

## Book Reviews

†**Timotei AIOANEI, *Anamneze. Slujitori ai Bisericii în evocări și portrete (Anamneses. Servants of the Church in Evocations and Portraits)*, Editura Spandugino, București, 2023, 222 pp. and Annex**

After revealing to us the secrets of the native village and showing us in vivid and indelible colors the mother's image, after familiarizing us with the defining notes of Romanian monastic spirituality in significant volumes of studies, essays, portraits and, obviously, with the history and the mission of the Romanian settlements in Jerusalem, Jericho and Jordan, the Most Reverend Dr. Timotei Aioanei, Vicar Bishop of the Archdiocese of Bucharest, proposes a recollection under the title *Anamneze* of some portraits of Romanian hierarchs and abbots who marked, through their life and thought, Romanian Orthodoxy of the 20th century.

*Anamneze* reconstructs, through a method accessible to the general public, unique sequences from the lives of hierarchs of the Romanian Orthodox Church such as Bartolomeu Anania or clergymen such as Paisie Olaru, Cleopa Ilie, Sofian Boghiu, Benedict Ghiuș. The book is original and at the same time seductive because the author does not compile it from an external bibliography, but from his own experience, encounter and communion with those he evokes. But besides the bright images he praises, Most Reverend Timotei Aioanei also offers us a whole set of monastic and cultural realities introducing to a genuine spiritual environment specific to monasteries in Moldova and beyond, as well as access to lesser-known monastic and cultural biographies. That is why the book is not simply a guide to the life of the monasteries or the biographies of some hierarchs or priests, but sheds, through access to personal realities, new light upon the biographies and monasteries it presents.

The author succeeds in surprising the reader through a simple style, reduced to the essence, but endowed with the cursiveness and wealth of meanings that burst from the story. We are in front of some biographies presented simply, original, narrated, without inflation of neologisms or theological terms, and without the pretense of exhaustiveness. It is a book about the creed and the life of the characters as a story in their complex connections and manifestations with people and places.

Of course, the image of Metropolitan Bartolomeu Anania is presented through the eyes of the disciple who entered the Neamț Monastery in 1989 and had contacts with the great Romanian abbots. It is presented in the form of diary pages, a sequential reconstruction of Bartolomeu Anania's itinerary from Sihăstria, Iași, Văratec, Neamț, Agapia to Bucharest and then to Cluj. Thus, if the passage about Bartolomeu Anania can be considered a disciple's testimony about his Father, the images furrowed by the writing of Metropolitan Bartolomeu Anania at the end of the book, can be seen, reciprocally, as a Father's testimony about his disciple.

Practically, the whole book opens our eyes to some people who, through their lives, represent those constitutive stones of Romanian monasticism and its history in modernity. A book accessible to postmodern man, a prolegomena for a phenomenological understanding of Romanian monasticism in the 20th century in its historical, cultural and spiritual dynamics. The Most Reverend Father Timotei Aioanei, depicting historical events and masterfully outlining biographies of Romanian Orthodoxy, manages to bring around the same table, an image of the royal feast, hierarchs and great abbots of Romanian Orthodoxy - Paisie Olaru, Cleopa Ilie, Sofian Boghiu, Benedict Ghiuș - offering us the opportunity and the image of an inspiring perpetuum of monastic vocations for the ages to come.

**Rev. Prof. Dr. Cristinel IOJA**