

Fănel Şuteu:<sup>1</sup>

## **Reformationstag 500. International symposium in Bucharest: “The Protestant Reformation. History, Reception, and Influences”**

„The Protestant Reformation. History, Reception and Influences”: an emblematic meeting under the form of an international scientific symposium of the Pentecostal Theological Institute from Bucharest, Romania (I.T.P.B.). The event took place on the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> of May 2017 and was organized by Assoc. Prof. EMANUEL CONȚAC (I.T.P. Bucharest) and by Senior Lect. ROMULUS GANEA (I.T.P. Bucharest). The Romanian inaugural timer anticipated the German augural gong of the 31<sup>st</sup> of October 1517, on the eve of “All Saints’ Day” [*Allerheiligen*], which became later on, for a part of Christendom, “The Reformation Day” [*Reformationstag*]. The event that took place half a millennium ago was thus recalled: an event through which the symbolic gesture of the monk and theologian Martin Luther, who posted the ninety-five theses “against the traffic in indulgences” (M. Malherbe) on the door of the Castle Church in Wittenberg, expressed an already existing fracture in the midst of the Catholic Church, the appearance of the Reformation and the birth of Protestantism.

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At the moment of the official opening of the event (Bucharest, Thursday, the 18<sup>th</sup> of May), the guests from Romania and abroad, the leadership, the faculty members and the I.T.P.B. students joined their voices in a genuine resonant effluvium intoning the “battle hymn of the Reformation” – “A Mighty Fortress Is Our God” [*Ein feste Burg ist unser Gott*].

Following the welcome speech addressed by the I.T.P.B. rector, pastor Senior Lect. IOAN BRIE (I.T.P. Bucharest), a topic dedicated to “the most important concept underlying the Reformation” was presented by Prof. HANS KLEIN (“Demokratischen Forums der Deutschen in Rumänien”, Sibiu), namely “Justification in Paul’s and Luther’s writings”. The concept, essentially associated with *sola fide*, can be streamlined – as the author of the discourse suggested – only by the “counsel and power of the Holy Spirit”.

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Pastor Prof. SILVIU TATU (I.T.P. Bucharest) shaped in an abridged form (according to his own expression) “Prophet Jonah’s drama in the interpretation of the reformers Luther and Calvin”, investigating some commentaries, “searching for similarities and differences between their perspectives” and concluding that the two reformers “were culturally conditioned by the context in which they wrote, with its specific assumptions and accents.”

Museologist PhD. ANA DUMITRAN (National Museum, Alba-Iulia), in the discourse entitled “Image – Word – Reformation. Change marks in the faith realm of the Transylvanian Romanians in the 17<sup>th</sup> century” stated: “All three together: the image, the word and the reformation, under the form in which they interacted in the 17<sup>th</sup> century, indicate a spiritual regeneration capable to give a real meaning to everyday Christianity”.

Senior Lect. ROLAND CLARK (University of Liverpool), presented a thesis named “Cuibul cu barză [The Stork Nest]: The Exposure of Heretics in the Romanian Orthodox Church, 1921-1924”, in which he spoke about “a reformation of Romanian Orthodoxy”, referring to Saint Stephen’s Church from Bucharest (“The Stork Nest”) and to the activity of the priests Tudor Popescu and Dumitru Cornilescu at the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

During the session breaks, Senior Lect. ROMULUS GANEA (I.T.P. Bucharest) presented two recent releases of Casa Cărții Publishing House from Oradea: Tim Dowley, *Atlas of the European Reformation [Atlasul istoric al Reformei]* (tr. Andreea Izabela Vesa, 2016) and Erwin W. Lutzer, *Rescuing the Gospel: The Story and Significance of the Reformation [Reforma și întoarcerea la Evanghelie. Un model pentru Biserica de azi]* (tr. Laurențiu Pășcuți, 2017). Moreover, prestigious participants gave a greeting: Pastor Assoc. Prof. JOHN F. TIPEI (former rector of I.T.P.B.) and PhD. CRISTIAN BĂDILIȚĂ (Paris), a renowned Romanian patrologist and biblist, whose biblical comments were presented by Assoc. Prof. Emanuel Conțac.

The session was closed by Pastor Assoc. Prof. CIPRIAN TERINTE (I.T.P. Bucharest), who stated in “Luther’s and Calvin’s New Testament Exegesis. A Comparative Study based on the Commentaries of the Two Reformers on the Epistle of Paul to the Romans” that the reformers “are preoccupied with the spiritual welfare of the church” as “their exegesis generates pastoral sensibility towards the doctrinaire and spiritual challenges of the church in that time”.

The following day (Friday, the 19<sup>th</sup> of May), Assoc. Prof. EMANUEL CONȚAC (I.T.P. Bucharest), by means of his study entitled “Coresi’s Catechism and the Beginnings of Reformation for the Romanians”, guided the participants towards an unusual historical fact: the elaboration of a catechism “published by Coresi at Brașov in 1560” which represents “the direct result of the influence of the Reformation”, being a “profoundly Lutheran work”.

Through the topic: “Justification by faith – the theological pillar of the Reformation”, Pastor Senior Lect. EUGEN JUGARU (I.T.P. Bucharest) stated that this radical concept remains actual “as, besides the civic underpinning rooted in the Pauline Theology, it offers a

welcome humbleness to the postmodern man, exposing his spiritual capacity of obtaining salvation through personal virtues, and exalts God and Christ – the One who continues to bring salvation to all mankind, through grace”.

Pastor Assoc. Prof. EMIL BARTOȘ (I.T.P. Bucharest) established several “Turning points that triggered the Protestant Reformation”, looking over the pre-reformatory movements, then the humanist movement, the invention of the printing press and the dissemination of papal indulgences, and concluded with the influence exercised by personalities such as Peter Valdo, John Wycliffe, Jan Hus, Johannes Gutenberg, Martin Luther, Desiderius Erasmus, Jean Calvin, Johann Eck and Ignatius of Loyola over the Reformation.

A challenging archivistic journey was made by Senior Lect. CIPRIAN BĂLĂBAN (I.T.P. Bucharest). Under the title “Pastor Richard Wurmbrand. His life and activity as reflected in the folders of the State Security in the communist era”, the article decrypted names and facts from the history of this Romanian Lutheran of *Jewish descent*.

Through an exploration of “The teaching about the gifts of the Holy Spirit in Jean Calvin’s theology”, Asst. Prof. DRAGOȘ ȘTEFĂNICĂ (I.T.P. Bucharest) discovered that in Calvin’s writings, “the gifts of the Holy Spirit are not a central issue”, the reformer stating that “certain charismata with an obvious supernatural manifestation ceased to exist.”

PhD. DUMITRU PISCUC (I.T.P. Bucharest), in the presentation entitled “The Husband of One Wife: the evaluation of the leadership office in the light of the Pastoral Epistles, according to Martin Luther and Jean Calvin”, brought up controversial issues, such as ordaining bigamists, imposing monogamy to clergy and the marriage officiated before baptism as well as its validity in case of ordination, analysing the positions of the reformers towards such topics.

Finally, FĂNEL ȘUTEU (U.B.B. Cluj-Napoca), the author of the present paper, in his presentation entitled “*Cor ad cor loquitur*: T.U.L.I.P acronym in John Wycliffe’s writings” emphasized the fact that the English reformer John Wycliffe deserves the appellation “The Morning Star of the Reformation”, as he anticipated the specific precepts of Calvinism and Arminianism, confirming Cardinal Newman’s motto: “heart speaks to heart” (*cor ad cor loquitur*).

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In order to penetrate the Reformation spirit presented at this international symposium, the reader of these pages can become an attentive *elegans formarum spectator* (as Terence said), accessing the list of presentations from the I.T.P.B. webpage<sup>2</sup>. Reader! If you want to

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<sup>2</sup> The Reformation-related topics presented at the symposium can be accessed through the following YouTube link: [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3t-tzKBB1gk&list=PLIUF\\_IJOFQJzTsAajGHIT6a1qEMNRA2Zy4](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3t-tzKBB1gk&list=PLIUF_IJOFQJzTsAajGHIT6a1qEMNRA2Zy4).

penetrate deeper in the solemnity and severity of the German Reformation events, I suggest you to meditate upon the prayer uttered by Luther on the 15<sup>th</sup> of April 1521, before his second appearance in front of the most important figures in Europe, at the Diet of Worms:

*“Almighty, eternal God! How dreadful is the world! Behold how its mouth opens to swallow me up, and how small is my faith in You! O the weakness of the flesh and the power of Satan! If I am to depend upon any strength from this world, all is lost. O my God! Help me against all the wisdom of this world. Do this, I beg You. The work is not mine, but Yours. I have no business here. I have nothing to contend for with these great men of the world! I would gladly pass my days in happiness and peace. But the cause is Yours, my Lord; and it is righteous and everlasting! Stand by me! O faithful and unchangeable God! I lean not upon man. It would be vain! You have chosen me for this work. I know it! Therefore, O God, accomplish Your own will! Stand by me in the name of Jesus Christ, who will be my shelter and my shield, yes, my mighty fortress, through the might and strengthening of the Holy Spirit. I am ready, even to lay down my life for this cause, patient as a little lamb. For the cause is holy. It is Your own. Though this world be filled with devils, and though my body, originally the work and creation of Your hands, go to destruction in this cause — yes, though it be shattered into pieces — Your Word and Your Spirit they are good to me still! It concerns only the body. The soul is Yours. It belongs to You and will also remain with You forever. God help me. Amen.* (from Louis M. Kole, “The Prayer of Martin Luther: The Night Prior to Appearing at the Diet of Worms”, to the web address: [http://standardbearers.net/uploads/Martin\\_Luthers\\_Prayer\\_Prior\\_to\\_Diet\\_of\\_Worms\\_Louis\\_M\\_Kole.pdf](http://standardbearers.net/uploads/Martin_Luthers_Prayer_Prior_to_Diet_of_Worms_Louis_M_Kole.pdf))

The image of the first Sabbath from the history of Christianity, born under the Roman hammer blows, revealed the grace of God through *Solus Christus* – the first man (and God!) who gave life to the concept *Sola Gratia*. The shadow of the second Sabbath – belonging to the year of 1517 – when several German hammer blows caused fractures not in the hands of Christ, but in His Body, proclaimed the indisputable truth of Protestantism through the perpetual *Sola Fide* hidden in *Sola Scriptura*. The reality revealed on the eve of this third Sabbath, through the tick-tick of a clock hidden in the pulse of the active or passive participants, offered them the privilege to take a stand (even tacitly) for the reformers through *restitutio in integrum* (the principle of restoration to the original situation) and, with their eyes lifted to heaven, to exclaim: *Soli Deo Gloria!*