

Can Orthodox Biblical Theology be Autonomous?

The Case of the Bible from 1914

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The current trend among Orthodox theologians is to identify a fitting profile for biblical theology. The ecclesial and pneumatological dimension of biblical interpretation and the recovery of the patristic spirit of exegesis are the main principles invoked. Should Orthodox biblical theology develop autonomously, ignoring western biblical theology? The case of the Bible from 1914 analysed in this study shows that Orthodox biblical theology should develop taking into account heterodox biblical theology and making reference to its results.

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That Orthodox theology experienced a new approach in the 20th century is no longer a novelty to anyone. The same holds true for the finding that influences for such an adjustment have come from the outside, as a result of reform movements in Roman Catholic theology. Orthodox biblical theology confronted the influences for a “new hermeneutic” positively, namely as concern for its Orthodox character in relation to Western biblical science. In an attempt to define their own identity, Orthodox theologians have made contributions that are worthy of consideration and outlined some specific features of the Orthodox interpretation of the Scripture. Of these, the ecclesial and pneumatological dimension of biblical reading and the recovery of the patristic spirit of exegesis seem to be the most important¹.

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¹ For more details on involvements for Orthodox biblical hermeneutics, see: Elias Oikonomos, *Bibel und Bibelwissenschaft in der orthodoxen Kirche*, Stuttgart 1976; idem, *The Power of the Word in the Worshipping Church*, Crestwood, 1986; idem, *Scripture in Tradition: The Bible and Its Interpretation in the Orthodox Church*, Crestwood, 2001; idem, “Orthodox Principles of Biblical Interpretation”, in: *SVTQ* 40 (1-2/1996), p. 77-93; Paul Evdochimov, “Principes de l’hermeneutique orthodoxe”, in: *Contacts* 136 (1986), p. 289-306; 137 (1987), p. 61-67; 138 (1987), p. 127-135; 141 (1988), p. 69-72; 145 (1989), p. 56-64; Mircea Basarab, *Interpretarea Sfintei Scripturi în Biserica Ortodoxă*, Cluj 2005; Stelian Tofană, “Cuvântul lui Dumnezeu ca Euharistie: înțelegerea și interpretarea Bibliei în lumina experienței euharistice liturgice, din perspectiva ortodoxă”, in: *Studia Universitatis Babeș-Bolyai, Theologia orthodoxa* 1-2/1998, p. 109-123; Veselin Kesich, “The Orthodox Church and Biblical Interpretation”,