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ECCLESIOLOGY ACCORDING TO DUMITRU STANILOAE

Dumitru Staniloae was born on November 16, 1903, in Vladeni and he received his secondary education in Brasov. He studied theology in the capital of the then Romanian Bukovina, at the Faculty of Cernauti (1922-1927). As a student, he seems to have been primarily and legitimately preoccupied with the confessional identity of the Orthodox Church, which, in northern Romanian lands was just coming out of a long struggle for survival under Hungarian Roman Catholic or Protestant predominance¹. He also studied in Athens, Munich, Berlin and Paris. Then Fr. Dumitru started a long career as professor, then rector, at the Theological Faculty of Sibiu, in Transylvania (1929-1946). Dumitru was a married secular priest but he associated with the monastic revival of post-war Romania. This happened because in 1948 he produced the first three volumes of a Romanian (expanded and footnoted) version of the *Philocalia*, the well-known compendium of patristic writings on prayer². His studies in Athens helped him to understand the Greek Fathers and to deal with *Philocalia*. He strives to assume into a balanced Orthodox theology the totality of creation, the world and human culture. Occasionally criticized for his ontological optimism and his reluctance to reflect upon the inner brokenness of creation as a result of the Fall, Fr. Staniloae remains, by the example of his life and the perseverance of his witness, a theologian of hope. Applying the same positive approach to the issue of the relationship between Orthodoxy and Western Christianity, he also presents the truth of his convictions - uncompromisingly - as a liberating solution for all rather than as judgment upon others. For almost half a century in Romania, Staniloae has fought against a routine scholasticism which would replace substance and imagination with empty academic self-sufficiency. He has done so in the name of a truly "catholic" and dynamic Orthodoxy. He is indeed a man of the Church, and deserves to be heard everywhere as John Meyendorff underlines³.

¹ Staniloae Dumitru, *Theology and the Church*, translated by Robert Barringer, foreword by John Meyendorff, New York, 1980, 7.

² *ibidem*, 8.

³ *ibidem*, 9.

Frequently referring to St. Maximus the Confessor and his doctrine of the creative Logos, Staniloae always envisages the incarnation as the basis of the ultimate and total transfiguration of the cosmos⁴.

Ecclesiology is the central theme of the ecumenical movement. The Christian world's quest for unity is one with its quest for the Church.

It is the Protestant world which is searching most assiduously for this unity which is the Church. But the unity and the Church which Catholicism offers do not attract the Protestant world because the unity and the Church which it is seeking cannot be marked by the hindering of personal freedom and diversity⁵.

Orthodox strive to penetrate deeper themselves into the interpretation of their own ecclesiology, firstly, by indicating the presence of those dimensions for which the contemporary ecumenical perspective is searching, and secondly, by pointing out that these dimensions represent potentialities that could in fact be realized in a form adapted to the Church's contemporary mode of understanding, and thus become the expression of a united Christianity⁶.

Staniloae believes that the relations between ecclesiology and pneumatology are necessary and the action of the Spirit in the Church is very important. He understands the Church as the Body of Christ exists effectively where the Holy Spirit is present. So we can tell that Church exists where exist both Christ and Holy Spirit.

Three Byzantine theologians from the period after 1054 tried each in his own fashion to resolve the problem of the direct relationship between the Son and the Holy Spirit by explaining the Fathers' expression „through the Son”. These were Gregory of Cyprus (Patriarch of Constantinople 1283-1289), Saint Gregory Palamas and Joseph Bryennios⁷.

We are Christian as members of the Mystical Body of Christ. The Spirit „comes to rest“ (alights) upon the Church and in the Church because he comes to rest upon Christ, Us head, and because the Church is united with Christ. Since even the term „irradiation“ does not, as we have seen, mean that the one who shines forth also comes forth from the one in whom he radiates his light, it does show that when the Spirit communicates himself to us, he does not as a consequence come forth from or leave Christ, and therefore we do not possess him in isolation from Christ. Rather the Spirit unites us in Christ and gathers us together in him⁸.

The human persons of the faithful are penetrated only by the activity of the Spirit who, as Person, is united with Christ the divine Head of the Body and Head of every believer who is a member of his Mystical Body⁹. A comparison with human relations gives us a certain analogous understanding of this fact:

⁴ *ibidem*.

⁵ *ibidem*, 11.

⁶ *ibidem*, 2.

⁷ *ibidem*, 15-16.

⁸ *ibidem*, 27.

⁹ *ibidem*, 28.

our love for someone is not just our love, it also belongs to the one who loves us. The warmth of his love awakens and intensifies our love for him or for someone else.

Holy Spirit is wholly present in every member by a different gift¹⁰. But all together make up the complete Body of Christ in the unity of the Spirit, and provide mutually for one another from their gifts the benefit that each one requires.

Staniloae is based on Gregory of Nazianzen, Gregory of Nyssa, St. Basil, St. John Chrysostom and Vladimir Lossky. He studies their ecclesiology in order to organize his ecclesiology. Each and every Christian taken individually and all of us together want to reach a rich spiritual life; we want to achieve a perfect balance between the unity we share and the separate identities we maintain within this unity. We are aware that the most perfect and most meaningful unity is unity in love, that is, unity between persons who retain their own individual identities. The theology of tomorrow must be open to the whole historical and cosmic reality, but at the same time it must be spiritual. It must help all Christians to achieve a new spirituality, a spirituality proportional both to the cosmic dimensions of science and technology, and to the universal human community, a spirituality which has already begun to spring up before our eyes.

Staniloae expresses the idea that modern man no longer accepts the traditional notions of Christianity and that therefore a radical change in Christian language is necessary¹¹.

Christ is not only the future goal towards which we gaze in our progress towards perfection, but also the One who perfects us¹². So, according to Dumitru, Christian men must be associated with Christ in Eucharistia. I think that modern Christians forgot this true and this is the reason that some people think that Church doesn't help people or the society. If Christian men are in relation with Christ then they will become better men and the society will notice the difference and the value of the Church.

The Church, and theology too, must be unceasing in their efforts to unfold in the light of Christ and his Gospel the meaning of this constant „exit” or going forth, these continual invitations to new understandings and new efforts on the road that leads towards intimacy with Christ and the fulfillment of his Gospel¹³.

Staniloae reminds the Orthodox doctrine of salvation and its implications for Christian Diakonia in the World¹⁴. We cannot gain salvation if we remain in isolation, caring only for ourselves. There is no doubt that each man must personally accept salvation and make it his own, but he cannot do so nor can he persevere and progress in the way of salvation unless he is helped by others and helps them himself in return, that is, unless the manner of our salvation is communal. To be saved means to be pulled out of our isolation and to be united with Christ and the rest of men.

¹⁰ *ibidem*, 55.

¹¹ *ibidem*, 111.

¹² *ibidem*, 169.

¹³ *ibidem*, 178.

¹⁴ *ibidem*, 209.

Conclusions

1. Unity in Christianity is a quest in Staniloae's thought as a quest of modern world too.

2. Unity in the belief is impossible. The most perfect and most meaningful unity is unity in love, that is, unity between persons who retain their own individual identities.

3. If we are in ecclesia then we are members of Christ and have the Holy Spirit so we ought to become better in perfect and more spiritual.

4. The theology of tomorrow must be open to the whole historical and cosmic reality, but at the same time it must be spiritual. It must help all Christians to achieve a new spirituality, a spirituality proportional both to the cosmic dimensions of science and technology, and to the universal human community, a spirituality which has already begun to spring up before our eyes.

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ЕКЛЕСИОЛОГИЈА ПРЕМА ДУМИТРУ СТАНИЛОУ

Православни теже дубљем познавању себе и вероисповести у складу са њиховом еклесиологијом, указујући на присуство екуменске перспективе али и разумевању Цркве као примера јединста свих хришћана. Станило подвлачи везе између еклесиологије у пенуматологије у Духу Цркве. Он разуме Цркву као Тело Христово где је присутан Свети Дух. Свети Дух осветљава све припаднике Цркве који су сједињени у Христу. Станило базира своје ставове на исказима Григорија Назијанског, Светог Василија, Светог Јована Хризостома и Владимира Лоског. У тексту се указује на неке битније ставове наведених отаца Цркве. Богословска мисао мора помоћи хришћанима у достизању духовности, сазнања димензија науке и технологије, универзалне људске заједнице, духовности која извире пред очима човечанства.