

2. SEEKING FOR A DEEPER MEANING OF BIBLICAL THEOLOGY

Elena Onețiu

Paula Bud, *Studii de exegeză și teologie biblică
vechi-testamentară*, ed. Ioan Chirilă,
Teodora Mureșanu, Stelian Pașca-Tușa
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The volume *Studies of exegesis and biblical theology of the Old Testament* appears at the commemoration of two years from the passing to eternity of its author, Paula Bud. She was a lecturer at the Faculty of Orthodox Theology of Cluj-Napoca, at Babeș-Bolyai University. Occasioned by this memorial day, of the one who was kept in the memory of the colleagues and students as a person of “great self-sacrifice” and “proverbial humility” (p. 10), her close collaborators (Fr. Prof. Ioan Chirilă, Teodora-Ilinca Mureșanu and Stelian Pașca-Tușa), brought her “a sign of gratefulness” (p. 7) bringing together in one volume the most important part of her research activity through which Paula Bud brought a significant contribution to the biblical theology of the Old Testament.

The book is printed at Școala Ardealul, a publishing house well known in the academic society of Cluj-Napoca, at not only. Paula Bud collaborated with Fr. Ioan Chirilă, Stelian Pașca-Tușa and with this publishing house on other volume (*The Old Testament in the writings of the Romanian scholars. Bibliographic guide*, 2015), which is a important landmark for Romanian Bible researchers. The volume is consistent, counting 469 pages that are structured in three parts, as follows: the dissertation paper; a collection of studies and articles Old Testament related; a few theological essays from the period of college and masteral studies. The volume is preceded by a testimonial from Fr. Ioan Chirilă and a preface written by Fr. Vasile Stanciu, professors that try to emphasize the main qualities of Paula Bud, whose eyes where “shining with the beautiful light of fraternal relations” (p. 9), a light that generated “an atmosphere of unselfish colegiality, out of any pride or infatuation” (p. 10). Then, we propose a short review of the volume’s content, emphasizing the ideas and passages that I deemed essential in the economy of the book, stressing the dissertation thesis, because it was the first work edited and printed. The first part of the volume comprises, as I previously

mentioned, Paula Bud's dissertation thesis, entitled "Knowledge and recognition of God in nature. A perspective of the Old Testament". The thesis written on the Old Testament discipline, under the guidance of Fr. Ioan Chirila, was written in French, regarding the principles and standards of the Masteral program "Theology and culture". The subject of the thesis is very actual and relevant, its approach being justified by the contemporary context in which the man, often, perceives himself as the master of nature, forgetting on one side the responsibility God entrusted him for nature, and on the other side, acting as a commander of nature. The thesis is remarkable by the fluence of ideas and themes, starting from the contemplation of nature that leads to knowledge, further presenting the idolatrous perspective on nature, then approaching the subject of the miraculous intervention of God in nature by reviewing the main tipologies identified in the Holy Scripture, of persons/ attitudes that can arise as a result of natural knowledge of God effort, ending with the urge to return to the innate nature of knowledge.

The dissertation thesis commences, thus, with a chapter regarding the "contemplation in knowledge" (p. 17) in which, through a careful weaving of patristic and biblical texts with the contemporary theological and exegetical researches, the author emphasizes the in which nature fulfills a work of obedience and submission, being at the same time "life giving as it enables creature with a power similar to that of giving birth" (p. 19), at the same time gloryfing the Creator through respecting the nature's inner laws. The doxology that creation brings to the Creator is destined to human contemplation who, by seizing the beauties of nature and the perfect order in world, can gain knowledge of the attributed of God and those who are incomprehensible or unknown will generate in he who is wise attitudes of doxology and gratitutte for the infinite glory and grandeur of God. The author concludes: "limitation is the attribute of created essences, while God is infinite par excellence" (p. 40), a phrase that enables us to seize the clarity and precision of expression, that can offer closure even to a unspecialized readers.

The author draws attention to the fact that man, in his contemplative endeavor, must always embrace a humble approach in order not to fall in the trap of idolatry and come to consider nature as the ultimate reality and grant it with the glory and submission proper just to God. However, Paula Bud proves to be a theologian of faith who, immediately after presenting various idolatrous practices of the people of Israel, emphasizes the providential intervention of God, Who, even though was abandoned by His people, does not cease to manifest love to His people and sends them prophets who

contribute decisively to the redemption of Israel, rooting their prophetic proclamations in cosmological arguments and teachings of God.

In the following part of the dissertation, we are led towards an understanding of God's intervention in nature, through acts of providence. The thesis does mention the points of view opposed to God's providence in the created world, such as: Pantheism, materialism or deism which are then repelled with biblical and patristic arguments chosen with great ability, which leaves us the impression that the author had an impressive knowledge of the two sources. In the second part of this chapter, one can observe the author's ability and boldness to point out, in an original fashion, a subject that has often raised various issues, namely how one should perceive the acts of providence in natural phenomena. The author proposes a approach as such: any intervention of God in nature reveals the innate, natural manifestation of God's reign over the created world. Since the text presents clearly the correct approach to such events, I will cite the following phrase: "the divine act, either manifested in the world through its reign according to laws, or manifested through special interventions [...] is altogether natural, innate [...] God is always present in history but, in certain crucial circumstances, He shows Himself with a higher intensity, in this case, His intervention is equated to a miracle" (p .70).

Lastly, we are introduced to the main typologies of attitudes/states that human persons have towards divine revelations, namely: repentance and admission of sinful self; the prophetic proclamation revealed to fellows; the wisdom through which man pervades superior truths to those of natural knowledge and conveys his fellows support in faith earned by contemplation.

The second part of the volume is comprised of 20 researches and articles published since 2008 (the first year of PhD program), as well as other 4 researches which have not been yet published. Considering the fact that the vast majority of the articles have already been published (their republishing aims to gather them in a single volume in order to facilitate their access), we will not focus on their content. We will only state the fact that from the 24 researches/articles, 9 are related to the theme of Jewish Shabbat, which are a major contribution to Romanian biblical literature on this topic through important points of view in the Christian- Jewish religious dialogue. We also emphasize the scientific character of the articles and researches that meet a high academic standard, aligned to the research method used by prestigious universities.

The last part of the volume is comprised of several theological essays that confirm the author's urge to research since the very first years of college, essays that proved to

be mature and dense in approach. Fundamentally, the theological essays are focused on iconographic topics, echoing the artistic preoccupations of Paula.

The volume *Studies of exegesis and Old Testament biblical theology*, written by Paula Bud, creates us the image of a young researcher that tries to cover various topics of Old Testament theology. Through the way she integrates and analyzes the sources texts, the author proves good knowledge both of biblical languages (Hebrew and Greek), and modern languages (French and English), that she easily uses. Moreover, the text features personal opinions, pertinent analysis, the approach of various topics, some rather sensible, resulting, after summing up and integrating all the elements, a coherent work and material, that is interesting for both biblical scholars and researchers as well as for anyone who seeks for a deeper meaning of reality.