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PHD THESIS

**The missionary dimension of the synods of the
XV-XVII centuries in the Romanian Countries
and the Spanish Kingdom**

– SUMMARY –

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Content

INTRODUCTION	6
1. Argumentation of theme	7
2. The purpose and methods of the research	10
3. The current stage of research	11
4. Limits of the work	12
5. Structure of thesis	13
ABBREVIATIONS	17
I. THE ORTHODOX CHURCH OF THE EAST IN THE FIGHT FOR THE DEFENSE OF THE RIGHT FAITH	18
1. The Orthodox Church and contact with Catholics and Protestants in the XV-XVII centuries	18
1.1. The consequences of the actions taken by the Catholic Church in the Orthodox East	22
1.2. The divisive challenges of Protestant proselytism among the Orthodox	29
2. " <i>Confessions of faith</i> " in the theology of the Orthodox Church	34
2.1. Confessions of Faith in Western Christianity	40
2.2. Confessional attitudes in the Christian East	46
2.2.1. Patriarch Jeremiah II of Constantinople and his answers to the theologians of Tübingen	48
2.2.2. Mitrofan Kritopulos and "Confession of the Eastern Catholic and Apostolic Church" (1625)	56
2.2.3. Confession of (pseudo) Cyril Lucaris	61
2.2.4. The Dosite Patriarch of Jerusalem and the "Pavaza of Orthodoxy"	68
3. Conclusions	71
II. PETRU MOVILA AND HIS POSITION OF THE CONFESSOR	75
1. Biographical information	75
1.1. Family	75
1.2. Studies and experience of the th war	76
1.3. The monk and the abbot	77
1.4. Metropolitan	79
1.5. Founder of educational institutions	80
1.6. Church builder	82
1.7. Politics and diplomacy	83

1.8. Cultural activity	85
1.9. The transition to the eternal and its canonization	90
2. Petru Movilă – apologist of the faith	94
2.1. The Orthodox Confession of Petru Movilă	94
2.2. Petru Movilă, Orthodox saint or Philo-Latin undercover?	104
2.3. Problematic influences in the work of Petru Movilă	110
2.3.1. Petru Movilă and the concept of the state of souls after death (Purgatory)	110
2.3.2. The Honest Gifts and the moment of epiclesis, according to the Confession of Petru Movilă	118
2.3.3. Renewals brought by Petru Movilă to the performance of the Holy Mysteries	121
2.3.4. Petru Movilă and reflections in "Confession" on the jurisdictional primacy of the Pope	124
2.3.5. The positioning of the hierarch Petru Movilă in relation to the Filioque ...	125
2.3.6. The notion of "sin" in the Movilian Confession	128
3. Conclusions	130
III. THE SITUATION OF THE CATHOLIC CHURCH IN THE SPANISH KINGDOM IN THE XV-XVII CENTURIES: INTERNAL PROBLEMS, EXTERNAL CHALLENGES AND MEANS OF ACTION	
133	
1. Panoramic picture of the people and the Catholic clergy from the XV-XVII centuries	134
1.1. The situation of the laity in the Iberian Peninsula	134
1.1.1. Social circumstances	134
1.1.2. Special Social Circumstances: Blacks, Jews and Muslims	136
1.1.3. Political circumstances	138
1.1.4. Economic circumstances	141
1.1.5. Religious circumstances	142
1.2. The situation of the clergy and ecclesiastical crises	144
1.3. Religious orders	150
2. The Catholic Church in the Spanish Kingdom under the influence of external challenges accentuated by Protestant movements	154
2.1. The Protestant Reformation in the West and the means of propagation	154
2.2. The Protestant Reformation in the Kingdom of Spain	155

2.2.1. The first Protestant movements (Albigensians, Waldensians) and their eradication: the persecution of the first Protestants (the de facto beginning of the Catholic Reformation)	156
2.2.2. Penetration of the new reforming ideas inside the Spanish believers	159
3. Actions and means of restoring Christian life within the Catholic Church	161
3.1. Pre-Reformation, Reformation and Counter-Reformation in the Catholic Church	161
3.2. Spiritual reformation	164
3.3. Intellectual and theological reform	167
3.4. Disciplinary and doctrinal reform	169
3.5. The Inquisition in the Kingdom of Spain	171
3.5.1. Persecution of the Jews (conversos or new Christians)	174
3.5.2. Persecution of Muslims (Moriscos)	177
3.5.3. Persecution of blacks	179
3.5.4. Persecution of the Protestant Spaniards	180
4. Conclusions	182
IV. THE EVOLUTION AND DEVELOPMENT OF THE SYNODS IN THE ROMANIAN COUNTRIES AND THE SPANISH KINGDOM IN THE CENTURY. XV-XVII	186
1. Synods, the guarantee of truth in the defense and preaching of the faith	186
1.1. The synodal activity in the Romanian Orthodox Church in the century. XV-XVII	187
1.2. Synod of Iasi (1642)	188
1.2.1. The necessity of organizing this Synod	188
1.2.2. Organization and participants	190
1.2.3. Conduct of synodal work: topics discussed and decisions taken	192
1.2.4. The Iași meeting: Synod or pan-Orthodox conference? Contemporary testimonies.	199
2. The Catholic Church and the synodal system	201
2.1. The papacy and the synodal system	203
2.2. The relationship of the Catholic Church in the Kingdom of Spain with the papacy	204
2.3. The interference of the Spanish monarchs in the life of the Catholic Church and their relationship with the papacy	206
3. Synods and their importance in the life of the Catholic Church in the Spanish Kingdom	213

3.1. Synod meetings in the dynamics of the Church in the Iberian Peninsula	213
3.2. Synods from the XV-XVII century in the Spanish Kingdom	219
3.2.1. Synod of Aranda de Duero, 1473	219
3.2.2. The Synod of Seville, 1478	235
3.2.3. Synod of Alcala de Henares, 1497	236
3.2.4. The Council of Valladolid, 1550-1551	237
3.2.5. Other synods and decisions	238
3.2.6. Black slavery highlighted in synodal constitutions	242
4. Conclusions	243
V. MISSIONARY AND COMPARATIVE STUDY OF THE DOCTRINES OF THE TWO CHURCHES AND THE CURRENT MISSIONARY RELEVANCE	248
1. The impact of the actions undertaken by the two Churches, during the XV-XVII centuries	248
2. The reception of the doctrine of the Church in the faith life of the people through the synods	254
3. The missionary dimension of the synods. Synods - means of restoring the Christian life.	262
4. The mission of the Church in the life of the Romanian and Spanish people of "yesterday" and "today"	269
FINAL CONCLUSIONS	281
APPENDICES	286
BIBLIOGRAPHY	308

INTRODUCTION

Argumentation of the theme

Our thesis falls within the field of Missionary Theology and presents the actions that the Orthodox Church in the Romanian Countries and the Catholic Church in the Spanish Kingdom, through the convened synods, carried out during the XV-XVII centuries, to respond to internal and external challenges, and to he blocked the influences foreign to the teachings of the faith that were increasingly affecting the clergy and the faithful.

In troubled times, the faithful can often feel perplexed and worried, and consequently look closely to the actions of the Church hierarchy for guidance and spiritual support. The leaders of the Church, be they priests, bishops or popes, play an important role in the mission entrusted by the Lord Jesus Christ to lead those shepherded in such difficult times. Christians, as sons of the Church, wait, listen and carefully analyze how the Church carries out its missionary activity at all levels and for all people, taking care that no soul is left behind and lost on the path of salvation. Thus, the position adopted by the members of the hierarchy, through the teachings promoted and the decisions adopted in the synodal works held under the influence of the Holy Spirit, becomes very important (*FA* 15,28). These had to be in accordance with the fundamental values and principles of the faith in order to always provide moral, spiritual guidance and pastoral support to the faithful so that they could remain firm in their faith and act in the spirit of love and goodness.

Through its mission, the Church has the duty to present the teaching of faith through the preaching of Scripture and Holy Tradition, and to protect it from foreign influences propagated through heresies or teachings that contradict authentic Christian ones. The Church must promote unity, compassion, justice and understanding in a coherent and authentic manner and its leaders must be models of moral and spiritual integrity by living in accordance with the teachings they preach, manifesting Christian virtues such as: humility, kindness and love towards the neighbor. A strong and authentic example can inspire and strengthen believers in difficult times. Here are a multitude of aspects that the Church must take care of and provide an answer as clear and comprehensible as possible to Christians through the councils and synods held at the southern-geographic extremities of the "old continent".

The scientific approach of the work results from the desire to analyze the past and look as objectively as possible but also comparatively, from a light devoid of any prejudices, the outstanding personalities of the Church, and not only, -here including those who they directly

influenced the authority or the persons studied - as well as the events that caused them and their consequences in the XV-XVII centuries in the Romanian Countries and in the Spanish Kingdom.

The question arises: did the synods held, their decisions as well as the measures put into practice influence the behavior of believers in a practical way? Has the Church's response to all challenges, internal or external, generated direct repercussions leading to real change? We mean strictly missionary and pastoral theology, not speculative theology, completely removed from the real life of believers. We will analyze how, through the synods, the believer had the opportunity to know, live and preach his faith, to maintain his zeal and inner peace by seeking the love of his neighbor, and to know God and make Him known to others.

The mission of the Church, through the synods, is to facilitate the making of important decisions and to promote unity and correct doctrine within the church community, establishing canonical rules and norms for the life of the Church, and ensuring an orderly and coherent church life. As the title of this work suggests, the Church set out to clarify, establish and formulate its doctrine, adopting official positions and teachings at synodal meetings whose necessity was evident. Synods represent the proper framework for solving problems and controversies, they can address and resolve theological, doctrinal or disciplinary issues and disputes that arise. Through discussions, studies and consultations, we try to find solutions and make decisions in order to preserve unity and truth in the faith, being also the place where dialogue offers the opportunity to discuss and resolve differences and conflicts, thus promoting church unity within a wider communities. Last but not least, the mission of the Church through synods is to express the voice and will of the church community, making decisions on its behalf and acting as representatives of the faithful.

The period chosen for research is between the XV-XVII centuries as it represents the time interval with a multitude of factors and numerous actions in all fields (especially the theological) which imposed, in light of the newest challenges that appeared, naturally, an activity rich and often not easy responsibility of Church members. On the one hand, the 15th century meant for the Spanish Kingdom the end of the reconquest of all territories under the Moors (1492), the missionary journeys of Christopher Columbus, the colonization of the Americas (1492) and the beginning of the Spanish Inquisition (1478). On the other hand, in the Romanian Countries, for a short period, the union of the three Principalities was achieved under a single ruler Michael the Brave (May 27, 1600), so that afterwards, the danger of Habsburg and Ottoman influences was very present. On the religious level, Orthodoxy was marked by the new Protestant influences; of the religious tolerance that offered protection to the various

religious communities, to which was added the powerful united propaganda of the Catholic Church exercised in Eastern Europe.

The reality of the XV-XVII centuries, in the two countries, denotes complex changes and delicate international relations. The Orthodox and Catholic Churches, as a coagulating factor in society, were very closely involved, having to respond and fight for the preservation of identity in the face of foreign influences.

Last but not least, since 2010, serving the community of Romanians located in the northern area of Madrid (the capital of Spain), helped us to make contact not only with the native people but also with the history, culture and spirituality of this country.

Considering these considerations, we titled our research topic: *"The missionary dimension of the synods of the XV-XVII centuries in the Romanian Countries and the Spanish Kingdom"*.

I chose the topic together with Fr. university professor Dr. Mihai Himcinschi, our supervisor, after I had the opportunity to consult with *Miguel Anxo Pena González, academic and professor of Church History and Spirituality at the Pontifical University of Salamanca, to see possible research directions and topics that would include the historical-theological area of both countries and the Church. The impetus for the realization of this work was generated by the intellectual curiosity raised and shaped in the courses of the Faculty of Orthodox Theology in Alba-Iulia, the Pastoral Theology specialization, on the one hand, and the contact with the western civilization of the Iberian Peninsula and with the way of reporting of the Spanish Catholic people to the Church and to the forms of expression of faith, on the other hand. In addition, by the fact that we live here in a predominantly Catholic country, it gives us the opportunity to go beyond the level of theoretical knowledge about the Church and the Catholic people, and to reach, thanks to the relationships and direct connections we have with the laity and members of the Catholic Church, clergy and believers, let's see the faith manifested in the concrete way.*

The idea from which we started was to carry out a missionary and comparative study of the doctrines of the two Churches and to see, both for the Catholic Church in the Spanish Kingdom and for the Orthodox Church in the Romanian Countries, the common things existing then and now, and in what so they could be fruitful in a dialogue and a current joint mission. We believe that the way the members of the Church acted in those times through the organized synods, the decisions taken and their transposition into the practical life of the ordinary believer, represents a model for us today, who are faced with new and new challenges apparently foreign to the spirit Christian but which ultimately affects the very way of life.

This research is intended to be original and add value to Romanian research as it represents an interesting journey in understanding and appreciating the differences and similarities between the two Christian traditions. We also want to be a comparative study on how Romanians live the Orthodox faith and Spaniards the Catholic faith, by addressing different aspects of religious practices, cultural values and social influences.

The purpose and methods of the research

By writing this work, we aim to be a contribution that will enrich the knowledge about the Churches in the two countries, the synodal activity and its implications among the faithful. We also intend it to be a kind of guide for studying themes and discovering new commonalities. We sincerely hope that, when the time comes for projects similar to this, future researchers will find no greater difficulties in dealing with these periods than we have (though there are still symptoms of fear that it might happen) and this paper should be as useful as possible for posterity.

In our research we aim to analyze contemporary historical documents in order to capture the echoes caused by the synods that met in the Romanian Lands and in the Spanish Kingdom more than three centuries ago. We will try to discover whether there were, within the two Churches, common points or even common meetings in terms of the ways of action against the Protestant challenges and the consequences of all the measures taken. We would like to observe, for the universal church historiography, the role manifested by the hierarchical, theological and political personalities involved in the synodal activities of the two Churches as well as the effectiveness of the results obtained.

As a goal, when preparing this research, we first have in mind the historical perspective, in the sense of obtaining a deeper perception of the historical context, the reasons and the events that led to the convening of the synods. We will also highlight the admirable, enthusiastic states of mind experienced by the personalities who played a key role in the development of these events, people with a strong ecclesial conscience and overflowing mobilizing role. Next, we focus on theological analysis, since synods usually involve theological discussions and debates on topics important to a particular church or religious community. One aim of the research is to analyze and evaluate the arguments and theological positions expressed within these synods.

Then, we want to see the study of their impact from a missionary point of view, since synods can have a significant impact on the Church or religious community within which they are organized. An objective of the research will be to examine this impact of the synods on the doctrine, structure, culture and internal and external relations of the two Churches.

In terms of research methods, one of the most important research methods is the analysis of declarations, reports drawn up during the synods and, above all, the resulting rulings and official acts. Today, we are left with only the documentary, archaeological, artistic and other sources. In principle, any news or evidence that reliably refers to the Middle Ages can be considered a source, but it is necessary to know how to interpret it. These documents can provide essential information about the topics discussed, arguments, decisions made and the general context of synodal meetings. For this, I have chosen, as the main sources, the information regarding the synods of different bishoprics in the Kingdom of Spain and in the Romanian Countries out of the desire to analyze how the transmission of the teaching of faith was achieved through the councils and episcopal synods, as well as their effect on popular religiosity.

Another source of documentation is the testimonies and interviews with synod participants and eyewitnesses. These are a valuable method of gaining direct insights into the conduct of the synods and what was decided as they can provide us with additional information about the discussions held by the synod members, the decision-making process and the impact of what was decided. Also as a research method we add historical analysis, which can be used to examine the context and events that led to the convening of the synods and their long-term consequences. This approach involves the investigation of historical sources, their interpretation and critical analysis. Last but not least, we will use the analogy with other similar synods in history. In this sense, research may involve comparing the conduct, decisions and impact of the synods in question with other synods. This approach will highlight differences and similarities, helping to gain a deeper understanding of the peculiarities of the studied synods.

The current state of research

In some decades of the 15th-16th centuries in the Spanish Kingdom as well as the 17th century in the Romanian Lands, the events and characters of the era exerted a strong attraction on scholars of church history a few decades ago reflected in the abundance of extant writings today, helping in the research method of the respective periods.

The abundance of existing resources is a factor that, despite its obvious advantages, can have risks, especially when specialist knowledge is added regarding some topics, because then analysis prevails over synthesis, which is considered ideal in this kind of exposition. We have faced this difficulty and readers will say whether we have managed to find the balance in the most appropriate way when it has been overcome. The analysis makes certain repetitions

inevitable in parts dealing with similar arguments, and sometimes makes it difficult to link new or unstudied topics with equal competence over a whole period into an overall view.

Regarding the research approach on the Orthodox Confessions of Faith, on the Synod of Iași from 1642 and, implicitly, the personality of Petru Movilă, there are many writings by researchers from different areas and varied fields, not only theologians, due to the impact of the work his which was an enormous one. *The confession of faith* composed by Petru Movilă and the works of the Synod of Iași in 1642, aroused the interest of many. Regarding the Catholic Church in the Spanish Kingdom and the councils that took place, there is also a rich bibliography. This is natural because the Protestant phenomenon and, above all, that of the Inquisition have aroused great interest. On a political -social level, the reconquest of the territories under the Arabs (known as the *Reconquista*), the discovery of the Americas , the expeditions and the colonizing process represented achievements of great importance, being studied and analyzed from multiple perspectives.

Instead, we note that this research is among the few (if there is any other work that we are not aware of until now) that aims to address, based on the doctrinal points debated in the synods held in the XV-XVII centuries in The Romanian Countries and the Spanish Kingdom, their actuality and the common elements that highlight, within the framework of the two Churches, the essential concern: the unity of faith. Was there any intention of help between the two Churches or any common front of theirs towards Protestantism? We consider the novelty of our work to be as useful and interesting as possible, but also a starting point for the discovery of other common aspects existing between the two Christian and Latin peoples.

The content of the work

Chapter I begins by describing the efforts of the Eastern Orthodox Church to maintain Byzantine theology and tradition in a Europe divided between a Catholic West that was expanding more and more towards the east, and the Orthodox East that was forced to face a triple assault caused by the influences Catholicism, Protestant proselytism and conquering Islam. The first part describes the actions of the Catholic Church in the Eastern part of Europe, through which Orthodoxy had to face the policies aggressively manifested by the union of Brest and which resulted in the establishment of united churches.

We then expose the presence of orders and Catholic missionary organizations (the Jesuit order and *the Congregatio de Propagandae Fide*) , which had the responsibility to coordinate and promote the missionary and proselytizing activities of the Church throughout the world, and the Catholicization policies developed through the catechisms of faith, the most used and known being the Catechism of Peter Canisius (1555) and the Roman Catechism (1566)).

Then, we present the Calvinist Protestant influences from Eastern Europe and the Romanian Countries, especially Transylvania, and its impact on culture, education, social and religious life. All this had a doctrinal impact and required the reaction of the Orthodox Church. This reaction materialized through the confessions of faith and through the synods convened to analyze and approve them.

In the second part of this chapter, we refer to the emergence of *Confessions of Faith*, a new concept in the realization of inter-Christian dialogue. We begin by describing the most important and influential Catholic and Protestant confessions of faith existing in the Western Church and in Western countries. We will continue by analyzing Eastern doctrinal documents, wanting to show the way in which the Orthodox Church finds the right way to respond to doctrinal influences and challenges. The ones we will present are: *Patriarch Jeremiah II of Constantinople and his answers to the theologians of Tübingen*, *Mitrofan Kritopulos and "Confession of the Eastern Catholic and Apostolic Church"*, *The Confession of (pseudo) Cyril Lucaris*, and *the Dosite Patriarch of Jerusalem and "Paveza of Orthodoxy"*. In terms of our research, we present these *confessions of faith* to show their role and practicality. The Church, through synods, analyzed the confessions of faith, corrected them (where appropriate) and approved them.

In this chapter we wanted to research the way in which the Orthodox Church reacted to Catholic and Protestant influences from the XV-XVII centuries. We started from the realities faced by the Orthodox Church and we observe that it adapted to the challenges of those times and found the right answer by drawing up confessions of faith. These proved more practical than could have been expected as they proved to be pillars of guidance regarding essential teachings and traditions, and helped to recreate unity within the Church.

The importance of *the Orthodox confessions of faith* lies in the fact that they represented a concrete attitude of positioning in moments of urgent need for the Church, through the intervention of hierarchs, rulers, theologians and enlightened people. In their composition, quotes from the Holy Scriptures and the Holy Fathers of the Church were used, which denotes the theological acrimony but also the desire not to deviate from the revealed Truth.

The Orthodox Church did not remain untouched by the existing Catholic and Protestant influences during the 16th-17th centuries, but we noticed that every time it managed, through prominent hierarchs and theologians, to take a stand and defend the truth of faith received as an inheritance and on further left as unaltered as possible from any injurious influence.

Summarizing what was presented in this chapter, we can say that during its existence, the Orthodox Church was often in contact with other Christian denominations. Throughout history, there have been attempts to convert or influence the Orthodox faith through Uniatism

propaganda and Protestant propaganda. Uniatism, this movement of reconciliation and reunion between the Catholic Church and some Eastern Orthodox Churches, in which the Orthodox Church would recognize papal authority, had many incisive tendencies through many attempts to convert Orthodox believers to Catholicism. During the Protestant Reformation of the 16th century efforts were made to promote Protestant ideas and to attract orthodox believers to Protestantism. This happened especially in areas where Orthodox and Protestant influence intersected. However, the Orthodox Church has always had a strong sense of identity and has steadfastly rejected attempts to be swayed by propaganda or fundamentally change. It traditionally preserved its faith and traditions, basing itself on the teachings of Holy Scripture, Holy Traditions and the teaching of the Church Fathers.

The influences of Protestant proselytizing in Eastern Europe in the 16th century were significant and led to the spread of the Reformation in the region. The Hungarian reform and the political support of some leaders played an important role in this process. But the attempts of Catholics and Protestants to "tear the shirt of Christ", by dividing what was wanted to be in the bosom of the ancestral Church, met with the resistance of the orthodox hierarchs and priests who, through sermons, spiritual, social and cultural work, knew to keep the faithful close.

Just as the Ottoman threat ignited even stronger the love of country in the hearts of the Romanians, so in the case of faith, the Catholic and Protestant maneuvers will have favorable consequences by awakening in the soul and conscience the sense of love for God and neighbor. The influences of Protestant proselytism in Eastern Europe also encountered resistance as the Catholic Church responded to the spread of Protestantism through the Counter-Reformation, a process of internal reform aimed at revitalizing and strengthening the Catholic Church, and the Orthodox Church played an important role that led to rejecting Protestant influences and maintaining its traditions in Eastern Europe.

Wallachia and Moldova arrive to guard against Protestant actions not only Transylvanian Orthodoxy but even ecumenical Orthodoxy. Both Protestants and Islamists tried to take advantage of any misunderstanding between the two Churches, and the solution only came when there was solidarity and a sincere desire for consensus in keeping the faith unaltered and free from any kind of changes or interpretations according to the human mind.

Even if in certain situations there are sporadic heterodox influences, their authors did not want to propose a new form of Christianity, but, on the contrary, to give proof of sacred preservation of the truth revealed in the Scriptures and those received through the Holy Tradition. Therefore, they were not constituted as a new teaching to replace the previous ones, but were used for a better highlighting of what already existed and was lived: the unchanging faith in Christ the Lord received through the Holy Apostles and lived by the early Church.

The observed existence of some less positive parts, consequences of multiple influences foreign to Orthodoxy, referred either to the assimilation of some Latin terms, or to the way the writing was composed and presented. The novelty of certain expressions or terms used did not mean the desire to produce any doctrinal innovation but the aspiration to formulate the teaching of faith in the terms of those times but faithfully preserving the patristic tradition.

We cannot overlook the historical and political context experienced by the Orthodox Church under the Ottoman Empire, the need to establish some theological schools to prepare future ministers so that they no longer have to learn at Western schools. "But despite these hardships and extraordinary pressures exerted on it by the Western powers, the Orthodox Church had the ability to respond and face the challenges"¹.

The Orthodox Confessions of Faith were of fundamental importance in the history of the Eastern Church and played an essential role in living and perpetuating the right faith through: the *stability and continuity of the faith*, for they provided a clear and concise formulation of the Orthodox faith, thus ensuring the unity and continuity of faith; fighting *heresies and wrong teachings*, because through them the fundamental truths of the faith were clarified and protected against these wrong teachings; *spiritual and moral orientation* by providing a theological and moral framework, through which believers can guide their spiritual life and their *conscience is strengthened in the face of all theological innovations*; *the basis of the ecumenical dialogue* since they were an essential tool in the dialogue and interaction of the Orthodox Church with other Christian denominations. Even if the union between the confessions was not reached, *the confessions* contributed a lot to the opening and development of the inter-confessional dialogue; *the transmission of the faith to the next generations*, by providing a solid and clear basis for learning and understanding the Orthodox faith, ensuring the continuity and preservation of the Orthodox identity in Christian communities and families.

In conclusion, the Orthodox confessions of faith proved their importance because they contributed to the stability and continuity of the Orthodox faith, protected the faith against wrong teachings, provided spiritual and moral guidance, facilitated ecumenical dialogue and ensured the transmission of the faith to future generations.

The Orthodox confessions of faith arose from a confessed identity crisis through which the Orthodox identity was defined. By means of confessions of faith the Orthodox Church managed to preserve its integrity and remain faithful to its teachings and traditions when it was in contact with various influences and propaganda.

¹ Ioan ICĂ, „Discuții mai noi asupra unor probleme mai vechi în jurul Mărturisirilor de credință”, în *Logos*, Edit. Renașterea, Cluj Napoca, 2001, pp.313-314.

I dedicated the second chapter to the creation of the biographical profile of Saint Metropolitan Petru Movilă. We have included the essential biographical elements related to family, studies, entry into monasticism, election as abbot and then metropolitan, after which we present his rich activity through the establishment of educational institutions, the foundation of churches, cultural works; and at the end we will address the political -diplomatic part, its public end and the aspects related to its canonization. After the biographical picture, we will expose his main work, *Confession of Faith*, and dwell on the points that are considered problematic in his work: the concept of the state of souls after death (Purgatory); The honest gifts and the moment of epiclesis; the renewals brought by Petru Movilă to the performance of the Holy Mysteries; reflections in *the Confession* on the jurisdictional primacy of the Pope; its positioning in relation to the Filioque addition, and the notion of sin in the Movilian Confession. We are making this exhibition because Petru Movilă, through his personality and writing, represents the generating factor of the synodal event in Iași (1642).

This chapter expressly focused on Petru Movilă and we aimed to highlight his essential biographical features as well as the analysis of the *Confession of Faith* that consecrated him. I have presented both the bright and the darkest parts contained in his work because the Synod of Iași (1642) had Petru Movilă in mind expressly to correct him in the text of *the Confession* composed by him.

Son of a Moldavian, with strong Romanian origins that were reflected in his conscience and experience, Polish nobleman and Orthodox bishop of Ukraine, Petru Movilă defended his nation, faith and culture. Although he lived most of his life outside his native lands, Petru Movilă never renounced or forgot his ancestral origins, maintaining close religious and cultural relations with Moldova and Wallachia and keeping in touch with realities, not easy, through which his race passed.

We saw that, adapting to the style, means and context that Metropolitan Petru Movilă had, lived or created, he was aware of the living reality of his times, the Orthodox faith in Eastern Europe. Thus, he managed to face the challenges to which the faith was subjected, defending his soul and the faith of the nation from the phenomenon of uniatism. Through his life and activity, he continued to give himself to the entire Christian East because through his efforts, Orthodoxy was not only maintained, but even reborn. We can consider him the generating factor of the Orthodox revival after the Brest-Litovsk moment and the source of the return of many people seized by Uniatism.

Its cultural and spiritual heritage remains an important part of Moldovan identity to this day. In addition to his religious activity, Petru Movilă also had a significant political and diplomatic role. He was involved in negotiations with Moldovan lords and foreign political

leaders, fighting for the interests of Moldova and the Orthodox Church. He was also a supporter of the union with Poland and acted as an intermediary between Moldova and the Polish authorities. Cultural and spiritual impact emerges from his initiatives in the field of education and culture, Petru Movilă contributing to the creation of a strong cultural identity in Moldova. He promoted the study of the Slavonic and Romanian language and literature, supported the activity of copying and translating books and contributed to the appearance of important cultural and religious personalities in the region.

Petru Movilă achieved an extraordinary thing by taking from the disputes with the other denominations those elements or aspects that valued the Orthodox faith even more, at the same time leaving room for reconciling dialogue. He rebelled against proselytizing propaganda and even though there are Catholic influences and scholastic theology, he remained deeply orthodox. Petru Movilă was a remarkable personality, who played an essential role in the national history of Ukraine, Poland, Moldova, but also in the annals of the Orthodox Church.

The confession of the hierarch Petru Movilă was a genuine correction of the faith, written for the benefit and learning of the righteous people who were faced with many influences foreign to Orthodoxy, coming from the Catholic and Protestant channels, being more than necessary in the formation of future preachers of the faith, servants of the Church, and serving the laity as a support in knowledge and deepening of soul experiences. The preaching of the faith was and is still very topical today, since the catechizing of the people is not an optional activity but must represent a continuous approach of the Church through its ministers and members.

The importance of Petru Movilă's Confession of Faith is all the greater as it came to the support of the faithful in times when the Orthodox Church was living and being crushed by both internal crises and fierce heterodox attacks and, whoever would have taken a firm stand for solving in these critical situations he exposed himself, consciously or not, to some mistakes which, in substance and after all, are far inferior to the ultimate goal: the confession of the Orthodox faith regardless of times or trials. For the Orthodox believers it served the authenticity of living the faith and for the heterodox it was a benchmark to evaluate the Orthodox faith not according to their own opinions or prejudices, but according to a catechetical work.

"As for the extent and limits of these Western influences, it has been shown that in most cases they refer only to the means and form of exposition of the Orthodox teaching, not to the substance itself [...] none of them was exerted on the Orthodox Church and its dogmas, but on theology and its representatives; they have not penetrated the center and background of the Orthodox faith, but are external, peripheral and superficial, referring more to the formulation

of phrases" ². In this sense, it was not so much the doctrine that was wrong as the choice of language through which the doctrine was expressed. Orthodox theologians today, such as the late Bishop Kallistos Ware, consider the Confession of Petru Movilă to be "generally considered acceptable" ³ and, looking back, we conclude that its impact among the faithful was unparalleled in that era.

It is important to note that these teachings and theological convictions of Petru Movilă were discussed and criticized in the wider context of Orthodox theology and tradition, and Petru Movilă's position was an individual point of view and did not become unanimously accepted throughout the Church Orthodox. As evidence that at no time did he challenge any ruling that was against those aspects of the Confession that were less orthodox in expression.

Metropolitan Petru Movilă showed an activity with fruitful results in the multitude of situations, both in the spiritual, pastoral missionary and theological-doctrinal plane, giving firm and useful answers to all those who had to face the propaganda coming from Catholics or Protestants.

I noticed that his personality was not spared from involvement in many polemical, even critical discussions, being seen as a symbol of many evils that appeared in his era in terms of the organization of education and his work, as one that favored and developed the westernization of the East. In relation to this aspect, without considering to be wrong, we join and subscribe to the opinion of the researcher Margarita Korzo, who in one of her works, ⁴ declares: "with a large margin of probability, it can be assumed that Petru Movilă appealed to the experience of the West in the systematization of the theological material, because the tradition that led to the Greek patristics of theology gave less possibilities for the systematization and unification of teaching and liturgical practice" ⁵.

Petru Movilă fully understood his mission entrusted by God and therefore, in order to defend and promote the Church in all its directions of manifestation, "ad intra" and "ad extra", he considered it imperative to carry out reforms in all these aspects. He resided, literally and "figuratively", from the foundations of the Church in this part of Europe, being an important providential religious leader, who supported the organization and reformation of the Church at a time when it was faced with multiple political and religious challenges. Therefore, Petru

² Grigore Dinu MOȘ, *Ortodoxie și Occident. Problema influențelor eterodoxe în teologia ortodoxă*, Edit. Renașterea, Cluj Napoca, 2013, p.256.

³ Timothy WARE (Bishop Kallistos of Diokleia), *The Orthodox Church*, Penguin Books, New York, 1997, p.97.

⁴See: Margarita KORZO, „Prawosławne wyznanie wiary Piotra Mohyły. Kilka uwag w sprawie wpływów zachodnich na teologię kijowską”, *Odrodzenie i Reformacja w Polsce*, Nr.46 (2002), pp.141-149.

⁵ Egumen Silvestru (STOICEV), „Problema influențelor apusene din moștenirea teologică a Sfântului Ierarh Petru Movilă în lucrările cercetătorilor ruși”, in vol. *Mărturisirea de credință, locul și rolul ei în tradiția Bisericii Ortodoxe*, Edit. Doxologia, Iași, 2013, p.121.

Movilă made a significant contribution to the life of the Orthodox Church by promoting theological education, strengthening church institutions, promoting culture and interfaith dialogue

In conclusion, Petru Movilă was a powerful religious leader, an outstanding educator and theologian, as well as a diplomat and mediator during a tumultuous period in Ukrainian history. His legacy continues to influence and inspire the Orthodox community even today. In European culture, Petru Movilă and *the Orthodox Confession of the universal and apostolic faith of the Eastern Church* have built a special place for themselves, an aspect not to be neglected and recognized not only by his followers but also by those with a more critical eye. Even Georges Florovsky recognizes the extremely important role and enormous contribution of Petru Movilă when he says: "an entire era in the history of the Russian Church bears his name: the era of Movilă" ⁶.

I dedicated Chapter III to the Catholic Church in general and to the one in Spain in particular, with aspects related to the internal and external problems it faced. We will present in the first part of this chapter the situation of the laity, with all the circumstances: social, political, economic and religious; and then we examine the situation of the clergy, the existing ecclesiastical crises, the religious orders and their role. In the second part of this chapter we will take a look at the external influences occasioned by the Protestant challenges, analyzing *the causality and modality* of the reforming phenomenon in the Iberian Peninsula; and in the last part, the third, we will deal with what were the actions and means of restoring the Christian life inside the Catholic Church, through all the reforming movements undertaken before the Protestant reformation, during it and after it. We will see that this reforming movement was carried out on several levels (spiritual, intellectual and theological, disciplinary and doctrinal) and with resounding echoes were the actions carried out in the Spanish Kingdom through the Spanish inquisitorial phenomenon manifested on Jews, Muslims, blacks and Protestant Spaniards. The end of this chapter contains some findings regarding the connection between the Spanish Inquisition and the Catholic Church in the Spanish Kingdom, with echoes in contemporaneity.

In this chapter we wanted to highlight the situation of the Catholic Church with the internal and external challenges that arose and that demanded prompt and precise answers. The Pre-Reformation, the Catholic Reformation and then the Counter-Reformation, were a major response of the Catholic Church to the Protestant Reformation movement that arose in the 16th

⁶ Georges FLOROVSKY, „Ways of Russian Theology”, V.1, în *Collected Works of Georges Florovsky, Emeritus Professor of Eastern Church History*, Harvard University, Norland Publishing Company, Belmont, Massachusetts, 1979, p.64.

century. In the Kingdom of Spain, this period was marked by a revitalization of religious fervor, the persecution of minority religious groups, and the assertion of papal authority. **All the reforms in the Catholic Church proposed a religious revitalization**, bringing a renewal of spirituality and religious life in Spain. It was a period of flourishing religious art and literature, the growth of monastic orders such as the Jesuits and Carmelites, and the growth of popular devotion.

We note that there was a Catholic reform that changed the face of Catholicism and Catholic countries. We note that confessionalization processes were common throughout Europe: indoctrination, moral vigilance, and the improvement of ecclesiastical structures. We confirm that the popularized idea that supports the emergence of capitalism in Protestant countries due to the Reformation must be nuanced, because it was multifactorial and, if there is a significant element, it is that of vocation, that of developing a culture, of significantly different work.

Some of the actions of the Catholic Church were hit by the interference of the political factor, especially the inquisitorial phenomenon, leading to unimaginable situations. In the Spanish Kingdom, through the involvement of the Iberian monarchs, the papacy escaped the control of the Inquisition and, after a period of three centuries from the Papal Inquisition, a paradigm shift took place reaching, through the control of the Spanish Inquisition exclusively by the Spanish Catholic Kings, to disastrous consequences.

The Spanish Inquisition was the harshest of all existing inquisitorial systems. The exaggerations reached in many cases meant that not only the spiritual factor (invoked at the origin) was taken into account, but also other political or social factors. Although acting in the name of the defense of the Catholic faith, in the case of the Spanish Inquisition, even the papacy itself had come to be limited in its involvement in the judgments of the inquisitor, which demonstrates the fact that, unlike other Inquisitions of the time, the Spanish Inquisition differentiated itself from the Catholic Church.

Thus, this period was marked by an intensification of religious persecution through the Spanish Inquisition, which played a central role in this persecution, hunting down and punishing heretics, including Jewish and Muslim converts, blacks and, at a later stage, Protestant Spanish. Following conversion pressures and persecution, Spain expelled the Jews in 1492 and the Moors in 1609. These acts of expulsion had major demographic and economic consequences for Spain.

During this period, the Catholic Church sought to reassert its authority in the face of challenges posed by the Protestant Reformation movement. This involved a series of reforms

within the church, such as the Council of Trent, which redefined many Catholic doctrines and practices, setting new standards of education for priests.

As a global impact, during this period Spain became an important player in the spread of Catholicism in the world, especially in its colonies in the Americas and Asia, and the religious reforms thus had a significant global impact through Spanish imperial expansion.

Even if "Spain was the only European country that had a national institution dedicated to the eradication of heresy"⁷ and the interests of both institutions intersected in the same common point called political ambition, we must not forget a very important aspect, namely: the Church means much more than the Inquisition and the inquisitors are not only of the Church but much more; for example, the phenomenon of burning witches at the stake also occurred in non-Catholic countries. Objectively speaking, even during the Inquisition, the actions of the Catholic Church continued to be exercised on a spiritual, social, educational level, being close to the faithful sons. We mention this because due to a more or less intentional misrepresentation, either out of ignorance or out of bad faith, there is a tendency to hold the Catholic Church responsible for all the crimes of history, a kind of giant Inquisition⁸. Yes, injustices were committed and for many of them the Catholic Church, recognizing them, asked for forgiveness⁹.

Was the much-feared Spanish Inquisition really the work of the Catholic Church? How guilty was the Catholic Church? We notice that when this aspect is approached, on the one hand, there is a "silence and bowing of the head" response, and on the other hand, historians point the finger at the Church (Catholic, but not only), showing Christianity as the culprit.

Were the people of the Catholic Church really the mentors of this Spanish Inquisition?

Wasn't it the State, in the person of the Spanish King, who was helped by the Catholic Church and the execution, the burning at the stake, the killing, was no longer the part of the Church, but was carried out by the State? Death at the stake was ordered by the Kings. In the Spanish Kingdom, the inquisitor general obeyed the King and the papal power was, in the same way, undermined by the Iberian monarch. Indeed, the Catholic Church carried out the investigation and analysis of the cases, and it has its share of the blame because it should not

⁷ Henry [KAMEN](#), *La Inquisición Española. Una revisión histórica* (3ª edición), Barcelona, 2011, p.93.

⁸ For example, even by the least knowledgeable of history, the Catholic Church is fervently accused of torturing and killing the famous scientist Galileo Galilei through the Inquisition; this is completely untrue. Galileo Galilei was accused and condemned by the Inquisition as a heretic for espousing his ideas on heliocentrism, but he was neither tortured nor killed, but died at home under house arrest.

⁹ See: <https://www.descopera.ro/istorie/13969903-omul-care-a-cerut-iertare-pentru-pacatele-bisericii-catolice-dis-cursul-istoric-al-papei-ioan-paul-al-ii>, accessed on August 3, 2023; <https://www.stiripesurse.ro/in-portugalia-biserica-catolica-isi-cere-iertare-pentru-preotii-si-episcopii-pedofili-si-homosexuali-mii-de-copii-au-fost-violati-2818020.html>, accessed on August 3, 2023; <https://www.catholica.ro/2022/04/25/biserica-din-spania-cere-din-nou-iertare-pentru-abuzuri-sexuale/>, accessed on August 3, 2023.

have been involved in this trial process if it knew that after the sentencing there was no chance for repentance for the condemned, only execution. The religion of agapic love in no way permits one's death; Christ died and that is enough!

It is the great fault of the Catholics; involvement in the Spanish Inquisition as judges. They were to stand aside and, regardless of the consequences, preach repentance and forgiveness to the world, showing the face of love and not hatred. Precisely because of this aspect, the world blames the investigation, the trial and the execution on the Catholic Church.

But they didn't act like that and that meant until today one of the accusations (along with the crusades) that led to the secularization of Spain. One of the causes of the accelerated secularization among the Spanish people is also this: the presentation of an Inquisition, of a religious violence whose sole author is the Catholic Church. The Church is not entirely to blame. The church did not kill anyone, but it gave sentences, which makes it partaker. Sentencing should not have been reached as it was well known that the consequences were the death sentence.

It is very superficial to look only from this point of view at the Church (be it Catholic), and accuse it. Following the same reasoning we think: What are we doing today? What will we say about our century? The Inquisition remains very small compared to the genocides of our time. How can we blame those who lived in another century for their crimes, if we ourselves accept today's massacre of millions of innocent children who are not brought to life?

In other words, even if the inquisitors were members of the Catholic Church, they, through their acts, did not represent the entire Catholic Church, but were under the control of the Royal Court. Making a parallel with we can say that, as *the Confessions of Faith* drawn up by the hierarchs, theologians of the Orthodox Church, did not involve the whole Church until after they were discussed and approved by the Synods of the Church, and if they were not approved, the mistake to the author it did not affect the entire Church, we can consider that this example can be extrapolated to the Spanish inquisitorial phenomenon.

Lastly, we note that in none of the synods held in the Spanish Kingdom was the question of the Inquisition raised. This is because it was in the attributions of the Kings who, it is true, appointed inquisitors from among the members of the Church; but the Church as a whole was not mixed, but only certain members, even when we are talking about important people (Catholic archbishops).

During these councils, discussions had focused mainly on matters of faith, doctrine, church organization, and matters of morality and discipline.

In Chapter IV we present the evolution and conduct of the synods in the Romanian Countries and the Spanish Kingdom during the XV-XVII centuries. In the first part of this

chapter, we will address the theme of synods in the Romanian Orthodox Church, after which, in more detail, we will stop at the Synod of Iași from 1642 and all that it meant as a necessity, organization, participants, carrying out the works and the decisions taken. Then we continue with the presentation of the relationship between the papacy and the synodal system in the Catholic Church, the relationship of the Spanish church with the papacy and we emphasize the interference of the Spanish monarchs in the life of the Catholic Church and their relationship with the papacy. It is of great importance to know these ecclesiastical realities in order to understand not only superficially but as deeply as possible the motivation, achievement and consequences of these synods in the life of the Church, the monarchy (in the case of the Spanish Kingdom) and the ordinary believers. In the third part, we will want to describe the synodal meetings in the dynamics of the Church in the Spanish Kingdom, and present some synods of greater importance in terms of those who participated, the topics discussed and the decisions adopted. At the end of this chapter we will describe in conclusions the ways in which we observed that the two Churches reacted in order to stop foreign influences and the consequences of these actions .

In this chapter, we aimed at the historical understanding of the held synods, in order to obtain a deeper understanding of the historical context, the reasons and the events that led to their convening, also highlighting the admirable, enthusiastic states of mind experienced by the personalities with a leading role in the development of these events, people with an ecclesial conscience powerful and overflowing mobilizing role.

On the other hand, we focused on the theological analysis, since the synods involved, through the lens of challenges foreign to faith, theological discussions and debates on important topics for a certain church or religious community. As the aim of the research, we proposed, analyzed and evaluated the theological arguments and positions expressed within these synods. I presented the synodal activity in both Churches, as an organized form of responding to the influences exerted by various factors.

The Orthodox Church, through its hierarchies, both at the private and synodal level, found the confessions of faith from the 16th-17th centuries as a way of responding to the preservation of the faith. These are valuable works from every point of view and were the fruit of the unceasing effort to defend the Orthodox faith in the face of Catholic and Protestant influences. Thus, the traditional line was maintained and the teaching received as an inheritance from our Savior Jesus Christ and the Holy Apostles was preserved as clearly as possible.

For peace and to avoid any mistakes, the confessions of faith were researched by the leadership of the Church, local and not only, before being exposed to Christians, both for verification and to strengthen the principle of sobornicity and infallibility of the Orthodox

Church . As an example, the Synod of Iași was the first in which the members of several Orthodox churches gathered and established, by approving the confession of the hierarch Petru Movilă, the truth in which the children of the church should live cleanly and without the heterodox influences of the time.

Even if, in certain situations, forced by circumstances, limitations or inabilities, the authors of these confessions of faith impregnated some human element in the clarifying exposition of the teaching of faith, this was not at all desirable. On the contrary, as soon as they were submitted to the investigation and approval of the Church by the synods convened in this sense, everything that was erroneous was corrected or eliminated. Its escapades can be seen through the great desire to defend the Orthodox doctrine from the strong Protestant attacks, from the wave of Calvinization or other confessions outside Orthodoxy.

For peace and to avoid any mistakes, the confessions of faith were researched by the leadership of the Church, local and not only, before being exposed to Christians, both for verification and to strengthen the principle of sobornicity and infallibility of the Orthodox Church. As an example, the Synod of Iași in 1642 was the first in which the members of several Orthodox churches gathered, establishing, by approving the confession of the hierarch Petru Movilă, the truth in which the sons of the Church could live cleanly and without the heterodox influences of the time.

The importance of the Confessions of Faith is all the greater as they came to the support of the faithful in times when the Orthodox Church was living and being crushed by both internal crises and fierce heterodox attacks, and anyone who would have taken a firm stance to resolve these critical situations was exposing himself, consciously or not, of mistakes which, in essence and after all, are far inferior to the ultimate goal: the confession of the Orthodox faith with face and without face regardless of times or trials. Among the synods gathered in the 17th century in the Church of the East, the one in Iași in 1642 has a special importance because it was not only local but crossed political borders through the representativeness of those present, and preserved the teaching of faith in unity.

During the Iași Synod of 1642, through the analyzed Confession of Faith, Petru Movilă justifies and defends the Orthodox position unequivocally. The synodal meeting in Iași in 1642 was also a clash between Greek theology (represented by Meletie Sirigul) and Russian theology (delegates of the Ukrainian Church), on Romanian territory. Now " light has been shed " regarding the work of the hierarch Petru Movilă, but it did not in any way represent the condemnation or " putting him on the wall " (as wrongly as it would be understood from the attitude of the Greek delegation). At the Synod, what was not in full agreement with the Orthodox teaching was corrected and what resulted became a work that, later, proved its

usefulness by being widely spread and used. So, the Synod of Iași in 1642, even if from the point of view of some it implies that it expressly had in mind the personality of Petru Movilă, - in order to correct him -, basically represented the canonical and practical method by which the Church confessed and defined the identity in front of the Protestant movement, first of all, but also of the Catholic doctrine. In this period of confessional disputes but also of confessionalization through the reforms undertaken, the Orthodox Church remains steadfast, "pillar and foundation of the truth" (*1 Tim 3, 15*).

We conclude that the Synod of Iași in 1642 was an important religious event, with a significant impact on the Orthodox Church, and with all the difficulties encountered or shortcomings, it remains in the history of the Eastern Church a reference point in the missionary approach to the pastoral dimension of the Church, a model of action perfectly assumed in spite of all difficulties of any kind and coming from any person. And, as in any thing or work the person is involved, in those times Petru Movilă demonstrated that he was the *right man in the right place*, a man whom God could use to lead his Church on the road of salvation against all doctrinal vicissitudes what appeared

On the other hand, the synods of the Spanish Kingdom helped to consolidate and strengthen the influence of the Catholic Church in Spain and the Spanish colonies. They promoted Catholic orthodoxy and consolidated religious unity at a time when there was a diversity of religious currents and critics of the Church.

Synods from the century XV-XVII of the Spanish Kingdom were organized to face the challenges and religious changes of the era, maintaining the power and influence of the Catholic Church and establishing the official positions in front of the Protestant reformist movements; this was achieved not through doctrinal disputes within the synods or other common gatherings, but through a better and careful preparation of the clergy and the faithful regarding the knowledge of the doctrine. The councils addressed a number of issues regarding improving the morals of the clergy, combating heresies, improving religious education and implementing the decisions of the Council of Trent.

I noticed that there was a great emphasis on catechizing the faithful, on knowing and practicing the faith, as essential in the face of Protestant challenges. The hierarchs of the Catholic Church considered this situation of spiritual and doctrinal illiteracy urgent and made efforts to remedy the existing deficiencies as best as possible.

We can describe it as the "age of reforms" because there were countless attempts at reform, some of them successful, that were undertaken throughout the century, even though a complete and satisfactory ecclesiastical reform was never achieved at that time. But there is no doubt that the greatest concern of the Church at that time was to reform itself, to purify itself,

to renew itself spiritually, to adjust its life and institutions to the evangelical norms that it had always preached. The yearning for reform became a real challenge and, when it was taken up not only by preachers and saints, it also managed to mobilize leaders, publicists, theologians, chroniclers and poets, thus becoming a universal cry that awaited the practical effectiveness of the Church. However, the synods were precisely an example of such pragmatic efficiency for those times.

The synods played an important role in the Church's mission by defining dogmas and doctrines as they had the power to issue declarations and canons to establish the Orthodox faith and the rules of conduct of the faithful as well as of the priests. We see that the disciplinary and moral issues of the clergy and believers were also addressed in them, with laws and regulations regarding behavior and ethics being issued, emphasizing the need to preserve the integrity of the Church and its norms. And last but not least, these synods helped combat heresies and schisms by investigating and condemning teachings considered heretical and taking steps to maintain the unity and cohesion of the Church.

From reading the synodal constitutions I saw that they are a first-hand tool for the study of church history, ecclesiastical legislation, popular religiosity, the liturgy and, most importantly in terms of our work, a real benefit in continuing the mission entrusted by Christ. That is why we consider it important that the analysis of these synods leads us to a much better understanding of the history and mission of the Catholic Church in the Spanish Kingdom during the XV-XVII centuries.

Chapter V is intended to carry out a missionary and comparative study of the doctrines of the two Churches and the current missionary relevance. We want to show the way in which, for the two Churches today, Orthodox and Catholic respectively, certain common things from those times can be fruitful in a dialogue and in a current common mission. In the second part of this chapter we will do a comparative study between the way Romanians live the Orthodox faith and the Spanish Catholic faith, addressing several aspects, such as religious practices, traditions, cultural influences and the impact of religion on daily life.

In conclusion, we say that, in this work, we wanted to highlight the similarities and differences between the two Churches and their actions towards the Protestant phenomenon, analyzing how they evolved in different cultural, political and historical contexts. We aimed through this approach to bring a better understanding of the religious diversity in the two countries and to help identify commonalities in the human experience of spirituality and faith.

The interest of the synods lies mainly in the knowledge of everyday attitudes in religious matters. Carrying out a quick reading of the decisions, I noticed that they are full of very detailed considerations, proposing norms of immediate conduct for the people and the clergy (especially

for the latter); they are concerned with remedying abuses, correcting the habits of ordinary life, and offering practical guidelines for their eradication. Therefore, it is useful to study texts of this type, which show the reality of everyday life and teach us a lot about what religious life was like in the past. At the same time, church synods have played and continue to play an important role in increasing the Church's mission, being eloquent examples of the catechizing process, given the context of producing social, political or religious changes. Catechism had and still maintains today an important role in understanding and strengthening the Christian faith.

We pointed out in our paper the fact that, through the synods, the Orthodox Church in the Romanian Countries and the Catholic Church in the Kingdom of Spain were able to clarify and improve their faith teachings, establish norms and rules for religious practice, and address various problems and challenges with which they faced in the context of the society of the XV-XVII centuries, and which immediately demanded clarification.

As a common point for both Churches, I noted the fact that their members had an immediate reaction to external challenges, by drawing up catechisms, confessions of faith or convening synods. Through these methods, I knew the zeal of the servants of the Church who engaged without fear or planning in these doctrinal battles. In the current context, such " battles " no longer have their former relevance, being replaced by commissions and theological dialogue groups.

As for mutual influences, even if they existed at the level of conceived Faith Magnifications, they were quickly checked and corrected.

In addition to theological and organizational aspects, the synods also contributed to the expansion of the Church's mission by adopting specific strategies and action plans. These plans had in mind the right, correct preaching of the revealed Truth, the promotion of Christian values in society, the involvement in works of charity and social aid, or the support of missions and churches in less-reached or remote areas.

In an overview that includes both Churches, we notice that, *vis-à-vis* the Protestant phenomenon, for the Orthodox Church the responsible modality was the use of *the Confessions of Faith* , as accepted dogmas for which certain compromises were made, while for the Catholic Church, the problem of Protestantism had become a predominantly legal one with possible " life and death " implications for those who flirted with " reformation teachings " , emphasizing the catechetical, moral and disciplinary aspects. If in the Orthodox Church the actions were constituted on the doctrinal line, in an *ad extra direction* , in the Catholic Church they were concretized *ad intra* , with the canonical-juridical aspect prevailing.

In the Orthodox Church, the doctrinal aspect was the main subject of the synodal meetings, out of the sincere desire to enlighten and enlighten the "lost". In the Catholic Church the emphasis was on catechizing the faithful and strengthening them by virtue of obedience to the Church and its servants. This difference in approach to the Protestant issue is due not only to members of the Church institution, but also to "external" factors (institutionally speaking, since the Church as the "Body of Christ" includes everyone), and here we are referring to the powers of the state - in The Spanish Kingdom, the Iberian monarchs - who we have seen used their powers and power in support and the "good" of the Church. We find over the centuries that this "good" turned into a moral burden that hangs heavy in the history of the Catholic Church, especially in Spain.

At certain times the work is too busy. This is either due to the fact that we tried to describe as comprehensible as possible the entire problematic context or the key characters who were involved in the events (and thus, to make ourselves partakers and contemporaries of those events), or because of the many quotes that we were we have to expose them in order to understand the effort put into finding the best solutions in the spirit of peace and unity of faith.

No matter what culture we belong to, we must recognize that we still have a long way to go in terms of unity of faith. For this reason we believe it is necessary to recognize where we really are and all that we still have to go, in order to subsequently strengthen our commitment to change attitudes, to put aside the loopholes of intolerance and to take new steps or ways to lead us to the beautiful areas of religious respect and coexistence, which will undoubtedly facilitate pluralism and coexistence in other spheres such as social, political and cultural.

Through synods, the Church had and has the opportunity to strengthen and strengthen its unity. Their debates and deliberations bring together diverse perspectives and experiences, enabling the Church to make informed decisions and develop a deeper and more comprehensive understanding of its mission. Synods also provide a forum for discussion and dialogue between the various branches of the Church, promoting collaboration and solidarity between them. In the context of contemporary man, dialogue is needed. His Highness Dr. Damaskinos Papandreou very clearly remarked that *"current interreligious dialogues are not only an inherent internal necessity of religions for the defense of religious values from the leveling anthropocentrism of contemporary civilization, but also a common obligation of religions towards contemporary man"*¹⁰.

There are mutual invitations to various events and great respect and tolerance. Inter-confessional activity is today limited between the Churches to joint prayer and meetings where

¹⁰ Mihai HIMCINSCHI, *Misiune și dialog. Ontologia misionară a Bisericii din perspectiva dialogului interreligios*, Edit. Reîntregirea, Alba Iulia, 2003, p.5.

inter-religious and ecumenical relations develop. But it takes more than that! And the synods have shown us that whenever there is a problem, the only solution is to gather in consultation, as a first step, to be able to reach communion.

We noticed that the synods provided a favorable framework for dialogue and discussions between representatives of different churches, dioceses or communities in the Romanian Lands and the Spanish Kingdom. These gatherings allowed for the expression of diverse opinions and perspectives, facilitating mutual understanding and strengthening ties between the various parts of the Church. Through dialogue, the synods were able to bring together the varied traditions and practices and at the same time find ways to promote unity in diversity.

In the present work, being an analysis of the reaction of the two Churches to the challenges to which they were exposed, I have not issued sentences favoring a particular Church or any of the perspectives. We wanted to offer a balanced view and objective information, to enable everyone to better understand what happened, analyze it and form their own conclusions.

The councils took, in those troubled times, important decisions for the Church as a whole. These decisions addressed theological, moral, liturgical, organizational and mission-related issues. Through the involvement and participation of church representatives from various regions or branches, the synods contributed and contribute to making collective and consensual decisions. This strengthens the sense of belonging and involvement of all members of the Church in the decision-making process and in the management of common problems.

It is important to emphasize that although the synods took place, they did not fulfill their purpose if the established ones were not put into practice. Each believer and each church community has the responsibility to contribute to the spread of the faith and the service of the neighbor. Through their deeds of love and compassion, through their confession of faith and through their active involvement in the communities in which they live, Christians can be outstanding members of the Church's mission and the preaching of the Gospel.

The synods favored the promotion of solidarity and collaboration between the various church entities. Through these meetings, partnerships and joint projects could be initiated, resources and expertise could be exchanged to support weaker churches and communities or to respond to social and spiritual challenges in a specific region or context. Collaboration between churches and diverse communities strengthens the sense of belonging to a larger church body and increases the Church's resources and potential for action.

The synods were occasions when the Church could clarify and strengthen its church teaching and practice. Through theological discussion and debate, synods can establish common teachings, refine dogma, and update interpretation of scripture and tradition. This

process of clarifying and consolidating church teaching contributes to coherence and unity in faith and spiritual practice.

By analyzing and evaluating the fundamental arguments and concepts, ethics, religious practices and theological positions expressed in these synods, it contributed to the promotion of interreligious dialogue and to the stimulation of critical thinking regarding one's own faith.

Synods were often key moments in the evolution and development of the Church, contributing to the formation and shaping of church tradition in different historical periods. They represented the expression of the community and church authority in making important decisions, and they contributed to the transmission of Christian teachings and practices from one generation to another. Without these synods, the Churches would have been much poorer and the faithful would have been widowed from their contact with ecclesiastical and doctrinal reality.

In relation to the synodal activity in the Spanish Kingdom, additions can certainly be made regarding other synods that took place or personalities from the life of the Church who were involved, (can be used, for the research of the synods in the Spanish Kingdom, and the archives of other Bishoprics Catholic or of the Libraries of the Pontifical Universities – in Spain there are 14 Pontifical Universities, some not reaching or not having access), and which require enormous work regarding documentation.

Through the presented, we wanted our work to enrich the knowledge about the Churches in the two countries and the events that marked their historical and doctrinal course. Also, we intend to further arouse the interest of other researchers in discovering new events or elements common to the two Churches or the two peoples, which, once discovered, will be of real use to contemporary man.

Therefore, Church synods have been of significant importance for the lives of the faithful, helping to define the teaching, maintaining canonical discipline, resolving disputes and problems, teaching and transmitting the teaching, as well as ensuring the participation of the faithful in decision-making. They brought unity and stability to the community of Churches in the two countries, and helped the faithful to live in accordance with the values and traditions of their faith. The two Churches proved that synodality is their very nature of being, their form and one of the practical ways of doing mission.