

“LIGHT AND DARKNESS”: THE TRANSYLVANIAN ORTHODOX APOSTOLATE AGAINST RACISM IN THE TIME OF BISHOP NICOLAE COLAN¹

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Abstract

The idea for this research project, which is dedicated to the Orthodox theologian Puiu Ioan Hojda and his reflections on racism in the context of Christian theology, emerged after I had finished working on the archival guide for the Romanian Orthodox Theological Institute/Academy in Cluj. During that time, while consulting fundamental documents concerning the aforementioned prestigious institution in the Archive of the Romanian Orthodox Archdiocese of Vad, Feleac, and Cluj, I also came across manuscripts by theologians who had studied at this Academy at various points in its history. Through my research, I demonstrated that the Romanian Orthodox Church in Transylvania adopted a firm stance against racism, viewing it as a real danger to the spiritual lives of the faithful. Meanwhile, the communist political authorities launched their own rhetoric against this “scourge”. From their perspective, the idea of the “Superior Man” (American) and the “Superior Race” (Western) — who had created an atomic weapon of mass destruction to subjugate the world and those considered to belong to an inferior race — had to generate extensive counterpropaganda. This discourse was indeed created and had a significant impact at the time. The manuscript by the theologian Puiu Ioan Hojda is a compelling exploration of the intellectual history that led to the formation of radical European racism, which ultimately resulted in the major horrors of the 20th century.

Keywords: The Romanian Orthodox Church in Transylvania; the Romanian Orthodox Theological Academy in Cluj; elites; Puiu Hojda; fight against racism.

Motto: “We cannot be slaves to blood, rank, caste or body (...)
By condemning racism, the Church serves the peace of mankind”
(Fr. Puiu Ioan Hojda)

1. The Priest in the Battle: Exorcising a Dangerous Heresy

Puiu Ioan Hojda, the Orthodox priest and author of the manuscript analysed in this volume, has an interesting biography. Like many other prominent figures in the Romanian Orthodox Church in Transylvania after the World War II, he was a distinguished member of the Romanian Orthodox Theological Academy in Cluj, founded in 1924.

Many of these individuals have also made a name for themselves here through their exceptional teaching. However, prior to this significant career milestone, they maintained close ties with the medical community in both Romania and abroad. For example: Professor Dr. Ioan

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Lupaş² was Minister of Health and Social Welfare from 1926 to 1927; Fr. Emil Nicolescu³ was the Intendant at the Clinical Hospital No. 2 in Cluj from 1954 to 1956; Prof. Dr. V. D. Pârvulescu⁴ was a student at the Military Sanitary Institute during his years of professional training (until 1902), and then established himself as a professor of clinical surgery between 1922 and 1923; the renowned Cluj physician Dominic Stanca⁵ worked at the Tobacco Factory in the city from 1923 to 1938, and was simultaneously a professor of hygiene at the Theological Academy of Cluj from 1924 to 1937; Dr. Octavian Stanca⁶ studied in Germany, and in 1933 he defended a brilliant doctoral thesis on gastric epithelioma at the University of Cluj.

At the Orthodox Theological Academy, he taught hygiene, first as an assistant (1933-1937) and then as a substitute professor from 1937-1940; Dr. Eugen Nicoară⁷ initially received a substantial scholarship from the Orthodox Metropolitanate of Sibiu, which enabled him to study medicine in Cluj. He then became a Doctor of Medicine at the University of Budapest in 1918. At the Orthodox Theological Academy, he taught hygiene, first as an assistant (1933-1937) and then as a substitute professor from 1937-1940.

In the Orthodox Theological Academy of Cluj he worked, from October to December 1940, as a substitute professor of Pastoral Medicine; Fr. Dr. Virgil Ciobanu⁸ enrolled at the Faculty of Medicine at the University of Vienna in 1911. After the World War II, he obtained his Doctorate in Medicine from the University of Prague.

He established himself at the Orthodox Theological Academy in Cluj in several stages: From 1932 to 1938; from 1 October 1939 to 30 August 1940; from 1951 to 1952; and from 1952 to 1953 at the School of Church Singers in Cluj. He specialised in Forensic Medicine and Pastoral Medicine; Dr. Liviu Telia⁹ studied medicine in Budapest, Vienna and Munich. From 1940 to 1945, he was a substitute professor of pastoral medicine at the Theological Academy in Cluj.

Fr. Puiu Ioan Hojda was born in Sighet, Maramureş, on 10 April 1926. He attended primary school in Vişeu de Sus from 1933 to 1937. He then went on to attend secondary school in Sighet (1937–1938), Cluj (1938–1940) and Timișoara (1940–1941). Timișoara was a refuge for him and his family after the Vienna Arbitration in the summer of 1940.

² Before teaching at the Romanian Orthodox Theological Academy in Cluj (1934–1939), Prof. Dr. Ioan Lupaş (b. 1880–d. 1961) studied in Budapest and Berlin. Prior to his appointment as Minister of Health and Social Welfare in 1926, he served in several legislatures.

³ Fr. Emil Nicolescu (1896–1980) studied at the Andreanian Theological Academy in Sibiu from 1915 to 1918, and then at the Faculty of Letters and Philosophy at the University of Cluj from 1918 to 1922.

⁴ Professor Dr. V.D. Pârvulescu (born 1883, died unknown) studied law in Bucharest. After graduating, he became a professor of equestrian science, clinical surgery at the Sanitary Application School for Veteran Captains, animal anatomy and physiology at the Agronomic Academy in Cluj and comparative anatomy at the Faculty of Veterinary Medicine in Bucharest, among many other things.

⁵ Dominic Stanca (b. 1892- d. 1972) studied medicine in Cluj, where he obtained his doctorate. During the World War I he worked at the Military Hospital in Budapest, then at the Tobacco Factory in Cluj. She founded the women's hospital in Orăștie between 1940 and 1945 with staff who had taken refuge from the Cluj Women's Hospital.

⁶ Dr. Octavian Stanca (1908–1977) studied medicine at the University of Cluj, specialising in hygiene and internal medicine.

⁷ After completing his medical studies in Cluj, Dr. Eugen Nicoară (1893-1985) specialised in Budapest, where he worked as a sanitarian at the Red Cross Hospital during the World War I. In 1919, Prof. Iuliu Hațieganu called him to Cluj to work at the Surgery Clinic. He was later appointed head physician at Reghin Hospital. He built hospitals in Ibănești Pădure and Gorani.

⁸ Prof. Virgil Ciobanu (1876–1965) studied medicine at the universities of Vienna and Prague. He then worked in Cluj as head of the Forensic Medicine Department under Prof. Dr. Nicolae Minovici. He published two significant works: *Forensic Terminology* and *Ritual Murder*.

⁹ Dr. Liviu Telia (1899–1956) was a lifelong advocate of mass sporting activity under medical supervision. He gave many lectures and courses on sports education, which were attended by medical and other students.

From 1941 to 1944, he attended Vasile Lupu Normal School in Iași. Upon graduating, he volunteered for the Timișoara Regiment of Hunters and was sent to the Hungarian front. On 20 February 1945, he was admitted to Hospital No. 8 Campaign in Oradea.

He was released from military service on 10 May 1945, and shortly afterwards enrolled at the Normal School in Iași, studying from 1945 to 1946 and obtaining a teaching diploma. Believing that he was called to the priesthood, he enrolled at the Faculty of Theology in Oradea in 1946, studying there until 1948.

He attended the Theological Academy in Cluj from 1949 to 1952. In 1949, he married Viorica Hantig in Viseul de Sus, with whom he had three children. On 10 February 1949, he was consecrated a priest by Archbishop Sebastian Russan of Suceava¹⁰. Three days later, he began working as a parish priest in Borșa I Cetate.

Alongside his pastoral work, he continued his theological studies at a higher level at the Romanian Orthodox Theological Institute/Academy in Cluj between 1949 and 1951 (Hojda, in AROA, n.d., f. 40.). He achieved excellent results in his teaching here. He knew Hungarian, French and Italian, and his research on European racism was overseen by the renowned Professor Ioan Pop¹¹, who specialises in Liturgics, Homiletics, the History of Religions and Fundamental Theology. The consistent presence of doctors and modern medical discourse in the internal life of this renowned theological academy, which contributed greatly to the development of the Transylvanian Romanian Orthodox Church elite, can be explained primarily by the broad, pioneering vision of the academy's founder, Bishop Nicolae Ivan (1921–1936), regarding what a genuine theological school should be for the life of a diocese. At the inauguration of the Romanian Orthodox Theological Academy in Cluj on 6 December 1924, Bishop Nicolae Ivan emphasised the importance of moral, social and individual health in his festive speech (Ciuruș, 1924, pp. 10-12).

To ensure social and individual health within the newly established Theological Academy and the diocese, the link between medicine and theology was crucial. Professor Virgil Ciobanu, a doctor and a professor of hygiene at the Romanian Orthodox Theological Academy in Cluj, emphasised the importance of medicine in the internal life of the academy and the community and wrote an interesting manuscript titled “Cine vindecă trupul, întărește sufletul” [He who heals the body strengthens the soul] (1934).

This was justified by the Church's obligation to relieve the suffering of the people by all means necessary; by the nation's precarious sanitary situation; and by the existence of venereal diseases, a lack of hygiene, and serious alcoholism, all of which seriously affected national vigour. Pastoral medicine was therefore considered an ideal way to provide priests with the necessary training to combat physical and mental illness (Ciobanu, 1940, p. 301).

¹⁰ Archbishop Sebastian Rusan (1884–1956) served as Bishop of Maramureș (1947–1948), Archbishop of Suceava and Maramureș (1948–1950), and Archbishop of Iași and Metropolitan of Moldavia and Suceava (1950–1956). Although he had been elected hierarch with Petru Groza's support, Archbishop Sebastian Russan was a defender of the Orthodox faith. He advised his priests not to play politics, but to be close to the faithful and convey to them the need to preserve the faith.

¹¹ Ioan Pop (born 1912, died 1973) studied at the Greek-Catholic Theological Academy of Cluj from 1930 to 1934. He graduated with a degree in theology from the Greek-Catholic Theological Academy of Blaj in 1937. The following year, he enrolled at the University Pedagogical Seminary in Cluj. Following this, he held various positions, including sub-administrator at the Greek-Catholic Theological Academy in Cluj (1932–1940), teacher at secondary schools in Turda (1940–1943), and priest in Mărgău (1943–1945) and at the parish of Cluj VII (1945–1948). In 1948, he joined the Orthodox Church and was appointed assistant university lecturer at the Romanian Theological University Institute in Cluj (1948–1952). From 1952 to 1958, he was the protopope of Bistrița and an administrative counsellor at the Diocese of Cluj. From 1958, he was a parish priest in Turda Nouă until his death in 1973. He was awarded the Patriarchal Cross in 1948. See Moraru, A. (2020). *Educația Teologică Universitară Ortodoxă din Cluj (1924–1952)* [Orthodox University Theological Education in Cluj (1924–1952)].

The harmonious intertwining of theology and medicine was reflected in the rhetoric of the Romanian Orthodox elite in the Diocese of Vad, Feleac and Cluj, as well as in the curriculum of the Orthodox Theological Academy of Cluj. As the institution's curriculum shows, hygiene was the only compulsory subject throughout the entire course.

In the first year, it was included in the first module, alongside core subjects such as Biblical Archaeology, an Introduction to the Old Testament, Old Testament Exegesis, a History of the Universal Church, an Introduction to Christian Philosophy, Greek Language, Church Songs, and Psychology.

Bishop Nicolae Ivan wanted to integrate theological studies with psychology and medicine within the Academy, primarily to ensure an enlightened, connected clergy with an interdisciplinary training to guarantee a high intellectual and cultural level, but also because of the need for a clergy connected to reality and the imperatives of the community. The diocese's specific needs required practical solutions to various medical issues and moral problems that could not be overlooked. During Bishop Nicolae Ivan's tenure, 24 state hospitals, four county hospitals, four sanatoriums and clinics in Cluj were registered to treat 5,300 Orthodox patients (AROA, 1929, f. 40).

In addition, there were 23 prisons housing 800 inmates, two juvenile correctional institutions housing 180 Orthodox inmates, six orphanages housing 405 Orthodox children, two dispensaries housing 30 Orthodox patients, an institution for the blind housing 40 Orthodox patients, and an institute for the deaf and dumb housing 29 Orthodox patients (AROA, 1929, f. 40). They all needed medical and spiritual care in order to heal. The need to support the sick is repeatedly mentioned in the Acts of the Eparchial Assembly, in line with the idea that healing the body strengthens the soul and caring for the soul gives strength to the body (AROA, 1928, f. 49-50).

Bishop Nicolae Ivan had an organic vision of his diocese as a large body, with the Academy he had founded at its heart. For the bishop, the theological school was the heart of the diocese, without which it could not survive (Tira, 2015, p. 106).

Thus, from his point of view, the role of the Theological Academy was not only to kindle and maintain the flame of the Orthodox faith and to uplift the youth culturally and intellectually, but also to heal the moral imbalance that had penetrated the finest fibres of social life and threatened to destroy the organism [...] because moral imbalance gives rise to social gangrene (Ciuruş, 1924, pp. 10-12). The fear of the "destruction of the nation's organism" due to social "gangrene" was a great concern for the Orthodox lay and ecclesiastical elite during Bishop Nicolae Ivan's leadership and after his death.

The causes of the social "cancers" endangering the nation's body and spirit were identified as bodily vices and what the theologian Puiu Ioan Hojda defined as "modern heresies", "misguidances", "absurd dogmas" and "dangerous theories". In order to do a great service to humanity and civilisation, the Church had to firmly condemn these (Hojda, in AROA, n.d., f. 10).

These bodily vices and "dangerous theories", which have deeply disturbed the spirits within the Romanian Orthodox Diocese of Vad, Feleac and Cluj, have generated a "Crusade of Light against Darkness", a true Transylvanian Orthodox apostolate in the field of science. This has brought together young theologians, renowned professors, doctors and priests on the same side of the barricade. Beyond their theological activities, they have also achieved what Bishop Nicolae Colan (1936–1967) of Cluj so evocatively described in his pastorals as good stewardship of the people's health.

For the benefit of the physical health of the faithful in the diocese, the Transylvanian Orthodox elite took energetic measures to combat immorality, poor hygiene, venereal diseases and, above all, alcoholism. These were all seen as sources of degeneration that endangered the nation's wellbeing. Bishop Nicolae Ivan took vigorous action against alcoholism as early as his

time, when it was discovered that there were 1,789 taverns with 579 Orthodox owners in the territory of the Orthodox Diocese of Vad, Feleac and Cluj (AROA, 1929, f. 42).

In such situations, priests were asked to take part in the fight against alcoholism, as well as performing acts of philanthropy in hospitals, clinics, sanatoria, dispensaries and correctional institutions (AROA, 1930, f. 54, 55, 56). In 1942, Bishop Nicolae Colan received the „Medal of Honor” from the National Red Cross Society of Romania for his generous contribution to the society’s actions (Moraru, 1989, pp. 127),). In his famous Pastoral against drunkenness, he stressed that drunkenness prevents a person from being a worthy and useful member of the nation. Drunkenness kills the soul and the body (Moraru, 1989, pp. 216-218).

He emphasized that the new man was someone who did not allow himself to be overcome by passions, but who lived with dignity for the good of the nation, in the light of a new sun, the sun of national greatness (Moraru, 1989, pp. 216-218). In this way, Bishop Nicolae Colan emphasised the fragile connection between physical and spiritual health, both of which required careful attention for the benefit of the nation as a whole. If left untreated, the diseases that threatened them could lead to serious degeneration and ultimately physical and spiritual death. This is why he urged the faithful to ensure that our beloved offspring receive a good education and guidance, and that our children are healthy in body and soul.

The Transylvanian Orthodox elite were as concerned about theories that might affect the health of the mind and soul as they were about vices that targeted the health of the body. Thus, during the time of Bishop Nicolae Colan¹² young people from the Orthodox Theological Academy in Cluj conducted a series of fascinating studies on racism and other “false” or “absurd dogmas”, alongside established specialists.

These represented the Romanian Orthodox Church’s response to the serious social problems and „dangerous heresies” prevalent in Transylvania at the time. Puiu Ioan Hojda addressed racism; Remus Văleanu discussed positive eugenics (Văleanu, in AROA, 1949); Mihai Diaconescu discussed “The Problem of Heredity and Christian Education” (Diaconescu, in AROA, 1952a); Nicolae Bugariu discussed “The Disgusting Abnormalities of Puberty” (Bugariu, in AROA, 1950a); I. Racoveanu discussed “Moral Conscience and its Reflection in Social Life” (Racoveanu, in AROA, 1950b); Mihai Iuga discussed “The Avoidance of Degeneration through Lust in the Case of Youth” (Iuga, in AROA, 1952b); and Iacob Panga discussed “The Links between Psychology, Education and Religion to Remove Barriers to Mental Health” (Panga, in AROA, 1952c).

Of all these theories, which the Orthodox elite in Transylvania considered to be very dangerous to the health of the mind and soul, racism occupies a special place. Prior to the research conducted by Puiu Ioan Hojda between 1950 and 1952, another prominent figure and leading representative of the Siberian School of Theology, who was also one of the Romanian Orthodox Church’s most esteemed canon law specialists, published a significant book on this topic: Liviu Stan¹³, *Rasă și Religione* [Race and religion] (1942).

¹² Dominic Stanca, *Prostituția și Bolile Venerice* [Prostitution and venereal diseases] (1922); *Cunoștințe pentru Toți despre Sifilis* [Knowledge for all about syphilis] (1925); *Contribuții la Istoria Sifilisului în Transilvania* [Contributions to the history of syphilis in Transylvania] (1925); *Campania Antisifilitică în Regiunea Cluj* [Anti-syphilis campaign in the Cluj region] (1934); Eugen Nicoară, *Tuberculoza* [The Tuberculosis] (1929); *Cancer* [The Cancer] (1932); *Tinerețe fără Bătrânețe* [Youth without old age] (1933); *Păstrează-ți Sănătatea* [Keep your health] (1936); *Beția și Consecințele ei* [Drunkenness and its consequences] (1937) etc.

¹³ Liviu Stan (1910–1973) was a distinguished theologian and one of the most renowned canon law specialists. He attended the faculties of theology and law at the University of Athens in Greece and, in the 1934–35 academic year, the faculties of theology, law and letters at the University of Warsaw in Poland. The following year, he attended courses at the Pontifical Gregorian University in the Vatican, studying theology and canon law. In 1936–37, he studied philosophy and law at the University of Munich in Germany. He was ordained a deacon on 16 September 1937 and a priest the following day. On 1 October 1937, he was appointed substitute professor of apologetics and confessor at the Andrean Theological Academy in Sibiu. The following year, on 1 October 1938,

Such reflections highlight the fact that racism has been a subject of heated debate and reflection not only in academic and ecclesiastical circles. In reality, however, beyond the walls of scientific institutions and theological academies, it has been a real and serious problem with profound, long-term consequences.

This can be explained by the fact that, since the late 1930s, racism has often succeeded in polarising and radicalising minds in Romanian society. It was at this time that the Romanian science of race emerged, claiming that ethnic minorities were either “inferior” and therefore had to be eliminated, as was the case with the Roma, or defined as “racially” Romanian, as was attempted with the Csangas and the Szeklers (Turda, 2018, p. 139).

During this period, the racial stigma attached to certain ethnic groups caused havoc in Romanian society. Following the example of Nazi Germany, a number of Romanian scholars began to promote ideas of social segregation. With the support of the political authorities, they claimed that the individual is nothing and the nation is everything (Turda, 2018, p. 143).

Prominent Romanian scientists such as Ioan Maniu and Iordache Făcăoaru were influenced by German racial hygiene. Following the territorial losses of the summer of 1940 Sabin Manuilă¹⁴ developed his own interpretation of Romanian racial biopolitics: the aim of population policy had to be to unite all Romanians and eliminate all minorities that exhibited centrifugal tendencies (Turda, 2018, p. 143). Specific measures included combatting the racist influence of Gypsies, as well as practical eugenics measures aimed at improving the quality of the population.

These practical and discriminatory measures came into effect in 1943 when the Presidency of the Council of Ministers, with the approval of Marshal Ion Antonescu, established a Commission for the Promotion and Protection of the Nation’s Biological Capital. The commission’s purpose was to assess the health of the population and adopt quantitative and qualitative eugenics proposals. (Turda, 2014, p. 128)

Shortly afterwards, Iordache Făcăoaru proposed the establishment of “Mareşal Ion Antonescu” Institute of Ethnoracial Biology. The institute aimed to study the hereditary, racial and biological foundations of the Romanian nation (Turda, 2014, p. 128). Convinced of the existence of superior and inferior races, he believed that the Romanian nation was superior and identified this superiority in the western provinces (Turda, 2014, p. 128).

Against the backdrop of Nazi Germany’s domination of Europe and Romania’s placement within its sphere of influence, an exclusive and intolerant form of Romanian nationalism emerged. Despite the extremely difficult political and military context of the World War II, the ideal of a healthy race was officially adopted as state policy in most European countries. Consequently, preserving the racial potential of the nation became a primary political objective (Turda, 2014, p. 133).

Following the end of the World War I and during the communist period, scientific ideas took shape in a new political context, with Romania rapidly becoming a socialist democracy. Under the heavy influence of the Soviet Union in the early 1950s, Romanian science also adopted a new ideological guise.

At that time, references to Romanian scientific traditions from the interwar period and to Western authors were considered harmful for both the authors and the general public.

Fr Liviu Stan was appointed substitute professor in the Department of Canon Law. In 1941, he became a full professor in the same department. From the 1948–49 academic year, he was elected full professor of the Department of Canon Law at the Theological Institute of the University of Bucharest, a post he held until his early retirement on 30 September 1972.

¹⁴ Sabin Manuilă (1894–1964) was a Romanian physician, demographer, statistician and university lecturer at the Institute of Pathological Anatomy in Cluj. He was also the director of the Central Institute of Statistics in Bucharest and a corresponding member of the Romanian Academy. He was also a geopolitician and advocated the consolidation of Greater Romania through eugenics, colonisation, population exchange and assimilation.

Outstanding Romanian thinkers and scientists, constrained by unfavourable circumstances, were forced to adopt a scientific culture based on the Soviet model (Turda, 2020).

This was also why they eliminated bourgeois idealism, fascism and, above all, racism from their writings. However, this was not the case with the Romanian Orthodox Theological Academy in Cluj. Contrary to all expectations, a dose of normality was maintained at the renowned Orthodox theological academy in the heart of Transylvania during that very difficult period of the early 1950s, when Soviet control and pressure were considerable at all levels¹⁵.

Young Orthodox theologians continued to read Western scholarly literature. In their final exams, they submitted well-researched theses in which they quoted authors that the Soviet censors had blacklisted many years earlier. These included, Arthur Gobineau's famous essay on racial inequality, Thomas H. Morgan's *The Scientific Basis of Evolution*, Jean Marie Guyau's *Education and Heredity*, Sabin Manuilă's *Demografia Rurală a României* [Rural demography of Romania] (1940), Petru Râmneanțu's study on the depopulation of Banat, F. W. Foerster's *Sexualethik und Sexualpädagogik* [Sexual ethics and sex education], P. Gillet's *La virilité chrétienne* [Christian virility], A. D. Sertillanges's *Socialisme et Christianisme* [Socialism and christianity], A. Funk's *Pastor Bonus* [The Good Shepherd] in the French magazine *Précis de Théologie Pastorale* [A Handbook of Pastoral Theology], and even *Osservatore Romano* [Roman Observer], the official Vatican publication with which the Communist authorities in Bucharest had broken official ties by denouncing the Concordat in 1948.

Such courageous research, which was considered "uncanonical" and contrary to the spirit of the time, was never published, but the authors successfully completed their studies and specialised exams. They left behind an Orthodox Theological Institute/Academy that became a true landmark of Orthodox education in Romania at that time.

Even during the communist period, the elite professors, both clergy and laity, carried on the pioneering spirit of Bishop Nicolae Ivan until the Academy was abolished in 1952. They nurtured the development of strong personalities and exceptional theologians who, in the great confrontation between "light" and "darkness", sought to "exorcise" the "dangerous heresies" of their time through their learning and works.

2. The Romanian Orthodox Theological University Institute of Cluj. Positive Eugenics, Malthusianism, Neo-Malthusianism and the Fight Against Racism during the Communist Regime

By the time the theologian Puiu Ioan Hojda from Maramureș presented his renowned dissertation on European and German racism to the committee, the Romanian Orthodox Theological Institute/Academy in Cluj was already in its final stages of existence. However, nothing that had happened before foreshadowed the dissolution of this prestigious Orthodox school for the elite.

In 1948, the Academy was transformed into a university-level Theological Institute with a four-year course. In the following academic year, 1950–51, the Holy Synod co-opted renowned professors such as Liviu Galaction Munteanu, Izidor Teodoran, Nicolae Balca, Gheorghe Barna, Mihail Dan, Alexandru Filipașcu, Ioan Zăgrean, Dumitru Bodea, Titus Țifu, Mihail Dan, Ioan Pop and Victor Ienciu to write university textbooks (Moraru, 2020, p. 142).

¹⁵ In 1951, the Ministry of Religious Affairs asked all teachers, lecturers, assistants and administrators to declare to the Ministry any books, pamphlets, excerpts or magazines printed before 1948 that were found in their library or storeroom and that contained totally inappropriate content. They were required to provide detailed information about the content and quality of these publications. Those who did not comply were to be prosecuted. For more information, see the Archive of the Romanian Orthodox Archdiocese of Vad, Feleac and Cluj, Convocatories for the academic year 1950–1951, in the Register of Minutes of the Orthodox University Theological Institute of Cluj, 1951.

At the request of the communist authorities, the Institute's professors participated in meetings, committees and peace conferences organised in collaboration with the Evangelical Theological Institute in Cluj, as well as Russian language courses. During this period (1950–1951), the Theological Institute at the University of Cluj received visits from several prominent figures in Romanian Orthodoxy and beyond, including: Metropolitan Sebastian Russan of Moldavia; Bishop Teofil Herineanu of Roman; Archimandrite Samaha of the Patriarchate of Antioch; and Bishop Andrei Mager of Arad (Moraru, 2020, p. 143).

In terms of internal life, Bishop Nicolae Colan organised cycles of religious meditation on various themes, held in the cathedral or Orthodox churches in Cluj. The hierarch intended that, by confessing their faith, teachers would feel freer from the regime's pressure (Moraru, 2020, p. 144). A similarly detached atmosphere pervaded both the students' training programme and the final examinations.

During those challenging years, three theses presented by young theologians stood out for their "non-conformist" tone: Mihai Diaconescu's work on "The Problem of Heredity and Christian Pedagogy"; Remus Văleanu's thesis on "The Moral Aspect of Denaturalisation in Banat", which dealt with sensitive issues such as Malthusianism, Neomalthusianism and Positive Eugenics at that time; and Puiu Ioan Hojda's thesis on "Racism in the Light of Christian Theology".

The theologian Remus Văleanu was born on 13 September 1925 into a modest family in the commune of Jupalnic, which was then part of Severin County. His father, Ioan, was a mechanic by profession, while his mother, Sofia (née Marculini), was a housewife. The future theologian Mihai Diaconescu attended school in Orșova in his early years, then at School No. 8 in Timișoara, to which he had moved with his family.

After finishing secondary school, he enrolled at Diaconovici Loga high school. Four years later, he enrolled at the Industrial High School, specialising as a technical conductor in electromechanical radio. Having obtained his baccalaureate diploma with top marks, he took the university entrance exam, which allowed him to be admitted to the Electromechanical Section of the Polytechnic School of Timișoara.

Feeling called to the priesthood, he enrolled at the Orthodox Theological Academy of Oradea, which was based in Timișoara at the time. After some time, he gave up his polytechnic studies to dedicate himself to pastoral work within the "Army of God" community in Timișoara. Due to his excellent academic performance, he was permitted to complete his fourth year at the Theological Academy in Cluj. Deacon Remus Văleanu was free to diversify his reading and showed a keen interest in the influential ideas of the time in the secular world.

These were the subjects of intense debate in academic and medical circles at the time: the depopulation of the Banat, problems of infant hygiene and child care, abortion in criminal law, the examination of the population from the point of view of venereal diseases, the degeneration of the nation due to medical and moral problems, contributions to research into congenital weakness and the fight against infant mortality, Malthusianism, neo-Malthusianism and positive eugenics.

Such concerns demonstrate a complete disregard for his initial technical training. Although he was a theologian and would have been expected to undertake specialist analysis to obtain a degree, the professors at the Orthodox Theological Academy in Cluj permitted him to take such a seemingly "non-conformist" approach. They understood that a future priest would live and serve within his community. Given this, it was only natural for him to connect with not only spiritual problems, but also the problems of everyday life, thus preparing himself to contribute effectively to their solution.

Fascinated by the studies of Petru Râmneanțu on the decline of birth rates in Banat due to abortions, and by the contributions of Vasile Dumitriu on abortion in criminal law, Deacon

Remus Văleanu conducted his own research, emphasizing the role of Christian morality in addressing these issues.

He argued that the depopulation of Banat risked leading to the disappearance of the Romanian nation, warning that this situation should concern the country's leadership. In his view, only the Church could halt this process and restore the region as a cradle of Romanian identity, while any delay would accelerate national decline. (Văleanu, in AROA, 1949, f. 3)

In an Orthodox Theological Academy under the restrictive political regime of communism, publicly supporting the thesis about the danger of the degeneration and disappearance of the Romanian nation and directly appealing to the authorities to contribute more to solving the province's problems was certainly courageous. This demonstrates the modern and realistic discourse promoted at the Orthodox Theological Academy in Cluj, as well as the author's mature connection with the imperatives of the time.

In the first part of his research on the moral aspects of the denaturalisation of the Banat, carried out under the auspices of the Moral Theology Department of the Academy, the author presents a series of biblical arguments to emphasise the positive impact of population growth. He points out that, when it comes to the future of the state, the most important factor is a God-blessed family, specifically the young people who are essential for the survival of the state.

In his view, young people were the future of states, so it was only natural that they should be taken into account. After all, the stronger a people were, the more likely they were to subjugate the weak. For this reason, all peoples focused their attention on children and population growth, which became the defining criterion of a nation's freedom (Văleanu, in AROA, 1949, f. 3).

The idea of social Darwinism and the survival of the fittest emerges from the theological discourse of Remus Văleanu, highlighting his interest in Western European scientific and medical rhetoric, which emphasized selection, regeneration, and national consolidation. Within this framework, the protection of the family appears as an essential condition for the survival and strengthening of the nation, being regarded as the fundamental social unit and the space in which collective cohesion is formed.

This rhetoric placed particular importance on the protection of women and children, as it is within the family that feelings, moral values, and patterns of behavior are shaped elements that are later reflected in public life and determine the overall well-being of society. The family was thus conceived as a true social laboratory, in which the future of the nation is gradually constructed through a discreet yet decisive process.

In this context, women were assigned a position of major responsibility, being seen as the bearers of the collective destiny and the formation of the rising generation. Through their educational and moral role, they contributed directly to shaping the social and national character, which explains the strong emphasis placed on their protection and valorization within this type of discourse (Văleanu, in AROA, 1949, f. 18).

While the priest Puiu Ioan Hojda described racism as a "dangerous heresy" for the soul of a people, a community and an individual, the deacon Remus Văleanu referred to Malthusianism, neo-Malthusianism and positive eugenics as "doctrines and practices contrary to Christian teaching", which are in fact real brakes on the population growth that is necessary for the consolidation and salvation of a nation.

Upon careful reading of Malthus¹⁶ the theologian Văleanu found that, although Malthus was deeply concerned about population growth as a threat to humanity, he did not foresee its imminent danger, as he recognised a compensatory factor in nature. These were seen as a means

¹⁶ Thomas Malthus (1766–1834) was an English clergyman and economic theorist who founded the theory that bears his name. According to this theory, population growth is geometric, while the growth of subsistence is arithmetic. Consequently, Malthus viewed poverty, disease, pestilence and war as positive factors for humanity, as they balanced population size and livelihoods.

of restoring equilibrium and were considered providential, not only in terms of balance, but also in terms of improving the human species, since the weak and incapable were destroyed by these obstacles. These were seen as a means of restoring equilibrium, considered providential not only in terms of balance, but also in the improvement of the human species since the weak and incapable were destroyed because of these obstacles.

Moreover, as the theologian Văleanu pointed out, Malthus did not just leave the obstacles to population reduction to the repressive ones, but also referred to the preventive ones: namely, postponing marriage until a man has accumulated enough money to support his future children. In his view, Malthus's doctrine was by no means the most dangerous. Unlike the neo-Malthusians, he never advocated limiting the number of children within marriage. This is evident from his assertion that the average number of children in a marriage was six, despite the fact that the spouses never knew whether they would have more (Văleanu, in AROA, 1949, f. 27).

He argues that the neo-Malthusians were, in fact, false followers of Malthus because, whereas Malthus prioritised the interests of society over those of individuals, the neo-Malthusians prioritised the interests of individuals over those of society by advocating birth control through illegal means, such as contraception and abortion. Any practice that opposed the natural progression of the sexual relationship between a man and a woman for the primary purpose of procreation was considered neo-Malthusian (Văleanu, in AROA, 1949, f. 30).

Contrary to biblical principles supporting universal procreation, he viewed positive eugenics, defined as the science of healthy births, as a heresy close to neo-Malthusianism, a position he supported by referring to the works of Petru Râmneanțu. In this perspective, positive eugenics aimed not only at the reproduction of healthy individuals but also at maximizing it. In contrast to the hypothesis of Thomas Malthus, considered erroneous, according to which individuals endowed with superior physical and intellectual qualities would lack sufficient resources, it was argued that general progress provides the necessary conditions for healthy individuals to exploit nature in such a way that it can sustain an unlimited number of people. (Văleanu, in AROA, 1949, f. 32-33)

In his work, Remus Văleanu focused extensively on the three "heresies" (Malthusianism, Neomalthusianism, and Positive Eugenics), as he recognised their impact on the depopulation of Banat. He also believed that physical and moral factors contributed to this. In the first category, he identified venereal diseases, tuberculosis and alcoholism. In the second category, he identified the conscious practice of marital onanism, the use of contraception and voluntary abortion.

He also pointed out that the Banat province, located in the west of the country, has always had a distinct character due to its unique geographical features and the significant ethnic diversity of its population. Due to its isolation and subsequent Ottoman and Austro-Hungarian rule, the province adopted its own customs, as well as those of neighbouring nations. For these and other specific reasons, Banat became the "graveyard of Romanianism". (Văleanu, in AROA, 1949, f. 44)

In all the villages of Banat, girls began their married life at an average age of 16 or 17. This led them to interrupt their schooling and stay at home with little primary or general education, due to a lack of education for women, disregard for the institution of the family and a lack of thrift. Furthermore, the proportion of illiterate girls in the area was twice that of illiterate men. Consequently, the rate of cohabitation increased, undermining the prestige of marriage and the family unit in the provinces.

1. High infant mortality due to poor living conditions and inadequate disease treatment.
2. The economic situation is also precarious.
3. Convenience and a lack of concern for the future lead to abstention from procreation.
4. Religious feeling is weakening.

5. Mistakes in choosing food that is often inappropriate for infants, leading to fatal diseases.
6. Incorrect breastfeeding methods, such as overfeeding or underfeeding, can have harmful effects on babies' bodies.
7. The spread of unhygienic female sterilisation practices, which often had serious consequences.
8. Using contraception (e.g. abstinence, prolonged breastfeeding, preventive douching).
9. Abortion involving abdominal suction in the infra-umbilical region, followed by massage.
10. The spread of cohabitation and venereal disease was believed to produce stunted, sickly and abnormal children who would be a "burden" on society and a perpetual source of infection.
11. The perpetuation of superstitions about causing sterility. (Văleanu, in AROA, 1949, f. 81).

The solutions found to remedy the critical situation in Banat, which threatened to affect the whole nation, addressed moral, social and economic issues (Văleanu, in AROA, 1949, f. 101). For those with a strong sense of morality, the following proposals were made: the establishment of church choirs for every Sunday and feast day; teachers accompanying their pupils to church on feast days; the introduction of simple school uniforms to combat excesses among children; the establishment of a National House where priests, notaries, mayors and other officials would be present; the requirement for religious marriage; severe prison sentences and fines for concubinage; high taxes on luxury goods; the condemnation of sexual debauchery; and the cultivation of spiritual and moral values (Văleanu, in AROA, 1949, f. 101).

The author mentions the following social causes of the Banat's social disaster: the need to prohibit marriage for girls under the age of 18 and for boys under the age of 20; the obligation for girls to attend a domestic science school; heavy penalties for organising weddings without civil and religious ceremonies; heavy penalties for abortions; higher taxes for families without three children; high taxes on alcohol; state healthcare for families; hygiene education in primary schools; the promotion of village hygiene and preventive medicine; and the training of villagers in basic and occupational hygiene (Văleanu, in AROA, 1949, f. 102).

The economic causes were as follows: securing more diverse and profitable livelihoods; draining flood-prone land and regulating the Timiș-Bega canal; establishing cooperatives to sell potatoes and horticultural produce; cultivating medicinal plants and altering production methods; promoting cottage industries and recognising the value of women's work; establishing compulsory home economics schools for girls aged 12–16; and industrialising agricultural and household products (Văleanu, in AROA, 1949, f. 103).

As a theologian, Remus Văleanu added to all these solutions the importance of strengthening religious and moral education through catechesis, as well as through both collective and individual pastoral care, together with the creation of religious and social welfare organizations. He regarded these as effective ways of combating neo-Malthusianism, which destroys the first building block of society, the family. Therefore, in his struggle, the priest must take into account the economic situation of different families (Văleanu, in AROA, 1949, f. 106).

His analysis was limited to the external aspects of the issues affecting the health of the Banat community and the Romanian nation. However, Mihai Diaconescu, a prominent theologian from the Orthodox Academy of Cluj and the Argeș region, deserves credit for tackling these delicate issues and delving into unexpected depths.¹⁷ He began his own

¹⁷ The theologian Mihai Diaconescu was born on 2 January 1928 in the commune of Domnești, in the county of Curtea de Argeș, in the region of Argeș, into a modest family. He attended primary school in the same commune from 1935 to 1939. In autumn 1939, he enrolled at Neagoe Basarab seminary in Curtea de Argeș, studying there until its abolition in 1941. Diaconescu then transferred to Sf. Nicolae seminary in Râmnicu Vâlcea. He remained there until 1945, when the central seminary reopened in Curtea de Argeș. He graduated in theology from this

demonstration by analysing the dangers to the health of the Romanian race/nation, on the premise that a people's energy ultimately comes down to heredity (Diaconescu, in AROA, 1952a, f. 3).

The author considered it to be very important because it determines the destiny of individuals, families, societies, nations and races. For this reason, the theologian Mihai Diaconescu analysed the problem of heredity on five different levels: pathological heredity; national morality; the heredity of mental defects; and the role of religion as a "stabiliser" or "moderator" in cases where serious hereditary problems risk spreading and affecting the health of the entire nation.

As for pathological inheritance, he believed it was prevalent among suicides, the mentally deficient, and individuals with severe neurological issues. When such hereditary diseases affected the organs of the nervous system, they were passed on in the family from one generation to the next until the lineage disappeared. When heredity comes from the parents, it is called direct heredity. It can also come from both parents, in which case it is called bilateral or convergent.

If it comes from the grandparents rather than the parents, it is called atavistic. Hereditary diseases can appear at around the same age as in the ancestors. All individual hereditary characteristics together make up the genotype, while changes to these characteristics due to the action of the external environment make up the phenotype. The change in phenotype is therefore not necessarily an expression of a concomitant change in genotype, but merely an expression of somatic changes (Diaconescu, in AROA, 1952a, f. 5).

In his view, just as anatomical characteristics are easily transmitted, so too is moral inheritance a general phenomenon. Emotional transmission is obvious. Humans possess a national morality, the ultimate expression of the anatomical and functional characteristics transmitted by the germ. This morality is passed down through the generations, even though the body dies. However, the strength of the moral instinct with which a person is born is influenced by their environment and circumstances.

Along the way, we infer mental heredity from the striking similarities seen between children and their parents. Newcomers to the world have psychological as well as biological predispositions. These are only partial conditions of psychic qualities present in the psychophysical organism, and other partial conditions (environment) must be added for a psychic quality to manifest. Psychic qualities only arise in certain circumstances and do not have a specific organ or function (Diaconescu, in AROA, 1952a, f. 31).

From his perspective, the human soul can only be understood as a set of predispositions greatly influenced by the surrounding world. Essentially, it is the environment that awakens and develops these predispositions. Without these influences, mental development would be impossible. It is only in relation to the outside world that the concept of the individual takes on its full, living reality. The influence of the environment is therefore crucial, shaping both the content and the form, direction and extent of a disposition's development. (Diaconescu, in AROA, 1952a, f. 58).

In this context, theologian Mihai Diaconescu concludes that religion plays a key role in addressing hereditary issues, acting as a "moderator" and "stabiliser". This is because religion awakens and clarifies our innermost self, providing certainty about our purpose in the world. This enables it to assert its authority over the instinctive urges of the human body. Moreover, the struggle between good and evil, and between the soul's higher aspirations and its evil inclinations, is waged in conscience. If the conscience is no longer a temple of the divine

institution in 1948. In January 1949, he enrolled at the Theological Institute in Cluj, where he remained until 1952. That year, he took the licentiate examination and presented a notable dissertation. Archive of the Romanian Orthodox Archdiocese of Vad, Feleac and Cluj, Cluj Orthodox Theological Academy Fund. Manuscripts.

presence, then any argument or exhortation for the fulfilment of the moral law is futile (Diaconescu, in AROA, 1952a, f. 63).

In other words, according to this view, every generation is born with a predisposition to evil that becomes a reality if given the right environment in which to develop. This problem, which is rooted in the human soul, requires an extensive study of biopsychology, especially since the role of heredity is always challenging to determine. Biopsychic heredity must remain a field of great interest to those concerned with the nation's health, because physical defects must be taken into account to improve them for the community's general good, as must mental defects, which are the most difficult to treat and manage (Diaconescu, in AROA, 1952a, f. 67).

At this level, theologian Mihai Diaconescu considers the involvement of the clergy to be of the utmost importance, as they played a significant role in shaping minds and characters. The clergy carried out this educational work through catechesis, which provided an opportunity to study each case individually and determine the nature of the links between the generations. Such an understanding of the relationships between the generations paves the way for more effective education and the easier redress of soul imbalances.

He said that the parents' lack of medical knowledge could have serious consequences for their children that they would not be able to escape from for the rest of their lives. "A child who grows up in a family environment with tuberculosis, without special attention, will inherit this predisposition, which is created when the environment offers favourable conditions." (Diaconescu, in AROA, 1952a, f. 68). A child like this who comes for catechesis will be noticed by the priest.

If he draws attention to such a case, he will not only save the child from certain death, but he will also be seen by his flock as a true pastor. Similarly, many childhood mistakes or psychopathological phenomena manifested in children can only be properly understood and treated if heredity is understood and valued in a dignified way (Diaconescu, in AROA, 1952a, f. 67-68).

The theologian Mihai Diaconescu therefore advocates a rigorous and professional approach to biopsychic heredity. He considers that, when certain striking phenomena manifest in the spiritual lives of individuals (not only those who are intellectually impaired), the role of heredity must be taken into account if we want to promote their spiritual development and avoid causing them harm. This is also important for the good of the community and the race (Diaconescu, in AROA, 1952a, f. 68). Puiu Ioan Hojda's plea was significant in addressing the issue of race/racism and the dangers that loomed over it. It opened up new perspectives on interdisciplinary research, in which theology also had a well-established place.

3. "The atomic bomb of the American race". Puiu Ioan Hojda Reflects on Racism in the Context of Propaganda during the Communist Regime

When the theologian Puiu Ioan Hojda presented his argument for combatting racism at the Orthodox Theological Institute of the University of Cluj, the issue was already a concern for many people, particularly within the political sphere. At that time, two parallel discourses were emerging, addressing the threat of racism from two very different angles.

While the Romanian Orthodox Church in Transylvania took a firm stance against racism, viewing it as a genuine threat to the spiritual well-being of its followers, the communist political authorities of the time also condemned this "scourge". More precisely, in 1950, Ilie Stanciu, a notable communist propagandist, published *Rasismul: Arma Reactiunii Imperialiste* [Racism: Weapon of imperialist reaction], a work that caused a furore at the time. By the time the book was published, the European continent was already under the shadow of the Cold War. In the "socialist camp", where Romania was located, there was a persistent fear of a devastating nuclear war with the Western powers.

Communist propaganda, promoted by Ilie Stanciu, fostered a heightened sense of fear among the population by promoting the idea that Anglo-American imperialists were preparing to launch a new world war. They were portrayed as being driven by a deep economic crisis to seek solutions through conflict, aiming to secure additional advantages, consolidate their class position, and reignite antagonisms among peoples in order to exploit them more effectively.

Within this framework, their propaganda was depicted as pervasive and harmful, extending across all domains, from the economy and military strategy to ideology. At the same time, they were accused of using racism as a political tool, promoting the idea of a one hundred percent American as the model of a superior human destined to dominate the world. Thus, the propagandistic discourse maintained that public opinion was shaped through the spread of the concept of an American race and the invocation of the threat posed by the atomic weapon. (Stanciu, 1950, p. 160)

The idea of the superior American man and the superior Western race creating a superior nuclear weapon of mass destruction to subjugate the world and those considered inferior generated a vast communist counter-propaganda discourse that was highly influential at the time. This discourse was designed primarily to combat racism, which was seen as an ideological weapon intended to disrupt, divide and weaken the population. This counter-discourse against racism operated on two different levels: 1. The superiority of Soviet scientific thinking in the field of biology and heredity 2. The continuity between the idea of the superior German man/race (promoted by the Nazis during the World War II) and the idea of the superior American race (promoted by the “imperialists”/neo-Hitlerites) in the post-war period.

According to Ilie Stanciu, the theory of the one hundred percent American was presented as a mere reiteration of the concept of the one hundred percent German, associated with Hitler’s idea of a superior race. In this interpretation, the theory functioned as a persuasive tool aimed at encouraging the peaceful American population to accept the prospect of a new war, by arguing that armies of mercenaries belonging to a supposedly inferior race would fight on their behalf. (Stanciu, 1950, p. 155)

In order to demolish the theory of the superiority of the American race and its atomic weapon, Romanian communist propaganda first invoked the superiority of the Soviet atomic weapon. Considering that the people who produced this weapon used atomic energy and defended the interests of the working class — which others sought to divide using the weapon of racism — it was concluded that these people could only be superior to the imperialists, who could not understand this.

Whereas socialism has liberated peoples from the yoke of capitalist exploitation, it has demonstrated that all peoples, regardless of their ethnic origin, are capable of achieving the highest level of human knowledge. [...] By abolishing the exploitation of one person by another and of one nation by another, conditions are created that enable all peoples to reach the highest level of culture. (Stanciu, 1950, pp. 5, 156)

As for the superiority of Soviet scientific thought in the fields of biology and heredity, a notion also widely disseminated by Romanian communist propaganda, it attempted to demonstrate that Marx and Engels had identified the materialist core of Darwin’s theory, thereby enabling materialist biologists to advance Darwinism. The most notable figures in this movement were the renowned Russian scientists V.V. Kovalevsky, I. Sechenov, I. Mechnikov and Timirjazev.

They developed Darwinism and achieved notable successes in the field of agronomy. In contrast, the “reactionary biologists” (A. Weissmann, Mendel and T. Morgan), representing the interests of the bourgeoisie, attempted to remove the materialist core from Darwin’s theories and deprive them of their scientific basis. They claimed that hereditary substances are transmitted unchanged and that the environment and the struggle of organisms to adapt to it have no influence on living beings or their organism’s structure. [...] Racism is presented as

supposedly scientific. Different species and races are fixed and definitive. This implies that the hereditary substance of a noble, pure race will be passed down forever, while the hereditary substance of an inferior race will perpetuate inferior characteristics (Stanciu, 1950, pp. 8-10).

Inspired by Miciurinism¹⁸ Soviet biology opposed this theory, arguing that the phenomenon of heredity is not limited to the crossing of chromosomes or genes, but is instead the result of almost complete crossing of germ plasm, influenced by an infinite number of environmental phenomena. The somatic and mental changes that humans have undergone since their appearance on Earth are due to the interdependence of these changing phenomena, which alter the structure of the individual and are passed on to their descendants (Stanciu, 1950, p. 19).

Soviet biology also sought to counter the theories of Western European racist biologists and ethnographers who sought to prove the existence of an Aryan race, by proposing a theory of change in the basic hereditary process. Relying on the reactionary basis of Mendelian biology — the unchangeability of species and the unalterable transmission of specific characteristics — racists such as Gobineau, Vacher de Lapouge, Günther and Rosenberg affirmed the racial superiority of the Aryans and their right to rule over inferior races. Today, Anglo-American racists replace the Aryan race with the nobler, purer race of Anglo-Americans. Aryanism, an obsession and a prejudice, has taken on a life of its own and does not stand up to scientific analysis. It is a concept invented by scholars in their studies [...] as it was never the source of Europe's high mentality and the virtues of its inhabitants, as opposed to other peoples, races and civilisations (Stanciu, 1950, p. 34).

Communist propaganda challenged the idea of the superiority of the Aryan race, which it regarded as the source of the concept of the superiority of the American race. In this interpretation, the German people, like other European peoples, were seen as the result of a continuous process of mixing between indigenous populations and those who arrived later, thereby invalidating the notion of a pure race.

At the same time, racism was presented as lacking any scientific foundation and as fostering opposition to science and culture, being built on the myth of blood and on the idea of a supposed mission of domination of the German people over others. This perspective was associated with the imperialist period, in which the bourgeoisie, confronted with the rise of the working class and revolutionary dynamics, resorted to promoting racism as a strategy of self-preservation. (Stanciu, 1950, pp. 49)

The other parallel discourse — the orthodox theological one — also began dismantling racism by debunking the myth of Aryan racial superiority. It pointed out that the most radical form of German racism was a National Socialist construct, holding that pure blood was the only absolute value and that religion and the church had to subordinate themselves to the commandment of life and blood.

In the face of the danger of reconfiguring religion by adapting it to the supreme criterion of blood, theological advocates have countered the image of Almighty God with that of the “racial God of the Germans”, who is not a lord, lawgiver, beginning, end, providence, help or rewarding power. This image therefore gives way to atheism. In six coherent chapters, theologian Puiu Ioan Hojda presents arguments that highlight the vast difference between the Creator God and the “Aryan racial God”, a difference created by the barbaric theory of blood.

His remarkable manuscript offers readers the chance to embark on an exciting journey through the history of the ideas that helped shape European racism in its most radical form, ultimately leading to the great horrors of the 20th century.

¹⁸ Reference is made to the Russian scientist, botanist and plant breeder Ivan Vladimirovich Michurin (1855–1935), who was an Honorary Member of the Soviet Academy of Sciences. He argued that human intervention could force any animal or plant form to change more quickly and in the desired direction. Michurin attempted to disprove the Mendelian theory of the absolute independence of germplasm from the rest of the organism.

The author invites reflection, implicitly pointing toward a return to God's revealed truth as a standard for distinguishing between a form of thinking that divides and one that fosters understanding and communion. Within this framework, it is not violence or selfish force that governs life, but peace grounded in justice and love. The theory of blood, seen as a barbaric construct, is presented as incompatible with the Christian faith and its moral principles. By rejecting this view, the Church is portrayed as playing a liberating role, contributing to the emancipation of humanity from biological and social determinisms.

In contrast, the Gospel emphasizes that people are not defined by blood, rank, or belonging, but by their spiritual relationship, being equal as children of God and united in a community founded on love, under the authority of Christ. (Hojda, in AROA, n.d., f. 66).

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