

BOOK REVIEWS

Adrian Nicolae Petcu, *Clerici și teologi din Eparhia Aradului, în închisorile comuniste (1945-1964)*, Editura Arhiepiscopiei Aradului, Arad, 2017, 209 p.

On December 2017, at the Publishing House of the Archdiocese of Arad, there appeared the book *Clerici și teologi din Eparhia Aradului, în închisorile comuniste (1945-1964)* [*Clerics and Theologians from the Diocese of Arad in the Communist Prisons (1945-1964)*]. Its author is the well-known historian and scientific researcher Adrian Nicolae Petcu. This book was elaborated in the context of the Commemorative Year „Justinian the Patriarch and The Defenders of Orthodoxy during Communism in the Romanian Patriarchate”, enjoying the assistance of His Eminence Archbishop Timotei Sevciciu, as well as of the Eparchial Centre’s collaborators who are in charge with the cultural section and the eparchial archive. The content of the volume, written almost exclusively on the basis of archive documents, makes it an event book for the Diocese of Arad and a documentary book for the Romanian Orthodoxy. Metaphorically speaking, the book is a light drawn from the corner of history.

The entire content of the book, totalling 209 pages, is structured as follows: preface, introduction, and abbreviations, followed by the biographies of 66 priests, theology students and monks / nuns from the Diocese of Arad, who were arrested and imprisoned by the Communist regime between 1945-1964; the book ends with nearly 30 pages of annexes. The foreword of the book is signed by His Eminence Dr. Timotei Sevciciu, Archbishop of Arad, who praises those mentioned in this book, as well as its author, in words of great theological and intellectual refinement. The Church’s endeavour to restore the truth, which cannot be but Jesus Christ, only reveals her diligent sons, preserved in the memory of the faithful people, as His Eminence emphasizes in the continuation of the preface.

The introduction signed by the author of the book himself, is a thorough study of the stages the communist administration was established in the

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country in, but especially of the religious and social life in the Diocese of Arad, a brief presentation of the informative sources and the bibliography used in drafting the volume, as well as the criteria underlying the selection of priests, theologians and monks / nuns presented in this book. Also in the introduction the author lists examples of priests, theologians or monks / nuns who have not their biography written in the book because of the lack of information. Their simple enumeration opens new research tracks for the specialists.

We can structure the biographies presented in the book on two levels: a part of them are presented on several pages and the other part is narrower, some of them being summed up to a few rows. The information found and processed by the author has led to this fact. However, each biography is original, with unique information and relevant data. The extensive biographies contain information on every clergyman or theologian, starting with his date of birth, studies, clerical and intellectual activity and, of course, information on arrests, imprisonment, prosecutions and investigations. If it is known, the date of death is put down, as well as the circumstances that led to the end of the earthly life of these blessed confessors of the Romanian Orthodoxy from the middle of the 20th century. Each biography ends with a bibliography, most of the bibliography sources being first-hand, i.e. from the archives.

A particular thing that gives this book a spiritual weight is the presentation of a picture of the one whose biography is presented, from his detention, if it could be recovered. Seeing the faces of these confessors awakens a sense of profound piety and admiration for their life, dedication and sacrifice. The effort of the author to also recover the visual memory of the convicted gives the present volume originality, consistency and an indisputable documentary and moral value. Thus there are made public and known original information and images of ministers, monks or young theologians whom nothing was known about. This is the case of hieromonk Iov Volănescu, exemplary in living and confessing, but also of many priests and theologians, courageous and ready to sacrifice for the confession of Christ and the service of their fellows.

The bibliographic sources used by the author can be divided into two categories: archives and books published with reference to this issue, but also to the history of the Diocese of Arad and the Academy of Theology of Arad, mentioned by the author in the introduction. The author consulted three important archives: the Archive of the National Council for the Study

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of the Securitate Archives, the Archive of the Archdiocese of Arad and the Archives of Hodos-Bodrog Monastery, Arad County, to these being also added: the Archive of the Ministry of Justice, respectively the Military Courts Directorate and Archives of the Metropolitan of Cluj. The simple sequencing of the archives researched by the author reveals the fullness of the book presented.

The appendices of the book are not at all negligible, which are made up of authentic documents meant to certify the information presented. We find: addresses and tables with arrested priests and students, notes on monastic tonsure, addresses of protopresbyteries announcing the arrest of priests or of bishop Andrei Magieru to various state organs and institutions, criminal records filed by the Securitate, sentences of the Eparchial Consistory of Arad regarding the canonical rehabilitation of certain priests, individual files of priests drawn up by protopresbyteries. All this gives the book a document value.

Although at first glance the book is a collection of personal data and biographies of historical value, a careful and contextualized reading reveals the realities from half a century ago and the models to follow. In addition to the unique presentation of biographies of ministers, theologians, monks, or nuns, the book restores the memory and image of some characters so far presented in a negative way. Thus, the book becomes a therapeutic act to local and national historical ecclesial consciousness. Phenomenologically speaking, the book presents the figure of the worthy remembrance Bishop Dr. Andrei Magieru (1935-1960), shepherd and servant with a confessing vocation, who gathered around him the theological and monastic elite from Arad, creating a spiritual wall against the red scare. This spiritual resistance, built by the bishop of Arad through the theologian students and teachers from the Theological Academy, the clergy of the city churches, the monks from Hodos-Bodrog monasteries and the nuns from Arad-Gai Monastery, reveal the courage of Bishop Andrei Magieru, but also availability for sacrifice of monks, priests, and theological students from the Diocese of Arad for the confession of Christ.

Veritable martirology of Arad, the book of the gifted researcher Adrian Nicolae Petcu, constitutes a fascinating local and national ecclesiastical history with viable models for us today, provoked by a different confession of Jesus Christ, “the same yesterday, and to day, and for ever” (*Hebrews* 13, 8).

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