek Catholics recognise the pope as their Head. Fr. Iuliu didn't seem nostalgic then – he had five children to feed and raise and all of them graduated a university.

On the other side, not all the bishops of the Holy Synod agreed with the suppression of the Greek Catholic Church. The Bishop Nicolae Popoviciu, from Oradea, mistrusted the rectitude of reunification<sup>16</sup>. Later on, even the Patriarch Justinian said – according to a historian: “I did a huge and stupid mistake accepting the suppression of the Greek Catholic Church”<sup>17</sup>. The

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<sup>14</sup> Băltăceanu / Broșteanu, *Martori ai fericirii. Șapte vieți de sfinți români* 13-14.

<sup>15</sup> M. Oprea, “Prefață”, in C. Vasile, *Istoria Bisericii Greco-Catolice sub regimul communist 1945-1989. Documente și mărturii* 21.

<sup>16</sup> Enache / Petcu, *Patriarhul Justinian și Biserica Ortodoxă Română în anii 1948-1964* 126.

<sup>17</sup> Vasile, *Biserica Ortodoxă Română în primul deceniu communist* 206.

Orthodox priest Gheorghe Coman from Oradea, the father of Ana Blandiana, a famous Romanian writer thought that „the Greek Catholic Church was suppressed for the splitting up of the Romanian people”<sup>18</sup>. The first one and the last one paid for their general anticommunist attitude. Nicolae Popoviciu was placed under house arrest in a monastery until the end of his life (from 1950-1960), while Fr. Gheorghe was imprisoned for a few years.

Many Orthodox bishops (Atanasie Dincă, Nicolae Colan, Ion Crăciunel or Nicolae Bălan) were reserved regarding the brutal manner in which the state forced the Greek Catholics to sign for “reunification”<sup>19</sup>. Anyhow, one of the great surprises – at least for the Greek Catholics – after the opening and study of the archives – was “the fact that not the Orthodox Church planned and organised the <liquidation through unification>” of their Church, but the Stalinist security of Romania. This security tried to create the same impression like in Ukraine, that the repression against Greek Catholics emanated from the Orthodox Church<sup>20</sup>. The liquidation of the Greek Catholic Church proved to be a poisoned apple for the Orthodox Church.

### 3. The Romanian Orthodox Church in the Communist times

The next years proved to be a very difficult period also for the Orthodox Church. The Religious Education was excluded from the public schools. Out of seven faculties and academies of Orthodox theology, five have been closed and maintained only those from Sibiu and Bucharest<sup>21</sup>. Many priests followed the same way of suffering as their Greek Catholic brothers. According to the National Institute for the Study of Totalitarianism (1998), a number of 1725 Orthodox priests have been arrested<sup>22</sup> out of approximately 11.000 priests. Is it much, is it little? The monasteries underwent a harsh persecution after 1959.

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<sup>18</sup> L. Hossu-Longin, *Credința nepieritoare*, Timișoara 2019, 63.

<sup>19</sup> Vasile, *Istoria Bisericii Greco-Catolice sub regimul comunist 1945-1989. Documente și mărturii* 23.

<sup>20</sup> Băltăceanu / Broșteanu, *Martori ai fericirii. Șapte vieți de sfinți români* 39.

<sup>21</sup> B. Georgescu, *Biserica Ortodoxă Română și puterea comunistă (1945-1964). Contribuții la studiul relațiilor dintre Biserică și stat*, București 2018<sup>2</sup>, 91-92.

<sup>22</sup> Vasile, *Biserica Ortodoxă Română în primul deceniu comunist* 12-13.



According to the official data of the time, around 90 monasteries have been liquidated<sup>23</sup>.

Beyond numbers and data, there is the reality of people whose lives have been destroyed, whose families shared their pains. In such a case, a deacon came back home. “My wife called the girl to come because her father is here. The daughter came, but she stopped and my wife asked her: <Do you know daddy?>. She thought for a few seconds and then she denied. My wife touched my forehead in a familiar way and the girl recognised me in that very moment; we hugged together for the great joy of meeting again”<sup>24</sup>.

What was the attitude of the Patriarch Justinian in such conditions? Almost all the historians recognise that he did the best to save whatever could be saved. He tried to play a double game, trying to collaborate with the regime, but in the same time he did his best to trick the watchfulness of communist authorities and thus saved people, monasteries and Church’s patrimony. He is unjustly labelled “the Red Patriarch”. In his *Memories about the Patriarch Justinian*, the metropolitan Bartolomeu Anania reveals his strategy: “The long-term strategy presumes a *modus vivendi*. And the Patriarch proposed and realised this compromise, this *modus vivendi*. On one side, he claimed Church’s freedom, the freedom to organized itself and mainly, the faithful’s freedom to believe and to manifest his/her faith, and on the other side he offered whatever he could offer, but he refused to concede in matters of dogmas”<sup>25</sup>. A. Scrima summarises thus the fruits of this policy: the autarchic organisation of the Church’s economy through its art and craftsmanship workshops, followed by a vast program of restoration and building; the theological publishing activity (works and translations); young priests educated in Church schools and seminaries; the uniformisation of the liturgical books and practices in the Romanian Patriarchy; the involvement of the laymen in the liturgical life and the activities of the parishes; the involvement in the ecumenical dialogue etc.<sup>26</sup>.

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<sup>23</sup> Vasile, *Biserica Ortodoxă Română în primul deceniu comunist* 259.

<sup>24</sup> T. Savu, *Sub nimbul amintirilor. Câteva reperi autobiografice* (autobiographical work in manuscript).

<sup>25</sup> In *Biserica Ortodoxă Română*, 1-6, 1998, 115. See as well Enache / Petcu, *Patriarhul Justinian și Biserica Ortodoxă Română în anii 1948-1964* 69.

<sup>26</sup> Scrima, *Ortodoxia și încercarea comunismului* 189-190.

This strategy was as well applied by the next Patriarchs. Nevertheless, during Ceaușescu's time, the Church's life was severely controlled by the state. Among other things, Ceaușescu destroyed more than twenty churches, almost without opposition. A remarkable example, in this context, is that of the priest Gheorghe Calciu Dumitreasa, who protested against the demolition of some churches and delivered seven famous speeches to the youth, condemning the atheist regime. When Fr. Calciu was afraid to continue and was ready to give up, thinking at his family, he was encouraged by his students in theology: "Father, don't give up, we are standing by you! You must go on; from now on we can't step back! We don't stop"<sup>27</sup>. For his audacity, he is put to jail from 1979-1984. The next year, he is forced to leave the country, contrary to his will and obliged to emigrate to the USA.

#### 4. The relationship of the two Churches after 1989

All this period, the Greek Catholic Church continued to survive in catacombs, asking for official recognition. No wonder, therefore, that in December 1989, one of the first measures taken by the new government was to abolish the decree 358/2 December 1948, by which the Greek Catholic Church was suppressed. This measure opened a new era for the existence of this Church and its relationship with the Orthodox one.

On one side, there were tensions because the Greek Catholic Church tried to recuperate all its properties (*restitutio in integrum*), starting with the churches used until then by the Orthodox. This process proved to be a hard matter, since its faithful were around 223.000 people, according to the official census data from 1992<sup>28</sup>. Many Orthodox parishes and communities lost their place of worship. The reviving of the persecuted and forbidden Church, not only in Romania but in all Eastern Europe had a negative impact on the ecumenical dialogue between the Orthodox and the Catholic Church.

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<sup>27</sup> Mesaj de iubire. Gheorghe Calciu Dumitreasa in L. Hossu-Longin, *Credința nepieritoare* 194.

<sup>28</sup> S. Negruți, Evoluția structurii confesionale din România de la 1859 până în prezent, *Revista Română de Statistică*, supl. 6, 2014, 37.

In order to stop these negative effects, the mixed commission of dialogue, in the presence of Greek Catholic representatives issued the *Balamand Declaration* (1993). But before the Balamand meeting, a subcommission met in Vienna (1990) to deal with the problem of “uniatism”. It concluded that the relationship between Orthodox and Catholics must be based on an “ecclesiology of sister Churches”; the consequence was that “uniatism can no longer be considered a model” for reunion and that “any form of soteriological exclusivism” and “any kind of proselytism violating the religious freedom of conscience and using illicit or illegitimate means” must be rejected<sup>29</sup>. This perspective was reflected as well in the *Balamand Statement* (1993).

Entitled *Uniatism, method of union of the past, and the present search for full communion*, it condemned uniatism as a method of union with the Catholic Church and recognised that the exclusivist ecclesiology of this Church, according to which the salvation is possible only within its canonical limits produced a similar Orthodox position. This way of thinking provided the base of proselytism<sup>30</sup>. According to the “classical” Catholic teaching, the only true Church of Christ is the Catholic and outside it there is no salvation: for this reason, the Orthodox that were out of communion with this Church, were lacking the possibility of salvation. On this base, the 16<sup>th</sup> Century witnessed the attempted of the Jesuits to convert Russia and the Tsar. This way of thinking was not unknown to the architects of the Union of Brest-Litovsk (1586)<sup>31</sup>. Besides, among other practical proposals, the Balamand declaration advised the Greek Catholics to solve their legal arguments only through dialogue with the Orthodox. Where it was possible, it was advisable for the two communities to use alternatively the same church<sup>32</sup>. In Oradea, there is such a beautiful example, the church “St. George”, used alternatively by the Orthodox and the Greek Catholics. However, the reception of the Balamand document

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<sup>29</sup> Full text in *Episkepsis* 433 (15th feb. 1990). See also J. H. Erickson, Concerning the Balamand Statement, *The Greek Orthodox Theological Review*, 1-2, 1997, 27.

<sup>30</sup> Art. 10, *Balamand Declaration, Uniatismul metoda de unire din trecut și căutarea actuală a deplinei comuniuni*, Sibiu 1993, 16.

<sup>31</sup> Z. J. Kijas, *Ecumenism. Răspunsuri la 101 întrebări*, Iași 2014, 358.

<sup>32</sup> Art. 28 and 31, *Balamand Declaration, Uniatismul metoda de unire din trecut și căutarea actuală a deplinei comuniuni* 28; 31.

varied from region to region; it was favourable received in Romania by the Orthodox Church and with some reservations, in the beginning, by Greek Catholics; in the West the Catholic and the Orthodox theologians were favourable to it but Greece rejected it (the Holy Synod and Mount Athos), influencing thus the American Greek diaspora<sup>33</sup>.

On the other side, the priests of the two Churches could serve occasionally together. Until 2008, one could frequently see an Orthodox and a Greek Catholic priest serving at the opening of the school year in September, at funerals, at different public festivities and ceremonies like the National Day, Heroes' Day etc. 2008 marked the moment of maximum rapprochement between the two Sister Churches, and, unfortunately, of maximum alienation. The metropolitan Nicolae Corneanu from Timișoara, known for his willingness to retrocede some churches to the Greek Catholics, attending a Sunday Liturgy in their Church, took Holy Eucharist with them. His gesture was disapproved by the Holy Synod of the Orthodox Church, which decided that from that moment on, no Church services could be celebrated with priests of other confessions, under the punishment of laicisation.

The decision was precipitated not only by this moment of intercommunion, but as well, by another episode which took place in Oradea – the concelebrating of the Great Blessing of Waters at the Feast of Theophany 2008, by the local Orthodox and Greek Catholic bishops. Although well received by local people of both confessions, this liturgical concelebrating was contested by more intransigent believers from all Romania. The fear overcame love and thus, the return to normal relations after the fall of communism was stopped. A new era began – an era of “Cold War” in which dialogue gave place to suspicion, love to fear and mutual attention to mutual disinterest.

### **Conclusions and perspectives**

Now, in Romania, not only the relationship between the two Churches but generally the ecumenical relations seems to be a Platonic love story. That means that theologians, clergymen and laymen belonging to different Churches

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<sup>33</sup> For further details on this topic, see Erickson, Concerning the Balamand Statement 33-37.

or confessions may attend conferences, may protest together in the public space (the meetings for the referendum of redefining family in the Constitution) etc., but they cannot celebrate or pray together. There is however a small exception: The Week of Prayer for Christian Unity.

In order to overcome this dead end, the two Churches must follow the next steps:

- First of all, they should officially and honestly recognise their historical mistakes, offer forgiveness and ask for forgiveness. Without this institutional process of *metanoia*, without a change in the attitude and in the public discourse of the hierarchy, it is not possible a change in the attitude of the rest of Church members, priests and laymen.

- Secondly, they should mutually recognise the sufferings of their martyrs after 1700, respectively after 1948. Actually, the *Balamand Declaration* urges the Churches to recognise the sacrifice of all people, Oriental or Latin, clergymen or laymen and to express their respect and gratitude towards all those who underwent persecutions, “without discrimination”<sup>34</sup>. Of course, this implies two different sinaxaries, two divergent narratives of the past. But these feasts of the martyrs may be as well occasions for the commemoration of the common stance of people belonging to the two Churches, of their courage and faith in front of their prosecutors, which sometimes were their common enemies. It is useless to compare the moment 1700 with the moment 1948 and to draw from here the conclusion that the Romanians from Transylvania suffered more when converted by force than the Greek Catholics when their Church was suppressed<sup>35</sup>. The Metropolitan Nicolae Corneanu rejected this analogy in an expressive manner: “Of course we may talk about analogies between what happened in 1700 and what happened afterwards, but we cannot return always hundreds of years back, because life itself cannot go back; life goes on”<sup>36</sup>.

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<sup>34</sup> Art. 33, *Balamand Declaration*, *Uniatismul metoda de unire din trecut și căutarea actuală a deplinei comuniuni* 32-33.

<sup>35</sup> See, for exemple, the approach of Rev. I. A. Mizgan, *Biserica și cetatea*, București 2017, 135.

<sup>36</sup> Discursul mitropolitului ortodox Nicolae Corneanu la înscăunarea PSS Alexandru Mesian, în catedrala Lugojului, la 5 mai 1996, in C. Alzati, *În inima Europei. Studii de istorie religioasă a spațiului românesc*, Cluj-Napoca 1998, 215. See as well Vasile, *Istoria Bisericii Greco-Catolice sub regimul communist 1945-1989. Documente și mărturii* 30.

- Thirdly, a mixed commission of dialogue between the representatives of the two Churches must deal with the most delicate ecclesiological topics, like the papal primacy. There are many changes of perspective in the last decades in the Greek Catholic and Orthodox theology. New emphases influence both ecclesiologies but in the absence of the dialogue, they seem to be parallel lines and ways that never meet. An institutional dialogue between them would ensure better mutual knowledge and rapprochement. We may contextualize here the words of A. Scrima: "... if the separation between the Orthodox and the Catholic Church is the result of a human estrangement, the reunification must be obtained by the abolition of this estrangement and of its causes. Of course, the deepest and the most effective remedy in order to heal this estrangement is love"<sup>37</sup>.

- Fourthly, at least for the public festivities and ceremonies, the Orthodox and Greek Catholic priests must be allowed to celebrate together. This is the minimum requirement for a much wanted return to normality and as a step towards the full Eucharist communion in the future.

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<sup>37</sup> Scrima, *Ortodoxia și încercarea comunismului* 219.