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**Teodosie Athanasiu the Bishop of Roman  
(1912 -1923). Life and his Achievements**

- PhD Thesis -

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**Cluj-Napoca  
2016**

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## **Keywords:**

The Bishop Teodosie Athanasiu, Secular priest, Archbishop, Archimandrite, High Priest Vicar, Pre-Eminence Deputy, Bishop of Roman.

## **Summary**

It is well known the fact that the Bishopric of Roman, placed right in the middle of Moldavia, was throughout its existence a territory of passage and also a place of balance throughout this part of Romania. All those more than 70 Archbishops, who were lined up one after another over the centuries on the Bishop Seat of Roman, marked their time leaving things of paramount importance for the orthodox culture and spirituality. We must remember that, for their worthiness, the Holy Synod of the Romanian Orthodox Church has canonized, until nowadays, four of its great hierarchs, who, beside the good they did for this Eparchy, now they have become fervent prayers to the Merciful God.

Among those more than 70 hierarchs who shepherded and served this Eparchy of Roman since its establishment, it is also included the Bishop Teodosie Athanasiu (1912-1923), who was the fifty-seventh titular Bishop<sup>1</sup>, and who occupied the Bishop Seat from Roman, preaching in the early of twentieth century, in a difficult time for the Romanian State and also for the Romanian Orthodox Church.

Incomplete information, sporadic concerns on the topic, many overlooked elements, but also the need to know the realities of the Romanian society in that period between the late nineteenth century and early twentieth century, were the necessary impetuous drives for the research topic „Teodosie Athanasiu the Bishop of Roman (1912-1923). Life and Achievements”. Therefore, our research relates to one of the hierarchs, almost forgotten today, Teodosie Athanasiu the Bishop of Roman (1912-1923), the one who, for those times, tried to stem ignorance, malice and hatred in the society acting, firstly as a simple priest and then as a Bishop of the Ancient Seat of Roman, whose name is still preserved today only by those who studied the translations of the patristic comments.

I have structured the work in eight major chapters, each consisting of several subchapters, preceded by a short *Introduction*, where, besides the motivation of choosing this

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<sup>1</sup> *Anuarul Eparhiei Romanului*, Editura „Institutul de Arte Grafice Marvan S.A.R.”, București, p. 34.

topic, I have included also a brief overview of the life and work of Bishop Teodosie Athanasiu, using the social, political, cultural and religious climate of the age he lived in. In this introductory part I have analyzed also the current state of the topic research, presenting the documentary sources, especially those from the Archive of the Archbishopric of Roman and Bacău, and also two original manuscripts (written by the grandson and great-grandson of Bishop Teodosie Athanasiu) which have not been published until now, containing valuable data about the birthplace origin of Bishop Teodosie, the childhood, life and family of the Bishop and some facts and events occurred in his family over the years and which have not been known until nowadays.

The first chapter of the work - *The life of Bishop Teodosie Athanasiu (1852-1927)* - is structured on three subchapters, namely: Place of Birth. Region name and history; Secondary and Seminary Studies; Fellow at the Faculty of Theology in Athens (1893-1898).

In the first subchapter I have given some data related to the place of birth, as well as some information related to the family of Bishop Teodosie. The one who would be the Archbishop of Roman, The Bishop Teodosie Athanasiu (1912-1923), saw the daylight in Sascut, Bacău County<sup>2</sup>, in October 19, 1852<sup>3</sup>, within the family of the priest Teodor and Ecaterina Atanasiu from Sascut. The priest Teodor Atanasiu had six children, four boys and two girls. The first born was Theodor, the future Bishop of Roman, who at his baptize received his father's name, after an ancient tradition that existed in Moldova of that age. Of those four boys, two of them became servants of altars, namely Gheorghie Atanasiu a parish priest at the „Precista” Church in Bacău and sub-archbishop of „Bistrița de Sus Region” from the Archbishopry of Bacău County, after 1886; another brother Neculai Atanasiu became priest and Archbishop in Focșani, where he activated a long time. The last and youngest of those six children of the priest Teodor Atanasiu from Sascut, was Ion Athanasiu (1868-1925), a great scholar of the Romanian Veterinary Medicine and member of the Romanian Academy, former Rector of University of Bucharest (1912-1925), named also „the father of the Romanian Physiotherapy” and recognized as an UNESCO Scholar.

In the second subchapter I have presented the schooling time - Secondary and Seminary Studies. Bishop Teodosie Athanasiu began his primary education at the school in his native village Sascut, school which took the name of his younger brother for a long time - School „Prof. I. Athanasiu” until the communist regime was established in Romania. He

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<sup>2</sup> Scarlat, Porcescu, *Episcopia Romanului*, Editura „Filocalia”, Roman, 2008, p. 326.

<sup>3</sup> Dosar nr. 17 din 29 martie 1913, *Corespondență cu Sf. Mitropolii și Episcopii și Sf. Sinod*, arhiva Arhiepiscopiei Romanului și Bacăului, p. 498.

followed the Seminary Studies from Roman and Iași, and after being married in 1871, he was ordained as a deacon on October 14 in the same year, with the occasion of the Episcopal Cathedral dedication day in Roman, by Bishop Isaia Vicol.

In the third subchapter I have presented the time spent by Bishop Teodosie Athanasiu as a Fellow of the Faculty of Theology in Athens (1893-1898). Due to an adverse event occurred in his family (his wife, who had been married for 20 years, died of a „terrible disease” in 1892), Bishop Teodosie Athanasiu being at that time Archbishop of Bacău County, resigned in 1893, from this position, took a study leave and went with a scholarship to the Faculty of Theology in Athens, in the autumn of the same year, returning in the country in 1898 with a PhD title in Theology and with the Doctoral Thesis published in Athens in 1898, „an unequaled performance at that time”<sup>4</sup>, entitled: „Περι των Ελληνικων σχολων εν Ρουμανια, 1644-1821, και περι της επιρροης αυτων επι του τε τρησκευτικου κμι πολιτικου εδοφους, meaning (About Greek Schools in Romania (1644-1821) and their influence in the religious and secular field)”<sup>5</sup>, paper written in ancient Greek, „catalytic” dialect specific to the end of nineteenth century and which is today in the Archive of Roman and Bacău Archbishopric.

The second chapter of the work - *The time before the episcopate (October 14, 1871 - February 4, 1912)* consists of nine subchapters, where I have chronologically presented the important moments of Bishop Teodosie Athanasiu life, starting with taking his holy orders as Deacon (October 24, 1871) until his election as Bishop of Roman Eparchy on February 4, 1912.

In the first subchapter I have presented the ordination as a deacon which happened soon after graduation of Seminary studies in Iași, when the young Theodor Athanasiu married and followed the path of his father, the priest Teodor Atanasiu in Sascut, coming to Roman and submitting the study papers to be ordained. Here, he was taken under the high protection of Lieutenant Bishop of Roman, the Archbishop Isaia Vicol, and after submission of the study papers at the Bishopric Chancery and forwarding an application for ordain, the seminary student Theodor Athanasiu was ordained as deacon with the occasion of the Episcopal Cathedral dedication day in Roman, on October 14, 1871.<sup>6</sup> Here, at the Episcopal Cathedral in

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<sup>4</sup> Iuliu, Scriban, *op. cit.*, p. 103.

<sup>5</sup> Theodor, Athanasiu, *Peri ton Ellinikon scholon en Roumania 1644-1821 kai peri tis epirois afton epi tou te thriskeftikou kai politikou* (Asupra școlilor grecești din România 1644-821 și asupra influenței lor în spațiul ecleziastic și laic), ek ton tipografion „Ton Adelfon Perri”, Atena, p. 4.

<sup>6</sup> Dosar nr.6/1871, *Relativă la Chirotoniri și Chirothesii*, arhiva Arhiepiscopiei Romanului și Bacăului, p. 79.

Roman he served as a deacon for nine years, between 1871-1880, under three Bishops: Isaia Nicol, Calist Băcăoanul and Melchisedec Ștefănescu.

In the next three subchapters I have presented his ordain as a priest (December 25, 1879) and election as the Chairman of the Church Consistory (April 1, 1880) and Archbishop of Bacău County (1881- 1893), all these happening during Bishop Melchisedec Ștefănescu service time. Bishop Melchisedec Ștefănescu will be the one who will remark the deacon Theodor Athanasiu, becoming his protector and mentor but also the one who will propel him on the highest level of priesthood. Thus, in December 25, 1879 he was ordained by the Bishop Melchisedec Ștefănescu as a Secular priest in the Episcopal Cathedral in Roman, and from January 1 until April 1, 1880 he was appointed as Member and then Chairman of the Church Consistory. After the work as a Secular priest at the Episcopal Cathedral in Roman he was appointed by the Bishop Melchisedec Ștefănescu, in 1880, as a Parish priest at Church „Saints Emperors Constantine and Helene” in Bacău,<sup>7</sup> and after few months delegated as a Archbishop of Bacău County and appointed him in this position through the Decision no. 899 dated December 16, 1881.<sup>8</sup> The Bishop Melchisedec Ștefănescu chose the young priest Theodor Athanasiu (at that time he was only 29, being also the youngest Archbishop in the history of Bacău County), as Archbishop of Bacău County as we found out from a letter of that time: „...Then the Bishop replaced the resignation with a letter of dismissal, being recommended instead of the wronged Archbishop, the young Priest from the Bishopric, Theodor Athanasiu, handsome, good chancellor and eminent priest, the actual Bishop Teodosie, former Bishop of Roman, retired now at Saint Monastery Neamț”.<sup>9</sup>

Bishop Melchisedec was not wrong with this decision, so after ten years of service as Archbishop of Bacău County, his activity was successful, because in 1890, at the perseverance and impulse of Bishop Melchisedec Ștefănescu, the Archbishop Theodor Athanasiu, drew up a report of his work, entitled „Memorandum of the Orthodox Churches and Parishes State in Bacău County”, which was published in 1890, containing more than 70 pages.

This memorandum is considered to be the first „church monograph” of all the churches that existed in the late nineteenth century in Bacău County, and it is very important historically because it contains the start dates of all the churches and parishes from Bacău

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<sup>7</sup> Scarlat, Porcescu, *op. cit.*, p. 306.

<sup>8</sup> Dosar nr. 3 din 3 martie 1881, *Acta-relativa la numirea de sub Protoierei a Eparhiei Romanului*, arhiva Arhiepiscopiei Romanului și Bacăului, pp. 3-4.

<sup>9</sup>I., Gotcu, „Amintiri din viața Marelui Melchisedek, fost al Romanului (Iași, martie 1925)”, în rev. *Cronica Romanului*, anul II, Nr. 5, Roman, 1925, pp. 124-129.



County, many of these churches due to those time adversities after World War II have lost their archives or they have been scattered, making this report to be the basis of „the catalogues” in 1965 of all churches.

In this position, as the Archbishop of Bacău County, he will remain one more year after the death of Bishop Melchisedec Ștefănescu, exactly until the end of August 1893 (where we find the last address when he signed as the Archbishop of Bacău County), after remaining widower, he takes a study leave and goes to Athens where he completes his doctoral studies, returning in the country at the beginning of 1898.<sup>10</sup>

In the following subchapters I have presented the time after his returning from Athens, from 1898 until his election on the Bishop Seat from Roman - February 4, 1912. Due to his training session in Athens and his knowledge gained here, at his returning in the country, his merits were immediately recognized and appreciated by the people here, putting on the monastic robe in 1898, at Bogdana Monastery (the monk god father being the Archimandrite Ieronim - the brother of Bishop Melchisedec Ștefănescu), and also in the same year it has been given the honorary title as Archimandrite and was appointed with the title of Seat Archimandrite at Roman Bishopric<sup>11</sup>; in 1899, the Metropolitan Bishop of Moldova and Suceava, Iosif Naniescu, has appointed him the Abbot of Church „Sf. Spyridon” in Iași, and as a sign of great appreciation, the same Metropolitan Bishop gave him the rank of Archimandrite wear of mitre<sup>12</sup>. After the death of Bishop Iosif Naniescu he will return to Roman in 1902, being appointed by Bishop Gherasim Safirim as Abbot of Church „Precista Mare“. Here at Roman he will stay until the summer of 1909, when he is called by the Bishop Atanasie Mironescu in București and elected by the Sf. Synod, in May session 1909, as High Priest Vicar with the title of „Ploieșteanul”. After ordination he worked as a Vicar of Ungro-Vlahiei Mitropoly and Abbot of the Church „Domnița Bălașa” in București, and for few months (July 5, 1911 - February 1912) he was appointed as Pre-Eminence Deputy until 1912, when he was elected by the Sf. Synod, Bishop of Roman Eparchy<sup>13</sup>, on February 4, 1912.

The third chapter - *The Bishop of Roman (February 4, 1912 - February 1923)*, being structured in three subchapters, is dedicated to the election, appointment and enthronement of Bishop Teodosie Athanasiu, as the Bishop of Roman Eparchy. In the first two subchapters I have presented the territorial jurisdiction of Roman Eparchy and also the status of the Eparchy

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<sup>10</sup> Scarlat, Porcescu, *op. cit.*, p. 326.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibidem.*

<sup>12</sup> BOR, XXXIII(1909), Nr. 4, București, p. 451.

<sup>13</sup> Dosar nr. 3 din 1912, *Instalarea Prea Sântitului Episcop Theodosie în anul 1912*, arhiva Arhiepiscopiei Romanului și Bacăului, p. 4.

at the moment of Bishop Teodosie Athanasiu appointment. The third subchapter deals with the enthronement of Bishop Teodosie Athanasiu in Roman. After choosing the High Priest Teodosie „Ploieşteanu” on February 4, 1912 as the Bishop of Roman, it had to be the enthronement solemnity. Initially, the solemnity of receiving and enthronement of the new Bishop of Roman was scheduled for March 4, 1912, on a well established schedule. In reality, the event was on February 26, 1912. The new Bishop, Teodosie Athanasiu, arrived by train in Roman railway station, in the morning of that day, being received by the civil, ecclesiastical and military authorities. The procession accompanied the high hierarch and walked on Ştefan cel Mare Street, Precista Mare Square, until the Bishopric. For the success of this religious ceremony, the Prefecture of Roman County together with the Eparchial Center and the main institutions of the city (Archbishopry, the Army, the School, etc.) have drawn up a detailed schedule („The schedule for Bishop Teodosie of Roman enthronement - February 26, 1912”), which was published and given to all involved parties. According to the schedule of this solemnity, after meeting the hierarch in Roman railway station, in the morning of February 26, 1912, he was led by the local officials and by the clergy of Roman Archbishopry, on Stefan cel Mare Street, to Precista Mare Church and then to the Episcopal Cathedral. Here it was celebrated the Divine Liturgy Service, and at its end it took place the ceremony of the new Bishop enthronement. It has been read the metropolitan official letter and several speeches were held with this occasion.

The official letter of Metropolitan Bishop Pimen of Moldavia, addressed to Bishop Teodosie, on the occasion of his enthronement in the Eparchial Seat from Roman, was read by Priest Ioan Gotcu, the delegate of Moldova Metropolitan Bishop, which fulfilled the position of Chairman of the Metropolitan Consistory. Being a harsh winter the Metropolitan Bishop could not attend the ceremony that is why he sent the official letter and his message through a close collaborator. The Ministry of Cults and Education, has delegated to attend this event the administrator of the Church House, N. D. Chiriac, who sent a message and, with this occasion did the inventory of the Bishopric goods, in order to be taken the Bishop of the place. On behalf of the Eparchial Center, he addressed the words of welcome to the primate of Roman Eparchy, the Archimandrite Ilarion Mircea - the Vicar of Roman Bishopric, who dealt with the smooth progress of the appointment ceremony as well as the Bishopric goods inventory. According to the schedule, after the religious service in the cathedral, the new Bishop, was led to the bishop's residence, where he offered a dinner, receiving with this occasion congratulations from all those present.

The fourth chapter presents - *The administrative-domestic activity* being structured in six subchapters. In this chapter I aimed to introduce in the first four subchapters the organization and operation of the Episcopal Chancery, the organization of the archbishopries, parishes and sub-parishes, and also the status of the monasteries from Roman Eparchy during Bishop Teodosie Athanasiu time.

Shortly after the installation event of Bishop Teodosie, according to the church ordinances, the new hierarch had to provide each church a sanctified pall signed by him, as a superior church authority. Through address no. 799 of 1912, Bishop Teodosie Athanasiu submitted a request to the Ministry of Cults in order to manufacture 700 palls. They have been manufactured by Phillip Hass House in Bucharest, in three colors (red, yellow and blue), on satin and atlas, for parishes, their sub-parishes and monasteries in Roman Eparchy. Bishop Teodosie submitted to all Roman Eparchy Archbishops, a Circular Order no. 1591/1912, by which made known to them: „to send the picture with the names of the parishes, parochial churches and sub-parishes dedication day from that county for the distribution of the Holy pall”.<sup>14</sup>

Roman Eparchy consisted of four Archbishopries: Roman, Bacău, Putna and Tecuci. These Archbishopries were led by Archbishops, elected by Bishop Teodosie Athanasiu, the new hierarch, as we found out from the file regarding the „Correspondence with the Holy Mitrology of Moldavia and the Holy Synod” in 1913, where are presented the new appointments of Archbishops, and also some personal data about them: „The Archbishops of the county who are part of Roman Bishopric are: 1. Priest Teodor Zotta, Archbishop of Bacău County, born on October 26, 1877, in Valea Arinilor commune, Bacău County, with a Bachelor degree in Theology, appointed in December 1, 1912; 2. Priest Toma Petrescu, Archbishop of Putna County, born on February 14, 1869 in Focșani commune, Putna County, with a Bachelor degree in Theology, appointed in December 1, 1912; 3. Priest Manoliu Gheorghe, Archbishop of Roman County, born on December 20, 1862 in Crivești commune, Roman County, Inferior Seminary, named interim on January 15, 1905<sup>15</sup>; 4. The Archbishopry of Tecuci County was vacant, and sub-archbishop Vasilescu Ioan was appointed interim on May 1, 1908. On December 12, 1912 was appointed priest Ioan

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<sup>14</sup> Dosar nr. 3 din 1912, *Instalarea Prea Sfințitului Episcop Theodosie în anul 1912*, arhiva Arhiepiscopiei Romanului și Bacăului, p. 19.

<sup>15</sup> Dosar „Corespondența”, Arhiva „Parohiei Moldoveni I”, Protopopiatul Roman, anul 1919, p. 12. (Documente aflate în arhiva personală a Pr. Dr. Aurel Florin Tuscanu din Roman).

Andreescu, parish priest at the church „Sf. George” in Tecuci, Archbishop of Tecuci County.<sup>16</sup>

Once with the election of the new Archbishops, which took place in December 12, 1912, Bishop Teodosie Athanasiu has drawn them also coordinates in the mission they were entrusted: „1. Inspect churches whenever they think is convenient and report to the hierarch about the moral and material state of each; 2. Report the wrong things committed within the church or society; 3. Report death of a church servant, sending the Bishopric also the papers of the deceased that belonged to him; 4. Report hierarch the shortcomings of the churches in order to take necessary measures”.<sup>17</sup>

Throughout his work, as a supervisor of Roman Eparchy, Bishop Teodosie Athanasiu (1912-1923) enjoyed the relentlessly support of the archbishops he appointed at the beginning of his mandate in the difficult moments engulfed by our country. The collection of a great amount of money and food for the Romanian army, orphans and widows of war organized starting with 1913 until the end of the World War I, was supported promptly by the archbishops of Roman Eparchy counties, with the help of the priests from villages and towns succeeding to collect large amounts of money (i.e. at the proposal of Bishop Teodosie, in 1913, each priest in the Eparchy, but also non-clerical staff donated for the national fleet 10% of their salary per one month<sup>18</sup>) and food for these purposes.

Throughout his service in Roman, Bishop Teodosie Athanasiu will enjoy the respect and devotion of the priests who expressed through a telegram in 1914, „the expression of their feeling of deep respect and obedience towards the parental love and big sacrifice he shows to clergy and church, and ask the good God to give him many years for the benefit of their Holy Church”.<sup>19</sup>

Following secularization of the monastery fortunes dedicated, decided in December 1863, and expropriation of some monastic lands, as well as other laws during Al. I. Cuza Lord which stated an older age for those who wanted to wear monk cloth, some of the monasteries and convents in Roman Eparchy became parochial churches or sub-parishes churches, especially those which were dedicated.<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>16</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 515.

<sup>17</sup> Dosar nr. 4 din 1912, *Acta-relativa la numirea de sub Protoierei a Eparhiei Romanului*, arhiva Arhiepiscopiei Roamului și Bacăului, pp. 3-4

<sup>18</sup> Dosar Nr. 21/1913, *Sfânta Episcopie a Eparhiei Romanului- ofrandele pentru Flota națională*, arhiva ARB., p. 2.

<sup>19</sup> Dosar nr. 14/1914, *Corespondența...*, arhiva ARB, p. 38.

<sup>20</sup> Scarlat, Porcescu, *op. cit.*, p. 362.

In 1912, once with the appointment of Bishop Teodosie Athanasiu in Roman, there were running, in this Eparchy - at that moment, only with Roman, Bacău, Putna and Tecuci counties - two monasteries: Bogdana-Bacău Monastery for monks and Giurgeni-Roman Monastery for nuns and 13 convents, as we found out from the address no. 262 of February 29, 1912 submitted to the Abbot of Bogdana Monastery in order to be mentioned during services the new hierarch elected in the Bishop Seat in Roman: „...it is written to you to mention during all church services the name of his Pre-Eminence with no. 263 on February 29 for Convent M. Ocnei; no. 264 for Convent Brazi, Putna; no. 265 for Convent Balu, Putna; no. 266 for Convent Moșinoaiete, Putna; no. 267 for Convent Sihastru, Tecuci; no. 268 for Convent Giurgeni, Roman; no. 269 for Convent Troțușan Sf. Ioan; no. 270 for Convent Tarnița, Putna; no. 271 for Convent Valea Neagră, Putna”.<sup>21</sup>

Without doubt, one of the most significant contribution of Bishop Teodosie Athanasiu for the Nation Union War in 1916-1918 is the preparation of the monks and nuns in the monasteries as care taking persons in the campaign hospitals, as well as provision of accommodation spaces inside the monasteries for injured persons care, orphans sheltering, with remarkable results, as Bishop Teodosie himself urged the monks and nuns: „The time being for sacrifices.... considering that these would be the most indicated places for sheltering of these offspring dear to us, we decide that all holy monasteries in Roman Eparchy, guarded by God, have to receive as many children as possible, knowing that boys would be sent to the monks churches and girls to the nuns churches”.<sup>22</sup>

In the last subchapter I have presented *the domestic achievements* which Bishop Teodosie accomplished during his service in Roman. Bishop Teodosie Athanasiu was not mentioned in particular for domestic development, his achievements in this field being small and done in his early service years (1912-1913). His work in Roman was marked by the social and philanthropic spirit, large amounts of money being collected for the social causes faced in the World War I and afterwards.

However, Bishop Teodosie Athanasiu remains known in the history of Roman Eparchy with important works of modernization and redevelopment of Bishopric buildings from the early twentieth century, consisting of electricity connection for the Episcopal Cathedral in Roman and Eparchial Chancery, as well as water supply and sanitation works.

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<sup>21</sup>Dosar nr. 3 din 1912, *Instalarea Prea Sfântului Episcop Theodosie în anul 1912*, arhiva Arhiepiscopiei Romanului și Bacăului, p. 2.

<sup>22</sup>Dosar nr. 15 din aprilie 1913, *Dosarul lucrărilor privitoare la mobilizarea armatei române*, arhiva Arhiepiscopiei Romanului și Bacăului, p. 34

The fifth chapter - *The missionary pastoral activity* - is structured in three subchapters, where I have presented the activity of *reorganization of the cultural priesthood circles* in Roman Eparchy, which the Bishop Teodosie started in 1913, but also his care towards the clergy and believers manifested by sending several *pastoral letters* from the Episcopal Palace seeking the solidarity with those on the frontline.

Bishop Teodosie Athanasiu was a connoisseur of the priestly life, with its problems and needs, being also Archbishop of Bacău County, for 12 years, under the supervision of Bishop Melchisedec Ștefănescu, knowing very well what their activities were, in general. In order to intensify pastoral activity, enlighten people, build up religious and moral behavior, and contribute to the promotion of Christian culture and life, in the interest of spiritual training of priests in Roman Eparchy, Bishop Teodosie Athanasiu has set up at the beginning of 1913 „cultural priesthood” circles.<sup>23</sup>

Generally, the meetings of the circles, which were held one time per year in each parish, were developed as follows: in the morning, at that church, the service of the Holy Liturgy took place in the assembly with preaching, attending all the priests of the circle, authorities, schools and believers, after which a non-public meeting took place, at the parochial house, where they developed a topic, given in time, and in the afternoon a public meeting took place, with the attendance of the villagers, where in addition to an occasional feast, a conference with moral community interest was presented by a member of the circle,.

The topic of the pastoral circles was established by the bishop, who informed the Archbishops of the Eparchy through a circular order about the topic that will be discussed in that year: „it is written to you that on February 19 this year to be present at the Chancery of the Holy Bishopric, where together with Our Worthy Archbishops and Our Worthy Eparchial Auditor it will be established the topics to be treated in the pastoral conferences per circles”.<sup>24</sup> At these general pastoral conferences attended all the priests of the county Archbishopry (Bacău, Roman, Tecuci and Putna) and were held in May and August, so the topic of the general priesthood conferences had two subjects. For such conferences, the archbishop of the county appointed a reliable priest from the Archbishopry who prepared the established topic, sustaining a paper work in front of all, and afterwards discussions were held on the presented topic, questions were asked and practical proposals were made. Thus, through these priesthood conferences, Bishop Teodosie Athanasiu knew to plant in the heart of his believers the love for the Sacred and care for the Romanian well faithful people.

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<sup>23</sup> *Anuarul Eparhiei Romanului*, Editura „Institutului de Arte Grafice Marvan S.A.R.”, București, p. 367.

<sup>24</sup> Dosar nr. 14 din 1913, *Conferinți Pastorale-1913*, arhiva Arhiepiscopiei Romanului și Bacăului, p. 1.

A major coordinate of his missionary pastoral activity of Bishop Teodosie Athanasiu during the war for nation union (1913-1918) was the solidarity with those involved in this great world war. Bishop Teodosie was inspired by patriotic feelings and ideas, sending from the Episcopal Palace *pastoral letters* to clergy and believers, requesting the solidarity with those on the frontline. In addition, Bishop Teodosie Athanasiu collaborated with different foundations and charities, the most important one being the „Red Cross” (nuns of Roman Eparchy were sent to special courses of nursing organized by this foundation, in order to help soldiers injured in the war and population) and the „National Orthodox Society of the Romanian Women” which was founded in May 1910 in Bucharest, Bishop Teodosie Athanasiu being Chief Priest Vicar of Ungro-Vlahiei Mitropoly at that moment, being among the founding members of this society, and which had the goal of „souls union and mobilize energies for religious education of youngsters for helping families in need and support of the Church”. At his initiative and support in Moldova were set up the first subsidiaries, in Roman, Bacău, Focșani and Tecuci towns. Bishop Teodosie will be connected all his life with this foundation, donating almost all his fortune through a will.

The Clergy Society „Roman-Vodă” was founded by Bishop Teodosie Athanasiu with the help of the priests from Roman Eparchy on April 25, 1913. This society proposed to help priests and singers of Roman Eparchy and „any person forced by fate to ask for help” performing „operations of saving, credit and help”.<sup>25</sup> The involvement of Bishop Teodosie Athanasiu, for the smooth running of this society, since its beginning, it is well known through his several initiatives for this society to run along his service in Roman. He urged the priests for parishes to get involved, knowing the fact that „the needs of the church are many and too felt, and for correction of these shortcomings we have to drive our forces and activities on the right way”<sup>26</sup> - confessed Bishop Teodosie.

The sixth chapter – *National patriotic activity* - being structured on four subchapters is dedicated to the activity in World War I, period which coincided with the service of Bishop Teodosie Athanasiu in Roman. The service of Bishop Teodosie Athanasiu in Roman (1912-1923) coincided with events of great significance for the history of the country, following which the National Unitary Romanian State has been formed.

During World War I Bishop Teodosie Athanasiu did not hesitate to visit hospitals where were hundreds of injured persons, wholeheartedly participating in their suffering,

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<sup>25</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 6.

<sup>26</sup> Dosar nr. 8 din 1914, *Societatea Clerului „Roman-Vodă” pe anul 1914*, arhiva Arhiepiscopiei Romanului și Bacăului, p. 24.

encouraging and instilling them the patriotic feeling, spreading several books of moral-religious guidance, supporting the right cause for which the Romanian people was fighting in that time. From those times remained his memorable pastorals dedicated to priests, believers and soldiers on the frontline. Together with his brother, professor I. Athanasiu, they came in Sascut, his native village, at the beginning of the war and donated for the army a part of the family inheritance – the forest on the Trotuș bank, for the military hospital (it is about the military hospital that was built in Coțofenești during the war) for the frontlines in Oituz, Cireșoaia and Mărăști, its traces being evident even today, as former royal residence of campaign. Bishop Teodosie Athanasiu along with Metropolitan Bishop Pimen, had extremely useful initiatives for the Army and implicitly for the Romanian people. Being next to the Metropolitan Bishop of Moldova Pimen Georgescu, Bishop Teodosie Athanasiu of Roman was inspired by patriotic feelings and ideas<sup>27</sup>. A huge issue, in addition to the lost lives, was the problem of orphans and widows remained without any support during the war. The monks and nuns from the monasteries and convents in Roman Eparchy, at the urge of Bishop Teodosie took care of many orphan children during the war.

Orphans protection was a moral obligation towards the sacrifice of their parents, for the future of those who survived in a united country, a civic responsibility, because those sons of the nation could represent the good part or the criminal part of the future generation. Bishop Teodosie Athanasiu has sent from the Episcopal Palace pastoral letters to clergy and believers requesting solidarity with those on the frontline, and in this respect he set up in Roman in 1913 on August 21, an initiative committee named „the Committee for helping the families of those on the frontline” which was gathered in the same day at the Episcopal Palace, at 4 p.m. under the chairmanship of Bishop Teodosie all famous personalities of Roman county, where Bishop Teodosie has worked out an appeal entitled „Romanian Brothers!” and sent to all the archbishopries in Roman Eparchy, which disseminated this message to the priests from villages and towns, by which were collected important amounts of money donated to the families of those departed in the battlefield, orphans and widows of war.

Also, with the help of the priests in the parishes were collected money, food and clothes for soldiers, being known the initiative of Bishop Teodosie Athanasiu that each priest in Eparchy donated for the national fleet 10% of their salary per one month, collecting a considerable amount. More than 30 priests in Roman Eparchy accompanied the army in the

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<sup>27</sup> Aurel, Pentelescu, Gavriil, Preda, *Mitropolitul Pimen Georgescu(1853-1934)*, Editura „Printeuro”, Ploiești, 2003, p. 113.



war, among them the best known being priest Gheorghe Tudorache in Tg. Ocna (Infantry Regiment 55/69) who „went to the front line of battle to encourage the officers and soldiers (...). it has been established such a spiritual connection between the priest and the soldiers that they named him their father, because he was with them all the time, in the infirmary taking care, communing and encouraging them”.<sup>28</sup>

After the end of the war, many of the refugee priests (over 20 priests from Braşov and Sibiu area) in Transylvania found support and understanding from Bishop Teodosie, who received in the Eparchy and appointed them in different parishes, after they stayed several months in Ruginoasa (Iaşi), being rejected by the Metropolitan Bishop of Moldavia, Pimen Georgescu, who promised them in the beginning that he will help them, and also by the Bishop of Huşi.

In early 1918, a group of priests refugee from Transylvania to Moldova, sent Bishop Teodosie Athanasiu a letter full of drama and excitement in the same time, where they were asking to be appointed priests in Roman Eparchy, and by this, as they confess themselves: „...on one hand let us save our existence, and on the other hand, we can work together for the progress of the people of this country”.<sup>29</sup>

Bishop Teodosie understood the voice of suffering of all priests refugee from Transylvania and received all of them, helping them to integrate in Roman Eparchy, supervising himself each and every one in their way of service, dressing properly according priestly dignity, for which the bishop did not made any compromise.

The seventh chapter presents – *The scholarly and teaching activity* - and is structured in five subchapters. In this chapter I have mentioned the journalistic activity of Bishop Teodosie Athanasiu throughout his life, before the episcopate, as well as during his service in Roman. Bishop Teodosie Athanasiu remained known in the orthodox consciousness and spirituality as a skilful scholar and tireless translator from Greek language of the works of Sf. Joan Chrysostom, succeeding to publish during his lifetime *The Comments or explanation of Pauline Epistles* in nine volumes. Another work which was translated is *Isagogia*, the work of a famous theologian in Athens, N. Damallas, remained in manuscript (contains over 660 pages) until today, unpublished due to lack of financial means at that time and which can be found today in the Archive of Neamţ Monastery.

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<sup>28</sup> Ilie, Manole, *Armata și Biserica*, Bucureşti, p. 153.

<sup>29</sup> Dosar nr. 7 din 1918, *Preoți din Transilvania, numirile lor 1918*, arhiva Arhiepiscopiei Romanului și Bacăului, p. 1.

Years spent away from the country, in an environment with a different cultural effervescence and special theological influence, made Bishop Teodosie Athanasiu to understand better the meaning of the translations from patristic works for the development of Romanian theology, feeling very well that „one of the literatures which shine on the firmament of theological culture and continues to adorn the ecumenical spirit and the treasure of Christian Church is the patristic literature, namely the results of the priest writers and Holy Fathers, which last approximately from the conclusion of the canon of New Testament writings until the eighteenth century in the Eastern part and until seventh century in the Western part.<sup>30</sup> Therefore, as he confessed, the meeting with the Chrysostom work in Athens represented an impulse to approach to the conscience of the greatest Christian speaker.<sup>31</sup>

This was the step through which the work of Saint John Chrysostom would become known better to the Romanian theology space, because, returned in the country after completion of doctoral studies in Greece, the Archimandrite Teodosie Athanasiu, where he acquired a better command of Ancient Greek, started the difficult work of translation of the works of Saint John Chrysostom.

These works have attracted the attention of the Archimandrite of that time, as they best suited the needs of his time having in view the social convulsions encountered by the Romanian society, the Church being the one who had to suffer most. Teodosie Athanasiu foresaw the way he could give an answer to the problems occurred, and so, as not to be accused as bias, he gave the answer of the Church through the voice of Saint John Chrysostom, which, as mentioned before, benefit of respect and special authority in the life of the Romanian society.

On the ground of this decision was the urge of the famous Constantin Erbiceanu, knowing the translation skills of the Archimandrite, who suggested him to continue the work started by his mentor, the Bishop Melchisedec Ștefănescu, who did himself a translation of the Chrysostom works published in 1883.<sup>32</sup>

The translations of Bishop Teodosie Athanasiu brought an increase of light upon the beauty of Chrysostom thought, and all his cultural activity revealed us a man of a great inner beauty, always focused on his mission as grafter of characters and always eager to implement patristic impulses.

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<sup>30</sup> Pr. Prof. Dr. I.G., Coman, „Valoarea literaturii patristice a primelor patru secole în cadrul culturii antice”, în rev. *S.T.*, an XXIV, nr. 1-2, ianuarie-februarie, 1972, p. 5.

<sup>31</sup> Teodosie, Athanasiu, „Precuvântare” la *Comentariile sau explicarea Epistolei către Evrei, a celui intru, Sfinti Părintelui nostru Ioan Chrisostom*, București, 1923, p. 4.

<sup>32</sup> Este vorba despre lucrarea *Sfântul Ioan Gură de Aur, Șaizeci și patru de cuvinte sau predice*, București, 1883, republicată în 1997 la Editura „Buna Vestire”, Bacău.

Bishop Teodosie Athanasiu of Roman, being a great lover of culture and a fervent supporter of Romanian theological education, founded in 1912 „the School of Church Singers from Bacău”, and at his initiative this school received the name of his mentor, the Bishop Melchisedec Ștefănescu. This school was running until 1914 when due to the beginning of World War I and lack of means closed its doors. After the end of World War I, in 1919, being a shortage of priests, it came out the desire of Bishop Teodosie Athanasiu that next to the Roman Bishopric, to revive the former seminary, and so, in October 1919, at the initiative and plead of Bishop Teodosie it is reinstated the Seminary „Sf. George” in Roman, which runs to these days. For the people of Roman County the Bishop Teodosie did some great things, which placed him today among founders and benefactors of cultural and educational institutions of this town. In October 1919, he intervened for the establishment of a kindergarten in a building in the center of the town which was his property and was donated to Roman community for this purpose. This kindergarten that took the name of its founder: „Kindergarten Bishop Teodosie Athanasiu” is the second institution of this kind in Roman town, founded by a bishop, after the foundation of a similar institution by the great Hierarch Melchisedec Ștefănescu, at the end of nineteenth century.

The last chapter of the work – *The time after the episcopate (February 1923 - February 6, 1927)* - is structured in four subchapters and I have presented *The resignation and retirement of Bishop Teodosie Athanasiu* to Neamț Monastery which took place in early February of 1923, *The death and funerals of Bishop Teodosie* and *The will* left by the Bishop, and in the last subchapter – *Posthumous evocations* I have presented the important events that occurred after the death of Bishop Teodosie Athanasiu until today, by which it was celebrated the personality of this great scholar hierarch in Roman.

Being sick he submitted his resignation at the beginning of 1923 and retired in the peace of the secular forest of Neamț Monastery, living in the house that belonged to Lieutenant Bishop Nectarie Hermeziu and restored from his own money in 1926, continuing his scholar activity. After four years of dwelling here, in the morning of February 6, 1927 (Sunday morning at 5<sup>30</sup>), surrounded by Archdeacon Calistrat Lăcătușu and priest Gheorghie Dadău from Neamț Monastery, the Bishop of Roman Teodosie Athanasiu died, „his death being in good condition”, at the age of 77. Upon hearing this news, the Most Holy Lucian Triteanul decreed two days of mourning in Roman Eparchy and the courses of „Sf. George” Seminary in Roman were interrupted for that time. His lifeless body was buried near the Church „Ascension of the Lord” from that Monastery and later on his bones were exhumed

and deposited in the altar of „Sf. Joan the Devine” Church from the cemetery, where they can be found nowadays.

Although he went silent on the history scene, in Neamț Monastery, his volumes dedicated to the Chrysostom homilies, remained the voice that would always speak for him.

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## Curriculum vitae

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### Activitatea științifică

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1. „Theodor Athanasiu protopop al Județului Bacău(1881-193)”, în *Anuarul Facultății de Teologie*, XVI( 2014), Cluj-Napoca, pp. 207-225;

2. „Mărturii inedite despre „Școala de cântăreți bisericești Episcop Melchisedec Ștefănescu de la Bacău” înființată de episcopul Teodosie Athanasiu al Roamnelor(1912-1923)”, în *Anuarul Facultății de Teologie*, XVII( 2015), Cluj-Napoca, pp. 139-153.

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## **Declarație**

Subsemnatul, Colpoș Petrică-Răzvan, candidat la titlul de doctor în teologie, declar că lucrarea „Vlădica Teodosie Athanasiu al Romanului(1912-1923). Viața și înfăptuirile sale”, pe care o prezint ca teză de doctorat, sub îndrumarea Pr. Prof. Univ. Dr. Alexandru Moraru, îmi aparține în întregime, iar la alcătuirea ei nu am folosit alte lucrări decât cele menționate în note și lista bibliografică.

Pr. Colpoș Petrică-Răzvan