

A MODEL OF HISTORIOGRAPHIC RECONCILIATION: THE RECEPTION SPEECH OF IOAN LUPAȘ AT THE ROMANIAN ACADEMY

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Are really books and speeches capable of unleashing revolutions, of defining the roots of the mutations induced in the conscience of the readers and public? This is rather a rhetoric exercise, once Roger Chartier has already demonstrated, in quite a convincing manner, that the answer to it is an affirmative one¹.

A double sequencing in the Transylvanian historical writing, one in the beginning of the dualist regime, the other one around the year 1918, evidences the major changes produced over this historical period. Globally viewed, the ecclesiastic historiography of the years 1870-1910 appears as almost hermetically closed. Its two main directions, the Orthodox and the Greek-Catholic one have only accidental contacts outside their world, with the Romanian historiography of the Romanian Principalities, and no dialogue has been ever established between them. Historians used either to approach exclusively the past of their own religion, or to launch reciprocal accuses, causing violent polemics, prolonged along several decades. That is why, Orthodox historians used to read the books of their Greek-Catholic contemporaries only for criticizing them as loudly as possible. In their turn, the Greek-Catholic supporters always questioned the syllogisms of their opponents.

In spite of their numerous political agreements, the representatives of the two Romanian churches in Transylvania failed, for several decades, to issue a reconciling and unifying historiographic message. However, around 1918, the historical speech was radically modified: Transylvanian historians scrupulously mentioned and cited the works of their colleagues from the Principalities, the old spites appeared as solved, Orthodox and Greek-

Catholic members together leaving aside any confessional attack, putting all their talents in the service of the national cause. The national interest prevailed in front of the confessional disputes. A historiographic antanta was created prior to achieving political unity. Of course, this could not be the expression of a sudden option, but the result of a long coagulation process, under circumstances in which the external model had interfered with the reconsideration, from inside, of the system of values.

Considering the roots of such a metamorphosis of the Transylvanian historiographic writings, a different valoric evaluation may be provided to the provokingly entitled study - *Confessional chauvinism in Transylvanian ecclesiastical historiography*, sent to the Orthodox journal of Sibiu by its young author, Ioan Lupaș, from Budapesta. Trying to appear as an impartial arbitrator, the author severely criticized the confessional atmosphere of the Transylvanian historical writings: „here an there, at Sibiu or at Blaj, some historical writings were issued, all bearing the sign of the place where they had been elaborated and giving the impression that they were rather partinic and not scientific works”². The critical current to which Lupaș had adhered, under the influence of his professor, Henrik Marczali, may explain the origin of this text, in which major stress was laid on the triumph of historical truth, going beyond confessional subjectivism.

The Romanian Academy, too, played some part in breaking such confessional barriers, representing, from its very beginnings, a bridge between the historians of the two territories, attempting at and succeeding in neutralizing the confessionalizing positions. Orthodox members such as Nicolae Popea, Zaharia Boiu, Vasile

Mangra, Ilarion Pușcariu, Ioan Lupaș *et al.*, supported the Greek-Catholics Timotei Cipariu, August Treboniu Laurian, Al. Papiu Ilarian, Nicolae Densușianu, Augustin Bunea, etc. As the program of this high institution was firstly a scientific one, it provided to historians, as well as to the other specialists, the chance of some learned speeches and a fruitful dialogue among the historians from the two sides of the Carpathians. The dialogue also attracted prestigious secular historians, under discussion being several aspects of Transylvanian ecclesiastical history. Unfortunately, the dialogue remained limited to a close circle of specialists, behind the closed academic doors, so that their spirit and substance could not exceed, at least for the moment, the main controversies in fashion on the Transylvanian ecclesiastical historiography, made known especially by the press of the epoch.

Another observation to be made is that the dialogue between Transylvanian and Romanian ecclesiastical historiography was initiated by the latter one, which had no partisan sympathies. If Nicolae Iorga was the undisputed „spiritus rector”, wholly dedicated to the study of national history at highest academic level, one should not forget that he was only a follower – even if an exceptional one – of the orientation already present in the extra-Carpathian historiography, initiated, even if only modestly, by Grigore Tocilescu, A. D. Xenopol, Nicolae Dobrescu, etc. Also true is the fact that Transylvanian historiography remains much indebted to Iorga; it was he who initiated a passionate discovery of old documents, demonstrating, among others, the old age of the Transylvanian metropolitan church, imposing himself authoritatively as a model of professionalism for the group of young Transylvanian students, when he met them in Budapest,³ it was again he who launched messages for national unity in studies with programmatic titles, such as: *History of the Romanian people* (1905), *History of the Romanian church and of Romanians religious life* (1908), *History of Romanians from Transylvania and Hungary* (1915), etc.

The conclusion to be drawn is that several attempts had been made at initiating a dialogue between the Orthodox and the Greek-Catholic historiography in Transylvania in the first years of the XXth century. However, it was only the scientific performance of two great historians, Nicolae Popea (1908) and Augustin Bunea (1909), whose writings were indestructively related to the history of the church, that contributed decisively to the reconciliation between the two religions.

Elected corresponding member of the Academy of România in the year 1914 and full member in 1915, Ioan Lupaș will have to postpone for a few years – as due to the political situation – his reception speech. Meantime, the Transylvanian historian experienced memorable events, involving national achievements and institutional innovations: participant to the Assembly of Alba Iulia, together with Silviu Dragomir, member of the „High Council”, professor at the newly established University of Cluj, co-director of the Institute of National History of Cluj⁴.

Coming to București on June 8, 1920, to deliver his speech in front of the academicians reunited in solemn assembly, the Transylvanian historian proposed a topic of special importance for the subsequent development of the history of historiography. Making his choice for a scientific, academic theme, Lupaș wanted more than that: to transmit to all those present the reconciliation message of the two main directions of research of the Transylvanian ecclesiastical historiography: the Orthodox and the Greek-Catholic one. To this end, he decided to make the portraits of Nicolae Popea and Ioan Micu Moldovan, two historians of the church representing the most efficient and richest generation, as to its historiographic creation. At the same time, he took the opportunity of defining himself as a historian of the church, interested in the same thematic horizon as the two personalities described by him.

Antecedents of the conception put forward by

Ioan Lupaș in his academic speech may be easily grasped in almost all his published studies – for example, the inauguration lecture of the course of history of Transylvania, delivered at the University of Cluj, in November 1919, evidences the same ideological ideas. In his study, entitled *Historical factors of the Romanian national life*, Lupaș adapts to the Romanian climate the coagulating elements of the national spirit, as they had been established in the middle of the XIXth century by Pasquale Stanislao Mancini, important representative of the Italian *Risorgimento*, active participant to the revolution of 1848 and, further on, full professor of the first Chair of International Law of Europe, established in Turin; following the example of his illustrious predecessor, who, in 1851, had inaugurated his course with a pleding on nationality, viewed as the foundation of any people's right⁵, Ioan Lupaș discussed comparatively the role of the geographic, ethnographic, religious, rational, traditional, juridical and moral factors⁶. In this study, Ioan Lupaș declared his affinity for national history, for the key elements assuring coagulation of the Romanian identity spirit, along with validating his opening to European historiography, to the history of philosophy, Herder and Fustel de Coulanges being his declared mentors, as well as to Romanian historiography and the achievements it registered in the last decades, especially the contributions of Ilarion Pușcariu, Andrei Șaguna, Timotei Cipariu, Nicolae Popea, Ioan Micu Moldovan, Ioan Crișan, Augustin Bunea, Teodor V. Păcățian, highly representative for the effort of renewing the domain of historiography⁷. Especially impressive in this text is the confessional detachment, the absence of any confessionalizing acrimony, association of the Orthodox and Greek-Catholic priests, all involved, in the words of Lupaș, „in an action of the whole nation”⁸.

One may therefore assert that, in his academic speech of 1920, the historian attempted at establishing, from the very beginning, a balance of value between the two personalities he analyzes. Assuming a position of restitution – in

the case of Popea – and, respectively, of compensation– for the biography of Micu Moldovan, as seen by an Orthodox historian, Lupaș explicitly evidenced the reasons of such an association. In this way, besides his national ideals and convictions, nourished by the recent history he had lived, he discussed the common biographical aspects of the two personalities: „elected full member of the Academy by the decease of the dignified canon of Blaj, Ioan Micu Moldovan, I have the statutory duty to evoke, on this occasion, the life and activity of my predecessor. Considering, nevertheless, the special life of the Romanians in Transylvania which, through the “foreign sin” of the Habsburgs was divided, in the last centuries, in two parts, I shall resort to the method of Plutarh, describing the life and work of my forerunner in parallels with those of his contemporary, Nicolae Popea. Both lived in the same epoch, both worked hard, animated by the noble ideal of devoting all their efforts to their nation, as a token of their sacrifice”⁹.

From a methodological perspective, such a comparative approach will perform a simplified analysis, including a successive presentation of the biography and activity of the two reputed representatives of the Transylvanian ecclesiastical historiography. In concise comments, Lupaș harmonized the information referring to the intellectual formation and to the main domains of interest of the two characters. He developed no erudite lines, even if, in 1920, Lupaș was recognized as a learned man, as his conceptions on history were those acquired from the works of Ranke, Hegel, Lamprecht, Xenopol, Pârvan, Iorga¹⁰.

The image of Popea was reconstituted from discussions with the main figures of his family, school or ecclesiastic background. The main feature of the portrait emphasizes his participation to the main national events of the epoch: „even if the younger ones used to see Popea exclusively as a good and gentle bishop, a bit weak, the real Popea was a warrior, yet defeated by old age and by the historical circumstances in which he had lived”¹¹.

The text of Lupaș was aimed at presenting, as

briefly as possible, his whole, long-life experience, both as a professor at the Theological Institute of Sibiu, and as a clerk of the consistorium, as a hierarch or as an author of historical works. Trying to avoid the strident style of the superlatives, Lupaş established exactly the position held by Popea in the Transylvanian culture and in the Romanian ecclesiastical historiography, by means of specific positivistic procedures: „his whole activity as a writer is devoted to rather practical and not scientific purposes. That is why its evaluation should not involve a too severe criticism, but rather a correct understanding, without leaving aside the circumstances in which this literary activity was developed and the benefits it might bring about”¹². In this respect, mention was made of the polemic position of Popea especially *versus* the Serbian representatives of the hierarchy of the time, thus putting into evidence the national features of this personality.

Judging the historical work of Popea with the instruments and methodology specific to the positivistic course, Lupaş put special stress on his monograph of 1879, dedicated to Andrei Şaguna, as he himself was especially familiar with such a topic, on which he had written a similar work „ this will preserve the name of Popea for a longer time in our historical literature, being a book elaborated with ability and attention. By its vigorous and lucid style, by the methodic organization of the material, and especially by the sincere admiration and enthusiasm manifested for the great master and hierarch Andrei Şaguna, his biography became an important element of national education”¹³.

The second part of the speech was devoted, with the same correct judgement, to Ioan Micu Moldovan, a careful presentation of his biography and many-sided activity of the Greek-Catholic scholar being made. In this way, Ioan Lupaş elaborated a balanced presentation, with no subjective hints, his information being taken over from the writings of a reputed biographer of Blaj, I. Raţiu. In the presentation made by Lupaş, Ioan Micu Moldovan became, too, the representative of the same national

engagements. This was actually the dominating conception in the reconciliation period of the Romanian ecclesiastical historiography of Transylvania: „more than the distinction that he might have received from the Bishop of Blaj or from the Pope of Rome, Ioan M. Moldovanu was especially honoured to be elected, by all representatives of Transylvania, after the death of Bariţiu in 1894, President of the Association, as well as member of the Romanian Academy, in the same year”¹⁴.

The same national ideals explained why, in the eyes of Lupaş, Ioan Micu Moldovan remained the professor who launched in his writings a polemic at national level, such as the one referring to the didactic legislation from the Kingdom, or the one with German historians, e.g., Wattenbach: „it was not the hatred and contempt expressed by other Greek-Catholic writers in almost all their writings about the Romanian Orthodox church, it was not the polemic passion, but the irony that Moldovanu used to resort to, when discussing the two religions of the Transylvanian Romanians, on never sacrificing the historical truth for defending some confessional position”¹⁵.

Faithful to such a judgement, Lupaş manifested no indignation during his polemic with Popea. Evidencing the alert rhythm of the debates of the two, in the end Lupaş made only some stylistic observations - about Popea with hid „more elaborated, solemn writing” and also about Moldovan - who expresses his ideas in a „simple and knotty style, yet so attractive by the force of the purely popular judgement, wrapped in it”¹⁶.

All in all, the speech delivered by Ion Lupaş at the Academy of România represents an important piece of his historiographic creation. Closing his plead with a discussion on the common occurrences of the two destinies, the historian followed the same interpretation, circumscribed to the national idea. For Ion Lupaş, the two Transylvanian intellectuals were both self-taught persons, devoted to the principle „all for the nation” and, with a highly suggestive expression: „model priests, laborious workers in the field of culture and stainless

guides in the national policy of the Romanians living in Transylvania”¹⁷.

The symbolic academic speech of Lupaș put an end to a historiographic epoch, by associating two representative figures of the ecclesiastical historiography, Nicolae Popea and Ioan Micu Moldovan, thus achieving the posthumous reconciliation of the two historians. A „reconciliation” to which another academic reply is provided – not at all accidentally – by one of the masters of Lupaș, Nicolae Iorga. According to the regulations in force, the response of Iorga demonstrated his interest for the topic under discussion, outlining, with admiration, the major stages of the historiographic work of Lupaș. Nicolae Iorga openly declared him as one of his disciples, yet recognizing the originality of his writings: „today, you are one of the historians of the past of „villages and priests” of Transylvania, offering in the work of Your Reverence not only rich knowledge of the novel material, so laboriously brought to light, but also a pleasant and light style, inherited from the most important scholars of the XVIIIth century, so that each page may be read, with interest and advantage, by any villager who had had the chance of attending school in his birth place”¹⁸. In this way, he symbolically integrated the historian in the recently reunited family of Romanian historiography.

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Endnotes

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