

PHD STUDENTS RESEARCH ON THE OLD TESTAMENT (II)

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The volume edited by the professors of Old Testament Theology at the Faculty of Orthodox Theology in Cluj-Napoca is an outstanding academic work that significantly contributes to the field of biblical exegesis, providing a nuanced understanding of Scripture from an Orthodox perspective. This book, which brings together papers from doctoral students at a conference devoted to biblical exegesis, covers various themes and topics, each exploring an essential aspect of the divine will as reflected in the Hebrew Bible and the New Testament.

Structured on 215 pages, this volume is divided into studies on various topics, ranging from the sacredness of biblical places and sacrifices to aspects of anthropogenesis and the relationship between Jewish and Christian worship. In his opening address, Ioan Chirilă emphasizes the importance of returning to the roots of the Orthodox tradition and the role of Scripture as the foundation of faith and culture. He appeals to the need to respond to the challenges of modernity by returning to the essentials that form our spiritual identity, making this volume a relevant resource for contemporary theological discourse. Among the works included in the volume are studies analyzing Mount Sinai as a symbol of divine self-giving, works on blood and sacrifices in the Holiness Code, and aspects of abomination in the Torah. Each article contributes to a deeper understanding of Scripture, discussing the complexity of the relationship between divinity and humanity and the connection between the Old Testament and the patristic tradition.

Bogdan-Marius Negrea's study illuminates Mount Sinai's spiritual and geographical identity. This place is not just a geographical point but a manifestation of the divine will, symbolizing man's encounter with God. B. Negrea argues that although

biblical references to Sinai are rare, their impact on religious faith and identity is profound and inspires contemporary theology.

In his work, Dan Vele examines the central role of sacrifices and blood in the Mosaic rituals, providing a detailed analysis of the Holiness Code. He outlines how these practices not only reflected a cultural error but also served as mechanisms of spiritual purification, highlighting the strict regulations that were implemented to maintain the religious purity of the people of Israel.

Iancu-Ionuț Buda discusses the messianic character of Psalm 88, emphasizing how it highlights the importance of faith in God in times of adversity. This interpretation directs our attention to divine providence and invites us to understand the depth of prayer as a means of divine intervention.

Mircea-Grigore Grec discusses the prophetic schools in the historical and religious context of the Old Testament, shedding light on their role in Israelite society. The study highlights how these groups influenced the development of prophetic and subsequent literature, emphasizing their relevance in the religious landscape of the time.

Florin-Constantin Dobocan explores man's relationship with material goods, emphasizing how the biblical doctrine of goods is essential in understanding the relationship between humanity and divinity. His study details how the Old Testament portrays goods as divine gifts, inviting people to be wise stewards of the resources received from the Creator. This ethical and theological approach provides a robust framework for discussing believers' social and moral responsibility, including the importance of goods in community life.

Constantin-Radu Iliescu reiterates the influence of Moses Maimonides – the central figure who left a profound imprint on religious thought in the three great monotheistic traditions: Judaism, Christianity, and Islam. R. Iliescu proposes a new conceptual framework called the “edge effect” to highlight Maimonides' contributions at the intersection of these traditions, bringing to light the complexity of his thought and its diverse influence on spirituality and theology.

Decebal Gorea discusses the myths of Mesopotamia and how these ancient stories influence the biblical understanding of creation. D. Gorea's insights raise essential questions about the origin of humanity and the nature of cultural collaboration, demonstrating that although the myths have similar elements, each tradition culminates in unique revelations about God and humanity.

Gabriel Solomon turns his attention to the symbolism of the cloud in the context of divine revelation. In his study, he analyzes iconographic representations of the cloud and how they correlate with biblical texts, highlighting how religious art uses nature to communicate God's presence. This examination allows for a deeper understanding of how humans interpret divine extravagances and how these representations evolve in the visual realm.

Călin-Alexandru Ciucurescu proposes a comparative analysis of the Book of Judith, highlighting its influence on later biblical thought, especially in the New Testament. The study emphasizes the book's complexity and theological maturity and suggests significant parallels with nouthetic themes, thus strengthening its position in the Christian tradition.

Ioan-Daniel Manolache examines how Jesus Christ interacted with the Old Testament, emphasizing his exegetical method of quoting, explaining, and fulfilling biblical texts. This analysis deciphers the Savior's interpretive techniques and provides a contemporary model for believers in reading and applying Scripture.

Bogdan Șoptorean discusses the theological significance of the marvelous healing of the man born blind, emphasizing the connection between this divine act and the theme of light as the revelation of Christ. His work connects patristics, church music, and visual art to illustrate how Christian culture interprets and celebrates this miracle.

Marian-Cristian Porțan discusses the power of the Spirit in the Epistle to the Romans, describing how the apostle Paul emphasizes this element as essential for the life and development of the Christian community. This paper analyzes the importance of the manifestation of the Spirit in strengthening the faith and the essential virtues necessary for Christians.

Dorin-Ioan Sălvan's contribution to the two Beasts of Revelation offers a Christian Orthodox interpretation of these complex symbols. His study examines the identity of these biblical characters, which have been interpreted throughout history, clarifying confusions to date and shedding light on their role in Christian eschatology. I. Sălvan emphasizes that, despite the diversity of interpretations, the Orthodox Church retains a unified vision that combines the patristic tradition with an updated hermeneutic to understand contemporary spiritual threats.

Marius-Gheorghe Tănase tackles a fundamental topic in depth by analyzing the evolution of patristic thought on the resurrection and eternal life, starting from the Didache of the 12 Apostles and continuing up to the Fathers of the Golden Age.

His work is essential for understanding how the concept of the resurrection was documented and interpreted in the earliest centuries of Christianity, with clear implications for Christian ethics and behavior theorized throughout the ages.

This study by Lucretia (Iustina) Gagea examines the writings of Evagrius Ponticus, one of the founders of ascetic literature who profoundly influenced Christian spirituality. It details the intricacies of asceticism and prayer practices, which were central to mystical-spiritual development in the Orthodox tradition and significantly impacted later theological thought.

Finally, Eduard-Robert Matyas compares Jewish and Christian worship, emphasizing the similarities, continuities, and differences between the two traditions. This analogy is fundamental for understanding the liturgical evolution and the moral principles that guide the believer's life, highlighting how biblical principles remain relevant today.

This volume is an excellent resource for theologians and readers who seek better to understand the sacred text from an Orthodox perspective. The diversity of topics covered in the works and the wide-ranging approaches of the doctoral students bring a fresh breath of fresh air and not merely a mere act of study but an invitation to deep reflection on religious faith and practice. The recovery and deepening of the Orthodox theological tradition contributes significantly to an interreligious dialog. These studies are relevant to the academic community and believers who wish to deepen their knowledge of God and Scripture. Works such as those included in this volume make valuable contributions, demonstrating that the intellectualization of faith does not detract from spirituality but, on the contrary, enriches it. This volume is a study tool and a means of strengthening the Orthodox Christian identity, a guide for those who wish to find a balance between faith and contemporary challenges. As society evolves and transforms, these exegetical and theological insights remain essential to understanding and living our faith authentically.

