

Ewelina Drzewiecka (Sofia, Bulgaria)

THE 2022 CONFERENCE OF THE EUROPEAN ASSOCIATION OF BIBLICAL STUDIES IN TOULOUSE AND THE CONTRIBUTION OF THE SLAVONIC PARABIBLICAL TRADITIONS RESEARCH UNIT

This year's conference of the European Association of Biblical Studies (thereafter EABS) was held on 4–7 July at the University of Toulouse – Jean Jaurès. It was organized in collaboration with the ERC (European Research Council) project “Mapping Ancient Polytheisms” based at the University of Toulouse – Jean Jaurès, and also with the Institut Catholique de Toulouse, the Institut Protestant de Théologie in Montpellier and Paris, and the Dominican Community in Toulouse. Due to the dynamic situation of the pandemic of COVID-19, after two years of online meetings, for the first time it had a hybrid form which provided an experimental combination of presentations held on-site and online via ZOOM platform. The aim was to enable the participation of a maximum number of people, while at the same time challenging the point of view that the involvement of the online presenters is less significant than that of active participants or has a somewhat limited impact upon the exchange of knowledge. This approach has shown that there are valuable new strategies of academic discourse, given that the mission of the

EABS is to support various disciplinary and interdisciplinary approaches within the academic study of biblical and cognate areas. In this context, during his opening speech, the EABS president, George Brooke, emphasised that, holding a conference in Toulouse – where the first University was founded in 1229 and where the Albigensian heresy was addressed by a local Church Council in the same year – was a unique experience, and he expressed his joy that study of the Bible is no longer restricted to the Latin text alone, exclusively amongst clergy, as was decided by the said Council. The following opening session, which was entitled *From Olympus to Tibet: Religion and Globalisation, A Transdisciplinary Dialogue*, consisted of three different presentations in terms of research focus, yet deeply interconnected, by Corinne Bonnet (University of Toulouse – Jean Jaurès), Valérie Nicolet (Protestant Faculty of Theology of Paris), and Paul Seabright (Toulouse School of Economics); in fact, the exchange of ideas between these three scholars was a true preview of the EABS openness towards diversity and innovation.

Indeed, the programme of the conference confirms that the EABS seeks a dialogue and encourages the active participation of scholars not only from a wide variety of disciplines, but also from different confessional and ethnic backgrounds. There were 58 different thematic panels based on the research units that function within the EABS which were devoted to various aspects of Biblical studies, in many cases with more than two sessions¹. Also, there were two plenary sessions. The first one was *Rituals and the Senses: New*

Insights into Greek Religion, presented by Adeline Grand-Clément from the Université de Toulouse – Jean Jaurès. It was devoted to the question how to get access to the feelings of ancient people in order to reconstruct the sensory dimension of their religious experience. Grand-Clément addressed the problems of collecting and analysing the necessary data and suggested that historians of ancient religions could benefit from drawing parallels with anthropological studies, adopting a comparatist approach.

¹ Ancient Jewish and Christian Religions in their Broader Religious Landscapes (1); Animals and the Bible (1); Anthropology and the Bible (2); Biblical Theological Investigations into the Attributes of God (6); Bodies of Communication (2); Canonical Approaches to the Bible (3); Central Theologoumena in the Narrative Texts of the Pentateuch (2); Citations and Allusions in the Hebrew Bible (3); Comparing Ancient Chronographic Historiographies (1); Crises and Ancient Jewish and Christian Apocalypses: What is at Stake? (2); Developing Exegetical Methods (1); Diachronic Poetology: The Poetic Forms of Psalms from the Monarchic Period (1); Early Christianity (2); Edom East and West of the Arabah Valley and in the Negev (2); Emotions and the Biblical World and Bodies of Communication (4); Enoch Within and Outside the Books of Enoch: Parabiblical Writings, Iconography and Oral Tradition (4); Iconography and Biblical Studies (1); Evil, Exorcism and Magic (2); Food-Symbolism in Biblical and Extra-Biblical Perspective (1); Graeco-Roman Society and the New Testament (2); [HadadDigital]: The Biography of a Statue (2); Hebrew Bible, and Cognate Topics (1); Historical Approaches to the Bible and the Biblical World (1); Impact of Hellenistic Empires (3); Intersections: A Forum for Research on Ancient Israel, Hebrew Bible, and Cognate Topics (2); Israel in the Ancient Near East (1); “Literary Features” – Fact or Fiction (2); Lived Scriptures in Late Antiquity (1); Medicine, Sciences and Knowledge in Biblical and Talmudic Traditions (3); Memory, Method and Texts (1);

Miracles and Paradoxography in Biblical Reception from Late Antiquity (1); Northwest Semitic Epigraphy Related to the Biblical World (1); Open Forum for New Testament and Early Christian Studies (2); Parabiblical Texts: Literature Inhabiting the Narrative World of Scriptural Texts (1); Perceptions and Receptions of Persia (PERSIAS) (2); Perspective: Gender and Food (1); Politization of Bibles and Biblization of Politics in the Twenty-First Century (1); Prophets and Prophecy (2); Psalms from the Monarchic Period (1); Reading, Theory and Poetics (2); Representations of Cultural Trauma in the Hebrew Bible (1); Scribes and Scribal Groups in the Early Second Temple Period (1); Septuagint of Historical Books (1); Sexual Behavior in the Bible and Its Context(s) (2); Slavonic Apocrypha (5); Slavonic Parabiblical Traditions (5); Textual Criticism of the New Testament, the Old Testament and the Qur’an (2); The Bible and Ecology (2); The Biblical World and Cultural Evolution (2); The Biblical World and its Reception (3); The Book of Numbers in the Context of Second Temple Literature (1); The Dead Sea Scrolls (2); The Language of Colour in the Bible: From Word to Image (3); The Septuagint and the Cultural World of the Translators (3); The Special Profile of the Prophet Jeremiah and of his Book (2); Vision and Envisionment in the Bible and its World (1); Wisdom in Israel and in ANE Wisdom Literature (2); Yahwistic Diversity and the Hebrew Bible (1). Cf. <https://www.eabs.net/EABS/EABS/Research-Units/Research-Units.aspx>

The second plenary session was *Biblical Studies in France: In the Footsteps of Four Major Figures*; speakers were Corinne Bonnet (University of Toulouse – Jean Jaurès), Riccardo Di Giuseppe (Catholic Institute of Toulouse), Corinne Lanoir (Protestant Faculty of Theology of Paris), and Renaud Silly (Couvent Saint Thomas d’Aquin – Toulouse). The intellectual milieu shaping the epistemologies of four major French scholars with significant impact in the field of Biblical studies – Marie-Françoise Baslez, Matthias Delcor, Suzanne de Dietrich, Marie-Joseph Lagrange – were discussed, especially in the light of their contribution to the French academic landscape; after all, it was also due to their scholarly input and influence that the EABS conference was held in France for the first time.

A special session, *The Bible and Biblical Scholarship in Ukraine: Voices from a Troubled Land*, was organized as a way of addressing the Russian aggression against Ukraine. The aim was to express the EABS support for Ukrainian scholars and to make their contribution visible despite the difficult situation in their country and academic milieu. The session was chaired by George Brooke (the EABS President) and consisted of an introductory talk (via Zoom) by Halyna Teslyuk (Ukrainian Catholic University, Lviv), and four presentations: *Bible-Centric Literature: Ukrainian Literature in the Middle Ages and Early Modern Period* by Dariya Syroyid (Ukrainian Catholic University, Lviv), *Biblical Studies at the Kyiv Theological Academy (19th – early 20th c.): Results and Prospects of the Research* (via Zoom) by Serhii Holovashchenko (National University of Kyiv-Mohyla Academy, Kyiv), *Restoring and Transmitting a Nation’s Memory: Reading Psalms with Contemporary Ukrainian Lenses* by Roman Ostrovskyy (Kyiv Three Holy Hierarchs Major

Seminary), and *Reading Biblical Stories of Jael and Judith amid Russian Atrocities in Ukraine* (via Zoom) by Halyna Teslyuk (Ukrainian Catholic University, Lviv). The second special session was devoted to a presentation and celebration of the Festschrift for Diana V. Edelman, *The Hunt for Ancient Israel: Essays in Honour of Diana V. Edelman*, eds. Shafer-Elliott, Cynthia, Kristin Joachimsen, Pauline A. Viviano, and Ehud Ben Zvi (Sheffield, South Yorkshire Bristol: Equinox Publishing Ltd, 2022).

As the intention of the organizers was to make the conference as open as possible for scholars worldwide, all the events and sessions were streamed live via the conference platform at the website <https://www.eabs.net/> or via ZOOM. Moreover, all the participants had an opportunity for their presentation to be recorded and circulated online in order to make them available for the period of two weeks after the conference for all those interested in hearing them. It was indeed a very thoughtful decision given that the conference programme was – as usual – very rich and it was impossible for participants to attend all the sessions because of time-table overlapping; by making the presentations available online, all those interested were able to hear the talks, many of which were interconnected in varied, and even surprising ways.

There were five conference sessions that were organized within the Slavonic Parabiblical Traditions Research Unit, the Chairs of which were Florentina Badalanova Geller (The Royal Anthropological Institute of Great Britain and Ireland / University College London), Anna-Maria Totomanova (Sofia University), Alexandra Vukovich (University of Oxford), and Ewelina Drzewiecka (Polish Academy of Sciences / Bulgarian Academy of Sciences). As in previous years, the ses-

sions were designed according to the main notion of the project, i.e. exploring the Slavonic parabiblical heritage as an open concept which allows for the inclusion and evolution of various epistemological perspectives. The main aim was to grasp and contextualize the *Nachleben* of the Judaeo-Christian parabiblical heritage within the intellectual landscape of *Pax Slavia Christiana*. The special emphasis was on scribal traditions preserved in the most recent *lingua sacra* of Europe – Old Church Slavonic, but socio-political conditions of their transmission from the Middle Ages to Modernity, as well as the processes of cultural continuity through different media (literary, visual) were also within the focus². It is worth noting that participants presented various interdisciplinary papers devoted not only to official Church Slavonic writings related to Eastern and Western Christianity but also to the vernacular oral heritage of the three Abrahamic religions.

The first session of the Slavonic Parabiblical Traditions Research Unit was held in the morning of 5 July, and was chaired by Dariya Syroyid (Ukrainian Catholic University, Lviv). It was mainly focused on the scribal heritage concerning the Slavic intellectual landscape and consisted of three presentations. The first talk, *On the Oral-Formulaic Origin of Thietmar's and al-Mas'ūdī's Descriptions of Pre-Christian Temples and Gods*, was given by Andriy Danylenko (Pace University, New York), and was devoted to the process of transmission of medieval knowledge about Slavic religious cults. It was suggested that the accounts from the

chronicle by Bishop Thietmar of Merseburg (1005) and *Murūj al-dhahab wa-ma'ādin al-jauhar* (*Venae auri et fodinae gemmarum*, ca. 947) by al-Mas'ūdī are based on a largely accurate textual transmission of a work dealing with Slavic gods, their temples and writings. Using the Parry–Lord oral-formulaic concept of multiform, and in view of a series of fixed formulas, including recurrent word-grouping as found in Thietmar and al-Mas'ūdī, Danylenko argued for the existence of a “European” oral narrative as a source of the two accounts, one found in the Latin text written in German surroundings and the second in the Arabic geographical work.

The next lecture, devoted to *The Reception of Biblical Proper Names in the Old Bulgarian Translation of the Old Testament*, was presented by Veselka Zhelyazkova (Cyrillo-Methodian Research Centre, Bulgarian Academy of Sciences). The author raised a hitherto unstudied yet fundamental question related to strategies implemented in the process of translation of some Biblical proper names into Old Bulgarian, along with scribal conventions implemented in the process. She reminded us that the Old Bulgarian translation of the Biblical corpus was not made directly from the Hebrew text but from the Septuagint, which means that the linguistic choices of the Slavonic translators fully depended on the decisions of their Greek predecessors. As a result, many nouns and phrases acquired new meanings, usually limited to only one context, a detail which would not always be mentioned in historical dictionaries. Focusing on few linguistically distinctive cases, Zhelyazkova emphasised the importance of careful evaluation of the Slavonic variants – be it as proper names, or as Biblical paraphrases.

The last presentation in this section – *Colour Terminology in Slavonic Parabiblical Traditions: In Search of Asbestos/*

² For more information, cf. https://www.eabs.net/EABS/Research-Units/Research-Units/EABS_Research-Units/Slavonic-Parabiblical-Traditions.aspx

Amiant in Old Bulgarian Literature (via Zoom) – was a part of a broader research on the vocabulary denoting colours and fabrics in Old Bulgarian literature. Mariia Totomanova-Paneva (Sofia University) focused on asbestos/amiant and reminded us that it has been known since antiquity and talked about the reception of the term in a purely linguistic aspect on the one hand while adducing and discussing material from several sources on the other: the relatively early Slavonic translations of the *Protogospel of James*, Josephus' *Jewish War*, and works of the Church Fathers, as well as 15th–17th century material from later translations. She showed that in some of the discussed examples, the sense of the original text has been lost due to calquing and that the respective passages have undergone changes to adjust the meaning, and she concluded that asbestos/amiant remained generally unknown to Old Bulgarian literature, and any trace that can be found is encapsulated exclusively in translated works of non-Slavic authors.

The second session of the Slavonic Parabiblical Traditions Research Unit was also in the morning of 5 July. Chaired by Veselka Zhelyazkova (Cyrillo-Methodian Research Centre, Bulgarian Academy of Sciences), it was devoted to Old Church Slavonic writing heritage in the Orthodox context. The first speaker, Marco Llo Garzanaiti (University of Florence) presented a paper entitled *The Simeon's Miscellany and the Apology of Holy Scripture* (via Zoom). He pointed out that the Question 75 (65 according to the numbering in PG) of Simeon's Miscellany represents the first extensive apology of Holy Scripture in Slavonic tradition and focused on this collection as a complex amalgam of Biblical passages and Patristic writings which closely relates to both the Old and New Testaments, concentrated on the con-

cept of wisdom, a central theme of Byzantine thought.

The next speaker, Jerzy Ostapczuk (Christian Theological Academy in Warsaw), presented a paper on the *Old Testament Saints in the Menologia of Cyrillic Early Printed Tetraevangelia*, in which he showed the importance of investigating the history of the Orthodox liturgical tradition, as reflected in Gospel calendars. He introduced extensive data collected in regard to all Old Testament figures that were present in Cyrillic early printed *Tetraevangelia* (issued before 1800) and pointed out that these Biblical characters were included in (or excluded from) the *Menologia* at different stages of Church history and in local traditions.

The last presentation in this session was devoted to *Biblical Writings and Rewritings in the South Slavic Repertoire from the 14th-15th Centuries: Rethinking the Sacred History in Anticipation of the End of the World*, and was delivered (via Zoom) by Nina Gagova (Bulgarian Academy of Sciences). The author showed that between the middle of the 14th and the middle of the 15th century, in the South Slavic miscellanies that were intended for lay readers, a particular concept gained significant popularity, i.e. a compilation of the *Chronicle of John Zonaras*, which was based on a full Bulgarian translation from the 14th century, and various apocalyptic and exegetical-catechetical texts. The presentation was devoted to a variant of the compilation that appeared in the first quarter of the 15th century in the literary circle around the Serbian despot Stefan Lazarević, being attested in two versions (known respectively from Zogr. 105 and MSPC 42), in regard to possible reasons and consequences of the compiler's choice from the point of view of the spiritual context of the time, i.e. the eschatological and apocalyptic perspective of the "Last Days".

The third session of the Slavonic Parabiblical Traditions Research Unit was held in the afternoon on 5 July and was chaired by Ewelina Drzewiecka (Bulgarian Academy of Sciences / Polish Academy of Sciences). It was devoted to the vernacular traditions in the context of Slavonic reception of Abrahamic religions, in particular with respect to Jewish and Early Christian sources. The first talk was devoted to *Tales of the Solomon Cycle in the Palea Interpretata* and was presented by Reuven Kiperwasser (Ariel University), who focused on the cycle of stories about King Solomon in the *Palea Interpretata* in regard to the Jewish sources and their transformations. He argued that, although scholars of Slavonic traditions have often believed that the roots of these parabiblical traditions go back to the apocryphal literature of the Second Temple period, the sources of these stories are in the relatively late layer of Rabbinic Literature, including late midrashim (such as Tanhuma/Tanchuma), along with early medieval Jewish collections of stories.

The next speaker also raised the question of the Solomon Cycle and the problem of sources. Florentina Badalanova Geller (Royal Anthropological Institute / University College London), with co-presenter Yaroslav Melnyk (Ukrainian Catholic University, Lviv), discussed *The Solomon Saga in Slavonic Parabiblical Traditions*. First, she drew attention to the reception history of the Saga in Slavonic parabiblical writings, including the *Palaea* corpus, oral tradition and iconography, in particular the contribution of Fedor Buslaev and Aleksandr Veselovskiy, and pointed out that the folklore and iconographic sources remain understudied. In her contribution, she presented a selection of written and oral narratives and examined them with special emphasis on the accounts about the build-

ing of the Temple and various tales of Solomon being imagined as an wizard and the archetypal magician.

The last presentation in the session – *The Wandering of the Mother of God with the Child in the Folk Tradition of the Border Between Slavia Orthodoxa and Slavia Catholica: Apocryphal and Folklore Motifs* – was also prepared by two authors: Tatsiana Valodzina (National Academy of Sciences of Belarus) and Kaciryna Bychak (University of Szczecin). It was devoted to the results of field research on the subject of the vernacular, orally transmitted traditions, conducted in the borderlands of Poland, Belarus and Ukraine. Bychak reminded us that the narrative of the wandering Mother of God with the Child is popular within the corpus of the Folk Bible circulating on the frontier between Eastern and Western Christianity, and pointed out that in the borderlands under study, there are interpretations of the canonical source of the New Testament motifs “Flight to Egypt” and “the Massacre of the Innocents”, but also some parabiblical motifs reaching back to pseudoepigrapha of the first centuries of Christianity. She presented numerous variants of the motifs with special attention to their origins and later adaptations as far as the social, religious and theological aspects are concerned.

The fourth and fifth sessions of the Slavonic Parabiblical Traditions Research Unit were held on 7 July in the afternoon. The first one was chaired by Jerzy Ostapczuk (Christian Theological Academy in Warsaw) and commenced with the paper of Jelena Erdeljan (University of Belgrade) on some *Old Testament Topics in Visual Culture of Slavia Orthodoxa in the Middle Ages*, in which she reminded us that various Old Testament concepts appeared at the core of processes creating political and visual identities in the icono-

graphic culture of polities in *Slavia Orthodoxa* in the Middle Ages. In her contribution, she focused on the topic of the God-chosen and God-protected status of Jerusalem as one of the major *topoi* underlying the construction of such identities of the Christian capitals in the Middle Ages, and presented the history, process and literary and visual means/media of formulating this idea and its pertaining spatial-visual matrix, as well as on the transfer of this matrix and its fundamental implications in the process of constructing the sacred status of Tarnovo, Belgrade, and Moscow.

The next presentation, devoted to *The Representation of Paradise and the Veneration of the Relics in 18th–19th Century Bulgaria* was delivered (via Zoom) by **D a r i n a B o y k i n a** (Bulgarian Academy of Sciences). The author admitted that various aspects of the iconographical program of the reliquaries have already been examined, but the question of their ornamental decoration is still understudied, as it is considered mainly from the stylistic point of view of the art from the period of the Bulgarian National Revival. In her contribution, she analysed a range of ornamental motifs used in the decorative program of 18th – 19th century reliquaries and argued that the main role of the ornaments was to represent the sacredness of the objects and the relics they contain through the symbolic depiction of Paradise which correspond with its textual description in Biblical and parabiblical literature.

The last presentation in this session was *King vs. Prophet: Biblical Topoi in the Context of Modern Discourse on Religion in Bulgaria* by **E w e l i n a D r z e w i e c k a** (Bulgarian Academy of Sciences / Polish Academy of Sciences). It was focused on Bulgarian literary texts from the interwar period that paraphrase the Life of Saint Clement of Ohrid. The author pointed out that the motif of a meeting between

the spiritual leader and the secular ruler (e.g. Prince Boris I and Simeon the Great), was particularly popular at that time and suggested that it actualized a well-known Old Testament topos “King vs. Prophet”, which is not only due to the fact that the (in)direct source is medieval hagiography but also because of a current need to address the relationship between the secular and the spiritual power in the history of Bulgarian statehood. Drzewiecka pointed out that the Biblical topos could serve as a model of interpretation which was oriented in fact towards the modern discourse on religion and its place in a secular(izing) society, so the fundamental question for a cultural studies approach, i.e. of the intertwining of the old (pre-modern) and the new (modern) social imaginaries should be seen in regard to the hermeneutical potential of Biblical *topoi*.

During the last session within the Slavonic Parabiblical Traditions Research Unit, the chair of which was Jelena Erdeljan (University of Belgrade) the main focus of discussion was on the interdisciplinarity in the scholarly approach towards the problems of transmission and dissemination of knowledge and history of ideas. In her presentation on *Acts of Paul and Thecla in Kyivan Tradition 11th–17th Century*, **D a r i y a S y r o y i d** (Ukrainian Catholic University, Lviv) explored the history of the Church Slavonic reception and redaction of the so-called *Martyrdom of Saint Thecla* in both written and visual traditions. Special attention was given to two original versions of *Saint Thecla's Life* from the 17th century: an Old Ukrainian translation of a work by the Polish priest and Church writer Piotr Skarga and a Church Slavonic attempt to reconcile the pseudoepigrapha with canonical Acts by Dymytriy Tuptalo.

O l e s i a B r i t s y n a (State Scientific Center for Cultural Heritage Pro-

tection from Technogenic Catastrophes, Kyiv) presented a paper entitled *Biblical Themes and Motifs in Contemporary Ukrainian Oral Tradition* (via Zoom). Referring to research on the folklore tradition of Ukrainian Polissia at the turn of the 19th and 20th centuries, she reminded the audience that in some later periods oral vernacular traditions were influenced by the pressure of the state ideology of atheism, and political obstacles affected both the research trends and traditional repertoire. Nevertheless, the corpus of the Folk Bible in Polissia is extremely valuable because it still preserves unique archaic features, which distinguishes it among the traditions of other regions of Ukraine, and the traditional Bible-related texts function both in everyday communication and in ritual contexts; besides, their symbolic content is often influenced by social settings or the vernacular context of performance. The latter deserves special attention, as the quantity and qualities of Biblical stories in oral settings (especially the verbal performances) usually depend upon the narrators' confessional affiliation and conduits.

The last presentation – *The National Research Programme “Cultural Heritage, National Memory and Social Development” and Slavonic Biblical and Parabiblical Traditions* (via Zoom) was devoted to a research program which started in 2018 under the funding of the Bulgarian Ministry of Education and Science. The speaker and one of the coordinators of the project – Anna-Maria Totomanova (Sofia University) – presented the aim, scope and current results of the endeavour, emphasising that it is the first of its kind in the field of cultural and historical heritage studies for at least 30 years. The focus was on the contribution for studying Old Church Slavonic language and creating an awareness of Slavonic Biblical traditions through different kinds of initiatives: from digital tools

and electronic research infrastructures and platforms through publications of monographs and editions of the texts related to this tradition, to the creation of documentaries that elucidate Bulgarian contributions to European civilization.

During the sessions within the framework of the Slavonic Parabiblical Traditions Research Unit the presentations were indeed varied in terms of examined material and reference points. The participants showed that the mega-corpus of texts explored by them has been preserved through multilingual channels of cross-cultural transmission. The discussions after the presentations were referring to the basic question what makes a text significant in the Slavonic parabiblical landscape. It was raised and addressed in different ways depending on a researcher's disciplinary matrix and focus, but the common notion was that many of the presented issues need more exploration. For example, it was pointed out that there is a great need for further investigation of proper names of Biblical characters in Slavonic translations, or Biblical *topoi* within national historiographies; it was also pointed out that the most current and adequate approach towards parabiblical motifs within vernacular traditions should take into account the function of oral transmission, so that the 19th century tradition of inquiry would be left behind. It was also emphasised that the iconographic aspect of Slavonic parabiblical tradition is still understudied and needs careful investigation in a wide culturalological contexts. In this regard, the hybrid form of the EABS gave an opportunity to meet and to discuss problems from different epistemological points of view.

However, there were also some obstacles as far as a hybrid conference is concerned. As the chairs of the session were responsible for all the issues regarding the streaming and recording the presentations,

some technical problems occurred, which caused delays, although eventually everything was resolved by the local support group. Nevertheless, the conference was indeed huge – there were 500 registered participants (200 of which were presenting online). In fact, it turned out that the problems with the transportation in Toulouse that occurred on the third and fourth day of the conference had a more severe impact on the programme. The Mirail Campus of the University Toulouse – Jean Jaurès is located in the peripheries of the city, so when the metro was stopped for two days due to an unexpected incident, heavy traffic, lack or delay of alternative transport indeed influenced the proceeding. The organizers reacted as soon as possible by providing additional information and alternative routes, nevertheless some problems remained unavoidable. All the tension related to these problems was part of a greater feeling of uncertainty that was shared by the conference participants due to the travel disruptions in Europe. Many international flights were cancelled or seriously delayed which made it impossible to arrive or leave Toulouse on time. Fortunately, the presentations within the Slavonic Parabiblical Traditions Research Unit were not affected and were held smoothly, being attended by participants from other panels, which along with the great number of the sessions may be seen as another proof that the topic is not only interesting but also particularly important and needs further investigation with regard to both other religious and cultural traditions and different research perspectives.

The hybrid (on-site, online and recorded) and eco-friendly approach (marked i.e. by reduced usage of paper and using biodegradable and recyclable materials) of the EABS conference should be continued. Also, the fact that it was organized in Toulouse merits our attention. It was a unique opportunity to discover the rich cultural heritage of Occitania, from the tomb of Thomas Aquinas and the wonderful Saint Sernin basilica to the city of Albi or Carcassonne. Debating on the Biblical world and heritage in such a place was indeed a thrilling experience. Having in mind this perspective, the organizers provided a guided tour in the Saint Sernin basilica and a visit in the Musée Saint-Raymond with the wonderful exhibition *Le mystère Mithra. Plongée au cœur d'un culte romain*. The closing event, taking place at the Church Notre-Dame de la Dalbade, was also oriented towards a multi-sensory experience of the conference participants, as it was a concert by a duet playing traditional Occitan and Persian music.

The 2022 EASB conference was indeed a challenge for both the organizers and the participants but it showed that Biblical studies are a very important platform for transmitting and expanding knowledge. It was a great opportunity to meet in person after a long pandemic disruption, so our hope is that the next conference, which is planned in Syracuse, will only contribute more to the subject, and again will be a feast of academic collaboration, personal reunions, and simply joy of conducting research.

*Ewelina Drzewiecka,
Cyrillo-Methodian Research Centre –
Bulgarian Academy of Sciences*