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An Unquenched Flame: Orthodoxy Resurgent in Romania

In 2025 Romanian Orthodox Christians will mark the centenary of their church's elevation to the status of Patriarchate just a few years after the 1918 political union of their country's three major regions: Transylvania, Wallachia, and Moldavia. Transylvania's Romanian Orthodox population— previously part of the Austro-Hungarian Empire— had special reason to celebrate. Excluded from the quartet of "received confessions" (Catholics, Lutherans, Calvinists, and Unitarians) granted religious toleration by the 1568 Edict of Torda, they won the right to build lasting structures for Orthodox worship in the wake of the First World War.

Most of the next century proved turbulent, however. Many Romanian Orthodox—including its first Patriarch, Miron (Cristea)— became enmeshed in the rise of local fascism during the 1930s, and Romania entered the Second World War an ally of Nazi Germany. As elsewhere across Eastern Europe, Red Army occupation and a Soviet-installed militantly atheistic regime meant subjugation for religious believers. In Romania, this was characterized by particularly brutal incarceration and vicious re-education experiments. (The next issue of the East-West Church Report *will delve further into the impact of Communist—and fascist—regimes upon Christianity in Romania.)*

Yet after December 1989—when notorious dictator Nicolae Ceaușescu was violently overthrown—Romania experienced possibly the most dynamic resurgence of Orthodox church life anywhere in the former Eastern Bloc. Today, the People's Redemption National Cathedral of the Ascension and St. Andrew—the tallest Orthodox church in the world—towers over Ceaușescu's grandiose Palace of Parliament in the capital, Bucharest: a proud proclamation of Orthodoxy's restoration to public life.



At Râmeț Monastery, Transylvania, SS Peter and Paul Church was constructed in the 1980s. (G. FAGAN)

Statistical research appears to confirm this bold architectural assertion. The National Census of 2021 found 74 percent of the adult population identifying as Romanian Orthodox [www.recensamantromania.ro]. According to "Religious Belief and National Belonging in Central and Eastern Europe," a landmark 2017 study by the Pew Research Survey, 21 percent said they attend church weekly—the highest figure of any predominantly Orthodox country polled. One hundred percent of Orthodox parents also stated that they were raising their children as Orthodox Christians [www.pewresearch.org/religion/2017/05/10/religious-belief-and-national-belonging-in-central-and-eastern-europe].

On visiting the three principal cities of Transylvania, Wallachia, and Moldavia in late 2023, the editor of the East-West Church Report *observed considerable public engagement with the Orthodox Church. Approximately 100 people had already gathered in Cluj's Metropolitan Cathedral (Transylvania) more than half an hour before the start of its Sunday morning liturgy. On a cold, damp Sunday morning in Bucharest (Wallachia), the large 17th-century church in Radu Vodă Monastery was packed solid during its main liturgy, with a line of people waiting to enter and over 100 following worship via loudspeakers outside. Around 125 people stood attentively for vespers—a minor worship service—one wintry Wednesday evening in the Metropolitan Cathedral of Iași (Moldavia).*

Multiple interviewees emphasized to the East-West Church Report *that the relatively unscathed preservation of monastic life under Communism is a crucial factor behind the current strength of Romanian Orthodoxy. Ironically, a boost came from Ceaușescu's*

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Orthodoxy in Romania *(continued from page 1)*

attempts to establish his country as a bastion of Communism independent of the Soviet Union. While the general situation for religion remained difficult, the oldest monasteries survived by doubling as museums and tourist centers, noted Paul Ersilian Roșca of Cluj Orthodox Metropolitanate Museum: "Ceaușescu understood they might attract UNESCO funding or be shown off to visiting presidents." Ceaușescu even donated funds for the upkeep of Prodromos, an historic Romanian monastic community on Mount Athos, recalled Senator Andrei Dîrlău: "Not because of Christ, but because of Romanian national prestige—this was a Romanian monastery in Greece."

Located a short walk from Ceaușescu's vast 1980s Palace of Parliament in downtown Bucharest, Antim Monastery is emblematic of the seesawing fortunes of Romanian monasticism under Communism. While Patriarch Justinian (Marina) was able to renovate the 18th-century complex in the 1950s and early 1960s, it faced demolition in the 1980s due to the construction of Ceaușescu's new parliament. Yet thanks to the efforts of Eugeniu Iordăchescu—nicknamed the "engineer of heaven"—an endangered part of the monastery was rotated and moved roughly 25 yards (23 meters) on rollers, meaning that a northeastern corner of the perimeter wall was all that was lost.

Previously, the arrival in late 1943 of refugee Ioann Kulygin [usually rendered into Romanian as Kulâghin]—a priest-monk at Russia's renowned Optina Monastery—sparked a spiritual movement within Antim Monastery centered upon the Orthodox hesychast spirituality of the Jesus Prayer ["Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God, have mercy on me, a sinner"]. Named the Burning Bush [Romanian: Rugul Aprins*] after Moses' Divine encounter retold in Exodus 3, its participants—including lay intellectuals—gathered for theological discussions in the monastery library until their circle was disbanded by the Communist regime in 1948. Key Burning Bush members were jailed, while its leader, Daniil (Sandu) Tudor, died in 1962 after sustained torture in Romania's infamous Aiud Prison.*

In July 2024 two prominent participants of the Burning Bush movement—theologian Fr. Dumitru Stăniloae (d.1993) and Abbot Sofian Boghiu of Antim (d. 2002)—were included among 16 Communist-era saints canonized by the Romanian Orthodox Church in anticipation of its 2025 commemorative year. Antim Monastery today houses seven monks, who hold catechism classes twice weekly and perform various ministries aiding local poor and infirm in addition to the regular cycle of worship.

This issue of the East-West Church Report *considers the remarkable resilience of Orthodoxy in Romania, with a particular focus on the role of monastic life. The editor wishes to thank Codruța Popovici for interpreting and Fr. Viorel Sima for logistical assistance.* ♦

"We know that we have to love our enemies, but we can barely love our neighbors!":
An Interview with Andrei Dîrlău

Andrei Dîrlău is a senator in Romania's parliament representing the Alliance for the Union of Romanians [Romanian: Alianța pentru Unirea Românilor*], a right-wing political party whose candidate placed second or close third in recent opinion polls for Romania's 24 November presidential election. A dedicated Orthodox Christian, graduate of the University of Bucharest, and professional interpreter, Andrei is also author of a novella,* The Book of Things Unknown. *Published in English in 2020, its narrator recounts how an intricate interplay of life encounters and literary exploration led to the maturation of his personal faith.*

The editor of the East-West Church Report *met Andrei in late November 2023 in the offices of the Romanian Senate, part of the grandiose Palace of the Parliament in downtown Bucharest. The construction of this immense building in the 1980s—a walk across the front façade takes approximately 10 minutes—was ordered by Communist dictator Nicolae Ceaușescu and entailed the destruction of multiple historical churches. Today, the gleaming gilded domes and white walls of a towering new edifice under construction are visible from Andrei's office window: the People's Redemption National Cathedral of the Ascension and St. Andrew, the tallest Orthodox church in the world.*

The editor's interview with Andrei Dîrlău took place in English.



Andrei Dîrlău in the offices of the Romanian Senate, Bucharest (G. FAGAN)

What is your background?

I was born and have lived all my life here in Bucharest. After military service, I first studied economics and international relations, graduating in 1980. I then took a second degree in foreign languages and literatures: English, Spanish, and French. My dissertation was on the Romanian Romantic poet Mihai Eminescu and the English Romantic poet William Blake. After this second degree, Fr. Constantin Galeriu—an Orthodox priest and professor of theology I met in 1987—urged me to study theology. I said, "I don't need another degree!" but he countered: "You are not an educated and cultivated person if you don't know theology." So I did a Master's and a PhD in theology—the history of religions. Fr. Galeriu was right: Theology gives one a better perspective on cultural issues.



Entrance to the Romanian Senate, Bucharest (**G. FAGAN**)

It was providential that I met Fr. Galeriu. He was a very well-known parish priest at St. Sylvester Church here in Bucharest. He would deliver extraordinarily powerful sermons. They might last an hour or more, but nobody left the church. He was erudite—he could quote the Patristic Fathers of the Church by heart—but he also had a gift of being able to present Christian doctrine in a way that everyone could understand, whether very simple people or highbrow intellectuals. People came to him because he loved everyone, and he embraced everyone with the same love. He never said anything like, "You are an atheist, you will go to hell!" He never judged anyone for their beliefs, whether a freemason, yogi, or believer in reincarnation. In Bucharest thousands of people were converted like this in the 1980s.

Did Fr. Galeriu's sermons have any particular themes?

He believed very much in the unity of the Church, and he very much wanted to see a unity of the Christian churches. Here I have to be very clear: Fr. Galeriu—along with our Romanian Orthodox Church—rejected ecumenism when understood as a kind of compromise from a dogmatic point of view. He stuck to the doctrine of the Patristic Fathers of the first millennium—St. John Chrysostom, St. Basil the Great, St. Gregory of Nyssa, St. Gregory of Nazianzus, St. Maximus the Confessor… there are so many!—who laid the foundation of Christian theology completely in accordance with the Gospel.

This is the heritage that we keep. The Orthodox Church is organized along national lines, and we are accused sometimes of phyletism—emphasizing the ethnic or national component to the detriment of the universality of the teaching of Christ. I say this because it is important to understand the distinction between the national identity element within the Orthodox tradition in Romania or Russia, for example, and the universal or ecumenical nature of the teaching of Christ—*oikoumene* meaning "world" in Greek. Fr. Galeriu was ecumenical from this point of view; embracing everyone in a universal embrace. He said that every human being is made in the image and likeness of God, and God is love.

That is another fundamental idea that he always insisted upon: "If God is love and we are made in His image, then this means that the definition of man—of human beings—is also love." This is man's essence, and we should strive at being love, full of love in the image and likeness of God, because that is our deepest identity. This has been obscured by layers of sin, passions, and dark elements, so that we find it difficult to love. But we should try to reach the deep level in ourselves where we can find this essential feature of love, God in us. We should dedicate all our lives to attaining this love, and so sainthood: Once you reach that level, that is what saints are. They are nothing but human beings who have cultivated this image of God in themselves and so

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Beyond the Palace of the Parliament, construction work continues on the Orthodox People's Redemption National Cathedral of the Ascension and St. Andrew, Bucharest. (**G. FAGAN**)

become deified by grace. Not deified ontologically—man can never become God—but by being in the image and likeness of God. The image is something you have already, while the likeness is something you should strive to obtain. These two dimensions were Fr. Galeriu's major teaching.



Sucevița Monastery, Moldavia
(**G. FAGAN**)

How did the atmosphere at Fr. Galeriu's church in the late 1980s contrast with the rest of society under the Communist regime of Nicolae Ceaușescu?

In terms of demolished churches, things never got as bad in Romania as in the Soviet Union. But after 1947 [the establishment of Communist rule]—in the 1950s until 1964—very many thousands of people, mostly Christians, were killed by the Communist authorities, the *Securitate* secret police. Things became a little less violent after 1964.

Was there a shift in the regime, as in the Soviet Union after the removal of Nikita Khrushchev?

In the early '60s Romania got rid of almost all Soviet influence. Soviet troops were kicked out of the country, so it was better from that point of view. As the regime also felt safe and consolidated, they were no longer afraid of any threat from the Church. All the "enemies of the state" had been killed, imprisoned, or silenced. So they relaxed the tension a little, particularly in the '70s: Romania had opposed the 1968 [Soviet-led] invasion of Czechoslovakia very vocally, and was viewed rather favorably by the West because of this semi-dissident position within the Eastern Bloc.

In the 1980s things worsened a little, but churches were still open. If one had a certain position—in the Communist Party, the army, the *Securitate*, or a government ministry—it was not a good idea to go to church. However, many other people went—the churches were rather full. Priests could hold services and deliver sermons, but it was not permitted to go out and preach, or to have any form of mission in society. You could not find Bibles or any Christian literature in bookshops.



Depiction of the Last Judgment, Voroneț Monastery, Moldavia
(**G. FAGAN**)

Did you need any special permission to access that type of literature in public libraries?

No, but you had to know exactly what to search for. Of course, Fr. Galeriu had his own large library. The Romanian Orthodox Church even published translations of patristic writings in those years. That was only for internal circulation, however.

My point here is that Christianity was permitted, and that Fr. Galeriu was allowed to preach, just not outside church. He could deliver university lectures as a theology professor—he taught dogmatics and homiletics—but he was not allowed on television or to preach in the public square. Priests and theologians had to stay within their own quarters, in a church or a monastery. So people came to them! In those years I visited many monasteries and met elder monks like Fr. Cleopa Ilie, who was Fr. Galeriu's spiritual father—there were scores of them across Romania. The tradition of these monastic elders was very important: They upheld the faith in Communist times more than anybody else. They were the main focus, the main resistance. Fr. Galeriu was imprisoned, as were many others. After they were released, they saw faith as a matter of life and death, not [assumes lukewarm tone] "Okay, I'm a Christian."

Why was Fr. Galeriu imprisoned?

Because he openly opposed Communism. He did not oppose the regime in a political way like Fr. Gheorghe Calciu [a prominent priest who criticized the regime in sermons aimed at young people, and who was imprisoned repeatedly before being exiled to the West in 1985.] Fr. Galeriu just upheld Christianity. Yet that was enough, because there is clearly an incompatibility between Christian and Communist doctrine, which is atheistic and materialistic.

These elders incarnated a living tradition. Orthodoxy relies very much upon elder-to-disciple transmission—personal transmission of faith that has continued for two thousand years. It continues today in Romania, only not at the same level, because these people were saints. I will tell one story. Back in 1988, my father—then in his mid-seventies—lay

dying from asthma in hospital. The doctors said, "We can't do anything. Take him home so that his death won't be on our records." When my mother and I took my father home, he was suffocating—his medicine no longer had any effect. Someone suggested that we go to one of these great elders, Fr. Ilarion Argatu in Cernica Monastery near Bucharest, so my mother and I took my father there in a taxi. Fr. Argatu's small monastic cell was packed with people, and we brought my father to him on a bed, as he couldn't stand up. Fr. Argatu uttered prayers of exorcism for all the people present in the room. Then he touched my father on his forehead and said a prayer. My father left walking by himself. He lived more than seven years after that, in relatively good health.

Fr. Argatu was a saint, as was Fr. Galeriu. On meeting them, this was unmistakable—you could not help but perceive the presence of Divine grace. I also visited Fr. Arsenie Papacioc, an elder who lived at a monastery in Techirghiol, near the Black Sea. In the morning, he got up, put on his cassock and boots, and said: "I'm a soldier of God!" He spent the whole day in worship services and talking to people about their burdens. This was his mission. When you talked to him, you could not help but be converted. He transmitted Church tradition in a living, personal way. Such elders converted millions of people—I say this without hesitation.

[Editor's note: On 12 July 2024 the Romanian Orthodox Church approved the canonization of 16 Communist-era saints, including Archimandrite Cleopa Ilie and renowned theologian Fr. Dumitru Stăniloae: https://basilica.ro/en/holy-synod-approves-canonization-of-16-modern-day-saints/.]

To what extent did the Communist regime subvert the Romanian Orthodox Church through collaboration?

Nobody really knows. There were certainly some hierarchs and priests who collaborated with the *Securitate*, but how far it went is really open to question. It's not black and white. Sometimes a compromise could be necessary



With new upper stories, the former *Securitate* secret police headquarters in Bucharest was partly destroyed in the 1989 Revolution (G. FAGAN)



Renaissance Memorial commemorating those killed in the 1989 Revolution, Bucharest (G. FAGAN)

for the greater good of the Church. Here, I am not trying to be apologetic or absolve guilt; I am just trying to have discernment and to understand things as they were. For example, a patriarch might form an alliance with the regime because he was incapable of doing anything else, but on the other hand, he saved other things. Churches were open the whole time in Romania. Monasteries were closed for a short while, but then re-opened—there were thousands of monks and nuns. Priests received training, and several universities had theological departments. In the '70s, Fr. Galeriu was able to publish his PhD thesis, and Fr. Dumitru Stăniloae was able to work and publish in Romania during the 30 years after his release from prison in 1963. [Editor's note: The next issue of the *East-West Church Report* will delve further into the impact of Communist—and fascist—regimes upon Christianity in Romania.]

Did you also study theology under the Communist regime?

No. I began my third degree—in theology—after the so-called Revolution we had here in 1989.

Was there a sense that year that something was going to happen, a build-up of popular resentment?

It was not a national uprising, but a geopolitical decision due to a change in the balance of power. The United States had won [the Cold War] economically and militarily—the Soviet Union was not able to keep up. [Then Soviet leader Mikhail] Gorbachev was faced with a choice: either complete collapse or save something by imposing *glasnost'* [Russian: transparency, openness] as a kind of "socialism with a human face." However, that did not and could not work, because Communism cannot exist unless it is a dictatorship. So, as Communism collapsed in the Soviet Union, it collapsed all over Eastern Europe. There was no way it could survive in just one country.

In Romania we had a distant sense that this process was happening—people listened to Radio Free Europe and Voice of America—so it was not something unexpected. But

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it was hard to believe, and the way it happened here was very violent. [Editor's note: Thousands of people were killed and wounded when the authorities attempted to suppress street protests that began as Nicolae Ceaușescu was addressing a large crowd in Bucharest. He and his wife were swiftly overthrown, tried, and executed on 25 December.] Somehow, the other dictators realized what was going on and yielded. Ceaușescu did not do that. He thought that he could save himself and the regime; he was living in a kind of bubble, perhaps. His advisers did not tell him—many have said that he was sabotaged by his own security services, who did not tell him the truth.



During Sunday worship, people wait to enter the packed main church at Radu Vodă Monastery, Bucharest (G. FAGAN)

They saw that he would not understand the situation?

They wanted him to become a scapegoat. Their thinking was along these lines: "It [the collapse of Communism] will happen. Let's save ourselves. But we have to blame someone— Ceaușescu is the perfect scapegoat." And that is what happened—the whole system got away; all the high-ranking Communist Party members, the activists—there were only a few exceptions who went to jail. The system, with all its privileges, survived—officials were able to buy their government villas legally for a low price, for example. They turned the system around to their own benefit.

Did you witness the violent events of December 1989?

I went out in the streets on the 21st. I was in the crowd—I was 33 in 1989, old enough to understand what was going on. I was arrested not far from the square where Ceaușescu was making his speech. I was put into a police van with about 10 others. We were unsure what was happening—at first we thought they were going to take us into the forest outside Bucharest and shoot us; that we would simply disappear. We were relieved when someone finally opened the doors and said that we had reached Jilava Prison! I was held there until noon the next day, packed with around 70 people into a cell with beds for only 20. Thousands of people were there.

So I was in the Revolution! (Chuckles.) I believed things would change. Things *have* changed—some for better, some for worse. For better is the fact that I have a passport—we are free to travel anywhere. We joined the European Union in 2007, NATO in 2004. [Editor's note: According to the Pew Research Center's landmark 2017 study, "Religious Belief and National Belonging in Central and Eastern Europe," 82 percent of Romanians—by far the largest figure in any Orthodox majority nation polled—agreed that it was in their country's interest to work closely with the USA and other Western powers. In Ukraine at that time, this figure was 62 percent: www.pewresearch.org/religion/2017/05/10/religious-belief-and-national-belonging-in-central-and-eastern-europe.] We have democracy. We can have Christian mission openly—Christianity is not persecuted or simply tolerated, but even promoted.

However, there are many pressures and threats to Christianity from secularization imported from the West: LGBT, political correctness, neo-Marxism. For youngsters it is not so easy to resist these tendencies—this is the cultural environment in which they grow up. In school they might have one hour of religion a week, taught by a teacher with more or less grace or tact and pedagogical talent, but there are examples of teachers with less talent who can have the effect of turning pupils away.

Such imposition of religion contributed to the rapid secularization of the West.

The West has undergone a serious transformation. Today it is more secular and exporting anti-Christian attitudes and philosophy. Paradoxically, the West meant Christianity in the 1970s and '80s, when I was young.



Lighting votive candles for the living and the dead, St. Anthony the Great Church, Bucharest (G. FAGAN)

Claiming to be Christian may still feature in today's Western political discourse as a superficial pitch for votes.

Yes, it went down from a spiritual teaching to a civic attitude—activism and social justice, which is still good—and is now degrading simply to political propaganda. So, the road from real faith to civic attitude to ideology is the road to secularization.

Is Romanian society more spiritually robust, given the





Local diocesan offices of the Metropolis of Bessarabia under the Romanian Patriarchate (left) and Orthodox theological academy under the Moscow Patriarchate, Chișinău, Republic of Moldova. (G. FAGAN)

resilience of Orthodoxy under Communism that you have described, as well as the huge increase in popular engagement with the Church following 1989?

Following 1989 there was great enthusiasm for the Church because it became free after being barely tolerated. There was a renaissance of Christian life, including a great surge in monastic life. Today we are witnessing the opposite—if that was a flow, now we have an ebb of monastic vocations. In Romania we have about 7,000 monks and nuns in about 600 monasteries and convents. That is a lot, but we now see monasteries with only two or three monks or nuns, and not 20 or 40, as there used to be. This is a little worrying, as monastic vocations are not something that you can take for granted.

Might Romania's entry into the European Union in 2007 yet contribute to the spiritual revitalization of Western Europe? Some émigré Romanian Orthodox communities there are large and active.

I trust God works in mysterious ways. Maybe God is working through something we consider a tragedy—because for us it is a tragedy that some six million have left the country even though we have no war, and there have also been many millions of abortions since 1989. [According to the Pew Research Center's 2017 study "Religious Belief and National Belonging in Central and Eastern Europe," 58 percent of Romanians agreed that abortion should be legal in all or most cases: www.pewresearch.org/religion/2017/05/10/religious-belief-and-national-belonging-in-central-and-eastern-europe.] Abortion is used as a form of contraceptive not only for economic reasons, but also due to a lack of morality and education. I'm sorry to say that such problems are the other side of an Orthodox society—I don't want to lie and present everything as rosy.

What does it mean, to be a Christian? In the watered-down understanding of Christianity now prevalent in the West, it means to be a nice person, to behave nicely towards your fellow human beings. This is a memory of a Christian tradition that has all but disappeared, but it is still valuable. What do you think people will answer here in Romania, if you ask them what it means to be Christian, to be Orthodox? Their answer will be: to go to church. Going to church is one thing: "I believe in God—I pray." That is good and valuable, but it is only one aspect. There is a discrepancy I observe in Romanian society. A person might go to church yet despise their fellow human beings once they leave. This might not be in an aggressive way—they are just selfish and don't care. I love the Orthodox tradition, and the elders I have described certainly never preached anything else. But we are weak at kindness and love, which makes it difficult for us to behave up to the standard. We know that we have to love our enemies, but we can barely love our neighbors!

How do Romanian Orthodox generally view the Republic of Moldova, which was Romanian territory between the two World Wars?

Moldova is regarded by us as part of Romania. We hope to be reunited. This is very difficult for geopolitical reasons—Moldova is not in NATO or the EU. While no longer part of the Soviet Union, it is still in Russia's sphere of influence. In 1990 the Romanian Church re-established a metropolitanate in [newly independent] Moldova—-the Metropolis of Bessarabia. There is now competition between our metropolitanate and the Metropolis of Chișinău and All Moldova, which is under the jurisdiction of Moscow. I estimate that around one third of Moldovan parishes are now under our jurisdiction—they are transferring slowly, as we want this to be a free choice of each respective parish community. However, Moscow promotes fierce propaganda, saying: "Don't leave, because if you go to the Romanian Church, they are in the European Union! You will become LGBT-icized! You will have gay bishops! You will have women bishops and priests! Stay with us, because we are the *stronghold* of Orthodoxy." [See also Andrew Higgins, "'Sinners' and 'Russian Talibans': A Holy War Roils a Once Placid Village, *New York Times*, 17 July 2024, https://www.nytimes.com/2024/07/17/world/europe/russian-orthodox-

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church-ukraine-war-moldova.html.]

The Russians are serious, no doubt—they have great saints, such as St. Seraphim of Sarov. Some say we should be with Russia—there *are* people here who say that. Others say life would become totalitarian because Putin has a totalitarian regime. Do we want that?

Is there a linguistic distinction between the two metropolitanates in Moldova?

No, even Moscow's metropolitanate has services in Romanian. For a long time after breaking with the Soviet Union, the Chișinău authorities claimed the population spoke the Moldovan language, not Romanian, but there is almost no difference. What is spoken in Moldova is perhaps a dialect. Now, at last, Romanian is the official language of Moldova. [See "Moldovan parliament approves law on Romanian language, *Reuters*, 16 March 2023, www.reuters.com/world/europe/moldovan-parliament-approves-law-romanian-language-2023-03-16.] In Moldova they do follow the Old Style church calendar, but they may keep that—we are not forcing them to switch.

We are also trying to set up a Romanian metropolitanate in Ukraine. In regions such as Budjak [the territory between the Republic of Moldova and the Black Sea] which also used to belong to Romania, there are around half a million Romanian speakers. [Editor's note: on 29 February 2024 the Holy Synod of the Romanian Orthodox Church established a structure called the Romanian Orthodox Church in Ukraine: https://basilica.ro/en/romanian-orthodox-church-holy-synod-meets-for-first-time-this-year-main-decisions.]

Soon after Russian forces invaded Ukraine in February 2022, a spokesperson for the Romanian Orthodox Church issued a critical statement. This described the war as "caused by a political pathology, by a clinical imperialist vision, and, outrageously, blessed, even implicitly, by someone who, totally lacking in moral acuity, has identified the 'forces of evil' exactly where they are lacking, thus cleverly, but utterly dishonorably, substituting the aggressor for the victim." [Editor's note: Issued on 5 March 2022, this statement was quickly removed from the Church's website. An English translation remains at: https://orthodoxtimes.com/patriarchate-of-romania-this-war-is-caused-by-a-clinical-imperialist-vision-and-blessed-by-someone-who-lacks-in-moral-acuity.]



"Moldovans Therefore Romanians"—graffiti in downtown Chișinău, Republic of Moldova (G. FAGAN)



Sunday worship in Romanian at the Moscow Patriarchate's St. Theodore the Recruit Monastery, downtown Chișinău, Republic of Moldova (G. FAGAN)

So he was blaming Russia, right?

The statement does not name Patriarch Kirill, but it appears to blame the Moscow Patriarchate for backing the invasion.

Well, that's true—they blessed the tanks.

Does this suggest that the Romanian Patriarchate has taken sides in the rivalry of the Orthodox Patriarchates of Moscow and Constantinople over Ukraine?

Our Patriarch Daniel is too smart to do that. He does not want to be on very bad terms with Moscow, but he cannot side with them either. He has perfectly good relations with Bartholomew [Patriarch of Constantinople, Orthodoxy's most senior hierarch], who came to consecrate the cathedral over there [indicating the People's Redemption National Cathedral of the Ascension and St. Andrew through the Senate windows] in 2018. Our patriarch is trying to maintain a balance.

In this situation, we care about the interests of the Romanian Church, the Romanian people, and the Romanians in Ukraine and Moldova. We also care about the cause of Orthodoxy, because in the future we would like to see unity

"When people come back, they are spiritually richer"

An Interview with Fr. Pantelimon Mocan



In late November 2023 the editor of the East-West Church Report *visited Nicula Monastery, some 30 miles northeast of the Transylvanian city of Cluj. There, one of the resident monks, Pantelimon Mocan, outlined the monastery's 500-year history, including its 18th-century transfer to Romania's Greek Catholic Church, which recognizes the Pope of Rome while generally following Orthodox rites. With the installation of a Communist regime following the Second World War, the Greek Catholic Church in Romania was outlawed. At Nicula, its monks were imprisoned, and the monastery was transferred back to the Romanian Orthodox Church.*

The editor of the Report *briefly asked Fr. Pantelimon how the monastery had fared under Communism and more recently. Local translator Codruța Popovici assisted by interpreting to and from Romanian.*

Priest-monk Pantelimon Mocan, Nicula Monastery, Transylvania (G. FAGAN)

What was the situation for Nicula Monastery after it was transferred to the Orthodox Church in 1948?

Patriarch Justinian (Marina, d.1977) knew how to deal with the Communist regime. He worked to enrich the Orthodox Church with more monasteries and monks, until the Communists figured out what had happened! (Laughs.) They viewed this increase as a danger. In 1959 they passed a decree prohibiting all monks and nuns younger than a certain age. Younger ones were forced to leave—to work in factories or to get married—and monasteries became empty and few. [Editor's note: Decree 410 of 19 November 1959 stipulated that monks must be at least 55 years old and nuns 50 years old, leading to the eviction of approximately 5,000 monks and nuns.] People who wished to enter monasteries were no longer admitted—that was the case until the 1989 Revolution. There was then an explosion of enthusiasm in the 1990s, and the monasteries were filled again.

Why do you think such an explosion occurred in Romania?

The same phenomenon happened elsewhere—the Russian Orthodox Church experienced this wave as well.

Proportionate to size of population, though, there are roughly four times as many Orthodox monasteries in Romania as in Russia.

As a country, we were helped by our proximity to Greece—its culture and spirituality. The Greeks managed to keep their Orthodox tradition, especially on the holy mountain of Mount Athos. We somehow found our balance through them. At present we are discovering Byzantine culture more and more: sacred music—especially the Psalter, church architecture, and spirituality. We like to see and know the holy places—many Romanian Orthodox pilgrims have visited Jerusalem, Mount Athos, and other parts of Greece. When people come back, they are spiritually richer.

How many monks are here at Nicula Monastery currently?

There are 15 monks plus an additional two nuns—fewer than we used to be. In the 1990s we were more than 40, but the others were transferred to newer monasteries. Monastic vocations are also declining.

Are there any particular reasons in Romania for that drop?

That is a very long story. Mass media has an important part to play; the Church is under attack even now, and young people have various ways to separate themselves from the Church—or to be separated from the Church, voluntarily or involuntarily. Yet God performs His own works in Romania, and even now we have young people who come with a calling or vocation. We have experienced fluctuations, just like on Mount Athos. Mount Athos almost emptied in the 19th century, but experienced an invigorating phenomenon in the 20th.

Nicula Monastery has been an important pilgrimage center since the early 17th century. To what extent were pilgrims able to visit during the Communist period?

I just published a book containing documents from that era about six elder monks [Romanian: *stareții*] at Nicula during that time. In the early years of the regime, 1948-50, the Communists tried to stop pilgrims from coming here. How did they do this? Around 15th August, a holy day for the monastery [Editor's note: The feast of the Dormition of the Mother of God according to the Gregorian calendar], they spread the news that a new disease—paralysis affecting infants—had appeared, for example. Many people were scared they might catch it and thought it would be better not to go to the monastery. Along the approach roads, police officers would also stop people who still wanted to go from making the journey. In those years, only a couple of hundred pilgrims managed to come.

Later on, pilgrims came in greater numbers—two or three thousand, then seven or eight thousand: The numbers grew every year, even during the Communist era. Today thousands of people come, typically walking more than 60 miles over two days. They attend worship services, including late at night. It is like being in heaven! ♦

Sacred Arts at Nicula Monastery

In a workshop at Nicula Monastery, the editor of *East-West Church Report* met Laurențiu, a young mosaic artist. Accompanied by the rhythmic bangs of tesserae being cut by a colleague, he explained that the angle at which each tessera—consisting of gold leaf between thin layers of glass—is set into plaster is crucial to how the finished image responds to the light. This technique follows a Byzantine method used since the 3rd century, he added, and which differs from that of modern mosaics.

Laurențiu described how, on the most recent of his dozens of visits to Greece, he had seen some of the greatest examples of Byzantine mosaic artistry at an 11th-century church on the island of Chios: "Something in them cuts right through you—my reaction was, only saints could work like that." Laurențiu also stressed the importance of prayer and fasting for artists carrying out the work:



A mosaic in progress, Nicula Monastery, Transylvania (G. FAGAN)

> "We humans put more of ourselves into the work than we are aware. You can see this in mosaics prior to the 11th century—we don't know the names of the artists, but when you see the work, you can know what they were like in real life, almost make a spiritual portrait of them. I wish I could do the same as they did! We just try to follow in their footsteps." ♦

"I hope the power of church wisdom will renew society"

An Interview with Fr. Professor Ioan Chirilă

Fr. Ioan Chirilă is a Romanian Orthodox priest and theology professor at Babeș-Bolyai University in Cluj (officially Cluj-Napoca), the largest city in the Transylvania region of northwestern Romania. He was successively chancellor and dean of the university's Faculty of Orthodox Theology (1997-2012). During the two terms he subsequently served as president of the university's Senate (2012-2020), he welcomed various international visitors, including the future King Charles III of the United Kingdom, who was awarded an honoris causa *doctorate by Babeș-Bolyai University in 2017.*

Locally, Fr. Ioan Chirilă is also renowned as a poet. In late November 2023 he delivered a sermon to a packed Orthodox parish church in suburban Cluj to mark the occasion of its patronal feast: the Entry of the Mother of God into the Temple. Thanks to simultaneous translation by Codruța Popovici, the editor of the East-West Church Report *heard Fr. Ioan weave poetic imagery from Romanian folk carols depicting snow-covered ground and subsequent spring seedlings with reflections on the pure offerings to God made by the Virgin Mary—herself—and the myrrh-bearing women who approached Christ's tomb on Easter morning as examples of being "rich toward God." In this way, he tied together the day's assigned readings from Mark 16, Ephesians 2, and Luke 12 with folklore symbolism familiar to all parishioners.*

A few days prior, the editor of the East-West Church Report *met Fr. Ioan in his book-lined study at the Faculty of Orthodox Theology to hear about his decades furthering theological inquiry in Romania. The interview took place in English.*



Fr. Prof. Ioan Chirilă in his study at Babeș-Bolyai University, Cluj, Transylvania (G. FAGAN)

What is your current role in the Faculty of Orthodox Theology?

I am one of a dozen professors and lecturers here. My first responsibility is as Professor for Old Testament Studies, including the Theology of the Old Testament and related secondary disciplines: Biblical Archaeology, Hebrew Biblical Language, and Modern Universal History. My own doctoral thesis was on the theology and language of the Book of the Prophet Hosea. Our faculty is one of 22 within Babeș-Bolyai University—the largest university in Romania—and it is also one of the largest theology faculties in the country. Across the three levels of Bachelor's, Master's, and PhD studies, we have 600 to 700 students. At the moment, there are some 150 students in the doctoral study program alone.

That is just students of Orthodox theology?

Just Orthodox. Babeș-Bolyai University is a special case in Europe, because we have four theological faculties: Orthodox, Roman Catholic, Greek Catholic, and Reformed. Yesterday I was talking with a colleague in the Greek Catholic faculty, who told me they have around 250 students. The Roman Catholic faculty has around 100, as does the Reformed faculty—they specialize in only pedagogics and ecclesiastical music. So, there are approximately 1,000 theology students altogether in the four faculties.



St. Thomas Orthodox Church next to the Faculty of Orthodox Theology, Babeș-Bolyai University, Cluj, Transylvania (G. FAGAN)

We also have another form of diversity in the religious field. We have a small number of students engaged in Jewish Studies—I also teach a program in that—and our university has an Institute of Turkish and Central Asian Studies, which has some engagement with Islam. Here in our faculty, we have a special program in international geopolitics and geo-religiosity, where we study Christianity, Islam, and Judaism to understand how to manage international conflicts. We seek to give students competency in conducting interreligious dialogue with a view to finding genuine solutions.

At Babeș-Bolyai University we also have a Center for Biblical Studies organized by biblical scholars from all four theological faculties, as well as an ecumenical body organized in the same way, so we have a proper forum for interconfessional and interreligious dialogue here. In one of my faculty Master's programs, I have Greek Catholic students, for example, and together we discuss tensions between the Orthodox Church and the Greek Catholic Church. I am not talking merely about the issue of church property rights [Editor's note: In Transylvania sometimes violent disputes between Greek Catholics and Orthodox have erupted over historical church property in recent decades.] Rather, in the field of education we come together and are open for theological discourse within the unity of Christianity.

Do many of your students wish to serve as clergy?

In our Orthodox archdiocese [Vad, Feleac and Cluj] we have some 10-15 parish vacancies per year, but we prepare around 20-25 students. However, we also prepare candidates from Bukovina, Suceava, Botoșani, and Bistrița [areas to the north and east of Cluj], as well as a small number from the Hungarian zone of Transylvania—Harghita and Covasna [Hungarian: Hargita and Kovászna]. This is because we can offer four fields of study: Pastoral Theology, Didactic Theology—for teachers in secondary schools, Social Work Theology, and Sacred Arts, which is for painters and restorers. I have some of our art students' work here in my office.

Literature stand, Faculty of Orthodox Theology, Babeș-Bolyai University, Cluj, Transylvania (G. FAGAN)



Where are the other major faculties of Orthodox theology in Romania?

In the cities of Bucharest, Iași, and Sibiu [respectively in southeast, northeast, and central Romania]. The Romanian Patriarchate has also organized a theological faculty extension in Italy, because we have a large number of parishes there. [See "How the Romanian Orthodox Diocese of Italy grew to nearly 500 communities in just 16 years," *Orthodox Times*, 15 May 2024: https://orthodoxtimes.com/how-the-romanian-orthodox-diocese-of-italy-grew-to-nearly-500-communities-in-just-16-years.] Theology professors from the theological faculties in Bucharest and Iași have organized a similar extension in Chișinău, the capital of the independent Republic of Moldova. Previously, Moldova had no department of theology at a state university, only private study. The Chișinău extension started this year with the support of the Moldovan government. [See "Department of Orthodox Theology in Iași Opens Branch in Moldova," *Orthodox Christianity*, 5 October 2023, https://orthochristian.com/156451.html.]

Moldova is an ancient part of Romania which was annexed by the Soviet Union in Stalin's time. We are brothers—the language spoken there is Romanian—and so we try to develop together in the theological, as well as cultural, field.

Particularly given the ongoing war in Ukraine, how are Romanian Orthodox relations with the Moscow Patriarchate in Moldova?

Metropolitan Vladimir [of Chișinău and All Moldova, head of the Moscow Patriarchate's metropolitanate in Moldova] recently affirmed his relations with the Russian Church. We are not trying to make Moldovan Orthodox dependent upon the Romanian Patriarchate in a dictatorial way—we try to assist them, but only if assistance is requested. Diplomatic relations are necessary between our two Orthodox churches, and we hope that Moldovan Orthodox theology can become the point of contact for dialogue between the Romanian and Moscow Patriarchates.

Unity in Orthodoxy is a different matter from the political situation shaped by the war: We have unity in theology. In the late 19th century, the

(continued on page 12)

great monasteries of Russia developed as theological centers, and Russia produced great theologians such as Georges Florovsky, Pavel Florensky, and Vladimir Solovyev. Many of them lived in exile due to the 1917 Revolution and developed Russian émigré theology in the West, such as John Meyendorff, Alexander Schmemann, Boris Bobrinskoy. This is the unity of our Orthodoxy, which brings together Russians, Poles, Czechs, Romanians, Greeks, and so on: We find contact in this theology, if not the political position of the [Russian] Church. Here too, we are in contact with Moscow—but in a prudent way. In that respect, Orthodox unity is still an ideal, a task before us.

Were you also a student at Babeș-Bolyai University?

No. I completed my studies in the Communist period. At that time there were six theological seminaries that were the responsibility of the Romanian Orthodox Church, not the state. They operated with the agreement of the state and were under the control of the State Secretariat for Religious Affairs [Romanian title: *Secretariatul de Stat pentru Culte*]. There were also two university faculties of theology in Bucharest and Sibiu.

I studied theology at the seminary here in Cluj—situated close to the cathedral downtown—and then the theology faculty in Sibiu, although at that time it was named the University Institute for Theological Studies. While I was a strong high school student—good at mathematics, physics, and chemistry, as well as the humanities—I wanted to study theology.

Did your family encourage your interest in theology?

My parents had both been imprisoned. After release, they just wanted to get on with their lives. When I said that I wanted to study theology at university, my father said, "No! I haven't any money," because he would have had to pay for these studies. However, the archbishop of Cluj at that time, Teofil (Herineanu), supported each student in their studies. He gave 50 percent of each student's fees, for example, while 40 percent was provided by monasteries, where we volunteered our labor in the summer months. Our families only had to pay for student accommodation.



Metropolitan Cathedral and Orthodox bookshop, Iași, Moldavia (**G. FAGAN**)



Entrance of the Mother of God into the Temple Orthodox Church, Cluj, Transylvania (**G. FAGAN**)

Did your parents encourage you spiritually, such as by taking you to church as a child?

Yes, but vocation does not have a precise definition or explanation. A theological or artistic vocation is a special feeling within us which emerges as a force, our greatest desire to realize something. We understood the difficulty of our path in the Communist period only after 1989, when we were able to understand the diabolic source of the state control that tried to force the church to change its activity. During harvest time, for example, churches had to hold liturgies early in the morning so that they were over in time for people to go into the fields and fulfill the production quotas demanded by the state authorities. Here, a priest had to be a most diplomatic person, supporting the state's requirements while continuing worship services and upholding other elements of religious life in society. It was difficult, but that was also a period when martyrdom was quite real, a model for both priests and faithful.

Did you experience pressure from the Communist authorities when you were in seminary in the 1980s?

Yes, that was the moment when we understood what strong control by the state meant. You discovered that liberty was absent from some parts of life. (Sighs.) But later, we found liberty and lost responsibility.

Were there restrictions on which students could enter seminary?

Very much so. It took me three attempts to enter. When I tried, there were only two places available for our archdiocese. Two! This number was established by the State Secretariat for Religious Affairs, which was a special department of the Department of State Security [*Securitate* secret police agency]. It exerted control over religious institutions.

Were there also limitations on the availability of theological books and materials?

Yes. There was a general practice in the Communist period: The largest libraries in the country had a secret collection that was not open to ordinary readers. When I was a student,

the works of [20th-century émigré Romanian writers] Mircea Eliade and Eugène Ionesco had been published in English, French, and Spanish, but we had no possibility of finding their works because all those books were held in this secret collection. If you wanted to study something you could view it, but not read it just out of casual interest.

Do you think that the persecution suffered by the Romanian Orthodox Church during the Communist period led to any distinctive theological understanding?

It is so difficult to return to that period and ascertain the nature of the state's control. Now we use the word "persecution," but at the time, the church leadership was simply trying to find a proper solution for the survival of church communities. It was a little like that television show, *Survivor*! [Editor's note: A reality television series in which contestants are stranded on a desert island and have to compete against one another in a process of elimination in order to win a prize.] However, I can make one comparison: There was not the same diabolic attitude towards the church in Romania as in Soviet Russia. Following an initial Stalinist period, the life of Romanian society entered a period of equilibrium. The authorities did not stop religious activities. They did put up some barriers to religious liberty, and they demolished some churches when they rebuilt the cities. In other places, however, they built new ones. In our archdiocese, for example, the state authorities destroyed a village when they built a hydroelectric dam at Tarnița in 1974, but they also provided the funds to reconstruct the village church elsewhere. This is far from the only such case.

There was another interesting thing about that period: Christian unity. The Orthodox, Reformed Church, and newer Protestant denominations would come together at conferences, and the Catholic Church offered Romanians scholarships to pursue doctoral studies abroad. There was another side to this, however: If you wanted to study in the West, you had to be on good terms with the Communist authorities. While another student was able to travel—perhaps because of his character—I was not permitted to exit Romania.

Another contrast with Soviet Russia appears to have been that monasteries generally remained open.

Yes. I was born not far from Rohia Monastery, where Nicolae Steinhardt lived as a monk—a Jew who became a Christian in prison [See also *East-West Church Report*, vol. 32, no. 2 (2024), 3.] While her mother Elena was always anti-clerical, Zoia Ceaușescu [daughter of Romanian Communist dictator Nicolae Ceaușescu] used to visit that monastery during the 1980s, staying for a week at a time.



University Orthodox Church of SS Nicholas and John the Evangelist, Cluj, Transylvania (**G. FAGAN**)

In Romania monastic life was a foundation for spirituality and true Christian resistance. Following the revolution of 1989, the great developments in our church came in the monastic field. There are now as many as 46 monasteries in the neighboring diocese of Maramureș and Sătmar, although I am not sure about our own archdiocese. [Editor's note: According to local Orthodox priest Fr. Viorel Sima, there are approximately 60 monasteries in the Archdiocese of Vad, Feleac and Cluj.] Romanian monasteries have also developed social programs. At the women's monastery near Florești [approximately 10 miles southwest of Cluj], they have developed a special program for orphans, for example [see page 14 of the current issue].

Is there continued interest in monastic life today?

There are two levels to that question. In the current period monastic vocation is at a low level—it is in decline—but the number of believers who go to monasteries each Sunday or on holy days is great. This is because the world is chaotic, and people are trying to find a place for spiritual silence and equilibrium. They find this when they are at a monastery.

We have also seen a lower number of theology students in recent years, but this is in proportion to the number of school-leavers, and therefore not so much of a decrease. The birthrate in Romania has lowered in recent decades.

Do you see differences in attitude among the generation of theology students that has grown up since 1989?

After the revolution, religion returned as a discipline in the school curriculum. A generation that studied religion in school has grown up going to church with mother and father. But we still face postmodernity, syncretic forms, and an antireligious spirit, as in America. I hope that the power of church wisdom will renew society; that we can become the element of equilibrium in society. Churches and theological institutions have the great responsibility of finding a proper way to communicate faith in this society. While it is not easy, we try to find it. ♦



Traditional Transylvanian glass icons by students of sacred arts in the study of Fr. Prof. Ioan Chirilă, Babeş-Bolyai University, Cluj (**G. FAGAN**)

St. Onuphrius Children's Home, Florești



Girls' bedroom at St. Onuphrius Children's Home, Florești, Transylvania (G. FAGAN)

Orthodox priest Fr. Visarion Pașca, founder of and mentor to St. Onuphrius Children's Home, told the editor of the *East-West Church Report* that the project was first suggested in the early 1990s by then-Metropolitan Bartholomeu (Anania) of Cluj, Alba, Crişana and Maramureş. Following the metropolitan's death in 2011, Fr. Visarion remembered his proposal and was allocated land previously farmed by Florești Women's Monastery. While the project is independent of the monastery—located 10 miles southwest of Cluj city in Transylvania—the nuns host a small zoo for the children.

It took some four years to obtain the relevant permissions for, and then to build, two houses for the first intake of abandoned or orphaned children, Fr. Visarion told the *Report*. St. Onuphrius Children's Home thus began operation with approximately five children in 2015. Currently, 10 boys and 10 girls live two to a bedroom in the boys' and girls' houses. While the younger ones receive instruction locally, older pupils attend high school in Cluj.

The children are generally referred to St. Onuphrius Children's Home by the Romanian government's Directorate for the Protection of the Child [Romanian title: *Direcția Generală de Asistență Socială și Protecția Copilului*]. They may have special needs such as autism, Fr. Visarion noted—"in fact, some who came with these needs are getting better now"—and the Children's Home employs a psychotherapist and social workers in addition to tutors. He added that some children arrive without knowledge of basic hygiene: "While we would wish them to be reintegrated with their families, this is rarely possible in practice."



Fr. Visarion Pașca, founder of St. Onuphrius Children's Home, Florești, Transylvania (G. FAGAN)

St. Onuphrius Children's Home also supports some 500 underprivileged children living with their families in the adjacent counties of Cluj, Bistrița-Năsăud, and Maramureş. Part of the premises serves as a clearing house for volunteers to parcel up donations—clothes, shoes, toys, and hygiene products—according to the age and sex of those children. While similar Orthodox projects are not unusual in Romania, according to Fr. Visarion, they are typically smaller. "And yet we are so small! The need is greater."

At the heart of the complex stands a small church: "a special place for the children—we wanted them to evolve near it." Its basement houses a professional kitchen and large dining room, in addition to space for small pet animals. At the time of the *Report*'s late November 2023 visit, the site reverberated to the blows of building work: two more residential houses were under construction with a view to doubling the intake of children. A mixed use building—the interior unfinished—will house a library, while a sports hall is also planned.

Răzvan Bîțu—a sponsor of the children's home and also administrator of Gheorghe Dima Music Academy in Cluj—further explained that the project is almost entirely sustained by private donations and support from the Romanian Orthodox Church. While St. Onuphrius Children's Home received a government grant of some $100,000 for the first time in 2023, he said, this required substantial paperwork and the prior fundraising of 10 percent of the total sum. "We are growing some nice money roses," joked Bîțu, "but we need to water them!" ♦



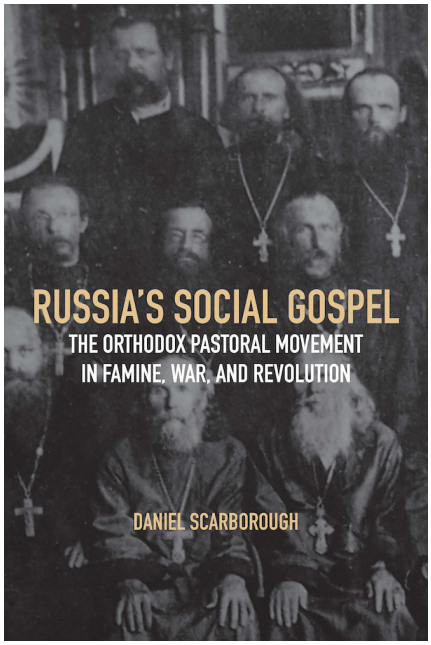
Florești Women's Monastery (left) and new house under construction at St. Onuphrius Children's Home, Florești, Transylvania (G. FAGAN)

BOOK REVIEW

Russia's Social Gospel: The Orthodox Pastoral Movement in Famine, War, and Revolution

Daniel Scarborough
Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin Press, 2022
320 pp., $30 (paperback), ISBN 978-0299337247

JULIE DEGRAFFENRIED



Readers are likely familiar with the Social Gospel, a Protestant movement that emerged in the late 1800s seeking to establish the Kingdom of God by combatting the many social problems—poverty, economic inequality, etc.—that plagued the modern industrial world. Daniel Scarborough, in his much-anticipated book, draws on its name to describe parish-level, grassroots responses to needs of the local population within the Russian Orthodox Church in the late imperial era, a period when the Russian Empire was racked by famines, wars, and three revolutions. He argues that "the pastoral activism of the parish clergy during this period shifted the focus of the Orthodox devotional practice in Russia toward cooperative social engagement . . . [which] altered the organizational structure of the Orthodox Church" and "established the Church as a source of trust and mutual aid at a time of disruption and crisis" (3).

Using Russian Orthodox Church records from state archives as well as local ecclesiastical archives of two dioceses, Moscow and Tver', Scarborough's book primarily focuses on the activities of Orthodox parish clergy as they navigated this tumultuous era with the aid of—and in service of—their parishioners. He terms their "collective efforts to recruit the support and participation of the laity in the Church's social mission as 'the pastoral movement'" (7).

In the first four chapters, Scarborough traces the efforts of parish clergy to encourage lay financial support both by and while moving money and resources beyond the Church to the community from the reform era of the 1860s to the aftermath of 1905. Since Peter I's reorganization of the Church in 1721, the state intended parish clergy to supplement the bureaucracy in surveilling and regulating the populace, yet inadequate funding from state and parishioners hampered their ability to educate themselves, perform their duties, and support their families. In the late 1800s, as Church funding dwindled, clergy were granted freedom to form local voluntary associations to support their pastoral work. Priests then used the resources collected by these associations not simply for personal or institutional support but also to address local problems that threatened the very population whose financial support they required. While lacking a developed theological justification for social justice efforts, clergy themselves appear to have understood their efforts to help their parishioners as deeply embedded in Christian tradition (191).

The 1891-2 famine relief campaign revealed the utility of these collaborations, demonstrating the "indispensability of the parish clergy's social network" in providing local aid to both Church and state (43). In subsequent crises such as the Revolution of 1905 and the Russo-Japanese War, the Holy Synod requested that local clergy respond, and their efforts—via a variety of mutual aid organizations comprised of clergy and laity—proved significant enough to establish parish clergy as authoritative "community organizers," a useful if anachronistic description (64).

According to Scarborough, "clerical education was a thoroughly cooperative endeavor" (104), both in terms of the evolution of seminaries and parish schools, the subjects of Chapters 3 and 4. The opening of seminaries to non-clerical estates in the 1860s created an opportunity for clergy to advocate seminary as an option for orphans, a venture attractive to lay donors. This partnership became strong enough to repeatedly buck Synodal restrictions on seminaries, culminating in an empire-wide strike and petition movement during 1905 that made permanent curriculum reform and lay admission. While they did not increase the number of laity attending seminary, Scarborough claims that these changes elevated the dignity of clergy, presenting their careers as results of choice or "calling" rather than family obligation (76). When the pastoral movement touted education as a mutual goal, local lay support made possible the steady expansion of parish schools, up to 1917 (94, 103). Parish clergy served not only children but also adults in rural and urban areas via community "readings," skill training, and entertainment (94-6, 98). Though often disparaged as retrograde tools of

(continued on page 16)

Scarborough Review *(continued from page 15)*

state, Scarborough notes that parish schools used the same curriculum as other schools and were particularly important in increasing literacy among women.

A prevailing view among scholars of the prerevolutionary Orthodox Church is that the exclusion of laity in management of its resources, termed "the parish crisis," led to a loss of legitimacy for parish clergy in the early 1900s. Scarborough challenges this interpretation in Chapter 5, demonstrating that the pastoral movement occurred *despite* the hierarchy's failures to reorganize Church governance (116). He argues that the much-maligned parish trusteeship, originally established to support the local church financially and materially, was more responsive to community needs than previously assumed.

Any opportunity for political influence by the pastoral movement in the new constitutional monarchy post-1905 was short-circuited by Church hierarchy, the subject of Chapter 6. The defrocking of several clergy elected to the Duma and the cooperation of the Church hierarchs with the monarchy in manipulation of elections, restriction of religious freedom, and also opposition to educational reform cemented public perception of clergy as state lackeys. As a result, Scarborough contends, a "lasting effect of the clerical experience in the Duma era was an aggravation of the parish clergy's resentment of the monastic hierarchy" which "fueled a revolt . . . within the Church" (157).

The fall of the tsarist regime in February 1917 unleashed a "general revolt against all forms of ecclesiastical authority" (159). In Chapter 7, Scarborough explains how the Russian Orthodox Church became the only tsarist-era institution to survive the two revolutions of 1917. In response to upheaval, clergy led diocesan congresses composed of clergy and laity to reshape church organization. The 1917-1918 Sobor (or All-Russian Church Council) was the first held in over two centuries. Its first elected prelate of the ROC was the re-established Patriarch Tikhon, and it reorganized the Church's structure along conciliar lines that relied upon shared governance, an event the author identifies as the "most enduring legacy" of the pastoral movement (194). Yet these dramatic changes were cut short by the Bolshevik regime and its war on religion.

This deeply-researched book provides a much-needed perspective on parish-level clergy and their communities. Scarborough presents a dynamic, thoughtful clergy, complicating their motives for establishing mutual aid organizations and their relationship with Church hierarchy. He provides the best investigation of parish-level organizations in print. His selection of Moscow and Tver' as representative dioceses is effective, as they contained important seminaries and urban and rural parishes. The voices of the Church's clerics speak clearly throughout, while the voices of parishioners are largely limited to statistics and financial figures. While persuasive, more evidence of the laity's acknowledgment of the pastoral movement's "turn" to community work would strengthen the argument.

The pre-revolutionary Church has generally been characterized as reactionary and out-of-touch, but Scarborough's work at the diocesan level forces a reconsideration. In fact, his contention that the pastoral movement succeeded in building networks, authority, and trust goes a long way toward explaining resistance to Soviet anti-religious policies. Furthermore, Scarborough's description of the late imperial era sounds strikingly similar to observations of local clergy and their community initiatives in the 2000s by scholars such as Russian sociologist Sergei Filatov. One wonders what might have been possible with a revived, post-Soviet, Russian pastoral movement had crisis not—once again—intervened. ♦

Julie deGraffenried *is Associate Professor of History at Baylor University in Waco, Texas.*

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- emerging threats to religious freedom for all
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