

Rev. Ioan Leonardo Atudorei, *Anthropocentrism and Theocentricism in the Works of Father Dumitru Stăniloae*, Iași, Doxologia Publishing House, 2014, 233 p.

The problems of the human being have always been an object of research for many anthropological fields of activity. It is a well-known fact that the human being has been perceived along history in various ways, according to the historical and cultural context of the times.

In the very *Argument* of his book, father Ioan Leonardo Atudorei, points out clearly enough to the trap which most humanities fell in; these so-called objective sciences are studying the human spiritual manifestations somehow from the outside and in an allegedly objective way, without adhering to any religious belief. Nevertheless, there are phenomena and religious manifestations that go beyond the borders of the rational and which need, therefore another type of judgment, other than the reasonable one. Also, some of the fundamental errors of anthropology consist, according to father Ioan Leonardo Atudorei, in the biased and not direct reflection of religious and spiritual life into the human psychic, which determines a fracture between the subject and the object, thus distorting the possibility of a real understanding of religious feelings and of the way they should be approached. As a proof, it is the fact that the very term of *anthropology* is understood in various ways, according to the domain of research of each humanist branch in particular. In the work under consideration, we can see, through the theology of father Dumitru Stăniloae, how Man, as a religious being, cannot be correctly understood outside religious life, his perception being always distorted.

The book includes six chapters preceded by an *Argument* and followed by *Conclusions*, each chapter being divided in several sub-chapters. In the first chapter, *Man, God and God-Man*, the author approaches the problems related to the individual and his relation with freedom, communion, the world, and extinction, everything being crowned by a beautiful chapter

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on body and soul and the existential implications of these two realities. This first chapter shows the junction point between the divine and the human, between the Creator and His creation, namely the person, which is a central element in father Dumitru Stăniloae's concept. From the very first pages of any of his books, the topic of the person, either divine or human, is obviously central and plays a fundamental role in his entire conception. This first chapter starts by a short insight into the antic Greek and Latin philosophy, and shows that this term used to be vaguely shaped, as there was no real ontology at the time, the person being most often understood in its purely physical aspect, and not as a being with metaphysical and even divine dimensions. Father Dumitru Stăniloae is regarded as a providential person, whose philosophy enlightens the various and distorted understanding of the human being.

The second chapter, entitled *The Divine Logos – Rehabilitation of the Authentic Anthropocentrism*, hints at understanding the issues related to communion and communication among persons, through understanding the person of Jesus Christ and the communication among Divine Persons. This chapter underlines the fact that the real means of understanding the human being as a person resides in the divine-humane personality of Jesus Christ, the only divine person with a double valence; divine in virtue of the fact that Jesus Christ is the Son of God and implicitly a real God Himself, and humane in virtue of His embodiment from Virgin Mary, thus acquiring a human shape. In fact, father Dumitru Stăniloae's entire theology is centered on the personality of Jesus Christ the Redeemer, who, in virtue of His embodiment and His victory over death, offers eternal values to the human being.

The third chapter, entitled *The Steps towards Communion with God*, gives an insight into the theology of the philocalist fathers, in which readers are shown the way man can valorize the qualities of his being, in view of his evolution as a person. After all, man is, but also becomes a person in his process of rising above passions, illumination and accomplishment. The genius in father Dumitru Stăniloae comes forth both in his writings and in the footnotes of his translations, which always hint at the anthropological thinking of the 20th century, by a never ending adaptation of contemporary analytical thinking to patristic thinking. Christian life is, according to his concepts, ascetic by excellence. The anthropological bases of ascesis are taken from the patristic thinking and lifestyle, never omitting

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to consider the views of the contemporary thinkers, both theological and lay, while permanently aiming at deification through Jesus Christ.

The fourth chapter, entitled *Ecclesiology, Rehabilitation Space of the Theandric*, is almost entirely dedicated to the sanctifying activity of the Church in all its aspects, starting from the relation among the Holy Scriptures, the Holy Tradition and the Church with all its unifying, congregational, apostleship and holiness characteristics. Then, in the next subchapters, starting from father Dumitru Stăniloae's theology, the author gives an insight into all the Sacraments of the Church, culminating with the importance of the Holy Liturgy. This fact makes the Church a meeting place between the divine and the humane, by means of the Holy Spirit. According to father Dumitru Stăniloae's theology, the Holy Spirit moves freely inside the church, every time in a novel way, according to the needs of historical time. God is not an eternally immovable Trinity, but a living, dynamic and forever creative reality. This is why the Holy Spirit adapts Itself to the needs of each and every human, since each human is unique and has his own specific qualities, which stresses the infinite creative power of God.

In the fifth chapter, entitled *On the Relation God - Human within the Framework of History*, the author valorizes God's involvement in the world created in time and space. This chapter points out to the relation between God and man, having as a convergence point the divine-humane personality of Jesus Christ and the union of God and man in the created space-time. In the same chapter the Calcedon dogma is rightfully understood as the balance of dimensions in Jesus Christ the Redeemer. There has been dissociation, along history, between the metaphysical and the historical. Christianity, through the divine-human personality of Jesus Christ, who, by joining Heavens and Earth, the divine and the humane, the unseen and the visible, has forever eliminated this opposition. In Christ, according to father Dumitru Stăniloae's theology, one can notice a certain non-repeatability of historical events, a permanent progress, idea which was inaccessible to the antique world, which perceived time cyclically. Father Dumitru Stăniloae takes, mainly from the theology of Saint Maxim the Confessor, the idea of overcoming time and space by what we call deification, history being nothing but a dimension of eternity.

In the sixth and last chapter, called *The Relation God - Man Within Social Life*, the author approaches theology in relation with the world we are living in, respectively in relation with the state, society, nation, war, etc.

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Christian life is carried on within the historical reality, with everything it involves, unable to ignore it at any time. This is why, a balanced ratio between these realities grants a favorable environment for the development of spiritual life. According to the Holy Scripture there is a mystic basis of the state, which many theologians speak about, particularly the Russian ones, an idea embraced by father Dumitru Stăniloae, too. The state can have a twofold valence: both sacred and demonic. When the valence of the state is sacred, positive, God is providentially involved in society and when the state is demonic, God is absent. This aspect is often stressed in the Holy Scripture. But, once Christianity is born, a new social model appears, whose model is Jesus Christ, the God-Human and thus a divine-humane society has been created.

As a conclusion, man proves to be a paradoxical and contradictory being, inasmuch as he cannot be reduced either to the natural or the spiritual. Man is a synthesis of the humane and the divine and this is why the very title of the book anticipates the approach of the human being, by naturally relating it to divinity. Without God, man is nothing but a rational animal, or better said, he would not exist at all. The sense of human life consists in the way he manages to build his own divine life, which represents the guarantee of eternal life.

In fact, beyond any anthropology, resides the complexity of human being, which, quite often, in its manifestations, escapes our full understanding. This is a truth that even father Dumitru Stăniloae has acknowledged in his works, admitting nevertheless that man still remains a great mystery, which can be understood as much as God allows us to, and only to the extent man gets to know God. All these issues are very well brought forth in father Ioan Leonardo Atudorei's book *Anthropocentrism and Theocentrism in the Works of Father Dumitru Stăniloae*, which brings an extra light to the genial thinking and holy life of Dumitru Stăniloae.

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