



Ion Vicovan

## Education in the preoccupation of Moldavia's Metropolitans Iacob Putneanul and Veniamin Costachi

### Abstract

In this article Rev. Prof. Dr. Ion Vicovan analyses the meaning and historical impact of theological education as promoted by *Metropolitan Iacob Putneanul* (1750-1760) and *Metropolitan Veniamin Costachi* (1803-1842).

This article underlines the historical fact, that the Romanian Orthodox Church always promoted education and sustained the cultural development of the society. By this excellent historical analysis one can learn how meaningful and impressive the activities of two well-known moldavian



Rev. Prof. Dr. Ion Vicovan,  
Dean of the Faculty of  
Orthodox Theology, Uni-  
versity Alexandru Ioan  
Cuza Iași, Romania

Metropolitans actually were. The Romanian Orthodox Church was always involved in public activities and influenced beneficial the culture of the time. *Metropolitan Iacob Putneanul* (1750-1760) and *Metropolitan Veniamin Costachi* (1803-1842) were founders of many and various schools, they compiled and published the first school books, they made a constant effort for the introduction and the reintroduction of the Romanian language in school and Church, and they also printed various religious, learning books, many of them having valuable prefaces, in which they highlighted the benefits of education

Keywords

Education, Metropolitan Iacob Putneanul, Metropolitan Veniamin Costachi, culture, public theology

## **1 Introduction**

Education has been for the Church a constant care and preoccupation. The means, through which the Church has achieved education, not only in the sense of instruction, as a cultural act, but also in the sense of spiritual perspective, have been diverse: the word (the sermon), the art (with all its forms), the manuscripts, the printings, the schools, etc. Only thus can one explain its impressive cultural work, developed throughout history, meant to serve its sons and daughters.

## **2 Metropolitan Iacob Putneanul (1750-1760)**

Metropolitan Iacob Putneanul, recently included among the saints by the Holy Synod of the Romanian Orthodox Church

(2016), has had, in the field of education in general, *a constant concern, an active involvement, and a significant achievement*. This activity was carried out through: *printing* religious and learning *books*, which contained rich and valuable prefaces, *setting up* and taking care of schools and *compiling schoolbooks*.

### *The printing work*

The fact that Metropolitan Iacob Putneanul has been a hierarch concerned with cultural development can be proven by the printing of several books in Romanian, first in the printing house of Duca Sotiriovici, set up in Iași<sup>1</sup>, and later on in the Metropolitan printing house (in Iași), which he restored.

In what regards the printing activity, we mention that, „through his endeavour and at his expense”, numerous books were brought to light for the benefit of both priests and believers, as he printed works of religious teachings, as much as for the benefit of children and young people, through compiling and, respectively, printing schoolbooks. Moreover, as an enlightened hierarch, Metropolitan Iacob did not limit his work to printing, but he also added beautiful and valuable exordia to the religious books.

It needs to be specified that education in the mind and work of the Church’s servants has not been, and must not be understood only as an activity referring only to children and young people in general, but it has always aimed at „every man who comes into the world”. It fundamentally attempts to achieve the purpose for which man has been created: redemption.

This is why, in one of the prefaces, after first showing that „everyone has been made well by God for a certain deed, as fire

---

<sup>1</sup> Mircea Păcurariu, *The History of the Romanian Orthodox Church*, vol. II, Iași: Trinitas Publishing House, 2006, p. 303.

is to heat, the sun to make light and others in the same way”, he asks himself: „for if the sun didn't make light, what would it be? The same is it with man, who was created for God, if he doesn't strive to reach the truest goal for which he has been built, that is God, he struggles in vain and without use”<sup>2</sup>.

Among his many works, we mention, as being in a place of honour, *The Alphabet of the Soul*, which appeared in 1755 in the Metropolitan printing house in Iasi. Here, the author introduces the reader inside the essence of things, underlining, through many examples and metaphorical language, the ephemeral traits of this life and the undying value of spiritual things. Hence also the introduction with a more than relevant title: "For we ought to be gladdened by the Lord, and not by the decaying joys of this world". In this exordium, as well as in the entire work, the enlightened hierarch mentions that *man must not lead himself and live only by the material things, but rather by the spiritual ones*, motivating why: „because the Lord's joy remains eternally". However, he does not despise the material aspects, but he recommends and impels that they be used, as much as possible, for the benefit of the soul, keeping in mind the final goal which man should tend to reach: glorifying God. As a practical example, he says: „Nothing of this age is worthy of joy and cheerfulness, nothing worthy of comfort and good heart: but they are all full of weeping and lament. Vanity of vanities is man's life; for man is born out of decay, he grows in pain and helplessness, he plagues his life with sorrows and troubles, with hassles and untidiness and unhopd happenings

---

<sup>2</sup> Ion Bianu and Nerva Hodoş, *Old Romanian Bibliography*, tome II, Bucharest, 1910, pp. 123-124 at Teoctist, Metropolitan of Moldavia and Suceava, *In the Service of Romanian Orthodoxy, of Its Strivings for National Unity and for Acknowledgement of the Romanian Culture: Metropolitan Iacob Putneanul (1719-1778)*, Neamţ Monastery, 1978, p. 26.

and all unrest... But if you wish to rejoice, only in God rejoice: for the wordly joy perishes quickly, and the Lord's joy stays forever. The earthly comfort quickly perishes and returns to bitterness; but the comfort of the Holy Spirit always soothes in the name of the Lord, and it will sooth with unspoken comfort now and forever.

For this reason rejoice in God and not at all in other things... rejoice in nothing else but in God: for all the joy, which does not reside in the Lord, is lying and deceiving: and all the comfort, which does not reside in God, is hardship and unrest for the soul. For this, do not be gladdened by food and drink, neither by the riches and glory of this world, neither by some beauty and beastly lust, but only by God be gladdened, with joy rejoice in God: for in these evanescent things there is no true joy, but it is only deceiving, evanescent and groundless: for in darkness there is no light, in death you will find no life, in lie no justice will be shown.

The joy of this world is deceiving, its comfort passing, its cheerfulness changes easily. Into little joy and comfort, and suddenly without notice into weeping and lament. It hasn't been comforted yet when suddenly sadness and hardship have already arrived. For that rejoice only in God, with joy and cheerfulness be glad. Rejoice in Lord God, for your God: God is great, eternal, without death, almighty, God of clemencies, merciful, just, loving people and all too merciful, Father of all forbearance, God of all comfort... Rejoice in God and give thanks to Him: for He made you in His image and likeness, He brought you from nonexistence to existence, He crowned you with glory and honour. He hasn't made you a beast, nor a whale, nor some other kind of animal: but a man, an understanding, immortal creature, and He has honoured your soul with unshared dominion. Even if we must break apart from our passing body, but we go to a better dwelling, and with our soul, we live forever:

not for one thousand, or two, or three thousand years, but forever and ever without ending... Rejoice in the Lord and give thanks to Him: for He has made everything as a gift for you, for you the sky and the earth, for you He has made the sun and the moon and the whole adornment of the sky with the stars, for you the beasts and the animals and the flying birds and all the creatures. For you the seas, the rivers, the springs, the ponds, the different kinds of fish, the big whales, for you the forests, the woods. The groves, the different kinds of desserts; for you the seen and the unseen have been made... Rejoice in the Lord and give thanks to Him: because that God Almighty, too rich, became poor for you, He became man for you, in order to join you with Him: He wasn't disgusted to take ours upon Himself, to give Himself entirely to us"<sup>3</sup>.

Another one of his works, in which he makes a valuable introduction about education, is *Synopsis*, meaning a collection of several teachings, published in 1757. In the exordium, the great hierarch formulates a special encouragement, „teaching why every man should send his sons to learn”. Here he underlines that „every learned man is called a man of words, and the one who is not learned, resembles the animals.”

For the beauty and the importance of the text, we present you with the author's words: „Man cannot be happier, than when he directs all his concern and care, towards finding out how and by what means he could see his children benefit from learning; as we can see not only in the Holy Scriptures but also in all the Stories, that blessed are the parents who engage in sleepless

---

<sup>3</sup> *The Alphabet of the Soul for which reasons we ought to rejoice only in God; and not in the decaying things of this world*, annexe III, at Teoctist, Metropolitan of Moldavia and Suceava, *In the service of Romanian Orthodoxy, of its Hopes for National Unity and for the Assertion of the Romanian Culture: Metropolitan Iacob Putneanul (1719-1778)*, pp. 79-82.

struggle for their children's education. As long as the teaching inspired by God is the light of the body, and the knowledge of the Godly faith, an ascension of human nature, it is a dogma of the High and Heavenly King and a guardian of all the commandments of His Holiness. And this teaching has helped the philosophers to know all the natures, not only the earthly ones, but also the heavenly ones.

This teaching is an icon and a godly image and a rudder steering the soul, which dwells in this earthly vessel. (...) And seeing that this teaching lies asleep in the darkness of laziness, our heart felt hurt by this hunger, which has its roots in the souls of some parents who bring up their children without education. Thus, every learned man is called a man of words, and the one, who is not learned, resembles the animals. And if you wish your sons to resemble the animals, it is a great mistake and blindness: because they are deprived of the learning, outside of which one can hardly know God, they know of Him as little as the unfeeling animals do.

And this is a true and trustworthy thing: that learning is like the scented flowers, which heal all the bodily wounds with the scent of knowledge, and the one who is not learned resembles the dried tree, and the way the sun sends warmth and helps grow all that is born by the earth, the same way learning gives man cleverness towards all knowledge, and again, the way darkness sets in when the sun moves away from the day's sky, the same way, if learning is away from that wretched man, it lies in the darkness of nescience, and, in short, he is blind, at least it seems to him that he can see, for the eyes of the unlearned and unpunished one are blind, and better said those of the soul, for the soul and the mind are the ones which can see, and when the mind does not understand, it is entirely blind. You can see, then, those of you, parents, who leave your children unpunished, how much damage and poverty is caused

by your son's lack of learning. For this, behold, we urge you to waken your hearts to see the soul goodnesses, which flow out of the holy teachings, and every one of you must send your children to learn, as complete parents who care about what is useful for your sons"<sup>4</sup>.

Another work about education at the highest degree is *The Primer*, printed in 1755. It has the merit of not only being the first book of this kind on the territory of our country, but as well the one of also circulating in Transylvania, being republished even in Vienna (in 1771), with certain completions. In the preface of *The Primer*, the metropolitan addresses the parents, urging them to send their children to school for learning, which is „the beginning of wisdom”, so that they do not deprive them of the „soul's food” and the „good advice”<sup>5</sup>. The manual was directed, as the author mentions, „to the good, faithful parents, to the feeders, to the subprefects, to the masters and to all the others who have a fatherly name over the young children”<sup>6</sup>.

He foregrounds the necessity and the importance of education at a very early age, starting from infancy. It shapes the man and

---

<sup>4</sup> V. A. Urechia, *The History of Schools from 1800-1860*, tome I, Bucharest, State Printing House, 1892, p. 24. See also Teaching for every man to send his sons to learn, chap. 60 in „Collection of Many Teachings”, Iași, 1757, exemplary kept in the Academy Library RS Romania, no. invent. 305 at Teoctist, Metropolitan of Moldavia and Suceava, *In the service of Romanian Orthodoxy, of its Hopes for National Unity and for the Assertion of the Romanian Culture: Metropolitan Iacob Putneanul (1719-1778)*, pp. 84-85.

<sup>5</sup> Mircea Păcurariu, *The History of the Romanian Orthodox Church*, vol. II, p. 303.

<sup>6</sup> Teoctist, Metropolitan of Moldavia and Suceava, *In the service of Romanian Orthodoxy, of its Hopes for National Unity and for the Assertion of the Romanian Culture: Metropolitan Iacob Putneanul (1719-1778)*, p. 42.

stands at the basis of what he will do<sup>7</sup> when he grows older: „it depends on the infancy raising what kind of child someone is, the same thing happens if he grows older, if he has been brought up since his childhood with honest teaching and in the fear of God (which is the beginning of wisdom), there is hope for that one to be well-educated also when he is older; but if his upbringing passes without fear and learning, there is little hope that the other part of his life should be better”<sup>8</sup>.

Metropolitan Iacob insists on the fact that the educational process must not be limited strictly to the teaching system, to its content itself, but it must take into consideration also the environment in which the child is brought up: „If someone lives among well-known people, that is a good correction for the child, but if one lives among people with many quarrels, ugliness, hatred, fraud and robbery, and other bad habits, do not doubt that they should serve as a good correction for the children”<sup>9</sup>.

---

<sup>7</sup> Teoctist, Metropolitan of Moldavia and Suceava, *In the service of Romanian Orthodoxy, of its Hopes for National Unity and for the Assertion of the Romanian Culture: Metropolitan Iacob Putneanul (1719-1778)*, p. 42.

<sup>8</sup> Ion Bianu and Nerva Hodoș, *Old Romanian Bibliography*, tome II, Bucharest, 1910, p. 131, at Teoctist, Metropolitan of Moldavia and Suceava, *In the service of Romanian Orthodoxy, of its Hopes for National Unity and for the Assertion of the Romanian Culture: Metropolitan Iacob Putneanul (1719-1778)*, p. 42.

<sup>9</sup> *The Primer*, Iași, 1755, *Exordium addressed to the good, faithful parents, to the feeders, to the subprefects, to the masters and to all the others who have a fatherly name over the young children*, at Teoctist, Metropolitan of Moldavia and Suceava, *Metropolitan Iacob Putneanul (1778-1978). Enlightener of Romanian Orthodoxy, of its Hopes for National Unity and for the Assertion of the Romanian Culture*, Neamț Monastery, 1978, p. 36.

*Founder and protector of schools*

As following Grigore Ghica's *Settlement* in 1747, new schools appear in addition to the already existing public schools, thus being made „the first steps towards the compulsoriness of education”<sup>10</sup>. In this context, Bishop Iacob founded a school „of Slavonic, Greek and Romanian” assigned to the Diocese of Radauti, where his residence was<sup>11</sup>. After becoming a metropolitan, he became protector of the schools and their teachers in Iasi<sup>12</sup>.

From the kept information, we find out that, at the beginning of his pastorate, in Iasi there were only two public schools supported by the Metropolitan Church, and the clergy were exempt from the lordly taxes and the ruler's gift, instead having to pay „the school tax”. Thanks to his intense activity in this area, in the last year of his pastorate, there were several schools functioning not only in Iasi, but also in entire Moldavia, and even private schools were mentioned. In 1759, the ruler Ioan Teodor Callimachi (1758-1761) issued a lordly decree regarding the schools, naming the metropolitan and the great ecclesiarch to examine „the situation of the schools” in Iasi<sup>13</sup>. From the account left by them, we find out that in Moldavia at that time, there were public schools, Greek schools, but also schools „both in Moldavian and in Slavonic”. From the kept information, we also find out that in (certain) monasteries there were also „somehow private” schools, the most famous one being the one from Putna Monastery, this school being raised to

---

<sup>10</sup> Al. I. Ciurea, *Iacob Stamati*, Iași, 1946, p. 115.

<sup>11</sup> Teoctist, Metropolitan of Moldavia and Suceava, *Metropolitan Iacob Putneanul*, p. 11.

<sup>12</sup> Mircea Păcurariu, *The History of the Romanian Orthodox Church*, vol. II, p. 303.

<sup>13</sup> V. A. Urechia, *The History of Schools from 1800-1860*, tome I, p. 25.

the rank of „lordly school”<sup>14</sup>, according to Grigore Ghica’s document. Together with the learned Archimandrite Vartolomeu Măzăreanu, Metropolitan Iacob organized here a school, which became a true „spiritual Academy”<sup>15</sup>, following the example of the one in Kiev, founded by the Moldavian Saint Hierarch Petru Movila<sup>16</sup>. In its curriculum, there was also a course of psaltic music, taught by the monk Ilarion of Patmos<sup>17</sup>.

### **3    Metropolitan Veniamin Costachi (1803-1842)**

The designation given to him by his contemporaries and confirmed by his descendants, „the Enlightener of Moldavia”, is due to his exceptional cultural activity. This represents, as in the case of his predecessors in the metropolitan seat, a complex, rich and valuable achievement. Also, when referring to his work, one can mention *the school founder, the decisive contribution to reintroducing Romanian in the religious cult and in schools and the impressive printing activity*, many of these works having valuable prefaces about education, signed by the Metropolitan.

---

<sup>14</sup> Ibidem, p. 26.

<sup>15</sup> Petru Rezuș, *The Old Theological School at Putna. A New Letter of Vartolomeu Măzăreanu*, in „Banat’s Altar”, II (1945), no.3-4, pp. 150-156 at Teoctist, Metropolitan of Moldavia and Suceava, *In the service of Romanian Orthodoxy, of its Hopes for National Unity and for the Assertion of the Romanian Culture: Metropolitan Iacob Putneanu (1719-1778)*, p. 41.

<sup>16</sup> Mircea Păcurariu, *The History of the Romanian Orthodox Church*, vol. II, p. 482.

<sup>17</sup> N. Iorga, *The History of the Romanian Church*, vol. II, Bucharest, Ministry of Culture Printing House, 1930, p. 156

### *School founder*

After only two months from his coming to Moldavia's metropolitan seat, he received from the ruler Alexandru Moruzi (1802 – 1806) various documents, regarding the organization of the schools in Moldavia. Thus, a Romanian school (in addition to the Greek one) was founded at Mavromolu monastery – Galati, as well as several Greek and Romanian schools in Focsani and Barlad, and he also obtained a budget enhancement for supporting the schools (from the State, in addition to the clergy's contribution). During his pastorate, a school guardianship was founded as well, within which the Metropolitan had the function of the president. Otherwise, he has been constantly concerned with the issue of education in general.

With regard to this, he writes some pages of rare beauty about the special role which culture plays in a man's shaping process<sup>18</sup>. Among other things, he shows that even though

---

<sup>18</sup> Taking inspiration from the Holy Fathers (especially from Saint John Chrysostom), the Metropolitan has very harsh words, addressed to the parents who fail to care for their children's education: „Killers of sons, indeed, can those parents be considered, who don't attend to give some kind of teaching to their sons and even worse than those, as the golden mouth truly speaks (St. John Chrysostomos, emphasis mine): the killers of their sons separate only the body from the soul, while those who do not give their sons good upbringing and teaching, separate both the body from the soul, and the soul from God. Woe betide you, parents, in this world! And even more woe betide you in the one to come”. As it is natural, he raises the issue of education from a double perspective. On the one hand, education, in general, has an important role in terms of informing and forming man, and on the other hand, Christian education, as a special case, offers man also an eschatological perspective, in addition to the formative aspect: „All sciences and crafts are, without doubt, useful to man; but the usefulness of some of these is transitory!... and only for some does it go to the grave, and it finds there its end, as well as the sciences and the usefulness among them; and the science of the Christian faith and its usefulness is great

„some beings have an ability greater than man, the latter, having a mind, can overwhelm those natural abilities, through *education (emphasis mine)* and occupation”. In the same context, he shows that: „Man can be also a good painter, a good astronomist, a good physic (*physicist, AN*); he can gain insight into all of them with the help of education, he can understand them all, he can learn them all; through this, he rises to the chair of God the Highest. (...) But as much as education makes the most of man, the same way the lack of education degrades him and reduces him to nothing, more than the speechless creatures”<sup>19</sup>.

Wishing for the people to rise through culture<sup>20</sup> and being convinced of the fundamental role of the priests, the metropolitan presented the ruler with a rapport, in which he requested the founding of a *seminary* for the future priests. In addition to the presented reasons, which determined him to set the grounds for the seminary, there was another perhaps more important one: the wish that the moral state of the youth be risen. Regarding their state of moral decay, which caused him „great sadness and worry”, as the Metropolitan states, and having his duty’s consciousness awake, he came to the conviction that the concern for correcting the young through

---

and eternal; as, by giving advice for the whole good deed and moral living, it makes man worthy in this life and in the afterlife”. If the knowledge of the Christian teaching brings much benefit to man, it is self understood that its absence leads, according to the words of Veniamin himself: „to unworthy delays and breaking the law” (cf. Protos. Dr. Vasile Vasilache, *Metropolitan Veniamin Costachi*, Neamț Monastery, 1941, pp. 152-153).

<sup>19</sup> A. Vizanti, *Veniamin Costachi, Metropolitan of Moldavia and Suceava. His epoch, life and works*, Iași, 1881, p.124, at Nicolae Isar, *Under the sign of the „Lights”. Epoch figures from 1821*, p. 24.

<sup>20</sup> Nicolae Isar, *Under the sign of the „Lights”. Epoch figures from 1821*, București, Paideia, 2006, p. 24.

education is not only very important but also the only possible approach. He considered this mission to be even higher than his own life. This is why he decided to found a seminary, which would thoroughly prepare the future priests, so that they, in their turn, be of help to their flock: „Judging that I, the unworthy, having taken onto my shoulders the duty of pastoring this country, if I do not strive to break away my speaking flock from such precipices, the just judge shall reprimand me even more frightfully than for my own sins. I have never ceased, both in private and in public, to rebuke and reprove, mourning from my soul, the lack of care for the Christian education of the young”<sup>21</sup>.

And indeed, through a charter in 1803, he decided the founding of the Seminary, „with Moldavian teachers ... for the education of the priests' and deacons' sons”, and starting with the following year, it actually functions<sup>22</sup>.

In the year 1840, the Seminary received, from the ruler Mihail Sturza, the title of *Seminaria Veniamină (Veniamin Seminary)*, and the great historian Constantin Erbiceanu was going to name it later *The Sorbonne of the Romanians*: “What Sorbonne is for the French, Socola is for the Romanians”<sup>23</sup>.

For the seminary at Socola Monastery, Lapasneanu's foundation, to be able to function, the ruler, decided through a charter in 1803, to relocate the nuns here to Agapia Monastery, where the abbess was the Metropolitan's sister. Here, through his care, a Greek school will be founded, and the nuns were

---

<sup>21</sup> Ibidem, p. 156.

<sup>22</sup> For more details, you may consult, among others, priest as. Ion Vicovan's study, *Pages from the History of Theological Education in Moldavia*, in TV no. 1-3/1995.

<sup>23</sup> C. Erbiceanu, *The History of Veniamin Seminary at Socola Monastery, founded in 1804*, Iași, 1885, p. 122.

going to be engaged in handwork as well. Also, the girls of boyars and merchants had access to Agapia and Varatec Monasteries, for the learning of books and handwork. It is worthy to remember that this is the first time when the concern for the education of girls appears mentioned in a lordly charter. In 1805, he founded a *church singing school* in Iasi, offering at the same time the necessary money for the opening of a similar private school assigned to Saint John the New of Suceava Church, and this school functioned for over 15 years.

In the period between 1814-1818, his disciple Gheorghe Asachi taught classes of engineering, laying thus the foundation of our polytechnic education, demonstrating in this way, to the retrograde boyars, that exact sciences could also be taught in Romanian. It is noteworthy that the great Metropolitan considered that, in the process of education, the teaching alone, the theory, was not sufficient, but the practice was also needed: Every science and craft is gained through theory or praxis. And for one to become complete in one of these, one must be both theoretical and practical”<sup>24</sup>.

On January 1, 1828, the Metropolitan, together with Gheorghe Asachi, presented the ruler with a plan for the organization of education in Moldavia. This included two types of schools: a *normal school* (with 2 years of study) and a *secondary school* (with 4 years of study), proposing the use of the Romanian language as a priority. As well, he initiated the founding of *libraries and equipping them with didactic material*. The courses of both schools were opened at the beginning of 1828. In the autumn of the same year, 6 *regional schools* were opened, and in the following years others appeared.

---

<sup>24</sup> A. Vizanti, *work cited*, annexes, p. 125 at Nicolae Isar, *Under the sign of the „Lights”. Epoch figures from 1821*, p. 27.

In November 1834, *Academia Mihăileană*<sup>25</sup> was opened, the official inauguration being held in June 1835, and the superior courses of the Seminary (of 4 years) being considered the third faculty within the Academy (next to Philosophy, with 2 years, and Law, with 3 years). Out of this faculty, the University, which bears the name of its founder, Al. I. Cuza, developed in 1860.

In the year 1841, *the first school of arts and crafts* in Moldavia was opened. In 1843, he laid the foundation of the first public school for city girls in Iasi, in collaboration with Gheorghe Asachi. Its courses were taught in a building belonging to Barboi Monastery.

As a response to his and Gheorghe Asachi's urge, some of the boyars and certain monasteries set up village schools, while the Metropolitan encouraged the flock, through various pastoral letters and through some prefaces of his printed works, to send their children to learning, highlighting its usefulness. Let us also mention that, according to Veniamin's own testimony, "at my expense, I have sent many young people to various places, to prepare themselves" (Kiev, Moscow, Petrograd, Athens, Vienna, etc.)<sup>26</sup>.

#### *His contribution to the reintroducing of Romanian in the religious cult and schools*

Regarding the Romanian language, we notice the perseverance with which he fought for its being reintroduced in schools, the care for "the good presentation of the Romanian language" be-

---

<sup>25</sup> For details, you may consult priest as. Ion Vicovan's study *Academia Mihăileană - 160 years since its foundation*, Scientific Annals of "Al. I. Cuza" University, tome III, 1995-1996, pp. 239-253.

<sup>26</sup> Ilie Gheorghită, *Metropolitan Veniamin Costachi's special concern to rise the cultural level of the clergy. Considerations about a new letter*, in MMS, year XLVII, no. 9-12/ 1971, p. 646.

coming for Metropolitan Veniamin “a holy concern”, a “cult”<sup>27</sup>. Hence also his statement “that those who stand against the truly Romanian words, which the learned ones of our nation have now started to use again, let everyone know, they become the enemies of our Romanian nation”<sup>28</sup>. Many of the boyars were not consenting to the fact that Romanian should be the teaching language. The argument they were bringing was that Romanian had few words which defined scientific notions, reason for which one could not study (higher) sciences in this language. They preferred, as a teaching language, any of the languages Greek, Russian, French, except for Romanian! In order to have more success, the supporters of the foreign languages as teaching languages in the Moldavian schools raised this issue in a meeting of a Public Assembly. Some boyars, used with the Phanariot habits, showed preferences for the Greek language, others, under the influence of the Russians, chose Russian, and those with (more) modern views, among them, being also the ruler, preferred French. The author of an interesting work about Metropolitan Veniamin Costachi, priest Dr. Ilie Gheorghita<sup>29</sup>, catches the tension and the difficulty of this moment for the school-founding Metropolitan: “When all of them seemed not only to agree on this proposal, but they were also waiting to vote, suddenly, the saint protector and founder of the *Romanian language, as by divine inspiration*, instead of plunging into debates, whose end could not be foreseen, proposes to the boyars

---

<sup>27</sup> Vasile Vasilache, *Metropolitan Veniamin Costachi (1768-1846)*, Neamț Monastery, 1941, p. 189,

<sup>28</sup> *Foreword to the Divine Liturgy, directed from the Greek and Slavonic-Russian ones by His All Holiness Metropolitan of Suceava and Moldavia Veniamin Costachi, year 1834*, at Protos. Vasile Vasilache, *Metropolitan Veniamin Costachi (1768-1846)*, p. 190.

<sup>29</sup> Ilie Gheorghita, *A century since Metropolitan Veniamin Costachi's Death*, Neamț, 1946, p.67.

that, before making any decision, they should be so kind as to visit the Academy, in order to ensure themselves just how big the grain of truth in their objections was. And after the boyars' acceptance, in everyone's presence, a thorough exam started, in which the learners, taking turns, were called to answer in religion, rethorics, history, geography, literature, philosophy, mathematics, etc. The exam, which was quite all-embracing, included poetry from the country's history, fragments from Romanian and foreign poets, physics problems, and others, and it proved not only the soundness of the knowledge, but also the clarity and the elegance of the presentation "as though they would have been specially prepared for this". After praising the students and congratulating the teachers "in the name of the country", the Metropolitan turned to the members of the Public Assembly "full of joy and having tears in his eyes", addressing the following words to them: "Let us hear you say again, that one cannot learn in our country's language"<sup>30</sup>.

The Metropolitan Veniamin Costachi not only made important effort that Romanian should be reintroduced in schools, but he was actually preoccupied to cultivate and enrich it. Veniamin names the language: "Romanian", as the Saint Hierarchs Varlaam and Dosoftei had done in their time, although in other prefaces he will name it also "Moldavian" and "Vlach-Romanian" and "Moldo-Romanian"<sup>31</sup>. Still, most of the times he names it "Romanian" or "the language of our people"<sup>32</sup>. Entirely aware of the language and origin unity, common to all Roma-

---

<sup>30</sup> A. Vizanti, *Veniamin Costachi*, Iași, 1881, p. 81 from Pr.lect. I. Vicovan, *Academia Mihăileană – 160 years since its foundation*, p. 244.

<sup>31</sup> See notes 142, 143 și 144 la + Antonie Plămădeală, *Orthodox Clerics, Founders of Romanian Language and Culture*, in vol. „Teachers of Romanian Thinking and Feeling”, EIBMBOR, Bucharest, 1981, p. 104.

<sup>32</sup> Note 145 at Antonie Plămădeală, *Orthodox Clerics, Founders of Romanian Language and Culture*.

nians, whenever he refers to the language, he bears in mind the language of all Romanians.

*The printing activity*

Founder of numerous schools and of education, the Metropolitan felt more intensely than others the negative implications brought by the shortage of books. To cover this, he set up a new printing house at Neamt Monastery, and restored the one belonging to the Metropolitan Church. Living in the spirit set by Saint Paisios of Neamt, metropolitan Veniamin granted special attention to the translation of the Holy Fathers works, the translations beeing carried out by two scholar monks from Neamt Monastery, *Gherontie*, and *Grigorie* (the latter being the future Metropolitan and Saint Grigore Dascălul of Ungro-Wallachia). There have been printed over 100 books altogether under Metropolitan Veniamin's "blessing", "his order", "his urge" or "entirely at his expence". According to his vision, "books must be useful not only to the old, but also to the young, not only to the citizens (city dwellers), but also to the peasants, not only to the wise, but also to the dumb" <sup>33</sup>. We also mention the printing of certain laic works: *The Description of Moldavia* by Dimitrie Cantemir's (1825), *The Chronograph* by Saint Dimitri of Rostov (1837), and others.

Among the printed works, we mention especially *The Liturgy Book*, which appeared in Iasi in two editions, with valuable editions (in which we find out about his opinions regarding literary Romanian, as well as his contribution to the setting of certain liturgical terms in our language ("molitva" replaced with prayer, "vohod" with entrance, "cădire" with incensing, "dveră"

---

<sup>33</sup> I. Gheorghită, *A century since Metropolitan Veniamin Costachi's Death*, Neamț, p. 113 at Nicolae Isar, *Under the sign of the „Lights”. Epoch figures from 1821*, p. 24.

with curtain, the holy “agneț” with the holy bread, “pocrovăț” with covering, and others). It has to be mentioned that the majority of the liturgical terms proposed by the Metropolitan Veniamin have imposed themselves and are still in use today. He had a significant contribution to the cultivation and the unification of the Romanian language, without reaching exaggerations (as was the case of the Transylvanian School or of I. H. Rădulescu, who wanted to remove the foreign words from Romanian)<sup>34</sup>, but he refers to “the old books and documents” and to the words kept in “the mouth of the people”.

#### **4 Conclusions**

Our church has always been concerned with the education of its spiritual children. This concern was manifest in the founding of schools, in the compiling and printing of school books or learning books, etc.

The above-mentioned hierarchs, of the second half of the XVIII century and the beginning of the XIX century, became outstanding, especially through this work. Hence we understand also the designation with which they were honored by their contemporaries and descendants (“Pestalozzi of the Romanians” or “the Enlightener of Moldavia”).

They were founders of many and various schools, they compiled and published the first school books, they made a constant effort for the introduction and the reintroduction of the Romanian language in school and Church, and they also printed various religious, learning books, many of them having valuable

---

<sup>34</sup> Gabriel Cocora, *Metropolitan Veniamin Costachi, translator and corrector of church books*, in BOR, year XCIX, no.5-6/1981, p. 666.

prefaces, in which they highlighted the benefits of education, emphasizing the final destination of man, “rejoicing in God”. Their cultural work bore rich fruit not only in their times but also after them, their works representing important references in our people’s cultural history.