

BABES-BOLYAI UNIVERSITY CLUJ-NAPOCA
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“ISIDOR TODORAN” DOCTORAL SCHOOL”

THE EPISTLE TO THE COLOSSIANS.
INTRODUCTION, COMMENTARY AND
THE THEOLOGY OF THE EPISTLE

DOCTORAL DISSERTATION

- Abstract -

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF TABLES

ABBREVIATIONS

Introduction

1. The importance of the topic and the results of previous research
2. Objectives
3. Research methodology and justification of the chosen methods

CHAPTER 1. ISAGOGY OF THE COLOSSIANS

1.1. Approaches in isagogical research

1.2. The recipients

- 1.2.1. Historical and archeological contexts
- 1.2.2. *Church paternity*
- 1.2.3. *Colossians philosophy*

1.3. The Author

- 1.3.1. *Internal evidences*
- 1.3.2. *External evidences*
- 1.3.3. *Place and date*
- 1.3.4. *Purpose*

1.4. The structure and content

- 1.4.1. *Literary forms and traditional materials*
- 1.4.2. *Epistle analysis - perspective*

CHAPTER 2. THE COMMENTARY OF THE COLOSSIANS

2.1 Title of the Epistle

2.2 Apostolic Greeting (Col 1,1-2)

2.3 Exordium: Thanksgiving (Col 1,3-23)

- 2.3.1 *Thanksgiving and Intercessory Prayer (Col 1,3-12)*
- 2.3.2 *Christological hymn (Col 1,13-20)*

Excurs: Chiastic structure of the Christological Hymn

- 2.3.3 **Partitio:** Christological Hymn and colossians (Col 1,21-23)

Excurs: The Sacrificial Cross of the Son – the aim of ecclesial destiny of creation

2.4 Probatio: Letter Body (Col 1,24–4,9)

- 2.4.1 *Apostle Paul and Proclamation of the Gospel (Col 1,24-2,5)*
- 2.4.2 *Apostolic exhortations (Col 2,6-4,6)*

- 2.4.2.1 Exhortation to Faithfulness to the Christ Jesus (Col 2,6-3,4)

Excurs: The philosophy and the elements of the world

CONTENTS

2.4.2.2 Exhortation to Holiness of Life (Col 3,5–4,1)

2.4.2.3 **Peroratio**: prayers (Col 4,2-6)

2.5 Letter Closing (Col 4,7-18)

Excurs: The Epistole to the Laodiceans

CHAPTER 3. THE THEOLOGY OF COLOSSIANS

3.1 Christology

3.2 Ecclesiology

3.3 Eschatology

3.4 Ethics

Excurs: Colossians in dogmatic treatise "On the Holy Spirit" of St. Basil the Great

CONCLUSIONS

BIBLIOGRAPHY

KEY WORDS

New Testament, Colossians, Paul, isagogy, authenticity, commentary, theology, Apostolic Tradition, Apostolic Spirituality

SUMMARY

The research area of the Epistle to the Colossians, regarding especially the introduction, exegesis and the theology of the epistle, is generally more than modest in the Romanian School of the Bible, considering its scale and the diversity of its thematic.

The research captures different references to unresolved controversial issues in the introduction of the contemporary studies, regarding the author of the epistle, his relationship with the Pauline school, the paternity of the church in Colossi, the nature of the Colossian philosophy, the place and date of writing of the epistle, the relationship with the Epistle to the Ephesians, the analyses of the epistle and its theological emphasis.

The written work is outlined in three chapters, each of them having subchapters, each of them being preceded by a preliminary chapter emphasizing the objective of the research, the themes argument, the methodology in approaching the subject and also the purpose of the work.

A historical perspective regarding the interpretation of the Epistle to the Colossians has been covered in the *Preliminaries*, with the purpose of revealing the multitude of different approaches that demanded the attention of the exegetes of the Church. In this context we have established that the object of our research needs a harmonized approach, by which we can identify the introductive aspects and also the exegetic and theological aspects of the Epistle to the Colossians. We propose that in the introductive part of our research we would identify (1) the arguments for the Pauline paternity of the Epistle, (2) the arguments for the paternity of the church in Colossae, (3) the nature of the heresy in Colossians, (4) a theological idea in the light of which we can understand the whole argument the Epistle to the Colossians. For the commentary part, the proposed purpose of our research was to go through all the dangers in a critical way and for the theological part, defining the major theological themes and the way they relate according to the intention of the author.

In the first chapter, „**THE INTRODUCTION OF THE EPISTLE TO THE COLOSSIANS**”, we approached the issue regarding the author of the epistle, providing an outline of the literature, and also of the interpretative framework of the issue regarding the paternity of the epistle. In the last years, the interests of the studies was focused on the way the Apostle Paul was understood in the Epistle to the Colossians. According to the understanding of the contemporary specialists, the composure of the epistle and the contents of its argument, underline the fact that the author was familiar with the Pauline theology, by this belonging to the Pauline school. In the process of writing, the Apostle Paul is given a defining role, because the person of the Apostle Paul belongs to the Pauline preached gospel. The contents of the epistle does not presume a development of the Pauline theology, but the author rather takes the tradition of Judeo-Hellenistic Christianity and harmonizes them with those of the Apostle Paul. This is also the reason for witch by the counter-arguments made in order to stress the Pauline paternity of the epistle, we analyzed the defining aspects of the literary, linguistic and theological arguments of the epistle, in comparison with those of the Pauline epistles considered authentic.

Starting with the demonstration that the Apostle Paul is the author of the Epistle to the Colossians, we identified the place of the detention from where he could have written the epistle. Out if the three variants disputed in contemporary research, Ephesus, Caesarea and Rome, we chose the last hypothesis, considering the details related to the collaborators of the Apostle, named in the final salutation of the epistle. In this case, the date of writing cannot be different than the period of the first roman detention (61-62 A.C.), because after that date, the city of Colossae was affected by a strong earthquake, which devastated the whole region of the Lycus Valley, The determination of the date of the earthquake remains a reference point for establishing the date and the recipients of the Epistle to the Colossians.

Since we have not counted the matter of the paternity of the church in Colossae as a closed approach, we insisted on a historical research, inasmuch as the premise of specialized contemporary studies is the Epaphrasian paternity. Starting from the origins of this debate (IV-V Century A.C.) we analyzed the pro and counter-arguments, both in western perspective and the Romanian School of the Bible perspective. Thus, we can understand better the relationship between the author of the epistle and the recipients he addresses it to.

The theological idea on which we built the whole structure of the Epistle is related to the urge of the Apostle Paul in Col. 2:6. Such an urge to walk in the Apostolic tradition they have received (Jesus Christ, the Lord), couldn't have been given but by the Apostle that had founded that Church, and that had charged Epaphras to complete his apostolic ministry.

The second chapter of the research, **“THE COMMENTARY OF THE EPISTLE TO THE COLOSSIANS”** addresses the content of the letter of rhetorical perspective, which would respond better understanding of the message written by the Apostle Paul. Identification of the structure of the letter is accompanied by a commentary that exposes the author's intention to counter the offensive of the so-called philosophers, identified as belonging to the Jewish world, and the influence of Jewish mysticism. The chapter is accompanied by the presence of three *Excursus* with extensive information on the biblical scholars and their divergent views on the issue.

The last chapter, **“THE THEOLOGY OF THE EPISTLE TO THE COLOSSIANS”** is dedicated to defining the theological themes of Colossians: Christology, Ecclesiology, Eschatology and Ethics. This last chapter is accompanied by a patristic *Excursus* („*Colossians* in dogmatic treatise "On the Holy Spirit" of St. Basil the Great”), intended to be a model of theological approach.

THE FINAL CONCLUSIONS are followed by **“BIBLIOGRAPHY”**, where I have mentioned the editions for the Holy Scriptures, patristic and scholastic commentaries, dictionaries, encyclopedia, Bible concordances, lexicons, grammar dictionaries, Bible commentaries, specialized papers, monographs, article and studies.

This thesis is intended as a contribution to Romanian Biblical references, covering an obvious goal. Exegetical studies on *Colossians* missing, most of the published studies focusing on theological issues. It is important to have an isagogical perspective which, together with exegetical and theological analysis of the text, and with a specific critical tools of biblical research, provide new perspectives to approach the biblical text.

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