PERSON AND FREEDOM
A MISSIONARY APPROACH[†]

Mihai Himcinschi[∗]

'1 Decembrie 1918' University of Alba Iulia, 5 Gabriel Bethlen Str., 510009, Alba Iulia, Romania

Abstract

Above all doctrines and religious systems, Christian morality is the only one that perfectly emphasizes the ontological relationship between freedom and human consciousness. Permanent dialogue between freedom and personal conscience is based on knowledge, for without self-knowledge, and the world-knowledge, with its sensitive or intelligible issues, neither can create its own entity. The person, without its free expression, remains mired in the abyss of a totalitarian apophasis. What the person transmits, and only in full freedom, from its internal and external conditions, is emerging - exhaustively - in its works or actions in relation to others, towards which, it presents its potency of dynamic opening to eternal communion.

Keywords: Trinity, Christology, Church, society, mission

1. Introduction

A nation's place in the world is due mostly to how it knows and is able to assert itself in the light of divine revelation. The decisive role in the emancipation of a nation is its decisive factor: the person.

The man is not an individual of a species, neither an element of the human social determinism. This theory is a sad reminder of the era in which one could differentiate the complexity of relations coming from the objective's subjectivization (internalization) and from the subjective's objectification (externalization), thus from the complex reciprocal crossings between the social objective and the subjective factors, in the sense of awareness and achievement, of manifestation of social and individual consciousness [1].

The human person is the subject, is somebody beyond something, where human nature subsists as the image of God, it is the rationality of the Threefold Deity, which - through creation – has the possibility of opening to the divine and to all peers. The person has thus a unifying function in creation, in that it carries its dignity of priest, of mediator, the dignity of bringing all into union with God. "Creation forms a unity in man. It is not a microcosm, as a part of the Universe,

---

[†] The Romanian version of this article was published in *Jurnalul Libertatii de Constiinta*, Editura Universitara, Bucharest, 2013.

[∗] E-mail: himmmihai@yahoo.com

but the Cosmos is part of it, intended to unite in it. The person is the type of the cosmos, which is the unity of all parties. It circumscribes the world; in it, creation becomes a whole. It unifies the world, being the bridge, the mediator between God and creation." [2]

2. Person or individual?

In the current European language, there is a tendency to identify the words *person, personality, personalism, personal* with *individual, individuality, individualism, individually*. The individual appears more like a human ontological reality broken from the transcendent reality and suits to a theist existence where God is completely uninvolved in the daily life of this world. The individual, spiritually isolated in its own structure, desperately seeks specific forms of union and merely human unity, associations and congregations of all kinds, strives for a form of political and social unity that exceeds the state, nation, faith, Church. This is how it came to the theories of globalization, of single currency, European Community, the North Atlantic bloc, etc... "Indeed, the idea we have about human personality, about this personal something that makes each human individual a unique being in the world, absolutely incomparable, and impossible to reduce to other individuals, this idea of person comes from the Christian theology. The philosophy of the ancient world knew only the human individuals. The human person cannot be expressed in concepts. It escapes any rational definition, even any description, for all the attributes by which we would characterize it, would be present in other individuals as well. The person can only be caught alive by a direct intuition or can be translated into a work of art." [3]

The religious sentiment in man is born with it, and it finds a prominent place in the social construction as a form of human community. It is revealed as questions to be answered by the views of general human experience, where all social factors are involved. The most palpable dynamic of religious experience is included in the sad reality of suffering. The true meaning of life must be sought in it: who am I?

While the relationship with the faith's *object* is not exclusive in terms of functionality, and stable against the individual psyche, however, there are created legitimate forms of social relationality: although there are many beliefs, there is only one collective reality. "At the same time, the relationship with the faith's *object* is not the exclusive function of comfort and stability of the individual psyche, but it creates the legitimate forms of social relationalit." [4]

Technological developments, commercial and administrative techniques are marked by an individually uniformity. Are novelty and innovation a European problem?

From the Christian point of view, *novelty* is purely personal. The tension between continuity and innovation, found all over the world, is marked in Europe more than ever by a typical European individualism. *In Europe, today, there are obvious tensions between individual and community*, European

individualism being deeply rooted in its own history. We may mention here the eighteenth century, the century of individual rights, of its internal lighting, of the lack of communicability with others and with God. *The individual became the irreducible subject of inalienable rights.*

In return, the Eastern theology, personalistic par excellence, offers contemporary man a speech about the individual's freedom in terms of a theological and anthropological apophasis about the image of God and the mystery of human being, alike. Man is never only some social problem. "What is of human nature always lies within the limit of mystery and not within the limit of the problem." [5] The issue is about something, which we know everything about, or almost everything, through a rational knowledge. But in those of the free person we must speak with great caution so as not to fall again into the idolatry of own speech, sophiological idolatry which opens only brackets and gives us the impression that we know everything about what we say. However, we know that idolatry, in moral life, can lead to death if it does not obey the Gospel [6].

Modern Europe, gradually established by the model of French Revolution, is a complex of divergent socio-political cultures and organizations within which freedom and human dignity cannot be possible if people do not *a priori* belong to a tradition, ideology or to a particular system. For example, in the French Revolution era, the Church and religion were part of a detailed and specific traditions and regulations frame. Europeans then, used to establish a relationship between the personal ecclesiastical traditions and the social power, especially between ecclesiastical traditions and social conflicts, but politically neutral, religion has lost its prominence. "For now, the individualism of many Western Europeans manifests itself mainly through a critical reserve *vis-à-vis* the Christian tradition. For them, this tradition's real issues are the sediments of lack of freedom and restrictions, rather than on a socio-political level. Europeans have become sceptical of all efforts to develop a full project about man and society, easily enslaved by the idea of technological progress, literal trend humanism or socialist utopia." [7]

The ontological-ecclesial human person always lives the otherness. In the current European context, the big family of the old Christian continent – a feature not yet specified in the European Constitution – the social, political, economic, cultural and religious contacts of peoples cannot be achieved without the humanism open to the other. The Western spiritual offer promotes through the progress of post-modern life, not the interpersonal relationships based on full communion, but it substitutes *someone* with *something*. The *object takes the subject's place*, the feeling's place is taken by the rules, the love's by rights, and laws take the repentance's place. Moreover, the lack of personal otherness, missing the other's love can lead to conflict, hatred and murder. "Personal otherness is not revealed and is known only in the middle of the direct personal relationship and communion, and only if participating in the event - the Logos – of personal immediacy, or in the loving and creative energy that distinguishes person from the common nature. This revelation and knowledge of personal

otherness is more complete as the event of communion and relationship is fulfilled in love. Love is by excellence, the way to know the person: it allows full acceptance of the other. It does not project, over the other, preferences, requirements or individual desires, but accepts it as it is, in the fullness of its personal uniqueness. Therefore, the knowledge of personal otherness is perfected ultimately in *Eros*, which is self-overcoming and self-sacrifice, and all that in biblical language *Eros* is the same to knowing the person." [8]

3. Church is the environment of full personal otherness

We cannot imagine a Europe in which the Church. "Basically, Orthodoxy does not openly opposes nor democracy, nor the European spirit (Greece is a European and Orthodox country alike, namely a NATO and a Common Market member). They need however interpretation, as for hundreds of years the priest translated the Scripture in the Church. And an appropriate language is required as well; because there is a rationalist wooden tongue. Do not forget that in the East, heart always goes before the brain and feeling before logic is missing." [9] Within the Church, one can fully live the most intense aspiration to unity. Before telling the contemporaries about their possible establishment in Christ - the Head of the Church, about the source and the model of human unity that is the Trinitarian doctrine, the Church's liturgical, mystical and missionary space is the first contact with the unity experience completely free of conscience, which leads to the final, general human desire of being one as God in Trinity (John 17.11). *To believe* is a term so universalized, but the only contemporary way of transcendental experience.

The trends of a European type of syncretistic Christianity are excluded. Orthodoxy, in the new European context, will be required to keep and to submit the ascetic-mystical spirituality - Christ-centred, Trinitarian and ecclesial - in other words, its own communion way of being. Europe will not belong to the *supermarkets* Christianity, because the *Pleroma* of **unity in diversity, of evangelical freedom of conscience**, although it will not immediately convert, it will overwhelm, because without the ecclesial space, the person loses its own identity.

Church proposes the secular society a baptismal personality, which it maintains Eucharistic and perfects eschatological. Individualism obscures the openness to communion, to freedom of personal conscience. It appeared due to the alteration of the doctrine of man as an ecclesial being. "The Catholic - in general - is more active and organized, more attentively for the worldly forms and affairs; he is also more rationalist and tries to justify the dogma through reason as well, not only through mystical faith. The Orthodox, by contrast, is more passive and mystical, less entrepreneurial and less organized, and with little attention to worldly affairs. The situation changes with Protestants, Calvinists, Lutherans, Puritans, etc. Generally, the contact between their religious beliefs and secular affairs is more closely, and the ritual and the outer forms are of limited significance. Inner faith and perseverance is the essential

element of their religiosity. Ascetic severity, together with a very sharp sense of initiative, is one of the Puritans' basic features. Being Protestant or Catholic, Puritan or Orthodox, therefore means having a specific organization of life, with a certain lifestyle, with a certain resonance in thought and in feeling, as well as in terms of character." [10]

Under these conditions, it will be very difficult for the modern European man to show its current ecclesiastical personality, or to share it with others. "This theology of the person, which first appeared in history through the patristic vision on God, can never become for man an experience lived out the mystery of the Church. Humanism or sociology can fight forever for the importance of human being, but, as noted in our existential philosophy, with the intellectual honesty for which it deserves the name of philosophy, the issue of the individual as absolute ontological freedom remains forever unanswered, an endless search. Even when living the communion, either as love, or as social and political life, it is required in the final analysis, if it wants to survive, to relativize its freedom, to expose to certain natural or social *facts of life*. The person, as the requirement of absolute freedom, requires a *new birth*, *a birth from above*, a *Baptism*. In addition, the very ecclesial being is who objectivises the real person by the being of God. Through this, the church becomes image The Threefold God." [11]

Within the human-society report, the Church cannot undergo a secular social practice, while exhibiting indifference to the principles of its religious faith. Church cannot overcome the fact that its members, human persons, waste their love socially, provided it is in accordance with the faith revealed, both as content and as application form. Opposition, through the Church's reluctance to engage officially in the European social struggle, may lead to its prosecution to remain indifferent to the spiritual mission of its own world.

Church cannot be indifferent towards Europeanization, globalization or towards the geo-strategic military pacts. Its evangelic voice must be heard, regardless of the reactions of these European organs and bodies. "Christian man is, on the one hand a member of the local society. The Christian citizen has the love to fully participate in political life and to intervene in the state authority in order to promote its fundamental rights. It can become the carrier molecule of Christian doctrine to animate the international declarations of Christian anthropology development. This statement proves that Christian man accepts, through the doctrine of Christian anthropology, an outstanding and real freedom to better adapt to the requirements of each age and to better defend its dignity and the society's fundamental freedoms." [12]

Through Church, the message to Europe is concentrated in the following statements:
1. The European man has the right to freedom, but freedom is lived fully only in God's grace, imparted through the Sacraments in the Church;
2. Man, since creation, has the image of God and was set free;
3. *Only the ecclesial ontology of the European man* can provide true freedom, because sin hacks, and grace gives us true freedom.

4. True personalism is Christological

The image of God, the human person, can secure the wealth of its own existence only in connection with Jesus Christ, the Incarnate Son of God, the only divine-human Person in history, the full rescue of today's Europe. Despite all religious convulsions, the European continent remained essentially Christian. Without Jesus Christ, the New Adam, Europeans would miss the bond of unity and spirituality. "Europeanism - complex synthesis - is neither the monopoly of the West, nor of the East. Europeanism is *our common denominator*, bearing the redeeming seal of Christ's Cross; the West's easternization issue or the East's westernization is false. East and West were, are and must remain *two complementary values*, providing *the internal dynamics of Europeanisms*, which cannot be understood outside the Christian tradition and without reference to the healthy trunk of the aurora Millennium." [13]

Without the Son of God made Man, European unity and union would be repeatedly insufficient. Christian people always tend to this unit as a sign of their ontological failure, always concerned about everything that is going on within them. The personal Christ dynamism translates into looking for the other beside you, through collective engagement in all the others' sorrows and shortcomings, even if they are part of other people's womb. This honest engagement should entail no reasons and purposes foreign to Christian spirituality; it should have as a starting point, the Christ-morphosis feature of all members of *the big European family*. "Everyone is a furnace, eager to project in itself, the rays of all things, and the light of the Above, but also to return towards them, lit by them. Man must somehow gather all and unite with as many, not only to see them all in their unity, but also to see through all, the One who is above all. Advancing in Christ, each endlessly, in communion with others and in endless communion with the Holy Trinity, man also advances in its unity, without cancelling its contrasting components. The supreme model of this unmixed and unmistakable unit is Christ, where humanity is united to divinity in one Person, non-intermingled." [14]

The Orthodox Church, in the new European context, always emphasizes the relationship between human and Trinitarian God through and in Jesus Christ, in whom the deified humanity - full of grace - becomes the meeting place of all Europeans who want unity. The Christian faith, according to which human race and all creation come to God – in permanent relationship with the sacred, independence and intrinsic value of the human person – is the basis of contemporary dialogue for peace, social justice and love towards the others. The idea of these ideals' universality, which is the contemporary European and international dialogue, will totally agree with the doctrine on human-ontological unity. It is obvious that *the European Christian man* is the centre of this Orthodox Church's mission, but also the absolute ideal of social commitment. Church must correct the society's theistic or oppressive situations that promote isolation of human love, because in our tradition, social action was never considered separate from the believer's spiritual life *in* and *through* Christ.

"Jesus Christ is both God and man, the only person in two natures (divine and human), and His person of the Son reveals God Himself both as One and as Three. Understanding the mystery of this revelation required and still requires a new relational and paradoxical mindset that holds in tension two opposite and irreducible, but equally valid terms (their reduction was the hallmark of heresy against orthodoxy). This way of thinking – opposed both to the dialectical reduction to identity, and to the alternative dualism - through Christianity, became the Europe's genuine *forma mentis*, dispersing in the most diverse fields, printing a relational-personal vision not only on God, but also on man, world and history. On this basis, Europe could assimilate different traditions and cultural heritages, becoming an open culture." [15]

In the context of the Christological model of European unity today, one can see the trends in the European society moving towards *Nestorianism* and *modern Adoptionism*. If Nestorius split Jesus Christ's unit of divine-human Person, speaking at the same time of a true man Jesus and separated from a Christ God, Europe seeks the same: the separation of the united European society and its spiritual development separate from the Church it was molded in. Even the participation of the European Christians to the ecumenical movement, and not only, can be accused of the Nestorian tendency to constantly seek a unity of Christians without the Church, talking only about Jesus.

Unity in Christ is always present in the Church, and where it is lacking, its Head neither can be present. Through the ecumenical movement, Christians not fully united in faith, are called to be fundamental and necessary to the unity of the new Europe. They are also called to give an essential contribution... but their unity is not complete, they must never forget that it has been completely broken and that the efforts to retrieve total communion of faith, charity, life and spiritual structures are efforts that only attract people's attention and approval [16]. However, all European Christian's effort to give future generations a world of peace and reconciliation is the only proof, the only reason and the dynamic element in the ecumenical movement of promoting these axiological values.

Unity is not sought *ad extra*, but is an *ad intra* constituent of the Christian ontology. The consequences of the fourth century Nestorianism, unfortunately, can be found in the Europe-Church, reason-faith, Theology-culture, spirit-matter, and Church-State report. Therefore, we can theoretically and practically speak about a *modern Adoptionism*.

Adoptionism as heresy, considered *Jesus Christ as an adoptive son of the Father*, of a different nature or substance, unequal, non-consubstantial with Him. The West, by scholasticism, saw faith as the reason's adoptive and subordinate daughter, the State adopted and subordinated the Church, the matter did the same with the spirit, and the science with theology. Under the influence of the science that has developed through a transparent nature, Western Christianity has gone too far, believing that God is so close in His transcendence that He can never demonstrate that His work is supernatural in nature. Protestantism gave this doctrine a pessimistic feature, believing that God cannot work because of the people's (believers or not) irreversible sinfulness. Eastern Christianity,

following the holy Fathers, reconciles God's transcendence by being with His work in the world, believing God is not only above nature, but He is also the Lord of nature and the One who strengthens the people who believe to purify themselves and become organs of His work. Western Christianity has not pulled all the consequences of the resurrection of Christ in the flesh. Therefore, in explaining salvation, it stopped at the Cross. However, who believes that Christ could raise His body, why does not believe that He can work on creation, connected to His resurrected body, if connected with Him as divine bearer of flesh? [17] Just from this results the community dynamics, and the unity among people as Christological dimension, to the extent that in Christ, we all are restored and summarize, adopted and not adopted, deified and not divided.

5. Holy Trinity - the model of freedom and interpersonal relationship

The Orthodox East started, in highlighting the reality and strengthening the unity of human nature, from the triple-hypostatic ontology of Godhead. Not the being is the factor of unity, but *the person* as its hypostasis, and the *relationship* as hypostatic state. A personal, eternal Subject cannot be alone. The Person involves communion with at least one other person. The Father is 'the One who is', but if so, it must be the Son too.

The Father exists from eternity by Himself, and does not receive His existence outside Himself, nor does He bear an existence distinct from Him and inferior to Him. "It is therefore not lawful to say about the Father: He was once when He was not, neither is it allowed to say about the Son: He was once when He was not" [17], only the Adoptionist Aryans adopted the formula (referring to the Son) 'He was once when He was not'. If the Son is not from forever, neither can the Father be from forever. If the Father's reason is creature, and the Father is created, a personal supreme Wisdom can only come from a supreme and eternal God. "A wisdom without a Subject of its own, aware of it, without a subject which to enjoy it and to use it, to see the meaning of existence in it, would be pointless and impossible to explain how it exists" [17, p. 69], therefore God is good, He is the threefold hypostatic goodness. The main kindness is without doubt the Father, of which the Son was born, who is in all respects 'the image of His goodness' (Wisdom 7.25, Ecclesiasticus 7.22, Wisdom 7.26).

The Son, as a person, is born, but not from the divine Being, for the being cannot birth, but from the Person of the Father who enjoys the birth of His Son, forever loving Him. A being or a substance that 'births' can only flow impersonal and pantheistical emanates.

The anti-Trinitarian European doctrines do nothing but to undermine the effort of the human aspiration to unity. The negligence of inter-Trinitarian personal relationships, especially of the relationship between them, is the symbol of 'the West's slippage towards *rationalism and essentialism*, with the loss of fundamental Christian category: the person (both divine and human) replaced by other categories: individual, conscience, subject etc. actually belonging to nature. To the antipode of this rationalist essentialism, the **apophatic**

personalism will therefore be the central theme of the great synthesis of Christian-Orthodox thinkers' [18].

As long as Europe is seen as an essentialist fund of a Christian culture, the toil for unity will be doomed to failure, or will be a superficial, without consistency one. A consumerist and essentialist *Europeanism*, more inclined to economics, politics and to the strictly immanent product, cannot open to the all peoples' joy of community and personal life, ultimately founded on the Holy Trinity. "The European world is no longer divided into good and bad, but into groups of subjects with multiple memberships. Each state, region or individual are simultaneously part of several clubs. The linguistic family, the gained economic standard, the adoption or rejection of the single currency, the denominational majority, the cross-border relations and the conversion of old military rivalries into economic competition, are all instruments of association, institutionalized or not." [19]

6. Conclusions

The Romanian theologian, Father Dumitru Stăniloae, preached in his huge work, the Orthodox personalism of *Trinitarian*, *Christological* and *ecclesial* foundation. This year marks 110 years since his birth. He has endeavoured to highlight the treasures of Orthodoxy to the whole world, but especially to convey it to a Europe fevered for the desire of unity. This *way of life* that is Orthodoxy has fascinated - by Father Dumitru Stăniloae – the Catholic and Protestant world, and is the starting point in the Orthodoxy's dialogues with the European world, a dialogue on freedom and interpersonal communion towards which we are inevitably going.

The Son of God did not avoid embodiment, the assumption of death, corruption of our nature, but assuming them, He overcame them, directing them towards the eschatological purpose ordained by the Creator. Similarly, Romanian Orthodoxy in relation to its new European family, cannot avoid secularizing or globalization, or its representative organs and bodies, but it has to submit their true values related to the purpose of the world in grace and freedom: deification, and that, only by a fully personalistic, Trinitarian, Christological and ecclesiological ontology.

References

[1] C. Mare, *Introducere în ontologia generală*, Albatros, Bucharest 1980, 236-238.
[2] I. Bria, *Dicționar de Teologie Ortodoxă*, EIBMBOR, Bucharest, 1981, 298.
[3] V. Lossky, *Teologia mistică a Bisericii de Răsărit*, Anastasia, Bucharest, 1990, 83.
[4] T. Grande and E.G. Parini, *Studiare la società. Questioni, concetti, teorie*, Caroci, Rome, 2007, 85.
[5] G. Marcel, *Le mystère de l'être*, vol. 1, coll. *Philosophie de l'esprit*, Aubier, Paris, 1951, 227.
[6] J.M. Gueullette, Nouvelle Révue Théologique, **133(3)** (2011) 397.

[7] A. Simonis, *Continuité et inovation dans la nouvelle réalité européenne*, in *Religion et société*, Chambésy, Geneva, 1998, 284-286.

[8] C. Yannaras, *Libertatea moralei*, Anastasia, Bucharest, 2002, 17-18.

[9] D. Ciachir, *Raportul Ortodoxie-Europa*, in *Cronica ortodoxă,* Timpul, Iaşi, 1994, 49.

[10] N. Mărgineanu, *Psihologia persoanei*, Institutul de Psihologie al Universitatii din Cluj, Sibiu, 1941, 311-312.

[11] I. Zizioulas, *Fiinţa eclesială*, Editura Bizantina, Bucharest, 1996, 11.

[12] V. Phidas, *L'Église et les droits umains dans la expérience contemporane*, in *Religion et société*, Chambésy, Geneva, 1998, 255.

[13] R. Codrescu, *Homo europaeus între ontologie şi ideologie*, in *Pentru o teologie a neamului*, Christiana, Bucharest, 2003, 208.

[14] D. Stăniloae, *Caracteristicile generale ale omului ca fiinţă nemuritoare*, in *Chipul nemuritor al lui Dumnezeu*, Mitropolia Olteniei, Craiova, 1987, 32-33.

[15] I. Ică jr., *Biserică, societate, gândire în Răsărit, în Occident şi în Europa de azi*, in *Gândirea socială a Bisericii*, Deisis, Sibiu 2002, 50.

[16] J. Willebrands, *Eglise et mouvement œcuménique dans la nouvelle réalité européenne*, in *Religion et société*, Chambésy, Geneva, 1998, 294-295.

[17] D. Stăniloae, *note 81*, in Saint Athanasius the Great, *Tratat despre Întruparea Cuvântului*, Părinţi şi Scriitori Bisericeşti, vol. 15, EIBMBOR, Bucharest, 1987, 126.

[18] I. Ică jr., *Persoană sau/şi ontologie în gândirea ortodoxă contemporană*, in *Persoană şi comuniune. Prinos de cinstire preotului profesor academician Dumitru Stăniloae (1903-1993)*, Editura Diecezană, Sibiu, 1993, 360.

[19] T. Baconsky, *Puterea schismei. Un portret al creştinismului european*, Anastasia, Bucharest, 2001, 312-313.