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Does Eastern Orthodox Christianity allow a "doctrinal development"?

Abstract

The present study aims to clarify to what extent there exists a place for “doctrinal development” in Orthodox Christian theology. It attempts to capture what such a development would mean, and whether it is in accordance with the professed faith of the Church. Initially, it looks at the context in which such a concept has been developed and how it has been received in the realm of Orthodox theology. The main content of the study is formed from the analysis and research of doctrinal principles that could potentially support “doctrinal development” in the Eastern Orthodox Christian tradition. Zoe Carbonopsina, Leon did not hesitate to turn to the papacy, which offered him the much-desired dispensation.



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1 Introduction

Among theologians, there is a significant claim of incompatibility between the teachings of the Eastern Orthodox Christianity and the concept of "doctrinal development"¹. This perspective is based on what Paul Valliere identifies, in the various writings of contemporary Russian Orthodox theologians, as the limits of the development of the Tradition². This leads to a whole new series of questions and dilemmas related to the understanding of dogmas and even of Orthodox theology as a whole. Most of these issues can be formulated as follows: Can Orthodox dogmas be subject to change given changing societal conditions? Could there be an evolution of Orthodox dogmas? Can there be originality or progress in Orthodox theology?

The present study will primarily consider the answer to the main question of this paper, namely whether Eastern Orthodoxy allows for doctrinal development. Therefore, it will examine the debate on the possibility of "doctrinal development" from an Orthodox perspective, and what this possibility would imply. It also

¹ Vladimir LOSSKY, *In the Image and Likeness of God*, St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, Crestwood, New York, 1974, p. 160.

² Paul VALLIERE, *Modern Russian Theology-Bukharev, Soloviev, Bulgakov: Orthodox Theology in a New Key*, Eerdmans Pub Co, Michigan, 2000, pp. 373-404.

intends to answer the related dilemmas about the nature of dogmas, doctrine, and theology. The research focuses, in particular, on several principles for a possible “doctrinal development” in Orthodox theology. The necessity and topicality of such an approach derives from the confusion surrounding the relation between the novel, creative character of theology and the necessity of fidelity to Tradition and Revelation (referring here to the divine act of God communicating with man, not the book of the New Testament). Are theology and dogmas topical, creative, and original, or are they merely dry rules of faith, monotonously and redundantly repeated over the course of centuries? This paper shall seek to answer these questions, primarily drawing inspiration from the works of Saint Dumitru Stăniloae, the recently canonised by Romanian Orthodox Church.

2 “Doctrinal development” - a contextual-critical assessment

In order to understand the context of this issue, it is important to note that the phrase “doctrinal development” is most commonly associated with a preoccupation in the Roman-Catholic tradition which emerged in the mid-nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. The exponent of this preoccupation was the cardinal and theologian John Newman. He saw new doctrinal definitions as developments resulting from the Church's growing understanding of the Revelation. It must be noted that this is understood to be a growth in the understanding of Revelation rather than in Revelation itself³. Newman argues that the newer dogmas about the Person of the Mother of God, Purgatory, etc., are the consequences of a rational ‘working-out’ of revealed truth, a process

³ John Henry NEWMAN, *An Essay on the Development of Christian Doctrine*, University of Notre Dame Press, Notre Dame/Indiana, 1989, p. 30.

that results in new understandings that were not evident from the beginning. The principles he presented have had a great impact on the Catholic world, especially as regards the Second Vatican Council.

The problematisation in Roman Catholic theology of "doctrinal development"⁴ is therefore rooted both in internal reasons, with reference to the ongoing process of rational understanding of the faith, and also in external ones concerning Christianity's mission and unity and, implicitly, ecumenical dynamics at the inter-Christian level⁵. At the end of the 1970s, the British Catholic theologian Nicholas Lash argued that „dogmatic development” is a matter of revision of „dogmatic formulae” through the implementation of contemporary language:

„A Catholic who protests the dogmatic formulae cannot be subject to revision is hardly likely to rest content with the

⁴ Nicholas LASH, *Newman on Development. The search for an explanation in history*, Patmos Press, West Virginia, 1975; Linda RASINSKI, *A Systematic Presentation of Development of Dogma in the Theology of Karl Rahner*, Master's Theses, Loyola University Chicago, 1980; Steven MCNEEL and Philip L. THORSEN, "A Developmental Perspective on Christian Faith and Dogmatism", in *The High School Journal*, 68/3, 1985, p. 211–220; James GAFFENY, John Henry NEWMAN, *Roman Catholic Writings on Doctrinal Development*, Sheed & Ward, Kansas City, 1997 (Preface); Aidan NICHOLAS, *From Newman to Congar: The Idea of Doctrinal Development from the Victorians to the Second Vatican Council*, T&T Clark, Edinburgh, 1990, p. 256; Thomas G. GUARINO, "Tradition and Doctrinal Development: Can Vincent of Lerins still teach the Church?", in *Theological Studies* 67/1, 2006, p. 34-72; Guy MANSINI, *The Development of Dogma: A Systematic Account (Sacra Doctrina)*, The Catholic University of America Press, Washington, 2024, p. 192; John WHITE, "St. Bonaventure and the Problem of Doctrinal Development", in *American Catholic Philosophical Quarterly*, 85/1, 2011, pp. 177-202.

⁵ Peter HARRIS, "Ecumenical dialog and the development of doctrine", in *Doctrinal development and Christian Unity*, Edited by Nicholas LASH, Sheed & Ward, London and Melbourne, 1967, p. 34.

statement that the union of the divine and human in Jesus Christ is a *unio hypostatica*. He may wish to express this dogmatic truth by speaking of a “hypostatic union”, but he will probably realise that, in terms of contemporary English usage, such a formula states very little, if anything [...]. Therefore, it is the case that a Catholic who wishes to express in intelligible contemporary English, the idea contained in the phrase *unio hypostatica*, is thereby subscribing to a theory of dogmatic development”⁶.

The above conception remains centred predominantly on the outward form of expression of the revealed truth, and not on its substance. Lash's key concern seems to be expressing doctrinal meaning in intelligible contemporary English, and only in this context does he speak of a reformulation of the dogmas. Even if the theological premise of the stated doctrinal development was the process of understanding faith, from Lash's presentation it is not clear if this reformulation is only in terms, or actually of the revealed content. It is unclear whether such doctrinal development is a deepening of the faith, or a “revision” of it.

The recent work of Michael Seewald aims to resolve this concern. In his view, the contemporary Catholic Church is in a deep crisis because it cannot identify which elements are essential to the Catholic faith and which can be changed⁷. As a result of this issue there are currently competing interpretations of what “doctrine” and “dogma” mean. According to Sean Toh, even the Church itself does not give strict definitions for these two terms, although he considers that certain provisional definitions can be found in its documents, such as the Catechism of the Catholic Church, Code

⁶ Nicholas LASH, “Dogmas and doctrinal progress”, in *Doctrinal development and Christian Unity*, Edited by Nicholas LASH, Sheed & Ward, London, 1967, pp. 18-19.

⁷ Michael SEEWALD, *Theories of Doctrinal Development in the Catholic Church*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 2023.

of Canon Law, and dogmatic constitutions. From these documents, Toh will argue, doctrine (*Latin: doctrina*) could be understood as "teaching". Only the Magisterium – the legitimate and universal office of teaching of the Catholic Church – can propose and define doctrine that is binding for Catholics. He considers that doctrines, propositions which are taught authoritatively by the Magisterium of the Church, are teachings related only to faith and morals. On the other hand, dogmas are a smaller subset of teachings which have been raised to the level of infallibility. They are not just authoritative, but also definitive. Doctrines, which are authoritative and binding on the faithful, are not necessarily infallible – as stated in the Code of Canon Law⁸. Despite the attractiveness of this interpretation, such a demarcation is not an official teaching of the Roman Catholic Church and, in general, Roman-catholic theologians don't make a difference between the two terms. Therefore, in this section we will consider dogma/dogmatic and doctrine/doctrinal to be synonymous.

Beyond the aforementioned contextual-linguistic perspective, Lash is keen to stress that any development in Christian life, including dogmatic development, can only take place under the following conditions: a. under the assistance and guidance of the Holy Spirit in the Church; b. in accordance with apostolic truth; c. with the consensus of the members of the Church⁹.

As for the concrete role of the Church in the process of "doctrinal development", Lash points out that this can be specified through the Pontiff under the strict conditions expressed by the First Vatican Council regarding the exercise of his prerogatives in accordance with the extraordinary Magisterium of the Church. The

⁸ See: Sean TOH, "Dogmas vs doctrine" (online article), 2022, <https://oyp.org.sg/dogma-vs-doctrine/> (accessed on 15th July 2024).

⁹ N. LASH, "Dogmas and doctrinal progress", pp. 26-28.

Magisterium, in the Roman Catholic conception, is the sole authority for the teaching of the faith, an ecclesial institution identified with the Pope: “The task of interpreting the Word of God authentically has been entrusted solely to the Magisterium of the Church, that is, to the Pope and to the bishops in communion with him”¹⁰.

This “doctrinal development” is also conducted by the college of bishops in accord with the extraordinary Magisterium and by agreement with the universal body of the Church¹¹. The moderation, relationship, and practical action in this ministry would be done by the extraordinary Magisterium, which has the function of expressing the faith of the Roman Church in dogmatic truths. In reality, this function is mainly taken over by the Sovereign Pontiff¹².

This is also stated by C. Vollert, who points out that any act of possible “doctrinal development” is realised through the Magisterium of the Church, culminating in the Supreme Pontiff. The latter is considered empowered by divine illumination to read progressively and prophetically into the Church’s initial foundations of faith, in order to interpret and teach them to the faithful. God is taken to have willed that the Church delve into this comprehensive deposit of revealed truth, which she is called to translate into concepts, statements, and formulas through which His message may reach people¹³.

¹⁰ *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, Libreria Editrice Vaticana, Washington, 2000, p. 30.

¹¹ N. LASH, “Dogmas and doctrinal progress”, p. 26.

¹² *Ibidem*, p. 28.

¹³ C. VOLLERT, “Doctrinal development: a basic theory”, in *Proceedings of the Catholic Theological Society of America*, 12/2012, p. 70, <https://e-journals.bc.edu/index.php/ctsa/article/view/2437> (online free access, accessed on 15th July 2024).

Jaroslav Pelikan, in his work entitled *Development of Christian Doctrine*, provides a scholarly analysis of the various processes of "doctrinal development", starting from the tradition of the early Christian centuries and reaching up to the present day¹⁴. His research attempts to contextualise the debate on Newman's position developed by many others in the 1970s¹⁵. Pelikan gives a historical-patristic support for the theory of "doctrinal development". He expresses himself to be in favour of "doctrinal development", although he does not identify the full theological principles of such an undertaking. His presentation seems rather to seek to compare Protestantism and Roman Catholicism, borrowing and systematising ideas from the two traditions. For our presentation, the analysis of "doctrinal development" against the backdrop of the patristic approach is very useful, thanks to the development of doctrinal definitions and clarifications in the

¹⁴ Jaroslav PELIKAN, *Development of Christian Doctrine. Some Historical Prolegomena*, Yale University Press, New Haven & London, 1969, p. 168.

¹⁵ See: St John HENRY, "The authority of doctrinal development", in *Blackfriars*, vol. 36, no. 428/1955, p. 412-424; Henri de LUBAC, "The Problem of the Development of Dogma", in *Theology in History*, Ignatius Press, San Francisco, 1996, pp. 248-280; Nicholas LASH, "Faith and History: Some Reflections on Newman's Essay on the Development of Christian Doctrine", in *Irish Theological Quarterly*, 38/1971, pp. 224-241; George LINDBECK, "The Problem of Doctrinal Development and Contemporary Protestant Theology", in *Man as Man and Believer*, Edited by Edward SCHILLEBEECKX, Paulist Press, New York, 1967, pp.133-149; Gerard MCCARREN, "Are Newman's 'Tests' or 'Notes' of Genuine Doctrinal Development Useful Today?", in *Newman Studies Journal*, 2/2004, pp. 48-61; Paul MISNER, "Newman's Concept of Revelation and the Development of Doctrine", in *Heythrop Journal*, 11/1, 1971, p. 32-47; J. M. R. TILLARD, "Dogmatic Development and Koinonia", in *New Perspectives on Historical Theology: Essays in Memory of John Meyendorff*, Edited by Nassif BRADLEY, Eerdmans Pub Co, Grand Rapids, 1996, p. 172-185; Jan Hendrik WALGRAVE, *Unfolding Revelation: The Nature of Doctrinal Development*, Hutchinson, London, 1972, p. 418.

theology that appeared in the third and fourth centuries¹⁶. One can find possible arguments for supporting an Eastern Orthodox position on “doctrinal development”, but also for Orthodox-Catholic dialogue on the same topic¹⁷.

The Orthodox criticism of the above perspective is that the „doctrinal development” cannot be realised by the Magisterium or the Supreme Pontiff and cannot be exclusively a matter of rational understanding and of translation of concepts, statements and formulas. This is because the faith is understood to not be the responsibility of a single person (See: the Supreme Pontiff) or a technical service of the Church as Magisterium appears to be, but instead as that of the entire Church. Jesus Christ, the Holy Spirit, and the Church and her Saints are the pillars of Christians faith and of a dynamic and living relationship with God through the formulation of dogmas and, potentially, through „doctrinal development”.

3 “Doctrinal development” in the Eastern Orthodox Theology

3.1 Preliminary for a “doctrinal development”. A debate

The concept of “doctrinal development” implies a necessary hermeneutic from an Eastern Orthodox point of view, yet it has received surprisingly little attention from the theologians¹⁸. In

¹⁶ J. PELIKAN, *Development of Christian Doctrine...*, pp. 99-116.

¹⁷ See on this: Danile LATTIER, *John Henry Newman and Georges Florovsky: An Orthodox-Catholic dialogue on the Development of Doctrine*, Doctoral dissertation, Duquesne University, 2012, p. 323.

¹⁸ Vladimir SOLOVIEV, *Le Développement Dogmatique de L’ Église*, Desclée, Paris, 1991, p. 209; Aidan KIMEL, “Orthodoxy, Dogma, and the Neuralgic Question of Doctrinal Development” (online blog article), 2020,

general, the expression and the theological reality behind it have been repudiated in the Eastern Orthodoxy space on grounds of context and of inter-Christian confessional delimitations. More specifically, the expression has often been seen as referring to new and unfounded doctrinal inventions and novel reinterpretations of Revelation. In a study on the subject, Daniel Lattier explains the concept and examines whether there is a real rejection of "doctrinal development" in Orthodox theology or whether "doctrinal development" might, in fact, be aligned with its very nature¹⁹.

Meanwhile, there are other questions that have arisen and may yet arise from the analysis of such a concept: does it represent development towards a fullness/completion of Revelation? Is it a development of dogmatic knowledge? Is it a development of the dogma or a development of dogmatic understanding? Is it a development in the sense of the multiplication of dogmas, giving rise to new dogmas and teachings?

The research conducted by Lattier brings forward two perspectives, one in favour of "doctrinal development" and one against it. Among those in favour of Orthodox "doctrinal development"

<https://afkimel.wordpress.com/2020/07/19/orthodoxy-dogma-and-the-neuralgic-question-of-doctrinal-development/> (accessed on 15th July 2024); Freeman 2007; Pantelis KALAITZIDIS, "The Issue of Dogmatic Development in Contemporary Orthodox Theology", in Ioan TULCAN, Peter BOUTENEFF and Michael STAVROU (eds.), *Dogma and Terminology in the Orthodox Tradition Today: 4th International Symposium of Orthodox Dogmatic Theology, Sofia, 22-25 September, 2013*, Astra Museum Editions, Sibiu, 2015, pp. 157-169.; Dumitru STĂNILOAE, "The Orthodox conception of Tradition and the Development of Doctrine", in *Sobornost*, Series 5/9, 1969, pp. 658-659; Craig TRUGLIA, "Staniloae's Insight into Orthodox Doctrinal Development" (online blog article), 2021, <https://orthodoxchristiantheology.com/2021/03/20/staniloaes-insight-into-orthodox-doctrinal-development> (accessed on 15th July 2024).

¹⁹ Daniel LATTIER, "The Orthodox rejection of Doctrinal Development", in *Pro Ecclesia*, 20/4, pp. 389-410.

are George Florovsky and St Dumitru Stăniloae, whereas the opposite position, more widely held, is championed by Vladimir Lossky, John Behr, Olivier Clement, Andrew Louth, and John Romanides²⁰. As Daniel Lattier observes, the argument against doctrinal development is very abstract, being supported in particular by Lossky and Louth, who believe that Revelation is understood in “terms of quantity, not quality”²¹.

Following Lattier’s analysis, we also note that Lossky, for example, is rather polemical, outright rejecting a possible “doctrinal development”. Thus, his arguments respond to the possibility of introducing innovative aspects into the Church’s teaching of faith, as is the case in Roman Catholicism²². In this sense, he firmly concludes:

“But would one dare to speak, against all the evidence, of a collective progress in the knowledge of the Christian mystery, a progress which would be due to a 'dogmatic development' of the Church? Would this development have started in 'gospel infancy' to end today-after a 'patristic youth' and a 'scholastic maturity' - in the sad senility of the manuals of theology?”²³.

Louth likewise considers, in an article dedicated to Jaroslav Pelikan, that “doctrinal development” is outside the Eastern Orthodox creed. A possible development may come from the fact that we are called to develop through our understanding of the Scriptures:

“There is no development beyond seeking, again and again, to deepen our understanding of the Scriptures in

²⁰ See more on: P. KALAITZIDIS, “The Issue of Dogmatic Development...”, p. 15.

²¹ D. LATTIER, “The Orthodox rejection of Doctrinal Development”, p. 396.

²² V. LOSSKY, *In the Image and Likeness of God*, pp. 160-161.

²³ V. LOSSKY, *In the Image and Likeness of God*, p. 162.

the light of the mystery of Christ"²⁴. Likewise, John Behr considers that "from an Orthodox perspective there is no such thing as dogmatic development" because "a tradition with potential for growth ultimately undermines the Gospel itself; it would leave open the possibility for further revelation, and therefore the Gospel would no longer be sure and certain"²⁵.

George Florovsky also argued in the early years of his theological writing that:

"Dogma is by no means a new Revelation. Dogma is only a witness. The whole meaning of dogmatic definition consists of testifying to unchanging truth, truth which was revealed and has been preserved from the beginning. Thus, it is a total misunderstanding to speak of the development of dogma"²⁶.

Somewhat later, as Lattier notes²⁷, Florovsky accepts the prospect of "doctrinal development" without explicitly using the term. He considers that Revelation cannot be approached from an exaggeratedly incomprehensible perspective, which would lead to agnosticism. In doing so, he indirectly acknowledges that the mystery of divine Revelation, though complete and finished, is deepened, participated in, and appropriated through spiritual

²⁴ Andrew LOUTH, "Is Development of Doctrine a valid category for Orthodox Theology?", in *Orthodoxy and Western Culture: A Collection of Essays Honoring Jaroslav Pelikan on His Eightieth Birthday*, Edited by Valerie HOTCHKISS and Patrick HENRY, St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, Crestwood, New York, 2005, p. 61.

²⁵ John BEHR, "Scripture, the Gospel, and Orthodoxy", in *St. Vladimir's Theological Quarterly*, 43/1999, pp. 247-248.

²⁶ Geroges FLOROVSKY, *Creation and Redemption*, in *Collected Works*, Vol. 3, Belmont, Nordland, 1976, p. 30.

²⁷ D. LATTIER, "The Orthodox rejection of Doctrinal Development", pp. 399-400.

development. The latter can be understood as a deepening of individual and collective knowledge. “Doctrinal development” would therefore be related to the link between the integral character of revealed truth and its progressive unfolding in relation to human consciousness²⁸. On this basis one may reach the heights of Christian spiritual life, which St Sophrony Sakharov equates with the process of acquiring a “dogmatic consciousness”²⁹.

St Dumitru Stăniloae offers us an understanding similar to that of Florovsky, but articulated and presented explicitly in terms of “doctrinal development”. In his understanding, “doctrinal development” would be based on the fact that we are co-workers with God through His grace which He has given to us/ συνεργοῦντες τὴν χάριν τοῦ Θεοῦ δεξασθαι (II Cor 6:1). This is also true in the theological field. In this sense, as Dumitru Stăniloae points out, Tradition is not only the sacred archive that the Church constantly accesses and discovers, but it is also the incessant progress in the understanding of the content towards an eschatological point. This progress is a development and growth in the Same or *progressus in idem*, that is, progress in Revelation and in Jesus Christ³⁰. Therefore, “doctrinal development” - Stăniloae openly argues - is acceptable from the Orthodox point of view, being a *motus stabilis* or *status mobilis*. It is based on the becoming and spiritual growth of believers in Jesus Christ and on the

²⁸ Georges FLOROVSKY, *Ways of Russian Theology: Part Two*, in *Collected Works*, Vol. 6, Buecher Vertriebs Anstalt, Vaduz/Liechtenstein, 1987, p. 158.

²⁹ Sophrony SAKHAROV, *Saint Siluan the Athonite*, St. Vladimir’s Seminary Press, Crestwood, New York, 1991, p. 184.

³⁰ D. STĂNILOAE, “The Orthodox conception of Tradition...”, p. 658.

process of communicating faith actualised by the Church, a process of a doctrinal development in Church, accomplished in every historical context³¹.

As far as can be understood, this is not a matter of a development of dogmas in terms of their content, nor an arbitrary multiplication of the ultimate foundations of salvation. It is a development in terms of man's participation in the divine mysteries, a development that takes shape through what would be called "doctrinal definition" or the explication of dogmas. The definition and explanation of the faith, carried out by the Church in the Ecumenical Synods³², is also one of the highest offices and works of the Church. The doctrine of the faith is "given once for all to the saints" (Jude 1:3), however the dogmatic definition and articulation of the faith in dogmas has been accomplished over the course of centuries.

In fact, the doctrinal articulation of the Niceno-Constantinopolitan Creed, was finalised in its present form in the 4th century. The dogmatic horos/definition of Chalcedon (451) followed a process of clarification of the faith, which ended only in the 5th century. Indeed, there are a plethora of such examples³³. Thus, on the question of whether the Church is capable of historical development, also understood as "doctrinal development", Sergei Bulgakov believes that the facts speak for themselves: "It is obvious that dogmas are developed in history and that, consequently, the Church knows a development of dogma"³⁴. He argues that

³¹ *Ibidem.*, pp. 658-659; C. TRUGLIA, "Staniloae's Insight into Orthodox Doctrinal Development".

³² Sergius BULGAKOV, *The Orthodox Church*, St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, Crestwood, New York, 1988, p. 28.

³³ Daniel CLENDENIN, *Eastern Orthodox Theology*, Baker Academic, Michigan, 2003, p. 143.

³⁴ S. BULGAKOV, *The Orthodox Church*, p. 30.

“the primitive Church, compared to the epoch of the Ecumenical Council, was comparatively adogmatic, while the contemporary Church is richer and fuller of dogmatic 'content' than the ancient Church. But on the other hand, the Holy Spirit, who renews the Church and the external life which He gives us, knows neither diminution nor increase, and so the Church is always identical with itself, without evolutionary change”³⁵.

Furthermore, the contemporary Orthodox researcher and interpreter of G. Florovsky theology, Paul Gavriyuk rejects a “theology of repetition”³⁶. Likewise, over the course of the last few decades there have been several theologians who legitimised the historical research of dogma based on a positive understanding of „doctrinal development”, such as Stylianos Papadopoulos, Petros Vassileiadis, Metropolitan John Zizioulas³⁷.

The dogmatic content of the Church does not increase, nor does it reform itself, and it is not completed by additions. It is a complete divine content given to the Church in Jesus Christ and shared with the faithful in the Holy Spirit. Growth and “doctrinal development” would be linked to man’s understanding of revealed truths. The consequences of this growth are part of what J. Stamoolis would call the “dogmatic formulations” accepted by the Church towards the end of the last century: “There are orthodox dogmatic formulations which arose in response to external theological challenges”³⁸. This can be achieved, as Daniel Clendenin suggests, under the following conditions: in accordance with the evangelical and biblical didactic, but also with the

³⁵ *Ibidem*, p. 31.

³⁶ Paul L. GAVRILYUK, *Georges Florovsky and the Russian religious renaissance*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 2014, p. 269

³⁷ See: P. KALAITZIDIS, “The Issue of Dogmatic Development...”, p. 159.

³⁸ John STAMOOLIS, *Eastern Orthodox Mission Theology Today*, Wipf and Stock Publishers, Oregon/USA, 2001, p. 17.

teaching and experience of the Apostles; with reference to the unity of faith of the Holy Fathers of all times; in accordance with the faith of the Church of all times; following the process of reception of doctrinal definitions by the members of the Church³⁹. In other words, the answer to the question of this paper is positive. Thus, the possible principles of an Orthodox "doctrinal development" shall be considered below.

First it is important to note that dogma isn't merely a theoretical principle which must be applied practically, but it represents and therefore is the righteous life, or the evaluation of faith in accordance with the criteria of the divine life confessed by its bearers - the saints. Since the life of the Church is not something static, but rather a dynamic course towards the future, developed throughout history, the dogmas of faith are determined in terms of their explanation and appropriation of the historical course of the Church. Dogmas appear at first as simple proposals of the content of the Church's faith, then they are received and assumed by the Church as decisions or definitions (ὅρος/horos) of the absolute truths of the Christian confession. Doctrinal development refers both to the deepening of the Church's understanding of the mystery of faith, and also to its explanation and formulation according to the needs of each historical context.

3.2. The distinction between the teaching of faith, theology, and dogmatic definitions in the context of "doctrinal development"

In the broader context of "doctrinal development", understood as the growth and manifestation of man's faith, Dumitru Stăniloae distinguishes between church teaching, theology, and dogmatic definitions or dogmas themselves. Even though Orthodox

³⁹ D. CLENDENIN, *Eastern Orthodox Theology*, pp. 144-145.

theology doesn't make a difference between dogmas/dogmatic and doctrine/doctrinal, there is "a distinction between ecclesiastical teaching with a binding and permanent character and theology which may contain explanations related to a certain time and which may have had a contemporaneous circulation in the Church at a certain time"⁴⁰. Theology is considered the continuous, general and contextual reflection on the content of the Revelation inherited through the Apostolic Tradition. Church teaching is the permanent structure of presentation of Revelation, with unchangeable authority; dogmatic definitions are the foundations of faith, i.e. permanent Church teaching, developed and defined in Ecumenical Synods and received by the Church, i.e. dogmas⁴¹.

From this perspective, as mentioned above, a distinction is made between "theological development" and "doctrinal development". "Doctrinal development" can be achieved through doctrinal definitions that make the foundations of faith even more explicit. It can be understood as a theological explanation which is linked to a specific time and which may enjoy circulation in the Church in a particular context. Theological developments may or may not be accepted later by the Church, and may or may not enter into the Church's authoritative and permanent teaching. The "doctrinal development" achieved through more profound dogmatic definitions and subsequently accepted by the Church enters directly into the framework of the teaching of faith obligatory for salvation.

Henceforth, every "doctrinal development", being a development of dogmatic faith, is also a "theological development", but not every "theological development" is also a "doctrinal development". The theology of the various aspects of the faith acquires

⁴⁰ D. STĂNILOAE, "The Orthodox conception of Tradition...", p. 70-71.

⁴¹ *Ibidem*.

dogmatic authority through a process of dogmatic definition, which necessarily involves reflection, critical evaluation of the proposed theological realities, dogmatic definition in an Ecumenical Council (the highest authority in matters of defining the faith), and acceptance by the Church. Hence, "theological development" is the premise of any "doctrinal development" of the faith.

As for the method of doctrinal development, it is organic, integral, personal, distinctive, and unitive. It presupposes and involves the following: a. Persons - man as person and God as Person; b. the integrality/integrity of Revelation as the divine action of the extension of Jesus Christ in man; c. the personal and communitarian assimilation of Revelation in the space and Body of the Church.

The method is *Christological-pneumatological and ecclesial-sacramental* in substance, and traditional, contextual, and hermeneutical-critical in form and structure. Development can only be achieved through growth in Jesus Christ and in the grace of the Holy Spirit and its expression, in relation to the realities of Tradition, context, and a current and prophetic-critical approach.

A direct consequence on the formal level of "doctrinal development" is the development of doctrinal terminology. Through new words, metaphors, terms and formulas, the Christian spirit seeks to highlight new aspects contained in the mystery of salvation, insufficiently highlighted by the old formulas. According to St Dumitru Stăniloae's observation, new terms are used to show that, hidden in the content of the Christian mystery, are the answers to some new or more nuanced questions that believers had previously not experienced the need to ask⁴².

⁴² Dumitru STĂNILOAE, "Concepția ortodoxă despre Tradiție și dezvoltarea doctrinei", in *Ortodoxia*, 1/1975, p. 12.

3.3 *“Doctrinal development” as theological participation in the mystery of divine Revelation*

The first principle of a “doctrinal development” is the connection between faith and the mystery of divine Revelation. In St Dumitru Stăniloae's thought, for example, “doctrinal development” is not a simple reformulation of the expressions of faith, an external renewal or an updating of theological language and discourse to the contemporary conditions of the faithful. Nor is it an evolution or a process of producing new dogmas outside the information provided by Revelation. Rather, “doctrinal development” is the consequence of a development of man's relationship with God through Revelation. If we recognise a progress of the human spirit towards the more proper condition of the Kingdom of God and a progress in the deepening of man's understanding of Revelation, then, we also recognise the need for new ways of expressing the salvific ministry (*oikonomia*) of Jesus Christ. Hence, “doctrinal development” could be counted - St Dumitru Stăniloae points out - as an organic process of the Church's growth in the mystery of divine economy and Revelation, as “a plant grows from its seed”⁴³.

If “doctrinal development” is fundamentally linked to the mystery of Revelation, then support for it ought to be found in the Holy Scripture. From the scriptural texts, we understand that Revelation and its definition in dogma is linked to the mystery of simultaneously seeing and believing (I Tim 3:16) in the Word of God made flesh/*σὰρξ ἐγένετο* (1:14). We also understand that we are called to work to increase in faith/*ὑπεραυξάνει ἡ πίστις* (II Thess 1:3), to keep the faith/*τὴν πίστιν τητήρηκα* (II Tim 4, 7) and to build ourselves up in faith/*πίστει ἐποικοδομοῦντες ἑαυτοὺς* (Jude 1, 20), which is not a blind and undefined reality,

⁴³ *Idem.*, “The Orthodox conception of Tradition...”, p. 660.

but it is founded on sight and revelation experienced by man. Jesus Christ reveals Himself to us as God and Man and calls us to faith/ ἔχετε πίστιν Θεοῦ (Mk 11:22). The Apostles receive this faith as a gift through the grace of Jesus Christ/ ὑπερεπλέονασε δὲ ἡ χάρις μετὰ πίστεως ἐν Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ (I Tim 1:14), and then they turn to Jesus Christ to increase (πρόσθετε) their faith (Lk 17:5). Thus, faith is founded on the Revelation received by the Holy Apostles (Mt 16:17) through seeing the Son of God in His Body, and it develops to the extent that it is mobilised towards acquiring the righteousness and holiness of God: "For therein is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith/ ἐκ πίστεως εἰς πίστιν" (Rom 1:17). This journey towards the "righteousness of God" from faith to faith/ ἐκ πίστεως εἰς πίστιν could also ground the process of "doctrinal development".

Subsequently, St Dumitru Stăniloae points out that dogmas and Orthodox faith are *living realities*, rather than fixed and restrictive limitations on the human spirit and intellect. Faith does not mean the blind acceptance of preconceived and intellectually levelling concepts. "Doctrinal development" is based on the assumption and experience of Christian dogmas in a personal and communitarian content through the spiritual growth that is assured by their very content. Man and the ecclesial community grow in "Spirit and in Truth" (Jn 4:24) in the revealed divine mysteries which ensure eternal spiritual freedom (Jn 8:32). Apart from this freedom and the living character of the dogmas, one cannot speak of a dynamic of faith and life of the Church. Because dogmas and, implicitly, faith are about the person, and not only about concepts and ideas, the process and mystery of "doctrinal development" cannot be an indoctrination or an adaptation/reformation of the faith to the needs of people⁴⁴.

⁴⁴ *Ibidem.*, p. 56.

Thus, by their constitution, Christian dogmas are an assurance of the true freedom of the believer as a person. Dogmas are the definition of immutable divine realities. Therefore, their assumption leads man to transcend his natural limits. Christian dogmas underpin the spiritual development of the one who believes in freedom, because they are the expression of his communion with God as a Person. On the basis of interpersonal communion, one enters into the realm of freedom, equivalent to the domain of faith⁴⁵. So, one might say that freedom comes from faith and from growth in faith, i.e from “doctrinal development”.

Therefore, any process of “doctrinal development” also depends on the inner condition of the man at the time of his encounter with the Revelation of God. Starting from this encounter, man grows during his temporal life until completion, and then infinitely in eternity⁴⁶. In the temporal framework, this growth consists of the development, increasing, and intensification of the faith, but also that of the condition of the human being, determined by historical factors. It is a development understood as a transition and actualization, as St Sophrony explains, from a potential state to a state of “pure reality”⁴⁷. It is the transition from understanding and uncertain knowledge – for now we “see as through the mirror, darkly” – to knowledge and vision “face to face/ πρόσωπον πρὸς πρόσωπον” (I Cor 13:12). The update of faith on account of Revelation is meant to help us grow until faith leads us to “see God as He is” (I In 3:2). Following this journey, overcoming the body, death, and time in the perspective of eternity, faith, as far as it is understood, will cease, along with “doctrinal development”. This is because at the final, personal, and

⁴⁵ *Ibidem.*, p. 56.

⁴⁶ *Ibidem.*, p. 18.

⁴⁷ Sophrony SACHAROV, *Truth and Life*, Stavropegic Monastery of St John the Baptist, Essex, 2016, p. 38.

temporal encounter with God, when man sees Him in His glory, he will no longer need further clarification and understanding⁴⁸. In accordance with the interpretation of some of the relevant aspects of anthropology and cosmology as they emerge from divine Revelation, "doctrinal development" could also be considered a development in terms of the exploration of the mystery of man and creation. Man and the cosmos are built by God and their existence is actively and dynamically maintained and governed by Him. On this basis, St. Dumitru Stăniloae speaks of a "just development of the cosmos and man"⁴⁹, not an endless anthropogenic and cosmogonic process, but a spiritual development of both in relation to God, the Holy Trinity. This is a mystery of God's ongoing work (In 5:17) on the world and on man, but also man's response to this work, an act which also implies its development. Consequently, we can also speak of a development of man's capacity to comprehend divine Revelation and, implicitly, of his understanding of his condition and conscience as a theological and doctrinal act. "Doctrinal development", therefore, in relation to man and the cosmos could be achieved through the participation of the human being in what St Dumitru Stăniloae calls "the development of the plasticised/materialised rationality" of creation and man⁵⁰.

In his conception, everything created develops in the perspective of attunement and collaboration with the Divine Logos in the world and in man. This is also equivalent to a growth and activation of man's potentialities in relation to himself, the world, and God. This growth and actualization of man's personal nature also affects his doctrinal condition and understanding.

⁴⁸ *Ibidem.*, p. 30.

⁴⁹ D. STĂNILOAE, *The Experience of God*, Holy Cross Orthodox Press, vol. I, Brookline, 1998, p. 2.

⁵⁰ *Idem.*, *The Experience of God*, vol. II, p. 68.

Thus, “doctrinal development” takes place in accordance with the “saeculum” on theological grounds. The world contains virtualities that have been activated by the important moments of the divine economy, especially through the Crucifixion, Resurrection, and Ascension into Heaven⁵¹. “Doctrinal development” is thus the consequence of the openness of theology to the world and to man, sustained by the Revelation of Jesus Christ as it has been organically assimilated in the world and it constitutes a source of growth in a spiritual, cultural, theological, and existential sense⁵².

As a consequence of human development, the development of human sciences offers both challenges and opportunities to investigate the mystery of faith and Revelation manifested both through man in his formation and through the cosmos in the majesty of its created aspects⁵³. Delving into the mystery of creation should simultaneously be an exploration into the mystery of faith and, as a consequence, of “doctrinal development”.

3.4. “Doctrinal development” as a relationship with Jesus Christ and Holy Spirit in Church’s life

As can be grasped, “doctrinal development” is not a mere intellectual work. The effort to unravel the mysteries of Revelation through study is only one aspect of it. The mystery of Divine Revelation is not imparted at the end of a simple process of scientific research, with the implicit limits of such an endeavour. Divine Revelation presupposes living with Jesus Christ and building a

⁵¹ *Idem.*, *The Experience of God*, vol. I, pp. 90-91.

⁵² *Ibidem.*

⁵³ John F. HAUGHT, *Science and Faith. A New Introduction*, Paulist Press, New York, 2012.

relationship with Him. Having completed His salvific and economic work through the Crucifixion, Resurrection, and Ascension, Christ continues His work of saving people in and through the Church. Thus, Revelation concerns the coming of Jesus Christ to people to save them⁵⁴. From this perspective, "doctrinal development", beyond its scientific framework, is more the consequence of personal participation in the economic work of Jesus Christ executed in the Church through the Holy Spirit over the ages; it is the communion of Jesus Christ, present in His Church, with the members of the ecclesial community.

Therefore, "doctrinal development" is not required by the incomplete or potential content of revealed faith, but by the development of the human person in relation to the divine-human ministry and Person of Jesus Christ. Due to this, St Dumitru Stăniloae stresses that *Christian dogmas constitute a unity* in Jesus Christ. Thereupon, assuming them constitutes man's participation in the divine infinity in Jesus Christ. This presupposes a development of believers in the perspective of salvation and *theosis* and, implicitly, of union and communion with Jesus Christ⁵⁵. On this basis, "doctrinal development" can be considered as the expression of the reality, ministry, and presence of Jesus Christ in the perspective of His communion with people.

As we have mentioned, "doctrinal development" is based on the principle of Revelation, but, ultimately, it could be based on the Christological principles of "hypostatic union" and the "communication of the appropriations". Until the attainment of the *theosis* of every human being, on account of the "hypostatic union" as a communication of the divine and human natures in Jesus

⁵⁴ Antoine Costa de BEAUREGRAD, Dumitru STĂNILOAE, *Mica Dogmatică Vorbită*, Deisis, Sibiu, 1995, pp. 131-132.

⁵⁵ *Ibidem*

Christ, one can speak of an actualization, growth, and development of humanity towards a transformation into the divine. There exists also the possibility of a “doctrinal development” as a part of the plan of human development as a result of the communication of the appropriations of the two natures in the common *Hypostasis of Jesus Christ*, a reality sacramentally transferred to the Church and to the faithful through the Holy Mysteries. Thus, just as the human nature in Christ “grew with wisdom and age and grace” (Lk 2:40), so too man, though united with Jesus Christ, grows as a result of the actualization of the communication of the gifts of Jesus Christ, depending on the capacity of each person. This growth also takes place in terms of the exploration of the depths of the mystery of Jesus Christ, expressed and defined in the plan of a “doctrinal development”.

The same hermeneutic could be applied to the connection between *hypostatic union* and “doctrinal development”. From this perspective we can understand how man grows on the hypostatic level. By actualizing this mystery of Jesus Christ on the personal level the believer passes, as St. Sophrony argues, from the person as a potentiality to the person fully activated in his potentialities⁵⁶. This process of actualization of man as a person could also be attributed to a “doctrinal development” through which the mysteries of God, man, and the whole world are increasingly revealed. The culmination of this process, i.e. the future deification of the human being, goes beyond doctrinal development.

Under those circumstances, “doctrinal development” cannot take place apart from the ministry and presence of Jesus Christ and Holy Spirit in the Church. The activation of divine Revelation in its various human and historical contexts depends on an alternation of the divine works of the Holy Spirit with those of the

⁵⁶ Sophrony SACHAROV, *We Shall See Him as He is.*, Stavropegic Monastery of St John the Baptist, Essex, 2004, pp. 195-196.

Son, Who works sacramentally in His Church. Without the link between the *Word of God* and the *Holy Spirit*, one falls into individualistic subjectivism both at the level of Christian living, but also at the level of theology and that of "doctrinal development". Revelation can only be shared through the Holy Spirit Who makes the Son evident in His work. Therefore, "doctrinal development" presupposes the manifestation of the Holy Spirit Who makes it possible - through the uncreated energies - to discern, participate in, and assimilate the Revelation of the Logos and, through Him, that of God the Holy Trinity⁵⁷. This process begins at the Resurrection, is activated in the first apostolic community at Pentecost, and is actualized in the Church throughout the ages in the perspective of the Second Coming of Jesus Christ.

"Doctrinal development" as an actualisation and exploration of the mystery of Revelation in the Church through the Holy Spirit is therefore based on the Apostolic Tradition and Doctrine founded at the Resurrection and Ascension of Christ and sealed at the outpouring of the Holy Spirit. For example, the "doctrinal development" of the teaching that Christ is Head of the Church is a development of the Holy Fathers who deepened the doctrinal teaching on the Incarnation of the Son of God: "The Holy Fathers developed the teaching that Christ is the head of the Church; they saw the Church as founded on the fact that through the Incarnation, Christ assumed the fruition of our nature"⁵⁸.

"Doctrinal development" is also about continuous development of one's participation in the mystery of the Holy Spirit and the divine works. Dumitru Stăniloae, following Saint Gregory Pala-

⁵⁷ D. STĂNILOAE, "Sfântul Duh în Revelație și Biserică", in *Ortodoxia*, 2/1974, p. 217, 232, 223.

⁵⁸ *Idem.*, *The Experience of God*, vol. IV, pp. 16-17.

mas, spoke of a progressive outflow and springing of divine energies⁵⁹. Thus, Orthodoxy, through its teaching on *uncreated energies*, has laid a new foundation which also represents a new vision of God's relationship with creation. This doctrinal awareness has thus developed with new theological perspectives on the understanding of divine Revelation, but also in terms of new expressions and terms of expression for this experience⁶⁰. The living and dynamic character of these works is expressed in the progress of knowledge and the relationship of communion with God.

In accordance with Pauline theology, it is often spoken of a growth and building up of the Church in a human perspective (I Cor 14:12). The Church grows, is sacramentally actualized, and is filled by Jesus Christ in its human members. This highlights the reality of the wholeness/catholicity⁶¹ of the Church, which is also its ultimate purpose. It will grow in God, and He, "as all fullness" (Eph 3:19), will be "the fullness of Him who fills all in all" (Eph 1:23). This journey of growth of the Church brings with it both a growth and unity of faith and a fullness and unity among all the members of the Church in the knowledge of the Son of God⁶².

The ecclesiological principle stated above is also related to Christian dogmas which can be considered more than mere theoretical statements. They are "the interpretation of Christ's reality as this reality is being extended into the lives of human beings"⁶³. This act of hermeneutics, communion and growth in Jesus Christ takes place in the Church: "The Church causes her teaching to

⁵⁹ *Idem.*, "Concepția ortodoxă despre Tradiție...", p. 13.

⁶⁰ *Ibidem.*

⁶¹ Ioan I. Ică, *Canonul Ortodoxiei*, Deisis, Sibiu, 2008. p. 6.

⁶² D. STĂNILOAE, *The Experience of God*, vol. IV, p. 86.

⁶³ *Idem.*, *The Experience of God*, vol. I, p. 68.

grow, while at the same time preserving the fundamental terms of her unvarying doctrine"⁶⁴.

"Doctrinal development" can thus be sustained in accordance with the catholic/whole/universal faith of the Church and its teaching can be enriched by the Saints of the Church. Thus, the Church can be counted as the deified Mystical Body of Jesus Christ extended in humanity or, as Saint Săniloae puts it, "the descent of Holy Spirit initiates the indwelling of Christ's deified body in human beings and thereby initiates the Church as well"⁶⁵. The transmission of life and dogmatic faith is realised in this process as ministry, mystery, and gift, a divine dynamic that could ground "doctrinal development". It is the sacramental transmission of faith/dogmas St. Basil the Great speaks about: „Dogmas have been preserved in the Church [...] transmitted to us sacramentally/τῶν ἐν τῇ Ἐκκλησίᾳ πεφυλαγμένων δογμάτων [...] διαδοθέντα ἡμῖν ἐν μυστηρίῳ παραδεξάμεθα"⁶⁶. This process is supported by the sacramental life of the Church, which leads the faithful towards an enrichment in learning through theology, in direct connection with the spiritual development of each generation.

Therefore, according to Orthodox theology, we are dealing with a "doctrinal development" of Tradition. It is understood as a reflection of the content of the faith, through the witness and experience of Jesus Christ and His Revelation in the Church from the Apostles to us, with the eschatological reality as its target⁶⁷. A "doctrinal development" was also achieved by the Apostles, who did not merely transmit information about divine Revelation, but

⁶⁴ *Ibidem.*, p. 85.

⁶⁵ *Idem.*, *The Experience of God*, vol. IV, p. 2.

⁶⁶ BASILII CAEZAREAE CAPADOCIAE ACHIEPISCOPII, *Liber de Spiritu Sacto*, in *Patrologia Graeca*, Edited by J. P. MIGNE, Paris, 1857, Vol. 32, col. 188A.

⁶⁷ D. SĂNILOAE, "Concepția ortodoxă despre Tradiție...", p. 11.

handed it on in its fullness after having experienced it in the Church through the ministry of the Holy Spirit. They lived it, developed it, amplified it and expounded it doctrinally (see Apostolic Council of Jerusalem, Acts 15:2-29) to the people of their time, especially in the liturgical setting, by teaching the mystery of the risen Jesus Christ⁶⁸.

Theology, understood specifically as “doctrinal development”, is determined by the *reception of apostolicity*. It is fulfilled to the extent that it is part of the tradition that starts from the apostolic experience and then opens prophetically and eschatologically to the mystery of the future age. The “doctrinal development” must be organically linked to the life of the Church and grow together towards the Kingdom of God. It is bound to be apostolic, encompassing in every age the complete witness to Jesus Christ, but it must also be eschatological, leading the Church towards Jesus Christ at the end of the ages. The prophetic and dynamic openness of “doctrinal development” cannot be lacking, but it must not imply a future step higher than Revelation in Christ. It must explain and unravel - through His historically realised economy - the mystery of Jesus Christ at His Second Revelation⁶⁹.

Thus, “doctrinal development” has and continues to be accomplished under the following conditions: 1. In accordance with the fullness of Revelation in Jesus Christ, preserved in Scripture and Tradition and lived continuously in the Church; 2. In view of the responsibility towards the faithful of a particular historical time, continually ensuring their openness to the eschatological future⁷⁰.

Theology, also understood as “doctrinal development”, is the sharing, assumption and progress in the full Revelation in Jesus

⁶⁸ *Idem.*, *The Experience of God*, vol. I, p. 83.

⁶⁹ *Ibidem.*, p. 91.

⁷⁰ *Ibidem.*, p. 89.

Christ. It is enshrined in Scripture and Tradition and experienced "mystagogically", or sacramentally, in the Church of Christ. Removed from this dimension, theology, or any act of teaching the faith, "is inadequate and to a great extent useless, at times even damaging to the Church and to the faithful"⁷¹.

Conclusions

Summarising the above, we consider that one can speak of an Eastern Orthodox "doctrinal development" with the following very important qualifications: a. It is theologically grounded in the organic plan of assuming and actualizing the full and complete Revelation in Jesus Christ; b. It is based on concrete doctrinal foundations: Jesus Christ, the Holy Spirit, the Church, the Holy Mysteries, etc; c. There are requirements linked to the form of the process of doctrinal definition and development; d. It is a development in the sense of defining the faith in new contexts and different forms with the purpose of teaching revealed truth to the members of the Church.

Thus "doctrinal development" cannot be understood as a development of original ideas and concepts and it does not imply new dogmas. It does not have a subjective character, nor does it concern the expression of hierarchical authority isolated from the Church. It also cannot be understood as an exclusively intellectual-scientific process.

As mentioned above, we also note the importance of several further requirements: a. Conformity with the Doctrine of the Apostles; b. Consensus with the experience and faith of the Holy Fa-

⁷¹ *Ibidem.*

thers from time immemorial; c. Agreement with the Sovereign/Catholic faith of the Church; d. The concretization of the process of “doctrinal development” through in-depth doctrinal definitions, carried out in an Ecumenical Council; e. Assuming a dynamic perspective with regard to the new doctrinal notions and terms; f. Implicit delineation of heresy and explicit hermeneutics of the faith; g. Reception of doctrinal definitions by Church members.

Since our topic has been generally focused on the analysis of the possibility of an authentically Orthodox “doctrinal development”, these aspects have been mentioned directly or indirectly. Their analysis could be the subject of further research examining the principles on the basis of which an Orthodox “doctrinal development” can be coordinated, checked, and actualised, as well as the theological methodology of this process.

In order to answer the questions at the beginning of this analysis we highlight the following: dogmas are topical because they communicate Jesus Christ “yesterday and today and forever the same” (Heb 13:8), alive and active beyond the ages; there is an evolution of the number of dogmas in the sense of dynamically defining the foundations of the Church's faith and from the perspective of exploring their content, but not *new dogmas* that contradict and “complete” divine Revelation; dogmatics is an “objective science” through faith that mediates participation in the mystery of God.

Thus, “doctrinal development” does not mean an arbitrary multiplication of dogmas as an effort to reform the Church, but it presupposes an exploration by the Church into the divine mysteries experienced on a personal and communitarian level within it. Removed from this work, the members of the Church would experience no growth and edification in the mystery of faith. How-

ever, through it, they have done so across history on their journey towards the Kingdom of God without interruption since the Apostolic times.

As for the empirical impact of this research, it can have the following consequences for Orthodox Christian life, but also for ecumenical dialogue:

1. The doctrinal development offers, pastorally, the same new divine life and updated Christian message;
2. It ensures the bolstering of the faith of Orthodox Christians by responding to their need for a deeper relationship with the Source of faith, Jesus Christ;
3. It keeps the Christian life open to eschatological horizons and prevents it from being reduced to a simple ideological doctrine;
4. It protects the immediate life of Christians from harmful moralism and legalism in that it does not stick to simple principles and norms of faith, but gives rise to a development of the relationship between man and Jesus Christ through development in faith;
5. It thereby prevents Christian dogmas from degenerating into dogmatism;
6. It responds and offers the perspective of ecumenical dialogue to those who consider the Orthodox Christian Doctrine a simple scheme of dead thinking, devoid of dynamism and intellectual, spiritual, and inter-human development.

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