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The Theological Word: “*Living according to Truth*”

Abstract

Dialogue as a way of communion between rational beings has as a goal the search and knowledge of truth, i.e. of reality. Human negligence, though, and slothfulness lead to decreased rational capability, resulting in the search for truth being limited to the phenomenal world of sensory reality, which is characterised by changeability and the dissension of perceptions. Thus, sensory knowledge leads to ignorance, i.e. to fantasy, due to the lacking capability of righteous judgment (intellect), and is identified with evil, since evil is nothing other than the distortion of reality. The end result of this dialectic knowledge is the idolisation of creation and the raising up of man’s egoism. Truth, though, for patristic theology is a given within the world and history, which is why it is identified with life



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itself. In this way, the search and knowledge of truth is man's very way of life. Man acquires this experiential knowledge of truth primarily within the world and the Church in the context of the dialogical relationship between the created and the uncreated. In this perspective, dialogue surpasses man's existential dimension and does not comprise a way of seeking the truth, but within the energetic-ontological relationship of God and man it expresses this very truth. From this basis should the inter-Christian as well as the inter-religious dialogue advance, having as a precondition that sin and delusion are the abuse of man's natural powers and characterise the sick members of the body of the Church.

Keywords

Dialogue, truth, fantasy, intellect, Church, inter-Christian dialogue

1 Introduction

Modern man has for many years now surpassed the narrow social and political boundaries of a small society, as of the village or the city. Today's easy and accessible mode of transportation and the broad usage of the Internet bring man in contact with other peoples, cultures and ways of life. By broadening his knowledge in this manner he parallelly redefines his existence not with the givens of a small society, in which he was born and raised, but of the broader society, of the Western European way of life, as it is being formed by the – positive or negative – effects of the eastern way of thinking. Within this now multicultural society the Orthodox Church is called to give the Christian content of the current way of life upon the basis of sacramental communion and orthodox

tradition. The way of communication between Church and world or between Churches, religions and worldviews is none other than dialogue.

2 Dialogue and "Living according to Truth"

Dialogue as "*the word commonly agreed as questions and answers*"¹, as the platonic Albinos characteristically mentions, is distinguished into two types: the internal, i.e. the dialogue of the soul, and the verbal, which consists of the externalisation of the internal dialogue, i.e. of the intellect². In both cases, though, dialogue comprises the characteristic trait of human nature only, since it is identified with the human word³. That is why the content of dialogue are the "*political and philosophical things*", with which man only is concerned as a rational being. Dialogue is the means, therefore, with which the rational person thinks and expresses himself in proportion to his ethos and character, although the precondition of dialogue is the word as the deliberative organ of the man, who reveals himself.

¹ Albinos, *Introduction to the Platonic dialogues, I*, (*Platonis dialogi secundum Thrasylli tetralogias dispositi*, vol. 6, ed. by K. F. Hermann, (Leipzig: Teubner 1853), p. 147: "What in any case is dialogue? It is nothing more than the word, that has been agreed to consist of questions and answers relative to some political or philosophical matters, including the emulating of the customs and characters of the participating persons and the artistic lingual formulation". See also Diogenes Laertius, *Vitae philosophorum* 3, 48, (*Diogenis Laertii vitae philosophorum II*, Long, H. S. (ed.), (Oxford: Clarendon Press 1964), p. 141 ff.

² Johannes Stobaeus, *Anthologium* 1, 59, 1, (*Ioannis Stobaei anthologium*, C. Wachsmuth, O. Hense, (eds.), (Berlin: Weidmann 1958), p. 498.

³ Albinos, *Introduction to the Platonic dialogues, II*, p. 147 ff. Cf. Athanasius the Great, *On Dionysius bishop of Alexandria*, 23, in: J.-P. Migne (ed.), *Patrologiae cursus completus* (Tomus XXV, Paris: Garnier Fratres, 1857), 513B– 516A.

The Church Fathers also highlight reason, as the unique characteristic of man, which is identified with the mind and which comprises the point of man's distinction from irrational creation⁴.

St. Gregory of Nyssa, who especially dealt with the creation of man in the work *De Hominis Opificio*, observes that the human word is the image of the Word of God himself, who reveals himself via the prophets, the apostles and even via this human mind⁵.

Consequentially, the perceptive and cognitive organ of man is the mind, which through the sensory organs "*infiltrates via the phenomena into the non-visible*", as St. Gregory of Nyssa

⁴ Gregory of Nyssa, *De Anima et Resurrectione Dialogus*, PG 46, 60B. John of Damascus, *Expositio Fidei Orthodoxae* 26, (*Die Schriften des Johannes von Damaskos*, vol. 2, B. Kotter, (ed.), (Berlin: De Gruyter 1973), p. 76: "the accordance to the image denotes the noetic and autonomous nature, whereas the accordance to the likeness the as much as possible resemblance in virtue".

⁵ Idem, *De Hominis Opificio XVI*, in: J.-P. Migne (ed.), *Patrologiae cursus completus* (Tomus XLIV, Paris: Garnier Fratres, 1863), 181BC, idem, *Let us make man in our image and likeness I*, (illegitimate), (*Gregorii Nysseni opera, Supplementum*, H. Hörner, (ed.), (Leiden 1972), p. 12 (PG 44, 261D–264A): "Let us make man in our image and likeness and may they rule over the fish. In body or in mind? To rule in the soul or in the flesh? (...) man's flesh is vulnerable, when attacked by the flesh of an animal. But in what is the ruling? In the rational advantage. As much as he lacks in bodily strength so much does he dominate in mental creativity". See also: John of Damascus, *Expositio Fidei Orthodoxae* 44, p. 104: "Since he was made according to the image of God, logical and noetic and autonomous, he most rightly gained power over the earthly from the common creator and ruler of all". See: Gregory of Nyssa, *De Hominis Opificio V*, 137BC: "If you examine together with the rest, those through which divine beauty is characterised, you will find that in those also the likeness to our image is exactly maintained. The Godhead is mind and word; because in the beginning was the Word. And the prophets, according to Paul, have the mind of Christ who speaks within them. The human element is not far from these. You see in yourself both the word and the intellect, which are an emulation of the true mind and word".

characteristically mentions⁶. This means that the mind, through sensory things, knows the almighty wisdom of God, "*which is perceived in everything and that heralds Him, who embraces everything*"⁷. But "*human thoughtlessness*" often does not allow for the knowledge of the signified and the infiltration into the meanings of the almighty wisdom of God. It stops at the knowledge of the phenomenon, which is not identified with the essence of beings. That is why knowledge of the phenomenal world is limited to non-beings and to man's entrapment within an imagined reality. This sensible relativity which is acquired through the senses is based on its temporary and short-lived content, due to the continual alteration and transformation of the elements that it consists of, as well as from the negation of a knowledge by the knowledge of its opposite⁸. Due to this, St. Gregory of Nyssa will end up saying, that "*finding is to eternally search*", which governs man's entire life⁹.

St. John of Damascus proceeds even further, to an ontological interpretation of the cognitive process, according to which the knowledge of truth determines human existence itself and differentiates man from the rest of the visible beings of created nature. In this way the people, who are truly capable of learning

⁶ Gregory of Nyssa, *De Anima et Resurrectione Dialogus*, in: J.-P. Migne (ed.), *Patrologiae cursus completus* (Tomus XLVI, Paris: Garnier Fratres, 1863), 33B.

⁷ *Ibid*, 28C.

⁸ *Idem*, *In Ecclesiasten VIII*, (*Gregorii Nysseni opera*, vol. 5, P. Alexander (ed.), (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1972), p. 422 (PG 44, 737BC): "All else that are good to the senses, that the delusion of fantasy makes appear good, have neither essence nor substance, but having a flux and temporary nature through a deceitful and futile perception the unlearned consider that they truly exist". See also, *ibid*, I, p. 285 (PG 44, 624C): "The human lack of rationality does not see that which we admire via the creatures, but admires the very thing it sees. Because, therefore, the function of the sensory [organs] is transient and brief, this higher voice teaches us that, whoever sees the phenomena does not see anything".

⁹ *Ibid*, XII, p. 400 ff. (PG 44, 720C).

and knowing the truth, but “*from a negligent and slothful soul*” (from lack of reason, according to St. Gregory of Nyssa) do not pursue the knowledge of beings, i.e. the knowledge of reality, are degraded to the category of the irrational beings. Within this category are also included the people, who have a false knowledge of reality and are characterised by ignorance, since they do not know beings, but non-beings, that are opposed to the being, false and deceptive¹⁰.

Knowledge of non-beings, though, means ignorance, according to St. John of Damascus, since “*the non-being cannot be known*”. This ignorance, which is knowledge of the non-real, is nothing other than fantasy, which is a *passion of the irrational soul* and is induced by something void of content¹¹.

From the aforementioned it becomes clear, that the man lead to fantasy, is he who does not lack rational power and energy, but who lacks *intellect*, i.e. who lacks the *possibility of righteous judgment*¹². In this way fantasy is identified, according to St. John of Damascus, with falsehood, which is “*knowledge of non-being*”¹³, and with wickedness, since reality is distorted by

¹⁰ John of Damascus, *Dialectica I*, (*Die Schriften des Johannes von Damaskos*, vol. 1, B. Kotter (ed.), (Berlin: De Gruyter 1989), p. 53: “Whoever, therefore, lacks knowledge, despite naturally having the ability to know and learn, his nature which is truly rational, due to a negligent and slothful soul becomes worse than the irrational beings; with knowledge I mean the true knowledge of beings. If what is known is of beings, then false knowledge as knowledge of non-beings is ignorance rather than knowledge; because falsehood is nothing other than non-being”.

¹¹ John of Damascus, *Expositio Fidei Orthodoxae* 31, p. 83.

¹² The inability of righteous judgment by man owes to his knowledge, which on the one hand is distorted by wickedness, i.e. by the abuse of the word, on the other hand to the desire for the creation of a reality, which is ideal for the same, but irrelevant and harmful for another person. See, John of Damascus, *Contra Manichaeos* 78, (*Die Schriften des Johannes von Damaskos*, vol. 4, (Berlin: De Gruyter 1981), p. 393.

¹³ Idem, *Contra Manichaeos* 1, p. 351.

using the non-being as being and not attributing to each that, which belongs to it¹⁴.

Fantasy, though, as the passion of wickedness -an evil, which is the voluntary abortion, and lack of divine gifts from the rational soul¹⁵- is the very idolisation of created beings, which is due to the "abuse" of man's natural powers and not to the natural creative power of the word. And this, because evil is not, according to St. John of Damascus, the natural human powers, the passions, neither their use, but "*the evil way of usage, not in accordance with law of God the benefactor*"¹⁶. In this way fantasy, as false knowledge, is the knowledge of non-beings, of idols, which is founded upon the abuse of man's rational power. That is why fantasy as lack of truth is identified with the unlawful. On the contrary, "*the truth of beings is knowledge*", which is identified with the life according to the law¹⁷ and is nothing other than the good, to which man refers "*due to his creation from non-being to being*"¹⁸.

¹⁴ Ibid, 60, p. 379: "This therefore is evil: to use non-being as if it were being, to not give to each what is due; What is due to each is determined by God".

¹⁵ Ibid, 14, p. 358 ff.: "Evil is nothing other than the rejection and wilful loss of the God given gifts to the rational soul (...) wickedness therefore is the abuse of the natural powers".

¹⁶ Ibid, p. 359.

¹⁷ Ibid, 1, p. 351 and 14, p. 359.

¹⁸ Ibid, 31, p. 370 ff.: "Rational beings are also susceptible to change due to their creation from non-being to being, though because rational they are also autonomous. And they remain autonomous, as they were created, i.e. good, consenting and conscious and obedient to the creator, which is suited to their nature. Man, therefore, autonomously changed in desiring a great thing, although not in the correct way; Because it is indeed great for one to be a god, but it is evil for the one who is not God to be ungrateful to his creator and to surpass his own nature in trying to become what is impossible; because it is impossible for the non-beginningless to become God or him who has beginning to become beginningless. When one therefore does not seek after that which suits him, it desolates his being".

The birth and formation of fantasy is attributable, according to St. John of Damascus, to the senses¹⁹. That is why man's mind ought to detach from the memory of the sensory, "so that it may lightly fly to the noetic sun and be illuminated by its inapproachable and perplexing beauty"²⁰. And this, because fantasy creates a reality un-true, which is the "reality" of the ignorance of an "irrational" soul and means man's downfall not only from the true knowledge of reality and the true life, but also from this very human existence of the rational being. This happens, according to St. John Chrysostom, not in the irrational man, i.e. in him who lacks sound reason, because then fantasy would be the product of the natural malfunctioning of the word. On the contrary, fantasy is born in the man who subjects everything to the power of the word, and who ends up idolising and bowing down either to irrational creation, which he emulates²¹, or to himself²², i.e. the very power of his logic.

Thus, the idolisation of the created world through fantasy is due, so much according to the blessed Chrysostom as much as to St. John of Damascus, to the *intellect*, i.e. to the ascribing of meaning to material things by man himself, to which is assigned honour and value much more than what they have in reality²³.

This downfall of man from the knowledge of truth and reality and his attachment to a materialistic way of life is due to his absolute trust in logic, which is expressed in man's difficulty to

¹⁹ Idem, *Expositio Fidei Orthodoxae* 31, p. 83.

²⁰ Idem, *Contra Manichaeos* 86, p. 397.

²¹ John of Chrysostom, *In Genesis VII*, in: J.-P. Migne (ed.), *Patrologiae cursus completus* (Tomus LIII, Paris: Garnier Fratres, 1862), 67D–68D.

²² Idem, *In Epistolam ad Romanos*, in: J.-P. Migne (ed.), *Patrologiae cursus completus* (Tomus LX, Paris: Garnier Fratres, 1862), 408A. See, K. Bozinis, *John Chrysostom on the Imperium Romanum. A study on the political thought of the ancient Church*, (Athens: Book Institute A. Kardamitsas, 2003), p. 33 ff.

²³ John of Chrysostom, *In Catecheses II*, in: J.-P. Migne (ed.), *Patrologiae cursus completus* (Tomus XLIX, Paris: Garnier Fratres, 1862), 237CD, 237D–238A. See G. Florovsky, *The Eastern Fathers of the fourth century*, p. 392 ff.

perceive the futility of this world, where "everything fluxes, and flees and is lost"²⁴.

People do not realise that their social differentiation according to the titles and offices they possess and which define the structures of a society, have a specific duration in time²⁵. In this way society is, according to St. John Chrysostom, a theatre, where all social roles dissolve and disappear, when the preconditions subside, that comprise this specific social structure²⁶.

²⁴ John Chrysostom, *In Epistolam Primam ad Timotheum XV*, in: J.-P. Migne (ed.), *Patrologiae cursus completus* (Tomus LXII, Paris: Garnier Fratres, 1862), 584A. This position of St. John Chrysostom clearly reminds us of the transience of things, as is stipulated by Heraclitus: "Heraclitus mentions somewhere that 'everything passes and nothing remains [constant]', and depicting beings with the flow of a river he says that you cannot enter the same river twice". (Cf. Plato, *Cratylus*, 402A, (*Platonis Opera I - IV*, Burnet I. (ed.), Oxford: University Press 1958).

²⁵ *Ibid*, 584AB: "(...) but what would you for me to say about the flowers, offices, the kings who now are and tomorrow are not? (...) Does anything perhaps remain of the things we see? Nothing (...) can one do many things? But tomorrow they will pass; and it is evident that those who achieved great things are now nowhere to be seen".

²⁶ *Idem*, *Ad Homilias de Lazaro II*, in: J.-P. Migne (ed.), *Patrologiae cursus completus* (Tomus XLVIII, Paris: Garnier Fratres, 1862), 986B-D: "Because, exactly as some are presented on the stage [of the theatre] taking on masks of kings and generals and doctors and orators and sophists and soldiers, without being something of them, in the same way in this current life wealth and poverty are only masks... Because, as in the theatres, as the evening sets, (...) after they leave and remove the masks they wear, those that seemed to all to be kings and generals, show who they really are. Thus, now that death has come and the theatre has ended, everyone removing their masks of wealth and poverty, depart there [to death]; and now being judged only on their deeds are the truly wealthy and poor revealed, who are honourable and who inglorious". See also, *idem*, *On Matthew LVI*, in: J.-P. Migne (ed.), *Patrologiae cursus completus* (Tomus LVIII, Paris: Garnier Fratres, 1862), 555B: "Neither the rich man, nor the poor, nor ruler, nor sick, nor wise, nor foolish, nor slave, nor free will be presented

The man, therefore, who lives in the “theatre” of this present life, according to the example of the blessed Chrysostom, is he, who freely chooses the false way of life of society and assumes the mask void of content, in order to cover his internal poverty²⁷, and living his existential nihilism becomes a slave of passions²⁸, he emulates the irrational, beastly nature of animals and becomes in-humane, resulting in his perceiving his neighbour as an object for the satisfaction of his beastly appetites²⁹. That is why St. John Chrysostom does not consider them, as many as belong to this category, primarily people, but he characterises them as “*flesh*”, since they are subject to the desires of the flesh, as “*earth*”, due to their material mind-set, or he considers them “*inexistent*”, due to the fact that they are desolate of virtue. This society of people is a society of “*crisis*” and “*deceit*”, it is a society of “*falsehood*” and of “*evil*”, a society of the “*irrational*”.

With the attribution, though, of “*inexistence*” to the distanced from virtue man the blessed Chrysostom touches the core of social life and clearly points out the existential nihilism of man, which is founded upon the egocentric and selfish way of life. Accordingly, humans are deprived of the name “*man*”, “not because they were not present, but because although present, they did not behave any better than those who were absent”³⁰, a state which the example of Noah overcomes, who safeguards his accordance to the image of God and advances against the

there [in the judgement], but after these masks are extinguished, only the examination of each ones works will exist”.

²⁷ Idem, *Ad Homilias de Lazaro II*, 986CD.

²⁸ Ibid, 1039A.

²⁹ Idem, *Instituenda Secundum Deum Vita*, in: J.-P. Migne (ed.), *Patrologiae cursus completus* (Tomus LI, Paris: Garnier Fratres, 1862), 44C–45A.

³⁰ Idem, *In Genesis XXIII*, 201B.; C. Kornarakis, *The Lords council. The ontological character and the dialectic nature of the pedagogical role according to the three hierarchs*, p. 443 ff. (mainly 448 ff.), where a psychological analysis is made of the existential deadlock of the man, who makes the value of sensory things absolute.

current of a perverted society³¹. This owes to the fact, that man is not discerned from the rest of creation due to the special human characteristics, but due to the accordance to the image, which entails the *logical discernment* of good from evil, the "lawful" from the "unlawful" and in the capability to govern the desires and the earthy mind-set³². In the opposite case, men lapse to the irrationality of the irrational beings, something that is confirmed by Holy Scripture when it ascribes animal names to them that characterise their beastly behaviour³³.

Fantasy, therefore, as knowledge of non-reality leads man to an idolatrous way of life, where creation is worshiped and man's egoism is exemplified. Knowledge is limited to the sensory world, which transforms and changes on a daily basis; that is why it is characterised by *stagnation*, since it is trapped within the world of the senses and loses the dynamism that the search for truth has. Thus is the stance of the Fathers of the Church fully understood, according to which truth, as "*that which always is*"³⁴ in contrast to fantasy, is not a product of knowledge, which is acquired after some mental elaboration of reasonings and premises, i.e. it is not the result of a dialogue, something which occurs in the case of philosophy with the dialectic and the natural sciences with the experiment.

Such a truth can be reached by the man, who searches for it in the relationship between human reason and God's commandments within the context of ethical duty³⁵. That is why truth in this case "must be sought after in a way suited to man's dignity and to his social nature, i.e. with free research, with the aid of

³¹ John Chrysostom, *De Diabolo Tentatore*, in: J.-P. Migne (ed.), *Patrologiae cursus completus* (Tomus XLIX, Paris: Garnier Fratres, 1862), 265D.

³² Idem, *In Genesis XXIII*, 201AB.

³³ Ibid, 201D–202B.

³⁴ John of Damascus, *Contra Manichaeos* 31, p. 370.

³⁵ K. Rahner, H. Vorgrimler (eds.), *Kleines Konzilskompendium. Sämtliche Texte des Zweiten Vatikanums*, (Freiburg: Herder 1991), p. 663.

teaching and education, communication and dialogue, through which the one party exhibits the truth that they found or that they think they have found, and both mutually help one another in the quest to find it"³⁶. The result of this way of considering truth is the fact that, when people come to know the truth, "they ought to steadfastly embrace it with personal consent"³⁷.

Truth, though, for patristic theology is a given within the world and history, it is the very beings themselves³⁸, a way of life, which is neither seized, nor imposed, but is experienced unforcedly by all people as this very life³⁹. That is why truth is not the object of man's knowledge, so that those who have known the truth might compulsorily embrace it, but of the foreknowing power of God. This is due to the fact that man's knowledge is limited to "*seeing beings as non-beings or events*", whereas the foreknowledge of God extends to "*the knowledge of events before they occur*"⁴⁰. In this way only does the foreknowledge of God mean the catholic knowledge of beings, beyond the created and conventional boundaries of fluxing and transforming reality, whereas man's knowledge is founded upon the fragmental reality of the historic ascension of man⁴¹. That is why man's reason cannot know the entire truth, but is neither capable of righteously judging, because that which is determined just by most, is many times considered unjust, due

³⁶ Ibid, p. 663 ff., and John Paul II, *that they might be one* (Ut unum sint) 10, 32, Γραφείον Καλού Τύπου (Office of Good Publishing), p. 38.

³⁷ Ibid.

³⁸ John of Damascus, *Contra Manichaeos* 1, p. 351.

³⁹ *Jn*, 14, 6: "Jesus said to him, "I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me". See N. Matsoukas, *Orthodoxy and heresy in the ecclesiastical writers of the 4th, 5th, 6th, century*, (Thessaloniki: P. Pournaras 1992), p. 66 ff.

⁴⁰ John of Damascus, *Contra Manichaeos* 78, p. 393 ff.

⁴¹ A possibility of surpassing this fragmental knowledge is the significance given to these very historical events, "which surpasses the objective count without detaching from things, because most simply it interprets these very things" (N. Matsoukas, *Orthodoxy and heresy in the ecclesiastical writers of the 4th, 5th, 6th, century*, p. 58).

to the infiltration of wickedness and the varying evaluations between people.

God, though, judges "*not after evaluation and understanding*", which means that God doesn't judge on the basis of post-evaluation or the acquired true knowledge after its verification in relation to the false, "*but with foreknowledge*", which means judgment upon reality entirely⁴². Man's knowledge, therefore, is not static, but dynamic, i.e. *the continuous search for truth and not the finding of truth*. And this, because the "finding" refers to the possession of truth, i.e. to the description of truth on the basis of the canons of reflective thought and material, perishable reality. Man, in this way, is incapable of following the dynamic path towards the 'signified' of the phenomenon - i.e. towards the truth, as it is revealed via phenomena-, who is God the creator, and is trapped in the 'phenomenal' world of created reality.

The formulation of this truth as a way of life happens, naturally, with logical sentences, in order for dogma to be stipulated against the false way of life, which is heresy⁴³. St. John of

⁴² John of Damascus, *Contra Manichaeos* 78, p. 393.

⁴³ See N. Matsoukas, *Birth and essence of orthodox dogma*, (Analecta Blatadon 2, Thessaloniki: Patriarchal Institute of Patristic Studies 1969), p. 31 ff. Here, though, it must be noted that in no case is the stipulation of dogma divided from the historic reality, because the "denial of the 'historicity' of dogma inevitably leads to the detachment of dogma itself from the historic continuity of the salvific work in Christ, mysteriously displayed and repeated in the life of the Church", and in this way "we are lead to the consideration of dogma as a 'construction' or amalgamation of metaphysical theories influenced by cultural factors within the world environment" (ibid, p. 33). And this becomes clear, if taken into consideration, that revelation, which dogma interprets, "only perceived within the life of the church can be considered to have a relation to dogma, because within this life is the historic factor positively evaluated" (ibid, p. 59). Only under these preconditions can the relation of dogma with the ecclesiastical, i.e. sacramental way of life of the faithful, as involvement and experience of this life, in contrast with the heretics who introduce a new way of life from that of the Church (See op. cit. pg. 94 ff.). A different view is

Damascus specifically says: “Dogma is the search for true piety, a genuine and faultless diagnosis or exemption from error through words. Common dogma is the opinion proposed to all unforcedly and the rejection of every other and the refutation of false dogma”⁴⁴.

St. Justin, has already highlighted in a brilliant way, this direct relation of reason and life as “*living according to truth*” while on the same time he determines the liturgical unity of reason and practise as a precondition for the research of the nature of things. He specifically notes: “For one to act correctly, o men, is nothing other than living truly; for one living excellently and according to truth is not without the knowledge of the nature of things”⁴⁵.

The understanding, of course, of the true nature of things, the true nature of beings requires judgment, according to St. John of Damascus, in the way of the true and examining word, as was

expressed by the professor M. Farantos, *Dogmatics and Ethics I*, Athens 1983, p. 345 ff., who within the context of discerning revelation into natural and supernatural observes that dogma has no relation “to history and religious truth. Dogma is neither the product of experience and culture, -history therefore is neither the source neither the criterion of dogma-, nor does it have any relation to dogmas of other religions”. Matsoukas, in contrast, does not discern divine revelation into natural and supernatural, so as to identify natural revelation with culture and history in contrast with supernatural revelation, which is characterised by a spirit of metaphysics and philosophical mystery. The late Matsoukas, seeing the revelation of God in a single historic continuity discerns the ways of approaching life characterised either by the sacramental life of the Church, or the secular life of man, i.e. the “idolatrous” way of life. See also, N. Xexakis, *Orthodox Dogmatics I, Foreword to orthodox dogmatics*, (Athens: Ennoia 2006), p. 180 ff., and H. H. Blachus (Metr. Nafpaktus and St. Blasius), *Empirical Dogmatics of the Orthodox Catholic Church, according to the oral deliveries of fr. John Romanidis*, vol. I., (Lebadia: Holy Monastery Birth of the Theotokos Pelaghia 2010), p. 102 ff.

⁴⁴ John of Damascus, *Philosophia* 9, (*Die Schriften des Johannes von Damaskos*, vol. 1, Kotter, B. (ed.), (Berlin: De Gruyter 1989), p. 161.

⁴⁵ Justin, *Apologia* 13, 1 - 2, in: J.-P. Migne (ed.), *Patrologiae cursus completus* (Tomus VI, Paris: Garnier Fratres, 1857), 1600D.

utilised by Socrates⁴⁶ or as it was accepted by the principles of logical assessment in the context of the Hellenic dialectic⁴⁷. This means, that "*living excellently or according to truth*" is the result of the righteous judgement of the logical man between being and non-being, true and false, good and evil.

Therefore, dialogue is not the means for one to reach the truth, but the expression of the true way of life, which is for the dialoguing man a reality. Truth is not the sought after object of dialogue, so that each conversing side presupposes "in the other a desire for reconciliation, for unity in truth"⁴⁸. Truth is this very life, which man accepts without discussion on its content and value. That is why dia-logos (i.e. knowledge via the logos) is the necessary precondition of "*living excellently*", which is identified with "*living according to truth*", whereas the catastrophic behaviour of the unjust correlates to the *daemonic possession* of the word. In this way idolatry, which survives even till our times in the form of wealth gaining, power, glory or

⁴⁶ Idem, 336BC: "When Socrates thus attempted to reveal them [the daemons whom they worshiped as gods] with true word and exact examination and to distance men from the daemons, then those daemons acted within those people who delighted in evil to murder him as impious and ungodly, saying that he introduce new daemons [new deities]; They similarly also act in our case. Because they were not only censured by Socrates' word to the Greeks, but also to the Barbarians by the very Word, who took on form and became man and was named Jesus Christ, in whom we are convicted and we say that the daemons who enacted these not only are not gods, but are evil and corrupt daemons, who do not follow the acts of men who desire virtue".

⁴⁷ Ibid II, 2, 329AB. See Aristotle, *Topica*, 101B, (Aristotelis topica et sophisticis elenchi, W. D. Ross (ed.), (Oxford: University Press 1958): "This therefore is the special trait, or better, the foremost characteristic of dialectic; since it is scrutinising it is directed towards the principles of all methods". Regarding the meaning of "glory" so much in the ancient Greek writings as much as in Holy Scripture and the Fathers of the Church see. N. Mitsopoulos, *The glory of man in Jesus Christ*. (Doct. Thesis. Athens 1972), p. 13 - 25.

⁴⁸ John Paul II, *that they might be one* (Ut unum sint) 10, 29, p. 36 ff.

even a Christian God transformed to the desires and needs of modern man, is not a religion parallel to Christianity, but is interpreted as the daemonic domination of fantasy, as pathology, which is detected in the ailing word of man⁴⁹.

St. Justin notices: “the daemons acted through men who delighted in evil to murder him as godless and impious [meaning Socrates], saying that he introduces new deities; they similarly also act in our case”⁵⁰, because man “was created [by God] with the power of logic and the capability to choose true things and to prosper, so that all people may be inexcusable towards God, since they have been made rational and contemplative”⁵¹. It thus becomes clear why the crucifixion of Christ is characterised by Justin as a deed of *irrational opinion*⁵².

⁴⁹ N. Matsoukas, *Theology, creationism, ecclesiology according to Athanasius the Great. Points of patristic and ecumenical theology* (Thessaloniki: P. Pournaras 2001), p. 128 ff. Here it must be noted, that no heresy or any form of idolatry whatsoever exists independent and parallel to Christianity. This occurs from the fact that so much heresy as much as idolatry comprise a part of the ecclesiastical community, which attempts unsuccessfully to redetermine and define a different way of life from that which is founded in the life of the ecclesiastical community, i.e. in the dogmas of the Church. Thus via heresy or idolatry an interpretation of the way of life of the ecclesiastical community occurs, which differentiates from the essence of the ecclesiastical community, as it is documented and historically presented in its course within created reality. That is why with every human attempt to stop this historic continuity of the life of the Church, with a redetermining of the basic structures of the ecclesiastical community, i.e. of dogma, the Church reacts against the heresy perceiving its corrosive role. See also. N. Matsoukas, *Birth and essence of orthodox dogma*, p. 94 ff. and idem, *Orthodoxy and heresy*, p. 33 ff.

⁵⁰ Justin, *Apologia I*, 5, 336B.

⁵¹ Ibid, 372C.

⁵² Idem, *Dialogos cum Tryphone Judaeo* 93, 4, in: J.-P. Migne (ed.), *Patrologiae cursus completus* (Tomus VI, Paris: Garnier Fratres, 1857), 700A: “and to them he was an enemy of God and accursed and so they deemed it proper to crucify him, so is the work of your irrational opinion”. See J. Karavidopoulos, *Introduction to the New Testament*, (Bible Library 1, Thessaloniki: P. Pournaras, 21998, p. 137 - 143 and L.

3 "Living according to Truth" as Dialogue between God and Man

The true life, as was presented above, as word and deed, which is condensed in "living according to truth", does not comprise the gnostic object of man, but is the very experience of reality, which is lived primarily within the frame of the relationship created – uncreated. And this, because "the highest division of all beings has its rift between the created and the uncreated"⁵³, of which the uncreated, which is the Holy Trinity⁵⁴, is the cause of the existence of the created being, whereas the created, which is whatever exists apart from the Holy Trinity, owes its existence to the uncreated God. The creation from non-being, therefore, of created reality in relation to the uncreated God means the changeableness of creation, which is an innate attribute of its essence⁵⁵. Thus, the created being as changeable

Coppelt, *Les origenes de l'Église. Christianisme et judaïsmeaux deux premiers siècles*, (Paris: Payot 1961), p. 78 - 93 for the sermon of the apostles and its discernment from the Judaic faith on the basis of the event of the crucifixion and the resurrection of Christ. See also K. Skouteris, *History of Doctrine. The Orthodox dogmatic tradition and its falsification during the first three centuries*, vol. 1, (Athens 1998), p. 263 ff.

⁵³ Gregory of Nyssa, *Contra Eunomium III*, 3, 6, 66, (*Gregorii Nysseni opera*, vol. 1, W. Jaeger (ed.), (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1960), p. 209 (PG 45, 793C): "(...) because the highest division of all beings has its rift between the created and the uncreated, the one as the cause of the occurrence, the other as occurring from it. Thus, since created nature and divine essence are divided and no mixing of their attributes exists, it is imperative not to characterise either with the same attributes nor to seek after the same attributes for all things that are divided according to the word of nature".

⁵⁴ *Ibid*, p. 113 (PG 45, 341C): "We classify the Holy Trinity as uncreated nature, as created nature everything else that is spoken of and is and is named".

⁵⁵ See above footnote 53 and Gregory of Nyssa, *Refutatio confessionis Eunomii*, 101, (*Gregorii Nysseni opera*, vol. 2, W. Jaeger (ed.), (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1960), p. 354 (PG 45, 512BC). Even, John of Damascus, *Expositio Fidei Orthodoxae* 3, p. 11: "All beings are either created or uncreated. If

cannot exist without the participation in the uncreated divine energies, because, “if it stops participating it will most certainly stop abiding in life”, according to St. Gregory of Nyssa⁵⁶.

The via participation, though, sustainment of the created being in existence and the true life via the renewal of man and the entire world through the uncreated divine energies happens only within the church. But the church should not be interpreted within the narrow boundaries of an historic phase or even more within the flux time of everyday life. The Church as a way of life greatly surpasses the boundaries of the Church “militant” –which only comprises a historic phase- and is identified with creation itself⁵⁷. This means that God together with creation also builds the Church, whose symbol, type and icon, according to St. Maximus the Confessor, is God Himself⁵⁸.

created then by all means changing; because those whose existence started with change, will always be subject to change presented according to their choices either by corruption, or alteration. If uncreated, though, according to the continuation of our word, then by all means unchanging; because whoever’s existence is opposed [to created reality], these and the word on how they exist, i.e. their attributes, are in opposition”.

⁵⁶ Gregory of Nyssa, *Contra Eunomium III*, 3, 6, 75, GNO I, p. 212 (PG 45, 797AB): “Hence, since the Godhead is very life, the only begotten God is also God and Life and Truth and whatever higher and God-fitting meaning, whereas creation, that receives from there the granting of goods, it can be understood from it, that if it partakes of life it will be in life, and if stops participating it will most certainly stop abiding in life”.

⁵⁷ S. Maximi Confessoris, *Mystagogia*, in: J.-P. Migne (ed.), *Patrologiae cursus completus* (Tomus XCI, Paris: Garnier Fratres, 1863), 684D-685A, and John of Damascus, *Expositio Fidei* 13, p. 38. See also N. Matsoukas, *Dogmatic and Symbolic Theology II. An exhibition of the orthodox faith*, (Philosophical and Theological Library 3, Thessaloniki: P. Pournaras 1985), p. 352 ff.

⁵⁸ S. Maximi Confessoris, *Mystagogia*, 664D - 665A. See. J. Karmiris, *The orthodox dogmatic teaching on the Church*, excerpt from the *Encyclopaedia of Religion and Ethics*, vol. 5, edited by Athanasios Martinos, Athens 1964, p. 5 ff. and N. Matsoukas, *Dogmatic and Symbolic Theology II*, p. 356 ff.

This is why St. Gregory of Nyssa says: "the creation of the world is the making of the church"⁵⁹.

Thus, within the Church, which means within God's very creation, the knowledge of divine things is not simply the knowledge of a part of the scientific spectrum of created reality, as that of the various sciences. The Church does not possess the truth, but it partakes of it. That is why knowledge within the life of the Church has ontological significance and denotes the via knowledge sustainment of the created being in existence⁶⁰. This is otherwise perceived from the way of existence of the worldly revelation of the Church as *communion of rational beings*⁶¹,

⁵⁹ Gregory of Nyssa, *In Canticum Canticorum XIII*, (*Gregorii Nysseni opera*, vol. VI, H. Langerbeck, ed., Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1960), p. 384 ff. (PG 44, 1049B–1052A): " (...) the creation of the world is the making of the church, upon which, according to the word of the prophet, a new heaven is made (which is the firmament of faith in Christ, as Paul says) and a new earth is created (...) and another man is formed, he who is renewed according to the birth from above [i.e. baptism] according to the image of his creator, and another nature of the stars is made, about which he says: You are the light of the world, (...) and many are the stars that arise in the firmament of faith(...). Thus he who observes this new world of the creation of the Church, sees within it Him who is and becomes everything within everything and guides our knowledge through what our nature understands and contains in relation to the infinite". See *Eph.* 3, 9-12.

⁶⁰ See. N. Matsoukas, *Dogmatic and symbolic theology I. AN introduction to theological gnosiology*, (Philosophical and Theological Library 2, Thessaloniki: P. Pournaras 1985), p. 37 ff., idem, *Dogmatic and Symbolic Theology II*, p. 438 ff. and idem, *Ecumenical Theology*, (Philosophical and Theological Library 55, Thessaloniki: P. Pournaras 2005), p. 27 ff.

⁶¹ The Church as communion of rational beings clearly differentiates from the interpretation of the Church according to the Roman Catholic Church, according to which the Church is interpreted "als sakramentale Institution und deshalb als Beziehungspunkt unseres Glaubens an den dreifaltigen Gott und seine Heilswirkung". The institutional, in other words, trait of the Church establishes it as the point of reference of man as an intermediary organ between faith on the one hand and the Triune God and the divine energies on the other. See Miguel M. Garijo-Guembe, *Gemeinschaft der Heiligen. Grund, Wesen*

which is defined by St. John Chrysostom as dialogue between God and men. He specifically says: "Therefore, because God created man in the beginning, he conversed with men, as was possible for men to hear Him. Thus, he accordingly came towards Adam; thus he punished Cain; thus he spoke to Noah; thus he was shown hospitality by Abraham"⁶².

Dialogue does not consist of a vocal relationship, neither a noetic meditation, but neither the dialectic relationship of the subject with himself, which means the self-awareness of existence⁶³. The Roman Catholic Church becomes entrapped within this scheme, which on the one hand sees the surpassing of the gnoseological meaning of dia-logos, on the other hand it stops at its ontological character, which refers to the "the human subject in his or her entirety"⁶⁴.

This owes to the fact that dialogue on the one hand is interpreted on a horizontal level as an expression of the will of the conversing sides, that seek unity in truth⁶⁵, on the other hand as orientation towards the Redeemer of the world and Lord of history on a vertical dimension, which "lies in our acknowledgment, jointly and to each other, that we are men and women who have sinned"⁶⁶. Dialogue, though, between God and men is neither social-political, on a horizontal level, nor

und Struktur der Kirche, (Düsseldorf: Patmos 1988), p. 14. According to orthodox tradition, though, the Church is not a third dimension in between God and man, which plays an intermediary role, but comprises this very communion of logical and noetic beings, to which the revelation of God as truth and goodness refers. See: N. Matsoukoas, *Dogmatic and symbolic theology II*, p. 355.

⁶² John Chrysostom, *In Genesis*, pp. 27-28.

⁶³ Here we are naturally not referring to the internal dialogue of man, i.e. to his contemplative ability, but to the realisation of man's being, i.e. to the 'gathering' of the consciousness on the truth of its essence". See: T. Pentzopoulou-Valala, *Heidegger. The philosopher of word and silence*, Thessaloniki: Vantias 1991, p. 52 ff.

⁶⁴ John Paul II, *that they might be one* (Ut unum sint) 10, 28, p. 35.

⁶⁵ *Ibid*, 29, 36, ff.

⁶⁶ *Ibid*, 35, pg. 41.

ethical-judicial, on a vertical level. Dialogue reveals, according to patristic theology, the energy relationship between created and uncreated, i.e. it offers the ontological and not the existential dimension of man in relation to God. In this way, the ontological energy relationship of God and man *does not comprise a way of seeking* truth, but being true reality it *expresses* it, as it is experienced in this very relationship. In accordance, therefore, with the above text of St. John Chrysostom, the ontological character of this energy relationship is *expressed* in various ways of approach (*he came, he was undermined, he was estranged*). This energy relationship does not have the form of the overpowering call of man from God, as occurs in the case of the creation and recreation of man and refers to the birth and rebirth of creation. On the contrary, this relationship has a communal character, where God corresponds to man's capabilities and is revealed to man according to the measure and the power of his faith. Accordingly, the ignorance of divine things means irrationality or otherwise the *pathology* of the rational being, since "only through this [the mind] can God be known and contemplated", according to Athanasius the Great. In this way irrationality ultimately leads man to the breaking of the communion with God, to the breaking of the participation in the divine energies and his fall from the true life according to God.

Man, therefore, who fails to reach true knowledge and to correctly interpret the revelation of the Triadic God within creation and history is not equipped with judgment for the understanding of truth according to the true and examining word and continues an incorrect way of life, which leads him out of the Church. The heretic, i.e., stops at the knowledge of the world of phenomena, he partakes of "*flux*" and false knowledge and becomes entrapped within the imaginary and idolatrous perception of reality, so as to end up at the worshiping of

creation instead of the Creator, according to the word of Ap. Paul⁶⁷.

In his way, the heretical man is led to the worship of that, which he himself created on the basis of insufficient and false knowledge and instead of knowing the truth and living within the freedom of ecclesiastical communion⁶⁸, he becomes enslaved to the falsity and power of this world⁶⁹. Egocentrically judging and counter-legislating against God he sentences “man to slavery, whose nature is free and autonomous”⁷⁰. This is also exactly why one notices a polemic and dogmatic perception about truth, which asserts absolute and exclusive truth, devalues the human person and limits his freedom⁷¹.

The heretic doubts the three basic characteristics of the life of the Church, as they emerge from the image of the body of the Ap. Paul's *First epistle to the Corinthians*: 1) the variety of gifts, 2) the relation of love and 3) the liturgical union of the members. He denies this dynamic structure of the body of the Church, which is based on these three characteristics, and ends up at a static, anti-ecclesiastical way of life that resembles the secular and political character of society⁷².

The denial of the unity of the members, the loving relation and the variety of gifts within the Body of Christ subsequently means the denial of the Holy Trinity, since this way of life is the work of the Holy Trinity towards the entire body of the

⁶⁷ *Rom.* 1, 25.

⁶⁸ *Jn.* 8, 32.

⁶⁹ *Rom.* 1, 28-32.

⁷⁰ Gregory of Nyssa, *In Ecclesiasten V*, GNO V, p. 335 (PG 44, 664CD and 665B).

⁷¹ K. Rahner, H. Vorgrimler (eds.), *Kleines Konzilskompendium. Sämtliche Texte des Zweiten Vatikanums*, p. 661 ff.; *ibid*, *Einleitung*, p. 655 ff.

⁷² J. Karmiris, *The orthodox dogmatic teaching on the Church*, p. 16 ff. Characteristic in the case at hand is the deadlock of current society, which tries to solve the various problems by using the same methods and means that created those very problems, such as ex. the bad management of wealth, power and finally violence and war.

Church⁷³. The holy-triadic life of the church is underlined by Jesus Christ himself, who states in the *High-priestly Prayer*:

"I do not pray for these alone [= the disciples], but also for those who will believe in Me through their word [= the Church]; that they all may be one, as You, Father, are in Me, and I in You; that they also may be one in Us, that the world may believe that You sent Me. And the glory which You gave Me I have given them, that they may be one just as We are one: I in them, and You in Me; that they may be made perfect in one, and that the world may know that You have sent Me, and have loved them as You have loved Me"⁷⁴.

In other words, the via the loving relation unity of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit is actualised by grace in the relationship between God and man, which means in the Holy Spirit (glory), through Whom the familiarisation with the Son and where the reborn man becomes recognised as a child of God the Father is realised⁷⁵. In this way the natural relationship between the Father and the Son becomes, by the grace of the Holy Spirit within the church, the relationship between God and man, man and fellowman. The man free from worldly addictions and conventional relationships does not stand alone as an egocentric individual towards God and the world, where everything acquires meaning and content only in reference to the individual himself, but as the substantiation of the ontological, energy relationship towards the Father, as the son

⁷³ Cyril of Alexandria, *Commentarium in Joannem*, in: J.-P. Migne (ed.), *Patrologiae cursus completus* (Tomus LXXIV, Paris: Garnier Fratres, 1863), 556D - 557C.

⁷⁴ *Jn.* 17, 20 - 23.

⁷⁵ Gregory of Nyssa, *In Illud, Tunc ipse Filius Subjicietur*, (*Gregorii Nysseni opera*, vol. 3, 2, J. Kenneth Downing, J. McDonough s.j., H. Hörner, eds., Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1987), p. 21 ff. (PG 44, 1320C - 1321A). See. *Rom.* 8, 14 - 16: "For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God. For you did not receive the spirit of bondage again to fear, but you received the Spirit of adoption by whom we cry out, 'Abba, Father'. The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God".

by grace of God – the Father, i.e. as friend and brother of the incarnate Son and Word of God⁷⁶.

From the aforementioned the identity of life and faith becomes clear. The doubt and denial of the holy-triadic way of life of the Church means the denial and the alteration of the faith, which is experienced within the Church. And this, because faith forms the Christian life and the life of the church reveals the object of faith, who is the moving, historic and communal Triadic God so much of Israel as much as of the Church⁷⁷. This is distinctly apparent in the Fathers of the Church, who emphasised the triado-centrality of Church life in relation always and in reference to the salvation of man far from every notion of christomonism, pneumatomonism or patromonism. On the other hand, faith never became and objects of philosophical research and questioning on a purely theoretical level, because faith comprises neither philosophy, nor the content of some religion, but is a way of life, which touches the everyday life of the faithful person. That is why the church without exercising political power must intervene in all expressions of life influencing the life of man and society, even that of political power, with the energy of her charismatic treasure⁷⁸.

Under these preconditions the words of the blessed Chrysostom are fully understood, who urges Christians to treat heretics with lenience and not with a militaristic disposition, because, as he himself says: “I do not battle with material things, but I pursue with the word, not the heretic, but the heresy, I do not repel the man but I hate the delusion, and I

⁷⁶ See. J. Galanis, *Adoption, the use of the term by Paul in relation to the judicial and theological givens of the people of his environment*, (doct. thesis, Thessaloniki 1977).

⁷⁷ John Chrysostom, *In Epistolam ad Ephesius V*, in: J.-P. Migne (ed.), *Patrologiae cursus completus* (Tomus LXII, Paris: Garnier Fratres, 1862), 40A-D.

⁷⁸ John of Damascus, *Contra Manichaeos 14*, p. 171 ff.; N. Matsoukas, *Theology, creationism, ecclesiology according to Athanasius the Great*, p. 174.

wish to detach him from it"⁷⁹. And this because the fight towards heretics is not against the "*essence*", who is man and who comprises the "*work of God*", but occurs for the correction of the opinion, "*that the devil corrupted*". The heretic, therefore, should not, according to St. John Chrysostom, be treated as a "defilement", but as a sick person, who is in need of healing. And as the doctor does not destroy the body of the sick, but tries to cure it by eliminating the illness, similarly the orthodox Christian does not hold a hostile stance against heretics, but tries to extrude the error and cleanse the spiritual sepsis. In a contrary case he does not behave as a Christian, since "my habit is to be persecuted and not to persecute, to be fought and not to fight", according to the blessed father of our church. "Thus did Christ also come, not crucifying, but being crucified, not slapping but being slapped"⁸⁰.

4 The Inter-Christian Dialogue on the Basis of "Living according to Truth"

The church moves within in the context of the spirit of the words of St. John Chrysostom that was developed above, something which is clearly visible in the reaction of Peter of Antioch, when during the turbulent ecclesiastical period of 1054, where the final schism between the Roman Catholic and Orthodox Church was actualised, he recommends moderation and the careful examination of the issues, since he urges the Patriarch of Constantinople Michael Cerularius on the one hand to face the Roman Catholic Church as a sister, on the other to be more lenient regarding the exactness of phrasings due to

⁷⁹ John Chrysostom, *De S. Phocam Martyrem*, in: J.-P. Migne (ed.), *Patrologiae cursus completus* (Tomus L, Paris: Garnier Fratres, 1862), PG 50, 701D- 702A.

⁸⁰ *Ibid*, 701AB.

“boorishness and illiteracy”⁸¹. And this because the problem of the inadequacy of the latinophone West was already known from the time of Athanasius the Great, who, although noticing identification in regards to the understanding of the teaching on the one essence of God and the three substances, he perceives the infiltration of the danger of division, due to the “*pettiness about sounds*”. That’s why, after carefully examining the meaning of the phrasings and not noticing any essential difference “he puts words aside and connects them to things”⁸², as St. Gregory the Theologian mentions.

It is in this way, therefore, that in the dialogue between the orthodox and the heterodox Christians a clear distinction must be made between “objection” and “confession”, where for the first “it is not necessary for the one objecting to be precise with words, in regard to confession though exactness should be followed and sought after in all things”, according to the advice of Basil the Great⁸³.

The basic criterion for dialogue, therefore, between the Orthodox Church, on the one hand and the heterodox and society on the other hand, is not the verbal formulation, but the confession of faith, as is stipulated in the Symbol of Faith and is lived within the Church. That’s why the Symbol of Faith comprises the basis of dialogue between Cyril of Alexandria and

⁸¹ Peter of Antioch, *Epistola IV*, in: J.-P. Migne (ed.), *Patrologiae cursus completus* (Tomus CXX, Paris: Garnier Fratres, 1865), 805C-808A: “They are also out brethren, even if due to boorishness and illiteracy they often diverge from the plain truth and follow their own will; and do not seek so much preciseness in the barbaric nations, which we demand when manipulating words”.

⁸² Gregory the Theologian, *In laudem Magnii Athanasii XXI*, in: J.-P. Migne (ed.), *Patrologiae cursus completus* (Tomus XXXV, Paris: Garnier Fratres, 1857), 1124C - 1125A.

⁸³ J. Karmiris, *The dogmatic and Symbolic monuments of the Orthodox Church*, (vol. I, Athens 21960), p. 378. See N. Matsoukas, *Ecumenical Theology*, p. 31 ff. and 135 ff.

Nestorius⁸⁴, the dogmatic formulations of the church occur upon this basis and this is set, by Peter of Antioch, as the grounds for dialogue between the Roman Catholic and the Orthodox, who in his epistle to the Patriarch of Constantinople Michael Cerularius highlights: "It is of great significance if the life-giving Trinity is assuredly proclaimed by them [the Church of Rome] and the mystery of the incarnate economy according to our faith is accepted"⁸⁵. The only problem is detected in the addition of the Filioque to the Symbol of Faith, which should be corrected⁸⁶.

St. Gregory Palamas, following the same patristic tradition of the Orthodox Church, clearly discerns objection, in which there is great convenience regarding the usage of words and reasonings, from confession of faith, which refers to divine things and demands exactness. The Synodic Tome of 1351 points this out as follows: "Our truth and piety is not in words, but in things, according to Gregory the Theologian. I am fighting for dogmas and things"⁸⁷. Meanings and words can be used as one sees fit, "for we shall not behave uncordially in quarrels about words"⁸⁸, according to St. Gregory Palamas, provided that the content of names is not altered, i.e. the very things themselves. Hence, in this way, dialectic, which is the "art of words, through which we refute something or create something through the questions and answers of the discussions"⁸⁹, concerns created reality and is used for the stipulation of

⁸⁴ D. Lialiou, *Interpretation of the dogmatic and symbolic texts of the Orthodox Church*, (vol. 2, Thessaloniki: P. Pournaras 1994), p. 157 ff.

⁸⁵ Peter of Antioch, *Epistola IV*, 805C - 808A.

⁸⁶ *Ibid*, 812D.

⁸⁷ J. Karmiris, *The dogmatic and Symbolic monuments of the Orthodox Church*, vol. I, p. 379.

⁸⁸ Gregory Palamas, *That not also from the Son, but only from the Father does the Holy Spirit proceed* (29, SYGGRAMMATA, B. Bobrinsky et. al., vol. I., Thessaloniki: P. Christou 1988), p. 54.

⁸⁹ Diogenes Laertius, *Vitae philosophorum* 3, 48, (*Diogenis Laertii vitae philosophorum II*, (H. S. Long, ed., Oxford: Clarendon Press 1964 and 1966), p. 141.

dogmas and not for the finding of truth, “which is testified through works and life and which is not only true, but safe and without diversions”⁹⁰.

This is why Palamas persists in the proof of the thing, which is the experience of the divine presence in the work and life of the Church. The dialectic method is appropriate in regard to creation and the formulation of dogmas; experience takes preference, though, in the work and life of the church. Therefore, we can’t ascend from the created things to as many as do not become perceptible to the experience of the Church. Such a method is philosophical, theoretical, but not theological. In this way we know of the existence of God, we do not know though “what God is”⁹¹. Man in this case should not proceed to the search of “*how*”, but to accept with faith “*that God is*”⁹².

5 The preconditions of Dialogue as True Life

On the grounds of this discernment between objection and conciseness, dialectic demeanour and confession of faith, one could accept the hermeneutic differentiations and formulations, those though that do not touch and in no case alter dogma, which is a way of life and not the stipulation of a personal opinion. The word of St. Gregory Palamas is characteristic, when urges us to philosophise “about the world or worlds, about matter, about the soul, about logical beings both good and evil, about the resurrection, the judgment, retribution and the passion of Christ. Because on these matters success is useful

⁹⁰ Gregory Palamas, *In favour of the holy hesychasts* 1, 3, 13, *SYGGRAMMATA I*, p. 423.

⁹¹ See N. Matsoukas, *Dogmatic and symbolic theology I*, p. 156 ff.

⁹² Athanasius the Great, *Epistola ad Serapionem I*, 17-18, in: J.-P. Migne (ed.), *Patrologiae cursus completus* (Tomus XXVI, Paris: Garnier Fratres, 1857), 569C – 573B. *Heb.* 11, 6.

and failure is harmless"⁹³. On the contrary, concerning divine things, which do not comprise objects of contemplative knowledge, but of life and experience the existence of an energy context, is required, within which man approaches God experientially.

St. Gregory the Theologian, thus, mentions as a first precondition the spiritual purity of man and specifically the purity of soul and body, so that a man being exempt from the passions of the materialistic and worldly life may be able to gaze upon the purity of God. The second precondition refers to the time, which man chooses to approach God, which is determined by the purity of the mind. The mind ought to not be bound by logical categories of thought, through which created reality is interpreted and man is entrapped in the conventionality of the "phenomenal" world, but freed from the conventionality of words and meanings one must proceed to the knowledge of God. The third precondition, which is placed by St. Gregory for the word about God, is man's disposition, which should be characterised by the desire for the knowledge of God and not by the desire for a mere philosophical undertaking. Finally, he mentions as a fourth precondition the degree of approaching God, which is defined by what is "possible to us and to the reachable point of the listener's natural capability and possibility"⁹⁴.

Under the above preconditions should the double methodology of the Fathers should be understood, who used philosophy and the various sciences for the knowledge and proof of sensory and material things, although for the knowledge of God via the uncreated divine energies they prioritised the transformation of man in the Holy Spirit, so that the human mind may know the signified of the sensory and phenomenal world, without, on the

⁹³ Gregory Theologian, *Theological I (Oration XXVII)* 10, in: J.-P. Migne (ed.), *Patrologiae cursus completus (Tomus XXXVI, Paris: Garnier Freres, 1858)*, PG 36, 25A.

⁹⁴ *Ibid*, 3, 13C - 16B.

other hand, supporting the abandonment of bodily and sensory reality, i.e. a mystical in character ecstasy and exit from his natural and created environment. Therefore, the theological science expresses through words, reasonings and proofs whatever charismatic theology as knowledge of the uncreated God expresses experientially within the context of the sacramental life of the Church. That is why the Fathers of the Church are dialectic and compromising concerning the stipulation of faith, although relentless and austere regarding the exactness of confession, which presupposes a specific way of life and existence.

The fact, though, that the confession of faith, for which exactness is sought-after, comprises the foundation of the unity of the Church, since “*in one thought and one mind*”⁹⁵ the unity of the Church is ensured according to the Ap. Paul and “the church is truly one in the identity of faith and in the similarity of customs and cultures according to the decision of the even ecumenical councils” according to the patriarchal and synodic encyclical of 1902, the need for the existence of confession is clearly established –i.e. the identity of faith – not only as the basis of every dialogue of the Orthodox Church with the Heterodox, but as the necessary and imperative element which defines the method of the dialogue, in which dogmatic issues have priority over practical affairs⁹⁶.

The points that differentiate the Christian Churches or that lead to the differentiation of the Church from the world and human society and refer to the dogmatic stipulation of faith as a way of life, must be prioritised in discussions over matters of agreement and contact, which are of secondary importance and mostly depend on the unity of faith and the trust between the Churches,

⁹⁵ 1 Cor. 1, 10.

⁹⁶ J. Karmiris, *The dogmatic and Symbolic monuments of the Orthodox Catholic Church*, (vol. II, Graz, Austria ²1968), p. 958 ff.

*since the common points do not comprise a basis of approach and smoothening out of these differences*⁹⁷.

This becomes clear, if one takes notice of the up until then discussion upon the common points between the Orthodox Church and the Heterodox Churches, which never lead to any convergence, but rather comprised the opportunity for the development of proselytistic trends from the Heterodox Churches. This is already known to the Fathers of the Church, which is why Basil the Great in one of his epistles to Diodorus (later bishop of Tarsus), wanting to emphasise the value of the clarity and purity of the theological word against those who differ in regards to the faith, expresses his satisfaction in the second book that he sent him, which is clearly better than the first, "because it is simultaneously condense in meanings while clearly containing the objections of the opponents as well as the answers towards them"⁹⁸.

Basil the Great's aforementioned observation refers not only to the object of dialogue, which is the differences between the discussing sides, but also to the way of discussing, which is not the examination of problems with opulent expressive means, various schemes and eloquence, so that through these a conformative solution to the different theological problems may be achieved. These, as the academic K. Tsatsos very rightly points out, are elements of the artistic rhetoric word, which "does not seek to convince, by explaining and influencing with only what is said, but with the way in which things are said". And this, as the same continues, because the rhetorical word "does not seek objectively neither after the truth of word, nor after its aesthetic. These are at most a means for it (...). What interests it is if with these, whether they have objective value,

⁹⁷ The importance of dialogue in the solving of differences is also noted by the Encyclical of Pope John-Paul II, *that they might be one*, 10, p. 41 ff.

⁹⁸ Basil the Great, *Epistlola* 135, in: J.-P. Migne (ed.), *Patrologiae cursus completus* (Tomus XXXII, Paris: Garnier Fratres, 1857), 572B.

or lack it, whether they are correct and beautiful or not, can convince its co-discusser on the goal it pursues"⁹⁹. That is why rhetoric can impart knowledge, but "its final aim is not the truth as such"¹⁰⁰. Rhetoric "manipulates truth, knowledge, as a means to convince or to provoke the listener towards some action"¹⁰¹. The learner, though, through education, in contrast with rhetoric, learns the truth on the basis of "experience or logic", which means that he possesses "all the elements that establish and prove this truth"¹⁰².

Therefore, the artistic rhetoric word can be used in the case of a "diplomatic", politico-social approach, as occurs in the political connections and discussions between countries. In the case, though, of the religious dialogue mainly between Christians, in which unity is sought after as a common benefit and healing of the wounds of division, no conformity infiltrates. Every conformity leads to the strengthening of the division, *because the unity of the body demands a specific way of life, which can never be the result of conformation, but of "living excellently and according to truth"* in accordance to the true knowledge of things. That is why Basil the Great in the same epistle to Diodorus mentions immediately after: "also the simplicity and artlessness of words, seemed to match the demeanour of a Christian much more, who rights rather for the common good than for his personal flaunting"¹⁰³.

The dialogue between the Orthodox Church and the Heterodox with the aim of unity through the healing of the wounded and divided members of the Church is not a choice, but an

⁹⁹ K. Tsatsos, *Aphorisms and contemplations*, vol. III, Athens: Estia 1991, p. 248 ff.

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid*, p. 245.

¹⁰¹ *Ibid*.

¹⁰² *Ibid*, p. 244.

¹⁰³ Basil the Great, *Epistola 135*, 572B. See N. Matsoukas, *Theology, creationism, ecclesiology according to Athanasius the Great*, p. 186 ff.

obligation¹⁰⁴. And this, because the Church, which is identified with this very creation, is subject to the categories of created being, wherefore always resides on the verge between Being and non-being, perfection and nihilism and is called to partake of God, who is the very truth and very life¹⁰⁵, in order to be sustained in existence.

Thus, the existence of the members of the Church depends on the positive alteration, i.e. on the participation in the uncreated divine energies, which are poured out to the Church and to the whole of created reality¹⁰⁶. Sin, on a personal level, or delusion, on the level of faith and way of life, means exactly this disturbance of the communion of the created with the uncreated, of the finite and perishable with the infinite and imperishable God. Sin and heresy mean the sickness of these members of the Church, which interrupt their communion and participation in the truth and very life, who is God. It is exactly for these weak members of the Church that the incarnation of the Word of God occurs, who did not "*come to call the righteous, but sinners, to repentance*"¹⁰⁷. For these, the weak members of the Church, is the Church herself compelled to care for that they might resurface on her shore and commune the saving grace of God, which is amply granted to her.

St. John Chrysostom, perceiving society as a whole deems necessary the co-existence of good and evil within the context

¹⁰⁴ See. J. Karmiris, *The orthodox church in dialogue with the heterodox churches*, Athens 1975, p.12 ff.

¹⁰⁵ See: Athanasius the Great, *Contra Gentes*, in: J.-P. Migne (ed.), *Patrologiae cursus completus* (Tomus XXV, Paris: Garnier Fratres, 1857), 93BC, Basil the Great, *Epistola* 233, 2, 865C; John Chrysostom, *In Joannem Evangelium VIII*, in: J.-P. Migne (ed.), *Patrologiae cursus completus* (Tomus XXV, Paris: Garnier Fratres, 1862), 65B and 91C.

¹⁰⁶ J. Karmiris, *The orthodox dogmatic teaching on the Church*, p. 22: "Sinners are of course also enlisted amongst the members of the Church, exactly because in the Church and via the Church are men gradually transformed from sinners to righteous people and saints".

¹⁰⁷ *Lk.* 5, 32.

of a social dialogue. Exactly the same is valid for the Orthodox Church, which having the consciousness of the One, Holy, Apostolic and Catholic Church of the Symbol of Faith ought to always be present not only in the dialogue between the Heterodox Churches, but in the dialogue between the Church and religions or the Church and the world, so that comprising the yeast in the world she might censure regarding delusion and attract regarding faith and sacramental life. And this, because “*living according to truth*” is revealed in the theological dialogue, or living “*according to the law of the law-giver*”, according to St. John of Damascus¹⁰⁸.

¹⁰⁸ John of Damascus, *Contra Manichaeos* 14, p. 359.