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Dogma and Doxology. The Role and Meaning of Hymnology in Orthodox Spirituality



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Abstract

The subject proposes a rather complex theme. Therefore, the present study can only be considered a prelude to what implies

a complementary relationship between theology and doxology in the Orthodox Church, which, as complex as it is, is at the same time subtle because the translation of the dogmatic content into poetic hymns, or worship songs, took shape following a direct charismatic experience between their authors and the work of the Holy Spirit.

Keywords

dogma, doxology, confession, hymn, gnosis, Church, mission

1 Introduction

Rightfully considered monuments of the Holy Tradition, the doxological hymns have always been cataloged as being inspired and of the same soteriological value as the Holy Scripture, in short, a revelation and response to it in the ecclesial framework, precisely because of the biblical and dogmatic content, at the same time.

In the Church, love for God materialized in a doxological response on the border between theology and life, dogma and cult, doctrine and spirituality. This answer is proof of the subjective employability, on a personal level, of the believer in the Church. They are not passive recipients but active participants in its pilgrimage through the history of mankind, with a direct eschatological perspective. The idea of the transcendent is expressed through the hymn and the concrete expression of the communion experience between man and God as presence, image, sound, and form are conveyed.

2 Dogma and hymn

The birth of doxological hymns takes place in the liturgical environment of the Church; they are the expression of the natural extension and immediate reception of the dogmas promulgated to clarify the teaching of the faith, as well as the answers offered to the centrifugal slippages of various Christian and non-Christian groups or dissidents. From this context, we deduce the tripartite quality of the church hymn: biblical, dogmatic, and doxological. Due to this triple characteristic and the balance within its framework, Eastern hymnology was permanently protected from the penetration and priority of the pietist current to the detriment of the biblical-dogmatic foundation.

In the Church, the pietist side is risky in that it manipulates the soul of the believer towards a strictly personal commitment and communion; liturgical and doxological Christianity is reduced to the attribute of *private Christianity*¹, a fact for which the inconsistency of pietism found its antidote in urban agnosticism. From a missionary point of view, the dynamism of the liturgical atmosphere can be enlivened by the common singing of church hymns, which leads to a participatory intensity of each believer in public divine worship. Through the common singing of dogmatic hymns, the participants can easily assimilate Orthodox worship, which leads to a sublime sensitivity to the relationship with God, the Holy Trinity. Through the hymn, the dogma is correctly translated and harmonized with the character of each person. Therefore, the liturgical life played, and still plays, an essential, fundamental role in deifying the ecclesial being. Each

¹ † Anastasie, Archbishop of Tirana and Albania, *Nu izolării într-o pietate individualistă*, in *Misiune pe urmele lui Hristos*, translated by Ștefan L. Toma, Editura Andreiana, Sibiu 2013, p. 41.

voice, developed autonomously, can contribute to the heavenly and mystical harmony of Cosmic Liturgy.

"When, then, the singing that includes all the holy things (all salvation) prepares our soul powers for the harmony with those that will be sanctified a little later (honest gifts – author's note) and through the homophonic execution of the divine hymns will produce us the common understanding of the divine and that between each other, as through a united choir and a common confession to those saints, the most concentrated and shadowed in the utterance of the words of the psalms become more understood through more and clearer faces; and their expression or understanding is broadened by too sacred readings of written texts. In these, the one who looks in a holy way will experience a unitary breath as moved by the One and divine Spirit."²

Each person's doxological language must not be adapted according to specific prescribed patterns. However, each nation is called to cultivate and develop its voice and its hymnographic message, thus bringing a unique and invaluable contribution to the familiar doxological hymn, but in harmony with the dogmatic doxology of the entire Church. The doxology of the Church, unique and unitary, is the common foundation of the One Church, without jeopardising the diversity in the Holy Spirit, according to the Rusalim model.

Hymnological doxology is the palpable icon of communion and dogmatic-liturgical community that expresses, on the one hand,

² Sfântul Dionisie Areopagitul, *Despre Ierarhia Bisericească*, in *Sfântul Dionisie Areopagitul. Opere complete și Scoliiile Sfântului Maxim Mărturisitorul*, translation, introduction and notes by pr. Dumitru Stăniloae, Editura Paideia, București 1996, p. 80.

the unity between God and people, on the other hand, the unity between all sons of the same race, as well as the whole cosmos. "The doxology of the redeemed must be heard beyond the borders of their community and fill the universe."³

The dogmatic-liturgical doxology is not just a simple religious emotion. However, it is the most profound link between the liturgical experience and the missionary-confessional presence of the Church in the world, protected from any slippage or falsification of authentic Christian doctrine, "thus, the Liturgy turns into a life, and life becomes worship, singing and glorifying God."⁴ It is the doxological reflection of the angels and saints in the Kingdom of Heaven. Within the Holy Liturgy, the hymn is considered a doxological proclamation of the evangelical revelation as a living and immediate response of the believer to the discovery and experience of the divine Glory in his being. The liturgical experience of the Glory, as a direct and immediate act, immediately leads to the doxological joy of the Incarnate Truth and through Him of the entire Holy Trinity, joy immediately expressed through singing by Christ the Redeemer and His disciples immediately after the Last Supper: When they had sung a hymn, they went out to the Mount of Olives. (Mat. 26: 30), a general joy and metamorphosis started from within the human being by instilling the Holy Spirit as a transfiguring effusion through word and sound, a true doxological and plenary manifestation.

"The doxological song must encompass all humanity (Ps. 96: 3). The free doxology of free beings harmonizes the doxology of creation. The material universe participates in

³ † Anastasie, *Doxologia să fie auzită dincolo de granițele comunității*, in *op. cit.*, p. 75.

⁴ *Idem*, *Experiența liturgică a Ortodoxiei*, in *op. cit.*, p. 109.

the doxology of God by participating in the Eucharistic doxology."⁵

3 The doxological Trinity and the trinitarian doxology

In the Orthodox Church, the Trinity is doxological, and the doxology is trinitarian because the Holy Trinity constitutes the basis of Eastern theology and spirituality. There is only theology with life or spirituality, i.e., non-doxological theological thinking. Properly speaking, the theologian hymnographer, as a dogmatist, renders in verses and chants the experience of the ascetic-mystical ascent in and through the Church, as a living empirical theology, as a spiritual life experience shared with the entire ecclesial body implicitly expressed within the liturgical worship. "The dogmas, defined by the synods, are conceived as doxological formulas, which enter the cult organically, as its parts."⁶ Through worship, dogma becomes the way to eternal life, angelic doxology, because "angels, by their nature, essentially embody doxology."⁷

Saint Simeon, the New Theologian, having as his starting point the poems of Saint Gregory the Theologian, raises *dogmatic hymnography* to the highest heights of Christian religious poetry. His hymns were written under the impulse and inspiration of the Holy Spirit.

"For the first and only time in Byzantium, someone formulated in his verses not the objective cultic doxology of

⁵ *Idem, Asumarea și răspândirea Slavei lui Dumnezeu*, in *op. cit.*, p. 174-175.

⁶ Paul Evdokimov, *Cunoașterea lui Dumnezeu*, translated by pr. Vasile Răducă, Editura Christiana, București 1995, p. 105-106.

⁷ *Ibidem*, p. 112.

a community, as in the already standardized hymnography, he did not only process dogmatic or moral themes in poetic forms but expressed himself spontaneously and violently, pathetically and vividly, his own experiences of grace in a truly mystical and spiritual journal; and he did this without for a moment falling into the subjective outpourings and sentimental confessions of the intimate and pietistic type typical of Western spiritual literature of the second Christian millennium.”⁸

Orthodox theology, predominantly apophatic, directly implies a doxological character of thought and its expression. The explanation could be a simple one: when the mind of the mystical theologian rises to the true contemplation of God, realizing that He cannot be contained in words, he slips through the composition and singing of hymns to another way of soul expression, smoother and melodious, more comprehensible and more knowable under the influence of the soul's faculty of feeling.

Through the sung dogma, the perception of divine-human realities becomes transparent, and the eschatological perspective is experienced in advance. If reason supports the thought and theological formulation of the revealed message, the doxological side, also supported by feeling, makes it more consistent as a perception and way of expression. Doxology, or the right glorification of God through melodious words, gives dogmatic formulations a sensitivity specific to the ecclesiastical framework and brings light to the mind and soul of the believer, protecting him from pietistic slips and rationalistic

⁸ Diac. Ioan I. Ică jr., *Capitolele, Imnele și Epistolele simeoniene – problematica filologică, istorică și spirituală*, in *Simeon Noul Teolog. Imne, Epistole și capitole, Scrieri III*, translated by diac. Ioan. I. Ică jr., Editura Deisis, Sibiu 2001, p. 14.

interpretations of the teaching of the faith. *Therefore, it is more appropriate for him to Let God be sung rather than described without singing.*⁹

Since its foundation, the Church adopted a doxological attitude glorifying God through prayers and breaking Bread (Acts 2: 42), which gave it "centripetal missionary power of attraction."¹⁰ With all the postmodern missionary challenges, the Liturgy of the Church continues to fascinate the human spirit longing for the transcendent. In the light of its chants, the human being is charged with the energy of tranquillity and doxological balance due to the personal presence of the Savior, and through him of the entire Holy Trinity, through the grace and His glory.

Among the eight ways of the presence of Christ the Savior in the liturgical worship of the Church, Father Dumitru Stăniloae identifies in the sixth the divine presence through and in the *prayers spoken or sung*¹¹ within the eucharistic synaxis,

"that is why we sing in the Holy Liturgy so often and full of momentum and happiness that makes us foretaste the joy of the perfect communion and to feel happy from now on with this foretaste."¹²

Saint Dionysius the Areopagite, promoter of mystical theology and, in particular, of the apophatic side as a way of knowing, believes that hymns, along with the holy readings, have a

⁹ Dumitru Stăniloae, *Sfântul Simeon Noul Teolog. Imnele iubirii dumnezeiești*, in *Studii de Teologie Dogmatică Ortodoxă*, Editura Mitropoliei Olteniei, Craiova 1991, nota 6, p. 326.

¹⁰ † Anastasie, *Caracterul doxologic al gândirii teologice și al vieții liturgice*, in *op. cit.*, p. 178.

¹¹ Dumitru Stăniloae, *Modurile prezenței lui Hristos în cultul Bisericii*, in *Spiritualitate și comuniune în Liturgia ortodoxă*, Editura Mitropoliei Olteniei, Craiova 1986, p. 81.

¹² *Ibidem*, p. 379.

purgative role in the Eucharistic cult and explains the content of the revealed texts: "the most holy chants and readings from the Scriptures I give them (believers - n.a.) the teaching of the virtuous life and before that the perfect cleansing from the sin that causes corruption."¹³ Moreover, it bestows on those contemplating the Divine Being *upliftment, renewal, resurrection, steadfastness, safety, guidance, divine power, simplicity, unity, and life.*

"Let us aim for the rays that illuminate us from the Holy Scriptures and let us be guided by their light towards the hymns of praise of the deity, illuminated by them in a supernatural way. And impressed by the holy hymns of praise, let us look towards the lights divinely given through them and praise the good-giving origin of all the divine appearance, as she herself taught us about herself in the holy scriptures, as for example, that it is the cause and origin and being and life of all, and the recalling and raising up of those who have fallen from it; and for those who have slipped towards the corruption of the divine image, renewal, and resurrection, as well as for those moved towards a corruption devoid of holiness, holy constancy, and to the steadfast security and to those guided by it, strong guidance, and to those who are enlightened enlightenment and to those what is perfected, source of perfection; also to those who deify themselves, deifying power, to those who aspire to simplicity, simplicity, to those who tend to unity, unity, and to every beginning, beginning above beginning in the form above being. And, simply speaking, life to the living and being to those that are,

¹³ Sfântul Dionisie Areopagitul, *op. cit.*, p. 79.

beginning and cause of all life and being, for the goodness that brought things into existence and sustains them."¹⁴

The Theodoxology of the Church is the theology of Divine Glory, the only way of personal and economic communication between God and man. Glory, as divine and deifying uncreated energy, makes the Unseen visible, the Incommunicable shareable, the Incommunicable communicable, and the Transcendent immanent.

"A God without the uncreated energies appears before the faithful as a powerless God, withdrawn into His absolute transcendence, who looks unconcernedly upon man's inner anxiety. A true and philanthropic God, such as the God of Scripture, descends on the thread of uncreated energies to meet man, to tear him from his religious indifference and to wander, to raise him to communion with Himself, on the path of infinite spiritual progress, in Christ and the church, through the Holy Spirit, the inexhaustible source of uncreated energies, as unspeakable divine light, life and love."¹⁵

4 Dogma and liturgical life

When dogma becomes life, theology becomes doxology, and this relationship between dogma and its formulation and the experience of deification is indispensable. As a doxological

¹⁴ *Idem*, *Despre Numirile Dumnezeiești*, in *Sfântul Dionisie Areopagitul. Opere complete și Scoliile Sfântului Maxim Mărturisorul*, translation, introduction and notes by pr. Dumitru Stăniloae, Editura Paideia, București 1996, p. 136.

¹⁵ Dumitru Popescu, *Ortodoxie și contemporaneitate*, Editura Diogene, București 1996, p. 18.

Church, we have inherited the dogmas and their experience through the pure life of the Holy Fathers who formulated them and which preceded their formulation.

"Since the purpose of theology is the purification and enlightenment of the mind, and the expression of this experience of deification is dogma, then dogma is infallible in the Orthodox Church, as the expression of this experience of deification had by the Prophets, Apostles and Fathers of the Church. However, dogma, this form of expression of the experience of deification, we know not only as dogma but also as the life of the Saints of the Church or any person who has reached the same experience of deification. We have dogma as an expression of the experience of deification, and after, we have a dogma that becomes life for those who reach deification."¹⁶

Doxology, as an empirical experience of the divine and deifying life through grace, precedes the formulation of the dogma and conveys to it, along with the content, the theophanic, Christocentric, and pneumatic state. In light of this statement, Saint Simeon the New Theologian expressed the dogmas doxologically through his hymns as the fruit of personal and direct experience with the Son of God made man so that people could access them and understand them in the same spirit. Christ the Savior, the Light of the world (Jn. 8, 12) and the God of man illuminates the most holy meanings of the dogma to the extent that the one who theologises becomes a transparent medium for its reception, formulation and transmission. The enlightened one can compose the doxology in hymns and praises as in work

¹⁶ IEROTHEOS, Mitropolitul Nafpaktosului, *Dogmatica empirică după învățăturile prin viu grai al Părintelui Ioannis Romanidis*, Vol. I, *Dogmă-Morală-Revelație. Prezentare critică*, translated by Tatiana Petrache, Editura Doxologia, Iași 2014, p. 115-116.

inspired by the Holy Spirit, equal in value to the scriptural texts because, in the beginning, there was the doxology, then the Holy Scriptures if we were to note the historical approach. Then, the stage of formulation of the dogma on account of the former

"and enlightened by them, that is, by the wealth of light in them, these meanings prepared him in a way above the world to compose hymns inspired by God and worthy of God as holy praises. Through this, he could see the lights emanating from God, which enabled him to sing with great love the Lord, the giver of everything, as the cause of all the holy dominion shown in the light."¹⁷

The cooperation of the hymnographer with the Holy Spirit was based on the effort of a state of apathy that ordered the movement of the mind in a creative direction, not always based on knowledge previously acquired through strict intellectual training, although assumed in most cases, but more as a result of the synergistic perseverance of asceticism and mysticism, of pure prayer and holy readings beyond any speculative tendency of purely human reasoning. The creative work inspired by the Holy Spirit was not considered a wandering adventure of the mind preoccupied with contemplating the divine, as much as a tumult of the soul eager to meet God through the economy of His Glory and to imprint it in one's mind. This approach could be easily contested because other thoughts and compositions foreign to the Church and the authentic doxology may be imprinted in the mind, a fact for which, at the beginning of the

¹⁷ Dumitru Stăniloae, *Sfântul Simeon Noul Teolog. Imnele iubirii dumnezeiești*, in *Studii de Teologie Dogmatică Ortodoxă*, Editura Mitropoliei Olteniei, Craiova 1991, p. 325.

monastic life, some monks contested the singing¹⁸, the praises, hymns and doxology of early Christianity for fear of the slippages of devilish delusion. Thus, in the impressive monograph on Saint John Damascene, Father Andrew Louth indicates that

"in its origins, trope singing was alien to monastic life and in his account of the initial hesitation of John (Damascus - n. a.) overcome by his love for one of the monastic brothers and through the approval of the Mother of God of his poetic gift accounts for John's fame as a liturgical poet."¹⁹

The detention of the monks in the desert was also somewhat justified because wrong teachings can slip through some songs uncensored, harming the Church of Christ. It is known that the heretical priest Arius, in Alexandria, Egypt, flaunted himself through *Thalia*²⁰, the new teaching mainly through songs; on the one hand, the people who did not know how to read could easily assimilate a sung doctrine; on the other hand, being transmitted strictly orally, it could not be contested by the elders of the Church because *verba volant*. This observation, subtle by the

¹⁸ "The history of the beginning of the writing by John (Damascus - n. a.) of liturgical hymns may reflect the tradition according to which at the beginning the monks were opposed to singing and liturgical songs. There is a famous story about Abba Pamvo rebuking one of his monks who had heard the wonderful singing in the churches of Alexandria and regretted that there was no one who sang like that among the monks in the desert. In despair, Abba Pamvo prophesied that indeed one day the monks would sing tropes at their services, but *what kind of piercing of the heart, what tears would the tropes give birth to? What kind of piercing of the heart will the monk feel who sits in his church or cell and raises his voice like an ox?*", Andrew Louth, *Ioan Damaschinul. Tradiție și originalitate în teologia bizantină*, translated by Ioan Ică and Ioan Ică jr., Editura Deisis, Sibiu 2010, p. 42.

¹⁹ Andrew Louth, *Ioan Damaschinul. Tradiție și originalitate în teologia bizantină*, translated by Ioan Ică and Ioan Ică jr., Editura Deisis, Sibiu 2010, p. 42.

²⁰ Also see Rowan Williams, *Arius: Heresy and Tradition. Revised Edition*, Grand Rapids, Eerdmans 2002, p. 98-116.

way, is made by Saint Athanasius the Great in *Discourse 3 Against the Arians*, comparing the Arian heretics with "those who sing between the cups with noise and with jokes" and "Arius writing *Thalia*, (that – author's note) imitates the verses with mujerist meanings."²¹

Thanks to the doxological atmosphere, through which dogma becomes life and direct experience with God, the tradition of the Orthodox Church, regardless of its location on the globe, preserves its unitary character because, in worship, the Glory of God is proclaimed by the doxological communities in a communion way and as a reality that it includes the whole pilgrimage of the Church through history. Among the doxological communities, monasteries played an important role. The greatest Christian hymn writers were monks, and here we mention, only in passing, Saint John Damascene and Saint Simeon the New Theologian. In the doxological ambiance of the monastic cult, one can experience the ontological renewal of the human being and true freedom in divine grace and truth, which leads to the assumption of an inner spiritual power that purifies the whole nature, not as something static or passive, but dynamic and organic in a continuous epectatic ascent that transfigures us and leads us to an increasingly obvious resemblance to the Savior's life,

"thus, the doxological attitude and life, does not mean a hymnological refuge, in some kind of closed, idyllic environment. More quickly, it means universal openness, and participation in the problems of all humanity, especially

²¹ Sfântul Atanasie cel Mare, *Trei cuvinte împotriva arienilor*, translation, and notes by pr. Dumitru Stăniloae, Collection *Părinți și Scriitori Bisericești*, vol. 15, Editura Institutului Biblic și de Misiune al Bisericii Ortodoxe Române, București 1988, p. 158 și 159.

of the humble and wronged, it means universal compassion; a ceaseless breathing and effusion of the fire of the Holy Spirit. Directly related to the meanings of light and power, the glory of God expresses, in particular, something dynamic. The surprising and brilliant life of the saints reflects such a doxological experience of the humility and love of Christ, keeping the missionary conviction current for every person, at any time, in any society."²²

Revealing profound dogmatic content, doxological hymns emerge as potent spiritual therapies, capable of healing souls and uniting the body and the created realities with the divine archetypes. Through the highest wisdom and consciousness of the inspired author, they reflect the brilliance and Glory of the Most Holy Trinity, inspiring and uplifting all who partake in their divine melodies.

5 The empirical character of dogma

Through its content and structure, the theology and spirituality of Orthodoxy are the most able to attribute the correct diagnosis and therapy to the contemporary man who longs for divine experience. The dogmatic doxology, based on the experience of Revelation and the formulation of the experience of the Holy Fathers, is considered an axiom of human deification.

"The experimental character of the individual religious life is an indispensable condition of salvation. Religion is not a process of theoretical instruction, but a process of participation in being, of personal participation in the spiritual joys made available through Jesus Christ. He who

²² † Anastasie, *Characterul doxologic al gândirii teologice și al vieții liturgice*, in *op. cit.*, p. 182-183.

only theoretically knows the truth of the Gospel may be a scholar, but he is not a Christian. The quality of being a Christian is given only by personal experience or participation, or the inner experience of God."²³

The formulation of dogmas, as well as the extension of their explanatory content through doxologies and hymns, had as its aim the healing of some minds that had slipped from the path of truth but also the spiritual healing of Christian communities in a continuous thirst for the saving truth, a fact for which the dogma it was excluded from the purely speculative area of abstract theology and placed in the pneumatic life of the Church through its complex and dynamic worship.

"The criteria of Orthodox theology are not formally dogmatic but therapeutic. Dogma is a medicine. The dogmas correctly orient man towards the experience of deification. The purpose of dogma in the patristic tradition is to help man through his understanding of God. These dogmatic meanings help him on the path of purification and enlightenment, and when he reaches deification, dogma, of course, ends, and man has before him the mystery of the Holy Trinity."²⁴

Dogma, as a doxology, guides to light and is removed from the context of the liturgy. Asceticism remains a purely theoretical truth that does not differ from world philosophies or party ideologies. Doxology involves an interpersonal dialogue between man and God through song, praise, request, question,

²³ Nichifor Crainic, *Sfințenia împlinirea umanului*, Editura Mitropoliei Moldovei și Bucovinei, Iași 1993, p. 86.

²⁴ IEROTHEOS, Mitropolitul Nafaktosului, *Dogmatica empirică după învățăturile prin viu grai al Părintelui Ioannis Romanidis*, Vol. I, *Dogmă-Morală-Revelație. Prezentare critică*, translated by Tatiana Petrache, Editura Doxologia, Iași 2014, p. 123-124.

and answer; it is not an abstract reflection of speculative ideas or notions. Today's Orthodoxy is not social Christianity based on social action. However, the healing of a postmodern man who suffers the trauma of alienation from the Triune God, from the feeling of brotherhood with the Son of God made man and from the Spirit of our adoption as brothers with Christ and sons of the same Parent. If dogma helps us to understand God based on His Revelation, doxology helps us to be able to express Him empirically in the everyday ecclesial context. "Dogma is not meant to be believed. Dogma is meant to be lived. Because dogma without living is heresy"²⁵, a fact for which we have the moral obligation as Orthodox Christians to transfer this message to the missionary space. For example, the Mariological dogma, promulgated at the Council of Ephesus (431), by which the Virgin Mary was recognised as *theothokia*, *perpetual virginity* and *hyperdulia*, was disseminated at the level of the ecclesial communities not only theoretically but also doxologically, with deep reverberations in Hesychast theology and spirituality of the 14th century as a living testament and missionary imperative. St. Theophanes of Nicaea, speaking of the Mariological doxology as part of the generations of Christians also adorned with the virtues of pure chants, affirmed that:

"the flow of our life changes successively our generations and those after us, but the remembrance of our common salvation must remain ever moving forever in all generation and generation, and according to those madly in love with man or other, each must turn day and night in his heart the beauty truly loved and much desired after God by all intelligent and rational nature, and they bring her unceasingly not only doxologies and hymns for her glory

²⁵ *Ibidem*, p. 127.

beyond words and thoughts, for her generous mercy to the very bowels towards us and the supernatural gifts that come from there, but also a pure life or, rather, purified forever and variously adorned with the varied beauty of virtues as with a multi-colored golden garment (Ps. 45: 8-9)".²⁶

The doxological life of the Church presupposes a constant balance between the dogmatic content of the hymns and their musical context. An unglorified dogma is a spiritually enclaved reality, and a sentimental attitude that leads more towards pietism is equally harmful to the dynamism of ecclesial life. It would be pretty straightforward here that the slippage of the pietist-type movements, which, emptying the doxology of the dogmatic content, were left with simple chants, trained indeed but useless in their soteriological approach and role. The saints reflected the complementary and simultaneous aspects necessary and valuable in the spiritual and dynamic ascent towards God, the Holy Trinity. The Holy Spirit permanently accompanies the doxological dynamism; therefore, the hymnographic treasury of the Church is part of the Holy Tradition with value about the Holy Scriptures, but it is constantly renewed (Eph. 4, 23; Rev. 21, 5), step by step, epektatic, or from glory to glory (2 Cor. 3, 18) towards the deification of human nature, that is, towards its healing from every trace of corruption, sin and death.

²⁶ Sfântul Teofan al Niceei, *Datoria aducerii-aminte neîncetate de Maica Domnului atât prin laude, cât și printr-o viață curată*, in vol. *Maica Domnului în teologia secolului XX și în spiritualitatea isihastă a secolului XIV: Grigorie Palama, Nicolae Cabasila, Teofan al Niceei. Studii și texte*, diac. Ioan I. Ică jr, Editura Deisis 2008, pp. 575-576.

"With the presupposition of the perpetual presence of God, through Christ, in historical reality, Christianity offers man the possibility of deification, just as medical science offers man the ability to preserve or restore his health through a certain therapeutic procedure and a concrete way of life. The writer can understand the convergence between medical science and the pastoral science of the Church because both the diabetic and the Christian are aware that, in both cases, they must faithfully observe the prescriptions of the sciences indicated above in order to achieve their double objective."²⁷

Life in Christ and the Church implies growth to the stature of the perfect man (Eph. 4, 13), and growth means perfection. Perfection means growth, i.e. a permanent advancement in the knowledge of the dogmatic content and its liturgical expression through doxological hymns. It leads to the Christocentric transformation of human capacities to know, love and express. Dogmas are not lived in the Church as abstract definitions with a strict scholastic meaning, but to emphasise their proper understanding and essentially human feeling, the insight into their content through the grace of God is needed, a process that is neither purely rational nor purely sentimental, later identifies and doxological content with love and truth.

"The inspiration of theologizing through songs comes from above, against an intense work of purification of passions. The songs are thus a pure sacrifice and have their source in personal experience, like the prophets. The dogmatic role of hymnography was often emphasized as a response to contemporary heresies, hymns being recognized as a much

²⁷ P. Georgios Metallinos, *Storia e Teofania. La storia per un cristiano è una continua teofania*, traduzione dal greco di Antonio Ranzolin, Asterios Editore, Trieste 2018, p. 95

easier medium for spreading both heresies and the teachings they countered, acquiring, in some places, *an analytical tone, a hymnology with theological thesis, explanatory.*"²⁸

6 The spiritual character of hymns

Revealed in their content, the dogmas were formulated with a soteriological purpose by the Holy Fathers, whose thinking and thirst for theological and spiritual knowledge went beyond simple formulations or definitions. They went towards conjugating the content with psalmody, aware that their high theology could not express the God in His Being (Rom. 11, 33) but only in works through synergy with divine grace. This desire for dynamic comprehension of theological knowledge and expression, which rises to the Holy Trinity as authentic Theology, descends *kenotically* through songs and praises, concluding that God in Himself, theoretically and practically, is incomprehensible in His Being, but by the grace of the Holy Spirit *theology* becomes *economy*, *dogma* also becomes *doxology*. The content of the teaching of the faith is constantly renewed and *translated* to each generation's meaning in its history. This history becomes the medium of divine revelation. Through the teaching of faith, or dogmatic, confessed or sung, the Church proves that it assures man and the world of their true freedom in grace and truth, making them continually increase in the love

²⁸ † Damaschin Dorneanu, *Dimensiunea mistagogică a Săptămânii Sfințelor Pătimiri. Elemente de antropologie duhovnicească*, Editura Crimca, Suceava 2022, pp. 329-330.

of God without the external restraint of some fatal and inexplicable laws.

"Dogmas refer to the spiritual plane of existence, which is not subject to uniformly repeating laws, like the processes of the material plane. The spiritual plane of life is supported by acts of free choice, by freely chosen relationships and developed by people through acts and attitudes, to a certain extent, free from the material plane. Christian dogmas are the lights of love offered by God to people, they are expressions and assurances of the highest good."²⁹

This is a fact for which the doxological hymn builds, at the same time, a way of expressing the revealed dogma and a concrete response to it. Strictly speaking, the Church does not separate the theoretical content of the revelation from its liturgical manifestation, and the laudatory song becomes, thus, a dialogical way between man and God on the permanent support and constantly renewed in the Spirit, which is His discovery, which gives us leads us to define *hymnology as revelation and response*, at that time, without the pretense of making additional additions, but only as participatory experience and expression in a complementary way.

Conclusions

Psalmody like angels, human minds learn from pure and angelic minds not only the way of economic knowledge of theology but also the stages, or steps, of progress in this direction, strengthening the experience and consciousness of ecclesial unity through love and grace. Through the praise of

²⁹ Dumitru Stăniloae, *Iisus Hristos lumina lumii și îndumnezeitorul omului*, Editura Anastasia, București 1993, p. 157, 169.

hymns, we express the double purpose of our creation: the glorification of God and the happiness of creatures, not in the sense that God would need our doxology, which would constrain Him in His capacity as Creator, but by doxologizing Him our conscience is convinced that it cannot reach the level of what God is in Himself. Therefore, we praise Him for all His beautiful things that we have become partakers of here on earth, of our existence, constantly marveling at His boundless power, opening ourselves more and more with joy to His inexpressible Mystery, aware of the limitations of our nature and of the fact that the praise brought to God is also a gift from His power and love towards people.

"The doxological understanding of life and mission, and the clearest expression of this doxological disposition in our reflections, studies, and missionary activities, does not mean expressive acclamations to the glory of God, nor the limitation of our activities to cultic, hymnological synaxes. It does not mean overestimating the other aspects of the spiritual life, but rather, encompassing and including them in an approach of articulation and synthesis. Theological thinking, liturgical life, movement,, and daily activity pass through this warm and hopeful doxological vision to another level, one that is far from any abstract analysis, sentimental exaltations, or expressions of self-responsibility. I become thirsty for life in Christ, an inexhaustible source of spiritual light, doxological joy."³⁰

³⁰ † Anastasie, *Caracterul doxologic al gândirii teologice și al vieții liturgice*, in *op. cit.*, p. 184.

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