

Stanko Jambreč

Methodology of Research and Writing in Theology

Biblijski Institut, Zagreb, 2017, 230 pages

Stanko Jambreč's book, *Methodology of Research and Writing in Theology*, that was published in 2017 by the Biblijski Institut in Zagreb, is a valuable contribution to the domestic methodology of scientific work in the field of theology, as well as the social and humanistic sciences in general. The need for such referent publications has become a pressing need today, in the age of the domination of the virtual communication and the so-called "new literacy" that is characterized by using coded text, which ceases to be text, i.e., it becomes a standalone structure of an extremely, semantically reduced message. Of course, this has brought about an entirely and astonishing pauperization of general, standard, and literary literacy, especially when it comes to the younger, student population that this work was intended for.

Bearing this ever-present problem in mind, the author reached for the most relevant domestic and foreign methodological manuals (M. Šamić, D. Oraić Tolić, Z. Nikolić Jakus, E. Phillips - D. Pugh, K. G. Smith, M. Jensen) in order to be able to use five thematically and problematically rounded successive units to provide the reader with a systematic and comprehensive introduction into the basics of scientific and research work, and the skill of academic writing in the field of theology in general, i.e., Evangelical theology as a specific theological and scientific exploratory orientation.

The first part of the manual provides a systematic insight into the basics of theological epistemology and methodology, with a special emphasis on exploratory goals, ethical postulates, and types of qualification works. That is why today, in the times of impassioned debates regarding ethical standards in the academic community, the author's definition and his overall astute opinion on the causes and motives for plagiarism seem almost exemplary, "Plagiarism is a conscious or non-conscious use of ideas and works by another person without clearly and unambiguously stating whose idea or work that is. Plagiarism doesn't give proper credit to the person whose ideas or work have been used, nor does it point to additional information which the reader would have been able to find in the original work. In its essence, the cause for plagiarism is the inability and failure to trust one's own words, and by stealing other people's words, it also becomes a moral failure." (pg 28)

In the second part of the book, the author provides a systematic overview and a thorough elaboration of all the elements and stages of the scientific and exploratory procedure, from the defining of the issue that is explored, gathering information and writing notes, to making a draft and structuring the academic text of the academic work. It is worth noting the heuristic efficiency of the so-

called three-reading method (first reading - summarizing; second reading - categorization; and third reading - criticism), which is recommended by the author not just for the purpose of instrumental gathering of information, but primarily with the aim of understanding the inner logic of the argument, and developing the ability to interpret facts.

The value of the third part of the manual is seen in the fact that the author has, within separate sub-chapters, provided detailed guidelines for devising, structuring, and writing scientific works in various theological sub-disciplines: exegetics, systematic theology, Church history, applied theology, and apologetics. The fourth part of the manual is dedicated to the formal and technical aspects of scientific methodology, such as argumentation, language and style, quoting, abbreviations and the like which are, unfortunately, all too often ignored while creating qualifying and other academic papers. Because, just as is rightfully emphasized in the manual, "the author isn't writing for his own sake, but for the sake of readers, which is why he always has to have the potential readers in mind and provide them with the results of his own laborous research in a way that they can effortlessly understand them and, especially with theology, apply them in their life." (pg 170).

The final part of the manual offers illustrative and graphically carefully designed examples of guidelines for creating various types of scientific and exploratory works, which will sure prove to be more than a little useful to students who, as they fly on the wings of the successfully finished arduous process of writing, often neglect the importance of the final graphical appearance of their papers.

Thanks to the wide array of covered topics and their systematic, tidy, and comprehensible elaboration, this book will offer an immense contribution to knowing and understanding of the basic elements and stages of the scientific and exploratory procedure. Besides, its side-effect will include perfecting the generic and transferrable skills inside the population of students and young explorers which are today rightfully considered not just as indispensable skills in the academic domain, but also as the necessary qualifications in the increasingly competitive work market.

There's one more fact that is worth emphasizing, and which is crucial for the future reception of this manual. Namely, the author's approach to presenting the basics of scientific and exploratory process is, methodically and cognitively speaking, completely appropriate for the student population and is fully aligned with the contemporary didactic and methodic standards, which is going to prove as the best guarantee of its practical efficiency.

Besides this, it is worth pointing out the other professional qualities of this work, such as the problematically sharpened and critically measured approach to the epistemological and methodological problematics, clear and understandable

language and writing style, and an attractive graphic design. As a special virtue of this manual, I would like to point out is the numerous concretizations and exemplifications, and a well-thought out and visually appealing graphical format, which includes numerous tables, graphs, and illustrations. All of this is making it much easier to adopt the contents of this work, which can be read in a linear fashion, like a standard university textbook, as well as selectively, like a reference manual that is functional in solving individual methodological, formal, or technical problems that the reader will invariably encounter during their scientific and exploratory work.

Aside from numerous insights regarding epistemological, methodological, and practical characteristics of the scientific procedure in the field of theology, the key professional contribution of this work is outlining the innovative and creative guidelines for inventive and scientifically relevant exploratory trends in European and global theology. Also, due to the exemplary conceptualization, informative nature, and didactic adequacy, this book can surely serve as a valuable manual to student of associated social and humanistic disciplines, offering a thorough introduction and insight into all of the phases of the scientific and exploratory procedure and the skills of academic writing. And finally, thanks to its practical usefulness, this manual will no doubt attract the interest of numerous potential users, not only from the circles of students and young scientists from social and humanistic sciences, but the broader cultural public as well.

Both due to the relevance of the topic, as well as the didactically and methodically exemplary elaborated approach and structure, we can rightfully assume that Stanko Jambreč's manual, *Methodology of Research and Writing in Theology*, will soon become an indispensable manual and a canonical introduction into epistemology, methodology, and techniques of scientific research, not only in the field of theology, but the related social-humanistic disciplines as well. This will encourage and direct better scientific research and, even more importantly, it will raise awareness about knowing and mastering the modern methods, techniques, and skills of scientific research and presentation of research results so that Croatian theology would become scientifically relevant and competitive in the wider regional and European frameworks.

Zrinka Blažević

Roy H. Schoeman

Salvation Comes From the Jews

Naklada Benedikta, Zagreb, 2015, 354 pages

In 2015, Roy H. Schoeman's book, *Salvation Comes From the Jews: The Role of Judaism in the History of Salvation From Abraham to the Second Coming*, came to