

EDITORIAL

Dr. Justin Moiescu (1910-1986): A Scholar Patriarch and a Promoter of the Inter-Christian Approach

Worthy of remembrance Dr. Justin Moiescu was the fourth Patriarch of the Romanian Orthodox Church and an outstanding personality of Romanian Orthodoxy. Compared to his predecessors in the patriarchal seat, Dr. Justin Moiescu (1977-1986) affirmed himself through the solidity of his theological and scholarly formation, through the way he managed to affirm the Romanian Orthodox Church internationally and through the prestige he manifested in his ministry.

Patriarch Justin Moiescu had a solid theological training done in the country and abroad, which gave him the position of a true teacher of Theology. Particularly attracted by the Bible Study of the New Testament, he was always inspired by the living and luminous message of the Gospel of the Saviour Jesus Christ in all his theological and pastoral- missionary work. “With his authority as teacher of Exegesis and of the New Testament theology, Patriarch Justin argued that only the biblical argumentation of the local and universal Church at the same time can engage the theologians, the clergy and the faithful in a deeper understanding of “the particular image” of the Romanian Orthodoxy. Here theological education has an important place” (Preot Prof. Dr. Ion Bria, *Destinul Ortodoxiei*, Editura Institutului Biblic și de Misiune al Bisericii Ortodoxe Române, București 1989, p. 352). Patriarch Justin accurately understood the importance of theological and religious literature in general for students at Theology, priests and faithful and he promoted a high quality theological literature. Even briefly, it is appropriate to mention some of these directions of theological literature: handbooks and theological treatises from almost all theological disciplines, the inauguration of the collection “Church Fathers and Writers” which continues until today, the collection “Theological Library”, “Philokalia”, etc. The themes of the works printed during his patriarchate are focused

on the history, culture and spirituality of the Romanian Orthodox Church. Students from the Bachelor and Ph.D. courses from 1950-1956 never forgot he was one of the theology professors who brought academic prestige to the University of Bucharest at the new form of theological establishment starting with 1948, the Theological Institute of University Degree. That pleiad of theology professors from the University of Bucharest skilfully knew to give theological, academic and spiritual radiance to the new school of academic theology after 1948.

Nevertheless, what patriarch Justin was able to accomplish under the hostile conditions for the Church in Romania in those years was to keep awake the priestly conscience in the constant service of the faithful, on the one hand and to promote the presence of the Romanian Orthodoxy in the inter-Christian or international-ecumenical dialogue, on the other hand.

Patriarch Justin Moisesescu's ecumenical activity began coherently since 1956, when he was Metropolitan of Moldova and Suceava. At the Pan-Orthodox level, Metropolitan Justin was the promoter of gathering the Orthodox theological energies and continuing the development of inter-Orthodox relations, to prepare the Holy and Great Synod of the Orthodox Church. The Pan-Orthodox conferences played an exceptional role in this respect, and the contribution of the Romanian hierarch was meritorious. We are not wrong to say that Patriarch Justin was one of the pioneers of peace efforts in Europe and of what was then called - Christian ecumenism, with legitimate and justified hope. His contribution to the entry of the Romanian Orthodox Church into the Ecumenical Council of Churches at its Assembly in New Delhi in 1961 was extremely important. His theological and ecclesial personality was overwhelming by his involvement in the ecumenical strategy of the Church and the Romanian Orthodox theology. Patriarch Justin's involvement in promoting intercultural dialogue is obvious if we remembered his participation in the development of ecumenical dynamics in the second half of the last century. He unequivocally marked the participation of the Romanian Orthodox Church at the Ecumenical Movement for a quarter of a century (1961-1986). He was a member of the Central Committee of the Ecumenical Council of Churches between 1961-1977, attending three General Assemblies: New-Delhi (1961), Uppsala (1968) and Nairobi (Kenya – 1975). His concern for getting the Christians closer to each other through dialogue, cooperation and ministry was one of the essential dimensions of his ministry for three decades (1956-1986).

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Synthesizing the coordinates, the way and the ministry of Patriarch Justin at the head of the Romanian Orthodox Church, the following aspects can be highlighted:

Patriarch Justin came to the head of the Romanian Orthodoxy after Patriarch Justinian (1901-1977), who ruled the Church between the years: 1948-1977. Patriarch Justin understood his mission as a continuity of what his predecessor began at the Church level, but he also managed to imprint his personality traits in the pastoral-missionary work he carried out.

He was a Patriarch-founder of Church, theological-cultural and missionary projects. At a strictly pastoral-missionary level, he took care of printing the Word of God: Holy Scripture, New Testament, Catechism, Prayer Books, etc., to support the need of the faithful for catechesis and religious education.

Hierarch Justin Moisescu understood his church ministry as a way of highlighting the specific features of local Orthodoxy, with particular reference to Romanian Orthodoxy. By putting the accent on the local Church, which he understood in her profound biblical meaning, the first hierarch of the Romanian Orthodoxy clearly emphasized that the local Church is the universal Church from a certain place, with her own personality and identity.

Patriarch Justin was aware of the Church universal dimension and of preaching the gospel of Christ to all peoples. Therefore he widely opened the gates of Romanian Orthodoxy to the world through what he understood to be the Church peace message in a troubled world full of tensions and confrontations, but also by gathering the Christians in the name and power of Jesus Christ.

Patriarch Justin believed in the cooperation, ministry and theological dialogue between Christians, which he promoted through his own example. Another form was the development of consistent relations between the various Churches also open to this dialogue of mutual knowledge and of serving the world in the spirit of Christ sacrificial love.

In this context, Patriarch Justin facilitated fruitful cooperation of Romanian Orthodox theology with other theologies. He made possible the participation of Romanian theologians in ecumenical activities within inter-Christian co-operation bodies. At the same time, he promoted a consistent project of sending many PhD students to study abroad so that

they can be prepared for this theological dialogue in the broad sense of the word and to promote their visible unity.

In conclusion, it can be said without hesitation that Patriarch Justin was the scholar hierarch, the theologian teacher, the Patriarch-founder and a complex Church personality that inspired monumentality, distinction and dignity.

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