

Towards a Humanistic Theology of Youth Development: growing through the work of the Romanian theologian Dumitru Staniloae.

Abstract:

This article will introduce to an international and ecumenical audience the Romanian Orthodox theologian Dumitru Staniloae and the Eastern Orthodox approach to salvation. By then correlating Staniloae's theology with current development theories it will demonstrate Orthodoxy's importance for issues young people's development and participation in society, primarily in developing countries. This will be accomplished by correlating Staniloae's Trinitarian theology with two increasingly important development test cases: increasing social capital and reducing corruption. A critical theme to be explored is Orthodoxy's ability to bridge the conceptual chasm between humanistic concerns of the development world (natural theology), and those of salvation and redemption (revealed theology) with several concomitant practical implications for youth work spelled out.

According to Bishop Kallistos Ware, "Dumitru Staniloae [1903- 1992] is widely regarded as the greatest Orthodox theologian" of the 20th century.¹ His homeland Romania, a Latin outpost in a Slavic ocean, is significant in that that his thought bridges and synthesizes much of the East with West—it is truly *catholic*. Indeed, Moltmann called Staniloae a "pan-Orthodox theologian". Staniloae first taught in Sibiu, then later in Bucharest and spent five years in a communist concentration camp in 1958. Once free, his comment to Oliver Clement was merely "An experience like any other, only somewhat difficult for my family." A principle influence of Dumitru Staniloae is St Maximus the Confessor and the Eastern Cappadocian Fathers, yet he is conversant with Western theologians such as Barth, Rahner, von Balthasar and Kung. For Staniloae the theological task is both the means and ends of human freedom and such freedom is a freedom found in communion. Human beings only truly become human in loving dialogue with God and others. For Staniloae, theology is not what you study, but what you live and do. As his friend Fr. Donald Allchin remarked "He is a man who restores one's confidence in life"²

The hallmarks of Dumitru Staniloae's Theology:

A quotation of Staniloae's will orientate the reader toward the texture of and some key concepts for the Orthodox view of salvation, which can be quite shocking to those unfamiliar with the doctrine of *theosis* or deification that was prevalent in the Early Church.

*Deification is God's perfect and full penetration of man, granted that he can't reach perfection and full spiritualization in any other way. To a great extent, sin has dulled and chained and put an evil spell on the powers of human nature. We don't know the full scope of the powers which our nature is capable of. Envy, care, hate, have clipped its wings. The love which we have for another, or which someone has for us, the trust which people have in us or we have in them--any exit from sinful egotism--unchains unimaginable powers in us, like Prince Charming's kiss which roused Sleeping Beauty from her unnatural paralyzing sleep.*³

This term *theosis* or deification is like one of the “hard sayings” of Jesus, a wrench that most would rather not have to incorporate into their well-lubricated theological machines. But it is important to recognize that this orientation was a constant stream of teaching emanating from the springs of the Early Church fathers. The famous statement of Irenaeus of Lyons (c.130-200) “Gloria Dei vivens homo” “The Glory of God is man fully alive”⁴ is a reflection of this doctrine. Athanasius, champion against Arianism and instrumental in establishing the New Testament Canon, articulated the doctrine of *theosis* most provocatively “God became man so that man might become god.”⁵ Historian Jaroslav Pelikan writes: “The definition of the salvation of man as his deification was a standard element of Eastern theology”⁶ and Harnack writes “After Theophilus, Irenaeus, Hippolytus, and Origen, it is found in all the Fathers of the ancient Church”⁷

This doctrine of *theosis* clearly cannot be a form of pantheism. All Orthodox emphatically maintain that even in the heights of mysticism, humans remain ontologically distinct and inferior to the Godhead. And as will be discussed more below, it is important to emphasize that for Staniloae and the Orthodox tradition, *theosis* or divinization is accomplished through the development of “virtues” which are not private individualistic virtues, but social virtues, rooted in the nature of ultimate Trinitarian reality.

*The Fathers saw sanctity as an ever increasing likeness of man to God, brought about by the purification of the passions, and by growth in virtues which culminate in boundless love... Through the virtues God first of all becomes man in man [the virtues are the attributes of God in their human expression in the incarnation], and then he causes man to become God.*⁸

One key to understanding Orthodoxy and Staniloae (and the doctrine of *theosis* and its potential for youth development) is that the Orthodox believes, and in fact insists, that the Western church has overemphasized and reified one of the pictures or metaphors of salvation in the New Testament, and that is the legal or forensic aspect. The forensic aspect is that of the courtroom and follows variations on the formula: “Mankind’s “sin nature” or guilt—inherited from Adam—is an infinite sin because it is against a holy and infinite God, and therefore required an infinite sacrifice, which is Christ.” From the point of view of church history, it is only later with Saint Anselm (1033-1109) and *Cur Deus Homo* that the “juridical” point of view of salvation gained the ascendancy in the West.⁹ Without getting into the complexities of this doctrinal debate, suffice it to say that the Orthodox situate salvation in a broader context and focus on salvation as “fullness of life” best captured in the Gospel of John. What Paul’s “faith apart from works” is to Protestants, John’s “I have come that they might have life, and have it more abundantly” (John 10:10) is to Orthodoxy. However, Orthodox would seek a broader context for Paul’s “kerygma” than that proposed by Luther (which ended up becoming a

“canon within the canon,” and led him to want to eviscerate James from the New Testament) such as variations on the expression “faith expressing itself through love” (Gal 5:6, Eph 1:15, 3:17; Col 1:4, 1 Thes 1:3, 3:6; 2 Thes 1:3, 1 Tim 1:5, 2 Tim 1:13, Rev 2:19).

This emphasis on fullness of life is important for the ensuing argument concerning the *public* nature of salvation and human well-being in Eastern Orthodoxy. For as in many expressions of Christian theology (the Reformed tradition emphasizing salvation as *shalom* is a notable exception), the lion’s share of the work of salvation is an invisible formal transaction or reconciling the justice of a debt incurred, often inherited involuntarily from Adam. These criticisms of Christianity by the Jewish scholar Gershom Sholem are relevant:

*In all its forms and manifestations, Judaism has always held firmly to a concept of redemption which understood it as a process which takes place under the public gaze, on the stage of history and in the medium of society, that is, which definitely takes place in the visible world...By contrast, the view of Christianity is one in which redemption is a process in the intellectual sphere and in the invisible, which takes place in the world of every individual, and brings about a hidden transformation, to which nothing external in the world need correspond.*¹⁰

Staniloae and the Orthodox are largely in agreement with this criticism and are not comfortable with the shrunken horizons of the forensic view of salvation and non-public nature of transformation. “For what man experiences within this dialogue [with God] is no exterior formal peace but a power that grows within him in this peace and producing more and more fruit.”¹¹ A subtitle to one work of Staniloae’s is “The Icon of Man Renewed in God”. The great Russian author Nicholas Gogol wrote “When souls start to break down, then faces also degenerate,”¹² a very Orthodox concept echoed by Bono of U2: “your face caught up with your psychology.”¹³ For Orthodoxy, the renewed image of man literally shines forth visually in the face and eyes of the transformed. Staniloae however goes beyond this individual orientation for transformation, and includes structural socio-economic issues.

*Christians can make no fruitful contribution...if they are only concerned with service to individual men and therefore neglect to promote just and equitable relations on a broader and international scale...Christians must make the kind of contribution which will favor the continuous adaptation of these structures to meet contemporary aspirations for greater justice, equality, and fraternity in man’s relation to man.*¹⁴

And this abundance of life, this power that grows within producing peace and more fruit, at least in principle, is to be visible to all of humanity as a pointer toward what is humanly possible in Christ. As Staniloae writes,

The theologians...must reveal...what the principle acts of divine revelation culminating in Christ—the incarnation of the Son of God, his sacrifice on the cross, his resurrection and ascension as man—what these contribute as a vision

*of **Christian humanism**...and helping the world, as it should, towards a genuine development of what constitutes true Christian humanity.¹⁵*

Even the sacraments, important as they are in the Eastern tradition (similar but not identical to the Catholic), are not given in or for the privacy of our salvation experience, but in the eyes of Staniloae, as powers to be advanced growth and for living out the gospel.

The sacraments themselves do not give us graces of a static kind, virtues or benefits which are limited and kept carefully enclosed within their present borders so we can show them to God on the day of judgment neatly preserved, like the unproductive talent in the Gospel parable...They give us powers which have to be developed and which are meant to lead us towards final perfection by ever more advanced spiritual stages.¹⁶

This has been called the “Liturgy after the Liturgy”¹⁷—or the Service after the Service.

Theosis as the outworking of Trinitarian social ethics:

To round out this synopsis of Staniloae’s masterful synthesis of Orthodox dogma, it is important to look more precisely at the Trinitarian nature of *theosis* or salvation. As mentioned above, salvation/theosis/Divinization is consistently linked with continuously improving the moral life of Christians—growth in virtue. But how are we to understand this improvement of moral life? For Staniloae and Orthodoxy, it is inextricably linked to and grounded in the “social” life of the Trinity.

The Trinity is the culmination of the humility and sacrifice of love. It represents the continual mortification of each "I" for it is the self-assertion of these "I"s that would make the absolute unity of love impossible, and thus give birth to individualism. And it is the sin of individualism that hinders us from understanding fully that the Holy Trinity is a complete identification of "I"s without their disappearance or destruction.¹⁸

The social functionality of Staniloae’s use of the doctrine of the Trinity is not idiosyncratic either, but characteristic of Orthodoxy. Staniloae quotes this *remarkable* summary of the Eastern orientation by the Russian theologian Boris Bobrinsky,

The divine unity is not merely one of the attributes of God; more exactly it is the profound life of God and the fruit of the love that exists between the divine persons. This unity is in no way a depersonalizing confusion, nor a structure of monads, nor the sum of the parts of a whole. Only in God does unity assure a complete union which preserves the distinct and absolute qualities of the Persons.¹⁹

Staniloae drives the point even deeper by making explicit the role of transferring the quality of relational life within the Trinity to salvation.

As a work of raising up believers to intimate communion with God, salvation and deification are nothing other than the extension to conscious creatures of the relations that obtain between the divine persons. That is why the Trinity reveals itself essentially in the work of salvation and that is why the Trinity is the basis on which salvation stands.²⁰

Staniloae explains elsewhere that the Trinity is a relation not of subordination or humiliation, but of equality—a fact stressed by all the Fathers.²¹ Neither is it an equality in conformity, an equality that sacrifices individual initiative and distinctives to a hypothetical greater good. This divine social unity provides an ontological basis for human rights claims in general and specifically in that humans are not to be sacrificed against their will for achieving a greater utopian good as is the case in totalitarian societies. (Recall Lenin’s cynical saying: “You can’t have an omelet without breaking some eggs.”) Staniloae, who lived and was imprisoned and “instrumentalized” under the brutal regime of Communism, writes:

One who feels himself treated as object not only feels that he is an instrument, but he is also humiliated and repelled. This humiliation is different from that humility or modesty which is voluntary [grounded in the Trinity] and which itself derives from a refusal to treat others as objects.²²

Just how different this Trinitarian focus is to much western theology can be illustrated in the following. In 1967, the famous Roman Catholic theologian Karl Rahner stated,

We must be willing to admit that, should the doctrine of the Trinity have to be dropped as false, the major part of religious literature could well remain virtually unchanged.²³

This could not be further from the Orthodox position of salvation as growth in community, *koinonia*, or the oft-used Russian term “sobornost.” The Trinity is not just a doctrine, but a way of life, led by the Spirit, lived out and witnessed to in the Church, which aims simultaneously at wholeness of community yet without sacrificing individuality.

It is characteristic for Staniloae that if human interpersonal love is to have any ultimate meaning and to be eternally guaranteed, it has to be grounded in an eternal being who is also not impersonal, not a monad, but socially related from all eternity.²⁴ Eternal love requires the eternal existence of the “one and the many”, not as impersonal forces, but as distinct divine persons. The social Trinity is the basis for a socially oriented salvation that begins in this life and continues this trajectory into the next.

Salvation is thus a process of growing in grace, but grace not conceived principally as a legal concept, but as an interpersonal one. This grace is nothing other than living out in the social space *between* humans the divine community that obtains *between* the members of the Trinity—living the Trinity as a *mode of life*. This means that life lived “*sub specie sanctitatis Dei*” (in terms of the holiness of God) means that the quality of our relations is

sacred, and not profane, not common, not merely “social work.” Staniloae makes his intentions for this explicit by his oft iterated use of terms such as “improved social relations”²⁵ and iterations such as Orthodoxy will increasingly be “concerned to provide ever deeper foundations for human cooperation and for the service of all mankind.”²⁶ It is important to note that Staniloae and Orthodoxy place this interpersonal growth, this growth in virtue that facilitates community, at the heart and not distal to the work of the Gospel and the Kingdom of God, of which the Church is a witness and a foretaste. Such a view opens hermeneutical pathways to a truly humanistic theology.

The second move in establishing such a humanistic theology for youth ministry is to correlate Staniloae’s Trinitarian theology to other discourses on youth development. Social capital and anti-corruption are two strong cases for this as they are both current modes for debating youth development and are concerned specifically with youth development in developing countries. The next section of the article explores these two areas to provide a robust description of key theory and practical importance with which to correlate with Staniloae’s Trinitarian theology (as outlined in the first section).

Youth development in a global context: social capital and corruption

Twelve percent of young people live in countries with high per capita incomes (more than \$10,000 per year), whereas two thirds of the world's youth are growing up in countries with extremely low per capita annual incomes below \$1,000.²⁷ Because of poverty youth are often without any chance to participate meaningfully in decisions that affect their lives, which in turn lead to disaffection, apathy, and risk laden behaviors. Youth often are not viewed as a potential catalyst for community development.

Recent literature in development studies has placed firm linkages between the two domains of 1) economic poverty and 2) low social capital and the inverse of high corruption. In this section the argument will explore the domains of social capital and corruption and set the stage for the last section which will demonstrate the critical linkages between the natural theology/humanistic realm of development studies outlined in this section, and how these can be linked with and leveraged through Staniloae’s Trinitarian theology and doctrine of *theosis*. This may prove to be critical for the improvement of human well being in general, and not least for youth, who often suffer most due to their lack of rights, resources, and recourse to political power.

Social Capital:

The notion of social capital has received clamorous attention in the last decade. Situated atop the pantheon of the social capital movement are Robert Putnam,²⁸ Francis Fukuyama,²⁹ and Michael Woolcock,³⁰ the latter considered to be the leading researcher for the developing world.³¹ Woolcock argues that academic theories of development have moved during the last 50 years from “hostility to indifference to active support” of the importance of what he calls “getting the social relations right.”³² Despite criticisms

for its vagueness and imprecision, the social capital framework is seen as increasingly important by major global development institutions such as the World Bank.³³

What is social capital? There are many definitions, but most tend to focus on three items: 1) moral norms such as honesty and reciprocity, 2) social networks such as churches and Rotary Clubs, and 3) the benefits such as trust and the ensuing ability to work together for the common good on collective action problems. It is helpful to picture these three as a mutual conditioning virtuous spiral, a positive feedback loop. What differentiates social capital from its peer disciplines such as the communitarians of Amitai Etzioni, is that social capital ambitiously seeks to empirically measure robust social participation and its importance for human well-being, civil society, and not least of all, broad based (relatively equitable) economic prosperity. The reach of the social capital framework is extensive. The idea underneath it all strikes a harmonious chord with common sense: robust social participation—strong social capital stocks--is increasingly being understood to play an increasingly important role in human well being on multiple fronts, and thus is the subject of extensive research, public policy and scholarly debate even in areas such as environmentalism,³⁴ public health and epidemiology.³⁵

In the social capital literature, two types of social capital are mentioned, bonding and bridging (or three if “linking”³⁶ is included). Bonding social capital tends to be more focused on social cohesion for the benefit of the “in-group”, working with those with an already shared identity, and while it is important for strengthening social solidarity within a group, it like all productive resources, can be put to ill use and has a dark side such as in the Klu Klux Klan, and even Nazi Germany. On the other hand, “bridging social capital” extends the radius of trust to the out-group, the “other”, and somehow sees ones own well being linked with others. It is linked with what Tocqueville called “self-interest rightly understood.” Social capital theory is thus normative.

The philosopher John Stewart Mill eloquently reflected practical strategies on developing social capital long before the social capital language was in parlance.

It is hardly possible to overrate the value...of placing human beings in contact with persons dissimilar to themselves, and with modes of thought and action unlike those with which they are familiar... Such communication has always been, and is peculiarly in the present age, one of the primary sources of progress.³⁷

Getting ahead of the argument, this helps explain why cross-cultural mission trips, even short term one's, are such catalysts for youth development.

Samaritan Capital

For the Christian new to this discussion, it might be helpful to think of social capital as social science language for “**Samaritan Capital**”³⁸, an empirical framework for discerning how well a group or society lives out the ethic outlined in the Parable of the Good Samaritan. For social capital is not just community, but a certain quality of social space that is transformative for societies in that it, through values and the social

groupings reflecting these values such as *universal* respect and responsibility, safeguards trust and thus the ability to work together for the common good. Corrupt, dysfunctional, apathetic societies have low levels of interpersonal trust, are suspicious, and have grounds for feeling so in that their suspicions are all too often confirmed. Low trust cultures tend to treat family members with respect, but predatory behavior, Machiavellian deception and trickery are acceptable outside of the family sphere and are seen as necessary for survival—and often for good reason. This win-lose “ethic” unchecked creates a vicious spiral of downward degradation and makes any type of collaborative behavior highly suspect. Like in the X-files, the watchword is “Trust No One.”

It is often difficult for a Westerner living in the Netherlands or America to fully get their head around this issue precisely because their societies have such strong social capital which allows institutions to function well! But this is not the case in many places in the world, and as Amartya Sen points out, moral values are like oxygen. “we take an interest in its presence only when it is absent.”³⁹ And where social values are dysfunctional, so are public institutions including the most critical of all, the judicial system. Vaclav Havel hammers the nail squarely on the head when he writes,

*Without commonly shared and widely entrenched moral values and obligations, neither the law, nor the democratic government, nor even the market economy will function properly.*⁴⁰

It can be surmised that two things have attracted such a wide variety of individuals and institutions to the social capital paradigm. First is that it provides common ground for communal and justice concerns and functions as a neutral expression of communal concerns amenable to religious concerns across faith divisions, but also to concerns for virtue and cooperation rooted in evolutionary theory.⁴¹ Secondly, it strives for rigorous empirical analysis. It is thus a form of testable “natural theology”—a point which will be picked up later.

Corruption

The issue of fighting corruption is closely linked to social capital development and has become so significant that the World Bank initiated a major policy shift and included corruption as a principle obstacle to development. Corruption is now a central pillar of their poverty-reduction strategy.⁴² Corruption thrives in atmospheres of confusion, lack of transparency and mistrust, weak or non-existent civil society, and exists in an inverse relation to social capital, especially bridging social capital where moral norms of generalized honesty and respect are robust. Corruption is best thought of as a *syndrome* which is a number of symptoms and causes occurring together characterizing a specific disease or condition. Corruption traps millions of people in poverty and misery, undermines democracy and the rule of law, and among other things, retards social and economic development.⁴³

What is corruption? Some, such as Transparency International tend to focus on corruption as the public abuse of power.⁴⁴ However, Amartya Sen, a Nobel Economist and architect of the Capabilities Approach to development argues more generally that

“Corruption involves the violation of established rules for personal gain and profit.”⁴⁵ This definition is important because corruption’s definition if, limited to public officials, cannot have the policy and public educational reach to deal with some of its deeper sources situated in subterranean cultural roots, for example in post-communist cultures. It is a grave mistake to think of corruption as an institutional and top-down problem only and one that ignores the presence or absence of strong social values such as honesty and reciprocity. Corruption is also an individual and familial problem affected by primary socialization patterns. The original meaning of corruption is degradation from a state of wholeness, and unethical behavior, in this context best understood as abuse of power (whether institutional or individual), is its universal manifestation. Abuse of power starts often quietly with the seemingly mundane issue of dishonesty or lying. One may rightly ask: How is dishonesty abuse of power? Lying is a way of gaining power over other people by manipulating them in various ways.⁴⁶

Youth are all too often inducted into experiential education tutorials in corruption whereby they experience the reality that the only way to get ahead is through lying, cheating and stealing. A 1994 survey revealed in Romania that around 50% of the population believes that one becomes successful by stealing and breaking the law, 29% do so through personal connections, 11 % through luck or fate, and only 9% believed that hard work or personal merit had anything to do with personal success.⁴⁷ Where statistic like this hold, it is not enough to fight corruption at the top of the system if for no other reason than there will be no political will to enforce stricter rule of law necessary to fight corruption. Corruption is thus a grassroots issue which touches the lives of young people at many levels, and cheats them of their futures.

Youth the world over are growing up without significant experience and means to participate in the decisions that affect their lives. Youth live lives that lack true freedoms and are unable to develop their God-given potential, their “agency” potential, the ability to feel like they can make a positive contribution and be part of positive change (self-efficacy). The hallmarks of democracy are participation, accountability, and peaceable change. Yet these are high order skills, developed only through modeling of moral and spiritual qualities such as patient and honest dialogue, the ability to compromise and work together for the common good, and to forgo violence to achieve aims. The ability to work together for the common good, the moral discipline to forego short term gain for longer term sustainable benefits, these are skills which must be nurtured and modeled from youth both in the family and in cultural institutions such as public education and faith-based organizations. Indeed, the word culture is cognate with the Latin word to “cultivate”, etymologically implying that cultures are not static, nor uniformly developed towards ideals that promote human flourishing. Social capital and anti-corruption work are, as has been shown, significant tools in understanding how to approach youth development. However, are they fertile enough to provide for such human flourishing? It is here that the insight and foundations of Orthodox *theosis* is perhaps helpful.

Towards A Humanistic Theology of Youth Development

This article is an instance of the theological method of “correlation.” This method of correlation follows that of Paul Tillich (with depth psychology), Reinhold Niebuhr (with Marxist analysis) and others such as David Tracey (with postmodernism) who aim to correlate Christian thought with the modern situation in ways that are mutually illuminating. At times, and paradigmatic with the Bultmann’s (with existentialism) demythologization, this project of correlation darkened the horizons of faith by reinterpreting basic Christian dogmas in a fashion completely alien to their original intention.

Yet the approach here, while following the same methodology of correlation, avoids heterodoxy for two distinct reasons. First is that this instance of correlation is an extension of the prophetic tradition as it concerns issues of demonstrable empirical import for global poverty and can be viewed as an expression of God’s unremitting concern for the poor and the “other”. (This concern for the “other” has incidental overlap with postmodernisms “attending, both intellectually and spiritually, not to the self but to the other.”⁴⁸) If social capital development and fighting corruption is a critical part of the process of retrieving communities and nations from grinding poverty, Christians should support it at a personal and policy level regardless of whether explicit faith issues are mentioned. Furthermore, the social capital paradigm is not an ideological worldview that swallows and retrofits every possible counterargument as is the case with Marxism--which is unfalsifiable--but social capital is in fact a testable hypothesis (robust community has multiple benefits) that can be empirically confirmed or disconfirmed.

The second reason goes beyond merely not being heretical, but the possibility of openly harnessing and linking—correlating--ancient and Orthodox Christian dogma to modern development strategies, without compromising either. Eastern Orthodoxy, brilliantly interpreted through Staniloae, can help us see these social development issues that limit or promote human flourishing—that limit or promote fullness of life—precisely as faith issues and not as second class concerns of the secular world.

Orthodoxy has a rather unique theoretical ability to provide a bridge and synergy between the two often antithetical domains between faith and secular modes of thought, between common grace and revealed religion. The depth of the correlational potential for Orthodoxy with development theories and practice is uncovered in the first sentence of Staniloae’s Systematic Theology, “**The Orthodox Church makes no separation between natural and supernatural revelation.**”⁴⁹

Because the Orthodox view salvation as a recreation of humankind in the image of the Trinity (perfectly exemplified in the simultaneous restraint and freedom of the Logos, Jesus Christ, the archetype of human nature), the Trinity constitutes the social basis of salvation, the goal for all of humanity in general, but especially the life of the Church. Salvation is not something contrary to nature, but its fulfillment and flowering through healthy relationships.

Supernatural revelation merely restores direction to and provides a more determined support for that inner movement maintained within the world by God through natural revelation.⁵⁰

Staniloae, representing the promise of Orthodoxy, can heartily affirm that all human desires and acts that build community, justice and the true progress of humanization are part of the Trinitarian outworking of salvation—even if incomplete in that they fail to recognize the Source of these values.

Ubi caritas et amor, Deus ibi est—Where charity and love are found, there is God; the person in communion as the fulfillment of Being. Staniloae contrasts the West’s pessimism with human aspirations and how the West tends to see them as inherently in contradiction to God’s will with the Eastern emphasis that sees no inherent contradiction between the covenants of Creation and Redemption, between common and special grace. For Orthodox, there is evil in the world that is to be conquered, but there is also good to be built upon and enlarged as the image of God has not been totally effaced in humankind. As a consequence, the Kingdom of God—the Trinitarian Kingdom of “between”—can naturally be correlated with high levels of *bridging* social capital (Michael Woolcock’s “getting the social relations right”), and diminished levels of corruption (Sen’s definition of breaking ethical rules for personal benefit) and thus can easily be correlated with the Biblical concepts of shalom and sin—“despising justice and distorting all that is right.” (Micah 3:9). This leads to and is generated from the straightforward, commonsensical spiritual proposition:

As sin consists in the selfishness which separates men from God and from one another, so salvation consists in going beyond selfishness, in mutual love of all men, and in union with God.⁵¹

This is why the Orthodox often call salvation “therapeutic” (the Greek root is to heal, or restore to health); it is therapy aimed at increasing the capacities of interpersonal love, of overcoming the “divided self”⁵² which weakens humans in their relation to each other and God. Salvation or theosis can be understood as capacity building for “getting the social relations right”, for a robust expression of compassion. This accent of “authentic self-realization”⁵³ in the likeness of the *theandric* being (Christ) is yet another example of how Orthodox spirituality links with the concretely lived social life of common grace. As Kallistos Ware has aptly expressed the Eastern point of view,

The Trinitarian God of the Christian faith is to be understood above all in “social” terms, as koinonia or communion, as the supreme structure of interpersonal love. [Furthermore] the Trinity constitutes the model and paradigm of all human relationships, and more specifically the model and paradigm of the Church⁵⁴

Implications of a humanistic theology of youth development

This paper has tried to demonstrate that Staniloae's Eastern Orthodoxy meets basic conditions for a theology of development, more precisely that it has in principle significant overlap and is able to address issues that are regarded by development specialists as effecting human flourishing. A theology of development is one that, while faithful to its own tradition, can be useful towards solving global issues that limit human flourishing, as is the case with social capital development and fighting corruption. **What are the implications for youth ministry? Clearly** an adequate exploration and discussion requires a broader discussion, but the following summary points serve as an orientation toward practical and policy considerations for international youth ministry.

First, youth programs can prove their worth to their respective cultures. The framework outlined here gives the capacity to bridge, or correlate the concerns of theology and the concerns of development theoreticians and practitioners. Youth programs can focus on and program for "***bonding for bridging***" developing strong social identities around helping others, especially the marginalized in societies and caring for the common good. Theology can frame itself, without losing itself and indeed strengthen itself, around developing the social and moral capacities for living in a robust and law-based democracy which is the best guarantor of the rights and opportunities of the poor. If the Church cannot contribute to the common cause of human development in the role of values and moral development (social capital development and fighting corruption), where can it find that "point of contact"?

Secondly, there are youth pedagogies ready to hand such as service learning and adventure education,⁵⁵ that excel at developing Trinitarian social values/capital—in other words at developing vibrant in-group identities to work for the common good and reach out to marginalized out-groups. Indeed, both these pedagogies had faith-based origins⁵⁶ and have been largely co-opted by the secular and pluralistic role of public education because they are in fact so effective at social transformation. (See next paragraph for why this democratization of these disciplines is not necessarily a bad thing!) Yet people of faith can retro-graft these pedagogies back to their original roots even if much of the explicit faith language has been pruned away. Through these pedagogies rooted in experiential education, Christian theology can employ *proven*—the importance of this word will become apparent in the next paragraph on public policy--mechanisms that go beyond *theoria*, beyond a Trinitarian theology of social values development (such as the one adumbrated in this paper) to concrete and transformative praxis.

Thirdly, beyond theory considerations, beyond specific program embodiments, a more extended word about public policy considerations is in order. Developing or influencing public policy often means framing issues in a secular discourse (at least in the West) such as the social capital paradigm cited here. Linked with this, public policy almost always means research as well, both qualitative and quantitative, to *make the case for public spending* which can quickly ramp up impact. (Thankfully, all policy makers do not necessarily exclude the faith component, but they generally do want some sort of publicly verifiable evidence that the programs are socially beneficial.) Learning how to present programs in a way that can be part of public policy debate is a challenge that Christians

should, if not fully embrace, be at least aware of the issues. Learning to bridge faith with a discourse such as social capital is critical to this endeavor.

Public policy development has both robust possibilities and inherent dangers. The promise of public policy is public funding; the peril is the possible neglect or diminution of the doctrinal content of the Gospel. However, Christians preoccupied with evangelism should not automatically be overwrought about this if they understand the social nature of life and the Trinity. For we *act our way into believing*, and not just believe our way into acting. Acting out the implicit moral and social content of the Gospel can structure our minds and our emotions to prepare us for accepting the narrative content of the Gospel. And the main point here is that a social Trinitarian understanding of the Gospel such as the one outlined in this paper can help us conceive these bridges between a social faith and a social ethics and how they are mutually enriching. In a different set of terms, theory does not just lead to practice, but practice can lead to theory. Jesus himself said, the one that *does* his will, will *understand* (John 17:7). Programs such as service learning and adventure education, as well as social frameworks such as social capital, can thus be agents for the Kingdom even when undercover, even when Christian discourse is not on the surface. And indeed, such covert use of faith discourse might even be required in some international youth ministry contexts. The salient point here is that there can be genuine movements of the redemption of culture toward just and socially inclusive structures (and attitudes) that are achieved uniquely through public policy and based on arguments which are not always or usually grounded in explicit faith discourse. Again a Trinitarian perspective of salvation can help us see this broader perspective of social transformation and the role of public policy to these ends.

To close: inasmuch as democracy is based upon shared decision making and the values that facilitate interpersonal trust and working together for the common good, it is possible to work out a theology of democratic participation applicable to youth based on the Trinitarian theology of Dumitru Staniloae. And youth, with their energy and openness, can be a major engine of positive change, turning the foul tide of corruption, developing social capital and the good-will of their communities, and even becoming involved in local policy development—of actually participating in the decisions that affect their lives. In these ways, implicitly or explicitly theologically motivated youth programs, respective to their indigenous cultures, can be part of the solution for socio-economic development and even receive support from global public institutions such as the UN and the World Bank.

¹ In the Foreword of Dumitru Staniloae, *The Experience of God*, v.1 (Brookline MA, Holy Cross Orthodox Press, 1998) p. ix.

² *Ibid*, p. xv.

³ *Dumitru Staniloae, Orthodox Spirituality*, South Canaan, Saint Tikhon's Seminary Press, 2003, p. 362

⁴ (Adv. Haer. IV, 20, 7). Against the Heresies

⁵ Athanasius, *On the Incarnation* 54. in <http://www.orthodoxonline.com/incarnation.pdf>

⁶ Pelikan, Jaroslav. *The Christian Tradition: A History of the Development of Doctrine. Volume 2: The Spirit of Eastern Christendom (600-1700)*. Chicago: University of Chicago, 1974. 2:46

⁷ Harnack, Adolph. *History of Dogma*. (Translated by Neil Buchanan from the third German edition, circa 1900. Reprinted in New York: Dover) 3:164 note 2

⁸ Dumitru Staniloae, *Prayer and Holiness: The Icon of Man Renewed in the Image of God* (Oxford, SLG Press, 1984), p. 15.

⁹ Not only does Anselm argue that we must restore our debt, we must restore *more* than we took away. “He who does not render this honor which is due to God, robs God of his own and dishonors him; and this is sin. Moreover, so long as he does not restore what he has taken away, he remains in fault; and it will not suffice merely to restore what has been taken away, but, considering the contempt offered, he ought to restore *more than he took away*” (emphasis added). Ch IX <http://www.fordham.edu/halsall/basis/anselm-curdeus.html#ACHAPTER%20XI>

¹⁰ Quoted in Jurgen Moltmann, *The Crucified God*, (New York, Harper & Row, 1974) p. 100.

¹¹ Dumitru Staniloae, *Theology and the Church*, (Crestwood NY, St. Vladimir’s Seminary Press, 1980) 185 This is also reflected in Isaiah 32:16-17 “The fruit of righteousness is peace; the effect of righteousness will be quietness and confidence.”

¹² Michel Quenot, *The Icon : Window in the Kingdom*, (Crestwood, St. Vladimir’s Seminary Press, 1996) 147

¹³ From U2’s latest album, *How to Dismantle an Atomic Bomb*.

¹⁴ Staniloae, *Theology and Church*, 210.

¹⁵ Dumitru Staniloae, *The Experience of God*, v.1 (Brookline MA, Holy Cross Orthodox Press, 1998) 89. Emphasis added.

¹⁶ Staniloae, *Theology and the Church*, 177.

¹⁷ This expression was conceived by the author of this paper, but subsequently it was found out that Ion Bria, a Romanian Orthodox theologian and Staniloae scholar, coined the term

¹⁸ Staniloae, *Theology and the Church*, 89.

¹⁹ Ibid., 76.

²⁰ Staniloae, *The Experience of God*, v.1, 248.

²¹ Ibid, 99

²² Staniloae, *Theology and the Church*, 84.

²³ Cited in Robert Letham, *The Holy Trinity* (Phillipsburgh NJ, P&R Publishing Company) 291.

²⁴ Ibid., 74.

²⁵ Ibid., 217, 222, 223: open to almost any page of Staniloae.

²⁶ Ibid, 223.

²⁷ <http://www.un.org/events/youth98/backinfo/yreport.htm> United Nations Report on Global Situation of Youth Shows Changing Trends.

²⁸ Robert Putnam, *Making Democracy Work: Civic Traditions in Modern Italy*

(Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press 1993) and of course his well known *Bowling Alone*.

²⁹ Francis Fukuyama, *Trust: The Social Virtues and the Creation of Prosperity* (New York, Free Press, 1996 (Paperback)).

³⁰ Woolcock, Michael (forthcoming) *Using Social Capital: Getting the Social Relations Right in the Theory and Practice of Economic Development* Princeton, (Princeton, Princeton University Press).

³¹ From personal correspondence with Dr. Putnam.

³² Michael Woolcock, "Getting the Social Relations Right: Toward an Integrated Theology, Theory, and Strategy of Development Cooperation", von Hgel Institute Working Paper, WP2002-11, draft: 30 July 2002, p. 12.

³³ <http://www.worldbank.org/poverty/scapital/whatsc.htm> Increasing evidence shows that social cohesion — social capital — is critical for poverty alleviation and sustainable human and economic development.

³⁴ William Shutkin, *The Land That Could Be: Environmentalism and Democracy in the Twenty-First Century* (Cambridge, The MIT Press, 2000).

³⁵ Simon Szreter and Michael Woolcock, *International Journal of Epidemiology*, "Health by association? Social capital, social theory, and the political economy of public health" 2004; **33**:650–667

³⁶ Ibid, 655. "We would define linking social capital as norms of respect and networks of trusting relationships between people who are interacting across explicit, formal or institutionalized power or authority gradients in society." This is a significant refinement of the theory especially for developing cultures, but it is beyond the scope of this paper to assess.

³⁷ http://www.isuma.net/v02n01/woolcock/woolcock_e.shtml Michael Woolcock, "The Place of Social Capital in Understanding Social and Economic Outcomes", ISUMA: Canadian Journal of Policy Research, Volume 2 N 1, Spring 2001

³⁸ To my knowledge, this term is original with the author of this paper.

³⁹ Amartya Sen, *Development as Freedom*, (New York, Anchor Books, 2000) 264. The exact quote refers to a basic code of good business behavior, but the metaphor is extendable.

⁴⁰ Havel, Vaclav. "Politics, Morality, and Civility" in Eberly, Don E., (ed.) *The Essential Civil Society Reader*, Lanham, Maryland: Rowman and Littlefield Publishers, Inc., c2000, p. 401.

⁴¹ Matt Ridley, *The Origins of Virtue: Human Instincts and the Evolution of Cooperation* (New York, Penguin Books, 1998).

⁴² <http://www.worldbank.org/wbi/governance/> The World Bank views good governance and anti-corruption as central to its poverty alleviation mission.

⁴³ http://www.transparency.org/about_ti/mission.html

⁴⁴ http://www.transparency.org/about_ti/mission.html TI's definition: Corruption is the abuse of entrusted power for private gain.

⁴⁵ Sen, *Development as Freedom*, 275.

⁴⁶ This theme is consistently developed in an excellent work, Sissela Bok, *Lying: Moral Choice in Public and Private Life* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1978);

⁴⁷ Research Institute of Romania, 1994

⁴⁸ An interview with David Tracey, <http://www.religion-online.org/showarticle.asp?title=2269>

⁴⁹ Staniloae, *The Experience of God*, p. 1

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 1.

⁵¹ Staniloae, *Theology and Church*, 200.

⁵² Staniloae, *The Experience of God*, v1. 147. Compare with RD Laing *The Divided Self* (New York, Penguin Books, 1990). Also important in this vein is the Reality Therapy by Glasser, and Emotional Intelligence by Goleman, among others.

⁵³ Staniloae, *Theology and the Church*, 115.

⁵⁴ Quoted from the foreword of Staniloae, *The Experience of God*, v.1, xx.

⁵⁵ See www.new-horizons.ro for a youth ministry model (that of the author of this paper) that has orientated adventure education and service learning towards these social capital ends and that “leverages tradition” towards these aims of sustainable development.

⁵⁶ E.g. Kurt Hahn and his concern for Samaritan Service in the Outward Bound movement, and more clearly the role of Dr. Jim Kielsmeier of the National Youth Leadership Council, widely considered a pioneer of service learning.