

NO. 10 (2) 2023

NEAGOE BASARAB
– A MODEL FOR SOWING SCRIPTURE –

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ROMANIAN ORTHODOX OLD TESTAMENT STUDIES



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ROMANIAN ORTHODOX OLD TESTAMENT STUDIES
YEAR 5, NO. 10 (1), 2023

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ISSN: 2066-0936

Year 5 (2023)

Volume 10

Issue 2

Published online: 31.12.2023

Guest Editor: Stelian Paşca-Tuşa

Issue DOI: 10.24193/ROOTS.2023.2

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EDITORIAL

REV. IOAN CHIRILĂ

*The Cultural-Religious Context of the 17th Century
in the Romanian Environment*

THE CULTURAL-RELIGIOUS CONTEXT OF THE 17TH CENTURY IN THE ROMANIAN ENVIRONMENT

It is the 500th anniversary of the passing of the Wallachian Ruler Neagoe Basarab to the Lord, which is why it is appropriate to revive the essential aspect of the cultural-theological creation of the ruler, recently canonized by our Church. To understand the context in which his teachings to his son Theodosius were written, it is necessary to briefly characterise the 17th century, which was marked by several events of cultural significance for religious literature. The beginning of this century is marked by *Neagoe Basarab's Teachings to his son Theodosius*, and the end is marked by the *Divan or the wise man's quarrel with the world*, which belongs to another ruler, this time from

Moldavia – Dimitrie Cantemir. According to specialists, these two writings belong to the same literary area, which for the lexical and expressive area of today also refers to a certain type of ethical and theological leadership corresponding to a theocentrically oriented society. If we consider that this century is marked by a series of confessions of faith, both in our environment through the Synod of Iassy of 1642 and the Confession of Petru Movilă, and in the Pan-Orthodox environment through the Confessions of Metrophanes Kritopoulos of Alexandria (1625), Cyril Lukaris (1629) and Dositheus II of Jerusalem (1672), we can say that we are in a period in which the East was forced to achieve a definition of identity, an area of confession of faith. It is therefore in this context that we should consider the work mentioned and the work of Neagoe Basarab.

Church literature is a distinct category of literary creation, rooted in the sacred content and spiritual teachings of clergy. It is a form of cultural expression with a specific purpose: to serve ecclesial objectives and enrich the religious life of the community. Although sometimes overlooked in treatises on literary history, Church literature cannot be ignored because it makes a significant contribution to the development of the Romanian language and culture. Despite its apparent limitations in terms of thematic



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diversity, Church literature should not be excluded from the study of literary history. The literary works of the clergy provide a unique perspective on faith and traditions, offering a window into the spiritual world and the fundamental values of Romanian society throughout the ages. This form of literary creation thus becomes an essential part of the cultural heritage, influencing and being influenced by other literary genres.

Essentially, Church literature can be analysed in the light of five distinct categories. The first of these consists of the Sacred Books, especially texts such as the Book of Psalms, the four Gospels, the Acts of the Apostles and the Epistles of the Apostles. These works not only reflect the fundamental teachings of the Christian faith but are also essential sources of inspiration for other writers and intellectuals. The second category of church literature comprises the Homilies, books of sermons for religious services. These works cover a wide range of subjects, from interpretations of the texts of the Gospels to presentations of the lives of saints. They are not only sources of spiritual inspiration but also ways of strengthening the religious community through teaching and guidance. A special category of church literature is made up of the lives of martyred saints and ascetic works, known as *Manaion* and *Paterikon*. These were read during various religious ceremonies and were a way of preserving and passing on spiritual traditions. Books of worship, prayer books and hymn books are another important sphere, playing a vital role in the conduct of services and manifestations of faith. Finally, Church literature also includes books of a dogmatic and didactic nature, as well as sermons intended for the burial of priests and lay believers. These works offer a profound understanding of Christian theology and morality, having a substantial influence on religious and philosophical thought in the Romanian cultural context.

During the reign of Matthew Basarab (1632-1654), Slavic culture suffered a significant decline, mainly due to the disappearance of Slavic cultural centres under Turkish rule south of the Danube. This phenomenon affected the number of Slavic-speaking intellectuals and Slavic language schools in Romania, contributing to the decline in the use of the Slavic language. In the second half of the 17th century, Romanian clergy faced a crucial choice between preserving the Slavic tradition and adopting religious services in the national language. Metropolitan Stephen, at the end of the reign of Matthew Basarab, adopted a conciliatory approach, publishing bilingual books to reconcile the Slavonic tradition with local needs. The Homiliary, published at Govora in 1642, was one of the first books of homilies, translated by Udriște Năsturel from Russian into Romanian. In the same year, Meletius Melchizedek

published teachings translated from Greek, dealing with themes such as the law of love and the Decalogue.

Thus, this century was marked by extensive actions of instruction and education of the Romanian people through religious literature, with conscious efforts to introduce the Romanian language to the Church. The pioneers of this process were religious leaders such as Metropolitan Varlaam, Miron Costin and Udriște Năsturel. Varlaam wrote works such as *Leastvița (The Ladder) of John the Climacus* and the *Romanian Book of Teachings* (1643), and Năsturel translated *O Podrajanii Jesus Hristu* (1647), the famous medieval work *Imitatio Cristi* attributed to Thomas de Kempis. Simion Ștefan published *the New Testament* (1688) and *Psalms* (1651) in Bălgrad, and Miron Costin was among the initiators of Romanian lyricism with his poem “The Life of the World”, highlighting philosophical themes.

Metropolitan Dosoftei of Moldavia played a key role in the reform of the Romanian language in religious worship in the 17th century. By publishing a verse translation of the Psalter (1673) and other liturgical works, Dosoftei showed off his linguistic and artistic skills. Nicolae Milescu, a contemporary of Miron Costin and Dosoftei, was an outstanding personality, contributing to cultural diversity. The *Bible from Bucharest* (1688), the first complete printing of the Holy Scriptures in Romanian by the Greceanu brothers, had a significant impact on the development of the Romanian language.

At the same time, non-religious literature of the 17th century maintained links with the religious context, exemplified by the novel “Alexandria”, which, while telling the story of Alexander the Great, brings a religious perspective to life. Works such as “The Flower of Virtue”, “The Psychologist” and “The Life of St. Basil the New” contributed to the diversity and depth of Romanian culture of the period. Thus, religious leaders and intellectuals played a crucial role in reconciling Slavic culture with local needs, marking a significant transitional period in the evolution of Romanian literature.

Without paying attention to this ecclesiastical literature, we could not fully understand major works of Romanian literature, such as “The Teachings of Neagoe Basarab”, a literary monument in Slavonic, or “The Life of the World” written by Miron Costin, and Dimitrie Cantemir’s “Divan”. These works are not only expressions of faith, but also cornerstones of Romanian culture and identity, representing significant contributions to the country’s literary and spiritual landscape.

The present volume is the proceedings of the conference entitled “Neagoe Basarab. 500 years since his entry into the eternal kingdom – a model of sowing the Scriptures” held on 14 December 2021 at the Faculty of Orthodox Theology, “Babeş-Bolyai” University of Cluj-Napoca, under the auspices of the *ROOTS (Romanian Orthodox Old Testament Studies)* project which aims to highlight the Eastern interpretation of the Holy Scriptures and to enhance how this type of understanding of the revealed message is materialized in the Romanian environment. In this volume, we have proposed to highlight how the ruler Neagoe Basarab assumed the content of the Old Testament in his attempt to provide his son Theodosius with the necessary guidelines for assuming an ethical and theological way of leading his subjects.

ORTHODOX EXEGESIS

1. Rev. Ioan Chirilă, *“The Teachings of Neogoe Basarab” – a Manual of Leadership and a Model of Dynamic Embodiment of the Eternal Word*
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“THE TEACHINGS OF NEAGOE BASARAB” A MANUAL OF LEADERSHIP AND A MODEL OF DYNAMIC EMBODIMENT OF THE ETERNAL WORD

Abstract

The work of the Wallachian ruler Neagoe Basarab “The Teachings to his son Theodosius” remains an essential landmark of medieval Romanian culture and spirituality. The writing synthesizes an original vision of Christian teaching with the great models of universal political thought, becoming a manual for future rulers. Its importance is reflected in its overwhelming influence on later Romanian culture, as well as in the timeliness of its perspective on leadership based on enduring values. This study highlights the author’s multiple sources of inspiration, harmoniously integrating biblical, patristic and philosophical traditions in a work that goes beyond medieval political treatises. From a theological perspective, the writing reflects a unified conception of divine revelation, promoting a mystical pedagogy that proposes a model of integral human formation. And the virtues and values enunciated have universal anthropological resonances. Thus, the integral message of N. Basarab’s work is not only a major expression of local political literature but also a permanent invitation to rediscover the Christian ethos that was the basis of European culture. And the recovery of this spiritual paradigm remains indispensable for overcoming the contemporary crisis.

Keywords

Leadership, Spirituality, Culture, Values, Synthesis



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Introduction

The literary work of the ruler Neagoe Basarab, founder of impressive monuments such as the Curtea de Argeş Monastery, remains today a representative expression of Romanian medieval spirituality and culture. The “Teachings to his son Theodosius”, written in Slavonic, are a genuine political and moral-religious treatise, dedicated to the training of the future ruler of the Walachia. Integrating biblical and patristic teachings with the great Byzantine and Western political theories in a profoundly original vision, the work is a remarkable synthesis of Christian-Orthodox thought on the art of government. From this perspective, it becomes a key element for understanding Romanian culture and spirituality in the Middle Ages.

The present study analyses the writing of Neagoe Basarab from several angles. Thus, the introductory part presents relevant data about the ruler-reader and his rich religious education, which formed him both in the country and in monasteries on Mount Athos. His enlightened spirit and vast erudition place him in the vanguard of the defenders of Byzantine spirituality in the context of the Ottoman threat. “The Teachings to his son Theodosius” are analysed in terms of content, structure and sources of inspiration. The work highlights, among other things, the topicality of Neagoe Basarab’s conception of the status and responsibilities of the political leader. The second part of the study proposes a spiritual reading perspective that transcends historical contextualization and reveals the universal resonances of the work. From this theological perspective, it reveals itself as a model of the dynamic embodiment of perennial biblical teaching.

In the conception of the ruler of the mountains, the political leader has essential ethical and spiritual duties, so that the prosperity or decline of the country depends directly on his moral orientation. For this reason, Neagoe constantly urged Theodosius to turn his eyes to God’s judgement and mercy. He advises his son to cultivate fundamental Christian virtues such as love, gentleness, patience, mercy, etc., the only way to fulfilment both personally and in the conduct of public affairs. The study concludes that the ruler’s advice is a genuine spiritualised “leadership manual” based on the values revealed in the Holy Scriptures. Thus, the “Teachings to his son Theodosius” remain over the centuries not only a representative work of ancient Romanian literature but also a practical guide of spiritual guidance towards true Christian wisdom.

Neagoe Basarab – an educated ruler, fascinated by the hysichia

Neagoe Basarab, ruler of Wallachia in the first half of the 16th century, is a complex historical figure who is worth learning more about. He belonged to an important noble family from Craiova, the Craiovești family, who gave several kings to Wallachia. Also associated with this noble lineage is Basarab the Younger, Neagoe's elder brother, and his romantic relationship with Neaga. But beyond these family ties, Neagoe Basarab was distinguished by his education. As a young man, he attended schools in Wallachia and elsewhere, studied many languages and was initiated into the mysteries of monastic life on Mount Athos (Chirilă 2022-2023, 10). According to his testimony, his monastic experience in the Athonite monasteries left a deep mark on his personality. This period spent on the Holy Mountain allowed him to acquire a vast religious culture and imbibe the hysichian spirit characteristic of the Eastern monastic world. On his return from his pilgrimages, Neagoe Basarab proved to be a great supporter of the Church. Thus, he continued the tradition of the Craiovești family of financially supporting numerous monasteries in Wallachia and the territory of Athos. One of his most important foundations was the Bistrița Monastery in Oltenia, which he rebuilt and endowed with an impressive library and turned into an important cultural and religious centre of the time. This library today contains books, manuscripts and medieval documents of inestimable value, which provide essential information about the era of Neagoe Basarab.

The prince's links with the Serbian cultural world are also worthy of note. Thus, the Craiovești had close relations with the ruling families of Serbia and supported the Serbian Orthodox monasteries on Mount Athos. It is likely that Neagoe himself began his education in monastic schools in Wallachia and Serbia, and later completed it in his pilgrimages (Briciu 2013, 171-96). What is certain is that he had acquired an impressive culture for his time, mastering Slavonic, Greek, Turkish, Hungarian, Serbian and Latin. This multilateral training enabled him to occupy important positions in court at a young age. Thus, Neagoe Basarab goes down in history as a scholar of his time, with a choice of education in the most prestigious cultural and religious centres of south-eastern Europe. His enlightened spirit led him to support written culture and to leave behind invaluable sources for research into the past. In all this, he prefigures the model of a Renaissance ruler in a medieval world at the crossroads of civilisations.

The education offered by prominent personalities of the culture and spirituality of that time (Niphon, Maxim Brancovici, Macarius and others) marked Neagoe Basarab's entire subsequent activity. They introduced him to the mysteries of the sacred

texts as well as to Orthodox theological literature. Under their guidance, the young future ruler became familiar with the Holy Scriptures, the writings of the Holy Fathers, homilies and panegyrics of the great Christian authors. This solid education in the spirit of the Eastern tradition led Neagoe Basarab to become a great supporter of written religious culture (Minculete 2017, 59). Indeed, the hysichian education he received, his familiarity with the great works of Eastern thought and his efforts to promote Orthodox spirituality in the context of the Ottoman threat placed him in the vanguard of the defenders of Romanian cultural and religious identity.

“Teachings to Theodosius” – leadership manual

The Teachings of Neagoe Basarab to his son Theodosius, a literary work written in Slavonic (Cartoian 1980, 72), is considered the most important monument of medieval Romanian thought and feeling. It is linked to the ruler Neagoe Basarab, founder of the monastery of Curtea de Argeș and the Metropolis of Târgoviște. The ruler’s writings can be considered a veritable treatise on political theory and the pedagogy of power, intended for his son and heir Theodosius. Through the organic combination of religious and secular, moral and political-administrative dimensions, it becomes an essential reference for understanding medieval Romanian political thought. It is not by chance that the “Teachings to his son Theodosius” exerted an overwhelming influence on subsequent Romanian culture. Even in modern times, Neagoe Basarab’s advice retains its freshness and formative character, applying both to young people preparing to take the reins of political power and to any reader interested in Christian moral teaching. The monumental work of the ruler of the mountains therefore remains for centuries a model of wisdom and balance between matter and spirit, between the power of the world and the values of the Gospel.

Neagoe Basarab’s work dedicated to his son Theodosius is not entirely original but is part of a rich tradition of moral-political writings in medieval universal literature. Thus, the direct model that stood before him was that of the ‘Teachings’ of the Byzantine Emperor Basil I the Macedonian addressed to his son Leon in the 9th century. A similar source of inspiration was the advice of Emperor Constantine Porphyrogenites to his successor in the 10th century. The 11th-century writings of the Kievan kingship of Vladimir Monomachus are also in the same literary family. All these works had a strong influence on the political thought of the European Middle Ages, so the “Teachings” of Neagoe Basarab are part of a much broader framework than the Romanian one.

In addition to the sources mentioned, in structuring his text the ruler of the mountains integrated numerous passages from the Holy Scriptures, especially from the historical books of the Old Testament. There are also insertions from Isis monastic literature (e.g. from St Simion the New Theologian), from writings such as “Varlaam și Ioasaf” or “The Physiologist,” very popular at the time. There are also references to Byzantine homiletic and parenetic literature, Neagoe Basarab proved to be a fine connoisseur of great Christian authors such as St John Chrysostom, St Dionysius the Areopagite, etc. (Bobâna 2020, 75).

On the religious teaching side, there are similarities with fundamental texts of Eastern spirituality, such as Philip the Monk’s “Dioptra” or the “Ladder” of St. John the Climacus (Piru 1961, 42). It is precisely this harmonious combination of biblical, patristic and philosophical sources that gives Neagoe Basarab’s writings a synthetic character, revealing the erudition of the ruler-scribe. The use of diverse cultural models, but converging in their Christian essence, makes his literary work go beyond a simple collection of political advice, acquiring a universal spiritual dimension.

From a structural point of view, the “Teachings to his son Theodosius” comprises two distinct parts: one with a religious-moral character and the other with political-administrative recommendations. The first is marked by a strong Orthodox-Christian spirituality, expressing the ruler’s conception of the meaning of life and the virtues necessary for both the ordinary man and the ruler. The second part contains practical advice on the art of leadership, the organisation of the army, judging subjects, maintaining internal order, etc.

Neagoe Basarab’s work dedicated to his heir to the throne expresses an integral conception of the dignity and responsibilities of the political leader. The advice of the ruler of the mountains is based both on Christian teaching revealed in the Holy Scriptures and the lives of the saints, and on the great texts of ancient and medieval wisdom on the art of government. Neagoe Basarab’s writing harmoniously combines love of God, love of nation and people, and respect for his subjects with an awareness of the formative role and personal example that the leader must set for those he leads. He points out to his son that, being in such a high position, his actions and behaviour will inevitably be imitated by others (*Neagoe Basarab’s Teachings* 1970, 259). The ruler therefore has a moral duty to guide his subjects by his way of life towards goodness, truth and virtue. Thus, the message of the “Teachings” reflects a profoundly humanist

political axiology, in line with the great thinkers who have meditated overtime on the relationship between power and morality.

Although originally dedicated to his son Theodosius, Neagoe Basarab's "Teachings" went beyond simple formative writing, becoming a real moral-political guide for all those called to rule Wallachia. Moreover, the wise advice of the ruler of the mountains has today universal resonance, proposing a type of spiritual leadership, based on perennial values. The roots of this alternative managerial perspective to contemporary secular paradigms can be found in the solid religious education received by Neagoe Basarab. His formation was built through meditation on the great Old Testament and New Testament biblical texts, on patristic and hagiographic writings (Mihăilă 1970, 81). That is why his system of political thought is imbued with love, wisdom and respect for true human dignity. Over time, his "Teachings to his son Theodosius" is not only a model of Christian leadership but also an invitation to rediscover modern European spirituality. They propose the revival of the ethos that was at the foundation of the great culture on which the whole construction of the West is based. And this reconnection to our common roots remains indispensable for overcoming the crisis of meaning-affecting the world today.

In Neagoe Basarab's conception, every political leader has fundamental moral and spiritual duties, the first of which is the worship of God. Thus, the ruler must direct his gaze towards divine mercy and justice (*Neagoe Basarab's Teachings* 1970, 125-8), striving to ensure that his actions as a ruler reflect, as far as possible, these supreme virtues. He has a responsibility to ensure the welfare, unity and lawful government of the whole people. To support this view of the leader's status, the author of the "Teachings" cites the example of the biblical kings of Israel. These "servants of the Lord" were meant to keep the Jewish nation in obedience to the will of the Most High, so that the entire history of the Jews was governed by their relationship with God. Neagoe Basarab shows how the prosperity or decline of the Old Testament depended directly on the piousness or impiousness of the kings towards revealed teaching. His message to his son and heir Theodosius is built on these coordinates, as the ruler of the mountains stresses the paramount importance of the spiritual and moral orientation of political leadership, which determines the rise or fall of the whole nation. From this perspective, his literary work remains surprisingly modern.

In the second part of the "Teachings", the ruler insists on the virtues that a good ruler must embody in his relationship with his subjects. Thus, the right attitudes towards

the ruled are kindness, respect, justice, empathy and trust. At the same time, the leader must not detach himself from the people but must be directly involved in their lives, while maintaining the dignity of his superior status. An essential aspect emphasised in Neagoe Basarab's work is the need to forgive and always give new chances to the wrong (*Neagoe Basarab's Teachings* 1970, 255). He also offers numerous tips on the proper way for the ruler to interact with subjects from all walks of life: “O my son and you, brothers, how good it is to always comfort your cowherds and your servants and to always take counsel with them [...]. You shall go with them into a place of silence and shall counsel all counsel, and which shall be better you shall receive into your hearts, and which shall not profit you shall leave. And thou shalt not hinder any man from speaking counsel saying: behold your words are of no use to us.” (*Neagoe Basarab's Teachings* 1970, 267).

Finally, the political leader must make decisions only after consultation with those closest to him, listening to all opinions and choosing with discernment the best solution for the common good. All these practical guidelines are based on the fundamental values that the leader must embody love, gentleness, patience, attentiveness and kindness. The ruler stresses that rewarding evil with evil only increases suffering in the world. On the contrary, anger and envy – as manifestations of selfishness – are serious moral weaknesses that gnaw at the soul of the leader and impair his capacity for clear judgment. This is why Neagoe urges his son to replace these passions with a “peaceful heart”, full of “pure love”, following the model of the Saviour Jesus Christ (*Neagoe Basarab's Teachings* 1970, 315).

Therefore, the work of the ruler of the mountains is an authentic Christian “manual of leadership”, setting out the virtues to be cultivated by those called to such a high position as political leader. And the enduring relevance of these wise counsels proves their profound anthropological resonance. His message thus proposes a return to the cultural and religious foundations on which European civilisation was built as the only way to overcome the contemporary crisis. The virtues, values and principles set out in his writing have a universal resonance and can be successfully transposed from the political sphere to that of human relationships of all times. For example, they can serve as a guideline for the education of the younger generation, whether in the family or at school, since they are aimed at building moral character and not just imparting technical knowledge. The wisdom of Neagoe's teachings therefore goes beyond the historical context in which they were written, providing an indispensable spiritual orientation for today's secularised world. And taking them on board allows us to regain the inner balance so necessary to face

the challenges that come our way. Finally, their application leads to a fulfilled life, crowned with eternal happiness.

The dynamics of the eternal Word reflected in the writings/guides of His incarnation

We examined Neagoe Basarab’s treatise in its main editions and looked at it as a manual, a guide like those written by Erasmus of Rotterdam, Machiavelli, Basil I the Macedonian or Constantine Porphyrogenites. Because of its pedagogical content in matters of faith as well as politics, administration, diplomacy and war, we can consider this work an effective guide to the incarnation of the divine Word.

I believe that for the interpretation and analysis of the “Teachings of Neagoe Basarab” a reading paradigm is necessary that aims to identify the spiritual, spiritual meaning of the word of revelation (St Maximus the Confessor 2017, 63). This idea came to me from Constantin Noica and his lectures on the Romanian soul (Noica 1991, 12-8). Noica speaks of Neagoe’s work without using the term “hysichia”, although he links him to the Ecumenical Patriarch and Nicodemus, representatives of this spiritual direction. However, the philosopher uses the concepts of ‘contemplation’ and ‘interiorisation’ specific to the hysiasmatic movement. In the treatise, we constantly find the exhortation to unceasing prayer, which is also specific to hysiasm. Noica considers that here we have a succinct exposition of the steps that lead Theodosius to contemplation, which he calls “steps of perfection” (Noica 1991, 15). Starting from this interpretation, the academician Alexandru Surdu speaks of a “lay hysiasm” (Surdu 2010, 79), also present in the philocalic spirituality intended not only for monks but also for lay people. Given all this, it is not surprising that Noica calls Neagoe’s work “the first great book of Romanian culture” (Noica 1991, 14). To understand its importance, we can also refer to Dan Zamfirescu’s analyses or to Edgar Papu’s comparative perspective, which highlights the proto-chronic values of the writing (Papu 1977, 20).

My intention is not to respond to the typologies of approach or analytical conclusions referred to. The aim is quite different. I would recommend looking at the parallel column in the edition of Neagoe Basarab’s works, where the scriptural references are given. These show us the equation of the construction of the text, which transcends excessive historical immanentization and introduces the reader to a zone of transcendence. As such, we have an Old Testament text placed in relation and unity of witness with a New Testament text, in line with the type-antitype relationship that

characterizes the two Testaments of fulfilment and perfection (cf. Mt 5:17). Here I wish to emphasize only one aspect: Neagoe Basarab treats Scripture as a unit of witness, beyond the historical morphology of the texts. Although he was writing at a time when the New Testament had not yet been translated into Romanian, he starts from the Slavonic and Greek sources to capture the dynamic dimension of the revealed Word. Analysis of his works therefore requires identifying this unified perspective on Holy Scripture, which transcends the historical letter and values the spiritual meaning of divine revelation.

When I relate to the word of Scripture, I explore two distinct levels: a stasis or *historical status* and a *dynamis status* of the word, i.e. its pneumatic content. I have chosen as my point of reference, the writings of St Athanasius, the text that proclaims that “there is spirit and life” (St. Athanasius the Great 1987, 87-156), because it is the Spirit that gives life. Expanding the horizon of interpretation, we can turn to the contribution of Rev. John Breck in his work entitled “Holy Scripture in the Tradition of the Church”. He points out that, according to hermeneutical principles, the main interpreter is the Holy Spirit (Breck 2003, 70). We thus see that the acquisition of the Spirit is essential to achieve a deep understanding. At the same time, the hysias-tical practice of prayer opens the way to an area of communication and illumination, brought by the Spirit, necessary for understanding this pedagogical content. A point of interest, which I do not develop in detail at present, is recorded in Rev. Stăniloai’s third *Philokalia*, in which reference is made to the texts of St Maximus the Confessor. He speaks of the divine reason for every existence and explains that in natural contemplation, through the union of man with God, man has access to all the spiritual senses of divine reason, freeing himself from limiting constraints and entering the transcendent dimension of the mind which he calls *nous*. Thus, in this manual addressed to Theodosius for becoming a good leader, we find a mirror of knowledge. It gives us an insight into how a man can make this transition to transcendence and enter the dynamism of the divine infinite, experiencing rest in motion, a *shabatization*. This complex concept reveals an interesting aspect of the teachings conveyed in the guide-book intended to guide one towards harmonious co-working with spiritual principles and divine wisdom.

The second aspect that I would like to emphasize is related to the hysias-tic pedagogy present in the work of Neagoe Basarab. As Constantin Noica also notes in his analysis, in the “Teachings to his son Theodosius” there are references to the

steps of unceasing silence and the liberation from thoughts, which are specific to the hysastic spirituality. The universal openness of this religious pedagogy, which the Wallachian ruler applied not only to his son Theodosius but also to his descendants on the throne and the whole of his flock, is thus evident. An eloquent example of this is the sequence of the worship of icons. It refers directly to the iconoclastic struggle and the defenders of the cult of holy images such as St Theodore the Studite or the decisions of the Seventh Ecumenical Council. Thus, Neagoe Basarab remains anchored in the formula of dogmas established by the universal Church. Now, as the Church Fathers say, dogmas are formulas that lead you to the incarnation and living of revealed truth, to a real experience of God. Therefore, the hysastic pedagogy promoted by the ruler has a universal openness, leading to the experience of life in Christ based on Orthodox teaching (Noica 1991, 15). It proposes a path of deification open to all, regardless of social status.

Constantin Noica points out in his analysis that Neagoe Basarab praises the mind. This is important because in the patristic vision, the mind plays an essential role. From an anthropological point of view, it represents our opening towards the transcendent, towards communion with the divine infinite. This is why in Eastern spirituality we often encounter the theme of “emptying the mind”, as in Evagrius, St Ephrem the Syrian, St Isaac the Syrian etc., to reach the “mind of Christ”, as St Paul says. Neagoe Basarab’s praise of the mind is relevant and consistent with the perspective of the patristic tradition. He considers that, although it has certain limitations, the word of Scripture represents an opening of us towards transcendence, towards the unknowable God. This idea is also found in the *Philokalia*, where we are told about the relationship between mind, contemplation and divine reason. The noetic exercise leads to overcoming the individual condition and to union with the Absolute. Neagoe Basarab emphasizes the ordering power of the mind, which is also highlighted in patristic writings. He sets out various models, both positive and negative, showing the importance of humbly taking on the trials of life (Noica 1991, 16).

Examining the content, we discover two distinct aspects of believing and living in God. The first is the theoretical aspect, which highlights the importance of faith and the need to integrate this dimension into the social plane through concrete actions. These actions are designed to overcome conflicts and establish an atmosphere of peace. Looking for biblical sources that support these concepts, we can see that literature of this kind is rooted in Scripture. The Book of Wisdom or the Parables of Solomon provides a model for this, and an analysis of its conclusion reveals principles applicable to

social life. The *Wisdoms of Ben Sirah* also provides relevant lessons, particularly in its last part, from chapter 46 onwards. Extending the analysis to an international level, we can make a comparison with the works of Baltazar Gracian, such as “*The Books of the Perfect Man*” (Gracian 1994). Through this perspective, the literature revealed supports a profound reality: standing in faith and living according to divine principles leads to constructive actions and the establishment of peace in the social sphere. Finally, it can be stressed that this literature conveys an essential truth, also highlighted by a prayer sequence attributed to Calistus the Patriarch. It expresses man’s humility before the wisdom and power of God, recognizing the limitations of the human mind in comparison with the immensity of the Divine Being. At the same time, the prayer highlights the desire to attain the glory and goodness of God, emphasizing the deep connection between faith and the aspiration to divinity: “O most holy hypostatic Word and wisdom and power of God, how shall I praise you Lord, whose Being, and glory is unapproachable? How shall I extol Thy unbounded goodness, I who am human and bear a narrow mind? But I will praise, I will extol what I can reach. Thus, will I come from every side to the sense of Thy glory and goodness, and my soul shall cleave with all power to Thee.” (Calistus Patriarch 1979, 352).

I stop here and want to point out that I have analysed the word of Scripture from the perspective of the *status dynamis* level, focusing on its pneumatic content. In this context, I invoke a reading of the “*Teachings of Neagoe Basarab*”, looking at this theme from a spiritual perspective. This approach reveals that the king himself, known for his authoritarian manifestations, can be perceived, in a bold interpretation, as an Ebed Yahweh within historical existence – a servant of God. This perspective becomes evident in the context in which Neagoe Basarab, faced with his health problems, draws Theodosius’ attention to this dimension. Thus, analysis of the “*Teachings*” from this perspective reveals a spiritual depth and a profound connection to key aspects of the biblical tradition.

Conclusions

Neagoe Basarab’s work remains an essential expression of Romanian Orthodox spirituality, synthesizing an original vision of Christian teaching with the great models of universal political thought. “*The Teachings to his son Theodosius*” is thus not only an authentic manual for future leaders but also a spiritual guide with universal resonances.

The importance of the writing is reflected both at the national level, through the overwhelming influence exerted on the subsequent Romanian culture, and at the European level, the work being part of the great medieval political-moral treatises. Its remarkable topicality lies in its conception of leadership based on fundamental Christian values, which can represent an alternative to contemporary managerial paradigms.

The present research highlights the multiple sources of inspiration of Neagoe Basarab, from the model of Byzantine imperial teachings to the spirituality of the Philokalia, harmoniously integrating biblical, patristic and philosophical traditions. It is precisely this creative synthesis of the religious and political dimensions that ensures the originality of the work in the context of its era.

From a theological perspective, the writing reflects the ruler's unified conception of divine revelation, going beyond the historical letter of the text to its eternally valid spiritual meaning. The hysiotic pedagogy promoted thus becomes a model of integral human formation, open to all. The virtues and values set forth acquire universal anthropological resonances, constituting a moral guideline valid in any context. Thus, the integral message of Neagoe Basarab's work is not only a major expression of Romanian political literature but also a permanent invitation to rediscover the Christian ethos that was at the foundations of European culture. And the recovery of this spiritual paradigm remains indispensable for overcoming the contemporary crisis.

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“THE TEACHINGS OF NEAGOE BASARAB TO HIS SON THEODOSIUS” – A HISTORIOGRAPHIC RETROSPECTIVE

Abstract

On the commemoration of five centuries after the death of Romanian Ruling Prince Neagoe Basarab (1512-1521), one of the most important representatives of cultural resistance on Romanian territory in the Middle Ages, the author of the present paper shines a light on the history, context and influences of his masterpiece, *The Teachings of Neagoe Basarab to His Son Theodosius*. Thus, the paper highlights Neagoe Basarab's prophetic side, how his writings bring education to his people or the influences of authors like Basil I the Macedonian or Constantine Porphyrogenites on his style and ideas. At the same time, due attention is given to the influence of his work of patristic voices such as St John Chrysostom, Dionysius the Areopagite, John Climacus or mystical authors such as *Varlaam și Iosafat*, to his way of thinking, and the metamorphosis of his ideas. Furthermore, potential influences such as the one of Machiavelli and his chief work, *The Prince*, are also brought to attention in the paper, emphasising that there are voices that persist in the claim that the Italian author may have influenced Neagoe Basarab's activity. The paper concludes, among other things, that, through his work, Neagoe Basarab managed to pave the way for Humanist culture on Romanian territory.



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Keywords

Teachings, Dynasty, Social Ethics, Machiavelli, Holy Scripture

Introduction

The present work initially set out to conduct a historiographic evaluation of the reception of *The Teachings of Neagoe Basarab to his son Theodosius*, a work viewed by the author of the paper as fundamental to Slavic-language Romanian culture in the Middle Ages. Unfortunately, the pandemic precluded access to all the sources and editions related to the topic of the present research. As for the communist era, it is fitting to mention here that the work in question was obscured during that period, so a search into the catalogues of the major libraries, commentaries and analyses included, will reveal a mere 15 titles dedicated to that topic throughout the entire last century (Plămădeală 1969, 215-62; Bocancea 1998/1999, 146-9; Cădă 2012; Fîru, 28-36; Florea 2012; Grecu 2007; Grecu 1939; Grecu 1941; *Învățăături ale lui Neagoe Basarab*, 2003; Gabriela 2020; Popa 2010, 65-70; Tofan 2003, 35-9; Toma 1943; Turtoi 1976, 29-32; Zamfirescu 1973). A quantitative assessment of the text thus suggests that it was quite poorly received and insufficiently known. Unfortunately, however, due to the impossibility of accessing all the sources, such an assessment is not entirely possible at the moment either. Nevertheless, the information that was accessible allows for the deduction that the work has been insufficiently capitalised on by historiographic research so far and that the editions dedicated to it are quantitatively deficient.

Thus, the 2020 edition of *The Teachings*, published by the Romanian Academy, constitutes a noteworthy editorial event, as it reproduces in part the edition published by Roza Vânturilor publishing house in 1994, which is a well-executed text. Sadly, however, one cannot help but note its high price, which renders it inaccessible to the public and is bound to prevent it from becoming a part of most readers' libraries. The present author therefore holds that a pocket edition would have been much more appropriate, even without the introductory study, as such an edition would certainly have contributed not only to putting Neagoe Basarab back into circulation among the reading public, but also to stimulating and, at the same time, inciting the masses to critically analyse him and his ideas.

Given that a historiographic evaluation is not possible in the current context, and, besides, for the above-mentioned reasons, such an approach would not reveal much to the reader, being rather a disappointing undertaking, the author would like to highlight a few aspects regarding the context in which the work in question was elaborated, while also discussing its sources of inspiration and other elements.

The Context Surrounding the Appearance of *The Teachings*

The Teachings of Neagoe Basarab to His Son Theodosius, as already shown, constitutes a representative work of Slavic language (Neagoe 1971, 53) Romanian culture, whose influence extends upon the European Middle Ages and beyond. It was written in the above-mentioned language, and it generated controversy as to its paternity and authenticity, as works of its sort were already present in the cultural environment of the time, it was translated into Greek fairly shortly after its appearance, in 1645, by Manuel of Corinth, which says a lot about its reception and the interest it aroused in the cultural sphere of the era, while also indicating the excellent quality of relations with the Greeks, who drew benefits from the Wallachian and Moldavian rulers. Thus, the latter provided support to places of relevance to Eastern spirituality, such as Holy Mount Athos or the Holy Land, while some of them, such as Petru Rareș, even fancied themselves as liberators of Constantinople, at times taking concrete action in pursuit of that goal. Economic interests, alongside spiritual matters, played a part when it came to the initiative to translate this book into a language of wide circulation in the 16th century, which often rivalled Latin and enjoyed a wide cultural scope.

Whilst, indeed, the Romanian translation appeared somewhat later, the context and development of the language must also be taken into consideration. A small historiographic assessment in terms of quantity reveals that, up to the present, the Romanian Academy Library has preserved seven manuscripts containing translations of the text. All of them date back to the 17th and 18th centuries, which shows that it was nevertheless met with interest and was welcomed in that era, as it was used in both royal courts and the boyar households and constituted a topmost source in the educational process, due to its rich didactic qualities.

As for the context it was written in, it is worth mentioning that the end of the era of Stephen the Great brought about the onset of a new era in the Romanian Countries, one defined not by the fight for continuance, as had been the case before, not by wars intended to ensure the preservation, or, whenever necessary, to impose the independence of these countries, but by a form of resistance through culture and spirituality. One ought not to forget that Neagoe Basarab is the founder of Curtea de Argeș Monastery (Andronescu 2002; Băbeanu 1942; Bădescu 1915) and is one of the many rulers who were part of that resistance up until the onset of the Phanariot reign. During that era, the status of Christian became a form of identity and would, at the same time, become a component of Romanian specificity in the Middle Ages. Rulers themselves would come

to see themselves as small Maecenas, especially when receiving the visit of a Patriarch, who would request their help. Therefore, they would try to become educated and rise to the standards of their time, which is why certain culturally resonant ideas would make their way here as well. It is difficult to say to what extent Neagoie Basarab had access to Erasmus of Rotterdam, but one may assume that the ideas found in works known in the era, such as Machiavelli’s *The Prince*, were not entirely unfamiliar to him (Giulea 2021, 33). Furthermore, he is certain to have had access to certain writings from the East as well, which may well have influenced the above-mentioned Italian writer, too, and which most likely served to inspire the Wallachian prince. Texts such as *The Teachings of Basil the Macedonian to His Son Leo*, dating from the 9th century, or *The Teachings of Constantine Porphyrogenitus to His Son* (Porphyrogenites 1971), dated to a century later, which, some historians have even stated at one point, was the main source of inspiration for the Wallachian ruler, who allegedly even plagiarised it, can certainly be listed among the sources in this category. Even the historiographic discourse of the communist era, which was not eminently proto-chronic, proffered the notion that the text in question was a pastiche of the Eastern Roman emperor’s text. However, the author finds this unlikely in a society whose plagiarism standards differed from today, but which was rather a space where ideas circulated and their paternity was less strictly guarded, the priority being a shared interest in promoting fundamental values.

As for sources of inspiration, one is compelled to point out that the most important references employed in the Wallachian ruler’s work are the Holy Scriptures. As expected, he uses them assiduously, intensely quoting passages from books of the Old and New Testaments, some of historical relevance, others of theological, literary or poetic value, and providing either comparisons or arguments in support of certain ideas. Neagoie Basarab thus aimed, on the one hand, to mark himself as a Christian prince, who embraced that role in a society where Ottoman influence was on the rise, and, on the other hand, to emphasise the fact that such a quality served as an identity at the time, while also being of primordial relevance for his reign, the context he was in, and the message he sought to convey.

Furthermore, works such as *Alexandria, Barlaam and Josaphat* (*Vieața sfinților* 1904; Mazilu 1981), the patristic works of St. John Chrysostom and of St. Dionysius the Areopagite, Philippus Solitarius’s *Dioptra*, and *The Ladder* by St. John Climacus are extensively quoted reference works, Neagoie Basarab often specifying the origin of the ideas, since the above-mentioned authors were counted among the foremost names of

the culture, theology and spirituality of the time and the prince is a Christian, whose message does nothing but interpret the sacred text practically and testify to how the teachings of Christ the Saviour can be applied in political life. Up until the emergence of civil law, the very laws of the country would be based on religion and Christian rules (*pravilo*) would go hand in hand with civil law.

Nevertheless, beyond all these potential, claimed, or real influences, it is certain that *The Teachings of Neagoe Basarab to His Son Theodosius* constitute a veritable synthesis of Romanian ethical and political thinking and foreshadow topics that would later be tackled by the humanists of the region. Through this work, humanism, which would come with an important set of values, would gradually make its way into the Carpathian-Danubian-Pontic area, as the book anticipates themes that would be intensely discussed in subsequent works and featured redundantly therein, as well as topics that would be further developed within them. This book enabled the ruler to educate his son, by passing onto him a series of potentially useful principles to apply during his reign, to impose certain principles of social ethics and, at the same time, to educate his boyars, elevating society and raising social awareness.

Written in a language that pays tribute to the customs of the time, the work, however, avoids becoming overwhelmingly entrapped by philosophy, although one may note influences of this field in the author’s life and thinking.

Concluding Remarks

As the present study has striven to show, *The Teachings of Neagoe Basarab to His Son Theodosius* make for a complex work, representative of Romanian historiography, philology and theology alike, with multiple and pioneering facets. Beyond its sociocultural relevance – as it was originally conceived as a text intended to educate the son who would succeed him to the throne, as well as the boyars and the people, while also emphasising the relevance of certain sociocultural principles – the work, influenced, as shown, by the Holy Scriptures, patristic authors, hesychastic texts, as well as by later Byzantine and Slavic chronicles – which partly explains why it would enjoy such a widespread reception in different cultural contexts and be translated into Greek – provides an ethical and political view which, albeit original, does not step outside the boundaries of religious medieval thinking. At the same time, through this book, the author manages to pave the way for the ingress of humanism into Romanian culture (Duțu 1974, 17). Unfortunately, as this paper has attempted to show, to this day,

this work has not yet been sufficiently capitalised on, nor has it received its due attention from critics and historiographers. Furthermore, its analyses have often included aspects which were either unverified or taken out of context, which caused the Wallachian ruler to be pursued by the accusation of plagiarism or lack of originality so that his work ended up either shoved to the outskirts of history or ranked among worthless compilations.

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MONARCHY BY DIVINE RIGHT AS PER THE BOOKS OF KINGS IN “THE TEACHINGS OF NEAGOE BASARAB TO HIS SON THEODOSIUS”

Abstract

The present study aims to address the issue of monarchy by divine right in *The Teachings of Neagoe Basarab to His Son Theodosius*, which, due to its defining role in the most important work of the Romanian Middle Ages, allows one to observe how Saint Neagoe Basarab bases his teachings on references to the Holy Scriptures and to the Old Testament in particular. Furthermore, the chosen topic allows one to also understand the specific pillars of SlavicByzantine Eastern theological culture which Neagoe Basarab highlights authentically and originally in his remarkable work.



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Keywords

Neagoe Basarab, Monarchy, Typology, Old Testament, Kings

Introduction

Neagoe Basarab's personality is certainly a surprising one for the culture of the Romanian territories in those days of old in the context of its natural evolution and development throughout the Middle Ages. This was the very reason why, during the last century, preeminent personalities of the Romanian academic world engaged in a heated debate as to the originality of *The Teachings of Neagoe Basarab to His Son Theodosie*, which they either vehemently challenged (D. Russo 1907, Russo 1910, Panaitescu 1946, Panaitescu 1963, 403-424) or fiercely defended (Mihăilă 1971, Zamfirescu 1973). Once the stage of disputations was overcome, the debate regarding Neagoe Basarab's work occasionally acquired 'proto-chronistic' notes amplified by older and newer researchers' excessive concern with highlighting the humanist-Renaissance facets of *The Teachings*

of Neagoe Basarab (Ivașcu, 1969, Zamfirescu 2012, 241-281). One sought thus to give Neagoe Basarab's personality a 'European dimension' by placing it in exclusive connection with Western cultural standards. This perspective, which appeared to become generalised among people of culture in the latter part of the last century, would be countered by Metropolitan Antonie Plămădeală, who, despite his characteristic discretion as a man of culture of that time, did not however refrain from asserting with all firmness that, if one must speak of Neagoe Basarab's humanism, then it can only be defined as a 'Christian Orthodox humanism' (Plămădeală 1981, 33). Therefore, the present author can but agree with those who hold that the European dimension of Neagoe Basarab's personality must first and foremost be understood and then cultivated about the frameworks provided by the Eastern Orthodox culture, which the wise Romanian ruler successfully represents and pays homage to using a remarkable work for the beginning of the 16th century. Consequently, the present study aims to valorise *The Teachings of Neagoe Basarab to His Son Theodosius* based on their natural coordinates, which are specific to the Eastern way of thinking. Moreover, the present author holds that this is the only approach that allows one to tackle a cardinal theme of *The Teachings*, namely that of the monarchy by divine right, which provides a broad perspective when it comes to understanding and exploring in depth the theological nature of Neagoe Basarab's work.

Saint Neagoe Basarab's theological culture

Saint Neagoe Basarab's theological culture is *fundamentally biblical*, the Holy Scriptures being the main source for his *Teachings to His Son Theodosius*, in which he proves an extraordinary familiarity with the biblical text proper, which he interprets in the authentic spirit of Eastern Orthodox Church tradition.

The environment in which he acquired this theological culture was initially the family of the Craiovescu boyars, who provided Neagoe with a princely education typical for their time. Neagoe Basarab was born in 1481 or 1482, as the son of Basarab the Younger, also called Țepeluș (1477-1482). However, after the murder of his father following a boyars' plot, Neagoe was raised within the family of Pârveu Craiovescu, who married his mother, Neaga. According to some sources from the era, such as *The Life of Patriarch Nephon* or *The Cantacuzino Chronicles*, paternity is directly attributed to Pârveu Craiovescu (Giurăscu 1979, 227). Be that as it may, the fact is that Neagoe Basarab was considered by the Craiovescu boyars a potential claimant to the Wallachian throne,

which is why he received an exquisite education. From a spiritual point of view, that education would be consolidated at Bistrița Monastery, founded by the Craiovescu boyars, where he had the benefit of an excellent scholarly environment, as proven by the numerous manuscripts and printed books that were discovered much later in the Bistrița Monastery library (Mihăilă 1971, 68-75). Furthermore, his connections with Patriarch Nephon, with Metropolitans Maksim Branković and Macarie, the former printer, with Gabriel, the Protos of Mount Athos (Mihăilă 1971, 80-83) or with Manuel of Corinth (Tanașoca 2012, 364-70) raised the bar of this theological culture to the highest level of the era. Gabriel the Protos' *Life of Saint Nephon* tells us that 'Blessed Nephon empowered him with his teachings so that he might grow and rise in all good works and arise in good fortune and be pleasing to God and to men, all of which later came to pass, aided by the prayers of His Holiness' (*Literatura română veche* 1969, 76-7). The deep culture that Neagoe Basarab exhibits is best reflected, however, by the rich theological literature specific to the Orthodox world that underlies his *Teachings to His Son Theodosie*. Among them there are the Homilies of Saint John Chrysostom, the teachings of Saint Ephrem the Syrian, Saint John's *The Ladder*, Simeon the Monk's *Humility*, Philip the Hermit's *Dioptra*, or the panegyric on Saint Constantine written by Patriarch Euthymius of Tŭrnovo, or folk books such as *Barlaam and Josaphat*, *Melissa*, *Bestiarii* or *Alexandria*, which are used, ingeniously enough, on a wide scale, indicating that the Romanian ruler was well acquainted with them (Mihăilă 1971, 80-1; Zamfirescu 1973, 220-348; Șerbănescu, 288).

The Holy Scriptures in *The Teachings of Neagoe Basarab to His Son Theodosie*

The Teachings of Neagoe Basarab are the expression of a peak registered by Romanian culture at the beginning of the 16th century and were meant to summarise an entire previous era, which started in the second half of the 15th century and consolidated the old 'civilization of the Liturgy' by affirming within it the word of the Scriptures as rendered through the Slavonic alphabet.

Saint Neagoe Basarab expresses himself in a very convincing manner: 'The teachings of God [...] we hear from the Holy Scriptures' (*The Teachings...*, p. 138, 1971 edition). The Holy Scriptures are the living expression of the guidance of the Holy Spirit, the life-giving word, which Neagoe Basarab uses not only to confess their teachings but mainly to induce others to enter this live dialogue with God by internalising the words of the Scriptures under the guidance of the Holy Spirit. In the

spirit of Church Tradition, through the Scriptures, the faithful and righteous are called upon to know the truth, but, most especially, to live by it. In that same spirit, Neagoe Basarab shares with his son Theodosius his advice, supported by numerous references to the books of the Holy Scriptures. Naturally, since it is a book of ‘teachings’ addressed to a future ruler, most of the references are to the books of Kings. Unsurprisingly, these are followed by references to the Book of Psalms, an expression of God’s manifold wisdom, which Neagoe Basarab uses, in the authentic spirit of Eastern tradition, for the spiritual development of his son. Furthermore, his arguments rely on a wide range of Old Testament biblical texts of a historical-theological nature from the Pentateuch (Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, or Deuteronomy), the Book of Judges or Judith, as well as from prophetic books, such as Isaiah, Joel, Zechariah, or Baruch, and, of course, from the didactic ones, which are particularly useful for his endeavour, such as the Proverbs of Solomon, Job, The Wisdom of Solomon, the Wisdom of Jesus Sirach, or the Book of Tobit.

Neagoe Basarab’s view of the Holy Scriptures is a unitary one, which is why his references to the New Testament are as numerous as the Old Testament ones, occurring regularly following the systematic exposition of ideas. Thus, in addition to the numerous references he makes to the text of the four Gospels, Neagoe Basarab also refers to the Acts of the Apostles, the Pauline epistles (Romans, 1 and 2 Corinthians, Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians) or the catholic epistles (James, 1 Peter). Naturally, wherever the issues tackled by his teachings are of a distinct political, military, diplomatic or protocol-related nature, his invocations of the biblical text are limited. Furthermore, except those extensive excerpts from the books of Kings or the Gospels, references to the biblical text are much more numerous in those sections which are particularly theological and many of said references come via the passages borrowed from patristic literature.

Monarchy by divine right as per the books of Kings in *The Teachings of Neagoe Basarab to His Son Theodosius*

In the view of the Old Testament, the king rules as an earthly representative of God, his kingship being a mere reflection of the reign of the Heavenly King (Ex 15:18; Num 23:21; Jg 8:23; 1Kg 8:7; 10:19; 12:12). God is and has been king through His representative, who is to fulfil His will, ensuring justice and order, and the obligations established by the covenant with His people, in general. By his quality of son of God

bestowed upon him by the Heavenly Father (Ps 2:7), the king rules in the name of God to secure this filiation which supports his authority and, to a large extent, the dynastic nature of Israelite kingship (2Kgs 7:14-16). The king's sacredness, however, stems from the unction that accompanies his enthronement, which reflects the fact that he was divinely chosen and fulfils the will of God (1Sam 24:6,10; 26:9,11,16,23; 2Sam 1:14-16; 19:21-22; 1Kgs 21:10,13)

Theme-specific typology; Byzantine background

In general, for the Middle Ages, the return to the Old Testament comes naturally when the chosen theme is monarchy, which is explored within the framework of a vast biblical heritage. 'The Old Testament appears to be more in tune with the state of society and the mentalities of the time than the New' (Vauchez 1994, 9).

However, how Neagoe Basarab approaches the issue of monarchy by divine right is typically Eastern. There are two ways in which Byzantine authors related to the models of the Old Testament: *exemplum* and *typos*. *Exemplum* encourages one's efforts to conform to a model, while *typos* postulates that someone extends an established pattern up to the present. Historians favoured the *exemplum* mode, while theologians preferred the *typos*. The choice depended on the writer's education, chosen literary genre or preferred perspective, yet the two modes could also be used simultaneously. However, both groups shared the view that the Old Testament was the root, the baseline and the standard by which the present was measured. After the Constantinian era, considered a model era par excellence and consecrated from the late 4th century onwards by Eusebius of Caesarea in his *Life of Saint Constantine*, the choice of biblical models could be determined by the political context, which could have been positive as well as negative (Rapp 2010, 175-97).

What is interesting is the perspective provided by the biblical models based on which an earthly ruler can arise in the timeless realm of typological identity, one who can claim to be like David, a Christ-like figure, or at least equal to the apostles, like Constantine, just as he can be relegated to the status of failed Old Testament leader. In general, Byzantine emperors were recognized and labelled as genuine rulers through their relation to an Old Testament model which played the same normative role in the political sphere that the New Testament played in the moral sphere (Dagron 2003, 50). The tendency to apply biblical leadership models in Byzantium came from the Church, which was interested in maintaining a framework based on the Christian teachings

of the imperial power (Rapp 2010, 197). Neogoe Basarab fully identifies with this Byzantine perspective – as understood by the Slavic world – of the issue of monarchy by divine right.

The manner of presentation; the structure of the text

Neogoe Basarab’s concept of monarchy by divine right is encountered throughout *The Teachings*, but it is mainly reflected in the first section of the initial part of the book, which G. Mihăilă considers to be a true ‘theology to be used by heads of state’ (Mihăilă 1971, 29) and which lays down the fundamental principles that must lie at the foundation of leading a state.

Thus, the first section opens with an ample discourse of praise to the Heavenly Father, the Creator and Preserver of the World, in Whom resides the ‘royal power’ that is given to His chosen ones, followed, in the second section, by an exposition dedicated to man and his importance in the context of the order of creation and of the divine plan for the salvation of the world. Both sections are intended to theologially substantiate the ruler’s relationship with God and with man, and, of course, the obligations that derive thereof as to the people over whom the ruler has been placed (anointed) to rule justly and humanely (mercifully), according to the Christian teachings.

The third section of the initial part continues with an extensive anthology of biblical readings of a moral-pedagogical nature extracted from the Old and New Testaments, the *Life of Saint Constantine*, the homilies of Saint John Chrysostom or the folk novel *Barlaam and Josaphat*. This anthology, considered to be ‘unique in its way in European paraenetic literature’ (Mihăilă 1971, 30) sets out from the very beginning to highlight its main aim, which is that of affirming the role that history can play in shaping and moulding the character of future leaders: ‘Thus, mark and understand their lives and you shall be wise if you take careful heed [...] And keep away from evil, every one of you, and never cease to strive to do good things well. Therefore, pay heed and see and learn how the beginning of their reign was and how their reign went and how their end was, too’ (Mihăilă 1971, 30).

In what follows, the present paper will dwell only on the extensive Old Testament biblical excerpts that the author resorts to.

The structure of the anthology of Old Testament biblical readings is as follows:

Reading about the sons of Eli

Biblical reading about King Saul

Reading about the history of David

Reading about King Solomon

Reading about King Rehoboam

Reading about King Ahab

Reading about King Hezekiah

The story of the deeds of Emperor Constantine the Great

The biblical episode dedicated to Absalom's rebellion.

The reading on the sons of Eli (1Sam 2-4) starts by pronouncing the following sentence: ‘For your foolishness and your unwisdom, know that it shall be taken from you and given to another, who will fulfil the will and commandments of God’ (*The Teachings* 138). It is largely under the auspices of this sentence that the examples of rulers in the Books of Kings are presented. The sons of Eli are a negative example in comparison to Eli, their father, or with Samuel the prophet, and other biblical leaders (Gideon, David) who uphold the Law and fulfil the commandments of God, which is why the Lord has ‘multiplied the days of their reign’, unlike the foolish ones (Solomon, Rehoboam, and Absalom), who ‘shortened their lives and their kingdoms perished’. The death of the sons of Eli brings to attention the original sentence once more: ‘You see, my beloved son, that not even parents can be of aid...’ (p. 141), the negative example of Hophni and Phinehas being followed by those of the sons of Samuel as well (1Sam 7:19).

The biblical reading on King Saul focuses on his being chosen king, which is conditioned by his obedience to divine will, the biblical text serving to reiterate his capacity as God's anointed: ‘God has sent me to anoint you king over the Israelites, so now listen to the voice of the Lord: God has anointed you king over his people of Israel and you shall be great among the Lord's men and you shall save them from the hands of their enemies’ (1Sam 10:1). Failure to uphold the commandments leads to God ‘seeking another king’ (*The Teachings* 143). Saul's rising from among the poor is another reason for his fall due to his reckless management of his royal status (*The Teachings* 143). The conclusion that emerges is that one should ‘give thanks to God for all that He has given us and to reign with Him and so live’ (*The Teachings* 146).

The reading on David's history opens with a very harsh sentence uttered upon him, because, albeit pure in heart when he was summoned by the Lord (*The Teachings* 146), he falls into the sin of fornication and is rebuked by the prophet Nathan. Neagoie Basarab concludes that even the righteous can fall, yet the fear of God helps them repent. David is given once more as an example of repentance when he decides to choose

from among God’s three punishments the one through which he takes it upon himself to suffer for the sin committed regarding the census of the people.

The reading on King Solomon initially presents the great king and prophet as a positive example who, instead of wealth and glory, asks God for wisdom, which automatically invites the following sentence: ‘Do you see, my son, that God multiplies the days of him who acts according to His will and commandments? But those of him who do not uphold His Law and commandments He lessens and shortens’ (*The Teachings* 150). Solomon is a model of a godly king upon whom divine grace is spilt, his prayer at the dedication of the Temple being proof thereof. However, the sins he committed towards the end of his life would impact his descendants; the sons of David, having failed to uphold the Law, would lose the kingdom, a loss illustrated by Jeroboam’s rebellion. This leads to the following conclusion: ‘let no one deceive himself and hold himself great, a king though he may be, or a ruler [...] for all these are given by God, and God can take them away’ (*The Teachings* 155).

The reading on King Rehoboam. Rehoboam is given as a negative example, as he did not heed the counsel of the old and wise, but followed the counsel of the young, the lack of temperance exhibited by the Israelite king led to the division of the kingdom. This biblical episode is used by Neagoe Basarab to cultivate the wisdom and love that his son needs to show to his subjects in an authentic evangelical spirit, according to the example set by Christ: ‘And, when passing judgment, pay heed to those counsellors that are good and to those testimonies that are true and faithful. And love all young men as your own and use your words to teach and delight them! Love the old and the young alike, the great and the small, for the love of Christ’ (*The Teachings* 158).

The reading on King Ahab. The reference to King Ahab calls attention to the danger of abusing power, which led to the condemnation of both the king and his wife, Jezebel. However, Neagoe Basarab notes Ahab’s repentance, although it ultimately fails to exonerate him from his sins, so that both he and his last descendant, Jehoram, end up killed. Jehu, the man who kills Jehoram, also fails to uphold ‘the name of God and honour Him and fulfil His will’ (*The Teachings* 164).

The reading on King Hezekiah. Hezekiah is characterised as a just and good king, who walked the path of the Lord, as had David, his forefather (*The Teachings* 164). The sieging of Jerusalem by the Assyrian king Sennacherib is an occasion for Neagoe Basarab to highlight steadfast faith and the power of prayer. Since God hears the prayers of those who fear Him (Ps 144:19-20), Hezekiah is delivered. The example of Hezekiah

is employed to illustrate the fact that God can save one from the most arduous situations (for Neagoe Basarab, the Turkish danger was omnipresent). Hezekiah's humility aids him to gain some prolongation to his days. Unfortunately, however, like David, even such a godly king can err before the Lord, as Hezekiah does when he mingles with unbelievers, presenting his treasures to them. Pride and vainglory lead Hezekiah to mingle with heretics, namely with the envoys of the Babylonian king. Neagoe Basarab concludes that, even though King Hezekiah's wrong was small, his foolishness deprived him of God's benefactions.

The story of the deeds of Emperor Constantine the Great. The reading about Emperor Constantine the Great seems, at first glance, to stray from the logic of the previous biblical readings. In fact, to Neagoe Basarab, Constantine the Great is the model Christian emperor par excellence, who embodies the sum of all the virtues of his Old Testament predecessors and is distinguished from them by his being on par with the apostles, a direct follower of Christ. Like the pious Israelite kings of old, Saint Constantine is the exemplary ruler who follows the paths of the Lord, upholds the law and fulfils His will, fights against idolatry and seeks to 'broaden' the faith in the one true God, by strengthening the Church, the New Israel. The role of Saint Constantine and his mother Helen as protectors of the holy places can be regarded typologically and have the gift of reasserting the capacity that Neagoe Basarab assumes himself, namely that of the bearer of the cross in the cultural and ecclesiastical world of the Orthodox East under Turkish dominion.

The reading on Absalom's rebellion concludes the series of Old Testament biblical episodes through which Neagoe Basarab wishes to sketch the ideal portrait of a Christian prince. This reading does not follow the chronological order of events as previously presented. It is, however, intended to reinforce the conclusions previously expressed in the episode dedicated to Saint Constantine the Great. The final readings in the first part of *The Teachings*, the parable of the king's son's wedding, as well as the readings from the folk novel *Barlaam and Josaphat* are merely intended to exemplify that which is presented. Rehoboam's rebellion against David is directed against God's chosen/anointed, while the negative example of Absalom is countered by the example of David, who, like Christ, shows himself full of mercy. Therefore, Neagoe Basarab concludes: 'let no one dare, be they servant, or peasant, or anyone, to try to raise their mind and thoughts, with cunning craft, upon the urging of the devil, against their king and their ruler and master [...]. For the kingdom and rule of kings and rulers,

which is bestowed upon faithful and righteous kings and rulers, is a heavenly kingdom and rule. And the Lord, the Son of God, shall be their king and shall judge the world in righteousness. Therefore, each king or ruler to whom kingdom and rule are given receives them from God, who bestows them upon whomever He will' (*The Teachings*, 187).

Conclusions

Upholding the law, fulfilling the commandments, fearing God, and following the path of the Lord are Old Testament concepts that Neagoe Basarab resorts to build the personality of a future leader according to the biblical archetype. The monarch governs by divine will and conformity with it is the only way to ensure a good and long reign. The monarch, through his unction as the chosen one, is called upon to consecrate his life to the service of God and his fellow men, being the first one expected to uphold the Law and to fulfil the commandments. The governing of the people is to be done in the spirit of justice, but also of mercy and love toward men, whom he is to lead on the realm of faith to attain the heavenly kingdom.

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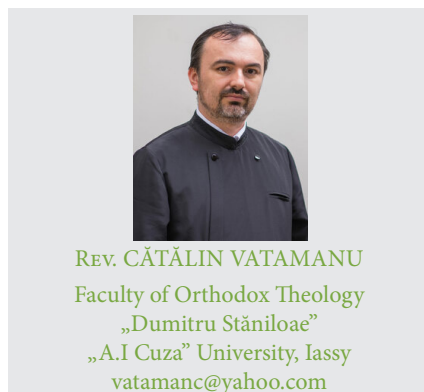
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THE BIBLICAL MODEL OF HUMBLE AUTHORITY IN “THE TEACHINGS OF NEAGOE BASARAB TO HIS SON THEODOSIUS”

Abstract

From a methodological point of view, the present research focuses on the fundamental aspects of Old-Testament monarchic theology, identifying them wherever they stand out in *The Teachings of Neagoe Basarab to His Son Theodosius*. The aim of this endeavour is threefold: first, to highlight the excellence of biblical values via direct references to the biblical text, mostly to the Old Testament, second, to underline the high leadership principles of the great ruler in question, as well as the responsibility he bears in mind in conveying them to his successor to the throne, and third, the fundamental goal of this research, namely to highlight the coherence, fluency, harmony and axiology of the text's rhetoric, as an exceptional literary model and treasure of Romanian literature, a testimony and testament, a source and resource for the life of society and the Church over the centuries.



Keywords

Neagoe Basarab, Old Testament, Humility, Authority, Education

Introduction

Conceived as a testament of Ruling Prince Neagoe Basarab to his son Theodosius, *The Teachings* resemble too much a holy scripture for one not to include them, at least formally, in the category of inspired and inspirational, normative and formative literature. Furthermore, by taking these characteristics of the book as a premise for this study from the very beginning, its relationship with the Old and New Testaments becomes more than obvious and worthy of consideration.

The occurrence of biblical themes in *The Teachings of Neagoe Basarab* is striking to the reader who is familiar with inspired literature, which makes for an argument solid enough for some specialists to justify the theory of a monastic author (Panaitescu 1942, 137; Balotă 1969, 271-80). Overlooking the bibliographic details of the great ruler and neglecting, if one may, the issue of the highly debated authenticity of the writing, the evidence of a work of a sapiential, Christian pedagogic nature, a work that ennobles one's character and shapes values, is unquestionable. Of course, all these literary elaborations – which the author of this study construes rather as natural guiding advice from the father to his son, full of sincerity, care, appreciation, watchfulness (and, no doubt, parental vigil, accompanied by prayer to Christ Our Lord and His Most Holy Mother) – stem from the monarch's political and religious experience, which he feels compelled to pass on to his son. In the vein of the biblical imperative *Shema...!* (*Listen...!*), Ruling Prince Neagoe Basarab summons his son to his most important instruction, one where the father can tell him everything, swiftly and sincerely, with the sense of responsibility of a man who has been appointed by God as master and ruler, and who now must enable his son to rise higher perhaps than he ever has.

Faced with such a monument of old Romanian literature, one can only bow with gratitude and respect, seeking to identify the biblical themes therein, to retrieve, restore and reclaim them in contemporary literature and theological discourse. The topic of the authority of the ruler about God and the people whom he was appointed to rule over by divine mandate – and the matter of humble authority in particular – makes the object of the present study, in the hope that, alongside the other prestigious contributions in this volume, it will constitute a homage paid to Ruling Prince Neagoe Basarab upon the commemoration of 500 years after his passing.

The authority of the ruler is granted and sustained by God

In the Holy Scriptures, God's presence requires no mediation. He reveals Himself to man, amid creation, willingly, publicly and privately. The instances when He reveals His authority and sovereignty, often presented in stylised language, are categorical, imposing, nearly always imperatively, the observance and upholding of the sacred words: “Now therefore, if you will indeed obey My voice and keep My covenant, then you shall be a special people to Me above all nations; for all the earth is Mine. And you shall be to Me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation. These are the words which you shall speak to the children of Israel.” So, Moses came and called for the elders of

the people and laid before them all these words which the Lord commanded him. Then all the people answered together and said: “All that the Lord has spoken we will do and hearken to!” So, Moses brought back the words of the people to the Lord.’ (Ex 19:5-8).

The Holy Scriptures, understood synthetically as the Torah (‘teaching’), start from the narrative of the creation of the entire cosmos and the establishment of man as a king in its midst, a ruler, by the grace of God, over all that has been created, and include a dynamic open to the undertaking of his salvation. Voivode Neagoe Basarab places this belief at the foundation of *The Teachings*, saying: ‘My beloved son, above all, it is meet that you ceaselessly honour and praise the great and good and merciful Lord, *our wise creator*, both day and night, at all times and in all places. And it is most meet that you glorify Him and magnify Him incessantly, with unbroken voice and unforsaken songs, as The One who *made us* and brought us out of the darkness into the light and from inexistence to existence’ (*The Teachings* 2016, 12). He then adds: ‘Therefore, “let not the wise man boast of his wisdom, nor the mighty of his strength, or the wealthy of his wealth. But let him that should boast”, be he a king, a ruler, a victor, do so for “his growing knowledge of God who *made him*” and let him with fear and trembling execute judgment upon earth.’ It is this awareness of one’s divine origin that immediately gives rise to the following exhortation: ‘Make peace and pray, all of you, for, without such, no man will come to see God!’ (*The Teachings* 2016, 15).

Unlike the Torah, the Hebrew royalty overtly expresses public order, political life, authority, power, and justice. Yet all these biblical values are constantly placed about Him who is the perfect King, namely God. Yahweh is the King. His kingdom in heaven must serve as the model, the example for worldly reigns to follow, hence the awareness of the world’s kings that all authority comes from Above, from the Lord. This is no less than what *The Teachings* say: ‘Be mindful and cautious of the task that God has entrusted to you (...). For naught is yours. (...) Yet, although you are possessed of such, boast not, for you have received them from God, that you may place the sceptre and the standard of your kingdom and reign, with much thanksgiving, as the kings of old have placed their kingdoms into the hands of God the Father, utterly undaunted, with great honour and justness. Thus, by the kingdoms of this transient world, they acquired the everlasting kingdom of heaven and received the crown of blessings from the hands of God. And let not your heart swell, nor pride yourself on the manifold tongues and peoples, for it is from God that comes your power and your victory from the One on high’ (*The Teachings* 2016, 17).

Yahweh-God is the King of Israel (Ex 19:6; Jg 8:22-23; Is 6:1; 33:17-22; Zeph 3:15; Zech 14: 16-17) and the Davidic kings understand that monarchy is not some eminently historical institution, but a special work of God, through which He communicates with His chosen people, as written in Ps 88:28-36: ‘And I will set up his seed to endure forever and his throne as the days of heaven; if his sons forsake My law, and walk not in My judgments, if they profane My ordinances and keep not My commandments, I shall visit their transgressions with a rod and their sins with a whip. But I shall not turn away My mercy from him, nor allow My faithfulness to fail, nor will I break My covenant, nor alter the words that proceeded from My lips. Once I swore by My holiness: I will not lie to David. His seed shall endure forever, and his throne as the sun before Me and as the moon established forever and a faithful witness in heaven.’ The Wallachian ruler’s awareness of his divine enthronement is clearly expressed, as a testimony and testament, in *The Teachings*, thus: ‘See, my beloved, the great king, who loved us and made us kings on earth as well, just like himself, and it is his will that we are likewise in heaven; and if we so wish ourselves, so shall we be, provided we do good, and so we shall be kings and reign forever. Yet these earthly kingdoms and reigns are in the hand and at the will of God and were given to us so we may labour for good. While the heavenly kingdom is up to our will and God shall give it to us, if only we want it. But do you know who the great and mighty king is? He is the king of kings the lord of lords and the God of gods, who vanquishes the living and the dead and has made all the ages. Therefore, praise him who has taken you out of the earth and made you a son and king of heaven and higher conqueror and commander over nations and people, and made you a ruler on earth, so that you may pass fair judgment on people and judicious judgment on the poor, as the prophet says: “O, God, give Your judgment to the king and Your righteousness to the king’s son.”’ (Ps. 71, 1).’ But mark how beautifully the author transposes biblical and his personal history into the Christological dimension: ‘Yet what king does the prophet speak of? He speaks of Christ the King. You know that “every perfect gift comes down from above, from the Father” upon the king, and the ruler, and the priest, and every man who belongs to God alike. It is therefore that the king’s son, who is the son of God, should judge righteously, for judgment, too, belongs to God and no one else. And you bow down under the mighty hand of God, as the apostle says, as to the maker and king of life and of our age, with all fear and trembling, so that one day He may exalt you and you may live long on a good earth. Now, o kings, understand and be taught, all you who judge the earth, serve the Lord with fear and rejoice with

trembling, receive instruction, lest the Lord be angry with you, and you may perish from the way of the righteous when his fury is quickly kindled. Be angry and do not sin, for what you think in your hearts have remorse in your beds. And again, the prophet says: “In your care are the poor left and to the miserable you are to be an aid”. For the Son of God himself was sent into the world poor, as it is written. And to you God has given the kingdom in this brief world.’ (*The Teachings* 2016, 15-16)

The peace, prosperity, well-being and harmony of the kingdom, on the one hand, and the authority, power, justice and wisdom of the king, on the other, are reflections of how God is to be understood as one who works amid Israel and blesses its people. That is what Ruling Prince Neagoe Basarab wishes to justify when saying: ‘For the kingdom and reign of kings and rulers, which is bestowed upon faithful and righteous kings and rulers, is a heavenly kingdom and reign. And the Lord, the son of God, shall be their king and shall judge the world in righteousness. Therefore, whenever a king or ruler receives a kingdom and reigns, it is by the mercy of God and He bestows it upon whomever He will. For kingdoms and judgments belong to God and it is for this reason that kingdoms are given by God, to judge his people with righteousness, and to impart pain and rebuke on those who have transgressed. For upon no one ever has God bestowed nor to anyone has He given the drive to do evil and unrighteous deeds, nor has He sent to anyone unclean thoughts, nor has God planted insidious cogitations and thoughts into anyone’s heart. For it is still by the devil’s craft that all these are stirred. For it is because of the devil and his urging that all wicked things are done, and not by the ordinance of God.’ (*The Teachings* 2016, 70)

Biblical models of humility and repentance

To make his teachings not merely scholastic, but strongly rooted in the lives of people in the history of sainthood, Ruling Prince Neagoe Basarab invites the reader to discover divine authority which descended from Heaven and materialised in historical experience. The historical summary of the Kingdom of Israel, in the context of divine providence and blessing, should make for a veritable example: ‘And God shall give you the kingdom on earth, and, for your sake, He shall give it to your sons after you, just as God gave the kingdom to Solomon for the sake of David, his father. And you and your kingdom shall be granted old age with honour by God and years shall be added onto your life, just as days and years were added to Hezekiah, the king of the Jews, fifteen years, as has been said. And wherever you may go and whatever foes you may face, you

shall still overcome them and tread them underfoot and you shall return once more with great honour and great joy. You shall likewise overcome all the heathens who come upon you and God shall deliver them into your hands; and those that may escape shall return to their lands with great shame and dishonour. Yet, should you not mark me, o, my beloved son, or should you not be mindful of the teachings of God, or should you not do the will and follow the statutes of God, which we have been taught and hear in the Holy Scriptures, but should you begin to act against the teachings of God and commit wrongdoings and anger the Holy Spirit, with whom we were stamped on the day we were cleansed of the sin of our forefather, the first man to be made by the hands of God, and should you besmirch godly things with filthy and abominable deeds that you commit, for your foolishness and unwisdom, take heed that God shall take the kingdom from you and give it to another, who shall do the will and follow the commandments of God. And He shall cut your days short and lessen them, as he shortened and lessened the days of Hophni and Phinehas, the sons of Eli the priest and judge of the Israelites, for they did not take heed of their father's teachings, nor keep the law of God. Thus, their lives met an unhappy end and their souls were lost to them. Yet, should you follow the commandments of God, God shall be your helper in all things, as He was to Samuel the prophet; for he, too, was a judge of the Israelites and God was with him at all times. But should you not do the will of God, He shall take your reign away from you, just as they took the kingdom away from Saul and gave it to David. As for Saul, having angered God, he was utterly racked and tormented by the unclean spirit, and for as long as he reigned, his strife and scourges never ceased and he was distressed by enemies and pagans all his life. And so was he bereft of the nation and the kingdom due to his own iniquities. You, however, should you follow the commandments of God and uphold His law, He shall lengthen the time of your reign, as he did those of his obedient ones, of David, of Hezekiah, of Gideon, who were also judges of the Israelites, and those of many others, who followed the will of God and upheld His commandments. Yet, should you not take heed of the commandments of God, nor mark my teachings, watch and guard yourself, lest you share the fate that befell many kings for their negligence and folly, such as Solomon, his son Rehoboam, and Absalom, and many others, who fell from the grace of God and had their lives shortened and their kingdoms fared ill and were spent.' (*The Teachings* 2016, 22-3) 'Therefore, take discerning and thoughtful heed and mind that, should you break the law and fail to fulfil the commandments of God, so even should you conquer the whole world and all

the kings of this world should bow to you, and should they rise with all their might to aid you, of no use shall that be to you, nor will anyone be able to rescue you. For the Scripture says: “The Lord is the one who holds heaven and earth in his hand, the sea, and all things visible and invisible” and “in the sanctification of His hands, all creation is as a drop of water in a vat”. But should you uphold the commandments of God and strive to fulfil them and to conduct yourself according to the will of God, so even should all the world begrudge you and rise with all its might against you, it shall cause you no damage, nor do you any harm, but rather do all the more harm and damage to themselves, just as once Pharaoh’s armies did, which rose against the Israelites, the people of God, and chased them with enmity and they all sank into the Red Sea like lead. From now on, we must not dwell on that which we have said above but show all briefly and see exactly which of the kings and in what manner they submitted to God and always how they transgressed the law and angered God and how they were tried by the wrath of God and how some of them turned God back to mercy with their repentance.’ (*The Teachings* 2016, 23-4)

King Saul

Fearful and somewhat doubtful of his son’s success, the Wallachian ruler refers to the history of the Israelite monarchy for the very purpose of encouraging his son. As an example, he brings up Saul, who, according to him, ‘was raised out of the dunghill’: ‘See, my son, this king, who was first raised by God from among the poor and elevated by Him and made king on earth, as it is written: “The Lord impoverishes and enriches, lowers and raises, he lifts the poor out of the dust and the dunghill, he raises the needy and makes him lord and conqueror over men and makes him heir to the throne of glory”. Did you see the poor lifted out of the dust and the needy raised out of the dunghill? Did you perceive that he was placed on the throne of glory and honoured with royal honour and God made him a king and a conqueror and a prophet?’ (*The Teachings* 2016, 30). But it is not the dung of the world that represents who a man is, but how unworthy man relates to his fellow human, in his capacity as the image of God. The Wallachian ruler understands that pursuing high values is what elevates man, as opposed to looking to the earth and the nothingness of the world. Our axiology should be based on divine values: “Therefore, let no one be deceived or delude himself thinking that he has some merit in his wisdom and worthiness. For all belong to God and it is from God that they are gifted to men, so that they may give thanks with fear and

trembling, be they a king, or ruler, or boyar, or poor, or needy, let him with much thanksgiving praise God at all times for all that He has given us, for we owe it to God to repay Him for what He has given us and gifted us. So, watch yourselves and labour to obey God well and to reign with Him and so live.’ (*The Teachings* 2016, 30)

King David

God’s providence over the chosen people and the Israelite monarchy is conditioned by obedience to the Law. It is precisely disobedience to the Torah that nullifies monarchical absolutism when it is self-sufficient, as Dt 17:16-17 warns: ‘But he shall not multiply horses for himself, nor cause the people to return to Egypt so that he may multiply his horses, for the Lord said unto you: “You shall not return that way.” Neither shall he multiply wives for himself, lest his heart be changed; nor shall he greatly multiply silver and gold for himself. But when King David is above the Law, what he does is displeasing to the Lord: ‘And when the time of mourning was over, David sent and brought her into his house and she became his wife and bore him a son. But what David did was evil in the sight of the Lord’ (2Sam 11:27) and again in the context of the murder of Uriah the Hittite and his sinful relationship with Bathsheba: ‘Why have you despised the word of the Lord by doing evil in His sight? You have struck down Uriah the Hittite with the sword and taken his wife to be your wife and killed him with the sword of the people of Ammon. Therefore, the sword shall never depart from your house because you have despised Me and taken the wife of Uriah the Hittite to be your wife’ (2Sam 12:9-10). This theological idea is wonderfully received in *The Teachings*: ‘So David said to Nathan: “I have done wrong before the Lord my God” and Nathan said to David: “God has taken your sin from you and you shall not die”. You have seen that he was a righteous and holy man and he feared God, yet he fell into the pit of sins. However, whenever he sinned before God, he would labour in repentance to rise and spare no effort and thus he would turn God back towards him in mercy and say: “I have erred before my God!”. And he would also say: “Have mercy on me, O God, according to your great mercy; and, according to the abundance of your compassion, blot out my transgressions!”. Thus did Nathan, too, say to David: “And God has taken your sin from you yet and you shall not die!”’ (*The Teachings* 2016, 32).

King Solomon

The biblical text insists that obedience to God brings well-being to man and multiplies the days of his life and, in the case of a king's reign, such as Solomon's, his obedience to the Law of God ensures a life of luxury for him (1Kgs 3:11-14). Recalling Solomon's reign, Ruling Prince Neagoe Basarab tells his son: 'Do you see, my son, that God multiplies the days of him who acts according to His will and commandments? But those of him who do not uphold His Law and commandments He lessens and shortens' (*The Teachings* 2016, 34-5). And then, to show that the dignity of the father is not guaranteed to pass onto the sons and that the heredity of the rule does not imply that the heirs would also inherit their predecessors' moral character, the Wallachian ruler once more brings to bear the case of King Solomon and his descendants to the throne, stating a warning: 'Therefore, let no one deceive himself and hold himself great, a king though he may be, or a ruler, or a boyar, or whatever he may be; for all these are given by God, and God can take them away. And to Solomon, again, God gave the kingdom, for it is written: "The Lord swears to David in truth and will not renounce it, saying: 'Of the fruit of your body I will set upon your throne if your sons keep my covenant'". Yet the sons of David did not uphold the law of God. Therefore, God removed them from their reign as ones who were ungrateful.' (*The Teachings* 2016, 39-40) And again, invoking the biblical sapiential texts in the *Proverbs of Solomon* 19:20: 'Hear counsel and receive instruction, that you may be wise throughout your life' and the parallel texts in Job 22:22, Jr 7:28; Sir 6:24, the author of *The Teachings* urges: 'But now, my offspring, I shall teach you, as Solomon says: "My son, receive the teachings of your father and heed the counsel of your mother, so that you may live forever"' (*The Teachings* 2016, 210).

King Rehoboam

When it comes to the Davidic kings given as examples below, it is natural that the author of *The Teachings* should have no words of praise about them. Starting with the example of the sons of Solomon as the most powerful representation of how children relate to the extraordinary legacy of their father, he brings to the forefront the reign of King Rehoboam, who, after the division of the kingdom of Solomon, would come to rule over Judah. The two brothers, Jeroboam and Rehoboam lacked counsel and, what is more, they proudly neglected the advice of the wise and old, which led to the splitting of the kingdom into the North and the South. 'Therefore,' says the great

Wallachian ruler, ‘he who heeds the counsel of the young and of children shall never rejoice; yet he who heeds the counsel of the old and wise shall not repent. For it has been said: “Ask your father and he will give you good advice and talk to your elders and they will teach you well”. And it is also said: “The man without counsel, he is his antagonist”. That is what Rehoboam did, refusing to heed the advice of the elders and thus he did wrong and became his enemy and corrupter. Ask your father and he will tell you and your wise elders and God-fearing and hold good counsel and they will teach you all that is fitting and worthy to do by the will of God and for the benefit of your body and soul. And, if you mind the counsel of the elders, so shall your foot not trip against stumbling blocks and offences, nor shall it befall you as it did Adam and many others since, who were disobedient. Therefore, my son, honour old age and silver hair and shirk not from their counsel and teaching, nor disregard your mother’s guidance, as Solomon says. Those of your boyars and counsellors of great quality honour and praise and other, smaller and lowerstanding boyars and captains content with good cheer and all the fellows who strive to obey God faithfully and righteously lade with gifts and hasten to raise them and make them boyars, so that they may serve your rule in good faith and fear of God, as true and righteous Christians. And, when passing judgment, pay heed to those counsellors who are good and to those testimonies that are true and faithful. And love all young men as your own and use your words to teach and delight them. Love the old and the young alike, the great and the small, for the love of Christ.’ (*The Teachings* 2016, 42-3)

King Asa

Recalling the trials that befell King Asa and his victory gained through faith in the power and work of God, as written in the Holy Scriptures: “Then the Spirit of God came upon Azariah, son of Oded, and went out to meet Asa and said to him: “Mark me, Asa and all of Judah and Benjamin: the Lord is with you while you are with Him. If you seek Him, He will be found by you, but, if you forsake Him, He will forsake you” (2Chr 15:1-2), the author of *The Teachings* goes on to advise: “Therefore, I teach you and tell you, to the best of my skill, and say that he who glorifies God shall be glorified by God in his turn, both here and in the kingdom of heaven; whilst he who does not glorify God, but glorifies his power and wisdom, shall not be glorified by God. For this world has seen many rulers and many of God’s chosen, yet only those who glorified God were glorified by God in His turn, both here, on earth, and above, in His heavenly kingdom.

Yet those who did not glorify God were unaware, as without warning came the wrath of God upon them and all the good gifts were taken from their hands and they were bereft of both this earthly kingdom and the heavenly one and nothing was left of them. So did Asa, the king of old, who did not want to praise God, but praised himself. Therefore, for his conceit, as he would not humble himself, God turned his wrath upon him and sent his angel to take him naked out of his bed in the night and cast him onto a dunghill and there he came to his senses and humbled himself and all would beat him and mock him. Thus, he knew then, he understood that all power and might come from God and he began to weep many tears with manifold sighs and God just barely turned His mercy upon him and forgave him.’ Then, moving on to higher biblical meanings, to the words of Christ Our Saviour in Lk 14:11: ‘For whoever exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted’, the author urges: ‘See, my son and you, brothers, how will it go for him who opposes God and holds himself as high and mighty and refuses to humble himself before God! For such a one shall come to be humbled, both here and in the age to come, as the Holy Gospel says: “Whoever humbles himself shall be exalted and whoever exalts himself shall be humbled”. Such shall befall you also, my son, and you, brothers, should you exalt yourselves and swell with pride here, as God shall humble you and nought shall be left of you. Yet, if you humble yourselves before God here, God will exalt you and bring your soul into His heavenly chambers. Thus, do I teach you to do, should you wish to dwell with God’ (*The Teachings* 2016, 153).

King Hezekiah

About the great reformer king Hezekiah, Ruling Prince Neagoe Basarab has words of praise, recalling his and Jerusalem’s resistance against the Assyrian attack of Sennacherib in 701, an example of the resistance of the chosen people against their enemies, through faith and special divine intervention, and an argument for the development of the theology of the inexhaustible Zion: ‘Behold, the angel of God came down onto the camp of the Assyrians and killed 185,000 men of war. And when those who were left rose in the morning, they found so many people all dead. So, Sennacherib returned with shame and scorn. And you, my beloved son, should you be like king Hezekiah in all things, God shall be with you always and shall be your aid in all things, as He was to this king Hezekiah’ (*The Teachings* 2016, 53). Then he adds: ‘O Lord, in this hour, hear me, Neagoe, too, your sinful and wicked servant, the careless and foolish, as you heard Hezekiah in the hour of death! Likewise hear me, Your

indolent servant, for I have no one left to turn to, O Lord, but to the mercy of Your compassion. And do not receive me as You did Hezekiah, but as one of your lowliest of knaves’ (*The Teachings* 2016, 208). About the great Assyrian king, forced to withdraw by the divine providence over Jerusalem and the chosen people, the Ruling Prince Neagoie Basarab exclaims: ‘See, my child, the proud man who rises to heaven, how he fell to hell!’ (*The Teachings* 2016, 54).

King Manasseh

After the positive example of King Hezekiah, the author of *The Teachings* brings to the attention of his son and, through him, to that of us, the readers, the life of King Manasseh, the great idolatrous and prophet-murdering king, during the first part of his reign, and his repentance towards the end. The Old Testament insists on the fact that the political peace of the kingdom is conditioned by the king’s obedience to God, in texts such as Ps 131:10-12: ‘For the sake of David, your servant, do not turn away the face of Your anointed. The Lord has sworn to David in truth and He shall not turn from it: “From the fruit of your body shall I set upon your throne if your sons shall keep my covenant and My testimonies that I shall teach them and their sons shall sit upon your throne forever”’; Ps 88:30-37: “If his sons forsake My law and do not walk in My judgments; if they break My statutes and do not keep My commandments, I shall visit their transgressions with a rod and their sins with a whip. But I shall not turn away My mercy from him, nor allow My faithfulness to fail, nor shall I break My covenant, nor alter the word that has gone out of My lips. Once I have sworn by My holiness that I will not lie to David. His seed shall endure forever and his throne as the sun before me and as the moon established forever and a faithful witness in heaven.” But You have cast off and scorned and rejected Your anointed’; 2Sam 7:12-16: ‘Behold, the Lord tells you that He will make you a house; and when your days are fulfilled and you rest with your fathers, then I shall set up your offspring after you, who shall come from your body, and I shall establish his kingdom. He shall build a house for My name, and I shall establish the throne of his kingdom forever. I shall be a father to him, and he shall be to Me a son; if he commits iniquity, I shall punish him with the rod of men and with the blows of the sons of men, but I shall not take away My mercy from him, as I took it from Saul, whom I put away before you. Your house shall stand firm, your kingdom shall be established forever before you and your throne will stand forever.’ When referring to King Manasseh’s enslavement by the Assyrian king and the shame that the Lord’s

chosen one suffered there, the author of *The Teachings* stresses his repentance and prayer, which the Church has kept in the Holy Scriptures and the service of Great Compline. ‘And hear, O Lord, my impure prayer, as You heard the prayer of Manasseh when he was locked up by heathens in the copper ox. For, at first, he addressed his impure prayer to the idols, to Artemis and Apollos and Baal, until midnight, but to no avail; and at midnight he awoke as if he had been drunk and mad with wine, and he turned his back to the idols and raised his mind and thoughts high towards God and wept bitter and scolding tears, saying: “Have mercy on me, O God of Abraham, of Isaac, of Jacob!” Thus, for this mere return, for his turning his face towards God and his back to the idols, You, my God, delivered him in that very hour from the copper ox wherein he lay captive. So, as You delivered Manasseh from that great adversity, have mercy on me, the villain, too, O God of Abraham, of Isaac, of Jacob, not according to my innumerable sins, my God, but according to Your great mercy. And, as you have shown mercy to Manasseh, so have mercy on me as well, my God!’ (*The Teachings* 2016, 214).

Christ – the perfect model of humble authority

The Incarnation of the Son of God from the flesh of the Holy Virgin Mary is categorical proof of the Heavenly Father’s all-merciful love: ‘for God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish, but have eternal life’ (Jn 3:16). The perfect authority of the divinity of the Son is revealed in the very act of emptying Himself, of humility expressed as His descent to a level where man could receive His love, as St. Paul says: ‘Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus, who, being in the form of God, did not consider it robbery to be equal with God, but emptied Himself, taking the form of a slave and being born in human likeness, he humbled himself and became obedient to the point of death, even death on the cross. Therefore, God also highly exalted Him and gave Him the name that is above every name, so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bend, of those in heaven and those on earth and of those under the earth, and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father’ (Phil 2:5-11).

In the mystery of the Incarnation of the Lord lies hidden the mystery of His sacrifice on the Cross, of His death and Resurrection, for Christ the Lord is not born so that He should become an important historical figure, but so that, by manifesting His divinity from within humanity, He should pull man out of death-fraught history and save him, offering him the Kingdom prepared for him from the very beginning of the

world. Furthermore, this deliverance of humanity could only have been carried out by the Man-God, Who willingly took upon himself the passions, the disgrace, the cross and death. The forgiveness that Christ offers to those who delivered Him to death and crucified Him must be a model for all, but, above all, for a future ruler of a country, who is often tried by the wickedness of the ungrateful: ‘Have we not heard, brethren, the Holy Scriptures never ceasing to testify to how our Lord and God Jesus Christ suffered and what He endured to deliver you from the bondage of labours? How he bore scorn and insults, even their spitting on His cheek, and slaps did He take from that thankless Jewish people. And, faced with that sight, the earth could not endure it, but trembled, while He endured it and did not repay them by the measure of their treachery, nor did He command the earth to split open and swallow them up and deliver them living to hell? Yet even more staunchly did He pray to the Father who is without beginning, saying: “Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do”. And in so doing, He gave you a model of patience and forbearance, so that you might do so in your turn for those who have hated you and done you evil and so that you should not repay evil with evil, nor bear the memory of evil, but have mercy and forgive them, as your Lord Christ did in praying for the thankless and senseless Jews’ (*The Teachings* 2016, 185).

The birth of Christ the Saviour in the poor cave of Bethlehem is proof that God does not seek worldly greatness to reveal His glory, just as we must not be influenced by someone’s social status to do good: ‘Therefore, let you, too, my son, or any other ruler chosen by God, or any of the great boyars, or the small ones, or of the rich, or the poor, let us all learn, brethren, to ever enact the mercy of God and to obey Him. For you see how much good He has done and how deeply He has humbled Himself for us, yet what have we done for Him?’ (*The Teachings* 2016, 196). Biblical wisdom often refers to the virtue of humility and to the fact that it is the one that exalts man: ‘Yet be patient with the humble and do not let him wait for your charity’ (Sir 29: 11). *The Teachings of Neagoe Basarab to His Son Theodosius* highlight the mystery of humble love, the beginning of all virtues: ‘Therefore, we, too, know all these to be good. Yet, all these virtues, where do they come from? They come from our Lord Jesus Christ. For he who has a pure mind, which is the foundation and the fabric of all good things, does not look merely to purity and fasting, to prayer, abnegation and humility, or merely to reach out with his mind and thoughts towards many things and in many ways, but leaves all that behind and raises his mind and thoughts high and enrobes himself in the love of Christ as in a coat of mail. And such a one does not concern himself with the kingdom,

nor with the reign, nor with the Patriarchy, nor with hierarchs, nor with abbots, nor with any earthly thing, such as we concern ourselves with and labour for, but only loves the Lord God with all his heart. (...) Therefore, so shall we, should we love God with all our heart, see the mercy of Christ bestowed upon us from his victorious right hand, alongside fasting and prayer and purity and abnegation and humility and charity and patience and obedience. For all virtues rest in His hands. Let us therefore not stretch or scatter our minds every which way, but direct them only up towards the merciful God, from Whom proceeds all mercy, so that we may reign together with him unto the ages of ages. Amen’ (*The Teachings* 2016, 116).

Man’s strife against the Lord brings him closer to death and separates him from God’s mercy and love

The Lord Christ’s humble assumption of suffering is the healing of humanity from the Adamic pride of self-sufficient and autarchic knowledge of good and evil. Yet the selling of the Lord by Judas shows that the desire to control the destiny and life of others, as a snare set by him who desires to rule over the heavens, namely Lucifer, is something that tempts man, especially those who hold worldly power and authority, hence the following exhortation: ‘For it is meet that man should serve his God, Who made and wrought him, with fear and trembling. He should likewise serve his ruler, for it is said: “He who goes against his master goes against God Himself”. But who is he that goes against his master? It is that man who schemingly rises against his ruler. And such a one stands in defiance alongside Judas the traitor. For Judas, in his madness and foolish envy, rose and sold Christ, his master and God. Therefore, he was justly judged for his guilty deed, so that he was expelled from among the apostles and from the glory of God, as was the devil. For the latter even showed pride and would be greater than God who made him and said: “I will set my throne above the clouds and I will be God’s match”. Therefore, he turned into a dark demon and was cast out of heaven and now the everlasting fire of Gehenna is what awaits him. Likewise did Adam, the first man, rise to rule and be king and seek to become God on earth, but he was not. For it is God Who bestows kingship and dominion, both on earth and in heaven. Therefore, he was condemned and cast into the darkness of hell, until the coming of Christ, and he was bound with unbreakable bonds. Thus, it is said that Adam himself was bound only until the coming of Christ and condemned to labours, while his offspring will be condemned and cast into the everlasting fire even after the coming of Christ’

(*The Teachings* 2016, 69-70). Furthermore, so as not to remain confined to the realm of ideas and moralising words, Ruling Prince Neagoe Basarab shows his son the example of ‘blessed Barlaam and Josaphat, the son of emperor Avenir’, in the form of a story or narration, concluding: ‘Do likewise yourself as that good and faithful emperor did and you will be exalted in your humility’ (*The Teachings* 2016, 85).

Humility must be accompanied by the other virtues, especially by love, which, according to the great Apostle’s words, ‘suffers long; love is benevolent, love does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. Love does not behave unseemly, does not seek its own, it is not provoked, it thinks no evil. It does not rejoice in unrighteousness but rejoices in the truth. It bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things. Love never fails’ (1Cor 13:4-8). *The Teachings* extol the virtue of humble love, a sign of faith in God and proof of respect for the dignity of man as a fellow image of God: ‘First, have faith, love, and hope in God, for love is greater than all. Thus, besides love, have praise for God, which pleases Him. Furthermore, have humility, too, for so our Lord Jesus Christ teaches his apostles, saying unto them: “Learn from me, for I am meek and lowly in heart”. See, my sons, how desirable humility is since our Lord Himself taught His disciples and said to them: “Be meek and lowly”. So do I teach you, according to the words of the Lord? For, should you be humble, God will teach you, and should you be gentle, God will send His mercy to accompany you’ (*The Teachings* 2016, 132). It is love manifested concretely as acts of mercy that save man’s soul from selfishness and isolation and bring forgiveness for many sins: ‘Therefore, brethren, let us run towards our God and fulfil His will and love His face, lest He may cast us away from before his face when the seals are put in place and lest we be counted with the sinners in hell, like those who loved the face of Satan. But let us run towards God through charity, repentance, brotherly love, purity and pure prayer and bow our faces to the earth and speak thus: “Bow down, my face, to the earth, bow down, for you are dust and to dust you shall return!” And let us raise our minds high towards our God, Who is in heaven, with much mourning and humility, so that we may follow our Lord and say: “Have mercy on us, O Lord, have mercy, for we have done evil and committed many sins before You and we have no one to show us mercy except for You, our God! Therefore, we run to You, O Lord, our God, so that You may have mercy on us”’ (*The Teachings* 2016, 205).

Humility must be accompanied by love, fear of God, fasting and prayer

The danger of sin in man is presented by the author of *The Teachings* using metaphors such as rust and weeds. Just as these take over the soul, so do sins and passions stifle the good in man, killing his soul: ‘For just as rust eats through iron, so does earthly glory eat through man, should he attach his heart to it. And as bindweed or old man’s beard wraps around the grapevine and causes its fruits to perish, my son, so do pride and vanity kill the fruits of the king or ruler. For wise deference comes before all good things. And the source of all passions lies in eating beyond one’s fullness. And the epitome of evil lies in man thinking himself righteous. Therefore, the solution presented at the beginning of the paragraph: ‘He who does not confess his thoughts signals and shows that he is entertaining such filthy vainglory; but he who shall confess such thoughts to his spiritual father shall drive desires away’, meaning that the soul’s kneeling before God as part of the Mystery of Confession must be done with hope of forgiveness and blessing: ‘Trust not in your strength and God’s help shall be with you’ (*The Teachings* 2016, 107).

As the righteous Job said, ‘the fear of God, that is wisdom, and to depart from evil is understanding’ (Job 28:28), while the *Proverbs of Solomon* stress the many gifts that emanate from ‘the fear of the Lord’: ‘The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom, but fools despise wisdom and instruction’ (1:7); ‘The fear of God is to hate evil’ (8:13); ‘The beginning of wisdom is the fear of God and the knowledge of the Holy One is understanding’ (9:10); ‘The fear of God prolongs (man’s) days, but the years of the wicked will be shortened’ (10:27); ‘In the fear of God there is hope of strength (...). The fear of God is a fountain of life, to turn one away from the snares of death.’ (14:26-27); ‘Better is a little with the fear of God than great treasure with trouble’ (15:16); ‘The fear of God is instruction and wisdom and humility is before honour’ (15:33); ‘By love and truth iniquity is atoned for and by the fear of God one departs from evil’ (16:6); ‘The fear of God leads to life and he who has it will abide in satisfaction; he will not be visited by evil’ (19:23).

It is easy to understand how Prince Neagoe Basarab, too, ‘lovingly’ places the fear of God at the foundation of virtues, stating: ‘And above all, my sons, you should have the fear of God lovingly rooted among you. For the fear of God is the mother of all good things. For it is the fear of God that begets fasting and fasting begets purity and purity begets prayer, while prayer begets humility, humility begets love and love is the pillar that upholds all the laws and prophecies’ (*The Teachings* 2016, 218). This

‘begetting’ of virtues from the fear of God strengthens man, who will be like a ship firmly anchored into the shore with ‘many braided ropes’: ‘Therefore, let me remind you, my sons, to join fasting with prayer, as well as fasting and bowed humility and love; and our Lord Jesus Christ will weave all the good things into your laurels. For when a ship is blown by the wind amid the sea, should its rope be made of a single string and should the wind blow it and rock it until the rope snaps, thus shall the ship drown into the depths and sink; while that ship whose rope is braided out of many strings, should it be blown by the wind, the strings shall aid one another, so that the wind cannot break it and it shall draw it out from the bottom and the depths and it shall not be harmed’ (*The Teachings* 2016, 219).

Once again, the author does not remain confined within the boundaries of theological discourse but brings before his reader the faces of those who laboured through fasting, prayer and good works: ‘So keep watch, in fasting and prayer and humility, for prayer and fasting and humility are a great thing. And now I shall show you, my sons, how great and mighty prayer and fasting and humility are. For, by fasting, Moses spoke to the Lord Sabaoth on Mount Sinai face to face, as one would speak to one’s wife, and walked across the bottom of the sea as on dry land. By fasting, Elijah the prophet sealed the heavens so that no rain fell for three years and six months and God took him up to heaven in a chariot of fire. Through prayer and the labour of his body, Paul the apostle ascended while in the body to the third heaven and there he heard unspeakable words, which it is not for man to utter – yet he says that what he heard was only in part’ (*The Teachings* 2016, 220-1). The examples of Moses, Elijah, and St. Paul as role models concerning fasting are all the more relevant in this evocation as they lived in times of adversity: whether it was the Egyptian supremacy and the exodus towards the Holy Land through the Sinai desert, or the reign of the idolatrous king Ahab – a time of drought for the land, but also a spiritual drought among the chosen people – or the difficult history of the Early Church after the Resurrection. All these periods in our horizontal history reveal the *katabasic* work of God descended among mankind.

A ruler must lead a temperate life, devoid of vices

In *The Teachings* of Voivode Neagoe ‘to his son, Theodosius, and other rulers and all. How it is meet for rulers to sit at the table and how they are to eat and drink’, the author calls for moderation as to food and drink, as an expression of inner spiritual balance: ‘My son, I thought it fit that a ruler should sit at the table with his great bo-

yars and his small ones. When a ruler sits at the table, first, his body lusts for food and drink. Then he lusts to make great merry. Yet you, my son, by no means let your mind be fully engrossed into merriment, for man in this world hangs between life and death. Therefore, it is meet that you keep close watch upon yourself and not let your mind be fully engrossed into merriment, nor sorrow either’ (*The Teachings* 2016, 136). Such words bring to mind the Holy Scriptures, which speak of the danger of drunkenness and surfeit: ‘What you hate do not do to anyone. Do not drink wine up to the point of drunkenness, nor let drunkenness accompany you on your way.’ (Tob 4:15); ‘A labouring man that is given to drunkenness shall not be rich’ (Sir 19:1). Saint Paul warns that ‘nor thieves, nor the greedy, nor drunkards, nor slanderers, nor swindlers shall inherit the kingdom of God’ (1Cor 6:10), while Our Saviour stresses which food is truly life-giving, namely the bread that is offered for eternal life: ‘Do not labour for the food which perishes, but for the food which endures to eternal life, which the Son of man will give to you, for God the Father has set His seal on Him’ (Jn 6:27).

As the head of the administrative apparatus and of the entire people, the Wallachian ruler is the community’s foremost role model concerning virtue, a reflection of God’s dominion, which is why he must avoid the temptation of drunkenness, a killer of the mind and soul, the examples invoked being those of Noah, Lot, Samson, Delilah, Holofernes, Judith and Herod: ‘Should you keep with the foolish and unruly, you shall be foolish and unruly yourself’; ‘Should he have singing and playing at his table, let his mind not be enticed by them’; ‘Do not encumber your body with drunkenness (...), for even should a man have a great mind, he loses it when drunk; should he have stout hands, they are of no use to him’ (*The Teachings* 2016, 137-40).

In an exceptional vein, Neagoe Basarab ends by urging his son to be grateful for all that he receives in life, both good and bad, even warning him as to the possibility that he may never come to rule: ‘Therefore I say, my son, rejoice you not overmuch in the glory of this world, nor be you overly sorrowful, but constantly give thanks to God for everything, even should you find yourself bereft of me. For you are not alone to have come to be bereft and sorrow-laden, but many sons of kings and rulers have been bereft, as is the habit and manner of this world, and many afflictions have befallen them and they have suffered in their kingdoms and reigns at the hand of evil and thankless men, while others never even came to succeed their fathers when they were left behind’ (*The Teachings* 2016, 183). Such awareness of potential political failure serves to heighten the sense of responsibility in the ruler’s son, while at the same time delimiting

and restricting his way of life, as he has a sacred mission both before his father and before God.

In the grave, the king is no different from the poor man

Speaking of life's end, Ruling Prince Neagoe Basarab points out that death is a debt all men are bound to pay, but, before that, they must lead a holy life, dedicated to God: 'Consider this, which is a great mystery, and see and ponder! When seeing kings, do not you be deceived, when seeing lords, do not you be amazed, for, once they have departed from this life and been interred, who then can tell who was the mighty king? Besides, death is something no one by any means can escape, but all shall tremble to face its cup. And thus, is he like any other man, fearing and trembling before it. He who was once strong and feared now walks the path like a condemned man; and he who yesterday made the doomed tremble is now completely extinguished, while all his wisdom and might perish' (*The Teachings* 2016, 94). 'Therefore, let us endeavour to bestow charity on all ahead of time before death catches up with us. And all of us, be we kings, rulers, boyars, and servants, come look into the graves and see what you become and tremble! And come you, too, who harbour grudge and strife against one another, behold and see how you are wasted and be reconciled. Peer ever so intently into the grave and see those who lie therein and distinguish which was the king and which are the bones of the ruler. Look upon the terrible and frightful sight and aspect of the bones and say then, of these, which belonged to the king and which to the ruler, or which were of the boyar, or which of the servant, or the rich, or the poor, or the old, or the young, or which was the Moor and which was the fair man? Are they not all dirt? Are they not all dust? Are they not all full of foul stench? Are we not now repulsed by the bones of those whom we once held dear?', 'Behold, as dust they have become, for the dust they were!' (*The Teachings* 2016, 95)

At the Judgment, the king will answer before God

Ruling Prince Neagoe Basarab's testament teachings are dedicated to his son, as well as to all those who would ascend to the throne eventually. Their universal application and prophetic projection ensure the perpetual validity of these sapiential judgments, increasing the sense of responsibility in those upon whom God bestowed the duty of leadership, as one can read in the following lines: 'Therefore shall kings and rulers with great fear and much trembling answer to Christ the Lord for the things

they did during the time of their reigns and dominions, for how they served Him’ (*The Teachings* 2016, 111).

The conclusion of the ruling prince’s teachings turns into an overt blessing upon the life of his son and upon the reign which the great voivode hopes that the former will carry out, for the glory of God. Invoking the divine presence in this testament, as a farewell to life uttered by the ruler and a way of entrusting his son to the divine Father, *The Teachings* attain their pedagogical and soteriological goal, which is that of serving the becoming of man in the Kingdom of Heaven, unto the ages of ages: ‘For now I have forsaken all my wealth and the glory of this world. And my reign vanished like smoke blown away by a swift wind and now my soul’s sole hope lies with the mercy of God and with you, God’s chosen and my beloved brother, whom may Christ the Lord teach to be charitable towards my soul and come to my aid with alms in this time of need for my soul. May our Lord Jesus Christ be merciful to you in this world and, in the next, may He make you worthy to be counted with the good and faithful rulers and kings. And may the seed of your reign grow here and may your soul blossom like the cedars of Lebanon and like the beautiful lily in the kingdom of heaven, unto the ages of ages’ (*The Teachings* 2016, 190).

Conclusions

Having studied the text of *The Teachings of Neagoe Basarab to His Son Theodosius*, the author of the present paper would like to highlight some personal observations, which may serve as a concluding summary of the above discussion.

First, the author finds it necessary that a ‘standard’ text of *The Teachings* should be edited. As for himself, the author has read the edition of *The Teachings of Neagoe Basarab to His Son Theodosius* prefaced by Nicolae Iorga, edited and annotated by Teodor Vârgolici, published by MondoRo, Bucharest, 2016, however, as specified in note 2 of this study, to preserve the originality and beauty of Old Romanian, the texts were cited after https://ro.wikisource.org/wiki/%C3%8Env%C4%83%C8%9B%C4%83turile_lui_Neagoe_Basarab_c%C4%83tre_fiul_s%C4%83u_Teodosie. Having many researchers using texts that are different in form as a reference renders the process of reviewing ideas more complicated and a unified critical approach to *The Teachings* impossible.

Upon researching the text of *The Teachings*, the author of the present paper set out to inventory the texts that refer to biblical sources. Due to textual lim-

itations, the study may be expanded on by subsequent research focused on the fundamental role of the Holy Scriptures in the drafting of *The Teachings*. Thus, identifying as accurately as possible the biblical texts that lay at the foundation of the sapiential statements in *The Teachings* would be of great benefit, as it would highlight the relationship between them and the text of the Holy Scriptures. Furthermore, specifying the biblical references, either within the text itself or in footnotes, would facilitate the dialogue between the Scriptures and Romanian culture/literature.

As previously pointed out, the message of *The Teachings* is not confined to the 16th century and its historical context but must be understood as impactful and valuable to this day and, hopefully, in the future as well. Therefore, it is necessary to retrieve, restore and rediscover the meanings of the political-religious message conveyed by Ruling Prince Neagoe Basarab, as a cultural treasure full of wisdom.

Even though the book is the expression of a political mandate, it has an obvious religious dimension, as its sociopolitical ideas are accompanied by theological and spiritual advice, which turn this royal testament into a pedagogical one, a father's loving legacy to his son. Therefore, it is necessary that *The Teachings* should be read through a spiritual lens and that their sapiential dimension should be highlighted, to outline the important basilic ethics of the Romanian rulers of the Middle Ages.

Ruling Prince Neagoe Basarab is a remarkable personality of the 16th century, who exhibits high spiritual qualities and an exceptional knowledge of the text of Holy Scriptures. Thus, his awareness of humility and obedience to God, born out of the historical experience of Davidic royalty, leads him towards a special responsibility, namely that of highlighting the presence of divine providence in his historical existence, as well as in that of the Romanian people. Furthermore, his frequent references to the revealed texts, the humble authority of the Holy Voivode Neagoe Basarab, and his obedience to Christ the Word, King and Lord, abolishes any understanding of the text along the lines of monarchical absolutism, while promoting and cherishing the dignity of the holy, faithful, pious, righteous man who bears testimony for God.

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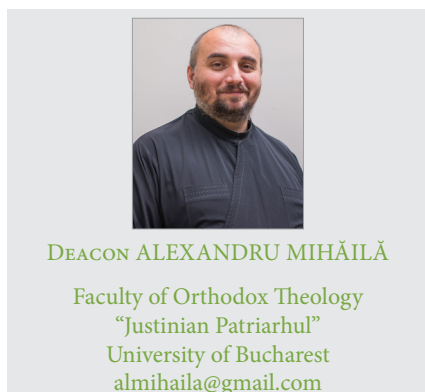
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THE TEACHINGS OF AMENEMOPE AND THE BOOK OF PROVERBS OF SOLOMON (22:17-24:22)

Abstract

The study explores the links between the Teachings of Amenemope from Ancient Egypt and the Proverbs of Solomon book. Egyptologist Erman observed the first connections. Since then, there have been hypotheses about the Proverbs author's access to Amenemope's text. Analysis reveals significant parallels between the two works – calls for obedience, respect for the poor and elderly, and warnings against greed. The author also highlights specific adaptations to Israelite realities and beliefs. He notes the Egyptian influence on biblical wisdom, with the author redefining this wisdom in an Israelite context. The influences point to a universalist view, transcending cultural boundaries, with the search for wisdom from diverse sources.



Keywords

Influences, Connections, Wisdom, Proverbs, Amenemope

Introduction

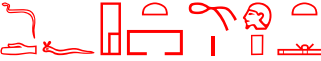





The Teachings of Amenemope is a work dating from the Ramesside period (13th-11th centuries BC). The complete text is in papyrus B.M. 10474 held in the British Museum. In 1888 the Egyptologist E.A. Wallis Budge bought the papyrus for the British Museum in Egypt. In 1922 Budge published a description of the papyrus, and in 1923 he published the entire manuscript (introduction, English translation, hieroglyphic transcription of the hieroglyphic text and facsimile) (Budge 1923, 9-18). In 1924 the German Egyptologist Adolf Erman published the first German translation (Erman 1924, 241-52). Other translations followed in languages of international circulation (Hallo 1997, 115-22; Pritchard 1969, 421-5; Otto 1991, 222-50), and in 1974 for the first time in Romanian (Daniel 1974, 159-78). The Egyptian text was edited

by Lange (Lange 1925), the most recent edition being that of Laisney (Laisney 2007). In 2002, as his doctoral thesis, James Roger Black also published part of the critically edited text with commentary (Black 2002).

Already in 1923, Budge notes small connections with the book of Proverbs in general (Amenemope 6 // Prv 15:17 and Amenemope 7 // Prv 23:7) (Budge 1923, 357), but gives precedence to presumed Semitic sources. In 1924 Adolf Erman is the first to notice the connection with the so-called “Words of the Wise” in the book of Solomon’s Proverbs (Prv 22:17-24:22) (Erman 1924, 86-93; Grebmann 1924, 272-96).


Various explanations have been offered for this reality (Ruffle 1977, 29-68; Overland 275-92; Schipper 2005, 53,72). The author of Proverbs would have had in front of him an edition of the Teaching of Amenemope in Egyptian or in a Hebrew translation (Römheld 1989, 113) or Aramaic (Fox 2014, 77). The Hebrew primacy proposal has remained only a hypothesis that has not been embraced by scholars (Drioton 1956; Heintz 1989, 19-29). Other authors have remained more reticent about the influence of the Egyptian text (Whybray 1994, 132-41). But especially since the 1970s, through the monograph of Irene Grumach, the idea of Egyptian influence on the Wise Words in the Book of Proverbs has been accepted in the academic world (Grumach 1963, 208-24).

I present below some examples of the connection between the Proverbs of Amenemope and the literary corpus of the Book of Proverbs 22:17-24:22, entitled “Words of the Wise” (Trimijopoulos).

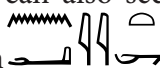
- 3.8  *dd.f hwt tpt*
- 3.9  *imi ḥḥwy.k sḏm i ḏdwt*
- 3.10  *imi ḥ3ty.k r whḥ.w*
- 3.11  *3ḥ p3 dit st m ib.k*
- 3.15  *hr rḥ wnw ḏḥ n mdw*
- 3.16  *iri.w nḥyt m nst.k*

“He says: chapter one: / Bow down thine ear, listen to the sayings, / set thine inward parts to understand them. / It is a profit to put them in thy heart / [...] When there is a storm of words / make them a mooring stake for thy tongue” (ch. 1-3; 8-11; 15-16). “Bow down thine ear, and listen to the words of the wise, and turn thine heart to my knowledge. For it is pleasant if you keep them in your belly, they will sit like a stake on your lips” (Prv 22:17-18).

Egyptian scribes used red ink for headings and chapters, otherwise using black ink. The text in Amenemope 3.8 is written in red ink (rubric).

The Egyptian phrase “bow down your ear” ( *imi nḥwy.k*, lit. “give your two ears”) has the Hebrew equivalent “bow down your ear” (הַט אָזְנְךָ *haṭ ’oznē ka*).


“The words of the wise” (מִדְּבַרֵי חֲכָמִים) in the Masoretic Text would constitute the title of the literary corpus, equivalent to the formula in Prv 24:23, in which a new corpus begins: גַּם אֵלֶּה לְחַכְמִים “and these belong to the wise”.


One can also see an adaptation to Palestinian realities: the “mooring stake” (in Egyptian  *n’yt*) becomes in Hebrew יָתֵד “tent peg”. Indeed, it seems very likely that the phrase יִכְנּוּ יַחְדָּו עַל שִׁפְתֶיךָ, literally “shall be set together on your lips” is corrected to read יָתֵד “tent peg” instead of יַחְדָּו “together”. This reading is also suggested in the critical apparatus of the Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia.

There is even a translation of the Holy Scriptures, the New American Bible (1991), which adopts the following translation for Prv 22:19: “that your trust may be in the Lord I teach you the words of Amenemope”. In the Masoretic Text appears אֲנִי הַיּוֹם אֶתְּנֶה לְךָ הַיּוֹם אֶף- , literally “I will teach you today even you”, but which in Hebrew a cumbersome construction (Fox 2009, 709). The phrase הַיּוֹם אֶף אֲנִי would thus constitute a distorted transcription of the name of the Egyptian sage.

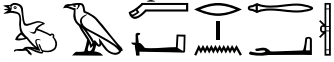






A generic comparison of the two texts also shows that the Hebrew text has been adapted to the Yahwist religion. Indeed, Prv 22:19 refers to Yahweh (the Lord): “that your trust may be in the Lord”. In other words, the Egyptian text is not taken as such, but adapted to the concrete realities of Israel’s life and to the monotheistic conception.

4.4  *s3w tw r ḥwr^c i3dt*
 4.5  *r n šiw s3w^c*

4.6  *m iri i3w drt.k r tkn*
i3(w)

4.7  *m tw.k t3 r n '3*

“Beware of reviling a poor man / and oppressing a cripple, / do not stretch out your hand to touch an old man, / nor open your mouth against an old man” (ch 2 – 4.4-7). “Do not rob the poor, for he is poor, and do not oppress the wretched at the gate [of the city]” (Prv 22:22).

In Amenemope 4.7 the expression “neither open thy mouth against an elder” is literally in Egyptian  *t3 r n '3* “do not rebuke the mouth of an elder”. In the Egyptian text, there are several categories against which the listener is admonished to show respect: “the poor” (Egyptian  *i3d*), “the cripple” or the one with crushed limbs (Egyptian  *s3w*), “the old man” (Egyptian  *i3w*) and “the great one” ( '3). In Hebrew only the category of the poor  and  is retained.

7.11  *hwt mht 6-nwt*


7.12  *m iri rmnw*
wdy hr tštiw n 3h

7.13  *m tw.k*
tfiw h3w3t n nwh

7.14  *m iri snkty r mḥ 1 n 3ht*

7.15  *m tw.k h3d*
tštiw n ḥ3rt

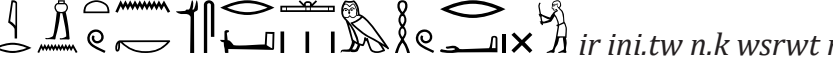
“Chapter Six: / Do not move the boundary markers of the field, / Do not change the place of the measuring line, / Do not be greedy for a palm of ground, / Nor trample on the widow’s boundary” (ch. 6 - 7.11-15). “Do not move the widow’s boundary, and do not violate the orphan’s field” (Prv 23:10).

In the Egyptian text, “a handful of earth” is actually “a cubit of earth”, with the unit of measurement “cubit” (e.g.  *mḥ*) also found in biblical culture.

Strictly speaking, in Hebrew Prv 23:10 is **אל תסג גבול עולם** “do not move the boundary of eternity”. But also, in the critical apparatus of the Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia it is suggested to replace **עולם** “eternity” with **אלמנה** “widow” based on the text in the Teachings of Amenemope (Gemser 1963, 87). It is interesting that the Romanian Synodical Bible and Cornilescu’s 1924 Bible accept this substitution for “widow”, although it has no basis in the Hebrew text. In the Septuagint it is *ᾠρια αἰῶνια* “eternal boundaries”, which Ananias’s Bible renders by “ancient boundary stones”. Indeed, the correction made based on the Egyptian text is also justified because the pair “widow” - “orphans” is preserved as socially assisted persons.


9.14  *m iri mš3pw*
r ḥ3ḥ ḥ3ww

9.15  *wd3 n.k ḥrw tw.k*


9.16  *ir ini.tw n.k wsrwt m ḥwr^c*


9.17  *nn sdr.w m diw.k*



9.18  *ḥd t3 bn st m pr.k*




9.19  *p tr.w*
t3y.w st rḥ bn st

9.20  *w n*
p3-iwdnwt r.f ‘qw.f sw ‘m[3m.f sw]




10.1  *m diw.f ḥ3rpwy.w*
m dw3t





“storehouse pit” (Egyptian  *šn'w* “store”, “trading space”, “working space”, “storage space”; the translation “cellar” is contextual), a reality also known in Israel: cisterns or pits dug into the ground and plastered over in which grain was stored (King and Stager 2002, 1216-9).


The most interesting parallel is between the wealth that takes on goose-like wings in the Egyptian text and the wealth that takes on eagle-like wings in the Hebrew text. The summer goose (*Anser anser*), in Egyptian  *r* or *r3*, is a very common sight in the Nile-watered area of Egypt, less suited to the dry, semi-desert and desert space of Israel. This is why the biblical author uses the image of the eagle or hawk, in Hebrew , more familiar to the inhabitants of the Holy Land.

11.12  *hwt mht 9-nwt*
 11.13  *m iri snsnti n.k p3 šmm*
 11.14  *m tw.k hnhn.fr sdd*

“Chapter Nine: / Do not befriend the angry man, / Do not come near to speak with him” (ch. 9 - 11:13-14). “Do not associate with the angry man, and with the man who is hot with anger you shall have no fellowship, lest you be led astray in his way and lay a snare for your life” (Prv 22:24-25).

The Egyptian term  *šmm* means “angry”, which corresponds closely with the Hebrew  “angry”, literally “lord of the [burning] face”, but also with the phrase  “angry”, literally “man of anger, burning”.

In Egyptian it is forbidden to associate with the angry one, but a term is used which would be better translated “to befriend” -  *snsn*, which comes from  *sn* “brother” - but which can also be translated as “to befriend”, “to befriend”. In Hebrew, the term , used here in *hitpael*, comes from  “near”, “companion”.

14.17  *p3 mh r t '3 'm3m.k sw bši.k sw*

14.18 iw.k šw.tw m p3yw.k nfr

“A mouthful of bread - you swallow it, but then you vomit it up / and you are left without your good” (ch. 11 - 14.17-18). “The morsel that you have eaten you shall cast out of you, and you have wasted [vainly] your chosen words” (Prv 23:8).

In Hebrew, the term פת means “piece”, but it is used especially in reference to “piece of bread”. In fact, the phrase פת להם “piece of bread” even appears in Gn 18:5. In 2 Sm 12.3 פת is used alone, but it still refers to bread or food in general. In Egyptian t or t3 refers to bread, as suggested by the hieroglyphs: a loaf of bread, a loaf of bread raised in a blid, and a loaf of bread wrapped in a roll.

The Egyptian verb bši “to vomit” has a direct Hebrew counterpart in the verb קיא “to vomit”. The variant “to throw out” is a euphemistic solution chosen by the translator. In the basic sense it is used in Jer 25:27: “Drink and get drunk, vomit (וקיו, here without *aleph*) and fall down and do not rise at the sight of the sword”. The sea monster in the book of Jonah “vomits up” the prophet (Jon 2:11), just as the holy land of Israel can vomit up unworthy inhabitants (Lv 18:25, 28). This idea of the vomiting up of wealth is also found in Job 20:15: “The wealth which he has swallowed up he now vomits up”.

Another correspondence between the Egyptian text and the Hebrew text is related to the adjectives nfr “good”, “pleasant” and נעים with the same meaning.

27.6 hwt mh 30-t

27.7 ptr n.k t3i 30 n hwt

27.8 st sd3y hr st sb3y

“The thirtieth chapter: / Look at these thirty chapters: / They give understanding, they give teaching” (ch. 30 - 27:6-7). “Have I not written to you in many (lit. “the day before”) counsels and teachings” (Prv 22:20).

This is the most interesting parallel, which would even involve correcting the biblical text. In Hebrew the word **שְׁלֹשֹׁם** appears as **שְׁלֹשֹׁם** and the *syllolism* “the day before yesterday”, which seems very strange in context. Indeed **שְׁלֹשֹׁם** can appear in the expression **תְּמוּל שְׁלֹשֹׁם** “the day before yesterday” (Ex 5:8), which occurs with variants **כְּתְמוּל שְׁלֹשֹׁם** “as yesterday the day before yesterday”, **מִתְמוּל שְׁלֹשֹׁם** “from yesterday the day before yesterday” in total in 19 verses. However, in the text of Prv 22:20 the phrase appears truncated, which would indicate that other solutions should rather be sought.

Already the rabbinic textual tradition has made an emendation: if the written form (the so-called *Ketib*) of the Masoretic Text is **שְׁלֹשֹׁם** “the day before yesterday”, the proposed read form (*Qere*) is **שְׁלֹשִׁים**, which means “officers”. It is more precisely **שְׁלִישׁ** *šališ*, usually translated as “chieftains”, meaning “third [in rank]”. It is especially used for “the third” in the chariot drawn by two horses; the first one was holding horses with a spear as a weapon, the second was an archer and shot arrows, and the third carried a shield and balanced the chariot as it went (King and Stager 2002, 244). And this term is inappropriate in context, the only argument - rather weak - being that in Prv 8:6 **נְגִידִים** which basically means “ruler”, “prince” (cf. 1 Sm 9:16; 13:14; 1 Kgs 1:35 etc.), but which in context refers to “noble words / deeds” (Emerton 2001, 431-65).

The Septuagint renders the term by a numeral *τρισῶς* “thrice”. Adolf Erman was the first to propose correcting the Hebrew text, proposing instead of **שְׁלֹשֹׁם** the numeral **שְׁלֹשִׁים** *šelošim* “thirty”, here he acknowledges a reference made by the biblical author – a Jew from Egypt of the Saite or Persian period who translated the Teachings of Amenemope into Hebrew or Aramaic (Erman 1924, 89. 92). The numeral “thirty” has a special significance in Egypt: thirty judges comprised the court of the vizier, also thirty were the gods who judged the soul after death (Fox 2009, 711). This could be a direct reference to the 30 chapters of the Teachings of Amenemope. Another possibility would be a reference to the 30 maxims into which the Words of the Wise are divided in Prv 22:17-24:22, which would imply an adaptation: instead of the 30 developed chapters of the Egyptian book, 30 Hebrew proverbs or maxims are briefly given (Fox 2002, 705).

Assessment and conclusions

I also take this opportunity to advocate the study by biblical scholars of oriental languages, including ancient Egyptian (Englund 1995; Allen 2010; Cihó 1996 and 2018). The teachings of Amenemope are a very eloquent example of the

interconnection between Egyptology and biblical study.

Despite attempts to argue for the anteriority of the biblical text to the Egyptian, I think it is fairly certain that the biblical author was inspired by the Teachings and not the other way around. The Teachings of Amenemope date from the Ramesside era (Assmann 1991, 475-500), so at least around 1100-1000 BC, whereas the collection of Proverbs of Solomon is much later. Even if the Solomonic dating, therefore from the 10th century, were valid, the Proverbs cannot be the source for the Egyptian text. The collection “Words of the Wise” (Prv 22:17-24:22) is placed after the late introduction (Prv 1-9), after the collection of Solomon’s proverbs (Prv 10:1-22:16), followed by another collection of the words of the wise (Prv 24:23-34), by the collection of Solomon’s proverbs collected in the time of King Hezekiah (8th century), and by four wisdom additions: the words of Agur son of Isaac of Massah (Prv 30:1-14), numerical proverbs (Prv 30:15-33), the words (mother) of King Lemuel of Massah (Prv 31:1-9), and the praise of the virtuous woman (Prv 31:10-31).

The biblical author does not take massively from the teachings of Amenemope, but selectively. He takes mainly from the opening chapters of the Teachings and especially from the first half of the Egyptian book. Given that in Egyptian the chapters are marked by rubrics (headings written in red ink), this could be due to the practical way in which the biblical author draws from the scroll of the Egyptian text, rotating the papyrus from beginning to end and then back again, repeating the process (Fox 2014, 78).

When inspired, the biblical author adapts Egyptian realities to Palestinian ones. For example, the comparison of wealth to geese, very natural in Egypt, becomes a comparison to the eagle for the biblical mind, and the mooring pole, specific to Egyptian boats, becomes the tent pole, very familiar to the inhabitants of the Holy Land. The biblical author also adapts the Egyptian text to Yahwist monotheism with theological additions - for example: “O that all [teachings] were on your lips! To put your hope in the Lord I want to teach you today” (Prv 22:18-19). If the teachings of Amenemope are centred on Egyptian social realities and strict social hierarchy (Keel 1979, 225-34), the biblical text insists more on the theological side.

These Egyptian influences demonstrate the biblical author’s concern to preserve traditional wisdom. Egyptian wisdom was renowned, so much so that in Acts it is supposed that Moses “was taught in all the wisdom of the Egyptians” (Acts 7:22). By using non-Israelite sapiential sources such as the Teachings of Amenemope and the

words of Arab sages and kings of Massah (Arabia), the biblical author(s) demonstrate a universalist view that while the Law and the Covenant are specific to Israel, the sharing of true wisdom is common to all peoples.

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BOOK REVIEWS

1. Constantin-Radu Iliescu, *Neagoie Basarab – the ruler who was seeking eternity*
2. Cătălin-Emanuel Ștefan, *An Academic Pattern: Professor – PhD Student*

NEAGOE BASARAB – THE RULER WHO WAS SEEKING ETERNITY

Constantin-Radu Iliescu

Învățăturilor lui Neagoe Basarab către fiul său Theodosie
[The Teachings of Neagoe Basarab to his son Theodosius]

Edited by Dan Zamfirescu and Ileana Mihăilă

(București: Fundația Națională pentru Știință și Artă, 2020), 1180 p.

Suppose the texts were to speak for themselves. In that case, *the Teachings of Neagoe Basarab* should be called, in the intertextual tension it establishes with Niccolò Machiavelli's *The Prince* and Erasmus of Rotterdam's *The Education of the Christian Prince*, *The Levantine Prince*, so much so that the work written in Târgoviște at the beginning of the 16th century seems to be a replica from the same times, but in a different place under a different sky, of the first modern treatises on politics. Modern, anti-traditional, broken from the authority of the sacred, centred on worldly ends to the point of disregarding any demands of means. *The Teachings of Neagoe Basarab*, the Wallachian ruler, is the late fruit of a world in which Byzantine echoes have not yet died away, over which is superimposed the breath of a Romanian society on the fringes of Christianity, in contact with Islam rather than with the Renaissance ideals of the West.

But the texts speak through the minds of *model readers*, called to enter *in fabula*, as Umberto Eco said. The ideal reader of this Wallachian Renaissance text is relentless, driven by the mad desire to update its potential content by confronting it with other works at different levels of intertextuality. It is easy for the reader to notice the correspondences between the *Teachings of Basil the Macedonian to his son Leo*, or *the Administration of the Empire of Constantine Porphyrogenitus*, to cite just two of the best-known political works of the time. Concentric circles around the parenetic work of Neagoe Basarab organize resonance with works of a spiritual nature, such as the *Humility* of St Simeon the New, the *Ladder* of St John the Climacus, the *Dioptra* of Philip the Solitary, the *Homilies* of John Zlatoust, the *Words* of St Ephrem the Syrian and the *Words* of St Athanasius of Alexandria. But above all *the Chronicles* of Holy Scripture, with their stringing together, intertwining and entangling of royal destinies, the dust and dust of times saved by a few sentences of wit.

The son of Basarab the Younger, ascended to the throne at the age of 30 for a reign of 10 years, “this Marc Aureliu of the Romanian Country” (B.-P. Hasdeu) began his apprenticeship as secretary to Metropolitan Niphon, exiled to our lands after having been Patriarch of Constantinople, thus from the heart of the Ottoman Empire in one of its most troubled edges. The bond between the two would prove indestructible over time, the representative of temporal power remaining the faithful spiritual son of the representative of spiritual authority. That is why the inclusion in the addendum of the edition published in 2020 by the National Foundation for Science and Art, under the auspices of the Romanian Academy, of the biography with the title *Nifon, patriarhul Țarigradului, care au strălucit prin multe patimi și ispite în Țarigrad și în Țara Muntenească, scrisă de Chir Gavriil Protul adică mai marele Sfetăgoriei*, follows the line of intertextualities intended to highlight for the informed reader the “dimension of eternity” (Constantin Noica) present both in the work of the disciple and that of the spiritual master.

A wind of aristocratic melancholy comes to this day from this prince of refined tastes (dressed in red brocade embroidered with the Byzantine double-headed eagle, a symbol of temporal power and spiritual authority in tandem, his head covered with the crown of a bazillion), who left us the architectural jewel of the Episcopal cathedral of Curtea de Argeș Monastery, the work of the mysterious Master Manole. Married to Despina, a descendant of the Serbian Brancovici family, with whom he had sons and daughters, he mourns in the pages of his spiritual testament for Petru, who died in infancy, and for Ion and Anghelina, who died in their youth. He does not know, the homely author and father, that Theodosius, the one destined to succeed him to the throne, will not reign, nor will he live much more than three months after his death. Man is under the times, and trouble is on men, and does not even bypass the reigning bone, scarcely does the fleeting gesture of writing escape, at times, from the burden of eternity into eternity.

We know something about the man Neagoe Basarab, we have a broad picture of his scholarly culture, his unflinching taste for beauty and his attraction for the good that is honoured to a worldly ruler. But who was Neagoe Basarab? Perhaps the best-kept secret about this character is the one in plain sight: Negru-Vodă, the name by which *the Ballad of Master Manole* makes him known to us. It is a constant in Romanian historiography, this Negru Vodă appears so often that a historian, D. Onciul, rightly concludes that “it is the poetic personification of the beginnings”, the nickname of the dismounts,

an “initiatory-priestly-royal function” (Vasile Lovinescu). Incidentally, Neagoe’s son-in-law, Radu of Afumați, will be nicknamed Radu-Negru, so he bears the same title. The colour of the planet Saturn, the priestly star...

In the light of these fleeting notes, we can only regret the fact that in the 1180 pages of *The Teachings of Neagoe Basarab...*, offered by the new Edition of the Academy, there is no room for the clarifications of a hermeneut dedicated to the *Philokalia*, able to capture the balance between the warlike breath and the priestly charge of the text, whose temporary and superb human expression must have been Neagoe, the Ruler of Wallachia. Treating such a work, however brilliant, exclusively as literature is a condemnation to remain on the threshold, in uncomfortable exteriority about the living and operational meanings of the text. Because isn’t it, the most comfortable way to miss the encounter with a text is to reduce it to its literary dimension.

AN ACADEMIC PATTERN: PROFESSOR – PhD STUDENT

Cătălin-Emanuel Ștefan

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]
(Cluj-Napoca: Presa Universitară Clujeană, 2022), 825 p.

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.

