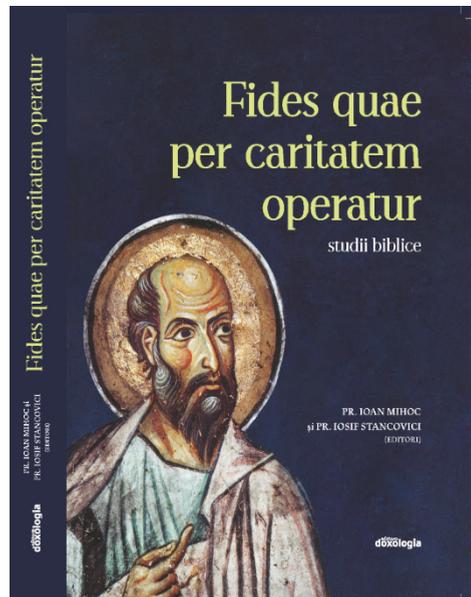


Book Review:

Ioan Mihoc, Iosif Stancovici (eds.),
Fides qua per caritatem operatur: studii biblice
[*Fides qua per caritatem operatur: biblical studies*]
(Iași: Doxologia, 2023), 495 p.

This volume brings together studies which have been presented at the International Symposium of Biblical Exegesis at the West University of Timișoara in 2020 and 2021. The symposium took place with the blessings of His Beatitude Ioan Metropolitan of Banat. The publication by Doxologia in Jassy has received the blessings of His Beatitude Teofan, Metropolitan of Moldavia and Bucovina. A short preface introduces the volume and each article. Every chapter has its bibliography, instead of an overall bibliography at the end of the volume.

Regarding the contents, despite a few philological, historical and art-historical examples, most of the articles can be categorised as belonging to biblical theology. The theological and spiritual focus is clear from the opening words of the preface: “Exegesis, the queen of biblical studies, is always fundamental, not only in academic disciplines but also in the life of believers” (p. 9). After this, the aim of exegesis is defined with a citation from 1 Tim 4:6 as “words of faith and of good teaching”. An interesting aspect of the volume is that this theological and practical (relevance for Christian life) approach is embodied in an open-minded and generous spirit.



There are several contributions of scholars from different Christian traditions. Regarding linguistic diversity, fifteen of the twenty-four chapters are in Romanian, eight in English and one in French. And the title in Latin... The choice for a Latin rendering of the expression based on Gal 5:6 for the title might also be part of this openness and/or might express a desire for alignment with scholarly traditions of the past.

The editors have arranged the unnumbered chapters thematically into six parts of four papers each. The first part is entitled “Credința lucrătoare prin iubire” (*Faith Working through Love*). All of its chapters address aspects of the New Testament. Vasile Mihoc, has prepared a verse-by-verse commentary on Galatians 5:1-12 as he explores “The Freedom of Faith working through Love” (“Libertatea ‘credinței lucrătoare prin iubire’”). He identifies faith, hope and love as “those three theological virtues” (p. 25). A key verse is verse 6, where St Paul expresses the close relation between faith and love in the life of Christian believers. In his conclusion, he draws attention to the depth of the concept of Christian freedom in the thought of St Paul. The next article is firmly embedded within Roman Catholic thought, as it cites both Pope Francis and Pope Benedict within its first three pages. Giuseppe G. Scollo, offers a summary of his PhD dissertation: “The Strength Needed to Enter the Kingdom of God: An Exegetical and Theological Study of Luke 16:16 in Context” (published as a monograph under the same title by Mohr Siebeck in 2019 in the series WUNT). It focuses on a verse which has proved difficult due to the presence of the term “violence”. This is illustrated in a list of different translations of this verse in English Bibles which is added as an appendix to the article. Chapter 3, by Dragoș Andrei Giulea, focuses on another verse with a rich history of interpretation, in this case with implications for debates between different Christian traditions: the concept of universal priesthood from 1 Peter 2:5 and 9. The last chapter from part I is by Traian Gheorghe Mocan, and deals with repentance as an essential marker of Christian life. He recognises five nuances of to repent (*μετανοέω*) in five of the seven letters from Revelation 2-3 where this verb features (“*Μετανοέω* în mesajele epistolare ale Apocalipsei 2-3: semnul existențial al creștinismului”).

The chapters of the second part are dedicated to both OT and NT topics and have been brought together under the heading “Theophany and Eschatology”. In the first of these, Cătălin Vatamanu, explores instances, where humans encounter God, face to face throughout the Hebrew Bible/Old Testament and draws attention to the implications of this for the way God relates to human beings (“Descoperirea lui Dumnezeu ‘față către față’ (פנים אל-פנים): Rolul dezvăluirii chipului în pedagogia divină”). The next chapter, by Nichifor Tănase, combines the concept of the face with that of the breath of life and the spirit of God in order to explore the Spiritual-Chistological dimension of biblical anthropology (“*Panim* (‘fața strălucitoare’), *nephesh hayya* (‘suflarea de viață’) și *Ruach Elohim* (‘Duhul lui Dumnezeu’): Dimensiunea pnevmatologic-hristologică a antropologiei biblice”).

In the next chapter Ioan Mihoc, offers an exegetical commentary on Luke 17:20-37, an eschatological text within the third Gospel. The last chapter in this section stands out as a valuable contribution to reception history. Linda-Saskia Menczel offers some highlights from her PhD thesis as she explores Hebrew (often pseudo-Hebrew as the artists did not know the language) inscriptions which feature on works of European Christian art. Her research has resulted in an enormous catalogue of works of art containing Hebrew letters, words and phrases, which deserve to be widely known and used.

The third part has received the title “Sfânta Scriptură și istoria traducerilor” (The Holy Scripture and Translation). Ștefan Munteanu contributes to canon criticism, as he compares the names, order, and number of the books in the MT and the LXX (“La structure rédactionnelle des livres de l’Ancien Testament”). The next article addresses textual issues, as Alexandru Mihăilă, explores “Aquila and the Greek Text of Ecclesiastes: Consequences for Eastern Orthodox Understanding of the Old Testament Ecclesiastical Text”. It starts with some interesting reflections on the importance of the Septuagint in the Eastern Orthodox Church. This is followed by a detailed analysis of how the text of Qohelet stands out from the other translations gathered in the collection known as the Septuagint and some insight into the figure of Aquila. The author understands that “the history of the Old Greek translation known as the Septuagint is far more complex than the legend based on the *Letter of Aritsteas*”. The inclusion of the translation of Qohelet by “proto-Aquila” is such a complicating factor. In the third article of this section, Constantin Jinga, tells the interesting story of the first translation of the Septuagint into Romanian. It was made by Chancellor Nicolae Milescu during his stay in Constantinople as representative of Prince Grigorie I Ghica of Wallachia from 1661 to 1664. In the last article of part three, the art historian Emilija Vuković examines the miniatures in the Kumanica Tetraevangelion (manuscript no. 69 at the library of the Serbian Academy of Science).

Part four deals with “Historical Aspects and Religious Identity” (Istoricitate și identitate religioasă). In the first chapter Eusebiu Borca offers biblical and scientific perspectives on the chronology of the flood (“Perspective biblico-științifice cu privire la cronologia Potopului”). Next Marcin Chrostowski, “The Book of Tobit in the Context of the First Israelite Diaspora in Assyria”, approaches Tobit not as a folk tale, but as an account based on historical facts which shed light on the circumstances of Israelites during the first exile. Lawrence Iwumadi, provides a careful analysis of “The Genealogy of Jesus According to Matthew: Purpose of the Text and its Reception in Early Christianity.” The closing chapter in this section is by Marian Vild, who explores the issue of marriage and virginity in 1 Corinthians 6-7 in the Greco-Roman cultural context in which the literature of the NT was created (“Căsătorie și feciorie după I Corinteni 6-7 în contextul lumii greco-romane.”)

The chapters in the penultimate section have been gathered under the concepts of Divine Pedagogy and the Study of Value (“Pedagogie divină și axiologie”). Maria-Cristina Trușcă provides an examination of concept and meaning of Ἀρετή in classical, biblical and patristic contexts (“Ἀρετή – conceptualizare și lexicalizare în context biblico-patristic”). Iosif Stancovici contributes to the interpretation of the OT and the NT, as he analyses the Christological interpretation of the story of Joseph and his brothers (Genesis 37:2-11) in early Christianity, examining Matthew 21, Mark 12, Luke 20, Acts 7 and I Clement 4 (“Nu puteau să-I vorbească în pace’: Facere 37:2-11 în literatura creștină primară”). The remaining chapters in this section are: George Cosmin Piț, “‘Toate faptele lor le fac ca să fie văzuți de oameni’ (Mt 23:5): Riscuri pentru ortopraxia creștină” (“‘Everything they do is done to be seen by people’ (Matthew 23:5): Pitfalls for Christian Orthopraxis” and Gabriela Radu, “Sfântul Ioan Gură de Aur, *Omilia a II-a la Epistola Sf. Apostle Pavel către Filipeni*” (Sf) John Chrysostom’s Second Homily on Philippians).

The closing part is called “Kerygma și paradigme misionare” (Proclamation and Mission). Its chapters address themes from the NT Gospels and the OT prophetic and narrative books. In the first article Ilie Melniciuc-Puică, examines Luke 4:18-30, Acts 2:14-38 and Acts 7:2-50 to offer a Lukan perspective on the citation of scripture in missionary contexts (“Citarea Scripturii în argumentarea misionară: paradigmă lucanice”). Next, Danilo Mihajlović draws attention to the multi-faceted role of prophets in the Old Testament world, in his article “Old Testament Prophets in the Service of Community: Holistic Perspective on Prophetic Service”. The next chapter is dedicated to one prophetic event, as Stelian Pașca-Tușa, explores the issue of interpreting the narrative of Jonah’s prophecy to Nineveh (“Mila lui Dumnezeu sau mania lui Iona? O abordare ortodoxă a evenimentului Nineve” – God’s Mercy or Jonah’s Madness? An Orthodox Perspective on the Events at Nineveh). The last article returns to the Gospels, with Daniel Enea, “Parabolele despre Împărăția cerurilor în Comentariul lui Origin la Evanghelia după Matei” (The Parables of the Heavenly Kingdom in Origin’s Commentary on Matthew.)

The wide range of topics ensures that the volume offers something for everybody. The spiritual openness embodied in this collection of conference papers is commendable as an example to be followed.

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