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Yearbook 2018-2019



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This volume was supported by a grant of the Romanian National Authority for the Scientific Research and Innovation, CNCS/CCCDI – UEFISCDI, project number PN-III-P1-1.1-BSO-2016-003, within PNCD III

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ISSN 1584-0298

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THE BRITISH CONNECTION: JEWS AND JUDAISM IN THE ANGLICAN-ROMANIAN ORTHODOX INTERFAITH RELATIONS

Abstract

On 19 August 1937, the Romanian daily newspaper *Curentul* published a virulent anti-Semitic statement of Miron Cristea, the patriarch of the Orthodox Church. Cristea claimed to have spoken those words to a delegation of British Jews during his 1936 visit to the United Kingdom. The visit was the culmination of a decade of intense interfaith relations between the Anglican and the Romanian Orthodox Churches. This article explores the context and content of the visit. It also examines the reactions of the Anglican Church to Miron Cristea's anti-Semitism and its effect on the bilateral relations between the two Churches.

Key words: Anti-Semitism, ecumenism, church-state relations, Jewish-Christian relations

In August 1937 Romanian daily newspapers published the Romanian Orthodox patriarch's virulent anti-Semitic attack. Miron Cristea's words were some of the harshest ever spoken by a public figure against Jews, whom he described as "parasites" who "suck the bone marrow of the Romanian people."¹ He asked for Jews to be expelled from the country and for a policy of Romanianization of workforce to be gradually implemented. Excerpts from this declaration were published by several historians, such as Leon Volovici² and Zigu Ornea³ who assumed, as I did for a long time, that, since the patriarch's anti-Semitic statement was published in the summer of 1937, it was made that year in Romania. In fact the declaration, published first by *Curentul* on 19 August 1937, and then by almost all Romanian press, was a series of statements which the patriarch alleged to have made a year earlier during his visit to the United Kingdom.

During the interwar period the Anglican Church promoted a consistent interfaith dialogue with the Romanian Orthodox Church, which for various reasons escaped serious historiographical inquiry until now. It is mentioned sometimes in Romanian and British works looking at the history of the two Churches, but there is no comprehensive analysis of the dialogue itself. Moreover, unfortunately none of these writings is dealing with the way in which the Jewish question impacted the Anglican-Romanian Orthodox interfaith dialogue. Bela Vago⁴ and William Oldson⁵ mention this briefly when they describe the personality of Miron Cristea and the way in which his anti-Semitism was received in British and Anglican circles. Lucian Leuștean⁶ and Gabriel Manea⁷ look at the relations between the two Churches after the Second World War. And although they passingly mention the pre-war bilateral encounters, the focus is on the equally fascinating topic of how the communist regime used the Orthodox Church to close ties with Western Europe via relations with the Anglicans. The Archbishop of Canterbury came to Romania for the first time in 1965, and Patriarch Justinian went to London in 1966, the second such visit of a Romanian Orthodox patriarch after that of Miron Cristea (1936). The Romanian Orthodox Church even published a propaganda book on the bilateral relations in 1976.⁸ In 1956 Sever Buzan wrote a short article on this topic under the supervision of Liviu Stan.⁹ Entitled "The Relations between the Anglican and the Romanian Orthodox Churches," the piece offers some chronological details about the ecumenical encounters, but it is very biased in presenting the superiority of the Romanian Orthodox Church.

The Anglican-Romanian Orthodox dialogue is mentioned briefly in general books on the history of the Anglican Church written by authors such as Adrian Hastings,¹⁰ E.R. Norman,¹¹ or Alan Wilkinson.¹² A more detailed examination of these relations is done by Hugh Wybrew¹³ in a 1988 article and by Bryn Geffert in his 2003 and 2010 books.¹⁴ The space dedicated to this topic in Geffert's first book is scarce, but in the second it is examined more closely. The subject is however analyzed from an Anglican theological point of view, with little attention to the history of bilateral encounters per se. Wybrew's article, on the other hand, although missing some important milestones, offers the best examination to date of the history of the interwar Anglican-Romanian Orthodox relations. The relations are also examined tangentially in the book by Lorelei Fuchs on Ecumenical Ecclesiology,¹⁵ while the matter of Orthodox recognition

of Anglican orders is explored in volume 5 of *The Oxford History of Anglicanism*, edited by William L. Sachs.¹⁶

This article has two parts. The first part examines the chronology and the motives of the Anglican-Romanian Orthodox interfaith dialogue. It answers questions such as: when did this dialogue start? What was the reason behind it? How did it develop and what were some of the most important events that shaped it? Did it lead to any theological compromises between the two Churches? In the second part the article looks at how the Jewish question appears in these interfaith relations. The fact that in 1937 Patriarch Miron Cristea claimed that his anti-Semitic declarations were made a year earlier when he visited the UK at the invitation of the Anglican Church led to a series of questions that were at the basis of the NEC project: to whom did the patriarch tell those anti-Semitic words? How did he meet those Jewish officials? Was the Anglican Church aware of this meeting and of Miron Cristea's anti-Semitism? How did they react after these declarations and how were the interfaith relations affected by this incident?

1. The Anglican-Romanian Orthodox interfaith relations: a chronology

1.1. The small beginnings

The newly released *Oxford History of Anglicanism* (2018) places the start of the modern Anglican-Eastern Orthodox relations at the beginning of the seventeenth century, with the contacts between Cyril Loukaris, successively Patriarch of Alexandria (1601-1620) and then Patriarch of Constantinople (1620-1638) and George Abbot, Archbishop of Canterbury (1611-1633). These relations led to the opening of various Orthodox churches in the UK or British controlled territories. At the end of the nineteenth century the tensions between the Anglican and the Catholic Church worsened and dashed hopes of an Anglican-Catholic union when the papal bull *Apostolicae Curae* was issued in 1896. The bull declared Anglican orders null and void.¹⁷ This led to even closer links between Anglican and Orthodox Churches, as they shared a common mistrust of the Catholics, and the mutual recognition of Anglican and Orthodox orders was one of the most debated topics during the interwar period. The issue was not a simple matter, as favorable statements made by a Church

at a specific moment were hotly contested by other Orthodox Churches, this leading to a fragmented and, often, inefficient result. Things got even more difficult as in almost all cases Orthodox Churches linked the issue of orders to the larger topic of sacraments; hence discussions became more complex and complicated. This, as we shall see, was also the case with the Anglican-Romanian Orthodox dialogue.

In 1914, the Eastern Church Association, founded in 1864, merged with the Anglican and Eastern Orthodox Churches Union to form the Anglican and Eastern Churches Association. One of the leading figures of the association during the interwar period was Revd. Canon J. A. Douglas, who would be very much involved in the Anglican-Romanian Orthodox dialogue. He travelled to Bucharest several times, including for the 1935 conference, and defended Miron Cristea when accusations of anti-Semitism emerged. In a 1954 Memorandum addressed to the Ecumenical Patriarch Meletios II, Canon J.A. Douglas, reflecting on the beginnings of the Anglican-Orthodox dialogue, claimed that he started approaching Orthodox Churches before World War I.¹⁸ In 1920 the Ecumenical Patriarchate had been invited to send a delegation to the Lambeth Conference. According to Hugh Wybrew, members of the Ecumenical Patriarchate delegation "met the Conference's Committee on Unity, and the Archbishop of Canterbury's Council on Eastern Churches. A wide range of topics was discussed. The issues the Anglicans were most anxious to pursue were intercommunion and the recognition of Anglican orders."¹⁹

The 1920 meeting led to a common declaration signed over the coming years by more than 2000 Orthodox and Anglican clergy.²⁰ Statements recognizing the Anglican orders were issued by the Churches of Constantinople (1922), Jerusalem (1923), and Cyprus (1923). Later, Churches of Alexandria (1930), Romania (1936), and Greece (1939) issued favorable statements. However, Ecumenical Patriarch Meletios IV's 1922 move to sign the common Declaration of Faith was not seen favorably by other Orthodox Churches who resented the close links with the Anglicans. In fact Meletios was replaced in 1923, largely due to this issue. The move was seen with criticism by high ranking members of the Anglican clergy too. In 1922 *Church Times*, the most important British weekly religious newspaper, hosted several heated exchanges of letters between those supporting relations with Eastern Orthodox Churches, and those opposing them.²¹ It seems that there was no representative of the Romanian Orthodox Church at the 1920 Lambeth Conference; the Church

was not a patriarchate at the time yet. But according to a document found in the Lambeth Palace archive, the Anglican Church sent the Declaration to the Romanian Orthodox Church via the Romanian legation in London in May 1922, including a Romanian translation.²²

In 1925, with the elevation to the rank of patriarchate, Miron Cristea, who became the first patriarch of the Romanian Orthodox Church, made concrete steps for closer links with the Anglican Church. Documents in the Lambeth Palace archive show that Cristea might have visited the UK in 1925. The uncertainty about this visit is underlined by the contradiction of several documents. Some records show that he was expected to attend the Nikaeen 16th Centenary Celebrations, organized that year in June-July in London. Moreover, he was invited on 27 June by Riley Athelstan, chairman of the Anglican and Eastern Churches Association, to attend the special dinner in honor of the delegates at the Holborn Restaurant on 7 July.²³ While this document would strongly suggest the patriarch's presence in London at the end of June-beginning of July 1925, in other documents, especially those dealing with the celebrations themselves, his name is missing.²⁴

In November 1925 Miron Cristea spoke openly to the Bishop of Gibraltar about his desire for collaboration with the Anglican Church. According to the Anglican bishop, Cristea proposed him, during his visit to Bucharest, "for a party of English theologians to come to Neamțu (i.e. monastery) for two or three weeks in September."²⁵ This might be, although unintentionally, the first step leading to the 1935 conference in Bucharest. The 1926 proposed meeting between Romanian Orthodox and Anglican theologians was postponed several times, a possible sign of the Romanians' hesitations. However, a February 1928 handwritten letter of C.J. Harley Walker to Canon Douglas explained that during a meeting with the Romanian patriarch,

[He] made it abundantly clear that they take a friendly interest in our Church affairs, and that they welcome closer contact between Anglicans and Orthodox. I can assure you on the basis of these interviews that the two projects of a Roumanian-Anglican conference of theologians and of a group of Roumanian theological students in England have not been abandoned but only postponed.²⁶

A year earlier, on 21 February 1927, the Romanian patriarch sent a letter to Carleton Jones, Secretary of the Third Anglican-Catholic Congress. The

letter, in English, expressed the joy for the upcoming Eucharist Congress in London and praised the Anglican Church for its "broad friendship and sympathy with our Holy Orthodox Church." It underlined the hope that the Congress will serve not only to deepen the faith of the Anglican Church in itself, but "will also strengthen its friendly relations with the Old Eastern Church."²⁷

1.2. From the 1930 Lambeth Conference to the 1935 Conference in Bucharest

In Anglican circles there was a perception that the Romanian Orthodox Church was the most populous, and hence the most important, Orthodox Church in the world, as the Russian Orthodox Church was under soviet control and less able to join ecumenical dialogue. After the elevation to the rank of patriarchate and the openness shown by Patriarch Miron Cristea, the Anglican-Romanian Orthodox relations grew closer before and during the 1930 Lambeth Conference. In 1929 the Anglican Church sent a succession of three letters introducing Canon Wigram to Romanian Orthodox officials. The last one was sent directly to Patriarch Cristea, but the first two were mailed to Archimandrite Iulius Scriban and Professor Gheorghe Ispir, both professors at the Orthodox Faculty of Theology in Bucharest. They would later be very much involved in the dialogue between the two Churches. The letters were introducing Canon Wigram, a distinguished Orientalist, who was on the staff of the Bishop of Gibraltar and travelled to Romania that year.²⁸

Despite this, the Romanian presence at the 1930 Lambeth Conference was minimal. In a handwritten note of the various Orthodox delegations it is not even mentioned.²⁹ Before the conference, the Romanian Orthodox officials asked for a formal invitation to attend the event. The letter asking for the invitation explained that, in the Romanians' view, the delegates should be voted for by the Holy Synod and not sent directly by the patriarch.³⁰ The Archbishop of Canterbury sent a letter of invitation, but in the folders looked at there was only a draft, probably written in December 1929.³¹ In the end the Romanian delegation was led by Metropolitan Nectarie of Bucovina and had several meetings with a special sub-committee of the Conference, chaired by Bishop Headlam, and dealing with interfaith relations.³²

The 1930 Lambeth Conference furthered discussions about the mutual recognition of orders and brought forward topics that had been

debated during the 1920s such as the possibility of inter-communion, mutual recognition of marriage and other sacraments, revision of Anglican Prayer Book. However, there were open discussions to go even further. In a short article published in *The Christian East* in spring 1929, Archbishop Germanos, Metropolitan of Thyatira, spoke about the "Progress towards the Re-Union of the Orthodox and Anglican Churches."³³ In 1930, apart from the Lambeth Conference, an Inter-Orthodox Committee representing all the Churches except that of Russia, gathered to prepare the agenda for an Orthodox Synod. The delegates included on the agenda an item on the relations between the Orthodox and other Christians. The Anglican Church was seen as one of the closest to Orthodoxy.³⁴

A letter of the Holy Synod of the Romanian Orthodox Church from October 1930 expressed willingness to participate in bilateral dialogue, including openness to facilitate and participate in joint conferences that would lead to progress on these topics.³⁵ However, the progress was slow. In 1931 the two Churches tried to put into practice the Lambeth Conference's most important recommendation, namely the creation of a Joint Doctrinal Commission "to consider the questions needing resolution before the two Churches could come closer together." However, as Hugh Wybrew notes, "the Orthodox were more cautious than they had been the previous year at the Lambeth Conference, when the willingness of the Orthodox delegation to recognize the ministrations of Anglican clergy to Orthodox believers under certain circumstances provoked a good deal of criticism in some Orthodox circles."³⁶ The documents consulted both in Anglican and in Romanian archives show the growing frustration of the Anglicans, over the coming years, with the lack of Romanian Orthodox commitment. Although the correspondence continued, especially with Bishop Tit Simeirea, who became after the 1930 Lambeth Conference one of the main participants in the bilateral dialogue, nothing concrete was happening.

Hoping to revitalize the interfaith relations and to succeed in putting into practice at least some of the discussed and promised initiatives, in 1934 the Archbishop of Canterbury invited Patriarch Miron Cristea to make an official visit to the United Kingdom. Initially the patriarch agreed, and the plans for the visit went into great detail, including who would be part of the Romanian delegation, the program of the visit, and the meetings with various religious and political figures.³⁷ Few weeks before the visit, Miron Cristea postponed due to health problems.³⁸ Initially the invitation was renewed for the summer of 1935. The patriarch confirmed the visit in

March 1935,³⁹ only to be postponed, due to Cristea's poor health, at the last minute less than two weeks before its start.⁴⁰ In the end the visit took place in June-July 1936. These postponements, although some of them might have been indeed caused by health issues, were also generated by the hesitancies of the Romanian Orthodox Church and of the patriarch about the bilateral relations with the Anglican Church.

These hesitancies are seen also in the arrangements for the 1935 conference in Bucharest. I initially had access to the documents found in several archives in Romania. Those documents suggested an almost un-gentlemanly push from the Anglican Church for the organization of the conference. In several letters sent to Tit Simedrea, the Anglicans were almost auto-inviting themselves to Bucharest and forcing the organization of a conference.⁴¹ It is clear not only that the initiative was coming almost exclusively from them, but that they were pushing in a diplomatic way for whom should be invited as representatives of neighboring Churches. Reading these documents one had the impression that, frustrated with almost five years of stale negotiations, the British representatives felt that only by forcing their way any progress could be made.

When I had access to the documents in the Lambeth Palace archive this image was somehow diminished, in the sense that the idea of a conference in Bucharest circulated throughout 1934, especially in exchanges of letter between Canon Douglas and Bishop Tit Simedrea. On 5 August 1934, Simedrea confirmed that the Romanian patriarch agreed for an Anglican delegation to visit Bucharest after the Easter of 1935.⁴² There are also documents showing that in 1934 Miron Cristea finally appointed a commission to examine the Anglican orders.⁴³ However, the impressions that the Anglicans were much keener on organizing this event are unchanged. Moreover, there seems to be a split between those such as Bishop Tit Simedrea or Father Florin Gâldău, who were in direct contact with Anglican hierarchy, and most senior Orthodox officials who were hesitant or reluctant to make any commitments. Or, when commitments were made, they were postponed and delayed.

1.3. The 1935 Bucharest Conference and its aftermath

Finally, on 31 May 1935 a delegation of Anglican officials and theologians arrived in Bucharest. They were led by Nugent Hicks, the Bishop of Lincoln. Other members of the delegation included the Archbishop of Dublin, the Bishops of Gibraltar and Fulham, as well as

Reverend Dr. A.J. MacDonald, and Canons J.A. Douglas, J.H. Sharp, and Philip Usher.⁴⁴

Hugh Wybrew offers an excellent analysis of the theological steps undertaken during the Bucharest conference (1-8 June 1935); hence I will not insist too much on it here.⁴⁵ More details can also be found in the 1938 booklet published by the Biblical Institute Publishing House of the Romanian Orthodox Church.⁴⁶ Suffice to mention that the conference dealt with topics as diverse as the Anglican Prayer Book and the Holy Eucharist, the Holy Scripture and the Holy Tradition, the "Divine Mysteries" and the Holy Sacraments. A Report was issued summarizing all these important discussions, which was to be voted for and approved by the Holy Synods of both Churches.⁴⁷ It is worth noting that some of the aspects discussed in 1935 would continue to be important on the Anglican-Orthodox agenda for decades to come, several issues raised then finding more favorable decisions in the workings of the 1973-1976 Anglican-Orthodox Joint Doctrinal Discussions.

The ratification of the 1935 Report was stalling in the Holy Synod of the Romanian Orthodox Church during 1935. The Anglican Church and the Romanian political authorities feared a last minute change of heart and asked the patriarch personally, via diplomatic channels, to intervene.⁴⁸ The intervention of the Romanian Ministry of Foreign Affairs to Miron Cristea is telling about the way in which the Orthodox Church was serving the political agenda of the Romanian state at the time.⁴⁹ At the beginning of 1936, with the patriarch's visit to the UK already on the horizon and in impossibility of another postponement after the previous two, the Holy Synod agreed and voted the Report.

The situation was even worse in the UK. Several groups inside the Anglican Church were contesting the links with the Orthodox Churches in general and with the Romanian Orthodox Church in particular. Some saw the Report as a humiliation for the Anglican Church which, in their view, was accepting anything in exchange for recognition. Often these conflicting opinions were discussed openly in lay and religious press. After Miron Cristea's 1936 visit, those opposing the ratification of the Report used the topic of his anti-Semitism to discredit the links with the Romanian Orthodox Church, but more details about this in the next section. In January 1937 the Anglican Church finally agreed and ratified the Report.⁵⁰ Nonetheless, the ratification came in a different climate. Miron Cristea became more reluctant to maintain the dialogue open as he was upset that members of the Anglican Church were accusing the patriarch

and the Romanian Orthodox Church of chauvinism, anti-Semitism, and disregard for minority Churches. At the same time, the anti-Semitism of the patriarch and his policies against Evangelicals in Romania made few (not all) members of the Anglican leadership more reluctant to be involved in interfaith dialogue with Bucharest.

2. The Jewish Question in the Anglican-Romanian Orthodox interfaith relations

All these details about the Anglican-Romanian Orthodox interfaith dialogue have a twofold importance. On the one hand, they have somehow escaped, with very few exceptions, the scrutiny of historiography. On the other hand, even more importantly, this dialogue happened at the same time as the Romanian Orthodox Church and its patriarch were hardening their discourse against Jews and other minorities. This hardening, which fomented for many years at the grassroots and among members of the Holy Synod, exploded with virulence in 1937, culminating in Patriarch Miron Cristea's August statement.

2.1. The 1936 visit to the UK. To whom did Patriarch Miron Cristea tell those anti-Semitic words?

The patriarch's 1936 visit to the UK was seen as the culmination of more than a decade of efforts to foster relations between the Anglican and the Romanian Orthodox Churches. It was greatly praised in Romanian lay and religious press. Newspapers such as *Universul*, *Curentul* and others had regular reports, while religious journals such as *Apostolul* commented on the visit in very glorious terms.⁵¹ The patriarch was received with great pomp not only by Anglican religious leaders (he met the Archbishop of Canterbury and other influential Anglican bishops), but by political figures too. On 3 July he had an audience with King Edward VIII.⁵²

In August 1937, in the article published in *Curentul*, the patriarch claimed to have made those statements during the 1936 visit to the UK. In order to understand the importance of both the 1936 and 1937 moments, it is crucial to see the 1937 allegations and then to put them face to face with the 1936 facts as they appear in available documentation. The patriarch's 1937 declaration appeared under the title "The Palestinian Issue: The Opinion of His Holiness Patriarch Dr. Miron Cristea." *Curentul* claimed to

have run a review on the Palestinian issue, and in this context the editors asked the leader of the Romanian Orthodox Church for his opinion, mostly on the issue of expulsing Jews to Palestine. And Cristea's answer was that he already discussed the topic a year earlier during a meeting with Jewish leaders in the UK. Actually the first subtitle of the article is: "The Discussion between the Patriarch of Romania and the Delegation of the Jewish World Alliance." The article alleged that the patriarch met in 1936 a Jewish delegation comprised of "Chief Rabi of London, dr. Beck and two other individuals (i.e. inși in Romanian), probably members of the Jewish World Alliance." It also claimed that the 1936 meeting in London was generated by the conspiracy of the Romanian Jews who wanted to present the patriarch and the Church in a bad light and to highjack the Anglican-Romanian Orthodox relations.⁵³ After these explanatory paragraphs about the context, the 1937 article in *Curentul* presents the main ideas of what the patriarch allegedly told the chief rabbi of London. They are split under five major subtitles: "Romania seized (acaparată) by Jews"; "Our existence as Romanians in danger" with the subtitle "The Duty of the Romanians"; "Jews claim impermissible rights"; "It is enough land in the world for Jews too"; and "How should the Gospel Truth about loving your neighbor be understood". These subtitles themselves are suggestive of the anti-Semitism promoted by the patriarch.

Documents from various archives show in great detail the steps of the 1936 visit. They show, for example, information about who went to the UK with the patriarch, official meetings and lunches/diners, schemes of some diner tables which described who sat next to whom, who talked with the patriarch, the schedule of his visit not only day by day, but more or less hour by hour. All these documents were essential in the quest to understand when and where was the meeting with the Jewish leaders. Unfortunately, they, including the official program, fail to mention any such encounter. It must be stressed that in 1936 almost nobody talked about Cristea's meeting with British Jews; nobody, except for a small note in *Universul* and a brief mention in a report by Iuliu Scriban, one of the members of the delegation. The note in *Universul* describes summarily the patriarch's successful visit, and then, briefly adds: "The Chief Rabbi of London presented to the Romanian Patriarch the homage of the Jews from the Capital."⁵⁴ The fact that the note appears in *Universul*, one of the newspapers that in 1937 will entirely twist the story and present it in very dark tones, is even more important. For *Universul*, in 1936, the meeting between the Romanian Orthodox patriarch and the British chief

rabbi was not at all a source of tension, the meeting being presented in a very positive light.

Iuliu Scriban, who offers more details, confirms this cordial nature of the meeting. Immediately after the visit to the UK he published a short report in the *Biserica Ortodoxă Română*, which is the main journal of the Church.⁵⁵ However, he does not mention the meeting with the chief rabbi there. He does that in a serial about the visit published in a small newspaper called *Epoca*. As in the case of *Universul*, Scriban describes the meeting in positive tones. He mentions that it was arranged at the request of the Anglican hierarchy, aspect confirmed by other documents that will be examined immediately, but does not offer any insight into what was discussed. Regarding the reason behind the encounter, he says: "It was in our country the time when newspapers were burned on the streets (uliță). These [news] were making an impact outside. The Great Rabbi of London wished (a dorit) to talk with the Patriarch." At the end of his brief mention, Scriban says: "I heard the Patriarch saying that he would have liked to meet Dr. Gaster, the professor former rabbi in our country, who wrote beautifully about our literature. However, he was not able to meet him."⁵⁶ There is no mention at all about heated exchanges during the meeting, or that accusations of anti-Semitism shadowed Miron Cristea's visit. In fact all the documents consulted show that this was not a topic during the visit, and appeared only few weeks later. The fact that Iulius Scriban, in this early account, mentions the desire of the patriarch to see Moses Gaster, a respected UK scholar of Jewish origin who was expelled from Romania in 1885, could be an indication that the meeting with the chief rabbi of London was friendly and not as tense as portrayed later in 1937.

Iulius Scriban and *Universul*, the two Romanian sources that commented in 1936 on the meeting, said nothing about the identity of the Jewish leaders who talked with the patriarch. The claims about their identity, made in *Curentul* in 1937, are contradicted by documents found in Anglican archives. First, it should be mentioned that during the patriarch's 1936 visit, Lord Vere Ponsonby, the 9th Earl of Bessborough who was in close relations with members of the Anglican hierarchy, asked if the Archbishop of Canterbury himself could talk with the patriarch about anti-Semitism in Romania. The Lord of Bessborough had been from 1931 to 1935 the British governor of Canada and Winston Churchill was a relative of the family, but it is not clear yet why he was interested in 1936 about anti-Semitism in Romania. He is not making any direct accusation

against the patriarch, but the idea is lurking that the Orthodox Church is involved in Romanian anti-Semitism. There were few exchanges of letters where various Anglican leaders explained why they did not discuss the topic with the patriarch, and on 4 July 1936, the Bishop of Lincoln replied to Lord Bessborough saying that: "I understand that the Chief Rabbi and a representative of the Board of Deputies of British Jews is going to have an opportunity to meet the Patriarch before he leaves England at the beginning of next week."⁵⁷

A 13 July 1936 document of the Board of Deputies of British Jews clarifies that the meeting was arranged by Dr. Don, the chaplain of the Archbishop of Canterbury, and by members of the Romanian Orthodox delegation. Those who met Miron Cristea were "The Chief Rabbi Mr. L.G. Montefiore" and the secretary of the Board of Deputies, whose name is unclear.⁵⁸ Miron Cristea did not meet any Dr. Beck, or representatives of the Jewish World Alliance, as the patriarch/*Curentul* claimed in 1937. He met the chief rabbi of London and the secretary of the Board of Deputies of British Jews. Actually the way in which the identity of the people he met is reported in 1937 is symptomatic for Miron Cristea: disregard for the other and gross negligence on the accuracy of the information provided. He and journals of the Romanian Orthodox Church would do that constantly when referring to Jews and/or the Jewish community in the coming months and years.

2.2. Anglican awareness of Patriarch Miron Cristea's anti-Semitism prior and immediately after the 1936 visit to the UK

There was no doubt that Miron Cristea was a strong nationalist. His nationalism dates back to the pre-First World War period, when he was the Bishop of Caransebeș. After the Great Union his ecclesiastical and political prestige increased dramatically. He became the first patriarch when the Romanian Orthodox Church was elevated to the rank of patriarchate in 1925. This ecclesiastical ascension was doubled by his political role. In 1927 he became one of the three members of the regency after the death of King Ferdinand. The available documentation suggests that during the 1920s his nationalism was not outspokenly anti-Semitic. This seems to be the case even for the first part of the 1930s. A change of tone can be observed after 1934, when he developed a close friendship with Stelian Popescu, the owner of *Universul*.⁵⁹ This seems to be the time when the patriarch's nationalism became more and more virulently anti-Semitic.

Still, probably because he was aware of how this would affect his international relations, Cristea did not have major outbursts against Jews until August 1937. He spoke more openly, after 1934, against foreigners, whom he considered a threat to the existence of the Romanian people. Romanian audiences knew that he was referring to Jews, but those in the Anglican hierarchy who wanted to keep the ecumenical dialogue open brushed those references aside.

This brushing aside is, in retrospect, problematic on many levels. The patriarch's language against foreigners became more virulent as the visit to the UK got closer. In June 1936, only days before the visit, he spoke to a meeting of the Antirevisionist League about the enemies within, those who were not ethnic Romanians, whom he portrayed as a Trojan horse. He praised Romanian hospitality, but he warned that this has been too often exploited by those who see it as a sign of weakness. In the thunderous applause of the audience he proclaimed: "In all the important posts, which the country must have from top to bottom, we need chiseled men, men who have Romanian blood. Otherwise every day our vital interests, the life and the future, will be in danger and our destruction will be near."⁶⁰ He closed the speech with the slogan "Rise the flag of Romanianism!" His speech and the slogan at the end were in tone with the Romania for Romanians program advocated by various nationalist movements/parties, and was preparing the ground for the Romanization process.

Despite these clear signals that the patriarch was going down a clear path of extreme nationalism, the Anglican Church preferred to remain silent and to continue the interfaith relations. This is even more troubling as other sides of Cristea's nationalism were also known. His anti-Hungarianism had been noted since the 1920s. Already in 1923 members of the Hungarian Parliament wrote open letters to Anglican officials expressing bewilderment at the Anglican Church's move to foster interfaith relations with the Romanian Orthodox Church.⁶¹ Still, these questions were bypassed for the sake of ecumenism. Documents researched in various archives in Romania and the UK show that before the 1936 visit there was almost no debate in Anglican circles about the possible anti-Semitic tendencies of the patriarch and of the Romanian Orthodox Church. During the visit itself, several British/Jewish individuals raised the problem of anti-Semitism. However, those discussions were more about anti-Semitism in general and less about accusations against the Romanian Orthodox Church or the patriarch. That changed soon after the patriarch's visit, when several groups inside the Anglican Church, most of

them Evangelicals who opposed the dialogue with the Orthodox Church, brought the issue more and more in the open. According to documents in the Lambeth Palace archive, the issue was first raised by a letter sent on 4 September 1936 to *The Recorder* by Prebendary (i.e. a canon of a cathedral or a collegiate church) H.W. Hinde, who was quoting the concerns of the Anglican Church Assembly Missionary Council. The question, as he (and the Assembly) put it, was:

The Jew the world over is watching to see what the Churches think and do on this race question: on the one hand he sees the Church in Rumania encouraging anti-Semitic movements [...] Certainly let us seek to draw the Churches closer together; but, even if there had not been this appalling misrepresentation of Church of England doctrine, is this the moment to assert the supposed closer relationship with a Church which encourages anti-Semitic movements?⁶²

Worried about the way in which this public scandal might affect not only bilateral relations, but ecumenical relations of the Anglican Church with other Orthodox Churches, Nugent Hicks, the Bishop of Lincoln, and Canon Douglas chose to deny any allegations of anti-Semitism. Several exchanges of letters between the two, sent in the wake of the publication of the article in *The Recorder*, reveal their deceitful plan to divert the negative attention by pretending that the Assembly's concern was not mentioning specifically the Romanian Orthodox Church, but the Christian Churches in Romania in general.⁶³

A letter of the Bishop of Lincoln to the Bishop of Guildford from 24 September 1936 already discusses implicit accusations of anti-Semitism against Patriarch Miron Cristea. The Bishop of Lincoln, who acknowledges that he is relying in his conclusions on Father Gâldău's information, defends Romanian Orthodox anti-Semitism on the following ground:

The trouble, of course, is the phase of Romanian patriotism (which is likely to come over any Romanian these days) which makes them feel that they cannot be good Romanians without being unkind to the Jews; and that is why it would undoubtedly be easy to pick out individuals who feel like this. But it would be no more fair to attack the Orthodox Church of Roumania, as a body, for what they do or say, than it would be to attack the Church of England, for what members of the Church of England do, or say, in their capacity as British citizens.⁶⁴

While some in the Anglican hierarchy were ready to go as far as to excuse even the clearest signs of anti-Semitism, the Romanian Orthodox Church found yet another motive to cool its interest in bilateral relations. A confidential letter from the Bishop of Gibraltar to Canon Douglas describes the discussion the first had with the Romanian Orthodox patriarch during their 24 October 1936 meeting in Bucharest. It starts:

His Beatitude expressed his apprehension lest there were a growing body of opinion in England, - indeed even within the Anglican Church itself – that the Orthodox Church of Roumania was pursuing a deliberate Anti-Semitic Policy against the Jews in this country. His Beatitude wished to take this opportunity of denying these allegations, and at the same time explain what was the true attitude of his Church, and how this confusion of thought arose.

In his explanation the patriarch blamed the “misunderstanding” on the fact that the Church was fighting an open war against communism and “in Roumania approximately 96% of the Communists had been found to be Jews. Thus it arose, that what to the outside world appeared to be Anti-Semitism in the Orthodox Church, in reality was Anti-Communism.” However, the patriarch did not shy away from giving vent to a lot of other conspiracy theories which showed his already growing extreme anti-Semitism. He claimed for example that, since Romanians are poets, “not naturally adapted for business”, Jews had taken over the Romanian economy. He claimed that only 3% of the population in the center of Bucharest was Romanian, the rest were Jews. “The Roumanian people therefore felt that the Liberty, which had won after a thousand years of subjection, was once again being taken from them; that they were being sold into a new form of slavery.”

During the discussion Miron Cristea brought two main arguments that the Church was not anti-Semitic: the fact that in Romania there were plenty of synagogues, and that many Jews were accepted for baptism in the Orthodox Church. These were, of course, very thin arguments. However, the Bishop of Gibraltar seemed to be oblivious to the problematic nature of the patriarch’s statements. He ends his letter as follows:

This brought His Beatitude to speak of the whole system of corruption, which characterized the public life of the country. The Jews made no effort to hide this fact. They were in a sense cynically proud of the power

of the purse. [...] It was this rottenness of the public life, together with the ever-present fear of Communism, which had determined the attitude of the Church towards the Jewish People.⁶⁵

2.3. Anglican reactions to Miron Cristea's 1937 anti-Semitic declaration

As pointed out earlier, in 1936 nobody talked about the alleged heated exchanges between the patriarch and the delegation of British Jews. On the contrary, the meeting was presented as friendly and for a year nobody talked about it. In 1937, in a clear desire to boost his political role, the patriarch twisted the story and presented himself as a great defender of Romanianism, as someone who was not afraid to confront the Jews and tell them off even in the UK. The reasons why in August 1937 Miron Cristea decided to be more outspoken against Jews could also have to do with what he perceived as the unacceptable attitude of some parts of the Anglican hierarchy. In October 1936 the Romanian Orthodox patriarch expressed his disappointment that British lay and religious press was accusing him of anti-Semitism. At the same time the Anglican Church was delaying the ratification of the 1935 Report of the Conference in Bucharest. Cristea probably saw that as a nuisance since the Orthodox Church already ratified the document in March 1936. The Anglican Church finally ratified the document in January 1937, but even after that many Anglicans were very critical against the links between the two Churches.

Documents brought forward by Bela Vago show that the British embassy in Bucharest, which was increasingly aware of the patriarch's anti-Jewish stance, was informing constantly British political and religious authorities of this aspect.⁶⁶ In the second part of 1936 and 1937 information about this reached the Anglican Church via two major sources: the British representatives in Bucharest, whose opinion was that the Romanian Orthodox Church and the patriarch were becoming more openly anti-Semitic, and reports of the Orthodox clergy involved in the interfaith dialogue, which were downplaying the subject. Prominent members of the Anglican Association for Eastern Churches, such as the Bishop of Lincoln or Canon J.A. Douglas asked Father Gâldău several times to provide his opinion on these allegations. Gâldău was kept in high regard by his Anglican counterparts, because of his education in English language settings and his involvement in the bilateral dialogue. He, however, presented only the favorable image, which the Bishop of

Lincoln or Canon Douglas preferred to believe despite worrying reports from the British embassy.⁶⁷

In September 1937 news about the patriarch's August declarations were reported in British press. Moreover, on 9 September 1937 Rev. Victor Sheburn, sent a letter on the situation in Romania to an unknown recipient (probably Canon Douglas). He writes:

My dear Father, [...] I mentioned to you over the phone some time back that the Patriarch had come out strongly anti-Semite. What happened was this. The newspaper 'Curentul' put out a questionnaire to leading people as to the partition of Palestine. The Patriarch made it the text of a grand diatribe. I will try and get hold of the Chapter and Verse of this. Of course it was taken up by other papers (nationalist variety), and his praises were sung.⁶⁸

Although Rev. Sheburn does not offer any details and does not comment on the allegations, it is important to note that already at the beginning of September 1937 members of the Anglican hierarchy involved in bilateral dialogue with the Romanian Orthodox Church knew and failed to condemn in any way the patriarch's anti-Semitic outburst. This is even more puzzling in a context in which religious press around the world was commenting his declaration in very strong words.⁶⁹

Nugent Hicks, the Bishop of Lincoln, and Canon J.A. Douglas carried on with their defense of Miron Cristea, trying probably to save as much as possible from the bilateral relations. Their already problematic excuses of anti-Semitism went to new levels. At the beginning of February 1938 *The Guardian* (i.e. the Anglican Church journal, not the daily lay newspaper) printed Canon Douglas's letter asking for proofs of the Romanian patriarch's anti-Semitism, less than six months since the August 1937 statements. Some in the Anglican Church reacted to this letter, calling Douglas blind, and an exchange of replies was hosted by *The Guardian* on this theme until April 1938. Canon Douglas, as the Bishop of Lincoln (see above), internalized some of the patriarch's anti-Semitism, their views becoming highly problematic.⁷⁰

Conclusion

By the end of 1937 beginning of 1938 the Anglican-Romanian Orthodox relations cooled off, despite desperate efforts of those most involved in the dialogue to keep them alive. In February 1938 Miron Cristea became prime-minister of Romania. Using a network of relations in the UK he, and the Romanian government, planted in the first months of governance several good stories/news in British newspapers.⁷¹ This is probably one reason, amongst others (such as the British political authorities' desire to keep Romania as close as possible in the context of German advance towards Eastern Europe), that British press was entirely oblivious to anti-Semitic measures of the new government. In June 1938 Canon Douglas claimed in a discussion with the Archbishop of Canterbury that the problem of anti-Semitism has been resolved in Romania. In a memorandum of the meeting he says that he told the Archbishop: "I said I felt strongly that after all the charges made against him, as a persecutor of Jews, within the last year, some amends might be made to him, now that, under his Premiership, anti-Jewish measures had been stopped, and the old charges no longer held good."⁷² That was the time when tens of thousands of Jews were being stripped of Romanian citizenship and the patriarch was making plans for the elimination of Jews from the economic, social, and cultural life of the country. There is no indication that those close to the Archbishop of Canterbury followed suit. The distance between the two Churches, despite the scandalous efforts of those such as the Bishop of Lincoln and Canon Douglas to brush aside and to excuse anti-Semitism, was reciprocal.

In 1938, when Miron Cristea celebrated 70 years, he received congratulatory letters and telegrams from many political, cultural and religious figures, but no official letter from the Anglican Church.⁷³ The same is apparent after his death on 6 March 1939. In the documents researched there are many letters of condolence from various individuals and institutions, including official letters from Churches in Serbia and Poland, but there is no such letter from the Anglican Church. Instead, there is a letter from the World Conference on Faith and Order, Continuation Committee Christ Church, Oxford, where Cristea is praised as the one who served not only his church, "but also the whole of Christendom and the cause of Christian unity."⁷⁴

In his article published in 1956, Sever Buzan, who provides a chronology of the ecumenical encounters between the Anglican and

the Romanian Orthodox Churches during the interwar period, stops in 1937. He instead offers details about a 1940 meeting of an Anglican delegation with the Bulgarian Orthodox Church discussing the topic of mutual recognition of ordination. Buzan pretends that the main topic of the interfaith dialog was the mutual recognition of ordination, and since this agreement was achieved in 1937 there was no reason for the dialogue to continue. Although this view is simplistic, his insight suggests that a rupture did indeed take place in 1937 and that the dialogue stopped then, to be revived under communist auspices after the war.⁷⁵

NOTES

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- 3 Zigu Ornea, *The Romanian Extreme Right: The Nineteen Thirties* (Boulder, CO: East European Monographs, 1999), pp. 31–38
- 4 Bela Vago, *In the Shadow of Swastika: The Rise of Fascism and Anti-Semitism in the Danube Basin, 1936–1939* (Farnborough: Saxon House, 1975), p. 61
- 5 William Oldson, "Alibi for Prejudice: Eastern Orthodoxy, the Holocaust, and Romanian Nationalism," *East European Quarterly*, 36, 3 (Fall 2002), pp. 301-311
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- 9 See Sever Buzan, "Relațiile dintre Biserica Anglicană și Biserica Ortodoxă Română" [The Relations between the Anglican Church and the Romanian Orthodox Church], Arhivele Naționale Istorice Centrale ale României (ANIC from now on) Fond Cristea 1662/7, pp. 101-109. The article was also published in *Ortodoxia* no. 3 (July-September, 1956).
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- ¹⁶ William L. Sachs, ed., *Global Anglicanism, c. 1910-2000*, vol. 5 of *The Oxford History of Anglicanism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018), pp. 307-312
- ¹⁷ William L. Sachs, ed., *Global Anglicanism*, pp. 305-307
- ¹⁸ "Memorandum by J.A. Douglas 15 June 1954 on Declaration to the Orthodox addressed to the Oecumenical Patriarch Meletios II," in Lambeth Palace Archive (LPA from now on) Douglas, vol. 10, p. 5
- ¹⁹ Wybrew, "Anglican-Romanian Orthodox Relations," p. 332
- ²⁰ "Memorandum by J.A. Douglas 15 June 1954," LPA Douglas 10, p. 5
- ²¹ See Letter of Rev. Arnold Pinchard 19 July 1922 to Rev. J.A. Douglas, and Letter by Canon Douglas in response to Rev. Headlam's letter, published in *Church Times* on 21 July 1922, in LPA Douglas 10, pp. 117 and 119-122
- ²² Telegram and attached letter sent by the Lambeth Palace to the Romanian Legation, 25 May 1922, LPA Douglas 10, p. 53-54
- ²³ "Letter of Riley Athelstan, chairman of the Anglican and Eastern Churches Association to His Holiness The Patriarch of Roumania, June 27th, 1925," LPA Douglas 26, p. 118
- ²⁴ See for example the list with "Orthodox Prelates," and "Westminster Abbey Service, June 28th," LPA Douglas 26, pp. 146 and 147
- ²⁵ "Letter of Diocese of Gibraltar to His Holiness Myron Crystia (sic), February 25, 1926," LPA Douglas 88, pp. 261-262
- ²⁶ Handwritten letter of C.J. Harley Walker to Canon Douglas, 11 February 1928, LPA Douglas 52, pp. 7-8
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- ²⁸ "To Archmandrite Scriban, 11 October 1929" It is unclear who the sender is, LPA Douglas 23, p. 315; the same text to Professor Ispir, p. 316; "His Beatitude Mgr. Miron Christea (sic), Patriarch of Roumania and Regent, Bucharest, Roumania, 11 October 1929," p. 317
- ²⁹ "Lambeth Conference 1930. Delegations," in LPA LC 153, p. 1
- ³⁰ Letter of W.A. Wigram to the Archbishop of Canterbury, 22 November 1929, LPA LC 153, p. 23
- ³¹ Draft letter to "The President of the Romanian Orthodox Synod," no date, LPA LC 153, p. 24
- ³² Wybrew, "Anglican-Romanian Orthodox Relations," p. 334
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- ³⁴ Wybrew, "Anglican-Romanian Orthodox relations," p. 333
- ³⁵ Letter in Romanian of the Holy Synod of the Romanian Orthodox Church to the Archbishop of Canterbury, 10 October 1930, LPA LC 153, p. 299-300

- ³⁶ Wybrew, "Anglican-Romanian Orthodox Relations," p. 334
- ³⁷ See "Ministerul Regal al Afacerilor Străine, Telegrama descifrată de la Legațiunea din Londra, nr. 638, 8 Martie 1934" [Royal Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Deciphered Telegram from the London Legation, No. 628, 8 March 1934]; "Telegrama Descifrată dela Legațiunea din Londra, nr. 1562, 13 iunie 1934" [Deciphered Telegram from the London Legation, No. 1562, 13 June 1934], in MAE Arhiva Diplomatică (AD from now on) Dosare speciale 254/4, pp. 1-2 and 3
- ³⁸ "Telegrama de raspuns nr. 32558 din 3 iulie 1934 către Legațiunea din Londra" [Reply Telegram No. 32558, 3 July 1934 to the London Legation], in MAE AD Dosare speciale 254/4, p. 4
- ³⁹ Handwritten letter of Patriarch Miron Cristea to Mr. Laptew, the Romanian ambassador to the UK, 7 March 1935, MAE AD Dosare speciale 254/4, p. 17
- ⁴⁰ Romanian Patriarchate, Holy Synod, Letter to the Minister of Foreign Affairs, No. 977, 18 June 1935, MAE AD Dosare speciale 254/4, p. 28
- ⁴¹ See "Scrisoarea nr. 130, 17 ianuarie 1935, Legatiunea Regală a României la Londra către Ministrul Afacerilor Străine" [Letter No. 130, 17 January 1935, Romanian Royal Legation in London to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs], MAE AD Dosare speciale 254/4, pp. 9-15
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- ⁴⁵ Wybrew, "Anglican-Romanian Orthodox Relations," pp. 334-339
- ⁴⁶ *Conferința Română Ortodoxă-Anglicană ținută la București 1-8 iunie 1935 și Călătoria I.P.S. Patriarh D.D. Dr. Miron în Anglia 28 Iunie – 7 Iulie 1936* [The Romanian Orthodox-Anglican Conference held on 1-8 June 1935 in Bucharest and the Trip of H.H. Dr. Miron to England 28 June-7 July 1936] (Editura Institutului Biblic al Bisericii Ortodoxe Române, 1938), in ANIC Miron Cristea 1662/4, pp. 42-103
- ⁴⁷ See "Report of the Conference at Bucharest from June 1st to June 8th, 1935. Rumanian Commission on Relations with the Anglican Communion and the Church of England Delegation Appointed by the Archbishop of Canterbury," Bucharest 1966, in ANIC Miron Cristea 1662/4, pp. 17-27
- ⁴⁸ See "Telegrama Descifrată, Legatiunea din Londra, nr. 46, 15 Martie 1936" [Deciphered Telegram, London Legation, No. 46, 15 March 1936], MAE AD Dosare Speciale 254/4, p. 39
- ⁴⁹ See "Nota de serviciu, 17 Martie 1936" [Memo, 17 March 1936], signed by Al. Crețianu, and "Nota de serviciu, 19 Martie 1936" [Memo, 19 March

- 1936], signed by Al. Crețianu, MAE AD Dosare Speciale 254/4, pp. 40 and 43. Here the personal intervention to the patriarch is confirmed.
- 50 See for example the way in which *Universul* reports on the March 1937 letter of the Bishop of Canterbury informing the Patriarch Miron Cristea about the Anglican final decision to ratify the report, in ANIC Miron Cristea 1662/10, p. 15
- 51 See for example *Apostolul* 13, no 13-14 (1-31 July 1936), pp. 173-177. The majority of this issue is dedicated to the visit of the patriarch to London. The first article, on the front page is entitled: "Biserica Ortodoxă Română în Serviciul Ortodoxismului Ecumenic" [The Romanian Orthodox Church in the Service of the Orthodox Ecumenism]
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- 59 About the friendship with Popescu see "Cuvântarea I.P.S. Patriarh Miron Cristea la sfințirea bisericii din comuna 'Stelian Popescu' Prahova, 6 Iunie 1937" [The Speech of H.H. Miron Cristea at the Blessing of the church in the 'Stelian Popescu' commune, Prahova County, 6 June 1937], *Apostolul* 14, no. 12 (15 June 1937)," in ANIC Miron Cristea 1662/10, pp. 54-55
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- 63 See for example the Bishop of Lincoln's letter to Canon Douglas, 22 September 1936, LPA Douglas 55, pp. 49-59
- 64 Letter of the Bishop of Lincoln to the Bishop of Guildford, 24 September 1936, LPA Douglas 55, pp 53-55
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- 66 Vago, *In the Shadow of Swastika*, p. 61
- 67 See for example the Letter of the Bishop of Lincoln to Canon Douglas, 26 September 1936, in LPA Douglas 55, p. 51 where they base their excuse of the Romanian Orthodox Church's anti-Semitism on Găldău's reports.
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- 73 See ANIC Miron Cristea 1662/6, pp. 98-130
- 74 Letter of the World Conference on Faith and Order, Continuation Committee Christ Church, Oxford England, 7 March 1939 to the Orthodox Patriarchate of Romania," ANIC Cristea 1662/6, p. 161
- 75 Buzan, "Relațiile dintre Biserica Anglicană," ANIC Miron Cristea 1662/7, pp. 101-109

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