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THE FACULTY OF ORTHODOX THEOLOGY

Priesthood and service, culture and spirituality
Aspects concerning the liturgical,
pastoral and cultural work of the Orthodox Church

HABILITATION THESIS

SUBJECT: THEOLOGY

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ABSTRACT

My scientific research work began under the guidance of Fr. Prof. Dr. Nicolae D. Necula, titular at that time of the chair of Liturgical Theology of the Faculty of Orthodox Theology “Justinian the Patriarch” of Bucharest, and continued after my appointment in higher education in the year 2000.

Beginning with this date, I have tried to keep my information in the domain of liturgical and pastoral theology as actual and factual as possible, trying to take into account the complex contemporary theological problems, approaching in my research important specific themes, thus making my own contribution to the knowledge of this domain.

Maybe some of my most consistent works out of the studies created during my scientific activity are those dedicated to the Holy Mysteries.

The Holy Mysteries, ways and means of edification of the Church and of salvation for the believers

As it is known, the Holy Mysteries represent a fundamental chapter of the Orthodox Theology and, equally, at the same time, a fundamental part of the liturgical life of the Church. According to the Orthodox Theology, it is impossible to understand salvation in general and subjective salvation, especially, without taking into consideration the role, the work and the importance of the Holy Spirit in this process. It is precisely for this reason that I have considered that giving attention to this chapter is especially necessary in order to reaffirm the value and the need for the Holy Mysteries in the process of man’s salvation, the Mysteries being understood also as means of edification of the Church.

Out of them, it is easy to remark the research dedicated to the Holy Mystery of Priesthood, which, beyond the biblical and patristic argumentation that substantiated the approach, had as purpose the presentation of the teaching of faith and the order of the divine service of cheirotonia (ordination) for the Orthodox Church, the Old Oriental Churches (Coptic, Nestorian, Syrian-Jacobite and Armenian Churches), the Roman-Catholic Church and the Protestant Church (with references from the Evangelical Church), highlighting the differences of doctrine of the churches mentioned regarding the Holy Mysteries in general and especially regarding Priesthood, and particularities regarding the liturgical order of Priesthood. As far as the other Mysteries are concerned, they constituted research themes, being approached in different ways: the Mysteries of the incorporation in Christ analyzed under the aspect of their patristic substantiation, using in this approach the works of St. Cyril of Jerusalem, St. John Chrysostom, Theodore of Mopsuestia, Ambrose of Milan

and highlighting the theological and liturgical particularities of each author in turn; the Confession of Sins, and the Eucharist have been treated as mysteries of the restoration of the human life and of the communion, in the approaches related to the Mystery of Crowning, it has been attempted to highlight the theological meanings of the mystery and to present the importance of the Mystery of Crowning as Mystery of the Christian family, and as far as the Mystery of the Holy Oil is concerned, I have presented the evolution of the order of this Mystery and of its significance for the pastoration of the sick.

Printing press, cult, culture – the 16th -17th century printings of Târgoviște

The research undertaken in relation to the printing press at Târgoviște in the 16th – 17th centuries, contains the analysis of the books printed here by the priestmonk Macarie, the most important liturgical books concerning the ecclesial divine service, a Ritual Book (*Liturghier*) (1508), an Octoechos (*Octoih*) (1510) and a Tetraevangelion (*Tetraevanghel*) (1512), true works of art of the Romanian printing press, the first books of this kind printed in Slavic, which had an extensive circulation in their time, being used by all the Orthodox Churches that used the Slavic language at that time. These are completed by studies related to the Euchologion (*Molitfelnic*) of Dimitrie Liubavici of 1545 and to the Great Nomocanon (*Pravila cea Mare*) of 1652, both appeared in Târgoviște. Regarding the printing activity of Dimitrie Liubavici at Târgoviște, I highlighted the fact that he continues the program initiated by Macarie the printer, meant to offer religious book to the Romanian Church, which needed it to perform the holy divine services, representing at the same time also an exceptional cultural activity, clearly underlining the fondness of the Romanian voivodes, of the Orthodox clergy and, last but not least, of the Romanians in general, of the cultural and religious phenomenon, during a time when the freedoms and the economic possibilities cannot be compared to those of our times. At the same time, I highlighted the fact that by the activity of this printer, who manages to train a generation of Romanian disciple printers (I have reminded of Oprea, Petre, Coresi and probably there may have been other disciples as well), Târgoviște becomes the first center of dissemination of the craft of printing for the Romanian book. Regarding the Great Nomocanon (*Pravila cea Mare*) I emphasized the fact that it is a reference work of this kind, its value and its importance being proven, among others, also by its prolonged use in the ecclesial and State life, for more than two centuries. The Great Nomocanon represented not just an ecclesial code, but also a code of State laws,

applied as such both in Wallachia and in Moldavia until late, towards the end of the 18th century, remaining in force along with other collections of laws and, after that, being always invoked in justice as a code of laws recognized as such, with authority in the court practice. We need to say that the Great Nomocanon was not thought of and conceived only as a code or assembly of laws, but also as a true straightedge of faith, which makes this work of an inestimable value be considered as a document of the Orthodox conscience. At the same time, the Great Nomocanon must also be understood as a document that contributed to reinforcing the conscience of nation, being known that it circulated and was used in all the three Romanian provinces.

Liturgical service, pastoration and mission – contemporary pastoral topics

The research in this chapter concerns to an equal extent important topics concerning the liturgical service and the problems the Church and its work are faced with today, seeing the not at all few challenges of the contemporary society, and the topical pastoral themes concerning both the pastoration in the rural area, and the pastoration in the urban area, with its specific particularities and problems. The topics approached aim to be an applied answer to the contemporary liturgical and pastoral challenges.

The part reserved to the propositions of development of the research has in view the realization of a tome dedicated to liturgical and pastoral issues, also comprising answers meant to solve them, the realization of certain studies regarding the printings of deacon Coresi, and the development of some studies of compared liturgics.