

Der geistig-geistliche Mensch im Konzept der Gnade bei Dumitru Stăniloae: Eine theologische Untersuchung unter der Berücksichtigung des soziokulturellen Hintergrundes. By Michael Weber. Forum Orthodoxe Theologie, no. 12. Münster: LIT Verlag, 2012. 543 pp. Notes. Bibliography. €54.90, paper.

The career of the Romanian Orthodox theologian Dumitru Stăniloae (1903–1993) accurately reflects the times through which he passed. Michael Weber's many-sided approach to his life's work suggests a scholar whose first love was meditation on universal truths. But, as Weber makes clear, Stăniloae could not help being drawn into the intellectual controversies and political strife of the two decades between the world wars and the four decades of communist dominance that shaped modern Romania.

Although these two periods differ in essential ways, not least in their treatment of the church and churchmen, Weber discerns a remarkable continuity in Stăniloae's preoccupations. In the interwar period, Weber points out, Stăniloae was absorbed in defining the "spiritual man" as revealed in Orthodox teachings. He was attracted especially to the theology of Gregory Palamas and made signal contributions to the elucidation of Palamas's conception of grace and the Christian life, matters that Weber analyses with much insight. He also describes Stăniloae's commitment to a dialogue with his western Christian counterparts, but he notes that Stăniloae engaged Protestantism from a strictly Orthodox perspective; he could not reconcile himself to its pervasive rationalism.

Stăniloae was a key player in the wide-ranging interwar debate among Romanian intellectuals about the identity of the Romanians and their future, which engaged philosophers, historians, literary critics, and theologians from the left to the right. Stăniloae stood with those who argued that Orthodox spirituality had been (and continued to be) the decisive force in the creation of the Romanian sense of being. He thus sided with his friend Nichifor Crainic, who was the chief theorist of Orthodoxy, the doctrine that Orthodox spirituality was inseparable from Romanianness and must therefore penetrate every aspect of national life. Weber follows the Stăniloae-Crainic relationship attentively and does an inestimable service to scholarship by re-establishing Crainic's reputation as a theologian, which had been overshadowed by his involvement in the political and ideological struggles of the 1930s. Weber draws a necessary distinction between him and the more scholarly Stăniloae, but perhaps he underestimates Stăniloae's own forceful promotion of Orthodoxy in public life. Weber adds much to our understanding of Stăniloae's idea of "spiritual man" and the role he was to play in the revitalization of the Christian community as he probes Stăniloae's disputes with leading public intellectuals. He explains why Stăniloae denounced the Orthodoxy of the charismatic professor of religion Nae Ionescu as a perversion of Orthodox spirituality solely to achieve "national-earthly" objectives.

For similar reasons, Weber shows, Stăniloae rejected the doctrine of *Românism* (Romanianness) formulated by the philosopher Constantin Rădulescu-Motru, because it characterized Orthodox spirituality as an obstacle to Romanian progress.

Weber describes the continuity of Stăniloae's preoccupations with Orthodox spirituality after World War II, despite the seizure of power by the communists, which brought him face-to-face with an order of things overtly hostile to religion and traditional spiritual values. But, as a consequence of a remarkable truce between party and church, he was able to teach and publish, even though his role as a public intellectual ceased. Weber leaves no doubt that he could never reconcile himself to the new regime and shows how he was drawn to small groups of clergy and lay intellectuals who met discreetly to discuss ideas and values proscribed by the regime. Such activity led to his imprisonment for five years.

Weber clarifies the apparent contradiction between Nicolae Ceaușescu's "cultural revolution" of the 1970s and 1980s, which had as its ultimate goal the creation of the "new man," rational and atheist, and Stăniloae's continued devotion to fundamental Orthodox teachings. How, Weber wonders, could Stăniloae publish, among other things, his three-volume *Teologia ortodoxă morală* in 1981, when Ceaușescu's atheistic campaign was at its height? Stăniloae could also be fully engaged in the ecumenical movement, more steadfastly, Weber thinks, than in the interwar period. In such a generally uncongenial atmosphere, paradoxically, his theological works could be translated into western European languages and he himself became recognized in the west as an authoritative voice of Orthodox thought.

Weber's book, then, offers the portrait of a distinguished theologian whose spiritual and sociocultural influence on Romanian Orthodoxy he likens to Karl Barth's and Paul Tillich's on German Protestantism. His book is both a perceptive recording of fateful turning points in the intellectual evolution of modern Romania and a sobering estimate of individual responses.

Prof. Dr. Dr. h. c. Keith Hitchins, University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign

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