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The Symeonian Triadology

Abstract

The dogmatics and spirituality of the Orthodox Church make a clear difference between Theology and Iconology. Theology, a word originating from the culture of the ancient Greeks, therefore, of pagan origin, is always used exhaustively in specialised language. It is based on divine Revelation - with direct reference to the intrinsic life of the Persons of the Most Holy Trinity, *ad intra*, that is, what God was in Himself before the world was. *Economia*, also based on the same revelation, defines God as coming out of Himself by love towards creation and His involvement in holy, divine, and deifying works through grace or energy.

This dogmatic aspect of differentiation and complementarity was profoundly highlighted in the work of



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Saint Symeon the New Theologian († 1022). It also determined the Hesychast thinking of the 14th century, which culminates in the life and work of Saint Gregory Palamas (1296-1359) and remains the factor of balance in Eastern theognosy based on asceticism and mysticism.

Keywords

triadology, theology, economy, Godhead, being, person, energy, grace, deification, asceticism, mysticism

1 Introduction

In academic study, the perception of the economy is more accessible, perhaps because the personal salvation of the believer is based on grace, faith, and good works. It radiographs the historical calendar of the involvement of the Holy Trinity *ad extra*, starting from creation, providence, salvation, sanctification, and, in the end, the judgement. Instead, Theology refers only to the Triune Persons, and the relationship between Them. Here, without a mind enlightened by grace and without a pure life, the Mystery explorer risks unforgivable slips, proved by the multitude of heretical teachings, and harshly and categorically condemned not only by the Church of the first millennium.

In the Christian East, the name of theologian was given with much acrimony only to the three saints and servants of the Most Holy Trinity: Saint John the Apostle and Evangelist († approx. 100 AD), Saint Gregory of Nazianzus († 389/390) and Saint Symeon The New Theologian († 1022). We might ask: why? A possible answer would be this: only they managed to synthesize the Mystery of the Most Holy Trinity and the dogma of the Most Holy Trinity. In the already consecrated language, the Trinity is a mystery, the Incarnation is a mystery, and the Church is a mystery. The other Holy Mysteries - inventoried or not - are organically linked to the first three, affirmed Saint Symeon The New Theologian:

“I call those seen by all but not understood by all: because from the Spirit that makes us, man acquires new eyes, also new ears, and from now on he no longer sees the sensible things sensibly like a man, but, becoming more above man, he spiritually sees the sensible as icons of the unseen, and he sees the forms in them as those without face and form”.¹

Orthodox dogmatics distinguishes between mystery and dogma. Dogma is more easily perceived and understood by the mind, enunciated, defined, and explained. On the other hand, the mystery remains an unfathomable reality, but both are complementary. Theological faculties study the dogma of the Holy Trinity, not the Mystery of the Holy Trinity. Just as Holy Scripture is not identical to God, it represents God’s words, so it is with the definition of dogma, not of the Mystery itself. God is not identical with some words or meanings, which would lead to their idolatry. This aspect was in the theological consciousness of the three great Theologians of the Eastern Church.

2 The Mystery of the Trinity in Saint Symeon the New Theologian’s Thinking

At the balance between the two millennia of Christianity, the one who expressed the Mystery of the Trinity through a remarkable life and teaching was Saint Symeon The New Theologian (949-1022). In the Orthodox Church, the expression of the Mystery is conditioned by the experience of deification. When deification is reached, the presentation of the mystery with the help of words, i.e., the dogmatic content, ends. Either deification or the end of the world cancels dogma as a salvation instrument. As a Church, we have inherited the dogmas and the experience of the Fathers who formulated them. Strictly speaking, there is no separation between the dogmatic and the experimental or spiritual identity of deification in Theology.

¹ Sfântul Simeon Noul Teolog, *Cateheze, 14*, in *Scrieri II*, translation diac. Ioan. I. Ică jr., Editura Deisis, Sibiu 2003, p. 179.

"In the Orthodox faith - look, if you want, at Symeon The New Theologian, and you will find more about it - dogma must become life. Dogma must become an experience. Dogma must be learned empirically. We first receive the dogma, thus, cerebrally, as a lesson in school, and the moment we have received it, we must translate this lesson into an experience. Dogma must become life".²

The content of the dogma, being revealed, cannot be subject to speculation. Theology, the Holy Trinity as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, as the Godhead in itself, cannot be researched, speculated, and understood by people. The alternating binomial, life – dogma – life, is the key to Symeonian triadology. Between life and dogma, there is no room for speculation. The challenge of Syn-cellus Stephen was precisely the centrifugal side of the speculative rationalist pursuing the question: *How do you mentally or physically separate the Son from the Father?*³ The syncellus, a former bishop of Nicomedia, renounced his episcopate for an administrative position at the patriarchate of Constantinople and failed to apply dogma as a chosen shepherd and a follower of the Holy Apostles, *teaching the word of Truth*. It is one thing to know and learn the aims of the dogma and its textual integrity and another to change it in life born from the experience of Revelation and the sight of divine glory.

"Saint Symeon denounces the specious nature of the scholastic distinction in question, reducing the trinitarian mystery to the rationalistic extremes of modalist Sabellianism or subordinationist tritheism. He offers a perfectly orthodox exposition on the dogma of the Holy Trinity (emphasising, in turn, the unity of being, personal distinctions and energies demonstrators). Saint Symeon devotes most of his poem (Hymn 21, free meter, 500 lines) to his polemics. It is directed against those who dare to do theology without having the experience

² Ierótheos, Mitropolitul Nafpaktosului, *Dogmatica empirică după învățăturile prin viu grai ale Părintelui Ioannis Romanidis*, Vol. 1, *Dogmă-Morală-Revelație. Prezentare critică*, translation Tatiana Petrache, Editura Doxologia, Iași 2014, p. 118.

³ *Idem*, *Imnul 21*, p. 128.

in the Holy Spirit of the theologised realities, relying only on profane Hellenic science. It concludes with a pathetic appeal to the sincere to abandon his false speculative theology and devote himself to concrete and existential spiritual experience, the only one appropriate to the triune mystery”.⁴

3 Dogma, Grace and Healing

Saint Symeon the New Theologian, the forerunner of Eastern Hesychasm, caused a real theological revolution in the sense that dogma only guides; the theologian must be pure, enlightened by grace and then perfected. Guarding the dogma is not the same as living it; that is why the speculative attitude does not find its place in its approach, although it can precede it.

“The first-without-beginning, Who is by nature together with God the Son and the Word The together-without-beginning, The One Born of You (Jn. 1:13) Who is not separated from You mentally, but he is inseparable from Thee in a real way. Even if he is separated, yet not in nature, but rather in posture or person, for to say that he is in a real way separate is proper to the ungodly and godless, and to say that it is mentally separate, it belongs to the dark. For the Mind has unfailingly unceasingly the Word born of it and somewhat separated from It; if He is really born and comes out, then He separates Himself in a hypostatic Word, but also remains within the Mind that gave birth to Him”.⁵

“Symeon remains here the same lively and direct temperament, not an impersonal theorist and didacticist. However, he submits to the rigours of a literary genre that recommends brevity, the result is not a complete manual of spiritual life,

⁴ Diac. Ioan I. Ică jr., *Sfântul Simeon Noul Teolog și provocarea mistică în teologia bizantină și contemporană*, in *Sfântul Simeon Noul Teolog, Discursuri teologice și etice*, Scrieri I, translation diac. Ioan. I. Ică jr., Editura Deisis, Sibiu 2001, pp. 20-21.

⁵ *Sfântul Simeon Noul Teolog, op. cit.*, pp. 128-129.

but a fabric of observations on the favorite themes of Symeonian spirituality: the necessity of the conscious experience of grace and a spiritual parent, the emphasis on the indispensability and the conditions – humility, repentance, tears – of mystical union with God-Trinity in the light of the Holy Trinity”.⁶

So the character of dogma is not speculative, anti-heretical, catechetical, or thaumaturgical; it cures the mind of the slippages of autonomous rationalism. Dogma is the correct azimuth of deification, which develops historically in form and not in substance. It is not the result of the philosophy of the Holy Fathers regarding the Church's faith itself but only regarding its relation to the slippages of heretical misunderstandings. In this sense, Saint Symeon's dogmatic formulations result, especially in *Hymns*, from a deified soul's dialogues directly with God-Trinity, through Jesus Christ. Therefore, it is inconceivable in Orthodoxy to separate dogma from life, the doctrine of spirituality, reason of faith, and Church Theology.

The apparent contradiction between episcopal and charismatic authority from the first millennium of the Constantinopolitan East created more fascination than scandal. However, triadology was sometimes a formal prerogative, a conglomerate of theoretical truths and even alien to practical life, primarily monastic. The role of the Studion Monastery, the centre of intellectual and spiritual elites right in the centre of the capital of Constantinople, was decisive in the fusion and complementarity of theoretical truths with practical experiences. Intellectualist formalism is the spirit of the letter that kills. (2 Cor 3:6) This type of urban monasticism/Hesychasm, through Saint Symeon the Pious, promoted the idea of an ecstatic experience, the fruit of prayers, of ascetic effort, combined with humility and tears, all leading the soul to acquire the grace of a personal encounter with Christ in the light of His Glory under the guidance of a priest or improved

⁶ Diacon. Ioan I. Ică jr., *Capitolele, Imnele și Epistolele simeoniene – problematica filologică, istorică și spirituală*, in *Simeon Noul Teolog. Imne, Epistole și capitole*, Scrieri III, p. 11.

monk. To see the light of the Glory of the Most Holy Trinity and live the direct experience with divine and deifying grace required integration into a contemplative spiritual life, “receiving the Holy Spirit and through him seeing the Son together with the Father”.⁷

The Holy Trinity is the basis of Christian spirituality but also the basis of Church theology. There is no Trinitarian theologising without the personal experience of the Most Holy Trinity's Revelation, the Glory's sight, of the uncreated Light that springs from the human nature of the Savior full of Spirit and foundation of the Church, of the general human nature restored from the old Adam until the end of the ages.

“Emerged from the Trinity and Her living ecclesial experience, unguided by the spirituality of the Fathers, epistemic theological discourse becomes anything but theology and testimony of the Church: dogmatics turns into religious philosophy, morality into a conventional ethical code, exegesis into philology and literary criticism, the liturgical in the history of the arts, the sermon in empty rhetoric, the canons in jurisprudence, the history of the Church in pure historiography, the object of which, with rigour, could be scientifically analysed and expounded even by an unbeliever”.⁸

Theology and the Church are one. Between them, there is a unity of spirit, ethos, of ascetic-mystical spiritual experience. In the book of the Acts of the Apostles, chapter 2, the Holy Evangelist Luke presents the unity of space and soteriological thinking of the Holy Apostles as a *sine qua non* condition for the Descent of the Holy Spirit, the Spirit of Incarnate Truth (Jn. 16:13), that is, of Christ the Savior: *When the Day of Pentecost had fully come, they were all with one accord in one place* (Acts 2:1). Unity, then extended, in the sacramental, baptismal and eucharistic framework becomes the Christological, pneumatic and ecclesial basis of our deification, but also of the revelation of the Holy Trinity

⁷ Sfântul Simeon Noul Teolog, *Cateheze*, 29, in *Scieri* II, translation diac. Ioan. I. Ică jr., Editura Deisis, Sibiu 2003, p. 307.

⁸ Diac. Ioan I. Ică jr., *Sfântul Simeon Noul Teolog și provocarea mistică în teologia bizantină și contemporană*, p. 26.

through grace, as Light: *Then those who gladly received his word were baptised; that day about three thousand souls were added to them. And they continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, the breaking of bread, and prayers.* (Acts 2: 41-42).

“The Church's unity in time and space has always been conceived as an experiential unity in Christ, the One to whom the Apostles bore witness. True theology is called to experientially apprehend the unity of Revelation, a unity that is not simply a logic and coherence intellectual, but a living reality proven by the continuity of the Church through the ages”.⁹

The sacramental eucharistic prolongation of the vision of light has become, for Eastern spirituality, an existential cry with an eschatological perspective: *I saw the true Light, I received the heavenly Spirit...*¹⁰, a sign that seeing God is a necessary condition for salvation and accessible to all Christian believers. Therefore, genuine spirituality can never be confused with rational speculation and can only be reached through purification (Matt. 5:8) and ascetic-mystical effort, but neither can theology with purely speculative science. Knowing and seeing God as a Trinity by grace implies participation in the entire Mystery of the Church as the defining sacramental reality of which Christ is the Head, as well as total adherence to the revealed Truth, which is not an abstract concept, but a Trinity of Persons.

Theology is mystical, or it is not Theology. It is a living and conscious feeling of the grace of the Holy Trinity as Light. It is interpersonal experience and communion, not abstract speculation; it is vision, i.e. theophany.

Saint Symeon the New Theologian¹¹ relates the testimony of a monk priest, taken from the mouth of the Reverend Symeon The

⁹ *Ibidem*, p. 33.

¹⁰ *Liturghier*, Editura Institutului Biblic și de Misiune al Bisericii Ortodoxe Române, București 2012, p. 195.

¹¹ Sfântul Simeon Noul Teolog, *Capetele morale ale lui Simeon Evlaviosul*, translation Dumitru Stăniloae, *Filocalia românească*, Vol. 6, Editura Institutului Biblic și de Misiune al Bisericii Ortodoxe Române, București 1977.

Pious, that a monk priest heard the Spirit speaking: "I thus descend upon all the prophets and apostles and the elect and the present saints of God. For I am the Holy Spirit of Christ"¹². This shaking testimony, received as a reward for the pure life spent by God's *chosen ones* in fasting and prayer, although taken from Philokalic spirituality, reinforces the teaching about the rest of the Spirit over the faithful people of the Lord in the Old Testament. "It is the Spirit who sits in the minds of the prophets, using their understanding as a matter, foretells in it through Himself, the things to come, first to them and through them and to us"¹³. Explaining this soteriological dogma, Saint Symeon the New Theologian entrusts us that "together with the word (of the archangel), the whole hypostatic and one-being Word of God and the Father entered the womb of the Virgin through the coming and together with the work of His Holy Spirit"¹⁴.

Starting from the text of Gen. 1:26 – *Let us make man in our image, after our likeness* – some holy fathers resorted to the psychological analysis of the Holy Trinity, in the sense that man also has mind, reason and soul. Unfortunately, from the 4th century, the Holy Trinity's psychological model proves inadequate. The Cappadocian fathers had reservations in this regard, precisely to counter Neoplatonic pantheism.

"The human mind can only point to a reality that transcends them. Their (the Holy Fathers') positive contribution to Trinitarian Theology is thus based on a careful and deliberate balancing of antitheses. The reality of the divine life lies between various sets of contradictory statements that are not subject to logical resolution. No philosophical calculation can ever solve the equation of the Trinity where $1+1=1$, hence the paradox that God is simultaneously three things and one thing.

¹² *Ibidem*, p. 118.

¹³ Sfântul Grigorie Palama, *Despre sfânta lumină*, translation Dumitru Stăniloae, *Filocalia românească*, Vol. 7, Editura Institutului Biblic și de Misiune al Bisericii Ortodoxe Române, București 1977, p. 344.

¹⁴ Sfântul Simeon Noul Teolog, *Cuvântări morale*, translation Dumitru Stăniloae, *Filocalia românească*, Vol. 6, Editura Institutului Biblic și de Misiune al Bisericii Ortodoxe Române, București 1977, p. 155.

St. Symeon the New Theologian resorts to the psychological model to illustrate his experience, and highlights precisely his reference to the union of man with God as involving the union of a *hypostatic triune* God with the deified man who has himself become the image of the Trinity...".¹⁵

4 Trinity and Unity

Being a communion of love, the Trinity is Light, a light in three radiances. "Light is the Father, light is the Son, light is the Holy Spirit... the three are one inseparable, but united in three Persons, unmistakably".¹⁶ As the interpersonal existence of love, "the Holy Trinity gathers them all together, glues them together, unites them and binds them to Himself. Their union makes them strong and unbreakable",¹⁷ therefore, man's love for God and love between men is always fueled by this communal power of triune love.

The Holy Trinity, as a diversity of Persons in Her unity, becomes the unifying principle of all opening to Him through faith, of human nature's unity in the diversity of its persons. "I see Christ fearfully opening the heavens to me, bending down to me, and showing Himself to me with the Father and the Spirit, the triune holy light, One and in Three and the Three in One. Light they are, undoubtedly, They and the Three are a unique light",¹⁸ the light of communal love.

¹⁵ Alexander Golitzin, *Sfântul Simeon Noul Teolog, viața, opera, gândirea*, in *Discursuri teologice și etice (I)*, diac. Ioan I. Ică jr., Editura Deisis, Sibiu 1998, pp. 499, 504.

¹⁶ Sfântul Simeon Noul Teolog, *Imne*, 33, translation Dumitru Stăniloae, Craiova 1991, p. 552.

¹⁷ *Idem*, *Cele 225 de capete teologice și practice*, translation Dumitru Stăniloae, *Filocalia românească*, Vol. 6, Editura Institutului Biblic și de Misiune al Bisericii Ortodoxe Române, București 1977, p. 60.

¹⁸ *Idem*, *Imne*, 11, translation Dumitru Stăniloae, Craiova 1991, p. 361.

Triune love is imparted to us by the Holy Spirit, and we experience love as triune hypostatic light through Him. "Love is the divine Spirit"¹⁹ because the Spirit is the One representing the perfect joy or love of the Father for the Son and the Son for the Father, it is by existence the Hypostasis of love, as the Son is the Hypostasis of Wisdom. As a speaking, dialogical hypostasis, man can become a hypostasis of love by receiving the grace of the Holy Spirit, just as the Son spreads love from Him by receiving the Spirit. Love is light and the Holy Spirit is love, and He represents the third in the Trinity and the fullness of God as meaning, as light, because only love as light gives meaning to existing things. This does not mean that only the Spirit is love and light. Nevertheless, Two would have neither love nor perfect light without the Third. The Trinity is, therefore, the source of love and light, therefore of life.²⁰

To be of the Father does not mean to have the Father as a cause outside Him, above Him, or before Him. However, being God the Father from eternity, the Son is also from eternity, and the Father begets a Person from eternity since He exists simultaneously with Him. "The Father is the Father, not the Son, because he begets. Furthermore, the Son is Son, and not Father because He was born... So we separate a moment, through thought and word, the quality of Father and that of Son... we outline the person of each two separately".²¹ It is with the eternal One. He is born of God the Father since He exists for eternity.²² Reason, Wisdom, and His Word are hypostasized following eternal birth from the Father. "The union of the Son with the Father is natural and without - from - beginning".²³

¹⁹ *Ibidem*, p. 396.

²⁰ Dumitru Stăniloae, *notele 204-205*, to Sfântul Simeon Noul Teolog, *op. cit.*, p. 400.

²¹ *Ibidem*, p. 46.

²² Dumitru Stăniloae, *nota 19*, to Sfântul Chiril al Alexandriei, *Despre Sfânta și cea deoștiță Treime*, translation and notes Dumitru Stăniloae, *Colecția Părinți și Scriitori Bisericești*, Vol. 40, Editura Institutului Biblic și de Misiune al Bisericii Ortodoxe Române, București 1994, p. 23.

²³ Sfântul Simeon Noul Teolog, *Cateheze II*, p. 350.

The Spirit proceeds only from the Father,²⁴ but it is sent by Christ into the world (Jn. 15: 26) and not only by Him but also by the Father. The Most Holy Spirit proceeds from the Father in an unspoken form and is sent to people through the Son. He is the teacher of the enlightened who sees the Son and the Father (Jn. 14: 9) worshipping the Triune God. His Father is the Principle that brings Him to being from eternity with the birth of the Son from eternity. The birth and procession of the Two Triune Persons are simultaneous works of the Father. The Spirit is the personified love of the Father to the Son. Therefore He sends Him into the Son and remains in Him, not passively but actively, resting in Him and shining in response to paternal love through filial love. The Spirit is the testimony of the love of the Two, made by a Hypostasis not separated from Them. He is sent by Christ into the world as a Comforter, as a witness of intra-trinitarian love, of community life, and through him, we become brothers of the Savior and sons of the same Father. It is the revelatory Hypostasis of the lives of the Holy Trinity: “how many of us have the Spirit...we see (know) in Him the Father, the unbegotten and the begotten Word, coming out of Him... worshipping the uncut Trinity, unfused in a single divinity and dominion and power”.²⁵

“When you hear of the Son of God understand and hear with Him also the Spirit; and when you hear the Spirit again, understand together with Him and the Father, since he also says about the Father (Jn. 4: 24). Everywhere you are taught the inseparability and divine existence of the Holy Trinity, and that where the Son is, there is the Father, and where the Father is, there is the Spirit, and where the Holy Spirit is, there is the entire tri-hypostatic Godhead, the One God, the Father with The Son and with His Spirit, Those of one being”.²⁶

Divinity is undivided into those distinguished as Father, Son and Holy Spirit. It is a single light in three suns, which interpenetrate each other without mixing.

²⁴ “As the mind is from my soul, rather in my soul, so it is from the Father, the Spirit”, Sfântul Simeon Noul Teolog, *Imn 44, op. cit.*, p. 612.

²⁵ Sfântul Simeon Noul Teolog, *Imnul 21*, p. 65.

²⁶ *Idem, Cuvinte morale*, p. 157.

“What the One is, these are the Other Two. For Three (persons) are in the same (God) (I John 4: 8) and are thought to be a single being, nature, and kingdom. So if the One is called by a name, it is contemplated according to nature also in the Others, apart from the names of *Father*, *Son* and *Holy Spirit*, that is, apart from the fact of *giving birth*, *being born* and *being proceeded*, because only these accompany indisputably Holy Trinity naturally and as properties, and in these it is not permissible for us to think or find an alienation, redistribution, or change of Names; for by these the Three Persons were made distinctly known, and it is not possible in this to put the Son before the Father, nor the Holy Spirit before the Son, but only to say at the same time: *the Father*, *the Son* and *the Holy Spirit*, without even the most subtle interruption of time or moment being made in these, because at once together with the Father the Son is also born and the Spirit is born”.²⁷

The Spirit did not leave Him even after He rose from the dead. Because in the work of renewing man and restoring his grace, the Lord breathed on the disciples and said: *Receive the Holy Spirit* (Jn. 20: 22-23).²⁸ Nor is the knowledge of the Father through the Son possible except in the Spirit. “He (Christ) bestows upon them (the Apostles) the Holy Spirit himself, and through the Holy Spirit also Himself and His Father, remaining inseparable from them”.²⁹

Shining the Spirit in Jesus Christ, those who unite with Him are partakers of this uncreated divine light; in it, they can know the whole Trinity. “Only those contemplating the Son who is in the beginning before all ages, the Father together with the Spirit, God

²⁷ *Idem*, *Cateheze II*, pp. 343-344.

²⁸ Sfântul Vasile cel Mare, *Despre Sfântul Duh*, translation Constantin Cornițescu *Colecția Părinți și Scriitori Bisericești*, Vol. 40, Editura Institutului Biblic și de Misiune al Bisericii Ortodoxe Române, București 1988, p. 55.

²⁹ Sfântul Simeon Noul Teolog, *Cuvântarea a V - a morală*, *Despre prezența Duhului Sfânt*, p. 198.

and the Word, and the triune light in one unity”³⁰ can partake of the uncreated grace and through him of the Triune God.

The sight of God, in Orthodoxy, is the height of glory. Glory is a manifestation of the divine Being, of the Godhead in the three Hypostases: the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. The human mind, contemplating them, can neither separate nor merge them.

“You made the corrupt one a god like You, O God, the First-without-beginning, Who are by nature together with God the Son and the Word, the Together-without-beginning, the One Begotten by You (Jn 1: 13), who is not separated from You mentally, but is inseparable from You in a real way”.³¹

The dogma of the Holy Trinity, which presents to us God as One in Being and three in Persons, cannot be compared with anything created, although the contemplation of the reasons for things in the world may raise our minds to their Creator.

“From the majesty and beauty of creatures is contemplated the Maker of all. By attributing these names to the divine being, which surpasses all understanding, we do not praise him by them, but guide ourselves through what has been said to the understanding of the hidden things”.³²

The perichoretic mode of existence of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit in the same Being (trinitarian inter-subjectivism) is incomparable; the intrinsic life of the Trinity is indeed the great Mystery of Christianity.

Scholastically, regarding the unity of the being and the trinity of the persons of the Holy Trinity, different analogies from the created world have been conferred over time (e.g., the brick that is made of clay, water and fire, but it is one; the tree with a root, trunk, crown; the sun with ray, light, heat).

Quoted often by Saint Symeon the New Theologian, the other theologian, Saint Gregory of Nazianzus, analogically compares the Holy Trinity to flowing water in which the Father is the eye, the Son the fountain, and the Holy Spirit the river. "But these are

³⁰ *Idem, Imn 21, op. cit., p. 364.*

³¹ *Idem, Discursuri teologice și etice, Scrieri I, trad. diac. Ioan. I. Ică jr., Editura Deisis, Sibiu 2001, p. 50.*

³² Sfântul Grigorie de Nyssa, *Contra lui Eunomie*, col. 961.

not separated either by time or by discontinuity of flow, even though they are distinguished from one another as God, by (hypostatic) properties. The eye, the spring and the river are one in number, although they have a special form”.³³ There is some resemblance between the eye, the spring, the river, and the Three Persons of the Holy Trinity, but in God, there is no flow but stability, although in Him there may be Three distinct Persons. “The Oneness is in Trinity without merging, and the Trinity is in Oneness without division”.³⁴

Divinity does not flow to another point through the Three Persons. They remain One in Another and are distinguished as Per-

³³ “I then thought of the sun as ray and light. But here too is the danger of thinking first of a composition of uncomposed nature, like the sun and those in the sun. The second, lest I see in the Father a being, and in the others not hypostases, but powers existing in God, non-existent, for neither the ray nor the light are themselves the sun, but solar emanations and qualities of the being. It is a great danger to think that in these there is and is not God... which is more absurd than everything that has been said. But I heard someone also subscribe to the following explanation: a ray shines on the wall coming from the sun and reflected by some moving water. The ray catches this motion, propagates it through the air it passes through and then stops it on the solid surface where it comes to rest. This is how an unusual vibration is born. The ray stirs in many movements and close together, showing itself one in many and many in one, because of the speed of meeting and separation. Thus her unit disappears before she catches sight of it. But I cannot admit this either for the following reasons: on the one hand, because the motion given to the ray of water is very clearly seen and there is nothing before God that gave the ray its motion. For He is the cause of everything and there is nothing prior to the cause. On the other hand, because even here they presuppose the same things: composition, diffusion, unstable nature and movement, which cannot be thought of the divinity. Using the guidance of the Spirit I showed to preserve to the end the illumination that I received. Thus, I convince as much as I can, (that people) worship the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, a single deity and power”, Sfântul Grigorie de Nazianz, *Cele cinci cuvântări teologice*, translated by Dumitru Stăniloae, Editura Anastasia, București 1993, pp.117-118.

³⁴ Sfântul Simeon Noul Teolog, *Discursuri teologice și etice*, Scrieri I, translation diac. Ioan. I. Ică jr., Editura Deisis, Sibiu 2001, p. 52.

sons more than in the three worldly examples. We can still consider the Father as the source of the Son and the Holy Spirit, but They do not come from Him. Between the Triune Persons, there is a unity that has no counterpart in the created.

“He who has This One (the Holy Spirit) also has the Three, but without fusion, even if without division. For he is a Father; and what will the Son be like? Because it is unborn according to being. And he is a Son; and how will Spirit be made? Spirit is Spirit. And what does Father look like? The Father is Father because He eternally begets”.³⁵

The Holy Fathers went beyond these examples from the material world in their thinking. They stopped at the human being,³⁶ which is made up - in addition to the body, mind, word and spirit - to analogically explain the triune mystery, which is above all human thought. Thus “in man there is mind, word and spirit, and neither the mind is without word, nor the word without spirit; and these are one in the other and in themselves. For the mind speaks by the word and the word is manifested by the spirit. By this man bears a dark image of the unnamed and archetypal Trinity. The word after the face shows this too. The Father is the Mind, the Son is the Word, and the Holy Spirit is truly the Spirit”.³⁷ Moreover, “the faculties of the body cannot apply in their mutual relations either to the Father, nor to the Son, nor to

³⁵ *Ibidem*, p. 53.

³⁶ “Orthodox theology emphasised the personhood of the human being with such intensity that it could say that the person means irreducibility to nature. Moreover, against individualism, it was shown that the person never remains closed in himself but is open to the connection in love with other people. According to the image of the Trinity above nature, communion does not mean living next to each other, but through each other, according to the word of Christ (Jn. 17:21), Dumitru Popescu, *Hristos – Biserică – Societate*, Editura Institutului Biblic și de Misiune al Bisericii Ortodoxe Române, București 1998, p. 93.

³⁷ Sfântul Grigorie Sinaitul, *Capete foarte folositoare*, Dumitru Stăniloae, Filocalia românească, Vol. 7, București, 1977, p. 101.

the Holy Spirit. For the nature of the Trinity transcends the realm of physical vision".³⁸

The dogma was not formulated to be believed only, but above all, to be lived. Without living, dogma becomes deceptive teaching; that is why dogmas are correlated with church life; they are in worship, sung and recited, iconographically exposed, and contemplated. Orthodox worship has a theophanic character. In Catechesis 2, Saint Symeon insisted on seeing and contemplating Christ even in this world, in the Church, through the Mysteries:

"please let us hasten to see Him and contemplate Him while we are still here. For if we deign to see Him sensibly even from here, we will die no more; death no longer has dominion over us (Rom. 6: 9). Let us not get to see Him only in the future, but let us fight even now to see Him".³⁹

Although it seems that Saint Symeon the New Theologian does not mention, in his work, very often the theophanic character of the Holy Eucharist, he is more concerned with the preparation for Eucharistic communion, purity, dispassion, and tears. There is no communion without tears. The Eucharist shares with us the Source of Grace, Christ the God-Man, the Way and the Life, because just like a newborn, if he does not cry when he comes into the world means that he is not alive, in the same way without tears at the Liturgy we are not alive before Life.

"One will not be able to cry a little, according to God, if he does not have to cry before Christ God every day and every night, even when he wants to obey the divine Mysteries. He will not be able to shed drops of tears. Therefore, communing daily, shedding tears with the fearful Mysteries, without pain entering the divine services, come out without any benefit".⁴⁰

The insistence on *communion with tears*, preceding the Eucharistic one, belongs to the believer's ascetic-mystical dimension on

³⁸ Origen, *Despre principii*, Teodor Bodogae, *Colecția Părinți și Scriitori Bisericești*, Vol. 8, Editura Institutului Biblic și de Misiune al Bisericii Ortodoxe Române, București 1982, p. 132.

³⁹ Sfântul Simeon Noul Teolog, *Cateheze*, 29, in *Scrieri II*, trad. diac. Ioan. I. Ică jr., Editura Deisis, Sibiu 2003, pp. 39-40.

⁴⁰ *Idem*, *Cateheze*, 4, p. 58.

the way to deification. We cry daily; we can share daily; only momentary repentance is not enough. This is how we arrive at the Mystery as service, an experience and reality, where God shows us all He wants and is helpful. Symeonian thinking proposes a Eucharistic approach in three steps: dinner, passion, and light⁴¹. Only in this way can the transfer of the fruits of objective salvation be fully realised at our personal level. It is about receiving the Treasure of real and personal, divine and deifying acts in which and through which the Trinity is whole in us and we whole in Her.

“For this is the treasure: the Holy Trinity, whom we contain, as has been said, by the exact observance of all the commandments, but Who contains us all by the love of men, Her power and grace, preserving and guarding us over all untouched, steadfast, and undaunted; and those who are powerless and slip easily, either lacking something or making a little mistake, immediately this Treasure gathers them, unites them with Herself, clings to Her and fills all our lacks, strengthens us and makes us stronger”.⁴²

Conclusions

Saint Symeon the New Theologian, at the height of the first Christian millennia, preaches a trinitarian theology based on the direct experience of the pure soul, with divine and deifying grace, in the shadow of the priest or the improved monk. Along with Saint John the Evangelist and Saint Gregory of Nazianzus, his personality fully embodies the mystical and doxological model of the Most Holy Trinity.

His trinitarian teaching runs through all his theological genres, from catechesis to poetry and even discourse. All this endeavour was carried out when the Church needed Christocentric and

⁴¹ *Idem, Cateheze, 20*, pp. 225-227.

⁴² *Idem, Cateheze, 27*, pp. 282.

pneumatocentric resettlement in terms of its spirituality and ecumenical witness.

The Symeonian triadology will undoubtedly give his homage, especially in 2022, a spirit of freshness and reevaluation of the Church's position concerning the new missionary and doctrinal challenges of today's society.

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