Laura Ganea (ed.), *Papa Ioan Paul al II-lea în România. Dialogul catolic- ortodox la nouă secole de la Marea Schismă* [Pope John Paul II in Romania: Catholic-Orthodox Dialogue Nine Centuries after the Great Schism], București, Editura Universității din București 2019, 326 p., ISBN: 978-606-16-1070-9

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On the eve of the second visit of a Pope to Romania, the Institute for Advanced Studies in Levant Culture and Civilization published in 2019 a commemorative volume on the previous pontifical visit (7th-9th May 1999) titled *Pope John Paul II in Romania: Catholic-Orthodox Dialogue Nine Centuries after the Great Schism*.

The volume, edited by Laura Ganea, is far from being a simple catalogue of pictures or a collection of the speeches delivered during the three days of the pontifical visit to Romania. The editor tried to present the whole range of recent history and the consequences of such a visit for Romania, presenting in an original manner events and personalities who contributed to the 1999 pontifical visit. Known names contributed: Radu Preda, Sorin Dumitrescu, Alberto Quattrucci and Cătălin Ștefan Popa.

Having an exceptionally graphic quality, the volume is presented completely bilingual Romanian-English, with the exception of the title rendered only in Romanian: *Papa Ioan Paul al II-lea în România. Dialogul catolic-ortodox la nouă secole de la Marea Schismă*.

The *Foreword* (p. 14-15), signed by Professor Vlad Nistor, former State Advisor and Head of Protocol Services for the Presidency of Romania (between 1998-2000) announces the three key personalities who are presented in the volume: Pope John Paul II, Patriarch Teoctist of Romania and President Emil Constantinescu of Romania. The importance of these three personalities is clearly illustrated as well on the cover of the book through a suggestive image of the three: the Pope, the Patriarch and the President. Most of the pictures in the volume present the three “main actors” (p. 15) of the 1999 moment. This is already an indication that the information that follows provides not only spiritual or ecumenical aspects, but political ones as well. We can also mention a fourth “main actor,” unnoted by Vlad Nistor: Cardinal Alexandru Todea,¹ the retired head of the Romanian

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¹ Cardinal Alexandru Todea (1912-2002) was a preeminent figure of the Greek-Catholic resistance and a symbol of the institutional continuity of the Greek-Catholic Church in Romania.

Greek-Catholic Church. Laura Ganea's volume gives space and attention both to the Romanian Greek-Catholic reality and to Cardinal Todea himself, though he isn't presented as being on the same level of importance as the Pope, the Patriarch or the President. Actually, from the *Foreword*, the reader can easily observe the huge importance given in this volume to the figure of the then President, considered by Vlad Nistor to be the only one truly worthy of receiving political credit for the pontifical visit: "there is President Emil Constantinescu – whose exceptional geopolitical and strategic vision made him understand the great opportunity that such a visit represented for Romania. Without the support of President Constantinescu, Pope John Paul II's visit would never have been possible – despite the braggadocious claims of certain Romanian politicians (...) who attributed to themselves all sorts of organizational merits in the Pope's arrival" (p. 15).

The first chapter, entitled very suggestively *Why Romania?* presents "historical, cultural and political arguments" (p. 18) about the first visit of an Eastern-European Pope to a mainly Orthodox country. The chapter contains valuable information on Pope John Paul II, the political and historical context of the early '80s and '90s, the history of the Greek-Catholic, Roman-Catholic and Orthodox Churches in Romania during communism, and the history of diplomatic relations between the Holy See and Romania. Laura Ganea gives an illustrative title to every subchapter dedicated to the history of the Churches: *The Greek Catholic Church under Communism. The price of refusal*; *The Roman Catholic Church under Communism. The price of adaptation*; *The Orthodox Church under Communism. The price of survival*. All these subchapters present in an objective manner important personalities of all religious backgrounds and clear information about the persecution of each of these Churches. Two subchapters of the first part are dedicated to Emil Constantinescu, presented here as the first President who was a true opponent of communism and a religious pacifier: "the first democratic President of Romania launches a programme of religious reconciliation" (p. 48).² His coming to power is presented here as an important factor of the 1999 pontifical visit to Romania. This aspect is detailed in the second chapter, titled *Diplomatic overtures. People and Religions* presents, as announced, information about the important ecumenical events in which President Emil Constantinescu took part. The items of the religious agenda of President Constantinescu are considered by the editor to be important steps on the path to the first pontifical visit to Romania. This chapter has significant value

² Laura Ganea had previously edited another volume dedicated to President Emil Constantinescu tilted in the editor's characteristic style: *Prețul demnității. O istorie altfel* [*The Price of Dignity. A Different History*] (Bucharest: Rao Books, 2016).

for ecumenical research because the reader can find here important speeches, official diplomatic correspondence, information and reflections on ecumenical events both in English and Romanian. A great downside when listing the events leading to Pope John Paul II's visit to Romania is the omission of the unofficial visit made by Patriarch Teoctist to the Vatican in 1989, against the will of the communist regime, just months before the Romanian Revolution.³

Even if mostly well documented, the text contains some minor detail oversights. For example, it is difficult to understand why, when speaking about an obviously anti-communist President and his call for religious unity, the author of the lines dedicated to Constantinescu uses the communist name of the Alba Iulia Orthodox Cathedral: "The Cathedral of People's Reunification" (p. 49), instead of the former and actual name of the cathedral, in use again after the fall of the Communist regime: *The Coronation Cathedral*.⁴

The third chapter enters into the volume's very substance: *The First Official State and Ecumenical Visit of a Sovereign Pontiff to a Majority-Orthodox Country*. The *motto* of this chapter is written on every page: "Three days to last a millennium." This chapter takes the form of a catalogue. The text is much reduced, and very descriptive, with pictures becoming more numerous. Quotations from the different speeches are reproduced. Flipping through this chapter one can easily recall all the important moments of the three-day-long visit of Pope John Paul II to Romania. Unfortunately, the speeches are not offered in their entirety, which does not allow the use of this chapter for academic purposes. One could assume, because of the final bibliographical list, that the English version of the papal speeches found in the volume comes from the official translation that is to be found on the Vatican's website. A simple search, however, shows this is not the case. Even

³ See the interesting details of that visit in: George Grigoriu, "Interviu cu Mihai Hau. Vizita neoficială a prelatului ortodox la Vatican, în 1989, a pus pe jar autoritățile comuniste: Patriarhul Teoctist, înjurat și amenințat cu închisoarea" [Interview with Mihai Hau. The unofficial visit of the Orthodox prelate to the Vatican worried the Communist authorities: Patriarch Teoctist, offended and was threatened with imprisonment], *România liberă*, March 18, 2017; an interview given by one of the members of the then Patriarch Teoctist's delegation, Fr. Mihai Hau, then deacon of the Patriarch, today Patriarchal adviser. According to him, Patriarch Teoctist and Pope John Paul II spoke privately for 49 minutes and it was exactly that private discussion that was the very basis of the later papal visit to Romania.

⁴ The communist name of Alba Iulia Cathedral, in use between 1948-1990, besides trying to avoid any mention of the Romanian Monarchy, is a reference to the forced reunification of the Transylvanian Greek-Catholic Church with the Orthodox one in 1948, after the illegal suppression of the Greek-Catholic one. The name itself could be offensive from an ecumenical point of view. A simple Google search, both in Romanian or English, shows that the actual name is the *Coronation Cathedral*. See as well: Claudiu Pădurean, "Catedrala Încoronării versus Catedrala Reîntregirii" [The Coronation Cathedral versus Reunification Cathedral], *România Liberă*, April 13, 2011.

the final “Common Declaration of His Holiness Pope John Paul II and His Beatitude Patriarch Teoctist” is a personal translation and not a reproduction of the official translation found on the Holy See website. The translator – Maxim Onofrei, mentioned at the beginning of the book – translated from Romanian himself the papal speeches, the documents, and the text of 12th May 1999 General Audience’s Papal Reflection (presented in Rome in Italian, the Romanian version is already a translation!) ignoring the official English version, which in 2019, when this volume was edited, had already been available on the Vatican website for many years. This is why, unfortunately, this chapter has only an informative value.

If the moments, speeches and documents of the 1999 three-day papal visit to Romania are well known and mostly available in different languages, the same thing cannot be said about the ecumenical, political or cultural consequences of such a visit. The editor deserves great credit for including in the successive chapters (*The President of Romania and the Patriarch of the Romanian Orthodox Church, at the Vatican; Called to the Heavenly Light; The Continuation of the Interfaith Dialogue; Blessed be Romania; The Catholic-Orthodox Dialogue in the Romanian Philately*) interesting details that followed the 1999 papal visit such as: the Patriarch Teoctist and Cardinal Todea being awarded the highest Romanian National Order by the President, a ceasefire agreement in the Yugoslavian war, President Emil Constantinescu’s state visit to the Vatican on 6th October 2000, Patriarch Teoctist’s ecumenical visit to Rome 7-14 October 2002, a Common Declaration signed by the Pope and the Patriarch on 13th October 2002, ecumenical, cultural and international symposiums and events and, eventually, the very foundation of the Institute that issued this volume. The Institute for Advanced Studies in Levant Culture and Civilization was founded after the *Levant Initiative for Global Peace* presented by President Constantinescu in 2011. “Profoundly marked by the ideas and the endeavors of His Holiness, Pope John Paul II, President Emil Constantinescu viewed the task of promoting interfaith dialogue between religious leaders as His Holiness’ spiritual legacy” (p. 239). Small problems of translation are still to be found. For example, the translator used in English a word for word translation of the ecclesiastical title of Metropolitan Daniel, today the Patriarch of the Romanian Orthodox Church (p. 195): “His High Holiness.”⁵

An *Afterword* entitled *Twenty Years After* signed by Teodor Baconschi⁶ offers a final reflection on the papal visit, considered by the former Romanian

⁵ There is no such ecclesiastical title in English. The title used for Orthodox Metropolitans is usually “His Eminence.” Most probably it translated word for word the Romanian way of addressing a Metropolitan: “Înaltpreasfințit.”

⁶ Ambassador of Romania to the Holy See between 2007-2010 and renowned author.

Ambassador to the Holy See as a prerequisite of Romania's integration into the EU and NATO: "I am convinced that the symbolic power of this unusual *family tableau* crystalized the mind-set necessary for the robust expansion of NATO and EU that eventually came to include Romania and Bulgaria" (p. 317-318).

The originality of this volume lies in presenting valuable details about lesser-known events prior and subsequent to the 1999 papal visit and of course in describing the contribution of President Emil Constantinescu to the ecumenical dialogue, a contribution insufficiently recognized and, unfortunately, partially ignored by the Romanian cultural and ecclesiastical milieus. The presence of such extensive information on President Emil Constantinescu's ecumenical and cultural agenda could give the impression that the title is not totally faithful to the content. In some way, adding the name of President Constantinescu to the title would have rendered it more faithful to the information within the volume. Making the information available in English is another plus of the volume, aside from the small translation-related issues that were mentioned.