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The Unity between the Dogma, Spirituality and Cult and the Relevance of this One for the Orthodox Gnosiology

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Abstract

In Orthodoxy, the dogma has been born in the cult of the Church. The dogmas reveal the truth and show us towards the knowledge of God and towards the salvation of the soul, while any heresy remove us away from the truth, and close up our way. The liturgical songs, through their content, wake up within the soul the longing after God and the impulse to know God. Through the participation at the Holy Services the believer enters into a spiritual atmosphere into which he easier feels the presence of God, and has the conscience of the presence of God in the dwelling place of the Church. There is a close relation between the dogma confessed by the Church and the fruits of the spiritual life. The inward experience of the Christians is fulfilled within the frame established by the Church's dogma. Without dogmas, the religious experience would be deprived of a sure leading, and this lack gives birth to the doubt and the zeal for knowledge and consummation diminishes. The spirituality means the experiencing of the dogma's content, its living in the life of the believers. Between dogma and cult there is a reciprocal connection; it is a known principle that "lex orandi, lex credendi" („the rule of the prayer determines the rule of the faith"), but also the rule of the faith determines the rule of the prayer. The interior connection between dogma and cult it is highlighted also in the seal left upon the cult by the doctrinal fights from the life of the Church, the cult helping especially the simple believers to know the teaching of faith and to defend themselves against the heretic's teachings. The cult has provided along the time an equilibrium of the Christian life, has guarded the Church of slide-slips from the right faith, against the heresies that have taken place within the Church's history.

Keywords

Dogmatic Theology, gnosiology, **Dogma, Spirituality and Cult**

The Dogma, as Expression of the Church's Experience

The dogmas are an alive expression of the Church's experience; they show their true signification, answering to the needs of the Christians in their daily life. In the Tradition of the Orthodox Church, there weren't ever separated the personal living from the Church's dogmas; thus

“the unity between the dogma, spirituality and cult is fundamental, and there cannot be thought a dogma emptied of spirituality, which to not be lived, which to not indicate an experiencing of the Trinity done in the ecclesiastical frame”¹. In the Orthodoxy, the dogma has been born in the cult of the Church. There is a close connection between the dogma confessed by the Church and the fruits of the spiritual life. The inward experience of the Christians if accomplished within the frame established by the Church's dogma. “We won't be ever able to understand a spirituality, if we wouldn't take in account the dogma that stays at its foundation”².

The term “dogma” comes from the Greek “δῶγμα” that is translated like “decree, ordinance, command, edict, order”, namely designates the unchangeable truth that must be accepted by all Christians. The dogmas were first revealed truths, and after they were formulated by the Church under the inspiration of the Holy Ghost. The dogmas are founded on the Holy Scripture and on the godlike Tradition, but besides these ones they must be defined by the Church³. The dogmas reveal the truth and show us towards the knowledge of God and towards the salvation of the soul, while the heresies removes us away from the truth, and close our road. The dogmas, as revealed truths are sometimes hard to be understood rationally, but living the life according to their teaching, we see the inward change that happens into the soul and only then will we understand their content. The Christological dogma is understood only by them who have met the Living

¹ Cristinel Ioja, *Rationality and Mystique in the Orthodox Theology*, the “Aurel Vlaicu” University's Publishing House, Arad, 2008, p. 26.

² Vladimir Lossky, *The Mystical Theology of the Eastern Church*, translated by Priest Vasile Răducă, Anastasia Publishing House, p. 48

³ Professor N. Chițescu, Priest Professor I. Petreună, Priest Professor Isidor Todoran, *The Dogmatic and Symbolic Theology*, Handbook for the Theological Faculties, volume I, Cluj Napoca, 2008, p. 67.

Christ and have accepted Him and have confessed Him as Lord and Savior and who have dwelled into Him through faith, and into His Body: the Church”⁴. Without dogmas, the religious experience would be deprived of a sure guiding, and this lack gives birth to the doubt and decreases the zeal towards knowledge and consummation. The Church’s Synods have conceived the dogmas as teachings of faith; they “express the cohabitation of God with the man and within the man. From the creation’s dogma to the eschatology they refer to the descent of God into the man, at the contact that is established into our depths with God”⁵.

Sometimes the truth of faith was confessed through hymns, antiphonies and doxologies, even before having been formulated as dogma. Becoming prayer in this way it prepares the soul of the believer for meeting God. The dogmas aren’t only simple teachings which must be learned, though this is necessary also, but they must be applied in the daily life, they must be lived, otherwise one falls in the extreme of the theory⁶. From Orthodox point of view the dogmas cannot be reduced to their strictly rational dimension, to the intellectual one, but this one must add to the practical dimension of the dogma its transformation in reason of the spiritual living, in a mobile of the prayer and even into prayer. The connection between the dogmatic knowledge and the theology of the prayer provide the exceeding of the strictly rational research of the dogmas through the living of their content, assures the valorization of the dogma through the effort of reaching at the knowledge. The connection between the dogma and the cult has been valorized by the Church’s Fathers through their spiritual living⁷. Through the knowledge and the living of the dogmas we reach also to the knowledge of God. The relation of the man with God, the particular

⁴ Adrian Lemeni, *Truth and Communion*, Basilica Publishing House of the Romanian Patriarchy, Bucharest, 2011, p. 13.

⁵ Priest Professor PhD Academician Dumitru Stăniloae, „The Newer Pastoral and its Importance into the Frame of the Theological Education”, in *The Theological Magazine*, year XXV (1935), no. 5-6, p. 217.

⁶ Priest Lecturer PhD Constantin Băjău, „The Living of the Christian Dogma in the Theology of the Father Dumitru Stăniloae. Scriptural, patristic and rational grounds”, in the volume *Father Professor Dumitru Stăniloae or the Consonancy between the Dogma, Spirituality and Liturgy*, coordinators: Priest Lecturer PhD Nicolae Răzvan Stan and PhD Lucian Dindirică, Cetatea de Scaun Publishing House, Craiova, 2015, p. 152.

⁷ Vasile Citirigă, *The Knowledge of God through the Prayer*, Asab Publishing House, Bucharest, 2008, p. 25.

The Unity between the Dogma, Spirituality and Cult and the Relevance...

prayer, the participation to the holy religious services, they are manifestations of the spirituality.

The Spirituality, the Content of the Faith Experienced into the Alive Living

The spirituality represents thus the spiritual climbing on the way of the consummation to the union with Christ, seeking the cleansing of passions and the achieving of the virtues and of the gifts of the Holy Ghost, all of them culminating into the union with Christ and together with this in the knowledge of Him, through experience, which is in the same time the deification⁸. The spirituality means experiencing the content of the dogma, the living of it in the life of the believers. The Latin term “spiritualis” has the same signification as the term “pneumaticos” and it refers to the manifestation of the Holy Ghost in the soul of the believers but also to the Christian way of life. The religious experience assures thus the best knowledge of the dogmas. Father Dumitru Stăniloae defines the Christian spirituality as being “the content of the faith of the Church experienced in the alive living”⁹, or “the living of God, come into us with His life”¹⁰. This it has a ground the personal experience of God and “implies in its content the growing up of the believer into the love of God through cleansing off the egotism of the sins and increasing into the generosity and the self-giving represented by the virtues”¹¹. The Orthodox spirituality it is faithful to the godlike Revelation and to the teaching of faith of the Church; it realizes an inseparable connection between the dogma and the life of the believers. The spirituality is founded on dogmas, they being the expression of the man’s communion with God and absolutely necessary for salvation. A true spirituality engages the whole man’s being especially through the cult, through the communion into the prayer. The spirituality supposes the communion and love; it is impossible to speak about an individual

⁸ D. Stăniloae, *The Cult of the Orthodox Church, Environment of the Works of the Holy Ghost upon the Believers*, in “The Orthodoxy” magazine, no. 1 from 1981, pp. 11-12.

⁹ D. Stăniloae, *The Orthodox Dogmatic Theology*, volume I, p. 5

¹⁰ D. Stăniloae, “The Mystery of the Eucharist, Spring of Life in Orthodoxy”, in *The Orthodoxy*, XXXI, (1979), 3-4, p. 499.

¹¹ D. Stăniloae, *The Mystery of the Eucharist, Spring of Life in Orthodoxy*, in *The Orthodoxy*, XXXI, (1979), 3-4, p. 500.

spirituality – this would mean rather egotism and deceitfulness. The entire Orthodox spiritual life

“is founded on the teaching about God, on dogmas. The Holy Trinity is the example and the power of the communion in love. Jesus Christ is the example and the power for the love, the humbleness, for the cleanness which we must gain”¹².

In Orthodoxy the spiritual life

“it means real participation of the Christian to the godlike life, a participation of his human nature, in a free manner. And the human nature itself asks for such participation. Aiming the deification, it abolishes the death brought by sin. The man must be seen in a permanent relation with God regarded in the light of Divine-human Person of Jesus Christ the Savior, true God and true man”¹³.

The Orthodox Cult, Educational Mean, a Christian Life Inspirer

The cult is the frame for expressing the Orthodox spirituality. It is “the main mean that helps to the man to advance unswervingly on the way towards the union with God and towards the eternal happiness in the light of His face. And because this closeness to God asks for an increment of the believer in the cleanness of the body and of the soul, in the enlightenment that is brought by these to the mind, in the goodness brought by it to the heart, the believer prays also for a spiritual increment. The cult is therefore the main mean of spiritual increment of the man and through this an anticipation of the eschatological happiness, or a handsel of this happiness. It accustoms us with a ever accentuated living with God, or into God, under the rain of rays of His love

¹² D. Stăniloae, note 261 to *Saint Simenon the New Theologian, the Hymns of the Godlike Love*, in the volume “Priest Professor PhD Academician Dumitru Stăniloae, Studies of Orthodox Dogmatic Theology”, Mitropolia Olteniei Publishing House, Craiova, 1990, p. 420.

¹³ Priest Lecturer PhD Constantin Băjău, „The Living of the Christian Dogma in the Theology of the Father Dumitru Stăniloae. Scriptural, patristic and rational grounds”, in the volume *Father Professor Dumitru Stăniloae or the Consonancy between the Dogma...*, p. 156.

The Unity between the Dogma, Spirituality and Cult and the Relevance...

which enlightens, strengthens, exalts our life, without making it insensitive towards the life of the fellow humans, but urging it to become an ever bigger factor of helping, sustaining and right advising of them”¹⁴.

In Orthodoxy

“the cult is the environment of living the work of the Holy Ghost by the believers. For the Orthodox believers, God is here, is felt working in a different way, according to their different needs and of each believer in part, or to the accent put by each believer on his need in accompanying the request uttered by the priest for all of them; they are felt as enjoying immediately of a listening from the part of God and of the help immediately given by Him or by the assurance that they would be imparted by this help in the moment when he will need it”¹⁵.

Between dogma and cult there is a reciprocal bond, it is a know principle that “lex orandi, lex credendi” or “the rule of the prayer determines the rule of the faith”, but also that the rule of the faith determines the rule of the prayer. The dogmas express the ecclesiastical experience of the presence of God into the world. This bond defends the theology against the peril of closing in itself, of losing the connection with the ecclesiastical life’s reality. But this connection doesn’t allowed any cult to remain in a subjectivism which is foreign from the Church’s theology, pursuing only the need of the time and the emotional state of the believers¹⁶. Within the cult, the dogma achieves a greater objective value, and so it doesn’t remain only a truth about Christ, Church, Salvation, but it is Christ, is the Church, is the Salvation; it actualizes through the participation of the believers and through the Holy Ghost the entire work of Christ for the salvation of the man¹⁷. In the Orthodox spirituality, the cult has a special role, through the religious services and especially through the dogmatic content of the hymns it maintains the connection of the believers with God but also the sentiment of communion, of belonging to the community of the

¹⁴ D. Stăniloae, *The Cult of the Orthodox Church, Environment of the Works of the Holy Ghost upon the Believers*, in “The Orthodoxy” magazine, no. 1 from 1981, p. 6.

¹⁵ D. Stăniloae, *The Cult of the Orthodox Church Environment of the Works of the Holy Ghost upon the Believers*, pp. 11-12

¹⁶ Priest Ioan Bizău, *The Liturgical Experience of the Presence of God in the Life of the World*, Eikon Publishing House, Cluj-Napoca, 2012, p. 366.

¹⁷ Cristinel Ioja, *Rationality and Mystique in the Orthodox Theology*, p. 32.

Church. The centre of the Orthodox cult is constituted by the Holy Liturgy, namely of the common work of all the believers; around it are ordered all the other manifestations within the Church. The man's communion with God in the frame of the Holy Liturgy "occasions to us the knowledge of This One and of His attributes, which we discover in apophatic, unspoken, uncontained way¹⁸. In Orthodoxy, the believer has seen first of all in the cult of the Church, a mean of sanctification and salvation of the soul. Through his participation at the cult of the Church and ever full living of the faith in God, the believer approaches ever more to the purpose of his life, namely to the knowledge of God and salvation of the soul (John: 17: 3). The participation at the cult of the Church is the guaranty for exceeding the word uttered about God and for passing to the experiencing God. Into the Liturgy, the dogma becomes prayer and the prayer is accomplished into the impartation of God. Who climbs to the union with God and has the conscience of this union through the mediation of the confessing dogmas, that one is a maker of communion and is a factor of sanctification of the community¹⁹. The cult sustains the spiritual communion and through this the deliverance of the man from the passions, and also the achieving of the virtues. The liturgical climbing towards God is sustained by the Resurrected Christ and united with the believers through the Holy Impartation²⁰. The cult has the purpose of putting the man in connection with God, pursuing the honoring of God and mediating the sanctification of the man or the impartation with the godlike grace. By participating to the Church's cult the man has the impression that he is in front of God, that he enters in connection with Him, through invoking His name, through the prayer of through other means²¹. As much as the teaching about of faith has been configured through the dogmatic definition of the Holy Synods, and

¹⁸ Priest Lecturer PhD Lucian Farcașiu, "The Liturgical Mystagogy of Father Dumitru Stăniloae, Reflected in the work *Spirituality and Communion in the Orthodox Liturgy*", in the volume "*Father Professor Dumitru Stăniloae or the Consonance between Dogma, Spirituality and Liturgy*", p. 184.

¹⁹ V. Citirigă, *The Knowledge of God through the Prayer*, p. 42.

²⁰ D. Stăniloae, *Spirituality and Communion in the Orthodox Liturgy*, second edition, the Publishing House of the Biblical Institute and of Mission of the Romanian Orthodox Church, Bucharest, 2004, p. 8.

²¹ Priest Professor PhD Ene Braniște, *The General Liturgy*, second edition, the Publishing House of the Biblical Institute and of Mission of the Romanian Orthodox Church, Bucharest, 1993, p. 45.

The Unity between the Dogma, Spirituality and Cult and the Relevance...

through the spiritual life, settled down, nourished, enlightened and permanently guided by the Holy Ghost, in the cult of the Church, it has become liturgical praise and doxology. In this spiritual understanding the dogma and the cult shows us Christ, the Way, the Truth, the Life (John: 14: 6), into which we achieve “the experience and the knowledge of God, through passion removal and increasing, never ended, in consummation towards the Kingdom of God, the Kingdom of Love²²”. The interpretation of the Person and of the work of Christ through dogmas, being the interpretation of the life, it reaches its goal if the theoretical formulas produce spiritual living, or, in quality of expressed truths, they end transforming the life of the people. Only then the dogmas become savior truths, because only in this way they express Christ as Life in the bosom of the churchly community from any time, according to the needs of the spiritual life and the needs of the concrete material life²³. The cult has a big importance for the spiritual life, which is lived and manifested especially through its forms. Any form of a cult is a manifestation of an inward spiritual ground. There is a tighten connection between the dogma and the cult, as a manner of expressing the religious sentiment²⁴. The form of the cult and the orders of the holy religious services

“are not only means of expressing the awe and means of imparting the divine Grace, but also a school or a alive catechesis, a mean of education, a instigator of Christian life. Through its forms of manifestation it has a great power of influence upon them who take part to it, helping them to progress into the knowledge of the truths of faith, to increase in virtue and awe. From this point of view the cult is a school into which the believers learn the Saint Scripture and the truths of faith and the rules of Christian living”²⁵.

The dogma, if not introduced into the cult and not transformed into doxology, it risks to become distant for the life of the people, cold and incomprehensible. In Orthodoxy, the cult becomes doxology, and the dog-

²² Priest Lecturer PhD Dumitru Pinteă, *The Holy Liturgy, Communitarian Ascension towards the Kingdom of God, the Kingdom of the Eternal Love* in the volume “The Pastoral and Missionary Implications of the Mystical Theology of the Father Dumitru Stăniloae, Cuvântul Vieții Publishing House, Bucharest, 2013, p. 70.

²³ V. Citirigă, *The Knowledge of God through Prayer*, p. 12.

²⁴ E. Braniște, *The General Liturgy*, p. 50.

²⁵ E. Braniște, *The General Liturgy*, p. 64.

matic tradition becomes cultic tradition, a doxological one²⁶, accessible and present into the life of the Christians. Father Stăniloae affirms that into the Eastern Church it has been felt always the necessity of the embodiment of the doctrine and not of building a doctrine broken from the life of the Church:

“The faith has been a practice, and not necessarily a doctrine. We practice the faith into the Holy Trinity, living after this model of the love of the Father and of the Son, filling ourselves up with the love of the Son for the Father, loving, united with Christ, the Father; and having upon us the same Ghost and remaining united with the Son and between us like the first Christians. The inheritance of the Orthodoxy is not so much a doctrinal inheritance but rather inheritance of a way of life”²⁷.

The liturgical prayer

„gets me out from the particular life and introduces me into the universal conscience. It teaches me the true relation between me and the others, and how to understand the words «love your neighbor as on yourself». In this communion, the restored and renewed man through the dynamism of the love finds again his own truth and the true essence of the things. Thus the cult makes alive the evangelical truth: the salvation of only one soul, separated from the others, it is impossible. The liturgical prayer becomes a canon, a rule for any other prayer. The Holy Fathers, speaking about the Eucharistic Liturgy, they called it simply: the prayer. It removes any subjective, emotional and passing tendency; full of a healthy emotion and of a powerful affective life, it offers to itself the consummated form, made consummated along many centuries and through all the generations which prayed with the same words. Like the walls of the Church bear the traces of all the prayers, the traces of all the sacrifices and of all the mediations, in the same way the liturgical prayers,

²⁶ Archimandrite Iustin Popovici, *The Man and the God-Man. The Abysses and the Peaks of the Philosophy*, translation by Priest Professor Ioan Ică, Deacon Ioan I. Ică jr., Deisis Publishing House, Sibiu, 1997, p. 106.

²⁷ M.A. Costa de Beauregard, Dumitru Stăniloae, *Small Spoken Dogmatic. Dialogues at Cernica*, translation by Maria Cornelia Oros, Deisis Publishing House, Sibiu, 1995, p. 30.

The Unity between the Dogma, Spirituality and Cult and the Relevance...

traversing the centuries, they bring into them the respiration of many human lives”²⁸.

In Orthodoxy, the religious services and the churchly songs, as they “have been composed in the first Christian centuries, they fulfill with the same intensity and cherishing the spiritual requests of the Church’s believers. Here must we find the explanation why the Orthodox cult, through the range and the variety of its songs, through their dogmatic content and a content of teaching, it fulfills in a good measure the catechetical function of the Church. The great living of faith believers, the Holy Fathers and Teachers of the Church, together with the kneading and the defining of the dogmatic truth they took upon them also the holy toil to give to the Church, through the religious services that they composed, a frame of prayer as fitted as possible to the soul and as close as possible to the expressing of the content, of the joys and godlike goodness of the new life, given by Christ the Lord, to His Church.

This way of life, ecclesiastical-sacramental, it has also a pronounced personalistic and communitarian character, having always as mode the communion and the perfect love of the Persons of the Holy Trinity. The Saints were the ones who followed this way and we can see in *Te Lives of the Saints* the fact that the dogmas are not only ontological truths, but any dogma is a spring of eternal life and of holy spirituality, in accord with the Gospel of the unique and impossible to replace Savior and Lord²⁹.

Thus, through their saint life,

“the saints of God entrust in a convincing and true manner all the other dogmas about Church, about grace, about the Holy Mysteries, about the Holy Virtues, about man, about sin, about Holy Relics, about the Holy Icons, about the future life and about all the others that compose the divine-human *oikonomia* of the salvation. *The Lives of the Saints* are the practical Dogmatic, the Dogmatic become living in the holy life of the saint men of God”³⁰.

²⁸ Paul Evdokimov, *The Knowledge of God in the Eastern Tradition*, translation Vasile Răducă, Humanitas Publishing House, Bucharest, 2013, pp. 124-125.

²⁹ I. Popovici, *The Man and the God-Man. The Abysses and the Peaks of the Philosophi*, p. 104.

³⁰ I. Popovici, *The Man and the God-Man. The Abysses and the Peaks of the Philosophi*, p. 106.

Separated from the dogma, the cult would become only a intellectual construction which would not have the power for changing the soul of the believers; and the dogma.

The cult of the Church defends the man against the egocentric and demonical traps which have as a direct danger the soiling and the alienation of the man; the cult of the Church brings the man to deification³¹.

Separated from the dogma, the cult would become only an intellectual construction which would not have the power for changing the soul of the believers; and the dogma, separated from the cult, would end an element of the metaphysics, through which the man would try to penetrate the essence of the divine mystery, losing however the connection with what he must express. These possible consequences of the separation of the cult from the dogma, could make the man not having part of the transformation of his inward life through the ecclesiastic living of the dogma, but only impropriating the “mystery”. In this way the dogma and the cult are interdependent; the cult offers to the believer the way of living according to the dogmatic truth and the exceeding of a personal knowledge and confession, rational and theoretical one of the dogmas. The experience brings the true knowledge and through this the most powerful confession of the faith³². The cult is the corporal form of the dogma, and the dogma is the soul of the cult. If one would try their separation, then they lose their real signification. This relation of unity between the dogma, spirituality and cult,

“avoids the separation between the rational aspect and the liturgical content of the dogmas, within the dogma coexisting harmoniously both the rational and the mystical aspects. Thus the dogmas invite to living, to experiencing them at the personal and at the communitarian ecclesiastical levels, through the cultic-sacramental dimension of the Church, and not towards sterile speculations, which do not have connection with the life and its purpose, which is the deification of the man and of the cosmos”³³.

The dogma isn't the individual creation of a certain specialist in dogmatic, no matter how renown and prepared would him be, but is the fruit of the faith and of the confession of the Church, being life from the Church's

³¹ Georgios Patronas, *The Deification of the Man*, translation by Lecturer Sabin Preda, Byzantine Publishing House, Bucharest, 2012, p. 173.

³² V. Citirigă, *Knowledge of God through the Prayer*, p. 37.

³³ C. Ioja, *Rationality and Mystique in the Orthodox Theology*, p. 33.

The Unity between the Dogma, Spirituality and Cult and the Relevance...

life³⁴. “Pray ceaselessly!” (I Thessalonians: 5: 17). The prayer is the most intimate spring and the shape of our being. Through the prayer you enter in that mysterious place which is the heart of the man, a place of meeting with God. Through the life of prayer it is measured the degree of the personal communion with God and of His knowledge³⁵.

The Dogmatic Structure of the Liturgical Hymns

Is somebody wants to become a theologian, he better reads the hymns of the Church³⁶. The liturgical hymns comprise a rich teaching about the Holy Trinity, God Father, the Savior Jesus Christ, the Mother of the Lord, the Holy Cross, the Angels and the Saints. Usually, they have been composed intending to reflect the content of the dogmas, but also the content of other texts from the Holy Scripture, especially from the New Testament. This facts offer to the hymns more credibility and authority within the cult, being in the same time an expression of the Christian awe³⁷. The Fathers of the Church intended to expose the Christian teaching in the clearest way but also an attractive one, pursuing the spiritual building of the believers and also the countering of the heretics’ teachings. Through the liturgical hymnography it was and it is offered to the believer through simple words the whole Christian theology synthesized since the first centuries³⁸. They constitute themselves in fiery prayers, into a doxology elevated towards God. Through their conservatism the Church’s hymns fulfilled their role of defender of the right faith. It is very important to follow in this sense the dogmatic structure of the liturgical hymns, which are made carriers within the Church, or the teachings of faith accessible to all the believers. Referring to this, Professor Nicolae Buzescu affirms that this can be reck-

³⁴ Aurel D. Grigoraș, *Dogma and Cult Interconfessional Regarded and the Problem of the Intercommunion*, p. 412.

³⁵ P. Evdokimov, *The Knowledge of God in the Eastern Tradition*, pp. 122-123.

³⁶ Ierotheos, the Metropolitan of the Nafpaktos, *The Empiric Dogmatic, According to the Mouth to Mouth Teachings of Father Ioannins Romanidis*, volume I, translation by Tatiana Petrache, Doxologia Publishing House, 2014, p. 331.

³⁷ Mihai-Gabriel Popescu, *The Cultic Books as Spring of the Sermon*, in *Theological Studies*, no. 5-6 from 1962, p. 351.

³⁸ Konstantin Nikolakopoulos, *The Orthodox Hymnography from the Beginning to This Day*, translation by Alexandru Ioniță, Basilica Publishing House, Bucharest, 2015, p. 74.

oned, without any exaggeration, a *poetical sum of the Orthodox dogmatic theology*, for we find again approached in it absolutely all the fundamental themes of the Orthodox Theology³⁹. The liturgical hymn through which it is operated the transfiguration of the faith into praise and the transfiguration of the dogma into spirituality, but also the transfiguration of the communion between the believers into a communion with the Holy trinity, it is a constitutive part of the theology and not a simple adding to it⁴⁰. Evagrius Pontius shows the connection between the prayer and the theologizing through the well known formula: "If you are theologian (you occupy yourself with the contemplation of God), pray you truly; and if you pray truly, you are a theologian"⁴¹. The inward connection between dogma and cult it is highlighted also in the seal left upon the cult the doctrinaire fights from the Church's life, the cult helping especially the simple people to know the teaching of faith and to defend themselves against the heretics' teachings. At the beginning the hymns were introduced into the cult or intercalated among the psalms or verses from the psalms to be sheltered under the authority of the singed biblical texts⁴². The cult has been assuring during the time an equilibrium of the Christian living, has been guarding the Church against the side-slipping from the right faith, against the heresies manifested into the history of the Church. But also the cult has been guarded against the foreign to Orthodoxy manifestations just by the dogmas which stay at the basis of composing the liturgical hymns. The heretics of the first centuries as also the Neo-Protestants from today, they used and they still use the singing in community to attract people and to transmit to them their teaching. Starting from the third century, the singing in common has been used in the missionary activity of the Church, as weapon for fighting against heresies and as mean for explaining, strengthening and defending the Orthodox doctrine. Because almost all the heretics tried to make known

³⁹ Preist Professor N. C. Buzescu, *The Triadic-Centric Ecclesiology in the Canons of the Octoechos*, The Orthodoxy, XXVIII, 1976, no. 2, p. 349.

⁴⁰ Iacob Coman, *Theo-Doxa-Logia. The Theological – Doxological Signification of the Religious Hymns in the Great Religions of the World from a Christian Perspective*, Episteimon Publishing House, Bucharest, 1999, p. 154.

⁴¹ Evagrius Pontius, *Word about the Prayer in 153 Heads*, 60, The Romanina Philokalia, volume I, by Priest professor PhD Academician Dumitru Stăniloae, Harisma Publishing House, Bucharest, 1993, p. 112.

⁴² Priest Petre Vintilescu, *The Hymnographic Poetry from the Ritual's Books and the Churchly Singing*, p. 60

The Unity between the Dogma, Spirituality and Cult and the Relevance...

their faulty teachings to the believers, they have used the hymns singed in the gatherings of the cult. So did for example the Gnostics Marcion and Valentine in Rome, in the second century, Bardesane and Armoniu in Syria, in second and third centuries, the anti-Trinitarian Paul in Samosata, the third century, and Arie in Alexandria, in the fourth century. The Church reacted to this heretic propaganda using the same means, namely opposing to the heretic hymns other hymns with Orthodox content... So did Ephraem the Syrian in Edessa, to counteracting the effect of the heretic hymns of Bardesane, Armoniu and Manes. Also the Saint John Chrysostom, organized processions to sing hymns about the coessentiality of the Son with the Father because the Arians also were using hymns for spreading their faith⁴³. This thing can be seen from the following liturgical texts:

“From the womb before the evening start You have been born, from Father without mother, before the ages, though Arius has reckoned You creature, and not God, shamelessly mixing You, the Creator, with the creatures, achieving to himself, as a foul, the flame of the eternal fire. But the Council of Nicaea, Son of God preached You, Lord, together with the Father and with the Ghost sitting on the chair”⁴⁴.

Another hymn confesses like so:

“Today, the bright city of the Nicene has called to itself from all around the earth three hundreds and eighty hierarchs, against Arius, the one who spoke blasphemies and diminished One from the Trinity, Who is Son and Word of God. And, on this Arius casting them down, they strengthened the faith”⁴⁵.

And the dogma from Chalcedon has been formulated in hymns and singed within the Church, just for being this one understood by the believers, for their salvation but also for counteracting the heresies. Thus this singing says;

“On You, the borderless and not-interpreted Word, Who made Yourself body for us, You the man’s Lover, You were preached

⁴³ E. Braniște, “Biblical and Traditional Reasons for the Believers` Singing in Common”, in *Theological Studies*, VI, 1954, no. 1-2, p. 274.

⁴⁴ *Pentecostarion*, the Seventh Sunday after Passover (of the Saint Father from the First Ecumenical Synod), the Great Evening Service, at *Lord I Shouted Out, Glory...*, p. 282.

⁴⁵ *Pentecostarion*, the Seventh Sunday after Passover (of the Saint Father from the First Ecumenical Synod), the Matins, the Canons, Sedealna of the Fathers, Glory... p. 282.

in the honored-assembly of the wise fathers, Consummated God and man, with two natures, with two works twofold and with two wills, but one and the same hypostasis. For this, together with the Father and with the Ghost knowing us You, One God, to You we worship, rejoicing Them”⁴⁶.

The Orthodox Church aims, through the liturgical confession, to preserve the dogmatic teaching. In Orthodoxy, “the cult becomes doxology and the dogmatic tradition becomes a cultic tradition, a doxological one, accessible and present in a traditional manner at the level of the communitarian and personal life of the Christians”⁴⁷. As guardian of the fullness of the Revelation, the Church forbids through its dogmas, the exceeding of certain limits. Thus even the formulas of the synods are formed under the shape of the hymns and liturgically confessed. Thus

“the dogmatic decisions of the Palamite Synods from the fourteenth century, regarding the theme of the Tabor light and the uncreated character of the grace, are received by the entire Church, just through the liturgical confession, while the definition of the synods from Constantinople from the seventeenth century about the Eucharistic trans-substantiation, not being liturgically confirmed, they haven’t received the same value and the same authority, so that a teaching, even synodically formulated, but which doesn’t receive cultic relevance, it remains a teaching without authority. The internal connection between dogma and cult it is highlighted also in the seal left upon the believers by the doctrinal fights from within the life of the Church, the cult being a true illustrative force, for the simple believers, of the authentic faith in contrast with the heresy”⁴⁸.

Priest professor Ion Bria expresses himself in what concerns the unity and the relation between the dogma and the doxology, in this manner:

“The Orthodox dogmatic give priority to the doxological element in presenting and interpreting the dogma of faith. Instead of the systematical constructions of a scholastic type, the Ortho-

⁴⁶ *The Menaion of July*, The Holy Fathers` Sunday from the Fourth Ecumenical Synod, the Great Evening service, at *Lord I shouted out...*, the first troparion, the Publishing House of the Biblical and of Mission Institute of the Romanian Orthodox Church, Bucharest, 2002, p. 195.

⁴⁷ C. Ioja, *Rationality and Mystique in the Orthodox Theology*, p. 31.

⁴⁸ C. Ioja, *Rationality and Mystique in the Orthodox Theology*, p. 34.

The Unity between the Dogma, Spirituality and Cult and the Relevance...

dox dogmatic preferred the doxological and symbolic language, which has saved the mystery of the faith. The Word of God becomes, thus, a live truth, and the confession of the faith take part from the liturgical experience of the Church. At the level of the prayer and of the doxology, the theological interpretation refuses the identity between the concept and the conceptualized content and resorts to the categories of the apophatic theology, which aren't something else but the hymns of the divine love. From this interpretation and doxological exposition of the teaching of faith come not only from the limits of the concepts and of the affirmations which can be applied to God and, especially, from the divine transcendent reality as such, from the plenitude of the presence of God in His acts of revelation and personal manifestation⁴⁹.

The life of the believers is guided by the dogmatic aspect of the cult. The Church's religious services put us in connection with God. Through the participation at the Holy Religious Services, the believer enters into a spiritual atmosphere in which he feels easier the presence of God, and has the conscience of the presence of God in the dwelling place of the Church. The liturgical singings through their content awake in his soul the longing after God and the impulse of knowing God. As guardian of the integrity of the Revelation, the Church stops through dogmas, the exceeding of some limits. For the knowledge of their content by the believers even the decisions of the synods have been formulated after under the form of the hymns and liturgically confessed. The hymns of the Pentecostarion show everything that has been made for the salvation of the man, but also what the man must do for achieving the salvation. The dogma sprung out from the dialogue with god, leads us to the knowledge of God consequently to its revealed content and formulated by the Church, as also due to its adequacy with the prayer into the Church's cult⁵⁰. Among all the religious services and singings of the Church, the songs of Pentecostarion are the most important through their unequalled beauty and power of expression of the joys contained by this time of the churchly year. The interval of the Pentecost, of the most sublime celebrations of the Church: the Resurrec-

⁴⁹ Priest professor PhD Ion Bria, *Treaty of Dogmatic and Ecumenical Theology*, The Romanian Christian Publishing House, Bucharest, 1999, p. 16.

⁵⁰ V. Citirigă, *Knowledge of God through the Prayer*, p. 22.

tion of the Lord, His Ascension and the Descent of the Holy Ghost or the Pentecost. The Resurrection of the Lord and the descent of the Holy Ghost are the two shores, the two diamond rocks of the faith of the Church; between them we receive the overflowing of the living water of the future life which «waters all the creatures towards fructification of life»⁵¹. Saint Basil the Great speaks about the indissoluble connection between dogma and its cultic experiencing:

“As we have received from God so we baptize ourselves, we baptize ourselves as we believe, as we believe we worship the Lord, neither separating the Ghost from the Father nor from the Son, and neither we put the Father above the Ghost, as we also not say that the Ghost is older than the Son, as try proving it the mouths of the one who blaspheme”⁵².

⁵¹ Vasile Ignătescu, *The Pentecostarion in the Spiritual life of the Orthodox Church*, in the “The Mitropolitanate of Moldavia and Suceava” magazine, no. 5-6 from 1960, pp. 326-327.

⁵² Saint Basil the Great, *Epistle 251*, 4, in “Writings”, Third Part, column: “Churchly Fathers and Writers”, volume 12, translation by Priest Professor PhD Constantin Cornițescu, Priest Professor PhD Teodor Bodogae, the Publishing House of the Biblical land of Mission Institute of the Romanian Orthodox Church, Bucharest, 1988, p. 251.