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Repenters

Whereas Inochentists and Old Calendarists rejected the official Church by grounding themselves in recognizably Orthodox patterns of piety, Repenters abandoned Orthodoxy altogether for a personal Saviour who promised them eternal life.¹ They called each other 'brother' and 'sister', cherished the Bible above all else and withdrew from 'worldly' things in their pursuit of holiness. Repenter groups appeared in Romania during the second half of the nineteenth century and spread in various parts of the country. Some claimed simply to follow 'the Repenter religion', but most clearly affiliated themselves with one denomination or another.² The spectre of Repenters appeared constantly in Orthodox writings from the 1920s, giving the impression that they were to be found knocking on doors in every village and town. In reality, the number of Repenters at this time was remarkably small, and their presence restricted to only some parts of the country. Baptists were strongest in Arad and Bihor counties, according to the 1930 census, with significant communities throughout western Transylvania and Bessarabia. Dorin Dobrinu writes that 'in 1921 the Baptist Union numbered 21,193 members (14,000 Romanians, 6,223 Hungarians, 670 Germans, and 300 Russians), congregated in 645 churches ... There were 77 ordained pastors ... and 668 unordained leaders.'³ Romania's estimated population in 1920 was 16 million, meaning that Baptists constituted roughly 0.001 per cent of the population.⁴ Brethren were concentrated most strongly in Teleorman, Suceava and Iași, although one could also find them in

¹ A thorough overview of the literature on Repenters can be found in Michelson, 'The History of Romanian Evangelicals', 191–234.

² Fond MCA, Dosar 178/1923, f. 48.

³ Dobrinu, 'Sub puterea cezarului', 94.

⁴ Direcția Generală a Statistice, *Anuarul statistic al României* 1922, 20.

Muntenia and Bukovina. Pentecostals and Nazarenes, on the other hand, were restricted primarily to the Banat and western Transylvania during the inter-war period.⁵

Baptists

The largest and most visible of the Repenter churches were the Baptists. The first Baptist church was established in Amsterdam in 1609 by English separatists angry at the Archbishop of Canterbury's suppression of reformist Puritanism. During the 1640s Baptists embraced the idea of believer's baptism by immersion, meaning that only people who are old enough to understand the significance of their actions should be baptized and that it should be done by immersing the entire person in water to symbolize them dying and rising from the dead.⁶ Believer's baptism became one of the trademarks of the Baptist faith alongside beliefs that Christians are saved by faith alone, that the Bible is the only reliable authority in matters of religion and that congregations should be allowed to govern themselves.

A Baptist pamphlet from 1905 Romania explained that 'God makes himself known to men through the books of the Bible, giving them everything they need to organize faith and life'. Although God created men

in his image and likeness ... through Satan's cunning the first man fell into sin. Turning away from God he lost the image and likeness of his maker and thus became mere flesh, existing in a state of spiritual death. Given that all men come from the seed of Adam we all partake of his nature, which is totally depraved and sinful. As children of hostility, conceived and born in sin, we oppose everything that is good and, despite ourselves, we seek that which is evil.⁷

Although he is fully God, Jesus Christ took on the form of sinful man for us, suffering and dying on the cross. 'He sacrificed himself for us body and soul, becoming a curse for us when he took the anger of God upon himself as punishment for our sins. We believe that this act of redemption, which has

⁵ Nicolae Geantă, 'Dinamica teritorială a bisericilor evanghelice din România', in *Omul evanghelic: O explorare a comunităților protestante românești*, ed. Dorin Dobrinicu and Dănuț Mănăstireanu (Iași: Polirom, 2018), 536–44.

⁶ Stephen Wright, *The Early English Baptists, 1603–49* (Woodbridge: Boydell, 2006).

⁷ *Făsiunea credinței și (întocmirea iei): Pentru adunările creștine, cari de comun poartă numirea de adunări baptiste*, trans. Georgiu Slăvū, 2nd edn (n.p.: n.p., 1905).

eternal value, is the only reason why ... all of our sins and transgressions are forgiven and atoned for for all eternity.' Of God's absolutely free will he 'chooses those sinners who, as individuals, accept his offer of salvation and make it their own during their lifetimes, thus inscribing their names in heaven and giving themselves into the hands of the Saviour'. God's choice is 'eternal and unchangeable' once he has made it, and 'those who he has chosen will never be taken out of Christ's hands. Rather, through the power of God, through faith in Christ, and through love they will be kept for eternal glory.' 'This is salvation,' the pamphlet said,

that man, through the living and active word of God awakens from the sleep of death, recognizes his sins and transgressions, is sorry for them and contrite at heart. Feeling Christ's sufferings, he hastens to escape by taking hold of Christ, the only way to salvation and redemption, thus receiving through faith the forgiveness of his sins and faith in his heart that he is a child of God and a partaker of eternal life.⁸

Baptists heard this message in weekly or twice-weekly sermons, proclaimed it in song, preached it to each other during Bible studies, reminded themselves of it in their prayers, told it to their neighbours and discovered it in the Scriptures. They believed that individuals had to make a conscious choice to accept Jesus's offer of eternal life, so they rejected the baptism into the Orthodox Church they had received when they were babies. Confident that Jesus's death and resurrection had saved them once and for all, they no longer felt that they needed to confess to a priest. Discovering that they understood the Bible when they read it for themselves and disappointed that they had never heard this message of salvation from their priests, they stopped trusting the Orthodox Church to interpret Scripture for them. Excited that they could pray directly to God as his beloved children, they stopped praying to the saints or venerating icons and relics. They also refused to pray to the Virgin Mary and held up Protestant missionaries as their heroes in place of the saints who populated the Romanian national pantheon. Striving to live the holiest lives possible, they cut themselves off from the rest of society, shunning alcohol, smoking, swearing and sex outside of marriage, and looked with suspicion on things such as cinema and novels that did not have a religious purpose.

⁸ *Fassiunea credinței și (întocmirea iei).*

Baptist churches were established in North America during the mid-seventeenth century. The Baptist Missionary Society was founded in 1792, which formed the basis for the international expansion of the movement.⁹ A preacher by the name of Johann Gerhard Onken founded the first Baptist church in Germany in 1834 and then baptized the first Swiss Baptists in 1847. Baptist churches appeared in Vienna, Denmark and Sweden during the 1840s, in Bohemia and Hungary during the 1870s and in Bulgaria during the 1880s. They faced persecution in almost every country they found themselves, but the Church continued to grow due to the tenacious efforts of dedicated preachers and a growing acceptance of the idea of religious freedom.¹⁰ It was ethnic Germans in Congress Poland who first introduced Baptist teachings into the Russian Empire during the 1850s. Ten years later ethnic Russians from Transcaucasia who were members of a sect known as Molokans or 'Spiritual Christians' began forming Baptist churches. Also in the 1860s, another new religious movement known as Shtundism appeared in previously Orthodox villages in the Ukraine. Shtundism grew organically out of interactions between Orthodox peasants and German Protestant colonists. Shtundists became known for their 'Bible circles' during which they discussed Bible passages and encouraged each other to live holy lives. Another reformist group, the Pashkovites, spread through St Petersburg's upper classes during the 1870s and, after tentative attempts at collaboration during the 1880s, the Baptists, Shtundists and Pashkovites increasingly decided that their movements were so similar that they should make common cause and organize together as Baptists. Tensions between different strands of Baptism continued throughout the movement's early decades but the faith spread quickly and created deep roots in tight local communities.¹¹

The Baptist faith came to Romania from a variety of directions. Karl Johann Scharschmidt, who had been baptized by Onken in Hamburg, arrived in Bucharest in 1856 and a small Baptist church developed around him over the following decade. At first it was composed entirely of ethnic Germans, but ethnic Romanian converts joined during the mid-1890s. In Dobruja the Baptist church was established by German migrants who came from southern Russia

⁹ William H. Brackney, *Baptists in North America: A Historical Perspective* (Malden: Blackwell, 2006), 8–23; Brian Stanley, *The History of the Baptist Missionary Society 1792–1992* (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1992).

¹⁰ James Henry Rushbrooke, *The Baptist Movement in the Continent of Europe* (London: The Carey Press, 1923).

¹¹ Coleman, *Russian Baptists*; Zhuk, *Russia's Lost Reformation*; Catherine Wanner, *Communities of the Converted: Ukrainians and Global Evangelism* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2007), 21–35.

during the 1860s. These congregations gradually increased in size, adding Romanian converts who in turn established their own communities. Although their numbers always remained tiny compared to their presence in the Orthodox press, the Baptist faith was well established in Romania by the early twentieth century. The creation of Greater Romania brought even more Baptists into the fold. Strong Baptist communities existed in Bessarabia, where they had been influenced by the Shtundists, and Baptists in Transylvania had enjoyed a limited degree of state recognition prior to war.¹²

Despite the strength of the Baptist Church in the Russian empire, Baptist beliefs emerged out of Christian experiences in Western Europe and the United States and most Romanians saw them as fundamentally foreign. Dănuț Mănăstireanu argues that twentieth-century Romanian Evangelicalism – a movement in which the Baptists held a central place – was influenced by the Reformation teachings of Martin Luther and John Calvin, Anabaptism, seventeenth-century Pietism and the brand of nineteenth-century Christian rationalism combined with Biblical literalism and dispensationalism that eventually gave birth to American Fundamentalism.¹³ Baptists did not particularly care whether their message was ‘Romanian’ or not. They saw these as universal ideas that applied to everyone regardless of their ethnic origins. Nonetheless, as Iemima Ploșcariu has argued, Baptists and other Repenters went out of their way to emphasize their loyalty to the Romanian nation and state. Despite Orthodoxist claims to the contrary, Baptists desperately wanted to be ‘good Romanians’.¹⁴

During the early twentieth century Repenters were characterized more by their enthusiasm than by their theological training. When a Baptist child from Jegălia died in 1909, no one in the community knew how to run a funeral so they had to send for a preacher from Cernavodă. Confronted by the ridicule of Orthodox family members who were horrified that they would bury someone without a priest, the small group carried the child to the cemetery singing hymns and eventually brought the whole village out for the funeral.¹⁵ Early Baptist gatherings sometimes just involved members reading passages of the Bible out loud. Over time one or two began explaining the readings and

¹² Popovici, *Istoria baptiștilor*, vol. 1, 17–179; Dobrinu, ‘Sub puterea cezarului’, 42–64.

¹³ Dănuț Mănăstireanu, ‘Identitatea evanghelicilor români: rădăcini, actualitate, perspective’, in *Omul evanghelic: O explorare a comunităților protestante românești*, ed. Dorin Dobrinu and Dănuț Mănăstireanu (Iași: Polirom, 2018), 256–64.

¹⁴ Ploșcariu, ‘Pieties of the Nation’.

¹⁵ Popovici, *Istoria baptiștilor*, vol. 1, 118–19.

drawing practical lessons from them, and people became preachers simply through practice.¹⁶ Regular Bible reading was extremely important. To help people discover the whole Bible, Baptist newspapers would publish daily reading guides with specific passages recommended for morning and evening reading.¹⁷ Many communities struggled to be allowed to register their leaders as preachers or to have their children taught religion by Baptists because the state required that people occupying these positions had either graduated from a recognized theological institute or passed their baccalaureate exams.¹⁸ Few Baptists had. Dorin Dobrinu writes that

the Baptists had 909 preachers at the beginning of 1927 with the following levels of education: one had university studies, four secondary school, three higher agricultural school, one business school, one four classes of middle school and trade school, six four classes of middle school, and three pedagogical school. Similarly, seven had attended seminary and three a school/Bible course/theological course. The vast majority (880) of preachers had only primary school although they had served in the church for many years.¹⁹

Instead, Baptists trained preachers through 'Bible courses' that might last anything from a couple of days to nine months.²⁰ Before a seminary was built in Bucharest in 1923, preachers who wanted further training travelled to seminaries in Budapest or Hamburg.²¹

Baptists spread their message through person-to-person evangelism and by inviting people to witness their church services where they would experience singing, prayers and preaching.²² Weddings, funerals and baptisms were particularly good occasions for evangelism because they attracted extended family members, and Baptist newspapers reported that these events were 'a good witness' or that non-Baptists had been converted.²³ Stories about conversion experiences that testified to radical changes having taken place in believers' lives provided the pivot around which evangelistic messages were structured.²⁴ In

¹⁶ Ibid., 191.

¹⁷ 'Un text din Sft. Scriptură pentru fiecare zi', *Farul mântuirii*, December 1923, 11.

¹⁸ ANIC, Fond Ministerul Instrucţiunii, Dosar 310/1923, f. 305.

¹⁹ Dobrinu, 'Sub puterea cezarului', 97.

²⁰ Ilie Craiovean, 'Cursul biblic din Reveşis', *Farul mântuirii*, December 1923, 12.

²¹ Dobrinu, 'Sub puterea cezarului', 97–9.

²² ANIC, Fond Direcţia Generală a Poliţiei (henceforth DGP), Dosar 44/1938, f. 18.

²³ 'Botezuri' and 'Căsătorii', *Farul mântuirii*, January 1923, 7–8.

²⁴ Heather Coleman, 'Becoming a Russian Baptist: Conversion Narratives and Social Experience', *Russian Review* 61, no. 1 (2002): 94–112; Mihai Curelaru, 'Convertirea religioasă în comunităţile evanghelice – o abordare psihologică', in *Omul evanghelic: O explorare a comunităţilor protestante româneşti*, ed. Dorin Dobrinu and Dănuţ Mănăstireanu (Iaşi: Polirom, 2018), 602–40.

addition to Bibles and tracts, they printed their own newspapers that contained information about local communities as well as articles of a devotional or theological nature.²⁵ Itinerant preachers worked as colporteurs, or travelling book salesmen, distributing Repenter literature as a way of supporting their preaching journeys.²⁶

The first Baptist hymn book in Romanian was printed in 1897. It contained 200 songs, but the translations focused more on doctrine than on rhyme, so the words were not always easy to sing. Some communities relied entirely on Orthodox or Greek Catholic song books as people were more used to this style of worship.²⁷ Repenters were willing to use song books produced by other denominations, and their music was influenced by a broad range of Protestant currents, including hymns from German Pietism, English Puritanism, Methodism, Gospel music and songs associated with the Salvation Army and the ministries of Dwight L. Moody and Ira D. Sankey.²⁸ Music became one of the most recognizable features of Repenter gatherings. As Marin Marian-Bălașa argues, ‘music does not just express identity, it creates it’, and foreign musical influences helped define Repenters as distinctively ‘non-Romanian’ in the popular imagination.²⁹

Romanian Baptist churches in the United States established close contacts with their co-religionists inside the country. They sent literature and missionaries, and local congregations stayed in touch with Romanian students who went to study in America.³⁰ The most important international contact Baptists had was James Henry Rushbrooke, a British pastor who served as the European Commissioner of the Baptist World Alliance (BWA) from 1920 to 1925, as the Secretary for Eastern Europe from 1925 to 1928, as General Secretary from 1928 to 1939 and then as President from 1939 until his death in 1947.³¹ Rushbrooke visited Romania together with Charles Alvin

²⁵ Popovici, *Istoria baptiștilor*, vol. 1, 204–19.

²⁶ ACNSAS, Fond Documentar, Dosar 12388, vol. 18, f. 1; Dosar 13408, vol. 1, ff. 160–2, 168.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 195–6.

²⁸ Vilmos Kis-Juhász and Iulian Teodorescu, ‘Bazele închinării evanghelice – Cazul evanghelicilor din România’, in *Omul evanghelic: O explorare a comunităților protestante românești*, ed. Dorin Dobrinu and Dănuț Mănăstireanu (Iași: Polirom, 2018), 726–33.

²⁹ Marin Marian-Bălașa, ‘Muzica în cadrul bisericilor minore: Funcții, identități și roluri socioculturale’, in *Omul evanghelic: O explorare a comunităților protestante românești*, ed. Dorin Dobrinu and Dănuț Mănăstireanu (Iași: Polirom, 2018), 714.

³⁰ ‘La Universitatea Denison’, *Farul mântuirii*, December 1923, 10.

³¹ Marius Silveșan and Vasile Bel, *Rolul lui James Henry Rushbrooke în obținerea libertății religioase pentru credincioșii baptiști din România între anii 1907–1947* (Cluj-Napoca: Editura Risoprint, 2017), 27–9.

Brooks of the American Baptist Home Mission Society in 1920. The two men were on a 'fact-finding mission' to ascertain the state of Baptist churches in Europe in the wake of the First World War. Their report emphasized how badly the war had devastated Europe – and Eastern Europe in particular – calling on Baptists in Britain and the United States to send material aid to Germany as well as to the rest of the Continent. Rushbrooke was particularly upset about the extent to which Baptists were being persecuted in Romania and they dedicated twelve pages of the report to describing beatings at the hands of police, closed churches and confiscation of buildings and literature. A Romanian delegation to the 1920 BWA conference in London attempted to bring detailed evidence of these atrocities but it was confiscated at the border.³² Rushbrooke made up to seventeen visits to Romania and tirelessly lobbied both the Romanian and British governments and other churches to introduce religious freedom, thus providing Baptists with a voice at the highest levels of government.³³

Baptists were the only Repenter denomination that enjoyed this sort of international support. They were also the only denomination to organize effectively on a national level. Despite frequent infighting, the establishment of the Baptist Union of Romania in 1920 provided them with a representative body that could intervene with the authorities on behalf of persecuted local congregations.³⁴ Official representation was important because Repenters enjoyed almost no rights under the law. A State Ordinance from 1921 denied them the right to worship and the 1923 constitution failed to recognize any Repenter denominations as churches. Laws were often inconsistent and confusing, such as the 1927 legislation that defined Baptists in Transylvania as a denomination because they had been recognized as such in Hungary but Baptists elsewhere in the country only as members of religious associations.³⁵

³² Bernard Green, *Tomorrow's Man: A Biography of James Henry Rushbrooke* (Didcot: The Baptist Historical Society, 1997), 73–9, 211 n. 14.

³³ Ibid., 88–110, 148–70; Silveșan and Bel, *Rolul lui James Henry Rushbrooke*; Robert S. Wilson, 'Coming of Age: The Post-War Era and the 1920s', in *Baptists Together in Christ, 1905–2005: A Hundred Year History of the Baptist World Alliance*, ed. Richard V. Pierard (Birmingham, AL: Samford University Press, 2005), 47–72.

³⁴ ANIC, Fond Ministerul Instrucțiunii, Dosar 1922/29, f. 120; Dosar 289/1924, f. 7. On the history of the Baptist Union, see Dobrinu, 'Sub puterea cezarului', 94–7; Popovici, *Istoria Bapțiștilor*, vol. 2, 288–94.

³⁵ Dobrinu, 'Sub puterea cezarului', 91–3; Green, *Tomorrow's Man*, 151–2.

Brethren

The Brethren (*Creștini după Evanghelie*) were the second largest Repenter denomination. The Brethren faith emerged out of meetings of non-conformist Protestants in Ireland during the late 1820s. Over the next decade it established important hubs in Plymouth, England, and Geneva, Switzerland.³⁶ The movement experienced a number of schisms, but it was a Swiss missionary from the ‘Open Brethren’, Francis Berney, who brought the faith to Romania in 1899. After planting a church in Bucharest, Berney was joined by an English missionary, Edmund Hamer Broadbent, and together they carried out missions among ethnic Germans in southern Transylvania in 1902–3. The faith then spread organically within Moldova when soldiers and refugees from the Old Kingdom concentrated there during the First World War.³⁷

Brethren placed a strong emphasis on personal prayer, regular Bible study and holy living. Their most distinctive feature was that they rejected the idea of pastors or any organizational structures above the level of the local congregation, preferring to be governed by a loose configuration of ‘elders’ – usually older men who were well regarded within the church community. Congregations were affiliated with one another through fraternal bonds and membership of the Church was defined by whether or not one was allowed to receive the Eucharist, not through any formal Church structures.³⁸ When the state demanded that the Brethren demonstrate that they had some sort of church hierarchy in order to receive permission to function, the Brethren decided ‘after much prayer and deliberation’ that they would prefer to remain outside of the law and suffer the consequences rather than appoint official leaders.³⁹

Brethren were also known for the doctrine of dispensationalism, which was first developed by the Brethren pioneer John Nelson Darby. Unlike other early Brethren preachers who taught that the Rapture and Christ’s Second Coming would take place after a seven-year period of tribulation, Darby

³⁶ Massimo Introvigne, *The Plymouth Brethren* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018), 18–60.

³⁷ Dobrinu, ‘Sub puterea cezarului’, 64–70; Ieremia Rusu, *Cine sunt Creștinii după Evanghelie? Curente teologice care au influențat doctrinele specific ale Bisericilor Creștine după Evanghelie din România în perioada interbelică și comunistă* (Bucharest: Editura Didactică și Pedagogică, 2011).

³⁸ Eugen Matei, ‘Teologia evanghelicilor români: Rădăcini și perspective’, in *Omul evanghelic: O explorare a comunităților protestante românești*, ed. Dorin Dobrinu and Dănuț Mănăstireanu (Iași: Polirom, 2018), 433–41.

³⁹ ACNSAS, Fond Documentar, Dosar 13408, vol. 2, f. 34–5.

argued that the rapture could take place at any time.⁴⁰ Darby's particular brand of Brethren theology was not the one that first arrived in Romania, but his dispensationalism was strong in Brethren circles between the wars.⁴¹ In practical terms, the knowledge that the Rapture could take place at any time encouraged a 'watchfulness' and served as an impetus for holy living because one did not want to be caught sinning when Christ returned.

Rather than entrusting preaching to one person with theological training, Brethren elders preached according to the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. They never established seminars or Bible schools in Romania during the inter-war period, although several leaders studied at Brethren seminaries in Switzerland and Germany and some Orthodox priests with theology degrees joined the movement during the 1920s. The Brethren also published their own newspapers and magazines, which disseminated Brethren doctrines to scattered communities.⁴² A police report from 1930 stated that in Braşov Brethren 'preachers and colporteurs traverse the town and villages selling different religious literature. They use these occasions to make speeches and convert the weakest [members of society]. These sects are sustained by money donated by their followers and from the sale of literature. Every year these sectarians are visited by foreign missionaries who make propaganda speeches for their sects.'⁴³ Police reports listing the members of Brethren communities suggest that women were in the majority in most churches.⁴⁴ As did all Repenter denominations, the Brethren insisted on clear gender roles for men and women. Only men were allowed to preach or exercise leadership and women were to display their subordination by covering their heads and not wearing jewellery or make-up. There was little that was remarkable about these rules for Romanian Christians, however, and none of the anti-sectarian literature ever commented on Repenter gender roles.

⁴⁰ Timothy C. F. Stunt, 'John Nelson Darby: Contexts and Perceptions', in *Protestant Millennialism, Evangelicalism, and Irish Society, 1790–2005*, ed. Crawford Gribben and Andrew R. Holmes (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006), 83–98.

⁴¹ Matei, 'Teologia evanghelicilor români', 441.

⁴² Dobrinu, 'Sub puterea cezarului', 101–2.

⁴³ ANIC – Braşov, Fond Chestura de Poliţie Braşov, Serv. Siguranţei, Dosar 4/1930, f. 691.

⁴⁴ ACNSAS, Fond Documentar, Dosar 13408, vol. 1, ff. 293–8; vol. 2, f. 205–6.

Nazarenes

The founding father of the Nazarenes, Samuel Heinrich Fröhlich, writes that in April 1825, during the Easter vacation from his second year of theological studies at the University of Basel, ‘a very soft voice, which was neither terrifying nor depressing but nevertheless very convincing and penetrating, spoke in the depth of my soul, “It cannot remain thus with thee. Thou must change!”’⁴⁵ With a new passion for personal holiness and renewal, Fröhlich returned to his studies temporarily but had to leave university in October for financial reasons. He became a minister in the Swiss Reformed Church in 1828 but was expelled in 1830 for refusing to accept new liturgical reforms, which he said were based ‘upon the underlying principles of nature and upon the religion of reason rather than upon faith in Christ’.⁴⁶ Fröhlich then embraced the doctrine of believer’s baptism and worked with the Baptist Continental Society between 1831 and 1836 before establishing the Neutäufer movement, also known as the Communities of Evangelical Baptists (Evangelisch Taufgesinnter Gemeinden). The new Church emphasized the importance of repentance and holiness to the point of believing that Christians must be entirely perfect. Fröhlich wrote that when they are born again, Christians

Receive, in addition to our cleansed *human nature*, the *divine* nature of the Son (Romans 8; 2 Peter 1); and as regenerated children of God we must in our following after Christ, *earn* our *share* in the future glory like Jesus, i.e., we must become *worthy* of it by our *obedience* to the will of God in our efforts and sufferings, although it is to Him alone that we owe our *share* in the salvation, because of his obedience to death on the cross. But if we are not faithful and do not suffer with Him and *conquer* the world and the devil, *remaining constant* unto the end, then we cannot be raised to glory with Him, although He died for us (2 Timothy 2:10ff; Romans 8:17ff).⁴⁷

From the late 1830s onward, the Neutäufer movement spread across Switzerland, Alsace and southern Germany as well as through the Hungarian regions of the Habsburg Empire. Increasingly known as Nazarenes, communities of Fröhlich’s

⁴⁵ Quoted in Joseph F. Pfeiffer, ‘Between Remnant and Renewal: A Historical and Comparative Study of the “Apostolic Christian Church” among Neo-Anabaptist Renewal Movements in Europe and America’ (MA diss., Associated Mennonite Biblical Seminary, Elkhart, Indiana, 2010), 53.

⁴⁶ Ibid., 59.

⁴⁷ Quoted in *ibid.*, 70.

followers consolidated in Hungary under the leadership of Louis Hencsey in particular, including converts from Roman Catholicism, the Hungarian Reformed Church, Slovak Lutheranism and Serbian Orthodoxy.⁴⁸ The denomination spread to the United States in 1847 where it became known as the Apostolic Christian Church of America.⁴⁹ A second wave of Nazarene migrants fled to America to escape communist persecution following the Second World War.⁵⁰ Non-resistance became a core feature of Nazarene teaching during the second half of the nineteenth century, bringing them closer to traditional Anabaptist teachings while exposing them to increased state persecution because of their refusal to bear arms.⁵¹

A number of Nazarenes became Romanian citizens following the territorial shifts after the First World War. The Romanian state soon classified them as Repenters and took a decidedly hostile attitude towards them. One police report stated:

This sect, originally known as 'the New Church' and later as 'the Nazarene community', adopting the name of Nazarenes because they confess that they seek to follow Christ the Nazarene in their life and actions. This sect originates among the Hungarians and entered Romania following the union with the Transylvanian provinces. Large concentrations of the sect are in the Banat, Bukovina, Cluj, and in Dobruja. Their doctrine consists primarily of affirming the interior church, rejecting outward acts of religiosity. They believe in baptizing only adults; they refuse to take oaths or serve in the military. They do not recognize the priesthood, and they call our church 'the old Babylon' in the propaganda. They hide under the name of Baptists. Their propaganda organ is a pamphlet called *The New Harlot of Zion* in which they defame the church.⁵²

The most serious quarrel that Romanian officials had with the Nazarenes was that they would not bear arms. They pointed out that many Nazarenes had refused to fight for Austria-Hungary during the First World War and had even been executed for it.⁵³ Nazarenes responded that their faith actually made them ideal citizens, because 'we submit to all the obligations of citizenship and wish

⁴⁸ Aleksov, *Religious Dissent*, 87–116.

⁴⁹ Aleksandra Djurić-Milovanić, "'Our Father is Good, but Strict': The Transformation of the Apostolic Christian Church-Nazarene in North America", *Journal of Amish and Plain Anabaptist Studies* 6, no. 1 (2018): 61–72.

⁵⁰ Perry Klopfenstein, *Marching to Zion: A History of the Apostolic Christian Church of America*, 2nd edn (Eureka, IL: Apostolic Christian Church of America, 2008).

⁵¹ Pfeiffer, 'Between Remnant and Renewal', 91–2.

⁵² ACNSAS, Fond Documentar, Dosar 10727, vol. 2, f. 3.

⁵³ ANIC, Fond MCA, Dosar 136/1922, ff. 1, 5, 21.

to contribute to the consolidation and happiness of the national Romanian state with our modest abilities. Our faith teaches us not to ruffle even a hair on anyone's head. We preach true love for one's neighbour in our Lord Jesus Christ.⁵⁴ Nazarenes operated with a different vision of the state to that of the police. Whereas the Nazarenes believed that the state should leave them alone so long as they obeyed its laws, the modern nation-state expected them to become active supporters of its ideological programme of national chauvinism, which is something they and other Repenters were not always willing to do.⁵⁵

Pentecostals

The Pentecostal movement was characterized by speaking in tongues, a focus on supernatural healing, a literal reading of the Bible and a strong emphasis on holy living. It had its roots in the Holiness movement, Protestant faith healing and the revivalism of the Keswick convention in England, but as a denomination it emerged out of a series of charismatic revivals in North America, Wales, India and Korea at the beginning of the twentieth century. The most famous of these revivals took place at Azusa Street in Los Angeles, California, between 1906 and 1915.⁵⁶ Pentecostalism arrived in the western Balkans almost immediately after the Azusa Street revival began.⁵⁷

In Romania there were reports of Pentecostals in Moldavia as early as 1908 and the first Pentecostal church was established in Bukovina in 1918 by individuals who had encountered Pentecostalism while serving on the Eastern Front during the First World War. Other Romanians discovered Pentecostalism in the United States through various preachers, including the founder of the International Church of the Foursquare Gospel, Aimee Semple McPherson, whose healing meetings in Los Angeles made her a household name in America.⁵⁸ As a denomination centred around faith healing and speaking in tongues, Pentecostalism was usually spread by people who had experienced

⁵⁴ Ibid., f. 6. They added that, although they did teach people not to bear arms, the choice to do so was an individual one and so the Nazarene denomination as a whole should not be punished for it. Ibid., f. 21.

⁵⁵ See *ibid.*, Dosar 178/1923, f. 114.

⁵⁶ Allan Heaton Anderson, *An Introduction to Pentecostalism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014), 19–39.

⁵⁷ Driton Krasniqi, 'The Development of Pentecostalism in South-Eastern European Nations: Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Greece, Macedonia, Montenegro, Kosovo, Serbia', in *European Pentecostalism*, ed. William K. Kay and Anne E. Dyer (Leiden: Brill, 2011), 205–24.

⁵⁸ Bălăban, *Istoria bisericii pentecostale*, 15–16; Dobrinu, 'Sub puterea cezarului', 70–2.

these phenomena at a Pentecostal meeting. Thus empowered, they would return to their own communities and pray that others might experience these 'gifts' as well. In Romania most early Pentecostals were converts from Baptist churches who broke away from their local congregations to form their own churches once they had gathered a few people who were enthusiastic about this new style of worship.⁵⁹

Two of the earliest Pentecostal leaders in Romania were a husband and wife, Gheorghe and Persiada Bradin, who had left their local Baptist church because of doctrinal differences. In 1923 they heard about 'baptism in the Holy Spirit' and wrote to Romanian Baptists in Cleveland asking for details. Their friends in America sent them a pamphlet and they prayed to be baptized in the Holy Spirit. Persiada Bradin had been suffering from tuberculosis and water retention for three years. She received gifts of prophecy and speaking in tongues as well as being miraculously healed. The couple subsequently established a Pentecostal church in their village of Pauliș, in Arad county. From here Pentecostalism spread throughout the country until by 1931 they could claim 169 churches with a total of 3,560 members. The Bradins preached a particularly strict doctrine of holiness and separation from 'the world', to the extent that early Pentecostals did not wear ties and shaved their heads to avoid becoming proud of their appearance.⁶⁰

Pentecostal congregations were typically smaller than most Baptist or Brethren churches during the inter-war period and police reports suggest that the average member was relatively younger.⁶¹ In addition to preachers, Pentecostals also recognized prophets, presbyters, deacons and deaconesses in their churches, each of which had clearly defined roles to play in making the church function.⁶² Although every Christian receives gifts of wisdom, knowledge and faith, Pentecostals argued, not everyone will be able to speak in tongues or heal people. Whether or not an individual received such a gift was at the discretion of the Holy Spirit.⁶³

The authorities were initially quite worried about the impact of Pentecostalism on society. A circular from the Ministry of the Interior from 1934 asked local police to report

⁵⁹ ACNSAS, Fond Documentar, Dosar 12388, vol. 21, f. 43; Dosar 10727, vol. 2, ff. 7–8.

⁶⁰ Bălăban, *Istoria bisericii pentecostale*, 18–19; Dobrinu, 'Sub puterea cezarului', 72–9.

⁶¹ ACNSAS, Fond Documentar, Dosar 12388, vol. 21, f. 16.

⁶² *Scurta expunere a principiilor de credință a "Bisericii lui Dumnezeu Apostolice" (Pentecostale) din România* (Arad: Editura Vestitorul Evangheliei, 1947), 22–3.

⁶³ *Ibid.*, 19–20.

- 1) If their belief in an outpouring of the Holy Spirit on certain people has a disastrous impact on these believers; that is to say whether it provokes a religious psychosis which manifests through extremely contagious psycho-mystical ecstasies. In other words, whether there are frequent cases of mental illness among them.
- 2) If their belief in healing through prayer and anointing with oil causes them to stop going to the doctor and reject normal sanitary measures such as refusing to vaccinate their children, etc.
- 3) What the attitude of these believers is towards the authorities and the laws of the state in general.⁶⁴

All reports consistently came back saying that Pentecostals were not a threat to law and order in any way but they were nonetheless persecuted by police to the extent that several early Pentecostals were beaten to death.⁶⁵ Not allowed to have church buildings, they met in secret in homes with blacked-out windows, in fields or in the mountains and at night.⁶⁶

Pentecostals were aware that they were frequently misunderstood and ridiculed, even by other Repenters.⁶⁷ An exposition of their beliefs from 1947 is instructive because it shows the extent to which Pentecostal beliefs about spiritual gifts were related to their understanding of the end times, as well as their desire to demonstrate that this was an international phenomenon, in no way restricted to Romania. They wrote,

Once again the Gospel is being spread among sinful people with ever greater power. The time when the Lord Jesus will come again is drawing near, though he cannot come until those who live on earth are made aware of what is coming. Precisely for this reason the Lord Jesus has begun to work in miraculous ways, raising up chosen people who are preaching the Gospel with the passion of Christians from ages past. Humanity has begun to awaken after ages of slumber; Christian churches based on repentance are being established everywhere. Great works of the Holy Spirit are appearing in churches once again. Apostolic Christianity has once again begun to move multitudes of faithful souls with enthusiasm. The apostolic faith is beginning to work with

⁶⁴ ACNSAS, Fond Documentar, Dosar 13408, vol. 2, f. 97.

⁶⁵ Bălăban, *Istoria bisericii pentecostale*, 42–50.

⁶⁶ Dobrinicu, 'Sub puterea cezarului', 77.

⁶⁷ On the polemics between Pentecostals, Baptists and Brethren, see Bălăban, *Istoria bisericii pentecostale*, 27–32.

⁶⁸ *Scurta expunere*, 3.

the same power that it had in the time of the apostles, bringing thousands, and hundreds of thousands of souls to the Lord Jesus.⁶⁸

A schism divided Romanian Pentecostalism only a few years after the movement began. Whereas Gheorghe Bradin led the Pentecostals in Arad, the churches in Bukovina were led by a former Baptist pastor named Eugen Bodor. Bodor invited the Russian and Eastern European Mission (REEM) to collaborate in the work in Romania, but Bradin clashed with REEM's representative, Gustav Herbert Schmidt, an Assemblies of God missionary from Poland. Bradin insisted that believers should wash each other's feet before participating in the Eucharist and that they never touch alcohol, and he differed with Schmidt over whether there were two different types of baptism in the Holy Spirit. Bodor and Schmidt found themselves unable to collaborate with Bradin and, despite several attempts at reconciliation, the movement split in 1931, beginning over a decade of infighting and factionalism.⁶⁹

Seventh-Day Adventists

Seventh-Day Adventism began in the United States. In 1833 a Baptist preacher by the name of William Miller predicted that the Second Coming of Christ would take place on 22 October 1844, a day that came to be known as the Great Disappointment. No one saw anything out of the ordinary happen that day, but Ellen Gould Harmon, a Methodist, had a vision in which it was revealed that this was when Christ began judging the dead. When he finishes he will return to earth. James White, an itinerant preacher who later married Harmon, supported her message and she continued having visions throughout her life. Together they founded the Seventh-Day Adventist Church.⁷⁰ The faith was first preached in Romania during 1868 by Mihail Czechowski, a former Roman Catholic priest who had converted to Adventism while visiting the United States. Czechowski made only twelve converts in Pitești, but visits from American Adventist leaders kept the community alive. Ludvig Conradi, another American missionary, converted several people in Cluj during the mid-1890s before helping a group of German Adventist settlers who had moved from the Crimea to establish a church in Constanța county. Adventism came to Bucharest in 1904 through

⁶⁹ Bălăban, *Istoria bisericii pentecostale*, 50–69; Dobrințu, 'Sub puterea cezarului', 105–11.

⁷⁰ Laura L. Vance, 'God's Messenger: Ellen G. White', in *Female Leaders in New Religious Movements*, ed. Inga B. Tøllefsen and Christian Giudice (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2017), 29–49.

Johann Ginter, an evangelist from Russia who was expelled from the country, but not before establishing a small church and sending two Romanians – Petru Paulini and Ștefan Demetrescu – to study at an Adventist training school in Germany. Paulini and Demetrescu began organizing conferences in 1907 and there were roughly 2,000 Adventists in Romania by the time they founded the Romanian Union Conference in 1919. An Adventist press in Germany printed Romanian-language literature between 1908 and 1920, when Adventists set up the Adventist Publishing House in Bucharest. By 1923 the church had its own training school in Romania.⁷¹ Adventists received state recognition in 1928 and by 1930 they had 7,700 members, 65 ministers and 290 houses of prayer.⁷²

A police report on Ion Solea, a preacher from Târgoviște who was arrested in the home of Pantazică Stoica in a village 45 miles away, gives us some idea of what Adventist gatherings looked like. ‘In the evening,’ the report said,

while he was giving some advice to Mr. and Mrs. Stoica several women and children arrived who listened to the sermon. He read several parables from Holy Scripture, about the beggar and the poisoned bread and the sacrifice of Abraham and Isaac and about how pork is unclean and should not be eaten. After this he sang the usual songs which are part of their prayers.⁷³

The fact that Solea was arrested so far from home reminds us that small, rural Adventist communities did not always have their own ministers and underlines the importance of travelling preachers in keeping the movement alive.⁷⁴

Adventists held a number of beliefs that set them apart from Orthodox Christians and from other Repenters. Demetrescu elaborated on these beliefs in a 1915 tract *What We Adventists Believe*, which focused on clarifying the differences between Adventism and Romanian Orthodoxy. Rather than worshipping on Sunday as other Christians did, Seventh-Day Adventists kept ‘the seventh day’ – Saturday – holy, in accordance with the fourth Commandment. They were happy to acknowledge the possibility that saints really were holy, but pointed out that if this was true only God would know anyway. ‘Their holiness only helps them,’ Demetrescu wrote, ‘not helping anyone else except as an example to

⁷¹ Gary Land, *Historical Dictionary of Seventh-Day Adventists* (Lanham, MA: Scarecrow Press, 2005), 252.

⁷² Earl A. Pope, ‘Protestantism in Romania,’ in *Protestantism and Politics in Eastern Europe and Russia: The Communist and Postcommunist Eras*, ed. Sabrina Petra Ramet (Durham: Duke University Press, 1992), 186.

⁷³ ACNSAS, Fond Documentar, Dosar 9486, vol. 1, ff. 48–9.

⁷⁴ Police reports often noted that Adventist communities were sustained by visiting ministers. ANIC, Fond MCA, Dosar 131/1922, f. 14.

follow because everyone has to answer before God for their actions themselves'. Adventists did not venerate icons, but Demetrescu insisted that they did not ridicule the Orthodox for doing so. Moreover, they believed in a strict separation of Church and state so they paid their ministers and did not expect state salaries, quoting the words of 1 Corinthians 9:14 that 'those who proclaim the gospel should get their living by the gospel'. Demetrescu mentioned that Adventists 'abstain completely from all forms of intoxicating drink, from smoking tobacco, from consuming food that stimulates and weakens the nerves [i.e., meat], and from any sort of bad habits'. 'For us renewing our health goes hand in hand with renewing and strengthening our faith', he said. 'It even constitutes the first step in preparing us for the higher life to which the Lord Jesus has called all men: purifying and keeping the human body healthy – this wonderful temple, the only one in which God dwells through his Spirit – being the first step towards a life worthy of the divine presence living in the heart of man.' A former army officer himself, Demetrescu denied the frequent accusations that Adventists refused to serve in the military, as well as distancing his denomination from both philosemitism and antisemitism. 'Explosions of hate are and remain proof of weakness', he said, 'which makes one think given that they come from [Orthodox] church leaders in the form of pastoral letters that claim that we are Jews who want to dominate the country spiritually. These attacks do the country more harm than people realize.'⁷⁵

Legal recognition did not always stop police and gendarmes from harassing Adventists. As the General Secretary of the Evangelical Union of Seventh Day Adventist Communities, Demetrescu frequently found himself writing to the government requesting that they remind the authorities that Adventists had a legal right to worship.⁷⁶ Whenever a conflict developed between Adventists and Orthodox Christians the police consistently sided with the Orthodox. According to an Adventist complaint from 1923 when two drunks disturbed an Adventist worship service in Turtucaia, the local policeman – who was already on the scene – entered the church and began beating the preacher 'to keep the peace'. A few days later secret policemen disrupted another one of their services, hitting people with their own Bibles.⁷⁷ Elsewhere Adventists were imprisoned for weeks at a time for actions such as 'insulting the Mother of God during a funerary

⁷⁵ Ștefan Demetrescu, *Ce credem noi adventiștii: Răspuns calomniilor debitate despre noi de către cei interesați* (Bucharest: Atelierele grafice SOCEC, 1915).

⁷⁶ ACNSAS, Fond Documentar, Dosar 9486, vol. 1, f. 3; ANIC, Fond MCA, Dosar 131/1922, ff. 36–7.

⁷⁷ ANIC, Fond MCA, Dosar 131/1922, ff. 42–4.

vigil [*priveghere*] in the church.⁷⁸ Adventist preachers and colporteurs were arrested and their literature confiscated any time they were found not carrying government-issued documents proving they had permission to preach. These authorizations had to be stamped, contain the individual's photograph and be renewed every three years.⁷⁹ Orthodox priests used the widespread distrust of Repenters to make life as difficult as possible for them. The parish priest in Alexandria wrote to the police in 1922 that

two colporteurs – Adventist propagandists – came into our town a few days ago. They went from house to house on the pretext that they were selling Bibles but in reality they were doing Adventist propaganda; criticizing and insulting our church and clergy, deceiving people that they are not Adventists but 'Orthodox Christians'; threatening women and children that if they did not buy the books all the punishments and plagues of Egypt would come upon them, and more.⁸⁰

Although the Romanian Adventist church might have been small, it was well organized on a regional scale, which made people suspect that Adventists were in the pay of foreign countries.⁸¹ According to one book catalogue confiscated by police, Adventists distributed literature in Romanian, Hungarian, Serbian, Slovak, Russian, Polish, Greek, Hebrew, Armenian, Croatian, Czech, German, French, Bulgarian, Ruthenian, Turkish and Italian.⁸² The police were not particularly discerning when it came to confiscating literature and one Orthodox bookseller wrote to the Ministry of Denominations in 1926 complaining that they were even confiscating Bibles and religious books that had been edited by the Ministry itself.⁸³

Bible Students and Jehovah's Witnesses

The founder of the Bible Students, Charles Taze Russell, was influenced by Adventism and other Christian millenarian teachings. He worked together with Adventist preachers in Pennsylvania before starting out on his own in 1879 with the newspaper *Zion's Watch Tower and Herald of Christ's Presence*. Russell taught that the Christian Church had lost its way since the time of the Apostles and

⁷⁸ Ibid., Dosar 131/1922, ff. 52–3.

⁷⁹ Ibid., Dosar 146/1936, ff. 1–32, 186–92.

⁸⁰ Ibid., Dosar 131/1922, f. 32.

⁸¹ Ibid., Dosar 131/1922, f. 73.

⁸² Ibid., Dosar 146/1936, f. 35.

⁸³ Ibid., Dosar 119/1926, f. 193.

only now, through a close study of the Bible, was it returning to its true path. His arguments found a ripe audience in late nineteenth-century America, which soon blossomed into a robust Church.⁸⁴ Russell believed that he was living in the last days and warned that the world was entering a time of tribulation and persecution for Christians. There is, he wrote,

a great and severe trial of faith coming with increasing force upon the church – ‘the fire of that day’ which ‘shall try every man’s work of what sort it is’. We saw that this fiery trial then coming, aimed to destroy the very foundation of Christian faith and hope, the first principles of the doctrine of Christ – ‘How that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures’ (1 Corinthians 15:3) and that he thus redeemed, ransomed, bought us with his own precious blood.⁸⁵

Political and social upheavals were all evidence of the birth pains of a new age, Russell said, as were changes to the climate and the environment as the earth was being ‘prepared’ like ‘the garden of Eden to be a fit home for perfect man.’⁸⁶ Russell rejected the concept of the Trinity, ‘an idea so absurd that its very absurdity is taken as proof of its divine authority, though not a text of scripture can be quoted in its support.’⁸⁷ He also explained that hell would not involve eternal torment, but ‘the tomb is spoken of as a great “prison house”, in which the captives of death (the Adamic, or first death) await deliverance. Though dissolved in death, the identity of each being is preserved in the mind and power of God, and will be reproduced in due time by resurrection power.’⁸⁸ Not quite understanding this doctrine and consistently thinking in nationalist terms, Romanian police wrote that Bible Student pamphlets taught that the souls of those who died in the war would not go to heaven but were now disembodied spirits because they had perished in bloodshed.⁸⁹

Russell toured Europe during the 1890s. Bible Students began outreach in Berlin in 1897, establishing an office there in 1903 and one in Warsaw in 1910. Adolf Erwin Weber began outreach in Switzerland in 1895, in Belgium in 1901 and in France in 1906.⁹⁰ Several Hungarian Bible Students returned

⁸⁴ M. James Prenton, *Apocalypse Delayed: The Story of Jehovah’s Witnesses*, 3rd edn (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2015), 13–68.

⁸⁵ ‘An Inconsistent Contemporary’, *Zion’s Watch Tower*, January 1886, 2.

⁸⁶ ‘View from the Tower’, *Zion’s Watch Tower*, September 1886, 1.

⁸⁷ ‘The Lord Your God Proveth You’, *Zion’s Watch Tower*, June 1885, 7.

⁸⁸ ‘The Lake of Fire and Brimstone which is the Second Death’, *Zion’s Watch Tower*, October 1886, 5.

⁸⁹ ANIC, Fond MCA, Dosar 137/1922, f. 10.

⁹⁰ Gerhard Besier and Katarzyna Stoklosa eds, *Jehovas Zeugen in Europa – Geschichte und Gegenwart: Band 1. Belgien, Frankreich, Griechenland, Italien, Luxemburg, Niederlande, Portugal und Spanien* (Münster: Lit Verlag, 2013).

to Austria-Hungary from the United States in the early years of the twentieth century. One of these was Károly Szabó, who carried out mission work in Mureş county from 1911 onwards.⁹¹ The movement soon established an office in Cluj, which moved to Bucharest in 1925.⁹² Ilie Groza converted in 1919 and began holding Bible studies in Bessarabia with his family, which soon expanded into a regional movement. By 1921 they could claim 200 members in Bessarabia and 2,000 in Romania as a whole.⁹³ Romanian Bible Students had five conditions for membership:

- 1) Belief in God as the supreme, intelligent Creator and Maker of the Universe;
- 2) Belief in the Son of God, our Lord Jesus Christ, as the Saviour of mankind and thus the personal Saviour of each individual;
- 3) Belief in the inspiration of the Bible as the Word of God and an unreserved acceptance of it as the sole belief of the Christian;
- 4) A complete consecration to doing God's holy will;
- 5) A holy, noble, and irreproachable life.⁹⁴

Each congregation was led by a group of elders who were appointed after a test on Bible knowledge. Individuals had to answer 19 out of 22 questions correctly before being eligible to become elders.⁹⁵

Romanian-language literature was published in New York and distributed throughout the country via the office in Cluj.⁹⁶ Iacob Sima, who had returned to Cluj from America after the war, did the Romanian translations, although they had to pay someone to translate their literature into Hungarian.⁹⁷ Police claimed that Bible Students exploited 'any difficult economic situation or national or international political conflict, claiming that these problems were predicted as the beginning of a cataclysm, following which the "Kingdom of God" will appear, which will last one thousand years'.⁹⁸ Most early missionaries had to work full time to support their evangelism. In 1920 the American leadership

⁹¹ Tudor Petcu and Andy Besuden, 'The History of Jehovah's Witnesses in Hungary', *Studia humana* 7, no. 2 (2018): 45–6.

⁹² ACNSAS, Fond Documentar, Dosar 10727, vol. 1, f. 7.

⁹³ ANIC, Fond MCA, Dosar 137/1922, f. 64; Emily B. Baran, *Dissent on the Margins: How Soviet Jehovah's Witnesses Defied Communism and Lived to Preach about It* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), 23–4.

⁹⁴ ANIC, Fond MCA, Dosar 137/1922, f. 65.

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, Dosar 137/1922, f. 65.

⁹⁶ ANIC, Fond MCA, Dosar 137/1922, ff. 9–12; ACNSAS, Fond Documentar, Dosar 10727, vol. 1, f. 7.

⁹⁷ ANIC, Fond MCA, Dosar 137/1922, f. 13; ACNSAS, Fond Documentar, Dosar 10727, vol. 1, f. 13.

⁹⁸ ACNSAS, Fond Documentar, Dosar 10727, vol. 1, f. 7.

gave the Romanian branch a gift of \$25, which was used to buy a suit for an evangelist to wear while preaching.⁹⁹

Leadership struggles wracked the movement in the United States during the First World War. Russell's death brought James Franklin Rutherford to power as the uncontested leader of the movement, but not before large numbers of people left to form their own groups in protest at Rutherford's autocratic style.¹⁰⁰ Romanians were largely cut off from the tensions between Russell, Rutherford and other leaders. They remained loyal to Rutherford throughout the inter-war period.¹⁰¹ In 1931 he changed the name of the Watch Tower and Tract Society to the Jehovah's Witnesses, which is how they are most recognizable today.¹⁰²

Bible Students were harshly persecuted by police and by 1927 some groups were meeting in the woods to avoid repression.¹⁰³ Persecution was compounded by the fact that the authorities frequently misunderstood or distorted Bible Student teachings. In 1921 police reported that they were 'socialist because they are against militarism and monarchies. Their primary tendency is Judaism [*jidovismul*], which is to say that everyone should celebrate Saturday because then a great and unique people will form. Only then will the Messiah come who has been awaited by the Jews for 6,000 years.'¹⁰⁴ Romanian police focused in particular on the potential political implications of their teachings, reporting that

They teach that after Adam fell into sin, Jehovah sent angels to turn the human nations from the rule of Lucifer; that angels have the power to take on human bodies on earth, that they took human women as wives and gave birth to the giants that were destroyed by God and their parents thrown into Tartar. They also say in their propaganda that Judgement Day began in the middle of the nineteenth century, when demons were again given the ability to take on human bodies and gave birth to giants, who in their minds are the great kings, statesmen, generals, scientists, and capitalists who demoralize the world. They believe that God in his anger punishes these people with revolutions and wars. Their doctrine is based on communism.¹⁰⁵

⁹⁹ Baran, *Dissent on the Margins*, 22.

¹⁰⁰ Prenton, *Apocalypse Delayed*, 69–80.

¹⁰¹ ANIC, Fond MCA, Dosar 137/1922, f. 13.

¹⁰² Prenton, *Apocalypse Delayed*, 86–7.

¹⁰³ Baran, *Dissent on the Margins*, 24.

¹⁰⁴ ANIC, Fond MCA, Dosar 137/1922, f. 10.

¹⁰⁵ ACNSAS, Fond Documentar, Dosar 10727, vol. 2, f. 3.

Another police summary of Witness teachings from the 1930s stated that their key doctrines were:

- 1) Belief in the millennium (they say that Jesus Christ will come to earth where he will reign for a thousand years);
- 2) All human organization is of the devil and the rulers of countries serve the devil;
- 3) Refusal to submit to the laws, which come from the devil;
- 4) The end of the world will come at the end of the millennium, when everything will be destroyed and only those who believe in Jehovah will live forever.¹⁰⁶

Most policemen were Orthodox Christians, and they looked on Repenters with deep mistrust. Largely convinced by arguments that to be Romanian was to be Orthodox, they saw Repenters as traitors to the nation who were spreading foreign propaganda. The foreign origins of these movements did little to allay such fears. Despite the fact that most Repenters did their utmost to obey any and every law that did not explicitly contradict their beliefs, they were consistently persecuted by both the Church and the state throughout the inter-war period.

¹⁰⁶ Ibid., vol. 1, f. 13.