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# „REVISTA TEOLOGICĂ”, THE JOURNAL OF THE METROPOLITAN CHURCH OF MOLDOVA (1883-1887) – A CULTURAL ECCLESIAL PERIODICAL OR SIMPLY A PRESS ORGAN OF THE CHURCH?

## Keywords

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## Abstract

At the end of the nineteenth century, in Iasi, an open conflict arises between the Metropolitan of Moldova and one of the professors of the Faculty of Law. As the time goes by, the conflict escalates, and supporters are added to both parties, both among the laity and the clergy. For this reason, the conflict enters in a sphere of politicization, the problem becoming a canonical-legal one. In order to win as many supporters as possible, both sides published one diary, „Deșteptarea” «Awakening» and „Revista Teologică” «The theological Review», through which they wanted to show their supremacy and prove the guilt of the other side. „Revista Teologică” appears out of an apologetic necessity, but due to the freedom offered by the Metropolitan Naniescu, to the editors Dragomir Demetrescu and Constantin Erbiceanu, the ecclesial newspaper acquires a cultural-philosophical character.

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## INTRODUCTION

The appearance of the ecclesiastical editorial „Revista Teologică”<sup>1</sup>, between 1883<sup>2</sup> and 1887<sup>3</sup>, is based on the open conflict between the Metropolitan of Moldova, Iosif Naniescu and Gheorghe Mârzescu<sup>4</sup>, professor from the Faculty of Law in Iasi. Gheorghe Mârzescu manages to gather around him, a group of priests – most of them excluded from the church by their superiors, and also retired priests, rural priests unsatisfied with their incomes, and as well seminary students - and to edit, „without the knowledge or mention of any ecclesial authority in the country”<sup>5</sup>, the publication „Deșteptarea”<sup>6</sup>, defined as „alleged organ of the lay clergy”<sup>7</sup>.

The present paper aims to systematically and objectively evaluate the evolution of the ecclesial periodical „Revista Teologică”, a publication arising from the express desire of the metropolitan of Moldova, Iosif Naniescu, and to answer questions such as: *What was the purpose of publishing the ecclesial journal? What was the impact of the journal in the society? and Was it a cultural ecclesiastical periodical or a simply press organ of the Metropolitan Church of Moldova?*

Given the interdisciplinary nature of the subject, a historical work with philosophical-theological and psychological values, the bibliography is a rich one, consulting the press of the time - publications „Revista Teologică” and „Deșteptarea”, memorialistic works, Constantin Erbiceanu, *Viața mea scrisă de mine după cât mi-am putut aduce aminte*, and also works of general character like Ioan Scaltuni, *Religiunea și știința, meditațiuni filosofico-teologice*.

### THE NECESSITY OF THE PUBLICATION „REVISTA TEOLOGICĂ”

In the first number of the journal „Revista Teologică”, the editorial team elaborates an article entitled „The necessity of preaching and setting up the Theological Magazine”, thus motivating the action of Metropolitan Iosif, as a „sacred duty”<sup>8</sup> to establish this religious newspaper. The stated purpose is an apologetic one, but in addition, the editors set another six points, which had to be met periodically: to deal with dogmatic and moral problems, to explain the evangelical pericope, to present and explain the elements of the church administration, to deal with present problems and last but not least, to deal with any „question regarding religion, according to its character as a religious eminence body”<sup>9</sup>.

Regarding the periodic „Deșteptarea”, the published articles contained attacks from the most virulent ones, most of them focusing on the superior clergy<sup>10</sup>, the members of the Holy Synod<sup>11</sup> but also the priests

employed in different administrative units of the Orthodox Church<sup>12</sup>.

The delicate situation in which the metropolitan was and the lack of the people in his entourage, capable of counteracting the degrading articles of the publication „Deșteptarea”, made him to address to two teachers from the „Veniamin” Seminar in Iasi, Constantin Erbiceanu and Dragomir Demetrescu. Erbiceanu states in his memoirs that the stated purpose of the publication was an apologetic one: „Metropolitan Iosif Naniescu was in 1882 in a difficult political situation and a newspaper „Deșteptarea” appeared in Iasi, against him, he called me and he proposed me and Mr. Dragomir Demetrescu, to draw up a church journal for the purpose of defending it”<sup>13</sup>. Erbiceanu emphasizes the difficult political situation in which the Moldavian metropolitan was, this highlighting not only protests of the priests, but a true split within the Church, part of the clergy desiring by the body of the Holy Synod.

### „REVISTA TEOLOGICĂ” VERSUS „DEȘTEPTAREA”

The year 1882 culminates with the first congress of the lay clergy in Bucharest, an action organized without the blessing of the hierarchs, but which gathered an impressive number of clerics. The central committee of this congress had a number of 28 priests, and what was worrying for the Metropolitan of Moldova, was that all of them were priests from Iasi, from the most important churches (among them also retirees) - Sf. Trei Ierarhi, Golia, Sf. Nicolae Domnesc, Tâlpăari, Mitocul Maicilor, Sf. Spiridon, Sf. Vasile Tătărași and others. In the article, their number is 30, but in fact they are only 28<sup>14</sup>.

The review „Deșteptarea” was well received by the public, especially since the titles of its articles contained can-cans and spices from the life and activity of the country's hierarchs. The public's interest in these details proved to be high, and among the readers of the newspaper were, besides those who were criticized<sup>15</sup> also men of culture from the country. One of the examples is given by Gavriil Musicescu, the one who writes on May 16, 1882, to his future cousin from Roman: „Dear Mr. Mandinescu! You have read no. 4 from *Deșteptarea* and if you did not have it? It is worth it from all points of view. If you do not receive it, write to me and I will send it to you”<sup>16</sup>.

Under the given conditions, the Metropolitan Naniescu is forced to counter this publication with another, which was printed this time, under the aegis of the Metropolitan of Moldavia. The dawn of the new publication has as its starting point an agreement between Metropolitan Iosif and the two future editors, Erbiceanu and Demetrich: „We have

made this commitment, but I have said that if there will be no abuses we will defend it"<sup>17</sup>. Regarding the abuses it was about, Erbiceanu did not want to mention them<sup>18</sup>, in order to protect the image of the hierarch, it is certain that between the young editors and the metropolitan there was not at the time of the beginning of the collaboration, empathy, but only interest. Both sides had to win. Erbiceanu was supported by the laity in his efforts, and together with Demetrescu had access to the archives in the cellars of the Metropolitan palace. From a financial point of view, the remuneration of the two was not a satisfactory one: „I didn't use money for anything, but it moralizes a lot. I affirmed myself"<sup>19</sup>. The desire for affirmation was manifested by the transcription and publication of various Greek and Slavic manuscripts, in the editorial pages itself. The Metropolitan himself published some works - especially sermons or pastoral letters - and contributed to the editing of older works, such as the *Viața Sfântului Nifon* by Gavriil Protul<sup>20</sup>.

The financing of the review was made exclusively from the funds offered by the metropolitan, this fact being stipulated even before starting the actual work: „I have said that we have no material funds to maintain a journal, and the metropolitan said that it will provides us with the material part"<sup>21</sup>. Some of this magazine costs 15 bani, the one-year subscription was 9 lei for those living in the country, and for those outside the borders, the one-year subscription costs 12 lei. The publication of the Metropolitan Church of Moldavia had the same number of pages, eight, as the newspaper „Deșteptarea” but it was 10 bani cheaper and had four monthly appearances, as opposed to only two, of the one supported by Mârzescu. By doing this, it was desired to sell as many copies as possible, even if their payment did not cover the costs of publishing the editorial.

The desire to assert of the young professors from Seminar, Erbiceanu and Demetrescu could not be realized by publishing in the new editorial, only texts to combat the articles from „Deșteptarea”, and for this reason, it diversifies the content of the newspaper. Thus, the ecclesial newspaper from Sunday, not only had an apologetic and religious content, but the topics covered in its pages included topics of discussion or reflection, with historical<sup>22</sup>, philological, philosophical, social and last but not least political character. The periodical contains religious meditations, preaches on Sundays of the related weeks, but what is very important is the fact that it presents countless translations. These translations were made from old manuscripts, found in the archives of the Metropolitan palace from Iasi<sup>23</sup>, as well as other books, many of them in Greek – „manuscripts from the library of the State Seminary in Bucharest”<sup>24</sup>.

As in the case of the competing newspaper, articles could be sent for publication, with the mention that

they were signed by their authors, in opposition to those from „Deșteptarea” where the signature was missing or the pseudonym was used. The articles sent for publication were verified by Dragomir Demetrescu and for this reason, each issue of the magazine has its address on the last page, from the Metropolitan Palace of Iasi.

In the pages of the magazine, during the time was added also the program of the seminar school and its examinations - the subject and the examining teacher<sup>25</sup> - sections intended to explain the dogmas, major events in the city of Iasi, both religiously and culturally-politically and last but not least, philosophical-theological meditations. Many of these meditations were printed in various issues of the newspaper, but they were also linked separately in a collective volume, published in 1885 in Iasi<sup>26</sup>. The history of the Socola Seminar was published in the issues of the Magazine in 1884<sup>27</sup>.

The newspaper intended to become a cultural-scientific one, Erbiceanu as well as Demetrescu, answering for this character. However, the publication was often used by the metropolitan for missionary-apologetic purposes, but especially as a way of attacking its opponents. This side of the metropolitan stands out in the pastoral that he sends to all the priests in his diocese, in November 1882. The speech, published in both the „Biserica Ortodoxă Română” and in „Revista Teologică”, brings a vehement criticism to his opponents, the metropolitan saying that: „For seven months we have been witnessing a scandalous and painful show for all the good people, for all the good Romanians and the good Orthodox Christians. Iasi was reserved by the evil spirit, anti-Christian and Romanian anti-national, this rude view carried out by the moral deforestation of some unmarried individuals, sheltered under the sacred principle of freedom of the press (...) they went so far as to publish, in contravention of the laws, even the apology of the assassin by the bullet, preaching the murder over the prelates - for in their hand is deposited the canonical secular authority of the church. Thus, in number 6 of their review, from the 15th of last June 1882, publishing a speech prepared to be spoken at the funeral of an Archer who had died in 1875, declared by them a despot and robber of the Romanian clergy and threatening us with the bullet, reminds us of an unfortunate archimandrite Climent, here in Iași, on the person of the former Metropolitan of Moldova Calinic Miclescu, as well as the tragic death by bullet of the mentioned Ieronim Sevastis, the vicar of the Metropolitan Ungro-Vlahiei in Bucharest<sup>28</sup> (...) these disowned perjury, monks who rejected their monastery, deacons who rejected their ordination, who because of immorality fled from Bucharest to Iași”<sup>29</sup>. The harsh words of the hierarch merely stirred the spirits, and the mutual accusations would continue in the numbers of the coming years.

## CONCLUSIONS

„Revista Teologică” can be included in the field of religious-cultural publications, such as the publications „Telegraful Român” and „Biserica Ortodoxă Română”. Although the reasons for the appearance were different, through the involvement of Erbiceanu and Demetrescu, the newspaper acquired a cultural-scientific character, due to the historical, philological and philosophical articles.

The written articles were verified by the two editors and this is how it came to very laborious topics, well-argued articles that present innovative situations and perspectives and last but not least are accompanied by a seriously critical apparatus - various works in international circulation languages such as: German, French and English.

The activity of the publication is interrupted with the departure of Professor Constantin Erbiceanu to Bucharest, this being mentioned both in the last issue of the newspaper<sup>30</sup> and in Erbiceanu's memoirs: „until 1887, when I was switched from Iasi to Bucharest”<sup>31</sup>. During the four years of activity, the main reason for starting this project was not forgotten, and after Erbiceanu's confirmations: „things have changed completely, the attacks against the metropolis stopped, and the metropolis was then peaceful all the time, until his death”<sup>32</sup>.

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- [2] Mihail, P. (1957) Viața și opera la lui G. Musicescu oglindită în scrisorile anilor 1871-1899, „*Studii Muzicologice*”, Vol. 4, pp. 58-128;

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- [1] „Deșteptarea ziar eclesiastico-literar”, nr. 17-18, year IV (1885); nr. 3, year V (1886);
- [2] „Revista Teologică”, nr. 1, year I (1883); nr. 39, year II (1884); nr. 41, year III, (1885); nr. 42, year III (1885); nr. 49, year III (1885); nr. 50, year III (1885);

## Notes

<sup>1</sup>„Revista Teologică” – ziar eclesiastic săptămânal editat sub patronajul I.P.S.S. Părintelui Mitropolit al Moldovei și Sucevei, D.D. Iosif Naniescu de Constantin Erbiceanu și Dragomir Demetrescu, profesori la Seminarul Veniamin din Iași, 24 martie 1885 – 23 martie 1886, Tipo-litografia H. Goldner, Strada Primăriei, Iași.

<sup>2</sup>The first edition of ecclesiastical periodical "Revista Teologică" appears on Friday, March 25, 1883. From this first edition it is mentioned that: „the journal does not enter in the plan of politics. We will defend Christianity with all its old institutions against all attacks.” Constantin Erbiceanu, Iași 25 Martie, 1883, în: „Revista teologică”, nr. 1, anul I, 1883, p. 2

<sup>3</sup>Although the first edition appeared in 1883, Erbiceanu mentions the year 1882, as the first of the periodical's debut, because this is the time when Naniescu request this project to start: "Theological magazine began in 1882 and lasted four years, until 1887, when I was swapped from Iasi to Bucharest". Constantin Erbiceanu, *Viața mea scrisă de mine, după cât mi-am putut aduce aminte* printed after his death, by the former scholar Iconom Ilie Teodorescu, Tipografia „Gutenberg” București, 1913, p. 16; See also Rudolf Suțu, *Iașii de odinioară*, vol II, ediția I, Editura Viața Românească, Iași, 1928, pp. 224-225.

<sup>4</sup>Gheorghe (George) Mârzescu, a lawyer and a politician, was born in Iași in 1834. He graduated the Faculty of Law from Paris in 1858. Returning to the country he was one by one, a professor at the Law Faculties from Iași and Bucharest. Liberal in the political orientation, he started as a partisan of Kogălniceanu. He held twice the position of the Cults Minister from December 1869 until April 1870 and from November 1896, until March 1897, being a member of the cabinet of the Liberal member Petre S. Aurelian. He contributed to the flattening of the metropolitan conflict, which resulted in the removal of the metropolitan Ghenadie Petrescu, but he was also involved in the conspiracy called „from Mazar Pașa”. See: Gh. D. Pallade, *Jurnal 1 martie 1897 – 8 ianuarie 1898*, ediție, studiu introductiv, note și indici Ioan Spătan, Editura Mica Valahie, București, 2001, p. 129 and Constantin Bacalbașa, *Bucureștii de altă dată (1871-1884)*, vol. I, Editura Ziarului „Universul”, București, 1927, pp. 132-134.

<sup>5</sup>Iosif Mitropolit al Moldovei și Sucevei, *Carte pastorală dată în luna Noiembrie 1882*, în: „Biserica Ortodoxă Română”, nr. 1, anul VII (1883), p. 52. (51-64).

<sup>6</sup>The newspaper „Deșteptarea” appeared twice a month - at 1 and 15 of each month - under the motto „Work and you will have”, summing up a number of eight pages, in A4 format. The price of the newspaper was 25 bani in romanian money, and the subscription for one year cost eight francs. In the pages of the newspaper, the internal evidence of the Orthodox Church is treated, highlighting many of the irregularities committed by the administrative apparatus of the Church. It should be noted that many of the allegations have been proven in court as unfounded. At the same time, we encounter many unsigned articles, or signed under the pseudonym. See „Deșteptarea”, nr. 3, anul V (1886), pp. 1-8.

<sup>7</sup>„Revista Teologică”, nr. 49, year III (1885), p. 388.

<sup>8</sup>The redaction, *Necesitatea predicii și a înființării Revistei Teologice*, în „Revista Teologică”, nr. 1, an I (1883), p. 4.

<sup>9</sup>*Ibidem*, pp. 4-5.

<sup>10</sup>“...the backward state of the Church and its institutions stems from the fact that the people advanced on the path of progress and culture, while the Church not only remained in place, but also fell from what was thanks to its leaders; because they come at the helm of the Church, not in the power of merits but because they are monks, the proof is that even today we have bishops who do not have the primary classes either, naturally it was that they, on the one hand, supported their tagma has created this high position and all the happiness ...”. See *Al doilea congres al clerului mirean*, in „Deșteptarea ziar eclesiastico-literar”, nr. 17-18, anul IV (1885) pp. 129-130.

<sup>11</sup>Melchidesc Stefanescu is accused that during the time of his episcopate in Ismail he took from the Neamț Monastery 150 books to divide them in the Diocese of Ismail. A body of such books costs 50 galbeni. He is accused of making 7500 galbeni from their sale, which he would have deposited at the bank in Odessa. See the *Negoțul membrilor Sinodului*, in „Deșteptarea ziar eclesiastico-literar”, nr. 17-18, anul IV (1885), p. 135.

<sup>12</sup>„The holding of two churches, namely the director of the chancery of the bishop C. Ciudin and of the priest Cojan, is the most living proof of the bishop's (from Huși) carelessness. Our denunciations of the abuses committed by the two had no result. (...) In the county the priest is not left behind, three years since the residents of village Chiriac pending the commune of Sălăgeni, Fălciu county want to make a church, they have also gathered some of the material and the protopop does not want to sanctify the place, postponing them under different pretexts (...) finally promises that they will go if they will be given 400 francs.” See *Din Huși*, în „Deșteptarea ziar eclesiastico-literar”, nr. 17-18, anul IV (1885), pp. 132-133.

<sup>13</sup>Constantin Erbiceanu, *op. cit.*, p. 15.

<sup>14</sup>*Programul și regulamentul provizoriu al Congresul al Doilea al Clerului de mir din Regatul României*, în „Deșteptarea ziar eclesiastico-literar”, nr. 17-18, anul IV (1885), pp. 137-139.

<sup>15</sup>"... Not knowing therefore the origin of this periodical sheet, after reading two or three numbers, we remained in thoughts ...", see Iosif Mitropolit al Moldovei și Sucevei, *op. cit.*, p. 52.

<sup>16</sup>P. Mihailescu, *Viața și opera la lui G. Musicescu oglindită în scrisorile anilor 1871-1899*, in: „Studii Muzicologice”, vol. 4, II (1957), (part II), p. 66.

<sup>17</sup>Constantin Erbiceanu, *op. cit.*, p. 16.

<sup>18</sup>"After I approached Metropolitan Iosif Naniescu, with whom I was not previously acquainted, for several reasons that for his prestige I keep silent, things changed completely, the attacks against the metropolitan ended (...) This proximity to me, to the Metropolitan, made the abuses disappear, to change the direction of business in the Metropolitan ". *Ibidem*, p. 16.

<sup>19</sup>Constantin Erbiceanu, *op. cit.*, p. 16.

<sup>20</sup>Mircea Păcurariu, *op. cit.*, p. 143.

<sup>21</sup>Constantin Erbiceanu, *op. cit.*, p. 16.

<sup>22</sup>„Revista Teologică”, *Istoria Domnilor Ungrovlahiei* – nr. 41, III, (1885), p. 336.

<sup>23</sup>About the Metropolitan Library Erbiceanu offers very useful information: “The old library of the Metropolitan Church was taken over and incorporated into that of the University. I have seen with this eyes ”, *Ibidem*, p. 18.

<sup>24</sup>„Revista Teologică”, *Manuscrise grecești din școala domnească numită Academia din București*, nr. 42, III (1885), p. 329.

<sup>25</sup>Idem, *Catehismului ortodox*, nr. 50, anul III (1885), p. 399.

<sup>26</sup>Ioan Scățuni, *Religiunea și știința, meditațiuni filosofico-teologice*, tr. Constantin Erbiceanu și Dragomir Demetrescu, tipo-litografia H. Goldner, Jassy, 1885, p. 1.

<sup>27</sup>Constantin Erbiceanu, *Înființarea Seminarului din Socola la anul 1804*, in „Revista Teologică”, nr. 39, II (1884), pp. 305-308.

<sup>28</sup>Also in Bucharest there had been an attack on an bishop. It is about the Metropolitan Niphon who was shot by an archimandrite (monk). The latter received only two years in prison. See Constantin Bacalbașa, *op. cit.*, p. 25.

<sup>29</sup>Iosif Mitropolit al Moldovei și Sucevei, *op. cit.*, pp. 52.

<sup>30</sup>„Revista Teologică”, anul IV (1887), nr. 37, 18 ianuarie, p. 296.

<sup>31</sup>Constantin Erbiceanu, *op. cit.*, p. 16.

<sup>32</sup>*Ibidem*, p. 16.