

BOOK REVIEWS

Mircea-Gheorghe Abrudan. *Ortodoxie și Luteranism în Transilvania între Revoluția Pașoptistă și Marea Unire. Evoluție istorică și relații profesionale [Orthodoxy and Lutheranism in Transylvania between the 1848 Revolution and the Great Union. Historical Evolution and Confessional Relationships]. Andreiana Publishing House/Cluj University Press: Sibiu/Cluj-Napoca, 2015, 934 pages*

Through this work, published three years ago, young historian Mircea Abrudan offers us a substantial monographic contribution regarding one of the exceptional personalities of the Romanian nation in the Habsburg Empire, Orthodox bishop Andrei Șaguna. Initially presented as a doctoral thesis at the Faculty of History and Philosophy, under the coordination of professors Nicolae Bocșan and Rudolf Gräf, the present book is not devoid of a celebratory connotation: the year before its printing, 2014, marked the 150th anniversary of the concretization of the great Șagunian project: the foundation (reactivation) of the Transylvanian Orthodox Metropolitan Church. Far from being dictated by celebratory reasons of conjuncture, the present work sensibly enriches the knowledge of ecclesiastical history of the Orthodox Romanians living in the mid-19th and second half of the 19th century.

The book opens with a Foreword signed by His Eminence, Laurențiu Streza, Metropolitan of Ardeal, a preface written by professor Nicolae Bocșan, followed by the author's argument, in which the goals

and the course of the research are briefly presented, as well as the institutions and the people with whom he interacted during the process. An introductory chapter follows, which contains preliminary aspects meant to guide the reader throughout the aforementioned subject of the book and to contextualize within the epoch the two Churches which are subject to this research: the Orthodox Church and the A. C. Evangelical Church in Transylvania.

The second chapter, *The Orthodox Church in Transylvania and Hungary in the Șagunian period (1846-1873)*, is a thoroughly researched portrayal of the historical context and the epoch in which several steps were taken within the Orthodox Church of the Romanians in Transylvania, under the tutelage of bishop and later metropolitan Andrei Șaguna, as well as an outline of his relations with the heads of the Evangelical Church, professors and superintendents of this religious structure. It is an ample incursion, complemented by the richness of information which the author took from German sources, fact that sets aside Mircea Abrudan's research in relation to other studies

dedicated to Şaguna and his epoch, which did not surpass the linguistic barrier of Romanian sources from the aforementioned period.

The third chapter focuses on a subject that was of concern on a large scale in the 19th century, a debate which was held in both ecclesiastical spaces and outside them: the relationship between Church and Nation. The chapter deals with the two Transylvanian churches, Orthodox and Protestant, in terms of organization and administrative-territorial jurisdiction, and, at the same time, regarding the perspective from which it was conceptualized and formed in the two ecclesiastical environments, with the issue of the ethnicity-confession/Church-Nation relationship. The fourth chapter casts light upon a subject of major importance for understanding the two Churches studied by the author: constitutional organization. Mircea Abrudan successively outlines the constitutional organization achieved by Andrei Şaguna for the Orthodox Church in Transylvania, the constitutional organization of the Evangelical Church and, in the final section of this chapter, he proposes a comparative approach of the two churches from this point of view. The facility with which the author covers large spaces, the references to the Transylvanian political and institutional context and the European cultural, ideological, spiritual and theological context of the epoch are to be observed, fact that highlights a thorough research of the chosen sources, extensive readings that allow ample enquiries into the problematics of the subject. The Conclusion, a summary in German, the annexes, the bibliography and the name index are the final sections of the book.

We stand before a highly substantial work, one of the most massive and

consistent contributions that falls into the field of ecclesiastical history which was published in Romania after 1989. The quantitative aspect, due to the 930 pages, speaks for the amplitude and scope of the scientific research carried out by the author. Mircea Abrudan has a double academic formation, of historian and theologian, fact that allows him to better contextualize the problematics of the subject and to employ in-depth research otherwise difficult to access by historians who lack a theological background. He completed his history studies at the Faculty of History, Babeş-Bolyai University, the German line of study, which was cancelled later on, studies to which a master's degree in the history of Southeastern Europe was added, completed both at the Babeş-Bolyai University and the University of Graz, Austria (through an Erasmus programme). The knowledge of German offered him the chance to access very valuable information, from church and state funds, through which the meeting and interferences of the two churches in Transylvania, Orthodox and Protestant, can be reconstituted. The scope of documentation, in as far as the primary sources are concerned, is illustrated by the archival resources used by the author, identified by him in Sibiu, Cluj-Napoca, Bucharest, Vienna and Munich. The first-hand information, taken by the author from archival funds in the country and abroad, among which the German documentation must be noted, is a strong point of the book and places the value and relevance of the documentary contribution at a very high level.

An important merit of Mircea Abrudan's book, from a historiographic point of view, is that it deconstructs misconceptions which circulated throughout

time in relation to the organization of the Transylvanian Orthodox Church. Of relevance in this case is the author's statement on page 761, in a chapter where a comparison between the constitutional organization of the Romanian Orthodox Church and the A. C. Evangelical Church in Transylvania is made: "it is precisely the fundamental elements that give the Organic Statute its originality, the Constitution of the A. C. Evangelical Church lacking the following principles: the separation of powers, the right to control the legislative bodies over the executive, universal and direct suffrage, the presence of the laity in a numerical proportion of majority in all bodies on each church level, the differentiation of the dogmatic, sacramental and canonical issues from the administrative, school-related, foundation-related and tutelary ones. Of course, one cannot deny altogether [...] the existence of similarities between the two church constitutions, but they were of structure, not of substance, in other words, of juridical body, not of ecclesiological nature, so that they do not overshadow the merits of the Şagunian principles, and an incrimination of Protestantism cannot be objectively justified." Thus, following in the footsteps of Johann Schneider's work, *The Organic Ecclesiology of Metropolitan Andrei Şaguna and its Biblical, Canonical and Modern Foundations* (published in Romanian at Deisis, Sibiu, 2008), Mircea Abrudan contributes to the thorough reconsideration of the constitutional organization of the Romanian Orthodoxy in Transylvania and to the removal of this issue from an area of controversies and polemics in which it has been placed over time, as a result of various Protestantization accusations from Catholic environments.

The research carried out by Mircea Abrudan acknowledges that, as far as ecclesiastical history is concerned, this is the century of nation and nationalism – the 19th century of national ideologies and political projects. For the Romanian and Transylvanian Saxons of those times, the Church-Nation relation was of utmost concern, the two factors being viewed as the central pillars of communal identity. Church environments within the epoch focused on the issue of the nation, both conceptually and from a more pragmatic perspective, of the organization of institutions, in order to configure practices that were in line with their own tradition and with the spirit of time.

The present volume restores, at the same time, a cultural and human climate, fragments of inter-human and intercultural life and relations in the Transylvanian society of the mid-19th century. Andrei Şaguna's relationships with bishops and other leaders of the Church and the Saxon community show a society in which such contacts and meetings were not only possible, but also frequent, and they expressed the normality of a society that practiced multiculturalism in everyday life.

Thus, Mircea Abrudan wrote a contribution of utmost interest for the history of a Church and an epoch, regarded in all their complexity and dynamics. It is a work that studies and research of ecclesiastical history should take into account for a long time to come.

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