

EXEGESIS IN A MULTI-ETHNIC AND MULTI-CONFESSIONAL REGION. CHALLENGES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

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Abstract. This paper addresses the particulars of biblical interpretation in Romania, with a special attention to Transylvania, discussing the theological, ecumenical and social implications of exegesis. The interpretation of the Bible has significant ecclesiastical and socio-political implications. Exegesis impacts on the ability to carry out an ecumenical dialogue and influences thereby the relationship between different denominations. Biblical interpretation has its share in the animosities that divide society. Fundamentalism feeds prejudice and hatred, and influences public policies. Therefore exegetes hold a particular responsibility in mediating an appropriate understanding of the Bible.

Keywords: biblical interpretation, Romania, Transylvania, historical-critical method, fundamentalism, anti-ecumenism, public policies, prejudice, nationalism, anti-Judaism.

This paper proposes a reflection on the particulars of biblical interpretation in Romania, with a special attention to Transylvania, focusing on the theological, ecumenical and socio-political implications of exegesis.¹ After introducing the context of this assessment and the conditions that mark biblical interpretation in the region I turn to some methodological and exegetical issues. I subsequently tackle certain problems related to biblical interpretation, largely due to the rift between university and religious communities, leading to the expansion of fundamentalist readings. The purpose of this paper is not only to assess (from one limited perspective) the challenges of contemporary biblical interpretation in a multi-ethnic and pluri-confessional region of Eastern Europe. I intend to point to the serious implications of biblical interpretation, to the problems resulting from the disregard for scholarly exegesis, emphasising the social responsibility of biblical scholars.

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