

## ORTHODOX-CATHOLIC DIALOGUE: RETRIEVING EUCHARISTIC ECCLESIOLOGY

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### PRECIS

Nicolas Afanassieff, in his eucharistic ecclesiology, contended that the local eucharistic assembly is fully autonomous and represents the church in its fullness. Both Catholic and Orthodox churches celebrate the same eucharist—a sign of their already existing unity despite canonical disunity—and, therefore, Afanassieff suggested the practice of intercommunion. In response, John Zizioulas's communion ecclesiology (as refined in *Communion and Otherness*) criticizes intercommunion and maintains the inseparability of eucharist, communion among bishops, and unity of teaching, emphasizing primarily the role of the bishop. Also in response to eucharistic ecclesiology, Dumitru Staniloae argued that the Orthodox and Catholic churches, although both having a valid eucharist, cannot have eucharistic communion because they do not share in the same faith, especially concerning papal primacy. The essay's conclusion proposes a communion ecclesiology that includes elements from Afanassieff, Zizioulas, Staniloae, and Vatican II.

One way in which Orthodox and Catholic ecclesiologies converge today is in understanding the church as communion. Contemporary Orthodox theology owes this approach mainly to John Zizioulas (1931–), who criticized the eucharistic ecclesiology of Nicolas Afanassieff (1893–1966),<sup>1</sup> although, in a recent book, *Communion and Otherness*,<sup>2</sup> Zizioulas has come closer to Afanassieff

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<sup>1</sup>For another excellent treatment of the theme of eucharistic ecclesiology from a Catholic perspective with ecumenical sensitivity, see Paul McPartlan, *Sacrament of Salvation: An Introduction to Eucharistic Ecclesiology* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1995).

<sup>2</sup>John D. Zizioulas, *Communion and Otherness: Further Studies in Personhood and the Church*, ed. Paul McPartlan (London and New York: T&T Clark, Continuum, 2006).

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than he has in the past. To better serve the cause of Christian unity, the positions of Zizioulas and Afanassieff at times need to be complemented or even corrected by the ecclesiology of Dumitru Staniloae (1903–1993).<sup>3</sup> After an analysis of Afanassieff's ecclesiology, this essay compares the similarities and differences between the communion ecclesiologies of Zizioulas and Staniloae, as they both respond to Afanassieff. Next, it identifies the strengths of these three Orthodox theologians and of Vatican II's document *Lumen gentium*, which introduce two models of ecclesial unity based on their emphasis on either the local or universal church and on the eucharist as either means or sign of unity. Finally, I submit a constructive proposal for approaching ecclesial unity from the perspective of a communion ecclesiology that advances the dialogue between the Orthodox and Catholic churches.

### *Afanassieff's Eucharistic Ecclesiology*

The eucharistic ecclesiology of Afanassieff represents a milestone in the development of Orthodox ecclesiology, with its emphasis on unity of faith, eucharistic communion, and the relationship between the local and universal aspects of the church. Afanassieff first proposed eucharistic ecclesiology in the winter of 1932–33,<sup>4</sup> when the Orthodox and Catholic churches showed barely any signs of mutual openness, although the situation would soon change.<sup>5</sup>

Afanassieff claimed that the early church had a "eucharistic ecclesiology" in which the eucharistic assembly of the local church contained the fullness of the church. Local churches were autonomous and independent, but at the same time they related to other local churches through bishops, through the acceptance of other local churches' ecclesial life, and—most importantly—through mutual identity, as they each represented the fullness of Christ's presence in the local eucharistic assembly. It was Cyprian of Carthage, Afanassieff argued, who later replaced eucharistic ecclesiology (which affirms the fullness and independence of the local church) with universal ecclesiology, wherein only the universal

<sup>3</sup>Unfortunately, Staniloae's most relevant works for eucharistic ecclesiology have not yet been translated into English, although some of his translated works provide important elements of his ecclesiology in general.

<sup>4</sup>Marianne Afanassieff, "The Genesis of 'The Church of the Holy Spirit,'" in Nicolas Afanassieff, *L'Église du Saint-Esprit*, tr. Marianne Drobot, *Cogitatio Fidei* 83 (Paris: Cerf, 1975)], p. 5. Note the more recent E.T.: Nicolas Afanassieff, *The Church of the Holy Spirit*, tr. Vitaly Permiakov (South Bend, IN: Notre Dame University Press, 2007). Unless otherwise stated, translations from French and Romanian are mine.

<sup>5</sup>Olivier Rousseau mentions that Afanassieff was quoted at Vatican II, where the participating bishops were asked to read one of his essays. His influence can be seen especially in the sections on the local church and on the laity of the "Dogmatic Constitution on the Church" (Olivier Rousseau, "Preface," in Afanassieff, *L'Église*, pp. 8–9). Moreover, besides Rousseau's considerations, I would also add that Afanassieff's *L'Église du Saint-Esprit* (published posthumously in French translation) approaches first the mystery of the church, then the people of God and the common priesthood, and then ordained priesthood, a scheme that preceded by twenty years Vatican II's *Lumen gentium*. In my estimation, it is probable that Afanassieff's work influenced this document, given Rousseau's remarks and Afanassieff's previous personal contacts with influential participants such as Yves Congar.

church possesses fullness and is made up of parts, meaning that local churches do not possess fullness,<sup>6</sup> all the parts of the universal church being united through their bishops. The principle of the unity of the universal church is the “multiplicity united by peace” of the bishops.<sup>7</sup> Consequently, the limits of the church are drawn by the episcopate, and outside these limits there is no church, according to Cyprian’s formula: “The bishop is in the Church and the Church in the bishop, and if anyone is not with the bishop, he is not in the Church” (*Epist. LXVI, VIII, 3*).<sup>8</sup>

In Afanassieff’s estimation, even though Cyprian’s understanding of universal ecclesiology has never been accepted in its entirety, the basic principles of his doctrine still perpetuate the schism between the Orthodox and Catholic churches.<sup>9</sup> To end this schism, Afanassieff proposed the application of eucharistic ecclesiology to twentieth-century Orthodox-Catholic relations, in order to manifest the (forgotten) unity that still exists between them. Several aspects of Afanassieff’s eucharistic ecclesiology are relevant today:

First, because Christ is fully present in the eucharist, the eucharistic assembly of the local church (including the bishop) fully manifests the church *Una Sancta*, which is the Body of Christ. Consequently, Afanassieff submitted the fundamental thesis of eucharistic ecclesiology:

[T]he Church is where the eucharistic assembly is. It is also possible to formulate this in another way. Where the Eucharist is, there is the Church of God, and where the Church of God is, there is the Eucharist. It follows that the eucharistic assembly is the distinctive, empirical sign of the Church. . . . The actual limits of the Church are determined by the limits of the eucharistic assembly.

In affirming that the eucharistic assembly is the principle of the unity of the Church, the thesis that the bishop is the distinctive empirical sign of the local church is not excluded, because the bishop is included in the very concept of the Eucharist. According to its very nature, the eucharistic assembly could not exist without its president or, according to the terminology established by usage, without the bishop. The foundation of the ministry of the bishop is the eucharistic assembly.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>6</sup>According to Cyprian, “Just as we can distinguish members in the Church, the Body of Christ, so the one and only Church, physically speaking, is made up of different local churches, which are her limbs or members: *ecclesia per totum mundum in multa membra divisa*” (*Epist. LV, XXIV, 2*; cf. *Epist. XXXVI, IV, 1*). Nicolas Afanassieff, “The Church which Presides in Love,” in John Meyendorff, *The Primacy of Peter: Essays in Ecclesiology and the Early Church* (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir’s Seminary Press, 1992 [updated from first (1963) E.T.]), p. 95; also in J. Meyendorff, A. Schmemmann, N. Afanassieff, and N. Koulomzine, *The Primacy of Peter*, The Library of Orthodox Theology 1 (Bedfordshire, U.K.: Faith Press, 1963; 2nd ed., 1973), p. 61 See the same idea in Nicolas Afanassieff, “Una Sancta,” *Irénikon*, vol. 36, no. 4 (1963), p. 440.

<sup>7</sup>Cyprian, *De unitate ecclesiae*, V.

<sup>8</sup>Nicolas Afanassieff, “Una Sancta,” E.T. by Michael Plekon, in Michael Plekon, ed., *Tradition Alive: On the Church and the Christian Life in Our Time—Readings from the Eastern Church* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2003), pp. 12–13. French original (see n. 5, above), pp. 449–451. In subsequent references, page numbers corresponding to the English and French versions are shown thusly: English/French.

<sup>9</sup>Afanassieff, “Una Sancta,” p. 440 (French); this is missing from the E.T.

<sup>10</sup>Afanassieff, “Una Sancta,” p. 14/pp. 452–453.

Thus, if Cyprian's universal ecclesiology regarded the bishop as the principle of unity of the church and the point of reference for the limits of the church, Afanassieff attributed these roles to the eucharistic assembly that includes the bishop as its president. Hence, eucharistic ecclesiology does not stand in tension with the hierarchical aspect of the church but includes it instead.

Second, Afanassieff affirmed the autonomy and independence of the local church based on the fullness of the local eucharistic assembly. He wrote that "in the apostolic age, and throughout the second and third centuries, every local church was autonomous and independent—autonomous, for it contained in itself everything necessary to its life; and independent, because it did not depend on any other local church or any bishop whatever outside itself."<sup>11</sup> As if knowing how prone to criticism this affirmation would be, Afanassieff added yet another clarification: "the local church is autonomous and independent, because the Church of God in Christ indwells it in perfect fullness. It is independent, because any power, of any kind, exercised over it would be exercised over Christ and His Body."<sup>12</sup>

Third, and complementary to the previous contention that nothing can stand above the local eucharistic assembly, Afanassieff affirmed that the *Una Sancta* is not subordinate to the local church, thus keeping a proper balance between the universal and local aspects of the church. He emphasized a unity by "mutual identity"<sup>13</sup> among diverse local manifestations of the same reality:

Each local church would unite in herself [all] the local churches, for she possessed all the fullness of the Church of God and all the local churches together were united because the same Church of God dwelt in them all. . . . This is not an association of parts of the Church or of diverse churches, but the union of different manifestations of the Church of God in actual human existence. It is the union of the Church of God with herself, through diverse representations.<sup>14</sup>

This kind of unity preserves the universal character of the church since, as Afanassieff continued, "What was celebrated in one church was also celebrated in the others, because everything was celebrated in the Church of God in Christ.

<sup>11</sup> Afanassieff, "The Church which Presides in Love," p. 107.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 109.

<sup>13</sup> Timothy (Kallistos) Ware has observed that, for Ignatius, "various local churches are related to each other, not as part of a whole, but on the principle of *mutual identity*, because in each local Church there is celebrated the one, unique and indivisible Eucharist" (Timothy [Kallistos] Ware, "Church and Eucharist, Communion and Intercommunion," *Sobornost*, vol. 7, no. 7 [1978], p. 554).

<sup>14</sup> Afanassieff, "Una Sancta," p. 15/454 (modified translation). Most contemporary Orthodox and Catholic theologians would agree with Afanassieff's affirmation based on the principle of catholicity, according to which the whole is present in the part and the part is in the whole ("catholicity" derives from *cath'olon*). This principle is valid both for the eucharist, where every communicant receives the entire body and blood of Christ, and for the church, as a description of the relationship between the local and universal aspects of the church. A further reason for Orthodox theologians to agree with this statement is that here Afanassieff seems to come close to the model of autocephalous Orthodox Churches, where they are administratively autonomous and independent, but united in faith and eucharist. This comparison with contemporary autocephalous Orthodox Churches, however, needs even further qualification: Afanassieff criticized this model because it ascribes autonomy only to the autocephalous church and not to the dioceses (as eucharistic centers) that form it.

Because of this universal nature, the local churches were neither locked in themselves, nor 'provincial.'"<sup>15</sup>

Fourth, Afanassieff contended that both Catholic and Orthodox churches celebrate the same eucharist, which unites all those who receive it, whether they be Catholic or Orthodox, in spite of their canonical and dogmatic divergences. He consequently criticized Cyprian's affirmation that separated churches place themselves outside of the Church (*Una Sancta*), so that their sacraments are not valid.<sup>16</sup> Paradoxically, however, both Catholic and Orthodox churches have adopted Cyprian's position, each considering itself to be the true church. They have altered Cyprian's position and affirmed that the other church contains a "diminished existence of the Church, or certain 'vestiges' of the Church, which allow the separated parts of the Church to continue their ecclesiastical life and for the sacraments to be administered."<sup>17</sup> Afanassieff considered that such a position cannot be defended theologically, since "[t]he nature of the Church presupposes that either she exists in her fullness or she does not exist at all, but there can be no partial existence nor can there be vestiges existing here and there. The Church is one in all the fullness of her nature and she is the only true Church, and it is not possible to have the Church where there is error."<sup>18</sup> Interestingly, Afanassieff did not accept differing degrees of belonging to the church, forcing him to implicitly uphold Cyprian's position that there is no church outside the canonical boundaries of the church.

Fifth, based on the affirmation of the Nicene-Constantinopolitan Creed that the church is "one, holy, catholic, and apostolic," Afanassieff reinforced his contention that the church is one, even in the present context of dogmatic disunity. Consequently, "if one recognized the quality of church in [either] part of the divided church, one would be minimizing the importance of dogmatic differences, leaving them integral as they are. If one or the other parts are both the church, then this means the sacraments are celebrated and salvation is possible in both, for this is the purpose of the church."<sup>19</sup> Afanassieff was subtle here; applied to the present Orthodox-Catholic situation, this statement means that the two churches recognize each other's sacraments and character of church (each being a local church of the same *Una Sancta*),<sup>20</sup> so, in practice, they actually deempha-

<sup>15</sup>Afanassieff, *L'Église du Saint-Esprit*, p. 29.

<sup>16</sup>Afanassieff, "Una Sancta," p. 442 (French only). Georges Florovsky would have agreed with Afanassieff, since the sacraments administered in separated churches are valid not by *oikonomia* (which cannot compensate for what did not take place at all), but because of the distinction between the charismatic and canonical boundaries of the church (See Georges Florovsky, "The Boundaries of the Church," in Richard S. Haugh, gen. ed., *Ecumenism I: A Doctrinal Approach—Collected Works of Georges Florovsky, Emeritus Professor of Eastern Church History, Harvard University* (Belmont, MA: Nordland Publishing, 1989), vol. 13, pp. 37 and 42). See also Georges Florovsky, "St. Cyprian and St. Augustine on Schism," in Richard S. Haugh, gen. ed., *Ecumenism II: A Historical Approach—Collected Works* (Belmont, MA: Nordland Publishing, 1989), vol. 14, p. 49.

<sup>17</sup>Afanassieff, "Una Sancta," pp. 443–444 (French only).

<sup>18</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 8/444.

<sup>19</sup>*Ibid.*, pp. 5–6/439–440.

<sup>20</sup>Afanassieff wrote: "For eucharistic ecclesiology, the orthodox church and the catholic church are both Churches, or to be more exact, each local church of both groups remains a Church—as it was before so it is after the 'separation.' I put 'separation' in quotation marks for it did not take place and there is no separation. The Church of God is forever and remains one and unique. The break in

size the importance of the dogmatic differences between them, even though they might be reluctant to admit it officially. I will return to this aspect below.

Sixth, Afanassieff considered the possibility of ecclesial unity without episcopal communion. He criticized universal ecclesiology for its position that the principle of church unity is not the fullest manifestation of the church in the eucharist but only one of its elements, namely, the episcopate, which, "though being most essential for the Church, does not manifest her entirely. . . . Therefore, in universal ecclesiology, the episcopate does not find itself within the eucharistic assembly, but above it."<sup>21</sup> According to eucharistic ecclesiology, however, "the unity of the Church . . . finds concrete expression in the eucharistic assembly."<sup>22</sup> This is an essential argument, since it implicitly poses the following question: Does disunion in episcopacy preclude union in the eucharist? The answer to this question will determine whether the Orthodox and Catholic churches are still united or not.

Seventh, Afanassieff contended that the lack of eucharistic communion between the Orthodox and Catholic churches has never affected the essence of their unity because it is based merely on canonical grounds (surprisingly for a professor of canon law). He wrote that

our separation, even if provoked by dogmatic differences, nevertheless has a canonical character. This separation always remains but on the surface of ecclesial life and never extends to its depths. Our canonical division (provoked by dogmatic differences), a division that in turn has given rise to even more profound dogmatic differences, has despite all of this never entirely broken our eucharistic unity. Nevertheless, this unity does not find its concrete expression—for canonical reasons—because we cannot transform in reality our ecclesiological *koinonia*.<sup>23</sup>

For Afanassieff, exclusion from the eucharist is the expected result of any schism, and it certainly does not imply the impoverishment or even cessation of ecclesial status:

The nature of the break in communion indicated that the local church deprived of communion with the other churches ceased to exist for the latter, for there were no longer links by which this communion could be realized. But such a church did not cease to remain in itself the Church of God despite its isolated situation. If we think that such a local church is no longer the

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communion was not able to produce the division of the Church which, by her very nature, cannot be divided into parts" (ibid., p. 22/465).

<sup>21</sup>Ibid., p. 15/454.

<sup>22</sup>Ibid., pp. 14/453–454.

<sup>23</sup>Nicolas Afanassieff, "The Eucharist: The Principal Link between the Catholics and the Orthodox," tr. Michael Plekon, in Plekon, *Tradition Alive*, p. 49. Original French: Nicolas Afanassieff, "L'Eucharistie, principal lien entre les Catholiques et les Orthodoxes," *Irénikon*, vol. 38, no. 3 (1965), p. 339. (The last sentence of the translation is mine.) History supports Afanassieff's affirmation, since the events that led to the schism in 1054 were not so much doctrinal differences but canonical (although not completely separate from dogma), and the schism was sealed only in 1204, with the fourth crusade. Even in the earlier Photian schism (867–70), unity was restored after agreement was reached in canonical issues, without solving the theological issue of the *Filioque*.

Church, we reject the only distinctive sign by which we can judge the existence of a Church: where there is the eucharistic assembly, there is Church, and there is the Church of God in Christ. This sign applies not only to churches that are part of the multitude-of-churches-linked-by-Love-and-peace but also to those that are separated.<sup>24</sup>

Afanassieff seems inconsistent here, by allowing a church to exist in isolation from other local churches, an assertion he has previously denied. Moreover, I disagree with Afanassieff that lack of love is not a church-dividing issue, since two local communities cannot share in the same eucharistic celebration without love.

The previous points illustrate Afanassieff's theology according to which the church scattered throughout the world is at the same time one and fully manifested in each local eucharistic assembly. Moreover, the unity of the church depends primarily on the same eucharist's being celebrated in different local churches, not on interdependence of the local communities, dogmatic union, episcopal communion, or bond of love. However, Orthodox and Catholic churches have forgotten these eucharistic ecclesiological principles and have concentrated on their canonical disunity. As a solution, Afanassieff called for a return to the eucharistic ecclesiology of the early church, meaning that, today, those who receive the eucharist "are united with all those who at that moment also participate in eucharistic assemblies—not only those of the orthodox church but also those of the catholic church—for everywhere there is only the one and the same Eucharist being celebrated."<sup>25</sup> Because of this unity manifested in the eucharist, "the links between the Catholic Church and the Orthodox Church were never entirely broken and continue to exist until the present. The essential link between us is the Eucharist."<sup>26</sup> Thus, Afanassieff arrived at the heart of eucharistic ecclesiology: Since Orthodox and Catholic churches celebrate the same eucharist, they are united through their mutual identity in the eucharist.

Afanassieff, as a practical consequence of his theology, recommended that the Orthodox and Catholic churches work toward manifesting their already existing unity by renewing their communion and postponing the solution of dogmatic divergences for the time when they would be able to address them in the spirit of love:

By an effort of Love, the orthodox church *could* reestablish communion with the catholic church, the dogmatic divergences notwithstanding and without demanding that the catholic church renounce the doctrines that distinguish her from the orthodox church. . . . If the orthodox church had been in communion with the catholic church up to the time of the First Vatican Council, she would have been able, without accepting the decisions of the council, not to break communion and to cover by the truth of Love that which was the non-truth, in her estimation, of the dogma there promulgated. If for the catholic church the divine truth is greater than that of man, she *could* consent not to demand that the orthodox church accept these new dogmas. Within herself

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<sup>24</sup>Afanassieff, "Una Sancta," p. 18/pp. 458–459.

<sup>25</sup>Ibid., p. 24/468.

<sup>26</sup>Afanassieff, "The Eucharist: Principal Link," p. 48/337.

she would have remained what she is today, preserving the content and the doctrines that she actually possessed. Certainly, to attain this, the effort in Love is necessary, a great sacrifice, an element of self-renunciation. To restrict the doctrine of the power of the pope within the limits of the catholic church would be, for the church of Rome, the result of a great sacrificial spirit toward the goal of reestablishing the union-of-the-churches-joined-in-Love. It has not at all to do with the Catholic church redefining her doctrine of the power of the pope as a *theologoumenon*, a theological opinion. The dogma would remain dogma but a dogma not recognized by other churches.<sup>27</sup>

Afanassieff's main argument here is that, if the Orthodox and Catholic churches acted based on love, they could renew their communion despite their dogmatic divergences. As if knowing that his daring affirmation would be met with strong criticism, Afanassieff defended his proposal by contending that, even though different local churches ideally should enjoy absolute dogmatic harmony, this has never been the case in history and is certainly unattainable in the present state of animosity. The Orthodox and Catholic churches have a better chance of solving their dogmatic differences in the context of unity. Until then—while not renouncing their teachings or accepting each other's doctrines—they should simply live in unity. Afanassieff claimed that he did not minimize the importance of dogmatic formulations and he did not advocate doctrinal relativism or indifferentism, but he hoped that differences could be solved in the spirit of love. He added that Christians "have forgotten that 'our knowledge is imperfect and our prophesying<sup>28</sup> is imperfect' (1 Cor 13:9). When Love is raised higher than knowledge, then knowledge itself will be perfected. Knowledge is not opposed to Love and Love does not exclude knowledge."<sup>29</sup> Thus, dogmatic differences should not stand in the way of communion.

What does renewing the communion between the Orthodox and Catholic churches mean? Timothy Ware contends that Afanassieff regarded intercommunion (that is, sharing in the eucharist among separate churches) as a practical consequence of his theology. He believed that Christians need to share in communion, so that they discover the unity that already exists in Christ and in the eucharist. This union would be built from the inside, rather than from the outside.<sup>30</sup>

The reception of Afanassieff's theology varied from enthusiastic embrace (Paul Evdokimov)<sup>31</sup> to vehement rejection (Ware,<sup>32</sup> Zizioulas, and Staniloae). The

<sup>27</sup>Afanassieff, "Una Sancta," pp. 25–26/p. 470, emphases in original.

<sup>28</sup>Most biblical scholars today argue that "prophesying" means explaining the scriptures, not predicting the future, so Paul is actually making the claim that even (what we call today) "church doctrine" is imperfect. Without being a minimalist, Afanassieff pointed to the apophatic character of doctrine and to the perpetually evolving character of dogmatic formulations.

<sup>29</sup>See Afanassieff, "Una Sancta," pp. 27–28/472–474; quote on p 28/474.

<sup>30</sup>Summarized in Ware, "Church and Eucharist," pp. 557–558.

<sup>31</sup>In *L'Orthodoxie*, Evdokimov dedicated an entire chapter to "eucharistic ecclesiology" and expressed his unreserved agreement with Afanassieff (Paul Evdokimov, *L'Orthodoxie* [Paris: Desclée de Brouwer, 1979], pp. 128–131 and 156).

<sup>32</sup>Ware has affirmed that the eucharist alone does not create the church, but that two other ingredients are necessary: "dogmatic unity (unity in faith) . . . [and] ecclesial unity (unity in the bishop)" in the local bishop. Moreover, Ware has disagreed with Afanassieff's view on intercom-

next two sections will concentrate on Zizioulas's and Staniloae's criticisms of eucharistic ecclesiology.

*Zizioulas's Response to Afanassieff: Episcopal Communion*

Zizioulas's main criticism of Afanassieff is that churches cannot have eucharistic communion without sharing the same teaching and without communion among bishops. Alternatively, Zizioulas proposes communion ecclesiology, which emphasizes the relationships among bishops gathered in synods and in communion with one another.<sup>33</sup> In his 1965 doctoral dissertation, Zizioulas first challenges Afanassieff's historical analysis of the contrast between the eucharistic ecclesiology of Ignatius and the universal ecclesiology of Cyprian.<sup>34</sup> Second, appealing to the authority of Irenaeus, who affirmed that "our doctrine [that is, the orthodox faith] is agreed on the Eucharist, and the Eucharist confirms our doctrine,"<sup>35</sup> Zizioulas contends that "*orthodoxy is unthinkable without the Eucharist*" and "*the Eucharist without orthodoxy is an impossibility.*"<sup>36</sup> Hence, he writes:

[T]he theory of eucharistic ecclesiology as taken to its ultimate conclusions . . . can lead to unacceptable and dangerous positions. . . . [I]n addition to the Eucharist other essential elements are required, such as right faith without which "even the Eucharist is an impossibility." It is consequently a negative element in the extreme positions of eucharistic ecclesiology that through them dogmatic differences tend to become unimportant in the unity of the Church.<sup>37</sup>

Third, Zizioulas criticizes the term "intercommunion" as inept, considering that eucharistic communion can take place only in a fully united church. In the meantime, "the avoidance of communion with the heterodox, far from having any sense of self-satisfaction or arrogance, expresses a continuing experience of the tragedy of schism as expressed in the most existential way through the refusal of eucharistic communion."<sup>38</sup>

Zizioulas's fourth criticism of Afanassieff, which coincides with the heart of his early account of communion ecclesiology, stresses that episcopal communion is the necessary condition for Christian unity. Zizioulas identifies the bishop with the entire local church and therefore concludes that the unity of the church

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munion. See Ware, "Church and Eucharist," p. 558.

<sup>33</sup>See also Lucian Turcescu, "Eucharistic Ecclesiology or Open Sobornicity?" in Lucian Turcescu, ed., *Dumitru Staniloae: Tradition and Modernity in Theology* (Iasi, Romania, and Palm Beach, FL: Center for Romanian Studies, 2002), pp. 92–94.

<sup>34</sup>John D. Zizioulas, *Eucharist, Bishop, Church: The Unity of the Church in the Divine Eucharist and the Bishop during the First Three Centuries*, tr. Elizabeth Theokritoff (Brookline, MA: Holy Cross Orthodox Press, 2001 [tr. from unpublished Greek dissertation]), p. 126. See also Ware's similar criticism in his "Church and Eucharist," p. 566, n. 20.

<sup>35</sup>*Against Heresies* 4:18:3; PG 7:1028A.

<sup>36</sup>Zizioulas, *Eucharist, Bishop, Church*, p. 133, emphases in original.

<sup>37</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 257.

<sup>38</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 258.

is not simply eucharistic but also hierarchical:

[T]he Church is the body of Christ because the body of Christ is *the historical Christ Himself* and the historical Christ is *the flesh of the Divine Eucharist*. . . .

The Divine Eucharist is closely bound up *with the Bishop* as he is in turn with "the whole Church." These elements are so deeply bound up with one another that they are not clearly distinguished in Ignatius' thought. . . . [T]he *Bishop is identified with the entire local Church*. Thus, we reach the classic passage "where the Bishop is, there is the multitude . . ."

. . .

The unity of the Church is not simply eucharistic, but because of the relation of the Bishop to the Eucharist it becomes hierarchical as well. . . . [T]he *community cannot even be called a church without the clergy*, i.e. the Bishop, presbyters and deacons.<sup>39</sup>

Fifth, Zizioulas criticizes Afanassieff for giving priority to the local over the universal aspects of the church. Zizioulas claims that, because the eucharist is celebrated at the local level but is offered in the name of the entire church, "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. . . . The dilemma 'local or universal' is transcended in the eucharist."<sup>40</sup> Moreover, for a local church fully to exist, it must exist in communion with different local churches. This principle is a major contribution to ecclesiology and stems from Zizioulas's understanding of the person as "being in communion," where a person (applied to God, humanity, and the church) exists fully only in communion with other persons.<sup>41</sup> Over time, Zizioulas's communion ecclesiology became more and more centered on his theology of personhood. In *Communion and Otherness*, he presents a theology of communion and otherness that attempts to move beyond Afanassieff's insufficient presentation of "the original synthesis of the Christological, the ecclesiological and the eucharistic."<sup>42</sup>

Zizioulas continues to reject the possibility for intercommunion and emphasizes the necessity of excluding from eucharistic communion those who do not belong to a certain church. Defending this proposal is difficult, since Zizioulas's major premise is that communion—which embraces and presupposes otherness—is a matter of ontology, inherent in existence in general, but especially in

<sup>39</sup>Ibid., pp. 114–116, emphases in original.

<sup>40</sup>John D. Zizioulas, *Being as Communion: Studies in Personhood and the Church* (London: Darton, Longman and Todd; Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1985), p. 133, emphasis in original.

<sup>41</sup>Zizioulas accuses Afanassieff of regarding Christ first as an individual who *then* becomes corporate personality, which would mean Afanassieff affirmed that the faithful are *identically* Christ rather than *differentiatedly* Christ and that local churches are united through their mutual identity. Instead, Zizioulas (in McPartlan's summary) suggests that the unity of the local churches "derives not from their sameness but from their existence in this differentiated configuration" (Paul McPartlan, *The Eucharist Makes the Church: Henri de Lubac and John Zizioulas in Dialogue* [Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1993], pp. 229 and 233–235). In my estimation, Afanassieff did not work within the framework of Christ as individual/corporate personality or of the local churches united *identically/differentiatedly*, but Zizioulas "forces" Afanassieff to fit into this scheme.

<sup>42</sup>Zizioulas, *Communion and Otherness*, p. 291.

the triune God, in the human person, and in the church. Although communion with “the other” is constitutive for the being of the church and the eucharist,<sup>43</sup> Zizioulas justifies the exclusion from eucharistic communion of “other” Christians:

[T]here is only one kind of exclusion that eucharistic communion permits, and that is the exclusion of exclusion itself, that is, of those things that involve rejection and division. Such are the things that *in principle* and by *an act of faith*—not by way of failure to apply the true faith<sup>44</sup>—lead to a kind of communion that disturbs Trinitarian, Christological, Pneumatological and ecclesiological faith . . . [Disagreeing with the practice of intercommunion, Zizioulas continues:] we do not preach exclusiveness and exclusion of the other; we simply acknowledge that such an exclusion does exist, and until the causes of it are removed, communion with the “other” suffers.<sup>45</sup>

Zizioulas thus brings a new explanation for his previous stance against intercommunion, this time from the perspective of his theology of the person in communion with the other, which he applies to the life of a church impoverished by heresies and schisms as acts of exclusion. His position stands in opposition to Afanassieff’s contention that dogmatic differences resulting in schism do not affect essentially the church unity still manifested in the eucharist.

Another issue resurfacing in *Communion and Otherness* is that of the relationship between the local and the universal church. Zizioulas reads Catholic ecclesiology as represented by Karl Rahner and Joseph Ratzinger (now Pope Benedict XVI) “to justify the ontological priority of the universal Church over against the local: it is, in effect, nothing other than the argument that the ‘one’ precedes the ‘many’ and that substance has priority over existence.”<sup>46</sup> Zizioulas argues that “Roman Catholic ecclesiology, as represented in the above authors, would say that the one Church precedes and ‘subsists’ in each local church.”<sup>47</sup> Protestant ecclesiology would tend to be more ‘congregationalist’ and to give priority to the local community, sometimes not even bothering about the one Church, at least in its visible form.” Zizioulas then formulates the synthesis between thesis and antithesis and affirms, “The one cannot precede the many, and otherness cannot be secondary to unity. The ‘many’ must have a constitutive and

<sup>43</sup>Zizioulas writes, “In the Eucharist the Other is inconceivable as an autonomous or independent ‘individual’. The Eucharist is *communion*, and this means that otherness is experienced as *relational*. The eucharistic ethos, therefore, precludes any exclusiveness in otherness. The only exclusion that is permissible—even imperative—is of exclusiveness itself” (*ibid.*, pp. 91–92, emphases in original).

<sup>44</sup>Zizioulas subtly refers here to the Orthodox in the Diaspora where, even though there is communion among different ethnic churches *in principle*, their communion *as an act of faith* is greatly impoverished by the existence of overlapping jurisdictions separated ethnically or politically (*ibid.*, pp. 8–9).

<sup>45</sup>*Ibid.*, pp. 7–8, emphases in original.

<sup>46</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 38.

<sup>47</sup>Surprisingly, at this point Zizioulas mentions in a footnote the debate between Kasper and Ratzinger but does not take into consideration Kasper’s position, which is certainly in disagreement with Ratzinger’s. For instance, see Walter Kasper, “On the Church: A Friendly Reply to Cardinal Ratzinger,” *America*, vol. 184, no. 14 (2001), pp. 8–14; Joseph Ratzinger, “The Local Church and the Universal Church: A Response to Walter Kasper,” *America*, vol. 185, no. 16 (2001), pp. 7–11.

not a derivative role in the Church's being; local and universal must somehow coincide.<sup>48</sup> Zizioulas's objective to give equal importance to the local and the universal is commendable, but many times it appears to be merely an unfulfilled *desiderate*, as several scholars have contended.<sup>49</sup> Despite his announced intention to find a balance between "one" and "many," "nature" and "person," "universal" and "local," Zizioulas repeatedly gives priority to "many," "person," and "local."<sup>50</sup> This brings him closer to Afanassieff than he would probably want to be, since Afanassieff also gave priority to the local church, despite his claim to maintain the universality of the church.

Another facet of Zizioulas's theology that comes closer to Afanassieff's is his account of the constitutive role of the eucharist for the church. He writes: "We can therefore describe the Church, fundamentally, as a *eucharistic way of being*," adding in a footnote that "the *only* way to 'regard' the Church is to identify her with the Eucharist."<sup>51</sup> Zizioulas does not necessarily agree with Afanassieff on the full ecclesiastical character of all eucharistic assemblies, but unqualified affirmations such as this one certainly come close to Afanassieff's position. Moreover, because Zizioulas does not consistently include the hierarchical aspect of the church in the eucharist<sup>52</sup> (as Afanassieff did), his contention that the eucharist makes the church appears rather surprising. He affirms in this sense that "the Church constitutes the Eucharist while being constituted by it," whereby church and eucharist "coincide, and are even in some sense identical."<sup>53</sup> It seems that Afanassieff was better able to explain how the eucharist makes the church, while including the category of the bishop under the eucharist.

Overall, Zizioulas provides important responses to Afanassieff's eucharistic ecclesiology, especially in regard to the interdependence of the eucharist, local church, and the bishop, as well as regarding Afanassieff's rejection of intercommunion. However, Zizioulas's departure from Afanassieff is not entirely satisfactory concerning the relationship between the local and the universal church (where both theologians give priority to the local) and in affirming that

<sup>48</sup>Zizioulas, *Communion and Otherness*, p. 38.

<sup>49</sup>See, e.g., André de Halleux, "Personnalisme ou essentialisme trinitaire chez les pères Cappadociens?" in André de Halleux, ed., *Patrologie et oecuménisme: Recueil d'études* (Leuven: Leuven University Press, 1990), pp. 215–268; Lucian Turcescu, "'Person' versus 'Individual,' and Other Modern Misreadings of Gregory of Nyssa," *Modern Theology*, vol. 18, no. 4 (2002), pp. 527–539; and idem, "Eucharistic Ecclesiology or Open Sobornicity?" In *Communion and Otherness*, Zizioulas actually engages with Turcescu, but, in my estimation, Zizioulas's arguments are not convincing.

<sup>50</sup>E.g., Zizioulas, *Communion and Otherness*, p. 142.

<sup>51</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 79, emphases in original; based on Nicholas Cabasilas, *De div. alt.* 37–38, PG 150, 452–453.

<sup>52</sup>Zizioulas's thorough treatment of the role of the bishop outside the local eucharistic assembly is rather surprising, given his earlier accounts of the relationship between bishop and the community described above, as well as his correct observation that, in the early church, the main role of the bishop was that of celebrant of the eucharist, and that only later did the bishop accept significant administrative duties.

<sup>53</sup>John D. Zizioulas, "The Ecclesiological Presuppositions of the Holy Eucharist," *Nicolaus*, vol. 10 (1982), p. 341. Cf. Zizioulas, *Being as Communion*, p. 219: "the concrete local community . . . is to be understood as something constituted by the very event it constitutes." Quoted in McPartlan, *The Eucharist Makes the Church*, p. xvii.

the eucharist makes the church, an assertion that is certainly correct, but must always be supplemented with other aspects of ecclesiology. As I argue next, Staniloae's response to Afanassieff's ecclesiology is more complete,<sup>54</sup> especially regarding the relationship between the eucharist and the common confession of faith.

### *Staniloae's Response to Afanassieff: Doctrinal Communion*

Staniloae reacted rather strongly against eucharistic ecclesiology,<sup>55</sup> especially in his essay on "the Universal and Catholic Church" and in his book on "spirituality and communion in the Orthodox liturgy," neither of which is available in English. While supporting Afanassieff's positive intention to ease the path toward Christian unity, Staniloae considered that eucharistic ecclesiology does a disservice to the ecumenical cause by being relativistic and by creating an illegitimate compromise;<sup>56</sup> he later referred to it as a "theory invented by the theologian Afanassieff."<sup>57</sup> Staniloae criticized several aspects of eucharistic ecclesiology, and I will summarize his criticisms in the following paragraphs. Interestingly, the relationship between the eucharist and the bishop—so prominent in Zizioulas—will not receive any attention because Staniloae thought that Afanassieff actually did emphasize this relationship.<sup>58</sup>

First, Staniloae considered that eucharistic ecclesiology does not adequately stress the importance of the right faith as a condition for the changing of the bread and the wine into the body and blood of Christ within the local eucharistic community.<sup>59</sup> Staniloae contended that orthodoxy does not result from the eucharist, but that the true eucharist results from orthodoxy, so that eucharistic communion can only take place within the context of sharing in the same faith. This conclusion stems from the order of the Divine Liturgy, where the community first affirms the same faith, and then the epiclesis<sup>61</sup> takes place. He continued:

<sup>54</sup>For an excellent comparison between the ways in which Zizioulas and Staniloae have balanced the christological and pneumatological aspects of their ecclesiologies, as well as the consequences for their descriptions of the relationship between the eucharist and the church (Staniloae finding the expression "the Eucharist makes the Church" insufficient), see Calinic (Kevin M.) Berger, "Does the Eucharist Make the Church? An Ecclesiological Comparison of Staniloae and Zizioulas," *Saint Vladimir's Theological Quarterly*, vol. 51, no. 1 (2007), pp. 23–70.

<sup>55</sup>Staniloae concentrated especially on Afanassieff's "Una Sancta," pp. 470–472; and "L'Eucharistie, principal lien," pp. 366–369. For another analysis of some of these criticisms, see Turcescu, "Eucharistic Ecclesiology or Open Sobornicity?" pp. 96ff.

<sup>56</sup>Staniloae, "Biserica universală și sobornicească" [The Universal and Catholic Church], *Orthodoxia*, vol. 18, no. 2 (1966), p. 167.

<sup>57</sup>Staniloae, *Spiritualitate și comuniune în Liturgia Ortodoxă* [Spirituality and Communion in the Orthodox Liturgy] (Craiova, Romania: Editura Mitropoliei Olteniei, 1986), pp. 397–398.

<sup>58</sup>Staniloae, "Biserica universală," pp. 168–169.

<sup>59</sup>Staniloae, *Spiritualitate și comuniune*, p. 397. See also Staniloae, "Biserica universală," pp. 169 and 172.

<sup>60</sup>Staniloae, *Spiritualitate și comuniune*, pp. 398–399.

<sup>61</sup>I.e., the invocation of the Holy Spirit upon the gifts of bread and wine, which then become the body and blood of Christ.

The confession of the unity in faith before the Sacrament of the changing [of the bread and wine into the Body and Blood of Christ] under the guidance of the priest, who maintains the connection with the entire Church through the bishop, reaches its climax when the priest says, "Let us love one another, that with one mind we may confess." The community responds, "Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, Trinity one in essence and inseparable," and then . . . recites the Nicene-Constantinopolitan Creed, which contains in a concentrated way the entire right faith. Only immediately after that the Sacrament of the Eucharist takes place.

What is required from the members of the community is not only the assurance of mutual love, so that they would then proceed with the Sacrament, the divergences of faith remaining to be appeased in a common Creed, after the Sacrament and receiving Communion. This is what eucharistic ecclesiology and other appeals for intercommunion among those of different faiths (commonly receiving the Eucharist) propose, in the hope that the love they promise to each other and the common sharing in the Eucharist would later on bring them to the unity of the faith. Mutual love, if it is true and total, must be made manifest immediately in the confession "with one mind" of the common faith.<sup>62</sup>

Thus, Staniloae rejected intercommunion,<sup>63</sup> affirming that eucharistic communion is based on unity of faith, the role of the nonordained to profess a common faith, the love among members of different communities, the unity between the priest and the bishop who appoints him to preside over the eucharistic assembly, and the communion between the bishop and the rest of the church. According to Staniloae, all these elements are interrelated and condition one another.<sup>64</sup>

Second, Staniloae disagreed with Afanassieff's assertion that the division between the Orthodox and Catholic churches has affected only the surface of their ecclesiastical lives and has only a canonical character,<sup>65</sup> since they both have the eucharist. For Staniloae, doctrinal disunity creates an essential separation between churches, which can be healed only within the context of a common confession of faith.

Third, Staniloae considered this theory to be a backdoor means of including Orthodoxy in a universal church under papal primacy. Staniloae thus criticized Afanassieff's affirmation that, in a spirit of love (which takes precedence over unity of faith), the Orthodox and Catholic churches could establish communion between them despite their doctrinal differences regarding papal primacy. But, Afanassieff continued, this would only be a temporary solution, since within this

<sup>62</sup>Staniloae, *Spiritualitate si comuniune*, p. 399.

<sup>63</sup>Besides the passage quoted previously and many other similar instances, Ware recollects Staniloae saying, "I cannot understand how communion in the Holy Eucharist can somehow compensate for non-communion in faith" (Ware, "Church and Eucharist," p. 558).

<sup>64</sup>For similar considerations, see Dumitru Staniloae, "Teologia Euharistiei" [The Theology of the Eucharist], *Ortodoxia*, vol. 21, no. 3 (1969), pp. 357 and 361.

<sup>65</sup>Staniloae, "Biserica universală," p. 195; Staniloae, *Spiritualitate si comuniune*, pp. 397-398. In the latter reference, after describing Afanassieff's position that the separation between the Catholic and Orthodox churches, "even though it was provoked by dogmatic differences, still has a canonical character (?)" Staniloae inserted a question mark in parentheses, indicating that this contention can be dismissed without any further comment.

reestablished communion, the Church of Rome would receive the first place that it had during the church of the first centuries: "Because of the reestablishment of the unity joined by Love and without imposing primacy by constraint, Rome would have certainly acquired it better by Love than by law."<sup>66</sup> According to Staniloae, this makes the Orthodox Church part of the universal Roman Catholic Church without regard to the theological and practical differences between the two.<sup>67</sup> To interpret Staniloae correctly, one needs to understand that he did not deny the inclusion of the Orthodox Church in a future united church, not even a universal church in which the pope would be *primus inter pares*.<sup>68</sup> Staniloae rejected union "without regard to the theological and practical differences" between churches, especially on the role of the bishop of Rome.

Fourth, according to Staniloae, the local church possesses ecclesial plenitude precisely because it does not break from the ensemble formed by all local churches, having at work in it the same Spirit that is present in other local churches.<sup>69</sup> Consequently, he accepted the idea of a local church's ecclesial plenitude, but only qualified by the existence of the local church within the framework of the universal church, conditioned by its communion in the Spirit and in the same faith with all the other local churches. Staniloae arrived at this conclusion starting from a text by Irenaeus: "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. Those, therefore, who do not participate in the Spirit neither feed at their mother's breasts nor drink the bright fountain issuing from Christ's body."<sup>70</sup> Staniloae considered that in Irenaeus's definition, the eucharist is included in the truth. In other words, to say only that the church is where the eucharist is, as Afanassieff did, represents a narrower definition than to say that the church is where the eucharist and the truth are. Essentially, both Afanassieff and Staniloae affirmed that local churches are united because of their mutual identity, yet they arrived at this conclusion in two different ways: Afanassieff emphasized that local churches are united in the same Christ, who is present in the same eucharist, while Staniloae stressed their unity in the Spirit, who is the Spirit of truth present in Christ's body—the church. These two different ways are complementary in Staniloae's estimation, since local churches are united by sharing in the same Spirit, faith, eucharist,<sup>71</sup> and episcopal communion. Thus, Staniloae affirmed the fullness of the local church, which embodies the elements

<sup>66</sup>Afanassieff, "Una Sancta," p. 27/472.

<sup>67</sup>Staniloae, *Spiritualitate si comuniune*, p. 398.

<sup>68</sup>In 1966, before these considerations from *Spiritualitate si comuniune*, Staniloae stated that Afanassieff's theory intended to challenge the kind of Catholic ecclesiology that affirms the interdependence between the church and the pope. However, Staniloae contended at that time that Afanassieff contradicted not only the idea of a universal church centered around the pope but also the idea of the universal church in general, which runs against the teaching of the first Christian centuries and of the second ecumenical council that affirmed the church to be universal or catholic (Staniloae, "Biserica universala," p. 173).

<sup>69</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 171. See also Dumitru Staniloae, *Teologia Dogmatica Ortodoxa II* [Orthodox Dogmatic Theology II], 2nd. ed. (Bucharest: EIBMBOR, 1997), vol. 2, p. 187.

<sup>70</sup>*Adversus Haereseos* 3, 24, 1, PG 7:966A-C; quoted in Staniloae, "Biserica universala," p. 189; and also in Staniloae, *Spiritualitate si comuniune*, p. 402.

<sup>71</sup>See, e.g., Staniloae, *Spiritualitate si comuniune*, pp. 81–82.

discussed previously, but not its absolute independence. In certain writings, Afanassieff's conclusions appear to agree with Staniloae's considerations, yet in other writings disagreement is apparent. Staniloae attributed this disagreement to inconsistencies in Afanassieff's theology of the interdependence and self-sufficiency of the local church.<sup>72</sup>

Staniloae ended his discussion of eucharistic ecclesiology on a more reconciliatory tone. He probably realized that his insistence on the relationship between the eucharist and orthodoxy should not be interpreted to mean that the Catholic Church has fallen so much from the true faith that its eucharist is not valid. Staniloae certainly wanted to dissipate such suspicions. Thus, he recognized that the Catholic Church admits the presence of the body and blood of Christ in the eucharist, through its teaching on transubstantiation "or through something similar to the changing of the bread and the wine, just as the Orthodox Church."<sup>73</sup> (So even though Staniloae had reservations about the theory of transubstantiation, he considered this teaching an attempt to explain what both Catholic and Orthodox churches hold in common, namely, that the eucharist is the body and blood of Christ.) Moreover, he affirmed that the Catholic Church, just like the Orthodox Church, has preserved the faith in the Trinity and Christ, even if it has also added to the church's ancient faith the dogma of papal primacy, papal infallibility, *Filioque*, and purgatory. Among these, the dogma of papal primacy and infallibility are obstacles for communion<sup>74</sup> or church-dividing. While rejecting papal claims for universal jurisdiction and the ability to speak (even under very strict conditions) infallibly for the entire church, Staniloae, however, accepted the role of the pope as *primus inter pares*.

Thus, Staniloae's central criticism of Afanassieff's eucharistic ecclesiology is that the Orthodox and Catholic churches, although both having a valid eucharist, cannot be in full eucharistic communion because they do not share in the same faith, especially concerning papal primacy and infallibility. I agree. However, I also recognize, with Emmanuel Lanne, that there is a tendency in the Eastern Orthodox Churches today to apply a more "liberal" practice toward members of the Oriental Orthodox Churches, who are allowed to receive communion in Orthodox Churches. Lanne asks rhetorically whether there is not greater unity of faith between the Eastern Orthodox and the Roman Catholics—identical Christology, the seven ecumenical councils, and so on—than with the Oriental Orthodox. It seems that papacy is the only issue that divides Catholicism and Orthodoxy.<sup>75</sup> Still, I do not advocate seeing the papacy as a nondividing local tradition, as Afanassieff did. In the following section, I suggest possible grounds for both churches to overcome this impasse.

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<sup>72</sup>Staniloae, "Biserica universală," pp. 170–177. Turcescu also pointed out an internal contradiction in Afanassieff, who, on the one hand, affirmed that local churches are "independent by not depending on any other local Church or any bishop whatsoever outside itself," while, on the other hand, wrote that a local church depends on the recognition of other local churches and that its bishop is ordained by other bishops (Turcescu, "Eucharistic Ecclesiology or Open Sobornicity?" p. 88).

<sup>73</sup>Staniloae, *Spiritualitate si comuniune*, p. 401.

<sup>74</sup>Ibid., pp. 401–402.

<sup>75</sup>Emmanuel Lanne, "Quelques questions posées à l'Église orthodoxe concernant la 'communitio in sacris' dans l'eucharistie," *Irenikon*, vol. 72, nos. 3–4 (1999), pp. 435–452.

*Retrieving Eucharistic Ecclesiology*

I have presented the preceding critiques of Afanassieff's eucharistic ecclesiology, not to completely discard it but to correct its deficiencies. After Zizioulas and Staniloae, eucharistic ecclesiology was regarded with suspicion and replaced by communion ecclesiology. It is now time to retrieve the aspects of eucharistic ecclesiology that have been unjustly dismissed and to outline a communion ecclesiology that incorporates the strengths of Afanassieff, Zizioulas, and Staniloae. I do not attempt to propose a totally new understanding of the church as communion but to continue the theological journey that these three theologians have already begun. While continuing this journey, I certainly do not claim to have reached its end.

At the present time, Orthodox theology needs to retrieve the ecumenical dimension of communion ecclesiology by refocusing on the cause of Christian unity. Afanassieff wrote in a context of ecumenical hope and optimism, when the Orthodox and Catholic churches entered into an earnest dialogue and expressed a real desire to make important steps toward unity. Given that this desire was in sharp contrast with the preceding centuries, it is understandable that this context had a significant influence upon Afanassieff's writings.<sup>76</sup> He was a pioneer; this means that, on the one hand, the reactions against him have sometimes been too strong, since his proposals were challenging for those times and theologians were not yet ready to embrace them. On the other hand, his pioneering role resulted in a theological system that is not always consistent, so some of the criticisms are, in fact, justified. Today's Orthodox theological context is more proper for a balance between ecumenical openness and theological thoroughness. The same is true for the Catholic Church; the recent declaration of the Congregation of the Doctrine of Faith, *Responses to Some Questions Regarding Certain Aspects of the Doctrine on the Church*—despite its unfavorable reception in many ecumenical circles—proves the willingness of the Vatican to deal earnestly with the theological issues that cause division within Christianity.

Critically important to the Orthodox-Catholic dialogue is Vatican II's *Lumen gentium*. Bruno Forte has argued that Afanassieff's eucharistic ecclesiology has influenced this document on the church, and he referred to the "eucharistic ecclesiology" of Vatican II.<sup>77</sup> Forte has highlighted different aspects of *Lumen gentium* that are similar to Afanassieff's position:

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<sup>76</sup>Unfortunately, Afanassieff was overly optimistic when he wrote: "We believe that the hour is near when the Catholic Church, after having transcended human passions, would extend a fraternal hand to the Orthodox Church, and that this hand would not remain suspended in the air" ("*Una Sancta*," p. 27/472).

<sup>77</sup>Similarly to Afanassieff, Forte has read LG 63 to affirm that the priority and fullness of the local eucharistic community is "grounded in the trinitarian and pneumatological origin of the Church and its eucharistic nature." He has even quoted Afanassieff's view on universality, catholicity, and the communitarian character of the church, concluding that, as a consequence of the local church's priority, the local church is by full right the "ecclesial subject," which implies its autonomy. See Bruno Forte, *The Church: Icon of the Trinity—A Brief Study*, tr. Robert Paolucci (Boston, MA: St. Paul Books & Media, 1991 [orig.: *La Chiesa icona della Trinità: Breve ecclesiologia* (Brescia; Queriniana, 1984)]), pp. 71–74 and 78. I think that Forte's concluding affirmation constitutes a departure from Vatican II's balance between local and universal.

The fullness of the one, holy, catholic and apostolic Church is therefore realized, first and foremost, in the local church. The unity of the local church has its highest expression and its wellspring in the Eucharist celebrated by the bishop with the body of priests and deacons and the active participation of all the faithful (LG 26). The variety of charisms and personal and communal ministries becomes part of and is coordinated in the local community, through the one Word, the one Bread, the one Spirit, by the bishop's ministry of unity and the exercise of all the other ministries. The bishop is the sign and minister (=servant) of the unity of the *Catholic Church*, made real in his local church (unity, diversity and communion). . . . These local churches all represent the fullness of the mystery of the Church on the local level and, therefore, they are united among themselves. This communion is expressed by the collegial communion of their bishops, ministers and signs of their unity, around the Bishop of the Church who "presides in charity,"<sup>78</sup> viz., the Bishop of Rome, the minister of unity in the universal fellowship of the churches, each church truly and fully the Church in itself (locality, universality and communion).<sup>79</sup>

Vatican II and Afanassieff are similar in their contention about the fullness of the local church as expressed in the eucharistic assembly headed by the local bishop. However, *Lumen gentium* articulated a more balanced relationship between the local and universal aspects of the church, properly stressing the communion among local churches and their bishops—elements that most Orthodox theologians would have hoped to see more prominently in Afanassieff. At the same time, the Orthodox might say, Vatican II placed too much emphasis on the role of the bishop of Rome in creating unity. Thus, there is room for growth in a common Orthodox-Catholic understanding of church unity.

The analyses presented in this essay show that ecumenical theology is faced today with two models for Christian unity, based on their emphasis on either the local or the universal church. If the local church has priority over the universal, then union represents the communion of these local churches; this is not necessarily a union based on sharing in the same faith, nor is it fully visible through communion among local bishops. If, however, the universal church has priority over the local, then union is accomplished through sharing in the same faith and through visible communion among the bishops heading the local churches. Moreover, in modern ecumenical terms, the first model emphasizes the eucharist as a means toward unity, while the second sees it more as a sign of unity (or lack thereof).

According to the first model, whose representatives are Afanassieff, Evdokimov, and Forte, the local church gathered as a eucharistic assembly has priority over the universal church, so unity is accomplished through the mutual identity of different local churches' celebrating the same eucharist. The merit of this model is that it earnestly seeks to explore the ecclesiological consequences

<sup>78</sup>Forte has given no reference for this expression, but, as previously shown, Afanassieff used it as well. See it used in LG 13, *Vatican Council II: The Conciliar and Postconciliar Documents*, ed. Austin Flannery, new rev. ed. (Northport, NY: Costello Publishing, 1998), vol. 1, p. 365. The expression originated with Ignatius of Antioch, *Ad Rom*, Praef.

<sup>79</sup>Forte, *The Church: Icon of the Trinity*, pp. 36–37, emphasis in original.

of the reciprocal recognition of the validity of the eucharist in the Orthodox and Catholic churches. Theologians representing both of these traditions unanimously agree that the eucharist has a constitutive role for the church, even though they differ in regard to the other elements that constitute the church, for example, other sacraments, teachings, episcopal structure, and so on. Afanassieff, Evdokimov, and Forte are the only theologians analyzed in this essay who, as a consequence of their respective eucharistic theologies, conclude that both the Catholic and Orthodox churches are truly manifestations of the church *Una Sancta*, or, to be more precise, are the *Una Sancta* as manifested in a specific context.<sup>80</sup> Consequently, they affirm that the Orthodox and Catholic churches are actually one and the same reality, namely manifestations of the *Una Sancta*, so their disunion is only relative, or, as Afanassieff explains, it has only a canonical character, which does not warrant the lack of eucharistic communion between the two churches. Contemporary theologians ought to continue to delineate the ecclesiological significance of mutual eucharistic recognition.

Another merit of this first model is that it calls for a reevaluation of the issues that were historically considered church-dividing. Newer bilateral dialogues prove that it is possible, based on thorough theological research, to affirm that some issues that were deemed church-dividing in the past need not be regarded as such any longer (for example, the *Filioque*).<sup>81</sup> Several other official dialogues concentrate at the present time on the issue of papacy, for example, the Joint International Orthodox-Catholic Theological Commission, whose co-chairs are Walter Kasper (a theologian who tends to follow the direction of Vatican II and who also gives priority to the local church) and Zizioulas, who represents the second model that I will evaluate below. The advantage of the contemporary approach to church-dividing issues over Afanassieff's methodology is that today theologians do not propose simply to ignore the theological differences between the two churches but to overcome them through earnest dialogue. I hope that this is the time that Afanassieff (and Congar) wrote about when, in the spirit of love, these issues will be overcome.

Afanassieff's suggestion for eucharistic communion, however, cannot be implemented yet, since both the Orthodox and the Catholic churches see today's

<sup>80</sup>In similar terms, Paul greets "the Church of God that is in Corinth" (1 Cor. 1:2).

<sup>81</sup>Based on thorough terminological, theological, and historical analyses, the North American Orthodox-Catholic Theological Consultation issued the following statement, one of historic importance: "We offer these recommendations to our Churches in the conviction, based on our own intense study and discussion, that our traditions' different ways of understanding the procession of the Holy Spirit need no longer divide us" ("The Filioque: A Church-Dividing Issue? An Agreed Statement of the North American Orthodox-Catholic Theological Consultation," Saint Paul's College, Washington, DC, October 25, 2003," IV). Long before the Consultation, Congar mentioned that the Latin position did not hinder the churches' being one for almost seven centuries and made references to several Orthodox theologians, such as Damaskinos of Tranoupolis, who affirmed that the schism between the West and the East had other causes than the *Filioque*. Congar also quoted Basile Krivocheine, who considered that "this question is concerned more with theology than directly with faith itself. . . . Disagreements of this kind, as St. Basil the Great wrote, can be easily overcome later, after reunion, in the course of life together over a long period and study together without polemics" (Yves Congar, *I Believe in the Holy Spirit: The River of the Water of Life Flows in the East and in the West*, tr. David Smith [New York: Seabury Press, 1983 (orig.: *Je crois en l'Esprit Saint* [Paris: Cerf, 1979-80])], pp. 190 and 202-203).

understanding of the papacy as church-dividing and are earnestly trying to reformulate it in a way that would be acceptable to both communities. Moreover, the Orthodox and Catholic churches today do not share in episcopal communion. From the perspective of their hierarchical structure, the two churches live totally separated lives, even though they coexist in the same place. If they do not share in doctrinal and episcopal communion, then the eucharist cannot be the sign of their unity. Paradoxically, Afanassieff insisted that the eucharist *is* the sign of their unity (he called it “link”), but he ended up deemphasizing the significance of the lack of eucharistic communion between the Orthodox and Catholic churches. Thus, he overemphasized the eucharist as a means toward unity, hoping that the theological and canonical issues would eventually be solved through intercommunion.

According to the second model for Christian unity, whose representatives are Zizioulas and Staniloae, union is accomplished through sharing in the same faith and through visible communion among bishops. Cyprian could be placed in this category based on the priority that he gives to the universal over the local aspects of the church, although this priority is not found in Zizioulas and Staniloae. However, all three representatives of the second model stress (in different degrees) doctrinal and episcopal communion as a condition for eucharistic sharing among different church communities.

A first merit of this model is its emphasis on doctrinal unity. The positions of Zizioulas and especially Staniloae are preferable to that of Afanassieff because they seek a type of union that stems from thorough theological dialogue and not from ignoring the points of divergence. True, overemphasizing the intrinsic connection between unity of faith and eucharistic communion runs the risk of placing undue emphasis on issues that are not church-dividing. Yet, this risk can be avoided by a constant focus on the ultimate purpose of ecumenical dialogues, namely doctrinal unity manifested in common eucharistic celebrations.

Another positive aspect of the second model is that Staniloae and especially Zizioulas underline the need for communion among the bishops of the two churches. Zizioulas has convincingly demonstrated the essential role of the bishop within the local eucharistic assembly and the importance of the relationships among bishops, especially when gathered in synods as representatives of their local communities. Since the union we seek ought to preserve the richness of the ecclesial life of the first Christian centuries, episcopal communion cannot be ignored. At the same time, the second model runs the risk of transforming canonical issues into church-dividing elements, which was never the case in the early church, where canonical disputes existed abundantly but, as Afanassieff has shown, were not reasons for division. Again, it is important to discern what elements need to be discussed before achieving eucharistic communion and what aspects can be postponed.

The main disadvantage of the second model is that neither Zizioulas nor Staniloae explores the consequences of the reciprocal recognition of the validity of the eucharist in the Orthodox and Catholic churches. Thus, a crucially important element in a discussion of Christian unity is missing from their theologies.

Moreover, there is the risk—sometimes present in Zizioulas—to overem-

phasize the hierarchical character of the church and not to address sufficiently the role of the nonordained in the move toward unity. Afanassieff and Staniloae, however, present a more balanced view of the church, where the faithful who are not ordained play a crucial role in the church and toward unity: The bishop is a representative of the community, so episcopal communion would be meaningless without communion among the faithful of the two churches; this highlights the need for the faithful to work toward unity. At the same time, where the faithful are in communion, the bishops need indeed to represent their flocks and express this unity at the episcopal level. Furthermore, through the process of reception of doctrine, the faithful could influence the hierarchs on the level of dogmatic unity necessary for eucharistic communion between the two churches. Simultaneously, the hierarchs and the theologians need to educate the faithful and enable them to assess this level of unity. Thus, Afanassieff and Staniloae avoid the danger of overemphasizing the hierarchical character of the church by consciously not separating the charism of teaching from reception by the faithful.

Both of these models have their strengths and weaknesses, and none of the theologians analyzed previously correspond precisely to either of these categories. This is especially evident in Afanassieff, who tried to maintain a balance between the local and universal aspects of the church. Thus, there is a need to reevaluate his position, without ignoring the inconsistencies in his argument. I think that Zizioulas and Staniloae have dismissed Afanassieff unfairly, taking the consequences of his theology to an extreme, especially concerning the interdependence of various local churches, which in fact Afanassieff clearly affirmed when he wrote that “[n]o single church could separate itself from the others”<sup>82</sup> and that

[a]ll the multitude of local churches forms one union founded on concord and love. Every local church must be in concord with all the other churches, [which means] that every local church accepts and makes its own anything that happens in other churches, and that all the churches accept everything that happens in each fellow-church. This acceptance (its regular designation is the word *reception* or *receptio*) is the witness of a local church indwelt by the Church of God, witnessing the work being done in other churches also indwelt by the Church of God—the Spirit bearing witness of the Spirit.<sup>83</sup>

The process of reception mentioned here refers to the entire church life of a local community, and one can safely assume that this includes teachings, so Afanassieff did not deny the importance of dogmatic unity as a necessary ingredient for Christian unity. Understood intrinsically, he was consistent with this principle, since he did not see the differences between the Orthodox and Catholic

<sup>82</sup> Afanassieff, *Church of the Holy Spirit*, p. 5.

<sup>83</sup> Afanassieff, “The Church which Presides in Love,” p. 112. Similarly, Afanassieff wrote that “the isolation and introversion of a particular local church was excluded. . . . [E]ach local church would accept all that took place in another church and all the churches accepted that which occurred in another. . . . This acceptance, or to employ a term used more regularly but with a slightly juridical nuance, this reception was not at all juridical nor social in general” (Afanassieff, “Una Sancta,” p. 15/pp. 454–455).

churches as church-dividing. Thus, he did not minimize the teaching role of the bishop or the importance of the unity of faith as transmitted and received by the whole church. However, he did question the status of “church-dividing” issues that separate Orthodoxy and Catholicism. Afanassieff did not regard the doctrines of papal primacy and infallibility to be the essential cause of their division, adding: “I know that I risk raising many objections and even provoking irritation, but I must say that from my perspective this cause is not so much of an ecclesial but a juridical nature, and in the end, this is only an apparent reason since in the Church, there exists no power based on law.”<sup>84</sup>

Yet, Afanassieff did not reduce the issue of papal primacy to a completely canonical issue, either. He wrote that “eucharistic ecclesiology excludes the idea of primacy by its very nature. As we already know, primacy means the power of one bishop over the whole universal church.”<sup>85</sup> If this text seems inconsistent with Afanassieff’s previous contention that a return to eucharistic ecclesiology is the key to Orthodox-Catholic unity, without changing the teaching on the papacy, the following passage raises even more questions: “The Orthodox Church is absolutely right in refusing to recognize the contemporary doctrine that primacy belongs to the Bishop of Rome; however, this rightness does not lie in the numerous arguments that have been brought against primacy, but in the very fact of non-recognition.”<sup>86</sup> These alternate positions show that Afanassieff is inconsistent about whether papal primacy is a canonical or a doctrinal issue. The role of the pope in a united church is still an open question.

Moreover, in response to Zizioulas’s accusation (which Staniloae did not endorse) that Afanassieff minimized the importance of the bishop, Afanassieff did in fact affirm the connection between the eucharist and the bishop, when he affirmed that the limits of the church are determined by the limits of the eucharistic assembly, which includes the bishop (see previous argument). He even accused universal ecclesiology of separating the bishop from the eucharistic assembly.<sup>87</sup> Zizioulas’s criticism, however, is also warranted, given Afanassieff’s conclusion that there can be unity without changing the present situation, in which bishops do not have communion. Still, Zizioulas would agree that later ecclesiology has partially detached the bishop from the eucharistic assembly by making him an administrator and by allowing ordinations in the abstract, where a bishop is not the head of a community.

These considerations have shown that even though there are several inconsistencies in Afanassieff’s thought, his eucharistic ecclesiology is significant for today’s ecumenical context, when corrected and supplemented with insights from Zizioulas, Staniloae, and Vatican II.

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<sup>84</sup> Afanassieff, “Una Sancta,” p. 24/468.

<sup>85</sup> Afanassieff, “The Church which Presides in Love,” p. 115.

<sup>86</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 142.

<sup>87</sup> Afanassieff, “Una Sancta,” p. 14/pp. 452–453.

*Continuing the Journey toward Communion Ecclesiology*

In order to advance the Orthodox-Catholic dialogue, I now propose implementing elements of eucharistic ecclesiology into a communion ecclesiology that would balance the local and universal aspects of the church. Staniloae has achieved this balance theoretically, but its practical consequences still need to be elucidated. I also hope to present a way in which the eucharist is simultaneously a sign of and an instrument for unity, by analyzing four elements: doctrinal unity, episcopal communion, love, and eucharistic communion.

First, the unity we seek needs to be based on doctrinal unity. It appears that the only church-dividing issues between Orthodoxy and Catholicism are papal primacy and infallibility. Zizioulas does not discuss this topic in detail, and Staniloae affirmed its church-dividing character but did not provide significant solutions, while Afanassieff proposed that it would temporarily remain a dogma in the Catholic Church, unaccepted by the Orthodox, hoping that a lasting solution would eventually emerge.<sup>88</sup> Afanassieff's proposal is not acceptable for either church at the present time. However, it might suggest the way toward doctrinal unity in the future, if the Catholic Church changes its understanding of primacy to refer only to the West (even though the pope has recently renounced his title of "Patriarch of the West," which many Orthodox have regarded as a move in the opposite direction) and its view of infallibility to be in harmony with the concepts of conciliarity and reception of doctrine.<sup>89</sup> The East, on its part, would have to reanalyze its understanding of the bishop of Rome as *primus inter pares*; if in the past the emphasis fell on "*inter pares*," now Orthodoxy must state positively what "*primus*" means. Most Orthodox theology has concentrated exclusively on refuting the Catholic position but now needs to propose concrete ways in which the papacy should be exercised in a united Christendom.

These considerations lead to the discussion of episcopal communion, the second aspect of communion ecclesiology. Ideally from an Orthodox perspective, in a united church, the pope would be *primus inter pares* within a unified synod of bishops, without overlapping jurisdictions. Bilateral dialogues are currently attempting to outline the concrete details of this proposal. However, I do not think that eucharistic communion must be postponed until the time of this perfect union. In line with Afanassieff's eucharistic ecclesiology, the Orthodox and Catholic churches could have eucharistic communion when their bishops would be gathered in a common synod (while temporarily still maintaining their

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<sup>88</sup>Staniloae raised three important questions that should be discussed in future ecumenical dialogues on this issue. First, eucharistic ecclesiology proposes the temporary acceptance of the idea of papal primacy; does this mean that the Catholic Church would accept union in sacraments without the recognition of papal primacy after this temporary period? Second, if the church is eucharistic, does it necessarily mean that it is universal? Third, does the idea of a universal church necessarily imply that of primacy, or, on the contrary, do local churches have ecclesiastical plenitude by virtue of their belonging to the universal church, from which results the catholicity of the church and the symphonic equality of all the local churches? See "Biserica universală," p. 182.

<sup>89</sup>Staniloae hoped that theologians would soon find a solution to the problem of the papacy, thus integrating the bishop of Rome into the communion of the church in a way acceptable to the Orthodox. See Ronald G. Roberson, "Dumitru Staniloae on Christian Unity," in Turcescu, *Dumitru Staniloae*, p. 113.

separate structures), according to the model of the Orthodox Churches in America.

Presently, Orthodox Churches in America have eucharistic communion, even though they are separated by ethnicity (for example, Greek, Romania, Serbian) or canonical affiliation (for example, Romanian under the Romanian Patriarchate and under the Orthodox Church in America [O.C.A.]). These Orthodox Churches have the same geographical territory, so their jurisdictions overlap. Most of them have their own synod that decides administrative issues pertaining to internal matters. All the hierarchs, however, gather periodically in the Standing Conference of the Canonical Orthodox Bishops in the Americas (SCOBA), but this institution does not have any administrative authority over its members. Besides individual synods and SCOBA, there is a third model of church structure in America, namely, the O.C.A., which is comprised of several ethnic churches with overlapping jurisdictions, yet the synod and other authoritative structures of the O.C.A. have full authority over all its members.

Despite many imperfections of Orthodoxy in America,<sup>90</sup> the separation here is only relative: The bishops do come together in SCOBA, and the O.C.A. is one synod with administrative authority even though it is comprised of overlapping jurisdictions. Most importantly, the churches share one common Tradition (capital T) while maintaining a certain diversity that pertains to traditions (small t): calendar, attitude toward ecumenism, liturgical practices, and so on.

The situation of Orthodoxy in America shows that, along the path toward full unity with the Roman Catholic Church, eucharistic communion is possible even before solving all the juridical issues, by regarding the Orthodox and Catholic churches as two local churches of the same universal church, albeit with overlapping jurisdictions. Thus, a united church might have overlapping jurisdictions as long as these member churches get together in an institution after the model of SCOBA (no administrative authority), then the O.C.A. (full authority), and then only one synod without overlapping jurisdictions, a situation that neither the Orthodox nor the Catholic families have yet accomplished internally.

Such a temporary situation should be acceptable to all Orthodox Churches in the world, which now tacitly but actively support the situation in the United States by having their representatives here, and to the Catholic Church, since Roman Catholic dioceses overlap with Byzantine Catholic dioceses, not to mention the multitude of ethnic dioceses overlapping within the Byzantine Catholic family. At that point, the role of the pope in a united church with a common synod would have to be defined, and Afanassieff might again offer a viable solution: "the bishop possessing primacy acts with the agreement of the whole body

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<sup>90</sup>I fully agree with Zizioulas when he deplores the existence of overlapping jurisdictions within Orthodoxy, distinct from each other based on their ethnic or political character. He writes in a very categorical, though justified, tone: "The present-day situation of the Orthodox diaspora is such an *unfortunate, dangerous and totally unacceptable* phenomenon. It allows ethnic and cultural differences becomes grounds of ecclesial communion centred on different bishops. A bishop who does not in himself transcend ethnic and cultural differences becomes a minister of division and not of unity. This is something that the Orthodox should consider very seriously indeed, if *distortion of the very nature of the Church* is to be avoided" (Zizioulas, *Communion and Otherness*, pp. 8–9, my emphases).

of bishops: this agreement is made manifest in the council in which the primate bishop participates as its president."<sup>91</sup>

I do not support intercommunion, but neither should eucharistic communion be postponed until all the canonical issues are solved. Theologians need to state clearly what they mean by doctrinal and episcopal communion, even though this will be a "theology of the abnormal," as Florovsky would say,<sup>92</sup> since it would describe a temporary, imperfect solution.

The third aspect of communion ecclesiology refers to love. Eucharistic communion cannot be justified where there is only a fragile bond of love between the members of the Orthodox and Catholic churches. Such a contention might appear inadequate to an audience in the West, where there is relative harmony between the two churches. However, in other places, such as the former Yugoslavia or Russia, there are considerable tensions resulting in mutual accusations and even violence. This affirmation is not intended to create an unfairly hostile picture of Orthodox-Catholic relations in general, especially given the positive aspects of this relationship, such as the successful bilateral dialogues, the exchange of students and professors, common charitable projects, and so on. However, the Orthodox and Catholics need to strengthen the bond of love between them, and only then will they be able to solve their theological difference and reestablish eucharistic communion. Here, again, the situation in the U.S. might point toward a solution.

In the U.S., there is a rather strong bond of love between the Orthodox and Catholic churches, which are discovering more and more aspects of their unity and are finding significant ways to move beyond their differences in all aspects of church life, including love, episcopal collaboration, and doctrinal unity. These results are not enough to warrant eucharistic communion. However, one should not forget that local churches are interdependent, a fact that has two significant consequences. First, the Orthodox and Catholics in the U.S. cannot ignore the insufficient love in Eastern Europe. Second, Eastern Europeans cannot ignore the U.S., either, but need to strengthen their bond of love, thus receiving as their own the positive aspects of other local churches, as Afanassieff would say; thus would they take an important step toward eucharistic communion.

A fourth aspect of communion ecclesiology is that the unity between the Orthodox and Catholic churches will be a full reality only when they reestablish eucharistic communion between them. At that point, the eucharist would be both a sign of and a means toward greater unity: a sign, because there would be no more church-dividing theological issues between them, there would be a consid-

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<sup>91</sup>Afanassieff, "The Church which Presides in Love," pp. 102–103.

<sup>92</sup>Florovsky used the expression "theology of the abnormal" to describe any ecclesiology written in the context of the paradoxical, antinomical, and abnormal situation in which Christianity is divided among "separate brethren" while also being one church. He wrote: "There is a 'disproportion' between the two dimensions of the same Church. There is a disproportion between the 'historical' and 'eschatological' dimensions. And there is a disproportion between the canonical and sacramental dimensions. And yet there is but one Church. This theory earnestly wrestles with the antinomy of schism and attempts to interpret it on a theological level. It is an essay in the 'theology of the abnormal.' It is by no means successful in resolving the paradox. Instead, it emphasized it" (Florovsky, "St. Cyprian and St. Augustine on Schism," p. 50).

erable degree of episcopal communion, and, most importantly, there would be a strong bond of love between the two families of the united church. The eucharist would also be a means toward greater unity, because important differences would still require a solution, but their resolution can only emerge within the context of harmony and love of a united church, in which members approach the same cup, continually strengthening their communion. In this phase, the eucharist will be both a sign and an instrument of unity.

If this objective seems quite distant today, there is another element that could be solved much sooner, namely, communion in all the other sacraments except the eucharist. Staniloae contended that the sacraments have the church as a premise and, simultaneously, the sacraments constitute the church, perpetually renewing Christ's presence in the church.<sup>93</sup> Consequently, one could imply that the same Christ is present in the sacraments of both the Orthodox and the Catholic churches, thus uniting them to constitute one church. The two churches have progressed considerably toward union through the sacraments by recognizing each other's baptisms,<sup>94</sup> ordinations,<sup>95</sup> and weddings.<sup>96</sup> However, these bilateral agreements are not applied consistently in practice.

These four elements of communion ecclesiology—doctrinal unity, episcopal communion, love, and eucharistic/sacramental communion—are simply signposts along the way, inspired by my analysis of Afanassieff, Zizioulas, Staniloae, and Vatican II. There is much more work to be done, especially in

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<sup>93</sup>Staniloae, *Spiritualitate si comuniune*, p. 82.

<sup>94</sup>Although few in number, there still are Orthodox groups that do not recognize Catholic baptisms.

<sup>95</sup>The Joint Committee of Orthodox and Catholic Bishops affirmed in 1988 that "reordination" is impossible. . . . For both Orthodox Christians and Roman Catholics, when a member of the clergy who has been ordained in a church that shares with them an understanding of the priesthood and by a bishop in an unquestionable apostolic succession is received into either the Orthodox or the Roman Catholic Church, his ordination should be recognized. It should be noted, however, that until such time when the practice of the Orthodox Church will be unified, these cases will be decided by each autocephalous Orthodox Church." This statement could be seen as a practical application of an earlier statement of the Joint International Commission (Valamo #30, 1988), which affirmed that ordination is unrepeatable and that "on all the essential points concerning ordination our churches have a common doctrine and practice, even if on certain canonical and disciplinary requirements, such as celibacy, customs can be different because of pastoral and spiritual reasons." Both passages are included in John Borelli and John H. Erickson, eds., *The Quest for Unity: Orthodox and Catholics in Dialogue* (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1996), pp. 151 and 136.

<sup>96</sup>One can only hope that all Orthodox Churches would soon implement the "Pastoral Statement on Orthodox-Roman Catholic Marriages" formulated by the Joint Committee of Orthodox and Catholic Bishops, 1990, which affirms that "our present differences of practice and theology concerning the required ecclesial context for marriage pertain to the level of secondary theological reflection rather than to the level of dogma." The statement continues: "[O]ur common faith leads to the recognition of the sacramentality of marriage in each other's church. . . . We recommend that when an Orthodox and Catholic marry there be only one liturgical ceremony in which either one or both priests are present, with the rite being that of the officiating priest. . . . We recommend that such marriages be recorded in the registries of both churches. We recommend that in the case of marriages celebrated in the past, if it should be decided that some supplementary liturgical action is needed for a member to be readmitted to full eucharistic communion in one's church, care should be taken that this liturgical celebration avoid the impression of being another marriage ceremony, thereby implying that what had already taken place was not a marriage" (Borelli and Erickson, *Quest for Unity*, pp. 239–243).

regard to the unity with the Protestant churches, which was not discussed here at all, because this was not the subject of Afanassieff's eucharistic ecclesiology. In the meantime, I suggest that Afanassieff's eucharistic ecclesiology can be retrieved and improved in light of the theologies of Zizioulas and Staniloae to provide a valuable tool for the long journey toward communion ecclesiology and, ultimately, toward Christian unity.