

Study of the Universal Church History in the Faculties of Theology from Romania between 1918-1990

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ABBREVIATIONS

Keywords: higher education, theology, research, history, professor, development

As Romanian history is of great importance for the Romanian people, so is the Universal Ecclesiastical History that should not be overlooked because the Church was established by Jesus Christ Himself through the Holy Apostles whom in turn consecrated bishops, priests and deacons.

Due to this premise, we must have regard to the study of the universal church history. Therefore, the current study presents the evolution of the Academies, the Institutes and the Romanian Orthodox Theological Faculties. These did not have a peaceful past; on the contrary, they went through periods of disturbance because of the anticlerical and atheist regime. This regime, by the Decree of 1948, closed many Academies.

The current study also emphasizes the importance of the Orthodox Theological Academies during 1918-1990, a period with many alternations between tranquility and turbulence.

If we were to make a hierarchy of the great professors teaching Church History, we did not know exactly which specific criteria to choose. “We avoid creating a hierarchy as we can never say that one is “the best” as compared to another one that is “more”. All of them are “more”. Each one is unique, even if they are placed together. Each shone in his particular way. There are the great men of the Church. There have been and will remain so. They are the great men of theology.”

In this way, we must remember the role that the major theological figures had in the history of theology, rejoicing to discover their outstanding contribution.

The present thesis is structured in four major chapters, as shown in the contents of the thesis, comprising the main ideas addressed throughout the research.

The first chapter entitled “The Role of the Romanian history in the evolution of Romanian Orthodox Church in the twentieth century” describes the historical events in our country and the impact they had on the development and evolution of the Romanian Orthodox Church.

The present thesis describes the obtaining of the autocephaly by our Church and the establishment of the Romanian Patriarchate. The research also presents the negative impact that the communist regime had upon the Romanian Orthodox Church. So as to better understand the development of the events, the first chapter is divided in two parts: the first part is focused on the Romanian Orthodox Church since the Great Union in 1918 until the year 1948 and the second part describes the Romanian Orthodox Church during the communist period.

The second chapter entitled “The higher theological education and the Romanian theological culture in the twentieth century” gathers as much information as possible about the overall situation regarding the higher theological education in the period chosen for research, as well as the theological culture from Romania in the twentieth century. The two research topics are comprised in two subchapters: the first presents the Orthodox Higher Theological Education from Romania in the twentieth century and the second describes the Romanian theological culture in the twentieth century; and as a reflection of the importance of both (theological

education and culture), a third subchapter is introduced, namely, “The importance of the theological training in the formation of Romanian intellectuals.”

In order to understand very well the evolution of the Romanian Orthodox higher theological education, each faculty, academy or theological institute from the turbulent Romanian twentieth century was described.

The third chapter entitled “The history of Institutes, Academies and Faculties of Theology in Romania in the twentieth century” presents the evolution of these universities in the city of Arad, București, Iași, Chișinău, Cernăuți, Caransebeș, Cluj, Oradea and Sibiu. As we can see, this evolution was divided according to the legal regulations of those times. Moreover, it can be noticed that, unfortunately, after the approval of the 1948 Decree, the higher Orthodox theological education was restrained to two University Theological Institutes of Sibiu and Bucharest, but until 1952 a third functioned also in Cluj.

In the fourth chapter “The study and the remarkable teachers of the Universal Church History in the Theological Orthodox university system in Romania in the twentieth century” the present doctoral thesis describes mainly the “Necessity to study History in Theology”, more specifically the need to study academic theology and afterwards the need to study history in theology.

In the second subchapter “Outstanding teachers of the Departments of Theology, Universal History of the Academies, Institutes and Romanian Orthodox Theology Faculties during 1918-1990”, the thesis presents the life and work of the most important professors of the departments of Universal Church History from the theological Romanian Orthodox higher education during 1918-1990. These were: Cicerone Iordăchescu, Eusebiu Popovici, Gheorghe Stănescu, Silviu Dragomir, Romulus Cândea, Ilie Beleuță, Teodor Bodogae, Milan Șesan, Aurel Jivi, Dragomir Demetrescu, Teodor M. Popescu, Ioan Rămureanu și Viorel Ioniță.

Unfortunately, we remember too late the ones that were, and when we have them among us, we do not honor them as we should and we are sorry afterwards. Why should we not be sorry before, to still have a moment of honor? If we honor those professors, as least as we know, the more we ought to honor our present professors who are with us and will always be with us, as God has blessed their life to be present here, but spiritually they will be present as long as our faculties exist.

The annexes attached to the present thesis emphasize the fact that, despite the events during the Romanian communist regime, universal history was studied by many enthusiast researchers, passionate about this domain of Romanian Orthodox theology.

Given the importance of the past, the history of the Romanian Orthodox theological faculties, we ought to keep the memory alive of all professors who had an important role in history and due to whom we have access to the unblemished and untouched history of the Church. We believe that the Academies and the university theological institutes from Romania during 1918-1990 were, and will remain, true oases of Romanian Orthodoxy, even if they had to suffer because of the communist atheist regime.

Even if some bishops, professors of theology, were sympathizers of the communist regime we should not judge them and despise them, but rather they should be appreciated for their work and the contribution they made to improve the study of academic theology in the Orthodox theological Romanian institutions, because they are members of Christ's Church.

Through this incursion into to historical and cultural past of the Faculties, Institutes and Orthodox theological Academies from our country, but also by presenting the worthy to remember professors who taught courses of universal church history, the present thesis aims to emphasise and to preserve the importance of their existence for both the Romanian Orthodox Church and our country.

As the sunlight cannot be stopped for a long time by the clouds that bring the rain which makes everything to be revived and be reborn to a new life, with new strength, which hopefully will not be defeated, so the study of the historical theology should be preserved and further valued.

The rules of the ecumenical and inter-religious contemporary dialogue, those of coexistence in a multi-confessional environment or even multi-religious, reclaim the recognition of the other's identity and assertion of its own history. In the light of the facts presented in the present thesis, emerges the importance of the study of the universal ecclesiastical history as an act of assuming and affirming our Christian identity and our affiliation to the Church, the Mystical Body of Christ.

Also, it can be noticed that, regardless of how much has changed the curricula of the Romanian Orthodox theological institutes, the study of the church history of has never been

absent, even if in the process it was split into the history of the Romanian orthodox church and the study of the universal church history.

“The higher theological education of Romanian Orthodoxy cannot make an exception from the mission that it has, that of being a mouthpiece for the Church, to be an effective framework for discussing the problems that the Church is facing, to provide certain perspectives then and where they are absolutely necessary. In other words, the faculties of Orthodox theology must gain or regain consistency in course of time, not necessarily to adjust to the present time, but to work in correspondence with the issues of time, thus becoming a serious partner in the theological and intercultural dialogue.”

“It is true that he who lives on the fifth, sixth, tenth or on an upper floor remembers very hard the ground floor or the basement, or the structure of the building, and enjoys, and it is natural to enjoy, the view provided by the level at which he lives. However, from time to time, we are obliged to look to the structure, to preserve, to complete and chose to carry on what our ancestors have offered us.”

Therefore, I believe that, similarly to the worthiness of our professors, nowadays we should struggle to always keep alive the Orthodoxy and not to forsake our ancestral faith, but choose to continue to live in and with Christ in spite of the secularization and globalization of society.