

PHD STUDENTS RESEARCH ON THE OLD TESTAMENT (I)

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și rabinică – repere și direcții de cercetare, vol. 1,*
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Edited by Ioan Chirilă and Bogdan Șoptorean, the volume is an outstanding academic work that brings together PhD students' perspectives in Orthodox theology on profound and sometimes controversial topics in biblical exegesis. Focusing on how the Jewish and Patristic traditions interpret the sacred texts, this volume plays a crucial role in fostering an interreligious and interdisciplinary dialog that is not just academic but also essential for contemporary theological and cultural understanding, keeping the audience connected and informed.

The preface, written by Rev. Professor Ioan Chirilă, establishes a solid philosophical basis, discussing the spiritual unity gained through the knowledge of divine revelation reflected in the Scriptures. Rev. Chirilă emphasizes the perennial relevance of sacred texts and the need for their continuous reinterpretation to face the challenges of postmodernity. He suggests that this approach should not be merely an academic examination but a spiritual and cultural integration process that can renew today's religious and intellectual communities. This conceptual framework is vital to the structure and direction of the entire volume, orienting the reader from present-day disjunctions to the unifying potential of biblical spirituality.

The first chapter, written by Alexandru Ciucurescu, discusses a novel interpretation of the Patriarch Jacob, seen symbolically as a אֱלֹהִים ('Ēl – "god" or "God") in specific midrashic interpretations. This analysis explores in depth the complexity of ancient conceptions of divinity and provides an illuminating context for later theological developments in Judaism. By providing evidence of the diversity of monotheistic beliefs of the time, the study contributes to a better understanding of how these conceptions influenced not only Jewish thought but also the early structure of Christianity.

Continuing in the same vein, Marius Tanase contributes an in-depth comparative study of the belief in the resurrection according to the Talmud and the Targums, shedding light on rabbinic perspectives on the afterlife in contrast to those in the New Testament texts. This exploration is indispensable for anyone studying eschatology, providing a rich understanding of how different spiritual and cultural trajectories have worked together or contrasted over the centuries.

In his study on the resurrection of Christ as the typos of our resurrection, Iancu Buda brings a distinct Christian dimension by analyzing Psalm 30. He combines a scriptural approach with a reflection on the symbolic meanings of the resurrection, interpreting them both as fundamental historical events and as ongoing spiritual processes of inner restoration. This dual perception, emphasizing personal and communal transformation, highlights the deep theological roots of the Christian tradition that continue to influence contemporary faith.

Bogdan Negrea addresses the concept of the “School of the Wilderness,” describing spiritual and ascetic experiences as essential stages in knowing and drawing closer to God. Through interrogations of the reclusive life and ascetic disciplines, the author highlights how these practices have realized resilient spiritual and moral structures in theological history and how they can still inspire the spiritual lives of modern individuals. The idea that asceticism is not merely a relic of the past but a path of contemporary spiritual development is a key element in understanding the enduring relevance of ancient practices.

Ioan-Daniel Manolache examines an ancient marriage custom, levirate marriage, in the light of the legal traditions of antiquity, offering a historical and critical perspective that enriches our understanding of this complex phenomenon. He analyzes the cultural context in which this practice was accepted and its social and legal implications on the community, helping the reader understand how ancient traditions echo in contemporary societies. Manolache also emphasizes how these marriage norms were perceived in the Old Testament and how their nuances influenced biblical thinking on human relationships and the status of women, reinforcing the idea that the social and religious picture of ancient times has deep roots worth exploring.

Another captivating chapter is written by Ioan Dorin Salvan, who focuses on the “raising of the Ark” and the mystery of the biblical artifact of the Ark of the Covenant. I. Salvan examines the physical search for it throughout history and the profound symbolism associated with the Ark in Christian and Jewish traditions.

By comparing the image of the Ark with the figure of the Virgin Mary in Orthodox theology, the author reinterprets the role of this artifact within the biblical narrative, suggesting a continuity of divine presence through sacred symbols and artifacts. This iconographic exploration offers fascinating insights into how biblical symbols can evolve and adapt in diverse cultural contexts without losing their holy essence.

Ioan Krauciuc's analysis of the 'Lord's Prayer' as interpreted by St. John Chrysostom is a testament to the continuity of liturgical tradition. This study meticulously details the evolution of the prayer's text and demonstrates how the tradition has adapted to the needs of faith communities over time, providing a comprehensive understanding of the prayer's enduring significance.

In conclusion, Mădălin-Vasile Tăut presents a pastoral meditation on fasting based on the teachings of St. Basil the Great. M. Tăut explores the biblical origins of fasting and its importance in contemporary religious practice, highlighting when and how fasting becomes a tool of spiritual renewal. Reflecting on the impact fasting has on the shared consciousness of believers, M. Tăut argues that despite the diversification of religious views, fasting remains a central pillar in Christian spirituality, acting as a mechanism of discipline and introspection.

This volume proves to be a reference work for all those interested in biblical studies, comparative theology, or the history of religions. The thematic diversity and the depth of the research carried out by young academics give readers a picture of theological differences and commonalities that can lead to more incredible spiritual and intellectual unity. This work thus significantly contributes to interreligious dialogue, enlightening readers and showing that the study of sacred texts is an academic activity and a source of inspiration and personal transformation in a modern world characterized by complex challenges. For interested readers, the volume offers a unique opportunity to explore the intersections between Judaism and Christianity, to understand the reciprocal influences between the two traditions, and to reflect on their relevance in the present context. The research in this volume shows that, despite the diversity of approaches, the universal message of Scripture is evident.