

HABILITATION THESIS

THE DOGMATIC FOUNDATIONS OF THE CHURCH'S ORGANISATION AND MISSION IN THE WORLD

ABSTRACT

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In this habilitation thesis I present some of my own research directions and their scientific relevance in the field of Orthodox Dogmatic Theology. The scientific work, undertaken during my doctoral studies at the University of Strasbourg (France), has been continued and developed over the years in well-defined research areas. Out of these, I have chosen two of the most important ones, which I have tried to present synthetically in this thesis:

The first thematic direction deepened and developed over the years is **ecclesiology**, a theological field where the Church reflects on itself and is situated at the confluence of systematic, historical and practical research. There are many reasons for this undertaking. Among them, I would first of all highlight the love for the Church of Christ. Secondly is the interest in deepening this topic, which I acquired during my doctoral research. Not least, there are the major challenges that theologians and ministers of the Church are called to respond to in the 21st century.

Given its actuality and practical relevance, one of the special areas of research in ecclesiology that I have deepened and developed over the years is **the synodality** of the Church. The Orthodox Church is both a synodal Church and a Church of the Synods (of the Councils). In other words, the Church is organized in a synodal manner and its life is built on the foundation of the Seven Ecumenical Councils and of the councils with universal authority in Orthodoxy. This ecclesial reality essentially structures the identity of the Orthodox Church. Therefore, in my research I have tried to synthetically emphasize both the theological principles underlying the synodal life in the Church, i.e., the foundations and the theological content of the principle of synodality, and also the way in which they are expressed in the various synodal ecclesial structures. At the same time, because they are intimately linked to the understanding and the concrete experience of synodality, I have shown how the local Church relates to the entire or universal Church in Orthodoxy and also how the ministry of the first (Primate) is considered in the light of the fundamental dogmas of the faith.

It should be stressed that synodality is a timely and essential research topic for the Church. On the one hand, synodality is a subject on the agenda of the inter-Christian dialogue conducted by the Orthodox Church, in particular the bilateral dialogue with the Roman Catholic Church. On the other hand, we have recently witnessed attempts to give a boost to

the current practice of synodality at the pan-Orthodox level, through the Synaxis of the Primate of the Orthodox Autocephalous Churches and the convening of the Holy and Great Council of the Orthodox Church in Crete (Greece), in 2016. All these realities and needs of the Church formed the subject of important critical studies. Last but not least, this particular area of research aimed to present in an international and inter-Christian context how the principle of synodality structures the life of the Romanian Orthodox Church, and was also occasioned by the ongoing preparation by the Roman Catholic Church of a great synod precisely on the theme of synodality.

The second thematic direction that I have highlighted in the thesis is an attempt at an **academic and ecclesial revalorisation of the essential sources of our faith**. While deepening the teaching about the Church, or rather within the same ecclesially oriented theological vision, I have opened a new personal project: that of making available to students the fundamental texts of dogmatic theology.

Thus, on the one hand, I succeeded in a joint effort with two other colleagues to publish in a single volume, for the first time in Romania, all the dogmatic decisions of the Ecumenical Synods, mirrored by the critical edition of the Greek and Latin source text. The footnotes, as well as the substantial historical-dogmatic introductions to each Synod, are intended to facilitate the reader's understanding of the text and familiarize him with the history and dogmatic context of the formulation of the decisions.

On the other hand, it was also a research guided by the passion and love for the dogmas of the Church, this time confessed in worship, i.e., in the liturgical life of the Church, that led to the identification of the historical and dogmatic sources of the confessions of faith included in the ordination ritual of the bishop in the Orthodox Tradition. In fact, this is the most extensive confession of faith currently in usage within the Orthodox liturgical worship. It is solemnly read by the man elected to the episcopate in front of the ordaining bishops and the faithful in attendance, that is, in front of the Church.

In the second part of the thesis, i.e., in my own professional, scientific and academic career development plan, I have presented what I intend to achieve, with God's help, in the future. On the one hand, I have shown which research directions I wish to pursue and, on the other hand, I have indicated some of my future scientific and research projects.

The thesis concludes with the bibliographical references associated with the content of the first two sections.