

# **„Liturgy after the Liturgy" as the missionary-ecumenical reference point of father Ion Bria's thinking. A Critical Perspective\***

Valentin MOȘOIU\*

## **Abstract:**

The study explores the rich meaning of one of the most important theological formula developed by Father Ion Bria in his spiritual approach of the missionary theology, the expression "Liturgy after the Liturgy", which brings together and gives new understandings to the diaconship, spirituality, theological education, social ethics, Christian political discipline, etc. These topics connected with the Liturgy were treated by him in many studies, and then resumed and developed in a volume bearing exactly this title "Liturgy after the Liturgy"<sup>1</sup> intending to "rediscover the primordial significance of the Orthodox Liturgy, namely its evangelizing and confessing force, which extends into all spheres of the Christian's life, in the community of the Church and in the society."

## **Keywords:**

Liturgy; mission; martyrria; diacony; theological education

---

\* This article is part of the doctoral studies program under the supervision of V. Rev. Prof. Dr. Aurel PAVEL who gave his approval for publishing it.

\* Valentin MOȘOIU is Orthodox priest and doctorate student at St. „Andrei Șaguna” Faculty of Orthodox Theology, „Lucian Blaga” University, Sibiu, Romania. Email: valentinmosoiu@yahoo.com

<sup>1</sup> Idem, *Liturgy after the Liturgy. Apostolic Mission and Christian Testimony - Today*, Athena Publishing House, Bucharest, 1996. Originally the book was published in English: *The Liturgy after the Liturgy*, WCC Publications, Geneva, 1966, and is largely a commented exposition of some large fragments from the volume *Go Forth in Peace*, WCC Publications, Geneva, 1982 and 1986, a compilation of essential texts about the Church - Liturgy - Mission. On this subject also see Idem, "The Liturgy after the Liturgy," in: *International Review of Mission* 67 (1978), no. 265, p. 86-90.

### Introduction

From the missionary-ecumenical point of view, the professional, didactic and editorial activity undertaken by father Ion Bria makes us affirm that we are dealing with the most important Romanian Orthodox missionary theologian and one of the most important orthodox missionary theologians of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century. With an original and profound thinking, addressing the most up-to-date and difficult themes of the so tormented life of the Orthodox Church in this "century of totalitarianism", father Bria fully fulfilled what Father Dumitru Stăniloae "prophesied" in two letters he had sent to him, somehow delegating him as a "spiritual heir" of him<sup>2</sup>.

Ion Bria himself was perfectly aware of the role that the theologian now needs to play-as he was said to exert a true "charisma"<sup>3</sup> - and the words spoken in his provocative autobiography can be regarded as a kind of "creed" that animated him throughout life: "Every generation has its" Ambiguity ", especially the current generation living in a landless world. Today, at a radical turning point in history, the turns are extreme and the drifts are dangerous. It is in the responsibility of the theologian to help students, priests, Christians, young people and adults, to find in the labyrinth of postmodern society and civilization, the itinerary of personal salvation in the footsteps of Christ, to reach the knowledge of the Truth. I am

---

<sup>2</sup> I suppose you are the only one able to make a level interpretation of my writing, for you are the only one who thinks personally, the author, the only Romanian theologian of generations after me, troubled by problems and with new, subtle, poetical expression resources. Perhaps if you undertook such a larger work, which would also be a further advance of the Romanian theological thinking, you would do a great job of the work to make known the creative spirit of the Romanian Orthodoxy. I always remain firmly convinced that you are the only theologian after me who thinks alive, original, capable of others and other insights and broad and personal synthesis. Each of the others has one attribute: industriousness, logic, sense. You have them all. You have the whole complexity of a theologian. See: Nicolae Moșoiu, Ciprian Iulian Toroczka, "Postscript", in: Ion Bria, *Theological Hermeneutics. Her Dynamics in Structuring Tradition*, Second Edition, Andreiană Publishing House, Sibiu, 2009, p. 204.

<sup>3</sup> See Ioan C. Teșu, "Theologian and Theology, in father Professor Ion Bria's thinking", Ioan Tulcan, Cristinel Ioja (coord.), *Father Professor Ion Bria (1929-2002): The the reception of his theological thinking and his relevance to the overpass of the ecumenical & missionary deadlock*, Aurel Vlaicu University Publishing House, Arad, 2009, p. 291-314, and Ciprian Iulian Toroczka, "Father Professor Ion Bria and the theologian's charisma", in: N. Moșoiu (coord.) *The relevance of Father Ion Bria's work for the present church and social life: new research directions in the field of doctrine, mission and unity of the Church*, Sibiu, May 14-17, 2009, "Lucian Blaga" Publishing House, Sibiu, 2010, p. 535-549.

„*Liturgy after the Liturgy*” in father Ion Bria’s thinking.

convinced that the Church suffers when it is not sustained and accompanied by a lucid, critical and creative, hopeful theology. ”<sup>4</sup>

In our opinion, the above desideratum was embodied in the theology of Father Professor Ion Bria. His main quality was that of an orthodox missionary theologian and lately his contribution to the development of pastoral-missionary theology is increasingly emphasized, a contribution that was paradoxically recognized more in the West than at us<sup>5</sup>. Unlike other Romanian missionary theologians, Bria made a critical theology, but did not fall into the temptation of "anti-sect" theology. Denouncing any proselytism, he at the same time promoted a theology of openness to the Christian values of any Christian tradition and confession (emblematic, his manual is entitled "Dogmatic and Ecumenical Theology"). The intention was to distance itself from the temptation of a "middle" defensive orthodox theology which used Catholic theological arguments against Protestant theology and vice versa. On the contrary, the Romanian theologian fought for a specific Orthodox theology, both in method and in content, which made it "original". The promised perspective was a positive one, not a negative one.

In this study we will focus on a central theme of his thinking: the concept of "Liturgy after the Liturgy". Finally, after some positive assessments, we will also bring to light some critics brought to Ion Bria’s work.

### **Liturgy after the Liturgy**

One of the most important contributions made by Father Bria to the development of the Orthodox missionary theology consists in the crystallization and spreading in the ecumenical space of the expression "Liturgy after the Liturgy". It brings together deaconship, spirituality, theological education, social ethics, Christian political discipline. These topics connected with the Liturgy were treated by the Romanian theologian in many studies and articles, and then resumed and developed in a volume bearing even the title the Liturgy after the Liturgy<sup>6</sup> and

---

<sup>4</sup> Ion Bria, *The Second Baptism. Itineraries of a faith and of a theology of openness*, Reintregirea Publishing House, Alba Iulia, 2005, p. 266.

<sup>5</sup> The fame of the missionary of the right faith of Prof. Ion Bria far exceeded the boundaries of the Romanian theology, becoming a leader of the universal missiology. See: David Pestroiu, "Father Prof. Ion Bria - Missionary of Orthodoxy", in: N. Moşoiu (coord.), *op. cit.*, p. 447.

<sup>6</sup> Idem, *Liturgy after the Liturgy. Apostolic Mission and Christian Testimony - Today*, Athena Publishing House, Bucharest, 1996. Originally the book was published in English: *The Liturgy after the Liturgy*, WCC Publications, Geneva, 1966, and is largely a commented exposition of some large fragments from the volume *Go Forth in Peace*, WCC Publications, Geneva, 1982 and 1986, a compilation of essential texts about the Church - Liturgy - Mission.

has as its declared purpose to "rediscover the primordial significance of the Orthodox Liturgy, namely its evangelizing and confessing force, which extends into all spheres of the Christian's life, in the community of the Church and in the society."<sup>7</sup>

The foundation of the Church by the coming down of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost revealed the missionary quality of the Liturgy. Liturgical worship as a whole is an obvious form of testimony and mission. From Pentecost to Parousia, the liturgical service reveals the risen Christ and proclaims the coming of the Kingdom of the Holy Trinity. In other words, the Eucharist gives access to the vision of the Kingdom of God, promised as the ultimate renewal of creation, thus being the foretasting of it. The formulas "With peace come out!" from the Byzantine Liturgy and "Ite, missa est!" from the Roman mass symbolically marks the sacramental "sending" of believers into the world. At this time there is no "going out" of the Church, but "its entering" into the world. This is the way to go into another mode of liturgy, which is the "Liturgy" after the Liturgy. It is the passage from Sunday, the reigning day to the days of the week. "Sunday would have no meaning if it were not the first day of the seven, and at the same time the eighth, that is, the fullness ... when we go out of the church, the fullness of life in Christ we carry in us, throughout the world, during the week whole"<sup>8</sup>.

Relevant to Father Bria is the vision of St. John Chrysostom about the many ways of salvation practiced by Christians by virtue of their universal priesthood received through Confirmation: 1) The inner, individual liturgy revealing the man who became "the temple of the Holy Spirit" by the Sacraments of initiation and who, through the exercise of personal prayer, unite the multiple aspects of Christian life: faith, deeds, virtues. 2) Eucharistic Liturgy, committed by the consecrated and concelebrated hierarchy along with the parish assembly. Its purpose is to share the believers with the One who brings and the One to be brought, "The bread that descends from heaven," thus becoming the witnesses of Christ in the world. 3) "Brotherhood Liturgy", a human Liturgy determined by the real presence of Jesus Christ in the midst of all, men and women, living in unbearable conditions – in poor, suffering, orphaned, widowed, exploited, in those who do not have shelter, food and comfort. All these three Liturgies have the same value in the sight of God.<sup>9</sup>

---

On this subject also see: Idem, "The Liturgy after the Liturgy", in: *International Review of Mission* 67 (1978), no. 265, p. 86-90.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 12.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 26-27.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 107-108.

The missionary paradigm of "The Liturgy after the Liturgy" is materialized, in all its aspects, at the parish level of the local Church. About the parish it is said to be the "missionary cell" by excellence. This missionary character has its roots in its own nature, for the parish is not only a part of the Church but the presence and the epiphany of the whole Church, it works for the salvation of the whole world, being called to preach and to learn the gospel of Christ precisely because it possess the fullness of the gifts of the Holy Spirit. Exceeding the understanding of the liturgy exclusively as a mean of individual sanctification and rediscovering its cosmic and eschatological redeeming dimensions, Father Professor Ion Bria quotes from the *Go Forth In Peace* document to emphasize the missionary significance of the Liturgy: "The living source of the accomplishment by the parish of this mission is Liturgy, the essence of which is the manifestation (epiphany) and the communication of the Kingdom of God revealed in the life, teaching, death, resurrection and glorification of Jesus Christ"<sup>10</sup>.

The missionary activity must aim at the whole picture of parochial categories. Here, the group of the true "co-liturgists" or together workers (synergy), but also the category of "nominal Christians," that is of those who have only sporadic contacts with the priest and the active body of the parish, can be distinguished. The latter manifest themselves in the life of the Church only on the occasion of significant events of their own life: the baptism of the children, the marriage of the young, the funeral of their parents. However, this part of the parish must not be forgotten or lost. "Re christianization of the Christians" is one of the most important tasks of the evangelical witness of the Church. In order to achieve its missionary and pastoral purpose, the priest has at his disposal many means to be as close as possible to these "Christians, but only with the name": pastoral visits, blessing of his family and home, consultations with poor families, teaching catechism lessons, the distribution of religious books and, above all, the commission of services (see The Sacrament of Anointing of the sick or the Lity). In this area of the parish there are surprising human (and economical) resources: retirees, groups of specialists and artists, youth and sportsmen associations who want to participate in the parish program other than coming to the Liturgy each Sunday (which they find too long and sometimes dull)<sup>11</sup>. Though this consideration of "The Liturgy after the Liturgy" without the Divine Liturgy itself poses great dangers in our view, yet it must be acknowledged that the Church's Supreme Sacrament must address to all Christian categories and especially that it must avoid falling into a sterile formality. The participation of believers must be as active as possible, and the priest must bear in mind that "there is a feeling of

---

<sup>10</sup> See: *Ibidem*, p. 110.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 112.

frustration in most people because they do not understand the text and the content of the liturgy in the form in which it is singed or murmured by the priest." Hence the duty of the priest, along with the singers or the choir, "to sing clearly in a common language, the written and spoken language of all, including of the children and of the young people, without archaic variants.

Then it is necessary to explain rites and processions, reading aloud the canon (bringing the sacrifice and transforming gifts)"<sup>12</sup>.

The exercise of the ecclesial mission, expressed by the phrase "Liturgy after the Liturgy," implies a revival of the Eucharist - an aspect to which we refer in another chapter - as well as the reconsideration of the participation of the lay people in the Eucharist and, in general, in the life of the Church. If the Church is the people of God (*laos tou Theou*), the assembly of those baptized, then Christians, regardless of age, category or profession, "all must feel here at home. Everyone must be embraced in the prayer, mission and deaconship of the parish"<sup>13</sup>.

The priest's relationship with the parish resembles the marital relationship. The *Go Forth In Peace* document states that the Orthodox priest is ordained and "married" with a particular parish, in a long life connection. Even though "by economy" the Church allowed the movement and the transfer of priests in several parishes, the theme of the priest's "marriage" to a parish remains vital. It requires a deep intimacy and caring for the community. The priest has a special responsibility for each member of the parish<sup>14</sup>. He intercedes for all people in the sight of God, and every Christian is called to lead a genuine Christian life in the sense of a constant activity in the work of the Church. In this context it is appropriate to understand the obligation of "awakening the conscience of the laity". Every lay person must be a co celebrant, a witness, of the priestly mission. The following are expected: 1) a vital and living participation in the Divine Liturgy, 2) personal confession of the faith, and 3) the Christian commitment to the citizenship, educational, cultural and intellectual life of one's own nation and society<sup>15</sup>.

---

<sup>12</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 112-113.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 116.

<sup>14</sup> See: *Ibidem*, p. 117: "He nourishes the poor, protects the widows, shelters the orphans, liberates the prisoners, heals the sick, teaches the young, strengthens the elders, gathers together the scattered, turns the separated and unites them with the Church, unleashes those who are bound with unclean spirits. He remembers those who live in happiness, godliness, fasting, in pure words, those who have the authority to judge and reconcile, those who are united by the bond of marriage, those who have mercy".

<sup>15</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 118.

„Liturgy after the Liturgy" in father Ion Bria's thinking.

Taking into account the specific field of the internal mission, revitalizing the role of the laity in the Church embraces concrete forms: "the clericalization of theology", in the sense of revising language, forms and methods, as a common concern of the Church, which both the clergy and laity need; youth leadership, a vulnerable human category, for which increased attention is required for an effective sharing of faith; increasing attention to the family cell, against which there are many contemporary threats, which jeopardizes the "priesthood of the parents" (these being "temporary representatives and mirrors of parental care and divine mercy"); the reassessment of the role of woman in the Church, as recognition of her dignity, equal to that of the man, and possessing a special charisma that must absolutely receive place for exertion in the ecclesial community<sup>16</sup>.

The Relationship Liturgy - Spirituality - Mission is based on the richness of the Church's life in its sacramental aspects<sup>17</sup>. It is a very important aspect for making the mission more efficient. Why this? "The primary mean of giving the Church a testimony at the moment - Father Professor Ion Bria answers us - is not to boldly state that Christ is the Savior, to a world that has already heard these words and has remained unimpressed. The first and the main method of evangelical witnessing is the same as in the Primary Church. Those who saw the chosen lives of the early Christians were so attracted by its strength and beauty that they sought to discover its power and origin ..."<sup>18</sup>. In other words, the main missionary mean is the life of the Christian himself, renewed by the Holy Spirit and founded on prayer. The character is a community one: the realization of a communion of love in the image of divine love. Hence the various scriptural exhortations (see Jn 4:19, I Jn 4,7 or I Jn 5,3-4). Strengthening the ecclesial community as the Body of Christ absolutely implies responsibility for any human being. Serving God also involves serving the neighbor. Every person involved in the missionary work of the Church must be aware of this fact. From the "sent ones", personal sanctity is expected, for evangelical witnessing can only be done in a spirit of repentance. According to the model of the saints, Christian missionaries must reflect the uncreated glory of God and rely all their powers on the dynamic power of the Trinity. Being aware of their own repentance

---

<sup>16</sup> See: *Ibidem*, p. 113-116.

<sup>17</sup> This relationship was excellently analyzed by Nicolae Răzvan Stan, "The full capitalization of the Orthodox doctrine by the deification of human existence. An Assessment of Father Ion Bria's theological Thinking," in: Ioan Tulcan, Cristinel Ioja (coord.), *op.cit.*, p. 247-269; Idem, "The Principles of Orthodox Spirituality Highlighted in the Work of Father Professor Ion Bria", in: N. Moşoiu (coord.), *op.cit.*, p. 481-494.

<sup>18</sup> I. Bria, *Liturgy after the Liturgy*, p. 119.

(*metanoia*), conversion, and salvation, the "sent ones" must fully possess the quality of "witnesses of the Truth."

The missionary work, fulfilling the requirements that "Liturgy after the Liturgy" demands, also refers to the clergy and laymen. Father Professor Ion Bria wants to suggest that the conduct of the missionary activity of the Church is not the exclusive benefit of some specialists. Moreover, each priest is required to exercise his missionary work in particular. Every priest "must be fully the bearer of the Good News of Resurrection". His attitude must be adapted to the changes of the contemporary society. He can no longer remain passive and fatalist. Informed about the new requirements of the time, he is called to preach the gospel not only by word but by his whole life. In the Genesis 20, 28: "Remember you and all the flock ..." the priest's continued responsibility for the people of God and for his own person is shown. If everything that the priest does and preaches must reflect his own inner life, then one can understand that any personal failure is reflected on the entire community. "Although they have the foundation in the Risen Christ, some priests have contributed to the alienation of men by the reality of God through their own indifference to the world's shortcomings and also by their refusal to respond to the tragedies of the world in a remedy and efficient way. They must regret the failures of the past and obey the guidance of the Holy Spirit so that they can be again effective theophorus and missionaries, spreading the benefit of the kingdom."<sup>19</sup>

If the purpose of the parish is to be a "disciplined community," the cohesion force, both internally and in relation to other local communities, it is appropriate for the priest to have it. But it should not be forgotten that this is only a representative and sent by the bishop. That is why he is the arhimandrite that inspires and ensures the cohesion of the community, the conciliar life and the solidarity of the whole ecclesial body. His leading role, of course, marks his entire community that he shepherds. But this does not exclusively affect the clergy; we are talking about a general fact valid for each Christian. Every Christian is marked by "the symmetry between the person and the community, between the word and deed, between the self-image and the one he communicates to others."<sup>20</sup>

There can be no parish discipline unless it is based on mutual love among Christians. It is a love that has the very source of Liturgy. Indeed, Eucharistic Liturgy remains the source, the model and inspiration of social life. As Father Ion Bria details, "the fruits of the creation and work of the faithful are offered at the altar and changed into Eucharistic gifts, so that they can then be shared with all as the forces of communion. God is generous and invites everyone to the wedding

---

<sup>19</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 123.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibidem*, p.124.



table, provided that the invited guests become an example of conviviality and solidarity with their peers. A unique ritual of mental and emotional communion, the Liturgy is capable of restoring all human relationships, not only with God, but also with the social community, family and society. Liturgy and deaconship are therefore inseparable <sup>21</sup> Wherever and whenever two or three disciples were assembled together, the Risen Lord was present in the midst of them, inviting His friends to the wedding feast (Rev. 19: 9). This invitation remains valid for the Church today. It must be addressed to all people, especially to the masses of the disabled, the elderly, the sick, the poor or the other suffering and shortcomings. All members of the Church should not shut their door, but participate in their suffering, remembering the words of the Savior: "Whatever you did for one of the least, you did for Me" (Mt 25:40).<sup>22</sup>

### Positive reception

The phrase "Liturgy after the Liturgy" appears in the vocabulary of the Ecumenical Council of Churches in the early 1970s, being linked to the name of the current archbishop of Albania, Anastasios Yannoulatos. At the World Missionary Conference on *Salvation today* (Bankgog, 1972), he insisted on the sense of tradition and the dual movement in which the Church trains its faithful by worship: the public assembly for the Eucharistic Liturgy and other rites, namely the sending to the Christian testimony. The concept was resumed and deepened on other occasions by Orthodox theologians, the most important moments being remembered by Father Bria: The Orthodox Session *Confessing Christ Today* (Cernica Monastery, 1974), *Confessing Christ through the liturgical life of the Church* (Etchimiadzin , Armenians, September 16-21, 1975), the session on *the Ecumenical Nature of the Orthodox Testimony* (Valamo, Finland, 24-30 September 1977), the mission conferences in Melbourne (1980) and San Antonio (1988), as well as the General meeting of the World Council of the Churches from Nairobi (1975), Vancouver (1983) and Canberra (1991). The notion also had an impact on the drafting of the ecumenical documents of great importance:

---

<sup>21</sup> *Ibidem*, p.126.

<sup>22</sup> The essence of the Christian mission is to preach the gospel of forgiveness, resurrection, and eternal life. The gospel of love brings man out of the sphere of individualism, places him right at the center of the social and civic issues. In the document much cited by Father Bria, *Go Forth In Peace*, it is emphasized that "the mercy towards the poor is also a holy liturgy, in which human beings are priests, and which have greater value in the eyes of God." Even if it does not identify its message with the political and social programs of our time, the Church does not neglect the reality of human poverty and the problems with which humanity is overwhelmed. See: *Ibidem*, p. 127-129.

*Martyria-Mission. The Witness of the Orthodox Churches Today* (WCC, Geneva 1980), *Go Forth in Peace. Orthodox Perspectives in Mission* (WCC, Geneva 1982 and 1986), and several chapters in the section on the Eucharist of the BEM ecumenical document also refer to the missionary aspect of the Liturgy. Specifically, these documents highlighted the dual movement in which the Church engages its faithful: on the one hand, it gathers them publicly for the Eucharistic liturgical celebration, and on the other hand sends them to testify in the world through the quality of their moral and spiritual life. Though little obvious at first glance, it is about a close relationship between the missionary work and the Trinitarian theology: the mission is the transposition of the Trinitarian theology into practice, for the sending of the apostles by Christ is based on the fact that He Himself is sent by the Father in the Spirit (Jn, 20, 21-23). Also, the missionary sending is essentially the sending of the Spirit (Jn 14: 26) which reveals the life of God as a life in communion (I Corinthians 13:13). The Christian mission itself is to attract humanity and creation in general into this life of communion that exists in God.

The relevance of the missionary conception of "Liturgy after the Liturgy" is particularly important for the Orthodox and ecumenical missionary theology. See in this sense the provocative study signed by Tamás Juhász, "Happy End or Happy Begin? Protestant remarks on Professor Ion Bria's book "Liturgy after the Liturgy", in N. Moșoiu (coord.), cited works, pp. 203-210. Other contributions are the reviews of Father Ion Bria's book, *Liturgy after the Liturgy*: M. Blyth, "The Liturgy After the Liturgy, An Ecumenical Perspective," in the *Ecumenical Review* 44 (1992), no. 1, pp. 73-79; James J Stamoolis, "The Liturgy after the Liturgy: Mission and Witness from an Orthodox Perspective (*Review*)," in the *International Bulletin of Missionary Research* 23 (1999), no. 2, p. 84; Rev. J. van der Merwe, "Bria, Ion 1996 - The liturgy after the liturgy, mission and witness from an orthodox perspective (Book review)" in *HTS Theologiese Studies / Theological Studies* 53 (1997), no. 4, pp. 1452-1453. Some contemporary exegetes have concluded that a "Liturgy after the Liturgy" must necessarily imply a "Liturgy before the Liturgy"! See, for example, Irina von Schlipe, "The Liturgy after the Liturgy", available at <http://www.incommunion.org/2008/08/02/the-liturgy-after-the-liturgy/>. Here it is said: "There cannot be a Liturgy after the Liturgy without a Liturgy coming first. That is: we cannot go out into the world and serve God without first joining other people in the Eucharist. But can there be a Liturgy without committed service to God preceding it? Surely we must praise God in our work and our life, before we can presume to come and be partakers in his glory at the Liturgy. Unless we engage the Holy Spirit in our work, then whatever we do, however virtuous and useful, will not go beyond professionalism and be, at best,

philanthropy. It will still be very useful and welcome to its beneficiaries, but it will not bring us into communion with God"

This idea of a "Liturgy before the Liturgy" is also defended by Bishop Geevarghese Mor Coorilos, "Mission as Liturgy before Liturgy and as Contestation," in P. Vassiliadis (ed.), *Orthodox Perspectives on Mission*, Regnum Edinburgh Centenary Series, Oxford 2013, pp. 175-178.

Among the Romanian Orthodox theologians who analyzed (even tangentially) the expression "Liturgy after the Liturgy" we mention Father Professor. Dr. Aurel Pavel, *Critical Reflections on the Christian Mission*, 2 vol., Astra Museum Publishing House, Sibiu, 2014 and 2016, Father Professor Cristian Sonea, with the studies "The role and the place of laity in the mission of the Church in the view of Father Ion Bria", in Ioan Tulcan, Cristinel Ioja (coord.), *Homage to Father Professor Ion Bria (1929-2002). The reception of his theological thinking and its relevance for the overpass of the ecumenical & missionary deadlock*, the publishing house of „Aurel Vlaicu" University, Arad, 2009, pp. 220-244: "The Orthodox missionary paradigm and the current state of research in the field of Missiology in our country", in *the Faith and Life in Christ, The Yearbook of Sălaj Episcopate*, Zalău, 2008, pp. 429-442., and Assistant Lecturer Ph.D Ciprian Iulian Toroczkai, with the studies "The Liturgy After The Liturgy": The Basic Principle in Rediscovering the Valences of the Orthodox Mission, in Father Professor Aurel Pavel, father assistant professor Daniel Buda, Assistant lecturer Ciprian Iulian Toroczkai (eds.), *Making Mission from the Model of Christ. The specificity of Orthodoxy and Ecumenism today*, Astra Museum, Sibiu, 2013, pp. 292-307; "Role of the Parish in the Fulfillment of the Mission of the Church. Contribution of Professor Ion Bria (1929-2002) ", in Laurentiu Streza, Vasile Vlad, Florin Dobrei, Radu Trifon, Alexandru Vlad (eds.), *Postmodernism - A Challenge to Contemporary Christianity*, Felicitas Publishing House / Publishing House of Deva and Hunedoara Episcopate, Stockholm / Deva, 2015, p. 415-435.<sup>23</sup> There are also other summary articles, such as the one written by deacon Ph.D Cătălin Radu, entitled "Liturgy after the Liturgy"<sup>24</sup>, or other Romanian theologians tangentially touching the issue (see, as an eloquent example, the contributions of Professor Cristinel Ioja, "The Renewal" as a pastoral-missionary desideratum in the Theological Thinking of Father Professor

---

<sup>23</sup> See also the chapter: "A profile of Orthodox missionary theologian in the twentieth century: Father Ion Bria," from Ciprian Iulian Toroczkai, *The mission of the Orthodox Church, yesterday and today*, Astra Museum Publishing House, Sibiu, 2016, p. 49-57.

<sup>24</sup> Cătălin Radu, "Liturgy after Liturgy", text available at <https://www.crestinortodox.ro/religie/liturgie-dupa-liturgie-118518.html> (accessed on 12.05.2018).

Ion Bria in *Homage to father professor Ion Bria (1929-2002). The reception of his theological thinking and his relevance for the overpass of the ecumenical & missionary deadlock*, The International Symposium Arad 25-26 February, the publishing house of „Aurel Vlaicu” University, Arad, 2009, pp. 78-89, respectively "Father Professor Ion Bria and his specific contribution in the elaboration of a Dogmatic Theology with ecumenical implications", in the volume *The relevance of the Work of Father Professor Ion Bria for the present Church and social life. New research directions in the doctrine, mission and unity of the Church*, coordinator Associate professor Ph.D Nicolae Moșoiu, the Publishing House of "Lucian Blaga " University, Sibiu, 2010, pp. 321-334. See also pr. Prof. Dr. Nicolae Răzvan Stan, "The full use of the Orthodox doctrine by the hristification of the human existence: an evaluation of the theological thinking of Father Ion Bria", in *Homage to Professor Ion Bria (1929-2002). The reception of his theological thinking and his relevance for the overpass of the ecumenical & missionary deadlock*, The International Symposium, Arad 25-26 February 2009, Coordinators: Ioan Tulcan and Cristinel Ioja, the publishing house of Aurel Vlaicu University, Arad, 2009, p. 245- 269, and "The Principles of Orthodox Spirituality Highlighted in the Work of Father Professor Ion Bria", in the volume *The Relevance of father Professor Ion Bria's work for the contemporary society and for the life of the Church. New Directions in the Research of Church Doctrine, Mission, and Unity*, Coordinator: Associate professor Ph.D Nicolae Moșoiu, the publishing house of "Lucian Blaga" University, Sibiu, 2010, pp. 481-494).

Interestingly, almost all of these authors refer to expression without distinguishing between the ideas of Archbishop Anastasios Yannoulatos and those of Professor Ion Bria - yet another proof of the similarity of the vision and ideas of the two great Orthodox missionary theologians.

Regarding the relevance of the missionary phrase, the reverend Professor Bria himself emphasized that the expression "Liturgy after the Liturgy" had the merit of avoiding the danger of liturgical isolation, which over time Orthodoxy had. On the other hand, it restores the true dimension of the liturgical service as a form of *martyrdom*. More importantly, however, is that the "Liturgy after the liturgy" vision maintains the balance between personal holiness, through asceticism and prayer, and the social and cultural context in which the Christians and people in general live. Orthopraxy, asceticism, is not only about body passions, but also about social evil that manifests itself in institutions and ideologies that degrade man and detracts him from his destiny. We conclude our study with the criticism that father Ion Bria made to a certain type of Orthodox theology: "Identified with the mystical theology of the Eastern Church, with the apophatic gnosis, with the spirituality of the hesychasm, with the atonite monasticism, Orthodoxy seemed to concentrate at any cost on the theology - the

mystery of God's being and its contemplation, leaving leaving on a second plan the economy, that is, the unfolding in history of God's plan to save the world. Dualism between nature and person, separation between the iconomy of the Son and that of the Holy Spirit, the complex character of the person, all these attributes preferred by certain Orthodox theologians ... gave the impression that the theological reflection is incomplete. "What was lacking was the revelation of the social-moral components that the notion of deification (theosis) possessed. But the mystical experience of deification cannot be deprived of the connection with the liturgy and the everyday life of man. The economics of salvation takes place on several levels, and the values of the gospel must avoid past situations, when between theoria and praxis there is rupture, not reciprocity. "From here the flagrant contradictions encountered in the former Communist period: they were talking about theosis, but human rights violations were tolerated; were talking about philosophy, but closed their eyes to the destruction of creation with weapons and nuclear technology. "<sup>25</sup> A lesson of the recent past that Orthodox theologians today cannot afford to ignore...

In fact, we can even see a "universalism" of the thinking of father Bria, both on pan-Orthodox and ecumenical plan. Father Nicholas Mosoiu rightly highlighted this aspect in a medallion he dedicated to him in the "Orthodox Manual of Ecumenism"<sup>26</sup>. (Some exegetes even spoke of Bria's "struggle" against "the hegemony of Hellenism and Slavonism."<sup>27</sup>) A convincing example is still mentioned.

In one of the ecumenical documents, *Together towards Life. Mission and Evangelism in Changing Landscapes*<sup>28</sup>, direct reference to father Bria and the phrase "Liturgy after the Liturgy", referring to the presence and the work of the Holy Spirit in the world, the source of the Christian mission (Sections 16 and 17): „Biblical witness attests to a variety of understandings of the role of the Holy Spirit in mission. One perspective on the role of the Holy Spirit in mission emphasizes the Holy Spirit as fully dependent on Christ, as the Paraclete and the one who will come as Counselor and Advocate only after Christ has gone to the Father. The Holy Spirit is seen as the continuing presence of Christ, his agent to

---

<sup>25</sup> See: Ion Bria, *Liturgy after the Liturgy*, p. 30-32.

<sup>26</sup> Nicolae Mosoiu, „Father Ion Bria”, in : Pantelis Kalaitzidis et al. (eds.), *Orthodox Handbook on Ecumenism*, Regnum Books International, Oxford, 2013, p.190-193.

<sup>27</sup> Răzvan Emanuel Fibișan, „The Hegemony of Hellenism and Slavonism from the perspective of Father Ion Bria”, in: *Altarul Banatului* 10-12 (2015), p. 90-97.

<sup>28</sup> Jooseop Keum (ed.), *Together towards Life. Mission and Evangelism in Changing Landscapes*, WCC Publications, Geneva, 2013, p. 9. Text available at [https://www.oikoumene.org/en/resources/publications/TogethertowardsLife\\_SAMPLE.pdf](https://www.oikoumene.org/en/resources/publications/TogethertowardsLife_SAMPLE.pdf) (accesed on 10.06.2018).

fulfill the task of mission. This understanding leads to a missiology focusing on sending out and going forth. Therefore, a pneumatological focus on Christian mission recognizes that mission is essentially christologically based and relates the work of the Holy Spirit to the salvation through Jesus Christ.

Another perspective emphasizes that the Holy Spirit is the “Spirit of Truth” that leads us to the “whole truth” (John 16:13) and blows wherever he/she wills (John 3:8), thus embracing the whole of the cosmos; it proclaims the Holy Spirit as the source of Christ and the church as the eschatological coming together (synaxis) of the people of God in God’s kingdom. This second perspective posits that the faithful go forth in peace (in mission) after they have experienced in their eucharistic gathering the eschatological kingdom of God as a glimpse and foretaste of it. Mission as going forth is thus the outcome, rather than the origin of the church, and is called “liturgy after the Liturgy.”<sup>29</sup>

The studies published by father Bria in the *International Review of Mission*, and especially those in which the phrase "Liturgy after the liturgy" is found, are considered by a Greek theologian as an essential contribution brought by the Orthodox theologians in the contemporary ecumenical dialogue. Referring to the contribution made by Archbishop Anastasios in this respect, it is said: „The

---

<sup>29</sup> Romanian translation by father Daniel Buda, “Together towards life: Mission and Evangelism in Changing landscapes. A new assertion of the World Council of the Churches (WCC) about Mission and Evangelism”, in: Father Professor Aurel Pavel, Father Assistant Professor Daniel Buda, and Lecturer Ciprian Iulian Toroczka (eds.), *Making Mission from the Model of Christ. The specificity of Orthodoxy and Ecumenism today*, Astra Museum, Sibiu, 2013, p. 24-56 (text available at <http://teologie.ulbsibiu.ro/wp-content/uploads/2017/05/a-face-misiune-vol-1-320.pdf>, accessed 10.05.2018): Biblical witness attests to a variety of understandings of the role of the Holy Spirit in mission. One perspective on the role of the Holy Spirit in mission emphasizes the Holy Spirit as fully dependent on Christ, as the Paraclete and the one who will come as Counselor and Advocate only after Christ has gone to the Father. The Holy Spirit is seen as the continuing presence of Christ, his agent to fulfill the task of mission. This understanding leads to a missiology focusing on sending out and going forth. Therefore, a pneumatological focus on Christian mission recognizes that mission is essentially christologically based and relates the work of the Holy Spirit to the salvation through Jesus Christ.

Another perspective emphasizes that the Holy Spirit is the “Spirit of Truth” that leads us to the “whole truth” (John 16:13) and blows wherever he/she wills (John 3:8), thus embracing the whole of the cosmos; it proclaims the Holy Spirit as the source of Christ and the church as the eschatological coming together (synaxis) of the people of God in God’s kingdom. This second perspective posits that the faithful go forth in peace (in mission) after they have experienced in their eucharistic gathering the eschatological kingdom of God as a glimpse and foretaste of it. Mission as going forth is thus the outcome, rather than the origin of the church, and is called “liturgy after the Liturgy”.

„Liturgy after the Liturgy" in father Ion Bria's thinking.

“liturgy after the Liturgy” was a new perspective, although rooted in the heart of tradition. The meaning of this outlook is that the vision of the kingdom, which is revealed in the Divine Liturgy, concerns the whole world, and that it has to be diffused as witness and service to the whole of society. The witness that is given after the Liturgy is an organic part of it, not something added on and therefore of secondary importance. The formula “liturgy after the Liturgy” was first articulated by Anastasios Yannoulatos in 1975 in Etchmiadzine, Armenia, and since then, along with the valuable contribution of Ion Bria, has become an established phrase that is used often in the IRM.<sup>30</sup>

And other theologians, of different denominations, took over the phrase "Liturgy after the Liturgy." For example, the Greek Orthodox theologian Petros Vassiliadis, also involved in the ecumenical dialogue, uses it to recall the "cosmic dimension of liturgical theology."<sup>31</sup> Even when the Romanian theologian is not quoted directly, Vassiliadis echoes his ideas about the indissoluble relationship that exists (and must be exercised through missionary work) between the liturgical life and the social-philanthropic life.<sup>32</sup>

These were just some of the most important contributions brought to the emphasis on the meaning of the Liturgy after the Liturgy today. Without any claim of exhaustiveness, we note that his posterity is increasingly brilliant. On the other hand, there are still many aspects that seem to be deepened. For example, it would be interesting to make a parallel of the "liturgical revival" movements of both Orthodoxy (perhaps in a future PhD thesis to compare the works of Ion Bria and Alexander Schmemmann?)<sup>33</sup> as well as other Christian traditions (such as the Roman Catholicism promoted by Odo Casel and Lambert Beauduin)<sup>34</sup>. Besides, in

---

<sup>30</sup> Athanasios N. Papathanasiou, „Tradition as Impulse for Renewal and Witness: Introducing Orthodox Missiology in the IRM”, in: *IRM* 100 (2011), nr. 2, p. 203-215, here p. 209.

<sup>31</sup> Petros Vassiliadis, „Apocalypse and Liturgy”, in: *SVTQ* 41 (1997), p. 95-112, here p. 112 note 56

<sup>32</sup> See: Idem, „The Social Dimension of the Orthodox Liturgy: From Biblical Dynamism to a Doxological Liturgism”, in: *RES-Sibiu* 9 (2017), no. 2, p. 132-153.

<sup>33</sup> Interest also present the thesis sustained by Elizabeth Newman at the Duke University in 1990, “Alexander Schmemmann and Orthodox Theology: the liturgy as sacred *Sprachspiel*” (specially chapter “An ethical approach: the liturgy as public space”, p. 267-279). This, unfortunately, remained unpublished.

<sup>34</sup> Interesting is Slavko Krajnc's study, “Liturgy and Mission”, in: *Bogoslovni vestnik* 74 (2014), no. 3, p. 435-448.

neoprotestantism echoes the missionary conception of father Ion Bria, in which the central position is occupied by the missionary phrase "Liturgy after the Liturgy".<sup>35</sup>

We conclude this chapter with reference to a collective work: *The Mission of the Church. Five Views in Conversation*.<sup>36</sup> The five visions are supported from a Roman Catholic perspective (Stephen B. Bevans), Protestant (Darrel L. Guder), Evangelical Latin (Ruth Padilla DeBorst), Orthodox (Edward Rommen), and finally Evangelical-North American Ed Stetzer).

Edward Rommen supports the Orthodox vision of the mission, as it is found at Orthodox theologians like Ion Bria and Anastasios Yannoulatos. This is a "sacramental vision". In such a perspective, the Gospel is not a document about a person but it is the Person of Jesus Christ Himself, for He is the "Good News." Then the mission is to make Christ present to those who have not known Him yet. But Jesus Christ the Risen is present in different places, and especially in the Eucharistic community of the Church. Those faithful, gathered together to celebrate the Eucharist, receive Jesus Christ and they are then called to go out into the world to testify about this. This is the "Liturgy after the liturgy". Thus his Church and His Sacraments are the beginning and the end of the mission.

#### **Instead of conclusions: a few critics**

We conclude by pointing out that, through all his theological, pastoral-missionary and ecumenical activity, father professor Ion Bria remains a model to be followed by the generations of today and tomorrow theologians.<sup>37</sup> Positive appreciation in this respect is found in the two homage books, one appearing in Arad and the other in Sibiu, which I quoted in the introduction of this study. Here is one example: Father Bria, through his intense and long-lasting activity - for almost thirty years - within the structures of the Ecumenical Council of Churches, "is one of the most dynamic and authoritative theological voices of our time

---

<sup>35</sup> See: the exmple of Corneliu C. Simuț, *Traditionalism and Radicalism in the History of Christian Thought*, Palgrave, Macmillan, 2010, p. 37-66 (chapter "Traditional Christian Thought in Postmodernity: Ion Bria and Pastoral Ecclesiology in the Twentieth Century").

<sup>36</sup> Craig Ott (ed.), *The Mission of the Church. Five Views in Conversation*, Baker Academic, Grand Rapids, 2016.

<sup>37</sup> The contribution brought by Ion Bria to the development of the Romanian Orthodox dogmatic theology is synthesized in Cristinel Ioja, *Dogmatics and Dogmatists. Prologomena, on the deepening of the Orthodox Dogmatic Theology in Romania in the second half of the 20th century and the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century*, Marineasa Publishing House, Timișoara, 2008, p. 175-214.



regarding the presentation and the dialogue of Orthodoxy with the Western world".<sup>38</sup>

It is no less true that there are critical voices that call into question certain concepts and directions that Professor Ion Bria has drawn. For example, Father Ioan Ica sn., referring to the Manual of Dogmatic and Ecumenical Theology in comparison with Father Staniloae's Dogmatics, wrote that although the former, "wants to be on the same line of the Treaty of Orthodox Dogmatic Theology of father Dumitru Stăniloae, but he uses for the Orthodox dogmatic theology the equivocal term of ecumenical theology, which in the author's view is a "Christian dogma" (!) that abstracts from the confessional symbolism and makes Christian theology valid "per se and for all". In the same time, the treaty no longer appears as the fruit of a long teaching experience of dogmatic theology, but "a scholarly florilegium" made up of various dogmatic studies published over the years, "to be part of a manual or a compendium for students and which constitutes the essence of the ad hoc course of "dogmatic and ecumenical theology" held at the Faculty of Orthodox Theology in Sibiu between 1995-1999. For this purpose, the author commuted from Geneva to Sibiu at longer intervals."<sup>39</sup>

His Beatitude Patriarch Daniel Ciobotea, then the Metropolitan of Moldavia and Bucovina, said about the content of the work *Orthodoxy in Europe. The place of the Romanian spirituality*: "Even if the argumentation of his claims is not always sufficiently developed, which may sometimes give rise to reservations from the reader, the author provokes us to reflect on the pastoral, ethical, social, missionary and ecumenical issues. The author's critical observations on some aspects of today's Christian theology and life, which the Trinitas Publishing House respects, even if they do not share them " and so on (see p. 5-6).

Father Professor Gheorghe Drăgulin in the review of the *Dictionary of Orthodox Theology*, although welcoming certain positive aspects - such as the method of integrating the liturgical expressions, prayers in the Dictionary, and illustrating doctrinal statements almost exclusively through extracts from Philocalia - also signals some inconsistencies of this work, which was based on the fact that Father Bria "was not in the position to make his personal correction." Among these inaccuracies, he recalls: 1) the notion of *chenosis* understood as "annihilation" of the divine nature in the act of Incarnation; the consecration of the ointment by the bishop and not in a solemn frame in the synod. At the same time

---

<sup>38</sup> Vasile Vlad, "Dynamics of Orthodoxy: Identity and Renewal - From the Prospect of Father Professor Ion Bria", in: N. Moşoiu (coord.), *op. cit.*, p. 449.

<sup>39</sup> See: Prof. Ioan Ică, review to Prof. Dumitru Popescu, "Jesus Christ Pantocrator", in: *ST 2* (2006), no. 1, p. 224.

the text must "give up its many French words" and it is necessary for the Orthodox authors to emphasize their "hieratic" dignity.<sup>40</sup>

In turn, reverend assistant professor Ph.D Daniel Buda, in the introduction of a volume published in Sibiu, which included the translation of some of Ion Bria's studies, showed that there are issues in his work that are not, in our opinion, acceptable or current today: "the opening of the orthodox cult "or at least some aspects of this concept otherwise interesting from an ecumenical point of view, the enthusiasm of ecumenical prayers; finally, the reconsideration of the position that only full unity in faith allows sacramental and eucharistic communion."<sup>41</sup>

Whether or not these criticisms are substantiated, they do not impinge upon the imposing stature that father Professor Bria had to the development of Orthodox missionary theology in general and of Romanian in particular. With reference to the phrase "Liturgy after the Liturgy", it is enough to support our assertion of the profound implications that it has in the life of the Church.

Celebrated on Sunday, being a commemoration of the Resurrection of Christ, the Liturgy goes beyond the appropriation of the message of salvation of Christ; It turns Christians into witnesses of the Risen Christ. The joy of sharing the fruits of the Cross, the life of Christ Himself, symbolized by the Eucharistic bread and wine, should also be transmitted to others. Through the Liturgy of the Word - Bible Readings, Homilies, Litanies-Answers - believers teach a language of communication in order to reach those who seek faith. The Eucharist is certainly given as food for the tired pilgrims, sometimes the martyrs of the Cross. As a result, at the end of the Liturgy, the priest blesses their apostolic itinerary: *go in peace*.<sup>42</sup>

---

<sup>40</sup> According to father I. Dragulin, Review to father professor Ion Bria, *Dictionary of Orthodox Theology A-Z*, Bucharest, 1981, 399 p., in: *BOR* 99 (1981), no. 9-10, p. 1130-1132.

<sup>41</sup> Daniel Buda, "Introductory Study", in Ion Bria, *Mission and Ecumenism Studies*, p. XIX.

<sup>42</sup> See: *Ibidem*, p. 156, and the following ones, respectively *idem*, *Go in peace! Orthodox Perspectives on Mission*, Reintregirea Publishing House, Alba-Iulia, 2016.