

OLD TESTAMENT STUDIES IN THE MODERN GREEK ORTHODOX THEOLOGY*

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I feel very delighted for the chance that has been given to me, by the kind invitation of Professor Hodgson to speak to you this evening. I am not going to tire you with specialised subjects of the Old Testament which is my special subject, but I shall try to give, as concisely as possible, a picture of the studies of the Old Testament in Modern Greek Orthodox Theology. I trust, the subject is of interest to many of you, who believe, that a mutual spiritual intellectual intercourse and acquaintance with one another will bring in to closer contact our two countries. More especially, in the theological field, it could pave the way for a real rapprochement between the Anglican and the Eastern Orthodox Churches.

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The studies of the Old Testament in the Modern Greek Orthodox Theology began in 1837 when the new University of Athens was established, after the liberation of Greece. We could divide the course of the development of the studies in two periods, each one having the identical mark of particular tendencies by which they are characterised. The first period extends from the beginning of the establishment of the Faculty of Theology in 1837 up to the end of the last century, and the second, from that period up to now.

The curriculum of studies in the University, shows that, Hebrew, the Introduction to the Old Testament and the Exegesis of the Hebrew text began from the establishment of the Faculty. From the beginning, a great stress was laid on the learning of Hebrew which is, up to the present times, obligatory for the students who must pass a successful examination on it, in order that they may advance to the second year of their academic studies. This attitude was adopted, because we consider that a scientific exegesis is possible, as well as complete, if based on the original Hebrew text. This

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last consideration was the only reason why the text of the Septuagint, which is the version for the Greek Orthodox Church was excluded from the curriculum of the Faculty.

In the year 1837 the first Hebrew Grammar was published¹ and some years after the successful beginning of the Theological Faculty, Professor Vimbos published his Hebrew Grammar² which was followed in a very short time, by an other Grammar written by G. Pantazidis³. These Grammars were scientific and exclusively for the use of the Theological students. At about the same time, by the middle of the last century, the first Hebrew—Greek Lexicon was published. This was not the work of a Greek, but of an English Missionary Lowndes, who had undertaken this publication out of ardent zeal for the Greeks that they might know the O. T. in its original Hebrew⁴. A small Hebrew Grammar was attached to the lexicon.

The Introduction to the O. T. was taught in parallel with Hebrew and the first publication appeared quite early, chiefly for students, and in which the various subjects are not treated thoroughly and exhaustively⁵.

Apart from a few articles and essays in various magazines, periodicals and journals of that period, nothing of importance on the subject of the Introduction is worth recording.

As for the Exegesis of the O. T., although it was the centre of the studies, there are no works worth mentioning.

At the end of the first period, the first historic Geography of Palestine⁶, was published, whilst a complete, for those times, Hebrew Archeology was published soon after the establishment of the Faculty⁷.

I want to mention here an anonymous translation of the O. T. in Modern Greek, published by the British and Foreign Bible So-

1. Γραμματική τῆς Ἑβραϊκῆς γλώσσης εἰς χρῆσιν τῶν Ἑλλήνων. Μελίτη 1837 (Ἄνωνυμος).

2. Θ. Βίμπου, Στοιχεῖα Ἑβραϊκῆς Γραμματικῆς. Ἀθήνησι 1866.

3. Γ. Πανταζίδου, Ἑβραϊκὴ Γραμματικὴ. Λευψία 1880.

4. I. Λάουνδς, Λεξικὸν Ἑβραϊκο-Ἑλληνικὸν τῆς Παλαιᾶς Διαθήκης. Μελίτη 1842.

5. Κ. Κοντογόνου, Εἰσαγωγή εἰς τὴν Ἀγ. Γραφὴν καὶ στοιχεῖα Ἑρμηνευτικῆς. Ἀθήνησι 1859.

6. Εὐδ. Κοφινιώτου, Παλαιστίνη, ἢτοι Ἱστορία καὶ Γεωγραφία τῆς Ἁγίας Γῆς. Ἀθήνησι 1891.

7. Κ. Κοντογόνου, Ἐγχειρίδιον Ἑβραϊκῆς Ἀρχαιολογίας. Ἀθήνησι 1844.

ciety. The translation based on the Hebrew text was completed in the middle of the last century by Neophytos Vamvas, a very learned Greek clergyman and theologian. This translation which in many points is more intelligible than the text of Septuagint is a landmark in the studies of the O. T., inspite of many failings that one can notice.

The aforementioned publications demonstrate that the studies of the O. T. in Greece were in contact with the scientific researches in Western Europe, and that the Greek Theological World has kept an up-to-date pace with the developments in other countries. This was due to the fact that the authors of these works have profited by their studies in the Universities of Western Europe, and have been in close contact with representatives of the studies of the O. T. One can trace the influence of Western European Science on these authors. On the other hand, the beginning of an independant tackling of the various problems in the light of the orthodox frame of mind, is noticeable.

In their endeavour to solve the various problems the Greek Orthodox Theologians turned to the great field of the Patristic Literature which could offer them the necessary elements and help for the solution of the problems, whilst on the other hand, the Patristic treasures could safeguard them from falling away from the traditional character and spirit of the Orthodox Theology.

One cannot expect from the Greek studies of the O. T. of that period which was the beginning of science in Greece, the formation of particular schools of thought. It is worth mentioning here the first attempts to solve two of the most important problems of the scientific research. The first was the problem of the Divine inspiration of the O. T, and the Bible in general; the second, was the place of the Septuagint as a translation of the original text.

The problem of the divine inspiration was not examined in its entirety, but one side of it was touched, viz: whether ther entire Holy Bible has the seal of the Divine inspiration from the start to the end or the Divine inspiration is limited to the dogmatical and ethical elements. This problem was not raised by the professors of the O. T. but by those of the Systematic Theology. The former being under the influence of the literary and historic criticism which began in Western Europe at that time, they applied the historic and literary methods which tended to prove some parts of the O. T. as being deprived of any historic basis. This problem was very vital for

the future of the studies and the controversy was contested very hotly by both sides. As an outcome of this, a thorough investigation of the Patristic Theology was undertaken and two tendencies resulted. The first was adopted by those who were afraid that the authenticity and authority of the O. T. might be endangered. Consequently they extended the Divine inspiration of the Bible in its entirety and claimed that the commentators should apply an apologetic approach to the problems which have been raised not only by the followers of the literary and historic criticism, but also by the long additions of new discoveries after the successful excavations in the East, which led to many contradictory theories owing to the confusion created by their discovery. They seemed at the beginning to shake the authority of the O. T. In contrast to this, the second tendency was favoured by those who tended to limit the divine inspiration only on the dogmatical and ethical points and they stressed that the Holy Bible was a religious book and not a book of history or physics or geology. For those times, this view was quite satisfactory, as the school of historic and comparative study of religions had not yet started touching the dogmatic and ethical elements. The second tendency which was more prevailing, as being more liberal, appeared in the second period of studies in which the problem reappeared in a wider form.

The second essential problem of that period, as I mentioned before, was the place of the Septuagint. The great stress laid on the Hebrew text had as a result the neglect of the text of the Septuagint, because in those days, there was a lack of interest in the criticism of the Hebrew text. This attitude, provoked the reaction of many non academic scholars outside the University who were led by the very learned clergyman K. Oeconomos. He published a 4 volume monumental work on the Septuagint in which he attempted to stress the great significance of this work, basing his argument on history¹. Unfortunately, this wise man went to the extreme by accepting that the translation itself has the seal of the Divine inspiration. In spite of this fact, his was the first attempt to scientific research on the Septuagint, which has been neglected until recently when a new chair for the study and research on the Septuagint was created in our University.

1. Κ. Οικονόμου, Περὶ τῶν Ὁ' Ἑρμηνευτῶν τῆς Παλαιᾶς Θείας Γραφῆς, Ἀθήνησιν 1844.

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The second period of the studies of the O. T. in Greece coincides with the reorganization of the Faculty of Theology. From the 17 chairs of our Faculty of Theology 3 are allocated to the studies of the O. T. and it is the first time that a chair was reserved for the Septuagint. In this new scheme the principal subjects are the following, Hebrew, Introduction to the O.T., Exegesis, Hebrew Archeology, History and language of the Septuagint, History of Israel and the Theology of the O. T. The Literature on the aforesaid subjects has been greater in quantity and quality during the second period. A new Hebrew Grammar by Professor Papayannopoulos based on the famous Grammar of Gesenius is better than that previously published and is marked by its strict historic method and the systematic arrangement of the material¹, A new lexicon by the same Professor is still unpublished. In contrast to the first period the second period is marked by the great interest in critical work for the restoration of the Hebrew text and some works on this subject were favourably criticised in journals and reviews². There arose a particular interest in the monographs written on the theory of Wutz, on the transcription of the Hebrew text by greek letters³.

On the field of the Introduction, the Modern Greek Theology has to show 3 complete and exhaustive Introductions. The first, published by Papageorgiou⁴ at the beginning of this century was followed by works published a little before this war. The first by Professor Antoniadis⁵ of Halki and the second, a very large work by Professor Bratsiotis⁶ of the University of Athens. All these introdu-

1. Ν. Παπαγιαννοπούλου, 'Εβραϊκή Γραμματική. Λειψία 1912.

2. Cf. Π. Μπρατσιώτου, 'Υπόμνημα εἰς τὰς φθὰς τῶν ἀναβαθμῶν. Ἀθήναι 1928. Β. Βέλλα, Εἶναι ὁ 19ος ψαλμὸς ἐνιαῖος; Ἀθήναι 1928. Ἀνάλυσις τοῦ βιβλίου τοῦ Ναοῦμ. Ἀθήναι 1930. Τρία χωρία τῆς Π. Δ. Ἀθήναι 1931. Κριτικά εἰς τὸ βιβλίον τῆς Ἐξόδου. Ἀθήναι 1932. Τὰ χωρία Δευτ. 32,43 καὶ Ζαχ. 14.17. Ἀθήναι 1935. Παρατηρήσεις ἐπὶ τινῶν στίχων τοῦ βιβλίου τοῦ Ἀβαχοῦμ. Ἀθήναι 1938.

3. Cf. Α. Φιλιππίδου, Ἡ περὶ μεταγραφῶν θεωρία τοῦ Wutz. Ἱεροσόλυμα 1927.

4. Σπ. Παπαγεωργίου, Εἰσαγωγή εἰς τὴν Παλαιὰν Διαθήκην. Ἀλεξάνδρεια 1910.

5. Β. Ἀντωνιάδου, Εἰσαγωγή εἰς τὴν Παλαιὰν Διαθήκην. Ἀθήναι 1936.

6. Π. Μπρατσιώτου, Εἰσαγωγή εἰς τὴν Παλαιὰν Διαθήκην. Ἀθήναι 1937.

ctions have been written in a strict scientific method and deal with all the problems of modern criticism. These works are valuable as they have attempted to give solutions to the existing problems.

The various problems on the field of exegesis occupy very actively the modern Greek Theologians. Many commentaries with extensive introductions and annotations on the various books of the O. T. were written. I mention a 2 volume work on the Psalms by the late Rev. C. Callinicos¹. Commentaries on the Habakkuk², Proverbs³, the Song of Songs⁴, Iob⁵, Nahum⁶, published by various authors.

The exegesis with us is based on the investigation of the meaning of the text and on its historic and theological comprehension. It follows of course, the historic and comparative method, but it applies also the allegorical one with great care and these parts only where the connection with the New Testament is evident. The scholars do not hesitate to work out the exegetical material left by the Fathers of the Church, but they take from it what it is possible and beneficial to the studies.

On the subject of Hebrew Archeology many books have been written which demonstrate the great interest of the Greek Theological world in this field, which has been greatly developed in recent years⁷. But above all, I stress more particularly the significance of the publications on the Septuagint. This translation has for us, the

1. Κ. Καλλινίκου, 'Υπόμνημα εἰς τὸν ἱερόν ψαλτῆρα. Ἀλεξάνδρεια 1929.

Cf. Π. Μπρατσιώτου, 'Υπόμνημα εἰς τὰς ψῆδας τῶν ἀναβαθμῶν. Ἀθήναι 1928.

2. Ν. Παπαγιαννοπούλου, 'Ερμηνεία τοῦ ὕμνου τοῦ προφήτου Ἀββαζούμ. Ἀθήναι 1894.

3. Κ. Καλλινίκου, 'Υπόμνημα εἰς τὰς Παροιμίας. Ἀθήναι 1934.

4. Κ. Καλλινίκου, Ἄσμα ἑσμάτων. Ἀλεξάνδρεια 1938.

5. Κ. Φριλίγγου, Ἰώβ. Ἀθήναι 1931.

6. Β. Βέλλα, 'Υπόμνημα εἰς τὸ βιβλίον τοῦ προφήτου Ναούμ. Ἀθήναι 1932.

By the same author three commentaries on Amos, Hose, Micha, Ioel, Obadiah were published recently.

7. Cf. Ν. Παπαγιαννοπούλου, Περὶ τῆς σκηνῆς τοῦ Μαρτυρίου καὶ τοῦ ἐν Ἱεροσολύμοις ναοῦ. Ἀθήναι 1900. Π. Μπρατσιώτου, Οἱ Φιλισταῖοι καὶ ὁ Αἰγαιοκρητικὸς πολιτισμὸς ἐν Παλαιστίνῃ. Ἀθήναι 1926. Ἡ γυνὴ ἐν τῇ Βίβλῳ². Ἀθήναι 1940. Ἐβραίων παιδῶν ἀγωγή. Ἀθήναι 1920. Λ. Φιλιππίδου, Ἡ ἐξέλιξις καὶ ἡ σημερινὴ φάσις τοῦ ζητήματος τῆς προελεύσεως τοῦ Σημιτικοῦ ἀλφαβήτου, Ἀλεξάνδρεια 1929. Τιμοθέου Θέμελη, Ἡ Ἱερουσαλήμ καὶ τὰ μνημεῖα αὐτῆς. Ἱεροσόλυμα 1932. Β. Βέλλα, Ἡ Kapporeth καὶ ἡ ἐορτὴ τῶν Kippurim. Ἀθήναι 1930. Ὁ πολιτισμὸς τῶν Σουμερίων. Ἀθήναι 1931. Τὰ τέκνα παρ' Ἰσραήλ. Ἀθήναι 1932. Ὁ Ἰσραηλιτικὸς γάμος. Ἀθήναι 1935. Τὰ νέα ὄστρακα τῆς Λάχης. Ἀθήναι 1939.

Greeks, a particular significance not only because it is for us a means, perhaps the most important, for the critical investigation, correction and restoration of the Hebrew Text, but because it is a monument of our language, very respected for its antiquity and because it is the official text used in our Orthodox Greek Church. This is the reason why we want to study it from every angle, i. e., its history, its origin and especially its language, though it did not come originally from Greek sources; the first published works deal with the history of the text and with the specific problem of the double and triple translations of the same verse¹.

Besides these great works several specialised monographs were produced, the greater part of which is devoted to the religion of Israel and especially to the prophets, their personality, their teaching and so forth². Many articles covering almost all the Biblical problems are to be found in the Greek Encyclopedia, a work of 24 volumes, in the Religious and Christian Encyclopedia, 4 volumes of which were hardly published when the present war prevented the completion of this work, and in the 3 great Greek Theological Journals, The New Sion of Jerusalem, The Ecclesiastical Pharos of Alexandria and Theology of Athens. These periodicals appeared at the beginning of the present century and are still at the service of the Greek Theology. The Athens edition of the Septuagint though not a critical one is a good sign of this progress that has been made in the development of Theology.

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In summarizing the scientific work on the O. T. in Greece during this second period, we could remark following: for the tuition of

1. Cf. Π. Μπρατσιώτου, Ἑβδομηκοντολογικά μελετήματα. Ἀθήναι 1926-27. Βραχυτάτη εισαγωγή εἰς τὴν μετάφρασιν τῶν Ὁ. Ἀθήναι 1929. Β. VELLAS, L'importance des traductions doubles dans le texte des Septante. Athènes 1936. Παρατηρήσεις ἐπὶ τινῶν στίχων τοῦ Ἀβακούμ κατὰ τοὺς Ὁ. Ἀθήναι 1938. Τὸ χωρίον Ἡσ. 3,10 κατὰ τὸ κείμενον τῶν Ὁ. Ἀθήναι 1939. Τὸ χωρίον Ἡσ. 9,5 κατὰ τοὺς Ὁ. Ἀθήναι 1939. Hauptprobleme der Septuaginta-Forschung. Ἀθήναι 1939.

2. Cf. Δ. Μαργαρουδάκη, Περὶ τοῦ δυνατοῦ καὶ τῆς ἱστορικῆς ἀναγκαιότητος τῶν προφητειῶν τῆς Π. Δ. Ἱεροσόλυμα 1907. Α. Φιλιππίδου, Ἱστορία τῆς Θρησκείας τοῦ ἀρχαίου Ἰσραήλ. Τόμ. Α' Ἀθήναι 1938. Β. Βέλλα, Θρησκευτικαὶ Προσωπικότητες τῆς Π. Δ. Ἀθήναι 1934-40. Θεὸς καὶ ἱστορία ἐν τῇ Ἰσραηλιτικῇ Θρησκείᾳ. Ἀθήναι 1934. Ὁ ἄνθρωπος κατὰ τὴν Π. Δ. Ἀθήναι 1939.

Hebrew we apply the historic and comparative method in connection with the grammatical and linguistic material of the other semitic languages. On this point, there is no disagreement among us. Whereas in this field the historic method did not raise any controversial arguments, the application on the other hand of the literary and historic criticism as well as the comparative method of the religions on the exegesis, the history of the religion of Israel and the problems of Introduction, had raised many great problems which the Greek Theology has to face squarely.

As far as the criticism of the Hebrew text is concerned the scholars can work unobstructed because the aim of the research worker is the restoration of the text in its original form as it was when the authors finished their books. But, as for the other problems, the application of modern methods was met with some opposition as the question of the Divine inspiration was brought about when books or parts of them, or passages from them, have been characterised not as genuine, or, since in some points the connection of religious ideas of the O.T. with the non Hebrew world was evident and whenever the influence of the pagan world in the shaping of the Religion of Israel was stressed. On these controversial points some books were written by Professors of the University just a little before the war¹. It seems to me that two schools of thought are formed: the first is conservative and recommends a limited use of the historic and comparative method, suggesting that scholars should turn to the sacred Tradition. Unavoidably the exegesis will take an apologetic character. The followers of the second school make use of scientific methods without neglecting the exegetical material of the Fathers believing that by using modern methods they will not come into clash with the principle of the Divine Inspiration, provided that the essence of the Divine Inspiration is well and concretely defined. We are now at this point of forming a doctrine of the Divine Inspiration which must be reconciled with the freedom of scientific research. Although the doctrine has not yet taken any shape I dare to give you a general outline. Generally we reject the idea that the

1. Π. Μπρατσιώτου, *Αύθεντία και ἐλευθερία ἐν τῇ Ὁρθοδόξῳ Θεολογίᾳ*, Ἀθήναι 1931. Εὐ. Ἀντωνιάδου, *Αἱ τῆς Κ. Δ. Ὁρθόδοξοι ἐρμηνευτικαὶ ἀρχαὶ καὶ μέθοδοι καὶ αἱ Θεολογικαὶ τῶν προϋποθέσεις*, Ἀθήναι 1937. Ἐπὶ τοῦ προβλήματος τῆς Θεοπνευστίας τῆς Ἁγίας Γραφῆς, Ἀθήναι 1938. Β. Vellas *Bibelkritik und kirchliche Autorität*. Athen 1937. Π. Τρεμπέλα, *Ἡ Θεοπνευστία τῆς Ἀγ. Γραφῆς*, Ἀθήναι 1938.

Divine Inspiration extends to the letters; we reject the so called verbal inspirations, as the authors of the books of the O. T. preserved their independence and individuality. Secondly it seems that a general opinion is being formed with us that the Divine Inspiration covers only the dogmatical and ethical truths. Lastly, this point is being emphasised, that the rejection of non-genuine books or passages of books of the O. T. does not necessarily mean the rejection of their Divine Inspiration, as long as those works have been included in the canon and they draw their authority from the Church which formed the canon of the books.

Consequently from an orthodox point of view we could divide the book of Isaiah and Zachariah into two, written by two different authors, and so forth. Furthermore, the liberal school stresses this, that we can apply from an orthodox point of view the historic and comparative methods on the religious and moral ground as well and we can accept the influence of the religious ideas of Israel from the non Hebrew world as being, as we believe, that God acts in the Universal History and as a loving father had taught not only Israel but also other people and guided the authors of the Books of the O. T. to take from history whatever was profitable. The latter school of thought stresses this point that inspite of the comprehension of the Hebrew Religion there are some points which the scholar of the O. T. is unable to understand through the usual methods of investigation. At this point, the pure theological field begins where the principle of the Divine Inspiration could be unshakably applied. The followers of this second school think that their principles lead to the respect of the essence of the Divine Inspiration as well as to the preservation of freedom in the scientific research.

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This is a brief and simple sketch of the problems and aspired solutions. No one could dispute a certain influence on our modern studies of the methods and currents of ideas existing in Western Europe. But the sincere observer of the development of the Modern Greek theological studies will notice that there is a great endeavour among the Greek scholars to find solutions founded on Orthodox bases and on the Orthodox Traditions. In this attempt the Greek Orthodox Church allows a complete freedom for investigation and the formation of a sound scientific theological conscience. The Orthodox Church never hastened to make a pronouncement on these literary

questions and on the problem of the Divine Inspiration closing thus once and for all the road to scientific research. It is a good old tradition of our Church to allow first a full and free debate for minute examination of the problems and when they are ripe and become the Orthodox conscience, then, she adopts the solutions vesting them with her authority.

The question of the place of the Septuagint which occupied the minds of the scholars in the first period, has been solved. In spite of the fact that the Septuagint remains the version for our Church, we are in a position now to appraise its value and to assess its errors and the differences existing between it and the Hebrew text.

Far from considering this translation as Divinely inspired we recur to the original in order to discover the real meaning of passages. A new translation of the O. T. based on contemporary methods is anticipated. Its publication is not going to replace the Septuagint but we shall be able to give our people a more intelligible text.

I cannot really forecast the future development of the exegetical studies in the Greek Theology, we are working at full speed for the creation of a Greek Orthodox Science. In spite of probable influence of the Greek studies of the O. T. from abroad I am confident that we head towards orthodox solutions and orientations. Our ambition is to continue the glorious ancient orthodox exegetical tradition created by Origen, St. Basil the Great, St. John Chrysostom, Theodore of Mopsuestia, Theodoretus and so many other Fathers of the Christian Church.
