Education, religion and interculturality at Romanian people

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Abstract

One dominant of the current era is the access to different values, which determines the interest in understanding their place in the actual society. We are therefore facing a new cultural model, defined by meeting and more pronounced testing of cohabitation of cultures until recently located in a deep antagonism. One of the great questions which arises in this context is related to how religion as a major problem throughout mankind’s history, contributed to reaching this phase. This study aims to present the most important contributions of the Romanian Orthodox Church clergy from the XVII-XIX centuries, who agreed to assume modernity not only in personal or social exploitation of more diverse models, validated after meeting with people or different cultural models, but especially in the educational plan. School is thus not only the place where values of a historic period are heading to, but the environment in which they are integrated and presented to the world with new formative values based on various identity contours. During recall, many Romanian metropolitans are identified today as the true precursors of today’s intercultural openings, through their insistence on developing schools and placing them on the opening lines to national and European values.

Keywords: education, religion, values, interculturality, church.

Zusammenfassung

Eine Dominante der heutigen Zeit ist der Zugang zu verschiedenen Werten, die das Interesse für das Verständnis in der heutigen Gesellschaft bestimmt. Wir stehen also vor einer neuen kulturellen Modell, die durch Begegnung und ausgeprägter tiefe Feindschaft des Zusammenlebens der Kulturen definiert ist. Eine der großen Fragen, die in diesem Zusammenhang ist, wie konnte die Religion trugen zu erreichen als ein großes Problem in der Geschichte der Menschheit. Diese Studie zielt darauf ab, die wichtigsten Beiträge der rumänisch-orthodoxen Kirche Geistlichen aus dem XVII-XIX Jahrhundert, wo die Modernisierung nicht nur in persönlicher oder sozialer Ausbeutung von mehr unterschiedliche Modelle übernehmen wird, sondern auch vor allem in den Bildungs-Plan.

Schule ist also nicht nur der Ort, wo Werte von einer historischen Epoche zu positionieren sind, sondern auch die Umwelt, in denen sie integriert und vorgestellt sind, um die Welt mit neuen prägende Werte auf verschiedene Identität konturieren.

Wir erinnern, viele rumänische Metropoliten identifizieren sich heute als die wahren Vorläufer der heutigen interkulturellen Öffnung, durch ihr Beharren auf die Entwicklung von Schulen und legte sie auf die ersten Zeilen die nationalen und europäischen Werten.

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Introduction: Religion-culture-education relationship, in defining the identity of the Romanian people

Recognizing the role of Christianity in formation and development of European culture and civilization it is to a growing number of authors a natural extension in setting milestone in itself, the debut, of what Europe means: “Europe did not exist before Christianity, ancient Greece and the Roman world were not Europe. There was an Asian-Mediterranean world. Europe was established since Christianity appeared” (Al. Paleologu, 2003, p. 74). To a large extent each of the nations that make up this continent has a Christian culture, which integrated cultural influences of non-Christian peoples who came into contact with.

Thus, saying that in formation of a people culture a very important role have the elements related to its history, the geographic space that is, the religion of the majority population and the social, economical and political aspects manifested in different periods it is a widely recognized fact (C. Cucoş, 2000, pp. 191-192). But when talking about the Romanian people, these become also causes of cultural diversity present in this European area, being at the confluence of the world great cultures: the Western and Eastern. To all these, we add the fact that the Romanian people is the only Orthodox people with a Latin language substrate: “Words of Latin origin from our religious terminology indicates that the Dacians Christianization was done the same time with their Romanization” (M. Păcurariu, 1991, p. 80).

The constitution of the Romanian language was a long process, on the Latin vein being found language elements taken as a result of migratory people invasions (Goths, Tartars, Slavs etc.), but also due to the proximity of the three Romanian provinces to the great powers, especially in the Middle Ages: the Ottoman Empire, Habsburg Empire (and later the Austro-Hungarian) and the Tsarist Empire. Subsequent adoption as the official language of the Slavonic language in the organization of the Church and royal chancelleries was at the expense of Latin and in response to Catholic proselytizing, supporting in this way the spread of Byzantine culture: “Romanian people was completely Christianized at the Slavs arrival and it even contributed to their Christianization, since they settled in the provinces of the Eastern Roman Empire (Byzantine)” (Ibidem). On the other hand, cohabitation of Romanians in Transylvania with the Hungarian and German populations had a special role in relations with Western Europe. All
these influences have provided an element of specificity to the Romanian people culture, which reflects the relationship between crystallized Romanian culture and the great cultural religious centers life of Europe: Byzantium and Rome.

Religion-culture-education relationship is an intrinsic one, with deeper meanings when we are in a position to identify the contributions of leading representatives of these areas, whose works are landmarks in defining the identity of this space. Similar to other nations, our culture founders were men concerned not only with religious matters, but also members of clergy. We refer here especially to Orthodox metropolitans of the three Romanian provinces: Moldavia, Romanian Country and Transylvania, which proved to be equally concerned with theological training and living in faith in their personal life but also in the religious communities led by them. Thus, the formation of educated Christians was in their view, the basis for understanding the truths of their faith and practice.

A look to the history of the Romanian Orthodox Church leads to identify its interpenetration until the mid-nineteenth-century of the Romanian people history, personalities that stood out were particularly metropolitans of seventeenth and nineteenth centuries. Their contributions are essential in the development of Romanian culture, through language development, by supporting education and promoting art.

One of the greatest Romanian historian, Nicolae Iorga, in his famous work: The History of Romanian Church, mentioned the considerable role of the Romanian Metropolitans, from sections of religious life and continuing with the cultural space, given that living faith and culture are directly related: “nothing could be more useful [...] than an organized life view, almost millennial, in which bishops have given the people themselves almost all the teaching, have endowed the nation with a literary language, a sacred literature, with an art about their taste and needs, supported the state without being taken by it, have led people on earth roads, without looking away from heaven” (N. Iorga, 1929, pp. 4-5). A very important aspect to be mentioned is their openness to interculturality, not just by taking models of cultural spaces from neighboring countries, but also from populations of different ethnic cultures that established on the territory of our country. In addition, it is worth mentioning that some of them, although foreign nation, did not impose by force local cultural models in their archaic form, but adapted to the specific of the era, which created the premises of cultural and religious relations with numerous people, especially in Europe.

The relevance of these metropolitans activity, for the education in general and for the religious education in particular is currently very high. In the teaching of religion on various levels of education, many issues can be identified in both the purpose and level of learning content. A large number of
scholars have been canonized bishops, they are presented as models of holiness. We refer here to the Varlaam Saints (1632-1653), Simion Ștefan (1643-1656), Antim Șireanul (1708-1716), Grigorie Dascălu (1823-1829, 1833-1834), Andrei Șaguna (1864-1873).

The Romanian Language, “the language of the old Homilies”

The presence for centuries among the distinct provinces from the geographical and political point of view would naturally impose significant differences concerning the spoken language of their inhabitants. The situation in the Romanian countries wasn’t that way, and the explanation is more than easy: religious unity led to the establishment of language, and later, to the political one. The principal means of achieving and maintaining the unit was printing books in Romanian, the Romanian princes and bishops were considered the founders and the main promoters of language, culture and education.

It is important to note in this approach the role of the Protestant Reform, promoted by some Hungarians princes of Transylvania, which favored the development of education in their jurisdiction area, not to mention that their contribution surpassed by more than a century the translation of the Bible in Romanian, compared with other Orthodox people.

In the Romanian Countries, the books printing began with The Missal of the printer monk Macarius (1508), later Metropolitan of the Romanian Country. Gradual replacement of Slavonic language used in religious and royal chancelleries with the Romanian language, especially by printing of books, can be considered a cultural fact of great importance, and also a religious one. Comprehension of religious services texts by the people exceeded the religious issue, turning into a major educational factor in time. The presence, in each of the three historical provinces, of printed books (translations and original works) proves the cultural relations that existed between the inhabitants of these territories.

Through his writings, the Metropolitan of Moldavia Varlaam contributed significantly to the formation of literary Romanian language. The “Homily” or “The Romanian Book of Teachings” (1643) has the neat form of expression of the Romanian language in the first half of the seventeenth century, as shown in the Preface written by scholar Prince Vasile Lupu. Religion-culture-education relationship was an explicit one: this book is regarded as a gift to God, to the Romanian language, but also to the people, who will use it to learn and as a soul helper, its role overcoming the mundane: “From how God endured by his mercy to give us, we give ourselves the gift to the Romanian language, a Romanian language book, first to praise God, then to the orthodox teaching and helpful souls. Let (if) it is of little value, and you shall receive it as something not earthly but a heavenly scent, and by reading from it you remember us
in your prayer, do not forget us and be healthy” (Preface of Vasile Lupu Prince to Varlaam book, The Homily).

As already mentioned, the presence in a multi-confessional space was for the Romanians in Transylvania an advantage in that the cultural model of dominated space by the Protestant Reform was multiplied by the establishment of the first translations of biblical texts in Romanian. The books printed by Metropolitan Stefan Simion Bâlgrad (Alba Iulia) – The New Testament (1648) and The Psalter (1651) - stood behind the translation of The Bible from Bucharest (1688), which was extremely important in the development of Romanian literary language but also keeping the Romanians cultural unity. The text of The Preface of The New Testament shows concern for use in translation of the Metropolitan words for the Romanians from everywhere to understand and to enrich the language by introducing linguistic neologisms from the Latin, Greek and Slavonic background for the words that had no counterpart in Romanian. And now, after three and a half centuries, it is mentioned the comparison made by the Metropolitan scholar between words and money, thinking a translation in a linguistic unit: “Well we know that words must be like money, that those money is good, which go around all countries, so those words are good words if they are understood by all”, (excerpt from The New Testament Preface, 1648). Explanations of each page are a beginning of a explanatory dictionary in Romanian language, but also a first step towards explaining the biblical text. The emergence of The New Testament from Bâlgrad was possible also by the contribution of Calvin Prince Gheorghe Rakoczy I (1630-1648), who bear the costs of printing, and also proving the interest for interculturality as an opening to the majority population.

If the bishops of Transylvania had only in punctual situations support from the Princes, the Moldavia and Romanian Country clergy were supported by the majority of Romanian rulers, mostly scholars, trained in the most famous schools of the time. Their care to maintain the religious and linguistic unity overcame borders, but being directed toward the Romanians in Transylvania. In The Romanian Country, martyr voivode Constantin Brancoveanu brought to his court scholars from other countries who have contributed to the flowering of Romanian culture. Among these there was the future Metropolitan of Romanian Country, Antim Ivireanul (1708-1716), in its turn supported by ecclesiastical figures of his time, as Gerasimos II, Patriarch of Alexandria (N. Iorga, 2002, p. 167).

Related to the activity of Metropolitan martyr Antim Ivireanul we can say that the interest that he has for language learning (history held the fact that he knew Georgian, Greek, Arabic, Turkish, Slavic and Romanian), in relation to his exceptional talent in various fields of
art: sculpture, drawing, embroidery, calligraphy placed him among the great promoters of Romanian culture and language, in relation to the spirit of the age. If we add the contribution to the introduction of Romanian in ritual church and replacing read homilies with living preach for everyday life, his appointment is justified, rightly, as the most important metropolitan of the Romanian Country (1708 - 1716), ever.

The most valuable literary work is the work of his sermons, Didahii, revealing the poetic spirit of the Metropolitan: “On her (Mother of God) God has chosen before all creations, to be his eternal habitation, as David says: < This is my rest for ever and I will dwell in it, because I chose her. > Chosen is indeed, like the sun, because she is crowned with all rays of divine gifts and shines strongly [much more] from the other lights of heaven. (...) She is chosen because she is a virgin before birth, virgin in birth, virgin after birth and she is a depth of wealth and an inspired image of the beauty of heaven. It is a locked garden from which the undried flower came, and a sealed well from which flowed the fountain of life, Christ” (Antim Ivireanul, 1983, p. 35).

In fact, the whole cultural environment in which Metropolitan Antim Ivireanul manifested was a favorable one for his initiatives, “through the vast and varied cultural activity, expression of a political conception of culture held at the initiative of Voivode and the support of the Steward, with the most Romanian leading scholars of the time, among which the Metropolitan Teodosie, Radu and Ţerban Greceanu, Iordache Cantacuzino, Antim Ivireanul, David and Teodor Corbea etc., and many Greek scholars, bearers of Western spirit in its Oriental form (Hellenism). [...] By his cultural policy, Constantin Brancoveanu aimed on the one hand, the formation of scholarly elite, through neo-Aristotelian education taught at the Royal Academy of St. Sava, and on the other hand, raising cultural level and national consciousness development of the Romanian people everywhere” (Ș. Ionescu, 1981, p. 149).

Another bishop with cultural concerns was the Metropolitan of Moldavia Dosoftei, known in Romanian culture in particular by his Psalter in Verse (1673), considered the first book of poetry in Romanian. He printed this book shortly after a similar achievement made by the Polish Jan Kochanowski (G. Călinescu, 1982, p. 48). Many of the Psalm verses are inspired by Romanian folk poetry and in turn, those became the inspiration for Romanian poets. Metropolitan Dosoftei is the first hierarch who translated in Romanian the Divine Liturgy, which is the first Romanian clergy book printed in Moldavia. Lives of Saints, developed over 25 years, was an important work for scholars’ spiritual reading and for all the Romanian priests. The literary talent of Metropolitan Dosoftei is noted in the translation of the Greek drama Erofili, the
first literary work in the universal dramaturgy translated into Romanian. All these works show the Metropolitan effort to enrich the vocabulary of Romanian literary terms with borrowed terms from Greek and Latin, no less, his beliefs about the value for the religious life of cultural exchanges.

The contribution of Metropolitan Veniamin Costache of Moldavia (1768-1846) to the imposition of definitive Romanian language is essential. The numerous works which he wrote, prefaces to various works reveal a great concern that the Metropolitan had in Romanian literary language training. He proposed its enrichment from the Latin fund and from words preserved in old books and documents, but also from the popular speech. It is a remarkable effort to introduce the Romanian language as language of instruction in schools established by him, instead of Greek and French languages, which were promoted by rulers and boyars, under the political influences of the time.

An important role in the development of Romanian culture had the monk Grigorie, the future metropolitan Grigorie Dascalul, of the Romanian Country (1823-1829, 1833-1834). His relations with the Metropolitan Veniamin Costachi focused scholarly concerns towards the Romanian translation of some Holy Priests works, development of textbooks and review books of worship.

The Metropolitan Andrei Saguna of Transylvania (1864-1873) is considered one of the most brilliant hierarchies that have been in the history of Romanian Orthodox Church. Caring for the development of Romanian language and literature, for people culturalization and asserting its national identity (given that in 1867, Transylvania came from Habsburg rule to the Austro-Hungarian one) and expressed it by publishing books and contributing to the establishment of Transylvanian Association for Romanian Literature and Romanian People Culture (ASTRA) and the emergence of Romanian Telegraph newspaper in 1853, continuous printed so far, beginning with the Cyrillic and since 1863, with Latin characters.

Replacing the Slavic language with the language of the people was a natural one, given that the whole Europe valued the use of national languages. The involvement of clergy and the rulers in achieving this goal, gave religious value to Romanian literary language, so, not incidentally, the poet Alexei Mateevici, in the poetry dedicated to the Romanian language, emphasizes this: “Our language is more than holy / Words of homilies of old / Wept and sung perpetually / In the homesteads of our folks.”
Education in the Romanian area of the XVII-XIX

Education was considered by Romanian hierarchy not only one of the essential purposes of the Church, but a condition for fulfilling the mission of teaching, given by the Saviour: “Wherefore, while going you teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit and teaching them to take care of all things whatsoever I have commanded you” (Matthew 28:19).

The establishment of theological and secular schools, science development and elaboration of textbooks and training of future teachers is a process intrinsically linked to the hierarchs contribution to the development of literary Romanian language. An analysis of the kept documents remains relevant in this regard concerning the three Romanian countries; in each being found salutary examples, so that clergy may be appointed as promoters of education on the Romanian people. We have already mentioned the contribution of the Metropolitan Antim Ivireanul and Prince Constantin Brancoveanu in working at St. Sava Princely Academy, founded by Serban Voda in 1679, which the curriculum and quality of its teachers made it comparable with higher education institutions from the West. Among the subjects studied here we include: Logic, History, Physics, Mathematics, Rhetoric, Poetry, Astronomy, Psychology, Metaphysics, Greek and Latin and later French and Italian (A.L. Bădulescu, 2004, p. 67).

At the request of Metropolitan Varlaam, in 1640, Prince Vasile Lupu founded the first institution with higher education elements from Moldavia, College of the Three Hierarchs, following the model from Kiev, where many teachers were brought. Historical conditions that led to the increasing number of Greek teachers in this institution of higher education and the strong religious ties and commercial relations of that time led to increasing influence of Greek culture in Moldavia (and The Romanian Country), but also to achieve Romanian translations of original works in Greek (I. Albulescu, 2005, p. 47).

Metropolitan Veniamin Costachi is considered par excellence, a founder and a teacher of theology and secular schools. Among the schools established by him there are: Seminar of Socola Monastery (1803); School of church songs in Iasi (1805); School for nuns in Agapia Monastery (1805); the elementary school, the normal school and gymnasium, at the Three Hierarchs Monastery in Iasi (1828); Mihaielena Academy in Iasi (1834); Public School for townspeople girls in Iasi (1834); Public Schools in all cities from Moldavia, (1834); School of Arts and Crafts, the first of Moldavia (1841). One of the most important cultural institutions in Iasi was the Socola Theological Seminary (1803), it was elevated to college at the Mihaileni Academy set up in Iasi (1834-1835). The three colleges that belonged to the Academy -
Philosophy, Law and Theology - and the „extraordinary courses” of Engineering, Agronomy, Fine Arts and Literature, have set up development of science, which created the preconditions for the establishment of University of Iasi in 1860. During the metropolitan scholar, the first issue of setting up schools for girls and schools for the learning of arts and crafts was placed. Also, public schools established in every town and village of Moldavia contributed to the cultural development of the Romanian people.

The same concern on the establishment of schools also had the Bishop Grigorie Dascalul, in The Romanian Country. School teachers set by him - theological or secular - were paid from bishops funds. Caring for the formation of future priests led him to impose the establishment in all metropolitan bishops, of a theological seminary in each one (Bucharest, Buzau, Arges and Ramnic), which were open after his death.

Since his election as Vicar in Sibiu in 1846, the future Metropolitan Andrei Saguna (1864-1873) was concerned with the organization of Romanian education in Transylvania, by setting up more than 400 parochial schools, literacy classes, setting the lower and upper secondary schools (high schools) and technical schools in various cities of Transylvania, purchase of buildings for established schools, funding existing schools. To train future priests, he organized theological education in Sibiu, by creating a theological-pedagogical institute, which later developed the Theological Institute. To improve people’s religious education, he established the rule that priests should support lectures on Sunday afternoon, and at the Holy Liturgy, instead of singing canticles, the singer to read the main prayers and teachings of the Church. Throughout its work, Metropolitan Andrei Saguna managed to impress his contemporaries, regardless of denomination to which they belonged: “Almost a generation, Saguna was the intellectual head - the only recognized one - of his people and was able to obtain such results as this rarely happens to any mortal to be honored by them. Friends and enemies of the great man, whose tall, imposing stature, with alert eyes and curled beard will not soon be forgotten by those who have ever seen it, will all concur that the name of Saguna means a new era in the Romanian people life and the Orthodox Church” (C.D. Teutsch apud M. Păcurariu, 1994, p. 105).

Of the difficult problem of equipping schools with textbooks were especially concerned about Metropolitan Veniamin Costache, the Bishop Melchisedec Stefanescu of Roman, Metropolitan Andrei Saguna, Bishop Gregorie Dascalul, some of whom are themselves authors of such works. This way they replaced the service books used as textbooks for a long time: “For the time when schools did not exist, when teaching was delivered orally from person to person,
and when the only books were those of religious literature, they met without a doubt, the role of school textbooks. First there were reading books, tools of literacy, the first weapon, the first means of working against illiteracy, the first signs of culture. That it was that way and that there was clearly awareness of this function and that they realized the importance of literacy, we see it clearly in many religious books prefaces” (A. Plămădeală, 1981, p. 112).

Clerics who founded schools were concerned of teacher training also, through scholarships and by sending students to study abroad, students with the best results in school. In return, they were able to replace the teachers brought in from abroad for teaching various subjects.

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Because of the concern they had in developing and cultural and moral raising of the people, by living models of Christian teaching offered by themselves, by keeping the unity of love for nation and language, Romanian bishops are considered the founders of Romanian culture.

The historians testimony regarding their religious life, cultural and religious heritage left, through which bases of religious and secular education of the Romanians were founded, and also the martyrdom suffered by some of them have decisively contributed to the canonization of some of the hierarchs of the Romanian people. Just remember the words of the chronicler Ion Neculce about Metropolitan Dosoftei: “[...] full devout monk and gentle as a lamb. In our country, on this days there was not a man like him [...] people say he’s holy” (I. Neculce, 1975, p. 89), or the great historian Nicolae Iorga about Metropolitan Veniamin Costache, “A man more holy and better than him has never held in hands the crutch of Romanian bishop” (N. Iorga, 1904, p. 78), as well as “If they had asked the boyar of old-fashioned or a student in Paris, the faithful Christian, and even the Jew, who is the best man in Moldavia, they would reply in unison: The Priest Veniamin [...] if you wanted to know which is the poorest, the most deprived, the most sold of duty of good doers who can be seen and many well that does not know anyone, you would have whispered the same name revered of the octogenarian Metropolitan” (N. Iorga apud A. Plămădeală, 1981, p. 106).
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