

Between East and West. Contributions to Old Testament Exegesis

Summary

This thesis summarizes my main professional achievements and emphasizes the relevance and originality of my scientific contribution to biblical research.

Since 1989, there has been a salutary preoccupation, among Orthodox theologians, for identifying an orthodox profile of biblical exegesis. On the other hand, the impulses coming from the West, referring primarily to the results of the historical-critical research, cannot be ignored. An isolation of Orthodox theologians from the themes of Western biblical theology would be unproductive in the present global context, at least from the perspective of the relations of the Orthodox Church with the heterodox world.

My scientific and professional activity has been marked by the concern for increasing the openness of Romanian biblical theology to dialogue. Therefore, the volumes and studies I have published so far were meant to be bridges between East and the West. I consider that Romanian scholars can relate to the main achievements of Western biblical theology in articulating their own theology. Similarly, some of the Orthodox theology resources have been recognized by the West - for example, the importance it gives to the patristic and liturgical reception of biblical texts. In my view, the extent to which other resources have been acknowledged is yet too limited. This includes the integrative understanding, characteristic of the Orthodox tradition: the interpretation of Scripture is part of the Christian ethos, celebrated in the ritual of the Church and lived in private life, family and society.

My doctoral thesis (Prophet Elijah and the Drought Narrative. An Exegetical and Hermeneutical Study on 1Kgs 17,1-18,46) may be considered an outline of the main directions I have exploited in later research. The synchronic, diachronic and patristic exegesis, as well as hermeneutical discussion - the four major themes of the thesis - have been deepened in the studies that I have published in scientific journals and volumes, in Romania and abroad.

Prior to the publication of my doctoral thesis, the Romanian theological literature on the prophet Elijah was limited to sermons and texts aiming at popularization. In the studies of Elijah, I approached aspects related to literary history and the structural analysis of the biblical text. From the perspective of religious history, I analyzed the extent to which the traditions about Elijah reflect the categories used in the research of Israelite religion (polytheism,

monotheism, exclusive monolatry). Several studies analyze the reception of Elijah's figure in the writings of the Church fathers.

The hermeneutical question is a matter of debate among the Orthodox theologians in the field of biblical studies. In this context, I have published studies on the advantages and limitations of different approaches/exegetical methods. At the same time, the analysis of the sources used in Romanian biblical theology is, in my view, both necessary and enlightening for Orthodox theology. On this account, I have focused on whether modern Orthodox biblical theology has developed either from its own exegetical tradition or has used heterodox resources, and the actual implications thereof.

My research on biblical narratives has been carried out mainly on the prophetic narratives in the historical books. In practice, I have used both the narrative and the historical approach to texts.

It has been more than 70 years since Martin Noth formulated the theory of the *Deuteronomistic History* (DtrH). The theory has become, with some important adjustments (Cross; Smend, Vejiola, Dietrich), one of the reference theories of biblical science. Before 1989, the DtrH hypothesis was almost unknown to Romanian theologians. Some of the papers I have published are a contribution directed at covering this omission. I have investigated primarily the pre-Deuteronomistic sources and traditions and the way of their reception in DtrH.

Since the beginning of the Church, the texts of the Holy Scriptures have been used in worship. The ritual and hymnography of the Church are examples of a type of biblical text interpretation that I called "liturgical exegesis" in my research. In my opinion, the method of this approach should be diachronic. In order to establish why the Church has taken some biblical passages into its various rituals, it is necessary to explore biblical texts first in their historical context. In this way, it is possible to distinguish to what extent the understanding of the biblical text has acquired new dimensions in the Church.

Biblical exegesis is subject to the rigors generally imposed on any field of science. Reduced addressability and arid discourse are inherent and inevitable aspects of academic and scientific theology. On the other hand, the biblical scholar has to make a compromise, between academic rigor and Christian identity, responding to the needs of the Church, "converting" the results of scientific exegesis into accessible language, especially when the problems and challenges of modern society require it.

To a significant extent, my publications have a component on the reception of biblical texts. Orthodox theologians have always placed important emphasis on the reception of biblical

texts in the Patristic Period (1st-8th century), considering it as a paradigm for modern interpretation of the Holy Scripture. Personally, I considered it necessary to extend the reference period, including, as moments in the reception history of Old Testament texts, the New Testament, the writings of early Judaism - even the Old Testament. Nowadays, the phenomenon of interpreting earlier texts by later books of the Bible ("Scriptprophetie", "rewritten Bible", etc.) is a common topic among scholars. It can be argued that the Old Testament is the fruit of the reception of ancient traditions and writings from Israel.

My publications are, to a significant extent, the published form of presentations I presented at various scientific meetings. The publishing activity was the basis for my professional recognition and acceptance in associations of biblical scholars.

As regards my teaching activity, I shall continue to focus primarily on the practice of enabling students to work individually and methodically with biblical texts. This training will facilitate their own understanding and will be useful to them in either future research or professional activities.

I intend to further pursue the main research directions addressed so far, while also including new, forward-looking directions for biblical theology. Among the themes of interest, I shall include the canon and the anaginoskomena books of the Old Testament. I also find of great importance the investigation of a type of problematic, Judeophobe reception of the Old Testament and of the people of Israel in the Orthodox Church, in the first half of the 20th century. Extremism, whether political or religious, is dangerous, and its roots and antecedents must be understood, so as not to be repeated. The topic of immigration is more current than ever in Europe. I intend to address the theme of aliens - which is closely related to that of identity - especially in Old Testament narratives.