

Dogmas as forms of rejection of sectarian thinking in theology

Vasile CRISTESCU

*Associate Prof. PhD.
Faculty of Orthodox Theology,
Alexandru Ioan Cuza University of Iași, ROMANIA*

Abstract:

As expressions of the revealed truth, the dogmas reflect in their structure the communion of the Holy Trinity, made accessible to men through the Incarnation of the Son of God. They show Christ in His saving work to which people participate through the work of the Holy Spirit. Through the Holy Spirit, the revealed truth is known and lived in the life of the Church in its intensive aspect. By denying the personal structure of the Holy Trinity, sectarian thinking rationalizes the truth revealed and ignores its antinomic character. God remains an impersonal divine essence in which Persons are absorbed, becoming a simple name. By this He is relativized as Absolute, faith becoming just the expression of an individualist sentimentality that can not lead to salvation. The revealed truth loses its supernatural character, being conceptualized, reduced to a simple human understanding. In sectarian thinking, God is sought by men according to their subjectivist and reductionist orientations. In their inexhaustible structure, dogmas are the work of the Holy Spirit in the Church to lead believers to the highest acquisition of life in Christ, that is to say, the victory of sobornicity over individualism.

Keywords: *person, communion, dogma, apofatism, catholicity, individualism*

1. Dogmas – revealed truths of the transcendent and personal existence of God. Reducing tendencies of dogmas

Following the teaching of the Orthodox Church, the dogmas are revealed truths of truth, expressing God's tremendous reality-made known by the incarnation of Christ-and communicated to salvation by the organs of revelation in the catholic life of the Church. The dogmas thus comprise the two mysteries of existence: God as absolute personal Trinity and man as the created person. Personal existence also implies the possibility of communicating or revealing it, and therefore dogma emphasizes besides the personal character of the two divine mysteries and created – and their community aspect. The latter is expressed by the truth of revelation in

which God reveals His existence in the work and the word of human existence, the only one who can meet, understand and respond to His communication and speaking.

It is also to be shown that this power and ability to receive revelation and responsibility to it has man from God, and only in relation to Him can enhance them. This relationship has become maximal through the incarnation of the Son of God in which human nature has been received in His divine hypostasis. By this it also receives His work through which it is renewed, and this renewal can be shown by man in action as the fruit of the work of the Holy Spirit. After St. Athanasius the Great, the Word became a “body-bearer” so that men could become “Spirit-bearing” (St. Athanasius the Great 1857: 996 A). This new state is achieved in the catholic life of the Church, a life that is based on the relationship with the Supreme Person, and this in turn is shown in dogmas that become the points of the process of salvation and deification (Stăniloae 1978: 71).

In expressing God's trinity life and the continual process of inner transformation of man, dogmas, as revealed truths, have infinite and apophatic content. By this we are revealed their negative significance that stops the mind from following its natural pathways based on intelligible representation and forming concepts, notions that could replace spiritual realities. The concepts being formed by the natural power and opinion of the human mind can not express the mysterious depth of the personal infinity of God, and therefore they create idols about God instead of revealing Him (St. Gregory of Nyssa 1863, 377 B).

Such a deep one defended the Cappadocian Fathers in the disputes with the heresies of those times. A representative of those rationalist-reductionist currents, Eunomie, states that divine being can be expressed in concepts. Only in this way was it believed that it can be revealed to human reason. According to St. Basil the Great not only the divine being can not be conceived in concepts, but also the created beings. The formation of concepts on objects is based on the process of contemplation and analysis of their attributes.

However, rational analysis can not deplete the contents of objects, thus remaining an incomprehensible remnant in them. The more we can not speak of such knowledge when referring to the being of God, because

it can not be narrowed into something unilaterally or even multilaterally, as Eunomia did. The being of God is beyond the relationship and the composite parts of the material world. That is why, when we try to conceive God through natural thinking, we are silenced, for such thinking can not encompass infinite personalities through concepts that, by definition, limit His content. The only form of this knowledge is the existence of God without the knowledge of the existence of this existence.

According to St. Gregory of Nazianz, “there is still a great difference, the difference between science about the existence of a being and the way it exists” (St. Gregory of Nazianz 1947: 12). In this sense, the way of existence of the divine being, which, according to the Fathers, is the personal way, remains essentially incomprehensible to our minds:

And if anyone has come to understand God with the mind, how can he prove it? Who has ever worshiped such a great charisma? Who has opened the mouth of thought and drew the Spirit in it, for with the help of The Spirit who searches all things and knows the depths of God, embraces God with the mind, and does not need to go further, having the deepest, desirable thing to which all the livelihood and thought of the tall man hastens? (St. Gregory of Nazianz 1947: 13).

According to St. Gregory, when we relate to the divine being, we know it exists (ὅτι ἐστίν) but we do not know what it is (τί ἐστίν); therefore, a characteristic of the dogmas, as revealed truths, is the defense of the transcendent mystery of God's personal existence of rational tendencies. Such tendencies, which are the renewal of the heretical doctrinal systems that have disturbed the Church's life during the Church Fathers, are present in various denominations or spiritistic nuances such as theosophy.

At its core lies a disguised pantheism in which a single individualist “existence” (David 1987: 94) of God is asserted, but absolute transcendence is not recognized, but one is imbued with immanence. At the same time, this conception is monistic (H. Gaspar, J. Muller, F. Valentin hrsg. 1990: 398). “Deity is a universal and absolute uniquely out of which everything comes and absorbs everything” (David 1987: 94). As in the case of Eunomius, the idea of an immediate knowledge of the “essence of God” (David 1987: 91) with the help of human wisdom reached “enlightenment”. By this, an intelligible 'divinity' is created, whose being is embodied in notions, concepts, as R. Steiner points out in *Anthroposophical Theses* (1925) (David 1987: 94). As in the case of the

Aryans and Eunomians, here, by such a method, there is an “idolatry of concepts”, reducing theology to a “technique” (τεχνώδριον) (St. Gregory of Nyssa 1863, 377).

One can not recognize in such a conception any of the character of the truth of faith necessary for salvation, as it is found in dogma, because it lacks the basic principle in which truth is comprehended and realized: the supernatural divine revelation. Through it, or with its help, we experience dogma the personal reality of God. Although after being unknown, God is now known by his personal way of being or hypostatic.

In Christianity, this existence of God has a trinitarian character. St. Ilara of Pictavium shows that in the tripersonal character of the absolute God lies the superiority of the Christian teaching on heresies. This shows that we know a unique God but not a solitary God “Deus solitarius” (St. Ilarie of Pictavium 1845: 112), closed as a person so much in Himself that he does not make possible the communion with Him, but only the obedience, as is shown in Islam, and in the Arabic Seals inspired by it.

2. The Dogmas - an expression of the presence and work of the Holy Trinity in the life of the Church. Rationalist deviations regarding the mystery of the Holy Trinity

God is a third of people who have the whole being in common and retain their personal characters. It shows that there is a perfect love between people that demands full unity, equality and diversity, but not lived in isolation, but in mutual affirmation. This fundamental truth is called by the theologians (Prof. D. Staniloae) the first dogma (Stăniloae 1992: 3). The love of the Holy Trinity is all-encompassing, and the reality expressed in her work in the world is so rich that in the experience of the relationship with the supreme triumphant people the distinction made by St. Basil the Great between dogma and kerigm in the “Holy Spirit” Treaty translated into theology as truth and communion. St. Gregory of Nazianz shows that the light of the Trinity is so strong that the dogma expressing this impenetrable reality makes you shut (St. Basil the Great 1857: 185; St. Gregory of Nazianz 1862: 984-985), but the joy of the inexhaustible bright views of personal communion makes you also communicate in public speaking or publicly reveal this truth, he himself in “Theological Words” or elsewhere, where he shows that for him the Holy Trinity is the

reason of his life: “For You I live, speak and sing” (St. Gregory of Nazianz 1862: 1327).

This deep sensitivity of the Eastern Church to the mystery of the Holy Trinity kept intact the truth about the unity of the Divine Persons and their diversity revealed in the reality of their reciprocal communion and their relationship with man and the created world. This truth led Christianity to the transfiguration of reason through the work of grace, that this truth may be known not on the conceptual path, but on the union with the Divine Persons. In order to remain on such a path, the mind must, in meeting God's personal reality and understanding its mystery, leave the images created as faces and through the work of the Holy Trinity grasp a deconceptualization that will allow it to climb on the road of true knowledge.

At the same time, he will be able to preserve the antinomic, paradoxical character of dogma, which truly affirms the full character of the reality of the Divine Persons, as was made known in the supernatural revelation. In the case of the trinitarian dogma, antinomy refers to the unity and diversity of the Persons. In order to fully preserve this character, “thinking must move unceasingly from One to the Three to return to unity” (Lossky 1991: 77) unceasingly dividing the two terms of antinomy:

I did not even begin to think of the unity that the Trinity blesses me in His glory. I did not even start to think about the Trinity and my unity and it again ... When I gather the Three in the same thought I see only one flame, without being able to divide or analyze the unified light (St. Gregory of Nazianz 1858: 417 B).

This mystery of belief is reduced in its antinomic character by the rationalization of one or the other of the two terms. Their reduction has been operated in two tendencies: Unity and Triteism. The first is but an absolutist monarchy in which the personal existence of the Son and the Holy Spirit is reduced to a state of emanation or energy. In this expression, as in the modalistically asserted by Sabelie, the notion of a person disappears, because God remains an impersonal divine essence in which people are entirely absorbed.

Besides, such a Trinity remains a mere appearance that makes no sense for Christian existence. The second tendency, the triteism, in subcutaneous, unexplainable condition, leads to the weakening of the Trinitarian reciprocity: a third in which neo-Platonic subordination is

present, is an unparalleled Trinity. Moreover, by identifying the Father with supreme unity, he could not personally distinguish the Son of the Father, but came to the solution of subordination. By this, the divinity of the Son and the Holy Spirit is denying, being reduced to the state of instruments. Through Arius, such a tendency emerged in the heresy that sought to break the Trinitarian unity. By now identifying God with the Father, he states that everything that is not God belongs to the created plan. By attributing to the Son character created by birth in which the becoming, that is, the Son is other than the Father, Arianism leads only to an ontological rupture. Aspects identical to the two heresies are found in modern times in Iechovism. In addition to not accepting the Holy Trinity, I come to the same conclusion stated by unitarianism: Jesus Christ is not God, and the Holy Spirit, not having this character, is not a person, but only an energy ((David 1987: 53). Not being God, the Son is only a creature (David 1987: 161) as in Arianism.

Thus, the sectarian thinking of this group is nothing but an attempt to reaffirm the doctrine of the two old heresies. Pentecostals also fall in this direction, considering the Holy Spirit as a creature (David 1987: 52). In other ways, but operating a reduction in personal appearance in the Trinity, theosophy repeats the heretical doctrine of Arie, admitting that Jesus Christ is not the Son of God (David 1987: 91). Therefore, He is a being of another order, most often being created. The influence of anti-trillion heresies is also felt in unitarianism, which is based on the same tendency to minimize the Persons in the Holy Trinity. It can be noticed that at the base of the reduction tendencies there is a damage to the fullness of the mystery of the love of the Holy Trinity which includes the damage to other Christian mysteries, a neurosis that relativises the absolute and absolutises the relative. It “relativises communion and isolates an element or factor of communion in order to abolish it” (Ciobotea 1991: 4).

In the case of the teaching of the Holy Trinity, relativizing the absolute means to empty the infinite content of the reality of divine persons, reducing their essence to a simple name, being understood only in an impersonal sense. This emptying of content, which is the expression of the emptying of faith for revealed divine truth, is always expressed in the temptation to reduce what is irreducible: the person. At the same time,

emptying what is left in existence is also a closure in relation to other existences. It is often expressed in the doctrines of old or newer heresies of sectarian groups when referring to God by the simple name: idea, force, concept (David 1987: 191, 221). In another variation, the being is divided to preserve the survival of the triad (triteism). In the face of these attempts to deny the supreme personal mystery, the dogma of the first two Ecumenical Councils establishes the essence identity and at the same time the equality and mutual relation of the Divine Persons. The term consecrated in the “*homousios*” trinitarian dogma, expressing the identity of essence, unifying without reabsorbing into their own unity two irreducibly different person. Contrary to closure in narrow rationality, Christian dogmas open an endless horizon (Stăniloae 1991a: 4). This unlimited horizon is revealed in the person of Jesus Christ, the Son of God incarnate, uniting Divinity and humanity in himself, and through which the Holy Trinity reveals and at the same time works our salvation. The Incarnation of Christ is the revelation of the Trinity, because “the Logos does not reveal himself, but as a Divine Person in relation to the other divine Persons: in relation to the Father and the Spirit” (Ciobotea 1991: 591). Explaining this truth revealed through Jesus Christ, the dogma is, according to St. Athanasius, “the only true godliness (faith) and this is the good and the truth” (St. Athanasius the Great 1857: 49 A). It is “the faith that the Lord himself has given (ἔδωκεν), which the apostles have known (ἐκήρυξαν) and the Fathers of the Church have kept it (ἐύλαξαν), the faith on which the Church is built” (St. Athanasius the Great 1857: 605). As Divine-Human Person What reveals the Father and the Spirit, Christ-Christ with Himself, humanity at communion with the Holy Trinity. At the same time, He recapitulates in Him all men and expands in Him the life of communion with God and with men. The dogmas express and explain Christ in the review work, showing that His work, which starts from the Trinity, encompasses men to bring them back to communion with the Trinity. That is why communion with Him is the communion with all the Third Person (Stăniloae 1978: 82).

3. Dogmas - an expression of the perfect communion of God with the man fulfilled in the person of Christ. Unilateral Trends of Understanding Christology

The Mystery of the Trinity of Persons having the same common nature and that of the incarnation of the Son of God, through which the union of human nature with divine nature is affirmed in a divine person, exceeds any power of encompassment through thought, thus being a revealed truth. It is also a supreme manifestation of divine love, for the Word, without changing in its divine nature, descends to our condition and engages in it until acceptance of death. From this we know that the Trinity is the one who saves us, and the incarnate Son does the work of salvation in the world. This truth was defended in the dogma of incarnation against the Patriarchs who claimed that the Father suffered and He was crucified with the Son because of their unity of nature. This has led to confusion between nature and person in God. The Fathers of the Church found in the Christological dogma of the 5th Ecumenical Council of Chalcedon the connection between triadology and Christology, expressed by the term "homoousios". Through it was revealed that Christ is consubstantial with the Father through His divinity, and consubstantial with us through His humanity. There are two consubstantialities in Christ, but one Person: True God and True Man. The dogma of Chalcedon, which brought light to the Christological truth of the Incarnation in one, represents the victory against the tendency to rationalize the Incarnation by denying the deity or, on the other hand, the humanity of Christ. By not understanding the mystery of the person, Nestorius conceives it as nature, and at the same time identifies them. Thus he opposes the Person of the Word of the Person of Jesus, thus dissecting Christ into two different persons: Thence Nestorius concludes that only the human person of Jesus Christ was born of the Virgin Mary, she was thus the mother of Christ and not of God. Son of God and the Son of Man, separated by their constitution of persons. Hence Nestorius concludes that only the human person of Jesus Christ was born of the Virgin Mary, she was thus the mother of Christ and not of God. By denying the unity of the person of Christ, it is denied the true assumption of human nature. The doctrine of salvation loses any foundation, and men remain separate from God. That is why the process of inner transformation is no longer possible, and

deification does not take place anymore. Another tendency opposed to this heresy has dissolved humanity into divinity. Christ is thus consubstantial with the Father but not with the people. His humanity is an a In both heresies human reality is diminished: on the one hand, it is closed in itself, and on the other hand dissolved in the divine appearance and thus the heresy called monophysitism has reached dochetism. In both concepts, human reality is diminished: on the one hand, it is closed in itself, and on the other hand dissolved in the divine. The Dogma of Chalcedon defines the truth about God and man and the mystery of their union in an undivided and inseparable way: Jesus Christ is a true God and a true Man, and being with the Father through divinity and being with us through humanity. Chalcedon clarifies the distinction between person and nature, establishing freedom of the person to nature, allowing the affirmation of unity of two principles in which the properties of each nature are confirmed and not denied. Later there was another trend that represented a real compromise with monophysitism. It was called monothelism. Although they admitted the two natures in the person of Christ, his supporters defined the person of a faculty. In this case, the will was not related to nature, but to person. To restore the truth, St. Maximus takes as its starting point the dogma of the Holy Trinity, which states the reality of the existence of the three divine Persons in one nature. The three people share a single will. This shows that the will is related to nature and not to person. The Sixth Ecumenical Council (681) of Constantinople underlined the existence in Christ of two natural wills that are not in opposition, the human will subject to the divine will. Against all attempts to dissociate the teaching of the Holy Trinity and of Christ, the Christian Church has shown that they are inseparable. This connection is shown in both Sacred Scripture and Holy Tradition. To combat the attacks of some representatives of these concepts, the Church Fathers explained and interpreted Scriptural texts clearly depicting Christian teaching and at the same time, St. Athanasius defends the deity of the Son against Arianism, proving in scriptural places that the Son is eternal as the Father (John 16: 15; 10: 30; 14: 9) correcting the conceptions that led to the rationalization of the faith. If the Father is God, true God is the Son, as John wrote, “We are in the true One in His Son, Jesus Christ. This is the true God and eternal life” (I John 5: 20) (St. Athanasius the Great 1857: 612).

St. Cyril of Alexandria gives a profound analysis in the Old Testament “Glafire” where he revealed the mystery of Christ, the one who recapitulated in Him the things of heaven and earth (Eph. 1: 10), by understanding recapitulation of the correction again and the return of the corrupted to the state in which they were from the beginning (St. Cyril of Alexandria 1992: 8). In order to understand the Method of the Church Fathers concerning the approach of divine secrets, the words of St. Cyril of Jerusalem are edifying: “It is not necessary to surrender teachings of divine mysteries randomly and without evidence from the divine Scriptures, nor should they be presented by assumptions and sought words. Even to me, who speak to you, do not believe me if you will not receive through the divine Scriptures the proof of those who preach you. The salvation of our faith does not lie in the ease of speech, but in the evidence of the divine Scripture” (St. Cyril of Jerusalem 1886: 477A).

These are but a few of the countless examples of the Church Fathers who interpret Scripture not in the letter, but in the Spirit that gives life (II Corinthians 3: 6), and in this aspect dogmas were formulated in the Church by the work of the Holy Spirit. They sought the mystery not in words, but in reality itself, as Blessed Augustine showed: “In ipso facto, non solum in dicto, mysterium requirere debemus” (Augustin Aurelius 1865: 838). And the reality that gives unlimited content to the mystery is the divine-human person of Christ. Through Him the supernatural revelation is fully received, and in Him it is fulfilled in real life, being in the process of fulfillment also in those who are connected with Him. Therefore, dogmas based on supernatural revelation have a greater record, which is felt from the contents discovered (Stăniloae 1978: 72). In them God reveals itself as a personal reality, and in connection with it the organs of revelation feel its initiative. And the record and the person's initiative are closely linked to the faith of the recipient. There is a correspondence between them which is strengthened by the gracious work of the Holy Spirit. Because of His indissoluble relationship with Christ, the Holy Spirit helps us to enter into the depths of this personal record of Him, but does not go beyond what has been revealed in the Savior, as St. Cyril of Jerusalem says: “The Holy Spirit makes us penetrate into the depths of Christ, but does not lead us further from Him” (St. Cyril of Jerusalem 1886: 920, 924, 989, 992, 1002, 1005). The revealed truth is

thus defined in an intensive manner without extensive development. In Christ we have found all that is necessary for salvation. As God is true, He was made man to restore our communion with God and to introduce us in the perfect order of love, and this work accomplished by the Holy Spirit is expressed in dogma: In them is revealed and strengthened our intimate communion with the personal God. They express this communion in the reality of the life of the Church, and this, deepening in the depths of life in Christ, or in the intensive character of revelation, deepens and discovers through the work of the Holy Spirit in it the pneumatological dimension of revelation.

It thus embraces the Word by dogma and receives God, not those around Him, as St. Maximus the Confessor says:

It is necessary that those who earnestly seek God will not be detained by any letter in order not to receive God's places in the place of God, that is, to embrace it in a wrong way without realizing it The Word of Scripture. For they have condemned to eat the land of Scripture or the body, like the deceiving serpent, but not the meaning and soul of Scripture, that is, the heavenly and angelic bread, the knowledge and the spiritual contemplation in Christ. For God has come to us by becoming a man besides other mysterious causes, which no mind can penetrate, and to fill the spirit spiritually by removing the letter and to exalt and show its power of life, the part that kills. And the part of the law that kills is after the divine Apostle the letter, as its power-making power is the Spirit. For it says, the letter kills, and the Spirit is alive (II Corinthians 3, 6) (St. Maximus the Confessor 1941: 197).

This difference of the letter and the Spirit could not be understood by some representatives of the present theological thinking, as can be seen in G. Ebeling: "What does the constitution and transmission, traditio tradende, really mean, if it is the preaching, the word, the gospel, and on the other hand the Holy Spirit and not the letters, though not the Holy Spirit without a letter? What does this mean one that is encountered in a variable character?" (Ebeling 1964: 153).

Concerning the Christological teaching, the neo-Protestant groups, misunderstanding the paradoxical character of this (Christ-God-Man), moreover rationalizing it, have, like previous heresies, denying one aspect (divinity) or another (humanity). It is a characteristic of these groups' thinking to deny the divinity of Christ and to present Him as a simple man. This denial translates the loss of the meaning of life and salvation. "If Christ is not God we can no longer be saved," says St. Athanasius, and

this truth remains always true. By not admitting this, the Jehovahs claim that Christ is a creature, thus remaining in Arianism. Additionally, adding that “a simple man” (David 1987: 52) closes the access to salvation, seen as a communion of man with God, while remaining at an unrepeatable naturalistic aspect. The Nazarenes denied by Wirz the humanity of Christ whom He “undresses” (David 1987: 55) before ascending to heaven. Hoolists want to distinguish their conception from other groups, saying that between heaven and earth there is uninterrupted communication. The basis of this communication is not seen in a Divine Person, but in the “Powers of Heaven” represented by the third Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. We encounter here the repetition of the failure of previous heresies that could not understand the mystery of the existence of the Divine Persons: arianism and modalism. Molokans also reduce the reality of divine hypostases to “appointments of God” (David 1987: 70) and the Savior denies divinity. Spiritists and theosophers believe that Christ is only an example of perfection. In addition, the theosophists repeat the Nestorian scheme: in Jesus is embodied the entity of Christ (David 1987: 95).

4. Dogmas as a work of the Holy Spirit for the victory of the Church's catholicity against individualism

This is the general line of denial of the divine character of Christ in which the old errors of heresies are repeated and the drama of denial of supreme existence is lived. Instead of life and communion with Christ, he remained at discourses that “do not say anything about the deity and work of Christ,” but merely “sentimental statements about His love for those who seek or those who sing to Him” (Stăniloae 1991b: 18).

Such an attitude is but a closure of the human person and of creation in its autonomy, expressing a deaf closure of God. God remained at the level of a rational thought, as is also the case in the rationalist currents of the nineteenth century. That is why He is searched in Scripture in the letter and not in the Spirit, condemning those who seek to eat the earth of Scripture, not her soul, the heavenly bread (John 10), that is, the spiritual knowledge of Christ. The way of understanding Scripture after the current sectarian thinking is similar to that practiced by the sectarian thought of the former Church: fragmentary, individualistic, rationalist, reductive, and therefore subjectivist. According to St. Irenaeus of Lyon,

heretics disregarded and interrupted “the order and bond of Holy Scripture by mutilating the truth” (λύοντες τὰ μέλη τῆς ἀληθείας). Words, phrases and images (ρήματα, λέξεις, παραβολαὶ) taken from Scripture are real, but their connection is arbitrary and false” (St. Irineu of Lyon 1857: 521). By fighting the method of the Aryans to orient themselves in the exegetic field, St. Athanasius the Great explains their error in the following way: Using chosen texts, they no longer focused on the whole context and sense of revelation. The true understanding of the texts, St. Athanasius shows, is possible only in the perspective of the faith that receives the whole Christ, to confess it all in faith. It therefore looks at the integral, infinite aspect of the revelation present in the divine-human person of Christ, not defragmenting or subjectivizing his objective character. True faith has in the center the “rule of faith” as preserved in the Church by the Holy Apostles and transmitted to this day. Thus, the “rule of faith” is the fundamental principle of interpretation that opposes the “arbitrary choice” (hairesis) of heretics, the church understanding (τὴν ἐκκλησιαστικὴν διανοίαν) (St. Athanasius the Great 1857: 101). “Against any reflection, in the dogmatic assertion it is the salvation event, and it is left to come to light. She is not only talking about this event and is not heading in any way to a sentence, but is “ex fide ad fidem” (Rahner/Lehman 1965: 692). Such an understanding fixed by the teaching Church in the dogmas of the Ecumenical Councils reveals a unity, because it brings to the believer the perspective of salvation or unlimited spiritual development, showing that this perspective is given in Christ, the God of Man, in Whatever is accomplished in all that is expressed in the dogmas of the Church. As revealed truths that are contained and concentrated (συνεπτυγμένως) in Holy Scripture and Holy Tradition, developed (ἀνεπτύχθησαν) and formulated in the Ecumenical Councils, dogmas are the victory of the spirit of sobornicity over individualism.

As in the apostolic period, when the teaching Church established, through the presence and work of the Holy Spirit, the teachings (δογματα) of faith, then urging Christians to keep them (Acts 14: 6), so later on the same teaching Church her sovereign character or community through love, established through the same work of the Holy Spirit the truths of faith, formulating them against individual opinions. This sovereign character is present in the life of the whole Church as the secret

body of Christ. It is based on the work of Christ and of the Holy Spirit through which Christians, as members of this mysterious body, are exalted to a level where they go beyond the limitations of purely individual consciousness and live in communion with the objective truth that is Christ. Their opening to communion in love is at the same time an opening to the inner evidence of Truth, and this opening is made in the Church in Christ by the Holy Spirit.

But it is not uniform, because the reality of the Church comprises human beings not only in unity but also in their multiplicity. Those who are more anchored in the Church are even more free from their individual limitations, and their personal consciousness is more open to truth testified in its objectivity. Truth is thus revealed to those who through the inner transformation of their lives and understanding “dilute their being into communion with holy things and saints, and tend to coincide their personal consciousness with church consciousness” (Clement 1963: 93). In the Church, the “ecclesial balance of the ontology and the subjective” (Clement 1963: 97) which is based on the Trinitarian equilibrium of essence and persons, and by this it ends the individualistic, anarchic, superficial, sentimentalisms that “seek the Spirit but can not find it because it does not anchor in profound community reality” (Clement 1963: 103). Lacking this ecclesial balance and true community structure,

the spirit of the sect is worse than individualism, for it creates the illusion of universalism, it contains an apparent exodus of self-indulgence, individual disintegration ... The sect is a false sovereign spirit, a false church spirit, and therefore difficult to reconcile with the true sovereign spirit and the true ecclesiastical spirit (Berdiaev 1992, 153).

As the revealed truths and the expression of its sovereignty, the dogmas of the Church go beyond every narrow, individualistic character, assuring freedom of the believer as a person, and grounding his spiritual development at liberty through his relationship with the Supreme Person, while pointing out that the salvation of man is assured only if his relationship with this Person is so strong that it leads to the imprinting of divine attributes (Stăniloae 1978: 82).

This is the deification of man or the special state of the one who received the work of the grace of the Holy Spirit, and who cleans his mind makes it “the image of the divine beauty” (St. Maximus the

Confessor 1948: 40) discovered in the inexhaustible structure of Christian dogmas.

References:

- Aurelius Augustinus. 1865. *In psalmos 68, Sermo 2, 6, PL XXXVI.*
- Berdiaev, N. 1992. *The meaning of creation*, translated by Anca Oroveanu. Bucharest.
- Ciobotea, Pr. Prof. Dr. Dan-Ilie. 1991. "The longing for the undivided Church or the mysterious and irresistible appeal of the Holy Trinity", în *Ortodoxia*, XXXIV.
- Clement, O. 1963. "Ecclesiologie orthodoxe et dialogue oecumenique", în *Contacts*, nr. 42.
- David, Deacon P.I. 1987. *Christian guide to knowing and defending the right faith in the face of sectarian proselytism*. Arad.
- Ebeling, G. 1964. "Wort Gottes und Tradition", în *Kirche und Konfession*, 7, Göttingen.
- Gaspar, H.; J. Muller, F. Valentin hrsg. 1990. *Lexicon der Sekten, Sondergruppen und Weltanschauungen*.
- Lossky, Vl. 1991. *The Mystical Theology of the Eastern Church*, translation into Romanian by Priest Vasile Răducă. Bucharest.
- Rahner, K; Lehman, K. 1965. "Kerygma und Dogma", în *Mysterium salutis*, Band I, Koln.
- St. Athanasius the Great. 1857. *Ad Serapionem*, I, PG XXVI.
- St. Athanasius the Great. 1857. *Contra Arianos*, I, PG XXVI.
- St. Athanasius the Great. 1857. *De incarnatione et contra arianos*, 8, PG XXVI.
- St. Basil the Great. 1857. *About the Holy Spirit*, XXVII, Migne, PG XXXII.
- St. Cyril of Alexandria. 1992. "Jamb", translation into Romanian by Priest Professor Dr. D. Stăniloae, în the collection *Parents and Church Writers*, volume 39, Bucharest.
- St. Cyril of Jerusalem. 1886. *Baptismal catechesis*, IV, 17, PG XXXIII, 467 B.
- St. Gregory of Nazianz. 1858. *In sanctum baptisma*, or. XL, 41, PG XXXVI.
- St. Gregory of Nazianz. 1862. *Poems about oneself*, I, PG XXXVII.
- St. Gregory of Nazianz. 1947. "Second Word about God (Theological)", în *The Five Words of God*, I betray. by Pr Gh. Tilea and Daniel Barbu. Curtea de Arges.
- St. Gregory of Nyssa. 1863. *De vita Moysis*, PG XLIV.
- St. Ilarius of Pictavium. 1845. *De Trinitate*, IV, 20, PL X.
- St. Irineus of Lyon. 1857. *Adversus haeresis*, 8, 1, PG VII.
- St. Maximus the Confessor. 1941. "Theological Heads, 75, 76", în *Filocalia*, vol. 2, translated into Romanian by Priest Professor Dr. D. Stăniloae. Sibiu.
- St. Maximus the Confessor. 1948. "Answers to Talasius, 10", în *Filocalia*, vol. 3, translation by Priest Prof. D. Stăniloae. Sibiu.
- Stăniloae, Priest Professor Dr. D. 1978. *Orthodox Dogmatic Theology*, vol. 1. Bucharest.

-
- Stăniloae, Priest Professor Dr. D. 1991a. "Dogmas, expressions of divine love", în *Ortodoxia*, XLIII.
 - Stăniloae, Priest Professor Dr. D. 1991b. "Why are Orthodox?", în *Theology and Life*, LXVII, nr. 4-8.
 - Stăniloae, Priest Professor Dr. D. 1992. "Christian and apostolic dogmas, the expressions of the highest good", în *Ortodoxia*, XLIV.