



Daniel James

“Stăniloae Generation”

Abstract

The study uses biographical details of the celebrated Romanian theologian, Rev. Fr. Professor Acad. Dr. Dumitru Stăniloae (1903-1993), recently canonized as Saint Priest Dumitru the Confessor, to highlight the theological reception of his teachings among his disciples, those who identify as “Stăniloae Generation.”

In light of Stăniloae’s legacy and influence, the research explores a key debate: whether he is best understood as a Patristic or Neo-Patristic theologian. Most contemporary Orthodox scholars, including Daniel Ciobotea, Lucian Turcescu, and Adrian Lemeni, consider him Neo-Patristic, linking him with the creative theological synthesis championed by George Florovsky, which he developed from 1936 onward. However, evidence suggests



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that Stăniloae followed the Metropolitan Nicolae Bălan’s advice in 1922 to pursue a scholarly return to the teachings of the Holy Fathers of the Orthodox Church. As a result, Dumitru Stăniloae is recognized for helping Romanian Orthodoxy move away from scholasticism and rediscover Patristic theological values, as demonstrated by his publication of the first Romanian translation of Saint Gregory Palamas’ teachings in 1929. Nevertheless, while Metropolitan Bălan did not explicitly use the term neo-Patristic turn, his advice from 1922 subtly and unintentionally points towards George Florovsky’s neo-Patristic approach. Stăniloae’s achievements include translating the *Philokalia* into Romanian and writing his three-volume *Orthodox Dogmatic Theology* (1978), as well as other mystical and spiritual works. The study concludes that Stăniloae is a Neo-Patristic theologian whose work predates Florovsky’s writings and has influenced contemporary Romanian Neo-Patristic theological education. We, of “Stăniloae Generation,” see him as a saint and a theologian of ecumenical importance.¹

Keywords

Dumitru Staniloae, Stanioae Generation, Philokalia, Patristic, Saint Gregory Palamas

1 Who Are We, Those Who Call Ourselves “Stăniloae Generation?”

On November 16, 1903, in the village of Vlădeni, Făgăraș County, within the Austro-Hungarian Empire², a child was born. His

¹ In my article, I employ the Romanian spelling of the Romanian proper nouns, including that of Saint Priest Confessor Dumitru Stăniloae, other Romanian Theologians, and Romanian geographical places.

² The Austro-Hungarian Empire, also known as the Dual Monarchy or Habsburg Monarchy, was a constitutional monarchy in Central Europe that existed from 1867 to 1918.

name was Dumitru, the fifth and youngest child of the Romanian Orthodox family Stăniloae, whose parents were Reveca (sometimes spelled Rebeca) and Irimie. According to one of his disciples, Rev. Fr. Professor Dr. Dumitru Radu (1926-2014), Stăniloae's family was "poor peasants."³ However, this view by Rev. Fr. Professor Dr. Dumitru Radu does not accurately reflect the social status of Stăniloae's family at that time. Rev. Academician Prof. Dr. Mircea Păcurariu (1932-2021), one of Romania's most prominent historians of the Orthodox Church, describes the real situation of the Stăniloae family on the day their youngest child was born: "His parents, Irimie and Reveca, were two peasants working on their beautiful farm. His father had also worked in America (U.S.A.) for an unspecified period."⁴

The legacy left to the world by our Father, Saint Priest Confessor Dumitru Stăniloae, is profound. One of the most important aspects of this legacy is that we are his disciples. The most notable disciple of Saint Dumitru (Stăniloae) is His Beatitude Dr. Daniel (born Dan Ilie) Ciobotea, the Patriarch of the Romanian Orthodox Church.⁵ Another distinguished disciple of Saint Dumitru

³ Dr. Dumitru Radu, "Coordonate și Permanențe Teologice în Opera Părintelui Academician Prof. Dr. Dumitru Stăniloae" în *Persoană și Comunione. Prinos de Cinstire Părintelui Profesor Academician Dumitru Stăniloae la Împlinirea Vârstei de 90 de Ani*, volum tipărit cu binecuvântarea Î. P. S. Dr. Antonie Plămădeală, Mitropolitul Transilvaniei, din inițiativa Pr. Prof. Decan Dr. Mircea Păcurariu, sub îngrijirea Diac. Asist. Ioan I. Ică Jr. [Person and Communion: Offering Honour to Father Professor Academician Dumitru Stăniloae on His ninetieth birthday. Volume printed by hierarchical blessing of His Eminence Dr. Antonie Plămădeală, Metropolitan of Transylvania, la inițiativa Pr. Prof. Decan Dr. Mircea Păcurariu, sub îngrijirea Diac. Asist. Ioan I. Ică Jr.], Sibiu: Editura Arhiepiscopiei Ortodoxe, 1993, p. 138.

⁴ Dr. Mircea Păcurariu, "Preotul Profesor și Academician Dumitru Stăniloae – Câteva coordonate biografice," [Rev. Professor and Academician Dumitru Stăniloae – Some Biographical Details], in *Persoană și Comuniune. ...*, p. 1.

⁵ His Beatitude Dr. Daniel (Ciobotea), born Dan Ilie in 1951, is one of the most highly educated contemporary Romanian Orthodox theologians. On 15 June 1979, Dan Ilie Ciobotea, then a lay Orthodox theologian,

(Stăniloae), Dr. Antonie (born Leonida) Plămădeală (1926-2005), Metropolitan of Transylvania (Ardeal), used to refer to us, the disciples of Saint Dumitru (Stăniloae), as the “Stăniloae Generation.”⁶ Dr. Antonie Plămădeală emphasizes that:

The sense in which I refer to the “Stăniloae Generation” differs from the usual one I used earlier when discussing his generation. In the title [“Stăniloae Generation”], I do not mean his contemporaries, but rather his age peers, his disciples - those influenced by his thinking, those who learned from him, and those who can consider themselves graduates of his school, inheritors of his ideas and perspectives. In this sense, can we speak of a “Stăniloae Generation”? If I were the first to be asked, my answer would be YES!⁷

One of the most important Romanian Orthodox dogmatist theologians, Rev. Fr. Professor Dr. Costachi Galeri (1918-2003), also known as Constantin Galeriu⁸, who was not a student of Saint

earned his first doctorate in theology from the University of Strasbourg in France, based on his successfully defended thesis “‘Réflexion et vie chrétiennes aujourd’hui: Essai au sujet des relations entre la théologie et la spiritualité.’” His research supervisors were two well-known French professors: Gerard Ziegwald and André Benoit. Under the guidance of his mentor and research director, Father Professor Dr. Dumitru Stăniloae, he defended his second doctoral thesis on October 31, 1980, at the Orthodox Theological Institute in Bucharest. He earned his second doctoral degree titled *Teologie și spiritualitate creștină. Raportul dintre ele și situația actuală* [Theology and Christian spirituality: The relationship between them and the current situation].

⁶ Dr. Antonie Plămădeală, “În loc de introducere — ‘Generația Stăniloae’” [A Substitute for an Introduction — “Stăniloae Generation”], in *Per-soană și Comuniune ...*, p. xi.

⁷ *Ibid.*, p. xii.

⁸ Rev. Fr. Professor Dr. Costachi Galeri, also known as Constantin Galeriu, earned his Doctorate in 1973 from the Orthodox Theological Institute in Bucharest after defending his thesis titled “Jertfă și răscumpărare” [Sacrifice and Redemption], under the supervision of his director of research, Professor Dr. Nicolae Chițescu (1904-1991). He was a professor of Catechetics and Homiletics at the Orthodox Theological Institute in Bucharest from 1973 to 1991. From 1992 until his passing away in

Dumitru's (Stăniloae) but considers himself part of the "Stăniloae Generation," emphasized: "I believe that in the future it [the Romanian Orthodox Theology] will be periodized in this way: Theology before Rev. Fr. Stăniloae, and after Rev. Fr. Stăniloae."⁹ We, his disciples, were his contemporaries until he passed away in 1993. Even now, nearly 32 years after his departure to eternal life and following his canonization (the Holy Synod of the Romanian Orthodox Church approved the canonization of Rev. Fr. Professor Dr. Dumitru Stăniloae on 11-12 July 2024, with the title: Saint Priest Confessor Dumitru Stăniloae, to be honoured every year on October 4), we have the mission to make him known to the entire world. An important Romanian contemporary Orthodox theologian, Rev. Fr. Dr. Adrian Agachi, emphasizes this mission for us, his disciples, regarding those who have attempted to present "the Patristic work undertaken by Father Dumitru Stăniloae."¹⁰ The author notes that "the Romanian (Orthodox) theologians who have tried to achieve this goal are very few."¹¹ An esteemed Orthodox English theologian, Dr. Kallistos (born Timothy) Ware (1934-2022), Bishop of Diokleia in Phrygia (later made a titular metropolitan in 2007, under the Ecumenical Patriarchate of Constantinople), believes that Rev. Fr. Dumitru Stăniloae's standing "in present-day Orthodoxy [is] comparable to that of Karl Barth in Protestantism or Karl Rahner in Catholicism."¹²

2003, he served as a Consulting Professor at the Faculty of Orthodox Theology in București.

⁹ Dr. Antonie Plămădeală, "În loc de introducere, ...," p. xx.

¹⁰ Dr. Adrian Agachi, *The Neo-Palamite Synthesis of Father Dumitru Stăniloae*, Newcastle: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2013, p. 15.

¹¹ *Ibidem*.

¹² Dr. Kallistos Ware, "Foreword," in Fr. Dumitru Stăniloae, *The Experience of God*, Vol. 1 - "Revelation and Knowledge of the Triune God." Translated and edited by Ioan Ioniță and Robert Barringer, foreword by Kallistos (Bishop Kallistos of Diokleia) Ware. Brookline, Massachusetts: Holy Cross Orthodox Press, 1994, reprinted 1998, xxiv-xxv.; also cf. Lucian Turcescu, ed., *Dumitru Stăniloae: Tradition and*

2 Was Saint Dumitru (Stăniloae) a Patristic or a Neo-Patristic Orthodox Theologian?

We, his disciples, belonging to “Stăniloae Generation” dare to ask: Is our mentor a Patristic or a Neo-Patristic Theologian? Moreover, by exploring synonymous parallelism, we consider another question: Are we the disciples of a Patristic Theologian or a Neo-Patristic Theologian? As I have pointed out, His Beatitude Daniel Ciobotea, the Patriarch of the Romanian Orthodox Church, is the most prominent disciple of Saint Dumitru (Stăniloae). His Beatitude clearly states that Saint Dumitru (Stăniloae) is a Neo-Patristic Theologian. Suppose we are disciples of a Neo-Patristic Orthodox Theologian.¹³ What can we infer about our mentor’s Neo-Patristics? Professor Dr. Lucian Turcescu¹⁴, Professor Dr. Adrian Lemeni¹⁵, and Archdeacon Professor Dr. Ioan I. Ică Jr.¹⁶, three of the most notable modern Romanian Orthodox theologians, all members of “Stăniloae Generation,” hold differing views on this matter. During our undergraduate studies at the Orthodox Theological Institute in Sibiu, Archdeacon Professor Dr. Ioan I. Ică Jr. taught Professor Lucian Turcescu and me.

Modernity in Theology, Iași, România, Palm Beach, FL: Centre for Romanian Studies, 2002, p. 8.

- ¹³ His Beatitude Dr. Daniel Ciobotea, “Părintele Stăniloae — Creator al unei sinteze neo-patristice în teologia ortodoxă contemporană,” [Father Stăniloae — Creator of a Neo-Patristic Synthesis in the Contemporary Orthodox Theology], in *Studii Teologice* [Theological Studies], 3, year I, no. 1 (2005), pp. 146-150. His Beatitude wrote this study when he was the metropolitan of Moldova.
- ¹⁴ Dr. Lucian Turcescu is a Professor of Church History at the Faculty of Theology, “Concordia” University, Montréal, Québec, Canada.
- ¹⁴ Dr. Lucian Turcescu is a Professor of Church History at the Faculty of Theology, “Concordia” University, Montréal, Québec, Canada.
- ¹⁵ Dr. Adrian Lemeni is a Professor of Orthodox Dogmatic and Fundamental Theology at the Faculty of Orthodox Theology, Bucharest University.
- ¹⁶ Dr. Ioan I. Ică Jr. (b 1960) is a professor of Systematic Theology at the Faculty of the Orthodox Theology “Saint Andrei Șaguna,” University “Lucian Blaga,” in Sibiu.

While attending the Faculty of Orthodox Theology in București, the future Professor Dr. Adrian Lemeni became one of Rev. Academician Fr. Professor Dr. Dumitru Popescu's (1929-2010) disciples.¹⁷ During his doctoral studies, Dr. Dumitru Popescu served as his research director. Dr. Ioan I. Ică Jr. emphasizes that:

Without any intention of “protochronist” (“Romanophile”) exaltation or local autochthonous patriotism, one cannot overlook the fact that this balanced, ontological, authentic (NOT NEO-) Patristic view of the person was supported and promoted in Romanian Orthodoxy by him 50 years ago, by Rev. Fr. Professor Dumitru Stăniloae.¹⁸

Professor Dr. Lucian Turcescu has a unique perspective. He disagrees with the opinion expressed by Archdeacon Dr. Ioan I. Ică Jr. He asserts that Saint Dumitru (Stăniloae) is a neo-Patristic Theologian. In this context, he emphasizes that

“Through his Theology, Fr. Stăniloae places himself within Orthodox Theology – with Russians like George Florovsky and Vladimir Lossky and with Greeks like John Romanides and Christos Yannaras – as a representative of the neo-Patristic synthesis.”¹⁹

Professor Dr. Adrian Lemeni also shares this view, stating that Saint Dumitru (Stăniloae) is a neo-Patristic, not a Patristic Orthodox Theologian.²⁰ I would also like to include the opinion of Rev.

¹⁷ Dr. Dumitru Popescu defended in 1972 his doctoral thesis *Eclesiologia romano-catolică după cel de-al doilea Conciliu de la Vatican și ecourile ei în teologia contemporană* [The Roman Catholic Ecclesiology after the Second Vatican Council and its Echoes in Contemporary Theology]. His Director of Research was Professor Dr. Nicolae Chițescu.

¹⁸ Ioan I. Ică jr., “Persoană sau/și ontologie în gândirea ortodoxă contemporană” [Person or/and Ontology in the Contemporary Orthodox Thought], in *Persoană și Comuniune ...*, p. 376.

¹⁹ Dr. Lucian Turcescu, “Introduction,” in Dr. Lucian Turcescu (ed), Dumitru Stăniloae: Tradition and Modernity, Iași, România; Palm Beach, FL: Centre for Romanian Studies, 2002, p. 9.

²⁰ Dr. Adrian Lemeni, “Father Dumitru Stăniloae – the Promoter of Neo-Patristic Thought in Romanian Theology,” in *Revista Teologia* 62, no. 1 (2015): pp. 108-120,

Fr. Dr. Adrian Agachi, an Orthodox theologian with extensive knowledge of Orthodox theology. He agrees with the two professors, Dr. Lucian Turcescu and Dr. Adrian Lemeni, that Saint Dumitru (Stăniloae) is a neo-Patristic, rather than a Patristic, Theologian.²¹

The neo-Patristic synthesis, as many contemporary Orthodox theologians understand it, was developed by Russian Orthodox scholars, especially by Rev. Fr. Professor Dr. George Florovsky (1893-1979). His Eminence Dr. Hilarion (born Grigoriy Valerievich) Alfeyev, Metropolitan of Volokolamsk — Russian Orthodox Church, writes:

Florovsky was the main driving force behind the ‘Patristic renaissance’ in 20th-century Russian Theology: his key concepts shaped how the Patristic heritage is interpreted, especially the idea of the ‘neo-Patristic synthesis.’ Florovsky states that the study of theology quickly leads to what I now refer to as the ‘neo-Patristic synthesis.’ This synthesis should be more than just a collection of Patristic sayings or statements; it must truly be a synthesis—a creative re-examination of the insights given to the holy men of old.²²

Rev. Fr. Prof. Dr. George Florovsky emphasized the urgency and importance of the “neo-Patristic” synthesis for a necessary Patristic revival within modern Orthodox Theology. He outlined its demands at the First International Congress of Orthodox Theological Faculties (Athens, November 29 – December 6, 1936). In 1936, the Orthodox Theological institution in Sibiu was an academy, Academia Andreiana, not a faculty, and Saint Dumitru

http://revistateologia.ro/downloads/Teologia/1_2015/11_Lemeni.pdf (accessed March 11, 2017).

²¹ Dr. Adrian Agachi, *The Neo-Palamite Synthesis of Father Dumitru Stăniloae*, p. 15.

²² Dr. Hilarion (Grigoriy Valerievich) Alfeyev, *The Patristic Heritage and Modernity*, published by the Department for External Church Relations of the Moscow Patriarchate, http://orthodoxeurope.org/page/11/1/2.aspx#_ftn16 (accessed May 2025).

(Stăniloae) was teaching there. As a result, the First International Congress of the Orthodox Faculties of Theology did not invite the professors from Sibiu, including Saint Dumitru (Stăniloae), to participate in its sessions. *Revista Teologică* [The Theological Journal], the magazine of *Academia Andreiana*, did not publish any articles related to the First Congress of the Orthodox Faculties of Theology.

Another prominent Orthodox Theologian of the twentieth century, Archimandrite Dr. Justin (born Blagoje) Popovich (1894-1979), was not invited to that congress, despite having taught Orthodox Dogmatic Theology at the Theological Faculty of Saint Sava in Belgrade since 1934. On May 2, 2010, he was canonized as Saint Justin Popovich by the Holy Synod of the Serbian Orthodox Church. Saint Justin Popovich was a close friend of the Romanian Orthodox Archimandrite and Saint Pious Cleopa (born Constantin) (Ilie) (1912-1998), who was canonized on July 12, 2024. I will not focus this article on Saint Justin Popovich's Orthodox Theological activity.

However, the year 1938, which occurred two years after the First International Congress of Orthodox Theological Faculties, was of great significance to the Romanian Orthodox Church. In 1938, Saint Dumitru (Stăniloae) published his third Romanian translation of one of Saint Gregory Palamas' writings: *Viața și învățătura Sfântului Grigorie Palamas cu patru tratate traduse* [The Life and Teachings of Saint Gregory Palamas with Four Translated Treatises], Sibiu, 1938.

In my view, as someone who considers myself part of the "Stăniloae Generation," I want to share my opinion as well. In 1991, I accompanied a group of young students and professors from the Faculty of Human Medicine in Bucharest who were visiting Saint Dumitru (Stăniloae) at his home. One of his visitors asked him to describe how encountering the writings of Saint Gregory Palamas had changed his life. Saint Dumitru (Stăniloae) replied that, indeed, his life had been transformed. He discovered the writings of Saint Gregory Palamas in Paris in 1929, seven years before the First International Congress of Orthodox Theological Faculties

(1936), and before Rev. Fr. Professor Dr. George Florovsky highlighted the urgency and importance of the “neo-Patristic” synthesis. The truth he shared with us relates to the call that the Metropolitan of Transylvania (Ardeal), a worthy figure of remembrance, Dr. Nicolae Bălan²³, made to him in 1922 when, accompanied by his uncle, Rev. Fr. Ioan Curcubătă, he asked the metropolitan’s blessing to enroll in the Faculty of Orthodox Theology. During a discussion with the venerable Metropolitan Dr. Nicolae Bălan, young Dumitru confessed that he wanted to understand the human person through scholastic philosophy. The erudite metropolitan, upon hearing his new disciple’s plans, immediately advised him to focus solely on exploring the writings of the Holy Fathers, and not elsewhere! This advice gave his life and his future academic pursuits a fresh start.

The metropolitan’s exhortation became a true guide to his life. It is worth noting that this discussion took place in 1922, fourteen years before the First International Congress of Orthodox Theological Faculties in 1936. Unfortunately, Saint Dumitru (Stăniloae) did not find an authentic Patristic spirit during his first year (1922-1923) of Orthodox Theological studies at Cernăuți. Instead, the same scholastic understanding, influenced by German Theology — meaning Protestantism rather than Orthodox tradition — prevailed. I, too, began my Orthodox Theological studies at the Orthodox Theological Institute in Sibiu in 1987. In 1989, I enrolled in one of the most compelling courses: Orthodox Moral

²³ Dr. Nicolae Bălan (1882-1955) was one of Romania’s most prominent Orthodox hierarchs and among the most highly educated Romanian Orthodox theologians of the early twentieth century. He earned his Doctorate in Theology in 1905 at Cernăuți (Romanian spelling) — Czernowitz (Ukrainian spelling) — University. He taught Orthodox Dogmatic Theology, Apologetics, and Moral Theology at Academia Andreiană in Sibiu from 1905 to 1920, serving as a layperson professor until 1919, when he was ordained as a celibate priest. In 1920, he was elected Metropolitan of Transylvania (Ardeal) and held that position for the remainder of his life. He passed away in 1955, as I have already mentioned.

Theology, taught by Rev. Fr. Professor Dr. Ilie Moldovan (1928-2012).²⁴ He often warned us that *Orthodox Moral Theology*²⁵, the

²⁴ Rev. Fr. Prof. Dr. Ilie Moldovan was one of the most highly educated Romanian Orthodox Theologians of the second half of the twentieth century and the first 12 years of the twenty-first century. He studied at the Faculty of Agronomy in Cluj-Napoca from 1947 to 1952, earning a degree as an agronomist engineer between 1952 and 1955. He continued his Orthodox Theological studies in Cluj-Napoca from 1950 to 1952 and in Sibiu from 1953 to 1955. He obtained his doctoral degree in Orthodox Theology, specifically in Orthodox Dogmatic Theology, from the University of Bucharest in 1974 after defending his thesis, “The Holy Spirit in Orthodoxy and in Contemporary Ecumenical Concerns.” His director of research was Professor Dr. Nicolae Chitescu. Since November 1, 1983, he has been a full professor at the Department of Orthodox Moral Theology at the Orthodox Theological Institute of Sibiu. He retired in 1998 but continued serving as a consulting professor for doctoral students until his passing away in 2012. In the late 1980s, when speaking with two young Romanian Orthodox Theologians — now both archbishops of the Romanian Orthodox Church, His Eminence Dr. Teodosie Petrescu, Archbishop of Tomis, and His Eminence Dr. Casian Crăciun, Archbishop of the Lower Danube — about Rev. Fr. Professor Dr. Ilie Moldovan, they told me — His Eminence Dr. Teodosie Petrescu: “Rev. Fr. Professor Dr. Ilie Moldovan delivers prophetic sermons,” and His Eminence Dr. Casian Crăciun: “during my student years, there were two *avvas* in Bucharest: Rev. Fr. Professor Dr. Costachi Galeri (also known as Constantin Galeriu), serving at the Saint Silvester Church, and Rev. Fr. Professor Dr. Ilie Moldovan, serving at the Saint Catherine Church, the chapel of the Orthodox Theological Institute in București.

²⁵ The manual is divided into two volumes and authored by four prominent Romanian Orthodox Theologians of the twentieth century: Metropolitan Dr. Nicolae Mladin (1914-1986), Archdeacon Professor Dr. Ioan Zăgorean (1912-1991), Archdeacon Professor Dr. Orest Bucevschi (1897-1992), and Professor Dr. Constantin Pavel (1907-2000). The manual was published between 1979 and 1980 and is titled “Orthodox Moral Theology for Theological Institutes.” It is worth noting that a third volume of Orthodox Moral Theology exists, but it is not an authentic moral manual authored by the same writers. Instead, this work is a study of Orthodox Ascetical and Mystical Theology, written by Saint Dumitru (Stăniloae), but published under his legal name to facilitate easier passage through communist censorship. It was first published in 1981 and comprises 320 pages.

manual used in Orthodox Theological institutes — a coursebook approved by the Holy Synod—was, unfortunately, scholastic in nature. As his students, we were advised to focus on his courses rather than rely solely on that manual.

Unfortunately, in Chişinău, Saint Dumitru (Stăniloae) encounters the same scholastic spirit, which leads him to withdraw from studying Orthodox Theology and to begin studying at the Faculty of Letters in Bucureşti. However, God had a different plan for him. After one year at the Faculty of Letters in Bucharest, the young Dumitru Stăniloae experienced one of the most significant moments of his life. He met Metropolitan Dr. Nicolae Bălan in Bucharest, a meeting that forever changed the course of his life. Referring to that meeting, he describes it as a “miracle,” and he writes: “but God performed the miracle...”²⁶ Rev. Fr. Academician Professor Dr. Mircea Păcurariu considers it only a “chance meeting.” He writes: “A chance meeting with the metropolitan (Nicolae Bălan) in the Capital will forever change the destiny of young Dumitru.”²⁷ I am one of the disciples of these two great professors: Saint Dumitru (Stăniloae) and Mircea Păcurariu. Rev. Fr. Academician Dr. Mircea Păcurariu was my professor of the History of the Romanian Orthodox Church (in the first two years of study) and of Byzantine History and the History of Christian Art (in the first year). I specialized in Orthodox Dogmatic Theology and studied the Theological Anthropology of Saint Dumitru (Stăniloae). I appreciated the high academic level of both courses, even though I only attended Rev. Academician Fr. Professor Dr. Mircea Păcurariu’s classes. I have never participated in Saint Dumitru (Stăniloae)’s classes, but I have read them.

²⁶ Saint Dumitru (Stăniloae), “Iubiții mei frați Sibieni” [My Beloved Sibian Brothers], in *Persoană și Comuniune ...*, p. 635.

²⁷ Dr. Mircea Păcurariu, “Preotul Profesor și Academician Dumitru Stăniloae – Câteva coordonate biografice,” [Rev. Professor and Academician Dumitru Stăniloae – Some Biographical Details], in *Persoană și Comuniune. ...*, p. 3.

Now, I am sharing my opinion on the differing views of two great Romanian Orthodox theologians regarding the character of the 1924 meeting. For Saint Dumitru (Stăniloae), it is “a miracle.” At the same time, Rev. Fr. Academician Professor Dr. Mircea Păcurariu sees it only as “a chance meeting.” I firmly believe that the meeting in 1924 was a “miracle,” as Saint Dumitru (Stăniloae) testifies. I strongly reject the idea of a “chance meeting,” supported by Rev. Academician Professor Dr. Mircea Păcurariu. I also want to emphasize another point that Rev. Fr. Academician Professor Dr. Mircea Păcurariu raised, which is that this meeting changed “the destiny of young Dumitru (Stăniloae).” According to DexOnline.net, destiny is defined as “fate, misfortune, good or bad luck that accompanies a person’s life.” However, destiny is not a Christian value. “The course of his life” (referring to Saint Dumitru Stăniloae) more accurately captures the significance of his meeting with Metropolitan Dr. Nicolae Bălan in București in 1924. It was the second time in his life that the worthy Metropolitan Dr. Nicolae Bălan encouraged him to seek guidance from the Holy Fathers of the Eastern Orthodox Church to answer his questions as a young man eager to move beyond the scholastic level of Orthodox theological education at the start of the twentieth century. The first encouragement, as I previously mentioned, occurred in 1922 when Metropolitan Dr. Nicolae Bălan granted him his hierarchical blessing to apply for admission to higher Orthodox theological studies at the Faculty of Orthodox Theology at the University of Cernăuți. Five more years passed before young Dumitru Stăniloae, in Paris, discovered what he had been searching for over seven years: the work of Saint Gregory Palamas, an exceptional synthesis of Eastern Orthodox Patristic literature. At that time, the 26-year-old Professor Dumitru Stăniloae had a noble mission: to introduce the works of this great Holy Father of the Eastern Orthodox Church into Romanian. The first Romanian translation of some of Saint Gregory Palamas’ writings—specifically, *Tratate Demonstrative despre Purcederea Duhului Sfânt* [Demonstrative Treatises on the Procession of the Holy Spirit]—was made by Grigorie Dascăluș (the Teacher), the Metropolitan

of Ungrovlahia, and printed by Gherontie from Neamț at the Buzău printing house in 1832.²⁸

3 The First Studies Focused on Saint Gregory Palamas, published by Saint Dumitru (Stăniloae)

In 1930, Saint Dumitru (Stăniloae) published his first study on the spirituality of Saint Gregory Palamas, titled *The Path to Divine Light in Saint Gregory Palamas (writings)* in the “Anuarul VI al Academiei Teologice Andreiane” [Yearbook VI of the Andreiana Theological Academy], Sibiu, 1930, pp. 55-72. The event occurs six years before the First Congress of the Orthodox Faculties of Theology and 29 years before Rev. Fr. Dr. John Meyendorff published *Introduction à l'étude de Grégoire Palamas*.²⁹ In fact, this was the doctoral thesis that John Meyendorff defended in Paris in 1959.³⁰

²⁸ Sfântul Grigorie Palama, *Tratate Demonstrative despre Purcederea Duhului Sfânt*, Traducere din greaca veche de Pr. Roger Coresciuc, Studiu introductiv de Jean-Claude Larchet, tradus de Marinela Bojin, Ediție îngrijită de Pr. Dragoș Bahrim, Carte tipărită cu binecuvântarea Înaltpreasfințitului Teofan, Mitropolitul Moldovei și Bucovinei, [Demonstrative Treatises on the Procession of the Holy Spirit, Translation from ancient Greek by Fr. Roger Coresciuc, Introductory Study by Jean-Claude Larchet, translated by Marinela Bojin, Edition edited by Fr. Dragoș Bahrim, book printed with the blessing of His Eminence Theophanes, Metropolitan of Moldavia and Bukovina] DOXOLOGIA, Iași, 2023, p. 17.

²⁹ John Meyendorff, *Introduction à l'étude de Grégoire Palamas*, Paris, 1959.

³⁰ According to Rev. Deacon Dr. Ioan I. Ică Jr., this was the second study on Saint Gregory Palamas undertaken during the twentieth century. In fact, Dr. Ioan Ică does not include the studies carried out at the beginning of the twentieth century by the Greek Orthodox theologian Gregorios Papamichail, nor the studies published in Russia during the 1920s, nor the study by the Romanian professor Emilian Popescu in 1955. See Dr. Ioan I. Ică Jr., “De Ce ‘Persoană și Comuniune?’ - Cuvânt preventor

Three years later, he published the second translation of Saint Gregory Palamas, titled *Two Treatises of Saint Gregory Palamas*, in “Anuarul IX al Academiei Teologice Andreiane” [Yearbook IX of the Andreiana Theological Academy], Sibiu, 1933, pp. 5-70. It was in 1933, three years before the First Congress of the Orthodox Theological Faculties.

These two studies marked a significant turning point for Saint Dumitru (Stăniloae), moving him away from the scholasticism he encountered in Romanian higher Orthodox theological education. In this context, we can conclude that from now on, we will refer to Dumitru (Stăniloae) as a neo-Patristic Orthodox theologian. The final sentence presents a hypothesis, but perhaps we should go further back and start calling Dumitru Stăniloae a neo-Patristic Orthodox theologian from 1929, when he first discovered the writings of Saint Gregory Palamas in Paris. Saint Dumitru (Stăniloae) found the path that Metropolitan Dr. Nicolae Bălan had been urging him to follow since 1922 and reaffirmed in 1924.

In both the study of Saint Gregory and neo-Patristic Orthodox Theology, Saint Dumitru (Stăniloae) takes precedence, even though some contemporary Orthodox theologians dispute this. In 2006, I engaged in a polemical discussion with Rev. Fr. Professor Dr. John Jillions, a modern Canadian Orthodox theologian and professor at Saint Paul University, The Metropolitan Andrey Sheptytsky Institute of Eastern Christian Studies, in Ottawa, at that time. He strongly denied that Saint Dumitru (Stăniloae) was an Orthodox Theologian, insisting he was merely a holy man, not a theologian, and warned me to distinguish between the two. He also claimed that the only major Orthodox Theologian of the twentieth century was Alexander Dmitrievich Schmemmann (1921-1983). It’s noteworthy that Rev. Fr. Professor Dr. John Jillions is one of Schmemmann’s disciples. He maintained his stance even when I referred to Saint Dumitru’s theological writings, as

la un ‘Festschrift’ Întârziat – “[Why “Person and Communion?” - A word of caution on a belated “Festschrift”], in *Persoană și Comuniune ...*, p. xxv.

presented by Rev. Deacon Professor Dr. Ioan Ică Jr. and Professor Dr. Gheorghe Anghelescu over 50 pages in the work *Person and Communion: Offering Honour to Father Professor Academician Dumitru Stăniloae on His Ninetieth Birthday...*, which I have already cited.³¹ Our discussion continued with the same polemical tone regarding the early twentieth-century translations of Saint Gregory Palamas' works. He argued that Rev. Fr. Professor Dr. John Meyendorff completed those first translations, published in 1959, and presented them to the Orthodox world as highly significant Patristic material. I referenced both the translations by Saint Dumitru (Stăniloae), previously mentioned, and other translations from the early twentieth century. I specifically cited one of the most substantial studies by the Greek Orthodox Theologian Gregorios Papamichail, Saint Gregory Palamas, Archbishop of Thessalonica, published in Greek in St. Petersburg and Alexandria in 1911.³² I knew at that time that Gregorios Papamichail defended his bachelor's thesis at the Theological Academy of St. Petersburg, earning his Master of Theology in 1905 for his thesis on St. Gregory Palamas, Archbishop of Thessaloniki. Furthermore, in the 1920s, the Orthodox Russian Theological schools undertook further studies on Saint Gregory Palamas. The first Romanian Orthodox theologian to defend a bachelor's thesis on Saint Gregory Palamas, following the translations of Saint Dumitru (Stăniloae) in the 1930s, was Academician Professor Dr. Emilian Popescu (1928-2010).³³ He defended his thesis

³¹ Dr. Ioan I. Ică Jr. și Dr. Gheorghe Anghelescu, "Părintele Prof. Acad. Dumitru Stăniloae Bibliografie Sistematică," [Father Professor Academician Dumitru Stăniloae: a Systematic Bibliography], în *Persoană și Comuniune ...*, pp. 16-67.

³² Papamichail, Gregorios, *Saint Gregory Palamas, Archbishop of Thessalonica*. [Γρηγόριος Παπαμιχαήλ, Ο Άγιος Γρηγόριος ο Παλαμάς, Αρχιεπίσκοπος Θεσσαλονίκης. Πετρούπολις - Αλεξάνδρεια, 1911]. St. Petersburg/Alexandria, 1911.

³³ Academician Professor Dr. Emilian Popescu obtained his doctorate in History in 1970. From February 1, 1978, he was a full professor at the

in 1955, with Saint Dumitru (Stăniloae) serving as his research director.

Rev. Fr. Professor Dr. John Jillions argued that all these translations and other works about Saint Gregory Palamas are insignificant because they were not written in the languages of circulation, but in Russian, Greek, and Romanian, respectively. Instead, he emphasized that Rev. Fr. Dr. Professor John Meyendorff authored and published in French. This widely used language is why we should prioritize him when restoring Saint Gregory Palamas to twentieth-century Orthodox theological thought.

Unfortunately, the study by Gregorios Papamichail published in 1911 had little impact on Orthodox Theology at the time, as most Orthodox theologians acknowledge.

However, the two Orthodox Theologians — Saint Dumitru (Stăniloae) and Gregorios Papamichail — wrote in the languages of their respective peoples, and it was natural for them to write in the language spoken by the people. Additionally, for Saint Dumitru (Stăniloae), it was a significant achievement after several years of searching (1922-1929) to discover authentic Orthodoxy, which he eagerly decided to share with the believers of his country, the members of the Romanian Orthodox Church. Furthermore, this was the moment when Metropolitan Dr. Nicolae Bălan recognized one of his most important disciples as the scholar who introduced Romanian Orthodox Theology to one of the greatest Holy Fathers of Orthodoxy: Saint Gregory Palamas. In conclusion, I would like to emphasize that Saint Dumitru (Stăniloae) is indeed a Neo-Patristic Orthodox Theologian. I affirm what the great contemporary Romanian Orthodox Theologians have stated about him. I want to clarify a few points. First,

Department of Byzantine History and Spirituality at the Orthodox Theological Institute in București. He taught Byzantine History and Spirituality not only at the Faculty of Orthodox Theology in București, but also at the Faculties of Orthodox Theology in Iași and Cluj-Napoca, until his retirement in 2009.

Saint Dumitru (Stăniloae) is not a Neo-Patristic in the sense outlined at the First Congress of Faculties of Orthodox Theology held in Athens in 1936. He is a Neo-Patristic Orthodox theologian who preceded the Neo-Patristic movement referenced by the Congress, and he was not influenced by the Neo-Patristic thinking mentioned by Rev. Fr. Professor Dr. Georges Vasilievich Florovsky. The one who guided his path towards Neo-Patristic thinking was Metropolitan Dr. Nicolae Bălan, who understood the importance of this movement in the Romanian Orthodox Church in the early twentieth century. Furthermore, Metropolitan Dr. Nicolae Bălan sent his best students, who asked for his blessing, to study at Europe’s most renowned theological faculties - not only Orthodox, but also Roman Catholic and Protestant. Saint Dumitru (Stăniloae) was among them. Among these students, great professors emerged, transforming the distant and scholastic content of Romanian Orthodox higher theological education and laying the foundations for the modern ecumenical movement within the Romanian Orthodox Church. The metropolitan was a man who understood the expectations of believers at that time and provided priests who could present the highest ideals of those expectations: Orthodoxy. Indeed, Metropolitan Dr. Nicolae Bălan did not refer to the movement he sent his disciples to as the “neo-Patristics.” Essentially, he aimed to move away from scholasticism and to rediscover the values of Byzantine Theology, the theology of the Orthodox Church.

4 The Translation of the Philokalia into Romanian, a Crucial Aspect of His Activity as a Neo-Patristic Theologian

We cannot discuss Saint Dumitru (Stăniloae) as a neo-Patristic Orthodox Theologian without mentioning one of his most remarkable achievements. This is the Romanian translation of the Philokalia. He achieved what many rightly say could have been accomplished by a team of scholars on his own. He initially began

translating the first four volumes of the *Philokalia*. He was assisted by Archimandrite Arsenie Boca, a former student of his, who was canonized alongside Saint Dumitru (Stăniloae) in the same session of the Holy Synod of the Romanian Orthodox Church. However, Arsenie Boca did not participate in the translation process but only handwrote what Saint Dumitru (Stăniloae) initially translated from the Greek text. Not only did he translate the *Philokalia*, but he also wrote the introductions for all twelve volumes and added extensive footnotes. Some have said that these introductions and footnotes alone could constitute a treatise on Orthodox Dogmatic Theology of great value. Similar to the *Orthodox Dogmatic Theology* published in 1978, these writings show that Saint Dumitru (Stăniloae) is not only a neo-Patristic Orthodox Theologian but also a genius of twentieth-century neo-Patristic theology.

The translation of the *Philokalia* is a key part of Saint Dumitru (Stăniloae)'s Neo-Patristic work, rooted in the call issued by Metropolitan Dr. Nicolae Bălan, who initiated the translation of the *Philokalia* into Romanian. He did not limit himself to the six volumes of the Greek original; instead, he added six more volumes to the Romanian edition, bringing the Romanian Orthodox Church to twelve volumes of the *Philokalia*. One of his most notable disciples, Metropolitan Dr. Antonie Plămădeală, already mentioned in this article, accurately noted: "When one says *Philokalia*, one will say Stăniloae."³⁴ One year before Saint Dumitru (Stăniloae) passed away, an influential French Orthodox Theologian, Dr. Olivier Clement (1921-2009), wrote: "Everyone knows Father Stăniloae, who is a giant, a theological genius who marks absolutely everything in our century."³⁵

³⁴ Dr. Antonie Plămădeală, "În loc de introducere, ..." p. xi.

³⁵ Olivier Clément, in *Renașterea* [Renaissance], Theological Journal of the Orthodox Diocese of Râmnic, year 1, no. 3-4, 1992, p. 8, quoted without mentioning the title, by Dr. Antonie Plămădeală, "În loc de introducere, ..." p. xi.

An evident synthesis of the Neo-Patristic character of Saint Dumitru (Stăniloae)’s activity was provided by the same Metropolitan Dr. Antonia Plămădeală. He writes:

No one articulates a more precise or innovative theology of the world and the person — starting from God — the Person — than he does. This includes a theology of harmony and balance, as well as a theology of humanity, particularly reflected in the structure of the human soul.³⁶

A significant event occurred in 1978 in the life of Saint Dumitru (Stăniloae). As one of his disciples, I would call it the “MOMENT of 1978” in his life. That year, he published the Orthodox Dogmatic Theology in three volumes. It is not a textbook in the traditional sense, but rather a synthesis derived from the neo-Patristic research conducted since the discovery of Saint Gregory Palamas’ work. It reflects a neo-Patristic effort, following the advice of Metropolitan Dr. Nicolae Bălan, spanning approximately 48 years from 1930 to 1978. Before he began writing this Orthodox neo-Patristic dogmatic synthesis, his colleague, Professor Dr. Nicolae Chitescu, offered to collaborate on this extensive work. However, this was not realized, as his 1978 Orthodox Dogmatic Theology presents him as one of the most profound neo-Patristic Romanian Orthodox Theologians, the one who “has discovered new meanings where no one suspected them,” as Metropolitan Dr. Antonie Plămădeală emphasized, whom I quoted earlier. It is also worth noting that another great Holy Father of the Orthodox Church was at the forefront of his research: Saint Maximus the Confessor (c. 580-662). Therefore, Saint Dumitru (Stăniloae)’s 1978 Orthodox Dogmatic Theology was written based on the thoughts of several important Holy Fathers of the Orthodox Church, with Saint Maximus the Confessor and Saint Gregory Palamas holding prominent places.

³⁶ Dr. Antonie Plămădeală, “În loc de introducere, ...,” p. xi.

Another significant work by Saint Dumitru (Stăniloae), highlighting his status as one of the most profound neo-Patristic Romanian Orthodox Theologians, is *Teologia Morală Ortodoxă pentru Institutete Teologice*, vol. III. *Spiritualitatea ortodoxă*, București, 1981, [*The Orthodox Moral Theology for Theological Institutes*, vol. III. *Orthodox Spirituality*, Bucharest, 1981], (320 pages). I have already explained why this treatise on Orthodox ascetical and mystical theology bore this title; I reiterate that it was to facilitate passing through communist censorship. After Saint Dumitru (Stăniloae) provides a detailed overview of the believer's path to perfection - liberation from passions or purification and enlightenment - the final chapter focuses on one of the most profound aspects of Orthodox life: the deification of the human person (θεώσις). I reaffirm my view, aligned with that of one of his disciples from the younger generation: his ascetic and mystical theology is among the most extensive and well-grounded theology of the Orthodox Fathers. Like his other works, this writing is an exceptional achievement by one of the most prominent figures of the twentieth-century neo-Patristic movement.

On June 22, 1985, Romanian philosopher Emil Mihai Cioran (1911-1995)³⁷ wrote a letter to Saint Dumitru (Stăniloae) in which, referring to the *Philokalia*, he tells him: "I want to repeat that the *Philokalia* is a capital monument in the history of our language. At the same time, what a profound lesson for an unhappy and frivolous nation! From all points of view, such a work is called upon to play a considerable role."³⁸

He is both a Romanian Orthodox neo-Patristic theologian and a neo-Patristic theologian within the Orthodox Church, aligning himself with this movement across the entire Orthodox Church.

³⁷ Emil Mihai Cioran (1911-1995) was a Romanian philosopher, renowned for his aphorisms and essays. He was the son of a Romanian Orthodox Christian priest. Cioran's primary studies focused on aesthetics, anti-natalism, ethics, hagiography, literary criticism, music, nihilism, poetry, religion, and suicide.

³⁸ The fragment is quoted by Dr. Ioan I. Ică Jr., "De Ce 'Persoană și Comunitate? ...," p. xxv.

He was a Romanian Orthodox theologian who loved both his faith and his country. It is essential to acknowledge that salvation also has an ethnic dimension.³⁹ He was a Romanian Orthodox theologian who placed great value on Romanian Orthodoxy, a value that not everyone can grasp, especially given that Romania was Christianized by the Holy Apostle Andrew. He highlighted that, from the earliest church structures established on our nation’s territory, dating back to the Primary Church, some bishops participated in Ecumenical Councils as defenders of the Orthodox faith. Furthermore, he believed it is of fundamental importance that we are a people speaking a neo-Latin language but sharing the Orthodox faith. One of his notable works, which demonstrates his deep love for the Romanian people’s Orthodox Christian faith and homeland, is *Ortodoxie și Româanism* [Orthodoxy and Romanianism]. However, his understanding of the significance of the neo-Patristic movement, promoted by Metropolitan Dr. Nicolae Bălan as an important mission, positions him as an Orthodox theologian who has secured a place in the great book of universal Orthodoxy’s values. The Holy Synod of the Romanian Orthodox Church canonized him as a saint, thereby bestowing upon the universal Orthodox Church a saint and an Orthodox theologian of great significance. Our duty, as members of the “Stăniloae Generation,” is to present him to the world as the Orthodox saint and theologian Dumitru Stăniloae.

By carefully examining what the neo-Patristic movement has accomplished since 1936, we can say that Saint Dumitru (Stăniloae) may have been the most successful in achieving the neo-Patristic synthesis that G. Florovsky talked about in 1936. The person who initiated this mystical movement in the Romanian Orthodox Church was Metropolitan Dr. Nicolae Bălan. While he

³⁹ It was during his course on Orthodox Christian Morality, which he taught in the fall of 1989, that Rev. Fr. Professor Dr. Ilie Moldovan, whom I previously mentioned in this article, first pointed out that salvation also has an ethnic dimension.

did not call it “the neo-Patristic” movement, as Georges Vasilievich Florovsky did, he shared the same idea that the great Orthodox Theologian presented at the First Congress of the Orthodox Theological Faculties in Athens (1936). A similar level of activity also took place in the Serbian Orthodox Church, led by Saint Justin (Popovich). In this article, I highlight that neither Saint Dumitru (Stăniloae), nor Saint Justin (Popovich), two of the most salient Orthodox Theologians of the twentieth century, were invited to the First Congress of the Orthodox Theological Faculties in Athens (1936). The neo-Patristic synthesis achieved by both within their local Orthodox Churches was not due to decisions made at the Congress. Instead, it resulted from their dedication to promoting a return to the Byzantine Patristic tradition. In conclusion, I would like to highlight an aspect that Saint Dumitru (Stăniloae) emphasized during a dialogue with Sorin Dumitrescu (1946-2024), a significant cultural figure of the second half of the twentieth century and a disciple of Rev. Fr. Professor Dr. Costachi Galeri (also known as Constantin Galeriu). Saint Dumitru (Stăniloae) emphasized:

I want to be loved forever, and I want to love another person forever, in an increasingly complete union. People, love, and immortality converge in a more complete union in one place. This is the whole meaning of existence.⁴⁰

⁴⁰ *7 Dimineți cu Părintele Stăniloae, convorbiri realizate de Sorin Dumitrescu* [7 Mornings with Father Stăniloae, conversations carried out by Sorin Dumitrescu], Editura Anastasia, București, 1992, p. 151.