

# **The Cultural Inheritance of Holy Metropolitans Varlaam and Dosoftei. Notes on Metropolitan Veniamin Costachi's Preface to the 1834 edition of the *Liturgical Book***

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**Abstract:**

*In 1834 the Printing House of the Metropolitan Bishopric of Iasi issued the second edition of the Liturgical Book in Romanian. The work was addressed to the clergy, and Metropolitan Veniamin Costachi, who has been referred to as “a hesychast man of prayer and a European founder” completed the editorial work for the volume. In the Preface he sets his effort to translate the liturgical texts within the tradition of Holy Metropolitans Varlaam and Dosoftei, who lived in the seventeenth century. Veniamin also advocates the careful selection of terms, bearing in mind the fact that Romanian is “the daughter of Latin”.*

**Keywords:** *Varlaam, Dosoftei, Veniamin, Liturgical Book, Romanian language, translation, printing house*

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In 1834, the Metropolitan printing house of Iasi issued a new edition of *The Liturgical Book*, intended to be used by “all those adorned with the blessed rank of priesthood” (Veniamin 1834; *Bibliografia românească modernă* [Modern Romanian Bibliography] 1989: 106; Gheorghiu 1946: 185-189). The text had been translated, adjusted, prepared for publication and prefaced by the “humble Veniamin” (1803-1808; 1812-1821; 1823-1842), the Archbishop of Iași and Metropolitan of Moldova and Suceava; with his blessing and efforts, 16 years before a first edition of the “most useful book for the celebration of the Holy Service” had been printed in Iasi as well (*The Liturgies of Holy Hierarchs John Chrisostomos, Basil the Great and Gregory the Dialogist*, now adapted from the Greek Hellenic and Slavonic Russian ones by the Most Reverent Veniamin himself, Metropolitan Bishop of the entire Moldavia, through whose ardour, expenses and blessing they have been printed under this form, as can be

seen; during the days of our Most Eminent and Most Enlightened Ruler Scarlat Callimachi Voievod, in the 7<sup>th</sup> year of his Highness' second rule. In the Printing House of the Holy Metropolitan Bishopric of Iași, in the 7<sup>th</sup> year of the second ascension on the seat of the Metropolitan Bishopric, in year 1818 from the salvation of the world; Adamescu, 1904: 25; Gheorghiuță 1946: 153-158). It seemed necessary and useful to me (or "of good use", if we were to preserve some of the old linguistic flavour and meaning) to attempt to formulate some notes concerning the presence in the work of the Romanian hierarch, whom his posterity has called "a hesychast man of prayer and a European founder" (as he is referred to in the title of the conference given by the His Beatitude Daniel, the then Metropolitan Bishop of Moldavia and Bukovina, on the occasion of the Symposium *Veniamin Costachi – 150 years since his passage into eternity*, organised by the Metropolitan Bishopric of Moldavia and Bukovina, Iași, 1996) of the consciousness of continuity, both in witnessing and experiencing the rightly magnifying doctrine, and, undividedly, in his effort to promote and cultivate Romanian culture. In this sense, Veniamin himself wanted to clarify certain aspects and it is very significant that in the *Foreword* to the 1834 edition of the *Liturgical Book* he sets his own efforts along the line of those previously taken, via the same path, by his predecessors on the metropolitan seat, Saints Varlaam and Dosoftei. Also, mention should be made of the fact that posterity has considered Metropolitan Veniamin one of the "fathers" of the Romanian cultural synthesis in the "century of nationalities" (N. Iorga argued that during the first half of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, Veniamin had become "the Romanian national leader, according to the tradition of the Church" 1996: 488). The present article is neither the right place to, nor does it aim to, re-discuss issues clarified by research so far (however, we could note the fact that they can be found especially in synthetic studies, but not in any special study), but rather to highlight the way in which the memory of forerunners has been preserved and how their inheritance of Orthodox faith and Romanian language and culture was assumed and cultivated by posterity.

### **1. The awareness of the Latin origin of Romanian and references to precursors on the Metropolitan Seat of Iași**

In the very first paragraph of his *Preface*, Metropolitan Veniamin is keen to state abruptly, and therefore very significantly, that “just as Greek is the daughter of the Hellenic language”, so our Romanian language is the daughter of Latin, which was the language of the Romans, our ancestors” (*Divine Liturgies* 1834, Gheorghiu 1946: 185, for the use of terms and general concerns, see Arvinte 2008: *passim*). Then there are some brief remarks on Romanization:

in year 105, after our Saviour Jesus Christ’s birth, they brought us from Italy, the old Homeland, and they settled us here in Moldova, Wallachia, Ardeal and Banat, countries which at the time were called Dacia, because it was inhabited by a population called the Dacians.

After the Roman conquest, Emperor Trajan divided the land that he had taken possession of among “the ancestors who had come from Italy”, just as the land of Palestine had been shared among the Israelites after the rule of the Chananeites and “we, who call ourselves Romanians, have had “their pure language” and “scripture, that is the letters of their language”). Some explanations are added (the hierarch insists that they are not his) concerning the use of Romanian in the past. With us, it was replaced in the Church and in the Slavonic Chancellery by Slavonic (which is a “foreign language”) “at the time of Alexander the Kind”, for reasons that had to do with the effort to preserve our specificity and identity, a situation which lasted for two hundred years, “until the time of Vasile Voda (Lupu-our note)” (*The Divine Liturgies* 1834; on the “triumph” of Romanian see Panaitescu 1965: 210-226). Plămădeală 1997: 147 *sqq*; Panaitescu 1958; Lăudat 1973: 99-126). The theory concerning the existence of this latter event is borrowed (and quoted) by Veniamin from Dimitrie Cantemir’s texts, which he had consulted before, and it has not withstood historical criticism in time. The text that was most frequently referenced was *The Description of Moldavia*, written by the Romanian prince between 1714 and 1716, while in exile, upon the request of the Berlin Academy, whose member he was (Cantemir 1973, Șesan 1973: 547 *sqq.*, Plămădeală 1997: 147 *sqq*; Panaitescu 1958; Lăudat 1973: 99-126). The text of the work, written in Latin and intended for the scholarly world in Western Europe, was translated for Romanian readers much later (the translation was made

by Vasile Vârnav from the German edition, upon Metropolitan Veniamin's urge; it was printed under the title *Letter of Moldavia*, in the Printing House of Neamt Monastery in 1825; Bianu, Hodoș, Simonescu: 457). Cantemir himself had fine-tuned some of his statements and he wrote about the Dacian-Roman synthesis and about continuity in his last work on Romanian history (intended for Romanian readers), *The Chronicle of the Ancient Age of Romanians–Moldavians–Wallachians* which, as has been noted, through its very title, expressed “a vision and a programme” (Zub 2003: 12; Zub 1983: 52-57). The text of this latter synthesis was transcribed and printed in 1835 and 1836, with the blessing, upon the initiative and with the generous support of Metropolitan Veniamin Costachi in the Metropolitan Bishopric's Printing House in Iași. Tome I (edited by Gheorghe Săulescu) was printed in 1835, and tome II, a year later (Cantemir 1901: 50; Zub 1983: 61-67; Niță-Danielescu 2014: 29-40).

As far as the elements of continuity that we referred to in the title of the article are concerned, it is noteworthy that the 19<sup>th</sup> century Romanian hierarch thought of himself, in the actual context of his times, as a conscious continuator and legitimate heir of a Romanian and Orthodox cultural effort, that had become a living tradition (inherited and handed over), to which some of his forerunners on the Metropolitan Seat of Iasi had committed themselves (with difficulties and achievements that he does not fail to mention). Veniamin remembers especially the merits of Holy Metropolitan Bishops Varlaam (1632-1653) and Dosoftei (1671-1674; 1675-1686).

Landmarks that are mentioned are the initiatives that conferred so much brightness to Vasile Lupu's “cultural monarchy” (as N. Iorga labels Vasile Lupu's and Matei Basarab's rules in his synthetic work titled *Istoria Românilor [History of Romanians]*; N. Iorga 2015). Thus, Metropolitan Bishop Veniamin writes about “the building of the Three Hierarchs Monastery from Eși” (sanctified in 1639), “the foundation of the Academy in Latin, the mother of our language” (other study languages of the Academy were Greek, Slavonic and, maybe, Romanian; Zahariuc 2009: 268-269; Păcurariu 2006: 43), and he mentions that there “it had been established that students would study” and “write in Romanian too”, the printing workshop from the Three Hierarchs Monastery (Chiaburu 2005: 254-255; *Dumnezeieștile Liturghii [The Divine Liturgies]* 1834) being

opened in 1644 (the correct year - 1641- Păcurariu 2016: 54). Veniamin was also aware of Vasile Lupu's connections with Kiev, with the "Moldavian scholar, Metropolitan Bishop of Kiev, Jeremia" (correct, Peter; it has been remarked that there is, probably, a printing mistake in the text, such an error could not have been made by the Metropolitan Bishop; Gheorghiu 1946: 186), as well as about the fact that Petru Movilă had sent to Iași the press where "the interpretation of the *Gospel* translated by the then Metropolitan Bishop Varlaam" had been printed. Veniamin had certainly set his eyes on the text of *Cazania*, because he insisted on specifying that "in Varlaam's *Foreword* how the printing was set is shown" (*The Divine Gospels* 1834; for works printed during Metropolitan Varlaam's ministry see Bianu, Hodoș 1899: 137-143 and 147-151; Păcurariu 2002: *sub voce*; Porcescu 1971: 204-213; Varlaam, 1991; Varlaam 2001; Mureșanu 1944).

Therefore, the first landmark personalities mentioned by Veniamin Costachi in the process that he considers to be one of "restoring" (rather than promoting) Romanian as a language of worship and culture are Vasile Lupu and Metropolitan Varlaam. Beyond the precarious and incomplete character of some considerations borrowed from Dimitrie Cantemir's reflections (which, as stated above, Cantemir himself would refine, and which were subsequently adjusted in Romanian historiography), it is noteworthy that Metropolitan Veniamin himself had written before about "the Roman-Dacian people" – and about "the language of our nation" (as early as 1824, in "Foreword to readers" to *Istoria Scripturii Vechiului and Noului Testament* (*History of the Scriptures of the Old and New Testament*); Gheorghiu 1946: 169; Bianu, Hodoș, Simonescu 1912-1936: 438).

Therefore, Veniamin credited Vasile Lupu and Holy Metropolitans Varlaam of Moldavia and Petru Movilă of Kiev, with the efforts to promote, or (re)introduce (as he considered) Romanian as a worship language, to create some necessary cultural institutions (the Academy and Printing Press in the Three Hierarchs Monastery), as well as the collaboration effort, within the ecclesiastic community, of persons and peoples, under the guardianship of the Ruler of the country and of the Metropolitan Bishop. Even though it was not explicitly formulated, it is noteworthy that a Romanian cultural effort was promoted (and unfolding),

and one can notice that it involved renunciation to the “foreign language” (Slavonic) and the assertion of attachment to Romanian “daughter of Latin”, as a language of worship and Romanian theological culture.

As far as the cultural context of the age is concerned, it has been noted that under the specific circumstances in Eastern Europe, that were not lacking in diplomatic confrontations, political pressures and proselyting initiatives, the cultural movement known as Neo-Hellenism started gaining momentum. Key representatives of this movement were Meletios Pigas, Kyril Lukaris (later, an ecumenical patriarch) and Mitrophanos Kritopoulos – Patriarchs of Alexandria, Petru Movilă – the Romanian Metropolitan Bishop of Kiev, Varlaam and Dosoftei, Metropolitan Bishops of Moldavia, Simeon Ștefan, Metropolitan Bishop of Transylvania, and later, Patriarchs Dositheos and Chrisantos of Jerusalem, Antim, Metropolitan Bishop of Wallachia, Ilie Miniat, Alexandru Mavrocordat and others (Șesan 1976: 246).

It is also noteworthy that, in this context, in the middle of the 17<sup>th</sup> century, the spirit of brotherhood or confessional solidarity among various ethnic groups became more obvious, noticeable even when discontent, tensions or criticism of the general situation were not absent (the situation was similar in Iași and Bucharest). As a result, in retrospect, the “prevailing role of Romanians in the conservation work and the progress ensured by Greek to Orthodox literature” could be assessed (Bădărău, Caproșu 2007: 304-305; for instance, some products issued by the princely press from the Three Hierarchs Monastery of Iasi, during Vasile Lupu’s reign, were in Hellenic or Slavonic).

In the *Preface* to the 1834 edition of the *Liturgical Book*, Metropolitan Bishop Veniamin also mentions “the second round of church books issued in Romanian”, printed in the second half of the 17<sup>th</sup> century by the “erudite” Metropolitan Bishop Dosoftei. One name which is mentioned is that of Prince Gheorghe Duca, the founder of Cetățuia Monastery “in the year 1674”. From his time – writes the bishop – synthesizing the importance of this new Romanian cultural effort, “in Churches, especially, they started reading texts in the language of the nation, observing the Church rules”. Several titles are listed (the Book of Psalms “in verse and in prose”, the Book of Proverbs, the “Liturgy”, the Book of Hours, “Prologariul or the Lives of Saints in Brief”, “The

Octoechos in Brief” (the text was rediscovered a few years ago; Cojocaru 2010: 49–90). To these – says the Bishop – “maybe others more” were added (about the activity of Metropolitan Bishop Dosoftei, *see* Păcurariu 2002: *sub voce*; Păcurariu 2016: 78-83; Şuiu 1979: 296-302; Dosoftei; 1973; Dosoftei: 1980; Manea 2006; Ursu 2003: 354-450).

The construction of a new printing workshop in Iaşi is not overlooked, but mentioned as a memorable cultural event of that time. Thus, the *Preface* makes references to the printing press received by Metropolitan Bishop Dosoftei from Patriarch Joachim of Moscow (the latter, in his letter dated 16 December 1679, compared the Romanian Metropolitan Bishop to “the righteous and God-inspired Moses and the wise Emperor Solomon”; Ursu, Dascălu 2003: 58). Metropolitan Bishop Dosoftei had translated and printed “in the Holy Metropolitan Bishopric, in Iaşi”, in 1679, with the support of the Ruler of the Country (Chiaburu 2005: 262), *The Divine Liturgy*, prefaced, following the example from Varlaam’s *Cazania*, a *Word Together to the Whole Romanian People* (authored by Gheorghe Duca); the work was reedited in 1683, with the blessing of Patriarch Parthenios of Alexandria (Dosoftei 1980: XLVII).

Although praise worthy, the scholarly efforts of his forerunners are considered insufficient by Metropolitan Bishop Veniamin. He writes that translators found “Romanian and teaching” at a level of

poverty and decay, many words that had been proper to it, Romanian, had been forgotten and in their place, others had entered, foreign words, especially (...) Slavonic.

This was the balance sheet drawn by Metropolitan Bishop Veniamin at the commemoration of “two hundred years” since “afterwards, church books started to be translated in it” (*The Divine Liturgies* 1834).

## **2. The cultural effort of Metropolitan Bishop Veniamin and his urges for the priests of his time**

In 1834, addressing priests to whom the work was mainly intended, and after first asking for them the “heavenly blessing” from the “First among shepherds and our Saviour Jesus Christ”, Metropolitan Bishop Veniamin Costachi notices the difficulties of assembling, in his time, an optimal version of the liturgical text in Romanian. He explains all this

through the “poverty and decay” that had been reached through improper translations, which privileged borrowings from foreign languages. In addition, he mentions the absence of a systematic linguistic study in the past (“the above-mentioned having no *Grammar*, no *Romanian Lexicon*” and “no place where to learn the language according to its rules”); to this is added, as an effect, the “very deep spoilage of the Romanian speech” (*The Divine Liturgies* 1834).

Just like his predecessors of yore on the Seat related to the issues of their times, so did Metropolitan Bishop Veniamin feel responsible for his age of the construction of Romanian modernity (among others, *see* chapter “Conștiința națională” [“Romanian Consciousness”] in Georgescu 1987: 323-347; Xenopol f.a.: *passim*; Platon 2005: *passim*; Cliveti 2006: 109-264; Șesan 1970: 6-20; Duțu: 1972: *passim*), both with respect to accuracy and the use of preaching the *Gospel*, and, under the given circumstances (not at all cheerful, as he noticed), to preserve and cultivate Romanian as a language of worship and culture.

With these landmarks and with well understood responsibilities, Metropolitan Bishop Veniamin takes upon himself the continuation of the Romanian cultural effort. Now – writes the Metropolitan Bishop:

if no obstacle is set to the use of non-Romanian foreign words, such as Serbian or Slovene, Hungarian, Turkish or others, from other languages” and “if in their place the genuine Romanian words, abandoned and forgotten, will not be taken back, which are preserved, in part, in old books and documents, in part in vernacular speech” and “if we shall not use the latter instead of the foreign ones, as all nations have done, that wanted to cultivate themselves, then from one year to another, the national speech will be surrounded and diminished, until it will utterly disappear, and thus our Romanian nation will perish, just like all nations have perished, that abandoned their language”. And the Bishop ends as follows: “This is why all those who are against the genuine Romanian words, that the scholars of the nations have started again to use, let it be known that they make themselves the enemies of their Romanian nation”.

The Metropolitan Bishop also noticed that translators of yore, due to their difficulties to translate in Romanian from the Greek or Slavonic source text, “in many places” spoiled the meaning of the “holy Gospels”. This is why there is a need for – and he “strove to do it” especially after 1814, when a new series of printings started in Iasi – “not just a little mending” in “those translated with a harm to their meaning” (and he specifies that “such mending we have striven to make in words as well, by



introducing true Romanian words in the place of foreign ones”). Among the examples in the *Preface* one can mention:

instead of *Bagoslovenie* [Slavonic] one can say *Binecuvântare* [Romanian for “blessing”]; *Tresfoe* [Slavonic], *Trisfințită cântare* [Romanian for Thrice Holy chant]; *pravoslavnic* [Slavonic], *dreptslăvitoriu* [Romanian for Orthodox]; *blagocestiv* [Slavonic], *binecinstitoriu* [Romanian for right worshipper]; *cădelniță* [term based on Slavonic], *tămâietoare* [Romanian for incenser]; *cădește* [term based on Slavonic], *tămâiază* [Romanian term meaning “offers incense”]; *zvezdă* [Slavonic], *stea* [Romanian for “star”]; *copie* [Slavonic], *lance* [Romanian for “spear”]; *polunoșniță* [Slavonic], *miezonoptică* [Romanian for “midnight prayer”]; *vecernie* [Slavonic], *rugăciunea serii* [Romanian for “evening prayer”]; *norodul* [Slavonic], *poporul* [Romanian for “people”]” and so on. As a general principle he recommends that where there are no words that have correspondents in Romanian, they should be borrowed as such “from those who coined them, that is from the Greeks” (not “from their translators”, such as “the Serbians, who have been recommended to us in their language”), for instance: *Polieleu* [Polyeleos], *Litie* [Arthos], *Panahidă* [Panahida], *Liturghie* [Liturgy], *Proscomidie* [Proskomidia], *Antifoane* [Antiphona], *Potir* [Chalice], *Catapetesmă* [Iconostasis], *Icoană* [Icon], *Tetrapod* [Tetrapodion], *Analog* [Analogion], *Evanghelie* [Gospel], *Felon* [Phelonion], *Epitrahil* [Epitrachelion], *Stihar* [Sticharion] and so on; he notices that these words, “called Official”, are “also used by the mother of our language, Latin”. Then, Metropolitan Bishop Veniamin recommends priests that “it is better to say *Doxologhie* [Doxology] than *slavoslovie* [Slavonic term], *Evharistie* [Eucharist] instead of *Pricistanie* [Slavonic term], *Misterii* [Mysteries] than *Taine* [Slavonic term], which would be less understood than the word *Mystery*, *Sinod* [Synod] than *Sobor* [Slavonic term], *Evhologhiu* [Euchologion] instead of *Molitvelnic* [Slavonic term], *Chinonic* [Koinonikon, communion chant] instead of *Priceasnă* [Slavonic term] (...).”

And, fully aware of this necessary process to renew the liturgical language, he added that “our language starts now to work by analogy with how speech is structured and produced”. Patriarch Nikon of Moscow is given as an example, because in the past, when Russia was under Tsar Peter the Great, he adjusted, according to the Greek original, the translations of books of worship that had been made by then (*The Divine Liturgies* 1834).

The effort of the Metropolitan Bishop, an innovator in the Church, who remained faithful to the Romanian specific features and identity reflected in language, as well as to the cultural tradition initiated by Metropolitan Bishops Varlaam (he who “made it possible for the Holy Spirit to speak in the language of the Romanian people”; Eminescu 1980: 259) and Dosoftei (“our first national poet”; Păcurariu 2006: 107), is

recommended to the addressees of the *Foreword* to the 1834 edition of the *Liturgical Book*, accompanied by the urge to invest time in “acquiring what has been adjusted in certain places”. He advises them to “receive with joy” the work, by understanding the “purpose and use” of the adjustments and of the “Romanian words used instead of the foreign ones, that set confines to our language” and “not in the least doubting their use, as of a saving fact, both spiritually and bodily”. He also gave the example of other languages, such as Greek, for instance, which continues to receive (...), for its adornment, many adjustments (*Divine Liturgies* 1834).

Also, so far, the courageous and scholarly work of Metropolitan Bishop Veniamin to clad the orthodox liturgical text in the best Romanian language of the time, as well as the beneficial consequences on literary language and on cultural life in general, is always mentioned in syntheses or in special studies of church and literary history (for instance, Păcurariu 2002: *sub voce*; Teodorovici 1979: 121-122; see also the special issue of the “Mitropolia Moldovei and Sucevei” [Metropolitan Bishopric of Moldova and Suceava] magazine dedicated to Metropolitan Bishop Veniamin Costachi, year XLII, 1967, nr. 1-2).

Metropolitan Bishop Veniamin’s literary merits are unanimously recognised by his contemporaries, who praise him (*see* references in Iorga 1908: 113), sometimes dedicate to him the offering of their own scholarly efforts and do not hesitate to call him a “founder of our language” (this assessment belongs to Gherontie and St. Grigore Dascălul, of whom the latter became a Metropolitan of Wallachia himself, later; they translated St. John of Damascus’s work *An Exposition of the Orthodox Faith*, printed in Iași in 1806; Tomescu, 1927: 103). It is also worth mentioning the recommendation from the end of the *Foreword*, which Veniamin makes to the “beloved readers”, namely not to “wonder at the transformation and change of certain words or names”, but especially

to wonder at the Maker’s (...) untold wisdom, at how, out of nothing, He brought everything into being, and at how He elevated this language, so surrounded by many others, to such a height and worthiness so as to make us worthy, through His benevolence, to bring Him, though it, doxologies, supplications and thanks, by venerating the Holy Trinity in one Being, of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit. Amen (*Divine Liturgies* 1834: 8).

## Conclusion

The new 1834 edition of the *Liturgical Book*, prepared and recommended by Metropolitan Bishop Veniamin Costachi, is not simply a re-editing of the similar texts that precede it, but renders topical the efforts of cladding the Orthodox liturgical text in the best literary language of the time. The *Preface* accompanying the text of the Metropolitan book, according to the knowledge of that time, highlights the contributions of his predecessors to the Seat of Iasi, Holy Metropolitan Bishops Varlaam and Dosoftei. He considered himself a follower in their steps but under new circumstances, that required appropriate understanding and preparation, as well as modern working instruments. His initiative to offer a better version of the translation, the explanations and novelties proposed with the spiritual authority that he had, his erudition and commitment to Christian and Romanian values, are in agreement with the principles of the European modernity of the time (which were influencing Romanians too, in the “century of their national construction”). Metropolitan Veniamin was in favour of the careful selection of terms, given that Romanian is the “daughter of Latin”. Good knowledge and use of language were considered necessary both for the accuracy of the expression of dogmas and for the preservation and cultivation of identity (“otherwise our Romanian nation will perish, just like all nations that have lost their language”). Anticipating some “wonders” on the part of those to whom he was addressing, the Metropolitan urged them, like a father, rather to

marvel at the wisdom beyond words (...) of the Maker, Who (...) has elevated this language too, to such a height and worthiness as to entreat Him to make us worthy of bringing Him praises, supplications and thanks, worshiping the Holy Trinity in one Being, of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

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