

**“ALEXANDRU IOAN CUZA” UNIVERSITY OF IASI  
FACULTY OF HISTORY**

**PH.D. THESIS  
Summary**

**THE CATHOLIC PRESS IN ROMANIA IN THE  
FIRST HALF OF THE 20<sup>TH</sup> CENTURY**

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The main topic of this thesis is represented by the catholic press in Romania. What we would like obtain at the end of our research is an overview of the evolution of the catholic community in Romania with the help of its printings. This approach follows three different and complementary directions – the first one refers to the evolution of the means of communication within the Catholic Church (in relation with the existent situation in other states with a powerful catholic tradition like Spain, Italy and France); the second one reveals the situation of the catholic publications in Romania having in the center of the research the printings from the dioceses of Bucharest and Iasi; the third one presents analytically the unification attempts of the Romanian catholic press – whose role is to complete the picture over the catholic press in Romania and, also, over its role and place in the church and in society.

This thesis is intended to be a unitary research of the catholic press in Romania in the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century (and more exactly of the publications from the dioceses of Bucharest and Iasi, due to the existence of a Greek-catholic press in Transylvania that is not the direct object of our study but it is used in comparison with the Romanian Latin catholic press, as it is the case of the Hungarian press or other ethnic groups’) from a concrete perspective of the direct research of the primary sources.

Our research aims to identify and define the social-political coordinates of this period, to highlight the events and the measures that concern the beginning and the evolution of the catholic press, its deficiencies in consolidation before and after The Great Union, to detect the target public of the catholic press and to establish the decisive

criteria and norms (taken by the Holy See) that made a publication to be considered a catholic one.

Furthermore, the center of our research is dominated by the Romanian Roman-catholic press, but, in order to create a scientific comparative analysis we would like to begin with a general presentation and evaluation of the catholic press in Romania (which also includes the unitary press and that of the catholic minorities: Hungarian, German) and a pollster of the catholic mass-media from three countries with an imposing catholic and press tradition and a high level of culture and civilization, for instance Spain, Italy and France.

We intend to analyze the platforms and themes of the catholic publications (which have not been evaluated in a complex manner yet) and also to highlight the factors that marked the beginning of the catholic press. Moreover, we present its quantitative and qualitative increase/ decreasing throughout the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Two other objectives of our research are the following:

1. highlighting the Catholic Church's protective role concerning the perennial values of the Christian faith and also the means of communication that do not accomplish the norms adopted by the catholic press;
2. revealing the combative attitudes of the Catholic Church towards those elements considered to destabilize and destruct the Christianity and the Church (and also the sectarians, militant atheism, state's involvement in spiritual problems, etc).

The history of the press may be regarded as a complementary domain of the general history, the newspaper (together with the other publications) representing an important source for the historical research; this source, which often has a high level of subjectivism, is correlated with the reality, with the spirit of the age, with the intrigues and the problems specific to those times. That is why this information (corroborated with other historical sources) may offer the researcher an important scientific basis. Being an invention of the modern time, the press measures both the cultural level of a country and its degree of development.

The Pope's authority at its climax may be understood only due to the existence of a European clergy with Latin knowledge and of a certain conception over the world shared practically unanimously; taking this into account, the bilingual intellectuality

mediated between sky and earth using Latin and the local language. The gradual decline of the interdependent marks that represent the basis of the medieval society (firstly in the Western Europe and then everywhere), under the impact of the economical changes, of the social and scientific discoveries and also the quick development of means of communication, created a deep gap between cosmology and history, destroying the concepts that were at the basis of the church's creation, in its medieval form<sup>1</sup>.

The Catholic Church's centralization, volume and universality stand on two extremely important elements: the existence of a unique "official" language: Latin (that assured the unity of the whole Catholic Church no matter of its geographical extension) and, secondly, the control and the access over the printing and the book production processes<sup>2</sup> (in a certain historical period). Nevertheless, they disappeared with the "old regime's" decay and the creation of the liberal state, which repositioned the church in the new social-political order. In this context, the Vatican adapted to the new reality, reorganized and modernized itself, its main purpose being to maintain its unity and centralization, created around the Pontiff using modern means. That is the reason why the press is considered one of the most important and useful instruments.

On the other hand, despite the cessions in the secular reality, the Holy See defended its universal position as an institution in competition with the state, in the context of a society more and more dominated by the presence of the State that wants to monopolize all the social activity. According to this perspective, the Vatican's positions appeared to be more and more retrograde, as far as the defense of its immunities and privileges and, also, its resistance in front of the State's process of modernization are concerned. The State, detaching progressively from the divine sovereignty and applying the politics' modern and rational conception, managed to impose the constitutional liberties, the democracy and the religion in some territories where the Holy See could not reach with the medieval facility. Meanwhile, the State's self comprehension, born from the slow erosion of the social feudal order induced the authorities to legitimate the

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<sup>1</sup> Benedict Anderson, *Comunități imaginate. Reflecții asupra originii și răspândirii naționalismului*, Editura Integral, București, 2000, p. 39.

<sup>2</sup> Idem, *op. cit.*, p. 14-23.

secularized State with an autonomous sovereignty, by virtue of its wish for unity and order<sup>3</sup>.

At the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the Catholics' way of manifestation in public life changed. Therefore, the Catholic Church began to pay more attention to the social means of communication and to the whole mass-media phenomenon<sup>4</sup>. The documents issued by the Church's hierarchical authorities and the development of the catholic communication institutions highlighted the importance accorded to the press, but also the non-existence of a coherent long-term plan regarding the means of communication. The Vatican's main aims were to uniform the Catholicism (as a result of the Catholic Church's reorganization in the modern society) through mass-media and the increase of a unitary catholic vision concerning the society's evolution.

The methodological basis of these investigations was in relation with the fundamental principles of the modern historiography<sup>5</sup>. The exegesis was elaborated analyzing an important number of documents of different categories in order to render the research a high degree of objectivity. The data study according to the dialectic principle was oriented in a chronological and comparative-historical perspective, that allows the subject's equidistant evaluation (in general) and the components' precise research (in particular). This research's objective feature is rendered by the application of the principles of argumentation and phenomena motivation. The proposed chronological period is the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. We chose this period because the century's beginning is the same with the appearance of the Romanian Roman catholic press in the dioceses of Iasi and Bucharest, whereas the last years from the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century represent the period when communism installed in Romania, moment that

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<sup>3</sup> Șerban Turcuș, *Sfântul scaun în relațiile internaționale. Între societatea perfectă și poporul lui Dumnezeu*, Editura România Press, București, 2008, p. 29-30.

<sup>4</sup> The means of communication in general – the press and the literature in particular – become and create a space of the solidarity. Beginning with the modern time, the Church regarded the press in this way and tried to use this phenomenon, to assume it or, at least, to refer it to its own principles. The newspapers became a way to maintain the cohesion of the Catholicism's unity in the whole world, no matter of the country, language and nationality. This fact was also proved by the organization of events such as The World Exhibition of the Catholic Press, The World Congress of the Catholic Press, by the creation of some institutions whose role was to reunite the press activity (Annex 32 and Annex 43; ASV, *Fondul Archivio della Nunziatura Apostolica in Romania 1920-1933*, busta 19, fascicolo 59, f. 690-710).

<sup>5</sup> Silvia Grosu, „Valențele presei clericale din Basarabia (1918-1940)”, in *Studii și cercetări de istorie a presei*, volum II, anul II, Iași, 2009, p. 86.

marked the catholic press' forced disappearance in our country. However, in order to explain some situations related to the Catholic Church's conception towards the social means of communication, we had to expand the chronological period to the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century when it took place a new settlement of the Church in relation with the modern society and with the state. Moreover, at that moment the press had an important role in transmitting this new vision in all the catholic communities in the world. We also exceeded the superior chronological limit to present the stipulations of the Second Vatican Council related to the social means of communication because they synthesize the evolution of the church's vision over this field until that moment and they also unify the dispersed measures that had been taken until then, creating a unitary plan for the catholic mass-media development. The extension of the historical period settled at the beginning was determined by our wish to complete the subject researched. We elaborated the theoretical and methodological support of our study absorbing the studies in this domain referring to the premises, the conditions and the factors that conditioned the trajectory of the catholic press' diversification and consolidation process during the analyzed period. The traditional methods of research combined with the modern techniques increase the objectivity and bring the reader the certitude of an equilibrated analysis of this paper's topic.

This thesis is structured in three chapters with more subchapters and a volume separated by the appendix which contains unprecedented documents (some of them from the secret Archive of the Vatican) and photos. The first chapter – *The Catholic Church and the modern means of social communication* – is structured in three subchapters: *The Catholic Church and mass-media*, *The role of the press within the Church*, *The history of the Catholic Church's doctrine and its vision over the means of communication*, *The evolution of the press in Spain, Italy and France*. We present the general background of development of the means of communication within the Church, its conception regarding mass-media and its place in society, the mission of the catholic press. In addition to this, there is a short history of the Holy See's vision over this phenomenon (as it rendered in the doctrine of the Magisterium) and a synthesis concerning the catholic press' development and features in three states with a long catholic tradition and press, having

an important role in the evolution of the Catholic Church and its new settlement in the modern society.

In *The influence of the catholic intellectual environment from the West over the Catholic Church and the means of information in the public life*, we present and analyze the role of the centered created by some catholic laic intellectuals around some catholic publications from the West. They influenced the structure and the evolution of the Church's conception over the means of communication (we will show how the social-political situation from these states affected the church's position towards mass-media and the measure in which the Vatican was interested in the creation of a catholic movement in the social-political area, with the help of the press). The study *Giuseppe Chiaudano and the model of the catholic newspaper* – was very important for our research because we identified the norms and the conditions for the creation and the development of a catholic publication, but also its role and place within the Church and the modern society (the work cited here was endorsed by the Holy Father and this fact legitimated it and offered it an official position).

To continue, our research follows the chronological evolution of the Magisterium's interventions in the field of communication and we give examples from the church's documents that the Pope adopted along the time. The first part of this subchapter - *The Magisterium's interventions until the pontificate of the Pope Pius X* - represents a return in time, even from the first pontifical interventions related to the books' and printings' spreading until the Pope Pius X. A special part in this historical evolution is accorded to the document adopted by the First Vatican Council: *Syllabus and the First Vatican Council*, which repositioned the Church in the contemporary society where the press is given special attention. Thus, the press became a way to evangelize and to spread the christian message. In the last part, - *The Magisterium's interventions in the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century* –we present the results and the evolution in time of the Church's conception over the means of social communication during the period chosen for our research.

Although, at a first sight, one can have the impression of duplicating the information, we decided to structure in this way the first two subchapters (to introduce the information related to the means of communication's theory, adopted by the Church

in the modern time, the level of the evolution of the conception over the press, the way in which it evolved and its aim) before presenting the historical evolution concerning the pontifical interventions over the community (where, inevitably, we encounter additions and a duplication of the information from the first subchapter) due to the fact that the center of our research is represented by the Church's conception over mass-media in the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century and, subsidiary, the road made until we studied the matter concerned (having also its relevance).

*The evolution of the press in Spain, Italy and France* (structured also in three parts dedicated to the press in the three catholic states mentioned above) presents information about the means of communication and the manner in which the press developed in these states, but also how it was influenced by the social-political evolution. This short but necessary introduction was made in order to compare it with the situation of the catholic press in Romania, considering the major existing differences (especially from the point of view of the catholic confession statute) under the aspect of the catholic tradition, of the development of the press, of the culture and the society's modernization.

The main study of this research is – *The catholic press in the dioceses of Iasi and Bucharest in the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century* – that is structured in three subchapters with more parts. In the first subchapter - *The Catholic Church in Romania* – we sketch the Catholic Church's position in the country, its organization, the relation with the state and the social-political changes in the first half of the 20th century. Then, in *The Catholic press in Romania. General remarks* – we realize an inventory and radiography of the catholic publications during the period mentioned above (starting from the genesis of the catholic press in Romania) focusing our attention on the Greek-catholic printings from Transylvania. Finally, the last subchapter of the second chapter – *The catholic publications from the archdioceses of Bucharest and the dioceses of Iasi* – presents the printings from the dioceses in the geographical area of Moldavia and Wallachia (the basis of our analysis) and it is structured in several parts that include information about the publications' typology, the language in which they were written, their membership in missionary orders (*The press in Romanian, The press in German, Diocesan Publications, Franciscan publications*) , their short history, the introduction of the editors and collaborators. Moreover, we compare the technical features (*Editors and collaborators,*

*The comparative analysis of the catholic publications from the dioceses of Bucharest and Iasi, from a technical point of view*). This chapter is a descriptive one because our intention was to create a picture of the catholic publications from the dioceses mentioned above, through the direct research of these sources (completed by documents from the Archive) in order to establish the aim, the differences and the similitude with the catholic publication from the West, to identify the main features of their target audience, of their spreading, of the existence of specialists and press associations.

The final part of this thesis – *Ways and attempts to unify the Romanian catholic press*- represents *the red thread*, the main idea and the absolute novelty of our research. An extremely important feature of the Church's adaptation process to the new social, political, economical and cultural realities is given by the creation of some institutions and events in order to organize and control mass-media (and, implicitly, the catholic press) in all the geographical areas of the planet, imposing specific norms, principles and mutual directions of action specific to the church and its vision over the evolution of the society. These institutions and events hinted at the press, created and developed by the Church, were representative and had a strong impact on the whole international catholic community. They were coordinated by the Vatican, under the Pope's direct supervision and encouragement and they concentrated the all the power of the Catholic Church. Romania's participation at the World Congresses and Exhibition of the catholic press represented an important moment in the developmental process of the Romanian catholic press and for the Catholicism unification attempts in our country. Therefore, a constant element in these actions was represented by the wish to create a catholic daily paper in the capital of our country in order to present a diversity of themes, including politics, and to exceed the confessional barrier. The importance paid to a newspaper publishing resulted from its features and typology. In a catholic daily paper could be presented the society's most important and actual problems, certain polemics and visions over the social, political, economical, diplomatic and religious events. The newspaper in question should reflect the relation between the State – the Catholic Church – the Romanian Orthodox Church. A catholic daily paper could inform the Vatican about the Romanian society's pulse regarding some extremely important aspects for the Church and it would have been the Vatican's way of propaganda in Romania. The wish of the bishops,

archbishops and also of those who took care of the catholic press was to create, sustain and develop a strong catholic daily paper in the capital of our country in order to represent and transmit the Catholic Church's position towards the contemporary problems. Meanwhile, it was supposed to answer the challenges and the attacks against the Church. This wish was doubled by the Vatican's vision about the creation of an exponential newspaper for the catholic community in Romania. All these considered, the publication would have been an element of cohesion and unification of the Catholics through press (considering the Christians diversity in Romania, especially after 1918, when there were more ethnic groups, two different rites: Roman and Greek catholic and also a multitude of missionary orders: Franciscans, Jesuits, Dominicans, Assumptionists, etc).

The importance of this publication was fully understood and, consequently, there were many projects whose aim was to follow the Romanian Catholicism unity and the creation of some organizations and institutions through which it could act unitary. However, this project accomplished only partially, with the Vatican's undisguised intervention through the Apostolic Nuncio and direct financing. The result consisted in publishing the newspaper *Albina (The bee)* but, unfortunately, its appearance stopped after a short period. This fact proves the native hierarchs' limited capacity to collaborate efficiently and to exceed their personal pride and different visions regarding the organization and the development of the press and of the Catholicism in Romania.

The third chapter is structured in four subchapters which present the different attempts to unify the catholic press in Romania, its amplitude and organization, but, also, the manner in which the Romanian catholic publications manifest themselves at the international events organized by the church that regarded the means of social communication.

In *The participation of Romania at the World Congress and Exhibition of the catholic press* we analyze the way in which the Romanian catholic press presented itself at two extremely important events in the field of communication, organized under the Vatican's patronage. The World Congress of the catholic press was an event with several editions, being organized periodically. It was addressed to the catholic specialists in press, within the *universal* catholic community and its role was to adopt mutual directions for

an efficient development of the catholic press in the world and also the main themes for these publications (the structure of the institutions responsible with the catholic press' evolution). The World Exhibition of the catholic press was the most important event that took place in the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century regarding the means of communication and aimed at the promotion of the catholic press in the whole world and its exposure in society. The participation of Romania at these international events was poor and it showed the lack of communication and unity of the Romanian catholic community, but also low degree of development, in comparison with other states like Hungary and Poland.

*The projects of a catholic daily paper in Romania* - reveals the numerous attempts to create a catholic newspaper in the capital of our country, whose aim was to represent all the Catholics in Romania and to write about social-political problems, exceeding in this way the confessional barriers (we present- as a case study – a project of the AGR). Neither the intervention nor the direct support of the Vatican managed to unify the diversity of catholic forces in Romania, to determine them to collaborate in order to accomplish this wish of the Romanian catholic press. The subchapter *Albina daily paper* offers concrete examples for the lack of communication and collaboration as far as the press of the unit and the Latin Catholics is concerned – with the clear specification that this project was initiated and financed by the Vatican for three years (the period when it appeared).

At the end of our research - *The institute Presa Bună*- we present a successful initiative of promoting the catholic press in Romania. This was the idea of the diocesan priests from Iasi, and more exactly, it was the personal work of the monsignor Anton Gabor who tried to found institutions of press with a great national significance. Although there were other attempts to unify and develop (following the western model) the Romanian catholic press in the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century (many of these initiatives came from the Vatican and had external funding) they did not succeed from various causes. However, we think that the main reason was the lack of collaboration between the diversity of hierarchical authorities in Romania which, as stated before, represented different rites, ethnic groups and missionary orders. Even if they did not succeed to found some functional unitary national organisms for managing and developing the catholic press in Romania there were registered several attempts in this respect, some with a

regional character, others within the diocese, some of them being representative for the missionary orders, others for the unit rite. Therefore, they brought a significant contribution to the Christians' cultural development, to the defense of the Catholic Church in our country and to the spreading of the Christian message.

This thesis represents only the beginning of the study of the catholic press in Romania. Subsequently, it can be developed on several directions like: the creation of a complete general picture with the catholic publication in Romania, the precise identification of the obstacles that made difficult the realization of the unitary expression of the Romanian catholic press, the comparison between the level of development of the catholic publications in our country and those from countries where the catholic confession is a minority, etc.

The creation of the catholic press in Romania took place at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century thanks to the personal initiatives of some priests returned in the country after they studied in the West (Italy, Germany). Consequently, they followed the example of some catholic publications from the countries mentioned above and they published several catholic magazines (their theme being strictly religious, with cultural and social information but almost no politics).

The Old Kingdom had not a tradition of the Romanian catholic press. In Transylvania, the struggle for national unity combined with that for the units' confessional freedom developed some publications and created a tradition of the Greek Catholic press even from the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century (these printings main feature being not the religious one, but the membership of the intellectual and political elite from Transylvania to the unit rite, supporting Romanians' fight for unification).

Therefore, the development of the catholic press in Romania did not follow a good plan or the initiative of the church's hierarchy. It was realized from some priests' personal initiatives (that were approved and encouraged by the bishops) following an important western model. Whereas the western catholic countries –where in the process of development of the religious press (which had an important political component that Romania lacked)- took part laic intellectuals who sustained the politics of the church – in Romania the press initiative belonged almost entirely to the clergy (there was no laic implication).

The existence of these two rites and of more catholic ethnic groups made this manifestation in the field of the press not unitary. The units and the Latin had different visions regarding the role of the catholic press and even the degree of implication of the Catholics in public and political life. The Greek Catholics militated constantly and met the accent on the national feature, on defending the confessional freedom and the unity; the Latin saw the Catholicism's universal feature, treating many religious subjects (although the Vatican accepted gradually the existence of a national Catholicism). This lack of unity of the press was perceived by both the Catholics in Romania and the Vatican. It is true that existed more attempts and actions to unify the catholic press (and once with it the Romanian Catholicism): creating a daily paper in the capital of our country representative for all the Catholics, creating some nation associations of press, a unitary participation at international events in the communication field organized by the Vatican. Nonetheless, the Romanian hierarchs kept their different visions over the evolution and the development of the press and of the Romanian Catholicism and they did not manage to exceed their personal pride.

The direct intervention of the Vatican managed to change this reality only for a short period of time and only for some precise events. A good example in this respect is the daily paper Albina – appeared at the Vatican's clear disposition (the mobilization of the hierarchs in Romania was determined by the Nuncio in Bucharest) financed for three years only by the Holy See, whose role was to write about social-political topics. The newspaper in question stopped being published after three years because of the misunderstandings between the units and the Latin regarding its management and evolution. Except for the above mentioned newspaper, the majority of the Roman Catholic publications in Romania had a religious theme, without treating political topics like some unit publications where the two elements were mixed together.

This thesis relies on the analysis of the catholic printings in the diocese of Bucharest and Iasi, in the social-political context in the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. The wish to unify the Romanian catholic press was expressed much by all the catholic authorities. Nonetheless, it was not accomplished due to the fact that there were more unfinished projects for a catholic daily paper in the capital of our country to represent all the Catholics from Romania. In addition, there were not created any national media

institutions. The settlement of some institutions like The Institute “Presa Bună” from Iasi (and others) represented sporadic accomplishments as far as the development of the catholic press in Romania is concerned. However, they did not manage to exceed the confessional barrier, treating only classical religious themes, without writing about political topics (although the Vatican wanted some newspapers that could treat social-political themes in order to create a catholic political force in Romania that could address to the whole Romanian society).

The unification of the catholic press in Romania failed from several causes among which the misunderstandings between the two rites (unit and Latin), between the ethnic groups in the country regarding the evolution and the development of the catholic mass-media; an important factor was represented by the lack of the common national organisms or institutions. This lack of unity and action was noticed even by the Vatican that paid special attention to the situation in Romania and supported it in various manners. Its participation at international events (organized by the Holy See) in the field of communication – like The World Congress and Exhibition of the catholic press – proved the existence of some shortages: the lack of unity of the catholic Romanian press, its modest representation, the small number of publications, the lack of some specialists, the precarious funding and the lack of national organisms – in comparison with other western states and the neighbor states like Poland and Hungary (the conclusions drawn by the agents of the Romanian catholic press at these events).

Considering the development level of the Romanian society, the fact that the majority of the catholic community was from the village, the situations created due to the existence of two rites, of more ethnic groups and catholic missionary orders (all overlapping the fact that Romania was a state where the Romanian Orthodox Church dominated) for the Christians and the catholic clergy the importance of the press was a considerable one, but it could not exceed the confessional barrier in order to gain a unity of expression and manifestation.

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