

Book Reviews

Rev. Prof. Dr. Florin DOBREI, Dr. Sebastian-Dragoș BUNGHEZ, *Preotul profesor Teodor Botiș (1873-1940). O viață în slujba Bisericii, a învățământului teologic și a neamului românesc (Reverend Professor Teodor Botiș (1875–1940). A Life in the Service of the Church, Theological Education, and the Romanian Nation)*, “Aurel Vlaicu” University Press, Arad, 2022, 576 pp.

This volume appears within the “Arad Theologians” Collection, marking the bicentennial anniversary of Arad Theological Education (1822–2022), aiming

“to offer those interested the opportunity to engage with the thought and work of Arad’s theology professors, with their pastoral-missionary and cultural-social activity during the historical phases of theological education’s development — from Institute to Academy, and from Academy — through the crucible of dissolution — to Faculty, as fulfillment and current dynamism of Arad’s theological tradition”.

With scientific rigor and thorough documentation, this monographic work elucidates and supplements the biographical and bibliographical data on the personality of Father Professor Teodor Botiș, bringing forth previously unpublished material. At the same time, it provides an in-depth understanding of the mentality and actions specific to the era in which he lived and worked, thus standing as a genuine historical document preserved for posterity.

Structured into 14 chapters, this well-conceived and comprehensive volume opens with “Introductory Considerations” followed by biographical elements concerning: his origins; years of study; Teodor Botiș

and the Mocioni family; the Botiș family. Biographical data is interwoven throughout the entire narrative, with subsequent chapters containing relevant documents and analyses on his ecclesiastical, didactic, and administrative involvement in pedagogical and theological education in Arad, as well as in the national-political and cultural spheres.

The final part of the work refers to: “End of the Journey”; “Teodor Botiș – the Man, the Priest, the Teacher”; “Conclusions”; and the bibliography, accompanied by three appendices: *Florilegium*; *Teodor Botiș as Perceived by His Contemporaries*; and *A Life of Service in Images*.

The work offers an engaging and enjoyable reading experience, expanding horizons through well-documented exposition rendered in a coherent, sober, and fluent style.

From the abundance of data presented in this volume, readers can easily reconstruct the personality of Reverend Professor Teodor Botiș, the environment in which he was active, the historical epoch he traversed, and his contribution to the mission of serving Christ, His Church, and the Romanian nation.

Specifically, according to the data provided, a brief presentation would state that Teodor Botiș was born on November 17, 1873, in Valea Neagră village, Bihor County, to peasant parents Gavril and Ioana. He attended primary school in his native village, then continued with the Minorite monks in Șimleul Silvaniei. Thanks to a scholarship, he pursued secondary education with the Catholic monks in Oradea Mare. For his participation in the *Memorandum Movement* initiated by Romanian leaders in Transylvania, he and three colleagues were expelled from the Hungarian Catholic high school; he completed his final school year and baccalaureate in the state high school in Sibiu. He enrolled as a scholarship student at the Orthodox Theological Institute in Arad, gaining the respect and trust of Bishop Ioan Mețianu, who appointed him as tutor for the children of Eugen Mocioni, Petru and Alexandru, at their estate in Căpâlnaș – Severin County. The Mocioni family was known for their role in national, ecclesiastical, and cultural emancipation. Simultaneously, he continued his studies at the Arad Theological Institute, eventually completing them at the University of Chernivtsi as a scholarship recipient from the Diocese of Arad, earning a Doctorate in Theology in 1900.

He returned to Arad as a professor at the Pedagogical-Theological Institute and as prefect of the boarding school.

His comprehensive theological and secular education — truly encyclopedic — was evidenced by the wide range of subjects he taught between 1900–1906 at the pedagogical department: Religion, Romanian Language, Mathematics, National History, Geography, World History, German, and Constitutional Law. At the theological department (1901–1927), he taught: Biblical Studies (Old Testament), Church Universal History, Romanian Church History, Dogmatics, Canon Law, Morality, Church Administration, Apologetics, Liturgics, Catechetics, Pedagogy, Romanian Language and Literature, and Psychology.

In 1918 he was appointed interim director, becoming the permanent director in 1919; from 1927 he served as the first rector of the newly established Theological Academy, a position he held until his retirement in 1938. During this time, he taught Dogmatics, Morals, Apologetics, and Patrology.

In his effort to ensure the school fulfilled its mission, Father Professor Teodor Botiș was always committed to strengthening the faculty by promoting capable teachers qualified to cover all disciplines at the highest academic standards.

He fostered a vocational education model under the direct guidance of the Church so that future clergy could embody its mission in the daily lives of their parishioners.

At the centenary of the Theological Institute, Director Botiș remarked:

“Our theological institute in Arad has reached this year the age of 100 — one hundred — years of existence, of generous sacrifice and great hardships. Founded from the charitable coin of a poor yet enlightened people, it has in its lifetime produced 2,112 priests — as many apostles who strove to uplift the soul of our nation to the highest rungs of virtue and to enthrone, as a social ideal, the will of God in our diocese. These priests have been, and still are, the industrious bees in the tranquility of our villages. They alone preserved for our people the same

Romanian spirit, the same sweet language, and the same pure faith — as clear as a tear — weaving, in secret, the very fabric of today's national unity... With profound reverence, we bowed our hearts before this cultural hearth, which for the Romanian people of these lands has been 'manna in the wilderness and water from the rock'. And with deep humility, we turned our gaze to the sacred figures adorning the walls of the ceremonial hall. The diligent past of these modest professors is intertwined and indistinguishable from the very history of our diocese" (p. 149).

Alongside his academic work, Reverend Professor Teodor Botiș was an unwavering advocate for the national cause, contributing through both writing and activism to the achievement of the Great Union, and during the interwar period, he worked through cultural means to consolidate its legacy.

He also participated in various ecclesiastical and cultural associations, as well as contributing to numerous newspapers and journals. He was a long-time collaborator with the newspaper *Românul* (Arad), the *Theological Review* (Sibiu), and the *Calendars of the Diocese of Arad* (1905–1919; 1921–1926). As director and then rector, he authored the *Yearbook of the Pedagogical-Theological Institute* (1918–1927) and the *Yearbook of the Theological Academy* (1927–1935). He served as editor of the diocesan publication *Church and School* between 1917–1921.

In this publishing context, he secured a lasting legacy with two substantial monographs, awarded by the Romanian Academy and considered reference works in Romanian historiography: *The History of the Normal School (Preparandia) and of the Romanian Orthodox Theological Institute in Arad* (Arad, 1922, 742 pages), and *Monograph of the Mocioni Family* (Bucharest, 1939, 473 pages).

On the ecclesiastical front, he was a member of the Eparchial Consistory in Arad, a delegate in the Eparchial Assembly, a member of the Examination Commission for priesthood candidates; he was the first president of the "Secondary Teachers' Association" and of the ASTRA

Arad branch; a member of the Banat-Crișana Social Institute, and served as senator in the 1931–1932 legislature.

In recognition of his achievements, the diocesan leadership granted him the rank of *Iconom Stavrofor* in 1936, after bestowing upon him the title of honorary archpriest in 1920.

He retired in 1938 and passed away in 1940. In his memory, a foundation was established “to support poor children,” administered by his wife, Maria Botiș Ciobanu — an Arad-based poet and writer whose name appears in the *Anthology of Romanian Poetry*.

His retirement coincided with the 10-year reunion of the 1928 graduates of the Theological Academy. Summing up the institution’s significance, Rector Dr. Teodor Botiș emphasized the school’s formative role:

“Especially in our nation’s turbulent past, this school has produced individuals of genuine value and widely recognized reputation, from humble village priests to university professors, members of the Romanian Academy, and prominent parliamentarians...” (p. 226).

As professor, director, and rector of theological education in Arad before the Great Union and throughout the interwar period, Teodor Botiș remains a representative name — a model and benchmark in the collective memory of posterity. One of his disciples, the Banat historian Gh. Cotoșman, a graduate of this “school blessed by God and glorified by men”, affirmed that Botiș

“cemented morally what he sowed and built during his lectures... As rector, ever present among us, he watched over us with a father’s love... he listened to our words, observed our gestures, received our prayers and hymns... he was to all of us both teacher and father... ‘The Good Sir,’ as we affectionately called him, labored day and night to make our time in the seminary — that workshop where the characters of tomorrow’s priests are carved — as enriching as possible...” (pp. 205–206).

Since this year is dedicated to the elderly, we recall the words of one of his admirers, Mihail Wieder:

“...We need elders like these, to serve as examples and guides in all our lives. They have fulfilled their duty toward us; now we must fulfill our duty toward them. We must continue their work, honor them, venerate them as saints, follow their counsel, and enlighten ourselves with their thoughts... Only thus will we still have them among us” (p. 508).

Rightly appreciating this volume, we echo the words of Tudor Arghezi: “A beautiful book — honor to the one who wrote it!”

Rev. Prof. Dr. Sorin COSMA

Rev. Prof. Dr. George GRIGORIȚĂ (coord.), *Forme de organizare și funcționare ale monahismului ortodox: tradiție bimilenară și provocări contemporane. Actele simpozionului organizat de Patriarhia Română în zilele de 24–26 mai 2021 (Forms of Organization and Functioning of Orthodox Monasticism: Two-Millennia-Old Tradition and Contemporary Challenges. Proceedings of the Symposium organized by the Romanian Patriarchate on May 24–26, 2021)*, Basilica Publishing House, Bucharest, 2024, 952 pp.

In the *Studia Canonica* collection, initiated and coordinated since 2014 by Rev. Prof. Dr. George Grigoriță, Patriarchal Counselor at the Chancery of the Holy Synod, the sixth volume has recently been published. This volume contains the proceedings of the International Symposium organized by the Romanian Patriarchate, through the Faculty of Orthodox Theology “Justinian the Patriarch” in Bucharest (Department of Systematic Theology, Practical Theology, and Sacred Art) and the Exarchate Sector of the Archdiocese of Bucharest, which took place on May 24-26, 2021.