OLD TESTAMENT

IN THE CHURCH

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ROMANIAN ORTHODOX OLD TESTAMENT STUDIES

OLD TESTAMENT IN THE CHURCH

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CONTENTS

EDITORIAL | Rev. IOAN CHIRILĂ

The Old Testament Influence and Reception in the Church

Old Testament Influence and Reception in the Church

The tapestry of Theodore's intellectual contributions spans a rich spectrum, weaving together Antiochene biblical exegesis and contemplations on priestly vocation. In this diverse collection of studies, each thread traces back to the wellsprings of Holy Scripture, an enduring font of revelation that forms the bedrock of Church tradition. Whether engaging in the intricate dance of Christological controversies, shedding light on the profound testimony of the Baptist, unravelling the intricacies of ancient marital customs, delving into the foundational principles of Canon Law, or

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navigating the nuanced path of pastoral actualization, the common thread that binds these scholarly investigations is the Old Testament. This ancient repository of divine wisdom serves as the guiding light, shaping the contours of theological reflection and practical application alike. Theodore's expansive range of inquiries, rooted in the scriptural narratives, underscores the enduring relevance of the Old Testament in informing diverse aspects of Christian thought and practice. Each exploration, from the loftiest theological debates to the practical considerations of pastoral care, finds its origin in the profound well of revelation, perpetually replenished by the sacred texts that continue to illuminate the path of Church tradition.

Theodore stands as a representative figure among early biblical interpreters, embodying the delicate balance between groundbreaking critical analysis and the occasional foray into heterodoxy, a legacy that continues to be the subject of contemporary debate. His extensive commentaries, though occasionally unorthodox, were rooted in a profound engagement with Scripture, reflecting a genuine wrestling with the complexities of divine revelation. In parallel to the narrative arc of the Old Testament, which traces the gradual unfolding of understanding across generations, Theodore's theological journey mirrors a dynamic process. While his initial

Christological formulations leaned toward Nestorianism, the ensuing debates and correctives within the theological landscape served as a testament to the transformative power of Scripture. Theodore's deviations prompted a collective effort to safeguard orthodox Christology, revealing a process wherein the dynamic interaction with the Word ultimately guided the Church toward a more refined understanding of Truth. The ongoing discourse surrounding Theodore's legacy thus mirrors the intricate interplay between human interpretation, doctrinal development, and the ever-unfolding revelation encapsulated within the sacred text.

The Gospels, like masterful architects, construct their narratives upon the foundations of Israel's prophetic heritage. In this intricate edifice of divine revelation, John the Baptist emerges as a crucial figure, embodying the fulfilment of Isaiah's prophecy - the herald of salvific light piercing through the shadows of darkness. The Gospel writer deftly portrays Christ's forerunner as a paradigmatic witness, a figure who transcends and shatters messianic misconceptions, unveiling the Lamb of God. This transformative revelation echoes the prophetic tradition, reminiscent of Samuel anointing David against all expectations. Within the narrative tapestry curated by the Beloved Disciple, John the Baptist takes centre stage, offering an obedient testimony that resonates with Old Testament motifs. His voice, like a resonant chord, harmonizes with the prophetic strains of old, echoing the timeless truth embedded in sacred Scripture. Through the intricacies of the Gospel narrative, John the Baptist becomes a living embodiment of voicing revelation - an eloquent testament to the continuity between the Old Testament's anticipatory whispers and the fullness of revelation found in the life and ministry of Christ.

The narrative of Boaz's levirate marriage to Ruth stands as a compelling testament to the living inheritance of biblical precedent, continually reapplied through the annals of time. In this poignant episode, Boaz's embrace of a levirate union not only adheres to established legal norms but, more profoundly, serves as a transformative act of cultural assimilation. By welcoming the marginalized Moabites into the covenant community, Boaz disrupts the retributive cycles prevalent in the era of Judges. Instead, his actions embody hesed-covenant love, a manifestation of the Exodus liberation mandate realized through a receptive and inclusive approach. In the lineage of Abraham, Boaz becomes a conduit for perpetuating ancestral blessings. His judicious utilization of Deuteronomic provisions becomes a strategic tool, enabling the community to overcome the challenges of famine and reinforcing communal strength.

Thus, Boaz emerges not merely as a character within a historical narrative but as a steward of tradition, dynamically applying biblical principles to navigate the complexities of his time. The story of Boaz and Ruth serves as a living testimony to the enduring relevance of biblical paradigms in shaping cultural assimilation, social justice, and communal resilience.

Canonists, as guardians of ecclesiastical order, seamlessly inherit the authority of Scripture to navigate the ever-evolving challenges confronting the Church. Rooted in a tradition that traces its lineage from Moses through Second Temple Judaism to early Christian councils, their recourse to the Old Testament serves as a foundational pillar for the interpretation and application of divine law. This dual commitment to the written law of Scripture and the inspired tradition encapsulates a self-understanding that has resonated across epochs. The canonists' alignment with ancient biblical codes, grounded in Yahweh's justice, becomes an eloquent expression of the enduring relevance of these foundational principles. In the face of contemporary challenges, the wisdom distilled from the Old Testament provides a moral and legal compass. Their fidelity to divine law not only upholds church unity but also reinforces a continuity with a legacy that has shaped the ecclesial order throughout history. As stewards of tradition and interpreters of divine intent, canonists embody the ongoing dialogue between the ancient text and the evolving challenges of the Church, illustrating the perennial vitality of the Old Testament in informing ecclesiastical governance and ensuring the continuity of divine justice within the body of believers.

Ancient Scripture, a timeless reservoir of wisdom, not only resonates with contemporary circumstances but also moulds each emerging generation's sense of purpose. The Old Testament, a narrative tapestry woven with divine encounters and human responses, encapsulates a profound ministerial quest for actualization amid human limitations. This journey is vividly illustrated through the trials of Abraham, the reluctant leadership of Moses, the poetic psalms of David, the solitary lament of Elijah, the visionary reconciliation of Ezekiel, the portrayal of Isaiah's suffering servant, and the promise of Elijah's return by Malachi. Each narrative arc converges toward the revelation of the Good Shepherd, who, in Jesus, becomes the epitome of pastoral care, laying down his life for the sheep. In this rich tapestry, those inclined toward pastoral ministry find their calling illuminated. The Old Testament narratives serve as a developmental roadmap, guiding initial ideas of vocation toward a mature understanding centred on the Cross. Jesus, the ultimate Good Shepherd, becomes the archetype for

self-sacrificial service. The ministerial quest, mirrored in the Old Testament's diverse characters, culminates in the realization that true purpose is found in a life poured out for others, echoing the sacrificial love exemplified by the Good Shepherd.

In the diverse array of studies employing historical-critical, theological, and vocational approaches, the Old Testament consistently emerges as the indispensable backdrop. Much like the formative experiences of Israel, the Church age similarly witnesses a continual process where the questioning of prevailing convictions becomes an invitation for deeper discernment. This persistent cycle, reflective of Israel's historical journey, extends into the Christian era. Each probing inquiry into existing beliefs becomes a pilgrimage toward a profound understanding, and this understanding, in turn, yields Christological fruits.

In this dynamic process, the Old Testament stands as an enduring guidepost, illuminating the path of discernment. The scriptural narratives, like the road to Emmaus, serve as companions on the journey, shedding light on the transformative encounters with divine truth. Whether in historical-critical analysis, theological reflection, or vocational exploration, the Old Testament remains a constant reference point, offering timeless wisdom and insights. It becomes the perennial source that not only informs the questioning of convictions but also guides the pilgrimage toward a deeper comprehension of Christological realities, perpetuating a narrative of faith and understanding across the ages.

ORTHODOX
EXEGESIS

1. Rev. Ion-Sorin Bora, *Theodore of Mopsuestia – an Exponential Exegete of the Antiochian School in the Golden Age of Christianity*

2. Rev. Alexandru Moldovan, *Portrait of St. John the Baptist in the Prologue of the Fourth Gospel*

3. Ioan-Daniel Manolache, *Levirate Marriage – An Overview of an Ancient Matrimonial Custom*

4. Rev. Răzvan Perşa, *The Importance of the Holy Scripture within the Canonical Tradition of the Orthodox Church*

5. Rev. Patriciu-Dorin Vlaicu, *Biblical and Canonical Grounds for Assuming the Fulfilment of Man in the Ecclesial Ministry*

Theodore of Mopsuestia
an Exponential Exegete of the Antiochian School in the Golden age of Christianity

Abstract

This paper explores the life and work of Theodore of Mopsuestia, a key exponent of the Antiochene school of biblical interpretation. After providing biographical background situating Theodore as a student of Libanius and Diodore of Tarsus, the article outlines the history of the School of Antioch and Theodore's role as a teacher propagating principles of grammatical-historical exegesis. His prolific writings included commentaries on much of Scripture, though his interpretation emphasized the literal sense while downplaying typological readings. Doctrinally, Theodore combatted contemporary heresies but evidenced questionable Christology himself. He spoke of two subjects or persons in Christ and rejected the communication of attributes between Christ's divinity and humanity. Though initially orthodox, Theodore's theology anticipated Nestorian ideas, leading Cyril of Alexandria to critique his work. Ultimately the Fifth Ecumenical Council condemned Theodore posthumously. Modern scholarship has aimed to rehabilitate his legacy by distinguishing his use of terminology, assessing newly discovered writings, and analysing translation issues, yet his condemnation has not been overturned. Thus, this study presents a complex picture of this exegetical pioneer – a creative, ingenious interpreter who crossed boundaries into heterodoxy.

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Keywords

Theodore, Exegesis, Antioch, Christology, Condemnation

Rev. Ion-Sorin Bora
*Theodore of Mopsuestia – an Exponential Exegete of the Antiochian School
in the Golden Age of Christianity*

13

Introduction

The Syrian capital, Antioch, became, from 270 AD, a particularly important ecclesiastical centre, whose emulation revolved around the reading and interpretation of the Holy Scriptures in a specific manner. But Antioch was never a centre of learning, like its rival Alexandria, another *Didascalia*, but merely a Christian geographic area with a scholarly clergy (Vacant and Mangenot 1909, 1435). The Antiochian exegetical school, which emphasized the literal-historical meaning of the text of Holy Scripture, the typology of ancient-testamentary passages and hermeneutical principles that had become traditional in the Church, appeared as a natural reaction against the allegorism specific to the Alexandrian Fathers (Stamatoiu 1998, 218). Antioch becomes the place and the environment in which, through the criticism of Alexandrian allegorism, various theological opinions are born which are then transmitted through preaching and writings to disciples interested in deepening the teaching of the faith. The learned leaders of this centre received a disciple-eucharistic education in this environment, before becoming accomplished teachers, being exemplary disciples of Syrian priests and bishops. The theological heritage received by the disciple will never be ignored, just as the memory of the famous forefathers will be honoured with great piety. Every new idea will be rooted in what the previous Fathers said and in the text of the Holy Scripture, leaving room for the birth, development and perpetuation of heretical ideas under the name of *tradition*, in obvious opposition to the truth of Tradition (Chirilă 2009a, 15-9; Chirilă 2009b, 11-3).

Historians have chronologically divided the existence of the School of Antioch into three distinct stages:

1. Formative period (290-370). Dorotheus and Lucian were the first important figures in the Christian centre of Antioch Syria. There is also the opinion that the real founder of the school was Malchion of Antioch, the most important fighter against the heresy of Lucian of Samosata, but above all "a man of a multilateral culture, who had been before and at the head of a rhetorical school within the educational institutions of the Hellenes of Antioch, but who was also the most esteemed by the priesthood of the community of this city for the exceptional purity of his Christian faith" (Eusebius of Caesarea 1987, 301). However, one cannot speak of the beginning of this school, through a spectacular increase in the level of education of the clergy and faithful in the institutional setting. Therefore, its beginnings must be sought at the beginning of the preaching and obedience of faith in Christ, the Messiah, by the Holy Apostles and their

disciples (Vacant and Mangenot 1909, 1436).

2. *Flowering period (370-430)*. Two great personalities known above all for their boldness in expounding theology together with their ideas mark the beginning of this stage in the history of the existence of the school of Antioch: Bishop Flavian and Diodorus of Tarsus (†394). The latter is joined as disciples and friends by Theodore of Mopsuestia and St. John Chrysostom (Bud 2020, 43). Theodore gave great impetus to the group of scholars and teachers in Antioch through his specific method of interpreting Scripture: grammatically, historically, traditionally and typologically.

3. *The period of decadence (after 430)*. The decline of this school is due to the attachment of many leaders to rational results transmitted with greater impact than the literal text of the Holy Scriptures in this didactic-ecclesiastical environment. Moreover, Nestorius, a disciple of Theodore, argues against the truth certified by the Sobor of the Church, the duality of persons in Jesus Christ. More serious is the result of the analysis of the entire production of this school which has exposed Theodore of Mopsuestia as the father of this heresy. "The School of Antioch disappeared into history because it fell into the Nestorian heresy, which was for it a germ of death" (Vacant and Mangenot 1909, 1436).

Biographical notes

Theodore of Mopsuestia was born in 350 in Antioch Syria, to a wealthy family (St. John Chrysostom 1898, 209), his brother being Polihronius, the future bishop of Apamea, and his cousin Paenius. St John Chrysostom addressed four epistles to the latter, noted 95, 193, 204, and 220 respectively, which are found in the *Patrologia Graeca*, vol. 52. Theodore's intellectual formation is determined by the schools he attended, by the circles of friends in which he worked at various stages of his life, and by his careful and individual study of the books of Holy Scripture. It is well known that Theodore quickly distinguished himself for his qualities in rhetoric, philosophy and history (Tillemont 1707, 434). He began to perfect his rhetoric with Maximus, the future bishop of Seleucia in Isauria, who in Antioch had as pupils and friends Theodore and John Chrysostom (Paraschiv 2008, VII), then from the pagan sophist Libanius (Hill 2006, XV), who arrived in Antioch at the height of his activity (Socrates Scholasticus VI,3).

Another stage in Theodore's education was his encounter with Saints John Chrysostom and Basil the Great. The latter persuades the young Antiochians to leave Libanius and enter the monastic school of Carterius and Diodorus, during which time

Rev. Ion-Sorin Bora
Theodore of Mopsuestia – an Exponential Exegete of the Antiochian School
in the Golden Age of Christianity
15

Theodore receives the Sacrament of Holy Baptism (Paraschiv 2008, VIII). Theodore gave up the riches he had in this world around 368 to embrace the simplicity and poverty of monastic life. "His conversion was prompt and at the same time sincere and very intense" (Tillemont 1707, 434).

Diodorus of Tarsus was a disciple and friend of Flavian of Antioch, a contemporary of St. Basil the Great and a participant in the Ecumenical Council of Constantinople. Diodoran Christology is formed by opposition to the last great heretic, Julian the Apostate. Diodorus of Tarsus became for his young students the "initiator" and then the "true founder" (Hill 2006, XV). As a pupil of Diodorus of Tarsus, Theodore of Mopsuestia "spent his days reading and his nights in prayer; he fasted long, slept on the ground and practised all forms of asceticism" (Paraschiv 2008, VIII). Theodore would remain more Diodor's disciple than his friend. St John Chrysostom, around 374, left the two for a deeper ascetic life and Theodore stayed for another four years (Hill 2006, XV) until Diodor's ordination as Bishop of Tarsus in 379. When Diodorus is elected bishop of the see of Tarsus, Theodore no doubt followed him as a true spiritual son. In 381 Theodore, then a priest in Antioch, attended the Ecumenical Council in Constantinople as Diodorus' companion and, on Diodorus' death, might have become Bishop of Tarsus if the people of Tarsus had not preferred Theophilus of Alexandria (Tillemont 1707, 437).

A new phase in Theodore's life began in 392 when he was elected bishop of the Church of Mopsuestia, the third largest city in Cilicia. In this capacity he vigorously defends St John Chrysostom in 404, converts many pagans to Christianity and writes most of his exegetical work. His work was fruitful, fighting in writing and in discussion with the heretics of the time: Origenists, Arians, Eunomians, Apollinarists, and Pnevmatonmahites. His disciples include Theodoret of Cyrus, Rufinus, Nestorius and John of Antioch. Theodore's strong personality led the latter to use his name and work whenever they "produced" opinions that were difficult to accept by the simple faithful and the Orthodox clergy. St. Cyril of Alexandria, who calls him "the father of Nestorianism", demonstrates that the root of these disciples' heresies lies in the work of the famous bishop of Mopsuestia. The dogmatic truth is not to be found in the work of Theodore which Father Alexandrinus consulted. But is this the true work of Theodore?

The Falls of Theodore

Theodore fell at least once. But when he was alive, he appreciated the rebuke, owned his mistake and got back on track. It is known that Theodore entered the school

of Carterius as an apprentice, taking monastic vows immediately after his baptism. But Hermione, a young woman renowned for her beauty, made Theodore change his decision to follow a celibate life and marry her. Attracted by the young Hermione, Theodore renounced his celibate life and decided to marry her, living a secular life for a time (Patterson 2011, 2). Theodore's first fall shed many tears from the eyes of his friends, and many words were chosen and written for his uplift, of which a decisive role was played by the writings of St. John Chrysostom, "ad Theodorum Lapsum" (St. John Chrysostom 1898, 91). Thus St. John Chrysostom convinces Theodore that leaving the angelic life for Hermione is a great sin, marriage to her being a true adultery (Tillemont 1707, 435). Theodore's return was sincere and his determination in studying the Holy Scriptures was evident.

Theodore's other falls manifested themselves in preaching and writing, that is, in expounding his convictions as truths to be followed by the believers he addressed. In one of his sermons, Theodore stated that the Virgin Mary should not be called the *Birth of God*, a statement to which believers responded with protests to which he was forced to recant. This accusation went unchallenged until the beginning of the 20th century when theologians proved that this episode was an anecdote: Nestorius also attended the sermon and persuaded Theodore to retract (Devreesse 1948, 128-91; Mckenzie 1949, 402). From an anecdote for the Nestorians' humbling of Theodore's personality came the denunciation of Theodore as the father of the Nestorians and as having anticipated Pelagianism. After long controversies over Theodore's work and person, which are revealed more than a century after he died in 428, Theodore of Mopsuestia was posthumously condemned, man and work, by the Fifth Ecumenical Council (553) as one of the "three chapters". The Byzantine emperor Justinian fought for Theodore's condemnation, who was convinced that the Antiochian had divided the Logos-Christ into two persons, one human and one divine so that Theodore's Christ was but a mere man (Anastos 1951, 125).

Exegetical writings

The writings of Theodore of Mopsuestia are numerous, which is why Facundas, Bishop of Hermiane in North Africa, the most important defender of Theodore's memory, considered that the Syrian theologian wrote "countless books", while John of Antioch speaks of "tens of thousands", obviously both quantifications being exaggerated, but announcing an obvious reality: Theodore of Mopsuestia was a particularly prolific

Rev. Ion-Sorin Bora
Theodore of Mopsuestia – an Exponential Exegete of the Antiochian School
in the Golden Age of Christianity

17

writer, leaving behind him a very large work. Through his efforts, but consistent with a traditional grammatical hermeneutic, a good part of the books of the Holy Scriptures have been annotated in their entirety in Syriac. Thus, the library left to the Syriac-speaking Church by Theodore of Mopsuestia was taken as a starting point in the theological arguments of his followers but especially as an interpretative model.

Because the Fifth Ecumenical Council of Constantinople (553) condemned the man and work of Theodore of Mopsuestia between the "three points", most of his writings were lost or destroyed. But it was the discussion of this heretic that aroused the curiosity of the African bishops who, to make informed decisions, proceeded to translate the Theodoric writings into Latin. These Latin translations have persisted to the present day, allowing us to know a rich exegetical work, representative of the beginnings of the Antiochian exegetical school. Another way of transmitting Theodore's work was by false attribution, following the otherwise classic method of heretics of disseminating his works under the names of orthodox fathers. Thus, a fragment of the Theodorian commentary on the Acts of the Apostles, attributed to Eutalius, was preserved as an explanatory note to Manuscript H containing the text of the Holy Scriptures. The transmission of this text practically defies the condemnation of the complete work by the Fifth Ecumenical Council, since the text in question, although belonging to Theodore, passes as orthodox among right-thinking Christian readers.

A complete list of the exegetical writings by Theodore of Mopsuestia is given by Ebed Jesu, the last great representative of Syriac theology, who also compiled the catalogues of Syriac writers between 314 and 1300 (Bar Brika 1852, 361-79). The first exegetical work, in chronological order, by Theodore of Mopsuestia, when he was a priest in Antioch, is a commentary on the Psalms of David. Having been written when he could not yet be suspected of heresy, it has been transmitted almost in its entirety, occupying 25 columns in the Patrologia Graeca edited by Jean-Paul Migne. The commentaries on the Psalms use the historical-grammatical method. After introducing the reader to the historical context of the psalm, Theodore comments on it by giving numerous connections to precise events in Israel's history (von Rooy 2009, 120-34). The Bishop of Mopsuestia paid particular attention to the historical books of the Old Testament, the Pentateuch of Moses, Joshua Navi, Judges, Ruth, Samuel and Kings. Some fragments were discovered and published by Hieromonk Nichifor in *Catena in Octateuchum et Libros Regum*, which appeared in Leipzig in 1772. We can imagine that Theodore supported the "Nestorian" and the "apokatastasis" ideas, which he expounded at length,

Rev. Ion-Sorin Bora
*Theodore of Mopsuestia – an Exponential Exegete of the Antiochian School
in the Golden Age of Christianity*

18

according to the testimony of Photius, in the last two of the three volumes of his work *Magia persanii.* Of the commentaries on the poetic books written by Theodore, the commentary on the Book of Job, dedicated, uninspired we say, to St. Cyril of Alexandria (Paraschiv 2008, VII), is interesting. Finally, the books of the minor prophets were explained by Theodore of Mopsuestia according to his exegetical method, commentaries which have been preserved and published in full. He also looked at two books written by King Solomon, Ecclesiastes and Song of Songs, which he explained but disputed their inspired character.

New Testament exegetical work is also well represented in Theodore's concerns, focusing, as Ebed-Jesus tells us, on the Gospels of Matthew, Luke and John, Acts, the Pauline epistles and some of the pastoral epistles. The commentary on the Gospel of John was published in full by Chabot in Paris in 1897, and extracts from the Gospel exegeses are found in PG 66. It is not only Ebed Jesu who speaks of commentaries on the Pauline writings of Theodore; these works were quoted in discussions at the Fifth Ecumenical Council by popes Virgilius, Pelagius and Facundus. The commentary on the Epistle to the Galatians and the following nine Pauline epistles of the New Testament canon are preserved in their entirety in Latin.

Because he did not mention them in the writings that were translated into Greek, Theodore of Mopsuestia was accused of disputing the canonicity of some of the Old Testament books I, II Paralipomena, Job, Song of Songs and Ecclesiastes (Leontius of Byzantium 1913, 121-56). The same is true of six books of the New Testament: James, 2 Peter, 2 and 3 John, Jude and Revelation (Stamatoiu 1998, 218). The error can be excused because Theodore followed exactly the Antiochian view of the canon of Holy Scripture at the time. There are other explanations for the so-called split in the canon of Holy Scripture expressed by hostile judges of Theodoric's work. Devreesse has painted another profile for Theodore. The titles of the psalms were rejected by Theodore as canonical, parts of Job and perhaps Ecclesiastes but also the literary species of the book of Song of Songs. Also, not quoting from James, I Peter and I John in the New Testament does not mean that he rejects them from the canon of Holy Scripture (Mckenzie 1949, 399).

Biblical inspiration was considered by Theodore not in terms of the theandric work of transmitting and codifying the words of the Godly Scriptures, but as the fruits of this work. Thus, some books are diminished in their sacred dimension by reducing inspiration to "the gift of prudence and wisdom" for poetic books (Proverbs, Ecclesias-

Rev. Ion-Sorin Bora
Theodore of Mopsuestia – an Exponential Exegete of the Antiochian School
in the Golden Age of Christianity   19

tes) and to "the grace of prophecy" for prophetic books (Stamatoiu 1998, 218). Similarly, he notes the book of Job as "a drama composed after the pagan poetic art by a vein poet" and the Song of Songs as a poem dedicated to Solomon's marriage to the Egyptian princess (Stamatoiu 1998, 218), "a relic of Solomon's other poetic works, allowing an insight into domestic life" (Paraschiv 2008, XVII). The total disregard for previous research led Theodore to exclude the Song of Songs from the canon because "it was never read in the synagogue or churches" (Paraschiv 2008, XVII). No one, however, can easily decide whether this compromising information was written by Theodore or by the forgers of his work.

The method of exegesis used by Theodore was taken in part from his forerunner Diodorus of Tarsus, whose work, however, is insignificant. "For him, Scripture has only one meaning, either that of the mere letter or the writing, or that which lies hidden in hyperbole and metaphor. The multiple meanings of Scripture are absurd. Those who interpret Scripture allegorically are playing with the truth of God" (Tyng 1931, 303). Opposing the Alexandrian exegetical school, which proposed allegorism as an exegetical method even for historical books, Theodore falls into the other extreme, of historical and literary interpretation of the scriptural text, while accepting with great difficulty some typological references to Christ in the Old Testament books. His exaggeration in applying the literal-historical sense is even seen in his denial of the applicability of the Psalms to Christ, recognizing as Christological only 23 or 24 Psalms. The "style of Theodore" is his style of interpreting the Holy Scriptures, recognized above all by his hermeneutical independence from the authorities in the field and his refusal to accept the Christological interpretation of the prophetic texts. These "stylistic flaws" did not diminish the scope of his exegetical work, but aroused the curiosity offered by his originality, later condemned as heretical by the Church.

Doctrine

Theodore of Mopsuestia was a prolific fighter against the heresies condemned by the Church before him. Origenists, Arians, Eunomians, Pnevmatonmahites "benefited" from the attention of Theodore of Mopsuestia, who delivered numerous sermons against them and composed his writings with apologetic and dogmatic observations for the suppression of the mentioned heresies. Attempting to combat the heresy of Paul of Samosata, for whom Christ is a mere man, Theodore defined the connection between the human and divine natures in the hypostasis of the Logos Inhumitus by the term

parsupo (πρόσωπον, person) (Apostolache 2014, 157). Theodore of Mospsuestia was at one time Orthodox and a defender of Orthodoxy in the struggle against Arian and Apollinarist heretics. Incidentally, he died in peace with the Church and covered with glory. This is why some of his thought is accepted by the Church, knowingly or not, in the treatises of the Antiochian followers and not only (Rees 1939, 352).

Theodore's greatest errors are in Christology and Soteriology. Theodoret maintains the identity of nature and person in the Savior, and thus the existence not only of two natures but also of two persons. The union of the two beings and persons is purely moral. It is a union of goodwill, of authority, of dignity, of sonship. This is because it cannot be said that God was born of the Virgin. He who is born of Mary is of the seed of David. Therefore, between the two beings and persons, there is only a relationship, an inhabitation. Theodore rejects the communication of appropriations: the Jesus of history cannot be attributed to the titles and deeds of the Logos, and the Logos cannot be attributed to those of Jesus. The Virgin Mary is the Birth of God only by relationship. She can also be called the Birth of Man and the Birth of God, Birth of Man by nature of the thing, Birth of God by relationship. Jesus is the Son of God, but by grace, the same as man. In Jesus Christ, there are two sons.

Denying the inheritance of original sin, Theodore argued that salvation means only the elevation of the human being to a higher stage, which is entered into with Baptism. In the light of discoveries in his writings, the judgment on Theodore's doctrine is today more comprehensive, though not definitive. Thus, we learn his belief that man was not created by God immortal but mortal; Adam and Eve were wounded by their sin and the guilt for the universality of mortality does not belong to Adam. The justification for this slippage by Theodore's new defenders is that "Theodore saw, or thought he saw, in the writings of Jerome a declaration of the inevitability of sin; in his vigorous style he went too far in the opposite direction. Hence we may say that Theodore has not yet perfectly synthesized in his mind the elements of the doctrine of original sin" (Mckenzie 1949, 400).

Theodore affirms, however, the real, not symbolic, presence of Christ in the Eucharist and the transformation of the bread and wine into the Lord's Body and Blood.

Theodore of Mospuestia's status as a heretic is attacked with assessments of his extensive work, his complex personality and their effects. Moreover, just as an attempt is made to reconcile the methods of interpretation of Alexandria and Antioch based on the typology authorized by Antiochian hermeneutics, so too is an attempt made to

Rev. Ion-Sorin Bora
*Theodore of Mopsuestia – an Exponential Exegete of the Antiochian School
in the Golden Age of Christianity*

21

mitigate dogmatic discrepancies by arguing the differences in meaning for "being" and "person" in the language of Theodora.

St. Cyril of Alexandria turned his attention from Nestorius to Theodore of Mopsuestia in the early years after the Ecumenical Council of Ephesus. He notes, for example, that the Theodorian interpretation of the fragment of the Psalms (Ps 8:4-5, taken up by St. Ap. Paul in the Christology of the Epistle to the Hebrews, Hb 2:7-9) was the basis for Nestorius' division of Jesus' threads (Parvis 1975, 416).

Is Theodore's Christology identical to Nestorius'? The Fifth Ecumenical Council decided, based on the texts attributed to Theodore, that the work of Theodore of Mopsuestia should be condemned as heretical, as should his person. This condemnation has not been lifted, despite all the apologies made so far for these misdeeds and all the attempts to exclude the incriminating fragments from the originals of the Bishop of Mopsuestia.

Conclusions

Theodore of Mopsuestia, the leading exponent of the School of Antioch, both as a disciple and especially as a teacher, was a powerful personality to whom many scholars and teachers throughout the centuries, from different parts of the Christian world (Chalcedonian and non-Chalcedonian), turned their critical eyes. The honour he enjoyed from his disciples, the lack of condemnation of his work during his lifetime, and the possible impregnation of heretical ideas in translations made in heterodox environments are some of the directions in which research has been carried out to rehabilitate the personality and work of Theodore of Mopsuestia.

Because only an Ecumenical Council could raise anathema on him and his work, Theodore can be judged with caution and studied only in the light of the teaching of faith certified in the decisions of the Ecumenical Synods, lest the heretical interferences in his works that have been handed down to us, be still today the ferment of unbelief or the destruction of the principles of sound education.

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Rev. ION-SORIN BORA
Theodore of Mopsuestia – an Exponential Exegete of the Antiochian School in the Golden Age of Christianity

22

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Portrait of St. John the Baptist in the prologue of the Fourth Gospel

Abstract

This article analyses the portrait of John the Baptist in the prologue of the Gospel of John. It explores both the hymnic prologue (Jn 1:6-8.15) which speaks of John as the witness "sent by God" to testify to the coming Light, as well as the narrative prologue (Jn 1:19-34) where John denies being the Messiah but points to the "Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world." The study excavates the mission, role, and testimony of the Baptizer in preparing the way for Christ. Though subordinate to Jesus, John is presented as the first and paradigmatic witness who actualizes the prophetic tradition to proclaim the arrival of the long-awaited salvation. His testimony progresses from affirming the unknown presence of the One "standing among you" to explicitly identifying Jesus as the pre-existent Son. While the Johannine prologue features multiple witnesses to Christ, John the Baptist is the foremost herald who fades humbly into the background once the Bridegroom appears. As the study unpacks this rich, multi-layered portrait across the opening chapters of John's Gospel, it illuminates John's vital function in revealing the incarnate Logos to the world.

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Keywords

John the Baptist, witness, Prologue, Gospel of John, Christ

Preliminaries

The reading and analysis of the Gospel of John has given readers and exegetes of all times great delight and joy, and this has been the case from its very first lines which contain a "Prologue" or solemn hymn, a biblical text that has made history in the

theological literature of Christianity, being one of the most significant literary, biblical and theological reference points (Ravasi 2016, 485).

The Johannine Prologue is rightly considered a "masterpiece of New Testament literature". In attempting to comment on this Gospel text (sometime around 414 AD), Augustine addressed his audience as follows: "Abandoned to his nature, man will never be able to understand those of the Spirit of God. I feel powerless: how can I tell others what the Spirit inspires in me, or how can I interpret the text I have read? And then, brother, should I be silent? Who would benefit from silence? What joy do you have in listening to this text, and I do not explain it to you?... I am convinced that among you some can understand it, even without my explanations, but I do not want to deprive those who cannot understand it of my word... The Lord and His mercy will accompany us, so that all may understand according to their ability, for he who reads also says what he can. Who can speak as he ought about the works of God? I venture to say, brethren, that not even John was able to do this; he also spoke as much as he could, for he was but a man..." (St. Augustine 1968, 31).

Comparing the exegesis of the Johannine Prologue by Blessed Augustine and St. John Chrysostom, Professor M.A. Aucoin pointed out that both thought it was beyond human possibilities to speak as St. John speaks in the prologue of his Gospel (Aucoin 1963, 123-31). The choice of the eagle as the symbol of John's evangelism was prompted by the spiritual loftiness of the lines on the first page of his Gospel (Brown 1999, 26).

With this initial theological meditation, St. John was able to present to his readers, in summary, his own Christology which he would develop in the pages of his Gospel. Indeed, the Johannine Prologue contains some 40 terms that are specific to the Fourth Gospel. For this reason, a correct understanding of this pericope is essential for understanding the whole work (Ravasi 2016, 487).

J.A.T. Robinson insists on the impressive amount of themes common to the Prologue and the contents of the Fourth Gospel: the theme of the pre-existence of the Son (1,1 = 17,5); the theme of the Light of men and of the world (1,4.9 = 8,12; 9,5); the antithesis between Light and darkness (1,5 = 3,19); the view of the glory of the Son (1,14 = 12,41); the title of "One-Born" (1,14.18 = 3,16); no one but the Son has ever seen God the Father (1,18 = 6,46), and the two breaks in the hymn that speak of John the Baptist are related to what is said about him in the contents of the Fourth Gospel (1,7 repeated in 1,19; 1,15 = 1,30) (Robinson 1962-1963, 122).

In keeping with the Synoptic tradition, the author of the Fourth Gospel also speaks of a "man sent from God" (1:6) as "the first witness" of the incarnate Logos and the Light that has come into the world (3:19). This witness was "sent by God", a dignity which in the Fourth Gospel is attributed only to the Saviour Christ and the Holy Spirit, a detail which highlights the greatness of the one who came to fulfil this unique role in salvation history.

Portrait of John the Forerunner in the Hymnic Prologue

The third stanza of the Prologue (1:6-8) brings John the Baptist to the readers' attention: 'He was a man sent from God, and his name was John'. The Evangelist John highlights a new aspect of the story of the Logos: a personage of this world, born of flesh and blood, receives from God the mission to proclaim to people the presence of the Light or the Logos so that people will recognize him (Dufour 1990, 96).

This witness is said to have been "sent by God". This quality of "sent by God" evokes in this text the call of the prophets of old: Moses, Samuel, Isaiah, Jeremiah, or "the prophet who was to come" (Mt 11:3; Lk 7:20), according to a prophetic text of Malachi (Mal 3:1,23). Not the Logos, but God Himself entrusted John with this special mission in salvation history: "to bear witness to the Light" (In 1:7). The author of the Prologue prefers to use here the noun "witness" ($\mu\alpha\rho\tau\upsilon\rho\iota\alpha\nu$) without the article to indicate the mission or ministry that John received from God. It is about the witness par excellence that God Himself will give to the Incarnate Logos through the mouth of John the Forerunner (Dufour 1990, 96).

Like the other evangelists, the author of the Fourth Gospel is keen to present the testimony of Jesus' messiahship from the outset. However, St John the Theologian, like St Luke, and even more so than the evangelists Matthew and Mark, insists on the subordinate role of the Forerunner as one who was not the Light, but only the one sent by God to bear witness to the Light. Some exegetes believe that by mentioning John the Baptist here, the author of the Prologue would like to answer some of John the Baptist's disciples who did not embrace the Christian faith that their teacher was the true Messiah and that Jesus had usurped this title. From the Book of Acts (FAp 19:1) we learn that these disciples of John the Baptist were on a mission of their own in Asia Minor so that St. Paul would find twelve followers of the school of John the Baptist in Ephesus (Mihoc 2003, 50).

The third stanza of the Prologue speaks of the coming of the Light into the world to dispel the darkness of ignorance of God. Between stanza two and stanza three, the editor of the Prologue has placed three verses that speak of the Forerunner's mission to prepare people for the coming of the Word and His light (Brown 1999, 39).

Marie-Émile Boismard, in her work *St. John Prologue*, proposes the hypothesis that verses 6 and 7 originally formed the beginning of the Fourth Gospel (Boismard 1957, 127). The words in verse 6: "There was a man sent from God, his name was John" could be a natural beginning for a historical narrative (cf. Lk 1:5). In the pages of the Old Testament, Samson's story begins the same way: "But there was at that time a man of Zorah, of the tribe of Dan, whose name was Manoah, and his wife was barren and did not bear children" (Jgs 13:2). Moreover, if verses 6 and 7 were, at the beginning, before verses 19-31, we would have a text as flowing and coherent as possible. If verse 7 of the Prologue tells us that John came "to testify about the Light", verses 19-31 recount the content of this testimony and the circumstances in which it was given. Normally and naturally, the Light is seen and there is no need for anyone to come and bear witness to it, but in verse 19ff it is a witness given to the Light before those who stubbornly refused to see it and remained in darkness (Brown 1999, 39).

Verse 8 subordinates John the Baptist to Jesus: 'He (John) was not the Light, but (came) to testify about the Light'. Some exegetes believe that *Benedictus* (from Lk 1:68-79) was originally a hymn in honour of the Forerunner, a hymn that was later adapted by Christians in favour of the Savior Christ. Verses 78 and 79 of *Benedictus* link the mission of John the Baptist to the moment of the Incarnation of the Logos in history, a wonderful event seen and celebrated as a "Rising" (Barret 1978, 161. 170-9).

The testimony that John the Baptist must give to the Light in the poetic Prologue (1:1-18) stands out more clearly if we compare it with that contained in the narrative Prologue (1:19ff). The man John is the witness sent by God to help people recognize the work of the Light. If in the pages of the Prologue it is a "witness" (v. 7) given to the Word, in the narrative Prologue John the Baptist must reveal to his contemporaries the presence of the One who, though present in the world, was not yet known: "In your midst is he whom you do not know" (Jn 1:26).

Before the darkness and the ignorance of God threatens the world, the witness must rise to proclaim legally, on behalf of God, the presence and victory of the Light (Dufour 1990, 97). But what do the words "that all may believe through him" mean? The universalistic context in which the first part of the poetic prologue is presented

leads us to believe that this "all" refers not only to the contemporaries of a historical figure but to all people, beyond any spatial or temporal boundaries. How important this biblical figure is and how much prestige God has given to this man whom he sent into the world to bear witness to the Light!

Although verse 8 of the Prologue may conceal a polemic against John's disciples, the essence of the text lies elsewhere: the evangelist John has a special esteem for the Lord's Forerunner, whom he calls "an authorized or accredited intermediary from above" between the Logos and the humanity he came to redeem, a unique dignity that the narrative Prologue also highlights as clearly as possible (Brown 1999, 40).

In the narrative prologue (1:19-28) John calls himself a "prophetic voice", actualizing the entire prophetic tradition that preceded him in Israel and all the prophecies of the salvation that God has brought to the world in Jesus Christ. In verses 6-8 of the Prologue, the Lord's Forerunner is the typical figure of all the "witnesses" who in the course of history have been sent by God to testify before men to the presence of the Light (Heb 1:1). The figure of this witness is not confined to a single personage – in our case, John the Baptist – nor is his mission confined to a particular time in history; his message is universal. In the time preceding Christ's coming into the world, God did not deprive the world of "witnesses" to guide people towards the Light (Heb 12:1). John's mission and role are in action, we might say, throughout history.

John the Baptist was the "lamp" in whose light people were enlightened "for a moment", while the Logos or the Word is "the Light that enlightens every man who comes into the world" (v. 9). In chapter 3 of the fourth Gospel, John will call himself "the friend of the bridegroom" (v. 29). When the Bridegroom (Christ) is present, the "friend of the bridegroom" (John) shrinks back, withdraws discreetly, or at most conducts the wedding ceremony. In Eastern practice, the groom's friend had the role of preparing the groom's meeting with the bride, looking after the economic and social interests connected with the marriage contract, and being the discreet link of the feelings of the couple entering into a marriage (Ravasi 2016, 499).

The last stanza of the hymnic Prologue (1:15-18) is closely related to the preceding one. The Prologue could not be without a summary or summary of the testimony of John the Baptist, which affirms not only the Messiahship of the Incarnate Word but also his pre-existence (i.e. deity) (Mihoc 2003, 54).

Exegetes and commentators consider that here too, in the last stanza of the Prologue (vv. 15-18), as in Acts 1:6-8, the mention of the Forerunner John, the

privileged witness of the Incarnation of the Word, interrupts the unfolding of the poem and that the four verses could be considered an addition. Some exegetes insist on the slightly polemical meaning of verse 15: "John testified about him (Christ) and cried out, saying: This was the One of whom I said: He who comes after me was before me because he was before me". According to Jesus' words (Mt 11:9-11), "There has not risen among those born of women one greater than John the Baptist". Xavier Léon-Dufour considers that the polemical aspect of the text cannot be entirely excluded, but the Prologue does not include this aspect in the author's intention. The text had earlier emphasized (in vv. 6-8) that John was not the Light but at the same time elevated John to the high prophetic dignity of "a man sent by God", "a witness to the Light", a dignity which made him a special figure in the history of salvation. If the Lord's forerunner affirms the superiority of the Saviour Christ in 1:15, he does so from this position or quality of "man sent by God" (1:6) and "prophet of the Most High" (Lk 1:76) (Dufour 1990, 124).

The superiority of the Savior Christ, based on His pre-existence, is the content of the words of the Forerunner John. The expression ἔμπροσθέν can have two meanings: temporal and spatial. Translators often prefer the first, temporal sense: "He (Christ) was before me" (with the sense of "preceded me in time"), but this translation puts a tautology in the mouth of the Forerunner since John says further "because he was before me". Xavier Léon-Dufour prefers the spatial sense of the term, which helps us understand the superiority of the incarnate Logos ("He [Christ] is above me").

This sense of the superiority of the Incarnate Logos over His Forerunner emphasized in the Immaculate Prologue (v. 15), will be confirmed in the narrative Prologue that follows: by proclaiming in this verse "This was he of whom I said...", John refers to a word, or a testimony spoken the day after the Lord's Baptism. After recognizing Jesus Christ, the "Lamb of God" (Jn 1:29), John proclaims, "This is the One of whom I said: After me comes a man who is greater than I (or in other translations, *was before me*), for he was before me" (Jn 1:30). Saint Luke, recounting the testimony of the forerunner, will say: "I baptize you with water, but He who is greater than I is coming after me" (Lk 3:16).

These words, in turn, refer to what the Lord's forerunner had said the day before, speaking of "the One who is coming after me" (Jn 1:27). Before meeting Jesus, John the Baptist knew the superiority of the One who was to come and felt unworthy to do for Him even the service of a servant: "I am not worthy to untie His shoe belt" (Jn 1:27) (Dufour 1990, 125).

In this way, the servant – a man of flesh and blood – Is bound to the mystery of the incarnate Logos. If we consider the tense of the verbs that appear in the text, John the Baptist is not simply a witness who speaks to a specific time in history (a specific generation) and who performs an act linked to the past. The testimony of the Forerunner is introduced by a verb in the present tense: "John was testifying about him" and by another verb in the perfect-present tense, a tense specific to prophetic speech "cry out" (κέκραγεν). In Romanian, we have the imperfect tense which belongs to the indicative mood, and which expresses (or indicates) an action begun in the past and which continues at the moment of speaking. Moreover, while the situation of the story in the first chapter is contemporary: "This *is the one* about whom I said...", in this verse (v. 15) we read instead "This *was* the one about whom I said...". Since this imperfect refers to a personage from the past, John's testimony must be framed according to the Savior's public and earthly activity. It is as if John the Baptist continues to bear witness to the Word of God, his witness being a reality that must always be renewed. The statement in the Prologue has a supra-temporal dimension. John the Baptist is the inspired historical figure – the prophet of God – who had and has the role of affirming and confirming before all that this Man now "among us" (1:14) is the Logos or Word of God, spoken of from the very beginning of the Prologue.

The following verses (vv. 16-18) are probably not a continuation of the testimony of the Forerunner John, but rather pick up the thread of the argument interrupted in verse 15. The phrase "his fullness" refers us back to verse 14, where Christ the Word was said to be "full of grace and truth". From this fullness of grace and truth, "we all" – that is, all of us born of God through faith in Jesus Christ – "have also received grace upon grace", an expression that indicates the immeasurable richness of Christ's grace that believers receive (Mihoc 2003, 54).

Portrait of John the Forerunner in the Narrative Prologue

Beginning in verse 19, the evangelist John seems to start from the beginning. In perfect keeping with the Synoptic tradition, the evangelist begins his story of Jesus of Nazareth with the figure of the Forerunner John and his activity on the banks of the Jordan. According to this (synoptic) tradition, the life or public activity of the Saviour Christ is introduced using a triptych made up of three episodes: 'the preaching of John the Baptist', 'the baptism of Jesus' and 'the temptation of the Saviour in the wilderness'. In the Fourth Gospel, the preacher John becomes a witness of Jesus, the Savior's bap-

tism is only indirectly evoked by a testimony of the Forerunner, and the scene of the temptation in the wilderness is missing, the temptations appearing discreetly throughout the narrative. The triptych specific to the Synoptic tradition is replaced by three tableaux which, in their succession, form a literary unity (Dufour 1990, 147-8).

The text between Ac 1:19 and 2:12 forms a literary unit, which exegetes and commentators have called the "narrative prologue". The glory of Jesus is revealed progressively before he enters concrete public life. The first panel (Jn 1:19-34) introduces John the Baptist, the "first witness" of the Word made flesh, the witness of whom the Immaculate Prologue spoke twice (Jn 1:6-7,15). John testified before the people of Israel that the Messiah promised by God is present and that the Messiah is "the Lamb of God" (Jn 1:36).

The Fourth Gospel has many "witnesses" who bear witness to the incarnate Logos: John the Baptist is the first of these witnesses (Jn 5:35); the Scriptures bear witness to Jesus (Jn 5:39); God the Father bears witness to His Son (Jn 5:37; 8:18); the deeds (signs/minutes) that Jesus performs bear witness to Him (Jn 5:36; 10:25); the Holy Spirit bears witness to Christ (Jn 15:26); and finally, His disciples (Jn 19:35) (Dufour 1990, 150). The first witness and "witness par excellence" of the Saviour, the man "sent by God" (1:6) "to bear witness to the Light" (1:7) is John the Baptist, the Forerunner of the Lord. His testimony, expressed before a Sanhedrin commission of inquiry, opens the "trial" that will pit Jesus against the spiritual leaders of the Jews (the scribes and Pharisees). The testimony of John the Baptist - first expressed in the negative, then in the positive - is spread over two different days separated by the phrase "and the next day" (Jn 1:29, 35). The two days correspond to the two mentions of John that appear in the hymnic Prologue: the witness of the Word (Jn 1:6-8) affirms, first of all, the presence in the world of the One who is not yet known: "In your midst is the One whom you do not know" (Jn 1:26), and secondly, he identifies in Jesus the One Who is from eternity (Jn 1:27, 30).

From the very beginning, John the Baptist – "the first witness of the Word made flesh" – puts himself in the shadows or the background, claiming to be "Someone" already present in the world whom the Jews do not know (Jn 1:26). On the next day, or "the day after", he points to Jesus, through whom God will end the dominion of sin and death. Before an official delegation from the Jerusalem Sanhedrin, John the Baptist confesses that he is not the Christ (Messiah), nor the eschatological prophet (whom the

Jews were intensely expecting). John defines himself as "the witness" who came "to bear witness to the Light", as the words of Is 40:3 (Mihoc 2003, 57) are written about him.

About the Lord's Forerunner, we have a testimony from the historian Josephus Flavius, who describes him in this way: "John was a chosen man who exhorted his contemporaries to cultivate virtue and to be just to one another, showing their piety to God through baptism [repentance]" (Josephus Flavius 2001, 454). His activity extends from the autumn of 27 AD to the spring of 29 AD, during the second Qumran period, a period dominated by the Zealot Essenes. John's highly original religious movement resonated deeply with his contemporaries, a fact also noted by the Jewish historian Josephus Flavius. Such a movement would later be found in Ephesus (in Asia Minor), according to information in the Book of Acts, long after the death of the Forerunner, and survivors of this movement would be found in Syria towards the end of 300 AD.

The Synoptic tradition records that the Jews of Palestine were divided about John the Baptist: the crowds were attracted by his preaching and baptism of repentance, and many wondered, "Is he not the Christ?" (Lk 3:15), but the Jewish religious authorities did not believe in this hypothesis and sometimes considered John to be possessed by the devil (Mt 11:18) (Dufour 1990, 152).

Of the Logos or Word of God, John clearly and emphatically confesses that he is the "Messiah" or "Christ", presenting Him as "the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world" (Jn 1:29). Thus, the Lord's Forerunner announces that Jesus will save people through His sacrifice, and as proof of Jesus' messiahship, John offers the confirmation that the Holy Spirit Himself gave him when He baptized Him in the Jordan River (Mihoc 2003, 57).

The text of the Fourth Gospel stages a confrontation between the official Sanhedrin delegation and John the Baptist: "Who are you?" he was asked (Acts 1:19). From the Gospel of Luke, we know that John the Baptist came from a priestly family (the priest Zechariah was from the priestly brood of Abijah, and his wife Elizabeth was from the daughters of Aaron), but his ministry or mission was not that of priest (as was that of his father) in the holy place. The space or place of his mission was the desert of Judea where he, invested with a prophetic mandate (Mt 3:1; Lk 3:2), prepared the people for the encounter with the Lord's Christ, offering the people the baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins (cf. Mt 3:1-12; Mk 1:2-8; Lk 3:1-18; Phil 13:24; 19:4).

By saying "I am not the Christ" (1:20), John seems to be answering the question he was asked, but this answer is as pertinent as possible because it immediately reveals

the object of the inquiry he was under, an inquiry that would later continue with Jesus Himself in the pages of the Fourth Gospel (cf. Jn 7:26, 31, 41; 10:24; 12:34).

Two other questions follow about John the Baptist's relationship to "Elijah", or "the Prophet", questions through which the investigators want to know if John attributes any messianic function to himself. According to the beliefs of the time, the coming of the Messiah will be preceded by the coming, first, of the Prophet Elijah or with the coming of the "Prophet" announced in the Book of Deuteronomy (Dt 18:15,18) or of the "Angel" announced in the Book of Revelation (Ex 23:20-22, Mal 3:1).

At that time, there was no uniform expectation of a single eschatological figure in Judaism. Most Jews were waiting for the Messiah. However, some of the apocryphal works describe God's intervention at the end of time (at the "fullness of time") without mentioning any descendants of King David. It seems that the Essene group at Qumran expected not one but three eschatological figures: a prophet, a priestly Messiah and a royal Messiah. New Testament texts such as Jn 1:21, Mk 6:15 and Mt 16:14 testify to the diversity of messianic expectations in Israel.

According to the text of 2 Kgs 2:11, Elijah the prophet was taken up to heaven "in a whirlwind" and a "chariot of fire". The idea that he was still alive and active has remained in Israel's collective memory, especially since the text in 2 Cr 21:12-15 mentions a letter the prophet sent to King Jehoram, Jehoshaphat's son. In postexilic expectations, the prophet Elijah was to return before the arrival of the day of the Lord (but not necessarily before the Messiah). Mal 3:1 (a text written around 450 B.C.) refers to the "angel" who was to prepare the people for the coming of the Lord, and a later addition to the book [Mal 3:23] identifies this "angel" with Elijah (Brown 1999, 62).

Concerning the figure of Elijah, the narrative prologue of the Fourth Gospel contains a notable difference from the Synoptic tradition. The latter recognized Elijah in John the Baptist, as demonstrated by a saying of the Savior and the behaviour attributed to the Forerunner: "And the disciples asked him (Jesus), saying: For what but do the scribes say that Elijah must come first? And he answered and said, Elijah indeed will come and set all things in order. But I say to you that Elijah has come, but they did not know him but did with him as they pleased; so, the Son of Man will suffer from them. Then the disciples understood that Jesus had spoken to them about John the Baptist" (Mt 17:10-13). In the text of the narrative Prologue, John the Baptist loses this prestigious element of his mission: he is not "Elijah redivivus" as was believed. We have

in our text a slight polemical emphasis, which has the precise purpose of reserving for the Saviour Christ the fulfilment of God's promises (Dufour 1990, 154).

"I am the voice of one crying in the wilderness: Make straight the way of the Lord, as Isaiah the prophet said" (Jn 1:23). In speaking thus, the Lord's Forerunner links himself directly to Israel's past and expectations. When John is asked to speak about himself, he hides behind prophecy or, more correctly, identifies himself with a prophecy of Isaiah. Our editions of the Holy Scriptures mistranslate the original Greek text with "I am...", an expression which, in the Fourth Gospel, is reserved for the Saviour Christ alone.

A brief comparison of the portrait of John in the Fourth Gospel with that in the Synoptic Gospels will reveal notable differences: in the Fourth Gospel the fiery preacher, the threatening prophet, the baptizer who drew crowds to the Jordan River, the hero who defies the kings and dies a martyr, disappears. Nothing else remains but "a voice" (a voice) from far away, from Israel's distant past, actualizing a prophecy and calling for repentance. If in the Synoptic tradition, the prophetic text of Is 40 appears in the commentary of the narrating evangelist, in the Fourth Gospel the prophecy is quoted by John himself. A Jewish preacher, familiar with the Scriptures, needed only one verse to bring the whole context of the prophecy to the mind of his hearer. Thus, "by means of a voice [of a voice] the Word of God is made present" (in the words of the great Origen). By presenting himself as a "voice" or "voice" – the one who once spoke to the heart of Jerusalem - John the Baptist acquires the impressive dignity of Scripture itself (Dufour 1990, 156). Thus, through the "witness", Scripture itself recognizes Jesus the Messiah. This insight, as evident as can be from the very beginning of the book, will be fundamental to the entire Johannine Gospel.

John's inquiry continues in Ac 1:25: "If you are not the Christ, nor Elijah, nor the Prophet, why do you baptize?" This question justifies the previous questions: the baptism of repentance that John practised, to be valid, required John to be the protagonist of the end times, of the "fullness of time". It is difficult, however, to say with certainty whether water baptism was considered a messianic gesture at the time. Therefore, exegetes believe, we may have in this case a scenario of the evangelist who wanted to highlight the contrast between the Forerunner John and the Messiah Christ.

John's baptism could refer in the minds of his contemporaries to the purifying water. Mosaic law provided for ablutions or ritual washing of the body for purification before performing a ritual. In certain religious groups – particularly the Essenes – ritual

bathing or washing was of great importance: practised daily and reserved for the initiated, ritual bathing was linked to their desire for inner purification. For the followers of the Qumran sect, it seems that this ritual washing had a similar value to the sacrifices or offerings made at the temple, which the Essenes no longer practised because they considered them to be incompatible with the requirements of the Mosaic Law (Dufour 1990, 157).

However, we can speak of a "spiritual rebirth" about the baptism of repentance that John practised (Gese 1989, 237-41). Water baptism was meant to prepare the people for the coming of the Lord. This is why John the Baptist directs the attention of his interlocutors to the figure of the Messiah Christ, whose presence is still hidden: "In your midst is he whom you do not know" (1:26b). However, these words are not necessarily a reproach to the delegation of the Jewish Sanhedrin since he will confess on the second day that he did not know Christ: "and I did not know him" (1:31a). What the first witness of the Incarnate Word is saying here is that the Jews do not even suspect the overwhelming dignity of the One who is already present, even though He has not yet been or has not yet formally presented Himself. It will take a later revelation from Above that will attest to this dignity.

The manifestation of the Messiah does not depend on human speculation, but on God's initiative; it belongs to divine revelation: "I did not know him [Christ], but he who sent me to baptize with water said to me, 'On whom you will see the Spirit descending and remaining, it is he who baptizes with the Holy Spirit'" (Jn 1:33). The Messiah's presence will fulfil Israel's entire past; all that remains is to identify the One who comes in the name of the Lord, and this will happen on the second day of the narrative Prologue (Dufour 1990, 160).

On the second day, the Messiah Christ was identified by John the Baptist (Acts 1:29-34). The previous day's investigators had left the scene. This time, we are not told clearly and precisely who John's hearers are (we only assume that they were those who came to him to receive the baptism of repentance). We believe the evangelist did this intentionally to suggest that John's "audience" is not only his contemporaries but extends without limit to the end of time to all who will believe in Christ through his witness. We are told in the Immaculate Prologue (1:1-18) that John the Baptist "came to bear witness, that he might testify about the Light so that all might believe through him" (1:7). This "all", as we have seen, refers not only to the contemporaries of John and his work but to all people who will receive the witness that John will give to the Light.

Verse 29, "The next day John saw Jesus coming to him", has puzzled biblical exegetes and commentators. Spontaneously, the reader imagines the scene of Jesus coming to John to be baptized, as the Synoptic tradition (cf. Mt 3:13-15; Mk 1:9; Lk 3:21) says, albeit slightly differently. This "second day" indicates a time after Jesus' baptism. This moment will be evoked retrospectively by John the Baptist in his subsequent statement. Thus, in verse 29, Jesus' coming already implies that the Holy Spirit has come upon him. When Jesus appears for the first time in the Fourth Gospel, he is presented in the act of coming: „John saw Jesus coming to him". This is how Isaiah's prophecy is fulfilled: For the Lord comes with power and his arm subdues all. Behold, the price of His victory is with Him, and the fruit of His victory goes before Him. He will feed His flock as a Shepherd and with His arm He will gather them. He will carry the lambs to His bosom, and He will care for those who suckle" (Is 40:10-11).

John's reaction is on a very deep level: "Behold the Lamb of God, the One who takes away the sin of the world" (Jn 1:29). The voice crying out in the wilderness now points to the One he proclaimed before: "Behold, this is He of whom I have spoken: After me cometh a man, who was before me because he was before me" (Jn 1:30).

We must point out a significant detail in the Forerunner's words: he is not speaking about the "sins" of men but about the "sin of the world". In his first Solemn Epistle, St John, after stating that the Lord's Christ appeared "to take away sins" (1Jn 3:5), makes us aware of this deviation from "sins" to "the sin of the world": "Whoever commits sin commits iniquity, and sin is iniquity" *(ἡ ἁμαρτία ἐστὶν ἡ ἀνομία)* (1Jn 3:4). Why is this detail important? Because Christ did not come merely to remove or erase personal/individual sins but came to end the dominion of sin (and death). Lawlessness or transgression *(ἀνομία)* indicates the state of the world separated or cut off from God; the state of the world without God (Pottery 1956, 785-97).

The Evangelist John solemnly proclaims that the sin of the world will be taken away by the incarnate Logos called in our text "the Lamb of God". According to one interpretation, the "Lamb of God" has been identified with Ebed-Yahveh (the Servant or Servant of the Lord) of whom the prophet Isaiah speaks (ch. 53). In a well-known episode in Acts – the one which speaks of the work of the deacon Philip - the place in Scripture where he translates the Ethiopian famine (Ac 8:26-35) is precisely this passage: "As a lamb that is brought to the slaughter, and as a sheep without a voice before him that sheareth it, so He opened not His mouth. In His humility His judgment is

lifted up, and who shall tell His seed? That His life is lifted up from the earth" (Phil 8:32-33; Is 53:7-8) But Isaiah's prophecy speaks of the lamb "atoning for" or "bearing" Israel's sin, not lifting it up. Some exegetes, wishing to preserve this interpretation, have assumed a translation error: the Aramaic term *tal^e ya* can be translated "child", "servant/servant" or "lamb". These exegetes believe that the Lord's forerunner would have said: "Behold the servant of the Lord" and that the evangelist would have translated in Greek: "Behold the Lamb of God". But even if we assume that the semantic basis is valid, there is no reason to make "Ebed-Iahve" a messianic title.

Charles Harold Dodd has proposed an interesting hypothesis: the Lamb of God spoken of by the Lord's Forerunner is the equivalent of the conquering Lamb of the Book of Revelation, Whose wrath is terrible (Rv 6:16-17) and Who will overcome the seven kings of the seven-headed beast: "These are of one mind, and their power and dominion they give to the beast. They will wage war against the Lamb, but the Lamb will overcome them, for he is the Lord of lords and King of kings, and those [who are] with him - the called and the chosen and the faithful" (Rv 17:13-14).

This would indeed be – according to C.H. Dodd – the righteous Messiah that John the Baptist was waiting for, as the Synoptic tradition attests (Mt 3:7-12; Lk 3:7-18). The image of the victorious Lamb has deep roots in biblical tradition, roots that stretch back to the Book of Enoch, a work written sometime between 150 BC and the 3rd century AD. In this work, the history of Israel is compared to a battle fought by a lamb (which grows a horn) to protect the sheep against wolves, according to the mission entrusted to it by its Master or Lord of the sheep. The great figures of the biblical people – Moses, Samuel, the Kings…, and Judas Maccabeus – successively intervened in this battle, showing the characteristics and attributes of the Messiah. The holy war will be led by this lamb who will hold the flock together. Behind this very old tradition, in which a lamb puts the wolves to flight, we glimpse the biblical paradox of weakness overcoming, together with God, the power of evil.

Another interpretation, much more widespread among exegetes, is in the "Lamb of God" of which John the Baptist speaks the true Paschal Lamb. This identification is based on the early Christian preaching about Christ "our Passover, who sacrificed himself for us" (1 Cor 5:7), a preaching which the Apostle Peter, in his First Epistle, exemplified as follows: "Knowing that you were not redeemed with filthy things, with silver or gold, from your vain life, which you were bequeathed from your fathers, but with the precious blood of Christ, as of an innocent and blameless lamb" (1 Pt 1:18-19).

The term "lamb" itself evokes the sacrifices that the people of Israel offered to the Lord in the holy place, sacrifices in which small animals – lambs, kids or calves – were offered to the Lord as a pledge in the ritual of communion and reconciliation with God. The lamb was the daily sacrifice at the temple in Jerusalem (de Vaux 1964, 404-41).

Jesus is indeed the "Lamb of God", but not in the same sense, and certainly not on the same level as the lambs offered in the temple in Jerusalem. Jesus is the 'Lamb of God' in that his coming – his incarnation in history – removes the need for sacrifice and gifts from God: 'Therefore when he came into the world, he said, "You did not desire sacrifice and gift, but you made me a body. Burnt offerings and sin offerings have not pleased thee. Then I said, 'Behold, I am coming, in the scroll of the book it is written about me, to do your will, O God'" (Heb 10:5-7).

Isaiah's prophecy (Is 40:2) announced the end of bondage and the atonement for transgression, and now John the Baptist expresses with a suggestive image that in Christ God has reconciled the world to Himself and offered forgiveness. Jesus is therefore not a new cult victim, but the One through whom God intervenes on man's behalf, offering him salvation. At a first reading level, it is important to recognize, along with John the Baptist, that the presence of Jesus inaugurates a new stage in God's relationship with man, or, in theological terminology, a new iconomy of salvation.

As is well known, several important verbs are very dear to the evangelist John; two of them – "*to see*" and "*to believe*" – also appear in the narrative Prologue: "*I saw the* Spirit descending from heaven like a dove, and it remained upon him! [...] but He who sent me to baptize with water said to me, 'Upon whom *you will see the* Spirit descending and remaining upon Him, it is He who baptizes with the Holy Spirit. And I *have seen* and *have testified* that this is the Son of God" (1:32-34).

John the Baptist presents himself as an eyewitness: 'I saw'. What he "saw" immediately sends the reader of the Gospel back to the episode of Jesus' baptism. In the Fourth Gospel, no reference to the baptism ritual itself has been preserved. As in the Synoptic tradition, the Evangelist John also mentions the descent of the Spirit in the form of a dove, which refers to the Baptism of the Lord, and from that event, only the essential has been preserved: the descent of the Spirit (which was also the "sign" that the Lord's Forerunner had previously received for the recognition of the Incarnate Word).

According to the Synoptic tradition, the proclamation of Jesus' identity: "This is my beloved Son in whom I am well pleased" (Mt 3:17; Mk 1:1; Lk 3:22) comes from heaven, or from above, while in the Gospel of John, the proclamation of the divine

sonship of the Saviour is made by "the man sent from God" by a "prophet of the Most High" (Lk 1:76), that is, by the one who, a little earlier, identified himself with the "prophetic voice".

In the title "Son of God" the Christian reader discovers a meaning that goes beyond the messianic confession to the One-Born One, the One who was proclaimed in the Messianic Prologue (1:14). This is the meaning to which the Johannine text, which was written, "that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing you may have life in his name" (20:31), is pointing. Does this mean that the evangelist attributed to John the Baptist a full understanding of a mystery whose depth he could not even suspect? The literary arrangement of verses 32-34, all marked by the verb "to see", reveals a literary unity. Under the eyes and the gaze of the Forerunner, the Saviour Christ receives the investiture from on high, an event which the Apostle Peter will later mention in the house of Cornelius the centurion: "You know the word which was throughout all Judea, beginning from Galilee, after the baptism which John preached. (That is, about) Jesus of Nazareth, how God anointed him with the Holy Spirit and with power, who went about doing good and healing all who were oppressed by the devil, because God was with him" (Acts 10:37-38).

Jesus is the One who baptizes with the Holy Spirit (1:33). Jesus Christ is "the One who takes away the sin of the world" (1:29). In the Fourth Gospel, the first witness of the Incarnate Logos – John the Baptist – does not call people to repentance by confessing their sins (as in the Synoptic tradition), nor does he present them with special norms or rules to "direct the paths of the One who is coming", but he goes straight to the deep reason why the Messiah came into the world: sin, which means man's brokenness from God.

The Johannine text we are dealing with is not at the level of sinful individual existence but at the level of the disorder that affects the humanity of which we are all a part.

Instead of conclusions

In 1933, the French philosopher and playwright Gabriel Marcel wrote a play entitled *Le Monde cassé*, followed by a philosophical study entitled: *Position et approches concrètes du mystère ontologique* (Marcel 1933, 95-106) in which he stated that "our world is made of pieces". We can recognise this truth in the catastrophes, in the wars, in the conflicts, in the planetary economic recession, in the intolerable general social

state in which humanity finds itself, in the evil that manifests itself in various forms; finally, in the illnesses, the suffering and the death of loved ones. Is the sin of the world to blame for all this? Modern man and society have lost the notion of sin; modern man is no longer afraid of sinning; people make jokes about it and even TV showbiz, as if sin were something trivial and innocent. Modern man today fears many things: he fears the Sars-Cov-2 virus that has triggered a pandemic, he fears terrorism, he fears global warming, he fears nuclear war and biological weapons, but he no longer fears the war he is waging against God and His commandments.

The human sciences have taught us to consider the determinism of the unconscious and blind, the shortcomings in education, the social pressures, and the fanaticisms and barbarisms that blind people. As for the "sense or feeling of guilt", to which a morality reduced only to "allowed and not allowed" has contributed, it appears in the eyes of modern man as an obstacle to the full realization of the human being. Christian authors and spiritual writings have long stressed that guilt should not be confused with sincere repentance, which refers to real guilt and is the only valid remedy for man's re-entry into a living and harmonious relationship with the One who brought him into existence or being.

In this case, if we do not admit the existence of an intimate connection between the present state of the world and the rejection or rejection of God, we will not understand much of either the Prologue or the contents of the Gospel of John. The "sin of the world" in the Johannine text is not attributed to a mistake made at the beginning of the world – a mistake we commonly call "ancestral sin" – but rather it seems to be a power always at work or work, an anonymous power that produces and proliferates the rejection or rejection of God (conscious or unconscious). For the author of the Fourth Gospel "the sin of the world" means the rejection or non-acceptance of the Light that has come into the world and the embrace of darkness (Jn 3:19).

"Now", says St. John the Baptist, "God has come to you through Him who is the seen sign of His forgiveness", precisely "to take away" the sin of the world.

The work of the Lamb of God, accomplished, has not been limited to the Middle East and New Testament times; it undoubtedly traverses our sin-wounded world, and the struggle of Light against darkness has traversed and will continue to traverse the ages, through Christ's disciples, until a new "fullness of time" takes place. To be, in our turn, disciples or disciples, witnesses and confessors, characters, personalities and

heroes of the history of salvation that God has fulfilled in Jesus Christ, we have something to learn from the first witness of the incarnate Logos.

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Levirate Marriage
An Overview of an Ancient Matrimonial Custom

Abstract

Using the historical-critical analysis, this paper elucidates the ancient institution of the levirate marriage, a particular type of conjugal union attested in Assyria, Ugarit, Hatti, Israel, and beyond. The study presents the biblical stories of Judah and Tamar, respectively Boaz and Ruth, highlighting the complexity of kinship ties, inheritance rights, and cultural norms that have influenced marriage customs over time. The paper also briefly discusses the status of women in the classical Jewish family and its importance in the development of society. Expanding the historical lens, the final section of the work examines the status of levirate marriage in the Middle Ages and modern times, showing that this marriage practice is not limited to Antiquity, but existed also in certain regions in the post-antique period. Even though levirate marriage was quite widespread at one point in the history of civilization, it remains an almost extinct phenomenon today.
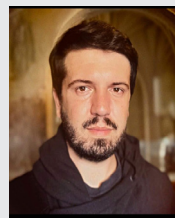
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Introduction

Levirate marriage (ייבום) represents a particular type of marriage practised in antiquity by various nations, especially in the East, in Assyria, Ugarit, Hatti, Israel and beyond (DeVine 1942, 326). Still present today in some African or Asian communities, this custom stipulates that after the husband's death, the widowed woman should be married to one of the deceased husband's brothers. Hence the name *levirate* for this custom, as *levir* means brother-in-law in Latin.

Using the historical-critical method, in our study, we will briefly present the status of women in the ancient family of the East, the advantages and disadvantages of levirate marriage, as well as its echoes throughout history. Regarding the case study, we will analyse the marriage between Judah and Tamar, as well as that between Boaz and Ruth, to see concretely how this type of marriage was applied in biblical history. Finally, we will attempt to ascertain whether this matrimonial custom extended or not into medieval history and recent history, to ultimately outline a more comprehensive profile of this type of marriage, from its origins until the present.

Levirate marriage in the context of antiquity – generalities

In antiquity, *levirate marriage* was practised by several peoples, but not by all. In the Assyrian legal corpus, it is stated that if a young man dies, the deceased's father can give the respective woman to his brother, and if he has neither brothers, nor children, nor other relatives in the household, then the woman remains widowed and can leave anywhere (Leggett 1994, 12-7). The same custom was practised in the Hittite Kingdom. According to the law there, if a man dies, either his brother or his father must take the widow as his wife and take care of her (Leggett 1994, 21). It seems that this custom was also practised in Ugarit, and evidence of this is an inscription on the tomb of King Arihalbu, where he explicitly forbade his wife from becoming his brother's wife through inheritance (Tsevat 1958, 237-43). Finally, in Mesopotamia (Nuzi), once the bride was purchased from her family, she would remain under the authority of the new family even after her husband's death (Leggett 1994, 24).

In ancient Greece, there existed the concept of ἐπίκληρος. According to this concept, orphaned girls without a family had to be married to a close relative of the deceased. The same practice occurred in Sparta, where these women were known as πατροῦχοι. Furthermore, this practice is frequently encountered in Greek literature, and Agariste is a well-known example in this regard. She was the daughter of Cleisthenes from Sicily and was married to Megacles (Lacey 1968, 276).

In contrast to the people who practised the law of levirate in one form or another, there was no such custom in Sumer, and anyone who dared to marry the wife of his deceased brother was sentenced to death (Civil 2011, 252). There was likely no such practice in Babylon either, as *the Code of Hammurabi* does not contain any provision explicitly regulating this matter (Burrows 1940, 5), only possible arguments by deduction, but nothing more (Neufeld 1944, 49).

Therefore, as can be seen, the law of levirate was not an exclusive Jewish custom but was practised by several peoples in various forms, most likely adopted by the Jews over time. Despite the formal differences regarding this custom, the people shared an important common background: the position of women in the family and society.

In ancient thinking, the family meant "a community of individuals consisting of a father, mother, and children, and by extension, all individuals of the same blood or all those living under the same roof" (Snell 1997, 52). The central authority in the family was held by the man, a kind of *Pater familias* (Mihăilă 2011, 210), who provided shelter and sustenance for everyone, with the other members being his property (Vatamanu 2011, 175-231). In the case of mariage, the young woman transitioned from her father's ownership to that of her new husband, who received her into his home by paying a certain redemption price, referred to as *mohar* in the Old Testament. This price was a compensation from the new husband to the girl's former family, both for the fact that she was born and raised there, economically supported throughout her childhood by her father, and for the fact that in the future, by moving to her new husband's house, she would no longer be able to assist her former family through various household duties (Radu 2020, 37).

In the case of Jacob (Gn 29), we learn that he worked for seven years for his future father-in-law, Laban, to marry Rachel, indicating that the marriage had clear socio-economic implications. The woman was under the care of a man who protected her. In return, she offered him the continuity of the family name through children, love, and assistance in household matters. Once the bride was redeemed by her future husband, no one else could approach her without being accused of violating her master's house and causing a disturbance in the city. For this reason, in ancient Greece, a man was not allowed to have intimate relations with a woman unless she was either a slave, from another city, or not in any way associated with any Athenian man, to avoid infringing on someone else's property (Mason 2022).

In this context, in antiquity, levirate marriage was a mechanism through which women received social protection, being safeguarded from poverty and abuse. For men, assuming a levirate marriage brought both advantages and disadvantages. On the one hand, the man no longer had to pay the bride's redemption price to receive his deceased brother's wife into his home. On the other hand, he did not benefit from offspring, as they would inherit the name of the deceased.

Although there are feminist voices today that vehemently accuse Holy Scripture, among other things, for including the law of levirate in the Old Testament, which they claim degrades women, we cannot assert in the context of that time that this practice was demeaning. Instead, it was a mode of social organization built around the head of the household, who was responsible for the woman and children, providing them with shelter, safety, and sustenance, without other men intervening in their household (Maurice 2014, 287). It is not very clear in large families which of the brothers would inherit the deceased's wife, but we know that people always tried to keep women and assets within their own families, practising endogamy (Matthews 1988, 21). In Assyria, this practice existed even when a man bought a girl for marriage but then did not marry her. In this case, the father and his brothers had the right of pre-emption over the woman (Leggett 1994, 12-7).

In Samaria, the deceased brother's brother-in-law could inherit the widow only if she had never had intimate relations with his brother before his death (Talmud Kiddushin 65b), and in Babylon, some cases mirrored classic levirate, meaning it was customary for the widowed man to marry his deceased wife's sister (Burrows 1940, 7). Thus, regarding levirate marriage, we can say that in antiquity, in the East, there were certainly many forms of this custom, which was a common practice for people of that time.

Case study: Judah and Tamar, Boaz and Ruth
Judah and Tamar (Gn 38)

Chapter 38 of Genesis tells us that one day, Judah saw Tamar, a Canaanite woman, and fell in love with her. So, Judah took Tamar as his wife, and they had three sons together: Er, Onan, and Shelah. When Er grew up, he married a woman named Tamar, but circumstances led to his early death, leaving Tamar a widow. In this case, Judah insisted that Onan, his second son, fulfil the levirate law and marry Tamar (Burrows 1940, 23) to raise offspring for his deceased brother. Thus, Onan went to Tamar and slept with her but did not fully comply with the levirate marriage because he avoided raising offspring for Er by spilling his seed. Shortly after, Onan died, and Tamar became a widow once again. Then, Judah proposed to Tamar to wait until Shelah grew up, stating that he would marry her and raise offspring for Er, as was the custom of the time.

In the meantime, however, Shua died, and Judah himself became a widower. In this context, one day, Tamar went to Enaim, disguised herself as a prostitute, and waited for her father-in-law there, covering her face. So, Judah came and went to Tamar without recognizing who she was, promising to give her a young goat as payment if she slept with him. However, Tamar asked for his signet ring, his staff, and his cord as a pledge. When the servant came to bring the promised goat to the woman, he couldn't find her, but after three months, it was discovered that Tamar was pregnant from her act of prostitution. At that moment, Judah wanted to have her killed. However, upon seeing the pledged items he had given to Tamar, he spared her life and accepted her into his household, and she gave birth to twin sons, Perez and Zerah.

Regarding the life and marriages of Tamar, there has been considerable discussion in biblical literature, particularly concerning her relationship with Onan, the middle son of Judah. For the deeds of Onan, the term *onanism* is used in specialized language (first used in a London pamphlet in 1716 – Stolberg 2000, 37). However, there has never been a uniform theological response regarding the sin committed by Onan. What did it consist of? Was it the spilling of seed on the ground? Was it the non-completion of the intimate act (*coitus interruptus*)? Was it Onan's refusal to fulfil his duty as a brother-in-law and take Tamar as his wife (Gn 38:8)? Or was it his lack of seriousness towards his father and the other members of the household, publicly claiming that he would have offspring with Tamar to continue the lineage of his deceased brother, but ultimately failing to do so?

For the rabbis, touching the genitals was considered an impure act (*Niddah* 13a), and the Old Testament states that one who loses semen (קְרִי) must cleanse himself and his clothes, being unclean until evening (Lv 15:16-18). However, nowhere is the death penalty mentioned for this act, so Onan's cause of death was probably something else, especially considering that natural secretions, as stated by St. Athanasius of Alexandria in his first canon, cannot be considered a sin, as they are ordained by God, and the status of *malkuth* is questionable in this regard (Conțac 2008).

According to St. Epiphanius of Salamis, Onan's mistake was that he avoided having offspring (Coogan 2010, 131), an argument also made by St. Jerome and St. Clement of Alexandria, asserting that God commanded humans to multiply (Gn 1:28), and Onan disregarded this command. Following this theory, virginity and monastic abstinence would become something against nature, but that is not the case. Therefore, the most sustainable hypothesis remains that Onan erred by taking advantage of Tamar

through deceit, not fully fulfilling the agreement. Moreover, he was selfish, thinking that if he did not raise offspring for his brother, then his father Judah's wealth would not be divided among three, but only two (Niditch 1979, 143-9). Thus, Onan's sin was a fraud (DeVine 1942, 323-40), which had direct consequences for the entire family. He was not obliged to marry Tamar, but he had the duty to publicly state his intentions, that he did not want to raise offspring for his deceased brother, and to accept public disapproval in this case, within a ceremony called חליצה (Dt 25:9 – Vigoder 2006, 463-4).

Regarding this, Josephus Flavius says: "If a man dies without having children, his brother should marry the widow, and the son who will be born shall bear the name of the deceased, becoming the heir of the first husband. This serves the interests of the state because in this way families do not die out and their wealth is preserved, and the marriage of the woman to a close relative of the first husband will comfort her for the misfortune she has endured. However, if the brother in question does not want to marry her, the woman shall go to the assembly of the elders of the city and testify that she desired to remain in the family and bear children for her first husband, but that his brother refused to marry her, thus insulting the memory of the deceased. When asked by the elders why he has an aversion to marriage, whether he cites a trivial or significant reason, the elders shall incline in favour of the woman. Then, after the woman removes the sandals of her brother-in-law, she shall spit in his face, saying that he deserves to be scorned because he has defiled the memory of the deceased. Afterward, he shall leave the assembly of the elders of the city, covered for life with the stigma of shame, while she is free to marry whomever she desires" (*Jewish Antiquities* IV, 8, 23).

Regarding this case, we remain with the idea that levirate marriage represented for the Jews an act of social protection for the widow and the name of the deceased (Vamosh 2009, 40). The widow's brother-in-law had the option to refuse the marriage, but he had to announce this publicly so that someone else could marry her, take care of her, and receive her into his home. Under these circumstances, concerning the law of levirate marriage, we can say that in the case of Tamar, she sought to become the wife of Judah, desiring to raise descendants for her deceased husband. If this had disgraced her, she could have remained in the uncertain status proposed by Onan. However, we see that she wanted to be a mother and live with Judah, fully assuming her communal responsibility and ultimately becoming part of the genealogy of the Savior (Mt 1:3).

Boaz and Ruth

Ruth is another woman known for her levirate marriage. The Old Testament presents Elimelech leaving Bethlehem during a time of famine and going to the land of Moab with his wife Naomi. After her husband and their two sons died, Naomi decided to return to Bethlehem. In this context, one of the daughters-in-law, named Ruth, which means *friend* and is a Moabite by birth, insisted on accompanying her mother-in-law on the journey home, while the other daughter-in-law, named Orpah, which means *she who turns back*, decided to stay in Moab.

Thus, Naomi and Ruth arrived in Bethlehem during the harvest season, where they coincidentally met Boaz, a wealthy relative of Elimelech, whom Ruth would assist in the fieldwork. Boaz heard about the young woman's actions and was impressed by her love for her mother-in-law. Likewise, Ruth was delighted when she met Boaz. Therefore, following her mother-in-law's advice, Ruth approached Boaz's feet during the night, and he covered her with his garment and promised that if no other closer relative would redeem her, then he would pay the redemption price and take her as his wife. So, Boaz inquired of the relatives of Naomi, and since no one wanted to marry Ruth, he redeemed all the widow's possessions: the house, the lands, and even Ruth herself, with whom he would bear Obed, the grandfather of King David.

In the Old Testament, there was a certain sexual libertinism (Luckenbill 1917, 12), but in the case of Ruth, we see that there was also a certain orderliness. Boaz did not allow himself to marry the young Moabite woman until he first asked the closer relatives if they wanted to redeem her, as they had the right of first refusal (Luckenbill 1974, 63-143). In the present narrative, the redeemer (גוֹאֵל) is a more distant relative, which highlights that the levirate law allowed for some flexibility. The purpose of marriage in the Old Testament was for the woman to have a home and a family and for the man to have strong descendants.

It is also interesting in this case that Orpah, the other daughter-in-law of Naomi, remained in Moab and nothing more is mentioned about her, not even when Boaz redeemed Naomi's entire family estate, including the house, lands, and even Ruth. Rabbinic literature identifies Orpah with Rafa, from whom the giant Philistines were born, with whom King David fought in his time (*Sotah* 42b), but this is not clear historically. However, what is certain is that Ruth became the wife of Boaz when he redeemed the estate of Elimelech.

Regarding Boaz, we are not sure if he was a brother-in-law to Ruth (יבמה –
Dt 25:5). Lv 25:25 states that if a brother becomes poor and sells his property, any close relative can redeem it; this is also found in Nm 27:11. Furthermore, according to Lv 21:2-3, the concept of *close kinship* refers to all relatives living in the same household. In this context, it is possible that Boaz redeemed Ruth not necessarily as her brother-in-law but as a close relative.

In the Old Testament, YHWH Himself presents Himself as the redeemer of the people of Israel in the metaphor of the mystical wedding (Is 54:5), and the prophet Hosea says that He paid silver, barley, and wine to redeem His beloved (Hos 3:2), just as Rebekah was redeemed in her time (Gn 24:53). This redemption involved the payment of a bride price by the future husband, manifested in various goods, such as a ring (Hos 2:17), or even work performed for the future father-in-law, as happened in the case of Jacob, who worked seven years for Laban to receive the hand of his chosen bride (Gn 29) (Seters 1969, 394).

In the New Testament, Christ Himself reveals Himself in the context of the mystical wedding as the Redeemer, paying with His Blood the price of redemption for us, thus making us free (Heb 9:12; Rom 3:25). He is the αντίτυπος of Boaz, fulfilling at the appointed time the anticipated events in the Book of Ruth. And even though some argue that Ruth does not have historical character, being merely a Jewish narrative anticipating Christ, it certainly provides an interesting historical basis for the levirate law, considering that any narrative is always constructed with the support of real concepts (Beattie 1974, 252).

Tamar and Ruth remain two telling examples of the levirate law (*The Encyclopedia of Biblical Literature*, 307), and while in the case of Tamar, the lack of seriousness of Onan was highlighted, in the case of Ruth, we observe the effectiveness of this practice, with the man becoming the protector of the widow, redeeming her, receiving her into his home, and providing for her needs, even having two children together.

Levirate marriage at different times throughout history. A current practice in the 21st century?

In *The Jewish Wars* (1, 24, 447), Josephus mentions that Jewish men had the ancestral custom of marrying multiple women, and it is likely that this practice was followed in Judaism until the 10th century CE when Rabbi Gershom enacted a decree

against polygamy (Vamosh 2009, 33). So, even in the early Christian centuries, there was some marital freedom, at least in Judaism.

The tractate *Yevamot,* found in the *Babylonian Talmud in Nashim*, contains a collection of provisions regarding the levirate law. It consists of 16 chapters and was written in the early 3rd century CE, which proves that levirate marriage was still practised in Israel at that time. This is not surprising considering that the political authority accepted marriage between brothers-in-law in the 1st century CE. King Herod himself was married to Herodias, his sister-in-law (Mk 6:17) (Kokkinos 1986, 42). At the same time, some ancient authors, such as Julius Africanus, speculate that the difference between the two genealogical lists of the Savior in the Gospels of Matthew and Luke is due to the levirate law (The Ecclesiastical History 1,7). This was a common practice in Israel.

Levirate marriage is indirectly mentioned even by the Savior Himself in the Gospel of *Mark* 12:18-27 when the Sadducees challenge Him, asking about the status of married people in the *afterlife.* If the levirate law was not practised at that time, the Sadducees' question would have been meaningless. Therefore, this dialogue must be evidence that Jews in the first Christian century still practised this type of marriage.

Today, levirate marriage is prohibited in both Judaism and Christianity, but it is still practised in some isolated communities. It appears that in the 4th century CE, the rabbis issued a decree, in agreement with Roman authority, declaring the levirate practice illegal (Monnickendam 2019, 138; Grubbs 2002, 161-2). In the case of the Church, we see that a similar decision was made in the 4th century CE at the Council of Neo Caesarea in 315, and those who did not comply with the new regulations were excommunicated (Council of Neo-Caesarea [1954, 35-8]). Furthermore, in Canon 23, St. Basil the Great forbids this practice (St. Basil, Letters 199, 23).

Until the time of Emperor Constantine the Great, Christians in the empire complied with imperial legislation regarding marriage, following the principle *nuptias, non concubitus, sed consensus facit* (marriage is constituted by consent, not cohabitation). The legislation of Justinian (527-565) does not provide any religious implications for marriage but states that through marriage, man and woman become an inseparable community (*Iustiniani institutions* I, IX). In the 8th century, in Byzantium, the *Ecloga* mentions that young people who wanted to marry were blessed in the Church (Ecloga, II, 9). However, it was only in the 9th century, through Emperor Leo VI's *Novella* 89, that a wedding celebrated in the Church became mandatory for

Christians and recognized as such by the state (Meyendorff 1990, 105). In the case of slaves, Church weddings were accepted only in the 11th century, during the reign of Alexios I Komnenos, even though the blessing of the newlyweds by the Church was unofficially performed since the 4th century, including in their case, at least in Armenia and Constantinople (Meyendorff 1990, 105). Therefore, there is no evidence or records of an officially celebrated levirate marriage in the Church during that time.

Starting in the 8th century, in Byzantium, polygamy was completely banned, and under these conditions, levirate marriage became difficult to accept as women became partners to men rather than mere property. Concubinage was also condemned, and a law issued by Leo VI in Byzantium stipulated that adultery would be punished by cutting off the noses of unfaithful individuals (Drimba 1998, 272), establishing a certain marital order in the empire.

From the 12th century onward, intimate life experienced new moments of emancipation in Europe. In the Middle Ages, in the West, concubinage developed considerably, and legal wives were often obligated to live in the same house with their husbands' concubines. Moreover, in Venice and Geneva at that time, many married merchants declared themselves unmarried to deceive women (Drimba 1999, 254). The orgies of Marozia were famous in the Vatican (Hofmann 2002, 8), and Pope Alexander VI (Hrib 2006, 40) and Benedict IX (Gregorovius 2010, 47) were known for their sexual immorality. In the Middle Ages, in the West, a tax called *Callagium* (Berry 2005, 82) was even imposed on priests who wanted a woman in their homes. It is said that in that context, Jan van Leyden declared it illegal for girls to remain virgins and reinstated polygamy (Blond 1976, 122). Despite reaching such depravity, there is no indication that the levirate law was reinstated in the Middle Ages, and no written documents supporting this have been found.

Currently, in Islam, levirate marriage is allowed, provided that the woman agrees to her new husband without being forced to accept this custom (Quran 4:19). In Sub-Saharan Africa, levirate marriage is still practised in certain communities in Kenya, Sudan, Uganda, and Zambia, but due to the spread of HIV/AIDS, it is now declining. Widows whose husbands died from this disease are practically condemned not to remarry (Kudo 2022). Additionally, Christian and European cultural influences have discouraged these practices in many African regions, and levirate marriages are becoming less common here.

In Europe, under conditions of monogamy, a woman can marry her former brother-in-law today, whether she divorced her husband, or he passed away. Although, from a civil perspective, this practice could be allowed, it is prohibited from a religious standpoint, as we can see in the practice of the Church and in Canon 23 of St. Basil the Great, which explicitly forbids this type of marriage. Even so, without a redemption price and explicit obligations, more or less evident, for close relatives to marry the widowed woman, there is no law like levirate marriage today. Women have a completely different status than that of the property of the *Pater Familias* and are free to decide for their future without any economic or social constraints.

Conclusions

Summarizing what has been presented so far, we can conclude that levirate marriage was an ancient custom practised not only by Jews but also by several other peoples, aiming to provide social protection for widowed women and maintain the deceased's lineage.

In the Old Testament, the levirate law is mentioned in Deuteronomy, and Tamar and Ruth are examples of this practice. As seen in the case of Tamar, women were not demeaned by this custom but rather sought to have a home, a family, and raise offspring for their deceased husband. The same happened in the case of Ruth, who took the first step towards marriage with Boaz.

Levirate marriage, in certain cases, involved polygamy as a matter of fact, but monogamy has always been the Jewish ideal, as we can see from the example of Adam and Eve. The Talmud, following the biblical model (Dt 17:17), recommends that a man should not multiply wives to avoid dividing his heart (*Sanhedrin* 21a). In Christianity, this is even more evident through the mystical marriage proposed by the New Testament between Christ and the Church.

Levirate marriage is still practised today in certain restricted communities in Kenya, Sudan, Uganda, and other countries in Sub-Saharan Africa, but it is on the verge of total disappearance due to HIV/AIDS and the influence of Christianity and Europe.

In Europe, from a legal point of view, it would not be impossible for a widow to marry her brother-in-law today, but it is prohibited by the Church. Nevertheless, even in this case, it would not be considered a levirate marriage, as there is no redemption price for the widowed woman, as she is not considered the property of the deceased family.

Taking these aspects into consideration, we can conclude that levirate marriage was an ancient practice aimed at providing a certain social stability to the family. However, the perfect model of marriage is Christ and the Church, which the Book of Ecclesiastes anticipates us to embrace, saying: "Enjoy life with the wife whom you love, all the days of your vain life that he has given you under the sun because that is your portion in life and in your toil at which you toil under the sun" (Eccl 9:9).

Acknowledgements

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The Importance of the Holy Scripture within the Canonical Tradition of the Orthodox Church

Abstract

This paper examines the views of Orthodox canonists on the relationship between the Holy Scripture and Canon Law in current academic research. It explores two general positions within Orthodox Canon Law: one that considers the Holy Scripture as a fundamental source of Canon Law, and another that postulates a conflict between the principles of love and grace found in Scripture and the legal aspects of Canon Law. The first position categorizes the Holy Scripture as divine written law, while the Holy Tradition is seen as divine unwritten law. The sources of law are further classified into fundamental, historical, and practical sources. The division of Canon Law also includes distinctions such as divine or natural Church Law, common law versus law, and old law versus new law. The text references various canonists and their works to support these classifications. It highlights the understanding of contemporary Orthodox canonists who continue to recognize the Holy Scripture as a source of divine written law, emphasizing the importance of formulating human laws by divine justice. In general, it is emphasized that all the canons of the Church included in the fundamental collection, being regarded as an essential part of the Patristic tradition and the synodal manifestation of the Church, can be understood as manifestations of the ecclesial experience across time and space, guided by the divine grace of the Holy Spirit, and as a continuation of biblical rules and norms.

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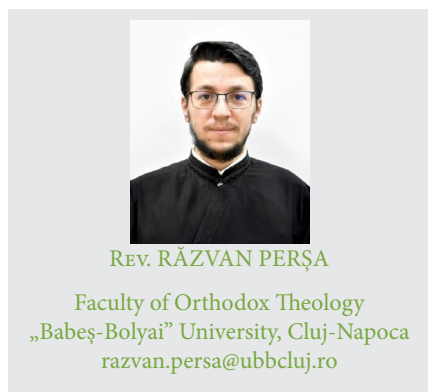
Keywords

Holy Scripture, Abrogation of Law, Law and Grace, Orthodox Canon Law

Rev. RĂZVAN PERȘA
*The Importance of the Holy Scripture within
the Canonical Tradition of the Orthodox Church*

58

The Holy Scripture as a source of Canon Law according to Orthodox Canonists

In the 19th and 20th centuries, Orthodox Canon Law emphasized two general positions on the relationship between Holy Scripture and Canon Law. On one hand, according to old-school manuals of Canon Law, there was almost unanimous agreement that the Holy Scripture is considered a fundamental source (*fons iuris canonici*) of Canon Law (Milash 1905, 12). On the other hand, since the second half of the twentieth century, some canonists have postulated an antinomy between the Holy Scripture and Canon Law, the former being based on the principle of love and grace, and the latter on law, jurisdiction and authority (Afanasieff 1975, 349; Stan 1968, 181).

According to the first position, Holy Scripture is considered, from a general perspective, as a source of law, being described, within a specific Western division of Canon Law (Perșa 2021, 25-130), as *divine written law (jus divinum scriptum)*, and the Holy Tradition was considered a source of *divine unwritten law (jus divinum non scriptum)*. For example, the sources of law are divided by the canonist and bishop Nikodim Milash, into three main categories: fundamental, historical and practical sources (Milash 1905, 12; Milash 1890, 10-15). Bishop Nikodim Milash divided the Church Law into 1. *written* and *unwritten* Church Law; 2. *divine* or *natural* Church Law, based on the clearly expressed will of God, and *positive* or *Ecclesiastical* Law (here Milash is misleading by equating divine law with natural law, considering that the latter originated within the Church). 3. *Common* Law, valid for the whole Church, and *particular* Law, valid for local Churches; 4. *internal* and *external* Law, regulating the internal life of the Church or the relations with external bodies such as the State; 5. Old Law and new Law, the former including rules "given in the time when the Church was not separated" (Milash 1905, 12; Constantinescu 2010, 97-99).

In a series of articles published in the Journal "Candela" of The Faculty of Orthodox Theology in Chernivtsi between 1885 and 1886, Constantin Popovici, professor of Orthodox Church law at the Faculty of Theology of the University of Chernivtsi, outlined the general elements of Canon Law, devoting several passages to determining the nature of Canon Law. From the outset, he divides Canon Law into written divine law (the Holy Scripture being its source), unwritten divine law (i.e. Holy Tradition), written human law (the "church" and "political-church" laws) and unwritten human law (represented by the customs of law) (Popovici 1885, 661-668). This division can be found in the handbooks of many 19th and 20th century Orthodox

Rev. RĂZVAN PERȘA
*The Importance of the Holy Scripture within
the Canonical Tradition of the Orthodox Church*

59

Romanian and other canonists (Pocitan 1898, 14-15; Χριστοδούλου 1896, 32; Popovici 1925, 25-26; Moldovan 1930, 11; Șesan 1942, 29). Contemporary Orthodox canonists also acknowledge the Holy Scripture as the source of divine written law. For example, Panteleimon Rodopoulos states in his work that „every law and every human judicial institution must be formulated following divine justice (*jus divinum*), that is with unwritten divine justice or natural justice (*jus naturale*) or natural law (*lex naturalis*) and with the written divine law" (Rodopoulos 2007, 10).

When dividing the different categories of sources of ecclesiastical law, the Holy Scripture is considered as the fundamental source (Popovici 1925, 25-26; Șesan 1942, 29) or general fundamental source (Floca 1990, 72-75). This division follows the connection between a source of law and the primary source, which is the will of the founder of the Church. Therefore, all sources are related to the words of the Saviour, or more technically, to *divine law* (*jus divinum*). Based on this distinction, N. Milash, like other canonists of this period, introduced a qualitative distinction between the words of Christ, found in the Gospels or in parallel passages, which are considered as Divine Tradition, and the words of the apostles, considered as theological recommendations or opinions (Milash 1905, 39-40).

According to the teaching of St. Basil the Great, as reflected in his Canon 91, Nikodim Milash equates the normative importance of the Holy Tradition with that of the Holy Scripture. In the handbooks of the 19th and 20th centuries, the transition from divine law, represented by the teachings and commandments of Christ, to human ecclesiastical law is described by the statement: "Christ did not leave a codified set of laws or an ecclesiastical legislation, but rather demonstrated the meaning of the Church by granting authority to the Apostles" (Milash 1905, 38; Rodopoulos 1991, 9-10). Nevertheless, Jesus Christ is regarded as the primary legislator of the Church's life. Because the Holy Scripture primarily encompasses fundamental principles and does not provide detailed regulations for ecclesiastical life, Orthodox canonists argued that norms, rules or laws based on fundamental principles must be established. From this perspective, laws concerning faith and morals, grounded in Holy Scripture, are unalterable, obligatory, and universally applicable. However, ecclesiastical laws governing the external organization of the Church are considered "conditionally binding", with only those laws rooted in fundamental principles being unchangeable (Milash 1915, 50).

Rev. RĂZVAN PERȘA
*The Importance of the Holy Scripture within
the Canonical Tradition of the Orthodox Church*

60

During the 19th and 20th centuries, there existed a general agreement among Orthodox theologians engaged in canonical research regarding the significance of the Holy Scripture for the Canonical Tradition of the Orthodox Church. However, this consensus was disrupted by the audacious theses of Rudolf Sohm, one of the most debated authors of the late 19th and early 20th centuries (Congar 1973, 263), who asserted an inherent incompatibility between grace and law, as well as between the principle of love and the authority or power of Law. Sohm's work can be summarized by two theses, one theological and one historical. The German scholar's theological thesis was that the being of Canon Law is in contradiction with the very being of the Church. "Das Kirchenrecht steht mit dem Wesen der Kirche in Widerspruch" (Sohm 1892, 2 and 700), and the Church is free from any juridical influence ("Die Kirche Gottes ist frei von ihrer Vergangenheit, von allem, was menschlich in der Geschichte gestaltet ist. Darum ist frei von jeglichen Recht", Sohm, 1892, 533). These perspectives introduced an antinomy between Holy Scripture and Canon Law (Buisson 1966, 1-175; Adams 1958, 219-235; Congar 1973 263-294; Haley 1980, 185-197). Sohm's theses had a significant impact not only on Protestant theology but also on Catholic and Orthodox theology. While Catholic scholars were initially inclined to dismiss Sohm's theses (Mörsdorf 1953, 483-502; Mörsdorf 1965, 72-79), as they directly challenged the fundamental principles of juridical thinking in Catholic theology (Cattaneo 1991, 23; Wijlens 1990, 30-31), Orthodox theologians embraced Sohm's arguments, with some minor adjustments, for anti-Catholic polemics and to assert the pneumatological character of the Church's being, which they believed to be independent of any legal or juridical influence.

In response to the legalistic perspective on the Holy Scripture, the second position challenges the dichotomy between divine and human law, as well as the idea of the Holy Scripture as a source of unchangeable written divine law that established a definitive Canon Law for the Church (Afanasieff 1967, 54-68; Stan 1968, 180-189). Christ's authority as the originator of laws is diminished, and the scriptural norms, encompassing both the Old and New Testaments, are no longer viewed as positive norms (Afanasieff 1959, 112-127). Instead of the biblical text, the canons have their source in the dogmatic consciousness transposed within a cultural and historical framework by the canonical consciousness of the Church. According to this second perspective, throughout history, law has been progressively integrated into the life of the Church, eventually assuming a central organizational role (Affanasieff 1975, 349; Stan 1968, 181). By aiming to reject the legalistic interpretation of the Bible, this perspective

Rev. RĂZVAN PERŞA
*The Importance of the Holy Scripture within
the Canonical Tradition of the Orthodox Church*

61

diminishes the significance of the Holy Scripture within the canonical tradition. A good example of this perspective is the Romanian Canonist Rev. Liviu Stan.

In an article written in 1960, Liviu Stan presented fundamental questions regarding the use of legal norms within the Orthodox Church by inquiring: "Why did the Church adopt legal frameworks? How and when were these legal norms developed and acquired?" (Stan 1960, 467-483). In response to the first question, the author examines the necessity and social context of human life, offering a critique of Rudolf Sohm's opinions regarding the incompatibility between grace and law. While rejecting these theses, the author emphasizes that the New Testament primarily embodies elements of grace, suggesting that the inclusion of legal elements occurred later as a response to social inequalities.

"It is true that our Saviour did not endow the Church with rules of law, with a 'code of juridical laws', but only with grace, with truths of faith and with religious and moral norms. Nor did the Apostles and the Evangelists give a legal character to the norms they set down in writing or transmitted orally. So, the revelation of the New Testament does not contain legal norms; the Law does not belong to the content of the New Testament revelation. It is only the traditional use of concepts or their confusion, that has led many to give the meaning of legal norms to the teachings or instructions of our Saviour or of his Holy Disciples" (Stan 1960, 471).

In addition to Catholic theologians, Liviu Stan also criticizes Orthodox theologians and canonists, such as Constantin Popovici, Nikodim Milash, and Valerian Şesan, especially their perspective on the Holy Scriptures and the Holy Tradition as the fundamental source of Canon Law. He argues that these two sources lack juridical value for the Church (Stan 2017, 122). According to the author, the development of law is rooted in social inequality and serves as a crucial instrument within the Church, particularly when it operates within a social class framework. From this perspective, the author affirms:

"It appears to us as an instrument created by social inequality, as a factor which will always assert its presence and usefulness, if the division of society into classes lasts; and the members of the Church themselves being divided into classes, as such they too cannot be governed without rules of law. ... If the members of the Church had not been divided into classes, then, of course, the Church also could have dispensed from Law. Moreover, the very fact that the Church has used and uses legal elements proves that they entered, under certain conditions of the time, into the economy of

Rev. Răzvan Perșa
*The Importance of the Holy Scripture within
the Canonical Tradition of the Orthodox Church*

62

salvation, for otherwise she, as the unfailing bearer of her saving mission, would not have appropriated them or, if they nonetheless infiltrated her life, would have eliminated them" (Stan 1960, 471-472).

Through these assertions, laden with undertones reminiscent of class-based propaganda, the author addresses the initial inquiry concerning the Church's adoption of legal elements. Regarding the origins and emergence of legal norms within the Church, the author posits that the initial legal elements were introduced by Jewish converts into Christianity, who drew inspiration from the Old Testament. Furthermore, the author contends that the New Testament does not encompass any legal elements at all (Stan 1968, 181).

"Although the intrusion of Old Testament legal norms into the Church was stopped, we find that the Jewish Christians, for their insistence that the Old Testament legal laws be received into the Church, found a valid basis because many of them had a revelatory content, although they had subsequently undergone alterations. And, indeed, while New Testament revelation has no legal content, Old Testament revelation has a rich content of this nature" (Stan 1960, 472-473).

The author provides an interpretation of the disparity between the two Testaments in his work "Ontologia Juris," focusing on the prelapsarian state of humanity characterized by perfection. According to the author, in this state, there was no necessity for religion, morality, or law. However, following the fall, religion and morality became insufficient, leading to the introduction of legal laws. It is important to note that the author does not precisely establish the exact timing of this second fall or clarify the point at which religion and morality were deemed inadequate (Stan 1943). In contrast to his thesis rejecting the Marxist theory that attributes the emergence of legal laws and law to economic factors, the author presents a potential explanation that indeed correlates with economic causes.

The Old Testament, while containing legal laws, according to the author, loses its authority after the removal of sin through the redemptive work of Jesus Christ. Consequently, Christ's advent renders the revealed law of the Old Testament null and void. Through objective salvation, individuals are granted the possibility of experiencing spiritual rebirth and embarking on a new life. Considering this, the author asserts that for such a life, religious and moral norms derived from the truth embodied and preached by the Lord are sufficient, eliminating the need for legal norms (Stan 1960, 473; Stan 1968, 3-11; Stan 1968, 181). This second state of moral and

Rev. RĂZVAN PERȘA
*The Importance of the Holy Scripture within
the Canonical Tradition of the Orthodox Church*

63

religious perfection is attributed by the author to the early Christian community, which thrived in a state of perfect harmony and love of God within their internal relationships. However, their exte nal interactions were subject to Roman law, which permeated the life of the Church. The author posits that the fundamental factor leading to the integration of law into the being of the Church was based on: "the lack of social homogeneity of the members of the Church, more precisely, the fact that they too were divided into classes and social categories, on a scale of at least 10 different statuses, each of which had not only a social identity but also a corresponding civil and political identity, established by the legal status of each, according to the rules of Roman Law" (Stan 1960, 474).

In this sense, Church Law is nothing more than "a new legal offspring", created from the interference of legal elements from the Old Testament, Jewish Law, and Roman law to regulate the division of Christians into social classes.

The theses put forward by Rev. Liviu Stan, permeated with notions of class struggle and social inequality, exhibit both oversimplification and contradiction. While the author attempts to underscore the imperative nature of law in the life of the Church by asserting the existence of social classes from the beginning of the Church and the subsequent need to regulate their social interactions, an inconsistency arises when the author postulates an initial state of perfection that was later disrupted by class conflicts and social divisions. However, a cursory examination of conflicts within the New Testament and the presence of legal elements therein refutes the claim of an absolute absence of legal content in the New Testament, as posited by Rev. Liviu Stan to account for the subsequent emergence of law. The author perceives legal laws through the lens of modern legal positivism, a perspective that rightly does not apply to the early period of Christianity seen as a time of unblemished moral purity, where even "divergent interests" did not exist. Yet, it is precisely within this conflation that the problem with the author's thesis arises. The legal elements found in the New Testament cannot be equated with those of modern legal positivism, as doing so would be anachronistic and fail to account for the contextual factors at play.

The Canons of the Church and their relationship to the Holy Scripture in current academic research

Contemporary scholarly investigations within canonical research have taken a fresh approach by closely examining biblical texts contained within the canons

Rev. Răzvan Perşa
The Importance of the Holy Scripture within
the Canonical Tradition of the Orthodox Church

64

of the Church. This exploration aims to reinitiate the discourse on the connection between Holy Scripture and the canons included in the fundamental collection of Canon Law of the Orthodox Church. These recent studies, conducted by researchers such as Wagschal (2015a, 204-205; 2015b, 245-253), Pieler (1997, 81-113), and Ακανθοπούλου (1986, 187-195), seek to move beyond the preconceived divisions within canon law and delve deeper into understanding the relationship between these two sources, i.e. Scripture and Tradition.

The biblical canon recognized by the Orthodox Church was established through the synodically received canons. A thorough study of these canons reveals the historical progression and finalization of the list of biblical books received as normative by the Orthodox Church (Boumis 2007, 547-602). The biblical canon itself is confirmed by specific canons, including the Apostolic Canon 85, Canon 60 of the Council of Laodicea, the canons of St. Athanasius, St. Gregory the Theologian, St. Amphilochius of Iconium, and Canon 24 of the Council of Carthage. Notably, Apostolic Canon 85 attributes the finalization of the biblical canon to St. Clement, mentioning his letter addressed to the bishops and referring to "Our Acts of the Apostles." Additionally, it includes a mention of "two epistles of Clement and the Constitutions in eight books," which are not to be publicly circulated due to the presence of mystical matters. However, Canon 2 of the Council of Trullo rejects the Apostolic Constitutions, deeming it a work tainted by heterodox teachings.

By examining the relationship between biblical and canonical texts, it becomes evident that Holy Scripture is the most frequently cited source within the canons of the Church. Nearly half of the 770 canons included in the Canonical Collection of the Orthodox Church contain a biblical quotation or reference, serving as various types of canonical arguments. However, a comprehensive study encompassing all the biblical passages found in canonical texts is regrettably lacking. Joannou provides a biblical index in his canonical collection, listing approximately 380 biblical references (Joannou 1962, 345). Akanthopoulos, in his analysis of biblical citations, identifies around 349 canons that contain biblical references, bearing in mind that a canon can often feature multiple biblical references (Akanthopoulos 1992, 26; Ακανθοπούλου 1986, 187-188). David Wagschal estimates that approximately 180 canons contain biblical references, not including the actual biblical quotations within these texts (Wagschal 2005a, 203).

From this perspective, the biblical text can be considered a primary and fundamental source of the canons. Indeed, most biblical quotations found in the

Rev. RĂZVAN PERŞA
*The Importance of the Holy Scripture within
the Canonical Tradition of the Orthodox Church*

65

canons are used, as we shall see, to reinforce a canonical provision and not to modify any biblical commandment or rule. Canon 5 of the Council of Carthage provides, as a rule of reference to the Holy Scripture, that "in regard to those things which the divine Scripture has most obviously provided, it is not proper that they should be subject to vote, but only that they should be followed" (For the Greek text see: Perşa 2022, 138). Therefore, most references to biblical passages are descriptive and explanatory.

Certainly, it is crucial to analyse the role of the biblical text and the use of biblical passages or quotations within the canonical tradition. With that in mind, it is prudent to address the Old and New Testaments separately, considering their distinct relationship as observed within the canons of the Orthodox Church.

The relationship between the Canons and the Old Testament

As discussed earlier, the attitude of Orthodox canonists towards the Old Testament was a dual one. On one hand, the Old Testament is recognized as divine written law, but it is limited to its moral principles rather than the legal prescriptions of the Mosaic Law. Consequently, this perspective inevitably results in the Old Testament being disregarded as a source of ecclesiastical law. This viewpoint is reinforced by the second thesis, which suggests that the introduction of Jewish and Greco-Roman legislative provisions caused the emergence of law within the spiritual life of the Early Church.

To compare these two theses with the canonical perspective on the Old Testament as reflected in the Holy Canons, it is necessary to conduct a brief analysis of how the Old Testament is regarded within these texts. The analysis aims to systematize the use of Old Testament texts within the canons of the Church.

a. *Rejection of Jewish cultic provisions*. Numerous canons within the canonical collection explicitly target the opposition of specific Jewish cultic practices or tendencies associated with Judaizing (Perşa, 2023). These canons address a range of topics, including observances related to Jewish Passover, marriage regulations, and other aspects. It is important to note that these canons do not entail an outright abrogation of the Old Testament itself, but rather focus on combatting certain Jewish cultic practices or religious influences within the context of the early Church.

For example, Apostolic Canon 7 and Canon 1 of the Council of Antioch explicitly denounce the celebration of the Lord's resurrection following Jewish practices, adhering to the biblical provisions outlined in the Old Testament (Perşa 2023;

Rev. RĂZVAN PERȘA
*The Importance of the Holy Scripture within
the Canonical Tradition of the Orthodox Church*

66

Feldman 1996, 399; L'Huillier 1996, 19-30). Apostolic Canon 70 forbids the observance of Jewish fasting and prohibits participation in Jewish celebrations or accepting gifts from Jews. Additional canons further prohibit accepting gifts associated with Jewish feasts (Canon 37 of the Council of Laodicea), participating in Jewish synagogue festivities (Canon 39 of the Council of Laodicea, Apostolic Canons 64 and 71), and observing the Sabbath (Canon 29 of the Council of Laodicea). These canons collectively demonstrate the rejection of Jewish cultic practices within the early Church while not necessarily annulling the Old Testament itself. We can find as well, some Old Testament texts that are abrogated or annulled by some canons. For example, Canon 2 of Saint Basil the Great rejects the distinction made according to the LXX text in Exodus 21:22-23 between formed and unformed foetus and condemns abortion as homicide in both cases (Roman 2009, 125-138; Stan 2010, 38-46; di Mauro 2008, 17-18; Gorman 1998, 63-67; Mistry 2015, 51-52). Canon 28 of St. Basil the Great rejects the provision of Leviticus 11:7-8 regarding the prohibition of eating certain types of meat. Canon 87 of St. Basil the Great rejects the Jewish provision regarding the possibility of marriage with the sister-in-law in the event of the death of the wife, a provision found in Leviticus 18:18 (Patsavos 2011, 197-219). St. Basil the Great offers a guiding principle for interpreting Jewish provisions, stating that the commandments of the Law are intended for those under the law (cf. Romans 3:19): "As to this first thing I shall ask permission to say is that whatever the Law says is said in the Law, since thus also at least we should he subject to the Law 's requirements as to circumcision and the sabbath and abstinence from certain foods (Rom. 3:19). For indeed we shall not lay upon ourselves a yoke of slavery to the Law if we find anything to help us to enjoy ourselves in sensuality: if anything included in the requirements of the Law appears to be too severe, too burdensome, why then we shall have recourse to the freedom granted by Christ (Gal. 5:1)." (Rudder 1957, 842)

b. *Acceptance of Old Testament norms*. A second attitude towards Old Testament texts is the acceptance of certain norms, rules or provisions. For example, Apostolic Canon 51 and 53 prescribe the defrocking of clergymen who abstain from marriage, meat, and wine out of disgust, as these elements were created by God and declared to be very good, according to Genesis 1:31; Genesis 5:2. Apostolic Canon 55, based on the provision found in Exodus 22:27, instructs that clerics who slander the bishop should undergo defrocking. Apostolic Canon 63 refers to various texts from the Jewish Law to impose certain dietary restrictions on the consumption of meat. These

Rev. RĂZVAN PERȘA
*The Importance of the Holy Scripture within
the Canonical Tradition of the Orthodox Church*

67

provisions are also reiterated in Acts 15:29 and reaffirmed by Canon 67 of the Council of Trullo. Canon 11 of St. Basil the Great addresses the distinction between voluntary and involuntary murder found in Exodus 21:18-19. He establishes that canonical punishment should be determined based on this distinction. Canon 5 of the Council of Carthage prohibits clerics from engaging in usury, a provision derived from Deuteronomy 23:19 and Psalms 15:5. Apostolic Canon 25, along with Canons 3 and 32 of St. Basil the Great, upholds the principle from Nahum 1:9 that forbids double condemnation for the same offence. Canon 17 of the First Council of Nicaea along with other canons (Apostolic Canon 44, Canon 10 of the Council of Trullo, Canon 4 of the Council of Laodicea, Canons 5 and 16 of the Council of Carthage, and Canon 14 of St. Basil the Great), prohibit clerics from offering money with interest or engaging in financial exploitation. This prohibition is based on the passage from Psalm 15:5. Canon 54 of the Council of Trullo reiterates the prohibition of incest as stated in Leviticus 18:6 (Petcu 2012, 105).

The canonical texts above highlight the complex and multifaceted relationship between the canons of the Church and the Old Testament. While there is a rejection of certain Jewish cultic provisions and practices in the canons, there is also an acceptance and utilization of Old Testament norms as a basis for canonical regulations. The canons demonstrate both a descriptive approach, where biblical texts are used as authority for specific norms, and an extesive approach. Overall, the relationship between the canons and the Old Testament reflects a dynamic interplay between scriptural authority, tradition, and the development of canonical norms in the life of the Church.

The relationship between the Canons and the New Testament

Regarding the relationship between the canons of the Church and New Testament texts, four key approaches can be identified: *descriptive, extensive, corrective, and interpretative.*

a. *The descriptive approach* entails the acceptance in the canons of the Church of rules and norms derived from the texts of New Testament. According to this approach, biblical texts serve as authoritative sources for specific canonical regulations. For example, Apostolic Canon 3 prohibits offering sacrificial products that contradict the Lord's commandment regarding the Holy Eucharist. Apostolic Canon 27, based on 1 Peter 2:23, subjects clerics who strike the faithful or the non-believers to

Rev. Răzvan Perșa
*The Importance of the Holy Scripture within
the Canonical Tradition of the Orthodox Church*

68

defrocking. Apostolic Canon 29, along with parallel canons, forbid any acceptance of any kind of payment in exchange for the grace of the priesthood, citing the condemnation of Simon Magus. Apostolic Canon 41, based on the principle found in 1 Corinthians 9:7, allows clerics the possibility of supporting themselves through Church income. Canon 50 of the Apostolic Canons mandates three baptismal immersions in the name of the Holy Trinity, following the command of Jesus from Matthew 28:19. Canon 67 of the Council of Trullo, drawing from the prohibition found in Acts 15:29 to abstain from blood, strangulated animals, and fornication, further specifies the prohibition of consuming animal blood prepared in any manner. This canon seeks to provide a deeper understanding of blood consumption, particularly within the socio-cultural context of the 7th century. Apostolic Canon 75 addresses the number of witnesses required in cases of canonical offences, referring to Matthew 18:16. Apostolic Canon 82 highlights the need for the consent of masters for the ordination of slaves, drawing this argument from Epistle to Philemon and Colossians 4:9. These examples demonstrate how the descriptive approach utilizes New Testament passages to establish specific canonical regulations, aligning the Church's canons with the teachings and guidance found in the New Testament.

Canons 2 of the Council of Nicaea and Canon 10 of the Council of Sardica incorporate the Pauline provision found in 1 Timothy 3:6, which cautions against the hasty ordination of bishops to prevent them from succumbing to pride and facing condemnation. These canons establish a required period between ordinations from deacon to bishop. Canon 70 of the Council of Trullo addresses the prohibition found in 1 Corinthians 14:34-35 regarding women speaking in the church. This canon prohibits women from speaking during the Liturgy. Byzantine canonists assert that this canon extends beyond the liturgy and encompasses other Christian services and gatherings. Balsamon, for instance, highlights that in the 7th century, certain women took it upon themselves to assume teaching positions and engage in preaching within the church. Church tradition acknowledges the existence of such female presbyters (πρεσβύτιδες) as early as the first Christian century, as mentioned by the Apostle Paul (Tim 5:2; Tit 2:3). These women held teaching or catechetical roles, being referred to as „teachers of good" (καλοδιδάσκαλοι) in Tit 2:3. They provided instruction to younger women concerning Christian morals and conduct but were not permitted to preach during worship services. The ecclesiastical institution of presbyters, including female presbyters and deaconesses, was formally established within the early centuries of the

Rev. RĂZVAN PERȘA
*The Importance of the Holy Scripture within
the Canonical Tradition of the Orthodox Church*

69

Church but later forbidden by Canon 11 of the Council of Laodicea. However, this canon specifically addresses the prohibition of women preaching the word of the Gospel in public and does not negate the significant role of women in catechizing their families. Canon 72 of the Council of Trullo incorporates the Pauline privilege described in 1 Corinthians 7:12-16, which allows for the dissolution of marriage between a believer and an unbeliever under certain circumstances (Perșa 2018, 346-372). This canon applies the principle of economy to such mixed marriages. Canon 11 of the Council of Neocaesarea establishes the age of 30 as the minimum age for priesthood ordination because Jesus was baptized and began his ministry at that age, as mentioned in Luke 3:23. Dionysius of Alexandria, drawing arguments from the account found in Matthew 9:20-22 regarding the woman with a bleeding issue, imposes certain canonical restrictions on menstruating women. These restrictions are intended to align with the biblical passage and are further discussed by scholars (Larin 2008; Papanikolaou 2008; Morris 2010). Canon 1 of St. Peter of Alexandria imposes a period of penance lasting 40 days, mirroring the Saviour's 40 days of fasting described in Matthew 4:2. This canon establishes the duration of the penitential period based on the biblical reference.

b. *The extensive approach* in the relationship between the Church's canons and the New Testament involves the expansion or modification of existing rules and norms found in texts of the New Testament. Within the canonical collection, certain canons can be identified that extend or amend specific provisions from the New Testament. Apostolic Canon 52 expands upon the verse "there will be more joy in heaven over one sinner who repents" found in Luke 15:7 by stating that bishops and priests should receive anybody who turns away from sin. Apostolic Canons 81 and 83, along with Canon 11 of the Proto-Deutera Council, based on the Lord's commands in Matthew 6:24 ("no one can serve two masters") and Matthew 22:21 ("render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and to God the things that are God's"), prohibit clergymen from engaging in public administration or military service. Canons 4 and 5 of the Seventh Ecumenical Council refer to Acts 20:33, 1 Corinthians 6:9, and 1 Peter 5:2-4 to establish canonical norms against embezzlement and simony in various contexts. These canons expand upon the biblical teachings to address specific cases of misconduct.

c. *The corrective attitude* in the relationship between the canons and the New Testament involves making changes, amendments, or improvements to the rules and norms found in the New Testament. This approach acknowledges the need to adapt and refine certain aspects considering the evolving needs and circumstances of the Church.

Rev. Răzvan Perșa
*The Importance of the Holy Scripture within
the Canonical Tradition of the Orthodox Church*

70

An example of this approach is seen in Apostolic Canon 80, which, based on the commandment found in 1 Timothy 4:12, prohibits the ordination of a lay person to the episcopate. However, a brief amendment is included, stating "except by divine grace". This addition recognizes that exceptional cases may arise where divine intervention warrants a departure from the general rule. Canon 40 of the Council of Trullo modifies the age requirement for the ordination of women deacons. While the New Testament specifies the age of 60 (1Tim 5:9), this canon reduces the age to 40, reflecting a change in practical considerations and pastoral needs. Canon 3 of the Council of Trullo introduces the requirement of celibacy for bishops, deviating from the Apostle Paul's instruction that a bishop should be "the husband of one wife" (1Tim 3:2). This corrective measure aims to address specific pastoral and ecclesiastical concerns within the context of the Church's historical development. Similarly, Canon 9 of St Basil the Great distinguishes between adultery and fornication, imposing different punishments for men and women. Although both acts are referred to as adultery according to the New Testament, this ca on introduces a distinction for disciplinary purposes, recognizing the need for a nuanced approach in addressing different situations. In all these cases, the corrective attitude reflects the recognition that certain adjustments or refinements are necessary to better align the Church's canons with its pastoral, moral, and disciplinary requirements (Viscuso 1999, 273-290).

d. *The interpretative or hermeneutical approach* in the relationship between the Church's canons and the New Testament involves a synodal interpretation of the texts, rules, and norms found in the New Testament. This approach seeks to provide a deeper understanding and clarification of certain biblical passages through the collective wisdom of the Church. An example of this approach can be seen in Canon 16 of the Council of Trullo, which offers an extended exegesis of Acts chapter 6 (Wortley 1984, 255-260; Dură 1995, 149-164). This canon, in contrast to Canon 15 of the Council of Neocaesarea, interprets the role of the seven deacons not as sacramental ministers, but as individuals tasked with assisting in the distribution of meals for the ones in need. Similarly, Canon 64 of the Council of Trullo provides an interpretation of 1 Corinthians 12:12, exploring the various services and roles performed by the members of the body of Christ (Stan 1939, 85-86). This interpretation seeks to deepen the understanding of the passage and its implications for the functioning of the Church. In both cases, these canons reflect the synodal effort to

Rev. Răzvan Perșa
*The Importance of the Holy Scripture within
the Canonical Tradition of the Orthodox Church*

71

interpret and apply New Testament texts in a way that aligns with the teachings and traditions of the Church.

Conclusions

In conclusion, the examination of the relationship between the Church's canons and the texts of the Old and New Testaments reveals a complex and multifaceted interplay. The canons demonstrate various approaches to the biblical texts, including rejection, acceptance, extension, interpretation, and correction. While some canons reject certain Jewish or Old Testament provisions, others affirm and extend biblical norms. The canons also interpret biblical passages considering the Church's context and make corrective amendments to address evolving circumstances.

The presence of extensive biblical references in the canons underscores the significance of Holy Scripture as a primary source for canonical tradition. Biblical quotations and references are used to establish moral, cultic, and disciplinary norms within the Church. The canons draw upon both the Old and New Testaments, reflecting the continuity and relevance of biblical principles in the life of the Church.

Furthermore, the canons demonstrate the dynamic nature of canonical development, as the Church adapts and refines its practices in response to evolving circumstances. The canons exhibit a balance between fidelity to biblical teachings and the need for practical and pastoral considerations. The interpretative and corrective attitudes exemplify the Church's ongoing discernment and application of biblical principles in the context of its mission and ministry.

Overall, the study of the Church's canons about the biblical texts provides valuable insights into the rich tapestry of canonical tradition. It highlights the multifaceted ways in which the Church engages with Scripture, utilizing its teachings to shape its moral, liturgical, and disciplinary life. This exploration invites further inquiry and reflection on the interplay between Scripture and the canonical tradition in the ongoing development of the Church.

According to the above arguments, it can be concluded that all the canons of the Church included in the fundamental collection, being regarded as an essential part of the Patristic tradition and the synodal manifestation of the Church, can be understood as manifestations of the ecclesial experience across time and space, guided by the divine grace of the Holy Spirit, and as a continuation of biblical rules and norms.

Rev. Răzvan Perşa
*The Importance of the Holy Scripture within
the Canonical Tradition of the Orthodox Church*

72

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Rev. Răzvan Perșa
*The Importance of the Holy Scripture within
the Canonical Tradition of the Orthodox Church*

73

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Rev. RĂZVAN PERȘA
*The Importance of the Holy Scripture within
the Canonical Tradition of the Orthodox Church*

74

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Rev. RĂZVAN PERȘA
*The Importance of the Holy Scripture within
the Canonical Tradition of the Orthodox Church*

75

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Biblical and canonical grounds for assuming the fulfilment of man in the ecclesial ministry

Abstract

This text explores the path towards human fulfilment in ecclesial ministry. It sees man's call to growth as a path to realizing one's God-given potential. Although sin obscures this call, God gently guides man toward renewal, culminating in Christ's restorative work. Seeking the kingdom reorients one's priorities toward eternity and aligns personal gifts with God's will. The Church nurtures these gifts, making each believer a vital, responsible member of Christ's Body. Through partaking of grace, one becomes a witness to the world. However, authentic Christian living requires continual purification. The calling to priesthood represents the pinnacle of service through total dedication. Chosen for their maturity and theological grounding, priests devote themselves completely to equipping believers for ministry. Necessary qualities include blamelessness, prudence, and virtuous living. Pastoral ministry starts from an inner call later confirmed by the Church. One who feels drawn to service and theological study discovers through this process a crystallization of vocation, assuming responsibility for living out God's gifts.

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Keywords

fulfilment, vocation, Ministry, Church, Priesthood

Introduction

Human, created in the image and likeness of the Creator, received from God the command to grow (Gn 1:28) (Rose 2001, 102), which is, in fact, a call to fulfilment. Unfortunately, by obeying his instincts rather than the Word of God, he became an accomplice to degradation, as a result of breaking of bond of trust in which he has been placed.

God could not leave humanity unfulfilled and therefore He announced the way by which it would be restored to its former glory (Gn 3:14), but without setting a time limit, valuing man's free participation in his own renewal. Beyond temporal constraints, the Heavenly Father has embarked a journey together with man, over the course of decades of discreet pedagogy, through a work of love, patience, perseverance, forbearance, and in some cases olso of firmness.

In the fullness of time, when a young woman was able to overcome her understanding and say, "Let it be to me according to your word" (Lk 1:38), the Path of Renewal was opened to her (St. Athanasius the Great 1987, 100).

From ths readiness to accept the call, untainted by human resistance, God has begun the work of restoration of man and the whole creation, as the Good Friday Troparion tells us (*Mineiul pe Martie* 2001, 187). The attitude of the Virgin Mary was cherished and honoured by the Saviour, showing that all humanity was included in this participation in the economy of salvation (Evdokimov 2004, 180). When the woman in the crowd said "Blessed is the womb that bore you and blessed are the breasts that you sucked!" (Lk 11:27), the Saviour showed that all who listen to the word of the Lord and fulfil it share the same blessing (Lk 11:28).

By listening to and following the path opened by the Word of God, man comes to live the fulfilment of the potential placed in him.

Each one of us should be concerned with how we can reach fulfilment and understand how we can be workers towards fulfilling what God has placed in us as potential.

The human journey towards the valorisation of inclinations and the discernment of vocation and calling

From a very young age, human beings are confronted with an avalanche of inclinations and urges. Some are God's gifts placed within the human being (Larchet 2001), others are instinctual developments, and many are influences of the environment. It is very difficult for a man to distinguish between these and, unfortunately, if he is not given genuine criteria for discernment early on, years of his life can be wasted in useless or even destructive wanderings, which can lead to waste, discouragement and despair.

By listening the voice of conscience and the will of God in the concern not to thwart the grace by which Christ is co-worker in our perfection (2Cor 6:1), man comes to distinguish between the different callings and to advance towards fulfilment, to come

to the assumption of the call of callings, the choice of life, which can also be called vocation.

This work of progress towards fulfilment is actually a service, a participation in the fulfilment in us of what God has placed as potential. Each person can also participate in the fulfilment of those around them, through support anchored in values and virtues.

The servant does what the master asks. His participation is one of willingness and of obedience. For this reason, when a man enters into the logic of service, he must be aware that he is abandoning his own will and falling into the will of the one in whose name he is striving (Tseleghedis 2015, 44). In this process it is not a matter of abolishing one's own will, but of a participation, through availability and faith, in a work that is above man.

Christ The Savior framed his ministry in this paradigm. He shows before us the perfect model of obedience (cf. Jn 5:30) and the symphony between the mind of the Almighty and the work of man.

Man, being aware of the potential for the fulfilment of his life through the Father's Fatherly work, needs not obsessively desire to acquire certain achievements which he considers important. He must seek a fulfilment in which his inner life meets God's will, and from this sincere association all else will flow, overcoming the problems he faces in life (St. John Chrysostom 2007), separating himself from the worldly, as St Paul tells us: "I exhort you therefore, brethren, for the mercies of God, that you present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, as your spiritual worship, and that you not be conformed to this age, but be changed by the renewing of your mind, that you may know what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect".

Seeking peace and peace of mind as the Psalmist urges us (Ps 33:13), we will ind ourselves on the authentic path of life. This point is also emphasized by the Holy Gospel when it speaks of the advice given by the Saviour to those who care for the things of the world (Mt 6:25-34). The answer is also a clarifying word on how we should relate to different callings, quests, needs and expectations. Even if, at first reading, this pericope would give the impression that man does not have to worry about food, clothing and other necessities of life we are shown that the only truly essential concern is the search for the Kingdom (St. Theofilact of Bulgaria 2007, 202). Everything else, which God knows is necessary, is added because of the orientation towards the eternal. Interestingly, Christ only asks us to seek the Kingdom, he does not ask us to find it.

From this state of seeking the high will come the giving of the temporal things necessary for daily life.

If we have a search that is based on stable foundations, in the coherence of the Christian conscience, the Lord comes to meet us, bringing us the fruits of the Kingdom.

We can thus understand that man advances towards fulfilment when he lives in peace and tranquillity, a sign of communion with God's grace (St. Basil the Great 1986, 257), in all that he does, through which he advances towards salvation and the knowledge of the truth (1Tim 2:4).

The knowledge of truth is not only about the external world but also about man himself. Coming to know our potential is part of our vocation, an important step in understanding how we are to relate to the choices we make in life so that we synchronize them with God's life-giving work.

To encourage us on this journey, St. Peter the Damascus says: "According to knowledge, it is man's choice, and this is the beginning of salvation. It consists in man's forsaking his wills and thoughts and fulfilling the wills and thoughts of God. And if he can do these things, there shall not be found in the whole creation a thing or occupation or place that can prevent him from becoming as God from the beginning has wished him to be, according to His image and likeness, and by his endeavour God through grace, fearless, just, good, and wise, whether in riches, or poverty, or virginity, or in marriage, whether in government and liberty, or in subjection and bondage, and simply speaking, in every time, place, and thing" (St. Peter of Damascus 1976, 30-1).

The spiritual search for gifts during life

In human relationships, when we smake ourselves available, we ask how we could be of help. We should do the same in our relationship with God. When a man seeks fulfilment, it is natural to ask what his life is for. How can he make his life a fulfilment of what God blesses?

The difference between God's response and man's response is that Heavenly Father sees in us the potential for fulfilment in all its complexity, whereas man has only certain immediate expectations.

So, we need to understand that God's answer to our search is not a human one. He enhances in us the gifts we have so that the service we propose is also our fulfilment. Rather than responding to us articulately through a particular path that he suddenly opens, he waits to see how we have the capacity to work with the gifts placed in us. He

blesses our openness to different ministries, one at a time, that prepare us for fulfilment in ministry, tailored to each person.

In the Epistle to the Ephesians, St. Paul testifies that God gives man grace according to the gift (Eph 4:7). In the Epistle to the Corinthians, the same Apostle exhorts us to covet the best gifts (1 Cor 12:31). By putting these verses together, we can see the way by which man can distinguish between the gifts that are set before him: We each have the freedom to desire, to covet the gifts that are pleasing to our heart. At the same time, we should understand that only gifts that are from God receive grace and bear genuine fruit.

It is appropriate for a man to have the initiative and the zeal to carry out projects that seem good to him and according to his heart. To the extent that they are a gift from God, they will receive grace and will come to fruition. If they are not fulfilled, they will fade away, but desired with a clear conscience, they can be turn into a life experience, which orients man on a path from which other genuinely fulfilling opportunities can open towards a vocation which initially might even be unimagined.

Many inclinations, aptitudes, passions or preoccupations come to be seen as stages of life, apparently without much consistency, but which influence the human journey. As long as they are received honestly and with spiritual balance, even if they will not all accompany him in the long term on the road to fulfilment, they will participate in completing the beauty of the picture of life. All that is needed is that on this journey, the inward movements are not contrary to the conscience, values and principles that man receives through the grace of birth from Water and Spirit.

The Church, the communal reality in which man is fulfilled

The Church, the communion of those who assume Christ in their lives, the icon of the Kingdom (Bobrinskoy 2003, 80) is shared with us, through the mysterious work of grace, as the framework in which we participate in the Trinitarian life (Șelaru 2014, 13) advancing towards a co-working with God. In this dynamic all believers are involved, each one with the task of making the divine image fruitful in him, progressing and achieving a life of communion (Șelaru 2014, 301) in which each one assumes service and accepts to be served.

When the Church welcomes a new member into its bosom, from the very first prayers offered for the one "called to holy enlightenment", the request for an active involvement in the life of the Church is obvious, the priest asking God that he become

a worthy soldier, a devoted servant of Christ (Aghiasmatar 2016, 20-1). The prayers that precede immersion ask God that the man will be able to make the Gifts of the Holy Spirit work in him, "and increasing the deposit of grace, to take the reward of the high calling and to be counted among the first-born enrolled in heaven" (*Aghiasmatar* 2016, 42).

Each person has the potential to be a living member (*Aghiasmatar* 2016, 30), with an effective role in the life of the Church. In the prayer that the priest makes at the haircut during the Baptism Service, the similarity of this gesture to the investiture that the prophet Samuel performs in the name of God for David (Afanasiev 2008, 64) is explicitly stated. Thus, we can understand that by working with grace in the settlement to which God calls us, we each have the potential to become an apostle, increasing the deposit of grace (Bulgakov 1952, 156), and making every life in Christ an apostleship.

Together working with God is confirmed and strengthened by co-working the Grace that establishes and perfects man in the attitude he has assumed. At the same time, we must understand that for Grace to be at work it must meet the will of man committed to the path of the Kingdom.

Nowadays it is more important than ever that every Christian assumes responsible participation in the life and ministry of the Church. Each of us must understand our role as a living member of the Body of Christ in a world where people act as if God does not exist (Ciubotea 2009, 217). The revelation of the likeness of God through conscious and committed participation in the life of the Church makes the Church itself to be perceived by society as a dynamic, peace-making and fruitful factor through the facts that prove Christ active in the world.

Every layman, sealed with the seal of the Gift of the Holy Spirit, is a bearer in the world of the Spirit's fruits, which are as St. Paul shows us in his Epistle to the Galatians: "love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control, purity" (Gal 5:22-23). Such attitudes cannot be restrained by anyone or anything, "against such things these there is no law" (Gal 5:23). They are means at the disposal of every Christian by which the world can be transfigured.

Every believer who participates in the life of the Church becomes a sharer in grace and is chosen to carry this ministry into the environment where he or she spends most of his or her time, in his or her personal surroundings and at work.

Those who participate in the sacramental life and share in the holy works are people of the Kingdom and, as the Saviour shows us in the parable about the Kingdom of God, are that dough mixed with three measures of flour to leaven all things (Lk 13:21).

The Church must assume the role of the yeast that leavens the dough (Mt 13:33). Like the flour, each person receives the leaven of the kingdom, to be integrated into the dough which is in turn leaven for all humanity.

Believers who participate in the life of the Church aquire a vitality that is transmitted beyond the testimony of the community. For thisto bear fruit, there must be a constant concern for the purification of attitudes, so that witness may be edifying and holy.

St. Paul in his epistle to the Romans, 11, confirms this understanding ("If the part of the dough offered as firstfruits is holy, then the whole batch is holy; if the root is holy, so are the branches." – Rom 11:16) and warns us about the danger of pride that taints the leaven. "Your boasting is not good. Don't you know that a little yeast leavens the whole batch of dough? Get rid of the old yeast, so that you may be a new unleavened batch - as you really are. For Christ, our Passover lamb, has been sacrificed." (1 Cor 5:6-7).

Thus, the mission of the Church depends on the purity and authenticity of each Christian's testimony.

In this ministry, we must be concerned about making the Savior Christ the worker, extinguishing any claim of merit on our part that might lead to damaging seediness.

If a person is ready to respond to God's call, he can become a bearer of Christ to the extent that he abandons himself, takes up his cross and follows the one who called him (Mk 8:34).

Christ, respecting freedom, invites us to participate in his work to the extent that we deny ourselves and follow Him. The assumption of the call is very important because it is only through the good use of freedom that the commitment is fully at work. If there were any compulsion, man's participation would not be full, it would be corrupted in its content.

Ecclesiastes tells us, "Before men are life and death, and whichever they choose will be given to them" (Eccl 15:17). In the book of Deuteronomy God says through Moses, "See, I have set before you today life and death, good and evil. For I command

you today to love the Lord your God, to walk in obedience to him, and to keep his commands, decrees and laws so that you may live and multiply, and the Lord your God will bless you in the land that you are about to take possession." (Dt 30:15-16). In keeping with this understanding of human freedom, St. Paul speaks to us about how we must make our choices in order to remain in the Lord's work.

"So then, my brothers, be all the more eager to make your calling and election certain, for by doing this you will never fail." (2 Pt 1:10).

We are thus invited to lay a serious foundation for our choices, aware that by assuming what God puts in our hearts we cannot fail. For this reason, it is important to let God renew in our innermost being the Righteous Spirit, who has been placed in the human heart since the building. This spirit of discernment makes desire naturally meet what God addresses to us as a call.

The first consequence of assuming the call with a pure heart and in complete freedom is the renunciation of all that clouds those within us.

Each person's self is besieged by a multitude of states, habits, weaknesses, and conditionings, inherited or acquired from the lives far from Christ, to which those before us and the environment in which we live have made us partakers. Through the investigation of conscience and the continuous renewal of our lives, we can come to this self-denial and say with St. Paul: "I have been crucified with Christ, and it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me. And the life I now live in the flesh I live in faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me" (Gal 2:20).

Once this state of cleansing from all that is selfish is reached, man can look within his heart and discern the deep calls that are addressed to him. There man meets his own cross, which he must bear following Christ on the path of apostleship.

Often the word "cross" and the expression "bearing the cross" are used in a sense that emphasizes primarily the sufferings and difficulties of life. Indeed, man is called to take up the cross, to crucify his own will, out of love for the world and the fulfilment of God's commandments. At the same time, we can ask ourselves how this understanding can be reconciled with the rosary that we take part in every Sunday on All Saints' Day, when we adore the Resurrection, confessing that "through the Cross, joy has come to all the world" (*Catavasier* 2000, 50)?

Can the call to carry our cross and thus follow Christ not also be understood as a call addressed to every Christian to participate responsibly in the salvation of the

world by cultivating the gifts that God has placed in him and by responding by making these gifts fruitful?

Since each person is God's gift to the world, for the world to be renewed, each person must take honest and responsible responsibility for his life, understanding his purpose, cultivating it and bearing fruit every day (Lk 9:23). Every day of our lives is thus a participation in the work of salvation.

We cannot be true Christians if we do not take this attitude. Whoever does not try to understand his mission, to cultivate it honestly and to make it work, does not honour the name of Christian and, unfortunately, makes Christ a disgrace. For this reason, we can say that the man who does not cultivate the gifts with which God has endowed him to do the work of Christ is not worthy of the name of Christian: "He who does not take up his cross and follow me is not worthy of me" (Mt 10:38).

Once we have discerned the call and the gifts within us, we will be able to help those around us also to discern the call and to put the gifts to work towards fulfilment.

The calling of the priesthood, the highest stage of human fulfilment in ministry

Priesthood was assumed by the Church through an extension and rediscovery of the meaning of the Law. The Old Testament priest was the one whose mission was to offer sacrifices for the people.

In the New Testament, priesthood is no longer understood in the same sense. In Christ, each one brings the sacrifice of his own life and integrates the whole of humanity into it. Christ is the one who sacrifices and who sacrifices Himself through each person who receives Him. But He has chosen persons to make explicit this work of continuous sacrifice until the end of time. From among the people, the Church chooses the most courageous, with the power of testimony, for a ministry of forerunners on the path of service.

Clerical ministry is a ministry of service, primarily to integrate into the ministry of the Church those who are available for service at whatever level. To be able to carry out this ministry, the clergy must assume a state of sacrifice, offering and dedication. Priests chosen and ordained by the Church for a distinct ministry are, as St. Paul says in his Epistle to the Ephesians 4:12-13, "to the perfecting of the saints, to the work of ministry, so that the body of Christ may be built up until we all reach unity in the faith

and in the knowledge of the Son of God attaining to the state of perfect man, to the measure of the fullness of the age of Christ".

Pastoral ministry is materialized based on an interior call, crowned by the choice for ministry that the Church makes through ordination. It is very natural and blessed for a man, as St. Paul tells us, to covet the gift of the priesthood, and to desire it with all his heart. If this desire seals a gift from God, the Lord will give grace commensurate with the gift. All that is needed in this process is that the strengthening of the readiness to serve be done with all the heart, not in the form that one can imagine but in the way that God considers that man can fulfil his mission.

He who feels the inner call to study theology and follows this urge advances towards understanding how the various ministries are carried out in the Church. The theological knowledge and the pastoral formation he follows should open him to understanding the complexity and beauty of Church life and the complexity of ministry. During this formation, the call is put to the test and the vocation to service is crystallized as the culmination of a life lived responsibly.

Priestly ministry is prepared for those lay people who have an honest life, a good name, a thorough theological training and have come to the responsible assumption of fulfilment either in family life or in the monastic path.

At the time of ordination, the future priest makes a solemn confession before the Church: bishop, clergy and people confessing that he fulfils the conditions that St. Paul sets forth in the Epistle to Timothy, chapter 3 stating that he is "blameless, a husband of one wife, watchful (*νηφάλιον* – prudent, moderate in desires – Bailly), wise, decent, hospitable to stragers, apt to teach others; not given to wine, not fond of beating (non-aggressive), not greedy of ill-gotten gain, but gentle, peaceable, not fond of money, keeping his household well" (1 Tim 3:2-5).

St. John Chrysostom, in his 10th homily to the First Epistle to Timothy, explains these requirements. Regarding the irreproachable life that a candidate for the priesthood must have he says: "Using the word *blameless* he (Paul) understands all virtues. So that he who is conscious of committing sins is wrong if he desires the episcopate (pastoral ministry), from which he has excluded himself by his deeds; he is to be guided, not to guide others. He who leads must be brighter than a flame and have a spotless life, for all eyes are on him and his life" (St. John Chrysostom 2009, 40).

A tarnished reputation carries with it the risk of bringing reproach upon the Church and therefore such a person should not be called to the priesthood. Saint

John Chrysostom goes so far as to consider that even unproven accusations that cause confusion among the people should be considered when choosing a cleric. He asks rhetorically and he answers: "What if a man is pursued by mischief, and certain circumstances draw him into slander? It may happen to be so, but that person must not be elevated in dignity (priesthood, our note) because there is danger of disturbance" (St. John Chysostom 2009, 42). The pastor must live a blameless life even in the eyes of those outside the Church, so that "outsiders", although they slander him for the faith, may value him for his way of life (St. John Chrysostom 2009, 41).

Canonical tradition has assumed and deepened this understanding by requiring that ministers be chosen from among those who live blamelessly, have a good reputation, and have not defiled their lives with fornication or other dishonest acts. The Church has been and is concerned that the reputation of the whole family of clerics should not be tarnished and that their way of life should uphold the Church's ordinances. For this reason, so that their lives should not encourage second marriages or concubinage, 18 Apostolic Canon prohibits the calling to the ministry of a person married to a widow, and still more of one married to a woman of bad reputation.

From the earliest days of the Church, the faithful were called to service in several stages, through which their vocation was strengthened and matured. The first obligatory stage was to understand the faith. Since in the early centuries, many people were baptised as adults, the Church tried to prevent the desire to become a Christian from being affected by the desire to become a clergyman or a minister in some ecclesiastical runk. For this reason, those who had not participated in the lengthy catechetical formation preceding Baptism and the newly baptised were not called to ministry.

In addition to understanding the faith through knowledge of the Scriptures and the writings of the Holy Fathers, those preparing for the priesthood need to strengthen their spiritual formation in a framework of spiritual witness. He who is thinking of dedicating his life to this mission must be concerned about receiving testimonies from those already living in the ministry. At the same time, understanding how experienced priests carry out their mission is not meant to offer ready-made solutions, but to make us understand how God worked through them and how they knew how to entrust themselves to God's work.

The mission of shepherding is a ministry of human nature placed at God's disposal so that His work may continue in the world until the end of time. The priest does not do his work but leads the faithful to God's work and helps them to undertake

it. He is called to give his own life to lead the spiritual flock to the perfect nourishment of God's work.

Rev. Dumitru Stăniloae points out that the person who assumes the priesthood must give himself to Christ, as Christ gave Himself to the Father. He shows that the priesthood in Christ receives meaning through this internalization of sacrifice: "from the power and according to the likeness of the priesthood and sacrifice of Christ, presenting our bodies as a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to the Lord, and as our spiritual service", like the body of Christ (Rom 12:1). This is our priesthood and sacrifice in the power and likeness of the priesthood and sacrifice of Christ. It is not the world that man has to offer to God first as a sacrifice, as a priest, but himself. It is in this sense that Saint Peter links the "royal priesthood" of those who believe in Christ with their duty to proclaim in their being "the virtues of Him who called them out of darkness into His enlightened light" and "to abstain from the lust of the flesh, which is against the soul" (1Pt 2:9-11). Only by becoming holy sacrifices do we also enter the Father, that is, into communion with Him. But only in Christ can we enter this communion with the Father. This shows the extension of Christ's holy sacrifice in us, to make us also, not without our cooperation, holy sacrifices and, since Christ as a sacrifice is also priest, priests in close union with him" (Stăniloae 1997, 70).

Christ identifies Himself with those chosen for His manifestation in them, saying: "He who listens to you listens to Me, and he who disobeys you disobeys Me" (Lk 10:16) "and behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age" (Mt 28:20). Thus, by integrating man into priestly ministry, the human person is assumed as a means of sharing in the ministry of Christ.

Speaking of the sacramental priesthood, Father Stăniloae points out that the Church and salvation in Christ depend on it because it is through those who have been called to the priesthood that the faithful receive the Mysteries of the Kingdom. It is through those chosen into the priesthood that Christ Himself is the worker. The work of those sent by Him is the work of Christ, the teaching of those is also the teaching of Christ. For this reason, the priest has no reason to take pride in the fulfilment of his mission because "priests are ministers of Christ's saving ministry. They give of themselves nothing but service" (Stăniloae 1997, 101).

Through the call of the sacramental priesthood, man receives the grace that makes him an icon of the sacraments of God. The pastor integrates the service of the community into his ministry. If every Christian is a member in part of the

ecclesial body whose head is Christ, we can say without hesitation that every believer is integrated into the priestly ministry. Through priests and their followers, the Kingdom of God is mingled with the world, so that all mankind may receive the leaven of reunion with God (Mt 13:33). It is also important to understand that the priesthood is a sacrifice to those around us.

The priest is a support for the community he leads. Through the servant, man must feel encouraged and supported to understand the sacramental ministry of the Church, through which the Kingdom becomes accessible to us here and now. All that is understood, however, awaits to be translated into life, and therefore the pastor is also a support to help the believer to be a witness of the faith through the works of life so that the Lord may be glorified through their ministry (cf. Mt 5:16). Priests need to be able to make the faithful understand the importance of their participation in the whole priestly ministry that Christ is fulfilling in the world. This mission can only be undertaken successfully if the shepherd carries it out wholeheartedly, aware of the greatness of the mission but also the richness of God's love poured out through him into the world. Father Stăniloae draws attention to this by saying that "if priests do not serve wholeheartedly, they not only fail to carry out the saving work of Christ as they should but to a great extent they hinder its fulfilment" (Stăniloae 1997, 102).

Conclusion

Human fulfilment lies in realizing one's potential according to God's purposes. This requires seeking first God's kingdom rather than worldly ambition. As we align our gifts with eternity, we discover our unique vocation. The Church plays an indispensable role in nurturing gifts and empowering believers to witness through imparting grace. Thus, the Body of Christ equips people for service. However, authenticity demands continual self-examination and purification.

Pastoral ministry represents the epitome of service because priests fully devote themselves to preparing others for ministry. Initial inner calls find eventual concrete actualization through theological education and the Church's confirmation. Embracing the call to ministry means completely relinquishing a self-directed life to live out God's will. This path of self-denial leads to the cross of responsibility yet also joyful purpose as our potential harmonizes with holy designs.

Since every believer receives God's commission to serve in some capacity, we each must seek personal fulfilment in Christ by cultivating our gifts to build up

others. Our vocation awaits discovery through the process of placing ourselves at the disposal of divine intentions. In summary, human fulfilment coincides with responding wholeheartedly to God's call, thereby aligning our lives with eternal Kingdom priorities and allowing our gifts to shine in humble service within Christ's Body.

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BOOK REVIEWS

1. Rev. Răzvan Perşa, *Philon of Alexandria and his Allegorical Interpretation*

2. Rev Maxim (Iuliu-Marius) Morariu, *The Holy Spirit as a Principle of Life and Instrument of Salvation History*

PHILON OF ALEXANDRIA
AND HIS ALLEGORICAL INTERPRETATION

Rev. Răzvan Perșa

Onița Burdeț, *Legum Allegoriae – Un posibil pattern al discursului exegetic iudeo-alexandrin* [Legum Allegoriae – A possible pattern of Judeo-Alexandrian exegetical discourse] (Cluj-Napoca: Cluj Univeristy Press, 2020), 322 p.

The work constitutes the doctoral dissertation of Onița Burdeț in the field of Old Testament Studies, composed under the guidance of Reverend Professor Ioan Chirilă, who also authored the foreword. This academic endeavor reflects a scholarly pursuit, guided by an esteemed mentor in the field. The book represents a thorough academic exploration of allegorical interpretation in Judeo-Alexandrian exegetical discourse, especially focusing on Philo of Alexandria. The book is structured into five main sections, each delving into different aspects of allegorical methods and their historical and thematic contexts. It examines the integration of Greek and Judaic teachings in Philo's work, the adoption and transformation of these patterns in various religious and philosophical traditions, and concludes with a synthesis of these insights, offering a unique perspective on the evolution of exegetical methods.

The book commences with a foreword, followed by acknowledgments and an introductory chapter that lays the groundwork for the subsequent study. In the first part, the focus is on fundamental concepts and methodologies, providing an in-depth examination of biblical allegory and its interpretation within Jewish, Hellenistic, and Christian traditions. This section is predominantly centered on the notion of allegory in the Judeo-Alexandrian exegetical tradition. It probes into the use of allegory in holy scriptures, specifically examining its historical application in both Judeo-Christian and Greek philosophical contexts. A significant portion of this work is dedicated to highlighting the contributions of Philo of Alexandria, particularly his influential role in synthesizing Jewish teachings with Hellenistic philosophy, thus establishing a new paradigm in the field of exegetical discourse. This section of

the book also discusses the impact of Philo's allegorical interpretations and their significance in shaping later exegetical approaches in both Jewish and Christian contexts. In this chapter, the author presents an insightful analysis of Philo of Alexandria's position within ancient culture, emphasizing his pivotal role in the synthesis of Jewish religious tradition and Greek philosophy. The chapter underscores Philo's unique contribution to creating a fusion between Judaism and Hellenism, a topic that remains a point of scholarly debate. The author emphasizes for instance, that Peder Borgen's inquiry about Philo's categorical identity – whether he is a mystic, philosopher, or exegete – highlights the complexity of Philo's intellectual persona. The author adopts a balanced viewpoint, considering Philo as embodying elements of mysticism, philosophy, and exegesis. This perspective aligns with Erwin Goodenough's interpretation of Philo's thought as part of a broader Jewish mystical trend, albeit with an anti-rabbinic stance that often employs symbolism. However, the author also addresses the critiques of Goodenough's arguments, particularly the claim that his extensive work on Jewish symbols does not conclusively prove the existence of a uniform mystical trend in Judaism. This critique does not diminish Philo's mystical inclinations or his symbolic expressions, as the author clarifies. Furthermore, the chapter discusses M. Idel's counterarguments to Goodenough. Idel contends that Philo's use of symbolism and his mystical tendencies in allegorical discourse do not substantiate the existence of an ancient, mystical, anti-Jewish current developed by Philo. Thus, the author navigates through various scholarly opinions, presenting a nuanced understanding of Philo's intellectual legacy within the context of ancient culture, balancing his role as a mystic, philosopher, and exegete. The final part of this section discusses how Philo creates a unique pattern in his portrayal of Moses, connecting the prophet's experiences with those of the patriarchs of the Old Testament, such as Abraham and Noah. It delves into the three stages of Moses' prophetic experience, starting from his emotional responses to various situations, leading to a state of divine possession, and culminating in the utterance of prophetic oracles. The chapter also explores the idea that Moses' emotional states transformed into motives for entering a state of inspiration, highlighting the connection between emotional responses and the state of prophetic inspiration. This pattern of prophetic inspiration reveals the link between emotional states, the experience of inspiration, and Moses' declarations to his people. The divine possession experienced by Moses had a significant psychological impact, transforming him into a biblical character akin to a 'priestly

oracle,' comparable to figures in Greco-Roman sources like Sophocles, Virgil, Strabo, or Lucian. Furthermore, the book examines other biblical narratives used by Philo to exemplify the phenomenon of prophecy among the Jewish people, such as the crossing of the Red Sea, the prophecy about manna, the punishment of those who worshipped the golden calf, the rebellion and punishment of Korah, and Moses' final prophecy before completing his mission. In addition to Philo's portrayal of Moses, the book discusses the allegorical method and its reception in various contexts, such as Judaism and Hellenism, and its roots in the interpretation of Homeric poems and religious teachings. It also touches upon the influence of Stoicism and other philosophical traditions on allegorical interpretations

The second part focuses on Philo of Alexandria, a key figure in allegorical interpretation, examining his approach and influence. The author articulates a comparative analysis of the use of allegory in the Old Testament and parable in the New Testament, highlighting a significant shift in the stylistic and interpretative approaches within these scriptural texts. In the Old Testament, allegory is identified as the predominant stylistic device. This preference for allegory is linked to the Jewish tradition of Torah study and the specialized training of rabbis, which was essential for deciphering the allegorical meanings embedded in the scriptures. These allegorical interpretations were accessible primarily to those who underwent rigorous intellectual initiation in the study of Torah within schools and synagogues. In contrast, the New Testament marks a transition from the allegorical method to a parabolic approach, aligning with the Savior's hermeneutics. This shift reflects a more pedagogical character in the interpretation of sacred texts, moving away from the allegorical complexity of the Old Testament. The author acknowledges the enduring significance of allegory as a paradigm for scriptural exegesis, noting its widespread presence in Holy Scripture and its capacity to elevate the narrative style through concrete comparisons and metaphors. However, the author also points out that in the Old Testament, allegory can some-times be perceived as vulgar or indecent, and not always suitable for conveying moral ideas. These so-called „imperfections" (page 43 and 64) in allegorical usage are seen as contributing to the narratives' plasticity and realistic character, hidden beneath the allegorical veil. Crucially, the author cautions against solely adhering to the allegori-cal interpretations of these texts, as this could transform the narratives into mytholo-gies and significantly diminish their importance. The analysis thus suggests a balanced approach to understanding these scriptural texts, recognizing the value of both allegory

and parable in their respective contexts within the Old and New Testaments.

The third and fourth parts analyze the application of allegorical methods in Philo's treatises and broader Judeo-Christian discourse. In the analysis of Philo's works, the author explores the Judeo-Christian interpretations of New Testament writings, emphasizing the Jewish origins of most New Testament authors. These authors are culturally situated within the Hellenistic stream of thought, reflective of the broader context in which early Christian communities emerged. Notably, many of these communities were located within the territories of the Greco-Roman Empire. This geographical and cultural placement led to religious dissensions within these early Christian communities, particularly around practices like circumcision and Sabbath observance. These issues became points of contention, not only between Christians and Jews but also within Philo's own interpretations in relation to Judaism. Philo, in his works such as "De Specialibus Legibus" and "De Migratione Abrahami," argues in favor of circumcision and Sabbath observance. However, he also imbues these practices with symbolic meaning, thereby offering a nuanced perspective that blends traditional observance with allegorical interpretation. This scholarly examination sheds light on the complex interplay between cultural, religious, and geographical factors in the formation of early Christian doctrine and practice. It particularly highlights the role of Philo as a key figure in bridging Jewish traditions with the evolving Christian thought within the Hellenistic context.

The author makes a significant contribution to the field of biblical hermeneutics by identifying and exploring the concept of "pattern" in the context of Philo of Alexandria's allegorical exegesis. This innovative approach draws on Thomas Kuhn's idea of patterns in scientific communities, as outlined in his book "The Structure of Scientific Revolutions." The author applies this concept to the study of Philo's work, suggesting that Philo's writings represent a paradigmatic shift in the interpretation of biblical texts. By analyzing Philo's treatise "Legum Allegoriae," the author demonstrates how Philo merged elements from both Greek culture and religious Judaism, creating a new pattern that had a profound influence on Christian hermeneutics. This merging is evident in the way Philo incorporates Greek allegory with key symbols of religious Judaism, structuring them in Midrash-like patterns of questions and answers and adopting verses from the Septuagint as the basis for exegesis. Furthermore, the author argues that Philo's work transcends the conservative approach of the rabbinic community and the allegorical exegesis of the Hellenistic community, thereby

creating a new, influential pattern. This patter combines oral elements, such as Greek rhetoric, with written traditions, establishing a comprehensive and universal exegetical discourse. The author's approach is particularly noteworthy for its interdisciplinary nature, applying concepts from the natural sciences to biblical hermeneutics. This cross-disciplinary method allows for a deeper understanding of Philo's impact as a paradigmatic figure who not only interpreted existing scientific knowledge but also laid down major interpretative lines for future works.

The final section discusses the reception and transformation of these methods in various intellectual traditions. The book concludes with a comprehensive bibliography, reflecting extensive research. This structure suggests a detailed and scholarly examination of allegorical interpretation, its historical development, and its impact on religious and philosophical thought.

The contribution of Onița Burdeț lies in identifying Philo of Alexandria as a paradigmatic figure in biblical hermeneutics, whose work represents a synthesis of Greek and Jewish elements, thereby creating a new pattern that profoundly influenced Christian interpretation of the scriptures. This approach opens up new perspectives in the study of biblical texts and their interpretation, highlighting the dynamic and evolving nature of hermeneutical practices.

THE HOLY SPIRIT AS A PRINCIPLE OF LIFE AND INSTRUMENT OF SALVATION HISTORY

Rev. **Maxim (Marius-Iuliu) Morariu**

Alexandru Salvan, *Discursul lui Isaia despre Duhul Sfânt [Isaiah's Discourse on the Holy Spirit] – Ruah Hakodeş* (Cluj-Napoca: Presa Universitară Clujeană, 2021), 274 p.

With the publication of the volume by Archdeacon Alexandru Salvan, PhD entitled: *Isaiah's Discourse on the Holy Spirit – Ruah Hakodesh*, which is based on the author's doctoral thesis, the theological research dedicated to the Old Testament in Romania has been enriched with a new valuable work. The author himself, a man with an impressive ecclesiastical and cultural track record (he has been a deacon of the Metropolitan Cathedral of Cluj-Napoca since 2017, an archdeacon since 2019, and since 2021 he has received from His Eminence Archbishop and Metropolitan Andrei the "Nicolae Ivan" order for clerics) has already distinguished himself through a series of articles dedicated to the subject, but also by the fact that he has deepened the thought of the prophet Isaiah both in his undergraduate and Master's studies at the "Babeş-Bolyai" University of Cluj-Napoca.

Written according to all the methodological norms in force, the research benefits from an ample foreword by Rev. Prof. Ioan Chirilă, PhD (pp. 11-15), the master of the person in question. The reputed biblical scholar from Cluj underlines here the multiple valences of the interdisciplinary investigation that Father Alexandru undertook and points out that: "The presence and work of the Holy Spirit in the New Testament sheds light on that of the Old Testament. The roots of pneumatology lie in the First Testament of Scripture. Father Alexandru-Adrian Salvan's work highlights this fact starting from the Book of the Prophet Isaiah, which, because of the prophecies it launched and the way they were fulfilled in history, was considered among the Church Fathers as the *Gospel of* the Old Testament." (p. 15)

Segmented into three main chapters and accompanied by an introductory part (pp. 16-24) and a preliminary chapter (pp. 25-48) in which issues such as the historical dimension of pnevmatology in early Christianity, how the various schisms and splits

contributed to the definition of a certain perception of the Third Person of the Holy Trinity, the pan-Orthodox perspective on the issue, as well as the identification of issues related to the proper noun concerning the Holy Spirit in the Old Testament and how it was perceived by leading representatives of patristic exegesis such as: St Ambrose the Great, St Athanasius the Great, St Cyril of Alexandria, Clement the Alexandrian, Eusebius of Caesarea, Dydimus of Alexandria, Dionysius the Areopagite, St Gregory of Nyssa, St Photius of Constantinople, St Dionysius the Areopagite, St John Cassian, St John Damascene, St Irenaeus of Lyons, St Justin Martyr and Philosopher, St Macarius the Egyptian, St Maxim the Confessor, St Nicetas of Remesian, St Simeon the New Theologian, St Basil the Great, or the writer Origen (p. 24). Once the patristic framework has been established, the author reviews the specialized literature on the subject in Romania and abroad. Among the reference authors who have produced works dedicated to Isaiah, the names of biblical scholars such as Josep Blenkinshopp, George Bucahan Gray, D. Litt, R. Jamieson, A. R. Fausset, A. R. Brown, D. Brown, John D. W. Watts, Hames M. Hamilton Jr. are mentioned, Lloyd R. Neve, C. Ryrie, Leon J. Wood, Fathers Constantin Coman, Petre Chiricuță, Vladimir Petercă, Ioan Chirilă and Petre Semen, or Most Reverend Father Lucian Făgărășanul (pp. 24-25). Alexandru Salvan manages to position himself critically about each of them, to present their contributions by identifying the originality they bring, to identify how his research converges with the one he proposes and to show which the niche of investigation he wishes to pursue. The work is thus, in this section, a valuable synthesis of literature in which the Romanian reader is invited to know and understand how the book of Isaiah has been understood by biblical research and to identify its particularities in the works written by Romanian authors. The philological analysis of the concept of *ruah* (pp. 32-37) and its correlation with *nephesh* (pp. 37-45), as well as with other similar concepts relevant to pneumatological research, is another valuable part of the work. The author thus succeeds in demonstrating both the necessity of the process he undertakes and the value of his investigation, to speak of the current state of research and to invite the reader on a journey through the Old and New Testaments starting from the prophecy of one of the most relevant authors in the first section.

Later, in the first chapter of the book, the author discusses the *ruah* in the Old Testament (pp. 49-76), systematically addressing its use and meanings in the *Torah* (pp. 49-54), historical (pp. 55-62), didactic-poetic (pp. 63-64) and prophetic (pp. 65-76) books. The second and densest thematic subunit of the work, entitled *Ruah Ha kodesh*

in the book of the prophet Isaiah – an exegetical approach (p. 77-210), is in turn segmented into seven subchapters. Alexandru Salvan begins with the passage in chapter 4, verse 4 of the book of Isaiah (p. 77-79), continues with verses 2 and 3 of chapter 6 of the same work (p. 101-130), with the first four verses of chapter 11 (p. 131-152), verse 19 of chapter 26 (p. 153-165), verse 15 of chapter 32 (p. 166-175), verse 13 of chapter 40 (p. 176-188), chapter 42, verse 1 and chapter 61, verses 1-3 (p. 189-210), thus creating a symphony between the exegetical and theological framework of the texts mentioned in the book of the prophet Isaiah, inviting the reader to glimpse the mystery of the Person of the Holy Spirit. The last part of the book is devoted to the theological landmarks concerning the key term of the investigation (pp. 211-244). The author analyses the concept of *Ruah Hakodesh* from the perspective of its quality as a principle of life and instrument of salvation history (pp. 215-221), as a sustainer of the life of God's people (pp. 222-225) and as a power of perfection in eternity (pp. 226-243).

An extensive, pioneering work and a bibliographical synthesis relevant to theological research in the biblical area, the book by Archdeacon Alexandru Salvan entitled: *Isaiah's Discourse on the Holy Spirit – Ruah Hakodesh,* published by Presa Universitară Clujeană in 2021, is therefore, as we have tried to show, a valuable and useful contribution for those who want to better understand the depths of the book of Isaiah and an example of how the complementarity between the Old and New Testaments can be seen.