

SAINT HIERARCH MARTYR ANTHIMOS THE IBERIAN, METROPOLITAN OF WALLACHIA, FOUNDER OF THE ROMANIAN LANGUAGE AND WISE PROMOTER OF PRINTING IN THE GEORGIAN SPACE

Daniel-Grigore Filimon

Phd. Romanian Patriarchate

ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0009-0000-0674-6979>

Abstract. Within the medieval horizon, the holy hierarch and martyr Anthim the Iberian (1650-1716) holds a distinguished place among the eminent figures who made a vast contribution both from an ecclesial standpoint and in terms of the cultural edification of the Romanian people.

Originating from Iveria (present-day Georgia), Saint Anthim the Iberian was "Romanian by destiny and devotion". He established himself in the consciousness of the Romanian Orthodox Church through his hierarchical ministry, through his essential contribution to the development of the Romanian liturgical language, and through his rich activity as a printer. His work extends beyond the "boundaries" of theology and encompasses fields such as printing, moral literature, homiletics, pedagogy, and national consciousness.

He was a true "apostle of the word" who assumed, with discernment, the mission of preaching the Gospel in the language of the people. This is why the honour and memory of Saint Anthim the Iberian in Romanian theology and culture rest upon the efforts made by this worthy metropolitan so that the Romanian language would become a liturgical language, so that the book would serve as an instrument of evangelization, and so that identity consciousness would take root through the written and spoken word. The repercussions of these considerable efforts also reached Georgian soil.

Keywords: Anthim the Iberian, culture, art of printing, Wallachia, Brâncoveanu era, Iveria, founder of the Romanian language, liturgical book

1. The Brâncoveanu era understood as a synthesis of Orthodox spirituality, artistic refinement and Romanian identity

The reign of Constantin Brâncoveanu (1688–1714) represents one of the most significant and valuable chapters in the cultural and religious history of Wallachia.

In a complex historical context, characterized by political tension and expansionist rivalries, the Holy Martyr Constantin Brâncoveanu Voievod encouraged and supported, in the Romanian space, an unprecedented cultural, artistic and religious renaissance.

The Brâncoveanu culture is the result of a thoughtful policy and the expression of the maturity of an Orthodox ruler who knew how to attract and assimilate external influences without neglecting or losing the national specificity. The Brâncoveanu era, also known as the "golden age" of Wallachia, left a lasting legacy on a theological, cultural, architectural, literary (Călinescu 1964: 340) and educational level.

The first and most important pillar of the Brâncoveanu culture was Orthodoxy. Prince Constantin Brâncoveanu proved to be a constant defender of the Orthodox faith, both in Wallachia and in the entire South-Eastern European Orthodox space.

The Holy Martyr Constantine Brâncoveanu financially and culturally supported the Patriarchates of Constantinople, Jerusalem, Antioch, monasteries of Mount Athos and religious units in Georgia. He strengthened an Orthodox network with an international specificity in which the Romanian culture became a centre

of spiritual irradiation. As a sign of gratitude for the benefits received, the Patriarch of Antioch at that time said about Constantin Brâncoveanu "that he printed for four nations: Greeks, Romanians, Arabs and Georgians and that the pious ruler procured books for the entire Orthodoxy" (Giurescu 1946: 892).

On the same note of admiration, in the preface of a *Chiriadromion* (book of sermons), printed in Bălgrad, by Mihail Iștvanovici, it was recalled about Brâncoveanu that "he is the true patron of the Holy Metropolis here, in Transylvania, and of all those who yearn under his great mercy" (Pop 1989: 63).

Internally, under the wise leadership of Saint Constantine Brâncoveanu, the religious life underwent an important development: numerous churches and monasteries were built and embellished, the printing activity was intensified, the religious language became closer and closer to the language spoken by the people, several translations and original redactions in Romanian were made.

From an architectural point of view, the Brâncoveanu style developed during this period, which represents a synthesis of Byzantine, Oriental, Renaissance and Baroque elements, harmonized in an authentically Romanian formula. The defining characteristics of this style are gazebos with three-lobed arches and slender columns; the facades richly decorated with vegetal motifs, rosettes, arches, in a balanced symmetry; the harmonious combination of stone and brick masonry, in a sober refinement; mural painting in fresco, with a touch of Byzantine monumentality and expressiveness, but also with Western influences in votive portraits. Monuments of this authentic Romanian style have remained, over the centuries, the Hurezi Monastery, an objective that is included in the UNESCO Heritage, the church dedicated to "St. George the New", in Bucharest, the „Sâmbăta de Sus” Monastery, the Mogoșoaia Architectural Ensemble (last was the prince's summer residence) etc.

The Brâncoveanu era is also distinguished by the contribution it had to the development of Romanian written culture and religious and secular education. "The Brâncoveanu era is a time in which the figurative language of the past was intensely built and restored, not only at the level of expression, but also of themes. The large construction sites favoured the emergence of groups of craftsmen and a school of painting. The school developed not only at the higher level, but also at the elementary level, thanks to the printed books (Octoih, Psalter) that were used for the first rudiments of reading" (Duțu 1989: 160).

Saint Constantine Brâncoveanu continued the efforts of his predecessors and consistently supported the activity started in the printing houses organized in Bucharest, Buzău, Râmnic and especially at the Snagov Monastery. These printing centres were under the coordination of another Romanian Saint and Martyr, Metropolitan Anthimos the Iberian.

In particular, the prints that appeared in the Brâncoveanu period have the following distinctive notes: exceptional quality, both from a technical point of view (clearly outlined letters) and from an artistic point of view (illustrations, frontispieces, etc.); the universal Orthodox vocation, concretized especially by the fact that the published writings are printed works in Romanian, Greek, Slavonic, Arabic, Georgian, that is, in the language of peoples with an Orthodox tradition; the emphasis placed on the liturgical Romanian language, which led to the consolidation of the Romanian language as a language of culture and worship (Câdea 1979: 68).

On the educational level, during the reign of Saint Constantine Brâncoveanu, monastic and princely schools carried out their activity, in which humanities, ancient Greek, Slavonic, but also the grammar of the Romanian language were taught. Constantin Brâncoveanu is the founder of the Princely Academy of Bucharest, founded in 1694, in the buildings that belonged to the Saint Sava Monastery. In this regard, one can speak of the beginning and formation of a Romanian cultural elite aware of its mission.

Another peculiarity of the Brâncoveanu era is the cultural patronage of the ruler and his family. Constantin Brâncoveanu maintained correspondences and cultural relations with the great centres of Orthodoxy, but also with the West (Austria, Venice, Poland, etc.). This wise diplomacy helped him to promote a cultural

model balanced between tradition and modernity, between fidelity to Orthodox roots and receptivity to educational and artistic progress.

Among the special merits that Saint Constantine Brâncoveanu had is that of having brought and promoted, in Wallachia, numerous artists, scholars, translators and miniaturists, who put their talents and chosen formation at the service of the Church and Romanian culture. "Brâncoveanu's court was a permanent place of refuge for all dissatisfied scholars, but also a protective and brilliant fortress of letters, where influences crossed and numerous works of neo-Hellenism were made" (Ștrempel 1972: IX).

Among those who found a place and protection at the court of the illustrious Wallachian Voivode, Constantin Brâncoveanu, was the Holy Hierarch Martyr Anthimos the Iberian.

Therefore, against the background of the above, it can be said that, in the history of the Romanian people, the Brâncoveanu era represents one of the most beautiful syntheses of the Romanian spirit: a culture of balance, refinement and fidelity to Orthodox values. The martyrdom of Prince Constantin Brâncoveanu and his four sons, in Constantinople, in 1714, is the sacrifice that became the symbol of the culture based on faith, dignity and unwavering in the face of the temptation to renounce Christ (Bibliarsky 2006: 153-176).

In particular, in a secular context, the Brâncoveanu era testifies to the fact that, in times of need, culture is not a luxury, but a form of resistance and inner edification: it is a means of uniting faith with art, education with tradition and sacrifice with love of nation.

Saint Anthimos the Iberian, a visionary theologian educated in the spirit of Eastern Orthodoxy

From the content of the works and studies that make up the specialized bibliography, we find out that, until his arrival in Wallachia, the Holy Hierarch Martyr Anthimos the Iberian, Metropolitan of Wallachia, had a biographical career about which little information is known. However, Saint Anthimos lived "in an era of brilliant culture and refined art and succeeded through his multiple talents and his unsurpassed ability to play the first role in the life of Wallachia" (Ștrempel 1972: IX).

Most scholars believe that St. Anthimos was born in Iveria, present-day Georgia, around 1650, in an Orthodox Christian region under constant threat of invasion. In the context of the expansionist policy carried out by the Ottoman Empire, the young Andrew, as the Saint was called before entering monasticism, was taken captive by the Turks and sold as a slave. Providentially, he was released and arrived in Constantinople.

In the former capital of Byzantium, Saint Anthimos "wandered through many places, until Patriarch Dositeus, formerly of Jerusalem, and at the court of Brâncoveanu, called him to himself" (Gibescu 1907: 73).

According to the chronological data provided by other biographers, St. Anthimos was freed from slavery and embraced the monastic life, becoming a brother in the Ecumenical Patriarchate. This fact gave him the opportunity to complete his education, being appreciated for his zeal and qualities. In addition to the Ecumenical Patriarchate, he discovered and cultivated multiple talents: calligraphy, sculpture, painting, but especially the art of printing, a new occupation for that time, but extremely important for the spread of the faith.

Under the guidance of Greek and Arab printers, he learned the secrets of printing and liturgical language. However, the early trauma of slavery and subsequent liberation were experiences that definitively left their mark on Saint Anthimos. His entire work was marked by a deep awareness of inner freedom and the defense and cultivation of human dignity.

The period he spent in Constantinople helped Saint Anthimos the Iberian to form himself theologically, intellectually and craftsmanship. He also had the opportunity to get to know the universal Orthodox culture, through interaction with various traditions (Greek, Slavic, Arabic). In this way, Saint Anthimos acquired a vast erudition that he later put at the service of the Church, as evidenced by the creations and activities carried

out during his pastorate in the Romanian space.

At the same time, the presence and activity carried out in Constantinople helped Saint Anthimos to meet and interact with many influential people. In this way, the news of his skill and diligence quickly circulated in the Orthodox space, reaching as far as Wallachia.

Prince Constantin Brâncoveanu, himself a great lover of art and culture, saw in Saint Anthimos a huge potential, which is why he intervened to bring him to Wallachia. Here, Anthimos began an exceptional editorial activity, contributing decisively to the process of Romanianization of church services, but also to the development of Romanian culture.

In this context, we note the following clarification: "from a cultural point of view, Brâncoveanu's reign was characterized by particularly close contacts with the enlightened figures of the Greek-speaking Orthodox world, but also with the cultural world of the West, especially with the Italian one. The universal character of this culture allowed it to penetrate deeply into the Orthodox world. Anthimos the Iberian will use this culture and will work with the presses of his printing presses on the great achievements that the Lord wanted; but he will not forget for a moment that his pastors were Romanians and that their language was not Greek, but Romanian" (Ștrempel 1972: IX).

A good connoisseur of the craft of printing, but also of "drawing, wood engraving and embroidery" (Giurescu 1946: 858), Saint Anthimos the Iberian carried out a remarkable activity in Wallachia, important from several points of view. This rich activity was amplified after the election of Saint Anthimos in the dignities of Bishop of Râmnic Nouă Severin (March 16/27, 1705) and Metropolitan of Wallachia (January 28/February 8, 1708).

The martyrdom of Saint Anthimos the Iberian also constitutes the testimony of faith and personal sacrifice for the Church. Although he had a decisive contribution to the development of religious life and culture in Wallachia, unanimously recognized since his lifetime, Saint Anthimos was persecuted by the Phanariot ruler Nicolae Mavrocordat.

At the Phanariot's interventions, the Ecumenical Patriarch Jeremiah III "declared Anthimos a scoundrel and an undead, a man who deals with satanic crafts and magic, a conspirator against the Turkish power. He was deposed and removed from the throne, restoring his lay name, Andrei. He was sentenced to life imprisonment at St. Catherine's Monastery, Mount Sinai" (Giurescu 1946: 858-859).

He did not get to the place of exile. At Mavrocordat's command, the Ottoman guards who accompanied Saint Anthimos, "after crossing the Danube, in Galipolis, near the Dulcia River, which passes through Adrianople, cut him into pieces and threw him into the river that is now called Marița" (Gibescu 1907: 74).

The martyrdom of Saint Anthimos took place on September 27, 1716.

The centuries have dressed the Holy Hierarch Martyr Anthimos the Iberian, Metropolitan of Wallachia, in the well-deserved garment of recognition and honor. He was a complex personality, endowed with many talents that, with great faith, Saint Anthimos understood to multiply, in the historical context in which he lived. For this reason, he is certainly among the most emblematic figures of the early eighteenth century, remaining in the consciousness of the Romanian people both through his theological thought, his vocation as a pastor, his special erudition, and through the diverse work he carried out.

The art of printing, the bridge created by Metropolitan Anthimos between the Gospel and the people

The end of the seventeenth century and the beginning of the eighteenth century summed up a period of time characterized by extensive political turmoil and tension, especially in Southern and Eastern Europe.

Wallachia, although under Ottoman domination, nevertheless benefited from a relative internal autonomy. In the Romanian space, the Orthodox Church was the only institution that could maintain the

cultural and religious cohesion of the people. However, in order to achieve this national goal, faithful, wise and hardworking hierarchs were needed.

A good example of this is Saint Anthimos the Iberian who, in the historical circumstances mentioned, proved to be "the right man in the right place".

A good connoisseur of the Romanian language, but also of the Greek, Slavonic, Arabic, Turkish and Georgian languages, Metropolitan Anthimos the Iberian has folded as best he could on the path of cultural effervescence and the rebirth of the Orthodox identity initiated and supported with great ambition by Constantin Brâncoveanu. "As a man of letters, he had great merit, printing several books in Romanian, Slavonic, Greek, Latin and Arabic" (Gibescu 1907: 74). In a relatively short time, Saint Anthimos became, deservedly, the central figure of the entire process of Romanianization of the religious and secular culture in Wallachia, a truth that may seem paradoxical if we take into account the ethnic origins of this gifted Metropolitan.

There are numerous and diverse achievements and contributions that have been recognized to Saint Anthimos the Iberian. Many of these are presented and deepened in the rich literature. Among these, the role and efforts that Saint Anthimos carried out in the typographic field stand out in particular.

First as abbot of the Snagov Monastery, later as Bishop of Râmnic Nouă Severin and, finally, as Metropolitan of Ungrovlachia, Anthimos the Iberian printed over 60 works, in various languages (Ciobanu 1989: 231).

Among these, keeping the chronological order, we mention the following considered to be more important:

Teachings of Vasile the Macedonian to his son Leon (1691), printed immediately after his arrival in Wallachia. It is considered to be the first creation of Saint Anthimos in the Romanian space (Călinescu 1964: 530-531).

Greek-Romanian Gospel (1693).

Romanian Psalter, with molitves to all kathismas (1694) (Cireșeanu 1910: 112).

The Ordinances of the Service of the Holy Emperors Constantine and Helen (1696).

An Anthology, a Gospel, in Romanian, and a Slavonic Grammar (1697).

Book or light, with just proofs, from the dogmas of the Eastern Church, and on the distinction of the Catholics (1699). It is a reprint of the work signed by Maximus the Peloponnesian.

Orthodox Confession (1699), printed in Greek.

The Flower of the Gifts or Christian Teachings (1700), translation from Greek of the writing *Fiore di virtù*, composed by the Benedictine monk Tommaso Gozzadini (1260-1329), in the thirteenth century.

The Proschinitary of the Holy Mountain (description of holy places), composed by one of the doctors of Prince Constantin Brâncoveanu, namely Ioan Comnenus (1701).

Also in 1701, he printed a *Greek-Arabic Liturgy*. In the context of the latter printing, in the specialized literature it is recorded that "the Arabic machine from Snagov was given by Brâncoveanu to Patriarch Athanasie IV Dabbas, who used it to print the books from Aleppo, Syria" (Călinescu 1964: 116).

The New Testament, Akathist in Romanian and a *Greco-Arabic Clock* (1702).

Slavonic Ceaslov (1703) and a *Molitvelnic* in two editions (1706 and 1713), in Romanian language.

A Gospel in Romanian, *Antologhion* or *The Flower of Words* and the work *Tome of Joy*, in Greek (1705).

A Slavo-Romanian Minei and an *Octoih* (1706).

Speech delivered on the occasion of his ascension to the throne of Metropolitan of Wallachia (1708).

The Faces of the Old and New Testament (1709), the work also includes a genealogy of the Savior, up to Adam, materialized in 505 portraits worked in pen, 3 sketches and 8 drawings.

A Romanian *Octoih* (1712) and a *Liturgy* in Romanian (1713).

A Slavo-Romanian *Ceaslov* (1714), a *Catavasier* in Romanian, in two editions (1714 and 1715) and a *Clock* in Romanian (1715).

Heads of commandment to the entire ecclesiastical group and the *Charter for the abolition of the cowherd* (1714), "form, together, a veritable manual of civil law" (Călinescu 1964: 340). In particular, the work *Heads of Commandment*, which is "an encyclical of the Metropolitan addressed to the priests of his diocese" (Cireșeanu 1910: 119), was called by researchers "the last Romanian rule before the Phanariot period" (Călinescu 1964: 348), important for rules regarding the drawing up of wills, dowry sheets, but also for the guidelines regarding the marriage between Romanians and Gypsies or the status of Romanian priests freed from serfdom.

Heads of Command is the expression of the hierarchical authority of Saint Metropolitan Anthimos the Iberian, but also the result of his fatherly care for the diocese he pastored.

Compared to another representative work, *the Didachies*, the writing of *Heads of Commandment* consists of clear, concisely formulated prescriptions, addressed especially to clergy and monks, in a context in which the Orthodox Church of Ungrovlahia was facing serious challenges: the decline of monastic life, moral deviations among the clergy, a tendency to relax canonical ordinances under the influence of the unstable political context. Although it approaches, in its form and tone, the classical pravilnic texts, nevertheless, in *the Heads of Commandment*, St. Anthimos did not render the canons formally, but offered an application of them to the immediate needs of the Church, offering his contemporaries a living pastoral code, which expresses the Orthodox ideal of service understood as responsibility, not as privilege. This is why the work *Heads of Commandment* remains a true legal-canonical and pastoral monument, which is part of the tradition of Orthodox canon law adapted to the Romanian context at the beginning of the eighteenth century.

Christian-political advice, in Greek (1715) (Rotaru 2006: 79).

The Didachies remain the masterpiece of Saint Hierarch Anthimos the Iberian, "the adornment of all his literary works" (Gibescu 1907: 76). The work consists of 28 sermons, grouped into two volumes, the first comprising homilies and sermons on the Great Feasts (1709-1716), and the second consisting of sermons for all Sundays throughout the year.

Although in the literature it has been highlighted that Saint Anthimos was inspired by the sermons and homilies of the greek preacher Ilie Miniati (1669-1714), who was his contemporary, *the Didachies* are particularized by originality, practical sense and oratorical talent, which is why Saint Anthimos was called, deservedly, "the first great church orator in the Romanian language" (Călinescu 1964: 540).

The often polemical and courageous tone of the homilies indicates the assumption of a hierarch who was aware of the dangers of the time, both spiritual and political. In ecclesiastical literature, *the Didachies* of Saint Anthimos the Iberian remain a valuable landmark also in that, in their content, we find a unique synthesis between theology, Christian morality and prophetic attitude. In an era of moral and political crisis, Anthimos the Iberian, through *his Didachies*, fulfilled the role of voice of the Church's conscience.

At the same time, one of the defining aspects of *the Didachies* remains the moralizing tone, often severe, but loving. Anthimos addresses the clergy, dignitaries, and people, criticizing corruption, shallowness of faith, immorality, and lack of compassion. A relevant aspect is that the criticisms they formulate are not general, but punctual and assumed. He denounces sins "by name and surname": greed, injustice, the laziness of the clergy, the lack of love for one's neighbour, etc. But he does not do this out of hatred, but with the pain of a parent who wants the correction of his spiritual children. "It is better to hate me for the truth than to love me for the lie", said Metropolitan Anthimos in one of his sermons, an eloquent expression of his moral uprightness. Certainly, it can be said that Metropolitan Anthimos the Iberian "is original in his eloquence and

especially in the quality of the language that dresses the ideas in his sermons. His stylistic procedures, comparisons and metaphors, plastic images and epithets place him among the great writers of our medieval literature" (Călinescu 1964: 540).

A reference chapter in the pastoral work of Saint Anthimos: the first national printing house of Georgia

The prodigious typographic activity carried out by Saint Anthimos the Iberian reveals to us the many qualities of this worthy Metropolitan. He was a polyglot, a great lover of books, a responsible and erudite hierarch, a diligent worker in the service of the Church and the nation. "Due to his work as a printer-scholar, in Brâncoveanu's time there were no less than five printing houses operating in Wallachia, with more or less continuous activity: in Bucharest, in Snagov, in Târgoviște, in Buzău, in Râmnic" (Ciobanu 1989: 231).

If his training as a master printer is different, opinions are different, one thing remains certain: Saint Anthimos "was the creator of a typographic school, from which the brilliant Mihai Iștvanovici, Gheorghe Radovici, Dinisie Floru and others emerged"(Ciobanu 1989: 231).

In particular, the master printer Mihai Ștefan or Iștvanovici became the apostle and messenger across the borders of the pastoral and cultural mission that Saint Anthimos the Iberian carried out in his time. I am referring here in particular to the fact that Mihai Iștvanovici was the one who, on several occasions, successfully fulfilled the responsibility of representative or delegate of the Metropolitan of Wallachia in terms of learning and spreading the craft of printing in various Orthodox centres of the time. Thus, between 1697 and 1699 he worked in Bălgrad, and between 1702 and 1708 he was present in Aleppo, Syria, where he founded printing houses and taught and transmitted the art of printing.

In 1708, at the insistent calls of King Vahtang IV of Iveria, with the agreement of Prince Brâncoveanu and the blessing of Anthimos the Iberian, Mihai Iștvanovici arrived in Tiflis (Tbilisi), Georgia, where he remained for about four years, until 1712. Here, in the capital of Georgia, Iștvanovici organized a printing house, with the support he received from Wallachia, and published several books, training Georgian apprentices who continued his printing activity (Bianu & Simionescu 1944: 32-38). The presence and achievements of Michael Iștvanovici in Georgia open a special chapter in the biography of Saint Anthimos the Iberian, namely the way he managed relations with the Georgian people.

We have already mentioned the Georgian origins of Saint Anthimos the Iberian. Although his life took a providential turn in the Romanian space, Metropolitan Anthimos has not forgotten where he started from. Often, the works he printed bear the signature of their author, which is also a true testimony of identity: "Anthimos, Georgian by birth" or "Anthimos, hieromonk, printer from Iveria". It is the business card through which Metropolitan Anthimos assumed and respectfully cultivated his origin.

The merit of Anthimos the Iberian is that "he gave a new bearing to the graphic arts in Wallachia, combining the craft of printing with that of the engraver" (Giurescu 1946: 1009).

However, from this position of connoisseur of the art of printing, Saint Anthimos became a bridge between two Orthodox worlds: his native Georgia (Iveria) and the Romanian Lands, where he completed his missionary, cultural and spiritual work.

As a tireless scholar and gifted church artist, Metropolitan Anthimos managed to mediate, with great wisdom and love for the Church, the rapprochement between the Georgian cultural tradition and the culture of Wallachia. To the Romanian believers he gifted, with great skill and love, "the floral motifs found in all the art objects of the Brâncoveanu era" (Iorga 1934: 124). These floral motifs contributed to the definition of the Brâncoveanu cultural style, which has lasted until today.

To the faithful Georgian people, Saint Anthimos gave the most precious fruit of his formation and experience on Romanian soil: the craft of printing and the priceless treasure of publishing books. In this re-

gard, the specialized bibliography reminds that among the important achievements of Metropolitan Anthimos was that he sent winepresses made by him, personally, with Georgian letters, for the establishment and organization of a printing house in Tiflis, Georgia. Because the responsibilities of Bishop did not allow him to go to his native homeland himself, Saint Anthimos sent, along with the technical equipment, a team of Romanian printers and craftsmen, led by his apprentice, Stefan Iştvánovici. "Identified with the aspirations of his adopted country, for which he worked and suffered, Anthimos the Iberian did not forget Iveria and the people from whose rank he rose. For the cultural uplift of Georgia, he sent there his most skilled printer, Mihai Iştvánovici, who printed, between 1709 and 1712, no less than ten books" (Călinescu 1964: 535).

Subsequently, after Iştvánovici left for the Netherlands, the printing house in Tiflis continued its activity until 1722, under the leadership of Georgian craftsmen trained by Mihai Iştvánovici. Russian invasions have interrupted.

About this printing house founded through the efforts of Metropolitan Anthimos the Iberian, some researchers have recalled that it was "the first national printing house, a product of the Romanian printing workshops, which contributed decisively to the cultural elevation of Georgia" (Ştrempel 1972: VII).

We do not know all the titles of the prints that were made in the Tiflis printing house. It is quite possible that they were cult books in Georgian, just as most of the writings that appeared in Wallachia were also cult books. For example, it is recalled that, in 1710, a *Liturgy*, which, at first, had the coat of arms of the Bagratids, the dynasty that ruled Georgia, and the portrait of Vahtang VI. There is also mention of the printing of an Apostle (1712) and a poem by Vahtang.

At the same time, the information according to which two copies of a *Gospel Book*, printed in 1709, were brought to Wallachia and given by Anthimos the Iberian, on the occasion of the name day, on May 21, 1709, to Prince Constantin Brâncoveanu. This edition of the Gospel Book "was adorned with engravings made in the manner of those who adorn the books printed in our country, probably made by the hand of Anthimos. Both include the autograph dedication of the metropolitan, a word of praise for the Lord who has made it possible for the land of the Ivers to be enriched with the patterns of his language" (Ştrempel 1972: XXI).

Some researchers also recall a *Bible*, printed in 1710, in which Mihai Iştvánovici wrote four Romanian verses with Georgian letters. "This scriptural manifestation in the Georgian Bible is the concretization of an idea of Anthimos the Iberian" (Bărbulescu 1928: 18), the erudite Romanian Metropolitan who, in the preface of another of his works, *The Slavic Grammar* (1697), stated: "it is admirable and comforting for everyone, when in his furrow grows some grain of foreign language" (Bărbulescu 1928: 18). According to other researchers, those verses were "stihurs in which the Georgian king Vahtang thanked Brâncoveanu for the printing house and the craftsmen" (C. 1951: 157).

The initiative and openness to support the Georgian people with a printing house and master printers is not something new in the complex activity carried out by the Holy Hierarch Martyr Anthimos the Iberian. He had also helped the Orthodox Church in Transylvania, but also many other Orthodox centres, such as, for example, the one in Syria, in Aleppo, or the one in Egypt. This time, however, it was about his brothers of origin. "Anthimos was an Iberian, from Iveria, Iberia of the Caucasus, a country with a long and significant past in terms of defending the Christian religion, as well as in terms of art, and literature, less so. He never forgot this Iberia" (Iorga 1937: 613).

Certainly, Saint Anthimos the Iberian supported the Georgian people in other ways, than through the printing press sent to Tiflis in 1708. The prestige and influence he enjoyed helped the Metropolitan of Wallachia to maintain close relations with the Georgian Church and people.

The historical truth according to which the Romanian Lands and Georgia have shared, over the centuries, common religious and cultural values also contributed to maintaining this connection with the homeland.

The fact that Saint Anthimos kept in touch with his country of origin is also proven by the fact that Anthimos "had learned, in 1713, of the departure from Georgia of the disciple Mikhail Iștvanovici, who went first to Moscow, then to the Netherlands" (C. 1951: 157).

Regarding Mihai Iștvanovici's departure from Georgia, researchers' opinions are divided. Some of them says that he left Georgian soil and settled in the Netherlands, where nothing more was heard of him. Others show that Iștvanovici left Georgia at the initiative of King Vahtang, who sent him to Moscow in 1712 with a message, after which he sent him to Holland for improvement in the craft of printing. However, it seems that "Iștvanovici would have returned to Georgia, with letters bought from Holland, and would have printed both Greek books (Lauds of the Virgin Mary) and numerous other works" (C. 1951: 160).

Conclusions. The biographical journey of the Holy Hierarch Martyr Anthimos the Iberian, Metropolitan of Wallachia, represents a synthesis of the encounter between suffering and grace, between craft and mission, between the written word and the Incarnate Word.

The unpleasant experiences of his youth, complemented by his cultural and craft training in Constantinople, but also by the activity carried out in Wallachia, made the Metropolitan of Wallachia a providential man, with a decisive role in promoting culture, in the crystallization of the liturgical Romanian language and in the affirmation of the Romanian Orthodox conscience.

At the same time, through his efforts, Saint Anthimos the Iberian has managed to bring two Orthodox peoples, the Romanians and the Georgians, closer together around the same ideal of enlightenment through faith and culture. He is among those who served the Church and the nation as a metropolitan, a man, a theologian, a scholar and a printer.

The pastoral work of Saint Anthimos the Iberian is vast and rich, intense and necessary.

In particular, if we refer to the love he showed to the Georgian Orthodox faithful, we can say that Saint Anthimos is "the most outstanding figure of our past ties with Georgia" (C. 1951: 131). He remains in history as a Georgian who became a saint of the Romanian nation, but also a Romanian with an Iberian heart, who remained attached to his native country.

Precisely because of his merit of being a founder of language and culture, both for the Georgians and, especially, for the Romanian people, Saint Anthimos the Iberian entered for eternity in the collective memory of the two nations, being honoured, admired and regarded with gratitude. His example of life and ministry puts before us a truth that is as important as it is profound and essential: God knows no ethnic boundaries, and the Gospel must not only be translated into languages, but also into human lives. On these two moral principles were built all the achievements of Saint Anthimos the Iberian.

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