

OVIDIUS UNIVERSITY FROM CONSTANTA  
DOCTORAL SCHOOL

# **SUMMARY OF THE PHD THESIS**

*CONTRIBUTION OF PATRIARCH  
IUSTIN MOISESCU TO THE  
DEVELOPMENT OF THE  
ROMANIAN BIBLE STUDY*

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The evocation of a person enters the register of our attention as an event that marks the value and legitimacy of that person. In cultic practice, the evocation of the saints is a reference to the valorization of holiness as a way of life for us. This PhD thesis aims to evoke the personality of Patriarch Iustin Moisescu by highlighting his contribution to the development of the New Testament biblical research in Romania. The honorable Father Patriarch has made his mark in a profound way especially with regard to the interpretation, the exegesis of the biblical text, but also the fact that he approached the topics that were little researched in the Romanian Bible horizon up to that moment: the sermon from Areopagus, the church hierarchy in the apostolic period. Also, the theological analysis of Evagrius' work and thought was a novelty in Romanian patristic theology.

We mention that, as a patriarch, he paid special attention to the editorial activity, being the initiator of the great collection entitled *Fathers and church writers*, designed in 90 volumes, as well as the collection of *Christian Art in Romania* in 6 volumes. During his shepherding, a new synodic edition of the *Holy Scripture* (1982) and a new edition of the *New Testament* (1979) were printed. There were printed numerous textbooks for higher theological education and for theological seminars, doctoral dissertations, religious books and the central and ecclesiastical journals continued, as well as the Romanian Orthodox community's newsletters from abroad.

Ever since the studies, Iustin Moisescu has acquired a thorough ecumenical formation, while the years spent in Greece at the Faculty of Athens directed his attention to inter-Orthodox problems, continuing his studies in France in Strasbourg and the beginning of his career as a professor at the Faculty of Orthodox Theology in Warsaw put him in front of the doctrine and the life of the other Christian confessions.

His amazingly rich and fruitful work recommends him as one of the outstanding personalities of contemporary ecumenism. Patriarch Iustin was present at all the inter-Orthodox and inter-Christian meetings of major interest that took place during his pastoral life, being able to always be the bearer of the spirit and message of the most authentic orthodoxy, an orthodoxy willing for "a dialogue of love" with the other confessions.

Understanding the inter-Christian dialogue as a manifestation of love for true faith and the conviction that we are all equal before God, Patriarch Iustin formulated these guiding principles in ecumenism: the noninterference of any Church in the internal life of another Church; in the relations between the Churches measures must be taken to establish an atmosphere of trust and love, excluding any form of proselytism; the Christian unity is a duty of all Churches, being commanded by the Savior Jesus Christ; Orthodoxy, which is the true

Church itself, considers as the main objective the unity of faith; any inter-church contacts are useful and necessary because they prepare the atmosphere for dialogue; love, peace, twinning, and the service of the world are the commandments of the gospel.

Antonie Plămădeală, the former Metropolitan of Transylvania, characterized in the following words the ecumenical attitude of Patriarch Iustin: "He was very interested in ecumenism, he had a lot of speeches about peace ... He was a man of few words, but when he was talking he was listened by everyone with great interest and trust, he believed in ecumenism."

The objectives of this doctoral thesis are to: explore the theological coordinates of Patriarch Iustin Moisescu; their applicability in the Romanian New Testament Study; updating into the theological consciousness of the apologetic and dialogical way that hired primary Christianity in confronting Greek philosophy. Regarding this last objective, we mention that Patriarch Iustin was especially concerned by the man and theologian Apostle Paul, seeing in him the authentic way of pastoral apostolate necessarily applied in the society of the twentieth century.

Among his first concerns as a patriarch, for a more thorough service of the righteous faith, he promoted a living theology, based on prayer, experience and life.

The care for education and its orientation according to the requirements of time was a constant of the activity of Patriarch Iustin Moisescu. Once in the central place where the entire church activity was headed, he organized with the members of the Holy Synod the fundamental mission of the Church, keeping our holy faith.

To this end, it is obvious the timeless and timely guidance of the Biblical and Mission of the Romanian Orthodox Church Institutes' activity. Under his protection, he saw the light of the monumental collection of patristic writings entitled "Church Fathers and Writers", designed in 90 volumes, to which the best translators from the patristic Greek and Latin literature contributed.

He initiated the volumes "The Christian Art in Romania", from which five appeared. During the nine-year patriarchate, he was responsible for the appearance of a new synodic edition of the Bible, in 1982, of a new edition of the New Testament, as well as of a series of theology books and many works by the great theologians of his generation.

There were edited numerous books of service, necessary for priestly ministering and pastoral service.

The written work of the erudite patriarch is not required in a quantitative way, but rather in the elegant, clear, sober style, which gives to his literary fruit the accuracy of the theological masterpieces:

- *Sfânta Scriptură și interpretarea ei în opera Sf. Ioan Hrisostom*, in „Candela”, year L-LII, 1939- 1941, p. 116-239 (and extract, Cernăuți, 1942, 120 p.);
- *Originalitatea parbolelor Mântuitorului*, in „Candela”, year LV-LVI, 1944-1945, p. 60-107 (and extract, Rm. Vâlcea, 1945, 50 p.);
- *Activitatea Sfântului Apostol Pavel în Atena*, in „Candela”, year LVII, 1946, p. 45 - 262 (and extract, Iași, 1946, 227 p.);
- *Ierarhia bisericească în epoca apostolică*. Anexa: Texte biblice și patristice despre pace și muncă, Craiova, 1955, 80 p.;
- *Simbolica lui Hristu Andrutsos*, traducere din grecește, Craiova, 1955, 349 p.;
- *Sfântul Pavel și viața celor mai de seamă comunități creștine din epoca apostolică*, în *Studii Teologice*, year III, 1951, no. 7-8, p. 398-416;
- *Temeiurile lucrării Bisericii pentru apărarea păcii*, în *Studii Teologice*, year V, 1953, no. 3-4, p. 247-268.

Before being elected Metropolitan of Ungro-Wallachia and patriarch of the Romanian Orthodox Church, Iustin Moisescu pastored for twenty years the Metropolitan Church of Moldova and Suceava. His name is connected with important works, among which the volume "Historical monuments of the Moldavian and Suceava Metropolitan Church", "The Dosoftei Metropolitan Psalter" or the monographs "Metropolitan Cathedral in Iasi" and "Cetățuia Monastery". But besides these and many other presentations of the historical-church heritage, it is worth mentioning the appearance of the "Metropolitan of Moldova and Suceava" magazine, on the pages of which can be retrieved studies and articles that complete the biographical portrait of the patriarch.

During the pastoral life of Patriarch Iustin, numerous churches and parochial houses were weakened during the Second World War and dozens of places were rebuilt or built. During this time, many places have been adorned with paintings and endowed with the necessary for the worship of many places.

With the support of the patriarch, many carpets, embroideries and tailor workshops began to work in many monasteries in the country where clerical clothes and church vestments were made.

During his patriarchal pastoral life, the Communist regime decided to make some important churches in Bucharest disappear, which inconvenienced the new development plan of the capital.

The patriarch's concern, his diplomacy, the love for the holy ones, and the meeting with the inspired engineer Eugen Iordachescu led to the solution for that moment: the translation of the places of worship into less visible places. Through a good communication with Patriarch Iustin Moisescu, engineer Iordachescu has moved 13 churches out of the dictators' unconsciousness. No acts or decisions were signed, but the churches were saved.

That is why, below, we will enumerate the contribution of the Metropolitan (at that time) Iustin Moisescu to the cultural life of the Metropolitan Church of Moldova and the contribution of other priests or bishops in his intellectual and pastoral activity.

Patriarch Iustin Moisescu was by excellence the Pauline theologian. Perpetually concerned by "The originality of the Savior's parables", Patriarch Iustin has shown, through a comparative research of evangelical parables with Buddhist and Rabbinic parables, that there is no identical non-Christian parable, in substance and form with the Savior's parables.

The great theological work with which Patriarch Iustin Moisescu has enriched our New Testament exegetical theological literature is "The work of Saint Apostle Paul in Athens", which is and remains a reference work for any theologian in the deepening of the Pauline theology. The book is, for researchers and exegetes of Scriptural texts, a model of deepening and scientific exposure. The rich incursion into the world of ancient Greek thinking and the contemporary world of the emergence of Christianity gives the author the opportunity to highlight and nuance the specifics of Christian teaching in general and of Pauline thought in particular.

Not less important are works such as: "Holy Scripture and its Interpretation in the Work of Saint John Chrysostom" and "The Hierarchy of the Church in the Apostolic Age". All these are reference works for the Romanian theology in the decades V-VI of the twentieth century. The representative work of the Fourth Patriarch of Romania was published in an entire collection at the Anastasia Publishing House in Bucharest, at the initiative and under the coordination of the Most Holy Calinic Argatu, the Bishop of Argeș and Muscel.

One of the Patriarch's theological dimensions was his love for the sources of the Church. Theologian Iustin Moisescu was fascinated by the source texts of the faith, the new meanings of the Gospels, the Pauline epistles and the patristic writings. The advanced knowledge of the ancient Greek language and its theological subtleties allowed it to address the theological study from the universal perspective of the primary Church that fed from the waves of Pentecost. The

mentioned patriarch was a restorer of the ancient ecclesial tradition of exegetic and patristic study in which the Church regains its pneumatology and missionary freshness. During his reign as Metropolitan and especially as Patriarch, Romanian theology - especially through the voice of Father Stăniloae, but not only - has become an applied, patristic and biblical theology, which has detached from the idiosyncrasies and scholastic Western loans.

The Patriarch's theological knowledge, however, expressed his constant concern for recent theological studies in the West. The exegetical approach he undertook in some studies, which later became sine qua new stages in the research of these themes, was a permanent dialogue between the careful study of the biblical language, the practical deepening of the patristic theology, and the Western theological analysis.

However, we note a poor literature that has capitalized on the theological coordinates of Patriarch Iustin Moisec, perhaps because of the accusations of his collaboration with security during communism. Here we note the thesis: *The priestly ministry and missionary activity in the thinking and writing of Patriarchs Iustin Moisescu and Teoctist Arăpașu*, which has as author Father Prof. Ștefan Oprea, published in Doxology in 2015.

The present paper wanted a theological radiography of the contribution of Patriarch Iustin Moisescu in the development of biblical research in Romania. Various themes have been analyzed that have brought the patriarch's attention to his theological value in Biblical hermeneutics, deepening the primary life of the Church, and other essential elements of the construction of the New Testament theology. His study, "The originality of the Savior's parables," is an example in this case. The author analyzes the linguistic spellings in general and lexical in particular of speaking in parables in the Semitic environment, and lingers carefully on the unique structures of the Savior's expression. It extends the exegetic theme into a true cultural phenomenology of the treated subject, in which the historical or the doctrinal context contributes to the theological integrity of the studied text. It is fascinating the ease with which the author unifies the authority of the sources quoted in the original (Hebrew, Old Hellenic, Latin) with the flexibility and intelligibility of unpretentious expression, without a gongorism or technical effusions.

Patriarch Iustin surprises the theological subtleties of the text that bring in a new light the orthodox theological hermeneutics. In this, the ideas and nuances of exegetical comments merge into a synthesis of the literal analysis with the prophetic allegory.

The above-quoted study, however, contains apologetic aspects of a certain value and timeliness in the present context of relativizing the Gospel message, even within the Christian communities. The author polemizes creatively with the French philosopher Charles Francois

Dupuis, who states in his book, "Origine de toute le culte ou la Religion universelle" (Paris 1794) that all religions of the world would come from Persian religion. This conception has its followers in the following centuries, Julius A. Wegschnider, J.A. Richter, and Ferdinand Chr. Baur, being tributaries of such an assertion without a historical or theological theme. The dualistic, rationalistic and symbolic current of the Tübingen School will be the one of systematic denial of the divine origin of Christianity as well as of the divinity of Christ the Savior and His resurrection. In a pseudo-theological enlightenment, the members of this school tried unsuccessfully to dismantle all the dogmas of the Church for the sake of syncretistic rationality, and his attempt at a so-called filtering of the *kerygma* by its subsequent elements was in fact a mutilation of the Gospel teaching *post-factum* means, framing it in currents invented on methodological basis by Western theology: *Judaism-Hellenism Pauline-Petrine, universalism-localism*, etc.

Theologian Iustin Moisescu responds promptly to all these allegations by making a comparative analysis between the texts cited by the above-mentioned scholars (especially Buddhism and Kabbalah) and the Savior's parables. The scientific objectivity and the accuracy of the sources of the respective authors are disputed, and the lack of clear evidence and the assumption of concepts that are foreign to the biblical spirit and mentality become stumbling stones that dynamically distort the rational-historical criticism of the School.

The feverish search for the sources of inspiration of the Christ parables by philosophers and even some Protestant theologians continued by affirmations lacking any scientific basis of the Buddhist or Talmudic filial of evangelical parables. The claims of the researcher Rudolf Seydel, in his book *Das Evangelium von Jesus*, which affirmed the Buddhist addiction of the Christian message, are competently dismantled. The parable of the sower, of the talents, of the prodigal son possesses a divine originality in which the universality of the calling to salvation, the necessity of the sacrifice of the incarnated God, and the realization of the human relationship with God by grace (to name but a few) are unique in all the sacred literature of humanity. Similarities between the parables of Christ and the Buddhist or Talmudic ones are only outwardly taking into account the universally-valid nature of human institutions and concerns: family, temple, agriculture, fishing, trade, etc.

A work of great importance for the study of the Primary Church in current Orthodox theology is: "The activity of the Apostle Paul in Athens" (1946). The author surprised the conflict and the collision between civilizations in the event of Saint Apostle Paul's speech, "the three-eyed man" (as Saint John Chrysostom calls him) in his intention to "tear down" the pagan world.

Paul, studying the religion of the times, emphasizes the syncretism which lacks in principles of the Athenian of the times. He noticed the mingling and merging of the ancient Greek deities with the new oriental divinities (often in dualistic pairs), the magical dependence of the initiate cults, but also the Roman infusion of imperial worship that politicized and infested religion. The heathen cult was therefore a dying intermarriage of Greek principles with obscure initiatory oriental religions (Persian, Phoenician, Egyptian, etc.). The existence of old demons and heroes with a well-established individuality, Romanization or Orientalization of the gods of the ancient Greeks, the cult of the Emperor are only a few aspects of this process.

The study continues with the actual preaching of Saint Paul in Athens (in the synagogue and in the agora). The Biblical exegesis continues on every verse of the 17th chapter of Acts and includes a true Greek and Latin classical scholarly compendium. The author realizes a remarkable hermeneutic of biblical text in which he uses not only literary and historical sources of the time, but also accepts the exegesis of the Fathers, which took into account certain social, cultural or theological aspects of their time. Unlike the protestant hermeneutics, who resort to a literal analysis of the biblical text taken from the patristic, cultic and pastoral tradition of the Church, Iustin Moisescu makes a synthesis of the biblical, linguistic, patristic and historical arguments of the biblical text. We can talk about a semiotic reading of biblical text in which the arguments converge logically and naturally, and in which the semantic analysis approach takes into account the sign and form of Lucan expression.

A very important aspect of the above-mentioned study is that of studying the cultural impact of the ancient world's mentalities on the primary Church. Access to the Jewish, Hellenic and Latin sources of the weather allows the theologian Iustin Moisescu to capture the complex historical, social and cultural context of the formation of local Churches. The role of Jewish proselytism in the cities of the Roman Empire, the privileged status of the Jews in them, the social messianism of the diaspora synagogues, on the one hand, and the religious decadence, the fall of the cult in trivial or even obscene rituals, the cultivation of physical pleasure, religious syncretism, perversion of the religious symbols, political intrusion into cult (*imperial cult, Caesar effigies*, etc.), the centrifugal fragmentation of religious paradigms in a multitude of gods, the constant opposition of philosophy to all manifestations of religion, all of which are emphasized in shaping a cultural history of the formation of the first church in Athens.

Between all these cultural-religious interdependencies, agora was for Athens, its cultural, political, social and philosophical center. Future Patriarch Iustin Moisescu shows the impact of the agora in the mentality of the ordinary Athenian, but also of the elites. The rational constitution of the Greeks determines logically and discursively all the compartments of social-

political or cultural life. Thus, for an Apostle who wanted to preach the coming of the kingdom of God into the world in the Person of Jesus Christ of history and eternity, the synagogue and the agora were the two spiritual lungs of the city. The Exegete sees the importance of the Hellenic secular culture for the doctrinal foundation of the Church. This is due to the fact that the Savior Jesus Christ, the Word incarnated in history, extends into the world through the Church, and the Truth of His divine-human person present by Mysteries "all the days to the end of the age" (Matthew 28:20) must be discursively articulated through doctrine, worship and mission.

Thus the Christian faith took over the massive structures of the Greek thought and adapted it to the truth revealed in history. In this way, there was no Hellenization of Christianity, but a Christianization of the philosophical structures of antiquity by using them to express the ineffable truth of man's union with God in Christ. This is the explanation for which the Apostle Paul insisted on preaching the Word of Life in the Athenian agora, understanding the importance of the Greek ideological springs in the articulation of the Christian doctrine. The great professor, Iustin Moisescu, insists on this event in the life of Solon and Pericles, showing the interference between completely different cultures, but also the apostle's skill to make an analogous, deductive and rational speech, even quoting Greek wise men.

The excellence of the Pauline speech is directly proportional to the mental capacity of the listeners in the agora to perceive reality. Adaptation to the mental paradigm of the audience demonstrates the divine inspiration of the speaker, but also the exceptional erudition of the speaker. The coherence of his missionary approach is also measured in the almost maieutic successive logic of the sentence and in the decisive and conclusive argumentation of his assertions. Thus, in Platonic tradition, Paul opens a point-to-point argument in which the logical chain is structured on the laws of reason. The Athenians were servants of the daimons, deified souls of historical figures. The apostle remarked the veneration enjoyed by the mysteries, the magical and initiatory cults and the Athenian appetite for apophatic. The syncretistic tolerance of the Athenians and the extension of the whole ancient world from the Apostolic Age was the land that ascetic and Eucharistic teaching has taken root. The crowd of Athenian gods was also noted by Petronius, *Life and Ep.*, Vol. 1, p. 363, who said it was easier to find a god in Athens than a man. Saint Paul offers a conciliatory perspective on the Athenian religiosity, which is praised as a quest for something above idols (acclaimed by human hands.) The apostle's theological aptitude, which uses pagan authors, is particularly noteworthy, in particular the stoic poet Aratus of Cilicia's Soli (a fortress near the Pauline Tarsus, hence the apostle's erudition), his predecessor for almost three centuries, who, in an astronomical poem (*Phainomena* 1, 5),

states in a pantheistic sense that we are "a nation" with God (Acts 17, 28). Epimenides the Cretan is also quoted in the same verse: "In Him we live, we move and we are". It is symptomatic the manner in which the exegete captures the correspondence between the Pauline theology and the ecclesiastical patristic anthropology of John Chrysostom: "As it is impossible to know the air that is spread everywhere and that is found in us, so also the Creator of all.

All this outlines not only an informational access worthy of any European academic agora, but also the critical and missionary realism of the exegesis of Professor Iustin Moisescu. The Church is, in its view, the space-time extension of Christ in the world and in history, and the Ecclesia of present time is the spiritual identity and the birth of the first Church. There is, in the statements of theologian Iustin Moisescu, a vision of the ecclesial continuity of the gospel message, but also a constant concern for the accessibility of this message, the fidelity of the patristic deepening and the reality of the current challenges. The excitement, anguish, oscillations and controversies of the Firsts Church are for the great hierarch a paradigm of ecclesial life that always distinguishes between truth and heresy. The hostile and decadent environment of the apostolic age was, of course, the sign of the "golden age" of communist persecution, censorship, lies and hatred. The wickedness of the age was for him only the sign of the Church's calling to the Church, who, out of nothingness of paganism, has built a Christian Europe, in the martyric efforts of the first Church to shape and affirm their unique and eschatological identity in the midst of persecutions, hierarch Iustin Moisescu has found strength to resist the communist regime's concentrated environment. He practiced and encouraged silent resistance, through culture and faithfulness of belief, as the most appropriate answer to a dictatorship that wanted the eradication of the transcendent from the social mentality. His realism was also determined by a good knowledge of the disaster that would have provoked an inflexible attitude, as was the unfortunate case of the Church in Russia that suffered a systematized decimation by confiscating all Churches and monasteries and by atheism promoted by killing hundreds of thousands of priests and believers who have joined the martyrdom of the overcoming Church.

In line with the above, Iustin Moisescu thoroughly and theologically explored the horizon of the primary community of the Christian Church, exposed in *Acts*, and his contribution to the development of the Romanian New Testament theology is incontestable.

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