

Translation from Romanian into English (excerpt)

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Biblical preoccupations in theological schools from Transylvania during 1850-1918

- ABSTRACT of doctoral thesis -

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BIBLICAL PREOCCUPATIONS IN THEOLOGICAL SCHOOLS FROM TRANSYLVANIA DURING 1850-1918

The Holy Scripture was and still is, nowadays, the most read and translated book in humankind history. Either we are talking about simple people or scientific researchers equally, they found through the pages of this writing not only a source of wisdom but also the way to guide their lives into a relation with its *author*, namely God. The Romanian people, getting in touch with Christianity, ever since the forming period, had the chance to get acquainted with *God's word*, which actually represents the basis of all Christians' faith and belief. Knowing this principle, they tried to spread around the scriptural word through a language that should be available and accessible to all Romanians, by partial or complete translations of the *Bible*. However, for those who needed to become soul pastors there was needed something much more. Professor Mircea Chialda, from Caransebes, pointed out, back in 1944, very clearly and coherently the way in which man, either be a common Christian or a cleric, should refer to *God's Law*: "*For mankind, the Law must not appear as a burden, it doesn't have to frighten him, and in the end it shouldn't be seen as a dreadful obligation that mankind must fulfill only because he cannot avoid it. [...] The Law must represent for mankind a sign of trust, of faith for it guides him on the way to salvation. Mankind's desire must always turn towards God's Law.*"¹

Thus, observing God's Law represents and stands for an absolute necessity, entailing also a careful and correct research, an endeavor that Romanians biblists understood and assumed consequently and aligned it in the social context where they all actuated. They assumed the fact that theological research, in general, and biblical research, in particular, can come into the Church support through prominences, analysis and efficient propositions for the development of the academic and missionary-social pastoral activity:

"Without research, the study of theology becomes monotonous, repetitive, superficial, stereotypical and static. Through research not only that it is confirmed and shaded what we already know in theology but, one can find new connections and directions of the old texts or new connections between classical theological disciplines that are seldom too isolated among them in the scholastic theology. Furthermore, other perspectives in describing creatively the new spiritual directions of the

¹ Mircea Chialda, *Passions and Sacrifice of our Savior Christ, by the Old Testament*, in *The Altar of Banat*, no. 5-6/1944, pp. 38. I, the undersigned Horatiu Gratian Babant, translator, license no. 11227 / 10.03.2004 issued by the Ministry of Justice certify this is a faithful translation of the document, in original. In witness hereof, I set my hand and seal.

connection between the holy and sacred text of the Scripture and Tradition and the socio-cultural context of the present times may open.”²

For this reason, it is necessary to have a strong and fair recognition of what our forerunners accomplished in the field of biblical study, to learn from their endeavor, on the one hand, and to continue, on the other hand, these workings, for the Church benefit.

I started this endeavor of research with the identification and analysis of the historical, social and ecclesiastic context in Transylvania, where confessional orthodox and Greek-catholic schools did appeared and developed. And that's the reason why, in the first chapter I chose to have a general presentation of these elements, elements that are compulsory in order to understand the way in which biblical study appeared and imposed as a real concern for the Romanian theology. The national education was reported to as the “national foundation” and, consequently, throughout the century, the deep interest over this matter was very important. The national pedagogy had the purpose or function to integrate the young in the Romanian nation feeling and emotion through the study of its language, history and literature. Whereas the pledged objective, to raise the cultural level of Transylvanian Romanians, was unitary, the clash or confrontation in ideas among the Transylvanian elite did happen. The European influence in the Romanian culture from Transylvania determined the emergence of the state secularization concepts. During the 18th and 19th centuries, the new secular state assumed more and more social functions that were assumed by the Church until that time, such as: civil status, charity, assistance and education, becoming the new protective and paternal resort.

I also noticed that these two visions of the educational development, the secular one and the ecclesiastic one, would also influence the way in which Romanians should refer to as what they wanted to learn. In spite of all these forbiddances, I did notice that the orthodox confessional education not only that it didn't stagnate but it also developed in a slower pace than the Greek-catholic one during the 18th century, gaining on after the year 1848, and, especially, after Andrei Saguna was the Bishop and then Metropolitan bishop of Transylvania. In the schools established besides monasteries and churches and in the confessional schools from Scheii Brasovului and Fagaras area, in the schools at the border areas and

² †Daniel, Patriarch of the Romanian Orthodox Church, *Theological Research – a thoroughgoing study of faith knowledge and Church life*, in *ROC*, no. 3, september-decembre, 2010, pp 79.

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in the schools from Blaj, Romanians did demonstrate that, during a period of hardships, they can vouch their cultural, religious and national identity. One cannot overlook the way in which the *instruction* of the abecedarians was performed at that time, namely by using religious books or other auxiliaries based on biblical readings. And even when we refer to the first Romanian language grammar books, we can notice that the textual material of handbooks was of biblical origin evidencing, on the one hand, the attachment towards the Church and, on the other hand, the abundance in which the Holy Scripture was used in the day-to-day life.

In the 2nd chapter I took a closer look at the theological schools from Transylvania, specifically at the ones from Sibiu, Arad, Caransebes and at the Greek-catholic from Blaj, and I tried to relate the way in which the theological subject of the biblical study imposed as necessary in these schools. I managed to identify, on the one hand, those who were teaching the biblical subjects in these schools, but, I also stopped at the bibliographic materials they used, thus opening the research area for the following chapter. I began by relating the historical context when the *Theological Institute* from Sibiu came into being, developing from a clerical course of 6 months during the time of the Bishop Vasile Moga, into an authentic *Theological Institute* during the time of Andrei Saguna and ultimately became until World War One an honorable institution and prospected by theologians and not only. We could also notice that, in the preliminary period to the year 1848, even that clerical course benefited of some good teachers and we can mention particularly *Gheorghe Lazar* and *Ioan Moga*, who were not by far strangers of the biblical Theology. The development of the educational institution from Sibiu, once that Andrei Saguna came also brought about the development of biblical studies. One first proof of this was represented by the translation and printing of a new edition of the Bible in 1858, which had a preface that can be easily be considered as an authentic isagogic treaty. Another proof of growth in the interest of biblical Theology comes out from the school curriculums issued by the directors of the *Theological-Pedagogical Institute from Sibiu*, where the biblical Theology chair did obtain the more and more classes every year. We cannot continue without mentioning also the professor and future hierarch *Ilarion Puscariu*, who completed the first handbook of Isagogics in Romanian Theology, which was used for a long period of time as a handbook in theological schools.

The same evolution we noticed also at the *Theological Institute from Arad* where, starting from 1822 until 1918, the curriculum, teachers and didactic materials underwent visible progression in favor

of the biblical Theology. The contribution of some teachers such as *Gherasim Rat, Roman Ciorogariu* or *Gavril Giuliani* to the biblical studies development is nonetheless remarkable. As for the *Theological Institute from Caransebes*, we notice that, even though it acted in a quite small community subject to the Serbian Orthodoxy influence, there were many well-trained teachers and visional hierarchs. The massive influence of some teachers from the Banat area specialized in biblical study such as *Filaret Musta, Iosif Olariu* or *Mircea Chialda*, outlined decisively the future lines for research and development of the theological study both in theological schools from Transylvania and from the Romanian Principalities and even from the neighboring orthodox area. A significant part of the thesis is dedicated to the Greek-catholic schools from Blaj, where the theological education which appeared and developed earlier in the Orthodox Church underwent a strong western influence, on the one hand, due to the teachers who were educated in western schools such as *Saint Varvara Theological Seminary* or the University from Vienna, and on the other hand, thanks to Theological publications that appeared in the Roman-catholic academic environment. We cannot ignore also the intense preoccupation in translating and editing the Holy Scripture text which was materialized in 1795 following the insistence of the scribe and canon (priest) *Samuil Micu*.

The 3rd chapter is dedicated to the biblical studies teachers from Transylvania. I tried to present some general information regarding their lives but also I tried to identify each of their contribution to the biblical study development. Where possible, I stopped over the most important studies and workings for a deeper analysis, inserted also images with the analyzed material. There was an extraordinary endeavor from these teachers to accomplish a competent theological-biblical field that should have responded to those times. All translations, studies, articles and handbooks represent a strong proof of their scholarship and of their competences in the Romanian theology from Transylvania who maintained on the line of the authentic orthodox tradition in spite the hardships caused by the historical framework.

In the 4th chapter I put forward other general historical data regarding the ecclesial press from Transylvania so as to understand the publishing trend that these publications developed on. Later on, we stopped to analyze the themes of these publications and considered that there were sufficient biblical preoccupations in their editing. The informative materials are preponderant in the contents of the publications focusing mainly on the Church life or on the cultural background. The biblical Theology handbooks used in the theological schools are the subject of a dedicated subchapter. What we can

conclude in this handbooks review is that they circulated mainly as manuscripts or as unofficial workings. The high interest in promoting the Romanian books written by the Metropolitan bishop Andrei Saguna had a decisive contribution to the diffusion of this kind of workings that were used for a long time in all theological schools from Ardeal. Merely after the Union from 1918 and after the consolidation of the clerical administration in 1922, the editing and printing of theology handbooks replaced those handbooks printed in Sibiu, Arad and Caransebes.

The last part of chapter 4 is dedicated to the analysis of the studies, articles, accounts and translation bearing biblical themes, published in the Theological Magazine that started to be published in Sibiu starting with 1907. In this endeavor we stopped at the year 1916 when the issue of the magazine stopped because of the European political unrests. When analyzing these publications, we can notice the fact that the Romanian and intellectual theologians who published the articles were informed on all tendencies and European studies in the field of biblical Theology using also the writings of the Holy Fathers. These writings were written only in Greek and Latin and in Romanian they were translated starting with the inter-war period. Aurel Craciunescu was a teacher from Sibiu, doctor in theology in Cernauti - city that we can identify as the focal spot of Theology for the Transylvanian Romanians - and he has distinguished as author and accounts editor in the field of the biblical study.

The 5th part of this thesis is dedicated to the Holy Scripture text, translated in Romanian and passed to all Romanians from Ardeal and from the Romanian Principalities. I considered necessary to start with a general exposition of the Bible's main translations that were made during history and stopped to the ones in Romanian. I spoke about the *New Testament from Balgrad* accomplished in 1848 by the great hierarch from Ardeal, *Simeon Stefan*; we analyzed the *Bible from Bucharest from 1688* completed by the ruler *Serban Cantacuzino*, we presented the publication of the united theologians from Blaj materialized in 1795 also known as the *Bible from Blaj od Samuil Micu*, emphasizing that the starting point for these publications was in Transylvania, that is the territory where the Romanian spirit was seldom put to test; we can remark that the *Bible* represented the weapon by means of which the Romanian orthodoxy fought against the denationalization through Calvinism and Catholicism.

The last part of chapter 5 is dedicated to the *Bible from Sibiu*, not because that we would discriminate de previous works but, because it was accomplished during a historical period that we are

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dealing with in this thesis. So, we have exposed the reasons for which the Metropolitan bishop Andrei Saguna made this translation, the corresponding approaches, the diffusion in the Transylvanian territory as well as the disputes around this intercession that appeared between Saguna and the writer Heliade Radulescu. The conclusion of this last part is made clear as we can see, on the one hand, the intense concern of the holy text translators in order to keep in a clean perspective of the truths regarding the faith and belief, the translators' exceptional erudition and the extensive theological culture of the hierarchs who wrote in the preambles of each edition of the Holy Scripture some authentic isagogic treaties that are abreast with the time even nowadays.

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