

THE ROMANIAN INSTITUTE OF
ORTHODOX THEOLOGY AND
SPIRITUALITY

Symposium

**The Theological Legacy of Fr. Dumitru
Stăniloae and its Ecumenical Actuality**

*The Sixth Ecumenical Theological
Symposium*

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**THE ROMANIAN INSTITUTE OF
ORTHODOX THEOLOGY AND
SPIRITUALITY**
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Introductory Address

Distinguished Guests, Dear Friends,

We find ourselves in a particularly important moment in the life of the Orthodox Church, today as we commemorate five years since Fr. Dumitru Stăniloae passed away.

This is an important moment because Fr. Stăniloae represented and represents an event in the history of contemporary Orthodox Christianity, and an event must be approached doxologically, in celebration as we are doing today.

When theologians of great prestige like Kallistos Ware, O. Clément, John Meyendorff, Ch. Yannaras, Jürgen Moltman and others like them consider Fr. Stăniloae the greatest orthodox theologian of our time, a panorthodox theologian, a Heidegger of our days, a Church Father, in the traditional, patristic sense of the term, the theologian of hope, the Professor, the Spiritual Guide etc., we understand better not only whom we celebrate but also why.

From a personal point of view I have to mention here that I organized this Symposium together with Mr. George Alexe, and I am part of it with all the more pleasure and increased sense of duty since I had the privilege to have been Fr. Stăniloae's student in my doctoral years at the Theological Institute in Bucharest (1975-1978) where I did in-depth studies of systematic theology under his direction.

Now I would like to tell you a few words about the Romanian Institute of Orthodox Theology and Spirituality.

The ROMANIAN INSTITUTE OF ORTHODOX THEOLOGY AND SPIRITUALITY was founded in 1993. It promotes an ecumenical exchange with other churches trying to bring witness of our Christian Orthodox faith, theology, and traditions (which, even though not very well known here, are a fundamental part of the personal and cultural identity of Romanian immigrants in this country). It is also a place to learn about the theological differences of the various American faiths. We believe that in the framework of our religious tradition, ecumenism is the foundation for life together based on freedom, respect and harmony. At the same time, we also want to educate our own people and especially the younger generation in the values of the Romanian culture and Orthodox faith and spirituality.

To accomplish this, the Institute has published a weekly bulletin with spiritual, homiletic, pastoral, and cultural articles. Since May 1996, the bulletin has been transformed into a quarterly review, approximately 120 pages, called *Lumină Lină, Gracious Light*. This review is published in Romanian and English, but Romanian is the predominant language.

The Institute organizes annually a Theological Ecumenical Symposium, at which theologians, clergy, and lay people from various Christian denominations are invited to present papers. The presentations are then published in a journal. There have been five symposia with the following themes: *Worship and Identity in our Contemporary Society* (1993), *Quo Vadis Homo? Salvation and the Modern World* (1994), *Divine Creation and Human Responsibility in the Context of Contemporary Ecological Preoccupations* (1995), *Freedom and Responsibility in Contemporary Society* (1996), and *Rediscovering God: the Relation Between God and Man and Its Significance for Our Life Today* (1997).

As president of the Institute I would like to acknowledge in gratitude our guest speakers who came to honor Fr. Stăniloae tonight:

George Alexe, Senior theologian of the Romanian Orthodox Church, poet and writer, essayist, publisher; director and founder of *Romanian Communion*; president of the Sixth Ecumenical Theological Symposium

Rev. Fr. Dr. Ronald Robertson

Associate Director, Secretariat for Ecumenical and Interreligious Affairs, National Conference of Catholic Bishops, USA

Rev. Fr. Dr. Eugen Pentiu

Professor of Old Testament and Hebrew at Holy Cross Greek School of Theology, Boston, MA

Rev. Fr. Drd. Ioan Ioniță

New St. George Romanian Orthodox Church, Lansing, Illinois, translator in English and editor of Fr. Stăniloae's dogmatic theology.

Dr. Lucian Turcescu

Adjunct Professor of Systematic Theology and Early Church History, University of Antioch, NY and St. Michael's College, Univ. of Toronto

I would also like to gratefully acknowledge all of you who are here present, guests from both cultures American and Romanian, parishioners, friends, and particularly members of the Church Council

and Committee who helped to organize this event.

I encourage all of you to actively take part in the discussions following the presentations, thus bringing your important contribution to the Symposium.

Welcome to the Sixth Ecumenical Theological Symposium!

GEORGE ALEXE

Symposium Overview

Distinguished Guests, Participants, and Friends,
Ladies and Gentlemen

We welcome you all to the Sixth Ecumenical Theological Symposium of the Romanian Institute of Orthodox Theology and Spirituality, academically organized by its President Fr. Dr. Theodor Damian, Professor of Philosophy and Ethics at Audrey Cohen College in New York.

This year, our Symposium is commemoratively dedicated to Fr. Stăniloae under the following theme: *The Theological Legacy of Fr. Dumitru Stăniloae and its Ecumenical Actuality*.

As you may know, there are five years since Fr. Dumitru Stăniloae of blessed memory, the most charismatic Romanian Orthodox Theologian of our century, had passed away on October 5th, 1993. He was one of the greatest religious thinkers of the Eastern Romanity. To our Romanian pride, Fr. Stăniloae, our beloved professor and spiritual mentor, was a friendly family man, whose vocation was not only to render the Christian Orthodox teaching more readily accessible to our modern and postmodern sensibility and mentality, but also to ethnically and ecumenically revitalize the Romanian Theology and monastic life. In this sense, the Theology of Fr. Dumitru Stăniloae provides a solid foundation for the Romanian Orthodox Spirituality, culture and art, as well as for the ecumenical unity of the one, holy, catholic and apostolic Church.

In setting the preliminaries for this Commemorative Symposium, we have to mention from the very beginning, that his great sense of Romanian dignity was essential to Fr. Dumitru Stăniloae's spiritual accomplishments as an Orthodox priest, University Professor of Theology, Doctor Honoris Causa of many European Universities, distinguished Member of the Romanian Academy, as well as a prolific writer.

Our Symposium offers new insights into Fr. Dumitru Stăniloae's theological legacy and its ecumenical actuality. Also, it is recalling into our memories the living image of Fr. Stăniloae as it is venerated in our souls.

Among the words most familiar to Fr. Dumitru Stăniloae are

person and communion. We all know these words, but do we fully understand them in the sense Fr. Stăniloae theologically and ecumenically intended them?

Fr. Stăniloae is teaching us that “person and communion” represent the ultimate reality of the Christian world, based on the image and likeness of God in man, thus revealing the true Christian essence and religious value of the human personality in its spiritual relationship with God; in other words that underscores the mystery of our communion with God.

Tonight, our commemorative Symposium highlights some of the most significant aspects from the life and work of Fr. Stăniloae in close connection with his theological legacy and its ecumenical actuality. The following papers will be presented: *Together with Fr. Stăniloae on the Theological Mainline of the Romanian Orthodoxy and Ethnicity*, by myself; *The Theology of the Gift in Fr. Stăniloae’s Synthesis*, by Very Rev. Fr. Dr. Theodor Damian, our President of the Romanian Institute of Orthodox Theology and Spirituality and Professor of Philosophy and Ethics at Audrey Cohen College; *Dumitru Stăniloae on Christian Unity*, by Rev. Fr. Dr. Ronald Roberson, Associate Director, Secretariate for Ecumenical and Interreligious Affairs, National Conference of Catholic Bishops USA, who just this year has successfully earned his title of Doctor in Theology, by presenting a very important doctoral dissertation entitled: *Contemporary Romanian Orthodox Ecclesiology. The Contribution of Dumitru Stăniloae and younger colleagues*, at Pontificium Institutum Orientale, Roma, 1988. I would like, on this very occasion, to congratulate Fr. Ronald Roberson, for his interest in the Romanian Orthodox Theology, by assuring him that his presence will always be brotherly welcomed at our Romanian Institute, under the tutelary spirit of our beloved Fr. Dumitru Stăniloae. The closing paper, *“Hermeneutical Principles in Fr. Stăniloae’s Theology*, will be presented by the Very Rev. Fr. Dr. Eugen Pentiuc, Professor of Old Testament and Hebrew at Holy Cross Greek School of Theology, Boston, Massachusetts.

Regretfully, instead of six papers assigned to this Symposium, there will be presented only four, because two of our participants, Prof. Dr. Lucian Turcescu of Toronto, Ontario, and Very Rev. Fr. Ioan Ionita of Lansing, Illinois, have announced in the last moment that, because of blessed reasons, they were obliged to cancel their participation. However, the paper of Dr. Lucian Turcescu, entitled: *Fr. Stăniloae’s*

Critique of Communion Ecclesiologies will kindly be presented by the Very Rev. Fr. Dr. Ronald Roberson, while the paper of Fr. Ionita, *Theological and Cultural Significance of Fr. Stăniloae's Visit in America*, will be published in the proceedings of this Symposium.

Now I am really privileged to acknowledge and inform you that yesterday we received from the Romanian Patriarchate, Department for Foreign Relations, Patriarchal Palace of Bucharest, and from His Eminence Daniel, Metropolitan of Moldavia and Bucovina, two very warm messages of best wishes for the success of our Symposium.

The messages are addressed to the Very Reverend Fr. Dr. Theodor Damian, President of the Romanian Institute of Orthodox Theology and Spirituality, and read as follows:

The Romanian Patriarchate
Department for Foreign Church Relations
Patriarchal Palace
December 1, 1998

To Very Reverend Fr. Dr. Theodor Damian
Romanian Institute of Orthodox Theology and Spirituality

Very Reverend Father,

We thank you for the news you sent us about the Sixth Ecumenical Theological Symposium having as theme: *The Legacy of Fr. Stăniloae's Theology and its Ecumenical Actuality*. We consider this initiative as very beneficial towards a larger better knowledge of the exceptional theological personality of Fr. Stăniloae in the American midst.

We are convinced that such kinds of meetings will be a significant contribution to the affirmation of the Orthodox theology in general and of the Romanian one particularly in the ecumenical context. We send you the best wishes of health and success in the work you are enterprising.

With our blessings
Bishop Teofan Sinaitul, Patriarhal Vicar

Metropolitanate of Moldavia and Bukovina
Dr. Daniel Ciobotea, Archbishop and Metropolitan
November 26, 1998

Fr. Dr. Theodor Damian,
The Romanian Institute of Orthodox Theology and Spirituality

Dear Father Damian,

Thank you for your invitation to participate in the Sixth Ecumenical Theological Symposium, "The Theological Legacy of Fr. Dumitru Stăniloae and Its Ecumenical Actuality". We have found both the theme and the programme of the conference very interesting and well chosen and we congratulate you for your effort to commemorate the work and personality of the greatest Romanian theologian.

Unfortunately though, due to numerous activities in our diocese already scheduled for December, we have to participate in the meeting of the Holy Synod of the Romanian Orthodox Church and are engaged in the preparations for the holy feast of Christmas, we cannot participate in this interesting event you have organized. We pray our Lord Jesus Christ to grant you His holy peace and love and to further help you in your noble activity.

With blessings,

Daniel

Archbishop of Iași, Metropolitan of Moldavia and Bukovina.

At 7:00 P.M., the Symposium will take a break during which all of us are invited to a memorial dinner given in the memory of Fr. Stăniloae. After the break, all papers will be discussed and commented as long as it will be necessary. The closing remarks will be presented by Fr. Theodor Damian, after which the Sixth Theological and Ecumenical Symposium will close with a prayer.

Together with Father Dumitru Stăniloae on the Theological Mainline of the Romanian Orthodoxy and Ethnicity. Personal Testimonies and Recollections

The most relevant modality to observe the first five years since our venerated professor, Fr. Dumitru Stăniloae has passed away (on October 5, 1993), is to celebrate this spiritual event by contemplation and not by a formalized commemoration empty of any sense. Instead of commemorators, we should become contemplators of the theological legacy of Fr. Dumitru Stăniloae in its highly impressive ecumenical actuality. In fact, our commemorative contemplation ought to be in itself a true celebration of the spirit, and a real *Communio Sanctorum*, in which all of us are participating in the same communion of love with the real Fr. Dumitru Stăniloae, who is still living in our souls, as himself totally devoted his entire life and work to the Romanian Orthodox spirituality and ethnicity, by asserting them nationally and internationally.

As far as I am concerned, my personal relationship with Fr. Dumitru Stăniloae, since he was transferred from Sibiu at the Faculty of Theology of Bucharest University, in the academic year of 1946-1947, until his passing away, five years ago, on October 5, 1993, was a real blessing. That means 46 years, during which I was in full communion with Fr. Dumitru Stăniloae on the theological mainline of the Romanian Orthodoxy and ethnicity, not only at the Faculty of Theology (1946-1955), but also at and through the main publications of the Romanian Patriarchate, *Theological Studies*, *Orthodoxy*, and *Romanian Orthodox Church* (1957-1959), at the Main Library of the Holy Synod (1960-1965) and at the Department of Foreign Relations of the Romanian Patriarchate (1966-1969), as well as here, in the United States and Canada, at the Department of Publications of the Romanian Orthodox Archdiocese in America and Canada, since 1969 until his passing away.

For as long as I could remember, Fr. Dumitru Stăniloae, my professor and spiritual mentor, has become transparent to my soul, irradiating in it the gracious light of his face and the goodness and love of his spirit. For me, Fr. Dumitru Stăniloae will forever stand at the heart of Romanian theology and literature, as a sacred symbol of our spiritual and national resistance. That is why, as one who has closely

worked with Fr. Dumitru Stăniloae in different periods of time and difficult circumstances, I express on this very occasion, my deepest devotion toward him; my personal testimonies, experiences and recollections are meant to humbly evoke his personality as a memorial tribute of our souls, in eternal recognition and gratitude for what he martyrically did and spiritually meant for our Romanian Orthodoxy and ethnicity.

Our testimonies and memories are centered on the very fact that Fr. Dumitru Stăniloae has been and faithfully remained identified with the orthodoxist and autochthonist ideals of Nichifor Crainic's *Gandirea* [*The Thinking*] movement; he developed it in his own way based on his encyclopedic knowledge of the patristic and philokalic literature and history, and particularly by being identified with the Romanian Orthodoxy and ethnicity that ethnogenetically were inherited from the apostolic times.

As far as I know, there still doesn't exist, at least in the last half of our century, a theological reevaluation of the orthodoxist and autochthonist movement of *Gandirea* and also of the literary and theological work of Nichifor Crainic. Such a theological reevaluation would show and will always show that, in the first place, this movement of Nichifor Crainic and of his theological group *Gandirea*, despite of all kinds of adversities against them, never ceased to exist in theology, literature and art. On the contrary, as I could personally testify, since 1944, and more precisely 1947, after the disappearance of Nichifor Crainic from the public scene, tacitly his place was taken by Fr. Dumitru Stăniloae, who then continued and accomplished in his own way the spiritual and national ideals promoted by *Gandirea* and Nichifor Crainic.

It is very hard for me to understand why the Romanian theologians did not even try to respond to the sharpest literary critics or to the Marxist interpretations of the movement *Gandirea*, initiated by Nichifor Crainic and devotedly supported by Fr. Dumitru Stăniloae and by an elite of university professors of theology, such as Fr. Ioan G. Coman, Emilian Vasilescu, Theodor M. Popescu, Ioan G. Savin, as well as by many writers and theologians, who altogether were representing the strong theological wing of *Gandirea*.

Nevertheless, immediately after December 22, 1989, Fr. Dumitru Stăniloae, in interviews, articles and essays began to talk about Nichifor Crainic and his spiritual movement of Romanian orthodoxism

and autochthonism and also about the relation between Orthodoxy and “Gandirism,” as the spiritual movement promoted by *Gandirea* under the leadership of his mentor Nichifor Crainic is usually called. Again, a special mention has to be made that in the new series of *Gandirea*, Fr. Dumitru Stăniloae has published his “Recollections about Nichifor Crainic, the Director of *Gandirea*” (Sibiu, 1992, No. 2, p. 9).

Certainly, our paper is not intended to be an exhaustive coverage of Fr. Stăniloae’s life and work in the Romanian or ecumenical field of Orthodox Theology. Being acclaimed as the most representative and influential personality of the Romanian Orthodox Theology, Fr. Dumitru Stăniloae is very well known almost in the entire Christian world.

However, despite of his ecumenical recognition and theological fame, the real Fr. Dumitru Stăniloae is surprisingly still very much unknown and even misunderstood in many regards by the new generations of intellectuals in Romania and abroad. The case of H.-R. Patapievici, a Romanian philosopher in vogue today, might be conclusive in this respect. According to his opinion, Fr. Dumitru Stăniloae was not the most remarkable Orthodox theologian of our times and, specifically, he was not a “creative theologian.” (See: H.- R. Patapievici, *Politice [Politicals]*, Humanitas, Bucharest 1996, p. 254). Unthinkable, but true.

While much has been written about Fr. Stăniloae’s theological and philosophical thinking, after the Second World War, and more precisely after he was jailed (1958-1963) by the Sovietic communist regime in Romania, too little if almost nothing was said concerning his prodigious life and work in Sibiu, before the Second World War (1929-1946), particularly about his active participation and total integration in the Orthodoxist movement of that time under the spiritual leadership of the great theologian, poet and essayist Nichifor Crainic, who was also a professor at the Faculty of Theology in Bucharest.

Unfortunately, his connection and spiritual belonging to this highly praised literary and theological movement of *Gandirea*, and particularly his exemplary friendship with Nichifor Crainic, who rightly was calling him “the mighty thinker from Sibiu”, were later on strictly forbidden by the Sovietic censorship, not only to be studied, but even to be mentioned by theologians until the end of this oppressive dictatorship in December 22, 1989, exactly at the same day as the Centennial Birthday of Nichifor Crainic.

More than that, *Gandirea* with Nichifor Crainic, Fr. Dumitru Stăniloae, and all the other contributors, were strongly repudiated before and after the Second World War, for various and unjustified reasons, and unfortunately this ill-fated tendency is still persisting in the Romanian culture and theology, without any justification, even after the so called Revolution of December 22, 1989.

In order to be more specific about Fr. Stăniloae's life and work I have to mention that there were aspects that were both known and unknown to the public. What was unknown consisted of those realities of his life and work that were hidden, strangled and forbidden in Romania by ideological and totalitarian means for almost half a century. It would be worthy of condemnation not to get out from this abnormal situation.

I believe that our Symposium considers its mission to show to the world who Fr. Stăniloae was; it is our moral duty to restore the whole truth about Fr. Dumitru Stăniloae and his creative relationship with the visionary poet of the Romanian orthodoxy and ethnicity who was Nichifor Crainic, the greatest one, of whom Fr. Stăniloae, himself, personally told us many times in our intimate conversations.

In the first place, we have to theologially and ethnically reevaluate at least the last two decades of the tragic existence and spiritual struggle of the great orthodoxist and autochthonous movement of the literary and theological group *Gandirea*. More especially we have to revalorize the essential contributions of Nichifor Crainic and Fr. Dumitru Stăniloae to the establishment of a dignified equilibrium to our dramatic and sometime shameful oscillation between East and West, or better said between Eastern and Western Romanity; they did so by considering the Romanian Orthodox Christianity not only as a principle of spiritual and national orientation, but also as a sacred source of regeneration and identification of our ethnicity and Christian faith.

First of all, we don't have to forget the European chaos before the Second World War, when the Romanian borders were bleeding in the East, in the North and South, and the entire nation was caught up between the two most ferocious totalitarian ideologies of our century, fascism and communism, symbolized by Hitler and Stalin. Certainly, for Romania, there was more than a matter of national and spiritual survival. No wonder why Nichifor Crainic and Fr. Dumitru Stăniloae, were among the first to theologially and philosophically define and defend the correct interpretation and Christian attitude of the Romanian

Orthodoxy toward fascism and communism. It is sufficient to mention here some of Fr. Stăniloae's articles published in *The Romanian Telegraph*, between 1936 and 1944: "In the Face of the Communist Offensive," "Attention, Communism," "The Church against Communism," "Christianity and Communism," "The Sovietic Regime and the Church," "The Church and the New Times," or "The Church in the New Socialist Horizon."

As expected, this glorious revival of the Romanian Orthodox Christianity and ethnicity, admirably and realistically reflected, with prophetic accents, in all the theological and literary works of Nichifor Crainic and Fr. Dumitru Stăniloae, as well as in all the writings of the other devoted members of *Gandireea*, before the Second World War, was sharply criticized, and then forbidden and hidden by the new literary workers and philosophers of the new Sovietic regime that enslaved Romania, since August 23, 1944, until December 22, 1989.

Hoever, there is a providential accomplishment in Fr. Stăniloae's personality. From his tenure as a professor and rector of the Theological Academy of Sibiu, where he functioned as a permanent consultant of Metropolitan Nicolae Balan of Transylvania, and then as an editor of and writer for the oldest religious magazine in the country, *Telegraful Roman [The Romanian Telegraph]*, founded in 1854, he emerged as a brilliant contender and defender of the Romanian orthodoxy and nationality, side by side with Nichifor Crainic, on the spiritual front of the orthodoxist and autochthonist movement of *Gandireea*.

Regretfully, under the Sovietic domination of Romania, the life and work of Fr. Dumitru Stăniloae in Sibiu were directly jeopardized by the new prime-minister of Romania, Petru Groza, who forced Metropolitan Nicolae Balan of Transylvania to fire him from *The Romanian Telegraph* in May 1945, and later on from the position of Rector of the Theological Academy of Sibiu, on February 7, 1946. Indeed, the persecution of the Romanian Orthodoxy and ethnicity by Communism could be considered as beginning with that of Fr. Dumitru Stăniloae and Nichifor Crainic, as well as with the official strangling of the orthodoxist and autochthonist movement promoted by the national magazine *Gandireea*.

Later, as a result of these political harassments, Fr. Dumitru Stăniloae was transferred from Sibiu to the Faculty of Theology in Bucharest, where he was called to take over the chair of Nichifor

Crainic, as professor of the Mystic and Ascetic Theology, in January 1947. From now on, a new epoch in his life and work is beginning in the larger framework of the Faculty of Theology of Bucharest University, as well as of the Orthodox Missionary and Biblical Institute of the Romanian Patriarchate.

Getting back to the starting point of our testimonies, I have to confess that I was educated at the Theological Seminary “Kesarie Episcopul” of Buzău, in the true spirit of the orthodoxist and autochthonist movement of *Gandirea*. My professor of Romanian Language and Literature, Fr. Vasile Ionescu, was a great admirer of Nichifor Crainic just like myself and not only because of his influence. My literary dream was, ~~at that time and after,###~~ to be like Nichifor Crainic, whose poems and essays were spiritually inflaming my imagination and my spirit. Following the graduation from the Theological Seminary, at the end of the school-year of 1944-1945, I became a theology student at the Faculty of Theology of Bucharest University (the academic year of 1945-1946); at this time the process of the sovietization of the Romanian government was already on its track.

This was no ordinary time. The general feeling among professors and students was one of discomfort, uncertainty and perplexity. At the Faculty of Theology the spiritual climate created by the orthodoxist movement of *Gandirea* continued to exist without Nichifor Crainic, but shadowed by the new political events. I became aware of this fact participating, in May 1946, at the funeral of Dr. Aglaia Crainic, the wife of Nichifor Crainic who, at that time, was hidden somewhere in Transylvania. During the funeral service the atmosphere was dominated by the terror of a strict surveillance. Only a few professors and theology students dared to attend. I found it very difficult to understand this almost imperceptible change in attitude especially toward the priests and theology students. Our isolation from society and other students had become, to our surprise, more and more visible.

In this climate of total uncertainty and hesitation my first coming together with Fr. Dumitru Stăniloae took place in January 1947 as I attended his lectures on Orthodox Mysticism and Asceticism. From the very beginning I believed that Fr. Stăniloae was a real visionary in his effort to preserve and to initiate us in the patristic and philokalic legacy of the Eastern Orthodox Church in its very Romanian tradition, despite of what was happening outside of our Faculty of Theology.

Inside, with Fr. Stăniloae, our classroom was becoming a safe oasis of spiritual relaxation. At once, all of our darkest nightmares and deepest fears, frightening stories of communist persuasions and persecutions, or tales of Sovietic tortures, were miraculously disappearing in his presence. For the first time in my life I learned from Fr. Stăniloae to understand the Orthodox meaning of the Christian life and to discover the sense of my spiritual existence.

At the same time I was captivated by his method of teaching which consisted of combining theological and philosophical knowledge with the art of thinking. Particularly, I was impressed by Fr. Stăniloae's mastery of words and their spiritual meanings. To my surprise, Fr. Stăniloae was giving the impression that he was not interested to increase our knowledge as much as he was eager to develop our critical thinking skills and to make us aware of the subtle correlation between thinking and knowing. He was always friendly, urging us to think about every day matters, to make principles plausible at the intuitive level, or to discover the spiritual sense of all the events that life was bringing in our existence.

I confidentially confessed to him that Nichifor Crainic was my literary idol and that I was educated at the Theological Seminary in the orthodoxism and autochthonist spirit promoted by *Gandireea*, and that I also had a special interest in the popular theology and old religious traditions, as well as in the Romanian Christmas carols. My parents, like the parents of Nichifor Crainic and Fr. Dumitru Stăniloae, were Romanian peasants who educated me in a very traditional and conservative way, that could be called the school of life of the Orthodox faith and love of our country. Immediately, I felt his warm spiritual openness toward me, as if he was rediscovering an old friend; he let me know how it might be possible, if one day circumstances would allow it, to reconsider some of the theological interpretations of *Gandireea* in a more accurate way in conformity with the Romanian Orthodox faith. So our spiritual relationship and friendship started based on our common dedication to the same orthodoxist principles of Nichifor Crainic and also on our deepest love for the Romanian popular orthodoxy and its very old religious traditions.

Not once, but many times, in our peripatetic discussions, Fr. Dumitru Stăniloae was initiatingly telling me about his relationship and friendship with Nichifor Crainic, as well as about his theological and

philosophical contributions to *Gandirea*. In 1934, following a lecture given by Nichifor Crainic in Sibiu, Fr. Stăniloae met him at the residence of Metropolitan Nicolae Balan. It was then that Nichifor Crainic invited Fr. Stăniloae to contribute to *Gandirea* with essays about Orthodoxy and Romanianism, to defend Romanian Orthodoxy against its enemies. This was the real beginning of a friendship that had spiritually become a very strong relationship for the rest of their lives. Since then, they met frequently either in Sibiu or Bucharest and each time Fr. Stăniloae was asked to send his contributions for every issue of *Gandirea*.

I learned from these intimate confessions and conversations what Fr. Dumitru Stăniloae was appreciating about Nichifor Crainic, and what Nichifor Crainic was appreciating about Fr. Dumitru Stăniloae, in their deep concern about the ontological relationship between Orthodoxy and the Romanian people's spirituality. It was clear for me that their confidence and spiritual strength was coming from their strong faith in the Romanian people. Both of them were unconditionally defending the Romanian Orthodoxy and nationality at a theological and philosophical level, thus defining and strengthening our distinctive ethnic and religious identity.

Memorializing and synthesizing at the same time this retrospective contemplation of our personal testimonies, experiences and recollections of Fr. Stăniloae, in close relation with Nichifor Crainic and *Gandirea*, I would like to stress the apologetical character and subtle persistence of the orthodoxist and autochthonist ideals of *Gandirea*, that have spiritually sealed the Romanian Orthodoxy and theology in the second half of our century and certainly forever.

The presence of Fr. Dumitru Stăniloae at the Faculty of Theology of Bucharest University has reinforced the strong theological wing of *Gandirea*, specifically represented by Fr. Ioan G. Coman, Theodor M. Popescu, Ioan G. Savin, Emilian Vasilescu and many other friends and disciples of Nichifor Crainic, who have continued to creatively implement the spiritual ideals of *Gandirea* by giving expression to an outspoken theology based on its autochthonous orthodox image and ecumenical likeness.

Without ignoring or delimiting itself from the new cultural and political realities, the Romanian Orthodox Theology has adopted a positive way to approach and confront the Marxist ideology and the atheistic offensive, which the state, in the Sovietic style, prompted

against the Romanian Orthodoxy and its ethnicity.

In the true spirit of *Gandirea*, I witnessed and actively participated, under the direct guidance of Fr. Stăniloae, at the first ideological confrontation between the Orthodox Theology and the Communist atheism during the so called “Obsessive Decennium” (1950-1960) of the Romanian culture. At that time, the communists were falsely accusing the Romanian nation as being full of superstitions, while its Orthodox faith was considered a false mysticism and an opium for the people.

Instead of polemically denying these false accusations, Fr. Dumitru Stăniloae advised me to avoid any controversy and to respond in a positive way, by publishing in *Theological Studies* and other Church magazines a series of articles and essays, in order to demonstrate how the Romanians have spiritually incorporated and assumed in their life the doctrinal teachings and ideas of their Orthodox faith. I did that between 1950-1959 by presenting and analyzing the old Romanian Christmas carols (colinde) and religious traditions and I always continued to do so since then.

I would like to mention at this point Fr. Stăniloae’s satisfaction when he learned from Fr. Olimp Caciula that my essay dedicated to the Mother of God in the Romanian religious Christmas carols (1953) was translated into Bulgarian and then published in the *Duhovna Kultura*, a theological magazine of Sofia. For both of them, that was a sign that the Orthodox Bulgarians were confronted with the same problems as we were.

But the survival of the orthodoxist and autochthonist spirit of *Gandirea* in the Romanian Orthodox theology, culture and art, as it was personally assumed and fulfilled, especially by Fr. Dumitru Stăniloae, requires special studies, theological and literary at the same time. However, following Nichifor Crainic, Fr. Dumitru Stăniloae has realized the highest spiritual accomplishment of the orthodoxist and autochthonist principles of *Gandirea* in the Romanian theology and culture. For this reason, Fr. Stăniloae cannot be separated from Nichifor Crainic and his great spiritual family of *Gandirea*. He was among the greatest. His life and work, his personality must be dutifully recognized and acknowledged, and this is what we do today as through this symposium we celebrate the legacy of his teaching and activity.

To conclude, I have to say that I was blessed by God to be one of the closest disciples of Fr. Stăniloae from the first generation of students that he taught at the Faculty of Theology in Bucharest. The spiritual intimacy I shared with Fr. Stăniloae from the very beginning has essentially changed my theological and literary orientation. Through him and Fr. Ioan G. Coman, I became *in pectore* a part of the theological wing of *Gandirea*. All I have published in Romania and here in the USA bears the spiritual imprint of Fr. Stăniloae's mode of thinking and theologizing. The *Romanian Communion*, a literary magazine of theology, culture and art, that I have founded together with my wife in Detroit, Michigan (1973-1984), was written and edited in the spirit of *Gandirea* and in the image and likeness of Fr. Stăniloae's theology. As always, on the mainline of the Romanian orthodoxy and ethnicity, Fr. Stăniloae has become our main contributor with theological and literary essays that I have published in the *Romanian Communion*, as well as in the yearbook and magazine *Credința-The Faith*, in Detroit, Michigan.

Certainly, from an ethnical point of view, Fr. Dumitru Stăniloae belongs to all Romanians everywhere in the world, but ecumenically, he belongs to the one, holy, catholic, and apostolic Church, once undivided, for whose spiritual unity he dedicated his entire life and theology.

Ecumenism in the Thought of Dumitru Stăniloae

In this presentation I will focus on Professor Stăniloae's contribution to the modern ecumenical movement. A glance at the list of his publications reveals that he devoted much energy to this field, especially after his emergence from five years of imprisonment under the communist regime and return to theological activity in 1963. It is evident that Stăniloae was genuinely concerned about Christian divisions and made a serious effort to contribute to the advancement of Christian unity. This paper begins with a presentation of Stăniloae's affirmation of the fullness of the Orthodox Church, and his thinking on the ecclesial nature of non-Orthodox churches in general. There follows an overview of his specific evaluation of the Oriental Orthodox and Western churches. Finally, his ideas on the promotion of Christian unity are described.

The Fullness of the Orthodox Church

Dumitru Stăniloae's whole theology makes clear that there can be only one Church because there is only one Christ, whose extended body it is. Gathered together by the Holy Spirit into the one Body of Christ, Christians have a sense of spiritual unity among themselves as Church. This spiritual oneness is manifested in unity in dogmatic expression, in the sacraments, and in hierarchical organization and communion. Stăniloae affirms that the visible Orthodox Church alone is this Church in the full sense of the word.¹

But the identification of the Orthodox Church with the one Church does not imply that non-Orthodox churches are devoid of any ecclesial reality. They are viewed as related to the one Church, but as weaker, incomplete manifestations of that which is fully present in the Orthodox Church.

Based on his theory of the "preincarnational presence" of the divine Logos in the world,² Stăniloae affirms that all human persons stand in a certain relationship to God when they perceive order and meaning in creation. Consequently, all humanity and all religious faiths possess at least a limited knowledge of God and are related to the Church.

But Stăniloae hesitates when the question of the salvation of baptized non-Orthodox Christians is raised. He does not wish to judge them on the basis of the official teachings of their churches because in most cases these Christians were simply born into those confessions without personally choosing them, and because the apostolic tradition often survives there in spite of those teachings. Since elements of the one Church remain in those churches, these Christians experience even now a “partial participation” in the life of Christ. This leaves open the possibility that they will also experience Christ in the future life,³ although in “less luminous” places in the house of God.

The incomplete nature of non-Orthodox churches is related to their faulty understanding of Christian doctrine. Because Stăniloae sees a mutual influence between doctrine and experience, distorted or incomplete doctrine is understood as an indication of an imperfect experience of the Trinity in the Church.

The Oriental Orthodox Churches

We now turn to Stăniloae’s evaluation of the Oriental Orthodox churches, which never received the Christological teaching of the Council of Chalcedon (451). Stăniloae made a great effort to contribute to a resolution of this disagreement, because he felt that the reestablishment of full communion with the Oriental Orthodox is a real possibility. Aware that these churches never accepted the monophysite teachings of Eutyches, he was convinced that this fifth-century schism was caused primarily by misunderstandings about the terminology used to describe the mystery of Christ. National, political, and social tensions were also involved. This was only a superficial division that did not affect fundamental unity in faith.

The task that lies before Orthodox and Oriental Orthodox theologians, according to Stăniloae, is to establish definitively that there is no substantial difference between their respective Christologies. He joined the effort to elaborate a new formula that would be acceptable to both sides.⁴ In the event of the adoption of such a common formula, he would support eucharistic hospitality with these churches in certain exceptional circumstances. He insisted, however, that full communion must await agreement on the number and nature of ecumenical councils.⁵

The Churches of the West

Stăniloae was less sanguine in his assessment of the Catholic and Protestant churches which, although he devoted more attention to the Catholic Church, he tended to evaluate in relation to one another. He interprets the history of the Western church and its theological tradition largely in terms of a loss of balance and the emergence of “unilateral” teachings on certain aspects of the Christian faith. For instance, he views the schism of 1054 as the result of an unbalanced understanding of the unity of the Church.⁶

In 1054 an exaggerated accentuation and an arbitrary - thus mistaken - understanding of the idea of the unity of the Church by the leadership of Western Christianity led to the breakdown of this unity, provoking the great schism....Unity was no longer understood as essentially a unity in balance, as a unity of opposites, but as a unity in which a part is raised up to the status of an all-powerful center that only suffocates the other component parts, simplifying complexity, and making variety uniform. This led to an impoverishment of the life of the Church in God, [an impoverishment] equal to that provoked by heresies which negated essential parts of Christian teaching.⁷

Stăniloae sees the Protestant Reformation as a reaction to this suppression of freedom in the Western Church, as a struggle against papal power. But instead of reestablishing balance and equilibrium in Christian life and doctrine, Protestantism embraced the opposite extreme. While the Catholic Church over-emphasized the Church at the expense of the individual, Protestants over-emphasized the individual at the expense of the Church. Moreover, the Protestants rejected certain essential aspects of the Church, including the hierarchy, which they associated with the Catholic suppression of the individual. One unilateral understanding provoked an even greater one. Catholics and Protestants came to categorically contradictory positions, neither having the openness needed to break the impasse. The West became hard, rationalistic and simplistic, having lost the complex richness of the full Christian faith.⁸

Like many Orthodox theologians, Stăniloae relates these difficulties in the Western churches to the acceptance of the *filioque* clause

in the Creed. He interprets this as an indication that the West had lost the necessary understanding of the mission of the Holy Spirit in the constitution of the Church. A subordination of the Holy Spirit to the Son resulted in an exclusively Christological understanding of the Church which led to an exaggerated institutionalization of the Church's life.

But this Christological emphasis in Western Christianity does not lead to a more intimate presence of Christ in those churches, because the presence of Christ is experienced precisely in the Holy Spirit. The lack of a correct understanding of the mission of the Spirit leads to a diminished presence of Christ in the Church and, consequently, to the need for something to substitute for him. Stăniloae describes the results of this weakened presence of Christ in the Catholic Church in devastating terms:

Christ the Logos, transmitting his power to Peter and his successors and partly to the successors of the other apostles and withdrawing into transcendence at the Ascension, also keeps the Spirit with him. The Church has been imprinted with the character of a juridical society, conducted in a rational and absolutist way by the Pope, no longer taking notice of the active permanent presence of the Spirit in it and in all the faithful and the presence of Christ indissolubly linked to [the presence of the Spirit]. The Pope, the bishops and priests take the place of the absent Christ who is not present in the Spirit in the hearts of the faithful (the vicarial theory); they are not the images, the visible signs of the sacramental and spiritual invisible presence of Christ (as in Orthodoxy). The character of the filial relationship of the faithful with the Father, and of the intimate communion among them in Christ who is present within them in the Holy Spirit, has likewise been weakened.⁹

For Stăniloae, the lack of an adequate understanding of the Spirit's presence throughout the Church lies at the root of the Catholic concept of the authority of bishops in the Church and of the Pope over the bishops. He finds no improvement in this situation in the documents of Vatican II, because he says the authority of bishops continues to be based exclusively upon episcopal ordination without taking into account their relationship to their communities. He insists that the authority of the bishop must be understood as a power of the Church, exercised in obedience to the Church, rather than over against the Church¹⁰

Stăniloae makes similar observations about the Catholic concept of papal infallibility. In his reading of Catholic theology, the attribution of infallibility to the Pope is the result of a weakened awareness of the presence of Christ in the Spirit. Since the Pope is not even limited by exterior sources of revelation, infallibility is no longer understood as a function of revealed truth, but as a function of the papacy that has replaced the indwelling Christ and revelation. The definition of papal infallibility at Vatican I in 1870 excluded the lived experience of the Church as a source of infallibility. The teachings of the Pope must be accepted not on the basis of any interior lived evidence, but on the basis of the obligation of obedience to external guiding authority. By requiring simple obedience to an unlimited individual monarch, an inner knowledge of Christ within the body of the Church is denied. Stăniloae says this is unacceptable because it is not consistent with the Orthodox affirmation that infallibility is an aspect of the whole Church, and cannot be identified exclusively with any particular structure within it.¹¹

Stăniloae writes that Protestantism holds the opposite extreme, denying any teaching authority to the Church, and allowing each individual to interpret Scripture and discern the truth according to his or her own conscience.¹² This is a result of Protestantism's substitution of the presence of the Spirit for the presence of Christ. But a presence of the Spirit without Christ is a presence devoid of the Truth, which is Christ actively present in the Spirit's power.¹³

A word must also be added here about Stăniloae's critique of the Eastern Catholic Churches. Addressing the concrete Romanian situation, Stăniloae often tried to justify and defend the 1948 decision of the communist government that led to the brutal suppression and liquidation of the Greek Catholic Church in Transylvania, and its absorption into the Romanian Orthodox Church. Many Greek Catholics lost their lives for their faith. In his writings Stăniloae insists that this and other Eastern Catholic Churches had been formed by the use of coercion in the first place, and that the Romanian Greek Catholics had remained Orthodox in faith. Moreover, Stăniloae states that the continued existence of the Eastern Catholic Churches constitutes a denial of the ecclesial reality of the Orthodox by the Catholic Church. Stăniloae often insisted that the return of Greek Catholics to the Romanian Orthodox Church in 1948 was both freely chosen, and the setting right of a historical injustice.

The overthrow of the Ceausescu regime in December 1989 led

to the relegalization of the Greek Catholic Church in Romania. In the following months, Stăniloae published articles indicating that he no longer held the position that the dissolution of 1948 was a free and spontaneous act. Indeed, it may be that he had been compelled to advocate that point of view. However, he continued to present the Romanian Greek Catholic Church as a threat to Romanian Orthodoxy, and called upon Romanians to remain united and faithful to the Church of their ancestors.¹⁴

This section cannot be concluded without noting that Stăniloae's experience as a participant at the second plenary session of the international Catholic-Orthodox dialogue at Munich in 1982 seems to have caused him to moderate greatly his views on the Catholic Church. In an interview published in 1988, he stated that Orthodoxy and Catholicism "are not divided by essential differences." He was pleasantly surprised at Munich to see that there was broad agreement on issues that had been significant causes of division in the past. He emerged hopeful that a solution may even be found to the problem of the papacy which would integrate the bishop of Rome into the communion of the Church in a way acceptable to the Orthodox.¹⁵

The Way Forward

Stăniloae's critical evaluation of other Christian churches does not mean that he is without hope that the differences between them and Orthodoxy can be overcome. Although he does not hesitate to condemn what he understands as distortions in the doctrine and ecclesial life of other churches, he tends to be very positive and conciliatory when reflecting on the possibility of a future reconciliation.

According to Stăniloae, the most important contribution Orthodoxy could make to the ecumenical movement would be to develop an idea that he calls "open sobornicity."¹⁶ This is a recurring theme in his writings on ecumenism. Although he affirms that any union between the churches must be based on the fullness of apostolic teaching, he observes that this teaching was handed down in the form of scriptural types or images which admit of different complementary interpretations. The authentic interpretation of these must take place in the Church through the exercise of sobornicity. Indeed, the full sense of

the word catholic implies "the active bringing to fruition by all Christians, in full communion, of the full treasures of truth and life brought by Christ."¹⁷ This experience of unity in diversity could serve as the goal of the ecumenical movement.

This is the sense in which a reunited Church must be both apostolic and catholic. Because every individual's access to Christian truth is incomplete and always remains fragmentary, the fullness of apostolic truth can be revealed only through an exercise of sobornicity. This implies mutual communication that results from a continual tension between unity and diversity. The result is neither uniformity nor static equality where each individual would possess the truth in isolation from others. Rather, each Christian is continually enriched by the perspectives of others, everyone teaching and everyone learning. The unity resulting from this process is a work of the Holy Spirit by means of which unity and variety are reconciled on all levels in a mysterious and irreducible tension.¹⁸

In this concept of open sobornicity, every theological system is welcomed as offering some valid insight, although the weaknesses of each must be criticized. Through openness to the insights of other systems, one's understanding is enriched, and a more symphonic understanding of the whole is attained. Different insights interpenetrate and communicate with each other in a unity where diversity is preserved.¹⁹

Stăniloae states that the Orthodox Church alone has preserved the equilibrium and complex richness of the Christian faith. Moreover, Orthodoxy encompasses the basic concerns of both Western traditions. Nevertheless, his idea of open sobornicity leads him to assert that Orthodoxy could be enriched by the experience of Western Christians.

Even though he thought that the Western churches have had a narrower experience of the Christian faith, Stăniloae observed a certain movement within them that is drawing them towards the whole, towards a broader vision. He saw signs, for instance, that the Catholic understanding of the Church as a juridical universal institution is giving way to a more sacramental, spiritual ecclesiology. He was certain that schism cannot endure. It always searches for a place within the whole.²⁰

Another important element in Stăniloae's understanding of sobornicity is openness to the world. Drawing on the theology of Maximus the Confessor, he views all humanity and all creation as destined to be Church because of the presence of "logoi" within them

which tend towards unification in the divine Logos. He finds evidence of this movement in three aspects of the contemporary world: movement towards greater knowledge of the universe, towards humanity's mastery of creation, and towards the perfection of social relations.²¹

But the meaning of these movements can only be understood in relation to the Incarnation, through which God entered into union with humanity and revealed the full meaning of creation. Even though they may not be aware of it, all human persons cooperate in some way with Christ in the resulting process of assimilation of all things into unity in God.

The progressive assimilation of all creation into unity in the Logos implies a continuity between people inside and outside the Church. The people in the Church are distinguished from those outside only by the fact that they have new power to advance spiritually, and are aware of the possibilities open to them in Christ and the Holy Spirit.²² But God is at work in all of humanity.

Consequently, Christians must be attentive to the values of contemporary society, and attempt to discern the way God is working in human secular culture. Attentiveness to these values by all the Christian churches will help them elaborate a common understanding of the world that will serve as a basis for their eventual reunion.²³

Conclusions

Although it is beyond the scope of this paper to respond to Stăniloae's critique of Western Christianity, it is clear that he was not able to make a profound study of Catholic and Reformation theology, and consequently often rejects Western positions on the basis of superficial impressions. At other times, there was the tendency to take aspects of the Western tradition out of their context and evaluate them in the incompatible environment of Byzantine theology. Many of his criticisms are simply without foundation. Speaking as a Catholic, it is a simple fact that when I read Stăniloae's description of Catholic theology, I rarely recognize my own faith. I recognize much more of my own faith when he describes Orthodox theology. It is my own conviction that the two are not nearly so different as he believed.

Nevertheless, Stăniloae showed an openness to the Western tradition and ecumenism that is unusual for an Orthodox theologian. This was most evident in his later writings. It will remain for the younger generation of Romanian Orthodox theologians, who now have access to the best of Western theology, to build on Stăniloae's legacy, especially his useful concept of open sobornicity. At a time when many Orthodox in Eastern and Central Europe are questioning the involvement of their churches in the ecumenical movement, the ideas of Dumitru Stăniloae need to be more widely known, since they grew from his profound awareness of the movement of the Holy Spirit in the contemporary movement towards unity among the churches.

1. *Teologia Dogmatică Ortodoxă*, 3 Vols. (Bucharest: Biblical Institute, 1978) 2:266-267.
2. For more on this, see his "La centralité du Christ dans la théologie, dans la spiritualité et dans la mission orthodoxe," *Contacts* 27 (1975) 447-457.
3. *Ibid.*, 2:268-269.
4. "Posibilitatea reconcilierii dogmatice între Biserica Ortodoxă și Vechile Biserici Orientale," *Ortodoxia* 17 (1965) 5-27. Stăniloae provides his own Christological formula of reunion on pages 26-27. See also "Acțiuni și poziții noi în eforturile de apropiere între Bisericile Ortodoxe și Bisericile Vechi Orientale," *Ortodoxia* 24 (1972) 113-119, where he comments on later events in this relationship; and "Perspectivele dialogului cu Bisericile Vechi Orientale. Lucrările Comisiei interortodoxe de la Addis Abeba," *Biserica Ortodoxă Română* 89 (1971) 978-991.
5. "In problema intercomuniunii," *Ortodoxia* 23 (1971) 568.
6. Stăniloae produced a series of studies in the 1950s which compared Orthodox doctrines to those of the West: "Învățătura despre Maica Domnului la ortodocși și catolici," *Ortodoxia* 2 (1950) 559-609; "Dumnezeiasca Euharistie în cele trei confesiuni," *Ortodoxia* 5 (1953) 46-115; "Starea sufletelor după judecata particulară, în învățătura ortodoxă și catolică," *Ortodoxia* 5 (1953) 545-614; "Faptele bune în învățătura ortodoxă și catolică," *Ortodoxia* 6 (1954) 507-533; "Ființa Tainelor în cele trei confesiuni," *Ortodoxia* 8 (1956) 3-28; "Starea primordială a omului în cele trei confesiuni," *Ortodoxia* 8 (1956) 323-357; "Doctrina protestantă despre păcatul strămoșesc," *Ortodoxia* 9 (1957) 3-40; "Tratatulele dintre Biserica Ortodoxă Română și Anglicană privite sub aspectul dogmatic," *Ortodoxia* 10 (1958) 236-251. See also his later studies, "Ortodoxia în fața unor fenomene actuale din creștinismul apusean," *Ortodoxia* 26 (1974) 3225-245; "Doctrina luterană despre justificare și cuvânt și câteva reflecții ortodoxe," *Ortodoxia* 35 (1983) 495-509.
7. "Sobornicitate deschisă," 168. In the 1950s, some observers of Romanian Orthodoxy warned that the more polemical aspects of this evaluation of the Catholic Church should not be taken at face value. They held that this polemical atmosphere resulted from the necessity to echo the hostility of the Romanian government to the

Catholic Church. See for instance I. Goia, "Vues Orthodoxes roumaines sur le schisme et l'Unité chrétienne," *Istina* 2 (1955) 31-50, and F. Popan, "Le caractère occidental de la théologie roumaine d'aujourd'hui," *Ostkirchliche Studien* 8 (1959) 169-183. As Goia points out, however, Stăniloae's highly critical attitude towards Roman Catholic theology was evident even before the communist revolution. I have endeavored here to present recurring themes that continue to appear in Stăniloae's later works.

8. *Ibid.*, 169-170.

9. "Sfânta Treime, structura supremei iubiri," *Studii Teologice* 22 (1970) 355. English translation in Barringer, 73-108.

10. "Din aspectul sacramental al Bisericii," *Studii Teologice* 18 (1966) 547-548. See also "Sfântul Duh și sobornicitatea Bisericii," *Orthodoxia* 19 (1967) 35-36. English translation in Barringer, 45-71.

11. "Autoritatea Bisericii," *Studii Teologice* 16 (1964) 196-200.

12. "Relațiile treimice și viața Bisericii," 524.

13. "Sfânta Treime, structura supremei iubiri," 355.

14. See his "Prigonirea Bisericii Ortodoxe strămoșești sub comunism," *Telegraful Român* 138, Nr. 7-8 (15 February 1990) 1-2, and interview by F. Strazzari in *Il Regno - Attualità* 35 (15 February 1990) 130.

15. Bălan, Ioanichie, ed. *Convorbiri Duhovnicești*, Volume 2 (Roman: Diocese of Roman and Huși, 1988) 92-93.

16. The term "sobornicity," taken from the Slavic theological tradition, is often used by Stăniloae to elaborate his thinking on the catholicity of the Church. For him, this term more clearly reveals the meaning of "catholic" as referring not so much to the Church's geographical extension, but rather to the conciliar or synodical nature of its inner life.

17. "Coordonatele ecumenismului din punct de vedere ortodox," *Orthodoxia* 19 (1967) 516.

18. "Coordonatele ecumenismului," 517-519.

19. "Sobornicitatea deschisă" 179.

20. "In problema intercomuniunii," 583-584.

21. "Coordonatele ecumenismului," 528.

22. "Dinamica creației în Biserică" *Orthodoxia* 29 (1977) 288.

23. *Ibid.*, 528-531.

Aspects of the Theology of the Gift in Fr. Stăniloae's Synthesis

Preliminaries

The theological work of Fr. Stăniloae is a synthesis not because it is less analytical, not only because it is all-encompassing, but more especially because in the complexity of his thinking, the great Romanian theologian thinks of the whole as being always reflected in the part, and of the part as being always related to and expression of the whole.

In other words, in the work of Fr. Stăniloae, who excelled in everything and is already considered among the Church Fathers, as Jürgen Moltman says,²⁴ synthesis is characterized by analysis, that is, nothing is put together without being profoundly analyzed, without the proof and the justification of the connection, and the analysis is constantly synthetically developed; this is how, when Fr. Stăniloae discusses one aspect of a problem, one has in view not only the entire problem, but also the others that make up the system of which the first is a part.

This is the reason for which, as I mentioned elsewhere,²⁵ when he was speaking, and this is valid for his writing too, Fr. Stăniloae had to be *listened* to carefully to the end if one wanted to understand him, since his way of thinking was more cyclical than linear.

For instance, when he speaks about the Orthodox spirituality, the Romanian theologian explains immediately its Christocentric character, makes references to the Holy Sacraments, and does not forget to emphasize its pneumatic and ecclesial dimensions.²⁶

Also, when he reflects on the Orthodox teaching about creation, Fr. Stăniloae speaks immediately about salvation, and places the entire discussion in the context of the Trinitarian theology,²⁷ one of the most specific aspects of his theology on which he builds his famous teaching on the human person.

Indeed, as Michael Evdokimov noticed as well, no one elaborated better than Fr. Stăniloae, a theology of the human person and of the world, a theology of harmony and equilibrium, in such an understandable way and with new meanings.²⁸

In his synthesis, John Meyendorff says, Fr. Stăniloae approaches the entire creation: the world and the human culture, and in accord with the Church Fathers, he takes the Lord's incarnation as foundation of the ultimate and total transfiguration of the cosmos.

Promoting an optimistic theology, Fr. Stăniloae proves himself indeed a theologian of hope.²⁹

All these aspects, his immense work in general, and the force of his thinking, as O. Clément puts it, make Fr. Stăniloae to be considered the greatest theologian of the Orthodox world today.³⁰

* * *

In the present paper I would like to emphasize only a few aspects of the theology of gift in the works of the great Romanian theologian, just as its title indicates; more precisely I will try to place the idea of gift in the context of the major lines of the Christian doctrine: The Holy Trinity, Christology, Pneumatology, Ecclesiology, Eschatology as they were developed by Fr. Stăniloae. The paper intends only to signal, not to exhaust.

The idea of gift

The entire work of Fr. Stăniloae is centered on the idea of gift.³¹ Developing itself simultaneously on the vertical and on the horizontal, the theological reflection of Fr. Stăniloae presents God as a gift given to man. The human person as the image of God is a divine gift. The world is a divine gift. Man must look at his relationship with those around him as a gift. Man is a gift to man, but to God too, in a reciprocal, if unequal relationship.

Addressing the contemporary world with all its crises, where the axiom *Homo homini lupus* is more and more evident, the Romanian theologian proposes through his entire thinking an alternative: *Homo homini donum*.³²

According to Fr. Stăniloae the gift must not be dealt with for its own sake, in separation from its two intrinsic poles: the giver and the receiver. The gift contains therefore in its nature a precise purpose, a precise destination. That is why it is on the one hand a working tool for the fulfillment of the purpose and on the other hand the expression of a conscious, deliberated relationship between two persons.

It is for this reason that the one who receives the gift, beyond the immediate joy of its reception, must direct his or her mind and heart towards the giver. It is only then that the gift fulfills indeed its destiny.

That is even more so since the gift represents a renunciation from the part of the giver vis-à-vis the receiver, and consequently bears the sign of the cross.

This is how Fr. Stăniloae explains the idea of gift in the passage where he refers to the world: “In essence, through the gift of the world God wants to make Himself known to the world in His love. That is why man too must rise above the received gifts to God himself, the giver. The gift, as sign of one person’s love towards the other has in itself imprinted the destination of being transcended by the one it was given to. In a sense the gift is the thing the giver renounces for the sake of the person he or she is giving it to.”³³

The purpose of the gift is thus strictly related to the loving relationship between two persons. The gift is the messenger of love. In our relation to God, because God is love (John 4,16) and because God loved us first (John 4, 19), the gift we receive from Him is His love’s sign meant to stimulate our love in such a way that through the gift, a dialogue of love and mutual giving between us and God be instaured.³⁴ The same can be said about the gifts people make to each other.

The world as a gift

The world as place and means of God’s revelation and of man’s living is a divine gift, Fr. Stăniloae explains. The idea of gift was the intention of the world’s creation. No matter how each man relates him/herself to the world at an active level (work and its benefits), contemplative (knowledge), or at another level, the world cannot be stripped of its main character: it is a gift.

Thus, all things contained in the world are offered by God to man so that they can be used as gifts in the relationships among people, but as gifts that bear the mark of God’s love for man.³⁵

In other words the gift is meant to stay in circuit. What it represents in the first relationship that it signifies, God’s renouncing love towards man, it must also signify in the second relationship that it creates, that between man and his or her fellow citizens.

The gift must remain gift. One cannot receive it and then block it. The gift must be given, it is in this way only that it fulfills its own destiny.

The world as a gift rises man to the level of the interior dialogue

of the Holy Trinity, the supreme living and dialogical existence,³⁶ so important is the role of the world and so great is the power of the gift: “The world is content of the dialogue between man and the Trinitarian God; through it man grows in God’s love and understanding as God gives it to him out of love so that through it man becomes a partner of God in understanding and love.”³⁷

The way Kallistos Ware reads Fr. Stăniloae, the world is a sacrament of the divine person, a theophany,³⁸ and it is so because it comes from God, through the Holy Spirit, the sanctifier, the one who attests God’s existence and His giving in love.³⁹

Related to the gift of the world there is the gift of life, too. Life is part of the world, it is a gift of God’s love and allmightiness;⁴⁰ it also has a sacred dimension because it is given to us through the Holy Spirit, “the giver of life”.

And as the world and life are in a permanent becoming they have a history. History, which is possible only due to God’s creation and providence, is a gift as well.

According to another explanation by Fr. Stăniloae, what makes history possible, when we speak of its human aspect, are man’s gifts, received from God.⁴¹

Actually, the supreme value of man consists exactly of the fact that his existence is constituted by God’s gifts. This is the reason for which, when they fall into darkness and risk to lose themselves, God does not hesitate to send His only begotten Son to save man, as a valuable being from the absurdity of death.⁴²

The fact that man represents such a high value before God is also confirmed by the distinctive, unique character of each human person; this is due to the Holy Spirit and this is why man is risen at the level of being compatible with God who is also a unity in diversity; on the other hand the distinction and diversity themselves are divine gifts.⁴³

In God, love and mercy are inseparable. That is why when God maintains us into the gift of existence and continues to bless us with the other gifts necessary for life, even when we ourselves go away from Him, this is an expression not only of His love but of His mercy too.

Fr. Stăniloae, however, is careful to emphasize the dignifying character of this mercy, which is not degrading or depersonalizing man, by making a clear distinction between asking for mercy and begging in the bad sense of the word; to ask for mercy is not begging because what we ask from God we cannot provide ourselves; besides that, God does

not offer us His mercy as a master full of contempt, but He, through His Son, assumes our human condition and participates in our suffering; in addition, the efficiency of the gift of mercy is manifested only if it is associated with our active contribution as a conscious response to the divine initiative and personal collaboration with God at the development of our own growth.⁴⁴

Holy Trinity as a gift

In accord with the patristic doctrine Fr. Stăniloae teaches that the primary source of the human person is the Trinity with its divine hypostases. In the loving zeal that characterizes it, the Trinity flows out of itself and brings to being other persons, not of the same nature, but to whom God offers as a gift, progressively, the deification. “And this He cannot do except by unifying them gradually with Himself, making them to experience in reality His love. This is the only way in which freedom and love manifest themselves in existence; otherwise everything would appear meaningless.”⁴⁵

The supreme being must be understood as a communicating energy, therefore the divine persons communicate their being perfectly to one another, without confusion.⁴⁶ This way of giving in the intra-Trinitarian life is then - through man’s creation in the divine image - overflowing into the specific extra-Trinitarian relationships.

Communication is an essential term related to the gift, it is an integral but distinct part of the gift. Of course, we are referring here to the communication through love. This is how we receive life, we receive Christ’s resurrection, we receive the eternal life and our deification.⁴⁷

It is only due to the communication in the Holy Spirit that we have in ourselves the love of God’s sons through the Son and the love of brothers of the Son through His incarnation.⁴⁸ This places man happily at the level of the intra-Trinitarian life, that is, it places man on the way to deification, at the level of the eternal communion with God.

Any communication from above then, is made through the Holy Spirit. It is He who activates our spirit.⁴⁹ Both of them, communication and action are gifts.

Speaking of the Holy Spirit as the one who shares the Trinitarian love, we must specify that even if the words *har* (grace) and *dar* (gift) in most cases can be used interchangeably, as sometimes in expressions like: “the graces of the Holy Spirit”, or “the gifts of the Holy Spirit”,⁵⁰ nevertheless Fr. Stăniloae distinguishes in the grace its quality of inexhausting divine power, the grace being a work of the Spirit that is given through a Sacrament, whereas the gift comes from the grace of the Sacrament and waits to be put at work by man.

Even if both, the gift and the mercy are bound to the Holy Spirit as a Trinitarian person, Christ is the one who through incarnation makes the Holy Spirit accessible to us towards our own salvation.⁵¹

The ecclesial character of the gift

The communication of the gifts of the grace of the Holy Sacraments not only takes place in the Church, but constitutes the very foundation of the Church, the Romanian theologian teaches.⁵² If the Spirit belongs to the Church and maintains it in being, one cannot conceive of Church without Holy Spirit and without its grace.⁵³ This is how Fr. Stăniloae explains that in more detail: “Each Sacrament presupposes the invocation of the Spirit (epiclesis) and in this sacramental context, the energy of the Spirit is received. But this epiclesis is done on behalf of the entire Church and the grace of the Spirit descends on the one who receives a Sacrament because through it, he or she is incorporated in the Church or grows in the Church that is animated by the uncreated energies of the Holy Spirit. This one gives himself to the Church strengthening the one who receives it in the measure in which he or she strengthens his or her belonging to the community. The Holy Spirit gives itself together with or from the mystical body of Christ, strengthening and growing this body;... this is so because the evocation achieves itself in the unique body of Christ and asks for the power of Christ’s Spirit; and this Spirit, animating the mystical body distributes to anyone the gift that one needs towards the empowerment of the ecclesial community, towards the enriching of the mystical body of Christ.”⁵⁴

Overflowing in the Church, the gifts of the Holy Spirit mediate the knowing of God⁵⁵ and through that the acquisition of eternal life, of salvation, since the eternal life consists in the knowing of God, as Christ

Himself said (John 17, 3). This is how one understands the sense of the categorical expression of St. Cyprian of Carthage: *Extra ecclesiam nulla salus*.

In the Church, the gifts condition each other and help people to complete each other and to stay in the unity of Christ's body, in such a way that all enjoy all gifts even if each one has his or her own gifts. According to Fr. Stăniloae "each gift wants to follow the one ahead of it, because in each gift there is the same spirit which keeps in that gift the tendency to unite with the other gifts. That is why each person who has a gift feels that his or her gift is a part of the other gifts, because of the Spirit that is in them all.

A more remarkable attribute of a Church member is called *gift*. Not only because it comes from the Holy Spirit, but also because it is meant to serve the others, to become a gift for the others... Through one's gift the Spirit addresses other people. The gift does not only have a vertical address but a horizontal one too, that is unifying. Through the gift the Spirit unites a man with another man, unites several together since He is the Spirit of them all, the Spirit of communion⁵⁶ of the Church.

We must specify here that the way in which the Spirit is present and works in the Church is designated by the word *gift*, a fact that implicitly indicates the poles of the relationship, its purpose, characteristics, implications, in other words, the value of the gift.

Christ as a gift

Our salvation is realized in Christ because He gives, offers, sacrifices Himself for us. Salvation is therefore based on the gift of His life. Out of love God the Father *gave* His Son (John 3, 16), so that all those who believe in Him receive the adoption as sons and this is the highest gift we have from God.⁵⁷

When we say that in Christ's gift the participation in His divine life is open to us, we understand the gift of our salvation from death, thus, the gift of resurrection.

However, these gifts or sacrifices, in order to be efficient, must be conscientized by man, impropriated, put at work, through our participation at the salvific work of Christ, at all levels including the level of the gift.

Christ gave Himself totally to God, and also to us, that is why we also must give ourselves totally to God in Christ and to one another.⁵⁸

More precisely, “Christ is in a continuing selfgiving to the Father for us, in order to give us this state also, so that He can bring us too in this giving of the self;”⁵⁹ at this point Fr. Stăniloae explains that even the very fact of giving, the capacity to give oneself, is a divine gift.⁶⁰

This reciprocity of the giving culminates in the sacramental and spiritual life of the believer, in the Holy Eucharist, the sacrament of Thanksgiving. Through the liturgical words: *Thine own of thine own we bring to You all that belongs to You*, we signify first the acknowledgment of the gifts offered by God to us, and then their restitution to Him; we do that both in words and through the liturgical gifts themselves: the bread and the wine.

The bread and the wine symbolize the elements that sustain our life; through their offering to God, we offer Him our life itself. This is how Fr. Stăniloae puts it in detail: “In the gift of bread and wine that we bring and through which we bring (offer) ourselves as Christ required us to do, there is a confirmation of our tendency to give ourselves, there is a prefiguration of the offering of our being itself, but also a prefiguration of His will to offer Himself as man and all the created things to the Father. Therefore through our gifts and our act of giving He gives Himself also. Offering ourselves we offer Him; or He offers Himself through the offering of ourselves. All come from Him not only as gifts given to us but also as gifts that we bring to the Father. Our tendency to give ourselves is the tendency put in ourselves by Himself. When He created us and gave us everything He put in us the tendency of giving also (giving of ourselves and of things) and as well His will to offer them and to offer Himself together with us.”⁶¹

Here one can see not only the connection between cross and gift through the idea of sacrifice present in both, but also the way in which the gift is a structural part of man, an ontological dimension of his life.

The Holy Eucharist is the culminating point in which the circuit of the gift is accomplished. From God, to man, from man, through men, and in Christ back to God. In this way the circulation of the gift is never closed because it goes back to God, only to proceed from Him again, ever richer.

However in this pilgrimage the gift is not always the same. Essentially it is the same but going through so many hands it receives the imprint of each of them. More precisely, man cannot return to God a gift which is not worked, enriched, unfruitful, unmultiplied in a way or another. The parable of the talents tell this to us clearly. That is so because the gift is the immediate expression of love and when one loves truly one does not only give what one received but also wants to give something from oneself.

The gift put a work by yourself bears in it two loves: the one of the giver and your own who put your own mark on it; this is how to put the gift at work is the only way in which the dialogue of the gift is complete and indeed ever enriching.⁶²

The gift and the human relationships

The offering of our life to God is thus an act of justice. It is just to give when you receive. The same is valid with those around us; because they are gifts for us, because without them we cannot live,⁶³ our giving to them is a vital necessity and an act of justice.

The return of the gift must be done with gratitude. When we refer to our relation to God, the return of the gift is done in the framework of prayer, even though the prayer in itself is a divine gift offered to us in order for us to return it to God.⁶⁴

If we refer to our relation to other people, gratitude becomes obligatory because it makes the gift efficient. Our gratitude results from the awareness of the significance of the existence of other people for our own existence.⁶⁵ This fact becomes even more evident if we think that in our fellow citizens we actually meet Christ.⁶⁶

Speaking of the intrinsic connection of dependency between people, Fr. Stăniloae explains: "One could see that without responding to other people's request one cannot be truly human. I live other people's lives not only because I am responsible for them, but because they sustain me into existence. I am responsible for them not only because of their answer to my requests, but even through the importance they give me through their requests. In turn, they live my life, with the same necessity in both roles... I help them, they help me; they help me even making me help them, and I help them even as they help me... There is a mysterious link between man and man."⁶⁷

This link of total reciprocity between men is reflected as well in man's relation to nature. In the way in which nature and the world are divine gifts for man, man must have a positive understanding and a position of benevolence towards them. Nature facilitates the relations between people, that is why the sacrificial work out of love alone by men must have nature in view also. The world mediates to us the knowledge of God, it is our way to God; that is why the loving care of man must be equally directed to it.⁶⁸

Conclusions

As Fr. Stăniloae writes, the gift represents man's way towards immortality, towards eternal life. Man, as a rational being is thirsty of knowledge and of immortality because he has the intuition of his capacity to be immortal. Epectasis is one of his fundamental characteristics. He tends always towards what is ahead, to what is bigger. The way to infinity, to eternity, must be accomplished both on the vertical and on the horizontal,⁶⁹ that is through an adequate understanding of the idea of gift and its right application in both types of relationships: with God and with other people, but always totally centered on Christ, since He is "both the personal God and the Man realized at maximum in his quality of person destined to the eternity in God."⁷⁰

Being the only one who can offer God to us in an inexhaustible manner, Christ represents irrevocably the key to the mystery of the gift, both at the level of understanding and at that of its application toward the acquisition of eternal life.

24. Ignatie Monahul (editor), *Darurile Filocaliei [Philocalia's Gifts]*, Ed. Buna Vestire, Bacău, 1996, p. 98.

25. Theodor Damian, "Teologia darului, caracteristică fundamentală a gândirii Părintelui Dumitru Stăniloae" [The Theology of the Gift, a Fundamental Characteristic of Fr. D. Stăniloae's Thought], in *Telegraful Român [The Romanian Telegraph]*, 23-24/1996, Sibiu, p. 1.

26. Dumitru Stăniloae, *Ascetica și Mistica ortodoxă [Orthodox Ascetism and Mysticism]*, I, Ed. Deisis, Alba Iulia, 1993, p. 53.

27. *Idem*, *Chipul Nemuritor al lui Dumnezeu [The Immortal Image of God]*, Ed. Mitropoliei Olteniei, Craiova, 1987, p. 21.

28. Ignatie Monahul, *op. cit.*, p. 97.

29. Ioanichie Balan (editor), *Omagiu Memoriei Părintelui Dumitru Stăniloae [Hommage to the Memory of Fr. D. Stăniloae]*, Ed. Mitropoliei Moldovei și Bucovinei, Iași, 1994, pp. 117-118.
30. *Ibidem*, p. 120.
31. Theodor Damian, *op. cit.*, p. 3.
32. *Ibidem*.
33. Fr. Prof. Dr. Dumitru Stăniloae, *Teologia Dogmatică Ortodoxă [Orthodox Dogmatic Theology]*, I, Ed. Institutului Biblic și de Misiune al Bisericii Ortodoxe Române, Bucharest, 1996, p. 236.
34. *Idem*, *Ascetica și Mistica Ortodoxă*, II, p. 31.
35. *Idem*, *Teologia Dogmatică Ortodoxă*, I, p. 237.
36. *Idem*, *Chipul Nemuritor al lui Dumnezeu*, p. 21.
37. *Ibidem*.
38. *Idem*, *The Experience of God*, Holy Cross Orthodox Press, Brookline, MA, 1994, p. XXI.
39. *Ibidem*, p. 269.
40. *Idem*, *Chipul Nemuritor al lui Dumnezeu*, pp. 9, 23, 357; see also *Spiritualitate și comuniune în Liturghia Ortodoxă [Spirituality and Communion in the Orthodox Liturgy]*, p. 223.
41. *Idem*, *Ortodoxie și Româanism [Orthodoxy and Romanianism]*, Ed. Arhiepiscopiei Sibiu, 1939, **republished by the** “Asociația românilor din Bucovina de nord”, 1992, p. 205.
42. *Idem*, *Chipul Nemuritor al lui Dumnezeu*, pp. 19-20.
43. *Idem*, *Teologia Dogmatică Ortodoxă*, III, p. 56.
44. *Idem*, *Spiritualitate și Comuniune în Liturghia Ortodoxă*, pp. 160-161, 165, 277.
45. *Idem*, *Ascetica și Mistica Ortodoxă*, I, p. 42.
46. *Ibidem*, p. 43.
47. *Idem*, *Chipul Nemuritor al lui Dumnezeu*, pp. 14-15.
48. *Idem*, *Sfânta Treime, sau La început a fost iubirea [The Holy Trinity or At the Beginning There Was Love]*, Ed. Institutului Biblic și de Misiune al Bisericii Ortodoxe Române, Bucharest, 1993, p. 75.
49. *Idem*, *Ascetica și Mistica Ortodoxă*, II, p. 11.
50. *Idem*, *Ascetica și Mistica Ortodoxă*, II, p. 6. See also *Teologia Dogmatică Ortodoxă*, II, p. 217.
51. *Ibidem*, pp. 5-6. See also *Teologia Dogmatică Ortodoxă*, II, pp. 200-202.
52. *Idem*, *Ortodoxie și Româanism*, p. 233.
53. *Idem*, *Teologia Dogmatică Ortodoxă*, p. 204.
54. *Idem*, *Rugăciunea lui Iisus și experiența Duhului Sfânt [The Jesus Prayer and the Experience of the Holy Spirit]*, Ed. Deisis, Sibiu, 1995, p. 108.
55. *Idem*, *Ascetica și Mistica Ortodoxă*, p. 10.
56. *Idem*, *Teologia Dogmatică Ortodoxă*, II, pp. 211-217 și III, p. 54.
57. *Idem*, *Spiritualitate și comuniune în Liturghia Ortodoxă*, p. 278.
58. *Idem*, *Chipul Nemuritor al lui Dumnezeu*, pp. 14, 32, 24, 356, 359.

59. *Idem*, *Spiritualitate și comuniune în Liturghia Ortodoxă*, p. 22.
60. *Ibidem*, pp. 223-224.
61. *Ibidem*, pp. 221, 280-282.
62. *Ibidem*, pp. 19-20; see also *Ortodoxie și Româanism*, p. 206, and *Teologia Dogmatică Ortodoxă*, I, pp. 234-237.
63. *Ibidem*, pp. 166-171.
64. *Ibidem*, pp. 407-409.
65. *Idem*, *Iisus Hristos sau Restaurarea Omului [Jesus Christ or The Restauration of Man]*, Ed. II-a, Ed. Omniscop, Craiova, 1993, pp. 20-26.
66. *Idem*, *Ascetica și Mistica Ortodoxă*, p. 31; see also *Spiritualitate și Comuniune în Liturghia Ortodoxă*, p. 20.
67. *Idem*, *Chipul Nemuritor al lui Dumnezeu*, p. 97.
68. *Idem*, *Ascetica și Mistica Ortodoxă*, I, p. 32.; II, pp. 16-20.
69. *Idem*, *Chipul Nemuritor al lui Dumnezeu*, pp. 10-12.
70. *Ibidem*, p. 13.

Principles of Biblical Hermeneutics in Fr. Stăniloae's Theology

The *exegesis* is usually defined as the application of the principles of hermeneutics in order to achieve a proper understanding of the text. The prefix *ex* in *exegesis* points to the fact that the understanding should come *from* the text itself rather than being a meaning introduced by the interpret *into* a given text (for which one might have a different word, *eis-egesis*). The hermeneutics is pivotal to both biblical and systematic theologies. While the former organizes the meanings in a historical way, the latter presents them in a logical manner.

The need of hermeneutics is required by the presence of several gaps between the text and its interpreter, i.e., the historical, cultural, linguistic and philosophical gaps, which tend to block a spontaneous understanding and make one feel the need for some hermeneutical principles or guidelines facilitating a correct reading. As an exemplification of the linguistic gap, consider the Hebrew idiom “God visited PN” which translated ad literam into English would diminish its genuine force, that is “God visited PN for either purpose, punishment or reward.”

One should distinguish between interpretation and application. While the text has one valid interpretation (which from an Orthodox standpoint depends on author's intended meaning and that shared by the community of faith), its applications may be multiple. Take into account the seventh commandment of the Decalogue: “Do not commit adultery” (Exodus 20:14) which has one meaning but various applications ranging from the carnal act itself up to an inner sinful desire, as Jesus explicates it: “If a man looks at a woman lustfully, he has already committed adultery with her in his heart” (Matthew 5:28).

The theological analysis focuses on the way in which the biblical passage fits into God's revelation as a whole. In order to get a true picture of this one should first find out the pattern or nature of God's revelation. In this endeavor, the greatest danger is transferring one theologian's system *to* a given biblical text. The theologian must rather rely on the text in his theological expositions. Thus, there must be a balance between these three interpretive thrusts, i. e., author-centered, text-centered, or reader-centered.

According to W. R. Tate (*Biblical Interpretation. An Integrated Approach*, Hendrickson, 1991, p. 210), “Hermeneutics is not a monologue; i. e., the author does not simply address readers through the medium of the text, the text does not alone speak to the reader, and the reader does not address only a silent text. Hermeneutics is a dialog between text and reader, and the text and reader enter into a conversational covenant informed by the world of the author.” Meaning occurs somewhere within this dialog, and it is closely related to the reader’s interpretive context (his faith, ideological presuppositions, etc.).

While the words of a text and the author’s world remain unchanged, the reader’s world is in a continuous flux. Thus, the interpretations change in time. W. R. Tate (*ibidem*, p. 212) observes that “the experience of doing hermeneutics is not just a scientific discipline unrelated to the task of living; it is rather a continually life-changing and lifeshaping experience. It can be an experience of God, and as such, it is redemptive.” But one may ask with Fr. Stăniloae “does there not exist an inner core of revelation which must be considered to have remained intact, unquestioned by all possible interpretations as long as these can still be called Christian? And is not this essential core of revelation also expressed by certain definite means?” (“Revelation Through Acts, Words and Images,” in *Theology and the Church*, trns. R. Barringer, p. 110).

According to this great Orthodox theologian, one must distinguish between the literary forms used by the sacred authors and the content of the revelation which transcends the normal content of those forms. He also refers to an “apostolic typology” which occupies a privileged position due to the fact the Apostles lived under the direct influence of Christ, the Son of God made man. “Hence the means by which they expressed the divine revelation have to be preserved” (*ibidem*, p. 111). This is a strong response to Bultmann’s “demythologization” which tries to replace the very content of revelation. Instead of “disobjectifying” God, Bultmann’s followers turn God into an object. Fr. Stăniloae’s merit is to point to God’s revelation through free acts which clearly underscores the personal character of God unconditioned by the material world (p. 115). The first principle of biblical hermeneutics says that the meaning of a text cannot be interpreted without historical-cultural and contextual analysis. This analysis considers the historical-cultural milieu in which the biblical author wrote as well as the relationship between a given passage and the

whole book. A sample of historical-cultural analysis is found in “Revelation Through Acts, Words and Images” (p. 115ff.), more precisely in the section where Fr. Stăniloae refers to the biblical narrative of Creation. While recognizing that elements of mythology are well present in the narrative, and therefore they must be eliminated, nevertheless he urges for preserving the very idea of revelation rather than doing away with it as the “demythologizing” theologians do. Fr. Stăniloae’s middle way position which takes into account the cultural milieu of the biblical author is also a critique of the fundamentalist views which tend to ignore any outside influence upon the text. “What is required, Fr. Stăniloae notices, is not “demythologization” but a spiritual understanding of the divine acts and the relations of God with the world” (p. 116).

In Fr. Stăniloae’s view, God of the Bible is always adapting His activity to the level of the human partners in a given moment in history. “This adaptation does not envisage only a subjective change of understanding under the influence of certain new conditions and problems of historical life; it looks also for a response to an action of God which is in a continual state of adaptation, and this response must come on the new plane where mankind finds itself under the upward direction of God” (p. 119). Speaking of the images as a means by which God has chosen to address the human person, Fr. Stăniloae underscores one more time the importance of the human history within the intricate process of shaping out the Scriptures. “The history of revelation is bound up with the history of mankind. As man progresses spiritually or grows in the awareness of his superiority over nature, he comes to the realization that man himself is the most adequate image of God and so he becomes this image in fact” (p. 134).

Fr. Stăniloae also emphasizes the role of the “subjective elements” within the visions or images “that cannot exist in the divine spirituality, and which the instrument of inspiration introduces from his own world of preoccupations and reading, and from the preoccupations of the age and social milieu in which he lives” (p. 140).

Despite the practice of Jesus and the apostles stressing the historical accuracy of the Old Testament, an allegorical school of interpretation dominated the Church in the succeeding centuries. The allegorization defended by the Alexandrians was born from the desire to understand the Old Testament as a Christian document. The great pitfall of this method of interpretation is that it ignores the author’s

intended meaning. The allegorization was sporadically represented throughout the history by Christians and Jews alike, from the fourfold medieval exegesis up to the letterism and numerology of the Cabbalists. An alternative to allegorizing biblical passages is principlizing. Principlizing is an attempt to discover the spiritual, moral, or theological principles that have relevance for the contemporary believer. An example of principlizing is the use of typology.

The Greek word *tupos*, from which the word *type* is derived has several meanings in the New Testament, among which there are notions of resemblance, likeness, and similarity. According to Henry A. Virkler (*Hermeneutics. Principles and Processes of Biblical Interpretation*, 184), “a *type* is a preordained representative relationship which certain persons, events, and institutions bear to corresponding persons, events, and institutions occurring at a later time in salvation history.”

Typology relies on the assumption that God prefigured His saving work in the Old Testament, and fulfilled it in the New. The prefigurement is labeled the *type*, and the fulfillment is called the *antitype*. So Adam as the representative of the fallen humanity is the *type*, and Christ, as the representative of the redeemed humanity is the *antitype*. Three are the main characteristics of a type: (1) there must be an obvious resemblance between type and its antitype; (2) there must be a clear evidence that the type was appointed by God to prefigure the antitype; (3) and, finally, there must be a corresponding antitype.

Typology distinguishes itself from symbolism and allegorism. Symbolism does not necessarily imply a similarity between its components. Moreover, types point toward future fulfillments, whereas symbols are not loaded with such an orientation. Typology is also different from allegorism because typology is based on an objective meaning of the biblical narrative while allegorism is a subjective search for hidden meanings by transporting one’s system of thinking onto the biblical narrative.

With respect to Fr. Stăniloae’s theology, the use of typology plays an important role. In his magnificent opus, yet untranslated into English, “*Teologia Dogmatică Ortodoxă*” (“Orthodox Dogmatic Theology”), vol. 1, 47, he first underscores the “prophetic character” of the revelation: “Therefore, the revelation does not consist only in a sum of acts accomplished by God and in their interpretation by His words, but also in an anticipation and description of the final goal of the

creation, whose beginning was set by those acts. The revelation has also a prophetic, eschatological character.” Then, in “Revelation as Gift and Promise” (originally published in *Ortodoxia* 21 [1969]: 179-96, translated by R. Barringer), Fr. Stăniloae shows that this “prophetic character” is shared by *types* or *images* by which the Old Testament revelation was made manifest: “We must here abstract from the fact that the acts by which God helped Israel are also types of higher fulfillment to come, and also from the fact that certain types also have the nature of acts by which the people received immediate help.) The Pascal lamb is a type of Christ, the Lamb who will in fact take away the sins of the world. The crossing of the Red Sea is a type of Baptism and of escape from the tyranny of Satan. The cloud which guided the Israelites through the desert is a type of the Holy Spirit. The manna is a type of the Eucharist; the water from the rock is a type of the grace of the Holy Spirit; all the sacrifices of the Old Testament are types of the sacrifice of Christ; the holy tabernacle is a type of the Church, and the ark of the Law found within the tabernacle is a type of the presence of Christ within the Church on the holy altar” (p. 162). But he also remarks that “The historical acts of the Old Testament were not just types of the spiritual fulfillments of the New Testament; they also served as preparations for them. God sustained the people of Israel because it was from them that Christ was to come forth according to the flesh” (p. 157). In this sense, “If the Old Testament revelation was only promise or hope, or a prophecy that God would dwell in and among His people and their relations with God would be brought to perfection, the New Testament revelation is both fulfillment, promise and prophecy” (p. 164). And as an example of this tension between present and future in the New Testament, Fr. Stăniloae brings forth the Beatitudes where the Savior speaks about virtues in the present tense and about goods in the future tense: “Blessed are the peacemakers (present reward - since in heaven there will be no need of peacemaking), for they shall be called sons of God (future reward - in the world to come)” (Matthew 5:9) (p. 168).

In fact, typology is closely related to the third principle of biblical hermeneutics, that is the *theological analysis* whose main goal is to find the pattern and nature of God’s revelation in the holy Bible. The use of typology can influence one’s theological analysis in the sense that the unity of the Scripture becomes more obvious. As one knows, there are various views on divine revelation ranging from those

emphasizing major discontinuities within biblical history up to the views underlining the absolute continuity. The use of typology may lead to a middle way between these two extreme views. This middle way is represented by the epigenetic model - progressive revelation - which underlines the organic unity of Scripture keeping a balance between dispensational (minimizing the unity of Scripture) and covenantal (ignoring the distinctions in the history of salvation, e. g., the difference between Israel and Church) theologies.

Is the New Testament absolutely *new* or simply a continuation in relationship with the Old? How the use of typology might contribute to solving this tension? Theologian of minute nuances and profound spirituality, Fr. Stăniloae, proposes a very complex picture of the organic unity between the two Testaments, by restoring the balance between revelation as promise and as gift. He starts by quoting the famous biblical scholar W. Zimmerli (“Verheissung und Erfüllung,” in *Probleme der alttestamentlichen Hermeneutik*, Kaiser-Verlag, 1960², p. 92) who wrote: “The whole history of the Old Testament is guided by the Word of Yahweh. It is a history which is given as gift and has the nature of a fulfillment, yet in that fulfillment there appears a new kind of promise.” But, then Fr. Stăniloae goes on making an important theological observation, that is: “No single fulfillment from the time of the Old Testament, nor even all the Old Testament fulfillments put together, represent “the fulfillment *par excellence*” which the revelation of the New Testament brings” (“Revelation as Gift and Promise,” pp. 156-57).

The Orthodox theologian is really a master of nuances when he draws the conclusion that “although the birth of Christ radically transcends the level of the Old Testament fulfillments as types, from another point of view His birth is the capstone of the series of fulfillments” (p. 157). Indeed, a very dynamic view which focuses on both unity and discontinuity with respect to the divine revelation in the holy Bible.

Since this year we commemorate the anniversary of Fr. Stăniloae’s falling asleep, I would like to conclude this brief presentation with the wise words of king Solomon: “Blessed are those who have discovered wisdom, those who have acquired understanding... In wisdom, the Lord laid the earth’s foundations, in understanding, he spread out the heavens... Glory is the share of the wise” (Proverbs 3:13. 19. 35).

The spiritual and cultural significance of Fr. Stăniloae's visit to America

When the history of the Orthodox theology in general and that of the Romanian Orthodox theology in particular for the 20th century will be written, a place of primary importance will certainly be given to the late Fr. Dumitru Stăniloae. No one else has attained the level of thought expressed in so many writings that dealt with a wide range of subjects touching upon all aspects of theology and Church life, which Fr. Stăniloae has. His life was dedicated entirely to the Church and to a tireless pursuit of the truth relating to human existence, its role, purpose and meaning here on earth and beyond, and its relationship to, as well as its dependence upon, the Divine Creator. In addition to the huge volume of work that he left us, this total dedication was also evident in his simple, almost monastic, way of life in his modest apartment on Calea Moșilor and then on Strada Cernica in Bucharest where I visited him many times. It is there that I saw him for the last time in the spring of 1993 when preparations were being made for honoring him at the celebration of his 90th birthday in November of that year. It wasn't meant to be. On October 5, 1993 Fr. Stăniloae entered the eternal life and his body was placed to rest in the cemetery at Cernica Monastery waiting “for the resurrection of the dead and the life of the world to come.”

Fr. Stăniloae traveled extensively throughout Europe giving lectures and representing the Romanian Orthodox Church at theological dialogues and ecumenical gatherings. He was open and receptive to ideas that would help build bridges over the chasms of a divided Christianity in the face of so many attacks both from within and from without and in an age of intense secularization with the divine message being unheeded if not entirely lost. He never compromised, though, his firm stand as an Orthodox theologian deeply rooted in the biblical and patristic tradition of the Church presenting his interpretation of the dogmas in the terms understandable to the contemporary society.

It was for the first and only time in November and December of 1982 that Fr. Stăniloae visited the United States, something that he wanted to do for a long time. The importance and the significance of this visit could not be overstated. Orthodox and nonOrthodox alike interested in the study of theology as well as anyone “attracted by

imaginative thinking on basic religious issues,” as Bishop Kallistos said in his *Forward to The Experience of God*, had a unique opportunity to hear one of the greatest Orthodox theologians of the 20th century share with them his theological insight. The visit which lasted between November 10 and December 15 was made possible through the invitation extended by St. Steven House, an Anglican retreat center, and McCormick Theological Seminary both in Chicago.

The immediate purpose of the visit was for Fr. Stăniloae to give a few lectures in order to familiarize others with the Orthodox theology in its Romanian characteristics and nuances. This theology has known through Fr. Stăniloae a renewal and, at the same time, a depth of thought rarely seen in the past. It is a theology that responds to the spiritual needs of the contemporary man without being detached from, but deeply rooted in, the thought of the Holy Fathers.

The lectures given by Fr. Stăniloae were as follows:

November 18: *The Lutheran doctrine on justification and word. Some Orthodox remarks.* Following the thought of the Eastern Fathers regarding justification, Fr. Stăniloae shows that the act of God in the salvation of man is seen in the restoration of God's image in man and in the development of that image towards a greater likeness. If God who is the model performs the good it means that man who as God's image is restored by grace or by justification cannot remain totally passive. If man has no role in his justification by God why are then not all men justified? The denial of any role of man in the process of justification is a predestination that contradicts God's love for all men (1 Tim. 2:4). Fr. Stăniloae emphasizes in this study the role of man in achieving his salvation with quotations from the Church Fathers and from some Protestant theologians. He says that while the Protestant churches sometimes give exclusive importance to word, in the Orthodox Church through word and through the knowledge it conveys about everything that is new, man opens himself up to Christ. Each word must be at work and that happens especially in the sacraments.

November 19: *Some characteristic features of Orthodoxy* (published in *Sobornost*, series 5, nr. 9, 1969, pp. 627-629). Fr. Stăniloae develops the following points: 1) Orthodoxy satisfies the religious needs of the people who adhere to it and has preserved the mystery of salvation in its richness. 2) In Orthodoxy symbols express the mystery of existence better than intellectual explanations. 3) Orthodoxy is conscious of living in the Holy Spirit, who is God at work

with us. 4) In stressing the life in the Holy Spirit, Orthodoxy has a foretaste of the resurrection. 5) Having a foretaste of the resurrection, Orthodoxy is catholic and cosmic. 6) Through the joy of living in God, Orthodoxy is doxological not theoretical. It does not separate words from things and for this reason we see everything as a sacrament. 7) The hierarchical priesthood represents the people, but it also symbolizes the transcendence of God. 8) In the relation of men with God, and of men with one another, Orthodoxy emphasizes love rather than justice. Love is always at work and it will become so more and more.

November 20: *Prayer and the light of the Holy Spirit* (published in Romanian in the 1993 Credinta Almanac). Here Fr. Stăniloae shows that prayer is the most proper and most direct relationship between us and God. It is our response to what God gives us. In prayer our love towards others is developed and this enlightens the relationship we should have with others. Prayer brings about the true knowledge of God as an experience of His presence, which gives spiritual power, light, peace and joy.

November 22: *Limit and transcendence in culture and religion*. Special reference is made in this lecture to the studies of American theologians David Tracy and Langdon Gilkey. After analyzing their thought on the subject Fr. Stăniloae presents the Orthodox position that as a religious being man experiences his limit and that of the world in contact with transcendence in an intuitive and plenary way. On the level of religious experience limit is at the same time a gate through which the waters of divine transcendence flow into the human experience. But man is not drowned by them because that transcendence is personal and allows man, as a limited person enriched through transcendence, to experience it in the same way two persons mutually communicate themselves and enrich their lives without abolishing the difference between them. In Christianity the union between the finite and the real transcendence was achieved in an absolute manner in Jesus Christ. In the person of Christ the entire finite is filled with the meaning and the life of the infinite personal transcendence. Thus the human person gains back the central position and value in the cosmos as a bridge between the finite immanence and the infinite, personal transcendence which is divine.

November 23: *The relationship between devotion and theology in the Orthodox Church*. This is the heart of Fr. Stăniloae's theology. To him theology is an expression of personal experience, of a living

encounter with the living God. In this study Fr. Stăniloae shows how the general features of Orthodox devotion are reflected in theology and viceversa. Devotion is filled with theology, with that theology in which the doctrine of the Church about God is animated by devotion. God is not an object for rational speculation but He accompanies us by the means of His uncreated energies in all the circumstances of our lives. True theology can only be experienced in the liturgical life of the Church through prayer both personal and communal.

November 29: *Spiritual and social responsibility*. Here Fr. Stăniloae expounds a few texts both from the Scripture and the Orthodox Tradition which speak of the way in which faith in the salvation we receive by union with Christ passes over into works for the benefit of the neighbor or, more precisely, of the way in which responsibility for human beings is actually included in the very spirituality by which human beings advance in the experience of their union with God and in the moral perfection inseparable from this. In addition to scriptural texts, Fr. Stăniloae comments on texts from St. Isaac the Syrian, Father Silouane, St. Cyril of Alexandria, St. Gregory of Nyssa, and others.

November 30: *Liturgy, participation in the sacrifice of Christ, spirituality*. A beautiful analysis of Christ's sacrifice on the Cross experienced in the Liturgy and its effects in the spiritual life of the believer. Spirituality, says Fr. Stăniloae, is union with Christ. Simple communication of His words does not give us the power to elevate ourselves spiritually or to perfect ourselves. We must receive Him in us in order to shape ourselves after Him as our model. And we receive Him as the one who was incarnate, crucified and risen from the dead. Christ communicates to us His perfection, gradually and eternally, and He sanctified us by making us share in His sacrifice. The spiritual life is a life of sacrifice, self denial and a life for others.

December 1: *Epektasis and transcendence in St. Gregory of Nyssa and in contemporary theology*. Drawing heavily from St. Gregory's *The Life of Moses* Fr. Stăniloae makes an excellent analysis of the human person's never-ending advance towards God and how this is reflected in contemporary theology. The connection between doing good as something that contributes to a continuous progress and the lack of any good actions as something similar to evil is underlined. There is no neutral state between good and evil. Any limitation is at the same time an invitation to pass beyond limitation and any self contentment

with life within certain limits is not only a cessation of further development but also a fall from what is characteristic to human life.

All these lectures were well received and a new interest in Orthodox theology was kindled.

On November 16, 1982 Fr. Richard Young, the superior at St. Stephen House, organized a reception for the celebration of Fr. Stăniloae's 79th birthday. Among the invited guests were the noted theologians and professors at the University of Chicago's Divinity School: David Tracy, Langdon Gilkey, Robert Grant and Bernard McGinn. Also Professor Bruce Rigdon from McCormick Theological Seminary was present.

The evening of November 23 was a special one because I witnessed the meeting between Fr. Stăniloae and Mircea Eliade in his apartment on the campus of the University of Chicago. I had met Eliade back in the spring of 1977 when I was a student there and living across the street from his apartment building. I would see him many times walking to and from classes. His office, in which he spent many nights until the early morning hours putting his thoughts in writing, was filled with books and manuscripts which, unfortunately, were later destroyed by a fire from which Eliade himself never recovered. The meeting took place in a cordial atmosphere, which lasted for a few hours with dinner hosted by Professor and Mrs. Eliade in the Professors Lounge at the University of Chicago. The two great thinkers reminisced about the period before the World War II when Eliade was in Romania; it was a period of intense intellectual activity and creativity when all intellectuals enjoyed the freedom of expression that was curtailed after the communists came to power. I remember that they talked at length about religious experience and religious expression, each one from his point of view as a historian of religions (Eliade) and as a dogmatist (Stăniloae). Fr. Stăniloae was always interested, in history; his doctoral dissertation was in the field of Church history.

It seems that the period immediately after their death (although seven years separates their departure from this life) was for both Eliade and Stăniloae a period of decline in the interest shown in their work. When a Romanian Library in Chicago was named after Mircea Eliade, the professor who represented at the dedication ceremony the Divinity School where Eliade taught and where the chair of the History of Religions bears his name told me about the significant number of critics at that school who not only did not agree with his methodology but were

playing down the influence Eliade and his work had in the way history of religions is regarded. Likewise, in Romania Father Stăniloae's theology was not continued in the way he had hoped and not too many were the disciples who followed in his footsteps. His huge volume of work, just like Eliade's, is still waiting for a critical edition and publication in a complete series.

During his stay in the United States I accompanied Father Stăniloae on a tour of a few Romanian Parishes in Michigan, Ohio and Pennsylvania. Archbishop Victorin Ursache, Archbishop Valerian Trifa and Bishop Nathaniel Popp received him very warmly and expressed their admiration for him and his work. Before leaving for Romania he also visited and gave lectures at St. Vladimir's Seminary in Crestwood, New York and Holy Cross School of Theology in Brookline, Massachusetts.

Father Stăniloae's historic visit to America had a great importance and significance both for the Romanian communities and for the American theological circles. The contacts he made and the discussions he had in addition to the lectures he gave increased the interest in the Orthodox theology. Everyone recognized in Father Stăniloae an Orthodox theologian who cannot be ignored by those who want to have a complete picture of Orthodoxy and its witness in contemporary society as well as the enormous value that his entire work has which is his experience of God shared with us.

Communion Ecclesiology According to Some Orthodox Theologians

This paper begins with an exposition of the concept of eucharistic ecclesiology developed by the Russian emigré theologian Nicholas Afanasiev, followed by a brief evaluation of it. Of other Orthodox theologians who have expressed their opinions about Afanasiev's ecclesiology, I have chosen John Zizioulas and Dumitru Stăniloae as the most significant. Thus, the presentation of Zizioulas's attempts to correct Afanasiev's theory will be discussed and then Stăniloae's critique of both.

N. Afanasiev's eucharistic ecclesiology

By proposing the concept of "eucharistic ecclesiology" at the beginning of the 1960s, Nicholas Afanasiev (1893-1966) wanted to overcome the impasse reached in the dialogue between the Orthodox and the Roman Catholics which had just been re-opened. This impasse has been reached mainly because of the issue of the "Petrine ministry" of the bishop of Rome and because both churches, Orthodox and Roman Catholic, consider themselves the universal Church. The Orthodox were preoccupied with giving to the "Petrine ministry" a sense acceptable to themselves. For the purposes of this paper I confine myself to presenting and analyzing two articles by N. Afanasiev in which the theory of "eucharistic ecclesiology" has been developed: "The Church which Presides in Love"¹ and "Una Sancta."² Afanasiev speaks of two fundamental types of ecclesiology, universal and eucharistic:

According to the universal ecclesiology, the Church is a single organic whole, including in itself all church-units of any kind, especially those headed by bishops. This organic whole is the Body of Christ. . . . Usually the church units are regarded as parts of the universal Church: less usually people see in each church a *pars pro toto* [i.e., a part which stands for the whole].³

Both Roman Catholic and Orthodox theologies have espoused this universal ecclesiology devised, according to Afanasiev, by Cyprian of Carthage, and both consider that there is only one true Church.⁴ The major difficulty arises, according to our author, when the Orthodox consider the Orthodox Church to be the true Church, whereas for the Catholics that designates the Roman Catholic Church.⁵ Therefore, a reunion of the two churches would be impossible, because if one is the true, universal Church, the other has to be excluded; otherwise, one has to recognize that there are two Bodies of Christ.⁶

Yet, in Afanasiev's opinion universal ecclesiology has replaced a different form of ecclesiology, which he calls "eucharistic ecclesiology."⁷ He starts reconstituting this primitive ecclesiology, mainly from some letters of St. Ignatius of Antioch. Afanasiev says that every local church throughout the second and third centuries was "autonomous, for it contained in itself everything necessary to its life, and independent by not depending on any other local church or any bishop whatsoever outside itself." This was so, "in virtue of the fact that each local church was the Church of God in all its fullness"⁸; this fullness was realized by a local community gathered around its bishop who celebrates the Eucharist, because in each eucharistic assembly Christ was present "in the fullness of His Body." In other words, "Where the Eucharist is, there is the fullness of the Church."⁹ Although not rejecting the idea of "the universality of the Church" by expressing rather an interior universality of "fullness and unity," eucharistic ecclesiology in fact excludes "any concept of the Universal Church, for the Universal Church consists of parts, if it exists at all."¹⁰ By considering that the local church possesses all the fullness of the Church, Afanasiev transfers all the attributes of the universal Church (oneness, holiness, catholicity and apostolicity) to the local church.¹¹

He then argues that originally in each local church there was a single eucharistic assembly presided by a bishop. In Afanasiev's opinion, the bishop was the principle of unity of the local church, and the basis of his ministry was presidency of the eucharistic assembly. The bishop was thus "included in the concept of the Eucharist."¹² In the universal ecclesiology, according to Afanasiev, the bishop is not included in the eucharistic assembly, but is considered in his own person the principle of unity.¹³

When arriving at the issue of unity among local churches, Afanasiev says that, albeit autonomous and independent, they were

united. This unity was manifested through reception: one local church had to accept what was happening in other local churches, “because what was happening in one church was also happening in the other churches.”¹⁴ Yet, local churches could also refuse to recognize what was happening in a local church or even break off communion with it. “By refusing to accept a certain ecclesial act, local churches witnessed that that act did not happen in the Church of God.”¹⁵ The “certification” of a bishop’s election was one of the acts which other local churches had to receive.

Subsequently Afanasiev contends that, though being by nature equal in value, local churches are not necessarily equal in authority. This leads to hierarchy among them, or as he puts it, to “priority.”¹⁶ Nevertheless, he insists that “priority” is different from “primacy”: “primacy is a legalistic expression, whereas priority is founded on authority of witness, and that is a gift God grants to the church-in-priority.”¹⁷ The consequences are important: “if you accept the idea of primacy, you must ban eucharistic ecclesiology; conversely, accept priority and there is no room for universal ecclesiology.”¹⁸

Critical assessment of Afanasiev’s eucharistic ecclesiology

One has to recognize that the theory of eucharistic ecclesiology has been highly influential in both Orthodox and Roman Catholic circles ever since its formulation. On the one hand, by emphasizing the role of the local church and the centrality of the Eucharist for the Church, this ecclesiology has had a positive impact on some formulations of the Second Vatican Council. On the other hand, eucharistic ecclesiology appears to Orthodox theologians to support their opposition to papal primacy, despite Afanasiev’s backing of papal primacy under the guise of “priority.”

In spite of its positive value, however, Afanasiev’s theory of “eucharistic ecclesiology” has some major flaws and internal contradictions. First, Afanasiev asserts that local churches are “independent by not depending on any other local church or any bishop whatsoever outside [themselves].” Yet at the same time he says that a local church depends on its recognition by other local churches, and that its bishop is ordained by bishops of other local churches. If so, then one can no longer maintain that local churches are independent. Moreover,

the affirmation of the “priority” among local churches contradicts still more their alleged “independence,” because if one local church has priority over the others, then the others depend on the witness of the “church-in-priority.”

Second, I must confess that I do not really see the difference between “primacy” and “priority.” Afanasiev may reply to this: the former is a “legalistic expression” (i.e., a human decision about an aspect of the Church), whereas the latter belongs to the realm of grace (i.e., it can be traced to Christ’s or the Holy Spirit’s instructions). Yet, I am still unconvinced. In an article on the catholicity of the Church, Michael Fahey wrote not only that the *ius divinum* and the *ius humanum* “may in the past have been unintentionally blurred,” but also that particular prestige came to be associated with certain local churches for a variety of reasons such as “real or imagined apostolic origins, geographical location, political power, effective leadership.”¹⁹ Therefore, I think, a distinction between “primacy” and “priority” is not possible.²⁰ Consequently, Afanasiev actually supports the idea of a real primacy, despite his initial intention when he formulated the eucharistic ecclesiology. Moreover, according to his own contention, it is the church of Rome that should have this primacy, because this church is in fact the one “which presides in love”²¹ (to use Ignatius of Antioch’s phrase from his second-century *Letter to the Romans*).

Third, when Afanasiev speaks about the process of “reception” taking place among local churches, he uses a vague expression: a local church had to accept “what was happening in other local churches.” Among these “happenings,” however, he never mentions the reception of the confession of faith of another church, because he knows that this is the delicate issue at stake in the ecumenical dialogue nowadays. Yet is he justified in avoiding this? Or, to put it better, is one church’s politely overlooking the differences of doctrine really the way to come to unity, as he suggests? Afanasiev says that, according to eucharistic ecclesiology, it is possible for two churches “which fully possess the ecclesial nature” to reunite without having to eliminate the dogmatic divergences existing between them.²² Yet, to my knowledge, this was not the case in the early Church. The early Church was very careful to defend its faith, even before the emergence of important creeds, such as the Nicene creed (in 325). As early as the second century, St. Irenaeus of Lyons quotes a Rule of Faith used in the catholic church at that time against the Gnostics.

John Zizioulas's communion ecclesiology

The Greek theologian John Zizioulas, now Metropolitan of Pergamon, is among those who have tried to correct Afanasiev's eucharistic ecclesiology, turning it into what he likes to call a "communion ecclesiology." I present these attempts next.

Unlike Afanasiev, Zizioulas tries to maintain the right balance between local church and universal Church. Therefore, he says: "No priority of the universal over the local Church is conceivable in [eucharistic] ecclesiology ... because the nature of the eucharist points not in the direction of the priority of the local Church but in that of the *simultaneity* of both local and universal."²³

Another point on which Zizioulas disagrees with Afanasiev, is the latter's formula, "wherever the eucharist is, there is the church."²⁴ Zizioulas says that this principle "risks suggesting the idea that each Church could, *independently of other local Churches*, be the 'one, holy, catholic and apostolic Church'."²⁵ Zizioulas is much more aware than Afanasiev that a local church must be in communion with other local churches. Moreover, a local church is not self-sufficient and independent, as Afanasiev holds, but interdependent. Besides mentioning that in each episcopal ordination two or three bishops from the neighbouring churches ought to take part, Zizioulas also emphasizes that these visiting bishops could preside at the eucharist of the community that invited them. These factors, in his view, have tied the episcopal office in a fundamental way, thus favouring the appearance of episcopal conciliarity. Zizioulas notes that Afanasiev has failed to see and appreciate these factors.²⁶

Nevertheless, an issue Zizioulas cannot explain within the framework of the eucharistic ecclesiology is the emergence of the parish. Both Afanasiev and Zizioulas tend to limit the function of the bishop to the celebration of the eucharist. Everything is fine with this attractive construction as long as one does not quit the space of a local church - a "village church" or "city church," as Zizioulas calls it sometimes - where the bishop, surrounded by the presbyterium, the deacons and the faithful, is the only presider at the eucharist. As seen, even communion among such church units can be explained quite satisfactorily. Difficulties arise when one attempts to understand the emergence of the parish, and when a bishop has to oversee more

parishes, thus becoming the head of a diocese. Zizioulas sees the emergence of the parish in the life of the Church as a “destruction” caused to eucharistic ecclesiology. He writes:

The Orthodox Church, in my understanding at least, has opted for the view that the concept of the local Church is guaranteed *by the bishop* and not by the presbyter: the local Church as an entity with full ecclesiological status is the *episcopal diocese* and not the parish. By so doing the Orthodox Church has unconsciously brought about a rupture in its own eucharistic ecclesiology. For it is no longer possible to equate every eucharistic celebration with the local Church.²⁷

Personally, I do not see the emergence of the parish as such a fatal event. Such a development was expectable in the life of the Church owing to an increase in Church membership. What appears to Zizioulas as a “complication” or “rupture” seems to me to show rather the weakness or even failure of the concept of “eucharistic ecclesiology” to explain the complex system which is the Church. This “complication” or “rupture” should warn us that “eucharistic ecclesiology” may not be the most proper theory to explain the life of the Church. Neither was “eucharistic ecclesiology” the ecclesiology of the early Church. The identification of the local Church with the eucharistic community alone may be simplistic.

Concerning papal primacy, which has inspired Afanasiev’s reflections and made him propose the eucharistic ecclesiology, Zizioulas has an ambivalent position. He has a tendency to affirm a real primacy among the churches and even to allow such a “ministry” to be manifested by the bishop of Rome. But the decisions of such a “primus,” continues Zizioulas, “must be tested through their reception by the communities before they can claim full and true authority.”²⁸

Dumitru Stăniloae’s critique of eucharistic and communion ecclesiology

The Romanian Orthodox theologian Dumitru Stăniloae (1903-1993) was among those who have not subscribed to Afanasiev’s eucharistic ecclesiology. I wish to present Stăniloae’s position vis-à-vis the eucharistic ecclesiology, because I consider that it shows even more

clearly than Zizioulas's the flaws of this ecclesiology.

In Stăniloae's view,²⁹ the three most important ministries of the bishop are: "preaching the truth," "overseeing the faithful" and "celebrating the eucharist." Even if it is true that all ministries culminate in the celebration of the eucharist, the latter is *not the only ministry*, as Afanasiev implies. "All in all," Stăniloae contends, "the celebration of the eucharist is also related to the preservation of the truth in the Church."³⁰ As I shall show below, because he has realized a synthesis between Christology and pneumatology better than that of other Orthodox theologians, Stăniloae can explain why it is necessary that the celebration of the eucharist be combined with the preservation of the true faith.

When arriving at the controversial point in Afanasiev's "Una Sancta" of the unity among local churches, Stăniloae says that the small local church possesses ecclesial plenitude, precisely because it does not break off with the ensemble formed by all local churches. "Otherwise, the small local church would not be interested in what happens in other local churches. Nor would it be necessary for it to receive the witness of the Spirit dwelling in it about the works of the same Spirit dwelling in other local churches."³¹ Consequently, Stăniloae accepts the idea of a local church's ecclesial plenitude, but only within the framework of the universal Church, i.e, when the local church maintains communion and the same faith with all other local churches. A local church isolated from other local churches loses its ecclesial character, in his view.³² This is exactly what Afanasiev fails to accept.

Afanasiev deals with the issue of a local church's being isolated by other local churches when the latter no longer recognize what is happening in the former. He says: "In refusing to accept a certain ecclesial act, local churches witness that that act does not take place in the Church of God."³³ At this point he is confused and hesitant, not knowing how to call this state of isolation; eventually he labels it a "weakening of the love" among local churches. Afanasiev categorically avoids the phrase "excommunication," since "from the point of view of the eucharistic ecclesiology such 'excommunications' are impossible: . . . a local church cannot amputate another [local] church from the Church, because this would mean that the Church excommunicates itself."³⁴ Stăniloae views things differently. To him, when a local church goes astray from the apostolic faith shared until then with other local churches, the Holy Spirit, who is the Spirit of truth, will prompt the

other local churches to break off communion with it. By this process the danger of the spread of error in the entire Church is prevented. Nonetheless, this action has a positive side too; it wakens the conscience of error in the community thus warned and maintains it in a state of doubt, preparing hereby its return to the truth.³⁵

The major ecclesiological dissimilarity between Afanasiev and Stăniloae is due to their positions vis-à-vis the Holy Spirit. Afanasiev assigns almost no role to the Holy Spirit in his eucharistic ecclesiology; his ecclesiology is definitely Christocentric. In contradistinction to Afanasiev, Stăniloae's ecclesiology is not only Christological but also pneumatological. According to Stăniloae, the Holy Spirit is the Spirit of truth, and hence the guardian of true, apostolic faith in the Church. Afanasiev opines that "where a eucharistic community is gathered around its bishop, there is the church integrally." To this Stăniloae prefers St. Irenaeus of Lyon's definition: "Where the Church is, there is the Spirit of God; and where the Spirit of God is, there is the Church and all grace; and the Spirit is the truth." Consequently, Stăniloae would not subscribe to the formula "the eucharist makes the church" without the qualification that the eucharist must be conditioned by the truth, i.e., the true faith. He considers that the priest's urging "Let us love one another, so that with one mind we may *confess* [emphasis added]," followed by the confession of faith before the epiclesis during the Orthodox liturgy, has not been fortuitously inserted into the liturgical text. Moreover, the holy eucharist itself clarifies the minds of the believers; therefore, according to Stăniloae, they can sing after communion: "We have seen the true light! We have received the heavenly Spirit! We have found the true faith! Therefore, let us worship the undivided Trinity who has saved us."³⁶

Stăniloae considers primacy among local churches purely administrative and functional, since all local churches are equal and not a single one of them can have a privileged union with Christ. The bishop primate has only a role of presidency of the episcopal college "for the sake of human, cultural, administrative facilities, being assisted by the political centre in which he had his residence."³⁷

Concluding remarks

Having analyzed the concept of “eucharistic ecclesiology” in Afanasiev’s exposition, in Zizioulas’s attempt to improve it, and in Stăniloae’s critique, I conclude that, as it is now, this concept cannot satisfactorily explain the complex reality which is the Church. The role of this concept was important in the unlocking of the ecumenical dialogue, especially between Roman Catholics and Orthodox. Moreover, “eucharistic ecclesiology” has brought local church to the attention of theologians. In my view, however, this concept can no longer further the ecumenical dialogue, unless its designers take also seriously into consideration other aspects of the sacramental life and the faith of the Church. Yet in this case, the concept under scrutiny cannot be called “eucharistic ecclesiology” anymore.

1. “L’Église qui préside dans l’amour” in N. Afanassieff, N. Koulomzine, J. Meyendorff, A. Schmemmann, *La primauté de Pierre dans l’Église Orthodoxe* (Neuchâtel: Delachaux et Niestlé, 1960), pp. 7-64. I shall use the English translation: Nicholas Afanasiev, “The Church which Presides in Love” in J. Meyendorff et al., *The Primacy of Peter* (London: The Faith Press, 1963), pp. 57-110.
2. “Una Sancta,” *Irénikon* 36 (1963): 436-475.
3. N. Afanasiev, “The Church which Presides in Love,” p. 58. In “Una Sancta” he rehearses many ideas from “The Church,” sometimes even word for word (cf. “Una Sancta,” 440).
4. N. Afanasiev, “Una Sancta,” 443.
5. *Ibid.*, 444 ff.
6. *Ibid.*, 443.
7. Afanasiev, “The Church which Presides in Love,” p. 73.
8. *Ibid.*, pp. 73 f.
9. *Ibid.*, p. 76; see also Afanasiev, “Una Sancta,” 452-453.
10. Afanasiev, “The Church...,” p. 76.
11. “Una Sancta,” 452.
12. “inclus dans le concept de l’Eucharistie” (“Una Sancta,” 453).
13. *Ibid.*, 453.
14. *Ibid.*, 455.
15. *Ibid.*, p. 456.
16. Afanasiev, “The Church...,” p. 79.
17. *Ibid.*, p. 82.
18. *Ibid.*, p. 82.
19. Michael A. Fahey, “The Catholicity of the Church in the New Testament and in the Early Patristic Period,” *The Jurist* 52 (1992): 64, 67.

20. Cf. also A. de Halleux, “La collégialité dans l’Église ancienne,” 437.
21. Afanasiev, “Una Sancta,” 471 ff.
22. *Ibid.*, p. 469.
23. “Christ, the Spirit...,” p. 133.
24. If I put it into Latin, *ubi eucharistia, ibi ecclesia*, some people might say that it is a patristic formula. The same happened with the formula coined by Henri de Lubac, “the eucharist makes the church” (*eucharistia facit ecclesiam*). B. Sesboüé says he saw it quoted here and there as a patristic formula (cf. B. Sesboüé, “Eucharistie: deux générations de travaux,” *Études* 335 [1981]: p. 101).
25. J. Zizioulas, “Introduction” in *Being and Communion*, p. 25.
26. Zizioulas, “Eucharist and Catholicity” in *Being and Communion*, p. 155.
27. J. Zizioulas, “The Local Church in a Perspective of Communion” in *Being as Communion*, p. 251.
28. Metropolitan John of Pergamon, “The Church as Communion: A Presentation on the World Conference Theme” in *On the Way to Fuller Koinonia: Official Report of the Fifth World Conference on Faith and Order*, edited by Thomas F. Best and Günther Gassmann, Faith and Order Paper no. 166 (Geneva: World Council of Churches, 1994), p. 108.
29. D. Stăniloae, “Biserica universală și sobornicească” [The universal and sobornost Church] *Ortodoxia* 18 (1966): 169.
30. *Ibid.*
31. *Ibid.*, p. 171.
32. *Ibid.*, pp. 171 f.
33. Afanasiev, “Una Sancta,” p. 456.
34. *Ibid.*, p. 456 ff.
35. D. Stăniloae, “Biserica universală și sobornicească” *Ortodoxia* 18 (1966), pp. 171, 193.
36. Stăniloae, “Biserica universală și sobornicească,” 197. Cf. also his *Spiritualitate și comuniune în liturghia ortodoxă* [*Spirituality and communion in the Orthodox liturgy*] (Craiova, Romania: Editura Mitropoliei Olteniei, 1986), p. 399. English quotes of the liturgical text are taken from *The Divine Liturgy according to Saint John Chrysostom*, third edition (Detroit, MI: The Romanian Orthodox Episcopate of America, 1975), pp. 78, 107.
37. D. Stăniloae, “Biserica universală și sobornicească,” p. 194.

List of participants