

# Mission, Spirituality, and Culture in Contemporary Orthodox Theology

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## Abstract

This thesis reflects the trajectory of my academic and personal journey, shaped by a dual vocation: to explore the depth and vitality of the Christian mission and spirituality as expressions of applied theology, and to investigate the complex relationship between theology and culture. The intersection of these two realms has formed the core of my theological reflection over the years.

In the first part, I analyze the Church's mission from the perspective of the theology of deeds and the witness through holiness of life. Drawing on patristic tradition and contemporary Orthodox thought, I argue that theology must not be reduced to abstract doctrine but must be lived and embodied in concrete ways. This section emphasizes the necessity of integrating explicit (dogmatic) theology with the implicit theology of daily Christian life. I explore the ascetical dimension of spirituality and its social implications, presenting the lives of saints and ascetics as authentic forms of Christian mission. I also reflect on vulnerability and power in mission, spiritual practices in both urban and rural contexts, and the idea of everyday heroism.

The second part is dedicated to the dialogue between theology and culture. I engage with contemporary debates around secularization, image and symbol, and the role of the Church in a changing world. I revisit classical Orthodox understandings of the icon, proposing a theology of the image rooted in the Incarnation and the sacramental vision of the world. In dialogue with modern thinkers such as Danièle Hervieu-Léger, Olivier Clément, and Chantal Delsol, I develop a theological response to the crisis of meaning in secular societies. The Church, I suggest, is called not to reclaim lost privileges, but to

offer a creative and kenotic witness, grounded in holiness and truth.

Throughout the thesis, I aim to integrate spiritual depth with academic rigor, offering both a theological synthesis and a pastoral vision. My approach is characterized by fidelity to the Orthodox tradition, attentiveness to contemporary cultural shifts, and a commitment to the renewal of the Church's mission through lived sanctity. This work is intended as both a personal testimony and a contribution to the development of a theology that is at once patristic and prophetic, rooted and relevant.