

**The episcopal ministry  
of the metropolitan Pimen Georgescu.**

**Projection and reforms for the married clergy (1909-1918)**

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## Summary

At the beginning of the XX<sup>th</sup> century, the Romanian Orthodox Church was autocephalous and functioned under the Synodal Law from 1872. Canonically and administratively it was ruled by the Holy Synod, which was presided by the Archbishop of Bucharest, who also had the title of primate metropolitan. In total, it had eight eparchies (Bucharest, Râmnic, Buzău, Argeș, Iași, Roman, Huși and Galați), grouped into two metropolitanates: of Ungro-Vlahia, with the seat in Bucharest and of Moldavia, with the seat in Iași.

The Archdiocese of Iași was the second eparchy as importance in the ecclesiastic organizational chart and its official held also the metropolitan miter of Moldavia. The history of this regional holy institution from 1909 to 1934 is linked to the hierarch Pimen Georgescu. His episcopal ministry was individualized by the implementing of a set of measures for extending the extra-liturgical pastoral activity. The thesis under his projection can be synthetized by the dictum *ora et labora*. According to his vision, the clerical mission was not only soteriological, but also social, implying economic, moral, sanitary and cultural aspects for the parishioners.

His perspective was not entirely original, as it was subscribed to the movement initiated by Spiru Haret for the economic and moral rise of the villages. Pimen was firstly enthroned at the episcopate of Galați in 1902, then in Iași in 1909, being supported by Haret, who was in both years the Minister of Culture and Religious Affairs. Therefore, the episcopal project introduced in eparchy of Iași by the hierarch was an ecclesiastic adaptation of the Haretian principles.

The main innovations of his project were the introduction of archpriest trimestral conferences, annual pastoral conferences and priestly monthly gatherings, alongside an inspection questionnaire which helped with the accounting of both liturgical and extra-liturgical activity of the priests from parishes. The model of summoning different gatherings was, in fact, adapted from the organization of the rural schoolteachers from the Minister of Culture, which was also controlled by the public educational system.

The filiation between the Haretian movement and the episcopal project of Pimen, as well as the cooperation between the minister and hierarch was not included in the history studies. The overall activity of Pimen as the head of the ecclesiastical institution of Iași was not presented exhaustively, as he was known more as „the Metropolitan of the War and

unification of the Romanian nation”, although he was important in an equal measure as „Haretian” and activist for economic and moral rise of the villages.

A point in the making of this interpretation of his activity was made by Pimen himself who, in 1934, when celebrating 25 years of rule as Metropolitan of Moldavia, during the reverential meeting of the Holy Synod, he stated that ”the most important period of his episcopal ministry” was ”during the Great War”<sup>1</sup>. Another clue was given by his appellation as ”Metropolitan of the War and the completeness of the Romanian nation” which was given posthumously by the King Carol the Second, during a speech in 1935<sup>2</sup>.

The most important writing dedicated to his activity is the monographic book realized by Aurel Pentelescu and Gavril Preda. Even if it keeps the traditional interpretation (the one made by Pimen in 1934), it is a professional historical study, which made a standard for our intercession, especially considering the chronological aspects.

The two historians divided the rule of the Metropolitan in three periods: 1909-1916, 1916-1919, 1925-1933<sup>3</sup>, the events from 1919 to 1925 being linked to the second and third ones. The first period contains the hierarch’s installment in Iași, the main eparchial reforms and the institutional preparations for the war; the second one is about the contribution in the war effort, the last one being about him and his eparchy role in the new organizational chart of the Romanian Orthodox Church from the Greater Romania.

Our analysis is limited on the first two periods because we want to cover the fundamentals of the eparchial initiatives during the First World War, which were responsible for his appellation as „the Metropolitan of the War and completeness of the Romanian nation”.

In the first instance, we have analyzed the archbishop project of Pimen Georgescu, implemented in the archdiocese of Iași after 1909. As partitions, we wanted to depict not only the way in which his initiatives were influenced by the political power, but also the extent in which they were carried out by the priests.

Secondly, we followed the activity of the metropolitan institution during the First World War. We concentrated on the way in which the priests from the parishes were prepared for the military campaign, alongside the study of the numerous orders which were issued by the hierarch for his inferiors from the parishes during 1916-1918. We insisted on two of those orders, more exactly the ones depicting the religious assistance in hospitals (field hospitals,

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<sup>1</sup> Aurel Pentelescu, Gavril Preda, *Mitropolitul Pimen Georgescu, viața și înfăptuirile sale, 1853-1934* [The Metropolitan Pimen Georgescu – life and deeds, 1953-1934], (Ploiești, Karta-Graphic, 2010), p. 17.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 190.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 90-107; 108-140; 141-164.

former civilian hospitals transformed for military use or newly established military hospitals), as well as the one about the substitution of the mobilized schoolteachers. The analysis of the carrying those two tasks has a great importance regarding the institution's functionality, as the religious assistance was supervised by the clerical hierarchy, whereas the substitution was not.

Thirdly, we want to show the activity of the Army's Religious Service, as it was an institution established by the Pimen's initiative. Hereby, we can see the influence of the Moldavian hierarch had in the matter of the functionality of the ecclesiastical military institution, as well as the ways in which the mobilized the clerics from the archdiocese of Iași accomplished their mission in the army.

The achieving of these three objectives leaves us an exhaustive perspective about the functionality of the archdiocese of Iași from 1909 to 1918, from which resulting the political influences on the actions of the institution, with the perspective and activity of the metropolitan as religious leader, as well as the extent in which his inferiors (archpriests and parish priests) were involved in his eparchial initiatives.

Our research is based on the documents from the Metropolitan Archives from Iași. The methodical research helped us to sketch the ecclesiastic relations from the beginning of the XX<sup>th</sup> century inside the Iași Archiepiscopate, obtaining a new perspective regarding the contribution of the clerics to the Romanian war effort during the First World War.

The thesis is structured on three chapters, based on the three main objectives of the research. In the first part, we are analyzing *The eparchial project of the metropolitan Pimen Georgescu (1909-1914)*; in the second part, the *Adaptation of the named project during wartime (1914-1918)*, and in the last part, *The development or the application of the same project in the Romanian Army*.

In the first chapter we are sketching the archiepiscopal project of Pimen Georgescu from three perspectives. In the first sub-chapter, named *The Haretian influence of metropolitan Pimen*, we are depicting the cooperation between Spiru Haret and the hierarch, at personal level and regarding villages' rising plan.

In the next two sub-chapters we are presenting the introduction of the Haretian eparchial project in the archdiocese of Iași. The split is linked to the change of the liberal government to a conservative one. Thereby, in the second sub-chapter we are following *The implementation of the project* between the enthroning of the metropolitan Pimen and the end of the *liberal government* in December 1910, and in the third *The continuation of the same project until the beginning of the First World War*. In fact, a great part of the aspects

presented in the third sub-chapter are often linked to the defense of the Haretian project in the context of the conservative government.

The last sub-chapter and the third analysis direction of the first chapter is depicting how the priests responded to the eparchial orders by using the statistical documents of the metropolitan institution about the accomplishing of the tasks by the inferiors from the eparchial parishes.

In the second chapter, we are also exposing three aspects. In the first part we are depicting the institutional *preparation of the priests for the war effort*. In the second one, the eparchial orders from 1916 to 1918, addressed to the married clergy for *contributing to the war effort*. In the final part, as in the anterior chapter, we are presenting how the clerics from the parishes accomplished the metropolitan directives. In order to achieve this, we analyzed two activities in which the priests from the parishes were implied, more exactly *the religious assistance in the military and militarized hospitals* in the third sub-chapter and *the substitution of the mobilized schoolteachers* in the fourth.

The last chapter contains two directions: the influence exerted by the metropolitan Pimen on the institution of military priests and their selection/mission accomplishment level during wartime applied on the priests selected from the archdiocese of Iași. The first direction is depicted in the first sub-chapter, which is dedicated to the role of the hierarch in the creation and the operation of the Religious Service of the Romanian Army from 1915 to 1918.

The second direction, concerning the priests, is displayed into the last sub-chapters of the thesis. We are presenting, on the one hand, the selection process of the *clerics mobilized at the recommendation of the Archdiocese of Iași*, and on the other hand, the *activity of army priests from archdiocese of Iași*, starting with the critical analysis of the way it was depicted in historiography.

We attached no less than 19 annexes to the study, which confirm and back up the demonstrations from the text. The first nine could be interpreted as proofs for the interest manifested by Spiru Haret, the Minister of Culture and Religious Affairs for the education and other extra-liturgical activities of the priests for the economic and moral rise of the villages.

The next two annexes, number 10 and 11, offer a sample about the way in which Pimen the Metropolitan has chosen his archpriests after his enthroning in Iași, based on their implication in the actions of the Haretian movement. The two documents reproduced by us are regarding the case of the first archpriest of Dorohoi chosen by the new metropolitan in 1909, the priest Gheorghe Nepotescu.

The 12<sup>th</sup> annex looks over the priests from the archdiocese of Iași who were active between 1909 and 1920, according to the calling and presence lists at the pastoral conferences from 1909 to 1915 and also from the year 1920. For completing the information discovered in the documents of the Metropolitan archive, I used the study of the priest Daniel Danielescu about the ordinations into priesthood (for both deacons and priests) between 1875 and 1985<sup>4</sup>. The total number of priests included in our list is 700, with details concerning their status as parish or supernumerary priests, the work parishes, their graduated studies etc.

The annex no. 13 presents the grades obtained by the priests after writing their theses for the pastoral conferences from the period between 1911 and 1914. As those conferences were part of the archdiocese program, their results act as a standard for comprehending their adhesion extent to the directives from Pimen. Annex no. 14 is situating on the same register, offering information about the collected money by the priests for building a monument in the honor of Spiru Haret.

The last five annexes are about the priests who activated in the Romanian Army's Religious Service. During our research we observed that the exact number of priests mobilized in the 1916-1918 campaign is not precisely known, so I processed annex number 15, with three lists with names of the mobilized priests, obtaining a total number of 283. The first list is found in the report made by archpriest Constantin Nazarie for the Holy Synod in 1920<sup>5</sup>; the second one, in the work of Grigore N. Popescu and contains the names of the military units linked with the name of the priests<sup>6</sup>; the third one, found in the Metropolitan Archives from Iași, listed as a secret document, more exactly the order of battle of the Romanian Army from the end of the year 1917, includes the distribution of the confessors in the regiments<sup>7</sup>. From those 283 priests, Grigore N. Popescu showed that 45 of them received the appointing orders, but did not stand with their units for different reasons. Their names can be found in annex number 16.

As we do not have information about all the regiments in which the mobilized priests, from the eparchy of Iași, activated, we have processed the list given by Grigore N. Popescu,

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<sup>4</sup> Daniel Danielescu, „*Luați Duh Sfânt...*”, *Condica hirotoniilor în diacon și preot din Arhiepiscopia Iașilor (1875-1985)* [Take the Holy Spirit... The registry of deacons and priests ordinations in the Archdiocese of Iași (1875-1985)], (Iași, Doxologia, 2012).

<sup>5</sup> Constantin Nazarie, *Activitatea preoților de armată în campania din anii 1916-1919* [Activity of army priests in the campaign of 1916-1919], (Bucharest, The printing press of Ministry of Cults and Arts, 1920), p. 36-90.

<sup>6</sup> Grigore N. Popescu, *Preoțimea Română și întregirea neamului, volum I, Chipuri, fapte, suferințe și pilde pentru viitor* [The Romanian priesthood and unification of the nation, volume I, Faces, deeds, sufferings and parables for the future], (București, Vremea, 1940), p. 116-140.

<sup>7</sup> Arhiva Mitropoliei Moldovei și Bucovinei, [The Archives of the Metropolitanate of Moldova and Bukovina], folder 81/1916, volume VII, leafs 93-103.

obtaining a table with the military units in which each and every priest was registered during the military campaign. Thereby, we obtained another table, that constitutes the annex number 17.

We elaborated the penultimate annex, containing the mobilized priests recommended by the diocese from Iași, with the information discovered in the Metropolitanate archive files. We also attached the report made by the priest Constantin Constantinescu from Hârlău, addressed to Pimen, in which he wrote about his activity during the military campaign, when he was firstly assigned to the Regiment 77, then, after the reorganization of the Romanian Army, was transferred to the Infantry Regiment 69/77 from August 15<sup>th</sup> 1916 to May 28<sup>th</sup> 1918. His testimony is of a great importance, as the former evidences about his activity are fragmentary.

Thereby, almost all the demonstrations of our research are backed up by the information contained in the 19 annexes. Moreover, the annexes act as tools, which are indispensable for the systematical analysis of the metropolitanate institution and clergy's past, as well as for the clergy from the archiepiscopate of Iași from the beginning of the XX<sup>th</sup> century.

Our PhD task is offering an unprecedented presentation about how the central eparchy of the Metropolitan of Moldavia worked between 1909 and 1918, alongside new interpretation about how the clergy was contributing to the war effort during the First World War. The adaptation of the eparchial project during 1914-1918, alongside its extension in the Romanian Army between 1915-1918, tells us about the major role played by metropolitan Pimen Georgescu in the main activities of the church in the period, which acts as a new contribution to the historiography of the Great War, based on the research done in the Archive of the Eparchial Center from Iași.

The results of our research include the idea that the new Moldavian metropolitan, elected in 1909 was a close collaborator of Spiru Haret in his movement for economic and moral rise of the villages. The two personalities met in the years 1870-1872, when Haret was a mathematics schoolteacher in the Central Seminary from Bucharest, Pimen (in that time named Petre) being his student.

Their first professional contact took place in 1887, when Pimen got a job as a provisory professor in the Faculty of Theology in the University of Bucharest, Haret being in that time the general director of instruction inside the Ministry of Public Education and Religious Affairs. A role in their approach was played by Atanasie Mironescu, former colleague and friend of Pimen.

Their real cooperation started in 1898, during his first ministerial mandate of Haret. As Atanasie Mironescu was elected into the episcopal throne of Râmnic, his former post (director of the Theological Boarding School) was given to Pimen with the understanding of Pimen.

After those events, during the second time of Haret as a minister, he helped Pimen to become the bishop of Lower Danube in 1902. During that time, Haret already started implementing his first measures for the economic and moral rise of the villages. At the same time, Pimen himself had joined to the movement initiated by Haret, which can be deducted from his enthroning speech, when he talked about the main Haretian goals. During the period 1902 to 1908 he remained loyal to the movements, so, in the beginning of 1909, Haret helped him again to obtain the metropolitan chair of Iași.

Haret punctually exposed his ideas about the role of the Church in his movement within the work, named *Chestia țărănească* (*The peasant problem*), published in 1905. More exactly, he stated that the priests had the possibility to become „the best and the most useful agents in the campaign for the economic and moral rise of the villages”<sup>8</sup>. Also, in a letter sent in 1907 to the priest Teodor Bălășel, he wrote about the „role of the church in the public and economic life of the country”, that its activity must not be limited to „serving the Liturgy”, but had the right to „strongly contribute to country’s rise and happiness”<sup>9</sup>. Those Haretian ideas were the base of the eparchial project implemented by Pimen in the Archdiocese of Iași.

Starting from 1909, the hierarch introduced in his archdiocese the archpriestly and pastoral conferences, priestly meetings, an inspection questionnaire with questions about the main directions promoted by his project, also sending many orders and directives to the priests, urging them to solve problems of different matters, including religion, cultural, economic, sanitary etc.

This episcopal project was not fully realized as Pimen would have wanted because the priests were only partially engaged. The improvements made by the pastoral conferences and priestly gatherings, even if we can consider them appreciable, did not produce a major transformation about the fulfillment of the tasks and directives sent from the eparchial level.

The beginning of the First World War on the continent determined the archdiocese of Iași to undertake a series of programatic measures, preparing its subordonate clergy to the event of Romania’s entry in the action. For avoiding any public interventionist speech, the

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<sup>8</sup> Spiru C. Haret, *Chestia Țărănească* [The peasant problem], (Bucharest, Institute of graphic arts „Carol Göbl”, 1905), p. 72-73.

<sup>9</sup> Teodor Bălășel, *Scrisori de la Spiru C. Haret* [Letters from Spiru C. Haret], (Bucharest, „Gutenberg” Typography, 1914), p. 16-17.



directives from the neutrality period (1914-1916) were communicated to the subordinates in a closed system, at archpriestly and pastoral conferences, respectively at priestly gatherings.

The most important preparative action from the eparchy was the usage of the general pastoral conferences from 1915 for the spreading of the ideas about the priestly contribution to the war effort. During those conferences, the clerics standardized their interventionist speech, as the contrary positions were discouraged. This action was the single one between all the bishops from the Romanian Orthodox Church. One year later, the Archdiocese of Bucharest made a similar decision, but the priestly conferences never took place because Romania entered in the war by that time.

After the general mobilization of the Romanian Army, the ecclesiastical administration from Iași also stood out alongside other eparchies of the Romanian Orthodox Church by a series of measures for backing the Romanian cause. The priests had the obligation of implementing a special liturgical program, to substitute the mobilized schoolteachers, to offer religious assistance to wounded soldiers from the military hospitals installed inside the territories of their parishes, to organize agricultural committees for making the spring and fall agricultural work on the terrains belonging to the mobilized soldiers, to collect money and objects for the Army, the Red Cross, The Warrior's Family, orphans, war disabled, affected by TBC etc. From all those measures, the religious assistance in the hospitals was primordial for Pimen, who instructed the metropolitan vicar Antim Petrescu to organize and supervise this service in the city of Iași.

Until the beginning of March 1917, the episcopal contribution to the war effort was a total one. When the metropolitan wanted to go to inspect the troops stationed for recovery was refused by Ion Gheorghe Duca, the minister of Public Education and Religious Affairs, he changed his attitude about the implication of the clerics in the war effort. Thereby, after that date, the vocational implication replaced the mandatory institutional one.

The archdiocese did not hold a record about how the priests accomplished those initiatives during the military campaign. When the war ended, he asked the archpriests and priests to send him reports about the events and fulfilled tasks. The only initiatives from whom we found complete information were about the clerics' adhesion to the Society for the Care of the War Orphans and the fulfillment of the task of writing the mentioned report in 1919. During those events the involvement of the priests was similar to the one from the period 1909-1914, like so: 10-20% of them were dedicated and meritorious, a majority of 60-70% was doing it for formal reasons and an approximate of 20% were non-involved. Even in

those conditions, the general contribution at an eparchial level on each directive was not insignificant in the context of the war.

Regarding the establishment of the Army's deanery, the decision of the Holy Synod of the Romanian Orthodox Church from 15<sup>th</sup> of May 1915 meant an innovation just for its institutional value. During peacetime and wartime alike, the Romanian military units were supplied with priests. The decision of the Synod just stated the selection criteria for army confessors, also giving them a minimal organizational pattern.

The metropolitan Pimen Georgescu had also the initiative of establishing the religious-military institution, which had the first attempts of coordinating the activity of the priests from the barracks from the Lower Danube since 1903. In the context of the Great War breaking up on the continent and the military preparations for an eventual joining the conflict, the General Staff of the Romanian Army started the drafting of the regimental priests without prior soliciting an agreement from the bishops.

The fault of the military leaders was exploited by the Moldavian hierarch, who solicited an audience with King Ferdinand, also initiating approaches with the Holy Synod for the creation of the new institution. In the same period, similar institutions could be found in the Austro-Hungarian, German, French and Russian armies.

The success of the hierarch's initiative was favored by his contacts with the former collaborators of Spiru Haret, especially Petre Gârboviceanu, the administrative director in the House of the Church. Not coincidentally, Constantin Nazarie, the one depicted in sources as „much appreciated by Haret”, was named the head of this service.

The new formed institution had double subordination, both ecclesiastical and military. In the organizational chart, the institution was described as a deanery, whereas in the army it was linked to the III<sup>rd</sup> echelon from the active part of the General Staff. In a first phase, the archpriest Nazarie was put alongside the military counselors, being assimilated later as a Colonel.

The other mobilized priests received military ranks as well, being subordinated to the military commanders of the units in which they activated. From an ecclesiastically point of view, they received their administrative orders from Nazarie, remaining, on the other hand, under the authority of their dioceses.

Alike the ideas promoted by the Haretian movement, the confessors' activity was split into the religious and military-pastoral ones. The extra-liturgical one was manifested especially by encouragement speeches made before and after the battles, which acted as the

main innovation present in the army after the institutionalization of the mobilized clerics in the Romanian Army.

In conclusion, even if Haret had died in 1912, his ideas and principles were perpetuated by some of his former collaborators. Pimen Georgescu was one of them, being the only hierarch enthroned during Haret's ministerial time who remained in his chair up until the First World War. That is how his individuality alongside other hierarchs of the Romanian Orthodox Church in the matter of implication for the war effort can be explained. From this point of view, his appellation as „the Metropolitan of the war and completeness of the Romanian nation” is also linked with the personality of Spiru Haret and his movement for the rise of the villages, which promoted the necessity of extra-liturgical implication for the Romanian Orthodox Church.