

RELIGIOUS TOLERANCE AND NATIONAL IDENTITY IN THE REIGN OF CONSTANTIN BRÂNCOVEANU

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Abstract: The reign of Constantin Brâncoveanu can be characterized by a certain tolerance that the great ruler has shown towards foreigners that found a place of peaceful living in Wallachia. Faced with the Ottoman persecution, the Catholic Bulgarians living in the South of the Danube found refuge in Wallachia, where they were given the freedom to organize their religious communities under the protection of a special legislation. At Brâncoveanu's court there were Greek Orthodox scholars and Catholic Italians who enjoyed the same benefits and rights.

As protector of the Orthodox Church, the great Romanian ruler manifested himself as a defender of the Transylvanian Orthodox threatened by the Catholicism supported by the Imperial Court in Vienna. The cultural community, faith and language of the Romanians of Transylvania have encouraged the Romanian ruler to defend their religious identity threatened by the Catholic proselytism. Our study tries to present the cultural opening and religious tolerance expressed by the ruler Constantin Brancoveanu during his long reign.

Keywords: Orthodox Church, religious tolerance, catholic proselytism, ottoman persecution

Brancoveanu's epoch represents the climax of certain changes expressed in the highest aspect of the Brancovean art, a selection of the influence coming from the Catholic West through Italian channels and of the Orthodox East through Greek channels. The reign of Constantin Brancoveanu meant not only a climax of the culture and arts the Romanians reached in the 17th century, but also a model of diplomacy and of religious tolerance. Given both the political and economical reasons, princes Matei Basarab in Wallachia and Vasile Lupu in Moldova showed tolerance to Catholics and Protestants as well. Many Catholics took refuge in Wallachia and succeeded in holding various positions at Brancoveanu's court, some of them as diplomats for the political contacts with the Habsburg Empire, Ottoman Empire, Venice or Rome. The economical and cultural relations Wallachia maintained with Venice, the great economical and naval power of the time, pass through a remarkable development in Brancoveanu's time, the Wallachian prince having a bank deposit in Venice. After the martyr's death of the prince both the Ottomans and the Austrians were very interested in his fortune in Venice. The prince's correspondence was usually ensured by the Venetians. His letters to the House of Austria were sent through Marcantonio Manucca Della Torre, Venetian dragoman from Vienna, while the relations with prince Eugen of Savoia were maintained through an Italian too, Aloise Volde, translator for Turkish and Greek in Vienna. At the prince's court, besides the native boyars dressed according to the fashion of the time, in Oriental vestments, there were representatives of the Italian culture as well, who adopted the same Oriental style of vestments not to draw the Ottomans' attention to them. Some of them were Catholics, while some other ones of Greek origin, formed in the Catholic schools of Padova or Venice, were philo-Catholic. There were fervent Orthodox faithful among them

too. Many of the best known Greek theologians of the time were welcomed around Brancoveanu¹.

Constantine Brancoveanu was a true protector of the Orthodox faithful in the Ottoman Empire. In the internal politics he took good care not only of the population Orthodox in their majority, but also of minorities, especially of Catholics. The reign made difference between the Catholics of Wallachia: those born and having lived in the Romanian territory for several generations enjoyed certain privileges and paid the tributes imposed by the reign, and those who took refuge in the South of the Danube because of the persecution, and the Catholic missionaries considered foreigners whose presence was temporary. Brancoveanu has become protector of the Catholic Bulgarians fled from Chiprovtsi and Copilovtsi as a result of the brutal defeating of their upheaval in 1688. Having taken refuge in the North of the River Danube, the Bulgarian Catholics were given the right to settle in the localities where there already were Catholic parishes, in Bucharest, Targviste, Campulung and Ramnic, or to set up some new ones where their presence was scarce, in Craiova and Bradiceni. Even Stefan Knezevic, the Catholic archbishop of Sofia, settled in Wallachia, together with a group of Catholics, priests and missionaries. The most important Catholic communities were at Targoviste, Ramnic, Craiova, Tismana, Campulung, where it was an old Catholic community set up by the Saxons of Transylvania, and in Bucharest, where they enjoyed the protection of High Steward Constantine Cantacuzino. Antonius Stephani, vicar to the archbishop of Sofia, then bishop of Nicopole, was allowed to settle in Bucharest, with the title of apostolic vicar². Brancoveanu created a facility for them, exempting Baratia from Campulung from “caminarit”, the tax on the wine the Franciscan missionaries produced at Topoloveni, which was the most important source of their income³.

The Catholic Church of Bucharest was raised by the efforts of Antonius Stephani assisted by the observant Franciscans, with the financial aid received in 1672, on behalf of Grigore Ghica who had converted to Catholicism five years before, while he was in Vienna, and with the support of governor Nasturel, and of the Bulgarian merchants⁴. Till 1688 the Catholics of Wallachia were under the canonical jurisdiction of the archbishop of Sofia⁵. Veterani imperial general, commander of Transylvania was the protector of the Catholics of Wallachia. The old Barartia church had fallen in 1670, and when the prince approved the construction of another one, patriarch Dositheos of Jerusalem reproved the ruler for the kindness he showed to the Catholics. The construction of the church was delayed because of the leaders' needs and who requisitioned the construction materials. Stephani presented the state of things to the secretary of the “De Propaganda Fide” Congregatio, to Mons Urban Cerri, who informed, in his turn, pope Inocentiu XI. Missionary Giovanni Del Monte, who spent many years in Wallachia, showed in 1688, that the church was still unfinished, the

¹ See Gerhard Polskalsky, *Griechische Theologie in der Zeit der Turkenherrschaft (1453-1821). Die Orthodoxie im Spannungsfeld der nachreformatorischen Konfessionen des Westens*, München, 1988.

² Violeta Barbu, *Purgatoriul misionarilor. Contrareforma în Țările Române în secolul al XVII-lea*, Bucharest, Academiei Publishing House, 2008, p. 157.

³ Idem, *Protectoratul domnesc asupra misionarilor și ierarhilor catolici în Țările Române în sec. al XVII-lea (I)*, SMIM, XXV, 2007, p. 135-158.

⁴ Virginia Vasiliu, *Constantin Brâncoveanu e il cattolicesimo alcune notizie nuove intorno alla sua politica religiosa*, in „Ephemeris Dacoromana”, III, 1925, p. 119.

⁵ *Ibidem*, p. 119.

religious services having been celebrated in a wooden chapel raised with the support of a Saxon of Transylvania, Stefan Sisti⁶. Stephani speaks about the few poor Catholics who were living in the capital city of Wallachia, some of them mercenaries in the prince's army, while Giovanni Del Monte stated that many Catholics were living in Bucharest, a rather strong community, able to raise a church with the help of the observant Franciscans.

From 1689-1692, priest Paul celebrated at Baratia church of Bucharest, and in 1702 Ioan Deanvici is mentioned. One proof of the tolerance Constantine Brancoveanu showed to the Catholics is the good care he took lest the Franciscans of Targoviste suffer because of the Turkish – Tatar military intervention in 1690, when the imperials headed by general Heissler were driven away after they had occupied Bucharest⁷. In 1714 we meet the provincial of the observant from Bulgaria and Wallachia, priest Anton Gunghici, who was informing the pope about the situation of the Catholics in Bucharest. The same year, priest Franz Pestin died in Bucharest. In 1705, Emperor Leopold offered almost 1500 Hungarian golden coins for raising the church. Brancoveanu seemed to have opposed the finishing of the church because of the religious state of things in Transylvania, where the Catholic propaganda divided the Romanians. In 1717, following the intervention of Secretary Anton Maria del Chiaro, prince Nicolae Mavrocordat exempted the Franciscans from their taxes for the guest house they had in the outskirts of Saint Gheorghe Vechi, which generated their income. The monastery was raised in the same place, where the wooden church had already been and the brick one was being built. The influence of Austria in Wallachia grew at the same time with the annexation of Oltenia, so that the construction of the church in the centre of Bucharest could be finished⁸. From 1688 – 1700, Baratia church of Campulung was repaired, where a beautiful belfry tower was raised with the money donated by the Moldavian Catholic Gheorghe Wolf. The estate of this church grew having included Wolf's plots of land and those of some other Catholics too, as well as a terrain bought from Radu Andrei in 1688⁹. This fact proves that the Catholic merchants settled in Wallachia enjoyed the privileges received on behalf of Brancoveanu, so that in the course of time they got enough income to help the churches of Bucharest and Campulung. The loss of their rights at the time of the Phanar rulers made them immigrate to Banat under the protection of Emperor Carol VI and of Empress Maria Theresa. Antonius Stephani became bishop of Cenad at last.

Constantine Brancoveanu corresponded with pope Clement XI. On 18 February 1701, Nicolae Papadopol Comnen, Greek-Catholic professor at the College of Padova, presented pope Clement XI a protocol letter on behalf of Brancoveanu written in beautiful Latin letters¹⁰. The correspondence with Andrea de Santa Croce, papal nuncio in Vienna was dispatched through Ilija Matejanici, parish priest at Baratia church of Bucharest and superior of the Franciscan monastery of Targoviste, a Bulgarian Franciscan, a protege of High Steward

⁶ Carol Auner, *Istoria Bărăției din București*, trad. Daniel Banner, în „Pro Memoria”, nr. 4, 2005, p. 16.

⁷ Virginia Vasiliu, *art. cit.*, p. 120; Paul Cernovodeanu, *În vâltoarea primejdiilor*, Bucharest, Silex Publishing House, 1997, p. 13.

⁸ Carol Auner, *art. cit.*, p. 19.

⁹ Gruia Zamfirescu, *Din istoria catolicilor din Câmpulung Muscel*, în „Pro Memoria”, nr. 4, 2005, p. 99.

¹⁰ Virginia Vasiliu, *art. cit.*, p. 112.

Constantine Cantacuzino. Matejanici has also been the diplomatic intermediary between Brancoveanu and emperor Leopold I from 1692 – 1700¹¹.

Several Catholics have been employed at Brancoveanu's chancellery who accomplished various diplomatic missions or were secretaries and translators for Latin, Italian, German and Polish. A fervent Catholic who held an important position at the princely court was Andreas Wolf, original from Cotnari. His brother, Georg Wolf was princely servant at the time of Vasile Lupu, curator of the vineyards of Suceava belonging to the Catholic church of Cotnari. At his death he bequeathed 2000 florins to the church of Cotnari, where a strong Catholic community used to be. First, Andreas Wolf was a Latin speaking secretary at the princely court of Iasi, and then went to the court of Serban Cantacuzino and Constantine Brancoveanu as Polish speaking secretary. After he settled in Bucharest, where Brancoveanu rewarded him with Sarulesti estate for the services done, he did not break up with the Catholic parish of Cotnari, but took good care of the estate bequeathed by priests and continued to sign important papers related to the estate of the Catholic Diocese of Bacau. Andreas had good knowledge of Latin, as well as of Polish, which he got during his studies at the Jesuit College of Camenica, where he attended the courses of the theological class wishing to join the Jesuit Company.

Baratia church of Bucharest has also received aids on behalf of Nicolaus Wolf (1685 – 1742), original from Poland, who was not related to Wolf from Cotnari, but had relations with the Catholic community of Moldova. His son, Ioachim, studied grammar at the Jesuit school of Cotnari, then at De Propaganda Fide College, operating as priest in Moldova¹².

A special place among the Catholics around prince Constantine Brancoveanu had the Neapolitan physician Bartolomeo Ferrati (? – 1738), one of the protectors of the Catholics of Wallachia and Moldova. Earl Ferrati settled at the princely court of Bucharest in 1707. In 1707, he married Agnes, the orphan daughter of count Samuel Kalnoki, which fact related him to the Szekler nobility and created many diplomatic relations. Due to his services, rather political than medical, Ferrati received a house in Bucharest and a boyar rank, and then moved to Targoviste where he buried his only child in the Catholic church over there. (+1711). Bartolomeu had many political relations because he operated in Smirna for a time as representative of the diplomacy of Venice¹³. In his political activity he used his network of Catholic missionaries and provided general baron Tige important information on the political events and activity of Brancoveanu's court. He tried to appoint his uncle Benigne da Miglionico, Franciscan too, as archbishop of Sofia or as bishop of Nicopole and apostolic vicar of Wallachia. He used his influence for the purpose and even got letters of recommendation from High Stewart Cantacuzino, from the Jesuit missionaries of Transylvania, and from the Franciscan Augustin Grienfiels, chaplain of general Rabbutin.

¹¹ See Kurt Telbizov, *Quelques donnees sur la personnalite diplomatique de Ilija Metajanici-intermediaire entre le voievode Constantin Brâncoveanu et l'Emperur Leopold I au cours des anees 1692-1700*, in „Etudes balcaniques”, 1975, XI, nr.1, pp. 99-102.

¹² Francisc Pall, *Le controversie tra i Minori Conventuali e i Gesuiti nelle missioni di Moldavia*, în „Diplomatariu Italicu”, IV, 1940, p. 136-268; Violeta Barbu, *Purgatoriul misiunilor. Contrareforma în Țările Române în secolul al XVII-lea*, Bucharest, Academiei Publishing House, 2008, p. 587.

¹³ Cristian Luca, *Contributi alla biografia dei medici Jacopo Pylarino (1659-1718) e Bartolomeo Ferrati (?–1738)*, in „Vocația istoriei. Prinos profesorului Șerban Papacostea”, coordonators Ovidiu Cristea, Gheorghe Lazăr, Brăila, Istros Publishing House, 2008, pp. 645-646.

After Ferrati's death, his widow, Agnes Kalnoki-Ferrati was one of the benefactors of the Catholic church of Bucharest, contributing with money to its restoration. Countess Agnes was an active supporter of the Catholic missionaries of Moldova, also wishing to have a close person of her family as bishop¹⁴. Anton Maria del Chiaro, Brancoveanu's secretary had an important role in the support granted to the Catholics in Wallachia¹⁵. His history is an essential historiographic source on the Brancovean epoch.

Brancoveanu was open to the young people's desire to study in Italy, at Venice or Padova. Although well known Catholic centres, the two Italian cities had strong Greek Orthodox communities, especially a well known printing press in Venice that operated for several decades. The prince offered scholarships of study to young people like Radu Cantacuzino – the prince's cousin, Gheorghe and Palade Damian who have become outstanding Latinists, Hypomene and Gheorghe from Trapezunt and Andronache, who graduated the medicine courses in Padova. Hrisant Nottara was one of those who benefited of the prince's support to study at Padova and Paris, Brancoveanu having been open to study at the great university centres even though they were Catholic.

A series of Orthodox Greeks activated at the court of the Wallachian prince, some of them known for their anti-Catholic activity. We mention some of them: Dionysios IV Mouselimis, five times patriarch of Constantinople, coming from the Comnen old Byzantine family, who was a student of Theofilos Korydaleus and of Zanolis, at the Patriarchal Academy. He was in the service of Matei Basarab, and then he became metropolitan of Larisa and ecumenical patriarch helped by princes Serban Cantacuzino and Constantine Brancoveanu. He may be one of the team of the translators of the Bible published in 1688. Another anti-Catholic was Ioannis Avamios (1670/1679 – 1718), born in Venice to a Cretan family, with studies at the Flanghinian College, who operated as priest at the church of Saint George of Venice and as professor at Zakynthos island. He came to Bucharest because of the conflicts with the philo – Catholic metropolitan of Philadelphia, Meletios Typaldos. Avramios was a close collaborator of metropolitan Antim Ivireanul and teacher of Brancoveanu's children.

The best known anti-Catholic and firm anti-Calvin too was Dositheos, patriarch of Jerusalem. Dositheos acquired a theological and humanist culture helped by his uncle Ghermanos, metropolitan of Corinth and entered the service of patriarch Paisios of Jerusalem ever since a young man. He continued his theological studies with the help of Nikolaos Kerameus, professor at the Patriarchal Academy. Patriarch Nektarios appointed him metropolitan of Caesarea, and soon after he became Patriarch. Dositheos was an active efficient supporter of the Orthodox Church, an anti-Catholic polemist, as well as a fierce adversary of Calvinism blamed at the synod of 1672, at Jerusalem, on which occasion he drafted the *Orthodox Confession of Faith*. In 1682, he publishes *Against the Pope's Primacy* at the printing house of Cetatuia. While in Bucharest, he was co-founder of the Princely

¹⁴ N. Iorga, *Medicul lui Consatantin vodă Brâncoveanu: Bartolomeu Ferrati*, în „Revista Istorică”, anul XXVIII, nr. 1-12, p. 12-13; Idem, *Medici și medicină în trecutul românesc*, Tipografia Cultura Neamului Românesc, București, 1919, p. 31; Vezi Susana Andea, *Medicul domnesc Bartolomeu Ferrati și epoca sa. Documente*, Cluj-Napoca, Supergraph Publishing House, 2005.

¹⁵ C. Boroianu, *Anton Maria del Chiaro*, in „Studia Bibliologica”, 3, 1969, p. 117.

Academy of Saint Sava Monastery dedicated to the Patriarchate of Jerusalem¹⁶. His nephew, Chrysanthus Nottara, who has become patriarch of Jerusalem, was one of the most important adversaries of Catholicism. From 1697-1700, he studied on scholarships Brancoveanu granted for studying at Padova and Paris. After finishing his studies, Dositheos assigned him various missions for combating Catholicism in Wallachia and Russia. Chrysanthus was the most important representative of the religious humanism and one of the closest collaborators of Brancoveanu¹⁷.

Ieremia Kakavelas, a Cretan who had studied in London, Leipzig and Vienna, interested in theology, philosophy and medicine, has also activated in Bucharest, finding a good place for his intellectual manifestations at Brancoveanu's court. He left from Bucharest to Iasi, at the request of prince Constantine Cantemir, as teacher of the prince's children and of those of some other boyars, too. He was the author of a catechism entitled Holy Teaching which circulated long time in manuscript among the Orthodox priests. Kakavelas was one of the greatest humanists who passed through the Romanian Principalities¹⁸. He was a rival of patriarch Dositheos of Jerusalem because of his involvement in the theological disputes, an anti-Catholic very appreciated by Brancoveanu. Ioan Comnen, another Greek humanist was Brancoveanu's physician, who has become a monk and metropolitan of Dristra. He was one of the authors of the programme for the re-organisation of the Princely Academy, together with Marcos Porfropoulos and Brancoveanu, which he handed over to patriarch Chrysanthus of Jerusalem. Sevastos Kyminites too, former student of the Patriarchal Academy of Constantinople, activated in Bucharest during the last years of his life, as director of the Princely Academy. He was one of the most prolific Greek authors. We remember two of his theological books published which reflect his theology: *Orthodox Confession*, Snagov, 1699, and *Dogmatic Teaching*, Bucharest, 1703, very circulated at the time. A special place at Brancoveanu's court was held by Gheorghe Castriotul, graduate of the Princely Academy of Bucharest and close collaborator of Dositheos, who held the position of delegate of Wallachia to Russia, where he met Nicolae Milescu, after the first of his three journeys¹⁹. A school was set up in Castoria with his help for teaching the young Orthodox Greeks. All these Greek scholars were supporters of the Orthodox Church and firm anti-Catholics, having been present at the court of prince Constantine Brancoveanu.

The Romanian princes exerted a certain patronage over the Orthodox patriarchates, at least till the appearance of Russia as great power in the European politics²⁰. The Romanian Principalities continued to help the Orthodox under the Ottoman occupation till the secularisation of the monastic estates in 1864. Patriarch Dositheos of Jerusalem holds a special position among the many Greek hierarchs who travelled to the Romanian Principalities and who were helped in various ways during the pastoral service of

¹⁶ Vezi Dumitru Stăniloae, *Viața și activitatea patriarhului Dosofteiu al Ierusalimului și legăturile lui cu Țările Românești*, Cernăuți, 1929.

¹⁷ Elena Lazăr, *Cărturari greci în Țările Române (secolele XIV-XIX)*. Dicționar biografic, Bucharest, Omnia Publishing House, 2009, p. 172.

¹⁸ *Ibidem*, p. 118.

¹⁹ *Ibidem*, p. 123.

²⁰ See Ioan Dură, *Les voievodes de Valachie et de Moldavie et les patriarches orthodoxes d'Orient dans la seconde moitié du XVII-e siècle*, în „Buletinul Bibliotecii Române”, vol. VIII (XII), 1980/81, Freiburg im Bressgau/Germania, 1981, pp. 291-338.

metropolitan Teodosie of Ungrowallachia. This patriarch was a close collaborator of metropolitan Teodosie and of prince Constantine Brancoveanu when faced with Catholic or Protestant proselytism. Dositei was an Orthodox hierarch with deep religious experience which he conveyed to his nephew Chrysanthus. Due to their dynamism an active Orthodox Church was maintained in the Orthodox space which succeeded to meet all the challenges coming from the Catholic or Protestant space. Following the request of prince Constantine Brancoveanu, who convened a council in Bucharest, in 1705, Dositheos of Jerusalem and metropolitan Teodosie defrocked bishop Ilarion of Ramnic²¹ accusing him of philo-Catholicism, the prince wishing Antim Ivireanul as bishop instead. Due to his authority, the ruling prince had a decisive influence over the church life, mostly if he had a longer ruling and enjoyed great consideration with the Ottoman or church authorities of Constantinople. Many times the jurisdiction of the Ecumenical Patriarchate was exerted formally, fulfilling the requirements of the Romanian rulers. It is a well known fact that some of the Orthodox patriarchs were imposed by the Romanian ruling princes. Thus, prince Nicolae Mavrocordat (1715- 1716: 1719 – 1730) asked the Ecumenical patriarch Ieremia III (1716 – 1726) to defrock metropolitan Antim Ivireanul, who not only was deposed from the rank of metropolitan but also excluded from monasticism, and finally killed²². The synod of Bucharest of 1705 was an act of the prince's will to promote a new bishop and not an anti-Catholic action in itself.

The politics of the *Holy League* in the Danubian space obligated Brancoveanu to focus his foreign politics on the Orthodox Russia. The anti-Catholic actions of patriarch Dositheos of Jerusalem who was disputing the Holy Places with the Catholics have also contributed to this politics, as well as the patriarch's desire to form an Orthodox anti-Ottoman front. The anti-Catholic trend was supported by many Greek theologians who found protection in Bucharest. Both patriarch Dositheos and metropolitan Dosoftei of Moldova were militating for an anti-Catholic front headed by the tsar of Russia²³. The anti-Catholic attitude has become harsher after the appearance of the Greek – Catholics in Transylvania. The printing in 1699 of the volume entitled *Book or light with right proofs from the dogmas of the Eastern Church over the division of the Pope's subjects*, by Maxim from Peloponez, with a preface written probably by Antim Ivireanul, is a proof of the anti-Latin atmosphere present with the clergy and intellectuals of Muntenia. Moreover, Antim Ivireanul was criticising the Greek theologians Ioan Cariofil and Leon Allatius, whom he accused of having promoted teaching alien to the Orthodox Church. The criticism of Antim also referred to the philo-Catholics who had tried to stop the printing of the book by Maxim of Peloponnese. The printing presses of Bucharest and Iasi constituted the engine of this anti-Latin polemics headed by patriarch Dositheos of Jerusalem. In order to attract the Russians into his project, Dositheos involved metropolitan Dositei of Moldova fled to Poland, Nicolae Milescu, from the court of the tsar

²¹ Bishop Ilarion of Ramnic had allowed the Catholics fled from Bulgaria to raise a church and granted them the cemetery of the diocese, which in fact was Catholic at the beginning, but in the course of time and as a result of the ruin of the Catholic community it has become territory of the Orthodox Diocese.

²² See Andrei Pippidi, *Tradiția politică bizantină în Țările Române în secolele XVI-XVIII*, Bucharest, Corint Publishing House, 2001; Ioan Dură, *Patriarhul Dositei al Ierusalimului (1669-1707) și ierarhii Râmnicului Ilarion și Antim Ivireanul*, in „Biserica Ortodoxă Română”, nr. 1-3, 2006, p. 480.

²³ Violeta Barbu, *op. cit.*, p. 297.

and the Orthodox metropolitan Vartolomei Jasinski of Kiev (1690-1707), installed by Dositheos and recommended by him to patriarch Adrian of Moscow, with whose help he initiated a programme for translating the Greek theological books into the Russian language and printing them at Bucharest and Iasi. High Steward Miclescu translated the book *Against Heresies*, printed in 1685, at Cetatuia, into Russian. During his Polish exile, Dosoftei of Moldova translated the *Epistle of Saint Ignatie Teoforul* (1691) into Russian, sent to patriarch Ioachim of Moscow, the *Church History and mystic sight* by patriarch Gherman of Constantinople, the *Treatise on the Eastern Dogmas* by Simeon of Thessaloniki, the *Apostolic Constitutions*, *Gems of Saint John Chrysostom*. *The Confession of Faith* by Petru Movila was translated into Russian and printed in Moscow in 1696. *Dogmatic Teaching* by Sevastos Kyminites was published in 1703, with special number of copies for Russia, and *Proschinitarios of Mount Athos*, drafted by Ierotei Comnen in 1700, was translated into Russian by monk Damaschin. But Peter the Great manifested special openness to the Western Europe, which fact enabled the construction of the Catholic church of Saints Apostles and the presence of the Jesuits missionaries. The tsar's conception concerning the relations between the State and the Orthodox Church headed by patriarch Adrian at the time was implemented in the church reform imposed to the end of his reign.

Dositheos II Notarius of Jerusalem fights to defend his theology the moment he is accused to have used Catholic terminology. A similar internal fight was waged in Russia too between the philo-Greeks headed by Epifanie Slavinecki and the philo-Latins formed by the School of Kiev headed by Symeon Połocki and Silvestre Medvédev. Dositheos succeeded in removing the pro-Catholic group (Silvestre Medvédev paying with his life for his writings), an action carried out by a synod of 1690, headed by patriarch Ioachim of Moscow. The books by the philo-Latins were cast aside together with some of the books by metropolitan Petru Movila (*Little Slavonic Catechism*, *Trebnic* and *Lithos*). *The History of the Patriarchate of Jerusalem* holds a special place among the anti-Latin books by Dositheos, having been characterised by the anti-Catholic character that marked the majority of the writings of the great patriarch. Brancoveanu, just like the scholars and theologians of his court knew many of the teachings of the Orthodox theology which he supported in various disputes²⁴. Moreover, patriarch Dositheos ordered that all the theologians who were coming from abroad to make a public confession of faith to reveal their Orthodox faith. The patriarch's decision was a way of opposing the Catholic or Protestant proselytism. Even his nephew, Chrysanthus Nottara had to pass such an examination at the Metropolitanate of Bucharest, after his return from Italy. The information was presented to pope Clement XI by the former professor of Chrysanthus at Padova, Nicolae Papadopol Comnen, worried because such a measure restricted the Catholic propaganda a lot²⁵.

During the last few years of the 17th century the Transylvanian Romanians passed through a religious event that crashed the Orthodox unity, as a result of the Catholic propaganda encouraged by the imperial authorities of Vienna. Constantine Brancoveanu saw how a part of the Transylvanian Orthodox faithful accepted the union with the Church of

²⁴ Constantin Erbicenu, *Documente istorice inedite*, in „Biserica Ortodoxă Română”, XV, 1891, nr. 7, p. 487-489.

²⁵ Violeta Barbu, *op. cit.*, p. 443; Virginia Vasiliu, *art. cit.*, p. 114.

Rome,²⁶ under the political pressure of the Habsburgs and of the missionary one of the Jesuits. When the “*young and not exemplary*” metropolitan Athanasie-Anghel, metropolitan of Transylvania elected with the Calvinists’ help, came to Bucharest to be ordained hierarch, Teodosie and patriarch Dositei of Jerusalem kept him for a few months to teach him the main Orthodox teachings and even to sign a confession of faith in 22 points drafted by patriarch Dositheos, metropolitan Teodosie and other hierarchs. Athanasie-Anghel did not observe what he had signed in Bucharest, so that in 7 October 1698, he signed the union with Rome together with 38 archpriests. Very affected, on 8 May 1700, metropolitan Teodosie addressed a letter to patriarch Adrian of Moscow in which he expressed all his sorrow for what happened in Transylvania²⁷. Brancoveanu supported the Orthodox Romanians of Transylvania, having even been threatened by the Austrian emperor not to interfere in the empire’s affairs because the emperor did not interfere in Wallachia’s affairs²⁸. Brancoveanu has always tried to be neuter in his foreign politics, not to get involved in anti-Ottoman actions. The anti-Orthodox attitude of the Austrians determined the Wallachian prince to support the Transylvanian Orthodox, especially those of Brasov and Fagaras, where he had raised a monastery and wanted it to be a place of refuge in case of Ottoman threatening.

The ecumenical patriarch Calinic sent, in his turn, a letter to metropolitan Atanasie-Anghel²⁹ laying him under the ban of the Church. The criticism patriarch Dositheos of Jerusalem addressed to the pope was radicalised in the context of the confessional changes of Transylvania. For Dositheos, the pope was Antichrist now: “*The Pope’s monarchy is the ruling of Antichrist, it does not persecute other people but the Orthodox, so that the idolaters and heretics did not spoil the Orthodox nation as the pope and his followers did, because the enemy is just in their dwelling place. They were brothers but they became denouncers. The pope’s subjects are outside our Church so that the Eastern Church is the righteous one, while that of Rome is heretic; and then, the Catholic priests say the Church is one only to laugh at the silly Orthodox*”³⁰.

Brancoveanu made tremendous efforts to keep an Orthodox Church in Transylvania. He and metropolitan Antim Ivireanul sent printer Mihail Stefanovic to Alba Iulia, where he succeeded in printing in 1699, a *Bucoavna* (spelling book) and a *Chiriadromion* (re-publishing of Varlaam’s *Cazania* (homiliary) of 1643), to be used by the Orthodox priests. In order to bring some material benefit to the Transylvanian Metropolitanate, in June 1700, the Wallachian prince granted it the Merisani estate, after he had financially aided metropolitan Ahtanasie Anghel³¹. Brancoveanu is considered the patron of the Orthodox Metropolitanate of Transylvania.

On 5 July 1700, prince Brancoveanu sent the following letter to the Orthodox faithful of Brasov: “*We wish good health and prayers to the priests of Brasov, and to other old people*

²⁶ Vezi N. Iorga, *Constantin vodă Brâncoveanu*, Vălenii de Munte, 1929.

²⁷ N. Șerbănescu, *Mitropolitul Teodosie al Țării Românești (1668-1672; 1679-1708)*, in „Studii Teologice”, nr. 5-6, 1952, p. 335.

²⁸ N. Iorga, *Istoria românilor prin călători*, Bucharest, Eminescu Publishing House, 1981, p. 304; N. Nilles, *Symbolae ad illustrandam historiam Ecclesiae orientalis in terris coronae S. Stephani*, Oeniponte, 1885, p. 364.

²⁹ N. Nilles, *Symbolae ad illustrandam historiam Ecclesiae orientalis in terris coronae S. Stephani*, Oeniponte, 1885, p. 350.

³⁰ Violeta Barbu, *op. cit.*, p. 372.

³¹ Mircea Păcurariu, *Istoria Bisericii Ortodoxe Române*, vol. II, Bucharest, p. 300.

of Schei! We have received your letter and understood everything you wrote. We learned from your letter which we trust what the bishop from Transylvania did and how he behaved. Very soon God will punish those who do not observe the law, because we have seen many times that those who leave their law and wish another one instead are punished by the right Judge, who is God. We have been very glad because you and other Orthodox faithful have not been allured to it but observed the pure Orthodox law you inherited from your parents and forerunners. We know you have done a fair and pious thing pleasant to God and to the wise people, so that we pray God to strengthen you and keep you in the Orthodox faith which you must observe right and correct. We know from the emperor's court from Beci (Vienna) that the bishop had no approval to obligate the people, but let them do whatever they wanted. We do not think he will tend to stretch out more than the country that the late princes created, which must follow the law observed so far. We shall always protect and help you with whatever we can and be by your side.

We understood that the fathers from Fagaras and other Orthodox fathers did the same, observing their law, and we were very glad. It seemed to them that was the right thing to do as long as we raised that holy church to dedicate it to the Holy Eastern church and to have the priests and Christian inhabitants over there, and we declare that we shall protect them anyway we can. May this be always for your help from God!”³² Brancoveanu's interventions and the direct manifestation of his support for the Transylvanian Orthodox brought about the establishment of 28 points at the meeting of the “great Council” of 14 September 1700, concerning the revival of the moral and religious life of the Orthodox clergy and faithful. Nothing was mentioned about the religious union with Rome.

Nevertheless, Brancoveanu adopted an attitude of tolerance towards the Catholics on one hand because he had a series of Catholics around him who served him with his foreign politics, and on the other hand because the political interests of Wallachia were related to the Great European Powers. Although he had very active Catholics and Orthodox around, Brancoveanu knew how to impose harmony and tolerance making a true model of modern politics.

³² Sterie Stinghe, *Documente privitoare la trecutul românilor din Șchei (1700-1783)*, vol. I, Brașov, 1901, p. 15-16.