
The Bible in Fundamental Theology : summary

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THE BIBLE IN FUNDAMENTAL THEOLOGY

SUMMARY

Contemporary theological disciplines, including fundamental theology encounter more and more difficulties when interpreting the Holy Scripture. Biblical studies developed in the twentieth century not only provide an extensive and detailed body of knowledge about God's Revealed Word such as the morphology of the text, the question of authorship, its editing history and cultural context but also create technical difficulties for theologians and the ordinary faithful. Because of the extent of the matter and the high specialisation of biblical disciplines it seems impossible to draw up the results in a synthetic form, while the variety of schools, especially exegetic ones, threatens to lead to a certain biblical relativism. The main aim of fundamental theology, however, is to justify the credibility of Christianity which relies, first of all, on stating the fact of God's Revelation in history with the life of Jesus Christ in the centre and the most complete understanding possible of its redemptive significance. This, however, requires multiple reference to the written Word of God, namely the Bible. The reflection on the methodology of the achievements of biblicistics undertaken by the Polish representatives of fundamental theology and biblical studies proves that there exists no unequivocal and simple "key" which would allow these achievements to be ordered and synthesised. The impressive success of the historical and critical school should be treated with caution as the reliable approach to the study of the Bible requires not only a textual analysis but also close interconnections between the Bible and the Church, between the Word of God and God's people. A theological re-reading of the Scripture requires the acknowledgement of the fact that throughout history God intervenes

in a dynamic way in the story of Israel and the Church, always transgressing the provisional “meaning” written down in the course of the oral tradition of the text. The community have conditioned in a marked way the appearance and development of God’s word and the word has given identity to the community and guaranteed its existence. Therefore the Holy Scripture might be interpreted only “within the Church”, that is in the unity with the living Tradition based on the belief in the ecclesiastic communion and the statements of the Magisterium. It is not surprising that Pope Benedict XVI suggests the return of theology to the patristic “canonical exegesis” reconciling the fragmentary, though profound and frequently revealing, hypotheses and conclusions with the entire heritage of the Church’s interpretation.

Papers presented at the 5th Convention of the Polish Association of Fundamental Theologians, which took place on 23–25th September 2009 in Toruń, and the debates accompanying them attempted to offer a reflection on the possibility of the methodical and academic “absorption” of the findings of biblical studies in theology. Łukasz Kamykowski in his paper *The Role of the Holy Scripture in Understanding the Revelation* stressed the influence of *Dei verbum* on the post-council development of biblicistics and the position of fundamental theology, accentuating the central importance of the work and figure of Jesus Christ. The development of biblical studies has to be continually an integral part of the Mission of the Church and of the reference to Jesus Christ, which is fundamental to Christianity. The three following papers *The Bible interpreted by the Fathers of the Church* by Wiesław Dawidowski, *The Bible in Medieval Sermons* by Bogusław Kochaniewicz and *The Bible according to French Apologists of the 19th and 20th century* by Sławomir Zieliński deal with the evolution of ecclesiastic and academic interpretation of the Holy Scripture. The Fathers of the Church perceived the Bible as the divine authority; however, the credibility of the Scriptures was received relying on the faith and the Church’s teaching. Patristic exegesis has seen in Jesus Christ “the key” to the interpretation of both the Old and the New Testaments as well as the rule of faith. According to the Fathers of the Church, Christological interpretation of biblical texts should lead to the encounter of the ecclesiastic community with the living and resurrected Lord. In this way, patristic exegesis has created the foundation for “canonical exegesis” mentioned by Pope Benedict XVI. Medieval preachers such as Peregrinus de Opole, Jacobus de Voragine, and Thomas of Aquinas utilised spiritual, allegorical and literal exegesis accentuating the church-

forming and soteriological (sanctifying) function of biblical texts. French thought of the 19th and early 20th century provided a crucial contribution to apologetics and later to the theological and fundamental approach to the Holy Scripture. P. de Broglie, M. J. Lagrange, P. Batiffol, A. Loisy and others included in their work, frequently in defiance of the School of Rome, the findings of historical and exegetic research. At the turn of the century E. Bougand, L. Olle-Laprune, P. Rousselot, and especially M. Blondel overcame historicism and the radical natural-supernatural division. Developing an integral concept of Revelation they stressed its Christocentric, semeiotic (sign-related) and personal character.

The second part of this volume is devoted to a contemporary relationship between fundamental theology and the Holy Scripture. Marek Skierkowski in his paper *Biblical Knowledge about Jesus Christ today* states that biblicists has questioned the conclusion of the advocates of the demythologisation of the Gospels, whereas the results of the so-called second and third "quest" have brought closer the academic vision of Jesus from Nazareth to the Church's understanding. A stronger "setting" of Jesus in the realities of contemporary Judaism paradoxically allows us to present Him more precisely as the Founder of Christianity. Contemporary research also re-evaluates the event of resurrection; however, it does not distort "the real", that is the historical vision of Jesus. The link with the pre- and post- paschal Jesus is, in the light of the latest research, eye-witnesses known by name. Post-paschal Christology is permeated with the acting of the Holy Spirit. Therefore the author suggests that fundamental theology concentrating on Christ should include pneumatology. Marian Rusecki in his extensive article *The Bible as a Tradent and Actualiser of Revelation* concentrates on the transformation which the theological and fundamental approach to the Bible has undergone in the recent decades. Developed in the polemics with Protestantism, scientism and positivism, the intellectual concept of Revelation, because of the development of biblical studies and openness to non-tomistic philosophical directions, gave way to the integral vision which respected the redemptive, historical and personal character of the Revelation. This process took place in the first half of the twentieth century. Underlying the importance of *Dei verbum*, the author observes that it dictates certain tasks for fundamental theology. Studying and justifying the credibility of the Revelation it uses natural and theological cognition. However, it must see clearly a direct relation between Revelation and the Church which predicts and realises them.

Krzysztof Kaucha in his text *The Bible in the Western Fundamental Theology* has described the theological and fundamental synthesis of the approach to the Bible within the last 30 years. The author analysing the extensive theological literature observes that even the most prominent publications on fundamental theology such as *Problemi e prospettive di teologia fondamentale*, Brescia 1980; *Handbuch der Fundamentaltheologie*, Freiburg 1985–1988; *Dizionario di Teologia Fondamentale*, Assisi 1990 deal with the relation to the Bible and biblical studies only occasionally. In the volume *La teologia fondamentale. Convergenze per il terzo millennio*, Casale Monferrato 1997 published after the 1st International Congress of Fundamental Theology A. Dulles' study on the Bible's application in fundamental theology deserves close attention. Dulles enumerates three possible approaches to the Scripture: the apologetic one which treats the Book as a historical source, the second which is associated with "conversion theology" based on the act of faith and the third characteristic of fundamental theology understood as science about the principles of theology. Dulles accentuates strong interconnections between the Scripture, Tradition and Magisterium which should be reflected in the work of theologians. Reporting the findings of the Symposium of Fundamental Theology in Paderborn in May 2009 Kaucha observes that the relation between theology and the Bible creates four main difficulties, namely, the relation between the biblical text and context, the extent and significance of Biblical inspiration, the function of religious language and the position of the Bible in relation to other theological sources. As Kaucha summarises, western fundamental theology apart from the importance of the Bible includes as tradents of Revelation Tradition, *sensus fidelium*, Magisterium and liturgy.

The paper by a biblicist concludes the theological reflection in this volume. Henryk Witczyk in his article *Inspiration and the Truth of the Holy Scripture – New Perspectives* presents two main directions of human cognition – descriptive and empirical which are typical of so-called science and based on Revelation – *Poiesis* which reveals the truth using the symbol, metaphor, narration and poetic language. Cognition through revelation, typical of the Bible, is symbolical and takes place through God's influence on the author (witness). His testimony is verified and accepted by the community through which it comes into contact with the truth. Subsequently, Witczyk presents a contemporary discussion on the concept of the truth in the Bible; the truth of the entire Bible, Redemptive significance of the Biblical truths, the truth as faithfulness to God and His Reve-

lation, the truth as an experience of a meeting with God and the truth as a symbolic communication. The author points out that in the biblical world the truth is the Revelation by God of what has been hidden to a man – a witness. In contemporary Catholic biblical studies the questions which have been undertaken once again are the problems of biblical inspiration and the relationship between cultural, historical and contemporary conditions in which God's Revelation is realised and the main aim of the Revelation, namely the redemptive relationship between God and a man.