

# **Philanthropic institutions of the Romanian Orthodox Church in the Romanian Country and Moldavia to the reign of Alexandru Ioan Cuza**

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## **ABSTRACT**

This research is a religious historical approach to the social care institutions coordinated by the Church in the XIVth - XIXth centuries in Romanian Country and Moldavia.

During this period the Church is one of the most important factors that assumes an important role in the development and provision of social services for people who are also believers in the community.

The work is a complex investigation of the philanthropic institutional phenomenon in the Romanian space and bring new conclusions on the issue of the relationship between the Church and the Reign in the Middle Ages when the Church was an institution in both global and national economic plan.

This paper aims compared with other topics of philanthropy approached to find and highlight the views in the history of the institutions of social protection under the tutelage of the church on the territory of the Romanian Principalities of over five centuries, from the foundation of Romanian Metropolitan until these settlements passed under the tutelage of the State. The paper analyzes bolnite name and developments in

historical and economic context of the time, clerical and secular philanthropic staff development in these care institutions.

The research focuses on the role of social institutions, particularly bolnite, and the importance of the Christian social assistance to support those affected by the diseases of the times they lived in groups in difficulty and their social reintegration.

The thesis presents, chronologically, charitable institutions, Christian eleemosynary in maintaining and expanding the philanthropic action, based on the rules of Christian morality in the Romanian Country and Moldavia founded by Church and Reign.

Through this theme: *Philanthropic institutions of the Romanian Orthodox Church in the Romanian Country and Moldavia to the reign of Alexandru Ioan Cuza*, there are exposed concrete aspects concerning Christian social assistance, conducted in Romanian Country and Moldavia respecting and preserving the purpose on this research line focusing on the description given by Reign social institutions and the Church involved in philanthropic act.

The concept of Christian charity, philanthropy derives from Church teaching on love and duty to one's neighbor. Philanthropy was considered one of the features of the Christian faith. This activity was carried out in direct dependence of the Church.

The Church's social mission is important because it can not be separate from the sacramental mission. We can not dissociate the sacramental aspect of the social mission of Jesus Christ as it was concerned at the same time religious and social dimension.

The philanthropic activity of the Church is continuing the philanthropic work of healing, sanctifying and redeeming of our Savior Jesus Christ, the Son of God Who out of love for people and for their salvation was made man, that man might participate in the life and eternal love of the Most Holy Trinity.

Philanthropy is part of the practice or practical attitude that the Church headed man. The beginnings of philanthropy and social assistance were initiated and sponsored by the Church. The social ministry of the Church is thus old as the Church itself, because right from the beginning, the Church has had in its ranks and the poor with it and had to be concerned with improving their material situation.

The philanthropy of the Church was manifested early by collections, agape, communion of goods, practiced by the Fathers well appointed. In the IV<sup>th</sup> century, rightly called *the golden age of Christianity*, St. Basil, St. John Chrysostom and other major lived in Christ have created a clear framework for conducting philanthropic work in the Church.

Following the model of the Apostles who researching the situation of the various Christian communities, to local Churches or communities identified the most needy persons or communities and organizing collections to help or support them, it proceeded and was gone from the individual charity to the institutionalization of the philanthropy<sup>1</sup>.

Following the model of Sf. Basil the Great, Orthodox Church has grown equally liturgical service, cultural empowerment, and philanthropic work that alleviate social differences, intervening to help the poor and those in greatest needs.

Helping the poor is an expression of divinity and love of fellowmen as recorded in the Biblical history. The founders of social assistance institutions thereby proving the love of neighbor, without search of persons, helping the poor that are equal to the rich before the deity, and by the charity covers a part of the "injustices they make poor, defenseless, fully blaspheme the good name that were called"<sup>2</sup>.

The Holy Fathers not only remained the most profound interpretations of Theology, but they applied the Christian doctrine in everyday life, establishing the first settlements "Christian pity."

The caring for the sick is closely related to the care of the poor, whereas poverty is generating much suffering. The Church's mission was historically in a world full of suffering, to bring the healing power for all its children.

Christian service and love of neighbor created a large and diverse number of charities, and many historians, theologians, doctors were arguing in their concern that human attitudes in terms of human relations. During this period (the XIV<sup>th</sup> - XIX<sup>th</sup> centuries) mercy towards those disadvantaged is implemented in faith interdependence, embodied in the organization of the church institutions for mutual aid.

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<sup>1</sup> Antonie Plamadeala, *Biserica slujitoare*, Sibiu, 1986, p. 150

<sup>2</sup> Grigorie Marcu, *Sărăcia și lupta împotriva ei*, in „Mitropolia Ardealului”, IX (1966). 1-3, p. 17.

The concept of philanthropy is manifested in agape first, then through the care of all those who waited for help because the needs were.

The philanthropy practiced and recommended was hospitality regarded as an important duty as a special Christian quality. Philanthropy in the Eastern Church as a corrective of wealth in favor of the suffering and the disadvantaged, as a corrective of ideological systems that do not want to know of compassion and brotherly love towards neighbor was in trouble<sup>3</sup>.

The work includes the following parts:

*Argument,*

Chapter I, entitled: *Sources and Historiography* where there are presented the objectives and purpose of the work, topicality and current state of research in the field and a general characterization of philanthropic establishments.

Chapter II entitled: *Philanthropy in the Conception and Practice of the Orthodox Church* treats the dimensions of philanthropy in the Church that is based on love for the man who finds a thread of history in Europe and the Orient, in general, and in the Carpathian Danube space, in particular. Social assistance is as old as the man in all times and societies, and the act of philanthropy in Christianity belongs to the service of the Church in the world where they were and there are people in difficulty either because of poverty or disease, and the Church through various institutionalized structures intervened and it is present today, too.

Chapter III, entitled: *Charities in Romanian Country* presents the social settlements, generally, the bolnitate, with specific historiography to each, which were coordinated by the Church and sometimes supported the throne, in fact they are the institutional period for caring for the sick and those in needs.

Chapter IV, entitled: *Philanthropic Institutions in Moldavia*, on the same line with Chapter III investigates the structure and the social assistance system of the Moldavian Metropolitan Church of the fourteenth century to the ruler Alexandru Ioan Cuza, supported by princes and other Christian dignitaries who were involved in the social mission promoted by the Church.

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<sup>3</sup> Valer Bel, *Misiunea Bisericii în lumea contemporană*, Renașterea Publisher, Cluj-Napoca, 2010, p. 120.

The thesis ends through the conclusions, with normal findings on research relevant and plus appendices and bibliography.

A central goal of the thesis is to identify the establishments of the Church in Romanian Country and Moldavia, which had the social objective, ie philanthropy, social problems in historical context, for the approached period. There were presented methods, even rudimentary, used in these institutions and structures almost entirely under the supervision of the Church.

Taking into account that between the XVth and XVIIIth centuries there was not an organized form of medical social after the model of such institutions in the West, the Romanian monastery bolnitate compensated these institutions so that they can be considered hospitals specific of those times.

The Church always took care of its faithful, all those called to salvation. But it has limited its work to help only believers, but extended it to everyone listening urging Lord Who sends His disciples: "Go into all the world and preach the Gospel to every creature" (Mk. 16:15).

The most numerous and diverse institutions for care of persons with different gaps have been priorities of the Church, actually included in the mission and work them into the world. Special care was given to disadvantaged people abandoned by society, the poor are particularly vulnerable and disabled, because they need the respect, trust and recognition of their value, despite leading the yoke of a painful reality.

The hierarchs of the Church in the Romanian were on the line of the Holy Fathers during the first Christian centuries and urged the charity to help our neighbor, to the creation of settlements for protection, given that the economic possibilities of our countries, were small compared with those of Byzantine Empire which was regarded as a model.

In the Romanian Countries, the hierarchs emphasized in their sermons the importance of committing good deeds for obtaining salvation. Most of our hierarchs also preaching the great hierarchs of the IVth and Vth centuries included exhortations to commit acts of mercy. All our Church hierarchy made speeches containing philanthropic, but were kept only a small part of their sermons, published in various books of sermons.



The feeling of philanthropy and divine mercy is the fruit of a long and thorough Christian education, done with tact and with boundless love by those appointed to it. The Church has borne the care and responsibility towards all those wretched, sick and poor.

In the Carpathian-Danubian space, as evidenced by documents and testimonies of foreign travelers who visited us, the Church was the one which, through settlements and its ministers, was involved in spiritual and physical relief of suffering of the people.

The servants of the Church, priests and monks were the only scholars who had concerns in the medical field, even if an empirical level, and often the emphasis was on healing the soul of the sick through prayer, worship miraculous icons or touch the relics of some saint.

In Christian humanism, which include the philanthropic act, wearing humanely has become a central feature of the Romanian people, springing from consciousness, fulfilling Christian law that conscience awakens people responsibility, regardless of his social status, religious or other<sup>4</sup>.

Philanthropy increases the value of Christian life, promoting harmony and understanding among people and makes no distinction between any of them religiously or ethnically Romanian in the area, and in the social welfare institutions have achieved a practical ecumenism.

In these five centuries, which treats paper, in the Romanian Church, the apostolic Church follower, history shows that love for the poor and humble is the history of the most passionate endeavors to alleviate human suffering<sup>5</sup>.

Social and philanthropic work of the Church of the Romanian Principalities during these five centuries is part of the "neighbor serving dimension" and is one of the main aspects of social Theology, which was deeply involved in the various aspects of people's lives, especially in terms of social apostolate.

Social mission of the Church lies not only its servants or social workers, but each man separately, as each of us has the duty to love and help his fellow man. The bolnite of monasteries have importance for the history of medicine, but also for social assistance. Among the former infirmary and modern nowadays hospital have seen a natural evolution

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<sup>4</sup> Constantin Coman, *Ortodoxia sub presiunea istoriei*, Bizantină Publisher, București, 1995, p. 289-290.

<sup>5</sup> Ioan Gh. Coman, *Frumusețile iubirii de oameni în spiritualitatea patristică*, Timișoara, 1998, p. 254.

continues, as an increase from flower to fruit or from dichotomous reality of man not only seeking healing both the body and especially soul.

For the Christian faith, whose essential principle is love, practicing philanthropy is a natural duty. Christian Church of the first centuries yet emerged as a haven in stormy weather. Crowds were drawn to faith through the generous support of the Church, which exceeded the familiar, social, national, even religious circle.

All the social welfare institutions have benefited from laws given by the Byzantine emperors that gave them rights and privileges being recognized as legal persons and appointed as church settlements, dating back to the Vth century - the VIth century, representing a breakthrough in raising Christian charity.

Also, they have identified a number of social establishments, sometimes overlooked in history that contribute to the overall picture of the Christian concept of social assistance in the Carpathian Danube space.

The main institutions of the Romanian social assistance were bolnits and later hospitals are two separate institutions, but close. Both are social health care for the population. Both have given assistance to more or less qualified.

In the Romanian Middle Ages, monasteries were considered bolnits specific hospitals that time, the modest nature related needs of rural populations. At the end of the eighteenth century, the bolnits specialize, appearing the xenon for travelers and pilgrims on the miraculous icons, with consideration to health professionals in the past.

In summary, we say that the infirmary was the Romanian hospital until the end of the seventeenth century, and the present research is accomplished two main objectives: to identify institutions and their social impact.

The thesis as a whole complements the researches in this area in that it highlights the historical basis that the Church had a social mission to promote philanthropy Romanian Orthodoxy, an extremely vast subject.

The Church was together with the people and is responsible until the end of time for spiritual progress and the needs of its children and their earthly sufferings, which should soothe, work that invites all its children. The Church cooperates with all social institutions of the state and supports the practice of philanthropy, which was not confined

to temporary relief for those which are in needs, but all the time, it contributed to poverty eradication and social climate for human dignity.

The Civil Code from 1865 of Alexandru Ioan Cuza discontinues the existence of bolnitate, only principled, as they continued to exist in cells reserved to the elderly, weak and suffering monks.

This thesis can give impetus to the education of the young generations to practice Christian social assistance that help prevent and stop the expansion of the effects of poverty, the Church has proven in history to all that it “bear the imprint of divinity”<sup>6</sup> and that who has pity on the poor and help them, that receives a reward of heavenly treasure. He who is kind and gentle, who loves his brothers, is honored with love and peace<sup>7</sup>.

The churchmen, from bishops to the brother of the monastery and not only during the studied period, were involved in the realm capital through charity and love of neighbor, establishing and supporting the multitude Church institutions hospital to treat the sick and those in different state of helplessness.

The whole social philanthropic activity in the Romanian Church in this period is fulfilled through the work together with the greatest philanthropist in history, still present in the world and in the Church - Jesus Christ until the end of time.

The Romanian Church from the foundation of the metropolitan sees, through its institutions fulfilled the hopes of the people and unites in history and bind them being the nation.

The paper is based on a rich literature on this topic, papers, studies and documents from archives image rendering philanthropic establishments with their historical landmarks and activities depending on material and human capacities for self-help throughout their existence.

Also thesis is based on existing material in archives, papers, studies and manuscripts, being in a whole.

Philanthropy is appointed by the Holy Fathers and post patristic theologians as "the mystery of the brother" as it is practical attitude of the Church towards man.

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<sup>6</sup> Nicolae Necula, *Rolul preotului român în viață obștească*, in „Biserica Ortodoxa Romana”, CIV (1986), 1-2, p. 60.

<sup>7</sup> *Despre gelozie și invidie*, XVI, in *Apologeți de limbă latină*, translated by Nicolae Chițescu, Eliodor Constantinescu, Pavel Papadopol, David Popescu, Institutul Biblic și de Misiune al Bisericii Ortodoxe Romane Publisher, București, 1981, p. 503.

Orthodoxy not only shown through philanthropy and ascetic contemplation, deep thought and spiritual experience, but also actively support those left by others, the whole society.

Religious institutions for health care are exemplary for the philanthropic activity carried on by the Church, or spiritual institutions under the patronage of the Church.

The research in Romanian Country proved the existence of an ancient monastery Vodița hospital for the indigent, the first known Romanian monastery linked to the great lived in Christ St. Nicodemus of Tismana. These social establishments located beside monasteries were an old Byzantine model.

The succinct presentation of the mission, the philanthropy and the charitable institutions appointed by the Romanian Orthodox Church in the past has meant to outline the principles and practice diaconate in the history and life of the Church to make a starting point in confrontation the problems of the contemporary world. Presenting some historical forms of diaconate and Romanian philanthropy, it was a relief line of continuity, the Church naturally being engaged in the social apostolate.

Church had a huge responsibility in the social field. It can not go around social issues, but through philanthropy improve the situation of those in wants and suffering.

**Key-words:** social care, Church, Orthodox, Romanian Principalities, philanthropy, mission, charity, settlements