

# Fr. Dumitru Stăniloae's View on Laymen's Participation in the Infallibility of the Church

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*Though Fr. Dumitru Stăniloae did not address the topic extensively, a certain view on laymen's participation in the Infallibility of the Church could be extracted from his writings. While professing the traditional teaching of the Orthodox Church, i.e., insisting on the role of hierarchy in preserving and formulating the faith, Stăniloae alluded to a specific charismatic role of laity in preserving and strengthening the faith. The dialogue with the ecclesiology of I. Karmiris also led Stăniloae to the formulation of a personal theory concerning the limits of Church infallibility. The collaboration between clergy and laymen, as witnessed by the Liturgy, appears to be a suitable description of the manner in which Church infallibility functions.*

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Still largely unknown to the Western world, Romanian Orthodox theologian Dumitru Stăniloae (1903–1993) brought forth an optimistic, person-centred and simultaneously Tradition-rooted theology, which may provide suitable answers for the identity crises of modern man. His ecclesiology distinguishes itself by marked Trinitarian and Eucharistic accents and accounts for one of the most balanced ecclesiological and dialogue-opened Orthodox views of the last century.<sup>1</sup>

In this paper we shall attempt to elucidate Father Stăniloae's stance on laymen's participation in the infallibility of the Church.

From the beginning we should note that the words "laymen" or "laypeople" are not to be taken in the sense of the French word *laïc* and of the later-emerged concept of *laïcité*, i.e. "independent of" or even "opposed

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<sup>1</sup> See, for instance, Radu Bordeianu, *Dumitru Staniloae: An Ecumenical Ecclesiology*, T&T Clark Theology series, T&T Clark 2011. A review of this work signed by Adam A. J. DeVile is to be found at: <http://easternchristianbooks.blogspot.de/2011/10/on-dumitru-staniloaes-ecclesiology.html>, retrieved on the 1<sup>st</sup> of August 2013. Also see R. Bordeianu, "Retrieving Eucharistic Ecclesiology", in: Gesa Elsbeth Thiessen (ed.), *Ecumenical Ecclesiology. Unity, Diversity and Otherness in a Fragmented World*, T&T Clark Theology series, T&T Clark 2009, pp. 128-142, in which he provides a view on Stăniloae's Eucharistic ecclesiology in comparison to the views of Afanassieff and Zizioulas.