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Father Dumitru Stăniloae and the Renewal of the Orthodox Dogmatics in Romania

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Abstract

This study presents the contribution of Father Dumitru Stăniloae to the development of Orthodox Dogmatics in the 20th century. The renewal he produced in this field of Theology was based on several specific aspects of his approach: the connection of patristic theology with the Scripture and the Church; an integrated view of dogma, spirituality and the Liturgy of the Church; rediscovery of the Palamite theology of the uncreated divine energies; unity between natural-supernatural and apophatic-cataphatic; a theology of creation with emphasis on the inter-relationship between God-man-world without confusion, on the cosmic dimension of salvation in Christ, on the sacramental-ecclesiological dimension of cosmology, and on its eschatological and transfigurative destiny; Christ's centrality within theology, creation, Church and the history of humankind; a conception of the Church which keeps together the institutional aspect with the eschatological and charismatic one, the sacramental one with the one of spiritual communion.

Keywords

Orthodox Dogmatics, Dumitru Stăniloae, renewal

I. Short excursion on the method of the Orthodox Dogmatics in Romania

The dogmatic system of the Orthodox Theology suffered influences on the approach, presentation and sometimes on the conclusions some dogmatists reached by their research¹.

The most representative treatises of Orthodox Dogmatic Theology from the nineteenth century, which were translated and assumed in the Romanian theology too, were those drafted by the Russian theologians Makari Bulgakov² and Sylvester of Kanev³. These have been doubled

¹ However, this Western influence on Orthodox theology is not shared in a substantial way by Karl Christian FELMY, *Dogmatica experienței eclesiale. Înnoirea teologiei ortodoxe contemporane*, transl. Pr. Prof. Dr. Ioan Ică, Editura Deisis, Sibiu, 1999, pp. 54-69 and by Ioan Ică sr., who, deepening and analyzing the theology of the Orthodox Faithful Confessions, concludes that Orthodoxy was not influenced by Western theology in a substantial way, but “had the capacity to respond and to face the challenges”: Ioan Ică sr., “Discuții mai noi asupra unor probleme mai vechi în jurul Mărturisirilor de credință”, in: *Logos*, Editura Renașterea, Cluj Napoca, 2001, pp. 313-314. Reporting the Orthodox theology to the concept of “pseudomorphosis” in the so-called Western captivity can be divided into two categories: 1) theologians who speak of an estrangement of Orthodox theology in its essence (G. Florovsky, A. Schmemmann, Ch. Yannaras, I. Romanides); 2) theologians who speak of a certain Western influence in the form and language of theology (I. Karmiris, I. Ică sn., G. Metallinos, K. Karaisaridis, K. Ware). We believe that being elaborated after the Western Dogmatic Handbooks, the Orthodox Dogmatic Theology of the eighteenth-nineteenth centuries suffered not only in its form and method, but also in many aspects of content. It would be enough to recall here the problem of the ancestral sin and its transmission, the primordial state, the western judicial practice through which soteriology is elaborated and understood, the relation between form and matter in the Mysteries, and the problem of grace. In general, Orthodoxy reacted to delimitate itself from the Roman Catholic theology with regard to the four Florentine points. This reaction is also found in School Dogmatics. In other respects, through the dogmatic syntheses of the textbooks it generally and unconsciously assumed accents and some of the structures of Western Catholic or Protestant Western theology according to context. See also Andrew LOUTH, *Modern Orthodox Thinkers. From the Philokalia to the present*, SPCK, London, 2015, pp. 77-93; Cristinel IOJA, *Dogmatică și Dogmatişti. Prolegomena privind aprofundarea Teologiei Dogmatice Ortodoxe în România în a doua jumătate a sec. al XX-lea și începutul sec. al XXI-lea*, Editura Marineasa, Timișoara, 2008.

² Macarie BULGAKOV, *Introducere în Teologia Ortodoxă*, trad. Arhim. Gherasim Timuș, with the blessing of Metropolitan D. D. Calinic, Tipografia Cărților Bisericești, București, 1885; Macarie BULGAKOV, *Teologia dogmatică ortodoxă*, 2 vol. trad. arhim Gherasim Timuș, with the blessing of Metropolitan D. D. Calinic, Tipografia Cărților Bisericești, București, 1886-1887.

³ SILVESTRU bishop of Kanev, *Theologia Dogmatica Orthodoxă (cu expunerea istorică a dogmelor)*, transl. Silvestru episcopul Hușilor, vol. I, Tipografia Gutenberg, Joseph

by Dogmatics written by Alexiu Comoroșan, professor at the Faculty of Theology in Chernivtsi, entitled *Prelegeri de Dogmatică Ortodoxă (Lectures of Orthodox Dogmatics)*⁴. Makari Bulgakov's treaty of Dogmatics influenced both Alexiu Comoroșan, and Iosif Iuliu Olariu, professor at the Theological Academy in Caransebeș who drafted Dogmatics at the beginning of the twentieth century⁵. As an essential feature of these treatises elaborated in the Russian theology and then translated into Romanian or elaborated in Romanian under the influence of the Russian theology, we can identify the historical method of dogmas presentation and influences of the Western Dogmatics structure.

In the Romanian Orthodox Dogmatics, the historical method of presenting the dogmas was gradually replaced by the symbolic method developed by professor Ioan Mihălcescu⁶ at the beginning of the twentieth century. It was also influenced by the more synthetic, but also scholastic method proposed by Hristu Andrușos⁷ in the translation of the Greek Theologian's Dogmatics in 1930 made by Father Dumitru Stăniloae.

The structure and symbolic method of dogma presentation was assumed and improved in 1958 when *Teologia Dogmatică și Simbolică (Dogmatic and Symbolic Theology)*⁸ was published by a team of professors coordinated by Nicolae Chițescu, professor of Dogmatic Theology at the

Göbl, București, 1896); vol. II, Tipografia Cărților Bisericești, București, 1899; vol. III, transl. Silvestru episcopul Hușilor and iconom. Nicolae Filip, Tipografia Cărților Bisericești, București, 1900; vol. IV, transl. arhim Gherasim Miron, Tipografia Cărților Bisericești, București, 1903; vol. V, transl. Arhim Gherasim Miron and Prof. Teodor Ghica, Tipografia Cărților Bisericești, București, 1906.

⁴ Alexiu COMOROȘAN, *Prelegeri academice din Dogmatica Ortodoxă, Partea generală*, Editura Editorului, Tipografia Arhiepiscopală, Cernăuți, 1887.

⁵ Iosif Iuliu OLARIU, *Teologia Dogmatică Ortodoxă*, Caransebeș, 1907.

⁶ Ioan MIHĂLCESCU *Manual de Teologie Dogmatică* (clasa a VI-a de seminar), Stabiliment de Arte Grafice „Energia”, București, 1916; *Dogma soteriologică*, Tipografia Cărților Bisericești, București, 1926.

⁷ Hristu ANDRUȘOS, *Dogmatica Bisericii Ortodoxe Răsăritene*, transl. Prof. Dr. Dumitru Stăniloae, Editura Tipografiei Arhiepiscopale, Sibiu, 1930.

⁸ Nicolae CHIȚESCU, Isidor TODORAN, Ioan PETREUȚĂ, *Teologia Dogmatică și Simbolică* vol. I-II, Manual pentru Institutele Teologice, Editura Institutului Biblic și de Misiune al Bisericii Ortodoxe Române, București, 1958. Father Stăniloae also contributed to this handbook, offering a new Palamite perspective in gnosiology and soteriology. Due to the political context in Romania, his name did not appear on the cover at the time of the publication of the Handbook of Dogmatic and Symbolic Theology, as he was arrested and imprisoned.

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Faculty of Theology in Bucharest. This manual of Dogmatics, developed in the context of the communist regime and the intensification of ecumenical dialogues, contains both symbolic elements and a new terminology and vision towards the unity between dogma and the Church experience. We might call it a transitive handbook from the historical and symbolic method to a new, unitary and experimental-ecclesial vision of the Orthodox Dogmatics.

By elaborating *Teologia Dogmatică Ortodoxă (The Orthodox Dogmatic Theology)* Father Dumitru Stăniloae⁹ (1978) did not completely exceed the classical dogmatic structure, but the approach and presentation method were changed. This work gives us a unitary, synthetic and interdependent view of the Church dogmas and experience. This vision gives coherence to the dogmatic system and opens it towards the life, spirituality and experience of the Church. The focus falls not on the *system* understood in the abstract sense, but on *life* understood as communion of man with God in Christ. This mutation is fundamental to a new approach and deepening of Orthodox Dogmatics, methodologically and historically delimited by the influences of medieval scholasticism.

“Christian dogmas make up a unity, unlike any other unitary system, since for the believer they have an infinite developmental perspective, that is, the true salvation and since the power to accomplish it and its perspective is given in Christ, the divine Person, who is at the same time the man in communion with the divine infinity. In fact, in Christ, everything that is expressed in the Christian doctrines is fully focused and accomplished [...]. The Christian dogmas are not a system of teachings, finite in their perspective and dependent on man in its limited realization, but the interpretation of Christ’s reality in the process of expansion towards men. As such, they express the most evident revelation, because with his love and power Christ presses on us as the perfect divine-human reality. Thus Christ is the living, all-encompassing and working dogma of all salvation”¹⁰.

⁹ Dumitru STĂNILOAE, *Teologia Dogmatică Ortodoxă*, vol. I-III, Editura Institutului Biblic și de Misiune al Bisericii Ortodoxe Române, București, 1978.

¹⁰ D. STĂNILOAE, *Teologia Dogmatică Ortodoxă*, vol. I, p. 57.

Father Staniloae emphasizes this mutation that he made in Dogmatics, from system as a rigid organization of concepts, to life and the living and personal communion between God-Trinity and man in Christ.

As to the dogmatic research in Romania, *Tratatul de Teologie Dogmatică și Ecumenică (Treaty of Dogmatic and Ecumenical Theology)* published by Fr. Ion Bria¹¹ in 1999 brings a new method, the ecumenical one, deepened in the ecumenical assemblies of the second half of the twentieth century, with numerous biblical arguments. In this sense, an integrative dogmatic-ecumenical method was developed based on the inter-Christian dialogue.

Tratatul de Teologie Dogmatică (Treaty of Dogmatic Theology) elaborated by Fr. Dumitru Popescu¹² in 2005 familiarizes us with a new method in the Romanian Dogmatics, the apologetic method. Nevertheless, it does not remove the symbolic method, some chapters being influenced not only by Father Dumitru Staniloae but also by the contents of the *Theological and Symbolic Theology Handbook* from 1958. The apologetic method that is intertwined with Father Stăniloae's philokalical, unitary and spiritual method, can bring remarkable missionary and apologetic results in the context of the world secularization and globalization. From this perspective, the Orthodox Dogmatics is closely related to the conceptual challenges of the world, and apologetics becomes not merely a rational operation, but a form of dogmatic confession in a rational-spiritual and ecclesial-experimental sense.

From this succinct historical presentation, we can state that, as far as the *structure* of dogma is concerned, the Romanian Orthodox theology registered minimal progress. However, with regard to the content of the presentation, decisive mutations were recorded in comparison to the Dogmatic Theology treaties of the nineteenth century and the first half of the twentieth century. Regarding the aspect we want to develop in this study, by comparison, we can see a progress on the approach, structure and content of the Orthodox Dogmatics.

¹¹ Ion BRIA, *Tratat de Teologie Dogmatică și Ecumenică*, Editura Cartea creștină, 1999.

¹² Dumitru POPESCU, *Iisus Hristos Pantocrator*, Editura Institutului Biblic și de Misiune al Bisericii Ortodoxe Române, București, 2005.

II. Father Dumitru Stăniloae and the renewal of Orthodox Dogmatics

The restoration of Father Dumitru Stăniloae in Orthodox Theology of the twentieth century is remarkable and impressive and he succeeds to selectively and creatively assume the most frequent philosophical systems and philosophical ideas of his time in the spirit of Church Tradition, remaining at the same time on the biblical and patristic line of ecclesial theology and experience. It goes beyond the schematism of school dogmatists influenced by medieval scholastics precisely by the force of its theological creation through a comprehensive and synthetic vision, anchored in the Revelation, in Christ and Church, in the Mysteries, Liturgy, Asceticism and Eastern Spirituality. The monumental work of Father Stăniloae expresses an exceptional creativity, universality, fidelity and implicitly originality in the valorisation of the sources.

Father Staniloae's theology is considered to be philokalic, ecclesially, universal, ontological, creative, mystical and personalist, thus re-generating the Dogmatics of the twentieth century. Among the fundamental aspects of his theological thinking and work, which are at the same time an opportunity for reflection and reception for us and for the future generations, we remember: a) he was the first in the Romanian theology to notice and abandon the scholastic schemes of nineteenth-century Orthodox theology, replacing them with the authentic patristic and Byzantine tradition; b) he made a considerable effort for the rediscovery and the theological revalorization of the Hesychasm and Palamism; c) he consistently promoted and sustained the philokalic and "neo-patristic" revival as a counterbalance to the scholastic and pietist influences present in the Orthodox theology; d) he made the first original theological synthesis in the Christ-anthropological approach from *Iisus Hristos sau restaurarea omului* (*Jesus Christ or the Restoration of Man*) (1943) as a reply to the Protestant dialectical theology and the Russian theology of emigration, starting a dialogue and a confrontation with Karl Barth, Emil Brunner and Sergei Bulgakov; e) he had critical-polemical relationship with the leading representatives of the Romanian culture of the interwar period: C. Rădulescu Motru, Nae Ionescu, Radu Dragnea and Lucian Blaga, delimiting himself from the anonymous and impersonal pantheism of the latter's cosmology and metaphysics; f) for the first time in the Romanian theology he made a grandiose synthesis, and a theological unity

between Dogmatics-Spirituality-Liturgy, through his three works: *Teologia Dogmatică Ortodoxă (Orthodox Dogmatic Theology)*, *Spiritualitatea Ortodoxă (Orthodox Spirituality)* and *Spiritualitate și comuniune în Liturghia Ortodoxă (Spirituality and Communion in the Orthodox Liturgy)*. g) he was the first to make a Trinitarian anthropology in the Romanian theology, in *Chipul nemuritor al lui Dumnezeu (The Immortal Face of God)* and *Omul și Dumnezeu (Man and God)*, works that complete the cycle of Christological and Anthropological Theology opened in 1943 through the work *Iisus Hristos sau restaurarea omului (Jesus Christ or the Restoration of Man)*¹³. Since the first half of the twentieth century, Father Staniloae's commitment to patristic thinking is evident, his program and theological course overtaking the Congress of the Faculties of Theology in Athens (1936). Thus, we can signal three decisive mutations in the Romanian Orthodox thinking through Father Dumitru Stăniloae's theological effort: a) the rediscovery of the Palamite theology with theological distinctions and emphasis on spiritual experience; b) the rediscovery of mysticism, as a continuity and deepening of Professor Nichifor Crainic's intuitions; c) the translation of the first four volumes of *Philokalia*, a monumental and decisive work in the renewal of Orthodox Dogmatics.

This path of healing and restoring the Orthodox theology has generated and involved novel connections in the theological research, and Father Stăniloae had a decisive contribution to the sedimentation of a unitary, experimental and ecclesial vision on dogmas and theology. These aspects have generated so many new dimensions of the Orthodox theology in general and of the Romanian Orthodox theology in particular. Father Stăniloae gave great importance to the philokalical writings that he not only translated, but managed to integrate most of them into the extraordinary expression of his Dogmatics and the entire theological work elaborated in the second half of the twentieth century. Through this theological-spiritual and ecclesial approach, Orthodox Dogmatics regained the method and spirit of the Church Fathers, renewing its content, without thereby asserting that we have reached the end of the renewal road in Dogmatic Theology. The proof is that in the late twentieth century, the Orthodox Dogmatic Theology from Romania made important steps in the creative assimilation

¹³ Diac. Asist. Ioan I. ICĂ JR., "De ce «Persoană și comuniune»? Cuvânt prevenitor la un Festschrift întârziat", in: *Persoană și comuniune. Prinos de cinstitie Preotului Profesor Academician Dumitru Stăniloae, (1903-1993)*, pp. XXV-XXVII.

of patristic tradition and in gaining a unitary vision of the relation between dogma-spirituality-worship.

III. Some directions in the renewal of Orthodox Dogmatics

Although he kept part of the classical Dogmatic structure, Father Staniloae did not remain its captive. Moreover, he restructured and brought new elements into the classical structure of Dogmatics, continuously deepening the various meanings of each chapter. At the same time, he achieved a veritable unitary and interdependent expression by a perichoretic method on the chapters of Dogmatics so they no longer suffer from autonomy over the unitary ensemble of Dogmatics. The question of Dogmatics from the methodological point of view is not only to unify the beginning with the end, or to unify the beginning, the middle and the end, but to keep them all together and at the same time distinct by a paradoxical method and in a perichoretic way. The *inter-relational* character of the dogmas transpires from Father Staniloae's Dogmatics. Thus, the expressed vision concentrates all other aspects of Dogmatics around the person of Christ in an inter-relational way. In addition, each chapter comprises elements that also refer to gnosiology, anthropology, cosmology, soteriology and eschatology or triadology, like a bundle. From the perspective of Christ's person centrality in Dogmatics, the dogmas of the Church constitute a unitary spiritual system. This system is not made up of abstract principles, but "it is the living unity of Christ, the Person in whom are united and who unites Godhead and creation"¹⁴. The focus does not fall on the *system* understood in the abstract sense, but on *life* understood as communion of man with God in Christ.

Among the novel aspects of Orthodox Dogmatics in Father Staniloae's thinking, we recall¹⁵: 1) the connection of patristic theology with the Scripture and the Church:

¹⁴ D. STĂNILOAE, *Teologia Dogmatică Ortodoxă*, vol. I, p. 56.

¹⁵ Some of these considerations are largely taken over in the collective study "Teologia Dogmatică în Biserica Ortodoxă Română în trecut și azi", in: *Ortodoxia*, XXIII (1971) 3, pp. 342-343. An extensive presentation of these was done in the study: Pr. Lect. Dr. Nicolae Răzvan STAN, Dr. Lucian DINDIRICĂ, "Părintele Dumitru Stăniloae (1903-1993) – restaurarea Dogmaticii Ortodoxe în secolul al XX-lea", in: *Părintele Profesor Dumitru Stăniloae sau consonanța dintre dogmă, spiritualitate și Liturghie*, Editura Cetatea de Scaun și Mitropolia Olteniei, Craiova, 2015, pp. 86-98.

“All the writings of the Fathers are an interpretation of the Bible. We could say that in the Church of the Fathers, theology is always a biblical theology. They cite only the Bible, and not the previous Fathers except for the Byzantine period. The Fathers of the first centuries, like Athanasius and Cyril quoted only the Bible and made a doxological commentary of the Bible. In their commentary on the Bible, the Fathers always remained faithful to the spirit of the Church, and stayed within the Church’s voice. Without always referring explicitly to one synod or another, they remained directly faithful to the faith of the Church. They show that the Church faith stems from the biblical text [...] and it is encompassed in the Bible”¹⁶.

This shows Father Staniloae’s vision in the context the Scripture is interpreted, namely the tradition and the connection with the Church. The Evangelical face or the history of Christ as God and Man, paying attention not only to patristic theology but also to biblical theology that patristic theology interprets and expresses from the perspective of ecclesial tradition¹⁷. 2) organicity between dogma, spirituality and the Liturgy of the Church, as dogma is a dimension of life in Christ and in the Church, and theology is doxology¹⁸. Theology is vivid, ecclesial-ontological-humanist and sacramental and it engages the whole being of man in communion. Theology feeds on spirituality and Divine Liturgy, which unite spiritual communion among Christians with the deep and rich content of the Christian faith¹⁹. 3) overcoming scholastic substantialism through the theology of the uncreated divine energies and the personal-communal

¹⁶ M. COSTA DE BEAUREGARD, Dumitru STĂNILAOE, *Mica dogmatică vorbită. Dialoguri la Cernica*, transl. Maria Cornelia Oros, Editura Deisis, Sibiu, 1995, pp. 123-124.

¹⁷ Pr. Prof. Dr. Dumitru STĂNILAOE, *Chipul evanghelic al lui Iisus Hristos*, Editura Mitropoliei Ardealului, Sibiu, 1992), p. 8.

¹⁸ Pr. Prof. Dumitru STĂNILAOE, “Relațiile treimice și viața Bisericii”, in: *Ortodoxia*, XV (1964) 4, pp. 503-525.

¹⁹ Pr. Prof. Dr. Dumitru STĂNILAOE, *Spiritualitate și comuniune în Liturghia Ortodoxă*, Editura Institutului Biblic și de Misiune al Bisericii Ortodoxe Române, București, 2004, pp. 7-8. D. STĂNILAOE, “Legătura între evlavie și teologie în Biserica Ortodoxă”, in: *Mitropolia Olteniei*, XXXVI (1984) 1-2, p. 48.

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character of the presence of God in cosmos and in the lives of men²⁰. The essence-energy-hypostasis distinction is a central theme understood as the key to the interpretation of the soteriological implications in anthropology, Christology and pneumatology-ecclesiology. In the biblical, patristic, ecclesial and experimental vision, Father Staniloae expresses a living, personal and loving God²¹. 4) the unity between natural-supernatural and apophatic-cataphatic with implications in all compartments of Dogmatic Theology. The apophatic-cataphatic synthesis has an existential relevance and presents a balance in the theological approach, being exploited at both triadological-Christological and anthropological-cosmological level. Theological gnosiology needs the terms of affirmative theology. Therefore, Father Stăniloae gives a place of manifestation to intelligence and reason in God's knowledge too²², the vocation of reason being to be spiritualized; 5) a Christological, integral and patristic inspiration, beyond the dualism and existentialism of many theologians and philosophers of the twentieth century. The theme of God's image in man has ontological, personalistic, community, dynamic and imperishable implications, favouring the authentic understanding of the Eastern concept of *deification*. Here as in the entire theology of Father Staniloae, the understanding of the person in communion is central according to the pattern of the Eastern triadology. Person and communion are seen as theological realities with ontological, ecclesial-sacramental and soteriological-eschatological implications. Time and person, space and person, society and person, person and the cosmos, person and deification are the themes Father Stăniloae deepens

²⁰ Pr. Prof. Dr. Dumitru STĂNILOAE, "Criterile prezenței Sfântului Duh", in: *Studii Teologice*, XIX (1967) 3-4, pp. 103-127; Pr. Prof. Dr. Dumitru STĂNILOAE, "Sfântul Duh și sobornicitatea Bisericii", in: *Ortodoxia*, XIX (1967) 1, pp. 32-48. In this study, Father Stăniloae puts the work of the Holy Spirit in connection not only with personal piety, but also with communion and progress in communion, thus showing the sovereign character of the Church. In this respect, he also addressed aspects of communitarian spirituality: "Comunitate prin iubire", in: *Ortodoxia*, XIV (1963) 1, pp. 52-70; "Rugăciunile pentru alții și sobornicitatea Bisericii", in: *Studii Teologice*, XXII (1970) 1-2, pp. 29-38. An exhaustive presentation of the hesychast controversy and the importance of the theology of uncreated divine energies for the spirituality and soteriology of man can be found in his work *Viața și învățătura Sfântului Grigorie Palama*, Editura Institutului Biblic și de Misiune al Bisericii Ortodoxe Române, București, 2006.

²¹ D. STĂNILOAE, *Teologia Dogmatică Ortodoxă*, vol. I, pp. 146-148.

²² D. STĂNILOAE, *Teologia Dogmatică Ortodoxă*, vol. I, p. 115.

in an original way. As far as anthropology is concerned, Jesus Christ is the restorer and the deificator of man and cosmos, being present in the life of the Church, the world and man through the Spirit. The integral anthropology overrides the reductive anthropologies, defining the soteriological meaning of man in history, in Christ and the Church²³. It offers a true perspective on man and his constitution, which is in the opposite direction to the anthropological reductions of modernity and post modernity; 6) a true theology of creation with emphasis on the inter-relationship between God-man-world without confusion, on the cosmic dimension of salvation in Christ, on the sacramental-ecclesiological dimension of cosmology, and on its eschatological and transfigurative destiny. It expresses a theology of gift and dialogue, based on the concept of the world as “the gift of God” and the dialogue of man with God in and through the world that has a Trinitarian and spiritual basis. According to Maciej Bielawski, he develops *a philosophical vision of the world*²⁴. The world is a gift and a sacrament, man is a *micro-cosmos* and a mediator and the cosmos is a becoming macro-anthropos. Father Stăniloae emphasizes the soteriological endpoint of our gift to our peers: he speaks of a close relationship between Divine Reason, reasons of things and human reason²⁵. Starting from Saint Maximus the Confessor, he also speaks about the ecclesiastical space, as the image of the cosmic and human creation, about the meaning of cosmic creation as a becoming Church, about the human being as a church and the human person as its priest, about the Church itself, as heaven on earth or the liturgical centre of creation²⁶. The world has an apophatic-cataphatic character, just as man has an apophatic-cataphatic character. This apophatism of creation is a reflection of the divine apophatism present in God’s creation²⁷. The inter-relationship God-man-world reveals a full-paradoxical theological anthropology and a theonomic cosmology centred on ecclesiology and Christology; 7) Christ’s centrality within theology, creation, Church and the history of humankind. The ontological aspect of redemption as foundation of man’s deification is

²³ D. STĂNILOAE, *Teologia Dogmatică Ortodoxă*, vol. I, pp. 366-367.

²⁴ Maciej BIELAWSKI, *Părintele Dumitru Stăniloae, o viziune filocalică despre lume*, trad. Diac Ioan I Ică jr, Editura Deisis, Sibiu 1998.

²⁵ D. STĂNILOAE, *Teologia Dogmatică Ortodoxă*, vol. I, pp. 350-351.

²⁶ D. STĂNILOAE, *Spiritualitate și comuniune în Liturghia Ortodoxă*, pp. 21-46.

²⁷ Pr. Prof. Dr. Dumitru STĂNILOAE, *Iisus Hristos lumina lumii și îndumnezeitorul omului*, Editura Anastasia, București, 1993, pp. 17-18.

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the centre of all Christian and ecumenical theology²⁸. At the centre of his thinking lies Christ, God and Man in a Chalcedonian vision, who is seen as inseparable from the Holy Trinity, the structure of supreme love and from the deepening of the theological concepts made by Saints Maximus the Confessor, Symeon the New Theologian and Gregory Palamas. Jesus Christ is the *Mediator* who stands between God and creation. In Christ we come across a mediation in a double sense: from God to humanity and from humanity to God, the redemptive work of Christ having ontological implications²⁹; 8) the Catholic ecclesiology in the sense that the Church was also included organically in the mystery of salvation - the Church ontologically proceeds from Christ - the institutional aspect being together with the eschatological and charismatic one, the sacramental one with the one of spiritual communion in a catholic ecclesiology³⁰. The cognitive ecclesiology that has Trinity as a model has also implications at the social level in terms of inter-human relations. Father Staniloae's ecclesiology is an ecclesiology of communion³¹ and its supreme model is the Trinitarian perichoresis³², as he speaks at a time in an ecumenical context of open catholicity. In addition, Father Staniloae's vision on the Church is in close relation with Christology and with his vision on hypostatic union, from where the theandric constitution of the Church³³, He also speaks about the dynamism of the world in the Church, starting from the restoration of the dynamism of creation through Christ and the Holy Spirit in the Church. In this respect, and using St. Maximus' key, he emphasizes the modern forms of the world dynamism and the relationship between the dynamism

²⁸ Pr. Prof. Dumitru STĂNILOAE, "Definiția dogmatică de la Calcedon", in: *Ortodoxia*, III (1951) 2, pp. 295-440.

²⁹ Pr. Prof. Dr. Dumitru STĂNILOAE, *Iisus Hristos sau restaurarea omului*, Editura Mitropoliei Olteniei, Craiova, 1993, p. 197.

³⁰ Pr. Prof. Dumitru STĂNILOAE, "Din aspectul sacramental al Bisericii", in: *Studii Teologice*, XVIII (1966) 9-10, pp. 531-562; D. STĂNILOAE, "Biserica universală și sobornicească", in: *Ortodoxia*, XVIII (1966) 2, pp. 167-198.

³¹ Olivier CLEMENT, "Orthodox Ecclesiology as an Ecclesiology of Communion", in: *One in Christ*, (1970) 6, pp. 114-115; See also Cristinel IOJA, "Părintele Dumitru Stăniloae și eclesologia comuniunii", in: *Teologia*, VII (2003) 3-4, pp. 126-148.

³² Pr. Prof. Dumitru STĂNILOAE, "Sinteza eclesologică", in: *Studii Teologice*, VII (1955) 5-6, p. 270.

³³ Pr. Prof. Dr. Dumitru STĂNILOAE, *Teologia Dogmatică Ortodoxă*, vol. II, Editura Institutului Biblic și de Misiune al Bisericii Ortodoxe Române, București, 1978, p. 196.

of the world in the Church and outside the Church³⁴, It also emphasizes the presence of Christ through the Spirit in the Church and the Trinitarian relations, underlining the inseparable and unmistakable presence of Christ and of the Spirit in the Church³⁵. Deepening the inter-relation between Christ and the Spirit in ecclesiology is an essential aspect of Father Staniloae's theology on the Church and Mysteries. Concerning ecclesiology, Father Staniloae treats the Holy Mysteries as "means" of accomplishing the union between Christ and man. He points out an extraordinary fact that Western theology has omitted, namely that

"the confidence lies at the basis of the Orthodox Church concept on Mysteries, that is the work of Christ's Divine Spirit is possible through one man upon another, through the intercession of bodies and matter among them, in the Church, as the secret body of Christ. It is the confidence that God can work through the intercession of the human spirit over cosmic matter in general and to other people"³⁶.

He talks about the relationship between the mystery of creation, the mystery of Christ and the mystery of the Church³⁷. In ecclesiology, the synthesis of Christology and Pneumatology is remarkable and implicitly the avoidance of the excessive emphasis on the Eucharist. He avoids the accents on the Eucharistic centrality by speaking of a sacramental theology of the Church, which includes all the Sacraments used by Christ in his work of men' salvation. In Father Staniloae's thinking, eschatology as a theological and dogmatic aspect of ecclesiology receives remarkable theological-spiritual nuances with reference to the question of death, the pneumatised character of the renewed world - the mystery of the indwelling matter - and the transparency of Christ through all, Heaven and Hell being understood in a personal sense, through the theological notion of communion.

³⁴ Pr. Prof. Dumitru STĂNILAOE, "Dinamica creației în Biserică", in: *Ortodoxia*, XXIX (1977) 3-4, pp. 281-291.

³⁵ Pr. Prof. Dumitru STĂNILAOE, "Criterile prezenței Sfântului Duh", in: *Studii Teologice*, XIX (1967) 3-4, pp. 103-127, especially 103-117.

³⁶ Pr. Prof. Dumitru STĂNILAOE, *Teologia Dogmatică Ortodoxă*, vol. III, Editura Institutului Biblic și de Misiune al Bisericii Ortodoxe Române, București, 1978, pp. 7-8.

³⁷ D. STĂNILAOE, *Teologia Dogmatică Ortodoxă*, vol. III, p. 13.