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**SUMMARY OF THE DOCTORAL THESIS**

**MONOTHEIST INTERRELIGIOUS DIALOGUE**

**- Contemporary missionary aspects -**

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# MONOTHEIST INTERRELIGIOUS DIALOGUE

## - Contemporary missionary aspects-

**Keywords:** *academic reunion, Catholicism, Christian testimony, Church, colloquy, dialogue, ecumenism, general assemblies, Holy Fathers, Holy Scriptures, Holy Spirit, Holy Tradition, Holy Trinity, Jesus Christ, Judaism, interreligious, Islam, mission, Orthodoxy, Second Vatican Council, World Council of Churches.*

The paper entitled *Monotheist Interreligious Dialogue - Contemporary missionary aspects*, written under the guidance of Fr. Mihai HIMCINSCHI, D. Th., is divided into four chapters, preceded by a dedication, a table of contents, a list of abbreviations, an introduction, and is rounded by a conclusion, some appendixes, a keywords section, a declaration of academic integrity and a curriculum vitae.

This paper is concerned with the research of the interreligious dialogue within the Orthodox Church, the Catholic Church and the World Council of Churches: its beginnings, its main features and its missionary traits. A special attention is given to the development of the interreligious dialogue while the dimension of the relationships between the Christians and the Jews, and those between the Christians and the Muslims are analysed.

The title of this paper is meant to highlight the missionary aspects of the meetings between the three monotheist Churches which were possible only because of the authentic communication based mainly on dialogue.

In spite of the numerous Orthodox hierarchs and theologians who have been interested in these matters, there has been made no comprehensive systematic examination of the theological common ground of the relationships between the Orthodox Christians, the Jews, and the Muslims, and in which the current global situation is taken into consideration in analysing their interactions throughout the last decades.

Hence, the most important questions of this paper are: how was the relationship between Christianity and the other religious, how has the Church been relating to this lately and what determined the Christian Church to engage in a dialogue with the other religions?

The purpose of this research is to provide a novel material of study for the Theological School by analysing how deep the involvement of the Christians is in the interreligious dialogue and relationships.

The paper has the following aims:

- ✓ to list the theological bases for a significant dialogue between Christians and the other religious traditions;

- ✓ to offer some guidelines about the manner in which a religion should engage in an interreligious dialogue;
- ✓ to present the historic and theological context of the academic meetings, such as the general gatherings of the World Council of Churches;
- ✓ to bring up to date the Orthodox theological message for the multi-religious society by emphasizing the universal, catholic or apostolic feature of Orthodoxy;
- ✓ to find a common denominator between the religious traditions without losing the meaningful differences between Christianity and the other religions;
- ✓ to identify the missionary aspects of each interreligious meeting;
- ✓ to mention the similarities and the differences in how mission is perceived by the Christian and by the non-Christian;
- ✓ to highlight the progress made in the dialogue between the Christian, the Jew and the Muslim;
- ✓ to publish and study the theological documents written by the Orthodox Churches, the Roman-Catholic Church and the General Gatherings of the World Council of Churches regarding the interreligious relationships.

The novelty of this scientific research on a rich topic resides in the vast and current documentation, based on the existent bibliography and the presentation of these sources in both narrative and critical manner, providing the reader with an account and an analysis of the interreligious meetings and the actions taken by the Ecumenical Patriarchate, the Vatican and the World Council of Churches throughout the years.

In the introduction to the paper, five distinct points are presented: the argument, the purpose, the sources, the current state, the method and the background of the research. These are meant to include the topic among the other theological and ecumenical works and to argue for the necessity of yet another paper about the interreligious dialogue.

The first chapter, entitled *Theology of the interreligious dialogue*, provides an overview of the interreligious concept. Firstly, the main concepts of the paper, present in its very title, are analysed from an etiological point of view in order to establish the proper meaning of each term. Secondly, the main modern historical references are mentioned together with the importance, the topicality, and the current challenged of the interreligious dialogue. Moreover, the dynamic relationship between the Christian mission and the interreligious dialogue is taken into consideration, as well as its occurrence in the

Scripture and in the writings of the Holy Fathers through which one might reach an understanding of the Orthodox separation of the source from the purpose of the religions and the way in which these are mirrored in the Church's mission and setting in the world.

The main body of the paper is represented by the second chapter, entitled *Interreligious dialogue within the Orthodox Church*, which is meant to bring novelty in the contemporary theological scenery. Today, Orthodoxy, as an early, sensitive receptor of the message of time, develops interreligious monotheistic dialogues with Judaism and Islamism.

In the first part of this chapter, the academic dialogue between the Orthodox and the Jews is analysed. This dialogue began in 1977 through the initiative of the Ecumenical Patriarchate together with the International Jewish Committee for Interreligious Consultations. Up to this point, there have been nine academic consultations on the following topics: *The Law in the Christian-Orthodox and Jewish Understanding*, *Tradition and Community in Judaism and the Orthodox Church*, *Continuity and Renewal*, *The Encounter of Orthodoxy and Judaism with Modernity*, *Faithfulness to Our Sources: Our Commitment to Peace and Justice*, *Religious Liberty and the*

*Relationship between Freedom and Religion, The World in Crisis: Ethical Challenges and Religious Perspectives, The Spiritual and Physical Environment: Respecting Our World, Respecting One Another, Spiritual Centres and Diasporas.*

In the second part of this chapter, the academic dialogue between the Orthodox and the Muslim is analysed. This dialogue began in 1986, being organized and funded by the Ecumenical Patriarchate together with the Royal Academy for Islamic Civilization Research (Aal al-Bayt Institute) from Amman, Jordan. Despite the tragic situations from the Gulf, Balkans and other regions which have favoured religious phenomena such as indifference and fanaticism, there have been ten such international academic meetings or consultations between the Orthodox Christians and the Muslims during which the representatives of both spiritual traditions discussed in detail the problems of the spiritual life and the social controversies. There were characteristic to both sides in simplicity, pace, gratitude, understanding, and respect for the individuality and the freedom of the each partner involved in the dialogue. The topics of these consultations are: *Authority and Religion*, a) *A Model of Historical Co-existence between Muslims and Christians and its Future Prospects* and b) *Common Humanitarian Ideals for Muslims and Christians*

(Symposium), *Peace and Justice, Religious Pluralism, Youth and Values of Moderation, Education for Understanding and Cooperation, The Educational System in Islam and Christianity, Perspectives of Co-operation and Participation between Muslims and Christians on the Eve of the New Century, Muslims and Christians in Modern Society: Images of the Other and the Meaning of Co-citizenship, Principles of Peaceful Co-existence.*

This dialogue was meant to establish permanent and organized ways for serious interactions and discussions on common topics for the Orthodox Christians, the Jews and the Muslims all over the world.

A special attention is given to the promotion of the academic Jewish-Muslim-Christian triologue. This triologue began in 1994 and was manifested in a total of four meetings on the following topics: *Peace and Tolerance I: The Bosphorus Declaration, The Peace of God in the World, Religion, Peace and the Olympic Ideal, Peace and Tolerance II: Dialogue and Understanding in South-eastern Europe, the Caucasus and Central Asia.*

The last part of the chapter presents the interreligious initiatives to dialogue with the Jews and the Muslims made by



the Romanian Patriarchate starting from December '89 until today.

The third chapter of the paper, entitled *Interreligious Dialogue within the Roman-Catholic Church*, briefly presents the attitude of the Church in confront to the followers of other religions before and after the Second Council of Vatican. Then, it presents the initiatives for dialogue with the other faiths manifested by this Church. Following two introductory subchapters, the main part of the chapter is concerned with the critical analysis of the interreligious dialogue in the main documents of the Second Council of Vatican as well as the documents from the post-council period. Furthermore, this chapter tried to highlight the relationships between the Muslims and the Christians in the Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue and between the Jews and the Christians in the Pontifical Commission for Religious Relations with the Jews.

The last chapter of the paper, entitled *Interreligious Dialogue within the World Council of Churches*, presents the history of the interreligious commitment made by the World Council of Churches through its actions from its establishment in 1948 until today.

Throughout the years, the World Council of Churches has been involved in many projects and initiatives based on the interreligious dialogue with other religions and with representatives of these religions. From all the bilateral efforts made the World Council of Churches, the arena of the Judaeo-Christian and Christian-Muslim relations was and still is the most challenging for the Christian, Jewish and Muslim communities all over the world.

Thus, in the last part of this chapter analyses the evolution of the Jewish-Christian and Christian-Muslim dialogue held under the auspices of the World Council of the Churches in the middle of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

The entire paper ends with some general conclusions meant to synthetize the opinions presented throughout the research.

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