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Church History under the Sign of Dialogue  
(Case Studies from the Christian Apologists to the  
Contemporary Theological Dialogue)

Summary

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The research projects developed during 2004-2018 have a focus on *dialogue*, a concept as simple to define as difficult to put into practice in the two-millennium Church history. Thus, a brief chronological display of personal contributions in this respect should have its starting point in the Late Antiquity (when *dialogue* was between Theology and Ancient Philosophy, and, in some other contexts, the Christian discourse towards the Greek-Roman polytheism) to continue in the Middle Ages (when the case studies aimed both the meeting of theological concepts already different between Byzantine East and Latin West, as well as the institutional relationship between Church and State) and in the Early Modern period (the *meetings* of Orthodoxy with *the other*, especially with the Protestant world, was one of the characteristics of my own research interests), ending with the Modern time (marking the shift back to a careful analysis of the relationship between the two fundamental institutions, namely Church and State, this time in purely Romanian context, both in the interwar period and during the Communist regime, as well as a direction focused exclusively on bilateral theological *dialogue*). Most of these contributions aimed to introduce new documents for the scholarship, to analyze and interpret historical facts from different angles in comparison to the current state of the art in the respective research field, and to underline new perspectives through the interdisciplinary research methods, meant to overcome an exclusive theological apprehension. In this respect, this thesis aims to set up a research direction in a constant *dialogue* with both sources and secondary literature.

The complicated process of identifying potential research topics in the broad field of Church History resides in two editorial projects. The first was the Romanian translation of *The History of the Byzantine Empire*, a fundamental work by the Russian scholar, later adopted by the University of Wisconsin-Madison (S.U.A.), Alexandr A. Vasiliev. The second project was the re-editing of the thematic alphabetical collection by Professor Dimitrie G. Boroianu. The interaction with both authors paved the way for future research ideas: through their works I have learned to apply different methods of investigation, and to deepen the secondary literature, and in some cases I even resorted to the primary sources in order to double-check the accuracy of the their references. Therefore, a retrospective look at the development of my academic career cannot omit the scholarly benefits intermediated by these two editorial projects.

Therefore, the research topics approached so far have been the subject of a continuous search for *the encounter* or *the dialogue* between Christianity and paganism, Latin and Byzantine, Orthodox and Protestant, and more specifically, it was a permanent search for *dialogue with the other*, a dialogue conditioned by the different social, political, economic and religious/theological contexts. The following three themes are confined to the Late Antiquity: the consequences of the anti-Christian religious persecution during the Roman Emperor Diocletian (284-305), the pilgrimage of Saints John Cassian and Germanos to Bethlehem (382-385) and the statement of Bishop Augustine of Hippo Regius (395-430) regarding the sensitive issue of *just war*.

Starting with the famous anti-Filioque polemic involving Patriarch Photius and up to the fall of the Byzantine capital into the hands of the Ottomans led by Mehmet II, *the dialogue* was focused on two major facets: first, the theological correspondence between Byzantines and Latins was investigated from the perspective of the dividing dogmatic issues (Filioque, purgatory, papal primacy, etc.) addressed in

polemical literature (short anonymous treatises or Latin / Greek lists of errors); secondly, the inner institutional relationship between Byzantine Church and State was addressed, and the extent to which they have been in dialogue and even collaborated for the spiritual benefit of the people. Thus, the publications have been focused on two prominent individuals: on the one hand, Patriarch Photius (9<sup>th</sup> century), and on the other hand Emperor Michael VIII Palaiologos (13<sup>th</sup> century).

After the Reformation and the confessional split of Western Europe, the theological dialogue entered a new phase. Under no circumstances the Orthodox answer could be limited to the Florentine Council (1438-1439) and the aftermath, but they themselves had to be informed about *the new theological ideas* promoted by Wittenberg, Geneva or Canterbury and to react. In this context, at the beginning of the 18th century, an interest in Eastern Orthodoxy emerged from a dissenting group of Anglicans, namely Nonjurors, contact that produced a rich diplomatic and theological *dossier* (1716-1725).

Although the chronological approach required that the 20<sup>th</sup> century themes to be described at the very end of this synthetic overview, *de facto* my academic interests had as its starting point exactly this timeframe, both through the research topic of my PhD dissertation in Theology and the constant fascination for the interwar period in all of its aspects, but especially with regard to the effervescence of the intellectual environment, whether secular or theological. Thus, the publications covering these scholarly interests can be assembled into three major themes: interwar intellectuality; the Church-State relationship in the Communist time; the bilateral theological dialogues (with a special attention to the Anglican-Lutheran conversations).