

## CONFESSIONAL INTERFERENCES IN TRANSYLVANIA. AN OVERVIEW OF THE SCIENTIFIC LITERATURE ON THE PHENOMENON OF LITURGICAL INTERCHANGES IN THE 16TH AND 17TH CENTURIES

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### ABSTRACT

*The Transylvanian Orthodox Church seems to have borrowed a lot of non-Orthodox practices from the confessions it lived with during the 16th-17th centuries, influences that can still be identified today. It is enough to think about the specifics of the funeral sermons in Transylvania, which are composed in a special style, including the famous "forgiveness", a style that seems to be borrowed from the Protestant confessions existing in Transylvania. In this context, we propose a research to demonstrate that some local practices of the Orthodox Church have been influenced by liturgical interferences from other Churches, by inventorying and presenting the research directions embraced by renowned researchers in the field, in order to know the historical context in which the long contacts between Romanians and the neighbouring nations took place, the factors that determined them, the exponents of each camp and the periods in which these processes took place. We will group the views of the cited authors into three, according to their ethnic or confessional belonging, and identify the results of these interferences, accepted by most specialists.*

**Keywords:** *Reformed Church; deacon Coresi; Protestant influences; funeral sermon; Romanian book;*

### INTRODUCTION

The particularities of church life in Transylvanian Orthodoxy have always been noticed even by ordinary believers, who have no theological studies on the doctrine or worship of the Orthodox Church. Here, in the intra-Carpathian area, Orthodoxy seems to be "contaminated" with various teachings or practices foreign to the Byzantine tradition, aspects that have acculturated and become an integral part of the church life of the Transylvanian Romanians. The aim of our study is to demonstrate that some local practices of the Orthodox Church have been influenced by non-Orthodox liturgical interferences, with reference to the Transylvanian area. In this regard, we will inventory and introduce the research directions adopted by renowned researchers in the field, to know the historical context in which the long contacts between the Romanians and the neighbouring nations took place, the factors that determined it, the exponents of each group and the periods in which certain stages of influence took place. Knowing and understanding these realities helps us to build a clear picture about the situation of the Romanian Orthodox, related to living conditions (and, implicitly, their vulnerability to certain material benefits that might have made them give up their religious traditions), their ability to be aware of and understand the realities and

teachings of the faith in which they found themselves, but also the degree of obligation – presented by orthodox historians<sup>1</sup> as extremely large – from the politico-religious authorities to embrace the new confession (and, at the same time, the level of reception of reform programs among the people and the implementation of the provisions for Calvinization). Finally, we follow in our research how the liturgical and paraliturgical<sup>2</sup> rites and customs of the Orthodox were influenced by those of the other Churches or local confessions with which the Romanians shared the same area. In the analysis of documentary sources on Transylvania of the 16th-17th centuries, several research directions can be observed. At the present stage of our research, we have observed that there are three views that cover the historical realities, and these are most often influenced by the confessional or ethnic affiliation of the authors concerned with this subject. In what follows, we will present a synthesis of these trends, giving examples for each case, by analysing the literature.

## 1. THE ORTHODOX VIEW

The Orthodox view can be categorised as fundamentalist and not at all open to dialogue with other faiths. Most of the time we are dealing with an exaggerated (self)pity of Transylvanian Romanians. Often, the writings of historians consider that the Orthodox have always been subjected to discriminatory treatment by the followers of other local confessions. These (self)presentations leave the image of a martyred Church, which fought hard not to allow itself to be converted or "influenced" in doctrine by any other confessions that tried to extend its sphere of influence in these territories, and the political factor – always non-Romanian – supported and contributed to these pressures. The Romanian Orthodox are also presented as being extremely conscious of their own creed and faith, deeply rooted in Orthodoxy, fierce fighters against all ideas that are foreign to their faith. At the same time, we can observe that the Orthodox historiography presents the members of the other confessions as having an advantage in terms of legislation, so that most of the punitive laws were aimed only at the Orthodox Romanians<sup>3</sup>. As for the "degree of resistance" to the dangers of the Romanians' change of faith, the Orthodox authors point out that the efforts of the Protestants were unsuccessful, precisely because of the Romanians' indisputable attachment to Orthodoxy. However, recent Romanian Orthodox researchers have been trying to give an objective account of the facts that occurred in the 16th-17th centuries, leaning towards nuances that keep the discourse within natural limits, not going to the extreme of seeing in the Reformation only a persecution of the Romanians and their Church, nor exaggerating its merits. This contemporary view can be classified as objective or balanced<sup>4</sup>.

<sup>1</sup> See Mircea Păcurariu, *Istoria Bisericii Ortodoxe Române*, vol. I-III, Trinitas Publishing House, Iași, 2008; Mircea Păcurariu, *Istoria Bisericii românești din Transilvania, Banat, Crișana și Maramureș până în 1918*, Cluj-Napoca, 1992; Ioan Lupaș, *Istoria bisericească a românilor ardeleni*, introduction, editing, notes and comments by Doru Radosav, Dacia Publishing House, Cluj-Napoca, 1995.

<sup>2</sup> By "paraliturgical" we mean in this article all those rites which, although not organized and included in the official practices of the Church, are closely related to them. For example, funeral, baptismal or wedding customs; agricultural customs, etc.

<sup>3</sup> See Mircea Păcurariu, *Istoria Bisericii românești din Transilvania, Banat, Crișana și Maramureș până în 1918*, Cluj-Napoca, 1992.

<sup>4</sup> See Ana Dumitran, *Religie ortodoxă – religie reformată. Ipostaze ale identității profesionale a românilor din Transilvania în secolele XVI-XVII*, Nereamia Napocae Publishing House - Cristian Matos, Cluj-Napoca, 2004; Dumitru Vanca, *Paradigme liturgice în secolul 17. Ioan Zoba din Vinț și evoluția liturghiei românești*, Reîntregirea Publishing House, Alba Iulia, 2016; Ioan-Aurel Pop, "Națiuni și confesiuni în Principatul Transilvaniei – între acceptare și excludere", in Mihai Spăriosu, Vasile Boari (coord.), *Armonie și conflict intercultural în Banat și Transilvania. Perspective cultural-istorice 1650-1950*, Seria Studii culturale, Institutul

Nicolae Iorga was one of the first historians to deal systematically and scientifically with the religious realities of the Transylvanian Romanians. The study "The History of the Romanian Church and the Religious Life of the Romanians"<sup>5</sup> brings to the reader's attention the activity of the Calvinist superintendents and the measures of the reform program initiated by them. The decisions taken by Pavel Tordásy are significant in terms of the intention to change the Romanian ritual: from the liturgy to keep only what is "by the word of God" and follows "the name, honour and praise of God"; prayers for the dead are abolished<sup>6</sup>. Evidently, Iorga presents the provisions found in the Reformed programs, but without specifying any detail related to their application and the degree of acceptance among the faithful. For this reason, we cannot draw a conclusion regarding Iorga's opinion about the influences suffered by the Orthodox rites, but we must be aware that the author exposes here only the external intention of modifying the ritual. On the other hand, in the work dedicated to Romanian writings – "History of Romanian religious literature up until 1688"<sup>7</sup> – Iorga considers that Calvinist propaganda literature was not as successful as expected, even though most of the early printings bore the Protestant imprint – Catechism "Întrebare creștinească" (=Christian Question), "Molitfelnicul" (=Book of needs), "Tâlcușii Evangheliilor", Coresi's "Cazania" (=Homilies) (1564). Iorga believes that these writings did not receive much notoriety among Orthodox Romanians because they provided for an exaggerated simplification of liturgical practices and a virulent attack on the Orthodox clergy, which was far too obvious. Attempting to justify the pressure to simplify the cult and eliminate the liturgical and paraliturgical customs of the Easterners (while promoting the concepts of the Reformers), the prefaces of these books consider these customs as "superstitions and incantations", "devilish things" of no use to the soul<sup>8</sup>.

Ioan Lupaș is also another historian who systematically dealt with the religious realities of the Transylvanian Romanians – "The Church History of the Transylvanian Romanians"<sup>9</sup>. Lupaș combats the theory that Romanians stubbornly refused to accept some of the ideas professed by the Reformation, including the introduction of vernacular languages. According to the author, the introduction of the Romanian language in the cult was welcomed by many enlightened priests and prelates; for example, the "Catechism" (1544, Sibiu) enjoyed notoriety precisely because it was the first Romanian book, although it admitted only two sacraments; Lupaș, however, emphasizes the fact that the Romanian people did not deviate from religious ceremonies and dogmas of faith<sup>10</sup>. He observes that the initial intention of the Protestant authorities to simplify the ritual of the Orthodox Church and to abandon the cult of the dead (the Synod of 16 October 1569 in Aiud) was gradually abandoned<sup>11</sup>. The reasons proposed by Lupaș for why the reforming provisions did not "catch on" among Orthodox Romanians concern, first, the rules imposed by Orthodox prelates for their shepherds – we recall in this regard Bishop Dosoftei (1622-1628) who tried

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European, 2014, p. 273-284.

<sup>5</sup> Nicolae Iorga, *Istoria Bisericii românești și a vieții religioase a românilor*, edited and prefaced by I. Opreșan, Saeculum I.O. Publishing House, Bucharest, 2016.

<sup>6</sup> Nicolae Iorga, *Istoria Bisericii românești...*, p. 205-210.

<sup>7</sup> Nicolae Iorga, *Istoria literaturii religioase a românilor până la 1688*, Graphic Workshops I. V. Socecu, Bucharest, 1904.

<sup>8</sup> Nicolae Iorga, *Istoria Bisericii românești...*, p. 80.

<sup>9</sup> Ioan Lupaș, *Istoria bisericească a românilor ardeleni*, introduction, editing, notes and comments by Doru Radosav, Dacia Publishing House, Cluj-Napoca, 1995.

<sup>10</sup> Ioan Lupaș, *Istoria bisericească...*, p. 49-52.

<sup>11</sup> Ioan Lupaș, *Istoria bisericească...*, p. 53-54.

to discipline the Orthodox clergy and faithful, by drawing guidelines in the exercise of their faith, as a kind of counter-offensive to the ideas promoted by Protestants<sup>12</sup>. Another reason for the failure of the Reformation among the Orthodox is the hierarchical links between the Romanian Church in Transylvania and the Romanian Church in the principalities, with the clergy of the three Romanian countries having close relations, especially since the priests from Transylvania were ordained at certain times in Wallachia or Moldova.

Another author who deserves our attention is the priest professor Mircea Păcurariu. His work "History of the Romanian Church in Transylvania, Banat, Crișana and Maramureș until 1918"<sup>13</sup> traces all the stages through which Transylvanian Orthodoxy has passed over time, giving us the framework of these confessional interferences. Mircea Păcurariu explicitly points out that the "Calvinist proselytising action" had the same aim as the Catholic one, in other words, the "Hungarianization" of the Orthodox Romanians by attracting them to Calvinism. The reasons why this was not achieved are, in our author's opinion, the following: the anti-Ottoman treaty concluded by Michael the Brave with Prince Sigismund Báthory (20 May 1595) had some favourable stipulations for the Romanian Church in Transylvania – all Romanian priests and monks "to be left in the custom and tradition of old, with their rites, ceremonies and liberties"<sup>14</sup>, the politico-religious authorities thus taking a "step backwards" in supporting the spread of Calvinism. And secondly, the Orthodox bishops, despite the difficult context and the obligations they had towards the Calvinist religious authorities, managed to convene various Synods in which they drew the lines to guide the Orthodox clergy and faithful<sup>15</sup>. Therefore, according to Păcurariu's account, we can conclude that most of the conversion attempts initiated by the Calvinist authorities were counteracted by episcopal provisions that were intended to help discipline the clergy and the faithful, so that the Protestant influences felt in the Orthodox cult or in the customs of the Romanian Orthodox at that time were very few, if not non-existent<sup>16</sup>.

In the study signed by Ioan-Aurel Pop, entitled "Nations and Confessions in the Principality of Transylvania – between acceptance and exclusion"<sup>17</sup>, the author makes a detailed analysis of the system of states and confessions in Transylvania, focusing on the inferior status of the Romanians in the Transylvanian society of the time, and then explains the reasons why the Protestant Reformation did not "succeed" among the Transylvanian

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<sup>12</sup> "The priest who will not keep two days in a week, 24 florins"; "The priest who will not know the psalter, 24 florins"; "The priest who will not have a deacon and will not serve, 24 florins"; "The priest who will not have long clothes up to the ankles, 12 florins"; "The priest who will not sing the liturgy with 7 prescuri, 12 florins, but the man who will not pay the priest, will not serve". . . At the same time, at the end of the "bargains", the bishop makes a list of the most important days of the year, in which he forbids the people to work and obliges the priest to "say the feast". See Ioan Lupaș, *Istoria bisericească...*, p. 65-66.

<sup>13</sup> Mircea Păcurariu, *Istoria Bisericii românești din Transilvania, Banat, Crișana și Maramureș până în 1918*, Cluj-Napoca, 1992.

<sup>14</sup> Mircea Păcurariu, *Istoria Bisericii românești...*, p. 132-133.

<sup>15</sup> We recall here, for example, the synod convened by Metropolitan Sava Brancovici in Alba Iulia in 1675, where the obligations of Orthodox Christians were reiterated: the romanization of the services and their celebration on all Sundays and holidays, as well as on Wednesdays and Fridays, and during fasts on a daily basis; the discipline of priests and stricter control by the protopopes; the removal of superstitions, especially those related to the cult of the dead; the catechizing of the faithful and children by the priest in church; the obligation of the faithful to attend religious services and to receive Holy Communion four times a year. See Mircea Păcurariu, *Istoria Bisericii românești...*, p. 162-163.

<sup>16</sup> Mircea Păcurariu, *Istoria Bisericii românești ...*, p. 128-140.

<sup>17</sup> Ioan-Aurel Pop, "Națiuni și confesiuni în Principatul Transilvaniei – între acceptare și excludere", in Mihai Spărioso, Vasile Boari (coord.), *Armonie și conflict intercultural în Banat și Transilvania. Perspective culturale istorice 1650-1950*, Cultural Studies Series (European Institute, 2014), 273-284.

Romanians. These causes that Ioan-Aurel Pop identifies are important for our topic, as they also provide possible explanations for why – in Aurel Pop's opinion – the Orthodox ritual did not borrow too many foreign elements either.

First, the Reformation was designed for Catholics, so the Romanian Orthodox had no idea about the authority of the Pope, indulgences, exaggerated fasting or celibacy of priests. Then, the exaggerated simplification of the ceremonial meant the breaking of the foundations of the faith (a direct attack to tradition, saints, icons, the cult of the dead or the use of candles). An important role was also played by the "quasi-illiterate" state of the Romanians, for whom theological disputes were almost incomprehensible. Finally, another reason was represented by the calls for resistance coming from outside the Carpathians. However, in this context there was also a positive effect on the Romanians, which was that it hastened the transition to the use of the Romanian language in the Church and stimulated the printing of books of cult<sup>18</sup>.

A work of major importance for our research is Ana Dumitran's "Orthodox Religion – Reformed Religion. Instances of the confessional identity of Romanians from Transylvania in the 16th-17th centuries"<sup>19</sup>, in which the author makes an extensive analysis of the peculiarities of Transylvanian religious life from the 16th and 17th centuries. Ana Dumitran focuses at length on the pro-Calvinistic Synods convened by Superintendent Gheorghe from Sângeorz. The old fundamental principle of the Reformation – the vernacular language – is amplified with the theme of the uselessness of prayers for the dead. Ana Dumitran's conclusion about the implementation of these ideas is more than logical: The impact that someone's death had on the Romanian community, along with several pre-Christian practices associated with this moment, was deeply rooted in the popular consciousness, so Romanians did not feel the need to reform in this regard. Also, the politico-religious authorities did not manage to fully support this approach of the Calvinist superintendents, probably for the same reason of Romanian society's attachment to these practices<sup>20</sup>. At the same time, Ana Dumitran is of the opinion that the changes on the ritual underwent an involution during the 17th century. If the "most complex" of the variants of the program for the attraction to Calvinism, which was imposed on Ilie Iorest in 1640, refers in particular to the way of administering the Mysteries<sup>21</sup>, the reform program of 1669 is summed up in new measures of control over Orthodoxy formulated in four points, which are in fact a repetition of previous requirements: the establishment of schools, the reopening of the printing press, the generalization of the use of the Romanian language in worship and the strict subordination of Romanian ecclesiastical institutions to the Hungarian Church<sup>22</sup>. For this reason, A. Dumitran believes that the only merit of the Calvinist episcopate resumes with the celebration of the Liturgy in Romanian; the use of Romanian translations of the scriptural texts in the service cannot be considered a doctrinal matter, but rather a spiritual revolution.

<sup>18</sup> Ioan-Aurel Pop, "Națiuni și confesiuni...", p. 278.

<sup>19</sup> Ana Dumitran, *Religie ortodoxă – religie reformată. Ipostaze ale identității confesionale a românilor din Transilvania în secolele XVI-XVII*, Nereamia Napocae Publishing House - Cristian Matos, Cluj-Napoca, 2004.

<sup>20</sup> Ana Dumitran, *Religie ortodoxă – religie reformată...*, p. 106-109.

<sup>21</sup> The provisions of the reform program concerned the use of the Romanian language in worship, the introduction of the Calvinist ceremony for baptism, communion, marriage and burial, the granting of divorce according to the canonical prescriptions of the Hungarian Church, the renunciation of the cult of saints, icons and the cross, as well as some superstitions, the discipline of the faithful and the hierarchical organization according to the model of the Hungarian Church.

<sup>22</sup> Ana Dumitran, *Religie ortodoxă – religie reformată...*, p. 146-149.

Finally – perhaps a little too dramatically – A. Dumitran sums up that, without the contribution of the Reformation, none of the 11 Romanian books would have seen the light of print, but it must be specified that the involvement of Calvinism in this process was quite small, compared to the desire of Transylvanian Orthodoxy to renew itself, to reform itself<sup>23</sup>. In this regard, the author concludes that the transposition into Romanian of the Orthodox ritual was specific to the entire Transylvanian area, the coordination of translations and their uniformity being the work of the famous Protopope Ioan Zoba from Vinț, who also consecrated the Transylvanian funeral sermon as an integral part of the burial ceremony of the Transylvanian Romanians. Thus, according to A. Dumitran, this aspect seems to have remained among the few in terms of the influence of Calvinism on the ritual practiced by the Romanian Church<sup>24</sup>. Dumitru Vanca, who, as a theologian, identifies in the sermons of Protopope Ioan Zoba of Vinț homiletic models perpetuated even until the last century in this area<sup>25</sup>. Furthermore, Vanca identifies the origin of the elaborate funeral speech – which came into Romanian use in the second half of the 16th century – most probably in the Protestant neighbourhood and in the Reformed programs. The practice of "forgiveness", still used today, is specific only to the Transylvanian region, and the "Our Father" prayer as the conclusion of liturgical gatherings, introduced by the "Golden Coffin", is practiced only in Transylvania<sup>26</sup>. The research of the two authors in this regard was even materialised in a joint study, "The funeral sermon in the Romanian Orthodox community in Transylvania"<sup>27</sup>, who argues that the practice of elaborate funeral speech (unknown in Transylvania until the mid-16th century) was undoubtedly borrowed by the Romanian Church, probably because of attempts to draw the Orthodox Church in Transylvania into the Protestant Reformation<sup>28</sup>.

The work signed by Dumitru Vanca, "Liturgical Paradigms in the 17th century. Ioan Zoba of Vinț and the evolution of Romanian liturgy"<sup>29</sup>, is also useful for elucidating other confessional interferences in Transylvania. After an introduction in which the well-known justifications and pressures of the Reformation are rehearsed, Vanca categorically underlines the role of the Reformation in speeding up the process of translating books of cult: "we must admit that, without the pressure of the Reformation on the Transylvanian Romanians, the translation of the books of cult into Romanian would have been delayed by at least a century, and if among the elites of Transylvania in the 17th century we can count some Romanians, this is due, in good measure, to the Calvinist cultural policy favourable to the Romanians, led by some reformed principles"<sup>30</sup>. At the same time, the author considers that, if the Reformation did not achieve its objectives, it helped the Orthodox Church to become "renewed, modern, Romanian and national at the same time", without the liturgical practice and Orthodox doctrine being contaminated by the Reformation. Thus, the pressure of the Reformation was fructified by the Romanians in an internal liturgical and administrative reform<sup>31</sup>.

<sup>23</sup> Ana Dumitran, *Religie ortodoxă – religie reformată...*, p. 120-121.

<sup>24</sup> Ana Dumitran, *Religie ortodoxă – religie reformată...*, p. 178.

<sup>25</sup> Dumitru Vanca, *Paradigme liturgice în secolul 17...*, p. 286.

<sup>26</sup> Dumitru Vanca, *Paradigme liturgice în secolul 17...*, p. 286.

<sup>27</sup> Dumitru Vanca, Ana Dumitran, "Predica funebră în mediul ortodox din Transilvania (mijlocul secolului XVI – sfârșitul secolului XVII)", in *Apulum: Series Historia & Patrimonium (Alba Iulia)*, 47 (2010), p. 139-157.

<sup>28</sup> Dumitru Vanca, Ana Dumitran, "Predica funebră în mediul ortodox din Transilvania...", p. 156.

<sup>29</sup> Dumitru Vanca, *Paradigme liturgice în secolul 17. Ioan Zoba din Vinț și evoluția liturghiei românești*, Reîntregirea Publishing House, Alba Iulia, 2016.

<sup>30</sup> Dumitru Vanca, *Paradigme liturgice în secolul 17...*, p. 35.

<sup>31</sup> Dumitru Vanca, *Paradigme liturgice în secolul 17...*, p. 36.

Therefore, inventorying the foreign influences in the Orthodox ritual, Dumitru Vanca finds that the list is rather short; it is about the acceleration of the process of introducing the Romanian language in the ritual and the lachrymose and rhetorical homiletic style in the first person (the priest speaks in the place of the dead). It is possible that the custom of saying the prayer "Our Father" after all the services was also introduced by Protopope Ioan Zoba, but this practice cannot necessarily be considered of Protestant influence.

So, as far as the Romanian Orthodox view is concerned, we can make a few remarks. Most researchers are of the opinion that the only influence suffered by the Romanian Church in Transylvania because of contact with the Protestant Reformation is the acceleration of the introduction of the Romanian language in the cult and, possibly, the homiletic funeral style. All the other points set out in the reform programs seem to have been lost over time, so none bore fruit in the long term. Thus, the cited researchers claim that Transylvanian Orthodoxy undoubtedly remained intact, untouched by Reformed teachings or practices.

## 2. THE GREEK-CATHOLIC VIEW

On the opposite pole, one might say, is the Greek Catholic view. Although historians of the Uniates Church present the situation of the Romanian Orthodox in the same way – a martyred Church, their conclusion about the impact of the Reformation on the Romanian Church is different. In contradiction to Orthodox historiography, the uniates authors consider that the impact of Protestant proselytism on the Orthodox Church in Transylvania was immense, so that all aspects of church life were "contaminated" by foreign teachings, from dogmatic and institutional to ritual and behavioural. Greek Catholic authors argue that the Orthodox faith was influenced in all its aspects by Protestant interference, so that at the end of the 17th century the face of Transylvanian Orthodoxy was completely changed or even transformed. Of course, this approach is intended to highlight the saving role of the union between the Orthodox Church in Transylvania and the Church of Rome, an event that seems to have put Orthodoxy back on course<sup>32</sup>.

As far as this vision is concerned, we will first consider a publication by Alesandru Grama, edited in Blaj in the last years of the 19th century, which deals with the history of the Calvinist Church in Transylvania and the reform programs initiated in the Romanian Church. From this exposition, our attention is drawn to a chapter entitled "Calvinization of the Holy Mysteries", where the author presents, in turn, the Reformers' provisions concerning the transformation of each mystery<sup>33</sup>. We are dealing with an interesting perspective; Alesandru Grama bases many of his theories only on his own suppositions, without providing any indisputable historical evidence to support his ideas.

Thus, Grama is of the opinion that the Calvinites tried to change, at first, the number of Sacraments, and then to modify the meaning and the way of administration of each of the sacraments; this approach was initiated by the printing of the Catechism of 1643 – about which G. Șincai says is "the most venomous and poisonous" book<sup>34</sup>. If Baptism was

<sup>32</sup> See Alesandru Grama, *Instituțiunile calvinesci în biserica românească din Ardelu, fazele lor în trecutu și valoarea în prezente*, Archdiocesan Seminary Typography, Blaj, 1895; Zenovie Pâclișanu, "Câteva date despre preoții româno-calvini", in *Cultura creștină*, 2 (1911), p. 44-49; Zenovie Pâclișanu, "Legăturile românilor ardeleni cu Reformațiunea în veacul al XVI-lea și al XVII-lea", in *Cultura creștină*, 17 (1911), p. 550-557.

<sup>33</sup> Alesandru Grama, *Instituțiunile calvinesci...*, p. 407.

<sup>34</sup> G. Șincai, *Cronica românilor, apud Alesandru Grama, Instituțiunile calvinesci...*, p. 408.

to be performed without holy water and without any symbolic action or prayers absent from Holy Scripture, the Eucharist adopted the name "Lord's Supper", according to canon 2 of the Synod held in 1675, and it was forbidden to administer it to children - according to canon 63 of the program signed by Geleji Katona. A consequence of this is, in Grama's opinion, that the practice of infant Communion in Transylvania remained rather poorly represented<sup>35</sup>. Regarding the Holy Myron, Confession, Unction of the sick, or even the Holy Liturgy, the author finds an interesting explanation, but not very well argued: ignoring these services and not issuing any reforming provision concerning them would lead, in time, to their elimination. In supporting this theory, Grama brings the "custom" of some priests to give communion to the dying without any confession. On the other hand, the funeral was intended to be simplified by renouncing candles, frankincense, dispensations or other superstitions and ingrained traditions (usually "unorthodox") traditions, the service being reduced to a few hymns and sermons<sup>36</sup>. The Calvinist influence on Marriage can be seen in the introduction of the vows between the bride and groom as part of the ceremony (see Coresi's Molitevnic), a custom unknown in the Eastern Church. At the same time, the "institution of the announcements" in the Transylvanian Church is also imposed by the Calvinists. According to Grama, this custom remained among the Calvinists in the Roman Catholic Church, and the Calvinist princess imposed it on the Romanian metropolitans, a custom that became widespread in the Romanian Church in Transylvania and has been perpetuated to this day. Under the same Calvinist influence, Grama also puts the calculation of kinship lines in the way known today, and the grounds for divorce would have been limited to two: adultery and leaving the home<sup>37</sup>.

Concerned about other liturgical traditions endangered by Calvinist pressure, Grama believes that if they really wanted to eliminate the honouring of saints from the Orthodox cult, they would have to destroy all the service books, since the Orthodox mention the saints in every religious service, but such a radical measure would have scandalised the Romanian population. This is why the author believes that even in the case of the honouring of saints, the reformers appealed to ignorance so that "time would solve everything" in the sense of eliminating the cult of saints. Fortunately, the author's conclusion is that in this case we are not dealing with any significant influence. The same strong resistance was encountered by the Calvinist reformers regarding the cult of icons, but in this case the author considers himself "justified" in believing that it was some priests who removed icons from the churches<sup>38</sup>.

Therefore, throughout the work one can see the author's intention to give exaggerated merits to the union of the Romanians with the Church of Rome – which would have "straightened out" all the influences imposed on the Romanians by the Calvinists and would have brought the order back to its original form. However, although the author makes some "arguments" in support of his theories, we are entitled to regard these as mere suppositions, which he puts down to provisions of the "union acceptance" synod of 1700. So, if that Synod had established in its canons some orthodox practices, Grama considered that those teachings or rites had previously been violated<sup>39</sup>. We must recognise that the

<sup>35</sup> Alesandru Grama, *Instituțiunile calvinesci...*, p. 412-415.

<sup>36</sup> Alesandru Grama, *Instituțiunile calvinesci...*, p. 417-418.

<sup>37</sup> Alesandru Grama, *Instituțiunile calvinesci...*, p. 410-424.

<sup>38</sup> Alesandru Grama, *Instituțiunile calvinesci...*, p. 430-431.

<sup>39</sup> For example, canon 24 of the 1700 synod obliged priests, under penalty of a fine, to ensure the presence in churches of icons of the Saviour Christ, the Virgin Mary and Saint Nicholas. From this canon, Grama



establishment of a practice by an official provision does not necessarily mean a prior violation of it (although we cannot categorically exclude this possibility either), especially in the context of the union of Romanians with the Church of Rome. These provisions could simply be repetitions of Orthodox doctrine, demonstrating to the clergy and faithful of Transylvania that the union does not represent a renunciation of Orthodox doctrine.

The studies<sup>40</sup> signed by Zenovie Pâclișanu are also part of the Greek-Catholic vision, although he represents the balanced voice, so to speak, among the united historians. Thus, in an exaggerated way, Zenovie Pâclișanu sustains that the Transylvanian princess used "the most violent and inhuman means" to preach Calvinism among the Orthodox population. Among the consequences of these actions was, according to the author, the appearance of many Romanian books "full of heretical teachings". In this way, the author's conclusion is that, even though the Romanian people hold on to their customs and traditions, these attempts could not remain ineffective<sup>41</sup>, without supporting his theory with any solid argument. Pâclișanu relies rather on his own logic: however attached the Romanians were to their faith, the multitude of reforming provisions must have influenced them in some way.

So Greek-Catholic historians claim, as we have seen, that the Orthodox ritual was influenced, at least at the time, by some printed liturgical books and by the provisions of the Reformed programs, so that many priests deviated from the practice of the Eastern Church. They rely on some suppositions or logical syllogisms, without providing undeniable historical arguments to support their theories. We can, however, observe that they insist on "finding" Calvinist influences in Orthodox rituals to underline that, in fact, the union with the Church of Rome brought back Orthodox practice in Romanian communities. Yet, in the absence of historically substantiated facts, we are entitled to regard these theories as simple assumptions.

### 3. THE HUNGARIAN VIEW

The third view we noticed is the Hungarian one, although in studying it we were limited by the language barrier, so we could only consult studies translated or published in Romanian<sup>42</sup>. Nevertheless, I could observe a slightly biased presentation, like the Orthodox one – but directed to emphasize the merits of the Protestant Reformation in Transylvania, which sees in the actions of the Hungarians a disinterested missionary, eager to help the Romanian population, left behind because of poverty and low level of culture. It is clear that the Hungarians did not want to Hungarianize the Romanians, nor the Calvinization of the Romanian Church, any collaboration between the two confessions being incompatible. Once again, recent research seems to balance the scales in terms of the merits and criticisms of the

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concluded that before 1700 (i.e., after the implementation of the reform programs in Transylvania), some priests removed icons from churches. Also, if another canon of the same synod, this time canon 17, provided for the punishment of catechesis for the priest who would not administer the Anointing of the newly baptized, the author considered that some priests certainly renounced the sacrament of the Anointing.

<sup>40</sup> Zenovie Pâclișanu, "Câteva date despre preoții...", p. 44-49; Zenovie Pâclișanu, "Legăturile românilor ardeleni", p. 550-557.

<sup>41</sup> Zenovie Pâclișanu, "Câteva date despre preoții...", p. 44-49.

<sup>42</sup> Some of the accessible and useful studies are: Levente Nagy, *Reforma la români. Un fenomen de transfer cultural în secolele XVI-XVII*, Editura Ratio et Revelatio, Oradea, 2021; Péter Bod, *Brevis Valachorum Transylvaniam incolentium Histoiria*, 1764, editată în *addenda* lucrării semnate de Ana Dumitran, Botond Gúdor și Nicolae Dănilă, *Relații interconfesionale româno-maghiare în Transilvania (mijlocul secolului XVI – primele decenii ale secolului XVIII)*, Alba Iulia, 2000; István Juhász, *A reformáció az erdélyi románok között*, Kolozsvár, 1940.

Reformation, so that the discourse seems to be much closer to that of contemporary Orthodox researchers.

Of major importance for our study is the work of Levente Nagy, "The Reformation in Romania. A Phenomenon of Cultural Transfer in the 16th-17th Centuries"<sup>43</sup>. Here, the author presents the causes behind the failure of the Reformation among Romanians. First, the fact that the union of the Romanians with the Reformed Church meant only the acceptance of an administrative jurisdiction. Many questions remained regarding the fulfilment of the conditions connected with religious and liturgical life. Another reason for the failure of the Reformation is also linked to the fact that the change to Calvinism did not bring any advantage to the Romanians, as would happen in the case of union with the Church of Rome. The author also states that tithing was a condition of the believers of accepted religions, so that the Romanians were not at all motivated to enter "legality", and another cause of failure of the Reformation is also the takeover of the printing business by the Catholics. However, Nagy believes that the merit of the Protestant Reformation on the Romanian thought in Transylvania is to have played a catalytic role in its modernisation and westernisation. In addition, the development of the Romanian language and literature, as well as the introduction of the Romanian language in the cult, are products supported by the Reformation<sup>44</sup>.

Another piece of work that provides information about the "meeting" of confessions in Transylvania is Botond Gúdor's "Transylvanian Orthodoxy between Tradition and Enlightenment in the Image of the Reformed Notary General (Episcopal Vicar) reformed Péter Bod (1712-1769) of Ighiu"<sup>45</sup>. The author explains how Bod analysed the diversity of Romanian church services, focusing on the relationship between the believer and the celebration; in this context, Péter Bod details the ways in which Romanians experienced their cult – through fasting, mourning, Marriage or Baptism, also reaching the external aspects of the manifestation of the cult – semantron and bells. He also presented some of the Romanian burial customs to support the idea of superstitions. Next, Bod addresses the idea of celebration, emphasizing that fasting and celebration are essential elements of religiosity in Romanian life, even representing sacred duties. The fact that the Romanian customs seemed to him as primitive, ancestral, and linked to superstition, is attributed by Gúdor to the bitter taste left by the failure of the Reformation to change popular customs<sup>46</sup>. Thus, the details related to the religious life of the Romanians in the first half of the 18th century lead us to believe that the customs of the Romanians seem not to have been influenced by the Protestant Reformation, so that the Orthodox Church preserved its confessional identity despite the vicissitudes of the time.

The work by Ana Dumitran, Botond Gúdor, Nicolae Dănilă<sup>47</sup> brings some further clarifications about the spread of the Reformation among Romanians. The chapter "Popular religion under the impact of the Reformation" draws attention to the fact that the Reformation – borne of a sincere and deep faith – tried to eliminate all religious manifestations under the sign of folklore or magic. According to the authors, it is important

<sup>43</sup> Levente Nagy, *Reforma la români. Un fenomen de transfer cultural în secolele XVI-XVII*, Editura Ratio et Revelatio, Oradea, 2021.

<sup>44</sup> Levente Nagy, *Reforma la români...*, p. 210.

<sup>45</sup> Botond Gúdor, "Ortodoxia transilvăneană între tradiție și iluminism în imaginea notarului general (vicar episcopal) reformat Péter Bod (1712-1769) din Ighiu", in Avram Cristea, Jan Nicolae, *Credința și credințele românilor*, Reîntregirea Publishing House, Alba Iulia, 2011, p. 110-123.

<sup>46</sup> Botond Gúdor, "Ortodoxia transilvăneană...", p. 114-115.

<sup>47</sup> Ana Dumitran, Botond Gúdor, Nicolae Dănilă, *Relații interconfesionale româno-maghiare....*

to mention the rather weak attachment of the Romanians to the church, with very low participation in religious services. Neither was participation in the Eucharist common among Romanians, as it was usually reserved for the dying<sup>48</sup>. The lack of involvement in religious life and the lack of practicing believers is, according to the authors, the reason why Sava Brancovici urges priests to teach the faithful the "Our Father", the "Creed" and the "Decalogue".

In this sense, the authors consider that the Reformation acquires a sense of apostolate, of mission; the essential prayers of Orthodox cult were taught to the Romanians for the first time from Calvinist books. Hungarian historiography thus considers that the merits of the Reformation are embodied in the translation of Scripture, the structuring of the sermon, the generalisation of the sermon in Orthodox cult in Transylvania, and the introduction of the Romanian language in the cult<sup>49</sup>, elements that could hardly be countered. The work therefore explains the important role of the Protestant Reformation in the Romanians' "religious emancipation" initiative, highlighting the victory of Orthodoxy with the weapons of the Reformation.

Therefore, we observe that the studies of the Hungarian authors emphasize the merits of the Protestant Reformation in the emancipation of the Romanians, attached to a much too primitive faith, loaded with a lot of superstitions and non-Christian customs. In their view, the Romanians' contacts with the Reformation, even if they did not imprint Protestant teachings on the Orthodox faith, succeeded in influencing Orthodox thinking, westernising it<sup>50</sup>. As for the influences suffered by the Orthodox ritual, they are limited solely to the introduction of the Romanian language in the cult.

## CONCLUSIONS

An analysis of the literature dealing with the confessional situation of Transylvania in the 16th-17th centuries brings forward some findings. We observe in the cited authors several tendencies to position themselves towards the phenomenon of the Protestant Reformation, some of them quite "extreme", if we can call them so.

For example, the priest professor Mircea Păcurariu betrays an exaggeratedly compassionate attitude towards the Romanians subjected to Calvinist proselytism, the actions of the reformers being catalogued as oppressive towards the Orthodox, pursuing in fact, the "Hungarianization" of the Romanians. A. Grama takes a different position, according to whom all Orthodox practices were "contaminated" by the Protestant spirit. Even where he has no arguments or historical evidence for some rites, Grama concludes that they "were to be transformed over time" unconsciously into Calvinist rites. Of course, this positioning is intended to highlight the merit of the religious union of Transylvanian Romanians with the Church of Rome. According to the author, it was this union under Metropolitan Athanasius Anghel that cancelled or annihilated the long-lasting consequences of Calvinist proselytism, bringing back the "Orthodox spirit" among the Romanians.

Even more differently, Levente Nagy argues that the Transylvanian Orthodox were not at all discriminated against by the political authorities of the state, as the rules applied to the clergy were the same – regardless of confession. The author dismantles many of the theories previously stated by various researchers and points out the merit of the Protestant

<sup>48</sup> Ana Dumitran, Botond Gúdor, Nicolae Dănilă, *Relații interconfesionale româno-maghiare...*, p. 107.

<sup>49</sup> Ana Dumitran, Botond Gúdor, Nicolae Dănilă, *Relații interconfesionale româno-maghiare...*, p. 110.

<sup>50</sup> Levente Nagy, *Reforma la români...*, p. 192.

Reformation, which was to modernise and "westernise" Romanian thought in Transylvania and, equally, to boost the development of the Romanian language and literature, and the introduction of the Romanian language in the cult.

On the other hand, we find the attitudes of the other authors cited to be balanced. They each underline the benefits that the Romanians shared following contact and living with the Protestant reformers; we can summarise this merit to the revolutionary success of introducing the Romanian language into the religious service, an endeavour in which the Transylvanians were at the forefront. In the absence of the impulse coming from the Protestant world, this step towards modernity would have been delayed by at least a century. The Reformation also deserves credit for the organisation and structuring of religious discourse in Transylvania (especially funerary discourse), by the work of the Protopope Ioan Zoba of Vinț.

From all the analysed data, we consider that, as far as the Protestant impact on the Transylvanian Orthodox Church ritual is concerned, its successes are quite limited. Although the reform programs provided for a fundamental change in the Romanians' religion, the context and the situation of the Romanians did not favour the assimilation of religious practices. However, it seems important to us to point out a success of the Reformation on the cult of the Transylvanian Romanians, although this cannot be catalogued as a Protestant influence on the ritual, but rather as a consequence of the Protestant neighbourhood. It is about a certain "purification" of the religious cult from the multitude of superstitions that reigned in the Romanians' consciousness, especially those related to death. Even now, the villages of Transylvania abound in funeral traditions and customs, "impossible" to omit from religious services, but, compared to the Orthodox in other areas, we see that Transylvania is balanced in this respect. According to all the provisions of the reform programs encountered in the literature reviewed, this was a main goal of the Protestants, and credit is due to them.

Consequently, after analysing the literature, we can clearly observe that the liturgical influences suffered by the Romanian Church in Transylvania because of the Protestant neighbourhood seem to be very few, although initially we are tempted to believe that they abound. Probably some non-orthodox customs were borrowed only in the religious behaviour of the Romanians, but this aspect remains an open topic for future research.

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