

**“1 DECEMBER 1918” UNIVERSITY OF ALBA IULIA
FACULTY OF ORTHODOX THEOLOGY**



UNIVERSITATEA
1 DECEMBRIE 1918
DIN ALBA IULIA

- ABSTRACT -

**CURRENT DIRECTIONS IN
MISSIOLOGICAL RESEARCH**

HABILITATION THESIS

DOMAIN: THEOLOGY

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Alba Iulia

2025

The habilitation thesis "Current Directions in Missiological Research" is a synthesis of the research activity carried out both during my doctoral studies (2011-2014) and after their completion, specifically between in 2014-2024. Regarding the research directions addressed, the studies and articles undertaken aimed, on the one hand, to continue the research topic within the doctoral studies in the field of Theology, namely the approach to the practice of cremation, an important theme for the recent theological survey, to which the Orthodox Church is called to give a firm and substantial answer, and, on the other hand, I also developed a sequence of scientific analyses referring to the challenges and opportunities offered by digital media, the particular relationship between media, journalism and religion, together with the investigation of the effects caused determined by the digital age on the missionary work of the Church.

The groundwork directions covered in this habilitation thesis are devoted to the issue of incineration, requiring serious interdisciplinary analyses and studies in the field of theology, since this is a less investigated topic in Romanian Orthodox theology and spirituality. One of the main objectives of this research was to demonstrate the Orthodox teachings on death, eternal life, the perennality of the human soul and the perspective of the resurrection in the flesh, with direct applicability in the field of Christian mission to promote the practice of burial and challenge the practice of cremation. It is a topical issue, given today's interfaith and interreligious dialogues, in a European multicultural context. Of course, the presented studies do not claim to be exhaustive, but they systematically propose and develop the main directions in the description of Orthodox missiological doctrine. The research carried out seeks to be a synthesis of the issue, with distinct missionary values, creating a valuable affinity with the practical field of the pastoral care of the Church.

A research topic related to the practice of cremation that I had as an objective was the arrangement of the funeral service, which I analysed in a book that I published, but also in different studies and articles, in an interdisciplinary approach, namely: liturgical, missionary, homiletic, dogmatic, canonical, ethnological, using a diversified and recent bibliography to help clarify and develop new logical directions to be followed in the future by theologians. Those studies aim, on the one hand, to highlight the liturgical, catechetical, and missionary aspects of the funeral service, and on the other hand, the ethnological aspect of the traditional rituals regarding death and burial in the rural areas of Romania. The present investigation does not seek to be exhaustive and definitive on this subject; I aim to unveil several aspects from the past of the missionary and liturgical practice of the Church, and, at the same time, I intend to come up with a sequence of revisions, but also with several proposals regarding the funeral service.

We conducted a series of investigations on the challenges and opportunities offered by

digital media, the distinct relationship between media, journalism and religion, and the implications of the digital age on the missionary work of the Church. Journalism is confronted with the dynamic interaction between media and religion, as it faces challenges such as the decline of public confidence and the imperative to adapt communication strategies to the specific demands of the digital era. The media landscape has undergone a profound metamorphosis, with digitalization influencing content consumption, dissemination and the complicated relationship between media and public perception. Simultaneously, the Church has embarked on a proactive experimentation in the digital field, harnessing modern information and communication technologies to preach the Gospel effectively while avoiding cautiously the pitfalls of excessive virtualization. This study analysed the profound impact of digitalization on various aspects of society, following this transformation of recent decades and the evolution from conventional methods of communication to the recent era of digital anxiety, where mobile applications provide instant access to information.

The **first chapter** of the habilitation thesis includes professional, didactic and scientific achievements, together with the investigation results highlighted by a research project and reinforced by numerous publications (as author/co-author), with high visibility in the scientific environment. In the **second chapter**, the systematized results refer to the previously stated research directions and the content has been divided into two large subchapters. Several books, volumes and representative articles have been selected for the proposed investigated areas. In the **last chapter** of the habilitation thesis, prospects of career development are stated, related to teaching, study and personal development. The future goals in terms of scientific work will include interdisciplinary research in the theological field concerning the missionary dimension of the theology of St. Paul; I intend to develop a critical examination of the Church's position on war (faith, ideology, politics) both in the past and in contemporary times, to provide answers and solutions that are timely to the context of current society; I also plan to perform a scientific analysis on the religious phenomenon in Romania (the 20th century and the beginning of the 21st century). All of the directions I outlined will be achieved through the active involvement of future doctoral students, who will be selected from among the deserving students participating in the student scientific research circle. Also, my development of the research activity focuses on participation in dedicated events at the national and international level, by publishing study results and developing new methods or new sub-domains, through submitted research projects.