

# **Pieties of the Nation: Romanian neo-protestants in the interwar struggle for religious and national identity**

by

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## Abstract

Neo-protestants (Seventh-Day Adventists, Baptists, Brethren, and Pentecostals) were the fastest growing among the religious minorities in interwar Romania. The American, Hungarian, German, and other European influences on these groups and their increasing success led government officials and the Romanian Orthodox Church to look on them with suspicion and to challenge them with accusations of being socially deviant sects or foreign pawns. Neo-protestants presented themselves as loyal Romanians while still maintaining close relationships with ethnic minorities of the same faith within the country and abroad. The debates on the identity of these groups and the “competition for souls” that occurred in society demonstrate neo-protestants' vision of Romanian national identity challenging the accepted interwar arguments for what it meant to be Romanian.

This new religious contribution to Romanian identity developed in part with the growing number of ethnic Romanians adopting these confessions and forming churches separate from the ethnic minorities and as a response to the challenges posed by the Orthodox Church and the state. Romanian neo-protestants presented a competing vision of Romanian national identity which did not include Orthodox Christianity. The reactions they received reveal the confusion and intense competition of interwar Romanian politics and society which influenced legislation leading to their harsh repression in the 1940s.

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## Introduction

The end of World War I and the subsequent peace treaties resulted in a drastic reconstruction of European states, especially in Central and Eastern Europe. The new boundaries incorporated new peoples and required a re-definition (or stronger affirmation) of the identity of each nation-state. The Treaties of Bucharest, Trianon, Versailles, Neuilly, and St. Germain allowed for the secession of the territories of Bessarabia, Transylvania, the Banat, southern Dobrogea, and Bukovina to the Romanian state by the end of 1920.<sup>1</sup> These regions, formerly belonging to neighboring states, included large populations of ethnic Romanians but also ethnic and religious minorities. In part as a response to the growing revanchism of the defeated powers, politicians in Romania attempted to find a strong political, cultural, and social identity across the country based on the ethnic majority. Religion in particular remained one of the most important factors contributing to national identity. In 1920 a significant number of political leaders and elites of the newly enlarged Romania (Greater Romania) embarked on a mission to develop a united Romanian Orthodox identity. Creating clear religious-ethnic categories, however, proved difficult.

One factor, seldom researched, was the increased missionary activity during World War I among ethnic Romanians (especially soldiers) and their exposure to Christian neo-protestant denominations. These originally came to Romania through Hungarian and German missionaries as early as the sixteenth century; they took root among minority communities in Romania proper and in the territories annexed to post 1918 Romania, spreading to the majority population. At the war's end the Romanian Orthodox Church (*Biserica Română Ortodoxă*, hereafter BOR) leaders and Romanian elite were astonished at the exponential growth in the

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<sup>1</sup> Octav George Lecca, *Dictionar istoric, arheologic și geografic al României* [Historical dictionary of Romania] (Bucharest: Universul, 1937), p. 557; League of Nations, *Minorities Treaty*, Chapt.1, art. 2 and art.7 (1919), in Charles Upson Clark, *Greater Roumania* (NY: Dodd, Mead and Company, 1922), pp. 290, 292.

number of converts from the Orthodox Church to the Baptist faith and other neo-protestant Christian denominations (the Seventh-day Adventist, Brethren, and Pentecostal churches).<sup>2</sup> The League of Nations Minorities Treaty and the 1923 Romanian Constitution seemed to provide religious pluralism for the continued increase of these churches. Orthodox clergy, on seeing their church lose social and political influence, blamed these new groups of unfair benefits from abroad and became more aggressive in their competition over cultural and political resources. Neo-protestants in turn accused BOR of excessive privileges in her relationship to the state. Intellectuals and politicians who were opposed to what they saw as growing liberalism also labeled these converts a dangerous “other” and a threat to the politically legitimizing power of the state churches.

Nevertheless, ethnic Romanian neo-protestant congregations continued to grow despite marginalization or even legal suppression. Due to intimate minority connections within Romania, Romanian neo-protestants felt they needed to present a strong national identity rooted in the spread of their faith convictions among Romanian peasants from the northernmost part of Transylvania to the eastern towns of Bessarabia. They initially sought to build a positive dialogue with minorities and presented a dissonant image of “Romanian-ness” from that which was endorsed by the majority. Who were these neo-protestant converts? How did they construct their identity and how did others perceive them? Why were they treated with growing hostility in Romania, which culminated in an outlaw of their denominations during Ion Antonescu’s regime (1940-1944)? What role did they play in the struggle for Romanian national identity formation in the interwar period?

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<sup>2</sup> The term Protestants refers to the denominations coming directly out of the Reformation (Calvinists/Reformed, Lutherans) and these along with the Orthodox, Greek Catholic, and Roman Catholic Churches are considered traditional churches in Romania. Throughout the paper Seventh-day Adventists will be referred to as Adventists, but the author is aware of the various branches within Adventism.

The study of this group demonstrates the harsh competition in the midst of attempts at increasing religious pluralism and their importance in challenging accepted notions of Romanian identity. Their position on the separation of the Orthodox faith from this identity was significant enough to be considered a national danger to influential persons within the hierarchies of BOR and of the Romanian state. However, despite a rejection of Orthodox doctrine, they presented their own form of piety as loyalty to the nation. The subsequent marginalization of these neo-protestant converts in society reveals the weight of their development on integral nationalist rhetoric and action and the complexity in claims to nationhood and identity.

The present study will begin with the conceptual framework, intersecting the research on nationalism, identity, and religion. An introductory look at Central Eastern European neo-protestant communities during the same period provides a context for comparison with the situation in Romania. This is followed by an analysis of the development in Romania of the four neo-protestant groups with a focus on their transnational dimensions and the influence of missionary organizations to reveal both the benefits and shortcomings of interwar transatlantic and pan-European religious networks for these neo-protestant communities.

The second chapter will explore the beliefs and rituals of neo-protestant communities analyzing their self-perceptions as presented in their publications, and particularly an unpacking of the meaning behind the conversion process for this group of ethnic Romanian converts. The basic tenets of Christian neo-protestant faith ultimately match those of Orthodoxy. However, a reinterpretation of the same authoritative religious texts brought these new converts to an interesting balance of individual faith and of community dependency, and thus into an entangled relationship with the contemporary discourse on national identity. I will analyze how they presented their new identity through the way in which they stressed the



personal reading of the Bible, emphasized public testimony, adapted the message to their culture through song (the word read, spoken, and sung) and how they tied this to their national loyalty. Within the neo-protestant group there are the subgroups mentioned previously, whose boundaries of differentiation also require analysis. The polemics that developed between neo-protestants in their battle for legitimacy within their local communities and in the eyes of the government provides an added dimension to their perception of self and of Romanian identity.

The third chapter will draw out the image of these groups as constructed by the BOR hierarchy, intellectuals, the press, and by political authorities in the interwar period. The forms and justification of local hostility and state repression will be analyzed to reach a better understanding of the competition for influencing national identity at all levels of society and why the image presented by Romanian neo-protestants was so radical. The reform movement which occurred during this time within BOR- *Oastea Domnului*- and its interaction with the neo-protestants will also be considered. This will allow the relations between Romanian converts and BOR or Orthodox affiliated elite to be examined in a variety of dimensions and not solely in interactions of conflict.

The study is pertinent to an understanding of national identity and of religious minorities in Romania during the interwar period and of today. These neo-protestants engaged in competition at the local level over souls and social influence with Orthodox priests who perceived them as a threat. At the state level officials were unsure of how to treat the growing Romanian non-traditional churches, which initially received similar restrictions as those of ethnic minority congregations. Despite the early influences of and affiliation with Germans, Hungarians, and others the neo-protestants had a unique interplay between their individual faith, their religious community, their interaction with the wider society, and national loyalty. Yet, because of foreign origins and sustained collaboration with ethnic minorities and western

religious institutions, many considered them a spiritual and political threat to the Romanian state. A study of Romanian neo-protestants engages with a small but significant sub-section of the population whose success and challenges in the interwar era reveal important aspects of political, cultural, and religious life in Greater Romania.

## Chapter I:

### Academic, Regional, and Historical-Religious Context

Few historians have dealt with Romanian neo-protestants apart from detailed histories compiled by denominationally affiliated writers, and even fewer look at the interwar period.<sup>3</sup> A critical view of the self-perception of these groups is missing in conjunction with how and why this identity conflicted with BOR adherents and Romanian government officials. As historian Dorin Dobrinu argues in his 2007 article on state policies concerning neo-protestants, the topic is vast, under researched, and sensitive.<sup>4</sup> A broader look at the current literature with a contextualization of neo-protestants in interwar Europe and their development in Romania in particular provides crucial background for the development of the images of these groups and their importance in the debates on Romanian identity as discussed in the chapters to follow.

### Conceptual Framework and Methodology

The use of conceptual history on nationalism and religion, and the blending of an anthropological approach, across national and trans-national contexts allows for a deeper understanding of the interwar social presence and struggle of ethnic Romanian neo-protestants.<sup>5</sup>

In 2013 Viorel Achim released a collection of archival documents in relation to the suppression

<sup>3</sup> Here are some of the works of neo-protestant historians: Horia Azimiora, *Din viața și lucrarea lui Teodor Popescu* [From the life and work of Teodor Popescu] (Oradea: Editura Emmanuel, 1988); Alexa Popovici, *Istoria Bapțiștilor din România*, [Baptist History in Romania] vol. II, 1919-1944 (Chicago, IL: Biserica Baptistă Română Chicago, 1989); Șandru Trandafir, *Biserica Penticostală în istoria creștinismului* [The Pentecostal Church in the history of Christianity] (București: Editura bisericii lui Dumnezeu apostolice penticostale din România, 1992); Ioan-Gheorghe Rotaru, Dan Iulian Opris, Beniamin Rosca-Nastasescu, *O Istorie a adventismului de ziua a șaptea din România* [A History of Seventh-day Adventism in Romania] vol. I (Bucharest: Editura Viață și Sănătate, 2009). A work on the history of the Romanian Brethren is in the making.

<sup>4</sup> Dorin Dobrinu, "Religie și putere în România. Politica statului față de confesiunile (neo) protestante, 1919-1944," [Religion and power in Romania. State politics in the face of neo-protestant confessions] *Studia Politica. Romanian Political Science Review* 7/3 (2007), pp. 583-602

<sup>5</sup> By dealing almost exclusively with Romanian neo-protestants, the thesis does not wish to lessen the difficulties faced by minority adherents; good research is already available on interwar ethnic minorities. See Irina Livezeanu, *Cultural politics in Greater Romania: regionalism, nation building & ethnic struggle, 1918-1930* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1995); Balázs Trencsényi, Dragoș Petrescu, Cristina Petrescu, Constantin Iordachi, Kántor Zoltán, *Nation-Building and Contested Identities: Romanian and Hungarian Case Studies* (Budapest: Regio Books, 2001).

of these groups during Antonescu's regime, which reveals some of the government and self-perceptions of neo-protestants, but refers almost exclusively to the World War II period.<sup>6</sup> In contrast to devotional and historical works written by neo-protestants themselves, both Dobrinu and Achim largely analyze the group from the point of view of the Romanian government. Gheorghe Modoran's 2008 article focuses on the interwar nationalist response of the Orthodox Church hierarchy towards Romanian converts and its influence on the state, bringing them into the discourse on Romanian nationalism.<sup>7</sup>

Nationalism and Romanian religious-national identity of the interwar years developed in response to Romania's newly acquired boundaries and peoples; but it fed off illusions of primordial ethno-religious distinctiveness.<sup>8</sup> Amidst the debates occurring during the time and in light of more recent nationalism studies, the development of neo-protestant identity within Romanian identity proved a complex manifestation of modernization.<sup>9</sup> Heather Coleman argues that in the Russian interwar context "Baptists promoted a vision of a Russia where one could be at once Russian and non-Orthodox...[with] conversion unsettling identities of self, nation, community, [and] showing the permeability of these borders."<sup>10</sup> The same can be said of Romanian Baptists and neo-protestants in general. Though Romanian elites influenced by the 1848 revolutionaries showed admiration for the western model of the state, by 1900 they

<sup>6</sup> Viorel Achim, *Politica regimului Antonescu față de cultele neoprotestante: documente* [The Politics of the Antonescu Regime in the face on neo-protestant cults: documents] (Iași: Polirom, 2013).

<sup>7</sup> Gheorghe Modoran, "Naționalismul interbelic- factor ideologic al intoleranței religioase," [Interwar Nationalism-ideological factor of religious intolerance] *TheoRhēma* 3/2 (2008), pp.118-139.

<sup>8</sup> Ernest Gellner, *Thought and Change* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicholson, 1965), p. 168; Eric J. Hobsbawm, *Nations and Nationalism since 1780* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), p. 10; George Enache, "Problema 'Sectelor' în România. Din a doua jumătate a Secolului al XIX-lea până în 1948," [The Problem of the "Sects" in Romania. From the second half of the nineteenth century to 1948] *Analele Universității Dunărea de Jos" Galați* 19, Istorie, tom VI (2007), pp.101-123.

<sup>9</sup> T. N. Madan, "Secularism in Its Place," *Journal of Asian Studies* 46 (1987), p.753; Alex Drace-Francis, *The Making of Modern Romanian Culture: Literacy and the Development of National Identity* (London: Tauris Academic Studies, 2006), p.199.

<sup>10</sup> Heather Coleman, *Russian Baptists and Spiritual Revolution 1905-1929* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2005), p.5.

largely came to pursue a nationalist discourse focused on language, roots, and blood.<sup>11</sup> This spread to village priests and was adopted among the peasants. The rise of an anti-western ideology and belief in a superior autochthonous tradition dominated the interwar cultural and political scene.<sup>12</sup>

As political scientist Radu Cinpoș argues, allegiance to the nation in interwar Romania incorporated mobilization of people of the same ancestry and traditions against the foreign enemy.<sup>13</sup> The definition of the national “self” at the exclusion of other communities played an important part in national identity formation. The “other” was necessary to test and ensure the unity and homogeneity of the national “self.”<sup>14</sup> Both these identities were socially constructed and so subject to change in themselves and in their relationship with one another as historical, social, and political contexts also changed.<sup>15</sup> However, the perceived fixed character of national identity could easily turn oppressive as evident in the government campaigns for Romanianization.<sup>16</sup>

Writings by influential interwar theorists of Romanian identity such as Nichifor Crainic, Nae Ionescu, Ocatvian Goga, and A.C. Cuza, among others, are valuable primary sources to analyze forms of Romanian nationalism. Secondary works on Romanian nationalism and culture, such as historian Alex Drace-Francis’s research, provide a link between the role of literacy in national identity formation, the protestant emphasis on individual access to the

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<sup>11</sup> Radu Cinpoș, *Nationalism and Identity in Romania: A History of Extreme Politics from the Birth of the State to EU Accession* (London: I.B. Tauris Publishers, 2010), p. 41.

<sup>12</sup> Dragoș Sdrobiș, “Național și naționalism în educația românească interbelică (1918-1939),” [National and nationalism in Romanian interwar education] *Anuarul Institutului de Istorie “George Barițiu” Historica* Issue L (2011), pp. 348-350.

<sup>13</sup> Cinpoș, *Nationalism and Identity in Romania*, pp. 13-15.

<sup>14</sup> Lucian Boia, *History and Myth in Romanian Consciousness* (Budapest: Central European University Press, 2001), pp. 153-183.

<sup>15</sup> Anna Triandafyllidou, “National Identity and the Other,” *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 21/4 (1998), pp. 598-600.

<sup>16</sup> Craig Calhoun, *Nationalism* (Buckingham: Open University Press, 1997), p. 7; Irina Livezeanu’s *Cultural politics in Greater Romania* provides a good context for the intolerance in society in the name of Romanianization and national consolidation during the same period.

words of the Bible, and the idea of liberating the Romanian peasant prevalent in the discourse of the time. As print and education developed into important Romanian national symbols, they were “explicitly invoked in terms which likened them to surrogate or neo-religious institutions.”<sup>17</sup> There was great competition for these institutions both in the religious and secular spheres as their ability to influence national formation became evident. Scholarly work on religion and nationalism in Romania, such as that of Keith Hitchins, Lavinia Stan, Lucian Turcescu, Lucian Leustean, George Enache, and primary sources by Romanian intellectuals offer a solid basis for the seeming indispensability of religion in Romanian nationalism.<sup>18</sup>

Interwar Romanian society generated mostly negative images of neo-protestants. Ioan Vasile Leb presents the legal tensions between BOR and the growing neo-protestant denominations, which when recognized with full legal rights were officially categorized as *culte* [cults] (the term used for legally recognized denominations in Romania) or identified as *secte* [sects]-heretical splinter groups- even in government documents.<sup>19</sup> However, both sides held firmly to their identity as loyal and most beneficial to the state. Missionary or neo-protestant publications also made references to quotes by BOR clergy and by intellectuals or government officials which identify neo-protestants with issues of national security. In presenting their different arguments for Romanian identity it is crucial to differentiate between the creed as officially presented (either by BOR or by neo-protestants) and the way in which

<sup>17</sup> Alex Drace-Francis, *The Making of Modern Romanian Culture*, p. 197.

<sup>18</sup> Keith Hitchins, “Orthodoxism: Polemics Over Ethnicity and Religion in Interwar Romania,” ed. Ivo Banac and Katherine Verdery, *National Character and national Ideology in Interwar Eastern Europe* (OH: Slavica Publishers, 1995), pp.135-156; Lavinia Stan, Lucian Turcescu, *Religion and Politics in Post-Communist Romania* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007); Lucian Leustean, “‘For the Glory of Romanians’: Orthodoxy and Nationalism in Greater Romania, 1918-1945,” *Nationalities Papers* 35/4 (2007), pp.717-742; George Enache, “Biserică, societate, națiune, stat în România interbelică. Biserica Ortodoxă Română și ‘ispita totalitară’ de dreapta,” [Church, Society, Nation, State in Interwar Romania. The Romanian Orthodox Church and the ‘totalitarian temptation’ of the Right] *Revista Teologica* 94/2 (2012), pp.276-300; A.C.Cuza, *Naționalitatea în artă. Principii, Fapte, Concluzii. Introducere la Doctrina Naționalistă-Creștină*, ed.III (Bucharest: Cartea Românească, 1927); Onisifor Ghibu, *Politica religioasă și minoritară a României* (Cluj: Editura Ardealul, 1940).

<sup>19</sup> Ioan Vasile Leb, “The Orthodox Church and the Minority Cults in Inter-War Romania (1918-1940),” *Journal for the Study of Religions and Ideologies* 1/3 (2010), pp. 131-141.

the different churches' language, symbolism, and tradition were used or knowingly manipulated for social and political gain.<sup>20</sup>

Along with the conceptual history of nationalism, the focus on the transcendent or supernatural in religion among these groups benefits from an anthropological approach, utilizing studies on belief, ritual, and aesthetics among Christian groups conducted by anthropologists of religion such as Roy Rappaport, Brigit Meyer, and Webb Keane. These provide a more intimate analysis of how Romanian interwar neo-protestants saw themselves beyond politics and nationalist discourse. Neo-protestant sources, in particular, offer a window into their mode of engaging their belief with their action- their spiritual identity with that of their ethnic and national identity. Katherine Verdery, in her study on post-socialist Romania, identified a “competition for souls” among the different religious groups, a concept that can be applied to the interwar period. It is the starting point for understanding the reactions of the different actors to the religious pluralism attempted in the 1920s. Verdery presents an economic analogy in which each of the religious sides marketed either the idea of individual agency or of ancestral faith to convince Romanians to join their church. It was this battle for souls, engaged in vigorously by neo-protestants through proselytism, which BOR clergy found unfair and disruptive.<sup>21</sup>

This study looks at neo-protestants collectively in order to understand the context of their common struggles and the reasons why Romanian society and government grouped them together despite their many differences. They held to a common historical protestant identity,

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<sup>20</sup> The issue of belief needs further analysis here, but will be expounded in chapter two. Though the exact beliefs of Romanian political and religious leaders is impossible to ascertain, there are those, such as Baptist minister Constantin Adorian and Bishop Grigorie Comşa, whose writings show a reinterpretation of creeds and religious texts to settle their personal ambitions. An extreme example is the Legion of the Archangel Michael. They all believed something different under similar labels.

<sup>21</sup> Katherine Verdery, *The Political Lives of Dead Bodies: Reburial and Postsocialist Change* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1999), pp.79-80.

adopting the moniker of *pocăit* [repenter] as a positive label for themselves. The history of their formation, their doctrine, and the political and social response to them all follow a similar pattern. However, to avoid imposing homogeneity their similarities as well as particularities are highlighted in the various ways each group developed in Romania and how they engaged in polemics with the Romanian Orthodox Church, the Romanian government, and other neo-protestant denominations. The range of legal statuses among them is another mode of differentiation. All coveted the status of cult (which only Baptists and Adventists received temporarily). However, Brethren and Pentecostals considered it a success to receive the legal category of “accepted religious associations,” which had more restrictions than those that qualified as cults.<sup>22</sup> Regardless of status, church and state officials continued to refer to them as sects.<sup>23</sup> Their situation in interwar Romania was not much different from their co-religionists in surrounding countries.

### **Central and Eastern European Neo-Protestant Communities: Interwar Context**

Neo-protestants in Romania had a similar development to that of other countries in the region, where their ideas were introduced mostly by German immigrants and financed by western missionary organizations. The way in which Protestantism was previously introduced or accepted in a country did not always reflect a similar situation for neo-protestants. Interwar Czechoslovakia was the main exception, where protestant/neo-protestant churches were given the same rights as Roman Catholics and were not seen as foreign elements due to the early Czech reform leader Jan Hus. In Poland, Protestantism was indeed identified with the German minority- the largest confessional group being Lutherans, but with significant congregations of

<sup>22</sup> Chapter three will deal with this in more detail as part of the government’s image of these groups.

<sup>23</sup> Dobrinco, pp.584. Dobrinco also uses “evangelical” for some of these groups, but this term has different meanings in different cultural and theological contexts. He also argues that concerning the use of the word “sects” in this context, there is a overlapping of sociological and theological concepts such that heresy becomes entangled with Romanian legal categories.



Adventists, Baptists, and Brethren. Though associated with Germans, the Adventist church was first founded among Polish emigres in Paris in the mid nineteenth century. These Polish neo-protestant groups were given legal status only after World War II.<sup>24</sup>

In Hungary, despite a strong protestant tradition, Adventists, Brethren, and Pentecostals were also considered sects by Catholic and Reformed churches and dangerous groups by the state, which sought their strict regulation and limited rights. The Baptist Church was the exception and received recognition in 1905. Similar to the situation in Romania, what little rights they did have (the equivalent of religious associations) were taken away in 1939 and their status changed only in 1947.<sup>25</sup> Protestantism was brought to Slovenia, Croatia, and Serbia through Hungarian, German, and Slovak migrants as early as the eighteenth century. However, it wasn't until the end of the nineteenth and early twentieth century that neo-protestant denominations began to grow with the help of American, German, and British missionaries. In the Kingdom of Yugoslavia (1929-1943) neo-protestants did not enjoy the same legal status as the dominant Catholic and Orthodox Churches and often experienced harassment by local authorities even when legally recognized.<sup>26</sup> The discrepancy between legislation and lack of government enforcement was prevalent across the region.

Protestant teachings entered Bulgaria through American missionaries in the second half of the nineteenth century, with little influence from German or other minorities. Baptists and Pentecostals started work in the country in the late 1920s under loose organization.

<sup>24</sup> Norman Davies, *God's Playground, A History of Poland* vol. II (New York: Colombia Press, 1982), p. 216; Zbigniew Wierzbowski, "Polish Baptists in the Twentieth Century: The Search for Identity," PhD. diss. University of Wales (Prague, 2010); Petr Pabian, "Inventing the Hussite Nation: Liberals, Catholics, and Protestants in Conflict over Czech National Identity," (eds.) David R. Holton, David Zdeněk, *The Bohemian Reformation and Religious Practice* (Prague: Academy of Sciences of the Czech Republic, 2007), pp. 275-282.

<sup>25</sup> Joseph Punger, "Protestantism in Hungary: The Communist Era," ed. Sabrina Ramet, *Protestantism and Politics in Eastern Europe and Russia*, pp. 124-125.

<sup>26</sup> Nikola S. Žutić, "Religious liberalism and political activity of the Serbian orthodox church in the Kingdom of Yugoslavia," *Istorija 20. veka* 13/ 2 (1995), pp.51-62; David Steele, "Configuration of the Small Religious Communities in the Former Yugoslavia," *Occasional Papers on Religion in Eastern Europe* 15/3, <http://digitalcommons.georgefox.edu/ree/vol15/iss3/2> (accessed 4 June 2015).

Interestingly, Adventists were even later arrivals here. Greater ecumenical vision among Bulgarian Protestants was observed through the opening of the YMCA (Young Men's Christian Association) in 1925 on a multid denominational basis. Due to their strong American links, the Bulgarian government looked suspiciously on these religious communities.<sup>27</sup>

Further east, neo-protestants also experienced growth in the Soviet Union during the interwar period. Pentecostalism was brought in by Ivan Voronaev on returning to Odessa in 1921 and by 1928 they claimed 17,000 members. The 1929 Law on Religious Associations severely curtailed religious activity leading to sealed churches, further oppressive legislation with high taxation, arrests and imprisonment (all Pentecostal leaders were imprisoned). After 1930 it became difficult for them to communicate with co-religionists abroad.<sup>28</sup>

As detailed above, neo-protestant groups have been a presence in Central, Eastern, and Southeastern Europe since the middle of the nineteenth century. The 1920s and 1930s saw an increase in their numbers and activity in the majority of the countries east of the Elbe River. In Bulgaria they seem to have been the result of American missionaries. In Czechoslovakia, and Hungary these groups were not seen as connected to ethnic minorities, as they were in Poland, Romania, Yugoslavia, and the Soviet Union. They were tolerated as religious associations, often viewed as sects, and outlawed with the coming of World War II. A look at their development and the degree of missionary influence in Romania, in particular, further reveals why these groups were viewed with suspicion.

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<sup>27</sup> Paul Mojzes and N. Gerald Shenk, "Protestantism in Bulgaria and Yugoslavia since 1945," Ramet, *Protestantism and Politics*, pp.210-212; Jupiter Doycheff, "A Baptist Hero of Bulgaria," *Home and Foreign Fields* 5/5(May 1921), pp.7-8.

<sup>28</sup> Johannes Reimer, "Recovering the Missionary Memory: Russian Evangelicals in Search of an Appropriate Missiology," *European Journal Of Theology* 22/ 2 (October 2013), pp. 137-148; Walter Sawatsky, "Protestantism in the USSR," Ramet, *Protestantism and Politics*, pp.240-243.

## Early Neo-protestants in Romania

With background on central and eastern European interwar neo-protestant communities, a parallel can be drawn with how these groups took root and expanded in Romania. The predominance in this section of the Baptist group and the region of Transylvania is due to the fact that the former is the oldest and largest of the denominations under study and the latter is the region with the largest increase and activity of neo-protestants. Adventist, Brethren and Pentecostal denominations were also introduced in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century by Polish, German, Swiss, and English missionaries. However, the German and Hungarian communities were instrumental in the growth of the Baptist denomination, first in Transylvania and then in Bucharest, by the mid nineteenth century.

Transylvania under the Hungarian crown had a strong Reformed and Lutheran presence and a growing Baptist denomination, which in the 1850s first attracted members of the German minority who felt there was an increasing liberalization of the Protestant churches. They first formed small groups within the Reformed Church or the Lutheran Church and were seen as “churches within churches.” Many of Transylvania’s Baptist ministers and missionaries were from rural areas and thus the Baptist conviction spread mostly among peasants, so much so that these new groups were termed “peasant ecclesiolas.”<sup>29</sup>

The Baptists, Brethren, and Adventists were not initially accepted in the Hungarian empire. German and Hungarian neo-protestants were themselves marginalized in their ethnic communities for leaving the traditional churches and were thus not officially considered part of any magyarization campaign- an important accusation voiced by opponents.<sup>30</sup> It may have

<sup>29</sup> Istvan Gergely, “Revival Among Hungarian Baptists in Transylvania in the Period of the ‘peasant prophets,’” *Baptistic Theologies* 1/1 (Spring 2009), pp. 58-63.

<sup>30</sup> The majority of Germans in Transylvania still attended the Lutheran Church and the Hungarians the Catholic or Reformed Churches. Istvan Borzasi, Lehel Kiss, “Scurtă istorie a bapțiștilor maghiari din Transilvania,” [Short

been appreciated as such by the Dual Monarchy in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century; but it is more likely that the convictions of the new found faith of Hungarian Baptist peasants (which called believers to speak and spread their faith) led them to reach out to ethnic Romanians.

By the end of the nineteenth century the work of these rural ministers or “peasant prophets” produced an increase of Hungarian Baptists in Transylvania, most of who were farmers and tradesmen.<sup>31</sup> Baptist colporteurs sold Bibles and received both literature and training from the British and Foreign Bible Society. János Rottmayer was an influential Baptist leader in Cluj who sold more than 10,000 Bibles in a single year in the 1860s and pioneered Sunday school for children.<sup>32</sup> While most of the work at this time was done among German speakers, Rottmayer learned Romanian to reach the Romanian peasants.<sup>33</sup> Janos Lajos and Anton Novák were also influential in the spread of Baptist doctrine among Romanians in Salonta Mare, Transylvania.<sup>34</sup> Karl Johann and Augusta Scharschmidt are recorded as the first Baptists to settle in Bucharest in April 1856; their work was exclusively among Germans. However, the religious community that they fostered provided a foundation for the growth of the Baptist denomination among Romanians in Wallachia.<sup>35</sup>

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history of Hungarian Baptists in Transylvania] eds. Dieter Brandes, Vasile Grajdian, Olga Lukás, *Scurtă Istorie a Bisericii și Comunităților Religioase din Transilvania* [Short History of Churches and Religious Communities in Transylvania] (Cluj-Napoca: Presa Universitară Clujeana, 2008), pp. 211-217.

<sup>31</sup> Gergely, “Revival Among Hungarian Baptists in Transylvania in the Period of the ‘peasant prophets,’” p. 63.

<sup>32</sup> Ioan Bunaciu, *Istoria Răspândirii Credenței Baptiste în România* [The History of the Spreading of the Baptist Faith in Romania] (Bucharest: Editura Uniunii Comunităților Creștine Baptiste din R.S.R. România, 1981), p. 86.

<sup>33</sup> Ian M. Randall, *Communities of Conviction: Baptist Beginnings in Europe* (Schwarzenfeld, Germany: Neufeld Verlag, 2009), p. 139.

<sup>34</sup> Gergely, “Revival Among Hungarian Baptists in Transylvania,” pp. 65-68. Mihály Kornya was another famous “peasant prophet” in late nineteenth century Transylvania. Kornya is said to have baptized over 11,000 people and started 100 Baptist congregations in just over a decade.

<sup>35</sup> Ian Randall, “Evangelicals and European Integration,” *EuroJTh* 14/1 (2005), p.19. Karl Johann Scharschmidt was baptized by Johann Oncken in Hamburg in 1845. The Baptist seminary in Hamburg would be an important training site for the first Romanian ministers. Other German Baptists and an English woman, Elizabeth Peacock Clarke, joined Scharschmidt’s congregation.

In 1896 Ștefan Pirvu was regarded as the first ethnic Romanian to be baptized within the Baptist denomination in a ceremony led by Johann Hammerschmidt.<sup>36</sup> Baptist witness spread among Romanians and from its beginnings faced opposition. The end of the nineteenth century saw an increase in missionary activity to Africa to “civilize” the populations. Romanian political and religious authorities may have felt the Hungarian and German mission movements to be patronizing and degrading of Romanian culture.<sup>37</sup> Some missionaries did perhaps come with the intent of “civilizing” the Romanians. Influenced largely by the Orthodox clergy, Bucharest city authorities declared in 1900 that the Baptist church may only serve Germans. As the majority of new converts were peasants, foreign Baptist organizations sponsored Romanian students to attend theological seminaries in Germany or Hungary.<sup>38</sup> In May 1919 the Union of Romanian Baptist Communities was formed and with their first congress held in Buteni, Arad County on 14 February 1920.<sup>39</sup>

The Adventist faith, the second oldest neo-protestant group in Romania, was brought to Transylvania around 1869 by Michał Czechowski, a former Polish priest, followed by the founding of the first church in Cluj in 1890 among Germans by missionary Ludwig R. Conradi. In 1891 there was also a group of German Adventist believers in Dobrogea, who bred horses for King Carol I of Romania. Conradi worked with former Baptist elder Andreas Siefried to start a church for Romanians in Viile Noi, Constanța County, resulting in one of the oldest remaining congregations of Romanian Adventists. Among these early Romanian converts were Petre Paulini (in 1906) and Ștefan Demetrescu (in 1907), later to become editors of the interwar publication *Curierul Adventist*. The majority of early Romanian Adventist ministers completed

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<sup>36</sup> Popovici, vol. I, p.21.

<sup>37</sup> On Germans in the east in the 1800s see Robert L. Nelson (ed.), *Germans, Poland, and Colonial Expansion to the East: 1850 Through the Present* (NY: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009).

<sup>38</sup> Constantin Adorian studied at the Hamburg Baptist Seminary and, in 1912, became the first minister of a Romanian speaking neo-Protestant church in Bucharest. Randall, *Communities of Conviction*, pp. 147-149.

<sup>39</sup> Popovici, vol.II, pp.29-31.

theological studies in Friedensau, Germany and succeeded in organizing the Romanian Union of Seventh-Day Adventists at the war's end in 1920. Adventists were particularly different from the other three denominations through their observance of Saturday rather than Sunday for religious services and through their vegetarian diet.<sup>40</sup>

Rather than an initiation by the German minority, Brethren teachings were brought to Romania by British missionaries Eduard H. Broadbent, Francis Berney and Charles Aubert in 1899, with the first service conducted in French at a church in Bucharest. Just a year later a new group was formed a few streets away with services in Romanian and similar groups set up meeting houses in the cities of Ploiești, Iași, Suceava, and Sibiu.<sup>41</sup> However, Germans were again influential in the spread of Brethren teaching once brought by the British missionaries. In 1902 Aubert started missionary work among Germans in Constanta and Berney and Broadbent in Rasnov, Transylvania where they organized prayer meetings, Bible studies, and Sunday schools. In Ploiești in 1907 a group of young Romanian men started holding Brethren meetings in the house of a local German woman who owned a clothes factory and assisted them in printing and distributing religious pamphlets. Romanians also adopted this confession as soldiers during the war and spread their new faith on returning home to Bessarabia and other regions. In 1922 Paul Perret, a Swiss missionary, came to train members from all Brethren churches within Romania and on a visit to Chișinău in 1933 he found very diverse Brethren congregations of mixed Jewish, Russian, and Romanian believers. The Romanian Brethren

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<sup>40</sup> “Romania- Prezentare si Istoric,” [Presentation and History] <http://www.adventist.ro/index/despre-noi/istoric.html> (accessed 19 May 2015); Dumitru Popa, *Pagini din istoria Bisericii Adventiste din Romania, 1870-1920*, [Pages from the history of the Adventist Church in Romania] vol. I (Bucharest: Editura Viață și Sănătate, 2008).

<sup>41</sup> Bogdan Emanuel Răduț, *Din istoria creștinilor după Evanghelie: Culegere de documente* [From the history of the Christians according to the Gospel: Collection of documents] (Târgoviște: Editura Cetatea de Scaun, 2013), pp.11-12. The name of *Creștini după Evanghelie* [Christians according to the Gospel] as they are called in Romania was given to them by interwar Romanian authorities. They have adopted it for themselves but they also refer to their meetings as *adunări frățești* [Brethren meetings].

held their first nation-wide conference in Bucharest in 1924 and by 1929 there were forty-seven Brethren meeting houses in Romania.<sup>42</sup> Due to their doctrine of no ordained ministers and no church hierarchy, they did not form a union until forced to by the government after 1948.<sup>43</sup>

The Pentecostals were the last of the neo-protestants to develop congregations in the country. The most influential individuals were Romanian immigrants in the United States, such as Pavel Budean, who returned to Romania after starting the first Romanian Pentecostal church in Detroit, Michigan (USA) in 1922.<sup>44</sup> A number of these immigrants came into contact with Aimee Semple McPherson's Four-Square Gospel movement, or were members in the Assemblies of God or Church of God Pentecostal denominations in America; they sent letters to relatives in Romania relating their experience of being "baptized with the holy spirit."<sup>45</sup>

On receiving one such letter, Baptist believer Gheorghe Bradin contacted Budean for more information on the doctrine of this new movement and on 10 September 1922 he started the first Pentecostal church in Romania in Pauliș, Arad. Within a few months the church had thirty members and in 1923 a new church was founded in Cuvin, Arad.<sup>46</sup> Pentecostals in Romania were also influenced by former Lutheran or Baptist Saxons from Transylvania and other Germans who immigrated to America and came in contact with the Pentecostal movement in California in 1915. However, the main actors in spreading the teachings were Budean and Bradin with minimal initial help from so-considered foreigners.<sup>47</sup> Having seen the

<sup>42</sup> Eliezer Macesaru, "Adunările Creștine după Evanghelie în Istoria Creștinismului la Români (1899-1989)," [The Meetings of the Christians according to the Gospel in the history of Christianity in Romania] unpublished manuscript, <http://www.bcev.ro/istoric/> (accessed 8 May 2015).

<sup>43</sup> Ieremia Rusu, "The Communist State Interference in the Autonomy of the Local Churches of the Open Brethren from Romania," *European Journal of Science and Theology* 9/5 (October 2013), pp.47-57.

<sup>44</sup> Valeriu Andreiescu, *Istoria pentecostalismului românesc*, vol. I (Oradea: Casa Cărții, 2012), pp.40-41.

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid*, p.32. Pentecostals believe in the need not only of immersion but also of receiving spiritual power after baptism from the Holy Spirit, the third person of the Trinity, to speak in tongues as part of a true Christian life.

<sup>46</sup> "Istoricul Bisericii Pentecostale din Romania," [The History of the Pentecostal Church in Romania] [http://cristianet.fr/index.php?option=com\\_content&task=view&id=150&Itemid=52](http://cristianet.fr/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=150&Itemid=52) (accessed 19 May 2015).

<sup>47</sup> Andreiescu, p.36. This has to do with the fact that the branches of the Pentecostal denomination in America were also relatively young and still developing.

separate beginnings of each group, and before unpacking the issue of foreign assistance, statistics will provide a context for these groups in the interwar period, pointing to their success.

By the 1930 census 76,600 of the country's eighteen million inhabitants were listed as neo-protestants compared to the thirteen million registered as Orthodox Christian. These numbers did not include Pentecostals and Brethren, whose members were listed in the sections for "other religions and sects" or "no declared religion."<sup>48</sup> The numbers may be higher considering the political nature of the census and its organizers' desire to present a united homogenous ethnic Romanian majority and due to the many that participated in the new religious services but did not withdraw their membership from BOR.<sup>49</sup> The map below shows the regional distribution of three of the neo-protestant groups in 1942. The interwar situation was similar in regards to ratios of Baptists in the territories versus Baptists in the Regat and the predominance of Adventists in the latter regions.

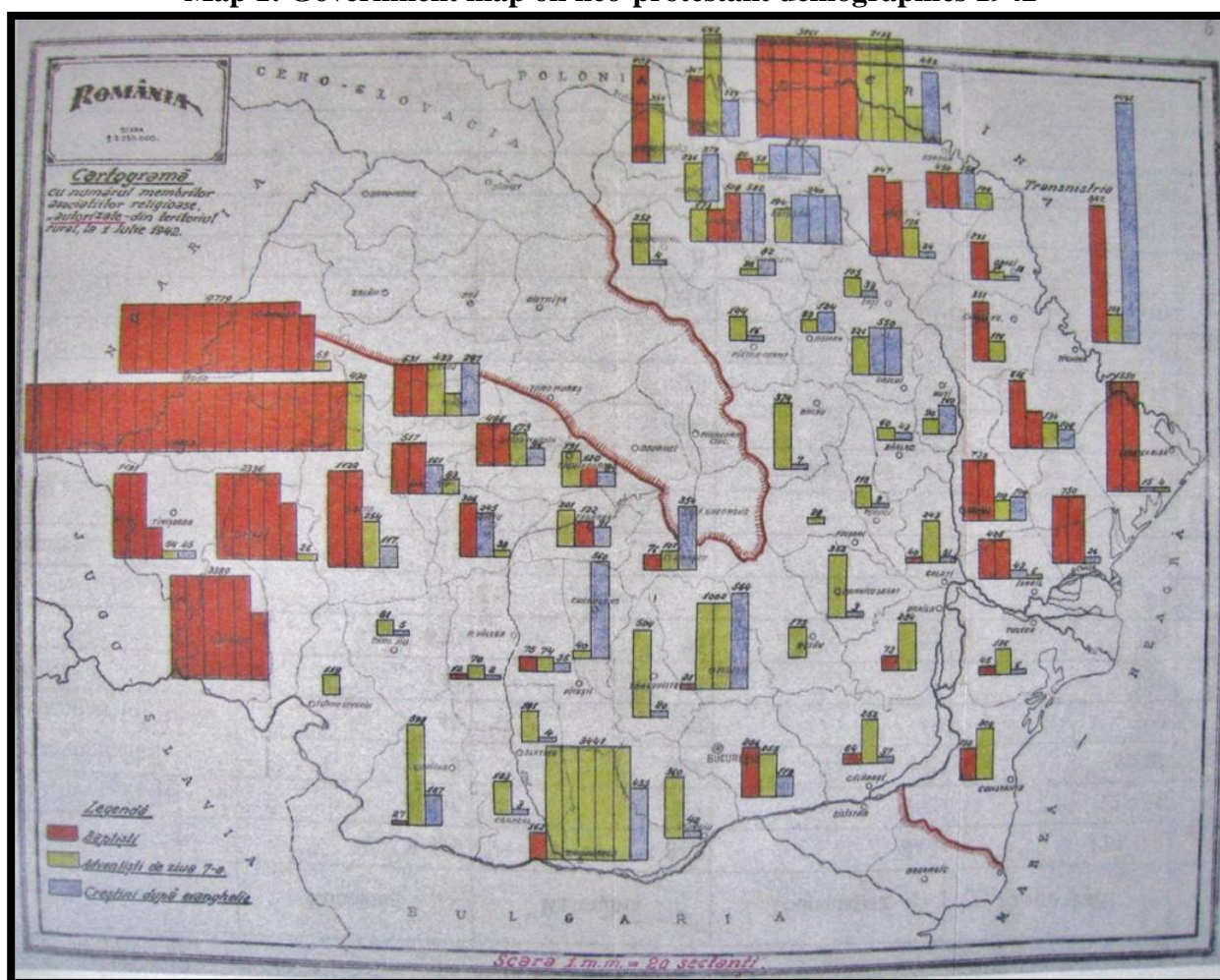
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<sup>48</sup>HU OSA 410-0-1, folder "Minority Rights in Romania 1936-1944," p.3. Dorin Dorbrincu provides the following demographic breakdown from the 1930 census: 72.6% Orthodox; 7.9% Greek-Catholic; 6.8% Roman Catholic; 4.2% Jewish; 3.9% Reformed/Calvinist; 2.2% Evangelical/Lutheran; 1% Muslim; 0.4% Unitarian; 0.3% Baptist; 0.3% Lipoveni, in "Religie și putere în România," p.584.

<sup>49</sup> For more on the census see the writings of influential interwar sociologist Dimitrie Gusti in Ion Matei Costinescu, "On Modernity and Technologies of Nation-Building in the Projects of the Bucharest Sociological School," *Transilvania* 11-12 (2012), pp.79-87; Earl A. Pope, "Protestantism in Romania," ed. Sabrina Ramet, *Protestantism and Politics*, p.175.



**Map 1: Government map on neo-protestant demographics 1942**



Source: Viorel Achim, *Politica regimului Antonescu față de cultele neoprotestante: documente* (Bucharest: Polirom, 2013), p. 516.

Neo-protestant congregations claimed an increase of 1,500 adult baptisms per year between 1920 and 1925 in the region of Bessarabia alone, the majority of which were ethnic Romanians.<sup>50</sup> Baptists in Romania went from 18,751 members in 1919, according to Baptist World Alliance statistics, to over 60,500 in the 1930 census.<sup>51</sup> Both Adventist and Brethren

<sup>50</sup> Everett Gill, "Baptist Persecution and Progress in Roumania," *Home and Foreign Fields* 10/2 (February 1926), p. 8. Such sources also may have had reason to present higher numbers of converts in order to encourage readers in the west to continue their financial support.

<sup>51</sup> Approximately 5,750 were ethnic minorities. Popovici records 44,828 Baptists in 1930, in *Istoria Bapțiștilor*, vol. II, pp.18, 48; Andreiescu, *Istoria penticostalismului românesc*, vol. I, p.74. The high number of over 60,000 may have been due to Pentecostals and individuals from other unrecognized religious groups identifying themselves as Baptist to avoid persecution. Achim also provides a number of 40,734 in 1930, closer to the Baptist Union figures, p.373.

Unions could not provide statistics prior to World War I, but in looking at interwar figures 16,202 Adventists were recorded in 1930 and 16,890 in 1942.<sup>52</sup> For the Brethren some sources listed 7,434 adherents in 1930 and 9,746 in 1942.<sup>53</sup> Pentecostals, due to their late start in Romania, had about 100 adherents in 1925 in Arad County which increased to around 2,000 across the country by 1930 and to 7,400 by 1938, according to Pentecostal statistics.<sup>54</sup> Interwar Pentecostal leader Eugen Bodor estimated that by 1930 there were 2,000 Pentecostals in Bucovina alone.<sup>55</sup> The following table attempts to consolidate these numbers.

**Table I: Statistics on the Increase of Neo-Protestant Adherents<sup>56</sup>**

Denominations	Prior to 1930 Census	1930	1942
Baptist	18,751	40,734	36,222
Adventist	-	16,202	16,890
Brethren	-	4,414	9,746
Pentecostal	100	660	3,583

Regardless of the discrepancy in statistics, the increase in the number of Romanian converts, though small in comparison to the wider population, was undeniable- evident in the numbers above and in the concern voiced by church and government officials. Perhaps more important was the increased international attention they were bringing to the Romanian

<sup>52</sup> Achim, *Politica regimului Antonescu față de cultele neoprotestante*, pp.373, 519. George Enache provides a figure of 504 Adventists across Romania in 1913, according to Paul Paulini, but the link to his source is not available, in "Problema sectelor," p.12.

<sup>53</sup> Bogdan Emanuel Răduț, *Din istoria creștinilor după Evanghelie*, p.17; Achim, p. 519. Some sources list a seemingly exaggerated number of over 15,000 Brethren believers during WWII. Biserica Creștină după Evanghelie din România, "The Brethren Assemblies," <http://www.bcev.ro/istoric/en> (accessed 8 May 2015).

<sup>54</sup> Andreiescu, vol. I, p. 74. According to government figures 660 Pentecostals were listed in 1930 in Achim, p.373.

<sup>55</sup> Andreiescu, vol. II, p.18. Andreiescu admits that Bodor's figure may be exaggerated.

<sup>56</sup> For consistency I have included the numbers provided in Achim, pp.373, 519. Sources for the numbers which are not provided by Achim are listed in the previous paragraph. The lower number of Baptists in 1942 is due to the annexation of northern Transylvania to Hungary and the Baptists there no longer being counted in the census.

government's minority policies through their exposure to western religious organizations. A brief analysis of the approach and influence of these western missionaries will be provided below.

### **The Influence of Western Missionary Organizations**

Previously the focus of western missionary organizations had been on getting religious literature, mainly Bibles, to people in the eastern parts of Europe, chief organizers of this endeavor being the British Bible Society through colporteurs from Germany and Hungary. The German minorities were the channels through which they came perhaps because of greater linguistic access and higher literacy rates. After World War I missionary work in Eastern Europe saw a dramatic increase with opportunities for war relief and maintaining and expanding educational institutions.

Western missionary organizations saw a need to combine the written word they provided with that of material aid. Money and trained individuals were sent to ensure the construction and maintenance of church buildings, of schools, seminaries, orphanages, the publication of religious literature, and the financial support of ministers and other workers. Baptist World Alliance and the Southern Baptist Convention were the most influential organizations due to their size and prestige.<sup>57</sup> Adventist, Brethren, and Pentecostal missionary groups were not yet as affluent. They also sent people from America or western Europe and contributed literature for the development of their denominations in Romania and across the continent. However, these latter groups seemed to depend more on working through natives already in the country.

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<sup>57</sup> Newsletters *Home and Foreign Fields* and later *The Commission* detailed the work in Romania of the Southern Baptist Convention Foreign Mission Board.

All missionary organizations encouraged or sponsored budding Romanian neo-protestant leaders to study in theological institutions abroad. In an attempt to be culturally sensitive and less paternalistic, missionary journals published articles written by Romanian ministers. This cultural sensitivity was rarely extended to BOR, despite the image presented by historian Ian Randall of an ecumenical Christian dialogue led by the British World Evangelical Alliance in 1923.<sup>58</sup> A considerable number trained, ordained, and sponsored émigrés to return to their country of origin to spread their new faith. Often the assistance was appreciated or requested by Romanians of the same faith but at times seen as interference.<sup>59</sup>

The type of aid offered in the 1920s decreased across Europe with the onset of the economic depression and often took the form of legislative appeals for greater religious freedom. The strongest advocate for this was James H. Rushbrooke, general secretary for the Baptist World Alliance, who, though representing Baptists, called for religious freedom for all.<sup>60</sup> Rushbrooke organized an international campaign to reopen the 1,600 Baptists churches in Romania that had been closed by decree in 1938 and from 1920 to 1940 he made at least thirteen visits to Romania to meet with Baptist leaders and to petition the government for a

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<sup>58</sup> *Evangelical Christendom* (March/April 1923), p. 34, in Ian Randell, "Evangelicals and European Integration," *EuroJTh* 14/1 (2005), p.19. For a different perspective see Kenneth Grubb's quote in chapter three (page 44). Grubb shows an attempt to understand the issues of BOR and nationalism at stake. For more on Grubb see <http://www.bu.edu/missiology/missionary-biography/g-h/grubb-kenneth-george-1900-1980/> (accessed 27 May 2015). Articles in such journals conveyed a demeaning attitude towards BOR due to lack of historical-cultural knowledge and information from intra-Romanian religious polemics (such as articles written by Baptist ministers Constantin Adorian and Ioan Socaciu).

<sup>59</sup> Andreiescu, vol. I, p. 42-50. Occasionally foreign help was resented as in the case of American Pentecostal missionary Janos Lerch through the organization Russian and East European Mission. He was accused of creating a schism in the Romanian movement leading to the break-off of Ioan Bododea and Eugen Bodor from the leadership of Bradin in 1931. Andreiescu makes it a point to mention Lerch was Hungarian. See Andreiescu, vol. I, p.167.

<sup>60</sup> Bernard Green, "'Earnest to Make Others Free:' J. H. Rushbrooke and Religious Liberty," *Baptist Quarterly* 36/3 (July 1995), pp.108-119.

change in legislation.<sup>61</sup> This external support may be the reason Baptists engaged more in secular debates as compared to the other denominations, which focused on theology.

As detailed previously, the Romanian neo-protestant congregations' connections to the minority Hungarian and German Protestant and neo-protestant churches remained an important part of the former's identity.<sup>62</sup> However, in contrast to the growing Romanian neo-protestant churches, the ethnic minority churches were slowly losing congregants. Nevertheless, Hungarian and German churches already possessed land and various cultural and social institutions, while the Romanian churches were in the process of building these institutions during the 1920s.<sup>63</sup> Intimacy between the ethnic majority and minority neo-protestant churches lessened as both clerical and state authorities intensified their rhetoric and legislation against such "foreigners." The Agrarian Reform Act of 1922 nationalized a large percent of ethnic minority church land and closed their schools, while a bill passed by parliament in December 1925 (one among many such bills) sought to restrict the work of Hungarian and German ethnic churches and to outlaw neo-protestant activities altogether.<sup>64</sup>

The insistence of Rushbrooke and others on behalf of Romanian neo-protestants produced irritation and embarrassment among government officials. Some saw it as unnecessary interference and unwelcome foreign pressure on domestic affairs. These religious

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<sup>61</sup> Popovici, vol. II, pp.344-350.

<sup>62</sup> Ibid, p.48. Hungarian pentecostals worked with Romanians in spreading the denomination to Cluj in 1930 and in planting the first church there in 1935, in Andreiescu, vol.I, p.96.

<sup>63</sup> This decline was due to emigration or to people leaving the Church. The Romanian congregations initially worked alongside the Hungarian Baptist and other neo-Protestant churches, which sometimes became a part of the Romanian congregations. Popovici, vol. II, pp. 54, 204, 246, 326. Ioan Ciuraș, Interview, Oțelu Roșu, Romania (2 January 2012).

<sup>64</sup> Zsombor De Szasz, *The Minorities in Roumanian Transylvania* (London: The Richards Press Ltd., 1927), pp. 186, 196-200. De Szasz was a former Transylvanian member of the Hungarian Parliament and writings like his, which presented the Romanian government's violation of the peace treaties validated the fears of certain BOR and government officials of minorities seeking to challenge Romania's territorial acquisitions. He also quotes the findings of the American Committee on the Rights of Religious Minorities, *The Religious Minorities in Transylvania* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1925), p. 144. In the village of Sântimbru the historic Presbyterian church was expropriated through Decision no. 48/1923 and given to the Orthodox Church.

groups often benefitted from the aid provided and were grateful for those who came to their defense in legal matters. Leaders and congregants acknowledged what they saw as the invaluable spiritual influence of Hungarian, German, Russian ethnic minorities within Romania and of western Europeans and Americans abroad. However, the close and consistent contact of neo-protestants with both ethnic minorities and foreigners created an image different from the one they had of themselves. They were thus pushed into negotiating their identity by the competitive religious and social environment: to remain loyal to their religious convictions while expressing their devotion to the Romanian nation and state. They thus found themselves arguing against the dominant view of Romanian national identity.

## **Chapter II:**

### **The Self-Image of Neo-Protestants:**

#### **Individual Faith and Community Dependency through the Bible**

Neo-protestants were an example, albeit imperfect, of possible cooperation between Romania's diverse populations. They offered a competing vision of Romanian identity during a time of political and social turmoil in the midst of a newly forming national consciousness. They achieved this through balancing their newly acquired understanding of personal agency in their new confession with a deep dependence on community (both religious and national). This is best observed through their interaction with the Bible. Religious leaders of the time stressed the priority of the written word and continually came back to it as the main issue that separated neo-protestant churches from other religious communities in the country, specifically the Romanian Orthodox Church (BOR).

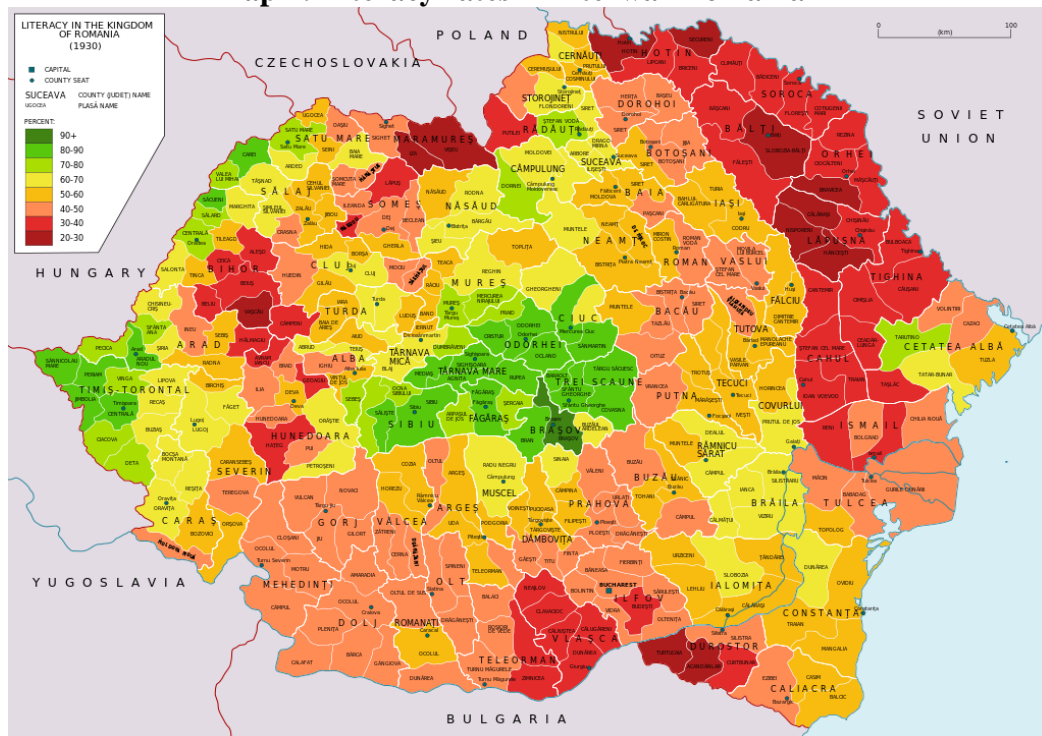
This chapter shows how neo-protestants' unique relationship between the individual and both religious and national communities was formed through the importance placed on the reading of the Bible as God's word, the giving of personal testimony (speaking the word read) in the presence of the church community as well as outside, and then through engaging in corporate singing of the word that was read and to whose potency was previously testified. Their engagement in contemporary issues of education, culture, and politics can be observed through this lens of the word read, spoken, and sung, revealing, in the end, how they engaged with their identity as Romanians. The components in each of these three actions will be presented as rituals which were introduced to replace or compete with BOR rituals. The image of the Romanian neo-protestant self, coming out of the rituals and aesthetics of their new

religious community, was used to express their faith as one which made them better citizens who contributed to the Romanian state and the nation.

### The Word Read: Access to God and to Education

The Protestant tradition of providing the masses with the scriptures was based on belief that the power of the words in the Bible provided the individual who read it a direct link with God. As in the history of Protestantism, access to the physical Bible and comprehension of the words printed within it was seen as a major step towards liberating the illiterate, in this case the Romanian peasants. The high illiteracy was a considerable challenge which they tackled either through reading courses offered or through dependence on literate ministers who could expound the written word until more lay members could access it on their own.

**Map 2: Literacy rates in interwar Romania**



Source: Arnold Platon, "Romania 1930 literacy EN," based on the map from Anton Golopenția, "Gradul de modernizare al regiunilor rurale ale României," *Sociologie românească* 4/4-6 (1939), [http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Romania\\_1930\\_literacy\\_EN.svg#/media/File:Romania\\_1930\\_literacy\\_EN.svg](http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Romania_1930_literacy_EN.svg#/media/File:Romania_1930_literacy_EN.svg) (accessed 23 May 2015).



In 1930 the illiteracy rate in the Regat regions of Wallachia and Moldova was at 44.2%, the highest figures being in Bessarabia (61.9 %) and the lowest in the Banat (27.5 %).<sup>65</sup> The western regions with higher literacy rates were also the areas with higher numbers of neo-protestants.<sup>66</sup> The focus on reading and studying the Bible found a receptive audience among the more literate populations. These religious groups were against what they thought was priority given to church tradition over that of the Bible in the teaching and example of BOR adherents, forgetting, however, the role of the Orthodox Church in early Romanian education and press.<sup>67</sup> The new ritual of reading the Bible was used by neo-protestants as a way of distancing themselves from what they viewed as oppressive power structures.<sup>68</sup> Reading the Bible was emphasized as crucial to the individual Romanian's spiritual salvation, their participation in the new religious community, and their positive influence on Romanian society and the nation.

In order to help both the literate and illiterate to engage in this vital ritual of reading the word, neo-protestants set up courses on the Bible (*cursuri biblice*). These courses (which eventually became seminaries) among Romanian neo-protestants were first offered by Baptists in 1921 in Buteni, Arad County, to help individuals hermeneutically approach what they read. Legally the courses were allowed to take place due to the 1905 law allowing education for

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<sup>65</sup> *Enciclopedia României*, vol.I (Bucharest, 1938), pp.142-143.

<sup>66</sup> See map 1 on page 20.

<sup>67</sup> Books reached the Romanian masses around the beginning of the twentieth century, but by this time the initiative for printing was taken up by Romanian businessmen and thus distanced the Church from its previous influence. For more on the presence of the Orthodox Church in the development of Romanian literacy and education see Alex Drace-Francis, pp.166, 167.

<sup>68</sup> President of the Baptist Union Constantin Adorian wrote that a battle for religious liberty was taking place between the priests and the poor Romanians who exemplify Christ, in "Rumania- the Buried Treasure of Europe," *Home and Foreign Fields* 5/5 (May 1921), p. 29. An interesting comparison can be found in Heather Coleman, *Russian Baptists and Spiritual Revolution 1905-1929*, pp. 3, 53: "Russian Baptists disappointed by Orthodoxy saw it as encouraging debauchery." See chapter three for similar accusations and calls for renewal from within BOR.

Baptist ministers in regions under Austro-Hungarian rule.<sup>69</sup> However, there were neither funds nor proper locations available for such an endeavor after World War I. With financial and administrative help from Britain and North America, mentioned previously, and with the adoption of German-styled Sunday school classes, individual churches developed ways of making the Bible more accessible and understandable. Historian Charles Upson Clark, on his trip to Romania in 1932, remarked that laws were issued which insisted on minimum educational qualifications for ministers, since one of the major complaints against Romanian neo-protestants was the large number of unschooled itinerant ministers. Clark observed that “the admirable Baptist Seminary in Bucharest is making an earnest effort to overcome this handicap with quite insufficient funds, derived mainly from American Southern Baptists.”<sup>70</sup> Neo-protestants had to devise inventive ways to procure necessities.<sup>71</sup>

Training of ministers in Romania took place once some level of centralization of the different denominations occurred with the formation of their separate unions. This was essential as these ministers would in turn teach the lay people. Adventists and Brethren opened seminaries and offered courses on the Bible in 1924.<sup>72</sup> Pentecostals, due to their illegal status,

<sup>69</sup> “Statutul organizatiei bisericeasca a baptistilor,” [Organizational Church Statute of the Baptists] ord. 77092, par. 18, pt. 2, (Prefectura Jud. Arad, 2 November 1905), p.13, in Popovici, vol. II, p. 80. The law was kept valid by the post-WWI peace treaties and then included in article 137 of the Romanian Constitution of 1923. When legislation was passed attempting to curtail their activities, the Union of Baptist Communities petitioned the senate in March 1928 for their constitutional rights to be respected as well as the rights accorded them as a recognized cult under the Hungarian 1905 law. ANIC, fond “Direcția Generală a Poliției,” dos. 33/1928, f. 4 in Dobrinicu, p.587.

<sup>70</sup> Charles Upson Clark, *United Roumania* (NY: Dodd, Mead and Company, 1932), pp. 351-352. Dr. Everett Gill of the Southern Baptist Mission Board facilitated the reimbursement of the building funds and the land was initially bought in his name and transferred to the Southern Baptist Mission Board in 1935. Popovici, vol.II, pp.84-85.

<sup>71</sup> “Istoria Bisericii Adventiste de Ziua a Saptea I,” *Oameni si Perspective*, <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Nh25sPFobC8&feature=relmfu> (accessed 5 May 2015). The Adventist churches, for example, sold stamps to buy bricks for their church buildings and schools. The majority of neo-protestant churches were built by volunteers.

<sup>72</sup> “Institutul teologic in perioada interbelică,” [Theological Institute in the interwar period] <http://institutadventist.ro/despre-institut/> (accessed 5 May 2015). The Brethren resisted official centralization until the first communist government due to their tradition of not having ordained ministers. Bogdan Emanuel Răduț, *O istorie a creștinilor după Evanghelie*, [A History of the Christians according to the Gospel] vol. I (1899-1946), unpublished manuscript.

did not have formal institutions, such as seminaries and schools. Their emphasis on the Holy Spirit as teacher to individual believers made Pentecostals in the interwar period suspicious of religious leaders with formal education.<sup>73</sup>

For neo-protestants in Romania, previous rituals of the Orthodox Church were first replaced by the ritual of reading the Holy Scriptures for one's self and on one's own as a way to connect with the divine. Dumitru Cornilescu, a former Orthodox theologian who provided a modern translation of the Romanian Bible in 1921 claimed he was motivated to translate out of an understanding that in order to obtain a true Christian life the Romanian people needed a translation of God's word which they could understand.<sup>74</sup> Cornilescu wanted it to no longer be associated with an institution, but for it to be "the book of the people."<sup>75</sup> Tudor Popescu, former Orthodox priest and founder of the Evangelical Church of Romania (linked with the Romanian Brethren Church), identified the "Gospel Word" as the believer's daily sustenance by which his or her thoughts, feelings, speech, and work are formed.<sup>76</sup> Popescu claimed that studying the words of the Bible was the most encouraging daily cleansing of the soul.<sup>77</sup> It was through setting aside personal time for what was considered earnest examination of the words of the Bible that Popescu reached what he regarded to be knowledge of God's love and holiness, and of the state and purpose of humans in the world.<sup>78</sup>

<sup>73</sup> They considered such teachers to be corrupted by the philosophies of the world. Șandru Trandafir, *Trezirea spiritual pentecostală din România*, p. 88-89 in Vasiliță Croitor, *Răscumpărarea Memoriei* [Redeeming Memory] (Megedia: 2010), p.24.

<sup>74</sup> Dumitru Cornilescu, "Cum ma-m întors la Dumnezeu," [How I returned to God] *Credința Adevărată*, [The True Faith] ed. Iosif Țon (Societatea Missionară Română, 1988), p.55.

<sup>75</sup> Cornilescu's version was published by the Romanian Evangelical Society in 1921 and was taken as the standard translation used by the British Bible Society. By 1924 they had printed 100,000 copies for Romania. Corneliu Constantineanu, "The 'Rediscovery' of Scripture and its Impact on the Romanian Christian Context at the Beginning of the 20th Century," *KAIROS - Evangelical Journal of Theology* 5/ 1 (2011), p. 89.

<sup>76</sup> Tudor Popescu, "Ce este cu mișcarea de la Cuibul cu Barza" [What is with the movement at Cuibul cu Barza] (27 January 1924), *Adervărul Creștin* 26/31 (March/April 1995) p. 35. Popescu started his group in the 1920s under the name *Creștini după Scriptură* [Christians according to the Scriptures].

<sup>77</sup> *Ibid*, p. 37.

<sup>78</sup> Popescu, "Ce este cu mișcarea de la Cuibul cu Barza," *Adervărul Creștin* 26/30 (January/February 1995) p. 19.

The power of the word of God read daily, a ritual engaged in privately but expected corporately, was stressed by neo-protestant leaders in providing such guidance. The daily practice of ritual, as defined by anthropologist of religion Roy Rappaport, is to establish convention. Ritual, thus, established and re-established instructions to remind adherents of the way things ought to be and of their responsibility towards God and towards the community.<sup>79</sup> Cornilescu and Popescu edited the journal *Adevărul Creștin* [The Christian Truth] to provide converts with systematic Bible teaching and to emphasize the authority of the Bible over that of any institution.<sup>80</sup>

The individual right to interpretation of scripture through the Holy Spirit was an important part of this ritual and communion with the transcendent. Gavril Dunca, a Baptist lay preacher, identified his change of faith as occurring from direct personal study of the Bible. He specifically mentioned that encounters with other believers of this kind did not immediately lead him to adopt a new faith- such conversations resulted in an increase of time spent studying the words of the Bible which in turn produced a change both intellectually and spiritually.<sup>81</sup>

As cultural anthropologist Brigit Meyer argues in relation to aesthetics of religion, for neo-protestant groups the sensational form developing around the icon was replaced by one which developed around the book. The power that a religious artifact was perceived to have over a person, as Meyer describes it, was seen in the power attributed to the physical Bible, and reverence toward it due to the words inside, among the growing Romanian neo-protestant communities. A family of Baptists from Bessarabia described the way in which no other object

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<sup>79</sup> According to Rappaport, "Efficacy of ritual is grounded in principles of communication," and in the history of the Christian Church the bible was considered the main mode of God communicating with people. Roy Rappaport, "Enactments of Meaning" (1999), *A reader in the anthropology of religion*, ed. M. Lambek (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 2002), p. 459-463.

<sup>80</sup> Constantineanu, "The 'Rediscovery' of Scripture," p.91.

<sup>81</sup> Claudiu Handaric, "The beginnings and growth of Baptist witness in Bicazu Ardelean, Romania, in the 1920s," *Baptistic Theologies* 1/1 (1 March 2009), p.45.

was allowed to be placed over the Bible that lay on the family table.<sup>82</sup> The significance given to the physical Bible contributed to a particular religious aesthetics that directed believers' sensory engagement with the transcendental and with each other.<sup>83</sup> Procuring a Bible in the interwar years became less difficult than in subsequent years. Peasants who could barely read were able to procure a copy through most neo-protestant churches and looked to it as a means to their spiritual and social advancement.

By reading the words of God daily they engaged with the transcendent author of those words who was also acknowledged as the Supreme Being by the Romanian Orthodox Church, the moral authority of the country. These new churches saw themselves as offering the nation access to this divine knowledge through reading the Bible without other human mediation or clerical hierarchy.<sup>84</sup> With personal access to God, adherents considered that they more fully embodied the moral authority of the nation. As such they felt it their duty to speak this written revelation which had affected them as readers.

### **The Word Spoken: Further Religious and Social Empowerment towards Reform**

Narrativization of religious experience contributed to self-transformation, to solidifying an individual's commitment to neo-protestant groups, and to presenting his or her change of faith as beneficial for the nation and state. As Catherine Wanner elucidates in connection with her work among evangelicals in the Ukraine, "Conversion is given meaning through narrativization, through linguistic representations...It is in the retelling of the 'conversion

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<sup>82</sup> Irina Țurcan, Interview, Sacramento, California (25 July 2014).

<sup>83</sup> Birgit Meyer, "Religious Sensations: Why Media, Aesthetics, and Power Matter in the Study of Contemporary Religion," *Religion: Beyond a Concept*. ed. Hent de Vries (NY: Fordham University Press, 2008), pp. 704–723 (2006 lecture, pp. 16, 19–22).

<sup>84</sup> Ion Podea, "Forța Morală a Băptismului," [The Moral Force of Baptists] *Creștinul* 10/6 (March 1922), p.9. Article reprinted from *Sămănătorul*.

experience' that the experience itself is reconstituted and made meaningful."<sup>85</sup> Witnessing - the relating of a conversion account- or telling others (both fellow believers and non-believers) how the word read produced a radical transformation reaffirmed the speaker's willingness to submit to what they understood as God's will by sharing and inspiring others.<sup>86</sup> A former anarchist published his conversion account in the Brethren publication *Buna Vestire* and again pointed to studying the Bible as the source of his conversion, encouraging others to do the same.<sup>87</sup>

The word spoken also included the word written as literacy increased, and personal accounts, alongside theological works, circulated more widely, but the focus remained on the individual's responsibility to share. Neo-protestant leaders published guides on how to best share and present one's conversion account.<sup>88</sup> Just as new social and economic opportunities opened up for Romanian neo-protestants as a result of increased literacy from the ritual of reading the Bible, speaking the effects of this word also contributed to a new understanding of the agency of the individual.<sup>89</sup> Similar to Heather Coleman's study of Russian Baptists, the individual's role in the Romanian neo-protestant church and the voluntary nature of membership brought to the forefront the spiritual experiences of ordinary people and gave them

<sup>85</sup> Catherine Wanner, *Communities of the Converted: Ukrainians and Global Evangelism* (NY: Cornell University Press, 2007), p.157. Though neo-protestants did not "convert" in the true sense of the word, since they remained within the Christian faith, their change of confession is called conversion in their own and in BOR writings and is the term used in anthropological studies to distinguish such changes.

<sup>86</sup> ACLA 31227, "Aducerea sufletelor la Hristos," [Bringing Souls to Christ] *Călăuza* 4/2 (April/June, 1938), p.35. Author encouraged individuals to speak of their faith not just from the pulpit.

<sup>87</sup> ACLA unprocessed, G.M.S., "Pocăința unui anarhist," [An Anarchist's Repentance] *Buna Vestire* 14/2 (February 1924), pp. 3-5.

<sup>88</sup> ACLA unprocessed, Aurel C., "Mijloace ce trebuiesc față de cei nepocăiți," [Methods needed when confronting unrepenters] *Buna Vestire* 14/4 (April 1924), pp.2-5. The author emphasizes that conversion accounts must point to the bible and how the story and arguments therein affected the convert.

<sup>89</sup> ACLA unprocessed, Toma Slev, "Rolul și viitorul social al Baptismului," [The social role and future of Baptism] *Farul Mântuirii* 11/7-8 (April 1930), p.9. Because illiteracy remained high, speaking was also a way to spread the word to those struggling to read it on their own. Neo-protestant ministers were the major actors, often trained in west European or American institutions, which allowed for stronger theological foundation in apologetics among these groups but also supported accusations of foreign interference.

the confidence to speak and write about their lives and conversions.<sup>90</sup> *Mărturisire* -conversion “testimony” or “confession”- as an important part of neo-protestant religious services further revealed a new self-worth derived from what they interpreted to be a deeper self-understanding. A former Orthodox cantor wrote in his conversion account that despite having lost his means of making a living due to his new beliefs, he was glad to have discovered the “truth of the gospel” and to seek what he considered to be a more personally fulfilling occupation.<sup>91</sup>

The testimony also solidified the speaker’s moral commitment to the religious community.<sup>92</sup> The ritual of reading the word was followed by the ritual of speaking the word. Rappaport defines ritual performance as one in which the actor conforms to or accepts the beliefs of the community to which the ritual belongs.<sup>93</sup> The name of *pocăit* adopted as a common self-identification among neo-protestants also came out of converts’ accounts of repenting from their former life and sharing their new moral commitments. Both adult baptism and testimony acted as crucial pledges to the neo-protestant communities. The 1882 and the 1927 official Baptist Confessions of Faith in Romania stated that an individual was accepted into the religious community once they had given their personal conversion account in front of the community of believers.<sup>94</sup> Conversion accounts delivered by individuals prior to their baptism were important and highly anticipated events.<sup>95</sup>

<sup>90</sup> Coleman, *Russian Baptists*, p. 63; ACLA 31161, Loghin Motrescu, “În căutare după Dumnezeu,” [In search of God] *Farul Mântuirii* 6/23 (December 1925), p.4.

<sup>91</sup> ACLA unprocessed, Ioan Socaciu, “O Scrisoare din multe altele,” [A letter among many others] *Farul Mântuirii* 5/24 (December 1924), p.19. He also identified the high levels of illiteracy which kept many from accessing what he claimed to be the truths found in the bible.

<sup>92</sup> ACLA 31162, “Un ajutor sau o piedică,” [A help or a stumbling block] *Farul Mântuirii* 12/15-18 (September 1931), pp.2-3.

<sup>93</sup> Rappaport, pp. 451,453.

<sup>94</sup> ACLA 31218, *Mărturisirea Credenței precum și constituirea comunităților creștinilor botezați (baptiști)* [Confession of Faith as well as the constituency of the community of baptized Christians] (Bucharest, 1882), p.25; ACLA 31189, *Mărturisirea credinței creștinilor botezați în general numiți baptiști* (Arad: Speranța, 1927), p.31.

<sup>95</sup> ACLA unprocessed, “Conferința de la Brașov,” *Buna Vestire* 14/11-12 (November/December 1924), pp.5-7.

Ritual, as expounded by Rappaport, establishes a degree of obligation.<sup>96</sup> By speaking the word in the presence of others the recent convert and even older believers identified themselves with the lifestyle and rituals associated with neo-protestant communities. The conversion experience entailed a new perception of one's personal spiritual state and a new intentionality of living a life of purity. This included committing oneself to the community's rejection of "alcohol, tobacco, dancing, card playing, theatre-going, and other worldly amusements," which were meant to be an example for the rest of the nation in producing more responsible citizens.<sup>97</sup>

The importance of the individual in the decision of repentance through baptism was evident but its efficacy lay in the public acknowledgement of new commitments to the body of believers.<sup>98</sup> Webb Keane, anthropologist of Christian communities in Indonesia, demonstrates that "[w]hen Baptists hear the voice of the Spirit in the inward self, the only evidence lies in the public act of talking about it, a common reason for quoting divine speech."<sup>99</sup> Dumitru Cornilescu claimed that Popescu was converted while giving his own sermon, and that after his conversion- after "seeing the greatness (*grozăvia*) of his own sin"- Popescu began to speak "through the power of God's Spirit."<sup>100</sup> Popescu testified to the authority of the word in the Bible, resulting in it being indispensable from his sermons.<sup>101</sup>

<sup>96</sup> Rappaport, pp. 457, 464-465.

<sup>97</sup> Wanner, *Communities of the Converted*, p. 12; Webb Keane, "Religious Language," *Annual Review of Anthropology* 26 (1997), p.52. Numerous Romanian neo-protestant articles spoke against alcohol such as "Alcoolul: Vai, vai, vai!" *Căluza* 4/2 (April/June 1938), p. 32-33. The article also mentions Romanian's ancient ancestors, the Daci, and what the author considered the wisdom of one of their kings in making them pull out their vineyards, thus tying the morals of their community with beloved national-historical figures. See also footnote 103. BOR and political groups also published on similar themes in competing for moral superiority; an example is the newspaper of the League of National Christian Defense: "Impotriva beției," *Infrățirea Românească* 2/1 (1 November 1925), p.1, [http://documente.bcuculuj.ro/web/bibdigit/periodice/actiunearomaneasca/1925-1926/infratirearomaneasca/BCUCLUJ\\_FP\\_279052\\_1925\\_002\\_001.pdf](http://documente.bcuculuj.ro/web/bibdigit/periodice/actiunearomaneasca/1925-1926/infratirearomaneasca/BCUCLUJ_FP_279052_1925_002_001.pdf) (accessed 4 June 2015).

<sup>98</sup> Rappaport, p. 447.

<sup>99</sup> Keane, "Religious Language," p.61.

<sup>100</sup> Țon, *Credința Adevărată*, p. 59.

<sup>101</sup> Popescu, "Ce este cu mișcarea de la Cuibul cu Barza," *Adervărul Creștin* 26/31 (March/April 1995) p. 37.



However, acceptance of a religious community's rituals may not entail belief; belief as identified by Rappaport is a private act while acceptance is a public and visible act.<sup>102</sup>

Engaging in the ritual of testimony was perceived as a way of encouraging agreement and bringing together acceptance and belief. Maria, a Romanian neo-protestant, gave her account of giving up drinking as a way of proving her dedication to the faith values of the Romanian Baptist community.<sup>103</sup> The ritual of testimony among Romanian neo-protestants pushed for acceptance to also mean belief and for the believer to "prove" it by telling the religious community how the change of heart was reflected in the change of actions.<sup>104</sup> Often these newly motivated actions were presented as contributing to moral renewal among Romanians in the country.

It was these actions of speaking or writing of the change of faith which most revealed the differences among neo-protestant groups. Despite all practicing adult baptism, their theologies, rituals, and aesthetics of communal worship were different.<sup>105</sup> Space does not permit a detailed description of these differences but the breadth of interwar polemics against each other and against BOR teaching, dealing mostly with hermeneutical differences, were voiced in pulpits and in publications.<sup>106</sup> The regional tensions occurring across the country

<sup>102</sup> Rappaport, pp.454-456.

<sup>103</sup> Eugenia Pop, "Despre Beție," [About Drunkenness] *Farul Mântuirii* (July/August 1929), p. 9.

<sup>104</sup> ACLA unprocessed, Aurel C., "Împărăția lui Dumnezeu nu stă în vorbe ci în putere," *Buna Vestire* 14/9-10 (September/October, 1924), pp.3-5.

<sup>105</sup> Tudor Popescu's *Creștini după Scriptura* (also called *Tudoriști*) practiced infant baptism and held a Reformed rather than an Arminian theology. Today they are associated more with Protestant denominations but in the interwar period they were linked to the Brethren. For the differences on these see: William Moorhouse, *Arminianism and Calvinism Compared: In their Principles, Tendencies and Results* (London: Frederick Westley and A.H. Davis, 1834).

<sup>106</sup> ACLA unprocessed, Dimitrie Sida, "Rătăcirile cu Sambata," [Waywardness with Saturday] *Farul Mântuirii* 5/19-20 (October 1924), p. 9; "Rătăcirea mileniștilor," [Waywardness of the millenialists] *Buna Vestire* 17/4 (April 1925), p.32; Nicolae Sava, "Biblia și Adventiștii," [The Bible and the Adventists] *Farul Mântuirii* 6/10 (May 1925), p.3; "Penticostalismul," *Farul Mântuirii* 8/23 (December 1927), p.10. A Pentecostal publication stated it would not be a source of polemics but that the editors wished to work alongside similar publications to make knowledge of God accessible to the people through the bible, in Ion Bododea, "Cuvânt Înainte," [Preface] *Glasul Adevărului* 1/1 (January 1929), p.2.

were also present in the internal dynamics of the Baptists in particular, as leaders from Arad resented the push for centralization headed by ministers in Bucharest. Despite being grouped together by the government and various BOR authorities, these groups were not homogenous. These differences were most evident in the way they interpreted the Bible and delivered the word spoken.

### **The Word Sung: Aesthetic Alternatives for Church and Nation**

The words of the Bible, which were read and spoken by Romanian neo-protestants, were turned into song to be sung corporately. An American missionary involved in supervising the Baptist seminary in Bucharest asserted that “In Roumania there is much more emphasis put on church music than in the South [United States]- yes, just about five times as much emphasis.”<sup>107</sup> Youth were encouraged to attend courses held in Buteni to learn to read music and to conduct choirs.<sup>108</sup> Descriptions of what were considered particularly powerful services, baptisms, new churches organized, or church buildings built almost always include a reference to the choirs or the songs sung. One author went so far as to argue that a lack of corporate singing would “kill” a congregation.<sup>109</sup> The importance placed on song within the religious service presented corporate singing as a ritual which linked the reading and the speaking of the word.<sup>110</sup> As with speaking to spread their faith in the words of the Bible, singing also

<sup>107</sup> Dan T. Hurley, “A Worthy Program for Roumanian Baptists,” *Home and Foreign Fields* (August 1926), p.18.

<sup>108</sup> ACLA 31160, Vasile Berbecar, “Învățați notele!” [Learn the notes!] *Farul Mânturirii* 3/11-12 (November 1922), p.16.

<sup>109</sup> To list here just a few of the articles: Teodor Pușcaș, “Deschidere de adunare în Oradea Mare,” [Opening of a meeting house in Oradea Mare] and Ioan Dan, “O Serbare la Petrifalău,” [A celebration at Petrifalău] *Farul Mânturirii* 5/1-2 (January 1924), p.16. Dan Baban, “Serbari,” [Celebrations] and Petru Bosia, “Inaugurare,” [Inaugurations] *Farul Mânturirii* 5/14 (July 1924), p.8. “Școala biblică în Iași,” [Bible School in Iași] *Buna Vestire* 17 (25)/4 (April 1925), p.8. “Muzica din Rădești,” [Music from Rădești] and “Corul din Timișoara” [Choir from Timișoara] *Farul Mânturirii* 11/15-17 (August 1930), pp.6, 9. “Cum poți omori o comunitate?” [How you can kill a community] *Farul Mânturirii* 5/19-20 (October 1924), p.6.

<sup>110</sup> An Adventist song on bible colporteurs encouraged the word read and the word spoken (evangelism) through the word sung. N. Dorobăț, “Colporterii,” [The Colporteurs] *Curierul Misionar* 6/11 (November 1926), p.172.

contributed to theological instruction for a large percent of the population that remained illiterate or semi-literate.<sup>111</sup>

The importance of song in Romanian culture and in particular within Orthodox liturgy was re-appropriated in Adventist, Baptist, Brethren, and Pentecostal church services.<sup>112</sup> Dumitru Cornilescu, along with a group of young Romanian soldiers he was mentoring, identified the need for something to sing as an expression of their new faith. Worldly songs (*cântece din lume*) were not considered appropriate and the group claimed to possess no “Christian” songs. Cornilescu translated a song book (he did not specify the original foreign language, most likely German) into Romanian out of, what he argued, was a need for everything to be renewed in the convert’s life, even or especially song.<sup>113</sup> Songs interspersed throughout the service allowed congregants to participate corporately in the activity that they considered to most resemble what the faithful would engage in once they reached heaven.<sup>114</sup> In 1925 Baptist minister and seminary professor Jean Staneschi compiled a hymnal mostly of songs translated from the Russian language as well as songs from Romanian song books published abroad to diversify the English, German, and French song translations.<sup>115</sup>

The song books printed in the mid 1920s became inseparable from a neo-protestant’s Bible and devotional life. Gavril Dunca in his conversion account attributed his adoption of the Baptist confession to a Bible, some pamphlets, and a song book given to him by a Baptist believer. Singing songs and reading Bible verses composed the worship services at Bicazu

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<sup>111</sup> For more on the use of song in the history of Protestant church teachings see Andreas J. Loewe, “Why do Lutherans Sing? Lutherans, Music, and the Gospel in the First Century of the Reformation,” *Church History* 82/1 (March 2013), pp. 69-89.

<sup>112</sup> For the importance of song in the fascist movement the Legion of the Archangel Michael see Roland Clark, “Collective Singing in Romanian Fascism,” *Cultural and Social History* 10/2 (2013), pp.251-271.

<sup>113</sup> Țon, *Credința Adevărată*, p.57

<sup>114</sup> Ioan Socaciu, “Baptist Persecution and Progress in Roumania,” *Home and Foreign Fields* (April 1925), p. 18.

<sup>115</sup> Staneschi’s hymnals were called *Cântările Triumfului*. The earlier song books included *Harfa Coriștilor* (Budapest, 1904) and *Cântările Sionului* (Detroit, 1919). Popovici, vol. II, p.68.

where Dunca founded the town's first Baptist church.<sup>116</sup> Participation in a liturgical order, as part of the rituals mentioned previously, functioned as an acceptance of and legitimized that order.<sup>117</sup> By engaging in corporate song these individuals validated neo-protestant beliefs by taking part in the ritual and abiding by a set of religious aesthetics. Meyer pinpoints the importance of aesthetics in people's sense of belonging:

Sharing a common aesthetic style via a common religious affiliation generates ...feelings of togetherness and...mirrors particular moods and sentiments. Such experiences of sharing also modulate people into a particular, common appearance, and thus underpin a collective religious identity.<sup>118</sup>

Similar music and words could be found across the denominational groups. Song among neo-protestants became an important part of their aesthetics and thus of their identity.

Interestingly, the fact that they carried over some songs from the Orthodox Church reveals a degree of aesthetic connection between the two traditions. However, the change in style of singing from the clerical and the choice of songs carried over exposes the importance placed on aesthetics of song as a unique corporate identity marker in interwar neo-protestant communities.<sup>119</sup> They wanted to look and sound distinctly different from their previous religion.

The religious and secular communities were simultaneously affected as local musical styles (the accordion and guitar) were introduced into neo-protestant and especially Pentecostal songs. Local Romanians were recorded as saying that the neo-protestants enjoyed themselves in their song-filled services and that local ethnic Romanians also attended to take part in the

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<sup>116</sup> Gavril Dunca, *Amintiri din viața mea* [Memories from my Life] (unpublished manuscript, 1978), p. 15, in Claudiu Handaric, "The beginnings and growth of Baptist witness," pp.44, 49.

<sup>117</sup> Rappaport, p. 463.

<sup>118</sup> Meyer, "Religious Sensations," Lecture (2006), pp.25-26.

<sup>119</sup> W.Y. Quisenberry, "In the Capital of Roumania: Spiritual Heart-Hunger for the Word of God," *Home and Foreign Fields* (June 1924), p. 9. ACLA 31181, Victor Covaci, "Scopul muzicii în bisericile noastre," [The reason for music in our churches] *Glasul Tineretului Baptist* 4/4 (April 1928), pp.9-10.

joyful gatherings.<sup>120</sup> The songs disseminated into the wider community and were adopted by other confessions, which all considered themselves thoroughly and loyally Romanian. The insertion of the scriptures into music and blending this with international neo-protestant translated hymns, Orthodox lyrics, and traditional Romanian music produced a unique link to trans-national neo-protestant communities as well as to local Romanian communities. Some versions of *Cântările Sionului* also included the hymn “Trăiască Regele” [Long Live the King] to show their love of king and country.<sup>121</sup>

They saw themselves as enhancing the nation’s musical repertoire through songs which encouraged renewal at all levels of society and culture. Songs translated or composed by Vasile Berbecar, Cornilescu, Staneschi, and others became important pillars of neo-protestants’ community identification.<sup>122</sup> Congregants engaged together through song in “giving the word back to God.” Unlike prayer, preaching, or conversion testimonies, song united the individual with the religious community by speaking together the words they claimed to have individually read, internalized, and testified to previously. They also linked themselves to the larger Romanian ethnic community and culture through their choice of aesthetics through song.

### **Solidifying their Engagement with the Nation**

Observers at an outdoor baptismal service in then Caraș County were recorded by American missionaries as exclaiming: “We never heard things like these in all our lives; they believe the teachings of Jesus as the Book tells them and do what he says.”<sup>123</sup> The validity of the quote is questionable; it nonetheless explains the self-image of such groups as those who read the words of “the Book” (or the words of the “Word that became flesh”) and lived them

<sup>120</sup> Țon, *Credința Adevărată*, p.57

<sup>121</sup> Ioan Ciuraș, Interview, Oțelu Roșu (10 April 2015). Ciuraș recalls how his father was told to rip the song out of his hymnal after WWII to avoid difficulties with the new communist government.

<sup>122</sup> ACLA unprocessed, Vasile Berbecar, “Cântul în bisericile noastre,” *Farul Mânturirii* 10/11 (June 1929), p.5.

<sup>123</sup> L. Balint, “Baptist Persecution and Progress in Roumania,” *Home and Foreign Fields* 10/2 (February 1926), p. 7.

out. Tudor Popescu showed how his congregants started helping the poor as an extension of reading and speaking the word.<sup>124</sup> Calls were printed to aid famine stricken victims in Bessarabia and money sent; orphanages were built and groups organized to help the elderly and to do other voluntary work.<sup>125</sup> The implications were that living out the words had a direct affect on the self, the religious community, and the communities at the local and national level.

Ethnically these growing neo-protestant groups identified themselves with the Romanian *neam* [kin] and *popor* [people] at the level of the nation, saying they were neither Magyarized, Germanized, nor anti-national. They also used the concept of citizenship to argue that the state should not take heresy and apostasy as a category of legal infraction, but should protect religious liberty and liberty of conscience.<sup>126</sup> They claimed to provide a new moral force for Romanians in contrast to “radical extremism,” through their appropriation of the words of the Bible read, spoken, and sung. This new morality would overcome what they considered to be the “fanatical doctrine” of those refusing to give neo-protestants their religious rights.<sup>127</sup> One Baptist believer expressed the need for Orthodox priests to work together with them to reach Romanians “lost in sin.”<sup>128</sup> Though rarely, they even included writings of BOR priests as legitimate teachings in their publications.<sup>129</sup> Patriotism was demonstrated further

<sup>124</sup> Popescu, “Ce este cu mișcarea de la Cuibul cu Barza,” *Adervarul Creștin* 26/31 (March/April 1995) p. 38.

<sup>125</sup> ACLA 31161, Magdalena Dumitrescu, “Către societatea femeilor creștine,” [To the society of Christian women] *Farul Mântuirii* 6/8 (April 1925), p.10. ACLA 31159, *Luminatorul* 3/3 (March 1929), p.5 on sending money to poor in Bessarabia.

<sup>126</sup> Baptist minister Ioan Socaciu called on the state to not leave them in the hands of inquisitioners and for the larger public to intervene for their fellow Romanian brothers of the same blood and kin, so that together they could fight for national consolidation, the spread of the Gospel, and the happiness of Greater Romania, in ACLA 31160, “Cine suntem și ce credem noi Bapțiștii,” *Farul Mântuirii* 3/1 (January 1922), pp.1-3; V.Diaconescu, “Cronica școlii,” *Curierul Misionar* 10/7 (July 1930), pp.103, 106-107.

<sup>127</sup> Ion Podea, “Forța Morală a Bapșismului,” *Creștinul* 10/6 (March 1922), p.9. “Through work, honor, and true brotherhood let us raise our kin (*neam*) to the height to which it is called,” in ACLA 31181, “10 ani de la unirea tuturor românilor,” [10 years since the union of all Romanians] *Glasul Tineretului Baptist* 4/12 (December 1928), p.6.

<sup>128</sup> G. Baciș, “Primejdia bapșismului,” [Baptist danger] *Farul Mântuirii* 9/15-16 (August 1928), p.2.

<sup>129</sup> ACLA unprocessed, Pr. Marin C. Ionescu, “Mândria și smerenia,” [Pride and humility] *Duminica Ortodoxă*, in *Farul Mântuirii* 5/21-22 (November 1924), pp. 12-13.

through reprinting articles by Queen Marie and previous Queen Elizabeth (under pen name Carmen Sylva) in neo-protestant publications. Occasionally, neo-protestant representatives in delegation to government ministers appeared in traditional Romanian dress.<sup>130</sup> To prove their care for the nation, they sent telegrams of well wishes and prayers for the success of the country and Romanian people to the various monarchs in power during this period (King Ferdinand and Queen Marie, King Michael, Carol II) and to officials (Prime Minister Alexandru Vaida Voevod and Minister of Cults Dimitrie Gusti).<sup>131</sup>

Neo-protestant soldiers serving in the Romanian army published articles declaring their loyalty and love of country. They joined the rest of the country in commemorating those who died fighting for a united Romania and mourned the nation's loss of King Ferdinand and Prime Minister Ion I.C.Brătianu in 1927.<sup>132</sup> They presented themselves as working towards the economic good of the country, through such examples as Adam Sezonov, decorated by the state for commerce and industrial work.<sup>133</sup> By interweaving their theology, their focus on the agency of the individual, the importance of ritual and aesthetics as described above within the religious community, and their responsibility as citizens but also as people of the nation, they presented themselves as loyal Romanians attempting to provide legitimate aid in the struggle for national consolidation.

<sup>130</sup> ACLA 31186, Photo of Baptist delegation in audience to Carol II, *Calendarul Poporului Creștin* [Christian People's Calendar] (Arad: Ateneum, 1932), p.70.

<sup>131</sup> ACLA unprocessed, Ioan Socaciu, "An nou fericit!" [Happy new year] *Farul Mântuirii* 5/1-2 (January 1924), p.5; Ioan Ungureanu, "Independența României," [Romania's Independence] *Farul Mântuirii* 11/10 (June 1930), p.4; Ion Dan, "Trăiască Carol II și România întregită," [Long live Carol II and united Romania] *Farul Mântuirii* 11/21-22 (November 1930), p.8. On page 19 of this last issue were included telegrams to Queen Marie. "Telegrams," *Glasul Adevărului* 1/17 (September 1932), p.3. Ilisie Rus a peasant from Cluj on being arrested for preaching in the streets, shouted "Long Live Romania" and on another occasion he prayed in front of the authorities that arrested him for the King, Country, and the governing authorities in Andreiescu, vol. I, p.99

<sup>132</sup> ACLA 31181, I. Borcău, "Un cuvânt către frații ostași," [A word to my brother soldiers] *Glasul Tineretului Baptist* 4/1 (January 1928), p.16; ACLA 31233, "Pentru neam și țară," [For kin and country] *Calendarul Poporului Creștin pe anul 1935* (Arad: Ateneum, 1935), pp.88-89; ACLA unprocessed, "Este o mare pierdere pe care o încearcă țara," [It is a great loss that the country suffers] *Farul Mântuirii* 9/12 (June 1927), p.8.

<sup>133</sup> ACLA unprocessed, "Informațiuni," *Farul Mântuirii* 11/10 (June 1930), p.7.

Historian Dorin Dobrinu claims that the neo-protestant confessions in interwar Romania were at a child's stage in the development of their identity, having no developed theology adapted to their culture, no intellectuals, and no politicians or groups to lobby for them. Marginalization and persecution were part of their everyday lives and it was during this stage that they adopted a strong martyr complex, according to Dobrinu.<sup>134</sup> However, though seeming to be heavily dependent on North American and British guidance (more detailed in the previous chapter), Romanian neo-protestant leaders were actively developing their own unique identities and communities and flourishing. For neo-protestants in interwar Romania, reading the word, speaking the word through conversion accounts, through sermons, or other evangelistic endeavors, and then singing the word contributed to an entanglement of the Weberian concept of an individualized protestant tradition with that of an increased dependency on community. A consideration of ritual, aesthetics, and language in the study of religion contributes to a better understanding of the complexity of the Romanian neo-protestant self, in vital connection with the new religious communities, whose burden it was to contribute morally (and practically) to the newly formed Greater Romania. The following chapter will analyze the religious and political context that produced a different image of neo-protestants, to better understand the increasing emphasis placed on their ability to offer moral and material advantages to the nation and to the state.

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<sup>134</sup> Dobrinu, "Religie și putere în România," p.602.



### Chapter III: External Perceptions of Romanian Neo-Protestant Identity

Liberty of conscience is absolute. The state guarantees liberty and protection for all cults as long as their practices do not interfere with public order, mores, and the organizational laws of the state... The Romanian Orthodox Church, the religion of the majority of Romanians, is the dominant church in the Romanian State... [and] has pre-eminence over other cults. The Romanian Orthodox Church is and will remain autonomous of any foreign diocese...<sup>135</sup>

Interwar Romania was filled with “isms” to propose the best definition of the Romanian nation and of its most appropriate path of development: orthodoxism, poporanism, gândirism, sămănătorism, eugenicism, etc. Such a definition required identification of the foreign, and, in the opinion of some, its eradication. The negative or positive effects of western influence and the alleged exploitative actions of ethnic minorities were main points of the debates. Ethnic Romanian neo-protestant churches exemplified both. They were born out of ethnic minority religious communities and showed substantial western influence. As new denominations, they drew congregants away from the Romanian Orthodox Church (BOR), the constitutionally recognized dominant church, which was historically presented as the defender of the Romanian people.<sup>136</sup> An American minister working with the Romanian Baptist Union acknowledged that it was “difficult to deny to a nation the right to grant favored treatment to any particular religious tradition which has been the rallying point of the people in their evolution toward national unity.”<sup>137</sup> However, the quote from the 1923 constitution, meant to present religious liberty and pluralism in Romania, was often used to accuse other faiths of threatening social mores and state law.

<sup>135</sup> Section 2, Art. 22, *Constitution of Romania 1923*, [http://www.cdep.ro/pls/legis/legis\\_pck.htm?act=text?id=1517](http://www.cdep.ro/pls/legis/legis_pck.htm?act=text?id=1517) (accessed 25 May 2015).

<sup>136</sup> Lavinia Stan and Lucian Turcescu, *Religion and Politics in Post-Communist Romania* (NY: Oxford University Press, 2007), p. 43.

<sup>137</sup> Kenneth G. Grubb, “Rumanian Protestants,” *The Commission* 2/7 (July 1939), p. 253.

The Romanian neo-protestants were seen as hindering the process of Romanianization of Romania's territorial acquisitions, in fact doing the very opposite, through their adoption of "foreign" religions and spreading them among the peasants. Along with BOR clergy, the growing number of neo-protestant adherents did not go unnoticed by other interwar contemporaries who tried to offer scientific, philosophical, or other explanations for the phenomena.<sup>138</sup> This chapter will examine the image of Romanian neo-protestants as presented first by BOR, then by intellectuals, and concluding with the perceptions and actions of government officials.

Presenting these subgroups is a challenge since the most prominent figures overlap: influential BOR leaders were brought into government such as Patriarch Miron Cristea, Archbishop Florian Roxin, Bishop Grigorie Comșa, and Bishop Nicolae Colan, among others.<sup>139</sup> Interwar intellectuals were also preoccupied with the role of religion in Romanian society. Nevertheless, the theological and doctrinal implications of arguments by BOR members call for such subsections. They reveal the extent to which church, intellectuals, and the government influenced one another reciprocally in causing and disseminating confusion and hostility regarding the neo-protestants, provoking them to emphasize and further develop their national loyalty, thus producing a new image of Romanian identity.

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<sup>138</sup> Henri H. Stahl considered that the "sects" developed out of dissatisfaction with the current political and social situation. Zoltán Rostás, *Monografia ca utopie. Interviu cu Henri H. Stahl (1985-1987)* [Monograph as Utopia. Interviews with Henri H. Stahl] (Bucharest: Editura Paideia, 2000), pp. 97, 105, in Dobrinu, p.586. From a psychological perspective: Al. A. Scvoznicov, *Psihologia sectelor religioase. Studiu analitic asupra cauzelor și fondului mișcării sectare* [Psychology of religious sects. Analytical studies on the causes and foundation for sectarian movements] (Chișinău: Monitorul Oficial și Imprimeriile Statului, 1939).

<sup>139</sup> Miron Cristea was Prime Minister February 1938 to March 1939. Archbishop Florian Roxin of Buteni was a senator during the third Averescu government of 30 May 1926 to 4 June 1927. Grigorie Comșa served as a deputy in parliament in 1920 and as the subdirector of the Ministry of Cults and Arts from 1920 to 1925. "Grigorie Comșa," <http://biserica.org/WhosWho/DTR/C/GrigoreComsa.html> (accessed 11 May 2015). Nicolae Colan served as Minister of Cults in 1938.

## The Romanian Orthodox Church: the Hermeneutical and Nationalist Battle for the Word

BOR could also claim the importance of the Bible read, spoken, and sung for their religious community, though in different forms. The first point of conflict with neo-protestants was regarding differences in theology and church tradition. Some clergy took this conflict further and intimately linked it with national and state concerns. Among the images presented by clergy and others was of these growing confessions as tools of German, Hungarian, or Jewish minorities, as corrupted by western powers, or as a Bolshevik threat.

Within the first point of conflict, the BOR hierarchy saw neo-protestant groups as sects-heretical splinter groups from the dominant church- who rejected the importance of church tradition, rituals, and priestly authority.<sup>140</sup> An Orthodox seminary textbook on Bible hermeneutics from 1922 emphasized the insufficiency of individual interpretation (considered of utmost significance among neo-protestants) and the need for church hierarchy and tradition to guide Romanians' understanding of the words in the Bible.<sup>141</sup> A reoccurring label was that of *rătăciții* [lost or wayward ones] and a number of polemical works were published to show how the neo-protestants had gone wrong in their theology.<sup>142</sup>

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<sup>140</sup> The Greek-Catholic Church identified neo-protestant teaching as competition prior to World War I. Priest Nicolae Branzeu (1883-1962) of Lugoj published *Pocăiții, Cuvântări bisericești asupra așa-numiților pocăiți* [Repenters, Words from the church on the so-called repenters] (Petrosani, 1913) focusing on the Adventists, and their errant understanding of the doctrine of repentance. He also published *Culte în România* [The Cults in Romania] (Lugoj, 1925), in <http://www.crestinortodox.ro/dictionarul-teologilor-romani/nicolae-branzeu-84544.html> (accessed 8 May 2015).

<sup>141</sup> ACLA 31182, Archimandrite I. Scriban, *Manual de Ermeneutică Biblică pentru învățătura clasei VII a seminarilor teologice din România Veche* (ed. II) [Bible Hermeneutics Manual for teaching class VII of the theological seminaries in Old Romania] (Bucharest: Sportul, 1922), pp. 151-159.

<sup>142</sup> Examples of such publications are: Alexandru N. Constantinescu, *Sectologie. Istoricul și combaterea sectelor din România* [Sectology. History and battle against the sects in Romania], ed. II (Bucharest: Tipografia cărților bisericești, 1929); Gheorghe Sălcescu, *Ce vor rătăciții?* [What do the wayward want?] (Bucharest: Tipografia Cărților Bisericești, 1931); A.C. Cosma, C. Popescu, *Țiparii se pescuiesc pe întuneric sau Sectele din România. Istoric, doctrină și combatere* [Eels are fished in the dark or Sects in Romania. History, doctrine, and battle] (Aiud: Tipografia Unirea, 1933); Ilarion F. Felea, *Critica ereziei baptiste* [Cirtique of the Baptist Heresy] (Sibiu, 1937), in Dobrinu, p.590.

Adherents and leaders in these groups were also presented as propagandists. The disappointment and moral imbalance left as a result of the war, according to one priest, brought a general restlessness, which allowed the “sectarians to produce the fiercest propaganda.”<sup>143</sup> Archimandrite Galaction D. Cordun claimed they (either unknowingly or out of evil intentions) “sow[ed] the tares of their false teachings in the harvest fields of the Orthodox Church” and confused Orthodox believers. Cordun published hermeneutical interpretations of Bible texts to counter Adventist teachings and wrote that Adventists encouraged people not to listen to God’s word, because they presumed to give dates for the world’s end, contrary to the words of Jesus that “no one knows the day or hour.”<sup>144</sup> In what regards rituals, exaggerated fasting was a common accusation against Pentecostals, a misunderstanding of the way they approached the ritual of fasting, similar to other neo-protestant denominations.<sup>145</sup> They were seen as basing their arguments on false premises, mixing Bible texts without any criteria, and presenting their “wrong interpretations of spiritual truth” as God’s word. Neo-protestant calls for piety and arguments for the greater moral status of their religious communities were presented as a façade to attract proselytes. Cordun also encouraged Romanians to obey the voice of God - the words of truth in the Bible- but to do so by listening to “the voice of our Church, the only one which guides people to salvation.”<sup>146</sup>

Other Orthodox writings also pointed to the problems within BOR and claimed that new sects took root particularly in the villages where priests lived far from their parishes or where

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<sup>143</sup> Article from the July 1926 issue of *Renașterea* [Re-birth] published in “Fără comentarii,”[Without Comments] *Curierul Misionar* [Missionary Courier] 11 (1926), p. 171-172.

<sup>144</sup> ACLA 31216, Archimandrite Galaction D. Cordun, *Ce este Adventismul?* [What is Adventism?] ed. III (Bucharest: Imprimeria Cailor Ferate Romane, 1922), p.13-14. He references Colonel Van Beninghen who said the Second Coming of Christ would be in 1932.

<sup>145</sup> Andreiescu, vol.I, p.66-67. Peasants were told by some local priests that the devil comes into the water at *pocăit* baptisms and puts his seal on the back of those baptized, or that the all night prayer gatherings of the Pentecostals were sexual orgies, in Ioan Socaciu, “Baptist Persecution and Progress in Roumania,” *Home and Foreign Fields* 9/4 (April 1925), pp. 14-19.

<sup>146</sup> ACLA 31216, Cordun, *Ce este Adventismul?* p.22-23, 32.

they failed to carry out their clerical responsibilities.<sup>147</sup> Bishop Grigorie Leu Botoșăneanul presented neo-protestants as developing out of BOR's inadequacy in filling the spiritual hunger of the people and causing them to go awry (*aiurea*). In his works he quotes priests from Bessarabia who portrayed the "sectarian problem" as the fold of Christ going to troubled waters. The resolution he offered was for renewal within BOR, condemning as vices smoking, drunkenness, loss of significance in religious rituals- these were similar to aesthetic calls for purity among neo-protestants during the same period.<sup>148</sup> BOR leaders placed increasing emphasis on preparing priests to face what they considered to be sectarian proselytism. Patriarch Miron Cristea suggested sending priests to the United Kingdom for special training.<sup>149</sup> Archbishop Nicolae Bălan of Ardeal rallied clergy to be more aware of their "holy mission" and called for a militant religiosity. For him this took the form of a journal on religious education for villages published in 1922 entitled *Lumina Satelor: foaie săptăminală pentru popor* [*The Light of the Villages: a weekly paper for the people*].<sup>150</sup>

The physical presence of an Orthodox church and the communal space the building occupied was another response to the expansion of neo-protestant prayer houses (*case de rugăciune*). In Buteni, Bishop Florian Roxin orchestrated the transfer of the Orthodox church

<sup>147</sup> ACLA 31156, *Gazeta Transilvaniei* (14 September 1922) in V.W. Jones, "Convertirea drept credincioșilor Greco-Ortodocși la Baptism și Adventism," [The Conversion of the faithful Greek-Orthodox to Baptism and Adventism] *Creștinul* 10/21 (November 1922), pp.8-9; Clark, *United Roumania*, p. 351.

<sup>148</sup> Grigorie Leu Botoșăneanul, *Confesiuni și secte. Studiu istoric misionar* [Confessions and Sects. Historical Missionary Study] (Bucharest: Tipografia Cărților Bisericești, 1929) and *Sectele din România* [Sects in Romania] (Chișinău: Tipografia Eparhială Cartea Românească, 1931). At the time of writing he was not yet a bishop in Argeș but a priest in Iași. Teodor Danalache, "Grigorie Leu, un episcop martir," <http://www.crestinortodox.ro/parinti/grigorie-leu-episcop-martir-126163.html> (accessed 7 May 2015).

<sup>149</sup> This is one example of BOR also seeking foreign help in regards to theological training, an accusation levied against Romanian neo-protestant ministers. Cristea was also influential in founding the Bucharest Orthodox Bible Institute in 1920. Ilie Șandru, Valentin Borda, *Patriarhul Miron Cristea* (Târgu Mureș: Petru Maior, 1998), p.147; Antonie Plămădeală, *Contribuții istorice privind perioada 1918-1939. Elie Miron Cristea. Documente, însemnări și corespondențe* [Historical Contributions regarding the period 1918-1939. Documents, records, and correspondence] (Sibiu: Tiparul Tipografiei Eparhiale, 1987), pp. 17-18.

<sup>150</sup> *Pravila Oastei Domnului* [Lord's Army Codex] (Sibiu, 1937), pp. 1-2, in Constantineanu, "The 'Rediscovery' of Scripture," p. 94. Iosif Trifa, founder of *Oastea Domnului*, was editor of *The Light of the Villages*.

to the administrative centre of the town from 1927 to 1929. With the help of Vasile Goldiș, Minister of Cults at the time, Bishop Roxin succeeded in building the largest Orthodox church in the county in an attempt to rival the work done by Baptists in Buteni.<sup>151</sup> Arad county seemed to be the most problematic in terms of the growing neo-protestants, it was thus the region which had the most influential and outspoken Orthodox polemical figures.

The BOR hierarchy remained firm in their convictions that neo-protestants were errant theologically. However, the source of their heresy became intricately linked with their doctrine and it was accusations of the former which came to dominate. They were identified as a foreign import, influenced by ethnic minorities. Priests accused them of meeting in unauthorized houses and of illegal proselytising, saying they did not follow the authority of the Romanian government and that they would not raise arms to defend their country.<sup>152</sup> Bishop Grigorie Comșa of Arad was the most vociferous of BOR opponents, publishing polemics on a regular basis for ten years between 1923 and 1933.<sup>153</sup> Pentecostal historian Valeriu Andreiescu calls him the great enemy of the Pentecostals.<sup>154</sup> Three years after the founding of the

<sup>151</sup> Corina Vașca, “80 de ani de la târnosirea bisericii Ortodoxe din Buteni,” [80 years since the dedication of the Orthodox church in Buteni] *Studii De Știință Și Cultură* 5/4 (December 2009), pp. 116-118. “Sfântirea Bisericii din Buteni,” *Românul* 14/47 (17 November 1929), p.1, <http://dspace.bcuculuj.ro/handle/123456789/16896> (accessed 20 May 2015). Goldiș was Minister of Art and Cults from 1926 to 1927 under the second Averescu government. Goldiș was also Head of Public Education and Religions in 1918 and later Head of Relations with the Co-inhabiting National and Religious Minorities.

<sup>152</sup> James Henry Rushbrooke, “The Latest Phase,” *The Commission* 2/3 (March 1939), pp. 72-73. Rushbrooke looks at accusations raised against them since 1920. Many such believers fought in World War I and some were decorated.

<sup>153</sup> Here are some of Grigorie Comșa’s works during this period: *Pentru Neam și Lege. Patruzeci de cuvântări de învățătură împotriva adventiștilor și baptiștilor* [For Kin and Law. Forty teachings against Adventists and Baptists] (Bucharest: Editura Librăriei Diecezane, 1923); *Călușa cunoașterii și combaterii sectelor* [Guide for knowing and battling the sects] (Cernica: Editura Noii Reviste Bisericești, 1925); *Noua călăuză pentru cunoașterea și combaterea sectelor religioase* [New guide for knowing and battling the sects] (Arad: Tiparul Tipografiei Diecezane, 1927); *Primejdia baptismului* [Baptist Danger] (Arad, 1928); *Cheia sectelor religioase din România* [The Key of the religious sects in Romania] (Arad: Tiparul Tipografiei Diecezane, 1930); *Zece ani de luptă împotriva baptiștilor* [Ten years of fighting against the Baptists] (Arad, 1930); *Cenușa pe capul baptiștilor* [Ashes on the heads of the Baptists] (Arad: Tiparul Tipografiei Diecezane, 1931); *Ura baptiștilor împotriva noastră* [The Baptists’ hatred of us] (Arad, 1932); *Statul în fața sectanților* [Advice concerning the sects] (Arad, 1933).

<sup>154</sup> Andreiescu, vol.I, p.65.

Pentecostal church in Păuliș, Bishop Comșa wrote exuberantly of how the authorities had uncovered the Pentecostal sect and claimed with certainty that it would not spread outside of Cuvin and Păuliș in Arad County.<sup>155</sup> Comșa published a new guide in 1927, after seeing Pentecostals spread to Iași. He called on the gendarmes to do their duty and to stop their meetings.<sup>156</sup> His argument was that those baptized as adults into these churches were almost exclusively baptized by Hungarians, thus further evidence of a conspiracy.<sup>157</sup>

In a supposed interview with a Baptist minister in 1927 Comșa claimed that initially Hungarians did not view the Baptist denomination well, but began to support it on seeing that the group gained ground among Romanians. He mentions Hungarian Baptist historian Attila Csopják (1853-1934), as supposedly admitting to the conspiracy that the Baptist doctrine was an infiltration by the Hungarian state.<sup>158</sup> In the interview Comșa was adamant that Hungarians who turned to the neo-protestant churches did so only as a façade to draw in Romanian peasants.<sup>159</sup> However, he neglected the fact that Hungarian neo-protestants were marginalized in their own ethnic community, being neither Catholic nor of the Reformed Calvinist tradition.

Though suspicions concerning the German minority were not as strong, mention was frequently made of neo-protestant faiths spreading to Romania through “German colonists” and of their leaders receiving training in German institutions.<sup>160</sup> The German and Hungarian roots

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<sup>155</sup> Comșa, *Călăuza cunoașterii și combaterii sectelor*, p. 77 in Andreiescu, vol.I, p.65. Andreiescu claims that despite the manipulation of the history of pentecostalism in Romania by Comșa, the Bishop was more exact and less hostile than Baptist sources presenting the same history.

<sup>156</sup> Comșa, *Noul ghid pentru cunoașterea și combaterea sectelor religioase*, p.106 in Andreiescu, vol.I, p.65.

<sup>157</sup> He claimed that 800 Romanian ministers out of 910 were baptized by Hungarians. “A Plea for our Romanian Brethren,” *Home and Foreign Fields* 11/10 (October 1927), pp.15-16.

<sup>158</sup> Grigorie Comșa, *Baptismul în România din punct de vedere istoric, național și religios. Convorbiri cu un predicator Baptist* [Baptism in Romania from a historic, national, and religious point of view. Conversations with a Baptist preacher] (Arad: Tiparul Tipografiei Diecezane, 1927), p. 9. Comșa does not support his claim about Csopják with quotes by the historian.

<sup>159</sup> Comșa, *Baptismul în România*, pp. 8-10.

<sup>160</sup> ACLA 31216, Cordon, *Ce este Adventismul?*, p.7-9. Cordon claims German Adventists first came to Dobrogea, then to Bucharest, then to Ploiesti. But in recounting the global historical development of Adventism

of many of the neo-protestant churches were presented as evidence of a subversive plot between two of the largest minorities in the country to maintain social and economic power in Romania. The unexplained growth of these churches was seen as an attempt to continue Magyarization in hopes of ultimately regaining lost territories. Romanian neo-protestant ministers, in particular Baptists (as well as ethnic Hungarian and German churches) were accused of spreading anti-Romanian propaganda from the pulpit.<sup>161</sup>

As previously mentioned, they were also perceived negatively for their interactions with western religious organizations. The work of Southern Baptist missionaries such as Dan T. Hurley and Everett Gill resulted in the founding of the Baptist seminary in Bucharest with Hurley as president of the seminary for a time.<sup>162</sup> One Transylvanian periodical rightly accused Romanian Baptist minister Ioan Socaciu of coming from America to spread the new faiths of the “sects.”<sup>163</sup> Bishop Romulus Ciorogariu of Oradea argued that

...the creed of the Baptists is not a religious creed at all, but a political one. Such is its character also in Romania, where its activity is aimed chiefly against the Romanian Churches and against the interests of the State. The cause of its spreading is the dearth of priests in the two Romanian Churches, but its chief promoter is American money.<sup>164</sup>

Evidence of adherents receiving money from Romanian immigrants in Detroit, Michigan and Akron, Ohio was published.<sup>165</sup> BOR officials also did not want Romania to be seen as a missionary project, grouped with other countries in need of so-called civilizing. As one

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he writes nothing of Ellen White, revealing an incomplete history. On Pentecostals and Saxons see Andreiescu, vol.I, pp.37-38.

<sup>161</sup> Clark, *United Roumania*, p. 351.

<sup>162</sup> R.Tandy McConnell, “*Indigenous Baptists and Foreign Missionaries: Baptist Communities in Romania, Hungary, and Yugoslavia, 1872-1980*,” Ph.D. dissertation (University of South Carolina, 1996), <http://www.eastwestreport.org/31-english/e-17-2/244-baptists-in-romania-hungary-and-yugoslavia-surviving-hostile-authorities-and-well-meaning-missionaries> (accessed 13 May 2015).

<sup>163</sup> ACLA 31156, *Gazeta Transilvaniei* (14 September 1922) in V.W. Jones, “Convertirea drept credințioșilor Greco-Ortodocși la Baptism și Adventism,” *Creștinul* 10/21 (November 1922), pp.8-9.

<sup>164</sup> De Szasz, p. 203. Though significant, the money was rarely sufficient to meet the needs of the growing churches.

<sup>165</sup> Comșa, *Noul ghid*, p.106, in Andreiescu, p. 65.



Orthodox priest argued, “If you Americans desire to spend money in Christian missionary effort, why don’t you send your emissaries to non-Christian countries? We were Christians here, actively defending our faith against the infidel, long before America was discovered.”<sup>166</sup> The contempt with which neo-protestant missionaries and Romanians of these confessions approached BOR clergy contributed to hostile perceptions and interactions on both sides.

Professor and priest Ioan Pasca, from the Orthodox Theological Academy at Gherla wrote of what he perceived as the religious division created by “foreigners among the Romanian brotherhood towards their annihilation.”<sup>167</sup> Pasca and other clergymen felt that this division was not produced by the religious convictions of individuals but through the persistent influence of foreigners who induced Romanians to join the new “heretical” faiths. Comşa brought minorities and western accomplices together by insisting that neo-protestants were against Romanian culture and as loyal to the minority faiths they were bringing about the denationalization of the Romanians to the benefit of the Hungarians who, according to him, were controlled by Britain. He made the prohibition of these groups his chief aim in parliament.<sup>168</sup>

Neo-protestants were also linked to Judaism (with as much historical validity as BOR’s link to Judaism)- a dangerous accusation with the increase of anti-Semitism in Romanian society. Archimandrite Cordun argued that western Christians fell to the wayward (*ratacite*) teachings of Judaism (he uses the derogatory label of *jidovism*) and were influencing Romanians through the spread of western neo-protestant teachings. He claimed that Jews boldly propagated Adventist teaching, which followed some of the ceremonial and dietary laws given in the Torah and were thus influenced by rabbis and the Talmud, such as in keeping

<sup>166</sup> Clark, *United Roumania*, p. 351.

<sup>167</sup> Ioan Pasca, “Preoţi români care rup pecetea cu Roma,” [Romanian priests who break their seals with Rome] (Arad, 1924), pp. 16-17.

<sup>168</sup> Dobrinicu, p. 587. Comşa probably referred to Rushbrooke and his ties with Hungarian Baptists.

Saturday as a day of rest and eating kosher. He insisted that Jews sought to use Adventists to institute Saturday nation-wide in order to not lose business on both days. Cordon interpreted that God nevertheless allowed these “heresies” in order for the “true” church and the faithful to make themselves more prominent and more respected.<sup>169</sup> An article from *Universul* identified Baptists also with Judaism, mentioning that Theodore Herzl’s son may have become a Baptist.<sup>170</sup> Their response was usually that they were engaged in Christian missionary activity among the Jewish communities.<sup>171</sup> Nevertheless, nationalist arguments by clergy continued to present neo-protestants as a political and cultural threat.

The accusation of communism among neo-protestants was another argument for their un-Romanianess despite the frequent warnings against bolshevism in their publications.<sup>172</sup> This was a reoccurring charge used by anti-Semites during the interwar and war period; thus claims of Judaism and Bolshevism followed one another closely.<sup>173</sup> A priest from Galați sent a memorandum to the Minister of Cults asking him to take measures against the Pentecostal gatherings, who, because of Russian believers in the congregation and the fact that they did not make the sign of the cross, he accused of being Bolsheviks.<sup>174</sup>

Some clergy claimed that the new faiths were taking root especially among the workers.

The Director General of the Romanian Railroads (CFR) worked with BOR clergy in 1922 to

<sup>169</sup> ACLA 31216, Cordun, pp.33, 38-41.

<sup>170</sup> ACLA unprocessed, “Fiul lui Herzl nu sa botezat, ci a devenit Baptist,” [Herzl’s son was not baptized but became a Baptist] *Universul* 201, quoted in *Farul Mântuirii* 5/18 (September 1924), p.6.

<sup>171</sup> I did not find evidence of them specifically petitioning against anti-Semitic legislation. More research needs to be done on Baptist minister Leo Averbuch and his interaction with Romanians and Jews in Bessarabia. ACLA 31159, “Reviste,” [Magazines] *Luminatorul* 3/3 (March 1929), p.8; Popovici, vol. II, p.319.

<sup>172</sup> ACLA 31161, Ioan Socaciu, “O scrisoare din statele unite,” [A letter from the United States] *Farul Mântuirii* 6/8 (April 1925), p.16.

<sup>173</sup> ACLA 31216, Cordun, pp.7-8; Constantin Iordachi, “Charisma, Religion, and Ideology: Romania’s Interwar Legion of the Archangel Michael,” (eds.) John Lampe and Mark Mazower, *Ideologies and National Identities: The Case of Twentieth-Century Southeastern Europe* (Budapest: Central European University Press, 2004), p. 28.

<sup>174</sup> Andreiescu, vol.I, p.151. He doesn’t provide a citation for the memorandum sent to the Minister of Cults. Baptist minister Titu Oprescu also wrote about being labeled as communists (as well as cannibals) in ACLA unprocessed, “Cum ne cunoaște lumea?” [How does the world know us?] *Farul Mântuirii* 11/7-8 (April 1930), pp.11-12.

organize cultural and religious propaganda among CFR workers in hopes of bringing “to the bosom of the national church those who have gone astray at the behest of foreigners.”<sup>175</sup> Priest Ion Gurgui from the town of Ciuperceii Vechi lamented the good organization of about 30 Adventists in his parish (with a house of prayer, education in Germany, tithes used to sponsor the preacher, and publications) and what he perceived to be daily support from politicians encouraging their “impudence.”<sup>176</sup> He blamed the government for not taking a harsh enough stance against neo-protestants:

All yell from all sides that they are a danger to the church and to the nation...the state recognizes their intentions but no one is taking any measures.... They attack the workers for not leading a life preoccupied with the care of their souls, they contribute to all great social restlessness, warning of universal catastrophes, the end of the world, and they consider themselves the community of saints...the community which keeps the purest union with God.<sup>177</sup>

Priest Gurgui identified more the urban impact of these groups by mentioning their affect on workers and the social unrest produced by their teachings (particularly Adventist eschatological emphasis). As mentioned previously by other clergy, he also argued against what was perceived as a mask of spiritual concern and moral superiority. Leaders such as Miron Cristea, Roxin, and Comşa warned that while “these sects dazzle our eyes with an ideal future, their own aim is to annihilate our creed and our race...and to produce a religious anarchy.”<sup>178</sup> They called the Romanian people to defend the nation against these groups.<sup>179</sup>

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<sup>175</sup> ACLA 31216, Cordon, p.5-6.

<sup>176</sup> Priest Gurgui refused to let them bury a young girl who died of tuberculosis (citing order No. 11327/925) and had the gendarme arrest the preacher for not having the legal right to preach. The Adventists procured an order from the Minister of Cults and the first procurer of Dolj to let the girl’s body be buried, in “Fără comentarii,” *Curierul Misionar* 11 (1926), p. 171-172.

<sup>177</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>178</sup> Grigorie Comşa, *Problema sectelor; Sectele religioase din Romania* [The Sectarian problem; religious sects in Romania] (Bucharest: 1925), p. 4.

<sup>179</sup> Comşa, *Baptismul in Romania*, p. 27. Comşa writes: “The soul of an entire people is against the recognition of the Baptists, who say they do not need affiliations with the state. Romanians, Romanians, defend your law and people!” He makes reference to statements made by Ioan Socaciu that religion is between God and the individual, in ACLA 31160, p.3.

BOR leaders faced the burden of a spiritual crisis which emerged after World War I and some priests resorted to ultra-nationalist sentiments, including joining the Legion of the Archangel Michael. Dobrinu claims that among the major intellectual and theological currents within BOR in the interwar period none stood to oppose the rising extremism which grew increasingly hostile and violent in language toward neo-protestants.<sup>180</sup> However, there was a group within BOR which sought change using similar language to that of the neo-protestants.

A parallel development to the growth of ethnic Romanian neo-protestants was the BOR reform movement of *Oastea Domnului* [Lord's Army], started by Orthodox priest Iosif Trifa in Sibiu. *Oastea* religious leaders presented themselves as responding to the physical and moral poverty in the nation, blaming it in part also on the exploitation by foreigners in their midst and on an inactive state church.<sup>181</sup> Here too the physical presentation of the Bible as well as its ability to bring spiritual renewal spurred Trifa to seek change. He compared the Cyrillic letters used in the BOR seminary Bibles with the biblical image of the veil, preventing priests from "penetrating the treasures of the Bible." Trifa also claimed that reading the Bible guided him in speaking, "proclaiming continually the Word."<sup>182</sup>

In January 1923 he published a decision in *Lumina Satelor* for people to enter a spiritual battle and begin a new moral life, focused on the individual's relationship with the Bible.<sup>183</sup> According to *Oastea* historian Constantineanu, villagers across Romania answered Trifa's call

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<sup>180</sup> Dobrinu, p.598.

<sup>181</sup> Priest Traian Dorz argued that "While the orphans are dying, the people suffer, the faith is being lost, the poverty is spreading, the strangers are getting fat, and the devil is laughing - the Church is silent, inactive and absent." Țon, *Credința Adevărată* [True Faith], p. 142.

<sup>182</sup> Iosif Trifa, *Revista Teologica* [Theological Journal] (1921) 8-11, p. 252, in Constantineanu, p. 92-93.

<sup>183</sup> "All those who want to enter in this open battle against drinking and cursing, will sign this *decision*. Then you put this signed decision on the wall of your house and especially in your heart..." Iosif Trifa, *Lumina Satelor* (January 1923), in Țon, pp. 144-145.

and formed study groups.<sup>184</sup> Evangelism through spreading Bibles and song books was an important part of the work, expected by every participating “soldier.” Trifa emphasized that the Bible should be taken out of the church and distributed to the nation.<sup>185</sup> Elements of their meetings included scripture reading, praying, and singing together. Personal, spontaneous, rather than reciting written prayers were encouraged as a sign of the individual and the Holy Spirit working together. The role of the individuals taking part in the meetings included participation through different forms of speaking: prayer, readings, recitations, speeches. Singing was also a mandatory element, an important ritual which brought collaboration between *Oastea* members and neo-protestants in later years.<sup>186</sup> Thus through the idea of the words of the Bible read, spoken, and sung, these different religious groups were forming their identity, doctrine, and practice in constant response to one another. However, *Oastea* members were also marginalized in the interwar period. The dominant voices continued to be the ultra-nationalist clergy, intellectuals, and government officials, who increasingly sided against further opening up of religious space in Romanian society.

### **The Intellectual and Government Authorities: National Identity and Religious Liberty**

From 1922 to 1937, the BOR clergy represented 2.7 % of the representatives in the House of deputies and 22.6 % in the Senate. Although not incredibly high figures, they proved an important influence on the actions of the state in regards to religious issues. The greatest opposition to neo-protestants occurred when those holding the position of Minister of Cults or other positions in the same department were Orthodox clergy or closely associated with

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<sup>184</sup> Trifa called the meetings “a school of the Bible which lasts a lifetime,” in Iosif Trifa, *Ce Este Oastea Domnului* [What is the Lord’s Army] (Sibiu: Oastea Domnului, 1996), pp.175, 182, in Constantineanu, pp. 97, 105.

<sup>185</sup> Trifa explains in one issue of *The Light of the Villages*: “We have devoted this number of our journal to the Bible in order to make this Book of Life known to our readers. *The Light of the Villages* brings...them the Word of God that remains forever.” Trifa, *Ce este Oastea Domnului*, pp. 142-143, in Țon, p.154-156.

<sup>186</sup> Nicolae Moldoveanu and Traian Dorz, *Cântările psalmilor: psaltire versificată și așezată pe muzica: 1947-1950* [The songs of the psalms] (Deva: Comorile Harului, 2000).

BOR.<sup>187</sup> But the whole cultural, intellectual, political atmosphere of the period was imbued with concerns over religion, often with a blend of the mystical.<sup>188</sup> Such influential figures as philosopher Constantin Rădulescu-Motru argued that Orthodox doctrine laid claim to the tradition that passed down unaltered the truths of Christ while Protestant and neo-Protestant doctrine was filled with supplementary contributions from individuals throughout history.<sup>189</sup>

However, it was philosopher and professor of theology Nichifor Crainic who insisted on the predominance of religion and its entanglement with ethnicity in the debates on national identity.<sup>190</sup> Through his theory of Orthodoxy he claimed that Orthodoxy was never imposed on Romanians but naturally part of their consciousness due to a fusion between ethnic tradition and Eastern Christianity.<sup>191</sup> He presented as proof the lack of Romanian converts to Catholicism and Protestantism but he neglected to address the increase of ethnic Romanian neo-protestants. He argued, like the neo-protestants, that spiritual elements were the most important in the development of a country but considered the western religious influences of these new groups as superficial imports.<sup>192</sup> He instead presented the fascist Legionnaires in similar terms to how the neo-protestants viewed themselves: “missionaries through which the Gospel goes into the hand of the faithful and on to the masses.”<sup>193</sup> Resentful of the terms regarding minorities stipulated in the peace treaties signed by the Romanian government after

<sup>187</sup> Dobrinicu, p. 600. Minister of Cults Octavian Goga, 1920-1921; Minister of Cults Nicolae Colan and Prime Minister Miron Cristea, 1938-1939.

<sup>188</sup> Keith Hitchins writes of a “return to religion” among students and intellectuals in “Orthodoxy: Polemics Over Ethnicity and Religion in Interwar Romania,” ed. Ivo Banac and Katherine Verdery, *National Character and national Ideology in Interwar Eastern Europe* (OH: Slavica Publishers, 1995), p.148.

<sup>189</sup> Constantin Rădulescu-Motru, *Țaranismul, un suflet și o Politică* [Peasantism, a soul and politics], pp. 23-24 quoted in De Szasz, p. 177.

<sup>190</sup> Hitchins, “Orthodoxy: Polemics Over Ethnicity and Religion in Interwar Romania,” p.152.

<sup>191</sup> Ibid, p.143. Crainic maintained that the Orthodox Church was the church of the Romanian nation but his theory of Orthodoxy is not equated with BOR.

<sup>192</sup> Nichifor Crainic, “Politica și ortodoxie,” [Politics and Orthodoxy] *Gândirea*, 3/5 (1923), pp. 80-81; “Parsifal,” *Gândirea*, 3/8-10 (1924), pp. 182-183; “Obrăznicia baptilștilor,” [Impudence of Baptists] *Calendarul* (10 September 1933) in Popovici, vol. II, p.383. This last article was Crainic’s response to a protest placed in the newspaper *Dimineața* by Baptist minister Ioan Socaciu regarding decision nr. 114119.

<sup>193</sup> Crainic, *Puncte Cardinale în Haos* [Cardinal Points in Chaos] (Iași: Ed. Timpul, 1996 (1936)), p.59.

World War I, Crainic remarked with bitter irony that Romania seemed to have no greater calling than to put the majority ethnic population in the service of foreigners. In his “Program for an Ethnocratic State” he argued that only the historically recognized cults (the ethnic churches) should be free to organize on condition that they accept the authority of the state and renounce all proselytizing activities among Romanians.<sup>194</sup>

In a similar vein philosopher Nae Ionescu, also closely affiliated with the Legionnaires, claimed that a Romanian converting to protestantism would be rejecting the natural state in which he or she was born.<sup>195</sup> In an article entitled *Sectanții*, he presented the sects as spiritually inferior to Orthodoxy, as a type of foreign philanthropy in comparison to his mystical interpretation of the “faithful, unaltered, and intransigent” character of Orthodox doctrine.<sup>196</sup> He expressed frustration that the state hindered rather than helped the church solve the religious difficulties in the country.<sup>197</sup>

A.C.Cuza professor of political economy at the University of Iasi, head of the anti-Semitic League of National Christian Defense, and early mentor to the legionnaires, though not writing specifically on neo-protestants argued strongly against what he considered to be a plot by foreigners (mainly Jews but also others) to undermine the social and political structures of the country and preventing the establishment of a Romanian Orthodox Christian state.<sup>198</sup> In the light of such influential figures, neo-protestants were seen as non-Romanian and as causing

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<sup>194</sup> Nichifor Crainic, *Ortodoxie și etnocrație. Cu o anexă: Programul statului etnocratic* [Orthodoxy and ethnocracy. With an appendix: the Program of an ethnocratic state] (Bucharest: Editura Albatros, 1997 (1940)), pp. 136-137, 162, 252.

<sup>195</sup> To be Romanian meant being Orthodox, “in the same way in which a horse is a quadruped,” in Nae Ionescu, *Roza vânturilor, 1926-1933* (Bucharest: Editura Cultura Națională, 1990), p.201; Hitchins, “Orthodoxism,” p.147.

<sup>196</sup> Nae Ionescu, “Duminica,” [Sunday] *Cuvîntul* 570 (27 September 1926) in *Între ziaristică și filosofie: texte publicate în ziarul Cuvîntul (15 august 1926- 26 martie 1938)* [Between journalism and philosophy: texts published in the newspaper *Cuvîntul*] (Iași: Ed. Timpul, 1996), p.200.

<sup>197</sup> Ionescu, *Roza vânturilor*, pp.5-7.

<sup>198</sup> The things that would preserve Romania, according to the Legion and their supporters, were what they considered to be Orthodox tradition and avoiding contamination by decadent western values, in Cinpoș, *Nationalism and Identity in Romania*, pp. 52-53.

the destruction of the ancestral church by representing foreign interests.<sup>199</sup> One of the harshest religious minority laws of the period was passed during the Goga-Cuza government of 1937-1938.

The press picked up on the debates concerning these groups and published articles which revealed similar accusations and mystifications.<sup>200</sup> Many such charges called for government and police action while Romanian government officials faced a confusing image of neo-protestants, often siding with calls towards their restriction. The importance of religious issues for the state could not be overlooked. Onisifor Ghibu, professor of pedagogy and under-secretary of the Church and Educational Department in 1924, wrote that: “The religious problem is not simply a problem of the churches, as many superficial observers believe; it is eminently a national one: more than that, it is a problem of the state...”<sup>201</sup> Ghibu, along with other Romanian politicians, sought to clearly distinguish the Orthodox Romanians- legitimate heirs of the new state- from the so-called foreign influenced individuals who could hinder the growth and development of ethnic Romanians within Greater Romania. In some rare cases local officials became members of these congregations, such as the mayor of Luguzen in Arad County or defended them as important allies of the state in fighting bolshevism.<sup>202</sup> However, the state honor given to officials who were known for their opposition to neo-protestants also

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<sup>199</sup> Though Crainic’s Orthodoxy rallied a significant following, there were intellectuals such as Eugen Lovinescu, Mihai Ralea, and Pompiliu Constantinescu who denounced the importance of orthodoxy. Unfortunately, they do not mention neo-protestants in their writings. Lovinescu’s opinion would have been especially interesting since in his proposed theory of syncretism he recognized other aspects of influence to national character. However their lack of interest in Orthodoxy reflected their larger marginalization of religious issues in their writings. Ralea, “Iarăş ortodoxism,”[Again Orthodoxy] *Viaţa Românească* 21/7-8 (1929), p. 188-89; Mircea Vulcanescu, “Generaţie,” *Criterion* 1/3-4 (1934), p. 6, in Hitchins, pp.149-150, 153.

<sup>200</sup> A. Filimon, “Fanatismul Baptist,”[Baptist Fanaticism] *Solia Dreptăţii, Gazeta Hunedoarei* 32/8 (August 1923), p.1. The dailies *Universul, România Nouă*, and *Curentul* often published articles on neo-protestants as traitors to the state and nation, in Popovici, vol.II p. 124-125.

<sup>201</sup> Onisifor Ghibu, “Hungarian Catholicism and the religious policy of the Romanian State,” (Cluj, 1924), quoted in De Szasz, pp.185-186.

<sup>202</sup> Ioan Socaciu, “Baptist Persecution and Progress in Roumania,” *Home and Foreign Fields* 9/4 (April 1925), pp. 14, 16; V.Diaconescu, “Cronica scolii,” *Curierul Misionar* 10/7 (July 1930), p.106.



hindered their acceptance in society. The prefect of Suceava, Dimitrie Cojocariu, received the “Reward of Work for the Church” and the blessing of the Archbishop and Metropolitan of Bukovina, Necatrie in 1927. Cojocariu, called the “Torquemada of the Baptists” after the fifteenth century Spanish inquisition leader, was known for physically harming people from his district who took part in neo-protestant prayer meetings.<sup>203</sup>

Officials in smaller localities often had the help of the gendarmes to suppress neo-protestants. They were known for beating members gathered for services, fining them exorbitant amounts, and threatening to arrest them on accusations of bolshevism if they continued meeting.<sup>204</sup> Baptists and Adventists were encouraged to show gendarmes and others the decrees printed in their publications as evidence that they were acting in accordance to government decree. However, even when religious rights for some neo-protestants were granted the ordinances were not always respected by local authorities.<sup>205</sup> A priest from Bukovina is said to have published an article stating that “the Minister is Minster in Bucharest, but here the minister is the Minister,” revealing the influence of local clergy in how laws were carried out.<sup>206</sup>

The laws regarding which neo-protestant denominations were recognized and which remained outlawed changed often enough that local authorities were not aware of the changes or could take advantage of the confusion and feign ignorance of the legislation. Both the

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<sup>203</sup> L. Balint, “Baptist Persecution and Progress in Roumania,” *Home and Foreign Fields* 10/2 (February 1926), p. 7; De Szasz, p. 202.

<sup>204</sup> The mayor, the priest, and gendarmes were said to have whipped congregants in Galați in, Ion Bododea, “Buletinul prigonirilor,” [Persecution Bulletin] *Cuvântul Adevărului* 3/5 (May 1931), p.9.

<sup>205</sup> E.Y. Mullins, “Religious Progress and Problems in Europe,” *Home and Foreign Fields* 11/1 (January 1927), pp.10-11. Mullins reminded readers of the Romanian government’s signing of the peace treaties to protect minorities. He also quotes Queen Maria as stating that her country was backward in regards to its treatment of religious minorities. Neo-protestants asked the government to put more effort into enforcement of the laws. Ion Ungureanu, “O prigoană neomenească contra bapțiștilor,” [An inhuman persecution against Baptists] *Luminătorul* (November 1929), pp.15-16.

<sup>206</sup> *Lupătorul* (1 January 1924), in De Szasz, p. 202. For neo-protestants as well, if state legislation was interpreted as unbiblical they claimed their actions were in conformity with the higher authority of God.

police and military were briefed on issues pertaining to the “sects.” One police directive called them anarchists and their practices phantasmagorical, a danger for both the state and the church as subversive anti-national movements, while others reported that there were no claims to the accusations filed against neo-protestants.<sup>207</sup> The military organized what they considered a more rigorous approach through producing files on “religious sects” which included a description of the situation by district, an identification of the leaders and propagandists, and a collection of the literature they had given out.<sup>208</sup> Neo-protestants who enlisted lamented the difficulties they faced for their faith while serving in the army, including unbalanced work duties, harassment, and barriers to promotion. They called for justice all the while declaring their loyalty to the state and love for the Romanian people.<sup>209</sup>

The first restrictive law against neo-protestants, ordinance nr.15831, was passed by Minister of Cults Octavian Goga on 1 April 1921, which closed the neo-protestants’ Unions and declared the Adventist and Baptist groups illegal. Goga claimed the law was produced as a result of civil and military reports which outlined the unacceptable propaganda done across the country by these groups with money received from abroad.<sup>210</sup> Thirteen days after the ordinance was passed James Rushbrooke persuaded Goga to annul the law, revealing the strong connection between British and Romanian Baptists and their ability to influence Romanian legislation. However, a change of government prevented Goga’s revision. This brought Rushbrooke back in December 1921, during which time he gained audience with Tache

<sup>207</sup> Arhivele Naționale Istorice Centrale (ANIC), fond “Direcția Generală a Poliției”, dos. 61/1942, ff. 24-25 in Dobrinicu, p.600; Arhivele Consiliului Național pentru Studierea Arhivelor Securității Statului (ACNSAS), fond Documentar, dos. 6881, f. 104-106, in Modoran “Naționalismul interbelic- factor ideologic al intoleranței religioase,” pp.118-139.

<sup>208</sup> Nr. 26.208/938 *Monitorul Oficial* 133 (14 June 1938), in Nicolae Videnie, “Sectele religioase in percepția autorităților militare românești (1930-1948),” [Religious Sects in the perceptions of the Romanian military authorities] *Dosarele istoriei* 7/11 (2002), pp.25-30.

<sup>209</sup> ACLA 31181, I. Borcău, “Un cuvânt catre frații mei ostași,” *Glasul Tineretului Baptist* 4/1 (January 1928), pp.16-18.

<sup>210</sup> Popovici, vol. II, p.105.

Ionescu, President of the Consul of Ministry, and the new Minister of Cults Vasile Dumitrescu-Brăila. They indeed annulled the ordinance through a set of laws signed on 24 December 1921 and 17 January 1922 which gave Baptists and Adventists the status of recognized cult.<sup>211</sup> However, the proceedings were an attempt to quiet the Americans and the British, who wanted to bring the Romanian government's treatment of religious minorities before the League of Nations, rather than a true opening up of political culture.

In January 1925 Minister of Cults Alexandru Lapedatu passed decision nr. 5734 /25 which divided the religious sects into three groups (cults, religious associations, and prohibited groups). The Adventists and Baptists were demoted from cults to religious associations.<sup>212</sup> The Pentecostal sect appeared on record for the first time and was outlawed under pretext that the pioneer churches in Pauliș and Cuvin, Arad County, did not present sufficient guarantees of respecting Article 22 of the constitution in regards to public order and state organization.<sup>213</sup>

The latter half of the 1920s saw an increase in the debates over the status of neo-protestants with an effort to keep them from re-gaining cult status. Law nr. 53049 (19 January 1928) recognized the earlier standing of the Adventist and Baptist denominations in formerly Hungarian territories of Transylvania, Crișana, and the Banat, and gave the government the power to extend the same rights to these denominations across Romania.<sup>214</sup> However, in the Regat regions of Wallachia and Moldova, where there were smaller neo-protestant congregations, and in Bucovina, Bessarabia, and Dobrogea, they continued to be regarded only

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<sup>211</sup> The December ordinance was nr. 68135 and the January ordinance was nr. 2143. Popovici, vol. II, p. 345.

<sup>212</sup> *Ibid*, p.140.

<sup>213</sup> "Istoricul Bisericii Penticostale din Romania,"

[http://cristianet.fr/index.php?option=com\\_content&task=view&id=150&Itemid=52](http://cristianet.fr/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=150&Itemid=52) (accessed 28 June 2012). The decision claimed that the Pentecostal doctrine, as outlined by Gheorghe Bradin, was not accepted by the majority of the group's constituents and so not a legitimate church. For more on the rifts between two Pentecostals groups see Andreiescu, vol.I, p.176

<sup>214</sup> Kenneth G. Grubb, "Rumanian Protestants," *The Commission* 2/7 (July 1939), p. 226.

as a religious association.<sup>215</sup> Minister of Cults Lapedatu voiced his discontent during the senate meeting of 29 March 1928, demanding that the sects in their entirety be outlawed because they went against the organizational laws of the state.<sup>216</sup> Nevertheless, in May 1928 ministerial decision nr. 24536/28 allowed for the continued free functioning of Baptists and Adventists as religious associations and the same status was given to the Brethren through decision nr. 28228/28.<sup>217</sup>

With the return of Carol II to the throne in 1930 things largely remained the same for neo-protestants until 1933. Decision nr.114119 to regulate the activities of religious associations published on 24 August 1933, divided the denominations into accepted and prohibited groups. Pentecostals were placed in the latter and Adventists, Baptists, and Brethren retained their previous status but all continued to experience strict government control and local abuse.<sup>218</sup>

As the atmosphere in Europe grew tense with the increasing militarization of Germany and the growing political and social influence of Romania's own fascist group, the government again cracked down on the "sects." Decision nr. 4781 signed by Minister of Cults Victor Iamandi on 17 April 1937 took away the privileged status of Adventists and Baptists in the former Hungarian territories. A year later, on 14 June 1938 the Minister of Cults, Archbishop Nicolae Colan of Cluj, under the government of Prime Minister Patriarch Miron Cristea,

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<sup>215</sup> Dobrinu, p.588; Popovici, vol. II, p. 379; John Cocuts, "A Message from Rumanian Baptists," *The Commission* 2/1 (January 1939), p. 3. Cocuts, elected General Secretary of the Baptist Union in 1937, wrote of the difference between the freedom experienced by the religious cults and the restrictions placed upon religious associations under the control of the Minister of Cults.

<sup>216</sup> Constantin Schifirneț, *Biserica noastră și cultele minoritare: Marea discuție parlamentară în jurul legii cultelor, 1928* [Our Church and the minority cults: the Great parliamentary discussion regarding the law on cults] (Bucharest: Albatros, 2000), p. xxv.

<sup>217</sup> ANIC, fond "Direcția Generală a Poliției," dos. 61/1942, f. 22, in Dobrinu, 588.

<sup>218</sup> Minister of Cults Dimitrie Gusti did not sign the decision. Popovici, pp.381-382; Olimp Căciulă, "Culte în România," [The Cults in Romania] *Enciclopedia României*, vol. I (Bucharest, 1938), p. 440. Decision nr. 4781/1937 regarding religious associations from 21 April 1937 kept the same categories from the 1933 law, but among the prohibited religious associations the group *pocăiți* was listed (a denomination that did not exist) – revealing the confusion among state officials regarding these groups.

published decision nr.26208, which was to be carried out on 15 December 1938.<sup>219</sup> The decision required all churches to have at least one hundred adult male members, to own a cemetery, and to not be located in the vicinity of a state church in order to receive official recognition and be allowed to meet. Legal documents were required to transfer membership from the Orthodox Church to the officially recognized religious associations.<sup>220</sup> The congregations were small but numerous and such an edict would shut over 1,600 Baptist churches alone, leaving only the thirty largest.<sup>221</sup> Rushbrooke claimed that, from his meetings in Bucharest, members of the Romanian government were divided over decision nr.26208 and that the Orthodox ecclesiastical point of view did not command general approval.<sup>222</sup>

One such example was diplomat Nicolae Titulescu who was instrumental in providing a protective status for Baptists to avoid alienating the United States.<sup>223</sup> Romanian leftist intellectuals and politicians proved to be among the main political defenders of neo-protestants' constitutional rights. Social democrat Senator Gheorghe Grigorovici from Bukovina spoke in parliament of the need for religious liberty as part of modernizing Greater Romania.<sup>224</sup> Mihail Sevastos (1892-1967) was one of the few journalists to write positively of neo-protestants in arguing that the *sectanți* responded to the spiritual need of the masses and spurred the minds of

<sup>219</sup> Popovici, pp.402, 409, 413-414. By November 1937 Romanian Baptist representatives managed to get law nr. 4781 repealed but then faced Colan's law.

<sup>220</sup> John Cocuts, "A Message from Rumanian Baptists," *The Commission* 2/1 (January 1939), pp. 3, 30; James H. Rushbrooke, "The Latest Phase," *The Commission* 2/3 (March 1939), pp.72-73.

<sup>221</sup> "Rumanian Baptists Persecuted and in Great Distress," *The Commission* 2/1 (January 1939), pp.12-13; "A Call to Protest Persecution of Rumanian Baptists," *The Commission* 2/2 (February 1939), pp. 44-45. The editor wrote that the Romanian Department of Cults "knows that the churches are small and many, spread across the country and occupy strategic points, and are growing, which led to the decision." This also affected small ethnic minority churches with few members. Decision nr. 26208/1938 was repealed under the Călinescu government, with Minister of Cults Nicolae Zigre in March 1939.

<sup>222</sup> Rushbrooke, "The Latest Phase," *The Commission* 2/3 (March 1939), p.73. Popovici shows how later legislation (nr.31999/1939) did seem strongly influenced by the BOR officials in government, in vol. II, pp.425-426.

<sup>223</sup> Andreiescu, vol. I, p. 64. Titulescu served as president of the League of Nations in 1930 and 1931 as well as Minister of Finance and Minister of the Exterior during the period. "Fundația Europeană Titulescu," <http://www.titulescu.eu/nicolae-titulescu/> (accessed 6 May 2015).

<sup>224</sup> Dobrinu, p. 591; ACLA 31156, "Vorbirea Senatorului Gh. Grigorovici in Senat," [Senator Grigorovici's Speech in the Senate] *Monitorul Oficial* 6 (13 December 1921) in *Creștinul* 10/6 (March 1922), pp.4-9.

the peasants and town folk. He went so far as to say that only with these new faiths were true Christians being formed among the Romanian people (*popor*).<sup>225</sup>

According to Dobrinicu, the attitude of BOR is the key to understanding the actions of the Romanian state in regards to neo-protestants, since he claims the government knew it was captive to the demands of the Orthodox hierarchy.<sup>226</sup> However, society was ripe with the struggle between acceptance and intolerance, as the Jewish minority in the country found itself in an even harsher battle for their rights. BOR clergy were a significant portion of those who encouraged the marginalization of neo-protestants, but there were also intellectuals, politicians, and ultra-nationalist laypeople who did not follow BOR doctrine, nor were their arguments and actions all condoned by BOR. Dobrinicu puts it well by saying that BOR representatives, as part of a religious institution, had every right (constitutionally as well as morally from the point of view of their faith obligations) to enter into polemics concerning theology and practice with neo-protestants; but not to incite lay authorities to legal suppression.<sup>227</sup> Comşa, Cristea, Colan and others took the battle from one over hermeneutics to one over the survival of state and nation in the image they presented of neo-protestants not only as heretical splinter groups, but as anti-national foreign agents and threats. Ghibu, Goga, Lapedatu and other politicians ensured the adoption of these accusations by the government through the legislation they helped pass. These religious groups protested such classifications and thus introduced a new form of patriotic piety that would take a few more decades to be accepted in Romanian culture and society.

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<sup>225</sup> Mihail Sevastos, "Prigoana religioasă," [Religious Persecution] *Adevărul* 14691 (21 November 1931), p. 1, <http://www.resursecrestine.ro/eseuri/10877/istoria-bisericii-penticostale> (accessed 14 May 2015). "Prigoana împotriva sectelor. Oameni înhămați la care cu pietriș. Copii bătuți cu baioneta la palmă. Rugăciuni în păduri," [Persecution against the sects. People harnessed to carriages filled with gravel. Children beaten with bayonets on their palms. Prayers in the forest] *Dimineața* 8948 (21 November 1931), p. 11; Popovici, vol.II, p.383.

<sup>226</sup> Dobrinicu, pp.601-602.

<sup>227</sup> Dobrinicu, p.590; "Luați aminte," [Take to mind] *Luminătorul* 3/7 (July 1929), p.8.

## Conclusion

The first groups of ethnic Romanian “converts” to the Adventist, Baptist, Brethren, or Pentecostal faiths sought a balance between their new spiritual identity, which entailed collaboration with a wider and diverse community of ethnic minorities and missionaries, and that of their ethnic identity. The increase in the number of Romanian neo-protestants resulted in the need for greater organization of their religious communities with their separate church buildings, schools, and presses. They were able to procure many of these through the financial assistance of co-religionists from abroad. However, it was the formation of Greater Romania after World War I and the governments’ policies for Romanianization that forced these ethnic Romanians to diligently link their new faith with their national identity.

They 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 developed and promoted an image of loyalty to the Romanian nation and state as an integral part of their identity. This was a response to the accusations and the social and government harassment they faced for their connections with those considered foreigners within the country and abroad. The very fact of their numeric increase reveals the success of these groups in society. Their presence and actions were seen as a challenge, and in turn their success was strongly challenged.

Analyzing both the self-image of neo-protestants and the image of them as conceived by Romanian government officials, intellectuals, and the Romanian Orthodox Church reveals how the groups articulated their identity in response to each other in their rivalry for influence. Each group became more emphatic, at times aggressive, in their polemics and apologetics, striving to show their own piety as the most appropriate for national consolidation.

In the midst of intellectual discussions on the essence of Romanian identity, neo-protestants diverged from the belief that the Orthodox Church most ensured prosperity and development for Greater Romania. Indeed, they were not the only ones. Romanian Greek Catholics and literary figures like the Criterion group either presented another type of Christian faith as legitimate in uniting Romanians or thought religion irrelevant and pointed to the need to emulate other western models. But none, apart from Jews and Roma, received such a consolidated attack from different levels of society and government. The ideological currents of Orthodoxism, not linked to BOR but arguing for the essential bond between Eastern Orthodoxy and Romanians, felt neo-protestants enough of a threat to their idea of Romanian identity that they maintained campaigns against them, striving to convince the rest of the population that Romanian neo-protestants were un- or anti-Romanian. They temporarily succeeded.

On 30 December 1942 Ion Antonescu passed law 927 which disbanded all religious associations, authorized the state to take possession of their property and goods, and called for all citizens to return to their cult of origin.<sup>228</sup> Until 1948 these groups remained illegal revealing the extent of policies for cleansing and purifying the nation. Not only were ethnic minorities considered elements to be eliminated but these ethnic Romanian converts also became targets of abjection.

This analysis of neo-protestants exposes Romanianess as more complex than earlier or even current nationalists believed. A social history of these groups along with their unique blend of foreign and local doctrines and customs during a critical period of reform is a topic in need of more scholarly research. The present study opens up questions on the role of other minority groups in the discourse on Romanian national identity and citizenship during the interwar period. More analysis is needed on the entangled relationships between the ethnic

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<sup>228</sup> Achim, pp.620, 750.



majority and minority neo-protestants. The former's interactions with the Jewish minority, especially in Bessarabia, and their reactions to accusations of Judaism and Bolshevism would provide greater nuance to the way the struggles outlined in this thesis developed in such a diverse region of Greater Romania.

Within the interwar struggle for Romanian national identity formation neo-protestants strove to show that they valued the individual's choice in religious conviction (but claiming all the while their hold on truth), that they contributed to the advancement of the peasants and workers, engaged with and enriched Romanian culture, provided the nation with a superior moral authority, and appreciated the value of other countries while still remaining loyal to their own. Sometimes they succeeded while other times they gave in to similar vitriolic language used against them, especially in their competition with BOR over souls. Romanian identity is not made clear as argued by these differing belief and ideological systems, but their reasoning towards and in reaction to the other provides insight into ripples of such claims to truth and national distinctiveness that persist today.

## Appendix

### Document 1: Patriotic hymn in Baptist songbook- *Trăiască Regele* [Long Live the King]

Trăiască Regele  
În pace și onor  
De țară iubitor  
Și-apărător de țară.

[Long live the King  
In peace and honor  
Lover of country  
And defender of country

Fie Domn glorios  
Fie peste noi,  
Fie-n veci norocos  
În război, război.

Be he Lord glorious  
Be he over us,  
Be he forever fortunate  
In war, war.

O! Doamne Sfinte,  
Ceresc Părinte,  
Susține cu a Ta mână  
Coroana Română!

O! Holy Lord,  
Heavenly Father,  
Sustain with Your hand  
The Romanian Crown!

Trăiască Patria  
Cât soarele ceresc,  
Rai vesel pământesc  
Cu mare, falnic nume.

Long live the Homeland  
As long as the heavenly sun,  
Earthly joyous paradise  
With great towering name.

Fie-n veci el ferit  
De nevoi,  
Fie-n veci locuit  
De eroi, eroi.

Be he forever protected  
From want,  
Be he forever inhabited  
By heroes, heroes.

O! Doamne Sfinte,  
Ceresc Părinte,  
Întinde a Ta mână  
Pe Țara Română!

O! Holy Lord,  
Heavenly Father,  
Stretch out your hand  
Over the Romanian Land!]

Source: Samy Tuțac, *Cântările Sionului* nr.593 (date and publisher unknown).

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- AZS        *Curierul Adventist* Digital Archive (Biserica Adventistă de Ziua a Șaptea din România The Seventh Day Adventist Church of Romania,  
<http://www.curieruladventist.ro/arhiva-reviste/1921-1930>)
- BCU        Biblioteca Digitală (“Lucian Blaga” Central University Library, Cluj,  
<http://dspace.bcucluj.ro/>)
- OSA        Open Society Archives (Budapest, Hungary)
- PCRA        Pentecostal and Charismatic Research Archive (University of Southern California Digital Library,  
<http://digitallibrary.usc.edu/cdm/landingpage/collection/p15799coll14>)
- SBHLA      Southern Baptist Historical Library and Archives (Nashville, Tennessee, USA)

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