

AN UNPUBLISHED ACCOUNT OF 1676 ON CATHOLICISM IN WALLACHIA

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The writings of the Franciscan Observant missionary Anton Stepančić are important to a better knowledge of the Catholic Church in Wallachia, the region north of the Danube, in the last decades of the seventeenth century. Until now, only his accounts written in 1673 and before August 1688 were known¹.

Stepančić's letter of 20 February 1676, written at Chiprovaț, Bulgaria, includes a report on the situation of the Catholic Church in Wallachia. This unpublished document, written in Latin, was found by me at the National Archives of Bucharest, under the form of a microfilm. In addition to information already at hand, the document adds a series of new data. One may see that the document in question was employed by Urbano Cerri, the secretary of the Congregation of Propaganda Fide, in the concise presentation of the Catholic Church in Wallachia made in 1677, which was further included in the Memoir on Catholicism all over the world, forwarded to Pope Innocent XI (1676-1689)².

For a better insight into Catholicism in the region north of the Danube, the information provided by Anton Stepančić on Wallachia should be confronted with the information provided by his superior, the Archbishop of Sofia Petru Bogdan Bakšić³.

Anton Stepančić was born in Chiprovaț, Bulgaria, approximately in 1640-1645⁴. Until now, the Catholic missionary was believed to have come to Wallachia in 1670, to remain here until 1677, when he became Bishop of Nicopolis⁵. According to this letter of 1676, Anton Stepančić had been in Wallachia for seven years, and had been sent there by his superiors. He remained in the principality until August 1675, when he was elected guardian of the monastery of Chiprovaț by

¹ Eusebius Fermendžin, *Acta Bulgariae ecclesiastica ab A. 1565 usque ad A. 1799*, Zagrabiae, 1887, doc. CLXXIX, pp. 288-289; *Relația anonimă latină despre Țara Românească (înainte de august 1688)*, in *Călători străini despre Țările Române*, ed. by M. Holban, M. M. A. D. Bulgaru and Paul Cernovodeanu, vol. VII, București, 1980, pp. 441-463.

² I. Bianu, *Vito Piluzio. Documente inedite din Arhivul Propagandei*, in "Columna lui Traian", 1883, doc. VII (1676), pp. 161-164; N. Iorga, *Călători, ambasadori și misionari în țările noastre și asupra țărilor noastre*, București, 1899, pp. 52-56; Urbano Cerri, *Relația despre Țara Românească și Moldova 1676-1678*, in *Călători străini*, pp. 487-489.

³ Alexandru Ciocîltan, *Catolicismul în Țara Românească în relatări edite și inedite ale arhiepiscopului de Sofia Petru Bogdan Bakšić (1663, 1668 și 1670)*, in "Revista istorică", t. XVIII, 2007, nos 1-2, pp. 61-90.

⁴ Ivan Dujčev, *Il Cattolicesimo in Bulgaria nel sec. XVII secondo i processi informativi sulla nomina dei vescovi cattolici*, Roma, 1937, p. 67.

⁵ *Ibidem*, p. 67; see his biography in *Călători străini*, pp. 310-311.

the chapter of the Bulgarian Custody; after this election and until 20 February 1676, when he wrote the letter, he seems to have returned to Wallachia on two occasions. This should not be surprising, as the document shows that he was still holding the office of Vicar General of Wallachia. This office had been entrusted to him by the Archbishop of Sofia, in 1670, during the latter's visitation to Wallachia, on which occasion Stepančić had been requested by the archbishop to have the church in Bucharest reconstructed. According to Stepančić's letter of 1676, the last visitation of Bakšić (who died in September 1674) to Wallachia took place in 1670, when sickness and old age compelled the higher prelate to appoint a Vicar General for administration of the territory north of the Danube in his name. Therefore, Stepančić's uninterrupted stay in Wallachia should be placed between 1668 and August 1675. During his mission, the Wallachian throne was occupied successively by four princes: Radu Leon Tomşa (1665-1669), Antonie of Popeşti (1669-1672), Grigore Ghica (1672-1673), and Gheorghe Duca (1673-1678). According to his accounts of 1673, 1676 and 1688, Stepančić had free access to the Prince's Court, and knew well the organization and the high offices of the principality. Stepančić's accounts confirm the information provided by Bakšić and reflects the involution of Catholicism in Wallachia⁶.

There were numerous Bulgarian Catholic merchants trading in Wallachia, some of whom had shops in various townlets. In several places north of the Danube there were Catholic Paulicians, who had fled Ottoman persecution.

The 40 Catholic households of Câmpulung mentioned in 1676 made up the only Catholic parish in Wallachia. Eight years before, the Archbishop of Sofia had noted the existence of 200 Catholics in town⁷, an indication of demographic stability in the interval 1668-1676. Stepančić noted in 1676 that the Catholics of Câmpulung had much to suffer from the Orthodox, on account of their faith⁸. Their father was an Observant Franciscan monk, who had difficulty in making ends meet and was living on the charity of the Catholic believers.

There was not a single Catholic left in Târgovişte; two churches had functioned there: the church of the parish, dedicated to Sancta Maria Gratiarum, of which the walls and the intact tower were left, and the monastery of St. Francis. Both of them had been burnt down by the Tatars. The walls of the monastery were

⁶ A. Ciocîltan, *op. cit.*; idem, *Dispariția comunității germane din Câmpulung-Muscel*, in "Revista istorică", t. XVI, 2005, nos 3-4, pp. 123-144.

⁷ Idem, *Catolicismul în Țara Românească*.

⁸ The same author notes in his account of 1688 that the Catholics in the town "are pauperized, exhausted and enfeebled; they suffer much harm and persecution from the Romanians. They are told by the latter, 'Be baptized, heathen, and the burden of taxes will be lowered.'" see *Relația anonimă*, p. 461.

still erect, but no restoration work could be done for lack of funds. A Franciscan monk lived near the Church of St. Francis. The missionary was living on the revenue from the vineyards of the monastery, tended by ten Romanian subjects exempt from all taxes. This information can also be found in other sources dealing with the Catholic monastery of Târgoviște. Stepančić notes that the monastery was able to employ the Romanian subjects only when the ruling prince was favorable to the Catholics, but not when he was an enemy of the Catholics. In this latter situation, the monk was barely able to make a living. No doubt, the Vicar General of Wallachia refers to Radu Leon Tomșa, an enemy of the Catholics, who annulled the privilege of the monastery to employ several families of subjects exempt from taxes. The other princes, Grigore Ghica (during both his reigns) and Antonie of Popești were favorable to the Catholics⁹. During his stay in Wallachia, Anton Stepančić had his residence in Târgoviște, and so did the monk who succeeded him.

The residence of the prince was in Bucharest. Here the Catholics “sometimes more numerous, other times fewer” were of various nationalities: Italian, French, German, Hungarian, Polish, Bulgarian, Serbian, Bosnian, and from Epyrus. Many of them were mercenaries; others were traders. On Church holidays, the monk of Târgoviște would travel to Bucharest in order to hold service for them. The Catholic church of Bucharest, which Stepančić terms “chapel”, was dedicated to the Immaculate Conception of Virgin Mary. Burnt down by the Tatars in 1659, the church was left without a roof for several years, until a new roof was built at the expense of Radu Leon Tomșa’s spouse, who was a Catholic of Pera. However, the new vault “rough and poorly built” and the weak foundation caused the collapse of the entire building around the Easter of 1670¹⁰. The Orthodox Patriarch of Jerusalem, Dositheos II Notaras (1669-1707), on a charity mission to Wallachia, put about the idea that the collapse of the Catholic edifice was the result of the curse he had pronounced against it during his sermons. The Romanians and the Greeks believed it a miracle. The Franciscan missionary stated that the “miracle” was nothing but a lie. Indeed, six months before the arrival of the Patriarch in Wallachia, seeing that the church was in danger of collapsing, he had ordered it boarded shut, and had been holding mass in a private home¹¹. In May 1673, during the second reign of Grigore Ghica, Patriarch Dositheos made another trip to Wallachia. He upbraided the Prince for allowing the Catholics to begin the

⁹ A. Ciocîltan, *Catholicismul în Țara Românească*.

¹⁰ E. Fermendžin, *Acta Bulgariae*, pp. 288-289; A. Ciocîltan, *Catholicismul în Țara Românească*.

¹¹ The patriarch traveled to Wallachia in February 1670, see Dumitru Stăniloae, *Viața și activitatea patriarhului Dosofteiu al Ierusalimului și legăturile lui cu Țările Românești*, Cernăuți, 1929, p. 7.

rebuilding of their church. However, the ruling prince defended the Catholics¹². Stepančić believed the Patriarch to be the fiercest enemy of the Catholics.

During his exile in Vienna, Grigore Ghica had secretly converted to Catholicism. As a result, during his second reign in Wallachia he assisted the Catholics in having their church in Bucharest rebuilt. Anton Stepančić noted in 1676 that the Bulgarian Catholic merchants who were trading in Wallachia and had shops there donated 90 dollars for the rebuilding of the church; a Romanian boyar, 20 dollars; the former prince Ghica, 70 dollars; and he himself, had managed to procure 40 dollars¹³. With this money, the Vicar General of Wallachia began the building of a small church, the walls of which were raised two cubits off the ground. However, the Prince joined the Turks in the war against Poland, and the men who had pocketed the money for the bricks accompanied him on the expedition. The boyards left in charge during the Prince's absence, who were little tolerant of the Catholic Church, ordered the mortar and the sand to be employed in the construction work on the Prince's court, and promised that the entire quantity would be restored upon the Prince's return. Grigore Ghica never came back to the throne, and his successor, Gheorghe Duca, gave no further assistance to the project. No additional money could be raised for the reconstruction of the Catholic church in Bucharest from the Catholics living in Wallachia or in Bulgaria, who had been reduced to poverty by the wars in Poland. On the other hand, the Romanians were unwilling to offer any help. As a result, the project failed. The Catholic missionary advised the cardinals of the Congregation of Propaganda Fide that the absence of a Catholic church from the capital town of Wallachia was prone to affect the position of the Roman Church and trigger, among other, the loss of many believers.

In his letter of 1676, after a brief description of Orthodox monachal life in Wallachia and the links with the monasteries of Mount Athos and the Holy Land, Anton Stepančić speaks about relations between the various denominations. Therefore, the Orthodox hegoumenos and monks would gather up at the Prince's Court for church festivals, "and if they happened to see a Catholic monk, they would abuse him and attack the Florentine Synod (especially the Pope's primacy, the Crede, and Filioque), berating it to the best of their abilities." They were irreducible enemies of Catholicism. The Franciscan missionary further notes: "At the Prince's Court and at the Metropolitanate and in many other places, debates are held between the Greeks [= Orthodox] and any of our monks who happens to be

¹² E. Fermendžin, *Acta Bulgariae*, pp. 288-289.

¹³ The name of the Romanian boyar who made the donation is quoted in *Relația anonimă*, p. 461: (Radu) Năsturel. However, the amount differs. Written shortly after the event, the account of 1676 should be deemed more reliable.

there. We are nonetheless allowed to answer freely and use the sword of reason against their senseless talk. The Catholics are not forbidden to defend their dogmas [...] The Lutherans and the Calvinists of Transylvania, who are often seen at the Prince's Court, would take advantage of any opportunity and challenge the Catholic monks, but they can be answered freely, so that their errors should be mended. The Jews and the Turks also discuss faith with the Catholic monks occasionally, and they can also be answered freely, although not so freely as far as all the Turks are concerned." One may see in this an interest in denominational polemics at the Prince's Court and in several other places as well. Dogmatic differences made the object of heated theological debate. Faith was being discussed with Jews and with Turks as well.

Anton Stepančić suggests to the cardinals of the Congregation of Propaganda Fide that two or three well-prepared Observant monks should be sent over, in order to "teach Latin to children in Târgoviște, in our house (hospitium), for many boyards would be willing to have their children taught by us" Two other proposals refer to the reconstruction of the church in Târgoviște and the creation of a seminar for the clergy of the Bulgarian Custody. The underlying goal was to attract the Romanians to the Catholic faith.

The idea of attracting the sons of the Romanian boyards to Catholicism was not new. Petru Cercel (1583-1585) had considered sending such young persons to Rome, to be educated there by the Jesuits¹⁴. In the time of Matei Basarab (1632-1654), the Greek-Latin school founded at Târgoviște by Pantaleo Ligaridis worked towards attracting the Romanians to Catholicism¹⁵.

Anton Stepančić informed his superiors in Rome that "many Romanian boyards are very friendly to the Latin monks, and occasionally make charity to them and honor them, but there are many others who, together with the people, declare them and all the Catholics odious to God, and abhor them." The Archbishop of Sofia, Petru Bogdan Bakšić, also speaks of the favorable attitude of some boyards towards the Catholics¹⁶.

The letter of 1676 also makes brief reference to the condition of Catholics in Moldavia, who "afflicted by wars and raids and struck by the plague, have died for the most" The text, in its present form, seems to suggest that only one third of these Catholics survived. Three or four priests had also perished, including the Apostolic Vicar of Moldavia. The information should not be surprising, since in

¹⁴ Francesco Sivori, *Plecarea spre Țara Românească*, in *Călători străini*, vol. III, 1971, pp. 28-29.

¹⁵ Victor Papacostea, *Originile învățământului superior în Țara Românească*, in *Civilizație românească și civilizație balcanică. Studii istorice*, ed. by C. Papacostea-Danielopolu, București, 1983, pp. 259-282.

¹⁶ A. Ciocîltan, *Catholicismul în Țara Românească*.

1672-1676 Moldavia suffered from the clashes of the Turks and the Tatars with the Poles, and subsequently from a terrible plague epidemic¹⁷.

Anton Stepančić's contacts with Wallachia did not end after 1677, when he became bishop of Nicopolis. On 30 March 1682, through the Archbishop of Antivari, he requested from the Holy Congregation the right to administer, as an Apostolic Vicar, the territory of Wallachia falling under the authority of the Archbishop of Sofia. Stepančić founded his argumentation on being the nearest bishop to the related territory, and thus able to travel there more often than the Archbishop of Sofia, who used to make one such visit every two or three years. According to Anton Stepančić, Wallachia could also serve as a place of refuge from Ottoman persecution¹⁸. However, the request of the Bishop of Nicopolis went unanswered.

Stepančić wrote his texts of 1673 and 1676 under the circumstances in which the Ottoman Empire had launched yet another offensive against Poland. When the bishop was writing his new account on Wallachia (before August 1688), a radical change had occurred in the geo-political background: the Habsburg troops had freed large territories in Central Europe, and had advanced as far as the Carpathians, where they were preparing a new attack on the Ottomans. Bishop Stepančić, who had fled to the north of the Danube in 1687, was hoping that the Habsburgs would defeat the Ottoman troops, free Wallachia and Bulgaria, and create in these two regions a privileged regime for the Catholic cult. The Bulgarian Catholics put all their hopes in the victory of the Austrians, and in September 1688 they launched an anti-Ottoman revolt in the Chiprovaț region. The suppression of the revolt dealt a lethal blow to Catholicism in Bulgaria. Thousands of Catholics fled into Wallachia and Transylvania; very many of them were nevertheless killed or enslaved by the Turks. Starting with 1687, the Wallachian authorities sent Bishop Stepančić on several embassies to the Habsburgs. The higher prelate died in Vienna on 21 October 1691¹⁹.

Anton Stepančić, who spent seven years in Wallachia as a missionary and came to know it thoroughly, provides in his writings essential information for a better understanding of the history of this province in general, and of Catholicism in particular.

¹⁷ Paul Cernovodeanu, Paul Binder, *Cavalerii apocalipsului. Calamitățile naturale din trecutul României (până la 1800)*, București, 1993, p. 93.

¹⁸ E. Fermeňin, *Acta Bulgariae*, doc. CLXXXIX, pp. 295-297.

¹⁹ *Călători străini*, vol. VII, pp. 311-312, 447-449.

ANNEX

Eminentissimi et Reverendissimi Patres et Domini, Domini mei Colendissimi,

Septem transiere anni a quo me mei superiores in Valachiam Transalpinam miserunt, ubi biennio expleto, visitam faciens quondam pie defunctus Dominus Archiepiscopus Sardicensis per Valachiam Vicarius Apostolicus, me suum Vicarium Generalem in sua Provincia reliquit, qui senio diversisque morbis confectus, amplius Valachiam non visitavit, quia morte præventus in Christo requiescit. Scio optime dictum Dominum bonæ memoriæ Archiepiscopum dedisse Vestris sacris purpureisque Eminentijs plenam et sufficientem informationem, sed anceps sum, ne in tam longo et arduo itinere literæ sint amissæ. Ideo zelus Domus Dei me comedens et meam pauperulam conscientiam exonerare desiderans, ne tacens reus sceleris apud verum Pastorem (qui nonaginta novem pro una perdita relictis, ipsam inventam humeris imponit) inveniar et iudicer. Ideo Vestræ Sacræ Congregationi (quibus cura animarum fidelium incumbit) fideliter, nude, syncere, pure et simpliciter statum fidelium in Valachia Transalpina notifico et nihil aliud optans, nisi salutem animarum ac inter tot veritati hostes Sanctæ Romanæ Ecclesiæ exaltationem, amplitudinem et decorem totis viribus affectans, super conscientias Vestrarum Eminentiarum omnia relinquo, quæ vestro arbitrio sint examinanda. Hęc quæ infrascripturus sum, scribenda erant iam dudum, sed multæ causæ (quæ si Sacra Congregatio vellet, possent notificari) me totaliter impediverunt.

Provincia Valachiæ othomanico Imperio tributaria Principem suum, ut absolutum Dominum a Porta othomanica recipit quem, uti Turcæ suum Imperatorem, Valachi adeo timent et verentur qui, more Turcico, solus iudicat et ius gladij habet, mox ut vult quemlibet decapitari iubet et ad suum placitum tributa quęcunque gravia leviaque imponit.

Valachi et eorum Princeps sunt omnes Ritus Gręci, Schismatis fautores, eorum Monachi sunt Calugheri Basiliani, schisma gręcum et suos errores acerrime defendentes; ideo Sanctæ Romanæ Ecclesiæ infensi. In Valachia sunt omnes monasterij Valachorum per se independentes ab aliquo Generali et eorum Hegumani, iussu Principis, accipiunt curam Monasterij et prioratum. At Monasteris Gręcorum qui sunt in Terra Sancta et in Gręcia (presertim in Monte Sancto, ut vocant illi) suas possessiones, rura et subditos ac oratoria, (ut illi dicunt) Metoh, per Valachiam et Moldaviam habent, ubi præcipui Monachi et Hegumani eorum morantur et multoties per annum, præsertim in magnis solemnitatibus, in Aula Principis quasi omnes congregantur et si quem ex catholicis Religiosis vident illico

eum aggrediuntur et Sacram Oecumenicam Florentinam Synodum acriter oppugnantes (præcipue primatum Sanctę Romanę Ecclesię et illum Sacrum Symboli, Filioque procedit etc.) quampluries deblaterant. In Aula Principis et in Metropolia eorum ac in multis locis sæpius occurrunt disceptationes inter Gręcos et si quis est ex nostris Religiosis. Possumus tamen libere ipsis respondere et eorum procacitati rationis gladio obviare. Non est prohibitum Catholicis sua dogmata defendere, hoc tamen solum cavendum ne cum audioribus et cum humanioribus concertetur nam alioquin ad viagia et conviva pervenitur quod nec honestum catholicis, nec utile ecclesię esse quis ignorat. Lutherani et Calvinistę ex Transylvania, qui crebrius in Principis Aula reperiuntur, data opportunitate loci et temporis, subito Religiosos catholicorum adoriuntur quibus libere potes responderi, ut eorum errores enerventur. Hebrei etiam et Turcę aliquando cum Religiosis catholicorum de fide disceptant, quibus libere respondetur, sed non tam libere omnibus Turcis.

In Valachiam diversi Patriarchę, tum exules, tanquam ad asylum, tum suas sedes occupantes, pro eleemosyna petenda conveniunt, præsertim ille pessimus inimicus Sanctę Romanę Ecclesię Patriarcha Hierosolimitanus et quasi omnes cum Catholicorum Religiosis desiderant disputare et contra Sanctam Ecclesiam Romanam sui pectoris venena effutise. Per Valachiam fuit Vicarius Apostolicus quondam pie defunctus Dominus Archiepiscopus Sardicensis vir utique doctrina et sapientia clarus ac vitę probitate celebris; nunc autem eo iam defuncto a Sacra Congregatione expectatur successor.

Per Valachiam huc illucque vagantur cum diversis mercibus multi negotiatores nostri Bulgari Catholici quorum nonnulli in diversis oppidulis apothecas mercium tenent. Sunt etiam in quamplurimis locis confugitivi Catholici ex Paulianistis qui oppressi assiduis turcicis tributis et aggravationibus compulsi sunt proprias sedes relinquere.

Compilongi sunt circa 40 domus catholicę quę multa a Schismaticis ob fidem Catholicam et Ritum Romanum patiuntur. Templum habent adeo vetus et integrum, satis magnum et domum commodam iuxta dictum templum, ubi unus Religiosus ex Ordine et Custodia nostra Bulgarię moratur et Sacramenta ecclesię illis Catholicis administrat et vix vivit ex eleemosynis adeo tenuit ex festivis atque Dominicis diebus. Ipsis signo Campanę in templum confluentibus, suis temporibus persolvit matutinum, canit Te Deum Laudamus et Hymnum ad Laudes cum Benedictus Sacrum et vespas a Capitulo.

Tergovistij ubi ego habebam Residentiam, Princeps Provincię cum sua Aula prius residebat, sed ne sit procul a Danubio et ut tollatur quęcunque nota

suspicionis ex iussu magni Turcę Residentia Principis mutata est Bukuresct, ab hinc sunt circa 20 anni. Tergovistij fuerunt prius duo Templa Catholicorum, Ecclesia Parochialis sub Titulo Sanctę Marię Gratiarum, cuius muri adhuc patent et turris integra persistit et circa ipsam sunt quorundam Valachorum domos; hoc templum posset facillime recuperari si alicuius emolumenti foret. Est et monasterium Fratrum Minorum de observantia cum suo templo sub Titulo Sancti Francisci, quę omnia a Tartaris sunt exusta. Templi muri sunt integri sed non est possibilitas illum restaurare et aliqua materia illum coaperire; iuxta Templum sunt domus satis bonę et honestę a nostris Patribus reffectę, ubi Religiosus habitat. Degit tamen dictus Religiosus non semper uniformiter sed iuxta Principum benevolentiam quando est Princeps amicus catholicis permittit ei decem rusticos immunes cuiuscunque tributi et liberos, qui aliquas vineas excolentes ex vino victum Religioso suppeditant et quando Princeps est hostis Sanctę Romanę Ecclesię vix et miserime ibi Religiosus sustentari potest; tamen Deo adiuvante et Religioso religiose se portante non desunt Dei auxilia. Tergovistij nulla domus catholica et raro pro nunc absente aula reperiuntur catholici. Idcirco ille Religiosus qui ibi habitat, quando aliqua festivitas occurrit, Bukuresctinum comigrat.

Bukuresctini ubi est pro nunc Residentia Principis, inveniuntur Catholici multoties plures, multoties pauciores et hi ex diversis nationibus: Itali, Galli, Germani, Hungari, Poloni, Bulgari, Serbi, Bosnenses, Epirotę quorum multi stipendijs obstricti militem agunt. Aliqui in Aula Principis inserviunt et aliqui pro negotijs diversis exercendis passim conveniunt; sunt et nonnulli qui ad emendas vendendasque merces et victualia convolant. Ibi erat una Capella sub nomine Immaculatę Conceptionis Magnę Domine nostrę, quę ex iniuria temporis sine tecto diu persistens, postea eleemosynis cuiusdam Principisę cooperta paucis post annis quia et fundamenta non erant bona et fornix erat adeo crassus et male constructus, funditus cecidit.

Ibi ego omnibus diebus solemnibus Sacrum faciebam et Sacramenta ecclesiastica administrabam quę et post ruinam dictę Capellę in domo privata faciebam, qui usque ad transactum Augustum moratus sum in Valachia Tergovistij vel Bukuresctini (quod distat Tergovistis circa 40 milliaribus Italicis) prout temporis necessitas postulabat; et facto Capitulo huius nostrę Custodię Patres me Chiprovatij Guardianum deputarunt et alium Patrem loco mei ibi morari curarunt a quo tempo [!] ego bis in Valachiam fui.

Ruina autem dictę Capellę non fuit sine iniuria Catholicorum, nam Schismatici sicut et cęteri hęretici semper sunt impostores et Catholicos diversis calumnijs mendaciter lacesant. Illi tunc promulgarunt per vulgum Patriarcham Hierusalimitanum (qui tunc Bukuresctini fuerat) prętereuntem dictam nostram

Capellam vidisse et interrogasse cuiusque Religionis erat? Cui cum responsum fuerat esse Papistarum illum statim ac audisse dictę Capellę maledixisse et illam execratum fuisse et anathematizasse; tunc dictam Capellam mox funditus corruisse quę prius integra erat. Hoc figmentum cum sit purum et evidens mendacium (nam ego sex mensibus ante adventum Patriarchę ob formidinem casus illam Capellam occluseram et in domo privata celebrabam) pro magno miraculo et rei veritate apud stolidos Valachos et impostores gręcos et pro nunc habetur.

Tunc non post multos dies adfuit pręmentionatus bonę memorię Dominus Archiepiscopus Sardicensis qui illico mihi iniunxit ut opportuno tempore adisem omnes catholicos qui huc illucque cum mercibus vagantur et qui apothecas habent pro eleemosina petenda ad pręmentionatam capellam restaurandam, quod et feci et ab illis circa nonaginta Imperiales recepi. Et quidam Baro Valachus dono dedit viginti, Princepsque pręteritus septuaginta et ego hinc illinque quo potui quadraginta et ad redificandam dictam Capellam aggressus sum et maiore parte materię pręparata quasi ecclesiole satis commodę fundamenta ieci; sed Satan et hic adfuit. Bellum Polonicum irruit et illi quibus antea dedi pecuniam pro lateribus coquendis compulsi fuerunt ad bellum cum Principe abire et sic muri remanserunt duobus cubitis a terra excitati. Et alij Barones Valachi, qui loco Principis Provintiam regebant, Sanctę Romanę Ecclesię inimici, Principe iam absente, iusserunt extraportare cęmentum et arenam ad construendos muros aulę Principis, pollicentes Principe venturo omnia quę acceperant se reddituros; at Princeps fuit privatus suo Principatu et alter in Provintiam venit et sic nostra spes tota evanuit.

Multoties Patriarcha Hierosolymitanus conatus est impedire ne nos ibi in Valachia templum faciamus et suam rabiem quam in Terra Sancta contra Catholicos et Sanctam Ecclesiam Romanam evomere non potest in Valachię et Moldavię Provintijs (licet quampluries cum suis visceribus) eiecit et eijcere non desistit.

Nunc, Patres Eminentissimi, non est alia spes unde posset aliqua pecunia inveniri pro dicta ecclesia ad finem perducenda. Nam Catholici, imminentibus bellis polonicis extenuati, tam illi qui sunt in Valachia, quam in Bulgaria vix se sustentant. Et Valachi nolunt adiuvere et sine pręmemorata ecclesia multę animę fidelium perduntur. Estne vero in dedecus nostrę Sanctę Ecclesię Romanę quod ubi est Caput et Metropolis tam celebris Provintię, Catholicos carere templo, quod arbitrio Vestrarum Eminentiarum submitto.

Meo autem iudicio videtur quod esset in magnam utilitatem Catholicę Religionis et pro decore Sanctę Romanę Ecclesię si Sacra Congregatio mitteret duos vel tres Religiosos ex ordine nostro (qui sint doctrina et vita conspicui) et eos suis

expensis teneret qui pueros instruerent idioma latinum Tergovistij in nostro hospitio, nam multi Valachorum Barones suos filios erudiendos nobis committerent et sic utilitas et decus Sanctę Romanę Ecclesię foret. Posset etiam Sacra Congregatio illud etiam templum quod est Tergovistij resarcire et iubere Patri Custodi nostrę Custodię ut ibi constituat Seminarium clericorum qui et divina officia in templo cum suis magistris et superioribus diu noctuque recitent et virtuti ac doctrinę vacarent et sic luceret omnibus lux veritatis Catholicę et maestas Sanctę Ecclesię Romanę toti Synagogę Gręcorum coruscaret et sic multi ex nostris inimicis, agnita veritate Religionis, glorificarent Patrem nostrum qui est in cęlis; nam plus movent exempla quam verba et bonus odor Christi a longe etiam sapit et recreati illum affectantes. Hoc opus esset adeo bonum, pium, sanctum et Deo charum.

Sciunt Vestrę Eminentię quamplures Valachorum Baronum valde benevolos esse erga latinos Religiosos eisque aliquas eleemosynas quandoque elargiri atque eos venerari; et quamplures cum vulgo toto ipsos et cęteros chacholicos [!] tanquam Deo abominabiles depatere et execrari.

Hęc quę usque modo scripsi ita sunt vera ut testis oculatus existo, sic me Deus in ultimo puncto meę vitę adiuvet. Potest etiam Sacra Congregatio aliunde informationem inquirere et si ita non sit ut scribo ut mendacem et seductorem me castiget et puniat. Hęc autem quę infra relata refero.

Audiui a quibusdam Valachis Baronibus et nostris Moldavis in Moldavia Catholicos duplicem morbum famemque pati, corporalem et spiritualem, primum quia bellis et incursionibus concussi pesteque contriti, maior pars eorum periit et huc illucque dispersi nescio remansit ne tertia; secundum quia ad minorem numerum redacti Pastores spirituales amiserunt; ibi defuncti sunt tres vel quatuor Sacerdotes inter quos et qui erat a Sacra Congregatione deputatus Vicarius Apostolicus per Moldaviam in Christo requiescit ac Templum Bakovię amnis Bistriza per medium funditus evertit.

Olim etiam ex penuria Pastorum quasi omnes Catholici per Moldaviam Romani Ritus ritui gręcorum iam vicini poterant delabi, nisi a felicis recordationis Urbano 8. pie defunctus Petrus Deodatus Archiepiscopus Sardicensis pro tunc Calipoliensis per Breve Apostolicum emanatum, anno Domini 1640, die 28 septembris, Pontificatus sui anno 18, Apostolicus Vicarius et Visitor Chiprovatio in Moldaviam missus eos ad frugem reduxisset; qui a sede Apostolica, absente Episcopo Bakoviensi, obtinuit Moldavis quemdam bonę memorię Fratrem Marcum Archiepiscopum Martianopolitanum.

Vobis ergo, Eminentissimi Patres, est talibus iacturis obviare et pauperulas animas Christi nostri Reparatoris cruore conquisitas Sancta Mater universalis

Ecclesia Romana in suo gremio fovere non desistat. His ad pedes Vestrarum Eminentiarum provolutus, humillimam reverentiam ex corde facio fimbriasque Sacrarum Purpurarum Vestrarum quam reverenter exosculor.

Datum Chiprovatij die 20 Februarij anno 1676.

Vestrarum Eminentiarum

Humilissimus Servus et cliens
Frater Antonius Stephani Guardianus Chiprovatiensis et
Vicarius Generalis in Valachia manu propria

(Central National Historical Archives, Microfilm Collection Vatican, reel 62, mm. 390-396, Archivio Propaganda Fide, Scritture Originali riferite nelle Congregationi Generali, vol. 461, f. 59^r-62^v)