



Journal Homepage: - www.journalijar.com
**INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF
 ADVANCED RESEARCH (IJAR)**

Article DOI: 10.21474/IJAR01/4004
 DOI URL: <http://dx.doi.org/10.21474/IJAR01/4004>



RESEARCH ARTICLE

THE TRINITY IN DUMITRU STANILOAE

Lect Univ Dr Pavel Chiritescu.

Manuscript Info

Manuscript History

Received: 11 February 2017
 Final Accepted: 07 March 2017
 Published: April 2017

Abstract

The articles explores the concept of the Trinity in the theology of orthodox theologian:

Dumitru Staniloae. For Staniloae, the Church is the icon of the Trinity and the Trinity is the power and model for the Church: the structure of the supreme love. Since the Church is an imitation of the Trinity, we should express the unity and love. The spiritual purpose of the church is to introduce the believer into the sphere of the Trinitarian life, unity and love. Like the Trinity, the church is *one* but in the same time a communion of persons. The church is thus the locus of the fulfillment of the Trinity's plan, the medium of salvation. By extension, this fundamental idea of the Trinity determines the mission of the local church and constitutes the basis of the structure of social relationship. Living according to the Trinitarian model should lead naturally to an implication in the communities.

Copy Right, IJAR, 2017,. All rights reserved.

Introduction:-

The Orthodox theologian Dumitru Staniloae is increasingly recognized as one of the most important modern orthodox theologians. He was born in Brasov (Romania) in 1903. From 1922 he studied theology at the University of Cernăuți and then at Athens, manifesting a special interest in Byzantine history and theology (esp. that of Greek Fathers, Russian theology, Gregory Palamas) and German philosophy. Later on he studied Byzantine history in Germany and France. Back in Romania, he was involved in an academic career until his death (1993). During the communist period he spent five years in prison because of his participation in a renewal movement of the Romanian Orthodox Church.

Staniloae's theology is marked by a deep loyalty to the past. It is an attempt to reevaluate the theological formulation of modern orthodoxy in the light of the Writings of the Fathers. He abandoned the scholasticism of XIX century orthodox theology by going back to patristic and Byzantine sources,¹ where he found the true spirit of orthodoxy. In a way he is a mediator between the Greek Fathers and the modern orthodox theologians. Staniloae's theology is an attempt to a fresh articulation of the Christian belief.

He "regenerated the dogmatics of the nineteenth century and liberated the orthodox tradition of abusive stereotypes and of a traditionalist exegesis, regaining its ecumenical dimension."²

¹ Staniloae finds a great source of inspiration in the writings of St. Gregory Palamas

² E Bartos, *Conceptul de Indumnezeire in Teologia lui Staniloae, Theosis* (Oradea: IBE, 1999), 52.

Revelation and Knowledge:-

For the Orthodox Christian, God has revealed Himself to mankind and yet in His essence remains incomprehensible. The knowledge of God is therefore possible by supra-natural revelation but it is never complete. The apophatic approach is in favor because it has the capacity of transcending rational categories.³ “Faith seeking understanding” from western thought is more “faith adoring the mystery” in orthodoxy.⁴ However, Staniloae makes an apophatic - cataphatic synthesis. He shows the insufficiency of the cataphatism of western theology but also the radical character of the Byzantine apophatism; apophatism could lead to relativism and agnosticism. As a reflex of the Trinitarian *perihoresis*, Staniloae understands knowledge as being close related with communion. “We should not become agnostic (drown in uncertainties) because we have the assurance of the eternal realities “by communion with the divine personal reality.”⁵

“From Revelation, we know that God is *essence* subsisting in three Persons. Such a thing does not exist in the created order It is a mystery. We never should think that

we have fully understood this mystery of Trinity. Such an attitude would stop our spirit moving towards the mystery of the fullness of life which is beyond comprehension.”⁶

The role of this knowledge is one of transformation; knowledge that does not produce love and worship is in vain.⁷ The emphasis is on the mystic aspect of the Christian life. Theology should promote the spiritual progress of Christians toward union with God, *theosis*.⁸

The Orthodox criticize any theology which is too rational, too concerned with logical consistency. An appeal to the reason is combined with distrust of rationalism.⁹ Staniloae insists that in matters of faith and doctrine two ideas may appear contradictory and yet both be true.

There was a time when the coincidence of those which are opposed was counted as incompatible with reason. Wherever such synthesis appear - and this is the case with all realities reason tried to fragment this in the irreconcilable and contradictory notions, stirring one against the others or trying to unite them all by force. Reasons now become use to join the distinctiveness with the unity principle, realizing the antinomic way of being of all reality.... Plurality is not a danger for unity, by contrary, it is necessary and interior to unity and the unity manifests itself in plurality. Plurality maintains the unity and the unity plurality and the weakening of one of them could lead to the disparities of life.¹⁰

The Trinity:-**Holy Trinity, the Ground of our Salvation:-**

The basis of Orthodox Trinitarian theology is found in soteriology: the Fathers were actually preoccupied, not with speculation, but with man's salvation. The starting point was the Biblical experience of salvation in “the fully identifiable and distinct person of Christ and the Spirit.”^{11 12} As Staniloae puts it: “the dogmatic formulation of the Triune God ... is a confession in a Reality who saves us and then gives us a minimal understanding of His incomprehensibility” and “opens for us the perspective of personal participation in Him.” “Salvation ... is nothing less than the extension of the love relationship from the Persons of Trinity to the human created order. Only a Triune God makes possible that one divine Person incarnates himself and brings his brothers into humanity, in a filial relationship to the Father.” The Holy Spirit spiritualizes the humanity assumed by the Son, making therefore

³ Bartos, 52.

⁴ R A Whitacre, R A. ‘The Orthodox Churches,’ *Handbook of Christian Belief*, ed. R. Keeley (Herts: Lion Publishing, 1982), 434

⁵ Staniloae, ‘Teologie,’ 283.

⁶ Staniloae, ‘Teologie,’ 283.

⁷ It is important to know that the orthodox faith is manifested more in worship in liturgy, and there is less preoccupation with systematic theology.

⁸ The concept of *theosis* is the center of Staniloae's thought.

⁹ Whitacre, 435. Also, a lack of legalism is combined with strong ascetism.

¹⁰ Staniloae, ‘Teologie,’ 288.

¹¹ Meyendorff, 181.

¹² Staniloae, ‘Teologie,’ 284-287.

possible our participation in the divine love of the Son to the Father. The Trinity is “the infinite reservoir, the power and the model” for our progressive communion and participation in God (*theosis*)²

The Holy Trinity: The structure of the Supreme Love Staniloae argues that “a common being in three persons,” is a condition of the full personal character and full communion. “The love from this world presupposes as origin and purpose, the perfect and the eternal love ... And, this eternal love presupposes a common being in three persons.”¹³ The proper number (applied to individuals), which represents by excellence the distinctiveness in unity or the explicit unity, is the number *three*. A unique subject in an absolute sense would miss the joy and then the sense of existence. *Two* do not say all about what unity means. Two subjects have some sense of existence and joy but a limited one. This is because the communion in two does not open the entire existential horizon, which is beyond them. This kind of communion does not make men happy, less so God.¹⁴ Only the third partner of communion, not a passive one (as an object) could take the two out of their loneliness in two. “The existence of the third subject is the real test of the true love between two. Only by the third, the love of the two can prove itself to be generous, able to expand to the subjects beyond them.” This is why only through the Holy Spirit the divine love is extended to people. Only the existence of the third One could account for the creation of a world of *egos* and by the same Spirit, people are called to participate in God.¹⁵

A Triune Person is also for Staniloae, the proper structure for a full unity of joy.

“The Father enjoys the Son and He wants to communicate to a third this joy, toward the fullness of joy. The fullness of joy is only fulfilled when the joy is communicated by each Person to the Third. For this purpose the Father has proceeded the third Subject.” The Son shares His Father’s joy with the Spirit, without proceeding the Spirit again, since He is already preceded from Father. “If the Son would proceed the third, He will close himself to the Father in communication with another Subject.”¹⁶

Holy Trinity, the Mystery of the Perfect Unity of the Distinct Persons

The Orthodox’s belief is: “God is identically monad and triad.”¹⁷ Staniloae also affirms both unity and distinctiveness in the Trinity: “God is One ... and All from Him are unity even if it is triune. It is not One, more God than Another, it is not One the first and Another the second. It is not division of will, nor division of power, ... but the Trinity is undivided in the things which make them different.”¹⁷

The unity of being and personal distinctiveness of human people is taken to some extent as a model of unity and distinctiveness inside the Trinity. The humanity is seen as a network. Each human hypostasis is connected with the other ontologically and this ontological link is manifested in the necessity of the relationship between them. “Each human person is a center of a rays network like a star. Thus the humanity is not a sum of individual persons but a unique being carried by many *hypostases* in solidarity.” It is a unity in plurality.¹⁸

The Hypostatic Trinity bears both similarities and dissimilarities with human the race. “In spite of the solidarity of the human race, each individual acts separately, (so that is proper to regard them as many). This is not so ... with God. The Father never acts independently of the Son, or the Son of the Spirit. A Divine action ... always begins from Father.. ,”¹⁹ Also, humans have the capacity of reproducing himself, while God remains only one.

Staniloae, along with the Fathers, does not think of *being* in separation from the *person*. All Three are perfectly One in the Other, all possessing in common the entire divine nature. This is because the divine nature is a spiritual one and exists only in the three Persons. The divine spiritual essence subsisting only in Subjects implies always a

¹³ Staniloae, ‘Teologie,’ 282.

¹⁴ This view contradicts the importance of number two from Romanticism.

¹⁵ Staniloae, ‘Teologie,’ 307-309.

¹⁶ Staniloae, ‘Teologie,’ 317.

¹⁷ Meyendorff, 182. A quotation from Maximus de Confessor.

¹⁸ Staniloae, ‘Teologie,’ 289. A quotation from Gregory of Nyssa. Capadocian Fathers gave “preeminence to the personal diversity over the essential unity.” They were accused of tritheism, so that G. of Nyssa states: “there are not three gods.” In the classical Latin Trinitarian theology, Father, Son, and Spirit are only relatively distinct.”

Meyendorff, 184.

¹⁸ Staniloae, ‘Teologie,’ 293.

¹⁹ Meyendorff, 185.

conscious relationship between the Subjects. It is one essence in three hypostatic subjects, in a co-penetration (*perihoresis*), a communion of subjects fully transparent to each other. *Being* does not mean a confusion of the persons because the begotten birth is an incommunicable attribute of the Father.²⁰ To each Triune Subject the Others are interior. At the same time, to each Triune Person the Other Triune Subjects are perfectly transparent, as other Selves of Himself.

“The Father self knows Himself by His image from the Son, and the Son knows Himself looking to the Father as His Model.”²¹ The Triune Subjects exist within each other but they are not identical. It is as “all numbers are a unity but in the same time every unity is a number.” “So, God is *One* and *Three*, but, beyond our common understanding of one and three.” “The Three Subjects exist within each other in their unity which characterizes a non-dispersed being that cannot be counted as three entities with any degree of discontinuity between them”²² (Jn 14; 9,14).

The Divine **Inter-subjectivity**:-

When Staniloae explains the spiritual character of the transparency and interpenetration of the Divine Persons (which implies an interpenetration of their knowledge), he uses also the term *inter-subjectivity*. “God is pure subject, or He is a Trinity of pure Subjects. All divine essence, spiritual essence subsisting in the three, is subjective or threefold subjective.” “Neither, one of the three Subjects see some objective in the Other Person or in Himself. Therefore “each person lives the Other [as pure subject] but not as himself but as themselves.” If the Triune subjects would possess something objective in themselves, this would make them treating one another as object and as a result this would decrease the full openness\communion to the Others and thus the One would not possess the Others two fully within\inside.”²³

The Father, begetting the Son, does not make Him His object. Therefore, the Christian teaching uses both expressions “The Son begotten from Father as well as the Father begotten from the Son.” The act of begetting is eternal. ... Both live this eternal act as pure subject. The Spirit is also into an eternal proceeding from the Father ...”²⁴ The Son is not passive in the act of birth from Father neither Spirit in the act of proceeding. This is for Staniloae, a proof against the Greek’s idea of a passive God.²⁵

The Triune inter-subjectivity, makes possible the reciprocal exchange of the *Egos*. “It is like another *ego* living inside me and possessing all I have, but at the same time I remain the owner of what I am, and in the same time I may use my *ego* as a perfect identical content of a dialog which implies giving and receiving involvement.” “In God it is not possible that an *Ego* affirms Himself in relation with the Other, but continuously sees Another as his Substitute.” Each sees Himself in relation to Another, or sees Himself in the Others.²⁶ The Father is known as the One who loves the Son. However, the Father’s *Ego* do not lose Himself by this but it is affirmed in the Son, who in return wants more than anything to do the Father’s will.²⁷

“The Christ wishes (the One who live in us) the substitution of his *Ego* by Spirit *ego* in us. He gives us the model and power to substitute our *ego* with the Spirit’s and with Christ’s, and with our neighbor’s, in this way restoring our original unity damaged by sin. Therefore, salvation, as reunification with God and one another could only be the work of the Trinity.” Only love, originated in Trinity could enable us to prefer others to ourselves, to come close to one another and to become one. “The sin of individualism prevents us from understanding the fullness of love and unity inside the Trinity which is consistent with maintaining the distinctiveness of the Persons.”²⁸

²⁰Staniloae, ‘Teologie,’ 193-197. He notes: “It is necessary to see the divine being simultaneously as unity-relationship, or as a relationship inside the unity.” Neither, the unity or the relationship should be damaged. This will maintain the both love as an act, which bring in being and love as relationship.

²¹ Staniloae, ‘Teologie,’ 199.

²² Staniloae, ‘Teologie,’ 306.

²³ Staniloae, ‘Teologie,’ 300.



²⁴ Staniloae, ‘Teologie,’ 301.

²⁵The catholic theological concept of *gemratio activa* and *generatio passiva*.

²⁶Staniloae, ‘Teologie,’ 304.

²⁷ For eg. sometime Father reveals the Son and sometime Son reveals the father.

²⁸ Staniloae, ‘Teologie,’ 305 (for all quotations from the paragraph).

The Three Persons, a Condition of their Distinctiveness and Objectivity:-

The being of God, as pure subjectivity, should not be understood as an illusory content. Staniloae notes: "God is an objective subjectivity or a subjective objectivity." This objective-subjective constituency of the Deity is possible because God is Trinity. The third subject fulfill the role of the object, which give to the other the feeling of objectivity, avoiding the danger of the two of becoming a non-distinctive unity by an exclusive love.²⁹ "In Deity, the Third person has the role of maintaining the Other Two into a personal distinctiveness ... due to their infinitudes." The third assures the objectivity and distinctiveness.³⁰

Trinity and Uncreated Energies:-

Western theology, as Staniloae suggests, could not reconcile the unchangeableness of God and His implication in history. Staniloae approaches this subject by an appeal to the *uncreated energies*. God is involved in our world by His energies, which are not His essence, not His persons but are located "around God's being [Trinity]." These *energies* are the means of God's revelation and activity in history. The Holy Spirit introduces the divine *energies* in creation. Thus God comes out of His being by the Spirit. But each act\ energy is the work of the Trinity.³¹

Staniloae's doctrine concerning the *uncreated energies* permits man's participation in the divine existence of the One whose essence could not be shared.³² This view safeguards the inaccessible character of the essence and reconciles the transcendence of God with His implication in creation and history.³³

The Dogma of the Filoque:-

Staniloae becomes polemic when he approaches the *Filoque* issue. He accuses the Catholic's doctrine of being pantheistic³⁴ and Protestantism of being individualistic.

Both pantheism and individualism are a distortion of nature. A specific reference is made to a quotation from the catholic theologian H Muhlen: "the difference of the Spirit from the Father and from the Son consists in that that He (Spirit) is the absolute closeness of two realities in a single person, i.e., the Spirit is the unity between the Father and the Son in one person." Thus, Staniloae sees in Muhlen's view, that the divine being is somehow an equivalent person, first with the Father and Son and then with the Holy Spirit. The love between the Father and Son, which is identical with the Spirit, makes the two persons another impersonal being.³⁵

Staniloae sees the causes of the Catholic's error, due to an appeal to unrevealed doctrine and to the analogy of the psychic process when we think of the origin of the Holy Spirit. Contrary to the West, Staniloae uses a personalistic approach and attributes the *origin* of hypostatic 'subsistence' to the *hypostasis* of the Father³⁶, not to a common being (as Catholics), a view which would "make relative the distinctiveness of the . persons."³⁷

Implications and Conclusions:-

For Staniloae, the Church is the icon of the Trinity and the Trinity is the power and model for the Church. The Church should show in her life that she is an extension of the Trinitarian relationship. "One cannot think about the church without the Holy Trinity, as a church exclusively of Christ or exclusively of Holy Spirit."³⁸ The Holy Spirit's role is to maintain the Trinitarian love. For Staniloae, pneumatology does not come as a distinct doctrine but is closely linked with Trinity, Christ and salvation. Each person of the Trinity shares the other's work, thus the Father and the Son are present in each work of the Holy Spirit.⁴⁰

²⁹ Staniloae, 'Teologie,' 310. The two persons in an exclusive communion do not necessary reflect an objective reality.

³⁰ Staniloae, 'Teologie,' 310. The forth Person is not necessary, this will mean dispersation and limitation of the third.

³¹ Bartos, 95.

³² Bartos, 140.

³⁴ Meyendorff, 187.

³⁴ Staniloae, 'Teologie,' 316.

³⁵ Staniloae, 'Teologie,' 314.

³⁶ The Capadocian Fathers maintained the personal identity of the Father as the ultimate origin of all divine being and action. Meyendorff, 183

³⁷ Staniloae, 'Teologie,' 316-317.

³⁸ Staniloae, D. 'Sobomicitate Deschisa,' *Ortodoxia* 2 (1971), p. 179-180.

Since the Church is an imitation of the Trinity, we should participate in the work of salvation, promoting the spiritual growth of man in Christ. The spiritual purpose of the church is to introduce the believer into the sphere of the Trinitarian life and love and to come into a personal relationship with Father, Son and Holy Spirit. "But by growing in understanding of it [Trinity], we grow toward the promoting of an increasing unity among us as human persons."⁴¹ It is a supra-rational paradox, still not an abstract speculation isolated by life. The church is thus the locus of the fulfillment of the Trinity's plan, the medium of salvation.

The church is the common participation of the human being in the life of the Holy Trinity. Living in the image of the Trinity, the church reveals the antinomic character of unity and diversity. The trinity distinction between *persona*, *essence* and *energies*, has similarities in human side as: persons, nature and works (spiritual gifts). Thus the Church is a society or community in which the human and visible dimension is closely united with the divine and invisible dimension of the Trinity.

The communion of the church is based on the Trinitarian relationship, from which the believers receive power of communion. Like the Trinity, the church is *one* but in the same time a communion of persons. By extension, this fundamental idea of the Trinity determines the mission of the local church and constitutes the basis of the structure of social relationship. Living according to the Trinitarian model should lead naturally to an implication in the communities. The church is "an open community."⁴²

Since the entire creation is the work of the Trinity, "between them existing an ontological and fundamental link," the entire creation is called to universal transfiguration by grace. The starting point was the incarnation of the Logos and the discedence of the Spirit.⁴³ God and man have profound and inseparable links with Christ. Therefore, the Incarnation becomes the center of his entire perspective about God and the world.⁴⁵ The Son assumed our humanity in order to change it.

Staniloae's Trinitarian theology is not a speculative one, but is rooted in the concrete realities of man's salvation, church and mission. He engages a "theology of experience" versus an abstract theology. The love and communion from the created order and especially from Church, is nothing other than the extension of the love relationship from the Persons of the Trinity to humanity by the Holy Spirit.⁴⁶ The doctrine of the Trinity is closely related to other doctrines and especially, with soteriology, pneumatology, ecclesiology and

⁴⁰ Bartos, 364.

⁴¹ Staniloae, 'Teologie,' 289.

⁴² I. Bria, 'Spațiul Indumnezeirii,' *Ortodoxia* 3-4 (1993), p. 97.

⁴³ D Staniloae, 'Sinteza eclesiologica,' ST 5-6 (1955), p. 275-276.

⁴⁴ Bartos, 361.

⁴⁵ In the Orthodoxy there is no radical separation between reason and revelation, grace and nature, human and divine.

⁴⁶ Staniloae, 'Teologie,' 284.

⁴⁷ In the West, since the time of Augustine, the unity of the divine being served as the starting point.

Missiology. The Trinity is "the infinite reservoir, the power and the model" for our progressive communion and participation in God. The Trinity is expressed in personal terms and remains primarily a concrete experience. The three *hypostases* were seen first of all in their personal functions while "the unity of God's nature is more an article of faith, coupled always with an insistence on the absolute unknowability of the divine essence."⁴⁷ Against the Greek concept of a static and incommunicable God, Staniloae presents an eternal and personal Triune God, a living God of love and communion.

Bibliography:-

1. Bartos, E. Conceptul de Indumnezeire in Teologia lui Staniloae: Theosis. Oradea: Editura Institutului Biblic **Emanuel**, 1999.
2. Bria, I. 'Spațiul îndumnezeirii,' Ortodoxia 3-4 (1993), p. 97.
3. Costa de Beauregard. The Father Dumitru Staniloae: Mica Dogmatica Vorbita, Sibiu: Editura Deisis, 1995.
4. Hammond, T C. In Understanding Be Man. London: IVF, 1936 (1958).
5. Meyendorff, J. Byzantine Theology: Historical Trends and Doctrinal Themes. New York: Fordham University Press, 1983.
6. Staniloae, D. Teologie Dogmatica Ortodoxa. Vol.I. București: IBMBOR, 1978.
7. Staniloae, D. Sfanta Treime sau La început a fost Iubirea. Staniloae, D. 'Sobomicitate Deschisa' Ortodoxia 2 (1971), p. 165-180.
8. Staniloae, D. 'Sinteza eclesiologica,' Studii Teologice 5-6 (1955), p. 262-284.
9. Thiessen, H C. Lectures in Systematic Theology. Oradea: SMR, 1986 (1979).
10. Whitacre, R A. The Orthodox Churches, Handbook of Christian Belief, Ed. R. Keeley. Herts: Lion Publishing, 1982.(434).

The Holy Trinity: The structure of the Supreme Love:-

Staniloae argues that "a common being in three persons," is a condition of the full personal character and full communion. "The love from this world presupposes as origin and purpose, the perfect and the eternal love ... And, this eternal love presupposes a common being in three persons."³⁹ The proper number (applied to individuals), which represents by excellence the distinctiveness in unity or the explicit unity, is the number *three*. A unique subject in an absolute sense would miss the joy and then the sense of existence. *Two* do not say all about what unity means. Two subjects have some sense of existence and joy but a limited one. This is because the communion in two does not open the entire existential horizon, which is beyond them. This kind of communion does not make men happy, less so God.⁴⁰ Only the third partner of communion, not a passive one (as an object) could take the two out of their loneliness in two. "The existence of the third subject is the real test of the true love between two. Only by the third, the love of the two can prove itself to be generous, able to expand to the subjects beyond them." This is why only through the Holy Spirit the divine love is extended to people. Only the existence of the third One could account for the creation of a world of *egos* and by the same Spirit, people are called to participate in God.⁴¹

A Triune Person is also for Staniloae, the proper structure for a full unity of joy.

"The Father enjoys the Son and He wants to communicate to a third this joy, toward the fullness of joy. The fullness of joy is only fulfilled when the joy is communicated by each Person to the Third. For this purpose the Father has proceeded the third Subject." The Son shares His Father's joy with the Spirit, without proceeding the Spirit again, since He is already preceded from Father. "If the Son would proceed the third, He will close himself to the Father in communication with another Subject."⁴²

³⁹ Staniloae, 'Teologie,' 282.

⁴⁰ This view contradicts the importance of number two from Romanticism.

⁴¹ Staniloae, 'Teologie,' 307-309.

⁴² Staniloae, 'Teologie,' 317.

Holy Trinity, the Mystery of the Perfect Unity of the Distinct Persons.

The Orthodox's belief is: "God is identically monad and triad."⁴³ Staniloae also affirms both unity and distinctiveness in the Trinity: "God is One ... and All from Him are unity even if it is triune. It is not One, more God than Another, it is not One the first and Another the second. It is not division of will, nor division of power, ... but the Trinity is undivided in the things which make them different."⁴³

The unity of being and personal distinctiveness of human people is taken to some extent as a model of unity and distinctiveness inside the Trinity. The humanity is seen as a network. Each human hypostasis is connected with the other ontologically and this ontological link is manifested in the necessity of the relationship between them. "Each human person is a center of a rays network like a star. Thus the humanity is not a sum of individual persons but a unique being carried by many *hypostases* in solidarity." It is a unity in plurality.⁴⁴

The Hypostatic Trinity bears both similarities and dissimilarities with human the race. "In spite of the solidarity of the human race, each individual acts separately, (so that is proper to regard them as many). This is not so ... with God. The Father never acts independently of the Son, or the Son of the Spirit. A Divine action ... always begins from Father..,"⁴⁵ Also, humans have the capacity of reproducing himself, while God remains only one.

Staniloae, along with the Fathers, does not think of *being* in separation from the *person*. All Three are perfectly One in the Other, all possessing in common the entire divine nature. This is because the divine nature is a spiritual one and exists only in the three Persons. The divine spiritual essence subsisting only in Subjects implies always a conscious relationship between the Subjects. It is one essence in three hypostatic subjects, in a co-penetration (*perihoresis*), a communion of subjects fully transparent to each other. *Being* does not mean a confusion of the persons because the begotten \birth is an incommunicable attribute of the Father.⁴⁶

To each Triune Subject the Others are interior. At the same time, to each Triune Person the Other Triune Subjects are perfectly transparent, as other Selves of Himself.

"The Father self knows Himself by His image from the Son, and the Son knows Himself looking to the Father as His Model."⁴⁷ The Triune Subjects exist within each other but they are not identical. It is as "all numbers are a unity but in the same time every unity is a number." "So, God is *One* and *Three*, but, beyond our common understanding of one and three." "The Three Subjects exist within each other in their unity which characterizes a non-dispersed being that cannot be counted as three entities with any degree of discontinuity between them"⁴⁸(Jn 14; 9,14).

The Divine **Inter-subjectivity**:-

When Staniloae explains the spiritual character of the transparency and interpenetration of the Divine Persons (which implies an interpenetration of their knowledge), he uses also the term *inter-subjectivity*. "God is pure subject, or He is a Trinity of pure Subjects. All divine essence, spiritual essence subsisting in the three, is subjective or threefold subjective." "Neither, one of the three Subjects see some objective in the Other Person or in Himself. Therefore "each person lives the Other [as pure subject] but not as himself but as themselves." If the Triune subjects would posses something objective in themselves, this would make them treating one another as object and as a result this would decrease the full openness\communion to the Others and thus the One would not possess the Others two fully within\inside.⁴⁹

⁴³Meyendorff, 182. A quotation from Maximus de Confessor.

⁴⁴Staniloae, 'Teologie,' 289. A quotation from Gregory of Nissa. Capadocian Fathers gave "preeminence to the personal diversity over the essential unity." They were accused of tritheism, so that G. of Nyssa states: "there are not three gods." In the classical Latin Trinitarian theology, Father, Son, and Spirit are only relatively distinct."

Meyendorff, 184.

⁴⁵ Staniloae, 'Teologie,' 293.

⁴⁶Meyendorff, 185.

⁴⁷Staniloae, 'Teologie,' 193-197. He notes: "It is necessary to see the divine being simultaneously as unity-relationship, or as a relationship inside the unity." Neither, the unity or the relationship should be damaged. This will maintain the both love as an act, which bring in being and love as relationship.

⁴⁸ Staniloae, 'Teologie,' 199.

⁴⁹ Staniloae, 'Teologie,' 306.

⁵⁰ Staniloae, 'Teologie,' 300.

The Father, begetting the Son, does not make Him His object. Therefore, the Christian teaching uses both expressions “The Son begotten from Father as well as the Father begotten from the Son.” The act of begetting is eternal. ... Both live this eternal act as pure subject. The Spirit is also into an eternal proceeding from the Father ...”⁵⁰ The Son is not passive in the act of birth from Father neither Spirit in the act of proceeding. This is for Staniloae, a proof against the Greek’s idea of a passive God.⁵¹

The Triune inter-subjectivity, makes possible the reciprocal exchange of the *Egos*. “It is like another *ego* living inside me and possessing all I have, but at the same time I remain the owner of what I am, and in the same time I may use my *ego* as a perfect identical content of a dialog which implies giving and receiving involvement.” “In God it is not possible that an *Ego* affirms Himself in relation with the Other, but continuously sees Another as his Substitute.” Each sees Himself in relation to Another, or sees Himself in the Others.⁵² The Father is known as the One who loves the Son. However, the Father’s *Ego* do not lose Himself by this but it is affirmed in the Son, who in return wants more than anything to do the Father’s will.⁵³

“The Christ wishes (the One who live in us) the substitution of his *Ego* by Spirit *ego* in us. He gives us the model and power to substitute our *ego* with the Spirit’s and with Christ’s, and with our neighbor’s, in this way restoring our original unity damaged by sin. Therefore, salvation, as reunification with God and one another could only be the work of the Trinity.” Only love, originated in Trinity could enable us to prefer others to ourselves, to come close to one another and to become one. “The sin of individualism prevents us from understanding the fullness of love and unity inside the Trinity which is consistent with maintaining the distinctiveness of the Persons.”

The Three Persons, a Condition of their Distinctiveness and Objectivity:-

The being of God, as pure subjectivity, should not be understood as an illusory content. Staniloae notes: “God is an objective subjectivity or a subjective objectivity.” This objective-subjective constituency of the Deity is possible because God is Trinity. The third subject fulfill the role of the object, which give to the other the feeling of objectivity, avoiding the danger of the two of becoming a non-distinctive unity by an exclusive love.⁵⁴ “In Deity, the Third person has the role of maintaining the Other Two into a personal distinctiveness ... due to their infinitudes.” The third assures the objectivity and distinctiveness.⁵⁵

Trinity and Uncreated Energies:-

Western theology, as Staniloae suggests, could not reconcile the unchangeableness of God and His implication in history. Staniloae approaches this subject by an appeal to the *uncreated energies*. God is involved in our world by His energies, which are not His essence, not His persons but are located “around God’s being [Trinity].” These *energies* are the means of God’s revelation and activity in history. The Holy Spirit introduces the divine *energies* in creation. Thus God comes out of His being by the Spirit. But each act\ energy is the work of the Trinity.⁵⁶ Staniloae’s doctrine concerning the *uncreated energies* permits man’s participation in the divine existence of the One whose essence could not be shared.⁵⁷ This view safeguards the inaccessible character of the essence and reconciles the transcendence of God with His implication in creation and history.⁵⁸

The Dogma of the Filioque:-

Staniloae becomes polemic when he approaches the *Filioque* issue. He accuses the Catholic’s doctrine of being pantheistic⁵⁹ and Protestantism of being individualistic.



⁵⁰ Staniloae, ‘Teologie,’ 301.

⁵¹ The catholic theological concept of *gemratio activa* and *generatio passiva*.

⁵² Staniloae, ‘Teologie,’ 304.

⁵³ For eg. sometime Father reveals the Son ad sometime Son reveals the father.

⁵⁴ Staniloae, ‘Teologie,’ 310. The two persons in an exclusive communion do not necessary reflect an objective reality.

⁵⁵ Staniloae, ‘Teologie,’ 310. The forth Person is not necessary, this will mean dispersation and limitation of the third.

⁵⁶ Bartos, 95.

⁵⁷ Bartos, 140.

⁵⁸ Meyendorff, 187.

⁵⁹ Staniloae, ‘Teologie,’ 316.

Both pantheism and individualism are a distortion of nature. A specific reference is made to a quotation from the catholic theologian H Muhlen: "the difference of the Spirit from the Father and from the Son consists in that that He (Spirit) is the absolute closeness of two realities in a single person, i.e., the Spirit is the unity between the Father and the Son in one person." Thus, Staniloae sees in Muhlen's view, that the divine being is somehow an equivalent person, first with the Father and Son and then with the Holy Spirit. The love between the Father and Son, which is identical with the Spirit, makes the two persons another impersonal being.⁶⁰

Staniloae sees the causes of the Catholic's error, due to an appeal to unrevealed doctrine and to the analogy of the psychic process when we think of the origin of the Holy Spirit. Contrary to the West, Staniloae uses a personalistic approach and attributes the *origin* of hypostatic 'subsistence' to the *hypostasis* of the Father⁶¹, not to a common being (as Catholics), a view which would "make relative the distinctiveness of the . persons."⁶²

Implications And Conclusions:-

For Staniloae, the Church is the icon of the Trinity and the Trinity is the power and model for the Church. The Church should show in her life that she is an extension of the Trinitarian relationship. "One cannot think about the church without the Holy Trinity, as a church exclusively of Christ or exclusively of Holy Spirit."⁶³ The Holy Spirit's role is to maintain the Trinitarian love. For Staniloae, pneumatology does not come as a distinct doctrine but is closely linked with Trinity, Christ and salvation. Each person of the

Trinity shares the other's work, thus the Father and the Son are present in each work of the Holy Spirit.⁴⁰

Since the Church is an imitation of the Trinity, we should participate in the work of salvation, promoting the spiritual growth of man in Christ. The spiritual purpose of the church is to introduce the believer into the sphere of the Trinitarian life and love and to come into a personal relationship with Father, Son and Holy Spirit. "But by growing in understanding of it [Trinity], we grow toward the promoting of an increasing unity among us as human persons."⁴¹ It is a supra-rational paradox, still not an abstract speculation isolated by life. The church is thus the locus of the fulfillment of the Trinity's plan, the medium of salvation.

The church is the common participation of the human being in the life of the Holy Trinity. Living in the image of the Trinity, the church reveals the antinomic character of unity and diversity. The trinity distinction between *persona*, *essence* and *energies*, has similarities in human side as: persons, nature and works (spiritual gifts). Thus the Church is a society or community in which the human and visible dimension is closely united with the divine and invisible dimension of the Trinity.

The communion of the church is based on the Trinitarian relationship, from which the believers receive power of communion. Like the Trinity, the church is *one* but in the same time a communion of persons. By extension, this fundamental idea of the Trinity determines the mission of the local church and constitutes the basis of the structure of social relationship. Living according to the Trinitarian model should lead naturally to an implication in the communities. The church is "an open community."⁴²

Since the entire creation is the work of the Trinity, "between them existing an ontological and fundamental link," the entire creation is called to universal transfiguration by grace. The starting point was the incarnation of the Logos and the discedence of the Spirit.⁴³ God and man have profound and inseparable links with Christ. Therefore, the Incarnation becomes the center of his entire perspective about God and the world.⁴⁵ The Son assumed our humanity in order to change it.

Staniloae's Trinitarian theology is not a speculative one, but is rooted in the concrete realities of man's salvation, church and mission. He engages a "theology of experience" versus an abstract theology. The love and communion from the created order and especially from Church, is nothing other than the extension of the love relationship from the Persons of the Trinity to humanity by the Holy Spirit.⁴⁶ The doctrine of the Trinity is closely related to other doctrines and especially, with soteriology, pneumatology, ecclesiology and missiology. The Trinity is "the infinite reservoir, the power and the model" for our progressive communion and participation in God. The Trinity is

⁶⁰ Staniloae, 'Teologie,' 314.

⁶¹ The Capadocian Fathers maintained the personal identity of the Father as the ultimate origin of all divine being and action. Meyendorff, 183

⁶² Staniloae, 'Teologie,' 316-317.

⁶³ Staniloae, D. 'Sobornicitate Deschisa,' *Ortodoxia* 2 (1971), p. 179-180.

expressed in personal terms and remains primarily a concrete experience. The three *hypostases* were seen first of all in their personal functions while “the unity of God’s nature is more an article of faith, coupled always with an insistence on the absolute unknowability of the divine essence.”⁴⁷ Against the Greek concept of a static and incommunicable God, Staniloae presents an eternal and personal Triune God, a living God of love and communion.

⁴² Bartos, 364.

⁴³ Staniloae, ‘Teologie,’ 289.

⁴² I. Bria, ‘Spațiul Îndumnezeirii,’ *Ortodoxia* 3-4 (1993), p. 97.

⁴³ D Staniloae, ‘Sinteza eclesiologica,’ *ST* 5-6 (1955), p. 275-276.

⁴⁴ Bartos, 361.

⁴⁵ In the Orthodoxy there is no radical separation between reason and revelation, grace and nature, human and divine.

⁴⁶ Staniloae, ‘Teologie,’ 284.

⁴⁷ In the West, since the time of Augustine, the unity of the divine being served as the starting point.

Bibliography:-

1. Bartos, E. *Conceptul de Îndumnezeire în Teologia lui Staniloae: Theosis*. Oradea: Editura Institutului Biblic **Emanuel**, 1999.
2. Bria, I. ‘Spațiul îndumnezeirii,’ *Ortodoxia* 3-4 (1993), p. 97. Costa de Beauregard. *The Father Dumitru Staniloae: Mica Dogmatica Vorbită*, Sibiu: Editura Deisis, 1995.
3. Hammond, T C. In *Understanding Be Man*. London: IVF, 1936 (1958).
4. Meyendorff, J. *Byzantine Theology: Historical Trends and Doctrinal Themes*. New York: Fordham University Press, 1983.
5. Staniloae, D. *Teologie Dogmatica Ortodoxa*. Vol.I. București: IBMBOR, 1978.
6. Staniloae, D. *Sfanta Treime sau La început a fost Iubirea*. Staniloae, D. ‘Sobornicitate Deschisă’ *Ortodoxia* 2 (1971), p. 165-180.
7. Staniloae, D. ‘Sinteza eclesiologica,’ *Studii Teologice* 5-6 (1955), p. 262-284.
8. Thiessen, H C. *Lectures in Systematic Theology*. Oradea: SMR, 1986 (1979).
9. Whitacre, R A. *The Orthodox Churches, Handbook of Christian Belief*, Ed. R. Keeley. Herts: Lion Publishing, 1982.(434)