

SUMMARY OF HABILITATION THESIS

Research into Universal Church History

1. Ethos and Mindsets of Ancient Christianity; 2. Orthodoxy and Reformation

Throughout my years of research into Historical Theology, I have focused on two great topics, or periods, in the Universal Church History: the epoch of Ancient Christianity and the epoch of the Reformation, respectively. Concerning these two distinct historical units, I have contributed studies on newly-discovered documents, original approaches, historical and methodological theorizing, novel interpretation of old data, interdisciplinary research, etc.

In my first area of interest, namely the ethos and mindsets of Ancient Christianity, my research addresses the entire course of life of Ancient Christians, from their „pilgrimage” between two worlds – the pagan and the Christian one – through conversion to Christianity, to the eschatological perception of historical life. This approach is informed by the postulate of an Orthodox ecclesiological paradigm that allows the outlining of a history of Church life and the lifestyle of Ancient Christians. Once he had become part of this new world, the convert professed his faith, enjoyed an enhanced understanding of time within the liturgical space, undertook pilgrimages to the great worship centers or saints’ relics, experiencing in a wondrous, paradoxical manner his new identity achieved by means of baptism.

My studies dedicated to this topic broach the various Christian lifestyles, starting from the catechumenal-baptismal stage to the dual citizenship, the spirituality of martyrdom, Christian charity, liturgical and Eucharistic ethos, philanthropy and social work, daily life in a predominantly pagan world, monastic ethos, pilgrimages, transcending of temporality etc. The methodological principle of this approach lies in the fundamental distinction between the „ideal ethos” and the „actual ethos” of a community. The „ideal ethos” is shaped by the Christian commandments put forth theoretically by Christian sermons and texts. The „actual ethos” is the way in which this ideal of Christian living was concretely applied in the communities of Christian Antiquity, and this is my original tenet in the present habilitation thesis.

My second line of research concerns the relationships and interactions between Orthodoxy and the Reformation trends of Western Europe, mainly 16th-century Lutheranism. I was mainly interested in the relations between the great German Lutheran reformers and Byzantine Orthodoxy, from Church history, ecumenical and theological standpoints. The three volumes I have published on this topic, as well as my countless papers on particular aspects of theological dialogue, the mutual perception of the two denominations, their different thought structures, etc., are based on extensive knowledge of sources and historical context of the respective period. Also, my research into the encounter between Western Protestant Christianity and the Eastern Orthodox one, during the 16th century, has led me to identify a new, yet uninvestigated field of research: namely that of the „image” of the stranger, the representations of „otherness”, the construction of denominational alterity as a form of asserting identity. I published the first results of my research in specialized journals abroad, bringing new contributions even internationally, by publishing yet unknown documents and presenting unknown episodes in the 16th-century Orthodox-Lutheran relationships.

Among the topics I broach in this field of research I mention: unheard-of episodes in the relationships of Philipp Melancthon and the Orthodox; presentation and investigation of the first recorded description of Orthodoxy given by Primus Truber, reformer of Slovenia; the relationship between Transylvanian Protestantism and the first Romanian prints issued at Sibiu, Braşov and Orăştie; Christian identity traits of Johannes Wild (1604-1611), a Lutheran imprisoned by the Ottoman Empire; the unprecedented attempt of Prince Despot (1561-1563)

of Moldavia to introduce Protestant Reformation into an outstandingly Orthodox country, which ended tragically for him.

In a number of other papers I provide an updated overview of the results of theological dialogue from Reformation to the present, focusing on the attainability of a joint mission for the European Churches, the relevance of the *filioque* tenet, the relationship between denominational rigor and ecumenical openness, putting forth critical opinions on many of these aspects.

Bucharest,

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