

**MINISTRY OF EDUCATION, RESEARCH, YOUTH
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**THE ROMANIAN GREEK-CATHOLIC CHURCH IN
THE UNITED STATES 1904-1989**

**DOCTORAL THESIS
(ABSTRACT)**

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Key words: church, Greek-Catholicism, parish, priests, immigration, Metropolitan See, diocese, missionaryism.

To evidenciate the purpose of writing this thesis it is obviously necessary to review step by step the undertaken historiographic action. Similarly, by recapitulation of phases and moments of its development, as well as structure and its conceptual dimension we may practically underline what this thesis brings new in the field of knowledge and nowadays historical research from Romania. As for the base problems it addresses, it is obvious, a first synthesis of this type, dealing mainly with the Romanian Greek-Catholic communities from the United States of America, reconstructing the appearance moment of the first parochial churches and neighbouring parishes, inclusively the moment of establishing the afferent Greek-Catholic Bishopric and their development along time, until close from strict present.

Then, methodologically, it is an innovator historical measure, tributary also to investigation of differentiated documentary sources and historical individuals that are still alive (personalities of the Greek-Catholic Church from the United States of America, from Rome or Romania or common members of the respective religious community), in a slightly modernised manner, by comparison with strict positivism.

It is not avoided the fact that time span of the undertaken study is quite long, throughout two centuries, fact which gave substance to the carried historical work and allowed providing a comprehensive overview on the history of these communities of Romanian immigrants, as well as drawing some valid conclusions capable of revealing the historical truth referring to them, tested along history.

Chapter I, *Immigration of the Greek-Catholic Romanians from Transylvania into the United States of America*, illustrates mainly the causes of the remembered immigration phenomenon, as well as its social dimensions, being drawn up mainly based on previous historiography of the subject and research of some documentary sources. It was written a lot on the respective theme, but in this paper emphasis is laid on the

relations between immigrants and Church, not on social problems that this phenomenon involves. Its subchapters are: 1. *Greek-Catholic Church from America*, which records introductive generalities, presenting also the situation of the other Greek-Catholic immigrants (Hungarian Ruthenes, Ukrainians etc.) organised before construction of the first Romanian Greek-Catholic Churches; 2. *Organization of the Romanian Greek-Catholic parishes from the United States of America*, by which it is circumscribed only fugitively and introductorily the establishing moment of some parishes and parochial churches of the respective communities of Romanian immigrants, the subject being resumed and developed in the IInd chapter; 3. *Involvement of the Greek-Catholic Metropolitan See of Blaj in organization of the believers*, subchapter by which it is presented the challenge that the Greek-Catholic Metropolitan See of Alba Iulia and Făgăraș had to face in organizing its believers that were at a such great distance, attaching particular importance, for the first time within the remembered institution to the concept of missionary priest; there were even offered special grants for missionary priests in America, that were trained under the patronage of *De Propaganda Fide Congregation* from Rome. Involvement of the Metropolitan See of Blaj as far as the problems of the Greek-Catholic believers from America is concerned did not end with sending the first priest Epaminonda Lucaciu, but was permanently preoccupied with life and spiritual needs of the immigrant believers, sending priests for their shepherding, this being one of the priorities of the clerical bodies from Blaj and suffragan bishoprics. Thus, the best priests were sent (the celibate, widower or secretaries) that the Metropolitan See had. One of these, Alexandru Niculescu became, at the return from the mission, Bishop of Lugoj and then was elected even Metropolitan bishop of Blaj. It was also presented the range of priests following 1948, when the Church from America was aided by the Greek-Catholic Missions from Europe, South America until their own Bishopric was established in 1983.

With the second chapter begins the massive historical approach of the problems, by reconstruction of facts, events of some key moments of establishment and evolution, beneficial and sometimes less beneficial, of the Greek-Catholic church organisations of the immigrant Romanians into the United States of America. Thus, the second chapter, very considerable, of this paper is entitled : *Romanian Greek-Catholic parishes from America (1905-1990.)*

Its subchapters illustrate the history of main elements of Romanian Greek-Catholic Church from the United States of America, approach being a synthetical one, yet analytical, on certain evolutive phases, there being rendered particular elements, from the past of these fundamental components of the Church.

There are recorded in the history of the parishes some aspects that are totally new to us from the 'old world', for example, the fact that the church was constructed by a community and once with disappearance (assimilation of the community by the American elements), the Church was sold, according to American mentality, or, in some other cases, when the community left in other areas, in search for work, they sold their old Church and built another Church on the established spot. Another case, would be, that in which the Church, to may be constructed, money was borrowed, and not being able to return the amount of money, the building was sold. That is why, the chronicles of the parishes present one, two or even three Churches constructed by the same community, there being preserved the dedication day, but location being changed. As a particularity, imposed by the American context, community was the one that ensured the wage of the priest, maintenance of the Church etc., and that is why the chronical of each parish records donations of money made by each person, for the wellbeing of the parish.

The subchapters for the greater division (II. 1.) of this second chapter are :
Cleveland Diocese: includes generalities, but also particular data referring to the remembered church body, with the following subdivisions: 1. „*Saint Helena*” parish, *Cleveland, Ohio*; 2. “*Holy Trinity*” parish, *Cleveland, Chesterland, Ohio*; 3. „*Saint Basil*” parish, *Lorain, Ohio*.

We mention that the first Romanian parish was established in this Cleveland Diocese, the Roman-Catholic Archbishop of the Diocese helped enormously Romanians by giving them money to construct the church, he being practically followed by the other Roman-Catholic Bishops from the other Dioceses, in offering support to establish Romanian Greek-Catholic parishes.

The second great division of the second chapter of this work, entitled *Detroit Diocese* (II.2) illustrates organization and history of the remembered diocese and has the following subdivisions: 1. „*Saint John the Baptist*” parish, *Detroit*; 2. „*Saint Mary*” parish *Dearborn, Michigan*

The third great section (II. 3) of the second chapter is, naturally, *Erie Diocese* with its subdivisions: 1. „*Saint John the Baptist*” parish, *Sharon Pa*; 2. „*Saint George*” parish, *Erie, Penna*

The fourth division of the second chapter (II.4) deals with *Fort Wayne Diocese*, which includes: 1.„*Saint Nicholas*” parish *East Chicago*; 2. „*Saint Demetrius*” parish, *Indiana, Harbor*; 3. „*Saint Mary*” parish, *Gary, Indiana*.

The fifth division of the second chapter (II.5), entitled *Pittsburgh Diocese*, refers to: 1. „*Saint Mary*” parish, *McKeesport* and 2. „*Saint Jacob*” parish, *Pittsburgh*.

Another successive section of the chapter (II. 6.) is represented by *Rockford Diocese*, with subdivisions: 1. „*Saint Michael the Archangel*” parish, *Aurora, Illinois*; 2. „*Saint George*” parish, *Aurora, Illinois*.

Another section of the second chapter (II.7) refers to *Trenton Diocese* with adjacent parishes: 1. „*Saint Basil*” parish, *Trenton, New Jersey*; 2. „*Saint Mary*” parish, *Robeling*.

Another subsection, the eight, of the same chapter (II. 8.) makes reference to *Altoona Diocese*, having one afferent parish: 1. „*Saint Mary*” parish, *Scalp-Level, Pennsylvania*.

Section nine of the second chapter (II.9) focuses on *Youngstown Diocese*, with afferent parishes: 1. „*Saint Mary*” parish, *Youngstown*; 2. „*Saint Theodore*” parish, *Alliance, Ohio*; 3. „*Saint George*” parish, *Canton, Ohio*; 4. „*Saint Archangels Michael and Gabriel*” parish *Dayton, Ohio*.

Also in the IInd chapter were included sections referring to *Greek-Catholic Missions*, respectively: the 10th subsection (II.10) tackles *Greek-Catholic mission* „*Saint Mary*”, *New York*, while the 11th (II.11) deals with the *Greek-Catholic mission* „*Descent of the Holy Spirit (Pentecost)*”, *Los Angeles, California*; the 12th makes reference to the *Greek-Catholic mission* „*Saint John*”, *Los Angeles, California*.

After development of sections from the IInd chapter it contours in fact, synthetically, history of the Romanian Greek-Catholic Church from the United States of America, from establishment to close from our days, with significant details and particularities.

The IIIrd chapter has the same synthetical character as for the approached theme and adopted time span.

Thus it deals with *Priests that have contributed to organization of the Greek Catholic parishes from America (1906-1990)*, emphasizing not administrative territorial organization and history, in general or particular, of diverse parishes, but, indifferent from the place and time they served, the staff having theological education that activated in the mentioned parishes, people that are bearer of ideal and grace, modeller of people. To them, these schooled persons, was owed in fact organization, functioning and maintaining identity of these Romanian parishes, along time, respectively their past and future, because their future will develop on the direction already traced by the forerunners.

There are presented priests that became Bishops, priests that were rector-missionaries, refugee priests from the First World War and the Second World War, priests that escaped from the communist prisons and took refuge from Romania to the United States of America, priests born in America, priests from Romania, Europe and South America, that were paying visits to American parishes, Romanian orthodox priests converted to Greek-Catholicism etc. We may enumerate representative figures as: Epaminonda Lucaciu, Ioan Spătariu, Mircea Todericiu, Louis Pușcaș, Michael Boteanu etc.

After emphasis was laid on people that served in the Greek-Catholic Churches from America, on personalities of the servants of the pulpit from there, it is approached the issue of the Church staff from the strict perspective of its relations with Churches of the same confession from abroad, pointed out throughout the IVth chapter, one of the most important for the organizational and administrative future of this Romanian church body from America, chapter entitled *Hierarchic subordination of the Greek-Catholic Church from the United States of America and formation of the Bishopric*.

It was followed the long line from establishing the first parish in 1905, until setting up of the Bishopric, in 1983. There were presented all tendencies had by the generations of Romanian Greek-Catholic priests living in America, and who wished to have their own church organisation, subdued to the Metropolitan See from the Native Country, as they were aware that Union makes them stronger, and also that estates of

Churches and Presbyteries they administered were necessary to come back, if they were sold, to the Church from Romania. They had taken over the model of the Ruthenian Greek-Catholic Church in 1913, formation of the Romanian Orthodox Bishopric in 1936, of diverse Greek-Catholic Vicariates from America and are presented petitions submitted most of time personally by priests and addressed to Papality. Fulfilment of these wishes happened in 1982, when the Romanian American Churches formed their own Bishopric. Subsequently 1948, parishes from America considered themselves entitled continuators of the Romanian Greek-Catholic tradition, after which the cult had been abolished in Romania.

To may accomplish presentation of confessional life from the Americam parishes it was written the Vth chapter of this paper, *Greek-Catholic solidarity*.

It reveals firstly the financial solidarity with Romania shown by the Romanian Greek-Catholic parishes and communities from America. Next to private persons that sent monetary funds in the country, Romanian parishes from America were deeply involved in the process of supporting parishes from home and in development of diverse projects, undertaken by the Metropolitan See from Blaj: orphanages, churches, monasteries, schools, grants etc. It is relevant the visit made by the Lugoj Bishop, Alexandru Niculescu, former missionary priest there, in parishes from America, in 1923, to raise funds on behalf of the Metropolitan See etc. Not only Greek-Catholic believers from America, especially following the Second World War, did organize offertories for supporting Romanians affected by the drought from 1946, floods from 1970 and 1975 etc. and especially the Greek-Catholic priests from Romania, that did not embrace orthodoxy.

Also within this chapter we may speak of political solidarity with compatriots from the country. Settled down in a free country, Romanians immigrant to the United States of America were in permanent contact with the reality from home, being preoccupied with each novelty concerning the political changes from the country. Out of the documents presented, we find this solidarity shown throughout different periods, under the Austrian-Hungarian regime, during the First World War, in the interwar period, after the Second World War and, especially in the communist period.

It is often evoked tradition of Blaj culture, of institutions, priests, believers, remaining always alive the memory of what the Greek-Catholic Church means in the Romanian culture and history.

Obviously, the work has a general and particular Bibliography, which is directly or collaterally connected with the approached theme, completing and ordinating its scientific apparatus. Similarly, by the bibliographical remembered list, our work itself is placed in the necessary context of published specialized works, having a place of its own, amongst other references on the same theme. Also it reveals that another synthesis and with monographic characteristics, as it is this one, was not dedicated until now to the respective theme.

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