

## DEVINE PROVIDENCE FOR THE GENTILES AND THE ROLE OF MEDIATOR OF THE CHOSEN PEOPLE

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Cosmin Lauran, *Missio Israelis. O lectură misionară a Vechiului Testament*  
[*Missio Israelis. A Missionary Reading of the Old Testament*] (Alba Iulia: Reîntregirea, 2017), 482 p.

In the “Author’s Note” section, Fr. Lauran makes an assertion which is very enlightening for the understanding of the undertaken behind this work. He claims that every reader who approaches a book “can understand or interpret it differently, according to their inner structure, their own values, choices or other hermeneutic notes” (p. 17). [our translation] This perspective which the book fully “exploits” has an important contribution to the common reader’s better understanding of their relationship with God, mediated by the Holy Scripture.

This assertion could be one of the reasons why the Bible still offers something new to every believer who studies it, even though it has been constantly read and studied for thousands of years. An example is the very structure of Fr. Lauran’s book. It would be useless to count all the works which speak of the *protogospel* (Gn 3:15), *the choice of Adam and the covenant God made with him* (Gn 12:1-3.17) or of the “central” *position of Israel in the area of creation and the responsibility thereof* (e.g.: Ez 5:5). Nonetheless, every researcher manages to emphasise a new nuance of the text, which awaits revelation. Thus, it provides the historian with historical sources, the homilist with homiletic material, *the missiologist with reference points of the divine and human mission* and so on. The holy text is itself the depositary of all these elements. Consequently, in the foreword to this book, Fr. Ioan Chirilă points to the fact that “we do not need to create catechetical, homiletic, missionary biblical editions; the introduction of proper Hermeneias is enough” (p. 14). [our translation] That is why the fact that Fr. Lauran proposes in his work a possibility by which the books of the Old Testament can be regarded from the perspective of Christian mission perfectly falls within Fr. Chirilă’s line. The author resorts to the aforementioned passages, among

others, to prove that the mission of the Church is better rooted in the revelation of the Old Testament than we used to think, at least in the Romanian space. If we relate this to the initial assertion, we can conclude that Fr. Luran does not force the text to say what it actually does not contain; on the contrary, he found a method by which he allows the Scripture to contribute to the understanding the Church has about itself, in order to better act in a fallen cosmos in need of its intervention. In fact, this is also one of the purposes of the Holy Scripture, namely to show man what the actual reality is. As the Holy Fathers have many times shown, the Bible is not a “collection” of stories and human texts, but, due to the work of the Holy Spirit, it is a writing which was given to us to respond to our spiritual needs (St. John Chrysostom, *Homilies on Matthew*).

This book cultivates the same reality. Fr. Luran does not enumerate passages with no connection between them, which give the impression that they can somehow suggest a certain missiological aspect. However, he shows us step by step how the rationale ingrained in the creation and divine urges converge throughout history towards the moment when God will be “all in all” (1 Cor 15:28).

The starting point of his study is the fact that, from the very beginning, creation was conceived by God as a *support for the future mission* to which man is called. Moving on, the author shows that, even if men fell and therefore no longer had a proper understanding of their calling, God always worked to get them back on track towards their initial purpose. As a consequence, this study continues with the idea that patriarch Abraham was the man through whom history actually changed its course, as the Lord chose him for a special mission, namely that of “raising” a people amid whom he would work towards the salvation of the entire world. Thus, this book shows that, through the patriarch, the mission switched from the stage of potential to that of a *personal act*. Following Abraham, the preparation of the chosen people became a reality over the course of many years. When his many offspring are ready, the Lord intervenes decisively in their destiny, to entrust them with a “global” mission, that of testifying to the entire world about God’s closeness to man. Therefore, at the right moment, through the Hebrew people, the mission ceases to be only personal and gains a *community* character, with *universal valences*. By means of three well-developed sequences, the author outlines the main steps of God’s work in the history of Israel: “creation as mission” (p. 79), “choice as mission” (p. 197) and, in the end, the idea of “mission as an attraction” (p. 321).

Cosmin Luran’s research succeeds in demonstrating a supposition which has

long been anticipated but not fully studied until now. Consequently, he shows that the Old Testament does not speak only about the idea of *Deus mittens* or *missio Dei* (divine work in history), but it also presents the concept of *homo missum* or, in particular, as the title of the book shows, the concept of *missio Israelis* (the calling of man to work together with their Creator on the mission He entrusted to them). Thus, this book proves once more a fundamental truth preached by the Church, namely that the Lord does not work alone towards the fulfilment of creation, but also calls man to partake of it, through the mission to which they are called from their very creation (Dumitru Stăniloae, *Teologia Dogmatică Ortodoxă*).

That is why we believe that *Missio Israelis* is an exceptional and extremely complex study, which answers very well to the exigences and needs of Romanian researchers in general and of the common reader, who seeks to better understand the rationale of the world they live in. This book fully deserves the status granted by Rev. Ioan Chirilă, who considers it to be “a first missionary hermeneutic approach to the Old Testament in the Romanian space” (p. 16). We believe the characterisation Rev. Ioan Chirilă made shows not only the chronological primacy of Rev. Luran’s endeavour but also the fact that it can be considered a benchmark for future research in this field!