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Disertační práce/ Thesis

# **The Church as a Non-familial Solidary Political Community**

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practical theology

Praha 2013

## **Declaration**

I hereby declare that I wrote this dissertation entitled The Church as a Non-familial Solidary Political Community by myself and solely with the indicated resources.

I assent that this thesis is made available for the purpose of research and private study.

Prague, November 20, 2013

Michaela Kušnieriková

## **Prohlášení**

Prohlašuji, že jsem tuto disertační práci s názvem Církev ako nerodinné solidárne politické spoločenstvo napsala samostatně a výhradně s použitím uvedených pramenů.

Souhlasím s tím, aby práce byla zveřejněna pro účely výzkumu a soukromého studia.

V Praze, 20. listopadu 2013

Michaela Kušnieriková

## **Bibliografická citace/Bibliographical Reference**

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## **Summary**

This thesis explores why the metaphor of the church as a family is insufficient, when we focus on the relation of the church to the world and primarily on a holistic concept of Christian acting. In this attempt, Arendt's theory of political action, Bonhoeffer's ecclesiology and political theology and Stăniloae's theology of the world and acting are brought into a conversation. The roots of the different views of Arendt and Bonhoeffer on the family symbolism are traced to their distinct notions of acting. Therefore, including also Stăniloae's voice, this becomes the central theme of the debate focusing on the inter-action of actors and acting's place in the world. Christian calling is unfolded not only as acting for others, but also with others in a response to the words and deeds of God existing as three Persons in communion. As human beings are drawn into this space of unique relations, they are empowered to communal and common acting of equals participating in worldly and public-political issues. Since a familial symbolism conveys only a limited notion of acting, omitting its common aspect, this study complements this symbolism with a metaphor of the church as a solidary political community.

## **Keywords**

Arendt, Bonhoeffer, Stăniloae, church, familial symbolism, political community, common action, equality

# **Anotácia**

## **Cirkev ako nerodinné solidárne politické spoločenstvo.**

Táto dizertačná práca skúma prečo je metafora cirkvi ako rodiny nepostačujúca, keď sa sústredíme na vzťah cirkvi k svetu a predovšetkým na holistický koncept kresťanského konania. V tomto úsilí je do rozhovoru vovedená Arendtovej teória politického konania, Bonhoefferova ekleziológia a politická teológia a Stāniloaeho teológia sveta a konania. Korene rozdielných pohľadov Arendtovej a Bonhoeffera na symboliku rodiny sú odhalené v ich rozličnom poňatí konania. Preto sa ono stáva hlavnou témou debaty, zahrňujúc aj hlas Stāniloaeho, zameranej na interakciu konajúcich a miesto konania vo svete. Kresťanské povolanie je rozvinuté nielen ako konanie pre druhých, ale tiež s druhými v odpovedi na slová a činy Boha, existujúceho ako tri Osoby v spoločenstve. Tým, ako sú ľudia vťahovaní do tohto priestoru jedinečných vzťahov, sú zmocňovaní k vzájomnému aj k spoločnému konaniu tých, ktorí sú si rovní, a podieľajú sa na svetských a verejno-politických záležitostiach. Vzhľadom na to, že symbolika rodiny vyjadruje iba oklieštené poňatie konania, opomínajúc jeho spoločný aspekt, táto štúdia dopĺňa túto symboliku o metaforu cirkvi ako solidárneho politického spoločenstva.

## **Kľúčové slová**

Arendt, Bonhoeffer, Stāniloae, cirkev, symbolika rodiny, politické spoločenstvo, spoločné jednanie, rovnosť

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# INTRODUCTION

*The baby explodes into an unknown world that is only knowable through some kind of a story – of course that is how we all live, it's the narrative of our lives.*

Jeanette Winterson<sup>1</sup>

*Churches can be models for public life of communities in which pluralistic citizenship is possible, communities that witness to the unity that can be affirmed in the midst of diversity.*

Ronald F. Thiemann<sup>2</sup>

Christian communities tell and interpret the biblical stories and fill in the missing pages about what happened as the curtain went up and what will happen as it goes down. From their communication, a certain picture of the world and of God emerges to those within their communities and to those outside of them. Is there anything specific about the stories the children of God listen to in a church that understands itself as a family of God? What stories do they enact in and towards the world? What acting and interacting do they transpire? Does an extended concept of acting tell a story of a non-familial, perhaps a political, community?

This thesis concentrates on the family symbolism, respectively on its deficiencies, as it discusses a correspondence between church's acting and its self-understanding. The aim is to explore church's familial symbolism in the light of Christian acting for others and with others fully engaged in the world. On this quest I will facilitate a conversation between three main thinkers whose perspectives can be beneficial on this journey, Hannah Arendt—a political thinker, Dietrich Bonhoeffer—a Lutheran theologian, and Dumitru Stăniloae—an Orthodox theologian.

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<sup>1</sup> Jeanette WINTERSON, *Why Be Happy When You Could Be Normal?*, London: Jonathan Cape, 2011, p. 5.

<sup>2</sup> Ronald F. THIEMANN, *Constructing a Public Theology: The Church in Pluralistic Culture*, Louisville, Kentucky: Westminster/John Know Press, 1991, p. 122

Throughout this study, I employ a comparative method in approaching their works. The voice of Arendt on her theory of action will be heard in a dialogue with Bonhoeffer's political theology and ecclesiology and Stăniloae's theology of the world and acting in communion. I will accentuate and discuss specific concepts from their thoughts arising from their unique contexts. They will become the main pillars of the deliberation of a family metaphor of the church, Christian acting and their mutual relatedness.

Arendt, Bonhoeffer and Stăniloae were contemporaries and all lived under totalitarian regimes, which persecuted and imprisoned each of them, and executed Bonhoeffer. All of them were concerned for the world and human beings living there and responded to their challenges from within their own particular traditions. The imprints of their deliberation are not necessarily in agreement with each other. Being students at the desks of different schools of thought, each of them represents a certain other. Therefore, I do not intend to harmonize their positions. Rather, I attempt to discern helpful leads out of their mutual conversation for thinking about a familial metaphor of the church based on a theology of Christian acting enriched by their unique perspectives.

This conversation is imaginary, as it never took place in reality. Even if Arendt and Stăniloae knew of Bonhoeffer they did not choose him as a conversation partner. In addition, this thesis does not discuss their work in its entirety, rather it focuses on specific concepts derived from it to illuminate the main topic of this inquiry. It concentrates on *vita activa* leaving out Christian cultic or spiritual practices and exercises since they require a separate treatment exceeding the scope of this thesis.

It is important to clarify that this study is not based on, and certainly attempts to avoid, a division between the public and the private.<sup>3</sup> The familial and the political in the title are explored in connection with action, which builds the core of Christian

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<sup>3</sup> As Elshtain asserts, it is important to keep their distinction and connection, since they are fundamental for ordering of human societies. (Cf. Jean Bethke ELSHTAIN, *Public Man, Private Woman: Women in Social and Political Thought*, Princeton: University Press, 1993, p. 6)

existence and calling. Therefore, a research of different family models throughout history or in the present is not undertaken. Nevertheless, behind the notion of a family in this thesis is primarily an extended, rather than a nuclear family.

Regarding sources, I draw on the English editions of Arendt's major works (e.g. *The Origins of Totalitarianism*, *On Revolution*, *Eichmann in Jerusalem*). However, I use *Vita activa*, the German edition of Arendt's original *The Human Condition* of which it is not an identical translation. In addition, the originally published *The Life of the Mind* is cited here from its German translation *Vom Leben des Geistes*. I quote primarily the English edition of *Between Past and Future*, referring to its later German extended edition *Zwischen Vergangenheit und Zukunft*, when a specific text is not included in the first one.

I studied Bonhoeffer's major works in their German edition *Dietrich Bonhoeffer Werke* (e.g. *Sanctorum Communio*, *Akt und Sein*, *Nachfolge*, *Gemeinsames Leben*, *Ethik*) consulting crucial texts, as I worked on its translation, with *Dietrich Bonhoeffer Works* in English. In referring to some of his essays, I draw on the older edition of his works *Gemeinsame Schriften* and of *Widerstand und Ergebung* as I had a continuous access to them during my research. However, to my knowledge, there are no major differences in those texts compared to their new edition.

Dumitru Stăniloae's work is extensive and only its part has been translated from Romanian into English or German. I draw from the English translations of his major works: *The Experience of God: Orthodox dogmatic theology, vol. 1-3* (the translation of all the three volumes of the original *Teologia Dogmatica Ortodoxa* -1978, 1981, 1987) has not been published in English yet), *Orthodox Spirituality: A Practical guide for the Faithful and a Definitive Manual for the Scholar*, collection of essays *Theology and the Church*. Articles I refer to were published either in English or German.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> His other important works include *Life and teachings of Gregory Palamas* (1938), *Orthodoxy and Romanianism* (1939), *Philokalia* (1944-1948; 1976), *Jesus Christ or the Restoration of Man* (1943),

The first part of the thesis explores how the symbolism of family is employed in Arendt and in Bonhoeffer. Their positions will be discussed separately in order to let their arguments gain clear contours. From a mutual dialogue of their positions, the theme of human acting surfaces as a crucial concept behind their views of the family metaphor applied on the church. Therefore, the next section focuses on the concept of human acting.

Since the first chapter outlines the crucial elements of Arendt's theory of action, the third chapter discusses Bonhoeffer's understanding of Christian action qualified as acting for others. This notion is found to correspond to Bonhoeffer's theology of mandates, where Christian action is organized within hierarchical structures, corresponding to his image of the church as a patriarchal family. The lack of common dimension of acting is addressed in the context of Bonhoeffer's Christocentric view of revelation.

His voice is therefore complemented with Stăniloae's theology of acting, which, rooted in his theology of the life of the Trinity, contains foundations of a Christian common, next to communal, acting. Stăniloae elaborates on it in the context of human work and striving for justice, peace and equality. However, a similar effort is absent in regards to the church. Possible reasons for this are suggested and searched for in the next chapter.

The fifth chapter puts acting, as understood by all three thinkers into the context of the space, which it creates and in which it flourishes asking, whether distinctions between private, secular, spiritual or public-political spaces do not prove divisive. This conversation challenges an opinion, that each of the thinkers shared, namely, that a certain aspect of acting needs to remain invisible; specifically, an actor of goodness in Arendt, human equality in Bonhoeffer, and church in politics in Stăniloae.

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which he considered as his most important work, *Orthodox Moral Theology* (1981), *The Immortal Image of God* (1987) which have not yet been translated into English or German.

The concluding chapter contains a summary of the previous discussion, followed by an attempt to construct a concept of Christian acting based on a dialogue between Arendt, Bonhoeffer and Stăniloae. The final section puts Christian solidary acting into a relation with the image of the church as a family. A corresponding metaphor of the church to the previously formulated Christian acting is outlined as a solidary political community.

# CHAPTER ONE:

## FAMILY SYMBOLISM IN ARENDT

“The unpolitical and unworldly character of the community of Christian believers expressed itself in the Early Christianity in the requirement that the Christian community should build a *corpus*—that is, a “body”—whose members would treat each other as brothers of the same family [...] Between the members of one family, a public worldly space had never been built, and therefore it was unlikely that such a space would be developed in a Christian church community to which the family structure would be applied.” Hannah Arendt, *Vita Activa*, p. 67

Arendt’s discussion of the familial imagery of the church centers on the Early Christianity’s attempt to express the uniqueness of its community over against the public-political space consisting in love as the bond between its members.

In the first section, the argument of Hannah Arendt will be followed regarding the image of the church as a family in order to establish the main themes emerging from it as well as the reasons for their appearance within her political theory.

This chapter will focus on the elements which, in Arendt’s opinion, make private and public-political spheres distinct, namely equality and freedom, which are integral parts of her theory of action as a common undertaking. Metaphor of the church as a family will be considered in the context of examining the historical data of several authors. Next, Arendt’s interpretation of the development and foundation of the church as a political institution will be presented. Finally, Christian freedom from politics will be discussed with an emphasis on its background in the family imagery.

## 1. Family as the Unpolitical

Arendt explores the notion of the church as family in the context of making distinctions between private and public spaces, which correspond to specific human activities and different principles of human togetherness present in them. The *polis* was a space of freedom, while the family was under the despotic rule of the *paterfamilias*, who expected all of the other members to obey his commands.<sup>1</sup> Therefore, the private or familial sphere was the place of coercion and even violence, which were justified in an environment where one wanted to exercise mastery over necessities of life.<sup>2</sup> Concepts such as *pater*, *rex*, *anax*, *basileus*, *dominus*, which have been used in reference to rulers ever since Plato, originate from the household; specifically, these titles were used by slaves to address their masters. In Arendt's opinion, applying them to the political sphere results in changing the character of those public places<sup>3</sup>; for example, in Rome, "after the Roman Caesar finally let himself be titled as *Dominus* [...], it was the end of Roman freedom."<sup>4</sup>

Focusing on the Roman family at the beginning of the Christian era, Lassen summarizes: "The Roman family had a remarkably strong impact on society—as ideal and as metaphor. The Roman family was strictly hierarchical. *Patria potestas* was a legal concept that gave the *paterfamilias*—the oldest male in direct succession within the *familia*—an almost omnipotent power over his *fili* and *filiae*." The ideal constituted the "idealization of marriage, procreation and sexual virtue." According to Lassen, the

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<sup>1</sup> Hannah ARENDT, *Vita activa oder Vom tätigen Leben*, München: Piper Verlag, 2008, pp. 38-43. The Greek word *oikos* and Roman *familia* differ from today's western understanding of a family. In their original contexts, they comprised "a family, household, and estate, composed of people related by blood, marriage, or adoption, and holding property that included slaves. *Oikos* or *familia* consisted of not only husband/father/master, wife/mother, dependent children, one or more married sons with their wives and children, other kinfolk, and varying numbers of servants and slaves." Freedmen and slaves were on the lowest strata of society. (Cf. The Family in Christian Social and Political Thought, 4-5; Rowan A. GREER, *Broken Lights and Mended Lives: Theology and Common Life in the Early Church*, University Park and London: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 1986, p. 95)

<sup>2</sup> ARENDT, *Vita activa*, pp. 37; 41

<sup>3</sup> ARENDT, *Vita activa*, p. 424, n.22. Arendt refers to the book *La Cité Antique* by Fustel de Coulanges.

<sup>4</sup> ARENDT, *Vita activa*, p. 422, n.11



metaphors from the family ideal were used for various spheres of life in Roman society “to help underline its hierarchical nature.” In her analysis, “a predominant—though not exclusive—function of Roman family metaphors was to evoke images of authority: authority of gods over humans, senior officials over junior officials, state leaders over subjects.” (Arendt pointed to the same tendency already in Plato and Aristotle, as they were searching to formulate the concept of authority.<sup>5</sup>) Among the various family metaphors, the metaphor of the father “held a particularly important position among family metaphors in the aristocratic political system of the Republic and later on in imperial Rome.”<sup>6</sup>

Along these lines, Waters’ statement is to be read that “the *polis* could be perceived as a “family of men” or as being “akin to a family of families.” As he points out, the family language was applied to the polis, as a way of forming a “cohesive, loyal group of citizens [...] to appropriate its affective relationships.” The household was “a microcosm of the social order” in Roman society, a unit of economic production as well as a “school of political virtue.” Waters explains this by asking, “How could men govern wisely and protect society against inferior barbarians if they could not first rule over their own households?” (This reminds of the criteria for a bishop from 1 Timothy 2).<sup>7</sup> Elshtain comments on the interconnectedness between polis and household in a less plausible way: “The public world of politics and free citizenry was conceptually and structurally parasitic upon the world of necessity.”<sup>8</sup>

According to Arendt, it was therefore a “deep misunderstanding” when the term *zoon politikon* was translated from Greek to Latin, substituting the “political” with the “social.” In her view, this radically changed the meaning of the term itself, which she

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<sup>5</sup> Cf. Hannah ARENDT, *Between past and future: eight exercises in political thought*, Penguin Books: New York, 2006, pp. 104-120.

<sup>6</sup> Eva Marie LASSEN, “The Roman Family: Ideal and Metaphor”, in: Halvor MOXNES, ed., *Constructing Early Christian Families : family as social reality and metaphor*, London: Routledge, 1997, p. 114.

<sup>7</sup> Brent WATERS, *The family in Christian social and political thought*, Oxford University Press: Oxford, 2007, pp. 4-5. Waters draws mainly on Susan Pomeroy, *Families in Classical and Hellenistic Greece* (1997) and Peter Brown’s *The Body and Society* (1989).

<sup>8</sup> ELSHTAIN, *Public Man, Private Woman*, p. 12.

illustrates by discussing Thomas Aquinas's comparison between the head of a kingdom and the head of a family. In his opinion, they differed only in the fact that the king's power was more absolute. However, Arendt argues, such a similarity between the household regiment and the public political sphere would be impossible, based on the original meaning of the word.<sup>9</sup>

In Arendt's view, household and *polis*, as the political sphere, contrasted also in the range of the varied perspectives and opinions that they represented and evoked. In the *polis*, such differences, which correspond to the diversity of its members were to be displayed. On the other hand, "there can be only one perspective and only one interest in a family," which is the uniform interest that corresponds to the worldview of the head of the family. His unquestioned mastery would quench any differences of opinion or possible conflicting interests "in the bosom of the family." The rule of the *paterfamilias* is despotic, meaning that all family members are equal under his rule, but not equal with their master."<sup>10</sup>

As Lassen affirms: "Although *patria potestas* was curtailed in a number of ways, and despite the fact that the ideal *paterfamilias* would exercise his *potestas* with love and in moderation, both men and women under *potestas* were severely restricted in their freedom of action."<sup>11</sup> It is precisely freedom of action or more precisely freedom as

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<sup>9</sup> ARENDT, *Vita activa*, p. 38. Elshtain criticized such an interpretation of Aquinas by Arendt: Aquinas was "stressing a theory of the natural sociability of human beings. This social nature meant that humans had needs that were social, including work, love, worship, and play with others. Thus the restructured, virtuous Christian *civitas* would be bound together, not so much through the reflected glory of heroic warriors, but by those social ideals Aquinas considered worthy, but Arendt does not – indeed she scorns them throughout her work." see: ELSHTAIN, *Public Man, Private Woman*, p. 77, n.24.

<sup>10</sup> ARENDT, *Vita activa*, p. 50.

<sup>11</sup> LASSEN, "The Roman Family", p. 114. Dunn also points to different positions of widows and of single women of means who "could hold important posts in business or society or religion." He also warns of interpreting slavery at that time with our present moral standards and also of assuming that slavery was "necessarily degrading". (James D. G. DUNN, "The Household Rules in the New Testament", in: Stephen C. BARTON, ed., *The Family In Theological Perspective*, T&T Clark: Edinburgh, 1996, p. 48; 60) Yet, Francis notes that one of the "standard ways of addressing a slave" was by the word 'child' or 'boy'. He agrees that both names are dehumanizing devices. Francis also reminds us that in Matt 18, 25 wife and children are part of man's property. (cf. James FRANCIS, "Children and Childhood in the New Testament", in: BARTON, ed., *The Family*, p. 68, 70)

action that matters for Arendt in differentiating between household and *polis*. Therefore we will concentrate now on Arendt's understanding of freedom.

## 1.2. Family and Freedom

Freedom understood politically, emphasizes Arendt, is not an inner disposition or feeling. It is not an "inner freedom," the inward space into which men may escape from external coercion and *feel* free."<sup>12</sup> Arendt, interpreting the Greco-Roman world, says that freedom there was a political reality, "a demonstrable fact."<sup>13</sup> It was not part of their philosophy, which did not even have a term for a will. Philosophical consequences of the antique understanding of political freedom were formulated, in her opinion, only by Augustine, who as a Roman and as a Christian, considered it as the human capacity to begin. He did not understand it only as a freedom of choice between already existing things or possibilities (*liberum arbitrium*), but as a capacity to initiate something new. For Augustine, freedom was born together with the creation of a human being, and keeps entering into the world with every new birth.<sup>14</sup> Arendt identifies this human capacity to make a beginning as an action.<sup>15</sup>

This capacity is realized and confirmed when an individual takes an initiative and enters into the human world. This is done through words and deeds, which Arendt understands as aspects of action. Such an entry and a new beginning relate to taking responsibility and represent the second birth of this initiating person. This kind of action is inescapable.<sup>16</sup> In addition, freedom is inherent in action: "Men *are* free – as distinguished from their possessing the gift for freedom – as long as they act, neither

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<sup>12</sup> ARENDT, *Between Past and Future*, p. 146 (emphasis original).

<sup>13</sup> ARENDT, *Between Past and Future*, p. 149.

<sup>14</sup> Cf. Hannah ARENDT, *Vom Leben des Geistes : das Denken, das Wollen*, München: Piper, 1998, p. 442.

<sup>15</sup> ARENDT, *Vita activa*, p. 18.

<sup>16</sup> ARENDT, *Vita activa*, p. 218.

before nor after; for to *be* free and to act are the same.”<sup>17</sup> And at the same time, freedom and politics are, for Arendt, two sides of the same coin: “The reason d’être of politics is freedom, and its field of experience is action.”<sup>18</sup>

In order to enter the world, to act, and to be free, one needs to leave the security of the home. The space where the care of one’s life is not the leading principle—as in the case of a household—is the world itself. Therefore, emphasizes Arendt, courage remains a basic political virtue.<sup>19</sup> “Freedom as a political reality is identical with a space of movement between men.”<sup>20</sup> This in-between dynamic occurs in “a politically organized world,” in which free people move and engage with one another in word and deed. Thus, Arendt traces freedom, in this sense, from the experience of the Greek *polis*, which was open only to those men who first managed to take care of the necessities of life within their households; only then could they enter the public space and meet others equal to them.<sup>21</sup>

Thus far, Arendt’s position can be summarized in three points: she distinguishes between the private and public/political spheres of life because the ordering of both was different with regard to freedom in Antiquity. The family was ruled by a man, the *paterfamilias*. Since his opinion and will were to be followed, it was not a place of freedom. *Polis* was a space where many heads of such families did not rule over each other, but rather, while being equals, could use only verbal persuasion to bring others to their side. They were free to speak, act, be heard, and seen in their distinctness.

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<sup>17</sup> ARENDT, *Between Past and Future*, p. 153 (emphasis original).

<sup>18</sup> ARENDT, *Between Past and Future*, p. 146. “Arendt is thinking as anti-dualistically as Heidegger or American pragmatists. However, she may be distinguished from him in that he ascribed freedom to the realm of purposes. Freedom comes from the postulated fact of reason, untouched by outer circumstances; it flourishes within a person. According to Arendt, revelation and being are inseparable in action. Freedom, in order to exist, has to be revealed outwardly.” (Hauke BRUNKHORST, *Hannah Arendt*, München: Oskar Beck, 1999, p. 121)

<sup>19</sup> ARENDT, *Between Past and Future*, p. 156.

<sup>20</sup> Hannah ARENDT, *The Origins of Totalitarianism*, San Diego ; New York ; London : Harvest Book Harcourt, Inc., 1976, p. 473.

<sup>21</sup> ARENDT, *Between Past and Future*, p. 148.

At this stage it appears, according to Arendt, that action is possible also within the household, since human beings can start something new there also—can be initiators for herself or himself. However, freedom understood this way may only be termed as pre-political. It “animates and inspires all human activities and is the hidden source of production of all great and beautiful things” and “is able to save itself, even under politically unfavorable circumstances.”<sup>22</sup> Action as a beginning interrupts natural and automatic processes. Arendt understands Augustine’s discovery to be in line with Jesus’ words in terms of their philosophical implications. Nevertheless, action needs the light of worldly and political space in order to develop fully—“to come out of hiding [...] and make its appearance.”<sup>23</sup> This is not only for the sake of being seen and heard but also in order to give others the room to join the undertaking. Since this could be done only through deliberation and persuasion—not by force—the household cannot be considered such a space. Both of these concepts of action and freedom will be discussed throughout the next sections.

## **2. Common Acting in Arendt**

It is evident, that for Arendt, the relation between family and the private, and the political and the public, are interrelated with her theory of action. Therefore, before moving to the family imagery of the church, two main issues need to be raised regarding action. First, relation between action and plurality, and secondly, action taking place in two stages.

Arendt views action as the only activity that takes place directly between people. Human beings are able to communicate not only something, like thirst, hunger, fear, to the world, but also themselves—“Who” they are. They do that through word and deed,

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<sup>22</sup> Hannah ARENDT, *Was ist Politik?*, Piper: München, 2010, p. 51.

<sup>23</sup> ARENDT, *Between Past and Future*, pp. 167-169.

which Arendt, following Greek *polis*, understood as two aspects of human action.<sup>24</sup> Its presupposition is the human condition of plurality (next to natality, as was already mentioned). It requires the presence of other people in order to be seen and heard and thus be remembered.<sup>25</sup>

Arendt characterizes plurality to mean that “not a person, but people live on earth.” Plurality manifests itself in two ways, as equality (*Gleichheit*) and distinction (*Verschiedenheit*). Due to equality, in the sense of sameness, we are able to communicate and understand each other. Simultaneously, from all living creatures only people are able to express and thus to differentiate themselves from others, to excel. “In human beings, the otherness (*Besonderheit, Andersheit; alteritas*), which they share with everything that is, and distinctness, which they share with everything alive becomes uniqueness (*Einzigkeitigkeit*), and human plurality is a multiplicity (*Vielheit*), which has the paradoxical character, that each of its members is in his way unique.”<sup>26</sup>

According to Arendt, action—encompassing words and deeds—has two stages. The first represents starting something new, taking an initiative, bringing something into motion. In the second phase, this beginning needs others in order to be accomplished. They participate on the action, and bring to an end, what an individual had begun. The initiator may win the others for this cooperation only by persuasion, never using violence. S/he does not command, but enters a dialogue with others.<sup>27</sup> In other words, human action requires plurality, active presence of others who are not only to be recipients of other’s actions but as active co-actors on words and deeds (*mitteilenden Teilnehmen an Worten und Taten*<sup>28</sup>). This becomes a common effort.

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<sup>24</sup> ARENDT, *Vita activa*, pp. 35-36.

<sup>25</sup> Action “is the condition of all political life; so far as it engages in founding and preserving political bodies, creates the condition for remembrance, for history.” ARENDT, *Vita activa*, p. 18.

<sup>26</sup> ARENDT, *Vita activa*, p. 214.

<sup>27</sup> Cf. ARENDT, *Between Past and Future*, pp. 165-166; ARENDT, *Vita activa*, p. 18, 36.

<sup>28</sup> ARENDT, *Vita activa*, p. 249.

Moreover, only among those who consider each other equal, is action able to retain its genuine character. Only equals are able to be not only initiators of action, but also free participants in its later stage. This theme emerges as being crucial for Arendt's treatment of a family metaphor implemented in public and political spaces.

### 3. Church as a Family

Arendt claims that the family imagery applied to the church was motivated politically, or rather, unpolitically, on account of the Christian belief in the penultimate existence of the world and, primarily, because of the preaching of Jesus on goodness.

Christian acting, as a life of holiness, cannot bear the light of the public. It exists only in "the personal in-between (*Zwischenbereich*) of person and person." In Arendt's view, it was due to the historical situation that "this in-between was identified and maybe mistaken with the private sphere because it was in an obvious contrast to the public-political sphere."<sup>29</sup> Since the only nonpolitical alternative was the household, the early Christians chose the private sphere as the form according to which they organized their common life. "The unpolitical and unworldly character of the community of Christians expressed itself early in Christianity based on the requirement of the Christian community to build a *corpus*—that is, a "body"—whose members would treat each other as brothers in the same family."<sup>30</sup> The world, as a space between members of the church was substituted with relations of love.<sup>31</sup> Familial love was replaced by the love of the neighbor in the church.

In the time of early Christianity, this image was understood literally, not as a metaphor. The life of the church community (*Gemeinde*) structurally followed the life of the family, and the requirements of this life were oriented by these familial relations.

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<sup>29</sup> ARENDT, *Was ist Politik?*, pp. 61-63.

<sup>30</sup> ARENDT, *Vita activa*, p. 67.

<sup>31</sup> Cf. ARENDT, *Vita activa*, p. 66f.

This was due to the fact that the used model was of a non-political and even anti-political coexistence. “Between the members of one family, a public worldly space (*öffentlicher Weltraum*) had never been built, and therefore it was unlikely that such a space would be developed in a Christian church community to which the family structure would be applied”. Arendt illustrates this point by calling to mind the life of monastic orders. In her opinion, they were “the only communities in which the love of the neighbor was tried out as a principle of political order.” A kind of counterworld emerged within the monasteries, which offered an alternative public space. In it, monks’ words and deeds were heard and seen, thus enabling human excellence. Arendt thinks, this was identified as pride, which was fought by the new regulations.<sup>32</sup>

Referring to Thomas Aquinas, she asserts, “In political theory, this imagery gained importance only in the Middle Ages when it was seriously accepted that humankind as a whole formed one single body (*einen einzigen Körper*).” Nevertheless, according to Arendt, even within this period the theme was treated differently. During the early Middle Ages, the idea of equal status (*Gleichberechtigung*) and equality (*Gleichheit*) of all the members was emphasized; all members were regarded as important for the life of the body. Later the emphasis shifted to the difference between the head and other members and thus to the inequality between the head, whose duty was to give orders, and the members, whose duty was to obey.<sup>33</sup>

Greer confirms Arendt’s idea that for the early Christian community, family was a description of reality. Many Christians, mainly widows and orphans found their home in the church. Probably also those with no family of their own (maybe due to following Jesus and giving him the highest loyalty) were given protection and nurture. “The Church was their family. And even for those who did live in families, the patronage of the Church put them under the *paterfamilias*, Christ.”<sup>34</sup> Patronage was also impersonated by the head of households. After all, local churches met in homes and

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<sup>32</sup> ARENDT, *Vita activa*, p. 67f.

<sup>33</sup> ARENDT, *Vita activa*, p. 429, n.48.

<sup>34</sup> Rowan A. GREER, *Broken Lights and Mended Lives: Theology and Common Life in the Early Church*, University Park and London: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 1986, p. 99.



were financially supported by the *paterfamilias*. Greer thinks that without this in mind, “we cannot understand the role of bishops in the ancient Church.”<sup>35</sup> Waters agrees and points to the growing political significance of Christian households ever since Christianity became the dominant religion.<sup>36</sup> In contrast with Arendt, Greer does not consider monasteries to be a counterworld in the political sense, but rather considers them mainly to be “understood and organized as surrogate families, which try to live out the life of the church in Jerusalem.”<sup>37</sup>

Arendt does not pay attention to the struggle within early Christianity to understand the value of family life. She mentions ascetic tendencies within Christianity as a consequence of its worldlessness. Most of the Church Fathers (even in theology the fatherly role is maintained) preferred the ascetic way of Christian life to the married and family way of life. This preference had to be soon defended against the Gnostics. Finally, Augustine included both marriage and single life as different yet complementary ways of ordering of the Christian life.<sup>38</sup>

In addition, Arendt’s discussion does not seem to reflect the changes that households, which were the centers of early Christianity, had to undergo after converting to Christianity. That shift is expressed, for example, in the “household rules.” Even though these rules followed the typical Greco-Roman patriarchal structure in terms of concentrating on the same relations, such as husband and wife, father and child, master

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<sup>35</sup> GREER, *Broken Lights*, p. 95.

<sup>36</sup> WATERS, *The Family in Christian Social and Political Thought*, p. 18. MacDonald outlines a “multifaceted picture” of the role of women in the expansion of the early Christianity. She concludes that “nevertheless the picture has a unifying element: household life.” (Margaret Y. MACDONALD, “Was Celsus Right? The Role of Women in the Expansion of Early Christianity”, in: David L. BALCH – Carolyn OSIEK, eds., *Early Christian families in context: an interdisciplinary dialogue*, Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2003, p. 184)

<sup>37</sup> GREER, *Broken Lights* 108-109. This interpretation supports also Harrison. (cf. Carol HARRISON, “The Silent Majority: the Family in Patristic Thought”, in: BARTON, ed., *The Family*, p. 101.)

<sup>38</sup> WATERS, *The Family in Christian Social and Political Thought*, p. 23.

and slave, they were simultaneously qualified in an untypical way. They were directed to both parties of the pairs, as equal members of the body of Christ.<sup>39</sup>

Arendt takes notice of the fact that the Christian churches remained indifferent to slavery for a longer period, even though at the same time they held on to the teaching of equality before God. She believes the reason behind this was a specific Christian understanding of freedom.<sup>40</sup> It was not only freedom from politics or political liberation. In Christ, every person is liberated to experience a new life and become a “free personality.”<sup>41</sup> Correspondingly, slaves did not become automatically free agents and women did not become church mothers after being freed to enjoy a new life in Christ.

Sandnes’s conclusion is in accord with Lassen’s based on his study of Paul’s letter to Philemon: “The Christian fellowship as a family, consisting of brothers and sisters, was articulated and incarnated in dialogue with the cultural forces of patriarchal society,” a model, which was not easily overcome “even within a Christian household.” He analyzes this tension in Paul’s letter, claiming that “Paul wants this [the new identity in Christ both of the slave and his master] to have social implications, but beyond the symbolic value of the hospitable welcome he is in doubt how to put the equality into practice.”<sup>42</sup>

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<sup>39</sup> Cf. WATERS, *The Family in Christian Social and Political Thought*, pp. 13-15. There is also the connection between Christian rules adapting not only Greek but also Jewish traditions, while trying to be realistic and practical within the given society, see: James D. G. DUNN, “The Household Rules in the New Testament”, in: BARTON, ed., *The Family*, pp. 43-63.

<sup>40</sup> Hannah ARENDT, *Zwischen Vergangenheit und Zukunft: Übungen im politischen Denken I*, München: Piper, 1994, p. 310.

<sup>41</sup> Cf. ELSHTAIN, *Public Man Private Woman*, p. 63.

<sup>42</sup> Karl Olav SANDNES, “Equality Within Patriarchal Structures: Some New Testament perspectives on the Christian fellowship as a brother- or sisterhood and a family”, in: Halvor MOXNES, ed., *Constructing Early Christian Families : family as social reality and metaphor*, London : Routledge, 1997, pp. 162-163. Sandnes terms the mutual relations between Paul and Philemon as “complex.” Paul’s own words testify to that: “I am bold enough in Christ to command you to do what is required,” (v.8) “Confident of your obedience,” (v.21) and also, “to say nothing of your owing me even your own self” (v.19). Even though Paul at the same time declines to appeal to his superiority (?) “yet for love’s sake I prefer to appeal to you,” (v.8) and “if you consider me your partner” (v. 17). Philemon owes himself to Paul presumably because he came to Christ through his ministry. For a study on different “nonservile ‘roles’” that slaves played in the Greco-Roman households, see: Dale B. MARTIN, “Slave Families and Slaves in Families” in: D. L. BALCH – C. OSIEK, eds., *Early Christian families in context*, pp. 207-230.

Christian metaphors of the family differed from the Roman ones, as Lassen's study shows. In her view, Christians "did not primarily support a hierarchical order on earth," as the Roman metaphors did; rather, they "were used to describe inter-human relationships, their function was primarily to create equality and a new sense of belonging." She believes that using family metaphors helped to make Christianity understandable to the Romans, and simultaneously through their new content hand over the Christian message. Nevertheless, Lassen concludes that both the Roman and originally Christian accents on the family metaphor survived in Christianity, putting emphasis on equality in other areas and "eventually adopting the hierarchical nature of pagan Rome."<sup>43</sup>

Woodhead asserts that "Christianity served not only to legitimate the patriarchal family, but to strengthen its institutional importance, and gradually root out alternative forms of patterned intimate relationship."<sup>44</sup> She understands the teachings of Jesus and Paul as pointing towards a spiritual family of God in contrast to the natural family. However, so she argues, 1 Timothy 2, 15 already deals with the role of the bishop in a way that is an example of "how quickly the potentially subversive teachings of Jesus and even Paul," were reinterpreted into "more conventional patriarchal forms. For the author of this text, a male God who commands obedient servants was to be the model for a church order in which a male bishop commands the faithful and a domestic unity in which the paterfamilias commands wife, children, and servants."<sup>45</sup>

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<sup>43</sup> LASSEN, "The Roman Family", pp. 114-115. According to Lampe, the most common way in which "early Christians dealt with the tension between the two coexisting social contexts was by toning down the new Christian context of meaning a little instead of being radicalized by it. [...] Thus, over time, hierarchical structures also developed in the church in spite of the doctrine of equality." Galatians 3,28—an "uncomfortable statement of the first generation"—was soon to be altered. In Colossians 3, 11, the phrase "neither man nor woman" is already left out. (Cf. Peter LAMPE, "The Language of Equality in Early Christian House Churches: A Constructivist Approach", in: David L. BALCH – Carolyn OSIEK, *Early Christian families in context: an interdisciplinary dialogue*, Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2003, p. 83)

<sup>44</sup> Linda WOODHEAD, "Sex and Secularization", in: Gerard LOUGHLIN, ed., *Queer Theology: Rethinking the Western Body*, Malden, MA ; Oxford: Blackwell Pub., 2007, p. 234f.

<sup>45</sup> WOODHEAD, "Sex and Secularization", p. 235. Woodhead argues further that this text was taken over by the Protestant Reformation, which "envisaged a Christianity that was founded on a patriarchal, family-based system." Through the Reformation, it made its way into modern society, which is now

What Arendt's analysis has in common with the rest of the consulted authors is that Christianity changed the understanding of humanity before God, which started changing the households themselves. This eventually led to churches—that is, household churches—being transformed as well. Thus, transformation was not merely limited to the way people experienced their spiritual state after conversion. This heritage involves not only a tension between the way the church and Roman society each viewed family metaphors, but also a tension between the way patriarchal households and their churches uphold equality in their life and structures. Thus, the theme that Arendt is concerned about in this connection is equality, without which acting is impossible.

#### **4. Church as a Political Institution**

According to Arendt, the unpolitical position of the Christian church, which led to its emphasis on asceticism, underwent a transformation after the fall of the Roman Empire. Politically, for Arendt, this event meant the loss of a stable political body for the different nations within its borders. Since then, it was not only Christians anymore, who did not believe that anything in this world would last forever.

However, the church became a stable institution. It was able to offer the people a new citizenship within itself. It was also “the only institution that could be justified within the secular realm, [...] for it was the *Civitas Dei* on earth, to which the burden of political responsibility had fallen and into which all genuinely political impulses could be drawn.”<sup>46</sup> Arendt attributes this change to Augustine, “the greatest theorist of Christian politics.” Next to Augustine's concept of action as a beginning, Arendt praises his concepts of *Civitas Dei* and *caritas* as his crucial contributions, which correspond to her concern for human plurality and interconnectedness.

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separated from its religious origin. It was in this context that hierarchy in society was established. (Ibid., p. 236)

<sup>46</sup> ARENDT, *Between Past and Future*, pp. 70-73.

In a fragment from 1950, while she was working on her book *Einführung in die Politik*, Arendt identifies a problem in philosophy and theology, which leads her to seek an answer to the question “What is politics?” since both disciplines “are concerned with a human being (*dem Menschen*)”—that is, being an image of one God. In another words, Arendt thinks human plurality is anchored neither in philosophical nor theological anthropology.<sup>47</sup>

Arendt contends that the attempts to take political organization from the family structure (assisted also by Christian talk about the Holy Family) “were the decay of politics.” This is because, in her opinion, distinct people organize themselves politically according to certain commonalities, while keeping their distinctions. Yet when family serves as an organizational form, distinctions are canceled because plurality is substituted for the concept of kinship (*Verwandtschaft*). This is able “in its various degrees to connect (*verbinden*) the most distinct people *and*, on the other hand, to be a means by which individual-like entities differentiate themselves from and against each other.”<sup>48</sup> Therefore, Arendt’s view of the political possibilities that relate to the notion of family were not limited to its historical setting in the Greco-Roman world.

Arendt believed that Augustine’s theology offered a rescue. In his concept of *Civitas Dei*, says Arendt, Augustine rooted human plurality and mutual interrelatedness before the Fall. According to Arendt, “This earthly city is always a society as well, that is, a social organism defined by peoples living with and for each other and not just alongside each other.”<sup>49</sup> The common descent of all people from Adam means that they are all members of the same kin. “This kinship creates an equality neither of traits nor of talents, but of situation [mortality]. All share the same fate. The individual is not alone in this world.” In Arendt’s view, Augustine was convinced that “some kind of political

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<sup>47</sup> ARENDT, *Was Ist Politik?*, p. 9. The context is the criticism of the term *dzoön politikon*, which may be translated as “social,” however, remaining in the singular.

<sup>48</sup> ARENDT, *Was Ist Politik?*, p. 11.

<sup>49</sup> Hannah ARENDT, *Love and Saint Augustine*, J. V. SCOTT – J. C. STARK, eds., Chicago: University of Chicago, 1996, p. 100. Arendt makes reference to these words from Augustine: “Because, of course, any community life must emphasize social relationships.” (*The City of God XIX, 17*).

life must exist even under conditions of sinlessness, and indeed sanctity.”<sup>50</sup> This point is crucial for Arendt since, for her, human plurality is the condition of any politics.<sup>51</sup> Moreover, politics in this understanding is not just a regretful consequence of sin, but also a part of a future hope.

For Arendt, Augustine’s idea of plurality implies another important aspect of human relations, which is indispensable for action and mutual trust. Arendt praises Augustine for discovering charity as a political principle that is able to connect people, even without the common world. Even after the grace of faith, Arendt sees the love of neighbor in Augustine as being connected with sin and, therefore, in the past.<sup>52</sup> It is not a distinctly Christian love that Augustine had in mind, but the love of neighbor, which is present even among the criminals and is not identical with the love of God.<sup>53</sup> The interdependence, which is expressed in a mutual “give and take”, requires believing in the other: This “is the belief that he will prove himself in our common future. Every earthly city depends upon this proof.”<sup>54</sup>

It is noteworthy, that according to Arendt’s interpretation Augustine considers the existence of human beings to be a matter not of creation, but of procreation.<sup>55</sup> Therefore, it will be explored, if rooting human plurality within creation itself has implications for an understanding of human acting. The same will be discussed regarding a certain idea of one God. In the later chapters, both possibilities will be explored with Bonhoeffer and also with Stăniloae.

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<sup>50</sup> ARENDT, *Between Past and Future*, p. 73.

<sup>51</sup> ARENDT, *Vita activa*, p. 17.

<sup>52</sup> ARENDT, *Love and Saint Augustine*, pp. 102-112.

<sup>53</sup> ARENDT, *Vita activa*, pp. 66-67.

<sup>54</sup> ARENDT, *Love and Saint Augustine*, p. 101. The insight regarding complementarity and mutual dependency will be elaborated further, especially with regard to its consequences for acting understood as communal.

<sup>55</sup> ARENDT, *Love and Saint Augustine*, p. 104.

#### 4.1. Christian Freedom from Politics

According to Arendt, the Roman Catholic Church became a political institution in accepting the Roman tradition of viewing a foundation as the making of a new beginning. The Christian faith has perceived “the birth, life, death, and resurrection of Jesus of Nazareth as a historically recorded event,” which has thus formed a worldly beginning of its existence. According to Arendt, “the church could now be interpreted politically,”<sup>56</sup> and thus the unworldly character of the church ceases.

The space the church created was not political, since it could not have become a place of appearances (*Erscheinungsraum*), but public nevertheless. This space is one between the private and the public, claims Arendt. She believed even without privatization of faith and secularization, which followed the Reformation movement with its emphasis on a hidden life according to the gospel, “the Protestant church would hardly be able to take over the role to offer people a substitute for the citizenship of Antiquity – a role which the Catholic Church undoubtedly fulfilled.”<sup>57</sup>

In spite of the transformed self-understanding of the church rooted in Augustine, Arendt links the apolitical tendencies of Christianity back to him, saying that according to Augustine “the duty of the love of the neighbor sets the limit (*Grenze*) to the *otium* and contemplation. *Vita activa* springs from the love of the neighbor; and in it “we are not allowed to long for honors or power in this life, [...] but for the salvation of those who are under us” (*De Civitate Dei, XIX, 19*). On it, Arendt comments, that “obviously, this has more to do with the responsibility of a father for his family than with political responsibility.”<sup>58</sup>

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<sup>56</sup> ARENDT, *Between Past and Future*, pp. 125-128.

<sup>57</sup> ARENDT, *Was ist Politik?*, pp. 61-65.

<sup>58</sup> ARENDT, *Vita activa*, p. 430, n. 57. Greer even goes as far as saying that “Augustine [...] is thinking of a city rather than a family, but the difference is not so great as to prevent our arguing that the Christian destiny is a familial one.” He refers to *The City of God XXII, 29*, which deals with the future vision of God, namely, God’s presence in each other and each in himself. Even though I do not find a persuasive argument for this conclusion, the interdependence of people that is raised by the text is significant for the life of the church as it is for a family. (GREER, *Broken Lights*, pp. 115-116.)

She claims that the following principle of Christian morality survived even secularization: “Public responsibility is a burden and one is allowed to take upon himself the burden of the political only out of love for the neighbor, namely to liberate the faithful concerned for the salvation of their soul from the care for the public issues.” Even though she remarks that precepts of Christian morality are not necessarily identical with fundamental Christian religious teachings,<sup>59</sup> in the connected footnote Arendt identifies that this principle of caring for one’s own business mostly refers to 1 Thessalonians 4,11. There Paul exhorts the faithful “to aspire to live quietly, to mind [their] own affairs.” In Arendt’s interpretation, this is meant to be in opposition to political activity; against *prattein ta idia* stands the common *prattein ta koina*, to be active in public matters (*öffentliche Angelegenheiten*).<sup>60</sup> Arendt names this a new kind of freedom, which was a specific contribution to the understanding of politics from early Christianity onwards. This was the freedom *from* politics.<sup>61</sup> Arendt considers this freedom to stay in one’s private life to be “probably the most relevant aspect of our Christian heritage,” because life within politics is not a way of life for everybody. Individuals are to elect themselves into politics, thus expressing their care for the world more than for their own private happiness.<sup>62</sup>

Does Arendt hint at a kind of familial heritage that would not only be a matter of a metaphor in Augustine? Could a familial understanding of the church be connected with a certain understanding of *vita activa*, or more specifically, with Christian acting? She does not explore this premise further. Such an undertaking will be embarked here in the later chapters not by studying Augustine, but by examining a larger Christian context, which highlights the perspectives of Bonhoeffer and Stăniloae.

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<sup>59</sup> ARENDT, *Vita activa*, p. 74f.

<sup>60</sup> ARENDT, *Vita activa*, p. 430, n. 57. Here the passage is quoted from RSV. In *Vita activa* Arendt writes: “*Dass ihr stille seid und das Eure schafft*,” in *The Human Condition*, p. 60 we read: “that ye study to be quiet and to do your own business.” Hannah ARENDT, *The Human Condition*, 2nd ed., Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998)

<sup>61</sup> ARENDT, *Zwischen Vergangenheit und Zukunft*, pp. 310.

<sup>62</sup> Hannah ARENDT, *On Revolution*, New York: Penguin Books, 1977, pp. 270-272.



## **5. Summary: Familial Symbolism in Politics and in the Church**

From Arendt's discussion of the family symbolism, there are three main reasons surfacing, which lead her to consider it unsuitable as a metaphor for public life. Since the church is a public community, these arguments become important for the following discourse, in which I will bring them into a theological context. First, love, not a worldly concern, is the binding force between the family members. Second, inequality between the family members results in obedience of some to others (this is applicable not only to patriarchal families, but to any family, where children and other dependants are not equals to the parents or other members of an extended family). Third, family unity is held at the expense of action, understood in terms of freedom to take an initiative and join others' action. All of these characteristics of a family—love, inequality, and obedience—are an impediment to action when applied to the public and primarily political space of life.

In Arendt's analysis, family metaphor of the church does not mirror a lack of equality between the head and the members of the church. Instead, it was used to express its unworldly character arising from two sources: active goodness<sup>63</sup> and church's personal in-between. Even though church had become a political institution for a certain time, and has remained to be public, it is primarily the concern for salvation of their souls and mutual love, not the world, that unites people there. Nevertheless, Arendt herself employs a familial approach when she identifies freedom from politics to be a genuine Christian heritage that is still relevant for all people, not only for Christians.

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<sup>63</sup> Arendt's notion of goodness will be explored further in dialogue with Bonhoeffer and Stăniloae in the chapter five, focusing on the relation between the world, love and acting.

In the following chapter, the previous analysis of church's family metaphor by Arendt will be put into conversation with Bonhoeffer's comparison of the church to a patriarchal family. Next to his substantiation of this metaphor and its place in his theology, it will be inquired what place equality, freedom and obedience have in such church. Does a responsible *paterfamilias* allow differences of opinions and perspectives within his church family?

## **CHAPTER TWO:**

# **THE IMAGE OF THE CHURCH AS A PATRIARCHAL FAMILY IN BONHOEFFER**

“Only the original patriarchal structure of the family is a sociologically comparable form, even if only approximately. [...] It is not possible to define patriarchal family as a pure union of purposeful obedience and of a true communal relation. It is either one or the other. The true interconnection of the two elements is realized only through the work of the Holy Spirit, wherefore it is possible to name it also the family guided by the Spirit.”  
BONHOEFFER, *Sanctorum Communio*, p. 182f

Bonhoeffer compared the church to a patriarchal family in trying to express the church-community as a distinct sociological type which the empirical church embodies.

He applied this familial metaphor on the church in a different context from that of the early centuries of the Christian church that Arendt focused on. In this chapter, the reasons that are behind his choice of the symbolism will be uncovered and explored.

Bonhoeffer compared the church’s social structure to the structure of a patriarchal family. This symbolism might evoke various ideas as any other metaphor. Therefore, it is important to ask in what ways Bonhoeffer uses this image of the church and how he substantiates it. Does it express the atmosphere of love and care in the church? What place do individuals and their uniqueness have in such a church? Does the adjective patriarchal mean that the church is a place of fathers’ and men’s authority where women and/or others are suppressed?<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Cf. D. K. McKIM, *Westminster Dictionary of Theological Terms*, Louisville, KY: John Knox Press, 1996, p. 204. Hauverwas stated already nearly 30 years ago: “neither side of the patriarchal paradigm

The search for answers will start in looking at how Bonhoeffer thematizes the family symbolism. Following, the focus will be aimed at the three basic concepts emerging from the symbolism within the context of Bonhoeffer's theology of the family and of the church, namely love, unity and patriarchal structure. Next, helpful aspects of Bonhoeffer's symbolism of the church as a patriarchal family will be suggested and arising questions formulated. Finally, the main arguments of Bonhoeffer will be put into conversation with those of Arendt.

## 1. Church as a Patriarchal Family

According to Bonhoeffer, there are three sociological forms interconnected in the empirical church, specifically community (*Gemeinschaft*), society (*Gesellschaft*) and association of authentic rule (*Herrschaftsverband*). It is possible because the church is realized by the Spirit and therefore is also *Geistgemeinschaft*. In it the one will of God is realized, particularly, to establish and reign in God's realm in love. At the same time, love is the meaning of the Realm itself, existing in loving community. Thus, this community is the end in itself. Love is the end, the means and also the rule in God's Realm.<sup>2</sup>

According to Bonhoeffer, the church is a unique sociological form, which cannot be reduced to any of the three forms it embodies. The only form that is sociologically comparable to the church is "the original patriarchal structure of a family." In it, the communion between the children and servants is the will of the father, and at the same time, the keeping of this communion means obedience. Bonhoeffer makes this comparison with the reservation that "it is not possible to define patriarchal family as a pure union of purposeful obedience and of a true communal relation. It is either one or

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seems to bring out the best in humanity." Stanley HAUERWAS, "The Family as a School for Character", in: *Religious Education* 80, no. 2 (March 1, 1985), p. 274, n.2.

<sup>2</sup> Dietrich BONHOEFFER, *Sanctorum Communio: Eine dogmatische Untersuchung zur Soziologie der Kirche*, in: Joachim VON SOOSTEN, ed., *Dietrich Bonhoeffer Werke Bd. 1*, Berlin: Evangelische Verlagsanstalt, 1987, pp.181-2.

the other. The true interconnection of the two elements is realized only through the work of the Holy Spirit, wherefore it is possible to name it also the family guided by the Spirit.”<sup>3</sup>

Bonhoeffer uses also other images for the church taken from the family. He talks about the importance of God’s fatherhood for earthly fathers, and describes the earthly family as a communion, which is a reflection of God’s fatherhood over all people.<sup>4</sup> “*Gathering of the believers continues to be our mother,*” because it is the place where Christians receive the nutrition of the word and the Sacraments. They are born within the church through baptism, after which “communion carries the saints as a mother her most holy treasure.”<sup>5</sup> Infant baptism is a witness to the fact that the church is not a human work. In the church, God keeps Christians together and draws them into love, which is the principle of the church’s life. “The gathering is organically connected with the life of an individual. This connection is motivated by *thankfulness* to the mother, giving him life and by love for her encompassing *trust*, that she will always give her gifts.”<sup>6</sup> This image of the church as a mother does not disrupt the comparison of the church to the patriarchal family, since in it the nurturing role falls upon the mother.

There are three basic concepts emerging from this family symbolism, which are repeated and interconnected, precisely love, unity, and patriarchal structure. Gradually, they will be put into the light of Bonhoeffer’s theology in order to search for clues connected with the life of the church as a family guided by the Spirit.

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<sup>3</sup> BONHOEFFER, *Sanctorum Communio*, pp. 182-185.

<sup>4</sup> Cf. Dietrich BONHOEFFER, *Schöpfung und Fall*, in: M. RÜTER – I. TÖDT, eds., *Dietrich Bonhoeffer Werke Bd. 3*, Chr. Kaiser: München, 1989, p. 70; Dietrich BONHOEFFER, *Widerstand und Ergebung: Briefe und Aufzeichnungen aus der Haft*, E. BETHGE, ed., München: Chr. Kaiser Verlag, 1985, p. 58.

<sup>5</sup> BONHOEFFER, *Sanctorum Communio*, p. 164.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 156-157.

## 2. The Main Concepts of the Symbolism: Love, Unity and Patriarchal Structure

The notions of unity and love will be discussed first and with them the notion of communal relations, as they spring from love. Next, Bonhoeffer's understanding of patriarchal structures will be explored within his theological views of both family and the church.

### 2.1. Love and Unity in the Symbolism

Since, according to Bonhoeffer, Christ exists as a church-community (*Christus als Gemeinde existierend*),<sup>7</sup> it is Christ himself who unites it with his love. Therefore, unity and love are discussed together, as Bonhoeffer refers to Augustine's words: *caritas* is the bond of church unity.<sup>8</sup>

The love of God was revealed in Christ's cross and resurrection as being for others. From this love springs his vicarious action, when he lived, suffered, died for others.<sup>9</sup> This love of God changes people's hearts, which are turned in upon themselves since the Fall.<sup>10</sup> In Christ, the alienated I and Thou become siblings in that God gives them new hearts liberated from egoism to freedom in love for others.<sup>11</sup> Thus, in being re-

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<sup>7</sup> Bonhoeffer introduced this concept in *Sanctorum Communio* expressing the existence of Christ as a collective/corporate person (*Gesamtperson*). Cf. BONHOEFFER, *Sanctorum Communio*, pp. 76, 126f, 133f. In *Nachfolge* he uses the term corporeal/embodied person (*leibhafte Person*). Cf. Dietrich BONHOEFFER, *Nachfolge*, M. KUSKE – I. TÖDT, eds., *Dietrich Bonhoeffer Werke Bd. 4*, Gütersloh: Gütersloher Verlagshaus, 2011, pp. 232-233.

<sup>8</sup> Cf. BONHOEFFER, *Sanctorum Communio*, pp. 135-6.

<sup>9</sup> Bonhoeffer subsumes this work of Jesus Christ under the term vicarious responsible action (*Stellvertretung*). As one of the pillars of Bonhoeffer's theology, it will be discussed in the section dealing with his concept of Christian acting.

<sup>10</sup> Bonhoeffer adopts Luther's understanding of sin as *cor curvum in se*. Cf. Dietrich BONHOEFFER, *Akt und Sein: Transzendentalphilosophie und Ontologie in der systematischen Theologie*, H. R. REUTER, ED., *Dietrich Bonhoeffer Werke Bd. 2.*, München: Chr. Kaiser, 1988, p. 39.

<sup>11</sup> Cf. BONHOEFFER, *Schöpfung und Fall*, p. 60; BONHOEFFER, *Akt und Sein*, pp. 110-111; BONHOEFFER, *Sanctorum Communio*, pp. 108-111. Bonhoeffer does not understand freedom as a freedom of choice, nor as an inner condition of human beings. He criticized freedom interpreted as a right of an individual for independent thinking, speaking and acting, which is thus not rooted in human

united with God, with others, and also each with himself/herself, human beings are led back into the community which God intended for them. This love within community is realized primarily in the church, the Body of Christ.

Bonhoeffer compares the love of Jesus to a mother's love, by which God loves and accepts God's children the way they are, "as a mother loves her child and she loves her/him even more the more she is troubled by the child, because she knows, that s/he needs her love."<sup>12</sup> Therefore, in the church, which lives out this love, there is no one person more welcomed than another based on his/her piety, gender, origin, sexuality, status or race. From this it must follow that the less the church is able to gain from a person (e.g. money, volunteer work, or influence) and the more inconveniences the church has with someone (e.g. in the form of care, expenses or posed questions), the more loved and accepted that person should be.

To turn one's back on any of the brothers and sisters equals separating oneself from God, because God's Son became our Brother. Only God the Father decides on the membership of God's family, therefore it is not in human competency to banish others from the church.<sup>13</sup> Church members are not interconnected by feeling as soul mates, or by sharing the same views, experience, origin or status, but only by Christ himself and his love leading to mutual service and sacrifice.<sup>14</sup>

Bonhoeffer characterizes the deeds expressing the community of God's love as mutual with-one-another (*Miteinander*) and active for-one-another (*tätiges Füreinander*), which also determine the church's structures. Later he emphasizes the

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sociality. Cf. Dietrich BONHOEFFER, *Gesammelte Schriften I: Ökumene: Briefe, Aufsätze, Dokumente: 1928 bis 1942*, München: Chr. Kaiser, 1965, p. 337.

<sup>12</sup> Dietrich BONHOEFFER, *Gesammelte Schriften IV: Auslegungen - Predigten: 1933 bis 1944*, E. BETHGE, ed., München: Chr. Kaiser, 1961, pp. 463-465.

<sup>13</sup> Cf. BONHOEFFER, *Nachfolge*, s. 124-125. Excommunication does not happen through a decision other people make about somebody, but this person excludes himself/herself from a church community.

<sup>14</sup> Cf. BONHOEFFER, *Sanctorum Communio*, s. 156. Human experience does not form the basis of the church, but only of a religious community. Cf. Dietrich BONHOEFFER, *Gesammelte Schriften V: Seminare - Vorlesungen - Predigten 1924 bis 1941*. E. BETHGE, ed. München: Chr. Kaiser, 1972, p. 253; Cf. BONHOEFFER, *Schöpfung und Fall*, p. 115; Dietrich BONHOEFFER, *Gemeinsames Leben, Das Gebetbuch der Bibel*, in: Gerhard Ludwig MÜLLER – Albrecht SCHÖNHERR, eds., *Dietrich Bonhoeffer Werke, Bd.5*, München: Chr. Kaiser, 1987, p. 34.

church's calling to exist-for-others (*für-andere-da-sein*). Christ's siblings are to suffer and rejoice with others, to fight on their behalf, to endanger themselves for them, and to take their guilt upon themselves.<sup>15</sup> Such love is the bond of unity.

The church as the unity of humankind does not have any specific place in the world, neither geographically nor in the sense of a favorite company. Bonhoeffer refuses a church preferring some people based on their origin, age or status. Already in April 1933, he names Christians of both Jewish and Aryan origin as brothers, even though state laws, which were supposed to be adopted into the church, pushed them aside to the level of at least inferior brothers and sisters. Bonhoeffer refuses to make such a heretical step and instead calls upon the church to act as a limit over against the state.<sup>16</sup>

Bonhoeffer also criticizes what is called today positive discrimination of youth. In his opinion, the church failed to proclaim God's order in their regard and instead, idolized them. The consequences included not only the loss of divine honor and authority of parents, but also the loss of the youth themselves and destruction of families. Winning of the youth or elderly for Christ is not a matter of compromises with their opinions or the popular trend.<sup>17</sup> In addition, Bonhoeffer reproaches his church for settling in the comfort of the upper middle class and for copying its needs and lifestyle, while intellectuals, enemies of the church, the proletariat, revolutionaries and businesspersons remained unnoticed.<sup>18</sup> For Bonhoeffer, diversity within the church is

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<sup>15</sup> Cf. Dietrich BONHOEFFER, *Gesammelte Schriften II: Kirchenkampf und Finkenwalde: Resolutionen, Aufsätze, Rundbriefe, 1933 bis 1943, 2. Aufl.*, München: Chr. Kaiser, 1965, p. 332. Bonhoeffer differentiated himself over against idealism, which "in understanding the spirit as being-for-himself (*Fürsichsein*), ascribes to a human being an absolute value, which belongs only to the Spirit of God." BONHOEFFER, *Sanctorum Communio*, p. 49. Cf. *Ibid.*, p. 117.

<sup>16</sup> BONHOEFFER, *Gesammelte Schriften II*, pp. 51-52. Bonhoeffer was motivated not only by the Christian calling to express the love of God, but also by a dogmatic problem he clearly formulated: "excluding the racial Jews from our church of German origin would make it into a Jewish-Christian type. Such exclusion remains an ecclesial impossibility." On Bonhoeffer's position on the Jews, see W. HUBER – I. TÖDT, eds., *Ethik im Ernstfall: Dietrich Bonhoeffers Stellung zu den Juden und ihre Aktualität*, Internationales Bonhoeffer-Forum, München: Chr. Kaiser Verlag, 1982.

<sup>17</sup> Cf. BONHOEFFER, *Ethik*, p. 130.

<sup>18</sup> BONHOEFFER, *Gesammelte Schriften V*, pp. 231-232. Bonhoeffer's appeal to include the proletariat into the church was not included into the printed edition, probably due to the critical remarks of his promoter R. Seeberg. Nevertheless, still twenty years later Bonhoeffer did not think the desired



the fruit of the creation of distinct human beings and also of the working of the Holy Spirit through and in God's word. Differences are united in the church and they should be kept. As soon as love is denied to someone, the church betrays its essence to be the church of Jesus Christ.

What place do individuals and their uniqueness have in God's family? What happens to them in the united church hospitable to all? Bonhoeffer wanted to uphold the conviction that "God does not wish for a history of individual human beings, but a history of human community,"<sup>19</sup> together with the claim that the church cannot swallow up an individual. In the Third Reich only the *Führer* was allowed to be what nobody else could have been – a personality. The others transferred on him their rights and also responsibility.<sup>20</sup> True community, however, is not possible without responsibility, which relies on discerning the limits between I and Thou. Their mutual relations enable responsibility as vicarious living.<sup>21</sup> As the first fruits of this design of God, the church is the place of personal responsibility before God and human beings.

An individual finds God in Christ in a community, where s/he hears the word, the proclamation of sin and forgiveness, the calling to the discipleship of Christ, and receives the Sacraments. The church's office (*Amt*) is responsible for the proclamation of the word of God towards the church and also to the world (the highest relative authority in the church belongs to councils and synods). The vector of movement of the proclamation of the Gospel and of the imperative for obedience leads from above, from the church office down to the church members, from the pulpit to the pews.

Church representatives have a unique responsibility and they demand obedience. In praxis it means that an individual Christian owes *sacrificium intellectus* and *sacrificium*

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change happened when in prison he writes similar words in the outline for a book. Cf. BONHOEFFER, *Sanctorum Communio*, pp. 290-29; BONHOEFFER, *Widerstand und Ergebung*, p. 414.

<sup>19</sup> Cf. BONHOEFFER, *Sanctorum Communio*, p. 80.

<sup>20</sup> Bonhoeffer identified such transfer to be an expression of collectivism. Cf. BONHOEFFER, *Gesammelte Schriften II*, pp. 25-38.

<sup>21</sup> Therefore, it does not suffice for the actor to be responsible to his/her own conscience. Responsible acting is free also because it is not backed up by other people, principles, own conscience, church or nation. Cf. BONHOEFFER, *Widerstand und Ergebung*, p. 18; BONHOEFFER, *Nachfolge*, p. 84.

*conscientiae* to the church office. In the first case, the subordination of one's "uncontrolled intellect, emotions and experiences" concerning for example the teaching and the creeds is required. How the sacrifice of conscience is to be understood Bonhoeffer does not develop.<sup>22</sup> The whole of the church, the unity of its confession, teaching and praxis are thus superior to individuals, although their position might be justified.

That does not pertain only to a borderline situation, when the word of the church gets into conflict with the word of God, which requires absolute obedience from God's children. In such circumstances *status confessionis* applies.<sup>23</sup> Every Christian is to examine the correspondence between the word of God and the word of the church office, and in the case of discrepancies not to be silent but to act in obedience to the word. In such a case, Bonhoeffer takes into account "the prophetic and reforming possibility of God's revelation to an individual,"<sup>24</sup> which is not a principle to which church structures should correspond.

Nevertheless, in Bonhoeffer's view, "Love rules when it serves," which was proved most poignantly on the cross. Mutual service in a Christian community of love does not exclude tensions between different wills, which is a consequence of each human person being "created in individual unique form (*Gestalt*)." All members thus want to express their love of God in their own particular way. Therefore, this kind of struggle originates from creation itself, and is not a result of the Fall and therefore, something to be overcome.<sup>25</sup>

The unity of the love of God realized by the Spirit in the body of Christ is to be accepted and lived out by the church and its individual members. For Bonhoeffer, the

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<sup>22</sup> Cf. BONHOEFFER, *Sanctorum Communio*, pp. 172-173.

<sup>23</sup> Cf. BONHOEFFER, *Gesammelte Schriften II*, p. 341.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 55. According to Bonhoeffer, „every evangelical Christian is a dogmatic.” BONHOEFFER, *Sanctorum Communio*, p.172. When Bonhoeffer insists that every individual for himself or herself stands before the question, in what s/he believes, he does not mean by that the church as such does not need a common confession. Rather, he wanted us "to be honest to ourselves." Cf. BONHOEFFER, *Widerstand und Ergebung*, p. 415.

<sup>25</sup> BONHOEFFER, *Sanctorum Communio*, p. 223.

church as a mother nourishes all God's children with God's word and Sacraments. The form it is to have is loving others and living for them, whereby the unity of the life of the church subsists in the mutual service of the members.

Each one of her children is responsible for his/her own deeds and should not thoughtlessly submit to authorities, towards which s/he is bound in obedience under normal circumstances. Even though the direction of authority from above suggests a patriarchal hierarchical structure of the church, it will be explored further, if that is the case and if Bonhoeffer managed to keep the uniqueness of individuals within the ecclesial family. This uniqueness will be understood not only in the sense of differences in strength, morality or social status in the church,<sup>26</sup> but including also the distinctness of God's gifts of talents, body, acquired experiences and character. Ways in which this uniqueness is kept within the unity of God's family guided by the Spirit will be searched for and also if there is space for its growth towards new life.

Unity of the church is the work of the Holy Spirit who leads diverse members into mutual ministry of love in obedience. This is expressed in Bonhoeffer's symbolism of the church in terms of a patriarchal structure. Its thread of recurring use in both family and the church will be traced in the following section, together with the connection between his understanding of vocation and office in family and the church. Did Bonhoeffer manage to offer an alternative to the image of the church as an organism?

## **2.2. Patriarchal Structure in Family**

Bonhoeffer's theological anchor of the family needs to be discussed first before a study of patriarchal structure of the church in order to understand the source of this symbolism. A search will be undertaken in order to find out why various Bonhoeffer's texts display a certain tension regarding the relationship between spouses.

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<sup>26</sup> BONHOEFFER, *Gesammelte Schriften II*, p. 331.

Generally, it can be said, that Bonhoeffer thematizes family primarily in the context of relationship between a man and a woman as husband and wife, and also between parents and their children. According to Renate Bethge, there are two views on the family in Bonhoeffer's writings, originating in two different periods of his life, which do not chronologically follow each other. She argues that Bonhoeffer's open position on the relations between spouses was interrupted by a period of his time in Finkenwalde and the collective pastorate in the years 1935-39 and lasted until the first months of his imprisonment. He was influenced by the fact, that he had only male students and also that he did not teach at a university, but in the name of the church, which "put him under obligation toward the doctrine of the church. And he put up with it, as the burning problems occupying him lay in a different field."<sup>27</sup>

To illustrate Bonhoeffer's open attitude, the focus will be placed on his lectures *Schöpfung und Fall* and on his meditations on the Moravian daily texts from 1944.<sup>28</sup> In these texts, there is a perceptible emphasis on the unity and mutuality of spouses. This impression is supported by the concept of *Beistand* (help, assistance), by which Bonhoeffer titles the created woman. Precisely mutual help is the essence of marriage, which God comes to fulfill through the Holy Spirit. Communion of a man and a woman

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<sup>27</sup> Renate BETHGE, "Bonhoeffer and the Role of Women", in *Reflections on Bonhoeffer: essays in honor of F. Burton Nelson*, G. B. KELLY, – C. J. WEBORG, eds., Chicago: Covenant Publications, 1999, p. 176; 178. If Bethge is right and Bonhoeffer himself submitted to the teaching of the church even though he himself did not like to talk about the subordination of women, this would be an example of his own *sacrificium intellectus*. Bethge also notes that Bonhoeffer ordained a woman in 1936 by the order of the Brethren Council of the Saxony Province of the Confessing Church, which was not yet an official practice. She thinks he did it "as a matter of course, but it did not occur to him to fight for the general ordination of women or for the right of women to take over parishes of their own." Siegele-Wenschkewitz does not mention this event and quite on the contrary claims, that unlike Niemöller Bonhoeffer did not participate in any such activity. Leonore SIEGELE-WENSCHKEWITZ, "Die Ehre der Frau, dem Manne zu dienen : Zum Frauenbild Dietrich Bonhoeffers", in: *Wie Theologen Frauen sehen : von der Macht der Bilder*, R. JOST – U. KUBERA, eds., *Reihe Frauenforum*, Freiburg im Breisgau ; Basel ; Wien: Herder, 1993, p. 120.

<sup>28</sup> BONHOEFFER, *Gesammelte Schriften IV*, pp. 592-594. Bonhoeffer dedicated this meditation to Renate and Eberhard Bethge. (Cf. BETHGE, *Bonhoeffer and the Role of Women*, p. 178.) One of the given texts was from Psalm 54,4: "Behold, God is my helper (in his edition of the Bible, the word comes from the verb *beistehen*); the Lord is the upholder of my life." (quoted from RSV) Van Eyden asserts that in this meditation "Bonhoeffer sees husband and wife as equals." René VAN EYDEN, "Dietrich Bonhoeffer's Understanding of Male and Female", in: *Bonhoeffer's ethics: old Europe and new frontiers*, G. CARTER, ed. et al, Kok Pharos: Kampen, 1991, p. 204.

is characterized by love, in which two become one (*Einzelnersein und Einssein*) belonging to one another. Not even the Fall has changed anything about the fact that “communion of a man and a woman carries the purpose of being the church.”<sup>29</sup>

From Bonhoeffer’s work in the seminary and in the collective pastorate, two texts are of importance: his guide for how to write a wedding sermon and his notes on 1 Tim 2, 9-15.<sup>30</sup> In them, a truly patriarchal image of the family surfaces: woman has a subordinated and serving status in relation to her husband; she does not have only a kind of supporting function, as was the case in the previous texts. A man and a woman have a different vocation (*Beruf*): woman creates a home, while man is called to take care of the family and protect it, to represent his family before God and also before the world. There is a visible direction of authority coming from above, from the husband to the wife and towards the household as such. This biblical order is not conservatism, asserts Bonhoeffer for two reasons. First, it follows from the succession of the creation and secondly from the fact, that a woman was seduced and therefore needs protection against temptation from the side of man. This interpretation of Bonhoeffer, draws most closely to what might be called an ontological argument, even though van Eyden believes Bonhoeffer did not represent an anthropological teaching of a man and a woman, but rather theological views of their status and function based on a theological understanding of the Bible and ethics of the Scripture.<sup>31</sup>

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<sup>29</sup> BONHOEFFER, *Schöpfung und Fall*, pp. 92-94. Siegele-Wenschkewitz thinks Bonhoeffer had a more opened attitude towards relations within marriage in this text and also in his ecclesiology, because there he refers to Ephesians 5,30-32, omitting verse 22f talking about subordination of women to men, which was used in the wedding sermon from prison. Cf. SIEGELE-WENSCHKIEWITZ, “Die Ehre der Frau, dem Manne zu dienen”, p. 111. On the other hand, van Eyden believes that even where Bonhoeffer cites Ephes 5. 31f, “implicitly accepts” also that which Paul says in the preceding verses, including v. 24. VAN EYDEN, “Dietrich Bonhoeffer’s Understanding of Male and Female”, p. 202f.

<sup>30</sup> Cf. BONHOEFFER, *Gesammelte Schriften V*, p. 413; BONHOEFFER, *Gesammelte Schriften IV*, p. 369 (notes to 1 Tim)

<sup>31</sup> VAN EYDEN, “Dietrich Bonhoeffer’s Understanding of Male and Female”, p. 201. The author argues that these texts by Bonhoeffer need to be read in context of his lectures *Vergegenwärtigung neutestamentlicher Texte* from 1935, where he attempted to lay out the principles of the most clear interpretation of the Bible without its adjustment to one’s own situation so that Christ be proclaimed to all and in every situation. Cf. Dietrich BONHOEFFER, *Gesammelte Schriften II: Kirchenkampf und Finkenwalde: Resolutionen, Aufsätze, Rundbriefe, 1933 bis 1943, 2. Aufl.*, München: Chr. Kaiser, 1965, p. 313.

To understand Bonhoeffer's ideas better it might be helpful to reflect on some of his comments from the first version of his dissertation on social theory regarding marriage and family drawing on patristics. He claims, in disagreement with Troeltsch's argument, that in the patristic literature, there is no support for the idea of equality in the sense of likeness being present in the state before the fall. Subordination was present already then, as being good and necessary, however not affected by the state of sin. Therefore, patriarchalism was not understood as a punishment. At the same time, equality does not cancel subordination. "As an example serve the heavenly hierarchies."<sup>32</sup>

In his later work *Ethik*, Bonhoeffer does not elaborate on the details of family relationships, but outlines their broad structures. Family is as a place for bodily life, procreation and education. Parents are for their children God's representatives as those who gave them birth and raise them not only as their but also as God's children. The mystery of Christ as being one with his church is reflected in the unity of the married couple.<sup>33</sup>

It is crucial that Bonhoeffer discusses family in the context of God's mandates, which preserve the world toward Christ and mediate God's commandment into concrete spheres of human life.<sup>34</sup> Commandment comes from *above* (*von oben her*) and persons always encounter it in "an earthly relation of authority, in an order with clearly given *Above* and *Below*." Nevertheless, they cannot be identified with any earthly power,

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<sup>32</sup> BONHOEFFER, *Sanctorum Communio*, p. 237.

<sup>33</sup> Cf. BONHOEFFER, *Ethik*, pp. 54-60.

<sup>34</sup> Cf. *Ibid.*, pp. 392-393. The number, order and the terminology of the particular mandates are not stable in Bonhoeffer's works, not even within *Ethik*, where next to the church, work, family and (temporal) authority also culture is listed or marriage is also termed family. Cf. BONHOEFFER, *Ethik*, pp. 54-61; 399, 406. For example in the Bethel Confession there are named among them also sex, nationality, possession (vocation and government) and occupation. Cf. BONHOEFFER, *Gesammelte Schriften II*, p. 99. Rasmussen interprets this variety as an expression of the fact that Bonhoeffer was experimenting. Larry L. RASMUSSEN, *Dietrich Bonhoeffer: Reality and Resistance*, Nashville ; New York: Abingdon Press, 1972, p. 29. As Green rightly notes, Bonhoeffer spoke initially about the orders of creation's preservation. However, later in 1933 he abandoned this terminology due to its possible resemblance to the ideology of National Socialism. Cf. Clifford J. GREEN, *Bonhoeffer: a Theology of sociality, rev. ed.*, Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 1999, p. 204. Bonhoeffer argues that orders do not emerge from the creation itself, because it is broken. Only in Christ, do we get to know God's commandment and that through the divine mandates. Cf. BONHOEFFER, *Gesammelte Schriften V*, p. 291.

because “those who carry the mandates do not receive their authorization from below, they are not executioners and representatives of human products of will, but they receive their authorization from God in a strict independent sense, they are God’s deputies and representatives.” That holds true regardless of their historical formation.<sup>35</sup>

Van Eyden asserts that in *Ethik* the relation of superiority and subordination also concerns marriage, which includes relations of dominance between spouses ordained by God. Even though his argument is not convincing, his conclusion is correct since hierarchical structure *from above* concerns all mandates, which do not differ in the structure of authority, but in the area of life that they cover.<sup>36</sup>

The wedding sermon from 1943 connects the idea of hierarchy from *Ethik* with the concern for God’s order of married life from Bonhoeffer’s time in the seminary and pastorate (it is surprising that here Bonhoeffer does not imply his own concept of God’s mandate). The foundation of marriage stands the same as at the roots of the church and of the new humankind, namely Christ himself. The core is the mutual acceptance of the spouses as they are and forgiving each other every day. Probably that is the reason why

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<sup>35</sup> Cf. BONHOEFFER, *Ethik*, pp. 384, 394-397. God’s commandment in Christ is contained in the mutual relations between the mandates, which limit one another. These relations Bonhoeffer specifies as the existence of the mandates *with-one-another*, *for-one-another* and *against-one-another* (*Miteinander, Füreinander und Gegeneinander*). Yet, as Hauerwas claims “Bonhoeffer does not develop how we would know when one domain has encroached on the other, or what conjunction or collaboration might look like.” Stanley HAUERWAS, “Dietrich Bonhoeffer”, in: P. SCOTT – W. T. CAVANAUGH, eds., *The Blackwell Companion to Political Theology*, Blackwell Publishing: Malden, 2004, p. 145. An example of Bonhoeffer’s attempt to point to the difference between the family and school is found in his essay “*Was heißt Wahrheit sagen?*” Cf. Dietrich BONHOEFFER, *Konspiration und Haft : 1940 – 1945*, W. KRÖTKE – U. KABITZ – J.J. Glenthøj, eds., *Dietrich Bonhoeffer Werke Bd. 16*, Gütersloh : Chr. Kaiser ; Gütersloher Verlagshaus, 1996, pp. 619-629.

The tension between *above* and *below* has an eschatological dimension for Bonhoeffer, which is expressed in *Ethik* with the concepts of ultimate and penultimate. Even though van Eyden praises this aspect, he at the same time says: “the traditional religiously based patriarchal structure of marriage and family was legitimated theologically and ethically in Bonhoeffer’s doctrine of the mandates.” In his view, Bonhoeffer’s “inheritance of a patriarchal culture in the form of a bourgeois pattern of values” prevented him from reaching a more critical view of the matter. (VAN EYDEN, “Dietrich Bonhoeffer’s Understanding of Male and Female”, p. 203).

<sup>36</sup> Van Eyden proceeds from a presupposition already mentioned, see here note 28. Cf. BONHOEFFER, *Ethik*, p. 58.

Bonhoeffer says: “the earthly home is the reflection of heavenly home, the earthly family reflection of God’s fatherhood of all people, who are children before him.”<sup>37</sup>

Even more clearly than the later texts, this sermon leaves the impression that a woman is less responsible compared to a man, more precisely, as if a woman was not responsible for herself in contrast to a man. That would be in contradiction to Bonhoeffer’s criticism of *Führer* who was more responsible than anybody else. On the other hand, a different measure of responsibility has to do with the different vocation of men and women in Bonhoeffer’s view. In the family, the role of a man was his office, which had nothing to do with his personal individual characteristics. That does not prevent Bonhoeffer from comparing the church and even God’s realm to the earthly home interconnected with love. The commandment *from above* is represented towards the family as such by the father, to the children by the parents. The position of the father is a matter of an office, not of personal capabilities, which also holds true for any position of authority, such as statesman, master, bishop etc.<sup>38</sup>

Renate Bethge recalls that the wedding sermon was surprising to her. Even though Bonhoeffer came out of “a patriarchal social structure,” she was not familiar with a similar attitude to those expressed in the sermon with neither Dietrich nor any of the

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<sup>37</sup> Moreover, about the lack of understanding of this order Bonhoeffer wrote: “It is the beginning of a dissolution and decay of all human orders of life, when the serving of a wife is understood as affront, even as an insult to her honor, and the exclusive love of a husband to his wife as a weakness or even as stupidity.” Cf. BONHOEFFER, *Widerstand und Ergebung*, p. 56. In this sermon Bonhoeffer refers to not only Colossians 3,18-19, but also to Ephesians 5, 23 about man being the head of a woman, as Siegele-Wenschkewitz notes. Cf. SIEGELE-WENSCHKEWITZ, “Die Ehre der Frau, dem Manne zu dienen”, p. 123. Nevertheless, it is noteworthy, that in this sermon Bonhoeffer does not list the rule of a man over a woman among the consequences of the fall from Genesis 3. (Cf. BONHOEFFER, *Widerstand und Ergebung*, pp. 53-59)

<sup>38</sup> According to Siegele-Wenschkewitz, from the original Bonhoeffer’s emphasis on being for one another of the spouses became a rigid hierarchy, even though he concretized or modified it. Van Eyden is in agreement with her and both view this sermon as a turning point in Bonhoeffer’s views on the relations between men and women, even though in opposite direction. While Siegele-Wenschkewitz believes that Bonhoeffer had a more open view of these relations before the sermon, which she considers to be an exposition of his theological interpretation of marriage (Cf. SIEGELE-WENSCHKEWITZ, “Die Ehre der Frau, dem Manne zu dienen”, pp. 122-124, 220), van Eyden understands this sermon as a summary of Bonhoeffer’s position on the relations between men and women until this time. He dates a change in Bonhoeffer’s opinion only in the meditation on the Moravian daily texts from 1944. (Cf. VAN EYDEN, “Dietrich Bonhoeffer’s Understanding of Male and Female”, p. 204)



other family members. She explains it as a consequence of his life situation.<sup>39</sup> Bonhoeffer's own family was characterized by care and even a year before he talked about "existence for others" of Christ and Christians, he describes his own family as always thinking of each other and acting for one another (*füreinander tun und denken*).<sup>40</sup> Bonhoeffer considers the family and family tradition to be important not only in itself but sees them rooted in society and leading towards it.<sup>41</sup> It is possible that Bonhoeffer did not have a reason to doubt the model of the patriarchal family as such, based on his experience in his own family, where he was happy.<sup>42</sup> In this sense Green's statement is also to be understood, when he argues that Bonhoeffer's family is also reflected in his usage of the family symbolism for the church.<sup>43</sup>

The question remains, if the failure of the church, next to Bonhoeffer's own life situation, did not play a role in his thematizing of family too. Already in 1933, he pointed out that in Germany it came to dissolution of all authorities, orders and givens, as a result of the bankruptcy of individualistically structured autonomous personality separated from reality, to which the church itself succumbed.<sup>44</sup> Later in the ethics manuscript, Bonhoeffer confesses for his church: the church did not say any guiding and helpful word in the situation in which the obliteration of all order in the relations

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<sup>39</sup> In the words of R. Bethge, Bonhoeffer wrote this sermon in the first weeks in prison, when he was even considering suicide, not thinking of a new order of marriage. Moreover, he was engaged only for a short time and a real contact with his fiancée had not even started yet. In addition, she believes, Bonhoeffer wanted to help his friend and her groom to gain a status in the family, where women had the main word. Later in 1944, after adjusting to his situation in prison, meeting friendly guards, keeping in touch with his fiancée, he wrote the mentioned meditation. Cf. BETHGE, "Bonhoeffer and the Role of Women", pp. 177-178; 183.

<sup>40</sup> BONHOEFFER, *Widerstand und Ergebung*, p. 72. Renate Bethge identifies many elements in the theology of her uncle originating in the house of his parents. See Renate BETHGE, "Bonhoeffer's Family and Its Significance For His Theology" in: L. RASMUSSEN – R. BETHGE, *Dietrich Bonhoeffer – His Significance for North Americans*, Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1990, pp. 14-30.

<sup>41</sup> Cf. BONHOEFFER, *Widerstand und Ergebung*, p. 322.

<sup>42</sup> „It is a great gift to be such a big family and so happy.“ Dietrich BONHOEFFER, *Gesammelte Schriften VI : Tagebücher - Briefe Dokumente: 1923 bis 1945*. BETHGE, E. (ed.) München : Chr. Kaiser, 1974, p. 298.

<sup>43</sup> Green even claims, that Bonhoeffer's „experience of his family was a formative contribution to [his] theology of sociality.“ GREEN, *Bonhoeffer*, p. 256, n. 34f.

<sup>44</sup> BONHOEFFER, *Gesammelte Schriften II*, p. 26, 31.

between men and women was taking place.<sup>45</sup> In the meditation for the baptism of Dietrich Bethge, Bonhoeffer describes his present as “times, in which children in arrogance broke away from their parents.”<sup>46</sup> Therefore, one can ask whether his lectures in Finkenwalde and the collective pastorate and the latter sermon from prison were not his attempts to fill this grey area in the church’s proclamation so that order and authority could be restored.

From this point of view, there is no chasm between the two Bonhoeffer’s understandings of marriage, that Renate Bethge suggests. For Bonhoeffer, the hierarchy of love in a family does not exclude mutual help and *Beistand*, just the opposite, it supports the idea that husband and wife are each other’s helpers in fulfilling their respective vocations. Therefore, it can be stated that his understanding of the relations between spouses was rather consistent during his life, instead of being contradictory. The tension arising between them arises from different emphasis corresponding to different contexts. Therefore, Bonhoeffer’s statements regarding family will be summarized instead of bringing them into opposition.

The term patriarchal family Bonhoeffer himself does not use in the texts that were discussed, even though they express a pre-given hierarchical structure leading *below from above*, which he ascribes to the family in some of his writings. This order is not autotelic. In marriage, two become one body whereby the distinctness of the spouses is kept. In order for this body to live fully, it is important that each of them fulfills the vocation to which s/he was called. Men and women have different roles and functions based on their sex, not based on their unique abilities, gifts or character. Unity is created by love, being the spring of mutual help and care, and eventually of subordination or of assuming responsibility for the household.

In Bonhoeffer’s treatments of the family, not only comparisons of earthly and divine families repeat themselves, but also the three basic concepts which form the essence of

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<sup>45</sup> “The church did not go beyond occasional moral outrage. It did not proclaim powerfully enough that our body belongs to the Body of Christ.” BONHOEFFER, *Ethik*, pp. 130-131, 354-355.

<sup>46</sup> BONHOEFFER, *Widerstand und Ergebung*, pp. 322-3.

his symbolism of the church as a patriarchal family, precisely unity, love and patriarchal structure. Thereby they fulfill the same function as in the church family: love is the bond of unity of the spouses in one body who are in a certain hierarchical relation of authority. The aim is mutual service in love.

### **2.3. Patriarchal Structure in the Church**

For Bonhoeffer, symbolism of the church as a patriarchal family does not mean formation of ontological distinction between men and women, or between adults and children, rather he wants to make a distinction between their different functions in the unity of love for the benefit of the whole of the church. He pays attention to mutual service maybe in such a way, as he got to know it from the mutual love of his family.

There are two functional understandings of the church as a patriarchal family in Bonhoeffer's theology. The first one concerns the functioning of the Body of Christ because it is governed by Christ as its Head. The second meaning lies in his understanding of vocation (*Beruf*) of the Body of Christ which is fulfilled in the life of community where every member fulfills his/her vocation within the given order. Every Christian has a specific place in the Christian community based on the gifts of the Holy Spirit. Thus each individual Christian has an important role to play in the whole body, nobody is superfluous, yet at the same time, to be within a given structure of authority means one did not necessarily choose one's role.

Bonhoeffer sees the basis for such an understanding primarily in 1 Corinthians 12 (also Romans 12), interpreting the role of particular members of the body of Christ in the sense of their function in and for it. In his reading, according to Apostle Paul the body of Christ means a corporate person (*Gesamtperson*), and speaking of the church as being Christ's body means "the body as a functional concept" that is governed by Christ. This body is held together by the rule of Christ just as a person governs his/her

body. However, his rule consists in a loving service, to which the Head leads its members as well.<sup>47</sup>

In this diversity directed for mutual service one becomes a priest to others within the church community. This is how the priesthood of all believers is understood, in which the existing dissimilarities of the different members of the church are confirmed. In it, differences between people “are for each other” as they live together, thus not existing alone, not being just for themselves. The unity of the Spirit together with the dissimilarity of the church members leads, “at once to the possible connection of the priesthood of all believers and of patriarchalism.” Bonhoeffer finds justification of Paul’s patriarchalism in the fact that the Christian idea of equality does not allow for egalitarianism, but only for the recognition of particular circumstances. Bonhoeffer claims, “this is established from the view leading below from above (*von oben nach unten*).”<sup>48</sup> In the first version of the dissertation he expressed it this way: “Egalitarianism interferes with God’s order (communist idea of equality).” The idea of equality before God means, “nobody may be prevented from access to God, but nothing is said about sociological, for example democratic form of the constitutional form of the church community. On the contrary, what was created as unequal has to be accepted as such. Thereby the idea of patriarchalism is justified and introduced.”<sup>49</sup>

According to Bonhoeffer, all human beings are equal in their sinfulness and their need of God’s grace. Their equality expresses the uniqueness of the Creator over against

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<sup>47</sup> Cf. BONHOEFFER, *Gesammelte Schriften V*, p. 251; BONHOEFFER, *Sanctorum Communio*, pp. 85-87. In this second passage Bonhoeffer following Seeberg, curiously distinguishes between the Spirit of Christ, who causes “the historical becoming of the life of the church as a whole,” and the Holy Spirit bringing “Christ to individuals,” using “the social nature of people.” (Ibid., p.86) Even though Green uses this text as one of the texts supporting the trinitarian character of this work of Bonhoeffer, he does not explicate this distinction of Spirits. Cf. Clifford J. GREEN, “Trinity and Christology in Bonhoeffer and Barth,” in: *Union Seminary Quarterly Review* 60, no. 1-2 (January 1, 2006), pp. 1-22. *ATLA Religion Database with ATLASerials, EBSCOhost* (accessed March 28, 2013)

<sup>48</sup> BONHOEFFER, *Sanctorum Communio*, pp. 138-139. Bonhoeffer wanted to distinguish his understating of equality from the socialist and idealist ideas (in order to know others one only needs to look into himself/herself). Even though Bonhoeffer sees a certain affinity of socialism to Christian idea of community in that “genuine socialism and individualism in a true sense belong together,” it is only in a Christian community, where community and the freedom of an individual person are balanced. Socialism is unchristian and violently equalizing all people. (Ibid., p. 293)

<sup>49</sup> BONHOEFFER, *Sanctorum Communio*, p. 273.

creation. Bonhoeffer does not regard equality (*Gleichheit*) as a general characteristic, but similarly to Arendt, claims it needs to refer to something. In this case, it is to God, to whom alone is this equality visible. To people it is only an object of faith, which holds on to the cross, on which Christ died for all people equally. Therefore, no person has a priority before God, neither Jew nor Greek, all are pulled into Christ existing as a church-community (*Christus als Gemeinde existierend*). The “Christian idea of equality does not say anything about interpersonal relations,” rather equality is “based in the unity of the Spirit of the church being beyond our perception, and there repeats itself merely the dialectical relation between plurality (*Vielheit*) and unity (*Einheit*).” Plurality is willed by God in creating a man and a woman.<sup>50</sup> Plurality exists in the form of visible dissimilarity (*Ungleichartigkeit*), consisting not only in social differences between people, but also in their being strong and weak, honorable and dishonorable, moral and immoral, pious and impious, religiously valuable and inferior.<sup>51</sup>

The Church’s diversity consisting in the plurality of its members and also its bond and unity are the most visible at the Lord’s Table in a city,<sup>52</sup> as a public expression of Christian obedience, where various people come to the altar, who naturally do not have anything in common outside of this space. On the contrary, at the altar there gather great contradictions right next to each other, consisting either in different status, views of war and it can be added, of their race, financial security, and gender. Bonhoeffer identifies this unity as being paradoxical because it does not rely on these persons, but only on Christ, who is in their midst.<sup>53</sup> How is mutual love and service manifested in this case?

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<sup>50</sup> Cf. BONHOEFFER, *Schöpfung und Fall*, p. 60. Even though Bonhoeffer talks about God creating his image in a human being (*im Menschen*), he does not mean a man as a single person: “The human being is not alone; s/he is in duality [of man and woman] and his creatureliness consists in this dependency on others.”

<sup>51</sup> BONHOEFFER, *Sanctorum Communio*, pp. 137-138.

<sup>52</sup> In the first version of his dissertation, under the heading *Zur Soziologie von Gottesdienst und Seelsorge* (*Concerning the sociology of worship and pastoral care*), Bonhoeffer even suggested a liturgical expression of the bond of the church community by holding hands when celebrating the Lord’s Supper in “more mature congregations.” (BONHOEFFER, *Sanctorum Communio*, p. 295f)

<sup>53</sup> Cf. BONHOEFFER, “Das Wesen der Kirche” (1932) in *Gesammelte Schriften V*, 255; BONHOEFFER, *Sanctorum Communio*, p. 167; 192.

What happens to the unity and diversity of equals after the Lord's Supper is over? Is it lived out in the church and its structures?

Whether Bonhoeffer was led by the conviction that dissimilarities between people were created and as such are to be accepted, or by Troeltsch's analysis of equality and Christian patriarchalism<sup>54</sup> or eventually by his "implicit conservatism,"<sup>55</sup> patriarchal church structures serve as a form or instrument and as a catalyst of mutual service of distinct church members at the same time living for others within the church united by the Spirit. Equality of the members of the church remains invisible to human eyes and is termed as formal. The opposite, namely visible equality, Bonhoeffer identifies with egalitarianism that levels out all concrete dissimilarities, as is the case in realizations of the ideas of socialism and idealism.

While in *Sanctorum Communio* Bonhoeffer expressed the connection between equality and diversity with the concept of patriarchalism, in *Ethik*, as was already discussed, the distinctness receives a concrete place in the structure of the mandates *from above* (as was insinuated already in his dissertation in talking about „view from above towards below“), given in advance. Barth has reservations against "the one-sided analysis" of the mandates in Bonhoeffer, including "the authority of some over others," where any idea of freedom of those below over against those above is absent. In reply to such objections Moltmann reminds us, that Bonhoeffer "is not talking of a purely external authority derived from an official position, but an authority which is existential

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<sup>54</sup> BONHOEFFER, *Sanctorum Communio*, pp. 138-139. In his reflections on patriarchalism and equality, Bonhoeffer draws on Troeltsch, who introduced the concept of *Christian patriarchalism*. It is "based on the religious recognition and overcoming of the earthly inequality, which was prepared in the late Judaism, but receives a specific color through [...] the connection of all in the love of Christ." The main idea consists in accepting the given inequalities and in their cultivation for ethical values of mutual personal relations by those who are superior as well as from those subordinated. What puts them all on one level in Troeltsch's view, is service to God in the entrusted office within the given hierarchy." Cf. Ernst TROELTSCH, *Die Soziallehren der christlichen Kirchen und Gruppen* 3. Neudr. d. Ausg. Tübingen 1922. Scientia Verlag : Aalen, 1977, pp. 67-68.

<sup>55</sup> Peters points out that it is due precisely to his implicit conservatism that Bonhoeffer brings "his alternative to the national church and to the free churches into the structural proximity to patriarchalism." T. R. PETERS, *Die Präsenz des Politischen in der Theologie Dietrich Bonhoeffers: Eine historische Untersuchung in systematischer Absicht in Gesellschaft und Theologie*, München; Mainz: Chr. Kaiser – Grunewald Verlag, 1976, pp. 27-28.

and personal, resting upon self-sacrifice and vicarious action for others.” Moltmann is certainly right, when he puts the relations between above and below into the broader context of Bonhoeffer’s theology of vicarious acting. He also draws on Bonhoeffer’s letter from prison from January 23<sup>rd</sup> 1944, according to which surrounding and accompanying the obedience to the four mandates, there is a sphere of freedom, where Christians are led by the spirit of sonship. Moltmann asserts, “this view of freedom is part and parcel of the doctrine of obedience and the mandates.” He thinks Bonhoeffer, with the help of the mandates, wants to view life as a whole, which we can live fully, engaged in the world with having in mind Christ’s death and resurrection.”<sup>56</sup>

Indeed, in the mentioned letter Bonhoeffer writes about the free space of freedom in the sense of freedom of choice, not of obedience to a command coming from *above*. Belonging to this space, culture, friendship, education, or play are not parts of the mandates, but are under the reign of *necessitas of freedom*.<sup>57</sup> Nevertheless, this space does not change anything about the fact that the mandates, namely family, church, work and government all fall within the sphere of given relations of authority and obedience, into the sphere which requires one’s undivided obedience and sacrifices. Yet, Bonhoeffer did not envision the space of the mandates as a constant questioning of one’s actions or motives since that causes paralysis and the inability to make a decision and to act. The structure of the mandates created a kind of limit around human action regarding the particular areas of life in order that people can act freely within the space thus created.<sup>58</sup> However, a given structure of authority—even though it is accepted freely—makes the impression that unique loving acting of the members of the churchly patriarchal family can be manifested only to the extent in which it will fulfill the

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<sup>56</sup> Jürgen MOLTSMANN, “The Lordship of Christ and Human Society”, in: J. MOLTSMANN – J. WEISSBACH, *Two Studies in the Theology of Bonhoeffer*, Scribner: New York, 1967, pp. 86-93. The quotation of Barth comes from the *Church Dogmatics III/4*. (Ibid., p. 93) Barth even raises the question: „In Bonhoeffer’s doctrine of the mandates, is there not just a suggestion of North German patriarchalism?“ *Church Dogmatics III/4* (Ibid., p. 85)

<sup>57</sup> Cf. BONHOEFFER, *Widerstand und Ergebung*, pp. 216-217.

<sup>58</sup> Cf. BONHOEFFER, *Ethik*, pp. 386-390. His idea of the mandates and God’s commandment expressed through them remind of Arendt’s words regarding God’s commandments as given from above, from outside of the human relations themselves enabling their lives.

corresponding function of the particular member of the church's family and that within the hierarchy *from above*.

### **3. Metaphor of a Patriarchal Family as a Problem**

Bonhoeffer's intention of using the symbolism of the church as a patriarchal family was to grasp and express three main aspects of church community, namely unity, mutual love and ministry of its members in obedience. If anyone from these aspects were left out of consideration of the church, this would lose its character as a Christian community. However, this poses a problem, since love and mutual service are conditioned by inequality. Love is not called to make equality before God visible among people, but it is to be confirmed.

Those features of this symbolism, which express relations of love, care, nurture and hospitality appear rather attractive, as they do not evoke these problematic contours. God's parenthood gives all God's children the gift of life, perceives each one of them equally lovingly sacrificing the life of the Son for all of them to the same extent. The church is a place where a human being is born as a child of God, where Christians are carried, loved, and sustained by the Word of God and community. Christians are at home already on this earth, where they are to live fully in the church, which is a part of this world while at the same time pointing to its fulfillment and perfection. God's children do not need to be with one foot on earth and the other in heaven.<sup>59</sup> God's fatherhood and motherhood take the absolute authority from the hands of the majordomos of God's house. Thus, a space emerges for its specific historical form, which does not need to remain conserved as the only right one or directly divine, enabling its change.

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<sup>59</sup> Cf. R.-A. VON BISMARCK – U.KABITZ, eds., *Brautbriefe Zelle 92: Dietrich Bonhoeffer Maria von Wedemeyer 1943-1945*, 6. Auflage, München: C.H. Beck, 2010, p. 38.



However, the image of the family receives with the adjective patriarchal a specific hierarchical dimension. Bonhoeffer's choice of the metaphor is closely connected with his experience from his own family, with his theological understanding of the family and finally, with his perception of God. There are traces of this family metaphor also in his theology of the mandates ordered within a patriarchal view of authority. An individual is set into clear given hierarchical structures of relations of authority and obedience. Every person has her/his place and even though fully respected, not equally initiating and participating in action. Only some have an authority while others fulfill in obedience what they are told, even though all involved are to live for others actively accepting and fulfilling their roles in responsibility and free acceptance. The commandment of love is realized within human relations and structures of the church only under the condition of keeping not only human distinctness but also social inequalities.

The church as a patriarchal family attempts to secure the existence of differences within human plurality, which are indispensable for fulfilling specific functions within the church's body for mutual service. However, this metaphor insinuates that Bonhoeffer is concerned primarily for the unity of the church, which can lead to the "sacrificing" of individual members, either in their acting, convictions, experiences and even conscience even though there is reason to believe that Bonhoeffer challenged this model later, mainly in prison.

At the same time, comparing church to a patriarchal family implies an image of God as a family patriarch. It suggests that God keeps the unity of his household and realizes his will through given hierarchical relations. Is this the same God, who let the world push him on the cross? Is this the one who did not insist on his absolute superiority and did not use it to create a community of his children who would love and obey him? Is

this the God who did not come into the world through the already existing structures of religious or worldly authority, but from outside of them?<sup>60</sup>

Patriarchalism, which Bonhoeffer thought necessary for the realization of God's will in the church while simultaneously holding together the mutual community of its members, corresponds to the "primacy of the collective,"<sup>61</sup> that Kodalle identifies in Bonhoeffer. That is despite the fact that Bonhoeffer dissociates himself from the image of the church as an organism, since it puts the whole above its individual members.<sup>62</sup> Moreover, Bonhoeffer is aware that whatever we believe of *sanctorum communio* will get transformed into the structure of the visible church community,<sup>63</sup> as he portrayed in the example of the image of the church as an organism. Nevertheless, in the same way, his own metaphor of the patriarchal family can be projected into the church's reality restricting diversity and uniqueness of its members.

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<sup>60</sup> Even though I am aware of such a possibility, here I do not explore a relation between an image of a patriarchal F/father with "images of a punitive God, thus inhibiting Christian responsibility to work against those structures that engender meaningless suffering." I agree with Jensen that Bonhoeffer's emphasis on the cross and suffering in a life for others "proved decidedly subversive: Following the Crucified One, Christians were thrown into solidarity with those Jews whom the State was annihilating." Jensen talks about "vulnerable discipleship" corresponding to the vulnerability of the cross "for the sake of God's relationship with the world and humans' relationships with each other." However, punitive accents on the cross are present in Bonhoeffer's theology (as will be mentioned in the following chapter) and I think this topic requires a separate treatment. (David H. JENSEN, *Religionless Christianity and Vulnerable Discipleship: the interfaith promise of Bonhoeffer's theology*, in: *Journal of Ecumenical Studies* 38, no. 2/3, (March 1, 2001), p. 161-162.) Nevertheless, that does not answer the question of the importance patriarchal structures have for Bonhoeffer. Thatcher claims that familial relations "derived from God's incomparable fatherhood [solidify] the asymmetry on both sides of the relation." He argues for an alternative to, in this case, Barth's use of *analogia relationis* in establishing familial authority, in proposing a theological understanding of family that is grounded in the Trinity. (Cf. Adrian THATCHER, *Theology and Families*, Oxford; Malden, Mass: Blackwell Publishing, 2007, pp.90-92)

<sup>61</sup> K.-M. KODALLE, *Dietrich Bonhoeffer. Zur Kritik seiner Theologie*, Gütersloh : Gütersloher Verlagshaus – Haus Mohn, 1991, pp. 35-37. According to Bonhoeffer, there is also a difference between the suffering of the church and the suffering of one of her servants. Cf. BONHOEFFER, *Widerstand und Ergebung*, p. 260.

<sup>62</sup> Cf. BONHOEFFER, *Sanctorum Communio*, p. 87.

<sup>63</sup> Bonhoeffer even claim, that the concept of organism has a bad impact on the social structures, when applied also in other than theological sphere, such as the field of biology or the philosophy of the state. The second reason for the impropriety of the concept of organism is that it fails to characterize the independence of Christ as the Lord from the church. Cf. BONHOEFFER, *Gesammelte Schriften V*, p. 251.

#### **4. Summary: Bonhoeffer in Conversation with Arendt on Family Symbolism**

Bonhoeffer's comparison of the church's sociological structure to that of a patriarchal family conveys that the life of the church-community is dependent on the diversity of its church members, who at the same time need to be structured in an obedient service of love. Now, I will put his thoughts on the familial metaphor on the church alongside Arendt's ideas on the same subject. This perspective will bring out those elements of the church's existence that both thinkers find crucial for their understanding of the church, but which they translate differently: love, inequality and obedience.

Bonhoeffer and Arendt explicate church's family metaphor differently. While Bonhoeffer's metaphor of a patriarchal family is meant to communicate the way human plurality and diversity are united in mutual service of love in Christian community, for Arendt it conveys church's apolitical and unworldly character. Nevertheless, the specific attributes of family— love, inequality, and obedience—which Arendt finds problematic when employed in public, comprising also the Christian church, and political spheres, Bonhoeffer identifies as the reasons for applying a family metaphor on the church.

Bonhoeffer and Arendt treat equality differently even though they agree that it is not given in and of itself, but always needs to refer to something specific (such as law, God, sin). People are not born equal; rather they are characterized by inequalities and differences.

Bonhoeffer attempts to keep their legitimacy within human community and its model, the church. Becoming God's children does not make people the same, replaceable by anybody else. Quite the opposite, human persons retain their uniqueness. Its place is in the mutual service within a church community. The church is hospitable equally to all human beings, because it is the will of God that this community is the visible presence of Christ who loves and died for all people equally.

However, unlike Arendt, for Bonhoeffer equality of all human beings in sin before God is invisible to their eyes, it is only an object of faith. The life of the church is not to visibly express this ontological equality, but to keep the existing differences. Visible equality threatens the existence of diversity, making out of the church an idealistic, socialist, or egalitarian community. Bonhoeffer is not able to hold together church's unity and visibly equal sinners. Therefore, equality remains a "spiritual" not a worldly reality. Is this not a pietistic concept of the church, in spite of Bonhoeffer's criticism of the notion of the invisible church? Is it not a remainder of the two-sphere thinking, he so strictly criticized?

Arendt does not propose equalization of people in all spheres of life. In fact, it would be destructive of them (e.g. family, education, society, administration). Arendt holds that there is a space created by human persons in public, where they equalize one another. Only there human action is enabled in both of its stages—as an initiative and its continuance through participation. Equality must be visible. Still it does not turn to be identical to sameness and implies neither violence nor individualism, which both Bonhoeffer and Arendt are fighting. Instead, it allows differences of perspectives to be expressed in speech and materialized in deeds.

Obedience limits actors and divides them into those who initiate action and those who only can or even must participate in it. In that way freedom—a human capacity to begin and to participate in common acting—is limited. Therefore, we need to ask, if Bonhoeffer's symbolism of the church as a patriarchal family, in spite of its attempts to express unity of love in diversity, does not contribute to confining his understanding of love as a life for others. Therefore, the next chapter explores Bonhoeffer's theology of Christian action understood in terms of living for others.

Since Bonhoeffer's symbolism of the church as a patriarchal family focuses on structuring acting of distinct actors (of which problematic aspects were established), we need to go beyond this form and focus on his theology of Christian acting as such. With that aim, the following questions will be raised: what moves Christians to act? Does

such acting necessarily entail fatherly and obedient approach of a dependant within and outside of the church? How is Christian acting interconnected with Christian freedom and equality? Since Christian acting is to find its fullest expression in the church, is there a connection between an understanding of Christian acting and of the church?

## **CHAPTER THREE:**

# **POSSIBILITIES OF CHRISTIAN ACTING IN BONHOEFFER'S THEOLOGY**

“Jesus ‘is only for others’ [...] Our relationship to God is a new life in ‘being-for-others’ in the participation on the being of Jesus. [...] The church exists only as long as it exists for others.”  
BONHOEFFER, *Widerstand und Ergebung*, pp. 414-416.

Bonhoeffer's theology of Christian acting is shaped by his notion of 'being for others' formulated also as living or existing for others. Life for others, of which Christ is an example, is the principle of Christian love, communal relation and obedience in mutual service. This life is to be embodied by Christ existing as a church-community that Bonhoeffer compares to a patriarchal family. Bonhoeffer understands Christian action as being vicarious and responsible. In this chapter, the inter-personal dimensions of such an acting will be researched.

First, Bonhoeffer's understanding of Christian acting will be identified. Then the direction of acting in different connotations will be traced: within the church itself, in the world and, finally, regarding the role of the other in acting. In each of the parts, the focus will be on the role of interaction between different persons. Next, several examples from Bonhoeffer's own participation in common action will be outlined and after that several reasons for its absence in Bonhoeffer's theology will be explored.

## 1. Christian Acting

Bonhoeffer develops his concept of action centered on the person of Jesus Christ, the man for others. As the New Adam he broke the egocentric bondage of the old humanity and brought it into communion with its Creator<sup>1</sup> by standing in the place of the old humanity and acting on its behalf, taking its sin, guilt and evil upon himself. He selflessly loved the other instead of himself. This work of Christ Bonhoeffer characterizes as responsible vicarious representative action (*verantwortliches stellvertretendes Handeln*).

Jesus died on the cross for the sins of humankind and accepted punishment for them. The punitive character of the cross of Jesus is important for Bonhoeffer, since it means that God takes human beings seriously as “personal beings” (*Personhaftigkeit des Menschen*) and in their guilt. Such vicarious representative love conquers sin, enables its forgiveness and thus also creation of a new person and therefore, of a new community. An ethical person (later in *Ethik* named as one of incapacitations for just acting) attempts to justify himself/herself even before God. However, that precisely expresses the need for a vicarious representative action, one that is “possible only so long as it is based on an offer by God.” This means it is in force only in Christ and his church-community. “*It is not an ethical possibility or standard, but solely the reality of the divine love of the church-community. [...] Through the Christian principle of vicarious representative action the new humanity is made whole and sustained.*”<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Cf. BONHOEFFER, *Sanctorum Communio*, pp.146-147.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., pp. 99-100 (emphasis original). STĂNILOAE approvingly quotes the Catholic theologian Thüsing who completed Bonhoeffer’s formula in this way: “Jesus is the man for others because He is the man for God.” STĂNILOAE believes that this formula overcomes the understanding of the death of Jesus according to the theory of satisfaction and better expresses the unity of the life and work of Christ: “Jesus’ entire existence before death, during death, and after His Resurrection reflects the communication of God’s complete love toward us, but also our love toward God, so that our love toward God, as a sign of salvation started within us by God’s love, may sprout and develop under the pouring out of His divine love, manifested toward us, and under the power of His human love, manifested toward God.” Dumitru STĂNILOAE, *The Experience of God: Orthodox Dogmatic Theology vol.3: The Person of Jesus Christ as God and Savior*, Holy Cross Orthodox Press: Brookline, Massachusetts, 2011, p. 17. (STĂNILOAE refers to Karl Rahner and Wilhelm Thüsing, *Christologie*, p.130)

This theological understanding of vicarious representative action forms the basis for its ethical inter-personal concept. It describes “voluntary taking upon oneself of evil on/in the place of another person.”<sup>3</sup> It is a heroic courageous act when it is done fully on behalf of the other. Even though Bonhoeffer doubts such a deed is frequent, “it is intended in every genuine deed of love.”<sup>4</sup> Love and life for others are synonymous.<sup>5</sup>

In addition, living for others corresponds to freedom. Just as creatureliness does not exist as an individual’s property, the same is true of human freedom, since “only in relation to the other I am free.” This relationality is not vague in Bonhoeffer, but is made specific reflecting *analogia relationis* between the Creator and human beings. Their freedom is a response to the relation of God towards them. God “binds his freedom to the people, giving himself, who does not have to be thought as being alone, inasmuch as “he is the God, who testifies his “being for human beings” in Christ.”<sup>6</sup>

It is in the encounter with Christ that human acting is radically changed from being turned in upon the self to freedom to live for others. It is the other and his/her specific reality to which Christian acting needs to respond and correspond.<sup>7</sup> Such a life is responsible, that is, lived “in a response to the life of Jesus Christ.” According to the

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<sup>3</sup> BONHOEFFER, *Sanctorum Communio*, p. 99, n. 17. In addition, Bonhoeffer thinks of sin not only evil in this connection: “to take the consequences of sin upon oneself is conceivable in the framework of ethical behavior in civic life.” (Ibid., p. 155)

<sup>4</sup> BONHOEFFER, *Sanctorum Communio*, pp. 121-122.

<sup>5</sup> Bonhoeffer understands love as a “social affiliation.” (BONHOEFFER, *Sanctorum Communio*, p.106) At the same time, as he formulated it later, responsibility “as vicarious life and action is basically a relationship from person to person.” He developed this concept in both meanings in his others works, e.g. Dietrich BONHOEFFER, *Ethik*, pp. 256-259; BONHOEFFER, *Nachfolge*, pp. 143-144.

<sup>6</sup> Bonhoeffer talks about *analogia relationis* between God and human beings created in God’s image: “*Analogia relationis* is therefore from God himself established relation and only in this set relation by God *analogia*. Relation from creature to creature is a relation divinely constituted, as it exists in freedom and freedom comes from God.” Human beings differ from other creation precisely in the fact that in their creation, “God himself enters the creation and so creates freedom.” The Holy Spirit worships the Creator within the human creature and in this sense, according to Bonhoeffer, the assertion of the theologians of the Lutheran Orthodoxy about “indwelling of the Trinity in Adam” are to be understood. (BONHOEFFER, *Schöpfung und Fall*, pp. 59-61) Bonhoeffer’s notion of *analogia relationis* clearly states that “the divine image is not an innate potential or possibility or structure of human existence, but a constitutive relationship in which God sets us, given *through* the other.” (Barry HARVEY, “Accounting for Difference: Dietrich Bonhoeffer’s Contribution to a Theological Critique of Culture”, in: K. B. Nielsen – U. Nissen/Chr. Tietz, eds., *Mysteries in the Theology of Dietrich Bonhoeffer: A Copenhagen Bonhoeffer Symposium*, Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2007, p.104)

<sup>7</sup> Cf. BONHOEFFER, *Schöpfung und Fall*, pp. 59-60.



concept of vicarious action, a responsible person “stands *simultaneously* for Christ in front of the people and for the people before Christ.”<sup>8</sup> Thus vicarious representative action is the principle of Christian acting.

We can summarize that for Bonhoeffer Christian acting is to be formed according to Christ’s *Stellvertretung* and it is the word “for” that is the most characteristic of it. Vicarious living and acting are to be for others, on their behalf. The clear direction of acting is thus given, a person acts for another instead for himself or herself.

How this “for” of Christian acting is realized within the Christian community itself and later how Christians and the church are to act within and for the world will be explored further. The focus will be on how actors are interconnected in their acting among each other and with the other.

## **2. Acting in the Church**

According to Bonhoeffer, every Christian and the church as a whole is called to responsible action for others. This new life arises and is nurtured only in a Christian community, because in it there is Christ. It is only in and through the Incarnate One we get to know love and God. This is where we receive and learn to give God’s love in Christ through others. It is here where we meet the Other in an authentic way.<sup>9</sup> In fact, the church is to be the realization of Christ’s *Stellvertretung* in concrete relationships. They are characterized as two “concrete acts” in which the calling to act for others is qualified with the emphasis on mutuality: being for-one-another (*Füreinander*) and being with-one-another (*Miteinander*).

The structure of *Miteinander* describes the unity and oneness of Christ’s congregation (*Gemeinde*) with its individual members: Where there is one of its

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<sup>8</sup> BONHOEFFER, *Ethik*, pp.254-255.

<sup>9</sup> Cf. Dietrich BONHOEFFER, *Akt und Sein*, p. 111.

members, there is the whole body of Christ. Bonhoeffer drawing on Luther, states that the congregation is with every member. It carries the burdens and sins of all its individuals, gives them strength, faith. Where the individual stands entirely alone, he/she is accepted by Christ and the congregation. When standing before God as an individual, all stand for him/her before God.

*Füreinander* is to be actualized in deeds of love, which Bonhoeffer describes as self-denying active work for the neighbor, intercessory prayer, mutual administering of the forgiveness of sins, confession and *Seelsorge*. According to Bonhoeffer, the church is not built on natural relations between members, but is simply given in Christ and the church's structure in his *Stellvertretung*. This church is to be realized in sacrificing of the members for one another, in visible deeds. This sacrifice concerns one's goods, honor, property, even one's life. The strong are to serve to benefit others, especially the weak.<sup>10</sup> Such action actualizes the connection with the Body of Christ and thus with Christ himself.<sup>11</sup>

Of these two aspects of being for others, only the for-each-other of members is active, as realization of the static being with-one-another between congregation and its member. Therefore, the direction of action does not change. It remains one "for" another. Therefore we can say, in his ecclesiology Bonhoeffer did not introduce a concept of individual Christians acting with-one-another.

From the idea of Christ's *Stellvertretung* grows not only Bonhoeffer's understanding of Christian acting, the structure of the church but also the structure of the relationship between the church and the world. In the next part we will search for other qualifications of the being for others in Bonhoeffer's theology of acting in and for the world.

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<sup>10</sup> Cf. BONHOEFFER, *Sanctorum Communio*, pp. 117-128; BONHOEFFER, *Gesammelte Schriften V*, pp. 262-269.

<sup>11</sup> Cf. BONHOEFFER, *Gesammelte Schriften II*, pp. 331-332.

### 3. Acting for Others Outside of the Church

Only in his letters from prison Bonhoeffer made an explicit connection between the responsible vicarious representative action of Christ and the calling of the church (even though this idea was present already in his doctoral thesis and developed in his later writings<sup>12</sup>): “Jesus ‘is only for others’ [...] Our relationship to God is a new life in ‘being-for-others’ in the participation on the being of Jesus. The church exists only as long as it exists for others [...] The church has to tell people of all vocations what a life with Christ is and what it means ‘to be there for others’”<sup>13</sup>

Bonhoeffer distinguishes the calling of individual Christians and of the church in its scope and authority.<sup>14</sup> In their content they are identical. To live for others means to stand, pray and suffer for the other, who is a concrete neighbor in the case of an individual Christian. For the church it is the nation, people, or the world.<sup>15</sup> The church is one of the mandates within which a Christian is to be obedient,<sup>16</sup> unless that would mean disobedience to the call of Christ. The church is represented and led by its

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<sup>12</sup> For example, in Bonhoeffer’s *Akt und Sein* we see a clear development in this direction: Christian church is a visible community. Its “word is preaching and sacrament” its action is believing and loving. The being of revelation, ‘Christ existing as church-community,’ has to be thought of in this concreteness. There is no God who ‘is there’. God ‘is’ in the relation of persons, and being is God’s being persons.” BONHOEFFER, *Akt und Sein*, p. 112. In the lectures on Christology Bonhoeffer developed Luther’s concept of *Christus pro me*, which was later reflected in Bonhoeffer’s concept of church’s being for others. Cf. Dietrich BONHOEFFER, “Vorlesung “Christologie”, in: *Berlin 1932-1933*, in: C. NICOLAISEN – E.-A. SCHARFFENORTH, eds., *Dietrich Bonhoeffer Werke Bd. 12*, Chr. Kaiser – Gütersloher Verlagshaus: Gütersloh, 1997, pp. 277-348.

<sup>13</sup> BONHOEFFER, *Widerstand und Ergebung*, pp. 414-416. With the phrase “church for others” Bonhoeffer became “the creator of a church ideal” (*Kirchenideal*). “Dass er wirkungsgeschichtlich hierzu wurde, lässt sich schwer bestreiten.” (Sabine BOBERT-STÜTZEL, “‘Kirche für andere’ oder ‘Spielraum der Freiheit’? Kritische Grundsatzüberlegungen zu einem Leitbild von missionarisch-diakonischem Gemeindeaufbau“, in: *Evangelische Theologie* 55 (1995) Heft 6, p. 534f)

<sup>14</sup> For Bonhoeffer, it is impossible to divide a Christian and the church in their being, as we could see earlier in the structure of *Miteinander* and *Füreinander*. We also need to keep in mind, that for him it is necessary to be a part of a local Christian community otherwise it is difficult to talk about a believer at all.

<sup>15</sup> BONHOEFFER, *Nachfolge*, p. 84.

<sup>16</sup> The space of the mandates is surrounded by the sphere of freedom, but this concerns those areas of life not included in the mandates, such as friendship, play, education and art. Cf. BONHOEFFER, *Widerstand und Ergebung*, pp. 216-217.

structures, such as a bishop, a synod or a church council.<sup>17</sup> The church office speaks from the divine authority, an individual from his/her own authority and responsibility. In the state of *necessita* each one is facing a direct call from God to act requiring courage and self-sacrifice.<sup>18</sup>

The form of this acting for others in the world will be traced, omitting spiritual practices such as prayer or *Seelsorge*, focusing on self-denying deeds of love for the neighbor in the social and political form. The aim is to discern the interaction between actors themselves and with the other that underlies Bonhoeffer's understanding of acting for others.

For Bonhoeffer, the love of God for the world and therefore acting for others "encompasses also political action."<sup>19</sup> The church is to enter the relations with the state with words and deeds in preaching, speaking up and acting. Bonhoeffer gradually developed four ways in which the church is to live out its being for others in its relations with the state, corresponding to escalating injustice from the side of the state.<sup>20</sup>

The church is to preach "indirectly political word" in proclaiming Christ, who is the Lord of the world. Thus it makes everything else, including political institutions, penultimate and therefore having only derivative authority from Christ.

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<sup>17</sup> Bonhoeffer states: "A direct political action of the church is always to be decided by the „evangelical council" and it cannot be construed casuistically." (BONHOEFFER, *Gesammelte Schriften II*, p. 49.)

<sup>18</sup> For Bonhoeffer, responsibility without action is unthinkable because acting is a response to the call from God to an "obedient and responsible deed." The norm of such an action is the commandment of love, which requires one to sacrifice everything and follow Christ. God requires "a responsible deed of a free venture of faith," that breaks through one's civic or familial responsibilities to the service to the neighbor. (Cf. BONHOEFFER, *Widerstand und Ergebung*, pp. 14-18; BONHOEFFER, *Ethik*, p. 285) What is required is *Wagnis*, a courageous deed that leaps over doubts and countless possibilities. (Cf. BONHOEFFER, *Sanctorum Communio*, p. 99.; BONHOEFFER, *Ethik*, p. 286.)

<sup>19</sup> BONHOEFFER, *Ethik*, 244. Bonhoeffer planned to write a passage in Ethics on political ethics, but he never did. (Cf. *Ibid.*, 234, n.94)

<sup>20</sup> In the following I draw on an article by Tietz. I find it helpful in providing a concise and accurate summary of Bonhoeffer's views on the relations between church and the political sphere. It is noteworthy she does not find any contradictions in Bonhoeffer's views throughout the years 1933-1943 from where the Bonhoeffer's works come she refers to: *Kirche vor der Judenfrage*, *Betheler Bekenntnis*, *Was Ist die Kirche?*, *Protestantismus ohne Reformation*, *Staat und Kirche* and *Ethik*. (Cf. Christiane TIETZ, "The church is the limit of politics: Bonhoeffer on the political task of the church", in: *Union Seminary Quarterly Review* 60 (1-2/2006), pp. 23-36)

The second word is “directly critical” meaning a concrete God’s command into the specific reality. The role given to the state by God is to create justice and order. A directly critical word is to be heard when that is not the case.

The third way of the church dealing with the state as Tietz summarizes it is “directly constructive word.” For Bonhoeffer, this is diakonia, because it is a human, not a divine word. The church can adopt a position of Christian experts in a certain area and make positive recommendations to the creation of new orders.<sup>21</sup>

The fourth task of the church is “resistance in responsibility.” According to Bonhoeffer, the church, as well as individual Christians, is to stand in the place of the suffering neighbor and risk all they have.<sup>22</sup> Bonhoeffer makes clear that action for others brings suffering on the actors. He calls for *Mitleiden*, suffering with others. This does not mean anything else, than just another call to act for others, to a “responsible deed,” especially when confronted with suffering of others.<sup>23</sup>

These ways of the church are the duty of the preaching office which, according to Bonhoeffer’s understanding of the church’s office, fulfills a church synod or council. A representative body would follow certain procedures and deliberations before taking a position. This process itself can be important for the wording of the “directly critical” word. That it takes creativity and courage we can read in the church’s confession of guilt.<sup>24</sup> However, Bonhoeffer does not elaborate on this process as such. There is no discussion on how Christians in church offices act together in such cases, no word on how cooperation and mutual dialogue between different Christians is an important part

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<sup>21</sup> Cf. BONHOEFFER, *Ethik*, 363-364.

<sup>22</sup> Tietz in the mentioned article discusses this task as a role of an individual Christian not also that of the church, even though in *Kirche vor der Judenfrage* Bonhoeffer stated: the church is “not only to bandage the victims under the wheel” of the state machinery but also “to jam a spoke in the wheel itself.” This is possible only after the church recognizes the state does not provide justice and order, which are aimed towards preservation of God’s world towards the coming of Christ. (BONHOEFFER, *Gesammelte Schriften II*, p. 48).

<sup>23</sup> BONHOEFFER, *Widerstand und Ergebung*, pp. 23-24.

<sup>24</sup> Cf. BONHOEFFER, *Ethik*, pp. 128-136.

of Christian calling as a prerequisite of the church's acting for the world and thus, its witness.

Preparing the way for the Word includes not only inner deeds of repentance, but also “forming action visible to the greatest extent” (*gestaltendes Handeln in sichtbar größtem Ausmaß*). Under such deeds he understands not only feeding the hungry, giving shelter to the homeless, company for the lonely, but also giving freedom to the slave, justice to the deprived of their rights and uplifting those humiliated and degraded.<sup>25</sup>

This is one of the fields of work for civic associations. Bonhoeffer was aware of their activities and importance. In 1933 he asserts, making a distinction between the role of the church in judging state's decisions and moralizing or humanitarianism saying, “It is not the place for the church to remind the state of the moral side of its decisions, or their immorality. It is rather the task of humanitarian societies and individual Christians aware of their calling. [...] Every strong state needs such associations and such individual personages and therefore is to care of them in a special way.”<sup>26</sup> Later in 1939 in his essay *Protestantismus ohne Reformation*, Bonhoeffer criticizes the American Christianity for not making the necessary distinction between the offices of the church and state as, he believes, was clarified by the Reformation. He observes that the churches in America do not influence the state through congregations and preaching of the Word of God, but by way of various voluntary non-denominational Christian associations.<sup>27</sup>

Bonhoeffer does not discuss civic associations further. It seems he simply takes them for granted. He does not include them in his theology of Christian acting as possible places for the calling initiated by the Spirit. Nor does he recognize them as places where a true exchange of views, deliberation and common acting could be taking place under the guidance of the Spirit.

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<sup>25</sup> BONHOEFFER, *Ethik*, pp. 152-157.

<sup>26</sup> BONHOEFFER, *Gesammelte Schriften II*, p. 45.

<sup>27</sup> Dietrich BONHOEFFER, *Gesammelte Schriften I*, pp. 345-346.

He concentrates on an individual human being and his/her calling to act on behalf of others in a response to the love of God in Christ within his/her specific vocation. It is an individual, who is hit by the Spirit as the Word and who experiences the appropriation of the work of Christ.<sup>28</sup> The Spirit also interconnects these individuals in their particular callings thus creating the life of the Body. However, the Spirit does not call Christians to common acting, as is the case of common praying or common living as in Finkenwalde. There is no call to intrinsically acting together with others on something recognized as a common goal and common calling within a specific time and place.

So far, we have come to see that the acting of individual Christians or of the church is directed towards others, for them, on their behalf. Bonhoeffer views the acting of the church as being a matter of its governing bodies or responsible individuals. There is no direct reflection of the need of Christians to cooperate. Christian actors themselves do not seem to depend on each other in a concrete action. They are not called to act together with others for others. Rather, they are summoned to act for others each on their own.

#### **4. The Other**

Yet we can ask: What about the other for whom Christians are called to act? The other for Bonhoeffer represents a concrete neighbor. It is a brother or sister in Christ, an enemy, family member, or boss. It is the one whom I am called to love and to live for. Does this other remain a receiver of love and vicarious action, or is s/he seen also as a co-actor in Bonhoeffer's theology?

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<sup>28</sup> BONHOEFFER, *Gesammelte Schriften V*, p. 252. Bonhoeffer is aware, that in the very fact lies the danger of individualization of Christianity.

#### 4.1. A “General” Other

We meet others through Christ. Bonhoeffer lays a great emphasis on the change of perspective on others this encounter catalyzes. The others “become Christ for us in their demand and promise.”<sup>29</sup> Bonhoeffer does not explicate an active role of the other in this transformation. The driving force is the presence of Christ and what matters is the changed “I”, the “I’s” heart that is turned out of itself and loves the other regardless. The “I” does not need to hear the other speak; it is called to love him/her no matter what.

Does the loving “I” expect anything from the other? Bonhoeffer gives both positive and negative answer. In *Sanctorum Communio* he asserts that “a will for a concrete other lies in intentional essence of love, a will for building a community (*Gemeinschaft*) that means, for prompting requited love.”<sup>30</sup> This is qualified as an unintentional goal, since “even though love does not aim at love in return, it implicitly aspires to it.” He differentiates between *agape*, understood as “the love of God revealed in Christ,” and *eros* characterized as “our self-love.” God’s community of love is based on Christian love characterized as a complete self-surrender to the other.<sup>31</sup> In *Gemeinsames Leben*, Bonhoeffer continues to keep this distinction in terms of spiritual and emotional love and based on it formulates contrasting concepts of spiritual and emotional community. *Agape* is “the love of Christian service [which] lives in the spiritual community,” while *eros* “burns in the self-centered community.” Spiritual love is there to serve. Emotional love desires other persons, their company. It wants them to return its love. It does not

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<sup>29</sup> BONHOEFFER, *Act and Being*, p, 114.

<sup>30</sup> BONHOEFFER, *Sanctorum Communio*, p. 111.

<sup>31</sup> BONHOEFFER, *Sanctorum Communio*, pp. 167-178. Von Soosten, as the editor of this edition of Bonhoeffer’s dissertation notes, that Bonhoeffer follows Barth in the distinction between *eros* and *agape* and draws on the differentiation between natural and spiritual love in Kierkegaard. (Cf. *Ibid.*, p. 167, n. 124.) The influence of Kierkegaard on Bonhoeffer’s concept of love is discussed for example in Geoffrey B. KELLY, “Kierkegaard as “Antidote” and as Impact on Dietrich Bonhoeffer’s Concept of Christian Discipleship”, in: P. FRICK, *Bonhoeffer’s Intellectual Formation : Theology and Philosophy in His Thought*, Mohr Siebeck: Tübingen, 2008, pp. 145-165.



serve them but is centered upon itself. The expectation of being loved back is viewed rather critically here.<sup>32</sup>

How do we know what the other needs and thus what form does the life for others need to take? Presumably, Bonhoeffer would reply by a call to listen to the other, as he did for the life at Finkenwalde.<sup>33</sup> There listening is understood as a service one owes to others in the Christian community. Out of Christ's love, we can truly listen to the other, serve the brother/sister and bear their burden. Serving others is limited firstly by love, and secondly by the others' freedom. Love means to love others "for who they are" without trying to make them in one's own image. In this sense, those who are served are free from those serving them. The actor must give up "all attempts to control, coerce, and dominate" others with her/his love. That would be a fruit of self-love. "God did not make others as I would have made them. God did not give them to me so that I could dominate and control them, but so that I might find the Creator by means of them," and at the same time, assist them in fulfilling the image of God imprinted in them.<sup>34</sup> In addition, serving others requires respecting their freedom in terms of their "human nature, individuality, and talent," as well as their "weaknesses and peculiarities." Spiritual love rejoices in human diversity. The other is never to become "just an object to be controlled," but only suffered and endured. That is what God did on the cross of Christ "as a mother carries her child as a shepherd the lost lamb."<sup>35</sup>

According to Bonhoeffer, in making a decision regarding acting for others, we are to carefully discern the situation with all our capacities; we are not to satisfy ourselves with an intuition or a quick fix.<sup>36</sup> It can be also assumed a dialogue with the other is desired. However, Bonhoeffer does not explicitly mention the voice of the other.<sup>37</sup> (In a

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<sup>32</sup> BONHOEFFER, *Gemeinsames Leben*, p. 39-41. pp. 27-31.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid., pp. 83-84.

<sup>34</sup> Ibid., pp. 31; 79.

<sup>35</sup> Ibid., pp. 85-86.

<sup>36</sup> Cf. BONHOEFFER, *Ethik*, pp. 323-328.

<sup>37</sup> In the fragment *Der Blick von Unten* Bonhoeffer expresses the value he saw in the view of the world that personal suffering made available. However, that does not suggest a direct interpersonal dialogue as a necessary condition for acquiring such a worldview. It is rather an encouragement to

situation of terror and annihilation of a certain group of persons as was the case of Bonhoeffer's present situation that was difficult. Yet the need of these others was rather obvious.<sup>38)</sup>

Bonhoeffer does not bring up if the other is to participate in the action together with the one acting for him/her. The other is rather a recipient of action. Bonhoeffer focuses his attention on the one who acts for the other and not the other as such. He presupposes the other would not refuse the acting on his/her behalf. It could be given by the fact that Bonhoeffer had in mind (in his ethics, for example) those who were powerless, vulnerable and voiceless.

Of course, cooperation with an evil person or a person participating in the devilish actions of the Third Reich is not being suggested here.<sup>39</sup> However, even as Rasmussen proposes (as will be discussed below), a villain or a gangster might be appropriate co-resisters in the state of *necessita*. This would correspond to the concrete time and place of God's call, without making a general guideline for responsible action.<sup>40</sup>

Arnett claims that Bonhoeffer's theology and his ethics mainly represent a theology of dialogic confession, which "tempts the rhetoric of the faith with the dialectic counterpart of uncertainty and caution, permitting one to learn from the Other and the changing historical situation, ever responsible to the ongoing revelation and relevance

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participate in suffering of those powerless, oppressed, as we have indicated in discussing his concept of *Mitleiden*. Cf. BONHOEFFER, *Gesammelte Schriften II*, p. 441; BONHOEFFER, *Widerstand und Ergebung*, p. 27.

<sup>38</sup> This would also support the fact, that in the church's confession of sins Bonhoeffer does not mention the lack of the church's discernment of the present situation as if the church did not rightly see or recognize the suffering and its cause. Instead, he identifies church's silence and its lack of action (no rushing to help, no creative ideas) as sinful. This suggests, he presupposes the church knew who was suffering unjustly.

<sup>39</sup> For a study on Arendt's and Bonhoeffer's view of evil, see: Charles T. MATHEWES, "A Tale of Two Judgments: Bonhoeffer and Arendt on Evil, Understanding, and Limits, and the Limits of Understanding Evil", in: *The Journal of Religion*, 3 (Vol.8/2000), pp. 375-404.

<sup>40</sup> Larry L. RASMUSSEN, *Dietrich Bonhoeffer: Reality and Resistance*, Abingdon: Nashville, 1972, pp. 209-211.

of the faith story in action.”<sup>41</sup> He praises Bonhoeffer for listening to and learning from the other, meaning the ‘world come of age’. On the other hand, Mengus asserts that Bonhoeffer’s “treatment of the French Revolution may also be read as an example of how inclined he was to belittle the other man or thing, to reduce the different, to fail the alien. In passages like ‘*Erbe und Verfall*’ he offers little of his inclination to discuss and of his drive to discover. He adheres massively to a familiar one-sidedness and calming like-mindedness.”<sup>42</sup>

#### 4.2. The Other from Below

A specific other, that plays an important role in Bonhoeffer’s discussion of the French Revolution, are masses.<sup>43</sup> He describes them as rebellious, unpredictable, and their action as distorting order and creating chaos. Masses are ennobled through neither blood nor achievement. They despise both reason (characteristic of bourgeoisie) and the law of blood (aristocracy); their only law is misery. Bonhoeffer identifies his present time as being “the culmination and the crisis of this revolt.” According to the editors of *Ethik*, “Bonhoeffer obviously saw “the rise of the masses” to culminate in the national socialism and fascism.” These movements represent a government established from below, whereby Nazism claims “new ‘blood’-aristocracy of the SS in the sense of ‘racial’-homogeneity,”<sup>44</sup> disregarding human distinctness and its value. Neither German

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<sup>41</sup> Ronald C. ARNETT, *Dialogic Confession: Bonhoeffer's Rhetoric of Responsibility*, Southern Illinois University Press: Carbondale, 2005, p. 25.

<sup>42</sup> Raymond MENGUS, “Bonhoeffer and the French Revolution: Loss or Gain?”, in: Guy CARTER, René VAN EYDEN, Hans-Dirk VAN HOOIGSTRATEN, Jurjen WIERSMA, eds., *Bonhoeffer's Ethics: Old Europe and New Frontiers*, Kok Pharos Publishing House: Kampen, 1991, p. 138.

<sup>43</sup> In *Sanctorum Communio*, masses are identified with the proletariat longing for a community. This emphasis is due to Bonhoeffer’s conversation with socialist ideas of community in this work. At other places, where Bonhoeffer mentions masses, he is concerned with the inability of the church to proclaim the gospel to them. Being concerned for their living conditions and education he started social work among them in Berlin. Cf. BONHOEFFER, *Sanctorum Communio*, p. 290-293; BONHOEFFER, *Widerstand und Ergebung*, pp. 414-416.

<sup>44</sup> BONHOEFFER, *Ethik*, pp. 109, 110, n.68. Unlike Bonhoeffer, Arendt does not identify masses with the working class. Instead, she claims that masses included all strata of the society after classes broke down and people remained lonely and isolated as a result of industrialism and atomization of

aristocracy, nor its elites from among the bourgeois succeeded in resisting the Nazi ideology and politics. Therefore, new nobility in Germany is called for and Christianity is expected to play an important role in this task, believes Bonhoeffer. Only faith in the Lord of the earthly lords and their commission from above averts “demonic forces to rise from below.”<sup>45</sup>

In *Drama*, Bonhoeffer wrote in prison, its characters believe there are plebs and there are noble people “according to their nature”. The elite are destined to rule and enjoy freedom. Others are to obey and to serve. “There has to be above and below between people and who does not understand it, brings chaos among people.”<sup>46</sup>

This idea is viewed as contradictory in the *Roman* based on the words from the Galatians 3 about the equality of all people in Christ regardless their status, nation, gender as well as the fact that God’s election is aimed at those who are weak and not noble. That complicated an establishment of new true and responsible nobility in Germany based on the traditional above and below scheme according to which everything depends upon the right people being above. This problem is left unanswered, even when theoretically individuals from the masses could be seen as possible candidates of God’s election.<sup>47</sup>

In spite of the equalization in all aspects of human life, the “sense of quality of human values of justice, excellence and bravery,” which Bonhoeffer perceives in all strata of society, gives him hope for formation of a new leadership and reestablishment

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society. „In this atmosphere of the breakdown of class society the psychology of the European mass man developed.” (ARENDDT, *Origins of Totalitarianism*, p. 315) Arendt saw misery as being one of the crucial elements leading to the French Revolution, but only after the passion of compassion entered the public realm and became an immediate impetus for political action. “The sentiment of the heart”, not misery, as such, as Bonhoeffer thought, helped violence to gain such an immensity, in Arendt’s opinion. (Cf. ARENDT, *On Revolution*, pp. 56-65; 76-88)

<sup>45</sup> BONHOEFFER, *Ethik*, p. 396f.

<sup>46</sup> Dietrich BONHOEFFER, *Fragmente aus Tegel*, in: R. BETHGE – I. TÖDT, eds., *Dietrich Bonhoeffer Werke Bd. 7*, Chr. Kaiser: München, 1994, p. 32.

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 106-112. The literary characters in the *Roman* describe the German society as “hollow and snobbish.” They blame for its state the upper class, which other classes look up to and imitate its lifestyle.

of order.<sup>48</sup> The belonging to these new elite would not be hereditary, but would be founded on quality. Attributes of masses (*Pöbel, Massen*), a lack of respect for human distances, inner uncertainty, and striving to get into the favor of the impudent, result in disorder. The only way to fight the dangers of mass society (*Verpöbelung; Vermassung*), is to emphasize human dignity and distances. “Quality is the strongest enemy of any kind of *Vermassung*.” This quality is given clear criteria: “sacrifice, courage and a clear awareness of how one owns himself or herself also to others.” It now belongs to the church’s calling to emphasize human distances and distinctness, not equality, as it might have been in the past.<sup>49</sup>

Even though Bonhoeffer puts into contrast human equality and distinctness, another type of equality—different from natural sameness or social likeness—surfaces from him theology, even though he does not explicitly formulate it. It is equality understood as a possibility of a certain kind of action—a life for others. The new elite would include all those, who remain inter-connected to and with others, knowing they are called to respond with their whole life to the need of a concrete other, who challenges them to action. Therefore, it is possible that such courageous people would emerge from any part of society, including masses. Renate Wind interprets Bonhoeffer’s “theology of the prison letters” to be in opposition to his formulations from *Roman* and *Drama* from prison. She believes it was the Gospel that led to a new orientation of Bonhoeffer, “from a person of order becomes a theologian of liberation.” The Gospel liberates to solidarity with those who are below, it leads to crossing class divisions.<sup>50</sup>

However, this invites several questions: is this crossing taking place in both directions, from above and also from below? Who would make the decision about the membership of the new elite? Would elite coming from the masses not disturb

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<sup>48</sup> *Widerstand und Ergebung*, p. 327.

<sup>49</sup> Cf. BONHOEFFER, *Widerstand und Ergebung*, pp. 21-23. This move would have social as well as cultural consequences. Bonhoeffer in a letter to Bethge from November 18, 1943 mentions, that he intends to write a history of a middle-class family, which should deal with “a rehabilitation of bourgeoisie as we have gotten to know it in our families, precisely with its renewal from Christianity.” *Ibid.*, p. 148.

<sup>50</sup> Renate WIND, *Dem Rad in die Speichen fallen: Die Lebensgeschichte des Dietrich Bonhoeffer*, Gütersloher Verlagshaus: Gütersloh, 2011, pp. 198-199.

Bonhoeffer's view of the mandates communicating order from above? Does Bonhoeffer really seize to be a theologian of order? In other words, does this solidarity mean work on behalf of the others across the classes or does it also empower them for a common and even an inter-class acting too? Bonhoeffer does not say if the other, for whom the Christian acting is directed, does have a distinct voice in the process and is expected to participate in this action together with the initiative actor.

In the next section it will be examined if this absence of common acting in writings applies for Bonhoeffer's life and action as well. Several examples from his life will be given in order to discern, what understanding of acting lies underneath them.

## **5. Bonhoeffer's Action**

Bonhoeffer was involved in church politics and to some extent, and only in a limited way as Bethge points out, in a political arena of the state.<sup>51</sup> In this he worked together with others, often initiating certain activities and organizing them. We will mention several examples to illustrate this point.

In 1931, Bonhoeffer intervened with "a leading churchman in Germany" (Bethge thought it could have been Otto Dibelius) to raise the voice on behalf of nine teenage African-American "Scottsboro boys" who were sentenced to death at an unjust trial in Alabama, USA. "A disconcerted Christian" did not succeed.<sup>52</sup>

Bonhoeffer organized a campaign aimed against the candidates of Deutsche Christen for the church wide elections in 1933. Together with his students they prepared flyers

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<sup>51</sup> Bethge evaluates Bonhoeffer's position within the political resistance movement from three particular perspectives: Bonhoeffer's political ambition, his role in the future plans for Germany and finally, his intellectual capacity. Cf. Eberhard BETHGE, *Bonhoeffer: Exile and Martyr*, The Seabury Press: New York, 1975, pp.128-129.

<sup>52</sup> BONHOEFFER, *Ethik*, 296

and voting lists with the candidates of the church opposition (the Young Reformation Movement). For this he got into a conflict with the Gestapo.<sup>53</sup>

When the *Braune Synode* of the Old Prussian Union Church decided that the non-Arian candidates could not be in pastoral office Bonhoeffer suggested, and lobbied in favor of, a visible demonstration of a schism this decision meant. He wanted all pastors to decline their office. Together with Hildebrandt he considered such a measure to be a consequent theologically, and also in regard to church politics.<sup>54</sup>

Bonhoeffer was working on behalf of the Confessing Church against the policies of the official church in Germany and also within ecumenical circles as a representative to the World Alliance. He was suggesting an action of the Christian Church and council in support of the confessing minority. He presented views, entered into open discussions, published articles. Consequently, he entered into public confrontation and deliberation.<sup>55</sup>

In the resistance he contacted Christians outside of Germany. He informed them of the situation in the country and later of the plans of the resistance for an overthrow and for the future. He also took part in helping several Jewish people to emigrate from Germany (Operation 7).<sup>56</sup>

These are some examples of common action that Bonhoeffer himself initiated and/or together with others accomplished. He was visible in the church's political arena, invisible as a member of a conspiracy group within *Abwehr*. He was thinking, judging and deliberating in a community of friendship, among other Christians, within political

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<sup>53</sup> Cf. Eberhard BETHGE, *Dietrich Bonhoeffer: Theologe, Christ, Zeitgenosse*, Chr. Kaiser Verlag: München, 1967, pp. 345-348.

<sup>54</sup> Cf. BETHGE, *Dietrich Bonhoeffer*, pp. 360-370.

<sup>55</sup> Cf. *Ibid.*, pp. 587-597.

<sup>56</sup> Cf. BETHGE, *Bonhoeffer: Exile and Martyr*, pp. 125-6; BETHGE, *Dietrich Bonhoeffer*, pp. 811-877. For the Gestapo, this operation was later to become one of their leads to Bonhoeffer and other conspirators. Cf. Eric METAXAS, *Bonhoeffer: Pastor, Martyr, Prophet, Spy: a righteous gentile vs. the Third Reich*, Thomas Nelson: Nashville, 2010, pp. 388-389; 423f; Peter HOFFMANN, *History of the German Resistance, 1933-1945*, McGill-Queen's University Press: Montreal, 1996, pp. 218-221.

dissent with different people of various backgrounds. Therefore, we can conclude that the lack of common action present in his theology was not absent in his own life.<sup>57</sup>

However, a certain other seems to be absent from those with whom Bonhoeffer cooperated in the resistance. There were not people from the working classes involved, or masses, or plebs as Bonhoeffer named them. Rasmussen sees it as a mistake characteristic of the political resistance as such. He thinks this elitism, together with the intellectual character of the resistance, were reflected in its failure. He characterizes this relationship to the masses as “distrust” present before the resistance itself. He applies Bonhoeffer’s ethics to the resistance as such claiming, it would have been responsible, if the Christian or humanist conspirator recruited the gangster in order to make a technical success of the revolt.<sup>58</sup>

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<sup>57</sup> According to Rasmussen, Arendt was “poorly informed about the conspiracy itself,” when she contends that those “who opposed Hitler” were not “inspired by moral indignation or by what they knew other people had been to suffer; they were motivated almost exclusively by their conviction of the coming defeat and ruin of Germany.” (RASMUSSEN, *Dietrich Bonhoeffer*, p. 196 n. 58). This certainly did not apply to Bonhoeffer or Hans von Dohnanyi, who was collecting *Chronicle of Shame (Skandalchronik)* of the criminal acts of the National Socialist party and Reich’s administration from 1933. (Cf. BETHGE, *Dietrich Bonhoeffer*, pp. 703; 1096-1101). However, the book by Gerhard Ritter, *The German Resistance: Carl Goerdeler’s Struggle against Tyranny* (New York, 1958), that Arendt refers to in *Eichmann in Jerusalem*, does not mention it. Nevertheless, Ritter mentions Dietrich Bonhoeffer several times, even though with not much detail (cf. pp. 62, 161, 236). Arendt learned about Bonhoeffer also from Karl Jaspers. In the time of the controversy around *Eichmann in Jerusalem*, she sent him “pages about the resistance movement,” quoting also Ritter, which were included into the second enlarged edition of her book. In his response, Jaspers said he liked that extension on the German resistance and adds that Bonhoeffer and von Tresckow should be noticed among others as well. He admits, he himself does not know about them, but “suspects something positive, even though apolitical.” (Hannah ARENDT – Karl JASPERS, *Briefwechsel 1926-1969*, Lotte KÖHLER – Hans SANER, eds., Piper: München, 1993, pp. 580-583). There is no other mention of Bonhoeffer by Arendt. (Cf. James BERNAUER, *Bonhoeffer and Arendt at One Hundred*, in: *Studies in Christian-Jewish Relations Volume 2* (1/2007), p. 78)

<sup>58</sup> Rasmussen asserts, “the elitist failure to recruit members for the conspiracy among the workers appears a major mistake [...] it may have meant the overcoming of scruples that plagued the gentler conspirators. It may also have contributed those men who could have made possible the technical success of the *coup d’état*. Scruples and the lack of technical finesse and expertise were major causes for the failure of the revolt.” RASMUSSEN, *Dietrich Bonhoeffer*, pp. 186-187. It is curious, that Rasmussen assumes without any questioning, that people from among the workers were gangsters, people more prone to exercising violent acts as those from the elitist resistance. However, Arendt makes a similar point in the very passage of her book Rasmussen criticizes, when she says: “none of [the July conspirators] would have dared even to think that the best thing that could have happened to Germany under the circumstances would have been open rebellion and civil war.” (Hannah ARENDT, *Eichmann in Jerusalem: A Report on the Banality of Evil, rev. enlarged ed.*, Penguin Books: New York, 1994, p. 98.)



“According to the Holy Scripture, there is no right to revolution,” claims Bonhoeffer resolutely probably in 1941, after being involved in the resistance already for some time. Individuals are responsible to “to keep their office and task in the *polis* pure.” This is their service to the authority (*Obrigkeit*), for which actions they are not responsible.<sup>59</sup> Bonhoeffer was taking part in a “revolution from above,” preparing *coup d'état*.<sup>60</sup> He understood his participation in the resistance as one of the last resorts of opposition after the people in higher positions, either political, administrative or military, failed to take appropriate action.<sup>61</sup>

Common action is implied in Bonhoeffer's own actions, in his work in and for the church, within Germany, on the international ecumenical level and also in the resistance, even though with limited membership. He was an initiator as well as participator, to use Arendt's distinction, and his actions were neither isolated nor private. I think Bonhoeffer is to be counted among those Arendt names “challengers,” because in an extraordinary situation he was among those who took an initiative and acted.<sup>62</sup> It was his personal decision, yet he did not act alone. He acted for others, together with others, in a common co-operative action, even though he did not reflect it. Arendt would attribute this fact to one of the specifics of action itself—that an actor cannot be an observer of one's own life at the same time. By acting, saying words and performing deeds, Bonhoeffer wrote a story of himself. However, only an independent spectator would be able to read, interpret and then tell the story.<sup>63</sup>

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<sup>59</sup> Dietrich BONHOEFFER, “Staat und Kirche”, in: Wolf KRÖTKE, Ulrich KABITZ – Jorgen Johannes GLENTHÖJ, eds., *Konspiration und Haft 1940-1945, Dietrich Bonhoeffer Werke, Bd. 16*, Chr. Kaiser/Gütersloher Verlagshaus: Gütersloh, 1996, p. 532.

<sup>60</sup> Gerhard RITTER, *The German Resistance: Carl Goerdeler's Struggle against Tyranny*, New York: Frederick A. Praeger Publishers, 1958, p. 62. Ritter makes a distinction between two sides of the German opposition according to their method. The first represents the middle-class and its revolution from above. The other constitute the churches and Socialist Labor “raising a great popular movement against Hitler.” It would be impossible to apply these categories on Bonhoeffer, who even though participating in the *coup*, was a member of the middle-class and an active church member at the same time.

<sup>61</sup> For a sequence of responsibility for the state's affairs, see RASMUSSEN, *Dietrich Bonhoeffer*, p.137.

<sup>62</sup> ARENDT, *Between Past and Future*, p. 4.

<sup>63</sup> Cf. ARENDT, *Vita Activa*, pp. 113-116, 222-232. In Bonhoeffer's case, those stories told of his words and deeds are indeed manifold. Haynes summarizes this variety into radical, liberal, conservative

## 6. Acting, Mandates and the Trinity

Based on the foregoing discussion, it may be asserted, that a theory of common acting is absent in Bonhoeffer's theology of action, even though it is present in his own life. Nonetheless, it is not reflected in his writings.<sup>64</sup> The following section examines several reasons that could lie behind this conclusion. It inquires, whether a limited understanding of acting is affected by Bonhoeffer's theology of mandates. Since their roots are found to lie in the revelation explicated christologically, the relation of Bonhoeffer's theology of revelation to his theology of the Trinity will be explored.

### 6.1. Mandates

Bonhoeffer believes that Jesus meets and calls to action every human being at a specific place, which he names *Beruf*, understood as a worldly place of concrete Christian responsibility. This is not boundless, rather, it is limited by four elements: God and the neighbor as they summon to action, by "creatureliness," by one's own possibilities, and finally by the responsibility of others.<sup>65</sup> Life for others is an everyday life, as Bonhoeffer explains on the examples of fathers, politicians, or teachers. They actually enter the place of those for whom they are responsible, thus pointing to the fact, that every human being is interconnected with others. Even a solitary person lives

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and universal Bonhoeffer, exploring the notion of a Protestant saint. (Cf. Stephen R. HAYNES, *The Bonhoeffer phenomenon: portraits of a Protestant saint*. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2004)

<sup>64</sup> The fact that Bonhoeffer did not mention cooperation in the letters from prison might have been due to the fact he did not want to endanger his fellow conspirators.

<sup>65</sup> BOHOEFFER, *Ethik*, 267-269. Bonhoeffer makes clear it is not a principle, one's own conscience, or even vocation that would construct this limit. Also, another's own responsibility makes the difference between responsibility and violation. (Ibid., p. 268)

vicariously for the humankind as such, since no human being can be thought of as disconnected from the rest of humanity.<sup>66</sup>

The other challenging us to vicarious representative living is met in given structures of authority of above and below within the mandates. This is not to be understood in an oppressive or capricious way. Instead, it is realized in a free responsibility of both sides. “The lord and servant can and should stand for each other in free responsibility in observing the relation of obedience.” Thus, both obedience and freedom are encompassed in the concept of vicarious representative action. Those who obey are responsible for how they live and fulfill their tasks; they do so in freedom. Superiors are responsible to act as God’s representatives. “There will always be relations of obedience and dependency, but they will always remain in the realm of responsibility.”<sup>67</sup>

Moltmann points precisely to responsible action—which does not separate Lawgiver and the Law— as having the capacity to integrate the mandates “into the living history of God.” In that way, “the negative rigidity” of the mandates is removed, as is a possible conflict between person’s vocation and her/his concrete responsibility within God’s law and the historical forms of mandates, which Bonhoeffer leaves “in a dilemma.”<sup>68</sup> Nevertheless, Bonhoeffer does not develop possible ways of communication or cooperation within the mandates. Instead, he emphasizes the place each one has set by the mandate either above or below. Even criticism is limited to those of one’s own status.<sup>69</sup> People who do not stay active only within their particular vocation and calling

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<sup>66</sup> Jesus himself was not “within the specific responsibility of marriage, family, vocation,” but precisely this makes his vicarious representative action more obvious to be done vicariously for the whole humankind. (BONHOEFFER, *Ethik*, p. 256f.)

<sup>67</sup> BONHOEFFER, *Ethik*, 285-289. “The holders of the mandate acts in *Stellvertretung*, as a place holder of the one giving the mandate.” (Ibid., p. 393)

<sup>68</sup> Jürgen MOLTSMANN, “The Lordship of Christ and Human Society”, in: J. MOLTSMANN – J. WEISSBACH, *Two Studies in the Theology of Bonhoeffer*, New York : Scribner, 1967, p. 94.

<sup>69</sup> According to Spiegel, Bonhoeffer’s model of church and state’s office are structured similarly and come from “the close relations between the church and state government in Prussia, also in its legitimization from above, which is common to both. The individual is limited in critique and responsibility to his vocation and the personal way of life, only those ruling are legitimated and enabled for a fundamental criticism. There is something apparent from the casts’ spirit, that had such a decisive importance for the officers in state, church and military, that other parts of inhabitants stayed excluded from the right to a fundamental criticism: the same can be criticized only from the same.” Yorick

be it in church or state, and who start crossing the boundaries of their given place over against the above structures are necessarily bringing chaos, disorder and disunity. If they start acting together outside their given space, according to Bonhoeffer, this is already a revolutionary action, an example being the French Revolution.<sup>70</sup>

Even though all Christians are called to obedience and a life of loving responsibility, the specifics of this call depend on the place and status within the respective mandates. Therefore, any action crossing those lines under normal circumstances is considered subversive of the divinely given order and of its unity. Only in an extreme situation, one is called to act contrary to one's position limited by the above in responsibility towards the Lawgiver himself for forming the mandate according to Christ's command.<sup>71</sup>

Bonhoeffer's theology of the mandates establishes a static order and patriarchal hierarchy. God's mandates of church, state, family and work as places, at which we receive God's commandment in Christ are structured from top down. This is not only in a theological and eschatological sense of the word, since the commandment meets a person always in "an earthly relation of authority in an order given by a clear above and below," both of which are set by the mandate.<sup>72</sup> In order to better understand

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SPIEGEL, "Dietrich Bonhoeffer und die 'protestantisch-preussische Welt'," in: Ernst FEIL, *Verspieltes Erbe: Dietrich Bonhoeffer und der deutsche Nachkriegsprotestantismus*, Chr Kaiser Verlag: Munich, 1979, pp. 63-64.

<sup>70</sup> In Bonhoeffer's opinion, it meant the beginning of the rule of terror and of plebs in Europe. Cf. BONHOEFFER, *Ethik*, pp. 105-109; BONHOEFFER, *Fragmente*, p. 171.

<sup>71</sup> Rasmussen describes an absurd situation in which some military officers were caught up because they were not able to overcome their understanding of duty and act without a command from above. "They conceded that Hitler must be dislodged. But they could not strike against him without the command from their Commander-in-Chief," they wanted to remove. Cf. RASMUSSEN, *Dietrich Bonhoeffer*, p. 204.

<sup>72</sup> Cf. BONHOEFFER, *Ethik*, pp. 384; 394-397. In the afterword to the *Ethik* its editors put into perspective Bonhoeffer's emphasis on the differentiation between above and below in pointing to the vulgar understanding of democracy that Bonhoeffer had before his eyes as "the worst variation of the bogus-plebiscitary "Führer"-democracy." In it the nation below legitimizes everything that is above, which is at the same time threatened by that which is below. "This differentiation had for him primarily theological meaning, not a politically-societal." (BONHOEFFER, *Ethik*, p. 432.) Over against that Ruth Zerner comments that Th. I. Day was right in claiming "Bonhoeffer was not a democrat" and he saw authority coming down from above rather than from below. (Ruth ZERNER, "Regression und Kreativität: Ein Nachwort", in: *Dietrich Bonhoeffer: Fragmente aus Tegel: Drama und Roman*, hrsg. Renate und Eberhard BETHGE, Chr. Kaiser Verlag: München, 1978, p. 239)

Bonhoeffer's treatment of the mandates, his concept of revelation needs to be discussed, in which it is embedded.

## 6.2. God's Mandates and Revelation

The mandates are "established in the revelation of Christ" and they are leading the world towards Christ. In them human beings encounter God's command in its unity in the forms corresponding to four aspects of the reality of Christ. The mandates represent "divine authorization, empowerment and legitimation to exercise certain divine commands, and the bestowal of divine authority on earthly authority." Mandates are one of the vehicles of the conformation of the world to the form of Christ, the God-Man.<sup>73</sup>

The objectivity of God's command coming from above corresponds to Bonhoeffer's theology of revelation, which comes to us from the outside (in opposition to idealism). Our reason, thinking or experience cannot deduce or presuppose it. In this Bonhoeffer agrees with Barth. However, as Dejonge claims, these theologians did not agree on how this comes about. Bonhoeffer, in careful avoidance of the presuppositions of philosophy and act- and being-theologies, chooses to establish the revelation of God in Christology. In having Luther and the Lutheran tradition as a guide in this dialogue, Bonhoeffer offers an alternative to Barth's understanding formed by the Calvinist tradition.<sup>74</sup>

Barth, starting with the life of immanent Trinity, believes that divinity and humanity are reconciled "in the Trinitarian person of the Logos," whereby he places reconciliation into the otherworldly eternity. Revelation consists in revelatory acts of the transcendent Being. He understands the contingency of revelation (corresponding to the freedom of God) to be taking place through "serial acts that occur outside of space and time."<sup>75</sup> Drawing on the Reformed tradition, he "explicitly rejects doing so in the historical

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<sup>73</sup> BONHOEFFER, *Ethik*, pp. 80; 392-4.

<sup>74</sup> Michael P. DEJONGE, *Bonhoeffer's Theological Formation: Berlin, Barth, and Protestant Theology*, Oxford University Press: Oxford, 2012, p. 112.

<sup>75</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 37.

person of Jesus Christ, an alternative Barth derides as the ‘exclusive “Jesus Christ”-pit of the Lutherans.’ Bonhoeffer, drawing on the Lutheran theology of the Person of Christ, disagrees and reaffirms ‘the Lutheran pit.’ He identifies the revelation of God with the historical person of Jesus Christ. This for him is a fact. In the same way, Bonhoeffer locates reconciliation into the historical person of Jesus Christ not into the life of the Trinity in eternity. In the context of discussing revelation, both Bonhoeffer and Barth understand the choice between trinitarian and Christological starting point more than a matter of emphasis. Rather, perceive them as alternatives.<sup>76</sup>

### 6.3. Trinitarian Aspect

In his lectures on Christology, Bonhoeffer makes one explicit reference to the Trinity, who glorifies himself in a human being: “The last mystery of the Trinity,” is that “God sees himself as the Incarnate One.”<sup>77</sup> Green draws attention to this section, which together with a stream of Trinitarian texts in his work, “require us to think about Bonhoeffer’s Christology in a new light.” After discussing Trinitarian references in Bonhoeffer’s major works, Green concludes that even though “it is Christology [...] which does the main work for Bonhoeffer [...] the doctrine of the Trinity was a permanent and perduring presupposition of Bonhoeffer’s theology.”<sup>78</sup>

Bonhoeffer’s identification of the Trinity and the God Incarnate would require further elaboration. Who is this Triune God, who is for us in Jesus Christ? According to Dejonge, “Christological thinking [...] proceeds hermeneutically, unpacking definitions of God and humanity from the logically prior person.”<sup>79</sup> How would Bonhoeffer have interpreted hermeneutically—from the person of Christ—the doctrine of the Trinity?

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<sup>76</sup> Ibid., pp. 20-21; 105-106.

<sup>77</sup> BONHOEFFER, Vorlesung “Christologie”, p. 342.

<sup>78</sup> Clifford GREEN, “Trinity and Christology in Bonhoeffer and Barth”, in: *Union Seminary Quarterly Review*, Vol. 60, No. 1-2, 2006, p. 21.

<sup>79</sup> DEJONGE, *Bonhoeffer’s Theological Formation*, p. 98. More on the subject of hermeneutical form of thinking, as an alternative to dialectical thinking, see Ibid., pp. 97-100.

How would Bonhoeffer have developed his Christology in a Trinitarian context? What role would have the trinitarian God played in his theological argument regarding revelation, reconciliation, Christian church or acting?

In saying the person of Christ is ontologically *pro me*,<sup>80</sup> Bonhoeffer, even though starting from a (single) person, establishes Christ in communion. In this person of the God-Man, the reconciliation of act and being, of God and the world, took place. This revelation has its continuity in the church, “the communal new I,” to which Christ bound himself.<sup>81</sup> Christ’s *Stellvertretung*, again rooted in his Pro-me structure, leads to Christian acting defined as being for others. Under normal circumstances, it has a specific content for specific people, based on whether they were given a place in God’s order above or below. This confirms the communal character of acting within God’s mandates, lacking its common dimension.

The person of Jesus Christ being *pro me* and for others is at the heart of Bonhoeffer’s thinking. Mödlhammer, discussing the concept of the “being-for-others” of God as developed in *Schöpfung und Fall* by Bonhoeffer, says that it is not only in Christ that God is for others, but already God as love is a being of the persons of the Trinity for each other. Also God knows what love is only in the process of his openness of persons to each other. “The old church’s dogmatic ground of in-one-another of the immanent and economic Trinity is present in Bonhoeffer’s theology of the cross, but “not sufficiently thought through.” He asserts: “The concept of love is *essentially* influenced by the experience of otherness and alienness, and love is exactly the reconciliation of this otherness.”<sup>82</sup> Is the lack of common acting in Bonhoeffer’s theology one of the

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<sup>80</sup> “The being of the person of Christ is essentially in relation to me. His “being-Christ is his being-pro-me. This *pro-me* [...] is to be understood as a being of the person himself. [...] This is not a historical, factual, ontic, but an ontological statement.” BONHOEFFER, Vorlesung “Christologie”, p. 295.

<sup>81</sup> Cf. DEJONGE, *Bonhoeffer’s Theological Formation*, p. 78.

<sup>82</sup> Johann Werner, MÖLDHAMMER, *Anbetung und Freiheit. Theologisch-anthropologische Reflexionen zur Theologie Dietrich Bonhoeffers*, Salzburg, 1976, pp. 34-36 quoted in Klaus-Michael KODALLE, *Dietrich Bonhoeffer: zur Kritik seiner Theologie*, Gerd Mohn: Gütersloh, 1991, pp. 173-174. Green asserts along the same lines, that even though Bonhoeffer grounds “the economic Trinity in the

consequences of his Christological focus, which he does not put into a trinitarian context?

## **7. Summary: Possibilities and Challenges of Acting for Others**

For a non-reductionist understanding of possibilities of acting in Bonhoeffer's theology, the following points need to be kept in mind: The three crucial reasons, why Bonhoeffer compared the church to a patriarchal family—obedience, unity and true relations—resurface in his doctrine of Christian acting within mandates. Obedience and superiority are to be realized in mutual responsibility and love, thus expressing their unity in Christ and of Christ with the world.<sup>83</sup> The concept of vicarious representative action is at the heart of his theology of the church, action, and mandates.

In Bonhoeffer's view, all human beings are equal before God in their basic identity as sinners and, as Bonhoeffer implies without directly formulating it, in their calling to live for others. As in the family, so also in other three mandates, the gift of human diversity is to be preserved and sanctified in mutual ministry limited by one's position within structures of authority. Some are initiators and others are obedient not because of their gifts, actions or character, but because of the office they do or do not represent. The Holy Spirit immanently interconnects the deeds of individual Christians acting next to each other but does not lead them to common words and deeds. Even though Bonhoeffer initiated as well as participated in common action, it did not find its way into his theology.<sup>84</sup>

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immanent Trinity," he does not speak of the second one. (GREEN, "Trinity and Christology in Bonhoeffer and Barth", p. 21)

<sup>83</sup> This is one of the ways, in which Bonhoeffer responded to the Lutheran teaching of the two spheres and of Christian vocation (*Beruf*) as they were misinterpreted by the Lutheran theology, as will be discussed in chapter 5.

<sup>84</sup> Heuser claims that "for Bonhoeffer, political ethics asks how people are called to act co-operatively and vicariously," this call meaning "to become a citizen by representing, helping and co-operating and even fighting when people are kept from participating in a humane reality." (Stefan HEUSER, "The Cost of Citizenship: Disciple and Citizen in Bonhoeffer's Political Ethics," in: *Studies in Christian Ethics* 18,



Bonhoeffer's Christocentric theological foundation is a reason lying behind this limited notion of Christian acting. Even though such acting is understood as freedom for others, the other remains action's recipient—being active and free—but a recipient nevertheless. Life within mandates is conformed to Christ in that every person, be it in a church, state, family or work, fulfills his/her calling in responsibility for others. In this way various and distinct persons fulfill the function needed and necessary in the world united with Christ. Thus, Bonhoeffer's theology of action—in its communal aspect—corresponds to his theology of the church compared to a patriarchal family. Equality remains invisible in the roles people were given through their place within mandates.

Yet, the question is whether such a church and such an acting would be able to influence public life and the state as Bonhoeffer envisioned. Is the conformation of the world to Christ possible without coercion? If acting for others is the life principle of the Christian church, what life would bring such an acting understood in addition as being common? Certainly, it would have consequences for acting within the church, for church's acting in the world and also for church's own structures. The static concept of *Mitleben* and of the mandates could thus receive a new active dimension in Bonhoeffer's theology.

Bonhoeffer does not search for an alternative to Barth's early theology of revelation from a trinitarian starting point.<sup>85</sup> Is it because he suspected that any such attempt necessarily leads to establishing reality on the other side of this world in eternity? In addition, his Christocentric theological basis is not set within a wider Trinitarian context. He does not develop *analogia relationis* from the Person of Christ towards the relations between the Persons of the Trinity. As will be shown, for Stăniloae the inter-

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no. 3 (2005), p. 56; 65) Since I do not find foundations for common aspects of acting in Bonhoeffer's theology, I can agree with these statements only with reservations.

<sup>85</sup> As DeJonge argues, Bonhoeffer did not abandon his theology developed in polemics with early Barth, but further “deploys the thought-form developed” at that time, even though Barth “has largely dropped out of his polemical sight” in the time of working on *Ethik*. Nevertheless, Bonhoeffer seeks to explicate concrete ethics, in order “to overcome what he considered Barth's inability” to do so. This was through hermeneutical, rather than dialectical, ethical analysis, leading Bonhoeffer to formulate reality in terms of the unity of God and the world. (Cf. DEJONGE, *Bonhoeffer's Theological Formation*, pp. 140-141).

trinitarian relations are crucial. And precisely because Stăniloae's theology is an example of a trinitarian thinking that treats the historical person Jesus Christ as the second Person of the Trinity incarnate, being in constant relation to the other two divine Persons as well as to human beings and the world, he will be a useful complement to Bonhoeffer's theology.

Turning now to Stăniloae, the next chapter will show that since Christian acting is Christian love lived out for others, a concept of the living and acting of the Trinity as being for-one-another and also with-one-another has consequences for viewing acting as a common venture open for participation of others. Therefore, in the following section, Stăniloae's theology of common acting will be traced from its roots in the trinitarian communion.

## **CHAPTER FOUR:**

# **CHRISTIAN ACTING IN THE LIGHT OF STĂNILOAE’S THEOLOGY OF THE TRINITY**

“The divine love is [...] God’s movement towards creatures, towards union with them. But for there to be movement towards someone, an eternal movement of this kind must exist in God. If, in general, *eros* means the movement full of longing on two sides, it cannot exist where only one of the sides is person while the other is passive object of longing and love.” STĂNILOAE, *The Experience of God vol. 1*, p. 240

Human persons are invited and mercifully empowered by God to participate in the movement of love between the divine Persons. From Stăniloae’s notion of these relations emerge the contours of his theology of acting. Since this is built on triadology, my intention is to complement with it Bonhoeffer’s notion of acting for others rooted in Christology and to arrive at a fuller concept of Christian acting.

Since Stăniloae is not as well-known in our geographical space as Arendt and Bonhoeffer are, I will introduce him briefly before moving into our topic itself.

### **Dumitru Stăniloae (1903 -1993), an Introduction**

Stăniloae was a Romanian priest and one of the greatest Orthodox theologians of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>1</sup> He became a pioneer in the modern Orthodox revival of Palamism

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<sup>1</sup> In the following I draw on these sources: Ion BRIA, “The Creative Vision of D. Stăniloae: An Introduction to his theological thought”, in: *The Ecumenical Review* 33 (January 1981), pp. 53-59; Ioan I. ICA Jr., “Stăniloae, Dumitru 1903-1993”, in: T. A. HART – R. BAUCKHAM, eds., *The dictionary of historical theology*, Grand Rapids (Mich.): Eerdmans, 2000, pp. 528-531; Kalistos WARE, “Foreword”

encountering God there who is “moving towards man.” Even though also dialectical theology made him “see a living God, a personal God,” it was God “separated from man” who was not able “to discard his sins.” In the Palamite theology he finds “a God that is close to man, that opens to man, enlightening him whenever he is praying.” In fact, this characterizes his theology, a movement of God towards human beings as they seek God. This is no “unemotional God.”<sup>2</sup>

Stăniloae continued to move towards this God exploring and interpreting further the tradition of the Church Fathers creating a “neopatristic synthesis”. Besides the Palamite tradition, St. Maximos the Confessor had a lasting influence on him as well. Among others, he often refers to St. Gregory of Nazianzos, St. Gregory of Nyssa, St. Cyril of Alexandria and St. Dionysios the Areopagite. Stăniloae did not lead a dialogue only with the Greek Fathers and the dialectical theology and Barth, but also with Rahner, von Balthasar, Heidegger, Kierkegaard, Lossky, Evdokimov, Schmemmann, Clément and others. Criticizing scholastic approach, rationalism and pietism, Stăniloae explicates dogmas in their existential and spiritual depths. Thus, his theology “enables him constantly to challenge the language and images applied to God.”<sup>3</sup>

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in: Dumitru STĂNILOAE, *The experience of God: Orthodox dogmatic theology Vol. 1, Revelation and knowledge of the triune God*, I. IOANITA – R. BARRINGER, eds., Brookline, Massachusetts: Holy Cross Orthodox Press, 1994, pp. ix-xxvii; Florin GRIGORESCU, “With Father Dumitru Stăniloae on Father Dumitru Stăniloae”, in: *Codrul Cosminului* no. 12 (2006), pp. 259-267; Ivana NOBLE, “Doctrine of creation within the theological project of Dumitru Stăniloae”, in: *Communio Viatorum* 49, no 2, 2007, pp. 185-209; Lucian TURCESCU, “Dumitru Stăniloae (1903-1993): Commentary”, in: J. WITTE, (Jr) – F. S.ALEXANDER, eds., *The teachings of modern Orthodox Christianity on law, politics, and human nature*, New York: Columbia university press, 2007, pp. 295-322; Peter DE MEY, “Apophatic and Kataphatic Theology in Dumitru Staniloae (1903-1993)”, in: *Orizonturi Teologice* 12, no. 1 (2012), pp. 9-22. I will mention specific events from his life in this text, as they will unfold with the topics discussed.

<sup>2</sup> Strazzari, F. & I. Prezzi, *Una teologia filocalica. Intervista a padre Dumitru Staniloae, Il Regno-attaulita*, 34 (1989), p. 108, cited in: GRIGORESCU, “With Father Dumitru Stăniloae on Father Dumitru Stăniloae”, p. 263. This is not a place to go into details of this assesment by Stăniloae. However, it can be said, that his generalizations regarding Western, Protestant and Catholic theologies are not very precise or accurate. Louth, writing about Stăniloae’s Orthodox Dogmatics, says: “his attitude to Western theology is quite negative, even uncomprehending.” (Andrew LOUTH, “*The Orthodox Dogmatic Theology of Dumitru Stăniloae*”, in: Lucian TURCESCU, *Dumitru Stăniloae: Tradition and Modernity in Theology*, Iași; Oxford; Palm Beach; Portland: the Center for Romanian Studies, 2002, p.63)

<sup>3</sup> BRIA, “The Creative Vision of D. Stăniloae”, p. 55

Nevertheless, this God does not change. Remaining ‘emotional’, the Triune God is lovingly longing for a communion with the whole creation. Stăniloae explicates how human beings are drawn by the uncreated energies into the intimacy of the experience of God enabling human beings, through the complementarity of cataphatic and apophatic knowledge, to participate in the divine mystery. They are made partners of God “who co-operate with him in full liberty; without freedom there can be no love and no inter-personal communion.”<sup>4</sup>

In this chapter, I will explore how Stăniloae’s notion of communication between the Persons of the Trinity for and with one another builds the foundations for understanding human action not in its communal, but also in its common dimension. This new participatory feature of acting will constitute a crucial addition to this debate.

Before going deeper into exploring ways in which the inter-trinitarian relations serve as a source for understanding human acting, few words are needed on a general theological view Stăniloae has of human beings.<sup>5</sup> He describes “the continuity of human nature subsisting concretely in many hypostases” with images of strings with knots, of a star and its rays. Those strings and rays are interconnected within a “huge net of mesh.” This is an ontological given, which expresses itself in the need human beings have to be in relation. It is up to them, as to whether they materialize their relational being and in

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<sup>4</sup> WARE, “Foreword”, p. xiv. Ware names freedom to be “one of Fr. Dumitru’s recurrent *leitmotifs*.” (Ibid.)

<sup>5</sup> Regrettably, I am not able to draw from his work *Jesus Christ, or the Restoration of Man* (1943) since it has not been translated into English or German yet. As Miller comments, in this work, Stăniloae “developed his own theology of hypostasis and an understanding of man as eternal person.” (Charles MILLER, *The gift of the world: an introduction to the theology of Dumitru Stăniloae*, T. & T. Clark: Edinburgh, 2000, p. 17) As Noble puts it, “For the Orthodox theology of his time, Stăniloae unusually rehabilitates Christology from below. He claims that only in the incarnation can we discover our authentic humanity.” (Ivana NOBLE, “Doctrine of creation within the theological project of Dumitru Stăniloae”, in: *Communio Viatorum* 49, no 2, 2007, p. 186) Ica points out, that in this work’s “major theme is Christ as the only genuine key to the self-understanding of the human person and of human history,” in dialogue with (among others) Barth, and Heidegger. (Ioan I. ICA, Jr “Stăniloae, Dumitru 1903-1993”, Trevor A. Hart – Richard Bauckham, eds., *The dictionary of historical theology*, Grand Rapids (Mich.): Eerdmans, 2000, p. 528) I think this work would enhance this discussion in new dimensions also because Bonhoeffer develops his concept of a person in a dialogue with Barth and Heidegger in *Akt und Sein*.

what ways.<sup>6</sup> The image of the Trinity is visible in the communitarian character of human beings and also in their complementarity of being created as male and female.<sup>7</sup> Human plurality and the distinctness of every human being are rooted in the diversity within the Trinity, who is one God “according to the being as well as threesome and different as Persons.”<sup>8</sup> A monistic God could not explain the existence of unity in the diversity of creation.<sup>9</sup>

The unity and diversity of the Trinity is the foundation of the unity and diversity of human beings. Plurality in disunity and uniformity is, for Stăniloae, a consequence of the “life according to the flesh” whereas “life according to the soul develops generous communication between us and accentuates us as infinitely varied personalities.”<sup>10</sup> The call to growing in the likeness to God means to materialize the created variety in human relationships of mutual help and love. Therefore, Stăniloae’s theology of the Trinitarian communion will be discussed focusing on interacting of the Persons as a model for acting of human persons and communion.

First, acting of the immanent as well as the economic Trinity will be explicated from the perspective of Stăniloae’s theology. Human interaction will be the topic in the next parts, discussing *theosis* and human *perichoresis* as modes of the dialogue between God and human beings. Based on this study, distinction between communal and common

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<sup>6</sup> Dumitru STĂNILOAE, *The experience of God: Orthodox dogmatic theology Vol. 1, Revelation and knowledge of the triune God*, I. IOANITA – R. BARRINGER, eds., Brookline, Massachusetts: Holy Cross Orthodox Press, 1994, pp. 253-256.

<sup>7</sup> Dumitru STĂNILOAE, *The Experience of God: Orthodox Dogmatic Theology Vol. 2, The World: Creation and Deification*, I. IOANITA – R. BARRINGER, eds., Brookline, Massachusetts: Holy Cross Orthodox Press, 2000, pp. 94-96. “The doctrine of the Trinity constitutes the foundation, infinite reservoir, power, and model of our growing eternal communion; yet it also spurs us on to grow and think continuously in spirit, and helps us both pass continually beyond any level we may already have reached in our personal communion with God and among ourselves, and also strive for an ever more profound grasp of the mystery of supreme communion.” (STĂNILOAE, *The Experience of God vol. 1*, p. 247.)

<sup>8</sup> Dumitru STĂNILOAE, “Der dreienige Gott und die Einheit der Menschheit”, in: *Evangelische Theologie* 41, 5 (1981), pp. 444-445.

<sup>9</sup> Bonhoeffer establishes human plurality in God’s creation of human persons, not of a human being. Both, Stăniloae and Bonhoeffer, view human plurality as a fact of God’s creation, not human procreation, as Arendt, based on Augustine, asserts. For Arendt’s critique of the failure of theology to found plurality of human beings, see chapter one.

<sup>10</sup> Dumitru STĂNILOAE, “The faces of our fellow human beings”, in: *International Review Of Mission* 71, no. 281 (January 1, 1982), p. 34.

acting in Stăniloae's theology will be made. The possibilities of the human capacity to act together with others will be outlined for the calling of the church to join the struggle for justice and peace in the world and finally, for the church's structures.

## 1. Immanent Trinity

In Stăniloae's concept, Christ is the unique human being who was and is being for others. However, this "for others" is not a formula which is descriptive exclusively of the Son from among the Trinity, or for God in the person of Jesus Christ, as Bonhoeffer uses it. Rather, it is true for every Person in their mutual interrelationships. The bond of unity between the three unique Persons is characterized by mutual transparency of love.

This mutual inter-relatedness of the persons of the Trinity was expressed by St. John Damascene in the concept of *perichoresis* which Stăniloae adopts.<sup>11</sup> Each Person of the Trinity lives a life for others, of giving oneself to the other Persons to such a degree that they forget themselves. Each Person is interior to the others, while at the same time remaining distinct from each other. Each one is disclosing "not his own "I," but two together, revealing the "third." Simultaneously, each pair of persons discloses not their own "I's" in an exclusive way, but they place the other "I" in the forefront, making themselves transparent for that one, or hiding themselves (as it were) beneath him."<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> Regarding *perichoresis* Stăniloae asserts: "with respect to the Holy Trinity, *perichoresis* must mean a *fortiori* a passage of the Spirit through the Son and of the Son through the Spirit. The Father is also included in *perichoresis* inasmuch as the Spirit passes through the Son as one who is proceeding from the Father and returning to him [...]. Consequently, on account of these interior relations with the others, no divine Person is ever, either in the Church as a whole or in the individual believer, without the other divine Persons or without the particular characteristics of the others." (Dumitru STĂNILOAE, *Theology and the Church*, Crestwood, New York: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1980, pp. 38-39.)

<sup>12</sup> STĂNILOAE, *The Experience of God vol. 1*, p. 264. "In God it is not possible for an "I" to assert himself over against another "I"; instead he continually considers the other as a substitute for himself... Each sees himself only in relation to the other, or regards only the other, or sees himself only in the other... This is a circular movement of each "I" around the other as center (*perichoreiss* = *circumincessio*)." (STĂNILOAE, *The Experience of God vol. 1*, p. 203.)

According to Stăniloae “in this self-forgetting of each person for the other, perfect love is manifested and only this makes possible that unity which is opposed to individualism,” which would suspect such a relationship of dissolving each personal identity.<sup>13</sup> Giving oneself in love presupposes also willingness to receive the other as well as an openness to the other, disclosing oneself and thus being transparent to the other.<sup>14</sup> This mutual self-giving and receiving of the “I’s” enables a joyful communion between them.<sup>15</sup> Love between human persons can reach a similar level to the divine, as Stăniloae sees in an example of love between parents and their only child.<sup>16</sup>

Stăniloae emphasizes all along the fact that each of the Persons does not only keep their individual identity (keep their “I”) in this divine self-giving and interrelatedness, but also that each of the Persons is affirmed by the other two and remains a subject. This means that none of the Persons is ever passive and that one Person does not act upon another. This would degrade them to objects, which cannot be open to the others making complete mutual communion impossible. Therefore, it is not only that “the Father begets the Son eternally,” but also that the Son “takes his birth from the Father.” Accordingly, the Holy Spirit “proceeds” from the Father, but at the same time “the Father also causes him to proceed.” In this way, the Persons of the Trinity mutually establish each other and “are active together”.<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> STĂNILOAE, *The Experience of God vol. 1*, p. 264.

<sup>14</sup> Cf. STĂNILOAE, *The Experience of God vol. 1*, p. 202f

<sup>15</sup> Cf. STĂNILOAE, *The Experience of God vol. 1*, p. 257; Dumitru STĂNILOAE, *The Holy Trinity: in the beginning there was love*, Brookline: Holy Cross Orthodox Press, 2012, pp. 56-59. For Stăniloae, referring to the Fathers, the communion of three is a complete communion of joy, since the “third” is to the two as a horizon of their love, preventing their relationship from being concerned for the two alone.

<sup>16</sup> “Occasionally [...] when the love between three persons is full and equal [...] Parents look together upon their child, while the child looks simultaneously upon the faces of its parents. [...] None of them is, strictly speaking, “third” when it comes to matters of order, love, or honor.” (STĂNILOAE, *The Experience of God vol. 1*, p. 270.) Moltmann and also L. Boff remind of the use of the family imagery (e.g. the first family) to express the unity of the Trinity by the Church Fathers. Moltmann gives an example of Gregory of Nazianzen in order to talk about the Trinity. Cf. Jürgen MOLTSMANN, *Trinität und Reich Gottes: zur Gotteslehre*, München: Kaiser, 1980, p. 216. L. Boff adds also Methodius and Ephraim and observes that the aim of this imagery was to express mutual love and knowledge between the persons as well. Cf. Leonardo BOFF, *Trinity and Society*, Tunbridge Wells: Burns and Oates, 1988, p. 205f.

<sup>17</sup> STĂNILOAE, *Theology and the Church*, pp. 76-79; Cf. STĂNILOAE, *The Experience of God vol. 1*, pp. 247-263. Based on this Stăniloae concludes: “For this reason the Catholic terminology of



Being an active subject for others establishes the Trinity as a communion of perfect love, in constant movement from one subject to another. Love is understood as an essential divine act, common act of love, while the divine being is to be seen simultaneously “as unity and as relation.”<sup>18</sup> Moreover, since love is at the same time understood as transparency and openness towards others, it also implies mutual knowledge of the divine Subjects.<sup>19</sup>

Mutual love, self-giving and interrelated presence of the Persons of the Trinity suggest equality within the Trinity.<sup>20</sup> On the one hand, “the Father, as the divine “universe” lived in one mode, contains the other two modes of being which belong to this same universe, not in the sense of being perfectly equal to them, but of being identified with them,” in putting the other Person on one’s own place.<sup>21</sup>

These and similar texts<sup>22</sup> from Stanilaoe suggest a certain monarchic understanding of the Father, having a supreme role in the Trinity. Manastireanu notes rightly, that Stăniloae made these statements in the context of discussing trinitarian perichoresis.<sup>23</sup> Moltmann puts Stăniloae’s statements suggesting inequality between the Father and other two Persons of the Trinity into a perspective: “the Trinity is constituted by the

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*generation activa* and *generation passiva* – the former attributed to the Father, the latter to the Son – is foreign to Orthodox theology.” Ibid., p. 262.

<sup>18</sup> Cf. STĂNILOAE, *The Experience of God vol. 1*, p. 258; STĂNILOAE, *Theology and the Church*, p. 78.

<sup>19</sup> In this knowledge “there is given in God, simultaneously with eternity, the basis for the possibility of the knowledge of other subjects, and hence also of the creation of subjects who are limited in themselves. Through this love which gives him knowledge, God comes down to the interiority found in created limited subjects, yet by means of his love God raises them up at the same time to their interiority in him, thus opening up for them the road towards his knowledge.” (STĂNILOAE, *The Experience of God vol. 1*, p. 203)

<sup>20</sup> Cf. STĂNILOAE, *The Experience of God vol. 1*, p. 215: “Justice towards creatures has its foundation in the equality of the Trinitarian persons.” Cf. Ibid., 258: “In God there must be Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. But the persons do not change these positions among themselves. On the other hand, since the being is one and is perfect love, the relationship is that of equal to equal, not that of superior to inferior or stranger to stranger.”

<sup>21</sup> STĂNILOAE, *Theology and the Church*, p. 88. Interestingly enough, both of the last references are taken from sections entitled *(The) Holy Trinity: Structure of Supreme Love in the two works*.

<sup>22</sup> Manastireanu mentions also STĂNILOAE, *The Experience of God vol. 1*, p. 255. (Cf. Danut MANASTIREANU, *A Perichoretic Model of the Church. The Trinitarian Ecclesiology of Dumitru Stăniloae*, Saarbrücken: Lambert Academic Publishing, 2012, p. 163); Cf. STĂNILOAE, “Der dreieinige Gott”, p. 444f.

<sup>23</sup> Cf. MANASTIREANU, *A Perichoretic Model of the Church*, pp. 110; 162-165.

Father, as “source of Godhead,” but that holds only for the “constitution of the Trinity.”<sup>24</sup> The eternal life of the three Persons exists in perichoretic unity, which is constituted by the interrelations between the Persons. Stăniloae express this in naming the Father as the Initiator of the mutual affirmation of the Persons of the Trinity: “all the works of the Father are affected by the Son, and vice versa. This is how we are to understand the idea that all the divine activities are common to the three Persons. In the eternal act whereby the “I” of the other reciprocally replaces the “I” of each other Person, it is the Father who continually has the initiative.”<sup>25</sup>

In conversation with Arendt’s theory of action, her distinction between the two stages of acting could be helpful in explicating this paradox of equality. Taking an initiative and starting an action, or beginning something new, does not mean a superior position to those who join the action. It can be said that taking initiative in a non-causal divine act of love the one taking the initiative is never a sole “author” of the acting since, without the other two persons, divine act would be impossible. Moreover, according to Stăniloae, the supreme Personal reality, subsisting in a communion of persons, “decides all its own acts in communion.” It is this personal community, not the Person of the Father, which is “self-existent, super-existent, transcending all being and absolute.” This interpersonal community is “the common source of all existing acts and realities.”<sup>26</sup>

It is crucial in the Trinitarian theology of Stăniloae that God is a communion of Persons who, while open towards each other and placing the other Subjects on their own place in love, keep their identities, without being dissolved in the common. It is precisely in the preserved subjectivity of active Subjects that true communion exists, and extends beyond itself to creating other subjects as well as objects. At the same time, there is freedom within the Trinity, especially in the ways in which the three Persons are

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<sup>24</sup> MOLTSMANN, *Trinität und Reich Gottes*, p. 192. For his criticism of political and clerical monotheism, see *Ibid.*, pp. 205-220.

<sup>25</sup> STĂNILOAE, *Theology and the Church*, p. 89. Stăniloae draws from St. Athanasius and St. Gregory of Nyssa.

<sup>26</sup> STĂNILOAE, *The Experience of God vol. 1*, p. 138.

acting within the world. The three Persons are always interconnected, they are always present together and are acting together.<sup>27</sup> Nonetheless, in the perichoretic trinitarian movement each Person retains individual identity, while at the same time affirming the two other Persons in common acting.<sup>28</sup> From the intrinsic characteristic of the communion of the Trinity the other—the world—comes into existence. In the following section, the common acting in which this immanent perichoretic Trinity expresses its being towards and within the world will be discussed.

## 2. Economic Trinity

Stăniloae develops his theology of the economic Trinity based on the distinction between divine being and divine energies as stated by Dionysios the Areopagite.<sup>29</sup> Human beings are able to know those operations of God by participating in them. Thus they join in communication with God which leads towards full communion with the Trinity. “We know the God who is for us [...] In his descent to us, God communicates to us in modes adapted to our condition something of what he is in fact, leading us to stages which correspond more and more to himself.”<sup>30</sup>

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<sup>27</sup> Cf. STĂNILOAE, *The Experience of God vol. 1*, p. 274

<sup>28</sup> STĂNILOAE, *Theology and the Church*, pp. 78-79.

<sup>29</sup> Stăniloae cites his *The Divine Names* “The operations are nothing other than the attributes of God in motion – of God himself, the simple One, in a motion which is, on every occasion, specific, or again, in a number of different kinds of motion, specified and united among themselves. God himself is in each of these operations or energies, simultaneously whole, active, and beyond operation or movement. Thus his operations are what makes God’s qualities visible in creatures, creating these with qualities analogous, but infinitely inferior, to God himself, and then imparting his uncreated operations or energies to them in higher and higher degrees.” (STĂNILOAE, *The Experience of God vol. 1*, p. 125) Bria thinks that Stăniloae was the first Romanian theologian who developed this doctrine and drew from it “its theological and spiritual consequences, especially the importance of *theosis* in soteriology. He has emphasized the importance of Orthodox pneumatology for present day Christian theology and for contemporary ecumenism as well, by insisting on the close connection between the work of the Holy Spirit and the life of the community in the world.” (Ion BRIA, “A Look at Contemporary Romanian Dogmatic Theology”, in: *Sobornost No.5*, Series 6, 1972, p. 331)

<sup>30</sup> STĂNILOAE, *The Experience of God vol. 1*, pp. 126-127. God for us according to Stăniloae communicates God for us in Christ, the aspect that Bonhoeffer emphasized, but also God communicates with human beings through creation, life situations, not only through the Word and Sacraments, even though they are central also for Stăniloae. Even though, as Bordeianu observes, “[Stăniloae] does not

According to Stăniloae, the divine personal Subject in loving the other subject is transparent. In giving love, there is also a yearning to be loved reciprocally by the other.<sup>31</sup> In God there is a movement of love from one divine Person towards another. The divine love moves also towards creatures and desires the same; a loving communion and unity with them. God's love is not a one-sided affair, but awakes a loving response in human beings. God's love, whether termed *agape*, *eros* or *good*, as by Dyonysios the Areopagita,<sup>32</sup> "cannot exist where only one of the sides is a person while the other is a passive object of longing and love [...] The love by which they themselves move towards him is the love by which God moves them towards himself. Thus *eros*, as "the movement full of longing on two sides" characterizes the divine community.<sup>33</sup> So, there is not only a love for others within the Trinity but a love desiring a response from the other created subjects; to be united with them and known by them in love.

Acting by the Trinity is initiated by one of the Persons. Yet, the other two Persons always remain connected and participate together in the action. Never is any of the three Persons passive, be it in dealing with each other within the life of the Trinity or with the world. In this acting towards the world, each divine Person retains their specific

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separate clearly between the sacraments and the other prayers, the proclamation, or the good deeds of the Church. It would not be a stretch to refer to the sacramentality of all these means of obtaining and manifesting grace." (Radu BORDEIANU, *Dumitru Stăniloae: an ecumenical ecclesiology*, T & T Clark: London, 2011, p. 97)

<sup>31</sup> The Father gives himself wholly to the Son and the Son wholly to the Father. One who loves is not content with halves; he desires the other wholly and gives himself wholly. [...] Only the existence of a Third in God explains the creation of a world of many "I's". (STĂNILOAE, *Theology and the Church*, p. 93)

<sup>32</sup> Stăniloae refers to his *The Divine Names*, saying "the unifying force of good, or of love, or of *eros* lies in the fact that the divine yearning (*eros*) "brings ecstasy so that the lover belongs not to self but to the beloved." This tendency, whether it is called *good* or *agape* or *eros*, does not merely urge the creature towards God, but also God towards the creature." (STĂNILOAE, *The Experience of God vol. 1*, p. 239)

<sup>33</sup> STĂNILOAE, *The Experience of God vol. 1*, p. 242. Stăniloae criticized, what he terms, Protestant differentiation between *agape* and *eros* (for example by Nygren) where *agape* is understood as "the benevolent inclination of God towards creatures," and *eros* as "the natural attraction felt by creatures towards God," claiming there is just one kind of love, and that is that of God, who desires full communion with human beings and human love exists as a reflection of the divine *eros*. In addition, this distinction between *eros* and *agape* in his opinion also "hides the Protestant criticism of patristic thought in the name of an exaggerated conception of man's sinfulness." (Ibid., p. 244, n. 49) Bonhoeffer's interpretation of *eros* was discussed in the previous chapter.

identity, but is constantly united with the other two Persons. The examples of creation and resurrection from Stăniloae's theology will illustrate how the Persons of the Trinity also act together towards the world.<sup>34</sup>

## Creation

According to Stăniloae, God created the world by the Word, the Reason. Therefore, the world carries within itself imprints of the Logos. Moreover, "created things are the created images of the divine reasons given material form." That does not mean it is only the Logos as a particular Person of the Trinity present in the creation because, "the divine reasons are [...] rays of divine life and power which radiate from [...] the Son and Word of God as well as in the Father and the Holy Spirit. [...] In the state of these images given material form are reflected the meaning, the power, and the life of the divine reasons in their unity, which comes from the divine Logos."<sup>35</sup>

God created human beings as images of His Son, the Logos, in order to extend his paternal love to other children. They were given the soul, Spirit's *alter ego*, in order to enable their mutual communication. They were invited to respond with love to the Father's love, being united with Christ through the Spirit and as a result, participating in the life of the Trinity.<sup>36</sup> Consequently, all the Persons of the Trinity are active in the creation of the world and human beings, leaving their imprints on their past as well as their future.

## Resurrection

Jesus was not only an object of resurrection. As the Son of God he raised himself from the dead cooperating with the Father and the Spirit. Christ could not have been an object

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<sup>34</sup> Bordeianu explains, how Stăniloae puts Crucifixion into a trinitarian context. Cf. BORDEIANU, *Dumitru Stăniloae*, p. 118f.

<sup>35</sup> STĂNILOAE, *The Experience of God*, vol. 3, p. 1.

<sup>36</sup> Cf. STĂNILOAE, *The Experience of God*, vol.2, pp. 67-68; STĂNILOAE, *The Holy Trinity*, pp. 49-50.

of another Person's activity. "In this common act of supreme pneumatization of the body, the supreme communion between the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit is achieved. Only because of this full pneumatization will the Spirit irradiate into the world from the Son's body, the Spirit who proceeds from the Father and will be sent into the world through Christ as man. For Christ is not passive in this irradiation of the Spirit from His body."<sup>37</sup>

Stăniloae takes the Chalcedonian dogma of the two natures of Christ to its fullness and draws its consequences for the teaching of resurrection. He does this polemically with what he calls "Western theology" and its claim that Jesus Christ was risen by the Father and the Spirit being himself passive.<sup>38</sup> This illustrates, that according to Stăniloae "the supreme communion" between the persons of the Trinity was reached by their mutual active cooperation (common action). In addition, it is the supreme communion which human beings are called to reach in cooperating with the Trinity.

From the previous discussion several main points from Stăniloae's theology of the Trinity can be identified. Divine Persons are Subjects in a mutual communion. The love of God, as a movement from one Person to the other within the Trinity, exceeds this communion and leads to the creation of objects (nature) and human personal subjects in the Trinity's own image. Persons are free to love one another as Subjects and to freely love the world. They never act alone and at the same time, they all act in unison, towards each other and towards the world, keeping their distinct personalities. Therefore, common acting is characteristic of both the immanent and the economic life of the Trinity, as well as human relationship with God developed by Stăniloae in the doctrine of *theosis*.

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<sup>37</sup> STĂNILOAE, *The Experience of God*, vol. 3, p. 136.

<sup>38</sup> Cf. STĂNILOAE, *The Experience of God*, vol. 3, pp. 134-148.

### 3. Theosis as Human Cooperation with God<sup>39</sup>

God created human beings so that they may grow into the communion with the Trinity by cooperating with God's grace and initiative. Even though God as Trinity remains a mystery as "the supreme Apophatic reality," the communion with this God represents "the highest stage of the true spiritual life and the goal for which the Christian as a spiritual being yearns continuously."<sup>40</sup> Stăniloae, in line with the Church Fathers, names this intimate communion with God *theosis* or divinization. Even before the fall human beings "would have advanced naturally towards the goal of eternal perfection in God and been strengthened in communion with him, even while on earth."<sup>41</sup> This goal of perfection Stăniloae also terms a growth towards likeness.<sup>42</sup>

Each Person of the Trinity is actively cooperating in drawing human beings into itself.<sup>43</sup> More specifically, deification is enabled by the Person of Christ who restored

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<sup>39</sup> Stăniloae's ecumenical spirit and work can be seen also in his attempt to build a bridge between the orthodox doctrine of *theosis* and Luther's emphasis on salvation achieved through Christ: "While it recognizes the importance of Luther's emphasis on the condition of salvation which Christ has achieved for us, the Orthodox church also believes that man can grow continually in the new life of Christ as it is described by the Scriptures and the Fathers, and that the foundation for this growth, the foundation of man's new and true life, is the relationship of peace between man and God now experienced consciously by man as a result of Christ's sacrifice [...] Once we perceive that justification is conceived by Lutheran teaching as something organically united to peace, then we can say that the righteousness which Christ gives as a gift to every man is just such a hidden reality...this peace and the righteousness which it implies must have the nature of a power." (STĂNILOAE, *Theology and the Church*, 185-186). The following study discusses this topic in Bonhoeffer: Martin, HAILER. "Rechtfertigung als Vergottung? Eine Auseinandersetzung mit der finnischen Luther-Deutung und ihrer systematisch-theologischen Adaption." *Lutherjahrbuch* 77, (January 1, 2010), pp. 239-267. *ATLA Religion Database with ATLASerials*, EBSCOhost (accessed February 16, 2013).

<sup>40</sup> STĂNILOAE, *Theology and the Church*, p. 75.

<sup>41</sup> STĂNILOAE, *The Experience of God vol. 1*, p. 16.

<sup>42</sup> The image of God put into human beings at creation is their active potential, which, even though it "has been weakened because it has not been activated fully in the work of growing into the likeness [...] is never totally lost." The image of God remains passive in human beings, a potential waiting to be activated. "It is in deification that the image finds its own fulfillment as the highest possible likeness with God. [...] Likeness is not just the final state of deification; it is also the entire path along which the image develops through the agency of the human will stimulated and assisted by the grace of God." (STĂNILOAE, *The Experience of God, Vol. 2*, pp. 89-90.)

<sup>43</sup> "Through the incarnate Son we enter into filial communion with the Father, while through the Spirit we pray to the Father or speak with him as sons. If in the incarnate Son we have become sons by grace, in the Spirit we gain the consciousness and boldness that come from being sons." (STĂNILOAE, *The Experience of God vol. 1*, p. 248) Radu Bordeianu reminds us that "Stăniloae's considerations of our status as free children of the Father were based on the work of his friend Jürgen Moltmann, who affirmed

and perfected human nature by actualizing, in himself, both human and divine natures in the “form of the cooperation, or of a communication, of the properties of the two natures [...] as a subject who subjects the will of His inferior part to the will of the superior one and imprints the first with the latter without suppressing the inferior part.”<sup>44</sup> It is the salvation directed to Christ’s human nature<sup>45</sup> that is extended to the human nature as such. Human beings are invited and drawn to participate by union with Christ on his divine nature, thus being divinized in a gradual fashion.<sup>46</sup> In Baptism (which leads toward the Eucharist), the human being is first united with Christ, and given the gift of good, which is to be further developed in strengthening virtues and weakening passions by human cooperation.<sup>47</sup>

Why does Stăniloae put an emphasis on cooperation, or communication between God and human beings? There are two main reasons for this, namely, God is not only

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that the Son became a human being so that he could see other human beings his brothers and sisters,” reading Moltmann’s book *Trinität und Reich Gottes*. (BORDEIANU, *Dumitru Stăniloae*, p. 71)

<sup>44</sup> STĂNILOAE, *The Experience of God*, vol. 3, p. 60. Stăniloae stresses the importance of Christ’s incarnation, life, cross, resurrection and ascension for salvation understood as communion with God, over against what he identified as the Western satisfaction theory, which he criticized as being too narrow in paying attention exclusively to the cross of Christ. (Cf. *Ibid.*, pp.111-123; STĂNILOAE, *Theology and the Church*, pp. 187-204.)

<sup>45</sup> “The direction of His work of salvation toward human beings is an extension of His work of salvation upon His human nature.” (STĂNILOAE, *The Experience of God*, vol.3, p. 88)

<sup>46</sup> Bartos identifies a contradiction in Stăniloae’s theology of *theosis* rooted in his emphasis on the hypostatic union between God and humankind and on the other and, while asserting, “mankind does not encounter all of God as He is in Himself.” At the same time Bartos points to another problem concerning the distinction between the being of God and humans, claiming, “While there is compatibility [among them], as shown in the incarnation, God’s being is of a different order to mankind’s being.” He also believes, Stăniloae does not always keep the distinction between them “through his stress on the idea of deification-as-participation.” (Emil BARTOS, *Deification in Eastern Orthodox theology: an evaluation and critique of the theology of Dumitru Stăniloae*, Carlisle: Paternoster periodicals, 2002, pp. 190-191).

<sup>47</sup> “Certainly, we must work together with Christ who dwells in us through the holy mysteries; otherwise we aren’t saved.” (Dumitru STĂNILOAE, *Orthodox Spirituality: A Practical guide for the Faithful and a Definitive Manual for the Scholar*, St. Tikhon’s Seminary Press: South Canaan, 2003, p. 61) “So the beginning of good is put in us by God through Baptism. All our virtuous life is nothing but an unfolding of this good put there by God. Before any virtue whatsoever we must have the faith won or strengthened at Baptism. But its efficiency depends on our cooperation, so that we can advance on the way of the virtues toward perfection. Faith, therefore, is a virtue too, a good, but it shows itself as a good by our cooperation. At the beginning, this is only the simple will to believe and not to do something. [...] But from the moment somebody wants to believe, he has started in fact to believe, and the grace hidden in him from Baptism, or faith as a virtuality, has been awakened to actuality, by the fact that man has made his contribution.” (*Ibid.*, p. 124)



merciful, but also just, encouraging and having regard for human effort,<sup>48</sup> and secondly, human beings are created in the image of God as subjects, not as passive “receptacles of his mercy.”<sup>49</sup> God does not act upon human beings, rather effects an influence upon human life, but since God’s divine acts take “the form of a dialogue between God and man,” God is the one waiting for the person’s response. “God has regard for what man needs but he also has regard for man’s acceptance or rejection of revelation.”<sup>50</sup> Thus, God’s love is fully respectful of human beings, as Persons towards persons, Subjects towards subjects. Furthermore, Christ as God “wishes to achieve, in his humanity, intimacy with all men as partners equal to himself, and to maintain the personal identity of each.”<sup>51</sup>

It means human beings are entrusted with an active role in this journey towards their anticipated mutual communion; in both divinization and humanization through Christ and the Holy Spirit towards the Father. Therefore, they are free to respond to God’s love, who even gives them time and space in order not to force them to return their love.<sup>52</sup> Human persons are, and remain, subjects in their striving for eternity and unity with the Trinity. Even though mercy can be received only passively, it helps people to work actively, with their own effort on their spiritual growth.

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<sup>48</sup> Stăniloae in this context differentiates between the concepts of God’s mercy and justice, which God manifests always together. Only a just God would not be free. God is equally merciful to everyone, yet is just to each according to his/her justice. This means that they receive as much blessedness from God as they are able to according to their own efforts. People receive mercy as a gift, but the reception itself is to be connected with an effort on their part. (cf. STĂNILOAE, *The Experience of God vol. 1*, pp. 215-216; 221)

<sup>49</sup> “If he were only merciful, God would have no regard for human efforts nor would he encourage them. Human beings would be reduced to the state of being passive receptacles of his mercy. The created world would have no true and consistent reality and human beings could not grow through their own effort.” (STĂNILOAE, *The Experience of God, vol. 1*, p. 215.)

<sup>50</sup> STĂNILOAE, *Theology and the Church*, p. 113.

<sup>51</sup> STĂNILOAE, *The Experience of God vol.1*, p. 37. Also, a certain view of sin and the good lie behind this position.

<sup>52</sup> “Love is the gift of oneself to another, and the waiting for the full return of that gift from the other in response. Only in a complete and immediate response to the offer of love is love fully realized and full communion attained between the two. The interval of waiting for the response is time. As such, time represents a spiritual distance between persons, while eternity is beyond all distance or separation.” (Dumitru STĂNILOAE, *Eternity and Time*, SLG Press: Oxford, 2001, p. 3) For Stăniloae’s discussion of the concept of time and space, see: STĂNILOAE, *The Experience of God vol. 1*, pp. 160-176. The existence of space is also an indication, that God is not unipersonal. (cf. *Ibid.*, p. 173)

Because of the unity of the divinity and humanity in Christ, this growing process of divinization constitutes also the process of humanization: “only in God can man become fully human.” God’s children are to strive for virtue in the freedom from passions given in Christ. This struggle “means living for others [...] The virtue of love represents the culmination of goodness, transparency, and communicability,” including transparency and spiritualization of one’s body.<sup>53</sup> Living for others is the opposite of sin, which places the human ego in the center.<sup>54</sup> In this way, the common life of the Trinity as a life for others is realized in its image, in an interpersonal communion. The image of God in human beings “discloses itself and becomes actual” and grows into God’s likeness not in self-sufficient individual persons, but in the human communion, drawing on the love between the divine Persons.<sup>55</sup> Therefore, there is no escaping fellow humans and cooperating with them on the journey towards realizing communion with God.

#### **4. Inter-human Spiritual *Perichoresis***

Human relations have the potential of taking the form of the loving acting of the Persons of the Trinity for each other, in the transparency of their “I’s,” in a kind of human *perichoresis*. Stăniloae compares a “non-causal reciprocity” between divine Persons to “reciprocal spiritual encounters among human persons (*perichoresis*) where each person as a consequence bears the other in himself.”<sup>56</sup> That is because “we all have within ourselves the impulse to transcend self and to be in the other,” without confusing ourselves with her/him, which is only the work of sin ending up in annihilating others.

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<sup>53</sup> “And in his love he gives us too the power to overcome ourselves with all our selfish impulses.

Through Christ we have the power to die to selfish passions and appetites and to die to ourselves; but also have the power to live a new life, a life triumphant in us, born in our spirit but revealed in our body as well.” (STĂNILOAE, *Theology and the Church*, p. 200)

<sup>54</sup> This battle brings with it suffering, which is unavoidable on the journey towards one’s deification and humanization. (STĂNILOAE, *The Experience of God*, vol. 1, p. 227f.)

<sup>55</sup> STĂNILOAE, *The Experience of God*, vol. 2, p. 94.

<sup>56</sup> STĂNILOAE, *Theology and the Church*, p. 105. This concept reminds us of Bonhoeffer’s theological understanding of *Stellvertretung*, when Christians are called to act on behalf of others.

The Holy Spirit mediates loving mutual relationships, being between them as “a living reality” uniting them as brothers with Jesus Christ as their Brother.<sup>57</sup>

Could these “spiritual” perichoretic encounters be a model for “bodily” encounters in the form of being for one another and of acting in common reflecting the life of the Trinity? It is not only possible, but also even inevitable for two main reasons. First, since in the person of Jesus Christ, including his body, divine and human hypostasis, God and the world were indivisibly united and, secondly, since the Persons of the Trinity act together not only in its immanent but also economic life reaching “a supreme level of communion.” Human beings are called and led to actualize their image of the Trinity in their relationships with God and among each other. Besides, following their model, God-Man, human beings are also to introduce the “nature as a whole within the communion of transfigured humankind”. In this way, they are “to bring about on the human plane a life of communion similar to that of the Trinity and arising from its power.”<sup>58</sup>

The Church, as the Body of Christ is the realization of this communion, moreover it is the “supernatural revelation concluded in Christ,” forming the faithful into the likeness of Christ, into the communion of the Trinity. There is a continuing activity of the revelation in the church and through the Church in the world, sharing the warmth of the Holy Spirit with others.<sup>59</sup> This communion is realized in mutual service to one another, in existing for others, even bringing a sacrifice for them, as Christ did.

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<sup>57</sup> STĂNILOAE, *Theology and the Church*, pp. 62-63. Stăniloae describes the Holy Spirit also as “a kind of “midst”, a “milieu” for the faithful. Even the egoist, contends Stăniloae, “cannot escape from ontological, spiritual relationship with others,” defining himself/herself in opposition to them, “and consequently it is easy to lead him back toward positive preoccupation with them.” (STĂNILOAE, *The Experience of God*, vol. 2, pp. 91-92.)

<sup>58</sup> STĂNILOAE, *The Experience of God*, vol. 2, p. 101.

<sup>59</sup> Stăniloae expresses the existence of the church also in terms of communication: “The Church is the dialogue of God with the faithful through Christ in the Holy Spirit [it is] an intimate dialogue through the incarnation of the Son of God as man and begins to spread through the Church.” (STĂNILOAE, *The Experience of God*, vol. 1, p. 38). Based on the importance of *perichoresis* for the life of the Trinity and therefore for his ecclesiology, Manastireanu suggests, in discussion with Stăniloae, a perichoretic model of the church, which at the same time serves as a lens to uncover “certain inconsistencies in his trinitarian construction.” Even though he believes they are based in his “unreserved commitment to the Romanian Orthodox Church.” (MANASTIREANU, *A Perichoretic Model*, p. 304)

However, it is a love yearning to be loved back. This love creates a community which is unthinkable without loving reciprocity. Human persons are to be, like the Persons of the Trinity, active within the movement of love within their community. Even though Bonhoeffer understands love as expecting nothing in return, he does emphasize the others' freedom in being served, as was explicated earlier. Human beings, as subjects, remain active even when being acted for.

Each human being is a bodily existence, which has the capacity to transcend the body spiritually, yet only to transform it to a more divinized and humanized body transparent of the Spirit. This transcendence is realized not in a detachment from human relations and the world, but in cultivating of virtues not in theory or just in a person's heart, but within the human community. Love first "unifies the individual man," bringing him into unity with Christ in overcoming passions, which are rooted in person's self-centeredness. By overcoming egoism, human beings are brought into mutual unity, which "takes them to a laudable equality, because each draws the other to himself in his intentions and he prefers him to himself."<sup>60</sup> Thus, God's love liberates human beings to freedom for others and the life for others creates relationships between equals. Therefore, human interpersonal reality participates in the communion arising out of common acting inescapably belonging into the supreme communion of love. According to Stăniloae therefore, unity, diversity and equality are not threatening to communion, but just the opposite. They are integral aspects of it. Nevertheless, in light of Bonhoeffer's view of equality, the question needs to be raised, if Stăniloae thinks also of invisible equality and in addition, how is common acting of the Trinity reflected in its image, the human community.

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<sup>60</sup> Stăniloae expresses this new unity also in terms of the unity of the logos: "Each has become one with the other and all with all, or better, with God rather than between themselves, manifesting in them the same logos of being both according to nature and will." (STĂNILOAE, *Orthodox Spirituality*, p. 323)

## 5. Human Inter-acting

### 5.1. Common Acting Regarding the World

Stăniloae uses the explicit language of cooperation mainly when talking about the human activity in human work regarding the nature and striving for justice. “The world is not so rigid as is sometimes claimed,” affirms Stăniloae in a discussion with Bultmann, “[on] the contrary it too is open to the transforming power of man.” God has given people freedom in dealing with the creation and to discern which are “those creative acts which introduce beneficial changes into the world, society and human relations.”<sup>61</sup> In fact, “the meaning of nature is fulfilled by the use which man makes of it in pursuing the needs he has chosen,” and thus is able to be a vehicle for spiritual progress.<sup>62</sup> This decision is to be done with others by mutual listening and common choice – in solidarity with each other and with the nature as such.

“Created things cannot be used and understood unless they are processed and deciphered in a common collaboration imposed by circumstances.”<sup>63</sup> This dialogical cooperation, having both theoretical and practical dimensions, represents and enriches love between those involved. In it, new meanings within creation get uncovered as they get a new form in people’s appropriating it to their needs.<sup>64</sup> Cooperation encompasses a common joint effort of human beings in dealing with the nature and the use of natural resources. Even thinking the Logos and discovering the *logoi* of the world, not just their usage, is to be done together with others and the Creator.<sup>65</sup>

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<sup>61</sup> STĂNILOAE, *Theology and the Church*, p. 114. In another place, Stăniloae says: “Orthodox theology has become a theology of the world, returning through this aspect to the tradition of the Eastern Fathers themselves who had a vision of the cosmos recapitulated in God. [...] The world is presented to man not as a closed and determined system, but as a constant and infinitely varied appeal to human freedom.” (Ibid., p. 224)

<sup>62</sup> STĂNILOAE, *Theology and the Church*, p. 225.

<sup>63</sup> STĂNILOAE, *The Experience of God*, vol.3, p. 5. 224-225.

<sup>64</sup> *The Experience of God*, vol.3, pp. 4-5.

<sup>65</sup> “The supreme Personal reality increasingly reveals the meanings hidden within created things and makes them flexible by combining them through providence within new connections and circumstances in collaboration with us.” (STĂNILOAE, *The Experience of God*, vol.3, 4)

In Stăniloae's view, human collaboration is needed in the matters concerning political, social and international relations as well. Love strives "to secure equality and justice among men and nations, and to promote continuous mutual exchange animated by love." (Lasting reconciliation is not purely formal peace.)<sup>66</sup> Stăniloae appeals to Christians to fight for justice, equality, brotherhood and peace based on the faith, that "The universe belongs to Christ; it is mysteriously attached to his crucified and risen body. Yet it also belongs to men, to Christians and non-Christians alike who suffer and advance towards salvation." All to whom the world belongs are to participate jointly on its transfiguration through its exchange among each other in love.<sup>67</sup> As Bria notes, *theosis* has its ethical dimension in "the transfiguration of our style of life, and implies concern for one another, mutual sharing, dialogue and openness."<sup>68</sup>

Since all people are images of God and adopted children of God in Christ, "in the face of every man we must see and love some aspect of the face of Christ, indeed the very face of Christ himself."<sup>69</sup> Christ identified himself especially with those who need our help. Therefore, no person can be treated as someone less than others. Everyone is potentially a person for whom I need to sacrifice myself, thus responding to a call for

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<sup>66</sup> STĂNILOAE, *Theology and the Church*, p. 210.

<sup>67</sup> *Theology and the Church*, p. 211. "The Christian has a duty, to fight on behalf of justice because the presence of injustice can appear to provide a justification for eternal death, while the removal of injustice deprives eternal death of any justification. One who struggles to end injustice follows in the path of Christ who was the first to use justice as a means to deprive death of its justification. Moreover, Christ gives us the power to do the same because our own struggle for justice depends on his power." (Ibid.)

<sup>68</sup> Ion BRIA, "The Creative Vision of D. Stăniloae: An Introduction to his theological thought", in: *The Ecumenical Review* 33 (January 1981), p. 56. Bria rightly states that "Stăniloae opposes the excessive privatization of piety which he sees reflected in Christian existentialism in the West. He insists on the ethical implication of Christian piety and on the quality of personal relationships as a mode of existence. [...] The continuing invocation of the name of Jesus, the so-called "prayer of Jesus", is incompatible with closing the door on neighbors. Theology and spirituality cannot be separated from a clear and sharp witness to Christ in society and in the world." (Ibid.)

<sup>69</sup> STĂNILOAE, *Theology and the Church*, p. 206. "In Jesus, our neighbor has the face of God and God incarnate has the face of our neighbor. Jesus bestows on each of our neighbors an eternal value, which must be loved without limit." (STĂNILOAE, "The Faces of Our Fellow Human Beings", p. 31.) Stăniloae compares love to "the staff of Moses which draws water for the thirsty from the dry rock. It is in this loving gesture that Christ's power lies. Christ is the love hat opens other people's hearts, lovingly giving them to drink, awakening a response of love welling up in their hearts." (Ibid., p. 34)

help.<sup>70</sup> At the same time, I entrust myself into his/her help. Because all people are loved by God by the same love, all of them have their source in God and are siblings. From that follows their equality<sup>71</sup> and the need for justice, understood as “proper relation among us and between us and God, is a reality and a full reciprocal honoring, it is the condition for open, unhindered communicability.”<sup>72</sup>

Agreeing with Moltmann, Stăniloae believes Christian faith and hope cannot be passive in this world and towards this world.<sup>73</sup> Stăniloae bases Christian *diakonia* in the world in soteriology, centering it on the work of Christ. (It needs to be remembered, that within the larger picture of Stăniloae’s theology, soteriology is understood within triadology; namely it is the Father who in Christ unites all God’s children in the Trinitarian communion, including the created world as it is gradually transformed by people.) This reaches the whole cosmos, not only the salvation of individuals. Each aspect of Christ’s work, of his incarnation, cross and resurrection, gradually led to union of all things in Christ.<sup>74</sup> In Christ, human beings are united with God and with one another and cooperation of persons growing in selfless love regains its power. Also through the work and sacrifice of humanity the world is being gradually united with Christ.

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<sup>70</sup> STĂNILOAE, *Theology and the Church*, p. 208. Stăniloae uses an interesting image from the Fathers, who compared this world to “a fair where we make purchase of the Kingdom of Heaven. Anyone who does not take part in the fair by trading with other men, anyone who produces no fruit by his labor, who develops no talent by his activity, will leave this life with an empty soul. We purchase the Kingdom of Heaven from our fellow men both with the return we have won from our labors and also with the capabilities which our faith in Christ has conferred upon us. We can even acquire the Kingdom more readily from other men than we can from our fellow believers, because our service and generosity in their case demand of us greater effort and disinterestedness. Men who “love those who love you [...] if you do good to those who do good to you [...] even sinners do the same.” (Lk 6.32-33) Such men as these are trapped within a vicious circle; they contribute nothing to the spiritual progress of relations between men and nothing to the spiritual progress of the world.” (Ibid., pp. 207-208)

<sup>71</sup> “By making us sons of the Father inasmuch as we are united in the Son, the Spirit is our power of communion and the bridge of communion among ourselves, and yet he does not destroy the liberty we have as sons who are equal in honor before the heavenly Father.” (STĂNILOAE, *Theology and the Church*, p. 106)

<sup>72</sup> STĂNILOAE, *The Experience of God vol. 1*, p. 220.

<sup>73</sup> STĂNILOAE, *Theology and the Church*, p. 179. Stăniloae quotes from Moltmann’s book *Theology of Hope*.

<sup>74</sup> Cf. STĂNILOAE, *Theology and the Church*, pp. 187-202. Stăniloae refers also to Eph 1,10: “as a plan for the fullness of time, to unite all things in him [Christ], things in heaven and things on earth.”

All the motives which lie behind obligations which Christians have towards non-Christians, are centered on the work of Christ on behalf of humanity leading it to the fullness of the Kingdom of God.<sup>75</sup> They express Stăniloae's insight, that equality, peace and justice cannot be separated from one another because they spring from love aiming at reconciliation. "Jesus supports struggle for justice," and thus, those who are deprived of it, are "justified in rebuking those who are unjust, those who trample on justice for their own benefit and protesting against their deeds." This primarily "belongs to love of neighbor," and therefore one is to call for the strife for justice on behalf of those deprived of it.<sup>76</sup> Thus, Stăniloae is reluctant, similarly to Bonhoeffer, to encourage Christian acting when striving for one's own rights. Rather he shifts the emphasis to acting for others. Acting for one's own benefit would imply for both theologians, selfish acting.

For Stăniloae this kind of cooperation in work, science and justice concerns, all human beings, regardless of their Christian affiliation. Therefore, he invites Christians to join others from outside of their communities in a common effort. Why are all people capable of such an undertaking in his opinion? Firstly, as was already explicated, all human beings are created in the image of God. They are to grow towards God's likeness, spiritual and higher ends, desiring a true fulfillment of their being. This also occurs when dealing with nature. Secondly, sin did not pervert human beings completely.<sup>77</sup> They are still able to do good and to love. Moreover, any expression of

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<sup>75</sup> They could be summarized as following: 1. Live in the world and at the same transcending point to the true goal of its progress; 2/ in the face of every human being we must see and love the face of Christ; 3/ Christ's work confirms value of human life on earth; 4/ in Christ's love people are to respond to every cry of help made by their fellow human beings; 5/ love cannot tolerate inequality; 6/ reconciliation means lasting peace, equality and justice; 7/ Christians need to make contribution to peace and equality also on international level and its structures; 8/ material universe needs to be treated as a means of communication with God. (Cf. STĂNILOAE, *Theology and the Church*, pp. 204-212)

<sup>76</sup> STĂNILOAE, *The Experience of God vol. 1*, pp. 218-219.

<sup>77</sup> STĂNILOAE, *Theology and the Church*, pp. 216-217; 224-225.



love, goodness, generosity, help and even sacrifice has its source in the love of God in Christ.<sup>78</sup>

Then, there are further questions which stem from Stăniloae's position: What form is the struggle for justice, peace, and equality supposed to take from the side of the church? What is the church called to do when there is a conflict between its message and the state's actions or laws? What should be done regarding collaborators from among the politicians, priests and high-church officials with the Ceausescu regime (primarily its secret police, the *Securitate*), who still held positions in state or the Church?

During a series of interviews with Stăniloae during 1992, Sorin Dumitrescu asked such questions. Should not "the Church deliver a speech on guilt [...] theologize a little on guilt?" He was pointing to a misuse of the Christian message of forgiveness done by Romanian political leadership saying, "Look, we are the real Christians, because we do not punish anybody." On that account, no one was held responsible for killing young people protesting against the regime of Ceausescu in December 1989 or other crimes committed during those years. Stăniloae denied that the church should have unmasked the perpetrators (he himself did not name the most brutal prison guards who tortured him): "The Church cannot publicly condemn anybody, because confession is an intimate matter."<sup>79</sup> Stăniloae eventually admitted, that the church was culpable by its

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<sup>78</sup> STĂNILOAE, *Theology and the Church*, p. 208. Any sacrifice one man makes for another in this world comes from the sacrificial consciousness and power of Christ, from the power of his loving *kenosis*. Stăniloae believes that, "Even while the human being is mastered by evil, it is still the case that he almost always retains in himself the remnants of good, resistance to evil, power to return to the good, power to check evil and repent of it. [...] Christian faith holds that alone the demonic spirits no longer retain any remnant of good in themselves. For them evil has become a "second nature." (STĂNILOAE, *The Experience of God*, vol.2., p. 149) Bartos criticizes Stăniloae's theology of sin, which is understood as an infection or disease healed by salvific work of Christ. That, according to Bartos, questions the meaning of Jesus' cross, which turns to be "more a revelation of mercy than a vicarious substitution," and to resistance of the idea of penal substitution. "The persistent criticism is that the victory motif found in Stăniloae tends to overlook sin and guilt and to shift the emphasis to mortality, finiteness, and death. [...] In Stăniloae's view, the incarnation has to be seen in terms of God's purpose for man rather than primarily in terms of what was necessary in order to save man from his sin. The immediate premise of the incarnation is not sin and redemption, but death and deification." (BARTOS, *Deification*, pp. 235-236)

<sup>79</sup> Henkel points out, that Stăniloae's theology does not include the notion of collective guilt. Guilt is strictly personal category, applying only to individuals. (Jürgen HENKEL, *Eros und Ethos: Mensch*,

collaboration saying: “What can we do? There is a long road from teaching to practice.” The church representatives are only sinful people. Stăniloae implies they do not have moral authority to speak up on those issues in which they themselves are failing. Nevertheless, their mission to be personal examples for the Church and society remains the same. In order to avoid being accused of hypocrisy, the church, should not become “a force in history itself,” meaning identifying a specific “government or party is sinful.” This could be said about all of them anyway.<sup>80</sup>

Turcescu commented on Stăniloae’s position this way: “While the eighty-nine-year-old Stăniloae proved to be remarkably vivid, the interview showed that after forty-five years of Communist repression, Stăniloae was unable to distinguish Christian love from Christian justice and to realize the necessity not only of the former but also of the latter.”<sup>81</sup> It could also be said, Stăniloae does not differentiate issues from their political

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*Gottesdienstliche Gemeinschaft und Nation als Adressaten Theologischer Ethik bei Dumitru Stăniloae*, Münster: LIT, 2003, p. 315) According to Ica, Stăniloae had to “pay a price” to be able to return to his work (teach, publish articles and books and later to travel abroad), after he was released from prison in 1963. He wrote several “commissioned” articles “with dubious argumentation on the ideological and practical ‘convergence’ of Orthodox communitarian morality and the ‘new’ collectivistic realities in Socialist Romania” and also articles denouncing “the Romanian Greek-Catholic (Uniate) Church.” ICA, “Stăniloae, Dumitru”, p. 529.

<sup>80</sup> Lucian TURCESCU, “Dumitru Stăniloae: Seven Mornings with Father Stăniloae”, in: *The teachings of modern Orthodox Christianity on law, politics, and human nature*, John WITTE (Jr) – Frank S. ALEXANDER, New York: Columbia university press, 2007, pp. 337-339. In another text, Stăniloae writes that “the progress in the good occurs through the struggle against evil,” which is inevitably equivocal. (Cf. Charles MILLER, *The gift of the world: an introduction to the theology of Dumitru Stăniloae*, T. & T. Clark: Edinburgh, 2000, p. 192) In the interview, Stăniloae leaves the impression, as if the church should not get involved in politics, precisely because such an effort is inevitably ambiguous.

<sup>81</sup> Lucian TURCESCU, “Dumitru Stăniloae (1903-1993): Commentary”, in: *The teachings of modern Orthodox Christianity on law, politics, and human nature*, John WITTE, (Jr) – Frank S.ALEXANDER, New York: Columbia university press, 2007, p. 310. Nevertheless, as Bordeianu states, Stăniloae’s “beginnings as a publicist were actually primarily dedicated to social issues, and less to theology,” as he was the editor of the church magazine *Telegraful Roman* in Sibiu (1934-44). (Cf. BORDEIANU, *Dumitru Stăniloae*, p. 7) In the 1930s, Stăniloae joined a heated political discussion—the so-called great debate—where his theological writings on nation and nationalism are rooted. “The Romanian ‘intelligentsia’ was deeply divided by the conflict between champions of a rapid modernization of Romania through the adoption of the standards of western democratic civilization and the supporters of a national traditionalist, rural Orthodox country ruled by a right-wing, authoritarian regime.” (Cf. ICA, Jr, “Stăniloae, Dumitru”, p. 528) Due to his peasant origin, Stăniloae “associated naturally with the nationalist Orthodox circle of intellectuals orbiting round the literary review *Gândirea*.” He became friends with its editor-in-chief, Nichifor Crainic, who was also a leader of the Iron Guard, the Romanian fascist, anti-Semitic movement. (Cf. TURCESCU, “Dumitru Stăniloae (1903-1993)”, p. 298) From this time come his theological writings on nation and nationalism collected in *Orthodoxy and Romanianism* (1939). Ica asserts, his

representatives. Why does he not suggest a direction for Christian or church's acting in the case of a conflict between the state's policies or lack of them and Christian vocation to reconciliation? In his writings referred to above, such an explicit discussion is not to be expected, since they were written in the time of persecution. Based on the interview, the church is to proclaim the need of justice, equality and peace—be personal example, help, give words of consolation, listen to confession, administer forgiveness, penance. These are all expressions of spiritual mission and care. Nevertheless, addressing concrete socio-political issues, in this case, the desire for reconciliation within a nation, is considered an attempt to make history and thus, unacceptable.<sup>82</sup>

Next, the question will be raised, what role does cooperation and common acting have in Stăniloae's theology of the church, which has as its structure the Trinitarian community.

## 5.2. Communal Acting in the Church

Stăniloae basis cooperation in human interdependency and complementarity, which he views as a consequence of the variety among human beings each needing the other for the talents and abilities one does not have himself or herself. This co-dependence has its roots in the gift of the creation itself. It is found in the whole cosmos. "Every created entity is a part of the whole which is the universal "reason" corresponding to and in union with the uncreated Logos. Understood in this way nothing is self-sufficient or complete in itself."<sup>83</sup> These particularities of the world are to find their unity in Christ

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views were "not explicitly connected with right-wing political extremism and authoritarianism. It was, rather, more in the spirit of the Orthodox nationalist movement promoted in the nineteenth century by the celebrated Metropolitan of Sibiu, Andrei Saguna (1808-73)." (Cf. ICA, Jr, "Stăniloae, Dumitru", p. 528)

<sup>82</sup> Bonhoeffer wrote something resembling this stance of Stăniloae in 1933, in his essay "Die Kirche vor der Judenfrage," saying "the history is not done by the church, but by the state." However, only the church knows what the state is really about, pointing to the coming of Christ into the middle of history. From this center the church needs to speak up in the public-political arena. Cf. BONHOEFFER, *Gesammelte Schriften II*, p. 45.

<sup>83</sup> STĂNILOAE, *Theology and the Church*, pp. 68-69. "Each has a more particular gift which the others need, and certain undeveloped potentialities in itself which demand the presence of others if they

through the activity of human beings within their communion. Every individual needs other human beings to discover and develop his/her gifts and those of the nature. This takes place only in a community where they are put into mutual relations and service, thus enabling each other's growth.<sup>84</sup> The opposite would result in corrupting not only human nature as such, but also the entire cosmic nature, since the two are indivisible from each other. Human beings, and also the world, are co-dependent on the effort and treatment through others.

This dependency on the Creator and each other was distorted by the Fall. It is re-established in the church, the Body of Christ, within which the Holy Spirit, living in each part, unites human beings with Christ. This enables them to participate in their life together with the Father. In church, the particular members retain their individuality. At the same time, they are "members of one another." The church represents the organic unity of its diverse and particular members without their destruction or annihilation. It retains their uniqueness and thus enriches the whole. The individuality and diversity need to remain within the Church, because without a particular gift, the whole organism would be limited and particular needs remained unfulfilled. Moreover, each individual needs others, because it is only in their mutual exchange of gifts that they grow. The functioning of the Body of Christ is the goal on which different members of the church participate led and united by the Holy Spirit. Thus, the complementarity of various gifts

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are to be developed. Each is universal in potency only, and can become universal in act, although without ever ceasing to be itself, only when surrounded by and in communion with all men and all things." This essay is entitled "The Holy Spirit and the Sobornicity of the Church," in which Stăniloae was discussing Lossky's theology and pointed out the importance of the Trinity and especially the Holy Spirit for the existence and life of the Church. (Ibid., pp. 45-71)

<sup>84</sup> Cf. STĂNILOAE, *Theology and the Church*, pp. 84-85. "Serving other persons he commits himself freely and, through the effort of bringing joy to others, he himself grows in freedom and in the spiritual content of his being." The others remain and "grow as sources for an inexhaustible warmth of love and of thoughts that are ever new, brought forth and sustained by the reciprocal love of these persons, a love that remains always creative, always in search of new ways of manifesting itself." (STĂNILOAE, *The Experience of God vol. 1*, p. 9-10)

of the Holy Spirit, in various members of the church, is crucial for its life and existence as such.<sup>85</sup>

In this spirit, Stăniloae clarifies Chrysostom's distinction between the particular and common function. He contends that these two functions can be held apart only theoretically, since the individual members are indivisible from the whole and vice versa. Individuals need the help of the whole organism to be able to accomplish their task, and at the same time, the organism cannot work otherwise than through its individual members. Therefore, "in reality, it is precisely as long as each member performs her/his own particular activity that it contributes to the welfare of the whole organism, and this is the common activity."<sup>86</sup> Hence, the common activity for Stăniloae consists in the fact, that in the Church community where egoism is overcome, nothing belongs just to an individual or just to the whole, superseding individuals. Moreover, at the same time, common activity consists in its effect on the whole Church.

Based on this, it seems Stăniloae has a theology of common acting resembling that of Bonhoeffer, characterizing a communal acting of Christians, where each and every one of them has a special gift with a potential for common benefit. All the members are interconnected by the Holy Spirit, the blood flowing through each of them bringing the benefits of each member to where it is needed. Individual's gifts are meant to be complementary and common for the whole body of Christ, or for the whole humanity expressing and creating the interconnectedness of individuals. However, in addition to the communal aspect of acting, Stăniloae's understanding of acting is expressed more fully, in its common dimension. It is anchored in listening to one another as well as in acting for and with others.

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<sup>85</sup> Cf. STĂNILOAE, *Theology and the Church*, pp. 54-56. "All those who have received gifts, and therefore ministries, within the Church are subordinated to and serve the whole body. In every member we see the Spirit who is present in the entire Church and who desires that through the continual activity of each individual believer the needs of the whole Church may be satisfied." According to Bordeianu, "The union of the faithful without the loss of each person's characteristics and the free manifestation of their charisms take place primarily in worship." BORDEIANU, *Dumitru Stăniloae*, p. 137.

<sup>86</sup> STĂNILOAE, *Theology and the Church*, p. 59.

### 5.3. Common Acting in the Church

As stated earlier, for Stăniloae the church, through the Holy Spirit, represents the reestablished weakened unity of the cosmos. This unity is found only in mutuality and in unity with the Logos through whom everything was created and leads back to the Father. The Trinity is not only a model for the life of the church, but in fact, “Christ makes visible the Father and the Spirit, and together with them, achieves the task of raising humanity up to an eternal communion with the Holy Trinity, itself the structure of perfect communion.”<sup>87</sup> Thus, if common acting of equal loving subjects is to be found and realized anywhere, it is in the church.

Any acting for others is to be done in communion and dialogue with them, as Stăniloae carefully explains: “You must listen to [other subject] if you wish to see what he also expects of you and come to know more than just his existence as something different from that of the world, but also what is the good that he is looking for from you. Indeed, the good he looks for from you, and you from him, lies precisely in this: that each of you is for the other a source of newness, communion, and love.”<sup>88</sup> No one is passive in acting for or being acted for. None of them becomes an object. The actor cannot decide alone what is the loving thing that needs to be done for others, since this is possible only in a loving community between them. In addition, the good is done only when others are included in the acting itself: “If I want to serve my good and that of the other through reason, I cannot do it by my reason only. I must consult his reason also, for each one sets out from different concrete circumstances and needs, and in any case, the ultimate good is brought to light through dialogue with the other.”<sup>89</sup> Perichoretic relations take place between subjects. These are equalized not only by means of the event of creation, but primarily by this self-giving love itself, which recognizes the other as a subject.

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<sup>87</sup> STĂNILOAE, *The Experience of God*, vol. 1, p. 67.

<sup>88</sup> STĂNILOAE, *The Experience of God*, Vol. 2, p. 179.

<sup>89</sup> STĂNILOAE, *The Experience of God*, Vol. 2, p. 180. More about ‘active goodness’ will be considered in the next chapter.

If people are degraded into objects, it results in closing into oneself from the others, to mutual estrangement, thus to “a weakening of consubstantiality, a decline into an inferior kind of consubstantiality, the decline of real love through communion into a facsimile only more or less faithful to the original.” The person, who is treated as an object, feels as an instrument and also “humiliated and repelled”. On the other hand, viewing each other as subjects prompts mutual appreciation, openness towards each other. This even creates a space within each one of them living for the others, opening “their inner world” to them.<sup>90</sup> Therefore, communion can be established and preserved only on interpersonal relations between subjects in a loving union with Christ.

Being created in the image of the Trinity also implies that human beings are capable and called to common acting, mirroring the life of the Trinity in and for the world. Even though Stăniloae talks about such acting primarily in the sphere of discovering nature, struggling for justice and peace, it can be asserted that the Church, as an icon of the Trinity, is to reflect also this aspect of participation in the trinitarian communion. Therefore, listening to the other, making common decisions and joint participation in what is decided together is encompassed in acting together within communion. It is in acting for others and with others that Christian acting is fully realized, thus taking the face of the other seriously enough to include him/her into common acting, which surpasses communal effort and reciprocity. Christian acting is necessarily a result of a common effort of people who consider each other equals not only as passive recipients of God’s grace and other’s love and help, but also as active co-participants in commonly decided acts.

Despite the emphasis on equality between people, Stăniloae recognizes a certain kind of inequality, namely the spiritual one. This is a consequence of the freedom given to human beings in order to cooperate with the Holy Spirit in their divinization. Accordingly, some of them reach higher degrees on the ladder of perfection. This kind

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<sup>90</sup> Cf. STĂNILOAE, *Theology and the Church*, p. 84. “A mutual consubstantiality can exist only when persons are treating each other as subjects, even though until resurrection, due to the existence of the bodies, it is not possible for them to become completely interior to each other, as is the case between the Persons of the Trinity.” (Ibid., p. 83)

of inequality is within the competence of every human subject. However, social inequality is caused by others and distorts community. This leads to a sense of inferiority, something which creates distance between people. Distance then hinders not only human cooperation, but contradicts love itself, a love which “prompts us to strive for the achievement of equality and justice among men.”<sup>91</sup> Thus, Stăniloae understands both, human equality and justice to be rooted in God’s love and therefore, in interpersonal community.

#### **5.4. Acting and Hierarchy**

While Stăniloae emphasized the equality of all people, without viewing its implementation as causing egalitarianism, he also integrated hierarchy into the life of the church, not founding it on the life of the Trinity, but as reflecting the heavenly hosts.<sup>92</sup> Is hierarchy not an impediment to common acting as explicated above?

Stăniloae differentiates between two kinds of hierarchies, “the ecclesiastical hierarchy,” which serves salvation of the faithful by administering Baptism, Chrismation, and the Eucharist. Simultaneously, there is a “hierarchy of holiness,” in which Christians are on different steps on their journey towards deification. For their spiritual growth they need the mysteries and, therefore, “they stand in dutiful dependence on [ecclesiastical] hierarchy entrusted with [their] celebration.” Those on the higher steps of the spiritual hierarchy are responsible for helping those on the lower steps by rising higher themselves towards the “heavenly hierarchy of the angels.” The

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<sup>91</sup> STĂNILOAE, *Theology and the Church*, p. 209. Stăniloae’s opinion that social injustice is caused by others is viewed differently by Bonhoeffer, who understood social inequality as being sanctioned within the mandates. Nevertheless, one could argue in opposition to Stăniloae, that social inequality is not necessarily caused by others, but is a result of the fact, that some are working more, harder or diligently than others, defined along the lines of his reasons given for spiritual inequality. What both theologians probably understood as problematic, and would be more proper in this context from Stăniloae, was the concept of social injustice.

<sup>92</sup> Cf. chapter 4, *The World Unseen: Angels and Human Life* in: STĂNILOAE, *The Experience of God*, vol. 2, pp. 147-162.



way of spiritual progress consists in practicing virtues. This means to practice Christian love which acts together with growth in faith.<sup>93</sup>

Stăniloae understands growth in faith as “the most frequent remembrance of [God] possible,” which stands in contrast to egoism, the core of sin and passions, in which a person thinks only of himself/herself. Sin and passions “produce and maintain chaos between people,” and fragmentation. However, Christ in “founding the Church, seeks by it the reestablishment of human unity and conciliarity.”<sup>94</sup> Love is the power binding people together with one other, with God and also within themselves. For Stăniloae, “the whole Church is a permanent Synod, a communion, a convergence of and permanent co-operation of all its members.”<sup>95</sup>

Drawing on the Church Fathers who developed the image of the church as the Body of Christ, Stăniloae describes the specific kind of unity of the Church unity as *sobornicity* (translating the Greek term for the notion of wholeness, or catholicity) and also as a unity in communion.<sup>96</sup> He believes “it is the sole unity which does not subordinate one person to another, or in which the institution is not conceived as something external to or superior to and repressive of the persons involved in it. In the unity of communion persons are united in equality. The institution is the expression of

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<sup>93</sup> STĂNILOAE, *Orthodox Spirituality*, pp. 63-66. Here Stăniloae reflects on Dionysius the Areopagite’s theology. Regarding sacramental character of hierarchy, see also Dumitru STĂNILOAE, “Unity and diversity in Orthodox tradition”, in: *Greek Orthodox Theological Review* 17, no. 1 (March 1, 1972), p. 23.

<sup>94</sup> STĂNILOAE, *Orthodox Spirituality*, pp. 81-83.

<sup>95</sup> Dumitru STĂNILOAE, *Teologia dogmatica ortodoxa, vol. 2.*, Bucuresti: Eibmbor, 1978, p. 283, quoted in MANASTIREANU, *A Perichoretic Model*, p. 260.

<sup>96</sup> For a study of Stăniloae’s concept of open *sobornicity* and Eucharistic ecclesiology as his proposals for the ecumenical dialogue, see: Lucian TURCESCU, “Eucharistic Ecclesiology or Open Sobornicity?” in: Lucian TURCESCU (ed.), *Dumitru Stăniloae: Tradition and Modernity in Theology*, Iasi ; Oxford; Palm Beach; Portland: The Center for Romanian Studies, 2002, pp. 83-103. For another assessment focusing on Stăniloae’s concept of open *sobornicity* in the ecumenical relations, see: Ronald G. ROBERSON, “Dumitru Stăniloae on Christian Unity,” in: L. TURCESCU, *Dumitru Stăniloae: Tradition and Modernity in Theology*, Iasi ; Oxford; Palm Beach; Portland: The Center for Romanian Studies, 2002, pp. 118-125.

their communion. In the unity of communion structures are communities of persons with identical ministries.”<sup>97</sup>

This is not a place to discuss Stăniloae’s ecclesiology in detail. Therefore, only two yet different examples of interpretation by Manastireanu and Bordeianu will be presented of how Stăniloae managed to implement this aspect of his theology into the teaching of the church structures themselves. Both authors agree that the political circumstances in Romania pushing religion outside of the public sphere hindered Stăniloae’s writing in these areas, since they could not have been implemented in the praxis. Manastireanu criticizes Stăniloae for clericalism inherent in his theology of ministry. He asserts, that Stăniloae presumes “the ontological differences [...] to exist between clergy and laity.” However, he praises Stăniloae for his conciliar ecclesiology, which even though applicable to the council of bishops, might be difficult to employ at the level of local congregations.<sup>98</sup>

Bordeianu, in the context of discussing the priestly, kingly and prophetic office of all Christians, writes: “Stăniloae considered that all the members of the Church manifest communally their kingly office by striving to have dominion over their passions. Next, one would expect a thorough treatment of the clergy and people’s shared role in the leadership and administration of the Church. However, such considerations are not prominent in Stăniloae.” Nevertheless, Bordenianu believes, that had Stăniloae lived under free political government, he would have emphasized and developed further the kingly office of the faithful. He also mentions several examples of Stăniloae’s sketches

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<sup>97</sup> STĂNILOAE, *Theology and the Church*, p. 57.

<sup>98</sup> MANASTIREANU, *A Perichoretic Model*, pp. 282-295. Manastireanu basis this conclusion on drawing attention to Stăniloae’s theology of the priestly office, according to which priest represents Christ to the congregation and the congregation before Christ. Manastireanu does not consider it to be developed enough by Stăniloae, to prevent it from possible abuses. Manastireanu also points to the different role the faithful have in teaching, which in its public dimension is reserved only for those ordained. Next to Stăniloae’s lack of consideration of various church structures present in the church’s history, Manastireanu holds for problematic Stăniloae’s claim, that the ordained ministry is a visible confirmation of the Incarnation. However, I find this criticism to be insufficient as a basis for Manastireanu’s claim, that Stăniloae assumes ontological differences between the faithful and the clergy. Rather, I believe, Stăniloae bases those differences on the various charismata people receive and accordingly fulfill different ministries and functions. The same expresses Bonhoeffer’s concept of vocation.

of a “representative model” of church structures and the possibility for Orthodox bishops and priests being elected directly by the faithful or committees.<sup>99</sup>

In 1990, Stăniloae co-founded the Group for Reflection on Church Renewal, which attempted to bring reform to the Romanian Orthodox Church. They appealed to the Holy Synod, attempting to persuade it that the collaborating bishops should resign and open the way for other church leaders. They were not successful at this attempt. Nor did they gain support from among the wider church membership after Stăniloae passed away.<sup>100</sup>

Who speaks for the church after the officials made something with which “Orthodoxy” does not agree? During the mentioned interviews, Stăniloae criticized a metropolitan for publicly proclaiming his support for the new government: “There are people and people in the Church. Such and such metropolitan gave opportunistic speeches, approving of the new political power. That was his business, but the Church did not do it. The Church is something else: it is the general consciousness of the Christians. The Church as such, I think, does not approve of what is happening. Orthodoxy, in fact, keeps itself at a distance from these kinds of things.”<sup>101</sup> Clearly, Stăniloae did not understand the Church in strictly institutional terms. Nevertheless, this raises a pressing question: Who speaks for the “general consciousness” of the Christians, for “the Church as such”? If Orthodoxy thinks something different from what its official representative publicly said, why is it silent? Are not Christians as a community, called to common action in such situations?

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<sup>99</sup> BORDEIANU, *Dumitru Stăniloae*, pp. 180-181. In this book, Bordeianu explicates Stăniloae’s application of his trinitarian approach to ecclesiology, more specifically, to the way unity of the Persons of the Trinity is “reflected in, and imprinted upon, the unity of the local churches that make up the *Una Sancta*.” (Ibid., p. 215) Bordeianu believes, Stăniloae worked out the balance between these two dimensions of the church, but need to be thought further in its practical effect. Bordeianu makes this undertaking in “implementing elements of Eucharistic ecclesiology into a communion ecclesiology.” (Ibid., p. 209)

<sup>100</sup> Lavinia STAN – Lucian TURCESCU, *Religion and politics in post-communist Romania*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007, p. 82.

<sup>101</sup> TURCESCU, “Dumitru Stăniloae (1903-1993)”, p. 339.

## **6. Summary: Possibilities and Challenges of Acting for Others and with Others**

It is not possible to know what Stăniloae would have done, had he lived under a free and democratic political government and thus, might have been able to develop his theology into its practical consequences. But within his theology there are traces of a theology of Christian acting, which are building the foundations for a participatory acting of the church and therefore, for its participatory structures. Since the whole life of the church, and ultimately of the whole humankind, is to reflect the communion of the Trinity, it is to mirror communal as well as common acting of the divine Persons.

Stăniloae argues that human beings are called to cooperate in their divinization with the Trinity. They are dependent on each other in their spiritual growth and receive the Holy Spirit through others. Hence, they experience faith in communion with others, and primarily within the Church. At the same time, each human being is created with the ability to discover God's *logoi* in the world and to develop God's spark within oneself into full transference of the body together with others.

Even though Stăniloae himself focused primarily on common acting regarding nature, human work, and worldly problems, his Trinitarian ecclesiology is leading Christians, and all human beings, to participate in acting in common. This equalizes each other in faith and love. Consequently, others are viewed simultaneously as recipients and as co-actors. All God's children are to act in common in and with the world striving for interpersonal community, which would participate in God's communion with human beings and the world. Thus, Stăniloae holds together unity in love, diversity and equality. These need to be reflected in the visible life of the church leading a mutual dialogue, making common decisions, participating in common acting turned into their community and towards the world.

Bonhoeffer drew the church's structure from Christ's *Stellvertretung* and Stăniloae from the trinitarian communion. Their different starting points have consequences for

their view of equality in diversified unity and, therefore, for their concept of acting. Bonhoeffer, as was explored in the previous chapters, sees equality of all people in sin, while Stăniloae bases equality in love, after sin—understood as egoism—is overcome by being caught up into the life of the Triune God. Nevertheless, both theologians identify acting for others as a human response to God’s initiative in mercifully entering their life.

Both Bonhoeffer and Stăniloae, develop diversity as an integral part of united community. Various gifts of the Holy Spirit given to various church members to complement each other are to be in service to others within and outside their fellowship. Stăniloae with his concept of a human active subject creates the possibility not only for communal, but also for common acting. In this dialogue, Bonhoeffer’s theology rooted in Christology, of acting for others, who are loved and respected in their freedom, receives a new dimension of acting for and with others.

Nevertheless, why does not Stăniloae develop a possibility of common acting within the church, even though he carefully establishes common acting—the centrality of communication and dialogue regarding the world? Why should spiritual inequality be any different from social inequality—not being divisive of people and not creating distance between them? Why is inequality in visible human relations expressing lack of love, but inequality in a spiritual sense is not only sanctioned but desired? How does the church as an institution express the equality of its members and its *sobornicity*? Why is a specific word of the church to a concrete policy of the government considered inappropriate? What to do, when the church structures or their representatives are not representing “the Church as such”?<sup>102</sup>

The absence of answers and even of some inquiries, invites the question, if Stăniloae’s position is not an expression of dualism between the spiritual and worldly, invisible and visible worlds, as a residue of his theological tradition. The church is

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<sup>102</sup> Another issue, which according to Turcescu, Stăniloae did not discuss was: what to do with those priests, who, as a part of their collaboration with the *Securitate*, broke the confidentiality of confession? (TURCESCU, “Dumitru Stăniloae (1903-1993)”, p. 311.

primarily a spiritual communion. The spiritual human *perichoresis* resembles the communion of the Trinity.<sup>103</sup> Stăniloae's treatment of the issues concerning the relations between the life of the church and the world, including his theology of Christian acting, seems to mirror this presupposition.<sup>104</sup>

According to Manastireanu, even though Stăniloae was interested "in the social implications of trinitarianism," he does not get to it, because his concern was fighting "individualism of modern culture, which was nurtured in the west by a trinitarianism rooted in the Augustinian psychological model." At the same time, "when dealing with the Christian responsibility" regarding justice peace, brotherhood and equality, he "sets the discussion in the general context of Christology and soteriology, rather than in that of triadology, and emphasizes mystical living rather than social activism."<sup>105</sup> However, Stăniloae, in "Christian Obligations To The World Today In The Light Of Orthodox Soteriology," equates reconciliation with lasting peace, equality and justice and also points to the international structures, which need to contribute to secure those realities.<sup>106</sup> Moreover, as was discussed earlier, Stăniloae's treatment of equality and justice is established in his trinitarian theology. Therefore, I think, Stăniloae was closest to "social activism" in his socio-political discussions rooted in soteriology (which is

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<sup>103</sup> This is one of the consequences of applying the dogma of Chalcedon to the Church: "There is a *perichoresis* between them, similar to the relationship between Christ's humanity and his divinity. [...] yet, there is a difference between Christ's theanthropy and that of the Church: in Christ, it refers only to the relationship between his two natures, while in the Church it refers, in addition to its divine-human constitution, to the personal relationships between the members of the Church and Christ." Bordeianu notes, that this theanthropic character of the Church as "an extension of the incarnation need to be complemented with that of the union between husband and wife," representing a patriarchal model of their relationship, emphasizing the fact, that "Christ continues to stand above the Church." Therefore, the Church cannot be considered to be "a fully divine institution." (BORDEIANU, *Dumitru Stăniloae*, p. 91f) "The humanity of Christ is united with our humanity, so the Spirit rests upon us too. Our humanity is transformed and raised in an intimate relationship with God. The Church, as the Body of Christ whose members bear Christ in their hearts, represents the mystical humanity of Christ." (Ibid., p. 125f) Even though Bonhoeffer used the metaphor of the family to express obedience of the church and its members to God, he avoided thinking about humanity and divinity outside of their unity in the person of Jesus Christ, as was already explained, even in regards to the church.

<sup>104</sup> Bartos thinks, there is an "excessive spiritualization in Stăniloae's tendency, in his mystical theological approach, to spend rather more time in dialogue with tradition than with contemporaries, so that modern concerns become secondary. There is a regrettable lack of more serious engagement with contemporary issues, leading to deserved criticism." BARTOS, *Deification*, p. 335

<sup>105</sup> MANASTIREANU, *A Perichoretic Model*, p. 164.

<sup>106</sup> Cf. here n. 69

embedded in triadology). Nevertheless, in his ecclesiology based on the doctrine of the Trinity, similar activism is rather absent and if, than it is placed into the worshipping community of the Liturgy and is closer to what Manastireanu calls “mystical living.”

Bonhoeffer’s starting point of his theology of the church—anthropology rooted in the person of the God-Man—makes any division of bodily and spiritual, divine and human in Christ, now living as a church community, impossible.<sup>107</sup> Therefore, next to a spiritual accent on the word of the church and *diakonia*, Bonhoeffer formulates two other ways of church’s calling towards the political representation, which were already discussed. The confession of guilt, Bonhoeffer wrote, summarizes them. Among other things, church confesses its fearfulness, concessions, silence “where she was supposed to shout,” lack of compassion.<sup>108</sup> Bonhoeffer believes, it is church’s calling to speak to specific issues even when taking risks in word and deed. In doing so, the church is not to be concerned and led by wanting to keep its own reputation (shame, guilt) intact. This is one of the intrinsic forms of a life lived for others, not only of individual Christians, but also of the institutional church.

In order to explore the possibilities of a non-reductionist understanding of the relation of the Christian acting to the world, I will now bring Stăniloae’s insights into conversation with those of Bonhoeffer and Arendt.

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<sup>107</sup> As was discussed in the previous chapter, church is in Bonhoeffer’s theology the continuation of the revelation, united as act and being in the historical person of Jesus Christ. For a discussion of Bonhoeffer’s concern with anthropology, see: Cf. GREEN, *Bonhoeffer*, pp. 64-65.

<sup>108</sup> Cf. BONHOEFFER, *Ethik*, pp. 129-132.

## **CHAPTER FIVE:**

### **A PLACE OF ACTING: A Conversation Between Arendt, Bonhoeffer and Stăniloae**

*“Nicht in der Flucht der Gedanken, allein in der Tat ist die Freiheit. Tritt aus ängstlichem Zögern heraus in den Sturm des Geschehens.” BONHOEFFER, *Widerstand und Ergebung*, p. 403*

After establishing inter-personal dimensions of Christian acting, outlined as a communal and common activity, its visible and public scope, a place of that storm, remains open. Therefore, this chapter explores the relation of Christian acting to the world in an attempt to perceive the story it unfolds in its complexity.

As we have seen, all of the three thinkers from this conversation, Bonhoeffer, Arendt and Stăniloae, think that some aspect of acting remains invisible and thus unworldly. According to Bonhoeffer, equality between human beings should not be realized in the world, because it endangers the existence of human diversity. In Arendt’s view, an actor of goodness cannot appear in the world, because that is not a proper space for this specific activity. Stăniloae’s theology of Christian acting seems to emphasize its other-worldly dimension, since church’s acting in politics is to stay invisible. From this, a need of a discussion of the relation between acting and the world arises.

In this chapter, it will be treated from two perspectives, namely from a theological and a political. In the first section, a dialogue will be led between Arendt, Bonhoeffer and Stăniloae centered on their notion of goodness. What is the place of the world in the inter-personal Christian relations and acting? In the second part, Arendt’s own theory of action will be contested regarding her underlying assumption that only the political



space is appropriate for action. Do not her own distinctions lead her to impoverish an interpretation of action itself?

## 1. A Place of Goodness According to Arendt, Bonhoeffer and Stăniloae

In this section, we will return to two topics that surfaced from Arendt's discussion of a family metaphor applied on the church already in the first chapter, but were left unaddressed: is Christian acting unworldly? Are worldly matters a distraction from a Christian journey towards salvation? Are Christians freed from politics in their search for spiritual good they have in common?

The structure of this section follows Arendt's understanding of the public, in the context of which she discusses the concept of the world. On the one hand, it means, "that everything that appears before the general public, can be seen and heard by every person, whereby it receives the most possible publicity."<sup>1</sup> Goodness, as introduced into the Western civilization by Christianity, cannot meet this characteristic, as neither do pain or love.<sup>2</sup> Secondly, public means the "world itself as far as it is that which is common to us and as such differs from that, which is [...] private property." More precisely, it is not the given natural world as a condition of human existence, but the world of things (*Dingwelt*) produced by human hands.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> ARENDT, *Vita activa*, p. 62.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. *Ibid.*, p. 64.

<sup>3</sup> ARENDT, *Vita activa*, p. 65f. Objects become things (*Dinge*) in being perceived as that which is common (*koinon*). They "gather and connect people between each other," and simultaneously keep them at a certain distance. (*Ibid.*, p. 68) This is hindered by consuming objects of the world and by reducing various points of view, from which those common things can be seen, to just one single perspective since "common world [...] exists at all only under the variety of its perspectives." (*Ibid.*, p. 73) Epochs of despots and mass hysteria are examples of a collapse of the common world, when diversity is destroyed. At such times, "all suddenly behave as if they were members of one huge, in itself unanimous, family." (*Ibid.*, p. 72)

According to Arendt, Christianity is unworldly because of its specific activity of goodness and the other-world interconnecting Christians. These two issues will be treated in the next section in a conversation between Arendt, Bonhoeffer and Stăniloae.

## **1.1. Goodness**

First, we will look at the relation between Christian acting and the world as its witness in order to explore, whether Christian acting and its actors are supposed to be visible there. Is only God its possible witness, as Arendt contends?

The notion of goodness will be the leading concept in this section because it is used by Arendt to describe a specific Christian activity and is used also by Bonhoeffer and Stăniloae to express the life for others. Therefore, goodness will be considered in a mutual dialogue between Arendt, Bonhoeffer and Stăniloae. Within it, relations between acting and the world will gradually emerge into the forefront. At the outset, goodness will be explicated from Arendt's perspective, follow by a theological view of Bonhoeffer and Stăniloae.

### **1.1.1. Invisible Goodness According to Arendt**

Arendt differentiates three spheres, in which human activities are performed—private, public, and political. They correspond to the nature of the activities themselves—labor, work, and action—which reflect certain aspects of the human condition: life, work, and plurality. In her view, even though the church is a public institution, Christianity does not belong to any of the three spheres based on its specific activity—goodness.

Arendt asserts that the activity of goodness as performed by Jesus needs to remain hidden and anonymous. As every human activity belongs to a specific space, based on its characteristics, acting done for others requires a hidden place so that its goodness is

not lost. Therefore, “the phenomenon of goodness [is] one of the roots of the worldlessness of Christianity.”<sup>4</sup>

Arendt describes the life of goodness also as a life of holiness, or doing good works. She refers the ideal of holiness to the words of Jesus from the Sermon on the Mount and in particular to the love of enemies, overpowering evil with good, turning the other cheek and giving of alms when the left hand is not supposed to know what the right hand is doing. “The only activity Jesus demonstrably taught in word and deed is active goodness (*tätige Güte*), and this activity has obvious tendency, to stay hidden from the eyes and ears of people.” As soon as goodness appears publicly, “it naturally loses its specific character of goodness.” Even though every public good deed remains important in acts of solidarity or in the activities of charity organizations, “it is not goodness anymore.”<sup>5</sup> In the glow of being seen and heard by others, holiness turns into hypocrisy.

The lover of goodness cannot revisit his/her own acting in thinking about it, because such thinking creates memory of their goodness. Arendt asserts that if goodness wants to retain its specific character, it has to remain hidden from all people, including the actor. “The one, who is aware of doing a good work, is not good anymore.” Hence, good works cannot build an element of the world and “cannot keep company to anyone,” not even to the actor. Instead, active goodness negates the world and points to its otherworldly existence.<sup>6</sup> Not even the private sphere is an alternative space to the shine of the public, as early Christianity mistakenly thought and adopted metaphors from the family life to describe its existence.

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<sup>4</sup> ARENDT, *Vita activa*, p. 90.

<sup>5</sup> ARENDT, *Vita activa*, p. 91. Arendt treats acting for someone and against someone in the same way in regards to the need of anonymity of the actors in those cases.

<sup>6</sup> ARENDT, *Vita activa*, pp. 91; 93; ARENDT, *Was ist Politik?*, p. 62. In Arendt’s view, this does not apply to the human power to forgive. Even though Jesus of Nazareth discovered the role of forgiveness in the realm of human affairs, Christianity is wrong, when it claims that only love can forgive. Arendt suggests respect is able to do the same as a worldly relation. Action due to its unpredictability and tendency to escape control takes unexpected turns. It cannot be undone, but the wrong that it caused, can be forgiven. (This does not apply to evil deeds.) Moreover, nobody can forgive oneself, each needs others to do that. Thus life together, including political life, is made possible. (ARENDT, *Vita activa*, pp. 300-310)

Goodness is characterized by a paradox: it needs the presence of others for its own acting, yet at the same time, it needs to appear without their ability to identify the actor. Active goodness cannot occur in solitude, but leaves the actor in loneliness, which s/he can escape only with having God as a witness, not the world as any other activity.<sup>7</sup> It is only in times of “collapse, decline and of political corruption,” that this phenomenon of loneliness can become historically active. It is because in those times the public, the realm of the in-between of human beings, is darkened. It loses its ability to reveal its actors, and so, an ideal situation for doers of good works (and also evil ones) is created.<sup>8</sup> This implies that, in Arendt’s view, under normal circumstances goodness cannot take a form of common acting.

From Arendt’s thinking about goodness, there are two main questions surfacing for this discussion that will be posed to Bonhoeffer and Stăniloae: what is good or goodness from a theological perspective? If goodness cannot be witnessed by human beings, does it mean that invisibility needs to be a characteristic of Christian acting?

### **1.1.2. Goodness in Communion According to Bonhoeffer and Stăniloae**

Goodness, good works and love are developed by both theologians to mean a life for others characterizing people’s everyday lives. The life of Christ and a human life lived in its response are good.<sup>9</sup> Since this is discussed at length in previous chapters, let it suffice here to say, that such a life of holiness sprouts from a union with Christ through

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<sup>7</sup> ARENDT, *Vita activa*, p. 94.

<sup>8</sup> ARENDT, *Vita activa*, p. 220f. Arendt treats acting for someone and against someone in the same way in regards to the need of anonymity of the actors in those cases. Bonhoeffer acted in such a time, and the appearance of saints and evildoers in the public is noticed as well. There have been various answers to the question “Who” Bonhoeffer was and that not only he was a double agent.

<sup>9</sup> Bonhoeffer makes clear, that goodness is not an ideal or an idea. (Cf. BONHOEFFER, *Ethik*, pp. 230-233) See Feil’s explication of this Bonhoeffer’s criticism also in relation to Barth in: Ernst FEIL, *The Theology of Dietrich Bonhoeffer*, Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1985, pp. 34-37.

whom the Trinity lives in Christians.<sup>10</sup> In this way, a Christian is primarily a partaker of the goodness of God acting in him/her and only then an actor of goodness.

Any attempt to put one's own ego or its own criteria into the center of a search to know good, is doomed to fail. Because only after human life is re-centered in and on Christ and filled with his love, being for others is made possible. Both theologians express their position in interpreting the story of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. Bonhoeffer expresses this in his refusal to ask the question of the knowledge of the good, while Stăniloae focuses on the possibility of such true knowledge.<sup>11</sup> Nevertheless, both have the same starting point—disunity of God, human beings and the world overcome in Jesus Christ.

In the first manuscripts of *Ethik*, Bonhoeffer resolutely states, that Christian ethics does not ask “how do I become good?” and “how do I do anything good?” Rather it inquires about the will of God. This will is embodied in the person of the God-Man creating a new reality. This is the starting point of Christian ethics, not the reality of

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<sup>10</sup> “With Christ the Father lives with me, and the Father and the Son live through the Holy Spirit. It is the Holy Trinity itself, which makes a home in a Christian, fulfilling him and making him into God’s image,” while the individual Christian needs to remain interconnected with the church, as the Body of Christ. (BONHOEFFER, *Nachfolge*, p. 303. Cf. Dietrich BONHOEFFER, “Vorbereitungsblatt Bonhoeffers: Einwohnung der Trinität”, in: O. DUDZUS – S. BOBERT-STÜTZEL – D. SCHULZ, I. TÖDT – J. HENKYS, eds., *Illegale Theologenausbildung: Finkenwalde 1935-1937, Dietrich Bonhoeffer Werke Bd. 14*, Gütersloh: Chr. Kaiser, 1996, pp. 443-444.) This notion of the Trinity living and acting in and through Christians is not developed by Bonhoeffer. Stăniloae does so at length within the concept of *theosis* and emphasizes the moment of human cooperation with God much stronger than Bonhoeffer, also in leading towards salvation.

<sup>11</sup> “The human person is free only if he is free also from himself for the sake of others, in love, and if he is free for God who is the source of freedom because he is the source of love. But disobedience used as an occasion the commandment not to taste from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. The fathers [...] imply that by the two trees [of knowledge of good and evil and the tree of life] we are to understand one and the same world: viewed through a mind moved by spirit, that world is the tree of life that puts us in relationship with God; but viewed and made use of through a consciousness that has been detached from the mind moved by spirit, it represent the tree of the knowledge of good and evil which severs man from God.” (STĂNILOAE, *The Experience of God*, vol.2, p. 167) Union of reason and love leads to the true vision of the world. (Cf. *Ibid.*, pp. 163-175). Bonhoeffer talks about disunity (*Entzweiung*) as a consequence of disobedience. Cf. BONHOEFFER, *Schöpfung und Fall*, pp. 77-87.

one's own "I", of the world, norms or values.<sup>12</sup> The life of discipleship—being united with Christ, looking at and knowing only Christ—partakes in this good.

It is not always obvious what the will of God is, in times as was the Third Reich, when criminal acts were legal or when the church struggled to remain Christian.<sup>13</sup> In such cases, "an extraordinary necessity appeals to the freedom of a responsible person." This is a situation, in which one cannot hide behind a law or other people but is called to a courageous deed.<sup>14</sup> Such acting has continually its source in the Incarnate one (the new good reality), having in mind the world in its specific circumstances as well as God who loves this world and is united with it through Christ.<sup>15</sup>

Stăniloae underlines Bonhoeffer's emphasis on the union with God in Christ as being a condition of a life for others and extends it with an emphasis on mutuality and community with other human beings drawn into the Trinitarian communion. After person's egoism is overcome in her/his union with Christ, the ability to cross the distance between her/him and other people is regained and with it, their mutual communion is established. "The good is the response of the other to your need for love

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<sup>12</sup> Bonhoeffer puts into contrast the aim of the old Adam to knowing good (and evil), with the question of the new person: what is the will of God? This inquiry surpasses the sinful attempt to be like God, an attempt to better the world or be good. Seeking the will of God has only the reality of God in the world in its focus. (BONHOEFFER, *Ethik*, pp. 31-33)

<sup>13</sup> Cf. BONHOEFFER, *Ethik*, p. 62; Cf. Dietrich BONHOEFFER, "Zur Frage nach der Kirchengemeinschaft", in *Gesammelte Schriften II*, pp. 231; 236f.

<sup>14</sup> BONHOEFFER, *Ethik*, p. 274; Cf. BONHOEFFER, "Civil Courage", in: *Widerstand und Ergebung*, p.14f.

<sup>15</sup> "The deed, which is performed in responsible consideration of all personal and factual circumstances with the view of the God becoming *human* (*Menschwerdung Gottes*), will be completely handed over only to God in the moment of its execution." (BONHOEFFER, *Ethik*, p. 268) Green makes a distinction between two aspects of Bonhoeffer's ethics, shaped by different contexts: an ethics of tyrannicide which corresponds to the extremity of the political situation he was facing, and an ethics of everyday life, built upon the pillars of Scripture, offices, mandates, and natural rights and duties. In both cases "doing of the will of God," not being or doing good, remains the "foundation for Bonhoeffer's one ethic." (Cf. GREEN, *Bonhoeffer*, pp. 321-327) Green finds the ethics of everyday life reflected in the manuscripts entitled *Das "Ethische" und das "Christliche" als Thema*. He thinks this text is helpful in tracing this kind of ethics in Bonhoeffer, because it was "written not under the pressure of the resistance movement but under the influence of Karl Barth's ethics in Church Dogmatics II/2," specifically for the "sphere of everyday happenings." (Ibid., p. 321)

and your response to his need.”<sup>16</sup> In order to know this need and the other person, s/he needs to reveal her/himself first to us, “in his own initiative; he does this in proportion to the lack of your aggression to know him.”<sup>17</sup> The knowledge and experience of good are fully possible only in this communion of love and trust, where listening and mutual dialogue are enabled. One’s reason needs to consult the reasons of others. One needs to search for other points of view since “only the decision that has its origin in love and its goal in love – or is taken in common on the basis of and for the sake of reciprocal love – serves what is genuinely good.”<sup>18</sup> This is a reflection of Stăniloae’s theology of human beings as active subjects. In his view, communion and communication are indivisible. The ability to think and speak was given to people by the Other who is addressing and challenging them.<sup>19</sup> Common decisions and common acting flow from common dialogue, since “the good is what ought to be done, not simply what is.”<sup>20</sup>

To summarize, for Bonhoeffer and Stăniloae, goodness is possible only in a communion with God and human beings. An actor needs to stay interconnected with concrete people if goodness is to come into existence.

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<sup>16</sup> “If holiness is the pure and communicative transparency of one person for another person, it has its ultimate source in the tripersonality of God. The subject of holiness can only be a person in his pure relation with another person.” (STĂNILOAE, *The Experience of God vol. 1*, p. 235).

<sup>17</sup> STĂNILOAE, *Orthodox Spirituality*, p. 38. Stăniloae makes a comparison between a revelation of human being to others and revelation of the Supreme Person to human beings so that they can know him.

<sup>18</sup> STĂNILOAE, *The Experience of God vol. 2*, pp. 179-181. “The good is the continuous exercise of man’s responsibility toward his fellow humans within a concrete relationship, and it results from genuine knowledge, while genuine knowledge is knowledge in communion.” According to Stăniloae, communion is not only “a fulfillment of being,” in it even “evil is overcome,” in that people communicate about it with each other. For a discussion of various consequences of Stăniloae’s ontology (reality always being hypostatic, personal in the communion of the Holy Trinity) for anthropology and epistemology, see: Silvu Eugen ROGOBETE, “Mystical Existentialism or Communitarian Participation?: Vladimir Lossky and Dumitru Stăniloae”, in: L. TURCESCU, ed., *Dumitru Stăniloae: Tradition and Modernity in Theology*, Iași; Oxford; Palm Beach; Portland: the Center for Romanian Studies, 2002, pp. 177-206.

<sup>19</sup> For Stăniloae’s discussion on this topic, see: STĂNILOAE, *The Experience of God vol. 2*, pp. 34-38.

<sup>20</sup> STĂNILOAE, *The Experience of God vol. 2*, 181. For a discussion of Stăniloae’s concept of dynamic providence and its relation to goodness, see Ivana NOBLE, “Doctrine of creation within the theological project of Dumitru Stăniloae”, in: *Communio Viatorum* 49, no 2, 2007, pp. 202-206.

### 1.1.3. Witnessed Goodness

If goodness is discernible and takes place only in communion, what does it say about its worldly reality? Can goodness, as an indissoluble aspect of Christian acting, escape into an invisible spiritual world?

Arendt bases her argument regarding goodness on Matt. 6, 1f that Bonhoeffer interprets differently. Arendt explains it to mean actor of goodness has to hide from others, while Bonhoeffer says such an actor has to refrain from any attempt of self-justification. Bonhoeffer's reading of this text points to a tension between this gospel passage and its preceding chapter (the church is to be visible, it is a city on a hill, light of the world, etc.). He places its resolution in discipleship. As a tree does not know about its own fruit, so also Christians are not aware of their holiness. It remains hidden from them, even though visible to others.<sup>21</sup>

Remembering one's own goodness is problematic for two reasons. First, it would be self-deceitful since, in reality, it is Christ himself living in Christians through the Holy Spirit leading a person to such deeds. Secondly, the last word in naming something good belongs to God alone, who is not only the witness of every deed, but also its judge. Disciples are to remember what they have done, as Arendt herself points out, when talking about repentance as being rooted in the human capacity of thinking, which creates memory.<sup>22</sup> Goodness is witnessed by others and the actor himself/herself, but it is not judged by them.<sup>23</sup> This is only in God's competence; God has the last word.

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<sup>21</sup> BONHOEFFER, *Nachfolge*, pp. 148, 283. "The good of Christ, the good in the discipleship takes place without awareness (*ohne Wissen*). The true work of love is always a hidden work." (Ibid., pp. 155-157.) Bonhoeffer wrote a note on Matt 25: "Unconscious Christianity: left hand does not know what the right hand does." (BONHOEFFER, *Widerstand und Ergebung*, p. 412) This leaves another aspect of a possible interpretation of this text for Bonhoeffer.

<sup>22</sup> According to Arendt, "memory is the most common and the most essential experience of thinking." (ARENDR, *Vom Leben des Geistes*, p. 90). Any event can cause thinking. In it, one tells himself/herself this in a kind of story (*Geschichte*). Remorse consists primarily in remembering one's own deeds. Over against that, "the most certain way in which a criminal evades being caught and punished, is that he forgets his own deeds." (Hannah ARENDT, *Über das Böse: Eine Vorlesung zu Fragen der Ethik*, München: Piper Verlag, 2009, p. 75) It is not possible to remember anything, about which a person does not talk about to himself/herself. In hesitating to remember one's own deeds, lies the foundation of radical



Arendt's position is based on an assumption that goodness is a certain standard accessible and discernible by individuals. However, goodness, as a life for others, consists in loving relations. As theologies of acting of Bonhoeffer and Stăniloae demonstrate, it is not something an individual by oneself is in a position to create or to judge. Acting for others not only has to be considerate of others and their situation. In addition, they have to be included as active recipients of help within communion, not treated as passive objects of others' goodness. In addition, based on Stăniloae, the discernment and realization of goodness can be done only within a visible community—with others. Goodness has a communal (consisting in mutual giving and receiving) as well as a common (discussed, decided and performed together with others) character.

From this it follows, that Bonhoeffer's and Stăniloae's interpretation of goodness transcends Arendt's understanding in saying, goodness is not an invisible principle applied by an individual. Instead, it is visible acting of God within a loving community of the faithful. Human actors are visible, unlike the invisible Actor and Judge. If goodness were anonymous, as Arendt claims, both communal and common dimensions of acting would have been impossible. Christian acting for others and with others does not exclude them in any aspect of their presence—as witnesses, active recipients or helpers, and as actors participating on common acting. In each of these instances, Christian acting of a solo individual would negate Christian and human communion, thus abandoning goodness itself. An extraordinary situation, when people are driven into solitude, out of communities, is an exception. This is the opposite of Arendt's view, who claims, that under normal circumstances one needs to hide from others if s/he wants to act for others.

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evil. (cf. *Ibid.*, pp. 76-77; ARENDT, *Vom Leben des Geistes*, p. 188) For Arendt, thoughtlessness characterized Eichmann, which predisposed him for his evil deeds. (ARENDT, *Eichmann in Jerusalem*, p. 126).

<sup>23</sup> Making such a decision does not exclude, for Bonhoeffer, introspection. Rather, he gives several criteria for such an exercise centered on responsibility. Being one's own judge would lead to a rupture (*Entzweiung*) within the person, of which the Pharisees thought Bonhoeffer were a living example. (Cf. BONHOEFFER, *Ethik*, p. 295)

## 1.2. Common Good and the World

In the prior section, it was established that goodness does not need to be protected from the world in terms of others, but instead needs them to actively give, accept, reject or participate in help. Now, we need to inquire, if there is a part or an aspect of the world (of both natural and human origin) that should be left untouched or transcended by Christian acting.

As was discussed in the first chapter, Arendt thinks love of the neighbor, not the world, interconnects the members of the church. She also argues, that the adjective common means something different in the Christian and the worldly sense. It depends on, whether the common is centered in or outside of a person. The Christian common good rests “in the common care that all Christians have each for their own salvation.” They are freed from politics in order to attend to this goal. On the other hand, the world that is common (*das weltlich Gemeinsame*) “lies outside our own selves and we enter it when we are born,” it exists before and after our individual lives.<sup>24</sup>

There are two main themes, which follow from Arendt’s discussion of the relation between the world and Christianity, namely the role of the world in one’s salvation and secondly, Christian freedom from politics. To this, theological perspective of Stăniloae and Bonhoeffer will be outlined and put into a mutual dialogue.

According to both theologians’ interpretation, it is not the care for their own salvation that connects Christians, but Christ through the Holy Spirit leading them to the Father. In the God-Man, God is united with human beings and thus with the world. Therefore, this world is the space in which to live, love and be transformed. There is no sphere of life exempt from it for reaching salvation. Their views will be presented as they complement each other based on their accents on different aspects of the world. Stăniloae developed a theology of the world, which explicates the love of God encompassing the world, in the sense of human beings, nature, and of the products of

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<sup>24</sup> ARENDT, *Vita activa*, p. 69.

human labor and work. Concentrating primarily on the challenges of the Third Reich, Bonhoeffer develops theology of a possibility of political resistance.<sup>25</sup> Nevertheless, the question regarding possible residue of dualism in Stăniloae's theology will be revisited as it will be posed by this discussion itself.

### 1.2.1. World and Salvation in Stăniloae's Theology

We will start with focusing on the role of the world in spiritual life of Christians. Thus an aspect of *vita contemplativa*, otherwise left unaddressed in this thesis, will be touched upon to be navigated by it back again into the visible world only to find it enriched and whole.

This will be done in concentrating on Stăniloae's notion of the world as a gift of God for human beings. Enabled to discover God in and through the world, to transform and share it with others, they are invited to give it back to God. As traces of a predominance of the spiritual in relation to the public-political are uncovered, Bonhoeffer's views are included for a comparison and mutual dialogue.

Stăniloae uses the term world always to mean human beings and nature. He does not think nor treat them separately.<sup>26</sup> There are two main ways in which this bond is expressed: first, every human being is interconnected to the "entire cosmic nature" and therefore, s/he is responsible for her/his acting not only before others, but also before

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<sup>25</sup> Bonhoeffer did not specifically focus on a theology of the natural world. Scott attempts to remedy this "ecological deficit" in Bonhoeffer's theology "by drawing together the mystery of reconciliation and the mystery of praxis." (Cf. Peter Manley SCOTT, "Postnatural Humanity? Bonhoeffer, Creaturely Freedom and the Mystery of Reconciliation in Creation", in: *Mysteries in the Theology of Dietrich Bonhoeffer*, pp. 111-134)

<sup>26</sup> STĂNILOAE, *The Experience of God* vol. 2, p. 1. Stăniloae discusses next to the visible world also "the world unseen." (Cf. *ibid.*, pp. 113-162)

Stăniloae's theology of the world treats an important aspect of the world being not only a product of human hands out of nature, but also of nature itself. According to Miller, this theology "involves just the sort of integrated vision of God, humankind and the world for which the analysis of our present ecological crisis cries." (MILLER, *The Gift of the World*, p. 5)

nature.<sup>27</sup> Secondly, whatever human beings do effects the world as such: “the spiritual and physical order of the created world develop together, by a mutual influence which holds for the whole universe. [...] Our smallest gesture makes the world vibrate and changes its state.”<sup>28</sup> This close bond between human beings and the cosmos Stăniloae expresses in naming human being a *macrocosmos* and the wedding ring between God and creation. Both are derived from St. Maximus the Confessor who used them to convey the human calling to unify the whole cosmos with its Creator and to point to the human ability to transcend it with the spirit embracing the world and its principles in themselves.<sup>29</sup>

The world contains within itself God’s *Logos*, through whom the world was created, and *logoi*, the principles of the creation streaming from him. The human *logos*, being the image of the divine *Logos*, is able to gradually discover and perceive the world’s rational unity and harmony. Even though the Fall obscured them for human perception to a certain extent, created things continue to point to their Creator. In Christ, the dialogue between God and human beings was reestablished and restarted.<sup>30</sup> Egoistic love, which perceives others as objects and treats nature for one’s own benefit is overcome in and with Christ. Those united with him become united with God, with one another and with nature as well.<sup>31</sup>

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<sup>27</sup> STĂNILOAE, *The Experience of God* vol. 2, p. 2.

<sup>28</sup> STĂNILOAE, *Orthodox Spirituality*, p. 41.

<sup>29</sup> STĂNILOAE, *The Experience of God* vol. 1, pp. 147; 179-180. Dumitru STĂNILOAE, “Jesus Christ, Incarnate Logos of God, Source of Freedom and Unity”, in: *The Ecumenical Review* 26 (July 1974), p. 410f.

<sup>30</sup> STĂNILOAE, *The Experience of God* vol.3, pp. 5-6. Stăniloae says: “The dialogue was intermittent; the divine and human partners remained separated by a certain distance [...] But as soon as Christ had come, the divine subject of these words became incarnate as man and entered into intimate and permanent communion with mankind. (STĂNILOAE, *Theology and the Church*, p. 161)

<sup>31</sup> STĂNILOAE, *The Experience of God* vol. 1, p. 148. “Through his effort, man extends that unity, which he realizes within himself and with God in Christ, into his relations with his fellow men [...] God and all created things will possess a unique simplicity and fullness.” This leads them to full union with God already mentioned earlier when discussing *theosis*. (STĂNILOAE, *The Experience of God* vol.3, p. 146) Through Christ’s risen body irradiates unhindered the power of Him who made this body incorruptible, leading all those who will partake of Him to resurrection and incorruption, leading even the entire creation to incorruptibility and transience, namely to the maximum transfiguration and communicability between persons through the Spirit as well as to a total personalization of the cosmos in

Only united humanity is able to perceive and treat the world as a gift of God.<sup>32</sup> It is not given as a means to express their creativity similar to that of God, but to be in “a dialogue of loving thoughts and works between the supreme rational Person and rational human persons themselves.”<sup>33</sup> There are several ways in which this can be done: “through progress in their grasp of the reasons/inner principles of created things; through penetration via these reasons to their pre-existent reasons in God and so to God himself; and through the living of a life that conforms to the symphony of these reasons.”<sup>34</sup>

There comes to an exchange of gifts between God and human beings in their mutual dialogue. Human beings, as priests, offer back to God what they have been given first to meet their needs. “Man’s gift to God is sacrifice and ‘Eucharist’ in the wide sense.” God gives the gifts back “to us charged with a new blessing and a new flow of love.”<sup>35</sup> This love is a life for others. Therefore, “a movement from sacrament to solidarity” springs

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Christ and in human beings; for there is an ontological continuity between the matter of the body and the matter of the cosmos.

<sup>32</sup> STĂNILOAE, *Theology and the Church*, p. 212. Only if all men are united can they transform the world and respond to the call to treat the world as a gift, as the means of mutual exchange. When we share in the material goods of the universe we must be conscious that we are moving in the sphere of Christ, and that it is by making use of these material things as gifts for the benefit of one another that we progress in our union with Christ and with our neighbor. We must also be aware that when the material world becomes the means whereby we communicate in love, then we are communicating in Christ.

<sup>33</sup> STĂNILOAE, *The Experience of God vol. 1*, p. 11. “Every human person is a thinking word in a dialogue with the Personal, divine Word and with the other human, personal words. Each human person absorbs power from the divine Word and also from the power of things as he gathers reasons in his thought as well as their power in his life.” (STĂNILOAE, *The Experience of God vol.3*, p. 2) Through this dialogue, God is made transparent in the world. Therefore, Stăniloae considers the world also a sacrament. (Cf. BORDEIANU, *Dumitru Stăniloae*, pp. 150-151)

<sup>34</sup> STĂNILOAE, *The Experience of God vol. 2*, p. 102. In thinking divine Logos, God’s rays (*logoi*) imprinted within creation itself, radiate God’s power and life from creation. This in turn enriches the lives of those thinking about it and acting on it together. Thus, unity of the Subject of thinking and acting creates unity among those involved in this undertaking. In this way they deepen their mutual relationship as well as their knowledge of each other and, through the creation, their knowledge of the Creator. Even though this speaking and thinking requires human diversity, they are also “called to give actual, concrete unity to their thinking.” (STĂNILOAE, “Jesus Christ, Incarnate Logos of God”, p. 409)

<sup>35</sup> Dumitru STĂNILOAE, “Orthodoxy, Life in the Resurrection”, in: *Eastern Church Review* 2, no 4 Aut 1969, p. 373.

from the Eucharist, extended towards the world outside of the church, where the world is transparent of God and drawn into mutual communion.<sup>36</sup>

The world is not to be returned to God sterile but changed by efforts upon it, which are performed in freedom. This includes scientific work, art, development of technology in conformity with the Logos and *logoi*.<sup>37</sup> In this way, people develop the potential of the world as well as their own gifts from God. It is also the world of things, or as Arendt says, *Dingwelt*, which has an indispensable role in Stăniloae's theology of the world. Producing no fruit, making no effort leads to having an empty soul.<sup>38</sup>

Nature and the world built up by people become the means of communication between them and God and each other. The human spiritual progress<sup>39</sup> and their salvation<sup>40</sup> are dependent on their treatment of the world. Stăniloae goes further than Bonhoeffer in saying, that living for others fully in this world—due to the incarnation, life, death and resurrection of Christ—leads to transformation not only of their lives, but also of the world as it gradually irradiates the *logoi* as well as the Word of God.<sup>41</sup> Miller contends that Stăniloae's theology of the natural world is an expression of a new spirituality. Treating this world accordingly “can contribute positively toward greater solidarity between people. In this way [...] our labor becomes a major force in eliciting unity amidst legitimate human diversity. It becomes a means by which we reflect more fully God's own Trinitarian life.”<sup>42</sup>

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<sup>36</sup> MILLER, *The Gift of the World*, p. 103.

<sup>37</sup> Stăniloae mentions how the Fathers used to talk about this world as a fair. We enter it with other human beings, being Christian or not, from whom we purchase the Kingdom of Heaven, “both with the return we have won from our labors and also with the capabilities which our faith in Christ has conferred upon us.” (STĂNILOAE, *Theology and the Church*, p. 207)

<sup>38</sup> STĂNILOAE, *Theology and the Church*, p. 208.

<sup>39</sup> Cf. STĂNILOAE, *The Experience of God vol. 2*, pp. 58, 102; STĂNILOAE, *The Holy Trinity*, p. 34.

<sup>40</sup> Miller summarizes it saying: “The ethical and spiritual development for which the created world is the inevitable medium is nothing less than the sanctification and deification of man.” (MILLER, *The Gift of the World*, p. 58.)

<sup>41</sup> Through this dialogue, God is made transparent in the world. Therefore, Stăniloae considers the world also a sacrament. Cf. BORDEIANU, *Dumitru Stăniloae*, pp., 150-151.

<sup>42</sup> MILLER, *The Gift of the World*, p. 64.

Stăniloae names this new spirituality “a new asceticism, a positive asceticism,”<sup>43</sup> according to which the transformation of the world in human hands needs to be done with responsibility and love towards and with others, who are also candidates of the natural priesthood.<sup>44</sup> This is not only an expression of ascesis, as Arendt thought, but also a result of the belief that the world needs to remain stable and nourishing for the coming generations.<sup>45</sup> Accepting the world as a gift and giving it in return implies overcoming passions of egoism (such as pride, greed, anger) and cultivating virtues (patience, discipline, self-denial).<sup>46</sup> People are called to help each other with their gifts and resources. This includes just distribution of natural resources and also their spare usage. “God gave humans the ascesis of work as a means of healing” their selfish inclinations. The additional pain makes the material world and humanity more spiritual through work and sacrifice in freedom.<sup>47</sup>

At the highest stage of spiritual growth, one “is no longer preoccupied with external activity, but with contemplation.” Nevertheless, that person remains in the world and connected with it in love, which is “the very highest of the virtues.” A person of such spirituality makes an imprint on the world by attracting and touching others to strive for the same virtuous life.<sup>48</sup> Even though Stăniloae clarifies that in practicing self-control, a person does not turn away from the world as such, but “from a world narrow and exaggerated by the passions, to find a transparent world which itself becomes a mirror of God and a ladder to [God].” However, a problem of “the surest, the most radical, the shortest way” of climbing to the union with God arises. It concerns monks who take it

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<sup>43</sup> STĂNILOAE, *The Experience of God vol. 2*, p. 6. Stăniloae wants to express an affirmation of the world over against an understanding of ascesis negating the world, as Arendt understood it.

<sup>44</sup> Stăniloae differentiates between three kinds of priesthood, the natural, universal and ordained. For a concise summary, see: MILLER, *The Gift of the World*, pp. 96-98.

<sup>45</sup> Cf. ARENDT, *Vita activa*, p. 68.

<sup>46</sup> Cf. STĂNILOAE, “Orthodoxy, Life in the Resurrection”, p. 374.

<sup>47</sup> Cf. STĂNILOAE, *The Experience of God vol. 2*, p. 181; STĂNILOAE, *The Experience of God vol. 1*, p. 217. Also distribution of the goods is to be just, but at the same time it is to correspond to the effort an individual makes on spiritual as well as worldly levels.

<sup>48</sup> STĂNILOAE, *Orthodox Spirituality*, pp. 44-45.

by leaving the world to be able to better exercise self-control than those people living in the world, even though one is never able to leave it fully.<sup>49</sup>

Describing three steps of divine love, Stăniloae refers to St. John of the Ladder, according to whom “divine love makes those who share in it no longer feel either pleasure from food, or even to often want it.”<sup>50</sup> Even at lower stages of spiritual ascent the natural passions, such as appetite for food and the enjoyment of food, “must be overwhelmed with the spiritual pleasure of a knowing mind.” This is helped when we “bridle the feeling of pleasure from food, by different reflections on the purpose of food – the blessing which God has given us through it, the duty which we also have of being merciful to others.”<sup>51</sup> On the other hand, Bonhoeffer interprets food, drink, clothing, rest and play not only as means to another (higher or spiritual) end, such as keeping the body healthy and able to perform at work, but also to enjoy life, including its bodily life (sexuality notwithstanding). “The meaning of the bodily life is never realized in its purposefulness, but it is exhausted only in the fulfillment of its intrinsic claim for joy.”<sup>52</sup>

The question from the previous chapter resurfaces again in this context: even though the world—as nature, human beings and human artifact—has a critical role in human search for God and growth in communion with the Trinity and one another, what is the place of the material, worldly, including human body, in relation to the spiritual and otherworldly in Stăniloae’s theology? It seems that even though he attempted to formulate ascetic aspects of his tradition in their positive sense, a tension remains in terms of the spiritual, worldly and bodily life. Bonhoeffer’s radical view of a life for others, calls to a life in “this-worldliness, in the fullness of duties, questions, successes

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<sup>49</sup> *Orthodox Spirituality*, pp. 149-150; 154. Regarding the impossibility of leaving the world Stăniloae refers to Heidegger’s concept of *In-der-Welt-sein*. Stăniloae does not develop this idea further. For a comparison of Heidegger’s and Arendt’s understanding of being in the world, see here note 90.

<sup>50</sup> STĂNILOAE, *Orthodox Spirituality*, p. 308.

<sup>51</sup> STĂNILOAE, *Orthodox Spirituality*, p. 101. These passions “are necessary for our nature, and help to preserve it,” include also fear and sadness. “Nevertheless, they aren’t a part of the original constitution of our nature; they weren’t created at the same time. They sprung up in it after man’s fall from the state of perfection. [...] They represent the animal (irrational) aspect of our nature, accentuated after the fall from the spiritual, paradisiacal life, united with God.” (Ibid., p. 84)

<sup>52</sup> BONHOEFER, *Ethik*, p. 182f.



and failures, experiences and perplexities.” Only in this way, one learns to have faith and “throws oneself completely into God’s hands.” Bonhoeffer considered self-discipline to be an integral aspect of Christian living; nevertheless, at no stage it involves a separation of the worldly, the bodily and the spiritual.<sup>53</sup>

### **1.2.2. Christian Freedom from Politics in Bonhoeffer’s Theology**

Unlike Bonhoeffer’s, Stăniloae’s theology seems to be leaning towards, what Arendt names, Christian freedom from politics. Both theologians establish their views on the world in the person of the God-Man. However, they have a different understanding of the consequences of this reality for Christian life in the world. Therefore, a brief discussion of their understanding of incarnation might be helpful.

Bonhoeffer, as was explained in discussing his dialogue with early Barth, affirmed the person of Jesus Christ as God for us. Because of the Incarnate one, it is not possible to talk about humanity and divinity as being separate before nor after Incarnation. There is nothing we can say about divinity and humanity as such. We can think them only in their unity in the person of the God-Man. The incarnation is not kenosis of God or divinity, rather, it “is the message of glorification of God, who sees his honor as consisting in his being in the form of a human being (*Menschengestalt*). This glorification is not visible, but is veiled, because the Incarnate is also the Crucified one. However, “God does not disguise himself in human being (*im Menschen*), but reveals himself as the God-Man. [...] The subject of humiliation is not the divinity or humanity,” but the God-Man. “The teaching of incarnation and humiliation must be radically separated,” because God is incarnate, while the God-Man is humiliated. The central problem of Christology, says Bonhoeffer, lies in the incognito of Christ, not

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<sup>53</sup> BONHOEFFER, *Widerstand und Ergebung*, pp. 401-403.

God, who is “not visibly recognizable.” He enters the world of sin and death and whose actions cannot be unequivocally identified as good or evil.<sup>54</sup>

On the other hand, Stăniloae applies to the Word of God, or divinity that, which Bonhoeffer ascribes to the unity of the God-Man. “In order to fill the human nature with His ‘glory,’ [...] the Son of God had to ‘make this nature His own’ through Incarnation, that is to say, to become its Hypostasis. This ‘impropriation’ of the human nature represents the humility of God’s nature, or His so-called *kenosis*, or ‘emptying,’ of the glory He had before Incarnation.”<sup>55</sup> Stăniloae believes, “the assuming of our nature by the Son of God is the first act of His *kenosis*,” which continues “in His obedience as man and in His bearing of human necessities [...] and in suffering death itself.”<sup>56</sup>

Stăniloae’s position could be placed between Bonhoeffer’s and his interpretation of early Barth. Stăniloae’s theology is trinitarian, yet Incarnation does not take place in eternity—which Bonhoeffer criticized in Barth—but is a part of historical reality of the God-Man. Even though Stăniloae goes beyond, what Bonhoeffer understands as Chalcedonian negative Christology,<sup>57</sup> he believes, the worldly is inseparable from the divine. It is taken up into the divine life through the life of Jesus Christ, the Word incarnate. The humiliation of the Incarnate occurs in part in his entering human sin and death—which is asserted also by Bonhoeffer, but has its first stage rooted in humiliation of the Son of God, who disclaims his glory. For Bonhoeffer, God glorified himself in being united with human being.

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<sup>54</sup> BONHOEFFER, Vorlesung “Christologie”, pp. 342-345. For his discussion of *kenosis* within Lutheran theology, see: Ibid., pp. 332-336.

<sup>55</sup> STĂNILOAE, *The Experience of God*, vol.3, p. 50. “Two phases can be distinguished in the descent of the Son of God: one prior to the Incarnation, through which the Son of God accepts becoming man; the other following the Incarnation, in which God takes upon Himself our suffering. In fact, the latter is implied in the former, given the suffering condition of the human being, because God did not become man to suppress the content of our humanity. He took upon Himself our sufferings in order to overcome them from within.” (STĂNILOAE, *The Experience of God*, vol.3, p. 51)

<sup>56</sup> STĂNILOAE, *The Experience of God*, vol.3, p. 54. “We ascend to the heavenly Christ through the earthly Christ within a world which, even more than the Church, is always seeking to progress beyond whatever happens to be its present condition, always yearning for something better, always convinced that the status quo need not be definitive.” STANILAOE, *Theology and the Church*, p. 205.

<sup>57</sup> Cf. BONHOEFFER, Vorlesung “Christologie”, pp. 335-336; 339f.

It was his struggle against two-sphere thinking, dividing the Christian and the worldly spheres, that incited Bonhoeffer's treatment of the world.<sup>58</sup> He answers in affirming one reality of God in communion with the world in Christ,<sup>59</sup> one command of love in the four mandates and one Lord of all.<sup>60</sup> Christian life is "a participation in the encounter of Christ with the world."<sup>61</sup> This participation is Christian acting itself,<sup>62</sup>

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<sup>58</sup> Bonhoeffer founded his refusal of this so-called Lutheran separation on Luther himself and identified it as a misinterpretation of his theology. Bonhoeffer protests against it based on his doctrine of revelation. (Cf. BONHOEFFER, *Ethik*, pp. 290-292.) According to Bonhoeffer, since God became a human being, we are to look for the sacred, the 'supernatural' and the revelational only in the worldly, natural, profane, and rational. (Cf. BONHOEFFER, *Ethik*, p. 44f)

<sup>59</sup> God's love for the world is an "event of a communion of God with the world realized in Jesus Christ." BONHOEFFER, *Ethik*, pp. 240-241.

<sup>60</sup> Stăniloae recognized family, nation and state as orders of creation, which are "absolutely necessary for preservation of our life" and to which we need to subordinate ourselves. Disregarding now the term orders of creation, Bonhoeffer names two of them in his theology of mandates. He refuses to consider nation to be one of them, as he was fighting Nazi racial and nationalistic ideology. On the other hand, Stăniloae's claim that "anti-nationalism" is a sin "is not at all understandable from contemporary view," claims Henkel. Stăniloae's "concern about orthodox identity of the Romanians is apologetically inspired," whereby he "did not have to consider the (often politically-ideologically motivated) premises of the special German hermeneutic of a 'theology after Auschwitz'." (HENKEL, *Eros und Ethos*, pp. 297; 301) The original articles, reflecting Stăniloae's nationalism, to which Henkel refers, were written in the 1930s and published in a book in 1992. To my knowledge, they do not contain any additional reflections on the Holocaust (as a historical fact). A reason behind this could lie in the fact, that until recently, there was a wide held opinion within Romania, that there was no Holocaust there. This interpretation was promoted during the communist times and had not been officially revisited until an international incident caused by the Romanian president and other government officials saying, there had been no Holocaust in Romania (Cf. "Romania sparks Holocaust row", last modified June 17, 2003, accessed July 20, <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/europe/2997616.stm>). After pressure from the State of Israel and international organizations, an independent international commission, presided by Elie Wiesel, was appointed, "to repair years of forgetfulness and face the demands of History." ("Message from Elie Wiesel", accessed July 20, 2013, [http://www.ushmm.org/research/center/presentations/features/details/2005-03-10/pdf/english/message\\_wiesel.pdf](http://www.ushmm.org/research/center/presentations/features/details/2005-03-10/pdf/english/message_wiesel.pdf)) The commission presented its report in November 2004, together with recommendations to the Romanian government. Its findings state: "A significant percentage of the Romanian Jewish community was destroyed during World War II. [...] The Commission concludes [...] that the Romanian authorities were the main perpetrators of this Holocaust, in both its planning and implementation." ("Findings & Recommendations" accessed September 12, 2013, <http://www.ushmm.org/m/pdfs/20080226-romania-commission-findings-recommendations.pdf>, p. 459.)

For specific parts of the *Final Report of the International Commission on the Holocaust in Romania*, Presented to Romanian President Ion Iliescu, November 11, 2004, Bucharest, Romania", visit: "Romania: Facing Its Past", accessed September 12, 2013, <http://www.ushmm.org/research/scholarly-presentations/symposia/holocaust-in-romania/romania-facing-its-past>.

<sup>61</sup> BONHOEFFER, *Ethik*, p. 151. According to Bonhoeffer, it was a misinterpretation of the Sermon on the Mount claiming it was a stumbling block for active Christian engagement in the world. He says, it portrays the love of God for and in the world, not a set of principles or ideals, which need to be implemented by Christians, as Arendt seems to suggest. Rather, God in Christ draws us into the event of the communion of God and the world in the person of Christ and this text "puts people in front of the necessity of historically responsible acting." (*Ethik*, pp. 229-230; 240-244)

understood as vicarious representative acting.<sup>63</sup> Bonhoeffer did not just talk about it, but lived it out to the point of sacrificing his own life. He is certainly a participant on, what Arendt calls, a great mystery: “why is it, that also under the worst circumstances there exist individuals, who not only abstain from getting involved [in evil deeds], but risk their body and life for goals and ideas, that we summarize with the term ‘goodness’.”<sup>64</sup>

Christian faith sees the world as loved, condemned and reconciled by God. Therefore, it is not superfluous nor is it to be abolished, or just endured. Instead, it is to be formed according to the reality of Christ,<sup>65</sup> towards its true worldliness.<sup>66</sup> Christian participation in the new reality established by Christ, consists in being fully immersed “in the fullness of concrete worldly acting, subject to all misinterpretation and condemnation,” including misunderstanding and ambiguity that characterize everything worldly.<sup>67</sup> This includes also political involvement and action.<sup>68</sup>

A separation of the world into two spheres, limiting one’s acting by vocation’s “job description,”<sup>69</sup> or attempts to retain pure conscience, results in oblivion towards the

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<sup>62</sup> Bonhoeffer rejected any possibility of a double morality, one secular and another Christian. What is “Christian” and “worldly” is recognized in their unity “only in concrete responsibility of acting in the sight of the unity created in Jesus Christ.” (BONHOEFFER, *Ethik*, p. 237f; 266)

<sup>63</sup> DeJonge illustrates on the examples of Bonhoeffer’s writings *Nachfolge* and *Ethik* the consequences of his theology of revelation. Having the person of Jesus Christ at the center of his theology, Bonhoeffer views discipleship as an expression of this unity of God-Man. The call of this Christ and obedience of a Christian form the unity of the life of a Christian. Similarly, the concept of responsible action, argues DeJonge further, depicts the unity of worldly and Christian happening in the action of the Christian. Cf. DEJONGE, *Bonhoeffer’s Theological Formation*, pp. 105; 133-134; 138-140.

<sup>64</sup> ARENDT, *Über das Böse*, p. 194f.

<sup>65</sup> Cf. BONHOEFFER, *Ethik*, pp. 227-228. “Action, which corresponds to the reality of Jesus Christ, is good, action *corresponding-to-Christ* is action *corresponding-to-reality*.”

<sup>66</sup> BONHOEFFER, *Ethik*, p. 404. Cf. BONHOEFFER, *Widerstand und Ergebung*, pp. 306; 401-402.

<sup>67</sup> BONHOEFFER, *Ethik*, p. 240.

<sup>68</sup> Discussing the mandate of work, Bonhoeffer names Cain’s creation of the city, invention of musical instruments and processing of natural resources as an anticipation of the heavenly city and music among the results of work from which emerges “a reflection (*Abbild*) of the heavenly world.” (BONHOEFFER, *Ethik*, p. 57.)

<sup>69</sup> An illustration of this emphasis of Bonhoeffer’s theology is the already mentioned case of the “Scottsboro boys.” The churchman’s explanation, of why he did not support Bonhoeffer’s appeal to voice a protest on behalf of those teenagers, was based “on the “Lutheran” idea of vocation, meaning the boundaries of his responsibility.” Bonhoeffer identifies that this same belief stopped many parish priests from speaking up on behalf of the persecuted Jewish Christians who were not from their congregations. It was not a lack of courage or discernment which motivated them, but this wrong idea of vocation. Bonhoeffer asserts that the one “who does not know behind the neighbor this furthest and this furthest at

world and incapacitation of Christian acting in terms of civil courage.<sup>70</sup> There is no possibility left open for resistance, for acting on behalf of those suffering. There is no space left for a response to others' needs and challenges posed by injustices of a criminal political regime.

Since the love of God for the world “includes also political action, [...] the worldly form of Christian love can [...] take upon itself a struggle for self-assertion, power, success, security.”<sup>71</sup> In Arendt's terms, these are elements of politics. The world remains a connecting element between Christians, who in looking at Christ see God in communion with the world. This new reality summons them to action in and for the world. Since this new reality formed in Christ includes the world's political, social, and private dimensions, there is no space for freedom from the public and political. Taking care of one's own matters or salvation, disregarding the common world outside of ourselves and the church, is missing the root of Christian faith, namely the Incarnate One.

In spite of his personal suffering and struggle with the misuse of political power and its failures, Stăniloae did not address them as a specific topic of his theology. I think that one of the reasons for this missing theme, aside from spending most of his life monitored by the secret service and under censorship<sup>72</sup>, lies in Stăniloae's

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the same time as this neighbor, does not serve the neighbor, but himself, takes flight from the free air of responsibility into the limitedness of convenient performance of his duty.” Bonhoeffer brought into affinity stories of the African-Americans in the US and of the Jewish people in Germany and suggests that Nietzsche, unlike this churchman, “spoke in the spirit of the New Testament, when he attacked the legalistic-philistine misunderstanding of the command of the love of the neighbor.” (BONHOEFFER, *Ethik*, pp. 295-297)

<sup>70</sup> Bonhoeffer gives an example of a physician, who does not fulfill his/her Christian vocation by only healing people, but also in publicly speaking against mistreating human life and misusing the medical profession. (*Ethik*, 294.)

<sup>71</sup> BONHOEFFER, *Ethik*, 244f. Bonhoeffer intended to write a passage on political ethics, but he never did. (Ibid., p. 234, n.94) When Bonhoeffer uses the expression “political ethics” in *Nachfolge*, the editors let us know this was a hint at Friedrich Gogarten's book of that name that Bonhoeffer criticized already in 1933. His response expresses the theme of the rest of *Nachfolge*, saying the Christian community is a polis on a hill, which should shine forth its sanctification and the preaching of the word of God proclaiming the Lord over the earth. (Cf. BONHOEFFER, *Nachfolge*, p. 277f, n.28)

<sup>72</sup> Stăniloae spent five years in prison (1958-1963) mostly at Aiud where the “re-education” program took place (the whole group Burning Bush was imprisoned). After he was released, even though he was

understanding of incarnation. In it, the human and divine, even though united in the Person of Jesus Christ, remain distinguished and treated separately in his concept of spiritual progress, understanding of the church and Christian acting within it, elevating the spiritual perspective and reality.<sup>73</sup>

### **1.3. Summary: Goodness and the World**

In this part, I will summarize the presented arguments that lead up to the main findings formulated in this passage: goodness in terms of acting for others cannot be invisible; Christian acting is indivisible from the world discerned as a means of communication between God and human beings. Therefore, Christian acting is not unworldly or apolitical.

Since the Triune God entered into the communion with the world in Jesus Christ, it is not possible to see God, oneself and the world—human beings, nature, world of things and the political life—isolated from one another. In addition, because also individual human beings are united with the Father in Christ through the Holy Spirit, they are not the only actors of their goodness, but the only visible ones.

Based on the above interpretation of theological views of Bonhoeffer and Stăniloae, a human actor of goodness cannot, under normal circumstances, remain anonymous because goodness—as a life for others—is acting taking place in a visible community. Christian acting for others, complemented by its common dimension in words and deeds, is unthinkable without other actively acting subjects. Hidden actors would

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allowed to teach, to travel to conferences abroad and later also to publish, he remained monitored by the *Securitate*.

<sup>73</sup> I think this could be a reason why Stăniloae “appeared incapable of dealing with some of the hard political issues facing post communist Romania” and did not “develop much original political thought.” (TURCESCU, “Dumitru Stăniloae (1903-1993)”, p. 318) Even though his theology of nations, and primarily of the Romanian nation, has political consequences, unlike Bonhoeffer, he did not think the church was called to tell the right word at the right time to the political authority, as was noticeable in his interview with Dumitrescu.

silence the dialogue which is one of the roots of the common good. Therefore, from this perspective, goodness is not unworldly, as Arendt suggests.

In addition, this world has an important role as a subject matter and a catalyst of Christian action. The world as a gift of God, as Stăniloae explicates, encompasses nature, human beings, and human artifact, which is to be a product of human cooperation and transformation according to the reasons and the will of God. Therefore, the world is not only an object of spiritual exercises leading to escaping it. This is feasible in a community, in which people accept each other in love and respect, but also as equal subjects. Their diversity consists not only in their character, God's gifts, and vocation, but also in the uniqueness of their perspectives.

Nevertheless, Stăniloae does not develop what consequences and implications this has for the life of the church (even though he suggests that for the worldly space), as he does not suggest such a dialogue between the church and the political space. Bonhoeffer, in affirming the person of Christ as a unity of God and the world, overcomes even a theoretical division of divine and worldly, spiritual and bodily. In this way, Bonhoeffer establishes Christian acting containing not only spiritual and charitable deeds, but also political ones. "Bonhoeffer's concept of responsible action is rigorously Christocentric. What this clearly shows is that there is never an apolitical theology"<sup>74</sup> and so, I would add, there is never an apolitical church.

Those identified distinctions arising from Bonhoeffer's and Stăniloae's theologies regarding the world and common acting, are rooted in their different theological starting points and interpretations of incarnation. Bonhoeffer, begins from Christology, which leads him to develop theology of acting in its communal dimension and to an intrinsic unity of God and the world. Stăniloae basis his theology of the human relations in the life of the Trinity—of which the church is an icon—and arrives, next to communal, also

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<sup>74</sup> John A. MOSES, "Dietrich Bonhoeffer's Repudiation of Protestant German War Theology," in: *The Journal of Religious History*, 30 (October 2006), p. 369.

at a concept of common acting. Even though divinity and humanity are united in the Person of the God-Man, they are treated separately.

Discussing goodness and the common good from theological perspectives of Bonhoeffer and Stăniloae, makes the absence of theology of common acting in Bonhoeffer's theology clearly perceptible.<sup>75</sup> At the same time, his unequivocal stance on the visibility of a life for others, including public-political voice of the church, challenge Stăniloae's lack of political theology.

## **2. A Place of Acting According to Arendt**

In this section, we will revisit Arendt's distinctions between various spaces in this world and the reasons why the political space is a unique environment for human acting and why it should not be compared to a private familial space. Since the church is a public community, this discussion is vital for a continuing conversation between Arendt, Bonhoeffer and Stăniloae.

The new aspect that I will introduce into this discussion points to a political space that is not necessarily given in established institutions and dependent on them. What role action itself plays in this variability is the main topic here.

Arendt located Christian acting into a paradoxical place of public acts performed in anonymity. The case of goodness is for Arendt, an extreme example of the fact that each of the human activities belongs to a certain place. Corresponding to their nature, some of them deserve to appear in the public and some need the seclusion of the private sphere in order to flourish.<sup>76</sup> Arendt keeps the public-private distinction throughout her work and characterizes it with a several sets of binary relations, such as *polis* vs. *oikos*,

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<sup>75</sup> In understanding Christian acting in both its communal and common dimension, Bonhoeffer might have invited to cooperation all those blessed—concerned and persecuted for a just cause—whom Jesus “brings under his protection, responsibility and claim.” Cf. BONHOEFFER, *Ethik*, pp. 349-350.

<sup>76</sup> Cf. ARENDT, *Vita activa*, p. 96f.



private vs. public sphere, political vs. social issues, visible vs. invisible, biological life vs. world etc.

In the following, the question will be discussed, if these distinctions do not occur at the expense of making certain issues concerning human life and acting itself invisible. Two aspects of Arendt's concept of action will be discussed corresponding to the binary relations. A search for their common denominator will be undertaken concentrating not on leveling out or deepening of the differences between the various spaces of human activities, but seeking if there is anything within action's capacities that would instead of dividing, unite them.

## 2.1. Private, Social and Political

The first part exposes Arendt's distinctions between private, social and political spaces pointing to some of resulting difficulties.

Brunkhorst claims Arendt dichotomizes the two spheres to the point of proposing a secularized version of the teaching of two spheres, which is also based on hierarchical differentiations between the secular and the churchly.<sup>77</sup> Accordingly, he identifies bipolar contradictions in Arendt's theory of action, pointing on the one hand to the political action (characterized by elitist or aristocratic citizenship), and on the other to pre-political action (described in terms of egalitarian freedom).<sup>78</sup> He praises Arendt for

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<sup>77</sup> Brunkhorst argues Arendt neglected different degrees of freedom that existed between *oikos* and *polis* in Greco-Roman thinking, giving examples of self-discipline or self-control, which included rule over wives, children or slaves, which were achieved in household, but certainly not in a private sphere. (Hauke BRUNKHORST, *Hannah Arendt*, München: Oskar Beck, 1999, pp. 104-105). However, Arendt does not consider rule over oneself and others to be a matter of freedom, but of sovereignty. (ARENDT, *Between Past and Future*, 164f)

<sup>78</sup> He believes this tension is established according to the different sources Arendt uses: Aristotle and pagan antiquity with its concept of citizen and Augustinian natality representing created human being. (BRUNKHORST, *Hannah Arendt*, p. 106)

never trying to smooth out those contradictions, because he thinks this ambivalence and “a serious attempt to solve and bear it, [...] make Arendt’s work so important.”<sup>79</sup>

Elshtain is more critical of the consequences, which Arendt’s making distinctions has. She believes, Arendt overlooked certain authentic expressions of political life by excluding social issues from politics. This is because she holds Aristotle’s attitude towards the existence of the public at the expense of the private, which kept women, slaves and unfree men at home and *barbaroi* even at a greater distance.<sup>80</sup> Arendt’s political theory continued to dream about a romanticized idea of the *polis*,<sup>81</sup> where acting was a privilege of only a few. Therefore, Arendt does not discern instances of authentic citizenship present within society.<sup>82</sup> Elshtain gives an example of the way handicapped citizens in America organized themselves. They did not aim at their self-interest only but also to “reach out so that others may identify with them as individuals

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<sup>79</sup> BRUNKHORST, *Hannah Arendt*, pp. 137-138. As was indicated in the first chapter, Arendt herself introduced the concept of action as a beginning under the term pre-political because it is inherent in a new beginning of any human activity.

<sup>80</sup> “Of the major contemporary thinkers only Arendt seems relatively unfazed by similar preconditions for citizenship,” refers Elshtain to *The Human Condition*. (ELSHTAIN, *Public Man Private Woman*, p. 53)

<sup>81</sup> This still remained parasitizing on the invisible and politically unimportant household and so Arendt was not able to “escape the iron cage of the agora.” ELSHTAIN, *Public Man Private Woman*, pp. 322; 346-348.

<sup>82</sup> Arendt’s notion of the public is “blinded to authentic instances of citizenship within one’s own society. It means one nurtures the concept of the “citizen” in a hothouse of purity so as to keep it untainted by the struggles of the present.” Elshtain criticizes, what she calls Arendt’s celebration of Greek heroes and warriors. (Elshtain, *Public Man Private Woman*, p. 346f) However, Arendt’s text, which might suggest such a reading from *The Human Condition*, to which Elshtain refers, probably comes from the section entitled “The Greek Solution” of the unpredictability of acting escaping actor’s control, following the section entitled, “The Frailty of Human Affairs.” Therefore, I think it is not clear from the texts themselves, if Arendt recommended such “Greek” action since, in a certain sense, it would contradict her understanding of action as something we cannot control in contrast to work and something we do together with others. Moreover, she sees solution to the *aporia* of action in the human capacity to forgive and give promises, not in something like Achilles’ heroic final deed. Honig asks the same question, saying, “Arendt often fails to distinguish clearly her (admittedly admiring) descriptions of the practice of agonal politics in the polis from her own vision of politics.” (Bonnie HONIG, “Toward an Agonistic Feminism: Hannah Arendt and the Politics of Identity”, in: *Feminist Interpretations of Hannah Arendt*, Bonnie HONIG, ed., The Pennsylvania State University Press: University Park, 1995, pp. 143, 162, n. 17)

“America’s handicapped citizens, a minority dispossessed and deprived of most basic dimensions of human existence [...] organize themselves into a viable political force and break through invisible walls of public unconcern and private disgust, barriers of silence and shame, stigmata of helplessness and dependence that we forced upon them. Are these not citizens?” asks Elshtain. (ELSHTAIN, *Public Man Private Woman*, p. 347)

and citizens.” Elshstain recognizes such initiative as an authentic political acting and, therefore, distinguishes herself from Arendt: “Public imperatives, competing public claims, public morality, public duties, responsibilities, goods, yes: a ‘public space,’ no.” Elshstain considers Arendt’s essay *Reflections on Little Rock* to be an example of Arendt’s criticism of ‘an improper “politicizing” of a social issue,’ concerning the struggle surrounding school desegregation.<sup>83</sup>

This essay contains Arendt’s clear exposition of the three spheres she distinguishes—private, social and political. Each of them has a specific principle, according to which it is organized: The realm of privacy is ruled by exclusiveness. Here we “choose those with whom we wish to spend our lives, personal friends and those we love.” The social sphere is ruled by discrimination. Here we choose the company of people who are similar to us, thus making the use of the right to free association. The political realm is organized according to equality, where appearances as such do not matter, but only actors’ words and deeds. When any of the principles is applied to one of the other spheres, it is destructive of them. In Arendt’s view, the issue of legal enforcement of school desegregation was a political means of regulating a social issue—the racial problem. “The only public [not political] institution that can fight prejudice,” are the churches. Arendt bases it on the principle of their existence, namely on the uniqueness of the person. Unlike in the private sphere, where uniqueness concerns only those we choose, church is to welcome the uniqueness of everyone.<sup>84</sup> However, Arendt does not

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<sup>83</sup> ELSHTAIN, *Public Man Private Woman*, p. 347, n.55.

<sup>84</sup> Cf. Hannah ARENDT, “Reflections on Little Rock”, in: Hannah ARENDT, *Essays in understanding, 1930-1954*, 1st ed., Jerome KOHN, ed., Harcourt Brace: New York, 1994, pp. 204-209. Arendt made a similar attempt to make a distinction between social and political already in 1933 in her book review *On the Emancipation of Women*. (in: *ibid.*, pp. 66-68) Arendt gives an example of such an initiative, suggesting a different way of fighting school segregation than the forced desegregation, she criticized. With the help of a Christian community or other like-minded citizens, there could be established an interracial school as a pilot project aimed at persuading parents to enroll their children to such a school. (*Ibid.*, p. 195) The theme of school segregation could be an interesting case study in conversation with the present tensions between the Romas and majority inhabitants in Slovakia. There were concrete walls built separating Roma’s settlements from the white residences by also public institutions, and the government was proposing an establishment of boarding schools for the Roma children in order to enable their better education and assimilation to the majority’s culture. Cf. Andrew HIGGINS, “In Its Efforts to Integrate Roma, Slovakia Recalls U.S. Struggles“, *The New York Times*, May

give a reason for such an initiative. Since in her view, the social sphere is organized according to the principle “like attracts like”, is there any need to fight social prejudice in the public social sphere outside of the churches at all?<sup>85</sup>

## 2.2. Action Crossing the Lines

In this section, I inquire whether action stays limited by the distinctions between different spaces. Does action remain “at home” in an established political space? Or does it escape any attempt to be domesticated?

Benhabib asserts that Arendt wanted to select what is public-political based on “content- or issue-based distinction.” Benhabib does not find this helpful, when it comes to defining social and political problems. Similarly to Elshtain, she points out the lack of content of the political when it is emptied of social concerns. Benhabib argues, that what is public-political needs to be discerned in a public debate. In it, classes, or groups must engage in an exchange of views, discussion of their narrow interests and enlarge their thinking in “giving reasons in public, by entertaining others’ points of view, and must attempt to transform the dictates of self-interest into a common public goal.” Arendt’s essay *Reflections on Little Rock*, “shows not only the failure of the

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9, 2013 [http://www.nytimes.com/2013/05/10/world/europe/in-slovakia-integration-of-roma-mirrors-early-struggles-in-us.html?\\_r=2&](http://www.nytimes.com/2013/05/10/world/europe/in-slovakia-integration-of-roma-mirrors-early-struggles-in-us.html?_r=2&) (accessed July 2, 2013)

<sup>85</sup> In the political space, where people consider one another equal, they are interconnected with a specific personal relation, which Arendt, drawing on Aristotle, defines as respect—“a kind of political friendship.” (ARENDR, *Vita activa*, p. 310) Benhabib rightly notes that Arendt’s “ethic of radical intersubjectivity, which is based on the fundamental insight that all social life and moral relations to others begin with the decentering of primary narcissism,” is a presupposition of her anthropological universalism, without justifying it. “Arendt does not examine the philosophical step that would lead from a description of the equality of the human condition to the equality that comes from moral and political recognition.” (BENHABIB, *The Reluctant Modernism of Hannah Arendt*, p. 196.) Similarly, Arendt is aware that trust in people is needed for human acting, “a trust—which is difficult to formulate but fundamental—in what is human in all people.” Nevertheless, Arendt does not continue to say, what this ‘fundamentally human’ is, nor does she explain trust’s origin. (ARENDR, *Essays in Understanding*, p. 23)

distinction between the social and the political but also the failure of the art of practicing ‘enlarged mentality’ in the public realm.”<sup>86</sup>

According to Honig, Arendt used the private-public distinction to protect the public realm, not from bodies and their cares, from certain classes, or social issues, but from “particular sensibilities that hinder or destroy action,” such as utilitarian thinking, violence, inequality or sameness. In the same way, she was attempting to protect the private sphere from the sensibilities of action that is boundless, unpredictable, and irreversible. Once entering the web of human relationships, action starts a process of creating new relations and effects, escaping the control of its initiator. It is one of the gifts as well as stumbling blocks of acting. Even if we try to tie it to a certain space, it is, in and of itself, driven to trespass those boundaries. Precisely these agonistic and performative aspects of action itself are able to both cross and redraw the lines distinguishing the public and private realms.<sup>87</sup>

In Benhabib’s reading, agonistic action is one of two modes of action in Arendt’s theory. Agonistic action reveals the “essentialist aspects of identity,” by actor’s speech and deed. It is a process of discovery. The “who” someone is, is revealed by a memorable deed and speech. On the other hand, the narrative model of action reveals the “inventive process” of constructing an identity within a web of human relationships.<sup>88</sup> Honig emphasizes this capacity of action to “performative production of identity,” referring to Arendt’s discussion of the inner struggle between *velle* and *nolle* in *Wollen*.<sup>89</sup> Benhabib uncovers the two modes of action in Arendt’s thinking, corresponding to the distinction between the space of appearances, which is phenomenological and does not have to be

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<sup>86</sup> Seyla BENHABIB, *The Reluctant Modernism of Hannah Arendt, new ed.*, Lanham: Rowman and Littlefield, 1996, pp. 145, 154-156f.

<sup>87</sup> HONIG, “Toward an Agonistic Feminism”, p. 143. Cf. ARENDT, *Vita activa*, 236-239. It establishes relationships and therefore has an inherent tendency to force open all limitations and cut across all boundaries.” For that reason, action and suffering are two sides of the same coin. ARENDT, *Human Condition*, pp. 190-191.

<sup>88</sup> Cf. BENHABIB, *The Reluctant Modernism of Hannah Arendt*, pp. 124-127.

<sup>89</sup> Honig, p. 145f. Cf. Hannah ARENDT, *Vom Leben Des Geistes: Das Denken, Das Wollen*, Piper Verlag: München, Zürich, 2008, pp. 298-307; 318-343; 360-375. For Bonhoeffer’s criticism of inability to overcome indecisiveness in action, see Cf. BONHOEFFER, *Widerstand und Ergebung*, pp. 14f., 403; BONHOEFFER, *Ethik*, pp. 386-390.

accessible to all, and the public space, characterized as institutionalized. Based on exposing this dichotomy in Arendt's concept of the public sphere, it can be established that while some action can reach agonistic dimension in public space, action in the narrative sense, is possible also within the private spheres of love of family and friendship, whose relations would suffer in the limelight of the public.<sup>90</sup>

Nevertheless, Benhabib does not give sufficient support of placing 'the space of appearances' within private sphere, meaning friends or family members. In the passage Benhabib invokes, focusing on "everything that appears in public can be seen and heard by everybody," Arendt also continues, that in order for the experiences from the private sphere to appear, they need to be "deprivatized."<sup>91</sup> This would not be needed if the space of appearances were present within the private. Moreover, Benhabib claims, "humans 'appear' to each other also in concentration camps."<sup>92</sup> Uncovering Arendt's concept of action as a crucial human activity of interaction, absent in Heidegger, Benhabib says: "To be alive as a human being, as opposed to being a mere body, is to act and speak with others in space and time."<sup>93</sup> However, when Arendt writes about concentration camps, she also notes: "The camps [...] also serve the ghastly experiment of eliminating [...] spontaneity itself as an expression of human behavior and of transforming the human personality into a mere thing." Through a process of making

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<sup>90</sup> Cf. BENHABIB, *The Reluctant Modernism of Hannah Arendt*, pp. 124-127. The reason for such unequivocal way of Arendt's distinctions sees Benhabib in her philosophical methodology, concretely in her "phenomenological essentialism." This often leads Arendt to blending conceptual differentiations with social processes, ontological analysis with institutional and historical descriptions.

Benhabib argues that Arendt's concept of the space of appearances is very different to Heidegger's language denigrating this realm, which Arendt finds to be in proximity to Plato. "Arendt revalues what Heidegger devalues, because she has disclosed the deep structure of human action as interaction. The space of appearances is ontologically reevaluated by her, precisely because human beings can act and speak only with others, and in so far as they appear to others." In Benhabib's interpretation, Heidegger's language reminds of "a Christian theology that views the world as the domain of fallen sinners who are condemned to live in finitude, contingency, accident, and death." (ibid., p. 110-111) Theologies of Bonhoeffer and primarily Stăniloae's theology of the world contain a different perspective on the world.

<sup>91</sup> BENHABIB, *The Reluctant Modernism of Hannah Arendt*, p. 127; Hannah ARENDT, *The Human Condition*, 2.ed., The University of Chicago Press, Chicago, 1998, p. 50. In this conversation with Benhabib I refer to *The Human Condition*, the English version of *Vita activa*, in order to avoid terminological inconsistencies on my part.

<sup>92</sup> BENHABIB, *The Reluctant Modernism of Hannah Arendt*, p. 128.

<sup>93</sup> Ibid., pp. 110.

human beings living corpses, by murdering the moral man, his individuality, until they “do nothing but react.”<sup>94</sup> Spontaneity, the human capacity to begin, is one of characteristics of action for Arendt. Besides, it is only among people who “are together in the manner of speech and action,” that the space of appearances comes into being.<sup>95</sup> In Arendt’s view, friends or members of a family are not interconnected by the world and concern for freedom, but by their inter-personal relations of love and care for their wellbeing.<sup>96</sup>

I think it would be helpful to look at the question regarding a possibility of action within the private sphere from the angle of Arendt’s understanding action as a freedom to take an initiative. Because even though she does not clearly delineate the space of appearances, she puts into relation action, freedom and equality of its actors. “The *raison d’être* of politics is freedom, and its field of experience is action.”<sup>97</sup> Arendt recognizes freedom as a characteristic of the will and as a freedom of choice that do not necessarily need the presence of others. Action, on the other hand, as a freedom to begin, “develops fully only when action has created its own worldly space where it can come out of hiding, as it were, and make its appearance.” Without this space, freedom does not disappear. In fact, it “animates and inspires all human activities and is the hidden source of production of all great and beautiful things.” In this sense, the source of freedom is not visible, but is present nonetheless.<sup>98</sup> From this perspective, action in the sense of a beginning is present also in the private sphere of life, as Brunkhorst claims. However, as was explicated in the chapter one, another prerequisite for freedom to flourish and be visible is that the actors consider each other equals. Co-actors need to grant one another freedom all along action’s path: freedom to begin and freedom to join

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<sup>94</sup> ARENDT, *Origins of Totalitarianism*, pp. 438; 451-455.

<sup>95</sup> ARENDT, *The Human Condition*, p. 199. Soon after, Arendt names the public realm “the potential space of appearance between acting and speaking men.” (Ibid., p. 200)

<sup>96</sup> Cf. ARENDT, *Between Past and Future*, pp. 148 “Obviously not every form of human intercourse and not every kind of community is characterized by freedom. Where men live together but do not form a body politic—as, for example, in tribal societies or in the privacy of the household—the factors ruling their actions and conduct are not freedom but the necessities of life and concern for its preservation.” Moreover, “in politics not life but the world is at stake.” (Ibid., p. 156)

<sup>97</sup> ARENDT, *Between Past and Future*, p. 146.

<sup>98</sup> ARENDT, *Between Past and Future*, p. 169

the action already started. Since this is not the case among family members, who cannot escape their determinative positions, a family is not able to become an agonistic space of action.

In her introduction to *Between Past and Future*, Arendt (on an example from the French resistance) illustrates how among people who were acting together, a public space was formed without them noticing it. That is the space where people set aside masks, roles, and their functions in everyday lives. “They had been visited for the first time in their lives by an apparition of freedom [...] because they had taken the initiative upon themselves.”<sup>99</sup> Actors’ in-between is a place, where they are interconnected by their mutual *inter-est* in the world, not their possible sociological, gender, class, family, psychological or physical profiles describing “What” they are. Something outside of themselves brought them together and paradoxically, in being concerned with the world, their common action brings out into the light “Who” they are within a newly miraculously established public space outside of the public. Along these lines, Honig claims, “nothing is ontologically protected from politicization, [...] nothing is necessarily or naturally or ontologically *not* political.” Therefore, she proposes to understand “Arendt’s notion of the public realm not as a specific *topos*, like the ancient Greek *agon*, but as a metaphor for a variety of (agonistic) spaces, both topographical and conceptual, that might occasion action.” In addition, she proposes to understand action as “an event, an agonistic disruption of the ordinary sequence of things,”<sup>100</sup> which Arendt terms automatism, sameness, behaviorism, attempting to level differences and novelties that disrupt statistical probabilities or traditions.<sup>101</sup>

Arendt’s own thinking about agonistic action and the political changes over time. In *Vita activa* she claimed that the ability to act, to reveal an actor and thus to create his or

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<sup>99</sup> ARENDT, *Between Past and Future*, pp. 3-4. Benhabib invokes Havel, Kundera, and Konrad, who documented how an alternative public life was created within the private sphere under totalitarian regimes. However, she thinks this was “an interesting contrast to Arendtian concepts.” (BENHABIB, *The Reluctant Modernism of Hannah Arendt*, p. 128) However, Arendt’s own theory of action asserts action’s creativity in forming a space of appearances wherever people act together.

<sup>100</sup> HONIG, “Toward an Agonistic Feminism”, p. 146.

<sup>101</sup> ARENDT, *Vita activa*, pp. 57; 316.



her story was very rare.<sup>102</sup> Six years later Günter Gaus inquired about this statement. She explained that, she did not have in mind only the masses, but all strata of society: “the difference between the statesman and the man in the street is in principle not very great.” Because, referring back to what she had been saying all along, “wherever men come together [also masses], in whatever numbers, public interests come into play,” because it is there among them that the public realm is formed. Arendt gives examples of the formation of spontaneous associations, which gather people from neighborhoods or the city acting effectively because they act in matters with which they are familiar. In this interview, Arendt also admitted that her understanding of the world had expanded from a more narrow view of political space towards a broader vision of “space in which things become public, as the space in which one lives and which must look presentable.”<sup>103</sup>

### **2.3. Telling Stories**

After a shift was made from an institutionalized political space towards public spaces where the world matters, we are left with the following question: How do “things become public,” and thus potentially political there? In what way do private or invisible matters enter a public-political discourse (except being exposed against the will of those concerned by the tabloids)? An answer will be attempted in the following passage.

Within action itself lies a remedy to Arendt’s distinctions between the world of private life and the public-political sphere. By distinct people acting together in a public debate among equals, is decided what is or what is not going to be considered to be a public-political issue. Common action in its agonistic dimension shifts the lines between life’s spheres. This does not mean it cancels distinctions between different spaces of human togetherness. At the same time, it is one of the intrinsic capacities of action to

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<sup>102</sup> Cf. ARENDT, *Vita activa*, p. 414.

<sup>103</sup> ARENDT, *Essays in Understanding*, pp. 21-22.

not only (re)create the boundaries between the spaces, but at the same time, to keep them interconnected.

According to Arendt, telling a story within the web of human relationships creates a bridge between the spheres of public and private. This bridge from the world we do not share with many people, including the world of one's intimacy, towards the world of the wider public is action itself in its mode of, as Benhabib names it, narrative action within a public space.<sup>104</sup> At the same time, since such an action requires taking an initiative to expose oneself on the stage of the public, it is also action in its other, agonic, form.

If one chooses to do so, it is possible for desires of the heart, thoughts of the mind and even for desires of our senses to come out of our inner life to the public. They need to be “transformed, de-privatized and de-individualized and changed in order to find a fitting form to appear publicly.” Ordinarily we do these transformations through telling stories: “As soon as we start to talk about things we've experienced in the private and intimate, we place them into the sphere, in which they acquire reality, which they would be never able to reach regardless of the intensity with which they affect us.”<sup>105</sup>

The home as the place of privacy, is important for the lives of adults and children. It offers safe haven and hidden space for relationships and intimacy to flourish.<sup>106</sup>

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<sup>104</sup> See also Michael JACKSON, *The Politics of Storytelling: Violence, Transgression and Intersubjectivity*, Museum Tusulanum Press: University of Copenhagen, 2006, pp. 39-41. Benhabib surpasses the distinction between the two models of action in interpreting Arendt's concept of action as “a disclosure in speech.” Both models of action are “narratively constituted,” they have the capacity to reveal “Who” the actor is based on the story of “What” someone did or said. Benhabib does not mean that speech as such is a form of action. Rather, “both the doer of deeds and the teller of stories must be able to say in speech what it is that they are doing.” Only by means of a narrative, it is possible to identify “the who, the what, the why, the who, and the what for,” of action. Benhabib considers “one of Arendt's fundamental contributions to the history of twentieth-century philosophy,” and to the theory of action her “radical discovery of the link between action, narration, and interpretation.” (BENHABIB, *The Reluctant Modernism of Hannah Arendt*, pp. 112; 125-126; 129f; 199) For Arendt's treatment of the capacity of action to reveal its actors, see ARENDT, *The Human Condition*, pp. 178-187.

<sup>105</sup> ARENDT, *Vita activa*, 62-63. For Arendt it was important to keep the private realm distinct and secure from the public and political: “Family and home [...] atmosphere of idiosyncratic exclusiveness which alone makes a home a home, strong and secure enough to shield its young against the demands of the social and the responsibilities of the political realm.” (ARENDT, *Essays in Understanding*, p. 211)

<sup>106</sup> For Benhabib's appreciative comments and challenges, see: BENHABIB, *The Reluctant Modernism of Hannah Arendt*, pp. 211-215.

Therefore, to disclose oneself requires courage to appear in the public and then bear its reaction. The web of human relations and enacted stories has a life of its own, making the actor and her/his story open to interpretations and vulnerable to misinterpretations. This web itself is characterized by conflicting stories due to the different and distinct people entangling their words and deeds like a thread into it. At the same time, presence of others, their deeds and words, is important since they offer reality to person's life.<sup>107</sup> Jackson, drawing on Arendt, suggests, "stories take us out of ourselves" and transfer us to the world of various and struggling perspectives "in order to gain an enlarged view of human experience." This is no theoretical undertaking, "for in telling stories we testify to the very diversity, ambiguity, and interconnectedness of experiences that abstract thought seeks to reduce, tease apart, regulate, and contain in the name of administrative order and control."<sup>108</sup>

However, in the name of administrative, political, social, racial or another order or reason, some people may not be allowed to build the bridge and appear in the public. Excluded in passivity outside of the public realm, they are robbed of the freedom to appear in words and deeds. Such persons beyond the lines of the public are left "unequalized" as actors. Jackson believes, "a person's humanity is violated whenever his or her status as a subject is reduced *against his or her will* to mere objectivity, for this implies that he or she no longer exists in any active social relationship to others, but solely in a passive relationship to himself or herself." Among the reasons for denying "vast numbers of people in modern societies" their agency, he lists their being "poor, 'colored,' infirm, elderly, vagrant, or migrant." They are victims of structural violence, "that systematically negates [their] will," as Arendt would say, their capacity to initiate something new in word and deed. Jackson thinks, "it may not matter whether a person is made an object of compassion, of abuse, of attack or of care and concern; all such modalities of relationship imply the nullification of the being of the other as one whose

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<sup>107</sup> Reality and appearance equal one another in a space in-between persons, which is created by acting and speaking. (Cf. ARENDT, *Vita activa*, p. 250)

<sup>108</sup> JACKSON, *The Politics of Storytelling*, pp. 252-253.

words and actions have no place in the life of the collectivity.”<sup>109</sup> By this collectivity, the public-political is to be understood, which surpasses outcasts’ social equals.

This is, what Arendt was calling for in *Reflections on the Little Rock*. Her argument starting with saying “if I were a Negro mother” could have been misplaced and inaccurate due to the distance from those mothers, as Benhabib contends.<sup>110</sup> However, Arendt is outraged by the fact, that African-Americans were not granted their right to privacy, and then equality within the political realm. She repeats her argument from *The Human Condition*: “For it is precisely appearances that ‘appear’ in public, and inner qualities, gifts of the heart or mind, are political only to the extent that their owner wishes to expose them in public, to place them in the limelight of the marketplace.”<sup>111</sup> But in order to appear and disclose to others “Who” s/he is, one has to be equalized as a citizen and, first and foremost, as a human being. This denial of basic rights of African-Americans was criminal, and therefore should have had a priority over the problem of school segregation for the Supreme Court.

Social affiliations emphasize commonalities at the expense of each person’s uniqueness, which is one of the pillars of common action in the public space. To be a citizen, in Arendt’s view, is, what gives a person voice in the public-political arena. Every citizen has a right “to challenge society and prevailing customs,”<sup>112</sup> including presenting one’s point of view without prejudice. As Honig shows, Arendt herself struggled to escape the determinism of social normalizing institutions, and the tendency

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<sup>109</sup> Ibid., pp. 43-45.

<sup>110</sup> Cf. here note 86.

<sup>111</sup> ARENDT, *Essays in Understanding*, pp. 198-204. “The right to marry whoever one wishes is an elementary human right [...] even political rights [...] are secondary to the inalienable human rights to ‘life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness.’” (Ibid., p. 203)

<sup>112</sup> ARENDT, *Essays in Understanding*, p. 208. Arendt’s argument in this essay is led in several layers. Next to discussing the differences between three spheres, also the question of authority is insinuated (between parents, children and school), where political rights and primarily the right for privacy were at stake, as it was in the case of interracial marriages. I think the crucial presupposition of this essay is Arendt’s understanding of school as “the first place away from home” establishing “contact with the public world,” understood as a social world. Arendt does not treat school as a public institution in the sense of “services which, whether privately or publicly owned, are in fact public services that everyone needs in order to pursue his business and lead his life.” (Cf. Ibid., p. 207; 212). Into this world, “school makes the transition from the family possible at all.” (ARENDT, *Between Past and Future*, p. 188f)

of founding her identity exclusively or predominantly on a natural givenness. Therefore, Arendt rejected when specific attitudes or opinions were required of her, or denied her, based on her being a Jewess or being a woman,<sup>113</sup> thus leveling out differences between various people based on their natural characteristics. This would be an example of a social affiliation, which seeks sameness in contrast to political community based on equalized distinctness. In Arendt's view, human beings are not born to be only determined or pre-determined. Even though all were given certain features, which they are not able to change, such as nationality, gender or sexuality. Arendt wanted to speak for herself on the controversy surrounding *Eichmann in Jerusalem*, not as a some kind of universal Jewess (she kept her last name because she wanted to identify herself as a Jew<sup>114</sup>), as she did not want to be treated as representing a collective of womanhood regarding women issues.

#### **2.4. Summary: Action and Stories**

From the previous part, it is essential for our discussion, that even though action is enabled by specific spaces, they are not necessarily those already established. Wherever equalized people act together interconnected by their worldly concerns, such a space is inescapably created in-between them.<sup>115</sup> The most common bridge between the public and the private (including the intimate) is action itself in terms of storytelling revealing the actor herself/himself.

Now I will summarize the main arguments and point out the results for the continuing deliberation of a place of Christian acting.

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<sup>113</sup> Cf. HONIG, "Toward an Agonistic Feminism", pp. 151- 154. Hannah ARENDT, "A Letter to Gershom Sholem", in: J. KOHN—R.H. FELDMAN, eds., *The Jewish Writings*, Schocken Books: New York, 2007, pp. 465-467.

<sup>114</sup> Arendt wrote this in one of her letters to Jaspers. Cf. Morris B. KAPLAN, *Refiguring the Jewish Question: Arendt, Proust, and the Politics of Sexuality*, in: *Feminist Interpretations of Hannah Arendt*, Bonnie HONIG, ed., The Pennsylvania State University Press: University Park, 1995, p. 107.

<sup>115</sup> Arendt in her book *On Revolution* explores this revolutionary capacity of action, which is able not only to create new spaces for action but also to overthrow old and establish new political structures, as was attempted and/or succeeded in the French, American or Hungarian Revolutions.

Making distinctions between various spaces of human life together—private, social and political—Arendt thinks necessary for protection of their respective importance. Nevertheless, those distinctions may, out of principle, turn out to exclude certain issues or persons from the public-political sphere. As was argued, familial life is indivisible from the social issues, which again, cannot be disconnected from the public-political sphere.

Arendt's theory of action contains within itself an aspect surpassing and recreating her own distinctions between different spheres of life. Action within the web of human relationships, in the form of words and deeds, as an unstoppable power, breaks through expectations, previous experiences, exceeding natural givenness, and surprising its actors themselves. Even though she claims every human activity of *vita activa* inherently belongs to a certain space, the gift of natality cancels those expectations and thus, gives hope for a new beginning in every human being.

Even though action, as a capacity to begin, is present in all spheres of human life, it remains invisible in most of them. It comes into forefront in the light of the presence of others, who consider each other equal. The space of appearances is not inherently limited to any place. Rather, it is a space arising wherever people gather together and “equalize” each other based on their common concern (*inter-est*) lying in-between them in the world. Thus, human acting itself creates agonistic spaces, which occasion action (Honig).

Action requires to understand both of its phases in terms of free initiation and free participation. Cooperation in action is not based on rule and command, but on discussion and resulting persuasion. The presence of equal others is needed for action, not in order for them to be passive bystanders who later interpret actor's life story, but in order to be invited and persuaded, via speech, to join in the effort, to engage in common acting and thus form it together. This cannot be said of private sphere, particularly about family life, which is based on authority of parents over children and aims at its own stability and unity based on givenness we cannot escape. Therefore, in

Arendt's opinion, understanding a public institution or space from a family is deteriorative of it. Politics is, according to Elshtain, "that which is, in principle, held in common and what is, in principle, open to public scrutiny and judgment,"<sup>116</sup> and, it needs to be added, also open to participation.

Action, in the mode of agonistic and narrative action, builds a bridge from the private sphere into the public-political. Actors themselves decide if they want to enter it or not (although sometimes it happens to them) and should never be forced into it nor excluded from it by others, while natural associations have inherent membership, hierarchical structures and social formations are based on sameness. Actors creating agonistic spaces do not have to escape their givenness in order to be heard and seen, but making themselves distinct from one another, in their words and deeds, expressing "Who" they are. In beginning something new and unexpected, they perform miracles and co-create the common world.

### **3. Summary: Acting's New Spaces**

In this chapter, I presented two parallel conversations regarding a place of acting, one exploring theological arguments, the other remaining within political theory. In Arendt's view of goodness, which she considers the main and distinct Christian activity, they should also be kept separately. However, based on the highlighted findings in the two sections, I will bring them not only into a conversation, but I will also redirect the lines separating these two 'spaces' leading to their erasure.

Why will I do that? There are three main reasons for this which were evolving in this chapter: Christian acting is not unworldly and it cannot be apolitical (certainly not anti-political); the world in all its dimensions is in-between the church members; acting itself

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<sup>116</sup> Jean Bethke ELSHTAIN, *Democracy on Trial*, New York: BasicBooks, 1995, p. 40.

has a capacity to create spaces that further action, when it is performed in public and among equals.

Even though both Stăniloae and Bonhoeffer believe, God is present in Christians through the Holy Spirit, this presence does not make them or their words and deeds otherworldly. Instead, as primarily Bonhoeffer explicates, Christian existence is fully this-worldly. Stăniloae's emphasis on the common dimension of acting is brought into attention again, as the world cannot be either explored, transformed or offered back to God without cooperation with others.<sup>117</sup>

Christians perceive the common world—human beings, nature, world of things and politics—from their various perspectives. Their faith does not make their view of the world unified, blurred or caricatured by the world to come. Instead, as Bonhoeffer emphasizes, their faith sees the love of God for the world embodied in Jesus Christ, who enables its transformation through the Holy Spirit leading it to the Father, as Stăniloae develops. It is his emphasis upon communication and the need of consulting others that resembles Arendt's understanding of public and political space. To use her terminology, people do not have freedom just to think what they want, but also to have an opinion, which amounts to action in the sense of sharing one's perspectives with others,<sup>118</sup> and to share their stories.

Christian acting—for and with others—is able to create public agonistic spaces which occasion further acting based on inviting and persuading others to join and act together. Such acting is possible to tell a story of its actor, and is able cross the lines between private and public-political, between the worldly and churchly, secular and religious, creating their unity in the acting itself towards the common good deciphered with others.

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<sup>117</sup> Thus, next to forgiveness and performance of miracles, also Christian acting can be included, as a religious concept having philosophical and even political consequences and potential. For a study comparing Bonhoeffer's and Arendt's religious interests, see James BERNAUER, Bonhoeffer and Arendt at One Hundred, in: *Studies in Christian-Jewish Relations Volume 2* (1/2007), pp. 77-85.

<sup>118</sup> Arendt makes this distinction when discussing the loss of right to have rights. Cf. ARENDT, *Origins of Totalitarianism*, p. 296f.



This questions Bonhoeffer's notion of mandates, as hierarchically pre-organized agonistic spaces between unequals, so as Stăniloae's view of apolitical acting of the church as well as Arendt's preconception of goodness, which is not, in fact, able to create any space due to its supposed requirement of invisibility.

The final chapter attempts to relate this-worldly character of Christian acting and its ability to create public-political spaces for others and with others to thinking about Christian church.

There are other themes that remain open and I will not be able to deal with them here, as they would need and deserve a separate study. I think Stăniloae, Arendt, and Bonhoeffer would not have to part each other's company in discussing them. I will mention two topics briefly, and explicate another one more.

Where do Christian political parties belong within a concept of Christian action that is worldly and public-political? How does acting for and with others reflect in their programs and politics? Alternatively, to turn this question around, what specifically Christian acting do they promote and embody? What story of God and of the world do they communicate?

What story is being narrated by the world's beauty of the natural world and also by the beauty created and performed by human beings in music, paintings, sculptures, street art, or architecture outside of sacred spaces and within them? Does Christian acting embody a relation between ecology and beauty?

Bonhoeffer, in his attempt to keep theological ethics distinct from morality, refuses the question of good and evil to be posed within the first one. Nevertheless, he talks about good people in the times of moral dissolution of the German society governed by evil legality, thus making a penultimate moral judgment. Stăniloae develops goodness more concretely than Bonhoeffer who is hesitant about it certainly due to their different notion of the consequences of sin for humanity. I think the challenge Bonhoeffer was attempting to face, remains: "to recover the non-moral sense of sin," as Ricoeur put

it.<sup>119</sup> This invites a study of these concepts and also asking, what kind of goodness is publicly proclaimed from pulpits and which one from public stages by the church and search for the reasons why.

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<sup>119</sup> Paul RICOEUR, The Non-religious Interpretation of Christianity in Bonhoeffer, in: Brian GREGOR – Jens ZIMMERMANN, eds., *Bonhoeffer and Continental Thought: Cruciform Philosophy*, Indiana University Press: Bloomington & Indianapolis, 2009, pp. 169-170. I suspect that moralizing is prompt to corruption in the public-political sphere, not goodness, as Arendt, drawing on Machiavelli, suggests. (Cf. ARENDT, *Vita activa*, pp.94-95f)

# **CONCLUSION:**

## **CHURCH'S FAMILIAL SYMBOLISM**

### **CRITICALLY REVISITED**

“In acting and speaking human beings reveal ‘Who’ they are, they actively show the personal uniqueness of their being stepping so to speak on the stage of the world.” Arendt, *Vita activa*, p. 219

Our words and deeds inserted into the web of human relations, mirror “Who” we are. What do words and deeds of church-communities say about them and about the One who brought them to life?

Up until this point, we were concentrating on the church's familial metaphor separately from reflecting Christian acting. In this final chapter, I will place the church's self-understanding expressed in a family metaphor in front of the mirror constructed from its calling to a specific kind of acting. What notion of acting reflects a familial image of the church? If all are equally actors (not just recipients of others' acting), is the church compared to a family still pertinent or does Christian acting of equals delineate another metaphor of the church?

I will begin with a summary of the previous chapters in order to provide a concise starting ground for the two final passages. The first one talks about Christian acting as it emerges from the previous conversation. The second passage focuses on the reflections those outlines cast on the church and its images.

## 1. Summary of the Argument

In the first two chapters, the metaphor of the church as a family was discussed from a perspective of political theory, represented by Arendt, and from a theological point of view of Bonhoeffer.

Arendt identified the family metaphor used in the Early Church to be a result of its apolitical and unworldly character. She traced historical development of the church towards a political and public institution, as well as changing emphasis on the family metaphor itself (stressing either equality or hierarchy between its members). Nevertheless, in her opinion, the church has remained unworldly. This is due to Christian love—not the world—interconnecting the church members and by Christian acting, which has to retrieve from the world to retain its unique character.

More generally, Arendt considered family to be a place of inequality and obedience between people connected with love (or kinship), where some have authority over others, some make decisions and others carry them out. On the other hand, in the public-political space, people are equal to each other, free to begin and to participate on action based only on persuasion. Its actors are random as to their origin, gender, education, talents or status, the only element bringing them together is their common interest (*inter-est*) in the world. Nevertheless, using familial approach herself, Arendt asserted that freedom from politics is legitimate in spite of being based on a fatherly love for others, which liberates most of the faithful from the burden of political affairs.

Bonhoeffer compared church to a patriarchal family in order to express its unity, true communal relations and purposeful obedience, which are based on the concept of vicarious representative action (*Stellvertretendes Handeln*) of Christ. Christians find nourishment in the church (the Word and the Sacraments) and hospitality based on God's love revealed in Christ. Church members do not have to have nothing in common outside of Christ. Equality between human beings is visible only to God and to the eyes of faith. When it becomes a tangible reality, egalitarianism will form the structures of

community. The only alternative, to which even the priesthood of all believers leads, is patriarchalism.

Bonhoeffer's use of this metaphor is mirrored in his theology of mandates, where uniqueness of diverse church members is affirmed and organized by the Holy Spirit in given structures of authority from above. In this way, complementarity of different gifts and talents of Christians is put into mutual service leading to a communal acting of the church for others. Even though those below remain active and free from their superiors—who are responsible for them and act theologically and/or ethically in their stead—there is a given relation of superiority and obedience between them.

Discussing family symbolism of the church in both Bonhoeffer and Arendt, it was stated that both thinkers were concerned with the same issues—love, inequality, and obedience. While for Bonhoeffer, these concepts constitute his argument for comparing the church to a patriarchal family, for Arendt, they are indispensable for a family life, but detrimental when used in the public-political space. It was stated that for both, the main concept lying behind this decision is their perception of acting. Therefore, it was the focus of the next three chapters.

Bonhoeffer's theology of acting corresponds, as his ecclesiology, to Jesus' vicarious representative action, to his being for others. God calls individual persons and the church to a concrete word and deed in a response to a need of a concrete other. S/he must be fully respected; the other must not be violated in any attempt to serve him/her. Nevertheless, the other remains a recipient of action, even though an active one. Acting for others does not require equality between actors and others. In fact, it would be detrimental of order, established from above, as was explicated on the example of masses. Based on this, it is established that Bonhoeffer's theology of acting for others, corresponds to his comparison of church to a patriarchal family, confirming its foundational elements of love, unity, true relations and purposeful obedience.

In contrast to Arendt's theory, action's common aspect—next to its communal dimension—is absent in Bonhoeffer's theology, even though he himself participated and initiated such actions. This deficiency was suggested to be a consequence of the Christological starting point of his theology of revelation—without being put into a context of a theology of the life of the Trinity—reflected in his theology of acting and ecclesiology. Therefore, in the fourth chapter, Bonhoeffer's perspective was complemented with Stăniloae's theology of acting, based on a theology of the Trinity.

Stăniloae's theology of human acting emerges not only from Christ's being for others, but on the being and acting for each other of all of the divine Persons, which extends beyond their communion to the creation of the world. Human relations and acting are to mirror relations and acting of the Persons of the Trinity to and with one another. Created in God's image, human beings are equal active subjects. Sinful egoism, overcome in Christ, liberates a human person not only to an acting for others, as developed by Bonhoeffer, but also with them. Even though Stăniloae developed common acting in the context of human work and striving for justice and peace, there were identified foundations in his theology for applying it also on the life of the church.

The fifth chapter, in a mutual conversation between Arendt, Bonhoeffer, and Stăniloae, challenged their emphasis upon invisibility of certain aspects of acting.

Christian acting as goodness, is homeless, in Arendt's interpretation, because, paradoxically, its actor cannot appear in the world even though it needs others towards whom it is directed. However, Christian acting in the light of Bonhoeffer's and Stăniloae's theology, understood as both, being for and with others, intrinsically takes place in a human community revealing its actors. Moreover, Christian acting cannot remain hidden, unworldly or free from politics, since it is understood as fully immersed in the world united with God in Christ (Bonhoeffer) and as encompassing human beings, nature and human artifact having a role in human growth and deification itself (Stăniloae).

Arendt's theory of action is in danger to divide, not only to distinguish, different spaces of human togetherness. Nevertheless, it encompasses in itself an ability to rearrange previous lines of distinction. It is up to the actors themselves, whether they decide to leave their private space by telling their stories and daring to start or participate in deeds in the public. In this performance, equalized actors create agonistic spaces for continuance of action and a material for a story of "Who" they are.

According to both Bonhoeffer and Stăniloae, goodness is not unworldly and Christian acting does not supersede this world. Therefore, it is possible to think about Christian acting in dialogue with Arendt's theory, asking, in what ways and whose stories it has a capacity to tell. Such an attempt will be made in the following section, before its connection with a specific space, the church, will be explored.

## **2. Gifts and Challenges of Christian Acting**

In the various tones of light that thinking of Arendt, Bonhoeffer, and Stăniloae create, certain contours of Christian acting will be discerned as I perceive them from my perspective. I will draw the main lines by Arendt's theory of action as it takes place in two phases—initiation and completion—between equal actors, who thus reveal "Who" they are. Secondly, by Bonhoeffer's Christological emphasis on the Christian calling to live for others, because its actor is fully immersed in the world, which is inalienable from God in Christ. Finally, by Stăniloae's theology of human acting as it reflects acting for as well as with others of the Persons of the Trinity in communion.

Plurality and diversity of human beings are God's creative gifts and intentions in Bonhoeffer's and Stăniloae's theology. Plurality in diversity, distorted since the Fall, was reestablished by and in the person of Christ giving new possibilities to distinct human beings living in loving relations instead of envy, estrangement and destruction. In Christ, they are liberated from their selfish selves to a new love and openness to

others. While according to Bonhoeffer, all human beings are equal before God in sin, Stăniloae affirms equality as an inevitable companion of a love for others. In the first case, human equality is visible to the eyes of faith, in the second, it is seen and made visible by love. Nevertheless, both, Bonhoeffer and Stăniloae, affirm equality in terms of a possibility of a human response to God's merciful initiative in God's love embodied in the person of Christ. This, I would term, equal response-ability takes various forms of a life for others, in both Stăniloae's and Bonhoeffer's view.<sup>1</sup>

Christian love—embodied in the Person of Jesus Christ—does not supersede or abolish the worldly in-between, since, as Bonhoeffer claims, Christians see in the person of Jesus Christ both God and the world in their unity. Christian acting is to realize this unity ever anew. Drawing on Stăniloae's theology, other people cannot be acted upon, but are considered equal subjects—being Christian or not. Not even nature is to be treated as an object in and of itself, but only as a gift in a dialogue with God and others. In this way, Christian acting creates unity of the spaces from which different actors come and, simultaneously, it encourages them to appear in the public and express their agency thus creating the common good.

Christian love, understood in this way, is not unworldly, as Arendt claims. Instead, it corresponds to her notion of solidarity, understood as “a principle that can inspire and guide action,” aiming towards founding lasting political institutions. Even though solidarity “may be aroused by suffering, is not guided by it, and it comprehends the strong and the rich no less than the weak and the poor.” This principle of action leads people to dialogue and deeds, not primarily about and on behalf of others in need and

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<sup>1</sup> Even though both, Bonhoeffer and Stăniloae, explicate sin in terms of egoism, Stăniloae does not lay emphasis on sin as a basis of equality between human beings, as Bonhoeffer does. (This was discussed in the second chapter.) Instead, Stăniloae lays emphasis on the remaining possibility of all human beings to grow towards their likeness to God. Since, according to Stăniloae, all human beings are able to do good and to love, he calls to cooperation on the worldly issues not only Christians, but non-Christians as well. However, a growth towards fullness and perfection in goodness and love is enabled only by Christ's union with them. (Stăniloae's position on this issue was explored in the chapters four and five.) Bonhoeffer, asserting complete corruptness of human beings due to sin, is hesitant in grounding human goodness theologically. The problem of sin and human (not Christian) possibility for goodness requires a study of its own.



suffering, but together with them as equals. As a result, out of solidarity people “establish deliberately and, as it were, dispassionately a community of interest with the oppressed and exploited.”<sup>2</sup>

This community entails mutual trust and equality of its actors. Firstly, because its principle—Christian love—necessitates not only equality, but also mutual transparency and openness, as Stăniloae argues, and secondly, because they are all called by God and thus entrusted with the capacity of acting for and with others. By loving one another, agents respect each other as equal subjects and partners in trust.

## **2.1. By-products of Christian Solidary Acting**

From human acting for others with others, there arise three byproducts (not being goals of such acting itself). They will be outlined, as uncovering “Who” of its actors, creating a powerful in-between them, and telling a story of “Who” God is.

### **2.1.1. “Who”**

Unlike compassion, Christian love is able to lead a dialogue of “persuasion, negotiation, and compromise.”<sup>3</sup> Conflict does not necessarily indicate a lack of love or unity; rather it is an expression of the essence of the church, in which diverse people strive to fulfill

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<sup>2</sup> ARENDT, *On Revolution*, p. 79. Arendt puts solidarity into contrast to compassion (as a passion), to which a sentiment of pity belongs. Arendt understands misery as a phenomenon entering politics (and thus a social issue, which could not have been solved by political, but only administrative means) from the side of those who were themselves not miserable in the first place, but felt compassion for those suffering (as the most natural human passion facing it). Therefore, if it sets out to change the worldly conditions motivated by the suffering of others, it claims “for swift and direct action, that is for action with the means of violence.” The sentiment related to compassion is pity, which “taken as the spring of virtue, has proved to possess a greater capacity for cruelty than cruelty itself.” Arendt refers to a section from the Instruction to the Constituted Authorities, which resemble the words of Jesus about removing one’s eye if it is a source of temptation. (Ibid., p. 77) Elshtain expresses the difference in saying, “pity for is not the same as solidarity with.” ELSHTAIN, *Democracy On Trial*, p. 122.

<sup>3</sup> Cf. ARENDT, *On Revolution*, p. 77.

the will of God in their own particular ways corresponding to their uniqueness. Christian love, as Stăniloae emphasizes, catalyzes consulting other reasons, creating an “enlarged mentality.” Desire to know the other rushes to listen to her/him and to a mutual dialogue. Christian solidary acting challenges predisposed views, generalizations of what the poor, women, oppressed, men, Christians, gays, immigrants, rich, unemployed, politicians, immigrants, shortly, the others including “us,” think, need, and “who” they are.

Drawing on Arendt, “Who” a person is, is not identical to his/her natural givenness one is not in a position to choose. The “Who” of the person is created by each person’s words and deeds, taken in their own initiative. Freedom consists in action, liberating a person from wavering between various possibilities of inner struggle, as Arendt and Bonhoeffer<sup>4</sup> believe. Therefore, a person’s identity is not a given, but has a performative character, being invented by person’s words and deeds within a web of human relationships.

I think Bonhoeffer relies on this capacity of acting in contemplating the future new elite. Their visible acting for others—crushed under the wheels of the Nazi regime—is the criteria for their leadership of the nation and the church.<sup>5</sup> “What” they are, “what” gifts they were given, “what” character they have would not have mattered had it remained hidden. Quality cannot be determined, unless human potential is transformed into visible deeds and audible words by acting subjects remaining interconnected with others.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> Here I think primarily of Bonhoeffer’s notion of ethics as formation. (Cf. BONHOEFFER, *Ethik*, pp. 62-90) Blackburn argues, that Bonhoeffer used terminology from gestalt psychology to express the idea of transformation. (Cf. Vivienne BLACKBURN, *Dietrich Bonhoeffer and Simone Weil: a study in Christian responsiveness*, Oxford; New York: P. Lang, 2004, pp. 93-104; 224-225)

<sup>5</sup> This does not cancel the paradox of being one’s witness but not own judge remains valid. Bonhoeffer himself refuses to be concerned about the picture his words and actions will draw for future storytellers. He remains focused on Christ and certain, that God—the Judge—knows “who” he is. (Cf. “Wer Bin Ich?”, in: BONHOEFFER, *Widerstand und Ergebung*, p. 381f)

<sup>6</sup> Bonhoeffer envisioned that after the war, all thinking, speaking and organizing within Christianity was to be born again from prayer and just action. Nothing was to be decided beforehand but only after certain time of repentance and preparation elapsed, in which the church gives up its property and power,

### 2.1.2. Strength and Power

All persons, liberated in Christ from a heart being turned upon itself to the love for others, are not to be or remain weak. Instead, “the weak Christ calls upon strong people to be responsible in their adulthood. Christ calls people to use their strengths of reason, knowledge, science, technology and psychic health and confidence in the service of human well-being, in this way being transformed by the paradigm of Christ’s ‘existing for others’.”<sup>7</sup> Personal ego is freed and transformed by Christ so that its “strengths will be freely and responsibly used in the service of co-humanity.”<sup>8</sup> Their participation in the sufferings of God in the world<sup>9</sup>—where God is hidden from the eyes without the perspective of faith—does not mean struggle for self-assertion, power, success, security

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becomes financially independent from the state and its pastors are supported only from free offerings or have secular professions. (Cf. BONHOEFFER, *Widerstand und Ergebung*, p. 328; 415) Bobert reminds us how Bonhoeffer’s warnings of letting the old “reactionary circles” return into the church’s leadership positions were not heard. (Sabine BOBERT, “Kirche für andere – das Kirchenverständnis Dietrich Bonhoeffers”, in: Karl MARTIN, ed., *Dietrich Bonhoeffer: Herausforderung zu verantwortlichem Glauben, Denken und Handeln, Denkanstöße – Dokumente – Positionen*, Berlin : BWV, Berliner Wissenschafts-Verlag, 2008, p. 235)

<sup>7</sup> GREEN, *Bonhoeffer*, p. 272f. Green discusses Bonhoeffer’s appropriation of Luther’s *theologia crucis* in the context of Bonhoeffer’s discussion of religionless Christianity in his prison letters. Religion (characterized by weakness, dependence, and the power God) seeks God for his power; however, God in Christ “sends them back to their own human strengths (knowledge, achievements, success, responsibilities, happiness). There, in their strengths, in the center of their lives, people shall find God. In existing for others, they experience integrity of their strengths in the wholeness of life. (Cf. *Ibid.*, pp. 262-272f.) Elshstain agrees with this interpretation: “Is there ground left for the church? Yes, but only in the light of Christ, a Christ who called human beings away from their sins, into strength, not weakness.” Christians “must participate in the powerlessness of God in the world as a form of life even as we acknowledge God’s sovereignty over all of life.” (Jean Bethke ELSHTAIN, “Caesar, Sovereignty, and Bonhoeffer”, in: John W. De GRUCHY, ed., *Bonhoeffer for a New Day: theology in a time of transition*, Grand Rapids, Mich. : W. B. Eerdmans, 1997, p. 234f.) Ricoeur, interpreting the same passages from Bonhoeffer’s prison letters, implies the notion of “the experience of the weakness of God in the strength of man.” (Paul RICOEUR, “The Non-religious Interpretation of Christianity in Bonhoeffer”, in: Brian GREGOR – Jens ZIMMERMANN, eds., *Bonhoeffer and Continental Thought: Cruciform Philosophy*, Bloomington & Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 2009, pp. 167-169)

<sup>8</sup> GREEN, *Bonhoeffer*, p. 17. Green identifies in Bonhoeffer’s work “a distinctive and modern soteriological problem in this anthropology which is clearly related to the Christology: human power in both its personal form (the power of the ego) and its social form.” (*Ibid.*, p. 13) Green argues that “it is by dealing with dominating power in his theological and personal pilgrimage that Bonhoeffer is able to arrive at that Christian celebration of human strength and maturity which is so conspicuous in the prison writings.” (*Ibid.*, p. 109)

<sup>9</sup> Christian acting brings guilt and suffering not only because of its inevitable side effects in the form of creating new relations and losing control over its continuation and fulfillment, as Arendt remarks, but primarily because it is liberated from egoism, self-justification, and can take upon itself also the form of sacrifice for others.

also in its political dimension are to be overlooked or considered unchristian, as Bonhoeffer claimed and lived out. Rather, they belong to a life of a strong and mature actor, who transpires another identity to her/his own, namely of the Actor living in her/him.

What happens when these people, liberated to use their human strength in the communion with the weak God in Christ, act for others as well as with others? It makes their community powerful in the sense of the movement of love in-between them.

Green defines the notions of power (*Macht*) and strength (*Kraft*) having exclusive meaning in Bonhoeffer. "Power as dominance" stands over against positive notion of strength as "capacity necessary for self-fulfillment."<sup>10</sup> Arendt puts into contrast personal strength (*Kraft*), which is owned by an individual, and power (*Macht*), which nobody possesses, as it arises between acting persons.<sup>11</sup> Strength cannot be divided, while power grows with the number of persons participating in it. Therefore, power corresponds to the boundlessness of action itself.<sup>12</sup> Stăniloae names love as "the most authentic power." It does not diminish nor change in coming down to people in Christ.<sup>13</sup> This love is a movement between the Persons of the Trinity, which extends to the creation of the world aiming towards their mutual communion.<sup>14</sup> Empowerment to the

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<sup>10</sup> GREEN, *Bonhoeffer*, p. 108. In telling a story of Angelo Guiseppa Roncalli, Arendt says his person illustrates that to be humble is not the same as being weak. Those who elected him into the Holy Office came to realize in the years of his pontificate, "that humility before God and meekness before men are not the same." It was not the humility of Pope John XXIII, "that enabled him to treat everybody, high or low, as his equal," but "his tremendous pride and self-confidence," which were rooted in his distinction between the will of God and the will of his superiors. "He never for a moment relinquished his judgment when he obeyed" what for him was the first. (Cf. Hannah ARENDT, *Men In Dark Times*, New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, 1993, pp. 59; 65; 68) Interestingly enough, Bonhoeffer was perceived similarly even in prison by his fellow prisoners. (Cf. "Wer Bin Ich?", in: BONHOEFFER, *Widerstand und Ergebung*, p. 381f)

<sup>11</sup> ARENDT, *Vita activa*, p. 252.

<sup>12</sup> ARENDT, *Vita activa*, p. 254. The power that keeps acting people together is the power to give promises and the space which is created by acting people is the space of appearances. Cf. *Ibid.*, pp. 313-314.

<sup>13</sup> STĂNILOAE, *The Experience of God*, vol.3, p. 57.

<sup>14</sup> See previous discussion of divine *perichoresis* and love as *eros*. e.g. "The divine love is [...] God's movement towards creatures, towards union with them. But for there to be movement towards someone, an eternal movement of this kind must exist in God. If, in general, *eros* means the movement full of

love of God and of the neighbor does not occur in an isolation from a community. Rather, as Stăniloae explicates, communication via words and deeds is powerful against evil.

Next to liberation of human beings in Christ to grow towards their full potential of individual strength—which comes to flourish in their life for others—they are liberated to create a powerful in-between of mutual love. It does not get diminished by others, but grows accordingly to their loving acting, as Arendt argues. The power of God does not manifest itself in individuals only, but primarily in-between them, as they are acting for others with others. Therefore, an individual cannot “possess” the power of God, which subsists only within human loving and solidary community participating in the life of the Trinity.

Christian acting—for others and with others—is powerful, limited nonetheless, containing its own limit within itself. The responsible being for others constitutes the principle<sup>15</sup> as well as the limit of acting. If it is motivated neither by an abstract rule, or a set of values, or by a threat of the last judgment, but by the love for others—who are active subjects themselves—it cannot become boundless. The other as a concrete human subject challenges and limits a concrete another.

### **2.1.3. Story of God**

As Stăniloae asserts, the life of the Trinity—its power of love and goodness—consists in the movement of love from one Person to another. Therefore, only a community of persons participating in the divine communion has an ability to draw a picture of “Who” God is.

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longing on two sides, it cannot exist where only one of the sides is person while the other is passive object of longing and love.” (STĂNILOAE, *The Experience of God vol. 1*, p. 240)

<sup>15</sup> I refer to Arendt’s understanding of action’s principle, which does not get exhausted within an action itself. Cf. ARENDT, *Between Past and Future*, pp. 151-156.

Visible Christian solidary acting transpires God's acting who is present within and among Christians. Their audible words and visible deeds compose a hymn of praise of their heavenly Father (cf. Matt 5. 14-16) in the Son through the Holy Spirit. In the stories of the disciples, the story of God breaks through, whereby both are read provisionally knowing that they develop towards a time when the communion with the Trinity will be perfected and God will have the last word.

Until then, the church—an icon of the Trinity—is the primary storyteller. If “God of metaphysics and interiority is dead,”<sup>16</sup> a question that is left to be raised is: is it an acting of a living God that a church understanding itself as a family transpires? An answer will be proposed in the concluding section.

### **3. Church as a Solidary Political Community**

Stories of God and human beings are indivisible in God's and human acting, specifically in Christian acting. Human beings are not to remain in audience fixed to their places carefully listening to what is being said from behind the curtain. It was torn apart. They are drawn on the stage of the world not just to fulfill what roles and scripts they were given. Instead, they are to creatively engage in one another's words and deeds in love which amounts to acting for and with others. This outlines a story of a different church from a familial one.

Therefore, in this section, an image of the church as a family will be challenged based on understanding Christian acting as solidary. Another image of the church will be proposed, rooted in this notion of acting as it arises from the preceding exploration a dialogue between Arendt, Bonhoeffer and Stăniloae.

The interaction between divine Persons transgresses limits of the “divine spaces” into creating the world. Both Bonhoeffer and Stăniloae view human acting as a response to

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<sup>16</sup> RICOEUR, “The Non-religious Interpretation”, p. 163.

God's initiative that has not ended in creation, but continues ever anew in God's communication with human beings. The Christian church is a specific space, created by God's words and deeds. There, God's Word and words are spoken, God's deeds are told in stories and experienced in the Sacraments and in the liturgy.

Church, as a space created by God's initiative acting, is to mirror acting of the Trinity (Stăniloae) and embody Christ existing as a church-community (Bonhoeffer), drawing human beings into the communion of the Triune God. If Christian solidary acting, as it was characterized in the previous passage, is considered to express God's calling, than the church needs to reflect, embody and enable such acting.

An understanding of Christian acting, as intrinsically communal and common makes the metaphor of the church as a family problematic, primarily because it implies inequality between its members and obedience realized in love within given hierarchical structures. Equality, as a requirement of love (Stăniloae), cannot remain visible only to the eyes of faith (Bonhoeffer), or only in the world in terms of justice and peace (Stăniloae), but needs to be visible to actors both from within and outside of the church, open and inviting to them all. If human agency is not given equal recognition, it can lead (even though without any intention) to paternalistic attitude toward the other, who does not need to be poor, ostracized, weak or a member of a minority, but also rich, strong, successful or one of the majority. Since familial imagery does not express a Christian acting as solidary, it needs to be complemented with other metaphors.

Based on this study, I propose to characterize the church as a solidary political community, occasioned by God's Word/words and deeds, in order that all those united with Christ through the Holy Spirit may be led to the Father participating in the communion, relations and acting of the Trinity. The term solidary corresponds to the outlined possibility of understanding Christian acting—incorporating its communal and common dimensions—for and with others as equals. The adjective political is not meant in opposition to the private sphere or directly over against the notion of familial, as it

does not refer to the church as a *polis*.<sup>17</sup> I use the term with the intention to express a specific character of church as a worldly—in terms of human beings, nature, human artifact and politics—public agonistic space. It conveys a space of reciprocal listening across the structures, as they are given in mandates (Bonhoeffer) or as they correspond to charisma (Stăniloae). There are stories heard, not only of conversion, but also of struggle, pain, disagreement and healing. In this public agonistic space, particular identities—of “Who” a person is—are formed, invented and appreciated.

Unity of the Trinity is not a static organized diversity of the Persons, but a dynamic powerful movement of love between them in their common acting among each other and towards the world. As power, neither church’s unity depends on the unity of opinion, perspective or a majority’s vote. Each human person is called and empowered by God to participate on the movement of love between the Persons of the Trinity. Every human being is entrusted with a capacity to respond in words and deeds, as well as with a capacity to listen, compromise, be persuaded—become transparent to others in love (Stăniloae). Other points of view and other co-actors do not diminish the powerful in-between of love between human beings, instead they deepen it.

What kind of organizing with the church could come out of Christian solidary acting? That is impossible to predict. This not knowing belongs to one of the creative aspects common acting, into which others enter as equal participants. In the past, it led to a birth of underground churches, secret seminaries; to living double identities of double agents; it brought a disruption of the patriarchal or established models and forms of authority, as was the case in the ordination of a woman, Ludmila Javorová, into the Roman-Catholic priesthood.<sup>18</sup> Nevertheless, those are examples from extraordinary situations. A calling to enable acting for others with others is, however, continuous. We need to ask, how could be such different organizing materialized today, in our present situations.

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<sup>17</sup> For a discussion of this imagery, see CAVANAUGH, *Migrations of the Holy*, pp. 137-140.

<sup>18</sup> Cf. Ludmila JAVOROVÁ, “V tichu a mlčení,” in: E. KOLLER—H. KÜNG—P. KRIŽAN, eds., *Zradené prorocstvo: Československá podzemná cirkev medzi Vatikánom a komunizmom*, Prešov: Vydavateľstvo Michala Vaška, 2011, pp. 69-85.



In the context of American democracy, Thiemann asserts that “churches can be models for public life of communities in which pluralistic citizenship is possible, communities that witness to the unity that can be affirmed in the midst of diversity.”<sup>19</sup> In order to be models, churches need to embody such citizenship and public life themselves. More recently, Cavanaugh writes that the church’s role in serving the world as a sign of God’s salvation of the world “is not merely to make policy recommendations to the state, but to embody a different sort of politics, so that the world may be able to see a truthful politics and be transformed.”<sup>20</sup> Are members of a familial church encouraged to answer to God’s calling with acting for others with those others as empowered co-actors—regardless if they are their fellow citizens or not?

Deriving from my context, I ask: how would a church—understanding itself as a solidary political community—come to its decisions regarding church restitutions in the Czech and Slovak Republics?<sup>21</sup> Would the public—people who are not church citizens—be invited? At what stage would be journalists let in to witness the consultations? How would the highest church representatives in Slovakia arrive at claiming their support of certain state documents and policies?<sup>22</sup> Would there be theological deliberations within the churches preceding it? Who would be included?

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<sup>19</sup> THIEMANN, *Constructing a Public Theology*, p. 122.

<sup>20</sup> William T. CAVANAUGH, *Migrations of the holy : God, state, and the political meaning of the church*, Grand Rapids, Mich: William B. Eerdmans Pub. Co., 2011, p. 138.

<sup>21</sup> For an article on church restitutions in the Czech Republic, visit: Daniela LAZAROVÁ, “Government Moves to Cement Church Restitution Deal”, last modified February 22, 2013, accessed April 10, 2013, <http://www.radio.cz/en/section/curraffrs/government-moves-to-cement-church-restitution-deal>. In Slovakia, there is a status quo in this regard after a general restitution law has been effective since 1994. The situation regarding church restitutions in the Czech and Slovak Republics is discussed in: Michaela MORAVČÍKOVÁ (ed.), *Restitutions of church property*, Bratislava: Ústav pre vzťahy štátu a cirkvi, 2010. For a sociological study on religion in the public life in Slovakia, specifically on its financial aspects, see: Miroslav TÍŽIK, *Náboženstvo vo verejnom živote na Slovensku : zápasy o ideový charakter štátu a spoločnosti*, Bratislava : Sociologický ústav SAV, 2011, pp. 244-255; 313-318.

<sup>22</sup> Here I refer to the *Statement of the highest representatives of Christian churches in Slovakia on family*, which is aimed against “trends from some – primarily economically developed countries of the world – [...] questioning the importance of marriage and eroding family’s foundations.” It pronounces support of adoption of such documents by the Slovak government and parliament, which reflect “our societal, cultural and religious givens, which were proved in the past and which have an indisputable significance for the survival of the Slovak nation and national minorities living in Slovakia till today.” For a full version of the document, visit: [http://ecav.sk/?p=Aktual/AktualStanov/vyhlasenie\\_najvyssich\\_predstavitelov\\_krestanskych\\_cirkvi\\_na\\_slovensku\\_o\\_rodine](http://ecav.sk/?p=Aktual/AktualStanov/vyhlasenie_najvyssich_predstavitelov_krestanskych_cirkvi_na_slovensku_o_rodine) (last modified September 16, 2013, accessed September 23, 2013)

How would such a church face the case of Archbishop Bezák?<sup>23</sup> Would at least he know what he had done that he is/was disciplined for? I believe the people concerned in such decisions could not be left out from the process as churchless people without a right to vote.

In criticizing the way, Bezák's case was handled by the Bishop's Conference of Slovakia and by the Vatican, a Czech theologian Tomáš Halík recalls the words of John Paul II on the need of the church to be a house of glass. It depicts the church as a home transparent to the world outside.<sup>24</sup> This metaphor, however, does not enlighten the household rules and its structures.

I think the church is able to embody pluralistic citizenship and its public life in “a different sort of politics,” when it is a space, where the other represents not only a limit of my love for him/her, in having a possibility to actively accept or reject my words or deeds. The other is also a limit of acting in the sense of making a claim to be heard and seen, approached as an equal partner, not as a second-class citizen. Christian solidary political community is not based on *treating* others *as* equals. Instead, it engages and empowers them in speaking and acting together.

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<sup>23</sup> Archbishop Róbert Bezák was removed from his office by the pope for unknown reasons, which caused a stir not only among Slovak Catholics, but also in a wider society. Cf. Nicole WINFIELD, “Pope Fires Slovak Bishop, Robert Bezak, in Rare Show of Authority”, last modified July 2, 2012, accessed April 15, 2013, [http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2012/07/02/pope-fires-slovak-bishop-robert-bezak-rare-show-of-authority\\_n\\_1642999.html](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2012/07/02/pope-fires-slovak-bishop-robert-bezak-rare-show-of-authority_n_1642999.html); Beata BALOGOVÁ, “Reasons for Archbishop Bezák's recall still unknown“, last modified July 23, 2012, accessed April 10, 2013, [http://spectator.sme.sk/articles/view/47045/2/reasons\\_for\\_archbishop\\_bezaks\\_recall\\_still\\_unknown.html](http://spectator.sme.sk/articles/view/47045/2/reasons_for_archbishop_bezaks_recall_still_unknown.html) “Slovaks Sign Petition for Dismissed Archbishop Bezak”, last modified July 3, 2013, accessed July 15, 2013, <http://www.thedaily.sk/slovaks-sign-petition-for-dismissed-archbishop-bezak/>

<sup>24</sup> For a radio interview with Halík on this matter, visit: “Jak to vidí Tomáš Halík – 20. února” (*How does Tomáš Halík see it – 20<sup>th</sup> February*), last modified February 20, 2013, accessed April 10, 2013, <http://www.rozhlas.cz/dvojka/jaktovidi/zprava/jak-to-vidi-tomas-halik-20-unora--1177495>; For a video of a television discussion with him, visit: “Lampa s Tomášom Halíkom“ (*Lamp with Tomáš Halík*), last modified February 8, 2013, accessed April 8, 2013, [http://video.tyzden.sk/redakcia/2013/02/08/lampa-s-tomasom-halikom/?piano\\_d=1](http://video.tyzden.sk/redakcia/2013/02/08/lampa-s-tomasom-halikom/?piano_d=1).

I would like to point at two questions arising from a comparison of the church to a political solidary community. Both of them touch upon this community's limits and both of them exceed the scope of this thesis. First, what is the relation between *vita activa*, in focus in this thesis, and *vita contemplativa* in regard to the limits of Christian solidary acting and thus to a church as a political solidary community? What are the spiritual activities and those of the mind that prove to be crucial in discerning evil, abstaining from it or even fighting against it? I believe a continuing conversation between Arendt, Bonhoeffer and Stăniloae, would draw an interesting picture in its response.<sup>25</sup> Second, is there Christian acting, which cannot be common? Are there words and deeds, which have to be performed only in a limited non-political churchly space, for example regarding questions of doctrine, policy-making, or ethical deliberation? Are those problems to be discussed only by professional theologians, or only by clergy, thus narrowing Christian acting only to its communal dimension? If so, who circumscribes this space? At the same time, if the church as a political community allows and invites differences to be a constitutive element of its space and relations, where do splits due to differing doctrine or ethics leave it?

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<sup>25</sup> According to Arendt, action is prevented from becoming evil, and thus limited, by human capacity of judgment (meaning to think from a place of others) and conscience (an ability to envision a future inner dialogue of thinking about one's deeds that one has not done yet). Both human capacities are byproducts of thinking, understood as a dialogue between me and myself. Cf. ARENDT, *Vom Leben des Geistes*, pp. 187-192; ARENDT, *Über das Böse*, pp. 75-77; ARENDT, *Eichmann in Jerusalem*, pp. 49, 294-5. I think Stăniloae's theology of spirituality rooted in the doctrine of *theosis* and Bonhoeffer's notion of the unity of Christ and the Triune God with a believer could build a basis for a conversation on prayer as a communication between me, myself and the Other. In addition, spiritual practices and discipline, as Stăniloae explored and experienced them in the Hesychast movement as a member of the Burning Bush group (Cf. Alexandru POPESCU, "Short History of Hesychasm in Romania," in: *Petre Țuțea: Between Sacrifice and Suicide*, Aldershot ; Burlington : Ashgate, 2004, pp. 279-285; Athanasios GIOCAS – Paul LADOUCEUR, "The Burning Bush Group and Father André Scrima in Romanian Spirituality", in: *Greek Orthodox Theological Review* 52, no. 1-4 (Spring-Winter 2007), 38-42) and Bonhoeffer's notion of spiritual life are important in this regard as well. (On the relation between Bonhoeffer's view of mystery in connection with arcane discipline (*Arkandisziplin*), see: Andreas Pangritz, "The Understanding of Mystery in the Theology of Dietrich Bonhoeffer", in: *Mysteries in the Theology of Dietrich Bonhoeffer*, pp. 9-24)

If all human beings are equally called and anticipated to respond to God's initiative in this world, they are challenged to transform it into a space in-between human beings with others and for others, which mirrors and participates in the life of the Trinity. What is at stake is the story of God whose acting continues to create the space of the church in order to draw human beings into trinitarian communion of a movement of love consisting in acting for others with others.

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