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ROOTS.
BEGINNINGS AND PERSPECTIVES

R O O  S

ROMANIAN ORTHODOX OLD TESTAMENT STUDIES



ROOTS. BEGINNINGS AND PERSPECTIVES

No. 1 (1) 2009

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CONTENT

Editorial

Fr. Ioan Chirilă, *About ROOTS. Beginnings and perspectives*

Orthodox exegesis

1. Fr. Ioan Chirilă, *Scripture, Tradition and liturgical unity in the word. An orthodox perspective*
2. Hierom. Simeon (Ștefan) Pinteș, *The biblical concept “in the image of God” (Gn 1:26-27) according to the patristic and philocalic anthropology*
3. Fr. Petre Semen, *Moses’ second experience with the divine*
4. Stelian Pașca-Tușă, *Angelology and demonology notions in Psalm 91[90]*
5. Mihai Nagy, *Isaia 53. Analiza exegetico-teologică a discursului retorico-profetic*

Book reviews

1. Stelian Pașca-Tușă, *Isagogical concepts in Old Testament theology*
2. Paula Bud, *O exegeză biblică modernă în duhul Părinților*
3. Mihai Nagy, *Retorica biblică. Principii, aplicații și perspective*

Tradiție iudaică (ro)

1. Paula Bud, *Rabbi Hillel și interpretarea Sfintei Scripturi*
2. Stelian Pașca-Tușă, *Instituția familiei*

Kol Nețer (ro)

1. Paula Bud, *Betleemul – casa Pâinii ce S-a pogorât din cer*
2. Stelian Pașca-Tușă, *Arheologie biblică – repere cronologice (1717-1899)*

Kol YHWH (ro)

Pr. Ioan Chirilă, *Reflecții filologice – Facere 1:1*

Fragment de mărturisire (ro)

Pr. Ioan Chirilă, *Pergamentul inimii*

EDITORIAL

FR. IOAN CHIRILĂ

About ROOTS - beginnings and perspectives

ABOUT ROOTS - BEGINNINGS AND PERSPECTIVES

It is possible to be an idealist; however, I do not see anything wrong with it. I am convinced that from a single textual source cannot derive many divergent exegeses, even though today we are witnessing the development of clear and distinct directions of interpretation. Thus, in the Western Church, the historical-critical method imposed, being based on a thorough historical examination and having an appropriate exegetical instrument. On the other side, the Eastern Church rather payed attention to the divine action in history, so that traditional patristic hermeneutics inside Orthodoxy understands mystery and rational research in close relation. In my opinion, this exegetical diversity is generated by the lack of methanoia within the process of encounter / incarnation of the Text. This may also be the result of an excessive positioning in the immanence, losing sight of the fact that, in the case of the biblical text, the Word also has a transcendental dimension, even when the narrative presents us a strictly historical (apparently) event.

That is why our Review proposes several ways of returning towards the understanding of the unity and uniqueness of Revelation.

The starting point is the belief that exegesis is a unitary event; therefore, there is no divergence between the various directions of interpretation, but only complementarity. That is why we will stress, as much as possible, on the complement specific to Eastern Christianity.

Without polemizing or criticizing some exegetical directions, ROOTS desires to offer the Orthodox perspective, and in particular the Romanian perspective with its patristic fundament. In our opinion, the Holy Fathers do not interpret the Scripture in our place today, but they provide us with the paradigms of spiritual interpretation and transmit us a fundament of dogmatic reflection stabilized and acknowledged as such by the Ecumenical Councils. This way, we believe that we will be able to rediscover, at least partially, the unity of understanding of the One Church and of the restoring



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humility of those golden centuries. In the patristic paradigm, we will be able to observe and understand the prophetic dimension of the Church, understood as an effective and continuous work of the Holy Spirit inside the Church. We believe that it would be sufficient to recall the fact that Fathers of the Church such as Saint Basil the Great, Saint Athanasios the Great, Saint Gregory the Theologian, Saint Maximus the Confessor have written their works before the ecumenical Councils established the orthodoxy of dogmatic statements. We can discover in their works an important hermeneutical fact: we must operate simultaneously with three unities which will determine the unity of understanding: the unity of the pericope – the context rule the unity of the Scripture – parallel verses rule – and the unity of the Church / Creation – the rule of faith.

Therefore, the attribute “Orthodox” in ROOTS is more than just a confessional attribute. The concept tries to express the proper interpretation of the biblical text according to which we cannot automatically speak about a perspective or statement valid only in a certain period of time. Thus, the attribute “Orthodox” means unity and continuity in the process of both interpretation and understanding.

We cannot resume ourselves to *bederianism* or *lachmanianism*, in other words, to a simple investigation of the phonetic and graphic form of words. We must find the Holy Spirit. When the Word is at work, so do the Spirit and the Father, and I wonder where they are in contemporary exegesis?! Here is the complement we are willing to offer as a gift to the professional occidental interpretations.

When speaking of roots, we cannot skip the Old Testament period, the ways in which the leading figures of Israel chose to accomplish their confession. That is why we will try to bring to your attention representative figures of classical, contemporary and Romanian Judaism. This section of the review will be achieved on the basis of encyclopedias and specialized monographs that we will translate in order to make them accessible to the Romanian reader and thus providing the effective premises of interreligious dialogue. Therefore, the studies included in this section will be exclusively in Romanian.

An important section of our Review will be dedicated to theological studies with a patristic exegetical character. These will provide a rich bibliographical resource for theological institutions, while mostly presenting to the public the work of both young theologians and professors in Romania, but also the contributions of contemporary western theologians.

We are witnessing a more and more applied attempt of reconstructing the historical medium and geographical configurations where the nations, the historical figures of

the Holy Scripture have lived, and it is really amazing. The sole problem is that some of the researchers are creating artificial complements where stones refuse to speak. We will focus on archeological, historical and geographical research of the Holy Land, but with a special accent on the spiritual orientation of reflection generated by this type of scientific discovery. When speaking about this area of research, I remember the words of our Savior: "...if these should hold their peace, the stones would immediately cry out" (Lk 19:40) Even the stones know better than us that they must confess the Christ, they must confess God. And I believe that the meaning and object of confession appears clearly, and it does not resume to the historical condition or to the levels of immanence.

And last, but not least, we will offer reviews of recent works in the field of Old Testament theology, isagogy, hermeneutics, archeology, Hebrew, and in all other disciplines related to the objectives of our ROOTS.

I would like to say that for us, ROOTS may also be / mean Remember the One Orthodox Teaching of Saints, as a constant impulse to remember the Orthodox unity of patristic exegesis of the Holy Scripture.

And hopefully, the roots will burgeon!

ORTHODOX EXEGESIS

FR. IOAN CHIRILĂ

Scripture, Tradition and liturgical unity in the word. An orthodox perspective

Hierom. ȘTEFAN (SIMEON) PINTEA

The biblical concept “in the image of God” (Gn 1:26-27) according to the patristic and philocalic anthropology

FR. PETRE SEMEN

Moses` second experience with the divine

STELIAN PAȘA-TUȘA

Angelology and demonology notions in Psalm 91[90]

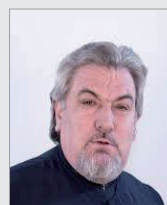
MIHAI NAGY

Isaia 53. Analiza exegetico-teologică a discursului retorico-profetic

SCRIPTURE, TRADITION AND LITURGICAL UNITY IN THE WORD. AN ORTHODOX PERSPECTIVE

Abstract

The paper offers an overview of what the Scripture and the Tradition are from an Orthodox perspective and practice. The author is preoccupied by orality and scripturality trying to present us with a possible answer to the meaning of writing as replacement for the oral way of transmitting the Revelation. The paper underlines the link between Tradition, Scripture and Canon, while confessing the belief that the Holy Scripture is not only a human product, but a divine-human reality. The author introduces an overview of the dynamics of the biblical text which justifies a similar dynamics of the biblical research, thus introducing a synthetic presentation of Romanian biblical research from the beginning of the XXth century to today.



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Keywords

orality, scripturality, tradition, Romanian translations, biblical studies

Contemporaneity has forgotten its foundations which made out of it God's making, has placed man in its center, the human being who is in search for his self only in creation, making abstraction or forgetting about his Creator. In this situation, we could bring forward any kind of scientific theories, without being able to remove the "dead end" aspect of such thinking. What is the major cause of such situation or, as a liturgical hymn says, why have we given ourselves up to death and corruption? The simplest answer: we have forgotten about the Word who gives eternal life, we don't perceive any more the One who brings us the supreme Revelation, Christ, the One who gives us the possibility of seeing God. If we cannot see God, even though the creatures, we cannot see anything, that is, we can see the nothingness which we accomplish every day by our powers. But I would not dare to say that we have lost Him for good, He is waiting for all the prodigal sons, He is waiting to see us coming to ourselves, remembering of the

beauty, the harmony, the peace and the goodness/ richness which are to be found in the house of our Father. The memories are not completely erased; when suffering justly comes upon us, we remember of how good it was in your house, almighty God, and then, the angel's wing refreshes us with the blowing of the Spirit which determines us to come to ourselves.

There are moments in every man's life in which we have to rebuild the frame of our existence starting from the very foundation of the cultural and cultic building of our people. Now, when we are trying to speak about Scripture and Tradition in the Orthodox perspective and practice, we make this exercise more than ever, we are coming down to the act of fixing the foundations of Christianity. We are doing this in an apologetic way as well, because there are lately many voices saying that the act of fixing the Christian scriptural canon was one of political and imperial nature rather than one of ecclesiastical nature. But the very facts in their chronological development testify something else.

Before answering to this problem, I would like to insert an internal explanation of what the Holy Scripture means for the East: St. Ap. Paul says that "All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished to all good works" (2 Tm 3:16-17), and St. Ap. Peter says that man must know that there are "some things hard to be understood, which they that are unlearned and unstable wrest, as they do also the other scriptures, to their own destruction" (2 Pt 3:16). Nevertheless, the Scripture, as "the manifold wisdom of God", must "be made known by the church to the principalities and powers in the heavenly places" (Eph 3:10). We may also recall the words of St. Peter Damascene: "many mysteries are hidden in the Holy Scriptures, without knowing the thought of God through the spoken words... and nobody knows the meaning of any word, but through revelation" (St. Peter Damascene 1977, 165-6), that is, through the sharing of the Holy Spirit (Bobrinskoy 1999, 26), or the verses taken over by Pavel Florenski: "blessed is the one who has kept the meaning of his ancestors' customs, of their simple tradition, who answered with a tear in return to the singing of a psalm, who willingly breaks the doubts of the soul while reading the Holy Bible" (Florenski 1999, 45).

On orality and scripturality

This year is dedicated to the Holy Scripture, a lot of reunions dedicated to this depth

of wisdom will be organized, but many of them will be very different of what the Holy Fathers have seen and see in the Scriptures. One aspect of the debates may be the one invoked by us: why the oral and personal revelation has been replaced by the written form of transmitting the Revelation? Is this a derogation, a freezing of Revelation in historicism? We will try to answer to this question by making use both of the Judaic position and the patristic one. But first, I would like to bring forward an essential assertion for the understanding of the eastern perspective regarding the two ways of transmitting the Revelation: “The Scripture reveals to us the most elementary truth about our life, namely that our longing for God is the answer to His longing for us. His love, which antecedes our love, (1 Jn 4:10) produces in us the desire of knowing Him and living in Him forever. Read from this perspective of longing for God, the Bible transforms itself from an ancient document into a source of Revelation which offers us the true knowledge of God and, through this, the possibility of sharing with Him the eternal communion which we desire so ardently” (Breck 2007, 15). Therefore, the two ways of transmitting the Revelation don’t offer the knowing of an epoch, of a character or of an historical event, but “the knowing of God” and, through this, the way of achieving and pre-tasting in this world His Kingdom.

In order to understand this partition of the Revelation in oral form and in written form, we must come down in the chronological zone of the starting point of the second form, in the period when God, through the activity of Moses, is making for Himself a new people. With this moment begins what Jaspers called “the axial epoch”, that is, the epoch of the written Revelation which hasn’t become canonic, in the human meaning of the process, because it was canonic through what it achieved and by the origin/ the subject of its achievement. The pre-axial period was the epoch of the oral revelation, of the direct revelation to the human persons, to the group of the patriarchs, the ones who were “seers of God”. From this period, we may perceive the fact, very much experienced in the East, that man receives and experiences Revelation in the prayer and that the acts of the Revelation clarifies the fact that the two worlds become one according to the very knowledge of God, because in Him there is no “here” or “there”, only “now”, the liturgical “today”. The Revelation expels the darkness of ignorance and invites not only to reading, but also to embodiment.

Perhaps this is why the Judaic spirituality directed itself towards the personification of the Torah, but never in a radical way. Why the written form is, nevertheless, useful? I would like to bring forward a text from the scholia to Ambigua of Saint Maximus the

Confessor, written by Dumitru Stăniloae, in which it is said: “But if the seeing power of the mind sees those spiritual as the eye sees, the ear listens and receives with faith the mysteries transmitted by God, Whose presence the mind perceives. This seeing and hearing gives strength to the human freedom against the external temptations and places man on the ladder of his perfection as a spiritual person, that is, on the way of: purifying himself of sins; contemplating the reasons of things through the mind, which is no longer coerced – by worries and pleasures – to stop to the materiality of things; mystic or apophatic knowledge of God, achieved by the mind purified through prayer, that is, through concentrating in God and leaving aside any ideas of things. Thus, we may say that reason, as an element which defines the person, is not a simple faculty of knowing, but has a power of facing and fighting against the actions of the evil powers” (St. Maximus the Confessor 2006, 218). It is clear from this the fact that man gathers in himself thoughts (dead thoughts) which are not in accordance with the thinking of God and which separate man from God. Due to this inclination of our being, God Himself command to Moses to write down (Ex 17:14; 34:27) and to put into the Holy of the Holiest those revealed, but again, in the Holy of the Holiest of our being, in our heart, not in our mind, the word of the revelation’s spirit works (Lk 24:32).

It is to be noticed, as well, the fact that the saints before the written law didn’t know God in a simple way, from nature, but through speaking with Him (Noah, Abraham, Moses before Sinai). They understood from their talking with God a lot of words or commandments which were to be given for those many in the Law of Sinai. It is about a unity in word which, it seems, has been largely diminished today. Therefore, before having a written law, man could live a life full of virtue, following the inner voice of his con-science, his only teacher. Man could also learn about God from the creatures (Rom 1:20), and Plato also said that “the world is a divine letter to humans”, an assertion taken over by St. John Chrysostom, but in other words: “The Holy Scripture is a letter of God’s love for man” (St. John Chrysostom PG 53, 28; 61, 20). He also gives an answer to our question: “Considering the thoughts of humans and finding them pure, God spoke with them directly, as they were capable to understand Him. In this way He spoke with Adam, with Noah, with Abraham. This direct communication of God with men is superior to the one through scriptures. This is why God didn’t intend, from the beginning, to give to the humans a written law. Both the written law of the Old Testament and the written law of the New Testament were given by God because of the weakness of men” (St. John Chrysostom PG 61, 20). Thus we may understand what the

reason of this double formal partition is.

I would like to underline the following aspect: the written word, even if it is poorer in content by the fact that it implies a second effort in perceiving it as a living word, is a testimony, a testimony about God and a testimony for us that we belong to the people of God and that it requires from us its embodiment. The mind is the altar on which, on the one side, the praising and thanking offerings are brought to God, and on the other side, from those offerings we eat. The souls of those who bring these thanking and praising offerings also eat, spiritually, from these, which are like some breads of the knowledge of God and as a glass of wisdom, breads and glass which are not only products of man, but also gifts of God, and this food is superior to the material one (Heb 13:9-10) (St. Maximus the Confessor 2006, 218). The Scripture is food, is word which feeds.

In this point, we must say that the Tradition is the environment in which the direct revelation is achieved, being reflected by the liturgical life which precedes, incorporates and comes after the act of seeing. In this period of seers, we clearly understand the fact that the patriarchs fulfilled the responsibility of the universal priesthood inside creation and the fact that the Tradition is an existential milieu founded in the time of unwritten laws; it is not a simple historical stasis, remembered or commemorated, it is a concrete type of ministration, of liturgical acting, through which we define the identity of our faith and the eschatological meaning of our living and our deeds. In this case, the oral revelation is the meaning of Tradition and its form of essentialization. We may therefore say that the expression: "Tradition is the living memory of the Church" (O. Clement) is fully true, because the meaning which sustains the superiority of the oral revelation compared with the written one is evident: a word, no matter how wise it is, is and remains a definition which records a certain historical moment and it is, therefore, a form of limitation (Ricoeur 1995; Gadamer 2001).

This is why we are speaking, in what concerns hermeneutics, of a static level and of a dynamic level of the word of Revelation, that is, an historical stasis and a dynamis in history, because the word of Revelation is a personal addressing, a circumscribing in dialogue, and the dialogue is at the same time saying and seeing. Scripturality has its reason in the word addressed by God to Moses: a sign of the covenant may remain; so, the covenant is much more than what we could assert by using this concept of those two Testaments. It is now time to say that during orality we are in the period of promise and choice, in the time of pedagogy; during the axial epoch, we are in the period of revealing the mystagogical typoi and of their accomplishment in Christ; and after His ascension,

we are in the time of our free assertion of our choice, according to the previous choice of God in order to remain together with Him and in order that our eyes may see for those in darkness as well. When the Revelation is accomplished on earth, it is accomplished in Heaven as well, because the Revelation is not addressed only to a part of creation, but to its whole (Eph 3:10).

Tradition, Scripture and canon

The communion with the divine is the natural condition of the human being in paradise and the intrinsic characteristic of the human person, through which man is religiously/ eschatologically oriented towards God. When I say “religiously/ eschatologically oriented. I have in mind the assertion according to which what has a beginning has also an end, and the idea of the end contains in itself this Eshaton, this “the most outer moment” of time. Or, most of the times, when we are speaking of religion or religious relation, we have in mind the meaning of the term which was given by Lactantius and Cicero, as deriving from *re-ligare*, which means that there is an untying, a breaking, a hiatus; this meaning is not common to the easier thinking, because it is a radical perspective of the effects of the primordial sin. Therefore, in a few words, I would like to underline the fact that the religious manifestation is not an instrumental, but an essential matter, that it is something natural of the unity of creation in itself and with the divine Self of the Creator. Man is from the very beginning an *anthropos leitourgos*, having the purpose of becoming an *anthropos eucharistikos*; in this case, *Kanon* or *Kaneh* is the Word, one of the Holy Trinity or the Holy Trinity seen in the Incarnation and in the revelation of His ministration as Christ.

The first reason of fixing the scriptural canon comes from here: those scriptures are canonic, which speak/ reveal God in His Word, and not the speculations of the human logic, but the epiphanic/ theophanic materializations of the Word before the Incarnation (in the prophetic way), in the Incarnation and in His mystic body, perceived as a teandric way of continuous ascension towards the Kingdom of Heaven. In fact, in the moment in which we go to find a chronological landmark of the beginning of collecting the canonic writings, we face the words spoken by God to Moses: “in order that an eternal sign of the covenant to remain” of the eternal relationship between God and His people, between God and His creation from this standpoint, we may say that a canonic writing has an evident dialogical aspect: it is not a *demonstratio fidei*, but a *revelatio fidei*. This assertion may also serve as an answer to the issue of removing as non-canonic

the Gnostic writings. In fact, faith is not a demonstration, but a transfiguration, and this formula may serve as an explanation to the reasons why the book of Revelation was accepted as a canonic writing after such a long process.

The biblical canon was fixed in a period of about 1500 years and this process was realized inside the living tradition of the indestructible faith in “the Living God”, “in the only true God”. In order to perceive the Eastern way of understanding how the canon was realized, we will allow George Florovski to speak, as he has done during the First Congress of Orthodox Theology, held in Athens in 1936.

The Holy Scripture is not only a human product, but a divine-human reality so complex that it cannot be understood but through analogy with the very mystery of the Incarnation of the Son of God (Florovski 2005, 8-9). Therefore, we must understand that the whole history is infused and moved by the dynamism and the tension of the man’s way from Image to Likeness. In this way, the whole history is contained in the Mystery of the divine incarnation, as we see in the cosmic and liturgical Vision of St. Maxim the Confessor. The very making of man “in God’s image” shows his nature contained in the historic impetus of achieving the divine likeness and the sharing of God’s glory (Florovski 2005, 9-10). This is why we may assert those above, namely the fact that God the Word is the “canon” of a canonical writing. All the answers to the questions regarding the fulfillment (and not becoming!) of man and of creation may be found in the mystery of the Word and are achievable by experiencing the mystery/ the mysteries.

From this perspective, a methodological landmark may be fixed, having the purpose of facilitating our understanding of the notions of Tradition and Scripture, namely the one through which the marks of co-developing of the history of humanity in the history of salvation are determined and asserted: the constitutive elements of Tradition are those which transcend the strict historical development, transcend the immanence of the event as temporal finitude and reveal themselves as revelations of asserting/ tasting eternity; the climax, the synthesis or the scriptural foundation of the dogmatic expression of this factual state is the Scripture as maximal accomplishment of the “axial period” of humanity. I made use once more of this expression of Jaspers because it theocentrically reconfigures the creation, fixing the Holy Scripture as axis, an axis through which the creation receives the power of acknowledging its continuous presence in God by perceiving the continuous presence of God in creation, in the image of “the unique icon” of this mysterious presence, of the icon of the incarnated Christ, of the icon of the Kingdom of Heaven. Because of this, it is said that the eastern tradition

and scriptural interpretation has a strong Christological character and that it opens the way to the re-assuming of the personalist logic proper to the biblical-patristic Vision, a unitary Vision in which Christology, pneumatology, triadology and ecclesiology cannot be separated. But this personalist logic is, in fact, a *perichoretic* logic in which the divine Persons are together present in a mysterious, but plenary way, in revealing One of them to the human being.

Therefore, the Tradition records the fact in which the human knowledge becomes a biblical, dogmatic and cultural-historical knowledge, by assuming the divine Revelation in the inexhaustible passing from the revealed word of the Scripture, through the living body of the Church/ Christ, bearing the Holy Spirit and the Tradition, towards the land of the eschatological transfiguration, thus illustrating the presence of God in the life of the world, the image of a *Deus revelatus* and not a *Deus absconditus*. This presence and working of somebody else in me is the one which defines my freedom, without annulling its responsibility, but involving it in the participation to “what will come” (Florovski 2005, 11). This is why I chose for a redefinition of the primary meaning of the concept of religion, because to be religiously in relationship with God means to take part with your own responsible freedom to the divine freedom, in the way of freely and consciously achieving the “likeness”, and the acts of this conscience, of this common consciousness, are in fact the constitutive moments of Tradition understood as accumulation of “living memories”, not of “dead thoughts” (see Ambigua of St. Maximus the Confessor), which we find between man and God during our existence in this saeculum.

But in order to be more explicit regarding the Eastern understanding of the Tradition and of the Scripture, I will present the eastern “perichoretic logic”, as follows: there is an inner rapport between the essence and the divine Persons inside Trinity, a rapport which determines real relations between the divine Persons, and this fact makes the Revelation to be a Trinitarian and unitary work in the way asserted by the unicity of the divine Essence, this being the unique source which reveals and generates a unique Revelation, even if, for us there are two ways of transmitting it and two ways of achieving it. For the Orthodox Theology, between creation and salvation, between the natural and the supernatural way there is a natural continuity. In the same way in which the salvation leads the world to the original purpose which was forgotten because of the Fall, the supernatural way doesn’t bring another truth, but reasserts the fundamental and perennial data of the natural way (Popescu and Costache 1997, 25). The unity of Revelation in Christ, the Logos who

is at the same time Creator and Savior, is very important for evaluating the relations between the two ways and between cosmos and history as spaces in which God revealed Himself. If God “didn’t let Himself unknown” (St. Athanasius the Great 1987, 35). His revelation towards the old Israel was made continuously and organized, by successive accumulations. The speaking of Christ in history was made at first in a mediate way, and afterwards manifestly, through the Incarnation, so that the whole process has a Christological foundation. This is why, once more, we say that the concept of canon/canonicity cannot be completely defined in the human logic, but only in the logic of Christ.

Revealing Himself step by step and in different ways, God pointed the history with his revelations, leading it to its natural direction. But the phases of this revelation are, in fact, the phases of the spiritual ethnogenesis of Israel. The meaning of history is the communion of humans and of creation with God, and this meaning reveals itself dynamically and exemplarily from the old Israel to the new Israel.

The speaking of God towards Israel didn’t remain without testimonies. Achieving through meetings, promises, revelations and covenants, this speaking/ dialogue has become a dynamic frame of truth and life. This frame of meeting and the first testimony of the relationships between God and Israel is the Holy Tradition. Inside the Holy Tradition appeared in time some records, strictly catalogued by the Church, according to their fidelity to the Truth/ Christ, in three categories: canonic books, explanatory books and apocryphal books. Born inside Tradition, as an embodiment of the Word, the Holy Scripture cannot be separated from its context (Popescu and Costache 1997, 20).

The Scripture and the Tradition, testimonies of the love between God and Israel, are not two separate, but reciprocally implicated realities, having their function not towards each other, but towards the truth/ Christ. In this way, they are not autonomous towards the Church either, because the truth is the speaking addressed permanently to the Church by God about God, about Himself.

The extension of the canon is given by the Scripture of Christ, but in the annunciation of Christ, the very transparency of the truth, as a unique transcendent reality, makes His enouncement to be not a nominal, but a categorial one, and this fact raises many discussions.

The fundamental criterion which can establish the canonicity is Christ/ the eternal truth of Deus revelatus. The usual thesis according to which Tradition completes the

Scripture at an informative level forgets their very common reference to the truth, to the very transcendence of the incarnated Truth. Among the multitude of the writings, the Church has chosen those which had as a direct object the knowledge of God from the acts of Revelation and not those which led to His knowledge from the acts of demonstration or of different Gnostic formula. Another question may be raised: in this context, why the East chooses as secondary the anaginoscomena writings and places them in the Holy Scripture? Because these writings show the axiological consistencies of the mundane history and the fact that the divine Providence manifests itself concretely in history, in order to reveal it as a way of salvation.

In the Romanian environment, the scriptural canon is as follows: since the very first integral edition of the Holy Scripture in the Romanian language, the canon is clearly established: 39 plus 27. Nevertheless, the anaginoscomena writings were also observed, which proves the fact that our Church acknowledges the Holy Scripture's power of moral restoration. The concept of "deuterocanonic", used by the Catholic Church, was avoided, as well as the exclusivist attitude of Protestantism. In our opinion, there is a clear conception about observing the scriptural text both in its static-historical structure and in its dynamic relevance. In Orthodoxy, it is not about only a stasis of the text, of its reception as a literary product of some ancient centuries – although this aspect is not completely excluded or neglected – but also about a dynamic status of the text, through which the text is a continuous revelation and man may fulfill himself as one who knows God. The dichotomy of the Scripture is only a formal one, because the scriptural text is a unity with a unique theme: to know You, the true God, the living God praised in the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, the undivided Trinity.

The dynamics of the scriptural text justifies an obvious dynamics of the biblical research and an exemplary effort in adjusting the text to each century; this is the reason why in the next part of our essay, we will try to present to Romanian biblical research, which remained faithful to the exegetical and isagogic patristic direction.

Bible translations in Romanian

The first translations of the Holy Scripture in the Romanian language were only partial ones: it started with the translation of the Psalms, and the first translation of this kind was *Psaltirea Șcheiană*, which dates from the XVth century and which is today the property of the Romanian Academy. This was followed by *Psaltirea lui Coresi* (1568, 1570, 1577) and *Psaltirea de la Bălgrad* (1651). The using of the Book of Psalms

in the cult made its translation in the Romanian language a priority. These editions were followed by *Palia de la Orăștie*, printed in 1582, which contains the Books of Genesis and Exodus. *Palia* was translated by Ștefan Hercse, Efrem Zacan, Moise Peștișel and the protopope of Hunedoara. The translation was made according to the Hebrew text, but the Greek, Latin and Slavic texts were also used. It reflects the level of the literary Romanian language's development in the XVIth century.

The New Testament appeared in the Romanian language in the translation from Bălgrad (Alba-Iulia) from 1648, but an integral translation of the text of the Holy Scripture was made only in Bucharest (1688). This translation was made by the bishop Mitrofan of Huși, the metropolitan Gherman of Nyssa and by the brothers Șerban and Radu Greceanu. In 1673 appears at UnieŃ (Poland) the Book of Psalms in verses, translated by Dosoftei. The edition of Blaj from 1795 is a translation made by Samuil Micu, under the patronage of the bishop Ioan Bob, according to the Septuagint, but the Bible from Bucharest and the New Testament from Bălgrad were also used.

The third edition of the Holy Scripture in the Romanian language appears in 1819 in Sankt Petersburg (Lupaș 1912), the work of the Russian Biblical Society, with the cooperation of the metropolitan Gavril Munteanu, of the bishop V. Cuza, the uncle of Al. Ioan Cuza, of the prince Ipsilanti and of the councilman M. Krupenschi. The Bible of the Bishop Filotei of Buzău, in five volumes, appears in 1854 (Marcu 1958, 325).

A very important edition is the Bible of the metropolitan Andrei Șaguna (Lupaș 1911; Iorga 1929), edited in 1858, which has a very elaborated introduction, well documented, and which is written in a very beautiful Romanian language. In 1914 appears the first synodal edition of the Holy Scripture. Between 1920 and 1923 appears the translation of Dimitrie Cornilescu. In 1938, after 250 years since the edition of the Bible in 1688, appears one of the best editions of the Holy Scripture in the Romanian language, translated according to the Septuagint by Gala Galaction and Vasile Radu (Lupaș 1912; Iorga 1929). In the same year appears in Neamț the illustrated edition of the Bible, made by the metropolitan Nicodim Munteanu. In 1944 another synodal edition of the Bible is published, translated by the Patriarch of Romania, Nicodim, according to the Septuagint, but also with the help of some Slavic, French and other translations. Two editions date from the time of the Patriarch Justinian, from the years 1968 and 1975, another edition appears under the care of the Patriarch Iustin Moisescu in 1982. Finally, in 1988 a new edition is published, under the care of the Patriarch Teoctist. The last edition of the Holy Scripture in the Romanian language is the version

of the metropolitan Bartolomeu Anania, the Archbishop of Vad, Feleac and Cluj, which appeared as jubiliar edition of the Holy Synod in 2001.

Romanian biblical studies

In the Romanian theology, the important treaties of biblical theology begin to appear only in the XXth century. I have opted for a synthetic presentation, namely for the presentation of the most important Romanian Biblicists and their activity. First of all, I would invoke the figure of the most unceasing searcher of Christ in the Old Testament, Father Nicolae Neaga, as well as the figure of the rector-martyr Liviu Galaction Munteanu, from whose work I will present in the compendia of biblical theology.

Father *Nicolae Neaga* (born on the 26th of July 1902) was the titular of the department of the Old Testament's Study, biblical Archeology and the Hebrew Language at the Faculty of Orthodox Theology in Sibiu, between 1936-1980; likewise, he was the rector of the Theological Institute of University Degree in Sibiu between 1946-1952. He is co-author of the manual *The Study of the Old Testament – manual for the theological institutes*, first edition appeared in 1956, the second one, improved, in 1985. He translated and commented all the canonic writings of the Old Testament, analyzed in different writings the problem of the anaginoscomena writings, as well as the problem of the inter-testamentary literature. I will present the aspect of novelty of his works, compared with those existent in the education's system of his time. The main interest of Father Neaga was the Christology of the Old Testament, materialized in the following works: *The messianic prophecies of the Old Testament*, Sibiu, 1929; *Contributions to the clarifying of the messianic texts in the book of Genesis*, Sibiu, 1930; *Daniel, the prophet about Christ*, Sibiu, 1933; *Christ in the Old Testament*, Sibiu, 1944.

These works offer an exegetical patristic perspective, because Father Neaga made direct use of *Patrologiae Cursus Completus*, both series. He focused his attention on the social value of the Old Testament, on the existent connections between the Old Testament and Coran, on the study of archaeology, geography and the Judaic cult, using the contemporary exegetical critical position regarding certain biblical writings as well. His scientific activity sums up 17 books, 406 studies and 267 critical editions. The last category reflects in an objective way his important theological and cultural work. He analyzes the works of the great western theologians, as: L. Dennenfeld, I. Goettsberger, Eissfeldt, W.F. Allbright, Oessterley, Bratitotis, Lods etc., thus proving the fact that the Romanian theology was acquainted with the contemporary works of specialty

and underlining the importance of the Romanian theology within the context of the European theology and spirituality.

Father *Liviu Galaction Munteanu* (16th of May 1898 – 8th of March 1961) became doctor in Theology in Cernăuți in 1924, was professor at the Orthodox Theological Academy, later the Orthodox Theological Institute in Cluj-Napoca, between 1924-1952; in 1952, this institution was closed by the communist regime and Father L.G. Munteanu was put in prison because he made a project regarding the teaching of religion in the laic schools. Without the help of the Church and after terrible physical and psychical sufferings, he died in the prison in Aiud as a worthy confessor of Orthodoxy. During the communist regime, his works were forbidden, as well as their quotation. A great part of his studies were contained in the manual of The Old Testament from 1956 and 1985. His work will be published later.

Although a specialist in the New Testament, Father L. G. Munteanu made important research in the field of the Old Testament as well. His works shows the importance of the Old Testament for Christianity and renders clear the orthodox position regarding the most recent biblical critics. He elaborated an ample study entitled *The Old Testament and Christianity*, Cluj, 1937, in which he asserts the typological function of the old testamentary writings for the new-testamentary theology. He refutes “the opinions of those who assert that we must abandon the Old Testament, opinions which are expressed by the followers of the theoretical atheism and put into practice by the followers of the practical atheism, which grows bigger and bigger” (Munteanu 1937, 5). “Under the form of the modern liberalism we observe a bigger and bigger atrophy of the sources of Christianity” (Munteanu 1937, 6). The argument of liberalism is refuted point by point, and Father Munteanu concludes: “The Old Testament doesn’t confound itself with the literature of the Jewish people, but remains a history of the divine revelation, in the way of interpreting it according to our Savior” (Munteanu 1937, 67). This work may be considered as the first Romanian study of the Old Testament’s apology, which corresponds to the exigencies of the modern scientific research.

His position towards the modern biblical critics is expressed in the works: *The history of creation in the light of the biblical researches*, Cluj, 1929; *The Pentateuch faced with the modern critics*, Cluj, 1937; *The biblical paradise. The Fall of our ancestors. An exegetical study*, Cluj, 1939. Making use of the modern exegetical techniques, appealing to the patristic theology, the author establishes the orthodox dogmatic points and the way in which these points answer to the interrogations of the modern critics. The

position of the orthodox theologians towards these theories – for example, towards the theory of sources – is reserved, these theories being nothing else than an object of study (Munteanu 1937, 47). L.G. Munteanu was, in the field of the biblical studies, a genuine model of theologian who belongs, due to his analytical objectivity, to the corpus of the modern European theologians.

At the beginning of the communist regime, a series of theologians developed an important activity of scientific research in the field of the Old Testament: Ioan Popescu-Mălăești, Vladimir Prelipceanu, Mircea Chialda, Nicolae Ciudin, Athanase Negoită, Ion Georgescu, Gheorghe Ciușeanu etc. Their works remained the main source of the Romanian theological education for a period of about fifty years.

The studies made between the third and the sixth decades of this century show the fact that the Romanian theology was in a process of crystallization, partially stopped by the communist authority. Nevertheless, the following directions were followed in the field of the Old Testament biblical research: the making of some compendia of introduction in the study of the Old Testament (Tarnavschi 1928; Prelipceanu 1955; Ciudin 1978); exegetical studies and corrections of the existent translations of the canonical books; the making of some compendia of biblical archaeology, geography and the history of the Holy Land (Tarnavschi 1930; Chialda 1941); the making of some compendia of grammar and classical Hebrew language (Negoită 1946). Many of these were never printed, as it is the case of the treatise *The Theology of the Old Testament*, written by Ioan Popescu-Mălăești or the one written by Athanase Negoită, which were preserved in manuscript. The compendium of biblical theology written by Athanase Negoită appeared only in 1992, although it was written in the fourth decade. About in the same period, other specialists of the Old Testament developed their scientific research, which I will present briefly in a few paragraphs.

Vasile Tarnavschi (16th of December 1859 – 4th of February 1945) became doctor in theology at the Theological Faculty in Cernăuți in 1886. Then, he made courses of specialization in the field of the Old Testament and Semitic languages in Vienna, Breslau (today Wrocław) and Berlin (1899-1900). For 26 years (1906-1932) he was professor of Old Testament and Hebrew Language at the Faculty of Theology in Cernăuți; he taught practical theology, Aramaic, Syriac and Arabic. He is considered one of the most important Romanian theologians in the field of the Old Testament. His works are numerous, we mention here the translations of some biblical writings, with commentaries: *Der Prophet Haggai. Einleitung und Kommentar*, Vienna, 1900

(Cernăuți, 1904); *The Book of Genesis, translation and commentary*, Cernăuți, 1907; *The Book of Exodus, translation and commentary*, Cernăuți, 1913; *The Book of Leviticus, translation and commentary*, Cernăuți, 1923. Two works were the best works in their field for a long time: *Introduction in the Holy Scriptures of the Old Testament* (Cernăuți, 1928, 656 p.) and *Biblical archaeology* (Cernăuți, 1930, 710 p.).

Ioan Popescu-Mălăești (31st of March 1874 – 3rd of April 1953) graduated Theology at the Faculty of Theology in Bucharest, in 1898 and became doctor in Philology and Philosophy at the German University of Strasbourg in 1903. He was professor of Old Testament, Biblical Archaeology and Hebrew Language at the Faculty of Theology in Bucharest (1907-1939), dean of this Faculty (1929-1933 and 1936-1938). He published a series of translations, commentaries on the books of the Old Testament (*Obadiah* – 1906; *Joel* – 1910; *Ecclesiastes* – 1933), as well as studies regarding issues of isagogy and biblical archaeology (*A short introduction in the writings of the Old Testament* – 1933; *Job. An introductive study* – 1935).

Vladimir Prelipceanu (20th of February 1903 – 29th of November 1990) followed the courses of the Faculty of Theology in Cernăuți (1925-1929) and became doctor in 1931, then attended courses of specialization in the Old Testament and in the Semitic languages (Hebrew, Aramaic, Syriac, Assyrian and Arabic) at the Universities in Vienna, Berlin and Strasbourg (1932-1934). Between 1941 and 1948 he was professor of Old Testament at the Theological Institute in Cernăuți and from 1948 professor at the Faculty of Theology in Bucharest, where he remained until his retirement, in 1969. A great part of his studies are dedicated to the prophetic writings: *The prophet Habakkuk. Introduction, translation and commentary*, 1934; *The vocation of the Old Testament's prophets*, 1942-1943; *Something about the writing of the Old Testament's prophets*, 1944-1945; *Social aspects in the writings of the Old Testament's prophets*, 1946; *Prophecies and false prophecies according to the Old Testament*, 1949; *The messianic peace at the prophets of the Old Testament*, 1954.

Likewise, he was interested in the archaeological discoveries, trying to identify their importance for the understanding of the Old Testament: *The diggings from Teleilat-Gassul and their importance for the prehistoric Palestine*, 1938; *The texts from Ras-Shamra and their relation with the Old Testament*, 1939. We mention also the manual of Old Testament which is still in use in the Faculties of Theology: *The Study of the Old Testament. Manual for the use of the students of the Theological Institutes*, Bucharest, 1952 (in cooperation with Nicolae Neaga and Gheorghe Barna).

Athanase Negoiță (3rd of July 1903 – 1994), graduated at the Faculty of Theology and Philology in Bucharest (1926-1930), became doctor in Theology (1932) with a thesis called *Nahum the Prophet*, attended courses of specialization at *Ecole Biblique et Archeologique Frangaise* in Jerusalem (1930-1932). He was professor for the exegesis of the Old Testament (1947-1948), member of the Association of the Eastern Researchers from Romania. The most important of his works concerning the Old Testament are: *The Sabbath of the Old Testament*, Bucharest, 1935; *The biblical theology of the Old Testament*, Bucharest, 1992. He was co-worker to many volumes in the *Bibliotheca Orientalis* collection: *The Phoenician thinking in texts*, Bucharest, 1979; *The Hittite thinking in texts*, Bucharest, 1986. His attention was also focused on the writings recently discovered: *The manuscripts from the Dead Sea and the more recent studies*, 1960; *The discovery of the Gnostic writings. The Coptic manuscripts from Nag Hammadi*, 1960; *The discoveries from the Dead Sea. The manuscripts from Qumran*, 1962; *The problem of the resurrection of the dead in the manuscripts from Qumran and in the more recent rabbinical literature*, 1962; *The teacher of justice in the manuscripts from Qumran*, 1962.

Iustin Moisesescu (5th of March 1910 – 31st of July 1986) studied at the Faculty of Theology in Athens (1930-1934), attended courses of specialization at the Catholic Faculty of Theology in Strasbourg (1934-1936) and again in Athens (1936-1937), where he became doctor in Theology in 1937 with the thesis: *Evagrius from Pont. His life, his writings, his teaching* (written in Greek, Athens, 1937, 155 p.). He was professor of New Testament at the Faculty of Orthodox Theology of the University in Warsaw (1938-1939), professor of the New Testament's exegesis at the Faculty of Theology in Cernăuți-Suceava, transferred in 1946 at the Faculty of Theology in Bucharest. On the 12th of June 1977 he was elected as Patriarch of the Romanian Orthodox Church. Among many of his works, I point here only one essential work for the Romanian biblical hermeneutics: *The Holy Scripture and its interpretation in the work of St. John Chrysostom* (Cernăuți, 1942).

Nicolae Nicolaescu (6th of November 1910 – 5th of March 1977) became a specialist in the field of the biblical studies at the Faculty of Catholic and Protestant Theology in Strasbourg (1935-1937) and became doctor in Theology in Bucharest in 1942, with the thesis *An introduction to the Epistle of Philippians. The captivity of St. Ap. Paul in Efes*. He taught New Testament and biblical hermeneutics as university assistant at the Faculty of Theology in Bucharest (1938-1946), professor in Suceava (Jan. 1947 – Apr. 1948), and later in Bucharest (1948-1971); pro-rector (1952-1962) and rector (1949-1950;

1962-1971) of the Institute of Theology. His special interest was focused on the epistles: *The exegesis of the text of II Corinthians XII* (1938-1939); *The Pauline chronology* (1942); *The actuality of the first Epistle to Corinthians of St. Ap. Paul* (1951); *The actuality of the first Epistle of St. John the Evangelist* (1953). Among his works there is a presentation of the biblical studies in the Romanian Orthodox Church (1971), a short history of the translations of the Holy Scripture in the Romanian language, as well as a manual (co-worker) of *The Study of the New Testament* (1977).

Grigorie Marcu (7th of December 1911 – 21st of January 1987) graduated the courses of the Faculty of Theology in Bucharest (1929-1932) and Cernăuți (1932-1933). He attended courses of specialization in New Testament at the Faculty of Orthodox Theology in Athens (1933-1934) and in Breslau (1934-1936); doctor in Theology in Cernăuți on the 3rd of June 1939. He taught New Testament at the Theological Academy in Sibiu starting from 1946. He was co-worker to a manual of *New Testament for the students of the Faculties of Theology* (1954). Among many of his studies, I mention only the most important one: *The process of our Saviour. A juridical and theological study*, Sibiu, 1945.

Biblical studies during the communist period

This period caused a diminution of the research activity in the field of the biblical studies. The instruction of the personal necessary for cult was restrained to those few university centers; only one of these had the permission of organizing doctoral courses. For this reason, between 1950 and 1989 only three doctoral theses appeared (Abrudan 1979; Cornițescu 1984; Basarab 1980). The study of the classical languages diminished very much, thus the access to the sources was considerably reduced. The Western bibliography was inaccessible to the students. Nevertheless, between 1956 and 1964 many studies concerning the discoveries from Qumran were published. We mention here only a few Biblicists who developed their activity during this period:

Ioan Mircea (born on the 19th of September 1903) became doctor in Theology with the thesis: *The first Epistle of St. Ap. Peter: introduction and commentary*. His works are focused especially on issues of canonic, liturgical and spiritual practice and has their sources in the new-testamentary writings: *The teaching about the Church in the Gospel. An inter-confessional approach*, 1955; *The 70 followers of the Saviour and the issue of the church hierarchy*, 1968; *Why are we celebrating the saints?*, 1980; *The Church and its activity according to the New Testament. Grace and gifts – administrators of the Mysteries*

and charismatics, 1982. A very useful work is the *Dictionary of the New Testament*, published in 1984.

Mircea Chialda (30th of June 1913 – 8th of December 1991) became doctor in theology with the thesis: *The sacrifices of the Old Testament*. Since 1944, he was professor of Old Testament and Hebrew language at the Theological Academy in Caransebeș. Transferred in Bucharest in 1948, he was professor in 1970, pre-rector (1971-1973) and rector (1973- 1979) of the Theological Institute. One of his points of interest was the unity of the Holy Scripture, therefore some of his works are dealing with the two Testaments and their relation: *Ebed Yahwe* (1940); *Melchisedec, the king priest in Salem* (1946); *The Canon of the Holy Scripture in the old-catholic Churches* (1972); *The relationship between the Old and the New Testament (The unity of the Holy Scripture)* (1981); *The second coming of our Saviour Jesus Christ (Parousia)* (1983); *The cult addressed to the Mother of God* (1983); *The teaching about the Holy Scripture* (1984).

Emilian Cornițescu (born on the 3rd of January 1941) attended courses of specialization in Aramaic, biblical Hebrew and modern Hebrew at the Hebrew University in Jerusalem (1974-1975). Starting from 1985, he is titular of the course of Old Testament at the Faculty of Theology in Bucharest. Among his studies, we find works which present old testamentary arguments for the liturgical practice of the Church: *The prophets of the Old Testament about the priesthood* (1967); *Arguments for the cult of the Mother of God in the Old Testament* (1980); *The cult of the saints according to the Holy Scripture and the Holy Tradition* (1980); *Prefigurations of the Holy Cross in the Old Testament* (1982); *The threefold ministration of our Saviour Christ according to the Old Testament* (1983); *The meaning of the prayer according to the Old Testament* (1983). He was also interested in problems of morals and in their old testamentary foundation: *The view on friendship in the didactic books of the Old Testament* (1967); *The relationships between parents and children according the didactic books of the Old Testament* (1969). We mention also the manual of *Biblical Archaeology* for the use of the students (Bucharest, 1994, in cooperation with Dumitru Abrudan).

Dumitru Abrudan (born on the 29th of August 1938) received the title of doctor in Theology in 1978, with the thesis: *Christianity and the Mosaic Law in the perspective of the interreligious dialogue*. His interest in the Old Testament is rendered obvious by his published works, which deal with all the writings of the biblical canon, as well as with the anaginoscomena writings, the apocryphal writings and those thematically related: *The anaginoscomena writings of the Old Testament according to the Romanian*

translations (1962); *Justice and peace in the book of the Psalms* (1963); *Salvation and its communitarian meaning in the prophetic writings of the Old Testament* (1975); *The apocryphal books of the Old Testament* (1983); *Philo from Alexandria and his importance for the Old Testament's biblical exegesis* (1985); *Joseph Flavius, an historian of the inter-testamentary epoch. His importance for the knowledge of the context in which Christianity appeared* (1997).

Vasile Mihoc (born on the 13th of March 1948) became doctor in 1983 at the Theological Institute in Bucharest, with the thesis: *The Epistle to Galatians. An introductive study, translation and commentary*. Starting with the 1st of October 1983, he is titular professor of New Testament. His articles are focused especially on dogmatic issues founded in the New Testament's writings: *The Son of Man according to the New Testament* (1973); *The unity of the Christians in Christ and through the Church according to the Epistle to Ephesians of St. Ap. Paul* (1976); *The New Testament's Ecclesiology* (1977); *God, one in essence and three in Persons* (1981); *Man, image and resemblance of God, although he bears the wounds of sins* (1981). Father Vasile Mihoc develops a very rich activity of research; recently, he took part to the International Biblical Colloque concerning the translation of the Holy Scripture, organized by the Saint Serge Institute in Paris in February 2008.

December 1989 meant the renewal of biblical studies

Under the conditions of the new democracy, the old Faculties of Orthodox Theology were reopened. Today function 16 Faculties. Some works absolutely necessary for the development of the process of education were published: D. Abrudan și E. Cornițescu, *Biblical Archaeology*, Bucharest, 1994; *The biblical Hebrew Language*, Bucharest, 1996. Due to private initiatives, other works appear: At. Negoită, *The theology of the Old Testament*, Bucharest, 1992; Petru Semen, *Holy and holiness in the Old Testament*, Iași, 1993; *Biblical Archaeology*, Iași, 1994; *Course of Hebrew Language*, Iași, 1993; Ioan Chirilă, *The Book of Hosea – breviarum of the Old Testament's gnoseology*, Cluj-Napoca 1999; *Messianism and Revelation in the writings of Qumran*, Cluj-Napoca 1999. A lot of doctoral theses were given; these theses brought the Romanian biblical exegesis at the level of the biblical studies from abroad. A short presentation of the theologians who developed the most part of their activity of research after the fall of the communist regime is given as follows:

Petru Semen (born on the 9th of October 1949) became doctor in Theology in

Bucharest, in 1993, with the thesis: *The teaching about holy and holiness in the writings of the Old Testament*. He is professor of Old Testament at the Faculty of Theology in Iași since 1990. Among his works, I mention: *The meaning of the expression "Iom-lahve" – the Day of the Lord at the prophets of the Old Testament* (1979); *The holiness of God and the holiness of men* (1992).

Stelian Tofană (born on the 2nd of April 1958) graduated the University Theological Institute in Sibiu with a thesis concerning The Fourth Ecumenical Synod in Chalcedon and its importance. He attended doctoral courses in Bucharest, the biblical department – New Testament (1983-1986), courses of specialization at the Faculty of Evangelical Theology of the University "Friederich Alexander" in Erlangen-Nurnberg. He became doctor in Theology in Bucharest with the thesis: *Jesus Christ – Eternal bishop according to the Epistle to Hebrews* (1996). Since 1990, he teaches New Testament at the Faculty of Orthodox Theology in Cluj-Napoca, he is professor since 2000. Among his works, I mention here: *Introduction in the study of the New Testament. I. Text and canon. The epoch of the New Testament* (1997); *II. The Gospel according to Matthew and to Mark. The Quelle Document* (2002); *III. The Gospel according to Luke and John. The synoptic problem* (2003); *Symbolism and sacramentality in the fourth Gospel* (2003). Since 2002 he is member of the International Biblical Organization Studiorum Novi Testamenti Societas (SNTS).

Ioan Chirilă (born on the 7th of February 1962) graduated the University Theological Institute in Sibiu with the thesis: *The essence of the grace from the inter-confessional perspective*. He attended doctoral courses in universal modern history at the Faculty of History and Philosophy in Cluj-Napoca (1991-1996) with the thesis: *Romanian-Hebrew cultural-ecclesial relations in Transylvania - XVIIIth and XIXth centuries* (to be completed). He also attended doctoral courses in theology in Sibiu (1992-1998) and he became doctor in theology in 1999, with the thesis *The Book of the prophet Hosea - introduction, translation, commentary and the theology of the book*. He attended courses of specialization in Hebrew language at the Institute of Assyrology and Babylonistics in Budapest (1992-1993), he had a scholarship at the University in Tel-Aviv (1994-1995) and in the same time he studied at the Goren-Goldstein Institute, at Ecole Biblique de Jerusalem, Studium Biblicum Franciscanum de Jerusalem and in the Archives of Zionism. He made research in Israel and Greece (1996, 1997, 1998, 1999, 2000, 2001). Since 2004, he is dean of the Faculty of Orthodox Theology in Cluj-Napoca. Among his works, I mention: *Exegetical fragmentarium, Philonian*

exegetical fragmentarium I-II (2002-2003), *Messianism and Revelation in the writings from Qumran* (1999), *Qumran and Mariotis – places of spiritual enrichment* (2000).

This is just a brief presentation of Romanian theologians, and an obviously subjective one. In the following issues of our Review, this kind of presentation will continue, thus completing the data subjectively selected for this inauguration. This time, we only wished to familiarize you with the dynamics of this sector in Romanian theology, with the effects of totalitarian ideology on theological development and with how strong the vital force of roots actually is, considering the fact that, after '89, we witnessed an irruption in the theological text output. Our Review will militate for the identification of roots which grow on the one foundation. Our roots are in the Holy Fathers through Romanian theologians from before the red night. And it is this fact that we will strive to emphasize.

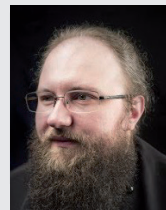
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THE BIBLICAL CONCEPT "IN THE IMAGE OF GOD" (GN 1:26-27) ACCORDING TO THE PATRISTIC AND PHILOCALIC ANTHROPOLOGY

Abstract

For the contemporary man it is very important to recover the sense of his existence. He always searches both his origin and his target – the purpose of his existence. Therefore, one of the aims of the contemporary theology is to show the man this origin and this target. Based on the Revelation, the biblical theology offers the foundation of this quest. We try here to show how the Patristic Theology understood the creation of the man "in the image of God", the way in which the Church Fathers perceived the notion of "image" and the way in which the Philocalic Fathers explained the entheosis using this concept. As we shall see, the destiny of the man depends on this revealed truth: that he t/vas made "in the image" of God. Here, we try to draw a patristic and philocalic anthropologic presentation of the entheosis, starting from the text of the Genesis 1:26-27. But why do we separate the patristic and the philocalic anthropology? First, because, using patristic arguments, we to explain the biblical concept of "image": second, to underline the importance of the notion "in the image" in the spiritual and mystical life in order to accomplish the "likeness" as we find it in the writings of the Philocalic Fathers.



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As the final act of the creation of the world, God made the man (Gn 1:26-27), who is the most important being of all creation, whose place is in its center, connecting the visible and the invisible world. Having a psycho-somatic structure, i.e. both a body and a soul (Gn 2:7), the man is a synthesis of these two worlds and participates to all the areas of the created world, since: "according to his rational part, the man is connected to that unspeakable and divine power, but, according to the flesh, he is related to the animals" (St. Anthony the Great 1999, 24).

He comes in the middle of the creation as king in his room, being "the king of the visible things that carries inside his body and mind the characteristics of these two worlds" (St. Symeon the New Theologian 2004, 56). Therefore, the man is the perfect being, the crown of the creation.

The entire world was built for the man, and he was placed there as in the Paradise, in order to rule "as lord and king of all the visible creation" (St. Symeon the New Theologian 2004, 117). But, for the king that was to come had been prepared not only this world, as a palace, but also the Kingdom of Heaven, in order to allow him to see it, as Saint Gregory Palamas says: "First, have been built one of the beings, after the first was built the second one, then, again, another, and, in the end, the man. He received such an honor from God: the entire visible world was created before him and for him. And the Kingdom of Heaven was prepared immediately after the creation of the world, also for the man, but before him." (St. Gregory Palamas 1999, 432)

According to the Greek philosophy, the man was a microcosmos inside a macrocosmos, a small world which unites two plans of existence inside him: spiritual and material. Then, this expression was used by the Church Fathers. But, starting with Saint Maximums the Confessor, the Fathers said that the man is not the microcosmos, but the macrocosmos itself, since he reunites the entire world inside him, through his reason. Concerning this, Nicetas Stethatos said: "God, after He had created from nothingness all the things in the world, He created the man as a macrocosmos, and set him in this world, as in a microcosmos, creating him as an image of Him and presenting the man as the king of all those on Earth." (Nicetas Stethatos 1948, 351)

The perfection consisted not in his similitude with the creatures, but in that which separates him from the cosmos and makes him similar with his Creator, since he, the man, belonging to the spiritual world, dominates the visible world and is also its king; he is the image of God. The revelation tells us that the man was created "in God's image, after His likeness" (Gn 1:26-27); and in another place the Bible says that the man is not only created "in the image" of God, but that his is "the image of God": "For God created man to be immortal, and made him to be an image of His own eternity" (Ws 2:23).

The theology of the "image" as the foundation of a patristic theology

We can see that the "image" (eikon) theme found in the Greek philosophy (Plato, Stoicism and Neo-Platonism) (Aubin 1953, 346-79), is also the nucleus of the Old Testament anthropology, especially in the Genesis and the wisdom literature

(Rowley 1946, 74-98). This word is also used by Philo from Alexandria who is giving it a special sense (Giblet 1948, 93-118). In the New Testament, the word acquires also a Christological understanding, and gives new dimensions to the anthropology. Then, in the patristic literature, the "image of God" theme is the basis of an Orthodox anthropology (Nellas 2002, 59).

The Theology of the "image" is developed for the first time in the New Testament by Saint Paul, the Apostle, in the Epistle to the Colossians, showing that Christ is the "Image" of God: "[He] is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of every creature: For by Him were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers: all things were created by Him, and for Him; and He is before all things, and by Him all things consist. And He is the head of the body, the Church: Who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead; that in all things He might have the preeminence." (Col 1:15-18).

And the man was created in God's Image; and, therefore, he is "the image of the Image". And Christ is the Archetype and the End of the human being as Saint Irenaeus of Lyon says: "God, when He created the man, used as Prototype the historical Christ, Who was about to show Himself on Earth. The Creator foresaw Him and created Adam in agreement with this future Prototype. Therefore, Adam was created in the Image of the Word who, as Christ, will assume the human nature and will reveal himself as perfect man." (Irineu Slătineanu 1998, 6)

This is the origin and the center of the theology of the "image" at the Church Fathers. All the Church Fathers saw, in the creation of the man "in the image" of God, His unique and unspeakable greatness, identifying here "a primordial agreement between the human nature and the divine one" (Lossky 1998, 101). Therefore, Saint Gregory Palamas says: "Among all the earthly and heavenly creatures, only the man was created in the image of the Creator, in order to look at Him and to love Him and to know Him, and to keep his beauty through the faith and the love towards Him." (St. Gregory Palamas 1977, 434)

But in the Church Fathers we do not find a totally coherent teaching about the "image". The image has a vast content, and it is identified in the various parts of the man; but even so it is impossible to accomplish a full description (Lossky 1998, 102). Saint John Damascene says: "Only the man, this noetic and rational creature is 'in the image and after the likeness of God', due to the dignity of the mind and of the soul, i.e. for his incomprehensible, unseen, immortal and free will, as well as for his capacity to rule, to

give birth and to create" (St John Damascene 2000, 191); and Abba Dorotheos says that "God made the man in His image, after the likeness, i.e. immortal, free, and having all the virtues" (Abba Dorotheos 2002, 453).

Saint Athanasius the Great shows that the man is a rational being due to the fact that he was created in the image of God, "in the image" of the eternal and personal Logos of the Father, since: "In His image He made them, giving them also the power of the Logos and making them rational in order to remain in the happiness" (St. Athanasius the Great 1987, 87). And Saint Gregory of Nyssa shows that, due to the fact that the man is "in the image" of God, he participates in all the good aspects that characterize the Image Himself, the Archetype of his existence: God created the man in His image, that is to say that He allowed the human nature to take part to all the good things. And if God is the fullness of all this good things, and the man is in His image, then this fullness will be the resemblance with the Archetype or the model (St. Gregory of Nyssa 1998, 49).

The Holy Fathers have given us many definitions, which means that they didn't wish to reduce the "in the image" expression to a certain part of the human body, since: "this image is not related to a certain part of the body as the capacity of the man is not related to one particular quality, but this capacity is related to the entire human nature. And, therefore, all the humans have the capacity to judge and to decide, and in the same way are explained all the other expressions of the divinity in those built in the image of God" (St. Gregory of Nyssa 1998, 49). The Fathers identified the "image of God" in all the actions and movements of the human nature. All of them take part in the image of God, in the relation with God and in the longing after the communion with Him. Not only the soul, but also the body participates in the image, since the image concerns the full man, and with consist in both the soul and the body. Nicetas Stethatos says that, in the man, "the image built by God is to be seen in three places: in the soul, in the mind and in the word [...]. Here we can see the image and, due to these parts, we are the icon of God, although they are mingled with the dust" (Nicetas Stethatos 1948, 298).

The man is in the image of God due to the act of the creation itself (cf. Gn 1:26). He is brought into existence through a special act of God, different from that used in order to create all other beings, since at the creation of the man, the Holy Trinity acts this way: "There was a plan before and the man was created by the hand of God and in the image of God and not all his parts are made from the matter of this world enslaved to the senses, as is the case with all other beings, but only his body; and his

soul is above this world, it is from God Himself, gave through an unspeakable breath." (St. Gregory Palamas 1977, 433)

It is clear that the man consists of two parts: the body and the soul. The body is made of common substance, and the soul is the breath of God, through which is related to Him, or, according to the teaching of the Holy Fathers, is "a fragment from God" (Stăniloae 2003, 405). Therefore, the man is in the image of God due to the fact that, having his soul related to Him, he longs after God, and he is involved into a vivid relation with his Creator, and he is fulfilling himself only in this relation. Concerning this aspect, Saint Maximus the Confessor, said: If someone's mind always looks for God, then his wish goes after the divine love and his consciousness turns towards God. Since, through the relation with the divine brightness, the man became an image made of light." (St. Maximus the Confessor 1999, 77)

Being the image of God, the man is in a dialogic relation with the Personal God, he is involved in a personal relation with his Archetype, in which he was created. Therefore, he longs after the absolute (Evdokimov 1996, 90), since he is created for a life of communion with God and with his fellow humans. The man is a speaking creature, but he needs to speak to someone in order to accomplish this capacity. The highest dialogue is that with God, Who summons him for a dialog and in this conversation the "image" gradually becomes "likeness".

The importance of "image" in divine anthropology

The image is "the main principle of our being" (Evdokimov 1996, 85), it is a dynamic reality and bears in itself the possibility of the "likeness" with God. And the human being becomes after God's likeness "due to the virtue, and due to our facts, which imitate God and bears the divine name, i.e. the philanthropic tendency of the mankind: its compassion and love of our neighbor" (Sf. John Damascene 1948, 191). We notice that the "likeness" consists of similarities with God in virtue, but especially under the highest virtue that defines God, the love.

The image of God inside the man is an "ontological given", but also a "mission" to accomplish. "The image implies a 'gift' and a target set before him, a possession but also a destiny, because it is truly the man, but only in potentiality" (Irineu Pop-Bistrițeanul 2001, 34). Therefore, Saint John Damascene says: "Every man has the image of God, because God does not feel sorry for His gifts. But very few have the likeness' of God, and only the virtuous people gain it, especially saints

and those who imitate God in His kindness, as it is possible for human beings" (St. John Damascene 1948, 191). We notice that "likeness" is won through individual effort which man must submit in order to imitate God, in order to assimilate in his personal life, the virtues which characterize God, in order to perfect and to sanctify himself.

Saint Maximus the Confessor shows that "all rational nature is God's image" (St. Maximus the Confessor 2005, 91), the image being an indestructible reality of the rational being. But the resemblance with God is won through will and freedom, i.e. through correction of the three mental faculties – reason, will and consciousness – in order to serve God. Thus, "that man who enlightens his mind with divine meanings and trained his mind to unceasingly praise the Lord through divine hymns, and he sanctified his senses through pure images; that man adds the willed kindness of the 'likeness' with God, to the natural goodness of the "image" (St. Maximus the Confessor 2005, 131). The "likeness" of God is won through our total abnegation, through our obedience to God's will, as Diadoch of Photicaea says: "all human beings are created 'in the image' of God; but only those who, through love, enslaved their freedom to God, is "alike" God. When we don't belong to ourselves, then we become "alike" to the One who conciliate us with Himself, through Love" (Diadoch of Photicaea 1947, 340). And the will of God is to join Him in Love and knowledge through the Holy Spirit, because "He, above all, loves the man and honors him with the highest veneration and His unspeakable goods kindness; and this is done for eternity" (Kallistos 2002, 374).

Thus, "the image predestined man to holiness" (Evdochimov 1996, 87; Lossky 1998, 110). In the man, the "image" is similar to an ontological code containing his final destination – the "resemblance" with God or the entheosis achieved through Holy Spirit. This is the last aim. But in likeness and holiness we should not see something static, we should see a dynamic process which belongs to the eternity, because God is eternal and infinite, and the soul which is also eternal and immortal from the moment of its creation, is created "in the image" of God. And trying to fulfil this thirst for eternity, he will achieve the "likeness" or entheosis only if he'll turn towards God, because God "shares His holiness to those who believe in His divinity [...] and they become gods, through deed and grace" (St. Symeon the New Theologian 1977, 127), or they will be lost in their egoistic desires and then they will become without "the likeness" of God.

Man was created perfect. But this primordial condition does not coincide with the ultimate aim. He was not united with God from the beginning of his existence, but

had everything in his nature, in order to achieve the aim, because: "God, who created the human nature, also created, through His will, the power to accomplish his duties" (Sf. Maximus the Confessor 1999, 142). His perfection consists in his power to become united with God, to become united with the divinity, which should have penetrated the matter, and to transfigure the created nature. Thus, the man through his union with God, was supposed to unite the Creator with all the created Universe. Saint Simeon the New Theologian, speaking of the transfiguration of the universe through the godly man, says that "all things will be above the words, exceeding understanding. Because they will become spiritual and divine and they will be united with the rational world and they will become a noetic heaven" (St. Symeon the New Theologian 1977, 138).

Reflecting on the primordial condition of man, the Philocalic Fathers talk about a glory which first man had before the fall. Therefore, Saint Simeon Metafrast says that: "Adam's glory [...] frightened the enemy who looked at it" (St. Symeon Metaphrast 2001, 294). But this glory hadn't been perfected yet, because Adam was not at the end of the glory but only in its middle: Abba Dorotheos said that Adam was in Heaven, praying, in spiritual Vision, in a middle glory and honor" (Abba Dorotheos 2002, 453). This condition is a natural state of the man, the man who normally lived until he was connected with God, "being in its natural state, as he was created" (Abba Dorotheos 2002, 453), or, as Abba Isaiah said, "having healthy senses and keep working those natural to him" (St. Isaiah 1991, 41).

When we talk about the primordial condition, we must underline the fact that the grace was present in the soul of the first man. Without the presence and wonderful work of the Holy Spirit in the human soul, he wouldn't have been able to lead a life in accordance with his reason, since the man has reason and freedom inside his soul, but they cannot operate fully but in unity with God. So this condition "in the image" implies the presence of grace which sustained the heavenly harmony. In this respect, Patriarch Kallistos says: "God breathed in Adam the grace of the Life-giving Spirit, as breath of life, and thus Adam was made a perfect man; and thus he became a living soul (Gn 2:7) and not a simple soul. Because the Holy Spirit of God is not the soul of the man, but towards a soul that have a spiritual life. Because the Spirit of God truly became the spirit of the soul, which lives in the manner in which it is supposed to life a reasonable should and a divine image" (Kallistos Katafygiotul 1979, 227).

In this condition of grace, the man is virtually incorruptible, being protected from pain, sickness and death: "Adam was created as an uncorrupted but material body, but

not yet fully spiritual" (St. Symeon the New Theologian 1977, 121). This primordial uncorrupted condition was only possible, because Adam was not trained in virtues. Adam's incorruptibility and integrity were given by the lack of the first man's sin and due to its unmediated creation by God, Who create everything to be "very good" (Gn 1:31), because "the man by receiving his being from God and by starting to exist from the very moment of the creation was free of sin and corruption, because these have not been created in the same time with man" (St. Maximus the Confessor 1999, 77). This means that man would have been able to become immortal if he had grown and fulfilled himself in this graceful condition and if he progressed in the development of the "image" into "likeness".

But this path will be interrupted by the fall of man into sin, because, the fall introduced a new condition (against the nature) in the human existence, and man becomes the slave of sin. In this respect, Abba Dorotheos says: "But when Adam broke the law and ate from the tree that God commended not to eat, he was thrown away from heaven and he fall from the normal condition to the one contrary to the nature, i.e. in sin and shame, in the love of glory and of the pleasures of this life, and in all the other passions, becoming their slave, because through his fall, he became the slave of the sins" (Abba Dorotheos 2002, 454).

But this condition, contrary to nature, brings disease not only to man's inner but also to the senses which, from now on, will not dwell only in God, because "when he heard of the swindler, everything was transformed in the condition contrary to nature, then the senses were thrown away from their natural condition" (St. Isaiah 1991, 42).

Adam no longer looks above, but he also gazes at the created nature, because "after his fall, his reason became earthly. This simple and good reflection mingled fleshy reason of the sin" (St. Symeon Metaphrast 2001, 294) so the nature ceased to be a transparent environment where he could see God's reason and where he could touch Him and become united with Him, but suddenly the nature become an opaque environment nourishing his sins.

Therefore, the sin has shadowed the image of God in man, so that the man was no longer capable to communicate with God, and closed the path of grace which, through him, should have flowed upon all creatures "because he kneeled and fall, through his mistake, under disobedience. In this way, The Holy and Life-giving Spirit moved away" (Kallistos 2002, 228-9). This does not mean that "the image" was destroyed, since otherwise the man would not have been able to relate with God. From the moment he

felt down until the Pentecost, the grace worked from the outside and not from within the man, maintaining the divine consciousness in human.

The sin was the fruit of human freedom, which he did not use it in agreement with God's wish. When freedom was corrupted, along with her the nature and the grace of sinless life were also corrupted. This way sin has appeared, and attained the decay of nature whose end is death, since "our nature is governed by death because of the fall, in order to avoid the evil to become eternal due to its contact with the goodness" (St. Maximus the Confessor 1999, 158).

Adam has not appeal his vocation to unite with God but he also closed this pathway for those who came after him, because "he didn't respect the law of God, and so he became friend with the snake and believed it. In this way he nourished himself with the deceptive fruit, and threw himself in the hands of dead and darkness, but his mistake led all those who followed him in the same abyss" (Nicephorus 1977, 11). The divine plan was not abolished by the Adam's mistake. What the first Adam was not able to achieve, will accomplish the Second Adam, the Son of God and eternal Word of the Father.

Conclusions

As we have seen, the aim of the human life is perfection and union with God and entheosis in grace. The theological premises and foundations of theosis are to be found in the beginnings of the creation when God made the man in His image, and gave him the mission to become alike God. Creating the man "in the image and after His", God underlined the unique value of man, the crown of the creation, the viceroy of the created universe. Being an anthropos, a person which looks towards heaven, the man, a noetic and social being, from the very beginning talked with the personal God who called him to become holy and to unite with Him.

"The image" of God in man is the theological foundation of deification. The primordial condition offered him everything in order to gradually transform the „image" into „likeness". The grace of God was present in the primordial condition and its condition cannot be taken into account without the communion between nature and grace. In this respect the union between man and God, the deification or the holiness appears as a synergic act.

Therefore, it is important to understand the Revelation through the spirit of the patristic and philocalic writings, because the Church Fathers tried not only to explain but also to experience the Revelation in their lives. The fundamental concern was not

to explain some theoretical concepts, but to live their lives in such a way, that they can achieve in their being the likeness with God, the holy archetype after which the man was created. And this experience is included in their writings and we also nourish our theological knowledge and spiritual life in order to fulfill "the image" inside us, and to transform it into divine "likeness"

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MOSES' SECOND EXPERIENCE WITH THE DIVINE

Abstract

The paper brings forward an exhaustive presentation of a very important episode in the Old Testament: Exodus 33. This episode is particularly important for the theology of the Face, but also for the understanding of the possibility / impossibility of man to actually see God's Face. The author's discourse is focused on creating a portrait of Moses as the absolute favorite of God, as the one prophet to whom God spoke Face to face. From all the episodes which present us with repeated dialogues of God to Moses, the author strongly believes that this one is definitely the most important in understanding Moses' personality and spiritual experience.



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Among the various righteous and prophets which the Scripture presents as beneficiaries of special experiences with God, the Scripture names only three men that were particularly loved by God. First of all, we must think of Moses for whom God Himself intervenes in order to protect him from the rebelled part of the Israelite community. He even protects Moses from its own family and close collaborators when necessary. On these occasions, Yahweh Himself calls Moses "faithful in all mine house".

With him will I speak mouth to mouth, even apparently, and not in dark speeches; and the similitude of the Lord shall he behold (Nm 12:7-8). In other words, God speaks to Moses directly, and not through dreams or symbols, as He does with other prophets. The second prophet who the Scripture calls "greatly beloved" is Daniel (chap. 9:23). But the most important is Saint John the Baptist about which Christ said that "among them that are born of women there hath not risen a greater than John the Baptist" (Mt 11:11). He was considered by the Lord to be the greatest righteous man, due to his purity, but also due to his unique opportunity of putting his hand on the head of his Creator, made man. In spite of all this, Moses remains the man who got the closest possible to his God. That is why we will refer to the most daring request ever pronounced by a human being:

that of seeing God's face.

We should underline that the prophet first interceded for the entire people, as well as for his own family, and only then for himself. We are witnessing thus an actual spiritual progress which becomes a *sine qua non* condition of being listened / heard by God, through the prayer of intercession, the only one capable of bringing him closer to his Creator. We were taught by Christ to pray incessantly for ourselves and for our neighbor. This is the only good deed that any psychically integral person may accomplish. Indeed, whatever our physical condition is, we can all pray. This being possible to everyone, Christ recommended us to pray incessantly. He didn't condition the salvation on knowledge or on restless work, because physical strength diminishes in time. He didn't advise us to support the poor incessantly because material resources, no matter how rich we are, may also diminish. But we can always pray.

The experience of Moses teaches us that only after the man evolves spiritually, he becomes compassionate; he turns into an imitator of God and thus grows ever more in the eyes of the Master. More than any other good deed, God appreciated Moses' prayer of intercession: "Yet now, if thou wilt forgive their sin; and if not, blot me, I pray thee, out of thy book which thou hast written." (Ex 32:32)

Only he who stands by a neighbor in need, out of selfless love becomes truly worthy of approaching God. In effect, sin drives man away from God, just as the author of the above-mentioned book tells us, namely that by committing the severe sin of apostasy – by venerating the golden calf – has made Moses take the Tabernacle out of the camp (Ex 33:8) because God could no longer descend in the pillar of cloud over a camp contaminated with a sin threatening to undermine the very covenant they had just made. Nevertheless, love and charity bring people closer to God. The compassion one may manifest towards one's neighbor can allay the divine wrath and it can make men more daring before God. This is why the sacred text insists solely on three great qualities of the prophet Moses. The first one is his sense of righteousness, made manifest in his protecting the weak (Ex 2:12-13); the second is the incredible humility with which he asks God Who am I, that I should go unto Pharaoh? (Ex 3:11), and the third and most important quality is him having put his life (namely his eternal life, his salvation) at stake out of love for his people.

I mentioned that the closeness to, and implicitly the knowledge of God, depends on man's growth in real love, up to self-sacrifice for his neighbor. Therefore, he who has won his neighbor by love has simultaneously won God.

Moses' experience also shows us that only after having been sure that God had forgiven the sin, did he dare to ask more than before, namely not only to hear His divine voice, but also to see Him Whom he spoke to. With his heart overflowing with love Moses intuited that the true face of God is neither the fire surrounding the burning bush of Horeb, nor the cloud pillar merged with the fire that had descended onto the Israelite camp, nor could it identify with the thunders, the lightening and the smoke covering the top of Mount Sinai before the Hebrews watching this spectacle in awe. Unlike the others, who were superficially witnessing the greatness of the Mount Sinai revelation, Moses understandably has benefited from a completely different perception of the divine. It is certain that he has been able to contemplate the mystery of God (Galbiati 1978, 137) during a mystical experience. Moses had experienced his encounter with God in spirit, which is far more than all the Jewish believers' community; the prophet's experience therefore shows us that any encounter with God determines a deep and durable transformation of the man, as well as attaining a new comprehension of man and the world in general.

After he had endured his people, his joy was so great that he desired and asked for an even more profound knowledge of their Saviour. On the other hand, it is likely that in that moment of spiritual exaltation Moses no longer knew what to utter, and his gesture resembled Saint Peter the Apostle's when he witnessed the Transfiguration of Christ our Lord, naively proposing that he should build a hut, in order to perpetuate the beatitude, he was experiencing at that moment (Mt 17:4).

But what does Moses actually say? "And the Lord said unto Moses, I will do this thing also that thou hast spoken: for thou hast found grace in my sight, and I know thee by name. And he said, I beseech thee, shew me thy glory. And he said, I will make all my goodness pass before thee and I will proclaim the name of the Lord before thee; and will be gracious to whom I will be gracious, and will shew mercy on whom I will shew mercy. And he said, Thou can not see my face: for there shall no man see me, and live. And the Lord said, Behold, there is a place by me, and thou shalt stand upon a rock: And it shall come to pass, while my glory passed by, that I will put thee in a cleft of the rock, and will cover thee with my hand while I pass by: And I will take away mine hand, and thou shalt see my back parts: but my face shall not be seen." (Ex 33:17-23).

The first thing we should take into account about commenting this paragraph would be that the terms "face", "hand", "back" etc., are mere anthropomorphisms which the sacred text uses with regard to God, and are therefore not to be considered *ad litteram*.

In addition to this, we should mention that most exegetes speak about Moses' request to see God's face, when he actually asks God to show him His glory, or more precisely, to see it again, as he had just seen it together with the people. We wonder what could be the logic of this request if he has just had such an experience, shortly before the apostasy the people would commit by making and worshipping the golden calf (most probably created after an Egyptian model). It is a known fact that any severe sin separates man from God; but in accordance with the biblical statements, idolatry was the worst as it was equivalent with abandoning God and Crossing over to the demons' side, the side of those who had abjured the true faith. As a consequence of this sin, God told Moses that He had decided to no longer accompany Israel in its journey towards the Promised Land. Even if an angel would take His place, as He promised (v. 1-3), Moses realized that between the people of Israel and God there was now a great breach, and that they subsequently no longer had the certainty of a permanent providential assistance and were exposed to demise. Thus, it is very likely that instead of being the manifestation of an ostensible self-assurance the prophet's request was the sign of doubt and of the fear that once the people had so gravely sinned, between God and them there was now a breach. This would explain his unusual request, which in essence is him asking God to repeat with him alone, the extraordinary event which accompanied the giving of the Law.

If we take into consideration what has already been stated, namely that God reveals Himself to a person or a community solely for a well determined purpose: calling for a mission, then we are entitled to ask ourselves whether Moses' insisting to provoke a new revelation wasn't superfluous and his request entirely unjustifiable. Wasn't his demand similar to the one the scribes and Pharisees made when they asked Jesus to give them a sign, despite the difficulty we encounter when comparing the two claims? Even with all these suppositions, a truth remains standing: his request came out of his immense love for God, Whom he couldn't conceive replacing with someone else, be it even the messenger of Heavens (Ex 33:2). Manufacturing and worshipping a golden calf, made by the means of public donations, is a return to the Egyptian and Canaanite deities and not a representation of God's revealing Himself in a visible form, as one may erroneously deduce from certain translations.

In order to correctly understand the message, it is compulsory that we go back to the original Hebrew text, where the divine name is plural: "These be thy gods, O Israel, which brought thee up out of the land of Egypt." (Ex 32:4)

But let us not naively imagine that by creating the golden calf the Israelites had selected just this one animal from the multitude being worshipped at that time – under the influence of the Egyptians, who were known to worship Apes, or of other peoples, because the bull was being worshipped throughout the Near East. The bull was thought to be the embodiment of the god Ptah, and once this god was recognized and worshipped, as a guaranty and a symbol of fertility and strength, it is certain the Israelites must have simultaneously accepted other idols, and therefore the text States “thy gods”.

The idea supported by many exegetes that the use of the plural would be justified by the Yahwist document's authors' intention to contradict those who were at that time worshipping the calves introduced in Betel and Dan by the schismatic king Jeroboam after the kingdom's dismembering lacks credibility. No strong argument can be evoked in order to support this idea, except for a mere opinion. The sin of those who worshipped the golden calf was considerably severe and was made even more so by the fact that not all those who had committed it have later repented. Thus, however saint and righteous may Moses have been before God, he couldn't possibly have substituted the entire people, that is to say it cannot be affirmed that he possessed such great merits as to counterbalance everybody's sin. He who has sinned must pay and “the soul that sinneth, it shall die” says Ezekiel (18:4). Even more so, the same Scripture adds that if even a single member of a community severely sinned before God, the whole community would automatically become equally guilty (see Jgs 7; 2 Sam 24; Dn 9).

The two statements seem to contradict one another when not corroborated with other texts of the same Scripture which affirm that on the one hand the sin remains a personal responsibility, and on the other hand, the community is guilt for tolerating the sin in its midst and for indulging itself in it. So, in the context of Moses' request, we believe that he didn't want something more for himself, but actually wanted to completely assure himself and his people that they found once again grace in the eyes of God, after the sinners had been expelled from the community. So then by his intervention the prophet didn't want to satisfy his own curiosity, as the text might suggest at a first glance; his request was meant to be a continuation of his prayer of intercession, or as one of the commentators of this text says, “Moses' intervention has generated a kind of breaches in the conflict God had with His people.” (Briend 1992, 73)

Moses couldn't have benefited from a personal advantage of having the divine good will exclusively orientated towards him. In the divine discourse of verses 1-6 (chap. 33) what stands out is precisely God's discontentment; he consequently decides to withdraw

his protecting grace from a guilty people, with a penchant for disobedience. The idea of Moses' obvious persistence in his intercession prayers for his people – when asking to see the divine glory – is also apparent in his gesture of having taken the tent far outside the camp, the tent he called “the Tabernacle... And it came to pass, as Moses entered into the tabernacle, the cloudy pillar descended, and stood at the door of the tabernacle, and the Lord talked with Moses” (v. 7-9). The conclusion is therefore quite logical. If he still benefited from the immense advantage of having the divine glory rest upon his tent, what sense would it have had to yet again ask Yahweh for a gift he already possessed? A little further away, the text adds the following: “the Lord spoke unto Moses face to face, as a man speaketh unto his friend” (v. 11). To conclude, we believe that the supposed antilogy within the text can only be understood as follows: “I beseech thee, shew me thy glory” again as you have done before, namely onto this community, as you have done before they had sinned, “that I may know thee, that I may find grace in thy sight: and consider that this nation is thy people” (v. 13).

The biblical expression, frequently used by the psalmists, “turning the face onto” means to take special care of, protecting someone. It is true there have been a lot of theological/ mystical speculations - which are not to be neglected - with respect to Moses' request, but we shouldn't forget that if we were to consider the phrase “seeing God's face and dying” ad litteram, as if God were the source or the cause of someone's death, would contradict the multiple scripture accounts of Moses being the only man God has spoken face to face, without him dying. To the contrary, owing to the grace of the divine face constantly and protectively oriented towards him, Moses reached the age of 120 (Dt 34:7). The context tells us that Moses' wish to see God's glory, which was already above his tent, was actually his asking God for His working presence among the people who were about to be left in the care of an angel. Consequently, he wants to see His glory once more, namely His presence and not that of an angel, in favor of a people who had been declared to be “a kingdom of priests and a holy nation” (Ex 19:6) (Briend 1992, 44), meaning that they would continue to see the same blessed effects of His presence in the time to come.

There are many instances when God's glory is made manifest not as spectacle meant to please someone's eyes, but rather as an effect of His working and providential presence and power (Briend 1992, 45). This is the meaning of the divine glory in the case of the prophet Isaiah – to whom God, the thrice Holy, reveals Himself to – the glory of which he emphatically says that “the whole earth is full of (Is 6:3). Although God reveals

His glory to Isaiah personally in the Jerusalem Temple, he sees the divine providential glory covering the entire earth with his eyes that had been enlightened by the Spirit. The liturgical context of the overwhelming scene the prophet witness's points at the positive effect the divine presence has over the universe (Briend 1992, 44). Even though God has revealed Himself to Isaiah as being at home simultaneously in His Temple and anywhere in the world – as the whole universe can be His home – the limited man, be it even Moses or any other of the great prophets, could never see Him with his bodily eyes unless He Himself would accept to reveal Himself through an act of kenosis, out of pure compassion and love of man.

Returning to Moses, God's answer to his request is positive, as He comes to meet man, and out of compassion, patience and mercy He accepts to utter His name a second time even though it is man's sacred duty to invoke the Lord's name (Gn 42:6; 12:8; 2 Kgs 5:11; Jr 10:25) (Childs 1974, 596). Actually it isn't simply articulating the name; it has more to do with reaffirming the testimony of His passing through the camp and His comforting Israel. However, the answer does have a trace of reticence, when God says "Thou canst not see my face: for there shall no man see me, and live" (v. 20). Deprived of divine protection man wouldn't even be able to survive such an experience: "And the Lord said, Behold, there is a place by me, and thou shalt stand upon a rock. And it shall come to pass, while my glory passeth by, that I will put thee in a clift of the rock, and will cover thee with my hand while I pass by. And I will take away mine hand, and thou shalt see my back parts: but my face shall not be seen" (v. 21-23).

The scene described as taking place before Moses bears a striking resemblance with the one happening before the prophet Elijah (cf. 1Kgs 19), which however does have a minor difference. Moses asks to see, but in Elijah's case God Himself invites him to stand before His face. In both cases God took care of the fragile human life. We should note that in both cases, although God promises His glory will pass in front of them, the actual accomplishment of the promise is not accounted for in the Scripture. Could this be a warning God gave man regarding the impossibility to represent the divine through images? The phrase "cover thee with my hand" (v. 22) suggests a barrier, the existence of a limit or of a distance between man and God.

There have been other cases, besides Moses, when certain people have had the audacity to know the name of God and demanding His complete Self-revelation, which is nothing more than "the creature's longing to admire the prototype it has been created after, or in other words, the unconfused hope to discover its own image"

(Clement 1978, 29) as Olivier Clement said. It is true that in Moses' case, the context helps us deduce that he didn't see God Himself; nevertheless, he did see a lot more than the rest of the people, and far more than man is allowed to see, a fact that indicates that even in knowing God there are various levels which depend on each person's spiritual progress. Some even suggest that God's emphasis on how He can only be seen from the back is to be interpreted as man's capacity to intuit His work on history and creation in general, solely from the past. This can be a relatively plausible point of view, especially if we take into consideration the determination with which the authors of the "Nebiim Rishonim" books refer to God's extraordinary interventions in the history of the chosen people. But the idea of not yet being able to see God's face, understood as man's complete incapacity to foresee any elements of God's future work, is not so easy to accept. This point of view is contradicted by the very practice of remembering the historical past of the chosen people by Moses, later by Joshua and other prophets, a past filled with events that underline God's providential work aimed at reaffirming the monotheist belief.

A worshiper consistent with his belief, who scrupulously abided by his Lord's covenant, was guaranteed to have a contented future, at least during a period when the material goods came first. With regard to the text in question, a partially satisfying explanation is given by Saint Gregory of Nyssa, who States that "what the prophet Moses asks for, cannot fit in people's lives" and subsequently, the text should not be understood *ad litteram* because "its meaning would be a lot harder to determine, as the notions of front and back apply only to that which has a face. But what any face does is to limit a body. Hence he who imagines a face on God will not think of Him as being free from a bodily nature. But any body is without a doubt, composed, and the being of that which is composed is comprised of different elements. And of what is composed, no one will say it cannot be undone. And what can be undone has to be corruptible because corruption is undoing the composed. Thusly, the front and the back are closely related to only one face, and the face is the body's own." (St. Gregory of Nyssa 1982, 90)

Certainly, many comments can be made with respect to the support text, along with the anthropomorphisms of that time. As noted above, Saint Gregory's observation is worthy of being taken into consideration, nevertheless remembering that the Bible uses the particular speech of that time. The reservations with respect to the explanation above are unlamented on the scripture statement which speaks of the image of God laid within man at creation (Gn 1:27). So therefore, He Who has inspired the hagiographer

and revealed him that God did have a face, but not one that reproduces the man's, something entirely different. Fundamental theology also speaks about God's image which man was called to attain by observing the commandments, but it isn't an image, a face similar to the physical one but rather completely different from what we imagine or from what the above mentioned exegete defines, an indestructible image probably resembling the one Christ had after His Resurrection – it is obvious that He had a face, probably one that was not very different from the one He had before His Passion, but nevertheless very different.

But let us come back to Moses and ask ourselves, in order to continue the idea from above, how could he be rebuked, he who has experienced as none other encountering God, for lacking the capacity to make the difference between a bodily being and a divinity which had previously revealed itself as absolute Spirit, One of which he publicly bears witness that is He Who has shown Himself on the mountain and had no face. Explaining the tremendous event of Mount Sinai, Moses said: "And the Lord spoke unto you out of the midst of the fire: ye heard the voice of the words, but saw no similitude; only ye heard a voice." (Dt 4:12)

In the case of the text from the Exodus, there is a parallel between appearance / face and glory. The order is actually changed as Moses doesn't speak about appearance, but about glory, whereas God refers to appearance. In our opinion sticking to the context is therefore extremely important for the correct understanding of the message. The prophet asked God, as the text says, to see His glory. What should he have done it for if he had just experienced the divine glory? Shouldn't the prophet have realized the huge gap between the Creator and his creature?

There is another element to be observed as far as the prophet's relationship with the divinity is concerned. Thus, even from his first encounter with Yahve (Ex 3), to the last one (Dt 34:4), there is no single reference to the fact that Moses might have ever been terrified of his encounters with God, as was the case of other people who went through the same experience. On the contrary, we could say he showed a slight tendency of too much boldness, the tendency towards an excessive familiarity, so that, God Himself had to draw his attention upon Whom he was talking to (Ex 3:5).

A similar boldness on the part of the man can only be found in the case of Abraham and, in a lesser measure in the case of Elijah. So, the already stated idea that the prophet wanted to see the divine grace again, not necessarily for himself, but for the people shouldn't be considered, especially if taking into account the fact that his request comes

to complete in a way the request to forgive the ones who earlier had sinned so seriously. Even if this idea isn't suggested directly, it can be sensed from the entire context of the prophet's activity. An exclusively personal request like the one uttered – "show me Thy glory" doesn't match with his tendency to intercede for the people he belonged to. (Ex 5:22-23; 32:11-13), even when, again because of his people, he mourns over his own (Ex 17:4; Nm 11:11-15), and his family's destiny.

No one knows the degree or the way in which Moses got to see God, but the fact that he was granted the favor to see more than any other human being has been noted in Numbers. By this we mean the discourse which has been written down, apparently by Moses himself, who said that: „God came down in the cloudy pillar, stood at the entrance of the tent, called Aaron and Miriam and said: If there is a prophet of God among you, I'll appear to him in a Vision and talk to him in his sleep. But I haven't done so with my servant Moses – he is the faithful one in all My house. With him I talk face to face, directly and in all reality, not in riddles, and he sees God's face. How weren't you afraid to grumble over My servant Moses? (12:6-8). From these words one could deduce that his request still had a purely personal character, and that he saw much more than the people who witnessed the grace on the Sinai, and again more than any other prophet or patriarch before him. In this case, if we return to Abraham's experience, whom God Himself called a prophet (Gn 20:7), and about whom some claim to have been the one who met the Holy Trinity at Mamvre's oak, which, as we have already mentioned, seems quite hard to believe, especially as God doesn't give any evidence in this respect as He did in Moses's case, despite the fact that Abraham himself had been a renowned intercessor for his people. If these words were truly uttered by God himself, then there should have been some reference to the fact that He had spoken face to face, that is directly, with Abraham just as He did with Moses. So if there is no reference made in this respect, it means there hasn't been such a strong direct connection between the divine and the humane as in Moses' case. So, in Abraham's case, more credibility should be granted to the Judaic hermeneutics, which makes it clear that it's only been God angels and not the Holy Trinity itself. This will however be more clearly dealt with later on. For the time being, we shall return to Moses. We should note that although God spoke to Miriam (Miriam being Moses' sister, and a prophetess herself), the serious distinction between her and Moses also implies all the other prophets before him, even though the text itself doesn't allow any generalizations. The above presented case represents however a point of reference as far as Moses' experience is concerned, which appears as unique.

Moses' experience is totally different from the prophesizing experience itself, which, as we have already seen, can be exclusively auricular or perceived by dreams. As Jacques Briend mentions, in Moses' case we can speak about a spiritual growth in knowing and approaching God. In contrast with the experience on Mount Horeb, where the bush burned without consuming, where Moses is said to have looked at God with a certain fear, because he covered his face (Ex 3:6), later on, his reaction in a similar situation is totally different (Briend 1992, 45).

One can never know what the shape was in which the prophet saw God. The masoretic text uses the noun *temuna'h* meaning resemblance. It can only be found three times in the whole Bible (see Ex 20:4; Dt 4:5; 5:8), and each time along with the noun *peselas* meaning "carved face", which is the sculptural reproduction of a certain person or object. Indeed, only the much later texts state the fact that Moses should have seen God's face and spoken to Him just as he would have done with any other friend. In the Hebrew variant, the prophets request refers to something totally different: "Show me Thy way so I may know Thee". As we can see there is a great distinction between the Masoretic text and the Alexandrine one which says: Show Thyself to me so I can see Thee better, so it's quite hard to find a theological explanation of the difference between the Alexandrine translation and the original text. The Hebrew text can be translated as follows by the Hebrew theology:

1. that we can speak about a mystical dialogue between God and Moses.

2. that Israel had all too suddenly been deprived of the divine grace, and obviously fallen from a high spiritual level by building and implicitly worshipping the calf, Moses actually trying an immediate restoration. With this occasion he would have tried to reach a better understanding of God as a Person and of His ways, especially of His ways.

The Hebrew phrase: "Show me Thy way, so I may know Thee" (v. 13) logically corresponds with line 18: "Show me Thy glory!"; both lines being a logical and natural sequel of the interceding request presented in the previous chapter (32:32). So, in order not to destroy them because of their obstinacy God warns the Israelites which had shortly before been freed from slavery that He wouldn't be with them on their way to the Promised Land but send them an angel (33:2). Hearing this they cried in despair, Moses probably joining them, because they were sure that it was only accompanied by the divine glory that they would reach the happy ending of their journey.

So, as we have demonstrated above, it would have been an absolutely useless request to have asked for himself something that he already had, because the divine glory had

never left him, but only the others. The text is clear enough when saying: "And after Moses entered the tent, a cloudy pillar came down and stopped at the entrance and God spoke with Moses." (33:9). As far as the request "show me Thy way" is concerned, this is not unique in the Bible. It also appears in the fifth Psalm, but only with a slight difference: "make my way right in front of you", as the author realizes that without having God as a guide in his life, man will find himself on a wrong way on which his enemies will attack him so much that he will never reach the resting place (Theodoret of Kir 2003, 19).

By encountering impediments in seeing God, Moses becomes conscious that human experience with the divine has certain limits in this world. Through the prophet, the Israelites, and in fact not only them, should acknowledge the impossibility of representing the Creator of the Universe through images. The prophet's experience, as much it was, has been more than enough to express the absolute contrast between a spiritual divinity, impossible to circumscribe in landmarks of natural perception and the golden calf manufactured by Aaron, at the request and under the pressure people (Briend 1992, 47).

By giving a dogmatic interpretation to Moses' experience, some say that the limited view of divine glory is actually equivalent to a limited knowledge of God, which in no case can be done before quitting all that is unclean and implicitly incompatible with His holiness. In order to reach Him, the human being should first deny everything that is not worthy of Himself (Lossky 1993, 54).

Because of the incomprehensible mystery of His Being, God will forever remain unknown and boundless. From Moses' request resulted that he wished a more intimate knowledge of the Divine in a manner of the knowledge of created realities, knowledge expressed by using concepts of time and space (Bria 1981, 38).

Vladimir Lossky speaks about the spiritual ascension of human as a total detachment of everything that can be known, and that this is the only way through which Moses could have ascended on the holy mountain in God's presence. Only after he began to purify and separate from the unclean, he was able to hear the trumpets with countless sounds and see the vivid fires. And only then, separated from the people and accompanied by the elected of the priests, he reaches the peak of Divine ascensions. However, neither in this stage is he in relation with God, he still not contemplates Him because God is not visible yet, but only His dwelling. In other words, as long as man is more anchored in the realities of this material world, less he is available to spiritual realities that actually coexist with us. It is only our senses that are able to perceive only the material world, in

and with which we cohabitate.

Human failure to perceive the spiritual world is interpreted by some Holy Fathers as another proof of divine providence towards man who otherwise would have been more exposed to the forces of demonic powers. After Saint John Cassian's allegations, in the whole sky crawl evil spirits which can almost instantly take different faces, in order to frighten people, to overdrive them, or to make them become even worse, by taking their eternal evil examples (Lossky 1993, 50).

It is hard to check the reality described in Saint Cassian's opinion, but it is not impossible. Medicine reported on cases of diseased which, once arrived in an advanced state of detachment of this world, by reducing the capacity of material perception of reality, perceived all other realities that normal and healthy people call hallucinations because obviously they are not for real, while for those involved, these are much more real than the rest of the world in which they still live.

It is therefore possible that Moses, after passing beyond the world in which you see or you are seen, had penetrated into the truly mysterious darkness of ignorance. And in there all knowledge ceases, because it escapes all connections to this world and entirely belongs to a different reality, primarily to the One who is above all... and due to this ignorance, man begins to know above all understanding (St John Cassian 1990, 440). In the case of mystical knowledge of God, it can no longer be knowledge similar to that of the material world, but we rather speak about a supra knowledge caused by the union with God.

Knowledge and proximity to God are often understood as a permanent thirst of God; "Because truly knowing God is when the human who looks towards Him never reaches the end of his desire to see Him. Because the Holy Scripture says: You can't see my face, because man can't see my face and live (Ex 33:20). This is not because God could cause the death of those who see Him as the face of Life would ever cause the death of those who come closer to it. It is rather because God is by nature, a life giver, and the sign of Divine nature is that it is beyond all knowledge. The one who believes that God may be something of what is known, deviating from the One Who is towards what it appears to be, is no longer alive, and because real life is just the One that truly is. And He remains unreachable to knowledge." (Pseudo-Denys Areopagite 1943, 179-80)

Numerous theological comments were made on this biblical text, however, a fact remains central, namely that God did not fulfill the daring request of the prophet to fully contemplate His divine face whereas the Infinite could not be seen in a limited

image, which would no longer be His Face, but an idol. "What is limited, continues Saint Gregory of Nyssa, and necessarily ends in something, just like the edge of those on earth is the air and of those in water, the water. Therefore, as the fish is surrounded on all sides by water, and the bird by air, and between water and fish, or between bird and air is the outside of the area surrounding bird or fish, followed by water or air, it would be similar if God would be conceived within certain limits and surrounded by some foreign nature." (St. Gregory of Nyssa 1982, 92)

The theological discourse of this Saint emphasizes that God is on the one hand, by His very nature unlimited, that is open to any side, and on the other, the unbounded thirst of the human being for Divine boundlessness. And this thirst is part of human nature. This paradox is plastically explained by Saint Symeon the New Theologian: "When I drink I'm thirsty at the same time... I'm always thirsty, although in my mouth the water is always flowing and pouring in rivers. But when I see the ocean, it seems to me that I'm not drinking at all, because I want to have everything, although I have all the water in my mouth." (St. Symeon le Nouveau Theologien 1979, 211)

We find the same idea in Saint Makarios the Egyptian's work which says that delighting with God is endless, and the more we taste and eat (Him) the hungrier we are. Such people with an insatiable desire and love of God, the more they try to grow and increase in this state, the more they think of themselves as poor and deprived, as those who do not possess anything whatsoever (St. Makarios the Egyptian 1992, 165).

We do not think appropriate to speak about the human desire of getting closer to God in such simple terms, but one thing should be borne in mind, namely the unlimited spiritual need to constantly ascend towards God. He remains the object of our search and desire, though eternally incomprehensible. The experiences of great accomplisshers of God's commandments, in spite of a continuous search and an apparent finding, speak about painfully resenting a temporary abandonment by God. The sense of our abandonment by God is to show us that we are not yet prepared to meet Him, because we have not yet gone through the whole way, that we have to pass through a much more exhausting askesis, in other words, we have to drink His cup (Mt 20:22).

The Bible informs us that for some prophets and righteous, their moment of meeting with God is really miraculous. Regarding his refusal to reveal Himself to man, the same Scripture shows that He cannot reveal Himself to anyone or anywhere, as He is the light above all light (1 Jn 1:5), and for this reason He cannot accept the union to our darkness. Before the accomplishment of Christ's commandments, which directly attires purity,

man cannot in any way share the joys of the Kingdom of God, a Kingdom of light and truth (Rev 1:17).

Therefore, no one can directly meet and know God only from the Bible or from theology treatises, as this is an intermediated knowledge, as understood and described by others, more or less successfully. Scripture speaks a lot about His work inside creation and urges us to look more carefully around us whereas God is with us always and everywhere, otherwise we could never understand the meaning of Christ's allegation who said that He is patiently waiting at the door of our hearts.

God's words also teach us that true knowledge of Him can only be achieved if one totally opens his heart and answers to God's invitation. To those who receive God in their hearts, He opens their eyes and heart towards perceiving realities above nature, to which man used only to earthly realities, cannot even dream. On the contrary, he does not even think other realities to be possible, considering divine experiences pure nonsense. Therefore, those who have gone through such divine experiences prefer not to speak about them.

Regarding the case of Moses' experience and of the children of Israel on Sinai, some theologians consider we are dealing with a confusion between theophanical miraculous manifestations perceived in the context of the cloud, fire and smoke, and regular meteorological behavior. Either the texts that talk about the revelation expressly emphasize that God Himself, or His glory, was dwelling in those manifestations and therefore would not be confused with them. The presence of divinity in those phenomena, frightening to humans, could be understood only by the initiated ones, in this case, Moses, in other cases, Elijah or Isaiah.

Perceiving the divine was on the other hand possible only to those elected to send a message to their brothers, or to entrust them with a mission, often extremely difficult, but a salvific one. Nevertheless, perceiving divine presence became possible only for those receptive to the call, for those who were available for the salvation work, and for those who were proved to have a quite special hunger for divine, using an expression of the Holy Father quoted above. The idea does not belong to him exclusively, and obviously we are not talking about physical hunger, but rather about a spiritual desire, pleasant to God about which the prophet Amos spoke when he said: "Behold, the days come, saith the Lord God, that I will send a famine in the land, not a famine of bread, nor a thirst for water, but of hearing the words of the Lord" (Am 8:11).

The experience of the prophets proves that everyone called by Yahweh to a mission

must pay attention not to be absorbed by secular concerns, in such a manner that he could not perceive the calling whisper, or even no longer be responsive to calls (Sofronie 1995, 35).

Among others, man has been defined as a religious being that longs for God ceaselessly, and if he once tasted the sweetness of Divine experience, this automatically creates a kind of addiction, and he would like the experience to be repeated forever, and if it would be possible, to amplify. Andre Neher expressed this idea quite graphically when he said: He who was once called by God from heaven on Morea, can never hear anything else again (Chambers 1996, 32). In other words, the one who tasted once spiritual realities becomes totally deaf and indifferent to the biological.

After the experience from Mount Morea, when God looked at Abraham and his son Isaac, they became blind for any work other than the fulfillment of divine commandments. Not someone say that the commandments were given much later, on Mount Sinai, because the Patriarch is praised by God who called him His prophet (Gn 20:7), or in this quality it was revealed to him what worth's respect since He added: "Because Abraham obeyed my voice, and kept My charge, My commandments, My statutes, and My laws" (cf. Gn 26:5).

For those who remain deaf to the divine call, the perception of His presence is difficult to achieve, even impossible. The one who perceives this presence cannot confound it with something else. In the book above mentioned, the mystics of the seeing of God, Sophrony says: I've known the Living God since my childhood. There were times when, leaving the Church, I saw the City illuminated with two kinds of light. The light of the sun was not an obstacle for me to feel the presence of another light. The remembrance of this light was mixed with a gentle joy filling my soul. I have forgotten almost every event of that period, but this light is still in my mind." (Neher 2002, 287-8)

As in the case of the prophets or the patriarchs, the person who experienced the divine, even if just for once, will remember this experience his entire life and will try to experience it again. The longing for God turned the prophets into champions of God in the world, not knowing any more, for the sake of their mission, what fear of man or of future is. The testimony of the prophet Ezekiel, the one touched by the flames of the divine love as a consequence of the revelation he had at the Chebar River, is relevant: "I will make your forehead like the diamond, harder than flint. Do not be afraid of them or terrified by them" (3:9).

For the contemporary man, ardent believer or not, having so many facilities at

hand, the promptness of the sacrifice of those touched by the Spirit of God is hard to understand. It is, therefore, understandable why the prophets were considered to be eccentric people even by their contemporaries, who blamed them and chased them, at the same time being convinced that they are the mouth of the Spirit of God.

Should any prophet appear today, full of missionary zeal as Jeremiah or Elijah, persuasive as Ezekiel or gentle as Moses, they were only a few to listen to him, interested in sensational or in a totally new speech. Even in those days, listening to the one touched by the Spirit of God was often a formal activity, as Ezekiel says with sorrow: "As for you, son of man, your countrymen are talking together about you by the walls and at the doors of the houses, saying to each other, "Come and hear the message that has come from the Lord." My people come to you, as they usually do, and sit before you to listen to your words, but they do not put them into practice. With their mouths they express devotion, but their hearts are greedy for unjust gain" (33:30-31). Thus, the words of the prophet, delivered to them as from God, were considered as a news bulletin, good to hear but not to put into practice.

In one of his comments to the prophet Daniel, Pierre de Benoît compares our world to the feast given by Balthazar, in the way that our life is conceived as a perpetual feast, since we live in a society of consumption. As a result, we eat and drink a lot, the amusement means are now a real industry, but we neglect the warnings of God and of His prophets. Even more, the holy word of God is despised, the piety is fake, even an object to sell; the old pagan conceptions have been brought to life again; the cult and the customs of the ancient gods have been put into practice once more. This is partly due to the fact that the sentries which supposed to keep the consciences of men awake either got asleep or abandoned their duties (Benoit 1984, 37).

They were only a few who understood that the person of the prophet, since the day of his calling, remained marked for his entire life. A sort of longing for that meeting with God is to be understood from the prophetic writings, a longing which requires to be shared to others as well. It is a longing resembling to the age of childhood. A fully grown adult, overwhelmed by so many responsibilities and troubles of life, has moments in which he desires to be a child again. Sometimes, even the most common longings for childhood have the fragrance of an experience with the divine, because God is closer to an innocent child than to an adult person, the latter knowing all the moral failures of the ordinary existence.

Nichifor Crainic speaks of a longing, too, but not of a longing for the immediate

experience with the divine; he refers to the generally human longing, born from the feeling of being a stranger into this world, where no mortal, either a man living in a cave or an emperor living in a sumptuous palace, feels like being at home. In the thinking of this great man, this longing is perceived as an inner suffering caused by alienation of something and of somebody (Crainic 1994, 241-52). The accounts of Saint Symeon the New Theologian relating to his experiences with the divine are very surprising. He suggests that although those experiences ceased, he feels fortified in his soul even remembering them. He testifies that what he saw was a light different from the natural one, with a salutary effect for his soul. Even if the Saint knew who was behind that light, he allowed himself to ask, in a moment of spiritual exaltation, of what kind was that light, and he understood that it was identical with Jesus Christ. As other persons who had the same experience, the Saint underlines the fact that his life was profoundly and forever marked.

Yet, in spite of the impetuous desire of man to reiterate the experience with the divine, this kind of meeting is very hard to bear, except for a few persons, as Moses and Abraham. Indeed, the Bible tells us that Moses was only once afraid of the Lord and hid his face (Ex 3:6); as for Abraham, after bringing sacrifice to the Lord, he fell into a deep sleep and a thick and dreadful darkness came over him (Gn 15:12). In other cases, they seem very bold in their relations to God. We cannot say the same regarding other prophets or righteous who had similar experiences. To be in the presence of God, even for a few moments, is a peril for a living man; this is the reason why God doesn't reveal Himself to anyone and anytime. The Creator knows that human nature cannot bear His appearance in His splendor. The biblical history warns us that God was seen only by those people called and inclined to answer to a divine calling. This propensity implied, among other qualities, much kindness and compassion towards the fellow men, as God showed Himself full of mercy and compassionate towards all.

Likewise, we must say that only the one who prepared himself beforehand by purifying his soul of his sins and by accomplishing the commandments of God may ascend the mountain of the Lord, because only such a man is inclined to open his heart to God. In other words, as Moses Rosen said: Only the one who already has God within himself can really direct his steps towards God, towards his mountain. He compares the heart of man with a vessel and says: if, from the material point of view, the empty vessel can take in values, whereas the full one cannot do this, from the spiritual point of view, things are completely different. Thus, if the vessel is empty, one cannot pour anything in

it, because it cannot receive anything. The full the vessel is, the more it can take in new and new values. Therefore, the spirit is more insatiable (Rosen 1992).

Conclusion

As a conclusion, we must underline the fact that, among all the righteous and all the prophets of the Old Testament, Moses was the closest one to God, both before the coming of Christ, when he was considered worthy of seeing the glory of God and of giving the Law to the Jewish people, and after the Incarnation, when he was present, together with the prophet Elijah, to the event of the Transfiguration. Likewise, the ascension of Moses to the mountain, together with his brother, Aaron, with Nadab and Abiud, may be a Symbol of the ascension of Christ to a mountain, together with his three disciples: Peter, Jacob and John, with the purpose of entering, only for a few moments, into the glory of the Father (Mt 17:1-8; Mk 9:2-8; Lk 9:28-36). Regarding the experience of Moses, as well as the personal experience of other prophets with God, we may say that they are a sort of an icon of the general experience of the Jewish people with the One Who has chosen them.

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ANGELOLOGY AND DEMONOLOGY NOTIONS IN PSALM 91[90]

Abstract

In this study we wish to focus our attention on several concepts of angelology and demonology in the Book Psalms. In order to be as comprehensive as possible, we have chosen psalm 91[90] which emphasizes, in a unique manner, the battle between angels, which are messengers of God, and demons for the human soul. After the introductory elements we will identify the passages which directly or metaphorically indicate the presence of unseen powers and the contact between those two opposing powers. In the second part of the study we'll present some Patristic analyses by which we will highlight the way the Holy Fathers related to these texts, and finally; before the necessary conclusions, we will make a theological synthesis that emphasizes the part played by the devil in the human's straying from God, and the role that angels have in the life of a man who wants to approach and commune with God.



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Introduction

Being the product of reflection and of the thought borne within a life lived under the Law, the Psalms include the wishes and longings of the human soul which aims to rise above the earthly things, to overcome evil and to commune with God. For this reason, no other book from The Old Testament contains the variety and the richness of the Psalms. All religious themes enounced and developed in the Law appear, one by one, in the psalms: God and his work, the universe, the angels, the man in both his vanity and his glory etc. The main emphasis is set on the human relationship with God and on his struggle to acquire communion with Him.

Psalms show the personal efforts of the righteous to fulfill God's commandments and to live according to His divine will. The obstacles that he faces on this path are numerous, whether they come from the world or the devil. Without God's help, man

can't resist the hostile attacks. For this reason, God sent his angels to support the man, to guard him in all his ways and to strengthen him so that he will trample all the hostile powers unharmed.

All the direct and insidious attacks of the devil can only be defeated with God's help. Without divine assistance, the man can't face the snakes of the fowler and the noisome pestilence (Ps 91[90]:3), he will be afraid of the tenor by night, will be pierced by the arrow that fly by day and the pestilence that walked in darkness and he will fall under the destruction that wasted at noonday (Ps 91[90]:5-6). God is the only one who can offer him full protection and show after all attempts his salvation.

Demons and angels – text identification and critical analysis

5. Thou shalt not be afraid for the terror by night; nor for the arrow that flieth by day

6. Nor for the pestilence that walketh in darkness; nor for the destruction that wasteth at noonday.

11. For he shall give his angels charge over thee, to keep thee in all thy ways.

12. They shall bear thee up in their hands, lest thou dash thy foot against a stone.

13. Thou shalt tread upon the lion and adder: the young lion and the dragon shalt thou trample under feet.

The metaphorical expression of psalm 91[90] reflects a world full of demonic presences. The text of the psalm reflects a synergic circle formed between the ordinary life and the occult powers. Demons, the powers that usually manifest themselves during epidemics and the unexpected physical attacks are those which influence human existence (Tate 1977, 744-5). In this sense we can say that pestilence and disaster indicated in verse 6 are metaphors suggesting the disease attack, while fear and arrows of verse 5 suggests the human attack. Considering the context, some interpreters have argued that the four dangers quoted in verses 5-6 (terror, arrows, the pestilence that walketh in darkness and the destruction that wasteth at noonday) are the demons and/or malignant spirits (Gaster 1962-76, 820) that are often associated with disease.

For example, the night-terror has a correspondent in the description of Zaqr, a god of dreams, in a Mesopotamian magical incantation known as *paluhtum sba litâti* (Gaster 1962-76, 813), and the Babylonian pest demon, Namtar, has been suggested for the plague (Anderson 1981, 657). Gaster (1962-76, 820) notes the association of *dbr* with Resheph (a Canaanite god of plague and pestilence) in Hab 3:5. Dahood (1965-70, 331) notes the possibility that arrow should be identified with Resheph, citing

Ugaritic references, though he also says that if v. 5 is read looking back to vv. 1-3, rather than forward to the plague in v. 6a, the primary reference is probably to the hunter's arrow. Higger (1971, 186) notes that the Targum on this verse refers to the arrow of the death angel.

Referring to the phrase the destruction that wasteth at noonday, rabbis argue that it designates a demon. Evagrius Ponticus takes this information and he describes exactly the manner that this foreshadowing demonic manifests: "The Aramaic *qeteb* indicates a creature covered by scales and hair that has no power when it is cool in shade and hot in the sun, only when it is hot in the sun and in the shadow. It rolls as a ball and haunts of 17 Tamuz until 9 Av [in July and August] between the 4th and 9th hour and whoever sees him falls to the ground" (Guillamont 1971, 87).

We should mention that from this phrase three assumptions have emerged: 1) it is an accident of translation, 2) it is the result of the influence of the belief in the demons specific to the oriental environment, and 3) it is a midrash, namely an explanation of the meaning implicit to the psalmist's text: the personification of an evil phenomenon (Bunge 2002, 15). Septuagint (LXX) believes that pestilence is a demon and it is possible that the Hebrew version had envisaged the same thing (Briggs 1906-7, 125). For this reason, it has demon/evil spirit for *išd* and reads *všd* in accordance with Dt 32:17; Ps 106:37; Gn 14:3, 8, 10. However, some experts believe that LXX and Aquila and Simache erroneously associated the name of the demon *šed* with *iašod* (Knight and Fulton 2001, 94).

Regardless of the nuances interpreters and translators have stressed, one thing is obvious: the man is surrounded on all sides by evil and danger and he can't stop them. The devil attacks man in such a way that his fall is inevitable. In these moments of testing, God intervenes and establishes a balance in this fight. He sends his angels to guard man during temptations and guides him to victory. It is well known that angels are divine beings endowed with superior powers that can protect people from harm.

So, verses 11-12 propose an opposite image of demons that are personified in vs. 5-6, in which the angels of God are ordered to travel with the man to protect and save him from the snares of the devil. This reality is not foreign to the Old Testament's history, passages from the Law, of the prophets and other psalms clearly show the way in which God sends His angels to the service of people. The expression His angels is equivalent to the angels of God, which is a form in which God manifests Himself, Who appears to people in a humanized structure (von Rad 1962, 287).

We observe from the context of this psalm the commandment given to the angels concerns faithful man in particular, and not everybody. He, who is the Lord of angels, who seeded in their being the quality and the obligation to serve, commanded them to take care of each believer. From here we can see the care that God has for His chosen ones, as the angels received the command to be their servants. The only limitation that God makes is conditioned to the fulfillment of commandments. When he does not, man will stray from the protection of God. It is necessary to determine the extension of the commandment: angels must guard in all his ways, even where there is no apparent danger. Wherever man goes, the angel must accompany him, just like the servant stands next to the children (Flenry 1996, 289).

The care that the angels should have toward man goes even to wearing him on their arms. This shows both their ability and their delicacy. They are able to hold the faithful on their arms and to save them from dangers and in doing this they will manifest the tenderness and the affection with which people hold a child in their arms. They are yielding to their service, protecting the saint's feet lest they be hit by stones (Konrad 1951, 140) or preventing their committing a sin (Flenry 1996, 290). Whereas the angels have special care for the people they protect the noun *kaphaim* (hands) indicates more precisely the open palms and facing upwards.

The angels carrying the an in their arms is a metaphorical expression that seeks to highlight a particular concern, similar to the one that parents have for their children when they protect them from falling or hitting themselves. Those wearing someone hands are more confident that they will not fall from their arms.

The consequence of angelical intervention is not confined to protecting the sick, but goes up to surmounting the devil. Symbolic expressions used in verse 13 clearly show this because each of the four animals are the images of spiritual evils, and, naturally, of the devil. These animals hurt humans in different ways, but they all have the same result: death. Asp hurts by its bite, the basilisk through looking, the lion roars or hits and the dragon by his breathing. When the devil fails in a way, he immediately tries the other.

In the following section we will observe each animal and we will show the issues which make us consider them images of evil.

The asp (*phethen*) or the viper is a poisonous snake species that is in the same category and is equal to the lion in as much as the fright of the pilgrims is concerned. There is no doubt that the asp mentioned in the Scripture is the Egyptian Cobra (Tate 1977, 462). As we know, between man and snake there is a hostility set by God immediately after

the original sin, because the devil having taken the appearance of a snake had made Adam and Eve to sin.

Lion/ Basilisk. In terms of translation of the word *šhl* (lion), Septuagint and the Syriac version use words that indicate a snake: *vasiliskon* and *kurpha*. Mowinckel's study on this issue has revealed that in the Semitic thinking between feature lion and the serpent is a kinship. He used for this opinion Job 28:8: "The lion's whelps have not trodden it, nor the fierce lion passed by it". Mowinckel translate *šhl* with lizzard. Referring to this text he gives to *šhl* the meaning of the dragon water or Lindwurm (a mythical animal). In the same sense M.H. Pope in his commentary on the book of Job, he confers to the word *šhd*; the meaning of snake.

The LXX translators may have understood that the word *šhl* from Ps 91[90]:13 as serpent, helped, of course, by the feeling that lion is out of place with serpent in the same poetic colon. The Qumran text 11QPsApa has *phl* (cobra) in the first place followed by a lacuna in the text, which J. van der Ploeg (1965, 216) argues probably had *aph* (viper). Unlike this, Eissfeldt (1969, 84) reconstructs the lacuna with *šhl* which he treats as meaning a mythical sea serpent, following Mowinckel.

Some interpreters argue for a reptilian sense for both *šhl* and *khpir* in Ps 91[90]:13. Johnson's proposal to carry over the force of *lest* from 12b to v 13a (*Lest you ... step upon ... a viper, tread upon ... a snake*) works very well, but it demands the reading of *šhl* and *khpir* (lion – young lion) in reptilian senses. W. Thomas (Tate 1977, 462) cites Mowinckel and translates *šhl* as *asp* and *khpir* (young lion) in 13b as *viper*, citing the use of *kurpha* in Syriac with the meaning *asp/viper*. And noting the LXX use of *dragonton* (dragons/large serpents) for *siriphkh* (young lions) in Job 4:10, where the arrogance (or exultation) of the dragons/serpents will be quelled. Hugger (1971, 50-2) discussion of the versioned variations, adopts J. van der Ploeg's reconstruction of *ph* in the Qumran text and translates *Kobra und Otter*, (cobra and viper) in 13a, retaining *lion*, however, in 13b.

The translation of *šhl* meaning snake or crawler is important because the verbs *drk* and *rms* that metaphorically expressed the enslavement provide an image that can difficultly be applied to the lion, namely because one can easily step on a snake, but not on a lion.

After this exegetics dispute, M. Tate concludes: „Despite the evidence for the reptilian sense of *šhl*, I have retained the meaning *lion* in v 13a, though with doubt. There seem to be enough contexts in which to establish the basic meaning of *šhl* as *lion*, at least in

biblical Hebrew. There is really no question about *khpīr* as lion in 13b. The parallelistic sequence is: lion/ snake // lion/ snake. The incomplete Qumran text (Eissfeldt 1969, 87) may have had: snake/ lion // lion/ snake – a sharper parallelism; though it is possible, of course, that this text had: snake/ snake // snake/ snake. The verbs seem somewhat strained with lion; however, they are not necessarily unsuitable” (Tate 1977, 463).

Despite its positive values, the lion is a symbol of evil which furtively prowls and kills the ones it attacks. The sin often resembles the lion that will not let you go after catching you. For this reason, man is asked to keep away from it and those who resemble it. New Testament brought forward these meanings and it compares the devil with a hungry lion seeking prey. In all situations in which man is attacked by the lion, the only one who can save him is God. In this respect Daniel’s case – besides the literal meaning – can also be interpreted allegorically.

Dragon. The term *tnīd* defines either a water snake or a water dragon, as we can find in some contexts, or a snake. The name of the Dragon is used for (1) sea monster, (2) snake, (3) flying wild animals living in desolate places and (4) the enemies of God, especially the Pharaoh who represents the power of Egypt and Nebuchadnezzar who represents the Babylonian monarchy. The meaning of the term generally defines any monstrous creature who is either on land or in water. These notes will be taken in the context where they are used (Tate 1977, 462).

The Dragon is a symbol of the evil power. Besides its huge strength, it has an awful appearance. To better understand the symbolism of this animal we must combine the data that we have in the Old with those from the New Testament. In the Revelation the Dragon indicates the devil. This is evident because the devil has long been called a snake.

The verbs *tidrok* (a break, a walk) and *tidmos* (a scorn, a trample) indicate that the man does not step on them accidentally, but in a deliberately, like a conqueror, expressing his dominance, as Jesus Christ promised: „Behold, I give unto you power to tread on serpents and scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy: and nothing shall by any means hurt you” (Lk 10:19). Man has the power to defeat the serpent’s harmful power whether it comes to the literal meaning or mystical one.

Protective metaphors of vv. 3-12 open the way in verse 13 of a positive enslavement. The person who is under the protection of God and His angels (v. 11) will have the power to step upon poisonous snakes and over lions. These treacherous and horrific animals which attack without warning from hidden places (Schaff 1997, 446) will be

subjected to the faithful because they can't be compared to angels who serve him by divine commandment (see St. John Chrysostom 2002).

Patristic interpretation

When interpreting this psalm, the Church Fathers often refer to the struggle between man and devil. They give warnings about the cunningness with which the devil tries to make the man – who tries to approach God – give in to temptation and finally to sin. The devil has been so perfidious as to tempt the Savior with the very words of this psalm.

„Let us therefore attend to it – worn St. Augustine – that thus armed, we may be enabled to resist the tempter, not presuming in ourselves, but in Him who before us was tempted, that we might not be overcome when tempted. Temptation to Him was not necessary: the temptation of Christ is our learning, but if we listen to His answers to the devil, in order that, when we ourselves are tempted, we may answer in like manner, we are then entering through the gate, as you have heard it read in the Gospel. For what is to enter by the gate? To enter by Christ, who Himself said, I am the door (Jn 10:7) and to enter through Christ, is to imitate His ways...” (St. Augustin 1997, 446)

Saint Augustine insists in his commentary on the Lord's temptation in Qarantania, trying to provide us with some practical advices we can use in our fight against the devil, through the Savior's example. To this purpose he analyses each temptation showing how the Lord foiled the devil's attempts at luring Him in the trap of his perverted logic (St. Augustin 1997, 446). He then shows us that any Christian can withstand the demonic attacks if he learns from the Teacher how to defend himself in battle – he presents facts from the history of the Church, especially from the times of the martyrdoms.

Actually, this psalm offers an abundance of Solutions for the moments when we suffer the temptations and the attacks of the devil. Whether it is a direct fight, in broad day light, or some secretive attacks, the faithful receives from God the strength needed to shield himself and to overcome any assaults. If one wants to be protected by the divine grace, one needs to go through the Door of the temple of godliness. There will he be covered by God's wings and angels will be assigned to watch over him and to guide him in all his paths and all his battles against the powers of the darkness.

The angel given by God always stands by those who believe in Him. But the Holy Fathers caution us that when the man strays away from the path of righteousness and begins to sin, the angel leaves him for a while. This truth is developed by Saint Basil the Great in his commentary on the psalms. The following text is eloquent in this respect:

“As the smoke drives the bees away, and the fowl smell does so with the doves, the angel, guardian of our lives, is driven away by the fowl-smelling and tear-worthy sin. If you have within your soul actions worthy of angelic protection, and if a mind rich in the contemplation of the truth rests within you, then for the richness of your virtuous actions, God will certainly post guards and watches by your side, His angels around you like a stronghold.” (see Eftimie Zigabenul and Sf. Nicodim Aghioritul 2006, 263)

There needs to be close connection between men and angels. This isn't necessarily due to the commandment God has given the angels – to watch over people – but to the divine reasons imbedded in both their beings, by which they have been given the natural impulse to seek the communion with God. Being unified with the Creator isn't selfish and exclusivist, because all creatures are called to this *thelos*. Consequently, when the man breaks his communion with God by sinning, the angels move away from him, as their way is no longer the one and the same with the man's. We will discuss the subject of the angels' communion with men at large when we will synthesize the theological ideas issuing from the analyzed verses.

God's care for him who hopes and believes in him is made manifest in various ways: He either intervenes directly in order to help the one He wishes to protect, or He gives him strength to resist the temptations, or He sends His angels to protect him wherever he goes. The power of these celestial beings is overwhelming.

“See how great the nature of the angels is – says St. Basil the Great – that one angel is like an entire army and a camp of many men. Because of the greatness of the One who guards you, the Lord offers you a camp, and because of the angel's strength God surrounds you with walls and strengthens you with his might. This means around you. As the walls of a City are erected around it and they stop the attacks of the enemies from all sides, the angel protects you from the enemies that come from in front of you, from behind and from your sides. «A thousand may fall at your side, ten thousand at your right hand» but none of your adversaries will wound you, because His angel will order for you.” (see Eftimie Zigabenul and Sf. Nicodim Aghioritul 2006, 264)

The power of the devil seems to be overwhelming most of the times. When he assaults men he tries to seem all-powerful by all means, so as to destroy any hope of salvation. However, the Scriptures and the mystical writings prove the contrary; we will not give further details because there are plentiful testimonies on the subject. We will only consider the words of St. Basil, who underlines the importance and the power of the angels when, inspired by text of Psalm 91[90], he presents the human constantly

assaulted by the evil powers. He offers us a clear image of how the powers of the malefic are annulled under the shielding wings of a single angel. Furthermore, he wishes to suggest men that they should seek the closeness of these beings. The reasoning used by Saint Basil has a great impact on the reader, because as the psalm's text implies, not only a single angel, but a multitude are sent to help men.

Verses 12 and 13 of this psalm highlight the care with which angels guard us. Their presence is almost imperceptible. The text lets us understand that the angels are secret guardians who watch over our gestures and our actions just like the parents do over their children. This aspect emerges from the writings of Diodorus of Tarsus, who put forward the following familiar image: "As the bodily parents raise the children in their arms when they see a stony path, so that they wouldn't hurt their feet, because they are still tender and cannot walk down such a path, the reasoning powers do so with those that cannot strive, with those who still have a childish mind; they do not let them tire beyond their powers, but protect them from all temptation, so that they wouldn't fall under the feet of Satan, and lose all hope of wanting to serve God. The angels' constant presence near the faithful drives away the devil, because God commands the powers of goodness to protect the aggrieved and to chase the evil away, so that they wouldn't cause any suffering." (see Eftimie Zigabenu and Sf. Nicodim Aghioritul 2006, 264)

In most cases, God's support is so efficient that goodness is always one step ahead of evil. For this reason, He cuts at the very roots of the devil's plots and does not allow him to lure the man into a greater temptation than he can withstand. However, in certain moments, God does allow the devil to dispose of a greater power over man in order to determine the latter to use with his own strength and fight evil, on the one hand, and in order to make him become conscious of his vainness and of his need for God's help. The angels' "hiding" is understandable in these moments. Saint John Chrysostom notes one of the main reasons and we believe that mentioning it in this context will complete our view of the matter: "The Lord had not allowed his angels to appear during his temptation, so that they wouldn't scare the one who sought his prey; but after He defeated him in all his trials and chased him away, the angels appeared, so that you would also learn that after you too would have defeated the devil, you will be received by angels, who will praise and accompany you in all your life." (St. John Chrysostom 1994, 159)

When we have analyzed the texts where the presence of the devil was suggested, we have stated that he was symbolically substituted by the four animals of verse 13.

The patristic inputs we are about to mention unanimously support the scripturistic arguments indicated before.

Saints Athanasius the Great, Cyril of Jerusalem and Diodorus of Tarsus understand the lion, the dragon, the asp and the basilisk as Satan himself and the angels that had angels: rebelled with him, who had not tended to their divine duties, but have chosen to serve their own will. Furthermore, Eusebius identifies these animals with the four orders of the fallen: "There are four kinds of malignant angels: the powers, the principles, the authorities and the masters of the world, the evil spirits are designated by these four beasts: the lion, the dragon, the asp and the basilisk." (see Eftimie Zigabenu and Sf. Nicodim Aghioritul 2006, 264)

Whether they refer to the devil himself or his works, the Holy Fathers perceive these beasts as images of his evil doings. Saint Gregory of Nyssa believes that triumphing over them is achieved through the submission of the sins; consequently, he considers that the animals correspond to anger, life's indulgements, envy, and enmity: "He who tramples anger, tramples the lion, because it is an angry beast. And he who tramples the indulgements and the other evils springing from it, trample the asp, and the basilisk, and the dragon: the bodily indulgements and all the evil of life are to be compared with creatures that move along the ground, because truly, he who steps over envy and enmity steps over the basilisk, as this beast has poisonous eyes just like the envious people who are said to hurt with their eyes." (see Eftimie Zigabenu and Sf. Nicodim Aghioritul 2006, 264)

A similar interpretation is offered by Euthymios Zigabenos, but the sins he indicates are slightly different from those presented above: the calumny, the envy, the selfishness, the cruelty, the inhumanity, and the anger. Euthymios tries to adapt the sins to the particularities of each animal, by indicating how they attack. After having stated his ideas, he concludes by identifying the animals with the devil himself: "By the asp we can understand the calumny, because similarly to the asp, the calumny pours poison in the ears of men against those who they calumniate, and the basilisk is the envy and the selfishness, because as the basilisk has his poison in his eyes, the envy and the selfishness hurt their victims by the means of their eyes. The lion is the cruelty and the inhumanity, and the dragon is the anger; the righteous man can trample all these passions and none of them will hurt him. But asp and basilisk, lion and dragon figurate the devil, because he also contains and cause all the harms these animals cause." (Eftimie Zigabenu and Sf. Nicodim Aghioritul 2006, 263)

From the elements mentioned so far, we can see that these beasts are symbols of the devil and of his works. The way these predators attack their prey can show the method by which the devil tries to kill the man's spirit. Saint Augustine gives two examples: „You know who the serpent is, and how the Church treads upon him, as she is not conquered, because she is on her guard against his cunning. And after what manner he is a lion and a dragon, I believe you know also, beloved. The lion openly rages the dragon lies secretly in covert: the devil has each of these forces and powers. When the Martyrs were being slain, it was the raging lion: when heretics are plotting, it is the dragon creeping beneath us.” (St. Augustin 1997, 450)

Because God is essentially good, He tries to make use of the devil's malice in order to do the man good. What Job has endured is illustrative enough. God allowed the devil to hurt Job with the purpose of proving him that man can triumph over him even when God keeps his distance from him, and even when He allows the devil to punish the man as he pleases. Seen from the man's perspective, the trials the devil subjects him to can be understood as ways to strengthen his belief and to achieve an authentic closeness with God. For Saint Basil the Great, these images of the devil can be a means by which the believer can confirm his faith: “Trust the Lord, he says. «You will tread on the asp and the basilisk; the lion and the dragon you will trample underfoot». Through faith you will be able to step over snakes and scorpions. I wonder, have no knowledge of Paul? When Paul gathered twigs, a viper bit his hand but it didn't harm him, because the saint was full of faith. If you are an unbeliever, be afraid, not as much as of the beast, but of your disbelief, by which you will be easily harmed by anything.” (St. Basil the Great 1986, 117)

Stressing the limited power of the demons, Evagrius Ponticus advises us to fight the devil to the death, because he only knows how to threaten: “Think nothing of the fleeing serpent (Is 27:1) that harasses you; take him for nothing and do not fear it. Because he is an escaped slave who lived wrongly and fled from his master. Make no room for him until your death! Your Lord gave you the authority to trample on snakes and scorpions (Lk 10:19) and you fear the voices of demons when they hiss? The snake only knows how to threaten.” (Evagrius Ponticus 1986)

This opinion is shared by most of the fathers who have lived in the desert and who after having fought the devil in all the possible ways, have come to the conclusion that the devil has a limited power. He only has power over us when we enter his logic or when we give in to his temptations. As long as we are anchored in virtues and faith, the

devil cannot harm us. The sufferings a man endures all his life is only due to his desire to become united with God as soon as possible.

Saint Maximus the Confessor believes that the only way man can gain the peace Christ had promised His disciples, the complete communion with God, is by conquering his capital passions. He expresses this itinerary in the following way: "... if we will not firstly trample on the asp and the basilisk, namely if we will not rise above the disobedience of God's words and above receiving the bad thoughts, and if we will not trample on the lion and the dragon, namely on the anger and the lust, then we will not have peace, and we will be unable to move towards any of the things surrounding us. Let us contain our anger and our lust, and kill the sinful life and behavior along with the passions" (St. Maximus the Confessor 1990, 171).

In this psalm Saint Irenaeus of Lyon sees a foreshadowing of Christ's future victory over the devil; he develops this theme from the proto-evangel up to the Revelation where the dragon is vanquished by the Lamb. Saint Irenaeus pinpoints the fundamental events which underscore how God-Man defeats evil, in his attempt at showing that the perfect man – Christ – will fight the last battle and conquer the one that has brought death and all evils to the world. If one man gave in to the devil, one Man will determine him to surrender and accept the due punish meant for having broken his communion with God: „God put enmity between the serpent and the woman and her seed, they keeping it up mutually: He, the sole of whose foot should be bitten, having power also to tread upon the enemy's head; but the other biting, killing, and impeding the steps of man, until the seed did come appointed to tread down his head - which was born of Mary, of whom the prophet speaks: You shall tread upon the asp and the basilisk; you shall trample down the lion and the dragon; - indicating that sin, which was set up and spread out against man, and which rendered him subject to death, should be deprived of its power, along with death, which rules [over men]; and that the lion, that is, antichrist, rampant against mankind in the latter days, should be trampled down by Him; and that He should bind the dragon, that old serpent Apoc 20:2 and subject him to the power of man, who had been conquered Lk 10:19 so that all his might should be trodden down. Now Adam had been conquered, all life having been taken away from him: wherefore, when the foe was conquered in his turn, Adam received new life; and the last enemy, death, is destroyed, 1 Cor 15:26 which at the first had taken possession of man.” (Irenaeus 1997, 457)

We conclude this part of our study by noting Origen's wish, expressed when he was

referring to man's battle with the devil, which lasts until the end of his days: "How I wish you would also have the power to walk over snakes and scorpions and all the powers of the enemy, so that you will trample on the asp and the basilisk; the same basilisk that has once ruled over you and made the reign of sin endure within you, so that when those that had submitted you with the works of the sin are vanquished, Lord Jesus Christ would reign within you, whose is the glory and the reign in the ages of ages" (Origen 1981, 260).

Theological references

1. The outcome of the battle between man and devil

The Holy Scripture teaches us that before Adam and Eve were created, the devil and those who followed him had broken their communion with God by sinning, by wanting to become similar to God on their own, without growing within a connection with The One Who had brought them to life. Because of this they put an end to their communion with the sole source of being. No longer having the divine grace, the devil wanted to separate the man from God and lead him to his demise. "The devil, who fell from the highest grace to the utmost pitiful state, seeing the man God had created being risen to such a glory (despite being a bodily creature) out of the immense love of the Creator, hated him so that through cunning, sending the snake to deceive him, invade the man worthy of the punishment of death." (St. John Chrisostom 2003, 267)

The devil continues uninterruptedly with his temptation (Acts 5:3; 1 Cor 7:5; 10:13; 1 Thes 3:5), daring to tempt even Jesus Christ (Mt 4:1; Mk 1:13; Lk 4:2). The fathers of the desert (Regnault 2004) talk about a battle of the evil spirits against us, a battle where they use the same methods and delusions that they are subjected to. They direct man's thirst for godliness down the same wrong way which had once led them to failure, trying to lure him into an alliance against God.

The strongest battle is fought against the man who wants to fulfill himself in God, and for this purpose the devil makes the people he has won on his side fight against the people who still want to achieve the complete communion with God. God has transformed this battle of the devil an opportunity for the man to reaffirm his choice for goodness. Saint Basil the Great, states the following: "The devil began to fight against us for our fall caused by his temptation from the past. But the Lord gave us the opportunity and the power to fight our own battle against him, so that we should oppose him by our obedience and that we should gain the crown of victory over the enemy. It would have

been good for him not to become the devil, but to remain within his order, where he had been put by the Head of all orders! But once an apostate, an enemy of God and of the humans created in His image (he is an enemy of man because he is firstly an enemy of God, and he hates us because we creatures of the Lord, and His images), He Who leads by His providence the human issues, has used the evil of Satan in order to help our souls, just like a doctor uses the viper's venom to prepare the healing medicines." (St. Basil the Great 2003, 481)

The battle against the evil spirits requires a refined soul so as to observe the temptations from the start, but also a constant effort and an arduous tenacity, so that we wouldn't yield to him. Because they are spirits, they can enter in the depths of our soul and body, almost interweaving their ego with ours, up to the point where we tend it hard to discern our manifestations from theirs. The man cannot fight to the end using only his strength: he needs God's help.

The more clearly does the man see God's absolute reign, the more limited the power of the devil becomes, who has left the communion with God because of his pride, his envy and his selfishness. On the other hand, when the people are not on the devil's side and they are with God they realize that his power is limited by God and depends on Him.

God, the sole Master from the book of Genesis to the last book of the New Testament, permanently crushes the powers of chaos, the dragons and all adversaries – and of course Satan. God's complete and bright dominion leaves no place for dualism: He reigns over the entire creation, which is exclusively His creation, so that however brutal the confrontation between Him and the devils, and however unbearable the torments of those subjected to Satan, God is the supreme judge, the conqueror and the liberator of creation (Matsoukas 2002, 71).

2. The communion with the angels – an opportunity for deepening our knowledge of God

Because the angels are charged with helping people vanquish evil and understand the eternal reality of God from the very dawn of their existence, they must help people know God by the means of the sensible symbols of this world. They have an ontological connection with the world, as their mission is to support man's rising "in eternity overwhelmed time" (Stăniloae 2003, 440): the spirits help men during their ascension (knowledge and spiritual growth).

When God kept his distance from men (because of their sins which broke the

communion), most of the knowledge people had of Him was transmitted through angels: the New Testament says that the Old Law had been given through angels (Gal 3:19; Heb 2:2; Acts 7:53). But when the Son of God became flesh godliness revealed itself through the experience and the transfiguration of what it is to be human, in a way the angels cannot experience or comprehend. This is why the Apostle Paul stated that the angels learn through the Church “the manifold wisdom of God” which Christ has revealed to people (Eph 3:10).

Father Dumitru Stăniloae assumes the words of the Apostle and develops them as follows: “This is a more convenient way for God to reveal himself on man’s account, which means a greater closeness between them, a greater interest for man and for his problems, an expression of an even greater love for people. This is God revealing himself through a greater kenosis and for this reason, the manifestation of an even greater love” (Stăniloae 2003, 440).

Consequently, the angels gain from their connection with people. They communicate a non-sensible experience of God to the people, whereas the people communicate the angels a sensible one. If God wants to be known in a greater measure by all rational creatures, the connection between the spiritual beings and people must be so that it would form a unitary creation. The Church Fathers see the unity of creation in the fact that the angels were created to serve God’s eternal plan to redeem men (St. Maximus the Confessor 1948, 69).

This of course does not mean that the angels aren’t also created in the view of their own happiness, just like the people, but this is achieved for both of them only by communion. “And in this communion the angels’ part as superior beings is to help us. Through this, although they are superior, they serve the people’s redemption and their mission to spiritualize the visible creation. If the human subject is enriched in so far as he enters relationships with more human subjects, and in so far as these subjects are on higher spiritual levels, he will of course be enriched even more if he had a relationship with even more angels who are on higher spiritual levels. We can assume that they can enter such an intimate inner communion, that they can see through the eyes of men as if they were their own and with men they can feel the joys and pains they cause in the sensible world, just as the men can appropriate the angels’ sight in their intelligible images and symbols.” (Stăniloae 2003, 444)

The angels are not only charged with enriching the people’s knowledge of God, but also to help them so that they will attain knowledge sooner. This help given by the angels

in order to comprehend the spiritual meanings becomes less and less necessary as they progress in their spiritual journey of understanding and reaching the angelic state.

Thusly, as the angels have a positive God-given part to play in helping people grow perfect and United with God, the evil spirits have the exactly opposite role. Through the good angels God reveals His infinite depths so that we would nurture a continuous dialog with Him, whereas the evil spirits lure us into an opaque, senseless existence which can only end up in death. Just as the demons' existence is ultimately an active death, which spreads its inconsistency over everything that attaches to it, the life of those deceived by them has the same trajectory: an existence in death, a violent existence comparable with a non-substantial nightmare of helpless and tormented shadows, connected to the surface of reality, who extend their agony of helplessness and platitude over others. It is the death of conscientious loneliness or the death by conscientious loneliness which is unable to commune, but which breaths its envy of those communing and drawing them towards that lonely death (Stăniloae 2003, 481).

As opposed to the devil, the man isn't alone not even when he seems to be completely alone. On the contrary, when he recollects himself within, as his attention is always scattered and set on a multitude of exterior things and memories, it is precisely then when he opens himself to the spiritual presences. When he recollects himself in prayer his work is united with that of the angels into an inner opening towards the divine absolute. Evagrius Ponticus explains this in the following way: "Know that the holy angels encourage us to prey and stand with us, rejoicing and praying for us. If you truly pray then you will find strength and confidence, the angels will come to you as they came to Daniel and they will shade light on the meanings of the things that happen to you." (Evagrius Ponticus 1947, 87)

This way a communion is achieved not only between the visible members of the Church, but also one with the angels, because its universality also includes the heavenly powers.

Conclusions

At the end of our study we consider it necessary to state several conclusions and present the result of the research we have conducted having taken into account the perspectives indicated by the patristic interpretation and by the present exegetic requirement.

In the first section we have tried to identify the texts which indicate the demonic or

angelic presences in psalms 91[90] and to analyze them critically. In order to clear the more difficult passages we have used the specialized literature and we have given the possible answers. Consequently, as to the 6th verse of the psalm, LXX lets us understand that the pestilence mentioned in the Hebrew original is a demon. It is possible that the Hebrew version envisaged the same thing. For this reason, the Septuagint has demon/evil spirit for *iṣd* and reads *vṣd* in accordance with Gn 14:3.8.10; Dt 32:17; Ps 107:37.

The issues raised by verse 13 was far more delicate because the Greek original mentions two venomous snake species, and the Hebrew mentions only one snake and one lion. Therefore, both the Septuagint and the Syrian original use for *ṣhl* (lion) the words which indicate a snake: *vasiliskon* and *kurpha* respectively. Mowinckel's study on these issues has uncovered the fact that in the Semitic thinking the lion's and the snake's physiognomies are related. The translators of the Septuagint have understood that the word *ṣhl* from psalm 91[90] refers to a snake, were helped by the fact that both the lion and the snake belong to the same symbolic sphere in most of the poetic books. Translating *ṣhl* by snake or reptile is important because the verbs *drk* and *rms* which metaphorically express submission offer an image difficultly applied to the lion, because one can easily trample on a snake.

The patristic commentaries which build up the second part of our paper have highlighted the spiritual way in which these verses have been interpreted. We should note that Saint Augustine's commentary offers us the Solutions we need in the moments when we are tempted or attacked by demons, by putting forth the Savior's attitude when He was tempted in the desert of Qarantania. Whether it is a direct fight, in broad day light, or some secretive attacks, the faithful receives from God the strength needed to shield himself and to overcome any assault.

In the last section we have presented the theological dimensions of these texts, we have shown the way the devils which have broken their communion with God forever try to lead us astray from the path of righteousness. Their efforts are balanced by the good angels who are sent by God to guide men towards the Source of communion and to guard him from anything that may drive him away.

Therefore, as we have seen, Psalm 91[90] takes some basic notions from the teaching found in the Old Testament on angels and demons and develops them. We should also note that a direct contact is established here between these two unseen forces, and the supremacy of goodness is underlined. Their power is overwhelming because it bears the seal of the divine commandment, namely that to protect the man who seeks and wants

to commune with God.

The statements made in this study bring their contribution to the development of the Romanian old testamentary theology. The notions presented here may constitute the premises needed to outline certain notions of angelology and demonology.

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ISAIA 53. ANALIZA EXEGETICO-TEOLOGICĂ A DISCURSULUI RETORICO-PROFETIC

Abstract

The study of the rhetoric in general, and particularly of the biblical, namely of the old testamentary one is essential for decoding, understanding and composing discursively nowadays when once the informational phase is surpassed, the general tendency is towards creating a communication era. One of those who have tackled the rhetorical aspects of the prophetic writings has been Saint Jerome, closely followed by Saint Basil the Great; nonetheless there are some preoccupied by the subject in our times as well. All these works are focused on explaining the texts from a theological perspective and the unanimous message is somewhat simple: we need to take full ethical responsibility of our own critical judgements based on the best available proofs and pieces of information. Bearing this in mind as a starting point, I intend to carry out a philological-theological analysis of the rhetoric dimension within the prophetic discourse, namely Isaiah 53.



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Keywords

prophetic discourse, rhetoric, isaiah 53, prophecy, fulfillment Gospels

Retorica stilului profetic

Înțelegerea și cunoașterea reală a valorii Vechiului Testament stă în strânsă legătură cu Noul Testament. Vechiul Testament este, putem spune, cuvântul înainte al Noului Testament și din această cauză sensul lui devine evident doar în legătură cu acesta, după cum se exprimă și Fericitul Augustin: „Novum Testamentum in Vetere latet, Vetus in Novo patet”. Trecerea de la Vechiul la Noul Testament, este exprimată de Sfântul Evanghelist Matei prin înșiruirea strămoșilor după trup ai Mântuitorului. Prin aceasta se arată nu numai legătura (Sf. Ioan Gură de Aur 1994, 533), dar și unitatea Sfintei Scripturi, curgerea ei, lucru ce atestă faptul că textul ei este eminent retoric.

Acest adevăr mai rezultă și din faptul că în Sfânta Scriptură apare tipul (Breck 1996, 41-2; Moisescu 1942, 105), înfățișat printr-o realitate istorică a Vechiului

Testament, care se împlinește în mod desăvârșit în Noul Testament. În felul acesta, evenimente sau persoane din Vechiul Testament, devin tipuri ale unor evenimente sau persoane din Noul Testament care constituie antitipurile lor. Potrivit naturii sale, tipul poate fi reprezentat de persoane (Adam, Melchisedec, David, etc. care îl prefigurau pe Hristos), de evenimente sau lucruri (mana, șarpele de aramă, mielul pascal, etc.), sau precepte legale (dispoziția de a nu zdrobi oasele mielului pascal). Din punct de vedere al raportului dintre tip și antitip putem vorbi despre trei categorii de tipuri: a) profetice sau alegorice, b) morale sau tropologice, c) anagogice. Vechiul Testament este bogat în exemple de tipuri profetice, cele tropologice și anagogice fiind mai puțin numeroase. Însă trebuie făcută mereu diferențe dintre tipurile Vechiului Testament și adevărurile Noului Testament, întrucât adevărurile sunt superioare tipurilor (Moisescu 1942, 106).

Vechiul Testament ca „pedagog spre Hristos”, conține tipuri care ne pregătesc și ne sugerează venirea lui Hristos. Legea Veche este privită, în general, ca o fază de pregătire a omenirii pentru venirea Legii celei noi în Iisus Hristos. Hristos a fost considerat ca mărgăritarul de preț care se găsea îngropat în ogorul Vechiului Testament (Origen 2002, 36). Astfel privesc lucrurile, între Vechiul și Noul Testament există o legătură firească și, în același timp, o unitate ce este subliniată și de caracterul hristocentric al Scripturii (Chialda 1981: 542-61). Dacă Vechiul Testament reprezintă istoria pregătirii neamului omenesc pentru primirea mântuirii realizate de Hristos, Noul este împlinirea acesteia. Toată Scriptura este o mărturisire despre Hristos, care în repetate rânduri în cuvântările Sale, face referire la cărțile Vechiului Testament, mai cu seamă la profeții, cu ajutorul cărora argumentează realitatea împlinirii în persoana Sa a acestora.

Cu cât te adâncești mai mult în Sfânta Scriptură, cu atât descoperi mai mult că nu este doar o adunare de cărți puse la întâmplare, ci este un întreg cu legătură interioară. Acest lucru arată faptul că textul Scripturii este unul retoric, întrucât există acea curgere a textului fiecărei cărți din una în alta, descoperind o cuvântare bine alcătuită și convingătoare. Noul Testament, aproape la fiecare pagină sau capitol din scrierile sale, cuprinde citate din Vechiul Testament ce dovedesc „adevărul și viața” Mântuitorului. Citatele Vechiului Testament – mai cu seamă mă refer la profețiile mesianice – făcute în Noul Testament, sunt încă o probă evidentă a raportului celor două Testamente, lată un exemplu al raportului dintre profețiile Vechiului Testament și împlinirea lor în Noul Testament

Toate acestea s-au scris de profetul Isaia cu aproape o mie de ani înainte și s-au împlinit întocmai. Împlinirea profețiilor cu privire la Persoana Mântuitorului dovedește

faptul că Vechiul Testament are nu numai valoare de mărturie doctrinară ci și autoritate divină. Întreg Vechiul Testament face parte din economia divină a mântuirii neamului omenesc. Așadar fiecare text sau carte a Vechiului Testament cuprinde Revelația divină, care culminează în Noul Testament, în Însăși Persoana Mântuitorului. Dacă în Vechiul Testament, Hristos, este prezent prin mărturii, Noul cuprinde desăvârșita descoperire a Sa. Putem spune deci că Vechiul Testament este legat de Noul prin Însăși persoana lui Hristos, lucru întărit de afirmațiile Sfântului Apostol Pavel: „După ce Dumnezeu odinioară, în multe rânduri și în multe chipuri, a vorbit părinților noștri prin prooroci, în zilele acestea mai de pe urmă, ne-a grăit nouă prin Fiul” (Evr 1:1-2).

Retorica Vechiului Testament este o dovadă a luptei neîncetată a profeților pentru realizarea unei lumi superioare. Aceasta se constituie într-o predică adecvată tuturor timpurilor. De aceea, proorocii, pot fi numiți, pe drept cuvânt contemporanii noștri. În cele ce urmează, ne vom referi, pe scurt la profețiile mesianice ale profetului Isaia, numit, pe bună dreptate evanghelistul Vechiului Testament, întrucât nici un profet nu a mai scris atât de mult despre venirea lui Mesia. Din acest motiv, cartea sa a fost numită a cincea Evanghelie. Interesantă este și asemănarea dintre cartea profetului Isaia și Sfânta Scriptură în general. În acest sens, John Stevenson (*Studies from the Old Testament*) prezintă într-o formă schematică această asemănare: Biblia: Vechiul Testament (39 cărți); Noul Testament (27 cărți) – Isaia: Judecată (39 capitole); Mângâiere (27 capitole).

Analiză exegetico-teologică

A) Părintele Nicolae Neaga (2007, 77-107) rezervă profetului Isaia cel mai mare spațiu, analizând 18 profeții mesianice, multe din ele cu ajutorul tâlcuirilor Sfinților Părinți. Face, totodată, analize, din punct de vedere etimologic, prin explicarea termenilor ebraici originali. Textele mesianice ale profetului Isaia sunt, în general, cunoscute și ușor de reperat (Is 2:2-4; 7:14 etc.). Cu privire la dimensiunea retorică a prevestirilor din Vechiului Testament, evidențiem mai multe aspecte, alese pe considerentul actualității, evident, cu adaptările de rigoare: Forma de adresare sau de atenționare este pe măsura autorității lui, conformă, totodată, cu starea morală jalnică în care decăzuse poporul lui Iuda, în sânul căruia a propovăduit: „Ascultați cuvântul Domnului, voi conducători ai Sodomei, luați aminte la învățătura Domnului, voi popor al Gomorei!” (Is 1:10); Iscusita utilizare a proverbelor: „Vai de cei ce zic răului bine și binelui rău” (Is 5:20); „Gândurile Mele nu sunt ca gândurile voastre, și cugetele Mele precum cugetele voastre,

zice Domnul...” (Is 55:8) etc.

Retorica pusă în slujba dreptății și păcii sociale: „Învățați să faceți binele, căutați dreptatea, ajutați pe cel apăsător, faceți dreptate orfanului, apărați pe văduvă” (Is 1:17); „Preface-vor săbiile în fiare de pluguri și lăncile lor în cosoare. Nici un neam nu va mai ridica sabia împotriva altuia și nu vor mai învăța războiul” (Is 12:4); „Dreptatea va fi ca o cingătoare pentru rărunchii Lui și credințioșii ca un brâu pentru coapsele Lui. Atunci lupul va locui laolaltă cu mielul și leopardul se va culca lângă căprioară... Pruncul de țâță se va juca lângă culcușul viperei și în vizuina șarpelui otrăvitor copilul abia înțărcat își va întinde mâna. Nu va fi nici o nenorocire și nici un prăpăd în tot muntele Meu cel sfânt!” (Is 11:5-9).

Inteligenta utilizare a parabolilor: în capitolul 5 al cărții, întâlnim pilda viei neroditoare, care anticipează profetic parabola smochinului neroditor (Lc 13:6-9), rostită de Mântuitorul la trecerea a peste 700 de ani, cu același înțeles: lipsa de roadă a poporului ales va înșela, astfel, așteptările Stăpânului-săditor, Dumnezeu. Utilizare a cuvântărilor parenetice și panegirice, de o frumusețe deosebită, care pot fi reproduse și acum la amvon, fără modificări esențiale. Din prima categorie am exemplifica pareneza despre post (Is 58), de o actualitate evidentă: „...Nu știți voi postul care îmi place? – zice Domnul. Rupeți lanțurile nedreptății, dezlegați legăturile jugului, dați drumul celor asupriți și sfărâmați jugul lor. Împarte pâinea ta cu cel flămând, adăpostește în casă pe cel sărman, pe cel gol îmbracă-l și nu te ascunde de cel de un neam cu tine...” (Is 58:6-7). Din a doua categorie, a panegiricelor cu accente parenetice, face parte și celebra profeție cu privire la patimile și jertfa Mântuitorului de care ne vom ocupa mai în amănunt (Is 53:1-12).

Buna cunoaștere a figurilor de stil, utilizate pentru impresionarea auditoriului fac dovada unei științe superioare în folosirea cuvântului. Ele au constituit, în permanență, o preocupare majoră a retorilor și stilisticienilor. Figurile de stil se clasifică în: figuri de cuvinte (metafora, metonimia, sinecdota, catahreza, litota, hiperbola); figuri de gândire: (a: descrierea, portretul, aluzia, comparația, alegoria, antiteza, reticența, suspensia; b) interogația și exclamația retorică, dubitația, apostrofa, ironia, sarcasmul, imprecția, prosopopeea); figuri gramaticale: (inversiunea, pleonasmul, repetiția). Figurile de vorbire sunt folosite foarte mult și în Sfânta Scriptură; și toate figurile de vorbire variată folosite în alte cărți le regăsim și în textul scripturistic, inclusiv în Cărțile Profeților.

Comparația este o figură de stil în care un lucru este comparat în mod formal cu altul, pentru a impresiona mintea cu asemănarea sau analogia lor. Exemplele sunt elocvente,

în cele 66 de capitole din Isaia, dacă ne gândim la o serie de formulări precum: „Sidonul a ajuns ca o colibă într-o vie, ca o covercă într-o bostănărie, ca o cetate împresurată! Dacă pomul Savaot nu ne-ar fi lăsat o rămășiță, am fi ajuns ca Sodoma și ne-am fi asemănat cu Gomora” (Is 1:8-9); „Și vor aduna prada voastră, cum adună lăcustele; arunca-se-vor asupra ei, cum se aruncă lăcustele” (Is 33:4); „Șaronul a ajuns ca o câmpie” (Is 33:9); „Popoarele vor fi prefăcute în cenușă ca spinii tăiați și mistuiți în foc” (Is 33:12); „Atunci va sări șchiopul ca cerbul” (Is 35:6). Datorită numărului mare de comparații care se regăsesc pe parcursul cărții profetului Isaia, am hotărât să aleg doar câteva, pentru exemplificare și înțelegere.

Metafora este o figură prin care dintr-o anumită asemănare sau analogie presupusă, un nume, un atribut sau o acțiune aparținând unui obiect sau caracteristicii unui obiect este atribuită altuia la care nu este aplicabil în mod literal. Regulile care guvernează folosirea metaforei: a) Lucrul din care este luată o metaforă și cu care un alt lucru este comparat trebuie să fie cunoscut: „Ierusalimul...dărâmată și Iuda este gata să cadă” (Is 3:8); „Via domnului este casa lui Israel, iar oamenii din Iuda, sădirea lui dragă” (Is 5:7); „Babilonul, podoaba împăraților, cununa mândriei Caldeilor” (Is 12:19) implică o cunoaștere a arheologiei, geografiei și istoriei biblice; b) Scopul unei metafore trebuie să fie studiat. Contextul imediat poate indica aceasta, sau scopul general și contextul capitolului în care se găsește „Dar domnul se va milostivi de Iacov (adică seminția acestuia, n.n.) și va alege încă o dată pe Israel (țara unde locuiește seminția, n.n.) și îl va statornici în pământul lui (țara care va purta numele lui Israel, n.n.)” (Is 14:1); c) Punctul de comparație trebuie să fie considerat cu grijă și trebuie să se ia în considerare faptul că punctele de asemănare nu sunt multiplicat în mod nejustificat.

Metonimia – schimbarea numelui – este o figură în care numele unui obiect este pus pentru alt obiect, cele două fiind atât de înrudite încât menționarea unuia sugerează în mod natural pe celălalt. Ea este întemeiată pe relația închisă dintre cele două, nu asemănarea, de exemplu „sticla” pentru „băutură”; „ceașcă” pentru „vin”; etc. Metonimia implică un anumit tip de „dislocare” semantică: a) Cauza pentru efect sau efectul pentru cauză: „Locuitorii Sidonului vor cădea de sabie” (Is 3:25); b) Subiectul pentru atribut, sau invers: „Ei au trecut pasul (locul cel strâmt, n.n.)” (Is 10:29); c) Forma pentru lucrul conținut: „Ascultă cerule, și ia aminte, pământule, că Domnul grăiește” (Is 1:2); d) Semnul pentru lucrul semnificat: „Tu ai lepădat (neamul tău) casa lui Iacov” (Is 2:6).

Sinecdoca este o figură prin care o parte dintr-un lucru este pusă pentru întreg, sau un întreg pentru o parte, specia pentru gen, etc. Aceasta este strâns legată de metonimie.

Dar aici nu schimbăm numele de la un lucru pentru altul, ci dăm subiectul unui nume care semnifică ceva mai mult sau mai puțin decât intenționăm. Astfel specia este pusă pentru gen, „om” pentru „ființele umane” în general, „aur” pentru „bani”, o „sabie” pentru „armă”; „evreu și grec” pentru toată omenirea, etc. Mai rar genul este pus pentru specii.

Hiperbola este o figură de stil în care expresia este o exagerare evidentă a înțelesului intenționat a fi transmis, sau prin care lucrurile sunt reprezentate ca fiind mult mai mari sau mai puțin, mai bine sau mai rău, decât sunt ele în mod real. Exagerarea nu are intenția de a înșela, ci de a face gândul sau cuvântul mai eficient sau mai apăsător. Nici exagerarea nu înșală, pentru că este clar pentru fiecare ceea ce vrea să se spună. Aceasta este o figură legitimă de vorbire. Ironia este o figură de stil în care limbajul înseamnă în mod literal exact opusul a ceea ce autorul intenționează să spună: Ironia ridiculizează în timp ce pretinde că laudă. Personificarea este o figură de stil prin care viața este atribuită lucrurilor fără viață. Această figură este folosită foarte mult în special în Vechiul Testament (Is 55:12).

Apostroful este o figură de stil în care vorbitorul sau scriitorul se adresează unei persoane absente ca și când ar fi prezentă, o persoană moartă ca și când ar trăi, sau unui lucru fără viață ca și când ar trăi. Apostroful este combinat adesea cu personificarea, sau o include. Interogația este o figură de stil în care se pune întrebarea cu scopul de a afirma opinia personală a cuiva mai puternic, nu pentru a obține o informație. Ea este numită întrebare retorică. „Cine va crede ceea ce noi am auzit și brațul Domnului cui se va descoperii?” (Is 53:1); „întru smerenia Lui judecata Lui s-a ridicat și neamul Lui cine îl va spune?” (Is 53:8). Exclamația este o figură de stil similară interogării, folosită pentru a exprima sentimentele sau gândurile cuiva într-un mod mai puternic: „Că s-a luat de pe pământ viața Lui!” (Is 53:8). Fabula/alegoria este o poveste în care animalele sunt lucruri fără viață care sunt reprezentate ca vorbind și acționând ca un om inteligent. Unii nu recunosc existența fabulei în Sfânta Scriptură, numind-o pildă sau parabolă. Conținutul alegoric al pildei ne demonstrează că este vorba despre fabulă.

Ghicitoarea/ enigma este o enigmă, o zicală întunecată un exemplu mascat al cărui înțeles cititorul îl poate lesne deduce. Alegoria este o figură de stil în care un lucru este descris sub imaginea altuia. Este o metaforă continuată. Alegoria și parabola ar putea fi considerată a constitui al patrulea capitol, în ce privesc tipurile, al procedeelelor stilistice. Dar, vorbind în mod strict, ele aparțin tot acestui tip. Există doar două sau trei exemple ale alegoriei și parabolei mistice în Sfânta Scriptură și acestea ar trebui să fie clasate sub

alte „tipuri”. Conform Psalmului 80 care poate fi numit alegorie retorică. Parabola este o figură de stil în care o narațiune, nu istorică, dar adevărată față de faptele și experiențele vieții umane, este necesară pentru a ilustra un adevăr spiritual sigur. O parabolă este o comparație continuată, așa cum o alegorie este o metaforă continuată. Cuvântul provine din grecescul parabalo – „a compara ceva cu altceva”.

B) Isaia își începe cartea profeției cu ceea ce începe cartea Facerii: omul în păcat și în răzvrătire împotriva lui Dumnezeu, și sfârșește cu ceea ce cartea Apocalipsei sfârșește: cu crearea unui cer nou și a unui pământ nou unde cei dreπți vor fi împreună în slava lui Dumnezeu, iar cei păcătoși vor fi trimiși la osândă veșnică. Principala împărțire a cărții are loc după încheierea capitolului 39 (întrucât cartea se împarte în două, n.n.) în același fel în care Vechiul Testament se încheie după a 39 carte. Structura întregului capitol 53 este sub formă de chiasm (Dahood 1976, 145; Breck 2005, 27). Este o paralelă care începe și se termină cu aceeași notă. Un punct important al acestei paralele este modul în care se concentrează totul în jurul acesteia. Punctul central al acestui pasaj este aspectul suferinței. Dar înainte de a citi despre suferințele „Robului Domnului”, suntem încredințați de slava Acestuia. El însă va propăși. Acesta este și mesajul pe care se întemeiază cartea Apocalipsei.

O interesantă formă retorică se regăsește în versetul 13 al capitolului 12 care începe cu o poruncă. Se zice: „Luați aminte!”. Dumnezeu ne sfătuiește că ar trebui să venim să-L vedem pe Cel pe care L-a alea să-l fie Slugă. Hristos și-a luat asupra-și acest titlu de „Rob”. În paralel putem pune textul de la Filipeni 2:6-7 unde citim: „Care, Dumnezeu fiind în chip, n-a socotit o știrbire a fi El întocmai cu Dumnezeu, 7 Ci S-a deșertat pe Sine, chip de rob luând, făcându-Se asemenea oamenilor, și la înfățișare aflându-Se ca un om”. Acela care este din veci (Sf. Ioan Damaschinul 2004, 125), a luat chipul Robului: „Dar El a luat asupra-și durerile noastre și cu suferințele noastre S-a împovărat. Și noi îl socoteam pedepsit, bătut și chinuit de Dumnezeu, 5 Dar El fusese străpuns pentru păcatele noastre și zdrobit pentru fărădelegile noastre. El a fost pedepsit pentru mântuirea noastră și prin rănilor Lui noi toți ne-am vindecat. 6 Toți umblam rătăciți ca niște oi, fiecare pe calea noastră, și Domnul a făcut să cadă asupra Lui fărădelegile noastre ale tuturor (Is 53:4-6).

În aceste versete oscilăm între adevărul despre lucrarea lui Hristos și ceea ce aștepta poporul de la el. Este un contrast între realitate și iluzie:

- 53:4 – Realitate – „Dar El a luat asupra-Și durerile noastre, și cu suferințele noastre S-a împovărat”;
- 53:4 – Iluzie – „Și noi îl socoteam pedepsit, bătut și chinuit de Dumnezeu”;
- 53:5 – Realitate – „Dar El fusese străpuns pentru păcatele noastre și zdrobit pentru fărădelegile noastre. El a fost pedepsit pentru mântuirea noastră și prin rănilor Lui noi toți ne-am vindecat”;
- 53:6 – Iluzie – „Toți umblam rătăciți ca niște oi, fiecare pe calea noastră”;
- 53:6 – Realitate – „și Domnul a făcut să cadă asupra Lui fărădelegile noastre ale tuturor”.

Iar în versetele 4-8 avem paralelă între ceea ce reprezentau de fapt nevoile lui Israel în contrast cu ceea ce divinul „Rob” a venit să îndrepte. Cel nevinovat a fost pedepsit în locul celui vinovat, iar cel vinovat a fost lăsat liber. Există, de asemenea, un paralelism contrastant, bun de pus în evidență, între regele Babilonului prezentat în Isaia 13-14 și suferințele Robului din Isaia 52-53:

Concluzii

Studiul retoricii în general și a celei biblice a vechi-testamentare, în special, este esențial pentru decriptarea, înțelegerea și compunerea discursivă, într-un timp în care, depășindu-se stadiul informațional, se tinde, spre instituirea unei ere a comunicării. Revenirea în atenție a acestei discipline, considerată de unii îmbătrânită sau învechită, în secolul XX, se datorează în cea mai mare parte caracterului său transdisciplinar și noii perspective asupra recuperării tradiției sale într-o structură coerentă a interacțiunii în comunicare. Prezentarea unor probleme dintr-un domeniu cu o istorie și complexitate remarcabile se dorește a fi un îndemn pentru viitorii specialiști în comunicare, de a se deprinde cu reflecția, analiza și critica unui fenomen care ne privește pe toți deopotrivă.

Discursul se construiește pe baza unor elemente fundamentale și este imprimat cu personalitatea autorului, care își îmbogățește discursul alegând să folosească acele figuri de stil care îi exprimă cel mai bine gândirea și trăirea. Pentru o înțelege cât mai bună a specificului figurilor de stil folosite de autorii inspirați, am ales să mă rezum la o prezentare a acestora aplicată pe cartea profetului Isaia în ansamblu, precedată de o scurtă expunere a scopurilor omiletice și catehetice care determină folosirea lor. Limitarea studiului la cartea Isaia este întemeiată: a) în primul rând extinderea cărții oferă material suficient pentru identificarea tuturor figurilor de stil, b) în al doilea rând putem considera că discursul profetic isaian este reprezentativ pentru discursul profetic

în general, și c) gândirea profetului Isaia este apropiată gândirii Evangheliștilor fapt care i-a adus supranumele de „Evanghelistul Vechiului Testament”.

Această analiză asupra cărții Isaia, restrânsă la un singur capitol – 53, care are ca temă principală suferințele lui „Ebed Yahve”, este parte integrantă din aria tematică pe care îmi propun să o acopăr pe parcursul studiilor doctorale. Subiectul poate fi cercetat mai amplu, desigur, însă studiul de față este, fără îndoială, indispensabil pentru dezvoltări ulterioare.

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BOOK REVIEWS

STELIAN PAȘA-TUȘA

Isagogical concepts in Old Testament theology

PAULA BUD

O exegeză biblică modernă in duhul Părinților

MIHAI NAGY

Retorica biblică. Principii, aplicații și perspective

ISAGOGICAL CONCEPTS IN OLD TESTAMENT THEOLOGY

Stelian PAȘCA-TUȘA

Petre Semen, *Introducere în teologia biblică a Vechiului Testament* (Iași: Trinitas, 2008), 223 p.

Fr. Petre Semen's book, *Introduction to Biblical Theology of the Old Testament*, published at Trinitas Publishing House in Iași (2008) seeks to answer primarily to current requirements of the analytic curricula of the Faculty of Theology as well as to the needs of recent biblical studies.

In the preface of his work, Fr. Semen stresses the importance of Bible studies indicating that all theological subjects revolve around their basis in Holy Scripture. In this regard, Fr. Semen considers it natural that a theologian should have minimum knowledge that allows him to anchor in the inspired and alive spring of Revelation. The young generations of theologians must know the holy text, must believe in it and pass it forward it with "passion and professionalism"

While developing this theology text book, the author has used existing sources which, he otherwise, mentioned. The basic structure of his book was taken after the manual for the Institutes of Theology, The Old Testament Study appeared in 1955, through teacher's collaboration: Vladimir Prelipceanu, Nicolae Neaga, George Barna and Mircea Chialda. This paper was developed with real improvements. Main information was reviewed and then updated. Items that were condered unnecessary were eliminated in order to show students the essential things. The issues which required more attention were analyzed comprehensively by the author to fulfill existing gaps.

An increased emphasis was placed on the theology of books, reducing the information that disclosed different views over some books paternity. With this attitude criticism story was not harmed, because they have been given all essential data. The author considered, that the content and the explaining of a book from the Old Testament Canon are more important, than playing polemics which affect the least amount of the holy text itself, because, after all, the author of the Holy Scripture is God par excellence great merit that Fr. Semen has in this study is, in addition to those mentioned above, updating the bibliography published in the Romanian theology. The author has tried to substantiate the allegations writes on Romanian theology scholars to highlight their contribution to the development of national biblical theology. He used treats and theology studies in

foreign languages to support Romanian theology scholars' writes, as it is natural, or to replace failing, as happened, unfortunately, in many parts of the paper.

The paper is structured in ten chapters. First eight deal with the general part of Old Testament studies, and the other two special parts of them. Prior to a short presentation of each chapter, it is necessary to mention that the author wishes to continue this work because his analysis of the last part of the book resumes to the Pentateuch and the historical writings of the Old Testament Canon.

The first chapter is entitled Sacred Scripture - name and division. After the necessary details of terminology, Fr. Semen lists all books that make up the Old Covenant, indicating the difference between the canonical writings and anaginoscomena or good for read. Because these books were written over a longer period of time (~ 1200 years) and because they belong to different genres, Jews and Christians have considered it necessary to place them under different categories. The author presents the categorization of books and stating the reason that resulted in the segmentation of the content in parashe and haptare respectively chapters and verses.

In the second chapter Introduction to Sacred Scripture of the Old Testament – springs, several biblical arguments are presented motivating the need for auxiliary disciplines that can provide natural support in understanding and then in the interpretation of the biblical truths. The second part of this chapter reinforces the earlier arguments and moved further by a few quotations from Patristic writings. This section is ended by a complete listing of the major introduction works occurred in our country at the beginning of the Nineteenth Century.

The history of Old Testament Canon is examined in the third chapter. Here the author notes that we cannot speak of a proper history of the compilation of the Canon because we do not have specific information in this regard. However, he reminds the several stages of collecting holy texts that are shown in St. Scripture. Then he provides a plausible explanation that may elucidate the difference between quantitative Canon Alexandrian and Palestinian. The final part of this chapter is devoted to events and personalities that led to specify and finalizing Canon Old Testament in Christianity.

The fourth chapter is dedicated to Holy Scriptures inspiration. From the outset it is specifies that the authority of the holy text cannot be contested because of its divine origins. This point is developed and substantiated by the manner in which conducted the divine inspiration of the author human. These questions are based on biblical and Patristic texts.

Chapter five examines the history of biblical text. The history reconstruction of the holy text involves a relevant documentation to confirm the integrity of the text sent from one generation to another, over the centuries. The author mentions the ways in which you can find material integrity of the text, the three phases of work in his review and analyze the Samaritan Pentateuch, a valuable material for studying the Bible. In the conclusion of this part, Fr. Semen emphasizes that the Hebrew text sent to us is not identical to the autograph. Although it suffered some changes, the text was not affected its dogmatic integrity.

The sixth chapter is dedicated to holy text translation. The most consistent part is devoted to Septuagint, the first translation of the Hebrew version in Greek. The impact of this translation of posterity was very high, because Septuagint was early generalized as main version of the Old Testament text. After listing corpus comprising Septuagint, the author mentions the alternative translations in Greek of Aquila, Symmachus and Teodotian as a reply to errors translation made by the 70 elderly. After that he presents the Aramaic and Syrian versions, the Latin, Coptic, Ethiopian, Armenian and Gothic translations.

The next two chapters present translations of Hebrew text in modern languages and Romanian.

The ninth chapter represent a transition to a special section of this book. It starts with the presentation of the main ideas which are found in the Pentateuch. After that Moses books are analyzed line on line. It is necessary to emphasize that the author carried out a unit selection of events to develop books theology. For example, he analyzes the crucial moments of Genesis: the fall into sin, the promise of redemption, flood and the new covenant, the choice of Abraham as the father of the people chosen.

These events are completed by the release of chosen people from Egyptian slavery and his guidance under the authority of Moses, through the wilderness. These stories culminate with the Law on Mount Sinai. In Leviticus are underlined the sacrifices that lead people to purification and holiness. During their wilderness wanderings Jews were raises of the holiness of God which don't let sin among the community. Fr Semen reminds here in analysis of Numbers the divine punishment materialized in the face of fire, earthquake of the epidemic, the snake poisonous invasion or even war. And finally, when he is referring to Deuteronomy, he reminds the essential commandment of all laws: love of God and neighbor.

Therefore, the words of the title that makes reference to Old Testament theology find

its coverage in the ideas stressed by Fr. Semen during the analysis of canonical books. Previous words may be confirmed by the record of Messianic prophecies mentioned in Pentateuch, beginning with promise Redeemer (Gn 3:15) and ending with the announcement of Prophet that resembles Moses (Dt 18:15). Chapter is completed by an isagogic analysis which aimed the composition of this collection, the author and her writing.

The last chapter of the book focuses on historical books. In addition to the introduction which describes the book, the author tried to emphasize the spiritual and theological texts. By presenting the leaders of the people chosen who stayed loyal to God and went towards his commandments, Fr. Semen stressed typological purposes. From Joshua and to Ezra and Nehemiah foreshadowing the Savior as king and spiritual guide was developed in an obvious way. I do not think it is appropriate to mention here King David whose relationship was born Christ Himself, to highlight even more this reason.

So, in analyzing this book, we can say that Fr. Semen has made an important step in biblical theology of the Old Testament. The paper was presented in a well-developed manner the first steps that young man need to cover that wants to be acquainted with the holy text of the Old Law. Thanks to the clarity of the ideas, events and indications theological meaning of the holy text, this book can be recommended to the readers.

O EXEGEZĂ BIBLICĂ MODERNĂ ÎN DUHUL PĂRINȚILOR

Paula BUD

Yves-Marie Blanchard et Guillaume Bady (eds.), *De commencement en commencement. Le renouveau patristique dans la theologie contemporaine* (Paris: Bayard, 2007), 365 p.

Asistăm, în zilele noastre, la un interes manifest al teologiei biblice spre o întoarcere la perspectiva hermeneutică patristică, cea capabilă să ofere principiile pentru o relectură a Sfintei Scripturi în cheie creștină. Această relectură este eliberată de o tehnicizare excesivă a exegezei biblice care sufocă mesajul revelat și nu permite, celui care se apropie cu dragoste de textul Sfintei Scripturi, să o întrupeze în propria-i existență. Dintre titlurile care propun această reîntoarcere la izvorul Tradiției patristice avem bucuria de a avea în traducere românească lucrarea părintelui profesor John Breck, *Sfânta Scriptură în Tradiția Bisericii* (Patmos, 2003), un autentic reper de preluare a paradigmei patristice interpretative și de aplicare a ei în discursul exegetic contemporan.

O tentativă care se înscrie pe aceeași linie a identificării izvoarelor interpretării biblice, de dată recentă și provenind, de această dată, din mediul apusean, este volumul *De commencement en commencement. Le renouveau patristique dans la theologie contemporaine*, realizare editorială a Institutului Catolic din Paris.

Lucrarea își propune să demonstreze că accesarea discursului patristic este esențială pentru teologia contemporană (p. 9). Ea se situează, după cum mărturisește coordonatorul (Yves-Marie Blanchard), la răscrucea a trei demersuri succesive și complementare. În primul rând, este vorba de un omagiu adus profesorilor Michel Corbin și Joseph Wolinski la momentul retragerii lor din activitate de la Institutul Catolic din Paris, în 4 februarie 2002. Ambii au acceptat, cu această ocazie, să prezinte o sinteză a propriului demers de cercetare, oferind, în acest fel, două posibile modele de teologie patristică. În al doilea rând, volumul cuprinde acta unui colocviu consacrat „efectelor reîntoarcerii la Sfinții Părinți în teologia contemporană” (5-6 februarie 2002), dintr-o dublă perspectivă: cea a exegezei biblice (Olivier Munnich, Monique Alexandre, Yves-Marie Blanchard) și cea a teologiei dogmatice (Bernard Sesboue, Vincent Holzer, Dominique Cerbelaud), insistându-se pe avantajele unui dialog interdisciplinar (Yves-Marie Blanchard, Allain Le Boulluec, Pierre Maraval, Bernard Pouderon, Guillaume Bady, Jacques-Noel Peres). În sfârșit, toate aceste materiale au fost parcurse

de unii dintre profesorii Institutului, cu scopul de a evidenția complementaritatea eforturilor și rodnicia abordărilor interdisciplinare. Toate aceste resurse valoroase au fost sistematizate în forma unei prezentări coerente, în stilul specific manualelor, gândit pentru un spectru cât mai larg de cititori. Volumul, deosebit de consistent, numără 346 de pagini structurate în patru capitole mari, de aceea propun aici o trecere în revistă a conținutului, permițându-mi să zăbovesc asupra acelor pasaje pe care, în chip subiectiv, le identific drept esențiale în iconomia lucrării.

Lucrarea debutează cu un capitol intitulat *Deux itineraires dans le champ des etudes patristiques*. Joseph Wolinski et Michel Corbin (pp. 13-119). Profesorul Wolinski își începe discursul cu o mărturisire din care, afirmă el, decurg cele trei componente ale expozeului său: „Je voudrais lire Ies Peres (...) à partir de Celui qui, par-delà toute paroles humaine, est le fondement vivant de la foi, le Christ lui-meme, plus précisément le Christ envisage comme «la Nouveauté en personne» faisant irruption dans notre monde en tant que Christ ressuscite, toujours vivant dans son Eglise” (p. 19). Partea întâi prezintă ca punct de plecare al demersului kerygma pascală, autorul considerând că Sf. Apostol Pavel o definește în chip fericit: „Că de vei mărturisi cu gura ta că Iisus este Domnul și vei crede în inima ta că Dumnezeu L-a înviat pe El din morți, te vei mântui” (Rom 10:9). Partea a doua și a treia au ca obiectiv demonstrarea faptului că cele două moduri de înțelegere a paradoxului creștin (înțeles ca ceea ce, în credința creștină, se opune opiniei comune, p. 27), ante și post-niceean, nu sunt numai diferite, ci și complementare.

În perioada ante-niceeană, autorul se concentrează asupra câtorva teme pe care le consideră fundamentale: trecerea de la tainic la revelat (*Du cache au revelé: Justin et le recours aux theophanies*, pp. 29-32), nașterea din veci a Fiului în raport cu opera de creație (*Naissance du Fils et creation du monde*, pp. 32-34), persoana Tatălui (*Origene: un Dieu toujours Pere et toujours tout-puissant*, pp. 34-36), subordinaționismul (*Le Pere est plus grand que le Fils: le subordinationisme d'Origene*, pp. 36-39), și, în sfârșit, ridicarea Templului „în trei zile” (In. 2, 19) (*Le relevement du Temple et les trois resurrections*, pp. 39-41). Din analiza extinsă pe care o face asupra perioadei postniceene (*Le paradoxe chretien apres Nicee*, pp. 41-65), aş remarcă în chip deosebit partea dedicată Sfântului Maxim Mărturisitorul (*Le paradoxe du «Mystere du Christ» apres Nicee: Maxime le Confesseur*, pp. 52-56), în care autorul urmărește evoluția paradoxului creștin referitor la chemarea omului de a intra „dans le mouvement sans mouvement de la vie intra-trinitaire” (p. 52). Profesorul Wolinski concludă afirmând că Sfinții Părinți sunt cei care pot înlesni veacului acestuia redescoperirea nădejdi și a puterii de transfigurare

ce izvorăște din Însăși persoana Mântuitorului Hristos cel înviat (p. 65).

Cel de-al doilea excurs, semnat de profesorul Michel Corbin, propune o lectură a tezaurului patristic care să aibă neîncetat înaintea ochilor Cuvântul unic și personal pe care îl consemnează, în diverse moduri, cărțile Sfintei Scripturi (p. 67). În acest context, el propune două exerciții exegetice pentru apelează preponderent, în chip exemplificativ, la literatura patristică: „Au principe Dieu fit le ciel et la terre” (Fc 1:1) (pp. 78-95) și „Au principe etait le Verbe” (In 1:1) (pp. 95-109). Studiul se încheie cu ideea că toate cărțile care compun Sfânta Scriptură nu fac altceva decât să împlinească cu bucurie o misiune similară cu cea a Sfântului Ioan Botezătorul, aceea de a-L arăta lumii întregi pe Dumnezeu, Cel „mai mare decât inima noastră” (1 In 3:20). Relectura care încheie acest prim capitol mărturisește faptul că încrederea excesivă în rațiune și rationalitate, atât de mult promovată în ultimele secole, devine falimentară în timpul nostru, în timp ce atașamentul față de Sfinții Părinți se amplifică invers proporțional (p. 119).

Capitolele II și III sunt rezervate, cum spuneam mai devreme, lucrărilor unui colocviu dedicat studierii efectelor reîntoarcerii la moștenirea patristică în exegeza biblică (pp. 121-209) și în teologia dogmatică (pp. 211-262). În exegeza biblică, preocupările teologilor vizează studiile pe Septuaginta și modul în care promovarea studiilor patristice a făcut ca interesul pentru această variantă a Sfintei Scripturi să crească considerabil în ultimele decenii (Olivier Munnich, *Les etudes sur la Septante et le renouveau patristique*, pp. 123-140), raportul studiilor filoniene cu revenirea la tradiția Părinților (Monique Alexandre, *Les etudes phllonlennes etle renouveau patrlstique*, pp. 141-179), în sfârșit, impactul moștenirii patristice asupra exegezei contemporane (Yves-Marie Blanchard, *Le renouveau patrlstique et l'exegese contemporaine*, pp. 181-202). Relectura care încheie capitolul (Beatrice Caseau, *La patristique dans le champ des etudes bibliques*, pp. 203-209) subliniază faptul că întoarcerea la discursul exegetic patristic este răspunzătoare, în parte, de revigorarea studiilor biblice pe care o putem observa în ultimele decenii (p. 203), importanța pe care o acordă cercetătorii Septuagintei în istoria formării Scripturii creștine (pp. 204-205), modul în care reflexia aprofundată asupra exegezei patristice relevă conexiunea profundă cu teologia dogmatică (pp. 205-206) și, în sfârșit, legătura intimă dintre Sfânta Scriptură și viața sacramentală a Bisericii, în afara căreia Sfinții Părinți nu puteau concepe actul hermeneutic (pp. 206-209).

În spațiul teologiei dogmatice (*Les effets du renouveau patristique en theologie dogmatique*, pp. 211-262), studiile analizează relația dintre gândirea dogmatică modernă și readucerea în scenă a discursului patristic (Bernard Sesboue, *Le renouveau*

patristique etia dogmatique au siecle, pp. 213-227), încearcă să identifice izvoarele patristice ale discursului hristologic contemporan (Vincent Holzer, *Les traites contemporains de christologie et leurs sources patristiques*, pp. 229-245), extind tradiția patristică în zona siriacă și analizează influența Părinților sirieni asupra hristologiei (Dominique Cerbelaud, *Etudes syriaques et christologie*, pp. 247-257), relectura finală identificând aportul acestor autori la promovarea studiilor patristice (Frangois Cassingena, *Quelques idées saillantes des trois contributions de Bernard Sesboue, Vincent Holzer et Dominique Cerbelaud*, pp. 259-262).

Ultimul capitol al volumului prezintă avantajele unui dialog interdisciplinar, încercând, mai întâi, să clarifice raportul teologului biblist cu studiile patristice (Yves-Marie Blanchard, *La place du theologien bibliste dans le domaine des etudes patristiques*, pp. 265-273). Zăbovesc puțin asupra acestei lucrări pentru a arăta că, în domeniul studiilor patristice, autorul distinge patru abordări diferite: una istorică, care consideră textele patristice drept martori privilegiați ai creștinismului primar, în mijlocul problemelor politice, sociale și culturale ale Antichității târzii (p. 267), una literară care înțelege scrierile Părinților ca opere majore ale literaturii acelei perioade (p. 268), una filosofică care vizează preponderent efortul speculativ al tradiției occidentale, începând cu Augustin (p. 268) și una teologică, în care textele constituie o parte importantă a tradiției mărturisitoare (p. 268).

Alături de acest studiu sunt introduse alte câteva care observă efectele revenirii la tradiția patristică în sensul că studierea operei lor îi reasează în pluralitatea culturală a epocii, cantonându-i în sectoare limitate ale creștinismului primar, dar, în același timp, ei redevin, din punct de vedere teologic, un corpus unitar de scrieri (Allain Le Boulluec, *L'un des effets du renouveau: le decentrement des Peres*, pp. 275-281). Este analizat modul în care începuturile creștinismului fac obiectul studiilor universitare contemporane (Pierre Maraval, *De l'histoire du christianisme à l'universite*, pp. 283-288), abordarea filologică a chestiunilor teologice (Bernard Pouderon, *Une approche specifique des problemes theofogiques: celle du philologue*, pp. 289-296), paternitatea Sfinților Părinți față de teologia protestantă (Jacques-Noel Peres, *Les Peres de l'Eglise sont-ils aussi les Peres des protestants?*, pp. 297-303), și, în final, o lucrare care prezintă reînnoirea discursului teologic prin întoarcerea la sursele patristice, cu identificarea originii și finalității acestui demers, precum și un îndrumar bibliografic al acestui areal de cercetare (Guillaume Bady, *Le renouveau patristique, son commencement et sa finalite. Aperçu bibliographique*, pp. 305-326).

Nădăjduiesc ca aceste repere să suscite interesul pentru lecturarea volumului, ea se poate dovedi utilă în contextul în care, într-adevăr, avem de-a face cu o schimbare de perspectivă asupra interpretării biblice în ansamblul ei. Radiografia cercetării biblice actuale pe care ne-o oferă lucrarea este una îmbucurătoare, fiind, printre altele, mărturia faptului că teologia biblică contemporană simte tot mai acut nevoia exercitării actului hermeneutic în mediul eclezial. Numai aici, lectura Scripturii devine cale înspre întruparea Cuvântului, Cel care și-a îndemnat odinioară ucenicii, și, prin ei, pe noi toți: „Cercetați Scripturile, că socotiți că în ele aveți viață veșnică. Și acelea sunt care mărturisesc despre Mine” (In 5:39).

RETORICA BIBLICĂ. PRINCIPII, APLICAȚII ȘI PERSPECTIVE

Mihai NAGY

Roland Meynet, *Traite de rethorique biblique* (Paris: Lethilleux, 2007), 717 p.

„Retorica” reprezintă un termen atribuit unui concept complex, care este folosit cu mai multe sensuri interdependente, nu întotdeauna delimitate cu precizie. Studiul retoricii în general și a celei biblice a cărților vechi-testamentare, în special, este esențial pentru decriptarea, înțelegerea și compunerea discursivă, într-o era care, depășind stadiul informațional, tinde în pragul mileniului trei, spre instituirea unei ere a comunicării. Revenirea acestei discipline, în secolul XX, se datorează în cea mai mare parte caracterului său transdisciplinar și noii perspective asupra recuperării tradiției domeniului într-o structură coerentă a interacțiunii în comunicare. De-a lungul secolelor retorica a cunoscut diferite modificări. Transformarea retoricii a fost urmarea modificării metodelor de transmitere a informațiilor: de la forma orală la forma scrisă. Scrierea duce și la o aprofundare a cunoștințelor, devenind o știință dedicată elitei.

Noua retorică devine teoria comunicării persuasive, argumentarea devenind o componentă esențială a activității discursive, în general, și a celei politice, publicitare, în particular. Se pune, astfel, problema transformării retoricii într-o matrice a științelor umanistice. Funcția persuasivă nu caracterizează în totalitate retorica. Discursul argumentativ are și o funcție hermeneutică, respectiv, de modelare a situației și de interpretare a retoricii adversarului. Inventarea noilor soluții la problemele vechi și rezolvarea celor noi ne face să realizăm că această știință este caracterizată de o funcție intrinsecă, respectiv, funcția euristică. Prin corelarea acestor două funcții, euristica și hermeneutica, deducem funcția pedagogică, funcție care nu necesită explicații, fiind de la sine înțeleasă.

Anul 1958 este anul renașterii interesului teoretic pentru retorică: retorica rediviva. În Belgia apare lucrarea lui C. Perelman și L. O. Tyteca, „La nouvelle rhetorique. Trait d argumentation”, iar în SUA apare lucrarea lui Stephen Toulmin, „The uses of arguments”. Dar scrierile despre retorică au continuat și în anii ‘80, ‘90. Nume ca J de Waard, Pietro Bovati, Paul Beaucamp sau Georges Mounin, dar și altele, sunt legate de unele studii aprofundate pe teme de retorică biblică, sau analiză retorică asupra unor cărți sau pasaje ale Scripturii.

Un astfel de studiu asupra temei retoricii, este și lucrarea profesorului Roland Meynet, fost student al lui Paul Beauchamp și George Mounin. Din 1992, este profesor de teologie biblică la Universitatea Gregoriană din Roma, după ce petrecuse mai bine de douăzeci de ani în Orient, la Universitatea Sfântul Iosif din Beirut și la Institutul biblic din Ierusalim. A predat la Centre Sevres din Paris și la Universitatea din Turin. Coordonează de asemeni colecțiile „Rhetorique semitique”, „Retorica biblica” și „Epifania della Parola”. În 2006, pentru valoroasa sa lucrare „L’Evangile de Luc”, a primit marele premiu pentru Filosofie al Academiei franceze.

Deși este pentru prima dată când se publică o carte cu un asemenea titlu, totuși nu este pentru prima dată când se vorbește despre acest subiect. Așadar, este imperios necesar un prim capitol în care să fie tratată Istoria sau evoluția conceptului de retorică de-a lungul timpului. Sunt amintiți precursorii, fondatorii și de asemeni toți cei care au participat la reafirmarea și expansiunea retoricii în secolul XX. Este foarte interesantă abordarea acestora întrucât fiecare membru al perioadelor amintite este prezentat cu modul propriu de abordare al elementelor retorice. Unul dintre precursorii retoricii, J.A. Bengel, este considerat descoperitorul construcțiilor concentrice, cu toate că se practica acest tip de structurare în tradiția iudaică, un exemplu fiind Psalmul 67 pe care Cabala îl reprezintă sub forma minorei (p. 46), volumul introducând o serie de reprezentări grafice ale acestor construcții speciale ale textelor scripturistice (pp. 47-48).

Lucrarea de față este structurată în trei părți extinse, cuprinzând studii și comentarii care pun în aplicare o minuțioasă analiză retorică. Fiecare dintre aceste părți este rezervată unei teme foarte extinse din domeniul retoricii, astfel: prima parte este dedicată Compoziției, a doua Contextului, iar a treia Interpretării, toate sunt alcătuite din patru capitole. Vom încerca, în cele ce urmează să realizăm o prezentare a conținutului cărții, urmărind modul în care ea a fost concepută de către autor și introducând date sumare despre fiecare capitol în parte, pentru a oferi cititorilor posibilitatea de a vedea în ce măsură lucrarea răspunde problemelor punctuale specifice retoricii biblice.

Prima parte intitulată simplu Compoziție, are prioritate datorită convingerii autorului că ea este tot atât de de importantă cât este fundația pentru o clădire. Cele patru capitole urmează o ordine firească, tratând diverse aspecte ale compoziției textelor. Primul capitol (*Les rapports entre elements linguistiques*, pp. 113-130) cuprinde un invent

inventar, care se dorește a fi cât mai complet, al mijloacelor lingvistice utilizate de autori în construirea textelor. Justificarea acestui inventar este aceea că, pentru o bună înțelegere a compoziției textelor, trebuie depășit nivelul strict al vocabularului, fiindcă, chiar dacă și acesta este foarte important, totuși, el nu cuprinde totalitatea fenomenelor lingvistice. Următorul capitol (*Les niveaux de composition*, pp. 131-215) își propune să identifice diferitele niveluri ale organizării textuale, de la unitatea unui mic segment și până la ansamblul cărții, al textului. Este cel mai important în iconomia acestei prime părți, și cel mai extins, mai ales datorită faptului că cercetătorii nu au acordat o atenție deosebită acestui subiect până acum, deși, în opinia autorului, este unul esențial. Capitolul al treilea (*Les figures de composition*, pp. 217-281) este consacrat figurilor compoziționale precum paralelisme sau compozițiile concentrice. În sfârșit, ultimul capitol (*La reécriture*, pp. 293-344) este unul inedit, propunând modele de rescriere, prin aceasta înțelegându-se tehnici de a dispune textele supuse analizei în așa fel încât compoziția să poată fi limpede înțeleasă.

O a doua parte este dedicată Contextului, și aceasta are la bază nemulțumirea autorului legată de faptul că vocabularele de exegeză biblică nu introduc, între noțiunile definite, și contextul. Ceea ce înseamnă că realizatorii lor exclud contextul din domeniul exegezei, fapt cu care R. Meynet nu poate fi de acord, considerând că este imperioasă cunoașterea realităților care realizează contextul cultural căruia aparține un anumit text. Astfel, pentru înțelegerea unui text este indispensabilă cunoașterea geografiei, arheologiei, istoriei, instituțiilor lui Israel (p. 346). Dar tratatul nu se ocupă de acest tip de context, ci strict de contextul textual, acordând prioritate intratextului, căruia îi dedică primul capitol (*L'intratexte*, pp. 349-373). Intratextul este format din textele cu care un anumit text formează un ansamblu structurat. Apoi, intertextul sau contextul paradigmatic este constituit din relația pe care un anumit text o are cu diferite texte, dar o relație care nu se bazează pe aspecte compoziționale (*L'intertexte*, pp. 375-415). Capitolul al treilea analizează un caz particular de intratext, și anume cel al construcțiilor concentrice, încercând să identifice centrul acestui tip de compoziție, care poate fi constituit dintr-o întrebare, un citat, un proverb sau o parabolă (*Le centre des compositions...*).

Interpretarea se bucură de multă atenție, având dedicată cea de-a treia parte a tratatului. Plasarea ei la finalul cărții este întemeiată, având în vedere faptul că munca exegetică nu are altă finalitate decât interpretarea. Primul pas în procesul interpretativ este stabilirea textului și a traducerii sale, cunoașterea legilor retoricii biblice putând oferi

noi criterii pentru critica textuală, de aceea problema edițiilor biblice și a traducerilor constituie conținutul primului capitol (*Edition et traduction*, pp. 509-547). Al doilea capitol este consacrat contribuției pe care o poate aduce înțelegerea compoziției textelor în procesul interpretativ (*Composition et interpretation*, pp. 549-590). O altă problemă studiată este aceea a influenței pe care contextul biblic o exercită asupra interpretării (*Intertext et interpretation*, pp. 591-622). Ultimul capitol al părții a treia (*Le don de Interpretation*, pp. 623-636) reprezintă fără îndoială punctul decisiv în ceea ce privește interpretarea textului biblic, întrucât este vorba despre experiența pe care exegeții trebuie să o recunoască. Dacă primul capitol al acestui tratat a fost dedicat istoriei descoperirii retoricii biblice este logic ca ultimul capitol să indice câteva piste pentru viitoarele abordări a retoricii, deși acest ultim capitol este mult mai scurt decât primul (*Perspectives*, pp. 637-654).

Această carte, este rodul unei munci asidue desfășurate pe parcursul a treizeci de ani. De ce este intitulată „Tratat”? Pentru că, după cum însuși autorul arată, deși este un termen pretențios, totuși un altul s-ar putea să fie mult prea modest. Este pentru prima dată când sunt expuse principiile de retorică biblică, sistematic și aprofundat. Roland Meynet, arată că acest lucru este esențial pentru a înțelege cum sunt compuse scrierile biblice, atât în structura lor, cât și în relațiile inter (sau intra) textuale, din aceste structuri. Acest tratat, se bazează pe o pedagogie prin exemplu, care va permite mai întâi de toate să se facă distincție între nivelele de organizare a textelor, apoi permite cunoașterea figurilor de compoziție și însușirea regulilor de rescriere. Toate cele expuse până aici recomandă această carte ca fiind una foarte utilă atât celor care vor să traducă cât și celor care interpretează Scriptura căci cei „neștiutori și neîntăriți le răstălmăcesc, ca și pe celelalte Scripturi, spre a lor pierzare” (2 Pt 3:16).

JEWISH TRADITION

Paula Bud,
Rabbi Hillel și interpretarea Sfintei Scripturi

Stelian Pașca-Tușa,
Instituția familiei

RABBI HILLEL ȘI INTERPRETAREA SFINTEI SCRIPTURI

Paula BUD

„În memoria posterității, Hillel este mai mult decât un înțelept. El reprezintă știința îngemănată cu smerenia, justiția îngemănată cu iubirea creaturilor; religia inimii, tot atât cât a rațiunii, într-un cuvânt un adevărat model de umanitate.”

Mireille Hadas-Lebel

- **Numele:** Hillel cel Bătrân sau Babilonianul
- **Locul activității:** Babilon și Ierusalim
- **Timpul activității:** 70 î. Hr. – 10 d. Hr.

Rabbi Hillel a fost lider al fariseilor sub domnia lui Irod, cel mai important învățat al perioadei celui de-al Doilea Templu (din 517 î. Hr.), și fondatorul școlii Hillel pentru Tanaim (înțelepți ai Mishnei). Discipolii și adepții gândirii sale au fost numiți, timp de secole, „școala lui Hillel” (Bet Hillel), în opoziție cu discipolii lui Șamai (Bet Șamai), succesorul său la conducerea Sanhedrinului.

Schiță biografică

Conform tradiției, Hillel a fost descendent al tribului lui Veniamin, pe partea tatălui, și al familiei lui David pe partea mamei. Născut în Babilon, și-a dedicat întreaga viață studierii Torei, plecând la Ierusalim cu intenția de a se perfecționa în această adevărată știință. Primii săi învățători au fost Șemaia și Abtalion, doi învățați ai Torei renumiți în Ierusalim, după moartea cărora, Hillel, demonstrându-și înțelepciunea și buna cunoaștere a Legii, a fost ales în fruntea Sanhedrinului, cu titlul de „nași”, prinț. Sub regimul lui Irod, Hillel a păstrat o atitudine prudentă, criticând totuși luxul exagerat în care trăiau unele familii bogate și puternice din Ierusalim.

Înțelepciunea lui Hillel

Regula de aur care a stat la baza întregii sale gândiri și activități și pe care a făcut-o cunoscută tuturor era aceasta: „Ce ție nu-ți place, altuia nu-i face. Iată toată Tora; restul nu-i decât o ilustrare a acestui principiu. Acum, du-te și învață!” (*Șabat* 31a).

Hillel considera iubirea aproapelui ca stând la baza întregii învățături iudaice (Lv 19:18), dar este de la sine înțeles că iubirea aproapelui avea ca izvor iubirea lui Dumnezeu. Din faptul că omul a fost creat după chipul și asemănarea lui Dumnezeu, Hillel deduce că omul are datoria de a-și îngriji trupul (*Levitic Raba* 34). Într-un alt context, Hillel își numește sufletul „musafir”, trecător pe pământ, față de care trebuie să manifeste grija cuvenită. El acorda o importanță deosebită comunității umane, fiecare trebuind să se perceapă ca parte a unui întreg, și nicidecum ca existență de sine.

Din înțelepciunea sa reținem următoarele:

- Fii un discipol al lui Aaron, iubitor și căutător de pace, iubindu-ți aproapele și îndemnându-l să studieze Tora (*Avot* 1,12).
- Dacă mie nu-mi pasă de mine, cui are să-i pese? Dar dacă nu-mi pasă decât de mine, ce mai sunt și eu? (*Avot* 1,14)
- Nu te rupe de comunitate; nu te încrede în tine până în ziua morții; nu-l judeca pe tovarășul tău până când nu ești în situația lui; și nu spune: „Voi învăța când voi avea vreme”, ca nu cumva să nu ai niciodată vreme de învățat (*Avot* 2,4)
- Smerenia mea este slava mea; slava mea este smerenia mea (*Levitic Raba* 1,5 – la Lv 1:1; *Eruvin* 13b, *Sanhedrin* 17b)
- Pașii mă conduc către locul iubit de inima mea. Dacă tu vii la mine, eu voi veni la tine, iar dacă tu nu vii la mine, eu nu voi veni la ținem așa cum s-a spus (Ieș 20:21): „Pretutindeni unde voi face să fie menționat numele meu, eu voi veni către tine și te voi binecuvânta” (*Tosefta Sukka* 4,3; *Sukka* 53b)
- Nu spune ceva care să nu poată fi înțeles, căci acesta va sfârși prin a fi înțeles (*Avot* 2,5).
- Atunci când aduni, risipești, atunci când risipești, aduni (*Tosefta Berahot* 6,24; *Berahot* 9,5; *Berahot* 63a).
- Cel ce nu sporește scade (*Avot* 1,13).
- Fiindcă tu i-ai înecat, ai fost înecat, iar cei ce te-au înecat vor fi înecați (*Avot* 2,7).
- Nu-ți judeca aproapele înainte de a te afla în locul său (*Avot* 2,5).
- Fiți cu băgare de seamă față de cei ce sunt la putere, care se apropie de om numai din interes propriu, care se arată prieteni doar când le convine și nu ajută oamenii la vreme de nevoie (*Avot* 3,3).

Hillel Bătrânul avea obiceiul să plece de la cursuri neînsoțit de discipolii săi. Ei l-au întrebat într-o zi: „Rabi, unde te duci? El le-a răspuns: „Să îndeplinesc o mișva”. Ei au spus: „Ce fel de mișva îndeplinești, Hillel?” El le-a spus: „Să fac o baie la baia publică”.

Ei l-au întrebat: „Și asta e o mițva?” El le-a răspuns: „Da. Dacă statuile regilor ridicate în teatre și în circuri sunt frecate și spălate de către omul însărcinat cu aceasta și care își câștigă astfel existența – sau este chiar pus din rândul oamenilor cei mai înstăriți ai regatului – cu atât mai mult temei trebuie să acționez astfel eu care am fost creat „după chipul și asemănarea Sa”, așa cum stă scris: „Căci Dumnezeu a făcut omul după chipul și asemănarea Sa” (Fc 9:6) (Levitic Raba 34,3). Altădată ucenicii l-au întrebat: „Rabi, unde te duci?” El răspundea: „Să ofer omagii unui oaspete la mine acasă”. Ei l-au întrebat: „Ai un oaspete chiar în fiecare zi?” El a răspuns: „Sărmanul suflet, nu este el un oaspete în trup? Azi e aici, mâine pleacă” (Fc 9:6) (Levitic Raba 34,3).

Într-o zi pe când înțelepții erau reuniți în încăperea unui anume Guria la Ieriho, o voce venind din cer glăsuia: există printre noi (sau voi) un om care merită ca șekina să sălășluiască asupra lui, dar generația lui nu este demnă. Atunci toate privirile s-au îndreptat asupra lui Hillel Bătrânul (Sanhedrin 11a; Sota 48b; Tosefta Sota 13,3; Sota 9,13).

Studiul Torei

Mai presus, de orice, Hillel s-a ocupat de predarea Torei, pe care a făcut-o accesibilă tuturor, indiferent de condiția lor socială. Cerințele pe care le impunea elevilor erau, însă, foarte ridicate. Le cerea să studieze cu totală dăruire Tora ca scop în sine, fără să urmărească nimic altceva. Chiar dacă a-ți consacra toată viața studierii Torei însemna să te expui multor încercări, răsplata cerească avea să fie pe măsura eforturilor. Hillel avea convingerea pe care încerca să o transmită elevilor că învățând și numai învățând, caracterul omului și personalitatea lui religioasă se purificau, se năștea în el frica de Dumnezeu și el însuși se înălța la rangul de hasid, adică de om cu adevărat evlavios, așa cum era recunoscut Hillel însuși. Despre el se spunea că făcea orice lucru „de dragul cerului”, din dorința de a-L sluji pe Dumnezeu și a împlini voia Lui.

Interpretarea Torei

Hillel și-a impus propria metodă hermeneutică, sintetizată în șapte reguli fundamentale. Cele șapte reguli hermeneutice ale lui Hillel au existat și înaintea rabinului Hillel, însă el a fost acela care le-a așternut în scris. Acestea sunt:

Kal vahomer (neînsemnat și important)

Regula Kal vahomer presupune că ceea ce se aplică într-o situație neînsemnată,

se va aplica cu certitudine într-o situație importantă. Un argument kal vahomer este introduse de obicei prin formula „cu atât mai mult...”. Tradiția rabinică distinge două forme de kal vahomer:

- kal vahomer meforash – formă în care argumentul este explicit;
- kal vahomer saturn – aici, argumentul este subînțeles;

Exemple de kal vahomer din Vechiul Testament:

„Dacă cel drept este răsplătit pe pământ, cu cât mai mult cel nelegiuit și păcătos!” (Pilde 11:31)

„Dacă alergând cu cei ce merg pe jos, ai ostenit, cum te vei lua la întrecere cu caii?” (Ier 12:5a)

Exemple de kal vahomer din Noul Testament:

„Dacă omul primește tăierea împrejur sâmbăta, ca să nu se strice Legea lui Moise, vă mâniați pe Mine că am făcut sâmbăta un om întreg sănătos?” (In 7:23)

„Cine va fi între voi omul care va avea o oaie și, de va cădea ea sâmbăta în groapă, nu o va apuca și o va scoate?” (Mt 12:11-12)

G'zerah shavah (echivalența expresiilor)

Se face o analogie între două texte pe baza unei fraze, cuvânt sau rădăcini similare, considerându-se că cele două texte se completează reciproc din punct de vedere informativ.

„Și a dat făgăduință, zicând: Atotputernice Doamne, Dumnezeule Savaot, de vei căuta la întristarea roabei Tale și-ți vei aduce aminte de mine și de nu vei uita pe roaba Ta, ci vei da roabei Tale un copil de parte bărbătească, îl voi da ție, și nu va bea el nici vin, nici sicheră, nici brici nu se va atinge de capul lui.” (1Rg 1:11)

„Că iată ai să zămislești și al să naști un fiu; și nu se va atinge briciul de capul lui, pentru că pruncul acesta va fi chiar din pântecul mamei sale nazireu al lui Dumnezeu și va începe să izbăvească pe Israel din mâna Filistenilor.” (Jud 13:5)

Din compararea celor două texte pe baza expresiei „brici nu se va atinge de capul lui”, putem deduce că Samuel, asemenea lui Samson, a fost nazireu.

Binyan ab mikathub echad (a construi o „familie” dintr-un singur text)

O temă comună mai multor pasaje face ca o idee regăsită numai într-unul dintre aceste pasaje să poată fi aplicată tuturor. Este ceea ce realizează Sf. Ap. Pavel în Evr 9:11-12, punând în relație sângele din Ieș 24:8 și Evr 9:20 cu Ieremia 31:31-34

(toate cele trei pasaje conțin tema legământului, numai două dintre ele – Ieș 24:8 și Evr 9:20 – vorbesc despre „sângele testamentului”).

Binyab ab mishene kethubim (a construi o „familie” din două sau mai multe texte)

Presupune formularea unui principiu punându-se în relație două texte, iar principiul poate fi apoi aplicat altor texte.

„Să nu faceți nedreptate la judecată, la măsură, la cântărit și la măsurătoare. Cântarul vostru să fie drept, greutățile drepte, efa dreaptă și hinul drept. Eu sunt Domnul Dumnezeul vostru, Care v-am scos din pământul Egiptului.” (Lv 19:35-36)

Această regulă hermeneutică aplicată textului de mai sus prescrie aplicarea dreptei măsuri în toate, inclusiv în judecata aproapelei.

Binyan ab mikathub echad și *Binyab ab mishene kethubim* fac posibilă identificarea principiilor biblice și aplicarea lor în viață. Se consideră că, în acest mod, Scriptura este recontextualizată și își păstrează relevanța pentru fiecare nouă generație.

Kelal uferat (general și particular)

O regulă generală poate fi restrânsă printr-o particularizare a ei într-un alt verset, sau, invers, o regulă particulară poate deveni principiu general. Spre exemplu, în Fc 1:27 se spune că Dumnezeu l-a creat pe om, iar în 2, 7, 21 sunt introduse detalii privitoare la crearea lui Adam și a Evei. Un alt exemplu este cel al jertfelor, mai întâi se poruncește aducerea lor, apoi se arată modul în care trebuie acestea aduse.

Kayotze bo mimekom akhar (analogie cu un al treilea pasaj)

Două pasaje aparent contradictorii pot fi înțelese în lumina unui al treilea:

Lev 1:1: „Domnul i-a grăit din cortul adunării” și Ieș 25:22: „între cei doi heruvimi de deasupra chivotului legii, Mă voi descoperi ție și îți voi grăi de toate” sunt înțelese doar în lumina pasajului din Num 7:89 unde citim: „Când a intrat Moise în cortul adunării, ca să grăiască cu Domnul, a auzit un glas, care-i grăia de sus de pe chivotul legii, dintre cei doi heruvimi. Glasul acela grăia cu el.”

Davar hilmad me'anino (regula contextului)

Pentru corecta interpretare a unui pasaj, nu este suficientă analiza lui izolată, ci înțelegerea sa contextuală.

Regulile sale hermeneutice s-au răspândit și au revoluționat tradiția evreiască.

Hillel a jucat un rol hotărâtor în istoria iudaismului, atribuindu-i-se crearea iudaismului clasic: în locul cultului puterii și al statului, el a impus cultul unei comunități a erudiților – evrei cu dragoste de Dumnezeu și de semenii – oferind, el însuși, un autentic model de conduită morală, în conformitate cu legea mozaică.

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INSTITUȚIA FAMILIEI

Stelian PAȘCA-TUȘA

Introducem cu acest prim număr și o secțiune care vizează realitățile vieții omului din perspectiva culturii iudaice, apelând, pentru început, la lucrarea semnată de Menachem Hacohen, *Cartea vieții omului* (traducere din ebraică de Rodica Amel, Ed. Hasefer, București, 2005). Am extras în această primă parte elementele esențiale ale instituției familiale, componența familiei, responsabilitățile și drepturile fiecăruia dintre membrii acesteia.

Tatăl

- este capul familiei și el impune modul de viață al acesteia;
- are datoria de a-și educa fiii și de a-i conduce pe cale cea bună;
- poate să o vândă ca roabă pe fiica cea mai mică;
- are dreptul de a-și mărita fiica cu cine voiește și de a reține zestrea;
- este obligat să-i facă fiului său circumcizia, iar dacă este primul născut să îl răscumpere de la cohen;
- nu este obligat să-și hrănească fiii după ce aceștia au împlinit vârsta de 6 ani;
- genealogia fiilor se stabilește în funcție de familia tatălui.

Mama

- contribuie la formarea caracterului fiilor;
- trebuie să-și alăpteze copiii;
- este scutită de obligațiile care revin tatălui;
- își crește fiii cât sunt mici, până ei ajung la vârsta de 6 ani;
- în ce privește creșterea fetelor, dreptul mamei are întâietate față de cel al tatălui.

Fiul

este avertizat, în mod special, să nu își bată părinții și să nu-i înjure;
prin fii se perpetuează seminția tatălui;
genealogia se stabilește în funcție de tată, chiar și în cazul fiilor nelegitimi.

Fiica

- trebuie să-și respecte părinții și să îi cinstească;
- dacă își blestemă părinții este pedepsită cu moarte;
- beneficiază de dreptul de a fi întreținută de tatăl ei în mai mare măsură decât fiul;
- dacă moare tatăl, fiica trece la mamă, iar frații o vor întreține din averea tatălui; este interzis ca fiica să se expună goală.

Fratele

- fiii aceleiași mame sunt socotiți frați doar în anumite privințe;
- frații aceleiași mame sunt obligați să respecte porunca leviratului;
- fratele este scutit să depună mărturie pentru fratele său.

Sora

- îi este interzis să se afle în intimitatea celor care sunt goi.

Primul născut

- primului născut al tatălui, de gen masculin, îi revin două părți din moștenire;
- dacă tatăl nu are fii, ci fice, această lege nu se aplică primei născute, toate ficele primind o moștenire egală.

Nepoții

- trebuie să își respecte bunicul ca pe tatăl lor;
- sunt la fel de importanți ca și fii; bunicul lor trebuie să îi binecuvinteze ca pe copiii lui dacă aceștia mor;
- bunicul are obligația să îi învețe pe fiii fiilor lui Tora.

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KOL NEȚER

Paula Bud, Betleemul –
casa Pâinii ce S-a pogorât din cer

Stelian Pașca-Tușa,
Arheologie biblică – repere cronologice (1717-1899)

BETLEEMUL – CASA PÂINII CE S-A POGORÂT DIN CER

Paula BUD

- **Denumire:** בֵּית-לֶחֶם (*Beit-lehem*); lit. „casa pâinii”
- **Localizare:** la aproximativ 10km SV de ierusalim, pe drumul care unește Ierusalimul de Hebron și Negev.
- **Istoric:** în secolul IV, împăratul Constantin cel Mare (306-337), a construit o biserică în jurul unui grup de peșteri unde se presupune că ar fi fost locul Nașterii Mântuitorului. Împăratul Iustinian I (527-565) a reconstruit și extins lăcașul ridicat de Constantin.

Betleemul în Sfânta Scriptură

Vechea denumire a Betleemului era Efrata (Fc 35:19). Era cunoscut ca „Betleemul Iudeii” sau „Betleem Efrata” pentru a se distinge de Betleemul din ținutul lui Zabulon (Ios 19:15).

Cartea Facerii relatează faptul că Rahila, soția patriarhului Iacov, a murit la nașterea lui Veniamin și a fost îngropată lângă Betleem (Fc 35:19).

Localitatea este cetatea regelui David (1Rg 20:6), și locul în care acesta a fost uns rege peste Israel (1Rg 16:4-13). De asemenea, la Betleem s-au întors Noemina și Rut după moartea soților lor (Rut 1:19).

Dar importanța Betleemului rezidă în special în faptul că aici este locul nașterii lui Mesia anunțat de profeți: Și tu, Betleeme Efrata, deși ești mic între miile lui Iuda, din tine va ieși Stăpânitor peste Israel, iar obârșia Lui este dintru început, din zilele veșniciei (Mih 5:1; Mt 2:6) și confirmat de evangheliști: Iar dacă S-a născut Iisus în Betleemul Iudeii, în zilele lui Irod regele, iată magii de la Răsărit au venit în Ierusalim (Mt 2:1; Lc 2:4).

Betleemul în Tradiția Bisericii

Nașterea Mântuitorului în Betleem, având în vedere că El va locui în Nazaret, este înțeleasă de Sfinții Părinți ca o mărturie în plus a împlinirii voii lui Dumnezeu anunțate odinioară prin profetul Miheia (5:1): „Tocmai faptul că Mama Sa locuia în Nazaret arată că nașterea lui Hristos în Vitleem s-a făcut potrivit rânduielii lui Dumnezeu. De

aceea n-a plecat îndată după naștere, ci a mai rămas încă patruzeci de zile, ca să dea prilej celor ce voiau să cerceteze totul cu de-amănuntul (...) Proorocul n-a spus: va locui în Vitleem, ci din tine va ieși (Mih 5:2). Deci proorocia spune că Se va naște acolo” (Sf. Ioan Gură de Aur 2007, 55-6).

Informația istorică privind locul nașterii Mântuitorului este atestată de Sfântul Iustin Martirul, în dialogul său cu iudeul Trifon: „Bethleemul este un sat din țara iudeilor, care se găsește la treizeci și cinci de stadii de Ierusalim. Aici S-a născut Iisus Hristos, așa cum puteți afla din registrele de recensământ ale lui Cyrenius, care a fost cel dintâi guvernator al vostru în Iudeea” (Sf. Iustin Martirul și Filosoful 1980, 48).

Betleemul este „cu adevărat cetate a lui David, precum au grăit Proorocii. Căci toți au vorbit despre întrupare, iar Miheia pomenește și despre casa lui David – zic adică de Vitleem – zicând...” (Sf. Teofilact al Bulgariei 2007, 87). Renumele și strălucirea îi sunt date de învrednicirea sa ca loc binecuvântat al Nașterii Fiului lui Dumnezeu, bucuria a toată lumea: „Și tu, Vitleeme, nicidecum nu ești cel mai mic între domnii lui Iuda (Mt 2:6). Proorocul arată pricina strălucirii Vitleemului, spunând că din tine va ieși. Și nimeni altcineva n-a făcut strălucit și vestit locui acela, ci numai Hristos. După ce S-a născut, vin să vadă ieslea și locul colibei oameni de la marginile lumii.” (Sf. Ioan Gură de Aur 2007, 56).

În imnografia Bisericii, Betleemul este locul în care și prin care făptura umană se întoarce în Raiul odinioară pierdut prin păcat: „Edenul, Betleemul l-a deschis; veniți să vedem! Desfătarea într-ascuns am găsit; veniți să luăm cele ale Raiului înlăuntrul peșterii; acolo s-a arătat rădăcină neudată ce iertare odrăștește, acolo s-a aflat puț nesăpat din care să bea, David, mai înainte a dorit; acolo, Fecioara născând Prunc, a potolit îndată setea lui Adam și a lui David; pentru aceea, în acest loc să venim, unde S-a născut Prunc tânăr, Dumnezeu Cel mai înainte de veci” (Roman Melodul 2007, 61). Mai mult, Betleemul este casa „pâinii vieții” (In 6:35): „Betleem se tâlcuiește casă a pâinii, iar iudeea, mărturisire. O, să se facă dar ca și noi prin mărturisire să ne facem casă a pâinii celei duhovnicești.” (Sf. Teofilact al Bulgariei 2002, 155)

La intrarea în Betleem este turnul de veghe al lacrimilor, mormântul Rahilei, al lacrimilor care te curăță pentru ca să poți intra în peștera Nașterii unde poți să-ți pleci fruntea pe steaua de argint ce marchează locul nașterii. E o stea care te trezește ca să poți auzi cuvintele: „Eu sunt pâinea care s-a pogorât din cer” (In 6:32), să te înalți în anastasikon spre a te uni cu Hristos euharistie și apoi să auzi ce-ți cântă sufletul

din cântarea îngerilor: „Slavă, întru cei de sus, lui Dumnezeu și pe pământ pace între oameni bună voire!” (Lc 2:14) Adică, să înțelegi că sufletul îți dă ghes să colinzi, să treci de calende și să ajungi în gustarea veșniciei.

Am oferit acest fragment pentru că rădăcina odrăslește întru Naștere.

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ARHEOLOGIE BIBLICĂ – REPERE CRONOLOGICE (1717-1899)

Stelian PAȘCA-TUȘA

În rubrica Kol Nețer vom introduce și scurte prezentări ale marilor arheologi, ale școlilor de arheologie și ale celor mai importante situri. Pentru acest număr inaugural, vă propunem o prezentare cronologică rezumativă a istoriei arheologiei, de la începuturile sale și până la sfârșitul secolului XIX, extrasă din E.M. Blaiklock și R.K. Harrison (eds.). *The New International Dictionary of Biblical Archaeology*. Grand Rapids, 1982.

Arheologia biblică între 1717-1899

- 1717 Societatea anticarilor a fost înființată la Londra și acest moment poate fi privit ca începutul arheologiei. Societatea a publicat primul volum din „Archaeologia” în 1770.
- 1798 Un efect secundar al ocupării Egiptului de către Napoleon Bonaparte a fost stârnirea interesului general pentru această regiune. O echipă de savanți a însoțit armata, lucrarea „Description de l’Egypte” semnată de Vivant Deoon fiind o urmare directă a ocupării Egiptului.
- 1799 A fost descoperită Piatra din Rosseta care a înlesnit descifrarea hieroglifelor egiptene. Din ordinul lui Napoleon, piatra a fost copiată și a ajuns la British Museum ca pradă de război.
- 1805 Ulrich Jasper Seetzen a descoperit Cezareea Filipi, Ammon și Gerasa.
- 1811 Rabinul Benjamin de Tudela a identificat situl Babilonului în 1173 pe care geografi arabi îl cunoșteau deja. Alți europeni l-au menționat în sec. XVI-XVIII. În 1811, C.S. Rich primul consul britanic la Bagdad, a excavat parte din ruinele orașului și a realizat o hartă a acestuia, punând astfel început arheologiei babiloniene.
- 1812 Exploratorul elvețian Johan Ludwig Burckhardt a descoperit renumitul oraș Petra. Descoperirea exploratorului a fost descrisă într-un sonet al lui Dean Burgon drept „un oraș roșiatic-trandafiriu vechi cât jumătate de vreme”.
- 1815 Hester Stanhope a încercat alături de John Moore să scoată la iveală statuarul de la Ashkelon.
- 1817 Giovanni Battista Belzoni, în timpul celei de-a două vizite de lucrări la mormintele faraonilor, a descoperit marele templu al lui Ramses I la Abu Simbel.

- 1822 Jean François Champollion a reușit să descifreze scrierea hieroglifică de pe Piatra din Rosseta.
- 1837 Henry Creswicke Rawlinson a descifrat scrierea cunieformă a inscripției lui Darius I de pe Piatra Behistun, contribuind decisiv la fundamentarea cunoștințelor despre istoria Babilonului și a Asiriei.
- 1838 În urma descrierilor făcute de Edward Robinson și Eli Smith care vizau siturile biblice, s-a început munca în imensul șantier arheologic din Palestina.
- 1842 Paul Emile Botta, consulul francez de la Moșul, a descoperit Khorsabad-ul și palatul lui Sargon II.
- 1845 Austen Henry Layard a deschis șantierul arheologic de la Nimrud (anticul Cahal) și a descoperit palatul lui Assurbanipal, Salmanasal II, Adadnirari și a lui Esarhadon.
- 1848 F. de Saulcy a adus la lumină în Ierusalim situl numit Mormântul Regilor.
- 1849 Karl Richard Lepsius a publicat 12 volume în colecția Denkmäler aus Aegypten und Aethiopien.
- 1850 August Ferdinand Frangois Mariette a plecat în Egipt pentru a căuta manuscrisele copte. Puțin mai târziu, a întemeiat un muzeu arheologic care avea să devină Muzeul Național de la Cairo.
- 1859 Constantin Tischendorf a descoperit Codex-ul Sinaiticus.
- 1863 J. T. Wood a început săpăturile arheologice în Efes. Șase ani mai târziu, a descoperit Templul zeiței Artemis.
- 1864 Giovanni Battista De Rossi a început cercetările în catacombele romane, în anii următori a publicat trei volume intitulate Roma Sotteranea Christiana.
- 1865 Fundația Palestine Exploration Fund (P.E.F.) a început lupta de conservare a Ierusalimului antic.
- 1867 Sub egida P.E.F., Charles Warren și Charles Wilson au realizat studiile fundamentale pentru tipografia și istoriografia Ierusalimului.
- 1870 Charles Clermont-Ganneau, un orientalist, a trimis Piatra din Rosseta la Luvru și a identificat Gezer-ul.
- 1872 P.E.F. a trimis o echipă de cercetători condusă de Claude Rignier Conder și Horatio Herbert Kitchener pentru a studia vestul Palestinei.
- 1873 Cercetătorul britanic George Smith a pus cap la cap tăblițele inscripționate din biblioteca lui Assurbanipal, completând astfel părțile lipsă din Deluge (Epopeea lui Ghilgameș).

- 1877 Ernest de Sarzec, vice-consulul francez al Basrah-ului a coordonat lucrările de la Lagash. Aici a descoperit Stela victoriei sau Stela regelui Eannatum.
- 1878 Hormuzd Rassam a recuperat analele lui Assurbanipal și câteva documente care priveau campania lui Saneherib.
- 1879 Lucrând al siturile babiloniene, Hormuzd Rassam a identificat ruinile Grădinilor Suspendate din Babilon.
- 1881 Gaston Camille Charles Maspero a descoperit mai multe sarcofage la Deir el Bahari și a continuat săpăturile la templul lui Karnak.
- 1882 Edouard Naville și-a început lunga sa carieră de arheolog în Egipt.
- 1884 M. Dieulafoy a continuat munca antecesorilor săi la clădirile regale din Susa.
- 1887 O femeie a descoperit din întâmplare în ruinele orașului Akhenaton scrisorile de la Amarna.
- 1888 Conducând o echipă de arheologi americani, John P. Peters a descoperit 12.000 de tăblițe la Nippur.
- 1890 Cercetând movilele de la Teii el-Hesy, Flinders Petrie a pus baza principiilor stratigrafice.
- 1894 Arthur Evans a început lucrări de cercetare în Creta. Aici a descoperit civilizația Minoan, de o deosebită importanță în istoria filistenilor.
- 1895 Munca arheologică a lui William Mitchell Ramsay în Asia Mică a adus multe lămuriri asupra Evangheliei după Luca. În același an, Arthur Hunt și Bernard Pyne Grenfell au descoperit lângă Cairo prima pagină din logia lui Hristos.
- 1896 G. M. Legrain a început notabila sa muncă la templul Karnak.
- 1897 George Adam Smith a publicat *Historical Geography of the Holy Land*.
- 1898 M. Loret a descoperit în Valea Regilor mormântul lui Amenhotep II și al lui Thutmose III.
- 1899 Robert Koldewey a început munca sa de inventariere a tuturor săpăturilor și descoperirilor din Babilon.

Iată doar câteva repere din primele două secole de existență ale arheologiei, care, însă, dovedesc interesul mereu crescând al oamenilor de știință pentru această zonă de cercetare. Am putut observa că lucrările au fost uneori impulsionate de factori externi oricăror preocupări științifice (un exemplu este ocuparea Egiptului de către Napoleon – 1798), factori care, însă, au contribuit la dezvoltarea rapidă și sigură a acestei noi științe.

KOL YHWH

Pr. Ioan Chirilă,
Reflecții filologice – Facere 1:1

REFLECȚII FILOLOGICE – FACERE 1:1

Pr. Ioan CHIRILĂ

Voi începe suita acestor exerciții filologice cu gândul de a oferi cititorului câteva perspective cu privire la lexicul biblic ebraic și, de asemenea, din dorința de a facilita munca, posibila muncă de traducere, retraducere și diortosire a textului Sfintei Scripturi. Și așa începe prin lansarea unei atenționări: atunci când încerci să traduci textul scripturistic, nu trebuie să uiți că subiectul principal al Revelației este Dumnezeu. De aceea, nu vom marca cu accente multiple fațetele imanenței, dar nici nu vom propune, deocamdată, o formă finală de traducere, lată de ce intitulăm rubrica foileton: „Reflexii”. Vom încerca să introducem, cu fiecare nou număr al revistei, câte zece versete (dar nu și în cazul acesta, dat fiind faptul că lansăm acum doar ideea, tiparul), nu doar din dorința de a copia ideea simbolismului lui zece, ci, mai ales, din dorința de a ne păstra în structurile unui act pedagogic bine dozat.

Facerea 1:1

בְּרֵאשִׁית בָּרָא אֱלֹהִים אֶת הַשָּׁמַיִם וְאֶת הָאָרֶץ

בְּרֵאשִׁית: *roș/ aici: reșit* – „cap”, „început” (subst. comun, fem., sg.), este însoțit de prepoziția de loc **בְּ** (be) „în”, „întru” sau „dintru”. Dacă creăm conexiunea cu prologul ioaneic (In 1:1-2), ne vom gândi la sensul de „în”, „întru”; dacă punem, însă, accentul pe subiectul creator principal (în sensul de principiu), atunci vom putea spune că este consult să folosim și sensul „dintru”. Vom putea observa că Dumnezeu creator – Elohim – creează dintru început, iar în înțelegere ioaneică, începutul este Logosul: „Eu sunt Alfa și Omega, începutul și sfârșitul” (Apoc 21:6). Astfel, în Cuvântul sunt cuvintele creatoare și, prin lucrarea Dumnezeului făcător, toate vin din neființă în ființă. Foarte sugestivă, în acest sens, mi-aș permite un exercițiu ludic: cu-vânt, a creat dintru Cuvânt cu-vânt, cu Duhul și astfel ne vine în față spusa Sfântului Irineu de Lyon potrivit căreia Dumnezeu a creat toate prin cele două mâini ale Sale, prin Fiul și prin Duhul Sfânt (St. Irineu 1997, 531).

בָּרָא: *bara* – „a crea”, (vb., qal perfect, pers. a III-a, masc., sg.) – este un verb care aparține doar Dumnezeuului Creator, deoarece el este pus în legătură cu ideea creării ex nihilo. Cert este că acțiunea descrisă de acest verb se distinge de cea exprimată prin verbul „a face” (**עָשָׂה** – Fac 1:7).

אֱלֹהִים: *Elohim* – „Dumnezeu” (subst. masc., pl.) – derivat de la două rădăcini: 'alah „a speria”, „a înfricoșa” și 'ul „a fi puternic”; o formă de plural, singularul Eloah folosindu-se numai în poezie. Folosirea pluralului în limba ebraică era expresia deplinătății și totalității unei noțiuni, de exemplu, pluralul cuvintelor Urim și Tumim exprimă lumina și adevărul, dar nu oricum, ci la cea mai înaltă potență (vezi și Is 19:4). În același fel, Elohim este un plural al majestății, prin care poporul evreu îl desemna pe Dumnezeu în care se concentrează toate perfecțiunile. Interpretarea sa treimică aparține exclusiv discursului creștin (Eusebiu de Cezareea, *Praeparatio Evangelica* 1.10). Dar, deși substantivul era folosit la plural, verbul care exprima acțiunea era la singular (Negoiță 2004, 7-8).

הַשָּׁמַיִם: *hašamaim* – „cerurile”, (subst. comun, masc., pl.) – există și sensul de „rai”, aceasta pentru faptul că, în teologhisirea Vechiului Testament, cerurile sunt locul lui Dumnezeu (Ps 122:1).

הָאָרֶץ: *ha'areṣ* – „pământul”, (subst. comun, fem., sg.) – termen generic menit să exprime întreaga lume materială, dar există și cu sensul de „patrie”, pământ făgăduit de Dumnezeu, pământul făgăduinței fiind și el descris în registrul descrierii paradisiace.

Ceea ce vreau, însă, să subliniez aici care este rolul conjuncției coordonatoare **וְ** (ve) care leagă cele două substantive (**וְהַשָּׁמַיִם וְהָאָרֶץ**) unul la plural, celălalt la singular, adică dintru început a creat Dumnezeu cerurile și pământul, iar cele două sunt structuri organice ale aceleiași creații. Omul le-a separat, le-a împins spre autonomizare, oare de ce, se cuvine? Cred că ar trebui să înțelegem că poala veșmântului Lui umple, acoperă (pronie), templul-creație/ lume și că noi trebuie să le privim, să le receptăm în această unitate primordială.

Iată, așadar, un prim exemplu de exercițiu filologic-teologic reprezentativ pentru ceea ce ne propunem în această secțiune. Treptat, cu fiecare număr, vom încerca să oferim reperele esențiale pentru înțelegerea teologică minimală a unui nou fragment vechitestamentar.

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FRAGMENT
DE
MĂRTURISIRE

Pr. Ioan Chirilă,
Pergamentul inimii

PERGAMENTUL INIMII

Pr. Ioan CHIRILĂ

Am mai rămas în mijlocul grădinii pomul vieții spre care arată sabia de foc a Heruvimului. Din strălucirea ei, se revărsa peste pomul vieții un torent de foc, încât parcă el însuși ardea. Da. De atunci el arde și nu se mistuie, arde, arde... ce-o fi văzut Moise în Horeb, s-o fi mutat o ramură? A văzut ceva ce ardea și nu se mistuia, ce minunăție, și din foc se revărsa înspre el cuvântul: Moise, Moise – adică: cel izbăvit din apă, cel izbăvit de apă – desleagă încălțăminte ta căci locul pe care calci este sfânt... Cât nor de sensuri, dar de fapt nu sunt sensuri, e un singur sens: lumina, focul, apa, rugul care ardea, se curăța pentru cununa de spini?! cărbunele aprins, revărsare de Duh, sensul – Hristos, ce minunăție!

Pomul vieții crește spre cer; în el se odihneau cocorii și pelicanii, se jucau printre crengi veverițele, jos iepuri și căprioare răsuflau ușurate de arșița zilelor; dar omul? Omul privea de departe cum se stinge în zare flacăra... ce frig se făcuse, Adam și-a strâns pe sine veșmântul de piele și căuta cu privirea o scorbură a pământului ca să se ascundă de vântul pustiei ce-ți tăia răsuflarea și parcă-ți spinteca oasele... a zărit-o pe colinele Țoarului.

Din buza peșterii, pe când adormise Eva încălzind la sân dorul de Abel, privea peste zări și se întreba; de ce-mi tremură inima, de ce suspină... numai că a rămas în sine o rădăcină a pomului care crește în inima raiului și în inimă a rămas, ... și privea spre locul din care sabia îi aprindea în ochi pomul ce părea parcă de aur, dar nu, nu era de aur, nu, merele îi erau rodii cu 366 de diamante, în fiecare zi trebuie să găsești unul. Da, să-l găsești... și-am început să-mi sap puț în inima mea, săpam cu sfredelul iubirii Celui care mă îmbrăcase cu dragostea Sa. Ca să nu mă vateme frigul și Care își uitase din iudire, din aceeași iubire, o rădăcină a pomului în inima mea... pe obraz i s-a prelins o lacrimă și-n creasta ei a văzut strălucind pomul vieții. De atunci, când dă cu sfredelul rugii lui Iisus, vede în lacrimă copacul și ce căldură, îi vine să-și pună jos veșmântul de piele și să-și lase oasele să fugă după Duh ca să-nvie.

Voi căuta rădăcina și acolo va fi izvorul apei vieții, da, acolo este, în puțul inimii. Și-a plecat capul pe umărul de stâncă a peșterii și-a ațipit, dar de fapt s-a urcat, căci era o scară ce trecea peste buza cerului gătit să-l sărute, urca și, totuși, în fața sa vedea rădăcinile ce sfredeau pământul spre inima lui, trebuie să-mi găsesc rădăcinile... soarele l-a trezit și

se juca, zglobiu, peste chipul Evei, l-a sărutat în taină, pe Soare, și mai târziu i s-a născut
ca soarele Set.

Ajun de Crăciun, 2008