

# Father Dumitru Stăniloae and the Ecumenical Dialogue Between Disproof and Acceptance

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*This paper attempts to offer an answer to the question: how “ecumenical” was Dumitru Stăniloae? In fact, in terms of participation in the ecumenical dialogue, there are several stages in his life and work: in a first stage, until his release from the communist prisons (1964), Father Stăniloae did not take part in this dialogue; in the second stage, he became an active participant in various ecumenical meetings; finally, his retirement and the freedom gained after the 1989 Revolution witnessed the end of the ecumenical participation on behalf of the great Romanian theologian. The end of the paper offers several possible answers to this wavering trajectory.*

**Keywords:** Dumitru Stăniloae, ecumenical dialogue, open sobornicity

## Introduction

Father Dumitru Stăniloae (1893–1993)<sup>1</sup> is rightfully considered the most important Romanian theologian of all times. Regarding his work, it is acknowledged as monumental, its impact going beyond the boundaries of the Romanian theology, proving thus its pan-Orthodox and ecumenical character.<sup>2</sup> Thus, not incidentally, the name of the most important Romanian Orthodox theologian of the twentieth century stands among the “pioneers of ecumenism”<sup>3</sup>.

In a closer analysis, in terms of participation in the ecumenical dialogue, his biography must be divided into three distinct stages. In the first stage, during his imprisonment by the Communists, Father Stăniloae did not take part in this dialogue. During the second stage, after his release in 1964, he

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<sup>1</sup> Bibliographical information: Mircea Păcurariu, “Preotul profesor și academician Dumitru Stăniloae. Câteva coordonate biografice”, in: Ioan I. Ică jr (ed.), “*Persoană și comunitate*”. *Prinos de cinstitie Părintelui Prof. Acad. Dumitru Stăniloae (1903-1993) la împlinirea vârstei de 90 de ani*, Orthodox Archdiocese of Sibiu, 1993, pp. 1-15; M. Păcurariu, “Stăniloae, Dumitru”, in: *idem*, *Dicționarul Teologilor Români*, București, 1996, pp. 418-423; Jürgen Henkel, *Îndumnezeire și etică a iubirii în opera părintelui Dumitru Stăniloae*, translation by Ioan I. Ică jr, Sibiu 2003, pp. 47-60.

<sup>2</sup> I. I. Ică jr., “Părintele Dumitru Stăniloae – clasic al teologiei secolului XX și misiunea teologiei în Biserică și în societate”, in: Dumitru Abrudan (ed.), *Părintele Dumitru Stăniloae: teolog al iubirii*, Sibiu 2004, pp. 27-28.

<sup>3</sup> Article published in: Ion Bria and Dagmar Heller (eds.), *Ecumenical Pilgrims. Profiles of Pioneers in Christian Reconciliation*, Geneva 1995, pp. 226-230.