

**“1 DECEMBRIE 1918” UNIVERSITY OF ALBA IULIA  
FACULTY OF ORTHODOX THEOLOGY  
THE DOCTORAL SCHOOL OF THEOLOGY  
DOMAIN: THEOLOGY**

*PhD Thesis Abstract*

***THE EUCHARISTIC ETHOS AND THE CHRISTIAN  
DEVOTION IN THE SECULARISED SOCIETY***

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ALBA IULIA  
2020

***Thesis key words***

Eucharist, devotion, Divine Liturgy, secularisation, society, ecclesiology, godliness, ethos, morality, virtue, sacrifice, Church, early epoch

***A general introduction in the theme of the thesis***

In the earthly life, the man is in a continuous quest. He tries to find the most pertinent answers for his numerous questions. In other words, the man searches the most convincing arguments to elucidate his concerns. The process is valid for each individual, disregarding the occupation or the social environment, because each person has inner turmoil, born from these questions to which the answer must come individually.

Our theme aims to bring to date the importance of the Holy Eucharist in the contemporary Christian devotion. Knowing God must not remain only a theoretical aspect. We have the duty to live God and experience Him in our lives. In this regard, the Christian morality has an important place. In the same time, we see God – the Son present in each moment of the Divine Liturgy, the Liturgical Theology supporting this matter. All the theological disciplines are in perfect harmony and interdependence. The title of the thesis is significant under this aspect: *The Eucharistic Ethos and the Christian devotion in the secularised society*. Therefore, we chose to highlight the importance of the Eucharist in the Christian moral life, because, without doubts, the Divine Liturgy is the centre of the Orthodox spiritual life. In the same time, we also mentioned the existent exaggerations related to the Sacrament of the Holy Eucharist. The moral life of each Christian must maintain the equilibrium that characterizes the real life to which we are called by Christ.

Aware of the fact that no one can be exhaustive in discussing a specific theme, a known fact even in the times of Solomon: “And further, by these, my son, be admonished: of making many books there is no end [...]” (Eccl. 12: 12). The information is continuously updated, new commentaries appear and a subject can become endless. Still, we hope we managed to create a unitary study, reflecting the correct teaching on the

subject. We present as novelty certain aspect, which, even coming from dispersed opinions, are reunited here and accompanied by a personal opinion. Therefore, without having the pretention of exhaustiveness related to the stage of our research, we consider this work useful for those intending to understand the role and the importance of the Holy Eucharist in the life of the Christians, and the risks of an exaggerated devotion under this aspect.

### ***The placing of the thesis in the thematic field***

The present thesis, *The Eucharistic Ethos and the Christian devotion in the secularised society*, was accomplished in the Doctoral School of Theology, “1 Decembrie 1918” University of Alba Iulia, under the coordination and guidance of Father Archbishop PhD Habil Professor Irineu Pop, who is specialised in Orthodox Moral Theology, Social Ethics and Christian Bioethics. Due to the fact that the thesis proposes a vision on the Holy Eucharist and on the Christian devotion in the contemporary secularised society, a pluridisciplinary approach is required. We intended, most of all, to give this paper a moral spirit. Next to the moral approach, the thesis contains numerous liturgical, biblical, patristic, and missionary references.

The thesis may also connect to other branches of the systemic, practical and even historical theology (Canonical Law, Patristics, and Universal Church History), due to the fact that part of it debates the importance of the Eucharist in different collections, legislations and patristic and even literary works. The contemporary challenges faced by the Church are discussed in the thesis under moral, missionary and apologetic aspects. Still, the fundament of our study remains moral, and all the other approaches have the role of defending and maintaining alive the real liturgical tradition and the revealing truth from the biblical, canonical and patristic confessions on the Holy Eucharist in Church, from the beginning of the Christianity until our times, highlighting the devotion of the contemporary Christians.

The theologian Christos Yannaras develops the concept of liturgical morality, denoting interdependence between these branches of the theology. The Sacrament of the Holy Eucharist, as life unity of the persons in communion with Christ, re-establishes in each man the image of the morality (ethos) of God, meaning the completeness of the communion of the Holy Trinity, revealing, in the same time, the “theological feature of the human moral perfection”. This manifestation of the trinitarian morality, called an image of the morality by the above mentioned theologian, establishes the *liturgical morality* of the Church. Saint John the Evangelist speaks of the scattered sons of God (John 11:52). Bringing them together is the role of the liturgical morality.

The same theologian also presents the cosmological dimension of the liturgical morality, explaining this concept not only through the call to God, but also because it revises the reasoning, the logos, and the world in this Eucharistic relation with its Creator. This is the reason why the Christian Ethics is completely different from any other Ethics (philosophical, social or political). It has the merit to not separate the morality from the human life. In this regard, the syntagm *cosmic liturgy* can be easier understood: the affirmative response of the man to the “ascension” of his nature toward Christ.

The present thesis researched the implications of the Eucharist in the Christian moral life, based on biblical and patristic texts and also on works belonging to the contemporary theologians, consecrated and recent works. The spiritual discussions with the believers who feel the presence of Christ in the Holy Eucharist and in their life were also of real help in our research.

Related to the personal arguments for the approach of the theme, they go back to the graduation of the Faculty of Orthodox Theology, when we stated that the attempts to understand the mysteries of the world had begun together with the date of the first memories, in childhood. As a priest’s son and, therefore, close to the Church, I was always impressed by the divine cult and its moral implications in the daily life. Each Sunday, participating to the Divine Liturgy in the Holy Altar, I was paying attention to each move

and liturgical gesture of the priest, learning very quickly the ritual and the work during the divine service. I was realising that the daily life gravitates around the divine cult, giving the clear coordinates of an authentic moral life. Growing older, I began to understand more aspects related to the Divine Liturgy and the fact that the Eucharist is at its core – the supreme present: Christ giving Himself to us as bread and wine. Therefore, I considered that the sacrifice of Christ is the most important present a man can receive.

***The aim and the general objectives of the thesis***

In a secular social context, where the Church is attacked more and more, the present thesis has as main aim to present the importance of the Holy Eucharist in the Christian moral life. In the same time, by discussing the authentic devotion and the natural behaviour that should be manifested by all people, the thesis shows the manner in which the believer must relate to the most important Sacrament of the Church.

Following a chronological line, the first objective of the thesis is to achieve a comparison between the attitude of the first Christians and that of the contemporary Christians related to the Eucharist. The evolution of the Divine Liturgy and of the manner of receiving the Eucharist is a complex image with the same essential element, while the adjacent aspects change depending on the social and cultural conditions. Other objective of the thesis is to systematically present the teachings of the Holy Eucharist in other Christian Churches, mentioning the European secular context and its impact in the Christian moral life.

We also intended as objective to signal the exaggerations appeared in time related to the Eucharist. Whether the reasons were the ignorance, the malice or a wrongly understood devotion, the Eucharistic ethos was differently interpreted by Christians. Therefore, the paper discusses the creation of guidelines meant to lead the Christians to a correct understanding and receiving of the Sacrament. The same objective aims the understanding of the authentic devotion and the fighting against the false or wasteful devotion, denaturising the meaning of the Eucharist in the Christian life. Thus, the present thesis establishes certain norms for

receiving the Holy Eucharist, seen by some as spiritual need, by some as habit/ custom, and by others as a simple personal choice. Hence, a permanent and continuous preparation for receiving the Pure Holy Eucharist is necessary.

Among the objectives of this work, we mention the desire for the reader to acknowledge the fact that the Divine Liturgy is the centre of the Orthodox spiritual life. Our paper highlights the fact that each Christian's moral life must maintain the equilibrium characterising the real experience to which we are called by Christ. In our spiritual ascension, the Divine Liturgy is the sacrament of eternal life.

The aim and the objectives of this thesis cannot be restricted to reaching the concepts specific to the academic environment, but they also intend to create connections between the theological disciplines or even between fragmented manners of understanding some theological concepts. Still, any author can approach an issue from his own field of interest, leaving his mark on it, after a specific research. Therefore, we have no pretention of an exhaustive treating of this theme centred on the Eucharistic Ethos. Several general conclusions reflect a personal opinion and the manner in which is perceived and approached the most important Sacrament of the Christianity, and its fruits in the Christian life.

### ***The research stage***

There are numerous Romanian and foreign studies related to the Divine Liturgy and to the Holy Eucharist. Due to the fact that the Divine Liturgy is at the core of the Christian cult, it is a normal act for each liturgist to pay attention to this subject in his works.

Next to the dogmatic preoccupations of father professor Dumitru Stăniloae (the very well-known work – *Teologia Dogmatică Ortodoxă /The Orthodox Dogmatic Theology/*, in 3 volumes, reedited several times, *Chipul nemuritor al lui Dumnezeu /The Eternal Image of God/*, edited in Craiova, by Editura Mitropoliei Olteniei /The Metropolitan Print of Oltenia/ in 1987, and reedited in the collection *Opere complete /Complete Works/*, vol. 5, Bucharest, Basilica Print, 2013, *Iisus Hristos sau restaurarea Omului*

*/Jesus Christ and the Restoration of the Man/*, Craiova, Omniscope Print, 1993 and in *Opere complete /Complete Works/*, vol. 4, Bucharest, Basilica Print, 2013, etc.), we also used valuable works for the biblical study (*Chipul evanghelic al lui Iisus Hristos /The Evangelical Image of Jesus Christ/*, Sibiu, Editura Centrului Mitropolitan /Metropolitan Center Print/, 1991 and in *Opere complete /Complete Works/*, vol. 7, Bucharest, Basilica Print, 2016), the patristic study (*Viața și învățătura Sfântului Grigoria Palama*, Bucharest, Scripta Print, 1993), the study of the asceticism and mysticism (*Ascetica și Mistica Ortodoxă / The Orthodox Asceticism and Mysticism/*, Alba Iulia, Deisis Print, 1993), and also the liturgical and moral study. Related to the presence of Christ in the Divine Liturgy, the work *Spiritualitate și comuniune în Liturghia Ortodoxă /Spirituality and communion in the Orthodox Liturgy/*, București, EIMBOR Print, 2004, are iconic. Unedited liturgical elements are presented in the work *Iisus Hristos, lumina lumii și îndumnezeitorul omului /Jesus Christ, the light of the world and the sanctifier of mankind/*, București, Anastasia Print, 1993 and in *Opere complete /Complete Works/*, vol. 6, Bucharest, Basilica Print, 2013.

Among numerous studies and articles from Romanian theological magazines, of special importance for our research were the following: „Dumnezeiasca Euharistie în cele trei confesiuni /The Holy Eucharist in the three confessions/”, in *Ortodoxia*, year V, 1953, no. 1, pp. 46-115; „Legătura dintre Euharistie și iubirea creștină /The connection between Eucharist and the Christian love/”, in *Studii Teologice*, year XVII, 1965, no. 1-2, pp.3-32; „Liturghia, urcuș spre Dumnezeu și poartă a cerului /The Liturgy, ascension toward God and gate of Heaven/”, in *Mitropolia Banatului*, year XXXI, 1981, no. 1-3, pp.41-56; „Modurile prezenței Lui Hristos în cultul Bisericii /Modes of the presence of Christ in the cult of the Church/”, in *Mitropolia Banatului*, year XXXII, 1982, no. 7-9, pp. 429-456, „Jertfa lui Hristos și spiritualizarea noastră prin împărtășirea de ea în Sfânta Liturghie /The sacrifice of Christ and our spiritualisation through it in the Divine Liturgy/”, in *Ortodoxia*, year XXXV, 1983, no. 1, pp. 104-118. All these studies reflect the conception of father Stăniloae on the presence of Christ in the Divine Liturgy and the manner in which the

Christian is in communion with Christ, living Him and being guided to the Kingdom of God.

Another important author is Saint Nicolae Cabasila, especially through his work *Tâlcuirea dumnezeieștii Liturghii /Understanding the Divine Liturgy/*. Father Professor Ene Braniște, in a large commentary to this work, presents in details each element and symbol of the Divine Liturgy. These works were reedited in a unique volume, in 2011, by EIMBOR. Father Petre Vintilescu is important for this theme with the *Liturghierul explicat /The Hieratikon explained/*, published in several editions (the most recent in 1998 by EIMBOR). The Bishop Nicolae Popoviciu also presents a vast vision of the central part of the Liturgy in *Epicleza euharistică /The Eucharistic Epiclesis/*, Nemira Print, 2003. Extremely useful for our research were the Romanian translations of the theologian Karl Christian Felmy published in Sibiu by Deisis Print. Another important writing is *Deasa împărtășire cu preacuratele lui Hristos Taine /The frequent Eucharist with the pure Sacraments of Christ/* belonging to Saint Nicodim the Aghiorite and Neofit Kavsokalivitul, reedited in Alba Iulia, by Reîntregirea Print, in 2016. We also mention the anthology of Father Deacon Ioan I. Ică Jr., *Împărtășirea continuă cu Sfînele Taine: Dosarul unei controverse. Mărturiile Tradiției /The continuous Eucharist: The file of a controversy: the Confessions of the Tradition/*, published by Deisis Print, Sibiu, 2006. Father Alexander Schmemmann, in *Euharistia /The Eucharist/*, reedited by Sophia Print in 2012, develops the importance of the Sacrament of the Sacraments and its essential role in the Christian life. In the same time, numerous studies on the theme are present in the theological magazines, and in the two volumes occasioned by the 13<sup>th</sup> International Symposium of Alba Iulia, *Eucharist and Martyrdom*, at the Faculty of Orthodox Theology, Alba Iulia, 2014. Also in 2014 – The memorial year of the Holy Eucharist, Basilica Print *Spovedania și Euharistia – izvoare ale vieții veșnice /The Confession and the Eucharist – sources of eternal life/*, in two volumes. The second volume, *Sfânta Euharistie – arvuna vieții veșnice / The Holy Eucharist – the retainer of the eternal life/* was of real help for our research, due to the fact that it gathers



the most relevant studies and articles related to the sacrament of the Holy Eucharist. Precious information for our thesis came from the two books published in Iași, by Doxologia Print, also occasioned by the Memorial year of the Holy Eucharist (2014): Cătălin Vatamanu (coord.) *Spovedanie și Euharistie /Confession and Eucharist/* and Gheorghe Petraru; Liviu Petcu, *Dimensiunea penitențială și euharistică a vieții creștine /The penitential and Eucharistic dimensions of the Christian life/*.

Precious information were adopted from the PhD thesis of father Florin Botezan, *Sfânta Liturghie – cateheza desăvârșită /The Divine Liturgy – a perfect catechesis/*, reedited in Alba Iulia in 2016. The author discusses the Divine Liturgy, the centre of the Orthodox cult, also mentioning the contemporary challenges of the cult in comparison with the first Christian centuries. The book is structured on four chapters, each of them gradually analysing the evolution of the Divine Liturgy from the perspective of the relation cult-catechesis.

The work of the theologian Georgios Mantzaridis, *Morala creștină /The Christian Morality/* is a bridge between liturgical and moral aspects. The author details the connection between man and God. Firstly, he discusses the presence of good and evil in the world, the possibility to know and do the good, and the modalities to fight the evil. Georgios Mantzaridis analyses also the spiritual effects of the participation to the divine cult, and the place of the man in Church.

Another important work in our research was the work of The Most Reverend Father Irineu, Archbishop of Alba Iulia, *Chipul lui Hristos în viața morală a creștinului /The image of Christ in the Christian moral life/*, Cluj-Napoca, Renașterea Print, 2001. A special chapter of this work discusses in detail specific aspects related to the Eucharist, and the likeness of man in the image of Christ. The Eucharistic communion, as perfect likeness to the Logos made man, achieves the likeness to God in each individual properly prepared for this process, surpassing the natural qualities of a man and sanctifying him.

For the part related to secularisation, next to the articles from the two volumes following the International Symposiums organised in Alba

Julia in 2003 and 2005, *Biserica în era globalizării /The Church in the globalisation age/* and *Omul de cultură în fața deșcreștinării /The man of culture in the face of dechristianisation/*, important information were offered by the work of the Metropolitan Hieotheos Vlachos – *Secularismul, un cal troian în Biserică /The Secularism, a Trojan horse in the Church/*, published by Egumenița in 2004. The secularism in Church directly relates to the real objective of the Church. A Church that is not animated by the spirit of the communion and love, meaning a distant Church, not healing the man and preoccupying for other problems, is a secularised Church. This is our acceptance of the secularism in Church. We can speak of a secularised Church when most of the people consider the Church a simple religious organisation. This type of institution, by its superficiality, fails to completely fulfil the believer, remaining fixed to simple ceremonies or religious services”, marginalising and casting shadows on the real richness and beauty of the Church of Christ.

Regarding the foreign language sources, as editorial novelty, very useful to the thesis, we mention the work of Agostino Porreca, *L' eucaristia «cuore» della Chiesa - Per un modello eucaristico di Chiesa a partire dal Concilio Vaticano II /The Eucharistic “heart” of the Church – For an Eucharistic model of Church starting from the Second Council of Vatican/*, Aloisiana, Il Pozzo di Giacobbe, 2016. The work of Robin Kirkpatrick, *Massacre, Miserere and Martyrdom*, published in 2015, inspired us related to the sacrificial feature of the Holy Eucharist. The second chapter of the second part (“Sur la divine Eucharistie” /“On the Divine Liturgy”) from the work *L’Ancien Charalampos, Éditions l’Age d’Homme*, published in Lausanne in 2012 by Joseph de Dionysiou was very useful to our research. We also mention the work Andrew McGowan, *Rethinking Eucharistic Origins*, in „Pacifica”, no. 23, 2010, and Giles Dimock’s work, *The Eucharist: Sacrament and Sacrifice*, Knights of Columbus Supreme Council, 2009.

Other works we used were edited to Egumenița in 2019 (Mihail Kardamakis, *Focul Împărtășaniei: Liturghia și Euharistia în viața Bisericii / The fire of the Eucharist: The Liturgy and the Eucharist in the life of the*

Church/ and Antonie de Suroj, *Dumnezeiasca Liturghie/The Divine Liturgy*) and 2017 (Sava Aghioritul, *Ce este Sfânta Liturghie și cum să o trăim*). Even if they do not have an extremely scientific character, they helped us due to their spiritual dimension.

There are several hundreds of theological, historical and canonical printed works that served as references for our theme, and we also used the internet resources, due to the fact that the internet allows a more rapid documentation and makes available data bases, digital libraries, and scanned documents and magazines that otherwise would be possible to consult only in specific libraries.

### ***The research methodology***

The present paper has an interdisciplinary character. The research methodology required several scientific methods in order to reach the objectives of our research. All the theological fields are in relations of interdependence and harmony; therefore, it is impossible to draw well-defined limits between the branches of theology. The pluridisciplinary approach aims to defend and keep alive in all people's consciousness the real liturgical tradition and the revealing truth from the biblical, canonical and patristic confessions. Firstly, we mention as scientific method the *parallel lecture* of the historical, moral and liturgical works and the achievement of a synthesis of these readings on a moral line. We used the *historical-critical method* in the first chapter for the presentation of the Eucharist at the beginning of the Christianity until the present ritual of the Holy Liturgy. This method was useful due to the fact that the enunciation of some theses and conclusions required a travel in the history and a retrospective view. Another method used in the present paper is the *analytical-synthetic method*, discussing a subject possible to approach from several perspectives, the references are very rich. We used several resources, some from different confessional environments, always mentioning the source of the mentioned ideas. Related to the matter of believers' devotion for the sacrament of the Eucharist, the *comparative method* had an important role, because it had helped us to understand the manner in which the ancient Christians related to the most important sacrament of the

Church, and the manner in which the contemporary believers relate to the Eucharistic ethos. In the contemporary society, the devotion can either be understood in its authentic meaning or be denaturalised. For this aspect, we used the *method of the direct observation of the religious reality*. As complex intellectual activity, this method uses the representations, the thinking process, the memory and the voluntary attention in each moment, this method is not entirely scientific, but it can depict realities useful for the present theme. We also used the *method of documents analysis*, necessary for each scientific endeavour. Next to the study of canons and old documents, our study required the study of contemporary documents (statutes, rules, regulations, and synodal decisions). Another method we used was the *expositive method of the argumentation*, especially for formulating reasons and for supporting specific ideas, related to different opinions. Under this aspect, the process of the argumentation had, as rule, three stages: the affirmation of the thesis, the exposition of the arguments, and establishing the connection between the arguments and the validity of the thesis.

The present paper is structured on four chapters, each of them structured in several parts, followed by conclusions. For a more systemic understanding, we chose to present some essential ideas to the end of each chapter.

### ***The research limitations***

The theme of the Holy Eucharist became, from a scriptural perspective (especially for the Protestant Church and the Roman-Catholic Church), a theme related to the “temptation of the spirit of discernment”, mentioned by Saint Peter (1 Peter 4: 1), and also to the urges of Saint Paul: to be “made all things to all men” (1 Corinthians 9: 22) and “be not conformed to this world” (Romans 12:2). We are facing nowadays an intense fight between the fundamentalism that closes the Church inside the forms of its past and the progressivism that hands it over to the fluctuations of the profane influences; the theologians are oscillating between the present ecumenical concern and the difficulties of the scriptural interpretations,

harassed by the so-called passionate fund of a problem unique in its ampleness and profoundness.

There can be voices that can say that, except for the subject of the thesis, there is no element of novelty in our work. Still, we chose to present a pertinent and personal opinion, after the careful analysis of the practice of the primary Church and of the Holy Fathers' writings, as well as of the contemporary rituals. The Sacrament of the Holy Eucharist is an invitation, a call addressed to all the baptised persons to participate to the embodied Logos, to life itself, in which all come to life and are kept in existence, as expressed by Saint Cyril of Alexandria.

A limit of our research is represented by the lack of a profound knowing of the ancient and Modern Greek language, and of the Russian language. A contrary situation would have had the power to enrich the references and the interest for our work, and would have also made possible more complex comparisons, because the other Orthodox countries are also affected by secularisation. Related to the foreign references, increased attention was necessary, because some sources, even if historically valuable, were stranger to the spirit of our Church. Another weak point of our thesis may be considered the lack of graphics and of concrete case studies on the frequency of the Eucharist depending on the geographical area or region.

Beyond the inherent limits, the present thesis has the merit to highlight the Sacrament of the Holy Eucharist from liturgical and moral perspectives. In fact, the moral part of the present study can be considered as practical part for what the liturgical and dogmatic theology represents in this case.

### ***A brief presentation of the thesis chapter***

The first chapter, titled *The Holy Eucharist, the nourishment of eternal life. The establishment from the Last Supper and the Eucharistic consciousness of the early Christians*, insists more on the historical aspects of the theology and, therefore, does not bring many elements of novelty. Still, we presented several theologians' opinions on the

evolution of the Holy Liturgy in time. Presenting the Holy Eucharist as unique sacrifice of the New Covenant, we systematically brought to light the evolution of the Eucharistic cult in the New Testament. It is unanimously acknowledged that this sacrament was established by Jesus Christ to the Last Supper, when He “took bread, and blessed it, and brake it, and gave it to the disciples, and said, Take, eat; this is my body. And he took the cup, and gave thanks, and gave it to them, saying, Drink ye all of it; For this is my blood of the new testament, which is shed for many for the remission of sins” (Matthew 26: 26-28). The Holy Evangelists Mark and Luke, as well as Saint Paul, show that Christ left the express commandment of the later formalisation of the Divine Liturgy: “For as often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do shew the Lord's death till he come” (Mark 14: 22-24; Luke 22: 19-20, 1 Corinthians 11: 22-25). The Eucharist recalibrates the unique sacrifice of the New Covenant brought forever by the High Priest Jesus Christ, Who did not spare His life, but sacrificed it for our salvation (Hebrews 8: 6, 9: 24-25; Colossians 1:4). With this regard, Saint Paul’s words are fully justified: “For as often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do shew the Lord's death till he come” (1 Corinthians 11:26). Therefore, after the Descend of the Holy ghost, the first Christians, respecting the commandment of the Saviour, “continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers” (Acts 2:42), meaning the service of the Liturgy, which always was the central part in the life of the Church, the sacrament of the actualisation of the Saviour’s salvation and of the complete union with Him.

We presented further the situation of the cult of the Church after the apostolic period. Even if, initially, the Christian divine cult took place in private places, constructions with a fix and permanent use appeared at the beginning of the 3rd century. The eldest was discovered on Dura Europos, the right shore of Euphrates, after archaeological works in the period 1922-1936. Until approximately the year 200, the Christian buildings serving for the practice of the divine cult were called “oikoi”, “connventicula”, or “locci ecclesiastici”. Around the year 200,

we meet for the first time “ekklesia” as name for the church. Related to the rituals of the cult, although the New Testament does not present in detail the Holy Liturgy to which the Holy Apostles and their followers participated, we reconstructed its structure due to the patristic and biblical information. We remarked that the service was much simpler, containing elements still present in the contemporary structure: the gathering in the Church (cf. 1 Corinthians 11: 18) and the reading from the New Testament (cf. 1 Thessalonians 5:27; Colossians 4: 16; Acts 20: 7, 11; 1 Timothy 4: 13; 1 Corinthians 16: 26), intending to spread the word of Christ to the believers. The first chapter also presents the vision of the Holy Fathers on the Holy Eucharist and its administration. As it is the supreme Sacrament of the Church, references to the Holy Eucharist are to be found in the works of all the fathers of the Church. We mentioned only the most representative in relation with the theme of the importance of the Holy Eucharist.

**The second chapter** (*Eucharist and Ministerium: An ecumenical view*) continues the deepening of discussing the theme of the Holy Eucharist and of the Christian devotion by presenting the teaching on the Holy Eucharist in the other Christian Churches. In the same time, we mentioned the European secular context and its impact on the Christian moral life. On the same ecumenical line, we highlight some aspects related to the Eucharistic ecclesiology, considered to be open togetherness by several theologians. Therefore, the relation is more based on the systematic part of the theology and the Holy Eucharist is discussed more from dogmatic and missionary perspectives. The Holy Eucharist stays, without any doubt, at the core of the Christian life; thus, it is normal for each theologian to take in consideration the Eucharist, existing numerous works on the theme, also used as references for this chapter. Still, any author can approach this theme from another perspective, expressing his own ideas, a reason for which we cannot consider this subject as treated in an exhaustive manner.

The chapter begins with the presentation of the differences in the conceptions related to the Sacrament of the Holy Eucharist in

Orthodoxy and other Christian confessions (Catholics and Protestants). We mentioned the fact that, from a moral perspective, the fruits of the Divine Sacrament are obvious for all of them. The convergences and the delimitations that we discussed are dogmatic, doctrinaire and administrative. We observed numerous similarities between the Western and the Eastern (Byzantine) divine cult, both liturgically rooted in the primary Church. The differences appeared in time, when the cult of the Roman-Catholic Church passed through changes in its liturgical and doctrinaire structure. Related to the Protestant conception on the Holy Eucharist, there are differences compared to the Orthodox doctrine and the Catholic doctrine. For them, the Holy Eucharist, similar to the Baptism, is only a symbol of grace and the idea of sacrifice of the Eucharist is vehemently rejected. The bread and the wine are symbolical and do not change their substance.

We underlined further the role of the supreme Sacrament in the secularised Christian life. The secularisation moved the centre of life and culture from God to the man, and the humanity passed from theocentrism to anthropocentrism. Nowadays, the man, and not God, is placed in the centre of the existence. This type of individualistic society was formed by denying the connection between the Holy Trinity and the man. The second chapter also contains a part titled *Eucharistic ecclesiology or open togetherness?*, analysing the two concepts proposed by the orthodox theologians of the 20<sup>th</sup> century in a context of ecumenical dialogue. Therefore, we observed the concept of “Eucharistic ecclesiology” to the contemporary theologians Afanasiev, Zizioulas and father Dumitru Stăniloae. The role of this concept was important in unlocking the ecumenical dialogue, especially between the Roman-Catholic and the Orthodox believers. Still, father Stăniloae proved that the optimum term is that of “open togetherness”, much clearer in the ecumenical dialogue and in the manner of understanding the relation between Eucharist and Church. The catholicity of the Church, seen as completeness of the truth and understood as communion, “the divine-human of life and love”, contributed much to the clarification of the meaning of the concept of catholicity for



each local church. The rediscovery of this essential characteristic of the local Church in communion with other churches that confess the same faith helps in the process of understanding the mistaken opposed relation between the local and the universal dimensions of the Church. The secularisation outside the Church refers to the loss of the real aim and meaning of the sacramental Body of Christ. Usually, the secularism appears in the Church when there is an attempt to institutionalise the Church and to transform it in a religious spiritless organisation.

**The last two chapters,** *The authentic devotion versus the denaturalised devotion related to the Holy Eucharist and The sacrament of the Holy Eucharist – the centre of the Orthodox spiritual life,* stay under spiritual sign of the theology, discussing the manner in which the believers perceive the most important Holy Sacrament. As a result, these chapters, with a profound spiritual content, bring to the attention of the reader several examples, concrete practices and opinions on the Sacrament of Holy Eucharist, as well as scriptural and patristic confessions, meant to prove the sanctity of the Eucharist and its absolute necessity in the spiritual growth.

Discussing the “wasteful devotion” and the authentic devotion of the Holy Eucharist, we highlighted the unpleasant situations when the Holy Eucharist is presented as a form of devotion estranged by the Orthodox spirit. In comparison, as contrast, we discussed the authentic devotion, insisting on aspects directly connected to the Romanian people. Thus, the Eucharistic icons, the old carols and the devotional literature are real examples for the manner in each the devoted Romanians relate to the Sacrament of the Holy Eucharist. A significant discussed aspect refers to the frequent or rare Eucharist. Therefore, a part of the present thesis present the situation of receiving the Body and Blood of Christ especially nowadays, in comparison with situations from the past of the Church. Admitting that devotion is possible to be denaturalised, we express the necessity to maintain the moral equilibrium and the real teachings of the Church for not making any mistakes.

In the same time, we highlighted the contemporary liturgical practice, related to the preparation and receiving of the Holy Eucharist. We must admit

the fact that, in a secularised society, the Christians receive the Eucharist without fulfilling all the necessary premises or, in the best cases, they prepare for the moment of receiving the Body and Blood of Christ, by fasting and confessing. The premises for receiving the Holy Eucharist are also important for the priest, not only for the believers. This is the reason why the Church established some rules: it formulated canons for the Christians' participation to the Holy Eucharist, established the rules of Confession, and imposed some modifications in the architectural structure of the Church and in the manner of reading the prayers, and also in other aspects that can be categorised as belonging to the field of missiology. Concerning the previous announced idea, we also discussed in the present work the permanent and continuous preparation for receiving the Holy Eucharist, which shows the practical part that must be considered by the Christians for receiving the Body and Blood of Christ. We discuss, under this aspect, a complex and continuous work, a permanence of our spiritual life. The ideal we need to have as aim is the spiritual movement of thanking for the Liturgy we take part to and where we received the communion, and also the spiritual movement to prepare for a new Liturgy and a new communion. Each believer has the duty to establish the most appropriate manner to prepare, according to his state. In the same time, related to this aspect, we must remember the role of the confessor, as adviser and father.

The Divine Liturgy is also possible to be perceived as Eucharistic act and missionary act. We consider necessary to underline the fact that numerous spiritual issues are resolved in a missionary key. In this regard we understand that the role of the Church is to place the man and the world in a specific liturgical, Eucharistic and Paschal rhythm, in the process of waiting the complete transfiguration in the Kingdom of God.

***Thesis Content (in extenso)***

**INTRODUCTION**

**I. THE HOLY EUCHARIST, THE NOURISHMENT OF ETERNAL LIFE. THE ESTABLISHMENT FROM THE LAST SUPPER AND THE EUCHARISTIC CONSCIOUSNESS OF THE EARLY CHRISTIANS**

1.1 The holy Eucharist – The unique sacrifice of the New Covenant

*1.1.1 The establishment of the Holy Eucharist*

*1.1.2 The main significance of the Holy Eucharist*

1.2 The Eucharist in the primary Church. The Liturgy of the early Church and the „Church from home”

*1.2.1 The life of the community*

*1.2.2 The agape feasts in the early Church*

*1.2.3 The evolution of the Divine Liturgy*

1.3 The Eucharist in the liturgical and literary collections, the canonical and imperial legislation and in the hagiography writings

*1.3.1 The Holy Eucharist in the Didachia (Law) of the Twelve Apostles*

*1.3.2 The correspondence between Pliny the Younger and Trajan, the Emperor of Rome*

*1.3.3 The Holy Eucharist in the work of the martyr and philosopher Saint Justin*

*1.3.4 The Holy Eucharist in the work Traditio Apostolica*

*1.3.5 The vision of Saint Irenaeus of Lyon related to the Sacrament of the Holy Eucharist*

*1.3.6 The vision of other Fathers of the Church related to the Sacrament of the Holy Eucharist*

*1.3.7 The Holy Eucharist in the canons of the Church*

Conclusions

**II. EUCHARIST AND MINISTERIUM. AN ECUMENICAL VIEW**

2.1 The Holy Eucharist and the teachings of the Christian churches. Covergences and delimitations

*2.1.1 The Orthodox conception of the Sacrament of the Eucharist*

- 2.1.2 *The Eucharist in the conception of the Roman-Catholic Church after the Second Vatican Council. A brief incursion*
- 2.1.3 *The Eucharist in the Protestant teachings. General aspects*
- 2.2 The Eucharistic ethos in the European secular context
  - 2.2.1 *The secularisation – general aspects*
  - 2.2.2 *The effect of secularisation on the Sacrament of the Holy Eucharisti*
  - 2.2.3 *The Eucharist – the integration of the people from the secularised society in the trinitarian way of living*
- 2.3 Eucharistic ecclesiology or open togetherness?
  - 2.3.1. *The ecclesiology in relation with the Holy Eucharist*
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### **III. THE AUTHENTIC DEVOTION VERSUS THE DENATURATED DEVOTION RELATED TO THE HOLY EUCHARIST**

- 3.1 “The wasteful devotion” and the authentic devotion of the Holy Eucharist
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- 3.2 Frequent or rare Eucharist?
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4.5.5 *The participation to the so-called Liturgies in the parallel churches*

#### 4.5.6 *The regain of the Eucharistic ethos*

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### **GENERAL CONCLUSIONS**

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