

Translations of the Bible into Romanian (1688): Evaluating the Sources in the Cultural Context of the Era

**Fr. Lecturer PhD ION REȘCEANU,
University of Craiova,
ionresceanu@yahoo.com**

Abstract

The first translation of the Bible, known as “Biblia de la București” (The Bible of Bucharest) (1688), or the Bible of Șerban Cantacuzino, is considered to be the most important work of the religious literature at the end of the 17th century. It is a significant publication for the Romanian culture as well, contributing to the edification of the literary Romanian language and to the national unity of the Romanians from all the territories inhabited by them. The translation of the Bible into Romanian was a cultural and a practical necessity, aimed at improving the understanding and the teaching of Christian faith and cult practice among the clergy and the believers. From the preamble of the Bible, we note that its publication had a European impact, being one of the cultural promotion strategies used by Prince Șerban Cantacuzino in his politics in South-Eastern Europe.

In fact, the entire translation work might be considered the result of a complex scientific endeavour, completely harmonized with the European cultural standards, to which many scholars participated, among whom were Radu and Șerban Greceanu, whose knowledge of Greek was quite good, together with the wise bishop Gherman of Nyssa, and with other teachers from the Royal School. All these scholars were educated and trained in well-known European academic institutions. The translators also used the previous partial translations into Romanian (the New Testament of Bălgrad -1648, the Manuscript 45 of Cluj -1683-1686, the Manuscript 4389 of Bucharest and the translation of the Old Testament by Chancellor (Spătarul) Nicolae Miclescu, a genuine erudite acknowledged in all the great European courts).

Taking into consideration the cultural context, our intention in this study is to make an evaluation of the most notable sources used in the translation of the Bible into Romanian, both from a

philological and a theological perspective. We will support and consolidate the philological argumentation with theological arguments, so that to further refine, through our contribution, the evaluation level reached in the current debate on this topic. Alongside the well-known sources of the Bible of 1688 (the Greek editions of Frankfurt - 1597, Strasbourg - 1526, Venice - 1687), we will rely on the Romanian sources (the New Testament of Bălgrad, Manuscript 45, Manuscript 4389), as well as the translations of the cult books printed in that period which use the Biblical text (the Gospel -1682, reprinted as the Greek-Roman Gospel in 1693, the Apostle -1683, etc.) in order to assess more easily the way in which the translators related to the source text both philologically and theologically. The results are used to reflect the quality of the translation of the first edition Romanian Bible, whose influence on the Romanian language had been felt until the beginning of the 20th century.