

AN ACADEMIC PATTERN: PROFESSOR – PhD STUDENT

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Stelian Pașca-Tușa (ed.), “Cercetați Scripturile...” (In 5,39).
Studii de exegeză și teologie dedicate părintelui profesor Ioan Chirilă
[“Search the Scriptures...” (Jn 5:39). Exegetical and theological
studies dedicated to Reverend Professor Ioan Chirilă]
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The Professor – PhD Student relationship is a very complex issue. It does not only involve a blood relationship of those involved and often involves an ambivalent relationship. For this reason, the bond that is created between Professor and PhD student or between teacher and disciple can often take the form of this kind of relationship. This *in honorem* volume that PhD students dedicate to Rev. Professor Ioan Chirilă is a compendium of direct and indirect testimonies about the bond that is forged over time between those who share the same field of interest but are at different levels of knowledge.

This volume has been published by Presa Universitară Clujeană and is coordinated by Deacon Lecturer Stelian Pașca-Tușa, one of Rev. Ioan Chirilă disciples. It brings together scientific studies of more than fifty PhD students dedicated to their professor on his sixtieth birthday. Although the academic value of these articles is important, we consider that this aspect is of secondary importance. In our view, the relationship between teacher and disciple has priority.

As I said earlier, the report between Professor and PhD student is ambivalent. This means that on the one hand, it implies caring for the one in the position of the teacher, and on the other hand obedience and honesty for those in the position of the disciple. Each aspect is seen directly or indirectly in this volume. The quality of the teacher is seen throughout his work. The care that Rev, Prof. Ioan Chirilă showed to his disciples takes many forms.

First, the attention paid to the intellectual formation of the disciples is seen in the fact that the studies contained in this volume have a remarkable scientific quality, a neat style, a very diverse theme and ample and up-to-date bibliographies. Only a

dedicated professor can make such many disciples fully embrace a large set of academic rigours. It is also significant that several of the contributors to this compendium are either professors in university and pre-university theological education or researchers. They would not have been able to reach this level if they had not trained under a dedicated and caring person. Finally, we believe that the authorship of Rev. Ioan Chirilă is also attested by the fact that the articles of his disciples do not aim at a rigorous exposition of knowledge, but often at opening spiritual perspectives. All those who have attended the courses of the Rev. Professor know that he does not belong to the category of those scholars who deliver sterile information but to the category of those who plant in the souls of their listeners the “seeds of eternity” found in the Holy Scripture. Fortunately, his PhD students have assumed this way of relating to the sacred text. Most of the articles in this volume are marked by the red thread of the spiritual relationship to the Old Testament. Even if there are also studies that include themes that do not favour this aspect, the spiritual formation of the authors is nevertheless seen in the homage section at the end of each article. These are the main coordinates of Rev. Chirilă’s spiritual paternity that are evident in the work of his disciples.

The second aspect of the relationship is obedience and honouring the disciples to their teacher. As we have seen, obedience is best seen in the fact that the authors of the present studies have assumed the teacher’s way of writing and researching. Beyond what has already been said about the academic quality of the studies and of some of the authors, we would like to point out an additional aspect. We believe that the disciples’ obedience can be seen in the fact that some articles deal with themes frequently used by Rev. Ioan Chirilă, such as the spirituality of the Psalms, the personality of Philo of Alexandria or Eschatology, as well as in the fact that some start their research from a series of word games with a rich theological load, such as the relationship between the names Cain (“man of God”) and Elijah (“man of God”).

In terms of honouring the teacher, this is by far the most visible aspect of the volume. Some of the final dedications are short, while others are of significant length. We can say that some PhD students even “outdo each other” in writing at the end of their articles about the positive impact of Rev. Prof. Ioan Chirilă in their lives, about the qualities they consider most important and about the main moments of interaction with the one who coordinated them. We consider these excerpts to be the most authentic glimpses from the souls of the authors. Besides, it is also natural for people to be sentimental when they talk about someone important to them. This is what

distinguishes a tribute volume from any other collective volume, namely the love that motivates the writing of a text. Therefore, although from a scientific point of view, there is no difference between the two categories of compendiums, from a human point of view, the first category is superior, because any erudite is first a person who has cultivated over time a relationship of apprenticeship or even collegiality with a person important to him, and only then someone who has dedicated himself to study.

We can also consider another aspect of the Professor – PhD Student relationship. There are countless cases in history where a “father”, whether biological or spiritual, has given his “sons” a written piece of wisdom. A very good example is the book that the ruler Neagoe Basarab, canonised not long ago, dedicated to his son Theodosius. However, there are fewer cases where the “sons” gave back to the “father” a book containing the fruits of their discipleship. This is why we believe that the appearance of the volume that the PhD students dedicate to Rev. Prof. Ioan Chirilă, which opens a series of three homage volumes, is a welcome one, both for “rewarding” the work that the Teacher did throughout his career and for offering a good testimony of what a natural father-son relationship means in the academic environment.