

Living Tradition: the rediscovery of worship as the place of ethics in contemporary theology

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Abstract: The present research will summarize the main foundations of the Orthodox faith, in the view of the most prominent representatives of the neo-patristic movement², but highlighting an aspect that researchers have not brought to light: the moral aspect. The main purpose of the study is twofold: on the one hand, the "neo-patristic synthesis" bequeathed by the theologians mentioned above - and in particular by Dumitru Stăniloae - represents a model of theologizing in theological schools; on the other hand, all Church institutions should be part of a dynamic process of renewal in the sense of the fundamental principles of biblical-patristic theology, for only in this way can it remain alive and working in the difficult context of today's post-modern world.

Keywords: Liturgy, Tradition, neopatristic movement, worship,

Introduction

The discrepancy between "school" theology and biblical-patristic inspired theology has already become a landmark of current Orthodox theology. Promoted as an imperative desideratum, the Orthodox "neo-patristic synthesis" - with Georges Florovsky, Vladimir Lossky, Dumitru Stăniloae, etc. as its main representatives - represents not only a model for the current generations of theologians, but also the paradigmatic line necessary to avoid some of the drifts that characterised a certain previous way of doing theology, with some of the most harmful effects in ecclesial life:

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² See Ciprian Iulian Toroczkaï, *Tradiția patristică în modernitate: Ecleziologia Părintelui Georges V. Florovsky (1893-1979) în contextul mișcării neopatristice contemporane*, Ediția a II-a, revăzută și adăugită, Astra Museum/Andreiană, Sibiu, 2012.

abstract dogmatism, formalistic or magical ritualism, canonical disorder, absence of the Bible, and so on³.

The genesis of innovative theological thinking in 20th century Orthodoxy took place in the 1930s in Paris and Sibiu. In opposition to the speculative theology of Fr. S. Bulgakov, a promoter of sophiology, Fr. G. Florovsky openly advocated a neo-patristic revival and denounced the Western-inspired "pseudo-morphoses" of Orthodoxy. At the same time, in Romanian theology, Fr D. Stăniloae rediscovered Palamite neo-patristicism as a response to overcoming scholasticism through the synthesis of dogmatics (*Dogmatic Orthodox Theology*, 3 vols., 1978), mysticism (*Orthodox Spirituality*, 1981) and Liturgy (*Spirituality and Communion in the Orthodox Liturgy*, 1986). "The overcoming of scholasticism - the answer given over the years to Andrusots' scholastic Dogmatics and Symbolism - was operated here in a double sense: its abstract intellectualism was replaced by the criterion of mystical experience of the Isiaistic type, and Thomistic essentialism (and modern individualism) was opposed by communitarian and energetic personalism as a model of Trinitarian and ecclesial communion between God, man and creation: implicit in dogma, this communion is concretely realized in the double experience of the descent of God and the personal-mystical and communitarian-liturgical ascent of the believer and the Church towards the Kingdom of the Holy Trinity"⁴.

The present research will summarize the main foundations of the Orthodox faith, in the view of the most prominent representatives of the neo-patristic movement⁵, but highlighting an aspect that researchers have not brought to light: the moral aspect. The main purpose of the study is twofold: on the one hand, the "neo-patristic synthesis" bequeathed by the theologians mentioned above - and in particular by Dumitru Stăniloae - represents a model of theologizing in theological schools; on the other hand, all Church institutions should be part of a dynamic process of renewal in the sense of the fundamental principles of biblical-patristic theology, for only in this way can it remain alive and working in the difficult context of today's post-modern world.

Relevance of the theme

The separation between different theological disciplines, such as between the "practical" and the "theoretical", is a symptom of a certain type of theology, which we

³ Ioan I. Ică jr. *Canonul Ortodoxiei* vol. 1: *Canonul apostolic al primelor secole*, Deisis/Stavropoleos, Sibiu, 2008, p. 39-40.

⁴ *Ibidem*, p. 43.

⁵ See Ciprian Iulian Toroczka, „The Orthodox Neo-patristic Movements as Renewal of Contemporary Orthodox Theology: An Overview”, *Review of Ecumenical Studies – Sibiu* 7 (2015), nr. 1, p. 94-115; Idem, „The Relevance of Orthodox Spirituality for the Ecumenical Movement”, in Pantelis Kalaitzidis et al. (eds.), *Orthodox Handbook on Ecumenism*, Regnum Books International, Oxford, 2013, p. 615-620.

could call "school" theology. This type of theology is also reflected in the consideration of Liturgy as distinct from Dogmatics or Morals. Thus, we are told in a textbook on Liturgics: as a discipline within theological education, it is relatively new, dating from the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries⁶; being part of the practical section of Theology, it is closely related to disciplines such as Catechetics, Homiletics, Church Law and Pastoral Care. At the same time, the author of the textbook recognized that, having not only a practical side, but also a historical, exegetical, doctrinal, etc. side, Liturgica also has relations and many points of contact with some disciplines in the systematic and historical section of Theology. "Thus, for example, Liturgy is most closely connected with Dogmatics and Morals, because ... worship is deeply rooted in the teaching of faith and in Christian religious life, its external forms being, in most cases, no more than the practical transposition of dogmatic ideas and rules of moral life"⁷. In addition, "many issues or chapters of study are common to all three disciplines. For example, the study of the Sacraments is also dealt with in Dogmatics and Liturgy and Morals. But each of these disciplines treats the respective issues from a different point of view. Dogmatics treats them from the point of view of doctrine or the teaching of faith; Morals, from the point of view of the moral laws or the effects of the sacraments in religious life, and Liturgy treats them as units of divine worship, dealing with the ordinance or ritual of their celebration"⁸.

When he wrote these, Prof. Ene Braniște was echoing a plethora of Orthodox authors whose vision was tributary to the "school" way of theologizing mentioned above. At the same time, however, linked in particular to the "Eucharistic ecclesiology" movement (whose main representatives were C. Kern, N. Afanasiev and A. Schmemman), a current of rediscovery of the biblical-patristic vision of the "place" of worship in the Church, i.e. the full conviction that the Holy Liturgy is at the heart of Orthodox liturgical worship, is found in Orthodox theology. In this regard, one author writes: "The Eucharistic Liturgy is the most important but also the most complex service of Orthodox Christian worship. It concentrates within itself the whole theology and life (experience) of the Church and shares it unceasingly with her sons and daughters, who live and witness their 'discipleship' in Christ. Since the beginning of Christianity, the liturgy has been the heart of the Church, the centre of gravity of her life. All the other sacraments and services were organically linked to the Liturgy, and therefore liturgical knowledge and experience should not normally be the object of academic study, but a

⁶ Ene Braniște, *Liturgica Generală, cu noțiuni de artă bisericească, arhitectură și pictură creștină*, ediția a II-a, EIBMBOR, București, 1993, p. 13.

⁷ *Ibidem*, p. 13-14.

⁸ *Ibidem*, p. 14.

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concern ... of every Christian"⁹. Bearing the sign of the divine pronomi, the Liturgy possesses a universal, all-encompassing meaning; it represents the meaning of creation seen and unseen: "Like the whole theology of the Church, the Liturgy has nothing incomprehensible and meaningless in it, but, on the contrary, here all the existential reasons and meanings of mankind and of the whole cosmos are concentrated and revealed in a mysterious way"¹⁰.

Research status

The above statements summarize the Orthodox view of the Holy Liturgy. It is also found in other Romanian Orthodox liturgists, such as Fathers Professor Ene Braniște¹¹, Petre Vintilescu¹², or the "patriarch of Romanian theology", Father Dumitru Stăniloae¹³. (Nor should Andrei Scrima be forgotten¹⁴.) Also the translation of other Greek or Russian Orthodox theologians, such as Fr. Alexander Schmemmann¹⁵, demonstrates the unique but polyphonic voice of Orthodoxy regarding the centrality of the Liturgy in the life of the Church. (This characteristic feature has also been highlighted by theologians from other Christian traditions. Translations of the works of Roman Catholic theologians such as Juan Mateos¹⁶ or Robert Taft¹⁷ are worth mentioning here, as are those of

⁹ Petru Pruteanu, *Liturghia ortodoxă: istorie și actualitate*, ediția a II-a, Sophia, București, 2013, p. 5.

¹⁰ *Ibidem*, p. 5.

¹¹ Ene Braniște, *Liturgica Generală cu noțiuni de artă creștină*, București, 1993; Idem, *Liturgica Specială pentru institutele teologice*, București, 1985; Idem, *Tâlcuirea Dumnezeieștii Liturghii, de Nicolae Cabasila*, (traducere în limba română), București, 1946; Idem, *Explicarea Sfintei Liturghii după Nicolae Cabasila* (teză de doctorat), București, 1943; Idem, *Participarea la Liturghie*, București, 1999.

¹² Petre Vintilescu, *Misterul Liturgic*, București, 1929; Idem, „Liturghia în viața românească”, *Ortodoxia Românească*, București, 1992; Idem, *Liturghiile bizantine primate istoric în structura și rânduiala lor*, București, 1943; Idem, *Liturghierul explicat*, București, 1998.

¹³ Dumitru Stăniloae, *Spiritualitate și comuniune în Liturghia Ortodoxă*, Craiova, 1986.

¹⁴ André Scrima, *Biserica Liturgică*, trad. Anca Manolescu, Editura Humanitas, București, 2005.

¹⁵ Alexander Schmemmann, *Introducere în Teologia Liturgică*, trad. Vasile Bâzdu, Editura Sofia, București, 2002; Idem, *Euharistia – Taina Împărăției*, trad. Boris Răduleanu, București, 1993.

¹⁶ Juan Mateos, S.J., *Celebrarea Cuvântului în Liturghia Bizantină*, trad. Cezar Login, Editura Renașterea, Cluj-Napoca, 2007.

¹⁷ Robert F. Taft, *Ritul bizantin*, trad. Dumitru Vanca și Alin Mehes, Editura Reîntregirea, Alba Iulia, 2008; Idem, *O istorie a Liturghiei Sfântului Ioan Gură de Aur*, Volumul II: Transferul Darurilor și celelalte rituri preanatorale, Partea 1: Intrarea cea Mare, trad. Cezar Login, Editura Renașterea, Cluj-Napoca, 2012.

evangelical theologian Karl Christian Felmy, who later converted to Orthodoxy¹⁸.) This line was continued by theologians of younger generations, such as Archdeacon. Ioan I. Ică jr.¹⁹, Viorel Sava²⁰ or Ciprian Streza²¹. In addition to the theologians mentioned above, an invaluable source has been the works of such Holy Fathers as Dionysius the Areopagite, Maxim the Confessor, Gherman of Constantinople, Nicholas of Andida, Nicholas Cabasila and Simeon of Thessalonica²².

The worship of the Church is the fountainhead of dogma, the place from which the experience of God's works is poured out in linguistic form. The confession of the Creed by each individual person cannot be an individual act, because in the Liturgy the whole Church expresses the true faith as the living out of dogma: "dogma lives in the Liturgy, it inspires and spiritualizes it unceasingly, and Orthodox worship practices dogma, it is founded on it [...] The intimacy between doctrine and worship even reaches to the point of transposition, so that the liturgy has begun to be indicated as very rich in loci theologici, i.e. the source for dogmatics"²³, said Father Petre Vintilescu.

Regarding the relationship of Tradition to ecclesial-liturgical life, we must acknowledge a precariousness of modern Orthodox studies. However, the concept of Tradition has been analysed in Romanian culture from other perspectives, such as, for example, the philosophical one²⁴.

In 20th century Orthodox theology, the renewal of Tradition was marked by the so-called "neo-patristic movement". Here we shall confine ourselves to mentioning only the most representative figures of this theological current, with reference to their most representative works:

¹⁸Karl Christian Felmy, *De la Cina de Taina la Dumnezeiasca Liturghie a Bisericii Ortodoxe. Un comentariu liturgic*, trad. Ioan Ica, Editura Deisis, Sibiu, 2004.

¹⁹Ioan I. Ică jr., *Canonul Ortodoxiei. I Canonul apostolic al primelor secole*, Editura Deisis/Stavropoleos, Sibiu, 2008; Idem, *Împărtășirea continuă cu Sfintele Taine. Dosarul unei controverse – mărturiile tradiției*, Studiu introductiv și traducere Ioan I. Ica jr., Editura Deisis, Sibiu, 2006.

²⁰Viorel Sava, *În biserica Slavei Tale. Studii de Teologie si spiritualitate liturgică*, Editura „Erota“, Iași, 2003.

²¹Ciprian Ioan Streza, *Anaforaua Sfântului Vasile cel Mare. Istorie – text – analiza comparata – comentariu liturgic*, Editura Andreiana, Sibiu, 2009.

²²Translated into Romanian, circulating in several editions, in manuscript or printed, the Byzantine liturgical commentaries have been republished in an exemplary volume by Deacon Ioan I. Ică jr., *De la Dionisie Areopagitul la Simeon al Tesalonicului – integrala comentariilor liturgice bizantine*, Editura Deisis, Sibiu, 2011.

²³ Petre Vintilescu, *Funcțiunea catehetică a Liturghiei*, în „Studii Teologice”, Seria II, Nr. 1-2, martie-aprilie, 1949, p. 17.

²⁴ See Vasile Zvâncescu, *Conceptul de tradiție în filosofia românească*, Argonaut, Cluj-Napoca, 2007.

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- Georges Florovsky, with a substantial body of work, translated and published in English in 14 volumes²⁵.

- Vladimir Lossky, who, in spite of his limited work - during his lifetime he published only one book, which quickly became a contemporary Orthodox theological bestseller, *Essai sur la théologie mystique de l'Eglise d'Orient*²⁶, plus several co-published works²⁷ or postum²⁸ -, established himself as one of the most influential contemporary Orthodox theologians of the 20th century and as one of the promoters of the "neopatristic" methodology;

- - Justin Popovich - see the publication of the massive "Orthodox Dogmatics" (1932-1978, Belgrade, respectively 1978, Bucharest) or the editing of the spiritual texts of the Church, *Lives of the Saints and Philokalia* (1972-1977, respectively 1946-1991);

- - Dumitru Stăniloae, whose impressive work has decisively marked Orthodox theology in general and Romanian theology in particular.

- - Panayotis Nellas, a model for the reevaluation of the Patristic Tradition in Greek Orthodox theology²⁹, whose name should be placed alongside that of Ioannis Romanidis³⁰.

It is worth mentioning here another aspect: the rediscovery of the Patristic Tradition, with reference to the indissoluble relationship between worship - with the Holy Mass at its centre - and ecclesial life has not been exercised exclusively in

²⁵ Georges Florovsky, *The Collected Works of Georges Florovsky* 14 vol, Nordland Publishing Company, Belmont, Massachusetts, 1972-1989; Paul L. Gavrilyuk, *Georges Florovsky și renașterea religioasă rusă*, trad. Adela Lungu, Doxologia, Iași, 2014; Georges Florovsky, *Scriseri esențiale*, trad. Dragoș Dâscă și Octavian-Adrian Negoită, Doxologia, Iași, 2021.

²⁶ Vladimir Lossky, *Teologia mistică a Bisericii de Răsărit*, traducere Vasile Răducă, Editura Bonifaciu, 1998.

²⁷ Together with N.Arseniev he published *Paternitatea duhovnicească în Rusia secolelor al XVIII-lea și al XIX-lea*, trad. Ciprian Vidican, Renașterea, Cluj-Napoca, 2017, and together with Leonid Uspenski, *Călăuziri în lumea icoanei*, trad. Anca Popescu, Sophia, București, 2011.

²⁸ See *Introducere în Teologia Ortodoxă*, traducere Lidia și Remus Rus, prefață Dumitru Gh. Popescu, Editura Enciclopedică, București, 1993, and *Vederea lui Dumnezeu* (traducere Maria Cornelia Oros, studiu introductiv Ioan I. Ică jr., Desis, Sibiu, 1995), also *După chipul și asemănarea lui Dumnezeu*, traducere Anca Manolache; Humanitas, București, 1998.

²⁹ Ierotheos Vlachos, *Dogmatica empirică după învățăturile prin viu grai ale Părintelui Ioannis Romanidis* 2 vol., trad. Tatiana Petrache, Doxologia, Iași, 2015 și 2017.

³⁰ See Dumitru Stăniloae, *Ascetica și Mistica Ortodoxă*, Deisi, Alba-Iulia, 1993; Idem, *Teologia Dogmatică Ortodoxă* 3 vol., ediția a II-a, EIBMBOR, București, 1996; Idem, *Spiritualitate și comuniune în Liturgia Ortodoxă*, Editura Mitropoliei Olteniei, Craiova, 1986.

Orthodoxy. The "Erlangen School", with its two great teachers, Fairy von Lilienfeld³¹, and especially Karl Christian Felmy³². Also from the same German university, another professor of ethics, whose synthesis work does not omit the concept of Tradition and its ethical-social implications, cannot be absent³³. Despite what has been said before, themes such as "deification" are not unilaterally Orthodox, although certain emphases are specific to it: "in the Orthodox Tradition theosis is not an individual process, although the experience of encounter with God and deification is in the highest degree personal. Homoiosis/theosis is a "mystical" experience, certainly not in the sense of an esoteric or nationalistic reduction, as German Protestantism operates, but as an experience of God realized in the Holy Mysteries (lat. sacramenta) of the Church... The epicenter of "bios pathikos" is the Eucharistic Liturgy. This is the place of the call of God and of the communion of the Holy Spirit, that is, the place... where the relationship between God and man is truly realized, for here human creatures become members of the Mystical Body of Christ"³⁴.

Thesis to be proved:

1. What is a "Traditio activa", i.e. a realization of tradition based on elements of worship such as those of Baptism and confession of faith,

2. from another perspective - of the political dimension of worship, the perspective of how it determines a Christian ethos in the form of a society. focuses on reconstructing a theological grammar of the indissoluble relationship between worship and the ethos of freedom.

3. the development of a Christian ethic is the culmination of liturgical service with *vita activa*, i.e. a synthesis of liturgy, teaching and life (we could say, *drei grosses L.: Liturgie, Lehre und Leben*). Hence consequences, such as the theme of ethics in preaching and the ethical source of the Mass in the Bible. The task is to find the best way to be able to convey to people "the words of life" (Acts 7, 38).

4. as a conclusion, Tradition is alive only if it is in close connection with dogma and worship, especially with the Holy Liturgy. The implications at the level of Orthodox ecclesiology, but also at the social, liturgical and ecumenical level, should be highlighted.

³¹ Fairy von Lilienfeld, *Spiritualitatea monahismului timpuriu al Pustiei*, trad. Picu Ocoleanu, Editura Mitropoliei Olteniei, Craiova, 2006.

³² Karl Christian Felmy, *Dogmatica experienței ecleziale. Înnoirea teologiei ortodoxe contemporane*, trad. Ioan I. Ică și Ioan I. Ică jr., Deisis, Sibiu, 1999.

³³ Hans G. Ulrich, *Wie Geschöpfe leben. Konturen evangelischer Ethik*, Lit Verlag, Münster, 2005 (EThD, Bd. 2), 747 p.

³⁴ Marco Hofheinz (ed.), Kai-Ole Eberhardt, *Die Tradierung von Ethik im Gottesdienst. Symposiumsbeiträge zu Ehren von Hans G. Ulrich*, LIT Verlag, 2019, p. 27.

Theology as "true philosophy" and way of life

First of all, we have to remember the relationship between authentic philosophy and authentic theology, grounded in their experiential, living character³⁵. Whether it is then the Socratic-Platonic, Stoic or Epicurean version³⁶, later reaching the existentialist or phenomenological one, philosophy has relentlessly tried to draw man a purpose in life. In this way, we believe we can speak of a "kinship" between philosophical thought and religious faith, both attesting to the holistic, deeply reflective dimension of the human being³⁷.

We take this experiential aspect of philosophy as our starting point, trying to show that the claim of some of the Church Fathers, such as the apologists, that Christian faith is an authentic, real philosophy was not at all exaggerated. We find in the apostolic-patristic period a vision that will run like a red thread through the history of a Christian tradition to the present day. On the other hand, it is no less true that, for centuries, this type of faith has been obscured by rationalism, individualism, secularism and other forms of -ism, leading to excesses that have only undermined the edifice of theology. (This departure marked a revival of other types of thought, the symptomatic case being that of Julian the Apostate.) So we return to the need for "patristic renewal," which has been a constant among the most prominent Orthodox theologians of the 20th century.

In fact, all nations/communities are based on a common memory which is, to one extent or another, "constructed". Although it has to be learned/assimilated, it is not a fictitious memory, an "invented tradition" and at the same time a "communicative action"³⁸. There is a moral duty to testify to it (le devoir de mémoire) not only for the advantages of preserving and exploiting memory, but also in order to correctly understand the limits of memory and memorialisation, as well as the abuse of memory, its falsification and manipulation.

It is also important to bear in mind the universal dimension of collective memory. It is therefore necessary to avoid negationism, but also relativism - with the aim of

³⁵ Jose Ortega y Gasset, *Ce este filozofia? Ce este cunoașterea?*, trad. Sorin Mărculescu, Humanitas, București, 1999, p. 198. See also Jeanne Hersche, *Mirarea filosofică. Istoria filosofiei europene*, trad. Drăgan Vasile, Humanitas, București, 1994.

³⁶ Martha C. Nussbaum, *Terapia dorinței. Teorie și practică în etica elenistică*, trad. S.G. Drăgan, Humanitas, București, 2022.

³⁷ Pierre Hadot, *Ce este filozofia antică?*, trad. George Bondor și Claudiu Tipuriță, prefață de Cristian Bădiliță, Polirom, Iași, 1997; Idem, *Filozofia ca mod de viață. Convorbiri cu Jeannie Carlier și Arnold I. Davidson*, trad. Adrian Cotoră, Humanitas, București, 2019, p. 99.

³⁸ Maurice Halbwachs, *Memoria colectivă*, trad. Irinel Antoniu, Editura Institutul European, Iași, 2007; Paul Ricoeur, *Memoria, istoria, uitarea*, trad. Ilie Gyurcsik și Margareta Gyurcsik, Editura Amarcord, Timișoara, 2001; Jan Assmann, *Memoria culturală. Scriere, amintire și identitate politică în marile culturi antice*, trad. Octavian Nicolae, Editura Universității „Alexandru Ioan Cuza”, Iași, 2013.

minimising or, even more perversely, relativising and contextualising a tradition, with the obvious aim of diminishing or even cancelling its value.

In fact, the grounding of inter-human bonds does not equate to an eternal dependence on 'roots', an obsession with an immutable ideational construct. Being in a Tradition means that these bonds are cultivated, developed, educated, strategically planned... Otherwise, they can fade, even be lost. The seriousness of the problem arises from the denial of the living, dynamic character that Tradition intrinsically possesses, a character that arises from the very nature of the human being in its dynamism, in its teleological aim to grow from "image" to "likeness" of its Creator, the Triune God.

The rupture between *modus credendi* and *modus vivendi* produces a serious crisis, with negative effects both inside and outside Christianity. Postmodern society can be assessed by some specific characteristics of the religious phenomenon. Thus, we find two predominant lines in the religiosity of the world in which we live: on the one hand, the exacerbation of religious extremism in the world, and on the other, the prevalence of a diffuse religious spirit, eclecticism and syncretism³⁹.

As a case study we refer to the case of Emperor Julian the Apostate⁴⁰. Beyond some political-theological aspects, his approach of returning to paganism had an ethical basis: those who teach must be in agreement with what they teach; consequently, one cannot talk about classical literature and not believe in the world of the gods it evokes; without being forbidden to Christian children to attend classes, Christian teachers should come out of the state of hypocrisy in which they find themselves, either by renouncing the magisterial office or by adapting their beliefs to the content of the texts they teach.

In fact, Julian was planning a reform of the cult and priestly ethics along Christian lines: the emphasis and mutations that philanthropy underwent in Late Antiquity under the influence of Christianity are evident. It was precisely philanthropy towards strangers,

³⁹ Henri Tincq, „Exacerbarea extremismelor religioase în lume”, in Jean Delumeau (ed.), *Religiile lumii*, Ed. Humanitas, București, 1996, p. 675-676.

⁴⁰ Ioan Rămureanu, „Religia solară a împăratului Iulian Apostatul”, *Studii Teologice* 39 (1987), nr. 6, p. 38-61; Bogdan Tătaru-Cazaban și Miruna Tătaru-Cazaban, „Cultură creștină și teologie politică. Polemica împotriva împăratului Iulian la Sfântul Grigorie de Nazianz și Sfântul Chiril al Alexandriei”, in Grigorie de Nazianz, Chiril al Alexandriei, *Cuvântarea a IV-a, Cuvântarea a V-a; Împotriva lui Iulian (I, II)*, trad. Anamaria-Irina Stoica, Polirom, Iași, 2020, p. 77; Giovanni Firolamo, *Crucea și Puterea. Creștinii, de la martiri la persecutori*, trad. Dionisie Constantin Pîrvuloiu, Humanitas, București, 2022, p. 224-276; Dmitri S. Merejkovski, *Moartea zeilor. Romanul lui Iulian Apostatul*, trad. Meline Poladian Ghenea, introducere Alexandru Barnea, Sigma, București, 2008; I. I. Pulpea, *Lupta Împăratului Iulian împotriva creștinismului*, București, 1942; Ioan G. Coman, *Sf. Grigorie de Nazianz despre Împăratul Iulian. Încercare asupra Discursurilor IV și V*, Editura Institutului Român de Bizantinologie, București, 1938; Idem, *Cauzele generale ale politicii anticreștine a împăratului Iulian după mărturiile patristice*, Editura Institutului Român de Bizantinologie, București, 1938.

together with care for the burial of the dead and the emphasis on moral dignity (whether true or false), that were the factors in the successful spread of Christianity, the emperor Julian believed. That is why he advised Arsakios, the high priest, to build a "network of hospitality", where the Christian model was more than evident.

From the previous stage we get the idea that Christian spirituality can be relevant for modern man only by avoiding two extremes: on the one hand academism, on the other pietism. On the contrary, taking the biblical and patristic sources as a starting point, a "theology of experience" should be founded - but not any individualistic experience, but sacramental-ecclesial experience itself.

Liturgy and theology – dogma and Tradition

Contemporary Orthodox theology has rediscovered the centrality of the Liturgy in the worship and life of the Church, based on biblical and patristic sources. Orthodox hermeneutics thus has ethical implications for both understanding and experiencing the Church as the "Mystical Body of Christ". This is the profoundly Christological and pneumatological dimension of ecclesiology. The Romanian theologian Dumitru Stăniloae, with his fundamental work on the indissoluble link between spirituality and communion in the Orthodox Liturgy⁴¹, will be the permanent reference point for our considerations.

Private worship and common worship are intertwined as a single work of salvation, so that the journey of the fulfilment of personal faith and the realisation of the unity of love in the community of the Church (liturgical ethos) are united in the Holy Eucharist. Jesus Christ is the Head of His body, the Church (*Totus Christi, caput et corpus*)⁴². The believer participating in worship becomes an interpreter of the liturgical texts and, according to personal ethical effort (understood as grace), becomes a worshipper, a hymnographer through the fulfilment of his life and a hymnographer of community fulfilment. Thus Scripture and Tradition are faithfully expressed in the liturgical worship of the Orthodox Church, which operates neither an absolute primacy of Scripture nor a primacy of institutionalized ecclesial authority, but operates with the "primacy" of the Spirit of God⁴³.

⁴¹ Dumitru Stăniloae, *Spiritualitate și comuniune în Liturgia Ortodoxă*, Editura Mitropoliei Olteniei, Craiova, 1986; Jürgen Henkel, *Îndumnezeire și etică în Spiritualitatea ortodoxă. Ascetica și mistica părintelui Dumitru Stăniloae*, traducere diac. Ioan I. Ică jr., ediția a II-a, Deisis, Sibiu, 2006.

⁴² Cf. Ioan I. Ică jr., „Teologia ortodoxă modernă și contemporană – momente, figuri, parcurs, interpretare”, p. 67-68.

⁴³ Alexander Schmemmann, *Euharistia. Taina Împărăției*, trad. Boris Răduleanu, Editura Anastasia, București, 1993, p. 147; Idem, „Problems of Orthodoxy in America. II. The Liturgical Problem”, *SVTQ*, vol. 8, nr. 4, 1964, p. 176; Idem, „Liturgy and Theology”, *GOTR*, 17 (1979), p. 89.

If the liturgical-ecclesial ministry is inextricably linked to the confession of the teaching of the faith, then our research could not be without a part dedicated to the nature and role of dogmas, i.e. the constitution of the Holy Tradition, in relation to Scripture and the Church.

The word "dogma" signifies a fundamental teaching of the Church, the doctrine of the Church handed down through written or oral tradition, dogmas being truths necessary for salvation. Christian dogmas are elements of the Christian's plan of salvation and deification, contained and realised in the supernatural divine revelation which culminated in Christ, and preserved, preached, applied and explained in the Church⁴⁴.

By their very nature, dogmas possess a double character, negative and positive: on the one hand, they demarcate truth from heresy, and on the other, they express the Church's teaching of faith in a particular time and place. Also, as truths of faith, dogmas are classified into "natural dogmas" and "supernatural dogmas". Being also an expression of divine-human collaboration, dogmas presuppose collaboration, since a person only reveals himself, i.e. only opens himself to the one who opens himself to him. In Jesus Christ, the Truth, dogmas find their unity, and the basis of dogmas is the Holy Trinity. The dogmas, through their unity in a "system", are preserved in the Church. But their unity also derives from their preaching, application, concretization, explanation and determination in the Church. They are transmitted through supernatural revelation in the Church, which is the community of those who believe in Christ, serve Him and follow His commandments, a community constituted at Pentecost⁴⁵.

One must always keep in mind Evagrius Ponticus, who, in order to show the indissoluble link between prayer and knowledge, emphasized that "he who has a pure prayer is a true theologian, and he who is a true theologian has a pure prayer"⁴⁶.

Contemporary Orthodox theologians have stressed that dogmas intrinsically possess a paradoxical, apophatic dimension. Vladimir Lossky⁴⁷ in particular has insisted that any authentic theology is an apophatic theology. This completely excludes any abstract and purely intellectual theology, which would adapt the mysteries of God's wisdom to the limits of human thought. On the contrary, this is the existential attitude which commits man to the whole: there is no theology apart from living; one must change, become a new man, for in order to know God one must approach him; one is

⁴⁴ Dumitru Stăniloae, *Teologia dogmatică ortodoxă*, vol. I, p. 45; Vl. Lossky, *După chipul și asemănarea lui Dumnezeu*, p. 135.

⁴⁵ Andrew Louth, *Deslușirea Tainei. Despre natura teologiei*, trad. și postfață de Mihai Neamțu, prefață de diac. Ioan. I. Ică jr., Ed. Deisis, Sibiu, 1999, p. 131.

⁴⁶ Cited by Vladimir Lossky: L. Ouspensky und W. Lossky, *Der Sinn der Ikonen*, Urs Graf-Verlag Bern und Olten, 1952, p. 11-24; republicat în *După chipul și asemănarea lui Dumnezeu* (vezi ed. rom., p. 134-162).

⁴⁷ Dumitru Stăniloae, *Teologia dogmatică ortodoxă*, vol. I, p. 45.

not a theologian if one does not follow the path of union with God. The path of knowing God is necessarily that of becoming divine.

Dumitru Stăniloae⁴⁸ pointed out the following aspect: the definite character of dogmatic formulas does not contradict their infinite content, but rather ensures it. In this context, theology has a very important role, namely that of reflecting dogmas, delimiting them and remaining within their boundaries. Thus dogma is the teaching of the Church, but not every teaching of the Church automatically has the status of dogma. In other words, teaching can enter into Tradition through the general consensus of the Church, achieved in structures empowered to do so (synod), structures which have the authority to make dogmatic formulations.

The updating of dogmatic formulations by enriching the teaching of the Church, teaching with the authority of Church Tradition, can be achieved by explaining previous dogmatic terms. This enrichment and development of the teaching through theology is synonymous with the "bringing to light" of the dogmatic terms mentioned for each generation of the members of the Church, corresponding to their level of understanding and the spiritual stage in which they find themselves. From this perspective, theology is a continuous form of existence in the Church "by all the members of the Church and always" (see the Vincentian canon) - be they Apostles, Holy Fathers or each priest who "translates Revelation to be lived by his faithful." Consequently, it follows that the theology of the Church has a great responsibility for the life of the Church and the spiritual progress of the faithful⁴⁹.

A full understanding of Tradition therefore requires a genuine understanding of the nature and role of dogma in crystallizing the teaching of faith; the meaning of a "renewal" in the life of the Church not as an innovation, but as a method of effectively transmitting Gospel values in a particular socio-historical and cultural-religious setting.

The word "tradition" comes from the Latin. "traditio" or from gr. "paradosis" and means teaching, transmission. The term has two meanings: on the one hand, it refers to the whole activity of Jesus Christ; on the other hand, tradition is the way in which divine revelation is transmitted to people in the Church. Thus Tradition is a form of preservation of revelation in Jesus Christ.

Tradition represents the permanence of the dialogue between the Church (as a whole) and Christ, and this dynamism is ensured by the work of grace. It is not by chance that Lossky called Tradition "the work of the Holy Spirit in the Church". Thus, in

⁴⁸ VI. Lossky, *După chipul și asemănarea lui Dumnezeu*, p. 135.

⁴⁹ *Ibidem*, p. 136-142; Dumitru Stăniloae, „Primirea Tradiției în timpul de azi, din punct de vedere ortodox”, *Studii Teologice* nr. 1-2 (1975), p. 5; Idem, „Unitate și diversitate în Tradiția ortodoxă”, *Ortodoxia*, nr. 3 (1970), p. 333, 337; Nikos Matsoukas, *Introducere în gnoseologia teologică*, traducere Maricel Popa, Editura Bizantină, București, 1997, p. 149; Ion Bria, *Tratat de teologie dogmatică și ecumenică*, Colecția Didaskalos, România creștină, București, 1999, p. 80.

its two forms of expression, written and oral, Tradition is reflected in Holy Scripture (the written form) and lived in the Church (the oral form) through the intercession of the Holy Spirit. The New Testament is composed in the Church and constitutes the "core" of Tradition, which reflects the way in which the apostolic faith was understood in the Holy Spirit⁵⁰.

The same Vladimir Lossky distinguished between Tradition and traditions⁵¹: under the supervision and guidance of the bishops, meeting in synods, the Church has preserved and valued its treasury of faith (expressed in acts, words and images) so that it can correctly distinguish between the perennial value of the Gospel and the transitory realities of a particular socio-historical context. A distinction is made between the unchanging aspect of Tradition and what changes in it as an adaptation to the socio-historical contexts in which believers live (traditions).

Instead of conclusions

Finally, we highlight some pastoral-missionary and ecumenical implications of this eucharistic-patristic vision, with emphasis on the need and return to the authentic Tradition as a response to the crises of today's post-modern society.

Fathers Nikolai Afanasiev⁵² and A. Schmemmann⁵³ have demonstrated the liturgical crisis that persists in the Orthodox Church, a crisis that consists in the lack of concordance between what is being celebrated and the understanding of the Mystery that is being celebrated, that is, its living. In order to overcome it, Father Schmemmann resorted to a "Eucharistic rebirth of the Church", which does not coincide with some "reforms", "accommodations" or "modernizations"; on the contrary, it is a question of a rediscovery of the essence and role of worship in the early Church, a return to that vision, to that living with which the Church lived from the beginning. In such a perspective there is an indissoluble link between Christ, the Church and the Eucharist. In the ancient Church, the Russian liturgist believes, all the sacraments were centred around the Eucharist, the 'Mystery of the Sacraments', because this is where the full presence of Christ in the Church takes place. For this reason, it should no longer be seen merely as

⁵⁰ Vladimir Lossky, *După chipul și asemănarea lui Dumnezeu*, p. 134.

⁵¹ L. Ouspensky und W. Lossky, *Der Sinn der Ikonen*, Urs Graf-Verlag Bern und Olten, 1952, p. 11-24; republicat în *După chipul și asemănarea lui Dumnezeu* (vezi ed. rom., p. 134-162).

⁵² Nikolai Afanasiev, *L'Eglise du Saint-Esprit*, Les Editions du Cerf, Paris, 1975; Idem, *The Lord's Supper*, traducere Michael J. Lewis, SVSP. Crestwood, New York, 1988; Idem, - *Biserica Duhului Sfânt* vol. 1, trad. Elena Derevici, Patmos, Cluj-Napoca, 2008.

⁵³ Alexander Schmemmann, *Euharistia. Taina Împărăției*, trad. Boris Răduleanu, Editura Anastasia, București, 1993; Idem, „Debate on the Liturgy: Liturgical Theology, Theology of Liturgy and Liturgical Reform”, *SVTQ*, vol. 13, nr. 4, 1969, p. 218; Idem, „Liturgy and Theology”, *GOTR*, 17 (1979), p. 89.

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one of the seven Mysteries (usually the third), as in the 'school' textbooks, but as the 'Mystery of the Church' par excellence. Its richness cannot therefore be exhausted by referring to a single aspect of it, A. Schmemmann treating it as a series of successive Mysteries: the Mysteries of gathering, of the Kingdom, of love, of the word, of the faithful, of bringing, of unity, of sacrifice, of thanksgiving, of remembrance, of the Holy Spirit, and of communion.

Following in the footsteps of the Russian liturgist, other Orthodox theologians have advocated a "rich Communion". But promoted indiscriminately, under pressure from its followers, it relativizes the prior ascetic preparation through fasting and especially the link between Communion and Confession⁵⁴. But Confession enables the confessor to ascertain and assess the moral state of the believer, his or her zeal or lack of it, and to decide whether or not to receive Communion in full knowledge of the facts. The Church has laid down certain rules of repentance, certain canons, which give confession a right to assess the "suitability" for communion and does not leave it to the penitent who, if he is honest, could hardly assess his own suitability.

Another unfortunate mutation is the depreciation of liturgical symbolism (in the etymological sense of the term, of "together-working"). The Mass, for example, has become a "sacred spectacle" rather than the ultimate means of human union with our Saviour Jesus Christ in this world, an anticipation of the eschatological state of the Kingdom "to come".

In terms of awakening the pastoral sensitivity of the faithful to the significance and importance of the Mystery of Baptism in the Orthodox Church, Alexander Schmemmann refers to the absence of Baptism from church worship. Baptism no longer enjoys a liturgical setting, but has become a private service that can be performed in almost any time, place and human presence. This has led to an obvious simplification of the baptismal rite (ranging from various omissions of prayers, formulas, rituals or biblical readings to the neglect of the baptismal act itself - the whole immersion). Fr Schmemmann thus insisted on the need to restore the liturgical link between Baptism and the Eucharist, between the Mystery of entry into the Church and the Mystery of the Church.

The same Russian liturgist also insisted on the rediscovery of the profoundly spiritual function of the nativity in a society increasingly (sometimes almost exclusively) subjugated to the material. In short, Fr Schmemmann's suggestions are as follows: at least one of the godfathers should be appointed by the priest from among the most active, conscientious and religiously trained parishioners; he should be charged with "watching over" the godchild and reporting to the priest on all matters relating to the spiritual formation of the godchild; the existence of a parish register of baptisms (in addition to the usual one), in which all the facts concerning the religious life of each baptised person are noted; a family in the parish should be appointed to give birth to any new convert, to

⁵⁴ Paul Evdokimov, *Orthodoxia*, trad. Irineu Ioan Popa, EIBMBOR, București, 1996, p. 135.

facilitate his integration into the life of the parish. By regulating this aspect we can indeed speak of Baptism as the beginning of a process that tends towards fulfilment, and not as an end in itself or as the exhaustion of its value by its simple ritual performance. The fully informed assumption of the role of godparenthood can have far-reaching positive repercussions on the spiritual life of a community, not only in individual but also in social-community terms, and can contribute substantially to the spiritual reinvigoration of community life.

Our research was part of an attempt to move, through a "resurrectio carnis", from theological science to liturgical knowledge⁵⁵. In our opinion, any "renewal" of Orthodox theology can only be fruitful if it is done "along the lines of the Holy Fathers", of the Holy Tradition, for only in this way can we find the answers, in accordance with the Gospel precepts, to the challenges of today's (post)modern world.

⁵⁵ Jean-Yves Lacoste, *Fenomenalitatea lui Dumnezeu*, trad. Maria-Cornelia Ică jr., Deisis, Sibiu, 2011, p. 251.