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St. Maximus the Confessor in the Thinking of the Theologians Dumitru Stăniloae and Hans Urs von Balthasar

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Abstract

In this study I list the contributions of the Christian theologians Hans Urs von Balthasar and Dumitru Stăniloae to the research of St. Maximus' work with their specific emphases and developments of some Maximian themes. Father Dumitru Stăniloae used the translations and the edition of Balthasar's *Cosmic Liturgy* from 1941 in his translations of St. Maximus' texts, and in doing so he suffered some influences from the Roman Catholic theologian, but later he nuanced his theological positions indicating some questionable aspects in the thinking Balthasar, from the perspective of the Orthodox theology.

Keywords

Saint Maximus the Confessor, Hans Urs von Balthasar, Dumitru Stăniloae

Saint Maximus the Confessor's thinking generated an earnest research in the 20th century, as it had a decisive influence in the deepening of theology, the renewal and deepening of Dogmatics and of the central themes of

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Christian spirituality and theology. The great themes of ancient philosophy and Christian thinking are concentrated and deepened in his thinking, a true dogmatic and spiritual tradition that is articulated and centred in the Person of Christ through the methodological distinctions of the dogma of Chalcedon and the spiritual branches of early Byzantium. Hans Urs von Balthasar and Dumitru Stăniloae are two of the theologians who approached and deepened St. Maximus' work in the 20th century. In this study, I do not propose to list the contributions of the Christians theologian to the research of St. Maximus' work and their specific emphasis, but only to draw the contributions of the theologians Balthasar and Stăniloae in their ideational encounter with the thinking of St. Maximus the Confessor on some aspects. The two theologians did not know personally, as there are no clues to have ever met and discussed, but they both played a decisive role in the renewal of theology from the East and West in the 20th century, and they both translated and analyzed St. Maximus' work. The translator of *the Cosmic Liturgy* in Romanian represented the configuration of the thought and writings of Saint Maximus and the two theologians Hans Urs von Balthasar and Father Dumitru Stăniloae as a "pyramid": the writings of Saint Maximus represent the source, the pyramid's tip; Balthasar is below as a translator and interpreter, and the Father Staniloae is the base as a translator and reader of the two¹. The conclusion is as follows: Father Dumitru Stăniloae used the translations and the edition of Balthasar's *Cosmic Liturgy* from 1941 in the translations of St. Maximus' texts, these influenced him, but later he nuanced some theological positions indicating some questionable aspects in the thinking of the Roman Catholic theologian, from the perspective of the Orthodox theology.

I. The relevance of St. Maximus' work in the thinking of the theologians Hans Urs von Balthasar and Dumitru Stăniloae

If Balthasar discovered the relevance of St. Maximus' work before Father Staniloae, after passing through Evagrius Ponticus and Dionysius the Areopagite, Father Staniloae discovered St. Maximus' thinking after discovering Saint Gregory Palama's. After dedicating a monograph to

¹ See *Nota traducătorului* in: "Liturgia cosmică, lumea în gândirea Sfântului Maxim Mărturisitorul", trad. Pr. Alexandru I. Roșu, Editura Doxologia, 2018, p. 22

Saint Gregory Palamas' life and thought in 1938 and assuming his method of doing theology for the rest of his life, Father Stăniloae translated almost the entire work of St. Maximus by the end of the first half of the 20th century². If Balthasar's contributions to rediscovering the Fathers were integrated into what is known as *nouvelle théologie*³, an innovating approach to the Roman Catholic theology and Church which preceded and prepared the Second Council of Vatican (1962-1965), Father Staniloae's contributions, which precede and continue in the spirit of the Congress of the Faculties of Theology in Athens (1936) integrates into what we call today "Neo-patristic synthesis"⁴. This revival and renewal of the Roman Catholic theology meant a return to the Fathers' thinking. In this context, Balthasar wrote in 1941 a monumental synthesis on the thought of Saint Maximus the Confessor, an epochal book received as a "key" of understanding man and the world. It was the context of the Second World War and, instead of the cosmic disintegration generated by the global conflagration because of the struggle of ideologies, Balthasar proposed the *Cosmic Liturgy*, starting from St. Maximus' thinking. Also in the context of the Second World War and starting from the thinking of the Fathers and especially of Saint Maximus the Confessor, Father Staniloae wrote in 1943 the monumental treatise of Christology and anthropology, *Jesus Christ or Man's Restoration*. This was a theological solution to the ideological utopias and disaster brought by the world conflagration: the restoration of the man, devastated and degraded by the war and the conflict of ideologies

² *Răspunsuri către Talasie* (PG 90, 243-786), *Tâlcuirea pe scurt la Tatăl Nostru* (PG 90, 871-910), *Cuvântul ascetic* (PG 90, 911-956), *Cele 400 de capete despre dragoste* (PG 90, 654-1080), *Cele 200 de capete despre teologie și întrupare* (PG 90, 1083-1176), *Epistola despre dragoste* (PG 91, 392-408). Also, see "Mystagogia, cosmosul și sufletul, chipuri ale Bisericii", in: *Revista Teologică*, XXXIV (1944) 3-4, pp. 162-181; *Revista Teologică*, XXXIV (1944) 7-8, pp. 335-356.

³ Gabriel FYNN, Paul D. MURRAY, *Ressourcement. A Movement for Renewal in Twentieth-Century Catholic Theology*, Oxford 2012; Jürgen METTEPENNINGEN, *Nouvelle Théologie – New Theology. Inheritor of Modernism, Precursor of Vatican II*, London-New York, 2010; Hans BOERSMA, *Nouvelle Theologie and Sacramental Ontology: A Return to Mystery*, Oxford: OUP, 2009.

⁴ Andrew LOUTH, *Modern Orthodox Thinkers. From the Philokalia to the present*, SPCK, London, 2015; Paul L. GAVRILYUK, *Georges Florovsky and the Russian Religious Renaissance*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 2013; S. S. HORUZHYY, "Neo-Patristic Synthesis and Russian Philosophy", in: *St. Vladimir's Theological Quarterly*, 44 (2000) 3-4, pp. 309-328.

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can only be accomplished in Christ as Person and in the communion of the Holy Trinity. In these two books edited by the two theologians at a short interval, we observe the importance of the thought of Saint Maximus the Confessor, even if the issues addressed are from different angles.

From another perspective, for the Orthodox Dogmatics the translation of the *Philokalia* represented the chance of re-centring on the method and the spirit of the Church Fathers. Father Staniloae gave great importance to the philocalical writings that he not only translated, but also managed to integrate most of them into the exquisite expression of his *Dogmatics* and the entire theological work elaborated in the second half of the 20th century. The translation of *Philokalia* was considered a “decisive step in depth” and an “epochal” work able to move hearts and to guide souls⁵.

Through *Philokalia*, the Orthodox Dogmatics in Romania made important steps in the creative assimilation of the patristic tradition and in gaining a unitary vision of the relation between dogma-spirituality-worship. We say all this because volumes 2 and 3 of the Romanian *Philokalia* contain essential texts from the work of Saint Maximus the Confessor. Moreover, in the comments of the work of Saint Maximus edited in the Romanian *Philokalia*, a meeting of two theologians, one Orthodox and the other Roman Catholic, took place in the first half of the 20th century, around the thought of Saint Maximus the Confessor. If we were to characterize the importance of the footnotes of the *Philokalia* and other patristic works translated and commented, we see that Father Stăniloae engaged in dialogue with the Fathers of the Church, expressing the depth of their theological thought in a modern language, and even bringing further their ideas and spirit, which can also be encountered in St. Maximus’ thinking.

II. Around St. Maximus’ thinking: Balthasar and Stăniloae

Balthasar’s accomplishment in *The Cosmic Liturgy*, a book “of extraordinary density, thoroughness and penetration” as Fr. Dumitru Stăniloae thought –

⁵ Dr. Grigorie T. MARCU, *Recenzie la Filocalia sau culegere din scrierile Sfinților Părinți cari arată cum se poate omul curăța, lumina și desăvârși*, volumul I, traducere Prot. stavr. Dr. Dumitru STĂNILOAE, Tipografia Arhidiecezană, 1946, p. XII+408, in *Revista Teologică*, XXXVI (1946) 1-2, p. 144.

wanted to be reiterated about St. Maximus' work in the Orthodox theology too. Father Stăniloae pointed out that through Balthasar, Saint Maximus found a "dignified" presentation in the Roman Catholic theology, but there was still no such presentation in the Orthodox theology in the first half of the 20th century. Referring to such an approach, Father Staniloae wrote in *Foreword to Philokalia 3*:

"The thought of attempting such an enterprise provokes an almost paralyzing feeling. The feeling we have when a huge mountain arouses and we think we must embrace it. In any case, the enterprise to present St. Maximus requires a long time to be brought to an end at all satisfactory"⁶.

Thus, Father Staniloae realizes the importance of St. Maximus' work, its complexity, and the value of the synthesis that Balthasar realizes in the *Cosmic Liturgy*. That is why we will meet many convergent ideas of the two theologians on Saint Maximus' work, at least in the first half of the 20th century. In the second half of the 20th century, Father Stăniloae tones up some theological positions on certain aspects that Balthasar analyzes in St. Maximus' work.

II.1. Convergences

In general, we can structure the thinking of the two theologians around two trilogies. If Father Staniloae's theological thought is synthesized in the dogma-spirituality-worship trilogy, shown in the works *Orthodox Dogmatic Theology* (1978), *Orthodox Spirituality* (1981) and *Spirituality and Communion in Orthodox Liturgy* (1986), Hans Urs von Balthasar's thinking is synthesized in the trilogy *Aesthetic Theology* (1961-1984), *Theo-Drama* (1973-1984) and *Theo-Logic* (1985-1987)⁷. However, what interests us in this study is the influence of Saint Maximus on the thinking of the two theologians and especially where the thinking of the two is convergent and interferes.

⁶ Pr. Prof. Dr. Dumitru STĂNILOAE, *Cuvânt înainte la Filocalia*, vol. III, Editura Hârisma, București, 1994, p. 12.

⁷ See Michael SCHULZ, *Hans Urs von Balthasar begegnen (Zeugen des Glaubens)*, Augsburg, 2002; Werner LÖSER, *Kleine Hinführung zu Hans Urs von Balthasar*, Freiburg-Basel-Wien, 2005.

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The first influence of Saint Maxim and Balthasar in the thought of Father Dumitru Stăniloae can be identified in 1943 when he published the work *Jesus Christ or Man's Restoration*. In this Christology treatise, with implications in anthropology, ecclesiology and soteriology, Father Stăniloae used texts from St. Maximus and the work of Hans Urs von Balthasar. It is known that Serghei Bulgakov's sophiological theory on *chenosis* and the concept of "hypostasis" is fought by Father Stăniloae in particular by citing Saint Maximus and Balthasar as interpreter of Saint Maximus. This delimitation of Bulgakov's sophiology was necessary within the Orthodox theology in the context of the disputes on this subject and the influences that Bulgakov's thinking had among the Orthodox theologians of that time.

The first point of the debate on Bulgakov's theory refers to the hypostasis, which Bulgakov saw as a "special entity of nature", a conception that - in Balthasar and Stăniloae's opinion - brought Bulgakov closer to the monothelites who considered the person "Irrational size beyond any kind"⁸. Hans Urs von Balthasar affirmed that the Chalcedon formula had the "first occurrence of the person factor in the philosophical consciousness of humanity and its relation to the being, solved in a just way", a theme developed by Father Stăniloae to express the relationship between being and person. The Dogma of Chalcedon and its deepening in St. Maximus' thought are the most powerful arguments Father Stăniloae exploits in his Christological synthesis in 1943, combating the sophiology of Sergei Bulgakov.

Concerning the theological convergences of the two theologians, on St. Maximus' thinking, we can identify some aspects: 1) Saint Maxim's theology is a grandiose, original, Christological, cosmological and anthropological synthesis; 2) Balthasar published the order of Saint Maximus' writings with an approximation assumed by Father Stăniloae⁹. He used Balthasar's

⁸ Pr. Prof. Dr. Dumitru STĂNILOAE, *Iisus Hristos sau restaurarea omului*, Editura Omniscop, Craiova, 1993, p. 114, note 1.

⁹ See Hans Urs VON BALTHASAR, *Die „gnostischen Centurien“ des Maximus Confessor*, Herder, 1941, pp. 149-156; Pr. Dr. Dumitru STĂNILOAE, "Sfântul Maxim Mărturisitorul", in: *Filocalia*, vol. II, pp. 12-17. However, as regards the texts of Saint Maximus the Confessor, Balthasar attributes them to John, bishop of Scythopolis in Galilee in the first half of the sixth century ("Das Scholienverk des Johannes von Scythopolis", in: *Scholastik*, V (1940) 1, pp. 16-38). In agreement with Otto Bardenhewer Father Dumitru Stăniloae considers that these texts belong to Saint Maxim

work to fix the correct chronological order of Saint Maximus' writings and found his work, *Die gnostischen Centurien des Maximus Confessor* (1941) remarkable. Starting with Philokalia 2, we notice the footnotes that Father Stăniloae used as accompanying notes of the philocalic texts to follow. In Philokalia 2 the notes accompanying *Two Hundred Texts on Theology* open a dialogue with Balthasar's thinking and work. In fact, we think we can talk here about a *trialogue*; 3) St. Maximus corrects Origen's and Evagrius's view that the movement does not belong to the nature of beings, but appeared after the fall into sin¹⁰. Through Balthasar's lens, Father Stăniloae catches the nuances, clarifications and theological rebalancings that St. Maximus does in relation to Origen, Evagrius, or Dionysius the Areopagite¹¹; 4) The distinction between *time* and *age* that St. Maximus makes under the influence of Saint Gregory of Nyssa¹². The central expression of Saint Gregory of Nyssa – *diastima* (interval) – which expresses the path of the creature from its starting point (being) to its

the Confessor and not to John of Scythopolis (Pr. Prof. Dumitru STĂNILOAE, *Introducere* to Sfântul DIONISIE AREOPAGITUL, *Opere complete și Scoliile Sfântului Maxim Mărturisitorul*, Editura Paideia, București, 1996, p. 13)

¹⁰ Pr. Dr. Dumitru STĂNILOAE, notes 5 and 9 to “Despre cele două sute de capete despre cunoștința de Dumnezeu și iconomia întrupării Fiului lui Dumnezeu”, in: *Filocalia*, vol. II, pp. 301-302.

¹¹ Pr. Dr. Dumitru STĂNILOAE, notes 67, 70, 91, 107, 151-152 to “Despre cele două sute de capete despre cunoștința de Dumnezeu și iconomia întrupării Fiului lui Dumnezeu”, in: *Filocalia*, vol. II, pp. 311-312, 315, 319, 323. We can find an eloquent example in note 91 where Father Stăniloae quotes from Balthasar's work but draws the nuances between Evagrius and Dionysius. At the first we encounter an immanence, a meeting with God in the depths of the mind, and at the last we can find a total transcendence, a meeting of man with God beyond his mind. At Maximus, the mind itself contemplates God, but after rising over her natural thought as a synthesis of many (p. 315). Another example assumed by Father Stăniloae in Balthasar's interpretation of Maximus in relation to Origen is that if at Origen God grows in the soul, all other meanings disappear - therefore Tabor, Moses and Elijah (the Law and the Prophets) are absorbed in Christ, - at St. Maximus the Logos is accompanied by logos; in the glory of God the world appears clear (p. 319). Let's not forget that before discovering Maximus the Confessor under the influence of Henri de Lubac, Balthasar wrote important articles about Gregory of Nyssa, Origen and Evagrius. However, as we will see, Father Stăniloae later considered some of Balthasar's statements as exaggerated as to Origen's possible influence on Saint Maximus the Confessor.

¹² Pr. Dr. Dumitru STĂNILOAE, notes 11 și 12 to “Despre cele două sute de capete despre cunoștința de Dumnezeu și iconomia întrupării Fiului lui Dumnezeu”, in: *Filocalia*, vol. II, p. 302

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realization by movement is resumed by Saint Maximus as *diastasis*; 5) The significance of the *Sabbath* in the thought of Saint Maximus. If Origen and Evagrius felt that Saturday was the rest following the movement brought about by the fall into sin, for Dionysius the Areopagite it is no longer a work, but a passion, it is the ecstasy of the creature over its nature. Following Gregory of Nyssa, Maximus speaks of a temporal movement that also ends and of an eternal one, yet the eternal movement does not belong to the nature of the created spirit - as Gregory of Nyssa thought - but to divine grace. This does not mean that the contemplative stops from fulfilling the commandments; by this remark Father Stăniloae underlined the lack of truth of those who accuse Orthodoxy of neglecting the charitable work considering contemplation superior to activity¹³; 6) Saint Maximus described the climax of man to perfection by in the image of the three days that are ascetically-mystically interpreted: day 6 - creation ends, day 7 - any temporal movement ceases completely, day 8 - the new state beyond nature and time or day 6 - fleeing passions, day 7 - dispassion (the desert), day 8 - entering the land of virtues or day 6 - the shedding of the last roots of sins, day 7 - deliverance from the imaginations of the passions, day 8 - the mind reaches the land of God's knowledge in peace. Thus Father Stăniloae closely observes Balthasar's interpretation, so he concludes that, with regard to the transposition of the three-day symbolism on the level of the Passion and the Resurrection of Christ, chapters 60-67 of the *Two Hundred Texts on Theology* are the most beautiful and the deepest texts of the whole work and represents the Christological character of mysticism¹⁴.

We also discover a series of convergences with regard to other dogmatic aspects. For example, Christology in the chenoitic aspect: Father Stăniloae notes that both Karl Rahner and Hans Urs von Balthasar give importance to the Christology of Chalcedon, in the sense that, in chenoisis, God does not strip His deity, but confirms it¹⁵.

¹³ Pr. Dr. Dumitru STĂNILOAE, nota 35 to "Despre cele două sute de capete despre cunoștința de Dumnezeu și iconomia întrupării Fiului lui Dumnezeu", in: *Filocalia*, vol. II, p. 304.

¹⁴ Pr. Dr. Dumitru STĂNILOAE, notes 53-62 to "Despre cele două sute de capete despre cunoștința de Dumnezeu și iconomia întrupării Fiului lui Dumnezeu", in: *Filocalia*, vol. II, pp. 307-309.

¹⁵ Pr. prof. Dumitru STĂNILOAE, *Teologia Dogmatică Ortodoxă*, vol. II, Editura Institutului Biblic și de Misiune al Bisericii Ortodoxe Române, București, 1996, pp. 51-52, note 75. Also see Hans Urs von BALTHASAR, *Le Mystère Pascal*, Edition du Cerf, 1972, p. 79.

II.2. Divergences

If in the first half of the 20th century, Father Staniloae positively received Balthasar's thought from *The Cosmic Liturgy*, in the second half of the 20th century, Father Staniloae's positions became more nuanced than the Roman Catholic theologian's thinking. For example, we would like to recall Father Staniloae's position from the Introduction to Saint Maximus' *Ambigua* on some of Balthasar's statements in *The Cosmic Liturgy*. Starting from the distinctions Balthasar makes between Evagrius and Dionysius, Father Staniloae considers that the Roman Catholic theologian attributes to Dionysius an absolute transcendence of God towards the creatures, disregarding the encounter between God and man in the present life. In his theological argumentation, Father Stăniloae resorts to the Palamite thinking, pointing out that the Christian East has maintained the transcendence of God through the uncreated divine energies, on the one hand, and on the other hand, it affirmed the encounter between God and creatures. Misinterpreting Dionysius, the West oscillated between the separation between God and the world in theology and the identification of the world with God in philosophy and mysticism¹⁶. He also identified the solution of the East in St. Maximus' thinking, which Balthasar does not capture on deification – *the saints will only have one work in heaven: God's* - which is achieved even from earthly life and therefore he shows that divinity is not entirely transcendent. Father Staniloae shows that the more St. Maximus asserts "a certain union of man with God even in the earthly life, the more he appreciates the movement of human nature. This movement does not make man's deification impossible in earthly life, and the human deification in the next life does not completely cancel the human work"¹⁷. At the same time, he considers that Balthasar has an autonomous conception of creation as opposed to Saint Maxim who has a positive attitude towards creation, an attitude that should not be confused with the autonomy of creation¹⁸. Father Staniloae understands that Balthasar believes

¹⁶ Pr. Prof. Dr. Dumitru STĂNILOAE, *Introducere* to Sfântul MAXIM MĂRTURISITORUL, *Ambigua*, coll. *Părinți și Scriitori Bisericești*, vol. 80, Editura Institutului Biblic și de Misiune al Bisericii Ortodoxe Române, București, 1983, p. 35

¹⁷ Pr. Prof. Dr. Dumitru STĂNILOAE, *Introducere* to Sfântul MAXIM MĂRTURISITORUL, *Ambigua*, p. 36.

¹⁸ Pr. Prof. Dr. Dumitru STĂNILOAE, *Introducere* to Sfântul MAXIM MĂRTURISITORUL, *Ambigua*, p. 37.

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there are small Origen's influences in St. Maximus' thought, especially in the *Two Hundred Texts on Theology*, but also in *Ambigua*, although he positively capitalized what could be harnessed from Origen. He considers that Balthasar's statements are a little exaggerated because the Logos from St. Maximus is not identical to the Logos from Origen and the world in Saint Maximus' thinking is not identical to the world of Origen. He concluded: "If Saint Maximus borrowed something from Origen, clearly what it was essentially recapitulated and transformed"¹⁹. We note that, unlike Balthasar, as far as Origen is concerned, Father Stăniloae does not express any nuances of theological positions. However, let us not forget that there is a continuity of theological and spiritual tradition beginning with Origen, passing through the Capadocians / Evagrius, Dionysius and to St. Maximus. Beyond some of the questionable aspects of Origen's work - some of them condemned by the 5th Ecumenical Council (553), following further distortions and the political-Church context in Byzantium - there are a number of theological insights and aspects assumed by the patristic tradition following Origen. From this perspective, the theological nuances on Origen and the influence he had throughout the patristic tradition after him are welcome.

If in many aspects of Christology Fr. Stăniloae affirmatively quoted Balthasar, as to *The Ascension* of Christ, he thinks that Balthasar understands that "the Resurrection and the Ascension coincide because the appearances can be of Christ the ascended after Resurrection". Fr. Stăniloae does not agree this opinion and he thinks the reason Balthasar had such a vision can be identified in the theory of satisfaction understood as atonement taken by God through his death on the Cross and the unique act of Resurrection – and not a series of acts done by Christ – as a proof that God declared himself emperor²⁰. Starting from the New Testament, he explains there are four successive moments, when Christ rises the humanity through, the Ascension and the sitting on the right hand of the Father being "the complete pneumatization and deification of his human body"²¹.

In opposition to Balthasar and Joseph Ratzinger, Fr. Stăniloae shows that "the condition of pneumatization is different from the special

¹⁹ Pr. Prof. Dumitru STĂNILOAE, "Sfântul Maxim Mărturisitorul, viața, scrierile și gândirea teologică și spirituală", in: Sfântul MAXIM MĂRTURISITORUL, *Mistagogia*, Editura Institutului Biblic și de Misiune Ortodoxă, București, 2017, pp. 42-43.

²⁰ Pr. prof. Dumitru STĂNILOAE, *Teologia Dogmatică Ortodoxă*, vol. II, pp. 121-122

²¹ Pr. prof. Dumitru STĂNILOAE, *Teologia Dogmatică Ortodoxă*, vol. II, p. 122.

ubiquity”. In opposition to the vision about the special ubiquity of his body, he underlines that the condition of pneumatization

“is a deep spiritual presence and height which can become sensible in different degrees of intensity, according to the degree of power to feel spiritually or to believe of the one whom Christ opens himself to and through this he «sees» and feels him in himself”²².

Fr. Stăniloae integrates the position of the two Roman Catholic theologians in a vision specific to the West about the Ascension of Lord with his body and his sitting on the right hand of the Father.

“The Christian West departed from this understanding of Lord’s Ascension with his body to the supreme power and glory, as to his supreme efficacy through his dwelling in us at the same time. For him after the Ascension, Christ became a Master, an exterior Lord who forgives because of his power to forgive, got through his sacrifice, and assuring happiness in the next life”²³.

This vision could be one of the arguments that a *locum tenens* of Christ was established in the Roman Catholic Church. In the East, the importance is given to Christ’s and Father’s presence inside the faithful through the Holy Spirit even from now and the reality of this work is the Church.

III. Conclusions

Although they never met, Hans Urs von Balthasar and Fr. Dumitru Stăniloae developed a theological passion for St. Maximus’ work. This theological effort of rediscovering the Fathers of the Church in an interpretation connected to the ecclesial method, spirit and experience is a part of the renewal process of the Christian theology from the 20th century. Hans Urs von Balthasar’s thinking influenced Fr. Stăniloae’s thinking on the interpretation of some texts from St. Maximus the Confessor’s work and

²² Pr. prof. Dumitru STĂNILOAE, *Teologia Dogmatică Ortodoxă*, vol. II, pp. 122-123.

²³ Pr. prof. Dumitru STĂNILOAE, *Teologia Dogmatică Ortodoxă*, vol. II, p. 125.

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especially on the historical and spiritual filiations that could be found in his writings. Nevertheless, apart from the convergences and interferences we can find in the thinking of the two theologians, there are some divergent aspects that delimitate Fr. Stăniloae from some of Balthasar's ideas or nuance them from the Orthodox theology perspective. Thus, we can say Fr. Stăniloae remains selective and critical in assuming some theological interpretations Balthasar did to St. Maximus' work as he himself deepens and interprets the thinking of St. Maximus the Confessor. Fr. Stăniloae's theological position referring to Balthasar's theological authority is nuanced in time, from the first aspects in Balthasar's work assumed by interpreting St. Maximus' thinking – in the first half of the 20th century – until some certain delimitations and critics brought to Balthasar as referring to St. Maximus' work in particular and to theology in general – in the second half of the 20th century. However, Balthasar is one of the most important sources Fr. Stăniloae relies on when he approaches the historicity of St. Maximus' work and its relation to the thinking of Evagrius Ponticus and Dyonisios the Areopagite. Although he uses the researches of St. Maximus from the 20th century selectively, Fr. Stăniloae accomplishes a personal interpretation of St. Maximus' thinking discovering its paradoxical unitarian-distinctive structure and the spiritual force for the life of the Church and of the modern man.