

**UNIVERSITY „LUCIAN BLAGA” FROM SIBIU**

**FACULTY OF THEOLOGY**

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**MATERIAL ELEMENTS USED IN THE  
HOLY MYSTERY OF EUCHARIST.**

Symbolism, historical and liturgical  
significance, comparative study  
with Old Oriental Churches.

**Doctoral thesis**

*Summary*

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## Thesis Summary

Keywords: Mystery of the Eucharist, Divine Liturgy, material items, bread, wine, water, symbolism, comparative study, Old Churches - Oriental.

The paper entitled *Materials elements used in the Holy Mystery of Eucharist. Symbolism, historical and liturgical significance, comparative study Old Oriental Churches*, written under the guidance of Prof. Univ. Dr. Laurențiu Liviu Streza, Archbishop of Sibiu and Metropolitan of Ardeal, by Protos. Ioachim (Ilie) Tomoiagă includes: list of abbreviations, foreword, introduction, three main parts, conclusions and some explanatory tables; all extended on 228 pages. In drawing up this draft thesis I used 27 primary sources, 131 studies and articles and 5 web sources, processed 428 bibliographical notes.

In the *Introduction* (p. 12-20), are presented the reasons for which I choose to research the topic of *Material elements used in the Sacrament of Holy Eucharist*, showing briefly the state of research today on the subject, especially in Romanian liturgical theology and explained in detail the contents of the draft doctoral thesis and purpose of each part thereof.

In first part, entitled *Materials used in the Holy Eucharist* (p. 21-59) have presented the material elements used in the Sacrament of the Eucharist in the Byzantine Rite in use in the Orthodox Church, namely bread, pure flour wheat, yeast and salt, wine and fresh water. Each of these elements, namely bread, wine and water first is dedicated to a chapter. In treating this part, I followed in main the text of the Missal in use and indications of Romanian Orthodox Church, adding own comments. Also I often resorted to comparing the current text of the Missal texts used in previous editions of the Romanian Orthodox Church. It is revealed that the Missal indications are very strict about not allowing any matter Eucharistic exemption regarding material used or quality. A separate chapter deals with the color of the wine of the Eucharist, I followed largely Romanian earlier related studies, but I added personal experience in this regard both at home and in the diaspora.

Then it is shown how matter is ready for the Eucharistic Sacrifice of the Eucharist in Proskomedia how the Holy Gifts are mixed after transformation and how hot water is added after transformation. In these three chapters we watched and commented elements Eucharistic symbolism as it is surprised by the accompanying text Missal formulas liturgical preparation of the Holy Gifts, first for transformation and then to share clergy and faithful. I pointed out that their symbolism is based primarily on the Bible and has essentially Christological meanings.

The last two subchapters complement this first part dealing with the canonical provisions about the Eucharistic elements, namely the Eucharistic controversies about the elements in the first centuries of Christianity. In the section dedicated to the canonical provisions, first canons are quoted on the subject, after which are briefly discussed. It is noted that the provisions of these canons were largely summarized under prescribed in the Missal. Regarding the controversy over the Eucharistic elements in the first Christian centuries, I have presented briefly how certain heretics have deviated from the use of the eucharistic elements, as they are instituted of the Lord Jesus Christ, using other Eucharistic elements. Thus, St. Irenaeus reminds us of a gnostic heretic who used white wine in the Eucharist whom red color using all sorts of charlatans; act of martyr Perpetua and Felicity describes the use of cheese and milk as Eucharistic elements by a group of Gnostic, from who apparently were also two North African martyrs of the century III. Also St. John Chrysostom reminds of a group of so-called Gnostic aquariums who used only water and not wine to the Eucharist. It seems that both gnostic North African group and the Antioch was reluctant to use wine in the Eucharist because they considered a negative element, as is the entire world created.

Part two, entitled *Historical significance and symbolism of Eucharistic matter* (p. 60-124) begins with an introduction which explains in detail the contents and purpose of this second part. Starting from the idea of the last subchapter, namely that some heretics appealed to other elements of the Eucharistic considering that matter is evil itself, I wanted to present the symbolism of the elements of the Eucharist from their place within Judaism framework where Christianity was founded and also the Greco-Roman world in which Christianity spread. It is revelatory that in the Early Church the Jewish cult was an influence, including the perception of the material elements used.

Before I relate strictly to Eucharistic elements, I devoted a short chapter to the "material ontology" in Orthodox theology. Following Father Stăniloae theology, which is presenting the fundamental belief of the Orthodox Church that the world as a whole, both the material and spiritual, was created by God from nothing and is therefore ontologically good in itself.

The Church has always decisively rejected the idea of the Gnostics that the world would have been created as ontological wicked or evil. The fundamental idea of perceiving the world as God's good creation is also based on the theology of the Incarnation: Christ is coming „into His own” as the Father created the world through Him. In the virtue of orthodox theology of Creation and Incarnation, the sacramental orthodox theology granted a special place to the matter in human sanctification through the Sacraments in the Church.

Therefore I showed following also the theology of Father Stăniloae, that in the Orthodox Church every Sacrament has an material factor which is taken from nature without being processed or being processed by human effort. The Grace of Sacraments, as for example that of the Ordination, is transmitted directly through the body of the seen celebrant. In the Holy Sacrament of Eucharist are used both complex elements, such as bread and wine, these materials being obtained after processing the elements given by nature, and also water as it is taken from the wild or after minimal processing such as heating. Thus the complexity of the Eucharist as a sacrament by which we receive the Sacraments Celebrant Himself, our Lord Jesus Christ, corresponds to a complexity of the materials used, namely bread, wine and water.

After these two initial chapters, I treated the „historical and symbolical” meaning the eucharist elements; starting with the water because it is the natural element used in the Eucharist but it is also presented in the complex elements: bread and wine. It is presented the symbolism of water in the Old Testament and in a selection of texts from the New Testament: John 2,6 „water of cleansing” from the wedding of Cana; „birth from above” (John 3,3); „from water and Spirit” (John, 3,5); „living water” (John 4,10); and „rivers of living water” (John 7, 38). In the same manner is presented the historical and symbolical significance of the bread. The New Testament text which are analysed in a

more special way are: the „bread of life” (John 6, 35) and „Eucharist” from the journey to Emmaus (Luke 24, 13-35).

The section dedicated to wine as a eucharistic element is more developed because it includes, besides its place in the Old and New Testament, references to its place in the Greco-Roman world. With that, i started to develop one of its assumptions, that the way wine was consumed in the Greco-Roman world, mostly mixed with water, was taken as it is in the Christina Eucharist and after that it has been theologized using the biblical reference from John 19, 35. This second part shows amply that the christian eucharistic elements played a key role both historically and symbolically in Judaism and the Greco-Roman world.

The last chapter of this second part deals with the analysis of the symbolism of the eucharist elements as it is revealed in the late byzantine comments. It shows that this symbolism is far more developed than strictly liturgical formulas of the Roman Missal and that there is a diversity of these symbolisms: the same gestures and liturgical objects can receive both an Christological and Mariological interpretation.

Part three, entitled „*Material elements used in the Holy Eucharist. Comparative study with the Old Oriental Churches*” (p. 123-200) contains the comparison of the thesis. I explained first why a chose for comparison Old Oriental Churches: they are the closest, not only doctrinal but also liturgical with the Orthodox Church. Comparing the Eucharistic elements used by them and the symbolism linked to them could provide answers on their own symbolic liturgical developments in the Byzantine Rite. I also presented the place and symbolism of the eucharist elements from the Armenian Apostolic Church, the Syrian Church, the Indian Syrian Church of Malabar, the Coptic Church and the Ethiopian Church. First, each of these churches are summarized in terms of historical and liturgical tradition followed, then are described the eucharist elements used and the symbolism developed around them.

This shows that in terms of the eucharist elements itself, there are differences between the Byzantine and the Old Oriental Churches: the Armenian Church uses unleavened bread, and no leavened bread as part of the Eucharist. The Ethiopian Church also uses unleavened bread in the Eucharist on Holy Thursday, following an old belief, wrong in fact, that in the Last Supper, our Saviour used unleavened bread. Other oriental

churches use leavened bread, but in the Coptic tradition wafer used is not salted, and in the Syrian tradition, including the Indian, they use five elements in the preparation of the Eucharistic bread, namely water, wheat flour, salt, yeast and vegetable oil.

I explained the use of unleavened bread by the Armenians as an old tradition of the Early Church which they preserved. Here I used the explanations offered by the Romanian liturgist with Armenian origins Zareh Baronian instead of the one offered by Ene Braniște sees in this Armenian practice a Latin influence. Zareh Baronian proves that there are historical sources who show no doubt that Armenians have used unleavened bread long before coming into contact with the Latins.

Adding the oil in the Eucharistic bread in the Syrian tradition can be a Jewish influence: the bread brought as an offering to the temple was mixed with oil. In regards the wine as part of the Eucharist the Armenian Church is the only one who's not mixing the wine and water in the Eucharist. I explained this peculiarity by the fact that Armenians had their own tradition separate from the Greco-Roman regarding the use of wine mixed with water in everyday life. This tradition has been transmitted in its liturgical use. Other traditions, namely the Syrian and Coptic were strongly influenced by the Greco-Roman world. Syrian-Indian traditions and Ethiopian, despite being far from the Greco-Roman world, took the mixing wine with water in the Eucharist from the Syrians or the Copts. However, neither of these churches do not add hot water in the Eucharist after transformation. It is obvious that this practice has been implemented in the Byzantine Rite after the separation of the Orthodox Church and Old Oriental Churches in the fifth century.

It is worth recalling here that I presented in detail and commented the debates between Armenian and Byzantine for centuries on the Eucharistic elements. In these theological debates were cited biblical and patristic texts more in favour of either practice. Are important, however, two elements that I tried to pull out enough: firstly that despite these small differences in Eucharistic elements the dialogue between Orthodox and Armenian was possible and secondly that moderate monophysitism adopted by the Armenian Church and the other Old Oriental Churches is not reflected in their liturgical texts.

In terms of symbolism related to Eucharistic elements I revealed translating the prayers used by these traditions, that every rite has grown in a certain direction: the Coptic rite is simple focusing on the mystery of the real presence of the Saviour in the Eucharist; Syrian rite emphasizes the community nature of the Eucharist. There are prayers for the community to the Theotokos, the saints, without remove bits for them. Also are related will developed prayers for repeated incensing of the Holy Gifts, highlighting their divine character. Ethiopian tradition focuses on prayers for the blessing of all the material objects to come in contact with the Holy Body and Blood of Jesus. The symbolism of the prayers of the Ethiopian rite calls massively to the Old Testament, stressing in this regard the strong links with the Jewish tradition of this church. One of our contributions is that we translated texts from the Ethiopian rite, making them known in the Romanian theological environment.

I also wanted to stress the cultural influences present in these churches regarding the eucharist elements. Thus the Eucharistic bread is shaped like the bread used by everybody, and the wine is obtained according to local traditions. For example, in the Ethiopian tradition the wine does not have a central place therefore is squeezed from grapes in the altar before the Eucharistic celebration.

The tables at the end of the thesis are intended to present more clearly the nature, the form and symbolism of the Eucharistic elements used in these churches.

## Summary

<b>Abbreviations.....</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>Foreword.....</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>Introduction.....</b>	<b>11</b>
<b>I. Material elements used in the Holy Eucharist .....</b>	<b>20</b>
I.1. The bread.....	22
I.2. The wine.....	26
I.2.1.The colour of the Eucharistic wine.....	28
I.3. The water.....	31
I.4. Preparing the Eucharist elements within Proskomedia.....	32
I.5. Mixing the Holy Gifts and adding the hot water after transformation.....	44
I.6. Canonical provisions regarding the Eucharistic elements and their use.....	47
I.7. Controversy about the Eucharistic elements in the first Christian centuries.....	52
I.8. Conclusions.....	56
<b>II. The historical and symbolical significance of Eucharistic matter.....</b>	<b>59</b>
Introduction.....	59
II.1. Ontology of the matter in Orthodox Theology.....	63
II.1.1. Matter and its symbolism in the sacraments of the Church.....	67
II.2. Historical and symbolical significance of water as a Eucharistic matter...	71
II.2.1. The significance of water in the Old Testament.....	71
II.2.2. The significance of water in the New Testament.....	76
„water of cleansing” (John 2,6) from the wedding of Cana.....	76
„Birth from above” (John 3,3); „birth from water and Spirit” (John 3,5).....	78



„Living water” (John 4,10) or sacramental theology of the dialogue between Jesus and the Samaritan.....	79
„Rivers of living water” (John 7, 38) of faith in Jesus.....	81

II.3. The historical and symbolical significance of the bread as a Eucharistic matter.....	83
---	----

II.3.1. Bread in the Old Testament.....	83
II.3.2. Bread in the New Testament.....	86
<i>Bread – Eucharistic matter</i> .....	86
<i>Material and spiritual dimension of the bread</i> .....	86
„Bread of life” (John 6,35).....	87
<i>The bread in the Saviours parables</i> .....	88
„Eucharist” and knowledge to Emmaus (Luke 24, 13-35).....	88

II.4. The historical and symbolical significance of the wine as Eucharistic matter.....	90
--	----

II.4.1. The wine in the Old Testament.....	90
II.4.2. The wine in the New Testament.....	95
<i>Wine as Eucharistic matter</i> .....	95
<i>Wine and grape-vine in Saviours speeches</i> .....	96
<i>Wine – healing liquid and nerve stimulus</i> .....	96
<i>Wine as fermented drink</i> .....	97
<i>Wine as an eschatological reason</i> .....	99

II.4.3. Wine in Greco-Roman world.....	100
--	-----

II.5. Mystical and symbolical significance of the Eucharistic elements in the Liturgy.....	103
---	-----

II.5.1. The symbolism of the main points of Proskomedie.....	108
II.5.2. Symbolism mixing water into wine.....	113
II.5.3. Symbolism pouring hot water and union of all elements in the Chalice.....	116

Conclusions.....	118
------------------	-----

<b>III. Material elements used in the Holy Eucharist. Comparative study with the Old Oriental Churches.....</b>	<b>122</b>
III.1. Old Oriental Churches.....	122
III.2. Armenian Apostolic Church.....	125
III.2.1. Brief historical and liturgical introduction.....	125
III.2.2. Eucharist elements used in Armenian Liturgy.....	129
III.2.3. Dialogues of the Armenian Church with other churches on the Eucharistic elements.....	132
III.2.4. Particularities of the Armenian Church on the use of the Eucharistic elements and their explanation.....	148
III.2.5. Conclusions.....	152
III.3. Syrian Church.....	156
III.3.1. Brief historical and liturgical introduction.....	156
III.3.2. Eucharist elements used in the Syrian Liturgy.....	159
III.3.3. Conclusions.....	168
III.4. Indian Syrian Church of Malabar.....	171
III.4.1. Brief historical and liturgical introduction.....	171
III.4.2. Eucharist elements used in the indian-sirian Liturgy.....	173
III.4.3. Conclusions.....	175
III.5. The Coptic Church.....	176
III.5.1. Brief historical and liturgical introduction.....	176
III.5.2. Eucharist elements used in the Coptic Liturgy.....	180
III.5.3. Conclusions.....	185
III.6. Ethiopian Church.....	187
III.6.1. Brief historical and liturgical introduction.....	187
III.6.2. Eucharist elements used in the Ethiopian Liturgy.....	191
III.6.3. Conclusions.....	199

<b>General conclusions.....</b>	<b>201</b>
<b>Bibliography.....</b>	<b>203</b>
<b>Annexes.....</b>	<b>217</b>
<b>Comparative table.....</b>	<b>217</b>
<b>Declaration according to the originality of the scientific work.....</b>	<b>223</b>
<b>Curriculum Vitae.....</b>	<b>224</b>