

A HERMENEUTICAL PILGRIMAGE

I opted for the notion of 'hermeneutical pilgrimage' instead of my Western colleagues' phrase 'lost among hermeneutics', as I am not inclined to idealise or dogmatise any of the biblical hermeneutics throughout history, but rather reflect, to the best of my abilities, upon Him who is the exegete par excellence, namely Christ the God-Man. From this perspective, I invoke the notion of pilgrimage, for a Pilgrim does not seek a place, nor a theoretical rule, but the rule embody, the rule *in-wordened*.

Saint Justin Popovich of Chelije, in his work *The Abysses of Human Thought and Feeling*, stresses the fact that the divine wisdom and theology planted by God in all of Creation are bestowed by Christ the Lord Himself, who is the eternal Logos. They become 'manifest only in the light of the Logos of the incarnated God. Only when it is enlightened by the incarnated God's radiance can the human mind (reason) comprehend the divine and rational (*logos-ni*) meaning of Creation, namely the meaning of the divine Logos within Creation, and allow itself to be thus convinced by the truth of the Apostle's words: *all things have been made through Him and for Him*.'

During this pilgrimage, both analytic and synthetic, we dwell on:

- *the apostolic era* and see that the Apostles speak as eyewitnesses and earwitnesses and that such active participation entails a martyrial responsibility to confess the resurrected Christ;
- *apologists* and realise that we need to testify to the incarnated truth and to His transcendence-immanence, which is what gives the Scriptures their unity (Behold, a new norm! That of unity that stems from monotheism, from the unity of being – the testimony or rule of the obvious.);
- *the Holy Fathers*, the golden age of the Church, whence we borrow the *ethos*, *pathos*, and the spiritual understanding that can provide us with the model of incarnation in the sense of emptying one's mind and having it inhabited by Christ and, implicitly, the acquisition of the mind of Christ to see and express that which is natural, for all, in the light of Christ. 'Unfortunately – Father G. Florovsky pointed out in *Church. Scripture. Tradition* – we are often inclined to



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evaluate the Word of God by our measure instead of letting our mind be led by Christ's measure.' The Gospel of the Word of God must be preached as it has been entrusted to us by our Saviour Himself through the saints to be preserved through faith. The words of the Scriptures cannot be adapted in a facile manner to the times it is preached according to each person's mind. The Fathers teach us to avoid exchanging the Gospel of Jesus Christ with someone's random *alien gospel*, which is why that same father stressed that 'the Gospel itself can be understood to the full extent of its wealth and depth only through spiritual experience (marked by faith). But that which is revealed through faith is truth itself. The Gospels are written within the Church. Thus, they are the testimony of the Church. They are records of the experience and faith of the Church.' According to the Fathers, the Church is the one able to interpret the message of the Scriptures, which is the *core* of the revealed scriptural text, through the direct intervention of the Holy Spirit; ■ *modernity*, the morphosyntax of languages as a reflection of the synaxis of eternity; even ■ *postmodernity* as a time of challenges generated by individual and sectorial developments, which call upon us to bring out the eschatological and eternal unity of nature found in the Scriptures and the epiphanic spiritual dimensions, so that everyone may identify with this eternal Self by hearing the echo of the primordial definitions within themselves.

I, therefore, believe that every one of us must acquire that minimal wisdom which requires us to include in the equation of our exegetic enterprise a time for thought/reflection/contemplation, during which we should break free from clichés and allow the echo of primary definitions to sound within us, as they are the words that create, that confess Christ and bring good tidings, they are fatherly words, ever loving and guiding towards the ever-enlightening breath of the Spirit.

The conference titled *Hermeneutics between Tradition and Postmodernity*, organised under the auspices of our magazine, ROOTS (*Romanian Orthodox Old Testament Studies*), through the papers it comprises – integrated into the two volumes of 2021 – aims to provide these perspectives for the reading of the Holy Scriptures and a hermeneutical pilgrimage towards the Truth. The studies included in this volume are intended to: offer solutions to the problematic situations resulting from the interference between the divine and the political; highlight the limitations of mundane, secularised politics and the way in which it can subsist from a historical point of view, but not necessarily from a theological-historical one (*The Secularisation of Divine Sovereignty. Saul and Samuel – King and Prophet*); reposition within the understanding of the

modern world a historical event of overwhelming importance for the restructuring of the identity of the chosen people; transpose the Babylonian exile into a modern pedagogical method that should open a series of metamorphoses of events in the history of Israel as orientation indicators or methods for the peoples of our times (*Jeremiah 29,4-14. A Prophetic Lesson for Modernity?*); trace a connection between several sources of reference in the history of Christianity, a connection that can be the object of the correct description and understanding of the phrase 'the Book of Life' (*'The Book of Life' in the Biblical Texts and in the Dead Sea Scrolls*); transpose the scriptural text into the indicators of modern, human, artistic, visual relations; specify the manner in which hermeneutics applies to the visual in universal art within the sphere of Christian understanding (*The Old Testament in Universal Art: the Hermeneutical Act between Description and Normativity*); and combine the theology of a sacrifice, of a historicalreligious act of remarkable significance with the theology of Byzantine art in order to access a universe of symbolism and mystical interpretation (*Is There Any Form of Brutality in the Byzantine Representation of Abraham's Sacrifice?*).

Thus, the studies included in this volume confront us with the truth: Christ is the ultimate hermeneutical criterion, the pillar and foundation of any exegesis. An exegesis that ignores this criterion may make for a wonderful philological, historical, philosophical or any other kind of study, but not a theological one. We promote the theological dimension as a relentless attempt to bring man to the hypostasis of the complete/integral man (*Theo-anthropic*) and to that of total knowledge.