

SOME THOUGHTS ON THE RELEVANCE OF THE
TRANSLATION OF THEODORET OF CYRUS' *CHURCH
HISTORY* BY THE METROPOLITAN PRIEST
VENIAMIN COSTACHI

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Abstract: *In 1845, when he was retired in Slatina monastery, not long before passing away, Veniamin Costachi, the Metropolitan of Moldavia and Suceava, translated into Romanian the book Church History by Blessed Theodoret of Cyrus, following the Greek text edited by Evghenie Vulgaris. Later, in 1894, Professor Constantin Erbiceanu printed Veniamin's translation, preferring it due to the translator's "great fame" and in order to "preserve the appreciated effort among the Romanians." In the second half of the twentieth century, the same reasons were also taken into account by the publisher who proposed to reproduce Theodoret's text "in the current Romanian language", but he insisted on pointing out the fact that "he humbly shows his respect and admiration for the great Moldavian Metropolitan and scholar /Veniamin Costachi – n.n./, who made this translation and brought in his time a priceless benefit to the Romanian theological culture".*

Cuvinte-cheie: *Teodoret, Veniamin, mitropolit, clasic, Erbiceanu, Sibiescu.*

Rezumat: *Considerații privitoare la importanța traducerii Istoriei bisericești a lui Teodoret al Cîrului de către mitropolitul Veniamin Costachi. În anul 1845, pe când se afla retras la mănăstirea Slatina, nu cu mult timp înainte de trecerea la cele veșnice, mitropolitul Moldovei și Sucevei Veniamin Costachi traduce în limba română Istoria bisericească a Fericitului Teodoret al Cîrului, urmând textul grecesc editat de Evghenie Vulgaris. Mai târziu, în anul 1894, profesorul Constantin Erbiceanu va tipări traducerea lui Veniamin, preferând-o pentru „marele renume” și pentru „conservarea osteneții atât de prețuită între români” a traducătorului. De asemenea, aceeași caracteristică este avută în vedere și de editorul din a doua jumătate a secolului al XX-lea, care își propune să redea*

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textul teodorotian „în limba curentă românească”, ținând însă să precizeze faptul că „păstrează cu smerenie tot respectul și admirația pentru marele mitropolit și cărturar moldovean /Veniamin Costachi – n.n./, care, realizând această traducere, a adus în vremea lui un neprețuit folos culturii teologice românești”.

Hierarchical confessions

On January 8th 1844, not long before passing away (December 18, 1846), Metropolitan Veniamin, in the solitude of his modest cell in Slatina Monastery in Suceava, wrote his *Will*. Among the confessions of the hierarch, whose name was given in posterity to the time when he lived¹ (he was a bishop in Huși, Roman, then an archbishop in Iași and the metropolitan bishop of Moldavia and Suceava from 1792 to 1842; he was the metropolitan bishop in Iași since 1803, with two interruptions²), it is also worth noting that he mentions: “I was also engaged in the translation of divine books and words, according to the understanding that God gave me and the little knowledge acquired, but I feared the punishment of the (cunning) servant who buried the talent entrusted to him...; among which translations, *I printed some at my own expense, I gave them as gifts, for the easy spreading of the light...*”. He added that he worked to “bring the priests to the good observance of the divine commandments”³, for which purpose he esta-

¹ Andrei Vizanti, *Veniamin Costaki, Mitropolitul Moldovei și Sucevei. Epoca, viața și operele sale (1768-1846)* (Veniamin Costaki, *Metropolitan of Moldavia and Suceava. His Epoch, Life and Works (1768-1846)*), Iași, Buciumul Român, 1881; Mircea Păcurariu, *Dicționarul Teologilor Români (Dictionary of Romanian Theologians)*, second edition, revised and completed, Enciclopedica, Bucharest, 2002, s.v.; Daniel Niță-Danielescu, *Mitropolitul Veniamin Costachi, întâiul ctitor al Catedralei Mitropolitane din Iași – arhipăstorul, cărturarul, ctitorul (Metropolitan Veniamin Costachi, first founder of the Metropolitan Cathedral in Iași - archbishop, scholar, founder)*, in *Așa să lumineze lumina voastră înaintea oamenilor...*. *Studii și articole privitoare la istoria și viața Bisericii (Let Your Light So Shine before Men...*. *Studies and Articles on the History and Life of the Church)*, “Alexandru Ioan Cuza” University Press, Iași, 2018, 39-40.

² *Enciclopedia Ortodoxiei Românești (Encyclopedia of Romanian Orthodoxy)* (coordinated by Mircea Păcurariu), Publishing House of the Biblical Institution and the Mission of the Romanian Orthodox Church, Bucharest, 2010, 216-217.

³ *Testamentul Mitropolitului Veniamin (Metropolitan Veniamin's Will)* in Constantin Erbiceanu's *Istoria Mitropoliei Moldovei și Sucevei și a Catedralei Mitropolitane din Iași (History of the Metropolis of Moldavia and Suceava and of the Metropolitan Cathedral in Iași)*, Printing House of Church Books, Bucharest, 1888, LIV, 177.

blished a seminary (“where they could learn all the rules of the church, *the holy and ecclesiastical history, the Hermeneia of the Divine Scripture* and the theological teachings”⁴), and in order to have the school close to the Diocesan Center, he even reorganized some monasteries⁵. Also, after 1828, he raised, as much as his “strength helped him”, “the public teachings... from the dust of the ruins”⁶. He left to the school founded by him “all the interpretations, some of which are written by my own hand and some by others, for my help...; I leave them to be kept at the Seminary in Socola, in whose library there are such manuscripts of mine, so that my name could be remembered there by the seminary brethren and in the churches where they will be worthy to be the servants of God”⁷.

Also, in that year, in December 1844, Metropolitan Veniamin finished writing the *Preface* to the work *Good Death* by Evghenie Vulgaris, translated by him into Romanian (and printed in Iasi, a year later, in 1845⁸). In the latter text the hierarch finds it appropriate to

⁴ *Ibidem*.

⁵ Gheorghe Adamescu, *Istoria Seminarului “Veniamin” din Iași (History of “Veniamin” Seminary in Iași) (1803-1903)*, Bucharest, 1904, 43-53; N. A. Ursu, *Seminarul de la Socola - prima școală de grad gimnazial în limba română (Socola Seminary – the First Secondary School in Romanian)*, *Teologie și Viață*, III/11-12, 1993, 253-254; Mircea Păcurariu, *Învățământul Teologic seminarial în Biserica Ortodoxă Română (Theological Education in the Seminary in the Romanian Orthodox Church)*, in *Două secole de învățământ teologic seminarial (Two Centuries of Seminary Theological Education)*, coordinators: Mihai Vizitiu, Adrian Timofti, Dragoș Bahrim, Trinitas, Iași, 2003, 88-89.

⁶ *Testamentul Mitropolitului Veniamin (Metropolitan Veniamin’s Will)*, 177; Constantin Erbiceanu, *Despre viața și activitatea Mitropolitului Veniamin Costache ca Mitropolit al Moldovei (On the Life and Activity of Metropolitan Veniamin Costache as the Metropolitan Bishop of Moldavia)*, Editura de Stat, Bucharest, 1886, 13-17; N. C. Enescu, *Veniamin Costachi, ctitor și îndrumător al școlilor naționale din Moldova (Veniamin Costachi, Founder and Supervisor of National Schools in Moldavia)*, *MMS*, XLIII/1-2, 1967, 32-48.

⁷ *Testamentul Mitropolitului Veniamin (Metropolitan Veniamin’s Will)*, 180.

⁸ The text in Elijah Gheorghită, *Un secol de la moartea mitropolitului Veniamin Costachi (A Century since the Death of Metropolitan Veniamin Costachi)*, Neamț Monastery Press, 1946, 216-225; Gheorghe Adamescu, *op. cit.*, 27 (on the title page of the paper: *How to work for a good death, to the one who asked how someone can wait for death manfully and with a good heart, coming to him, or to other home members and friends? Greeting or answer by the Archbishop Eughenie Vulgaris, in the Greek written language, interpreted by the humble Veniamin, before he was the metropolitan of Moldavia, Iași, Cantora Foiei Sătești, 1845*”).

make a confession, both to “set things in order in his house,” before receiving “the glass that nobody could avoid,” and to appear before the Holy Father. “The humble Veniamin”, following the words of St. Paul the Apostle (II *Corinthians*, chapters 11-12), writes for posterity: “God is my witness, Whom I serve with my spirit in the Gospel of His Son, I endlessly think of you, always in my prayers, wishing to be comforted, to rejoice with you, in your happiness, the one acquired by virtue; and again, as I once swore to be a believer, in the confession of the truth of the Gospel, so I am speaking now, in the same spirit of truth, not as if I should be pleasant to people, but to God. You know that my gospel to you was not only in the word, but also in strength and in much truth. You know that I did not come to you only for a word of flattery, nor on the occasion of greed, I did not seek to take something from you, God is my witness; I did not seek glory from people, neither from you nor from others, nor did I seek to be a burden to you..., but I stood quietly among you, and just as the nurse warms her children, I had a good heart to you so I sought to give you not only the gospel of God but also my soul.” And, following the same Apostle, he also showed that “I was often in temptations, in excessive toil, in persecution and hate from enemies... The ruler of reasoning Damascus closed the city of passions for me, wanting to catch me in his traps, and through the window of Providence I got out of the wall of the soul-losing enmity. I was in danger by the hand of strangers, in trouble by the hand of my own kind, in need among false brethren, in distress, in vigilance, in fastings, in raids, in caring charge of churches, in caring charge of churchmen, in caring charge of the people, in caring charge of myself; for who is powerless, and I should not be, and who falls foolishly into temptation, and I should not be in flames?... Therefore, I will also boast in my infirmities, I will rejoice in my weaknesses, in my afflictions, needs, persecutions and troubles. I will ask our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ with His gift and teachings, to make you perfect, to rejoice, to comfort each other, to think well, to have peace, to grow into virtue, in life-giving spirit, so that, by shedding the old sinful man and by putting on the new man of perfection, we could bear the heavenly image, so that the mortal one be swallowed by life, and just as like Adam, we all die, so into Christ shall we be resurrected.” He also advises like a parent: “my sons and brothers, together with me, not how much, but how we live, trusting the words of wisdom that the true life does not mean a long life, but a virtuous one, useful to mankind..., that the true greatness,

riches, and glory are not the same as the haughtiness outside, the splendor of the thrones, and the multitude of material treasures..., but we should spread them through our many good deeds to our brethren..., they reside in... preaching forgiveness to slaves and sight to the blind, in calling the year of the Lord full of goodness, in comforting all who weep by giving them greatness..., in making it possible that our people be called the people of righteousness, and let the planting of the seeds of Lord be for His glory. Only a life that would result from such goals can be called *life*"⁹. Later, N. Iorga wrote that "a holier and better man than him did not hold the staff of a Romanian bishop before"¹⁰.

The almost forgotten manuscript of an always useful history

What is remarkable in the set of Veniamin's last confessions that have been preserved, all full of significance, carefully chosen and weighed to be written on paper before his appearance in front of the Father of lights from Whom proceeds "every good gift and every perfect gift" is the manuscript that includes the translation of the text of the *Church History* by Blessed Theodoret of Cyrus¹¹. It was completed by Veniamin at Slatina Monastery in 1845 and then probably kept in

⁹ *Ibidem*, 224-225.

¹⁰ N. Iorga, *Viața și faptele Mitropolitului Moldovei, Veniamin Costachi (The Life and Deeds of Veniamin Costachi, Metropolitan of Moldavia (1768-1846))*, Minerva, Bucharest, 1904, 78.

¹¹ The Metropolitan translated several writings of Theodoret, after the edition of Evghenie Vulgaris, published in Halle, in five volumes, between 1768-1775. In the book fund in the Library of the Romanian Patriarchate, were reported and described the manuscripts that include: *To the unexplained of the divine Scriptures, To the questions of the Emperors and of the Paralipomenes, Interpretation of the big and small prophets, Interpretation of the 14 epistles of St. Paul the Apostle, Ascetic life, Word about the divine and holy love, Knowledge healing the Greek passions, The collapse of the 12 anathematisms of Blessed Theodoret on Cyril, Interpretation of the Psalms, Interpretation of the Gospel of Luke, Words about the incarnation of the Lord, About the Holy Trinity, About the Holy Spirit, About St. John the Baptist, Ten words about pronation* (D. Fecioru, *Catalogul manuscriselor românești din Biblioteca Patriarhiei Române (The Catalog of Romanian Manuscripts from the Library of the Romanian Patriarchate, ST, XII/3-4, 1960, 232-236)*. See also Nestor Vornicescu, *Literatura patristică și preocupările Mitropolitului Veniamin Costachi (Patristic Literature and the Concerns of the Metropolitan Priest Veniamin Costachi)*, *MMS*, XLIII/1-2, 1967, 59.

the library of the Seminar of Iași (which after 1840 was officially named: *Veniamin's Seminary*). With the help of Meletie Istrati, it reached later the Seminary of the Diocesan Center in Huși. Meletius had been an archdeacon in Iași and a close disciple of the metropolitan. After Veniamin retired from his position, Meletie followed his protector in Slatina, where the hierarch's wish was for former to be ordained a hieromonk, then to become an archimandrite and later the abbot of the monastery¹². In 1844 Meletie was appointed among the executors of the will of the old bishop.

In his *Will*, Benjamin called Meletie “my spiritual son” and gave him a pectoral cross (“with amethysts, surrounded by diamonds and a gold chain”), my old carriage from Vienna and my horses”, various woolen fabrics, and his “fatherly blessing”. Veniamin had no other wealth or money, but he also left him, in order to “pay what is necessary according to the rules of the Church for my much sinful soul”, his clocks, precious objects and many others, to be sold so that later, “after the advice I gave him”, he was going to pay for the expenses required by the Church for me and the appropriate alms and help for the poor, for the relief of my soul¹³. Later, in 1851, Meletie was ordained bishop and installed in the episcopal see of Huși, where he spent “six years, five months and twenty days”, then he passed away at the age of 40, on July 31, 1857¹⁴. Among other achievements, he reorganized the Diocesan Center in Huși and founded a school¹⁵, where he also donated his library which, most likely, included the manuscript with the Romanian translation of Theodoret's *History* (it has been noticed that part of the text seems to have been written by Meletie himself, perhaps on dicta-

¹² *Demisia Mitropolitului Veniamin și retragerea sa pentru totdeauna din scaunul metropolitan (Resignation of Metropolitan Veniamin and His Permanent Retirement from the Metropolitan See)*, by Constantin Erbiceanu, *Istoria Mitropoliei Moldovei și Sucevei și a Catedralei mitropolitane din Iași (History of the Metropolis of Moldavia and Suceava and the Metropolitan Cathedral in Iași)*, LIII, 173.

¹³ *Testamentul Mitropolitului Veniamin (Metropolitan Veniamin's Will)*, 179, 181.

¹⁴ Melchizedek, *Cronica Hușilor și a Episcopiei cu asemenea numire, după documentele Episcopiei și alte monunente ale țării (Chronicle of Huși and of the Episcopate with Such Name, according to the Documents of the Diocese and Other Monuments of the Principality)*, Bucharest, 1869, 456-459; Scarlet Porcescu, *Episcopia Huși. Pagini de istorie (Episcopate of Huși. Pages of History)*, Roman, 1990, 89-93.

¹⁵ *Ibidem*, 458.

tion, and another part by Veniamin himself). After the temporary close-down of the Seminary in Huși, the manuscript of Theodoret's *History* continued its odyssey and reached the library of the Faculty of Theology in Bucharest. Subsequently, in 1894, it was published by the Printing House of Church Books. The manuscript was found and prepared for publication by Professor Constantin Erbiceanu, a former student and then professor at Veniamin Seminary (he studied at the University of Iași and Athens), from where he was later called to the Faculty of Theology Bucharest (in 1890 he became one of the members of the Romanian Academy)¹⁶.

The text of the *Church History* by Theodoret of Cyrus, as it is established in the edition given by Erbiceanu in 1894, follows the translation made by Veniamin. The work was printed in 1894-1895 in several issues of the journal *Biserica Ortodoxă Română (Romanian Orthodox Church)* and, independently, under the title: *Teodoret al Cîrului, Cinci cuvinte asupra Istoriei bisericești de la 324-429, traduse în românește de Mitropolitul Veniamin Costachi, în anul 1845. Impriimate după original de Prof. Constantin Erbiceanu (Theodoret of Cyrus, Five Texts on Church History from 324 - 429, translated into Romanian by Metropolitan Veniamin Costachi, in 1845. Printed according to the original copy by Prof. Constantin Erbiceanu)*, Bucharest, 1894. From the editor's notes that are very useful, we find out about the options that he had, following the hardworking men that preceded him in the Romanian interpretation of the *History* of the former bishop of Cyrus: *either* the translation "from old Greek", completed on May 25th, 1787 by Macarie, "the archimandrite of the Holy Metropolitan Church" of Bucharest, *or the text from 1845*, established by Veniamin, before becoming the metropolitan of Iași. He lived in the mountains, at Slatina monastery, as a simple monk, and still bearing the great Skema, under the obedience of his former archdeacon, Meletie Istrati". Here he translated "all the writings of Theodoret", after the Greek and Latin editions by Evghenie Vulgaris. It is worth noting the detailed description of the manuscript from 1787, comprising 1,111 pages and titled *Carte numită Istorie bisericească... scoasă din elinie de mine, nevrednicul Macarie ieromonah, arhimandrit al Sfintei Mitropolii din București (Book Called Church History... taken from*

¹⁶ Mircea Păcurariu, *Dicționarul Teologilor Români (Dictionary of the Romanians Theologists)*, s.v.

Greek by me, the unworthy Macarie the hieromonk, archimandrite of the Holy Metropolitan Church of Bucharest). The interpretation is considered “a bit cumbersome, although in some places far from the original text, that is, more analytical and however, in simple, ecclesiastical and unpretentious Romanian; the sentences are very often, just like their construction, influenced by the original text”¹⁷). The author, Macarie the hieromonk (then archimandrite) was Romanian by birth, “probably from Transylvania, educated in Muntenia”¹⁸, with studies at the Princely Academy in Bucharest and remarked among the important translators of his time. He was a member of Paisie’s community since his stay in Athos, then in Dragomirna, Secu and Neamț, he was a polyglot and he loved obedience and silence. Together with hieromonk Ilarion, they were “the two learned Romanian teachers with whom St. Pious Paisie Velicovschi, the abbot, learned better Greek and whose Romanian translations of Greek patristic literature were used as a guide for the elaboration of his translations in Slavonic”¹⁹. In 1773, when the Russo-Turkish war was still waging (a year before, the hieromonk had finished writing a Romanian grammar at Sihla Hermitage in Moldavia), he returned to Bucharest, where he was the preacher of the Metropolitan Church (or “the teacher of *Gospel*,” as he calls himself)²⁰ distinguished by erudition, diligence, and humility²¹.

¹⁷ C. Erbiceanu, *Câteva cuvinte asupra a două manuscripte ce cuprind Istoria bisericească a lui Theodoret* (Some Words on Two Manuscripts Containing Theodoret’s Church History), *BOR*, XVIII, 1894-1895, 695-697 (as for the manuscript handed over to us by Macarie, the editor adds that “the icon of the writing seems to betray his Transylvanian origins”).

¹⁸ C. Erbiceanu, *Două manuscrise ale arhimandritului Macarie, predicatorul Evangheliei în Mitropolia de București* (Two Manuscripts of Archimandrite Macarie, Preacher of the Gospel in the Metropolis of Bucharest), *BOR*, XVIII/4, 1894-1895, 307.

¹⁹ N. A. Ursu, *Școala de traducători români din obștea Staretului Paisie de la mănăstirile Dragomirna, Secu și Neamț* (The School of Romanian Translators from the Community of Abbot Paisie, from Dragomirna, Secu and Neamț Monasteries), in *Românii în reînnoirea isihasta* (Romanians in the Hesychastic Renewal), Trinitas, Iași, 1997, 50-61; Valentina Pelin, *Paisianismul în contextul cultural și spiritual sud-est și est european* (Paisianism in the Cultural and Spiritual Context of South-Eastern and Eastern Europe (18th -19th centuries), an edition prepared and revised by the Andrei Eșanu and Valentina Eșanu, *Doxologia*, 2017, 236-239.

²⁰ *Ibidem*.

²¹ *Enciclopedia Ortodoxiei Române* (Encyclopedia of Romanian Orthodoxy), s.v.; see also N. A. Ursu, *Școala de traducători români din obștea Staretului Paisie de la mănăstirile Dragomirna, Secu și Neamț* (The school of Romanian

In 1894 the translation made by Veniamin was preferred for the printed edition (although the publisher considered it “too literary”). It was due to “the respect for the great metropolitan”, to “his great fame and for the preservation of his hard work so much appreciated by Romanians, as well as for the spiritual benefit of the clergy and especially of theological students...”²² It is no overstatement if we mention that it was preferred due to its *classicism*.

Later, for volume 44 of the *PSB* collection (published in 1995), Father Vasile Sibiescu offered a new translation of Theodoret's *History*, after the critical edition established by Léon Parmentier, considered “superior” to the text from the Migne collection, *Patrologiae cursus completus, Series Graeca* (which he used “however, to a large extent”)²³. While appreciating the work of his forerunners, he insisted on pointing out that “he humbly expresses all his respect and admiration for the great Moldavian metropolitan and scholar (i.e. Veniamin Costachi, our addition), who made this translation and a priceless contribution to the Romanian theological culture of his time”. However, he notes that Veniamin's translation is insufficient for “today's reader who will understand it and use it with great difficulty”²⁴. That is why he “worked hard, after so long, when the possibilities of expressing thoughts in writing in our language are much greater”, to “reproduce

Translators from the Community of Abbot Paisie, from the Dragomirna, Secu and Neamț monasteries, 54-56; Valentina Pelin, *Contribuția cărturarilor români la traducerea școlii paisiene (The contribution of Romanian Scholars to the Translations of Paisie's School)*, in *Românii în reînnoirea isihasta (Romanians in the Hesychast Renewal)*, 96-102; D. Storm, *Ucenicii Stareșului Paisie la Mănăstirile Cernica și Caldărușani (Disciples of Abbot Paisie in Cernica and Căldărușani Monasteries)*, Nemira, Bucharest, 2002, 116 and *passim*.

²² C. Erbiceanu, *Câteva cuvinte asupra a două manuscrise ce cuprind Istoria bisericească a lui Theodoret (A Few Words on Two Manuscripts Containing Theodoret's Church History)*, 696-697. The publisher also wants to mention the difficulty of his work: “I decided to forget the trouble” (p. 697).

²³ Theodoret of Cyrus, *Scrieri (Writings)*, translated by Vasile Sibiescu, Editura Institutului Biblic și de Misiune a Bisericii Ortodoxe Române, Bucharest, 1995 (*PSB*, 44).

²⁴ It is described as “full of provincialisms and archaisms, some with an ecclesiastic sound, but difficult to follow and understand; out of the desire to be as close as possible to the text, the translator did not give us the contents in clear sentences and phrases, and many proper names are changed and confused” (*ibidem*, 18).

this historical work of a great Christian writer of Greek language in the current Romanian language”²⁵.

Talking about other considerations regarding the life, activities and work of Bishop Theodoret of Cyrus (cca 392 – cca 458), it is appropriate to say a few words about the manuscript of Metropolitan Bishop Veniamin in the broader context of his activity as a scholar. In that epoch the hierarch was called by learned scholars: “the true and watchful shepherd, the diligent and unpretentious worker and keeper of the vineyard, the zealous voivode, and as a blazing fire against heresies and ungodliness”²⁶ and “a founder of our language”²⁷. He was the one who could offer the answer to the question: *Why can history be replaced by nothing? or about “the eternal importance of the classical past”*.

Beyond the need to recompose the history of a book and the influence exerted on the spirits of an epoch, beyond the research that brings order, light and joy, beyond delight or “ecstasy” and fortification or edification, or spiritual usefulness, the preoccupation for the classical past and for the writings preserved since then draws the attention and particularly the interest of the Romanian scholars in the

²⁵ *Ibidem*. A preoccupation always encouraged when it is noticed, in order to provide the contemporary reader with an optimal version of the text (Nelu Zugravu, review of Blessed Theodoret of Cyrus, *Talcuire la Epistola catre romani (Interpretation of the Epistle to the Romans)*, a translation from ancient Greek, introductory study and notes by Ilarion M Argatu, *C&C*, 15, 2020, 546-548).

²⁶ Constantin N. Tomescu, *Mitropolitul Grigore IV al Ungrovlahiei (Metropolitan Gregory IV of Ungrovlahia)*, Tipografia Eparhiala Cartea Românească, Chișinău, 1927, 103 and 117 (as Gherontie and Gregory of Neamt called him, the latter will become the Metropolitan of Bucharest, in the *Foreword* of the work *Checagration* by Blessed Augustine, printed in 1814, in Neamt Monastery, with the blessing of Veniamin and at his expense; See also N. Iorga, *Istoria literaturii române în secolul al XVIII lea (History of the Romanian Literature in the 18th Century 1688-1821)*, vol. II, edited by Barbu Theodorescu, Editura Didactică și Pedagogică, Bucharest, 1969, 327).

²⁷ The phrases belong to Gerontie and St. Gregory the Teacher, the translators of the work by St. John of Damascus, *Descoperirea pravoslavniciei credințe (The Discovery of Orthodox Faith)*, printed in Iași in 1806 (Constantin N. Tomescu, *op. cit.*, 116). St. Gregory the Teacher is himself the translator and the publisher of *Zece cuvinte pentru Dumnezeuiasca Pronie (Ten Words for the Divine Providence)* by Blessed Theodoret, the Bishop of Kyr, Bucharest, 1828 (the work was completed “after the entry of the Russian army”).

age of regeneration, or in “the century of the national construction”, as the 19th century was later called²⁸.

In 2002, Nigel Spivey and Michael Squire drew the attention to “the importance of the classical past” (the expression also gave the title of a chapter in *Panorama lumii clasice (Panorama of the Classical World)*, but they did not necessarily refer to a field. Yet they also had in view the fact that, from an etymological point of view, “the related terms grouped around the word ‘classical’ are sufficient to warn us that this fluid state of knowledge... suggests a firm and absolute standard, or at least a classification system that starts from the distinction of the highest quality term; a model of excellence by which other things are measured for their relative value... The exemplary models were those that survived the ancient world”²⁹. And the category of ‘the classic’ denotes more than an artistic style or a historical period: it sums up an extremely complex ideological package... But what provided the ‘imperfect’ and continuous process of the classical tradition was its lasting availability for change, its flexibility...”³⁰. And the necessary finding is that “the classical world... is a past that is still present, as a milestone, a harbor or a starting point”³¹.

Having expressed these reflections, we would like to make a few remarks regarding the material presented above. We distinguish an attitude and we find a model first from the way in which Metropolitan Bishop Veniamin chose to prepare himself for the passage to eternity; he was not only concerned with the usual Christian rule, but he also found useful books for himself. Moreover, he sought to offer to future generations of Romanian clergy who would study in the schools established by him, classical writings translated into the spoken language, in which one can find his own ideals and the ideals of his generation of hierarchs. In their turn, these hierarchs were in a renewed faith and continuity in cultivating the eternal values of personal and communitarian life, of the *Gospel* lived and raised normally and uninterruptedly

²⁸ Gheorghe Platon, *Românii în veacul construcției naționale. Națiune, frământări, mișcări sociale și politice, program național (Romanians in the Age of National Construction. Nation, Turmoil, Social and Political Movements, National Program)*, Enciclopedica, Bucharest, 2005.

²⁹ Nigel Spivey, Michael Squire, *Panorama lumii clasice (Panorama of the Classical World)*, translated by Simona Ceaușu and Gabriel Tudor, BIC ALL, Bucharest, 2007, 306.

³⁰ *Ibidem*, 308.

³¹ *Ibidem*, 331.

in the communion and loving community of the Church, starting from the first centuries up to their time. In its previously mentioned meaning, for the Romanian hierarchs in the first half of the 19th century, classicism could mean the existing consciousness of this fidelity and the consistent and dynamic cultivation of its values in the concrete context of their times. Veniamim offers to the community he guides, according to the requirements and criteria of the time, interpretations of the works that express the attachment to the values of tradition, basically classicism, as it is expressed in the Romanian Orthodox environment of the time. Perhaps we can better understand and classify Veniamin's option to translate the works of Evghenie Vulgaris³²: *Buna murire (Good Death)* and *Îndeletnicirea iubitoare de Dumnezeu (The God-Loving Occupation)*, *Tâlcuiri la Pentateuch (Interpretations of the Pentateuch)*³³ and *Istoria bisericească (Church History)* by Theodoret of Cyrus. In the case of the latter work, the hierarch was probably unaware of the existence of the manuscript translation of Theodoret's text done by Macarie. In 1845 Macarie passed away, and many of his manuscripts were scattered after several years (towards the end of the century, C. Erbiceanu wrote that he saw "a huge number of papers, Macarie's manuscripts, in Căldărușani Monastery, which were used by the monks as cardboard for their monastic hats"³⁴.

It is also very visible and significant that Metropolitan Veniamin himself placed his own efforts in an older Romanian cultural tradition when, for example, he wrote about "our Romanian language..., the daughter of the Latin language, that we descend directly from the

³² A Greek born in Corfu, with studies of philosophy and theology in Padova, a professor in Ianina, then the leader of the Athonite Academy, of the Patriarchal School in Constantinople, and later the archbishop of Herson – Ioan I. Ică jr, *Teologia Ortodoxă Modernă și Contemporară - momente, figuri, parcurs, interpretare (Modern and Contemporary Orthodox Theology - Moments, Figures, Trajectory, Interpretation)*, in *Teologia Ortodoxă în secolul al XX-lea și începutul secolului al XXI-lea (Orthodox Theology in the 20th century and the Beginning of the 21st Century)*, coordinated by Rev. Prof. Dr. Viorel Ioniță, Basilica, Bucharest, 2011, 39.

³³ The last interpretation, printed in 5 volumes, in Tipografia Mitropoliei Iași, three decades ago (between 1815 and 1819).

³⁴ C. Erbiceanu, *Două manuscrise ale arhimandritului Macarie, predicatorul Evanghelii în Mitropolia de București (Two manuscripts of Archimandrite Macarie, the Preacher of the Gospel in the Metropolitan Archdiocese of Bucharest)*, 307.

Romans, our ancestors”³⁵. He knew about Holy Metropolitan Bishops Petru Movilă, Varlaam and Dosoftei, his predecessors, in their effort to translate church books and, in his turn, he wanted to emulate them and cultivate the Romanian language as a language of worship and culture. Moreover, he drew the attention of his contemporaries, “his spiritual children” to the fact that “if we don’t use our language instead of foreign ones, as all the nations that wanted to be cultivated did, then the national tongue will disappear year by year, until it will be completely lost, and in this way our Romanian nation will perish, just like all the nations that abandoned their language”. The bishop added a further justification: “all the youth..., deprived of all the science of the Christian teachings, wasted their time with lies and uselessness, which is a source of breaking the law and neglecting the commandments”; “in many parts of Europe, these occupations could overturn the tower of faith, whose foundation was not laid on the foundation of Orthodox dogmas”³⁶.

On the other hand, it was also observed that Veniamin was the heir of the cultural-ecclesiastical trends which he led, in the first half of the 19th century, to find their consensual formulation, to lend them a common course, to ennoble them in a new, innovative, useful and bright synthesis. We also see his personal example, various concerns, that cover almost all the areas of ecclesiastical, cultural and social life. He has a rich editorial activity that he manages, encourages, guides and supports through the two printing houses of the Metropolis: one in Iași and one in Neamț Monastery (where he printed 17 theological books and facilitated the publication of another 23 books, to which many manuscripts are added), and their intense circulation³⁷. All the

³⁵ *Prefața (Foreword) to Dumnezeieștile Liturghii ale Sfinților Ierarhi Ioan Hrisostomul, Vasile cel Mare și Grigore Dialogul (Divine Liturgies of Saints Hierarchs John Chrysostomos, Basil the Great and Gregory the Theologian)*, Iași, 1834.

³⁶ *Ibidem*.

³⁷ *Bibliografia Românească Veche (Old Romanian Bibliography) 1508-1830*, volume II, 1716-1808 (by Ioan Bianu and Nerva Hodoș) and volume III, 1809-1830 (by Ioan Bianu, Nerva Hodoș and Dan Simonescu), Romanian Academy Press, Bucharest, 1910 and 1936. List of the works by Metropolitan Varlamie in: Gheorghe Adamescu, *op. cit.*, 24-40 and Ilie Gheorghită, *op. cit.*, 252-262; see also Milan Șesan, *Teologia Ortodoxă în secolul al XIX-lea (Orthodox Theology in the 19th Century)*i, *MMS*, XLVI/1-2, 1970, 13-16; Gabriel Cocora, *Mitropolitul Veniamin Costachi, traducător și diortositor de cărți bisericești (Metropolitan Veniamin Costachi, Translator and Editor of Church Books)*, *BOR*, XCIX/5-6, 1981, 663-668;

above can very well illustrate the new theological and cultural synthesis that confers ‘classicality’ to the epoch. As for its specific features, scholars noticed the faith to “the traditional, unitary Orthodoxy” (it can be observed that “it does not appear as a loan one” and that he succeeded “masterfully in keeping the balance between Slavonic and Hellenic influences”), as well as the fact that, in our country, due to “the tireless activity of Metropolitan Veniamin Costachi, it finds a Romanian road faithful to the Orthodox traditions”. His work spread over the Carpathians, to the Orthodox people in Transylvania and even in the region South of the Danube, carrying in its ambience the principles of *Mărturisiri de Credința (Confessions of Faith)* by Metropolitan Petru Movila”³⁸. It was noticed that in Veniamin’s times, the Romanian word ‘Orthodoxie’ started to become generalized, thus replacing the Slavonic-based word ‘Pravoslavia’, both meaning Orthodoxy). It was written that Orthodoxy “preserves its wanted qualities: to fulfill in the world the life and the teachings of the Savior (St. John of Damascus), to keep the harmony of the ways of acquiring knowledge – empirical, philosophical and theological (Mihail Psellos) and to show complete trust in God, Who endlessly sends His graces to believers” (St. Gregory of Palama)³⁹.

Certainly, we should add, in the conclusions, that in 1845, in his modest cell in Slatina Monastery, the great Skema Veniamin completed the translation of Theodoret’s *Church History*. It would have been comforting for him and he would have recognized himself in the words noted in the book, uttered in 381 by “the divine Gregory,” before retiring from the See of Constantinople. The saint was asking those who had gathered there to reach an agreement, to be preoccupied more by the union between them, rather than by making injustice to one man (namely, him). “Relieved from the many worries of the leadership, I will find the peace that is pleasant to me, and you will regain the peace you wanted so many times”⁴⁰. He had written in the same way in his

Teodor N. Manolache, *Bibliografia mitropolitului (Bibliography of Metropolitan Veniamin Costachi)*, BOR, LXIV/10-12, 1946, 545-600.

³⁸ Milan Șesan, *Teologia Ortodoxă în sec. al XIX-lea (Orthodox Theology in the 19th Century)*, 19.

³⁹ *Ibidem*; Ioan Rămureanu, Milan Șesan, Teodor Bodogae, *Istoria bisericească universală (World Church History)*, vol. II, 1054-1982, Editura Institutului Biblic și de Misiune a Bisericii Ortodoxe Române, Bucharest, 1993, 324.

⁴⁰ Theodoret al Cirului, *Scrieri (Writings)*, 207.

retirement paper on January 28, 1842, with classical serenity, spiritual understanding and the consolation of the one who loves divine wisdom: "the smart people today do not need a stupid Veniamin, but Chrysostomos, Gregory the Theologian, Basil the Great who can teach them with the words inspired by the Holy Spirit, and, with their deeds pleasant to God, they can persuade them to live according to the divine rules"⁴¹.

Conclusions

In 1845, when he was retired in Slatina Monastery, Veniamin Costachi, the former Metropolitan Bishop of Moldavia and Suceava, translated into Romanian *Church History* by Blessed Theodoret of Cyrus (after the Greek text edited by Evghenie Vulgaris). The manuscript (the last one interpreted by Veniamin), with a significant subsequent odyssey for the history of the Romanian theological education, is preferred by Professor Constantin Erbiceanu who facilitated its printing in 1894 at the Printing House of Church Books in Bucharest. The publisher's gesture is motivated by the notoriety and prestige that Metropolitan Veniamin enjoyed in posterity (his name was given to an entire epoch, in which the features of *the classicality* of the Romanian theological culture can be distinguished). The same attitude, of 'appreciation' and 'admiration' for the effort and exemplary achievements of the great metropolitan bishop is shared by the last translator of Theodoret's *Church History*, whose text, addressed to today's readers, was to follow the demands imposed by the evolution of the Romanian literary language.

⁴¹ Constantin Erbiceanu, *Istoria Mitropoliei Moldovei și a Sucevei și a Catedralei metropolitane din Iași (History of the Metropolitan Church of Moldavia and Suceava and of the Metropolitan Cathedral in Iași)*, LIII, 174.