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Doctoral School of Theology

Ph.D. Area: Theology

DOCTORAL THESIS

**Faith, passion, and virtue. Theological and moral
aspects in the Church literature of the mid-seventeenth
century**

Summary

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Argument. Actuality and importance of the topic. At the beginning of 2013, at the invitation of Archdeacon. Ioan I. Ică jr., the distinguished professor and researcher of Romanian spirituality, Prof. Dan Zamfirescu, gave a lecture in the hall of the Faculty of Theology "Andrei Saguna" in Sibiu. The theme of this conference was the re-edition of the famous *Cazania* of Metropolitan Varlaam of Moldavia, together with a substantial critical analysis, and on this occasion there was also the book launch of the second volume of the edition, dedicated to the actual text of the work of 1643¹.

The author of this thesis, who was present in the hall, noted two essential aspects in particular: firstly, the decisive importance of the "Romanian Book of Learning" in shaping the literary Romanian language - which makes it comparable to Luther's Bible in German culture. Dan Zamfirescu recalled, in this regard, the statement of Mihai Eminescu², according to which "Varlaam Metropolitan made the Holy Spirit speak in the language of the Romanian people". These laudatory remarks about Varlaam's *Cazania* are also repeated by other historians and men of culture. Nicolae Iorga, in his book *History of the Religious Literature of Romanians until 1688* (1904), wrote: "The thought of the books of ecclesiastical teaching had this time passed through the very soul of the Romanian people: it had thus been born again in the language, written as it is spoken, of Abbot Varlaam from Secu". Florea Muresanu, a priest-martyr in the hell of the communist dungeon of Aiud, was the one who published "the most imposing graphic monument" dedicated to this printing, on which occasion he wrote ³: „The Homilies, as they are drawn up, bear the stamp of his huge personality. The language in the sense of the Romanian people everywhere, not only of that time, but also of today, after 300 years, remains the monument

¹ Varlaam, mitropolit al Moldovei, *Carte românească de învățătură: dumenecele preste an și la praznice împărătești și la svenți mari* vol. 2, tipărită cu binecuvântarea Preafericitului Părinte Daniel, Patriarhul Bisericii Ortodoxe Române, ed. îngrijită și glosar: Stela Toma, pref. și studiu: Dan Zamfirescu, Ed. Roza Vânturilor, București, 2011.

² Mihai Eminescu, *Opere* vol. IX, Ed. Național, București, 2013, p. 259.

³ Florea Mureșanu, *Cazania lui Varlaam, 1643-1943. Prezentare în imagini*, editor prof. dr. Emil Hațieganu, Cluj-Napoca, 1944.

that Varlaam carved for himself in the everlasting history of Romanian spirituality and literature". Finally, in the preface to the same Cluj printing, which was marked by the three centuries since the appearance of the Cazania in Iași, Bishop Nicolae Colan stated: "I know of no book - apart from Holy Scripture - that has brought more light into the spiritual home of the Romanian than the Cazania of Metropolitan Varlaam, sent to the preachers in the year of our Lord 1643"⁴.

The second aspect highlighted by the lecturer was related to the identification, for the first time, of all the sources that were the basis of the work published by Metropolitan Varlaam of Moldavia. This fact makes the "Dan Zamfirescu edition" even more valuable, as it represents an exhaustive research on this work (a fact highlighted, in a final speech, by Prof. Mircea Păcurariu, present at the conference in Sibiu)..

Impressed by Professor Dan Zamfirescu's assiduous research on Cazania over several decades, I decided from that moment on to take a closer look at this fundamental work of Romanian culture. In this regard, I had a discussion with my former colleague, Prof. Dr. habil. Daniel Buda, who has since become a teacher at the Department of History of the Universal Church at the Faculty of Theology "St. Andrei Saguna" in Sibiu. He drew my attention to the fact that Varlaam's work, like other writings of that time, was not strictly theoretical. On the contrary, through the pastoral-missionary indications they conveyed, they aimed to combat non-canonical practices, such as the occult.

After a few years, having become a doctoral supervisor, Fr. Buda was kind enough to accept me as a doctoral student of the prestigious Siberian Doctoral School. The research topic was precisely the presentation and combating of occult practices in Holy Scripture and the Holy Fathers. Unfortunately, Fr. Daniel Buda's medical situation necessitated a change in his doctoral advisor, i.e. the area of research from Church History to Moral and Social Theology. Presenting the situation and the motivation of the research topic to the new PhD supervisor, Prof. Dr. habil. Ciprian Iulian Toroczka, he agreed to continue the

⁴ Vezi Dan Zamfirescu, „Cuvânt către cititorul de azi”, în Varlaam, mitropolit al Moldovei, *Carte românească de învățătură: dumenecile preste an și la praznice împărătești și la svenți mari* I. Studiul, p. V.

research topic - admittedly from other perspectives and using the sources that initiated our research in the first place. Thus, we believe we can safely say that, by the way they supported the author with welcome advice, the thesis has a double orientation, which is reflected in the interdisciplinary way of writing the thesis: on the one hand, the historical one, and on the other hand, the systematic one. Aware that any errors are strictly the author's fault, we would also like to thank our two tutors - two former theological colleagues in Sibiu! - who have spared no effort to help me complete this research project.

This research necessarily includes a return to and re-evaluation of the sources and principles underlying Orthodox Canon Law, which exposes and denounces non-canonical practices. (This is the reason why, along with Metropolitan Varlaam's *Cazania*, we also took as a research source the *Pravila of Govora*, which is less researched in the Romanian theological and cultural space.) Why? Because, first of all, only in this way can the holy canons and canonical principles be correctly understood and applied to the realities faced by the Romanian Orthodox Church⁵. It must be emphasized that canon law has as its principal aim the realization of full communion, both vertically - between God-Creator and man - and horizontally - between the members of the Church - as a continuation of the communion of the early Church, without schism, rupture or interruption .

The importance given by Orthodox theology to the sources reflects the special attention paid in Orthodoxy to both Holy Scripture and Holy Tradition. Liviu Stan drew attention to the fact that "the Church's practical tradition (of Pravilas)" is a basic element of the latter.⁶ One of the tasks of Orthodox theology in general, and of canon law in particular, is precisely to revalue the Church's Pravilas as an integral part of a new canonical code⁷.

⁵ Pr. Prof. Dr. Constantin Rus, Pr. Conf. Dr. Irimie Marga, Pr. Lect. Dr. Patriciu Vlaicu, „Dezvoltarea studiilor canonice”, in Pr. Prof. Dr. Viorel Ioniță (coord.), *Teologia ortodoxă în secolul al XX-lea și la începutul secolului al XXI-lea*, Editura Basilica, București, 2011, p. 600.

⁶ Vezi Pr. Prof. Univ. Dr. Liviu Stan, *Biserica și Dreptul* vol. 2. *Izvoarele Dreptului Canonic Ortodox*, Ediție coordonată de Pr. Conf. Univ. Dr. Irimie Marga, Editura Andreiana, Sibiu, 2012, p. 121.

⁷ *Ibidem*, p. 116.

Liviu Stan, reviewing briefly the appearance and development of the nomocanon in Byzantium, underlined that it consisted in the following: "first of all, in the appropriation and use of the State laws that refer to ecclesiastical affairs, or to other matters that concern the activity of the Church. Secondly, the inclusion of such State laws in the official body or code of ecclesiastical laws has also given to these State laws the character of fundamental sources of ecclesiastical law, together with the canons and other sources of this character. So, in short, this tradition consists in the use by the Church, in its organisation and management, of both its own laws and the laws of State which concern it"⁸.

The name given to the nomocanons in the Slavic world, as in the Roman Church, is that of *pravila*, along with the original Greek name of nomocanon. Thus, in the Romanian Churches, Greek, Slavic and then Romanian nomocanons were used in manuscript, and in the first decades of the 16th century, the Romanian people also used the Slavic nomocanon, translated from Greek and printed first in 1620 (in Lvov) by the Romanian monk Pamvo Berinda, and then widely disseminated in another edition (3rd) by Metropolitan Petru Movilă, who printed it in 1629, in Kiev.

However, in addition to manuscript or printed nomocanons or pravilas taken from the Greeks and/or Slavs, Romanians began to print various nomocanons in the language of their people as early as the 16th century. All these bear, from the beginning and without exception, the name of pravile. We recall in this regard: Coresi's *Pravila*, printed in Brasov in 1563 or later, in the years 1570-1580; *Pravila de la Govora* or *Pravila cea mică*, printed in Govora in the years 1640-1641; Vasile Lupu's *Pravila*, printed in Iași in 1646, then *Pravila cea Mare*, also known as Matei Basarab's *Pravila*, printed in Targoviste in 1652.

As can be seen, Romanian pravilas appear in the three great Romanian countries: in Ardeal, in Muntenia and in Moldova, the circulation of each pravile being in all of them. "This is the expression and proof of the homogeneous preservation throughout the Romanian Church of the nomocanonical tradition, so alive in Orthodoxy. How alive the

⁸ *Ibidem*, p. 127.

nomocanonical tradition has been in our Church can be seen from the maintenance in force and the application of the pravilas until late in life. It was not until 1865, with the Civil Code of Cuza Voda, that the beginning of the abandonment of some of the pravilean rites became more visible. However, the following should be noted: the word 'pravilă' became established in Romanian ecclesiastical and state life, and was also used for a long time to express the notion of common or state law, the very notion of legality being expressed by the words: „pravilnic”, „pravilnică” and „pravilnicesc”, „pravilnicească”, derived from „pravilă” and which became, together with it, technical terms in old Romanian law.

Research status. As far as the Romanian pravileas are concerned, given their particular importance for the development of Romanian canon law, together with the doctoral thesis of Archdeacon. Ioan N. Floca's doctoral thesis, the research of Fr. Liviu Stan should be mentioned. Among the more recent researches, those of C. Mititelu, and not only, should be mentioned.

In parallel with the theological analyses, relevant studies on Romanian pravileas have also been published by a number of lay scholars: Ștefan Berchet, Gheorghe Conț, Stelian Marinescu, Valeriu Șotropa, Ioan Rizescu, Emil Cernea, Florin Negoită or Vladimir Hanga. In addition, research analyses of a longer or shorter scope can also be found in other histories dedicated to the emergence and development of the history of Romanian law. More recently, the most significant names are those of Ioan Stanomir and Radu Carp, to whom Marius Andreescu should be added.

Concerning the Cazania of Metropolitan Varlaam, the following aspects should be mentioned: In 1991, Hyperion Publishing House in Chisinau published a massive 620-page volume entitled *Varlaam. Opere*, which included the Romanian Book of Teaching (transcribed from the "Chisinau copy"), The Response Against Calvinist Catechism (reproduced from the edition published by linguist Mirela Teodorescu at Minerva Publishing House, Bucharest, 1984), the important predoslovium to the translation of the *Stairway* of St. John the Sinaite of 1618, as well as a batch of documents issued or concerning the figure and work of Metropolitan Varlaam.

If the graphic presentation is signed by Isar Cârnu, the edition of the Cassania in Chişinău has Manole Neagu as its main author. He has assumed "the composition, glossary and bibliography", the preface being taken from Nicolae Cartoian's synthesis. This is the first edition in a large "mass" edition - 15,000 copies - and the first with the full text transcribed in Latin letters. Unfortunately, the circulation of this book was and is extremely low in Romania, which diminishes the linguistic and cultural potential of this edition.

The above probably led researcher Dan Zamfirescu to painstakingly prepare another edition of Varlaam's Cassian. It is the edition that bears the original title, "Romanian book of teaching: the holy days of the year and the feasts of the Emperor and the great feasts", being printed by the Bucharest publishing house Roza Vânturilor, in 2011. This edition comprises two volumes, one dedicated to the study of Cazania ("Sources, originality and the process of creation"; "Romanian teaching book in the history of Eastern religious eloquence in the post-Byzantine era"; "Saint Hierarch Varlaam and Romanian Christianity"), and the second to Varlaam's text itself (to which is added the original writing Mucenicia St. John the New by Gregory the Monk, who is not all one with the Bulgarian scholar Gregory Tamblac).

The "Dan Zamfirescu edition" is of particular value in the history of Romanian culture, and not only because, for the first time, it successfully identifies the main source of Varlaam's *Cazania*, or because it highlights once again the fundamental role that his text played in the creation of the Romanian literary language; another merit is that it brings into the present day, making it intelligible, a text that marked the spirituality of the Romanian people. It is precisely this aspect that Professor Dan Zamfirescu refers to, referring to the edition he has edited as being "intended to inaugurate a new era in the centuries-long history of the Romanian textbook".⁹.

Research methodology. The research methodology is characterised by its interdisciplinary character. Thus, the present work will be situated at the intersection of

⁹ Dan Zamfirescu, „Cuvânt către cititorul de azi”, in Varlaam, mitropolit al Moldovei, *Carte românească de învăţătură: dumenecile preste an și la praznice împărătești și la svenți mari* I. Studiul, p. XIII.

several theological research disciplines: canon law, dogmatics, liturgy, catechetics, etc. Among the research methods, we mention:

1.the historical method, which is necessary in order to correctly perceive the mutations produced in the history of the Romanian people and which determined a certain kind of pastoral-missionary ministry on the part of the Orthodox Churches in general and the Romanian one in particular;

2.the comparative method, which will help us to mark the specificity of this ministry both in different socio-historical contexts, making a parallel with other Orthodox sources from the time of the appearance of the *Pravila of Govora*, respectively of the *Cazania* of Varlaam;

3.the analytical method, which helps us to draw conclusions from the present research, aiming especially at highlighting possible solutions for optimizing priestly ministry in the context of today's world, with reference to the juridical-theological model that the tradition of the Church *Pravila* and *Cazania* have shown (in other words, what relevance did they have and to what extent can they still be current?).

4.Finally, we believe that an integrated research (theological and historical) on this topic is timely. For this reason, the preferred method of research is synthetic, since it is necessary to structure and summarise ideas during the collection of historical and theological bibliographical material. We started from the premise that there is a multitude of ideas on the theme which lack a specific organisation. The method of synthesis (not only cultural and historical, but especially theological) has the advantage of a linear and succinct process of drawing conclusions, a system that remains open to secondary questions related to the theme. Their assembly into a coherent whole does not affect the process of constructing other research (theological or historical), since the criteria can be adapted according to the scientific discipline, the researcher's own vision or the questions and challenges that arise over time. Romanian Orthodoxy has proved its historical vocation as a "bridge" by integrating them into a coherent religious whole (dogmatic, liturgical, spiritual and missionary).

Thesis structure. This paper is in three parts. The first part outlines the political, socio-historical, cultural and religious environment of the Romanian Lands in the first half of the 17th century. In this way, the context in which the two writings - which are the subject of our research - appeared and especially the role they played in the religious and moral edification of the Christians was better understood. The rulers Matei Basarab and Vasile Lupu were the dominant figures on the political scene of the Romanian Lands, but not only: despite their personal rivalry, they were true supporters not only of Romanian Orthodox culture and faith (by building and restoring churches and monasteries, supporting printing activity, etc.), but also of the universal. Thus, they also supported Greek Orthodoxy (especially Mount Athos), Bulgarian or Serbian Orthodoxy, while cultivating diplomatic relations with Western Christianity, as a factor in counteracting the increasingly strong Ottoman domination in the Balkans.

As for the second part, it focused on the presentation of the main sources of the research: the *Pravila de la Govora* or the "Little *Pravila*" (1640-1641) and the "Romanian Book of Teaching" (1643). We have reviewed their critical editions, with a summary evaluation of their positive and negative aspects. We then highlighted the sources of the *Govora Pravilla* and the *Varlaam's Cazania*. Finally, we brought to the foreground the outstanding figures to whom we owe the appearance in Romanian of these two important ecclesiastical writings: on the one hand, the monk and typographer Mihail Moxa, and on the other hand, the metropolitan and scholar Varlaam of Moldavia.

In the third and most substantial part of our doctoral thesis, we focused on some theological and moral aspects that emerge from a closer reading of the *Govora Pravilias* and *Varlaam's Cazania*. Thus, we exposed some of their essential themes, such as: the Holy Trinity, man and creation; Jesus Christ, the Saviour; the Church, the medium of human sanctification; Faith and knowledge; Sins and virtues; Justice and social responsibility. These themes are of particular relevance to Christians, both on a personal and on a socio-community and ecclesial level. They mark the two axes of the Christian life: the vertical one, marked by the relationship with God - the Holy Trinity, Creator and Provider of the cosmos in general and of the human being in particular, and the horizontal one, in which

all people - created "in the image" and tending towards the "likeness" of God - are brothers in our Saviour Jesus Christ, the Head of the Church, who therefore determines for them a unique and universal purpose: the deification (*theosis*).

Last but not least, throughout these chapters, we have focused on highlighting some of the pathologies, i.e. violations of religious-moral principles, at both individual and collective levels. The fight against sins, against passions of any kind, has been a constant in Romanian ecclesiastical literature since the middle of the 17th century. In fact, the whole of society at that time had the Church's teaching at its heart, with effects that are still felt - in some respects - to this day. Before drawing conclusions, we have tried to synthesise the moral teachings presented in the two research sources, highlighting the commonalities they share and their relevance to contemporary theology.