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The Stork's Nest: Schism and Revival in Modern Romania, 1921-1924

DR. ROLAND CLARK

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Abstract

Feeling threatened by the sudden popularity of neo-Protestantism in Romania and equipped with new church-building strategies by their studies abroad, in the early twentieth century leaders of the Romanian Orthodox Church promoted regular Bible study, Christian social activism, and increased piety as a way of renewing Orthodox spirituality. After the First World War, two of their students, Teodor Popescu and Dumitru Cornilescu, led a revival at St Ștefan's Church in Bucharest, colloquially referred to as The Stork's Nest. This article examines the schism that emerged between the revivalist preachers and their former teachers and mentors. Both sides developed opposing viewpoints on the authority of the Bible, the usefulness of Cornilescu's Biblical translation, the role of the saints and the Virgin Mary, prayers for the dead, and the role of the Church in salvation. Popescu's opponents turned him out of the Orthodox Church after it was discovered that he had changed the liturgy, and a new community of believers was born, known as "Tudorists", or "Christians According to the Scriptures".

Keywords: *religious revival, The Stork's Nest, Romanian Eastern Orthodoxy, neo-Protestantism, Romanian Evangelicals*

One of the trademark characteristics of religious revivals is their tendency to result in sectarian movements. In *The Social Sources of Denominationalism* (1922), H. Richard Niebuhr famously defined a sect as "the child of an outcast minority ... of those who were without effective representation in church or state and who

formed their conventicles of dissent in the only way open to them, on the democratic, associational pattern”.¹ Niebuhr’s definition has since been refined by scholars, but his basic assertions that sects are schismatic and that they emerge from churches before eventually taking on the characteristics of churches themselves remain widely accepted.² Niebuhr’s book constituted an appeal for Christian unity, but his Protestantism led him to cherish the sectarian formula. He wrote,

The rise of new sects to champion the uncompromising ethics of Jesus and ‘to preach the gospel to the poor’ has again and again been the effective means of recalling Christendom to its mission. This phase of denominational history must be regarded as helpful, despite the break in unity which it brings about. The evil of denominationalism lies in the conditions which makes the rise of sects desirable and necessary: in the failure of the churches to transcend the social conditions which fashion them into caste-organizations, to sublimate their loyalties to standards and institutions only remotely relevant if not contrary to the Christian ideal, to resist the temptation of making their own self-preservation and extension the primary object of their endeavor.³

Building on Niebuhr, Benton Johnson suggested that whereas “a church is a religious group that accepts the social environment in which it exists, a sect is a religious group that rejects the social environment in which it exists”.⁴ *Pace* Niebuhr and Johnson, not all preachers of “the uncompromising ethics of Jesus” want to separate from mainstream churches. In Roman Catholicism, for example, religious orders or indigenous churches operating in relative isolation from the Vatican have proved to be successful vehicles for assimilating revivals as reform movements without rupturing institutional boundaries.⁵ Why do

N.B., I am grateful to Emanuel Conțac for his comments and suggestions on earlier version of this manuscript, as well as for sharing his resources on Dumitru Cornilescu with me.

¹ H. Richard Niebuhr, *The Social Sources of Denominationalism*, New York, Meridian Books, 1922, p. 19.

² Cf. Rodney Stark and William Sims Bainbridge, *The Future of Religion: Secularization, Revival, and Cult Formation*, Berkeley, University of California Press, 1985, pp. 19-26.

³ Niebuhr, *Social Sources*, p. 21.

⁴ Benton Johnson, “On Church and Sect”, *American Sociological Review* 28 (1963), p. 542.

⁵ Roger Finke and Patricia Wittberg, “Organizational Revival from Within: Explaining Revivalism and Reform in the Roman Catholic Church”, *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 39, no. 2 (2000), pp. 154-170; William T. Liu and Beatrice Leung, “Organizational Revivalism: Explaining Metamorphosis of China’s Catholic Church”, *Journal for the Scientific Study of Reli-*

some revivals end in schism and others do not? The answer depends on much more than the relationship between revival and dissent, with contributing factors ranging from the orthodoxy of revivalist ideas and practices to the relative social, economic, and political power of revivalists vis-à-vis representatives of the establishment they hope to revive.⁶ This article examines a revival movement that emerged within the Romanian Orthodox Church soon after the First World War to understand how religious leaders conceptualized revival and what they considered to be acceptable limits of religious change.

In the wake of calls by Romanian Orthodox bishops and metropolitans for an increase in lay involvement and clerical fervour, a revival took place at St. Ștefan's Church in Bucharest, known as the Stork's Nest (*Biserica Cuibul cu Barză*), led by Father Teodor Popescu and his deacon, Dumitru Cornilescu. Using translations of Western Protestant writings and their own dynamic preaching, Popescu and Cornilescu drew crowds by interpreting the Bible as a roadmap for salvation and exhorting their listeners to develop personal relationships with Jesus Christ. Horrified at what they saw as a Protestant subversion of Orthodoxy, a handful of prominent churchmen challenged Popescu's orthodoxy with the result that he was defrocked and his community forced out of the Romanian Orthodox Church. According to the polemics that the revivalists and their opponents carried on in the press, both sides saw the dispute as a question of how believers related to their God. Both remained committed to a social order that expressed Romanian national specificity through religious practices, but they disagreed over how this should be done. They argued over the centrality and interpretation of scripture for discerning God's voice, the role played by the saints and the Church in mediating believers' relationships with God, and over how salvation takes place.

Although their debates revealed deep and fundamental differences between

gion 41, no. 1 (2001), pp. 121-138; Robert J. Houle, "Mbiya Kuzwayo's Christianity: Revival, Reformation and the Surprising Viability of Mainline Churches in South Africa", *Journal of Religion in Africa* 38 (2008), pp. 141-170.

⁶ A helpful multi-causal model of revival that unfortunately does not address the question of why some revivals result in sectarianism and others do not can be found in Edward J. Gitre, "The 1904-05 Welsh Revival: Modernization, Technologies, and Techniques of the Self", *Church History* 73, no. 4 (2004), pp. 792-827.

Popescu and the Romanian Orthodox Church, the revivalists still expressed surprise and horror at their exclusion from the church. They maintained that they should have been allowed to remain within the church as long as they desired to do so, while their opponents argued that once revivalists changed the premises, language, and practices through which believers related to God they had abandoned the basis of communion on which the Church was established. Whereas Popescu's opponents claimed that his condemnation was the result of unacceptable religious innovations, he believed that sectarianism was being forced on him by petty jealousies and personal rivalries.

Desire for Revival

Most observers who wrote about the Orthodox Church during the early twentieth century maintained that it was in desperate need of reform. Nicolae Iorga, a well-known atheist, committed nationalist, and erudite scholar, concluded the second edition of his two-volume *History of the Romanian Churches* (1928) by observing that at the beginning of the First World War “following the destruction of its spirit and purpose by the constant intrusions of the state as [political] parties vied for its control, the Church of the [Old] Romanian Kingdom no longer represents that moral force which once constituted its glory”.⁷ Church leaders agreed. Gheorghe Comșa, a dedicated anti-sectarian cleric, complained in 1921 that “in church life we see indifference about indifference. We acknowledge painfully that even some priests are addicted to commerce. No-one goes to church anymore; the laws and commandments of the church are ignored. Adultery is becoming widespread; the name of God is mocked, the holy mysteries are trodden underfoot, and sectarianism ravages the land”.⁸ The editors of the church magazine *The Cross (Crucea)* introduced their first issue in 1923 by stating that “almost everyone now believes that the Romanian Orthodox Church is incapable of doing its job”.⁹

⁷ Nicolae Iorga, *Istoria bisericii românești și a vieții religioase a românilor*, vol. 2, ed. a 2-a, București, Saeculum, 2011, p. 319.

⁸ Gheorghe Comșa, *Istoria predicei la români*, București, Tipografia Cărților Bisericești, 1921, p. 3. On Comșa's anti-sectarian writings, see Ciprian Bălăban, *Istoria bisericii pentecostale din România (1922-1989): instituție și harismă*, Oradea, Scriptum, 2016, pp. 32-40.

⁹ “Starea de plâns a bisericii ortodoxe”, *Crucea* 1, no. 1 (1923), p. 6.

Part of the problem with Romanian Orthodoxy was the poor state of theological education in Romania. The academic study of theology was not a vibrant discipline anywhere in the Orthodox world of the nineteenth century, and Orthodox specialists in Biblical Studies were heavily influenced by Western theological trends.¹⁰ Romanian dogmatic theology of the early twentieth century relied heavily on translated lectures by Russian and Greek theologians with a strong scholastic bent, and no Romanian moral theology to speak of had yet been written.¹¹ The most positive thing the theologian Iuliu Scriban could find to say about Romanian theological publishing in 1924 was that students now had access to some textbooks of questionable quality and a commentary that covered most of the New Testament.¹² According to the theologian Gala Galaction, the state of learning was so dismal that “in all of Romania there are probably only ten or fifteen theologians who know Orthodox doctrine”.¹³ The clerical publicist Teodor Păcescu agreed, noting that, because of the poor state of Romanian Orthodoxy at the time, “the seminarian and the theology student learns the religious sciences for his exams, not for himself (*nu pentru conștiința sa*)”, and consequently few priests really knew much about their own religion.¹⁴

Orthodox writers frequently used the Anglican Church as the standard by which they evaluated their church.¹⁵ An anonymous priest observed in 1909 that “the [religious] questions that are now being discussed in Romania, the civilized peoples of the West have been discussing for a long time. We have opened our eyes quite late. But at the end of the day it is a good thing that we have

¹⁰ Vasile Mihoc, “The Development of Biblical Studies”, in Viorel Ioniță (ed.), *Orthodox Theology in the 20th Century and Early 21st Century: A Romanian Orthodox Perspective*, București, Basilica, 2013, pp. 188-189.

¹¹ Ștefan Buchiu and Cristinel Ioja, “The Development of Dogmatic Studies”, in Viorel Ioniță (ed.), *Orthodox Theology in the 20th Century and Early 21st Century: A Romanian Orthodox Perspective*, București, Basilica, 2013, p. 396; Nichifor Crainic, *Zile albe – zile negre: memorii*, București, Casa Editorială Gândirea, 1991, p. 93.

¹² Iuliu Scriban, *Studiul pastoraliei în biserică românească*, Sibiu, Tiparul Tipografiei Arhidiecezane, 1924, p. 6.

¹³ Gala Galaction, *Jurnal*, vol. 3, București, Editura Albatros, 1999, p. 164.

¹⁴ Teodor P. Păcescu, “Propaganda neoprotestantă”, *Noua revistă bisericească* 5, no. 19-22 (1924), p. 244.

¹⁵ “Congresul preoților”, *Biserica Ortodoxă Română* 41, no. 15 (1923), p. 1125.

opened them at all".¹⁶ Ever since the Great Awakening of the eighteenth century, revival had been the standard Protestant solution to religious indifference. At first preachers thought of revivals as spontaneous, divine movements of the Holy Spirit, but by the nineteenth century churchmen had begun organizing them and scheduling them into the liturgical calendar.¹⁷

Romanian Orthodox leaders were well aware that promoting revival risked introducing Protestant ideas into their church. One of the most outspoken pro-revival church publications of the early 1920s was *The New Church Magazine* (*Noua revistă bisericească*). Established in March 1919, soon after the dust of the war had settled, *The New Church Magazine* was owned and edited by Teodor P. Păcescu, a priest who had earned his diploma with a study on whether or not the Bible was divinely inspired, and its editorial board included several distinguished theologians and church leaders.¹⁸ "Our Orthodoxy is passing through a deep crisis of understanding, method, and action", Păcescu wrote in one issue. "Everything in our Orthodox Church needs to be re-established on the ancient foundations of Orthodoxy and rejuvenated in today's struggle to shape and govern Orthodox Christian identity (*conștiinței creștine ortodoxe*)".¹⁹ Păcescu and the other contributors to *The New Church Magazine* wanted a revived Orthodoxy characterized by piety, good works, a passion for the study of the Bible, and an enthusiasm for spreading the gospel.²⁰ Deeply concerned about the dangers of lay involvement, however, Păcescu counselled that "all these efforts need to be directed, guided, and defined lest we pass beyond Orthodox dogma in our desire to evangelize and unexpectedly find ourselves in the camp of the sectarians".²¹

Inside Romania, it was the so-called neo-Protestants whose successes revivalist preachers coveted. One clerical contributor to *The New Church Magazine*,

¹⁶ Un preot de mir, *Chestiuni de discutat*, Pitești, Tipografia Transilvania, 1909, p. 1.

¹⁷ Janice Holmes, *Religious Revivals in Britain and Ireland, 1859-1905*, Dublin, Irish Academic Press, 2000, pp. 168-169.

¹⁸ Teodor P. Păcescu, *Inspirația cărților Sfintei Scripturi: Teză pentru licență*, București, Tipografia Speranța, 1907.

¹⁹ T. P. Păcescu, "Nouii noștri episcopi", *Noua revistă bisericească* 5, no. 3-4 (1923), p. 33.

²⁰ P. "Cum înțelege biserica unită intensificarea apostolatului în parohii?" *Noua revistă bisericească*, 5, no. 3-4 (1923): p. 61.

²¹ Teodor P. Păcescu, *Noua revistă bisericească*, 3/19-22 (1922).

Gheorghe Sălcescu, wondered why he saw “a breathtaking fanaticism” among “heretics” such as Seventh Day Adventists, Baptists, and Brethren, who are willing to “suffer beatings, (military) prison, insults”, and who take their Bibles to church “to follow the sermon with interest”, while among the Orthodox there was only “indifference”. The average Orthodox believer, Sălcescu wrote, “swears about his own faith, fights with his brothers from the village, and lives a life devoid of holiness, almost without faith”.²²

The history of neo-Protestantism in early twentieth century Romania is one of rapid and exponential growth. The first Baptist groups appeared among ethnic Germans in Bucharest during the mid-nineteenth century and had begun to spread among ethnic Hungarians, Russians, and Romanians by the turn of the twentieth century. In the early 1920s Baptist meetings in Bucharest were regularly attended by 120-150 people, and preachers who had trained in Italy, Austria, Russia, or the United States now returned home to plant new churches and convert their co-nationals.²³ Seventh Day Adventist missionaries from Poland and Germany arrived in Romania soon after the Baptists, and scores of Adventist communities were well-established by the early 1920s.²⁴ A Swiss missionary founded the first Brethren (*Creștini după Evanghelie*) church in Bucharest in 1899.²⁵ Small Pentecostal cells appeared in the country in the decade leading up to the First World War and the faith spread quickly throughout Romania as soon as the war was over.²⁶ The Romanian Orthodox Church responded to the rise of neo-Protestantism by sending out “missionary priests” whose goal was to convert people back to Romanian Orthodoxy.²⁷ They published profusely, but met with limited success.²⁸ In 1923 one missionary priest, Petru Chirică, com-

²² Gh. Sălcescu, “Fanatism și indiferentism”, *Noua revistă bisericească*, 5, no. 3-4 (1923), pp. 36-37.

²³ Alexa Popovici, *Istoria baptiștilor din România*, Oradea, Făclia, 2007, pp. 17-28, 279-282.

²⁴ Iemima Ploșcariu, “Pieties of the Nation: Romanian Neo-Protestants in the Interwar Struggle for Religious and National Identity” (MA Diss., Central European University, 2015), pp. 16-17.

²⁵ Bogdan Emanuel Răduț, “Comunitatea creștinilor după Evanghelie: 100 ani în Oltenia și 90 ani la Craiova”, *Oltenia: Studii, documente, cercetări* 4, no. 2 (2014), p. 111.

²⁶ Bălăban, *Istoria bisericii pentecostale*, pp. 15-23.

²⁷ Aurel D. Pap, “Măsuri pentru combaterea sectelor religioase”, *Revista teologică* 6, no. 16-17 (1912), pp. 441-446.

²⁸ On the challenges faced by missionary priests, see Ilie I. Imbrescu, *Misionarul eparhial al*

plained that some of his colleagues had to turn to the police to drive neo-Protestants out of their villages because they were unable to persuade them by their arguments or their good works.²⁹

Păcescu and his colleagues attributed the rapid spread of neo-Protestantism to the Orthodox Church's failure to satisfy the widespread desire for a renewed spiritual life. He wrote, "the need for repentance and spiritual rebirth, for religious activism, for an interiorisation of the Christian faith, for consistency between words and actions, cannot be satisfied by mechanically carrying out church rituals. The sectarians profited from this spiritual moment and attacked".³⁰ If it was to survive, the church needed to begin evangelising more heavily. In the words of Petru Chirică, "it is a painful fact, but we have to admit that so far the Church has remained silent. The Gospel has not been preached with zeal that it might serve the will of Jesus Christ. Its servants have focused on other domains, they have served zealously, but they have done no evangelistic work".³¹ Orthodox leaders decided that if they wished to remain competitive in the twentieth century they would need to begin preaching, distributing literature, expounding Scripture, and developing intentional communities of pious believers whose holiness and commitment rivalled that of the neo-Protestants.

Beginnings of Revival

There was a general consensus in the early 1920s that revival was coming. Dimitrie Nanu, a poet who published several lengthy pamphlets in support of Teodor Popescu, wrote that "the breeze of a spiritual springtime has begun to blow here and there: Father Gala Galaction, speaking from various pulpits with his skill and vast erudition, Father Nicolai Popescu at the Schitu Măgureanu church, Father Chiricuța in Botoșani, Father Ion Petrescu at the St. Visarion church, Simeon Mehedinți in pamphlets, Mihail Sadoveanu through his most

Tomisului, Bazargic, Tip. Gutenberg Hristo Radilof, 1935.

²⁹ Petru Chirică, "Considerațiuni asupra rolului de preot misionar", *Noua revistă bisericască* 5, no. 13-16 (1923), p. 169.

³⁰ Teodor P. Păcescu, *Noua revistă bisericască* 11, no. 10-12 (1930).

³¹ Petru Chirică, "Diferite soiuri de evanghelizare", *Noua revistă bisericască* 4, no. 1-2 (1922), pp. 6-7.

recent writings...³² Galaction, Popescu, Chiricuța, and Petrescu were all dynamic preachers at prominent churches with exceptional clerical careers ahead of them, while Mehedinți and Sadoveanu were, among other things, leading figures in the literary world. Despite the fears of pessimistic Orthodox clerics, the Christian message *was* being proclaimed loudly and clearly both inside and outside the church.

But Nanu only mentioned the tip of the iceberg. Returning from studies abroad, young church leaders breathed new life into Romanian Orthodoxy by establishing new journals and printing presses, and post-war expansion gave them an unparalleled opportunity to reinvigorate the church as a whole. The territories of Transylvania, Bukovina, Bessarabia, Banat, and Southern Dobruja were all incorporated into the Romanian nation-state between 1918 and 1920, and the Church quickly moved to extend its authority into these regions as well. Miron Cristea established a host of new bishoprics and metropolitanates after he was named Metropolitan-Primate of Greater Romania in 1919.³³ Since the turn of the century Cristea had been condemning his compatriots for their moral and spiritual failings in his sermons, exhorting them to stop drinking, to love one another, and to obey God's commands lest their families perish and their land be flooded through acts of divine retribution.³⁴ He worked in Transylvania before becoming Metropolitan-Primate, which only became part of Romania in 1918, and he saw church-building and nation-building as part of the same process.³⁵ He opened new theological faculties in Oradea in 1923 and in Chișinău in 1926, and reorganized programs of study in Cluj in 1924 and in Arad in 1927.³⁶ The restructuring of the Church culminated in the es-

³² D. Nanu, *Iisus vă cheamă*, București, Atelierele Adevărul, 1923, p. 8.

³³ Mircea Păcurariu, *Istoria Bisericii Ortodoxe Române*, Sibiu, Patriarhul Bisericii Ortodoxe Române, 1973, pp. 343-352.

³⁴ Elie Cristea, "Cuvântare rostită la Cristian la 12/25 Mai 1902", in Romanian National Archives (Henceforth ANIC), Fond Miron Cristea, Dosar 1902/1, ff. 3-15; E.M. Cristea, "La crăciun", *Țara noastră* 52 (1908); Episcopal circular, 1910, ANIC, Fond Miron Cristea, Dosar 1902/1, f. 25.

³⁵ D. Lungulescu, "Hirotonia noului episcop al Caransebeșului", *Revista culturală* 3, no. 11-12 (1910), pp. 314-322.

³⁶ Viorel Ioniță, "Orthodox Institutions of Theological Education: Key Factors in Promoting Orthodox Theology", in Viorel Ioniță (ed.), *Orthodox Theology in the 20th Century and Early*

establishment of an autocephalous Romanian Patriarchate in 1925 with Miron Cristea as Patriarch.³⁷

Revival was not solely an administrative affair. With new seminaries, periodicals, and administrative resources, church leaders across the country worked to convince the laity to dedicate themselves more wholeheartedly to the Church's mission. The Metropolitan of Ardeal, Nicolae Bălan, oversaw the creation of a lay movement known as The Lord's Army (*Oastea Domnului*) in Transylvania, and the Bishop of Râmnicul-Noul Severin, Vartolomeu Stănescu, established another movement in Oltenia aimed at reviving the clergy known as Rebirth (*Renașterea*).³⁸ Religious awakenings are rarely safe moments for those with institutionalized power, however. Bălan moved against the leadership of The Lord's Army in 1935 after it threatened to break free from under his control, and the Rebirth movement floundered after a series of scandals forced Stănescu to resign in 1938.³⁹ Another, smaller, movement was "Take and Read" (*Ia și citește*), which was a reading circle sponsored by the newspaper *The Orthodox Sunday* (*Duminica ortodoxă*), a revivalist newspaper run by the Old Testament scholar Ioan Popescu-Mălăești. Teodor Popescu was the Secretary of this circle before revival broke out in his church and he no longer had time to devote to this endeavour.⁴⁰

Translating New Religious Ideas

Supporters of a side-supply model of religion argue that the demand for "reli-

21st Century: A Romanian Orthodox Perspective, București, Basilica, 2013, pp. 162-165.

³⁷ Vasile Pocitan, *Patriarhatul României și chemarea lui în viitor*, București, Tipografia României Unite, 1926.

³⁸ Nicolae Bălan, "Binecuvântare arhierescă", *Lumina satelor* 1, no. 1 (2 Jan 1922), p. 1; Nicolae Bălan, "O arhierescă binecuvântare", *Lumina satelor* 6, no. 17 (24 April 1927), p. 1; D. Cristescu, *Viața și înfăptuirile Prea Sfințitului Episcop Vartolomeu*, Râmnicul-Vâlcea, Tipografia Episcopul Vartolomeu, 1936, p. 96ff; Cătălin-Valentin Raiu, *Democrație și statolatric. Creștinismul social la Bartolomeu Stănescu, Episcopul Râmnicului Noului Severin (1875-1954)*, București, Editura Universității din București, 2014, pp. 140-148.

³⁹ On the Lord's Army, see Nicolae Bălan, *Lumina satelor* 9, no. 24 (Feb 1935), pp. 1-2. On the scandals surrounding Stănescu's resignation, see ANIC, Direcția Generală a Poliției, Dosar 152/1936, ff. 1-19, and *Ibid.*, Dosar 45/1937, ff. 1-10.

⁴⁰ "Spre știință", *Duminica ortodoxă* 4, no. 13-14 (1921), p. 2; Popescu-Mălăești, "Stabilirea unui adevăr", *Duminica ortodoxă* 4, no. 37-38 (1922), p. 2.

gious goods” is relatively constant, but supply varies.⁴¹ According to this model, when rising literacy, improved transportation and communication networks, and greater access to Western Christianity increased the supply of alternative religious practices and ideas available to Romanians, revival was a likely result. Translating foreign texts allowed new religious ideas enter the country, and church periodicals frequently carried translations of Protestant, Catholic, or Orthodox writers. One of the most troublesome translators of the early twentieth century was Dumitru Cornilescu. He studied at Bucharest’s Central Theological Seminary between 1904 and 1912, first under the direction of Constantin Nazarie, the author of numerous books attacking Seventh Day Adventism, and then under that of a prominent revivalist preacher and theologian, Iuliu Scriban.⁴² Cornilescu was a devoted disciple of Scriban’s, who introduced his students to various Western authors, including Frank Thomas and William James.⁴³ “I was amazed”, Cornilescu later wrote, “when I saw so many Christian books, because at the time there were very few in Romania”.⁴⁴ In the words of the writer Gala Galaction, “in Romania books about religious and Christian topics are as unusual and rare as the rain in Egypt”.⁴⁵

Cornilescu published his first translation, taken from the writings of Frank Thomas, in *The Orthodox Shepherd (Păstorul ortodox)* in 1910. Thomas was a charismatic preacher based in Switzerland, whose writings emphasized evangelism, piety, and personal conversion.⁴⁶ Cornilescu continued translating Thom-

⁴¹ Roger Finke and Laurence R. Iannaccone, “Supply-Side Explanations for Religious Change”, *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 527 (1993): pp. 27-39; Paul Froese, “Hungary for Religion: A Supply-Side Interpretation of the Hungarian Religious Revival”, *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 40, no. 2 (2001), pp. 251-268.

⁴² Emanuel Conțac, *Cornilescu: Din culisele publicării celei mai citite traduceri a Sfintei Scripturi*, Cluj-Napoca, Logos, 2014, p. 48. For Nazarie’s anti-sectarian publications see Constantin Nazarie, *Duminica, botezul și ierarhia bisericească după adventiști*, București, Tip. Cărților Bisericești, 1910; Constantin Nazarie, *Combaterea principalelor învățături adventiste*, București, Tip. Cărților Bisericești, 1913.

⁴³ Crainic, *Zile albe*, 54.

⁴⁴ Dumitru Cornilescu, *Cum m-am întors la Dumnezeu*, București, Biserica Evanghelică Română, 2014, p. 5.

⁴⁵ Gala Galaction, “E bine și așa”, *Luptătorul 1*, no. 31 (21 July 1921), p. 1.

⁴⁶ Luc Weibel, *Croire à Genève: La Salle de la Réformation (XIX-XX^e siècle)*, Geneva, Labor et Fides, 2006, p. 136.

as' work along with those of the controversial writer and former Russian Orthodox priest Grigorii Spiridonovich Petrov, serializing them in *The Theological Magazine* (*Revista teologică*) during 1912 and 1913.⁴⁷ Cornilescu was well respected in the Romanian Orthodox Church at the time, and even had some of his translations published in the church's official magazine.⁴⁸

In 1915, while a student in theology at the University of Bucharest, he collaborated with the talented Orientalist Vasile Radu, himself also a student at the time, on translating a massive tome entitled *The Orthodox Church and Canon Law* (1890) by the Serbian bishop and canon lawyer Nikodim Milaš.⁴⁹ The translation was overseen by Irineu Mihălcescu, one of Cornilescu's teachers and a celebrated authority on theological matters. The fact that Scriban encouraged his students to engage with an American psychologist (James), a Swiss Protestant pastor (Thomas), and a defrocked socialist priest (Petrov) shows how varied the influences on early twentieth century Romanian Orthodoxy were.⁵⁰

Also in 1915, Cornilescu collaborated with Olga Gologan, an erudite young nun two years his senior who had just established an orphanage that would soon become a flourishing school, in translating a devotional calendar containing daily meditations by Frank Thomas.⁵¹ The calendar was praised by reforming churchmen such as Nicolae Bălan, the editor of *The Theological Magazine*, and found its way into the hand of Ralu Callimachi who immediately contacted him about translating the Bible into Romanian.⁵² A noblewoman in an unhappy

⁴⁷ Coșta, *Cornilescu*, p. 50; Dim. I. Cornilescu după Petrow, "Principiile fundamentale ale civilizației", *Revista teologică* 6, no. 4-5 (1912), pp. 131-137; Dim. I. Cornilescu după F. Thomas, "Chestiuni vitale", *Revista teologică* 7, no. 1 (1913), pp. 17-27.

⁴⁸ T. P. Păcescu, "Cine propagă ce este și unde duce teoria despre un Mântuitor personal", *Noua revistă bisericească* 4, no. 3-4 (1922), p. 34.

⁴⁹ Coșta, *Cornilescu*, pp. 50-51, 60, n. 52.

⁵⁰ Despite his rupture with the Russian Orthodox Church, Petrov's work was actually quite popular in Romania. No less an authority than Nicodim Munteanu translated three of Petrov's books between 1908 and 1918, all of which went through multiple editions. "Patriarhul Nicodim Munteanu", *Patriarhii României*. From <http://www.patriarh.ro/Nicodim/actpublicistica.php> Accessed 6 August 2017.

⁵¹ Dumitru Cornilescu and Olga Gologan (trans.), *Îndrăsnii! Cetiri biblice și meditațiuni pentru fiecare zi a anului, după F. Thomas*, București, Tip. Gutenberg, 1915; cited in Coșta, *Cornilescu*, p. 53, n. 29.

⁵² Coșta, *Cornilescu*, p. 53.

marriage, Ralu Callimachi, had had personal experience translating and distributing the Bible, and was known for loaning zealous young priests books from her extensive library of Protestant literature. Callimachi provided Cornilescu with room and board while he worked, and may have arranged with the Bishop of Huși, Nicolae Munteanu, to allow Cornilescu to take his monastic vows during the summer of 1916 so that he could avoid military service and continue to live at Callimachi's mansion at Stâncești until he finished translating the New Testament in 1919.⁵³

According to Cornilescu's later writings, he yearned for the "new life" that he had read about in foreign books and was very intrigued that the authors he was reading were so fascinated with the Bible. "I didn't like the Bible," he wrote, "I had a translation in front of me that was so bad that I couldn't understand it. ... But when I started to read it in another language, I understood it and liked it".⁵⁴ Despite his years of theological training, Cornilescu claimed that it was while he was translating the Bible that he first understood universal sinfulness, the idea that sin must be dealt with through hellfire, and that Christ died on the cross for the forgiveness of sins. He prayed: "Lord, I know only this book. You said that it is Your Word. I read in it that Christ died for me; I accept forgiveness for myself and if you judge me it won't be my fault, because I have believed what it says in Your Word".⁵⁵ Newly converted, Cornilescu began his translation again from scratch, telling himself that "up until now the translation has been done by *my old self*. I am a *new person* and must have a new translation done by my new self".⁵⁶

There were, of course, other Romanian translations of the Bible available. The most common was the "Iași Bible" (1874), printed with the Latin alphabet adopted by Romanian speakers in the early 1860s. The theologian Nicolae Nițulescu had also translated the New Testament in 1897. The British and Foreign Bible Society (BFBS) had printed Nițulescu's New Testament, together with the Old Testament of the Iași Bible, in a revised edition which went

⁵³ Conțac, *Cornilescu*, pp. 53-61; P. Chirică, "Adevăratul scop al *Adevărului creștin*", *Noua revistă bisericească* 5, no. 19-22 (1924), p. 248.

⁵⁴ Cornilescu, *Cum m-am întors*, p. 6.

⁵⁵ Cornilescu, *Cum m-am întors*, p. 11.

⁵⁶ Cornilescu, *Cum m-am întors*, p. 13.

through multiple print runs between 1905 and 1921, trying to keep up with various changes in orthography.⁵⁷ In 1911 the BFBS commissioned Iuliu Scriban and Nicodim Munteanu, the Bishop of Huși, to produce a new translation, but both men were increasingly busy with their official functions and were unable to complete the project.⁵⁸ Munteanu continued working on his translation – mostly from Russian – after retiring to a monastery in 1923, and published a new version of the New Testament (1924) and Psalms (1927), as well as being responsible for 24 of the books of the Old Testament which appeared in the Synod Bible of 1936.⁵⁹ The writer and Old Testament scholar Gala Galaction began his own, more literary translation in 1921, eventually inviting Vasile Radu to join as his collaborator. Galaction began doing readings of his Bible on the radio by 1923 and published his New Testament in 1927, but the translation was not finished until 1937.⁶⁰

Cornilescu's translation was based on a revised version of Louis Segond's French Bible, which had been published in 1910.⁶¹ Relying entirely on Calimachi's financial support, Cornilescu established the Romanian Evangelical Society, under whose auspices he published first the New Testament (1920), Psalms (1920), and then the whole Bible (1921).⁶² His translation met with a deafening silence from most critics.⁶³ Those who did comment on it were critical, but generally positive. Though he later described it as "tendentious and he-

⁵⁷ Conțaț, *Cornilescu*, p. 38; *Sfânta Scriptură a Vechiului și a Noului Testament*, București, Societatea de Biblie Britanică, 1921.

⁵⁸ Conțaț, *Cornilescu*, pp. 37-39.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 99; "Patriarhul Nicodim Munteanu".

⁶⁰ Galaction, *Jurnal*, vol. 3, pp. 112, 301, 309; "Citiri din Biblia nouă", *Biserica Ortodoxă Română* 41, no. 5 (1923), p. 394; Atanasie Mironescu, "Noul Testament", *Biserica Ortodoxă Română* 46, no. 2 (1928), pp. 169-185.

⁶¹ *La Sainte Bible*, trans. Louis Segond, Paris, Alliance Biblique Universelle, 1910; Emanuel Conțaț, "Influența versiunii Segond asupra versiunii Cornilescu 1921", in Eugen Munteanu (ed.), *Receptarea Sfintei Scripturi între filologie, hermeneutică și traductologie*, Iași, EUAIC, 2011, pp. 122-145.

⁶² Cornilescu, "Ce este cu Adevărul Creștin", pp. 99-100; *Noul Testament*, trans. D. Cornilescu, București, Societatea Evanghelică Română, 1920; *Cartea Psalmilor sau Psaltirea*, trans. D. Cornilescu, București, Societatea Evanghelică Română, 1920; *Biblia sau Sfânta Scriptură*, trans. D. Cornilescu, București, Societatea Evanghelică Română, 1921.

⁶³ *Noua revistă bisericească* 3, no. 1-2 (1921), p. 269, quoted in Conțaț, *Cornilescu*, pp. 72-73.

retical”, Galaction’s initial impression was that “this is and will remain a commendable work, providing worthwhile reading for everyone”.⁶⁴ The newspaper *Dacia* wrote that “The Cornilescu New Testament is far and away superior to any preceding translation in Roumanian language. It possesses a suppleness and fluency which is completely lacking in all the others. ... The language of the Cornilescu text wells from the very heart of our people”.⁶⁵ His old teacher, Iuliu Scriban, thought it “very colloquial”.⁶⁶ In contrast, the Greek Catholic priest and scholar Victor Macaveiu noted that although Cornilescu’s translation was “very original”, it lacked “that archaic, old hue of the word of God, it is missing what on bronze statues we would call *tarnish* – that which increases the value of the statue”.⁶⁷ The popular reception of Cornilescu’s Bible was overwhelmingly enthusiastic. It sold out almost immediately, and representatives of the BFBS who were trying to decide whether to publish Cornilescu’s translation themselves heard it praised everywhere they went.⁶⁸

The only genuinely hostile reviews came from the priests D. Mangâru and Petru Chirică, who attacked Cornilescu’s translation on the grounds that his choice of words in describing “a Sabbath rest” (*o odihnă de Sabat*) in Hebrews 4:9 supported the Seventh Day Adventist position that Christians should worship on Saturdays.⁶⁹ In addition to attacking his opponents’ knowledge of Greek, Cornilescu’s response was that the Adventists erred “in their twisted interpretation of the text, not in the meaning of the text, which should be preserved as it is, and not changed for the sake of it or out of fear of one teaching or another”.⁷⁰

⁶⁴ Gala Galaction, *Piatra din capul unghiului: Scrisori teologice*, București, Tipografia României Unite, 1926, p. 83. Galaction, “E bine și așa”, p. 1.

⁶⁵ Quoted in a letter, J. W. Wiles to J. H. Ritson, 27 November 1920, Bible Society Archives, E3/3/499/1. For the Romanian version, see Conțaș, *Cornilescu*, p. 118.

⁶⁶ Letter, R. Kilgour to J. W. Wiles, 21 January 1921, in Conțaș, *Cornilescu*, p. 121.

⁶⁷ Victor Macaveiu, “Spre o nouă ediție a Scripturii românești”, *Cultura creștină* 10, no. 1-2 (1921), p. 8, quoted in Conțaș, *Cornilescu*, p. 72.

⁶⁸ Conțaș, *Cornilescu*, pp. 118, 126, 128, 145.

⁶⁹ D. Mangâru, “Odihna creștinismului (Contra Adventismului)”, *Noua revistă bisericească* 3, no. 7-10 (1921), pp. 123-145; D. Mangâru, “Adaos la ‘Odihna creștinismului și răspuns la Domnului D. Cornilescu’”, *Noua revistă bisericească* 3, no. 22-24 (1922), pp. 404-405; Petru Chirică, “Condițiuni la studiul de combatere al adventismului”, *Biserica Ortodoxă Română* 41, no. 2 (1922), pp. 114-116. All three articles are quoted in Conțaș, *Cornilescu*, p. 73.

⁷⁰ Dumitru Cornilescu, “Odihna creștinismului”, *Noua revistă bisericească* 3, no. 17-18 (1921),

Possibly anticipating this criticism, in 1920 Cornilescu had already serialized his translations of two pamphlets by English and American authors attacking Adventist doctrine.⁷¹ Despite various concerns about the precision of Cornilescu's language and over his translation of the word *dikaïosynē* (righteousness) as *neprihănire* (sinlessness) instead of *dreptate* (uprightness, rectitude), the BFBS adopted it as their official Romanian version and released a revised edition in 1924.⁷² Cornilescu began publishing his own translations of a variety of Protestant books, such as John Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress*, Charles Challand's biography of George Müller, Wilhelm Broistedt's *Who Are You?*, and Paul Josef Cordes's *The Book of Books*.⁷³

A Born Again Community

After having been “born again” while translating the Bible, Cornilescu began holding Bible studies with young soldiers who were about to be sent to the front and who wanted to know if they would go to heaven when they died. The group met regularly, and Cornilescu taught them Christian songs that he had translated. Cornilescu wrote that the lives of these young men were profoundly changed, and that when they were persecuted for their beliefs by a group of schoolboys throwing rocks, they began to pray and converted their persecutors through prayer.⁷⁴ After finishing the first edition of his Bible, Cornilescu re-

p. 292. cf. Dumitru Cornilescu, “Câteva lămuriri în chestiuni de traducere a Bibliei”, *Biserica Ortodoxă Română* 41, no. 8 (1923), pp. 567-570.

⁷¹ R. A. Torrey, “Trebuie să țină creștinii sabbatul?” trans. D. Cornilescu, *Noua revistă bisericească* (Jan-Feb 1920), pp. 146-148; A. J. Pollock, “Adventismul în fața Scripturii”, *Noua revistă bisericească* (June-July 1920), pp. 40-42. Both are cited in Conțac, *Cornilescu*, pp. 74-75, n. 93.

⁷² Conțac, *Cornilescu*, pp. 79-85.

⁷³ John Bunyan, *Călătoria creștinului sau calea spre fericirea de veci*, trans. Dumitru Cornilescu, București, Editura Societății de Cărți Religioase, 1923; Charles Challand, *O minune din vremurile noastre: viața și lucrarea lui George Müller*, trans. Dumitru Cornilescu, București, Societatea Evanghelică Română, 1922; Wilhelm Broistedt, *Cine ești? Ce vrei? De unde și încotro?* trans. Dumitru Cornilescu, București, Societatea Evanghelică Română, 1923; P. J. Cordes, *Cartea Cărților*, trans. Dumitru Cornilescu, București, Tipografia Națională - Jean Ionescu, 1923. Other authors Cornilescu translated include C. H. Mackintosh, George Müller, J. H. M. Conkey, S. D. Gordon, R. A. Torrey, and Frédéric Bettex. Alexandru Măianu, *Viața și lucrarea lui Dumitru Cornilescu*, București, Editura Stephanus, 1995, p. 73.

⁷⁴ Cornilescu, *Cum m-am întors*, pp. 13-20.

turned to St. Stefan's Church in Bucharest, known as the Stork's Nest, where he had worked during his years as a student. The parish priest there was Teodor Popescu, who was newly married and only 24 years old. The Stork's Nest had been his father-in-law's church and Popescu became parish priest after the latter's death. Excited by the power of Cornilescu's message about "turning to God", Popescu began to preach it until he too was convicted of his sins and "born again".⁷⁵ "Like any believer, I would have been ready to say that Jesus died for His ideas", Popescu wrote. "Never, absolutely never, had I noticed the words in the creed: 'And He was crucified for us.' Had I noticed I would have thought that the word 'us' applied to anyone else just not to me".⁷⁶

Together they began holding evening Bible studies for men in the parish, postponing teaching women until eventually a group of women occupied the church and demanded to participate in these studies as well.⁷⁷ Meetings at The Stork's Nest became more and more popular, and in 1921 Iuliu Scriban began encouraging his students to visit the church to hear Popescu preach.⁷⁸ The growing movement attracted the attention of the Minister of Cults, Octavian Goga, who wrote that when he visited the church:

To my great surprise, the inside of the holy building was crammed with people from the beginning, a strange assembly made up of people from every walk of life. ... The priest's whole body trembled, caught up in the magic of his words. Screwing up his pale, ascetic forehead, his face came back to life, filled with nervous fluid, and two drops of an unusual light shone deep in his eyes like the canvases of [Jusepe de] Ribera. The devoted crowd listened carefully to his analyses and followed the rhythm of his logic with a lively discomposure, leaving the critical spectator with a profound conviction and an incontestable spiritual message.⁷⁹

⁷⁵ Cornilescu, *Cum m-am întors*, pp. 22-23; Teodor Popescu, "O mărturisire care poate fi unora de folos", *Noua revistă bisericească* 5, no. 9-12 (1923), pp. 124-130. Note that in his account, Popescu does not credit Cornilescu with having taught him the doctrine of justification by faith, but claims that he arrived at this conviction on his own through the working of the Holy Spirit.

⁷⁶ Tudor Popescu, *Isus vă chiamă*, București, np, 1939, p. 19.

⁷⁷ Dumitru Cornilescu, "Ceva despre activitatea evanghelizatoare de la 'Cuibul cu barză'", *Noua revistă bisericească*, 5/6-8 (1923), pp. 91-92.

⁷⁸ Horia Azimioră, *Din viața și lucrarea lui Teodor Popescu*, np, nn, 1988, p. 23.

⁷⁹ Octavian Goga, "Răzvrătirea de la 'Cuibul cu barză'", *Țara noastră* (Jan 24, 1923), reprinted in Iosif Țon, *Credința adevărată*, Wheaton, IL, Societatea Misionară Română, 1988, pp. 137-140.

When he published his collected sermons in 1923, Popescu received positive reviews from other revival-oriented Orthodox publications such as *The Light of the Villages* (*Lumina satelor*), *Solidarity* (*Solidaritatea*) and *Rebirth* (*Renașterea*) as well as in *The New Church Magazine*.⁸⁰ His preaching emphasized the urgency of personal conversion and the idea of justification by faith. Popescu's pamphlet *How to Bring Souls to Christ* (1924), for example, explained that human suffering is a result of sin's impact on the world, and that every one of his readers was a sinner. But sinners need not despair: Jesus Christ died for our sins. "And so the question is: how will you face the end? Saved or unsaved? Regardless, the Savior could come again today or tomorrow. Find out, He asks nothing of you except to believe and you'll be saved through grace".⁸¹ Spiritual change can only come about by the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, Cornilescu asserted, quoting sermons by reforming bishops such as Nicolae Bălan and Vartolomeu Stănescu to support his case.⁸² Cornilescu established a regular magazine promoting their ideas known as *The Christian Truth* (*Adevărul creștin*), which aroused suspicion among some of his colleagues once Adventist and Brethren preachers began buying and distributing it on the grounds that Cornilescu had "come over to our side".⁸³ The opening editorial of *The Christian Truth* outlined its mission statement as:

[The magazine] knows that humans do not naturally have this life, which is a gift of God obtained through faith in a personal Saviour, whose death atones for our sins, calling us to live in close connection to the One who gave His life for us. Second, it is aimed at the children of God who have passed from death to life, have been born again, and who live bound up with their personal Saviour.⁸⁴

⁸⁰ C. Diaconescu, "Iisus va chieamă!" *Noua revistă bisericească* 5, no. 6-8 (1923), pp. 112-113; Azimioră, *Din viața și lucrarea*, pp. 24-25; Manea S. Popescu, "O recapitulare a discuțiilor polemice provocate de învățăturile propoveduite la biserica Cuibul cu Barză și o concluzie", *Noua revistă bisericească*, 5, no. 6-8 (1923), p. 103.

⁸¹ Teodor Popescu, *Cum aducem sufletele la Hristos sau planul de mântuire*, București, Tip. "Cultura Neamului Românesc", 1924, p. 27.

⁸² Cornilescu, "Ce este cu *Adevărul creștin*", pp. 95, 97.

⁸³ Cornilescu, "Ce este cu *Adevărul creștin*", p. 99, n. 2; P. Chirică, "Adevăratul scop al *Adevărului creștin*", *Noua revistă bisericească* 5, no. 19-22 (1924), pp. 248-249.

⁸⁴ Quoted in T. P. Păcescu, "Cine propagă", p. 36.

Although he appreciated *The Christian Truth* and collaborated closely with Cornilescu, Teodor Popescu never published in its pages and claimed to have no connection with Cornilescu's Romanian Evangelical Society.⁸⁵ Iosif Trifa from The Lord's Army, on the other hand, actively promoted one of Cornilescu's books, *The Human Heart: God's Sanctuary or the Devil's Workshop* (1922), saying that "there are few books in Romanian which can do more for Christ and for the salvation of the souls of our people than this one".⁸⁶

Finally, Cornilescu collected and translated Protestant hymns, providing ways for believers at The Stork's Nest new followers to express their faith through song. Most Orthodox songbooks included slow, reflective pieces emphasizing God's might and holiness and on humanity's need for mercy. In a 1928 collection assembled by G. Cucu, for example, one finds titles such as "God is with us, understand you peoples and flee", or "God of power be with us".⁸⁷ The songs in Cornilescu's collection, on the other hand, were more upbeat, and the musical score was written for piano, in comparison with Cucu's songbook, which was arranged for choir singing. Cornilescu's hymns focused on the idea that Jesus saves and requires an individual response from believers as well as on the joy and security to be found in God. His first songbook included hymns such as C. Elliott's "Just as I am, without one plea, / But that Thy blood was shed for me" (1835), William Doane's "Safe in the Arms of Jesus" (1868), or Philip Doddridge's "O happy day that fixed my choice / On Thee, my Saviour and my God!" (1755). In Cornilescu's hands Doddridge's Reformed Calvinism became clearly Arminian: "Happy day, when I took Jesus as my Saviour! / O how good it seems to me now that I chose Him then".⁸⁸ Any sense that one's salvation was determined ("fixed") by God beforehand is missing in Cornilescu's translation, being replaced by an overwhelming emphasis on an individual's choice to believe. Whereas Cornilescu could claim that he had simply translated the Bible which was not just a

⁸⁵ T. Popescu, "O scrisoare a părintelui Teodor Popescu", *Noua revistă bisericească* 4, no. 3-4 (1922), p. 63.

⁸⁶ Iosif Trifa, "O carte de mare folos sufletesc", *Lumina satelor*, 2, no. 5 (11 February 1923), p. 5.

⁸⁷ "Cu noi este Dumnezeu" and "Doamne al puterilor" in G. Cucu (ed.), *Zece cântece religioase*, București, Editura Proprie, 1928, pp. 8-13.

⁸⁸ "Ferice zi..." in Dumitru Cornilescu, *47 cântări creștinești cu note muzicale*, București, Societatea Evanghelică Română, 1922, p. 14.

Protestant book, in publishing a hymnbook he was writing dogmatic confessions that people would reflect on every time they sang them.

Defining Orthodoxy

Other priests who had been preaching revival, such as Manea S. Popescu, who had gone to the same school as Teodor Popescu, wanted to know why The Stork's Nest was flourishing while they were preaching to empty churches.⁸⁹ The answer, they said, lay in the fact that Popescu had abandoned Orthodox doctrine. Apparently at the invitation of Teodor Păcescu, Manea published an open letter to Teodor Popescu in March 1922 in the pages of *The New Church Magazine* asking him to answer five questions:

1. Whether he considers that we owe our salvation to Christ the Savior alone, and that we can obtain it only through faith – our only contribution.
2. If he has eliminated the veneration of the Virgin Mary.
3. If he permits the veneration of the saints.
4. If prayers for the dead are useless.
5. Why, after he has renounced several Orthodox beliefs, he remains in the Church and benefits from its wealth.⁹⁰

The two priests debated these questions in *The New Church Magazine* for the next two years. Manea Popescu's questions – and Teodor Popescu's responses – are instructive because they represent a candid attempt at clarifying the boundaries of Romanian Orthodoxy during a period of institutional and theological renewal.

One thing that everyone agreed upon was that Christianity should strengthen the Romanian nation. In 1923 the ultranationalist philosopher Nae Ionescu accused Popescu and Cornilescu of threatening the security of the Romanian nation-state by importing foreign religious ideas from England and of subordi-

⁸⁹ On Manea Popescu's attempts at evangelism, see "Evanghelizare ortodoxă", *Noua revistă bisericască* 5, no. 3-4 (1923), p. 116.

⁹⁰ Manea S. Popescu, *Noua revistă bisericască*, 3/22-24 (1922).

nating Orthodoxy to the Anglican Church through their (alleged) association with the YMCA.⁹¹ The two preachers vehemently denied these accusations, claiming that “ours is a purely Romanian movement and has no other goal than the moral regeneration of our people in the only way possible, today and for all time: by disinterestedly preaching the Gospel of Christ”.⁹² Both sides in this dispute claimed that they were working for the salvation of their country. The highest praise that anyone gave Cornilescu’s translation was that it was “pure Romanian”, and reflected the language of the people instead of the wooden language of the church.⁹³ Popescu’s supporters responded by questioning whether Orthodox priests were truly serving the nation. They accused priests of corruption, and of exploiting the poor for their own financial gain: “What do Christ’s shepherds do when confronted with this odious spectacle [of politicianism]?” Dimitrie Nanu wrote. “Even though the Saviour told them clearly: you cannot serve both God and money, still there are some – many, in fact – who do not wear a cross on their neck or its commands in their hearts, but instead carry the heavy steel key from the bank or cooperative”.⁹⁴

The other thing that almost everyone agreed on was that God was an antisemite.⁹⁵ In 1922 Teodor Păcescu wrote that “the propaganda of these Protestant sects is a product of World Judaism, which uses any means to provoke diversions and confessional conflicts so that the economic and political dominance of Judaism might be followed by religious dominance”.⁹⁶ Similarly, in 1924 seven members of The Stork’s Nest attacked Gala Galaction for being a well-known philosemite: “He is alone among Romanian writers to have given himself body and soul to the Jews and their interests. Both before and after he became a priest he has writ-

⁹¹ Un Ortodox [probably N. Ionescu] “Pentru apărarea ortodoxiei”, *Ideea europeană* 4, no. 111 (1923), p. 2.

⁹² T. Popescu and D. Cornilescu, “Domnule Director”, *Ideea europeană* 4, no. 113 (1923), p. 2.

⁹³ Letter, J. W. Wiles to J. H. Ritson, 27 November 1920, in Conțac, *Cornilescu*, p. 118.

⁹⁴ Nanu, *Iisus vă cheamă*, p. 6.

⁹⁵ On Orthodox antisemitism during this period, see Roland Clark, “Orthodoxy and nation-building: Nichifor Crainic and religious nationalism in 1920s Romania”, *Nationalities Papers* 40, no. 4 (2012), p. 529; Nicolae Paulescu, *Spitalul, Coranul, Talmudul, Cabalul, Francmasoneria*, Filipeștii de Târg, Antet XX Press, 2001.

⁹⁶ T. P. Păcescu, “Biserica în pragul anului 1922”, *Noua revistă bisericească* 3, no. 19-21 (1922), p. 324.

ten the most perverse articles, confusing the Romanian spirit and sustaining the interests of Masonic Judaism”.⁹⁷ Johnson’s claim that by definition a sect “rejects the social environment in which it exists” does not hold in this case. In the course of their polemics, both sides displayed a commitment to core beliefs about the construction and delimitation of the national community. As Iemima Ploșcariu has demonstrated more broadly, neo-Protestants in interwar Romania “saw themselves as those most piously following the word of God and constructed an image of themselves around their interaction with the Bible but also promoted an image of loyalty to the Romanian nation and state as an integral part of their identity”.⁹⁸

The disputing parties disagreed on where authority in the Church lay. Dumitru Cornilescu said of himself that “the whole time I was reading their books, some of which were very good, I was as blind as any blind man”. Păcescu retorted: “A blind man with a degree in Orthodox theology! ... It appears that Deacon Cornilescu became a monk as a hobby”.⁹⁹ One thing that the opponents of The Stork’s Nest would not allow was the idea that their education was worthless. Manea Popescu attacked Teodor Popescu by demonstrating that Irineu Mihălcescu, who had taught them both, disagreed with the latter’s definition of salvation.¹⁰⁰ Quoting Mihălcescu when confronted with the Bible, Teodor Popescu said, was like a man who, “when attacked by a machine gun defended himself with a pistol”.¹⁰¹ When Teodor Popescu refused to discuss the veneration of the saints until he had studied the Bible more closely, Manea Popescu responded, “Why are you a still a priest and still accredited then? Doesn’t it strike you that your answer insults our Faculty of Theology which gave you your accreditation?”¹⁰² “In matters of God’s truths”,

⁹⁷ Dincescu Bolintin *et al.*, *Lupta între Dumnezeu și Mamona: Între predicarea Evangheliei și acatist*, București, Tip. Române Unite, 1924, p. 6. The signatories of this pamphlet were V. Dincescu Bolintin, F. Demetrescu Mircea, Th. C. Tomescu, Dumitru M. Pherekyde, Nicolae Flipescu, Gh. Ceaușescu, and Christian Theodora.

⁹⁸ Ploșcariu, “Pieties of the Nation”, p. 66.

⁹⁹ Cornilescu, “Ce este cu *Adevărul creștin*”, pp. 91-101.

¹⁰⁰ Manea S. Popescu, “Problema mântuirii”, *Noua revistă bisericească* 5, no. 13-16 (1923), p. 160.

¹⁰¹ T. Popescu, “Răspuns la răspunsul Părintelui Manea Popescu”, *Noua revistă bisericească* 4, no. 3-4 (1922), p. 65.

¹⁰² Manea Popescu, “Un ultim răspuns și câteva lămuriri Preotului Teodor Popescu”, *Noua revistă bisericească* 4, no. 1-2 (1922), p. 13.

Teodor Popescu wrote back, “I accept only arguments made with Holy Scripture, which is the Word of God, the Word that promises to be eternal”.¹⁰³

Teodor Popescu maintained that when Christians spoke of “the Church” in the sense of tradition, they meant “certain people within the Church who wrote about certain things and whose writings were accepted by the majority and retained”. Furthermore, “these people [were] obliged to take note of the Gospel”, so obviously, their writings did not replace the Bible. “Whoever invokes the authority of the Church independent of the authority of the Gospel”, Teodor Popescu claimed, “bases history on the history books; and whoever invokes the authority of the Gospel bases history on the documents”.¹⁰⁴ “The Bible is not Protestant”, Cornilescu added, so why accuse people who quote it of being Protestants?¹⁰⁵

Manea Popescu appears to have accepted the idea of citing Scripture to support one’s argument because his next contribution was suddenly full of quotes from the Bible.¹⁰⁶ Gala Galaction, on the other hand, constantly complained that Popescu and Cornilescu’s readings of the Bible were naive and simplistic. Galaction was quite happy to use the Church Fathers, Ecumenical Councils, and the Holy Liturgy as authorities alongside the Bible, and to use them to interpret the Bible. Whereas “most of the time when people wander from the truth it is because of the interpretation of Holy Scripture”, Galaction explained, “in the Church of the Saviour, dogmatic teachings and decisions are in the hands of the episcopal College, that is to say, in the hands of the gathering of the hierarchs. The episcopal College is the treasurer of the knowledge of the Church and guards our whole lives in Christ”.¹⁰⁷

Another of their major disagreements lay in their different understandings of salvation. Salvation is “a gift” according to Teodor Popescu. A Christian draws near to God by reading the Bible, and can be assured that “he has forgiveness and

¹⁰³ Teodor Popescu, “Poate cineva să spună că e mântuit?”, *Noua revistă bisericască* 5, no. 3-4 (1923), p. 44.

¹⁰⁴ Popescu, “Poate cineva să spună că e mântuit?”, p. 44.

¹⁰⁵ Dumitru Cornilescu, “Tot cu privire la foaia *Adevărul creștin*”, *Noua revistă bisericască* 5, no. 13-16 (1923), p. 163.

¹⁰⁶ Popescu, “Problema mântuirii”, pp. 159-162.

¹⁰⁷ Galaction, *Piatra din capul unghiului*, p. 44.

peace with God through the blood of Jesus; based *only and exclusively* on what the Lord has done and continues to do for him, saying “Thanks to Him I am saved”.¹⁰⁸ “That’s not the way things are”, responded Manea Popescu. According to him, Christians are united with God only through “the pouring of the invisible grace of God into the soul through the seven holy mysteries instituted by the Savior Himself”. Moreover, Manea Popescu maintained, “salvation is a divine-human act and ... reading the New Testament is a great thing, but it is not sufficient for the salvation of one’s soul”.¹⁰⁹ Only Protestants believed that “the Lord’s chosen, those He has called, are saved ‘*through grace*’, without any personal merit or contribution”, he said, concluding that therefore the preachers at The Stork’s Nest must be Protestants.¹¹⁰ Later, Manea Popescu explained quite clearly why he didn’t believe in the idea of a personal Saviour, which Cornilescu was teaching. He wrote,

On the basis of the Gospel and the writings of the holy apostles, our Orthodox Church teaches that the Saviour is the Saviour of everyone and thus of each individual person. It also teaches, again on the basis of the New Testament, that every soul can share in the salvation perfected at Golgotha and in the sanctification that the Holy Spirit brings through the Church which Jesus established. He gave the means of salvation to the Church (baptism = redemption from original sin) and sanctification through the seven mysteries administered by the hierarchy. The Protestant theory of a personal Saviour does away with these intermediaries and makes the personal Saviour into a direct Saviour.¹¹¹

The contributors to *The New Church Magazine* complained that Popescu and Cornilescu had marginalized the role of the Church by teaching justification through faith. If Christ alone saves us, then why do we need priests? “This explanation of the problem of salvation is a great danger”, Păcescu concluded, “because it does away with all the institutions of Orthodoxy, in particular the hierarchy, which is the *mediator* of salvation”.¹¹² The Church and its priests are crucial to Christianity, Păcescu insisted, because “if the problem of salvation forms the basis

¹⁰⁸ Teodor Popescu, *Iisus vă cheamă*, quoted in Manea S. Popescu, “Din învățăturile celor de la Cuiibu cu Barză”, *Noua revistă bisericească* 5, no. 3-4 (1923), p. 52.

¹⁰⁹ Popescu, *Iisus vă cheamă*, quoted in Popescu, “Din învățăturile celor de la Cuiibu cu Barză”, p. 52.

¹¹⁰ Popescu, “Problema mântuirii”, p. 159.

¹¹¹ Manea Popescu, “Cuiibul cu Barză”, *Biserica Ortodoxă Română* 42, no. 4 (1924), p. 212.

¹¹² Teodor Păcescu, “Mișcarea de la biserica Cuiibu cu Barză din București”, *Noua revistă bisericească*, 5/19-22 (1924), p. 264.

of Christianity, the purpose of the Church is none other than the realization of salvation, and the priest is the one who realizes salvation by means of grace and through the teachings available to him, applied through Christian pedagogy”.¹¹³ Gala Galaction wrote that “whoever does not believe in the Church of Jesus Christ – ‘I believe in one, holy, catholic and apostolic Church’ – does not believe in the Holy Spirit which guides it and thus does not believe in the promises and the power of the Saviour either”.¹¹⁴ The Stork’s Nest “is Christian, it is based on the Gospel,” Petru Chirică wrote, “but it does not support the Orthodox Church”.¹¹⁵

As Manea Popescu referred to in his opening letter, rumours had spread that Popescu was teaching people at The Stork’s Nest not to venerate the saints. Popescu defended himself by claiming that “regarding the worship of the Holy Virgin Mary and the saints, I remain within the general Orthodox formula, which is: worship God and venerate the saints. Unlike the Catholics, who canonize saints so often and present them to the world as beings that one can do business with and bow down to – and the Protestants, who ignore them entirely – the Orthodox Church has arrived at the happy formula I quoted above”.¹¹⁶ No-one was convinced. Moreover, Cornilescu appeared to have replaced the Orthodox saints with another pantheon of heroes. In a letter to *The New Church Magazine*, Petru Chirică asked, “What use to me are examples of missionaries in China who – according to D. Cornilescu – died for Christ, when everyone knows that they were Protestants, Adventists, or Catholics, when in the riches of my Orthodoxy I have so many missionaries at hand (John the Golden-Mouthed, Basil and Great, Gregory of Nazianzus, St. George, St. Dumitru, St. Nicholas, St. Peter and Paul, who also died for Christ.)”¹¹⁷

Exclusion

The issue came to a head in December 1923 after Galaction convinced the metropolitan to appoint a couple of other priests to serve alongside Teodor Popescu

¹¹³ Păcescu, “Mișcarea de la biserica Cuibu cu Barză”, p. 245.

¹¹⁴ Galaction, *Piatra din capul unghiului*, p. 26.

¹¹⁵ Chirică, “Adevăratul scop”, p. 249.

¹¹⁶ Tudor Popescu, *Spulberarea învinuirilor*, București, Tip. Române Unite, 1924, pp. 10-11.

¹¹⁷ Petru Chirică, “Scrisoare părinților Teodor Popescu și Manea Popescu”, *Noua revistă bisericască* 5, no. 6-8 (1923), p. 88.

at St. Ștefan's Church. It soon became apparent that Popescu was altering the liturgy, removing prayers asking the Virgin Mary and the saints to "have mercy on us!" and emphasizing instead that it was Christ along who has mercy and saves us.¹¹⁸ Galaction caused arguments at Cuibul cu Barza when he invited himself to preach there in December and then finally persuaded the metropolitan to charge Popescu with heresy.¹¹⁹ In Orthodox Christianity the liturgy defines how Christians relate to God, and it is that liturgy which binds together everything from the veneration of the saints to the interpretation of scripture and beliefs about salvation. Moreover, the concrete action of changing the liturgy was one of the few ways that Popescu's opponents could clearly prove his heterodoxy. Trapping heretics is difficult, Păcescu noted, because "sectarians do not attack the teachings of the Orthodox Church directly, but throw themselves over the religious identity (*conștiința religioasă*) of our people and try to subdue them".¹²⁰ What was really at stake, Păcescu claimed, was the national identity of the Romanian people, but what could be proven was that Popescu had changed the liturgy.

The committee of priests appointed to judge Popescu's case tells us something about how close to ecclesiastical centres of power his opponents were. The ten person committee included Iuliu Scriban, Irineu Mihălcescu, Gala Galaction, and Constantin Nazarie, all of whom we have met above as teachers and/or opponents of Popescu and Cornilescu. Other members included P. S. Platon, Atanasie Popescu, D. Georgescu, the dogmatician and canon lawyer Dimitrie Boroianu, the historian Niculae Popescu, and George Gibescu, who had written his undergraduate thesis on the importance of hierarchy in the Church. The committee concluded that "it is as clear as day that the priest Teodor Popescu does not confess our Orthodox faith".¹²¹

After Teodor Popescu had been defrocked, a number of priests continued

¹¹⁸ Galaction, *Jurnal*, vol. 3, pp. 151-152.

¹¹⁹ Galaction, *Jurnal*, vol. 3, pp. 153-156; [Gala Galaction], "Cuvinte de lămurire", *Biserica Ortodoxă Română* 41, no. 15 (1923), p. 1131.

¹²⁰ Teodor P. Păcescu, "Propaganda neo-protestantă", *Noua revistă bisericească* 5, no. 19-22 (1924), p. 241.

¹²¹ A.[rhimandrit Iuliu] S.[criban], "Chestiunea de la biserica Cuibul cu Barză", *Biserica Ortodoxă Română* 41, no. 15 (1923): pp. 1129-1130.

to attack The Stork's Nest on the front page of major cosmopolitan newspapers such as *The Truth (Adevărul)* and *The Morning (Dimineața)*, accompanied by occasional polemical replies from Popescu and his supporters.¹²² These newspapers were particularly interested in whether or not Popescu was a "heretic", a label which Scriban, at the very least, refused to give him, focusing instead on the fact that Popescu's ideas were "intolerable" to the Orthodox Church.¹²³ Like the friends of Job, one contributor after another told the newspapers how sorry they were for Popescu, who had been their friend, and gave him public advice about where he went wrong and how he could mend his ways.¹²⁴

Galaction wrote a lengthy book aimed at Orthodox priests who were confused about where Popescu had erred, and Irineu Mihălcescu published a series of articles outlining the Orthodox Church's position on the veneration of the saints.¹²⁵ They did not want others to follow Popescu's example. Greek Catholic writers claimed that Popescu had connections with the Anglican Church, something that his Orthodox opponents bitterly denied because of their own

¹²² Contributions supporting Popescu included D. Nanu, "Conflictul de la biserica Sf. Ștefan", *Dimineața* 20, no. 6167 (6 January 1924), p. 13; Marieta G. Vasilescu, "Incidentul dela biserica Sf. Ștefan", *Dimineața* 21, no. 6182 (21 January 1924), p. 1; Tudor Popescu, "Mișcarea de la Cuibul cu Barză", *Dimineața* 21, no. 6184 (27 January 1924), p. 1; Tudor Popescu, "Mișcarea de la Cuibul cu Barză", *Dimineața* 21, no. 6185 (28 January 1924), p. 1.

¹²³ Lorin, "Conflictul de la biserica Sf. Ștefan: Ce ne spune archim. Scriban", *Dimineața* 20, no. 6164 (3 January 1924), p. 1; Arhim. Scriban, "Răfuială pe chestiunea Cuibul cu Barză", *Dimineața* 21, no. 6181 (24 January 1924), p. 1. Cf. I.T., "O încercare de schismă", *Dimineața* 20, no. 6165 (4 January 1924), p. 1; Aida Vrioni, "Incidentul de la biserica Sft. Ștefan", *Dimineața* 20, no. 6170 (12 January 1924), p. 1; Vasile Dinescu-Bolintin, "Incidentul de la biserica Cuibul cu Barză", *Dimineața* 21, no. 6174 (17 January 1924), p. 1; "Procesul preotului de la biserica Sf. Ștefan", *Dimineața* 21, no. 6175 (18 January 1924), p. 1; N. Batzaria, "Ereziile", *Adevărul* 37, no. 12284 (19 January 1924), pp. 1-2.

¹²⁴ Lorin, "Conflictul de la biserica Cuibul cu Barză: Ce ne spune d. Vasile Dinescu-Bolintin", *Dimineața* 20, no. 6165 (4 January 1924), p. 5; Lorin, "Conflictul de la biserica Sf. Ștefan: Părerile părintelui I. Popescu-Mălăești", *Dimineața* 20, no. 6166 (5 January 1924), p. 1; "Chemarea clerului!", *Dimineața* 21, no. 6176 (19 January 1924), pp. 1-2; Gala Galaction, "Gala Galaction are cuvântul!", *Dimineața* 21, no. 6187 (30 January 1924), p. 1; G. Galaction, "Cazul de la biserica Cuibul cu Barză", *Dimineața* 21, no. 6188 (31 January 1924), p. 1.

¹²⁵ Galaction, *Piatra din capul unghiului*; Irineu Mihălcescu, "Clasicitatea creștină și cultul sfinților", *Biserica Ortodoxă Română* 42, no. 3 (1924), pp. 145-153; Irineu Mihălcescu, "Cultul sfinților în fața descoperirii dumnezeiești", *Biserica Ortodoxă Română* 42, no. 4 (1924), pp. 195-201; Irineu Mihălcescu, "Învățătura bisericii despre cultul sfinților", *Biserica Ortodoxă Română* 42, no. 5 (1924), pp. 290-295.

increasingly frequent meetings with Anglicans. In turn, the Orthodox polemicists claimed that they knew Anglican priests who were disgusted with Popescu's behaviour.¹²⁶ Popescu's supporters responded in kind, claiming that he had been defrocked only because the other priests were jealous of his popularity.¹²⁷ They published several pamphlets defending Popescu and defaming his detractors.¹²⁸

Though he himself did not attend The Stork's Nest, Cornilescu's former classmate the ultranationalist poet and theologian Nichifor Crainic defended Popescu in an avant-garde literary magazine he edited, entitled *Gândirea* (*Thought*). At the time, Crainic enjoyed championing radical causes, and Popescu's "preaching addresses a society whose moral conscience long been fast asleep and in which the triumph of sin has become normal", Crainic wrote. "This preacher whips us as one would whip a horse, and his blows are felt in society. ... This exceptional willingness to identity his personal life with the doctrine that he preaches is powerful, as is his moral beauty, which raises him above the rest of us and especially above those who are leading his persecution".¹²⁹ According to the secret police (*Siguranța*), Popescu and Crainic remained friends and in 1928 they collaborated on a petition to prevent the controversial singer Josephine Baker from performing in Romania.¹³⁰

These exchanges soon degenerated into personal attacks, Manea Popescu claiming that Crainic sided with Popescu simply because Galaction was a Marxist and a philosemite, and asserted that Crainic was too stupid to understand theology and too fat to look in the mirror.¹³¹ Galaction claimed that he had been approached by a father whose daughter had been converted by Cornilescu and was planning to marry him. When challenged on this by his superiors, Galaction said that Cornilescu had renounced his monastic vows

¹²⁶ "Cuibul cu Barză și anglicanismul", *Biserica Ortodoxă Română* 42, no. 2 (1924), p. 122.

¹²⁷ [Gala Galaction], "Cuvinte de lămurire", *Biserica Ortodoxă Română* 41, no. 15 (1923), p. 1130.

¹²⁸ Nanu, *Iisus vă cheamă*; D. Nanu, *Lupta între Evanghelie și tipic, între logică și sofism*, București, Atelierele "Adevărul", 1924; Popescu, *Spulberarea învinuirilor*; Dincescu Bolintin *et al.*, *Lupta între Dumnezeu și Mamona*.

¹²⁹ Nichifor Crainic, "Cuibul cu Barză", *Gândirea* 3, no. 11 (1924), p. 259.

¹³⁰ Archives of the Council for the Study of the Securitate Archives (Henceforth: ACNSAS), Fond Penal, Dosar 13206, vol. 2, f. 336.

¹³¹ Manea Popescu, "Cuibul cu Barză", pp. 211-215.

and fled to Germany, leaving the girl behind.¹³² Cornilescu's biographer, Alexandru Măianu, writes that shortly before leaving the country he "had a conflict with General [Gheorghe] Rusescu, whose sister frequented Christian meetings. General Rusescu felt insulted by Cornilescu, who told him that he was a sinner because he was not a believer, and the General challenged him to a duel".¹³³ Whatever his motives, Cornilescu left the country for Germany several months before Popescu's trial, apparently at the urging of the future Patriarch, Miron Cristea. Supported first by Ralu Callimachi and then by gifts from congregations he spoke at, he spent time as an itinerant preacher and Bible teacher in England, France, Germany, and Switzerland, before finally settling in Switzerland in 1929.¹³⁴ Following a request by *The Orthodox Sunday*, in June 1924 the Holy Synod recommended that priests no longer use Cornilescu's Bible on the grounds that "it does not correspond to the normative canonical text of the Orthodox Church ... [and] is done tendentiously, in a spirit that encourages the reader to arrive at interpretations that are completely opposed to the doctrines of the Orthodox Church".¹³⁵ Nonetheless, publications by The Lord's Army continued using it long after Cornilescu had fallen out of favour with the rest of the Orthodox Church.¹³⁶

Popescu's place as parish priest at St. Stefan's Church was taken by Father Marin C. Ionescu, who was an occasional contributor to *The New Church Magazine*.¹³⁷ A promising young priest who obtained his doctorate on the topic of "The Priest and the Harmonizing of Social Classes" (1925), Ionescu became a prominent defender of Romanian nationalism and of Orthodoxy as a Ro-

¹³² [Galaction], "Cuvinte de lămurire", p. 1130.

¹³³ Alexandru Măianu, *Viața și lucrarea lui Dumitru Cornilescu*, București, Editura Stephanus, 1995, p. 84.

¹³⁴ Măianu, *Viața și lucrarea lui Dumitru Cornilescu*, pp. 84-104; Schweizerisches Bundesarchiv BAR, E 4264 Bundesamt für Polizei, Dosar 1989/146, vol. 266, file K 10651, Dumitru Cornilescu, 1933-1949. I am grateful to Emanuel Conțac for providing me with Cornilescu's Swiss naturalization documents.

¹³⁵ "Cronica bisericească internă", *Biserica Ortodoxă Română* 43, no. 4 (1925), p. 232; quoted in Conțac, *Cornilescu*, p. 77.

¹³⁶ Conțac, *Cornilescu*, 77 n. 108.

¹³⁷ Marin C. Ionescu, "Moș Toader și Adventismul", *Noua revistă bisericească* 3, no. 3-4 (1921), pp. 67-69.

manian religion.¹³⁸ Few prominent churchmen of the interwar period avoided scandal at one time or another, and in 1933 The Stork's Nest was again upset following accusations by the cantor that Ionescu was mishandling parish funds and was promoting political causes. Parishioners quickly came to his defense, and Ionescu remained in his post.¹³⁹

A New Church is Born

Popescu's followers continued meeting in private homes, and distributed pamphlets and tracts teaching Popescu's message.¹⁴⁰ Originally known as the "Born Agains" (*Noii Renăscuți*), Popescu's movement soon spread to the nearby city of Ploiești, where the parish priest complained to the police that they held meetings at night time "when everyone needs peace and quiet".¹⁴¹ It was not always easy to organize their gatherings, and in February 1925 two priests from Bucharest attacked one of their meetings accompanied by 40-50 people. The police report stated that the building would have been destroyed had the authorities not intervened.¹⁴² In November 1925 Popescu admitted to a representative of the BFBS that he was still unsure what he meant his community to be. He would not return to the Orthodox Church, he did feel attracted to any of the major Protestant or neo-Protestant churches, nor did he particularly want to start his own church.¹⁴³ Popescu's indecision meant that congregations of his followers formed organically, often without any deliberate attempt by Popescu to establish them. Soon communities of "Tudorists" (*Tudoriști*) or "Christians Accord-

¹³⁸ ACNSAS, Fond Documentar, Dosar 12413, f. 1; Marin C. Ionescu "Unii cu Anglicanii! Alții cu Papistașii! Niciunul cu ortodocsii?!" *Glasul Monahilor* 14, no. 504 (1936), pp. 1-2; "Ionescu, Marin", in Mircea Păcurariu (ed.), *Dicționarul teologilor români*, București, Editura enciclopedică, 2002, p. 227.

¹³⁹ Epitropii, Consilierii, și Enoriașii bisericii Sf. Ștefan, "Cuibu cu Barză", *Mi-e milă de popor: Spulberarea unei calomnii*, București, Tipografia Astoria, 1933.

¹⁴⁰ ANIC, Ministerul Cultelor și Artelor, 167/1925, f. 6; Azimioară, *Din viața și lucrarea*, pp. 40-51.

¹⁴¹ ANIC, Ministerul Cultelor și Artelor, 167/1925, f. 3.

¹⁴² ANIC, Ministerul Cultelor și Artelor, 167/1925, ff. 10-11.

¹⁴³ Memo by Bishop J.H. Greig for Archbishop Davidson, 16 November 1925. Lambeth Palace Library, Douglas 88, ff. 245-9. I am grateful to Emanuel Conțac for sharing these documents with me.

ing to the Scriptures” (*Creștini după Scriptură*), as they were increasingly called, appeared in towns and villages throughout the counties of Ilfov, Ploiești, Brașov, Argeș, Ialomița, Constanța, and Tutova. Without trained pastors, these communities depended entirely on lay leadership and on books and songs supplied by Popescu.¹⁴⁴ Women originally prayed in Tudorist gatherings, but on Cornilescu’s advice Popescu demanded that they remain silent during the church services.¹⁴⁵ Tudorists also ceased making the sign of the cross or greeting each other with phrase “Christ has risen!” at Easter time, signaling their complete separation from Orthodox forms of piety.¹⁴⁶

As did neo-Protestants, Tudorists referred to each other as “brother” and “sister”, and usually spread their beliefs through one-on-one conversations. They also began publishing a magazine entitled *The Word of the Truth* (*Cuvântul Adevărului*), which contained short sermons, devotional readings, and commentaries on passages of the Bible.¹⁴⁷ Although it was highly illegal, some Tudorists posted tracts to non-believers through the mail, or handed them to passers-by on the streets. Individuals caught doing so were promptly arrested.¹⁴⁸

By 1936 Tudorist meetings in Bucharest were standing room only, with hundreds of people in attendance, but the movement still lacked any official recognition.¹⁴⁹ In one pamphlet from 1937 the Tudorists described themselves thus:

We are Christians. That is what we are called. But because the authorities ask us for a name to differentiate ourselves from other churches and directions, we call ourselves “Christians According to the Scriptures”. Our goal is to strengthen believers spiritually through sharing the Gospel and through evangelism to bring to the Lord Jesus to those who do not know Him and who are not born again. ... Towards the Orthodox Church and towards the other denominations [*culte*], according to the instructions of Scripture (Romans 12:18), our attitude is one of peace and of non-interference in their business.¹⁵⁰

¹⁴⁴ Azimioară, *Din viața și lucrarea*, pp. 47, 60.

¹⁴⁵ Azimioară, *Din viața și lucrarea*, p. 44.

¹⁴⁶ ACNSAS, Fond Informativ, Dosar 189663, f. 118.

¹⁴⁷ Two issues of *Cuvântul Adevărului* from 1937 can be found in ACNSAS, Fond Documentar, Dosar 13408, vol. 5, ff. 135-147.

¹⁴⁸ ACNSAS, Fond Informativ, Dosar 189663, ff. 13, 35-46, 53-75.

¹⁴⁹ ACNSAS, Fond Informativ, Dosar 189663, ff. 1-2.

¹⁵⁰ *Memoriu cuprinzând arătarea pe scurt a învățăturii și organizației “Bisericii Creștinilor după*

Neither prohibited nor sanctioned by law, Tudorists had trouble with the police throughout the interwar period, and had their authorization to meet approved or rescinded every few years without warning.¹⁵¹ They had to request permission from the Ministry of Cults to establish meeting houses (*case de rugăciune*) on a case-by-case basis, and approval in one village did not guarantee approval in the next. Preaching without authorization led to the immediate closure of Tudorist meeting houses.¹⁵² Local policemen remained confused about whether “Tudorists” and “Christians According to the Scriptures” were one and the same thing, and wrote to their superiors that Tudorist preachers “seek to break apart our ancestral religious beliefs, weakening the unity of the state in the process”.¹⁵³ A lay Orthodox movement known as the “Patriarch Miron Association” lobbied to have the Tudorists banned entirely in 1937, but without success.¹⁵⁴

In 1939 the government did move to close Tudorist meeting houses entirely, and Popescu agreed to merge his church with the Brethren in Romania.¹⁵⁵ By this stage the only serious difference between the two groups was that the Brethren baptized adults, while the Tudorists continued baptizing infants as the Orthodox Church did.¹⁵⁶ The Tudorists did not gain much breathing room, however, as when Ion Antonescu took power in 1940 he severely limited religious freedom and the Brethren, together with other neo-Protestant groups, faced the threat of deportation to Transnistria during the Holocaust.¹⁵⁷ After the Romanian Communist Party came to power, Popescu and other Tudorist preachers such as Gheorghe Cornilescu and Emil Constantinescu frequently disparaged

Scriptură” in ACNSAS, Fond Documentar, Dosar 13408, vol. 5, f. 123.

¹⁵¹ ACNSAS, Fond Informativ, Dosar 189663, ff. 110-113.

¹⁵² ANIC, Fond Ministerul Cultelor și Artelor, Dosar 149/1936, ff. 2, 6, 28, 38, 40, 48; ACNSAS, Fond Informativ, Dosar 189663, ff. 77-78.

¹⁵³ ANIC, Fond Ministerul Cultelor și Artelor, Dosar 149/1936, f. 4. Cf. ACNSAS, Fond Informativ, Dosar 189663, f. 85.

¹⁵⁴ ACNSAS, Fond Informativ, Dosar 189663, ff. 4-5, 9.

¹⁵⁵ ACNSAS, Fond Informativ, Dosar 189663, f. 10; Azimioară, *Din viața și lucrarea*, pp. 66-67.

¹⁵⁶ ACNSAS, Fond Documentar, Dosar 13408, vol. 5, f. 122.

¹⁵⁷ Azimioară, *Din viața și lucrarea*, pp. 70-74; Viorel Achim (ed.), *Politica regimului Antonescu față de cultele neoprotestante: Documente*, Iași, Polirom, 2013.

the Communist Party in their sermons. They encouraged their followers to have as little as possible to do with the state, including rejecting socialist literature, theatre, and cinema.¹⁵⁸ The secret police (*Securitate*) kept these men under strict surveillance, but Tudorist gatherings in Bucharest still regularly attracted crowds of between 1,000 and 1,500 people in 1953.¹⁵⁹ Popescu's failing health made him less of a threat to the authorities, who preferred to limit the freedom of activity available to neo-Protestant groups than to close them down entirely.

Conclusion

Monitoring and controlling the doctrines and activities of the Tudorists was an ideological imperative for the Communist secret police, just as it had been for state authorities during the 1930s and for Orthodox priests such as Teodor Păcescu and Manea Popescu in the early 1920s. In anniversary editions of *The New Church Magazine* in 1929 and 1930, Păcescu published articles entitled "Looking Back: The Struggle of Our Church Magazine with Tudorism and Cornilism" and "Our Identity as Defenders of Orthodoxy".¹⁶⁰ Polemics with Teodor Popescu and Dumitru Cornilescu dominated the magazine's pages throughout its existence, and Păcescu took great pride in the role he played in driving the Tudorists out of the church. Similarly, the prominence which Galaction gave his conflict with *The Stork's Nest* in his diary shows it to have been the highlight of his time as a missionary priest. Attacking the orthodoxy of *The Stork's Nest* allowed these men to act as defenders of what they saw as an embattled church despite their inability to either revive Orthodoxy on terms they considered acceptable or to halt the spread of neo-Protestantism in villages across the country.

The danger of Cornilescu's brand of Christianity, Păcescu later wrote, is that "he managed to mask the new Protestant garments in which he had dressed his Orthodox soul, and to present himself to his colleagues, refugee theologians

¹⁵⁸ ACNSAS, Fond Informativ, Dosar 259045, vol. 1, ff. 1-2, 5-7.

¹⁵⁹ ACNSAS, Fond Informativ, Dosar 259045, vol. 1, ff. 92, 105.

¹⁶⁰ T. Păcescu, "Uitându-ne înapoi: Luptă nouei reviste bisericesti cu Tudorismul si Cornilismul", *Noua revistă bisericească* 11, no. 14 (1929), pp. 1-2; T. Păcescu, "Despre noi ca apărători ai ortodoxiei", *Noua revistă bisericească* 12, no. 7-8 (1930), pp. 1-2.

from Moldavia, even military chaplains, as Orthodox, as someone who wanted to deepen our Orthodox Christianity”.¹⁶¹ Păcescu’s observation that Cornilescu’s initial success happened in the east is significant, because it came at a time when civil servants from Bucharest – including priests – saw it as their duty to “civilize” the eastern provinces, dominating them through the imposition of a centralized bureaucracy and by appointing people from Bucharest to positions of influence in Moldavia.¹⁶² By suppressing The Stork’s Nest, Păcescu and his colleagues had helped defend the nation-state at a vulnerable moment of territorial expansion.

The scandal surrounding The Stork’s Nest also placed a tentative halt to other attempts to reform the Orthodox Church. The early careers of both Cornilescu and Popescu were shaped by early twentieth century efforts by leaders such as Miron Cristea, Nicolae Bălan, Vartolomeu Stănescu, and Iuliu Scriban to revive Romanian spirituality through increased piety, social activism, and regular Bible study. The preachers at The Stork’s Nest cited these men as their examples, and claimed to be combatting sectarianism by reviving Orthodoxy just as they had been taught by their elders. But the dearth of religious writings and devotional resources available to would-be revivalists in the early 1920s meant that Cornilescu and Popescu discovered alternative, non-Orthodox ways of reading the Bible and practicing spirituality. Cornilescu’s translation efforts opened a means for new ideas and practices to enter Romanian religious culture. The temptation to import Protestant doctrines along with Protestant-style sermons and tracts appears to have been so great that Manea Popescu concluded that “if we have to establish our evangelism on a foreign basis, it would be better for us to stay where we are and to be happy with preserving what we have inherited”.¹⁶³

¹⁶¹ Păcescu, “Uitându-ne înapoi”, p. 1.

¹⁶² Irina Livezeanu, *Cultural Politics in Greater Romania: Regionalism, Nation Building, and Ethnic Struggle, 1918-1930*, London, Cornell University Press, 1995.

¹⁶³ Popescu, Popescu, “Un ultim răspuns”, p. 13.