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THE FACULTY OF ORTHODOX THEOLOGY**



The Liturgical heritage of Bălgrad

**The importance of Alba Iulia printings in the
establishment of the Romanian liturgical formulations**

HABILITATION THESIS

SUBJECT: THEOLOGY

[ABSTRACT]

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SUMMARY

At the time when I defended my doctoral thesis (*Icon and Cathehesis*), I have promised my magister (metropolitan Laurențiu Streza), as well as to the members of the scientific committee (rev.prof. PhD. Nicolae Necula and rev.prof. PhD. George Remete) that my future research objectives will include the analysis of a book printed in Alba Iulia, which I had identified in the old book repository of the Archbishopric of Alba Iulia, but which was largely unknown to me at that date.

For this reason, a significant part of our studies has been devoted to the evolution of the Romanian Orthodox Church's cult, as it was reflected in the first liturgical books printed in Alba Iulia. This is the reason why the first part of this habilitation thesis is reserved to studies and publications dedicated to Ioan Zoba, and to the works he edited in the second half of the XVII-th century in Alba Iulia.

The historical rehabilitation of the protopresbyter Ioan Zoba. A key feature of Alba Iulia was that the typographical production in this center has always been under the pressure of the Reformation, and functioning through the administrative and financial support of the Calvinist political authorities; For this reason, the orthodox purity of the texts, came under the scrutiny. Ineffective in achieving its set targets, the protestant Reformation has though facilitated the evolution towards a renovated Orthodox Church, modern, Romanian, and National, at the same time. Reformed without becoming a Protestant Church, the Orthodox Church has in fact been modernized through an internal reformation: a) *Liturgical Reformation*, acieved by the translation of service books and the uniformisation of liturgical practice; b) *Administrative Institutional Reformation*¹, among these the protopresbitery and the General Synod (Great Gathering), composed of Metropolitan, Protopresbyters and

¹ For the effects of the calvinist proselytism on the Romanian Orthodox Church institutions in Transylvania, see A. DUMITRAN, *Religie ortodoxă – Religie reformată...*, p.95-123.

clergy delegates, with an authority surpassing that of similar organisms within other Orthodox Churches, became „the most important administrative institution that had function within the Romanian Orthodox Church in Transylvania during the XVIIth century”.

Despite the conservative traditions within Constantinople and Moscow, which strongly influenced the medieval ecclesiastical culture, Romanians understood that language was just a means used for the Word of God to reach the ears of people. The leading role in Romanian printing and translation works for Transylvania was played by Alba Iulia, where significant cult books were produced: *The New Testament* – 1648, *The Psalter* – 1651, *Prayer Book* – 1689, *Chiriadromionul* – 1699, *Bukoavna* – 1699.

The typographical impetus of Bălgrad was truly impressive; printing activity was taking place in Latin, Hungarian and German. Numerous and detailed accounts regarding the Printing Center of Alba Iulia are known to exist². Under just some notable names – Metropolitan Simion Ștefan, Protopresbyter Ioan Zoba of Vinț and the typographers Mihai Iștvanovici and Chiriac Moldoveanu – the Alba Iulian typography center succeeded in bringing the Romanian printing legacy forward in terms of not just technique, but also by its high standards of selection, translation and editing of the religious texts³.

While the relationship with his own metropolitans (Sava and Ioasaf) was conflictual-so not in line with the traditions and practice of the Orthodox Church- and the attitude towards the Calvinist authorities was too obedient, we are now sure that the texts published by Ioan Zoba do not contain protestant influences. Moreover, the 7-8 titles published under his supervision had a decisive influence towards to formation of the Romanian liturgical language. As such, over more than 20 studies and articles detailing the works of this promotor of Romanian language and printing we have **demonstrated without a shadow of doubt** that:

- Ioan Zoba *has contributed to the refinement of the Romanian liturgical formulations*, not just in terms of expressions, but also in the selection and distribution of the liturgical material for the *Liturgy book* (*Litughier- Rânduiala diaconstvelor*) as well as for the *Prayer Book*

² Eva Mârza, *Tipografia de la Alba Iulia, 1577-1702*, Sibiu, Edit. Imago, 1998 și Eugen Pavel, *Carte și tipar la Bălgrad*, Cluj-Napoca, Edit. Clusium, 2001.

³ *Eugen Pavel, Carte și tipar la Bălgrad*, p. 12.

(*Molităvnic*), massively used in subsequent Romanian editions of *Antim Ivireanul*;

- By our analysis it results that **all his books can be accepted without any reservations as having an Orthodox content**, in perfect harmony with the doctrine of the Orthodox Church (sometimes even exceeding the purity of current texts)
- Through the homiletical models made available to the Transylvanian clergy (*The golden coffin and Homilies for departed*), **Ioan Zoba has contributed decisively to the formation of Romanian homiletics**.

The work undertaken by us and presented in the chapter **Research on history of the cult is** substantially illustrated by the publication (together with Ana Dumitran and Alin Gherman) of the critical edition of the *Prayer Book (Molităvnic)* published by Ioan Zoba in Alba Iulia (1687). Our most important conclusions are:

- *The services presented are of an undoubtless purity of the doctrine*; none of the services within the *Prayer Book (Molităvnic)* exhibits even a trace of protestant contamination;
- *The Prayer Book has contributed to the establishment of liturgical formulations* (one could check the Prayer and Liturgy books of Antim Ivireanul⁴), as well as to the development of the Romanian vocabulary.

The research in the domain of contemporary liturgical theology focuses primarily on the relationship between *Liturgy and Radio-TV broadcasting* (disseminated in two studies) and on the attitude of certain faithful towards contemporary challenges (e.g., incineration). The aim of these studies was to find out whether there is a real and conceptual conflict between the „On-line Liturgy” and the „live” Liturgy, as well as how this conflict could be solved. Indeed, the development of new technologies offers the possibility of broadcasting services *on-line*, but raises a question marks regarding the liturgical and doctrinal appropriateness of such undergoing. *What, how, and how much* of the liturgical act to transmit, are questions which the Church has to answer, considering that on one hand, the Liturgy does not resume to merely listening the service, but also includes the partaking to the Eucharistic Christ

⁴ Au confirmat ipoteza noastră atât Mircea PĂCURARIU (*Tiparul în Biserica Ortodoxă Română*, Sibiu, Edit. Andreiana, 2016, p. 86) cât și Cătălina VELCULESCU (*Diaconstoele de la Alba Iulia și Liturghierul lui Antim Ivireanul*, în „Anuarul Institutului de Istorie A. D. Xenopol”, XLVII, 2010, p. 23-31).

and the communion with the other members of the Church, which on the other hand, how could the Church address the pastoral needs of partaking for people who are immobilized in bed by serious health conditions. Our conclusions show that, while a certain benefit of the participation to an on-line Liturgy is possible, this just applies to Christians facing serious conditions, or who are unable to directly participate to the Divine Liturgy, as the ultimate finality of this act is to receive the Holy Communion.

The part dedicated to the revision of the Orthodox Church's Cult **(Proposals and solutions regarding certain contemporary liturgical practices)** has in focus two services which could be reformulated in the current Prayer Book (Molitfelnic), at least one of the them being inspired from the texts of Ioan Zoba.

As the current Prayer Book contains a *Prayer Canon* with a very somber text within the *Service for a person about to die* [*As which benefit I have, if my soul is snatched to terrifying passions, while my body is mourned by you! Leave it unburied, so that the dogs can eat my heart. (VI-th Ode, Molitfelnic, Bucharest, 2002)*], we would propose the more optimistic version of Ioan Zoba [*From the highest, look upon me Mother of God, and with mercy now lean towards me; come and search for me so that by seeing you I can depart my body, rejoicing. (VI-th Ode, Molitǎvnic, Bălgrad 1689)*].

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I think that my research in the field of Liturgical Theology has contributed to the development of this discipline, while my studies were well received by the scientific community. I also expect that my efforts will facilitate the development of future specialists in this subject.