

**PEACE AND ITS MEANING
ACCORDING TO FR. DUMITRU STĂNILOAE (1903-1993)***

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Abstract.

Fr. Dumitru Stăniloae is for sure the most important Romanian theologian of all times. Among the topics approached in his works, peace is, for sure, one of his important themes. I will try there to analyse his vision on this topic and to distinguish between the two levels of the way he understands peace namely the practical and the theoretical one. For the second part, the focus will be rather on the articles published in the interwar period, where the perspective will not be only a theological one, but also with references to the social, cultural, historical and political realities, a fact that will not be any more encountered in his work belonging to Communist period, because the censorship will not allow it. I will try to emphasize there the way how he saw peace in relationship both with the spiritual life, freedom, idea of community and nation, or with outcomes like the monastic or the hermitic life.

Keywords: *Nation, community, freedom, love, Telegraful Român.*

1. Introduction

Theologian with a rich work, Father Dumitru Stăniloae is still revisited until nowadays. His approaches on patristics, dogmatic, history of Christianity, spirituality, ecumenism or philosophy come to rise questions for the contemporary reader and to challenge for reflection. In the same time, the way how he understood the perennial message of the Fathers of the Church makes him very actual after three decades from his departure.

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Noticing the relevance of his ideas, I will try there to approach a topic that is, probably, more actual than ever and found an interesting and complex perspective in his life and work, namely peace. The question that this paper will try to answer is therefore: what does the peace mean for the life and work of Fr. Stăniloae? We will try to provide an answer to it based both on the example of his life, because the Romanian theologian offered an interesting example of how can peace be lived as a daily element, and also in his work. The research will both bring into attention works dedicated to his life, work and heritage, repertoires and summaries of his complex work¹ but also his books, articles or studies.

2. *Peace and its meaning according to Fr. Dumitru Stăniloae (1903-1993)*

2. 1. *The practical level*

The theologian who wrote a book where he invited to the discovery of the Holy Trinity as structure of the supreme love², theorized more than anyone else the concept of love in relationship with the alterity. Of course, as expected, one of its outcomes was the peace. As a virtue and a state of soul, but also as a way of interacting with the others. A man who was imprisoned between 1959 and 1963³ due to the fact that he was part of the „Burning

¹ Like: F. Anghelescu, *Bibliografia părintelui academician profesor dr. Dumitru Stăniloae*, (București: EIBMBOR, 1993); Florin Grigorescu, *Personalități contemporane: Dumitru Stăniloae (1903-1993)*, (Suceava: Editura Arhiepiscopiei Sucevei și Rădăuților, 2011); Ioachim Giosanu, *La déification de l'homme d'après l'apensée du Père Dumitru Stăniloae*, (Roman: Filocalia, 2013); Nicolae Moșoiu, *Taina prezenței lui Dumnezeu în viața umană – viziunea creatoare a părintelui profesor Dumitru Stăniloae*, second edition (Pitești: Paralela 45 Press, 2002); Liviu Petcu, *Lumina din inimi – spiritualitate isihastă în traducerea și tâlcuirea ărintelui Stăniloae*, Editura Trinitas, Iași, 2003; Silviu Eugen Rogobete, *O antologie a iubirii – subiect și realitate personală supremă în gândirea teologică a părintelui Dumitru Stăniloae*, (Iași: Polirom Press, 2001); Marius Portaru, „Contribuția Pr. Dumitru Stăniloae (1903-1993) în domeniul traducerilor patristice românești. Problema cronologiei traducerilor, principiile traductologice și receptarea critică”, In: *Studii Teologice*, 3rd Series, 4, no. 3 (2008), 107-108; Mircea Păcurariu, Ioan Ică (eds.), *Persoană și comuniune – prinos de cinstire părintelui profesor academician Dumitru Stăniloae la împlinirea vârstei de 90 de ani*, (Sibiu: Arhidiecezana Press, 1993); Cătălin Pălimaru (ed.), *Părintele Dumitru Stăniloae, teolog al profunzimilor*, (Cluj-Napoca: Renașterea Publishing House, 2012); Nicolae Răzvan Stan, Lucian Dindirică, *Părintele profesor Dumitru Stăniloae sau Consonanța dintre dogmă, spiritualitate și liturghie*, (Târgoviște & Craiova: Cetatea de Scaun and Mitropolia Olteniei Presses, 2015); Dumitru Stăniloae, *O prietenie între Părintele Dumitru Stăniloae și Părintele Donald Allchin*, translated by Dorin Demostene Iancu, (Bucharest: Basilica Press, 2014); Timotei Aioanei, Nicolae Cristian Cădă (eds.), *Părintele Dumitru Stăniloae, mărturii și evocări*, (Bucharest: Cuvântul Vieții Press, 2013).

² Dumitru Stăniloae, *Sfânta Treime sau la început a fost iubirea*, (Bucharest: EIBMBOR, 1993).

³ See: Mircea Păcurariu, *Dicționarul Teologilor Români*, second edition, (Bucharest, Encyclopaedic Publishing House, 2002), 455-456.

brush” mystical movement in the interwar period,⁴ he managed not only to avoid the compromise with the Communist regime, but in the same time to keep the distance in relationship with the different branches and attitudes, or to be creative from the theological point of view. Moreover, as it can be seen, his writings became more and more visible for the international theological, social, cultural, historical or political space⁵ and to be in touch with its elites from his field of research.

Due to the fact that at the time, the representatives of the Romanian exile from France, for example, were divided, it is important to notice the fact that he was appreciated by all the parts. A note of Monica Lovinescu, one of the leaders of the aforementioned exile comes to speak about the way how he was perceived, but also about the way how he manages to inspire the peace feeling to the ones that came in touch with him:

“Saturday, October 10 (1981)

In the afternoon – Father Stăniloae with his daughter. He wanted to bring us his last book and had the courage to write a dedication (not everyone has it). It’s as if I’m dreaming of another time, in which I could have it close and I would be I also learned something from Orthodoxy and about God. Great heat, peace - bitter - (time seems to go towards his end), an honest humility (not excluding the feeling of his value). Simple, everyday words. No emphasis, no rhetoric. Through Nicu Steinhardt (and maybe another time Yvonne Rosignon), I would be I could believe it. P. Stăniloae could have taught me what faith is”.⁶

⁴ For more information about his meaning, role and activity, see also: Cristian Pătrășconiu, „Rugul aprins este un fenomen spiritual purtător de viitor. Dialog cu Marius Vasileanu”, In: *Convorbiri literare*, 150, no. 9 (2016): 13-22; Marius Vasileanu, „Olivier Clément despre „Rugul aprins”, In: *Adevărul literar și artistic*, 15, no. 8431 (2005): 1; Camelia Suruianu, *Rugul Aprins*, (Brăila: Lucas Press 2016); Codina Săvulescu, *Literatura religioasă de la Rugul Aprins, mss. dactil. PhD thesis*, Sibiu, 2020; Anastasia Dumitru, „Despre „străinul” devenit maestru spiritual”, In: *Scriptor*, 3, no. 9-10 (2017): 80-82; Carmen Ciornea, *Chipul Rugului Aprins*, (Cluj-Napoca: Eikon Publishing House, 2015); Ioana Diaconescu, „Lotul” Rugul Aprins 1996. Recursul în anulare admis”, In: *România literară*, 99, no. 4015 (2017): 14-15; George Enache, „Represiunea religioasă în România comunistă. Studiu de caz: ‘Rugul aprins’ ”, in: *Analele Universității „Dunărea de Jos” din Galați*, 3 (2004): 135–153; C. Ciornea, „Father Ivan Kulighin - Religious Education As The Preservation Of Humanity”, in *4th International Multidisciplinary Scientific Conference on Social Sciences and Arts SGEM 2017*, Sofia, 2017, doi: 10.5593/sgemsocial2017/34/S13.028; Iuliu-Marius Morariu, *Spiritualitate și isihasm românesc*, (Cluj-Napoca: Cluj-University Press, 2022).

⁵ For example, conscious of the fact that he was imprisoned, Fr. Andre Scrima who managed to run away from Romania and was at the time in Paris, wrote about him and his translation from the *Philocalia* collection of writings, in order to determine the Communists to be carefully with the regime applied to him in the prison. See: Andre Scrima, „L’avenement philocalique dans l’Orthodoxie roumaine,” In: *Istina*, 5, no. 3 (1958): 295-398; Andre Scrima, „L’avenement philocalique dans l’Orthodoxie roumaine,” In: *Istina*, 5, no. 1 (1958): 493-416; Andre Scrima, „L’avenement philocalique dans l’Orthodoxie roumaine,” In: *Istina*, 5, no. 4 (1958): 443-474 ; C. J. Dumont, „Pour un dialogue sur la piete hesychaste”, In: *Istina* 5, no. 3 (1958): 293-294.

⁶ Monica Lovinescu, *Jurnal (1981-1984)*, Second edition (București: Humanitas, 2003), 23; Monica Lovinescu, *Jurnal esențial*, ed. Cristina Cioabă, (București: Humanitas, 2010), 25-26.

Notes like the ones of the Romanian radio speaker from Paris can be also found in works of other Romanians,⁷ but also in the one of the foreigner theologians. Despite of the fact that he was imprisoned by the Communists and, for a while, forbidden as an author, he remained a respected voice of the Orthodoxy. The impact that his works had in the Occident determined the representatives of the Bucharest regime not only to pay attention to him, but also to be afraid, in a certain measure, of his fame. In all these times, he remained a man who sake for the inner peace and for the joy that only prayer can bring into one's soul.

2. 2. *The theological work*

It is obvious the fact that the author who translated the Philocalic collection into Romanian spoke about peace, both on a theological, or a social level. Moreover, there can be found also references to the topic when approaching aspects like the morals, the dogmatic theology, history of the Church, but also philosophy. Still, there cannot be found a book dedicated to the topic, most probably in his work.

The particularity of his approach on topics like peace is that, compared with other contemporary scholars in the theological field, Stăniloae does not limit himself on the presentation of a certain information, or of a quotation, but realizes a critical approach of it. Moreover, sometimes, based on the information found in the works of the Holy Fathers, he speaks in terms of political theology or sociology.

The publications from the first part of his life are more relevant in this area than the ones from the Communist period. The reason is simple. Before

⁷ Therefore, for example, Sanda Stolojan wrote in her diary: „I'm going to see Father Stăniloae at Saint-Serge, where he lives in a student room. He has been in Paris for a few days. No one knew that he would receive the title of „doctor honoris causa”, not a single Romanian was present at the ceremony. According to Olivier Clement, who gave an impressive speech, the Russians from Saint-Serge are not too pleased, given the Russian ambition to be the first in terms of orthodoxy, but they are obliged to bow before Stăniloae and before a theologian like Olivier Clement. There is something else: the fear of displeasing the Patriarchate in Bucharest, of while the only ones present were the other Romanian priest and the bishop, called from Bucharest to Paris. Father Stăniloae told me about his works: *Dogmatics*, now translated into all the major languages, volume X of the *Phylotaly*, published by Olivier Clement at the publisher Desclees, and a book about love published in Switzerland. About the situation in Romania, he says that it has never been so by the humiliated Romanian people like now. He also spoke with disgust about the personality cult of Ceausescu, about the diabolical character of the system that defends him. No one can get close to him. He is surrounded by an extraordinary guard. He put only relatives and close people in the supreme positions. Even the Security, says father Stăniloae, would have had enough of the regime. Then, the mess, the queues, the shortages - especially in the villages. Father Stăniloae gave me the same impression of courage and authenticity as before. A judgment without error, a wisdom passed through a traditional mind, capable of being at the same time of great relevance”. Sanda Stolojan, *Clouds over the balconies. Diary from Paris exile*, translated by Michaela Săvescu, revised by Sanda Stolojan, (Bucharest: Humanitas Press, 1996), 110-111.

his imprisonment, the theologian was involved in the life of the community, and as an editor of *Telegraful Român*, was interested to present the religious realities in relationship with the social and political life of the time. Conscious of the fact that even the material ideals must be understood in a spiritual line,⁸ he insists on the fact that the freedom must not be perceived in the individual way, but inside of a community.⁹ In this sense, the peace, both from the theological as well as from the social point of view, is related with the continuity between generations and with the fact that the social responsibility comes to link them:

“Each generation is obliged to correspond to be at worthy, somehow cultic, of the respect that the next generation offers to it. In the teachings, parables, exhortations that it conveys to that generation, it must be guided by an acute sense of responsibility not only for the fate of that generation, but also for all those who will follow them.”¹⁰

If one reads the patriotic articles he published in the interwar period, will be invited to understand the fact that the Romanian theologian understands peace as a part of the personal development, related with the freedom and its applicability, but also with aspects like memories. In order to find peace, one needs, in his vision, to understand even the history in a manner affected by positive emotions and with tenderness:

“The soul element of tenderness - which is not something of a slightly sentimental and peripheral nature in the life of the soul, but a tenderness, a state of openness of the soul, opposed to whirling, a main element of the genuine, deep and total way, of the fundamental way of be of man - rises so high as a clot between man and earth, that it overwhelms the utilitarian”¹¹.

When this aspect is taken into account, elements like nation receive new accents.¹² Peace comes there to be related both with earth and with transcendence and the nation represents the context where it can be prac-

⁸ „A national ideal can only be thought of in a spiritual line, the last *raison d'être* of a nation can only be in the progress and achievements made by its spirit, in the spiritual order. Even when he strives for improvements of a material order, he must not do so in a manner opposed to spirit and morality.” D. Stăniloae, „Ortodoxia, modul spiritualității românești”, In: *Gândirea*, 19, no. 6 (1940): 417.

⁹ “In the class of human persons, however, the individual is no longer dominated exclusively by the instincts of the species, but follows a path largely chosen by himself freely. This path is a result of his free individuality, but of a certain originality, and of the eternal order, it is the result of his own kind of relationship and collaboration with that order”. *Ibid.*, 417.

¹⁰ D. Stăniloae, „Creștinism și tradiție în viața națională”, In: *Luceafărul*, 1, no. 1 (1941): 43.

¹¹ D. Stăniloae „Țara”, In: *Luceafărul*, 1, no. 4-5 (1941): 124.

¹² According to Fr. Stăniloae: „For a nation, the land is not only an external physical necessity, but also a reality of profound spiritual determinations. On the one hand, he is the body of the nation, and on the other, a window through which the she sees God and the higher spiritual order.” D. Stăniloae „Legea neamului”, In: *Luceafărul*, 2, Issue 2 (1942): 42.

ticed to a social level.¹³ Moreover, the achievement of peace is not the purpose, but the beginning of a complex process. The theologian insists on the fact that the struggle to preserve peace represents the main challenge for a faithful and it must be related with good behaviours. In an article dedicated to the Great Week from *Telegraful Român* from Sibiu whose main editor was at the time, he speaks about this aspect, underlining the fact that:

“The inner purpose of a habit is like the tenant of a house. When the tenant moves out of the house, the home falls into disrepair. Walls become chambers where spiders spread their webs, doors open, targets rust, and windows break. This is how old customs degenerate when the purpose for which they were invented disappears from people’s consciousness. Such dilapidated houses haunt the consciences of the world today.”¹⁴

Although the inner peace represents a main aspect for the spiritual life, when talking about pragmatic realities, Fr. Stăniloae will not neglect the relevance of the faith in its understanding. In his opinion, in order to have peace, one needs values. When he or she has them, they must be kept and defended and this sometimes means fight and even martyrdom¹⁵. Moreover the unity is also a virtue that can bring peace¹⁶. The scholar is also aware about the fact that, in certain cases, one needs to break up with the world in order to achieve the *hesychia*, namely the inner peace that brings one closer to God. It is the case of those special monks called heychasts that constitute the topic of one of his books¹⁷. In an article published in *Telegraful Român* in 1931 he will provide the example of the Holy Athos Mountain.¹⁸ Here, not only the example of the hermits that live hidden in the mountains,¹⁹ but

¹³ “A nation is a whole made up of a community rooted in transcendence and earth. Community, divine transcendence, and one’s own land are the organizing parts of the nation. All these three factors are different for each nation, but their specificity also depends on their mutual influence. The race consists of the threefold rootedness in the whole format of the three realities, of their steadfast union. Each individual has his being determined by the sap ascended through the roots from the three foundations, and is preserved in the clarity of his structure as long as his roots have not been torn from the whole of others.” *Ibid.*, 45.

¹⁴ Dumitru Stăniloae, „Solia păresimilor,” In: *Telegraful Român*, 78, no. 20 (1930): 1; Dumitru Stăniloae, *Cultură și duhovnicie*, (Bucharest: Basilica Press, 2012), 87.

¹⁵ See: Dumitru Stăniloae, „Mucenicii dreptei credințe,” In: *Telegraful român*, 78, Issue 92-93 (1930): 3.

¹⁶ Dumitru Stăniloae, „Ne trebuie mai multă unitate,” In: *Telegraful român*, 79 Issue 9-10 (1931): 1.

¹⁷ Dumitru Stăniloae, *Din istoria isihasmului în Ortodoxia Română*, (Bucharest: Scripta Press, 1992).

¹⁸ Dumitru Stăniloae, „Sfântul Munte Athos,” In: *Telegraful Român*, 79, Issue 24 (1931): 1-3.

¹⁹ “Besides these (hermits, n. n.), there are also hermit hermits, who have completely broken all ties with people and live, as they say, in the crevices of the rocks under the highest peak of Athos.

²⁰ one can see them. They are completely naked, with beards and hair grown until they no longer look like human beings, they would receive no food at all or only at intervals of weeks. They mortify their body, in order to no longer feel its desires and free themselves from any memories of this world, so that they can fix themselves with the thought of God, using neither words nor

also the one of the monks from different monasteries constitute examples of a special way to achieve peace. Speaking about their life and its different attitude towards the secular world and its values, he insists on the fact that:

“Their life is continuous prayer. And they are not satisfied, because in prayer they look and live in the brilliant world, infinite in its beauty, meaning and joy. To us they seem naive when they look uncomprehending on our worries that come from the seriousness with which we regard that which has no lasting and true being, from the pain that we cannot eternalize states that, by their nature, are changeable. They seem naive to us when we see them, people in the prime of life, singing hymns and meditating on God all the time, instead of taking an interest in the well-being of the family, in building a house, in collecting wealth for the children.

But it is not necessary to delve deeper into the paths of life and the monk mentality, to understand that it is not so certain that naivety is on their side.²⁰”

Aspects like the aforementioned ones are just briefly presented in the articles from different journals. But they can be found detailed, in a more theological way in later books like the treaty of *Dogmatic Orthodox Theology*,²¹ the ones of Christology²² or in other books signed by him,²³ where the approach is more theological and the emphasis on the social is not anymore so present.

Conclusions

As it can be seen, Fr. Stăniloae offers a complex approach on peace and its relevance for the social and theological life. There can be distinguished two levels on his conception. One is the practical one and is directly related with the way how he understood and put into practice in his life peace and in relationship with others. The other is related with the way how the

deductive reasoning. In this way, they enter the divine world with their soul, which appears to them like an immaterial light”. *Ibid.*, 2.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 2.

²¹ See: Dumitru Stăniloae, *Teologia Dogmatică Ortodoxă*, vol. 1-3, (București: EIBMBOR, 1997).

²² See: Dumitru Stăniloae, *Iisus Hristos sau Restaurarea omului* (Opere complete, 4), (București: Basilica, 2013); Dumitru Stăniloae, *Chipul nemuritor al lui Dumnezeu* (Opere complete, 5), (București: Basilica, 2013); Dumitru Stăniloae, *Iisus Hristos, lumina lumii și îndumnezeitorul omului* (Opere complete, 6), (București: Basilica, 2014).

²³ Dumitru Stăniloae, *Studii de teologie dogmatică ortodoxă*, (Craiova: Press of the Romanian Orthodox Metropolis of Oltenia, 1990); Dumitru Stăniloae, *Reflexii despre spiritualitatea poporului român*, (Craiova: Press of the Romanian Orthodox Metropolis of Oltenia, 1992); Dumitru Stăniloae, *Comentariu la Evanghelia lui Ioan*, (Craiova: Press of the Romanian Orthodox Metropolis of Oltenia, 1993); Dumitru Stăniloae, *Iisus Hristos lumina lumii*, (Bucharest: EIBMBOR, 1993); Dumitru Stăniloae, *Trăirea lui Dumnezeu în Ortodoxie*, *Antologie*, edited by Sandu Frunză, (Cluj-Napoca: Dacia Press, 1993).

Holy Fathers, in the *Phylocalic* collection saw peace as a virtue and about how it can be applied in the practical life. There are also some aspects that can be emphasized. Therefore, before the Communist period and his imprisonment, the social accents are more clear and often the theological interpretation does not avoid a correlation with the national history or the autochthon values. Later, probably due to the censorship, he will not go anymore so much in the practical sphere, insisting rather on the theoretical and theological approaches, fact that makes his work to be oriented mostly towards to the theological field.