

Fundamental and Dogmatic Theology in the Romanian Church United with Rome, Greek-Catholic: Tradition, Continuity, Renewal

Pr. Prof. univ. dr. Cristian Barta

Summary

The habilitation thesis, entitled *Fundamental and Dogmatic Theology in the Romanian Church United with Rome, Greek-Catholic: Tradition, Continuity, Renewal*, takes its point of departure in the principle of organic progress in theology. This principle calls for a permanent actualization of contents and methods in the context of the religious, cultural and scientific present, seeking a continuity with the sources of Revelation and with the tradition of the Church, deepening and expressing the truths of the faith, without relativizing them, in the language of contemporary man.

In the case of Greek-Catholic theology, which in the period 1948-1989 could not develop in a natural way because of communist persecution, the imperative of a renewal, with identity, pastoral and ecumenical stakes, was realised and assumed by the new generations of theologians and teachers. It is along these lines that my theological work is also being carried out.

In accordance with the requirements laid down in national legislation, the thesis is structured in three parts: presentation of scientific, professional and academic achievements, by disciplinary and interdisciplinary thematic directions; plans for the evolution and development of the scientific, professional and academic career; a bibliographical reference list.

The first part is opened by a succinct presentation of the author's academic training and didactic activity, as his doctoral thesis in fundamental and dogmatic theology, as well as the teaching of Fundamental Theology and some disciplines in the field of dogmatic theology, inspired his main research directions and objectives.

In fundamental theology we have examined two perspectives: the diachronic one, which deepens the genesis and development of this discipline in Greek-Catholic theology, capturing the transition from the apologetic model to the specific model of fundamental theology, focused on reflection upon Revelation and faith; the epistemological one, which discusses the nature of theological knowledge in the present context, evaluating the relationship between faith and reason, Christian religious experience and the possibilities of theological language. The conceptual-methodological horizon of theological epistemology and the function of fundamental theology as a borderline discipline are defined by the synthesis of the knowledge of God through the three modes of kataphatic, apophatic and doxological expressions, together with the essential dialogue with philosophical thought.

At the ecclesiological level, the diachronic perspective aimed at identifying the essential elements of Romanian Greek-Catholic theology and at interpreting them in a framework marked by the encounter between Eastern and Roman-Catholic ecclesiology. The Greek-Catholic theological literature from the 18th-19th centuries consistently debates the dialectic between the Florentine ecclesiological model, which is communal, anchored in the reality of the first Christian millennium, and the post-Tridentine model, which is predominantly pyramidal-legal, uniformising, and emphasises the papal primacy. Romanian theologians accepted papal primacy but contended for the individuality and Eastern identity of their Church within the Catholic communion. The Greek-Catholic ecclesiology articulated its identity based

on the Florentine model of union with the Church of Rome, unity in diversity, synodality, and the equal dignity of all the local Churches in the Catholic Church, anticipating the themes that the Second Vatican Council would present.

We have developed a systematic perspective on the trinomial authority-communion-synodality, connecting the ecclesiological vision of the Second Vatican Council and the post-conciliar magisterium with data from the Greek-Catholic tradition and recent developments in Catholic theology. We undertook this research in response to the elevation of the Romanian Church United with Rome to the status of Major Archiepiscopal Church, as it has regained complete synodality with its new quasi-patriarchal status.

The interdisciplinary perspective has proven especially helpful in enhancing the ecclesiological individuality of the Romanian Church United with Rome. The analysis, which dedicated to the historical evolution of this Church, has had different statuses in the Catholic communion (episcopate, metropolitanate, major archiepiscopacy). It provided the necessary support for reflections of an ecclesiological and canonical nature, contributing to the nuancing of the aspects of identity, to the highlighting of ecclesiality and ecclesiophanic meanings, and to the reconsideration of the ecumenical vocation.

Concerning eschatology, we have traced the significant changes of this subject in Catholic theology and scrutinised the principal themes within a Trinitarian-Christological and anthropological-personalist vista. When viewed in light of the work of the Most Holy Trinity, who guides humankind and the entire creation towards ultimate fulfilment, eschatology manifests its relevance and impact on the entire theology and, concurrently, resolves the fundamental queries of the individual. Nevertheless, this discipline of theology is highly dynamic and constantly evolving in terms of its framework and methodology. Throughout my studies, I have consistently integrated the process of renewal in eschatology and endeavored to express the eschatological contents in their completeness, whilst relating them to *Sacred Scripture*, the Magisterial documents, patristic thought and the Church's liturgy. Lastly, we analysed the most significant Christian eschatological symbols, considering their symbolising function and human consciousness's archetypal symbolic structure.

The career development plans discussed in the second part of the thesis focus on pursuing the main directions of my teaching and research activities in new thematic registers within the current Catholic theology. Regarding fundamental theology, my pursuit will center on the complex topic of faith credibility in cultural, scientific, and interreligious contexts. The orientation of ecclesiological reflection will encompass the synodality considered from an ecumenical perspective and explore the ecclesiological reality of the Eastern Catholic Churches from the concept of „*sister Churches*” and the frontier paradigm. In reference to eschatology, I aim to further explore the pneumatological, sacramental, and ecumenical aspects. Another significant undertaking is to author a history of dogmatic theology in the context of Romanian Greek-Catholic theology. These research directions will be pursued through personal activity and by establishing research teams that are open to master's and doctoral students.

The final section of the thesis comprises bibliographical references that are chosen and used as a support and point of reference for critically orienting achievements and development plans.