

## SUMMARY OF THE HABILITATION THESIS

In 2006, I defended the PhD thesis entitled „The Attitude of Traditional European Churches towards Adventist Proselytism. Its Impact on Contemporary Society”, at the Faculty of Orthodox Theology „Patriarch Justinian”, the University of Bucharest. My thesis containing over 800 pages was highly appreciated for its interdisciplinary approach, which was not widely employed in the theological research at the time.

Having obtained the doctoral degree, I continued my activity within the same Faculty, following the academic career path from instructor to assistant professor (2007) then associate professor (2013 – onwards). During this time, I focused my research on identifying the evolution of the religious phenomenon in the Romanian society of the post-communist era, investigating the developments as both challenges and opportunities for the Church mission. Also, as a representative of the Romanian Patriarchate in the Commission on World Mission and Evangelism of the World Council of Churches, I contributed to the efforts aimed to promote Christian mission in the world, by means of ecumenical dialogue.

The habilitation thesis entitled *Religious Metamorphoses In Today's Romanian Society. A Missionary and Ecumenical Approach*, provides a detailed presentation of the main research directions I undertook after the defense of my PhD thesis, namely: the evolution of the New Religious Movements in the secularized, globalized, pluralist context of post-communist Romanian society; the proliferation of the new movements and trends of alternative spirituality; the various manifestations of people's religiosity; the reconfiguration of the religious phenomenon in postmodernity. In each line of research, I have had original contributions, relevant for the current stage of scholarly investigation in the respective fields, as demonstrates my activity as editor of 2 books and author of 4 books, 26 articles published in Romania and abroad, 15 lectures delivered for national and international symposia and conferences.

I mention that my *ab initio* investigation into spiritual alternatives (*Spiritual Alternatives in Romania*, Sibiu, 2011) was met with great interest both in the country and internationally, as demonstrate the numerous quotations in the specialized journals. Also, my theological-historical approach to the Old Rite phenomenon in Romania stirred much interest (*The History of the Old-Rite Church in Romania*, Sibiu, 2011). In a very recent book, I have shown that under the influence of the factors shaping modernity, we currently witness a process

by which classical religious movements are reinventing themselves, after their influence had appeared to wane – as is the case with Jehovah’s Witnesses (*The Religious Universe of Jehovah’s Witnesses. Landmarks in an Ambiguous Relationship with Contemporary Society*, Sibiu, 2017)

Due to my entire research and teaching activity, I have gained the reputation of an expert in the field of the new religious movements and spiritual alternatives. At the same time, I plead for a necessary paradigm shift in the perception of Missiology as both a theological discipline and a field of theological research, and for a new understanding of the Orthodox mission, which must be *contextualized*, freed from the narrow outlook of *pro domo* apologetics, or from the limitations imposed by an exclusively theoretical approach. This shift is absolutely necessary so that the challenges are no longer perceived as adversities, but also as opportunities, as chances to reinvigorate the Orthodox mission. Through the Centre for Interfaith and Interdisciplinary Studies of the Faculty of Orthodox Theology, whose director I am, I have managed research programs and I have maintained the collaboration with prestigious academic institutions abroad, mainly with the University of Fribourg, the Observatory of Religions in Lausanne, and with Religioscope (Fribourg).

In the second part of my habilitation thesis, I present the directions for pursuing my academic career, namely in-depth, extensive research in the above-mentioned domains, and exploring new ones. Regarding my teaching activity, I intend to update the courses designed for undergraduate students and MA students, so that their structures and topics should reflect the current objectives and necessities of the Orthodox Church, and their presentation should be accessible and student-friendly. I shall also continue my collaboration in drafting the *Manual of Orthodox Missiology* aiming to ensure the uniform teaching of this discipline in the major academic centers; I shall continue my collaboration with other universities across the country, in order to provide a multidisciplinary approach to the subject I teach.

Regarding my research activity, I intend to deepen my investigation into the reinvention of religious movements in postmodernity, which is a dynamic field, and I shall also tackle new research lines. In this context, I mention my intention to explore the phenomenon of Pentecostalism in Romania; also, to produce a comprehensive study on theosophy and anthroposophy from the Orthodox standpoint, examining these influential movements underlying the new religiosity of Romanian society; and to approach a new trend that is particular to the

Romanian society – namely *Inforenergetics*, with a significant impact on the technical academic milieu. I shall continuously enrich my bibliographic database; I shall continue to attend congresses, symposia, conferences, which will provide opportunities for a fruitful exchange with other researchers in this field, and for my participation in academic partnerships. Not least, I shall constantly pursue the complementarity between teaching, research activity and the pastoral-missionary work, as it is my belief that only so one can identify concrete, effective pastoral-missionary steps in order to devise a powerful Orthodox missionary strategy in a perpetually changing world.