



PHILOSOPHY AND THEOLOGY, SCIENCE AND KNOWLEDGE, TRUTH AND LIFE

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ABSTRACT

The present article analyses the content on philosophical information and presents the Christian Theology and Dogmatic teaching as Science and Knowledge of Truth and Life. Orthodox theology in general and the dogmatic in particular, have as primary objective the knowledge and explanation of the revealed truths of faith, which exposes them systematically and symbolically, having the basic inside of their content sent by the Holy Scripture and Tradition, but formulated for Church in dogmas. The specific of the Orthodoxy shows us that theology is the science of the whole knowledge with a direct existential implication of the only truth about life-maker iconically expressed by God the Holy Trinity. The theological background of knowledge is essentially that of ecclesial, as graceful ambience in which the divine revelation represents the power of the truth. That's why Church is the guarantee and the authenticity of the free knowledge and infallible knowledge of the divine truth that it has inside.

Keywords: Christianity; Orthodoxy Theology; Dogma; Philosophy; Truth and Life; Church;

INTRODUCTION

Man is the only being created by God who has the ability to think, speak, and be like his Creator, the God. With the passage of time, the feelings and thoughts of everyday life passed through the thought filter were written on paper, and contained in words, notions and concepts written and left as an inheritance to future generations, but also as a testimony of the passage over time. Two great scientific contents deal with the knowledge of truth, of the human life of everything that exists. Of course, we are talking about philosophy and theology. "What is philosophy?" We asked Jules Lachelier (1832-1918), but here is what he responded to the astonishment of his disciples and ours: "I do not know!" Here's how a teacher teaches a discipline which he does not know, nor what it is and what it does¹. Starting from these considerations in philosophy, there are no universal standards that impose themselves in the face of knowledgeable consciousness, and the operation of delimiting philosophy from the other fields of intellectual exercise, starting from the criterion of definition, is itself philosophical. Man by nature is a philosopher, he thinks, has questions, and seeks answers. In ancient Greek, philosophy designated the love of wisdom, and according to tradition, Pythagoras used this term for the first time (580-500 BC).

¹ Andre Vergez & Denis Huisman, *Curs de filosofie, (Course of philosophy)*, Humanitas, 1995.



“Pythagoras was the first to use the term philosophy and called himself a philosopher ... saying that no man is wise but only the god. Philosophy was formerly called wisdom, and the professor was called wise, to show that he had reached the highest degree of soul perfection; the philosopher was the lover of wisdom”².

Is the philosopher a wise man? The wise man can be a philosopher? If philosophy questions question, theology with a revealed character responds. From a philosophical perspective, “wisdom means to conform to the truth by listening to the nature (*physis*) of things” that “remain hidden”³. It is man who creates wisdom and gives birth to philosophical thinking, which results in the purely anthropocentric character of philosophy.

What is theology? Unlike rationalist philosophical thinking where truth is impersonal, Christianity reveals God as a personal, Tri-Personality of the Holy Trinity, who does not stay away from His creatures but is in touch with them, and especially with man. It is revealed to men so that they can at least know something of His existence and works. If there was no Divine Revelation, or the action by which God is revealed to men, his knowledge would not be possible to men, for He, being a spiritual being, cannot be known by the senses. Revelation is necessary because without it man cannot know the works and plans of God, and thus he cannot fulfill the ultimate purpose for which he was created, namely, the exaltation of the Creator and the acquisition of eternal happiness as the fulfillment of his own being, as the Savior Himself says: “*Now this is eternal life: that they know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom you have sent.*” (John 17: 3). So, Christian theology does not build the idea of God but is based on the revelation of God made to men gradually, so long as man can understand the Truth. Hence the theology, the dogmatic knowledge does not ask what is the essence of divine revelation, but what the Church must say on the basis of the apostles and prophets and the Bible for the salvations of all peoples.

“The theology does not offer a sum of knowledge about God, but the life of God, the Person of Christ, God-Man, the only Complete Truth, the Way, Truth, and Life”⁴.

The Truth is God Himself. In this sense, revelation-based theology analyzes God and His works outside of His Being, but also all His works and beings created by Him as they stand in relation to God the Creator, the Provident and the Savior. So in this aspect as in philosophy, any natural or human phenomenon in this world can be analyzed from the theological perspective. Anything or phenomenon can become the subject of Christian theology: the world, nature, the environment, science, man himself, creation etc. Unanimously, philosophical thinking referring to Christian theology conceptualizes it and sums it up:

“1) the disbelief in the human mind of being able to find the truth through its own means. That is why human thinking in this period seeks support outside of it, in God, in divine revelation, in dogma. 2) The purpose of philosophy is of a hermeneutical nature. She has to interpret holy texts, in which the truth is masked, often exposed in a metaphorical way. 3) The world is not constituted by rational principles, as pagan philosophers understood it. The meaning of the world escapes our ability to know. The world is a mystery, since the

² Diogene Laertios, *Despre viețile și doctrinele filosofilor (About philosophers' lives and doctrines)*, București, Editura Academiei, p.118

³ See, *Filosofia greacă până la Platon, (Greek philosophy up to Plato)*, Vol. I. Second part, București, Editura Științifică și Enciclopedică, pp. 321-373

⁴ Pr. Lect. George Remete, *Dogmatica Ortodoxă, (The Orthodox Dogmatics)*, ed. III-a, Editura Reîntregirea, Alba-Iulia, 2000, p. 11.



creator of this world, God, has not presented to people his intentions. 4) Nature research becomes marginal. Interesting are, for the Christian philosopher, the moral deeds and inner life of man”⁵.

Certainly, from a rational point of view, these considerations can be accepted, but they miss out on the very real character, specific to God and especially to man. This definition of theology is made in the strictest way of logical reasoning and logic thinking, but apart from the total divine revelation realized by Jesus Christ, where the antinomy and the parody become real and meaningful. Greek philosophy is centered on the structure of religion, the mythology of history, and the relations of the gods with world-theology, and not a reality of God, which is why Greek philosophers conceive the world in the storyline as something of its own, something of the order logically constraining records and does not seek to see who her author is.

"*Philosophical theology*", in fact, the ancient philosophy rediscovered in the medieval period, represents the power of man's mind directed to the knowledge of divinity, to the relationship with the gods, an anthropocentric discourse - understood as a rational, monologist projection given to imaginary meanings that conceive of a divinity static, existing only apparent and not real. On the opposite pole, based on the divine discovery, theology means conceptually defined life by the systematic assemblies of revealed works of faith as well as the defense and valorization of the Christian faith.

Philosophy is man's desire to love the wisdom of fulfilling man's duty to man. Philosophy starts from the incursions of human thought into the world of the concepts and ideas that it generates, postulates, autonomously without guaranteeing their existence, and so at the origin of all lies a principle, an idea, abstract, unreal, but which becomes real just by the fact that is thought. *An essential remark is the following, namely, theology is specific to the man who seeks him, speaks with and is about God. While Divine Revelation is the revelation of God to men, the action by which God speaks of Himself and His works is theology. It does not mean theology, because it is Revelation. And if God does not exist, it cannot be discerned, it cannot be known, yet logically the philosophical man seeks precisely the existence of his non-existence, which for philosophy, ontologically, it cannot make sense, because the being cannot be thought as coming from non-existence.*

Talking about God, rationalizing the Divine Existence, thinking that there is a Supreme Being is in fact a call to what the Creator put into man's being, the mental and mental part through which man reaches the act of knowledge, understanding, and science. This complex and antinomical process is a revelation and certainty that at least in terms of logical act, gnostic is possible. So man ascends with the mind to perceive the mysteries of God and creation, because this presupposes on one hand his own existence and on the other hand the existence of God. From the perspective of theological thinking, this act is not based on the intellectual processes specific to man, scientifically perfected with the passage of time, because God is not an idea, a man-made conception, but is grounded on God's revelation, the Divine Revelation. God exists and is revealed to men, of course progressively in the Old Testament and fully through Jesus Christ, and man's reception of this revelation not only involves intellectual mechanisms, neither scientific schemes, nor philosophical opinions, but a relationship, a connection of love and communion of man with God specific to the personal beings that is generally attributed to the sacred and holy space of the Church.

⁵ http://www.unarte.org/unarte/pdf/pentru_studenti/cursuri/CA.2.pdf, pp. 76-69



The divine revelation is comprehended and transmitted by Sacred Scripture and Holy Tradition but in close connection with the Church that has authority over its formation, fixation, defense, and explanation under the direct presence, assistance and inspiration of God's Holy Spirit. The process of knowledge generally involves a conceptual coordinate with logical, analogical and symbolic veils, using words, judgments, images, symbols, analogies, according to the human way of thinking and understanding to express and define their realities and existence.

The Orthodox Theology, in general, and Dogmatics in particular, seeks to know and explain the revealed truths of faith, which they systematically and symbolically exhibit, having as their basis their content contained in the Sacred Scripture and transmitted by the Holy Tradition but formulated in time by the Church in dogma.

Theology refers to the totality of the teachings of the Church concerning the Existence of God and His works in the world. That is why theology should not be seen only as a science of religion or religion, because in reality God cannot be defined and encompassed scientifically, but rather, empirically by personal belief based on the revealed truths one can define and express part of the vast theological domain. As a science and religious experience, theology encompasses many forms of manifestation: dogmatic, practical, ritualistic, moral, ascetic, mystical. Through all the action of God's knowledge is made, which represents a way of life that Jesus Christ the Son of God incarnate has revealed, but the Church has regulated it by linking the theandric sacramental ambiance it offers to its members. *So, the man cannot know God without the dates of the Divine Revelation and especially without the harsh and ecclesial life through which he unites with Christ in the Holy Mysteries, but this process is continuous, it is not static, because what is to be known God is Absolute, that is why theological, dogmatic knowledge is accomplished in Venice and involves a transformation of man, a sanctification of it, the fulfillment of the divine archetype by the likeness of God.*

1. THE NOTION AND MEANING OF THEOLOGY AND DOGMA

The notion of "theology" first appears in the philosophy of the ancient Greeks, naming the words spoken of a certain god (θεολογία⁶), but being related to mythology and agnostic mysticism embodied in magic, which made the Christian context for differentiation uses the phrase "*true philosophy*," designating the action that deals with studying, knowing, explaining and transmitting the truths of revelation. St. Justin the Martyr and the Philosopher uses the first word "theologian" in the Dialogue with the Triphon the Jude, meaning the word or revelation of God to man, without defining theology as Christian teaching, which he is called "*the only true and useful philosophy*"⁷. In the same direction is also Clement the Alexandrine, who says that Christian theology is "true philosophy and theology." The term "dogmatic theology" dates back to the seventh century AD, adding to the historical

⁶ See: Platon, *Republica* (c. II, 379 A); Aristotle, *Metafizica* 2.4; The term theology was first used by Plato in the Republic (II, 379 A) where he speaks of three types of theology: (1) epic, (2) melos, (3) the tragedy, these being the representations of the gods, the citizens of a city, in contrast to the rough representations that circulated in the people. At Aristotle, the term "theologians" is used for old poets and writers: Homer, Hesiod, Orpheus. They are theologians, or those who know the life of the gods. In contrast to these theologians also considered to be a kind of philosopher, Aristotle opposes the ancient physicists or those who study and speak about the principles of the world, such as Empidocle (*Metaphysics*, I075 b, 2; 26).

⁷ Sfântul Iustin Martirul și Filosoful, *Dialogul cu iudeul Trifon (Dialogue with Trypho)*, Partea I, cap, II, trad. Pr. Olimp N. Căciulă, în P.S.B., Nr. 2., edit IBM al BOR, București 1980, pp. 92-94



separation of the Christian church beginning with 1054 but continued until today, and coordinated by comparative theology or "*symbolic*"⁸.

From etymological perspective, the notion of theology is made up of the words: Θεός -Theos = God and λόγος -logos = word, teaching, reason, knowledge, what only shows the material side that is related to rationality developed and materialized in what man called science of the "Word of God" or "science of God and His works". But this materiality of theology seen only as science is not sufficient, because its object which is the relationship of God with man and vice versa is not expressed, for it is accomplished in a living, integral reality by the interpenetration of natural the supernatural, the divine with humanity, the material with the spiritual, in other words, through mystical living, or life in Christ, defined by being in the "Holy Spirit, in the spirit of the holy Fathers".

Defining theology only as a science based on the etymology of the Greek word "theologia" means in fact a definition of what it contains and truly expresses, namely the co-working of man with God testified in the teaching of God and His works on the basis of revelation, and totally in and by Jesus Christ, but formulated, transmitted and preached exclusively by Church. Christ Himself is permanently and truly present in the Church teaches to the saints and leads to salvation the people who unite with Him and believe in Him. Therefore the Church is the theandrical framework of revelation, in which Christ continuously and continuously exercises until the end of his three-eyed ministry.

Theology dealing with Christian religion, or the free and conscious connection of man with God cannot be defined only as a sign of the teachings of God, God's relationship with man and the world, these being important as regards the epistemological side but not enough for knowledge of divine secrets because knowledge in its deep sense means the discovery of the one expressing a certain reality, in a dogmatic religious sense meaning God's knowledge. But God cannot be known by His being, because man does not have this capacity on the one hand, and on the other through such knowledge and definition we circumscribe Him, we limit Him and therefore we cannot be God. We know God after the works that springs up and holds on to His Being or grace; therefore theology implies the reception of grace that illuminates man's mind (gnosis); enlightenment that transforms him (*metanoia*) and makes him a worker according to the mystical experience he has reached, which he cannot define or conceptualize because it "contains the uncluttered", the apophatic in which human logic encounters antinomy.

Taking into account this mysterious experience, the Orthodox Church has always learned that theology is in the first place a way of life and not a science, and **theologian is not the one who speaks of God but the one who speaks to God**, to whom reveals the "hiding places and secrets" of the transcendent which he then speaks of using the elements of the immanent, but that does not mean a dissection and exhaustion of what he actually knows.

Theology is a reality of man's relationship with God, of prayer and contemplation. That is why Evagrius of Pontus teaches us that: „*he that loveth God hath spoken with him forever, as with a father*”⁹ and in conclusion „*if you are a theologian (you are dealing with the contemplation of God to the true knowledge), pray truly; and if you pray with a devil you are a theologian*”¹⁰. In this sense, the great writer of church, Origen in his epistle to his

⁸ Clement Alexandrinul, *Stromata* I, cap. V, trad. Pr. D. Fecioru, în P.S.B., Nr. 5, Edit IBM, București, 1980, pp. 25-28

⁹ Evagrie Ponticul, *Cuvânt despre rugăciune (The teaching of prayer)*, cap. 54, în Filocalia, vol.I, ed.II, trad. Pr. Prof. Dr. Dumitru Stăniloae, Sibiu 1947, p. 81

¹⁰ *Ibidem*, cap 60, p. 81



disciple St. Gregory the Thaumaturgus, advising him to understand the mysteries of Holy Scripture says:

“My distinguished son, be remembered in the reading of holy scriptures, for we who are reading the scriptures must be careful, that we may not learn or believe anything unhealthy about them. Having a lot of attention and remembrance in the reading of the holy ones, but also a belief with pleasing thoughts to God, knocks on the hidden doors of the scripture and opens to you the story about which Jesus taught us. But in order to understand the holy ones it is not enough to beat and to search, but very prayerful is also the prayer”¹¹.

Theology involves the sensual and gradual experience of the God's love for men, love that the ecclesial frame truly shares with those who enter into direct communication with Christ, illuminating their minds and revealing to them the unique system of cognitive knowledge in which divine life transcends the concept of "the word that kills" because it actually means receiving the spirit of life that makes the letter or word itself alive. In order to attain this knowledge, it is necessary to have the *metanoia* and deliverance from the bondage of sin by changing the mind that is heading to Christ, colliding with Him, having the same thoughts that materialize in good deeds as the rows of faith, as St. Athanasius the Great:

“In addition to the true search and knowledge of the Scriptures, it is also necessary for a good life and a pure soul and virtue after Christ, that, walking in its path, the mind reaches the desirable ones and can encompass as far as possible the flesh of men, find out about God-Word. For without pure thought, without the consecration of the saints, one cannot understand the words of the saints. ... He who wishes to understand the thoughts of God to the speakers must cleanse and wash the soul through life, and draw near to the saints by the likeness of his deeds, that by accompanying them together by living with them, discovered by God ...”¹².

St. Maximus the Confessor clearly shows the difference between theology as discourse and theology as knowledge of God, therefore:

“Those who have mysteriously conceived of God's contemplative knowledge (contemplative theology) and have made their minds clean of all material imagination and all, and have made the image of divine beauty by imitating that, to think that they are lovers”¹³.

Revelation in Jesus Christ is the plenary divine Revelation in the sense that it can no longer be improved or perfected, and that no new revelation, i.e., another, for mankind, is to be expected in the future. This plenary Revelation in Christ is not only a sum of teachings or truths, but also a new order of harvest life set in and by Christ, that is, the fullness of Christian truths and salvific hardships present as a continuous permanence of Christ in the Church over all times and spaces. Concretizing the knowledge of divine truth constitutes the Sacred Tradition or the Apostolic Tradition of the Church as the application and deepening of the revealed word of Holy Scripture. When the knowledge of theology teaches the true knowledge of God, the kingdom of heaven. In Christ is the whole content of knowledge that we reach through the Holy Spirit that guides us to all truth (John 16:13) or to Christ Himself "The Way, Truth and Life" (John 14: 6). That is why through the Holy Spirit „*What we have received is not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, so that we may understand what God has freely given us. This is what we speak, not in words taught us by*

¹¹ Origen, *Epistola către Sfântul Grigorie, (The Epistle to St. Gregory)* ; Migne P.G. vol. XI, col. 89-92

¹² Sf. Atanasie cel Mare, *Despre Întruparea Logosului (About the Incarnation of the Logos)*, trad. Pr. Prof. Dr. Dumitru Stăniloae PSB, vol. 15, Edit. IBM al BOR, București 1987 pp. 153-154

¹³ Sfântul Maxim Mărturisitorul, *Răspuns către Talasie*, 10, Filocalia 3, ediția electronică, Apologeticum 2005, p.63



human wisdom but in words taught by the Spirit, explaining spiritual realities with Spirit-taught words.” (1 Corinthians 2: 12-13).

From the view point of the stringency that characterizes most of the scientific fields, scholasticism has lately developed, apart from ecclesial authority, the discipline dealing with the study of religions called the Science of Religion (history of relegation). But the Science of Religion differs from theology as far as the subject is concerned, because religion science studies the religious phenomenon in general, and theology studies Christian religion, based on revelation in Christ whose content is contained in dogmas; as well as the methods: the Science of Religion, applying to the rational side, treats religion as a natural phenomenon arising from causes and effects, and evolved through the action of contextual factors, whereas theology, based on divine revelation data, does not aim at the theoretical formulation, the truths of faith, their experience in gaining eternal life.

So *Theology belongs to the Christian religion that it studies and explains, but not only in the vitality of the data provided by human reason, but above all on the divine revelation, through which the grace of the Holy Spirit illuminates reason; it is the true science that has the object of studying God and His works, and especially the relationship of all creation with God the Creator, Savior, Savior, and Judge. That is why Dogmatics:*

“No longer to man, but to human, and therefore to touch each soul's chords, may flourish with glimmers of light in every soul. It does not address the idol, the singular, the lusts, the random associations, or the selfish calculations of one individual or another, but the eternal, general-human, sacred, and abnegating of every human being. It does not address those who deprive man of his human face, but those who make him an authentic man. In a word, Dogmatics begins to use humanity arguments instead of the former Dominic's arguments, and the moment of the psychology of religion is replaced by that of the new testamentary theology”¹⁴.

The Orthodox Dogmatic Theology, if it remains in the scholastic sphere loses its meaning as the living source of the faith that Christ carries in human beings, risking being ideologized and consequently should call upon continuous adaptation of faith to various time-specific thinking systems, which contradicts divine revelation.

Orthodox Theology in general and especially Dogmatic Theology is based on the strong Biblical and patristic hermeneutics assumed and transmitted in the "spirit of the holy Fathers" gathered in synod under the authority and inspiration of the Holy Spirit formulated and transmitted the dogmas of faith absolutely necessary for knowledge, giving salvation. So dogma as a synthesis of the teaching of faith involves prayer and life in and with Christ known in the revelation transmitted by Holy Scripture and the Holy Tradition intensely applied by patristic theology, by the liturgical experience and by the improved life of those who came through ascetic effort to know the depth of divine secrets.

“That is why we are obliged to receive with strong faith and question from those who have tried the dogmas of the Church and the righteous judgments of the teachers about the divine Scriptures and the thoughtful and thoughtful creatures, lest we, by trusting in our understanding, fall short. In all, we owe ourselves to discover our ignorance that seeking someone and not believing in his thoughts, wanting to teach, and in the knowledge of much ignorance, to know his ignorance of the wisdom of God without the edges of God”¹⁵.

¹⁴ Pavel Florenski, *Dogmatică și dogmatism, Studii și eseuri teologice, Dogmatics and Dogmatism, Theological Studies and Theses*, Ed. Anastasia, 1998, p.144

¹⁵ Petru Damaschinul, *Despre a șasea cunoștință, About the Sixth Knowledge*, Filoc. 5, Eit. IBM al BOR, București, 1976, p.106-107



Understanding and knowing the mysteries of both divinity and creation cannot be accomplished without the divine help of grace that illuminates the mind of man and makes him truly faithful.

The central point from which the process of Christian understanding begins is the Person and the Work of Christ the Son of God Incarnate, or the Logos by which God has fulfilled all the purposes of creation. But the process of knowledge in Christ is full of life, graceful, that is why it cannot be attained in a discursive knowledge based solely on the powers of reason, for it remains within the sphere of creation, the need for overcoming by faith, contemplation of the things that are seen, which lead to direct, simple understanding, in which the mind lowered in the heart is enlightened by divine grace. The work of the Holy Spirit-giving life and the light of Christ's knowledge are inherent to the ecclesiastical theandric community, in which grace descends to a fifty-second continuously under the "image of the tongues as fire" as a manifestation and presence of the triumphal love. St. Gregory Palamas in the word of teaching at the descent of the Holy Spirit says:

"But why did the Spirit appear in the tongue? To show his coexistence with the Logos of God, for nothing has a greater approximation than the word with the tongue. At the same time to doctrine, because he who teaches the things about Christ must have gracious tongue. But why are burning tongues like fire? Of course, not only to show the Spirit's devotion to the Father and to the Son, for the fire is our God, and yet the burning of all wickedness, but also because of the folded work of the apostles' sermon. This is because it can also be for charity or for punishment. As the fire has the quality of enlightening and burning, so the word of the teaching of Christ also illuminates those who obey, and those who do not receive them make them worthy of torment and eternal fire. And he spoke tongues, not of fire, but of fire, lest any man think that this fire is material and subject to the senses and that we can understand the manifestation of the Spirit through this embodiment in the form of tongues"¹⁶.

The grasp of knowledge and knowledge (Luke 11: 52) offered by Christ to those who unite with Him leads to the understanding of the spirit of the life of the scripture and not to the speculative appreciation of "the letter that kills" (2 Corinthians 3: 6). Knowing and experiencing the "New Testament" - Jesus Christ puts theology in direct relation to the revelation, in which the initiative belongs to God, and at the same time engages the free answer of faith and love on the part of man. The renowned Professor Dumitru Stăniloae following St. Maxim the Confessor shows that Christ:

"The Word or Reason of God passes through the whole being of man by virtue and knowledge, family them. It's a breakthrough in time, not in a moment. The Word of God, stubborn in man, in his consciousness, passes through his reason, which thus conforms to the purposes of God. From consciousness, she organizes, rationalizes the bodily movements of man, and then enlightens his understanding, eventually penetrating all man. The two reasons are intimately related, but two remain, the human one following the divine, as the word of God binds to Himself, in response, our word, without canceling it, into a dialogue union"¹⁷.

In the union with Christ, the visible power of the mind reaches the understanding and vision of the spiritual ones communicated by God, whose presence it senses, but cannot express it in a material sense, for it exceeds the immanence. In this state, the mind is traversed by the apophatic intimate knowledge of God. Faith and pure prayer accompanied

¹⁶ St. Gregory Palamas, *Omilia 24, Cuvânt la pogorârea Duhului Sfânt, 7*, trad. Diac. Drd. Eugen Moraru, în rev. „S.T.”, Seria II, An XLVII, Nr. 1-3, 1995, p. 79

¹⁷ Sf. Maxim Mărturisitorul, *Ambigua*, trad. Pr. D. Stăniloae, PSB 80, Edit. IBM al BOR, București, 1983, nota 172, p. 144



by purification of passions brings the theologian closer to Christ, and the Incarnate Word Himself directs it to the knowledge of God One in being and in perspectives, seen as love and light above love and light.

2. DOGMA, THEOLOGUM, THEOLOGICAL OPINION

The Orthodox Dogmatic Theology expose systematically and symbolically in an organic form the teaching of revealed faith of the Church contained and transmitted by Sacred Scripture and Holy Tradition, but formulated in time by the Church in the dogmata. So the dogmatic content is dogmas, but especially their explanation.

The notion of "δογμα doctrine" derives from the verb "dokeo" which means I think. I think in a broad sense, meaning a conception, an unquestionable belief at origins. Also from the verb "dokeo" derives "doxa" which means opinion, magnification, and teaching.

In ancient philosophy, the "dogma" term defines a principle, a philosophical teaching that enjoys a wide recognition as an incontestable truth. Thus the doctrines were called, the teachings of Socrates, Plato, Pythagoras, Stoics, and philosophers in general.

In Christian Orthodox Theology, dogma is a truth of faith revealed by God Himself, her author, immutable, formulated, proposed, transmitted, defended, and accepted by the Church on account of her infallibility in the ecumenical and local synods necessary for the salvation of her members.

“The word dogma is used 5 times in the Greek New Testament, but with the one exception of Acts 16:4, in a sense widely different from that which ecclesiastical usage has given to it from the 2nd century downward. "Dogma" is used in the New Testament, (1) of Roman laws: "a decree (Greek dogma) from Caesar Augustus" (Luke 2:1); "the decrees of Caesar" (Acts 17:7) = the whole body of Roman law; (2) of ordinances of religious law: "the law of commandments contained in ordinances" (Ephesians 2:15); "the bond written in ordinances" (Colossians 2:14) = the Mosaic ordinances as expressing the moral law which condemned the sinner, and whose enmity Christ abolished by His death. It is a significant revelation of the spirit of Greek theology that all the Greek commentators understood by ordinances in these two places, the gospel as a body of dogmas which had removed the commandment or bond that was against us (see Lightfoot, Colossians, at the place); (3) of the decrees of the Council of Jerusalem (Acts 15:20), which Paul and his companions delivered to the Gentile churches (Acts 16:4). Here we have one element that entered into the later ecclesiastical meaning of the word. These dogmas were decisions on religious matters, imposed by a more or less authoritative council of the church as a condition of admission to its membership”¹⁸.

So, in the New Testament, the word "dogma" appears in two places (Luke 2, 1 and Acts 14, 7), meaning decrees, laws, imperial order, and (Colossians 2, 14 and Ephesians 2), we do the Mosaic Law prescriptions.

In the Acts of the Apostles, the term dogma defines the "decisions" taken by the apostles and elders of the Church of Jerusalem (in the years 50-52, Acts 16: 4) "*And when passing through the cities, they teach them to observe the teachings (δογματος) ordained by the Apostles and the priests of Jerusalem.*" St. Ignatius Theophorus by dogma defines all the teachings of Christ transmitted by the Holy Apostles when writing to the Magytes: „*Pray to be strong in the dogmas of the Lord and the apostles*”¹⁹. Also, St. Basil the Great says:

¹⁸ <http://biblehub.com/topical/d/dogma.htm>

¹⁹ Sfântul Ignatie Teoforul, *Către magnezieni (To Magnesians)*, cap 13, trad. Pr. D. Fecioru, P.S.B. 1, edit. IBM al BOR, București 1979, p. 168



“Of the dogmas preserved in the Church, we have the written teachings on the instruments, and the allies have received them from the tradition of the apostles. Both (forms of transmission) have the same power for faith”²⁰.

Father Dumitru Stăniloae claims that dogmas “are the truths of faith necessary for salvation, and these truths are in fact expressions of the Supreme Truth that is Christ-God true and true Man”²¹.

As a logical projection of one or more metalogical principles dogma is related to paradox or antinomy, which rationally does not mean nonsense. Antimony does not limit knowledge but opens it to the transcendent, to the contemplation of divine purposes, which implies charisma or the only way of understanding dogma.

Dogma in its essence is a truth of faith revealed by God, formulated and transmitted by the Church, for the salvation of man.

From this definition, two characteristics of dogma are easily detached:

Truth revealed / Church truth

These two are essential in defining a dogma. Therefore, a truth discovered in Sacred Scripture or Holy Tradition, but not formulated by the Church, does not constitute a dogma but has its revealed truth of faith. Only through express expression in the synod by the Church these truths become normative and leading to salvation and the heavenly kingdom in Christian life.

“In the first phase, revealed truth is implicitly or explicitly in the Revelation, without the Church activating, formally or officially deciding upon it. In the second phase, the truth is discussed on all faces, researched by theological conception, with all its possibilities for knowledge, possibly disputed by heretics. Finally, in the third phase, at the end of the exhaustion of all the discussions, the Church officially and authoritatively decides as a "pillar and foundation" of the truth”²².

Formal proclamation as a dogma is a non-standardized process that has several stages that involves revealing the truth by God in an indeterminate form, then analyzing under the harsh assistance of those discovered, and then proclaiming it as a dogma by formal, solemn and ultimate Church. In conclusion, the Church is the guarantee and authenticity of the revealed and infallible truth, of the divine truth, which it encompasses, regulated by the biblical canon and the monuments of the Holy Tradition. Outside of the Church according to the atotropicality and universality of the grace, there may be rational theological knowledge, but this is without the essence of integrity and the guarantee of authenticity. In this case, it must be passed under the authority and guarantee of the Holy Spirit that belongs to the ecclesial space, because theology is the revelation and the official voice of the Church, or the synodality of the mysterious Body of Christ.

Retrieving, preserving, preaching and accepting the dogmas is the exclusive preserve of the Church made up of clergy and believers, and once these moments have been accomplished, the dogma becomes a testimony and testimony of faith.

“Because this preservation, preaching, application, or fruition, explanation, and definition is the testimony of the experience of the same pressure of the whole Revelation centered on

²⁰ Sfântul Vasile cel Mare, *Despre Sfântul Duh*, XXVII, trad. Pr. Pof. Dr. Constantin Cornițescu, P.S.B. 12, edit. IBM al BOR, București 1988, p. 79

²¹ Pr. Prof. dr. Dumitru Stăniloae, *Noțiunea dogmei, The notion of dogma*, în “*Studii Teologice*”, Nr. 10, 1964, p. 540.

²² Coord. Liviu Petcu, *Lumina Sfințelor Scripturi, antologie tematică din opera Sfântului Ioan Gură de Aur*, vol. I, Editura Doxologia, Iași, 2010, p. 447



Christ that those who became the first members of the Church at Pentecost had through the descent of the Holy Spirit. Revelation remains effective through the Church; The Church is the environment of persistence of Revelation in its efficiency. The Church keeps alive Revelation, Revelation keeps the Church alive. Revelation thus receives a church aspect; her expressions or dogmas become the expressions or dogmas of the Church”²³.

The Orthodox Church formulates and defines the content of the revealed belief in two ways: 1. through the continued preaching and confession of the saving truths of the Church through the Apostles, hierarchs, local Councils, Confessions of Faith imposed by the consensus of the Church everywhere - *consensum ecclesiae dispersae*. 2. Formally and solemnly, where possible, through the Ecumenical Councils, as organs of expressing the infallibility of the Church.

The main attribute of dogma is the soteriological aspect. In the Orthodox Church dogma is absolutely necessary for salvation. The Church has not formulated doctrines for all the revealed truths of faith, because some are absolutely necessary, but others are not. If they were not necessary for salvation, dogmas would be only a religious philosophy.

Dogmas are immutable, absolute, because the truth itself is immutable and cannot be relativized.

“Thus dogmas are necessary for salvation, as they express Christ in His saving work. But Christ saves us only if we open to Him if we believe in Him. Christian Dogma expresses therefore the powers of Christ in the saving action, but on the condition that we believe in what they express”²⁴.

Speaking about God He is the only one who exists in Himself and through Himself for ever and ever. Having the author of God, the dogma has an immutable character, unchangeable because there is no shadow of change or change in God. That is why we must add to the doctrines of dogma in direct connection with the first two and its inimitableness and character of obligation to salvation. In Orthodoxy the latter, as once defined by the dogma, can no longer be changed, canceled, or replaced being a *sine qua non* for the attainment of salvation.

The criteria for recognizing and defining the dwellings imply in part the traditional historical aspect of the customary bill, as established by Vincent de Lerini: on the other hand, the aspect of synodality generically called and expressed by consensus *Ecclesiae dispersae*. As far as the historical aspect is concerned, it can be argued that not all the definite dogmas fall under its materiality, therefore the aspect of synodality is representative. The consensus of the Church, relative or absolute, of the Holy Fathers among themselves and of the Sacred Scriptures, of the clergy and laity, imposed in the Orthodox Church truths of faith which, by their soteriological value, amount to dogmas such as the number of the sacraments, the nature of the divine grace, and the way of the Eucharistic transformation.

3. THEOLOGUMENON AND THEOLOGICAL OPINIONS

Some Christian teachings, which find their foundation in Divine Revelation, but which do not have the unanimous consensus of the Church, although they can be of great circulation, have been called theologians, that is, what can be the object of Theology, which can form the basis of theological doctrine, such as the creation time of the angels, of the soul

²³ Pr. Prof. Dumitru Stăniloae, *Teologia Dogmatică, Orthodox Dogmatic Theology*, ediția a II-a, București, Editura IBM, 1996, pp. 77-78.

²⁴ Pr. Prof. Dumitru Stăniloae, *Teologia Dogmatică*, p.78.



of their parents etc. Theologoumena are opinions issued by some theologians, having some foundation in the revealed teaching, in order to clarify what the Church did not specify. That is why the theologoumena are not defined or accepted unanimously and officially proclaimed by the Church, for this would become dogmas.

Theologoumena are often found in Theology, usually the subject of the theological spheres, for example: the time of the creation and fall of angels, the origin of the soul of the descendants of Adam (3 theories), the way of transmitting the ancestral sin (7 theories), the salvation of those who are not part from the Church, the unbaptized, etc.

Theologoumena, as well as additions and explanations in some points of faith undeveloped by the Church, even if they are of importance to Theology, cannot alter the content of the dogmas. The traditional, ecclesiastical and spiritual theological experience shows that theologian has a theme in revelation, especially in the writings of the great teachers of the Church. To justify a theologoumenon, it must meet four conditions:

1. Have a theme in Revelation
2. Formulate only in relation to those aspects of doctrine that have not been specified and developed by the Church
3. To have both internal and external authenticity, that is, to fully agree both them and their consequences with all the dogmas formulated by the Church.
4. Be necessary and useful

Besides theologoumena, theologians and the personal opinions of some theologians, often admitted and debated in isolation or only in a restrained creature, are met. Theologians enjoy a certain generality and circulation in the Church, whereas the personal views of the theologians are admitted only to the extent that they do not contradict dogmas and are as close as possible to theologians and are a plausible and supportive theological explanation in Revelation.

CONCLUSIONS

In the Orthodox spirituality, theology is the science of total knowledge with direct existential implication of the only truth of life, expressed as iconomic - God the Holy Trinity. The theological framework of knowledge is exclusively the ecclesial one, as a holy ambience in which divine revelation is the force of truth. That is why the Church is the guarantee and authenticity of the full and infallible knowledge of the divine truth that it encompasses. Outside of the Church according to the atemporality and universality of the grace, there may be rational theological knowledge, but this is without the essence of integrity and the guarantee of authenticity. In this case, it must be passed under the authority and guarantee of the Holy Spirit that belongs to the ecclesial space, because theology is the revelation and the official voice of the Church, or the synodality of the mysterious Body of Christ.

As peculiarities of the Eastern Church Theology, to philosophical writings of truth, to scientific truths or to other religious ideas we will enumerate the most important.

1. Just as the healthy eye needs light to see, so the theology is the source of the uncreated light, namely God, so it is a theological one, springs from God, implies the grace and a specific charisma to the theologian, unlike the other sciences have an exclusively anthropocentric character and scientific content is the result of purely human thinking.

2. The Basis of Theology, the Eastern Churches is the full divine revelation accomplished in and by Jesus Christ, the Son of God Incarnate. *"After God, many times and many times, spoke to our fathers through the prophets, in these last days He spoke to us*



through the Son, whom He has given to all who He has made, and by whom also He has made the Ages"(Hebrews 1:1-2) and also in the divine-human Person of Christ, men know God as far as they relate to ecclesial harvest life.

3. The Church is the guarantor and the owner of the dogmas, that is, it has the merit of faithful, living, and not just leadership or assembled confessional gatherings. The Church is the pillar and the foundation of the truth (Timothy 3:25), therefore theology is a function of it and expresses its teachings.

“Because this preservation, preaching, application, or fruition, explanation, and definition is the testimony of the experience of the same pressure of the whole Revelation centered on Christ that those who became the first members of the Church at Pentecost had through the descent of the Holy Spirit. Revelation remains effective through the Church; The Church is the environment of persistence of Revelation in its efficiency. The Church keeps alive Revelation, Revelation keeps the Church alive. Revelation thus receives a church aspect; her expressions or dogmas become the expressions or dogmas of the Church”²⁵.

4. From the analytical point of view Divine Revelation is transmitted through Holy Scripture and Holy Tradition. This means that Orthodox theology understands Revelation in the light of the teaching of the holy Fathers of the Church, that is, as they explained it, formulated it and lived it. Sacred Scripture does not contain all the teachings that are supremely covered by Christ, but only what is normative; therefore, most of the teachings circulate on the pale of the living-beast: "There are many other things that Jesus did, he would have written in detail, it seems to me that even in this world would not fit the books that were written "(John 21:25). From this we infer that the Sacred Scripture contains the essential part of the Divine Revelation, while the Holy Tradition exposes all the truths that have developed and kept alive but which through the Church have become normative and fixed in writing, forming the Holy Tradition or Church Supper.

5. Orthodox theology involves a kataphatic and apophatic knowledge of God, a knowledge that cannot be separated from the Orthodox spirituality, that is why the theologian is both a man of dogma and especially a practitioner of them.

6. Naturally following the aforementioned Theology on the basis of divine revelation is not oversimplification but a living reality an experience of communion with God, within the theandric, through the grace of the Holy Mysteries in the Church.

7. The relationship between Holy Scripture, Holy Tradition and the Holy Church is interdependent because they cannot be conceived separately. It is the Church that gives its believers the guarantee of truth revealed in its full extent and experience. The Sacred Scripture, which contains the essence of the divine revelation, is complemented by what was preserved by live speech, namely, the Holy Tradition. This truth, and more so than the Incarnate Jesus Christ, the Church offers its members. The consensus of the Church, relative or absolute, of the Holy Fathers among themselves and of the Sacred Scriptures, of the clergy and laity, imposed in the Orthodox Church truths of faith which, by their soteriological value and value, amount to dogmas such as the number the sacraments, the nature of the divine grace, the way of the Eucharistic transformation.

8. Theology is a church ministry through which the contents of the dogmas are incessantly deepened, transmitted to man for the purpose of salvation and sanctification. If theology can only be conceived by constantly reporting to the Church it means that it must be anchored in the Church's Apostolic Tradition which it preserves and continues with

²⁵ Pr. Prof. Dumitru Stăniloae, *Teologia Dogmatică*, pp. 77-78.



fidelity, but at the same time contemporary with each and every time as the permanence of the message of salvation for the man and society of each time, and of course looking to the future with a prophecy-eschatological character. This eschatological perspective is in fact a fulfillment of it as science, as a fundamental truth revealed by God and especially as a way of life involving eternal life.

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