

## NAVIGATING THE LANDSCAPE OF ROMANIAN OLD TESTAMENT ACADEMIC RESEARCH

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*Vechiul Testament în cercetările bibliștilor ortodocși români: ghid bibliografic.*

*Vol. 1: Periodicele și Anuarele Facultăților și Departamentelor de Teologie din Patriarhia Română / Vol. 2. Bio-bibliografiile profesorilor din Facultățile și Departamentele de Teologie din Patriarhia Română și din străinătate / Vol. 3: Sistematizare tematică*  
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In the Gospel of Luke (10:25), a *nomikos* – an expert in the Torah – stands up and asks: “Teacher, what must I do to inherit eternal life?” Jesus answers not through a concept or a theory, but through two questions that lie at the foundation of any serious research, whether theological or academic: “What is written?” and “How do you read?” In this light, we also place the three volumes of the *Old Testament in the research of Romanian Orthodox biblical scholars*. They are not just a bibliographical inventory, but a hermeneutical, methodological, and identity infrastructure. They are a contemporary answer to the question “What is written?” and a permanent challenge to the question “How do you read?” *The importance of a bibliographical guide in theological formation*. A bibliographical guide is not a dry list.

It is a map, a memory, and a testimony. The map shows you where the resources are. Memory shows you who contributed to the development of a tradition. Testimony shows that theology is never born in a vacuum, but in a community of reading and working. The three volumes of the guide provide a complete architecture: Volume I: periodicals, yearbooks, theological magazines from across the country – an overview of the places where theology is expressed; Volume II: bio-bibliographies of professors – a panorama of the people and schools that make up the tradition; Volume III: systematization of themes – a theological synthesis of research directions. Together, these are indispensable tools for any student, researcher, or professor of theology.

*Volume I – “Where is it written?”: the geography of publications.* The first volume captures, as the Word-before states, how Old Testament research is found in the country’s traditional periodicals. It maps, by decade and by journal, how it was written, what was discussed, where the studies were published, and which themes dominated a particular era. For a student, this is the first step towards professionalization: to understand that theology is not consumed only in courses or textbooks but is born and develops in the living space of magazines, in academic dialogue, in the tensions and openings of a research community. Volume I thus answers the question “where is it read and where is it written?”, placing Romanian research in its historical and institutional dynamics.

*Volume II – “Who reads?”: the schools and teachers of a tradition.* If the first volume provides the editorial context, the second volume presents people: Old Testament professors from Romania and the diaspora, with their academic, journalistic, and theological careers. This volume is not just a list of authors, but an intellectual genealogy: it shows the centres of excellence; highlights the continuities between generations; makes visible the relational network between Sibiu, Bucharest, Iași, Cluj, Craiova, Oradea, Arad; places Romania in an international dialogue through professors who teach or have taught in Paris, Boston, Dayton, New York. For students, this is a fundamental volume because it helps everyone understand in which tradition they are, who the teachers are who built this school, and on whose shoulders we sit when we write, teach, or research.

*Volume III – “What is written?”: themes and directions of Romanian research.* The third volume is, as the Foreword says, the “piece de resistance”: a thematic systematization of the entire Romanian research on the Old Testament. Here we see the maturity of a theological school: studies on each biblical book; works dedicated to the canon, inspiration, and translations; research in anthropology, messianism, pneumatology, cosmology, and eschatology; patristic landmarks associated with each theme; and biblical archaeology in the Romanian context. Volume III offers not only a bibliography but a theological profile of contemporary biblical Romania. It is the mirror of a school that does not imitate, but produces, does not repeat, but formulates, does not limit itself to translation, but builds interpretation. In this regard, the volume becomes an invitation to responsibility: if you know what was written, you also understand what is missing, what needs to be deepened, what opens as a direction of research for the next generation.

From “What is written?” to “How do you read?” - a hermeneutic program in the light of tradition and experience. At the heart of the dialogue between Jesus and the *nomikos* in Luke 10:25 are two questions that, on the ordinary reading, seem simple, but which the rabbinic tradition – as Strack and Billerbeck show – considers the foundation of all Jewish hermeneutics: “What is written?” (*mah katuv?*) and “How do you read?” (*eikh attah qore?*).

“What is written?” – grounding in the text. In the time of Jesus, any serious discussion between rabbis began with this question: before interpretation, before doubt, before application, the text itself must be established. Strack–Billerbeck shows that this was the first step in halachic disputes: returning to Scripture, to what the Torah precisely says. Through His question, Christ brings the *nomikos* back to the source, to the revealed text, to the foundations of the identity of tradition. For us, in an academic context, the question carries the exact weight: before interpreting, discussing, or constructing theological arguments, we must know what is written in bibliographies, studies, articles, and the exegetical tradition. This is precisely the role of the three volumes of the guide: they present the complete map of what has been written in Romanian Old Testament research up to 2024.

“How do you read?” – hermeneutic discernment. The second question is even deeper. In the Talmudic tradition, Strack–Billerbeck explains the essential distinction between *ketiv* (how it is written) and *qeri* (how it is read). It was not just a question of pronunciation, but of a principle: reading is not mechanical, but interpretive; the text is not just what is on the parchment, but what it becomes in the living tradition of interpretation. By asking “How do you read?”, Jesus invites the interlocutor to assume the responsibility of interpretation: from what tradition do you read? on what exegetes do you rely? how do you unite Scripture with life? how do you transform the text into an answer for one’s own existence? The *Nomikos* answers exactly like a mature exegete: he unites the Shema of Deuteronomy with the commandment to love one’s neighbour from Leviticus – the rabbinic procedure of harmonizing fundamental texts into a unitary reading. Christ approves of this way of reading but adds, “Do this, and you will live.” In other words, accurate interpretation does not remain at the theoretical level, but becomes praxis, life, and incarnation.

*Meaning for us: what a bibliographic guide gives us and what it cannot provide us.* The three volumes give us the answer to the first question: “What is written?” – a vast, ordered, verified, systematized corpus. But they do not give us the answer to the second

question: “How do you read?” – this remains our responsibility, that of those who open them. Here it is appropriate to present the experience of two decades ago, when I was compiling the first New Testament guide. Back then, the answer to “what is written?” required train journeys, browsing through each magazine, dialogue with librarians, and fragmentary reading of the studies found. Today, technology replaces effort, compresses time, and provides instant access to information.

But what we gain in speed, we risk losing in encounter. Back then, “how do you read?” meant journey, conversation, discovery, respite, the joy of an unexpectedly found text. Today, the risk is the superficialization of reading, the transformation of research into an accumulation of titles with no relationship to their authors. The experience in Regensburg confirmed this truth: it is one thing to have names in a bibliography, and another to meet the person, the mind, the theological breath, the tone, the modesty – in my case, the encounter with Paula Fredriksen, a name that for years I had only read in footnotes. Then I understood that bibliography is not an inert list, but a network of people, traditions, and intellectual lives. And beyond these, there is the Author of Scripture, the One who calls us not only to information, but to transformation.

I return, therefore, to Christ’s questions: “What is written?” and “How do you read?” The first level is offered today, in a monumental form, by the three volumes of the bibliographic guide: a complete cartography of Romanian Old Testament research, a professional tool, a solid foundation for future generations. But the second level remains for each of us. “How do you read?” cannot be replaced by speed, algorithms, or digital access. It is an invitation to encounter, to living interpretation, to dialogue with the authors, to the patristic tradition, to our mentors, to our colleagues, to Scripture itself.

A bibliographic guide can tell you what was written. Only you, through effort, through discipline, through the joy of reading, and through the willingness to enter dialogue, will be able to answer: “This is how I read.” And beyond all this, if you go far enough along the thread of authors, texts, and interpretations, you will discover what no bibliography can record: The Author who inspires the texts and who gives meaning to our reading.