

Darko Djogo

## Trinity, Society and “Political Theology”

### Abstract

One of the greatest problems of contemporary Orthodox theology is an issue of its social involvement. There are two, as it seems, contradictive tendencies: one is the critical approach to the identification of the Church and society, criticized by some contemporary Orthodox authors and the other is a development of one evidently communal and social Trinitarian theology. However, it is obvious that the communal Trinitarian hermeneutics presuppose one Christian involvement in the social life. These hermeneutics have been developed by most prominent Orthodox theologians, such as Justin Popovic, Dumitru Staniloae, John Zizioulas and Christos Yannaras in order to underline ontological foundation of a Christian praxis and to explain the relevance of the patristic faith for today. As the main field of the relevance and an axis of both, Christian existence and ethics,



Prof. Dr Darko Djogo is Junior Associated Professor (Dozent) of Contemporary Theology at the St Basil of Ostrog Orthodox Theological Faculty, University of East Sarajevo, Republic of Srpska, Bosnia and Herzegovina.

we can observe the Divine Liturgy which also has to deal with some problems of modernity: domination of the functionality over ontology, fragmentation of reality, misbalance of liberty and unity. An answer could be given in one social ethics of Trinitarian responsibility. All these aspects might serve as foundation for one Orthodox political theology which would be adequate to the Orthodox historical identity.

### Keywords

Trinity, Society, Community, Modernity, Freedom, Relevance, Political Theology

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## 1 “We serve the liturgy...”

Every era has its own apophthegmata. One of the most popular apophthegmata of the modern historical Christian Orthodoxy is the following one: one Russian layman was praising protestant missionaries in the 19<sup>th</sup> century Africa, their engagement in the social care. When he asked an Orthodox priest why the Orthodox Church does not have any kind of such activities, the priest (or a bishop) briefly answered: “But we serve Divine Liturgy!” The morals of the story is that Protestants are those who require a charity work in order to make a compensation of the liturgical content: on the other hand, it presupposes that the Orthodox Church has a divine Liturgy as a simple and clear solution for every issue, including the problem of social engagement. I do not agree with the first prejudice and I think that the conception of the Liturgy as general solution is mainly misunderstood, if it should mean that Liturgy means to do nothing but the liturgy.

There is one more line of reasoning why the Orthodox Church should be very cautious concerning any kind of social over-estimated engagement: it is the experience of the Greek Orthodox Church with the pietistic “charity” organizations modeled on the Protestant pattern. It is not that, in this

concrete example, the very essence of the problem is in their "Western" place of birth. They were criticized by such ecumenically involved theologians such as Christos Yiannaras<sup>1</sup>. No, the problem is their ideological background which is founded in the early Modern Era moralism and their general strangeness to the conscience and praxis of the Orthodox Church. As especially shown in Yiannaras's dramatically colored memoirs "The Shelter of Ideas" (Καταφύγιο ιδεών), the concept of pietistic Christian charity has quite often not been centered on the values of love towards men, but, oppositely, on the need to use a man for some ideological purposes<sup>2</sup>. Since the Orthodoxy knows no ideology that could be more worthy than God-similar personality of men, it is obvious that this kind of so called "merciful social engagement" is out of the question for our Church.

The third reason for the skepticism towards the social engagement of the Orthodox Church could be traced back to the new conscience of the Church theologians that "Constantine Era" was not only a honey moon of the Church and State (Byzantine Empire, Russian Empire, 19<sup>th</sup> century Orthodox countries such as Kingdom of Serbia, "The Little Romania" or Greece) but also a violent era of numerous misuses in which the Church suffered Her "freedom". This was specially an issue for the theological sensibility of Fr Alexander Schmemmann. If the social engagement would mean that the Church will again readily pay its "role" in the Christian society, scarifying Her eschatological call and the freedom of being "in the world but outside of it", than it should be better for Her not to deal with the State any more.

All these "reasons", as long as a general spirit of conservatism (or at least one popular misunderstanding of it) contributed to

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<sup>1</sup> Christos Yannaras, *The Freedom of Morality*, (trans. Elizabeth Briere, Ed. St Vladimir Seminary Press, 1984)

<sup>2</sup> Χρήστος Γιανναράς, *Καταφύγιο ιδεών – μνήματα* (Ίκαρος, Αθήνα, 2000)

the popular conscience that all that Church has to do for modernity is to *witness* its theological and liturgical contents without dealing to much with “Modernity” and without some social engagement.

And, still, the Church has its natural need to be relevant. This means that all the reasons given for its “retirement from society” must be redefined and rethought again.

## 2 The Trinity as a social model in neopatristic theology

It is now a common place in all Orthodox theological papers to emphasize the importance of Trinitarian dogma. Although it may be disputed whether this dogma have had a crisis of interpretation and relevance in the former “scholastic” theology, it is obvious that contemporary Orthodox theology saw a true increase in the Trinitarian thinking. It is very interesting that, even though that some parallels could be made between neopatristic theology in Eastern philosophy/theology and humanist-neomediavelism in Western philosophy/ theology, Eastern patristic renewal experienced much earlier coming back to the inner meaning of the Trinitarian theology than the Western one. For example, when Jürgen Moltmann wrote his *Crucified God*<sup>3</sup> and Karl Rahner his *Trinity*<sup>4</sup>, in the 60ies, complaining about the crisis of the Trinitarian theology<sup>5</sup> (i.e.

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<sup>3</sup> Jürgen Moltmann, *The Crucified God. The Cross of Christ as the Foundation and Criticism of Christian Theology*, (trans. R.A. Wilson and John Bowden, Minneapolis, ed. Fortress Press, 1993)

<sup>4</sup> Karl Rahner, *The Trinity* (trans. Joseph Danceel, London and New York, ed. Burns and Oats, 2001)

<sup>5</sup> As an indicative statement, Moltmann quotes Kant: “The doctrine of the Trinity 'offers absolutely nothing of practical use'”. - J. Moltmann, *The Crucified God*, pp. 94 also K. Rahner, *Trinity*, pp.10-14 where the problem is defined in the context of the relation between treatises “About one God” and “About Triune God”. What is really important is the fact that those German theologians did not stop their efforts only on diagnostic inputs, but also gave some contributions to the issue: Rahner in the mentioned work, Moltmann in the mentioned work, but

about the lack of its relevance), the Orthodox Theology has already had some prominent theologians which centered their thoughts on the existential implications of Trinitarian dogma. The first generation of neopatristic authors still did not make any attempt to find some "practical" or, I find it better to say, "relevant" meaning out of the Trinitarian dogma *in some special social hermeneutics*. Surely, Florovsky's insights were quite useful and they gave precious road-marks how the patristic tradition formed dogmas in general (Trinitarian and Christological in particular), but the great theological genius has still not been so dedicated to discovering its implications for *particularly modern, secularized world*. We can say *almost* the same thing about Fr Justin Popovic and his eminent *Dogmatics of the Orthodox Church*<sup>6</sup> (the first volume, which originally appeared in the 1932 was dedicated, among the "general knowledge" about God also to the Trinitarian theology). What, in each case, must be specially appreciated is their emphasis on the soteriological meaning of each dogma. It was a spiritual witnessing that *theology needs a field of relevance, an opportunity to touch men*. Not only that: *it was a cry for being relevant*. It would be hard to compound all inner tendencies of neopatristic theology in few words, but if it has to be done, then we could conclude that it represented a "come back" of the soteriological principle in the Orthodox Theology. The problem of the scholastic theology was not in the type of the metaphysics it embraced: alienation of the scholastic metaphysics was so tragical because they stopped to speak about *how does*

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more in the Jürgen Moltmann, *The Trinity and the Kingdom. The Doctrine of God* (trans. Margaret Kohl, Minneapolis, ed. Fortress Press, 1993). These books represented a renewal of the Trinitarian theology. For insight in the contemporary Trinitarian theology in Western theology: Miroslav Volf, Michael Wellker (eds), *God's Life in Trinity*, Minneapolis, Fortress Press, 1989.

<sup>6</sup> Justin Popovic, *Dogmatika pravoslavne crkve*, tom.I, ed. Izdavačka knjizarnica Radomira Djukovica, Beograd, 1932. We use reprint edition from 1980.

*the existence of God make sense for the existence of men.* This principle became one of the basis of contemporary Orthodox theologians, even *after* (chronologically and thematically) the neopatristic synthesis.

It seems to me that, although for much of the younger Orthodox theologians it is obvious to consider two great and celebrated contemporary Orthodox theologians – namely, Christos Yannaras and John Zizioulas – for the next step in the development of the “community theology” in our theology today, it would be a great failure to overlook the contribution of father Dumitru Staniloae in the development of this concept. It is not only that Fr Staniloae preceded some of the aspects of the *Trinitarian ontology* – he also made a first *implication model* i.e. first *existential-social hermeneutics of the Trinitarian dogma*. Although simple, his theological entertainment was brilliant: *he made a concept of divine love and perichoresis into a concrete and practical existential model*. God exists as a perfect love (iubirea) – this “fact” is the normative for human existence, too. If we closely compare the first volume of Staniloae’s *Dogmatic Theology*, to the relevant volume of the dogmatic theology written by Fr Justin Popovic, we will easily understand that, structurally, the similarity is obvious: both have some *introductive part*, than a great deal of attention is paid on the *relation between the God and the world* and they both have a relatively modest part dedicated to the Trinitarian theology: in Popovic, only 89 pages out of 330 are dedicated to the Trinitarian dogma (together with Filioque problem)<sup>7</sup> and in Staniloae that ratio would be 41/520 (pages 297-334)<sup>8</sup>. Still, although Popovic’s theology is certainly patristic one (in a sense that it faithfully expresses beliefs of the Orthodox Church), Staniloae’s beginning of the Trinitarian treatise is extraordinary and today it is altogether classical:

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<sup>7</sup> J. Popovic, *Dogmatika* 1, pp. 125-214.

<sup>8</sup> Dumitru Staniloae, *Teologia dogmatica ortodoxa*, (I), ed. Editura Institutului biblic si de misiune ortodoxa, Bucuresti, 2010.

"Love always presupposes two "I"-s that love each other or the one which loves and the other which receives love or the one which is such that the one that loves knows that the other is conscious of his love. And all this in reciprocity. Still, at the same time, love unites two "I"-s in the proportional to their love, without mixing them, because it would mean an end to love."<sup>9</sup>

If we would not know that these words come from Fr Staniloae, I think that many of us would think that they were written by Martin Buber or some other great philosopher. In the whole first page "Trinity" is not mentioned. But what is mentioned is by far the most important: it is mentioned that "*without one eternal and perfect love, we would not see a love of the world and the meaning of the world*"<sup>10</sup>. The Trinity dogma is imposed and exposed as our own need for a perfect love. It starts with an *human perspective* and, what is also very important, it does not end in an anthropological ontology but remains theologically structured. It means that *Trinitarian hermeneutics became at the very same time ontological* but did not suffer any misfortune of the contemporary philosophical anthropological principle. The problem of the relevance of the relevance of theology was resolved in its very basis: *theology is relevant because it shows a way of existence of God which is at the same time the task of human existence*.

Thus a community-model in the Orthodox theology was made (or rather rediscovered). Although it may be not as evident in English as it is in the Old (and Modern) Greek, this model was instantly a *social one*: it was based upon the hermeneutics of the Greek word "κοινωνία" which means "Community", "Communion" and "Participation": Greek word for society is "κοινότης" (modern Greek uses the old accusative as nominative – "κοινότητα"), a noun co-radical with "κοινωνία". It means that the very emphasis on the validity of community/

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<sup>9</sup> D. Staniloae, *Teologia dogmatica*, p. 293.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid.

social Trinitarian dogma for human existence draw a picture of Christian “sociology”. Of course, this sociology would always have to be, so to say, onto-sociology, or socio-ontology: it has to be a *living in the community* of the existential values which are based on the Divine *Community* of Three Persons of the same Essence.

I think that the first such model could be found (speaking about the contemporary theology) in Fr Justin Popovic’s and Fr Dumitru Staniloae’s ascetics (for the Serbian theologian, basis of ascetic life is more emphasized in the Christological context, as the synergy concept of God-Man)<sup>11</sup>. For a mentality unfamiliar with the Orthodox theology, a statement that someone’s ascetic theology represents a social or community model might sound peculiar: mostly, ascetic theology requires solitude and “One-to-one” relation between God and man and,

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<sup>11</sup> Fr Justin Popovic developed one type of community theology, which, according to my personal opinion, is more based on his Christological insights than on the Trinitarian. Thus, he made a community-hermeneutics which are more *vertical* i.e. which tend to interpret Christ’s „double existence“ as a ascetic and existential mode. Popovic’s social hermeneutics of Christianity are based on one „simple“ but genius principle: everything must be measured and compared by and with Christ and Christ is the perfect model of divine-human communication and, eo ipso, of human-human communication. This is visible in the second volume of his *Dogmatics* (Christology and Soteriology) although his Christology has been very much misunderstood by some contemporary Orthodox and not-Orthodox scholars who, mostly motivated by Popovic’s severe criticism of ecumenical movement, try to establish reasons for this criticism. (It seems that a great deal of this misunderstanding is caused by the fact that only some of Popovic’s works are translated on foreign languages). Still, I consider Fr Popovic and Fr Staniloae theologies as complementary theological models for one „theological sociology“: the first one could be named „vertical“ and the second one „horizontal“. We should also understand that this complementary difference does not mean that Popovic’s theology and ascetics are only Christologically based or Christomonistic and Staniloae’s Trinitarian and not Christological: a mere glimpse on the works of both of them would assure us that the other component is present respectfully.



at the first place, it requires, *a man's depriving of the social life*. Nevertheless, for Orthodox theology and ecclesiastic spiritual experience, ascetics are primary onto-sociological model, a way on which a man tries to make healthy relations with the other men and the world implementing in his life a basic principle of Trinity<sup>12</sup>: *love without confusion*. I must add that, according to my personal opinion, this ascetic coloring of Trinitarian social hermeneutics is very therapeutic because it preserves this onto-sociological model from the illusion that collectivity in itself will solve the problem. No, Trinitarian socio-ontological model suggests that achieving the collectivity requires an ascetic efforts in implementing a Trinitarian life in us. *Collectivity in itself will not be sufficient if it is not transfigured in the Trinitarian way*: Popovic's and Stanolae's opposition to the Trinitarian model in which divine Essence would dominate over the Persons in the hermeneutical key of social relations means that institution should not dominate human persons (theme explained by Vladimir Lossky). At the same time, for both of them, ascetic life is the life of *obedience* (smerenie, smirenje), a term also often misunderstood as "submission... the passive acceptance of the superior will"<sup>13</sup>. However, for both of them (as well as for A. Yannulatos), obedience is a Trinitarianly based relation between the Father and the Son: Son does the Father's commandments because He loves Him and vice versa. This is very important for the social ethics based on the Trinitarian model.

Thus we have arrived to the one of the greatest moments of all Christian theology: introduction of the "ontology of the Other(ness)" in the works by John Zizioulas and Christos

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<sup>12</sup> Dumitru Staniloae, *Ascetica si mistica Bisericii Ortodoxe*, ed. Editura Institutului biblic si de misiune ortodoxa, Bucuresti, 2002, p.p.37-49.

<sup>13</sup> Anastasios Yannulatos, *Mission in Christ's Way. An Orthodox Understanding of Mission*, Brookline - Geneva, ed. Holly Cross Orthodox Press - World Council of Churches Publications, 2011, p.p. 180/181.

Yannaras. Although their efforts were primarily dedicated to the explanation of the patristic theology (especially the one imposed by Cappadocian Fathers), it was not without some social notions and connotations. According to my opinion, although the influence of modern philosophers was clearly refused by Zizioulas<sup>14</sup>, some of the basic features of their theology could be explained only by their need to be relevant and to correspond to some problems of the contemporary man. Here, on the first place, I consider the *emphasis on the ex-stasis of the Person over/from the Substance*. Generally, as Fr Nicolas Ludovikos has shown, such emphasis would destroy the inner sense of the homoousios creed: if the substance/essence is something that God needs to overcome in the Personal ex-stasis, what remains of the con-substantiality<sup>15</sup>? Even if this moment was not borrowed from contemporary philosophy (what, I think, even if it were true, would not jeopardize someone's authenticity), it may be motivated by the repression of the institution over the liberty and personhood of man. Still, even if these insights were unbalanced, they remain brilliant and genius: they openly spoke about the meaning of the Trinitarian dogma in the social context.

In his most known book *Being as Communion*, Metropolitan John Zizioulas explained his vision of the formation of the Cappadocian theology in the context of the semantics of terms "Person", "Hypostasis", "ousia" and "physis". The dissertation line is far too familiar to every modern theologian and I will not repeat it: I would only like to direct our attention on the fact that, speaking about the meaning of "persona" in Roman

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<sup>14</sup> John Zizioulas, *The Being of God and the being of Man, The One and the Many. Studies on God, Man, the Church and the World today*, Alhambra, ed. Sebastian Press, 2010, p.p.19-24.

<sup>15</sup> Νικόλαος Λουδόβικος, *Η κλειστή πνευματικότητα και το νόημα του εαυτού του. Ο μυστικισμός της ισχύος και η αλήθεια φύσεως και προσώπου*, Αθήνα, Ελληνικά γράμματα, 1999, p.p. 272-273

world<sup>16</sup>, Zizioulas clearly refused one purely social meaning of it: persona ought to have an *ontological* meaning in order to have a social one and not the opposite. Community theology thus appears to be not simply social, but somehow even opposite to it in Zizioulas's thought "koinonia derives not from a sociological life, not from ethics, but from faith"<sup>17</sup>. It is thus very surprising that in his analysis (and a bit confrontation) of biological and ecclesiastical "hypostasis" (or rather "hypostases")<sup>18</sup> Greek theologian did not include some *social* hypostasis. Nevertheless, I think that we can conclude with certainty that his answer would be very much alike the one about the perspectives of the biological hypostasis – it has to be ecclesiastically included in the ontology of salvation. Might be that the ecclesiastical hypostasis equals ideal social hypostasis in some way?<sup>19</sup> Since the Church is not entire human society (and vice versa) it would be interesting to find out what is their relation like, i.e. it would be very useful if the Metropolitan's theology gave us more detailed insight in the relation between Church and society.

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<sup>16</sup> John Zizioulas, Personhood and being, *Being as Communion*, New York, ed. St Vladimir Seminary Press, 1997, p. 34

<sup>17</sup> John Zizioulas, The Church as Communion, *The One and the Many. Studies on God, Man, the Church and the World today*, Alhambra, ed. Sebastian Press, 2010, p.51.

<sup>18</sup> J. Zizioulas, Personhood and being, p. 49ff

<sup>19</sup> Quotation given above (n. 16<sup>th</sup>) and some unauthorized papers of Metropolitan Zizioulas known as "Themes of Orthodox dogmatic theology" (in both, Greek and Serbian version) indicate a strong opposition of this author towards an equalizing *social* and *ecclesiastical* community. His main concern is not to *mix up* one ad hoc *social* aspect of the Church with its essence, because Church is not "koinonia" because it is social but it is social because it is the image of the Trinity as Community. (J.Zizioulas, The Church as Communion, p.p. 51/52). However, if we respect this very important methodological intervention, we may conclude that, even every social hypostasis is not and automatically is not an ecclesiastical hypostasis, the ecclesiastical hypostasis is community-hypostasis and, hence, a social hypostasis.

Such insight is, however, given by his theological brother, Christos Yannaras. Although also much criticized for his *ex-static* and *eros* theology, Yannaras remains the most profound, most fruitful and most detailed contemporary Orthodox Theologian. His first great appearance – now famous study *Person and Eros*<sup>20</sup> became *Sein und Zeit* of the contemporary Orthodoxy, it gave complete vision of authentic existence according to the neopatristic Orthodox theology. But, even more precious, Yannaras gave us many books which are concrete analyses of social ethics and Christian ontology and epistemology. Among other books his *Rationalism and social practice*<sup>21</sup> makes the clearest rethinking of the social applicability of Christian existential insights (surely, Trinitarian-based) on various phenomena of economical and social life.

With God's merciful help, this impulse from the Orthodox Theology came to the Western theologians opened for the true dialogue of love, in love and about (triune) love. We must sincerely confess that problems which the Orthodox Theology had in front of it in its liberation process of Trinitarian dogma were "smaller" than those of the Western Theology. Trinitarian dogma was put on the second placed on the second place in the sequence of "treatises" in the dogmatic books: however, it was not that it was proclaimed *virtually* "unpractical" (Kant) and irrelevant, as in the pre-Moltmann Western theology. It is far beyond the boundaries of this paper to deal what is the main reason of the relevance crisis of Western Trinitarian theology: introduction of the juridical tone and vocabulary done by Tertullian, psychological metaphorical language of the Augustinian theology (Zizioulas's thesis) or medieval scholastic

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<sup>20</sup> Christos Yannaras, *Person and Eros*, trans. Norman Russell, Crestwood, ed. Holly Cross Orthodox Press, 2007.

<sup>21</sup> Χρήστος Γιανναράς, *Ορθός λόγος και κοινωνική πρακτική*, Αθήνα, Δόμος, 2006.

alienation of metaphysics and practical Church life<sup>22</sup>. In each case, Western theologians discovered that Eastern Trinitarian model is more applicable on the field of social hermeneutics of Christian doctrine: although it may seem over exaggerated, I think that Moltmann's concept of social Trinity could never be developed without his relations with Eastern theologians<sup>23</sup>. Although it is disputable whether such "social" concepts of Trinity are totally compatible<sup>24</sup>, their inner similarity suggests a

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<sup>22</sup> Leo Scheffczyk, *Lehramtliche Formulierungen und Dogmengeschichte der Trinität*, *Mysterium Salutis – Grundriß heilsgeschichtlicher Dogmatik*, b.2, Zürich – Köln, 1967, p. 192.

<sup>23</sup> Cf. Jürgen Moltmann, *God the Father in the Life of the Holy Trinity*, *IJOT*, 1/1 (2010), p. 39.

<sup>24</sup> Orthodox patristic and Moltmann's Trinitarian theologies have a lot in common: a moment of Freedom, a moment of communal love, emphasis on the periochosis. Nevertheless, significant differences should not be neglected. The crux of the problem lies in Moltmann's theology of God's suffering in Trinitarian context. Much of his statements in *The Crucified God* and *The Trinity and the Kingdom* could be interpreted, with some hermeneutical efforts, in some communicative interpretation code which would make them understandable in the realms of patristic theology, but his statements about the Son's death as "inner stasis" or "God against God" situation would scandalize an Orthodox theological conscience and I see no way on which we can bring it to some adequate meaning for the Orthodox position. It could be disputed whether some or all elements of his *theologia crucis* are compatible with the Orthodox Christology and Trinitarian doctrine, but the position *Deus contra deum* (J. Moltmann, *The Crucified God*, p.p. 151-152.) would be a capitulation of the Divine love: if the historical process of Jesus as a result had an "enmity" between God and God (J. Moltmann, *The Crucified God*, p.152), not only that they succeeded in a murder, but also they have succeeded in killing the Triune God. We may find suitable hermeneutics for expression that "One of the Trinity has suffered" but I do not think that we can find, from an Orthodox point of view, any hermeneutics in which "one of the Three became an enemy of the other Two".

I have no intention to summarize all objections made by Western theologians for such statements, neither the answers given by Moltmann himself. It would require much more attention than it could be given right now. What really is a point of departure between

common ground for ecumenical understanding. As we would see, Western theology might “return the favor” by suggesting one other method of theological relevance in social context to Eastern theology.

In such manner the Orthodox Trinitarian theology became a *communal and hence a social one* and it was followed by Western brothers in the same efforts to authentically speak about the Holy One. But this was only a ontological frame: whole one field of relevance was introduced at the very same time and by the very same authors.

### 3 Liturgy as a social model and the challenge of collectively and “secularization”

As we know, Trinitarian and Christological Theology of Orthodox Church reveals itself, it makes itself public, authentic and vivid through the divine Eucharist<sup>25</sup>. Still, if we come back to the beginning of the article, we could remind ourselves that Eucharistic reality is often misleadingly interpreted as a sole and complete solution to all social situations and issues. Of course, this actually might be true, but *in which sense?* It is, I believe, more than obvious that one *liturgical passive approach* would not only fail to make the Church and its dogma present in the society but rather destroy it and betray it. One of the most

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Orthodox and Moltmann Trinitarian theology is the *semantics of suffering and community*. In Moltmann, suffering has almost sentimental meaning – how else can we explain this “enmity” which does not deconstruct Trinity? If this should be ontological “enmity”, it would be the end of Trinity. On the other hand, for Fathers such sentimental semiotics of Cross would be pointless and for two reasons: a) because they contradict divine love and community and, even on the sentimental perspective, tend to “abolish” Trinity b) because the way of thinking is the *ontological one*: sentimentality has nothing to say about the way of being.

<sup>25</sup> John Zizioulas, *Ecclesiological Presuppositions of the Holy Eucharist, The One and the Many. Studies on God, Man, the Church and the World today*, Alhambra, ed. Sebastian Press, 2010, p.p.61/63.

common misleading ideas of an average theologian is that *theology will speak from itself* and that it is quite sufficient for it to speak about itself: it is totally unnecessary to make it actual. Allegedly, our attempts would only "corrupt" the divine substance of theology or liturgy. This is, I believe, the ultimate negation of the Orthodox doctrine of synergy, cooperation of both, God and man. Liturgy as a primary field and context of theological actualization requires of us an impulse towards the world and society. Its cosmological structure suggests the involvement, not passivity<sup>26</sup>.

Liturgy is the most important act and fact of the Orthodox Church. Still, it is at the very same time, the most misunderstood one. We can easily show that all issues between the modern word and Orthodoxy exist just on the field of the liturgical problems and liturgical conscience. Or better: we can demonstrate profound misunderstanding between the average mentality of Post Modern (including the average "Orthodox" colored religious mentality) and the authentic experience of the Church life authenticity.

For instance, in the popular conscience, Eucharist has for a long time been considered to be a mere instrument in the "personal spiritual development". This attitude shows all traces of secularization process: it generally agrees that a Mystery of the Church is a private and individual act although it is more than obvious that it is not or it at least should not be. Whether this mentality was introduced from West or not, whether the secularization is the logical product of the de-sacralisation process introduced by the European Age of Enlightenment – it makes no difference for the fact that even in the realms of Orthodox spiritual space (which, allegedly, was not exposed to the rationalist *Weltanschauung* paradigm change) this mentality is dominant. It is an irony of history that functionalism, as the main characteristic of Post Modern, prevailed over

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<sup>26</sup> Christos Yannaras, *Postmodern Metaphysics*, Brookline, ed. Holly Cross Orthodox Press, 2004, p. 4.

the ontological approach even on one field in which it had previously been constructed *on the ontological foundation – the Divine Liturgy*. Liturgy, as the main cosmo-anthropological function of human existence became de-sacralised by the simple overthrow of functionality and ontology.

What is even more interesting (and frightening) is that this old diagnosis – secularization – became in the mean time obsolete. When Fr Alexander Schmemmann was writing his works trying to establish a liturgical answer to the challenge of secularization, it was only a secularization that was a hot point of the Orthodox witnessing in the modern world<sup>27</sup>. Whatever we might think about it, secularization was a *concept*, it had some inner coherence which, let us not forget it, had a lot to do with its Christian roots (Gogarten). The dialogue between Christianity and secularization (or even polemics) was possible because the both sides in it use to have some *conceptuality*, but what to do in a case where even conceptuality is brought in question? It is not a problem of secularization that is now actual one: we are witnessing the religious renaissance and, still, could we say that the problem of individualization is behind us or that the value-crisis is over? Can we now conclude that that inner solitude of existential philosophy and a severe feeling that man is left alone in the world is now less true, although the climax of Heideggerian or Jasperian philosophy has gone?

Thus we must conclude that two major aspects of our modern situation are: a) lack of the conceptuality, phenomenological particularism which is try to deal with; b) obviously present problem of the existential authenticity which is multiplied in a social life i.e. a problem of unauthentic existence which, on the social scale, becomes a problem of the *social nature* become it deals with human relations and institutions.

What can the Trinitarian hermeneutics say to us today?

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<sup>27</sup> Cf. Mathai Kadavil, *The World as a Sacrament. Sacramentality of Creation from the Perspectives of Leonardo Boff, Alexander Schmemmann and Saint Ephraim*, Leuven, ed. Peters, 2005, p.p. 200-209.



First of all, they might resolve the fragmentation-of-the-reality-problem. At the first place, it seems as an epistemological problem: like never before the world has been parted in multiple, even endless phenomena, so it overwhelms us – and, at the very same time it seems globalised and united (again like never before). However, it appears to be only an epidermical manifestation of the inner, existential disfunction of our being. In the words of (neo) patristic theology, we are experiencing problems on the relation between our Personhood, our personal tendency to freedom and the limitations of our Essence.

Our problem is that our *mode of existence* (simply put: a way of being, a way of life) and our inner existential content are trying to “jump over” each other. On the other hand, Trinitarian theology, in its patristic formulation and contemporary actualization, suggests us that neither of those could *exist for itself*, that our need for freedom needs to be in accordance with our existential solidarity and our existential solidarity should not oppress our liberty<sup>28</sup>. If we, *mutans mutandis*, now interpret this ontological thesis on the social level, it will mean that our personal fulfillment should be in accordance to the institutional frame and the institutional frame should be a field of our liberty, and not oppression. Liturgy, as a manifestation of the life of Triune God should show us this mode of existence: in it we meet the Community which is existing (or should exist) on the way of the Trinity – achieving perfect balance between institution and liberty, togetherness of the faithful people and the personal liberty of each of the Community members.

Still, liturgy is an anticipation reality: not a fulfillment, but an expectation. It contains and requires an element of a free participation and institutional unity which are two-fold reality: eschatological and historical. This two-fold-ness should be preserved: historical Christianity has often betrayed its

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<sup>28</sup> N. Λουδόβικος, *Η κλειστή πνευματικότητα*, p. 274. ff.

eschatological and liturgical identity trying to impose it in the social context by either political force or logical structure. The Constantine Era is over and logical persuasiveness of medieval scholasticism is no longer a dominant way of thinking: still, the mistakes of the past or some of their aspects could even now be repeated if we do not admit them. Lack of the liberty, a tendency to suspend it should not be repeated. One of the best aspects of contemporary Trinitarian theology is the emphasis on the liberty: if even the process of the Birth in which the Father begets the Son is a *free one*, than a liberty should be preserved as a principle in the human relations and as a social principle<sup>29</sup>.

#### **4 Trinitarian solution of ecological problem and a context of responsibility**

Liturgy, especially its cosmological and Christological aspect, was justly very much interpreted as a solution for an ecological problem. Creation is worth of care because the God created it and the God-man accepted and sanctified it in His Incarnation. Still, we must not forget that the very act of creation, in patristic thought, was caused by the decision of the Council of Trinity: with some platonic nuances, St Gregory of Nazianze speaks about the Trinitarian motive for creation:

“And since it was not enough for Goodness to be set in motion simply by contemplating itself, but the Good needed to be poured out, to undertake a journey, that there might be more beings to receive its benefits—for this, after all, is the height of Goodness!—it first thought of the angelic, heavenly powers; and that thought was an action, brought to fulfillment in the Word and made perfect in the Spirit.”<sup>30</sup>

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<sup>29</sup> A. Yannoulatos, *The Mission in Christ's Way*, p. 128.

<sup>30</sup> Gregory of Nazianze, Oratio 38 – On Theophany, *Gregory of Nazianze*, trans. Brian E. Daley, London – New York, ed. Routledge. 2006., p. 121

The impulse of Trinitarian Togetherness and Distinction of Persons, some basic information that the mystery of existence is given in the Unity in Diversity and Diversity in Unity - this is the onto-cosmological truth of Christendom. Even the nature, not just society, is a testimony of the supreme Community. The problem between nature and society thus may be concerned as a problem of misuse of the Freedom, since their basis is common. Since the nature is a passive factor of this relationship, the very existence of the problem suggests that it is an active member – man – the one who is responsible for the disorder. Freedom requires responsibility and not a responsibility on the manner of a outer repression on a person to be responsible, but responsibility as freely accepted relation with everything it brings with it. The difference between these two may be the most easily noted if we compare a Trinitarian context of cosmological and soteriological dogma in Anselm of Canterbury and St Nicolai of Žižca. For the first one, The Son is the Person who undertakes the incarnation because no one else can do it: He is obliged to do it because the Divine Justice has been insulted and the only Person who can satisfy it is the one supreme to men. At the same time, he must also be a man – so the God-man is ontologically composed in order to respond the demands which are above Him. Divine teleology makes Him a double representative and a victim. For every Orthodox theologian this theory would be a capitulation of theology, a sign that even God is under some outer repression, that, in Kierkegaard's words, in theology, there is a "teleological suspension of ethics" (and ontology!) On the other hand, for St Nicolai of Žižca, the Son is the one who incarnates because on the Divine Council of Trinity He took the responsibility for the World and men:

"In his endless love towards His Father, the Son wanted to please Him and to make more sons and more brothers for Himself, lower to Him, but in love equalized with Him. And in the eternal Council, the Father and the Holy Spirit agreed: they approved creation of the world for the Son's love sake...

Taking the initiative for the creation, the Son received responsibility for created worlds in the face of the eternal Council and even more: (He gave) an freely approval to give Himself as a Sacrifice if that ever might be required, as pure and immaculate Lamb, Sacrifice “Who verily was foreordained before the foundation of the world” (1. Pt 1.20). Thus the greatest epopee of all started, for only one reason, my daughter, for love, because the God is love and there is nothing else inside of Him.”<sup>31</sup>

Responsibility is not imposed or the forced one – it is an aspect of love. *Social responsibility*, hence, in Trinitarian way should be based on the responsibility of love. Of course, a state and a society in the World which lies in the power of the evil (1. John 5.19) cannot be made as an ideal implementation of the Trinitarian modes, so we should not have any illusions that a social responsibility can be made on the basis of such (or any other) theology. However, it does not mean that such freely taken responsibility, responsibility because I love and not because I expect punishment for irresponsible behavior, could not be a proposal for some new social thinking, for some redefinition of social obligations which would be some new – ism “with human face”. The lack of the motivation to work and to exist is not a feature of West or East, of developed or underdeveloped countries – it is a feature of modernity because all social and economical models have become tired. No matter how the present state of “capitalism” proved itself as economically successful, even the best economies, with almost genetic work ethics (Germany, Japan, in some aspects the USA) experience the institutional crisis and not only because of the economy crisis, but rather *parallel* to it. Of course, Trinitarian theology could not and should not be a compensation for some work-ethics. Even in the hypothetical situation of a completely “Christian” economy, nothing would be achieved with some

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<sup>31</sup> Nikolaj Velimirovic, *Kasijana*, Linc, ed. Eparhija srednje-evropska, 1996, p.33.

banal "Trinitarian" slogan. Nevertheless, it is worth of thinking that the world and society are a field in which we invest our love and that this very love should make us responsible for both. More that we feel connected to it, more we should be aware that the other part of the relation – very often hurtful one – requires of us to be responsible in love. If we remember the notion of "obedience" in the Orthodox tradition, we have a concrete path for the practice of socially responsible praxis: it is a kenotic willingness to serve without a passive submission to the will of the lords of the economy and history<sup>32</sup>.

The first field on which we should show this Trinitarian responsibility is the Church, or more precisely, the Liturgy. Liturgy actually requires a "liturgy after liturgy", an active attitude towards the Brothers and Sisters in Christ and towards the world itself<sup>33</sup>. The early Christian practice of visiting the sick bothers and ssters and bringing them Eucharist Gifts is a very illustrative one. It unites what we would nowadays call "social care" and "liturgical life"- for early Christians it was the same thing. In the mean time, we stopped doing this: we would rather even give some money for charity purposes than dedicate some of our time for our bothers and ssters in Christ, for those with whom we take part in the Body and Blood of the Savior. Money is the field of anonymous existence – it could be given and received without a personal relation. Might be true that time is money, but money is not time – it cannot compensate a lack of personal touch or kiss. Society is based on many human strivings – money is, apparently, one of the most important. And still, the only thing required is the personal relation, the implementation of the Trinity. As the first step towards one new social ethics of Trinitarian love and responsibility, we should pay some time for those who need us.

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<sup>32</sup> For a concrete Trinitarian hermeneutics of liberation see J. Moltmann, *Trinity and the Kingdom*, p. 212.ff.

<sup>33</sup> A. Yannoulatos, *The Mission in Christ's Way*, p. 94.

## 5 An Orthodox Political Theology?

Approaching the conclusion of this paper, I would just like to make one, maybe for theological mentality of Orthodoxy, strange proposal for the question of presence of theology in society. It is a proposal for one Orthodox political theology.

The very name of it – “political” theology – awakes some unpleasant memories and traumas of the historical Orthodoxy. Some of these traumas were caused by the caesaropapistic tendencies of Byzantine Empire and other “Orthodox” states – but even more wounds were result of communist repression on the Churches of the socialistic world (former Yugoslavia, Romania, Bulgaria, former USSR) when every “political” engagement of some ecclesial body was proclaimed “clero-fasistic” or “reactionary”. Sincerely speaking, we must add that the most of these Churches did not ménage to find its proper place in the societies of transition: although it appears that the Constantine Era was restored in some of these “transitory” societies (especially in Republic of Srpska, Romania and Georgia), it is obvious that behind the superficial “symphony” of the state and Church, there is more complicated relation which is, by no means, so idealistic as it may seem. Even more: it could be easily demonstrated that even the majority of the “believing” population considers their religious (ecclesial) community as their “religious service” and appreciates some “merits of the Church for the preservation of the national spirit”. However, as Christian theologians we must ask ourselves: is that enough? Is that everything we want of our Church? Are not we called on something better and more honorable? Should not we find a word that would interrupt this pact between State and Church and in the same time make the Church more authentic in the eyes of all those who cannot identify themselves with the winning class of the transition process?

I think we do and I think that we ought to construct one Orthodox political theology, even *Trinitarian* political theology, theology which would openly reevaluate all society values in the comparison with the Trinitarian ontology. Whether we want to

admit it or not, our position in the society of the "market competition" principle would eventually be similar to the position of Christian theology in the West. Hence, one Orthodox political theology should learn from it, it should follow some good sides of the German model and abandon some aspects which are not compatible with our historical identity and ecclesiastical experience.

As a basis of Orthodox Political theology we should take a *Trinitarian and Christological onto-sociology*: if the triune God did not remain "silent" (St Ignatius of Antioch) but have spoken the World out of Him, if in the very basis of the world lies a Community of Three Persons, than no Christian can leave this world and society alone. "Politicity" of the political theology, like in the German case, should not be considered in the sense of the vulgar *political involvement*: on the contrary, partisan spirit of the political life is quite opposite to the fine balance between personal particularity and human unity: a political party united in her demand for an abolition of personal freedom (which is the ultimate manifestation of man's "image of God" for Orthodox conscience) and a party divides humanity for the causes of the everyday interest – on the contrary, political theology should respect personal freedom and the common existential path of all men, or unity in the facing the pain and death. Hence, political theology should come back to the primal meaning of the *zoon politikon*.

An Orthodox political theology should deal with its own historical and social trauma in order to be a mature one for participating in the ecumenical social involvement of Christianity in the "new world". For example, it has all reasons to be critical towards the Byzantine "political theology" (the one introduced by Eusebius and others), but, for example, can it really be so critical towards Hellenism in general, alike the Metz-Moltmann political theology?<sup>34</sup> Should it follow the

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<sup>34</sup> As a cultural reflection more appropriate to the identity and historical experience of the Orthodox Church, I propose one more inclusive

Hellenism-Judaism schedule of German political theology or it should try to evaluate in each “system” the good and the bad sides, those who are compatible to the Christian mode of existence and those who are not? It should, rather, not be one theology among others: all Orthodox theology should become *political*, should become critical and socially relevant. It calls us on ex-stasis: the first thing it should ex-stasize is our own reconciliation with the social injustice. Patristic theology – St Basil the Great, St John Chrysostom and other – had that profound sense for social justice, that prophetic tone and content. It is up to us to implement it – if we want to earn the name of their sons, if we want to be “neopatristic” in the true sense of the word.

## 6 Conclusions

We should not be overoptimistic and triumphal, even cheerful because we could easily demonstrate the applicability of Trinitarian dogma in the social context of modern world. It is not for the first time: the Fathers of the Church (for example, Basil the Great or John Chrysostom) were alike aware of this fact in their own historical and social context but they were also aware that no society will ever be an implemented Trinitarian dogma except the One we expect – the Kingdom of God. They also knew that only icon and symbol of It which is given here for us is the Divine Liturgy. And, knowing all that, they did not pass any opportunity to note that this Trinitarian model is existentially and socially the only authentic one. This is the path for the authentic social/political theology: to readily witness its Trinitarian fundamentals aware that its true fulfillment is the Kingdom to come.

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attitude towards Hellenism (than the one of J.S. Metz and J. Moltmann), the attitude developed by Werner Jäger and Werner Beierwaltes. See: Werner Beierwaltes, *Platonismus im Christentum*, (Philosophische Abhandlungen Band 73), Frankfurt, (ed. Klostermann) 2001