IN HONOREM
REV. PROF. IOAN CHRILĂ, PHD
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ROMANIAN ORTHODOX OLD TESTAMENT STUDIES

IN HONOREM

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I

CONTENTS

EDITORIAL

Deacon STELIAN PAȘCA-TUȘA

Ioan Chirilă – the biblical scholar raised in the light of the Church Fathers

IOAN CHIRILĂ - THE BIBLICAL SCHOLAR RAISED IN THE LIGHT OF THE CHURCH FATHERS

Rev. Professor Ioan Chirilă is an Old Testament biblical scholar who assumes and interprets the Holy Scripture in full harmony with the Church Fathers. The patristic tradition, in which Father Professor is reflected, creates the appropriate framework for understanding and penetrating the mystery of the revealed word, giving the Christian exegete the opportunity to know God as He is. Rev. Ioan Chirilă is part of this interpretative direction and understands that any exegetical act must have as its finality an encounter with the divine Logos, to whom the Scriptures bear witness (Jn 5:39).

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This goal can be easily perceived in his writings, which totals 17 volumes as an author and more than 300 studies and specialized articles, which is why we can consider him a current reference point for the Eastern Orthodox interpretation of the Holy Scriptures.

The sixtieth anniversary of his life and thirty years of academic activity is an opportune occasion for a brief incursion into the biography and writings of Rev. Ioan Chirilă. We intend to outline the theological profile of the first full professor of the Old Testament department of the Cluj academic institution, founded almost 100 years ago.

Rev. Ioan Chirilă was born in 1962 in Măgoaja, a village in Cluj county. He attended the Orthodox Theological Seminary in Cluj-Napoca (1980-1983) and graduated from the Theological Institute of University Degree in Sibiu (1984-1988). He enrolled in the doctoral courses of the same institution and in 1999 he received his PhD in theology, specializing in the Old Testament, with the thesis: "The Book of the Prophet Hosea, introduction, translation, commentary and theology of the book". At the same time, he attended the PhD course in Modern Universal History at the Faculty of History and Philosophy of the "Babeș-Bolyai" University, Cluj-Napoca (1991-1996), where he researched a topic that dealt with the Romanian-Jewish

cultural-church relations in Transylvania during the 18th-19th centuries. At the same time, he studied Hebrew at the Institute of Assyriology and Babylonian Studies of the University of Budapest (1992-1993) and carried out an intensive research internship in Israel at the University of Tel Aviv, the Goldstein-Goren Institute, at the Ecole Biblique of Jerusalem, at the Studium Biblicum Franciscanum in Jerusalem and at the Archives of Zionism (1994-1995). Subsequently, he followed further research periods in Greece and Israel. This extensive academic training gave Rev. Ioan Chirilă the necessary skills to specialise in Old Testament study and theology, hermeneutics and scriptural exegesis, Jewish literature, Judaism, biblical archaeology and biblical Hebrew language, interreligious dialogue, science-religion dialogue, ethics, bioethics, discourse ethics and modern history.

Rev. Ioan Chirilă's integration into theological education was achieved in 1988, after graduating from the bachelor's level, when Archbishop Teofil appointed him pedagogue, confessor and later professor at the Orthodox Theological Seminary in Cluj-Napoca. After the re-establishment of the Theological Institute (1990), he became a teaching spiritual assistant (1990-1992), and from 1992 he became a teaching assistant in the same institution which, by integrating into the structures of the "Babeș-Bolyai" University of Cluj-Napoca, changed its name to the Faculty of Orthodox Theology. Later, Rev. Chirilă held the position of lecturer (1995), assistant professor (2000) and then professor (2004) in Old Testament, Biblical Archaeology and Hebrew Language. His teaching career was completed in 2007 when he became a PhD supervisor in the Old Testament. At the same time as his work in the faculty, Rev. Chirilă was an assistant professor at the Goren Goldstein Centre for Judaic Studies, the University of Bucharest (where he taught Biblical Archaeology at master level – 1999-2002) and at the Institute of Judaistics M. Carmilly, "Babes-Bolyai" University of Cluj-Napoca (where he taught History of the Hebrew Language, Biblical Hebrew Language and History of Hebrew Literature at the undergraduate level – 1999-2004). He has also been a *visiting professor* at the University of Medicine and Pharmacy of Cluj-Napoca since 2007.

On the administrative level, Rev. Ioan Chirilă served as Director of the Orthodox Theological Seminary in Cluj-Napoca from 1995-1998 and held the position of Chancellor of the Faculty of Orthodox Theology in Cluj-Napoca for two terms (1996-2004). In 2004, Metropolitan Bartholomew granted him the blessing to occupy the position of Dean of the same faculty, which he would lead for two terms (2004-2012). Subsequently, Rev. Professor was elected by the Senate of the University

"Babeş-Bolyai" as President of the Senate, a position he held from 2012 to 2020, also for two terms.

As far as his theological work is concerned, we can say that it is characterized by two fundamental aspects: constancy and epectasy. The first of these concerns the perseverance with which Rev. Chirilă tackles the fundamental themes of Eastern theology, which can be seen from his first volume *Homo-Deus* (1997) to the last *Roots of Eternity* (2022). The knowledge of the living God, the incarnation of the Word, resting in the Holy Spirit, anthropology, the pneumatology of creation, sacred time and space, the Eucharist, love, truth, freedom and unity are just some of the themes of which the Professor constantly returns to reaffirm their central importance in Orthodox Biblical Theology. The other fundamental aspect of his theology concerns the upward movement in the act of knowledge, growth in virtue and the continual aspiration towards deification. Rev. Ioan Chirilă urges us through his writings to approach the spring of life, to taste the living water, and to sink into the unfathomable depths of divinity until we never thirst again.

Regarding the approach to the scriptural text, the Professor proposes several requirements which place the exegete in the Eastern tradition of interpretation. The first requirement concerns the inspired character of the sacred text. Without this criterion, Scripture is desacralized and deprived of its divine character. In this way, the revealed text becomes the object of a critical analysis that often disregards the Church and Tradition. Scripture is an essential point of reference within Tradition, which validates all that the Church Fathers have affirmed. Therefore, denying the inspired character of the Holy Scripture leads to an unnatural separation of the three fundamental pillars of our faith.

Another basic criterion that marks Rev. Ioan Chirilă's vision of the sacred text is the unity of Scripture. The Professor unconditionally supports the inseparable link between the two Testaments, which he sees fully realized especially in liturgical hymnography. The latter, he points out, could in time become a hermeneutical landmark because of the confessional character with which it affirms the teachings of the faith.

The holistic approach to interpretation is another fundamental criterion that the Rev. Professor applies in his exegeses. In this sense, he does not reject the critical method of interpreting the Holy Scripture. On the contrary, he uses the critical instrument without hesitation when his academic research involves/requests it. However, Rev. Ioan Chirilă has reservations about the results of the historical-critical school

when they cast doubt on the inspired character of the Holy Scripture. He also considers inappropriate the tendency of some interpreters to "idolize" the method of work specific to this school of interpretation. In other words, the Rev. Professor uses critical tools with discernment but considers them insufficient to penetrate the mystery of the sacred text.

Also, with a view to a comprehensive interpretation, Rev. Ioan Chirilă often appeals to Jewish exegesis. His openness to the Jewish interpretive tradition is primarily because the Jews are the primary recipients of the revealed text. An honest exegete who wishes to understand the Old Testament in its entirety cannot disregard the view that this tradition (which resembles the patristic tradition) has of the theological content of the revealed message. Reading the two volumes in which the Professor exploits the exegesis of Philo of Alexandria (*Fragmentarium exegetic filonian I* - 2002 and *II* - 2003) is enlightening for understanding how we can relate to the Jewish tradition.

The patristic tradition is one of the strengths of the interpretative act performed by Rev. Ioan Chirilă. In his opinion, the exegete who assumes the Eastern method of interpretation must be in communion of thought with the Fathers of the Church. The interpretation that the former carries out must be in the same spirit as the latter. However, this unity of thought does not imply a rigid repetition of texts, but the assumption of content in a dynamic perspective. In other words, today's exegete must assume the method of interpretation and the mind of the Fathers to be able to be concretely part of the dynamics of the Tradition. Rev. Ioan Chirilă often stresses that it is the Holy Fathers who offer us the possibility of fully understanding the scriptural text. They do not remain locked in the historical dimension of the sacred text but transfer it to a spiritual dimension in which each one can find himself in the message revealed to us by the Holy Spirit. The Church Fathers offer us the paradigm of relating to Holy Scripture whereby what is "past for history is present, in a mysterious way, in spiritual meaning" for each of us, as St Maximus the Confessor, one of the Church Fathers whom the Professor is very fond of, points out in his responses to Thalassium. Acquiring *the mind of the Church Fathers*, i.e., assuming their way of thinking, brings with it the premise of the mystical union of our soul with the Word of God. Therefore, the finality of the exegetical act is always oriented by the Church Fathers towards our encounter with Christ. In this sense, if the interpretation of a scriptural text does not lead us to Christ, then we cannot claim to have understood much.

The last requirement that we have chosen to highlight the method of interpretation that Rev. Ioan Chirilă promotes in his writings (see *The Holy Scripture*

– *The Word of Words* – 2010) is the incarnation of the word. In his opinion, it is not enough to decipher the mystery of the scriptural word, but it is necessary to live it, to experience it. The word of God must become incarnate in us, be alive and working until we come to affirm, like the Apostle Paul, that it is no longer we who live, but Christ who lives in us (Gal 2:20).

The above justifies us to believe that Rev. Professor Ioan Chirilă is a reference exegete for Eastern Christianity and implicitly a current landmark for Old Testament Biblical Theology in Romania and why not for the whole Orthodoxy?

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This volume brings together the scholarly contributions of several professors of theology who teach the Old and New Testaments in academic settings. Their consistent contribution adds to our joy and gives Rev. Ioan Chirilă the opportunity to realise how valued he is.

ORTHODOX EXEGESIS

RELIGIOUS FAITH – A DETERMINING FACTOR FOR NATIONAL UNITY IN THE DIASPORA

Abstract

In the traditional church language, the word 'diaspora' (meaning 'scattering') has a social and a judicial meaning. The term was borrowed into Romanian from Greek and refers to the dispersion and subsequent settling of Jews outside the borders of their motherland, from the time of the Babylonian exile to the Greek-Roman era. Thus, the word 'diaspora' (Dt 28:25; 30:4; Is 49:6), as used in the Septuagint, refers to the body of Jews scattered throughout the pagan world after the Babylonian Captivity. The theological motivation for their scattering, in the opinion of certain prophets, would be purification (Ez 22:15), a notion which appears to trouble many pious souls (Ps 45). Once atonement and purification have been completed, the return to the initial state will take place (Ez 36:24; Eccl 36:10). In this study, we will evaluate the concept of 'diaspora' and the implications it has in the biblical context that is mentioned and we will capture how these perspectives are found in the way the Orthodox Church reports to the Christian communities in the diaspora.
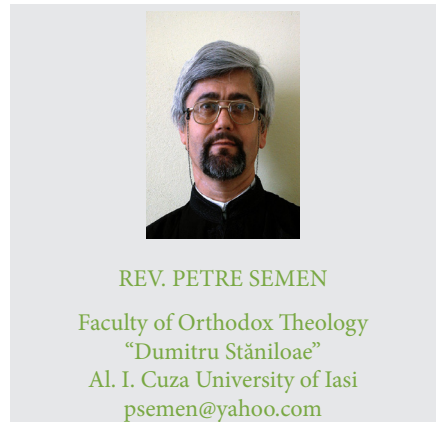
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the Babylonian Captivity, diaspora, deportation, autocephaly, unity

Introduction

The word 'diaspora' occurs in the Greek version of the New Testament as well and is used by Saint Luke the Evangelist when referring to the Jews scattered among the Greeks and the other foreign peoples and to their arrival in Jerusalem for the celebration of Pentecost (Acts 2:9-12). Thus, upon the founding of the Christian Church, one is reminded of the Jews dispersed over various regions of the Roman Empire and beyond.

Some believe that, from Jerusalem to Babylon and Rome, there were over 143 locations where one or several synagogues were built, depending on the number of Jews who had settled there definitively (Mircea 1984, 236). The Bible mentions two types of diaspora: the Jewish one, scattered among peoples of religions and cultures different from their own, (Dt 28:25; 30:4; Is 49:6; Jer 41:17; 2 Mc 1, 27; Jas 1:1) and the Greek one (Jn 7:35; 1 Pt 1:1). Jewish tradition, based on the scriptural texts that recount the Exile (2 Kgs 25:27; Jer 29:22; Ez 33:21; Lam 1:2) employs the word 'galut' in alternation with 'gola' fairly frequently (2 Kgs 24:15-16; Jer 24:5; Est 2:6; 1 Chr 5:22).

The word 'gola', referring to the Jewish communities anywhere in the world outside the borders of 'Eretz Yisrael', regardless of the circumstances that led them there, became dominant as a synonym for the Greek 'diaspora' (dispersion, scattering). The first Jewish communities created by force, in northern Mesopotamia, are the work of Sargon II, after the fall of the Kingdom of Israel (722-721). The Jewish people would go through two more tragic episodes, in 596 and 586, when caravans of deportees from the kingdom of Judah were taken to Babylonia, where they would remain for about 70 years. Note that the Assyrians and the Babylonians used to partly or completely deport the peoples they defeated to reduce the national drive of their enemies and to colonise those of their territories where the population was very scarce due to numerous wars. It appears that this policy was initiated by Tiglath-pileser III of Assyria. Between 734 and 732, he conquered the cities of Abel-Beth-Maacah, Janoah, Kedesh, Hatzor, and Gilead and displaced their inhabitants into Assyria (acc. II Kings 15, 29). After the conquering of Samaria (722), Sargon II continued that same policy, deporting many Israelites (according to Assyrian inscriptions, circa 27,280 people) into Assyria and making them settle in Halah and Habor. He replaced the deported population with colonists from Babylonia, from the cities of Cuthah, Hamath, Ava, and Sepharvaim (2 Kgs 17:24-41) (Bidoz 1987, 341-2).

The Causes of the Dispersion

As far as the causes of the Jews' dispersion among the Gentiles are concerned, even though most historians and Bible experts have directly associated the word 'diaspora' or 'scattering' and the moment of the forced departure into the Babylonian Exile (which involved three stages), the biblical context suggests that economic motivations preceded political and military ones. During the young monarchy consolidated by King David and carried on by his son, Solomon, Israelites were sent to various regions

they controlled in Asia and Africa, where they started colonies that kept in contact with the city of Jerusalem and that, in time, acquired the status of permanent residence (Sanders 1991, 855; Walls 1995, 340). The first economically motivated diaspora was established in Damascus and is mentioned in 1 Kings 20:34 (3 Kgs, according to the Septuagint), where it is recounted that the Syrian King Ben-Hadad proposed to King Ahab of Israel to reopen the market in the city of Damascus. After the weakening of the kingdom and the military defeats during the reign of Rehoboam and Jeroboam (cca. 918 BC), when Pharaoh Shishak of Egypt invaded the Kingdom of Judah (1 Kgs 14:25-28; 2 Chr 12:1-12), the Jewish diaspora of Egypt grew considerably. Furthermore, we are told that during the time of Prophet Jeremiah's mission as well, there was a fairly large diaspora in Egypt (Jer 42:15-18), subsequently increased by those who fled the country for fear of a Chaldean invasion.

It appears that the diaspora in Egypt came second in terms of size and socio-cultural importance. That is why Prophet Jeremiah felt morally compelled to also send a message to his fellow Jews settled in large numbers in Migdol, Tahpanhes, Memphis and Pathros (ch. 44:1). Moreover, Jewish historian and philosopher Philo (20 BC – 40 AD) informs us that, in Alexandria, Egypt, alone there was a Jewish diaspora consisting of about one million inhabitants, who accounted for an eighth of the country's population (*In Flaccum* 6, 8) and occupied two of the city's five neighbourhoods (Walls 1995, 855). However, the largest Jewish diaspora was generated by the occupation of the Holy Land by the Assyrians and the Babylonians, who, following the policies of the time, deported a very large portion of the population, particularly the country's intellectual and political elites (2 Kgs 15:29; 17:6; 24:14; 25:11). The deportation and the transition from the status of the internationally acknowledged national state to that of exile were carried out via approximately four stages: 605 (Dn 1:1); 597 (2 Kgs 24:10-17); 586 (2 Kgs 24:2; Jer 40:14); 582 (Jer 52:30) (Schultz 2001, 314-5).

It is known that, after Judaea and Israel, respectively, it is in Babylonia that the largest Jewish communities were found and it is also there that the outstanding exegetes of the Torah (Amoraim) were active, while the Babylonian Talmud was unanimously acknowledged as an interpretation of the Mishna (Schultz 2001, 314-5). History testifies to the Jewish people's vast capacity to adapt to a completely foreign, even hostile, culture and civilisation, especially when they had the benefit of spiritual leaders capable of raising their countrymen's morale. The case of Prophet Jeremiah is well known to Bible scholars. He can serve as a role model for Christians as well, when it comes to praying

for the authorities (ch. 29) and it is probably he who inspired the Apostle Paul, too, when the latter wrote to Christians to submit to the authorities, as it was God who allowed them to rule. Knowing that a return from exile was inconceivable at the time, Jeremiah wrote to his contemporaries in Babylon: 'Thus says the Lord of Hosts, the God of Israel, to all who were carried away captive, whom I have caused to be carried away from Jerusalem to Babylon: build houses and dwell in them; plant gardens and eat their fruit! Take wives and beget sons and daughters; and take wives for your sons and give your daughters to husbands, so that they may bear sons and daughters, that you may be increased there, and not diminished. Seek the peace of the city where I have caused you to be carried away captive, and pray to the Lord for it, for in its peace you will have peace!' (ch. 29:4-7).

The Downsides of Diaspora Life: The Acculturation Phenomenon

Practical experience of life among foreigners has shown that, in the lands of deportation, many exiles can, *nolens volens*, sooner or later, completely lose their national and religious identity. At least, that is the fate of nearly all nationalities uprooted from their native lands. As previously stressed, the practice of deporting conquered populations was very popular in Antiquity, which is why there were numerous communities of different nationalities and religions on the vast Assyro-Babylonian territories. In most cases, being far away from home, from the places of worship built by their forefathers, and being placed as newcomers in a completely different cultural context, produced major mutations on all levels. Moreover, let us not forget that aliens, who speak a different language and have other cultural customs and traditions, are much more difficult to assimilate with natives and less likely to merge with them.

The same can hardly be said of the Hebrew communities established in Babylon, even though, later on, during a certain period of the Roman Empire, they were unable to integrate into the culture and civilisation imposed by the empire (Acts 16:21; 19:34). Often enough, despite being tolerated by the Roman power, due to their moral intransigence and monotheistic religion, combined with their lack of participation in pagan religious celebrations and rituals, their refrainment from any public or private activity during the Sabbath, as well as their refusal to perform military service, some saw them as suspicious, or even inconvenient. Thanks to the mission of certain exile prophets, part of the pagan world gained access to the monotheistic faith, while, thanks to the diaspora in general, the Jewish population was faced with the Egyptian, Hittite,

Sumerian, Babylonian, Persian, Greek, and Roman cultures and civilisations and, implicitly, with their religions, but has the great merit of not becoming diluted within them. Those who accepted the Mosaic faith and law – and this is also true for those joining the Christian faith– were compelled to break away from their religious past and, often enough, from their own culture, too, while, by accepting the new faith, the prospects of the new culture were opened to them, a culture that was grafted onto their old one, giving rise to interculturality, the focal point of which was the Synagogue for the Jews and, subsequently, the Church for Christians (Basarab 2005, 41).

It was not rare for some leaders of the Roman Empire, spurred by political and military authorities, to issue decrees such as the one of 139 B.C., banishing the Jews from the Eternal City, which occurred during the rule of Claudius (41-54, cf. Acts 18:2) (*Împrăştiere* 1996, 182). For the sons of Israel, exile was associated with shame (Dt. 28, 37), as it implied losing the country and, more importantly, their precious sanctuary, which is why returning home was the enduring dream of each generation, hence the expression: 'If I forget you, o, Jerusalem, let my right hand forget its skill' (Ps 137:5). Despite all the shortcomings of life in exile, the upside of living in the diaspora was and still is that the members of the community share a more solid spiritual cohesion and national unity than back home. It is unanimously acknowledged that a providential role in maintaining national unity and religious faith was played by the Torah (instruction, teaching, law), which, after the destruction of the sanctuary, began polarising around it first the religious elite, led by the prophets appointed by God for the very purpose of watching over the unaltered preservation of the faith of their forefathers, as well as the sons of Israel everywhere. Outside the country's borders, the temple was substituted successfully by synagogues, which became places for social and religious gatherings, as well as for meeting with prophets.

Whenever a community lacked a synagogue, the prophet's home was the ideal place for reading and commenting on the Law. That is what Ezekiel tells us: 'And it came to pass in the sixth year since the enslavement of King Jehoiachin, in the sixth month, on the fifth day of the month, as I sat in my house with the elders of Judah sitting before me, that the hand of the Lord God fell upon me there.' (ch. 8:1; 14:1). Thus, if, at the peak of its glory, the temple was the one to polarise all religious activity around it, during the time of dispersion among foreigners, it was successfully substituted by the synagogue and the Torah. This was the case not only for the communities in Mesopotamia but also for the Greek-Roman period, when a large number of Jews created strong communities

in the great urban centres in Syria, Egypt or Asia Minor (in over 100 cities), for political or commercial reasons.

After the annexations carried out by Alexander the Great (4th century B.C.) and the implementation of the administrative system initiated by him and continued by his successors, the Seleucids and Ptolemies, the Jews were able to move easily from one area to another, as they were free to conduct various businesses and travel to Jerusalem, thus keeping in contact with those back home. The Jewish diaspora in Egypt played a substantial role, once they had learned Greek, and a major contribution to the propagation of Jewish culture in Egypt was the translation of the Bible into Greek, which was a genuine missionary action as well when it comes to the dissemination of monotheism among pagans. The writings of Philo and others undoubtedly reveal that the Jews were also engaged in missionary apologetics aimed at Greek culture and that there existed codices of instructions for converts from the pagan world (Walls 1995, 341).

It appears that, despite having acquired and promoting Hellenistic culture, they enjoyed a semi-independent status, in the sense that, as in Rome, the main communities possessed their system of government, the so-called council of elders (gerusia), with its official representatives and with the obligation to maintain good relations with the local authorities (*Împrăștiere* 1996, 191). It is believed that the same council was tasked with faithfully maintaining relations with the motherland by paying their dues to the Temple and by communicating with believers back home through pilgrimages to Jerusalem occasioned by major feasts (Acts 2:5; 8:27; 28:31) or commercial travels. Thus, although they lived far from home, the law of their forefathers was the strongest glue that held together their national identity (Phil 3:5-8).

From a Christian perspective, the translation of the Old Testament was not merely a cultural event, but a missionary one as well, to the benefit of the sympathisers of Jewish culture open to the monotheistic faith, as it paved the way for the Gospel (see Acts 8:27-40). Thus, through the Septuagint, the Jewish diaspora fulfilled a missionary role among the pagans that came into contact with them either directly or by listening to their message when attending synagogue services out of mere curiosity.

Religious historians can confirm that most of the world's religions have their diaspora, so this is not something specific to Judaism or Christianity, except that, as Hans Küng stressed, the exceptional capacity of the Jewish religion to adapt to any part of the world, aware of God's protective omnipresence, is remarkable. Even though the

Torah is no longer read in the Temple, but in the synagogue, even though the altar has been substituted by God's words conveyed through prophets and the performer of the sacrifice has been replaced by a rabbi, the Jewish diaspora has proven beyond a shadow of a doubt that religious – and, implicitly, ethnic – unity can be preserved even in the absence of a central religious or political authority (Küng 2005, 167), but only provided that the confessed religion is taken seriously, as, wherever secularisation seeps in, no religion can claim to remain intact. Thus, religion played an overwhelming role in the preservation of an unaltered national identity in the diaspora and the book of Esther is telling proof of that, as God does not hide from His people, for, wherever His people are, God will be there as well, as Isaiah says: 'But now, thus says the Lord, who created you, o, Jacob, and He who formed you, o, Israel: "Fear not, for I have redeemed you; I have called you by your name; You are Mine. When you pass through the waters, I will be with you; and through the rivers, they shall not overflow you. When you walk through the fire, you shall not be burned, nor shall the flame scorch you. For I am the Lord your God, the Holy One of Israel, your Saviour."' (ch. 43:1-3). In conclusion, even though much humiliation is endured in exile, given the assurance that God accompanies his people into exile, its burden is perceptively diminished (Wigoder 2006, 245).

The Christian Diaspora

Although facing roughly the same issues that the diaspora of any religion does, the beginnings of the Christian diaspora are somewhat different from all the others, in that, based on the commandment of the Founder of the Church to teach the Gospel to all the nations (Mt 28:19-20), the mission had to expand. It, therefore, means that, by definition, the vocation of the Church is that of spreading out instead of remaining stationed within a certain land, language, or ethnicity. To some extent, Church missionaries imitated the modus operandi of revealed religion, in the sense that people understood early on that the Christian message had to be disseminated among nations. It would not be wrong to say that this missionary work is biblically founded on the First Testament. Let us not forget that a significant portion of the prophets' message was also intended for the peoples neighbouring the Holy Land (Is 14; 15; 16; 17; 19; 20; 23; 34; 47; Jer 46; 47; 48; 51; Ez 25; 26; 27; 28; 29; 30; 31; 32; 35; 38; 39; Dn 11; Am 1; 2; Ob 1; Jon 3; Na 3; Zep 2) and that, implicitly, they were familiarised with the Bible. The first testimonies about the Christian diaspora are found in the Epistle of Saint James, which tells us that it was included among the twelve tribes scattered all over the

world (ch. 1:1), probably the world of the Roman Empire that the Apostle Peter refers to as well when speaking about the 'scattering' of Christians in the lands of Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia (1 Pt 1:1). Hans Küng even finds a certain similarity between the Church and the synagogue, in that they both had their spiritual points of reference: for the Jews, the era of the rabbis, from the 1st to the 7th/8th century, overlaps with the era of the Church Fathers; thus, while the former left a defining mark on the structure of Orthodox Judaism, the latter definitively influenced the structure of Orthodox Christianity. Küng further suggests another similarity when stating that, since Judaism mostly exists dissipated among the Gentiles and is therefore no longer a national religion (2005, 164), one cannot speak very clearly of an exclusively national Church either.

We have looked at the circumstances of the birth of the Jewish diaspora and it is fit to stress that they were somewhat similar to those of the Christian diaspora. They proliferated in places, thanks to the work of missionaries, through mass migration, for political and military reasons that caused territorial changes and, last, but not least, through expansion. It is known that long history, but especially in the last 20 years, for political and economic reasons, many Christians from ex-communist countries left and settled abroad and, implicitly, outside the ecclesiastic circumscription they belonged to; thus, they began to be known as *the Christians of the diaspora*, while all of them together formed the Christian diaspora. The Christian Orthodox diaspora in general and the Romanian one in particular maintain good relations with their mother Churches and conduct their religious life according to canonical ordinances. The religious and moral connection that communities maintain among themselves is the expression of the Church's catholic spirit and living life in Christ (Stan 1963, 3-5). After the fall of the totalitarian regimes in Europe, major demographic mutations occurred, including in Romania. For various reasons, the Romanian diaspora grew larger and more diverse, expanding into various areas of Europe and beyond, although not so much due to conversions as due to people leaving their native country and, implicitly, their mother Church.

It is already known that a great challenge facing Romanian Orthodox Christianity is the issue of integration. We are concerned with the integration of people who were brutally removed from their family and national environment, but especially with that of large groups forced to abandon their own country for various reasons, such as political persecutions, armed conflicts, economic crises, natural disasters, etc.

It is widespread knowledge that, once borders were opened after 1989, the diaspora in manifold countries in the world increased substantially and numerous families suffered due to both temporary separations, caused by the search for employment, and their inability to adapt. The issue of integration is especially significant for those who gave up their citizenship in exchange for another. Their whole life will be marked by the difficulty to integrate into a community with a different culture and religion and different traditions. It is extremely difficult for the first generation uprooted from their native land, because, once inside the adoptive country, the main handicap that arises has to do with communication, followed by another related to culture and religion. The children of the diaspora do not have an easy time either. Out in society and at school they will speak the language of their host country, while at home they will find it increasingly difficult to speak their language, so that, in time, they will forget it completely. As for the third generation, it may lose its national or even religious identity definitively. This will therefore be the main tough problem aside from the economic one, especially for recently integrated families. If the Church is not persistently involved in the spiritual life of enclave communities by providing religious assistance in the way they were used to in their native country, sooner or later, they will accept the faith and customs of the locals to feel fully integrated (Semen 2008, 171-2).

Conclusions

According to the tradition already established through the resolutions of ecumenical councils, the mother Church has exclusive jurisdiction rights over its diaspora and, after obtaining autocephaly, under the rights that arise from that, each autocephalous Church is canonically entitled to jurisdiction over its diaspora, yet it has not only the right but especially the duty to provide religious assistance to its children everywhere. Thus, the calling of the Church is that of teaching the Christians that belong to it that unity of faith can be an effective antidote against dispersion and the loss of one's own identity.

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THE TRANSLATION OF THE BIBLE INTO SLAVIC

Abstract

Old Slavic or Palaeo-Slavic generally refers to the language spoken by the populations that were part of the great family of Slavic peoples. It is possible that, initially, these populations shared a common language which subsequently gave birth to the various more or less mutually similar Slavic languages and dialects. Be that as it may, Old Slavic or Palaeo-Slavic should not be regarded as the 'mother' of today's Slavic languages, but rather as its 'sister'. During the time of Saints Cyril and Methodius, who were considered to be 'the Apostles of the Slavs', this language was spoken by the Slavic populations around Saloniki and Byzantium. After the mission of the two Saints, it would be adopted as a literary language by the vast majority of Slavic peoples. As an instrument of culture, Palaeo-Slavic was quite widespread, from Great Moravia (the current territory of Czech Republic and Slovakia) to old Bulgaria, Serbia, Croatia, and old Russia, and subsequently came to be used as a liturgical language even in non- Slavic countries such as the Romanian Provinces and Lithuania. Having become a dead language in time, Old Slavic remains the official liturgical language of the Orthodox Churches of Russia, Belarus, Ukraine, Serbia, Bulgaria, Macedonia, Czech Republic, and Poland to this day. Given the spread of Old Slavic and its role in promoting Christian teachings, we deemed it important to highlight in the present study how the translation of the Bible was carried out in the Slavic sphere of influence. An overview of main translations and editions will be provided, starting with the first texts translated by Cyril and Methodius, on to the Novgorod Bible (1496) and ending with the synodal translation of the Russian Bible of 1876.

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Introduction

The Missionary Work of Saints Cyril and Methodius

The beginnings of the translation of the Bible into Slavic are connected to the missionary activity of brothers Cyril (827-869) and Methodius (825-885). Originating from Saloniki (in northern Greece, by the Aegean Sea), from 862-863 onwards, they conducted important evangelisation work in Great Moravia. As part of his battle against the Frankish expansion carried out through Latin missionaries, Rostislav, the ruler of Great Moravia (a vast empire founded in 846 stretching from Dalmatia to Poland), asked Byzantine Emperor Michael III (842-867) to send him scholars to preach the Christian teachings in the Slavic language, the language of his people. Having been appointed by Michael III for this mission, the two brothers set off for Moravia in 862, where they probably brought some liturgical books translated into the variety of Slavic spoken in the Saloniki area. In the nearly four years they spent in Moravia, they translated the Liturgy, the Gospel, the Apostolos, parts of the Psalter, and other church books.

This period is also marked by numerous conflicts with Latin missionaries. Since the territory on which they conducted their activity was under the jurisdiction of the Pope, Cyril and Methodius were summoned to Rome by Pope Nicholas I (858-867) to answer the charges against them. In the meantime, Pope Nicholas I died and the Pontifical Throne went to Adrian II (867-872). At the end of 867, Cyril and Methodius reached Rome, where they were received by the new Pope, to whom they offered the relics of Saint Clement of Rome. Convinced of the importance of the two brothers' mission, Pope Adrian approved the use of Slavic for rituals and allowed them to continue their activity. Cyril became ill and died in Rome in 869 and was buried in the Church of St. Clement. Methodius was ordained Bishop of Pannonia and Moravia and appointed Papal Legate to the Slavic nations. Nevertheless, upon his return to Moravia in 870, Methodius had to stand alone against the objections raised by the Frankish clergy as to the scope of his jurisdiction and the validity of the Liturgy in Slavic. Having been condemned by the Frankish bishops at the Council of Regensburg, Methodius was deposed and put in jail. Three years later, Pope John VIII (872-882) released him and reinstated him as Archbishop of Moravia, on the condition that he should stop performing religious services in Slavic, but only use that language to preach. In 880, through the *Industriae tuae* bull addressed to Prince Svätopluk of Moravia (871-894), the same Pope approved the use of Slavic in the Liturgy and the reading of the texts

translated from the New and Old Testament, provided that the Gospel should be read first in Latin and then in Slavic. Methodius died in 885 and the Slavic Liturgy   was condemned by Pope Stephen V (885-891).

Soon after Methodius' death, following confrontations with Latin missionaries supported by Rome, his disciples were forced to withdraw into Macedonia and Bulgaria, where they were received by Knyaz Boris-Mihail (852-888). In the immediately subsequent period, they continued to translate religious books from Greek into Slavic and to make copies of already completed translations.

According to biographic sources, in the Cyril-Methodius era (863-885), almost all of the books of the Bible, except for the Maccabees, were translated from Greek to Palaeo-Slavic. Most specialists today prefer to attribute to them only the translations of the main biblical texts used in liturgical services: the Gospel, the Apostolos, and the Psalter.

The Glagolitic and the Cyrillic Alphabet
The first Slavic texts translated by Cyril and Methodius and their disciples starting in the second half of the 9th century have not been preserved in their original version, but only as subsequent copies. The oldest Slavic manuscripts, dating from the late 10th century and especially from the 11th century, are written in two alphabets: the Glagolitic and the Cyrillic.

The Glagolitic alphabet was introduced into Great Moravia by Cyril and Methodius to be able to correctly render the sounds of the language spoken by the local population. Its name, however, is fairly recent and stems from the term *glagoljati*, which in Serbo-Croatian means 'to speak' or 'to utter' (in Slavic). In Croatia, Catholic priests who performed the Liturgy in Old Slavic were called *'glagoljaši'*. The oldest biblical manuscripts in the Glagolitic alphabet, from the late 10th century and especially from the 11th century, are the Tetraevangelion of Zograph, the Tetraevangelion of St. Mary Monastery, the Assemani Evangeliary, the Sinai Psalter.

The name of the second alphabet is related to the name of St. Cyril. Contrary to what one may think, the Cyrillic alphabet is not his invention, but an adaptation of the Glagolitic alphabet. It is attributed to Bishop Clement of Ohrid (840-916), a disciple of Saints Cyril and Methodius who elaborated a much simpler alphabet than the original Glagolitic one. The oldest Cyrillic biblical manuscripts, dating from the 11th century,

are the Sava Evangeliary, the Apostolos of Enina, the Evangeliary of Reims, and the Evangeliary of Ostromir.

The Western Slavs remained faithful to the Glagolitic alphabet and the Slavic Liturgy, despite the unfavourable decisions of the local councils of Split of 925 and 1061. To preserve liturgical books in the Glagolitic alphabet and keep performing services in the language of the people, Croatian priests did not hesitate to attribute this alphabet to Blessed Jerome of Stridon. Thus, in 1248, Pope Innocent IV (1243-1254) authorised the Liturgy in Slavic and the use of the Glagolitic alphabet, his rationale being that 'it has existed since the age of Jerome'. From the 13th century onwards, the Eastern Slavs abandoned the Glagolitic alphabet in favour of the Cyrillic one. Simplified in 1708 by Tzar Peter the Great (1772-1725), it lies at the origin of the current Russian, Belarusian, Ukrainian, Bulgarian, Serbian and Macedonian alphabet.

There are several similarities between the two alphabets which have led researchers to hypothesise that they might have kindred origins: the Glagolitic alphabet comes from the Greek minuscule alphabet, to which several Oriental signs were added, while the Cyrillic alphabet is modelled after the Greek uncial alphabet, considered much nobler and thus fitting for the writing of liturgical texts (De Proyart 1989, 383-422).

The Bible of Metropolitan Gennadius of Novgorod (1499)

The books of the Scriptures in Palaeo-Slavic were first translated and compiled into a single volume in the late 15th century in the form of the Novgorod Bible (1499). Before that, translations of all the books probably existed in Russia, but they disappeared after the Tartar invasion of the 13th century. The oldest biblical manuscripts preserved from the pre-Mongolian era originate from northwestern Russia and contain the Gospels: the Mstislav Evangeliary (1117), the Galician (Galich) Evangeliary (1144), the Dobrilov Evangeliary (1164).

The reason behind the appearance of the first complete manuscript of the Slavic Bible is the Church's battle against the Novgorod-Moscow movement of the Judaisers. Having emerged at the beginning of 1470 in Novgorod, it only took a decade for this sect to become very widespread among Moscow dignitaries and clerics. In addition to heretical teachings — contesting the dogma of the Holy Trinity, the cult of the Mother of God, the veneration of saints and icons, refusing to acknowledge the hierarchy, practising astrology and magic — Judaisers expressed reservations as to the translation of the biblical texts. Under such circumstances, priest Ivan Cherny († 1490) of Moscow

performed corrections on a late 14th – early 15th - century codex containing the books of Joshua, Judges, Ruth and Esther, using other Slavic manuscripts as a reference. Cherny then used the codex to correct the biblical books of the Russian Chronicle manuscript of the Holy Trinity Lavra of Moscow.

It is during the same period that a revision of the translation of the Pentateuch was performed based on the Hebrew text (MT). The revised text contained marginal glosses and was divided into 52 *parašôth* (sections or liturgical pericopes to be read out on Saturdays at the synagogue), one for each of the 52 weeks of the liturgical year: 12 for Genesis, 10 for Exodus (MT contains 11), 10 for Leviticus, 10 for Numbers (MT contains 11), 10 for Deuteronomy. The revision is attributed to Theodor, a Jew from Ruthenia converted to Christianity by Metropolitan Zosimus of Moscow (1448-1461). The text of the revised Pentateuch had no direct influence on the Bible of 1499, as the Hebrew glosses are only found in the Bibles of 1581 and 1663. However, the translators of the Novgorod Bible were familiar with the said revision: the fourth preface contains a list of the 52 *parašôth*, which are then present in the text of the Pentateuch.

In 1484, when Gennadius was chosen Metropolitan of Novgorod (1484-1504), he didn't find all the books of the Bible in the Slavic manuscripts available to him. In his battle against the Judaisers, he decided to put together the existing texts and translate the missing ones to place at the disposal of the clergy a complete codex of the Bible. This project would take over seven years and be carried out by a group of scholars led by Archdeacon Gerasimov Popovka. Among the translators that stood out were Dmitry Gerasimov and Vlas Ignatov, together with Veniamin, a Dominican monk of Croatian or Czech origin – 'a Slav by birth and a Latin by faith' (Florovsky 2001, 20) – who arrived in Novgorod in 1490.

The first stage of the project consisted in gathering all of the biblical manuscripts available. The Slavic text was compared to the Latin Vulgate, and then the obscure phrases or archaic expressions were modified. In the case of partial or total lacunae, the Slavic text was filled in or translated integrally from the Vulgate version. Furthermore, the order of the books and their division into chapters, as well as the number of 'deuterocanonical' books of the Old Testament mirrored those of the Vulgate version.

The main Latin edition employed by translators was the Vulgate printed in four volumes by Anton Koberger in Nürnberg in 1487. Another edition is the one published by Nicolaus Kesler in Basel in 1487 or its re-edited version printed in Basel in 1491. Aside from the Latin editions, there were two German Bibles printed by Heinrich

Quentel in Köln/Cologne in 1478, from which the titles of the pericopes were borrowed. Dmitry Gerasimov also used the German text as a source when translating the third preface, which contained the list of the 75 books of the Bible, followed by an explanation regarding the division of the text into pericopes. Some words and phrases of Czech origin indicate that the translators had access either to the princeps edition of the Czech translation of the Vulgate version, published in Prague in 1488 or to the second edition, issued in Kuttenberg in 1489.

The final text of Gennadius' Bible was accompanied by commentaries from the work of Franciscan theologian Nicholas of Lyra, *Postilla litteralis et moralis in Vetus et Novum Testamentum*, first published in Nürnberg in 1493. The commentaries also included excerpts from *Additiones ad Postillam magistri Nicolai de Lyra* by Bishop Paul of Sancta Maria, from *Defensorium Postillae Nicolai de Lyra contra Paulum Burgensem* by Matthias Doering and from *Postillae super prologos S. Hieronymi* by William Brito. Some of the prophetic books of the Old Testament (Isaiah, Lamentations, Ezekiel, Hosea, Amos, Micah, Joel, Obadiah, Jonah, Nahum, Habakkuk, Zephaniah) include brief introductions taken from the commentaries of Blessed Theodoret of Cyrus.

Even though it is difficult to determine the origin, number and contents of the Slavic manuscripts that circulated in Russia before the 16th century and that lay at the foundation of the 1499 Bible, specialists do propose the following classification:

For the New Testament, one can acknowledge at least four sources:

▪ translations by Saints Cyril and Methodius from the 9th century, containing parts of the Gospels, the Apostolos, and the Apocalypse, which were later added to by anonymous translators;

▪ translations carried out in Russia from the 12th to the 13th century;

▪ the translation of the New Testament by Alexius, Metropolitan of Kiev and all Rus (1354-1378), around the year 1355;

▪ an edition of the Moscow Gospel from the 15th century, based on revised Slavic texts originating from Bulgaria and Serbia.

For the Old Testament, there are also four sources to be taken into consideration: old manuscripts containing translations from the time of Saints Cyril and Methodius or their disciples: Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy, Joshua, Judges, Ruth, 1-4 Kings, Job, Psalms, Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, Book of Sirach, Zephaniah, Haggai, Zachariah, and Malachi;

▪ prophetic books translated in Bulgaria during the rule of Tzar Simeon

(893-927) and mostly passed down through liturgical books or patristic commentaries: Isaiah, parts of Jeremiah, Lamentations, Baruch, the Epistle of Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Daniel, the 12 Minor Prophets;

▪ two books translated in Russia: Esther, translated between the 11th and the 13th century from a Hebrew source or from a Greek text close to the Hebrew one, the Song of Songs, which appeared in the 12th century as an abridged version accompanied by patristic commentaries;

▪ texts and books translated from the Vulgate version: the lacunae in Jeremiah (1,9-10; 1,18–2,1; 2,13–25,14; 46,1–52,3) and Esther (passages specific to the Greek text of the Septuagint and absent from the Masoretic Text, included in the Vulgate version in chapters 10,4–16,24), 1-2 Paralipomena (1-2 Chronicles), Ezra, Nehemiah (2 Ezra), 3 Ezra, 4 Ezra, Tobit, Judith, the Wisdom of Solomon, 1-2 Maccabees.

The absence of the 3rd Book of the Maccabees from the Old Testament is explained by the fact that the first Latin translation of the Greek text appeared in the Vulgate version printed in Lyon in 1532, while the inclusion of the 4th Book of Ezra is explained by its presence in the Vulgate editions. All the translations of the Vulgate version are attributed by specialists to the Dominican monk Veniamin.

The first complete codex of the Slavic Bible (*Gennadievskaia Biblia*) contained 986 pages and 50 copies were made after it. In the second half of the 16th century, the Gospels, the Acts of the Apostles, the Epistles, and parts of the Psalter were often printed in Lvov and Vilnius. In 1564, Ivan Fedorov printed an Apostolos in Moscow, the first book ever printed in Russia, in which he filled in the lacunae in the Slavic text with verses from the Latin, German and Czech Bibles.

The Psalms with Commentaries of Maximus the Greek (1521)

A mere decade after the appearance of Gennadius's Bible, many mistakes began slipping into biblical manuscripts. In the early 16th century, the first attempt to revise the biblical text was made, with a focus on liturgical books. At the request of Knyaz Vasili III (1479-1533), in 1518-1519, Moscow received Maximus the Greek, who would be tasked with correcting the liturgical books and harmonizing the Rite by the Greek manuscripts. A monk from Vatopedi Monastery of Mount Athos, Maximus (by his secular name Mikhail Trivolis), was a great Greek scholar who had studied philosophy and philology in Italy for ten years.

In 1521, after a year and a half of work, Maximus, who was not familiar with the Slavic language, aided by Dmitrij Gerasimov and Vlas Ignatov, completed a new translation of the Psalms, in which the difficult passages were accompanied by commentaries. Having translated several other biblical texts as well (Esther, 4 Maccabees) and patristic commentaries (the Commentaries of Saint John Chrysostom), Maximus expressed his desire to return to Mount Athos. Knyaz Vasili III detained him and asked him to continue revising liturgical books. Maximus' corrections sparked controversy among the Russian hierarchs and, in 1525, he was deemed a heretic by the Moscow council. For 30 years, Maximus was imprisoned in various monasteries until he died in 1556. In 1565, Ivan Fedorov published a new, stylistically and lexically revised edition of Maximus the Greek's Psalms with commentaries.

The Bible of Ostrog (1581)

In the second half of the 16th century, following the Union of Lublin (1569), Slavic printing and cultural centres appeared in Lithuania-Poland as a manifestation of the Ruthenian Orthodox population's attempt to rival the education provided by Jesuit colleges. This cultural movement enjoyed not only the support of Ruthenian merchants and tradesmen but also that of the nobility. An important role was played here by Prince Konstanty Ostrogski (1526-1608), a member of an illustrious Ruthenian family. In 1577, Ostrogski turned his town, Ostrog (Ostroh), into a veritable centre for Oriental Slavic education and culture under the name of the Ostrog Academy. He also founded a publishing house, which would issue several works in Slavic, among which the Ostrog Bible, the first complete printed edition of the Slavic Bible.

Among the Greek and Slavic 'lovers of wisdom' (Florovsky 2001, 34) who were active in Ostrog there were Herasym Smotrytsky, the first rector of the Academy and the main collaborator in the preparation of the Bible, Ivan Fedorov, the well-known Russian typographer, priest Vasyl Surazsky, author of *On a United Faith*, published in Ostrog in 1583, priest Damian Nalyvaiko, head of the parish of the Church of St. Nicholas of Ostrog, and Jan Latos, a famous mathematician and astronomer.

The foremost accomplishment of the Ostrog Academy was the publishing of the Bible in 1581. The endeavour took three or four years of work, which involved Ostrog scholars using several manuscripts, editions and translations of the biblical text. As early as 1570, Prince Konstanty began sourcing manuscripts of the best Slavic translations of the Scriptures from various corners of Russia. Unfortunately, as he confessed in the

first preface to the Bible, 'of all the Old Testament manuscripts, none was found to be perfect'. In 1571 or 1573, he obtained from Tzar Ivan the Terrible (1530-1584) a copy of Gennadius's Bible. Aside from Gennadius's Bible, Ostrogski brought the best copies of the Septuagint available in Greek or Slavic from Bohemia, the Balkans, Constantinople, and the 'Latin countries' (Desnitsky 2005: 245-52). He also placed at the disposal of the translators the Czech Catholic Bible translated from the Vulgate version and re-edited by Jiří Melantrich in 1570, the Polish Leopolitan Bible, translated by Catholics from the Vulgate version and published in Krakow in 1561, Radziwill's Polish Bible, translated by Protestants from the Masoretic Text and published in Brest-Litovsk in 1563 (Alexeev 2004, 13-30). For the Greek text, the translators used the Aldine edition of the Septuagint, published by Aldo Manuzio in Venice in 1518, and the Poliglota Complutense Bible completed by Cardinal Ximénez in Alcalá in 1514-1517.

According to the information on the title page, the Ostrog edition aimed to be a Septuagint-based revised version of Metropolitan Gennadius's Bible. In reality, it is a compilation of texts revised by the Septuagint and the Vulgate version and it contains a series of important modifications:

- books 1-2 Paralipomena, Ezra, Nehemiah (2 Ezra), the Wisdom of Solomon, 1-2 Maccabees were confronted with the Septuagint text and corrections were made wherever necessary;
- the Song of Songs was retranslated in full from Greek;
- the text of the Book of Esther was replaced with Maximus the Greek translation of the Septuagint text;
- book 3 Maccabees was translated and included now for the first time in the Slavic Bible;
- the Pentateuch contains rectifications and glosses borrowed from the Slavic manuscript revised according to the Masoretic Text in the 15th century;
- the books of Tobit, Judith, 3-4 Ezra, and parts of Jeremiah (1,9-10; 1,18-2,1; 2,13-25,14; 46,1-52,3) were revised according to the Vulgate version;
- the Prayer of Manasseh was taken by Fedorov from his Book of Hours and added at the end of 2 Paralipomena, mirroring the order in the Vulgate version;
- the Acts of the Apostles and the Epistles reproduce the text and order of the books in the Apostolos published by Fedorov in Moscow in 1564 and Lvov in 1574;

▪ the text is accompanied by various notes and explanatory passages, such as the introductions to the Gospels written by St. Theophylact of Bulgaria, and, at the end of the book, there is a list of the Gospel pericopes for the Sundays and feasts throughout the year.

In 1580, Fedorov published *The New Testament and the Psalms* in a small format and, in August 1581, he printed 1,000 or 1,200 copies of the complete Bible. The 76 scriptural books are divided into chapters and laid out in two columns of 50 rows each. The same Bible was reprinted in Ostrog in 1595. In 1614, only the Gospels were published in Moscow and, in 1623 and 1644, the New Testament was in Vilnius and Lvov, respectively.

The Moscow Bible (1663)

This Bible appeared in the context of Russia's attempt to expand its influence on the Ukrainian Orthodox population, especially after the Cossack uprising of 1648, when Ukraine enjoyed relative political autonomy. However, in the late 17th century, after the division of the Polish-Lithuanian state among its more powerful neighbours, the territory of Ukraine would be included in the Russian Empire. Following the various corrections made to the Slavic texts, significant differences emerged between Ukrainian and Russian liturgical books. Since books printed in Poland-Lithuania were widely used in Russia, in 1628, the Synod of the Russian Church decreed that they should be replaced with the Moscow editions. The latter had been revised according to a Greek text erroneously considered to be older or closer to the original than the Slavic one. Russian scholars noted that the text of the Ostrog Bible used in Ukraine was also much more similar to the Greek text of the Septuagint than that of Gennadius's Bible. It was therefore necessary to carry out new translations of the Bible based on the Septuagint text, but Moscow lacked the people qualified to do it.

In 1648, Tzar Aleksey Mikhaylovich (1645-1676) invited to Moscow two erudite monks and professors at the College of Kiev, namely Epiphanius Slavinetsky and Arsenius Sukhanovsky, together with several Kiev typographers, to prepare the publishing of a new Slavic Bible. Initially, the team working on this project set out to revise the Ostrog Bible but soon realised that the translation needed to be redone entirely. Unfortunately, this was not possible. Epiphanius Slavinetsky was co-opted by Patriarch Nikon Minov (1652-1658) and became his main assistant in the reform regarding the revision and publication of the liturgical books, which led to the schism of the Old Believers from the

Russian Church. As part of this reform, the Apostolos appeared in 1653, the Evangeliary in 1657, followed by the Book of Hours and the Psalter in 1658.

1663 marked the publishing in Moscow of the first edition of the Slavic Bible under the blessing of the Synod of the Russian Church. Aside from certain minor changes (the revision of the Psalms based on the Greek text; the prefacing of the Psalms by St. Athanasius of Alexandria's *Letter to Marcellinus* translated by Epiphanius Slavinetsky; *comma ioaneum* translated in 1 John 5,7-8; the marking of parallel passages; the orthographic correction of the text; the replacement of archaic, unclear words), the Bible of 1663 is a re-edited version of the Ostrog Bible. Printed in 2,412 copies, this edition exhibits high-quality graphics.

In 1674, with the approval of the Synod, Tzar Aleksey asked Slavinetsky to retranslate the entire Bible from the original Greek text of the Septuagint published in Frankfurt in 1597, from Brian Walton's Polyglot Bible published in London in 1654-1657, and from the Sixtine Septuagint edition of 1587. Slavinetsky started the work together with six collaborators and, by the time of his death in 1675, only managed to finish the New Testament.

The Moscow Bible, called *Pervopečatnaja* (the first to be printed) in Slavic, would become dominant not only in the Russian Orthodox Church. Due to it preceding the council of 1666, which condemned the opponents of Patriarch Nikon's reform, the 1663 edition remains to this day the only Bible acknowledged by Old Believers (*raskolniki*).

The Age of Peter the Great (1672-1725)

The reign of Peter the Great marked an important time for both the history and culture of Russia, as well as in the life of the Orthodox Church. Within the new cultural context, the translation of the Bible into the language of the people was seen by Peter the Great as a challenge of his age.

In 1712, Peter the Great issued a decree ordering the creation of a commission tasked with the complete revision of the 1663 Bible based on the text of the Septuagint. According to the decree, the commission of translators, editors, and typographers included hieromonk Sophronios Leichoudes, Archimandrite Theophylact Lopatinsky, Theodore Polikarpov, Nikolai Semenov, monks Theologian and Joseph. The project enjoyed the support of the hierarchs and clergy, who still remembered the most recent attempt to revise the Bible, which ended in the schism of 1666. However, the commission began its translation work in 1713 and, three years later, the six members would be joined by Ioannikios Leichoudes and

Athanasius Kondoide. Revising the Bible in full took ten years and, in 1723, the final manuscript was submitted to the Synod of the Russian Church for approval.

In 1724, the Tzar ordered that the changes made to the 1663 Bible should be checked and then introduced into the text and, to avoid a new schism, he asked that the passages that were to be replaced should still be kept as marginal glosses. Moreover, the final text was to be submitted for his approval. Via another decree issued in the same year, Peter ordered that the text of the Psalms should be kept unchanged and that any modifications should be included as marginal glosses. The members of the Synod were then presented with various samples of the printed text, which were to be sent to the Tzar to choose from. Unfortunately, after Peter the Great died in 1725, the endeavour to publish the Bible was abandoned. It was only at the end of 1725 that Empress Catherine I (1725-1727) chose the print model and ordered Lopatinsky and Kondoide to check the entire work again. Catherine's death in 1727 caused the project to be abandoned once more.

According to the information in the manuscript preserved in the Synod library in Moscow, the first book to be translated was that of Numbers, in 1714, and the last was Judith, in 1720, followed by the proofreading of the entire translation by the members of the commission. As for the text of the Septuagint, the translators used the London *Polyglot Bible* (1655-1657), edited by Brian Walton (which included, for the first time, versions from the *Codex Alexandrinus*), the Aldine edition of the Septuagint (1518) published by Aldo Manuzio in Venice, the Sixtine Septuagint edition (1587), as well as the Latin translation of the Sixtine Septuagint (1588), published by Flaminio Nobili in Rome. The text of the Slavic translation is accompanied by patristic quotations, including some from Blessed Augustine and Saint Ambrose; in addition, *Commentaria in Scripturam Sacram* by Cornelius a Lapido, *Postilla litteralis et moralis in Vetus et Novum Testamentum* by Nicholas of Lyra and *Synopsis criticorum aliorumque sacrae Scripturae interpretum* by Matthew Poole were referred to.

It is also worth mentioning that, in 1716, in an attempt to modernise the state, Peter the Great ordered the preparation of a Dutch-Russian bilingual edition of the New Testament, which was intended to serve as an aid for his subjects in learning the Dutch language. The Dutch text of the States-General Bible, first published in Leiden in 1637, was printed in the Hague in 1717 in two volumes, on the left column. Then, in 1718-1719 in Sankt Petersburg, the Slavic text of the 1663 edition was printed on the right

column. Pleased with the result, Peter the Great also commissioned the Old Testament to be printed similarly. When the four Dutch volumes, published in Amsterdam in 1721, reached Sankt Petersburg in 1723, it was discovered that the text translated from Hebrew was dissimilar to the Slavic one in many instances. In 1724, Tzar Peter decided that the problem should be solved by adding glosses indicating the differences between the two versions. The Tzar's death in 1725 prevented the completion of the project.

However, it is worth noting that, throughout this period, certain texts from the 1663 Bible were printed, either with or without commentaries: the Gospels commented on by Theophylact (Moscow, 1698), the Psalter (Moscow, 1698), the New Testament (Moscow, 1702), the New Testament (Kiev, 1703), the Gospels (Moscow, 1711), the New Testament with commentaries (Chernigov, 1717), the Psalter (Moscow, 1717). In addition, two non-liturgical editions of the Psalms were published: poet Simeon Polotsky wrote an in-verse translation into Slavic in 1680 and, in 1683, Avraam Firsov translated into Russian Calvin's Psalter from the Brest-Litovsk Bible (1563). The latter was the first translation of a biblical text into the language of the people ever made in Russia. Due to the negative reactions that ensued, Patriarch Joachim Savyolov (1674-1690) would ban it for believers (Krause 1958: 11-23).

The Elizabethan Bible (1750-51)

In 1735, the Synod of the Russian Church resumed the idea of publishing a new Bible and decided to carry it out in the capital of the Empire, Sankt Petersburg, at the Alexander Nevsky Monastery, under the direct supervision of Archbishop Theophan Prokopovich. To avoid wasting time checking and approving a new complete version, they opted to reprint the 1663 Bible and use marginal glosses to indicate the places where the old translation was significantly different from the new one. After the death of Theophan Prokopovich in 1736, Archimandrite Stefan Kalinovsky of Alexander Nevsky Monastery was appointed head of the commission for the revising and printing of the new Bible. In 1738, the commission ceased its activity. Stefan Kalinovsky disagreed with the use of the Vulgate version as a reference when revising certain books (Tobit, Judith, 3 Ezra). Furthermore, the addition of glosses containing reading versions and corrections in between lines and around the edges made the text illegible or undecipherable. Hoping to find a solution, Kalinovsky submitted several reports to the Synod but received no reply. In 1739, he has ordained Bishop of Pskov and the revision and printing of the Bible were abandoned.

In 1741, the members of the Synod decided that the 1663 Bible should be revised based on the Septuagint text as published in the London Polyglot Bible (1655-1657). To ensure a smooth revision process, it was decided that the Bible should be printed at the Moscow Academy. In 1743, Archimandrite Thaddeus Kokuilovich and Kirill Florinsky, rector of the Moscow Academy, completed the revision of the text and submitted it to the Synod for verification and approval. The revisors' report shows that the text of the Old Testament was now closer to the one of the *Codex Alexandrinus* published in the London Polyglot Bible. Nevertheless, the revisors meticulously followed the text of the Polyglot version. They also took into account the *Poliglota Complutense* (1514-1517) and the Sixtine Septuagint edition (1587) whenever they contained versions consistent with the Slavic text, indicating, where necessary, the differences from the *Codex Alexandrinus*. For the translation of the books of Judith, Tobit, and 3 Ezra, the Septuagint was used, while, for 4 Ezra, the Vulgate version was employed; however, due to their frequent reading in church, the Psalms and the New Testament were not revised.

Seeing how slowly the Synod worked at verifying and approving the new Bible, Empress Elizabeth (1741-1761) felt compelled to intervene. She issued a decree in February 1744 explaining how necessary the Bible was, both in church and among the people, and ordering that 'the members of the Synod should come together twice a day during Great Lent, except for Sundays and feast days, to revise the scriptural text given having it printed before Easter'. A commission was formed immediately, consisting of Archbishop Ambrose Yushkevich of Novgorod, Archbishop Joseph Volchansky of Moscow, Bishop Platon Malinovsky of Sarai, and archimandrites Simion Todorsky, Arsenius Mogiliyansky and Hilarion Grigorovich. In March 1744, the commission reported to the Empress that it was impossible to complete the revision of the 1663 Bible based exclusively on the Septuagint, as the fragments previously translated from the Vulgate version were not found in the Greek text. Under such circumstances, the Synod established the following principle: if the changes proposed were by the Greek text, they would be adopted and, if not, they would be submitted to the Synod for approval.

In 1745, under increasing pressure from the Empress, the Synod advised the revisors to limit themselves to those passages that exhibited blatant contradictions between the new text and the 1663 Bible or that seemed to challenge Orthodox teachings. Furthermore, to facilitate communication with the Synod, in 1746, the revision commission was relocated to Sankt Petersburg.

In 1747, the final re-examination of the text was entrusted to a commission formed by hieromonks Jacob Blonitsky, professor at the Moscow Academy, and Varlaam Lyashkevsky and Gideon Slominsky, professors at the Kiev Academy. In 1748, Blonitsky withdrew from the commission, so Lyashkevsky and Slominsky continued the revision on their own until September 1750. Aside from the Polyglot Bible, they used the versions of the Septuagint published by Lambertus Bos (Franeker, 1709) and by Christian Reinecceius (Leipzig, 1730), the *Codex Alexandrinus* edited by Ernst Grabe (Oxford, 1707-1720) and reprinted by Johann Jakob Breitinger (Zürich, 1730-1732).

In December 1751, the first 600 copies of the new Bible were printed in Sankt Petersburg, followed by another 1,200 in 1752. Known as the Elizabethan Bible (*Elizavetinskaia Bibliia*), after the Russian Empress, the text was printed again in 1756, 1757, 1759, and 1872.

The 1751 Bible exhibits certain significant changes as compared to 1663 one:

▪ the Epistle of Jeremiah, previously included at the end of the Book of Baruch (chapter 6), following the example of the Vulgate version, now stands separately, after the Lamentations of Jeremiah;

▪ 4 Ezra no longer comes after 3 Ezra, but is placed at the end of the Old Testament, after 3 Maccabees;

▪ the end of verse ten of the Prayer of Manasseh ('I have set up abominations and have multiplied offences') has been translated into Slavic for the first time;

▪ the Psalms and the New Testament have been corrected orthographically and grammatically, any text variants being specified in glosses;

▪ the division of the text into chapters has been amended and the numbering of verses has been introduced;

▪ in the introduction there is a Slavic translation of the '*Synopsis* of the Holy Scriptures' attributed to St. Athanasius of Alexandria, a list of the pericopes ordained for fixed feasts, moveable feasts, and various services, an alphabetical catalogue of proper names and untranslated words in the text, accompanied by explanations of their meaning.

The Elizabethan Bible, also called the Synodal Bible, having been published under the blessing of the Synod of the Russian Church, is to this day the official canonical and liturgical text of the Holy Scriptures in the Russian Orthodox Church. It is also the official liturgical text employed by the Orthodox Churches of Ukraine, Belarus, Bulgaria, Serbia, Macedonia, the Czech Republic, and Poland (Bryner 1974: 318-31).

Instead of a Conclusion. The Synodal Translation of the Bible (1876)

In 1852, the Synod of the Russian Church decided to have the Bible translated into Russian. To that purpose, it appointed a commission formed by priests A.V. Gorsky and K.I. Nevostruyev, assisted by Philaret Drozdov, the Metropolitan of Moscow. The Gospels were published in 1860, followed by the entire New Testament in 1862, and by the complete Bible in 1876. This is not an adaptation of the Slavic text in the 1751 Bible, but a scientific translation based on the critical editions available at the time, namely the Masoretic Text for the canonical books of the Old Testament, the Septuagint for the deuterocanonical books, the Vulgate version for 4 Ezra, *Textus Receptus* for the New Testament. The 1876 Bible, called *Sinodal'nyi perevod* (the Synodal Translation), received the Synod's blessing for academic usage and the individual use of believers, but not for liturgical usage. All of the Synodal editions that followed, in 1882, 1907, 1917… to this day are published based on this version, with various revisions. The Synodal Translation of the Russian Bible of 1876 would be translated into Bulgarian in 1901 (Cann 1993: 5-23).

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THE SYMBOLISTIC GEOGRAPHY OF THE GARDEN OF EDEN (GN 2:8-14)

Abstract

The present study aims to map the symbolic geography of the Garden of Eden, which God created for Adam and Eve. It points to a mythical space loaded with eschatological symbolism. At the centre of the garden were two symbolic trees: the tree of life and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. While the tree of life confers eternal life, the tree of the knowledge of good and evil represents the reason for the fall into the sin of the first humans. The Garden of Eden evokes beauty and rest and has been part of the human imagination since ancient times. The river that flows out of Eden and divides into four arms, encircling the surrounding lands, symbolises the source of life and fertility and is known in religious history and linked to the concept of the 'centre' of the world. The study explores the meanings and origins of the names of the four rivers, analysing them in their geographical and symbolic context. It also considers possible links between the earthly Paradise, the river, the King of Judea and the sanctuary of Zion. Finally, it compares this representation of the Garden of Eden with the image of Gehenna, it's opposite in the Bible, the place where eternal fire burns and where God will manifest his wrath.

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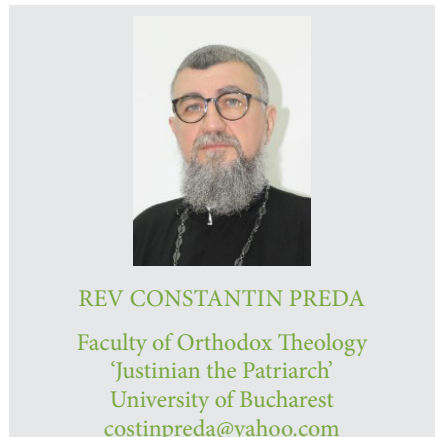
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The Names Given to the Garden of Eden

According to the Holy Scriptures, God created a living space for Adam and Eve, a space whence they were expelled after they fell into sin. In Hebrew tradition, this is a mythical place, which, at the beginning of creation, used to be an earthly paradise for

the first humans and which turned into an eschatological symbol, so that the garden of Eden became the picture of heavenly paradise, where the souls of the righteous will rejoice. In the Hebrew text (MT) of the Holy Scriptures of the Old Testament, it says that 'The Lord God planted a garden eastward in Eden (גַּן־בְּעֵדֶן) and there He put the man whom He had formed' (Gn 2:8). The text suggests that the garden did not take up the entire territory of Eden, but only a clearly delimited area within it (Busi 1999, 39-44; Bockmuehl and Stroumsa 2010; Luttikhuizen 1999; Delumeau, 1997). The Greek version of the Old Testament, the Septuagint (LXX), alongside the Latin one, the Vulgate (Vg), as well as subsequent commentators, who followed these two translations, noted that the noun *eden* was derived in Hebrew from the same root that referred to 'being fertile, plenteous' (Wigorer 2006, 191; Mihăilă 2021, 145-59); nevertheless, many researchers do not construe the term 'Eden' as a proper noun, but rather a common one, derived from Sumerian (acc. *edin* = 'plain, steppe') or via Akkadian (acc. *edinu*). There is even an attested settlement — *bit adini* — located on the middle Euphrates and bearing this name ever since the Assyrian occupation (Soggin 1991, 63). Thus, the garden is supposed to be located in a lowland area. Since the garden was found in Eden, it was named 'the garden of Eden' (cf. Gn 2:15; 3:23; Ez 36:35; Jl 2:3).

In the Holy Scriptures, it also appears under the name of 'the garden of the Lord' (גַּן־יְהוָה) (Gn 13:10; Is 51:3), 'the garden of God' גַּן־אֱלֹהִים (Ez 28:13; 31:8-9), or, simply and briefly, Eden (Is 51:3; Ez 28:13; 31:9). The Greek version of the Old Testament, the Septuagint (LXX), renders the term *gan* ('garden') from Genesis 2:8 and even the term *Eden* from Isaiah 5:3 by means of the Persian term *παράδεισος*, which means 'enclosed parc' or 'garden of delight' (*paradisus voluptatis*), hence the term 'paradise' used to refer to the garden of Eden. In Romanian, it has been translated as *rai*, a Slavic word which became established in theological speech as 'grădina Raiului' (the garden of Rai).

Thus, upon the first mention of the word Eden in the book of Genesis, one notes that it is located between a garden and a cardinal point, namely *east*. Thus, this specification has topographic value, first and foremost, since the biblical narration makes the distinction between the garden and the space where it is located, adding the essential detail of the cardinal point. In reality, the accuracy of this beginning is mere appearance, as the particularities of the following text introduce us to a *symbolic geography of Eden*, one of the most evasive themes in the whole of Scripture

(Busi 1999, 39). One is compelled to remark, first of all, that Eden is introduced into the account without any anticipation as if the reader should already have been familiar with the place and capable of granting due value to the geographical specification pointing to the east at the end of the sentence. Was Eden supposed to be 'eastward' from the point of view of the onlooker? Or is it that the garden is located 'eastward' of that region? Such an indication might refer to the relative position of the garden with respect to Eden, as the following verse in Genesis 2:10 appears to suggest: 'Now a river went out of Eden to water the garden and from there it parted into four river heads. The garden seems to be located in the place where the four rivers of the world were born, northwest of Mesopotamia and north-northeast of Canaan (Soggin 1991, 63).

What makes the narration even more ambiguous is the terms 'Eden' and 'garden', which merge in the middle of the episode into the phrase 'garden of Eden', which accompanies the most intense emotional stage of the account. The story definitely continues in a kind of backwards movement towards the east, as if Eden were found in the west, as God drove Adam and Eve out of the garden of Eden and 'placed cherubim at the east of the garden of Eden and a flaming sword that turned every way, to guard the way to the tree of life' (Gn 3:24), while Adam himself would settle down 'east of Eden' after the expulsion (Gn 4:16).

The Two Trees in the Middle of the Garden of Eden

As shown by the context, the name of the place is supported by the etymological value of the term *eden*, which means 'delight', 'pleasure' in biblical Hebrew. *Gan Eden* is thus a 'garden of delight' as well, where 'out of the ground the Lord God made every tree grow that is pleasant to the sight and good for food' (Gn 2:9); ergo, it is a space of beauty and rest as evoked by the vegetation, one that has been part of the imagination of the Oriental man from time immemorial. Nevertheless, the 'garden of Eden' is a space reserved for God, in the middle of which there are *two symbolic plants* of an extraordinary nature: 'the tree of life and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil' (Gn 2:9). In this setting that seems to induce peace and delight there is, however, an interdiction in force, as, according to God's commandment, the man may eat of the fruits of each plant, except for 'the tree of the knowledge of good and evil', for, the moment he does, he will die. In the story about the snake's temptation, 'the tree of life' seems to become invisible, as Eve's undivided attention is drawn to 'the tree of the knowledge of good and evil': 'And the woman said to the serpent: "We may eat the fruit

of any tree of the garden; but of the fruit of the tree which is in the midst of the garden, God has said: 'You shall not eat it, nor shall you touch it, lest you die.'" (Gn 3:2).

The first of the two trees is 'the tree of life', an element found in the history of religions; in the present context, there is no mention of its purpose, yet the implication, as well as the suggestion of the immediate context (Gn 3:22), is that it gave eternal life to the one eating its fruit. A similar notion is encountered in the *Epic of Gilgamesh*, the Sumerian king and hero: he sets off in search of the plant that gives life, finds it, yet loses it, because, while he was bathing, he left it unguarded and the snake ate it. In the *myth of Adapa*, on the other hand, the protagonist refuses the bread of life and the water of life, along with the knowledge they could confer upon him, knowing that such foods and prerogatives were reserved for the gods.

In the biblical narration, 'the tree of life' does not play any explicit role, nor does it do so in the rest of the Hebrew Bible: it is briefly mentioned again only in Proverbs 11:30; 13:12, and 15:4, yet it is used in a metaphorical sense, as it is at the end of the New Testament, in the Book of Revelation 22:7; cf. 2:7, where it becomes an important element of eschatological restoration. Aside from the already cited occurrences, others can be found in Mesopotamia and Egypt, in Chinese Buddhism and even in the Celtic world. In Mesopotamia, the character linked the most closely to 'the tree of life' is the king, who is represented in bas-reliefs or on seals next to 'the tree of life', in his capacity as custodian of the latter.

The other tree, the one 'of the knowledge of good and evil', however, plays a central part in the narration, especially in chapter three of Genesis, where it constitutes the reason for the fall into the sin of the first humans. It is therefore important to know exactly what it means and why God placed an interdiction that proved to be difficult to observe. Several attempts were made to draw up an explanation of the expression 'knowledge of good and evil'.

First of all, 'the knowledge of good and evil' is thought to refer to physical, intellectual and moral maturity, a meaning that occurs sporadically in the Hebrew Holy Scriptures; however, such an explanation does not appear legitimate, as God has never imposed upon man any limitations in this respect in order to keep him in a state of immaturity, of eternal childless.

The second explanation pertains to the sphere of sexuality, already familiar to Ibn-Ezra; however, the mention of marital relations in Genesis 2:24 seems to preclude this interpretation. Such an explanation is favoured historically and religiously,

through the binomial eros-thanatos in the classical world, yet it is not mentioned in the Holy Scriptures.

A very frequently encountered interpretation is the one that might be labelled as pedagogical: man needs to acknowledge that he is not God and that he needs to obey His commandments, irrespective of their intrinsic content, and, implicitly, needs to acknowledge God as the Lord and Master of his life.

J. Alberto Soggin proposes a solution for understanding this phrase that is based on the latter's stylistic form. 'Good and evil' is a rhetorical device called merism. It is intended to show the whole by means of contrasting or extreme terms. In this case, 'good' and 'evil', two opposing categories, indicate the sum total, the object of the verb *jādā* = 'to know'. A verb with a wide semantic scope: it refers firstly to the act of acquiring 'knowledge', both theoretical and practical, and, secondly, to sexual intercourse. It thus appears that the expression 'knowledge of good and evil' refers to omniscience, as well as omnipotence, two exclusively divine prerogatives and therefore definitely not accessible to man. This brings to mind again *the Babylonian myth of Adapa*, according to which man is offered both the water and the bread of life, which is nothing other than divine knowledge. That explains the initial interdiction and the subsequent punishment for trespassing against the divine commandment. Assigning a botanical identity to the trees (such as fig tree or apple tree), which has occurred over the history of scriptural interpretation, finds no justification in the biblical text (Soggin 1991, 64; Mihăilă 2017, 113-4).

After the breaking of the commandment and the tasting of the forbidden fruit, the garden momentarily became a space of knowledge, which manifested itself, first and foremost, as fear of nakedness and the birth of the feeling of shame; the first consequence of the transgression against the divine commandment was the knowledge of one's own nakedness or nudity, an effect that concerns the body. 'The garden of Eden' became a place where the first humans hid, while the trees were no longer pleasant and desirable, but a screen that concealed them from 'the presence of the Lord God' (Gn 3:8). At the end of this episode, all the vegetation of Eden would remain hidden by God's curse, which would enclose man into an earthly, hostile landscape: 'Both thorns and thistles it [the ground] shall bring forth for you and you shall eat the herb of the field.' (Gn 3:17-18). It is only the tree of life that will appear again in the narration, evoked by God's mysterious words in expelling Adam and Eve: 'lest he put out his hand and take also of the tree of life and eat and live forever' (Gn 3:22). Thus, the fruit of the tree of

life is presumably an antidote which would heal the transgression against the divine commandment and could give humans back their lost immortality, yet – for reasons the text does not specify – this antidote would be forbidden by God, who would place 'cherubim and the fiery sword which turns every way' (Gn 3:24) to guard the way to the tree of life.

The Four Rivers and the Neighbouring Lands

'Now a river went out of Eden to water the garden and from there it parted and became four river heads. The name of the first is Pishon (פִּישׁוֹן); it circles the whole land of Havilah (הַחֲוִילָה), where there is gold. And the gold of that land is good; bdellium and the onyx stone are there as well. The name of the second river is Gihon (גִּיחֹון); it circles the whole land of Cush (כּוּשׁ). The name of the third river is Tigris; it runs along the east side of Ashur; and the fourth river is Euphrates (Gn 2:10-14).

Out of Eden flowed a river that watered the garden, a veritable primordial river (Soggin 1997, 587-9). It is worth noting that the Hebrew term *rōṣ* (רֹאשׁ) is used with the meaning of 'origin, beginning, extremity' of a river, i.e. 'spring'. From a topographical point of view, it is an unusual situation: normally, there are one or several watercourses that come together into one, while the opposite only occurs in the case of an estuary in the form of a delta. However, such an unusual situation finds its explanation in the text: it consists in the very fact that *of the primordial river all the others are born*. The motif of the primordial river is known in the history of religions: in the present context, it plays the role of the original river, whose spring feeds the world's entire water system and which is known to all religions, from India all the way to Native Americans in North America. The concept appears to be related to the notion of the 'centre' of the world (*tabbur*), which is construed as a flat circle; such a centre possesses a particular holiness, as the latter emanates and radiates into all things. The Hebrew Bible itself knows two such sanctuaries that bear the significant name of 'centre or middle of the earth, navel of the earth' – *tabbur haʾareṭ* (טַבּוּר הָאָרֶץ): *Mount Gerizim* above Shechem (acc. Jgs 9:39; later a sanctuary for the Samaritans) and *Zion* (Ez 38:12); this name would continue to be used until the Middle Ages to also refer to the Holy Sepulchre.

'The centre or navel of the earth' (ὀμφαλός τῆς γῆς) is the name given to the cave of Calypso in the *Odyssey* I, 50 and from it four rivers spring (*Odyssey* I, 70) (Graves 2018, 608). The very number four was used in Israel and in the Ancient Near East in relation to topographical concepts such as the four cardinal points (acc. Zec 2:1);

sometimes it was used to indicate completeness or perfection (acc. the four kingdoms in Dt 2:34).

Thus, the garden appears as a symbolic place whence radiates only that which is good, beautiful and useful, a true centre of the world and even of the universe.

The names of the four rivers, the second in particular, are loaded with meanings *of a more symbolic rather than topographical nature* (Soggin 1997, 587*)*. The *Pishon* (פִּישׁוֹן) seems to be the 'original spring' (acc. the stem *pwṣ*, 'to jump', yet also used with the meaning 'to burst', 'to flow from a spring'). The stem has been placed by biblical exegetes in connection with related Egyptian terms indicating great waters or canals. The term is not attested anywhere else in the Hebrew Scriptures and is only found in the Greek text of Ben Sirah 24:25 (*Φισων*). This river flows around ('circles') the land of Havilah (הַחֲוִילָה), 'the sandy one', from *hōl*, 'sand'. In Genesis 25:18, Havilah is one of the names of Northern Arabia and Strabo (XVI,4,2) calls Arabs *χαυλοταιοι*, which is a Greek transliteration of the Hebrew stem. The coastal area was known in ancient times for its auriferous sands, which contained pure gold. Bdellium was a viscous resin used in ancient pharmacopoeia and, in spite of being highly appreciated, it was not a precious stone; it, too, came from Arabia. The 'shoham' (הַשֹּׁהַם) stone is probably the onyx; the LXX translates it as *ὁ λίθος ὁ πράσινος*, 'the greenish stone', probably emerald. It is unclear how the author of the biblical account saw a river flowing through a region that classical authors call *Arabia deserta*; some commentators believe that the river was mistaken for the Red Sea in its eastern gulf (today's Gulf of Aqaba), yet that is unlikely, considering that the ancients made the distinction between freshwater and saltwater, such information being known about Mesopotamia at the time, even though it is not mentioned in the biblical account of creation. In any case, the description is rather vague and that is why one wonders if the author had a concrete region in mind or if we are dealing with a *symbolic-mythical geography*.

The *Gihon* (גִּיחוֹן) has previously been identified as various rivers: the Nile (as early as Jer 2:18 LXX; Josephus Flavius etc.), the Ganges in India. It is in relation to the Gihon that the 'land of Cush' (כּוּשׁ) seems to be mentioned, namely ancient *Aethiopia*, today's Nubia and Sudan, which it seems to surround. However, none of these hypothetical identifications can explain how the Nile could have followed such a route, even though one must admit that anything is possible in a *symbolic-mythical topography*! E.A. Speiser attempted to identify 'the land of Cush' with the Kassites of Babylonia, who occupied Mesopotamia until the late 12th century BC, yet this seems

impossible, as it would entail the existence of a third river beside the Tigris and the Euphrates (Soggin 1997, 588).

However, the reality is different and much more complex: to the primordial river (if one may call the Pishon thus) corresponds the 'primordial, original spring', in accordance with the stem *gyh / gwh*, 'to burst out with force' (referring to the water of a spring), which seems to be attested in Job 38:8 (גִיחוֹ), where the water of the sea 'bursts out of the maternal womb'.

The *Gihon* is the name given by the Hebrew Bible to the spring located in the valley in the southeastern part of Jerusalem, at the foot of the Ophel, today called the Fountain of the Virgin, in fact, the only one in the City, whose waters have been abstracted and channelled inside the City walls via an ingenious and complex water system. During the time of King Hezekiah, a tunnel was built carrying the water from the spring to the pool of Siloam. It is with this 'spring' that Ibn-Ezra already unwaveringly identified *gîhôn* – the *Gihon*.

In the First Book of Kings 1:33.38.45 (MT), *the spring – Gihon* is placed in connection with the king's crowning ceremony (acc. also Ps 110:7, an otherwise recent composition, according to which the freshly crowned sovereign was supposed to go to the Gihon and drink water in order to complete the ritual). And, since, in ancient times, Zion was called 'the navel of the earth' (acc. Ez 38:12), one might ask the question whether in the ancient geography located *in illo tempore* there may not have been *a connection between earthly Paradise (the place where the first man created by God was put), the river in question, the king of Judaea, and the sanctuary of Zion*, acc. Psalm 46:5, which says: 'There is a great river and its streams gladden the City of the Lord, the temple and the tabernacle of the Most High', a statement that cannot be considered otherwise than in connection with the *topography of Jerusalem*. In Ezekiel 47:1 there is also such a spring that lies at the origin of the eschatological river that will make the oriental desert fertile at the end of time; such a spring, along with its stream, seems to correspond, according to the cult, to *the archetypal spring of origins*. It appears thus fairly clear that we are dealing with *symbolic geography* and not, as one often reads, with real rivers in the geographical sense of the word (Soggin 1997, 588-9).

Gan Eden and Gehenna (Heaven and Hell)

Alongside this representation of the garden of Eden that God prepared in order for man to live happily in it, the Holy Scriptures paint the picture of another place,

regarded with disgust, the opposite of Paradise, namely *Gehenna*, a ravine found south of the City of Jerusalem, also called 'the Valley of the sons of Hinnom' (*Ghe ben hinnom*). The Valley of Hinnom is located near the Temple Mount in Jerusalem, near the Ophel, the City of David and the Gihon spring. According to the Hebrew Bible, in this place, human sacrifices were made to the god Moloch (4 Kgs 16:3) and it was regarded with disgust, as the place upon which the wrath of God would fall. The valley later came to be used as a place for storing Jerusalem's waste. Its putrid and incessant fires were evoked by Jesus when, He, too, referred to them as a sign of God's judgment and the definitive defeat of the devil (acc. Mt 5:22; Mk 9:47-49), which gave rise to a long-going *association of Gehenna with Hell, a frightful place full of torment and suffering.*

Jewish scholars of the post-biblical era regarded the expulsion of the first humans from the Garden of Eden as merely temporary, as they believed that an inevitable force would presumably restore all souls to their original state. The path of such a return was different, however, as it reflected a fundamental dichotomy of the world: *the contrast between the children of Israel and the other peoples* (*goim*), which required the supernatural space to be divided into the Garden of Eden and Gehenna, the first being reserved for the children of Israel, while the second was meant to be a place of torment and suffering for the other peoples. While the children of Israel would have returned to the Garden of Eden by following the path marked by the coherent symbolism of biblical prescriptions, the return of the gentiles appeared to be a strenuous process, as it lacked awareness and was undergone passively. Thus, Gehenna was construed as a mirror image of Eden, intended to receive sinners who did not receive their due punishment during their lifetime and to confer greater value upon the reward prepared for the Jews.

In spite of the essential difference in nature between the two places, they were pictured as being very close to each other, as shown by *Ecclesiastes Rabbah* VII,14, a midrash compilation probably written in the 8th century AD based on materials from late Jewish Antiquity: 'Gehenna and Eden. What is the distance between them? The stretch of a palm. Rabbi Yohanan used to say: they are parallel so that one can see from one side into the other'. Gehenna and Eden are thus very close to each other, as are moral deeds and violations of the law, the distance being often so subtle it turns out to be imperceptible.

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Rev. CONSTANTIN JINGA
Why Change the Name of a King? (2 Kgs 23:34) – Questions, Exegeses, Dilemmas

50

WHY CHANGE THE NAME OF A KING? (2 KGS 23:34) - QUESTIONS, EXEGESES, DILEMMAS

Abstract

This study examines the change of a person's name as a mark of subordination in suzerain/vassal relations, using the case of Eliachim/Ioiachim as an example. The author points out that the change of name implies new obligations and rights for the vassal and becomes a 'trademark' of the vassal. The religious and political implications of the name change are discussed, using as an example the relationship between Pharaoh Necho II and King Jehoiakim. The author proposes three possible explanations for the fact that the name Jehoiakim does not indicate subordination to Egypt or any Egyptian deity: (1) the name change marks a change limited to political, economic and military aspects; (2) a possible link with the documentary theory of the Pentateuch; (3) the possibility that Jehoiakim was a "double agent" between Egypt and Babylon. In conclusion, the author suggests that the Jewish name of King Jehoiakim can be understood as a message from Pharaoh to the Jewish people, showing that Jehoiakim is God's anointed and that Pharaoh respects the Jewish Law. It also suggests that the name change does not necessarily imply a change in religious affiliation.

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Keywords

name, Pharaoh, Jehoiakim, God's anointed, change

Preliminaries

In the 7th century, the Middle East was marked by important political changes and a series of military confrontations with irrevocable consequences. The Assyrian Empire, which had fully dominated the region for centuries, was now tottering, weakened by political adversities and threatened by a strategic alliance mainly made

Rev. CONSTANTIN JINGA
Why Change the Name of a King? (2 Kgs 23:34) – Questions, Exegeses, Dilemmas

51

up of Scythians, Medes, Persians, and Babylonians in full expansion. In 612 BC, the armies of the alliance manage to conquer Nineveh, forcing the Assyrians to withdraw Westwards, to Harran. Here, Ashuruballit II, the last Assyrian king, tries to organise a counteroffensive, waiting for help from the Egyptians. Pharaoh Necho II was faithful to the commitments made to the Assyrians by his predecessors, Pharaoh Necho I and Psammetichus I (also known as Psamtik I) (Spalinger 1976: 133-4), but also aware of the ever-growing danger faced by Egypt from the alliance between the Babylonians and the Medes, prepares a campaign to support the Assyrians and, implicitly, to counterattack the Babylonian expansion. But the armies of Nabopolassar and Cyaxares get ahead of him and, in the autumn of 610 BC, lay siege to Harran. Ashuruballit II takes refuge in a safer place with part of his army, waiting for the Egyptian troops and hoping, with their help, to be able to repulse the siege of the Medes and the Babylonians. The garrison of Harran and the Assyrian troops who remained here barely resisted for a few months. As Egyptian military support is late, in the spring of 609 BC, Harran capitulates. The situation becomes even more dramatic for Ashuruballit II. However, it seems that some of the Assyrian defenders manage to escape. They join the army accompanying the king. Egyptian help finally comes, but only towards the middle of 609 BC. An important Egyptian military force now joins the remaining Assyrian army. Together, they try to reconquer Harran, but their attempt fails. Towards the end of the summer of 609 BC, the Egyptian troops withdraw, abandoning Ashuruballit II in the hands of Nabopolassar (Bertman 2003, 80; Lipschitz 2005, 19-20). Necho II is forced to reconsider his strategies, as he realised that, from now on, Egypt needs to exert its influence in the regions from the area of the Euphrates and to stand up to the Babylonian expansion mostly alone.

The victory of the Babylonians and the Medes over Harran marks the end of any kind of Assyrian influence in the region. For their part, the Egyptians are momentarily forced to withdraw and prepare a serious counteroffensive. A few years later, in 605 BC, they attempt for the last time to ensure well-delimited influence areas and, implicitly, to reduce the Babylonian power. Nonetheless, once again, this attempt has a disastrous denouement for them. The Egyptians are harshly defeated in the battle of Carchemish. Here, Nebuchadnezzar II crashes the Egyptian army and almost all that was left of the remaining Assyrian army, thus decisively imposing Babylonian rule in the region. This event opens a new page in the history of the Middle East in general and of the Biblical people in particular.

Rev. CONSTANTIN JINGA
Why Change the Name of a King? (2 Kgs 23:34) – Questions, Exegeses, Dilemmas

52

The Kingdom of Judah in the geo-political context of the 7th century in the Middle East

Caught in the crossfire between these great powers of that time, the small Judean kingdom is too weak to allow itself the luxury of neutrality. An eloquent episode for the fate of Jerusalem at the end of that century takes place precisely in the aforementioned context. On their way to the besieged Harran, the troops of Pharaoh Necho II choose the fastest route, the so-called *via maris*. "The way of the sea" (acc. Is 8:23c; Mt 4:15-16) came from Egypt, continued along the Mediterranean coast and, somewhere on the territory of the current state of Israel, approximately where Haifa is, was heading East-South-Eastwards, across the Jezreel Valley, up to the Jordan Valley, bypassing the Sea of Galilee, then heading towards Damascus, where it branched out towards the Eastern and Western regions of Mesopotamia. Once in the Jezreel plain, the Egyptian troops are faced with unexpected resistance from the Judean king Josiah. The event is narrated in 2 Kgs 23:29-30, 2 Chr 35:20-25, and in deuterocanonical and extrabiblical sources (1 Esd 1:25-32; Flavius Josephus 1999, 566-7). It is not yet fully clear why Josiah shows this opposition or whether an actual confrontation takes place between the Egyptian army and the army accompanying the Judean king. Some historians suggest that Josiah had hoped to reunite Judah and Israel under his rule, using to his advantage the Assyrians' fast decline and hoping to obtain protection from Babylonians. The hypothesis would be in agreement with the reforming tendencies which characterised Josiah's rule, but it is not supported by actual sources. On the other hand, biblical and extrabiblical testimonies on a military confrontation between Josiah's army and the Egyptians are quite confusing and interpretable (Talshir 1996, 213-36; Cline 2002, 92 *sq.*; Mihăilă 2011, 378-80). What is certain is that Josiah stops the Egyptians somewhere in the surroundings of the city of Megiddo, backing "the way of the sea", most likely in the vicinity of the Aruna pass. The sources we have at our disposal mention that Josiah ends up being killed and the Egyptian troops continue their journey to Harran. Could this delay caused by Josiah's opposition have played a role in the defeat of the Egyptian troops at Harran? (Lipschitz 2005, 29 *sq.*, 32 *sq.*)

Upon his death, Josiah is not followed by his firstborn, Eliakim, but by his youngest son, Jehoahaz. The latter enjoy the genuine sympathy of his people and probably intends to carry on the politics of his father. Jehoahaz's rule is very short. He only rules for three months, more precisely, until Pharaoh Necho returns from his failed campaign meant to save the Assyrians. While retreating from Egypt towards Harran, Pharaoh Necho II

Rev. CONSTANTIN JINGA
Why Change the Name of a King? (2 Kgs 23:34) – Questions, Exegeses, Dilemmas

53

takes Jehoahaz prisoner and lies on the kingdom a tribute of a hundred talents of silver and a hundred talents of gold. Jehoahaz finally dies in his exile to Egypt. Necho replaces him with his older brother, Eliakim. Even if Eliakim does not enjoy the sympathy of the people, he is the rightful heir to his father's throne, being his firstborn. It is interesting that Necho changes Eliakim's name to Jehoiakim: "And Pharaoh Neco made Eliakim the son of Josiah king in the place of Josiah his father, and changed his name to Jehoiakim ..." (2 Kgs 23:34)

King Eliakim's name change to Jehoiakim – cultural usage, theological implications, explanations

The name of this king is established as such, both in the books of the Holy Scripture and later on in rabbinic literature and in Jewish tradition, where the records made of him are far from being encomiastic (2 Kgs 23-24; 2 Chr 36). For their part, the biblical prophets Jeremiah and Daniel often portray him as terrible – Jeremiah himself suffered a lot from this king (Jer 22: 18-19; 26:20-23; 36:30 etc. Dn *passim*). The reality is that Jehoiakim rules for 11 years, until 598 BC, as a full vassal to Egypt; towards the end of his rule, he obeys the Babylonians, seeking however to remain faithful to Egyptians.

Jewish tradition likely remembers him under the name of Jehoiakim instead of his initial name of Eliakim precisely because of his very negative reputation. However, what has caught our attention is that the change of the king's name seems rather cosmetic, as it differs from the practice of changing one's name which existed back then. At that time, this practice was common in certain situations. For instance, Pharaoh Psammetichus I (*a. k. a.* Psamtik I, 664-610 BC), the predecessor of Necho II, is given the Assyrian name of Nabu-shezibanni when Egypt goes under Assyrian suzerainty, on the occasion of the second campaign against Egypt, led by Ashurbanipal (668-625 î. Hr.) (Spalinger 1976, 134-6; Miller, Hayes 1986, 369; Redford 1993, 430-5; Verreth 1999: 243). We find the same practice in 2 Kgs 24:17, where Nebuchadnezzar changes the name of king Mattaniah to Zedekiah. Similarly, Dn 1:6-7 mentions that Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah receive Chaldean names. These are only a few examples. We notice that all these new names are fundamentally different from the initial names those persons had and they entail a transfer to another linguistic, cultural and religious area. In some cases, the new names seem to redefine political or religious subordinations. This is not the case with Eliakim/Jehoiakim. The name remains Jewish and subordinate to the God of Judeans. In this case, the prefix *El-* is replaced by *Y-*. It is known that both

Rev. CONSTANTIN JINGA
Why Change the Name of a King? (2 Kgs 23:34) – Questions, Exegeses, Dilemmas

54

prefixes refer to divinity, *El-* being a generic reference to "God" and *Y-* to "Yahweh". However, ultimately, both *El-* and *Y-* refer to the God of Judeans. *Eliakim* was translated as "God will establish" and *Jehoiakim* as "he whom Jehovah has set up". We cannot speak of a major difference between the two.

According to the customs of that time, Eliakim would have received an Egyptian name. Could this be the hand of the "Yahwist" or the "Eloahist"? Such a question cannot be taken seriously. Not necessarily. What then? Could it be a more obliging attitude on the part of Necho II towards the Judean king to consolidate his fidelity? Or maybe a diplomatic approach through which the Pharaoh tries to appease the discontent of the people, showing through this new name given to the king that Egypt respects the Judeans' law. The fact is, as we have already seen, that Jehoiakim shows an unscrupulous servility towards Egypt and rules without taking into account the Law or the people; he manages to do so for a long period of 11 years. What are the actual reasons behind these changes of names? And still, why a rather cosmetic change of name for the Judean king?

The truth is that, in the Ancient world, the issue of names and of changing one's name is extremely complex, with profound implications. In what follows, I will try to outline a few ideas in this respect, hoping to be able to finally clarify some of the reasons behind the transformation of Eliakim to Jehoiakim.

In Ancient Middle East, the aspect of the name and of changing one's name has many philosophical implications and, last but not least, a religious background. In a few important lines, they start from how a name is understood at that time. We know that, in the Ancient world, the name of a person or a divinity is closely, almost concretely, connected to that person or divinity. The name is not only a label but an integral part of its bearer. For example, not far from our area of interest, in Ancient Egypt that is, the name is considered to be almost an avatar of its bearer and, in any case, it has to do with their personality. On the other hand, it is commonly believed that, by knowing one's name, you have some sort of power over that person (Tower Hollis 1995, 196; Der Manuelian 2005, 437).

We find some interesting suggestions in this respect in Philo of Alexandria. Even if Philo writes a few centuries after the events mentioned in 2 Kgs 23, his texts are a real synthesis of the Hellenistic religious, philosophical and linguistic thinking and the Ancient Levantine heritage (Chirilă 2002: 3-15). Thus, in his treatise *On the Decalogue*, Philo says: "... the name always stands second to the thing which it represents as the shadow which follows the body" (*Περί των δέκα λόγων*, 82. XVII;

Rev. CONSTANTIN JINGA
Why Change the Name of a King? (2 Kgs 23:34) – Questions, Exegeses, Dilemmas

55

Philo 1998, 48-9). Philo even has a treatise which we find extremely interesting, called precisely *On the Change of Names*. Here, he also refers to some passages from the Bible, among which we choose one: "Moses changes the name of Hosea into Joshua (Nm 13:17, emphasis added); he thus changes the one who only displays a state through his way of being to the state itself. For Hosea is interpreted as being, in his (particular – emphasis added) way, the one who is saved, whereas Joshua is interpreted as the salvation which comes from God, that is, a name which denotes the very state, in its most accomplished form" (*Περί των μετονομαζομένων και ων ένεκα μετονομάζονται*, 121. XXI-122; Philo 1988, 204-5**;** Chirilă 2012: 19-31).

Thus, as to the situation tackled in this essay, we could say that, according to Philo, on the one hand, a person's name is like a shadow accompanying that person and indicating their nature. On the other hand, changing one's name can influence that person's status and, implicitly, the person itself, through the simple fact that the bearer of the new name is recontextualised. The name contextualises the person. Changing one's name recontextualises that person.

To better understand the implications of these (re) contextualizations a name and naming imply, we need to remember that, in the Hellenistic world, the discussions on this subject are vast and complex, but they do help us because they very well systematise the main conceptions of the Middle East. Here, there is a debate on whether the name, Gr. *ὄνομα*, refers to Gr. *νόμῳ* or to Gr. *φύσει*. Or to both? There is a discussion about the Gr. *ὄνομα κύριον* (Lat. *nomen proprium*) and the Gr. *ὄνομα προσηγορικόν* (or *προσηγορία*, Lat. *nomen appellativum*). The conclusion is that there are names which reveal a person's nature, but also names which refer to their social/legal/administrative status. From an administrative point of view, someone's name (Gr. *ὄνομα*) can refer, among others, to codes or documents which stipulate their rights and obligations or to documents which certify their ownership of certain goods. Therefore, the name (Gr. *ὄνομα*) can also have the function of legal or public title and can be used about ownership, indicating a person's defining qualities, among which that of the owner or goods/objects owned by someone. Thus, most often, a person's name indicates the connection between the Gr. *φύσει* and the Gr. *Νόμῳ* and the nature of the relation between them (Kittel, Bromiley & Friedrich 1976, 245-6).

Then, if we are to go back to the pages of the Holy Scripture, we will mention only a few of the most representative references out of many instances from the Bible, which only partially render the issue under discussion:

Rᴇᴠ. CONSTANTIN JINGA
Why Change the Name of a King? (2 Kgs 23:34) – Questions, Exegeses, Dilemmas

56

▪ by giving names to things, Adam becomes their owner: „Now out of the ground the Lord God had formed every beast of the field and every bird of the heavens and brought them to the man to see what he would call them. And whatever the man called every living creature, that was its name. The man gave names to all livestock and the birds of the heavens and every beast of the field...” (Gn 2:19-20)

▪ Here are a few places which are relevant to the idea that attributing a name is directly connected to owning the thing which is named: "And Joab sent messengers to David and said, "I have fought against Rabbah; moreover, I have taken the city of waters. Now then gather the rest of the people together and encamp against the city and take it, *lest I take the city and it is called by my name.* " (emphasis added) (2 Sam 12:27-28) In the Bible versions *Carol II (Gala Galaction)* – 1938 and *Anania* – 2001, the end of verse 28 are closer to the Hellenistic source, compared to the Masoretic one: "Now, therefore, gather the rest of the people together, and encamp against the city, and take it: *lest I take the city, and it is called after my name*" (emphasis added). (Gala Galaction) / "Now then gather the rest of the people together and encamp against the city and take it first, *lest I take the city first and it is called by my name.*" (emphasis added) (Anania) Here, changing the name of the city entails its passing under the control of the conqueror, who assumes its ownership. Changing the name certifies the fact that the city passes under the ownership of the conqueror.

▪ If one assumes the name of another person, this could mean they pass under the protection of the latter: "And seven women shall take hold of one man in that day, saying, We will eat our bread and wear our clothes, only let us be called by your name; take away our reproach." (Is 4:1)

▪ Attributing an additional name could mean changing one's social status, without necessarily changing their religious affiliation: "And Pharaoh called Joseph's name Zaphenath-Paneah. And he gave him in marriage Asenath, the daughter of Potiphera priest of On." (Gn 41:45)

The situation in 2 Kgs 23:34, just like Dn 1:7, could very well fit in any of the last two cases we mentioned. In the case of Daniel and his friends, changing their names shows that they become Babylonian subjects and that they go under the protection of the chief of the eunuchs. Necho II changes Eliakim's name to Jehoiakim, thus certifying

Rev. CONSTANTIN JINGA
Why Change the Name of a King? (2 Kgs 23:34) – Questions, Exegeses, Dilemmas

57

his change of status (Eliakim, the son of King Josiah, becomes King Jehoiakim) and the fact that from that moment on, the Judean King is transferred under his protection. However, we underline once again that the name of the Judean king not only remains within the framework of the Hebrew linguistic context but also attests to the fact that he continues to be religiously affiliated with the God of Judeans. Nonetheless, as we have already seen, in such situations, the usual change of a name entailed either changing the etymon or changing the religious affiliation. In this respect, we could add an excerpt from a hymn dedicated to the goddess Ishtar, which praised her enthronement as Queen of Heaven. Among others, it says: "(17) I am Anu, the master who defends it: who rules over it! (18) Make its borders yours, rule by yourself! (19) Up to my throne hall, come, rise and sit! (20) May your name correspond to mine..." ("The Enthronement of Ishtar as Queen of Heaven" in *Gândirea asiro-babiloniană* [Assyro-Babylonian Thinking] 1975, 230) [our translation].

It is therefore clear that, in the case of such relations, changing a person's name creates a suzerain-vassal relationship or sometimes even a possession relationship, in which the suzerain includes the one whose name changes in their sphere of influence. The above-mentioned hymn and other extrabiblical documents of that time suggest that changing one's name entails both new obligations and new rights for the vassal. The new name becomes a sort of "registered trade mark" for them, a kind of "franchise" – if we are allowed to use these terms from a postmodern linguistic area. The existence of the newly named person is legally incorporated into the existence of the suzerain, thus becoming certified and consolidated. The suzerain and their world become the new context of the vassal, which is why, from now on, the vassal is defined through a name referring to this new context.

However, bearing all this in mind, the following question becomes ever more stringent: does this change of relations and status not necessarily entail a change in terms of religious affiliation? Was the vassal not supposed to necessarily pass under the protection of the gods of the suzerain – which essentially made up their sphere of existence? Some researchers would say yes, underscoring the fact that, in most cases, changing one's name also entails changing their religion (Horsley 1987: 1-17). Coming back to our particular case: if Necho II, the Egyptian Pharaoh, changes Eliakim's name and makes him his vassal, wouldn't it have been logical to also mark his subordination to Egypt or an Egyptian deity through his name? Nevertheless, the name of Jehoiakim does not point to any sort of subordination. Moreover, it does not make any reference

Rev. CONSTANTIN JINGA
Why Change the Name of a King? (2 Kgs 23:34) – Questions, Exegeses, Dilemmas

58

to Egypt. In the historical context of that time, we consider there are three possible explanations for why he chose to act like this:

(1) The new name should have referred to an Egyptian deity if the king had also changed his religious affiliation. In this case, Eliakim/Jehoiakim remains Judean. He becomes the vassal of Necho II but keeps his Judean faith – although later biblical sources show that he was not a model of piety (2 Kgs 23:36). For him, the new name marks a change limited to political, economic and military matters. From now on, Necho II exerts his quality of suzerain over the territories administered by the Judean king, asks tribute and so on. The newly installed Judean king even hurries to pay off the obligations he took on. "And Jehoiakim gave the silver and the gold to Pharaoh, but he taxed the land to give the money according to the command of Pharaoh. He exacted the silver and the gold of the people of the land, from everyone according to his assessment, to give it to Pharaoh Neco (2 Kgs 23:35, see also 2 Chr 36:4).

Thus, there are no religious implications here. Egyptian deities are not imposed upon the Judean king and his people. It is known that, through Jehoiakim's religious reforms, the idolatrous practices which were specific to the time of King Manasseh and which had been stopped by King Josiah reemerged. The fact that the king tolerates and even adopts idolatrous practices, probably some even of Egyptian origin, entails an alteration of the cult dedicated exclusively to Yahweh, but not a radical change of the religious paradigm. Most likely, that is why the name of the king remains attached to the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, be it Elohim or Yahweh.

(2) Another possible reason, which we have only briefly, cum grano salis touched upon so far could be however related to the documentarist theory regarding the Pentateuch. It would be necessary to revisit the layers of the composition of this fragment, and the data regarding its drafting, all of which should be put about the moment when the Pentateuch was written. I have not dwelt upon this hypothesis, as it requires a distinct study, a more thorough textual and historical-critical analysis.

(3) The third possible answer also seems to be the most stimulating one, revealing an aspect of policier of the entire narrative. This takes into consideration the fact that the story does not end with 2 Kings 23: 34, but has a continuation which is very interesting from a strictly historical point of view. What happens after? Briefly, this is the whole picture: in the historical moment when these facts occur, as we have seen, the Assyrians are no longer a threat to Egypt. At the same time, they can no longer ensure any protection against a possible Babylonian attack. And such an attack could not come

Rev. CONSTANTIN JINGA
Why Change the Name of a King? (2 Kgs 23:34) – Questions, Exegeses, Dilemmas

59

through the desert, but through the routes which were used at that time, namely Israel/ Jude. Under these conditions, Necho II needs a safety zone, a buffer between Egypt and the territories controlled by the Babylonians. Therefore, he makes sure the throne of Jerusalem is occupied by a king who is faithful to him. He thus eliminates Josiah for his opposition to Egypt. He also removes Jehoahaz, who intended to continue the politics of his father. He then appoints Eliakim/Jehoiakim, who becomes his trustful man, the puppet king of the Pharaoh. Only that, at some point, Jehoiakim also becomes the vassal of the Babylonians. He pays tribute to them for three years! After which he rebels! "In his days, Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon came up, and Jehoiakim became his servant for three years. Then he turned and rebelled against him." (2 Kgs 24:1).

Could it be possible to be the servant of two kings at the same time? Especially if they are rivals? Don't you grow fond of one and get to despise the other (Mt 24:6)? Then, why did Jehoiakim not rebel against the Egyptians? Why did he rebel against Nebuchadnezzar, contrary to Jeremiah's advice (see in particular Jer 21-22; 42-44; 2 Kgs 24:1)? Could Jehoiakim have been a sort of "double agent"? A marionette of the Egyptians, a servant of the Babylonians? Was there an agreement with Egypt, hoping that a rebellion of Jehoiakim could have shaken the stability of Nebuchadnezzar, given that the military capacities of Egypt and its strategic area of action had been considerably reduced (2 Kgs 24:7)? In fact, this rebellion takes place almost at the same time as Necho organises a campaign to reconquer some territories in Western Asia Minor, at the end of which Egypt moves considerably forward and conquers several cities, among which Gaza? Could Jehoiakim's insurgence have been part of this campaign (Katzenstein 1983: 249)?

Conclusion

To keep it short, as it seems we have generated questions rather than answers, I would like to end the discussion with one last conclusion: Eliakim/Jehoiakim becomes the vassal of Necho II but doesn't change his faith. His becoming a vassal is a strategic act. Thus, his name needs not to relate to any Egyptian deity. As to the fact that the king's name remains Judean, a possible answer would be that Jehoiakim, "he whom Jehovah has set up", can be understood as a message the Pharaoh sends to the people. The king he imposed must be received as appointed to this position by Yahweh Himself, the God of Judeans. This is not a singular approach at that time, namely to have a representative of a foreign power stand before the Jews as an ambassador and person entrusted by

Rev. CONSTANTIN JINGA
Why Change the Name of a King? (2 Kgs 23:34) – Questions, Exegeses, Dilemmas

60

God Himself (see the case of Rabshakeh, the Assyrian officer, who introduces himself as an ambassador of God among Judeans, having the purpose of conquering Jerusalem: 2 Kgs 18:25; see also how Jeremiah presents the Babylonians in Jer 21:4-5; 42-44). The Pharaoh thus shows that he respects the Law of Judeans and the fact that he appoints Jehoiakim king means fulfilling God's will. Therefore, the message conveyed is that Jehoiakim is God's anointed and he, Necho II, is the authority by which God's will is fulfilled on earth. By this authority, Judeans must bow before Egypt (we can thus understand why part of the population of the kingdom sought refuge in Egypt, where they enjoyed protection against the repeated attacks of the Babylonians; see also Jer 42-46).

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Rev. CONSTANTIN JINGA
Why Change the Name of a King? (2 Kgs 23:34) – Questions, Exegeses, Dilemmas

61

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CRISTINEL IATAN
"Teach me, and I will be silent" (Job 6:24). Scribes, Secretaries and Teachers in the Period of the two Temples

62

"TEACH ME, AND I WILL BE SILENT" (JOB 6:24).
SCRIBES, SECRETARIES AND TEACHERS
IN THE PERIOD OF THE TWO TEMPLES

Abstract

Over the centuries, research on scribes has explored various directions, offering hypotheses about their roles and status based on textual evidence. Prevailing theories on Israelite scribes heavily relied on sources like the New Testament, Josephus Flavius' writings, rabbinic texts, and non-Jewish scholars, considering them reliable for understanding 1st-century AD Jewish society. However, alternative evidence was often overlooked, and contradictions between sources went unexplained. In the late 19th century, German theologians delved into the history of ancient Jewish people, examining the context surrounding Jesus, his movement, and the New Testament. Regrettably, modern approaches neglect the ancient Israelites' self-perception, favouring biased interpretations influenced by contemporary assumptions. Anachronistic views on schools, scribal training, manuscripts, and authorship further hinder understanding. To grasp the true role of scribes, a comprehensive study of ancient sources, especially the Old Testament, is imperative.

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scribes, teachers, Chronicles, Ezra, Jewish society

In the Old Testament, scribes played an important role in preserving and transmitting Israelite teachings and traditions. They were skilled in writing and reading and therefore responsible for transmitting and copying the holy texts. They were also often responsible for passing on the Law and other important teachings of the Israelite religious community. Studying the Old Testament scribes presents several issues that need to be considered.

CRISTINEL IATAN
"Teach me, and I will be silent" (Job 6:24). Scribes, Secretaries and Teachers in the Period of the two Temples

63

A short history of research

First, studies in past centuries have outlined several directions of research on scribes. Although hypotheses about their roles and status vary widely, they can be categorised according to how they have been approached in the existing textual evidence. For example, most tended to consider that one of the main historically reliable sources for knowledge of 1st century AD Jewish society was from Greco-Roman, neo-Judaic society. In other words, most theories about Israelite scribes depended largely on the portrait painted of them by the New Testament, either the writings of Josephus Flavius or rabbinic texts or the roles of scholars who are not Jewish. Other evidence was frequently ignored or interpreted as a derivative of what was commonly accepted as reliable sources. Contradictions between different sources are rarely explained or, in most cases, not even mentioned.

Since the end of the 19th century A.D., there has been a growing interest in the history of the ancient Jewish people, especially in the studies of German theologians. Motivated by the understanding that Jesus, his movement and the texts of the New Testament should be considered in their historical, social and political context, scholars such as Emil Schürer, Hermann L. Strack, Paul Billerbeck, Joachim Jeremias and Adolf von Schlatter published works on aspects of ancient Jewish history and society (Schams 1998, 15). In their study of the evidence about the scribes, they worked with assumptions shaped by New Testament writings in which scribes were perceived as teachers and teachers of the Scriptures and Jewish law and as such influential in Jewish society in the first century AD. In general, these studies are based on the creation of an artificial category of teachers of the Law, which was also imposed on the ancient sources, without carefully investigating the text and the information they provided. So, the main shortcoming of many modern approaches is that they have not considered the ancient Israelites' perception of themselves as reflected in the sources. Instead, the selection and interpretation of the evidence is heavily influenced by modern assumptions and preconceptions about the scribes. Many of the views on schools, scribal training, scribal work, publication and circulation of books seem too rigid and sometimes too modern to provide an adequate foundation for understanding scribes and their role in ancient Jewish society. Another shortcoming is the under- or over-appreciation of sources about the extent to which they can provide historically reliable information about the realities of Jewish society during the Second Temple period. Finally, assumptions about the writing and transmission of manuscripts, authorship of books, or the composition

CRISTINEL IATAN
"Teach me, and I will be silent" (Job 6:24). Scribes, Secretaries and Teachers
in the Period of the two Temples

64

of the canon do not consider the fact that not only scribes but also some literate slaves and/or educated people could read and write (Schams 1998, 34-5). So, to outline the role of scribes one must study the ancient sources, the Old Testament and how they describe the role and importance of scribes and teachers of the Law.

Orality of Scripture

Then, another issue related to understanding the problem of the scribes, teachers and scribes concerns how we understand today what Scripture/Bible is and the orality of Scripture, or how much of the actual written content has been preserved orally. Is it the product of the scribes who put the oral traditions into writing? When talking about Scripture, modern readers think of it as a single book, printed and bound between covers, being read privately or studied in a scholarly way. The same can be said of our forefathers, who called the Israelites "a people of books", which paints an idyllic picture of a well-rounded and well-versed community, widely literate. For example, behind the "document hypothesis" associated with the biblical scholar Julius Wellhausen, which is still influential today, is the presupposition that large parts of Scripture are based on layers of written documents, the earliest dating from the time of the Davidic monarchy (10th century BC). These written documents, it is said, were woven together and edited in a cumulative writing effort. Other, more recent studies emphasize "intertextuality" in the Bible, the citation by one scribe of the written text but "fixed" by another. Other scholars consider large sections of Scripture to be the product of modern-type literati or ancient historiographers, all drawing on the resources or reflecting the values of an essentially literate culture (Niditch 1996, 1).

The role of literacy in the development of writing

Thirdly, if we talk about scribes, teachers and secretaries in the Old Testament, we must first understand the literacy of the Israelites and whether this literacy also led to the establishment of certain schools where scribes could learn to read and write. The general question of the presence or absence of schools in Ancient Israel can be analysed in the form of two adjacent, yet distinct questions: (a) the presence and character of schools for training professional scribes for the administrative service of the kingdom and (b) institutions that promoted literacy among the general population. R.J. Williams and A. Lemaire argued in favour of both, first with the emergence of schools for professional scribes, then those for the rest of the population

CRISTINEL IATAN
"Teach me, and I will be silent" (Job 6:24). Scribes, Secretaries and Teachers
in the Period of the two Temples

65

(Jamieson-Dake 1991, 11). R.J. Williams quoted by Jamieson-Drake says: "The report of Wen-amon, an Egyptian official sent to Byblos about 1100 BC, mentions that five hundred papyrus scrolls were delivered to the Syrian chieftain as an advance for a cargo of wood. This indicates the extent to which writing was practised there. References to Old Testament writing in the time of Moses (Jo 17:14; 24:4; 39:14,30; Dt 27:3; 31:24; *cf.* Jo 18:4-9) should therefore not be regarded as anachronisms. An episode from the time of Gideon, in the 12th or 11th century BC, attests to the knowledge of writing in a young man from a settlement that was captured at random (Jgd 8:14). As in Egypt and Mesopotamia, those who could write were usually royal rulers, as in the case of David's *scribe* Seraiah (2 Kgs 8:17). We must assume the existence of schools of scribes as in neighbouring peoples. Graduates of such schools would have been known as *skilful scribes* (Ps 45:1). Isaiah could read and write in the 8th century BC, although this was not true of everyone (Is 29:12). However, by the end of the 7th century, some degree of literacy was assumed (Dt 6:9; 24:1)" (Jamieson-Dake 1991, 11).

However, literacy in the Old Testament world is a thorny issue for current biblical scholarship. On the one hand, the evidence present in Scripture is not sufficient to state with certainty that there were schools of scribes (anachronisms), especially in the Mosaic period (the term "scribe", ebr. *sop̄er,* סוֹפֵר, is never mentioned in the Pentateuch), to produce the biblical text and pass it on. In the beginning, oral tradition was probably the main way of transmitting divine revelation. On the other hand, in the ancient world, it is difficult to specify the degree of literacy, because there are no reliable statistics available and no objective criteria for assessing it. Even understanding "popular literacy" is complex, so scholars propose ambiguous terms such as "limited" or "widespread" literacy (King and Stager 2001, 310). What is a literate society? Does it imply only the ability to read or write, or both? Another issue, discussed especially in studies of modern literacy, is the degree of proficiency a person should acquire in reading and writing before he or she can be called "literate" (Warner 1980, 81). To understand the importance of these questions, we need only consider how they affect how we view the issue of literacy in ancient Israel. For example, does an inscription on a ceramic object, "belonging to *someone*", lead us to believe that the person who wrote it did not necessarily know how to read it? Or that he could have written much larger texts/inscriptions? Or that he could both read and write other texts, not only the letters of this inscription but also much longer texts? The distinction between reading and writing is a very important one, because, for example, studies of literacy and education

CRISTINEL IATAN
"Teach me, and I will be silent" (Job 6:24). Scribes, Secretaries and Teachers
in the Period of the two Temples

66

in other societies show that completely illiterate people and functional "literates" can recognise many letter groups, e.g., street names, names of people, etc. Then, it is known from history that in many societies where literacy was first formally taught and learned, reading skills were considered far more important than writing skills, and the purpose of literacy was primarily to teach reading. It is also known that in such cases, reading was taught at a minimal level, but learners could nevertheless be called "literate" (Warner 1980, 82). Researchers also debate whether the inventors of the alphabet used a smaller number of letters just to facilitate the spread of writing, especially since literacy spread in Syro-Palestine in a short period. Theoretically, once the alphabet was invented, writing was no longer the exclusive preserve of the priesthood or a class of scribes but could be practised by anyone, generally (Warner 1980, 82).

The earliest evidence of writing and scribes in Ancient Israel (pre-exilic period)

Historically, the earliest writing, produced by educated elites, was discovered in Uruk/Warka (Biblical Erech) on the Euphrates and dates from 3100 BC (King and Stager 2001, 300). Soon after, there is evidence from Egypt in the Nile Valley. Both cuneiform and hieroglyphic writing flourished over the next three millennia, although orality continued to be the simplest and most widespread method of preserving and transmitting information and traditions. The Mesopotamians and common Egyptians were not literate on a large scale. Researchers say that no more than one percent of the ancient world's population was literate (King and Stager 2001, 302).

According to Naaman Nadav, hieratic figures and signs, of Egyptian origin, therefore, appear in the epigraphic documents of the kingdoms of Israel and Judah in the 8th-7th centuries BC, but not in the documents of Israel's neighbours. Moreover, Orly Goldwasser (1991, 251-2) has shown that they must have entered Hebrew writing much earlier, during the united monarchy of kings David and Solomon, i.e. in the 10th century BC, especially since after the decline of the Egyptian Empire, many Egyptians or Canaanite scribes trained in the language of the Egyptians lost their service at the imperial court and may have offered their scribal and administrative knowledge to the newly emerging powers in the area, first to the Philistines and then to the Israelites. So Naaman concludes, writing was already in use at the Jerusalem court in the 10th century BC (Nadav 1996, 22).

CRISTINEL IATAN
"Teach me, and I will be silent" (Job 6:24). Scribes, Secretaries and Teachers
in the Period of the two Temples

67

The second testimony is the account of Pharaoh Shishak's campaign against Jerusalem in the fifth year of Rehoboam's reign, which mentions the surrender of Solomon's golden shields and their replacement by copper shields (1 Kgs 14:25-28), testimony that must have been taken from an extant written text, a written record. Otherwise, the memory of the Egyptian campaign, which was fought in Shishak's later years, nearly 300 years before the Deuteronomistic history was told, would have been long forgotten. This would be clear evidence of the existence of writing at the royal court in Jerusalem (Nadav 1996, 22).

Thirdly, there are lists of scribes who knew how to write included in the narratives about David and Solomon which must have been taken from the archives (e.g., 2 Sm 8:16-18; 20:23-26; 23:8-39; 1 Kgs 4:2-19; 9:15-18). The introduction of the scribal profession to the court of David and Solomon is recorded in three of these lists (2 Sm 8:17; 20:24-25; 1 Kgs 4:3). From 2 Sm 8:16 and 20:24-25 (*cf.* 1 Chr 18:15-17), we learn that Jehoshaphat, son of Ahilud was a recorder (heb. *mazkir*, מַזְכִּיר), secretary to the king, one of the dignitaries in King David's court, probably the one who reminded (heb. *zakar*, זכר) the king of important matters of the kingdom, and Seraiah was a scribe or secretary (heb. *soper*, סוֹפֵר) (2 Sm 8:17). To the list of secretaries who most likely knew the art of writing is also added Adoram the one in charge of the forced labor (heb. *mas*, מַס) and Sheva the secretary (heb. *soper*, סוֹפֵר) (2 Sm 20:24-25). From 1 Kg 4:3-6, we learn that in Solomon's time, there were the following rulers who knew the art of writing: Elihoreph and Ahijah the sons of Shisha were secretaries (heb. *soperim*, סֹפְרִים), Jehoshaphat, son of Ahilud, was a recorder (heb. *mazkir*, מַזְכִּיר) and Adoniram, probably the same as Adoram, was in charge of the forced labor (heb. *mas*, מַס).

The Chronicles books preserve several testimonies about the existence of scribes in the pre-exilic period. 1 Chr 2:55 contains the first reference to a family of scribes and the profession of scribes: "The clans also of the scribes (heb. *mispehot soperim*, מִשְׁפְּחוֹת סֹפְרִים) who lived at Jabez…", since other professions (carpenter, mink workers and potters) are also mentioned in 1 Chr 4. The text suggests that writing was learned in the family and passed on from generation to generation, a practice that is also found in the context of the Ancient Near East, as the legend of Ahiqar shows. Ahiqar trained his grandson, because he had no son, and expected him to succeed him in his position at the royal court (Schams 1998, 58).

CRISTINEL IATAN
"Teach me, and I will be silent" (Job 6:24). Scribes, Secretaries and Teachers
in the Period of the two Temples

68

1 Chr 24:6 mentions Shemaiah the scribe who oversaw the ordinance of the priests and Levites and their duties at the future Temple: "the scribe Shemaiah, the son of Nethanel, a Levite (heb. *hassopēr min-hallevi*, הַסּוֹפֵר מִן־הַלְוִי), recorded them in the presence of the king and the princes". Festively present were the king, the chieftains of the people, the priests Zadok and Ahimelech, and the heads of the families of the priests and Levites. The Shemaiah seems to be one of the high religious rulers, a specialist in the art of writing, closely connected with the administration of the royal court and is the only place in Chronicles where the scribe is also a Levite.

1 Crh 27:32 mentions Jonathan, David's uncle, who was also a scribe: "Jonathan, David's uncle, was a counselor, being a man of understanding and a scribe (heb. *sopēr*, סוֹפֵר)".

2 Chr 24:11 speaks of the presence of the scribes on the occasion of the repair of the Temple during the reign of Joash: "And whenever the chest was brought to the king's officers by the Levites, when they saw that there was much money in it, the king's secretary (heb. *sopēr hammelekh*, סוֹפֵר הַמֶּלֶךְ) and the officer of the chief priest would come and empty the chest and take it and return it to its place. Thus they did day after day, and collected money in abundance."

2 Chr 26:11 (*cf.* 2 Kg 25:19) also mentions Jehiel the scribe ,and another class of specialists in the art of writing, the "teachers": "Moreover, Uzziah had an army of soldiers, fit for war, in divisions according to the numbers in the muster made by Jeiel the secretary (heb. *hassopēr*, הַסּוֹפֵר) and Maaseiah the officer (heb. *haṣoṭer*, הַשּׁוֹטֵר), under the direction of Hananiah, one of the king's commanders". Jeiel was one of King Uzziah's secretaries responsible, together with Maaseiah, for the assembly of the people and the organization of the royal army. *Sheṭer* is frequently used in the Pentateuch to designate different types of Israelite officials or rulers (e.g. Josh ch. 5). Because it is related to the Akkadian *shataru* ("to write") it suggests the idea that "teachers" were scribes with administrative responsibilities, charged with keeping track of the number of bricks made by the Israelites (Ex 5). This interpretation is also supported by the Syriac translation which equates the *shoṭer* with *saṗra*, a term commonly used with the meaning of "scribe". The obligation to keep written records of work indicates that at least some of the Jews were literate (Bălțăceanu and Broșteanu 2019, 173).

2 Chr 34:8-21, a theological rewriting of 4 Kgs 22, presents the personality and role of Shaphan, son of Azaliah, son of Maaseiah and Joahaz the recorder (ebr. *mazkir*, מַזְכִּיר) (2 Chr 34:8). Shaphan is called "scribe/writer" (סוֹפֵר) in 34:15

CRISTINEL IATAN
"Teach me, and I will be silent" (Job 6:24). Scribes, Secretaries and Teachers in the Period of the two Temples

69

and "the king's scribe" (heb. *soп̄er hammelekh*, סוֹפֵר הַמֶּלֶךְ). The other ruler, Joahaz the recorder was also part of the king's administration and knew the art of writing. Shaphan also has financial and administrative duties in the Chronicles (vv. 9,17), along with Joahaz.

2 Chr 34:13 is the second scriptural reference in the Chronicles to the scribal guild (*cf.* 2 Kgs 22:3-7, which, however, does not mention the Levites at all), besides those referring to individual scribes, a text which refers to the repairs of the Temple under King Josiah: "all these (the sons of Merari and Kohath – our note) were over the burden bearers and directed all who did work in every kind of service, and some of the Levites were scribes (heb. *soп̄erim*, סֹפְרִים) and officials (heb. *shōṭerim*, שֹׁטְרִים) and gatekeepers". Among the roles of the Levites was that of scribes, in addition to overseeing the work of the Temple. However, according to Christine Schams, there is nothing in the Chronicles that expresses or implies such a classification of the roles of the Levites. This suggests the idea that the passage reflects the postexilic realities of the author's day, especially since the other list referring to their primary role at the Temple differs. According to 1 Chr 23:4, the Levites first perform the functions of overseers (heb. *shōṭerim*, שֹׁטְרִים), then judges (heb. *shoп̄eṭim*, שֹׁפְרִים) and gatekeepers, musicians, rather than scribes, and overseers, as stated in 2 Chr 34:13. Schams states that 2 Chr 34:13 should be considered a gloss of a later editor, witnessing the organization of the Levites in the postexilic period, and suggests that at a later stage in the Persian period a class or group of scribes, possibly Levites, may have existed in association with the Jerusalem Temple (Schams 1998, 68-9).

These cases, taken together, lead to the conclusion that writing was introduced into the court of Jerusalem in the 10th century BC, in the time of David or Solomon. The scribes worked in the Jerusalem court as private secretaries to the king and as rulers in the administration of the united kingdom, implying the existence of a royal court (Nadav 1996, 22).

The fourth testimony is several biblical descriptions, from different times and different genres (e.g., historiography, prophecy, odes). They describe David as the conqueror of Jerusalem and founder of the royal dynasty that lasted until the end of the Jewish monarchy in 586 BC. The Tel Dan stele tells us that the kingdom of Judah was called Bet-David, "the house of David", in the second half of the 9th century BC. Incidentally, the eponymous/dynastic name "*Bit-someone*", "house of *someone*" is typical

CRISTINEL IATAN
*"Teach me, and I will be silent" (Job 6:24). Scribes, Secretaries and Teachers
in the Period of the two Temples*

70

of many of the new West Semitic kingdoms that emerged in the Fertile Crescent in the early 1st millennium BC (Nadav 1996, 22).

Scriptural evidence concerning scribes (postexilic period)

Gradually, beginning in the 8th century BC, writing began to spread throughout Ancient Israel, from the royal court to the common people. Scholars agree that most biblical texts date from the late 8th century to the 4th century BC. However, this does not mean that much of the Israelite population was literate. Also, clay bubbles, inscribed personal seals, seal impressions, inscriptions on vessels, ostraca, and inscribed weights date from the 8th-7th centuries BC and later. All these and the thousands of seal inscriptions such as, למלך, *lmlk* ("belonging to the king") or *l-someone* ("belonging to *someone*") on vessel handles attest to the role that literacy played in the economic sphere of the 8th century BC (King and Stager 2001, 312).

Most studies of the scribes have given great importance to the books of Ezra-Nehemiah because these books contain much information about Ezra, who is called "scribe" (ebr. *sopēr,* סוֹפֵר), whereas in the rest of the material on the status and roles of the scribes in this period the information is extremely scarce. Furthermore, the significance attributed to these books is a consequence of the consistency with which modern scholarship has made Ezra the scribe the archetypal Torah scribe.

The figure of Ezra is presented at length in Ezra ch. 7, where we learn that he was "scribe skilled (ebr. *sopēr mahir,* סוֹפֵר מָהִיר) in the Law of Moses" (v. 6). He is also said to have come from Babylon and to have been sent by King Artaxerxes to Jerusalem (v. 6), and in the letter the king gave him Ezra is said to have been "the priest, the scribe, a man learned in matters of the commandments of the LORD" (Heb. *hakkohen hassopēr, sopēr divre^y mitzvot-YHWH,* הַכֹּהֵן הַסֹּפֵר סֹפֵר דִּבְרֵי מִצְוֹת־יְהוֹה) (v. 11) or "priest, teacher/scriber of the law of the heavenly God" (ebr. *kahana'sapar data' di-'elah shemaayya',* כָּהֲנָא סָפַר דָּתָא דִּי-אֱלָה שְׁמַיָּא). Ezra's designation with the title "scribe skilled" is ambiguous and may refer either to his dexterity as a scribe/writer, to his knowledge and expertise in writing, or both, or be part of his official title, indicating that he was in charge of Israelite affairs at the royal court (Schams 1998, 53).

Ezra 4 contains several references to Shimshai the scribe, of Persian origin (vv. 8, 9, 17, 23), one of the most important men opposing the rebuilding of the Temple in Jerusalem after the return of the Israelites to the land. He is called "scribe/secretary" (heb. *sopēr,* סוֹפֵר) and writes a letter to King Artaxerxes I accusing the Jews of a

CRISTINEL IATAN
"Teach me, and I will be silent" (Job 6:24). Scribes, Secretaries and Teachers
in the Period of the two Temples

71

possible rebellion if the Temple were rebuilt and of "tax strikes" (vv. 12-13).

Nehemiah 13:13 mentions another scribe, Zadok, "and I appointed as treasurers over the storehouses Shelemiah the priest, Zadok the scribe (Heb. *Zadok hassoper*, צָדוֹק הַסּוֹפֵר)". We learn nothing clear about the roles of the scribes in charge of administering the tithe, but probably the scribe was the one in charge of record keeping and accounting. Nor is it clear whether the scribe Zadok was a priest, a Levite, or neither. Secretaries who were not Temple-serving priests may have retained privileges in the Temple administration in Jerusalem. Sanctuaries were part of the fiscal administration of the Persian provinces, and most likely the Jerusalem Temple was in the same category. Therefore, it seems that the Temple would have collected taxes for the Hasmonean sovereigns and the Temple rulers. Zadok the scribe seems to fit best into the category of rulers who collected and/or administered taxes, including tithes, for the Temple servants (Schams 1998, 58).

Extrabiblical (archaeological) evidence from ancient Israel on scribes

As we have seen, scribes were important rulers in the bureaucracy of ancient Israel and other neighbouring peoples. Unfortunately, to date, no Hebrew seals are known to have been used by scribes from the First Temple period. Instead, we know of two seals of Moabite scribes: that of "Kemos'am, (son of) Kemos'el, scribe (*hśpr*)" and "Amoz scribe (*hśpr*)", as well as one in Aramaic, "*Hwdw* scribe (*śpr'*)" (Avigad 1976, 8).

The Samaria Ostraca, ceramic vessels inscribed with texts of an administrative nature, are rare examples of writing from the northern kingdom of Israel, composed before the fall to the Assyrians in 722 B.C. Yohanan Aharoni dates them to the 8th century B.C. from the time of kings Jehu, Jehoahaz and Jeroboam II (Aharoni 1962, 67). They contain lists of wine and olive oil brought from neighbouring villages to the city of Samaria, or records of taxes or tribute in kind sent by villagers to Samaria. The main problem with these ostracises in terms of writing is their role. The answer depends on the role of the person whose name is preceded by the Hebrew preposition *lamed* (ל) in ostrace, i.e. "ל-*someone*", since the preposition *lamed* has a variety of meanings: "for, to, of, belonging to". According to Y. Yadin, the other names mentioned after the first person (to which the preposition *lamed*, "ל-*someone*" is prefixed) are generally interpreted as the names of the senders (Yadin 1959, 184). Therefore, the first name in the ostraca would be the one to whom these gifts were sent. The ostraca themselves seem, according to Yadin, to be records written by a secretary of the royal

CRISTINEL IATAN
"Teach me, and I will be silent" (Job 6:24). Scribes, Secretaries and Teachers in the Period of the two Temples

72

court on receiving gifts/taxes, and the first name mentioned after the place name would thus indicate the main owner of the property, while the others would be collaborators of the latter (Yadin 1959, 187). But Yohanan Aharoni says that the persons whose names are preceded by *lamed* were the payers of taxes, not their collectors (Aharoni 1962, 67). Either way, even if the people who wrote the ostracians were rulers at the royal court or wealthy taxpayers, they show us the existence of literacy in the 8th century BC. Here are some names of scribes from the 8th century BC as they appear in the ostracization of Samaria: Shemariah (שמריו) (Samr 1), Biriam (בארים) (Samr 1), Gaddiyaw (גדיו) (Samr 2, 4, 5, 6, 7), Aza (אזה) (Samr 2), Shemida' (שמידע) (Samr 3), Baala' (בעלא) (Samr 3), Qotz (קצה) (Samr 4, 5, 6, 7), Geba (גבע) (Samr 8), Abinoam (אבנעם) (Samr 8, 9, 10), Yahit (יצת) (Samr 9, 10) etc. (Hesser 2008).

At Tel Arad (Southern Kingdom) other ostraca have been discovered bearing the names of scribes. The biblical Arad, an Iron Age fortress, controlled the main road to Edom and was both an administrative and military outpost. Approximately two hundred ostraca have been found at this archaeological site, over half of which are inscribed in Hebrew and date from the late 7th or early 6th century BC. Eighteen ostraca are addressed to Eliashib, the chief of the fortress, authorizing him to provide rations (wine, oil, flour) for Cypriot or Greek mercenaries from the army of the kingdom of Judah (King and Stager 2001, 314). Apart from Samaria and Tel Arad, scribal testimonies have been discovered in the ostraca of Ḥorvat Uza, an archaeological site located in the northeastern part of the Negev desert (cent. VII-VI BC), Yavne Yam/Meṭad Ḥaṣavyahu, an archaeological site located in Shephelah, about 15 km south of modern Tel Aviv (7th century BC), and Tel Lachish, (7th-VI BC).

Ten bullae (*bullae*) from the province of Yehud were preserved in the postexilic period along with other bullae and two seals. They have been dated to the late 6th century BC and can therefore be linked to the Persian province of Yehud, i.e., to the early postexilic period. Two of them are of interest. The 6th Bull, originating from an official context, provides evidence of the employment of scribes in the Persian administration of the province of Yehud. It speaks of a certain "Jeremai the scribe" (ebr. *liremai hassoפֵer*, לירמי הספר, "belonging to Jeremai the scribe"). The name Jeremai is the hypochoristic of Jeremiah and appears only once in Scripture, as the name of a person who separated from his foreign wife because of the preaching of Ezra the scribe (Ezr 10:33). We do not know if it is the bull of the person mentioned in Ezra. The scribe was probably employed in an administrative position in the Persian province of Yehud under the

CRISTINEL IATAN
"Teach me, and I will be silent" (Job 6:24). Scribes, Secretaries and Teachers
in the Period of the two Temples

73

rule of Elnathan (Ezr 8:16) (Avigad 1976, 8). The second, the 14th scroll, written in Aramaic, is of a woman, "Shelemith, servant of the governor Elnathan" (Heb. *liŞelomit 'amat Elnatan paḥawa'*, לשׁלמית אמת לנתן פחוא). In 1 Crh 3:19, it appears as the name of the daughter of Zerubbabel, governor of Judah. The term *ama[h]* usually appears in Scripture with the meaning "handmaid", and in the Talmudic period, it was borne by the master's concubine who usually held the rank of second wife (Avigad 1976, 12). But W.F. Albright says that the Hebrew *ama[h]* would have been a title like *'ebed*, "servant/servant", found on the seals of high officials of the Israelite royal court. In other words, seals containing the title *ama[h]* would belong to female deputies (or other distinguished women) in royal or noble service. In support of this claim, Albright cites two parallels in Babylonian cylinder seals, whose owners were designated as servants of individuals, apparently kings. But it turns out that these seals contain no title, and there is no reliable evidence that the "masters" there were indeed kings. Thus, these seal cylinders offer nothing concrete to clarify the nature of the servants on the Ammonite seal cylinders (Avigad 1976, 12-3). But what might have been the job of the Selomite? Since the 14th bull was the only private seal found in this collection it would indicate that she would have overseen the archive, or rather the administrative centre to which the archive belonged. Furthermore, she also kept a provincial seal for sealing official documents. Thus, it would have played an important role in the administration of the province of Yehud. Despite the inferior status of women in the Ancient Near East, she would have enjoyed many civil rights. For example, in the Elephantine papyri, contemporaneous with the 14th Bull, the Israelite woman had almost equal rights with men in matters of property, could sign contracts, appear in court, and the like. But nowhere in the Old Testament or other external sources is there any indication of female rulers. However, there is evidence in Babylonian sources that women were in high positions as judges and scribes, but in none of these cases were female servants involved (Avigad 1976, 31-2).

Finally, in the New Testament era, we have several names of scribes discovered on ossuaries: Yehuda the scribe, Yehuda son of Eleazar the scribe (Jerusalem) and Joseph, son of Hananiah the scribe, and at Masada, ostraca were discovered on which was inscribed Eleazar son of the scribe (Mas 667) (Evans 2003, 56).

CRISTINEL IATAN
"Teach me, and I will be silent" (Job 6:24). Scribes, Secretaries and Teachers in the Period of the two Temples

74

Conclusion

Although the study of scribes, teachers and scribal scholars has been influenced in past centuries by New Testament writings and anachronistic preconceptions of them, archaeological discoveries, sociological research and Old Testament books attest to their existence since the time of King David (2nd century AD). At first, they were rulers and administrators in the king's court, i.e., they were part of the educated elite, then literacy spread among the Israelite population, and so scribes multiplied. Scripture most likely begins to be written down from the oral tradition from the 1st century onwards. 10th century BC, but mainly during the 8th-6th centuries BC.

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CRISTINEL IATAN
"Teach me, and I will be silent" (Job 6:24). Scribes, Secretaries and Teachers in the Period of the two Temples

75

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BOOK
REVIEWS

1. Rev. Liviu Vidican-Manci, *Heart, Thoughts and Prayers in the Preaching of the Logos*

2. Radu-Constantin Iliescu, *The Roots of Eternity or the Traces of the Priest in the World*

HEART, THOUGHTS AND PRAYERS
IN THE PREACHING OF THE LOGOS

Rev. Liviu Vidican-Manci

Ioan Chirilă, *Scara Cuvântului. Eseuri omiletice*
[The Ladder of the Word. Homiletic Essays]
(Cluj-Napoca: Școala Ardeleană, 2017).

Father Ioan Chirilă needs no introduction before the people of Cluj-Napoca. Minister of the Metropolitan Cathedral, professor of the Faculty of Theology, a well-known personality of the academic world and a voice of authority of the Orthodox Church, through his book *The Ladder of the Word. Homiletic Essays*, Father Chirilă offers a piece of his heart, of his thoughts and prayers to all those who, having listened to one of his sermons, either at the Cathedral or over the airwaves, would have liked to keep the Logos close a while longer through the words of their beloved preacher.

Preaching seems easy, but it is not. Not because mastering the skill of public speaking or the structuring of ideas might be impossible, but because, once in the pulpit, the preacher can no longer stand for his voice alone, but for the voice of Christ. The fact that the sermon is part of the Holy Liturgy and concludes the Liturgy of the Word, preparing the mind and soul for the Liturgy of the Eucharist is not a random arrangement. It is intended to stress the importance of preparation through the sharing of the words of the Gospel for the unification with Christ, the Eucharistic Logos, body and blood, to attain the promised salvation.

Publishing a book of sermons seems easy as well, but it is not. Not because drafting was difficult, especially for someone with the present author's experience, but because, once uttered, a sermon is like a bird enjoying the freedom of flight; laying it on the page bears the risk of caging it. Nevertheless, the text offered in *The Ladder of the Word* exhibits a characteristic freedom and dynamic, thanks to the author's style, which, as one goes through the pages, makes one feel as if one were in the midst of the crowd listening intently to every word uttered by this descendant of the Apostles.

The texts contained in the present volume consist of sermons given from the pulpit of the Cathedral between 2007 and 2015. The title, *Homiletic Essays*, is eminently fitting, as the author does not aim to follow a homiletic pattern, whether it be that of the thematic sermon, the exegetic homily, the panegyric, etc. The free spirit that he is known to be, Father Ioan Chirilă is at his best when he is not constrained by structures, forms, and rusty paradigms. The power of words in this volume resides in the intertwining of message and style. Metaphors are a constant presence, while epithets, similes, inversions, and rhetorical questions add a poetic touch to the theologically dense text.

Without any intention to use excerpts to convince the reader, we wish to highlight the distinct manner in which Father Chirilă makes his words sound fresh. The message that underlies them all is the invitation to prayer and to having a loving heart, to which purpose he often employs another figure of speech specific to church language, namely the invocation: 'our strength has left us, our understanding has left us, and the labours of disheartenment and despair are upon us. And so, we ask You, Who are the source of the joy and happiness of all, to rest upon us, strengthen us, guide us, so that, together with You, we may step into eternal life; having understood the grace and mercy of God and gained strength, let us cry onto all: *Come and see how wonderful the Lord in Trinity is*' (p. 135).

THE ROOTS OF ETERNITY
OR THE TRACES OF THE PRIEST IN THE WORLD

Radu-Constantin Iliescu

Ioan Chirilă, *Rădăcinile veşniciei*
[Roots of Eternity]
(Cluj-Napoca: Ed. Şcoala Ardeleană, 2022).

Behind the carpenter there is furniture, behind the builder there are houses, but what does the priest leave after his ephemeral passage through the world? His remains are not those that can be seen, nor do they belong to those that can be measured with human measures. After a life dedicated to the unseen, the books are inevitably the confession of one who has heard the confession of our sins, of those gathered under the Church's protection. This is why we must consider Reverend Ioan Chirilă's book as a coagulation not only of texts scattered over time but of uninterrupted experiences.

The work published by "Şcoala Ardeleană" Publishing House is testimony to the fact that the priest and the writer can coexist in the same person, and if they do not overlap (because one does not need both vocations to fulfil one of them thoroughly), at least they meet. Almost sixty texts, just as many encounters, because the writer does not forget the priest, and the priest happily fulfils and orders the writing. All this under the graceful sign of service, on three levels organised top-down: a first quasi-liturgical part, called Birth – Resurrection – Transfiguration, calligraphed on a corner of the altar, in the fragrance of incense and psalmody, this being the service of the sacred, a second part of chronicles and reviews of theological-ecclesiastical books, the service of the labouring in the holy, and a last part of essays called History – Culture – Life, the redemption of the age by serving both the Divinity and one's neighbour.

Writing about a Christian holiday, even in a periodical such as "Renaşterea" [Renaissance], which is aimed at an informed public, is a task fraught with paradoxes. What can you say to those who (think they) know everything? How can you say something correctly, knowing that you are in the shadow of two thousand years of theological reflection, without having the air of repeating yourself? And above all, how to say something new about eternity? These are not just rhetorical anxieties.

Father's writing responds by banking on the ineffable, embodying in the flow of words a discreet and refined doxology. The reader who allows himself to be carried away by the text comes out of "the captivity that habit gives you", out of "going under the weather", out of "not being satisfied", meeting the great moments of the descent of the Logos, but not through a return to the sharp edge of History, but by entering a super-reality of instantaneity and the concomitance of the transcendent. The book is meant to be read eucharistically, with Father's voice ringing in the ear, for those privileged to know his timbre, in an agapic state of liturgy after liturgy.

To lean over the writings of one's confreres, "feeling for meanings" that can be articulated in a review, is an act of service to the reader and patronage of the intellectual. Whether it is the diortoses of the Bible left to us by the worthy Metropolitan Bartholomew of Cluj (Romania), to which the Father returns again and again, or the evocation of Nicolae Steinhardt, the monk of Rohia Monastery, the Jew who met Christ in Jilava Prison, or the beautiful panegyric dedicated to the Orthodox theologian Olivier Clément, in these and in the others not mentioned here, there is a lively concern for beauty of traditional origin, the cultivation of the person at the expense of the individual, in the light of high theology.

Father doesn't go in for much criticism of the modern world. It is a temptation to which those who love it from the outside succumb. Not that he doesn't know "the cruelty of its entropy", "the idealistic, pseudo-spiritual and materialistic libertinism of contemporaneity", "the scientific discoveries that animate the age of techno-idolatry", far from it. Over these spirits of evil oppressed in the heart of the age we are urged to pass diaphanously, reserving our pressing footing for our role and vocation in the world: the passage from the image to the likeness of God, the actualization of all the potentialities planted by the Creator in us, in "longing after the Christ-Image". That is, "the real chenotic act, the emptying of solipsism and the incarnation of the mind of God", as Father wonderfully puts it.

Why would anyone nowadays write a text about a spiritual pressure? But are the days, in their monotonous flow, really ours? From the manifest hope of a Don Quixote (and Father Ioan Chirilă is one of the Church's many spiritual knights) that "all men may be of the world and in the world as in the Church". How big is the dream? As big as the whole world, with all the troubles that are upon people, as an Ardelen proverb echoes the Book of Job. But can it be realised? The Talmud says that "he who saves one life saves the whole world". This dream is fulfilled with every man who comes out of his

wandering, in whose heart Christ, the Son of God, is eternally born. The mission of the priest is not a percentage of spiritual awakenings listed in a table, but the salvation of the world with each individual person, by returning to the liturgical dimension of being and to the eternal joy of the Father.

And the key is to get out of Time, to lift the spiritual sons and daughters from the burden of one of the conditions of our world. There is no deification without a virtuous return to the heavenly condition. Moreover, in our times, the exit from modernity and the assumption of the "ecclesiastical winepress" precede the steps of holiness that we are called to climb. The one who is worthy of the Blessed Virgin once was the one who can say like the Apostle of the Gentiles: *Come, O Lord* (1 Cor. 16:22), he escapes from the past and the future, eliminating the dimensions of temporality from his life through Christ, our peace. And the world, attacked in its very heart, falls apart like a dragon with no heads left.

The priest is a sower of the seeds of eternity. When these sprouts, Axis Mundi orders the mind and soul of the spiritual son, the elemental tree with branches down and roots watering directly from heaven. The one sheltered in God, where "there is neither yesterday nor tomorrow", the anastasic creature whose cogitation is anchored in the transtemporal, in the meta-historical, becomes such a root of eternity, "God's whistle" like the prophets of old. Christified, for he no longer lives, but Christ lives in him, as the Apostle says, he "validates by personal example the way of life proposed by Christ."

The roots of eternity are the very footsteps of the priest in the world.