

THE MISSIONS AND “THE WORLD OF THE OTHERS”. DEPICTIONS OF THE OTHERNESS IN THE CATHOLIC MISSIONARY REPORTS FROM SEVENTEENTH-CENTURY MOLDAVIA

Diana-Maria Dăian, PhD Candidate, “Babeș-Bolyai” University of Cluj-Napoca

Abstract: After the Council of Trento (1545-1563) the Papacy became more interested in the Northern and Central-Eastern European territories since conciliation with the Protestants was not possible and the Catholicism needed to search new adepts through missions. Metaphorically speaking, Europe can be easily called an India; the references dating from this period to “these Indies” or “the Indies from this part” express clearly the activity of predication and catechesis initiated in the rural areas of the Catholic territories or in the spaces populated by the heretics that have become missionary territories during the seventeenth-century. However, the Catholic missions have not been limited to the labor of conversio and reductio, but they have represented important means of discovering and interacting with the otherness, with “the other”, different from the reality acknowledged. From this point of view, the missionary reports consist of valuable testimonies regarding the perception, the outline and the depiction of the otherness starting from different standards and patterns created and largely spread in the period mentioned above.

Taking into account these considerations, the research aims to analyze the relation between the confessional identity and the confessional otherness, as reflected in the missionary reports of the Franciscans and Dominicans once active in seventeenth-century Moldavia. Secondly, the analysis intends to outline the way in which the Catholic missionaries interact with the world they enter and especially what they perceive from this world, what aspects are the most important to be included in their testimonies and to reconstitute the depictions of the otherness. Finally, the research is meant to show the means by which the Dominicans and the Conventual and Observant Franciscans act in order that their ideals and goals should be included in the confessional diversity met in the missionary territories.

Keywords: Counter-reformation, Franciscans, Catholic identity, confessional diversity, intercultural dialogue

On the 16th of April 1645, the Conventual Franciscan Francesco Maria Spera, sent in mission in Moldavia, wrote to the Sacred Congregation de Propaganda Fide the following: “I will confess the miseries of these places so that the Sacred Congregation should become aware of them and find a solution to all these things...and so I state that a translator of Latin and Polish (Catholic by his name rather than by his facts) of this ruler is trying to bring to an end the schism begun in the past, wishing that the priest Fra Marco Bandini, archbishop of Marcianopol and administrator of Moldavia, with the residence at Bacău, to be taken out from this country by the ruler's refusal to receive him within his court because of this man. So as to demonstrate once more to these Catholic parishioners that this prelate is not a true bishop, but a false brother, he has brought to the church of Iași-where the missionaries have always been present-a Hungarian priest that seems to be a Jesuit and this act has been made without consulting any other ecclesiastical person”¹.

Despite the fact that such reports are intended primarily to capture a general image upon the situation of the missions, providing valuable pieces of information related to the

¹ Author's translation. Maria Holban, *Călători străini despre Țările Române*, vol. VII, Printing Press Științifică și Enciclopedică, Bucharest, 1968-, p. 385.

missionary activity and to its results, the testimonies also illustrate what is considered to be important to the Catholic missionary active in a certain territory. For instance, Francesco Maria Spera is writing to the Congregation about the delicate situation of the Catholic mission of seventeenth-century Moldavia, but the aspects included in his report bring also into discussion the problem of “the world of the others”, of the confessional otherness. The category of “the others” does not apply only to the Orthodox group, to the Muslim population or to the heretics; indeed the Franciscan's testimony makes a direct reference to the relation between a Catholic identity and a Catholic otherness. What can we say about the way the Catholic missionaries interact to the otherness? What aspects concerning “the world of the others” are considered important enough to be included in the missionary reports? But most of all, which are the strategies the missionaries appeal to so as to include their ideals in the confessional diversity met in their “target-territories”?

Taking into account these considerations, the research aims to analyze the relation between the confessional identity and the confessional otherness, as reflected in the missionary reports of the Franciscans and Dominicans once active in seventeenth-century Moldavia². The analysis intends to outline the way in which the Catholic missionaries interact with the world they enter and especially what they perceive from this world, what aspects are the most important to be included in their testimonies and to reconstitute the depictions of the otherness. Finally, the research is meant to show the means by which the Dominicans and the Conventual and Observant Franciscans act in order that their ideals and goals should be included in the confessional diversity met in the missionary territories.

So as to explore the universe of the Catholic missionary reports, first of all it is necessary to point out the way in which the topic of the relation between “us” (Catholics) and “others” is reevaluated after the apparition of the Congregation de Propaganda Fide. To put it another way, the Counter-reformation has brought into discussion once again the problem of treating “the Christians” (the populations submitted to a Catholic ruler) and “the non-Christians” (the people submitted to a Protestant ruler, the non-Christian habitants of America, Asia and Africa)³. We must therefore insist on the content of the letter dated in the year 1622 which made public the foundation of the Sacred Congregation and also dealt with the problem of “the infideles”⁴; even though the kindness and the violence were regarded as

² In our research we have appealed to the following missionary reports: Andrea Bobbi of Faenza (Andrea of Forlì)-Dominican (Moldavia, 1600-1604); Paolo Bonnicio (Bonici) of Malta-Conventual Franciscan (Moldavia, 1623-1627); Bartolomeo Bassetti, Conventual Franciscan (Moldavia, 1640-1644); Gasparo of Noto, Conventual Franciscan (Moldavia, 1643-1650); Marco Bandini, Observant Franciscan (Moldavia, 1644-1649); Petru Parcević-Observant Franciscan (Moldavia, 1644-1652/1653); Francesco Maria Spera-Conventual Franciscan (Moldavia, 1644-1652); Bernardino Valentini of Perugia-Conventual Franciscan (Moldavia, 1650-1656/1657); Vito Piluzzi of Vignanello-Conventual Franciscan (Moldavia, 1653-1687, excepting the years 1675-1679); Giovanni-Battista del Monte Santa Maria-Conventual Franciscan (Moldavia, 1663-1670); Antonio Rossi din Mondaino, Conventual Franciscan (Moldavia, 1663-1678). *Ibidem*, vol. IV, V, VII, VIII.

³ Peter Guilday, “The Sacred Congregation De Propaganda Fide” (1622-1922)”, in *The Catholic Historical Review*, vol. 6, no. 4 (Jan., 1921), p. 480, www.jstor.org; James Amelang, *Omul baroc*, Printing Press Polirom, Iași, 2000, p. 177.

⁴ Oskar Garstein, *Rome and the Counter-Reformation in Scandinavia: The Age of Gustavus Adolphus and Queen Christina of Sweden, 1622-1656*, vol. 3, E. J. Brill Printing Press, Leiden, 1992, pp. 3-11; Stanley B. Cunningham, *The Idea of Propaganda: A Reconstruction*, Greenwood Publishing Group, Westport, 2002, pp. 15-17; Jill Fehleison, *Boundaries of Faith: Catholics and Protestants in the Diocese of Geneva*, Truman State University Press, Kirksville, 2011, p. 32.

two juxtaposed ways of approach, the alternative of persuading “the others” turned to be much more justified⁵. The most appropriate person to fulfill this task appeared to be the missionary whose presence would become constant during the seventeenth-century when the Catholic missions got into the spotlight of the Counter-reformation movement.

What can be said about the missionary target? To put it in other words, which are the territories where one can find the new stable residences of the Catholic missionaries? To give an answer to these questions we must appeal to the particularities of the “target-population”. If the mission focuses on “the non-Christians”, intending to Christianize these populations, to introduce the model of an authentic evangelical way of life and also to fight against ignorance, obviously the missionary territories will be of a great variety, belonging especially to the New World and to the other territories discovered by the Europeans (Asia, Africa). On the other hand, if the mission aims to restore “the true faith” affected by the Reform movement and to consolidate the knowledge of the theological learning, then its target will be represented by the Christian “world”, that is to say the areas Christianized whose development has been profoundly marked by several transformations (the European continent). After the Council of Trento (1545-1563)⁶ the Papacy has become more interested in the Northern and Central-Eastern European territories since conciliation with the Protestants has not been possible and the Catholicism has needed to search new adepts through missions⁷. Metaphorically speaking, Europe can be easily called an India; the references dating from this period to “these Indies” or “the Indies from this part” express clearly the activity of predication and catechesis initiated in the rural areas of the Catholic territories or in the spaces populated by the heretics that have become missionary territories during the 17th century⁸. However, the Catholic missions have not been limited to the labor of *conversio* and *reductio*, but they have represented important means of discovering and interacting with the otherness, with “the other”, different from the reality acknowledged. From this point of view, the missionary reports consist of valuable testimonies regarding the perception, the outline and the depiction of the otherness starting from different standards and patterns created and largely spread in the period mentioned above.

The missionary testimonies are inextricably related to the missionaries' activity and practice, because the characters involved in missions and the efforts made in bringing “the infidels” or reconverting “the Christians” to “the true faith” are the same persons who have captured their activity through the testimonies. Is there any pattern that must be followed when elaborating a relation, in this case, a report belonging to a Catholic missionary? Needless to say, there is an acknowledged tradition concerning the missionary relations, the

⁵ Amelang, *Omul baroc*, pp. 178-179.

⁶ For a view upon the tridentine decrees, see Mitch Finley, *Key Moments in Church History: A Concise Introduction to the Catholic Faith*, Rowman and Littlefield Publishers, Lanham, 2005, pp. 101-113; Thomas Bokenkotter, *A Concise History of the Catholic Church*, Random House Publishing Group, New York, 2007, p. 242; Simon Ditchfield, “Tridentine Catholicism”, in vol. *The Ashgate Research Companion to the Counter-Reformation*, Geert H. Jansen, Alexandra Bamji, Mary Laven (eds.), Ashgate Publishing, Farnham, 2013, accesat la http://books.google.ro/books?id=ZHUksLV2J0kC&pg=PT1&dq=the+counter-reformation+movement&hl=ro&sa=X&ei=FGVaU8SzJMavygPr3ILwBQ&redir_esc=y#v=onepage&q=the%20counter-reformation%20movement&f=false, ora 17:05.

⁷ Maria Crăciun, *Protestantism și ortodoxie în Moldova secolului al XVI-lea*, Presa Universitară Clujeană, Cluj-Napoca, 1996, p. 170.

⁸ Amelang, *Omul baroc*, p. 197.

aspects used to be noticed and presented, but the models are as different as the types of travelers; while the sailors, the soldiers, the educated persons and the gentlemen used to focus on observing the habits, the economic dynamics, the justice systems, the taxes and the holidays, the rituals and the ceremonies, the missionaries would rather write about different “worlds”, showing a particular interest for the diversity of the populations, of their habits and their religious ceremonies⁹. Describing the otherness implies a multitude of elements that customize the relation; for example, a particularity of the missionary reports consists of portraying a negative image of “the other” with the purpose of outlining the lacks compared to what is generally approved (lack of clothes, laws, commerce, education, knowledge) and of emphasizing the superiority of the identity and the inferiority of the otherness¹⁰. Another particular element is represented by the illustration of the adventure and the martyrdom in the name of the faith with the intention of expressing the barbarism of the missionary territories and of “the target-populations”¹¹. From the 17th century the missionary testimonies have included another specific point, we mean the focus on science, on the missionary knowledge and training¹², idea that can be proved by “the abundance” of functions, by the prestige and the popularity the missionaries are rewarded by the local authorities. In what concerns the territories submitted to the missionary activity, apart from the usual reports sent to the Sacred Congregation, a distinct type of document is the testimony based on inquiries; this document is considered by the Romanian historian Violeta Barbu the first initiative of informational globalization since once evaluated and reviewed, the information provided by the missionaries would constitute the basis for creating universal strategies to overcome the difficulties encountered in the “target-territories”¹³.

Can these particularities be also found in the testimonies of the Catholic missionaries once active in seventeenth-century Moldavia? What kind of information regarding the relation between the confessional identity and the religious otherness can be detached taking into account the missionary reports? But most of all, what do the Catholic missionaries consider important enough to portray “the other” so as to be included in their relations?

In order that an answer should be given to the questions mentioned above we must become aware of the particular situation of the Catholic confession in seventeenth-century Moldavia, where its existence and evolution have been scored in a territory inhabited by an Orthodox majority and in most of the cases governed by an Orthodox ruler. During the reigns of Despot-vodă (1561-1563) and John Vodă the Brave (Ioan Vodă cel Cumplit) the anti-Catholic policy of the central authority and the hostilities have come to the highest point whereas a series of severe measures such as the destruction of certain institutions and places of worship as well as the confiscation of some properties have been taken. The situation of the Moldavian Catholicism has got to score significant changes during the reign of Peter the

⁹*Ibidem*, pp. 181-182; Jean Baudrillard, Marc Guillaume, *Figuri ale alterității*, 2nd edition, Printing Press Paralela 45, Pitești, 2002, p. 33.

¹⁰Amelang, *Omul baroc*, p. 182; see also Maria Crăciun, „Biserica uitată. Imaginea Bisericii ortodoxe răsăritene în scrierile călătorilor englezi din secolul al XVI-lea”, in vol. *Identitate și alteritate. Studii de imagologie*, Nicolae Bocșan, Valeriu Leu (coords.), Printing Press Banatica, Reșița, 1996, p. 8.

¹¹Crăciun, *Biserica uitată*, p. 12; Amelang, *Omul baroc*, p. 182; Teotonio R. De Souza (ed.), *Discoveries, Missionary Expansion and Asian Cultures*, Concept Publishing Company, New Delhi, 1994, pp. 23-26.

¹²De Souza, *Discoveries*, pp. 26-28.

¹³Violeta Barbu, *Purgatoriul misionarilor. Contrareforma în Țările Române în secolul al XVII-lea*, Printing Press Academiei, Bucharest, 2008, p. 37.

Limping (Petru Șchiopul) who has lead a pro-Catholic policy and has taken important measures in favor of the Catholic confession consisting of the official recognition of the Roman Church, the synod meant to facilitate the implementation of the Post-tridentine precepts, the installation of a Jesuit community at Cotnari, the expulsion of the Protestant clergy, the return of the Catholic places of worship confiscated by Protestants and also the forced conversion of the reformers to the Catholic confession¹⁴. Finally the reign of Aron the Tyrant has brought a renewal of the hostilities against the Moldavian Catholicism owing to the absence of an Episcopal authority, the practice of “the elected bishops”, the miseries the clergy and the faithful have been submitted to and also the restitution of the places of worship formerly confiscated. At the beginning of the seventeenth century Moldavia appeared to be undoubtedly a territory of a multicultural dialogue in which the climate of relative tolerance involved negotiations regarding the mutual recognition of both confessions (Orthodox, Catholic)¹⁵. The intensification of the relations between Moldavia and the Holy See at the end of the sixteenth century, the initiatives regarding the restoration of the ecclesiastical unity, the maintainance of good relations with Rome by the Moldavian rulers as well as the Moldavian Catholic population represented major motivations for the Congregation de Propaganda Fide to set up a mission in this territory only after three years of activity (1625)¹⁶.

What would we say then about the depictions of the otherness if we were to report the missionary testimonies to the climate of multicultural dialogue and relative tolerance specific to seventeenth-century Moldavia? Who belongs to “the world of the others”? But most of all, what are the main elements that characterize the otherness according to the missionary relations?

So that the Catholic missionaries should become able to exert their ministry, firstly it is necessary to establish a clear relation with the ruler by handing in the nomination papers and by gaining his support. The ruler's patronage proves to be essential for ensuring the mission advance by providing the necessary financial subsidies. However, the most important support comes along with the moment when the ruler recognizes the missionary and entrusts him the jurisdiction *in spiritualibus* upon the Catholic flock. Bartolomeo Bassetti describes briefly the behavior of the Moldavian ruler who “has proved and proves under all circumstances to have good feelings for the Catholics and especially for their monks”¹⁷. At this point we can identify one of the particularities of the missionary reports, found also in the testimonies of the seventeenth-century Moldavian missionaries: the emphasis of the multitude of tasks entrusted to the preachers by the rulers or by the landlords and, obviously, the hyperbolized outline of the popularity they benefit from at a local level (Andrea of Forli, Paolo Bonici of Malta, Marco Bandini, Bernardino Valentini of Perugia). There is a whole ceremony on behalf of the missionary's arrival at the Moldavian court as it is demonstrated by

¹⁴ Cesare Alzati, *În inima Europei. Studii de istorie religioasă a spațiului românesc*, Center of Transylvanian Studies, Cluj-Napoca, 1998, pp. 155-156; see also Gheorghe David, *Petru Șchiopul (1574-1577; 1578-1579; 1582-1591)*, Printing Press Militară, Bucharest, 1984, pp. 166-168; Crăciun, *Protestantism și ortodoxie*, p. 178.

¹⁵ Diana-Maria Dăian, „Preaching the Modernity. The Catholic Missionary as Exponent of the Multicultural Dialogue in Seventeenth-Century Moldavia”, in Iulian Boldea (coord.), *Studies on Literature, Discourse and Multicultural Dialogue*, Printing Press Arhipelag XXI, Târgu Mureș, 2013, pp. 196-197.

¹⁶ *Ibidem*.

¹⁷ Author's translation. Holban, *Călători străini*, vol. VII, p. 179.

the Andrea's of Forli testimony¹⁸. On the other hand, the fact that the ruler prefers sitting at the table accompanied by the Catholic missionaries with the intention of getting to know their position in what regards the dogmatic issues must not be overlooked; according to Violeta Barbu, this is something “to a certain extent accidental and private, reported by the missionaries so as to outline the importance of their presence and of their theological training”¹⁹. “The abundance” of positions held and especially the authority entrusted them by the ruler represent two constants that mark the Moldavian Dominican and Franciscan missionary reports. Peter Parcevič describes the way the missionaries have managed to gain “total favor to remain at their residence of Bacău”²⁰ all over the reign of Vasile Lupu. If we were to take into consideration the view of Bernardino Valentini of Perugia, to be accepted by the ruler and to achieve his support is synonymous to the freedom “of administering the holy sacraments in his principality, of wearing monastic clothes, of judging and fulfilling any other task related to his responsibility, of being exempted of any tax”²¹. Once the Catholic missionary has been acknowledged by the central authority and has been invested with the spiritual jurisdiction, he begins to exert his ministry with the aim of converting/”reconverting” “the others”.

“The world of the others” is one of a great ethnic and confessional diversity: Moldavians and “schismatic” Greeks, “schismatic” Armenians, Arians, Calvinist and Lutheran Hungarians, Turks, Tartars and Jews. A first dimension of the otherness can be reconstituted through the quantitative analysis because the missionaries are interested in **the number of the “infidels”**. For instance, Bartolomeo Bassetti includes in his relation the following information concerning the territorial distribution of the “schismatic” population: Bacău-130 houses (500 souls); Iași-15000 houses (60000 souls); Vaslui-230 houses (700 souls); Bârlad-3000 houses; Cotnari-120 houses (480 souls); Suceava-550 houses (3400 souls); Baia-180 houses (600 souls); Neamț-120 houses (470 souls); Roman-250 houses (1200 souls); Trotuș-45 houses (133 souls)²².

The Moldavian Catholic missionaries include also in their reports **institutional aspects** that define “the world of the others”. For example, Paolo Bonici of Malta is particularly interested in the characteristics of the reign institution as a means of expressing the temporal authority: the naming of the ruler by the Sultan, the elimination of the possible adversaries, the collection of the ordinary and extraordinary taxes so as to pay the polls to the Ottoman Porte. Furthermore, Marco Bandini completes the image of the reign with details that can be related to the main beneficiaries: the hetman, the chancellor, the high steward, the treasurer, the equerry, etc.

Strictly connected to the authority relations there are the details referring to the **jurisdictional aspects**. The most important question the Moldavian missionaries are trying to give an answer to is whom people are submitted to. The boyars obey the voyvode, the ruler being invested with the authority of ennobling them or deposing them. In addition to this, the town dwellers do not recognize another authority, except for the voyvode's one while the

¹⁸ *Ibidem*, vol. IV, p. 191.

¹⁹ Author's translation. Barbu, *Purgatoriul misionarilor*, p. 162.

²⁰ Author's translation. Holban, *Călători străini*, vol. VII, p. 361.

²¹ Author's translation. *Ibidem*, p. 428.

²² *Ibidem*, pp. 177-188.

peasants, although they are submitted to the landlords for whom they work, they have duties in money only to the Moldavian ruler.

Another feature that defines the otherness is represented by **the spiritual authority** the schismatic population must be obedient to. For instance, Paolo Bonici is particularly interested in including in his missionary relation aspects that make a direct reference to the governance of the spiritual issues, mentioning the existence of an archbishop (of Suceava) and of three bishops (of Roman, of Huși and of Rădăuți) that obey “the Greek schismatic patriarch of Constantinople”²³.

“The world of the others” is also a world of differences concerning **the rituals and the religious practices** (holidays, fasts) as reflected in the elaboration of its own truth about God and in the means of expressing its own faith. There is a wide range of ideas of past generations survived in each and every present generation; to begin with, each day off the week has been dedicated to a saint, an incontestable importance being attributed to the Fridays, days dedicated to the homonymous saint, “the saint that always goes down on her knees before the throne of God, praying with tears for those who prove their devotion to her”²⁴. In addition to this, there is a strong belief in the return of the dead people to their houses so as to receive food on Great Thursday. The ways of celebration, specific to a community, constitute a real distinctive feature, a unique identity mark, giving birth to the otherness²⁵. With respect to the differences of rituals and religious practices, it is often alleged that we assist at a clear representation of a confessional otherness, created by the Catholic missionaries with the purpose of popularizing a certain series of holidays as symbols of the Church they belong to²⁶. To be more exact, the otherness is promoted intentionally in order that “the other” would be described and labeled with the intention of emphasizing a specific identity meant to be maintained and protected²⁷. Due to their double dimension as time dedicated both to God and to relaxation, the holidays are for the Moldavians a good occasion to stop working and to feel more relaxed partying with food, drinks and dance. In what regards the fast, the Moldavians “have the same fast days as the Greek people do”²⁸.

But the otherness is also synonymous to a distinctive **way of clothing** and a specific **behavioral pattern**. In his missionary testimony, Marco Bandini inserts a valuable part committed to the description of the clothes, the character and the habits of the Moldavian people who appear to be more hospitable than other Romanians. It is a fact that the Oriental influences, especially the Turkish ones, cannot be overlooked when talking about the Moldavian way of dressing, but the clothes become a real proof for the social status: the furs and the jewelries belong exclusively to the boyars and sometimes to the traders, the silk as a material whose use becomes more general and can be met within the other social classes. “Clever enough, joyful, they (a.n. the Moldavians) take advantage of their sharp mind, tend to be addicted to robberies, are very patient soldiers and able to cope with frostiness and heat, deal with hunger and thirstiness up to two and even three days, being still safe and sound [...]”

²³ *Ibidem*, vol. V, p. 24.

²⁴ Author's translation. *Ibidem*, vol. VII, p. 343.

²⁵ Sorin Mitu, *Transilvania mea. Istorie, mentalități, identități*, Printing Press Polirom, Iași, 2006, p. 163.

²⁶ *Ibidem*, p. 167.

²⁷ *Ibidem*.

²⁸ Author's translation. Holban, *Călători străini*, vol. VII, p. 344.

they are not very good at trading, at field husbandry and at viniculture or at crafts, or at doing any other job”²⁹. In spite of the low level of education, the Moldavians have their own habits which have survived in each and every generation: greeting as a means of expressing the respect through kissing the hand, kneeling down in the presence of the significant persons, kissing the feet of the ruler when the servants stand in front of him as well as receiving the invitees in concordance with certain behavioral rules³⁰. Divorce is also a practice often met in “the world of the others” from the seventeenth-century Moldavia. Paolo Bonici of Malta notices the habit of the local bishops to make separation “decisions”: “when the husbands do not want any more to live together, they give the bishop a sum of money so that they could reach an understanding, the separation being made at the moment and each person can get married one more time”³¹.

To the best of my knowledge, the notion of otherness does not cover only the Orthodox majority, the Muslim group or the heretic population; the missionary reports, however, contain important clues of the fact that there is also a Catholic otherness. Who is then “the bad Catholic”? If we were to take into account the laity, an example of “bad Catholic” would be represented by the Lutherans that have converted themselves to Catholicism, but who “are still celebrating the mass as the Lutherans usually do”³², according to the testimony of Paolo Bonici. In the same way, a large number of Catholics do not know the prayers (Pater noster and Ave Maria) and make the sign of the cross “as the schismatics do” because they consider it correct. Marco Bandini uses the expression “bad habit” to make a direct reference to the customs that the Catholic faithful have taken from the Moldavians and that have to be corrected: “almost all the Moldavian Catholics refuse to eat meat and to drink milk even on Wednesdays, apart from Fridays and Saturdays”³³. On the other hand, Vito Piluzzi of Vignanello reminds the fact that “before the mission these habitants (a.n. the Catholics of Moldavia) have been living like the Lutherans, have been eating meat on Fridays and Saturdays”³⁴.

If we are referring to the clergy, “the other” can cover the hypostasis of the Catholic priest that according to the relation of Francesco Maria Spera, “does all the opposite to what the Roman Church does and, especially, does not have any devotion for the sacred sacrament of the altar, but the rests that remain in the chalice, are dumped on the altar and God knows whether he throws them away or not”³⁵. “The other” can be also represented by the deacons that manage to get all the pastoral duties of the priesthood-beginning with the celebration of the masses or the administration of the sacraments and continuing with the blessing of the houses, except for the blessing of the chrism: “they celebrate the divine masses, baptize, officiate the funerals for the dead people, give their blessings so that because of these mistakes the population makes the missionaries and the other priests run away”³⁶.

²⁹ Author's translation. *Ibidem*, vol. VII, pp. 332-333.

³⁰ *Ibidem*, pp. 374-376.

³¹ Author's translation. *Ibidem*, vol. V, p. 24.

³² Author's translation. *Ibidem*, p. 26.

³³ Author's translation. *Ibidem*, vol. VII, p. 344.

³⁴ Author's translation. *Ibidem*, p. 80.

³⁵ Author's translation. *Ibidem*, p. 386.

³⁶ Author's translation. *Ibidem*.

The relation between the Catholic identity and the Catholic otherness is demonstrated once more at the level of the missions, we mean by the way the Franciscan reports himself to the Dominican, the Observant Franciscan to the Conventual Franciscan or simply the way the Franciscan treats the Jesuit. Andrea of Forlì debates in his missionary report the topic of the “zoccolanti”, we mean the Franciscans of Bacău that have not adopted the Observant ideas and that represent a good example of “bad Catholics” because the possession of different properties is contrary to the monastic vows³⁷. Furthermore, the remark of Bartolomeo Bassetti appears to be full of significance; “the bad Catholic” covers the protean image of the Dominican or the Franciscan: “there are in this province some people that have two wives after the first has run away, especially one whose marriage has been made by the Dominican brother Giacinto, the bishop's vicar, one whose marriage has been officiated by the actual parochial priest of Bacău, and other by the Franciscan priest Sigismund the Polish”³⁸. The attitude of Petru Parcević, the companion of Marco Bandini, concerning the members of the Society of Jesus demonstrates once more the tension between “the good missionary” and “the bad missionary”: “that the Lutherans, the Calvinists, the Arians, the Turks, the Greeks, the Heretics and the other infidels persecute the Roman faith and us is not such an unbelievable thing, but that some clerics and I mean some clerics belonging to the Company of Jesus have begun to persecute a bishop and some priests, officially consecrated and sent by the Sacred Congregation, now this is surely something hard to believe”³⁹.

How can be then corrected “the bad habits”? But most of all, how do the missionaries act in order to include the authentic ideal of Christian life and the Catholic devotional patterns in the multi-confessional reality? To put it in other words, which are the means used to facilitate the adaptation to “the world of the others”?

Needless to say, the decision of correcting the faith errors and “the bad habits” implies at a theoretical level **the convocation of a reunion** meant to reassess the main points of the post-tridentine Catholicism and to come to a resolution concerning the matter of the future strategies and means of action. It is also the option of Bartolomeo Bassetti, proved by the following statement: “so as to wipe out from their very beginning and ultimately the misunderstandings and the troubles, I have been thinking about convoking a reunion (*congregatio*) of entire clergy (*religiosi*) that are found in this province [...] with the purpose of establishing what will be useful to the welfare and to the extension of the Catholic faith and Church”⁴⁰. **Knowing the language** is definitely one of the major keys to the success of the interaction, but at the same time the road to the professional accomplishment, turning gradually into a priority in getting a better and a more prestigious work-place, in obtaining the confirmation or the doctorate⁴¹. The importance of knowing the Romanian language is emphasized in the report of Paolo Bonici, who finds himself obliged to learn “the Moldavian language as if it were his maternal language”, owing to the fact that “in these countries the priests cannot live if they do not benefit from a support coming from another part and if they

³⁷ *Ibidem*, vol. IV, p. 192.

³⁸ Author's translation. *Ibidem*, vol. VIII, p. 51.

³⁹ Author's translation. *Ibidem*, p. 358.

⁴⁰ Author's translation. *Ibidem*, vol. VII, p. 52.

⁴¹ Teresa Ferro, *Activitatea misionarilor catolici italieni în Moldova (secolele XVII-XIX)*, Printing Press Romanian Academy, Bucharest, 2004, pp. 17, 20.

do not know the Wallachian language, I mean the Moldavian or the Hungarian or the German language”⁴². **The proper training of priests** selected from the population represents a good strategy for “bringing”/“re-bringing” the “heretics”/the “schismatics” to Catholicism. The Franciscan Petru Parcević considers that in addition to the priesthood, the Greek monks could be important mediators in propagating the Catholic teachings to the ordinary parishioners, aspect that is validated by the following assertion: “the smartest Greek monks come to me so as to ask for advice regarding tricky issues and processes of consciousness [...] and the monks themselves become the announcers and the trumpet of the Catholic doctrine”⁴³. **The catechesis** constitutes also an efficient missionary strategy for popularizing the tridentine precepts and for making the population become aware of the Catholic ideals (Gasparo of Noto, Giovanni-Battista del Monte Santa Maria)⁴⁴. In addition to this, **the sharing of sacred images/representations** of small dimensions represents another strategy the missionaries appeal to⁴⁵. Obviously the true integration of the Catholic ideals within the multi-confessional reality met in the “target-territories” is realized through **the conversions**. The missionaries' testimonies contain important pieces of information regarding the activity success, a success that is expressed by the number of conversions/re-conversions. As a rule, the missionary actions concerning the spread/the revival of “the true faith” are focused on the ruler and his entourage, on the families belonging to the high or middle classes because they can guarantee the welfare of the mission; however, this does not mean that the missionaries do not pay attention to the simple parishioners' necessities of preaching and catechesis. Needless to say, the information found in the missionary reports must be analyzed critically, the numbers of those brought to “the right path”, the positive impact and the effectiveness of the missionary initiatives being often exaggerated (Paolo Bonici of Malta, Antonio Rossi of Mondaino). The more spectacular the numbers are, but they are sustained by a single testimony, the more critical their interpretation must be⁴⁶. In spite of the missionaries' systematic efforts concerning the conversion of the population to their own faith, one must not fail to notice the fact that the conversions have not brought automatically the total transformation of the non-religious customs of the *conversos*⁴⁷.

To conclude, the following research has intended to analyze the relation between the religious identity and the confessional otherness in seventeenth-century Moldavia, using the information found in the Catholic missionary reports. Of a great ethnic and confessional diversity, “the world of the others” is a world of institutional, jurisdictional, ritual, linguistic and behavioral differences. Along with the “heretic” and the “schismatic” otherness, the Catholic missionaries capture also the image of a Catholic otherness, portraying in their reports the profile of the “bad Catholic”. Finally, the analysis has reconstituted the strategies and the techniques the Catholic missionaries have resorted to with the intention of integrating the post-tridentine Catholic precepts and ideals in the multi-confessional Moldavian territory, the compromise appearing to be in most of the cases the road to the success of the missions.

⁴² Author's translation. Holban, *Călători străini*, vol. V, p. 15.

⁴³ Dăian, *Preaching the Modernity*, p. 197.

⁴⁴ Holban, *Călători străini*, vol. VII, p. 25.

⁴⁵ *Ibidem*, vol. V, p. 27.

⁴⁶ Barbu, *Purgatoriul misionarilor*, p. 185.

⁴⁷ Tzvetan Todorov, *Noi și ceilalți. Despre diversitate*, EuropeanInstitute, Iași, 1999, p. 464.

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