

Cristinel IOJA, Daniela Popescu, Marcel N. TANG, Tiberiu ARDELEAN (coord.), *Art, Theology and Civilization in the Romanian Monastic Spaces. From Monastery Schools to Theological Schools*, Editura Presa Universitară Clujeană / Editura Universității „Aurel Vlaicu”, Cluj-Napoca / Arad, 2023, 316 pp.

The anniversary, in 2022, of the bicentenary of the Theology of Arad – in parallel with 210 years of uninterrupted Romanian pedagogical education in the same city of culture on the Mureș – has led to the initiation of a wide program of activities, including the organization of several symposia and national and international conferences, exhibitions of old books and illustrations, choral music concerts, the dedication of the student chapel, as well as a beautiful but difficult project of the Faculty of Orthodox Theology “Ilarion V. Felea” of a collection of bio-bibliographies of the forefathers of the departments that they currently honor by teaching.

The international symposium *Art, Theology and Civilization in the Romanian Monastic Spaces. From Monastery Schools to Theological Schools*, organized in Arad, on 25-28 September 2022, by the Faculty of Orthodox Theology “Ilarion V. Felea” in partnership with the European Federation of Associations and Clubs for UNESCO and honoured by the participation – onsite or online – of senior UNESCO officials and hierarchs, professors of theology, historians and people of culture from France, Italy, Serbia, Ukraine, Republic of Moldova, Bolivia, Mexico, Brazil, Hungary, Cyprus, Japan and Bulgaria, from the “George Barițiu” Institute of Cluj-Napoca of the Romanian Academy, as well as from several Romanian Universities (Bucharest, Cluj-Napoca, Timișoara, Oradea and Arad) was also part of this bicentennial anniversary.

The present volume, taking up not only the title of the ample event mentioned, but also constituting a faithful mirror of it, opens with a brief preface (in Romanian and English), signed by Fr. Cristinel Ioja, Dean of the Faculty of Theology in Arad, which outlines the importance of the

Arad Orthodox Theological School for the Romanian cultural, church and academic space in the past and today, as follows: 1. The Theological Institute of Arad, founded in 1822, is the first higher school of Orthodox theology in the entire intra-Carpathian area; 2. The Theological Institute and Preparandia (Pedagogical School) of Arad were the backbone of Romanian culture in this part of the country until the Great Union of 1918; 3. The Theological Institute, transformed in 1927 into the Theological Academy, has brought invaluable contributions to the development of Romanian culture and theology through the professors who taught there, some of whom became full, corresponding or honorary members of the Romanian Academy, respectively awarded by the high academic forum in Bucharest; 4) The theological tradition of Arad is further fulfilling its mission – after the difficult period of communism – through the current Faculty of Orthodox Theology, integrated into the state university system and benefiting from all three forms of training (bachelor, master and doctorate), an ideal that the forefathers did not even hope for; 5) Faculty of Orthodox Theology “Ilarion V. Felea”, through its own theological tradition, is connected to the Tradition of the Sovereign Church and to the demands of contemporary Romanian and European higher education.

The following are the speeches given at the festive opening of the symposium, presenting the need to organize scientific events of such magnitude and reaffirming the role and importance of the Orthodox Theology of Arad throughout the two centuries of its existence; among those who spoke we mention the following: His Eminence Timotei Sevcicu (Archbishop of Arad), His Eminence Chrysostomos of Kyrenia (Metropolitan of the Autocephalous Church of Cyprus), His Eminence Siluan Mănuilă (Bishop of the Romanian Orthodox Eparchy of Hungary), Prof. Dr. Ramona Lile (rector of “Aurel Vlaicu” University of Arad) and Dr. Iustin Cionca (President of Arad County Council).

Other pages were reserved for messages delivered on the occasion of the presentation of the volume Anniversary: 75th Anniversary of UNESCO; 65th Years of Romania in UNESCO; 40th Years of WFUCA; 20th Years of

EFUCA, signed by Daniela Popescu (President of the European Federation of Associations and Clubs for UNESCO - FEACU) and Ana Dumitrescu (former UNESCO representative), launched for the first time during the festive opening of the same symposium.

As was only natural, the substance of the volume is given by the papers presented in the sections of the international symposium, namely more than 20 studies in the fields of theology, history and art, covering topics and themes such as the beginnings, dynamics and challenges that lay and religious education has had to face in the past and today, its reflection in the press of the time, the school legislation of the 18th-19th centuries and some of the personalities who marked its evolution, Arad's contribution to the development of a genuine Romanian Orthodox Theological School, painting as a means of religious education, social Christianity, etc.

Distinguished by an exceptional graphic design, the book, fruit of a beautiful collaboration on editorial line between UNESCO expert Daniela Popescu and Arad theologians Cristinel Ioja, Marcel N. Tang and Tiberiu Ardelean, saw the light of printing in two prestigious publishing houses, namely Presa Universitară Clujeană and the Publishing House of "Aurel Vlaicu" University of Arad, the high academic forum of which Arad Theology, on institutional line, is part of since 1991, the year of its re-establishment as a Faculty.

At the end of this brief presentation, we consider that the volume in question has fulfilled its purpose, which is to have brought through it "a token of gratitude to the forefathers and a current testimony to the work and the dialogical vocation of Theology". It is therefore recommended to all those interested in learning more about Romanian history, culture and theology (and not only), as well as in (re)discovering personalities whose faces have been largely forgotten.

Rev. Prof. Dr. Florin DOBREI