

## FILLED WITH THE TRINITY

### THE CONTRIBUTION OF DUMITRU STANILOAE'S ECCLESIOLOGY TO ECUMENISM AND SOCIETY

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Orthodox theologians are constantly finding new ways to make their tradition relevant to contemporary issues such as ecumenism, secularization, depersonalization, aggressive market economy, and military conflicts. With these interests in mind, in the present essay I systematize Dumitru Staniloae's account of the genuine relationship between the Trinity and the Church, as opposed to most other accounts that see them as parallel and mirroring realities. Twentieth century theologians tend to take the relationship between Triadology and ecclesiology for granted.<sup>1</sup> Sometimes, because a true relationship between the Trinity and the Church has not been carefully established, the Church is seen as a parallel reality, somehow unrelated to the Trinity; it is not always clear how the two intersect.<sup>2</sup> Moreover, while seeing the Church as a reflection of the Trinity, some theologians accuse what they perceive to be a distorted Triadology of having catastrophic consequences in the life of the Church. Such is the case of Vladimir Lossky, who considered that the Filioque automatically leads to institutionalism, 'juridicism,' clericalism,

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<sup>1</sup> Notable exceptions are the discussions of the relationship between God *in se* and God *pro nos*, or between *theologia* and *oikonomia*; see Catherine Mowry LaCugna, *God for Us: The Trinity and Christian Life* (San Francisco: Harper Collins, 1992). John Meyendorff and Michael A. Fahey, *Trinitarian Theology East and West: St. Thomas Aquinas – St. Gregory Palamas* (Brookline, Mass.: Holy Cross Orthodox Press, 1977), pp. 40-41. Gary D. Badcock, *Light of Truth & Fire of Love: A Theology of the Holy Spirit* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1997), pp. 252-255.

<sup>2</sup> John Behr, 'The Trinitarian Being of the Church,' *Saint Vladimir's Theological Quarterly*, 48 (2003), 1, p. 68.

individualism, and subjecting the synod of bishops to the primacy of the Pope. Hence, in order to advance Orthodox-Catholic dialogue on the ecclesiological consequences of the Filioque, I will analyze Staniloae's contention that there is a continuum between the Trinity and the Church in such a way that these are not simply parallel realities where the Church mirrors our diverse or even conflicting understandings of the Trinity. I then argue that Staniloae's Trinitarian ecclesiology provides a valuable theological solution to the issue of depersonalization – a challenge that Eastern Europe encountered both during Communism and after the fall of the Iron Curtain in an aggressive market economy based on individual gain or in societies plagued by war.

Based on Staniloae's theology, while also taking it (sometimes considerably) further, I propose four models for the relationship between the Trinity and the Church: (1) reflection; (2) icon; (3) sacrament; and (4) *theosis*.<sup>3</sup> These four models result in the assertion that (5) the same relations that exist within the Trinity are manifested in the life of the Church, an affirmation that is relevant for the discussion of the (6) ecclesiological consequences of the Filioque and (7) depersonalization.

Dumitru Staniloae (1903-1993) is widely considered to be the most important Romanian theologian of all time and one of the most, if not *the* most prominent Orthodox theologian of the twentieth century.<sup>4</sup> Unfortunately,

<sup>3</sup> Staniloae summarized these elements when affirming that, through grace, the faithful are 'images, visible signs of the invisible sacramental and pneumatic presence of Christ'; cf. Dumitru Staniloae, *Theology and the Church*, trans. Robert Barringer (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1980), p. 107. Unless otherwise specified, all translations from Romanian and French are mine.

<sup>4</sup> Staniloae's oeuvre comprises some 900 books and articles, and this despite opposition from a Communist regime that censured his publications and incarcerated him for five years. His work has been praised by many important contemporary theologians. Andrew Louth writes that, compared to other Orthodox theologians, Staniloae 'is not marginal, he is not even simply a bridge between East and West, or between Russian and Greek Orthodoxy: he is at the center of what many would regard as the liveliest and most original movement in modern Orthodox thought [i.e., neo-patristic synthesis]': Andrew Louth, 'The Orthodox Dogmatic Theology of Dumitru Staniloae,' in *Dumitru Staniloae: Tradition and Modernity in Theology*, ed. Lucian Turcescu (Iasi, Romania; Palm Beach, FL: Center for Romanian Studies, 2002), p. 57. Jürgen Moltmann, a good friend of Staniloae, refers to him as 'the most influential and creative contemporary Orthodox theologian': *Orthodoxe Dogmatik*, trans. Hermann Pitters, 3 vols., *Öcumenische Theologie* 12,

most of his works have not been translated into English, but I hope this essay will contribute to make his thought known in a broader circle.

## 1. THE CHURCH AS A REFLECTION OR ANALOGY OF THE TRINITY

According to the reflection model, Trinitarian theology is automatically and analogically reflected in the life of the Church. I will attempt to show both the strengths and limitations of this approach.

Staniloae repeatedly applied the reflective model to ecclesiology. For instance, he affirmed, in language that echoes Dionysius the Areopagite, that ‘the Holy Trinity itself is mysteriously reflected in the threefold kingdom of the [three triads of the] celestial and [the three categories of bishop, priest, and deacon of the] ecclesiastical hierarchies and their works.’<sup>5</sup> Moreover, Staniloae writes, ‘the light of the Church represents the unity that the Son of God came to restore between humankind and him, after the *model and power* of the Holy Trinity’<sup>6</sup> [*italics mine*]. Danut Manastireanu describes

15, 16 (Zürich: Benziger Verlag; Gütersloh: Mohn, 1984-1995), p. 10. For Olivier Clément ‘Dumitru Staniloae is certainly the greatest Orthodox theologian of the present day. When it will be translated in the Western languages, his work will prove to be one of the major creations of the Christian thought of the second half of our century’: Olivier Clément, ‘Le Père Dumitru Staniloae et le génie de l’Orthodoxie Roumaine,’ in *Persoana si Comuniune. Prinos de Cinstire Parintelui Profesor Academician Dumitru Staniloae la implinirea varstei de 90 de ani*, eds. Mircea Pacurariu and Ioan I. Ica jr. (Sibiu: Ed. Arhiepiscopiei Ortodoxe Sibiu, 1993), p. 82. For Lucian Turcescu, Staniloae occupies ‘a position in present-day Orthodoxy comparable to that of Karl Barth in Protestantism and Karl Rahner in Roman Catholicism’: Lucian Turcescu, ‘Introduction,’ in *Dumitru Staniloae*, p. 8. See also Kallistos Ware, ‘Foreword,’ in Dumitru Staniloae, *The Experience of God: Revelation and Knowledge of the Triune God* (Brookline, Mass.: Holy Cross Orthodox Press, 1998), p. xxiv. Danut Manastireanu, an Evangelical Romanian theologian, calls Staniloae ‘undoubtedly the most important Romanian theologian of any Christian tradition to date’: Danut Manastireanu, ‘Dumitru Staniloae’s Theology of Ministry,’ in *Dumitru Staniloae*, p. 126. See also *Parintele Dumitru Staniloae in constiinta contemporanilor: marturii, evocari, amintiri* (Iasi: Trinitas, 2003). This volume contains appreciations by some of the most important theologians who studied Staniloae’s theology and others who have been influenced by him.

<sup>5</sup> Dumitru Staniloae, ‘Introducere,’ in *Sfântul Dionisie Areopagitul: Opere complete si Scolile Sfântului Maxim Marturisorul* (Bucuresti: Paideia, 1996), p. 13.

<sup>6</sup> Dumitru Staniloae, *Iisus Hristos, lumina lumii si indumnezeitorul omului [Jesus Christ, the Light of the World and the One Who Deifies Humankind]*, Colectia Dogmatica (Bucuresti: Editura Anastasia, 1993), p. 214. Staniloae also added that ‘the *foundation and model* of

Staniloae's position on the Church as being a reflection of the Trinity, which implies a balanced position on the roles of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit in the Church.<sup>7</sup> Stefan Lupu likewise sums up Staniloae's position in a similar way:

'The source and model of hierarchical communion is the Holy Trinity.<sup>8</sup> Trinitarian communion shows that the principle of unity cannot be just one person, but the communion between several persons. Consequently, the unity of the Church presents itself as unity of communion, in which the persons are gathered respecting their dignity and freedom, which the institution appears as expression of their communion, and Church-structures are communions between persons who accomplish the same service.'<sup>9</sup>

These examples represent constructive applications of the reflection model, where Triadology has theoretical consequences for ecclesiology. In other words, our understanding of the Trinity shapes our discourse about the Church. When these theoretical considerations are applied concretely to the life of the Church, several important questions arise: Does our theological understanding of the Trinity and the Church influence the relationship between the Trinity and the Church? Does an erroneous Triadology have ecclesiological consequences, or, would God have a poorer relationship with the Church because of an erroneous Triadology? I submit that, in both cases, the answer is negative: regardless of one's views in matter of Triadology, the Trinity remains the source and model of the Church.

creation and salvation would thus be God's mode of being in the Holy Trinity,' that is, in communion among the three persons, so the Trinity is the model of the entire creation, and especially of the Church: *Iisus Hristos sau restaurarea omului [Jesus Christ or the Restoration of Humankind]* (Craiova: Editura Omniscope, 1993), p. 76.

<sup>7</sup> Manastireanu, 'Dumitru Staniloae's Theology of Ministry,' pp. 131-132. Along the same lines, Ware comments, 'What Fr. Dumitru terms the 'divine intersubjectivity' of the Trinity constitutes the model and paradigm of all human relationships, and more specifically the model and paradigm of the Church' ('Foreword,' p. xx).

<sup>8</sup> The expression, 'hierarchical communion,' taken from *Lumen Gentium* 21, and referring to communion in the Church after the model of the Trinity, does not imply that there is a hierarchy within the Trinity in the sense of subordination. Rather, it refers to the concept of order or *taxis* within the Trinity.

<sup>9</sup> Stefan Lupu, 'Sinodalitatea si/sau conciliaritatea: Expresie a unitatii si catolicitatii Bisericii' [Synodality and/or Conciliarity: Expression of the Unity and Catholicity of the Church], *Dialog Teologic*, 4 (2001), 7, p. 67.

Consequently, the weakness of the reflective model is that it allows for the application of what one perceives as an erroneous Triadology to the practical life of the Church, which is thus presented as automatically impoverished, not allowing for the Trinity to create communion in that Church. As I argue in the sixth section of this article, this is Vladimir Lossky's case when describing the ecclesiological consequences of the Filioque. Taken to such extremes, the reflection model takes for granted a direct relationship between the theological discourse on the Trinity and the practical life of the Church, where, in fact, there may be only a theoretical relationship between the two.

In summary, while the reflection model supports a theoretical relationship between Triadology and ecclesiology (as discourse on the Church), it does not automatically imply a direct relationship between Triadology and the actual, practical life of the Church. Implied here is that both Triadology and ecclesiology can fail to correspond to the actual life of the Church. When dealing with 'authentic' theologies of the Trinity and the Church, however, the reflection model becomes illustrative of the direct relationship there is between the two. In the next three sections, I present other models that establish such a direct relationship, a communication, or a continuum between the Trinity and ecclesial life, and where theology describes this direct relationship, as opposed to conditioning it.

## 2. THE CHURCH AS ICON OF THE TRINITY

Staniloae writes about love among human beings, 'This unperfected love between us presupposes, however, the perfect love between divine persons with a common being. Our love finds its explanation in the fact that we are created in the image of the Holy Trinity, the origin of our love.'<sup>10</sup> Several elements stand out in this passage. First, our unperfected love points to the perfect love among the persons of the Trinity in such a way that our love finds its explanation and origin in the Trinity. Second, for our love to originate in the Trinity, there must be a communication of grace from the Trinity toward us, and so there is a continuum of grace between divinity and

<sup>10</sup> Dumitru Staniloae, *The Experience of God: Revelation and Knowledge of the Triune God*, trans. Ioan Ionita and Robert Barringer, vol. 1 (Brookline, Mass.: Holy Cross Orthodox Press, 1998), p. 245.

humanity.<sup>11</sup> Third, this communication is based on our creation in the image (i.e., *icon*) of the triune God.

This terminology of pointing to a higher reality (the type-archetype relationship), the type finding its explanation and origin in the archetype, the type being a presence of grace and an image of the archetype, is language associated with the theology of the icon. I interpret Staniloae's words to mean that love among human persons is an icon of the intra-Trinitarian love and that, as the visible type that points to its invisible archetype, the Church is an icon of the Trinity.<sup>12</sup>

Of course, much of Staniloae's theology of the icon is based on Theodore the Studite, especially his *16<sup>th</sup> Epistle* in which he argued that icons receive a relative veneration.<sup>13</sup> But Staniloae then adds that those who defended the veneration of icons in the eighth century did not benefit yet from a fully developed theology of the uncreated energies.

'This would have given them the possibility to explain the connection between Christ and his icon, a connection that they affirm, yet without sufficient explanation. Because they have not explained sufficiently the sense of the term, 'relative veneration,' 'veneration that passes on to the prototype,' they did not explain that 'the passing on' from icon to prototype does not mean a separation between Christ and icon or a distance between [Christ] and [the icon]. This is why they affirm both (that is, both the passing on and the interior connection between them), but they do not present a unitary explanation, a synthesis.'<sup>14</sup>

<sup>11</sup> Stressing that the Trinity communicates its 'power' or energy to the community that bears its image, Staniloae commented, 'if we are to grasp this supreme unity of a number of distinct persons, we have need of power from that very unity itself, and must make use of the imperfect unity among human persons as an obscure image of the Holy Trinity.' (Ibid., p. 251).

<sup>12</sup> One can refer to the Church as the icon of the Trinity only metaphorically, not in the proper sense of the word, because one cannot paint an icon of the Trinity, since the Father and the Spirit did not become incarnate, but only the Son did.

<sup>13</sup> For Staniloae the icon is a presence of the divine that penetrates the material through grace. Consequently, the affirmation of 'the seventh Ecumenical Council that the veneration given to the icon 'passes on,' 'ascends' to the person that is represented, or to the archetype, to its living model ... [also implies] the work of Christ unto the one who looks at the icon.': *Spiritualitate si comuniune in Liturghia Ortodoxa [Spirituality and Communion in the Orthodox Liturgy]* (Craiova: Editura Mitropoliei Olteniei, 1986), pp. 61-62.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid., p. 65.

This passage is very important because it creates a bridge between the type and the archetype, namely divine grace or uncreated energies; it shows a continuum between the icon and the one represented on it. Yet Staniloae went beyond traditional theology of the icon by adding that the Theotokos and the saints are icons of Christ, since Christ shines in them and his image was imprinted on them, as ‘the ‘pneumaticized’ dwelling places of Christ, whose humanity is fully ‘pneumaticized’ through the Holy Spirit.’<sup>15</sup>

If I were to take Staniloae’s affirmation a step even further, given that the Theotokos and the saints make up the Church together with the rest of the faithful,<sup>16</sup> living or departed, I would say that the entire Church is an icon of Christ, who is present in the Church through the Holy Spirit. Staniloae’s views on the Church as icon of the Trinity are further also based on Maximus the Confessor’s *Mystagogia*<sup>17</sup> (a work that Staniloae translated and commented extensively) and on a longstanding Eastern tradition.<sup>18</sup> In the first part of the *Mystagogia*, Maximus argued that the Church is an ‘icon and figure of God,’<sup>19</sup> adding that the Church ‘has towards us the same energy as God does, as icon of the same energy as its archetype.’<sup>20</sup> Because the Church is

<sup>15</sup> Ibid., p. 55.

<sup>16</sup> Staniloae has repeatedly affirmed the iconic presence of Christ in the faithful, especially when gathered for the Eucharist, but also in the context of charity and missionary endeavors. For example, see Dumitru Staniloae, *Teologia Dogmatica Ortodoxa [Orthodox Dogmatic Theology]*, vol. 2 (Bucuresti: EIBMBOR, 1997), pp. 153-154.

<sup>17</sup> Maximus the Confessor, transl. Dumitru Staniloae, ‘Mistagoghia: Cosmosul si sufletul, chipuri ale Bisericii,’ *Revista Teologica*, 34 (1944), 4-8. Reprinted in *Sfantul Maxim Marturisitorul: Mystagogia: Cosmosul si Sufletul, Chipuri ale Bisericii*, trans. Dumitru Staniloae (Bucuresti: EIBMBOR, 2000).

<sup>18</sup> See, e.g., Alexander Golitzin, ‘Hierarchy Versus Anarchy? Dionysius Areopagita, Symeon the New Theologian, Nicetas Stethatos, and Their Common Roots in Ascetical Tradition,’ *Saint Vladimir’s Theological Quarterly*, 38 (1994), 2, p. 168. Alexander Golitzin, *Et Introibo Ad Altare Dei: The Mystagogy of Dionysius Areopagita, with Special Reference to Its Predecessors in the Eastern Christian Tradition* (Thessaloniki: Patriarhikon Idryma Paterikon Meleton, 1994), pp. 403-404.

<sup>19</sup> The word ‘icon’ renders the Greek *eikon*. Julian Stead and George C. Berthold, in their translations of the works of Maximus, translate it as ‘image’.

<sup>20</sup> See the translation in Alain Riou, *Le Monde et l’Église selon Maxime le Confesseur*, *Théologie Historique*, 22 (Paris: Beauchesne, 1973), pp. 140-141. Riou’s translation expresses more clearly the relationship between the Trinity (as archetype) and the Church (as icon) than the existing English translations.

an icon of God, 'it works the same unity in the faithful as [that which is in] God, even though the people unified in her through the faith vary in their peculiarities and come from different places and different ways of life.'<sup>21</sup> Thus, Maximus argued that the Church is an icon of God because it does what God does, conforming itself to its archetype, and because the same energies or operations that effect union in God are at work in the Church. As icon, the Church is an instrument through which God works in the world. Moreover, the Church does what God does in figure, in the sense that the services performed in the Church, even though they appear to have only a limited scope, have in fact a larger effect, in that they are addressed to the entire universe, bringing it to unity. As Staniloae commented in his translation of the *Mystagogia*, God starts from a small group, the Church, in order to bring the whole creation to himself:

'The Church is cosmos partly united with God, on the one hand, and cosmos drawing closer to the full union with Christ and under his leadership, on the other. ... The dome of Eastern churches, with the Pantocrator [Christ almighty, who has authority over all], calls the community and each faithful person – the latter being considered as a mobile church – to be preoccupied with the entire creation. Having Christ as Pantocrator in it, the Church is at the same time the 'image' of God as God works in the world to gather the world in himself. Thus Christ does not do in the Church a work separate from the work he does as Pantocrator in the world. Christ begins from a small circle of humans with the intention to extend his perfecting work to the entire creation. [At this point Staniloae quotes the *Mystagogia*.] But, of course, in the understanding of the Church as image of the cosmos under the care of the Pantocrator, or as striving to extend over the entire creation and to contain it, is implied the will of the faithful to participate in the Liturgy of the Church and, as they go outside the Church, to bring the spirit of union with God and of union of creation in God.'<sup>22</sup>

<sup>21</sup> Maximus the Confessor, *The Church, the Liturgy and the Soul of Man: The Mystagogia of St. Maximus the Confessor*, trans. Dom Julian Stead (Still River, Mass.: St. Bede's Publications, 1982), p. 68.

<sup>22</sup> Dumitru Staniloae, 'Locasul Bisericesc Propriu-Zis, Cerul pe Pamant sau Centrul Liturgic al Creatiei' [The Church Temple: Heaven on Earth or the Liturgical Centre of Creation], in *Sfantul Maxim Marturisorul*, pp. 74-75.



Thus, Staniloae affirmed the cooperation between Christ and the faithful to incorporate the creation into the Church. Christ works through the Church to gather the world in himself. This contention is very important because it qualifies the understanding of the Church as icon-instrument of the Trinity in synergic terms.

An icon, however, is not only an instrument, but also a revelation. Maximus noted that, by observing what the Church does, one understands more about God, being guided 'into the meaning of the mysteries celebrated'<sup>23</sup> by the Church, which reveals God. Consequently, the Church as icon of the Trinity is both God's instrument and revelation.

If the Church is an icon of the Trinity, then the Church is the visible presence of the invisible Trinity, through grace. Consequently, I propose the idea that by entering into relationship with the Church, one enters into relationship with the Trinity, thus being drawn into the Trinitarian communion,<sup>24</sup> since the Church is the presence of the Trinity by grace. Furthermore, entering into relationship with the Church actually means becoming a member of the Church. The Church is thus revealed as the communion between God and the (human) members of the Church to the extent that the Church, or rather the people who make it up, are united with the Trinity by grace. The people gathered in the Church become, in a certain sense, Trinity by grace, especially in regard to their unity, since God realizes the same unity among the faithful as the unity that exists within the Trinity. This affirmation will be discussed further in the fourth section on divinization.

In conclusion, a close relationship between the Trinity and the Church as icon is prominent in Staniloae's thought. On the one hand, the Trinity informs the Church, since the Church does what the Trinity does, as the type that is filled with, and communicates the grace of, an archetype. On the other hand, the Church reveals the Trinity, which would otherwise be beyond our reach; one contemplates God by observing the work of the Trinity in the Church. Thus, better than the reflection model, the understanding of the Church as icon establishes the direct presence of the Trinity in the Church.

<sup>23</sup> Maximus the Confessor, *Mystagogia*, p. 102.

<sup>24</sup> More on this subject in the fifth section below.

### 3. THE CHURCH AS SACRAMENT OF THE TRINITY

Staniloae liked to refer to the Church as the third sacrament.<sup>25</sup> The first sacrament is the world, created to make God transparent in it, or to make God manifest. Hence, the world has a sacramental-liturgical and a revelatory function.<sup>26</sup> The second sacrament is Christ,<sup>27</sup> who is fully God's presence, since Christ is truly divine. Staniloae also explained the role of Christ in sacramental terms, affirming that the Trinity is revealed and acts through Christ.<sup>28</sup> As a consequence of the second sacrament or as an 'extension of the mystery of Christ,' arises the 'third sacrament,' the Church,

'in which God the Word re-establishes and raises to a more accentuated degree his unity with the world, [a unity] established through the act of creation and weakened by the sin of humankind. ... Christ is the real Head, or the fundamental hypostasis of the Church, which he constitutes and sustains, continuously imprinting his life in [the Church], or in its members, kept in unity among them and with him.'<sup>29</sup>

Thus, Christ acts as a sacrament of the Trinity and, by extension, the Body of Christ or the Church also becomes the sacrament of the Trinity, through which the triune God acts and reveals himself. Staniloae's considerations bring a significant contribution to Orthodox theology. To my knowledge, the only other Orthodox theologian who has referred to the Church as sacrament – and only in passing – is Nikos Nissiotis.<sup>30</sup>

<sup>25</sup> I use 'mystery' and 'sacrament' interchangeably.

<sup>26</sup> Staniloae, *Isus Hristos, lumina lumii*, p. 31. See also Dumitru Staniloae, *The Experience of God: The World – Creation and Deification*, trans. Ioan Ionita and Robert Barringer, vol. 2 (Brookline, Mass.: Holy Cross Orthodox Press, 2000), p. 45. Dumitru Staniloae, 'Creatia ca dar si Tainele Bisericii' [The Creation as Gift and the Sacraments of the Church], *Ortodoxia*, 28, (1976), 1, p. 28.

<sup>27</sup> Dumitru Staniloae, *Teologia Dogmatica Ortodoxa [Orthodox Dogmatic Theology]*, vol. 3 (Bucuresti: EIBMBOR, 1997), p. 13.

<sup>28</sup> Staniloae, *The Experience of God*, 1, p. 67.

<sup>29</sup> Id., *Dogmatics*, 3, pp. 10-11.

<sup>30</sup> Nikos Nissiotis, 'Pneumatological Christology as a Presupposition of Ecclesiology,' *Oecumenica* (1967), p. 251: The Church 'has to be accepted as a great sacrament, the *mysterion par excellence*.'

Thus, similar to his consideration of the Church as icon, Staniloae's designation of the Church as sacrament establishes a continuum between the Trinity and the Church and affirms the direct relationship between the two, going beyond the parallelism of the reflection model.

#### 4. THE ECCLESIOLOGICAL CONSEQUENCES OF *THEOSIS*

To a Western audience, Staniloae's understanding of *theosis*, divinization or deification, may seem strange, but Staniloae continues a longstanding Eastern Tradition that affirms the possibility of utmost union by grace (not by nature, as in the person of Jesus Christ) between God and human persons. Based on the distinction-in-unity between God's essence and his uncreated energies,<sup>31</sup> he defined *theosis* as 'God's perfect and full penetration of the human being.'<sup>32</sup> Moreover, 'just as the one who is loved, if they respond to love, becomes as the one whom they love, more so the human person, enlightened by Christ, is made as Christ, although through grace, not nature. Being full of Christ, the human person lives his divinity.'<sup>33</sup>

According to Staniloae, divinization is not only an eschatological gift, but it is also something to be achieved during this life, and then continually fulfilled in eternity. Actually, Staniloae considered that the Church is already holy as a whole, despite the presence of sinful individuals in it,<sup>34</sup> so divinization is something already attained by the community of the Church, even though some (or most) members of the Church have not reached it yet.

<sup>31</sup> This tradition is generally ascribed to Gregory Palamas, although it certainly was present much earlier already. It has not been fully represented in Orthodoxy's period of crisis, but Staniloae rediscovered its importance. See Dan I. Ciobotea, 'Une dogmatique pour l'homme d'aujourd'hui' [Review of *Teologia Dogmatica Ortodoxa*], *Irénikon*, 54 (1981), 4, p. 473.

<sup>32</sup> Dumitru Staniloae, *Orthodox Spirituality: A Practical Guide for the Faithful and a Definitive Manual for the Scholar*, trans. Archimandrite Jerome (Newville) and Otilia Kloos (South Canaan, Pa.: St. Tikhon's Seminary Press, 2002), p. 362.

<sup>33</sup> Staniloae, *Jesus Christ or the Restoration of Humankind*, p. 227.

<sup>34</sup> Id, *Dogmatics*, 2, pp. 177-186. See more on this below.

Because the Church is the locus of deification, *theosis* has a profound communitarian-ecclesiological dimension.<sup>35</sup> In his commentary on Symeon the New Theologian, Staniloae drew from the language of 1 Cor 12, arguing that Christ is ‘present in the members of his Body; he makes himself present ... in each believer and the believers are and feel like members of Christ’. As Symeon put it in his 15<sup>th</sup> hymn,

‘And I, the unworthy, am the hand and the foot of Christ.  
I move the hand and Christ fully is my hand.  
I move the foot and, behold, it shines like Him. ...  
And we will all become together gods through God.’<sup>36</sup>

Both Symeon and Staniloae used the image of the faithful as members of the Body of Christ because *theosis* takes place only in the community of the Church or, as Staniloae stated it, ‘spiritual ascent begins and ends in the Church.’<sup>37</sup> I would even say that one’s divinization is not individualistic, but it is based on the entire Church community and for the benefit of the Church. Thus, *theosis* extends from the person to the entire Church community and vice versa, from the Church united by grace with the Trinity to the person. These affirmations, even though they bear slightly eschatological overtones, are very relevant in a discussion of the relationship between the Trinity and the Church in this present age. Most importantly, together with the previous considerations of the Church as reflection, icon, and sacrament of the Trinity, the above considerations establish a direct relationship, a continuum of grace originating in the Trinity and manifested in the Church. Consequently, Staniloae arrived at the conclusion that the same relations that exist within the Trinity are manifested in the Church, as I discuss next.

<sup>35</sup> Personal *theosis* results in utmost communion with God, other people, and the rest of creation. Staniloae, *Iisus Hristos, lumina lumii*, pp. 186-187. This is why Bartos can argue, ‘Staniloae’s ecclesiology reveals, above all else, his understanding of deification as being communal in character. ... We are saved in communion, in the Church, and in creation’: Emil Bartos, ‘The Dynamics of Deification in the Theology of Dumitru Staniloae,’ in *Dumitru Staniloae*, pp. 234-235.

<sup>36</sup> Quoted in Staniloae, *Jesus Christ or the Restoration of Humankind*, pp. 227-228.

<sup>37</sup> Id., *Orthodox Spirituality*, p. 353.

## 5. SAME RELATIONS WITHIN THE TRINITY AND THE CHURCH

For Staniloae, ‘the Trinitarian relations are seen as the basis for the relation of the Trinity to creation and for the salvation of creation,’<sup>38</sup> with direct application in the life of the Church. In other words, Triadology has ecclesiological consequences, since the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit have the same kind of relationships within the Trinity and in the Church:

‘As a work of raising up believers to intimate communion with God, salvation and deification are nothing other than the extension to conscious creatures of the relations that [exist] between the divine persons. ... Only because a triune God exists does one of the divine persons – namely the one who stands in relationship as Son vis-à-vis the other and, as man too, can remain within this affectionate relationship as Son – become incarnate, placing all his human brothers within this relationship as sons to the heavenly Father, or indeed placing his Father within a paternal relationship to all men.’<sup>39</sup>

Thus, the extension of intra-Trinitarian relations into the world was made possible by the Christ event. Given the ‘theandric,’ or better, ‘theanthropic’ (i.e. divine-human) character of Christ, the same person whom the Father loves eternally as Son encompasses the entire humankind after the incarnation. Hence, the eternal Father-Son relationship extends to humanity and, more specifically, to the Church. Staniloae is here in line with the Pauline theology of incorporation into Christ and adoption, according to which baptized Christians experience God as Father. In other words, the Son places all his human brothers and sisters in a filial relationship with the Father. In turn, the Father loves the Church as the Body of Christ because of his paternal relationship with the Son, and this Father-Son relationship represents the basis for human relationships of paternity and sonship.<sup>40</sup> Similarly, the Spirit dwells in the Church, which is the Body of Christ, because the Spirit rests

<sup>38</sup> Dumitru Staniloae, ‘The Procession of the Holy Spirit from the Father and His Relation to the Son, as the Basis of our Deification and Adoption,’ in *Spirit of God, Spirit of Christ: Ecumenical Reflections on the Filioque Controversy*, ed. Lukas Vischer, *Faith and Order Paper No. 103* (Geneva: World Council of Churches, 1981), p. 178.

<sup>39</sup> Staniloae, *The Experience of God*, 1, p. 248.

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 246.

from eternity in the Son, so the extension of intra-Trinitarian relations to the Church is based both Christologically and pneumatologically. Staniloae wrote,

‘The sending of the Spirit by the Son to humans rather signifies that the Spirit rests in those who are united with the Son, since he rests in the Son. The Spirit does not go beyond the Son, even when we say improperly that he is sent to humans. The Son is the only and ultimate resting place of the Spirit. The Spirit dwells in us insofar as we are raised up in the Son.’<sup>41</sup>

Moreover, the Holy Spirit represents the possibility of extending the love between the Father and the Son to human beings because the Spirit is the third person who fulfills the loving relationship between the Father and the Son.<sup>42</sup> ‘He is the Spirit of [human] communion, because the Spirit is communion in the Holy Trinity, too.’<sup>43</sup> Thus, the Holy Spirit (and the uncreated energies with which the work of the Spirit is generally associated) represents the outpouring of Trinitarian love into the Church:

‘Only through the Holy Spirit, therefore, does the divine love radiate to the outside. It is not to no purpose that created ‘I’s’ are brought forward and raised to the level of being partners in the dialogue with Father and Son through the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit represents the possibility of extending the love between Father and Son to other subjects.’<sup>44</sup>

<sup>41</sup> Id., ‘Procession,’ p. 179.

<sup>42</sup> Staniloae added that human beings are not in communion with the Trinity to the same degree as the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are in communion among themselves. The faithful are penetrated only by the activity of the Spirit, so they can have only a relation ‘through grace,’ where the uncreated energies represent the bridge between the Trinity and the Church, allowing intra-Trinitarian relationships to be manifested in both the Trinity and the Church (*Theology and the Church*, p. 28).

<sup>43</sup> Id., *Orthodox Spirituality*, pp. 318–321.

<sup>44</sup> Id., *The Experience of God*, 1, p. 268. Staniloae’s comment, ‘Only through the Holy Spirit, therefore, does the divine love radiate to the outside,’ is very similar to the first antiphon in the fourth tone in the Orthodox service of Matins: ‘By the Holy Spirit shall every soul be given life and be elevated through purification, and be made radiant through the mystery of the Triune Unity’: *Orthros: The Resurrectional Hymns for Sunday*, trans. Spencer T. Kezios (Northridge, CA: Narthex Press, 1996), p. 75.

Based on the affirmation that the same intra-Trinitarian relationships are manifested within both the Trinity and the Church, Staniloae submitted his famous thesis that, because humanity is raised up to an ‘eternal communion with the Holy Trinity,’ the Trinity represents ‘the structure of perfect communion.’<sup>45</sup>

These considerations, as well as Origen’s description of the Church as ‘filled with the Trinity,’<sup>46</sup> led Staniloae to regard Church communion as unity in diversity, after the model of the Trinity,<sup>47</sup> in which the persons remain distinct in union with other persons. Given his dual nature, Christ ‘imprints his unity according to his divinity with the Father and the Holy Spirit, in the unity according to his humanity with the other people gathered in him,’<sup>48</sup> thus making human unity a manifestation of the intra-Trinitarian unity. Staniloae is very successful here in presenting the Trinity as model for the Church, as well as explaining the direct relationship and communication of grace between the Trinity and the Church, where the same intra-Trinitarian relations are manifested in the Trinity and in the Church.

The incorporation of the members of the Church into Christ also safeguards the personal character of our union with each other and with God. United with God and with the other members of the Church, the person does not disappear in an impersonal entity. According to Staniloae,

<sup>45</sup> Staniloae, *The Experience of God*, 1, p. 67. Staniloae originally published it as an article: ‘Sfanta Treime, structura supremei iubiri’ [The Holy Trinity: Structure of Supreme Love], *Studii Teologice*, 22 (1970). He gave the same title to the chapter on the Trinity in his *Orthodox Dogmatic Theology*. See also Id., *Theology and the Church*, pp. 73-108. Among the many commentators on this phrase, Silviu Rogobete stands out for noting that ‘in the reality of the participation of the divine ‘subjects’ lies the perfect model for our own participation. However, far from being just a simple model, through the consubstantial identification of Christ, one of the divine ‘I’s,’ with our own nature, this communal participation became open for each one of us’: Silviu Eugen Rogobete, ‘Mystical Existentialism or Communitarian Participation?: Vladimir Lossky and Dumitru Staniloae,’ in *Dumitru Staniloae*, p. 205.

<sup>46</sup> Origen, *Selecta in Psalmos* 23,1 (PG 12,1265B). Quoted in Staniloae, *Theology and the Church*, p. 39.

<sup>47</sup> In this sense, once should understand Staniloae’s comment that ‘the Church is a unity similar to that of the Holy Trinity, or the one who is baptized in the name of the Holy Trinity enters the unity filled with the supreme unity of the Trinity. [... The Church is a] community similar to that of the Trinity’ (*Spirituality and Communion*, pp. 392-393).

<sup>48</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 376-377.

‘The eternal communion after which we yearn has its origin and fulfillment in the one eternal co-essentiality of the divine persons of the Trinity. And if unity without confusion between the divine persons is assured by their sharing in a common nature, then certainly the communion between God and those who believe is assured by their participation, through grace, in the divine nature or in the energies irradiating from the common nature of the three divine persons, which is to say, from their loving community. But human nature, subsisting in a multiplicity of persons, must have some resemblance to the divine nature as this subsists in the three persons, if, in a divine person [i.e. the Son], it is to be able to be united with the divine nature.’<sup>49</sup>

Consequently, the same relationships of unity and diversity within the Trinity are manifested in the world and represent the basis for unity in the world. This affirmation is very important for Staniloae’s consideration of the nature of the unity that exists within the Church, with the preservation of the personal characteristics of each member, that is, unity defined as communion, or *koinonia*.

Up to this point, I have attempted to analyze the ‘mechanisms’ of the continuum between the Trinity and the Church. The same relationships that exist within the Trinity are manifested in the Church not only theoretically as a reflection, but also directly through grace. The uncreated energies directly manifest God in the world through icons, sacraments, in the people united in *theosis* with God, all of these having already been discussed as images for the Church.

Since the present discussion has an ecumenical motivation, it is important to note now that the principle that the Church is an icon, sacrament, instrument, communion, and manifestation of the Trinity is not foreign to Catholic theology, either. *Lumen Gentium* 1 defines the Church as ‘a sacrament – a sign and instrument, that is, of communion with God and of unity among all men.’<sup>50</sup> In an excellent summary of and commentary on the ecclesiology of Vatican II, Bruno Forte quotes *Lumen Gentium* 3 (which, he considers, restores the Trinitarian depth of the Church): ‘A people made one with the

<sup>49</sup> Id., *The Experience of God*, 1, pp. 70-71.

<sup>50</sup> *Vatican Council II: The Conciliar and Postconciliar Documents*, ed. Austin Flannery, New Revised ed., vol. 1 (Northport, NY: Costello, 1998), p. 350.



unity of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit (St. Cyprian), the Church comes from the Trinity, is structured in the image of the Trinity, and journeys towards the Trinitarian fulfillment of history.<sup>51</sup> Furthermore, Forte refers to the analogical language (which I have called the reflection model) of *Lumen Gentium* in combination with iconic terminology and similar to Staniloae's contention that the same relations are manifested both in the Trinity and in the Church: 'The Church is the icon of the Holy Trinity, i.e., her communion is structured in the image and likeness of the Trinitarian communion. ... So by analogy the Church can be likened to the divine communion: one in the diversity of Persons, in a fruitful exchange of relations.'<sup>52</sup>

Many more quotations from Staniloae or from Catholic theology could be added to support the previous arguments, but, for space considerations, it is important to turn to the question of ecclesiological implications of the Filioque and attempt to show that the principles outlined above provide an important ecumenical contribution.

## 6. THE FILIOQUE AND ITS ECCLESIOLOGICAL IMPLICATIONS

Based on a thorough terminological, theological, and historical analysis, the North American Orthodox-Catholic Theological Consultation issued the following statement: 'our traditions' different ways of understanding the procession of the Holy Spirit need no longer divide us.'<sup>53</sup> This means that,

<sup>51</sup> Bruno Forte, *The Church: Icon of the Trinity. A Brief Study*, trans. Robert Paolucci (Boston: St. Paul Books & Media, 1991), pp. 9-10, 17, 65.

<sup>52</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 28.

<sup>53</sup> North American Orthodox-Catholic Theological Consultation, '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,' at [www.usccb.org/seia/dialogues.htm](http://www.usccb.org/seia/dialogues.htm) (2003), p. iv. Long before the Consultation, Congar noted that the Latin position did not hinder the Church being one for almost seven centuries; he also referred to several Orthodox theologians, among them 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 held 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*, trans. David Smith, vol. 3 (New York: Seabury Press, 1983), pp. 190, 202-203.

if the Filioque were the only cause of Orthodox-Catholic disunity, these two churches should now be re-united. I do not think that the document diminishes the importance of the Filioque, but it does not consider its consequences to be as serious as it was previously thought. Behind this statement lies a rather recent history of debates on whether the Filioque has any major ecclesiological consequences or not, and the Consultation recommends further on that the procession of the Holy Spirit and ecclesiology should be duly distinguished (see my comments below). After outlining the major positions in this debate, I will point to a third option not as a clear-cut solution, but as a helpful focus of the discussion in order to ensure ecumenical progress.

Relevant to the present debate, Ware identifies two positions within Orthodoxy. On the one hand, the ‘hawks,’ represented among recent theologians most especially by Vladimir Lossky,<sup>54</sup> consider that the Filioque implies the subordination of the Spirit to the Son if not in theory, then surely in practice. As a result, insufficient attention is given to the Spirit in the Church, in the world, and in spirituality. Since the Filioque also over-emphasizes the oneness of God to the detriment of God’s ‘threeness’ and gives priority to essence over persons,<sup>55</sup> Lossky thought, the Catholic Church

<sup>54</sup> See, e.g., Vladimir Lossky, ‘Concerning the Third Mark of the Church: Catholicity,’ *One Church [Edinaia Tserkov]*, 19 (1965). For Staniloae’s comments on Lossky’s position, see *Theology and the Church*, pp. 64-71. This is a translation of ‘Sfantul Duh si sobornicitatea Bisericii: Extrase din raportul unui observator ortodox la conciliul al II-lea de la Vatican’ [The Holy Spirit and the Sobornicity of the Church: Extracts from the Report of an Orthodox Observer at the Second Vatican Council], *Ortodoxia*, 19 (1967), 1.

<sup>55</sup> Lossky wrote in a markedly polemical context, rejecting the Catholic teaching on the Filioque, which implies an eternal relationship between the Spirit and the Son. He went as far as to argue repeatedly for the Spirit’s eternal independence of origin from the Son. See Vladimir Lossky, *The Mystical Theology of the Eastern Church*, trans. Fellowship of St. Alban and St. Sergius, Fifth printing ed. (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir’s Seminary Press, 2002), pp. 243-244. Moreover, in those days, most theologians still accepted as normative Théodore de Régnon’s theory that the Eastern doctrine of the Trinity emphasizes person over nature and Trinity over unity, whereas Western theology gives priority to nature over person and unity over Trinity, see Théodore de Régnon, *Études de théologie positive sur la Sainte Trinité*, 3 vols. (Paris: Retaux, 1892-1898). Later on, John Meyendorff encouraged Orthodox theologians to challenge the traditional model according to which the East is more concerned with the persons in the Trinity and the West with the divine essence, especially in regard to Augustine; see Meyendorff and Fahey, *Trinitarian Theology East and West: St. Thomas Aquinas – St. Gregory Palamas*, p. 36. Moreover, Congar has shown

faces numerous ecclesiological problems, including papal totalitarianism, clericalism, institutionalism, and the litany of 'isms' could continue.<sup>56</sup> Also because of the Filioque, John Zizioulas (a 'hawk' that Ware does not mention) further adds that in Catholic theology, 'God is implicitly identified with being as neutral substance rather than with being as communion.' As Zizioulas sees it, the stage was set in the West for the Church as communion to dissolve into the Church as juridical institution, for the Church, too, came to be conceived of first as a neutral substance and only subsequently as a place for cultivating relationships.<sup>57</sup>

On the other hand, Ware refers to the 'doves,' or the moderate position, who point out that only in the twentieth century have theologians noticed a connection between the Filioque and papacy, but not before, so they question the existence of a real connection between the two. Ware probably has in mind here Sergey Bulgakov and Paul Evdokimov. Somewhere in the middle, Nikos Nissiotis<sup>58</sup> is closer to Lossky, while Ware<sup>59</sup> is closer to Bulgakov.

that de Régnon's theory is not completely correct, although he did not dismiss it totally. He pointed out that the so-called Eastern view had also always been defended in the West, be it only by a minority: *I Believe in the Holy Spirit: The Holy Spirit in the 'Economy': Revelation and Experience of the Spirit*, trans. David Smith, vol. 1 (New York: Seabury Press, 1983), pp. 85-92.

<sup>56</sup> According to Congar, who is followed by A. de Halleux, Lossky held that the Filioque has several ecclesiological consequences, among them the view that 'the people of God are subjected to the body of Christ, the charism is made subordinate to the institution, inner freedom to imposed authority, prophetism to juridicism, mysticism to scholasticism, the laity to the clergy, the universal priesthood to the ministerial hierarchy, and finally the college of bishops to the primacy of the Pope'; see Congar, *I Believe in the Holy Spirit*, 3, p. 208.

<sup>57</sup> See Dennis M. Doyle, *Communion Ecclesiology: Vision and Versions* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2000), p. 160.

<sup>58</sup> For Nissiotis, the Filioque, although not a heresy, is a practical deviation with ecclesiological consequences. See Bernard Dupuy, 'Nikos Nissiotis (1925-1986), théologien de l'Esprit-Saint et de la gloire,' *Istina*, 32 (1987), 3, p. 228.

<sup>59</sup> For Ware 'the divergence between East and West over the Filioque, while by no means unimportant, is not as fundamental as Lossky and his disciples maintain. The Roman Catholic understanding of the person and work of the Holy Spirit ... is not basically different from that of the Christian East; and so we may hope that in the present-day dialogue between Orthodox and Roman Catholics an understanding will eventually be reached on this thorny question'; see Timothy (Kallistos) Ware, *The Orthodox Church* (London, New York: Penguin Books, 1997), pp. 214-218.

Staniloae is much harder to categorize as a ‘dove’ or as a ‘hawk’ because he was not always consistent. On the one hand, he could write that, because of the Filioque,

‘in the West ecclesiology has become an impersonal juridical system, while theology, and in the same way the whole of Western culture with it, has become strictly rational. The character of a juridical society has been imprinted upon the Church, a society conducted rationally and in absolutist fashion by the Pope while neglecting both the active permanent presence of the Spirit within her and within all the faithful, and also the presence of Christ bound indissolubly to the presence of the Spirit. The Pope, the bishops, the priests occupy the place of the absent Christ who is not present through the Spirit in the hearts of the faithful (the ‘vicarial’ theory).’<sup>60</sup>

In my judgment, Staniloae was not writing at his best here, to say the least. He extended what he considered the logical consequences of Catholic affirmations to the point of caricature, where Catholic theologians would certainly not recognize them as their own positions. Then, Staniloae applied these reductive conclusions to the life of the Church, taking what I have termed the reflective model to an extreme.

On the other hand, especially when Staniloae wrote in an ecumenical context, or after he had become more exposed to what more recent Catholic theologians actually affirmed, he adopted a more reconciliatory position.<sup>61</sup> He admitted that he had sometimes criticized not what these Catholic

<sup>60</sup> Staniloae, *Theology and the Church*, p. 107. He actually refers here to P. Sherrard’s *The Greek East and the Latin West*. **Full title**

<sup>61</sup> Ronald Roberson, a Catholic scholar who extensively studied Staniloae’s theology, observes: ‘Staniloae’s experience as a participant at the second plenary session of the international Catholic-Orthodox dialogue at Munich in 1982 seems to have caused him to greatly moderate his views on the Catholic Church. In an interview published in 1988, he stated that Orthodoxy and Catholicism ‘are not divided by essential differences.’ He was pleasantly surprised at Munich to see that there was a broad agreement on issues that had been significant causes of division in the past. He emerged hopeful that a solution may even be found to the problem of the papacy which would integrate the bishop of Rome into the communion of the Church in a way acceptable to the Orthodox.’ (‘Dumitru Staniloae on Christian Unity,’ p. 113). Roberson refers here to Ioanichie Balan, ed., *Convorbiri Dubovnicesti [Spiritual Conversations]*, vol. 2 (Bucuresti: Editura Episcopiei Romanului si Husilor, 1988), pp. 92-93.

theologians stated, but the theoretical consequences of their theology, which, in practice, are not manifested in the life of the Catholic Church. I consider this to be Staniloae's final position: the Filioque might lead to unfortunate logical consequences if taken to an extreme but, in reality, the Catholic Church did not take the Filioque to that extreme, and these logical consequences do not apply to its practice. This is certainly a more balanced position than the one first presented above.

Another major protagonist in the debate over the ecclesiological consequences of the Filioque is Yves Congar. He answered Lossky's (and indirectly Staniloae's) accusations that the Filioque leads to subjecting the charism to the institution, prophetism to 'juridicism,' laity to clergy, the college of bishops to the primacy of the Pope. Based on the observation that the Filioque did not have the same consequences in several of the Reformed Churches that contain it in their Confessions of Faith, Congar responded that 'the whole body of consequences to which Lossky drew attention is too much his own reconstruction to be really precise.' Moreover, he referred to Orthodox theologians such as Evdokimov and Bulgakov who would not agree with Lossky, but would actually add that, because the Filioque has no practical consequences (quite significant for the study at hand), it is not a real dogmatic difference between the East and the West. This is why Congar concluded with the memorable words, 'in the final analysis, then, the quarrel about the ecclesiological consequences of the Filioque is of doubtful value.'<sup>62</sup>

Congar's words resonated with me for a long time. They still do. For a while, I believed that the Filioque has no consequences in the life of the Church and that this was also the intention of another memorable recommendation of the North American Orthodox-Catholic Theological Consultation: 'that those engaged in dialogue on this issue distinguish, as far as possible, the theological issues of the origin of the Holy Spirit from the ecclesiological issues of primacy and doctrinal authority in the Church, even as we pursue both questions seriously together.'<sup>63</sup>

<sup>62</sup> Congar, *I Believe in the Holy Spirit*, 3, pp. 210-211. Congar was also a strong proponent of the non-Church-dividing character of the Filioque based on several reasons, including the fact that Photius and his followers remained in communion with the West without solving this issue; it is a theological opinion as opposed to dogma; and it is no longer obligatory for Byzantine Catholic Churches.

<sup>63</sup> Consultation, 'The Filioque: A Church-Dividing Issue?,' IV.

I now think that Congar's statement is somewhat exaggerated. I also think that the above recommendation of the Consultation does not propose to separate the theologies of the Trinity and of the Church completely as if there were no connection between the two, but only the Filioque and the papacy, so that the polemic about the Filioque would not extend to the area of ecclesiology as well, and thus make it almost impossible to resolve. I agree that we should solve the problem of the Filioque first as a Trinitarian question, and not as an ecclesiological issue. Yet, the Church is an icon of the Trinity, filled with the Trinity, so a genuine Triadology does have ecclesiological consequences. Trinitarian theology informs the Church's understanding of the relationship between charism and institution, mission, organization, etc. For example, as shown above, Staniloae affirmed that because the Spirit is sent to the Son from eternity, so in the Church the Spirit dwells in those who are the Body of Christ, hence the tension between institution (generally associated with Christ) and charisms (related to the Spirit) disappears in the constructive cooperation between the two. Thus, the Church is at the same time charismatic and institutional not for purely organizational reasons, but because of its Trinitarian being.

This particular instance of constructive application of the last three models that establish a direct relationship between the Trinity and the Church raises another important question: Does the present organization of either Catholic or Orthodox churches represent a direct consequence of Triadology? On the one hand, if the answer is yes, then there is little or no room for ecumenical discussions, since present-day Church structures become issues of dogma. On the other hand, one cannot affirm that these structures are arbitrary human forms of organization either, since they are meant to emulate a certain understanding of Revelation in general and Triadology in particular. There is a creative tension between these two sides of the issue that I will not attempt to resolve. This tension leads into the next phase of the argument: the Filioque is simultaneously related and not related to Church organization (the papacy), depending on the perspective from which this subject is addressed: practical/historical or theological/logical.

Is papal primacy an automatic *theological/logical* consequence of the Filioque? The Filioque is considered more and more not to be a Church dividing issue. If Catholics and Orthodox believe that that Filioque does not divide them anymore, does it necessarily mean that its so-called consequences,

especially the papacy, do not divide them either? I do not think so. Hence, to a certain extent, the Filioque and the papacy are two separate issues. Another way to put this would be to affirm that, in my opinion, the Filioque *does not* automatically result in papal primacy and the other consequences that Lossky enumerated.<sup>64</sup> In the following paragraphs I support this affirmation by making reference to the four models that I have proposed in the first chapter, after which I qualify it with the discussion of some *practical/historical* ways in which the Filioque and the papacy *are* interrelated in the life of the Church.

I do not agree with Lossky's and (sometimes) Staniloae's application of the first, reflective model to the Filioque. Although such methodology has its own merits, seeing the Church simply as a reflection of the Trinity risks pushing the logical consequences of a certain Trinitarian theology to conclusions that were not initially intended, and then reflecting them in an inaccurate description of the life of the Church. Lossky's description of the ecclesiological consequences of the Filioque does not correspond to the reality of present-day Catholic and Reformed churches. If the reflection model is the basis for criticism, I suggest that it should be abandoned. Rather, theologians should strive to find a continuum between Triadology and ecclesiology, and this is where the other three models can be applied.

From an Orthodox perspective – where the Filioque is not condoned and where the Church is the iconic, sacramental presence of the Trinity, and the locus of *theosis* – the Filioque should have no essential consequences in the life of the Church, since the same Trinitarian relationships are applied in the Church, irrespective of Catholic understanding of the procession of the Holy Spirit. Thus, the direct manifestation of the intra-Trinitarian relations in the Church is not affected by the theology of the Filioque; it is God's uncreated energy that manifests these relations.

Hence, the Filioque has ecclesiological consequences only from the perspective of the reflective model (to which I do not condone in this case),

<sup>64</sup> Moreover, for Lossky 'the Filioque was the primordial cause, the only dogmatic cause, of the breach between East and West. The other doctrinal disputes were but its consequences' (*The Mystical Theology of the Eastern Church*, p. 56). If this is the case, then solving the issue of the Filioque would automatically result in solving all the other differences between the Orthodox and Catholic churches.

not from the perspective of the Church as the icon, sacrament, and *theosis*. Shifting the discussion from a theological/logical to a practical/historical tone, it is now important to acknowledge that, in history, the Filioque has crossed paths with Church life.

Without claiming to provide an exhaustive list of historical facts that show the consequences that the Filioque had in the life of the Church, I briefly provide several examples. First, the theologians at Charlemagne's court accused the Greeks of reciting the Creed without the Filioque,<sup>65</sup> so the addition caused animosity within the Church. Second, the Filioque became an issue during the German mission in Bulgaria, where the Byzantine missionaries were also present; one would preach the Filioque, while the other would reject it. Thus, this thorny question affected the mission of the Church that was still united at that point. Third, for the Filioque to become authoritative teaching of the Catholic Church, it needed the approval of the Pope.<sup>66</sup> Thomas Aquinas affirmed that new explanations or additions to the Creed do not involve changing the old confessions of faith, and that the Pope had the authority to add the Filioque to the Creed commonly agreed upon at an ecumenical Council.<sup>67</sup> In Aquinas's mind, at least from a practical perspective, the Filioque and the papacy were connected. Fourth, it is important to set the chronology straight: the Filioque appeared in the West long before

<sup>65</sup> Ware, *The Orthodox Church*, p. 51.

<sup>66</sup> In 1014, the Creed, including the Filioque, was sung for the first time at a papal Mass, so the Filioque was now generally assumed in the Latin Church to have the sanction of the papacy. The North American Orthodox-Catholic Consultation explains: 'The Orthodox tradition sees the normative expression of that faith to be the Creeds and canons formulated by those Councils that are received by the Apostolic Churches as 'ecumenical'. ... The Catholic tradition also accepts conciliar formulations as dogmatically normative. ... However, in recognizing the universal primacy of the bishop of Rome in matters of faith and of the service of unity, the Catholic tradition accepts the authority of the Pope to confirm the process of conciliar reception, and to define what does and does not conflict with the 'faith of Nicaea' and the Apostolic tradition. So while Orthodox theology has regarded the ultimate approval by the Popes, in the eleventh century, of the use of Filioque in the Latin Creed as a usurpation of the dogmatic authority proper to ecumenical Councils alone, Catholic theology has seen it as a legitimate exercise of his primary authority to proclaim and clarify the Church's faith' (The Filioque: A Church-Dividing Issue?, II, III.2.b.

<sup>67</sup> Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologiae* II<sup>a</sup> II<sup>ae</sup> Q.1, Art.10, *Complete English Edition in Five Volumes*, trans. Fathers of the English Dominican Province (Allen, TX: Christian Classics, 1981), pp. 1172-1173.



papal claims to universal jurisdiction<sup>68</sup> and infallibility.<sup>69</sup> Thus, papal authority cannot be the automatic theological consequence of the Filioque, or these consequences would have been manifested much earlier.

In conclusion, without venturing to give a clear-cut answer as to whether the Filioque has ecclesiological consequences or not, especially in regard to the papacy, I consider that, although these two have been historically connected, the papacy and the 'isms' listed by Lossky are not automatic consequences of the Filioque. Thus, theologians should avoid polemics based solely on the reflection model, but strive to establish a direct relationship between the Trinity and the Church to inform their ecclesiological organization and Church life. From this perspective, Staniloae's considerations about the relationship between the Trinity and the Church provide a methodology for advancing the ecumenical dialogue on the ecclesiological consequences of the Filioque, even though he did not apply this methodology consistently.

## 7. DEPERSONALIZATION

Another possible application of the theoretical principles outlined in the first part of this article is that of depersonalization, understood as the diminishing of human freedom, equality, and dignity as a manifestation of the loss of the importance of the person. Depersonalization occurs first when the person is subjected to suffering, such as Communist oppression, poverty in an aggressive market economy, or war. Second and paradoxically, depersonalization is also the result of individualism, where the individual rises above the community to the detriment of the members of the community, and without respecting their dignity, equality, and freedom. While attempting to present the universal significance of Staniloae's conclusions, I will also

<sup>68</sup> One of the first occurrences of such pretensions appeared in Pope Nicholas's letter of 865 as part of the Photian Schism: the Pope is endowed with authority 'over all the earth, that is, over every Church.' (quoted in Ware, *The Orthodox Church*, p. 53). The East was not ready to grant the Pope universal jurisdiction, but only primacy of honor.

<sup>69</sup> In the Catholic Church, this claim became authoritative teaching only in 1870, with Vatican I's *Pastor Aeternus* 4, even though it can be traced earlier in history. It is also important to note that specific limitations describe the circumstances in which a papal teaching is considered infallible.

offer a contextual analysis of his theology, given the importance of his theology of the person both during and after Communist rule.

Is it fair to apply Staniloae's theological principles to contemporary social issues? Was Staniloae's theology of personhood too narrowly connected with his understanding of the role of the person in the Church (especially in a liturgical context) and its application to society at large is thus rendered artificial? Why did Staniloae connect his theology of the person with social issues only episodically? The answer is twofold. First, theologically, Staniloae considered that the Church is fully manifested in the Liturgy, where the person is best affirmed in union with the rest of the community, hence his insistence on the Church as a model of communion after the image of the Trinity. Second, politically, Staniloae was also limited by Communist censure. Mihail Neamtu explains how Communist authorities confined the Orthodox Church within its 'liturgical borders. Religious education, charitable works, outward mission and public service were strictly forbidden.'<sup>70</sup> In his suffering under communist rule that included five years of imprisonment, Staniloae was representative of a Romanian Orthodoxy that was considered outcast, even though almost 90% of the Romanian population was Orthodox. His political voice was obviously muted in those years, which represent the vast majority of Staniloae's theological career. Thus, his theology of personhood can and needs to be applied in contemporary society.

Staniloae's understanding of the person illustrates the models discussed in this article. He affirmed that 'God created humans to raise them to the capacity of eternal communion with himself and among them.'<sup>71</sup> The key to understanding the possibility of communion between God and human-kind (*theosis* model) is that humans were created in the image of the triune God (icon model).<sup>72</sup> This also makes them capable of communion with their

<sup>70</sup> Mihail Neamtu, 'Between the Gospel and the Nation: Dumitru Staniloae's Ethno-Theology,' *Archaeus*, 10 (2006), 3, p. 27.

<sup>71</sup> Staniloae, *Jesus Christ or the Restoration of Humankind*, p. 406.

<sup>72</sup> According to Staniloae, the dialogic character of the human being results from its creation in the image of God as one in regard to its essence, and as different in regard to the person. This means that the intercommunication between human beings is a natural, necessary, and free act. See Lupu, 'Sinodalitatea,' p. 64. Moreover, Staniloae referred to this natural capacity for communion as 'natural sobornicity': Dumitru Staniloae, 'Natura sinodicitatii' [The Nature of Synodicity], *Studii Teologice*, 29 (1977), 9-10, pp. 605-610.

fellow human beings. When communion takes place after the model of Trinitarian communion (reflection model), Staniloae affirmed, the person is not lost in an impersonal uniformity. In other words, communion safeguards both the divine and human person:

‘Only in the Trinity, which is a unity of distinct persons, is the character of being a person fully assured. ... Properly speaking, the human person does not even exist except in the communion of nature with other persons. The eternal communion after which we yearn has its origin and fulfillment in the one eternal co-essentiality of the divine persons of the Trinity. And if unity without confusion between the divine persons is assured by their sharing in a common nature, then certainly the communion between God and those who believe is assured by their participation, through grace, in the divine nature or in the energies irradiating from the common nature of the three divine persons [icon, sacrament, and *theosis* models], which is to say, from their loving community.’<sup>73</sup>

These theological principles about the preservation of the person in communion, both in the Trinity and among human beings are themes that reoccur frequently in Staniloae’s writings. For example, throughout his book, *Jesus Christ, the Light of the World and the One Who Deifies Humankind*, Staniloae repeatedly criticized ideologies that affirm that the world is governed by blind laws, which end up in the disappearance of human persons. They exclude the existence of a loving God who offers to the faithful a life of eternal bliss in communion with the Triune God. Staniloae opposed these conceptions dominated by fate as being proper to most pantheistic philosophies and religions.<sup>74</sup> As a response, he emphasized the need for communion, in which the person is not lost in an impersonal union.<sup>75</sup>

<sup>73</sup> Id., *The Experience of God*, 1, pp. 70-71.

<sup>74</sup> Id., *Jesus Christ, the Light of the World*, pp. 169-170.

<sup>75</sup> It is true that Staniloae’s criticism of pantheism started early on in his career, before the Communist takeover. In 1943, when he published the first edition of *Jesus Christ or the Restoration of Humankind*, Communist ideology did not yet represent a significant threat. However, Staniloae saw the threat of the infiltration of pantheistic ideologies in the writings of Orthodox theologians such as Berdiaev and especially Bulgakov. Probably only later on, when he noticed that neither Berdiaev nor Bulgakov had the expected influence upon Orthodox theology, Staniloae stopped referring to them. But he did not cease to criticize pantheism. In my view, during this time Staniloae was in fact subtly criticizing Communist pantheist-like ideology, which proposed union without the preservation of

Paradoxically, if Communism theoretically advocates equality among people, in reality it leads to the subordination of the masses to their leaders. Where did Staniloae find the basis for true human equality and dignity? In the Trinity. He wrote that in the Trinity, 'since the being is one and is perfect love, the relationship is that of equal to equal, not that of superior to inferior or stranger to stranger.'<sup>76</sup> This is why, at the level of human relationships, 'the unity of communion is the sole unity which conforms to the dignity of the persons involved in the union. It is the sole unity which does not subordinate one person to another.'<sup>77</sup> Thus, as an alternative to ideologies that result in the loss of the person, Staniloae proposed the loving communion that exists within the Trinity and extends into the world, referring to the Trinity as 'the structure of perfect communion,' as discussed above. If communist authorities treated the people as objects and not subjects, Staniloae affirmed the value of each human being in communion with the others, after the model of Trinitarian intersubjectivity. Only if people treat each other as subjects, can they attain communion.<sup>78</sup> Even when he wrote about divine

personal characteristics. The Orthodox understanding of the preservation of the person in communion thus acquired a new relevance and meaning.

<sup>76</sup> Id., *The Experience of God*, 1, p. 258.

<sup>77</sup> Id., *Theology and the Church*, pp. 56ff.

<sup>78</sup> Staniloae wrote about the Trinitarian basis of our intersubjectivity, 'The spiritual character of the transparency or interpenetration of the divine persons, which is also a compenetration of the consciousness of each, can be still more fully expressed by the term 'intersubjectivity.' God is pure subject or Trinity of pure subjects. ... Not one of the three subjects sees anything as object in the persons of the others nor in himself; he experiences them as pure subjects and experiences himself too as pure subject. ... Full communion comes about only between persons who are and make themselves transparent as pure subjects. The more they are subjects and appear as subjects, the more the relations between them are characterized by a greater and freer degree of communication and communion and by a more evident interiority and conscious reciprocal compenetration, thus bringing into being a still greater intersubjectivity. ... The aspiration and, in part, the realized capacity of the human 'I' to be a simple unity while simultaneously containing all things and to be in ontological and dialogical relation with other 'I's' and thus to have them, in this sense, within himself as subjects is a reality that is perfectly realized in God from all eternity' (*The Experience of God*, 1, pp. 260-263). For a further discussion of Staniloae's theology of personhood, see Silviu Eugen Rogobete, *O ontologie a iubirii: Subiect si Realitate Personală suprema in gandirea parintelui Dumitru Staniloae [An Ontology of Love: Subject and Supreme Personal Reality in the Thought of Father Dumitru Staniloae]*, trans. Anca Dumitrascu and Adrian Guiu, Plural Religie, 66 (Iasi: Polirom, 2001). Also Rogobete, 'Mystical Existentialism,' pp. 167-206.

*taxis* (the order within the immanent Trinity), Staniloae affirmed that order is not devoid of freedom,<sup>79</sup> which is very significant in the context of an oppressive regime. The communion that exists between the Trinity and humankind, based on our creation in the image of the triune God and while preserving the person, is fully manifested in the Church. Staniloae developed these theological principles for different reasons during and after Communism. Before the Revolution in 1989, these elements of Staniloae's theology represented a subtle criticism of Communist ideology.

After the fall of the Iron Curtain, Staniloae criticized the model of society offered to Romania in the new European context, where many intellectuals proposed an individualistic (or even pantheistic) type of humanism of Western origin. Moreover, Staniloae perceived this current as a nihilistic drive of Western individualism into Romanian society.<sup>80</sup> In response, he argued that this kind of humanism benefits neither the human person nor society. He called for the rediscovery of true personhood in the Church, offering the spirit of interpersonal communion of Orthodoxy in general, and Romanian culture in particular. Staniloae's understanding of unity-in-diversity challenges the contemporary tendency (conscious or not) to put individual interests above the good of the others, society, and the Church.

Thus, even though Staniloae wrote under a Communist regime that censored him closely, he subtly managed to criticize impersonal and repressive ideologies by claiming that the true personal character, subjectivity, dignity, equality, and freedom can be found in the Church. Here, communion takes place after the model of Trinitarian communion and the person is not lost in an impersonal pantheistic kind of union. Consequently, the solution to communist-atheist depersonalization is full membership in the Church, which is filled with the Trinity. The same solution is applicable in today's individualistic market economies, where personal gain tramples the dignity of the others and regards them as objects. The same attitude stands at the root of military conflicts, where human victims are regarded as objects that

<sup>79</sup> Staniloae, *The Experience of God*, 1, p. 274.

<sup>80</sup> Dumitru Staniloae, *Reflectii despre spiritualitatea poporului român [Reflections on the Spirituality of the Romanian People]* (Bucuresti: Elion, 2001), pp. 18-39, esp. 31-32. For a further discussion of this topic see Neamtu, 'Between the Gospel and the Nation,' p. 30.

can be killed, and not as persons related to the aggressor in communion. Staniloae's theology of the person thus provides significant contributions in the area of depersonalization as manifested in Communism, aggressive market economies, and military conflicts. Besides these contextual applications, the universal principle that communion preserves and nourishes personal characteristics is another major contribution of Staniloae's theology to an issue that is widely discussed today.

## CONCLUSION

Staniloae's understanding of the relationship between the Trinity and the Church can be systematized in four models: (1) the Church as a reflection of the Trinity, or the analogical relationship between the two; (2) the Church as icon of the Trinity, where, just as in the icon the type points to its archetype because the icon is a presence of grace of the archetype, so the Church is a presence of the Trinity by grace, pointing towards the Trinity; (3) the Church as the 'third sacrament' of the Trinity in the world, as instrument and revelation of God; and (4) the ecclesiological consequences of Staniloae's understanding of *theosis*, in which creation becomes god by grace, though not God by nature. These models result in Staniloae's affirmation that the same intra-Trinitarian relationships are manifested in the Trinity and in the Church, providing a valuable contribution to two contemporary issues in particular. First, to further the ecumenical dialogue on the ecclesiological consequences of the Filioque (especially the papacy), I have suggested that one should apply only the last three models in order to gain a better understanding of Church life based on Triadology. Second, Staniloae's theology offers a solution to the increasing problem of depersonalization that was characteristic not only of the Romanian communist society in which Staniloae wrote, but also of present-day individualistic societies. I have suggested that his understanding of the dignity, equality, and freedom of the person in communion, which is based on his Triadology, may serve as a model for constructive inter-personal relations. Thus, the relationship between the Trinity and the Church as encapsulated in the four models that I have proposed based on Staniloae's theology contributes to both ecumenism and society today.

## Abstract

Staniloae's understanding of the relationship between the Trinity and the Church can be systematized in four models: the Church being a reflection of the Trinity; an icon of the Trinity, where the Church is a presence of the Trinity by grace, pointing towards the Trinity; the 'third sacrament,' as instrument and revelation of the Trinity; and the ecclesiological consequences of Staniloae's understanding of *theosis*. Consequently, Staniloae contended that the same intra-Trinitarian relationships are manifested both in the Trinity and in the Church, contributing to the ecumenical dialogue on the ecclesiological consequences of the Filioque and suggesting a solution to the problem of depersonalization.