

INTERDISCIPLINARY DOCTORAL SCHOOL
THE FIELD OF THE PHD: THEOLOGY
PHD THESIS

**DOGMA AND CHRISTIAN ETHOS IN OCCIDENT AND ORIENT.
HISTORICAL, DOCTRINAL AND MISSIONARY- ECUMENICAL
CONSIDERATIONS.**

Abstract

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Sibiu, 2018

Keywords: schism, Christian ethos, papal primacy, bishop, synod, Filioque, eschatology, purgatory, unleavened bread, Eucharist,

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This PhD thesis represents the completion of a research project on the Eastern and Western traditions that generated a certain ethos, a certain way of existence, ecclesial, which has implications to this day. The doctoral research project has entered from an early point of view in an interdisciplinary perspective. Thus, the historical and doctrinal considerations are doubled by those of pastoral-missionary and ecumenical character. The Orthodox Church, the

follower of the Apostolic Church, is, moreover, characterized by the blending of horizontal (socio-historical) perspectives with the vertical perspectives (charismatic-eschatological). Consequently, tradition and renewal define the work of Orthodoxy in the present world, one marked by globalization, relativistic spirit and secularization.

Without claiming exhaustiveness, I have attempted in my thesis to capture the essential of the main historical contexts and dogmatic teachings that marked the separation between the Christian West and the East. Also, I have always been concerned about the current implications of these issues, convinced that their relevance aims at the salvation of believers in different Christian traditions.

The present paper aims to show the specificity and the importance of the testimony of the Orthodox Church in the current socio-historical context, with an emphasis on the differences that occurred in the history of Christianity between the Eastern and the Western traditions, convinced that these differences have pastoral and missionary implications up to the present days.

A fundamental premise of the research is also the belief that a certain set of doctrines, of faith teachings, also determine a certain ethos, a certain way of ecclesial living of the faith. Of course, the *lex orandi - lex credendi* principle is part of this framework. At the same time, however, the relationship between dogmatics, liturgy and spirituality is threatened when heresies or schisms are manifested in confessions. In these cases, the fullness of the work of the grace of the Holy Spirit is threatened, since the members of the ecclesiastical structures gradually ceased to be able to live and testify the Truth.

Here it is appropriate to emphasize the importance of the testimony that the Orthodox Church, in its quality as a continuator of the apostolic, primary Church, must give it to all people. Beyond the effects of the schism, the desire of our Savior Jesus Christ was that all "be one" (Hebrews 17:21). This unity is nothing else than the manifestation of one of the attributes of the Church as the mystical Body of Christ, as affirmed it was affirmed in the Nicene Creed.

The above belief, shared by the author of this thesis, is not, however, a triumphal affirmation of some unjustified claims, nor the promotion of an idealistic state unsupported by "reality on the ground". Of course, the work of unity and catholicity (affirmation of the fullness of grace) in today's world is both a gift and a mission for all Orthodox believers, both clergy and lay people. That it is a reality we can see in the case of some Orthodox converts that have marked the Christian world in the last century. Some of the testimonies of these converts will be exposed in a future chapter. Here I sum up a few names - Jaroslav Pelikan,

Karl Christian Felmy, Gabriel Bunge - as well as a common idea that we find in their testimonies: that the coming to Orthodoxy was done gradually, after a careful study of the Christian sources, and that the act of conversion should be regarded as a "return home" as a natural act of (re) coming to the unique and true Church of Jesus Christ.

Regarding the method of research, I will again emphasize that we have tried to make an interdisciplinary theological analysis, which is why we have used several research methods. Thus, the historical method has helped us to evoke the most important stages in the crystallization of the two Christian, Eastern and Western traditions, going from the Apostolic to the Contemporary epoch. This historical excursion is necessary in order to identify the fundamental principles that have defined the orthodox ethos. *The comparative method* has also contributed to a better understanding of what defines the specificity of the Orthodox ethos. This has been highlighted in relation to Western innovations (while the Orthodox Tradition is generally marked by the unaltered preservation and confession of dogmas). *The analytical method* has helped us to explore the challenges due to the different theological developments that the Orthodox Church must respond to in the exercise of its missionary and ecumenical work in today's world. Finally, *the synthetic method* was used when I tried to formulate some answers to these challenges.

As a structure, the present paper comprises six major chapters, preceded by an argument and introduction, and at the end the final conclusions of the research are found. The plan of each chapter is a unitary one, characterized by a historical and doctrinal analysis that is then followed by the underlining of the pastoral-missionary implications of the theme. A distinct note is made in Chapter VI, which sets out the general considerations regarding the missionary and ecumenical implications of the Orthodox ethos in the act of the socio-cultural and religious context.

The first chapter of the thesis reveals the defining aspects of schism throughout the eleventh centuries, ranging from the "protohistory" of the Schism and until 1054. There is also a characterization of the theological-dogmatic framework, in order to be presented in a subchapter The Synod of Florence and its impact on the evolutionary framework of the Church. The pastoral-missionary considerations of the schism between the East and the West are the final reflections of the first chapter.

The second chapter deals with the concept of the "papal primate". There are not missing here the historical and the doctrinal data, but also doubled by the missionary considerations. Thus, it is emphasized that among the causes of the development of this

concept lie not only the theological, but also the socio-political, with repercussions to the present day.

The third chapter pays attention to the Filioque addition, about which Vladimir Lossky said it was the only theological foundation of the separation between the Christian Orient and the Occident. It is a term that reveals a triadology particular to the Eastern one, with implications in spirituality.

The fourth chapter is following the same line as the preceding one, dealing with another "Florentine point": the purgatory. Considering an intermediate place between heaven and hell has led not only to differences in the Western and the Eastern eschatology, but it has led to exaggerated liturgical practices, such as indulgences (which will, in time, underlie the emergence of the Reformation).

The fifth chapter is dedicated to the analysis of the liturgical practice of Unleavened Communion. One by one, the biblical arguments that have supported this practice will be dismantled, and then the Orthodox vision of the Holy Eucharist will be opposed to it.

Chapter VI marks the indissoluble link between dogma and the Christian ethos in the East and the West. The emphasis is on the current missionary and ecumenical implications, which reveal the importance of the testimony of Orthodoxy for the contemporary man.

The conclusions systematize the results of the research, as they were extracted from the analysis of the works included in the final bibliographic list. Among the results obtained I will mention a few.

1. The problem of the Great Schism is a rather thorny one that has raised numerous discussions and controversies over the past millennium and beyond. Moreover, the Ecumenical Movement for the Restoration of Christ's torn shirt raises this issue even further for an irenic solution to it. Although in the past it has been said that the moment of division between the Western Church and the Eastern Church was at 1054, recent studies of theologians of both denominations, shows very well that the event at the beginning of the second millennium is in fact only a natural consequence of a previous millennium that has inevitably accentuated and inevitably led to what we call the Great Schism. In the analysis of the rupture produced within Christianity, we can study the problem by identifying some schisms from the Church to the time of Photius, and another stage would consist of a period from Photius to the unpleasant event of 1054. Therefore, the moment of the great Schism is nothing more than the natural pursuit of several hundred years of quarrels and separations, sometimes politically, culturally and especially religiously.

What we observe is that a series of conflicts marked the East and the West since the fourth century, there have been a number of contradictions and incompatibilities that have been often solved through a procedure recognized as effective, namely the synod. The most important cause of the schism is the mutual ignorance, which prevented them from finding a common language of approach, and the moment 1054 is nothing more than the outbreak of personal passions, as well as other causes that accompanied the attitudes: political, religious and cultural causes.

The division of the two Churches was to be felt much later, that is, with the appearance of the Crusades. The fourth crusade of 1204, as outlined, is the final moment of the alienation of the West, because the rupture of July 16, 1054, was not accepted by contemporaries as a definitive schism between the two sister Churches. Subsequently, there have been many attempts to join, but they have failed. An important symbolic act is that of December 7, 1965, when the joint statement of Pope Paul VI and Patriarch Atenagoras, to lift the mutual anathemas of excommunication from 1054, was read.

The best known theological differences between the Roman Catholic Church and the Orthodox Church are called the "Florentine points". These are: the non-recognition of the primacy of the Bishop of Rome over the other bishops (in the Orthodox Church, all the archbishops, regardless of the title - Patriarch, Metropolitan, Archbishop, Bishop - are considered equal); the non-recognition of the addition of the Filioque from the Creed (considered in the Orthodox Church a misleading teaching with profound theological implications), the non-recognition of the validity of the use of unleavened bread used by the Catholic Church (the Catholic Church recognizes as valid both the use of unleavened bread and of the fermented bread) ; the non-recognition of the existence of the Purgatory (considered in the Roman Catholic Church as a middle ground between heaven and hell, in which the souls of the dead are purified until the entrance to Heaven).

2. The doctrine of the Church is not an abstract rationalization, a free exercise of human thought, but an incarnate truth, the doctrinal deviations having an acute consequence in the practical life of the Church. The manner in which the Church perceives triadology is mirrored in ecclesiology. Filioque, according to Kallistos Ware's testimony, "not only destroys the balance between the Three Persons of the Holy Trinity, but also leads to a misunderstanding of the work of the Spirit in the world, and encourages a false doctrine about the Church." At the same time, the disagreements about the origin of the Holy Spirit in the intimate life of the God Trinity undermine the spiritual and intellectual evolution and enrichment.

Significant are the documents of the Synod of Constantinople in 1285, written by the Ecumenical Patriarch Gregory II of the Crete, the only synodal document of the Orthodox Church which expressly, detailed and questionable refers to the Filioque doctrine. The Synod of 1285 has at least four incontestable merits: rejects the union of Lyon from 1274; condemns in categorical terms the teaching of Filioque, cutting his followers from the communion of the Church; Provides an Orthodox response, a positive solution to Filioque, clarifying and specifying patristic pneumatology; ultimately solves the problem of Filioque, warning those who in the future will dare to lift it again.

The Eastern Church has permanently sustained the procession of the Holy Spirit only from the Father, based on the words spoken by the Savior, that the Comforter is the Spirit of Truth, who proceeds from the Father (Jn 15, 26). In the aspect of their Godhead, the Three Persons of the Holy Trinity are consubstantial and equal among themselves, but in their personal aspect, the Son and the Holy Spirit have their origin in the Father, One by birth, the Other through procession, because the Father is the Source of the personal unity of the Holy Trinity. Inasmuch as He gives birth to the Son, the Father also proceeds the Holy Spirit to overthrow His fatherly love over the Son through the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit proceeds only from the Father and remains in the Son, for the purpose of the Father's love is the Son. The Holy Spirit is the inner bond between the Father and the Son, Who manifests the Father's love for the Son, but also the Son's love for the Father.

3. Innovation in the Western Church also had repercussions on the Christian Eastern tradition. From an orthodox perspective, papal primacy was the cause of the schism between the Eastern and Western Churches. I first pointed out that the bishops of Rome did not have universal authority in the first eight centuries of the Church. Secondly, they were not then considered to be the center of the unit or as a source of jurisdiction. Thirdly, that he should not have been invested by the divine right with any prerogatives, as successors of St. Peter. If, after the ninth century, they presented with respect to these three claims points contrary to the established and universal doctrine of the first eight centuries; if they pledged to subject the entire Church to their sovereign authority; if it was supposed to be the necessary center of unity and the source of jurisdiction, we must come to the conclusion that they sought to enforce a power they were not entitled to. If these usurpations have caused energetic resistance from the Eastern Church; if the bishops of Rome made recognition of their usurped power a condition for the meeting, it must be understood that the Papacy is the first and directed cause of the division.

4. According to the Roman Catholic Church, purgatory (from the Latin, "Purgare", pure, purification) is a place or condition of temporal punishment for those who have died in a state of grace but are not completely free from smaller defects or have not fully paid satisfaction because of their violations. The punishments in this alleged place are called "purifying fire" (from the Latin, "Purgatoriusignis") from which derives the term "purgatory". The Western Church teaches that the vast majority of believers is less good for heaven and not pretty bad for hell, and so it is tormented in purgatory to be purified and cleaned. This view is rejected by Orthodox theologians for the following reasons: a. Purgatory contradicts the doctrine of atonement and of redemption: The foundation of the doctrine of atonement and redemption is that human beings are totally incapable of satisfying God's Divine Justice, and so God, the only unlimited, has been incarnated and has offered us unlimited atonement and forgiveness. The existence of a place to purify the suffering for believers implies that our Savior's blood was not enough to purify us first. (See 1 John 1: 7-9, Hebrews 7:25, Romans 3:24); b. Purgatory contradicts the good news of the Holy Gospel: The angel told the shepherds, "Do not be afraid, for I bring you the good news of great joy that will be for all men. For today a Savior is born in the city of David, who is Christ the Lord" (Lk 2: 10-11). How should we be glad if the Savior cannot save us from torment and purgatory fire? How should we have a desire to leave and be with the Lord as Paul (Phil. 1, 23), while the flames of purgatory are waiting for us? This explains the paranoid question "Are you saved?" of the Protestants who came out of the Roman Church; c. Purgatory contradicts the righteousness of God: St. Paul said that we "were bought at a price" (1 Cor. 6:20). This price is the precious blood of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ (John 19:30).

The sufferings and torments of this purgatory presuppose that the price of the sins will be paid twice, which is in clear contradiction with divine justice. In addition, according to this doctrine, purgatory is a place of torment of spirits, while bodies are in graves, without feeling anything. This thing also contradicts the Divine Justice because it presupposes the punishment of only the spirit and not of the body that participated with it in the commission of the sin, and may even have been its cause as "the lusts of the body against the Spirit" (Galatians 5:17). Also, how will the spirit that is supposedly cleansed be united with an unseen body on the last day ?;

d. Purgatory contradicts God's Mercy: The Prophet David said, "Cleanse me with hyssop, and I will be clean; wash me and I will be whiter than snow" (Psalm 51, 7). Human nature is not cleansed by fire, but rather by the grace of our merciful God and by the work of His holy spirit. Our Lord said, "Though your sins are like scarlet, they will be as white as snow; though

they are red, they will then be like wool "(Isaiah 1,18). This will not happen through the tormenting flames of the purgatory after leaving this world, but rather through the work of the Holy Spirit in repentance during this present life. "Then I will sprinkle clean water on you and you will be clean; I will cleanse you of all your uncleanness and of all your idols "(Ezekiel 36:25). This is an act of mercy and grace, not of punishment, which takes place here on the earth, not after death, and not by the torture of the flames of fire, but by pure water;

e. Purgatory contradicts God's promises: Through the precious blood of the Lord Jesus Christ and the work of the Holy Spirit in repentance, God forgives our sins and does not remember them: "If an evil man turns away from all his sins ... none of the iniquity which he hath committed shall be remembered against him ... "(Ezekiel 18: 21-22).

Purgatory presupposes that the believers' spirits will have to suffer before going to heaven, even if God promised to forgive and to forget their sins. It is noteworthy that in the parable of the creditor and of the two debtors, whom the Lord Jesus Christ told Simon the Pharisee, the lender "freely forgave" both the debtor, the one who owed five hundred denarius and the one who owed fifty "because they had nothing to reward against "(Luke 7:42);

f. Purgatory contradicts the Holy Scriptures: Our Lord told the thief to be right, "Truly, I tell you that today you will be with Me in heaven" (Luke 23: 43). If this supposed purgatory really exists, why was the thief there? "And the dead in Christ will be raised first. Then we, the living ones, will remain and be captured with them in the clouds to know the Lord in the air. And so we will always be with the Lord "(1 Thess. 4:16, 17). Here St. Paul describes the last day saying that those believers who are still alive will meet the Lord with those who rise from the dead and then always abide in Him. Are these believers exempt from the purgatory? Is God's presence biased towards them? In the story of the rich and of Lazarus (Lk.16,19-31) we read about two places; one for comfort and the other for torment. Moreover, there is a great gap between the two that prevents people from moving from one place to another. Now, where does it say there is such a purgatory?

The Roman Church falsely learns that there is a "special" judgment that takes place after the death in which eternal fate is determined. The wicked will be sent to hell, the saints will be sent to heaven, and most of the faithful will be sent to purgatory to be tormented until they become worthy to enter the heaven. Now, it contradicts the Holy Scripture that confesses that there is one general judgment for the Last Day for all (Matthew 16, 27, 25, 46, John 5: 28-29, Acts 20, 11-15)

The Orthodox teaching about the relationship between God and souls after the individual judgment is characterized by a certain fluidity in which freedom and love retain

their role. Through their prayers, the one from paradise can help those on earth and those in hell; many souls from hell can be freed through the prayers of the saints and of those on the earth, and the automatic purifying mechanism of purgatory does not exist. In contrast to the legal-objective and unstable stability of the state of mind, the Orthodox teaching offers a personal, spiritual and dynamic-shared relationship between God and man and thus between those on earth and all who have left this life. As a result, the state of souls after the individual judgment is incompletely established in a total happiness or unhappiness, and therefore there is a distinction between this state and that after the universal judgment that will make total happiness or unhappiness final. The communication between the living and the left, between the believers on the earth and the saints, is also reflected in the Divine Liturgy.

5. Regarding the unleavened bread, the Roman Catholics claim that the Savior ate the Jewish Passover while eating only unleavened bread, and therefore, they claim, the Eucharistic bread, blessed and divided among the apostles, was unleavened. On the other hand, the doctrinal basis of the Orthodox ecumenical practice with leavened bread is itself the way of Easter was celebrated by Christ, when He established the Holy Eucharist at the Last Supper. At the Last Supper, the Savior did not celebrate the Jewish Passover, which began on the evening of Nisan 14, for the time had not come yet; it was, in fact, on the evening of 13 Nisan, and so it was impossible to eat unleavened bread; the Eucharistic bread was leavened bread and not unleavened. Then there are a number of details that support the use of leavened bread by Christ at the Last Supper. Thus, the washing of the disciples' feet could not have taken place at this Supper if it had been united with the Jewish Passover, for at Easter all had to keep their shoes in feet, having the midst of the torches and the sticks in his hand ready for the journey. Judas the Iscariot wiped dry the plate, whereby it appears that there was liquid food at the table, which was not allowed at Easter.

According to the Jewish custom, no one could leave the house where he had eaten the Easter bread and wine until the next day; or Jude, the Iscariot, being discovered by Jesus, has gone, at night, from the Supper. That night there was no Easter, because Christ comes out with His disciples and goes with them to the Gethsemane Garden to pray, where He will be trapped, being shown to the soldiers by Judas Himself (Mt 26: 48-49). Then the Friday of the Passions and the Death of the Savior was a day of work, Easter Eve.

This is evident from the fact that Simon the Cirene, the one forced to carry the Lord's cross to Golgotha, was returning from the work of the field, and the women carrying the ointment prepare, on the evening of the same Friday, fragrances, knowing that the Lord was buried; and

they do not go to the grave the next day on Saturday, for it was the Jewish Passover, but only on the third morning of Sunday, finding the empty tomb and being told that Christ have risen (Mt., 28: 1-5; Mc., 16, 1-9, Lk., 24, 1-6; 9-10).

But the purpose for which the Eucharist was established also required leavened bread to be used. The Holy Eucharist was ordained for all men, Jews and pagans, and forever, having to share at any time, not only at Easter. And it was natural for the Savior to use the bread, common to all peoples, and not the bread used only by the Jews.

The practice of the early Church was with leavened bread. (Acts 2, 42-46, 20, 7) and the holy apostle Paul (1 Corinthians 11: 21) speaking of the Eucharist or the Communion, call the Eucharistic Bread an *artos*, that is, leavened bread, and not unleavened. The holy fathers and church writers provide us with rich testimonies about the use of leavened bread and pure grape wine in preparing the material for the Eucharistic Sacrifice.

6. The Considerations about the "Great Schism" - as it is known in the religious historiography, the rupture produced in 1054 in the Christian West and East, but with roots that go into the first Christian millennium - outweigh the simple historical evocations. Its effects, the "ecclesiological loss" (the formula belongs to Chr. Yannaras), are massive and can be felt by all Christians until today.

Here comes the essential role of the testimony of Orthodoxy in today's world. The relevance of this confession stems from the fact that the Orthodox Church is the continuator of the integral Church of the early age. But we have to do with an idealized perspective, with the affirmation of an arrogant, unrelated superiority in contemporary society, marked by relativism and tolerance? In our opinion, the answer is negative. The testimonies of those who have met with Orthodoxy can eventually be witnessed, and eventually convert to it, convinced that they return to the true Church of Jesus Christ, his Head. We recall Jaroslav Peliakn, Karl Christian Felmy, Gabriel Bunge, Frank Schaeffer, Philip LeMasters, and others. A common idea that we find in their testimonies of conversion is that it has gradually become a careful study of the Christian sources, and that the act must be regarded as a "homecoming" as a natural act of (re) coming to the unique and true Church of Jesus Christ.