

A HERMENEUTICAL PILGRIMAGE

I opted for the notion of 'hermeneutical pilgrimage' instead of my Western colleagues' phrase 'lost among hermetics', 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 indicate how we can achieve an applied exegesis in which we understand, assume and embody the Word like the Desert Fathers and especially to the Fathers of the Philokalia (*Patristic-Philokalic Hermeneia*); to familiarize us with the content of intertestamental apocalyptic literature by presenting exceptional Jewish writing: the Book of 4 Ezra (*An Intertestamental Apocalypse: the Book of Four Ezra*); to guide us in

the identification of the spiritual perspectives that place in a new light the scriptural events that from a historical point of view were fulfilled (*Spiritual Significations of the Census in the Wilderness of Sinai Nm 1*); to point out how St. Paul the Apostle takes over the old testamentary language in contexts in which the recipients (the Colossians) are expected to understand not only the allusion or echo but also to recognize their implications (*Perspectives of Colossian 'philosophy': the meaning of intertextuality in the Epistle to the Colossians*); and make a research into second millennium BCE Mesopotamia to analyze the legal framework and broad implications of an adoption process (*Was Child Adoption in Mesopotamia in the 2nd Millennium BC*).

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.