

Abstract

The first part (I) of the present habilitation thesis contains my professional (scientific and didactic) preoccupations, from the time of my PhD studies and after acquiring my doctoral title. The second part (II) of the thesis presents the evolution of my career plan, taking into account my research and didactic activity and my personal implication in the institutional academic development. The last part (III) contains basic bibliographic references related to the drawing up of the present thesis and to my research.

I. Based on my professional training, a significant component of my research was the relationship between the primary Christian community and the classic (pagan) culture, especially the Roman one. This drove my attention to the Christian authors of the 2nd and 3rd centuries. This chapter in the history of Christianity was marked by controversies, several of which were focusing on the divergence between the Christian and the Roman community. These controversies were based on the different repressive actions of the Roman Empire targeted against this young religious community. This negative attitude manifested not only on a political but also on ideological, religious and cultural level. Several Roman intellectuals considered this new religious group as an enemy of the ancient Roman culture and civilization. In this situation, the Christian community was forced to defend themselves against these accusations, some which were serious but with no grounds. The Christian Church itself had its own internal problems based on the lack of a dogmatic theology, which lead to the emergence of different heretic communities and teachings, to the endeavour for self-definition in relation to the polytheistic classic culture and in relation with the monotheistic Judaic culture and religion. Under these circumstances, the Christian community had to defend itself and its religion against the attacks and controversies deriving both from the outside and from the inside of the Christian community. Most of the apologists of the first centuries were fierce defenders of Christianity. Many of them became Christians many years after their becoming of age, having a thorough intellectual training, based on the classic values of Roman culture.

Among the most outstanding apologists we can mention Q. S. F. Tertullianus, who himself was converted at a mature age. Tertullian's work is heavily marked by the problem of internal and external religious divergences. In this context, the ancient author tries to show himself as an apologist opposing different attacks against the Christian religion. Having been trained in the spirit of classical Roman culture, Tertullian was an excellent orator and he used this ability of his in the service of Christianity. In spite of the fact that the Christian community strived at

achieving an ever larger distance between themselves and the polytheist Roman community, they could not detach themselves at all from the culture in which they were formed.

Adversus Iudaeos takes a special place in Tertullian's work. This is due not only to researchers' constant interest in this work, but exactly the opposite: to the controversies formed around it, especially regarding its authenticity. Thus my research was focusing on the *structural* and *figural* analysis from the perspective of ancient *rhetoric*. Analysing the individual rhetorical units and identifying the stylistic elements in Tertullian's work, I came to the well-argued conclusion that *Adversus Iudaeos* is a unitary rhetoric work. Further elaborating on this research, I have analysed this work from an *imagological* perspective. Also related to this work, the connection of the Christian community in the context of Tertullian's polemic-apologetic *discourse* was discussed. The results of my research go against those incorrect interpretations which – in a way – lie on the grounds of post-renaissance anti-Judaism. Moreover, the rhetoric of the apologist also has a hermeneutical function through the continuous interpretation of the adversaries' rhetoric.

An interesting and less conformist side of my research related to this Christian apologist is the presence of humour and irony in the rhetorical discourse of the great orator. This aspect was completely missing from the research of the great Christian apologist. Due to the author's personality and to the context in which these rhetoric discourses emerged, this approach did not forecast important results. And still, our research results show that a classic orator like Tertullian, could not help exploiting the immense possibilities lying in humour and irony. In my attempts to get an insight into the role of irony and humour in classic, especially Roman rhetoric, I have thoroughly analysed the specialized literature of the domain. A significant point in this research was the role of irony and humour in the rhetorical discourse of the great Roman orator, M. T. Cicero, due to his influence on Tertullian's discourse.

This aspect of the Ciceronian rhetoric was studied by August Haury in an almost exhaustive monography. Almost exhaustive because the great French researcher failed to discuss the great orator's discourse entitled *In Pisonem*. This gap in the specialized literature allowed us to connect our research on the great apologists to the one related to the great orator. In this way we started a detailed investigation of the *post reditum* rhetoric discourse focusing on the fiercest invective targeted against Piso. After the euphoric possibility to return from exile, Cicero was looking forward to attack those persons who had fabricated the resolution resulting in his exile. This is also present in his discourse full of ironic allusions and sarcastic humour, having a role in the construction of this discourse.

In spite of the fact that the classic-Christian relation has an enormous literature, our non-conformist approach also resulted in a *comparative* analysis on the presence of elements of stoic philosophy in the apologist's rhetoric, which also emphatically appear in the great Roman orator's discourse. The Ciceronian figurative discourse emphasizes the persuasive function of invective rhetoric. As a follow-up of Cicero's rhetoric discourse centered round the *in Pisonem invective*, we have identified the important role of semantic figures (*tropes*) and cognitive figures. In this way, the invective discourse emphatically contains element which are less employed in the great orator's rhetoric: elements related to *genealogy*, *smell* and *travelling*. In spite of the fact that we encounter these elements in other Ciceronian rhetorical works (the research of these elements is in fact underrepresented in the specialized literature), they appear only sporadically and they do not have such an important role like in the discussed invective.

Another important segment of our research activity is the reception of primary Christian literature in the ecclesiastic historiography of the 16–18th centuries. The Protestant reform and Counter-Reformation are two salient elements profoundly marking the history of the above mentioned period. The emergence of new Christian communities (Anglicans, Lutherans, Calvinists, etc.) leads to a competitiveness the primary aim of which is raising the number of adepts belonging to different churches, this generating losses in the adversary community. At first, this competitiveness was present on the level of confessional rhetoric, present in (often public) disputes between followers of the Reformed and Catholic Churches. In these disputes the Reformed side emphasizes the basic aspiration of their reform, i.e. to return to the non-altered forms of the primary Christian church. This return manifested also in a special interest in the religious literature of this century. The forefathers of the church as well as the works of primary Christian writers were those landmarks undisputed (either by the Protestant or the Catholic Church), which were omnipresent in interconfessional disputes. Using this rhetoric, the Catholic side, as through a *retorsio criminis*, reversed the issue of the Protestant community's relation with the primary church, present in the rhetorical question: where was your church before Luther? The answer to this question requires the use of arguments to be found in historiography. The historiography of the 16th century and the beginning of the 17th was secular rather than ecclesiastic, not focusing on religious continuity. However, the emergence of certain arguments, such as the one mentioned above, and the emergence of certain events of the peaceful reform degenerating into armed conflicts and military repression resulting in material and human losses on both sides lead to the necessary inventory of these losses and composition of a historical *narrative* proper to sustain the connection between the

Protestant church and the primary Christian community. This is how the bases of Christian historiography were laid.

This historiographic interest was present also among the Christian community members (both Catholic and Protestant) of the Hungarian Kingdom and the Transylvanian Principality. One of the first historiographic works dealing with the presentation of the history of a religious community, was the one written by *Pál Ember Debreceni*. This work also discusses the issue of the continuity of Protestant churches. It is a narrative focusing on the argumentative sources deriving from the works of the primary Christian authors. Among these sources, two authors, Tertullian and Hieronymus are two basic landmarks in the concept of religious continuity. The reception of these authors also implies a biased interpretation of the source texts. Our research concentrates on the analysis of the source texts and their role in the logic of the receiving texts, placing them in a larger transtextual context. Our research has also revealed that these narratives become recurrent motifs emerging (but not only) in Central and Eastern European ecclesiastic historiography. Moreover these motifs present at first in the Protestant narrative, due to their nature, become recurring motifs also in Catholic historiography. In this way, in his historical work entitled *Chronologia*, the Franciscan monk *Leonard Losteiner* employs this motif almost in the same context, somewhat enlarging the catalogue of the primary Christian sources, but this time in order to prove the continuity of Christian faith among the Catholic community. The reception of ancient authors in the context of religious culture has a much larger geography, as the results of my preliminary research show, which points to the direction of future research. In this chapter, such an approach to the work of Hieronymus can be mentioned which indicates the objectives of my future research.

Last but not least, this chapter also presents my activity as a literary translator and author of *editio princeps* of ancient texts. The editing and the research of these texts introduced us into the fascinating world of archive research which, beside the reckless philological pleasures (manuscript collation), also require training in the domain of palaeography and diplomacy, activity which sometimes has secondary results present in publications that deviate slightly from my *mainstream* research.

II. In the second part of my habilitation thesis, I have presented the main directions in the evolution of my didactic and research activity. After a brief retrospective of career development, those important elements are presented that had a significant contribution to the development of my academic and research career (research projects, conferences, etc.).

An important part of this chapter is also the prospective view over the development of my academic career. This plan does not only refer to research but also to the didactic

component, emphasizing the harmonization of objectives and activities specific to the taught subjects with the students' needs, with social requirements, with the partners in the labour market, with the encouragement of critical thinking for the development of superior cognitive abilities, creative thinking, flexibility of objectives and proposed actions, in harmony with the students' individual and group features.

Within the domain of research, the main objectives derive from my academic activity and it has two major topics: The Reception of Christian Authors in Ecclesiastic Historiography (16-18th centuries) and Secondary Discursive Elements in the Ciceronian Rhetoric. Several objectives are suggested for the most efficient use of my personal results in the future.

III. The last part of the thesis contains bibliographic references used in the drawing up of the present habilitation thesis, which are the basis of the theoretical and applied approaches (monographies, studies, specialized works, etc.). I have also included the sources of (ancient and old) text corpora made up of modern scientific editions.