

Political Union Without Religious Unity?

Debates and Projects Around the Confessional Union of Romanians in the Interwar Period

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Abstract: The present study debates the issue of biconfessionalism among the Romanians during the interwar period and the solutions proposed by different opinion leaders for achieving religious union between the Greek-Catholic Church and the Orthodox Church. The ideological and symbolic valences of Orthodoxy in the Old Romanian Kingdom and the fortified status of the Orthodox Church in the interwar period were taken into account. The public discourse surrounding the Greek-Catholic Church was analysed, as an institution that had, in fact, fulfilled its role with the union of all Romanians in 1918. The present study discusses several of the primary projects for the union of the two Romanian Churches formulated by public figures, such as Onisifor Ghibu or Marius Theodorian-Carada, in addition to the findings of a series of sociological investigations regarding the issue of the religious unification of Romanians.

Keywords: National identity, confessional union projects, Orthodox Romanians, Greek-Catholic Romanians, religious division

Rezumat: Prezentul studiu dezbată problema biconfesionalismului în rândul românilor în perioada interbelică și soluțiile propuse de diferiți lideri de opinie pentru realizarea unirii religioase dintre Biserica Greco-Catolică și Biserica Ortodoxă. Au fost luate în considerare valențele ideologice și simbolice ale Ortodoxiei în Vechiul Regat și statutul consolidat al Bisericii Ortodoxe în perioada interbelică. A fost analizat discursul public referitor la Biserica Greco-Catolică, ca instituție care, de fapt, și-a îndeplinit rolul odată cu unirea tuturor românilor în 1918. Prezentul studiu discută câteva dintre proiectele de unire a celor două Biserici Românești

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formulate de personalități publice, precum Onisifor Ghibu sau Marius Theodorian-Carada, pe lângă concluziile unei serii de investigații sociologice privind problema unificării religioase a românilor.

Cuvinte cheie: Identitate națională, proiecte de unire confesională, români ortodocși, români greco-catolici, diviziune religioasă

1918 will forever remain, in Romanian history, as the year in which the national ideal became a reality. Like other peoples who, for centuries, had lived divided, the Romanians could rejoice in the fact that, at the end of the Great War, the state borders finally encompassed most of them. The price paid for such an important achievement was by no means small. Quite the contrary. Even if we were to only take into account the difficult years of the war, it meant hundreds of thousands of victims and immense material damages. Additionally, one must also consider the immeasurable traumas that many of the survivors of the cataclysm carried on their bodies and in their souls in the years that followed.

Even before the guns fell silent, the Romanians demonstrated their desire to live united under the same sceptre. Through the decisions of the Romanian communities in the provinces integrated into the Russian and Austro-Hungarian empires, the future outline of Greater Romania had already been foreshadowed. A true Romanian miracle. This is how the sequence of events from the final year of the war, which made the emergence of the new state possible, was recorded.¹ However, despite their desire to share their future, the unification decisions expressed in Chișinău, Cernăuți and Alba Iulia were subject to debates and deliberations at the Paris Peace Conference. A true battle for borders unfolded in the French capital and beyond. Even those who had emerged defeated from the war dared to hope for a lasting peace. The meeting of the leaders of the post-war world was meant to offer life-saving solutions to the old problems that had plagued the European scene for hundreds of years, solutions on which the durability of peace depended.

¹ Sorin Alexandrescu, *Paradoxul român* [The Romanian paradox] (Bucharest: Editura Univers, 1998), 58.

Romania started with high hopes on the road to achieving peace.² It was among the European states that could make territorial claims from all neighbouring countries.³ However, the Romanian diplomatic mission was received with certain reservations in the French capital, given the fact that Romania had not proved truly irreproachable military loyalty during the war, having signed a peace treaty with the enemy.⁴ However, the chancelleries of the victorious powers did not remain inert to the lobby made by the states with which Romania disputed its territorial possessions. A veritable mechanism of political pressure and public propaganda operated behind the scenes of the Peace Conference, aiming to tilt the balance in favour some of the competitors and to the disadvantage of others.⁵ The declared goal of the Romanian diplomats was to obtain the drawing of political borders in accordance with the ethnic ones, something extremely difficult to achieve in the amalgamated central and south-eastern Europe. Despite these difficulties, the Peace Conference confirmed, the borders of the Romanian state as configured since 1918, albeit with certain territorial adjustments.

But the hard times for the young Romanian state were only just beginning. The reconstruction of the country after the difficult years of the war had to be matched by the effort of welding the barely united provinces to the older body of the Romanian state. Two were to be the main methods by which the step forward, from union to unification, was to be made: legislative standardization and homogenization, on the one hand, and, on the other hand, the expansion and diversification of the network of Romanian

² Sherman David Spector, *România și Conferința de Pace de la Paris. Diplomația lui Ion I. C. Brătianu* [Romania and the Paris Peace Conference. The Diplomacy of Ion I. C. Brătianu] (Iași: Institutul European, 1995), 91-114.

³ Peter F. Sugar, "Naționalismul, ideologia victorioasă" [Nationalism, the victorious ideology], in Peter F. Sugar, *Naționalismul est-european în secolul al XX-lea* [Eastern European nationalism in the 20th century] (Bucharest: Curtea Veche, 2002), 19; Amedeo Giannini, *Le vicende della Rumania (1878-1940)* (Rome: Istituto per gli Studi di Politica Internazionale, 1940), 21-30.

⁴ Keith Hitchins, *România 1866-1947* [Romania 1866-1947], 2nd edition (Bucharest: Humanitas, 1996), 303-304; Glenn E. Torrey, *Romania and World War I. A Collection of Studies* (Iași-Oxford-Portland: Center for Romanian Studies, 1998), 301-311; Alexandrescu, *Paradoxul român* [The Romanian paradox], 100.

⁵ Emile Joseph Dillon, *The Inside Story of the Peace Conference* (New York and London: Harper & Brothers Publishers, 1920), 136-183.

institutions in the new territories.⁶ Although laborious and demanding of political (and other) resources, both processes represented mandatory stages in the efforts to impose and consolidate Romanian authority in the new centre of political power: Bucharest. Additionally, the governors there sought solutions to ensure the good management of the minority ethnic groups that had become part of the new Romanian state.

The much more accentuated ethnic diversification of the Romanian state after the First World War was matched by the increasing variety of the religious spectrum within it. If we were to refer strictly to Transylvania, we must say that in addition to the denominations that represented the Romanians, the most important confessions were: the Roman Catholic (with approx. 860,000 believers), the Calvinist (with approx. 650,000 believers), the Lutheran-Saxon (approx. 260,000 believers), the Unitarian (approx. 70,000 believers), the Lutheran-Hungarian (with approx. 30,000 believers), while the mosaic community consisted of approximately 300,000 members.⁷

But confessional polychromy was not only characteristic for ethnic minority groups. Even within the Romanian bloc, the political unity achieved at the end of the war seemed threatened by the confessional divisions within it. In a country where the vast majority of the population identifies as Orthodox, the existence of a different confessional reality within the same ethnic group (in this case, the Greek-Catholic Church) could appear to some as an element of its vulnerability. That is why this religious fracture that appeared in the heart of the Romanian community at the end of the 17th century needed to be “repaired”. Therefore, at the level of the public image, after the First World War, the United Church became the bearer of an unwanted stigma that evoked the religious schism that appeared more than two centuries before, within the same nation.⁸ At the same time, it symbolizes the perpetuation of a tradition (reconfirmed over time) of loyalty to the Austrian ruling House, but

⁶ Cătălin Turliuc, “Construcția națională românească și identitățile regionale. Modernizare și omogenizare în secolul al XX-lea” [Romanian national construction and regional identities. Modernization and homogenization in the 20th century], in *România interbelică în paradigma europeană. Studii* [Interwar Romania in the European paradigm. Studies], coordinator Ion Agrigoroaiei (Iași: Editura Universității “Alexandru Ioan Cuza”, 2005), 78-79.

⁷ Z. Străjanu, “Culte minoritare în Transilvania” [Minority cults in Transylvania], in *Transilvania, Banatul, Crișana, Maramureșul 1918-1928*, 2nd volume (Bucharest: Cultura Națională, 1929), 835.

⁸ Irina Livezeanu, *Cultură și naționalism în România Mare 1918-1930* [Culture and nationalism in Greater Romania 1918-1930] (Bucharest: Humanitas, 1998), 167.

also of the solid connections of culturalization and intellectual closeness to the Catholic West.⁹ Therefore, this ecclesiastical community (for the first time since its creation) was faced with the prospect of cohabitation in a predominantly Orthodox confessional environment, strongly connected to Eastern traditions and values and the Byzantine tradition.

In fact, for both Romanian Churches in Transylvania, the change that was foreseen in the context of the integration of the province into the Romanian Kingdom was major. With a comparable institutional architecture (at the time of the union of Transylvania with Romania, the United Church had a metropolitan seat with three suffragan bishoprics, while the Orthodox Church additionally had the metropolitan rank, and two subordinate dioceses, of Caransebeș and Arad – within the latter, a second consistory operated, namely in Oradea)¹⁰ and with a relative balance in terms of the number of believers,¹¹ the Greek-Catholic and the Orthodox Church had managed to acquire independence in relation to other ecclesiastical institutions until the beginning of the war, a status also recognized by the laws that governed Hungary. The place that each of the two Romanian confessions had acquired in the corpus of Hungarian legislation was also rather similar. Article XXXIX of 1868 recognized the independence of the Romanian Greek-Catholic Church; in the same way, article IX of the same year admitted the independence of the Romanian Orthodox Church in Hungary and Transylvania and its organization on an autonomous basis.

With a status and a quasi-equal approach from the state in which they functioned until the First World War, the two Romanian Churches in Transylvania longed for similar behaviour from the Romanian authorities. However, the realities of the Old Kingdom were fundamentally different in terms of the role and the primary position granted to the Orthodox Church. Having (rightfully) assumed a central role in the cultural and spiritual development of the Romanian people over time, Orthodoxy came to occupy a place of honour in the definition of the Romanian nation – a fact that was

⁹ Liviu Maior, *In the Empire: Habsburgs and Romanians. From Dynastic Loyalty to National Identity* (Cluj-Napoca: Romanian Academy, Center for Transylvanian Studies, 2008), 223-240.

¹⁰ See in detail Marius Eppel, *La frontiera ortodoxiei românești. Vicariatul de la Oradea (1848-1918)* [On the frontier of Romanian Orthodoxy. The Vicariate of Oradea (1848-1918)] (Cluj-Napoca: Presa universitară Clujeană, 2012), *passim*.

¹¹ Zsombor de Szász, *The minorities in Roumanian Transylvania* (London: The Richards Press, 1927), 217-220.

also reflected in the pre-war legislative corpus, which assimilated it as a state religion. Within the broader paradigm of the relations between the state and the Church, specific to the countries of the South-Eastern European cultural and civilizational area, the close cooperation between the two institutions shaped the identity features of each.¹² Taking part in the “birth” of the modern Romanian nation, Orthodoxy was rewarded with a place of honour in the legislation of the extra-Carpathian state, which offered it a privileged role and the protection of the “secular arm.” With this rather flimsy border that separated it from the political world – a boundary the Orthodox Church was often tempted to overstep –, the Church had grown complacent, considering that it had much more to gain from the fact that it was recognized by the Constitution of 1866 as “the dominant religion of the Romanian state.”

After the First World War, the Orthodox Church became fully aware of the strength conferred by its large number of adherents and of the advantages it could derive from this position. Gathering under its dome, at the end of the third decade of the last century, almost $\frac{3}{4}$ of the total population of the Kingdom, the Orthodox Church was numerically superior to any other denomination.¹³ Flanked by this indisputable numerical superiority, the Orthodox Church was fully interested in being the holder of a special status in the constellation of confessions of the entire Romanian Kingdom. This happened, first of all, through the text of the Constitution from 1923 (reconfirmed by the provisions of the fundamental law from 1938), by which Orthodoxy was assigned the status of “dominant Church in the Romanian state.” Then, the prioritization of the interests of the Orthodox Church was reflected in its elevation to the highest hierarchical rank used in the Eastern Christianity (that of the patriarchate) and in the elaboration of a unitary normative framework for its organization and operation.¹⁴

¹² Romulus Cândea, *Biserică și stat. Câteva considerații istorice și principiale* [Church and State. Some Historical and Principled Considerations] (Cernăuți: Glasul Bucovinei, 1926), 15, 19-20.

¹³ In 1930, 13,108,227 of the total 18,057,028 inhabitants of Romania (representing 72.6%) were registered Orthodox, and 1,427,391 Greek-Catholics (representing 7.9% of the total population of Romania): Sabin Manuilă, *Recensământul general al populației României din 29 decembrie 1930. Volumul II: neam, limbă maternă, religie* [General census of the population of Romania of December 29, 1930. Volume II: race, mother tongue, religion] (Bucharest: Monitorul Oficial, Imprimeria Națională, 1938), XXIV.

¹⁴ Alexandru Lapedatu, *Amintiri* [Memories] (Cluj-Napoca: Editura Albastră, 1998), 204.

Under these auspices, the Greek-Catholic Church found itself in obvious inferiority. Not only numerically, representing barely 8% of the total of 18,057,028 inhabitants of Romania since then, but especially in terms of the political decision-makers' attitude and of the overall the public opinion. Although the United Church was recognized for its undeniable merits in the cultural and social history of Transylvanian Romanians, with the fulfilment of the ideal of national unity, its purpose was considered finished.¹⁵ Despite the fact that it was regarded as one of the pieces of the Romanians' approach to Western European civilization, the Greek-Catholic Church was criticized for its hierarchical and dogmatic submission to Rome, and it was considered responsible for both the destruction of national sovereignty and the "spoiling of the law" and traditions of the Eastern faith. In addition, the membership of the United Church in the great universal ecclesial family gave it a touch of cosmopolitanism, not exactly favourable to the same feeling of affirmation of the Romanian ethos. To these evaluations, made according to a rigidly nationalistic grid, other imputations, of a subjective nuance, were added. First of all, Greek Catholicism was perceived in Greater Romania as a specifically Transylvanian "brand".¹⁶ Although the presence of Greek-Catholics in the extra-Carpathian space was not a recent element, those communities, geographically scattered, only accentuated the image of the confessional division present among Transylvanian Romanians. Secondly, one cannot overlook the fact that a significant percentage of Transylvanian political leaders belonged to the incriminated denomination. After the failed attempt, from the beginning of the third decade, of political collaboration between the Romanian National Party and the National Liberal Party, we must note that the public discourse condemning the regionalist aspirations, perceptible within a Transylvanian political group, also included the Greek-Catholic Church, as an institution which by its very presence maintained those

¹⁵ Nicolae Gudea, "Reflecții privind relația Stat-Biserică – o abordare teologică greco-catolică" [Reflections on the State-Church relationship – a Greek-Catholic theological approach], in Babeș-Bolyai University / Pázmány Péter Catholic University, *Theological Doctrines on the Ideal Church-State Relation* (Cluj-Napoca: Presa Universitară Clujeană, 2000), 54.

¹⁶ Gúdor K. Botond, "Biserica Greco-Catolică între 1918-1948. Considerații generale" [The Greek Catholic Church between 1918-1948. General considerations], in *Coordonatele preoției greco-catolice. Istorie și actualitate* [Coordinates of the Greek Catholic priesthood. History and current affairs], coordinators Călin-Daniel Pașulea, Anton Rus, Andreea Mărza (Blaj: Editura Buna Vestire, 2002), 273.

centrifugal tendencies.¹⁷ Finally, the involvement (overt or behind the scenes) of some priests, media outlets or even organizations within the Greek-Catholic Church in the electoral campaigns or in supporting certain candidates of the Romanian National Party gave the impression of a politically engaged Church, stepping well beyond the bounds of its primary spiritual mission.¹⁸

Under these conditions, the solution that could be considered for the fortification of the Romanian nation and the completion of its unity was the religious union of the two Romanian Churches.¹⁹ This generous idea of religious union had taken strong roots among the Romanians, immediately after the end of the war. For some the ardent supporters of this idea, it had become an imperative placed at the service of the internal consolidation of the nation, in the conditions of the fulfilment of the national ideal.²⁰ For most, however, it offered a good opportunity to highlight, sometimes with sufficient aggression, confessional partisanship. In order to make up for this shortcoming, which affects the image of the perfect cohesion of the Romanians, various options were taken into account, some of them far from applicable. But these plans, beyond their content, managed to shed light on the image that their authors projected both on the denomination to which they belonged, as well

¹⁷ *Biserica noastră și cultele minoritare. Marea discuție parlamentară în jurul Legii Cultelor* [Our Church and Minority Religions. The Great Parliamentary Discussion Around the Law on Religions], with an introduction by N. Russu Ardeleanu (Bucharest: Imprimeria "Universul", 1928), 8-9.

¹⁸ In this sense, see the campaign that Alexandru Rusu did in the pages of the publication *Unirea* in favor of the candidates of the Romanian National Party, then of the National Peasant Party. The open involvement of the canon from Blaj in the electoral campaigns for the main Transylvanian party was considered at the time to be responsible for propelling him, in 1930, to the dignity of the first bishop of the Diocese of Maramureș.

¹⁹ Onisifor Ghibu, *În jurul catolicismului și a unirii Bisericilor* [Around Catholicism and the union of the Churches] (Arad: Editura Librăriei Diecezane, 1925), 3-54; *Id.*, *O imperioasă problemă națională: unitatea religioasă a românilor* [An urgent national issue: the religious unity of Romanians] (Beiuș: Tiparul Tipografiei "Ateneul", 1931), 3-64.

²⁰ Charles Upson Clark, *United Roumania* (New York: Dodd, Mead and Company, 1932), 102-103; George Enache, "Religie și modernitate în Vechiul Regat. Dezbateri privind rolul social, politic și național al Bisericii ortodoxe române în a doua jumătate a secolului al XIX-lea și începutul veacului al XX-lea" [Religion and modernity in the Old Kingdom. Debates on the social, political and national role of the Romanian Orthodox Church in the second half of the 19th century and the beginning of the 20th century], in *Schimbare și devenire în istoria României* [Change and development in the history of Romania], coordinators Ioan Bolovan, Sorina Paula Bolovan (Cluj-Napoca: Academia Română, Centrul de Studii Transilvane, 2008), 392.

as on the confessional alterities.²¹ The Orthodox hypothesis was based on the idea of the common destiny shared by the Romanian state and the Orthodox Church within it. Given this near-total identification, placing the equal sign between “Romanian” and “Orthodox” truly seemed entirely natural.²² In other words, in the logic of post-Constantinian relations between the state and the Church, Orthodoxy played an essential role in defining the ethnic component.²³ Moreover, belonging to the Orthodox confession had become a symbol of national loyalty and a vector of its acquisition. This osmosis between nation and confession encouraged the plea that saw Orthodoxy as the source of the Romanian people’s spiritual unity.²⁴ In these conditions of doctrinal intransigence, it was evident that other variables of the state-Church equation were difficult to admit.

Nonetheless, at the elite level of the Greek-Catholic Church, a broad horizon of expectation was created regarding the benefits of a cohabitation with “blood brothers” from beyond the Carpathians. However, reality would disprove, little by little, the ambitious ideals.²⁵ The first and certainly the most

²¹ Cesare Alzati, Laura Evola, “Il dibattito confessionale nella Grande Romania e i suoi echi nella pubblicistica prima e dopo l’89. Alcune considerazioni,” in *Storia religiosa dello spazio romeno*, 2nd volume, edited by Luciano Vaccaro (Milano: Collana promossa dalla Fondazione Ambrosiana Paolo VI, Centro Ambrosiano, 2016), 646-650.

²² See Dumitru Stăniloae, *Ortodoxie și românism* [Orthodoxy and Romanianism] (Sibiu: Tipografia Arhiepiscopiei, 1939), *passim*.

²³ Olivier Gillet, “Orthodoxie, nation et ethnicité en Roumanie au XX^e siècle: un problème ecclésiologique et politique,” in *Ethnicity and Religion in Central and Eastern Europe*, edited by Maria Crăciun, Ovidiu Ghitta (Cluj-Napoca: Cluj University Press, 1995), 348.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 349; James P. Niessen, “Naționalismul românesc: o ideologie a integrării și a mobilizării” [Romanian nationalism: an ideology of integration and mobilization], in *Naționalismul est-european în secolul al XX-lea* [Eastern European nationalism in the 20th century], edited by Peter F. Sugar (Bucharest: Curtea Veche, 2002), 236; Dumitru Stăniloae, *Reflecții despre spiritualitatea poporului român* [Reflections on the spirituality of the Romanian people] (Bucharest: Editura Elion, 2004), *passim*.

²⁵ Being part of the delegation mandated by the Governing Council to present in Bucharest the resolution of the Alba Iulia Assembly, Iuliu Hossu declared in front of the political personalities from the south of the Carpathians, at the festive dinner held in honor of the Transylvanian guests, that Bucharest represented the “Jerusalem of our political and spiritual aspirations”: *Credința noastră este viața noastră. Memoriile cardinalului dr. Iuliu Hossu* [Our faith is our life. The memoirs of Cardinal Dr. Iuliu Hossu], edition by Rev. Silviu Augustin Prunduș OSBM (Cluj-Napoca: Casa de Editură “Viața Creștină”, 2003), 109. See Ioan-Marius Bucur, *Din istoria Bisericii greco-catolice române (1918-1953)* [From the history of the Romanian Greek Catholic Church (1918-1953)] (Cluj-Napoca: Editura Accent, 2003), 30-31.

demanding idea in this sense was precisely the one that sought to attract all Romanians to the Greek-Catholic confessional formula.²⁶ Not only the Latin branch of the ethnic ancestry of the Romanians was meant to encourage them to step courageously on such a path, but also the capital of prestige that the Catholic Church had, even and within the Orthodox world.²⁷ But this admiration was undoubtedly marked by subjective values, given that there was no official dialogue, at the institutional level, between the Orthodox Church in Romania and representatives from the top of the hierarchy of the Catholic Church to debate with involvement the mentioned theme.

A first possibility of accomplishing the confessional union of Romanians appeared precisely at the end of the First World War, when both Transylvanian metropolitan seats were vacant. Given the delay in the process of establishing the new Greek-Catholic metropolitan²⁸ and the death in Budapest of Vasile Mangra,²⁹ the moment seemed opportune to achieve a religious union within the Romanian ethnic body.

Becoming a topic of reflection among public opinion, the issue of the religious reunification of the Romanians was debated and argued, often from confessionalist positions, by the press bodies supervised by the two Romanian Churches in Transylvania. *Unirea* and *Telegraful român*, in particular, competed in an argumentative effort to promote the idea of including all Romanians under the auspices of the same faith. But these press materials were often marked by the self-justifying rhetoric of each side, thus limiting the real possibilities for dialogue and for reaching a consensus.

There seemed to be three possibilities for the concrete achievement of the confessional union: one was that of imposing the reunification through a decision of a political nature. With very little chance of being implemented, this option was frequently part of the speech of some opinion leaders, who

²⁶ Biró, *The Nationalities Problem in Transylvania 1867-1940*, 464; Nóda, "The Historical, Political and Ecclesiastical Background," 289.

²⁷ George Enache, *Ortodoxie și putere în România contemporană. Studii și eseuri* [Orthodoxy and Power in Contemporary Romania. Studies and Essays] (Bucharest: Editura Nemira, 2005), 459.

²⁸ Lucian Turcu, *Între idealuri și realitate. Arhidieceza greco-catolică de Alba Iulia și Făgăraș în timpul păstoririi mitropolitului Vasile Suciu (1920-1935)* [Between ideals and reality. The Greek Catholic Archdiocese of Alba Iulia and Făgăraș during the pastorate of Metropolitan Vasile Suciu (1920-1935)] (Cluj-Napoca: Editura Mega, 2017), 231-278.

²⁹ Marius Eppel, *Un mitropolit și epoca sa. Vasile Mangra (1850-1918)* [A metropolitan and his era. Vasile Mangra (1850-1918)] (Cluj-Napoca: Presa Universitară Clujeană, 2006), *passim*.

invoked the method by which the Greek-Catholic Church appeared within the bosom of the Romanian community. Seen as an institutional artifice of the House of Habsburg –subordinated to the Counter-Reformation program at the end of the 17th century and driven by its political interests to alter the balance between confessions in Transylvania in favour of the Catholic Church – the Romanian United Church could also separate from Rome through a similarly political decision. The probability of achieving church union in the era through such a method was small, considering that no political authority could afford to resort to such an extreme measure. All the less since at the top of the Romanian Kingdom at that time there was a sovereign who only after the end of the war had achieved, at the end of long and complicated negotiations, reconciliation with the Church led by the pope.³⁰ Even this docile behaviour imposed on King Ferdinand I encouraged some pontifical circles to hope that the sovereign of Romania would become a promoter of the idea of the religious union of the Romanian people.³¹

The second way of achieving the religious union of Romanians could be “from top to bottom” approach, which meant carrying out negotiations at the level of the episcopal choir of each Church. This approach was rather

³⁰ Lucian Turcu, “Com'è avvenuta la riconciliazione del re Ferdinando I di Romania con la Chiesa cattolica? (la fase postbellica), in *Dal cuore dell'Europa. Omaggio al professor Cesare Alzati per il compimento dei 70 anni*, a cura di Ioan-Aurel Pop, Ovidiu Ghitta, Ioan Bolovan, Ana Victoria Sima (Cluj-Napoca: Academia Română, Centrul de Studii Transilvane, Presa Universitară Clujeană, 2015), 363-376.

³¹ The ambitious plans of the first diplomatic representative of the sovereign pontiff in Romania, Francesco Marmaggi, to attract the Orthodox Romanians to the union with the Catholic Church required the tempering of the discontent of the local Catholic communities towards some Romanian political decisions, a goal for the achievement of which the Holy See was willing to comply with the requests made by the Romanian authorities, including those to transfer some persons from the top of the ecclesiastical hierarchy who had become undesirable, as was the bishop of Cenad, Glattfelder Gyula, or the archbishop of Bucharest, Raymund Netzhhammer: Nicolae Brînzeu, *Memoriile unui preot bătrân* [Memoirs of an old priest], edition, preface and notes by Pia Brînzeu and Luminița Wallner-Bărbulescu (Timișoara: Editura Marineasa, 2008), 338-339; Attila Varga, “Primul război mondial și consecințele Marii Uniri din 1918 asupra relațiilor dintre Biserica romano-catolică din Banat și guvernul de la București (1918-1923)” [The First World War and the consequences of the Great Union of 1918 on the relations between the Roman Catholic Church in Banat and the government in Bucharest (1918-1923)], in *Războiul și societatea în secolul XX. Lucrările sesiunii italo-române Cluj-Napoca – Arcalia, 6-8 mai 2005. Guerra e società nel XX secolo. Atti del convegno italo-romeno Cluj-Napoca – Arcalia, 6-8 maggio 2005*, coordinators Gheorghe Mândrescu, Giordano Altarozzi (Cluj-Napoca – Rome: Accent, 2007), 161.

encouraged by a series of statements launched in the public space even by some senior members of the clergy. In this sense, for example, in 1919, on the occasion of the synod of the diocese of Lugoj, its superior proposed that the hierarchies of the two Romanian Churches in Transylvania should meet and identify, based on the irenic dialogue, the ways forward for religious unification.³² During the debates held in the Romanian Parliament on the ratification of the Concordat, the Bishop of Gherla at the time, Iuliu Hossu, managed to create an outpouring among his fellow senators by making statements such as: "There are no two other Churches in the world that are so close! Are we truly unable to find a way of rapprochement between us?"³³ Seen from this perspective, religious union was treated as a strictly ecclesiastical matter, starting from the premise that there were indeed more similarities between the two Romanian Churches than there were differences. Replication of the rapprochement from the level of the hierarchies to that of the clergy and believers was believed to be possible through: (1) personal contacts, namely "to meet, for the time being at least, the publicists and theology professors of the two national churches"; (2) intensifying prayers for the achievement of union; (3) press articles to promote the idea of union, "cycles of conferences on religious topics of common interest," but also by eliminating any false ideas about the other Church found in various learning tools (school textbooks, brochures, etc.).³⁴

Finally, the third and most sensitive way of achieving religious unity was the "bottom-up" approach. This path required the development of a vigorous proselytization at the basic level of the church organization: that of the parish communities. There, villagers could be more easily encouraged to break away from the Church to which they belonged, especially if tensions simmered between the priest and some parishioners, or if some local leaders succeeded in creating them. Encouraged by some directions of action formulated from the top of the Orthodox Church (in his 1920 installation speech as Archbishop of Sibiu and Metropolitan of Transylvania, Nicolae Bălan made a programmatic declaration, stating that "he would not rest his bones until he embraced, as a father, all the sons of our nation"³⁵), the rather forced attempts of religious union managed to produce some results (Poiana, Cib, Hamba, Gâmbaş,

³² *Vestitorul*, VI (1929), no. 15-16: 3.

³³ The full speech, in *Monitorul Oficial. Partea a III-a. Senatul* [Official Gazette, Part III. The Senate], no. 54 (1929): 1833-1842.

³⁴ *Vestitorul*, VII (1931), no. 13-14: 4-5.

³⁵ *Vestitorul*, VIII (1932), no. 21: 6.

Sâniacobul de Mureș, etc.) by transferring some communities of believers from the Greek-Catholic Church to the Orthodox Church. The price, however, was the escalation of maximum tension between the two ecclesiastical institutions.³⁶

Many intellectuals at that time were highly interested in identifying the optimal ways that could lead to the accomplishment of the spiritual unity of the Romanians. It was a fairly natural sentiment, considering the duty that many of them felt towards the general good. As expected, many took partisan positions. Their writings and public positions testify to this. Some of even went beyond the stage of *pro domo* pleas. They thought of actual scenarios for the rapprochement or even the merger of the two Romanian Churches, plans that they repeatedly presented to dignitaries with the highest ecclesiastical rank. That was the case of Onisifor Ghibu.³⁷ The dialogue that the renowned pedagogue had engaged with officials from the top of the Roman Curia was held in the context of the opening of negotiations between the Romanian state and the Holy See in order to conclude a concordat.³⁸ Unfortunately, the Romanian side's terms regarding the fulfilment of the church union are still unknown,³⁹ but we do know the answer and the conditionalities received

³⁶ *Monitorul Oficial. Partea a III-a. Senatul* [Official Gazette, Part III. The Senate], no. 51 (1928): 1266-1270.

³⁷ See the biography of this figure in Teodor Gal, *Onisifor Ghibu, pedagog și educator național-militant* [Onisifor Ghibu, pedagogue and national-militant educator] (Cluj-Napoca: Napoca Star, 2002).

³⁸ The chronology of the steps to conclude the concordat, in Vasile Goldiș, *Concordatul* [The Concordat] (Arad: Tiparul Tipografiei diecezane, s.a.), 5-6; Marius Theodorian-Carada, *Acțiunea Sfântului Scaun în România. De acum și de întotdeauna* [The Action of the Holy See in Romania. From Now and Always] (Bucharest: Editura Autorului, 1936), 6-8.

³⁹ The plan to restore church unity included two main phases: the first was supposed to be that of the return of the Romanian Greek-Catholics to the Orthodox Church. Secondly, that the Romanian Orthodox Church, preserving its communion of faith with the Orthodox Churches of the East and the Ecumenical Patriarchate, would recognize the spiritual authority of Rome, enjoying a series of benefits from it results from the establishment of a Romanian patriarchate, so insistently claimed by the author. Although he stated that he enjoyed the support of "several heads of our Church," the ideas proposed by the illustrious pedagogue lacked ecclesiological substance, but they managed to arouse a series of debates in Romanian society: For a global view of the author's ideas, see Onisifor Ghibu, *Necesitatea revizuirii radicale a situației confesiunilor din Transilvania* [The need for a radical revision of the situation of confessions in Transylvania] (Cluj: Tipografia Națională, 1923), 37; *Id.*, *Catolicismul unguresc în Transilvania și politica religioasă a statului român* [Hungarian Catholicism in Transylvania and the religious policy of the Romanian state] (Cluj: Institutul de arte grafice "Ardealul", 1924), 274-275; *Id.*, *În jurul catolicismului și a unirii Bisericilor* [Around Catholicism and the union of the Churches] (Arad: Editura librăriei diecezane, 1925), 42-54; *Id.*, *O imperioasă problemă națională*, 19-31.

from the officials of the Holy See.⁴⁰

On behalf of the young congregation *pro Ecclesia Orientali*, Monsignor Enrico Benedetti conveyed, on April 1, 1921, the perspective of the Catholic Church on the exciting idea of church union. First of all, the assurance was given that “the Holy See was willing to facilitate in any way possible the return of Romanian dissidents to the Catholic unity,” reintegration which was to be carried out under the guarantee of the further application of the rights derived from the discipline and rite of the Eastern Church. Seen as an outpost of Latinity in the Slavic East, the Romanians had returned to the framework of the “true Church” were encouraged to preserve their traditional Latin culture as long as its manifestations did not conflict with the Eastern rite and discipline they professed. Regarding one of the Romanian side’s non-negotiable conditions, namely the granting of the patriarchal rank for the Church in Romania, the Holy See saw no impediment to its implementation. Just as institutions of a similar rank had been created in that era for Maronite, Syrian or Armenian Catholics, the pontifical officials considered that a patriarchal ecclesiastical structure could function in Romania too, to which all Catholics throughout the country would be subordinate, “not only the archbishops and bishops of the Romanian rite (i.e., Greek) but also, within the limits set by the Code of Canon Law functional in the Latin Church, archbishops and bishops of the Latin rite, as well as religious orders and congregations.” Referring to the Romanians remaining outside the country’s borders, the same reply letter advanced the proposal that they should be placed under the authority of the Romanian patriarch, a measure that was to be reconciled with the canonical rights of the local ordinaries. Onisifor Ghibu’s demand that the Holy See grant the future Romanian patriarch the title of apostolic vicar for all Greek-rite Catholics in Eastern Europe was not refused either. Since it was an Eastern Catholic Church, the submission was to be direct to the Holy See through the Congregation for the Eastern Churches. The seventh point of the negotiations concerned the establishment, in Rome, of a Romanian seminary where future priests could receive quality instruction.

⁴⁰ National Archives, Alba County Service (hereinafter A.N.S.J. Alba), *Romanian Greek-Catholic Metropolis of Alba Iulia – Făgăraș, Blaj Fund. Inventory documents*, file no. 4147 (1934), volume one, f. 18r-22r.

The idea seems to have delighted the sovereign pontiff who, according to the respondent, had shown himself willing to allocate a significant sum to achieve that goal. Religious orders and congregations were designed to foster the revival of spiritual life among Romanians. The Holy See assured that it fully understood the role of monasteries and the rigorous monastic principles in maintaining a high degree of religiosity and devotion among Romanians, which is why it was prepared to support the establishment of Romanian religious communities. The proposal for the Romanians to have convents in Italy or France, where the novices could benefit from the appropriate instruction in the western monastic environment, so that when they returned to their homeland, they could become the apostles of the acquired spiritual qualities, was also approved. Point ten contained the assurance that the Holy See would have a non-differentiated treatment of Romanian Catholics in relation to their ethnicity and that it would collaborate with the country's government in taking the necessary measures against the Hungarian and German clergy and believers who threatened the security of the state. Regarding the relationship between the future Church and the centre of the Catholic world, it was specified that the Holy See would refrain from any intervention that did not concern religious matters, and regarding the grounded political tutelage over the Orthodox Church, it was clearly stated that relations of that kind would not exist in the new context. In accordance with the norms of Eastern canon law, the patriarch and the bishops would be assisted to resolving ecclesiastical issues by a permanent synod from which the laity would be excluded. The latter's cooperation would be welcomed and even encouraged in the management of cultural-religious works, in the field of confessional schools, charitable actions, etc. Finally, the last item of the discussion referred to the means by which material support was to be provided by the patriarch, the bishops, the clergy and the actions of the Church in general, advancing the proposal that this should be the fruit of the collaboration between the Holy See and the Romanian government.

Clearly, what emerges from the above-described document is the generous response of the Holy See to the proposal for a church union, advanced by Onisifor Ghibu. Although it did not generate immediate effects, the discussion surrounding this project represented one of the most advanced steps of the intention to unite the Orthodox Church in Romania with the

Catholic Church, a step discussed by intellectuals, clerics and laymen alike, throughout the entire interwar period.⁴¹

Another great supporter of the idea of the religious union of Romanians was Marius Theodorian-Carada. Born a century and a half ago in Craiova, Marius Theodorian-Carada was part of the gallery of intellectuals deeply involved in the life of the Church in the years before the First World War and in those that followed. Of the two halves of his last name, the second obviously had the greatest resonance for the efforts to modernize Romanian society from a political, economic and cultural perspective, attributed to his illustrious predecessor,⁴² Eugeniu Carada, to whom he dedicated an opus honouring his merits.⁴³ A lawyer by training, Marius Theodorian-Carada, like other intellectuals, was involved in the Romanian political life, promoting the values he believed in not only from the rostrum of the Parliament, but also through press articles, as a tireless contributor to the most important periodicals of those times.⁴⁴ As prolific author, he was strongly involved in the debates around the political and cultural ideas of the time, repeatedly proving his qualities as a talented polemicist.⁴⁵

⁴¹ At that time, the theme was discussed repeatedly in the religious press, brochures were published and it was the subject of epistolary correspondences, such as the one between Elie Daianu and patriarch Miron Cristea. See, in this regard, National Archives, Cluj County Service, *Ilie Dăianu Personal Fund*, file no. 221 (s.a.), f. 3r – f 7r; file 738 (1936), f. 4r; *Memoriile cardinalului dr. Iuliu Hossu* [Memoirs of Cardinal Dr. Iuliu Hossu], 52-53.

⁴² Dinică Ciobotea, Aurelia Florescu, "Contribuții genealogice la o biografie a lui Eugeniu Carada" [Genealogical contributions to a biography of Eugeniu Carada], in *Analele Universității din Craiova. Seria Istorie* [Annals of the University of Craiova, History Series], XVI, No. 1(19)/2011: 119-122.

⁴³ Mariu[s] Theodorian-Carada, *Eugeniu Carada* [Eugeniu Carada] (Bucharest: Tipografia Gutenberg, 1922).

⁴⁴ *Id.*, *Efimeridele. Însemnări și amintiri, 1908-1928* [Ephemerides. Notes and Memories, 1908-1928] (Săbăoani: Tipografia "Serafica", 1937), 124-125; Dinu Bălan, "A piece of Mariu(s) Theodorian Carada's journalism. His collaboration with *Decalogue* magazine", in *Anuarul Institutului de Istorie „A. D. Xenopol”* [Yearbook of the "A. D. Xenopol" Institute of History], tome LVII (2020): 369-372. The attachment to the Catholic cause in Romania was also materialized in Theodorian-Carada's involvement, between 1921-1924, in the publicist project *Albina*, supported by the Nunciature from Bucharest.

⁴⁵ Dinu Bălan, "Chemarea străbunilor: Mariu(s) Theodorian-Carada și activitatea lui istoriografică" [The Call of the Ancestors: Mariu(s) Theodorian-Carada and his historiographical activity], in *Perspectivile și problemele integrării în spațiul european al cercetării și educației* [Prospects and problems of integration into the European research and education space], volume VII, part 2 (Cahul: Editura Universității din Cahul, 2020), 326-328; Miltiade Adamescu, *Bibliografia tuturor*

Theodorian-Carada was also a careful observer and commentator of religious life in Romania. He vehemently criticized the spiritual immobility of antebellum Orthodoxy, condemning the selfish interests behind certain promotions among the high clergy. He argued the inability of the Romanian hierarchs to convey to the faithful the aspiration towards higher values, based on his conviction that a Church servile to politics (as he considered the Orthodox Church to be) could not offer its pastors the all so necessary means for cultural and spiritual elevation.⁴⁶ Instead, he admired the existing discipline within the Catholic Church, the good intellectual training of the clergy and the strategies for mobilizing hundreds of millions of believers. This freshness of Catholicism led Theodorian-Carada to embrace, at the end of the first decade of the last century, the faith teachings of the universal Church, but in their Greek-Catholic version. After the end of the war, his plea in favour of the idea of uniting the Orthodox Church in Romania with the Church led by the sovereign pontiff returned repeatedly in his public statements, or in his correspondence, but the plans he stated in this regard were not quite clear or convincing enough to be put into practice.⁴⁷ He remained faithful to the paschoptist leitmotif of a single Romanian Church, "which must be neither orthodox nor united, but simply a Romanian church."⁴⁸

scrierilor domnului Mariu Theodorian-Carada [Bibliography of all the writings of Mr. Mariu Theodorian-Carada] (Bucharest: Institutul de Arte Grafice, 1923), *passim*. Mia Frollo, *Un scriitor original: Mariu Theodorian Carada* [An original writer: Mariu Theodorian Carada] (Bucharest: Tipografia "Dorneanu", 1940).

⁴⁶ Mariu[s] Theodorian-Carada, *Decăderea Bisericei Ortodoxe Române și cauzele ei* [The Decline of the Romanian Orthodox Church and its Causes] (București: Tipografia Gutenberg, 1897), *passim*.

⁴⁷ Theodorian-Carada's perspective on the binomial nation-confession (with a plea for the union of the Orthodox Church with the Church led by the sovereign pontiff), in his work *Biserica română din punct de vedere național* [The Romanian Church from a national point of view] (Bucharest: Tipografia Profesională Dimitrie C. Ionescu, 1913). See also Dinu Bălan, "Națiune și religie în România modernă: cazul lui Mariu(s) Theodorian-Carada" [Nation and religion in modern Romania: the case of Mariu(s) Theodorian-Carada], in *Perspectivile și problemele integrării în spațiul european al cercetării și educației* [Prospects and problems of integration into the European research and education space], volume VIII, part 2 (Cahul: Editura Universității din Cahul, 2021), 182-188.

⁴⁸ See Mariu[s] Theodorian-Carada, *Unirea Bisericilor* [Union of Churches] (Galați: Tipografia "Moldova", 1928). The author also designed a project for the unification of the Orthodox Church with the Catholic Church, edited under the pseudonym Protosinghelul A. Otmenedec, *Unificarea Bisericii. Organizație autonomă și canonică* [Unification of the Church. Autonomous and canonical organization] (Bucharest: Tipografia Gutenberg, 1920). See also Dinu Bălan, "Un mediator

Theodorian-Carada's attachment to the cause of restoring the faith unity of the Christian world was appreciated by the papacy, which granted him private audiences (the first, shortly after his conversion, in 1910)⁴⁹ and honoured him with the distinction of Commander of the Order of Saint Gregory the Great and with the cross *pro Ecclesia et Pontefice*.⁵⁰

The issue of the means for the religious unification of the Romanians returned recurrently in the contents of his letters addressed to the Holy See. It happened, for example, at the end of the third decade of the last century, when Theodorian-Carada sent an extensive memorandum to Pius XI.⁵¹ The author of the letter expressed his opinion about the strategies that the Catholic Church used to attract the peoples of Eastern Europe, primarily the Russians and the Greeks, to the unity of faith, expressing his gratitude that the Holy See overlook the Romanians in his plans to restore Christian unity, the proof of success, even if partially up to that date, being precisely the Greek-Catholic Church. This Church, Theodorian-Carada hastens to add, was exposed, immediately after the union of Transylvania with the old Romania, to virulent attacks from the Orthodox confessional circles and from certain politicians, who aggressively promoted the idea of the return of the Greek-Catholic believers to the Church they had once left.

Another theme touched upon by the author of the letter referred to the possibility of creating a confessional party in Romania. The lack of such an organization had also been noted by the former Nuncio in Bucharest, Francesco Marmaggi (at that time diplomatic representative of the Holy See in Poland). However, when he submitted an offer of that kind to the Greek Catholics, the hierarchs opposed, declaring that they were satisfied with the way in which the political group led by Iuliu Maniu defended their interests.

între confesiuni: Marius Theodorian-Carada în jurnalul arhiepiscopului Raymund Netzhhammer" [A mediator between confessions: Marius Theodorian-Carada in the diary of Archbishop Raymund Netzhhammer], in *Identități etno-confesionale și reprezentări ale Celuilalt în spațiul est-european: între stereotip și voința de a cunoaște* [Ethno-confessional identities and representations of the Other in the Eastern European space: between stereotype and the will to know], coordinators: Cristina Preutu, George Enache; foreword by Gheorghe Cliveti (Iași: Editura Universității "Alexandru Ioan Cuza", 2018), 83-102.

⁴⁹ Theodorian Carada, *Efimeridele* [Ephimerides], 28-31.

⁵⁰ Archives of the Congregation for the Oriental Churches (hereinafter A.C.O.C.), *Romeni. Affari generali*, 166 (1929), doc. 1a (p. 1-18).

⁵¹ Ibid..

Nonetheless, despite the fact that a political formation based on religion was strictly prohibited by the recently adopted law on the regime of cults in Romania, Theodorian-Carada believed that its usefulness could not be denied, considering that the nationalist-peasants would not always be in power. The problems of the Catholic community in Romania, however, regardless of the rite, would continue to exist. In addition, such a group could programmatically adopt the idea of the religious union of all Romanians with the Church of Rome, which could make that ideal easier to achieve. At the same time, the party could withstand the attacks that the Orthodox press and part of the Romanian political world launched against the Catholic Church. In order to prepare such a movement, it was absolutely essential, Theodorian-Carada believed, to establish a journal with a large circulation, which would support the project of the religious union. Theodorian-Carada explains that there was no such publication in Romania at that time, taking into account that *Unirea* from Blaj was published only once a week, having “un caractère trop exclusivité religieux et un ton de polemique bien désagréable,” written in a language that was not purely Romanian, but one specific to Transylvania, with all of its provincialisms and specific expressions. The project initiated by the former diplomatic representative, Francesco Marmaggi (the *Albina* newspaper) was short-lived, due to the fact that the editorial group from Blaj perceived him as a competitor and, through political obstruction, led by director Zenovie Pâclișanu from the Ministry of Cults. This was not the only instrument identified by Theodorian-Carada through which the seeds of the idea of ecclesiastical union could be sown among the Romanians. Taking into account the predominantly agrarian profile of Romania, he also proposed the founding of agricultural-type cooperatives, under the name “Peasant Farms”, which would develop a network of branches in as many villages as possible in old Romania and which, attracting Italian investors, could become the instrument of a successful pro-unionist propaganda. In addition to other objections related to the confusion in which the Greek-Catholic Church found itself regarding the date of the celebration of Easter, Theodorian-Carada resumed the idea that the shortest and most successful way to fulfil the desired religious union of all Romanians with the Church led by the sovereign pontiff was that the United Church should re-identify, as much as possible, in its external manifestations (without paying attention, of course, to the integrity of the dogma) with the rite of the Orthodox Church.

The fact that the issue of religious union was primarily attributed to national valences and only subsidiarily meanings related to the placement in the “true faith” matrix is also clear from the investigation carried out by Ioan Georgescu, the results of which were published in the middle of the fourth decade of the last century.⁵² The respective investigation sought to test the attitude of no less than 40 figures of the Romanian public life⁵³ in relation to the issue of the union of the Greek-Catholic and Orthodox Churches. The vast majority of respondents declared themselves open to the idea of the religious union of Romanians, which they also saw as a way to strengthen the Romanian bloc in the face of the dangers that minority ethnicities/confessions could represent. The possibility of the rapprochement, followed by the union of the two Churches was justified by all those who considered the respective approach achievable through the prism of the lack of fundamental dogmatic differences between them. Also, the majority opinion of those polled was that the biggest obstacles standing in the way of the confessional union of Romanians were the personal ambitions or the fanaticism of certain senior clergy members or the political interests that often further complicated the matter. Regarding the direction of the union, the opinion of the majority of the respondents was that it should be done in the sense of bringing the Orthodox Church closer to Western culture and spirituality, which confirmed the prestige enjoyed by the Catholic Church. But this was not the only (and most convincing) argument for the entry of the Romanian Orthodox Church into the communion of faith with the Church of Rome, according to the figures who formulated opinions on this sensitive issue. The Greco-Slavic ethos, of which the Orthodox Church considered itself to be “imbued”, and which made it alien to the Latin soul of the Romanian people, seemed to be the main argument for the orientation of the union in the direction of Western Christianity (Catholicism). An immediate consequence of the Romanians’ entry into communion with the Catholic Church was not only the correction of an anomaly – i.e., the incompatibility between the Romanians’ Latin roots and their adherence to Eastern Christian dogma and ritual –, but also their

⁵² *Bisericile românești. Anchetă de Ioan Georgescu* [Romanian Churches. Survey by Ioan Georgescu] (Oradea: Tipografia românească, 1935), *passim*.

⁵³ Among them: Vasile Băncilă, Ion Bianu, Nichifor Crainic, Iosif Frollo, Claudiu Isopescu, Simion Mehedinți, Sextil Pușcariu, August Scriban, Victor Smighelschi, Pamfil Șeicaru, Octavian Tăslăuan, etc.

seating at the table of prestigious and civilised European nations (Italian, French, Spanish, Portuguese, etc.). The levelling of the asperities created by the prejudices sedimented over time had to be done through the moral education of the younger generations. However, all of these theories were burdened by one major handicap: the difficulty of putting them into practice.

As a fairly thorny issue, the matter of the religious union of the Romanian people represented a passionate topic of debate in the interwar period, one that engaged numerous figures on the Romanian public scene, from high-ranking church figures, secular personalities, politicians, journalists, etc. The vast majority was open to the achievement of the confessional union, and these opinion makers treated the delicate enterprise as a necessity of a national order, rather than a merely religious matter. The religious dichotomy of the Romanians was considered a sign of their national fragility, which could only be cured by uniting everyone under the dome of the same faith. But precisely the transposition of this ideal into reality further deepened the distance between the two Romanian Churches, considering the confessional perspectives that were laid at the foundation of the welding of the two church communities. This intransigence can be considered responsible for the radical solution that would be resorted to in the issue of the religious union of the Romanians: the one of December 1, 1948.⁵⁴

⁵⁴ Namely, decree 358 of December 1, 1948, by which the Romanian Church United with Rome (i.e., Greek-Catholic) was outlawed by the communist state.