

Liturgical life
in a dogmatic world?

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Introduction

In setting out to write a paper on subjects like liturgy and dogma you realise one thing, how small you are. Through the years, many great men and women have defended the way we express our faith with their lives. The great apostles, the great councils of the Church, the Church fathers, ascetics and martyrs¹, all of them sacrificed everything in the name of Christ. It is easy to shrink away from our responsibility in such a comparison, yet, the only thing we can do is to join them. By joining them we honour them. By joining them, their struggles weren't in vain. By spending the hours of work writing this paper I do the only thing I can do to honour them, I remember them and I try to get to know Christ in a fuller way. That is what they wanted. They wanted people to get to know Christ. They wanted people to follow the way of life.

In the fallen state of humanity there is a tension between liturgy and dogma. At the same time the fulfilment of them both is pretty much the same thing. In our fallen state, men have drawn out the two so that they now, in some situations, are very far from each other². We tend to set them against each other (as provoked and insinuated in the title of the paper). One of the Church's major tasks is to draw them together again. In order to draw them together without making more damage one has to break them down³. Working with definitions and details provides the chance to correct errors made in the past. The errors made in the past are often caused by miscommunication, emotion, a political agenda or emergency circumstances. The Church has been able to correct itself just by this method of investigation of errors. However, the Church has also been forced to take more firm stands on errors that have turned into heresy.⁴ Another problem that the Church is constantly facing is that of historical and cultural change. Since we live in a living world, things and context change. It will always be a great challenge for the Church to hold on to what is true but at the same time accept new venues that express truths. To paraphrase Fr Alexander Schmemmann "The Church must change to remain the same". This is the paradox of which we find ourselves in the middle of.

Because we are fallen, the tension between liturgy and dogma will always be there, just like there is a tension in us between the Law and the Spirit; it is a natural consequence of the fall. However, in this paper I will try to investigate how the two can come together in a more full sense. Partially by defining what they are,

¹ Taking up an official role within the Church is a martyrdom as well.

² Westernizing and trying to define the sacraments for instance. The Eucharist, Fr Alexander Schmemmann

³ Death before life.

⁴ The ecumenical councils of the Church (325 – 787) defended the Christian doctrine against heresies like Arianism, Nestorianism, Montanism, Monoenergism, Iconoclasm, Gnosticism, Donatism, Apollinarianism amongst others. The first seven ecumenical councils, Leo Donald Davis.

partially by investigating history, and partially by comparing the liturgical life of the Church with the every day life of a Christian.⁵

Liturgy and dogma are bound together like the Law and the Spirit, like the letter and the spoken word or like the body and mind. They depend on each other to be able to work as they were supposed to work and together they show the way to the thing that binds them together and are their fulfilment, that is the Father in Christ through the Holy Spirit.

As two sides of the same coin they want to reveal a more complete picture of who God is. By approaching God from many different directions we can hope to grasp a little more during this life until we reach the full stature of wisdom in the next life.

⁵ The Christian life is supposed to find its foundation and goal in the liturgy, it is supposed to be liturgical every day and hour of the week. Often this is already the case but we fail to see it. We fail to see it because our knowledge of dogma isn't good enough.

Method of execution

The methods I've been using in writing this paper varied throughout the writing process. The biggest portion of the paper was written with the help of critical (in the good sense of the word) reading and information gathering. However, it would have been impossible to write the things here written without the effort of trying to live them myself. This is why my Church's and my own liturgical expression have had a big impact on the paper as well.⁶

Classic hermeneutics and exegesis blend into the paper as well as historical analysis and modern research of the catholic Church as a whole.

⁶ For information about the Evangelical Orthodox Church's doctrines and believes, here referred to as "my Church" please visit www.evangelicalorthodox.org

Dogma defined

In our “modern” age of secularism and post naturalism/modernism⁷ the word “Dogma” has received an undeserved “bad” reputation. The word is often used with the wrong intention, the wrong definition and with a lack of knowledge of what it actually means. Many of today’s problems within the Church spring from lack of communication or misinterpretations⁸ which is why we have to investigate words at a very basic level. The corruption of the word has gone so far that in the Oxford guide to philosophy you can read the following account on how the word is implied in today’s society.

“dogma. A term that is generally applied to religious doctrines that are accepted irrespective of reason of evidence, usually on scriptural or ecclesiastical authority. It is now used pejoratively, because it sanctions not only belief unjustified by reason , but also intolerance, i.e. the punishment of false belief. However, Mc Taggart revives the original positive sense, suggesting that the definition should be widened to include any proposition which has metaphysical significance, whether or not it is based on reason.

D. BER”

J.M.E Mc Taggart, *Some dogmas of religion* (London 1906)

We realise quickly that the above account is actually correct, this is how the word is used today. What it doesn’t account for is that this usage is wrong. Dogma is a lot bigger than that.

The original meaning of the word is “think, seem, seem good.”⁹ The original meaning is that it is a rule given from an authoritative source but the rule or law is *good*, it gives good fruit. As soon as a dogma doesn’t produce good fruit it ceases to be a dogma or a *doctrine of holiness*.

Ever since the fall of man, mankind has had a “problem” with authority¹⁰. Our ability to choose freely (so we can love truly) has presented us with the venue of doing whatever we would like to do, without considering what others think or

⁷ Naturalism. “In general the view that everything is natural, i.e. that everything that is belongs to the world of nature, and so can be studied by the methods appropriate for studying that world, and the apparent exceptions can be somehow explained away.” Post – Modernism. “In its broad usage, this is a ‘family resemblance’ term deployed in a variety of contexts (architecture, painting, music, poetry, fiction, etc.) for things which seem to be related – if at all – by a laid-back pluralism of styles and a vague desire to have done with the pretensions of high-modernist culture.” The Oxford guide to Philosophy edited by Ted Honderich.

⁸ The sack of Constantinople 1202 (The fourth crusade) is a very brutal and clear display of this lack of communication and misunderstanding. “Korstag” (Crusades), by Swedish author Lennart Johansson.

⁹ Derived from the Greek *dogma* from *dokein*, “think, seem, seem good”, the word designates a tenet of doctrine authoritatively pronounced. Bakers Dictionary of Theology p 171

¹⁰ Living Tradition p 41-44, John Meyendorff

need, especially others with authority over us. It has been “hardwired” into our core being to rebel against everything that is not inline with what we think is “right” (look at a two year old for a prime example). We look upon ourselves as the final source of knowledge.¹¹ We look upon ourselves as the final judge between what is good and what is sin. We look upon ourselves as the final answer to *everything*. Blinded by this (often emotional) rebellion we forget that it is often the ones with authority over us that have the most accurate knowledge and information upon which to base decisions. The ones with authority often have a better “over all” picture. This is logical because they didn’t get to the place of authority without displaying some kind of skill.¹² Since this is the case it is not very surprising that the definition of the word “Dogma” has been twisted as the years have gone by. Given this grim background of the usage of the word today, let us look at what it actually means and why a word like this can be a tool for us in our journey towards eternal life.

As we can see in footnote seven, dogma springs from the Greek word “dokein” which means “think”, “seem” or “seem good”. If we look in the Bible it seems like the word is used about decrees made from an authoritative figure.¹³ In Greek philosophy, especially Stoicism¹⁴ it refers to principles that are supposed to be “settled forever”, beyond all doubt. Josephus applies the word to the sacred books of the Jews¹⁵. Ignatius¹⁶, Origen¹⁷ and Cletet of Alexandria¹⁸ apply the word dogma to the Christian revelation (the Bible). If the word doesn’t hold anything “bad” or evil in itself why do we have so much trouble with it? Why do people usually become defensive when they hear the expression “dogmas of the Church”?¹⁹ Once again it springs from the very reason that the word holds authority, if a dogma is laid down and agreed upon it holds authority.²⁰ Even more severe and absolute are the dogmas that God has laid down in the Bible and the living expression of the One Holy Catholic and Apostolic Church. Since there is only one source of goodness and the very word “dogma” means “seem good” we can draw the conclusion that a correct understanding of the word is exclusive. If

¹¹ Individualism

¹² In this fallen world there are of course other ways to gain “authority” as well. Violence is a common one. However, in the spiritual realm everyone is equal and free, there are no “grades” of higher and lower except one, God, and His authority is based on the fullness of goodness existing in Him.

¹³ In the LXX the word dogma appears in Esth. 3:9; Dan. 2:13; 6:8 for a decree issued by the King. In Luke 2:1 it is the decree of Caesar Augustus, in Acts 16:4 the decrees laid down by the apostles, in Col. 2:14 and Eph. 2:15 the judgments of the law against sinners, which Jesus triumphed over on the cross

¹⁴ The philosophy of the mind and understanding of the world as a whole. (Simplified) Honderich “The Oxford guide to Philosophy” p 895

¹⁵ Contra Apion. I. 8

¹⁶ Ad Magnes. 13

¹⁷ De Principiis IV 156

¹⁸ Stromateis VII 763

¹⁹ This is a personal observation.

²⁰ This was the major task of the seven ecumenical councils.

we get to know this exclusive dogma, which we by all means now can call “the truth”, then all the other “dogmas” would cease to be dogmas. There can only be one ultimate authority and one final truth.

If we choose to see dogma like this, that it is actually a word showing us to God’s *loving* authority then we no longer need to shun away or be afraid of it. No, instead we can embrace it and learn about the decrees that God has given us through Christ and the Holy Spirit and as manifested in the Bible and in the living expression of the Church²¹. The dogma of the Church (with Christ as its head) is one of the foundational stones on which she finds her strength. The strength she finds there is the strength of *true freedom within loving authority*. An example of this is found in the gospel of St John when Jesus says: “*Neither do I condemn you; go and sin no more.*”²²

The word “authority” just like the word “dogma” is just a word that describes a thing, a relation or a situation. It doesn’t hold a value in the realm of good or evil until it is subject to man’s ability to choose. A man can choose to use his authority to his own vicious intentions or he can choose to use his authority to do good things. Who is the father that gives his son a serpent when he asks for a fish? Or who is the father that gives his daughter isolation when all she wants is an embrace and to be understood? God is *not* the evil father, He is the loving Father that isn’t/didn’t/wouldn’t stop at anything to save one of His lost sheep. Being sheep in His flock we should realize that it is not out of force that we have to obey the dogmas of the Shepherd but out of love for our Father. If we gain (with the help of faith) the spiritual knowledge about God’s good dogma, the result should be that we lay everything else aside so that we can enter into His salvation. (Whoever leaves his wife, brother or sister behind for the sake of my name will not be put to shame, he will gain his reward.)

The “problem” with dogma begins when we refuse to listen to the Shepherd’s voice or if we refuse to lay everything else aside. The consequences of doing that is that we change priority and with changed priorities we become prideful, thinking of ourselves in the first place²³. If we do that our understanding of dogma and doctrine becomes as narrow as our own mind, experience, feelings and moral will is. To grasp the true meaning of the dogma of God and in extension the Church, one has to extend oneself to the edge of self sacrifice (it is hard to learn new things and it hurts to grow). We have to put our own will aside and fill it with God’s will. Once we act upon God’s will, which in essence is agape²⁴, we can truly

²¹ Among other things, creation for example.

²² John 8:11

²³ According to St Makarios of Corinth we become subject to pride or ego as soon as we let go of our obedience to God. There is no middle ground. The Philokalia Volume One

²⁴ The unending, sacrificial love that brings diversity into unity.

know what His dogma is. It is once again a circular reasoning destined for eternity²⁵. It is only when we live the dogma that we can know it and it is only when we know the dogma that we are able to live it. Living the dogma is also called “liturgy”²⁶. One other great benefit from this is that it is when we do this we also can know ourselves, and since we are the image of God (one of the Church most “basic dogmas”) we also grow closer to an understanding of who God is.

Dogma is nothing dangerous or evil. It is actually the opposite. Dogma is the knowledge of God’s will and God’s will is good. This knowledge is hidden from those who won’t believe²⁷. The fullness of dogma and the natural consequence of having a correct understanding of God’s dogma is an outlived liturgy. It is knowledge coming “alive”, it is the understanding of the faith turning into practical living. If the dogma doesn’t turn into a correct liturgical living, a correct practice of a Christian life then it ceases to be God’s dogma, then it is something else, most probably a foolish man’s attempt to exploit God’s dogma for his own purposes (man’s dogma). This often happens when people who are in authority forget that they in turn are also under authority (God’s). True authority can only be given, and it can only be given to a person/communion that denies himself/itself. That is how the Son of God fulfilled His given authority and lived out true dogma in a true expression of liturgical life.

Embraced by liturgy

²⁵ St Irenaeus, Against heresies. The faith of the early Fathers. William A Jurgens p 94 index 227

²⁶ The work of the people.

²⁷ You heard without hearing, you saw without seeing.

As I mentioned above, liturgy is the work of the people. The original Greek word, “*leitourgia*” means to perform a public or state duty.²⁸ The early Church used this word to describe the actions of faith they were performing as a body of Christian believers. My own definition of the word, which this paper is an argument for, is: “Liturgy is the true understanding of God’s dogma, out lived in the practical life within the body of Christ.”

The Western view²⁹ tells us that the first record of liturgy performed (outside of the Bible) is the Didache (ca A.D 100). This work contains prayers of thanksgiving for the wine and the bread, simple instructions on how to perform a baptism and also some rules about fasting. The eastern view tells us this but also that liturgy has been performed as long as man have given thanks to God and that it emphasizes all aspects of life. Liturgy is not boxed in to take place only in a church building. Liturgy is taking place wherever God’s name is glorified. Where God’s dogma is lives out in His creation, there you find liturgy, or the work of His people.

Following the God given law, the Israelites performed the liturgy.³⁰ Following the fulfillment of the Law, the Church today are performing the liturgy whenever we pick up our cross and follow Christ in the deeds He performed. In thanksgiving for the gifts we receive, in the asking of forgiveness and in the asking of help from above³¹. In coming together as His body, with Him as Head we can work as a people, a holy nation, a royal priesthood. God wants us to come together, to come closer into the center, Him. He want’s us to stand as one and that is only possible through Him because it is only possible in the experience of His love. If we experience His love for us then we in return can give of that love to others. This is the intention of a liturgical or a sacramental life. We dare not exclude six days of the week from liturgy. Liturgy includes our whole being, our whole existence. Liturgy was never intended to be subdued to mere routine and law. Liturgy is meant to be the physical expression on this earth of the heavenly reality, in everything we do. Sacraments are the physical signs, which confer the very grace they signify. I will now go on to explain different “day to day” situations that everyone faces and that in a spiritual sense are connected to the Sunday liturgy and the “official” sacraments of the Church³²

²⁸ Bakers dictionary of Theology p 325

²⁹ Western theology has trough history leaned more towards the definition of liturgy and sacrament rather than letting the more eastern/mystical prevail. A good outline of this is given in Fr Alexander Schmemanns work, “The Eucharist”

³⁰ Leviticus

³¹ Tertullian on Prayer. The Faith of the early fathers. William A Jurgens p 124 index 300a

³² Baptism, Eucharist, Chrismation, Confession, Holy Unction, Holy Orders, Holy Matrimony are the sacraments that the Church recognizes as instituted by Christ Himself even though the eastern view always has been that life itself is a sacrament.

Baptism

The amount of written and spoken work about baptism is almost endless. As a “chief sacrament”³³ it has been the subject of a great amount of study. My intention is not to oppose, question or argue with the traditional view of baptism held by the Church but rather to remind myself of how great this mystery is. If we allow ourselves to view baptism as a mystery³⁴ (we can not fully understand it in our current state) we allow ourselves to enter into faith and it is only through faith, the elevating of our mind, that we can grasp the significance of baptism.³⁵

The sacrament of baptism is performed once because it imprints an indelible spiritual character.³⁶ The foundational thought of this doctrine is that in the baptism the sins of the person being baptised are forgiven, cleansed away, and are not to be repeated. However, history shows us that this hasn't been the case and the Church has adjusted to mankind's inability to stay away from sin, meaning, the penances aren't as severe as before.³⁷ If this is good or bad only God can say for He is the One seeing all the hearts of men. Since baptism is a picture *and* an experience of us dying and being resurrected in/with Christ it holds the same meaning as His life and death. The main difference is that He didn't have to die to gain eternal life because in Him there never was, is, or will be any sin. He died voluntarily for our sakes. We on the other hand *must* go through death to gain eternal life. Our sins must die away, we can't bring anything sinful or dark into our new state of life and light. It must be left behind and we can't leave it behind on our own. This leaving behind occurs in the baptism, we let our selves go and we jump into the water, trusting that Christ will help/raise us up, and He does.³⁸

When I look closer at my own life I realise that similar situations are occurring all the time. When I forgive someone a wrong done to me I make an effort to let it go, to leave it behind, to forget. Once I do it doesn't claim any power over me. It is dead, but both I and the person asking forgiveness are still alive, resurrected. When I left the womb of my mom I died from that reality (that is probably why I screamed) and I entered into a new reality, a new life. I left the water of the womb behind me and entered into the world of choice. Our whole life is shaped by this dynamic. The dynamic of leaving something behind so you can enter into something new. Everything that you are not able to let go of will claim power over

³³ The Church recognizes two “chief sacraments” on which the other sacraments and a liturgical life finds their origin and fulfillment, those sacraments are Baptism and Eucharist.

³⁴ From Gr “mysterion” which was often translated into “sacramentum” in Latin. Bakers Dictionary of Theology p 465

³⁵ St Hippolytus of Rome, the Apostolic tradition, Faith of the Early fathers p 169, William A Jurgens

³⁶ Tertullian on baptism, Faith of the early fathers p 127, William A Jurgens

³⁷ It seems like the theology concerning baptism and sin has gone from a very physical understanding in the early Church (being closer in time to the historical person of Jesus) to a more holistic view in the Church today (being shaped by the Holy Spirit).

³⁸ It also occurs in our physical death of our bodies when the body and the soul are separated.

you. The only person you shouldn't let go is Christ, He is the source of eternity and He reigns forever. Everything else will fade away so we better not cling to it.

We are baptised once but we bump into "small baptisms", "small deaths" every day. That is why we need to *live in our baptism* on a daily basis. We need to remind ourselves that we are forgiven so we should forgive. We are saved so therefor we should help others to the path of salvation. We have died but we live.

Eucharist

Ever since creation, man has needed food to survive its a necessary nourishment for mankind to survive. God gave Adam all the fruits of the earth, except one, to eat.³⁹ Adam ate of that forbidden fruit anyway. In his pride Adam failed to obey the one command which would have allowed him to freely trust God. After Adam's failure, God launches His back up plan to save mankind and allows them to stay alive but with restrictions. They now need to work for their food. He says that it is with much toil and sweat you now will ease your hunger for staying alive.⁴⁰

We still labour to "earn our bread", we still need food for our bodies to function and survive. It wouldn't matter how much food we would eat if we don't eat the right kind, if we don't eat the right kind we will eventually die. If we look on the uneven distribution of food in the world today we realise quickly that if everybody would have an equal share of the food produced we wouldn't have any starvation in the poor countries of this world. We wouldn't have the same amount of heart failures in the rich countries. The physical circumstances that we find our world in is a picture of a spiritual reality. Every person starves for real food, for real bread. They don't know where to find it or they choose not to look hard enough so eventually their heart fails. Since we are created for eternity (not 79 years) we must have food that is designed for eternity. That food is the broken body of Christ.

Christ is the eternal distributor of heavenly bread, the manna⁴¹ from above. He will never run out of supplies. He is the displayed Creator and Sustainer of life. As the head of His body, the Church, He continues to distribute heavenly bread for everybody that comes asking in faith. He gives of His life abundantly.⁴² He is the source of life and therefore we must draw our life from Him otherwise we will parish. This is why the Eucharist is so great, it is the actual "refilling" of life for our eternal existence. This is why the Eucharist is the supper of thanksgiving⁴³. We

³⁹ Genesis 1:29

⁴⁰ Genesis 3:17-19

⁴¹ Manna: What is this?

⁴² St Clement of Alexandria, The instructor of Children p 178 Faith of the early fathers, William A Jurgens

⁴³ Eucharist in Greek means "to give thanks",

don't give thanks merely because it is expected of us⁴⁴ but because that is the only thing we can do when we realise that we are saved by Him Who still feeds us. We offer ourselves back to Him. With the sweat of our labour producing the bread and the wine that we offer, we come back to Him with everything that we are and have, and put it on the altar to be reconciled with Him again. He doesn't require animals anymore, but He does require our hearts, which in a mystery are contained in the bread and wine.

In the sacrament of the Eucharist, everything that we are and have is transformed, by God's grace through Christ by the Holy Spirit into its original created state, the new Adam.⁴⁵ In accepting the offered gifts into our bodies, which is now Christ Himself, Christ once again fills us with His eternal life. In the sacrament of the Eucharist, we, as God's created beings become one and whole once again. It is only in Christ that we can find the unity that we long for. It is only Christ that can bring us back into the unity we lived in before the fall of man. The fullness of that "repairing" is celebrated every week, around the world in the sacrament of the Eucharist. The liturgical expression of the sacrament of thanksgiving that we celebrate every Sunday is a manifestation of how our whole life should be executed. We should live in a state of thankfulness because that is the only state that will bring us eternal joy and fulfilment.

Holy matrimony

Once again we must return to the time of the creation of the world to find the reason and beginning of the holy matrimony. God creates man as an image of Himself in an act of love. Since Adam is alone God creates woman so that Adam can love and give of himself as well, which of course is his purpose, being an image of God.⁴⁶ Adam and Eve are in one sense, diversities. They are different from one another. Yet it is together that they find their role and function. It is in their giving of themselves to each other that they come together. It is together that they in turn can create new life, which is one of the major reasons of holy matrimony.⁴⁷ It is in the unity of the diversity that life is able to go on, to be renewed. On their own they can not prevail in living like pictures of God. God is Three in One He is not alone. He is unity in diversity in a mystery. In holy matrimony man also becomes one by the grace of the Holy Spirit. Two persons become one body and one spirit in a mystery. In Holy matrimony we once again return to our original state as with any sacrament. We were supposed to be joined together in harmony and joy, giving out of our love for each other. The fall of man took away the natural promise of faithfulness between the "spouses". No ceremony was needed to confirm the legality and the exclusivity in their relation

⁴⁴ For instance during our every day prayers at our dinner table.

⁴⁵ St Irenaeus, Against heresies p 93, 100 Faith of the early fathers, William A Jurgens

⁴⁶ Genesis 1:27; 2: 7-9

⁴⁷ St Clement of Alexandria, Stromateis. Faith of the early fathers p 185 William A Jurgens

before the fall. God Himself was the witness. After the fall the promise to faithfulness needed to be spelled out and witnessed by the faithful, by the Church (God's presence on earth). In defining what a legal, holy and loving relation between man and woman is after the fall, the liturgy of the holy matrimony took form. What makes holy matrimony "special" compared to the other sacraments is that it is a physical reality *between two individuals* that has to be dealt with everyday once its entered. It is an eternal promise to another human being that must not be broken.⁴⁸ Once this promise is established and witnessed the foundation for new life is laid down. In the love and trust between the spouses, healthy children can be brought up. Once again the image of God is shown in mankind through the sacrament. In man becoming a father and in woman becoming a mother. Being a good father, provider, protector and lover of his wife and family is indeed liturgical living. Being a mother, nurturer, comforter and lover to her husband and family is indeed liturgical living. We were created for these functions and roles and when we step into them in faith we live the liturgy. We must never cease to work on our salvation or take it for granted.

Looking at the three sacraments mentioned above we quickly realize that the pattern of our whole life is linked together with all the official sacraments. We need to go to confession when we struggle with guilt. We need to go for holy unction when we are sick or dying. We need to confirm our baptism with the manifestation of the Spirit if we are going to be able to live godly lives. We need the structure of holy orders for the Church to work to the benefit of our salvation. We need the liturgical living established on the foundation of the holy dogmas for our salvation. It is real, it is about life and death.

Liturgy and order

Saying that our whole life is a sacrament may lead to an interpretation that we can celebrate liturgy however we please and whenever it fits our own individual schedule. This is not the case. Liturgy is the work of the *people*, not of the individual. Like any work or job we need to show up on time and work hard together to gain the desired results. As any collective, the Church requires a structure and organisation in order to function. This is why the Church has developed official liturgies through the centuries. This is not to be confused with politics. The liturgical frame that the Church developed derives from a love to the neighbour, not a need to fulfil some kind of civic duty (in the political sense of the word). It finds its source in a desire to help the needy, to share one's own gifts and possessions for the benefit for the greater body, to the benefit of *all people*. It finds its power in trying to act like God's presence here on earth. As this body grew, more structure was required (not everyone can be a foot or a hand). The early Church realised that as a growing community we need a set frame, with

⁴⁸ St Clement of Alexandria, Stromateis. Faith of the early fathers p 183 William A Jurgens

boundaries to be able to keep our integrity against impostors and heretics. The celebration of the liturgy (the Eucharist or the hours of prayer for example) helped in this defence of the Church. The Church is not a place of chaos but a place of order, good order. The Church is not a place of democracy but of authority, good authority. The Church is not a place of laziness but of work, good work.

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The common ground

Somewhere between heaven and earth, dogma and liturgy meet. The common place of where they meet is called the spiritual realm. It is only in the Spirit we can understand the dogma so that we can live the liturgy. God is Spirit⁴⁹ It is in Spirit

⁴⁹ John 4:24

we are baptised, it is in Spirit that the bread and wine are transformed. It is in Spirit we receive forgiveness of our sins, it is in Spirit we come together as man and woman. It is in Spirit we receive healing, it is in that Spirit we confirm our faith and it is in the Spirit that we set aside holy orders. Even though the Spirit is supernatural, It is very real. He is the Helper that Christ promised to send.

The Spirit has been ever present with all of us but revealed to the ones that believe. He is the One that inspired the writers of the holy canons in which the dogmas of God are revealed to His people. It is an absurdity to think that a non-believer can comprehend the mysteries that a believer like blessed Augustine for instance had trouble grasping. It takes spiritual eyes to understand spiritual things. However, there is a difference in understanding the faith and accepting the faith. If the heart is willing the mind will soon follow. It is about choice. A true faith can only be true if there is a lack of understanding. It is in this lack of understanding that we display our true trust in God. This is the mystery that we can't comprehend, this is where the dogma of God and the liturgy of His holy nation meet to perform the heavenly worship.

The common ground is the heavenly worship in faith. This is the place we were intended to be, in the presence of His glory. A true interpretation of the dogmas of God will eventually lead to this place. A true, sacramental and liturgical life will end up here in the New Jerusalem⁵⁰. They don't exclude each other, they confirm each other. Together they form a balance of peace keeping the believer on the narrow path towards/already in heaven. It is a living relation, an eternal dynamic.

Conclusion

Arriving at holy ground in the state of worship we reach our conclusion, we reach our ultimate goal.⁵¹ Sometimes we forget that even though dogma and liturgy will

⁵⁰ City of God, city of peace. Ps 46:4

⁵¹ Blessed Theodoret writes, "The Lord God has no need of anyone to praise Him; but by His goodness alone He granted existence to angels, archangels, and the whole creation." Further, "God has need of nothing; but He, being an abyss of goodness, deigned to give existence to things which did not exist." St.

take us to unity with God again we are still “locked” up in a stained body, a fallen world. We can only interpret the dogmas and doctrines from a fallen state, we can only live the liturgy with our broken bodies. Reaching the conclusion or rather fulfilment of Gods intended reason for us to be we no longer have to interpret the dogma through our fallen state and live the liturgy through a broken body. No, then we actually become what we were created to be, that is, images of God, united to Him. We, in Spirit become the “dogma” and by our very existence together with God in harmony celebrate the Divine Liturgy by nature. “Dogma” is just a mere word describing and explaining the fundamental truths of the Divine economy among other things. “Liturgy” is in a sense just a mere word trying to define how we should perform the work of God, the work of love. But in the conclusion those two words transform into the ultimate reality, the unity with God.

This conclusion is of course already happening within the body of Christ, the Church here on earth. In the Spirit we can “get in touch” with the heavenly reality from here, but more is yet to come. The fulfilment of the glory of the kingdom of God is here but it is also yet to come. It is beyond time and measure. This is mystery as anything spiritual. We must never stop moving further up and deeper in, it must be an eternal procession. It is in this procession, this *life* we find our peace and love. I could have written a paper on a specific dogma or a specific liturgy and the different aspects and interpretations of them. But I thought it unnecessary. The fighters and warriors of the Christian faith have already nailed down (literary) all the definitions that we need for our salvation. The interpretations and the lessons taught by them are equal to or surpass anything we can produce today. We don’t need another article on how the Spirit proceeds from the Father or how high an iconostases should be. Many times these articles/publications/arguments have led to disunity.⁵² What we need is Christians with integrity, living out their faith like the early Church did. In reminding myself of that I decided that I am way too small to bring my interpretations of already settled truths. The one thing I can do is to try to understand how they relate so that they may have a true impact on my life and in extension the lives of the people surrounding me. Then the words become living words. The thought becomes word, which becomes deed. The dogma becomes liturgy.⁵³

John Damascene says (as we have just seen), “The good and transcendently good God was not content to contemplate Himself, but by a superabundance of goodness saw fit that there should be some things to benefit by and participate in His goodness.”

⁵² Referring to the almost 1100 years old dispute of the Filioque for example.

⁵³ Personal interpretation of St. Athanasius, *De sentent Dionis.*, no. 15

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