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The Growth of the Dogmatic Teaching in the Contemporary Orthodox World. Questions and Problematizations

Abstract

The growth of the dogmatic teaching of the Church is closely related to the spiritual improvement of the Christian, as the Orthodox theology is not the fruit of rationalism or imagination, but comes from truly experiencing God in the mystical life of the Church. The Church advances through history following the steps of the Saints, so that no epoch is less patristic than another, while man has been called to be always *patristic*, namely to live the spiritual states of purification, illumination and deification. These conditions represent the spiritual premises allowing the believer, be he a clergyman or a layman, to theologize and to provide an answer to the theological *crises* or debates that appear in the life of the Church and endanger people's



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salvation. This kind of contribution represents the growth of the dogmatic teaching of the Church, which does not mean a new Truth, since in Christ is concentrated and concluded the whole Revelation, but the fact that the believer, having these spiritual premises, is able to go deeper into the truths of theology and of the Church teaching.

Keywords

Christ, Church, Orthodox theology, Orthodoxy, spiritual perfection, dogma.

1 Introduction

The choice of the topic of this study¹ is the result of a problematization of many years concerning the way the dogmatic teaching of the Orthodox Church, through the concise theological word characterizing it, can be developed and can become perceivable today to the contemporary man. Yet, the limited time framework indicated for the presentation of a

¹ This paper was presented in a first form in Greek, with the title *Problematizations concerning the growth of the dogmatic teaching in the contemporary Orthodox world*, at the 4th International Symposium of Orthodox Dogmatic Theology *Dogma and Terminology in the Orthodox Tradition Today*, held in Sofia, under the blessing of His Beatitude Neofit, Patriarch of Bulgaria, during the period 22-25 September 2013. The Symposium represented a special occasion of reunion for Orthodox clergymen and laymen from different local Churches of the Orthodoxy. The presentation of this study would not have been possible without the approval of the members of the *Organizational Commission of the International Association of Orthodox Dogmatic Theologians (IAODT)*, to which they added their friendliness, and for this reason I would like to address to them my heartfelt gratitude.

research work has not permitted a full analysis of this problematization, but only the presentation of certain essential points, not with the intention of answering all the questions concerning this topic, but with the desire of highlighting certain aspects of the authentic living of the Church, as it has been inherited and preached by the Church in its fullness, and with the hope that this will contribute to the contemporary problematization regarding the growth of the dogmatic teaching in the Orthodox Church.

2 The Duration of the Patristic Period

The first problematization concerns the duration of the patristic period, in other words, the issue whether we can accept the division made by the Western Christian doctrine regarding this period, according to which the patristic period ends in a certain century for the Christian world² or we are right to state that the period under discussion has continuity in the *one, holy, catholic and apostolic* Church to this day and shall continue until the second coming of our Savior Jesus Christ.

According to the Western Christian doctrine, the patristic period ended in the 8th century for the Eastern Christianity and, beginning with that epoch, other theologies have been developed, which formulate the experience of the Church using the terms and the thinking of each epoch. For instance, for the Western Christianity, one of these theologies was, according to the supporters of this division, the scholastic theology along with its representatives, *who are considered the new theologians*

² The Western Christianity considers that the patristic period ends with Saint Gregory the Great († 604) or Isidor of Seville († 636), see Constantin Voicu, *Patrologie*, I, București: Editura *Basilica* a Patriarhiei Române, 2009, p. 27; Στυλιανού Γ. Παπαδοπούλου, *Πατρολογία, Α'*, Αθήνα: Έκδόσεις Παρουσία, 1997³, p. 83 (= Στυλιανού Παπαδοπούλου, *Πατρολογία, Α'*).

or the new Fathers of the Western tradition³. One of them was Thomas of Aquino (1224/1225-1274), who, in his work *Summa Theologica*, uses the viewpoints of John of Damascus († 749). Consequently, the Western Christian doctrine includes Saint John of Damascus among the Holy Fathers of the first eight centuries and considers that he concludes the patristic period of the Eastern Christianity⁴.

This opinion has sneaked into the Orthodox world as well and has been appropriated especially by certain patrologists. As far as the Romanian Orthodox Theology is concerned, the two official textbooks of *Patrology* contain the perspective of the Western theology as accepted⁵. Yet, in the latest Greek theological thinking, one can note the existence of two perspectives. According to the first, *the Holy Fathers' period continues at least until 1453*, namely until the fall of Constantinople⁶. The second perspective rejects the existence of some temporal limits for the patristic period, as this would signify *a separation of the Fathers from the Church* and, naturally, *ignorance of what a Father and a Teacher of the Church means*⁷.

The characteristic features of a Church Father and Teacher are *his illumination par excellence by the Holy Spirit* and *his*

³ Ἱεροθέου Μητροπολίτου Ναυπάκτου καὶ Ἁγίου Βλασίου, *Μεταπατερική θεολογία καὶ ἐκκλησιαστική πατερική ἐμπειρία*, Ἱερά Μονὴ Γενεθλίου τῆς Θεοτόκου (Πελαγίας), 2012, p. 17 (= Ἱεροθέου Μητροπολίτου, *Μεταπατερική θεολογία*).

⁴ Ἱεροθέου Μητροπολίτου, *Μεταπατερική θεολογία*, p. 17.

⁵ According to the authors of the two textbooks, the third and last patristic period ends in 749, namely the year of the passage into eternity of Saint John of Damascus, or in 843, with the Sunday of the Orthodoxy, or even in 787, namely the year of the 7th Ecumenical Council, see Constantin Voicu, *op. cit.*, pp. 26-27; Ioan G. Coman, *Patrologie*, I, București: Editura Institutului Biblic și de Misiune al Bisericii Ortodoxe Române, București, 1984, p. 31.

⁶ Παναγιώτη Κ. Χρήστου, *Ελληνική Πατρολογία*, Α', Θεσσαλονίκη: Εκδοτικός Οίκος Κυρομάνος, Θεσσαλονίκη, 1994³, p. 11.

⁷ Στυλιανού Παπαδοπούλου, *Πατρολογία*, Α', p. 83.

contribution to managing a great theological crisis in the bosom of the Church. Yet, the Church history shows that these two elements characterizing a theologian as a Church Father and Teacher are present regardless of the epoch⁸. In other words, a theological crisis expressed under the form of a heresy and endangering the believers' salvation may occur anywhere and anytime. In order to face such a crisis, one surely needs an increased experiencing of the Truth, which experiencing, expressing the continuity of the *Holy Tradition*, guarantees faith, which, in its turn, assures people's salvation. It can be noticed that, during each epoch, when the content of faith is altered and the believers' salvation becomes problematic, the Holy Spirit brings to light great theologians in the Church, fighting through them any mistaken teaching. *Therefore, as long as the Church is history⁹, it shall have Fathers. Consequently, Patrology, which is also considered a branch of the theological science, has no limits in history, just as the Tradition of the Church has no limits¹⁰, given that this Holy Tradition is the work of the Holy Spirit¹¹. And this Tradition cannot have limits for the very fact that the Fathers are not just its authentic bearers but also its creators, in other words the dynamic continuators¹² of the spiritual and dogmatic heritage of the Church, under the*

⁸ Στυλιανού Παπαδοπούλου, *Πατρολογία, Α'*, p. 83.

⁹ It has been accurately stated that *history, from a Christian perspective, is a permanent theophany*, whereas *the birth of God from a woman*, namely from the Most Holy Virgin Mary, *as God-man is the appearing (2 Tim. 1:10) and the confirmation of the realization of the aim of history* [Γεωργίου Δ. Μεταλληνού (Πρωτοπρ.), «Ο λυτρωτικός διάλογος κτιστού και Ακτίστου μέσα στην ιστορία», in idem, *Λόγος ως αντίλογος. Θεολογικά δοκίμια*, Αθήνα: Έκδόσεις Αρμός, 1998², p. 33 (= Γεωργίου Μεταλληνού, *Ο λυτρωτικός διάλογος κτιστού και Ακτίστου*)].

¹⁰ Στυλιανού Παπαδοπούλου, *Πατρολογία, Α'*, p. 84.

¹¹ Στυλιανού Γ. Παπαδοπούλου, *Όρθοδόξων πορεία. Έκκλησία και θεολογία στον 21^ο αιώνα*, Αθήνα: Έκδόσεις Γρηγόρη, 2012, p. 70 (= Στυλιανού Παπαδοπούλου, *Όρθοδόξων πορεία*).

¹² Στυλιανού Παπαδοπούλου, *Πατρολογία, Α'*, p. 84.

guidance and the illumination of the Holy Spirit, a fact that indicates precisely the dynamic character of the *Holy Tradition*. Consequently, a segmentation of *Patrology* based on historical criteria or according to the theological debates or crises cannot be maintained, just as the separation of the patrological material into *Old-Christian and patrological* or, by extension, into *patristic and post-patristic* or *neo-patristic*¹³ is *neither necessary, nor realistic*¹⁴, because the patristic theology *represents a unitary and indivisible fact. Each type of theology stemmed from the bosom of another, so that one can distinguish between the old and the new theology only artificially*¹⁵.

¹³ The Romanian Orthodox environment has recorded as well the perspective of the passage from the neo-scholastic to the neo-patristic model, but as a creative return to the patristic theology, according to the Fathers Gheorghe Florovsky and Dumitru Stăniloae, who, in their works, highlighted the role of the patristic theology [Ioan Moga, «Despre maladiile teologiei. Marginalii la o temă actuală», *Tabor* 6/5 (2012), pp. 24-27]. However, the use of the expression *neo-patristic theology* (νεοπατερική θεολογία) is not adequate, because it leaves room to the interpretation that a period of the patristic theology has come to an end and now a new period has begun – regardless of the extent to which we could envision this period as a continuation of the first. This thing can be noticed by reading the *Prologue* of Father Dumitru Stăniloae from his *Dogmatic Theology*, see idem, *Teologia Dogmatică Ortodoxă*, I, București: Editura Institutului Biblic și de Misiune al Bisericii Ortodoxe, 1978, pp. 5-6. Concerning the patristic renewal of the 20th century, which has been called *neo-patristic synthesis* (νεοπατερική σύνθεση), a better expressed formulation for it would be *the new patristic synthesis* (νέα σύνθεση πατερική), see Adrian Marinescu, «Ortodoxie și ortopraxie. Reflecții privind importanța, autoritatea și actualitatea Părinților pentru omul contemporan (II) – Cu un studiu de caz privind fenomenologia patristică și (re)contextualizarea ei în societatea contemporană», *Tabor* 6/7 (2012), p. 18 (= Adrian Marinescu, *Ortodoxie și ortopraxie*, II).

¹⁴ Στυλιανού Παπαδοπούλου, *Πατρολογία*, Α', pp. 91-92.

¹⁵ Στυλιανού Παπαδοπούλου, *Πατρολογία*, Α', p. 91. *The notion of post-patristic (μεταπατερική) is foreign to the Orthodox Church because the whole historical manifestation of the Church is a patristic one. Only a scholastic thinking may distinguish between patristic and post-patristic,*

Therefore, each epoch is no less patristic than any other, while man is called to be always *patristic*, namely to have a patristic thinking and behavior¹⁶ in the Church, where the believers have lived uninterruptedly the mystery of the divine economy, which is nothing else but man's salvation in Christ¹⁷.

Consequently, what is important is to *focus on the person who has created theology, time after time. It is only this person that stands out in the unitary area of theology and only this person represents a small or great step forward on the road of theology*¹⁸, and also of the growth of the dogmatic teaching,

since the *patristic theology has always had "modernity" or the "contemporary man" as a fundamental coordinate*, even though it has not developed a *theory of the encounter of the Church with modernity* [Adrian Marinescu, *Ortodoxie și ortopraxie*, II, pp. 27, 28 - note 46; Adrian Marinescu, «Ortodoxie și ortopraxie. Reflecții privind importanța, autoritatea și actualitatea Părinților pentru omul contemporan (III) – Cu un studiu de caz privind fenomenologia patristică și (re)contextualizarea ei în societatea contemporană – », *Tabor* 7/6 (2013), p. 40 (= Adrian Marinescu, *Ortodoxie și ortopraxie*, III)]. Other Orthodox theologians also agree that the patristic period is not over and it shall continue *for as long as the Church of Christ is present in the world and the Holy Spirit exists in it* [Bishop Hilarion Alfeyev, «Moștenirea patristică și modernitatea», translation by Ștefan Toma, *Revista teologică* 17 (89)/2 (2007), p. 26; see as well Fr. Georges Florovsky, «St. Gregory Palamas and the Tradition of the Fathers», *Bible, Church, Tradition: An Eastern Orthodox View*, I, *The Collected Works of Georges Florovsky*, General Editor Richard S. Hauch, Belmont, 1987, pp. 105-120; Bishop Kallistos Ware, *The Orthodox Church*, London, 1992, p. 212].

¹⁶ Bishop Hilarion Alfeyev, *op. cit.*, pp. 25-26; Adrian Marinescu, «Ortodoxie și ortopraxie. Reflecții privind importanța, autoritatea și actualitatea Părinților pentru omul contemporan (I)», *Tabor* 5/12 (2012), p. 28 (=Adrian Marinescu, *Ortodoxie și ortopraxie*, I).

¹⁷ Dumitru Stăniloae, «Câteva trăsături caracteristice ale Ortodoxiei», *Mitropolia Olteniei* 22/7-8 (1970), p. 732.

¹⁸ Στυλιανῷ Παπαδοπούλου, *Πατρολογία*, Α', p. 91. For the close connection between the person and the experiencing of the divine truth, see as well Adrian Marinescu, *Ortodoxie și ortopraxie*, I, p. 42; Adrian Marinescu, *Ortodoxie și ortopraxie*, II, p. 29 - note 49, 45.

since these two – theology and the dogmatic teaching – represent an *organic unity* in the Church¹⁹.

3 The unitary Ecclesiology

Since patristic theology *represents a unitary and indivisible fact*, could one possibly accept the opinion that, in the historical evolution of the Church, two types of ecclesiology were developed, the *primordial one* and the *subsequent one*?²⁰ According to this opinion, *the primordial ecclesiology* appears in the *New Testament*, it is called *ecclesiology of communion and Eucharistic spirituality*, representing a *historical eschatology from a horizontal perspective*. *The subsequent ecclesiology* appears beginning with the third century and is considered a *conception of history from a vertical and rather personalist perspective*, a conception defined by the intense ideological pressures of the Gnosticism and Neo-Platonism, and connected to *the desert*, in other words, to the *anachoretic monasticism*²¹. *The primordial ecclesiology of communion* relies on the *Divine Eucharist* as a revelation of the eschatological glory of God's Kingdom, and the *subsequent personalist ecclesiology* is characterized as therapeutic-purifying, having two directions: the first refers to the *mysterious concentration of the divine*, which occurs with the mind emptied of any idea, taking place

Consequently, the Holy Fathers are not people that once belonged to the Church, because even nowadays they exist on earth and belong to the Church. Actually, the Church is not an old one; on the contrary, it is contemporary and continually renewing itself (Adrian Marinescu, *Ortodoxie și ortopraxie*, I, pp. 33, 50).

¹⁹ Adrian Marinescu, *Ortodoxie și ortopraxie*, II, p. 11.

²⁰ Ἱεροθέου Μητροπολίτου, *Μεταπατερική θεολογία*, p. 40.

²¹ See Πέτρου Βασιλειάδη, «Κοινωνία και έρημία. Τὰ βιβλικὰ δεδομένα (καὶ οἱ ἐκκλησιαστικὲς τοὺς προεκτάσεις)», *Σύναξη* 117/Ἰανουάριος-Μάρτιος (2011), pp. 41-43; Ἱεροθέου Μητροπολίτου, *Μεταπατερική θεολογία*, pp. 40-41.

according to the Evagrian tradition, namely the tradition developed around the teaching of Evagrius Ponticus, and is characterized as a *contemplative mysticism*; the second direction, developed after the Evagrian tradition and relying on the teaching of Saint Macarius of Egypt, gives priority to the sense, to the information and to the heart, is called Macarian tradition and is characterized as a *spiritualized materialism*²².

Yet, such a division of the ecclesiology fragments the unitary patristic tradition of the Church and alters its whole theology regarding the spiritual premises of the knowledge of God, since it underestimates the hesychastic way of living the faith in Christ and the mysterious life of the Church, in other words, since it ignores the spirit of the *Philokalia* and of the 18th century Holy Neptic Fathers and also the whole ecclesiology of the Orthodox Church²³.

The important points of reference of the ecclesiastic life and of the faith are the *Holy Scripture* and the *Holy Tradition*, and also the *Divine Eucharist*, the dogma and prayer. There is, therefore, a close connection between *lex credendi* (the *law of faith*) and *lex orandi* (the *law of prayer*), since, as His Holiness Athanasius Yevtich notices, the Church cannot subsist, according to Saint Irenaeus of Lyons, without the right faith, namely Orthodoxy, and the *Divine Eucharist*, just as the right faith cannot survive without the Church and the *Divine Eucharist*, and the *Divine Eucharist* cannot subsist outside the Church and the Orthodoxy²⁴, whose structures are par excellence patristic and cultic, as they express man's true experiencing of God in the

²² See Στέλιου Ράμφου, *Τὸ ἀδιανόητο τίποτα*, Ἀθήνα: Ἐκδόσεις Ἄρμος, 2010, pp. 266-267, 248; Ἱεροθέου Μητροπολίτου, *Μεταπατερικὴ θεολογία*, pp. 42-44, 86, 91.

²³ Ἱεροθέου Μητροπολίτου, *Μεταπατερικὴ θεολογία*, pp. 45, 91.

²⁴ See Ἀθανασίου Γιέβτιτς, «Ἐκκλησία, Ὁρθοδοξία καὶ Εὐχαριστία παρὰ τῷ Ἁγίῳ Εἰρηναίῳ», εἰς *Χριστός, ἀρχὴ καὶ τέλος*, Ἀθήνα: Ἐκδόσεις Ἰδρυμα Γουλανδρῆ-Χόρν, 1983, pp. 109-146.

sacramental life of the Church²⁵. The Holy Church Fathers and the *Canons* of the local and Ecumenical Synods clearly present the spiritual premises of man's participation to the *Divine Eucharist*, which are ascesis, namely the hesychastic way of living, and all that leads man towards living the experiencing of God. Man's aim is to progress from the state *according to God's image* to that *according to God's likeness*, which can be realized through the synergy of the human will with the divine will²⁶, since we are co-workers of God²⁷. Regarding the realization of this process, man has the duty to participate to God's purifying, illuminating and deifying energy, expressing in this way his goal through his actions. For this reason, the *Divine Eucharist cannot replace the purification, the illumination and the deification and certainly the other way round this statement is equally true*²⁸, because the Holy Eucharist represents the way of realization of the deification, which is participation to the embodied Son and Word of God. And this is clearly felt in the eschatological living of God's Kingdom in the *Divine Eucharist*, whose premise is precisely man's participation to God's purifying, illuminating and deifying energy.

Saint Maximus the Confessor, who in his *Mistagogy* systematically presents man's and the world's ascension towards God, does not present only the eschatological dimension of the *Divine Eucharist*, but also its hesychastic dimension, as a return of man's mind from those which are sensible to those which are inside him, to the heart, namely there where God's uncreated grace is activated through purification and illumination. In this way, the believer gets to contemplate God, namely he gets to see with the eyes of his

²⁵ Adrian Marinescu, *Ortodoxie și ortopraxie*, I, pp. 28, 31-32; Dumitru Stăniloae, *op. cit.*, pp. 736-737.

²⁶ Γεωργίου Μεταλληνοῦ, *Ὁ λυτρωτικὸς διάλογος κτιστοῦ καὶ Ἀκτίστου*, p. 37.

²⁷ *1 Cor.* 3.9.

²⁸ Ἱεροθέου Μητροπολίτου, *Μεταπατερικὴ θεολογία*, p. 58.

mind the uncreated Light of His glory²⁹. Based on the same holy and spiritual experience, Father Sophrony Sakharov considered, in our times, the hesychast way of living as a *necessary premise for correctly approaching the Divine Liturgy*³⁰.

4 The Dimension of the Ecclesial Life

Ecclesiology can be perceived only from the inside of the dimensions of the Church life, which dimensions also represent the *interpretation keys* in the in-depth study or the growth of the dogmatic teaching of the Church.

In the Orthodox world, it is recognized that the theology of the Church is not a fruit of rationalization, but a revelation of the Triune God to the deified people³¹, namely to the Prophets, Apostles, Church Fathers and Mothers along the centuries³². Saint Philotheos Kokkinos, patriarch of Constantinople and close friend of Saint Gregory Palamas, mentions in the

²⁹ See Saint Maximus the Confessor, *Mystagogia (Μυσταγωγία)*, in J.-P. Migne (ed.), *Patrologiae cursus completus, Series graeca*, tomus XCI, Paris: Garnier Fratres, 1863, col. 657 C - 718 D (= *Patrologiae cursus completus, Series graeca*).

³⁰ Αρχιμ. Ζαχαρία (Ζαχάρου), *Ὁ κρυπτός τῆς καρδίας ἄνθρωπος*, Ἔκδ. Ἱ. Μονῆς Τιμίου Προδρόμου Ἑσσεξ' Ἀγγλίας, 2011, p. 238.

³¹ The people who receive the revelation of God are also called in the literature *those being deified (θεούμενοι)*. This term (*θεούμενος*) indicates, on the one hand, the state of deification, which does not represent something statical or already accomplished, but is interpreted as a dynamic advancement process and as a continuous present (man is being deified/is getting deified = *θεεῖται*), and, on the other hand, the charismatic character of this state as God's gift through the uncreated deifying grace (*θεωτική χάρις*), see Ἱεροθέου Μητροπολίτου Ναυπάκτου καὶ Ἁγίου Βλασίου, *Ἐμπειρική Δογματική τῆς Ὀρθοδόξου Καθολικῆς Ἐκκλησίας κατὰ τίς προφορικές παραδόσεις τοῦ π. Ἰωάννου Ρωμανίδη*, Β', Ἱερὰ Μονὴ Γενεθλίου τῆς Θεοτόκου, 2011, p. 343.

³² Ἱεροθέου Μητροπολίτου, *Μεταπατερική θεολογία*, p. 72.

Synodicon of Orthodoxy the obligation of the Orthodox believers to walk according to the divinely-inspired theologies of the Saints and the pious way of living of the Church³³. But these theologies express, according to Saint Gregory Palamas, the unity of the teachings of the Prophets, Apostles and Church Fathers, namely the one theology of the Church and not different theological opinions. Saint Gregory characteristically affirms: *what else, naturally, than this thing that perfection is redeeming both in knowledge and in dogmas, namely we should think the same as the Prophets, the Apostles, the Fathers, simply as all those through whom the Holy Spirit confesses that He has spoken both about God and about His creations*³⁴.

Therefore, the unity in faith relies on the common experiencing of the divine revelation and the premise of this experiencing is the Orthodox hesychastic way of living joined to the sacramental life of the Church. From this fact comes the conclusion that, in the Church, one experiences Jesus Christ, the revealed and embodied Word of God, Who shows Himself to the believers who are worthy of this revelation, since Christ is *semper conformis cum omni tempore* and answers in the same perfect way to the man of any epoch³⁵. Consequently, the Christ of the revelation has nothing to do with the Christ presented by the existentialist Theology (Rudolf Bultmann), which approaches and interprets the *Evangel* using philosophical terms and gets to the point of separating Christ into *the historical Christ* and the *Christ of faith*³⁶. The fact that the Holy

³³ *Ibidem*.

³⁴ Saint Gregory Palamas, *Λόγος ὑπὲρ τῶν ἱερῶς ἡσυχάζόντων* 2, 1, 42, in *Συγγράμματα*, Α', ἔκδ. Π. Χρήστου, Θεσσαλονίκη, 1988², p. 504.

³⁵ Dumitru Stăniloae, *op. cit.*, p. 732; Ἱεροθέου Μητροπολίτου, *Μεταπατερική θεολογία*, pp. 72-73.

³⁶ Ἱεροθέου Μητροπολίτου, *Μεταπατερική θεολογία*, p. 73. On the formulation of the concept of *historical Jesus* and the fact that this concept has become obsolete in the literature, see Andrei Marga, *Religia în era globalizării*, Cluj-Napoca: Editura Fundației pentru Studii Europene, 2003, pp. 141-187.

Fathers took certain terms of the old Greek philosophy does not mean that they also adopt the philosophical content of these terms, which would have led to a laicization of the divine revelation; on the contrary, they transform these terms, namely they fill them with a new content according to their experiencing of God's vision, which they acquire in the context of the sacramental life of the Church³⁷.

An example of influence of the western thinking on the Orthodox scientific approach of the patristic texts is the statement that the writings of Saint Dionysius the Areopagite are Neoplatonic. Yet, what is overlooked is the fact that these writings, although containing a terminology pertaining to that epoch, express the teaching of Saint Dionysius, which is fundamentally different from the philosophical opinions of the Platonism and Neoplatonism, and also from those of the Aristotelianism³⁸. This can be seen from Saint Dionysius' reference to many Holy Fathers that preceded him, who call God *beloved but also lover and, on the one hand, good and gentle, and, on the other hand, eros and love again, as power moving and, at the same time, lifting the beings unto Him*³⁹. Saint Maximus the Confessor, who interprets the writings of Saint Dionysius, makes a similar mention: *because, on the one hand, due to the fact that the loving eros springs from Him, it is said that the eros-bearer Himself moves, and, on the other hand, due to the fact that He is truly lover and beloved, He is moving the onlookers, namely the beings, towards this thing, and He is the*

³⁷ Ἱεροθέου Μητροπολίτου, *Μεταπατερική θεολογία*, pp. 73-74. Thus, this is not about a refining or completion of the terms' content, as certain researchers state in different studies, see Adrian Marinescu, *Ortodoxie și ortopraxie*, II, p. 19.

³⁸ Ἱεροθέου Μητροπολίτου, *Μεταπατερική θεολογία*, p. 74.

³⁹ Saint Dionysius the Areopagite, *De divinis nominibus (Περὶ θεῶν ὀνομάτων)* 4, 14, in *Patrologiae cursus completus, Series graeca*, tomus III, Paris, 1857, col. 712 C.

power of the fact of wishing for these, by analogy⁴⁰. This means that man is called to empirically observe the *divine motion by which God is moving and He is His urger and mover* (*vreau să spun că El este propriul Său îndemnător și mișcător*)⁴¹. Therefore, the two Saints state that God is *eros* (ἔρως) and *lover* (ἐραστής), and also that *He is moving* (κινεῖται) towards man. In this way, Plato's theory that God has no eros is overturned, because he considered that the eros is only characteristic to man, but also Aristotle's opinion that God is the first *unmoved mover* (ἀκίνητον κινουῦν, *perpetuum immobile*), since God is moving⁴².

From all the above, it clearly results that there are no holy languages and divine words, but each man, walking towards spiritual perfection⁴³, expresses his own revelatory experiencing of God in the framework of the sacramental life of the Church, with the help of the terminology of each epoch, namely using «words» and «meanings» from the created reality⁴⁴. And this happens because there is no ontology, no

⁴⁰ Saint Maximus the Confessor, *Scholia in Librum De divinis nominibus* (Σχόλια εἰς τὸ Περὶ θεῶν ὀνομάτων), 4, 14, in *Patrologiae cursus completus, Series graeca*, tomus IV, Paris, 1857, col. 265 CD - 268 A.

⁴¹ *Ibidem*.

⁴² Ἱεροθέου Μητροπολίτου, *Μεταπατερική θεολογία*, pp. 75, 185.

⁴³ *Those participating to God's glory are called «those being glorified/δοξαζόμενοι» according to the language of the Holy Scripture and «those being deified /θεοούμενοι» according to the language of the Holy Church Fathers* (Ἱεροθέου Μητροπολίτου, *Μεταπατερική θεολογία*, p. 163). These medio-passive forms of present participle, specific to the Greek language, are encountered in the Romanian translation also under the form *slăvit* (*glorified*) and *îndumnezeit* (*deified*), yet we should mention that they do not refer to something that has come to an end in time, as they are not past participles.

⁴⁴ Ἱεροθέου Μητροπολίτου, *Μεταπατερική θεολογία*, pp. 133, 137-157. Characteristic is the case of the Saint Paul the Apostle, who speaks about the visions and revelations God gave him and about the fact that he was taken to heaven where *he heard words beyond the power of man to put into words, which man is not permitted to utter* (2 Cor. 12: 1-4). Yet, to express this revealing experience, the Saint Paul the Apostle

affinity or analogy between the created and the Uncreated One. *The Uncreated One does not submit to the canons of Logic or Morals or Human Psychology*, as Father Georges Metallinos affirms⁴⁵.

The Church has put the whole revealed theology in its worship, namely in the hymns of the holy services and in the prayers of the Holy Sacraments⁴⁶. The Church's daily prayers describe man's way from purification to illumination and deification, as states representing man's true therapy. For instance, in the *Prayer of our Lord Jesus Christ* from the *Typikon of the evening prayers*, the believer prays to God that He may send His grace and give him *alert mind, clean spirit, vigilant heart, and a light sleep, undisturbed by any satanic illusions*⁴⁷, so that he may live the state of awareness not just during the day but also during his sleep⁴⁸.

Consequently, the three dimensions of the Church life are, according to the Holy Fathers, the experiencing of God's vision, the hesychastic-philokalic tradition and the worship in the Church⁴⁹. Based on these *parameters* or *interpretation keys*, the ecumenical patriarch Bartholomew affirmed that *the future belongs to the authentic «patristic» theology, beyond the neo-paterism and post-paterism, to a Church theology invigorated by*

uses created words and meanings (Γεροθέου Μητροπολίτου, *Μεταπατερική θεολογία*, pp. 73, 138).

⁴⁵ Γεωργίου Μεταλληνού, *Ὁ λυτρωτικὸς διάλογος κτιστοῦ καὶ ἄκτιστου*, p. 36.

⁴⁶ Γεροθέου Μητροπολίτου, *Μεταπατερική θεολογία*, pp. 75, 88.

⁴⁷ *Προσευχητάριον Ὁρθοδόξου χριστιανοῦ*, Λευκωσία: Ἐκδόσεις Παγκυπρίου Ὁρθοδόξου Πνευματικοῦ Κέντρου «Ἅγιος Ἀρσένιος», 2000, pp. 79-80. This prayer is attributed to Antiochus the Monk, see *Carte de rugăciuni*, printed with the blessing of the His Holiness Father Nyphon, Archbishop and Metropolitan, Archbishopric of Târgoviște, 2012, p. 36.

⁴⁸ Γεροθέου Μητροπολίτου, *Μεταπατερική θεολογία*, p. 129.

⁴⁹ Γεροθέου Μητροπολίτου, *Μεταπατερική θεολογία*, p. 81.

the intensity between the fact of being «now» and that of not being «yet» of God's Kingdom⁵⁰.

5 The Orthodox way of doing Theology

According to the teaching of the Church, God's revelation is the same both in the *Old Testament*, and in the *New Testament*. This is why the word of the Prophets is no different from the evangelical word of the Holy Apostles and Fathers of the Church. The difference consists in the fact that the Prophets in the *Old Testament* were experiencing the not-yet-embodied Logos, whereas after the embodiment of the Son and Logos of God, namely in the *New Testament* and in the life of the Church, the Holy Apostles, Teachers and Fathers, as well as the believers who live the quality of member of Christ's Body, are experiencing the embodied Logos and the communion with Him⁵¹. Therefore, one can ask what the premises of the Orthodox way of theologizing are, or, in other words, who can finally be considered a theologian in the Church or who can theologize?

These questions are essential for each generation of people and the attempt to provide an answer to them is part of the problematization concerning the growth of the dogmatic teaching in the Church. This growth is not an aim in itself or a particular concern for the Holy Fathers of the Church but appears as the answer of the believers who are deified to the problems of their epoch. Consequently, another question arises, who is the deified man?

⁵⁰ «Χαιρετισμός της Α. Θ. Παναγιώτητος τοῦ Οἰκουμενικοῦ Πατριάρχου κ. κ. Βαρθολομαίου στό Συνέδριο τῆς Θεολογικῆς Ἀκαδημίας τοῦ Βόλου», in *Πληροφόρηση*, Ἰούλιος 2010, apud Ἱεροθέου Μητροπολίτου, *Μεταπατερική θεολογία*, p. 83.

⁵¹ Ἱεροθέου Μητροπολίτου, *Μεταπατερική θεολογία*, p. 88.

According to Saint Gregory the Theologian, the one who theologizes philosophically and lives outside the tradition of the Church is called *dialectic and loquacious*⁵². Thus, the one who theologizes first needs purification and to go through the living of the state of quietness (*συχολή*), to finally reach the illumination of the mind; otherwise, he shall fall into a wrong doctrine and heresy⁵³. *Because one really needs to have quietness in order to know God*, as Saint Gregory the Theologian affirms⁵⁴. Consequently, in order for someone to theologize and to be characterized as a theologian, he needs to have purified both his soul and his body, namely that person needs to have been set free from the *external mire and trouble and his guiding power should be able to no longer be troubled by malevolent and deceitful representations*⁵⁵. For this reason, Saint Gregory the Theologian speaks about purification (*κάθαρσις*), illumination (*έλλαμψις/φωτισμός*) and deification (*θέωσις*) as necessary premises for the Orthodox theology or for the Orthodox way of theologizing⁵⁶ and delimits the way of living and expressing this

⁵² Saint Gregory the Theologian, *Oratio XXVII (Λόγος ΚΖ') – Theologica I*, 8, in *Patrologiae cursus completus, Series graeca*, tomus XXXVI, Paris, 1858, col. 21 A.

⁵³ Ιεροθέου Μητροπολίτου, *Μεταπατερική θεολογία*, pp. 94-95.

⁵⁴ Saint Gregory the Theologian, *Oratio XXVII (Λόγος ΚΖ') – Theologica I*, 3, in *op. cit.*, col. 16 A.

⁵⁵ *Ibidem*.

⁵⁶ See Κωνσταντίνου Β. Σκουτέρη, *Η έννοια τών όρων “θεολογία, “θεολογεΐν, “θεολόγος, έν τή διδασκαλίχ τών Έλλήνων Πατέρων και έκκλησιαστικών συγγραφέων μέχρι και τών Καππαδοκών, Αθήναι, 1972, pp. 167-172. There is of course an opinion according to which the teaching on man’s spiritual perfection as formulated by the Holy Church Fathers would be of idolatrous origin, since the distinction between purification, illumination and deification can be found as well in Neo-Platonism. Yet, on the one hand, as Father John Romanides notices, these stages do not express the same reality in Neo-Platonism as in the hesychastic way of living of the Church, and, on the other hand, the Protestant historians who have dealt with this topic and have supported a similarity between the patristic teaching and the*

theology as follows: *For where there is fear [of God], there is respect of the commandments; and where is respect for the commandments, there, one attains the purification of the body, namely the chasing away of the cloud that hinders the soul and prevents it from clearly seeing the divine ray; and where there is purification, there is illumination; and illumination is the fulfillment of the desire of those who wish for the very high ones or for the most high one or something over the biggest thing*⁵⁷. This fact is necessary and, *therefore, one has to purify himself and only after that can one try to get close to the purified One*⁵⁸. Consequently, man is especially called to live the hesychastic way of living of the Church, so that he may reach the healing of his thoughts, the purification of his heart, the activation of his noetic energy or function, the acquisition of the prayer of the

idolaters' doctrine in point of the spiritual perfection stages, have come to this conclusion because they reject the hesychastic way of living and monasticism, see Ἱεροθέου Μητροπολίτου Ναυπάκτου καὶ Ἀγίου Βλασίου, *Ἐμπειρική Δογματική τῆς Ὀρθόδοξου Καθολικῆς Ἐκκλησίας...* Β', ..., pp. 290-291. Actually, monasticism is in the Orthodox world the way of living that *maintains the arms of theologizing in their authentic dimensions and its wings in the spiritual ascensions (worship and asceticism)*, see Γεωργίου Δ. Μεταλληνῶ (Πρωτοπρ.), «Λατρεία καὶ ἄσκηση στὸν ὀρθόδοξο Μοναχισμό», in idem, *Ἀντιμέτωποι μὲ τὴν πλάνη...*, Θεσσαλονίκη: Ἐκδόσεις «Ὀρθόδοξος Κυψέλη», 2013, p. 25 (= Γεωργίου Μεταλληνῶ, *Λατρεία καὶ ἄσκηση*).

⁵⁷ We should mention that in the *Codex* in which these words of Saint Gregory the Theologian have been preserved there is a comment according to which the expression *the very high ones* (τῶν μεγίστων) points to the Three Persons of the Holy Trinity, while the expression *the most high one* (τὸ μέγιστον) refers to the unique divine being because of the uniqueness of the Divinity (St Gregory the Theologian, *Ἄπαντα τὰ ἔργα*, τόμ. 5, Θεσσαλονίκη: Πατερικαὶ Ἐκδόσεις «Γρηγόριος ὁ Παλαμᾶς», 1977, p. 86, note 37).

⁵⁸ Idem, *Oratio XXXIX (Λόγος ΑΘ΄) – In Sancta Lumina*, 8-9, in *Patrologiae cursus completus, Series graeca*, tomus XXXVI, Paris, 1858, col. 344 AB.

heart or of the mind and of unselfish love⁵⁹. Yet, this way of living is directly connected to the sacramental life of the Church and leads man to deification *as man's only aim and goal in history*⁶⁰. For this reason, it is considered that the deified man is, in fact, the true theologian, as he is the one who acquires the true knowledge of God, namely the one who lives the experiencing of God's glory and who then formulates it in agreement to the challenges of each epoch⁶¹. Actually, man is, according to Saint Basil the Great, as it is mentioned by Saint Gregory the Theologian, *θεὸς κεκελευσμένος*⁶², namely he has in himself the commandment to become *god by grace*, in other words *to be conformed to the image of God's Son*⁶³.

6 Theological Rationalism and Empirical Theology

In the Orthodox world, there is a distinction between the *rationalist theologian* and the *deified theologian*, and, in a broader sense, the *academic theologian* and the *empirical theologian*. Consequently, the question arises: can one discern between theological rationalism and theology, namely between academic theology and empirical theology, in other words, does theological rationalism differ from theology and does it

⁵⁹ See Ἰωάννου Σ. Ρωμανίδου (Πρωτοπρ.), *Πατερική Θεολογία*, Ἀθήνα: Ἐκδόσεις Παρακαταθήκη, 2004, pp. 124-129, 171-179 (= Ἰωάννου Ρωμανίδου, *Πατερική Θεολογία*).

⁶⁰ Γεωργίου Μεταλληνού, *Ὁ λυτρωτικὸς διάλογος κτιστοῦ καὶ Ἀκτίστου*, p. 33.

⁶¹ Ἱεροθέου Μητροπολίτου, *Μεταπατερική θεολογία*, p. 99.

⁶² Saint Gregory the Theologian, *Oratio XLIII (Λόγος ΜΓ')*. Ἐπιτάφιος εἰς τὸν Μέγαν Βασίλειον, ἐπίσκοπον Καισαρείας Καππαδοκίας) – *In laudem Basilii Magni*, in *Patrologiae cursus completus, Series graeca*, tomus XXXVI, Paris, 1858, col. 560 A.

⁶³ *Rom.* 8.29; Γεωργίου Μεταλληνού, *Ὁ λυτρωτικὸς διάλογος κτιστοῦ καὶ Ἀκτίστου*, p. 37.

represent a theological word or does it express a personal opinion on theology?

It is known that, in order to avoid subjectivism, in other words, the personal conception on theological things, one shall have to rely on the patristic teaching, which expresses God's revelation through the Holy Spirit in the created reality and guarantees the historical continuity of the *Holy Tradition*. And this because the Orthodox theology does not rely on ideas, which are a product of the human intellect, namely simply of rationalization or even of imagination, but, as Saint Maximus the Confessor notes, it is a fruit of *action* (πράξις), namely of the empirical state that the Holy Fathers call purification, of illumination and of *vision* (θέα) or of the *contemplation* (θεωρία) of God⁶⁴. Saint Gregory Palamas highlights the fact that this vision is the *knowledge of God and of the dogmas regarding Him* and he calls it *theology*⁶⁵. For this reason, there is a great difference between theology and philosophy as far as the knowledge of God is concerned, because philosophy, according to Martin Heidegger, asks questions, while theology provides the answers⁶⁶.

Therefore, the academic theology permits a scientific approach and analysis, in different ways, of the marks left behind by the Holy Church Fathers, along the historical existence of the Church⁶⁷. Thus, the work of this theology is not to replace the

⁶⁴ Saint Maximus the Confessor, *Quaestiones ad Thalassium* (Πρὸς Θαλάσσιον περὶ διαφόρων ἀπόρων τῆς Ἁγίας Γραφῆς, Ἐρώτησις Ν', Σχόλια), 1-10, in *Patrologiae cursus completus, Series graeca*, tomus XC, Paris, 1865, col. 473 C - 476 B; Ἱεροθέου Μητροπολίτου, *Μεταπατερικὴ θεολογία*, p. 108. The *action* that Saint Maximus talks about means the purification of the heart. The term *θεωρία* means both *vision* and *contemplation*.

⁶⁵ Saint Gregory Palamas, *Λόγος ὑπὲρ τῶν ἱερῶς ἠσυχάζοντων* 1, 3, 15, in *Συγγράμματα*, Α'..., p. 425.

⁶⁶ Μάρτιν Χάιντεγκερ, *Εἰσαγωγή στὴ Μεταφυσική*, Ἀθήνα: Ἐκδόσεις Δωδώνη, 1973, pp. 37-38; Ἱεροθέου Μητροπολίτου, *Μεταπατερικὴ θεολογία*, pp. 223-224.

⁶⁷ Γεωργίου Μεταλληνοῦ, *Λατρεία καὶ ἄσκηση*, p. 25; Στυλιανοῦ Παπαδοπούλου, *Ὅρθοδόξων πορεία*, p. 69. The academic theology also

empirical theology or, in other words, the holy-patristic-charismatic theology, but to scientifically research and present the content of theology and of the Church teaching and also to discern and acknowledge the criteria of the true theology⁶⁸. For this reason, the scientific-academic research of the Orthodox theology represents an *introduction* to the true theology of the Church⁶⁹ and not a *premise of the ecclesiastic theologizing, namely of the original one, as the revealing, in other words, of the divine knowledge*⁷⁰, while the methods of the scientific academic theology, as necessary parameters of the research process, differ from the methods of empirical theology⁷¹.

In the empirical or holy-patristic-charismatic theology, which the Church offers to the world as the only redeeming reality⁷², man lives the revelation of the divine knowledge, namely he empirically knows the God revealed within the framework of the hesychastic way of living, which includes different types of spiritual ascesis and drawing nearer to God, one of them being

has some negative elements, such as: its division according to the scholastic and scientific structure of the western theology (*theologia historica, theologia biblica, theologia sistematica, theologia patristica* etc.); its representatives are not authentic spiritual people but rather intellectuals, who, nowadays, know better the western theology than the Orthodox one; the stages of the holy-spiritual life (purification, illumination and deification) are ignored etc. For more elements, see Adrian Marinescu, *Ortodoxie și ortopraxie*, II, pp. 39, 44-48; Adrian Marinescu, *Ortodoxie și ortopraxie*, III, pp. 34-35, 47.

⁶⁸ Δημητρίου Τσελεγγίδη, «Μετα-πατερική ή νεο-βαρλααμική θεολογία; Άγνοια ή άρνηση τής αγιότητας; Κριτήρια τοῦ Ὁρθοδόξως καί άπλανώς θεολογεῖν», in Ἱερά Μητρόπολις Πειραιῶς, *Πατερική θεολογία καί μεταπατερική αίρεση*, Πρακτικά Θεολογικῆς Ἡμερίδος, Πειραιεύς, 2012, p. 43 (= Δημητρίου Τσελεγγίδη, «Μετα-πατερική» ή «νεο-βαρλααμική» θεολογία;).

⁶⁹ Adrian Marinescu, *Ortodoxie și ortopraxie*, II, p. 30, note 50.

⁷⁰ Γεωργίου Μεταλληνού, *Λατρεία καί άσκηση*, p. 25.

⁷¹ Στυλιανού Παπαδοπούλου, *Ὁρθοδόξων πορεία*, p. 69.

⁷² See also G. Mantzaridis, «Das spirituelle Erbe der Orthodoxen Kirche und ihre Bedeutung für Europe», *Orthodoxes Forum* 1/1994, p. 40.

the monastic life⁷³. The Orthodox teaching does not rely on rationalization or imagination, but on «observation» and «experiment», namely on the experiencing of God's grace in man's heart and on the incorruptibility of the the Saints' relics⁷⁴. By means of this experience, man acquires the charismas of the Holy Spirit, as they have been described by Saint Paul the Apostle in chapters 12 to 14 of the *First Epistle to the Corinthians*⁷⁵. These charismas represent the *scientific spiritual tools* of every believer, thanks to which he can contribute to fighting the crisis of perception and living of the Truth and, consequently, to man's salvation⁷⁶.

It is this contribution that actually represents the growth of the dogmatic teaching of the Church, since *theology has developed*, according to the Church history, *under the pressure of the Church crises* or theological crises, to which answers have been provided by the deified or charismatic people⁷⁷ of the Church⁷⁸. They are, according to the Orthodox tradition, «erudite professors» of the Uncreated One or of the divine knowledge⁷⁹. And this happens because man's skillfulness as a writer and his scientific training do not represent premises able to bring to light the divine truth, unless, at the same time, man becomes as well an organ of the Holy Spirit, in other words, unless he has

⁷³ Γεωργίου Μεταλληνοῦ, *Λατρεία καὶ ἄσκηση*, p. 25.

⁷⁴ Ἱεροθέου Μητροπολίτου, *Μεταπατερικὴ θεολογία*, p. 175.

⁷⁵ Γεωργίου Μεταλληνοῦ, *Λατρεία καὶ ἄσκηση*, p. 25.

⁷⁶ Στυλιανοῦ Παπαδοπούλου, *Πατρολογία*, Α', p. 77.

⁷⁷ This term means people full of the gift of the Holy Spirit. In other words, it means the man who, through physical and spiritual purification, participates through the sacramental life of the Church to the divine uncreated energies and is being deified.

⁷⁸ Στυλιανοῦ Παπαδοπούλου, *Πατρολογία*, Α', pp. 91, 93. It is rightly stated that the Holy Church Father represents the true growth of the Church (Adrian Marinescu, *Ortodoxie și ortopraxie*, II, p. 22).

⁷⁹ Γεωργίου Μεταλληνοῦ (Πρωτοπρ.), «Πίστη καὶ ἐπιστήμη στὴν ὀρθόδοξη γνωσιολογία», in idem, *Σχέσεις καὶ Ἀντιθέσεις. Ἀνατολὴ καὶ Δύση στὴν πορεία τοῦ Νέου Ἑλληνισμοῦ*, Ἀθήνα: Εκδόσεις Ἀκρίτας, 1998, p. 180.

the spiritual premises presented above, according to the teaching of Saint Gregory the Theologian, so that he may be able to theologize. It is based on these premises that a man's theology acquires *authority, authenticity and actuality*⁸⁰, since it is the spiritual premises and not his personal skills that make him a Father and a Teacher of the Church⁸¹. Consequently, what gives authority to the Holy Church Fathers is not their hierarchic or academic position, but the living of faith in continuity with the patristic tradition⁸², namely the living of the *Holy Tradition* of the Church.

The Holy Church Fathers initiate a distinction between man's mind and man's reason or thinking, which corresponds to the distinction between empirical theology or the empirical knowledge of God and academic theology or the interpretation of faith according to the philosophic rationalism. This results in

⁸⁰ Adrian Marinescu, *Ortodoxie și ortopraxie*, I, p. 33.

⁸¹ According to Stelian Papadopoulos, *a Father and Teacher is the bearer of the Church Tradition, who expresses through the illumination of the Holy Spirit an ampler experiencing of the truth, in order to provide a solution to a Church crisis* (Στυλιανού Παπαδοπούλου, *Πατρολογία*, Α', p. 78), in other words, *they are those who have been remarkable for their holiness, piousness, pastorate and teaching of the believers* [Στυλιανού Γ. Παπαδοπούλου, *Οἱ Πατέρες καὶ Διδάσκαλοι τῆς Ἐκκλησίας μας*, Ἱερὰ Ἀρχιεπισκοπὴ Ἀθηνῶν, χ.ε., p. 5 (= Στυλιανού Παπαδοπούλου, *Οἱ Πατέρες καὶ Διδάσκαλοι*)]. Actually, the frequent mention of the name of a Church Father in the patristic literature denotes his authority as a Church Father, which is why the respective name is accompanied by the adjectives *holy* (ἅγιος) and *God-bearer* (θεοφόρος) [Adrian Marinescu, *Ortodoxie și ortopraxie*, III, p. 40, note 50; for other names, see also Adrian Marinescu, *Ortodoxie și ortopraxie*, III, p. 45; Adrian Marinescu, «Părintele bisericesc sau Sfântul Părinte, martor al lucrării Sfântului Duh în Biserică și în membrii acesteia. Noțiunea de „Părinte bisericesc” în tradiția patristică, originea și semnificația ei teologică. Scriitorul, creștere a Bisericii vs. scriitorul „creștin”» (Partea I), *Studii Teologice* 5/1 (2009), pp. 31-102].

⁸² Adrian Marinescu, *Ortodoxie și ortopraxie*, I, p. 33. For this reason, the literature talks about living the patristic way of life (πατερικὸν φρόνημα).

a distinction between the knowledge of God and the knowledge of the surrounding world. The deified or charismatic people teach that through the illumination of the mind by the Holy Spirit, man experiences God's uncreated energy⁸³, and by means of reason, namely by means of logical series and analyses, he can transmit this experiencing to other people⁸⁴. In this way, a theologian may have scientific knowledge on something and become a scientist by knowing the respective science, while a scientist, in order to get the knowledge of God and not just to be aware of His presence in the creation, a fact which he may intuit through his science as well, needs the help

⁸³ *God's uncreated energy is not beyond the physical reality, in a supernatural world, but creates, takes care of and sanctifies the creation* (Ἱεροθέου Μητροπολίτου, *Μεταπατερική θεολογία*, pp. 185, 212). The experience of the deified man is the participation to grace or God's uncreated energy and not to His being or nature, which remains inaccessible. Saint Gregory the Theologian says that the deified one sees only what is *around God*, but not His nature [idem, *Oratio XXVIII (Λόγος ΚΗ)* – *Theologica II*, 3-4, and *Oratio XXX (Λόγος Λ)* – *Theologica IV*, 17, in *Patrologiae cursus completus, Series graeca*, tomus XXXVI, Paris, 1858, col. 29 A - 32 A, 125 BC], while Saint Basil the Great showed that the things *around the divine nature*, which man knows, are God's energies [idem, *Epistola CCXXXIV (Ἐπιστολή 234, Πρὸς Ἀμφιλόχιον)*, in *Patrologiae cursus completus, Series graeca*, tomus XXXII, Paris, 1857, col. 869 AD], this is what Saint Gregory of Nyssa states, as well, affirming that we know from God only His energies [idem, *In Canticum Canticorum, Homilia XI (Εἰς τὸ Ἄσμα ἁσμάτων ΙΑ)*, in *Patrologiae cursus completus, Series graeca*, tomus XLIV, Paris, 1863, col. 1009 AD].

⁸⁴ Ἰωάννου Ρωμανίδου, *Πατερική Θεολογία*, pp. 19-22; Ἱεροθέου Μητροπολίτου, *Μεταπατερική θεολογία*, p. 187. In the patristic literature, one can find elements of literature, physics, medicine and politics, and also from other sciences, yet, what interests the Holy Fathers are not the sciences in themselves, since actually one can also find enough mistakes in their scientific opinions, but the interpretation of the created reality based on the theological and theocentric premises and aims [Adrian Marinescu, *Ortodoxie și ortopraxie*, I, p. 38; Γεωργίου Δ. Μεγαλληνοῦ (Πρωτοπρ.), «Ὁρθόδοξη πίστη καὶ Φυσικὴς Ἐπιστῆμες», *Διᾶλεξις*, Θεσσαλονίκη: Ἐκδόσεις «Ὁρθόδοξος Κυψέλη», 2008, p. 37].

of the Orthodox method of knowing God, which method consists in acquiring the spiritual states of purification, illumination and deification⁸⁵.

As an illustration, I shall briefly mention the case of Saint Gregory Palamas. He himself had both *worldly wisdom*, which he had acquired in Constantinople, and *wisdom from above*, which he cultivated in his family and then at the Holy Mount Athos. Consequently, Saint Gregory speaks, acts and writes according to the holy-spiritual experience that he has, and at the same time he uses philosophy and his intellectual capacities to reject the accusations and the scholastic opinions of Barlaam of Calabria and Gregory Akyndinos. This fact can be noticed from his works, in which he expresses the personal evolution of the holy-spiritual life, in other words the purification through asceticism, the illumination through prayer and the deification through the contemplation of the uncreated Light⁸⁶. Also, in the same works, Saint Gregory interprets in an original way different pericopes of the *Holy Scripture* and writings of the Holy Fathers⁸⁷, and based on the same holy-spiritual experience he provides answers to the dogmatic disputes of his time.

⁸⁵ Ἰωάννου Ρωμανίδου, *Πατερική Θεολογία*, pp. 58-62.

⁸⁶ See *The Second Homily* of Saint Gregory the Theologian to the Feast of the Entry of the Most Holy Mother of God in the Church and his work *For those living a hesychastic life in holiness* (ὑπὲρ τῶν ἱερῶς ἡσυχάζόντων) (Ἱεροθέου Μητροπολίτου, *Μεταπατερική Θεολογία*, pp. 357-358).

⁸⁷ For instance, see the hermeneutical analysis of Saint Gregory Palamas on the *Parable of the Tax Collector* (Luke 18: 10-14), whom he presents as the image of the hesychast (idem, *Ὁμιλία Β'*, in idem, *Ἄπαντα τὰ ἔργα*, τόμ. 9, Θεσσαλονίκη: Πατερικὰ Ἐκδόσεις «Γρηγόριος ὁ Παλαμᾶς», 2004, pp. 46-72; see also idem, *Homilia II*, in *Patrologiae cursus completus, Series graeca*, tomus CLI, Paris, 1865, col. 17 D - 32 C); on the *Parable of the Prodigal Son* (Luca 15: 11-32), whom he likens to the mind departing from the heart and then returning to it (idem, *Ὁμιλία Γ'*, in *op. cit.*, pp. 76-104; see also idem, *Homilia III*, in *Patrologiae cursus completus, Series graeca*, tomus CLI, Paris, 1865, col. 32 C - 47); on the evangelical pericope of the Second Sunday of the

From the polemic of Saint Gregory Palamas against the scholastics, I shall draw the attention on just two points that highlight extremely clearly that the charismatic way of living can provide sufficient answers to the intellectuals' rationalist reactions. The first point concerns the teaching of Saint Gregory on the procession of the Holy Spirit, fighting the doctrine on the *Filioque*, during the first stage of the theological crisis, while the second point refers to what the same Holy Father mentioned on the participation to God's uncreated grace, his mentions contradicting the Westerners' idea of *actus purus*. In the first case, Saint Gregory teaches that during the vision of God, the deified man can see *that the Holy Spirit proceeds from the Father and is sent also through the Son, while he himself participates to God's energies overflowing through the Persons of the Holy Trinity*. In the second case, Saint Gregory contradicts Barlaam, who was identifying God's uncreated energy (*actus purus*) with God's being and was putting created energies in God's connection with the world and with man. Therefore, following his holy-spiritual experience, Saint Gregory contradicts this rationalist interpretation and states that man, during his illumination and vision of God, does not participate to the created energies but to God's uncreated energies⁸⁸. The two previous examples directly bring to light the conclusion that the dogma is not the fruit of a philosophic thinking, as in the case of the western theology, whose main representative is Barlaam of

Great Lent, which mentions the healing of the paralytic at Capernaum (*Mark 2: 1-12*), bringing to light the amazing connection between the hesychastic life and the liturgical life (idem, *Ὁμιλία Ι'*, in *op. cit.*, pp. 252-278; see also idem, *Homilia X*, in *Patrologiae cursus completus, Series graeca*, tomus CLI, Paris, 1865, col. 112 A - 124 D); on the Sabbath Day and the ceasing of its celebration, with reference to the word of Saint Paul the Apostle (*Hebrews 4: 9-11*), making an analogy with the living of the hesychasm (idem, *Ὁμιλία ΙΖ'*, in *op. cit.*, pp. 484-514; see also idem, *Homilia XVII*, in *Patrologiae cursus completus, Series graeca*, tomus CLI, Paris, 1865, col. 220 C - 236 D; Ἱεροθέου Μητροπολίτου, *Μεταπατερική θεολογία*, p. 358).

⁸⁸ Ἱεροθέου Μητροπολίτου, *Μεταπατερική θεολογία*, pp. 359-360.

Calabria, but is the fruit of the holy-spiritual living and experience⁸⁹.

When the erudite or academic theologian does not have a holy-spiritual life, which represents *the fundamental premise of the fact of theologizing orthodoxly and faultlessly*⁹⁰, he ought to have a *humble living and thinking* (ταπεινὸ φρόνημα) and apply the Church method, summarized in the well-known holy-patristic formula: «*being followers of the Holy Fathers*»⁹¹. Therefore, the use of the scientific and academic theology without relating it to the empirical theology, the latter being characterized as patristic and charismatic, *is devoid of its ecclesiastical lived contribution, is a scholastic and spiritually poor theology, approaches the reality of the world and of life only through a created way and expresses things, in the best case, incompletely, and in certain cases, unfortunately, from wrongly to heretically*⁹². The danger is great, because the rationalist theologian, since he focuses on the illusion that he can research theological topics

⁸⁹ Ἱεροθέου Μητροπολίτου, *Μεταπατερική θεολογία*, p. 359.

⁹⁰ Δημητρίου Τσελεγγίδη, «Μετα-πατερική» ἢ «νεο-βαρλααμική» θεολογία, p. 38.

⁹¹ Δημητρίου Τσελεγγίδη, «Μετα-πατερική» ἢ «νεο-βαρλααμική» θεολογία, p. 41. Unfortunately, one can notice that the contemporary world of the academic-scientific theology is *disdainful* towards the empirical theology, as it was and is lived by the Holy Church Fathers, and *indifferent towards the theologian's premises* (Στυλιανοῦ Παπαδοπούλου, *Ὁρθοδόξων πορεία*, p. 69). This is why the *city's theologians, reunited in international commissions, pronounce their verdicts, yet, trying in vain, with pen and paper in hand, to find the desired answers in the "unapplied patristic literature", or answering according to their liking and according to their limited opinion. Today, the academic theology is almost completely torn apart and distanced from the spiritual realities and the gifts they impart* (Adrian Marinescu, *Ortodoxie și ortopraxie*, II, p. 24).

⁹² Δημητρίου Τσελεγγίδη, «Μετα-πατερική» ἢ «νεο-βαρλααμική» θεολογία, p. 44. A formal and rationalized *tradition*, which can be noticed with the majority of the believers in the Church, along with a *mysticism* inspired from individual enthusiasms, leads to making mistakes (Bishop Hilarion Alfeyev, *op. cit.*, p. 40).

without the necessary spiritual premises, limits himself to the knowledge resulting from the sensible and changing reality and secludes himself within the canons of the rationalist way of thinking. And in his attempt of interpreting the Church dogmas, he finally promotes faith as he perceives it. The result of this way of interpretation is the promotion of his own truth, transforming the dogma in ideology and moralism or pietism⁹³. Another danger is the rationalist theologian's endeavor to avoid "the outer wisdom", but because he does not have the necessary premises for the study of the patristic teaching, he gets to be *conservatorist* (not *traditionalist*). One more danger of the rationalist theologian is the unrestrained use of the worldly (scientific) wisdom, since he borrows scientific or philosophical terms along with their content, which leads to the falsification of the revealed truth⁹⁴.

Regarding all these, characteristic is the exhortation of Saint Gregory the Theologian to the believers, namely that they should theologize or philosophize on *the world or the worlds, on matter, on the soul, on the better or worse rational natures, on the resurrection, on Judgement, on the reward, on Christ's passions*⁹⁵, in other words, on all the subjects that do not immediately refer to the divine truth⁹⁶. In this case, the success is not *useless*, while failure is *not dangerous*⁹⁷. Yet, Saint Gregory gives a different piece of advice when it comes to topics that concern the divine truth or theology, namely the Holy Trinity

⁹³ Στυλιανοῦ Παπαδοπούλου, *Ὁρθοδόξων πορεία*, pp. 70, 81, 84.

⁹⁴ Στυλιανοῦ Παπαδοπούλου, *Ὁρθοδόξων πορεία*, p. 98. It should be mentioned that the authentic Orthodox theology rejects fundamentalism and syncretism (Στυλιανοῦ Παπαδοπούλου, *Ὁρθοδόξων πορεία*, p. 107).

⁹⁵ Saint Gregory the Theologian, *Oratio XXVII (Λόγος ΚΖ)* – *Theologica I*, 10, in *Patrologiae cursus completus, Series graeca*, tomus XXXVI, Paris, 1858, col. 25 A.

⁹⁶ Στυλιανοῦ Παπαδοπούλου, *Ὁρθοδόξων πορεία*, p. 53.

⁹⁷ Saint Gregory the Theologian, *Oratio XXVII (Λόγος ΚΖ)* – *Theologica I*, 10, in *op. cit.*, col. 25 A.

and the work of redemptive divine economy for man⁹⁸. This time, man is called to have spiritual premises, in order to be able to theologize: *it is not for everyone... to philosophize about God, namely to theologize about God, this is not given to everyone; therefore, this thing is not easy and is not for earthly-minded people. And I would add that it does not happen all the time, or to all the people, or about everything, but it happens sometimes, to some, and about a particular thing. Consequently, it is not for everyone, but only for the proven ones, and advanced in contemplation, and, first of all, for those who have purified their soul and body, or are purifying it, in the most adequate way. Because for the unclean one it is not somehow without a danger to be touched by the clean one, as it is to the weakened sight to be touched by the sunray*⁹⁹.

7 The Growth of the Dogmatic Teaching in the Church

Certainly, the progress of the positive sciences and especially of biotechnology, the dialogue with different Christian confessions of faith and religions or the contact to different philosophic and social trends are just a few of the factors challenging the Orthodoxy today to pronounce an actual and scientific theological discourse, according to their own models. Yet, in order to express an accurate theological discourse, man needs to have the spiritual premises (purification, illumination, deification), by which one reaches the correct knowledge of the Church dogmas, in the spirit of the patristic tradition and of the worship sacramental life of the Church. Otherwise, the word of the Church cannot be theological, but religious. Consequently, the believer can speak from a *theological perspective* and teach

⁹⁸ Στυλιανού Παπαδοπούλου, *Ὁρθοδόξων πορεία*, pp. 53, 57.

⁹⁹ Saint Gregory the Theologian, *Oratio XXVII (Λόγος ΚΖ)* – *Theologica I*, 3, in *op. cit.*, col. 13 CD - 16 A.

somebody else¹⁰⁰ only when he has the divine experiencing so that, by the content of his teaching, he may contribute to the spiritual development of the fullness of the Church and to the solving of the great problems of faith¹⁰¹. These problems, certainly, do not come from faith itself, namely from man's difficulty in perceiving and living the dogmatic teaching of the Church, but from the evolution of the world in the framework of the present modern lifestyle, in which man, indifferent to the Truth, denies God. This lifestyle of the contemporary man continues to represent a determining factor of the *existence of time and, consequently, of modernity*¹⁰², leading to a «vicious circle».

Consequently, it is with these spiritual premises that one can correctly approach the actual needs of the Church community and express the theological word of the Church. Therefore, it will be necessary that: 1) *the sermon* should aim not just to simply inform the believers on the topics of the *Evangel*, but also to provide them with theological knowledge regarding the dogmatic grounds of the Church; the sermon should also promote the believers' spiritual growth, in harmony with the patristic tradition; 2) the theological truth should be presented accurately, for the believers to be able to distinguish it from non-truth and inaccurate teaching; 3) The Saints' *divine experiences*¹⁰³ should be approached not as obsolete but as

¹⁰⁰ According to the Holy Fathers, an illuminated and deified man expresses himself *theologically* when he refers to the Holy Trinity, namely when he speaks of God based on his own experiencing of the divine Revelation, while his *teaching* or *didaches* (*teachings*) refer to God's work in the world for man's redemption.

¹⁰¹ Στυλιανού Παπαδοπούλου, *Οἱ Πατέρες καὶ Διδάσκαλοι*, p. 5.

¹⁰² Adrian Marinescu, *Ortodoxie și ortopraxie*, II, p. 29.

¹⁰³ The divine experiences of the Saints of our Church, in the respective case, do not refer to the telling of different spiritually profitable accounts but to what they themselves or their disciples put down or presented regarding those experiences, a fact which has led to the appearance of the ascetic-neptic works of the Holy Church Fathers (Στυλιανού Παπαδοπούλου, *Οἱ Πατέρες καὶ Διδάσκαλοι*, p. 6).

visible manifestations of the Holy Spirit in the believers' life; 4) the *preservation of the veneration of the Church feasts* should be continued, using the recognized and anonymous writers who have transcribed, analyzed and interpreted this veneration; 5) the *worship and the glorification of God* should be cultivated correctly¹⁰⁴. All these do not represent just answers of the Church to the problematizations of the people of every epoch, but contribute to maintaining the unity of faith in the Church¹⁰⁵. The certainty of the Holy Fathers about the revealing character of their theology and teaching does not rely, of course, on their personal study and knowledge, but on the words of our Savior Jesus Christ: *I have told you these things while I am still with you, but the Comforter, the Holy Spirit that the Father will send in My name, He will teach you all things and will remind you about everything I have told you*¹⁰⁶. *I have still many things to say to you but you are not able to bear them now. But when He, the Spirit of Truth, comes, he will guide you into all the truth*¹⁰⁷. According to the Holy Fathers' interpretation, Christ had also other words to make known and also other teachings to give to His disciples¹⁰⁸. Actually, Saint Gregory Palamas mentions that

¹⁰⁴ Στυλιανού Παπαδοπούλου, *Πατρολογία*, Α', pp. 21-22; idem, *Οι Πατέρες και Διδάσκαλοι*, p. 6; Adrian Marinescu, *Ortodoxie și ortopraxie*, I, pp. 31, 34-37.

¹⁰⁵ Adrian Marinescu, *Ortodoxie și ortopraxie*, I, pp. 31, 50.

¹⁰⁶ *Jn* 14.25-26.

¹⁰⁷ *Jn* 16.12-13.

¹⁰⁸ Saint Cyril of Alexandria affirms that the *One-Born*, namely Christ, has not finished His revealing work, which is continued on and on by the Holy Spirit, through the illumination and the deification of man: *as the One-Born has not finished, revealing us the mystery in itself, after He revealed the power to the first disciples in the beginnings; but He continues working on this forever, spreading in everyone the illumination through the Spirit and taking those who love Him by the hand and leading them to the knowledge of the things beyond mind and reason* [idem, *In Joannis Evangelium Liber XI (Εἰς τὸ Κατὰ Ἰωάννην ΙΑ')*, XVII, 26, in *Patrologiae cursus completus, Series graeca*, tomus LXXIV, Paris, 1859, col. 576 D]. Saint Gregory the Theologian says that one of

*John the golden theologian, namely Chrysostom, says about the Lord that, on the one hand, He rarely dialogued on dogmas, yet, on the other hand, He often talked about life, and, moreover, he talked everywhere*¹⁰⁹, making clear the difference between theology and sermon. As a matter of fact, the revelation in the Person of Christ is authentic and perfect. Consequently, the Comforter's work does not suppose some imperfection in the revelation of the Son and embodied Word of God¹¹⁰, since Christ is the natural image of the Father and acknowledged as Son of God and Lord only through the Holy Spirit. Therefore, the presence of the Holy Spirit, as He is lived after the Pentecost, contributes to a deeper understanding of the content of the truth, namely beyond the conventional conditions of life of the human society, which imprison man in the worldly way of thinking and perceiving¹¹¹. The believer has the duty to make

the things kept secret by Christ was the *divinity of the Spirit itself, which shall later on become clear* [idem, *Oratio XXXI (Λόγος ΛΑ΄) – Theologica V*, 10, in *Patrologiae cursus completus, Series graeca*, tomus XXXVI, Paris, 1858, col. 164 C].

¹⁰⁹ Saint Gregory Palamas, *Λόγοι ὑπὲρ τῶν ἱερῶς ἡσυχάζοντων* 2, 1, 43, εἰς *Συγγράμματα, Α΄...*, p. 504.

¹¹⁰ It is stated that *Christ is the accomplishment of the Old Testament, while the Holy Spirit is the accomplishment of the Evangel* (Adrian Marinescu, *Ortodoxie și ortopraxie*, III, p. 29).

¹¹¹ See also Στυλιανοῦ Παπαδοπούλου, *Οἱ Πατέρες καὶ Διδάσκαλοι*, pp. 7-8. Saint Photios the Great explains the fact that Christ revealed *the truth in part*, while the Holy Spirit leads to *all the truth*, and this is why people need, along with what Christ has preached and revealed, more *wisdom and power and truth* [idem, *De Spiritus Sancti Mystagogia (Περὶ τῆς τοῦ Πνεύματος μυσταγωγίας)*, in *Patrologiae cursus completus, Series graeca*, tomus CII, Paris, 1900, col. 305 CD - 308 A]. Saint Theophylact of Bulgaria emphasizes that the Holy Spirit *taught, on the one hand, all that Christ did not say to them*, namely to His disciples, as *they could not bear them; and on the other hand, He reminded them of the things that Jesus had told them and which, either for their lack of clearness, or because of the powerlessness of their mind, the Apostles had not been able to keep in their memory* [idem, *Enarratio in Evangelium Joannis (Ἑρμηνεῖα εἰς τὸ κατὰ Ἰωάννην Εὐαγγέλιον)*, in *Patrologiae cursus completus, Series graeca*, tomus CXXIV, Paris, 1864, col. 188 D].

his utmost efforts for his spiritual purification, as only through the Holy Spirit can he theologize, namely express the things that *the Spirit is telling him*¹¹² and live the fact that the Comforter is leading him *to all the truth*¹¹³ and is explaining to him *everything* that the Lord has said¹¹⁴.

Consequently, getting deeper into the knowledge of God through the Holy Spirit and a larger understanding, clarification and interpretation of the teaching of God's Son and revealed Word does not mean a new Truth, since nobody talks about a new Christ or another Creator God, but about the fact that *to a certain extent* the charismatic believer *goes deeper into the truths* of theology and of the teaching of the Church, and also he *deals with topics related to the Divine Economy, providing*

The Holy Apostles' powerlessness of understanding everything that Christ had told them is also mentioned by the Saints Gregory the Theologian [idem, *Oratio XXXI (Λόγος ΛΑ')* – *Theologica V*, 27, in *Patrologiae cursus completus, Series graeca*, tomus XXXVI, Paris, 1858, col. 164 C] and John Chrysostom [idem, *Commentarius in sanctum Joannem Apostolum et Evangelistam* (Ἐπόμνημα εἰς τὸν ἅγιον Ἰωάννην τὸν Ἀπόστολον καὶ Εὐαγγελιστὴν), in *Patrologiae cursus completus, Series graeca*, tomus LIX, Paris, 1862, col. 423-424].

¹¹² Rev. 2.7.

¹¹³ Jn 16.13.

¹¹⁴ Jn 14.26; Στυλιανοῦ Παπαδοπούλου, *Ὁρθοδόξων πορεία*, p. 15. God's work was and remains unitary, yet, after the event of the Pentecost, charismata are given by the Holy Spirit, as without Him *there is neither Church, nor Fathers, nor grace* (Adrian Marinescu, *Ortodoxie și ortopraxie*, III, p. 37). Saint John Chrysostom affirms that if *the Holy Spirit had not been present, the Church would not have existed, and if the Church exists, then it is obvious that the Holy Spirit is present*, and similarly *if the Holy Spirit were not present, there would be no fathers and teachers in the Church* [idem, *De Sancta Pentecoste, Homilia I (Εἰς τὴν ἁγίαν Πεντηκοστήν, Α')*, in *Patrologiae cursus completus, Series graeca*, tomus L, Paris, 1862, col. 458, 459]. Saint Irenaeus of Lyons had also stated that *where the Holy Spirit is, there is also the Church and all the grace* [idem, *Contra haereses Liber III (Κατὰ αἰρέσεων Γ')*, 24, in *Patrologiae cursus completus, Series graeca*, tomus VII, Paris, 1857, col. 966 C; Adrian Marinescu, *Ortodoxie și ortopraxie*, III, p. 37, note 42].

answers to the problems that appear from the way in which these truths are assumed¹¹⁵. In this way, one can understand the reason of the progressive solving of the problems that appear, sometimes, in the bosom of the Church, and the growth of the dogmatic teaching along the centuries: for example, the unity of the Church, in the second century; the authenticity of the Church and Triadology, in the 3rd century; Triadology, Pneumatology and Christology, during the 4th century; Christology, in the 5th to 7th centuries; the teaching on the holy icons, in the 8th century, and so on¹¹⁶.

The growth of the teaching of faith, to which the Holy Church Fathers refer, is also directly connected and related to God's revelation¹¹⁷. This thing means that the fact of the Pentecost continues in the Church space, through the guiding and illuminating action of the Holy Spirit¹¹⁸, *Who heals and introduces perfect knowledge* in the Church¹¹⁹, *since we can celebrate the Pentecost forever*¹²⁰. Consequently, the Holy Fathers state that the Church also grows ceaselessly in everything¹²¹, fact which means that the dogmatic teaching of

¹¹⁵ Στυλιανού Παπαδοπούλου, *Οι Πατέρες και Διδάσκαλοι*, p. 9; see also Adrian Marinescu, *Ortodoxie și ortopraxie*, I, p. 34.

¹¹⁶ Στυλιανού Παπαδοπούλου, *Πατρολογία*, Α', p. 92.

¹¹⁷ Adrian Marinescu, *Ortodoxie și ortopraxie*, III, pp. 31, 33, 37.

¹¹⁸ Στυλιανού Παπαδοπούλου, *Πατρολογία*, Α', p. 27.

¹¹⁹ Saint John Chrysostom, *Commentarius in sanctum Joannem Apostolum et Evangelistam, Homilia LXXVIII* (Υπόμνημα εἰς τὸν ἅγιον Ἰωάννην τὸν Ἀπόστολον καὶ Εὐαγγελιστὴν, Ὁμιλία ΟΗ'), 3, in *Patrologiae cursus completus, Series graeca*, tomus LIX, Paris, 1862, col. 424.

¹²⁰ Idem, *De Sancta Pentecoste, Homilia I* (Εἰς τὴν ἁγίαν Πεντηκοστήν, Α'), in *Patrologiae cursus completus, Series graeca*, tomus L, Paris, 1862, col. 454.

¹²¹ *All the Church grows, as long as it has the head*, namely Christ [idem, *Commentarius in Epistolam ad Colessenses, Homilia VII* (Υπόμνημα εἰς τὴν πρὸς Κολοσσαεῖς Ἐπιστολήν, Ὁμιλία Ζ'), in *Patrologiae cursus completus, Series graeca*, tomus LXII, Paris, 1862, col. 344]; *Because clinging on this*, namely on pretended humility, *the keepers of the letter are vainly boasting of their wisdom, as they do not have the Head, Who is Christ, from Whom the Church Body through joints and ligaments*

the Church also grows¹²², naturally, not in point of the number of dogmas¹²³, but in point of the participation to and perception of the revealed Truth¹²⁴.

increases with the growth that God gave in it, namely in the Church, so that it may thrive [Saint John of Damascus, In Epistolam ad Colessenses (Εἰς Ἐπιστολὴν πρὸς Κολοσσαεῖς), 2, in Patrologiae cursus completus, Series graeca, tomus XCV, Paris, 1864, col. 896 D]; Therefore, it is from Christ that the Church body is «nourished» (Colossians 2: 19), namely it receives the fact of living and growing spiritually... because the Holy Spirit gives through joints and ligaments the nourishment of the growth; because if the body were not joined and not linked to the Head, and not created in connection with the Head, namely not compound, then there would be no nourishment of the Spirit, and no growth in God, in other words, no growth in the living well-pleasing to God [Saint Theophylact, Archbishop of Bulgaria, Expositio in Epistolam ad Colessenses (Τοῦ ἁγίου Παύλου πρὸς Κολοσσαεῖς Ἐπιστολῆς Ἐξήγησις), 2, in Patrologiae cursus completus, Series graeca, tomus CXXIV, Paris, 1864, col. 1249 B]; Because through the fullness of the Holy Spirit, the Church grows to the full measure of the spiritual life, either by charismata or by knowledge, or by faith [Saint Ecumenius, Bishop of Triki, Commentarius in Epistolam ad Ephesios (ὑπόθεσις τῆς πρὸς Ἐφεσίους Ἐπιστολῆς), 6, in Patrologiae cursus completus, Series graeca, tomus CXVIII, Paris, 1864, col. 1224 C; see also Adrian Marinescu, Ortodoxie și ortopraxie, III, pp. 31-32].

¹²² *And we, being proved ourselves in love, in that for God and to our fellows, and having no more false dogmas, in other words, wrong teachings, and avoiding a hypocrite life (as here it seems to them that they dialogue about life as well), let us increase all our things in Christ, namely both our life and the dogmas, namely the faith in the sacramental life of the Church. As to this Head Who is we ought to adjust our own things so that we may bring nothing inadequate and inappropriate to the Head, but to grow in everything towards Him, Christ (Saint Theophylact, Archbishop of Bulgaria, Expositio in Epistolam ad Ephesios (Εἰς τὴν πρὸς Ἐφεσίους), 4, in Patrologiae cursus completus, Series graeca, tomus CXXIV, Paris, 1864, col. 1088 D - 1089 A; see also Στυλιανοῦ Παπαδοπούλου, Πατρολογία, Α', p. 32; Adrian Marinescu, Ortodoxie și ortopraxie, III, p. 44).*

¹²³ Regarding the Church dogmas, they are formulations of the truths of faith lived in the Church, being given through God's revelation once and for all at the Pentecost. Yet, when some people manifest their tendency of altering the dogmatic content of the Church, which content

In the theological terminology, actually, *Truth* is the name of Christ and, by extension, of the divine reality itself, which means that *Truth himself neither increases, nor decreases*, because He is identical to the divine reality¹²⁵. For this reason, the contribution of the Holy Fathers and Teachers can be perceived just as *addition* and *completion*¹²⁶ in the experiencing

ought to be lived, then dogmas are formulated, which are new for those who do not live the respective truths of faith of the Church, but these truths were existing in the life of the Church and, consequently, are not new for those who have the experiencing of these truths. For this reason, dogma, as formulation of the truth of faith, namely of the experience of the Church, is not countable, so as to increase or decrease in number, since the Truth of the divine Revelation is not divided into particular truths, but is lived in the sacramental life of the Church. Consequently, the «growth» of the Church dogmas cannot have a quantitative sense, but it clearly has a qualitative sense, which means growth of man's faith and, therefore, of his knowledge regarding the unique divine Revelation. The reformulation of the Truth by the Church depending on the problems it is facing during each epoch highlights, according to case, some particular *meanings* of the unique Truth, yet this is by no means a creation of new dogmas, but a delineation of the parameters of the divine Revelation that some have ignored, because of their lack of faith or because of their diminished capacities of perception.

¹²⁴ Father Dumitru Stăniloae speaks about the *progress of theology* and connects this progress to the *working presence of Christ* in the Church, where the *endless richness of the Same Christ in Whom the whole Revelation is concentrated and concluded* is communicated. *Christ is therefore the living dogma, all-comprehensive and working the entire salvation*. For this reason, *the Christian dogmas are many and yet one, because Christ is one, yet in Him are given all the conditions and all the means of our deification*. Consequently, *theology can however grow in understanding, without going over the content of the Revelation*, see idem, *Teologia Dogmatică Ortodoxă*, I, București: Editura Institutului Biblic și de Misiune al Bisericii Ortodoxe Române, 2003³, pp. 77, 81, 102-105, 108.

¹²⁵ Στυλιανοῦ Παπαδοπούλου, *Οἱ Πατέρες καὶ Διδάσκαλοι*, p. 9.

¹²⁶ Saint Basil the Great, *Epistola CCXXIII, Adversus Eustathium Sebastenum* (Ἐπιστολὴ 223, Πρὸς Εὐστάθιον τὸν Σεβαστηνόν), 5, in *Patrologiae cursus completus, Series graeca*, tomus XXXII, Paris, 1857, col. 829 B; Saint Gregory the Theologian, *Oratio XXX (Λόγος Λ)* –

and knowledge of the Truth himself. According to Saint Basil the Great, in the Church we must not add either truths or dogmas, *except for the fact that through progress is envisioned a certain growth compared to what has been said, which does not constitute a passage from bad to better, but represents a completion of what is missing by the addition of knowledge*¹²⁷.

Therefore, the Church is not called to answer modernism or post-modernism, but man's existential problems, which he is facing in his earthly life, a life in which his salvation can be realized by his synergy with the divine grace. Consequently, the answer of the Church goes beyond the limitations of the created

Theologica IV, 17, in *Patrologiae cursus completus, Series graeca*, tomus XXXVI, Paris, 1858, col. 125 BC; Στυλιανού Παπαδοπούλου, *Οἱ Πατέρες καὶ Διδάσκαλοι*, p. 9; Στυλιανού Παπαδοπούλου, *Πατρολογία, Α'*, p. 35. *The addition* (προσθήκη, τὸ πλεόν) and the *completion* (συμπλήρωσις) that Saint Basil the Great and Saint Gregory the Theologian talk about represent the result of the penetration in the *hidden beauty* of the letter of the *divine Scriptures* [Saint Gregory the Theologian, *Oratio XXXI* (Λόγος ΛΑ') – *Theologica V*, 21, in *Patrologiae cursus completus, Series graeca*, tomus XXXVI, Paris, 1858, col. 156 D] or in the *stored treasure of the truth* [Saint John Chrysostom, *In Genesim, Homilia LXII* (Εἰς τὴν Γένεσιν, Ὁμιλία ΕΒ'), 3, in *Patrologiae cursus completus, Series graeca*, tomus LIV, Paris, 1862, col. 535; Στυλιανού Παπαδοπούλου, *Οἱ Πατέρες καὶ Διδάσκαλοι*, p. 10].

¹²⁷ Saint Basil the Great, *Epistola CCXXIII, Adversus Eustathium Sebastenum* (Ἐπιστολὴ 223, Πρὸς Εὐστάθιον τὸν Σεβαστηνόν), 5, in *Patrologiae cursus completus, Series graeca*, tomus XXXII, Paris, 1857, col. 829 B. The theologian that succeeds in realising the *addition* in the domain of experiencing God, namely more than another has succeeded in the Church Tradition, is called *the best* by Saint Gregory the Theologian: *And, in this way, the best theologian is for us not the one that found out everything, because man cannot encompass everything with his reason, but the one who will think more than another and will gather in himself, to a greater extent, the image of the truth or shadow [of the truth] or what we shall name it hereafter* [idem, *Oratio XXX* (Λόγος Α') – *Theologica IV*, 17, in *Patrologiae cursus completus, Series graeca*, tomus XXXVI, Paris, 1858, col. 125 BC; Στυλιανού Παπαδοπούλου, *Οἱ Πατέρες καὶ Διδάσκαλοι*, p. 9; Στυλιανού Παπαδοπούλου, *Πατρολογία, Α'*, p. 34].

categories of space and time, since every man is called to transfigure the present of his history into the age to come.

8 Conclusion

This growth of the dogmatic teaching of the Church shall not be realized, however, by limiting the Orthodox theology to academic research or by interpreting the *Holy Scripture* using rationalistic or imaginary criteria; on the contrary, it is based on the premises of man's spiritual and sacramental life, which are purification, illumination and deification, and by means of which the believer, be he a clergyman or a layman, can theologize. In other words, theologians can be called those who have reached the vision and the knowledge of God¹²⁸ and it is only them that can bear the name of "Fathers and Teachers of the Church".

Actually, the patristic period has not come to an end, because the life of the Church progresses through history following the steps of the Saints. This means that the patristic tradition is not fragmented between the persons of the Holy Fathers of the Church, to allow one to talk about patristic periods. Those who are on their way towards spiritual perfection invite us to keep the Orthodox ecclesiastic criteria of interpretation for problems and things, on the one hand, and, on the other hand, exhort us to wait for the voice of the charismatic or deified men for a formulation of the teaching of the Church regarding the issues under discussion in each epoch¹²⁹. Consequently, the Holy Fathers represent the reference point of the Orthodox teaching.

¹²⁸ Ἱεροθέου Μητροπολίτου, *Μεταπατερική θεολογία*, p. 186.

¹²⁹ Ἱεροθέου Μητροπολίτου Ναυπάκτου καὶ Ἁγίου Βλασίου, «Ἡ θέση τῆς Ἐκκλησίας γιὰ τὶς μεταμοσχεύσεις», *Ἐκκλησία καὶ Μεταμοσχεύσεις*, Ἱερά Σύνοδος τῆς Ἐκκλησίας τῆς Ἑλλάδος. Εἰδική Συνοδική Ἐπιτροπή ἐπὶ τῆς Βιοθικῆς, Ἀθήναι: Ἔκδοσις τοῦ Κλάδου Ἐκδόσεων τῆς Ἐπικοινωνιακῆς καὶ Μορφωτικῆς Ὑπηρεσίας τῆς Ἐκκλησίας τῆς Ἑλλάδος, 2002, pp. 338, 358.

The Orthodox Theology is certainly not deprived of originality, dynamism, renewing spirit and actuality¹³⁰. Nevertheless, all these features create a continuum with the patristic period and the *Holy Tradition*, because each epoch of the Church is also patristic through the presence of those who have reached illumination and deification¹³¹. *The Theology of the Church has been and shall remain patristic*¹³², a fact that has been enriching the dogmatic teaching of the Church¹³³.

It is only from the position of the experiencing of the vision of God that someone can give a good answer to an existential problem of our epoch. For this reason, we should: 1) accept and existentially live what the Holy Fathers have been living in the Church, in other words, purification, illumination and deification through the grace of the Holy Trinity in order to be able to theologially express a greater and ampler experience of the Truth, Who is manifested in the *Holy Tradition* of the Church; 2) offer a decisive contribution, based on the divine experience, to the overcoming of a theological crisis that is shaking the Church during a certain epoch and which concerns the Truth, namely Jesus Christ, and man's redemption.

Therefore, we have the duty to follow the Holy Fathers and Teachers of the Church, not because the Church is the heir of the patristic teaching, but because the Church contains and renews this patristic teaching in the contemporary world¹³⁴. Consequently, the Orthodox theology should not be limited to the academic thinking and the scientific word, but should first

¹³⁰ Δημητρίου Τσελεγγίδη, «Μετα-πατερική» ἢ «νεο-βαρλααμική» θεολογία, p. 43.

¹³¹ Γεωργίου Δ. Μεταλληνού (Πρωτοπρ.), «Ἀπὸ τὴν πατερικότητα στὴν μεταπατερικότητα ἢ αὐτοαναίρεση τῆς ὀρθόδοξης ἡγεσίας», in Ἱερὰ Μητρόπολις Πειραιῶς, *Πατερική Θεολογία καὶ μεταπατερική αἴρεση...*, pp. 44-68; Ἱεροθέου Μητροπολίτου Ναυπάκτου καὶ Ἁγίου Βλασίου, *op. cit.*, pp. 338, 358.

¹³² Adrian Marinescu, *Ortodoxie și ortopraxie*, I, p. 33, note 38.

¹³³ Adrian Marinescu, *Ortodoxie și ortopraxie*, III, p. 33.

¹³⁴ See also Adrian Marinescu, *Ortodoxie și ortopraxie*, I, p. 28.

of all continue the patristic theological tradition both through its way of living and thinking and also through its way of expressing and using the methods of the contemporary scientific community.