

10-2003

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Recommended Citation

Romocea, Cristian G. (2003) "A Strategy for Social Reconciliation in the Ethnic Conflict in Transylvania," *Occasional Papers on Religion in Eastern Europe*: Vol. 23: Iss. 5, Article 1.

Available at: <http://digitalcommons.georgefox.edu/ree/vol23/iss5/1>

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A STRATEGY FOR SOCIAL RECONCILIATION IN THE ETHNIC CONFLICT IN TRANSYLVANIA

By Cristian G. Romocea

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Introduction

In March 1990, a violent street confrontation between the Romanian population and the Hungarian ethnic minority in the town of Târgu Mureş became a clear sign that the situation of the ethnic minorities in post-Ceausescu's Romania had to be asserted without delay. Located in the heart of Transylvania, a geographical territory which has been co-inhabited by various ethnic groups for many centuries, the town of Târgu Mureş consists of a large Hungarian community. This violent clash, occurring just over three months after the collapse of the totalitarian regime in Romania, was a first warning sign indicating the social instability which the previous regime managed to create. As Romania was preparing to embark on its long journey towards democracy, the ethnic minorities' problem posed one of the greatest dangers to social and political stability. Although the outcomes of this explosion of interethnic hate were eventually minor, due mainly to the significant work carried out by members and groups of the Romanian civil society and the moderate responses of the political representatives of the Hungarian and Romanian governments, it highlighted how

quickly such unresolved tensions inherited from the past could intensify and lead to serious interethnic and international conflicts in Eastern Europe.

Over the past two hundred years the Romanian and Hungarian ethnic communities in Transylvania have experienced oscillating degrees of tension which have escalated during communism with the intensification of radical nationalism, foreigners' phobia and crass violation of human rights. This hostility which has built up especially within the largest ethnic minority in Romania emerged with the change in the political milieu in Romania and was threatening the precarious social and political stability of the post-communist society. The task of reconstructing a democratic Romanian society required, and continues to do so, the affirmation of a political strategy or ethic in which significant action needed to be taken toward the alleviation of the interethnic conflict. In this article, the concern of the author is with proposing a strategy for understanding the theological, political, and social factors involved in dealing with ethnic conflict. Such a strategy will entail analyzing the nature of conflict and possibilities for resolution with reference to the concept of social reconciliation. Along this proposal, the ethnic conflict in Transylvania will serve as a case-study which will allow assessing the relevance of this strategy to a concrete social and political context.

Social Reconciliation and its Theological Meaning

In the ministry of reconciliation a distinction is being made between individual and social reconciliation. The prominent Catholic theologian Robert Schreier describes best the distinction between individual reconciliation, which refers to a victim's damaged humanity restored by God and by a supportive community offering safety, accompaniment and hospitality, and social reconciliation, defined as the process of reconstructing the moral order

of a society.¹ The transition between these two types of reconciliation is inherent in God's work of restoration in the hearts of the victims of ethnic conflict. This restoration should be continued by these reconciled individuals who could be in a better position to bring about social reconciliation. There are, however, three difficulties that can arise when discussing a strategy for social reconciliation. One comes from the fact that there is still a lot to be learned about reconciliation. Another problem is that even where a formal process of social reconciliation has been completed, it usually takes years to judge the effectiveness of the strategy used. A third impediment is that no two social or political situations are alike. In crafting a strategy for social reconciliation reference has to be made to concrete situations where ethnic conflict persists.

Social reconciliation should neither be regarded as an abstract mode of viewing and addressing ethnic conflict in a society, nor as another form of public apologizing. Schreiter is again illuminating when he warns that social reconciliation "...is not only a matter of healing memories and receiving forgiveness, it is also about changing the structures in society that provoked, promoted and sustained violence."² Whereas political forgiveness is one person, group, or nation's moral response to another's injustice, reconciliation includes at least two parties coming together in mutual respect. One may forgive and yet not reconcile. This idea is best articulated in Miroslav Volf's "theology of embrace," where he differentiates between the "will to embrace" and the "embrace itself."³ Whereas the former is not dependent on the other party, the latter involves two parties in agreement. We can easily apply this illustration

¹ Robert J. Schreiter, *Reconciliation: Mission and Ministry in a Changing Social Order* (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 1997), 111-2.

² *Ibid.*, 1.

³ A brief summarization of the theology developed in his book "Exclusion and Embrace" can be found in the article "The Clumsy Embrace." Miroslav Volf, "The Clumsy Embrace," in *Christianity Today*, Vol. 42. No. 12 (Oct, 1998), 66.

to the relationship between political forgiveness and social reconciliation and conclude that social reconciliation in an ethnic conflict should be perceived as a process which involves both parties that are locked into conflict working towards resolution.

Furthermore, there is a risk in discussing about concrete strategies for social reconciliation without making direct reference to the theological underpinnings of this concept. The ministry of reconciliation represents most of all a call to come under the cross of the Crucified. At the heart of the Christian message, reconciliation speaks about the changed relations between God and humanity as the result of the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. According to 2 Corinthians 5:19, reconciliation is the fundamental purpose of the Christ-event. Dr. Peter Kuzmic has been among the strong voices reminding Christians that they cannot speak about reconciliation without speaking of the cross.⁴ From the experience of the recent conflicts in the former Yugoslavia people have learned that: “Reconciliation is not brought about simply by a technical problem-solving mentality. It is a response to God’s reconciling initiative in Christ.”⁵

Another notable scholar who has contributed in recent years to the theological dialogue around the reconciling significance of the cross of Jesus Christ is Jürgen Moltmann.⁶ In *The Crucified God*, Moltmann stresses that the only way we can consider the consequences of the theology of the cross for the economic, social and political sphere is through a “political hermeneutics of liberation.”⁷ In this political hermeneutics of liberation, the

4 Peter Kuzmic, “Reconciliation in Eastern Europe,” in *Reconciliation in Difficult Places: Dealing With Our Deepest Differences* (Washington: World Vision, 1994), 53.

5 Peter Kuzmic, “Former Yugoslavia: A Journey toward Reconciliation,” in *Mountain Movers* (Feb, 1997), 5.

6 Moltmann’s view on the implications of the cross for life in the world is developed in many of his published works (*The Crucified God*, *The Trinity and the Kingdom*, *The Way of Jesus Christ* and *The Spirit of Life*.)

7 “Political hermeneutics of liberation reflects the new situation of God in the inhuman situations of men, in order to break down the hierarchical relationships which deprive them of self-determination,

crucified Christ realizes “solidarity” with every social form of struggle against inhumanity.⁸ For Moltmann, the reconciliation that Christ’s crucifixion brings into society is linked to the theme of atonement.⁹ Not only is Christ capable of suffering, identifying Himself with the victims of the world and with the guilt of the perpetrators through the cross (Christ our Brother), but Christ also atones for the victims, for the perpetrators and for the community in which both victims and perpetrators live together (Christ the Savior).¹⁰ This divine atonement for sin, for injustice and violence on earth, surpasses the mere solidarity of Christ with the victims by illustrating God’s sacrificial passion and love for humanity. In this way, He becomes “the God of the godless.”¹¹ Therefore, true social reconciliation can only be achieved under the cross of Christ: “Here [under the cross], rather, is where the godless are justified, enemies are reconciled, prisoners are set free, the poor are enriched, and the sad are filled with hope.”¹²

The legitimate question which arises from such a perspective on the role of the cross in the ministry of reconciliation concerns the role of the Church, as the community of the crucified Christ, to the conveying of this ministry in conflict-ridden societies. According to the Pauline message in 2 Corinthians 5:17-19, the Church understands herself to be delegated

and to help to develop their humanity.” Jürgen Moltmann, *The Crucified God: The Cross of Christ as the Foundation and Criticism of Christian Theology* (New York: Harper & Row, Publ., 1974), 318.

⁸ Ibid., 318-9. It is essential to note that the theme of solidarity sums up most of Moltmann’s thinking about the cross.

⁹ Jürgen Moltmann, “The Passion of Christ and the Suffering of God” in *The Asbury Theological Journal*, 48, no. 1 (Spring, 1993), 24.

¹⁰ Consequently, Christ’s death on the cross is atonement because Christ’s suffering is God’s suffering and because His death is the death which God experienced for all sinners and victims. As Moltmann cautions, Christ did not die crucified because God sadistically crucified His Son through a criminal court decision. The very love of God, which had been wounded by human injustice and violence, became the love of the God that endured pain. In this way, God’s anger became His compassion. Jürgen Moltmann, *The Spirit of Life: A Universal Affirmation* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1992), 133-5.

¹¹ Ibid., 137.

¹² Jürgen Moltmann, “The Ecumenical Church under the Cross”, in *Theology Digest* 24, No. 4 (Winter, 1971), 382.

with the ministry of reconciliation. Thus, it is because of its moral place in the society that the Church should aid the creation of communities of reconciliation particularly in situations of ethnic conflict. Karl Barth's suggestions are enlightening as to how Church and politics should function alongside each other: "The Church acknowledges and promotes the state insofar as service of the neighbor, which is the purpose of the state, is necessarily included in its own message of reconciliation and is thus its own concern."¹³ Having arrived to such an understanding of social reconciliation, the Romanian Church could become a more significant influence to the conflict resolution in Transylvania by helping the Romanian state fulfill its own purpose particularly in relation to the victimized groups that struggle under its jurisdiction.

Renarration of the Past of Enmity

Social reconciliation cannot be limited to the role of the Church to the alleviation of the ethnic conflict. As mentioned in the introduction of this article, our concern is with the formulation of a strategy for reconciliation that is aware of the theological, political and social factors involved in dealing with conflict resolution. In the following pages the focus will be on the role that the political leadership of a country can play in the reconciliation process.

In situations of ethnic conflict nationalism often plays a critical role to the fostering of hate between the groups, mostly because of its reliance on the interpretation of historical accounts. The renowned expert in International Relations, Professor Fred Halliday pointed out that retelling history is central to nationalism: "History, and legal claims, are there to be

¹³ Karl Barth, *Ethics*, edited by Dietrich Braun, trans. by Geoffrey Bromiley (New York: Seabury, 1981), 521.

defined by the goals of the community. Selection, distortion, manipulation, plain fabrication are an intrinsic part of the operation.”¹⁴ Thus, in its relationship to nationalism, history is important for presenting the origins of cultures and moral communities. The “fallacy of autogenetic cultures”, as Halliday coins the historical assumption that there is such a thing as a given, or timeless origin of a national community, can divert people from realizing that nationalism is a product of the social practice of definition, of instruction, of writing, and of enforcement.¹⁵

Social reconciliation cannot take place without exploring what past wrongs have been inflicted upon the perpetrated ethnic group. Absent the willingness of the antagonistic groups involved in conflict to *renarrate* history from the perspective of those who were its agents and its sufferers, there will be little opportunity for bringing social reconciliation and restoration of a moral society. In his book on forgiveness in politics, the theologian Donald Shriver stressed that only remembering history morally would protect the future against the repetition of the human atrocities of the past.¹⁶ How would such a memory of the past of enmity have to be addressed, in order to bring reconciliation? Shriver identifies such a remembering to be closely linked with a moral judgment of wrong, injustice and injury.¹⁷ Without an agreement between both parties that there is something to reconcile, the entire reconciliation process will most probably be halted.

Most ethnic conflicts draw their strength from moral judgments of irreversible events that have taken place in the past. However, in societies scarred by such political conflicts,

14 Fred Halliday, “The Perils of Community: Reason and Unreason in Nationalist Ideology,” in *Nations and Nationalism* Vol. 6 (February, 2000), 155.

15 Ibid.

16 Donald W. Shriver, Jr., *An Ethic for Enemies: Forgiveness in Politics* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995), 70.

17 Ibid., 7-9.

antagonistic groups of people tend to have difficulties agreeing on the moral significance of their actions. This phenomenon, which Volf describes as “the predicament of partiality,” leads to situations of conflict where each one of the hostile groups or communities sees itself as a victim.¹⁸ In such circumstances, thus, an important element for the process of reconciliation is the retelling, the renarration of the history of enmity which will allow the victims to gain a new memory of the past.

However, the danger with the renarration of history is that it may generate other tales of historical glory and plausible explanations of past failures, so that the hope for reconciliation is lost. The way out of this predicament is to focus the historical investigation on the real interests and power bases of conflicting groups who have manufactured those accounts for political benefits. For example, nationalism has led to a whole industry of historical claims, much of it fabricated, for definite goals such as achieving, or in other cases securing, certain territorial claims. Halliday writes: “The challenge to history, and tradition, assumes practical relevance in regard to what is one of the most contested areas of nationalist conflict, territory. Nationalism, by deriving legitimacy from the past, entails an ethic of territorial claims according to which *primacy of claims results from priority of occupation*. The first ones there have the best claims.”¹⁹

With its territorial claims, nationalism is at the heart of most repressive versions of history, and the account of Transylvania is no exception. That is how retelling of the past of a nation often becomes a hunt for territories because at the heart of this longing lies a desire for political power. As the Romanian philosopher Emil Cioran emphasized in his characteristically pessimistic note: “The myths of a nation are its vital truths. They might not

¹⁸ Miroslav Volf, *Exclusion and Embrace: A Theological Exploration of Identity, Otherness and Reconciliation* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1996), 123.

¹⁹ Halliday, op.cit..

coincide with the truth; this is of no importance. The supreme sincerity of a nation towards itself is manifested in the rejection of self-criticism, in vitalization through its own illusions. And, does a nation seek the truth? A nation seeks power.”²⁰

The history of Transylvania is notorious for two contradictory historical accounts narrated by Romanian and Hungarian historiography. In her work on Transylvania, the respected political psychologist Alina Mungiu-Pippidi indicates that the most unusual thing about the Romanian and Hungarian versions of the history of Transylvania lies in the fact that both disputed theories represent the very origins of both states (Romania and its neighboring Hungary).²¹ At one end, the theory of “Daco-Roman-Romanian continuity” asserted that the Romanians are the descendants of two noble races, the Dacians and the Romans whose descendants have permanently inhabited the territories which were later called Wallachia and Transylvania, where Romanians were the majority population in the eighteenth century.²² At the other end, the “Röslerian hypothesis of immigration” proposed the theory that the Daco-Romans have been forced out of their territory during the invasion of the Roman emperor Aurelian (AD 270-275) and by the time they migrated back into Wallachia and Transylvania many centuries later, the Hunic tribes have already established their kingdom extending into the Panonian and Transylvanian geographical regions.

20 Emil Cioran, quoted in *Democrație și Naționalism în România: 1989-1998* (Democracy and Nationalism in Romania) by Tom Gallagher, (București: ALL Education, 1998), 24.

21 Alina Mungiu-Pippidi, *Transilvania Subiectivă* (The Subjective Transylvania) (București: Editura Humanitas, 1999), 60.

22 The debate around these theories on continuity has been addressed in numerous publications which I have attempted to review critically and impartially in the second part of my unpublished Master dissertation entitled: *Forgiveness and Reconciliation between Hungarians and Romanian in Transylvania* (2001). For a synthesis of these historical arguments see: Constantin Iordachi, *The Anatomy of a Historical Conflict: Romanian-Hungarian Diplomatic Conflict in the 1980's* (MA Thesis, Central European University, 1996), [online] available: <http://www.cimec.ro/Istorie/Cristi/Cuprins.htm>, July 2003. See also A. D. Xenopol, *Teoria lui Rösler: Studii Asupra Stăruinței Românilor în Dacia Traiană*, (Rösler's Theory: Studies Concerning the Romanian Presence in Trajan's Dacia) (București: Editura Albatros, 1998).

However, with the question of the authenticity of historical evidence ruled out the moment the debate had left the academic setting where it initially belonged, these theories of ethnic continuity became tools of political manipulation for clearly identifiable political ends.²³ Hugh Seton-Watson had no doubt when he argued that these two rival theories have been perpetuated by nationalistic interest, while both of them are lacking conclusive evidences for support.²⁴

The same mistake that the Romanian representatives of the Transylvanian School have committed when they borrowed the theory of Daco-Roman-Romanian continuity in an attempt to justify, before King Leopold II, their demand for equal political status with the other three recognized national groups in Transylvania, by gaining political representation in the Transylvanian Diet, was reiterated by the Hungarian politicians who used Rösler's immigration theory to secure political and territorial ownership over Transylvania against the Romanians' demands for political representation. The discriminating policies carried out by the alternate political leadership of Transylvania which continued between the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, particularly amplified during communism, amounted to a conflictogenic environment which is responsible for the distorted self-perception of the people in Transylvania. As long as these effects continue to be perpetuated even after the collapse of communism through national propaganda, they will foster a culture where reconciliation between the ethnic Hungarian minorities in Transylvania and the Romanian population will be impossible.

23 Angelika Schaser, *Reformele Iosefine în Transilvania și Urmările lor în Viața Socială*, (Josephine Reforms in Transylvania and its Implications to Social Life) translated by Monica Vlaicu (Sibiu: Editura Hora, 2000), 215. See also Stephen Bela Vardy, "Trianon in Interwar Hungarian Historiography" in *War and Society in East Central Europe*, vol. 4 "Essays on World War I: Total War and Peacemaking, A Case Study on Trianon" edited by Bela K. Kiraly, Peter Pastor, et al. (New York: Columbia University Press, 1982), 361-91.

24 Hugh Seton-Watson, *Eastern Europe* (Hamden: Archon Books, 1962), 90.

Similarly, emerging Hungarian national ideology which in the years since the collapse of the totalitarian regimes in Eastern Europe has re-invigorated national themes such as nostalgia about Transylvania is shaping a conflict-producing national identity of the Hungarian ethnic minority in Transylvania. Whether or not such a resurgence of radical forms of nationalism may be the direct result of the crumbling of the communist states in Europe, they have already claimed the lives of thousands of innocent victims in the wars of Former Yugoslavia. "All across Eastern Europe, a monolithic communist ideology was replaced by conflicting pluralist nationalist ideologies; whatever animosities communism repressed, these exploded once communism was gone", explained Peter Kuzmic.²⁵ It is therefore worrying that, with the exception of ex-Yugoslavia where ethnic conflict led to war, Romania is the country where in the last decade general crisis and national polarization reached the highest degrees in the whole of Eastern Europe. The new political elite in Romania in Hungary should regard as crucial the handling of the ethnic minority problem and ought to take concrete steps toward social reconciliation in order to counter the ethnic strife and radical ideologies pervading their societies.

Many errors have been made in Romania especially during the Iliescu regime (1990-1996) when nationalist thinkers were encouraged to continue to redefine and re-evaluate the national history in ways that suited the governing party's own agenda.²⁶ Several historiographical treatises about Transylvania found their way into the Romanian society in this period, some of them resulting from individual efforts, while others from elaborate

²⁵ Peter Kuzmic, "Historical Context: How Did We Get Here?" in *Bridges of Reconciliation: A Reader on the Conflict in Bosnia* (Washington: World Vision, 1997), 7.

²⁶ David Prodan, a noted nationalist Romanian historian who lived in Cluj, intensified his anti-Hungarian propaganda through his reassessment of the theory of Daco-Roman-Romanian continuity versus the Immigration theory in the years following the collapse of Ceausescu's regime. Not surprisingly, at the celebration of the eighty-ninth birthday of the historian, President Iliescu visited Cluj declaring that "the main reason for his visit was to offer his good wishes to this illustrious historian." Today there's a street in Cluj bearing the name of this controversial historian.

projects sustained by nationalist Romanian intelligentsia. Telling gestures, like the visit of President Iliescu to Cluj in March 1991 which coincided with the two hundredth anniversary of the *Supplex Libellus Vallachorum*, the petition edited and presented to the emperor Leopold II by the Transylvanian School, made obvious that fact that the use of history for the safeguarding of the unitary character of the Romanian state has not been abandoned. National preservation became the main goal behind the persistence in recent years of references to the idealized Romanian past in the political public propaganda, newspapers of certain radical parties and Romanian history textbooks.

The Romanian history textbooks continue to be pervaded by idyllic accounts of the history of Transylvania, while the Hungarian history textbooks used by the ethnic minority in Romania present their conflicting version of the history of the territory. When, in one of the Romanian history textbooks published after 1989, the Romanian *voivodes* were presented less grandiosely than it was used to during Communism, the scholars reacted fiercely to what they considered to be the dishonoring of the Romanian nation's greatness. When Lucian Boia, one of the few notable Romanian historians, warned, during the 1996 International Colloquium on the Textbooks of Romanian History held in Iasi, that the current textbooks still reflect the nineteenth century romantic view of Romanian history with its myths, his view was severely criticized by his colleagues historians.²⁷

Repeated allusions have been made in Romanian public political discourse to the danger ethnic minorities pose to the decentralization of the Romanian state and the dismantling of the unitary character of the country as affirmed by the national Constitution. So much so that during the 1996 presidential electoral campaign, President Iliescu, in a

²⁷ Sándor Balogh, *Transylvania: Balkan or Europe?* Corvinus Library, [online] available: <http://www.hungary.com/corvinus/lib/transy3/transy3.doc>, April 2001.

desperate effort to avoid the inevitable defeat in the elections, inserted an anti-Hungarian speech in which he warned the voters about the imminent Hungarian danger in case they would vote the opposition. In the course of his address, the Romanian president displayed a map of Europe obtained from Samuel Huntington's book on the clash of civilizations,²⁸ in which Transylvania was included in Western Europe, and identified Huntington's theory with the hidden plans of the Western 'outsiders'.

Hungarian post-communist society had experienced a similar resurgence of nationalist propaganda in relation to Transylvania. This resurgence was materialized in the increased number of articles and volumes that were published on the subject in the last decade. From incendiary articles in newspapers to the setting up of non-governmental organizations demanding the return of Transylvania to Hungary, nationalist elements have reacted with an unprecedented euphoria. Although much of this propaganda that emerged in the post-communist Hungary was exaggerated in the Romanian mass media, dozens of books and articles are available to indicate the intense preoccupation of the populist Hungarian writers with the history of Transylvania. Moreover, imprudent declarations of certain Hungarian politicians in regard to Transylvania became the subject of much criticizing and political manipulation in Romanian mass-media. Whether they occurred in volumes of history, in newspapers, local political discourses or at lobbying meetings in Western countries, these assertions amounted to a resurgence of radical nationalist tendencies which is not favorable for the democratic process in which Hungarian society is currently progressing. Renarrating the past in a manner that feeds existing national anxieties of the Hungarian ethnic

28 Samuel Huntington, *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1997).

minority in Transylvania will continue to fuel ethnic conflicts and prevent the society from experiencing social reconciliation.

Would another account of the history of Transylvania become the solution to the interethnic conflict between the Hungarians and Romanians? As Emeritus Professor of Theology Haddon Willmer stressed:

“...we do not have to spend our energies on the kind of historical work which does not free people from pride in and dependency on some past, which continually draws them back with fascination to play over the issues of the past as though they were still playable, as though somehow the past can be different, if it can be shown a different version of the past is true. But pure historical argument is relatively weak; and the most powerful uses of the past are those that feed existing identities and anxieties and so keep people going in new conflicts.”²⁹

The task of achieving reconciliation should emphasize this crucial limitation of any renarration of the history. Only remembering the past in a way that reveals the real interests and power bases inherent in the conflicting interpretations of Transylvania's history may help the conflict resolution process. The purpose of this remembering of the past of enmity should be to bring the two divided groups to a place where they can begin to contemplate reconciliation. Much of the responsibility for this objective rests with the political leadership in Romania and Hungary. Gyorgy Frunda, the former representative of the moderate wing of the Democratic Union of the Hungarians in Romania party pointed out that the reciprocal

²⁹ Haddon Willmer, “The Question of Forgiveness and Reconciliation between Hungarians and Romanians in Transylvania” (Unpublished material, April 2001).

lack of knowledge is one of the primary causes of “the easiness with which the interethnic tension is maintained or even stimulated.”³⁰

The willingness of the political leadership in Romania to promote interethnic reconciliation will be favorable not only to the internal stability of the Romanian society which struggles enough at the economic level, but also to the advancement in the process of European integration. It is fortunate that both Romania and Hungary are preparing to join the European Union and therefore have to subscribe to the European demands concerning the handling of the ethnic minorities. Change, however, shouldn't be arbitrated and imposed by international organizations but ought to come from the inside in order to generate a lasting transformation. Referring to Romania, Smaranda Enache, who is the Vice-president of 'Liga Pro Europa' organization, stressed that it is possible that “the internal stability of the country and its chances of becoming an EU and NATO member are strongly dependent on its ability to maintain interethnic harmony.”³¹ The fact that in 1999, at the Helsinki EU summit, Romania received approval to start negotiations for integration into the European Union is encouraging, but at the same time is a warning that efforts should be intensified toward the consolidation of the unstable Romanian democracy. Romanian national interest lies in NATO and EU integration and being active in national politics in Romania today means working toward this integration. As it has been pointed out “...in our days, the national interest is tied to European and trans-Atlantic openness not nationalist extremism.”³² Whoever is against integration by promoting another political agenda, is working against the civic national

³⁰ Gyorgy Frunda, *Drept Minoritar, Spaima Națională* (Minority Right, National Fears) (București: Editura Kriterion, 1997), 28.

³¹ Smaranda Enache, “Democracy and Ethnicity in Post-Communist Romania” in *After the Revolutions: Democracy in East Central Europe*, edited by Mark Salter (Uppsala: Life & Peace Institute, 1996), 92.

³² Project on Ethnic Relations, *The Year 2000 Elections in Romania: Interethnic Relations and European Integration* (Project on Ethnic Relations, 2000), 13.

interest, against the sort of nationalism that is not based on ethnicity but on the common goal of achieving a more just, more secure and more affluent society. Therefore, as long as the national image of the state will be considered more important than the social and economic well-being of the society, the mistreatment of the ethnic minorities will not cease.

Public Repentance and Political Restoration

Social reconciliation should be assisted by a genuine apology for the wrong that both groups have incurred to one another. As Sándor Birő noted, knowing the past "...would provide both sides with an opportunity for self-examination and for a sincere acknowledgement of the sins of the past."³³ In situations of ethnic conflict this important element is sometimes referred to with the idea of "repentance" or "penitence". Although the idea of repentance has a striking religious note, it should not be perceived inadequate to the social and political realms. A basic definition of this concept reveals that repentance involves not only the theological principle of sin washing, but also a practical aspect "...a radical alteration of the course and direction of one's life, its basic motivations, attitudes, objectives."³⁴ Jesus' teaching makes it plain that repentance is required both of the victim and of the oppressor. For Volf, this seemingly paradoxical tension which he coins "the politics of pure heart" makes sense because only in this way the repentance-seeking victims will be untied from the danger of searching for revenge.³⁵ Without a "politics of pure heart", former victims will be drawn into the circle of revenge and thus perpetuate oppression.

33 Sándor Birő, *The Nationalities Problem in Transylvania: 1867-1940* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1992), xix.

34 James D. G. Dunn, "Jesus' Call to Discipleship" in *Understanding Jesus Today*, edited by Howard Clark Kee (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), 20.

35 Volf, *Exclusion & Embrace*, 114-7.

Joanna Udal has showed how the Stuttgart Declaration, during October 1945, had confirmed the important role of public repentance, as repentance became the only road open to the Church in Germany.³⁶ The confession resulted in a wider realization of common guilt and of the need of revival in the Church but also in the German nation.³⁷ Repentance through confession or apology can represent a facing of the reality of what a particular group, community or nation has done in the past. Shriver has insisted that a very convincing way of emphasizing the clean break with the past is to recall it clearly and publicly.³⁸ Approaching the issue of repentance from a more personal point of view, “The Faith and Politics Group” have stated that “... public rituals of atonement are important to help individuals come to terms with the painfulness of their societies past, for their healing and for reconciliation.”³⁹ Once the past has been retold and unknown facets of the history have been revealed, repentance becomes an acknowledgment of the wrongs done. Even though we should not feel responsible for acts we have not done, the fact that we belong to a community or a nation whose history has brought suffering on others would be reason enough for solidarity in repentance. At last, if the public repentance is to have power, it should be uttered by political and religious leaders who have credibility and a capacity to be considered the representative of both groups involved in the reconciliation process.⁴⁰

Public repentance has to be followed by an attempt to make a clear break with the past, that is, an effort to undo wrongs, to act differently, and to establish a new relationship. Genuine repentance should lead to some sort of political restoration, which may involve

³⁶ Joanna Udal, “Reconciliation Among Nations,” in *The Ecumenical Review*, Vol. 49, no.1 (Jan, 1997), 67.

³⁷ Ibid.

³⁸ Shriver, op.cit. 116.

³⁹ The Faith and Politics Group, *Remembrance and Forgetting: Building a Future in Northern Ireland* (Belfast: The Faith and Politics Group, 1998), 28.

⁴⁰ Ibid., 29.

concrete steps by the civil society and by the political leadership toward the reconsideration of the present status of the ethnic minorities in the society. In the Romanian context, the restoration process may amount to constitutional changes that secure the ethnic minorities' status within the state, allowing them to regain the properties which have been viciously seized from them by Ceausescu's regime, assistance to the rehabilitation of their traditions and culture, access to education in their native language to the highest levels, and opportunity to use their language in local administration, especially to those ethnic minorities who represent a significant percentage of the general local population. Some of these requirements are actually stipulated by the European constitution to which Romania is willing to adhere in its desire to join the Union.

One of the goals of public repentance in Romania should be the exchange of nationalist rhetoric for a public recognition of the discriminatory policies that have been used during Iliescu's government in Romania to foster the interethnic conflict. In an unconvincing televised speech in the course of the presidential elections' campaign in October 2000 President Iliescu promised that he intended to "achieve national reconciliation".⁴¹ Such an unexpected pro-democratic and reconciliatory position signified less a change of personal belief or party policy and more a realization that the Romanian society is heading in the direction of European democracy, where radical nationalism will be isolated. During those past four years when Romania enjoyed the leadership of the Romanian Democratic Convention party and the presidency of Professor Emil Constantinescu (1996-2000) significant changes have been accomplished toward the ethnic minorities. The level of

⁴¹ During the same month in a newspaper, he asserted: The International community will judge us according to our deeds. We will build together a new image of Romania and of the Romanian people. We will demonstrate that we know how to define correctly the national interest, to promote it with intelligence and boldness, and to use the favourable moment, which is the openness of the European community towards Romania. "Realizând Împreună Reconciliere Națională," (Achieving Together National Reconciliation) in *Jurnalul Bihorean the Duminică*, vol. 185 (October 29, 2000), 1.

stability which has been reached by this government through its actions led to a tremendous improvement of the relationship between the Romanian state and the ethnic minorities, with implicit positive results for the international relationship with Hungary and to the benefit of the social reconciliation process.

President Constantinescu became the influential political figure that was needed in the reconciliation process, whose openness to the democratic standards secured the improvement of the social conditions for the ethnic minorities in Transylvania. In a public speech delivered in the presence of the former Hungarian President Arpad Göncz in the city of Târgu Mureş on May 28, 1997, the Romanian President addressed the interethnic conflict which has divided the two communities and proclaimed the beginning of a historical reconciliation between the Romanians and Hungarians.⁴² The beginning of this reconciliation process formally iterated by the two presidents was immediately applauded by the European Commission which described it as a new venue for the construction of a fresh relationship between the two nations.⁴³ Following this meeting, the Romanian president addressed publicly in at least two more instances the need for Romanian-Hungarian ethnic reconciliation.⁴⁴

The reconsideration of the Romanian history textbooks used in education represents another aspect which the political elite in Romania could influence. History curricula, textbooks and much of the official media either ignore the richness of the multi-ethnic

⁴² Emil Constantinescu, *Timpul Dărâmării, Timpul Zidirii*, (The Demolition Time, The Building Time) vol. 3 (Bucureşti: Editura Universalia, 2002), 763-66.

⁴³ Ibid.

⁴⁴ At the Meeting of the Hungarian and Romanian Businessmen (Budapest, Jan. 26, 1998) and at the meeting of the Romanian-Hungarian Friendship Association (Bucharest, 13 Jan. 1998) where he appreciated the role of the civil society to the good relations between ethnic Hungarians and Romanians in Transylvania. Ibid., 277-79.

Romanian society or directly disdain national minorities.⁴⁵ Aware of the distinctive character of their nation, Romanian historians should emphasize those positive aspects that multi-ethnicity has brought in the past to the Romanian experience and way of life rather than dwell on the controversial accounts of that past. Nonetheless, as long as Romanian historians like Lucian Boia will be criticized for indicating that history textbooks reflect the historical myths developed by nationalists, the efforts toward reaching ethnic reconciliation will be hampered. The revised Romanian Constitution adopted in 1991 declares Romania to be “a unitary Nation State” (art. 1) and that “the foundation of the state is laid on the unity of the Romanian people” (art. 4).⁴⁶ Furthermore, the state’s unitary-national character is reinforced by Article 13, which stipulates that the country’s official language is Romanian.⁴⁷ These clauses do not take into consideration the reality of the country’s national diversity. Former Senator Gyorgy Frunda, an ethnic Hungarian, has requested during the year 2000 electoral campaign that the “nation state” provision of the Romanian Constitution should be modified since the above mentioned clause “is not in accordance with the truth” making the non-Romanian national minorities second-class citizens and violating the equal rights principles.⁴⁸ Although the use of the designation “unitary nation state” in a country with sixteen recognized ethnic minorities, continues to represent a reason for interethnic disputes, even the most recent demands for alteration of this clause required by the Democratic Union of the Hungarians in Romania party in June 2003, have been rejected by the Chamber of Deputies.⁴⁹

45 Smaranda Enache, *Ibid.*, 91.

46 Constituția României, [online] available: <http://domino.kappa.ro/guvern/constitutia.html>, May 2001.

47 *Ibid.*

48 Sándor Balogh, *Ibid.*, 5.

49 However, this clause in the Romanian Constitution does not seem to contradict the requirements of the European Constitution. See “UDMR nu a reusit sa scoata sintagma de stat national din proiectul Constitutiei” (DUHR has not Succeeded in Removing the ‘Nation State’ Clause in the Constitution) in *Divers*, vol. 122 (June 19, 2003).

Article 6 of the same Constitution indicates that: “The State recognizes and guarantees the right of persons belonging to national minorities to the preservation, development and expression of their ethnic, cultural, linguistic and religious identity” but remains unclear how such rights will be guaranteed.⁵⁰ Thus, until recently, the Hungarian minority could not use their mother tongue in local administration in locations where they constitute a substantial percentage of the total population.⁵¹

Another aspect worth considering here refers to the amendment of the Law of Education, passed by the Romanian Parliament in 1995, which was in many ways more restrictive than the 1978 Education Law approved by the communist political leadership.⁵² The 1995 Law of Education, although formally allows the use of the language of the ethnic minorities in education, it technically restricts it.⁵³ The Emergency Decree (36/1997) amending the Education Law of 1995, which was adopted by the coalition government, has not been approved yet by the Romanian Parliament.⁵⁴ Part of the process of social reconciliation between the Romanians and Hungarians would be to finalize this Emergency Decree, which stipulates fair provisions for the ethnic minorities.⁵⁵

⁵⁰ Balogh, op.cit.

⁵¹ The Romanian government adopted an emergency decree amending the local administration law (Decree 1997/22). See Project on Ethnic Relations, *Schools, Language and Interethnic Relations in Romania: The Debate Continues* (Project on Ethnic Relations, 1998), 4.

⁵² Enache, op.cit., 90.

⁵³ Especially significant are Articles 118, 120, 122, 123, 124, and 166. Legea Învățământului, (Law of Education) [online] available: <http://liga.math.unibuc.ro/ice/linv.html>, May 2001. According to these articles, the minorities are granted the right to study and learn in the mother tongue at all levels and all forms of education. However, although it may seem that the law does not impose education in Romanian on national minorities, it provides a powerful incentive. For example, Article 124 reads: “At all levels, admission and graduation exams are to be given in Romanian.” Thus, students with aspirations for higher education would be at a serious disadvantage if they have not studied Romanian at least in the last years of secondary school.

⁵⁴ *Schools, Language and Interethnic Relations in Romania: The Debate Continues*, 10.

⁵⁵ The members of the Project on Ethnic Relations noted that this decree of education would surpass even the most liberal provisions of the 1978 education law concerning education in minority languages. Ibid.

At last, Romanian politicians should reach an agreement about the conflicting situation of the Babes-Bolyai University in Cluj.⁵⁶ Presently, Hungarian pressure groups are seeking to restore the university as a Hungarian institution, or at least to divide it into two separate sections, professionally and administratively independent of each other. The issue has created much controversy: some argue for the preservation of the multiethnic character of the university, whereas the politicians are ambiguous when required to seek a resolution. Former President Constantinescu together with former Prime Minister, Victor Ciorbea, have agreed in principle to the establishment of a Hungarian university, in another city than Cluj, but no further action has been taken since.⁵⁷

Civil Society and Social Reconciliation

Among the most recent efforts toward social reconciliation, the “Project on Ethnic Relations” (PER) has been on the forefront, initiating the first discussions and negotiations between leaders of the Romanian government and the Hungarian minority, replacing confrontation with a pattern of dialogue. The Project on Ethnic Relations that met in Poiana Braşov, convened with the leaders of the principal Romanian parliamentary parties to discuss the problem of nationalist rhetoric during the sensitive period of the 2000 electoral campaign.⁵⁸ PER proposed that an agreement should be signed by each of the parties represented at this meeting concerning their conduct during the upcoming elections, with the

⁵⁶ Originally a Hungarian institution, Bolyai University was transformed in 1959 into a Romanian-Hungarian institution of higher education called the Babes-Bolyai University. Since that time, the Hungarian sections have been gradually dismantled and subordinated, so that today the Hungarian faculty members have little input in the affairs of the university. See Eniko Magyar-Vincze, *Politics of Multiculturalism and the Construction of Border Identities* (research in progress, Center for Comparative Social Analysis, May 1999), 9.

⁵⁷ Project on Ethnic Relations, *Schools, Language and Interethnic Relations in Romania: The Debate Continues*, 16, [online] available: <http://www.sscnet.ucla.edu/soc/groups/ccsa/magyari.pdf>, July 2003.

⁵⁸ See Project on Ethnic Relations, *The Year 2000 Elections in Romania: Interethnic Relations and European Integration*, *Ibid.*, 1.

purpose of avoiding nationalist rhetoric during the campaign.⁵⁹ It was for the first time that politicians in Romania signed and publicly presented a pact advocating the elimination of nationalism propaganda during the electoral campaign. Thus the commitment and potential to open-mindedness and tolerance toward ethnic minorities exists in the Romanian society, although much more effort is needed for a significant social reconciliation process.

The civil society in Romania could be much more successful in stimulating respect for ethnic diversity, interethnic dialogue and regional solidarity, and could function as a bridge between the Hungarian and Romanian communities. A series of non-governmental organizations have already been established in Romania, and their activity is crucial to the reconciliation process. Enache has underlined a number of civic groups who have engaged in dialogue confronting unpopular issues, thereby promoting respect for ethnic minorities and a culture of partnership: Liga Pro Europa, The Romanian Helsinki Committee, the Association for Interethnic Dialogue, the Group for Social Dialogue, Pro Democratia, LADO, etc.⁶⁰ Besides such pressure groups, there is an increasing need for workshops, seminars, tolerance festivals and publications to aid the process of forgiveness.⁶¹ Recent studies undergone by Hungarian and Romanian sociologists and political analysts have begun to ponder over the question of the “devolution” of Transylvania within the Romanian state.⁶² Such attempts of

⁵⁹ The meeting was attended by the political leaders of the main democratic parties from Romania: the Ethnic Hungarian party, the Democratic Union of Hungarians in Romania, the two mainstream opposition parties – the Party of Social Democracy in Romania (PDSR) and the Alliance for Romania (ApR), plus the other parties of the governing coalition (PNTCD, PNL, PD). Ibid.

⁶⁰ Enache, op. cit., 91.

⁶¹ See Alina Mungiu-Pippidi, op.cit., 16-17. In her study, Alina Mungiu-Pippidi notes that several conferences, seminars and works have begun to deal with the delicate Hungarian-Romanian relation in Transylvania. She asserts that the whole question of whether Romania is ready for democracy or not hangs on the way in which the Transylvanian problem will be dealt with.

⁶² Gabriel Andreescu, Gusztav Molnar, eds., *Problema Transilvană* (The Transylvanian Problem) (Iași: Polirom, 1999). This study gathers a set of recent articles by significant Romanian, Hungarian and other political analysts (Miklos Bakk, Sorin Mitu, Renate Weber, Tom Gallagher, Liviu Andrescu, Antonela Capelle-Pogacean, Liviu Antonesei, Elek Szokoly) who come in dialogue over Gusztav Molnar’s proposal of the devolution of Transylvania.

the Romanian civil society begin to inspire hope that the Hungarian presence in Transylvania will be “turned to good account” and that the Romanian society will attain a national consciousness that respects and appreciates diversity.

Social Reconciliation and the Romanian Church

The meaning of the notion Romanian Church here refers to the totality of the churches in the country that express a concern for the welfare and security of the citizens of the Romanian society, irrespective of their denominational color. It may seem reasonable to draw a distinction between the Orthodox, the Catholic, the Protestant and the Evangelical Churches in Romania, particularly in relation to their contribution to the reconciliation process. However, due to their lack of social teaching or praxis which they share in common, such a distinction is rendered unnecessary.

The Romanian Church is not prepared, in the opinion of the author of this article, to contribute in a significant way to the rehabilitation of the current ethnic tensions in the society. A defensive approach would suggest that the Church is not an institution called primarily to such a task. Professor Haddon Willmer stressed that it cannot be assumed that churches have the power to represent a coherent voice in the realm of politics.⁶³ At best, there could be developed a partnership between theologians, civil society and political leadership, in the sense that the former could become the interpreters of the efforts and achievements of the civil society and politicians.⁶⁴ Such cooperation between the Church and the State could well be perceived as an effort to bring social reconciliation not only between ethnic

63 Willmer, *op.cit.*

64 Willmer stressed that it may often be the case that the politicians are so secular and thus so spiritually blind, that they may not think of their actions as reconciling. It is in this context that the theologians could become the interpreters of their actions, and point out to their activity as instances of political forgiveness. *Ibid.*

minorities, but also in the relationship between the Romanian Church and the State. To give two examples, even though Romanian politicians do not perceive the amendment of the debated “nation state” clause in the Romanian Constitution to be a moral effort on the road to reconciliation, that doesn’t mean that this modification cannot be perceived as such by the Church. Likewise, a reformed Law of Education that would provide ethnic minorities with access to education in their mother language may not be identified as an act of social reconciliation but the Church could stress that aspect.

The Romanian Church may support with prayers the decisions of the Romanian Parliament concerning the rights and protection of the ethnic minorities. As Karl Barth stressed, the Christian community should pray for the civil community “all the more since the civil community as such is not in the habit of praying.”⁶⁵ With prayer also comes the need for the Romanian Church to support the endorsement by the Romanian government of a legislation concerning ethnic minorities which would stress the equality of all people, regardless of ethnicity. As David Steele emphasized, the Churches in Romania could protect these rights by building a trans-cultural or a cross-cultural community.⁶⁶

Péter Lakatos indicated correctly, in the opinion of the author, that the Romanian Orthodox Church defines itself as a spiritual factor in the society, but does not have a strong sense of social responsibility, whereas the Catholic and the Protestant have comprehensive teachings about the mission of the Church and the role of the state and are willing to assume responsibility for shaping the social, political, and economic process, but their attitude is

⁶⁵ Karl Barth, *Against the Stream: Shorter Post-war Writings, 1946-52* (London: SCM Press Ltd., 1954), 23.

⁶⁶ David Steele, “A Christian Exploration of Nationalism and Conflict Resolution: Raising the Questions” in *Occasional Papers on Religion in Eastern Europe*, vol. 12, no. 4 (August 1992), 38.

mostly polemical.⁶⁷ True, in the past few years Orthodox theologians have begun to work on the potential shape of a Romanian Orthodox social theology and praxis. In recent studies, when the Romanian Orthodox theologians want to indicate the involvement of their Church in the social realm, they point to the notion of Christian philanthropy.⁶⁸ However, much more has to be achieved by Romanian Orthodoxy in relation to inter-confessional and moreover interethnic dialogue and reconciliation. Notwithstanding the attempt at separation between the Church and the State, the Orthodox legacy of identification with Romanian nationalism continues to represent a major challenge today. In reference to this relationship alone, the Romanian Orthodox Church is often thought to be permeated more by nationalism and pragmatism than by critical theological reflection.⁶⁹ For this reason, the ‘National’ Orthodox Church in Romania is not ready to have a convincing contribution to the reconciliation of denominational tension, not to mention a reconciling role in ethnic conflicts.

The Protestant and Evangelical churches in Romania do not have a clearly defined social agenda either, or when they do, it is completely isolated from the notion of social reconciliation. Evangelical churches in particular tend to reduce reconciliation to its vertical, individual aspect to refer to the relationship between them and God with no bearing on further implications for a group or society. This stance corresponds to their pietistic and socially conservative tendencies in which reconciliation with God becomes a matter of

67 Péter Lakatos, “A Possible Ecumenical Strategy from a Romanian Context: Church and Social Responsibility, Part II, in *Occasional Papers on Religion in Eastern Europe*, vol. 18, no. 6 (December 1998), 6.

68 *The philanthropy has a dual aspect – the theoretical and the practical one. The theoretical approach is made out by sermons, lectures and conferences which focus on the philanthropic activity of the Church and is aimed at both the clergy and laity. These sermons or lectures have an educational character and stress the example of the biblical narratives interpreted for today’s real situations. See Ion Vicovan, Dați-le Voi să Mănânce Filantropia Creștină: Istorie și Spiritualitate, (Feed them Yourselves Christian Philanthropy: History and Spirituality) (Iași: Trinitas, 2001). Also Metropolitan Daniel Ciobotea, Confessing the Truth in Love, (Iași: Trinitas, 2001).*

69 See Paul Negrut, *Biserica si Statul* (Church and State) (Oradea: Emanuel, 2000).

personal morality which does not retain a wider social meaning. This is sad especially because the evangelical churches, with their inherent autonomy in regard to cultural identity, may serve well as agents for social reconciliation. However, more open-minded evangelicals often find themselves in a difficult position, in a Post-communist Romania where their loyalty is constantly questioned due to their foreign originating roots and close links with agencies external to the country. As for the Protestant Churches, whereas their theological stance is seldom apolitical, as they understand the limitations of social withdrawal, they tend to place at the heart of their social agenda the pursuit of social justice and the struggle for freedom, making reconciliation subsequent to these processes. Very liberal in their social perspective, the Reformed churches in Romania tend to seek first the restoration of justice in the society and only afterwards will there be a place to address reconciliation between people. Although this problem is apparently insignificant, it actually translates into complete disregard for the ministry of reconciliation, in their pursuit for social justice as the only solution to the social problems.

The Romanian Church has to develop an understanding of its role in the society in situations of interethnic conflict by rediscovering the theology as well as the practice of social reconciliation. As Schreiter has observed, the Church is not inactive socially because she has somehow been dismissed from the dialogue table, but because of its own guilt for its complicity in the ethnic violence, because of timidity and fear.⁷⁰ To be capable to exercise a positive role to the alleviation of the conflicts between the ethnic groups, the Romanian Church should learn to avoid fighting on the side of their cultural group, employing faith as a weapon in the struggle. An empirical research on the churches' reaction in the interethnic

⁷⁰ Robert J. Schreiter, *The Ministry of Reconciliation: Spirituality and Strategies* (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 1998), 129.

conflicts carried out by Ralph Premdas has shown that Christians tend to express an overriding commitment to their respective culture and ethnic groups.⁷¹ To prevent such an outcome in the tense situation between the Hungarians and Romanians in Transylvania, the churches should become actively involved in ecumenical cooperation and dialogue with the civil society. The initial effort should be made so that the ecumenical contacts of the Romanian and Hungarian denominations would not be determined by their ethnicity.⁷² The agenda of the Romanian Church should include more frequent inter-confessional dialogue on the subject of conflict resolution so that their awareness of the issues involved in the reconciliation process would be enhanced. In this regard, the Banat County is a rare example of a place where religious tolerance is evident in the fact that there are annual meetings of all the religious leaders and representatives of the Romanian Church in the region, which confer a degree of interethnic openness. Such instances should become paradigmatic for the inter-denominational cooperation in parts of the country where the Hungarian-Romanian interethnic conflict is more acute, such as Transylvania.

Conclusion

This article has attempted to suggest how the ministry of reconciliation should be discussed in situations of ethnic conflict by proposing a strategy for understanding the theological, political, and social factors involved in this process. Furthermore, the viability of social reconciliation strategy has been examined in reference to the ethnic conflict in Transylvania and the social and political realities inherent in post-communist Romania.

⁷¹ Ralph Premdas, 'The Church and Ethnic Conflicts in the Third World', in *The Ecumenist*, Vol .1(4), (1994), 53-56.

⁷² Lakatos stresses that the leaders of the Hungarian churches have a monthly conference, whereas their relation to other Romanian denominations remains cool. Péter Lakatos, *Ibid.*, 20.

In closing, by choosing this approach to reconciliation the intention of the author has been to concentrate on some of the aspects that churches and theologians often disregard as outside their field of expertise; aspects that should be addressed more often so that the Christian communities would be able to offer their informed support whenever a conflict or a crisis emerges in the society. As Premdas vigorously suggested, the leaders of the churches will have to take the issue of ethnic conflict more seriously, to investigate the origin of the conflict by appointing committees specially designed for such a task, to examine the social scientific literature on ethnic conflicts, to study the theory and practice of conflict resolution, and devise instruments of popular education that raise people's knowledge of the issues at stake.⁷³ Most of all, the churches in Romania will have to rediscover the theological meaning of the social meaning of reconciliation because this concept stands at the core of the Christian faith. Without such a theological understanding of reconciliation, the churches will be prone to become accomplices in conflicts rather than agents of peace.

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⁷³ Premdas, op.cit., 56.

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