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**Theology and Eucharist. A comparative analysis of  
the liturgical theology of Father Dumitru Stăniloae  
and Father Alexander Schmemmann**

**ABSTRACT**

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**Key-words: worship, Stăniloae, Liturgy, symbolism, sacrifice, Sacrament, communion, person, Schmemann, secularism, theology, Eucharist**

Nowadays the traditional values undergo a double dispute: philosophical and practical. What we are concerned about, due to its negative impact, is the secular vision on religion which dominates the collective mentality. In its center there lies the denying of the possibility of experiencing the communion with God during Church worship, thus leading to religious relativity and individualism. Secularism does not further atheism, but relativism. The secular man believes that “all religions are good”, or better yet they are “equally true”. The expression “there is only one God”, ubiquitous in the language of most Christians, reveals the opportunism, the syncretism and the relativism of life options and principles. The tensions between the ideals of the Gospel and world values have softened. The Apostle John’s conception that “the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes and the pride of life do not come from our Father, but are from the world” (I In.2, 16) has little echo in the nowadays Christian consciousness. Taking into consideration that secularism has been defined as “Christianity’s stepchild” and that it actually is a “denial of worship”, we aimed at pointing out the understanding of the Holy Liturgy as means of transcending of the fallen world and of entering God’s Kingdom. In order to achieve this goal, we have performed a comparative analysis of the liturgical perception of two of the greatest priest teachers of the past century: Dumitru Stăniloae and Alexander Schmemmann.

The almost 50 years-experience of “socialist camp” have determined our country to test modernity in its atheist and deeply violent version, which led to “a true lag of the respective area as in relation to the capitalist West”<sup>1</sup>. This aspect must be taken into account when dealing with father Săniloae’s way of understanding the surrounding realities. However, even if one cannot speak of a direct confrontation with secularism as an expression of religious relativism, of the liberalism of our consumption society and wild capitalism, one can still find in father Săniloae’s work plenty of examples which give away the great faults of this trend that have traumatized the Western modern Europe. There are several Christian principles in the father’s work which can be used as counter arguments to the abusive claims of the secular world

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<sup>1</sup> Pr. Ioan Bizău, „*Life in Christ and the disease of secularism*”, Editura Patmos, Cluj-Napoca, 2002, p 39.

threatening the authentic church life. Apathy and ridiculousness, individualism and opportunism are noticeably struggled against by means of a “philokalic vision upon the world” and a “liturgical ascent” that altogether lead to human being conversion. Sacramental experience and prophetic vision are the coordinates of a genuine Christian life. It is this particular assertion of spiritual life fulfillment that lies in the center of Father Stăniloae’s interests.

As theologian of experience, father Stăniloae has always been related to the reality of his own time and even went beyond. He has never remained within the rigid frames of his time, but got ahead through reflection and feelings. In an era of depersonalization and reclusion of the human being, father Stăniloae confessed the importance of interpersonal communion, as well as the importance of man’s communion with the Holy Trinity. In father’s opinion, worship in general and the Holy Liturgy in particular play a critical role in the human being’s enlightenment. *“As an everlasting absolute communion, the Holy Trinity constitutes the human beings’ spiritual force of attraction to communion; it gave them the nature of being fulfilled through communion. The Trinitarian force of attraction is fully experienced through the Holy Liturgy and this particular experience is extended in the life of the Christians as religious community, whose aim is to expand Its force of attraction upon the entire human society in order to accomplish it as a communion.”*<sup>2</sup> Not only the faithful, but the theologian as well find the source of their development and knowledge in the Holy Liturgy. Referring to the importance of the liturgical experience for theology, as perceived by Fr. Săniloae, a young Romanian theologian stated the following: *„I learned from Fr. Stăniloae that... speaking of God must not be separated from feeling God. The theologian should state, in his own society, that a culture with no reference to the revealed truth of the Holy Trinity leads to nowhere. The vocation of the contemporary theologian is not an academic one, but rather liturgical or charismatic.”*<sup>3</sup> His concerns about rediscovering an experiential theology have determined him to publish an opus magnum: *The Orthodox Dogmatic Theology*, in three volumes – 1978, *Orthodox Spirituality*- 1981 and *Spirituality and communion in*

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<sup>2</sup> Pr.Prof.Dr.Dumitru Stăniloae, *Spirituality and communion in Orthodox Liturgy*, Editura Mitropoliei Olteniei, Craiova,1986, p.379.

<sup>3</sup> Ștefan Lucian Toma, *Tradition and modernity with Fr. Dumitru Stăniloae*, Editura Agnos, Sibiu, 2008,p. 214.

*the Orthodox Liturgy* – 1986. As it can be comprehended from the above mentioned trilogy, Fr. Stăniloae’s theology “is promoting a dynamic and opened spirit in establishing an organic relationship between doctrine, worship, spirituality and mission, between an opening to the world and an ecumenical dialogue”<sup>4</sup>. Fr. Stăniloae was, above all, a man of the Church; his work met the needs of the Church, mainly in its efforts of approaching the secular and cultural trends of modern world, and reflected the way he sought after God.<sup>5</sup>

The work *Spirituality and communion in the Orthodox Liturgy*, considered among the most important works by the author himself<sup>6</sup>, will complete the subject of the hereby analysis, together with the studies dedicated to Liturgy and Eucharist. Acknowledged as a dogmatic theologian, Fr. Stăniloae was preoccupied and also wrote about all the theological domains. Aware of the relationship between dogma, spirituality and worship, he had tremendous contribution in all the three specializations. Over the course of time, his ample work has been subject to evaluations and descriptions regarding especially the dogmatic and moral-spiritual aspects. Fr. Stăniloae’s contribution in the field of Liturgy has been analyzed in a series of studies signed by His Holiness Bishop of Transylvania, professor Konstantin Karaisariddis<sup>7</sup> from the Orthodox Faculty of Theology of Thessaloniki and professor Ciprian Ioan Streza<sup>8</sup> from the Liturgical Department of the “Andrei Șaguna” Faculty of Sibiu.

Father’s wish was to convey a complete and just comprehension of all liturgical acts and formulas. Thus, Fr. Stăniloae’s liturgical comment reveals the complexity of all liturgical forms, and supports their maintenance and profound study in the forms assigned by tradition. With Fr. Stăniloae there is no reformatory

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<sup>4</sup> Emil Bartoș, *The concept of deification in Fr. Dumitru Stăniloae’s theology*, Editura Cartea Creștină, Oradea, 2002, p.23.

<sup>5</sup> Ieromonah Calinic Berger, *Saint Maximus the Confessors’ Theology in the view of a modern synthesis: Fr. Dumitru Stăniloae’s work*, in *Revista Teologica*, nr.1/2013, p.7.

<sup>6</sup> The confirmation of Fr. Dumitru Stăniloae’s opinion on his liturgical comment may be found in Jürgen Henkel’s work, *Deification and ethics in Fr. Dumitru Stăniloae’s work*, Editura Deisis, Sibiu, 2003, p. 334.

<sup>7</sup> Πρωτοπρ. Κωνσταντῖνος Καραῖσαριδης, *Ἡ σύμβολή τοῦ π. Δημητρίου Σταυλίου στὴ μελέτη τῶν λειτουργικῶν θεμάτων*, Ἀθήνα, 1997.

<sup>8</sup> Conf. Dr. Ciprian Ioan Streza, *The importance of Fr. Dumitru Stăniloae’s liturgical and ascetic vision concerning the call of man to enter to God through Christ by sacrifice* (Work presented at the International Congress in Bucharest between 4-5 October 2013 dedicated to father Dumitru Stăniloae. The material has been provided by the courtesy of the author even before its publishing, therefore we offer our most sincere gratitude)

tendency, only a deep urge to renew the mind and warm up the human soul so as to reach a proper understanding and transposition into practice of the sacramental experience.

Living in somewhat parallel frameworks, father Alexander Schmemmann, whose liturgical theology is to be approached in the second part of the present work, interacted throughout his life directly and existentially with different cultural, social, economic and religious patterns. Consequently, he sought to identify and signal the “diseases” of the society fit to those patterns, to explain the causes which led to a certain state of fact and to come up with “therapies” or solutions. *„With no exaggeration, we can state that we are living in a dreadful and spirituality dangerous era. It is not only dreadful because of hate, disunion, and blood. Most and foremost it is dreadful because the riot against God and His Kingdom is becoming stronger and stronger. Once again, it is not God, but man who has become the measure of all things; once again, not faith, but ideology and utopia have come to define the spiritual state of the world”*.<sup>9</sup> By these words placed at the beginning of his masterpiece, father Alexander Schmemmann justified his choice to include in a book his reflections on Eucharist as a capital phenomenon of Church. They qualify as explicit as possible the world and the society we live in: a world from which God has been banned, a world that does not want God any more, where people consider they no longer need God and try to “get rid” of Him.<sup>10</sup> The denial of world sacramentality as creation of God is therefore inevitable.

The rules and principles governing such a world are formulated by means of criteria different from the religious or divine ones. Everything is included in the domain of the material and consumption.<sup>11</sup> In one of his Diary pages, father

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<sup>9</sup> Alexander Schmemmann, *Eucharist. The Sacrament of the Kingdom*, translated by pr. Boris Răduleanu, Editura Anastasia, București, 1993, p. 14.

<sup>10</sup> The final stake of this mentality is to eliminate the hypothesis of God, because by removing His presence from the function mechanism of this world, the denial of God can easily be achieved. This process has begun in the 17<sup>th</sup> century and it has been “fulfilled” through the 20<sup>th</sup> century’s ideologies. (H.-R. Patapievici, *The recent man. A critic on modernity from the perspective of the question “What is lost when one gains?”*, Editura Humanitas, București, 2001, p. 68-83).

<sup>11</sup> Even if it does not involve a religious approach, we consider George Ritzer’s work as relevant due to its strength and vastness of argumentation, *McDonaldization of society*, translated by Victoria Vușcan, Editura Comunicare.ro, București, 2003.

Schmemmann uttered both his disgust and astonishment he felt concerning the “liturgy of consumption”<sup>12</sup>, as consequence of an ordinary commercial experience.

Even the things that naturally and obviously do not fall into the consumption category, such as culture and religion, are equally perceived and judged according to the same criteria of value and utility. Religion and theology have lost the possibility of acknowledging and feeling God, as their essential goal, and seem to be responding to the limited and individualist needs of man, far from a whole, fulfilled and comprehensive vision upon world. They have become optional sections of modern vision upon world, in which God may or may not find His place, according to each individual’s whim. Man and his needs that have to be satisfied, that is all there is.<sup>13</sup> Religion and theology have become consumption “elements” destined to cover the demands of a small market segment. They no longer represent totalizing life factors that are permanently related to human existence and influence its orientation and development.

In his work, Father Schmemmann tried to find a solution to these critical states of society and theology altogether. One could say that he is providing “an entrance into religion”<sup>14</sup> through the liturgical worship seen as a rhythm of life, and not as a specific activity with a strict character, separated from our existence. That is why his theological work has been written and programmed not as an intellectual approach with a profound exclusivist and academic character, but as a result of his reflection on the contemporary world and society. Through his work, Father Schmemmann wished to offer a new way of comprehending the world and also a new vision upon life and world, different from the profane one, deeply rooted in the authentic principles of Christian faith and centered on the Church Liturgy. The dominant pattern of his theological pattern is not objectivist, but rather a Eucharistic one, manifesting in Church’s life. To father Schmemmann, theology is not a mental and rationalistic ability,

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<sup>12</sup> *The Biography of a missionary destiny. Father Alexander Schmemmann’s Diary (1973-1983)*, translation, introductory study and comments by Felicia Furdui, Editura Reîntregirea, Alba Iulia, 2004, p. 289.

<sup>13</sup> “Look to Europe’s culture...all are confined to humans and humans only and even Christ the God-man has been reduced to the frames of a human being... Man has become the measure of all things, as well as of seen and unseen beings and things. Using himself as measurement, the European man rejects all that is larger than life”, (Archimandrite Justin Popovici, *Man and God-man. The abysses and peaks of philosophy, introductory study and translation by* pr. prof. Ioan Ică and diac. Ioan I. Ică jr., Editura Deisis, Sibiu, 1997, p. 152-153).

<sup>14</sup> Religion is understood as an ontological and permanent bound between man and God, and not as a fragmented and punctual aspect.

but an activity that we perform in front of God, in the context of Christian community. Besides a generous academic activity, in his theological work father Schmemman tried to transcend the boundaries of academic environment and to “descend” theology to the level of the people attending the liturgy, who actually represent both the source and the finality of theology. According to father Schmemann, theology must not be perceived as an abstract science, but it has to be related to life, to nourish itself from life and conceive life in the same time. These principles are obviously factual in the Christian Orthodox ritual, as long as it is consciously applied and interpreted in its natural meaning.<sup>15</sup>

We have discovered in father Schmemman’s theological work a courageous, well-argued and sustained initiative of “realizing”, revealing and apprising Orthodoxy in all its seriousness in a society that has separated itself from God. This specific approach was not an intellectual one, limited at the theoretical level, but rather permanently connected to modern practical realities, as a relevant pattern of experiencing Orthodoxy. Even if his source of inspiration was the past, his work was rooted in the organic present. The theological conception of father Schmemman has been analyzed and evaluated in the theological circles, obtaining both just appreciation as well as controversial critics. We would like to mention two doctoral thesis elaborated in the West by Janet Bellotti Puppo<sup>16</sup> and Elizabeth Newman<sup>17</sup> which positively assess father Schmemman’s theology, as well as the critics brought to his work by Mihail Pomazansky, Pr.Prof. Dr. Ioan Ică sr.<sup>18</sup> and Pr. Dr. Cornel Toma<sup>19</sup>. References regarding father Schmemman’s work can be found in the studies of Prof. Dr. Ioan Ică jr., who prefers an approach from the perspective of the actual impact it had on the theology and life of Church.

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<sup>15</sup> We regard as suggestive father Schmemman’s introductory argument on Eucharist, which defines “the essence of the crisis” in which the Church finds itself as a “lack of concordance between what is accomplished and the understanding of the Sacrament that is being fulfilled, and its experience. To a certain extent, this particular crisis had always been present within the Church; the life of the Church, or better said the life of the Church people has never been perfect, but in time this crisis has become similar to “schizophrenia” that poisons the Church and undermines its foundation” (Alexander Schmemann, *Eucharist*, p. 14).

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<sup>18</sup> Pr. prof. dr. Ioan Ică, *The ways of personal presence of Jesus Christ and of communion with Him in the Holy Liturgy and the Orthodox Spirituality*, in the volume *Person and communion, Tribute of honor to Fr. Prof. Dumitru Stăniloae*, Sibiu, 1993, p. 335-357.

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The hereby work, dedicated to the liturgical work of two great fathers that have influenced the Church life in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, is structured into three main parts with several chapters, each composed of subchapters and subdivisions.

In the first chapter of the first part we deal with the liturgical theology of father Stăniloae, and we took into consideration those particular aspects which influenced his theology. Most of his life and theological reflections unfolded under the communist regime that was established in Romania starting with 1945. On the other hand, his theological thinking was put face to face with a scholastic opposition that manifested in the theological academic groups. Despite the enforced limitations of the communist regime, father Stăniloae has elaborated a living theology (not always correctly appreciated<sup>20</sup>), capable to meet the needs of modern world.

The second chapter analyses aspects concerning the liturgical movement in the 20<sup>th</sup> century which concentrated on the reawakening of cultural tradition from the perspective of an adaptation of the modern world. This liturgical renewal present in both western catholic and protestant background, as well as in the Orthodox one, has generated argues that can be analyzed through father Dumitru Stăniloae's work.

The third chapter deals with the general aspects of the liturgical theology of father Stăniloae, who emphasized the importance of Sacrifice in the Holy Liturgy and the importance of assimilate Christ's spirit of sacrifice by taking part in the Holy Liturgy. The twofold experience of God's descend and the intimate-mystical and communitarian liturgical ascent of both the faithful and the Church towards the Kingdom of the Holy Trinity represents another aspect highlighted in the work *Spirituality and communion in the Orthodox Liturgy*. In addition, one can mention the complementarity between the eschatological and typological symbolism marked in father Stăniloae's liturgical comment. The horizontality of the liturgical memorial as Christ's life interferes with the verticality of the presence of Christ Crucified and Risen. In the fourth chapter we have emphasized father Stăniloae's ways of understanding the Holy Liturgy. He has described in his comment "a liturgical

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<sup>20</sup> About the hostilities of certain theologians (with emphasis on Mariology) towards the great patristic renewal of palamite and phylocalic inspiration undertaken by father one should refer to the work of Diac. Ioan I. Ică jr. The Holy Virgin in the 20<sup>th</sup> century theology and in the hesychast spirituality of the 14<sup>th</sup> century: *Gregory Palama, Nicholas Cabasilas, Theophan of Nicaea*, Editura Deisis, Sibiu, 2008, p.1

spirituality and a spiritual Liturgy” which is in contrast with other approaches of the orthodox ritual. Generally speaking, the liturgical comment of father Stăniloae had a crucial role in the interpretation of certain statements present in modern liturgical comments referring to the Holy Liturgy. A bright and deep vision on Holy Liturgy is bursting out from his work. One could even say that father had an ideal vision on the Liturgy. All is great, sublime, elevating, in one word perfect. If other liturgical authors preferred the critical tone, and a historical approach of the liturgical ceremonial, or they would struggle for contextual adaptations of the Holy Liturgy, father Stăniloae considered the acts of Liturgy from the point of view of communion with God and His overwhelming presence. From this perspective, everything is perfect, because each Liturgy ritual brings forth an existing and working God in the life of community.

In the first chapter of the second part, dedicated to father Alexander Schmemman, we attempted to summarize his existential and theological journey, with an emphasis on decisive and crucial aspects in his theological accomplishment. It was not our aim to frame a complete or abbreviate biography, but rather to highlight the relevance of his life experiences that have formed and shaped his theological vision. His existence, symbolically unfolded within the two geographical areas that set the 20<sup>th</sup> century history politically and economically, was a testimony of Orthodoxy, nourished by the eastern (Russian) culture and spirituality and manifested in a western (French and American) cultural environment. Thus, father Schmemman stated the dimension and the universal destiny of Orthodoxy, which cannot be enclosed within the human limits, regardless of their character.

The second chapter studies the cultural-theological background of forming, development and expression of father Alexander Schmemman’s liturgical vision. We underlined two dimensions considered by father Schmemman as decisive and crucial for the structure of western society and culture: secularism, as world’s estrangement from God, and western theology, also estranged from his liturgical source and re-focused on the categories of abstract rationalism, which led to its perversion and lack of connection to reality. These two aspects are brought back into discussion again and again in father Schmemman’s work, due to the fact that they can explain a series of the theological-liturgical anomalies Christianity is facing nowadays.

The third chapter includes the solutions proposed by father Schmemman in his work concerning the assault of secularism upon all characteristics of life (including the religious one) and solutions to the theological-liturgical crisis of Christianity. The main solution indicated by father Schmemman is resonant to the famous maxim “back to our Fathers”, only he concentrates more on the liturgical sources, as he considered that Liturgy was and it was supposed to become once more the source of true theology, not just as a simple text written by Fathers, but as a method of unveil the Kingdom of God on Earth. Therefore, the formulation and development of a theological hermeneutics with liturgical character are needed, with elements which can be identified in father Schmemman’s work.

In the fourth chapter, we analyzed father Schmemman’s conception on the Holy Liturgy. If Baptism represents the beginning and premise to the journey towards the kingdom of God, the Eucharist is the Sacrament which brings the Kingdom to us, in other words “the Sacrament of Kingdom”. Father Schmemman’s work is absolutely original in its structure and composition, as well as different from all the other “academic” and systematic works approaching this subject. Father Schmemann reflects upon the Holy Liturgy and he discovers in its construction a succession of twelve sacraments organically bound, which reveal and make the Kingdom of God accessible. A liturgical action takes place in a certain limit of time, but it exceeds any time barrier, be it the past or the future. The past is enhanced existentially and actual through anamnesis, while the future is being experienced and “deciphered” through the eschatological dimension of the Christian cult. Yet, the Liturgy nowadays fails to be understood and experienced in all its complexity, but it is more subjected to the individual need of the Christians, far from its authentic core. In this respect, father Schmemman suggests a series of guiding lines regarding the Eucharistic liturgical practice, aiming to its rediscovery.

The third part of the present thesis creates a comparative analysis of the theological conception of the two fathers, starting from their different views. Father Stăniloae has a scholar type of theological discourse, focused on the permanent religious identity of the Church, favoring continuity and spatiality. In the center of his theological preoccupations there stood reflection, elucidation and appraisal of divine

Revelation. Therefore, his theology has a sapient and mystical character, and thus distinguished from the liturgical theology of father Alexander Schmemmann. The latter evolved as a result of the need to meet the contextual challenges, favoring discontinuity and temporality. Following these traits, one may assert that his theology is of prophetic and critic nature. These different types of theology assumed by the two fathers, correlated with the 20<sup>th</sup> century époque and the different social background are, structurally speaking, the measure of the dissimilarities of their liturgical theology.

The main objective of the work is to highlight the approaches of fathers Dumitru Stăniloae and Alexander Schmemmann, by capturing the originality, the depth, the relevance and the present state of their liturgical theology. We tried to “signal” these works in order to be discovered. We consider their liturgical theology must be known and shared to all levels of the ecclesiastic organism, so that the formulated principles are applied.

## CONCLUSIONS

1. Father Stăniloae's theology is able to reveal the religious permanent identity of Church, favoring continuity and spatiality. Reflection, elucidation and appraising were in the center of his theological preoccupations. Thus, his theology has a sapient and mystic nature. Due to these features, it is radically different from father Alexander Schmemman's liturgical theology, which evolved as a result of the need to meet the contextual challenges, favoring discontinuity and temporality. Following these traits, one may assert that his theology is of prophetic and critic nature. These different types of theology assumed by the two fathers, correlated with the 20<sup>th</sup> century époque and the different social background are, structurally speaking, the measure of the dissimilarities of their liturgical theology.

2. The actual theological aim, specific to father Schmemman, is an opening to Church life and a minute study (of Liturgy, liturgical cycles, and Church life) to reach a simplicity that truly speaks about the presence of the divine inside the creation. A theology connected to the modern background is needed, in order to fully and critically reflect the needs of the Church, in other words, a theology that is able to nourish and th life of the Church and nourish itself from it.

Father Schmemann tried to demonstrate that Liturgy and Christian cult have not changed, despite the inherent historical transformations; what did change however, was their perception and understanding on the part of the faithful and the theologians. The recovery of the Holy Liturgy original meaning meant for father Schmemman the aim of his liturgical theology and, in the same time, the solution to exit a profound crisis of understanding Eucharist as separated from Liturgy, Church and the Kingdom of God. The liturgical order must be comprehended and experienced in their completeness. The consciousness of equal value and importance of all the liturgy "moments" is crucial to understanding and experience their full significance and profundity.

3. The emphasis on the personal character of Liturgy attendance, in the case of father Stăniloae, comes in contrast with the emphasis father Schmemmmman puts on the

community gathering in the holy place, to rediscover the Church. Father Stăniloae can be given the credit of showing that Eucharist does not dissolve the personal aspect in a diffused impersonal unity, even though it is the Sacrament of communion par excellence.

4. Father Stăniloae's maximian idea of ascetic-mystic soul progress by participating in the Liturgy marks his entire liturgical comment, transforming into an axiom and leitmotif. The efficiency of the liturgical symbol is directly proportional to each individual's spiritual state and progress, which explains the various ways of understanding Liturgy. The different emphasis put on history or eschatology, on ideal and real, on allegory and presence is directly proportional to the personal spiritual state and measure of the participants to the liturgy. This perspective also allows rising above the antinomy allegory-realism, as understood by father Schmemman.

5. If the Holy Liturgy is to father Schmemman an ascent, to father Stăniloae the soul ascension to God is connected to His descend into the Liturgy and the faithful souls. Our life is participation, experience and communion with Christ, the Way, the Truth and Life. Since the very beginning, the Christian community has been gathering around God's Table to nourish and receive the communion of Life: he who eats My Body and drinks My Blood shall have eternal life. (In.6,53). Summing up the entire history of redemption, the Eucharist opens to the eschaton, thus rediscovering us as pilgrims in this life and immortal children of the eternal Kingdom. According to father Stăniloae, who follows Saint Nicholas Cabasilas, the Liturgy makes us contemporary with the past and future events in the holy history of redemption. Through the liturgy, both eternity and the redeeming history of Incarnation, Crucifixion, Rising and Ascension of Christ are manifesting in everyday life. Within the Liturgy, history is no longer a succession of past events that have travelled to the present, in straight line. With the Liturgy, the faithful assert not only their belief in the Holy Trinity, but also experience their accomplishment in the present or Christ as Teacher, who still teaches as high priest and indulges Himself in sacrifice.

6. As neo-patristic theologian, father Stăniloae keeps in the center of his liturgical comment Christ's sacrifice and the necessity of personally assimilating it. Following Saint Cyril of Alexandria, whom he quotes countless times, the father

comes to the conclusion that we only have access to God through immaculate sacrifice, which is given to us by Christ's power of sacrifice. Christ gives Himself to us so that we can bring ourselves as sacrifice to the Father and be filled by his Holiness. For the man cannot reach holiness and get rid of selfishness unless he accepts sacrifice. Sacrifice opens the way to the Holy Trinity and to complete love of the Trinity towards us.

7. Through the Liturgy and God's Word, the creed evolves within us as prologue of Sacrament. Common faith and its testimony represent a necessary condition to sacred communion with Christ. That is why the Nicaea-Constantinople creed precedes the communion with Christ's Body and Blood.

8. The eucharist-centrism and the Christ-centrism of father Schmemman find their shape and accomplishment in the triadological conception of father Stăniloae, who understands them in the light of the access to the life of the Holy Trinity. To father Stăniloae, the Church is not just a Eucharistic community, but a sacramental and universal one. The communion with Christ leads to a filial relationship with the Father through the union with Him as Son, moving forward through the Holy Spirit.

9. Father A. Schmemman considers that a misinterpretation of communion has been reached, as it is now perceived as a method of individual sacrament, from a corporative and constitutive act of Church. As for the two dimensions of the liturgical act of communion, father Stăniloae demonstrates that they are not to be opposed or accepted in a unilateral way, by excluding one in favor of the other. Communion, in its essence, is a communitarian act which implies an individual preparation on behalf of the faithful and an inner state correspondent to experiencing the Sacrament or inclusion in the Body of Christ. Unlike the Russian liturgist, father Stăniloae talks about the transfiguration of Eucharistic communion act, through which the person reaches the ultimate and complete form of deification. He keeps the relevance and the importance of the Eucharistic Sacrament in the personal life. Thus, the unbalance between the personal dimension and communitarian one of this unifying Sacrament is avoided.

We therefore consider that, despite their deficiencies, the measures taken by father A. Schmemann led to an attitudinal change both at a theoretical, intellectual

and practical level, in relation to Eucharist. These transfiguration efforts of perception and practice of Eucharist are extended to our time through the effort and implication of orthodox theologians and high priests. Thus, His Grace, Most Rev. Laurențiu, Metropolitan of Transylvania utters his conviction that the Holy Liturgy *“fully accomplishes its aim only if within its context somebody but the servant will receive the holy communion, for which they have specifically prepared”*, because *“all faithful are summoned to the table of Kingdom”*<sup>21</sup>.

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<sup>21</sup> His Grace, Most Rev. Laurențiu Streza, *The dinamic and constant character of the Orthodox cult. Tradition and renewal*, in *Telegraful Român*, nr.45-46/2011, p.5.