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PhD THESIS

SUMMARY

**THE ROMANIAN NATIONAL IDENTITY AND THE  
MISSION OF THE ORTHODOX CLERGYMEN  
FROM TRANSYLVANIA UNTIL THE UNIFICATION  
OF THE BIG ROMANIA**

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*Motto:*

*‘Romanians need today to be based on patriotism and courage and to gain steadfastness in character. We believe that these results would be achieved when they had a good national history and when it was quite widespread. Looking at the series of centuries in which our parents lived, at the way they behaved in their social life, we would seek to acquire their virtues and to avoid the mistakes in which they fell.’  
(Nicolae Bălcescu)<sup>1</sup>*

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<sup>1</sup>*Din istoria pedagogiei românești*, Editura de stat didactică și pedagogică, 1957, p. 356:

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## Introduction

The work called - 'The noological - identity mission of the orthodox clergymen in Transylvania until the Unification from 1<sup>st</sup> December 1918, vector of cultural defence and expression of the national dimension of the Romanian Orthodox Church', coordinated by Pr. Prof. univ. dr. Pavel Aurel analyses the role played by the Orthodox bishops, priests and monks in Transylvania in terms of the national movement of the Transylvanian Romanians to defend and cultivate the Romanian identity and spirituality until the Great Union in 1918, emphasising the preaching mission (public communication) of the clergymen.

In the process of acquiring the knowledge necessary for the elaboration of this thesis, I considered several studies that dealt with the relationship of the Orthodox Church and the mission of the clergy with the state and society, serving me in this regard of many historiographical works, as well as the volumes published on the occasion of the feast of the Great Union, such as: *United in thought and feeling - The unity of faith and nation* (2. Vol.), *The Romanian Orthodox Church and the War of Independence* (2 vol.), *The Romanian Orthodox Church and the Great Union* (2 vol.). Thanks to these books, I was able to have access to many studies signed by different theologians and historians from the Romanian academic space, that deal with the issue of the confluence between the mission of the church and the Romanian national identity.

In this PhD thesis, we made an analysis based on a historical regression, in order to reconstruct some realities in the life of Transylvanian Romanians and to understand them from the perspective of the relationship between the Orthodox Church and the Romanian nation.

The motivation that stays at the origin of this scientific approach is based on the following arguments: Although there have been elaborated some specialized works that surprise the interaction process and the complexity of the relationship between the mission of the Orthodox clergy, the Romanian nation and the national identity defense – noologic, in this thesis, I want to deepen this relationship of the Orthodox clergy with their own parish, in the light of the analysis of the priest's sermons. On the other hand, we started in the preparation of this research topic from the consideration that the study of the social, political and cultural role exercised by the Orthodox Church and implicitly by its clergymen in the life of the state, as well as the identification of new valences of force represented by the national identity in

motivating and supporting actions to claim and defend the values and interests of a nation can contribute to real progress in formulating value judgments and developing an idea, which can serve as a benchmark in substantiating the national dimension of the Romanian Orthodox Church.

The research idea underlying this scientific endeavour is based on the reality that the national identity and religion are centred on the human person, and the religious beliefs classify the human life in certain traits and patterns that can be interpreted as relevant to the process of formation and defence of a nation. Lucian Blaga<sup>2</sup> draws the attention to the fact that the human person carries out his existence as a ‘thinking self’ both in the sphere of the seen world and in the area of sacrament and mystery, and this indicates that the study of the manifestation of the human being must refer only to the external aspect of its manifestation, but also to the forum of the soul which is confined to the field of Theology; therefore, the deepening of the study on the relationship between the national identity and the mission of the Church can offer particularly promising research perspectives, in terms of measures and doctrine that will underlie the construction or reconstruction, or preservation of the nation and national state. Starting from the conception promoted by Priest Dumitru Stăniloae, who claims that the existential framework of the human being in both his natural and spiritual register bears the national seal and cannot be conceived outside the life lived in God, and a nation cannot disregard in its progress the spiritual side which involves its Christian realisation or its entelechy, we can deduce that the study of the theme of the nation falls conceptually within the area of Theology.

If we consider that the valuable and lasting achievements of the people over time are the product not only of intelligence but also of faith and can be understood as the outpouring of the God’s gift on the creation, then the research of the topic which is incumbent on the title must be achieved through an interdisciplinary approach, covering the fields of Theology, History and Sociology.

The dealing with this topic is of major interest, as it bears witness to the relationship between the national identity (nation) and the religious reality, thus providing perspectives on the research and the definition of the concept of the National Church.

The elaboration of the work started from the knowledge of the realities lived by the Romanians from Transylvania, who were the subject of several articles and historiography

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<sup>2</sup> Lucian Blaga in the article entitled ‘Art and value’, published in *Gândirea* Newspaper, January, 1939, p. 31:

studies and is based on the capitalisation of the church press, which contains the message addressed by the Orthodox clergymen to the Romanian nation.

The main objective pursued in the elaboration of the research was to establish a concrete image on the role that the clergymen of the Romanian Orthodox Church in Transylvania had in the development of the national emancipation movement and in the preservation of the national values.

In order to study the national dimension of the mission of the Orthodox clergymen and the role of the ethno-religious factor on the social, I set out to find out about the relationships that took place in Transylvania between government policy and the Romanian nation until 1<sup>st</sup> December 1918 and I resorted to an analysis of the facts and messages that belonged to the clergymen of the Romanian Orthodox Church, trying to establish their role in the development of the struggle for national emancipation.

In order to know this issue, we performed an analysis on understanding the clerical mission, in order to obtain concrete results on the conceptualisation of the national dimension of the Romanian Orthodox Church and its integration in the sphere of cultural defence resources of a nation. Also, by carrying out this scientific endeavor, I set out to valorise the past by formulating those lessons for the future that would help to objectify specific directions and measures that can be assimilated by the strategy of ontological and cultural defence of the Romanian people.

One of the hypotheses on which I based this scientific endeavour is that the cultivation and preservation of the Romanian identity cultural heritage that ensures the resources and values underlying the strategy of defending a nation, as well as efforts made to sustain and consolidate the national identity, are the main indicators that shape the state of balance and progress of a nation, and they are the object of the combined activity of the State institutions and the Church, as managers of the interests and objectives of the society they lead.

Another hypothesis that underlies this scientific work refers to the research of the socio-political function exercised by clergymen in the dynamics of the process of national identity struggle, in terms of the role they played in society as primates (leaders, chiefs) of the community entrusted to pastoral care and educators (opinion formers)<sup>3</sup>.

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<sup>3</sup> C. Rudnean calls the clergymen ‘daily luminaries and guides’ of the Romanian people, whom they listened to without grumbling or feeling of doubt throughout its national history. (‘Factorul religios determinant în istoria națională’, 1931)

The study on the activity of the Romanian Orthodox Church carried out on the diplomatic, political, cultural, missionary, ecclesiastical and even military level, in the sense of protecting the Romanian national-identity values in Transylvania had as general purpose the study of the role played by the religious factor in re-establishing the connections between the entity of the State and the essence (sap) of the nation - which is spiritual, mental, religious, cultural, linguistic and social through the activity of the clergymen. Also, the reconstruction of the historical deeds committed by the Romanian nation in connection with the People's Church and the political class highlights certain essential features of the manifestation and evolution aspects of the struggle of Romanians in Transylvania to preserve the national identity and restore the political-state unity achieved on 1<sup>st</sup> December 1918.

In its content, the work focuses on the interaction of the political factor with the religious one in the denationalisation of the Transylvanian Romanians, recovers documentary evidence that characterises the identity resistance of the Romanian community, analyses and values the mission of the Orthodox clergymen in relation to the Romanian national values and pursuing the national interests.

Whereas in carrying out the scientific endeavour I focused on representing the elements that refer to the historical reality, individual and society in the Transylvanian space, in order to observe and interpret those meanings related to the field of the national movement of the Romanians and the mission of clergymen, the directions underlying the research were the following:

- knowledge of the politico-religious measures aimed at denationalising the Romanians; reconstituting the veracity of the facts based on the analysis of the information provided by the bibliographic sources;
- shaping the administrative, religious, cultural and social effects of the government, church and civil policies;
- identifying the mission of the priestly and monastic order in the Orthodox Metropolitan Church of Transylvania that aimed at the life aspects of the Romanian nation.

During the historical regression we made in this work, we recalled the mission of the Orthodox Church which attests the position of the Transylvanian clergy to the Catholic and Protestant offensive in conjunction with the Austro-Hungarian state policy and obtained the results that provide the answer to the question: What was the role of the Orthodox clergymen



in preserving the national identity of the Romanians during the Austro-Hungarian rule in Transylvania?

In the study that we conducted on the role of the clergymen in preserving the identity values and the state of the noological - identity security of Romanians in Transylvania, we gathered the information that helped me to configure the theoretical and representative model, which I subjected it to observation, critical examination and interpretation.

Collecting data on the unfolding of historical facts, as well as conducting content analysis of the messages of Transylvanian Orthodox clergymen helped me to detach both empirically and phenomenologically those meanings, which served as support for understanding the national role of the mission of the Romanian Orthodox Church in Transylvania.

At the beginning of the elaboration of the PhD thesis I resorted to gathering information through bibliographic documentation, which involved consulting historical works - books, studies and thematic articles, legislative corpora, statistical works, periodicals, archive works and schematisms, as well as other sources, such as: pastorals and speeches published in the church press of the time, works on the nation, nationalism, Romanianism, security, etc.

During the research, we combined the bibliographic method with that of content analysis, we used the procedures specific to analysis (comparison, reasoning and observation) and synthesis (classification and grouping), and we made the capitalisation of the information through the types of research: qualitative and quantitative, both on the basis of inductive and deductive reasoning.

The novelty that I bring through this study is represented by the unique sources of information, on which I based my research; and I am referring to the collection of publications 'Foaia Diecezană a Episcopiei Ortodoxe Române a Caransebeșului', 'Biserica și Școala' of the Romanian Orthodox Episcopate of Arad and 'Telegraful Român' - the publication of the Romanian Orthodox Metropolitan Church of Transylvania, from which I identified a number of 210 articles published during the years 1849-1918, which I selected by browsing a volume of 4,884 publications. I also based my study on two unique sources such as: the 36 sermons belonging to several Orthodox priests from the Archpriestship of Săliștei (Sibiu County), which first were published in 1916 through the efforts of Father Protopope

Dr. Ioan Lupaș<sup>4</sup>; as well as the volume of speeches of the Romanian hierarchs from Transylvania delivered by them in the House of Magnates that were recently translated from Hungarian into Romanian and offered to the press last year (2020).<sup>5</sup>

Whereas in carrying out the scientific endeavour I focused on representing the elements that refer to the historical reality, individual and society in the Transylvanian space, in order to observe and interpret those meanings related to the field of the national movement of the Romanians and the mission of clergymen, the directions underlying the research were the following:

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The data and properties of the social phenomena that we collected empirically by studying historiographical sources we counted in the form of coefficients that we ordered in the form of scales (tables) for their interpretation, comparison and analysis.

Qualitatively researching the units of analysis (articles), we detached the meaning that refers to the symbolic, attitudinal and behavioural aspect of the texts themselves and we corroborated these results with the analysis of the historical events capturing the social phenomenon in its entirety, taking into account the interaction of the social factors, the dynamics and complexity of reality and the historical context and its influences on the identity and national aspects studied.

In order to perform the content study of the analysis units we used the following procedures - we selected the representative quotes for the topic, respectively the dimensions that constitute the objective to be studied, we followed the frequency of meanings disseminated by the researched text and thus we identified the keywords or word associations related to variables and dimensions according to the tables. Using the tool of quantitative

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<sup>4</sup>*Mângâiați poporul! Cuvântări bisericesti*, Andreiană Publishing House, Sibiu, 2019.

<sup>5</sup> Dăncilă-Ineoan Andreea, Eppel Marius, Iudean Ovidiu-Emil, *Polifonii politico-cleziastice (1867-1918)*, Mega Publishing House, Cluj-Napoca, 2020.

research, we resorted to the association and counting of these keywords in order to obtain valuable deductions regarding the degree of involvement and effects caused by the Orthodox clergymen in Transylvania in the Romanian nation, in terms of cultivating the national identity/nationality by:

- raising awareness of the Romanians' belonging to the Romanian nation/ethnicity, assuming the Transylvanian territory as the Country/Homeland of the ancestors and claiming it as a Romanian value, representing the Romanian language and the Eastern religion as the main resources in affirming Romanians as a nation, pursuing and fulfilling aspirations and national objectives - state organisation, progress, defence, assurance of fundamental rights and freedoms;
- generating by the Transylvanian Orthodox clergymen in the Romanian nation in Transylvania of specific human actions, aimed at pursuing Romanian national interests represented by self-determination and defence and identifying how to influence (propaganda), awareness and mobilisation of human thought, attitude and action exercised over the Transylvanian Romanians by the representatives of the Orthodox Church from Transylvania through a message (preaching). (see model below)

In carrying out the evaluative analysis, we took into account as attitudinal objects: social unity (Romanian Transylvanian community) and social process (national renaissance) and we resorted to considering and corroborating the data provided by social determinations revealed by these units, namely: national cohesion, patriotism, determination, accountability, etc.

In order to obtain objective information about the role played by the Orthodox clergymen in Transylvania in the struggle of the Romanian nation for the preservation of its identity values and identity-noological defence, we evaluated each speech (sermon, pastoral), detaching the attitudinal content and intensity of will expressed by the sender. The storage of words and the association of keywords within the dimensions of the national values, which we grouped taking into account their semantic and symbolic meaning, led me to identify some characteristics and to establish the specific structure of the analysed words.

In its content, the work focuses on the interaction of the political factor with the religious one, recovers documentary evidence that characterises the identity resistance of the Romanian community, analyses and values the mission of the Orthodox clergymen in relation to the Romanian national values and pursuing the national interests.

The PhD thesis was structured into six chapters (excluding the introduction that represents the first chapter of the paper) that systematically include all aspects necessary for scientific edification and understanding of the subject which is incumbent on the title of the work. The summary content of the chapters is as follows:

In Chapter II, I present some aspects related to the mission of the Orthodox clergy in the Byzantine geopolitical architecture, in order to understand the traditional origins and coordinates that characterise the mission of the Orthodox Church in the world and then define the nation, national identity and national values. The testimonies recorded by the historical regression made in the Chapter 'The mission of the Orthodox clergy and the defence in the Byzantine geopolitical conception' claim that the Orthodox clergymen wanted to take part in the political decision and became involved in shaping the social life, feeling obliged to imprint on the world the Christ's call to truth, unity and virtue, contributing to the support of the interests and values of the state, which they considered that it has to fulfil by its actions the role of an arm of God in the world. During the Byzantine Empire, it is noted that the defence process had as a guiding principle the acceptance of the ethnicity of peoples and the attenuation of this diversity through the Orthodox faith as an identity link, which had an essential role in shaping the Romanesque identity of people who were part of the empire.

In Chapter II, we defined the nation, national identity and national values, we explained the process of their formation and at the same time, we made a conceptualisation of the relationship between religion and these notions trying to explain the relationship between Orthodoxy and identity-cultural defence.

In order to facilitate the process of understanding the role played by the clerical mission through communication, education and culture in the formation of the values contained in the matrix of national identity on the one hand and the process of national defence on the other hand, we resorted to defining the following concepts: homeland, national consciousness, national interest, patriotism, heroism, nationalism, civil cohesion and national language.

The research in this chapter led me to note the fact that the process of national defence cannot function without the spiritual and motivational baggage offered by national consciousness and interest.

In Chapter III, I address aspects that characterise the Romanian identity and I argue the fact that Orthodoxy represents a component of the Romanian national matrix.

In chapter IV, I present the model established by Saint Andrei Şaguna regarding the relationship of the Orthodox Church with the Romanian nation and state power. Recalling the

testimonies about Saint Andrei Şaguna recommends him as a true leader in the leadership of the Romanian nation in Transylvania, due to the fact that he met the following qualities:

- the conscience and the sense of duty to get involved with all his being in the struggle of the Romanians on the national field;
- assuming the role of representative of all Romanians;
- strategic vision - cultivating and exploiting the relationship with representatives in Vienna;
- courage, determination and spirit of sacrifice;
- adopting the peaceful path - using the cultural weapon in the pursuit of the national desideratum.

The historiographical data fits the Metropolitan Andrei Şaguna into the patterns of a personality who knew how to overcome the shortcomings of fragmentation, succeeding through his persuasive force to mobilise the energies of the Romanian nation in the direction of national struggle, offering through the Bylaws of Organisation of the Orthodox Church the space and means for fulfilling these aspirations.

The retrieval of information on the involvement of Metropolitan Andrei Şaguna on the political scene enlightens us on the fact that he designed the struggle for obtaining national rights (recognition of the nation, use of the Romanian language, participation in political life, etc.) in line with the participation of all Romanians in the constitutional life and the electoral process, qualifying them as being together with the activist and patriotic spirit, real tools in pursuing the Romanian national desideratum.

The national activity of Metropolitan Andrei Şaguna externally focused on the following coordinates:

- Saint Andrei Şaguna endeavoured to obtain the goodwill of the representatives from Vienna in support of the national cause of the Romanians, assuring them of the citizen's loyalty, of maintaining order and of the observance of the social duties by the Romanians;
- The Metropolitan of Transylvania showed fine diplomatic skills (persuasion, knowledge of protocol, use of German and Hungarian, maintaining friendship with some of the influential people at the Court of Vienna, etc.) in supporting the Romanian cause.

The virtue that helped Saint Andrei Şaguna to fight for the rise of the Romanian nation in Transylvania in all aspects - political, economic, social, religious, etc. aspect - was

his holistic vision of designing actions to pursue national interests. Therefore, the primate of the Orthodox Church managed to harmonise: the burning desire with balance and diplomacy; the uniqueness and personality of the people with the common motto and the confessional difference with the awakening of the national interest, managing to engage the entire energy of the Romanian nation under the same standard.

The registered historical testimonies confirm that Saint Andrei Şaguna based the struggle for national emancipation on the cultivation and manifestation of the competitive spirit of Romanians in all areas of social life: politics, education, culture, agriculture and industry.

Referring to the idea that a war cannot be won without the application of an intelligent strategy, Saint Metropolitan Andrei Şaguna considered that the formation of an intellectual class to cultivate identity values within the Romanian nation in Transylvania is a condition without which the process of national revival would not have been fully achievable; as a result of which he paid special attention to this cultural component of the national struggle by training in the Church schools which he managed the future teachers, who would take this mission to the realm of the mind and soul of the Romanians.

In Chapter V, I research the role of the mission of the Orthodox Church in Transylvania in promoting education on national grounds.

In Chapter VI, I evaluated the manner and the degree of involvement of the Orthodox clergymen in the struggle of the Romanian nation for the fulfilment of the Romanian national desideratum. The results of the research highlight the reality that in terms of the Transylvanian space, the Orthodox Church was politically and culturally the representative and bearer of the national character of Romanians and thus was one of the main factors in building national identity.

In Chapter VII, I interpreted and detached the meanings transmitted by the pastorals and speeches of the Orthodox clergymen from Transylvania regarding the Church's mission in Transylvanian society.

Highlighting this reality by recalling historical facts led me to include the institution of the Orthodox Church in the list of geopolitical actors and to note that researching the mission of the Orthodox clergymen and their involvement in the life of the nation states is a topic of interest to academia.

The contents of the research of the meanings transmitted by the pastorals and speeches of the Orthodox clergymen in Transylvania published in church press set out the idea according to which the Transylvanian clerical order had the role of culturalising and

training the people in order to stimulate them in the following directions that lead to the nation-state building: the desire to exist as a nation, the achievement of cohesion in feeling and thinking, the coherent politico-social organisation, the formulation and inoculation of the national ideological creed, the cultivation of the national values and interests by mobilising the resources of the nation politically, culturally, economically, patriotic actions and heroism, as well as building the national state on the basis of national defence that involves acquiring and protecting the following values: independence, self-determination, defence of national territory, spiritual and physical protection of citizens, and governance in accordance with the needs, values and aspirations of the nation. (see figures 5, 6 and 8)

The Transylvanian Orthodox hierarchs emphasised in their speeches that the Romanian Orthodox Church is within the Romanian nation a determining factor of moral discipline, the supreme ground of the civil order and a decisive criterion of nationality.

The Orthodox clergymen in Transylvania transmitted to the Romanians in their speeches to obey the moral laws and to fulfil them as much as possible, because the observance of the evangelical order and morality in the community represents a virtue and an indispensable human resource for what the progress of a nation means; they communicated the fact that the manifestation of respect for the Romanian Law involves the integration in the symphony of the whole (man, nature, God), it is a mysterious manifestation of national identity and a plasticisation of contemplating the order of creation providentially maintained by God according to His wisdom, which can also be understood as a result of studying the spiritual, artistic and physical forms in which human life is circumscribed.

The representatives of the Romanian Orthodoxy aimed to use the religious faith as a motivational support for the formation of attitudes and the development of national revival actions according to the saying: ‘being a good Orthodox Christian means being a good Romanian.’

The results of the research show that the Orthodox Church in Transylvania has engaged politically and socially in the fight for respecting the rights of its (Romanian) believers in accordance with its humanitarian vocation to free the Romanian community from suffering, exploitation and injustice.

The Orthodox clergy together with the Romanian believers from Transylvania worked together to maintain their national being, their tongue and faith in the tumult of the difficult challenges of the time, sacrificing themselves in the fight for preserving the national identity and pursuing the Romanian national aspirations.

The results of the study confirms that the Orthodox Church offered to the Transylvanian Romanians the possibility and the spiritual and material support to be able to resist in the ancestral spiritual womb (Eastern Christianity), not accepting the religion propagated by the Austro-Hungarian commandment; it cultivated and preserved in the Romanian community the consciousness of unity based on the same Romanian language and ethnogenesis, thus creating the premises for the struggle of resistance against Hungarianisation.

The thesis attests to the fact that, through the Orthodox Christianity, the Romanian nation stood out in the European area, preserving its own identity and consequently imprinted on the national defence a spiritual-religious dimension.

The clergymen of the Romanian Orthodox Church in Transylvania influenced the field of defence of the Romanian nation through several activities, among which we can mention the following: capitalisation of historical testimonies attesting the continuity and length of Romanians in the Romanian national area; cultivating the feeling of love and devotion towards the Motherland and its own Nation by cultivating, raising and transmitting the Romanian language, Orthodox worship, national culture and symbols, myths and common memories, historical traditions and community rituals, which have a special role in the construction of a Romanian identity structure; stimulating the creative forces of the nation, its qualities, its skills and genius; correcting defects and weaknesses and keeping alive the moral strength of the nation; creating the community feeling and affirming the superiority of the interests of the Romanian nation in relation to those of groups or individuals; unifying the forces of the Nation for the realisation of national interests; awakening the national consciousness in the sense of asserting the right to freedom, independence, sovereignty and social progress.

The involvement of the servants of the Romanian Orthodox Church in Transylvania for the reunification of the Country recognises an important role for the Church in the fight for the restoration of the territorial unity of Romania. At the same time, the cultural and patriotic activity of the church publications aimed at developing a popular national mentality contributed to the promotion of the Romanian national consciousness and the loyalty of Romanians to the desideratum of founding the unitary Romanian State.

Without claiming an exhaustive presentation of the studied issues, I believe that my endeavour will contribute to the further deepening of the topic, as well as to the identification



of the related topics that involve the paradigmatic capitalisation of the Romanian Orthodox Church's relationship with the Romanian nation.