Clark, Roland. "Catholics." *Sectarianism and Renewal in 1920s Romania: The Limits of Orthodoxy and Nation-Building*. London,: Bloomsbury Academic, 2021. 87–99. *Bloomsbury Collections*. Web. 26 Apr. 2023. <<http://dx.doi.org/10.5040/9781350100985.ch-005>>.

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Catholics

Of all the churches, it was the status of Catholicism that was most bitterly contested by Orthodox leaders during the 1920s. In particular, the negotiation of the 1927 concordat with the Vatican prompted accusations from the Romanian Orthodox Church (ROC) that the government was surrendering control to a foreign power. Between them, Roman and Greek Catholics made up 14.7 per cent of the country's population at the time of the 1930 census. Catholicism was strongly identified with ethnic and regional minorities which had been incorporated into Greater Romania after the First World War. Ninety-five per cent of Greek Catholics came from either Transylvania, Crișana or Maramureș, and only 13.5 per cent of Roman Catholics were from regions that had been part of Romania before 1918.¹ The Roman Catholic Church had only created archdioceses in Bucharest and Iași in the 1880s, and was commonly associated with Hungarian-ness because many Roman Catholics identified either as Hungarians or Csangos.²

Discussions about the status of Catholicism in Greater Romania had begun in 1920 but were not concluded until 1929.³ The Orthodox position was that any reconciliation with Catholicism was 'too difficult' and any attempts to make peace should be abandoned. The newspaper *Țara noastră* (*Our Country*) argued in 1926 that 'we want a union of the two churches too, as does any honest Romanian. But if this union cannot take place through a spontaneous manifestation [of brotherhood], but only through fratricidal fighting, then it is preferable to give up on it.'⁴ Orthodox newspapers wrote about 'the pope with all his antichrist tyranny, with all his frightening heresies' and claimed that he put

¹ Manuilă, *Recensământul general*, xxiv, xxx.

² Maner, *Multikonfessionalität*, 49.

³ Ibid., 225.

⁴ 'Treuga Dei', *Țara noastră* 7, no. 34 (1926): 1000, quoted in Kührer-Wielach, 'Orthodoxer Jesuitismus', 319.

on 'the airs of a god descended among unfortunate mortals'.⁵ *Biserica Ortodoxă Română* stated that Catholics 'praise our weaknesses because of delight and not out of sincere feelings. This Jesuit-Catholic system casts the scale of values into darkness, introduces confusion, makes people unable to recognize the real aspects of life and forces them to think only according to their misleading Catholic patterns.'⁶

Catholicism posed a problem for Romanian nationalists because many of them believed that Romanian-ness was synonymous with Orthodoxy. According to the wisdom of the day, the Romanian people had embraced Christianity thanks either to the preaching of the apostle Andrew or Roman legionaries settling in Dacia at the beginning of the second century. 'We have the Christian faith just as it grew from the first seed, sown in these parts by Christian missionaries,' wrote Sebastian Pârvulescu, a parish priest from Cernădia-Gorj in 1911, who used the antiquity of Romanian Christianity to argue that the Orthodox Church had preserved the 'original' faith of the apostles.⁷ Nicolae Iorga, the pre-eminent historian of the Romanian nation, argued in the 1928 edition of his *History of the Romanian Churches* that large numbers of the Roman settlers in Dacia were Christians fleeing persecution in Asia Minor. Christianity apparently soon spread among the pagan Dacians as well, and a 'Christianity without canonical bishops' took root in the area, where it survived for the next thousand years. Iorga argued that Greek and Slavic influences first entered Romanian Christianity as part of the cultural renaissance brought about by the creation of the first Bulgarian Orthodox patriarchate in the tenth century. Such influences, he wrote, involved naming sections of the liturgy and memorizing the Creed, and in no way imply that Bulgarian rule extended north of the Danube.⁸

With the blessing and possibly at the urging of the emperor, the ecumenical patriarch collaborated with local rulers in establishing a Metropolitanate of Ungro-Wallachia based in either Curtea de Argeș or Câmpulung in 1359, followed by one at Severin in 1370, and another for Moldavia at Suceava in 1394 (ratified in 1401). Establishing Orthodox Church structures provided international recognition for the newly independent principalities of Wallachia

⁵ *Misionarul* 2, no. 2 (1930): 132 and *Glasul monahilor* 5, no. 114 (1928): 3, both quoted in Ciprian Ghișă, 'The Image of the Roman Catholic Church in the Orthodox Press of Romania, 1918–1940', in *Eastern Orthodox Encounters of Identity and Otherness: Values, Self-Reflection, Dialogue*, ed. Adreei Krawchuk and Thomas Bremer (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014), 112.

⁶ *Biserica Ortodoxă Română* 13 (1923): 1010, quoted in *ibid.*, 113.

⁷ Sebastian Pârvulescu, *Biserica noastră națională în raport cu celelalte confesiuni* (Vălenii de Munte: Tipografia Neamul Românesc, 1911), 18.

⁸ Iorga, *Istoria bisericii românești*, vol. 1, 28–33.

and Moldavia and helped protect them from the imperialist designs of their Catholic neighbours.⁹ Romanian priests, scholars and rulers began to use Middle Bulgarian as their administrative and liturgical language during the fourteenth century, incorporating Slavic elements into what had hitherto been a Byzantine Christianity.¹⁰ In the early twentieth century Romanians looked back to the fourteenth century as the official beginning of their Church. 'The Romanian Orthodox Church established its hierarchy at the same time as the consolidation of the Romanian lands', the Liberal politician Petru Gârboviceanu wrote. 'Both in Muntenia and in Moldavia, and at roughly the same time. We had both metropolitans and bishops right from the beginning.'¹¹ History mattered because if Romanian Christianity was extremely ancient and ecclesiastically independent, then to be Romanian was to be Orthodox. Vasile Pocitan, a teacher at two of Bucharest's leading schools and the future Archbishop of Huși, claimed that 'Christianity is just as deeply embedded in the soul of our people as the yeast of Romanian nationhood. There was even a time when we were more Christian than we were Romanian.'¹²

Greek Catholicism

Ironically, it was Greek Catholics who made the story of the Roman origins of the Romanian people into the central founding myth of Romanian nationalism. The Greek Catholic Church had been established by the Holy Roman Emperor in 1698 along with promises that its adherents would receive rights and privileges in return for acknowledging the papacy. After struggling for its first few decades, the Greek Catholic Church eventually flourished in Transylvania between 1729 and 1744 under the leadership of Bishop Ion Inocențiu Micu-Klein. A capable organizer, he moved the seat of the bishopric to Blaj, where he built an impressive cathedral and encouraged Greek Catholic higher education. Klein is remembered today as a tireless advocate for Transylvania's Romanian population. Keith Hitchins points out that Klein used the word *natio* interchangeably to mean 'members of the Uniate Church' or 'a community held

⁹ Mircea Păcurariu, *Istoria Bisericii Ortodoxe Române* (Sibiu: Patriarhul Bisericii Ortodoxe Române, 1991), 253–85; Keith Hitchins, *A Concise History of Romania* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014), 23–4.

¹⁰ Hitchins, *A Concise History*, 37.

¹¹ Petru Gârboviceanu, *Biserica ortodoxa și cultele străine din regatul român* (Bucharest: Institutul de Arte Grafice, 1904), ix.

¹² Vasile Pocitan, *Patriarhatele Bisericii Ortodoxe* (Bucharest: Tipografiile Române Unite, 1926), 88.

together by common origins, customs, and origins', such that when he said 'Uniates' he also meant 'Romanians'.¹³ Klein tried to use the slippage between the two meanings of *natio* to extend the privileges promised by the Habsburgs when they created the Greek Catholic Church to all Romanian speakers.¹⁴ He was not always successful, but the educational privileges that Greek Catholics did enjoy helped them connect with strains of Enlightenment thought that introduced them to modern nationalism.

Thanks to their newfound access to higher education, Greek Catholic scholars such as Samuil Micu-Klein, Petru Maior and Gheorghe Șincai established the intellectual and literary foundations of Romanian nationalism through their works on history and linguistics.¹⁵ In 1774 Bishop Klein's nephew, Samuil Micu-Klein, wrote a sweeping history of Christianity in Transylvania in the hope that the Romanians would receive their own metropolitanate if he could prove that their Church preserved the original faith of the early Roman Christians.¹⁶ Subsequent Orthodox elites appreciated the contributions of the Transylvanian School, as it came to be known, but resented the fact that it had come out of Greek Catholic rather than Orthodox circles. Despite having tied their national heritage to Rome, Romanian Greek Catholic leaders repeatedly resisted attempts to Latinize their Church to the point of provoking talk of 'crises' in their relationship with the papacy. A Greek Catholic metropolitanate of Alba Iulia and Făgăraș was established in 1853, which was independent of Hungarian Catholicism and subordinate only to the Pope, giving them broad autonomy in the years leading up to 1867.¹⁷ A committed Catholic, the Emperor Francis Joseph encouraged ostentatious celebrations of religious holidays such as Corpus Christi, often attending the festivities himself. Thanks to state support, by the late nineteenth century Catholic priests were generally well educated, laypeople had a reasonable grasp of theology and the Church played an important role in secular education.¹⁸

Despite the emperor's support, the dominance of Catholicism in Hungary was contested by the class of liberal elites who controlled Hungarian politics from

¹³ Hitchins, 'Religion and Rumanian National Consciousness', 221–223.

¹⁴ Keith Hitchins, *A Nation Discovered: Romanian Intellectuals in Transylvania and the Idea of Nation, 1700–1848* (Bucharest: The Encyclopaedic Publishing House, 1999).

¹⁵ Sorin Mitu, *National Identity of Romanians in Transylvania* (Budapest: Central European University Press, 2001).

¹⁶ Keith Hitchins, 'Samuel Clain and the Rumanian Enlightenment in Transylvania', *Slavic Review* 23, no. 4 (1964): 668.

¹⁷ Dăncilă-Ineoan, Eppel and Iudean, *Voices of the Churches*, 86–7.

¹⁸ Maria Bucur, *Heroes and Victims: Remembering War in Twentieth-Century Romania* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2009), 21, 32.

1848 onwards. The liberals hoped to introduce lay governance in church affairs and to establish a secular state independent of any one church. Empowered by the 1867 Compromise which transformed the Habsburg Monarchy into the Austro-Hungarian Empire, they attempted to introduce religious equality, although only succeeded in introducing a 'hierarchy of privileges' that benefited some churches over others while giving Orthodoxy the status of a 'state church'.¹⁹ The clergy responded to what they saw as an attack on their autonomy and privileges with an organized campaign that culminated in the formation of a Catholic political party in 1895 in the wake of new laws regulating civil and inter-religious marriage. In an encyclical from 1893 Pope Leo XIII encouraged Hungarian Catholics in their struggle, writing that 'we hope that all the Catholics in Hungary will realise the dangerous turn of affairs in their country and will find courage and strength in our solicitude and good will. We hope, too, that on their part they will most conscientiously obey our counsel and admonitions.'²⁰ While neither the state nor the Church wanted a conflict, the result of these laws was the crystallization of a militant Hungarian middle class eager to assert its Catholic identity against any attempt to promote religious pluralism.²¹

Caught up in the midst of Hungarian Church-state politics, the Orthodox Church found itself at the mercy of the Hungarian state, which interfered in the election of bishops and at times postponed meetings of the Ecclesiastical National Congress.²² The lawyer Valer Moldovan accused the government of gerrymandering episcopal boundaries. He claimed that the administration was incorporating Romanian speakers into majority Hungarian dioceses as part of a deliberate strategy of 'Magyarization'.²³ As Roman Catholics were predominantly Hungarian, Romanian Greek Catholics typically opposed attempts to guarantee Catholic privilege, which was a not-very-subtle way of saying Hungarian privilege. Orthodox writers largely ignored Greek Catholic support for Romanian issues, however. They constantly reminded their readers that the head of the Catholic Church lived in Rome, and accused Greek Catholics of being 'more papist than the Pope'.²⁴ One pamphlet from 1910 signed by 'a large

¹⁹ Paul Hanebrink, *In Defense of Christian Hungary: Religion, Nationalism, and Antisemitism, 1890–1944* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2006), 12–13.

²⁰ Constanti Hungarorum Encyclical of Pope Leo XIII on the Church in Hungary, quoted in Dăncilă-Ineoan et al., *Voices of the Churches*, 65.

²¹ Ibid., 62–8; Hanebrink, *In Defense of Christian Hungary*, 23–8.

²² Dăncilă-Ineoan, Eppel and Iudean, *Voices of the Churches*, 81–4.

²³ Valer Moldovan, *Biserica în serviciul maghiarizării* (Braşov: Tipografia A. Mureşeanu, 1913), 14–19.

²⁴ Petru Ionescu, *Observări critice la opul 'Metropolia românilor ortodoksi din Ungaria şi Transilvania' etc. şi observări la răspunsul prea cuvioşiei sale Dlui Arhimandrit Dr Ilarion Puşcariu* (Caransebeş: Tiparul Tiografiei Diecesane, 1901), 11.

number of Orthodox' wrote that 'Propaganda is an institution created by the Pope in Rome for spreading Catholicism among the pagans and heretics which, like the Israelite alliance, spreads like a cancer across the whole earth with its agents and missions.'²⁵

Greek Catholics attacked the Orthodox in return. In his history of Romanian Orthodoxy from 1910, the Greek Catholic publicist Zenovie Păclișanu wrote that he was 'filled with pain':

When we see the immense role that the church has had in developing the national life of the peoples of Western Europe and we think of *the tragic destiny* which cast us into the arms of a church of extraordinary sterility, robed in a soul-destroying Byzantinism which lacked the power of life, and lacks it even today; when we think that it could have been a powerful wellspring of life if the church hierarchy had had other connections. It could have been a pedestal upon which we could have raised up a string of enlightened peoples.²⁶

While the Orthodox believed that the Greek Catholics were 'stealing souls' which were rightfully theirs, Greek Catholics pointed to weakness and corruption within the Orthodox Church and celebrated their own cultural and educational achievements.

Having been a dominant church under the Hungarians, the Greek Catholic Church found itself in the position of a minority religion after the war. In 1918 Alexandru Rusu, who later became the Greek Catholic Bishop of Maramureș, wrote that whereas before the war Greek Catholicism had been a major defender of ethnic Romanians – 'a true shield and watch tower for the strength of our ethnical character' – now it could focus purely on the care of souls.²⁷ Like the Orthodox, the Greek Catholics introduced a number of initiatives aimed at mobilizing the laity and intensifying spiritual life in their churches. This involved establishing new clerical and lay associations as well as distributing more devotional literature aimed at a popular readership.²⁸ Most Greek Catholic writings during the inter-war period emphasized the Church's victimhood and

²⁵ Mai mulți ortodoxi, *La 'Ierarchia Românilor din Ardeal și Ungaria'* (Sibiu: Tiparul Tipografiei Archiepiscopale, 1905), 1.

²⁶ Zenovie Păclișanu, *Biserica și românismul* (Târgu-Lăpuș: Galaxia Gutenberg, 2005), 10.

²⁷ Alexandru Rusu, 'Noua eră și biserica noastră', *Cultura Creștină* 7, no. 17–20 (1918): 336–7, quoted in Ciprian Ghișă, 'The Greek-Catholic Discourse of Identity in the Inter-War Period: The Relation between the Nation and People's Religious Confession', *Studia Universitatis Babeș-Bolyai Historia* 57, no. 2 (2012): 60.

²⁸ Sergiu Soica, *Biserica greco-catolică din Banat în perioada anilor 1920–1948* (Timișoara: Editura Eurostampa, 2011), 79–119.

their persecution at the hands of the Orthodox. At the same time, they repeatedly stated their loyalty to the Romanian nation and state. Eugen Stroescu wrote in 1922 that

on top of the commandments regarding our fellows, God put the duty towards the family, which extends with necessity over the large family, over the nation in which He wanted for each of us to be born in ... As Catholics aware of the divine law, for us, nationalism is not a facultative Evangelical advice from which we can restrain, but a command that we cannot deny without committing a sin.²⁹

Roman Catholicism

Romania's territorial expansion after 1918 necessitated a massive reorganization of the Roman Catholic Church, just as it had of the ROC, with dioceses that had previously been under Russian and Austro-Hungarian control now being brought under Romanian administration.³⁰ Both the Archbishop Raymund Netzhammer of Bucharest and the Papal Nuncio Francesco Marmaggi opposed the subordination of the Transylvanian diocese to the Romanian Catholic hierarchy and were hostile to the Vatican's attempts to arrange a concordat with the Romanian state. But heads of churches now had to be Romanian citizens, so Netzhammer was replaced in 1923 and Marmaggi in 1924. The new archbishop was a Romanian by the name of Alexandru Cisar, who then appointed other Romanians to leading positions within the church, radically changing the ethnic composition of the Roman Catholic hierarchy in Romania.³¹ Catholic leaders complained bitterly about having lost a great deal of property during the land reform of 1921, about discrimination against Hungarians in Romania and about the frequent attacks on Catholics in the Orthodox press.³²

Noting the close relationship between religion and ethnicity, Florian Kühner-Wielach has argued that 'Confessionalism – the political and ideology instrumentalization of religious affiliation' is key to understanding

²⁹ Eugen Stroescu, *Unirea* 6 (1922): 2, quoted in *ibid.*, 66–7.

³⁰ Marius Oanța, 'Arhidiocese romano-catolică de București între România Mare și Republica Populară Română (1918–1948): Date statistice', *Anuarul Institutului de Istorie George Barițiu din Cluj-Napoca* 57 (2018): 335–44.

³¹ R. Chris Davis, *Hungarian Religion, Romanian Blood: A Minority's Struggle for National Belonging, 1920–1945* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2018), 39.

³² *Ibid.*, 39.

how Orthodoxy functioned to create a more homogeneous population.³³ Confessional schools had been abolished in the Old Kingdom during the 1860s, and now the government decided that the time had come to close them in the new provinces as well, making schools a pivotal issue in the rivalry between the churches. Opponents of confessional schools argued that their primary role had been to fight the 'race war' for Romanian culture in Hungary and that they were now superfluous in an era of the 'uniform nation-state'.³⁴ This was a spurious argument, the Catholics responded, because

the church has established, sustained and defended schools according to its historic right that proceeds from the Saviour's command to teach the nations. It has not only cultivated language and love of one's nation, but above all it sought to shape religious beliefs, from which the spiritual and moral strengths of our nation have always flowed: 'The one who is righteous will live by faith'.

(Gal 3:11)³⁵

Angelescu abolished confessional schools entirely in 1925, stating that 'our churches have to realize that the Romanian State that is ours, all of ours, must be strengthened and that this State can only be strengthened by ... letting the State mold the souls of all its citizens'.³⁶ Impassioned protests came from the Roman Catholic, Greek Catholic and Reformed churches, whereas the only major Orthodox protest against the project came from Nicolae Bălan, who was also losing his Orthodox schools in Transylvania.³⁷

In 1923 the government legislated that 'Catholic priests may no longer teach religious education in schools in the Old Kingdom.' This was no longer just about regionalism, and Roman Catholics from Roman complained that they were now 'being treated worse than the brothers from the new provinces'.³⁸ Even when an earlier law had stated that Roman Catholic priests were allowed to teach two hours of religious education a week in Catholic villages, local officials had prevented them from doing so, claiming that no such rights existed.³⁹ A report

³³ Florian Kühner-Wielach, 'Orthodoxer Jesuitismus, katholischer Mystizismus: Konfessionalismus in Rumänien nach dem Ersten Weltkrieg', in *Orthodoxa Confessio?: Konfessionsbildung, Konfessionalisierung und ihre Folgen in der östlichen Christenheit*, ed. Mihai-D. Grigore and Florian Kühner-Wielach (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2018), 307.

³⁴ 'Stratificarea învățământului în Ardeal', *Școala nouă* (1922), quoted in Kühner-Wielach, *Siebenbürgen ohne Siebenbürger?*, 146.

³⁵ Senior, 'Agonia școalei confesionale', *Cultura creștină* 13, no. 2 (1924): 34.

³⁶ Quoted in Livezeanu, *Cultural Politics*, 47.

³⁷ Maner, *Multikonfessionalität*, 317–19.

³⁸ Petition to the Minister of Education, 28 February 1924, in ANIC, Fond Ministerul Instrucțiunii, Dosar 289/1924, f. 28.

³⁹ Letter, Episcopia Catolică de Iași to Minister of Education, 13 March 1924, in *ibid.*, f. 39.

by British Presbyterians on the state of Reformed churches in Transylvania after a fact-finding mission in October 1920 concluded that

Gross and grievous mismanagement has characterized the occupation and the administration of the Hungarian territory now ceded, and ... vindictive race-feeling has prompted and condoned a revolting policy of terrorism, and outrage, and dispossessions, and restraint, of which our Churches and ministers have been conspicuous victims, not, we believe, because they are Protestant or Presbyterian, but because they are Magyar by birth and education, and are regarded as foci of disaffection. Scores of the ministers and office-bearers we examined had been beaten or imprisoned or threatened with death or violence. Men are imprisoned for months, untried and even uncharged, by uncontrolled and irresponsible officials and police. Appeals for justice have been habitually ignored, or repelled and avenged by punishment, as insults to the good name of Rumania.⁴⁰

The Presbyterian report confirmed what became increasingly clear over the next few years – that if Catholicism was to survive in Romania it would need a solid legal framework defining its relationship to the state. To this end the Vatican spent much of the 1920s negotiating a concordat with Romania. Without a concordat, other churches struggled throughout the inter-war period. By 1930 the Lutheran Church discovered that the money it received from the Romanian state was far less than it had become used to in Austria-Hungary. Unable to continue to function otherwise, it began selling Church property and solicited money from Hungary to fund its schools.⁴¹ The Reformed Church found itself in a similar situation and had to rely on charity from churches in Switzerland.⁴² Neither of these churches faced the same popular hostility as the Catholics, but they nonetheless suffered from being classified as ‘minority religions’.

The 1927 concordat

The Vatican had not been represented at the Paris Peace Conferences. Terrified about the threat of communism, they used concordats as a way to establish political relations with European nation-states, signing ten such agreements

⁴⁰ William A. Curtis, J. R. Fleming and J. MacDonald Webster, *Report of the Commission Appointed to Visit Churches and to Inquire into Conditions Prevailing in Central Europe, August-October 1920*, in Lambeth Palace Archives, R. T. Davidson Papers, Official Letters, 1920, Vol. 198, f. 12.

⁴¹ ANIC, Fond Ministerul Propagandei Naționale, Dosar 5/1930, ff. 4–7.

⁴² *Ibid.*, ff. 24–5.

between 1922 and 1939.⁴³ Despite having been forced to make concessions to Romanian nationalism, most Romanian Roman Catholics responded positively to the concordat signed in 1927 and ratified in 1929.⁴⁴ Greek Catholics further defended it against Orthodox attacks in the press.⁴⁵ The concordat recognized the Catholic churches as churches (*biserici*) instead of denominations (*culțe*), provided government salaries for Catholic priests, gave the Catholic Church legal status as a corporate entity, required Romanian citizenship from all teachers in Catholic schools and made Romanian the official Church language. Individual bishops could, however, allow schools and churches within their jurisdictions to speak Hungarian.⁴⁶ Its ratification followed an equally divisive debate over the 1928 Law of Denominations. Whereas Orthodox leaders insisted that churches – not parishes – should control ecclesiastical wealth and that the ROC should receive preferential treatment from the state, other religious leaders insisted that the state ensure freedom of conscience for its citizens.⁴⁷

Orthodox leaders were furious with the outcome of both debates. They argued that ‘Catholicism is and remains a dangerous offensive force opposed to Orthodoxy and a formidable power capable of successfully penetrating inside and across the borders of *national* states’, and that the state had made too many concessions to the Vatican.⁴⁸ In an angry speech in the Romanian Senate, Nicolae Bălan complained that the concordat undermined the constitution and the Law of Denominations, forced the state to support Catholic proselytism, allowed for too many Catholic episcopates relative to the size of their population and promoted the ‘Magyarization’ of the Church.⁴⁹ The Greek Catholic Bishop Iuliu Hossu of Gherla responded that a treaty of this nature was necessary to bring episcopal boundaries in line with national boundaries and hoped that the new laws would finally bring Orthodox and Catholic conflicts to a close, emphasizing that ‘justice has finally been done.’⁵⁰

⁴³ Giuliana Chamedes, *A Twentieth-Century Crusade: The Vatican's Battle to Remake Christian Europe* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2019), 34–68.

⁴⁴ Ciprian Ghișa, ‘Întărind vechi alterități, ridicând noi frontiere: Concordatul dintre România și Vatican – 1929’, *Studia Universitatis Babeș Bolyai – Theologia Catholica* 55, no. 4 (2010): 43–56.

⁴⁵ ‘În chestia concordatului’, *Unirea*, 6 July 1929, 2–3.

⁴⁶ Tudor Popescu, *Concordatul cu Papa* (Bucharest: Institutul de Arte Grafice Răsăritul, 1927), 41–84.

⁴⁷ Constantin Schifirneț ed., *Biserica noastră și cultele minoritare: Marea discuție parlamentară în jurul legii cultelor* (Bucharest: Editura Albatros, 2000).

⁴⁸ I. Mateiu, *Valoarea concordatului încheiat cu Vaticanul* (Sibiu: Tiparul Tipografiei Arhidiecezane, 1929), 12–13.

⁴⁹ Nicolae Bălan, *Biserica împotriva concordatului* (Sibiu: Tiparul Tipografiei Arhidiecezane, 1929).

⁵⁰ ‘Cuvântarea Prea Sfințitului Iuliu ținută în Senat la discuția ratificării Concordatului cu Sfântul Scaun al Romei’, *Curierul creștin*, 1 August 1929, 121–37.

The debate over the concordat also had a wide-ranging impact on the Romanian public sphere. According to Ionuț Biliuță it was the 1927 concordat that disillusioned the Romanian Orthodox clergy with democracy and caused them to turn their sympathies increasingly towards right-wing and fascist politics.⁵¹ Indeed, a new group of writers calling themselves ‘Orthodoxists’ rose to prominence in the midst of the anti-Catholic sentiment of the late 1920s, pushing Orthodox public discourse further towards ultranationalism.⁵² The priest Ion Dobre, better known by his pen name of Nichifor Crainic, established his reputation after the First World War by publishing poetry with nationalist overtones and engaging in debates about Romanian culture with other literary critics. In 1926 he began teaching courses on Christian mysticism at the new theological faculty in Chișinău and started editing the literary magazine *Gândirea* (*Thought*).⁵³ In the pages of *Gândirea* he championed a literary and artistic current he called ‘Traditionalism’. Rather than ‘a longing for the past’, Crainic argued that ‘traditionalism does not appear as ... a static force, dead with its back to the future, but as a living, dynamic force, with bursts torrentially forward out of the past towards the growth of new and more adequate forms of its existence.’⁵⁴ Crainic’s Traditionalism fought for ‘a culture created with autochthonous values’, maintaining that ‘our orientation cannot but be towards the Orient, that is, towards ourselves, towards that which we are through the inheritance of which we are worthy.’⁵⁵ Alongside – and in competition with – Crainic, the religious philosopher Nae Ionescu promoted his own brand of ‘Orthodoxism’ through the newspaper *Cuvântul* (*The Word*), which he edited from 1926 onwards. Ionescu established his credentials as an expert on Orthodox Christianity through his celebrated lectures on mysticism at the University of Bucharest from 1924 onwards, though the bulk of these lectures were plagiarized from a book by the English Anglo-Catholic writer Evelyn Underhill.⁵⁶ Ionescu equated Protestantism with democracy, capitalism and rationalism, all of which

⁵¹ Ionuț Biliuță, ‘The Ultranationalist Newsroom: Orthodox “Ecumenism” in the Legionary Ecclesiastical Newspapers’, *Review of Ecumenical Studies* 10, no. 2 (2018): 192.

⁵² George Călinescu, “‘Crinul alb’ și ‘Laurul negru’”, *Viața literară*, 3 November 1928, 1–2.

⁵³ Roland Clark, ‘Orthodoxy and Nation-Building: Nichifor Crainic and Religious Nationalism in 1920s Romania’, *Nationalities Papers* 40, no. 4 (2012): 525–43.

⁵⁴ Nichifor Crainic, ‘A doua neatârănare’, *Gândirea* 1 (1926), reprinted in Nichifor Crainic, *Puncte cardinale în haos* (Iași: Editura Timpul, 1996), 153.

⁵⁵ Nichifor Crainic, ‘Sensul tradiției’, *Gândirea*, 9, no. 1–2 (1929): 2–3.

⁵⁶ Marta Petreu, ‘Istoria unui Plagiat: Nae Ionescu – Evelyn Underhill’, *România literară* 27, no. 49–50 (1994); Evelyn Underhill, *Mysticism: A Study in the Nature and Development of Man’s Spiritual Consciousness* (New York: E. P. Dutton & Company, 1911).

he saw as evils threatening to destroy Romanian culture.⁵⁷ Both Crainic and Ionescu claimed to speak on behalf of Orthodoxy, although Ionescu in particular frequently distinguished between 'Orthodoxy' and the actions of the ROC.⁵⁸ Orthodoxist polemics encouraged hostile reactions from Catholics, and in 1927 the French Catholic writer Henri Massis defended Western philosophy against what he called the 'German-Asian-Russian' irrationalism of Orthodoxists like Ionescu and Crainic.⁵⁹

Ionescu became embroiled in a bitter debate with the Catholic theologian Iosif Frollo over the relationship between Catholicism and Romanian-ness in 1930. In a discussion about the sister of the writer Cezar Petrescu, Ștefania Petrescu, who had recently converted to Catholicism and entered a convent, Iuliu Scriban used the pages of *Cuvântul* to argue that 'whoever turns to Catholicism ceases to be a good Romanian, and if one enters the monastic life then one becomes perverted to the highest degree so as to become the most dangerous enemy of the Romanian nation.'⁶⁰ Frollo responded by listing prominent Greek Catholics from the eighteenth century whose work had been foundational for the ideology of Romanian nationalism, asking rhetorically, 'can a Catholic therefore not be a "good Romanian"?'⁶¹ No, said Ionescu, 'no one can be Romanian ... unless one achieves concretely, individually, the organizing spiritual structure on the basis of which is the essence of the Romanian nation.'⁶² As Chris Davis points out, Ionescu's argument was that 'people's attitude toward God, and the ways in which they experience divinity, were interwoven in the nation's fabric.'⁶³

With the ROC now confirmed as the 'dominant' Church in the nation-state, Orthodoxists such as Crainic and Ionescu sought to use their particular brand of Orthodoxy to dominate Romanian culture. By defining ethnicity in religious terms, the Orthodoxists placed religion at the heart of Romanian-ness. In privileging religion, they gave themselves a privileged place in the

⁵⁷ Romina Surugiu, 'Nae Ionescu on Democracy, Individuality, Leadership and Nation: Philosophical (Re)sources for a Right-Wing Ideology', *Journal for the Study of Religions and Ideologies* 8, no. 23 (2009): 68–81.

⁵⁸ Nae Ionescu, 'Ortodoxia răsăriteană și pancreștinismul', *Cuvântul*, 2 May 1926, 1; Nae Ionescu, 'Tot despre Facultatea Chișinăului', *Cuvântul*, 24 September 1926, 1; both republished in Nae Ionescu, *Roza vânturilor* (Bucharest: Editura Roza Vinturilor, 1990), 3–5, 29–33.

⁵⁹ Vanhaelemeersch, *Generation 'Without Beliefs'*, 120–1.

⁶⁰ Iuliu Scriban, 'Călugărițele catolice nu-și lasă năravul', *Cuvântul*, 1930, quoted in Davis, *Hungarian Religion*, 54.

⁶¹ Iosif Frollo, 'Scrisoare deschisă către S.S. Arhimandritul Scriban', *Cuvântul*, 1930, quoted in *ibid.*, 55.

⁶² Nae Ionescu, 'A fi "bun român"', *Cuvântul*, 1930, quoted in *ibid.*, 55.

⁶³ *Ibid.*, 56.

creation of Romanian culture: only they, and not eugenicists, social scientists or bureaucrats truly knew how to reinvigorate Romania. Defining the status of Catholicism thus mattered as much to the Orthodox Church as it did to the Catholic churches. Whereas for the Catholics the concordat was a matter of securing their legal rights in a country where they now found themselves in the minority, for the Orthodox it was about determining which discourses and ideologies would shape the church's future. The idea that nationality should be determined in terms of religion resonated perfectly with the state's drive to unite the population around the idea of Romanian ethnic dominance, thus securing state support for the persecution of religious minorities. Whatever regional tensions remained in the wake of unification were largely put aside in the face of the greater dangers apparently posed by Catholics and Repenters. When it came to securing Orthodox dominance over other religious groups, even those bishops who had most passionately argued in favour of autonomy were more than willing to work together with the state to guarantee Orthodox hegemony in Greater Romania.