

OVIDIUS UNIVERSITY OF CONSTANȚA
PhD DOMAIN
THEOLOGY

ABSTRACT
OF
THE HABILITATION THESIS

CANDIDATE:

Associate Professor, Doctor Gheorghe Pufu

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SERMON ON THE MOUNT,
The paradigm of Jesus's meeting the postmodern man

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In order to deepen my theological knowledge, I attended, between 1984-1987, the Doctoral studies of the Faculty of Theology, University of Bucharest. At the same time, on the Christmas day of 1981, I was ordained as a deacon and a priest of the Colibași parish, Argeș County.

As I have always desired to deepen my studies, in 1988, I took an examination for a scholarship abroad, with the expected result which is a French language scholarship for six months in France, at Montpellier, in 1990, and starting the autumn of 1990 till 1991 I attended ecumenic classes at Bossey in Switzerland.

Back in country, I took and passed the exam for the position of Teaching Assistant at the newly founded Faculty of Orthodox Theology in Pitești and, in 1993, I occupied the position of Assistant Professor at same faculty, becoming a holder of the faculty and conducting the courses of The Study of the New Testament.

From 1994 until 2008, I was the Scientific Secretary of the Faculty of Theology, University of Pitești and, at the same time, Editor in Chief of *Analele Științifice (Scientific Annals)*, the Journal of the faculty.

I conducted the courses of the New Testament at the following specializations: Pastoral Theology, Didactics, Theology Social Assistance and, in present, Theology Sacred Art.

In 1998, I was awarded the title of “Doctor” in Theology”, after I completed my thesis, *Sermon on the Mount – History, Exegesis and Theology of the Text*, under the scientific coordination of Professor Doctor Constantin Cornițescu.

Besides biblical study, I have been preoccupied with the research of positivist sciences attempting to make a connection between them, to bring them up-to-date and to share my research with the postmodern world, which seems to have forgotten God. Studying various people, including school, high-school and faculty students, I noticed that the understanding of the Holy Scripture differs in accordance with the level of education and instruction of each and every person. Therefore, I tried to study Psychology, in connection with Theology, thus attending, between 1999-2004, the doctoral studies in Psychology and Sociology at the State University of Chișinău, Moldova Republic. The studies were completed with the PhD thesis *Psychological Mechanisms of Adaptation in Penitentiary Conditions*, a thesis which combines Theology with Psychology and which

was supported by the participation at symposiums and conferences connected with this field of research.

In what concerns the biblical research, I emphasized five main themes, as follows:

- The teaching of Our Saviour and the interpretation of The Holy Fathers;
- Biblical and Patristic foundations to accede the Kingdom of God;
- About future life and soul after death;
- Ways of perfection and the climb to redemption.

Focusing on these themes I attempted to bring my own contribution to research, also making use of selective bibliographies always mentioned in articles and papers and continually brought up-to-date. I consider that the biblical text has historic connotation, speaking about the composition and the preservation of the authentic text, at its beginnings. My second intention was to bring it into contemporary world, in order to make it easily understood for every human being who desires to know the biblical text, in a secular, postmodern world. In the third place, I tried to emphasize the message transmitted by the Holy Scripture for our redemption in eschatology.

The first writings of the New Testament were considered by all readers common spiritual and indispensable goods. They were encyclical and circulated from a community to another, and they were exchanged as Saint Paul the Apostle wrote to Colossians: “After this letter has been read to you, see that it is also read in the church of the Laodiceans and that you in turn read the letter from Laodicea” (Colossians IV, 16).

The testimonies of the Holy Fathers and the church writers in the first centuries prove that in the Eastern Church, as well as in the Western Church, the four Gospels, The Acts of Apostles, The 14 Pauline epistles and the 4 Church epistles were considered holy and canonical.

For the theological research about the Kingdom of God, I considered that the teachings of Our Saviour could be comprised, as a quintessence of His message, in the Sermon on the Mount. Thus, I conceived a new revised edition of the text pointing out scripture and patristic foundations: *The Kingdom of God called the Sermon on the Mount (Mathew V-VII)- Exegesis and Theology*, Second Edition, Mega Press, Universitaria Collection, Theology Series, Cluj Napoca, ISBN 10973-7867-70-X, 13878-973-7867-70-5, 305 pages, Foreword by University Professor Dr Stelian Tofană.

The coryphaeus who shared his teachings to the entire world, Saint Paul the Apostle, who, in his writings, remained unshakable through his wisdom in spreading Our Saviour's teaching was approached in the book called *Saint Paul the Apostle's Mission in the Book Facts of the Apostles* published at the University of Pitești Press, 2005, ISBN 973-690-500-4, 118 pages.

Saint Paul the Apostle reunites all those qualities of his personality "enlightened by the divine grace, which emphasizes that his life is one and the same with his mission". His teaching is not pure speculation, but knowledge and living in Christ. Concerning this aspect I tried to comprise the personality traits of Saint Paul the Apostle in the book *Landmarks of Paulinic Theology*, Mega Press, Universitaria Collection, Theology Series, Cluj-Napoca, 2007, ISBN 10973-7867-71-8; 13978-973-7867-71-1, 307 pages (Foreword by University Professor Dr Stelian Tofană and the second edition Mega Press, Universitaria Collection, Theology Series, Cluj-Napoca, 2006, ISBN 10973-7867-70-x, 13978-973-7867-70-4, 305 pages).

Salvation, as the supreme good of Christianity, is the unshakeable foundation of the entire life and activity of the Church of Christ. It contains the truth of salvation, as the essence of the Gospel of Christ. There is no salvation outside Christ and the Church. The Church, the secret body of Christ and the life plenitude of the Holy Spirit (Ephesians I, 23) is the point where salvation is accomplished.

I believe certain themes can never be worked out or exhausted. My previous papers indicate my preoccupation for biblical themes associated with Our Saviour's teachings, with the message sent by Saint Paul the Apostle to his readers, with the life we begin here and continue somewhere else, with the previous mentioned scientific connection between matter and spirit.

In my opinion, research and information in theological education must result in the publication of university courses placed at students' disposal. The structure of my course was developed in years and in accordance with the various didactic specializations: Social Assistance, Sacred Art and Pastoral Theology. With the aid of modern information, The Study of the New Testament will be given an archaeological, linguistic and theological approach in order to answer nowadays requirements.

Having as a starting point the previous course in the Study of the New Testament for the students in the first year of study, edited and published at the University of Pitești

Press in 2008, ISBN 978-973-690-833-0, I will bring a new adaptation in accordance with the European requirements and I will try to make it a subject of research for students. I believe that within the seminars of this course I could include biblical research during the trips which have as a main objective the geography and the archaeology of the Holy Land.

Within the institutes of research, I will try to come with a rich published bibliography, as well as with the most recent topics in what concerns the following of the didactical-pedagogical principles, clear and supported , with the purpose of facilitating, for the theological students, the knowledge of the Holy Scripture, its interpretation and its bringing up-to-date in the postmodern world.