

Article

Ecumenical Convergences: Romanian Evangelicals Exploring Orthodoxy

Cristian Sonea 

Faculty of Orthodox Theology, Babes-Bolyai University, 400084 Cluj-Napoca, Romania; cristian.sonea@ubbcluj.ro

Abstract: Historically, in Romania, the relations between the Romanian Orthodox Church and the evangelical communities have been characterized by tension and mutual distrust. That is why, unfortunately, there has been no official dialogue between the two communities so far. The present article investigates the theoretical possibility for such an ecumenical dialogue to occur by analysing the contributions of several evangelical theologians who published research studies on theological topics specific to Eastern orthodox theology. Their positions were analysed from the perspective of an inclusive theology which allowed us to identify some common themes for both traditions: the authority in interpreting the Scriptures, salvation as a process, and the Church understood through the application of a perichoretic model. All these convergent themes could constitute the basis for a future official ecumenical dialogue between the evangelicals and the orthodox from Romania.

Keywords: ecumenical convergence; Romanian evangelicals; Bible authority; deification; perichoretic model; inaugurated eschatology; proselytism



Citation: Sonea, Cristian. 2021. Ecumenical Convergences: Romanian Evangelicals Exploring Orthodoxy. *Religions* 12: 398. <https://doi.org/10.3390/rel12060398>

Academic Editors: Bradley Nassif and Tim Grass

Received: 30 April 2021

Accepted: 26 May 2021

Published: 31 May 2021

Publisher's Note: MDPI stays neutral with regard to jurisdictional claims in published maps and institutional affiliations.



Copyright: © 2021 by the author. Licensee MDPI, Basel, Switzerland. This article is an open access article distributed under the terms and conditions of the Creative Commons Attribution (CC BY) license (<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>).

1. Introduction

The ecumenical relations in Romania are currently going through a challenging phase. Some even consider it a crisis of the ecumenical dialogue in its institutionalised form (See: [Plaatjes van Huffel 2017](#); [Davids 1999](#)). The relationship between the orthodox and the evangelical Christians in Romania is no different, and, so far, there have been no official dialogues between the two communities. There are many possible causes for the lack of cooperation, but they seem to be different from those affecting the ecumenical dialogue at a global level. Both Christian communities are responsible for the current situation. On the one hand, evangelicals motivate their lack of openness towards dialogue with the orthodox through the historical wounds caused by the persecutions on the part of the orthodox Christians towards evangelicals. On the other hand, the orthodox are more reserved because of the aggressive proselytism practiced by the evangelicals in some cases, but also because evangelical theology is relatively new in Romania (in comparison to orthodox theology), which sometimes gives birth to a condescending attitude towards the evangelicals. When presenting the history of the evangelicals in Romania in the second half of the XIXth century, Dorn Dobrinicu talks about the persecutions the baptist and pentecostal evangelicals went through, caused both by the state and the historical churches ([Dobrinicu 2018](#), pp. 48–77). On the other hand, the accusations regarding proselytism from the part of the evangelicals have been commonplace in the orthodox environments for a long time now. The orthodox thus claim that the evangelicals use any means (more or less honest/fair) to attract orthodox believers to their churches. ([Mănăstireanu 2018](#), p. 271)

Still, there have been several initiatives to encourage a dialogue between the two communities. From personal relations among theologians to conferences open to scholars belonging to both traditions, these initiatives sometimes materialized in notable theological research studies (See: [Oxbrow and Grass 2021, 2015](#); [Grass et al. 2012](#); [Zondervan et al. 2010](#)). The purpose of this article is to offer an inventory of some convergent theological topics, more specifically those identified by evangelical theologians in Eastern orthodox

theology. The article is an attempt to offer some answers to three evangelical authors who present their views on how orthodox theology approaches topics such as the authority of the scriptures (Paul Negruț), the orthodox soteriology (Emil Bartoș) and the orthodox ecclesiology (Dănuț Mănăstireanu). These topics include important points of convergence, as well as some differences, so they could constitute a good theological ground for official dialogue between the Romanian evangelical and orthodox communities.

2. What Is the Meaning of Ecumenical Convergence?

Generally speaking, the term convergence refers to the effort made by two entities in order to reach the same point or to achieve the same goal. In other words, the process is initiated with the purpose of reaching unity by accommodating two separate realities. From a theological point of view, we use the word convergence when referring to the relations between Christianity and non-Christian religions. So, on the one hand, theological convergence is a process that refers to the necessity of finding common ground when interacting with a different religious tradition, and, on the other hand, it is a notion used to describe the encounter between two different realities (Dhavamony 2003, p. 245). In an ecumenical context, convergence involves the complex effort of the divided Christian communities to reach unity. The purpose of the institutionalised ecumenical movement is to offer a common Christian witness to the world. Thus, the declared aim of the ecumenical movement is to achieve the visible unity of all Christians. For this purpose, all those involved in the ecumenical dialogue, based on their spiritual, liturgical or sacramental experiences and inspired by their own traditions, elaborate various ecumenical syntheses that although not always the result of theological consensus do however represent factors of theological convergence, in hope of a future Christian unity (Leuștean 2002, pp. 40–41).

There is a risk of interpreting the hermeneutics of ecumenical convergence as an attempt to level out the differences between the evangelicals and the orthodox, in the name of unity. However, this type of approach does not postulate in any way the absence of divergences, which are of course numerous and, in most cases, well known both by the evangelicals and the orthodox. In fact, the differences are emphasized to such a degree, in the Romanian context, that the more radical representatives of the two communities go as far as denying any convergence. That is why I decided to give priority to the ecumenical convergence here and to place it at the very basis of the ecumenical dialogue and perhaps a future study could discuss the theological differences as well.

Therefore, this particular concept—ecumenical convergence—represents the filter through which the present study analyses the positions on various theological topics of several theologians belonging to the two traditions. More specifically, I started by identifying evangelical theologians who published research on orthodox theology, and I then tried to synthesize and offer a critical evaluation of the convergent elements I found in their works. For this particular research, I selected only three authors for the following reasons: first of all, it would have been impossible to offer an extensive account of all the evangelical authors who wrote about orthodox theology, even if I had chosen to organize the material thematically. The second reason is connected to the particularities of evangelical theology, in which personal theological approaches do not have to be accepted on a general level, so personal views can and should be emphasized anyway. The third reason has to do with a certain degree of openness towards the dialogue of the three authors, which made it easy for me to identify the convergences. From the very beginning, I would like to state that the arguments presented in this paper can be included within the framework of an inclusivist orthodox ecclesiology, adopting George Florovsky's theological opinion regarding the limits of the church. Florovsky argues that the charismatic limits of the church can be mystically found in other Christian communities as well (See: Florovsky 1933, pp. 120–29). I will also mention Dumitru Stăniloae here, according to whom although non-orthodox confessions did indeed separate from the church, they kept a connection with her and are, in a sense, contained by her, to the extent to which they did not completely part from the Tradition of the Church (Stăniloae 1997, vol. 2, pp. 275–76).

3. Hallmarks of the Orthodox-Evangelical Dialogue

Besides the interest that Romanian evangelicals have for the orthodox faith in a country that is mostly orthodox, we also acknowledge the more general interest evangelicals have towards traditional faiths.

Thus, Daniel Clendenin notices that the evangelicals have promoted an ahistorical faith, out of ignorance, because of a superficial understanding of sola scriptura, or due to the conviction that “Bible believers” should and can keep the distance from a corrupt society. At the initiative of Robert Webber, Donald Bloesch, and Thomas Howard, the evangelicals organised a conference for those who had a certain appreciation for the “orthodox evangelicals” and issued a document entitled “The Chicago Call: An Appeal to Evangelicals” (1978). Among other things mentioned in the document, we find the idea that evangelicals have neglected history and allowed themselves to be led by a sectarian spirit and proposed a return to a faith connected to patristic theology, councils, creeds, and “the catholicity of historic Christianity” (Clendenin 2003, p. 178). Similarly, in 1936 at the International Congress of the orthodox theologians in Athens, George Florovsky was urging the participants to go “back to the Fathers of the Church!” and he expressed his belief that the divisions among Christians can only be overcome “by a return to the common mind of the early Church.” (Gavrilyuk 2015, p. 2).

Again, part of the same trend of returning to the primary sources, we find the story of Peter E. Gillquist who, together with a group of colleagues started studying church history and became acquainted with the earliest forms of Christianity. In 1973, they started a network of house churches in the United States, with the purpose of restoring the “ancient church”, which they called the New Covenant Apostolic Order. After some research about the early church, they then started practicing a more liturgical type of worship and became interested in the idea of apostolic succession. This eventually determined most members of the group to join the Antiochian Orthodox Christian Archdiocese of North America in 1987. Thanks to Gillquist’s efforts, seventeen parishes with 2000 members converted to the Antiochian Archdiocese and they became known as the Antiochian Evangelical Orthodox Mission (Gillquist 1989, pp. 5–8).

Apart from these quests for the traditional forms of Christianity, another event that marked the relations between the two traditions was the Canberra Assembly of the World Council of Churches, from 1991. The topic of the Holy Spirit’s presence and activity in creation led to a heated debate regarding “spirits”, stimulated particularly by Chung Kyung-Hyung’s plenary presentation. Two of the groups participating in the conference were extremely critical towards Chung Kyung-Hyung’s presentation: the orthodox and the evangelicals. The two groups expressed their concern in open letters that were read out loud to the other participants. The orthodox remarked that “some have the tendency to easily affirm the presence of the Holy Spirit in many movements or evolutions without proper discernment” and warned against “the tendency to wrongly identify the personal spirit, the spirit of the world or other spirits with the Holy Spirit” (Pirri-Simonian and Beek 2012, p. 6). They also brought up other subjects such as the dialogue with other religions and the understanding of salvation through Jesus Christ. In their letter, on the other hand, the evangelicals insisted that “a lot of discernment is necessary in order to identify the Spirit with the Spirit of Christ” and they pleaded for a high Christology as the only authentic Christian basis in dialogue with those “belonging to other faiths” (Pirri-Simonian and Beek 2012, p. 6). They also remarked upon the many “engagements and theological preoccupations they had in common with the orthodox” and asked to “start a dialogue between the evangelicals and the orthodox as soon as possible” (Pirri-Simonian and Beek 2012, pp. 6–7). After the event, three important consultations took place: one in 1993, in Stuttgart, with the topic: “The Bible and the Tradition”, one in 1995, in Alexandria, with the topic: “The Proclamation of Christ today” and another one in 1998, in Hamburg, with the topic: “The return to God—Joy in hope” (Pirri-Simonian and Beek 2012, pp. 15–18). The meetings continued at the Ecumenical Institute from Bossey in 2000, 2002, 2006 (Grass et al. 2012). The first meeting (2000) dealt with the topic of salvation and concentrated on the question whether

salvation is the result of a single moment when an individual is “born again”, or if it is a continuous process or perhaps both. In 2002, the topic of the meeting was the role and the place of the Bible in the two traditions, while in 2004, the meeting dealt with the nature and the purpose of the Church. The last meeting, organised in 2006, approached the more sensitive issue of anthropology (Saucu 2012, pp. 3–4). In 2013, another series of consultations started, as part of the Lausanne-Orthodox Initiative, which is continuing until today (Consultations 2021). These consultations are oriented specifically towards mission, and have been documented in Oxbrow and Grass (Oxbrow and Grass 2021, 2015).

4. Romania—A Christian Country for Both: Orthodox and Evangelicals

In comparison to other European countries, Romania has a very high percentage of believers. Special Eurobarometer, 493, published in 2019 by the European Commission, indicates that Romania is the country with the smallest number of atheists in Europe: 1% (Discrimination in the European Union 2019), and according to the Special Eurobarometer, 73.1, from 2010, on the topic of biotechnology, Romania had a 92% of believers, most of them Christian, coming second in Europe, while the first place was occupied by Malta (Biotechnology 2010). It is thus obvious that religious practices in general, and especially Christian religious practices occupy an important part in the life of most Romanians. Although the number of practicing Christians is smaller than the number of those who simply declare themselves to be Christian, Romanians still seem to be very attached to their old traditions and they tend to integrate culturally or educationally many of the Christian values.

Around 324, Eusebius of Caesarea writes about the beginnings of Christianity on the Romanian territory and I will note here that his position is officially accepted and adopted by the Romanian Patriarchy. According to this tradition, Saint Apostle Andrew went from Asia to Scythia Major and then to Scythia Minor (present-day Dobrogea, Romania), and he preached in some of the Greek towns on the Black Sea shores (Păcurariu 1991, p. 13). Although this account has been contested by some theologians (including some Romanian theologians) (Stan and Turcescu 2007, pp. 47–48), who considered it to be part of a so-called protochronism (from proto-chronos, meaning “first in time”), a tendency that can be identified in many countries from the Balkans, and which promotes the idea that the ethnogenesis of the Romanian people coincides with the process of Christianisation (Stan and Turcescu 2007, p. 48). Interestingly, the apostolic origin of Romanian Christianity is also assumed by some in the evangelical communities. The former president of the Pentecostal Christian Community, Pavel Riviş Tipei, writes in Cuvântul Adevărului (the official magazine of the Romanian Pentecostal Community) about the apostolic origin of Pentecostalism on the Romanian territory: “We generally talk about a period of 85 years that have passed since the first Pentecostal church was founded in Romania, at Păuliş, Arad county, on 10 September 1922, but the beginnings of Pentecostalism can be traced back much earlier than that [. . .]. The Apostle Andrew was neither catholic, nor orthodox, but he was surely a Pentecostal as he was baptised with the Holy Spirit.” (Riviş-Tipei 2007, pp. 3–4).

According to the latest census, the majority of the Romanian population is orthodox (86.5%). Additionally, the numbers indicate that the Romanian Orthodox Church has the second-highest number of orthodox believers after the Russian Orthodox Church. According to the same census, the evangelical communities, including pentecostals, make up for 3.3% of the entire population and they represent the only Christian community that had registered a growth in the number of believers since the previous census. In the 2002 census, 1.49% of the population was Pentecostal, while in 2011, the percentage increased with 0.41%, to a total of 1.9%, as well as an increase in the number of followers with 43,476 (INS 2011). Allen Anderson notes that the more conservative sources claim that the number of Romanian Pentecostals is somewhere around 300,000, while other sources claim it is close to 800,000 which would turn Romania into the most pentecostal country in Europe (Anderson 2004, p. 100).

Apart from the numbers, which are obviously important, it is also worth mentioning that in the collective mentality of the Romanians, the Christian faith is also part of their ethnic identity: regardless of confession, they all agree that the Romanian nation was “born Christian”. So, although the first evangelical communities appeared at the beginning of the 20th century (Dobrincu 2018, p. 42), they still seem to be inclined to define their own theology as rooted in the Romanian culture (Rogobete 2001, p. 262, note 14). We can thus identify the influence of the traditional Churches in some of their teachings and practices. Just to give a few examples, in some Romanian evangelical communities, such as the Romanian Evangelical Church (the so-called tudorists who continue a movement initiated by the former orthodox priest Teodor Popescu), infant baptism is still practiced. Another similarity concerns the organisation of the ecclesial structure in the evangelical communities in comparison with the consecrated ordained members of the ecclesial body in the traditional churches. Here is an example:

“The deacon is in charge of the administration of the offerings received by the church. He can officiate Lord’s Supper, he can perform the blessing of children or funerals, if the pastor is not able to perform them. The presbyter can officiate all services, at the recommendation of the pastor. The pastor officiates all services and is in charge of the pastoral care of a local church.” (Mărturisirea de credință 2021, p. 22)

“The bishop can perform all Holy Sacraments and all church services [. . .]. The priest receives, from the bishop, through ordination, the three gifts: of teaching, sanctifying and leading [. . .]. The deacon serves as a help for the priest and the bishop.” (Belu et al. 2011, p. 57)

I am not going to discuss here the theological differences, which are obvious. However, we cannot ignore the similarities regarding the relations among various sacerdotal positions. The pastor, in this case, seems to have a role that is similar to that of an orthodox bishop, who is the leader of a local church or bishopric. The presbyter, who can officiate all religious services, at the recommendation of the pastor, is similar to the priest in the orthodox tradition, who performs all liturgical services, with the consent of the bishop, while the deacon helps the other members of the clergy. Obviously, not all evangelical communities have this kind of organisation and also, even those that do have it do not necessarily admit that it is an influence of the Orthodox Church, but rather say that it has biblical roots.

The similarities can be explained through the fact that the evangelical communities once belonged to the traditional churches and then separated from them. In fact, their conversion to the evangelical movements was perceived as sheep-stealing, as a result of proselytism, while the evangelicals regarded it as a return to biblical Christianity. This is actually the main reason why the relations between the two Christian communities have often been tense. Thus, the evangelical theologians who show interest in orthodox theology, do so with the declared purpose of finding reconciliation with the other Christian traditions, in this case with the orthodox, but also because they are making an attempt to define a Romanian evangelical theology (Rogobete 2001, p. 262, note 14). We are yet to find out whether the orthodox are receptive or if they are willing to answer with the same kind of attitude. According to Bradley Nassif, “the country holds much promise for constructive relations. At present, however, the dialogue in Romania remains weak and indirect, consisting mostly of a growing awareness of the need to explore the points of contact between each other. Academically speaking, there are more evangelical students of Romanian orthodoxy than there are orthodox students of Romanian evangelicalism” (Nassif 2000, pp. 29–31).

In 2018, the Coalition for the Family, an association of several organizations of the main religious denominations in Romania had the initiative to propose a referendum in order to change the definition of marriage in the Romanian constitution. While in the Romanian constitution marriage was defined as the union between spouses, the Coalition suggested that marriage should be defined as the free union between a man and a woman,

to be more specific “the stable union between one man and one woman”. Although the referendum failed due to low turnout, it did succeed in bringing together most Romanian Christian denominations. On this occasion, the Baptist Teofil Stanciu offered a short overview of the relations between the orthodox and the evangelicals for the past three decades. Stanciu explains that Christians belonging to various denominations were united under one cause because they suddenly discovered they had common moral values they wanted to defend. What was interesting, he notes, was that this recent discovery was not preceded by official dialogues between the orthodox and the evangelical leaders on the hot topics of the present-day society. They did not decide together what their position was regarding these issues. There were, however, inter-confessional interactions among academics in universities, but without much echo in the actual communities of believers. Another form of conversation, Stanciu adds, was constituted by the Ph.D. dissertations written by evangelicals under the guidance of orthodox theologians due to the lack of post-graduate programmes available in the evangelical faculties and institutes. However, the debates in the public arena, especially those related to moral issues, determined many to favour the Christian element of their identity, rather than their specific confession. Social media played an important part in this, as well as the global evolutions signalled by the press and the perceived persecutions against Christians. All these, Stanciu notes, gave birth to temporary trans-confessional solidarity. On the positive side, he explains, there is a dialogue in the academia (less influential), and another one on a wider scale, but perhaps more superficial, on the moral issues of the society. Otherwise, the lack of communication is still probably the rule, whether it is because of refusal of mutual recognition, or because of plain indifference. Finally, Stanciu appreciates the fact the orthodox and the evangelicals found some common ground in the current debates from the public arena, but he worries that they might remain stuck in the ideological or political realm. Although certain political, civic or social benefits can result from this, the theological dimension should not be ignored, as it is at the basis of any other initiative. We must find a way, he concludes, to put into practice, “in a creative but realistic way, the concept of unity in diversity” (Stanciu 2019).

5. Convergent Theological Topics

The divergences between the orthodox and the evangelicals are often intensely discussed in the sermons or other public speeches of the leaders of the two communities. Thus, topics such as infant baptism vs. adult baptism, sola Scriptura vs. the authority of the Tradition, sacramental priesthood vs. universal priesthood, the veneration of Holy Theotokos, the honoring of saints, icons and relics, as opposed to Christ as the only intercessor are just a few of the topics a simple believer can often hear being discussed in church. Besides these differences that surely exist, there are also a lot of convergences, much more rarely discussed, such as the authority of the Scriptures in the life of the Church, the teachings about salvation or the understanding of the church as *koinonia*.

5.1. *The Authority of the Bible in the Romanian Orthodox Church in the Work of Paul Negruț*

The Romanian evangelical theologians approach a wide range of topics when expressing their views on orthodoxy, such as the authority of the Bible in the Church (Negruț 1994), the theology of Stăniloae and theosis (Rogobete 2001), Scriptures (Mănăstireanu 2006), eco-theology (Mariș 2009), ecclesiology (Mănăstireanu 2012), justification (Floruț 2018), the theology of participation in God (Oprean 2019), salvation, grace and charismas (Ștefănică 2019), the role of women in Church (Sabou 2012), the ecumenical dialogue (Druhora 2020).

I will start with the classic debate concerning the place and the authority of the Bible in Church. In Paul Negruț’s view, the debate started with “the translation of Scriptures into modern Romanian by Dumitru Cornilescu and the tension between Scripture and Tradition emphasized in the work of Teodor Popescu” (Negruț 1994, p. 4), a deacon and a priest who embraced the evangelical principles, which led to their exclusion from the orthodox clergy. “From the interplay between the orthodox paradigm of revelation–communion–deification and the Protestant paradigm of revelation–justification–sanctification adopted

by Cornilescu's movement there emerged within Romanian orthodoxy new hermeneutical communities which emphasize both the mystical and the ethical dimensions of biblical Christianity. Consequently, since Scripture is perceived as the "Book of the community", both laity and hierarchy participate in episteme and praxis." (Negruț 1994, p. 341)

Negruț notes that Cornilescu regarded Scripture "as the only source of theological epistemology and the supreme authority in matters of faith and practice". Thus, he continues, Cornilescu "believed that the authority to maintain a balanced relation between episteme and praxis within the Christian community is sola scriptura. Although such a belief represents a radical shift from the orthodox view, the Romanian Orthodox Church avoided any open theological debates with Cornilescu regarding biblical authority, preferring instead to reject his teachings on the grounds that they were Protestant and thus heretical" (Negruț 1994, p. 79).

Although Bible occupies a central place in the Orthodox Church, it is not considered the unique source of theological epistemology. According to Orthodox theology, the unique source is Christ, Who can be known by the community of faith. This living relationship with God is called Tradition in the Orthodox Church. Christ was known by the members of the first Christian communities, before the first books of the biblical canon were written. Thus, in the orthodox view, the Bible is a written part of the Tradition. It does play a normative role in the sense that the truth of faith cannot contradict the Scriptures, but it is not the only source of theological epistemology. The orthodox Church never embraced Dumitru Cornilescu's and Teodor Popescu's views, which does not mean that the Bible plays a less important part in the life of the orthodox communities. The Romanian Orthodox Church has used the Romanian language in Church services as a liturgical language ever since the 17th century, which made it possible for everybody to access both the actual text and the interpretations of the Bible. A biblical and a liturgical tradition in the Romanian language developed early on, which allowed lay people to read the Bible in their own language. This aspect would be relevant in a bilateral dialogue between the orthodox and the evangelicals as the centrality of the Scriptures constitutes a topic of ecumenical convergence. The special place the Bible occupies in the Romanian tradition has been consolidated by the presence of a group inside the Romanian Orthodox Church called the "Lord's Army". The group has a pronounced evangelical character and although it was initially considered a separatist movement (David 1998, pp. 166–68), it eventually remained inside the Church. Within this considerably large group of orthodox Christians, the reading of the Bible occupies an important part of their church life.

Additionally, the "two source" theory, which placed the source of Divine Revelation in the Scripture and the Tradition and which had been adopted by the Romanian Orthodox Church (Negruț 1994, p. 164) was later on corrected by Dumitru Stăniloae and Dumitru Popescu, according to whom, the Source of the Revelation is the on-going work of the Son, the Word of God and of the Holy Spirit that are seen as the hands of God that reveal themselves in history (Stăniloae 1996, vol. 1, p. 32) through actions, words and images (Stăniloae 1996, vol. 1, pp. 28–29). As for the New Testament, the Word revealed Himself and, through the Holy Spirit, He was initially passed on by oral tradition and then He continued to be transmitted this way even after the books of the New Testament were written. Thus, Tradition has a wider meaning, preceding and including the Bible, which is simply the written record of the oral tradition (Popescu 2005, p. 66), but they both have one source: the Holy Trinity. This correction places both Tradition and the Scriptures within the limits of the Church and they appear to be woven into a whole through the work of the Holy Spirit.

There are of course different ways in which we can understand the authority of the Bible in the orthodox and the evangelical traditions, but the interaction between them in Romania made the Romanian orthodox biblical tradition consider the Scriptures as a criterion of validity for Tradition, while in the evangelical tradition, there are voices such as that of Dănuț Mănăstireanu that emphasize the necessity of Tradition, not just for the

purpose of preserving a Christian lifestyle, but also from the perspective of continuity (Mănăstireanu 2006, p. 55).

Thus, in the Romanian context, the Bible as an authority for faith, life and practice is an important element of ecumenical convergence. Contemporary orthodox Bible scholars identified in this area some common benefits for the two traditions. As far as “Bible literacy is concerned”, the orthodox have a lot to learn from the evangelicals, if they want to make “the Gospel of Christ clearer and more central to the life of the orthodox Christians” (Tofană 2015, p. 10), while on the other side, the appeal to the patristic authority in interpreting the Scriptures would prevent personal interpretations from causing separations in the body of the Church (Tofană 2015, pp. 13–14).

5.2. *The Concept of Deification in Eastern Orthodox Theology in the Work of Emil Bartoș*

Perhaps the most fundamental topic in Christianity is Salvation. God the Father sends His Son into the world in order to save it (John 3, 16). Since in the orthodox and evangelical theology salvation is understood differently, we must first start by asking ourselves what salvation is: the result of a unique event when a person is saved and “born again”, a continuous process or both. This possible point of convergence is identified by Bartoș who offers an analysis of Stăniloae’s teachings about deification, as well as about orthodox theology in general.

Bartoș notes that Stăniloae defines deification as the “man’s potential experience of participation in the life of the Trinity through the help of the divine uncreated energies” (Bartoș 1997, p. 341). Deification is then expressed in a dogmatic form. “Stăniloae asserts the relationship between nature and grace and the possibility of participation in God as a fundamental insight in his theology. God created humanity’s history in order to bring it to deification by His own power and will.” (Bartoș 1997, pp. 341–42).

Since this process is defined simultaneously as a movement of ascent (from human being to God) and a movement of descent (from God towards human beings), Bartoș thinks that this position presents the advantage of allowing us “to speak coherently about God as transcendent, yet intimately involved with us, and about man as a personal being destined to share in the life of supreme personal existence while remaining a creature. It does so in conformity with scriptural revelation, Christian experience and tradition by showing how creation and especially human beings are distinct but not separate from God.” (Bartoș 1997, p. 342).

Although Bartoș identifies in Stăniloae’s work a tendency of excessive spiritualisation, and a propensity to spend more time in dialogue with tradition than with contemporaries, he still appreciates the fact that “Stăniloae has provided us with a way of speaking about man’s destiny which resonates with the ethical and realistic models of deification.” (Bartoș 1997, p. 342).

For Bartoș, it is thus clear that “Stăniloae’s distinctive theology, besides being itself an exciting catalyst in the process of theological development, in orthodox theology in general and in Romanian orthodox theology in particular, is also very well placed to offer a normative contribution to the dialogue within contemporary theology, around his original ideas in the sphere of epistemology, anthropology, Christology, pneumatology, or ecclesiology.” (Bartoș 1997, pp. 341–44).

In *Building Bridges: Between the Orthodox and Evangelical Traditions*, a volume dedicated to the dialogue between the orthodox and the evangelicals, Bartoș concludes that evangelical protestants are pleasantly surprised by the way in which orthodox theologians apply the concept of deification in a Christological context. To be deified means to be in the likeness of Christ and to be united with Him. Although protestant theologians such as Luther, Calvin, Zwingli, Wesley, German pietists and English puritans, discussed the unification with God, the concept is understood differently in the orthodox tradition. While Protestants insist on a personal unification, a personal identification with the person of Christ, the orthodox choose the path of a mystical unification, interpreted ontologically. Personal union, Bartoș notes, is based on the experience of a personal relationship between

Christ and the believer, a relation that involves living a moral life, as the faithful is inhabited by the Holy Spirit (Bartoş 2012, pp. 48–49).

Bartoş's distinction is only partially valid, since if we examine closely this aspect, we will find several points of convergence between the two traditions. In orthodox thinking, the ontological discourse is personalist. Only on a conceptual level do we use the categories being or/and essence and person or/and hypostasis. In the orthodox world view, nature cannot be conceived as an abstract existence, it is implicitly hypostasized. That is why, even when we use ontological terms, they are used as being implicitly hypostasized in concrete personal existence. Another evangelical author who studied Stăniloae's theology, Silviu E. Rogobete, notices this and even emphasizes the fact that Stăniloae uses the term personalisation as a synonym for deification (Rogobete 2001, p. 235). In this context, personalisation refers especially to the personal relationship between the human being and Christ, a relation in which, in a sense, all other human beings are included.

Bartoş also remarks that the mystical union is meant for a spiritual elite in the orthodox Church (Bartoş 2012, p. 49), and it is somehow refused to or hard to attain by the other Christians. The observation is indeed partially correct, but it is important to mention here that theosis is not synonymous with salvation in the orthodox view, although deification does occupy a central place in orthodox soteriology. So, although the final stages of deification can only be reached by a "spiritual elite", this does not mean that those on the path to deification, even if they do not reach the final stages of perfection, have not walked the path to theosis to an extent. Grigore Moş synthesizes the orthodox teaching on theosis by identifying 5 categories of human beings: those who reach perfection, the saints, the righteous, the sinners who are saved and, finally, the sinners who are not saved (Moş 2021, sec. 3). This enumeration is, in fact, a development in a patristic key of the exchange between the young man and Jesus about salvation, the acquiring of the eternal life or of perfection (Matthew 19, pp. 16–21).

Those who have reached perfection are extremely few, perhaps one or two in a generation. They are completely purified of their passions, they have reached their human potential completely, through the works of grace in them. They are filled with grace, completely united with God, completely in the likeness of Christ, in a state of maximum deification, as much as the conditions of this world allow it. The saints, on the other hand, are the people of God through whom His work in Church or in the world is done. They are on their way to perfection/theosis, but have not made it until the very end. They are filled with grace in different degrees, and the grace in them is particularly powerful. They can be models for other people in many different ways, due to their diversity of gifts and charismas, the human condition or their social or cultural background, as well as their works through which they sanctified themselves and the world around them. They do not need to be entirely purified of their passions. There are many saints who confessed certain weaknesses or imperfections. The righteous are those who live a moral life, who are oriented towards good, but the grace of God in them does not visibly work towards the others or towards the world. Besides their goodness, morality and obvious virtues, they can have hidden sins and passions, often concerning their spiritual life. As God told Prophet Elijah, He always has His righteous people (1 Kings 19: 18) who often do not stand out through something spectacular, the way the saints do, for example. The sinners who are saved are those in whom the victory of evil is not complete, who have not entirely given up the fight or their hope, who still have their faith through which they can be saved (Hebrews 10: 38), who can get back up after they fall, who, when facing crucial decisions, choose light, even if it's on their death bed. We can hope that many people fall into this category and very few remain outside of it. As for the sinners who are not saved, not much can be said. It is a mystery and God's decision". (Moş 2021, sec. 3).

This classification offers a brief overview of the state of those saved through their faith and through a moment of personal choice to be with God, but also the dynamic of the process of deification.

While Bartoş appreciates the orthodox perspective on some of the important aspects of salvation, he also feels this perspective ignores the fact that the relation between human beings and God was completely destroyed. Eastern theology, Bartoş notes, avoids describing the human being as being in a state of total corruption so as to be able to talk about possible healing. For Bartoş, such approaches must be regarded as representing a simplistic and unfinished soteriology. That is why, he continues, the evangelicals can accept some of the orthodox theories only as being complementary to their own, but never fundamental (Bartoş 2012, p. 50).

The difference identified by Bartoş is indeed a substantial theological difference between the orthodox and the western, evangelical perspective. According to orthodox theology, through Adam's fall, human nature was altered, but it was not completely destroyed. There is in fact a difference here, as orthodox theology discusses the consequences of Adam's fall on an ontological level, while evangelical theology focuses on human beings' relationship with God. So, there is no contradiction per se. From an orthodox perspective, just like from an evangelical perspective, the fall did lead to the destruction of the relation with God and that is why the restoration of the human being could only be done by God Himself. However, orthodox theology avoids using the idea of complete destruction when referring to human nature. If human nature is destroyed, then this would result in the transformation of human nature into something else or would lead to its disappearance. It is as if existence would turn into nonexistence. Thus, with some terminological clarifications, we can find points of convergence in this field as well.

Theosis understood as perichoresis by Bartoş opens up, in Corneliu C. Simuţ's opinion, four possible pathways for dialogue between Baptists and orthodox. The first one would consist of the "acknowledgement that the doctrine of deification, in its Greek Patristic and Eastern Orthodox formulations, is inspired by scripture." (Simuţ 2021, p. 125). The second way would be related to the willingness of both traditions to discuss more controversial doctrines. For example, "baptists should be ready and willing to delve into the complexity of deification and Eastern Orthodox should be equally ready and willing to investigate the validity of justification as instrumental for salvation." (Simuţ 2021, p. 125). The third way would be to thoroughly understand how certain fundamental concepts, such as perichoresis, are being used by the opposite tradition (Simuţ 2021, p. 125). A fourth pathway would be "that both parties should be aware of the "delicate balance" the dialogue needs to keep between scripture, tradition, Christian experience, the logic and dynamics of philosophical systems, and their own presuppositions." (Simuţ 2021, p. 126). Thus, in Simuţ's view, Bartoş's understanding of theosis as perichoresis "can realistically become a major locus for the theological encounter between Baptists and Eastern Orthodox in the years to come, precisely because deification links anthropology with soteriology" (Simuţ 2021, p. 126).

Furthermore, Bartoş mentions that many of the Christological elements one encounters in the orthodox tradition are highly appreciated by the evangelicals, especially the centrality of Christ in salvation, the unity, His divinity and humanity, His role in the life of the Church or in the life of the faithful. Another one of his remarks concerns the fact that orthodox theology prefers to consider incarnation as the most significant moment in the divine revelation, the one that fundamentally determines the way in which Christian soteriology is understood. By placing such emphasis on the human nature of the Son, Bartoş adds, the manger becomes the focal point rather than cross, the emphasis is on Bethlehem, not on Golgotha. Although the evangelical theologian agrees that Jesus recapitulated in Himself the entire humanity in order to restore it, he still points to the fact that in the gospel these elements that are indeed part of the salvation process are nevertheless secondary. The peak of Christ's life is to be found on the cross, not in the manger. Christ did not come to solve the tensions that resulted from a fallen nature, but to die so that we can be reconciled with God, so that we can receive forgiveness for our sins and a new life from above (Bartoş 2012, pp. 48–51).

Although the points emphasised by Bartoş are valid, I think we can still reach a point of convergence for the topics mentioned. Extremely helpful from this point of view is a chapter entitled “What did Bethlehem and Golgotha bring?”, from Dumitru Stăniloae’s *Jesus Christ and the restoration of the human being*. Stăniloae explains that, through the incarnation, God came into our closest proximity for eternity, while through His death on the cross and through His resurrection he freed us from our spiritual death, He raised us up to a state in which we can find communion with Him. The basis for this communion was put through His incarnation. His sacrifice has such power that it breaks us free from our spiritual numbness, it shows us the way out of this dull existence to a place where we can meet Him as God. This is what a new life means. The Cross is thus a natural consequence, the final step of God’s love towards human beings. Through the cross, God’s communion with us is perfected (Stăniloae 1993, p. 97). Thus, through His saving work, which begins with His incarnation, continues with His death on the Cross, His resurrection, then His ascension to heaven, He deifies the entire human nature in Himself. In our worldly life, a person’s deeds have repercussions on those around us. One can perhaps create an institution, formulate a doctrine or produce a work of art, and all of these can influence the lives of others. But Christ does not save us through works or deeds separated from His being, but through a saving work in which His person is present. It is not Christ’s death or resurrection, as independent acts, that constitute the centre of Apostle Paul’s theology, but Christ the Crucified and the Risen One, because His deeds cannot be separated from His person (Popescu 2005, p. 223).

John Behr, for example, offers a meditation about the dimensions and the implications of the fact that Christ shows us what it means to be God by the way that He dies on the Cross as a human being, and simultaneously showing us what it means to be truly human. The words He says on the Cross—“It is finished” (John 19, 30)—are interpreted as the end of the act of creation of the human being. In Genesis 1, 26, God says “Let us make man in our image, after our likeness” and then, on the Cross, He says “It is finished”. That is when creation is complete, so the Cross is the central event (Behr 2018, pp. 20–21).

Thus, as we see, Bartoş’s analysis of the notion of deification in orthodox theology opens up the possibility of a dialogue with evangelical theology, since soteriology offers great potential when it comes to finding points of ecumenical convergence.

5.3. *The Perichoretic Model of the Church in the Work of Dănuț Mănăstireanu*

Ecclesiology is an important aspect of orthodox theology. Additionally, whether one belongs or not to the Church seems to play an important part in the ecumenical dialogue. Obviously, what constitutes the limits of the Church is a topic intensely discussed even among orthodox theologians. Although they have not reached an agreement, we do know that the Great Council of Crete from 2016 accepts “the historical name of other non-orthodox Christian Churches and Confessions that are not in communion with her” (*Relations of the Orthodox Church with the Rest of the Christian World* 2016, p. 6). As far as the orthodox communities are concerned, although there are certain local accents, the ecclesiology is unitary and the visible element that consecrate the unity of the Church is the Eucharistic communion, the sharing of the same chalice for the members of different local orthodox churches. On the other hand, in the evangelical tradition, the importance of the local churches is so high that it is difficult to find a voice that speaks for all the evangelicals (Bunaciu 2012, p. 115).

I will limit the scope of the article to the Romanian context and, for this purpose, I will analyse Mănăstireanu’s approach to ecclesiology in the orthodox and the evangelical traditions. His position, by his own account, is rather difficult: “As an ecumenical evangelical, I was always getting caught in the crossfire—from the orthodox side, for being an evangelical (meaning sectarian and schismatic, if not an outright heretic); from the evangelical side, for being ecumenical (meaning confused and ready to compromise with the “enemy”). Even so, I am convinced that, as an evangelical living in a predominantly orthodox environment, I have the unique opportunity of developing a contextual evangelical

theology in dialogue with this ancient Christian tradition. Furthermore, I believe that no other area in evangelical theology is more in need of a fresh perspective than ecclesiology. I am convinced that without this, in spite of its present expansion, evangelicalism will have no future" (Mănăstireanu 2012, p. 11).

When discussing Stăniloae's ecclesiology, Mănăstireanu proposes as a basis for the analysis the Trinitarian perichoresis and he motivates his choice as follows: "Being an icon of the Holy Trinity, the Church is called to reflect in her spatiotemporal reality, in Christ and through the power of the Holy Spirit, the dynamic relationships existing eternally between the divine persons, as described by the concept of trinitarian perichoresis." Mănăstireanu then discusses several implications that follow from this. Firstly, since she exists in history, the Church is not yet perfect. Secondly, since the Church is an image of the Holy Trinity, she is called to prolong the relation of communion at the level of the Christian community. Thirdly, the Church extends in the community the ontological unity of the Trinity, but also the "functional asymmetry" of the divine persons. Therefore, "a Church reflecting this model can be neither strictly and rigidly hierarchical, nor radically egalitarian. Moreover, such an understanding will exclude a view of the true Church as consisting merely of the clergy, with the role of laity thereby reduced to the state of mere passive onlookers." (Mănăstireanu 2012, pp. 127–28).

The perichoretic model applied by Mănăstireanu to Stăniloae's ecclesiology allowed the highlighting of the eschatological dimension of the Church, her relationship with the world and the complementarity of the laity and the clergy in Church.

Still, in orthodox theology, we speak of an inaugurated eschatology, not one that has been fulfilled. That being said, the idea that orthodox spirituality encourages indifference towards life in this world is not supported. Rather, orthodox spirituality encourages us to avoid what Stăniloae calls "a premature eschatologism" (Stăniloae 2002, p. 30). Failing to creatively assume history and the world leads to a disembodied ecclesiology, an ecclesiology that no longer embraces the world the way it is, imperfect and fallen, but tries to recreate an imagined perfect kingdom here on earth, which although appears to be motivated by religious ideas, falls more into the realm of ideology. There are many religious groups concerned with making the world a better place and who are willing to resort to violence for this purpose. They are, in a way, the effect of adopting an optimistic eschatology. The orthodox ecclesiology proposes an inaugurated eschatology, to which we relate prophetically, and which can be applied in mission in general, in the ecumenical dialogues among various Christian communities, as well as in the Christian witness in a postmodern world (Sonea 2020, p. 76), in the sense that we must live as if we have already been integrated into the Kingdom of God, but not fully, and so we apply a prophetic diakrisis on the entire human life, both on a personal level or the level of the community, seeing the world through a Christian filter.

When analysing Stăniloae's ecclesiology, Mănăstireanu notices a contextual element he considers relevant in the effort to identify points of ecumenical convergence: the fact that all Romanian Christians, regardless of their confession, suffered under the communist regime and because of the effects of the Marxist ideology, which are still very much present in the Romanian society: "the ecclesial community is rooted in a Christological understanding of the human person as "the image of Christ" . . . this is particularly important in a post-communist context, where the dignity of the human person still suffers from having been systematically undermined by the previously dominant collectivistic Marxist ideology." (Mănăstireanu 2012, p. 294).

Mănăstireanu also offers a few critical remarks regarding Stăniloae's ecclesiology. He identifies a certain deficiency in the life of the Orthodox Church: "Orthodoxy in general, he notes, have not been able to formulate practical guidelines for the application of the ecclesiology that they promote" (Mănăstireanu 2012, p. 296). The observation is valid and perhaps a good example can be considered the current crisis from Ukraine, where the Ecumenical Patriarchy has recognized the autocephaly of the Orthodox Church of Ukraine, which later led to the Russian Orthodox Church breaking the communion with the churches

that have officially recognised the orthodox Church of Ukraine. Furthermore, the principle of conciliarity remains suspended at the superior level of the Church hierarchy, although both from a theological and a statutory standpoint, there are enough arguments that laity should be involved in the decision-making process (see: [Statutul pentru organizarea și funcționarea Bisericii Ortodoxe Române 2020](#), p. 90). However, we must note here that, unlike other Orthodox Churches, the Romanian Orthodox has a long tradition of involving laity in the life of the Church, starting with the 19th century metropolitan of Transylvania, Andrei Șaguna (see: [Schneider 2008](#)).

In Mănăstireanu's view, an important point of convergence for the two traditions would be the role of Christ and of the Holy Spirit in ecclesiology. He notes that Stăniloae, for example, keeps a balance between the roles of the Two, while in catholic and protestant ecclesiology, there is often an imbalance (inclining towards Christology for Catholics and towards pneumatology for protestants) ([Mănăstireanu 2012](#), p. 264). That is why, Mănăstireanu agrees with Stăniloae's Trinitarian ecclesiology and considers it a good model for all Christian traditions: "Given its Trinitarian coherence and measure of balance, Stăniloae's doctrine of the Church constitutes a model worth following (albeit in a critical manner) not only by younger orthodox ecclesiologists, but also by ecclesiologists from other Christian traditions, including evangelicalism" ([Mănăstireanu 2012](#), p. 298).

This conclusion fits with that of the orthodox theologian Viorel Coman who notes that "Staniloae's Trinitarian theology is extremely relevant for the doctrine of the Church, for his balanced ecclesiological synthesis between Christology and pneumatology was constructed in light of the eternal relationship between the Son and the Holy Spirit in the Trinity". In Coman's view, Staniloae's understanding of the inseparable union between the Son and the Holy Spirit guided his understanding of the unity between Christology and pneumatology in the history of salvation and ecclesiology. Thus, Coman sees Staniloae as a unique voice among Orthodox theologians "who articulated a synthesis between the work of Christ and the work of the Holy Spirit in the life and spirituality of the Church. That being so, the Romanian theologian's ecclesiology avoids the criticism related to the practical implications of the strict monopatrist model of the Trinity." ([Coman 2019](#), p. 266).

6. Conclusions

The Romanian orthodox and evangelicals seem to have found common ground by adopting similar positions in the debates concerning moral issues that take place in today's public space. However, unless it is doubled by a serious theological dialogue which deals with deeper matters, this common ground risks remaining a superficial one.

Although the gap between the two traditions is generally perceived as wide, the fact that in the Romanian Orthodox Church we find groups such as the Lord's Army, with a pronounced evangelical character, shows that there is room for living the faith in different ways, which is encouraging from the perspective of future dialogue with the evangelicals. Still, in order to do this, first, the wounds of the past must be healed and then the two communities must be willing to be honest and open with each other and they must truly desire to learn about each other.

Identifying topics of ecumenical convergence such as the ones discussed above can constitute a platform for future official dialogue. All the theological issues that divide the two traditions must be boldly approached and discussed.

Although ecumenical dialogues can take various forms, such as a dialogue of Christian love or spirituality, a dialogue concentrated on theological matters and so on, due to the way the Orthodox Church is organized as a whole, having a synodal structure, both locally and on a panorthodox level, it is desirable that all these forms of dialogue should be accompanied by an official ecumenical dialogue as well. Having an official dialogue would not only allow a representative of the orthodox community to become more involved in the ecumenical encounters, but it would also make the reception of the results of these encounters easier at the community level. Without such a formal decision to start an official

dialogue, the encounters remain casual and contextual, and the reception will be limited to the direct participants.

On a more practical level, the orthodox and the evangelicals can and should cooperate in their missionary work in society. In order to be able to do this, they need to learn more about each other and this can only happen if they receive healthy ecumenical education in the theological schools. Pastors and priests must be encouraged to learn about the differences and similarities between the two Christian communities and they should be open to conversation when the opportunity occurs. Finally, missionary work must be carried out ethically, avoiding proselytism, as well as persecution and intolerance from both sides.

Funding: This research received no external funding.

Conflicts of Interest: The author declares no conflict of interest.

References

- Anderson, Allan. 2004. *An Introduction to Pentecostalism: Global Charismatic Christianity*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Bartoș, Emil. 1997. The Concept of Deification in Eastern Orthodox Theology with Detailed Reference to Dumitru Stăniloae. Ph.D. thesis, University of Wales Lampeter, Lampeter, UK. Available online: <https://ethos.bl.uk/OrderDetails.do?uin=uk.bl.ethos.683144> (accessed on 25 January 2021).
- Bartoș, Emil. 2012. Theosis from an Evangelical Perspective. In *Building Bridges: Between the Orthodox & Evangelical Traditions*. Edited by Tim Grass, Jenny Rolf, Paul Rolf and Ioan Saucă. Geneva: World Council of Churches.
- Behr, John. 2018. *From Adam to Christ: From Male and Female to Being Human*. The Wheel, no. 13/14. Boston: Spring/Summer, vol. 14.
- Belu, Dumitru, Isidor Todoran, and Ivan Iorgu. 2011. *Catehism Ortodox*. Cluj-Napoca: Renașterea.
- Biotechnology. 2010. *Special Eurobarometer 73.1*. Brussels: European Union.
- Bunaciu, Otniel. 2012. The Nature and the Purpose of the Church in the Evangelical Tradition. In *Building Bridges: Between the Orthodox & Evangelical Traditions*. Edited by Tim Grass, Jenny Rolf, Paul Rolf and Ioan Saucă. Geneva: World Council of Churches.
- Clendenin, Daniel B. 2003. *Eastern Orthodox Theology: A Contemporary Reader*. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic.
- Coman, Viorel. 2019. *Dumitru Stăniloae's Trinitarian Ecclesiology: Orthodoxy and the Filioque*. Lanham: Fortress Academic.
- Consultations. 2021. Lausanne-Orthodox Initiative. Available online: <https://www.loimission.net/> (accessed on 15 January 2021).
- David, Petru I. 1998. *Sectologie sau Apararea Dreptei Credințe*. Constanța: Editura Sfintei Arhiepiscopii a Tomisului.
- Davids, Adelbert. 1999. The Crisis of the Orthodox Participation in the Ecumenical Movement. *Exchange* 28: 113–29. [CrossRef]
- Dhavamony, Mariasusai S. J. 2003. The Convergence of World Religions and Christocentrism. *Studia Missionalia* 52: 245–82.
- Discrimination in the European Union. 2019. *Special Eurobarometer 493*. Brussels: European Union.
- Dobrincu, Dorin. 2018. Sub puterea cezarului. O istorie politică a evanghelicilor din România (a doua jumătate a secolului al XIX-lea—1989). In *Omul evanghelic. O explorare a comunităților protestante românești*. Edited by Dorin Dobrinu and Danut Mănăstireanu. Iași: Polirom.
- Druhora, Ovidiu Dorin. 2020. *Pledoarie pentru dialog: Protestantism și ortodoxie*. Cluj-Napoca and Oradea: Presa Universitară Clujeană, Casa Cărții.
- Florovsky, Georges. 1933. The Limits of the Church. *Church Quarterly Review* 117: 117–31.
- Floruț, Gabriel. 2018. *Justificarea prin credință în teologia lui Dumitru Stăniloae și Martyn Lloyd Jones*. Oradea: Metanoia.
- Gavrilyuk, Paul L. 2015. *Georges Florovsky and the Russian Religious Renaissance. Reprint edition*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Gillquist, Peter E. 1989. *Becoming Orthodox: A Journey to the Ancient Christian Faith*. Brentwood: Wolgemuth & Hyatt, Publishers, Inc.
- Grass, Tim, Jenny Rolf, Paul Rolf, and Ioan Saucă, eds. 2012. *Building Bridges: Between the Orthodox & Evangelical Traditions*. Geneva: World Council of Churches.
- INS, ed. 2011. Volumul II: Populația stabilă (rezidentă)—Structura etnică și confesională. Recensământ 2011. Available online: <http://www.recensamantromania.ro/noutati/volumul-ii-populatia-stabila-rezidenta-structura-etnica-si-confesionala/> (accessed on 17 December 2020).
- Leuștean, Lucian N. 2002. Stadiul dialogului interreligios și perspectivele sale în ecumenismul european. *Journal for the Study of Religions and Ideologies*. Available online: http://www.jsri.ro/old/html%20version/index/no_2/lucianleustean-articol2.htm (accessed on 9 November 2020).
- Mănăstireanu, Dănuț. 2006. *Locul Scripturii în tradiția ortodoxă*. Cluj-Napoca: Alma Mater.
- Mănăstireanu, Dănuț. 2012. *A Perichoretic Model of the Church: The Trinitarian Ecclesiology of Dumitru Stăniloae*. Saarbrücken: LAP LAMBERT Academic Publishing.
- Mănăstireanu, Dănuț. 2018. 'Identitatea evanghelicilor români: Rădăcini, actualitate, perspective'. In *Omul evanghelic. O explorare a comunităților protestante românești*. Edited by Dorin Dobrinu and Dănuț Mănăstireanu. Iași: Polirom.
- Mariș, Daniel Marius. 2009. *He Biblical Doctrine of Creation: A Basis for Theological Conversation between Evangelicals and The Eastern Orthodox Church in Contemporary Romania*. București: Editura Universitară.
- Mărturisirea de credință. 2021. Available online: <http://www.cultulpenticostal.ro/despre-noi/> (accessed on 23 January 2021).

- Moş, Pr Grigore-Dinu. 2021. Sfinţenia şi sfinţii în tradiţia răsăriteană. Radio Renasterea, May 23. Available online: <https://radiorenasterea.ro/sfintenia-si-sfintii-in-traditia-rasariteana/> (accessed on 3 February 2021).
- Nassif, Bradley. 2000. Eastern Orthodoxy and Evangelicalism: The Status of an Emerging Global Dialogue. *Scottish Bulletin of Evangelical Theology* 18: 21–55.
- Negruţ, Paul. 1994. The Development of the Concept of Authority within the Romanian Orthodox Church during the Twentieth Century. Ph.D. thesis, Brunel. Brunel University, London, UK. Available online: <http://bura.brunel.ac.uk/handle/2438/5323> (accessed on 27 January 2021).
- Oprean, Daniel G. 2019. *Theology of Participation: A Conversation of Traditions*. Kingstown: Langham Publishing.
- Oxbrow, Mark, and Tim Grass, eds. 2015. *The Mission of God: Studies in Orthodox and Evangelical Mission*. Oxford: Regnum Books.
- Oxbrow, Mark, and Tim Grass, eds. 2021. *Living the Gospel of Jesus Christ: Orthodox and Evangelical Approaches to Discipleship and Christian Formation*. Oxford: Regnum Books International.
- Păcurariu, Mircea. 1991. *Istoria Bisericii Ortodoxe Române*. Bucureşti: Editura Institutului Biblic şi de Misiune al Bisericii Ortodoxe Române.
- Pirri-Simonian, Teny, and Huibert van Beek. 2012. Dialogue between Orthodox and Evangelicals: The Story So Far. In *Building Bridges: Between the Orthodox & Evangelical Traditions*. Edited by Tim Grass, Jenny Rolf, Paul Rolf and Ioan Sauca. Geneva: World Council of Churches.
- Plaatijs van Huffel, Mary-Anne. 2017. From Conciliar Ecumenism to Transformative Receptive Ecumenism. *HTS Theological Studies* 73: 1–13. [CrossRef]
- Popescu, Dumitru. 2005. *Iisus Hristos Pantocrator*. Bucureşti: Editura Institutului Biblic şi de Misiune al Bisericii Ortodoxe Române.
- Relations of the Orthodox Church with the Rest of the Christian World. 2016. Available online: <https://www.holycouncil.org/-/rest-of-christian-world> (accessed on 9 January 2021).
- Riviş-Tipei, Pavel. 2007. 85 de ani de la înfiinţarea primei biserici pentecostale din România. *Cuvântul Adevărului* XVIII: 3–9.
- Rogobete, Silviu Eugen. 2001. *O ontologie a iubirii: Subiect şi realitate personală supremă în gândirea teologică a părintelui Dumitru Stăniloae*. Iaşi: Polirom.
- Sabou, Simona. 2012. *Trading Silence for Words of Praise: The Status of Woman in Eastern Orthodoxy as Reflected in the Works of Paul Evdokimov*. Saarbrücken: LAP LAMBERT Academic Publishing.
- Sauca, Ioan. 2012. Introduction: Why Orthodox–Evangelical Encounter? In *Building Bridges: Between the Orthodox & Evangelical Traditions*. Edited by Tim Grass, Jenny Rolf, Paul Rolf and Ioan Sauca. Geneva: World Council of Churches.
- Schneider, Johann. 2008. *Ecleziologia organică a mitropolitului Andrei Şaguna şi fundamentele ei biblice, canonice şi moderne*. Sibiu: Deisis.
- Simuţ, Corneliu C. 2021. Theosis and Baptist–Orthodox Discussions. *The Ecumenical Review* 73: 111–30. [CrossRef]
- Sonea, Cristian. 2020. *Spre o eshatologie profetică. Ecleziologia misionară în postmodernitate [Towards a Prophetic Eschatology. Missionary Ecclesiology in Postmodernity]*. Habilitation. Cluj-Napoca: Babeş-Bolyai, Available online: <https://doctorat.ubbcluj.ro/ro/cristian-sebastian-sonea/> (accessed on 16 January 2021).
- Stan, Lavinia, and Lucian Turcescu. 2007. *Religion and Politics in Post-Communist Romania*, 1st ed. Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press.
- Stanciu, Teofil. 2019. Evanghelicii Faţă Cu Dialogul Interconfesional. *România Literară*. no. 36–37. Available online: <https://romanaliterara.com/2019/08/evanghelicii-fata-cu-dialogul-interconfesional/> (accessed on 20 January 2021).
- Stăniloae, Dumitru. 1993. *Iisus Hristos sau Restaurarea omului*. Ediţia a 2-A. Craiova: Omniscop.
- Stăniloae, Dumitru. 1996. *Teologia Dogmatică Ortodoxă. Ediţia a doua*. Bucureşti: Editura Institutului Biblic şi de Misiune al Bisericii Ortodoxe Române, vol. 1.
- Stăniloae, Dumitru. 1997. *Teologia Dogmatică Ortodoxă. Ediţia a doua*. Bucureşti: Editura Institutului Biblic şi de Misiune al Bisericii Ortodoxe Române, vol. 2.
- Stăniloae, Dumitru. 2002. *Ascetica şi mistica bisericii ortodoxe. Scrieri 1*. Bucureşti: Editura Institutului Biblic şi de Misiune al Bisericii Ortodoxe Române.
- Statutul pentru organizarea şi funcţionarea Bisericii Ortodoxe Române. 2020. Monitorul oficial al României. Available online: <http://patriarhia.ro/images/documente/Statutul%20pentru%20organizarea%20si%20functionarea%20Bisericii%20Ortodoxe%20Romane.pdf> (accessed on 7 February 2021).
- Ştefănică, Dragoş. 2019. *Felurite daruri, dar acelaşi Duh. Harismele Duhului Sfânt la Dumitru Stăniloae şi Jurgen Moltmann*. Cluj-Napoca and Bucureşti: Risoprint/Plērōma.
- Tofană, Stelian. 2015. Prefaţă la ediţia a II-a în limba română I. Perspectiva ortodoxă. In *Ortodoxie şi evangheliism: Trei perspective*. Edited by Bradley Nassif, Michael Horton, Vladimir Berzonsky, George Hancock-Ştefan and Edward Rommen. Oradea: Casa Cărţii.
- Zondervan, J. I. Packer, Brad Nassif, Michael Horton, Father Vladimir Berzonsky, George Hancock-Ştefan, and Edward Rommen. 2010. *Three Views on Eastern Orthodoxy and Evangelicalism*. Edited by James J. Stamoolis. Grand Rapids: Zondervan Academic.