

UNIVERSITY "OVIDIUS" - CONSTANȚA  
THE FACULTY OF THEOLOGY  
THE DOCTORAL SCHOOL

## **SUMMARY OF THE DOCTORATE THESIS**

# **THE CONTRIBUTION OF THE ROMANIAN THEOLOGIANS FROM THE FACULTY OF THEOLOGY OF CERNĂUȚI TO THE DEVELOPMENT OF BIBLICAL STUDY**

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### I. Sources

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## KEY WORDS

The Faculty of Theology in Cernăuți

Vasile Gheorghiu

Vasile Tarnavscu

Vladimir Prelipcean

Vasile Repta

Isidor Onciu

Iustin Moisescu

N. Nicolaescu

Silvestru Octavian Isopescu

New Testament

Biblical theology

Several explorations in the studies of ecclesiastic history after 1989 emphasize the important role of the Faculty of Theology in Cernăuți as mainly marking the future of academic theology in Romania. Because of that, this PhD thesis wants to bring to surface more noticeably the contribution of the professors from the Faculty of Theology in Cernăuți to the development and thoroughness of the biblical study of the Old and the New Testament. But more than that, within the contemporary geopolitical context, Romania is much more interested into the Bucovina area. The concerns for a united Europe propelled this model to the limelight, being proposed as a possible paradigm of a tomorrow's Europe. Basically, the Bucovina model, conceived as a cultural symbiosis of the ethnic groups in the land of Bucovina, achieved with the help of a spirit of mutual understanding of them, of tolerance, of values exchange, of respect towards each national habits, of wide opening, and finally of ecumenism. Certainly, all the studies so far - leaving aside political-like improvisations - are fragmentary, fatally incomplete, often unilateral. We share the opinion that such a study supposes a historical approach first, an examination of the genesis of the Bucovina model. The synchronic optics should be replaced by the dyachronic one, according to the history of mentalities, with the participation of several subjects of study. It is enough to say that, from this point of view, the history of Bucovina was a part of the history of Moldavia, for over four centuries (1359-1774), then, for 143 years (1775-1918), it was a part of the Habsburg Empire, and for a period of more than two decades, it was naturally reintegrated to Romania, and during the last decades, a part of it was incorporated to the Soviet Union, in the Republic of Ukraine. An effective approach of this issue should take into consideration the geopolitical space where the history, the political, cultural and ethnic changes took place under different periods.

We think we are still far from such a complex study, but its elaboration cannot be postponed, in our thesis, we are trying to present a part of the above-mentioned process about the Faculty of Theology of Cernăuți, between 1875-1940, its ecumenicist character. It will not be a study, but the emphasis of a chapter of cultural history, that would offer a better understanding of the theological and cultural values of the professors who taught here.

The forerunner of the Faculty of Theology was the Theological Institute that opened its gates on 4<sup>th</sup> October 1827. Coming from the clerical school, the new institute had a university level, the "alumni" were recruited among the graduates of the high school of Cernăuți, founded in 1808. There are here the subjects taught in eight semesters: history of church, biblical archaeology, introduction into the Old Testament and into the New Testament - all in Latin; church law, dogmatism and morals - in Greek; pastoral theology, Catechetics and pedagogy - in Romanian. During the time of Dositei Herescu, Daniel Vlahovic and Isaia Baloșescu (1775- 1835), the official language of the Diocese of Bucovina was Romanian. The bishop Eugeniu Hacman introduced Ukrainian in 1838, too. But the same bishop decided that Latin be replaced with Romanian at the Theological Institute, for the subjects mentioned, also taking

the decision to establish the elementary school of "teachers" (cantors). Between 1827-1875, many students graduated this institute, becoming priests, future teaches at the Faculty of Theology, some of them even hierarchs.

In 1875, it is established the University of Cernăuți, as "deutschsprachige Nationalitäten-Universität", under the patronage of emperor Franz-Joseph ("Alma mater Francisco-Josephina"), bearing this name until 1918. The faculty of theology was added to the two faculties, law and philosophy, by incorporating the theological institute and employing the teachers from the institute to the new faculty. There it started a new period. Besides the old teachers, they brought new teachers with theological studies in Austria and Germany, and also graduates of the former Theological Institute. The subjects taught were: biblical study and exegesis of the Old Testament, biblical study and exegesis of the New Testament, history of church, dogmatism and fundamental theology, special dogmatism, moral theology, church law, practical theology, Hebrew and Aramaic, Greek and church Slavic. The duration of courses was eight semesters. The teaching language was German, except for the practical theology, taught in Romanian and Ukrainian.

The Faculty of Theology in Cernăuți was the only orthodox university institute from the former Austrian-Hungarian monarchy. There, they trained young men to become priests, from Bucovina and Transilvania, but also from the Old Kingdom (*Vechiul Regat*), Ukrainians, Serbians, Bulgarians.

The first doctorate in theology in Cernăuți was granted in 1881, being awarded to the future professor Emilian Voiuțchi, with the mention "Sub summis auspiciis Augustissimi Imperatoris", accompanied by the emperor's ring.

The reputation of the Faculty of Theology spread rapidly. The doctorate obtained in Cernăuți was considered a great honour: Grigore Pișculescu - the future theology professor, known as the writer Gala Galaction, the future metropolitan Nicolae Bălan, the future patriarch of Bulgaria, Kiril, Romul Cândeа, the future professor of universal history at the University of Cernăuți, were PhDs of the Faculty of Theology. R. Cândeа was first professor of Universal Church History at the Faculty of Theology, following the great Eusebie Popovici.

The prestige of the Faculty of Theology can also be seen from the fact that during 1875-1919, the following priest professors were rectors (chancellors) of the University: Vasile Mitrofanovici, Eusebie Popovici, Vasile de Repta, Constantin (Clement) Popovici, Emilian Voiuțchi, Teodor Tarnavscchi, Ștefan Saghin and Vasile Tarnavscchi. A historian of the University of Cernăuți (1875-1919), dr. Rudolf Wagner, stated the odd coincidence that both the first rector of the University of Cernăuți, Constantin Tomașciuc, and the last one, Vasile Tarnavscchi, during the Austrian period, were Romanians.

The Faculty of Theology was situated in the monumental metropolitan residence built between 1864-1882, the left wing, where the seminarian church was, also the Theological Institute (called

Seminar), and the library. As a particularity, we mention that the students from the Theological Institute, benefiting from exceptional conditions, were improving their training as future priests, under the guidance of a rector and a prefect. There, they would learn the ritual, homiletics, attended foreign language courses, canticles.

After 1919, the University of Cernăuți included another faculty: the science one. The period 1919-1940 represented a continuous progress for the Faculty of Theology, too. There were other subjects of study, the old professors continued their activity, the new professors were appointed among those with specialised studies at other universities than those in Austria and Germany. The reputation of the faculty was still great: here, the doctorate was obtained by the current academy priest professor Dumitru Stăniloae (born in 1903), pr. Teodor Bodogae, Ștefan Munteanu (Hebrew specialist), Ștefan Lupșa, Nicolae Popovici, Dimitrie Belu, Grigore Marcu, Milan Pavel Șesan, Petru Rezuș, Liviu Stan, Teodor Savu, who became professors in their turn.

Speaking again about the role of the Faculty of Theology in Cernăuți during 1875-1940, we need to say in conclusion that both Romanians and Ukrainians owe it the creation of their intellectuality for the most part. Practically, in the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, there were not situations where priests did not have a university degree in theology. Their reputation, granted by their academic training, their good material state assured by the Greek-Oriental Religious Fund, their missionary and cultural activity in villages, are the main features of the priests in Bucovina, mostly related to the Faculty of Theology in Cernăuți.

Following the tragic events in 1940, the Faculty of Theology continued its activity in Suceava, coming back to Cernăuți in the fall of 1941 until March 1944, when it continued again in Suceava, until 1948, when it was dissolved, the professors being sent to the university theological institutes in Bucharest and Sibiu, where the whole theological higher education had been concentrated in 1948. Temporarily, there was another one in Cluj (1948-1952).

The Faculty of Theology in Cernăuți, considered for years a factor of the Orthodox spirituality, along with the similar institutions from Kiev and Athens, ceased to exist. But it continues to exist through its many disciples, through its model of Christian ecumenism.

Following the December Revolution in 1989, both the organisation of the Romanian Orthodox church and the theological education, were improved. They established the Archiepiscopacy of Suceava, belonging to the Metropolitan of Moldavia and Bucovina, they created a theological institute in Iași and they are about to establish new theological seminaries. The Romanian orthodox parishioners of the historical Bucovina area belong nowadays to two eparchies: those from the Cernăuți area (Ukraine) have the eparchy of Cernăuți and Bucovina, subordinated to the Patriarchy of Moskow with the headquarters in

Cernăuți, and those from southern Bucovina have the eparchy of Suceava. Over artificial borders, the faith and ideals are still the same.

The great school of theology of church, originated in the Putna school of Vartolomeu Măzăreanu, with echoes at Suceava and flames at the Theological Institute and then at the Faculty of Theology in Cernăuți, was considered in its time as a factor of orthodox spirituality, along with the similar institutions from Athens and Kiew. Its professors were appreciated theologians, highly cultural personalities, authors of studies and syntheses, their lectures lying the bases of the Romanian theology. Most of them were deans and rectors, and besides the university chair and the church altar, they were real tribunes in defending the Romanians' rights.

Through its teachers, educated in the spirit of Romanian tolerance and trained at the great Western theological centres, by the care of a common body ierarch-teachers-priests, the Faculty of Theology in Cernăuți become one of the best and wanted faculties of orthodox theology in the world. "There came to listen to and to learn the orthodoxy of our ancestral faith, not only the sons of our people here, from Ardeal, Banat and Țara Românească, but also the sons of the other orthodox countries. The name of the Faculty of Theology in Cernăuți was regarded with the same respect in the North and South of the orthodox countries. The Greeks, Serbians, Bulgarians, together with the Romanians laid the foundation of their right faith there in Cernăuți, and were getting ready for their callings as future leaders of their church.

Until the borders of Russia and over them, the Faculty of Theology from Cernăuți became at one moment the centre of the orthodox theology science and culture all over the world, thanks to the solid organisation of its founders and to the rigorous scientific method applied by the scholars and teachers in the research and exposition of the wide and difficult problems within all theological subjects of study". for the most part of its existence, the faculty was considered the lighthouse of the Romanian orthodoxy and of all orthodox countries from south-east Europe. Here, most professors from our old Theological Faculties and Academies from Bucharest, Chișinău, Transilvania and Banat, will study, therefore we can rightfully say that these education institutions owe its scientific maternity to the Faculty of Theology in Cernăuți. The immortal theology teachers from these lands, true apostles of orthodoxy, trained, educated and moulded spiritually an elite priesthood in Bucovina who succeeded, during difficult times in history, to maintain the Romanian orthodoxy alive. The Faculty of Theology in Cernăuți played an important role especially for the Romanian people, and also for the other

orthodox Balcan countries. This fortress of orthodoxy and of the Romanian national culture promoted the ecumenical spirit, the Romanian theological science deriving from it.

At present, at Cernăuți, within the University with German-Romanian roots, but slavonised in the meantime, there is a faculty of theology depending on the autocephalous Ukrainian church. At Suceava, his Eminence IPS Pimen, the Archbishop of Suceava and Rădăuți founded the Theological Seminar "Sfântul Mitropolit Dosoftei" in 1991. The former quarters of the Faculty of Theology from Cernăuți was refurbished, part of the faculties of the State Ukrainian University carrying out their activity here, and in the former building from Suceava, there is the Bucovina Library "I.G. Sbiera".

It is remarkable that, due to the historical realities that placed Bucovina within the Austrian-Hungarian Empire between 1774-1918, the evolution of the theological education in Bucovina was different from the evolution of the theological education from the Romanian Kingdom (*Regatul*). The only theological school during the 144 years of Austrian-Hungarian domination, was the Theological Institute from Cernăuți, which was turned into the Faculty of Theology in 1875, within the new Imperial University of Cernăuți. Because Bucovina was part of the Austrian-Hungarian Empire, ever since its establishment, the University of Cernăuți, in general, and all the three faculties - Law, Philosophy and Theology - were organised according to the regulations of Western Universities, and the professors and students from Cernăuți would study and meet all the requirements of western university education from the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Being born in such a historical context, the Faculty of Theology from Cernăuți, and the whole theological education from Bucovina along with it, had a different evolution compared to the rest of the Romanian theological education. One of the characteristics of the theological education in Bucovina is the fact that, being part of the Austrian-Hungarian education system, the Romanian professors and students had access easily to the specialised courses held by the great western universities and had also access to the great western university libraries. Thus, the most enlightened minds of the Romanian orthodox theologians, professors and students, had a chance to meet the entire western, Roman-Catholic and protestant theological culture within the academic environment.

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