

1. SHABBAT: HISTORY AND ESCHATOLOGY OR ASSUMING AN IDEA

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Paula Bud, *Șabatul: istorie și eshatologie*
(Cluj-Napoca: Limes, 2014), 378 p.

On the volume: *Shabbat: History and Eschatology*, of the young researcher Paula Bud, many have written about, being previously reviewed. I would like to tell another story, behind the text, and to wander through memories from the beginning of this idea/ topic to the completion of the thesis, sprinkled with fragments and ideas from the book.

From the moment the author chose the topic and assumed the idea at a highly academic level, I came across with all the steps of this academic “pursuit”, when there came ideas or new bibliographical references, but also I managed to keep close when the times were not that bright, when she got stuck in her own ideas or in her guides’ ideas, who proved to be a true mentor, or when it was arduous to find the deep meaning of patristic texts.

Throughout the doctoral studies and even after, the main academical concern of the author was 80% the topic of Shabbat, the day of rest. This can be easily seen in the articles and researches published from 2008 to 2017, the year she passed away. In 2018 a volume was issued for all the research papers and articles, *Studies of exegesis and Old Testament biblical theology*, which provides a specialized or simple reader with a clear image of the author’s theological approaches.

From the very beginning I admit that it is quite difficult to write a text about an author you were very close to, and thus I do not claim full objectiveness. Subjectively, but with the eye of a critic I saw the birth and growth from idea to thesis the Shabbat theme. The author assumed it with earnestness. Not a moment, as many PhD students might consider, was these topic obsolete or nonsense for the author. And, I can affirm that three years of focus exclusively on a topic does not add anything but great value to a research as such.

The thesis was written as it has been lived and thought. Perhaps, one could say the author has a school like approach of the topic, but at last this is the real purpose of a PhD thesis: to clarify, make accesible and shed light on a particular theme, content.

Personally, I perceived this thesis as a path of Paula's becoming, a path that perhaps none of us fully understood that time.

In the first part of the thesis the author presents clearly and concisely the starting point of her endeavour. The correct understanding of terms and concepts is fundamental to draw a coherent discourse path. Paula loved the Holy Scripture, she fell in love with the Old Testament text, thus making the research something natural to herself. The lecture of the text, especially of those fragments related to her thesis with focus and great regard are reflected in the chapter of Biblical premises of the thesis. She also regarded the Holy Fathers who meditated and written on rest, on the day of rest. Among them, she was closest to Saint Maxim the Confessor, and this was induced by Father Ioan Chirila, her PhD guide. As it is impossible to write about something related to the Jewish people and innerent to their history without a serious research and lecture, the author wrote a chapter about the Judaic premises of the thesis. In an endeavour to find the starting points, from the Holy Scripture, to Judaic texts, passing through the writings of the Holy Fathers, to the scholar literature, the thesis begins to build itself with the general name of *Methodological preliminaries*.

With the second part, *Shabbat in history*, the path of introspection is laid down. Simple, cronological, the topic becomes more and more part of the author's thinking, and through lecture, close to the reader. The author reveals through the Old Testament fragments a deep dimension of the Shabbat in the life of the chosen people: "If, first of all, it is a day to seek God, a day to quenche the spiritual thirst, it is also a day to manifest filantrophy, a day of God's love manifested in time and history by His creation. Thus, from this point of view, Shabbat is a time when history meets eternity." (p. 140). The text follows its natural path, approaching then the word of New Testament, with our Lord Jesus Christ's attitude towards the Shabbat. Born and raised in the Judaic culture and laws of Moses Jesus Christ knew the importance of this day for Jews, but also knew that Jews did not mind the social, communional and filantropic dimensions of Shabbat. Jesus Christ emphasizes the spiritual aspect of Shabbat, the author leads the reader step by step, towards discovering through the words of Holy Scripture, the true meaning of this day, the eschatological one, and this is illustrative for "the shadows of those to come" from the Epistle to Collosians (Col 2:16-17).

The author carries us throughout the text through a simple and fluid phrase to the third part of the thesis, the most compelling and challenging, *Shabbat and eschatology*. In this approach, the emphasis is on the architecture of time "where Shabbat is a temple,

by its mediation function” (p. 209). Shabbat is a cultic day when man, “through the liturgical act brings eternity in time [...] is a form of expression of rest that is enjoyed by the human being”, who completes his purpose „coming in communion of love with God” (p. 230). Shabbat – blessed day, sacred day, the seventh day, icon of the eternal contemplation, sign of cosmic liturgy, are just some of the names and meanings through which the author brings us closer to understanding this day/ concept/ image of eternity.

The last part of the thesis, *Experience of eternity in time: the cult* is dedicated to the common roots of Judaic and Christian liturgic cult. Sunday, the day of Lord in the Christian cult, is not a replacement for the day of Shabbat, but a completion of the latter. Here the author insists on the fact that “the eschatological dimension of our existence that is foreshadowed by the seventh day is not, however, a mere reality of the future Christians, because the eternal life has already began in and through Christ Who Ressurrected, to Whom we are provided access through the liturgical experience” (p. 346).

The work *Shabbat: history and eschatology* is the result of unrelentless work, not at all facile, but obviously the result of team work. It is not the work of Paula Bud, but also the work of Fr. Prof. Ioan Chirila, who aimed to surpass obstacles and limits, who knew and had someone to ask much from, and did so. I strongly believe, without any exaggeration, that their collaboration is a paradigm for all the fellow PhD students. And since it is not a classical review, but more of a sharing of someone who was there for Paula, throughout all these moments, since we met, I deem right to say here that both at admission to PhD studies and their completion were supported and helped by fasting and prayers. I would not have shared this thing unless I was supported to show an authentic approach to PhD studies in Theology. I believe that today, more than ever, we need models, and avoiding false and cheap “hagiographies”, from certain points of view, Paula was and is a model.

For Paula, this thesis was a journey of knowledge, getting close to the Holy Scriptures, to God, to herself, and surely it was not just a research, but an assumption of the words she read and then wrote herself. Perhaps it is not meaningless that she wrote about rest, about eternity, about the uneved day because now, I like to believe, she understands from where she is much better the Rest of/ in God, the True Shabbat.