

**THE MINISTRY OF NATIONAL EDUCATION
UNIVERSITY „1 DECEMBRIE 1918” OF ALBA IULIA
FACULTY FOR ORTHODOX THEOLOGY**

***A View on the Contemporary Relation between
the Orthodox and the Catholic Mysteriology***

PhD Thesis

Abstract

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Alba Iulia

2017

Arguments for the importance of the theme and the general framework of the thesis

The present thesis aims to achieve a concise, yet correct view on the contemporary relation between the Orthodox and the Catholic sacramental theology. The present sacramental doctrine contains an abundant theological reflection, proving its importance in the Dogmatic Theology and its relevance for the salvation of the humans. The thesis is structured in four distinct chapters: *Chapter I*: Elements of Orthodox and Catholic misteriology, *Chapter II*: Differences and similarities of the initiatic Mysteries – The Baptism, The Chrismation and The Eucharist – in the Orthodox and Roman-Catholic theology; *Chapter III*: The sacramental theology of Confession and Unction. The sacraments in the stages of living: The Ordination and The Marriage in the Orthodox Church the Roman-Catholic Church and *Chapter IV*: Contemporary perspectives on the Orthodox – Catholic dialogue. We opted for the term “misteriology” because it is used by the Roman-Catholic theologians and the majority of the Orthodox theologians. The Romanian theology uses the term “Taină”, but the terms “misteria/misterii” and

“misteriology” are accepted and frequently used in the inter-Orthodox dialogue and has the advantage of being of common use with the Catholics, facilitating a common understanding.

The present thesis is preceded by an Introduction, presenting the main components of our work: the argumentation of the theme and its framework, the aim of the study, the bibliography and the research methods (trying to perform an analysis related to the familiarity of the theme) and the place of the thesis in the Orthodox and Roman-Catholic theological research.

The first chapter, *Elements of Orthodox and Catholic misteriology*, has as central point the general notion of Mystery/ Sacrament in the Orthodox and Roman-Catholic theology, more precisely the explanation and the development of the theme, highlighting the contemporary meanings of the Christian misteriology.

The second chapter, *Differences and similarities of the initiatic Mysteries – The Baptism, The Chrismation and The Eucharist – in the Orthodox and Roman-Catholic theology*, presents aspects related to the

differences and similarities of the Holy Mysteries in the two Churches, from a contemporary patristic and theological perspective. The chapter also underlines the ecclesial attitude based on the philocalic theology and spirituality.

The third chapter, *The sacramental theology of Confession and Unction. The sacraments in the stages of living: The Ordination and The Marriage in the Orthodox Church the Roman-Catholic Church*, offers information on the evolution and the development of the mysteries in the history of the Church, together with the spiritual fruits given by the experience of the Mysteries in the human life.

The fourth chapter, *Contemporary perspectives on the Orthodox – Catholic dialogue*, discusses the fact that the sacramental ecumenism is a consequence of the divine attitude and not an aim of the contemporary theology or of the contemporary theologians. The missionary practice must reflect the divine attitude. It is the only way for the missionary practice to become Theoforic, Logophoric and Pneumatological, meaning to become Trinitarian-doxological. Thus, the Holy Mysteries are the sine qua non element used by God to

give life and power to the Holy Gospel in the life of the Church and in the spiritual development of its members.

The last part of the thesis is a general conclusion, followed by the bibliography and the honesty declaration. The thesis aims, in the end, to offer to the reader an opportunity to know the theology of the Holy Mysteries in a clear, argued and precise vision, following a logic and coherent path.

The aim and the objectives of the thesis

The title of the thesis aims to highlight the fact that the Orthodox Church and the Roman-Catholic Church have both as essential component of their activity the teachings of our Saviour Jesus Christ, as life preserved in His Church. *Life in Christ*, as central notion and main thematic point in the theology of the Church, becomes concrete through the Holy Mysteries, or, more appropriate expressed, the *Mystery* par excellence. The aim of this thesis is to identify and highlight the historical relation and the contemporary relation between the Catholic and the Orthodox Mysteriology. Starting from the theological thinking, including a presentation of the most important moments

in the historical evolution of the Mysteries, our thesis intend to underline the importance of the relation between the Mysteries of the Orthodox Church and those of the Roman-Catholic Church.

The research theme has the following objectives:

- ❖ Showing the contemporaneity of the Orthodox theological message for the society, underlining the universal aspect and the dynamic role of the Christian Church for the postmodern society;
- ❖ Studying and publishing official documents with theological content related to the Holy Mysteries, belonging to the local Orthodox Churches and also to the Catholic Church;
- ❖ Showing the contribution of the Orthodox Church and of the Catholic Church to the development of a clear argumentation related to the dogmatic aspects of sacraments;
- ❖ Performing a pertinent analysis of the sacramental theology, using as main argument the teachings of faith and the patristic thesaurus of the Orthodox Church and of the Roman-Catholic Church;

- ❖ Showing the way the Orthodox theology and the Roman-Catholic theology influence and contribute to the reorientation of the postmodern world toward a life centred on Christ, in complete communion with Him.

The present thesis starts from general aspects related to the Holy Mysteries in the two confessions the research addresses and, in the same time, intends to analyse and develop elements of misteriology related to each of the seven Mysteries. The study is only a general view on the relation between the Orthodox and the Catholic misteriology and a starting point for a further research of the sacramental theology in the two Christian confessions.

The research and its documentation

The state of the research on the contemporary relation between the Orthodox and the Catholic misteriology is rich in published works. Numerous studies, articles and volumes on the theme appeared during the last decades because the relation between the two Christian confessions became less tensioned once the

anathemas pronounced at the Schism from 1054 were annulled. Orthodox and Catholic theologians were interested in this research in the same time and seriously approached it, in order to underline what unites the confessions more than what dissociates them.

The proposed research theme is based on several aspects, presented synthetically as follows:

- ❖ Elements of biblical theology for highlighting the identity, the essence and the specificity of the Orthodox theology and of the Roman-Catholic theology;
- ❖ Elements of systemic theology, meaning the main teachings on faith related to the sacramental theology of the Orthodox Church and of the Roman-Catholic Church;
- ❖ Elements of historical theology, through a series of given data and events referring to the history and the evolution of the Holy Mysteries in time;
- ❖ Elements of contemporary dogmatic theology, actualizing the message of the Orthodox Church and of the Roman-Catholic Church and their contribution in the contemporary society.

An important part of the bibliography was studied in The Library *Justinian Patriarhul* at the Faculty for Orthodox Theology of Bucharest, The Library of *Babeş-Bolyai* University of Cluj Napoca, The Library of the Faculty for Orthodox Theology *Andrei Şaguna* of Sibiu, The Library of the Gregorian University of Rome (Italy), The Library of *Saint-Serge* Institute of Paris (France) and The Library of the Faculty for Orthodox Theology of Alba Iulia. We also used documents and information from official web sites. The majority of the information in the thesis is relatively recent and concentrated on the theme, but we also used older, efficient and inevitable documentation for the conclusions of the research theme.

The research theme is contemporary appealing and debated in the public space and dedicated literature (magazines, studies and articles), thus it is *difficult* to approach it in an *exhaustive* manner. The Orthodox and the Catholic theological environment offer much information on the theme, but the present thesis has no intention to be exhaustive, trying instead to be concise, correct and useful. The novelty of the thesis resides in a rich up-to-date bibliography used in a logical, accessible and clear manner.

The present research is based on several books and articles important in the field, belonging to the Orthodox and to the Catholic environment and showing the value and the role of the sacramental theology in the life of the Church and of the world, among which: Panayotis Nellas, *La vita spirituale in Cristo. Studio sull'antropologia cristocentrica di Nicola Cabasilas*; Karl Rahner, *Tratat fundamental despre credință*; Suzanne Fouché, *Souffrance et école de vie*; Éric de Moulins-Beaufort, *Faire mémoire de la 'Passion bienheureuse*; Benoît XVI, *Lumière du monde, Le pape, l'Église et les signes des temps, un entretien avec Peter Seewald*; Jean-Marie Lustiger, *Le sacrement de l'onction des malades*, Marc Ouellet, *Confirmation: A Sacrament of Christian initiation*; Angelo Scola *Marriage and the Family between Anthropology and the Eucharist: Comments in view of the extraordinary Assembly of the Synod of Bishops on the Family*.

Our main bibliography from the Romanian theological literature is based especially on the works related to the theme belonging to Father Dumitru Stăniloae and Rev. George Remete.

Research methods

The present thesis has an interdisciplinary approach, being presented in front of the Department for Dogmatic Theology. Firstly, we tried to give a dogmatic character to the thesis. Secondly, we tried to use a multiple interdisciplinary approach, using biblical resources, patristic resources and official documents from the Orthodox and Roman-Catholic theology. The dedicated literature is ample and informative but disparate and required a rigorous selection.

Among the methods used in the paper, we mention:

- ❖ The historical method, meaning the research on the evolution of the Holy Mysteries in the Christian world;
- ❖ The analytical method, following the positioning and thinking of various theologians, philosophers, historians and scientists, a method that is very useful for a descriptive and analytical reflection of the contemporary sacramental theology;
- ❖ The comparative method, showing the differences and the similarities between the Orthodox

sacramental theology and the Catholic sacramental theology;

- ❖ The dogmatic method, presenting various contemporary theological opinions (Orthodox and Catholic) and the dogmatic values the Church proposes in order to meet the contemporary challenges.

This PhD research is a reflection upon the development of the sacramental theology in the two Churches: The Orthodox Church and the Roman-Catholic Church and upon the way the unique Church of Christ must express and promote the real theological treasure it received as gift from Jesus Christ, through the Holy Apostles and the Holy Fathers. The importance and the value of the Holy Mysteries are partially revealed in our thesis; they are comparable in the organic life with the blood making us alive and filled with spiritual gifts.

Their importance and value may not be expressed completely through words and ritual gestures; they need to be expressed through a direct experience and a permanent practice, taking part to the transfiguring power of the divine grace coming from them.

In conclusion, we may affirm that the sacramental theology of the Church, as a theological theme with profound dogmatic and ecumenical implications is founded on the mystery of the trinitarian life shared by Jesus Christ through the Holy Ghost. The Church is the only preacher of the Truth, offering the divine grace descending from the Father over the glorified Son embodied as Human and sharing with Holy Ghost through the Holy Mysteries. In Church, the Mysteries have an Christological and Trinitarian fundament and a profound ecclesial, private-community and cosmic-eschatological character, involving, in an experimental-deifying perspective, the doxological dimension of the dogma and the biblical dogmatic content of the doxology inside the cult of the Church.

We mention that the novelty and the merit of this thesis reside in the use of Catholic sacramental theological resources published during the last decades, unknown or unused in the Romanian research environment. The merit of the research is the interdisciplinary approach of the theme and the analysis of the Mysteries from an inter-confessional point of view on the attitude of the two historical Churches

related to the practice and the evolution of the Mysteries from the beginning of the Christianity until our times. The novelty of our thesis is represented by the creation of certain reflexes of attitudinal approach of the Orthodox and the Roman-Catholic theology. The present thesis is responding to the necessities of the postmodern society, managing to fulfil a profound research on the Theology of the Mysteries in a unitary understanding of the practice and of the biblical and patristic theology, using a substantial methodological integration of the Orthodox and Roman-Catholic Theology.

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