

Recent Research Projects About the History of the Greek-Catholic Church in Transylvania

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The idea to gather to the same working table the Greek-Catholic and Orthodox specialists from Romania to debate the genesis and evolution of the Romanian Religious Union with the Church of Rome, belongs to Professor Ernst Cristoph Suttner, an excellent expert in the history of the Romanian Church from Transylvania. To the project of an interconfessional research strategy on the Romanian ecclesiastical past from Transylvania, also contributed the Vienna Foundation “Pro Oriente” and the History-Philology Department of the University “1 Decembrie 1918” from Alba Iulia. The action was meant to draw some common viewpoints, unanimously accepted, on the Religious Union, as a starting point for an objective historic analysis of the Romanian Church from Transylvania. The first goal was to overcome the prejudices and traditionalism, considered a serious burden in the evolution of the confessional historiography.

The ample project was to be developed throughout three one week conferences, in the summers of 2001, 2003 and 2005. The participants representing the “Pro Oriente” Foundation, the laic historians and foreign moderators had to assure the balance of dialogue and equidistance of debates. The foreign partners or those belonging to other confessions than Orthodox or Greek-Catholic, more or less acquainted with local details of the phenomenon, were invited to contribute to the estimation of the European dimension of the events, or to point out new dimensions. The program was known before, and the subjects under discussion were chronologically ordered for half a century (from the years preceding the Religious Union, to those after the anti-Catholic movement of Visarion), so as each specialist had enough time to elaborate on his ideas. At the demand of the “Pro Oriente” Foundation, a working group was made up of Orthodox and Greek-Catholic historians and theologians from institutes for history, history and theology departments from all over the country.

As it often happens, the results of the dialogue did not meet the expectations. During the first two working meetings (Vienna 2001 and Alba Iulia 2003) the research team structure changed.¹ Some of the members, who participated at the

¹ About the first two working meetings organized by the “Pro Oriente” Foundation see REMUS CÂMPEANU, ‘Initiatives oecumeniques dans l’historiographie confessionnelle contemporaine de Roumanie’, in *Transylvanian Review*, Cluj-Napoca, XIII/2004, no. 3/autum, 66–71.

first meeting, didn't take part to the second, in favour of others, who needed time to get acquainted with the project, and consequently the debates were disturbed. At the first meeting, the Orthodoxes were represented only by theologians, while Greek-Catholic points of view were sustained by historians, so instead of a change of ideas, the result was a series of non-converging speeches. Moreover, during the second meeting the Orthodoxes were hardly represented, because the theologians, who participated at the first meeting, were absent at the following. As it was expected, at the first meeting, the dialogue wasn't an academic one, because of the passion and aversions. One of the speeches was so aggressive that the respective study was omitted from the volume *Annales Universitatis Apulensis. Series Historica*. Not even once, either the European dimension of the Romanian confessional transfer was enough emphasized, or the long process of Catholicizing the Transylvanian Romanians was situated in the natural series of Religious Unions in central and eastern Europe, the investigation of circumstances and force, provincial or local relations were preferred instead.

The studies at the Vienna meeting referred to the first years of the Religious Union, the institutions or personalities involved in the process of the Union of the Romanians with the Church of Rome. Among the issues under discussion, there was the role of the Jesuits in the act of Union,² the attitude of the Vienna circles to the religious events in Transylvania, the position of the "De Propaganda Fide" Congregation and cardinal Leopold Kollonich towards the Transylvanian religious problems,³ the opposition structures and groups facing the Latin proselytism in the territory,⁴ the causes of the approach of Romanians to the Church of Rome,⁵ the ecclesiastic background in the principality, in the years before the Catholicizing wave⁶, the Union of the Ruthenians, as premises for the Union of the Romanians from Transylvania,⁷ the negotiations for the Orthodox joining the Latin belief,⁸ the Romanian clergy motivations in assuming the confessional trans-

² MARIONELA WOLF, 'Ordinul iezuit și Unirea bisericească a românilor din Transilvania' (The Jesuits Order and the Religious Union of the Romanians from Transylvania), in *Annales Universitatis Apulensis. Series Historica*, Alba Iulia, (for the next quotations in shortened form, *AUA*), VI/2002, no. 2, 47–54.

³ PAUL BRUSANOWSKI, 'Motivațiile politice ale interesului cardinalului Leopold Kollonich față de români' (Political motivations of cardinal Leopold Kollonich's interest to the Romanians), in *AUA*, VI/2002, no. 2, 55–66.

⁴ ERNST CHRISTOPH SUTTNER, 'Die Anfänge und das Durchsetzen der Siebenbürgener Kirchenunion sowie die Widerstände gegen sie', in *AUA*, VI/2002, no. 2, 11–28.

⁵ ANA DUMITRAN, 'Unirea dinainte de Unire. Câteva posibile direcții de aprofundare a înțelegerii gestului Bisericii Ortodoxe din Transilvania de unire cu Biserica Romano-Catolică' (The Union before the Union. Some possible elaborate directions in understanding the Union of the Orthodox Church from Transylvania with the Roman-Catholic Church), in *AUA*, VI/2002, no. 2, 37–46.

⁶ IOAN VASILE LEB, 'Realități confesionale în Transilvania în preziua Unirii cu Roma a unei părți a românilor ortodocși' (Confessional realities in Transylvania, the day before the Union with Rome, of a great part of Orthodox Romanians), in *AUA*, VI/2002, no. 2, 29–35.

⁷ OVIDIU GHITA, 'Iosif de Camillis: un vicar apostolic la porțile Transilvaniei' (Iosif de Camillis: an apostolic vicar at the gates of Transylvania), in *AUA*, VI/2002, no. 2, 67–80.

⁸ MIHAI SĂSĂUJAN, 'Instituții și persoane implicate în Unirea bisericească din Transilvania (1698–1761) și opoziția la adresa ei. Motivele principale ale atitudinii lor' (Institutions and persons

fer⁹, the reactions of the Protestant Church from Transylvania on the Romanian religious problem¹⁰, the short and long term consequences of the Catholicizing the Romanians (the development of education, the improvement of the clergy and believers status, the elites, the evolution of the ecclesiastical administration)¹¹. At the same time, the documentary basis of the Religious Union was enriched by new archival sources¹² and the weak points of the historiography on this issue were emphasized¹³. There also existed some purely theological demonstrations, trying to define the term of “law” – very frequent in the documents of the Religious Union – in the public concept of the Romanians at the epoch¹⁴, and to explain the canonical aspects of including the Transylvanian Orthodoxes within the Church of Rome¹⁵.

It becomes quite clear, that the analyses focusing the relations of the Romanian confessional transfer with the European Christianity were extremely modest, even during the second meeting in Alba Iulia. However, unlike the first one, some steps forward are still to be mentioned. First, the debates achieved their aim, namely to draw a scientific perspective on the phenomenon. Consequently, the dialogue was elegant, efficient and free of passions. Second, there were some

involved in the Religious Union from Transylvania – 1698–1701 – and its opposition. The main reasons of their attitude), in *AUA*, VI/2002, no. 2, 81–94.

⁹ NICOLAE CHIFĂR, ‘Mitropolitul și sinodul Bisericii românești din Transilvania în contextul evenimentelor privind Unirea cu Biserica Romei: 1698–1701’ (The archbishop and the synod of the Romanian Church from Transylvania in the context of the events of the Union with the Church of Rome: 1698–1701), in *AUA*, VI/2002, no. 2, 95–103.

¹⁰ GÁBOR SIPOS, ‘Consistoriul Reformat Suprem și problema Unirii religioase a românilor’ (The Superior Protestant Consistorium and the question of the Religious Union of the Romanians), in *AUA*, VI/2002, no. 2, 105–110.

¹¹ GRETA-MONICA MIRON, ‘Puterea exemplului – preotul unit și enoriașii săi din dieceza de Făgăraș în secolul al XVIII-lea’ (The power of the examples – the Uniate priest and his parishioners from the diocese of Făgăraș in the 18th century), in *AUA*, VI/2002, no. 2, 167–182; DANIEL DUMITRAN, ‘Contribuții privitoare la statutul clerului greco-catolic în prima jumătate a secolului al XVIII-lea’ (Contributions to the statute of the Greek-Catholic clergy in the first half of the 18th century), in *AUA*, VI/2002, no. 2, 141–165; REMUS CÂMPEANU, ‘Un efect spectaculos al Unirii religioase: integrarea elitelor românești din Transilvania, Partium și Banat în sistemul catolic de învățământ în prima jumătate a secolului al XVIII-lea’ (A spectacular effect of the Religious Union: the integration of the Romanian elites from Transylvania, Partium and Banat in the Catholic education system in the first half of the 18th century), in *AUA*, VI/2002, no. 2, 127–140.

¹² LAURA STANCIU, ‘O contribuție documentară din secolul al XVIII-lea privitoare la Unirea Bisericii românilor din Transilvania cu Biserica Romei: 1697–1701’ (A documentary contribution from the 18th century on the Union of Romanian Church from Transylvania with the Church of Rome), in *AUA*, VI/2002, no. 2, 183–204.

¹³ IACOB MĂRZA – REMUS CÂMPEANU, ‘Secvențe istoriografice privind Unirea religioasă a românilor ardeleni’ (Historiographical sequences on the Religious Union of the Transylvanian Romanians), in *AUA*, VI/2002, no. 2, 205–218.

¹⁴ DORIN OANCEA, ‘Legea unică – sursă a unei duble identități confessionale?’ (The unique law – the source of a double confessional identity?), in *AUA*, VI/2002, no. 2, 111–125.

¹⁵ IRIMIE MARGA, ‘Unire sau dezbinare? Aspecte canonice ale începutului uniatismului din Transilvania’ (Union or separation? Canonical aspects of the beginnings of Uniatism in Transylvania – The Religious Union of the Romanians from Transylvania), lecture sustained at the first conference on the Religious Union of the Romanians from Transylvania with Church of Rome, and remained unpublished because of its unscientific and subjective nature.

studies implying profound European motivations of the phenomenon, such as those written by Ernst Christoph Suttner (who approached the Jesuits movements from Transylvania from the perspective of general ecclesiology of Rome, for all the missionaries of the order, sent among the eastern Christians¹⁶), by Ovidiu Ghitta (his investigation focused on placing the Romanians' Religious Union within the large context of religious social and political mutations, in the center of the continent, in the 17th century, and on the connections between the eastern political strategies of the Holy Seat and the efforts of the Austrian Royal House to consolidate its domination at the eastern borders¹⁷), by Alexandru Buzalic (his historical attempt to define the Romanian confessional transfer as a natural result of the Counter-reform and of the previous religious unions in central and east European territories¹⁸) and by Mihail Săsăujan (his study aimed the mechanism of Catholicizing the Transylvanian Orthodoxes from the perspective of the continental policy of the Habsburg Empire¹⁹).

The other demonstrations were limited to the local circumstances of the ecclesiastic process. Some other topics under discussion were: the Religious Union of the Romanians as viewed by different personalities or institutions involved²⁰, the quantification of the agreement – assuming action of the superior Romanian clergy in the process of joining the Latin belief²¹, new aspects of the Orthodox resistance in the principality against the Catholicizing process²². According to tradition, the Calvinist element and its position in the religious changes within the Transylvanian province and the Romanians choice for the Church of Rome, were

¹⁶ ERNST CHRISTOPH SUTTNER, 'Das Unionsverständnis bei Förderern und Gegnern der Union der Siebenbürgener Rumänen mit der Kirche von Rom', in *AUA*, IX/2005, no. 2, 7–20.

¹⁷ OVIDIU GHITTA, 'Unirea Bisericii Românești din Transilvania cu Biserica Romană 1697–1701: o perspectivă analitică' (The Union of the Romanian Church from Transylvania with the Church of Rome 1697–1701: an analytical perspective), unpublished lecture, sustained at the second conference on the Religious Union of the Romanians from Transylvania with Church of Rome, Alba Iulia, July of 2003, *passim*.

¹⁸ ALEXANDRU BUZALIC, 'Unirea cu Roma în viziunea teologiei greco-catolice' (The Union with Rome in the Greek-Catholic theological vision), in *AUA*, IX/2005, no. 2, 75–85.

¹⁹ MIHAI SĂSĂUJAN, 'Conceptul de Unire bisericească în dezbaterile conferințelor ministeriale din Viena la mijlocul secolului al XVIII-lea' (The concept of Religious Union in the debates of the ministry conferences in Vienna at the middle of the 18th century), in *AUA*, IX/2005, no. 2, 63–74.

²⁰ SUTTNER (*op. cit.* at note 16), *ibidem*; DORIN OANCEA, '„Legea strămoșească” în context istoric transilvănean' ("The ancient law" within Transylvanian historical context), in *AUA*, IX/2005, no. 2, 21–26; JÓZSEF MARTON, 'Instituții care au contribuit la realizarea Unirii. Contribuția vistiernicului Ștefan Apor și a iezuitului Ladislau Paul Baranyi la realizarea Unirii religioase: 1697–1701' (Institutions that contributed to the Union. The contribution of the treasurer Ștefan Apor and the Jesuit Ladislau Paul Baranyi to the Religious Union), in *AUA*, IX/2005, no. 2, 31–38.

²¹ GREȚA-MONICA MIRON, 'Ultimul act al Unirii românilor din Transilvania cu Biserica Romei. Spre un nou concept de Unire' (The final act of the Union of the Transylvanian Romanians with the Church of Rome. Towards a new Union concept), in *AUA*, IX/2005, no. 2, 47–52.

²² DANIEL DUMITRAN, 'Rezistența ortodoxă împotriva Unirii religioase în Brașov și Țara Bârsei' (The Orthodox resistance against the Religious Union in Brașov and Țara Bârsei), in *AUA*, IX/2005, no. 2, 53–61.

also pointed out²³. As during the previous meeting, important documents of the Religious Union were reevaluated²⁴ and some necessary correction on this subject have been made²⁵.

At this point, 2/3 of this generous project of the „Pro Oriente” Foundation, it became clear that not all the initial aims had real chances to be reached. From the studies under debate at that moment, no solid basis for a history synthesis of the Romanian Church meeting the expectations of both confessions, Orthodox and Greek-Catholic, could be sketched. Several details meant to underline the European character of the Romanian choice for Catholicism, were left aside. The next meeting scheduled for 2005 didn't seem to dispose of the scientific force, the time and amplitude necessary to fulfill the demands.

The research group, met for the third time (Alba Iulia, 2005) changed again, hoping that most of the initial aims would be fulfilled. Not even then, the debates could follow the established order, but still, the dialogue was interesting and useful, leavening apart the traditionalism of the church historiography.

During the debates, suddenly came into question as dominating subject, the metamorphosis of the Transylvanian Romanians' confessional identities, approached from various perspectives. A consistent study emphasized the development of spiritual criteria because of which, the Orthodoxes and the Greek-Catholics became aware that they represented well-defined beliefs. The investigation started during the first decades of Catholicization, when according to the author, loyalty or unloyalty to the Uniate bishop represented the only separation element between the two religions of the Romanians. The study went on, along the years

²³ ANA DUMITRAN, 'Aspecte ale politicii confesionale a Principatului calvin față de români: confirmările în funcțiile ecleziastice și programul de reformare a Bisericii Ortodoxe din Transilvania' (Aspects of the confessional policy of the Calvinist Principality to the Romanians: confirmations of ecclesiastical positions and the reform program of the Orthodox Church from Transylvania), unpublished lecture, sustained at the second conference on the Religious Union of the Romanians from Transylvania with Church of Rome, Alba Iulia, July of 2003; SIPOS GÁBOR, 'Unirea religioasă și antecedentele ei în relațiile calvino-ortodoxe din Transilvania: 1660–1710' (The Religious Union and its antecedents in Calvinist – Orthodox relations in Transylvania: 1660–1710), in *AUA*, IX/2005, no. 2, 27–30.

²⁴ LAURA STANCIU, 'Rediscutarea unei controverse. Rezoluția de Unire a lui Teofil: 21 martie 1697' (Rediscovering a controversy. Teofil's Union Resolution: March 2, 1697), in *AUA*, IX/2005, no. 2, 39–45.

²⁵ CRISTIAN BARTA, 'Dialectica Unirii celei dintâi și a Unirii celei de-a doua în concepția lui Samuil Micu' (Dialectics of the First Union and of the Second Union in Samuil Micu's conception), in *AUA*, IX/2005, no. 2, 87–93; REMUS CÂMPEANU, 'Un lider al istoriografiei pașoptiste, George Bariț, despre cauzele și începuturile Unirii religioase a românilor transilvăneni cu Biserica Romei' (A leader of the 1848 historiography, George Bariț, about the causes and the beginnings of the Religious Union of the Transylvanian Romanians with the Church of Rome), in *AUA*, IX/2005, no. 2, 95–117; IACOB MĂRZA, 'Zenovie Păclișanu despre raporturile românilor cu calvinismul în veacul al XVII-lea: reevaluări istoriografice' (Zenovie Paclisanu about the Romanians' contacts with Calvinism in the 17th century: historiographical evaluations), in *AUA*, IX/2005, no. 2, 119–124; IOAN MITROFAN, 'Influența calvină și Unirea românilor transilvăneni cu Biserica Romei, în interpretarea lui Zenovie Păclișanu – repere teologice pre și post eventum' (The Calvinist influence and the Union of the Transylvanian Romanians with the Church of Rome, as viewed by Zenovie Paclisanu – theological pre and post eventum framework), in *AUA*, IX/2005, no. 2, 125–134.

of anti-Catholic movements, at the middle of the 18th century, when the border between the two religions was consolidated by ideological and social arguments, concluding that by the end of the 18th century theological considerations became of great importance to separate the Uniates from non-Uniates²⁶.

Another issue focused on the stages of the Greek-Catholic discourse between 1696–1760, critically reviewing the popularization literature issued by the Greek-Catholic bishop, and later on, after the Greek-Catholic diocese was settled in Transylvania, by the Transylvanian. The author concluded that, both dioceses the Ruthenian and the Greek-Catholic, made great efforts to define a true relation between the Eastern Church tradition and the Florentine Union views. They tried to explain that the newly founded church inherited the eastern tradition, which is not against the Catholic belief, but implies and confesses it. After the religious riots at the middle of the 18th century in Transylvania and as a reaction to them, the popularization literature becomes more vehement from a dogmatic point of view, suggesting that the Religious Union was not a simple communion in belief, but an integration of the Romanian Church within the Church of Rome²⁷.

The historical evaluation of the Greek-Catholic Church identity was continued by a study underlying that the Uniates never considered themselves as an ecclesiastical entity separated from the Byzantine tradition, but one which got into the full communion of the universal Church. Moreover, in the first half of the 18th century intensified the contacts with the confessional structures of the same rite, namely Orthodox, the only separation representing the faithfulness or unfaithfulness to the Catholicised bishop. In spite of the efforts of the Vienna Court, at the middle of the 18th century, the Romanians were still divided religiously, so the identity discourse with theologic arguments intensified, both parts expressing and justifying their belief. The study, as the previous one, referred to the popularization Greek-Catholic literature, concluding that the Transylvanian Greek-Catholic Church was neither an appendix of a different rite for the Church of Rome, nor a religious hybrid, born of ancient political reasons, but it did and does represent an independent entity of the Catholic Church²⁸.

The maturation of the Greek-Catholic identity under the impact of the Orthodox protestant movements in Transylvania, at the middle of the 18th century, represented a favorite subject of analysis. This was the starting point, which during a lecture given at the conference, described the way of Catholicism in the Romanian society, from the early stages of approval, agreement and proclamation, to those of acknowledgment, understanding and promoting the idea of Union,

²⁶ ERNST CHRISTOPH SUTTNER, (II) 'Überlegungen zu Tagesordnungspunkt 5', in *AUA*, X/2006, no. 2, 149–154.

²⁷ CRISTIAN BARTA, 'De la „Catehismul” lui Iosif de Camillis <1696> la „Dogmatica învățătură” a lui P.P. Aaron <1760>: aspecte doctrinare ale discursului identitar greco-catolic' (From the "Catechism" of Iosif de Camillis <1696> to the "Dogmatic learning" of P. P. Aaron <1760>: doctrine aspects of the Greek-Catholic identity discourse), in *AUA*, X/2006, no. 2, 49–57.

²⁸ ALEXANDRU BUZALIC, 'Particularități în gândirea greco-catolică la jumătatea secolului al XVIII-lea' (Characteristics of the Greek-Catholic thinking by the middle of the 18th century), in *AUA*, X/2006, no. 2, 71–92.

the care of this spiritual evolution being the way the new Church referred to the Florentine points, during the first five decades of its existence. The conclusion was that at the middle of the 18th century, the Greek-Catholic spirituality became more offensive, criticizing important elements of the eastern tradition, giving up some of them, accepting and profoundly changing the others. As the author mentioned, there was a constant strain among the Catholic Romanians, caused by the existence of the new elements of Catholicism and the traditional religious customs²⁹.

The question of the Greek-Catholic identity was also approached from the perspective of the relation between faith and religious rituals. One of the theologians present at the conference pointed out that the connection between rite and faith was a concern for the newly catholicised ever since the first years of the Union with the Church of Rome. In this respect, they had to struggle in two directions: on one side, against the Roman-Catholics, who wanted the newly entered under the patronage of the Holy Seat should be integrated as much as possible in the Latin type ecclesiastical structure and, on the other hand against the Orthodoxes who had constantly accused them of having left their traditional belief (or „the ancestors’ law”). More than that, the Orthodoxes attached the ambiguous theological position of the Uniates, considering that it represented in fact, a third religion (or „law”), neither Catholic nor Byzantine. To face this attack the Greek-Catholic opposed two arguments: first, the Religious Union did not affect the traditional belief in its main ritual aspects and second, the Union with the Church of Rome was only a return to the legal, right situation before the Great Schism. There were these two arguments at the middle of the 18th century around which the whole identity discourse of the Greek-Catholics gathered³⁰.

After the first five decades since the United Church appeared, the Greek-Catholic and Orthodox leaders from Transylvania had already drawn the theological-dogmatic separation line between their churches; this was not true in the case of the believers. As a series of studies demonstrated, during the first century of the Religious Union, the great majority of the Romanians were still lacking a well defined identity spirit.

A study focused on the religious investigation ordered in 1754 by the Vienna Court among the Romanians from Partium emphasized the lack of any dogmatic motivation in the declarations of the people for one of the confessions. The only separation criteria were those of the loyalty to the local bishops and the administrative affiliation to an ecclesiastical jurisdiction. The imperial authorities at their turn, also had different opinions, but it was decided, that in Bihor area the

²⁹ LAURA STANCIU, ‘Între aderare și asumare. Punctele florentine pentru greco-catolicii transilvăneni în secolul al XVIII-lea’ (Between adhering and assuming. Florentine points for the Greek-Catholics from Transylvania in the 18th century), in *AUA*, X/2006, no. 2, 19–35.

³⁰ PAUL BRUSANOWSKI, ‘Biserica Română Unită: păstrarea „legii strămoșești” sau o „a treia lege”? Viziunea ortodocșilor și greco-catolicilor din sec. XVIII’ (The Romanian United Church: preserving the “ancient law” or “a third law”? The view of the Orthodox and Greek-Catholics in the 18th century), in *AUA*, X/2006, no. 2, 59–69.

catholicizing impact should be estimated from the perspective of the individual and conscious spiritual conversion³¹.

The same confusion concerning the motivation of the confessional identity was revealed in the 18th century by the Romanians from Transylvania. A religious investigation started in the same year when the United Church was founded (1699) and by which Romanians were asked to specify their options, showed that the new confession was perceived more through its socio-political aspects rather than the Florentine spirit, or any serious debate. At that time, the generous idea of catholicization as a spiritual return of the Romanians to their Latin origins was not yet outlined in the public perception³².

The weak presence of the identity spirit among the Greek-Catholics was also demonstrated by an analysis on the religious investigation from 1784, initiated by the headquarters of the 1st Romanian border guard regiment, in the southern territories of Transylvania, under its control. The results revealed that the local people didn't make any difference between Union and non-union, from a dogmatic point of view, and their choice had motivations outside the doctrine. Therefore, the crises of the wrong perception of the Religious Union in the public conscience pointed out serious deficiencies concerning the religious education of laic people, whose affiliation to the Greek-Catholic church had very poor theological motivation³³.

As another study demonstrated, until the Greek-Catholic identity discourse became fully consistent and the doctrine was well spread among the people, the enemies of the confessional transfer succeeded to break the balance of the popular support of the Religious Union. Considering the Union as a change of the religious identity or an affiliation to another Church, without any element of ecclesiastical continuity, they defined it as a radical separation from the past, the belief and "the law" of the Romanians³⁴. Such a catastrophic outlook, at a time when the United Church didn't benefit of a solid identity discourse, was easily assimilated, even by those with poor education.

Although the dominating topic under discussion was the identity of the Greek-Catholics during the first five or six decades after the Union, some studies of the third conference attempted to point out some other aspects of the Religious Union. One of the authors discussed the first years of the confessional transfer,

³¹ MIHAI SĂSĂUJAN, 'Criterii ale apartenenței confesionale – unit sau neunit – în comitatul Bihor: 1754–1758' (Criteria for the confessional belonging – united or non-united – in Bihor county: 1754–1758), in *AUA*, X/2006, no. 2, 113–127.

³² REMUS CĂMPEANU, 'Unire religioasă și mental public la începuturile catolicismului românesc din Transilvania' (Religious Union and public spirit at the beginnings of the Romanian Catholicism in Transylvania), in *AUA*, X/2006, no. 2, 93–102.

³³ DANIEL DUMITRAN, 'Uniți și ortodocși la sfârșitul secolului XVIII. Observații despre consecințele toleranței jusefine' (United and Orthodox at the end of the 18th century. Remarks on the consequences of the tolerance promoted by Joseph II), in *AUA*, X/2006, no. 2, 129–142.

³⁴ VIOREL IONIȚĂ, 'Argumentele adversarilor Unirii pe la jumătatea secolului al XVIII-lea' (The arguments of the opponents to the Union at the middle of the 18th century), in *AUA*, X/2006, no. 2, 15–17.

making some specifications about the promoters and opponents of catholicization in the 17th and 18th centuries: the Jesuits, the bishops who signed the act of the Religious Union, cardinal Kollonich, the leaders of the Calvinist Church, the Transylvanian Estates, the Orthodox opponents on both sides of the Carpathians, the apostolic vicar of Mukacevo, Joseph de Camillis, etc³⁵.

Starting from this ample image of attitudes and interests facing the religious strategy of the Vienna Court and the Holy Seat, a historian studied the support of the Calvinist Church from Transylvania for the Romanians, before and after the central policy of catholicization started³⁶.

The traditional issues of the historiography of the Union were also studied and new details and aspects were thus revealed. A research work reviewed the social-political motivations that determined the Romanians, especially the noble and ecclesiastical elite to accept or refuse the religious proposals of the Jesuits³⁷. Finally, other historiographical analyses insisted on the education advantages for the Romanian clergy, resulted from the Religious Union³⁸, as well as on the biography of one of the few Roman Catholic Romanian noble who, at the authorities order acted as a protector of the Religious Union in the first half of the 18th century³⁹.

Though the third conference should have represented the end of the research work, the focus on the confessional identity, to the prejudice of other aspects of the Union, of equal importance (the European perspective of the Romanians' catholicization), determined the "Pro Oriente" Foundation to decide the extension of the project for another meeting. This decision expressed not only the disappointment in reaching the initial objectives, but rather the interest in some unexpected characteristics of the phenomenon, which were spontaneously revealed throughout the conferences.

The post-modern approach of the Religious Union – based on dividing the subject into its minor components and on recomposing a discourse as close as possible to the reality of the time – provided the "Pro Oriente" Foundation enough arguments to extend the project. Consequently, the group met for the fourth time, in May 2007.

³⁵ ERNST CHRISTOPH SUTTNER, (I) 'Überlegungen zu den Tagesordnungspunkten 2, 3 und 4', in *AUA*, X/2006, no. 2, 37–48.

³⁶ SIPOS GÁBOR, 'Relațiile Bisericii Reformate ardelene cu Bisericile românești în prima jumătate a secolului XVIII' (The relations of the Transylvanian Protestant Church with the Romanian Churches in the first half of the 18th century), in *AUA*, X/2006, no. 2, 11–14.

³⁷ ANA DUMITRAN, 'Confesiune și statut nobiliar înainte și după Unirea religioasă a românilor cu Biserica Romei' (Confession and nobility status before and after the Religious Union of the Romanians with the Church of Rome), unpublished lecture, given at the third conference on the Religious Union of the Romanians from Transylvania with Church of Rome, Alba Iulia, June–July of 2005.

³⁸ MARTON JÓZSEF, 'Formația clerului greco-catolic în școlile catolice în secolul al XVIII-lea' (Training of the Greek-Catholic clergy in Catholic schools in the 18th century), in *AUA*, X/2006, no. 2, 143–147.

³⁹ IACOB MĂRZA, 'Petru Dobra: ?–1757, protector al Unirii. Preliminarii' (Petru Dobra: ?–1757, protector of the Union. Preliminaries), in *AUA*, X/2006, no. 2, 103–112.

As previously, the research group changed a little, including a well known specialist in Romanian modern history, Professor Keith Hitchins. The materials of this conference are not available yet, so they will be reviewed on other occasion. Anyway all the studies of the project developed between 2001 – 2007 will be published in a volume dedicated to the Religious Union during its first years of existence. The question is whether this volume will reflect a historical-theological agreement on this issue, between Greek-Catholic and Orthodoxes.

Above all the shortcomings, there are still the unquestionable performances. The project of “Pro Oriente” foundation brought together in partnership research groups which had parallel and seemingly irreconcilable scientific discourses, and these groups had to listen to each others’ opinion with objectivity. The Greek-Catholic and the Orthodoxes had formal historiographical collaborations during the last decade, and some collective volumes have also been published, but the action of the Vienna foundation, with the major contribution of Professor Ernst Cristoph Suttner is the first real, programmatic attempt to guide specialists, regardless of their confession, towards the solutions to remove the barriers that separated them. The step for a real, efficient communication was made and this fact alone is enough to consider the “Pro Oriente” project among the unfortunately very short line of the successful historiographical approaches.