



ORIGINAL PAPER

National and confessional identity in the periodical „Biserica Ortodoxă Română”. A monographic study

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Abstract

With an editorial tradition for almost a century and a half, edited monthly from 1874 till present days (with small interruptions), the periodical *Biserica Ortodoxă Română*, the official press organ of the Holy Synod (today, the official journal of the Romanian Patriarchy), represents in the publishing space an emblem of the identity of the Romanian Christian-Orthodox cult. Its diverse summary, the volume and the depth of the studies written by personalities of the cultural life, propels it to the rank of „high held theological Church magazine”, as the historian Mircea Păcurariu stated, with a considerable contribution to the development of the Romanian theology. Beyond the confessional identity, the constant publishing of regulations on the organisation and functioning of the Church, the explanations of these documents in the context of the relationship between the State and the Church and with the other religious cults, the coverage of social and political realities, of different historical events in which the Orthodox Church was more or less involved, actually or symbolically, represent aspects in which the national identity is reflected. Built around the idea of the organic connection between the Romanian State and the Church, between the formation and evolution of the Romanian people, on the one hand, and the Christian-Orthodox faith, on the other hand, the religious identity is circumscribed to the notion of national identity.

Keywords: *confessional identity, national identity, religious press, the Romanian Orthodox Church*

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Objectives and research methods

The study is based on the idea of the importance of the press in general as a means of information, education and a factor of socialization, of transmitting the essential values, traditions, attitudes and opinions to the individuals as part of a society with a distinct identity. The goal of this research is to reveal how the periodical *Biserica Ortodoxă Română* has evolved since its first edition in 1874 towards the statute of official publication of the Holy Synod, a symbol of both confessional and national identity. The present research is a monographic study, a type of qualitative research analysing the profound mechanisms of media text production in a historical context that has permanently changed according to the Romanian confessional and political realities.

The research sample has consisted on various editions of *Biserica Ortodoxă Română* (*BOR* from now on), starting with its first issue in October 1874 till present days. The study also uses the discourse analysis and the bibliographic study.

A brief chronology

The first issue was edited in October 1874, with the title “Biserica Ortodoxă Română” (“The Romanian Orthodox Church”) and subtitle (“Ecclesiastic periodical journal”), printed at Associated Workers Court Typography in Bucharest. The magazine was founded as an official publication of the Romanian Orthodoxy, on November, 17, 1873, based on article 16 in the Holy Synod’s Regulation, at the initiative of the Metropolitan Primate of Romania, Niphon Rusailă. As a sign of the traditional collaboration between the State and the Church, the magazine’s publication was approved by King Carol I by royal decree no. 1125 in May, 27, 1874.

The title of the magazine is an important identity mark of the Romanian Orthodox Church itself, as national autocephalous church, independent from the Ecumenical Patriarchy of Constantinople, with its own leadership, the Holy Synod in Bucharest. The magazine was covering both a practical need of the clergy to have a theological and ecclesiastic periodical, with a constant rhythm of editing, viable, financially supported by the entire Church, clergy and people; and a symbolical need for an official press organ of the Holy Synod of the Romanian Orthodox Church. This symbolical need is to be understood in the context of the efforts made for being acknowledged as an autocephalous Church, proclaimed like that through an act of cooperation between state and Church when Prince A. I. Cuza promulgated an organic decree, on December, 3, 1864, after the unitarian reorganization of the two united principalities. The decree stated that “The Romanian Orthodox Church is and remains independent from all foreign Church authority” (Drăgușin, 1957: 86-103).

The Romanian Orthodoxy Church was acknowledged as autocephalous only later, in 1885, under the ruling of metropolitan primate Calinic Miclescu, through a Tome of autocephaly signed by the ecumenical patriarch of Constantinople, Joachim IV.

In 1874, *BOR* has no editorial box. As signatories of articles we meet on Dr. Zotu, Archbishop Ghenadie (previously Argeșiu), Protosink. Ghenadie Enăcenu (the principal of the Theological Seminar), Prot. Silvestru Bălănescu, G. Ionescu, Priest Sp. Bădescu. In the first year of publication, three editions are printed, in October, November and December. The monthly periodicity is maintained in the coming years. Between 1878-1880 and 1916-1921, the periodical had short interruptions in its appearance.

The first presidents of the editorial board were the bishops Ghenadie Țeposu,

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former Bishop of Arges, followed by Silvestru Bălănescu, Ghenadie Enăceanu and Gherasim Timus. Initially, the summary of the magazine included numerous regulations regarding the operation and the organization of the Church, high level theological treatises, highly documented, superior to those published by other magazines, so that the periodical was criticized by the clergy of the time, insufficiently prepared for understanding such an elevated content. The articles were signed by members of the Synod, professors of the Faculty of Theology and even by members of the ordinary clergy in Bucharest, like Ghenadie Țeposu, Silvestru Bălănescu, Gherasim Timus, Gheorghe Zottu, Athanasie Mironescu, Dragomir Demetrescu, Ștefan Călinescu and later Ioan Mihălcescu. Under the title „Cronica bisericească” the editors included topical information, news and stories from the life of the Church, internal and external. The both confessional and national identity aspect was obvious in the studies on the Romanian Orthodox Church's history, original researches conducted by bishops Melchisedec Ștefănescu and Ghenadie Enăceanu, by professor Constantin Erbiceanu, by Nicolae Dobrescu and others. Translations from the Holy Fathers, preaches, the Holy Synod's debates were also part of the editorial content. traduceri din Sfinții Părinți, predici, dezbaterile Sfântului Sinod. Among its contributors there were also Romanians from Transylvania, a worth mentioning organisational aspect in the period before the Great Unification in 1918 (Păcurariu, 1997: 300). The interruption in 1878 occurred on the background of the financial difficulties caused by the Independence War (1877-1878). The publication is resumed from October 1, 1880, with the support of Metropolitan Primate Calinic Miclescu (1822-1886, who provided from 1882 the Typography of Church's Books, founded by him. The presidents of the editorial board in charge with this second series were Archbishop Ghenadie Enăceanu and protoskel Silvestru Bălănescu. The editors were the future bishops Inochentie Moisiu and Gherasim Timuș. From 1884, the publication appeared with the subtitle „Church Periodical Magazine”. The second temporary interruption took place when the Romanian Kingdom entered World War I, in 1916. The editing of the magazine, under the subtitle “A magazine of the Holy Synod” is resumed on October 1st, 1921, at the initiative of Metropolitan Primate Miron Cristea (1868-1939). The presidency of the committee board was entrusted to Archbishop Vartolomeu Stănescu; the editor in chief was Ioan Mihălcescu, the future Metropolitan Irineu of Moldavia and the editorial secretary was archimandrite Iuliu Scriban. Patriarch Miron Cristea enhanced the periodicity of the magazine, bringing it to six editions a year, starting with 1934, when Metropolitan Tit Simezea of Bucovina was invested as editorial secretary. Between the two world wars, the periodical had some valuable contributors, like the future patriarch Nicodim Munteanu, priest Grigorie Pișculescu (Gala Galaction) and the theology professors Teodor M. Popescu, Vasile Ispir, Nicolae Chițescu, Nicolae M. Popescu and others. From 1945, the editing process is an attribution of the Biblical and Missionary Institute of the Romanian Patriarchy, with priest Dumitru Fecioru as president.

After the investment of patriarch Justinian Marina (1948-1977), also president of the editorial board committee, the magazine was published under the subtitle “The Official Bulletin of the Holy Synod”. The editor in chief was priest Gheorghe Vintilescu and the editorial secretary was priest professor Gheorghe I. Moisescu. During the leading of patriarchs Justinian Marina, Iustin Moisescu and Teoctist Arăpașu, the magazine has enjoyed the collaboration of outstanding representatives of Romanian Orthodoxy, priests and professors Dumitru Stăniloae, Ioan G. Coman, Ene Braniște, Liviu Stan, Mircea Păcurariu, Ion Bria etc.

The editorial content

The summary – “Table of matters” of the first issues in 1874 consisted on: “I. To the Clergy and the Romanian people; II. Rules for editing the journal; III. The address of His Holiness Metropolitan of Ungro-Wallachia and president of the Holy Synod to the committee editor; IV. About the Church; V. The celebration of Sunday by the antique Christians; VI. Preaches: Sunday seventh at Luke, b) Sunday fifth at Luke, c) Sunday eighth at Luke, d) Sunday ninth at Luke, s) Sunday thirteenth at Luke, f) The entry into the Church; VII. Church’s Chronicle” (*BOR*, October 1874, no.1).

The programme-article, entitled “To the Clergy and the Romanian people” (*BOR*, October 1874, no.1: 1) announced the monthly apparition of the magazine, its purposes and

some organizational issues concerning the editing process. According to the editorial board, the magazine had to cover an urgent need of the Romanian Orthodox Church and of the entire Romanian people, the need for an emblematic official ecclesiastic journal of the representative religious cult in the Romanian Kingdom. It was a different editorial project, because it was not a solitary private initiative of some member of the clergy or of a certain benefactor, it was a journal of the entire Church, clergy and congregation, financially and theologically sustained by the Romanian Holy Synod. Even the government had its financial contribution to the publication – a subvention of six thousands lei that, according to the authors of the article, could merely cover the expenses with the first issue. But the state contribution was appreciated by the Church, as it is stated in the mentioned article. Thus, with all these financial facilities, the editorial board was still relying on the common clergy to receive the magazine with enthusiasm and to make subscriptions. Two major purposes are underlined in this article: the editing of a prestigious official magazine of the Romanian Orthodox Church and the enlightenment of both clergy and people in order to protect the congregation by wrong heretic interpretations of the holy writings. Time would prove the success of this ambitious editorial project. If the first purpose was highly attained and the efforts of all the editorial committees would prove it along the apparition of the magazine until present days, in the second one there are comments about. It was intended to be a journal for the entire clergy and even for the congregation, but the clergy’s cultural level was poor, with no faculty of theology in Romania at the end of the XIX-th century and a short tradition in seminary theological education. On the other hand, the contributors to the editorial content of the magazine were mostly members of the high clergy, professors with a high educational level and thus they were sometimes unable to properly adapt their writing to their targeted public. In these conditions, the common clergy, who had the obligation to pay the subscription, would frequently complain about the elitist content of the magazine. In time, the editorial committee would make efforts to adapt to the needs of the clergy, whose lack of superior theological knowledge was objective, and studies and articles about the life of the common clergy were introduced in the summary at the end of the XIX-th century and the beginning of the XX-th century. The editorial principles stated in the first edition are reaffirmed in 1934, when a reorganization of the magazine was intended “in form and content” (*BOR*, January-February 1934, no. 1: 1). The government support was also involved again. The new programme-article underlines the idea of a magazine worthy of the Romanian Orthodox Church as a Church who has contributed to the development of the national spirit, to the evolution of culture and education in the Romanian people. As we can notice in the history of the magazine, there was a permanent preoccupation of each

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editorial board to keep a balance between the status of official journal of the Romanian Orthodox Church and a quality theological content on the one hand and the practical needs of the clergy with the periodical on the other hand. In January-February 1934, an introduction article, with no title, written with italic letters, over a page and a half, announces the reorganisation of the magazine. A new editorial committee was elected by the Holy Synod, in charge with the raising of the periodical to a standard required by its status of “official organ of the highest canonical authority of the Church”, with the purpose “to keep and present the intellectual and practical life of our Church in its best ways, as well as our Holy Orthodox Church worldwide. That means from the strict study of theological science to the simple news story, the centre of gravity must be on Orthodoxy: studying, strengthen and defend it (*BOR*, October 1874, no.1: 1). The Synod saw in the magazine “a visit card” that had to be proper in shape and content to the status of “the best articulated and organised of all sister Orthodox Churches”. The introduction article also contains an appeal for the subscribers to continue paying the price of the subscription, price that remained unchanged despite the increased financial efforts to improve the magazine (*BOR*, October 1874, no.1: 2). The authors stated that the members of the editorial staff were not paid; even if there were budgeted expenditures for the work performed by the secretary of the editorial, the amounts allocated went towards improving the periodical. The article also mentioned that the magazine had no editorial committee, only a „board”, thus each contributor was to be treated equally in matters of publishing the articles, but nothing would be included in the summary without the approval of the editorial staff. This first edition of the reorganised magazine had 144 pages, which was considerably an improvement at least in quantity, compared to the previous ones that were below 100 pages.

An important evolution of the magazine would be registered between 1936 and 1949, under the editorial lead of Gheorghe I. Moisescu, dean, then priest and professor. He is included in the editorial staff from no. 11-12, November-December 1936, Year LIV. As an editor, Moisescu had multiple tasks: writing articles, covering some permanent columns of the periodical, the journalistic approach of the main Church events, revising texts, composing the summary, receiving theological articles from various contributors and others. The new job reflects on the editorial level first of all in a considerably higher amount of articles. Until this edition Moisescu had limited his activity to the bibliographic notes in the field of historical theology, but in the November-December 1936 issue, dean Moisescu signed a review and nine bibliographic notes covering various fields: “General works”, “Systematic Theology”, “Practical Theology” and “Historical Theology”.

In no. 1-2, January-February 1937, Year LV, in the summary of the magazine the editors included “The report of the committee of *Biserica Ortodoxă Română* to the Holy Synod”, that marked the 55-th year of publishing and the fourth year of the committee made up of H.H. Bishop Lucian of Roman - director, H.H. Bishop Titus of Hotin - editorial secretary, Archim. Iuliu Scriban - professor at the University of Iasi, Pr. Nicolae M. Popescu - Professor at the University of Bucharest and Pr. Grigore Pișculescu - professor at the University of Iassy. Few months ago, the young deacon Gheorghe Moisescu had permanently joined the editorial team, and his contribution was positively appreciated in the content of the report. We find out that he was paid monthly. He had taken over some of the duties of Bishop Titus Sîmedrea, to be, if necessary, even prepared to replace H.H. Tit. His studies abroad, in Greece and Poland, are mentioned as the trump cards for the post for which the editorial committee recommended him to the Patriarch on November 1, 1936, and Miron Cristea approved the appointment, the team thus completing a

collaborator who will prove to be a good choice for the magazine's progress: "In this way the magazine management committee is today completed with a young and competent collaborator and we have all the hope that the evidences of diligence that the Father Gheorghe I. Moisescu has given them so far will always be increased" (*BOR*, January-February 1937, no. 1-2: 93).

The objectives of the editorial committee on the Holy Synod's magazine – "a truly Orthodox Church magazine in terms of quality and source of information", in which "strictly scientific theological information come the first, presented through reviews and bibliographic notes. Second comes the chronicle, where the most important events in the Orthodox churches are presented and where can be found different news that deserve to be known by the whole Orthodoxy" (*BOR*, January-February 1937, no. 1-2: 93) – is reflected in its summary, in which there is a part of theological articles, a chronicle of internal events, a chronicle of external events and a part of reviews and bibliographic notes. As stated in the report, theological, scientific information prevails in the face of religious actuality, even if the summary order does not correspond to that structure. The old allegations of elitism and insufficient presentation of everyday church events still lie on the *BOR*, as we understand from the editorial board's report (*BOR*, January-February 1937, no. 1-2: 92). The editors have been criticized for a predominantly historical content of the magazine. The accusation is answered by a statistic on the themes of the articles, reviews and bibliographic notes published between 1934 and 1936: 40 articles and 551 pages in the field of practical theology, 6 articles and 228 pages - systematic theology, 1 article and 20 pages of exegetical science, 16 articles on 208 pages - church literature, 16 articles and 186 pages in the field of historical theology, representing a share of ¼ articles with historical content relative to the total, and 1/6 in relation to the total number of pages. Also, according to the editors' statistics, neither in the reviews and bibliographic notes chapter, the figures did not indicate the predominantly historical content: of the 38 reviews published in the three years, 11 were in the field of historical theology, quite significant if we look at the totality of theology fields, where each of them should be represented equally; of 788 bibliographic notes, 104 appear in "Systematic Theology", 230 in "Practical Theology", 30 in "Exegetical Theology", 187 in "Historical Theology", 14 in "History of Religions" and 168 in "Generic Works"; there were 187 bibliographic notes of historical character, which meant a proportion of ¼ of the total of this type of articles (*BOR*, January-February 1937, no. 1-2: 93).

Another accusation to the magazine was related to the small share of internal church news. Indeed, *BOR* published predominantly church-related events at the central, Patriarchal, or Archbishopric of Bucharest level, in a rather limited spatial proximity with the headquarters of the editorial office. This aspect is explained in the above mentioned report by a difficulty of organization within the Romanian Orthodox Church. The editorial board asked the Holy Synod to require cultural counsellors from the country's dioceses to send articles on major local events. The high Church forum has issued a ruling in this respect, but it was not respected by the Eparchial counsellors, according to the report published in the journal. The *BOR* editors even noted a bad will of these eparchial officials, who gathered at a conference in Bușteni, and stated their intention that the editorial staff of the magazine should be completely reorganized because at the time of reference, *BOR* paid more attention to the field of historical Theology. In other words, they resumed to criticizing and doing nothing to remediate the situation. Other difficulties noted in the report concern printing conditions, technological wear and tear: "This explains the delay with which the magazine sometimes appears, because we have to collect only one sheet

and then make even 6-7 corrections to replace the blunt or torn letters” (*BOR*, January-February 1937, no. 1-2: 93). The editorial team proposed to improve them by purchasing new equipment for printing a *BOR* magazine, a true visiting card of the Holy Synod, both in the country and abroad.

In the present days, *BOR* has the following columns: „Official telegrams”, „The Church’s life”, „Reports from the Motherland’s life”, „Pastoral guidance”, „From the past of our Church”, „Documents”, „Reviews” (Hangiu, I. 2004: 107). Although there were voices that considered it elitist and, from this point of view, not very useful, the Romanian Orthodox Church is considered “the best specialized journal at that time, fulfilling an important role in the promotion of Romanian theology” (Păcurariu, 1997: 301).

Reporting historical events

Significant moments both for the Romanian Orthodox Church and for the history of the entire people, have been reported in the issues of the magazine along its course of appearance. Most often, the events are reported in the column of internal news, which contain entire speeches of personalities from the church hierarchy or from the secular leadership of the state. In the XX-th century the Church's position on events in Romanian history is frequently expressed by pastorals addressed to clergy and believers. A strong state, completed by the Great Union of 1918, would be completed by a stronger national “dominant” Church with a strong voice in the public space, at least at the image level.

Before the interruption, in full war for the acquisition of state independence, the journal publishes a message of Bishop Ghenadie of Arges, where the author wonders rhetorically how the Church can stay away from the conflict that was raging the country's borders from the cannons of the Ottomans: “the country needs a general effort, each contributing according to possibilities, driven by the sacred duties of love for the Motherland; when the clergy, who in all times and in all the events of the country took part in all its disasters, gave its contest, by its means, how can we remain today less sentient in the voice of our dear Motherland?” (*BOR*, January 1878, No. 4: 213). The efforts of King Carol I and Emperor Alexander II of Russia to resolve the conflict are commended.

In the issue no. 3-4, March-April 1939, Gh. I. Moisescu reported the death of the Patriarch Miron Cristea, in a large collage of articles. It was a major event that created „a voice of sorrow and grief for the loss of the wise Church ruler of the country, and the first counselor of the King of Romania” (*BOR*, March-April 1939, no. 3-4: 131). Cristea’s personality and his political role were a source of controversy in the period between the two world wars, because the ambivalence of his position, both in the Church hierarchy and in the state’s government (Ionescu, 2003: 119). With all these controversies, in the three years of Regency, until the return of Carol II and the taking over of the throne by him, Patriarch Miron was considered a balance factor (Stan, 2009: 300). In 1938, he was named by King Carol II at the head of the government, a act considered by historians as a sign of the King’s desire to diminish somewhat the importance of this function in the state, allowing King Carol II to be the main “organizer of government activity” (Petcu, 2009: 234). The article signed by Gh. I. Moisescu recorded the circumstances of the Patriarch's death in Cannes, where French local and central officials together with Romanian diplomats came to pay tribute to him, in military honours. Miron Cristea had been decorated by the French government with “the great cordon of the Legion of Honor” (*BOR*, March-April 1939, no. 3-4: 133). It is an extensive and emotional reporting, that proves Moisescu’s journalistic talent, with accurate details, poetic expressions, topical

context and sensory particularities. The funeral corps reaches the country to Jimbolia, and then lands in the main stations, where it is received with mourning and proper honours. The close relationship between State and Church in Romania is highlighted in the officialities' speeches. Dr. Nicolae Zigre, the Ministry of Cults, spoke in behalf of the Government: „It is the loss of the whole nation because the Patriarch of the Romanian National Church among the boundaries of their land represents the Christian Church formed from the beginning with the Romanian nation. Our Orthodox Christian Church is national, because in it and through it the belief in God of the Romanian people appeared and the moral-ethical commands that formed the basis of his soul life were created” (*BOR*, March-April 1939, no. 3-4: 150).

On the 5-th of July 1939, His Holiness Patriarch Nicodim was invested and enthroned at the royal palace. In his speech, the second Romanian Patriarch connected the political and the religious life of the Romanians, explaining, on the byzantine principle of the relationship between the Church and the laic power, that The Romanian National Church and its Voivodship or State are inextricably linked, because the faithful sons of the Church are the citizens of the State, and the citizens of the State are at the same time faithful to the Church and, more than that: “The political governor of the State is the first son of the national Church and its greatest protector; and the Hierarch of the National Church is the first citizen of the State after its political governor, and the first counsellor of the latter” (*BOR*, September-October 1939, no. 9-10: 473). The newly invested hierarch discusses one of the controversial aspects in the relationship with the Romanian state, the situation of the confessional schools in the state administration, since the secularization of the Church's fortunes, by the prince Al. I. Cuza. In the eight decades of the time mentioned, according to Nicodim, theological education was deficient in the fruits, a situation disliked both by the Church and by the State itself (*BOR*, September-October 1939, no. 9-10: 477).

The royal discourse at the same occasion reminded to the auditory the contribution of the previous Patriarch in the development of both the Romanian Orthodox Church and the State. According to the king, who had installed a dictatorship with nationalist accents, Patriarch Miron Cristea, who had come from Transylvania, former bishop of Caransebeș, was a symbol of the union of all Romanians, “a clear sign that after the political unification, the union of the soul followed without delay”, in a single Church, of all the Romanians (*BOR*, September-October 1939, no. 9-10: 478). Miron Cristea's efforts, for the rights of the Romanians in Transylvania, then for the Union of 1918, are seen as an obvious proof “that in us, the Romanians, the Church and the Nation is one” (*BOR*, September-October 1939, no. 9-10: 478). Armand Călinescu's assassination is dealt with in the *BOR* pages, September-October 1939, in Patriarch Nicodim's speech at the funeral of the Romanian Prime Minister, a speech by Bishop Emilian Târgovișteanul, and the reproduction of the patriarch Nicodim's dictation to the clergy. The reprehensible event will be followed by a series of investigations and persecutions over members of the Legionary Movement, over whom the Church will not pronounce, given the political conditions of the Carlist dictatorship. The Patriarch urges the political opponents to be united against the external dangers that threatened the security of the entire Europe. The tone of the speech is vehement against the Legion. The word, however, introduces a nuance, a reference to an old political conflict, when the hierarch announces a parable about two dogs struggling in a household, and when the household is trampled by the wolf, dogs are allied against it, which it did not happen on such a troubled political scene at that time, when the borders were redefining, and the nations were waiting for their destiny. It was a fact that Armand Călinescu was an old

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enemy of the Legion (Veiga, 1995: 261).. This call to unity is pithy in the circular sent to the priests by Patriarch Nicodim, a much more moderate document addressed to all clergy in Romanian territories. We can understand this moderate tone in two respects: first of all the moment of the discourse, the circular being sent after the funeral, at a time when the tide of revenge of the authorities had an unprecedented hardness and the second is the sympathies of some of the priests to the legionary doctrine. Previously, in 1937, the Holy Synod was called to answer by various statesmen regarding the implication of some of the clergy in the activity of the Legion and the Church hierarchy was unable to express a clear separation from the legionnaires (Heinen, 1999: 304); their efforts on the political scene was regarded as a sign of a fight against the secular spirit, which the Church itself was fighting against.

A new political regime determined new writing conditions for the magazine of the Holy Synod. In 1941, under the dictatorship of Marshall Ion Antonescu, *BOR* stated its role as a ecclesiastic and theological publication, in an editorial called „Explanation” signed by the committee (*BOR*, January-February 1941, no. 01-02: 1-2). This status corresponded with a retreat of the Church from the political space, at least at a formal level. Its official position towards the political events, the legionary rebellion and its suppression, was limited to the approval of Antonescu’s repressive measures: “You made the heroic step. I know you hesitated a lot, but it could not be otherwise. This is what the salvation of the Homeland demanded. (...) The Church is warmly praying for God to give you strength to lead the affairs to the full salvation of the Motherland, and the Romanian nation will be grateful to you from generation to generation.” – Patriarch Nicodim, in a telegram to the general Ion Antonescu (*BOR*, January-February 1941, no. 01-02: 103). Along the interwar period, *BOR* constantly reported the situation of the Russian Orthodox Church confronted with the Soviet oppression and the events were a serious concern for the Romanian Orthodoxy (Enache, 2005: 21), as the articles in the “External Chronical” prove it.

After the installation of the communist regime, the state has constantly tried to turn the Romanian Orthodox Church into a vehicle of his ideology, whether by apparent concessions or by brutal interventions. On the other hand, by adopting an apparently supportive discourse, the Church has constantly sought to protect its rights, organization and functioning, and aspects of the cult essence. In regards of the public discourse, *BOR* had the fate of the other religious magazines that were infected by elements of the political discourse. In the first years of the communist regime, there were three main aspects of the political intrusion in the editorial content: new themes of the articles, new interpretations of the biblical precepts and new vocabulary (Safta, 2015: 229). Throughout the rest of the communist period, it was the elitist character of the magazine (Ghibu, 1910: 78) that saved it from suppression. *BOR* resumed its editorial activity to high quality theological articles and official messages from the Church hierarchy to the clergy – regulations and decisions of the Holy Synod.

Conclusions

With a tradition of more than a century of publishing and a high level of theological content, although it was often said that it had an elitist character, *Biserica Ortodoxă Română* is still considered to be the best specialized ecclesiastic periodical, that played a significant role in the development of the Romanian orthodox theology. The marks of the confessional and national identity consist on: the constant acknowledgement of the Church’s hierarchy and the editorial board that the magazine should maintain its

high level, as an official bulletin of a national autocephalous Church; the permanent preoccupation for its summary, both in theological studies and in topical subjects; the explicit references about the Romanian history and the cooperation between the state and the Church; the emphasis of the significant role of the Church in the process of education and cultural development.

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