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## Argument

### 1. The motivation for choosing the topic

In choosing this topic of doctoral research I was primarily determined by my obedience as a priest servant to the Metropolitan Cathedral of Iași since the spring of 1991. Seeing that at the grave of the great hierarch, the candle was never put out, I was convinced that the great hierarch was perceived by the people – over so many years – as a servant with a holy life; this is how I came to be concerned about the life and activity of the merciful Joseph Naniescu. After I came in possession of some of the testimonies regarding his ministry, as well as of the works consecrated to him, I began to investigate more thoroughly, starting in 2012, when – at the initiative of His Eminence Teofan, the Metropolitan Archbishop of Moldavia and Bukovina – steps towards the preparation of a canonization file of the gentle and merciful hierarch of Moldavia were taken.

A special moment in the life of the Archdiocese of Iași was the investigation of the state of Metropolitan bishop Joseph's bones - called "the holy one", as it appears in an icon at the catafalque of our Mother Saint Paraskeva. This fact took place, through the care of His Beatitude Daniel, beginning with the autumn of 1992, when he was the primate of the ancient Church of Moldavia, bearing in mind a future proposal for canonization. In order to carry out this research, His Beatitude delegated to His Grace Father Calinic of Botoșani, Bishop-Vicar of the Archdiocese of Iași, to conduct a first investigation, accompanied by the father servants of the Metropolitan Cathedral, among whom I was myself, too. Then the tomb of Metropolitan bishop Joseph Naniescu was opened, and I was the one appointed to enter in.

On that occasion, it was found that the hierarchical garments were intact, and the Metropolitan bishop's bones – who had been buried in his chair, according to the tradition established in our Church since ancient times – were framed within a plank coffin. His wooden engolpion and cross were intact. Also, the other liturgical ornaments. After a memorial service, the bones were reburied until the tomb was reopened. This postponement was due to the restoration work carried out at the Metropolitan Cathedral and at the Metropolitan Assembly.

The moment was exciting, being the one that made me pay special attention to this merciful hierarch. That is why I experienced a lot of excitement at the time that took place on the 16<sup>th</sup> of September 2015, at 20.30. Then, with the blessing of His Eminence Teofan, the Metropolitan Archbishop of Moldavia and Bukovina, the tomb of the gentle hierarch was reopened. The stone marble which had, in the meantime, cracked in a few places was lifted – and after the earth had been removed from the grave, we could enter the crypt from where the bones were carefully removed, but also several pieces of his bishop's vestment in which he was buried, the wooden carved engolpion and cross, a fragment of his cane, and pieces from the coffin, partly rotten during the 113 years since his funeral.

In the annex facing the north – where the Chapel of Prothesis is located – of the altar of the Metropolitan Cathedral, the bones were washed in holy water, wine and olive oil, then placed in a special bag, after which they were sealed and placed in a reliquary of carved wood, fitted with a glass pane. Then the reliquary was deposited in the chapel inside the metropolitan residence until the Good God decrees to be honoured as holy relics after proclaiming the merciful hierarch as a servant who was crowned by the Good God with that crown of light of holiness.

It follows that the parts of his bishop's vestments that were found intact, the engolpion, the cross, the chair and the cane will be restored in the restoration laboratory of the “Dumitru Stăniloae” Faculty of Orthodox Theology of the University of Iași. Then they will be deposited in the tomb, which – after its rehabilitation – will be provided with a pane so that they will be on display and honoured according to the good order of the Orthodox tradition.

All these aspects related to this historical moment have been presented in a report<sup>1</sup>, so that all these things are known to those who come after us; moreover, they were also presented to the readers of the “Lumina”<sup>2</sup> (“The Light”) newspaper, through an article on this important event in the recent history of the ancient Church of Moldavia.

In this research, I wanted to give the appropriate relevance to the missionary, social and philanthropic ministry practiced by the gentle bishop in a very tense historical context, as it was the one of the second halves of the nineteenth century, undoubtedly, this ministry being like a red thread guiding the entire history of our ancestral Church. And through this fact, it is certified that our ancient Church is part of the Church of Christ the Lord, guided by this call of inviting the sons of every nation to become a son of the kingdom of heaven.

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<sup>1</sup> See the Annex.

<sup>2</sup> <http://ziarullumina.ro/osemintele-mitropolitului-iosif-naniescu-au-fost-scoase-din-mormant-105473.html/03/04/2017>.



### **1. Washing with holy water and anointing the merciful metropolitan bishop's bones**

At the same time, I wanted to show that the social and philanthropic mission is a red thread in the history of our ancestral Church whose end we will find in the kingdom of heaven before the impartial Judge, when he says, “For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I needed clothes and you clothed me...” (Matthew 25, 35).

### **2. The stage of the research on the life and activity of Metropolitan bishop Joseph**

In order to prepare this work, I have researched the local archives, the church magazines, and especially what was published in “Mitropolia Moldovei” (“The Metropolitanate of Moldavia”) magazine – since 1948 and in “Mitropolia Moldovei și Sucevei” (“Metropolitanate of Moldavia and Suceava”) and “Teologie și Viață” (“Theology and Life”), after 1991 – regarding the pastoral period of the Metropolitan bishop Joseph. A special place was dedicated to the study of those monographies and homage studies dedicated to him by Professor Constantine Erbiceanu, Father Constantine Nonea, ex-vicar of the Archdiocese of Iași, Father Gabriel Cocora, Archimandrite Ph. D. Vasile Vasilache and many others whose works are mentioned in the final bibliography.

The most comprehensive of all seems to be the book signed by Protosyngellos Vasile Vasilache, *Iosif Naniescu, strălucit Mitropolit al Moldovei* (Joseph Naniescu, the illustrious Metropolitan bishop of Moldavia), published at the print belonging to the Holy Monastery of

Neamțu in 1940. Another well-researched scientific study that provides precious information, which cannot be found at Father Vasile Vasilache, is that of Professor Constantin C. Angelescu, entitled *Contribuții la biografia Mitropolitului Iosif Naniescu* (*Contributions to Metropolitan bishop Joseph's biography*), published in the "Mitropolia Moldovei și Sucevei" ("Metropolitanate of Moldavia and Suceava") magazine in 1982.

There is also an article published in 1991 in "Teologie și Viață" ("Theology and Life") journal of the Metropolitan Church of Moldavia and Bukovina, whose information I used in drafting this doctoral thesis project, belonging to Professor Ion Vicovan, *Un mitropolit de seamă al Moldovei, Iosif Naniescu* (*A remarkable Metropolitan bishop of Moldavia, Joseph Naniescu*), where – after a historical framing of the ministry of the Church in the 19<sup>th</sup> century – one can access a valuable summary of Metropolitan bishop Joseph's most important sermons and pastoral letters.

Some information was also found in *Comemorarea Mitropolitului Iosif Naniescu, cu prilejul împlinirii a 50 de ani de la moartea sa* (*Metropolitan Bishop Joseph Naniescu's commemoration on the occasion of his 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary since his death*), written by Father Constantine Nonea, which appeared in 1952 in "Mitropolia Moldovei și Sucevei" ("Metropolitanate of Moldavia and Suceava") journal. Related to the Metropolitan bishop Joseph's library – since everybody knows that he was very fond of books – Nicolae Iorga was of the opinion that through this enlightened hierarch, "The *Paisian* spiritual current gives a last very late pure innocent life and worship to God and the light that flows from Him upon our souls"<sup>3</sup>. A truly comprehensive study is the one signed by Petre Costinescu and Florin Marinescu, *Cartea românească veche din biblioteca Mitropolitului Iosif Naniescu* (*Old Romanian books belonging to Metropolitan bishop Joseph Naniescu's library*), published in "Mitropolia Moldovei și Sucevei" ("Metropolitanate of Moldavia and Suceava") magazine published in 1974. What makes it important is the fact that it presents a list of books from his library.

Joseph Naniescu – who lived between 1818-1902<sup>4</sup> – witnessed some of the most important events and periods in the affirmation of the ancient Church, despite the fact that the second half of the nineteenth century was one of the most challenged in our history because after a period of time **when our country was ruled observing the *Organic Regulation* (1834-1848)** and the Revolution of 1848 there followed **the period of time when our country was ruled observing the rules** established by the Balta-Liman Convention, the Unification of the Principalities (1859) and the reign of Alexander John Cuza, with its reforms applied in several aspects of social life, including in the church life.

Also, we must not forget that the gentle and vigilant hierarch was a contemporary of the War of Independence (1877-1878), in which Romania conquered its state independence<sup>5</sup>,

<sup>3</sup> Nicolae Iorga, *Istoria Bisericii românești și a vieții religioase a românilor*, edition under the care of and prefaced by I. Oprișan, volume II, Saeculum I.O. Publishing House, București, 2016, p. 251.

<sup>4</sup> Pr. prof. dr. M. Păcurariu, *Istoria Bisericii Ortodoxe Române*, volume III, Institutul Biblic și de Misiune al BOR Publishing House, București, 1997, pp. 161-162.

<sup>5</sup> Romanian Principalities – Moldavia and Wallachia – have had, since the 15<sup>th</sup> century, a status of tributary states in relation to the Ottoman Empire. See N. Adăniloaie, *România independentă*, în *Istoria românilor*, volume VII, tome I, Encyclopaedic Publishing House, București, 2003, pp. 633-699.

internationally recognized by the Peace Congress at Berlin, in 1878<sup>6</sup>, during the reign of Karl I as well as it raised Romania to the rank of kingdom, nonetheless, not without receiving the autocephaly and autonomy for the Romanian Orthodox Church.

From the writings, the correspondence and the sermons of Metropolitan Bishop Joseph Naniescu, whether edited or not, his opinions about the role that the Church was called to play in the new state, a state that wanted to join the other European states, giving the proper attention to the missionary and philanthropic ministry during the harsh conditions after the secularization, clearly come to light. But this has meant a momentum of stimulating the mission of clergy in society, a reform of education in which the teaching of Religious Education should have been given its proper place, as well as the constant concern arising from the preservation of national values, Christian mostly.

The importance of the hierarch's speeches in this sense is even greater, as the Romanian society of the nineteenth century has undergone numerous transformations. On several occasions, Metropolitan bishop Joseph Naniescu does not forget to emphasize the close connection between the clergy and the nation, as well as the priests' responsibility not only for the ancient Church but also for the entire Romanian society as a whole.

The transformations that took place following these events were not only of a political-institutional nature, but also of a social and cultural one that had a major influence on the church's life. And the role of the great hierarch was quite decisive.

Through this approach I tried to portray, to cover that void that is felt in the analysis of Metropolitan bishop Joseph Naniescu's socio-philanthropic activity, which so far has been made sporadically and only on certain segments of the mission undergone by this devoted hierarch to the Church and to the people from whose bosom he arose.

### **3. The objective of the research**

Metropolitan bishop Joseph Naniescu, a prominent figure of the nineteenth-century Romanian religious and cultural life, has enjoyed the attention of theologians and historians alike. As one has seen, most of them have dedicated interesting studies and works<sup>7</sup>, which highlighted in particular his work as a hierarch, as Bishop of Argeș and later Metropolitan bishop of Moldavia<sup>8</sup>.

The objective of this work – as I have already mentioned – is to create an icon-portrait of Metropolitan bishop Joseph Naniescu, mirrored by his sacrificial and dedicated service to the poor in the last quarter of the nineteenth century; for this reason the pastoral-missionary

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<sup>6</sup> Romania's independence, gained on the battlefield, was recognised in certain conditions by Germany, Austria, France, Great Britain, Russia, Italy, and Turkey, within the frame of the Treaty of Peace in Berlin, in 1878. See *Documente privind istoria României. Războiul pentru independență* (continuing DIR, *Independența*), volume IV, Academia of R.P.R. Publishing House, București, 1954, pp. 374-390.

<sup>7</sup> Protos. V. Vasilache, *Iosif Naniescu, strălucit mitropolit al Moldovei*, Holy Monastery of Neamțu Print, 1940, p. 203.

<sup>8</sup> Pr. G. Cocora, *Documente pentru biografia Mitropolitului Iosif Naniescu*, in "Mitropolia Moldovei și Sucevei", XXXVI, 1960, no. 1-2, pp. 92-99; Idem, *Mitropolitul Iosif Naniescu și Buzăul*, in "Glasul Bisericii", XXVII, 1968, no. 7-8, pp. 806-812; P. Costinescu, F. Marinescu, *Cartea românească veche din Biblioteca Mitropolitului Iosif Naniescu*, in "Mitropolia Moldovei și Sucevei", L, 1974, no. 1-2, pp. 63-81.

service will be presented together with his social-philanthropic activity for which the faithful people of Moldavia used to call him “the merciful Joseph”.

#### 4. Used methods

The methods I have used – after I have done the bibliographic research and documentation – will be the expositional, followed by the comparative one; and when dealing with certain aspects I also used the critical method. The analytical means for making a presentation as close as possible to historical reality did not lack either.

During the preliminary phase, I sought to give a harmonious presentation of Metropolitan bishop Joseph Naniescu’s entire pastoral-missionary activity, carried out with much care and dedication in a social-historical environment most often hostile and unfavourable to the affirmation of the ancient Church in the new context of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, which – as Thierry Wolton says – had “as a central problem that of the state, which is no longer to be conceived from above, in relation to God or to the sovereign, but from the bottom from the point of view of people or of the nation”<sup>9</sup>.

Raymond Aron, in turn, points out that doctrines regarding the definition of nationalism as it was stated in the nineteenth century do not lack the kind of desacralization by which they seek to take – “in the souls – the place of the missing faith”, placing “the salvation of humanity in our earthly world”<sup>10</sup>. Thus, the nation becomes the frame of manifestation of the sovereignty of a nation constituted of people bound by blood, language or culture, living on a certain tract of land.

But this nationalism – excluding the idea of religion on behalf of the equality of all people regardless of faith or religious conviction – has been accompanied by a cultivation of atheism; for this reason, the nineteenth century was called a century of atheism. Therefore, the analysis will not bypass this phenomenon during the pastorship of this gentle hierarch. Finally, I will use the interactive method, showing the power of the example of his social-philanthropic ministry, which was continued by the successors of the merciful hierarch till our time.

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<sup>9</sup> Thierry Wolton, *Roșu brun. Răul secolului*, in Romanian by Micaela Slăvescu, postface of the Romanian edition by Stephane Courtois, editor Romulus Rusan, Academia Civică Foundation, București, 2001, p. 190.

<sup>10</sup> Raymond Aron, *L’age des empires et l’avenir de la France*, Defence de la France Publishing House, Paris, 1945, p. 268, apud Thierry Wolton, *op. cit.*, pp. 192-193.

## Introduction

As I mentioned above, the nineteenth century was full of all sorts of disturbances; first of all, those ones that followed the revolutions of 1848.

Norberto Bobbio, taking into account that the individualism cultivated in the nineteenth century, in the direction of the 16<sup>th</sup> century Protestant Reformation and the philosophical thinking of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, considers “the state as an ensemble of individuals and as a result of their activities and relationships that are established between them”<sup>11</sup>.

This is because it comes to the fact that a secular vision of the state is being promoted, in which the Church of Christ only becomes a tolerated one. This is how – when Europe enters the era of national revolutions – the nation is shown to be “a soul, a spiritual principle, the desire to live together”, as Renan expressed in his speech *What is the Nation?* in 1882. This is how nationalism has come to be “translated into a laic, secular religion, with a universal claim” since “all peoples – or almost all – are interested in the national phenomenon”<sup>12</sup>.

The years 1848 and 1849 – representing “the apogee and the collapse of revolutionary romanticism” – will determine what it will happen in the second half of the nineteenth century, when “nationalism will follow two distinct ways in Europe: one that can be qualified as realised nationalism and another one qualified as idealised nationalism; the former is represented by the United Kingdom and France, who have the advantage of “having a modern state that diffuses a civic nationalism that facilitates the integration of populations at the time when industrialization develops, and in which the society of masses appears. In France, the spirit inherited from the Convention is achieved due to the definitive implementation of the republic, in particular through schooling. The cult of national collectivism is increasingly replacing religious cults”<sup>13</sup>.

This spirit will also influence the Romanian young people studying in Paris, when they will have to choose a state form for the two United Principalities. If during the period of the Organic Regulation the interference of the state in the church’s affairs was felt, because “when the Russians occupy the country in 1828, the clashes between the political authority and the Church do not cease, but intensify, the new leaders who were being taught at their homes with the domination by decrees and regulations of the dioceses and monasteries subjected entirely to the patriarch tsar”, there followed another period in which a strong emphasis on “the French anticlericalism and on the rule of the church in the state as in Russia” is laid on. This explains why the public assemblies will come to elect bishops and metropolitans, preparing “a new administration of all the church’s wealth and the creation of a ministry of the Church: *Logofătul trebilor bisericesti*”<sup>14</sup>.

For this reason, after the election of the new rulers – because he did not want “any particular interference or reign” and because Prince John Sandu (from Alexander) Sturdza banished the metropolitan bishop on the grounds that he did not have to “work with the

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<sup>11</sup> *Liberalisme et democratie*, Du Cerf. Publishing House, Paris, 1996, p. 54.

<sup>12</sup> Thierry Wolton, *op. cit.*, pp. 196 and 198.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibidem*, pp. 200-201.

<sup>14</sup> Nicolae Iorga, *Istoria Bisericii românești și a vietii religioase a românilor*, volume II, pp. 275-277.

appointed boyars” – Metropolitan bishop Veniamin Costachi “came into conflict with this new ruler”<sup>15</sup>. He eventually had to withdraw at the Slatina Monastery in 1844.

Thus, the Metropolitan bishop Veniamin Costache’s ideal that every year, at least once, all the bishops of dioceses together with their metropolitan bishops should gather to seek advice and take the necessary decisions in order to increase good manners and evangelical morality between the faithful of the Church, that no faith without deed or deed without faith should not be seen<sup>16</sup>, could not be reached, this being related to nothing else but to the decadent state of the church of Moldavia and Wallachia.

This is why the expectations of a church’s rebirth will be related to the ruler of the United Principalities who, unfortunately, will be animated by the idea of secularization of the wealth of those monasteries in strict obedience to the Greek Orthodox Church at the time, and not only, but tributed to “all of the French ideas advocated by men – with the same ideas – did not have the special knowledge in history and canons that would have been required”. Thus, it will be enough to complete the work started by Alexandru Ghica in Greater Wallachia and by Mihail Sturdza in Moldavia, which will lead to the stripping of any of the Church’s “autonomy, power and authority”<sup>17</sup>.

On the 13<sup>th</sup> of December 1863, the law of secularization of monasteries in strict obedience to the Greek Orthodox Church was voted, and – as compensation – “a sum of many millions, which the Greeks despised and lost afterwards” was allotted. But not only those which were in strict obedience to the Greek Orthodox Church but also a part of the autochthonous monasteries became “prisons, hospitals, shelters, sometimes schools or ruins, and the rest were left to ignorant and undignified father superiors who were constraining their election by the bishop for one reason or another. There was no scholarship, no household, no zeal for the Church, no sense of its calling.<sup>18</sup> From these facts one can understand the deplorable state of the monasteries of those times.

By a regulation on monasticism, the age of “sixty years for men and fifty years for women” was stipulated for those who wanted to enter the monasteries, which impeded the entry of young people and their formation in the spirit of the monastic life starting at an earlier age. But it went even further, for “the Metropolitans and Bishops had to be elected by the Legislative Assembly – except for the Heterodox – that was joining for this occasion to the Synod”, which was made up of “the archbishop in the country, bearing Romanian titles, each according to the most important city of the eparchy for which he was elected and sanctified”. By the *Organic Decree* of the 6<sup>th</sup> of December 1864, the archbishops had to be appointed by the ruler or prince.<sup>19</sup>

After Alexander John Cuza’s abdication, the new Prince Karl I seeks a reconciliation between the Church and the Legislative Assembly between the elected canonical and “non-canonical” archbishops; so he will keep the latter ones, which will not bring peace and unity to the ancient church. The *Organic Law* of 1872 seeks to legalize this “reconciliation” in some

<sup>15</sup> *Ibidem*, pp. 275 and 277.

<sup>16</sup> Bishop Melchisedec, *Cronica Hușilor*, I, p. 439, apud Nicolae Iorga, *op. cit.*, volume II, pp. 283-284.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 284.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibidem*, pp. 310 and 317.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibidem*, pp. 312, 314 and 311-312.

way, the theological schools will show coordination to the Ministry of Public Instruction; later some of them will be abolished. In 1874 – after having been approved since 1873 – the “Romanian Orthodox Church” magazine appears, having as subtitle “Jurnal periodic eclesiastic” (“Periodical Ecclesiastic Journal”); in 1880, this subtitle is changed into “Revista periodică eclesiastică” (“Periodical Ecclesiastic Magazine”).

In 1884, the Faculty of Theology in Bucharest was founded, as Nicolae Iorga says: “Almost unrelated to the Synod that also had a right of recommendation for the teachers subjected in all to the law of instruction”.<sup>20</sup> Through this new educational institution it was desired to educate priests and to provide a clergy with academic titles for the urban localities. It was also stated that – since early 1872, by King Karl I – at least from 1892, only clergy with academic titles may participate in the elections to be appointed hierarchs.<sup>21</sup>

During this time the Metropolitan Church of Transylvania was established across the Carpathians, in Sibiu, through the efforts of Metropolitan bishop Andrei Șaguna, recognized by the Synod of Karlovitz in 1863 and by the Hungarian Parliament in 1868; this metropolitanate had several episcopal subordinate positions. Through the efforts of the same metropolitan, the editing of the weekly religious publication “Telegraful roman” (“Romanian Telegraph”) begins in 1853.

In the nineteenth century, Romanians from Transylvania continued their struggle on social and political grounds, having in view their national emancipation, the separation of the Romanian (Orthodox) hierarchy from the Serbian one and the restoration of the old Orthodox Metropolitan Church, which had its seat in Alba Iulia. Since his arrival in Transylvania, the bishop Andrei Saguna had as main objective a reorganization of the church. Then, in the following years, Andrei Saguna, published three brochures<sup>22</sup>, in which he tried to prove to the authorities of those time the need to re-establish the Orthodox Metropolitan Church of Transylvania, suppressed in 1701.

At the same time, Metropolitan bishop Andrei, despite the opposition of his opponent, minister of religions Leo Thun, of the Serbian Orthodox Church and of the United Church with Rome – the Greek Catholic Church in Transylvania – was not discouraged in continuing his approach; through the eparchial synods held in Sibiu in the 1850s and 1860s – consisting of clergy and laity – as well as through petitions addressed to Patriarch Iosif Raiacici in March 1849 he expressed the Romanians’ of Transylvania wish. Thus, in the sessions of the Orthodox hierarchs in Vienna – held between the 15<sup>th</sup> of October 1850 and the 3<sup>rd</sup> of July 1851 – chaired by the Serbian hierarch, and also in the meetings of Metropolitan bishop A. Saguna with Patriarch I. Raiacici, in the summer of 1860, or in many other circumstances he advocated for the restoration of the old Orthodox Metropolitan Church of Transylvania.<sup>23</sup>

The steps for the re-establishment of the Orthodox Metropolitan Church of Transylvania continued in the years that followed – 1861, 1862-1863<sup>24</sup> – but all the efforts of

<sup>20</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 316.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 315.

<sup>22</sup> Cf. Pr. prof. dr. Mircea Păcurariu, *Istoria Bisericii Ortodoxe Române*, volume III, p. 91.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>24</sup> Mircea Păcurariu, *100 de ani de la înființarea Mitropoliei Ardealului*, in “Mitropolia Ardealului”, nr. 11-12/1964, pp. 826-830 with subsidiary footnotes; data regarding the efforts for re-establishment of the Metropolitanate of Transylvania; see pr. drd. Florin Teodorescu, *op cit.*, pp. 152-156, 158-162, 168-169 and 174.

Metropolitan bishop A. Saguna and his supporters had no result; especially when some Orthodox Serbians were among his opponents and also Bishop Eugene Hacman of Bukovina, who wanted to organize a Metropolitanate separate from the one expected by the bishop of Sibiu. Thus, on 22-28 March 1864, a new synod was held in Sibiu, where a *Regulation of Organisation* was issued for the future eparchy, having 174 paragraphs.

At the same time another memorandum was issued to be sent to the emperor in Vienna asking for the approval of the re-establishment of the Romanian Orthodox Metropolitan Church of Transylvania.<sup>25</sup> The attempts and efforts of Metropolitan bishop A. Șaguna, carried over for over fourteen years, seemed to be unsuccessful, but the first success was the decision taken in August 1864 by the Serbian Orthodox Church Congress to accept the hierarchical separation between the Serbian Orthodox Church and the Romanian Church of Transylvania and Banat. The crowning of all A. Șaguna's efforts was accomplished only on December 12/24, 1864, when – by an “imperial autograph”<sup>26</sup> – the re-establishment of the old Orthodox Metropolitan Church of Transylvania was approved<sup>27</sup>, and bishop Andrei was named Archbishop and Metropolitan bishop. The Romanian Orthodox Metropolitanate of Transylvania and Banat would comprise three eparchies: the Eparchy of Sibiu, the Episcopate of Arad and the Episcopate of Caransebes, the latter was to be established in 1865.<sup>28</sup>

The Metropolitan Church of Bukovina and Dalmatia was also established in 1873, through the endeavour of Bishop Eugenie Hacman who received the title of archbishop and Metropolitan bishop. In 1875, the Faculty of Theology will be established at the University of Cernăuți, which will publish “Candela” (“The Lamp”) magazine beginning with the year of 1881.

Regarding the organization of the Episcopate of Bukovina, this was accomplished following long negotiations between Bishop Dositei Herescu and General Enzenberg; on these bases a *Spiritual Regulation* was made up, sanctioned by the emperor on the 29<sup>th</sup> of April 1789.<sup>29</sup> By this regulation, the Eparchy of Bukovina was divided into six deaconates, protopope's districts and two protopope's vicariates; each deaconate had a number of parishes. At the head of a deaconate there was an archpriest or protopresbyter; this new organization has reduced the number of parishes from 239 to 186, which has displeased the elder clergy who were retired.<sup>30</sup>

The eparchial consistory was made up of the episcopal bishop (the occupant) appointed by the emperor (who was the supreme patron of the Orthodox Church in Bukovina), helped by four counsellors – id est *assessors*, two clergymen and two laymen – and the bishop's substitute, an archimandrite in function, with the title of general vicar. The priests and

<sup>25</sup> Cf. *Actele sinodului Bisericii greco-răsăritene în Ardeal din anul 1864*, Sibiu, 1864, pp. 276-283.

<sup>26</sup> Cf. N. Popea, *Mitropolitul Andrei...*, p. 146.

<sup>27</sup> Pr. dr. Sofron Vlad, *Din viața Mitropoliei ardelenă în cei 100 de ani de existență*, in “Mitropolia Ardealului”, no. 11-12/1964, pp. 842-844; see also *Statutul Organic al Bisericii Ortodoxe Române și Transilvania*, Sibiu, 1869.

<sup>28</sup> Alexandru Moraru, *Biserica Ortodoxă Română între anii 1885-2000: Biserică, națiune, cultură*, volume III, tome I, Institutul Biblic și de Misiune al BOR Publishing House, București, p. 28.

<sup>29</sup> I. Nistor, *Istoria Bisericii din Bucovina*, București, 1916, p. 3.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibidem*.

archpriests were appointed by the Governor of Bukovina after they had the hierarch's recommendation; this regulation also reduced the number of monasteries in Bukovina.<sup>31</sup>

Later, under Bishop Eugene Hacman (1835-1873) – who had always had misunderstandings with his priests, and above all, with bishop Andrei Saguna – was made a new *Statute of the organization* of the Eparchy of Bukovina, approved by the emperor on the 23<sup>rd</sup> of December 1843.<sup>32</sup>

In the end, it will be raised in the rank of Metropolitanate of Bukovina and Dalmatia in 1873, as I have described above.

Like the other great Romanian provinces – the United Principalities, and from the Habsburg Empire, Transylvania, Banat, Maramures – which were coveted for centuries by the great powers, Bessarabia, after a long preparation through a politico-diplomatic and military ways, was occupied by the Russians; to achieve this goal, they had “thoroughly prepared” for about a century and a half to annex it.<sup>33</sup>

In Bessarabia, taken in 1812, the Exarchate of Chisinau was organised by Metropolitan bishop Gavriil Bănulescu-Bodoni, which – after his passing to the Lord – was raised to the rank of Archdiocese of Chisinau and Hotin; this eparchy will edit, since 1858, the “Vestitorul eparhiei Chișinăului și Hotinului” (“The Eparchy of Chisinau and Hotin Herald”).<sup>34</sup>

Due to the oppression of this part of the country by the Russians, many Romanians left Bessarabia, passing the Prut River to Moldavia; on the other hand, the Russian administrations – between 1812 and 1828, when Bessarabia had the status of border region (*oblastie*), and between 1828 and 1871, that of a simple province (*gubernia*) – “promoted” the ethnic disintegration of the country throughout the tsarist empire. At the same time, there was a rough colonization policy in Bessarabia with populations of Slavic origin but also of German origin; At the same time, the compulsory use of the Russian language and the Cyrillic alphabet was introduced in the state administration, in the Church and in schools, and for this reason the ethnic Romanians who were a majority as well as their culture suffered.<sup>35</sup>

Regarding the situation of the church, I mention the fact that – when Bessarabia was annexed to the Tsarist Empire – there were some eparchies with jurisdiction in this territory; for example, the counties of Balti and Orhei depended on the Metropolitanate of Moldavia (with its seat in Iasi), the counties of Greceni, Codru, Hotăniceni, Lăpușna and Soroca, held by the Eparchy of Huși, the Hotina's district had its own hierarch (bishop) and the faithful people of Bugeac were subordinate to the Metropolitanate of Proilava (residing in Brăila).

As previously mentioned, under the succession of Metropolitan bishop Gavriil Bănulescu-Bodoni<sup>36</sup>, during the time of Archbishop Dimitrie Sulima (1821-1844), on the 9<sup>th</sup> of May 1837, a new church administrative division of the Eparchy of Chișinău and Hotin was put into practice; as a result, only the territories between the Prut and Dniester Rivers

<sup>31</sup> Cf. Pr. prof. dr. Mircea Păcurariu, *Istoria Bisericii Ortodoxe Române*, volume III, p. 180.

<sup>32</sup> I. Nistor, *Istoria Bisericii din Bucovina...*, p. 5.

<sup>33</sup> Alexandru Boldur, *Istoria Basarabiei*, București, 1993, p. 84; see also Boris Buzilă, *Din istoria vieții bisericesti din Basarabia*, Chișinău, 1996.

<sup>34</sup> Cf. P. Cernovodeanu, *Primii ani ai ocupației ruse (1812-1820)*, in *Istoria românilor*, volume VI, p. 710.

<sup>35</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 714.

<sup>36</sup> Arsenie Stanidițchi, *Viața și nevoițele Înaltpreasfințitului Gavriil Bănulescu-Bodoni*, “Lumina lui Hristos” Publishing House, Chișinău, 2013, p. 94.

remained under its jurisdiction. Parishes across the Dniester were annexed to the Kherson and Tauride Episcopate, residing in Odessa.

It is worth noting that, unlike his predecessor, the bishop Dimitrie Sulima began the process of “russification of the church organization in Bessarabia”<sup>37</sup>.

Later on, following the Crimean War (1853-1856), through the Peace of Paris (1856), southern Bessarabia – with three of its counties Cahul, Ismail and Bolgrad – were given back to Moldavia; so is the fact that the church jurisdiction has changed, passing under the jurisdiction of the Metropolitan Church of Moldova. However, a Church Consistory was organized in the southern part of Bessarabia, with its seat at Ismail, and under Prince Alexander John Cuza, The Lower Danube Episcopate was established on the 17<sup>th</sup> of November 1864, which was first filled by the scholar bishop Melchisedec Ștefănescu, who became the eparchial bishop on the 10<sup>th</sup> of May 1865. It included the counties of Ismail, Bolgrad and Covurlui – taken from the eparchy of Huși –, but also Brăila County, taken from the Eparchy of Buzău, while Cahul County came under the jurisdiction of the Episcopate of Huși.<sup>38</sup>

After the Independence War (1877-1878), at the Peace Congress of Berlin (1878) the annexation of southern Bessarabia to Russia was decided and the former counties – Ismail, Cahul and Bolgrad – re-entered from an administrative point of view in the structure of the Archdiocese of Chișinăului and Hotin and under the spiritual protection of the Synod of the Russian Orthodox Church. From now on there will be an even more intense russification process carried out by the Russian hierarchs and by the priests of the same nation, appointed in their positions of responsibility in the eparchy, which once was made up of Romanian population in its majority.<sup>39</sup>

All in all, this would be the ecclesial reality that the gentle hierarch Joseph had known until his election as Bishop of Argeș in 1873 and then as Metropolitan bishop of Moldavia in 1875. It is worth noting that – as Nicolae Iorga says – the gentle bishop appears to be an experienced servant raised and educated in the spirit of the *Paisian* spiritual current which had “abolished religious boundaries” through that hesychast renewal of the ancient Church of the two Principalities, Moldavia and Greater Wallachia at the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> century.

His election – as the last representative of the hesychast *Paisian* renewal, at a time when “the fall of the new monastic life established by Paisius is even better seen at its origin in the monasteries of Neamt and Secu”<sup>40</sup> – it is seen as the visible work of God for the church of the forefathers to fulfil its purpose of enlightening this nation. He came to Iași to raise the church to the height that Metropolitan bishop Veniamin Costache wished to. When he left the metropolitan seat, he prayed, invoking the “mercy of God on these Christian lands”, to the “flowering of the Holy Church and the Homeland” in whose service – as a devoted and with

<sup>37</sup> Nicolae Chifăr, *Basarabia – pământ românesc*, in *Priveghind și lucrând pentru mântuire*, Trinitas Publishing House, Iași, 2000, pp. 265-270.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 268.

<sup>39</sup> Ștefan Ciobanu, *Cultura românească în Basarabia sub stăpânire rusă*, Chișinău, 1992, p. 58.

<sup>40</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 246.

a selfless sense of sacrifice hierarch – he used “all the means of the circumstances provided him, with the aim to revive and increase the nation”<sup>41</sup>.

Not even in the world of villages or towns the situation was better, as the priests who “used to live in a secular, materialistic and sceptical environment, involved in the political life, bound by their family’s interests from priesthood” – in their vast majority did not have a proper level of education imposed by the requirements of those times, and they did not prove a spiritual zeal, often being related to the political, social, and cultural disturbances. That is how some widowed priests, – with a doubtful moral character –, “former teachers and well-known figures in the political controversies” have come to be elected to the dignity of hierarchs.<sup>42</sup>

That is why the election of Joseph Naniescu gave to all who have shown themselves devoted to the ideal of serving the Church of Christ the hope that “the hand of God is the one that protects them”.

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<sup>41</sup> Andrei Vizanti, *Veniamin Costachi*, Iași, 1881, p. 35.

<sup>42</sup> Nicolae Iorga, *Istoria Bisericii românești...*, volume II, pp. 317-318.

## CONCLUSIONS

Taking what has been presented in this paper into consideration, we can state that the latest decades of the nineteenth century marked, in the existence of the Moldavian Church, the shaping of the Merciful Saint Joseph's personality: scholar hierarch, unmatched philanthropist and distinct servant of the ancestral Church. His entire pastoral activity had a strong missionary character, as he would spend his days serving the interests of the Orthodox Church and of the nation into which he was born, in a social-political complex context, when a new state was emerging on the European map, its independence being finally recognised, Romania.

In its essence, the Christian mission always identifies with the entire life spectrum and the Church's activity throughout the world, having as fundament the apostolic tradition regarding the upholding of the true teachings and the practicing of a Christian way of life worldwide, and I can fully attest to the abnegation and the sacrifice for servitude of this great hierarch of our Church.

The activity of the great hierarch sheds more light into the service provided by the Romanian Orthodox Church, especially after receiving the recognition of the autocephaly. Furthermore, the current research helps us understand the necessity of an academic approach to this service, including detailed references and evidence of individual contributions of the devoted servants of the ancestral Church, who made their mark substantially upon the development and the growth of their eparchies.

The mission of the Church is not an isolated part of its existence, but it arises from the ethos and the spirit which are instilled in all the aspects of the ecclesial life, with the higher goal of governing the process of a gradual transformation of the human world into God's Kingdom. Through the apostolic succession and the wholeness of the Divine spirit, the High Priesthood service in Orthodoxy ensures the dynamisation of the Church service in order to extend in the world the holy work of God.

In ecclesiology, the accent always falls on the novel vision upon the human personality and the entire Creation, founded on the redeeming work of Christ the Lord, the One who said: "Behold, I am making all things new!" (Revelations 21, 5). Consequently, any academic theological endeavour concerning the missionary service of Christ's Church – and, particularly, the Ecumenical Orthodoxy – must also consider the personal contribution of its members and its greatest representatives.

The eagerness, the inspiration and the freshness in the spirit of the bards involved in evangelical preaching in the midst of time contributed to establishing a real perception of the Body of Christ, in which one can find our Lord Redeemer, alive and working through the Holy Spirit. Through their work and the upholding of the true Faith, the clergy and the believers express their gratitude for the self-sacrificing love of Christ the Lord.

The authenticity and the profoundness of the Christian-Orthodox thinking of Metropolitan bishop Joseph Naniescu have been important factors in the dynamisation of the ecclesial life in his time.

The great hierarch, who stood on the chair of the Moldavian Metropolitan bishops in times of gaining clarity and during efforts for strengthening the national unity, both through momentarily reactions and through his permanent model behaviour, proved his great love for the ancestral Faith and the zeal of nurturing and keeping its unity. Perfectly aware of the great, but also difficult responsibility which laid before him, Saint Joseph the Merciful did not remain overwhelmed by the heavy burden, but he got stronger and heartened by the Holy Spirit, rising to the expectations and needs of his contemporaries and believers, having the drive and efficiency of a true *apostle for evangelical peace*.

Professor Constantin Erbiceanu's words at the funeral of the great hierarch happily synthesize the following truth: Metropolitan bishop Joseph "was a strong pillar of the orthodox temple". Thus, Saint Joseph the Merciful proved to be a kind-hearted hierarch, a culture lover, a dignified man working in the service of Christian charity and symbolically representing the fight for the country's unity and the Orthodox faith in Romania in general and in Moldavia in particular.

An enlightened mind and a high moral theologian, Saint Hierarch Joseph Naniescu dedicated his life – both in Argeș and in Moldavia – to the mission of edifying and enlightening the clergy and the believers. The illustrious Metropolitan bishop was perceived, even during his lifetime, as being a central pillar of his era's culture, being involved in the promotion of the Romanian Academy's organisation in the second half of the nineteenth century, holding the belief that the Church, beyond its saviour and eschatological role, must also be a promoter of national values, a keeper of traditions and the language of the people, a guide in objective science and authentic literature.

All these saint ideals have kept their liveliness even today, giving strength to many of those who followed Christ (Luke 18, 22) by assuming the monastic pledges. Just as the Christian cannot let the light of the lamp lie hidden under a measuring basket (Matthew 5, 15), nor can the monks dislike the light of books, comprehending that in this light lies a continuous connection to God and knowing His truth – this was one the messages of the kind Metropolitan bishop who wanted to contribute to the servants' enlightening of the Ancestral Church; nonetheless, of the monks among whom – following the Alexander John Cuza's secularisation, due to some more than critical moments, the monastic life was clearly in a cultural regress – new generations of hierarchs were bound to arise.

In all the places where Saint Joseph the Metropolitan trod, we can see the evidence of a careful devotion to the teaching of the future servants, just as he himself enjoyed the mentoring, guidance and support of the Bishop Chesarie of Buzău. Coming to Iasi also meant a closeness to his origins in Bessarabia, which was still under the Tsarist rule. We believe that, deep within his soul, he longed, through his endeavour and his skills, to be able to contribute at least with a drop of hope to the awaiting state of the Bessarabian Orthodox believers, hoping for the much-expected day when the Moldavians beyond the river Prut would live in unity with the Romanians from the entire Principalities.

The gentle hierarch permanently preached by word but also by acting according to the good and merciful Samaritan parable. That is why all those in need went to his doorsteps and their expectations were never deceived. "Nothing is more priced before God as charity" – he

often told the poor who visited him to receive something – “but charity, as well as God’s love, asks to be imitated, by those who practice it, but also by those who benefit from it”.

His relentless prayers as a Father, his erudition and his practical spirit, supported in all the circumstances by a self-sacrificing braveness, brought a secure feeling and a protective one among the priests and believers of the Moldavian Church. He also made efforts to help the “Veniamin Costache” School of Theology in Iași hold a special status and function in a venue with its own building, an endeavour which proves his utmost care for the young people’s education in the spirit of respect towards the ancestral fate, towards the canonical rites of our Church and towards the laws of the country.

Joseph Naniescu was a man of culture, as he is among those who donated many books to the Romanian Academy Library, being one of the biggest benefactors of this reputed institution. We should mention that, by being elected as a corresponding member of the Romanian Academy, he received recognition not only for his merits as a philanthropist, but also for his intellectual level, as well as for his diligence shown in guiding the Moldavian Church, which in turn helped Iasi not to lose his cultural and religious importance.

Obviously, around a powerful man one cannot find only friends, but also numerous rivals, displeased subordinates with the decisions taken by the one outranking them, as well as people who are hostile to the Church. However, he indulged, permitted or corrected with patience and faith in God. All these qualities and beautiful traits of the Metropolitan bishop Joseph Naniescu have proven that he was a living holy man, and the Church approved this through his canonization.

The numerous structures built under the coordination of the enlightened hierarch in Iași or in its vicinity stand proof until today of his endless love towards their builders and their works. Especially inside the Metropolitan Cathedral in Iasi, Saint Joseph’s beloved construction, one can notice, by studying each piece (the paintings, the liturgical objects, the sermon books, the clothing etc.) visible, perennial proofs of the love for adorning the House of God instilled by the high hierarch.

This is how, through the striving of the forever-worth-remembering Metropolitan bishop Joseph Naniescu, also called by the monks and the churches in the Moldavian monasteries “our Father”, the Metropolitan Cathedral became “The mother of the churches in Moldavia”, just like Veniamin Costache, his forefather, had desired.

It was here that the canonising sermon of Saint Joseph the Merciful took place, on the 25<sup>th</sup> of March 2018, conducted by His Beatitude Daniel, Patriarch of the Romanian Orthodox Church, accompanied by an impressive assembly of hierarchs from the Holy Synod.

In the Metropolitan Cathedral, with the blessing of the His Eminence Teofan, the Metropolitan of Moldavia and Bukovina, a wooden sculptured iconostasis was prepared, onto which an icon of Saint Joseph the Merciful, painted in the workshop of the “*Sfinții Trei Ierarhi*” Monastery (“The Three Holy Hierarchs” Monastery) in Iași, was placed in and, after the official canonisation, the reliquary with the holy relics was laid at the base of the iconostasis, in order to be permanently praised by the pious believers, in close vicinity to the reliquary of Saint Paraskeva.

Following the event of proclaiming the canonisation, a part of the Metropolitan's clothes, the medallion known as engolpion, the cross, the chair and the sceptre were restored and laid in the new tomb, which was rehabilitated in such a way that they would be visible and praised accordingly. All these were made under the careful surveillance and involvement of His Grace Calinic of Botoșani, Assistant Bishop to the Archdiocese of Iași, whole-heartedly assisted by the priests serving the Metropolitan Cathedral in Iași.

I believe that the most proper way to summarize the activity of the gentle Metropolitan bishop can be found in the troparion and hymn of Saint Joseph:

**Troparion:**

With piety after receiving heavenly mercy, you have shown yourself to Moldavia as a great shepherd, merciful and full of holiness; for all of these, Saint Hierarch, you, who called upon your flock into redemption by means of words and good deeds, you now rejoice with all the righteous in heaven, Father Joseph.

**Kontakion:**

Following Christ's Mercifulness, Father, you were everyone's answers to everything, like the Apostle, Hierarch Joseph, with mercy; thus you, the blessed one, resting in heavenly peace, pray for those who piously sing: Rejoice, Saint Joseph, by Christ wisened!

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