

A HANDBOOK OF OLD TESTAMENT FOR STUDENTS

Fr. Maxim Morariu

Ioan Chirilă (coord.), Dumitru Abrudan, Petre Semen,
Oancea Constantin, Remus Onișor și Mircea Basarab,
Introducere în Vechiul Testament [Introduction in Old Testament]
(București: Basilica, 2018), 870 p.

Since most textbooks used in the Romanian Faculties of Orthodox Theology were published in the communist period and scientific research has developed very fast in the past years, proposing, for many topics, new keys of interpretation or offering additional information, there is a clear need for updated works which can not only guide students but also provide them with an overview of the most recent achievements and direct them towards an updated bibliography.

This was the reason why the Romanian Orthodox Patriarchate decided to publish new and updated books on all the important topics taught in the Romanian Faculties of Theology. One book dedicated to the Old Testament is coordinated by Fr. Ioan Chirilă from “Babes-Bolyai University” (Cluj-Napoca) and contains texts he wrote, together with other important theologians such as Fr. Dumitru Abrudan, Fr. Petre Semen, Fr. Constantin Oancea, Fr. Remus Onișor and Fr. Mircea Basarab, who are active in the most important centres of theological research from the Romanian area.

Being divided into eight chapters and many sub unities and containing, according to contemporary scientific standards, a foreword signed by the coordinator (p. 21-28), where he speaks about the relevance of the Old Testament for the theological context and summarises the content of the book, a “note on the edition” (p. 29-32) and a list of “abbreviations” (p. 33-36), the book starts with a few introductory notions (p. 39-91) and offers to the reader a detailed presentation of the context, the critical reception and other isagogic aspects related to all the books of the Old Testament.

While the first chapter emphasises aspects related to the methodology of research and the general bibliography (p. 47-48), the history of the texts (p. 59-50), the original language of the books investigated (p. 50-51), the history and the critical authority of the Hebraic text (p. 51-52) or the history of its translations (p. 53-66), together with aspects related to keywords such as inspiration and revelation (p. 77-91), the second chapter (p. 92-130) is dedicated to general exegetical and hermeneutical landmarks. Here, the

authors clearly state the meaning of these two important concepts and their area of research (p. 93-95) and present the main schools and exegetical directions which exist in the Jewish and Christian areas (p. 95-105), before linking them with the principles of biblical hermeneutics found in the Eastern Orthodox area (p. 105-113), the meanings of the Holy Bible (p. 114-117) or the quality which any of its interpreters needs to have (p. 119-126).

Furthermore, each book of the Old Testament canon is presented according to a pre-established structure, inside the category where it belongs and after describing the generalities of its genre. Therefore, for example, in the case of the *Pentateuch*, the authors of the book speak about its title (p. 132), the author (p. 133-134), its internal structure and the content (p. 134-135) and, afterwards, they start to offer information about each book, concerning its title (p. 136, p. 157, for example), its structure and content (see: p. 136-148, or 157-165) and its reception in the Tradition of the Church and the writings of the Church Fathers (p. 149-156, p. 167-171). Each book, in turn, is segmented in several subdivisions, according to the criteria already established by the exegetes, which helps the reader understand aspects related to the context, the preservation of the manuscripts, potential interventions, the authors and the schools of thought etc.

After presenting the Pentateuch (p. 131-258), the historical books (p. 259-404), the didactical-poetical (p. 405-515) and the prophetical books (p. 516-752), the authors also offer a presentation of the category of the “Anaginoscomena” (p. 753-843) and the Apocrypha (p. 844-870), inviting the reader to understand the complexity of the context of the Old Testament and to have a view of certain texts which could be useful in given situations if they are seen as complementary or additional literature.

Well-written, with dense content and a rich bibliography, the book *Introduction to the Old Testament*, coordinated by Fr. Ioan Chirilă and published by the Basilica Publishing House from Bucharest in 2018, is a useful tool for scholars, students or readers who are interested to find more about this topic and its influence on the entire theology. Therefore, we can only recommend it and underline its main qualities, inviting the readers to find more about how the Old Testament and its theology is developed in the New Testament.