

**„BABEȘ-BOLYAI” UNIVERSITY CLUJ-NAPOCA  
FACULTY OF ORTHODOX THEOLOGY  
DOCTORAL SCHOOL “ISIDOR TODORAN”**

## **SUMMARY**

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**CANDIDATE:**

**ANA PLATON**

**Cluj-Napoca**

**2020**

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**ORTHODOXY AND CATHOLICISM ENVISIONED BY FATHER  
WLADIMIR GUETTÉE (1816-1892)**

**- PHD THESIS -**

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**Key-words:** *Wladimir Guettée, papacy, orthodoxy, French-Romanian relations, Russian orthodox church, Gallicanism, Jansenism, XIX century, correspondence, France.*

One of the common characteristics of the Romanian and French people is the steady preoccupation for the delineation of values that formed the very basis of their culture. They raised highly cultivated people that remained recognised for centuries by their contribution to the development of society and the Church, and in the way they carried on their lives.

This thesis, „Orthodoxy and Catholicism envisioned by father Wladimir Guettée”, under close supervision of professor and Father Ioan-Vasile Leb, approaches a subject less known in the Romanian orthodox space; a very delicate, as well as controverted subject.

By immersing our full attention into the work of this illustrious theolog, we notice that we are dealing with an astonishing personality, that of Father Wladimir Guettée, also known under his worldly name as René (Aimé)-François Guettée. He brought to writing his research on the Church of France history from the beginnings and evoked a history if the events pertaining to the Nineteenth century. “Historian and theologist” for some, „polemist and French ecumenist militant”<sup>1</sup> for others, Guettée presented the history of the Eastern Orthodox Church in relation to the Western Orthodox Church, bringing forth well founded ideas and very well documented in favour of the Orthodox Church.

Wladimir Guettée was a Romano catholic priest converted to orthodoxy, theolog, and great historian of the XIX century, French native born from Christian parents in Blois, France at 1<sup>st</sup> of December 1816 and he died in 8<sup>th</sup> of April 1892 in Paris. He was a very unusual student who, during the high school at the Blois Seminar, choose to enrich his mind through reading. At a young age, after graduation, Wladimir Guettée was names priest in the village where he was born. That was also the place where he continued his studies and research, and later he was asked to move to Paris<sup>2</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> Gheorghe I., DRĂGULIN, *Istorie și religie. Instituții și personalități din tradiția Bisericii Ortodoxe Române*, Editura Tradiție, București, 1996, p. 110.

<sup>2</sup> I. STOENESCU, „Un mare ecumenist ortodox al secolului al XIX-le”, în: *Glasul Bisericii*, XXV (1966), nr. 7-8, p. 597.

At the small Seminar where he studied, he had his own library in his room. The young Wladimir was already a passionate reader of history, philosophy, and theology<sup>3</sup>. He would complete all his homework in a very short time, while dedicating the rest of the day to reading. He would thoroughly create synoptic tables of the events and dates provided in the books he read. He managed to learn Hebrew with no help from others. His very own teacher was profoundly impressed by his great intellect and by his extreme diligence at a very young age to constantly learn new things<sup>4</sup>.

And so, the assiduous student Wladimir Guettée spent four years of his life in this seminar, during which he gathered beautiful memories and benefited from the wonderful books that he had the chance to read. While others chose to spend their time for entertaining themselves, he filled his mind with diverse, but also deep and precise knowledge<sup>5</sup>.

At the age of nineteen, he enrolled at the Great Seminar<sup>6</sup> to study theology and philosophy. Just as at the Small Seminar, he would not be satisfied with the knowledge he was thought, and he would lend books from the library, asking for the writings of great thinkers such as René Descartes, Nicolas Malebranche, and father Claude Buffier, and later on, he began buying and studying philosophy books<sup>7</sup>.

His work was not in vain, but rather shortly he received the blessings of bishop Fabre des Essarts din Blois for initiating the publishing of „Histoire de l'Église de France”. As he was against the Ultramontanism trend, the young historian brought about the envy of those around him, fact that determines the new bishop of Blois to place his paper to Index (volumes 7-10) and tot prohibit his writings on the French territory<sup>8</sup>.

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<sup>3</sup> Wladimir GUETTÉE, *Souvenirs d'un prêtre romain devenu prêtre orthodoxe*, Éditeur Fischbacher, Paris, 1889, p. 9.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibidem*, pp. 9-11.

<sup>5</sup> Abbé Wladimir GUETTÉE, *The papacy. Its historic origin and primitive relations with the Eastern Churches*, Editions Minos, New York, 1866, p. IX.

<sup>6</sup> While the Little Seminary was a Catholic school that prepared students for the Great Seminary, the latter was not a simple educational unit, but a specific one to the Western Church, inaugurated in the seventeenth century. The Great Seminary was a higher education institution, specialized in theology and philosophy, specialized for young people who were preparing to receive the Sacrament of the Priesthood. For more details see: GARNIER Yves, KAROUBI Line, *Larousse Dictionnaires. Maxipoche 2015*, Éditions Larousse, Paris, 2014, p. 1274; <https://www.larousse.fr/dictionnaires/francais/s%c3%a9minaire/q=s%c3%a9minaire#183899>, accesat în 17.08.2020.

<sup>7</sup> Wladimir GUETTÉE, *Souvenirs d'un prêtre...*, p. 13.

<sup>8</sup> Ioan Vasile LEB, “Wladimir Guettée și românii- 180 de ani de la nașterea sa”, în: Ioan Tulcan și Lizica Mihuț (ed.), *175 de ani de la înființarea învățământului superior de teologie arădean*, Teologia- Revista Facultății de Teologie din Arad, Arad, 1997, p. 27.

As he became forbidden to publish in his own country, the eminent theolog, historian and ecumenist Wladimir Guettée continued his research and connected with Romanian students that were study in France at that time. He met Iosif Gheorghian at the orthodox Romanian chapel in Paris, the future metropolitan bishop of Ungro-Vlahiei, with whom would engage in a long lasting and beautiful correspondence<sup>9</sup>.

In hour country, this great writer is appreciated and highly regarded by all of those who read his works, and even more than that, some of the Romanian professors and clerics began to translate his writings into Romanian, and subscribed to the two magazines that he used to coordinate: „L’Union Chrétienne” and „L’Observateur Catholique”.

Converted to the Right Faith in 1861, he would join the Russian Orthodox Church „Saint-Alexandre-Nevisky” in Paris, where he receives the title of archimandrite and Doctor of Theology after publishing „La papauté schismatique” and the other works.

Highly regarded in the orthodox countries, after remarkable historical and doctrine research, he would envelope his activity in a remarkable number of seventy-eight volumes published in the honour of the Orthodox Church<sup>10</sup>.

Wladimir Guettée was a great historian, priest, and writer on one hand, and on the other, he was a very solemn person, precise and very well documented. He was not a manufacturer of thologic and philosophic formulas, but an enduring Christian, humble writer, and at the same time an applauded theolog, which became stood out by being highly knowledgeable of the historical and dogmatic documents of the Orthodox Church, and also those of the Roman Church. For a very long time he studied the activity and history of both churches, out of his will to discover the way of Truth, and after many years of study he succeeded in his endeavour. He gave up the Church he was born into and evolved do that through his own will and strength, to dig for the seed of Truth, the real path to salvation.

He was drawn into exploring the works of great scholars of the old regime and especially of the wonderful collection of the Gallican Church. At the same time he was loved and he wished to have a taste of the critical writings, of the history evoked by those who lived during the times

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<sup>9</sup>Ioan Vasile LEB „Wladimir Guettée und sein Beitrag zu den rümanisch-französichen Beziehungen” în: *Transylvanian review*, Vol. II, nr. 2, Summer 1993. p. 25.

<sup>10</sup>Gheorghe I., DRĂGULIN, *Istorie și religie...*, p. 117.

of Ludovic Filip. Even Augustin Thierry, which is mentioned in the body of this thesis and which, on his dying bed, admitted that the work of Father Guettée, „Istoria Bisericii Franței” remained to that moment uneven by any other writing<sup>11</sup>.

We need to emphasise the fact that the present thesis has an interdisciplinary character, which pertains to the fact that we approach a subject not only from the theological perspective, but also from a historical one. Through both our theological and historical research, we intended to bring to light aspects that are unknown to present both by the French audience, as well as for the Romanian one.

**The research methodology.** Throughout the entire study period, we aimed at consulting both the Romanian bibliography as well as the foreign one that provided information of the studied subject.

We appealed to a series of theological and historical writings, and we researched an impressive collection of publications and novel letters that are part of the correspondence between Wladimir Guettée and other members of the Church. These letters hold powerful debates on theological, historical, and philosophical themes. Unfortunately, a lot of these documents have not been consulted to present date, so I am glad to have had the chance to read through the pages of such valuable and ample works.

There were more than a few difficulties that I encountered during my research. Amongst these, I would mention the fact that in our country, at three libraries, the Sibiu Faculty of Orthodox Theology Library, The Bucharest Metropolitan Library, and the Central University Library „Carol I” in Bucharest, after I identified part of the volumes written by Father Wladimir Guettée and translated into Romanian, these documents, although indexed in the electronic systems, could not be consulted because they could not be brought to my disposal. I encountered the same situation when trying to consult the library of Sfântul Sinod from Antim Monastery.

In our country, the only places where I could identify a few of the translated works of Father Wladimir Guettée were central University Library „Mihai Eminescu” in Iași and the Central University Library „Lucian Blaga” in Cluj-Napoca, where the identified papers were also available for me to study.

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<sup>11</sup> Patric RANSON, *Wladimir Guettée- de la Papauté*, Editions l’Age d’Homme, Lausanne, Suisse, 1990, p. 6.



At the same time, the only articles, translations and books from Romanian literature regarding the life and activity of Father Wladimir Guettée were to be found at the Metropolitan Library in Bucharest, Library of Orthodox Theology Faculty from Cluj-Napoca, Library of Orthodox Theology from Alba-Iulia, and Library of Orthodox Theology Faculty from Arad. Also, while studying some documents in the Romanian National Archive, I identified a few of the connections between Wladimir Guettée and the Metropolitan Bishop Iosif Gheorghian and French-Romanian relations.

Given the small number of publications in Romanian language issued by the Romanian Orthodox Church that relate to Father Wladimir Guettée, it is worth mentioning the entire list of titles here:

- „Wladimir Guettée și papalitatea”, published in *Orthodox Magazine*, under the signature of father Haralambie Cojocaru.
- „Un mare ecumenist al secolului al XIX-lea: teolog, istoric și publicist francez Wladimir Guettée”, published in *Glasul Bisericii Magazine*, under the thorough supervision of Father Stoenescu Ion.
- „Amintirile unui preot catolic devenit preot ortodox”, published in *Revista Teologică*, in several issues of the magazine, translated by Father Ilie Beleuță.
- „Wladimir Guettée și românii- 180 de ani de la nașterea sa”, published in *Arad Faculty of Theology Magazine*, article written by Father Professor Ioan-Vasile Leb.
- „Wladimir Guettée și Ortodoxia”, published in *Ortodoxia* and „Din contribuția Bisericii Ortodoxe la Mișcarea Ecumenistă. Wladimir Guettée și revista L’Union Chrétienne”, issued by *Glasul Bisericii Magazine*, both articles written by the reputed Father Professor Gheorghe I. Drăgulin.

Also, throughout my research I identified two articles in German language and one in English, both dedicated to Father Wladimir Guettée:

- „Wladimir Guettée und sein Beitrag zu den rumanisch-französischen Beziehungen”, in *Transylvanian review*, written by Father Professor Ioan-Vasile Leb.
- „Der west-östliche Weg des Wladimir René-François Guettée”, article written by Peter Huber and issued in *the magazine of Orthodox Theology Faculty from München*, in 2013.

Recently I found out of the existence of the two final thesis: I.G. Dumitrașcu, „Viața și opera polemică a lui Wladimir Guettée”, written in 1938 and that of Petre Vlădescu, „Viața și opera lui Wladimir Guettée, published in 1956; both papers can be consulted at the Library of the Orthodox Theology Faculty in Bucharest<sup>12</sup>.

On the other hand, even though I managed to find I the Romanian libraries volumes published by Father Wladimir Guettée and translated into Romanian by the XIXth century theologians, I had the joy to consult his entire work, or at least ninety percent of it, straight from the source: the National Library of France and other libraries in Paris.

I highlighted all these difficulties that I encountered and also the good aspects throughout my PhD studies and research just to show that the path was often strenuous before getting to the desired result which was that of consulting the information sources that could have been related to the activity and work of Father Wladimir Guettée.

Yet another issue that I came across was the fact that part of the writings of Father Wladimir Guettée, especially the articles published in „Uniunea Creștină” magazine and those produced by „Observatorul Catolic” magazine, were only available in micro-sheets. This content was hardly legible, fact that hindered the studying process and led to the impossibility of photocopying of these texts. In Paris, I managed to consult and to procure novel documents, some of them have never been consulted to present.

I am grateful to have had the chance to meet exceptional people that guided me and offered advices or landed me books. These were highly valuable to my goal of completing the PhD thesis and I care to thank them all in the present context.

As for me, I have never been a polemic person, I chose this subject together with my coordinator, Father Professor, only with the purpose of exposing the truth, in its authentic reality, truth that was proven by Father Wladimir Guettée with no error, throughout a completely authentic activity, and by clearly establishing the limits between Orthodoxy and from three different perspectives: dogmatic, liturgic and patristic.

On my turn, after studying the entire work of this eminent Father, I emphasize and strengthen the words written above, stressing the fact that I found no work up to XXI century

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<sup>12</sup> Gheorghe I., DRĂGULIN, *Istorie și religie...*, p. 117.

that is more complete in relation to papacy and the history of French Church, as that of Farther Guettée.

The present thesis is a research over an ecclesiastic history, as well as of an exceptional personality that is less known nowadays. This remarkable man led me to search for and to demonstrate the effects that his work had over the religious, political, and cultural life of the Nineteenth century. Finally, thanks to the study of the life and activity of Father Guettée, I needed to delve into a lot of documents that show the evolution of the Church from the times before the first Christian century.

Another reason for selecting this research theme was the fact that, in spite the special relationship that grew between Wladimir Guettée and the Romanian people, many of his writings remained unknown to the Romanian theologians and historians off the twenty-first century. Even in France, as historian and theologian he remained a controverted figure, although everything he did was to fight assiduously for spreading the Truth.

**The necessity of research** for this subject can be identified also by revealing other considerations. Not only for the present Christians, and especially theologians, the Occidental Orthodoxy represents a rather vague notion, even confusing. If we look to the West, the first Orthodox Church in France was of Russian tradition and it was built in as late as 1816, even though the relations between orthodox people and French started to form as early as 1400.

The connection between Orthodoxy and Occident amplified during the nineteenth century, as young people spread in diaspora for studying and looked for a refuge in the bosom of the Church, fact that has proven true also for the Romanian Orthodox Church. At the time there was only one small Romanian chapel on the Rue de Racines and only later the Church on street Jean de Beauvais was bought and became the Orthodox Romanian Cathedral in Paris.

**The relevancy of the research theme.** This is the first PhD thesis in our country on the presented subject, fact that led into thinking that the research is extremely important. Abroad, the only paper centred on Father Wladimir Guettée was written almost three decades before by the French historian Jean-Paul Besse, who converted to Orthodoxy also in the bosom of the Russian Church in Paris and whom I had the honor of meeting in person. He provided me valuable information for achieving the purpose of this research.

**The working technique** that I used is the one specific to the norms cited from The Theological Studies Magazine. The thesis is structure into several chapters and sections, and I attached a few Annexe that represent a distinct part of the thesis.

**Chapters presentation.** The writing hold together six chapters and a few sub-chapters, all being preceded by an introduction, and at the end I added the conclusions and a few annexes that comprise the unpublished correspondence between Wladimir Guettée with some of the historical figures of the Nineteenth century.

**The first chapter** reveals the argumentation for choosing the theme of this doctoral thesis, the motivation, the methodology, and the relevance of the subject. **The second chapter** is relate to the western historical context in which the action took place, France of the nineteenth century and of course, I dedicated two of the subchapters to life and work of Wladimir Guettée. The first subchapter looks over his life from the first years of childhood to the moment when God decided to call him to the eternal life, and in the second one I decided to shortly present each volume that this Father had published, fact that constitute a novelty and also, I found necessary to place all his works in a logical order by dividing them into different subjects: a) historical writings; b) writings dedicated to papacy; c) writings that deal with the nineteenth century rationalism ; d) memoirs and diaries; e) correspondence with certain bishops of the times;

**The third chapter** was conceived with intention of revealing the vision of Father Wladimir Guettée regarding Catholicism and Orthodoxy from the very beginnings of Christianity, up to nineteenth century. Thus, I dedicated this section of the paper to Father Guettée and his way of making his work known to the European public. This chapter is split into two subchapters which constitute the central part of the present doctoral thesis: The Orthodoxy and the Catholicism envisioned by Father Wladimir. In the first part I described the Orthodoxy from dogmatic and liturgic perspective, and in the second part I wrote about Catholicism with an outlook over heresies, the papal primacy and the filioque.

And because a special bond existed between Father Wladimir Guettée and the Russian and Romanian people, in **the fourth chapter** I considered as necessary to talk about France and Russia from a political standpoint of these countries, and also that of the church relations. Provided that the central figure of this thesis was from the very beginning a priest and French

catholic historian who converted to Orthodoxy through the Russian Church, I found worthy to build an entire chapter related to the influence that this church had upon him, the way it succeeded in convincing that the Orthodoxy is the true way, inherited from Jesus Christ and brought forward to us by the apostles. Least but not last, I needed to remind here of the influence that the Russian university theology that left a mark on all of the writings of this Father and the fact that thanks to his valuable works he received the title of Doctor in Theology.

**The fifth chapter** was reserved to French – Romanian liaisons during nineteenth century from a historical perspective, and I also mentioned the emergence of the first orthodox churches in Paris. One of the subchapters is committed to the relations between Father Guettée and Romanians, especially with the Romanian bishops of those times, with whom he corresponded.

Aside from all these, I considered to dedicate the penultimate chapter, **the sixth one**, to the authenticity and the relevance in present context of Father Guettée. Here I have tried to reveal the reports between the Eastern Church and the Western one and the possible reunion between them that this Father had kept mentioning in his writings. And the **last part** of the present work comprises a series of conclusions on the topics covered throughout the entire doctoral thesis.

As a novelty I inserted, as a distinct part of the paper, a collection of texts revealing the correspondence maintained by Wladimir Guettée with some important personalities of the 19th century. I extracted these documents from the microfiches that I found at the National Library of France and which I consider to be extremely well blended into this work.

One of the reasons I chose to address this issue was that in a world where the Christian religion is wanted as removed, and especially the Orthodox one, I strongly believe that each man of faith should have access to the original work of the father Wladimir Guettée. I did not conceive this work to create polemics, but purely because I believe that it is a necessity for us to know those people that defended orthodoxy in troubled times.

To emphasize the truly "Catholic" and "apostolic" character of Orthodoxy in the West, we should divide Father Guettée's studies into five main themes<sup>13</sup>:

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<sup>13</sup> Patric RANSON, „Pourquoi des cahiers Guettée”, in: *Chaiers Guettée*, no. 1, Fraternite Orthodoxe Saint Gregorie Palamas, Paris, 1993, p. 6.

- a) Publication and dissemination on a large scale of the work of Wladimir Guettée that is not known in today's Orthodox space; his popularisation as a theologian and „witness to Orthodoxy in France" was also considered;
- b) Recognition of the value of his works, which are many in number and are based on patristic texts centred on the Christian tradition, which the papacy unfortunately did not use in creating their dogmas.
- c) The study of the way in which Orthodoxy resisted over the centuries and which manifested itself during the Roman Empire, and here it is worth mentioning the devastating effects of scholastic theology;
- d) Explaining the way in which the Schism of 1054 arose between the Church of the East and the Church of the West;
- e) Research into the manner in which Orthodoxy is presented in Western works and its discoveries from the nineteenth century to the present.

Wladimir Guettée not only sought to clarify historical, philosophical, dogmatic, or liturgical issues, but he dealt with a wide range of theological subjects to demonstrate once again how much he loved the Truth.

Father Guettée's thinking was extremely important for the efforts of the theology to rediscover and update the patristic, dogmatic, and historical tradition of the Orthodox Church. Of all the topics that this theologian debated in his works, I also wanted to remember and develop them chronologically, thus demonstrating how important they were for the nineteenth century and for those that followed.

As far as I am concerned, I believe that by writing this paper I have come to cover a gap that existed in both Eastern and Western theology. Although some other works, articles, have been written and circulated in various libraries, in French, German, or English on the subject, the authors have dealt especially with the life of the father or his writings on the papacy. None of them marked the relations between the Romanian Orthodox Church and Father Guettée, moreover no one made a review of the works of this father.

I believe that some new information obtained by researching archival documents will contribute to a better understanding of the work of Father Wladimir Guettée.