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Christ as Life-giving Spirit (1 Cor 15:45) in Ancient Christian Reception

Riemer ROUKEMA

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Abstract

In Paul's chapter on the resurrection of the dead we read, "Thus it is written, «the first human, Adam, became a living being»; the last Adam became life-giving Spirit" (1 Cor 15:45, my trans.). This paper deals with the reception of the last words of this text in ancient Christianity. Generally, they were understood to regard the spiritual vivification of human beings who had come to believe in Christ, so that he, as life-giving Spirit, brought about this regeneration. Several authors relate this clause also, or in the first place, to the final resurrection. Moreover, Origen and Didymus apply it to believers who became a "lifegiving spirit" themselves. 1 Cor 15:45c was also quoted in the Christological debates as a proof text either of Christ's humanity (Adam) *and* his divinity (Spirit), or of his humanity, without downplaying his divinity, or of his divinity without denying his humanity, or of his divinity exclusively (Apollinaris). Theodore of Mopsuestia conceives it as a reference to Christ's own resurrection. To several ancient authors this rare expression must have been puzzling.

1. *Introduction*

In Paul's chapter on the resurrection of Christ as an anticipation of the eschatological resurrection (1 Cor 15) we find many contrasts, for instance, between dying with Adam and vivification in Christ (vs 22), heavenly and earthly bodies (vs 40), a psychic and a pneumatic body (vs 44), the first Adam who became a living being (ψυχή) and the last Adam who became life-giving spirit (vs 45), etc.¹ This paper focusses on how the last two words of the fourth example were understood from circa 150 to 450 AD. In Greek the full text of 1 Cor 15:45 reads, οὕτως καὶ γέγραπται, Ἐγένετο ὁ πρῶτος ἄνθρωπος Ἀδάμ εἰς ψυχήν ζῶσαν, ὁ ἔσχατος Ἀδάμ εἰς πνεῦμα ζωοποιοῦν. First, however, I will make a few exegetical remarks in a present-day perspective.²

The text under discussion comes after Paul's distinction between a psychic and a pneumatic (or spiritual) body (εἰ ἔστιν σῶμα ψυχικόν, ἔστιν καὶ πνευματικόν, 1 Cor 15:44b), which refers to the natural human body in one's earthly life and the spiritual body that believers may expect in the future resurrection. Apparently it is to underpin this distinction that Paul quotes Scripture, "Thus it is written", viz. in Gen 2:7 LXX. This text first says that God formed the human with dust from the earth and blew the breath of life (πνοήν ζωῆς) into his face; then follows the quotation, to which the apostle added at least the word "first" and perhaps "Adam"; the Septuagint reads καὶ ἐγένετο ὁ ἄνθρωπος εἰς ψυχήν ζῶσαν, "and the human became a living soul".³ The translation of the

- 1 Abernathy, *Christ as Life-giving Spirit* (2002), 12, lists fifteen contrasts in this chapter.
- 2 See the expositions by e.g. Thiselton, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians* (2000), 1281-1290; Schrage, *Der erste Brief an die Korinther* (2001), 302-313; Fee, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians* (2014²), 870-880; Gerber, *1 Corinthiens* (2025), 520-521.
- 3 According to John Philoponus, *De opificio mundi* VI,21 (ed. Reichardt, 273-274), Theodotion and Symmachus translated דָּבָר in Gen 2:7 as the doublet Ἀδάμ ἄνθρωπος. If this was an older tradition, Paul may not have added Ἀδάμ off his own bat. Also in Field, *Origenis Hexaplorum quae supersunt*, vol. 1 (1964²),

Lexham English Septuagint, “and the human came into being as a living soul”, is acceptable if one takes “soul” in the sense of a living being as in, e.g. “a parish of 500 souls” and “Save Our Souls”.⁴ Henceforth I will adopt this translation because it demonstrates the link with the term ψυχικός and other instances where ψυχή only means “soul”.

After this quotation from Gen 2:7 we might expect some other words from Scripture, given the introduction “Thus it is written”. Instead, Paul goes back to his previous contrast between Adam and Christ, introduced in 1 Cor 15:22 (“For as all die in Adam, so all will be made alive in Christ”, *NRSV*).⁵ In this vein 1 Cor 15:45 concludes, with reference to Christ, “the last Adam [became] a life-giving spirit” (I will soon come back to this translation). In 1 Cor 15:47 he formulates the contrast between humans and Christ in other words, “The first human [was] from the earth, of dust, the second human [is] from heaven” (ὁ πρῶτος ἄνθρωπος ἐκ γῆς χοϊκός, ὁ δεύτερος ἄνθρωπος ἐξ οὐρανοῦ). Paul’s point is that in the resurrection believers will share the condition of Christ. Therefore, he says in 1 Cor 15:48, “As the one of dust (i.e. Adam), so also those of dust (i.e. humans), and as the heavenly one (i.e. Christ), so also the heavenly ones (i.e. the risen believers)” (οἷος ὁ χοϊκός, τοιοῦτοι καὶ οἱ χοϊκοί, καὶ οἷος ὁ ἐπουράνιος, τοιοῦτοι καὶ οἱ ἐπουράνιοι). This is confirmed by 1 Cor 15:49, which reads in the authoritative present-day editions, “And as we have borne the image of the one of dust, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly one” (καὶ καθὼς ἐφορέσαμεν τὴν εἰκόνα τοῦ χοϊκοῦ, φορέσομεν καὶ τὴν εἰκόνα τοῦ ἐπουρανοῦ). However, many patristic interpretations of this passage read the conjunctive φορέσωμεν, “let us bear”, instead of φορέσομεν (“we shall bear”).⁶ If the

13, who printed Ἀδὰμ [ἄνθρωπος], but does not justify the square brackets; cf. Stanley, *Paul and the Language of Scripture* (1992), 207-209.

4 Penner – Brannan (eds.), *The Lexham English Septuagint* (2019), 2.

5 This contrast between Adam and Christ also occurs in Rom 5:12-21.

6 For φορέσομεν the 28th edition of Nestle and Aland’s *Novum Testamentum Graece* only gives the manuscripts B, I, 6, 630, 945^{v.1}, 1881, and the Sahidic version. Aland

preference of most text-critics for the future *φορέσομεν* as the original reading is correct, it would neatly correspond to the preceding verses, where Paul contrasts the physical life on earth with the future of the resurrection anticipated by Christ. Yet the preference for *φορέσομεν* is not unanimous and is weakly attested by the manuscripts. Therefore, Gordon Fee, for instance, considers the exhortation *φορέσωμεν* to be the original reading.⁷ This would imply that Paul did not announce the heavenly condition of life in the resurrection but exhorted the believers to display the image of the heavenly Christ in their present life. This paper will demonstrate in which ways the different textual readings of the ancient authors relate to their interpretations of 1 Cor 15:45.

As said, attention should also be paid to the translation—and so to the meaning—of the words *ὁ ἔσχατος Ἀδὰμ εἰς πνεῦμα ζωοποιούν*, especially to the absence of the article before *πνεῦμα* and the significance of *ζωοποιούν*. That *πνεῦμα* is anarthrous does not imply that it should necessarily be translated as “a spirit”, with an indefinite article.⁸ Still, in English “a life-giving spirit” seems the usual translation, although some scholars opt for a capital S, “a life-giving Spirit”, which clearly

– Black – Martini – Metzger – Wikgren – Aland – Karavidopoulos (eds.), *The Greek New Testament* (2001⁴), gives more witnesses to this reading, but even far more to the reading *φορέσωμεν*. Remarkably, the reprint of the *Textus Receptus* in *The New Testament: The Greek Text Underlying the English Authorised Version of 1611* (1976) reads *φορέσομεν*. In agreement with most ancient manuscripts, Jongkind – Williams (eds.), *The Greek New Testament* (2017) read *φορέσωμεν*.

7 Fee, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians* (2014²), 871, 878-880. Grosheide, *Commentary on the First Epistle to the Corinthians* (1953), 389 also reads *φορέσωμεν*, but he interprets it as a future.

8 Robertson, *A Grammar of the Greek New Testament* (1934), 761, 795; Blass – Debrunner – Rehkopf, *Grammatik des neutestamentlichen Griechisch* (1990¹⁷), § 257,2 (including note 4).

refers to God's Spirit but curiously retains the indefinite article.⁹ Most French translations also read the indefinite article, "un esprit";¹⁰ exceptions are *Bonnes Nouvelles Aujourd'hui*, "l'Esprit qui donne la vie", and Christophe Senft, "Le dernier Adam Esprit vivifiant".¹¹ German translations exhibit variations as well. The 1912 revision of Martin Luther's translation reads the definite article, "zum Geist, der da lebendig macht", but in 1966 the Zwingli Bible translated "zu einem lebendig machenden Geiste".¹² Like Senft, the *Einheitsübersetzung* of 1980 opts for a translation without article, "lebendigmachender Geist".¹³ We shall see what light the patristic interpretations shed on this matter.

- 9 "a spirit" is found in the *New American Standard Bible* (1960), the *New English Bible* (1961), the *New International Version* (1979), the *New Revised Standard Version* (1989), and the *Contemporary English Version* (1995). The *King James Version* also has the indefinite article, "a quickening spirit", which agrees with William Tyndale's translation of 1526, "a quickenyng sprete", in Cooper (ed.), *The New Testament Translated by William Tyndale* (2000). Orr – Walther, *First Corinthians: A New Translation* (1976), 341 has "a life-making spirit". Fee, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians* (2014), 870 follows the *New International Version* and confirms it on p. 872. "a ... Spirit" in Barrett, *A Commentary on the First Epistle to the Corinthians* (1971²), 369, 374; Thiselton, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians* (2000), 1258, 1283; and Garland, *1 Corinthians* (2003), 735.
- 10 Segond (trans.), *La Sainte Bible* (1910); *La Sainte Bible traduite en français sous la direction de l'École Biblique de Jérusalem* (1956); Grosjean – Léturmy – Gros (trans.), *La Bible: Nouveau Testament* (1971); *Traduction Œcuménique de la Bible* (1972); *La Nouvelle Bible Segond* (2002); *La Bible Segond 21* (2007); Gerber, *1 Corinthiens* (2025), 514, 520.
- 11 *Bonnes Nouvelles Aujourd'hui* (1971); Senft, *La première épître de Saint Paul aux Corinthiens* (1990²), 207.
- 12 Conzelmann, *Der erste Brief an die Korinther* (1969), 332 ("zum lebenspendenden Geist"); Schrage, *Der erste Brief an die Korinther* (2001), 269, 304 ("zum lebensschaffenden Geist").
- 13 *Die Bibel. Altes und Neues Testament. Einheitsübersetzung* (1980).

The other question to be considered here is less consequential. How should we translate the term ζωοποιεῖν? Literally it means ‘vivifying’, ‘making alive’. In this contribution I will adopt ‘life-giving’ because it is the common and well-suited English translation of this term in 1 Cor 15:45c. For ζωοποιεῖν I will also use ‘to vivify’ instead of ‘to bring to life’.¹⁴

In addition, concerning ζωοποιεῖν it may be noted that twice Paul had used ζωοποιεῖν previously in his chapter on the resurrection. As we saw above, in 1 Cor 15:22 he writes, “For as all die in Adam, so also all will be made alive (ζωοποιηθήσονται) in (or: by, ἐν) Christ.” Next, in 1 Cor 15:36 Paul says, as an introduction to a simile about seed, “What you sow does not come to life (ζωοποιεῖται) unless it dies” (*NRSV*). We may conclude that 1 Cor 15:45 clarifies that the last Adam, i.e. the risen Christ, in his capacity of πνεῦμα, is the one who will vivify all those who belong to him.¹⁵

However, in Rom 4:17 Paul says that it is God who vivifies the dead (κατέναντι ... θεοῦ τοῦ ζωοποιούντος τοὺς νεκρούς). With reference to God’s Spirit this is also expressed in Rom 8:11, “If the Spirit of him (i.e. God) who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, he who raised Christ from the dead will vivify (ζωοποιήσῃ) your mortal bodies also through his Spirit that dwells in you.” Here God and his Spirit are said to be involved in the future resurrection. For Paul this hardly makes any difference; likewise, in Rom 8:9-10a “Spirit of God”, “Spirit of Christ”, and “Christ” are interchangeable.

14 Montanari – Goh – Schroeder (eds.), *Brill Dictionary of Ancient Greek* (2015), 897, translate ζωοποιεῖω as “to bring to life, give life to, vivify, animate”.

15 For the last Adam as the risen Christ see Schrage, *Der erste Brief an die Korinther* (2001), 304; Fee, *First Corinthians* (2014²), 874. I do not agree with Schrage, *Der erste Brief an die Korinther* (2001), 161-166, who holds that πάντες in 1 Cor 15:22 can only be interpreted in a universalistic sense. Even Schrage correctly admits “daß das Schicksal der Ungläubigen bei Paulus ganz im Hintergrund steht, wenn denn überhaupt daran gedacht ist” (163).

2. Ancient Christian interpretation: methodological observations

As said above, my investigation of ancient interpretations of the last two words of 1 Cor 15:45 concerns the authors from circa 150 to 450 AD. After the fifth century new, original patristic interpretations of scriptural texts are rare. I will focus on Greek works and translated works originally written in Greek and include two Latin authors who were well acquainted with the Greek language.

The relevant works will be presented more or less chronologically. I will not discuss other New Testament passages that include the verb ζωοποιεῖν, but sometimes I will refer to a few of them. In John 5:21 Jesus says, “just as the Father raises the dead and gives them life (ζωοποιεῖ), so also the Son gives life (ζωοποιεῖ) to whomsoever he wishes”. In John 6:63 he says, “It is the Spirit that gives life (ζωοποιεῖν); the flesh is useless.” Paul says in 2 Cor 3:6, “the letter kills, but the Spirit gives life (ζωοποιεῖ)”. 1 Peter 3:18 reads that Christ “was put to death in the flesh but made alive in the spirit (ζωοποιηθεὶς δὲ πνεύματι)” (quotations from *NRSV*). Unlike Paul’s uncontested epistles, the author or authors of Ephesians 2:5 and Colossians 2:13 situate being made alive together with Christ (συζωοποιεῖν) in the past, using the aorist συνεζωοποίησεν.

I will leave aside uncertain allusions to 1 Cor 15:45c, with one exception, viz. the revised Nicene Creed of the 381 Council of Constantinople, which says that we believe εἰς τὸ πνεῦμα τὸ ἅγιον τὸ κύριον καὶ ζωοποιόν, “in the Spirit, holy, lordly, and life-giving”.¹⁶ I will consider whether the gathered bishops may have been inspired for this tenet by 1 Cor 15:45c among other scriptural texts.

16 E.g. in Tanner, *Decrees of the Ecumenical Councils*, vol. 1 (1990), 24. The article in τὸ κύριον demonstrates that κύριον is an adjective neuter, not the noun κύριος. The participle ζωοποιεῖν and the adjective ζωοποιόν are synonymous.

3. *The Coptic Book in Berlin*

The first witness of 1 Cor 15:45 may be thought inconspicuous and hardly interesting, but I include it as a testimony and tribute to the numerous ancient Christian works that are lost. One such work was the extremely fragmentarily preserved “*Coptic Book*” kept in Berlin since the beginning of the twentieth century, and finally edited and translated by Gesine Schenke Robinson in 2004.¹⁷ She concludes that the original work, written in Greek, may originate from the beginning of the second half of the second century. She suggests that the author might have been Pantaenus, the teacher of Clement of Alexandria, but that is merely an educated guess.¹⁸ In her tentative reconstitution of the book from 1786 papyrus fragments the words “last Adam” are relatively well readable. Since 1 Cor 15:45 is the only text in the present New Testament that reads “last Adam”, a short note on this passage in the *Coptic Book* may be justified. On a page consisting of eleven fragments the author mentions Adam’s disobedience, the subsequent curse, and Christ’s redemptive death through which he defeated the devil. In the last three fragments of this page we read, “[through] the last Adam we [came to life] again” ([ΕΒΟΛ ΖΗ]ΤΜ ΠΣΔΕ ΝΑΔΔΑΜ ΟΝ Ν[ΤΑΝΩΝΣ]).¹⁹ To be sure, the term for “we came to life”, ΝΤΑΝΩΝΣ, apparently informed by ζωοποιούν in 1 Cor 15:45, is a reconstruction of a lacuna, but it is convincing because the designation “last Adam” immediately precedes the gap.²⁰ Although the argument may seem

17 Schenke Robinson – Schenke – Plisch, *Das Berliner “Koptische Buch”*, CSCO 610-611 (2004).

18 Schenke Robinson – Schenke – Plisch, *Das Berliner “Koptische Buch”* (2004), CSCO 610, xv-xviii; CSCO 611, xiv-xv.

19 Schenke Robinson – Schenke – Plisch, *Das Berliner “Koptische Buch”* (2004), CSCO 610, 324-325.32-33; CSCO 611, 164.32-33.

20 It is a lucky coincidence that the remains of the Ν, the first letter of Ν[ΤΑΝΩΝΣ], are visible, thus the Perfect II prefix ΝΤΑΝ is most likely and the Future I prefix ΤΝΝΑ (“we will come to life”) is excluded.

circular, if the reconstruction is correct, the passage understands ζωοποιεῖν in 1 Cor 15:45 as denoting salvation by Christ in the present life. We shall see that this interpretation is shared by contemporaneous and later authors.

4. Mark the Valentinian

In the Rhône valley Irenaeus of Lyons came to know a community founded by a Valentinian named Mark. Because of the so-called “magic” he practiced he was dubbed “the Magician” (Μάρκος ὁ μάγος). Around 180 Irenaeus discussed Mark’s doctrines and activities in his work known as *Against heresies*, so that the appearance of this teacher may be dated between circa 160 and 180.²¹ This account was copied and expanded in an anonymous work from the early third century, entitled *Refutation of all heresies*. It has been ascribed to Hippolytus of Rome, but this attribution has also been doubted and denied to him.²² While Irenaeus’ account has survived in a Latin translation, the *Refutation* has preserved his Greek text, which includes an allusion to 1 Cor 15:45.

According to Mark’s opponents, he saw a correspondence between the creation of the human being (ἄνθρωπος) on the sixth day (Gen 1:26-31) and the “dispensation of the suffering” (οἰκονομία τοῦ πάθους) on the sixth day, which refers to Jesus’ crucifixion. About this Friday Mark said, “on which the last human appeared for the rebirth of the first human” ((ἐν) ἧ τὸν ἔσχατον ἄνθρωπον εἰς ἀναγέννησιν τοῦ πρώτου ἀθρώπου πεφηνέναι).²³ The New Testament writings offer the combination of “last human” (in fact: “last Adam”) and “first

21 Irenaeus, *Adversus haereses* I,13-21 (SC 264, 188-309).

22 See Marcovich’s introduction to Hippolytus’ *Refutatio omnium haeresium* (1986), 1-17 as well as Litwa’s introduction to his translation of the *Refutation of All Heresies* (2016), xxvii-liiii.

23 *Refutatio omnium haeresium* VI,47,2-4 (Patristische Texte und Studien 25, 265-266); without τοῦ πάθους Irenaeus, *Adversus haereses* I,14,6 (SC 264, 224-225).

human”—though in the opposite order—only in 1 Cor 15:45. Clearly, by the “first human” Mark meant the human being created on the sixth day, and by the “last human” Christ, to whose suffering on the sixth day he alluded in the same sentence. The term ἀναγέννησις, “rebirth” or “regeneration”, corresponds with the appellation πνεῦμα ζωοποιῶν, “life-giving Spirit”, in 1 Cor 15:45c. We may conclude that Mark was thinking of Paul’s words when he taught that the first human and his descendants may receive the true and new life through the last human who is Christ. Because it is unthinkable that Mark, a Valentinian, was hinting at Paul’s theme of the eschatological resurrection, we may infer that he interpreted ζωοποιῶν in terms of spiritual resurrection.²⁴

5. Irenaeus of Lyons

Irenaeus uses Paul’s contrast between Adam and Christ for his theology of Christ’s new start or recapitulation (cf. Eph 1:10) after Adam’s fall and its consequences. For this concept of salvation history (οἰκονομία, Eph 1:10) he calls in Rom 5:12, 14, and 19, including the designations “first Adam” and “second Adam” inspired by 1 Cor 15:45 and 47.²⁵ In his later exposition of the *eschatological* resurrection of physical bodies, Irenaeus draws on 1 Cor 15:36, 42-44, 50-55, but there his interpretation of 1 Cor 15:45-49 has another focus.²⁶ There Paul’s designation of the last Adam who became life-giving Spirit does *not* relate to Christ. There Irenaeus considers the last Adam to be the first

24 See Förster, *Marcus Magus* (1999), 259-261. Altermath, *Du corps psychique au corps spirituel* (1977), 141-142, erroneously ascribes Mark’s use of 1 Cor 15:45 to Hippolytus, the presumed author of the *Refutation of all heresies*.

25 Irenaeus, *Adversus haereses* III,21,9-10 (SC 211, 422-431). See Noormann, *Irenäus als Paulusinterpret* (1994), 430-463; VanMaaren, *The Adam-Christ Typology in Paul* (2013), 281-285.

26 See Altermath, *Du corps psychique au corps spirituel* (1977), 84-92; Roukema, *The Resurrection according to 1 Corinthians 15,35-55* (2016), 37-39.

one who has *received* (προσλαβόμενος) the life-giving Spirit and will thus find life (i.e. in Christ). This happens when someone strips off the old self (Eph 4:22; Col 3:9) and is renewed by God's Spirit during his earthly life.²⁷ This interpretation corresponds to Irenaeus' exhortative reading φορέσωμεν in 1 Cor 15:49. Since he read this verse as an appeal to Christians to bear the image of the heavenly Christ in the present life, this affected his understanding of the preceding verses, not as indications of the final resurrection, but as touching the spiritual transformation due to conversion to Christ and baptism.

So we see that to Irenaeus the term ζωοποιεῖν in 1 Cor 15:45c is about the spiritual renewal of humans who have come to believe in Christ and are ready to leave their previous lifestyle behind them. In this sense he also writes that the Lord came to vivify (ζωοποιῶν) the human flesh which had received only the breath of life (πνοήν ζωῆς, Gen 2:7; 1 Cor 15:45b) and had died. To Irenaeus this means that

as we all die in Adam because we were psychics, we will all live (ζήσομεν) in Christ (cf. 1 Cor 15:22) because we are pneumatics. We do not put away [the fleshly body] shaped by God, but the desires of the flesh (Gal 5:16), having received the Holy Spirit.²⁸

Irenaeus' quotations from Rom 8:11 and allusions to it establish that in this verse he interprets the verb ζωοποιεῖν as regarding both the spiritual vivification in the present life and the eschatological resurrection of mortal bodies, but in 1 Cor 15:45 he reads it only as a term for renewal by the Holy Spirit.²⁹

27 Irenaeus, *Adversus haereses* V,12,2-4 (SC 153, 142-157).

28 Irenaeus, *Adversus haereses* V,12,3 (SC 153, 150-151; my trans.).

29 Irenaeus, *Adversus haereses* V,4,1; 7,1; 10,2; 15,1 (SC 153, 56-57; 130-131; 200-201).

6. *Clement of Alexandria and Theodotus the Valentinian*

Clement of Alexandria refers once to “the resurrection of the flesh”, which he considers a spiritual process that starts with baptism, continues in leading a spiritual life in a spiritual body, and continues in the purification after death.³⁰ In his extant works Clement quotes 1 Cor 15:40, 44, 49-50, 52-55, but not 1 Cor 15:45.³¹ However, his *Excerpts from Theodotus*, a Valentinian teacher, include two passages that remind us of the last text. It is hardly possible to date this work more precisely than somewhere at the end of the second century. Clement describes what happened, according to Theodotus (as it seems), when Jesus commended his spirit to the Father (Luke 23:46). At that moment—in the Valentinian’s view—Jesus entrusted to the Father the spiritual seed (σπέρμα) he had received from Sophia, which includes all the elect. Apparently, Clement then inserts his own reflection whose first words read, “We call the elect seed also «spark, vivified» (σπινθήρα ζωοποιούμενον) by the Logos.” A little further on Clement quotes the Valentinians saying that when the Saviour had come, he woke up the soul and ignited the spark (σπινθήρα). After the Saviour’s resurrection he blew the Spirit upon the apostles (John 20:22), blew away the dust (Gen 2:7), ignited the spark and vivified (ἐζωοποιεί) it.³²

Although the allusions to 1 Cor 15:45 are faint, these are still interesting passages. The term ‘spark’ is not frequent in Clement’s extant works; except for the cited texts it is only found in a quotation from the *Wisdom of Solomon* and in an allusion to it.³³ However, the

30 Clement, *Paedagogus* II,41,4 (SC 108, 90-91); cf. Schmöle, *Läuterung nach dem Tode* (1974); Roukema, *The Resurrection according to 1 Corinthians 15,35-55* (2016), 45-46.

31 See Altermath, *Du corps psychique au corps spirituel* (1977), 98-103.

32 Clement, *Excerpta e Theodoto* 1,1-3; 3,1-2 (SC 23, 52-59).

33 *Wisdom of Solomon* 3,7, in *Stromateis* IV,104,2 (SC 463, 228-229), “they (i.e. martyrs) will shine like sparks” (my trans.); *Eclogae propheticae* 41,2 (Bibliotheca Patristica 4, 76-77), “the righteous one shines ... like a spark” (my trans.).

source of Theodotus' and Clement's reference to the 'spark' is not Scripture but an interpretation of Plato's *Timaeus*. According to Plato, God created and sowed souls destined for the material bodies.³⁴ In later works these souls were considered sparks; this term is found e.g. in Philo of Alexandria and in "Gnostic" works and testimonies.³⁵ When Theodotus said that the Saviour ignited this spark and gave life (ἐζωοποιεῖ) to it, this recalls Paul's words about the last Adam who became life-giving Spirit. Although this is a Valentinian testimony, Clement confirms that in his tradition too "we call" (φραμὲν) the elect seed "spark, vivified by the Logos", i.e. Christ. This nod to 1 Cor 15:45 suggests that Clement as well as the Valentinians read Paul's designation of Christ as life-giving Spirit in terms of the awakening of the human soul to new life.³⁶ Although Clement's theology differs significantly from Irenaeus and Theodotus, their interpretations of ζωοποιούν in 1 Cor 15:45 are similar.

7. *Exegesis on the Soul*

Yet another Gnostic echo of 1 Cor 15:45 is attested in the treatise *Exegesis on the Soul*, which seems Valentinian as well or is close to Valentinianism in any case. It has been preserved in the Nag Hammadi Codices in a Coptic translation from the Greek. Possibly dating to the late second century or to the beginning of the third century and probably stemming from Alexandria, it describes the vicissitudes of

34 Plato, *Timaeus* 41e; 42d.

35 Philo, *Quis rerum divinarum heres* 308 (LCL 261, 442-443); Saturninus, in Irenaeus, *Adversus haereses* I,24,1 (SC 264, 332-333); *Paraphrase of Shem* (NHC VII,1 33.30-32; 46.13-29; NHMS 30, 122-123); with reference to the Saviour, *Apocryphon of John* (NHC III,9 10; NHMS 33, 40). More references in Tardieu, *ΨΥΧΑΙΟΣ ΣΙΠΙΝΘΗΡ* (1975).

36 For the term 'seed' see σπορά in 1 Pet 1:23 and Merkt, *i. Petrus*, vol. 1 (2015), 129-132.

a virginal soul that lapsed into prostitution. She then turned to the Father who “sent her from heaven her man, her brother, the firstborn”. They entered the bridal chamber and had spiritual intercourse. She “received from him the seed, which is the life-giving Spirit ([λ]C χ I $\overline{\mu\pi\epsilon\sigma\pi\epsilon\rho\mu\alpha}$ $\overline{\epsilon\beta\omicron\lambda}$ $\overline{\zeta\iota\tau\omicron\omicron\tau\epsilon}$ $\overline{\epsilon\tau\epsilon}$ $\overline{\pi\eta\eta\lambda}$ $\overline{\pi\epsilon\epsilon\tau}$ $\overline{\tau\eta\zeta\omicron}$)”. Thus the soul “received the divine ($\overline{\pi\theta\epsilon\iota\omicron\nu\omicron}$, viz. nature) from the Father, that she might be restored and returned to where she was before. This is the resurrection from the dead.”³⁷

Given this reference to the resurrection and the notion of the seed (cf. 1 Cor 15:36-37 and Theodotus’ view quoted above by Clement) it is more likely that we find here an allusion to 1 Cor 15:45 than to John 6:63, “It is the Spirit that gives life.” Like the Valentinians Mark and Theodotus, the author of this treatise understands the resurrection of the soul thanks to the life-giving Spirit as her spiritual regeneration. This also agrees with Irenaeus and Clement, notwithstanding their different theologies.

8. Tertullian of Carthage

In two of Tertullian’s works written between 206 and 212, his reception of 1 Cor 15:45 is determined by his opposition to Marcion and other teachers who held that Christ was a spiritual being sent by the high God and not by the inferior Creator, the God of the Jews. In his work *On the Resurrection of the Flesh* Tertullian emphasizes that Paul’s designation of Christ as “the last Adam” in 1 Cor 15:45 demonstrates that the Saviour, coming from heaven (1 Cor 15:47) as for his spirit (*secundum spiritum*), was human as for his body (*secundum carnem*). This implies to him that Christ had a fleshly body like the

³⁷ *Exegesis of the Soul* (NHC II,6 132.7-9; 133.35-134.2; 134.9-12; NHS 21, 154-155; 158-159, trans. Meyer, *The Nag Hammadi Scriptures* [2007], 229-231, slightly adapted).

first Adam. In Tertullian's view, the difference between the first and the last Adam does not concern their bodies; they are distinguished in that the first one became a living soul and the second one life-giving Spirit (*in spiritum vivificantem*).³⁸ In his previous treatise *On the Flesh of Christ* Tertullian says that Christ, being the last Adam, was revealed by God as life-giving Spirit from a virgin mother. The drift of his lengthy argument is that Christ was both Son of God and Son of man, both divine and human.³⁹

In his extant works Tertullian does not pay any particular attention to the description of Christ as *vivificans*, the one who gives life, but he only quotes 1 Cor 15:45 as a proof that Christ, called Adam and life-giving Spirit, is both human and divine, both corporeal and spiritual.

9. Origen of Alexandria

In 231 Origen started to write his *Commentary on John*, which he finished at chapter 13 some fifteen year later.⁴⁰ In his comments on the term ἀρχή (“beginning” or “principle”) in John 1:1, he distinguishes between Christ's ἀρχή, which is his divinity, and his humanity. In principle Christ is God's Wisdom and power (1 Cor 1:24), but to those who cannot understand this—Origen even writes: “to us”—his humanity is preached as “the Logos who became flesh and lived among us” (John 1:14) and as Jesus Christ crucified (1 Cor 2:2). In support

38 Tertullian, *De carnis resurrectione* 53,12-17 (SC 638, 582-587). In *Adversus Marcionem* V, 10,7-8 (SC 483, 212-215) he notes that Marcion replaced “last Adam” by “last Lord” in 1 Cor 15:45 to avoid the impression that “last Adam” refers to the God of the first Adam. See Altermath, *Du corps psychique au corps spirituel* (1977), 136-137, 139.

39 Tertullian, *De carne Christi* 17,4-18,3 (SC 216, 280-285).

40 Nautin, *Origène. Sa vie et son œuvre* (1977), 377-380.

of Christ's human identity Origen quotes 1 Cor 15:45.⁴¹ He writes, "Therefore, perhaps, he is not only «the firstborn of all creation» (Col 1:15), but also Adam, which means «human being» (ἄνθρωπος). For Paul says that he (i.e. Christ) is Adam, «the last Adam [who became] life-giving Spirit»."⁴² It is noteworthy that to Origen, apparently, in this context the designation "last Adam, life-giving Spirit" refers to Christ's humanity during his incarnate life. Further on, still in his comments on John 1:1, Origen explains that Christ is also the beginning (ἀρχή) in Adam, the human (ἄνθρωπος) that he took upon himself, and the end during his appearance on earth (ὡς δὲ τέλος ἐν τῇ ἐπιδημίᾳ), as it is said, "the last Adam [became] life-giving Spirit".⁴³ We see that in this exposition of Christ's double, pre-existent and human identity Origen interprets the clause ὁ ἔσχατος Ἀδὰμ εἰς πνεῦμα ζωοποιῶν as a testimony to Christ's human, incarnate side. This chimes with Origen's interpretation of the closely related words in 1 Cor 15:47, "the second human is from heaven" (ὁ δεύτερος ἄνθρωπος ἐξ οὐρανοῦ). In his view this is the believer converted to Christ and led by the Spirit. For Origen, 1 Cor 15:46-49 deals mostly with the Christian's life in this world. Correspondingly and like Irenaeus, he reads φορέσωμεν in 1 Cor 15:49, "let us bear the image of the heavenly one".⁴⁴

Origen's later homily (from the 240s) on the delimitation of the "holy land" in Num 34:1-7, preserved in Rufinus' Latin translation, sets different accents. In his spiritual approach the land promised to the people of Israel symbolizes the heavenly kingdom for which those who believe in Jesus as their Saviour are destined. In fact, according

41 Origen, *Commentarii in Joannem* I,18,107 (SC 12obis, 116-117). For Origen's interpretation of 1 Cor 2:2 see Roukema, *La prédication du Christ crucifié* (1995), 523-529.

42 Origen, *Commentarii in Joannem* I,18,108 (SC 12obis, 116-117).

43 Origen, *Commentarii in Joannem* I,31,225 (SC 12obis, 170-171). See Bammel [Hammond], *Adam in Origen* (1989), 79.

44 See Hannah, *The Text of I Corinthians in the Writings of Origen* (1997), 166-167.

to their respective merits, they live in different sections of heaven already.⁴⁵ Moreover, if in the beginning God dispersed the sons of Adam over the world (Deut 32:8 LXX) either according to their merits or because of Adam (i.e. his fall), the reverse will happen to the sons of the last Adam, who did not become a living soul but life-giving Spirit (1 Cor 15:45c). Then, Origen says, at the end of the world, God's goodness will not disperse but arrange (*dispensare*) them, not as those who "all die in Adam", but as those who "are all made alive in Christ" (1 Cor 15:22)—although differences will remain among them, due to their different merits.⁴⁶ This interpretation of 1 Cor 15:45 by means of 1 Cor 15:22 suggests that to Origen this vivification refers to the eschatological resurrection, which he considers a process of the soul's purification after the death of the body, when it will receive a spiritual body.⁴⁷ In other words, Christ, the last Adam, as life-giving Spirit, will accomplish this vivification in the future, although in Origen's view Christ also gives life prior to the end of the world, when in a spiritual sense believers on earth live in heaven already.

Similar references to 1 Cor 15:22 and 45 are found in Origen's comments on Rom 5:12-14, Paul's unfinished sentence on Adam's sin, its consequence for mankind, and the final designation of Adam as "a type of the one who was to come", i.e. Christ. Origen wrote his *Commentary on Romans* in 243.⁴⁸ This work too has been preserved in Rufinus' translation, in ten volumes, which is a considerable abridgement of the fifteen Greek volumes. Origen first quotes 1 Cor

45 Origen, *Homiliae in Numeros* 28,1-3 (SC 461, 352-365). For the idea of living in heaven already Origen alludes to Phil 3:20, "our πολιτευμα is in heaven".

See Torjesen, *Hermeneutical Procedure* (1986), 96-100 about "the organizing principle in Origen's exegesis" of Numbers.

46 Origen, *Homiliae in Numeros* 28,4,1 (SC 461, 364-367). See Bammel [Hammond], *Adam in Origen* (1989), 78; she translates *dispensare* as "distribution".

47 See Roukema, *Origen's Interpretation of 1 Corinthians 15* (2010).

48 Nautin, *Origène* (1977), 385-386, 407-408.

15:22, “For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ all will be made alive.” In line with his reading φορέσωμεν in 1 Cor 15:49, “let us bear the image of the heavenly one”, he interprets the foregoing verses on the present life of Christians. He explains,

he (i.e. Paul) encourages us to bear the image of the heavenly one after casting off the image of the earthly; that is to say, by living according to the Word of God we are to be renewed and remade in the inner human after the image of God.⁴⁹

To Origen, believers “have died with Christ and have risen with him” (Rom 6:8; Col 2:20; Eph 2:6). Each human was first “from the earth” (1 Cor 15:47) and had carnal thoughts (Rom 8:5), but “then, in the end, it is (*et uix aliquando est*) that one turns to the Lord (2 Cor 3:16), is led by the Spirit of God (Rom 8:14) and, made spiritual, becomes a last Adam, life-giving spirit”.⁵⁰ Again, in these comments Origen reads “last Adam” in 1 Cor 15:45 as the identity of the Christian who becomes spiritual and even a life-giving spirit. It would not be right to capitalize “spirit” in this case, since πνεῦμα here does not refer to the Spirit of Christ or to the Spirit that is Christ.

So, Origen read the clause ὁ ἔσχατος Ἀδὰμ εἰς πνεῦμα ζωοποιοῦν in 1 Cor 15:45 in several ways: first, as a testimony to Christ’s human, earthly

49 Origen, *Commentarii in epistulam ad Romanos* V,1,203-204, 211-214 (ed. Hammond Bammel, 368-369; trans. Scheck, 311-312, slightly adapted).

50 Origen, *Commentarii in epistulam ad Romanos* V,1,224-232 (ed. Hammond Bammel, 369-370). See also Bammel [Hammond], *Adam in Origen* (1989), 82; Roukema, *Origen’s Interpretation of 1 Corinthians 15* (1995), 338, 341-342. Erroneously Scheck, 312 translates line 230, “and very seldom it is that he is converted to the Lord...” Apparently he follows Heither, 49, who translates “Und ganz selten geschieht es, daß einer sich zum Herrn bekehrt.” According to Blaise – Chirat, *Dictionnaire Latin-Français des auteurs chrétiens* (1954), 854, *uix* as a conjunction can mean “dès que, à peine que” (“as soon as”). Correspondingly, Cocchini, 241, rightly translates “e finalmente una buona volta accade che si converta al Signore”. Likewise, but with another nuance, Brésard, 369, reads “et enfin, après bien des efforts, il arrive qu’il se tourne vers le Seigneur”.

life alongside his divinity; second, in terms of the believers' spiritual renewal by Christ in the present life so that they become life-giving spirit themselves; third, as a reference to the believers' eschatological—and spiritual—resurrection by Christ. This threefold interpretation need not surprise us, for Origen held that Scripture should be read on several levels, literally and spiritually, morally and eschatologically.⁵¹

10. Apollinaris of Laodicea

After Origen, whose latest known use of 1 Cor 15:45 in his *Commentary on Romans* dates to 243, we have to wait for some 120 years before we find another Greek-writing author who used this text for his view of Christ or for a comment on Scripture. This author is the Nicene bishop Apollinaris of Laodicea in Syria (nowadays Latakia in Turkey; ca. 310-392). However, because his Christology and his interpretation of 1 Cor 15:45 were met with resistance, many of his works are either lost or have been preserved fragmentarily, in quotations by unfriendly authors, and in *catenae* commentaries. Hans Lietzmann collected Apollinaris' dogmatic and polemical works and fragments.⁵² So, all in all, we can work out how Apollinaris thought about Christ and how he used 1 Cor 15:45.⁵³

⁵¹ Origen, *De principiis* IV,2-3 (ed. Behr, 484-561).

⁵² Lietzmann, *Apollinaris von Laodizea* (1904), 165-270. Apollinaris' *catenae* fragments on the Psalms, the Gospels of Matthew, Luke, and John, and Paul's epistle to the Romans have also been published. Although the topic of vivification is found in the *catenae*, there are no clear references to 1 Cor 15:45.

⁵³ See Greer, *The Man from Heaven* (1990). He states, "There can be little doubt that these words (i.e. 1 Cor 15:45-47) were central to Apollinaris' understanding of Christ" (165); but 1 Cor 15:45 is used less often than 1 Cor 15:46-47. Valuable analyses of Apollinaris' views are e.g. Kelly, *Early Christian Doctrines* (1977), 289-295; Bienert, *Dogmengeschichte* (1997), 207-211; Orton, *St. Gregory of Nyssa: Anti-Apollinarian Writings* (2015), 45-58.

Apollinaris conceives of Christ as a unity, not in two natures, divine and human, but in one (μία φύσις).⁵⁴ He assumes that in the incarnate God-man Jesus Christ the divine Logos had the role of the human mind and the animating soul, so that it was the Logos—and not a human soul—that animated his fleshly body, which, therefore, shared in his divinity. He observes that John wrote, “The Logos became flesh” (John 1:14), without adding “and soul”. Thus Apollinaris considers Jesus Christ an undivided person (πρόσωπον) in the *likeness* of humans (cf. Rom 8:3), “the human from heaven” (1 Cor 15:47).⁵⁵ He quotes Paul’s clause, “the last Adam [became] life-giving Spirit” (1 Cor 15:45), as a testimony to the divinity of Christ in his capacity of servant.⁵⁶ This implies that Apollinaris read the expression πνεῦμα ζωοποιούν as evidence of Christ’s divinity thanks to his Logos during his ministry as “last Adam” on earth.

Elsewhere Apollinaris infers from Gabriel’s words to Mary, “what was begotten in you will be called holy, Son of God” (Luke 1:35), that Jesus’ body was not like other human bodies since it came down from heaven and was divine. Here too Apollinaris quotes John 1:14, “The Logos became flesh”, and 1 Cor 15:45, “the last Adam [became] life-giving Spirit” as proof-texts of the divinity of Christ which permeated his fleshly body coming from heaven.⁵⁷ These passages suggest that to Apollinaris Christ was not truly human. This is confirmed by a

54 Apollinaris, *Ad Jovinianum* 3; *Ad Dionysium* 1,2 (Lietzmann, *Apollinaris von Laodizea* [1904], 253, 257).

55 Apollinaris, *Fragment* 2; 25 (Lietzmann, *Apollinaris von Laodizea* [1904], 204, 210, from Gregory of Nyssa, *Antirrheticus adversus Apollinarium* [GNO 3,1, 143]); *Ad Dionysium* 1,10 (Lietzmann, *Apollinaris von Laodizea* [1904], 260); Rowan, *The Man from Heaven* (1990), 169.

56 Apollinaris, *Ad Dionysium* 1,11 (Lietzmann, *Apollinaris von Laodizea* [1904], 261).

57 Apollinaris, *De unione corporis et divinitatis in Christo* 1-2 (Lietzmann, *Apollinaris von Laodizea* [1904], 185-186); cf. Rowan, *The Man from Heaven* (1990), 168.

fragment that says, “If Christ’s nature is the same as ours, then he is the old human, «a living soul» (ψυχὴ ζῶσα) and not life-giving Spirit, and such a one will not vivify (ζωοποιήσε). But Christ does give life and is life-giving Spirit. Thus, he does not have our nature.”⁵⁸

In these testimonies Apollinaris does not pay attention to the precise meaning of the participle ζωοποιούν in 1 Cor 15:45c. In the remains of his works, however, he often uses the verb ζωοποιεῖν, though without alluding to this text. One of his fragments reads,

His (i.e. Christ’s) flesh vivifies (ζωοποιεῖ) us by the divinity that it inherent in it (συνουσιωμένη ἀτῆ). The life-giving [principle] (τὸ δὲ ζωοποιόν) is divine. The flesh (i.e. of Christ) is divine because it is joined (συνήφθη) to God. This is that which saves, but we *are* saved, participating in it as in food.⁵⁹

This demonstrates that Apollinaris interprets the verb ζωοποιεῖν in the sense of salvation by Christ.⁶⁰ As far as I have seen, he hardly ever uses this term for the eschatological resurrection.⁶¹ Yet we may conclude that in his view this resurrection in a spiritual body (1 Cor 15:44) was destined for those who were already saved and vivified by Christ during their lives on earth.⁶²

58 Apollinaris, *Anacephalaios* 23 (Lietzmann, *Apollinaris von Laodizea* [1904], 244-245); cf. Rowan, *The Man from Heaven* (1990), 167.

59 Apollinaris, *Fragment* 116 (Lietzmann, *Apollinaris von Laodizea* [1904], 235; my trans.).

60 Rowan, *The Man from Heaven* (1990), 166-167.

61 Searching in Apollinaris’ works for the proximity of ἀναστασ* and ζωοποι* within ten words in the digital *Thesaurus Linguae Graecae* I found one text, the *catenae* fragment 224 *In Psalmos* 118:50 (Patristische Texte und Studien 15, 88.9-10), which mentions “the power of the life-giving God” and after seven intermediate words the “resurrection”. But note that the *Thesaurus Linguae Graecae* does not include all of Apollinaris’ fragments collected by Lietzmann.

62 Rowan, *The Man from Heaven* (1990), 173. According to my search in the *Thesaurus Linguae Graecae*, Apollinaris’ fragments do not quote 1 Cor 15:49, about bearing the image of the man from heaven in the present life (φορέσωμεν) or in the future (φορέσομεν).

In conclusion of this section, I note that Apollinaris' interpretation of πνεῦμα ζωοποιῶν in 1 Cor 15:45 as a reference to Christ's divine identity differs substantially from Origen, who in his *Commentary on John* used this expression as a designation of Christ's humanity, in his capacity of last *Adam*.

11. Gregory of Nyssa

In the 380s Gregory of Nyssa wrote a refutation of Apollinaris in which he succinctly gave his own interpretation of the clause about Christ as life-giving Spirit.⁶³ He says slightly tautologically, "he who energizes us with his vivifying Spirit *is* indeed life-giving Spirit" (ὁ τῷ ζωοποιῷ πνεύματι ... ποιῶν ἐφ' ἡμῶν τὴν ἐνέργειαν καὶ πνεύμά ἐστι ζωοποιῶν).⁶⁴ Apparently, this points to human beings vivified by Christ as the Spirit during their lives on earth, not to the eschatological resurrection.⁶⁵

12. Didymus of Alexandria

Didymus the Blind, who lived in Alexandria from 310/313 to 398, interpreted 1 Cor 15:45 in his *Commentary on First Corinthians*, from which only fragments on 1 Cor 15-16 have been preserved in the *catenae*.⁶⁶ There and in other works he explains in Origen's vein that in the ultimate resurrection the perishable, psychic bodies of the

63 For the date, see Orton, *St. Gregory of Nyssa: Anti-Apollinarian writings* (2015), 35-38.

64 Gregory of Nyssa, *Antirrheticus adversus Apollinarium* (GNO 3,1, 213.14-20, trans. Orton, slightly adapted).

65 In 378, Gregory wrote a *Dialogue on the soul and the resurrection* (*Dialogus de anima et resurrectione*, GNO 3,3). There he discusses several passages from 1 Cor 15, but not verse 45.

66 Staab (ed.), *Pauluskommentare* (1984²), 6-14.

righteous will be imperishable and spiritual (1 Cor 15:42, 44), even spirit and mind, but not flesh like Adam's "psychic" body (1 Cor 15:44). He affirms that the Christians' resurrection body will be similar to Christ's body after his resurrection.⁶⁷ In support of it, Didymus refers to 1 Cor 15:45, saying:

Therefore, the life of the first Adam [who became] a living soul enabled the human to live (ἡ μὲν οὖν τοῦ πρώτου Ἀδάμ ζωὴ εἰς ψυχὴν ζῶσαν παρεσκεύαζε τὸν ἄνθρωπον ζῆν), but life in accordance with Christ [is] not [to become] a living soul but a life-giving spirit. The spiritual vivification is inherent in those who are raised from the dead (ἡ δὲ πνευματικὴ ζωοποίησις συμφοῆς ἐστὶ τοῖς ἐκ νεκρῶν ἐγειρομένοις).⁶⁸

This interpretation is congenial with Origen's, since it applies the expression πνεῦμα ζωοποιούν to the believer who has become a life-giving spirit thanks to being incorporated in Christ. This vivification is called συμφοῆς with those who are raised from the dead, which resurrection is expressed by the present participle ἐγειρομένοις, not by a future tense. This means that those who have become a life-giving spirit are raised from the dead already. Since this exposition of 1 Cor 15:45 ties in closely with Didymus' interpretation of the preceding verses dealing with the resurrection in a spiritual body, we may conclude that in his view the resurrection of believers starts on earth and continues after the death of the body and in the final resurrection. It is probably no coincidence that in keeping with this fluid view of the resurrection as a process, Didymus knows both the reading φορέσομεν, "we shall bear" and φορέσωμεν, "let us bear the image of the heavenly one" in 1 Cor 15:49.⁶⁹

67 Didymus of Alexandria, *Fragments on 1 Cor 15,44-46* (Staab, *Pauluskommentare* [1984²], 10, 14-29). See further Altermath, *Du corps psychique au corps spirituel* (1977), 152-160; Roukema, *The Resurrection according to 1 Corinthians 15,35-55* (2016), 44-47, 51-53.

68 Didymus, *Fragments on 1 Cor 15,44-46* (Staab, *Pauluskommentare* [1984²], 10.29-32; my trans.).

69 Didymus, *Commentarii in Genesim 104,23-25* (SC 233, 244-247); *Commentarii in Zacchariam II,340* (SC 84, 596-597).

13. *Ambrose of Milan*

From the Greek-speaking Church we move to the Latin bishop Ambrose of Milan (ca. 339-397), since he had a good knowledge of Greek.⁷⁰ In his *Commentary on Luke* (376-390) he twice quotes 1 Cor 15:45 without any other interpretation of the terms *spiritus vivificans* than that they apply to Christ who comes from heaven (1 Cor 15:47).⁷¹ A third passage has a little more to say about Ambrose's understanding of the text under discussion. In his exposition of the passage about the barren fig tree (Luke 13:6-9) he says about Jews who did not live in accordance with their own religion that, being excluded from God's kingdom, they were (merely) "a living soul" (*in animam viventem*). When the second Adam came, he looked for fruits of virtue, i.e. life in obedience to God's will. Ambrose argues that this second Adam "was life-giving Spirit" (*in spiritum vivificantem*), and that it is by the Spirit that the fruit of virtue is produced and the Lord is adored.⁷² Here he does not say explicitly that the second (or last) Adam is Christ, but this is evident anyway, given his two previous quotations of 1 Cor 15:45 and since Ambrose appears to be thinking of the story about a barren fig tree in Matt 21:18-19, in which it is not "someone" (τις/*quidam*, Luke 13:6) but Jesus who searches for figs. This implies that for Ambrose someone who does not adhere to Christ is merely "a living soul", i.e. is not regenerated by the Spirit, and that those who lead fruitful, virtuous lives thanks to the coming of the second (or last) Adam have been vivified by his Spirit. So, in this *Commentary* Ambrose conceives of this vivification as taking place in the present life without any explicit reference to the eschatological resurrection.

70 It would have been interesting to include Jerome's interpretation of 1 Cor 15:45, since having Latin as his native language he too knew Greek well, but his two quotations of it (*Commentarii in epistolam ad Ephesios* III,5,31 [PL 26, 569.2-3]; *Adversus Iovinianum* I,37 [PL 23, 275.24]) are not followed by an interpretation.

71 Ambrose, *Expositio in Evangelium secundum Lucam* II,86; V,31 (SC 45, 113; 195).

72 Ambrose, *Expositio in Evangelium secundum Lucam* VII,164-165 (SC 52, 69-70).

In his work *On the instruction of a virgin and the perpetual virginity of the holy Mary* from 392 Ambrose maintains, however, that Christ is both the first human from the earth and the second human from heaven (1 Cor 15:47) and likewise both the first and the last Adam (1 Cor 15:45).⁷³ He glosses,

Look at Christ's mercy. He is the first and the last. He who was the first, made himself the last because of us. The first, because through him everything [exists], the last, because through him [there is] resurrection. For he came down and rushed forward so that he fell, making himself lower than all, in order to lift up all who lie down (*ut omnes iacentes levaret*).⁷⁴

Here Ambrose relates Christ, being the last Adam and *spiritus vivificans*, to the resurrection, which suggests the eschatological resurrection of the dead, but which, according to his own works, is anticipated in redemption by Christ in the present life.⁷⁵ That the sense of "realized" resurrection in the present life may be meant in this quotation is confirmed by Ambrose's subsequent characterization of Christ as lifting up all people who lie down. This does not signify their graves but their poor mental and spiritual condition, since Ambrose regularly uses the verb *levare* in this sense, but not for the final resurrection.⁷⁶

73 Ambrose, *De institutione virginis et sanctae Mariae virginitate perpetua* 72-73 (Sancti Ambrosii Episcopi Mediolanensis Opera 14,2, 162-165).

74 Ambrose, *De institutione virginis et sanctae Mariae virginitate perpetua* 73 (Sancti Ambrosii Episcopi Mediolanensis Opera 14,2, 164; my trans.).

75 Ambrose, *De paradiso* 15,76 (CSEL 32,1, 335,5-10); *De Cain et Abel* II,3,11 (CSEL 32,1, 387.21-25); *Expositio de Psalmis* 48,23,3 (CSEL 64, 375.19-20); 118,12,45 (CSEL 62, 278.4-5). For Ambrose's view of the resurrection of the dead see Roukema, *The Resurrection according to 1 Corinthians 15,35-55* (2016), 54-56.

76 Ambrose, *De fuga saeculi* 5,29 (CSEL 32,2, 187.20-21); *Expositio de Psalmis* 43,11,3 (CSEL 64, 269.3); 118,4,3; 118,4,9; 22,32,2 (CSEL 62, 69.11-12; 72.1-4; 504.15-16);

So we may conclude that in his *Commentary on Luke* Ambrose's designation of Christ as last Adam and *spiritus vivificans* refers to the spiritual vivification of humans during their earthly lives, and that this is also the main thrust of his address *On the instruction of a virgin*, though it may glance at the final resurrection as well. The interpretation of 1 Cor 15:45c regarding spiritual vivification in the present life tallies with Ambrose's usual reading (with one exception) of 1 Cor 15:49 as an exhortation, *portemus et imaginem huius caelestis*, "let us bear the image of this heavenly one".⁷⁷ This interpretation is further confirmed by the fact that in his address on the death of his brother Satyrus, in which he elaborately discusses the final resurrection, he draws on many verses from 1 Cor 15, but without quoting 1 Cor 15:45-49.⁷⁸

14. John Chrysostom

John Chrysostom served as a priest in Syrian Antioch in one of its two Nicene churches from 386 to 397. In this period, he preached on the first and second epistles to the Corinthians, verse by verse, so that he also expounded 1 Cor 15:45. Having observed that the introduction, "Thus it is written", does not apply to the words on "the last Adam [who became] life-giving Spirit" while they are still true, he explains how to read this clause. He says,

Expositio in Evangelium secundum Lucam VII,209; X,84 (SC 52, 87-88; 184-185);
De fide ad Gratianum II 2,25 (CSEL 78, 65.29-30).

77 *Expositio in Evangelium secundum Lucam* VII,194 (SC 52, 82-83); also *De fide ad Gratianum* V,14,176 (CSEL 78, 280.53-281.1); *De interpellatione Iob et David* III,8,24 (CSEL 32,2, 261.24-262.1); *Expositio de Psalmo* 118,12,12 (CSEL 62, 257.26-27. Yet in *Epistula* 29,7 (CSEL 82,1, 198.81-82) Ambrose reads 1 Cor 15:49b as, *ita portamus et imaginem caelestis*, "thus we bear also the image of the heavenly one". This too refers to the believers' present lives.

78 Ambrose, *De excessu fratris Liber II: De resurrectione* II,54-123 (CSEL 107, 174-199) quotes 1 Cor 15:13, 15, 19, 21-23, 28, 36, 42-44, 52-53.

He (i.e. Paul) said these things so that you may learn that the symbols and promises of both the present life and the future one have come already (ἐφθασε); [first,] Adam of the present life, and [second,] Christ of the future life. For since he presents the better things as to be hoped for, he demonstrates that [their] beginning has already started (ἤδη ἐκβεβηκυῖαν) and the root and the fountain have come to light (φανεῖσαν). ... Therefore he says, “He will vivify your mortal bodies through his Spirit that dwells in you” (Rom 8:11). So it falls to the Spirit to vivify.⁷⁹

John’s interpretation holds that vivification of Christians by the Spirit is twofold, as it regards their present life, symbolized in Adam, and the future life in Christ. In the present life they are vivified by the Spirit that has come to dwell in them already, but in the future that they hope for, viz. in the final resurrection, their vivification will be completed by the same Spirit. Neither here nor elsewhere, however, does John feel the need to explain in what sense Christ, the last Adam, is Spirit.⁸⁰

John gives the same twofold interpretation of 1 Cor 15:45 succinctly in his homily on John 3:5, where Jesus says, “Unless one is born of water and Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God.” Chrysostom underlines that a living soul cannot give life to someone else, while “the Spirit not only lives for himself but supplies (παρέχει) this to others too”. While at the creation of the world humans were created last (Gen 1:26-28), now the contrary happens, “for prior to the new creation the new human is shaped (ὁ ἄνθρωπος ὁ νέος δημιουργεῖται). For this one is born first, and then the world is transformed (μετασχηματίζεται).”⁸¹ Here Chrysostom hints at the initial regeneration or spiritual vivification of

79 John Chrysostom, *Homilia in primam epistulam ad Corinthios* 41,4 (PG 61, 359.43-54; my trans.).

80 For John Chrysostom’s view of the resurrection see Altermath, *Du corps psychique au corps spirituel* (1977), 194-204; Roukema, *The Resurrection according to 1 Corinthians 15,35-55* (2016), 53-54.

81 John Chrysostom, *Homiliae in Joannem* 25,2 (PG 59, 150.10-19; my trans.).

humans by the Spirit, which anticipates the final resurrection in the new world.

In John's time the interpretation of Christ as the life-giving Spirit in the process of vivification or regeneration in the present life was traditional, as we saw in the previous sections. John shares it, which is confirmed by his reading *φορέσωμεν*, "let us bear the image of the heavenly one", in 1 Cor 15:49, as this exhortation too applies to the present life.⁸² However, as a keen exegete he not only transmits the traditional interpretation of 1 Cor 15:45 but—with Origen, for that matter—he also sees that Paul points there to the final vivification or resurrection, which is the theme of the whole chapter. Yet this does not lead him to exclude the common, traditional interpretation.

15. *The Nicene-Constantinopolitan Creed*

As promised, I now give some thought to the tenet in the Nicene-Constantinopolitan creed of 381, *εἰς τὸ πνεῦμα τὸ ἅγιον τὸ κύριον καὶ ζωοποιόν*, "in the Spirit, holy, lordly, and life-giving".⁸³ Before we turn to authors who definitely wrote after 381, it is time to discuss the question whether 1 Cor 15:45c played any role in the inclusion of the term *ζωοποιόν* as an attribute of the Holy Spirit in this expanded version of the Nicene creed of 325. As yet, we have not seen any interpretation of 1 Cor 15:45c related to the pneumatological debate preceding the Council of Constantinople. A closer look at the controversy on the position of the Spirit within the Trinity bears out that Paul's typification of Christ as the last Adam and *πνεῦμα ζωοποιούν* was not used as one of the arguments in favour of the Spirit's attribute *ζωοποιόν*. For example, in 374-375 Basil of Caesarea wrote a book *On the Holy Spirit*, in which

82 John Chrysostom, *Homiliae in primam epistulam ad Corinthios* 42,1 (PG 61, 363.26.37).

83 Tanner (ed.), *Decrees of the Ecumenical Councils*, vol. 1 (1990), 24.

he considered, among many other aspects, that the Spirit is life-giving together with God the Father and the Son. He underscored this view by quoting Rom 8:10-11, John 6:63 and 10:27-28, but not 1 Cor 15:45.⁸⁴ Likewise, in 380 or 381 Gregory of Nyssa preached a sermon entitled *On the Holy Spirit. Against the Macedonians, the Spirit Fighters*. There he discussed the life-giving grace and power of the Spirit in finding faith and in baptism, for which he quoted John 5:21 and 6:63, not 1 Cor 15:45.⁸⁵ Michael Haykin investigated the exegesis of 1-2 Corinthians in the pneumatological controversy of those decades, but in his monograph he never refers to 1 Cor 15:45.⁸⁶ So we may safely judge that the bishops who formulated the elaborated version of the Nicene creed did not have this text in mind as a scriptural basis of the Spirit's attribute ζωοποιόν.⁸⁷

16. Theodore of Mopsuestia

Theodore was ordained a priest in Syrian Antioch circa 383, and in 392 he became bishop of the church of Mopsuestia in Cilicia. He died in 428. Under his name ten catechetical homilies on an expanded version of the creed have been preserved in a Syriac translation. Its text does not completely match with the version ascribed to the 381 Council of Constantinople, but it does contain an elaboration on the

84 Basil of Caesarea, *De Spiritu Sancto* 56 (SC 17bis, 452-453).

85 Gregory of Nyssa, *Adversus Macedonios de Spiritu Sancto* (GNO 3,1, 105.19-106.8; 108.18-21). See also *Contra Eunomium* I,315 (GNO 1,1, 120); *Refutatio confessionis Eunomii* 201 (GNO 2,2, 397).

86 Haykin, *The Spirit of God* (1994). Likewise Staats, *Das Glaubensbekenntnis von Nizäa-Konstantinopel* (1996), 25, 76-78, 91-93, 258; Ayres, *Nicaea and its Legacy* (2004), 211-218, 253-260.

87 This implies that I do not agree with Kinzig, *A History of Early Christian Creeds* (2024), 352, who considers that πνεῦμα ζωοποιόν in the Constantinopolitan creed alludes to 1 Cor 15:45.

Holy Spirit, including the words πνεῦμα ζωοποιόν. Wolfram Kinzig argues that Theodore did not discuss the text of Constantinople but of a Meletian synod held in Antioch in 379.⁸⁸ However this may be, since the term ζωοποιόν figured in the version used by Theodore, he invoked 1 Cor 15:45, among other texts, in his exposition. His tenth homily reads,

After this they (i.e. the bishops) added in their teaching concerning the Spirit: Giver of Life (ⲛⲓⲥⲁ), an expression which aptly demonstrates that the Holy Spirit is God like the expressions discussed above. Our Lord said: “The water that I will give will become in him a well of water springing up to everlasting life” (John 4:14). He refers by his words to the gift of the Holy Spirit which gives everlasting life to those who are worthy of it. ... And the apostle also said: “the letter kills but the Spirit gives life” (ⲛⲓⲥⲁ; 2 Cor 3:6) and showed us that he will make us immortal. And again in another passage: “The first Adam was made a living soul and the second Adam life-giving (ⲛⲓⲥⲁ) Spirit” (1 Cor 15:45bc). He shows by his words that Christ our Lord was changed in his body, at the resurrection from the dead, to immortality by the power of the Holy Spirit.⁸⁹

We see that Theodore interprets the Spirit as “Giver of Life” with respect to Christ who gives life to those who are worthy to receive the Spirit and everlasting life, which starts in the present life. He applies 1 Cor 15:45c, however, to Christ’s own resurrection and immortality thanks to the Holy Spirit. It is the first time that we encounter this interpretation.

Furthermore, Theodore wrote commentaries on the Pauline epistles which have been preserved fragmentarily. *Catena* fragments of his *Commentary on First Corinthians* include excerpts on 1 Cor 15:45-47 and 48-49. A sentence on 1 Cor 15:45b contains two points that seem abridged

88 Kinzig, *A History of Early Christian Creeds* (2024), 339-344.

89 Theodore of Mopsuestia, *Homiliae catecheticae* 10 (ed. and trans. Mingana, 231-232; 110, trans. slightly adapted). Cf. Altermath, *Du corps psychique au corps spirituel* (1977), 206-207.

to the extent of being incomprehensible, unless its difficulty is due to Theodore's own notoriously laborious style. The fragment says that Paul did not write (about Adam), "[he became] a life-giving soul" but "a living [soul]". Skipping the second line in Staab's edition, I surmise that the first line is explained by the next clause about "the first human" who "died and could not rise again (*ἀναστῆναι*)". In between, Theodore distinguishes Adam's "living soul" from the soul of irrational creatures that perishes with their bodies.⁹⁰ We read here that even though human souls are not irrational like animals, they cannot regain life or rise again by themselves after death. Then, commenting on 1 Cor 15:45c, the fragment says that the "second human (actually from 1 Cor 15:47) rose by himself (*ἀνέστησεν δι' ἑαυτοῦ*) because he had (a) life-giving Spirit and a soul".⁹¹ Because of the clause "rose by himself" we may safely conclude that Theodore here means Christ who rose from the dead. This is similar to his tenth homily on the Nicene creed, where he also relates the expression "life-giving Spirit" to Christ's resurrection.

In the excerpt Theodore briefly discusses regeneration and resurrection of the believers in his interpretation of 1 Cor 15:46-47, but without referring to Christ as life-giving Spirit who enables the resurrection of those who believe in him.⁹² Probably the full text of the *Commentary* said more about the relationship between the life-giving Spirit and the believers' resurrection, either in their regeneration or eschatologically. It is not known whether Theodore read *φορέσωμεν* or *φορέσομεν* in 1 Cor 15:49, but the remnants of his interpretation of 1 Cor

90 Staab, *Pauluskommentare* (1984²), 195, 9-12. Cf. Wickert, *Studien zu den Pauluskommentaren Theodors von Mopsuestia* (1962), 104; Altermath, *Du corps psychique au corps spirituel* (1977), 207.

91 Theodore, *Fragments on 1 Cor 15:45-47* (ed. Staab, *Pauluskommentare* [1984²], 195.12-13; my trans.).

92 Theodore, *Fragments on 1 Cor 15:45-47* (ed. Staab, *Pauluskommentare* [1984²], 195.13-20). See Wickert, *Studien zu den Pauluskommentaren Theodors von Mopsuestia* (1962), 104, 205 for his emendations of the *catenae* text.

15:46-49 demonstrate that he applied the passage both to the present life of the believers and to the eschatological resurrection. Most likely the few and complicated sentences of the excerpt that discuss 1 Cor 15:45c are defective in this respect.

17. *Cyril of Alexandria*

Cyril, bishop of Alexandria from 412 to 444, quotes 1 Cor 15:45 several times in his extant works. In the earlier years of his episcopacy, somewhere between 412 and 425, he refers to 1 Cor 15:45 in his anti-Arian *Treasury of the Holy, Consubstantial Trinity*. Under the heading “That the Son of God is life by nature” he lists several testimonies to this statement, the first of which is Jesus’ proclamation, “I am the way, the truth, and the life” (John 14:6). A little later he quotes 1 Cor 15:45bc as another proof-text for the heading, without any further explanation.⁹³ Yet, since he associates the designation *πνεῦμα ζωοποιούν* with Christ being life itself and God’s Son, he clearly links “life” and “life-giving” to salvation by Christ and life in communion with him.

In his comments on the Pentateuch called *Glaphyra*, from the same period, Cyril quotes 1 Cor 15:45 as a testimony to the juxtaposition of the first Adam and Christ as a second beginning who effectuates salvation and the ultimate resurrection (1 Cor 15:22).⁹⁴ With a view to the resurrection he reads *φορέσομεν* in 1 Cor 15:49, “we shall bear the image of the heavenly one”, whereas elsewhere he also reads the exhortation “let us bear” (*φορέσωμεν*), which applies to the present life.⁹⁵

93 Cyril of Alexandria, *Thesaurus de sancta consubstantiali Trinitate* (PG 75, 649.40-42; 652.5-7).

94 Cyril of Alexandria, *Glaphyra* 1 (PG 69, 28.50-29.20). For the date see Cyril of Alexandria *Glaphyra on the Pentateuch* (trans. Lunn), vol. 1, 21.

95 Cyril of Alexandria, *Glaphyra* 1 (PG 69, 29.6-7); *φορέσωμεν* in e.g. *Fragments on 1 Cor 15:47-49* (ed. Zawadzki, *Der Kommentar Cyrills von Alexandrien zum 1.*

Soon after the outbreak of the Nestorian controversy in 430, Cyril composes a collection of commented proof-texts *To the Most Pious Ladies*, most likely Emperor Theodosius' sisters Arcadia and Marina. This work is meant to refute Nestorius' Christology, which is why it was included in the Acts of the Council of Ephesus of 431. One of its sections is entitled, "That Christ is life and life-giving" ("Ὅτι ζωὴ καὶ ζωοποιὸς ὁ Χριστός). Among other scriptural texts, Cyril quotes 1 Cor 15:45-50, 52e-53. He comments on verse 45,

The first human became a living soul, for as a creature he was in need of the life-giving God (ἐδεῖτο γὰρ ὡς ποίημα τοῦ ζωοποιούντος θεοῦ). Since the last Adam, that is Christ, as God, was not in need of life (ὅτι μὴ ἐδεῖτο ζωῆς ὡς θεός), he became life-giving Spirit for us, which is the pre-eminence proper to [his] divine nature (ὅπερ ἐστὶ θείας φύσεως ἴδιον πλεονέκτημα).⁹⁶

This observation emphasizes Christ's divinity even though he was called "last Adam". Cyril's comments on the following verses, however, stress Christ's humanity, for being the Logos from heaven (cf. 1 Cor 15:47-48) he was born from a woman and became a human. In 1 Cor 15:49 Cyril reads φορέσομεν, "we shall bear the image of the heavenly one", in relation to the future resurrection announced in 1 Cor 15:51-52.⁹⁷

His *Commentary on First Corinthians*, dated to 433-438, has been preserved only fragmentarily in the *catenae*, which include excerpts on 1 Cor 15:44-45, 46, and 47-49.⁹⁸ Expounding verse 45, Cyril says that

Korintherbrief [2015], 252); *Thesaurus de sancta consubstantiali Trinitate* (PG 75, 489.7-9; 569.52-54).

96 Cyril of Alexandria, *Oratio ad dominas* 134 (ed. Schwartz, *Acta Conciliorum Oecumenicorum*, vol. I, 15, 95.1.13-25; quoted comments lines 22-25; my trans.).

97 Cyril, *Oratio ad dominas* 134 (ed. Schwartz, *Acta Conciliorum Oecumenicorum*, vol. I, 15, 95.25-33).

98 Cyril of Alexandria, *Fragments on 1 Cor* 15,44-45, 47-49 (ed. Zawadzki, *Der Kommentar Cyrills von Alexandrien zum 1. Korintherbrief* [2015], 244-253; cf. 58-59 for the date; trans. Maxwell, 80-82).

Adam, who became a living soul (ψυχή) so that he was psychic, had carnal desires and passions (even in Paradise, as Cyril clarifies later on). Next, the fragment introduces the *second* human who came from heaven (this actually derives from 1 Cor 15:47) and did not become soul but life-giving Spirit. The fragment argues that the Logos came from God the Father, was God by nature, united what was human to himself, and led a sinless life.⁹⁹ This is meant as an explanation of πνεῦμα ζωοποιούν. So, according to this fragment, Cyril explains the label “life-giving Spirit” as a testimony to Christ’s divinity during his incarnation and life on earth.

In Cyril’s anti-Nestorian dialogue from the same years (435-437), entitled *That Christ is One*, he also comments on 1 Cor 15:45bc. A fictitious interlocutor asks whether “the last Adam” refers to “the Logos from God”. Cyril answers that this is true for the time when “he (i.e. the Logos) had become equal to us”, that is, during his life on earth. However, his capacity to give life does not belong to his human but rather to his divine side (οὐκ ἀνθρώπινον θεοπρεπέες δὲ μᾶλλον τὸ ζωοποιεῖν). At the same time, he is called “last Adam” because he is “born from Adam according to the flesh”. As last Adam he was the second beginning of mankind, through whom humans may receive a new, holy, and imperishable life by the resurrection from the dead.¹⁰⁰ Here too Cyril reads πνεῦμα ζωοποιούν as a testimony to Christ’s divinity through which he confers salvific life to humans and their future resurrection. Nonetheless, during his life on earth Christ was human as well. The relationship and unity between these two aspects

99 Cyril of Alexandria, *Fragments on 1 Cor 15,44-45* (ed. Zawadzki, *Der Kommentar Cyrills von Alexandrien zum I. Korintherbrief* [2015], 246.17-20; 248.16-24; 250.5-12).

100 Cyril of Alexandria, *Quod unus sit Christus 772e-773a* (SC 97, 496). The editor de Durand puts ζωοποιεῖν between square brackets because, unlike the Greek codices, the Syrian and Armenian translations read *esse in spiritum vivificantum*, “to be life-giving Spirit”. For the date see SC 97, 69-80. Cf. Altermath, *Du corps psychique au corps spirituel* (1977), 164.

were at stake in the debate with Nestorius and his disciples.

We see that Cyril uses the words *ὁ ἕσχατος Ἀδάμ εἰς πνεῦμα ζωοποιοῦν* both for Christ's divinity during the earthly life that he led as the last Adam, without downplaying his humanity, and as a testimony to the life he gives in his salvation of humans and in the resurrection.

18. Theodoret of Cyrus

Theodoret was born in Syrian Antioch ca. 393. In 423 he became bishop of Cyrus, north-east of Antioch, and he died ca. 458. In the mid-440s he wrote a *Commentary on the Pauline Epistles*, which has been preserved, perhaps because of its succinctness and precision.¹⁰¹ His interpretation of 1 Cor 15:45 reads,

the first assertion (viz. 1 Cor 15:45b; Gen 2:7) we read in the Scriptures, the second one (viz. 1 Cor 15:45c) we came to know through what happened (*ἐν τοῖς πράγμασιν*). Now, he (i.e. Paul) did not call the second Adam (1 Cor 15:47) living spirit but life-giving, for he (i.e. Christ) grants everlasting life to all.¹⁰²

We recognize here elements from John Chrysostom and from Origen's homily on Num 34. The last words "everlasting life to *all*" probably alludes to 1 Cor 15:22b, "*all* will be made alive in Christ". That Theodoret hints at the eschatological resurrection, is confirmed by his comments on 1 Cor 15:46-49, which point to Christ's second coming, not to his coming as the incarnate Logos. Another corroboration of his eschatological take on this passage is his reading *φορέσομεν*, "we shall bear the image of the heavenly one", in 1 Cor 15:49.¹⁰³ While Didymus,

101 Theodoret of Cyrus, *Commentary on the Letters of St. Paul*, vol. 1 (trans. Hill), 1-2.

102 Theodoret of Cyrus, *Interpretatio primae epistulae ad Corinthios* 15,45 (PG 82, 365C, trans. Hill, 233, adapted).

103 Theodoret, *Interpretatio primae epistulae ad Corinthios* 15,44-49 (PG 82, 365C-367A).

Theodore, and Cyril used both *φορέσομεν* and *φορέσωμεν*, the latter reading is not found in Theodoret's extant works. In fact, he selects the interpretation that—as we may assume—Chrysostom preferred.

19. *Conclusions*

What does this investigation of the reception of 1 Cor 15:45 in ancient Christianity yield for the understanding of the expression “life-giving Spirit” as a designation of the “last Adam”, Christ?

The earliest allusions to *πνεῦμα ζωοποιούν* in the “*Coptic Book*”, the Valentinians Mark and Theodotus, Irenaeus of Lyons, Clement of Alexandria, and the *Exegesis on the Soul* agree that these words point to regeneration, salvation, and spiritual vivification of humans, brought about by Christ. In fact, this became the traditional interpretation that, in various terms, is also found in Origen, Apollinaris of Laodicea, Gregory of Nyssa, Didymus of Alexandria, John Chrysostom, Ambrose of Milan, and Cyril of Alexandria. This entails that, if this were accepted as the only reading of 1 Cor 15:45c, Paul would have interrupted his discussion of the final resurrection in 1 Cor 15:12-44 and 50-55. However, some of these authors perceived that Paul also—or even in particular—had the eschatological resurrection in mind. This holds for Origen, Didymus, John Chrysostom, Cyril, and Theodoret. Nevertheless, their views of the final resurrection were not all the same, for Origen and Didymus saw it rather as a continuing process instead of a specific event in the future, and they maintained that the resurrection body would be spiritual, in the sense of not fleshly.

Another application of 1 Cor 15:45c is found in Origen and Didymus, who also brought the term “life-giving spirit” to bear on the believers who, thanks to their spiritual renewal, became a “life-giving spirit” themselves. This fits with Origen's and Didymus' expectation of a spiritual resurrection body. All other authors conceive *πνεῦμα ζωοποιούν* in terms of the Holy Spirit or Spirit of Christ. They would

not have agreed with the present-day translation “a life-giving spirit”.

Furthermore, the fact that Christ was called “last Adam [who became] lifegiving Spirit” was used in Christological debates. Tertullian interpreted these two names in terms of Christ being both human and divine, both corporeal and spiritual. Origen regarded the two terms together as references to Christ’s humanity during his earthly life, alongside his divinity. On the contrary, Apollinaris read here that the incarnate Christ was divine and had a divine body, unlike other humans. Cyril read this clause as a testimony to Christ’s divinity, but like Origen and unlike Apollinaris he acknowledged his humanity too. Theodore of Mopsuestia is alone in relating the term *πνεῦμα ζωοποιούν* to Christ’s own resurrection. Also, as far as we can know, he was the first to quote this clause as a corroboration of the addition to the Nicene creed in 381 about the Holy Spirit being “life-giving”.

So, in the ancient reception of 1 Cor 15:45, especially its last clause, we see a striking divergence between the various interpretations, although they do not always exclude each other. The passage can be used for the spiritual renewal in the present life and in the final resurrection, but also in Christological arguments.

My final observation is that many authors who discussed Paul’s chapter about the resurrection in doctrinal (not exegetical) works passed over 1 Cor 15:45 in silence. This suggests a certain embarrassment with the verse. In comparison, in 2 Cor 3:17 Paul says that “the Lord (i.e. Christ) is the Spirit”. This saying was regularly quoted in contemporary Trinitarian debates, as Haykin’s monograph demonstrates.¹⁰⁴ Apparently, Paul’s phrase that the last Adam—undoubtedly Christ—was life-giving Spirit caused uneasiness and confusion.

¹⁰⁴ See the index in Haykin, *The Spirit of God* (1994), 252.

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La triplice via alla conoscenza di Dio nel trattato *De Trinitate* di Ilario di Poitiers

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Keywords: *Hilary of Poitiers, Trinity, faith, apophaticism, theological language*

Abstract

The Threefold Way of Knowing God in Hilarius of Poitiers' De Trinitate: For Hilary, the mystery of God transcends human intelligence in such a way that it cannot be reached by human efforts alone. Our author develops an apophatic theology that emphasises this inability of human intelligence to comprehend the divine essence. Within this theological development, he distinguishes a triple path in man's knowledge of God: the *via negationis*, the *via analogiae* and the *via eminentiae*. In this way, he offers a way forward, a *profectus*, through which man can always grow in *cognitio Dei*. Ultimately, even if it is not possible to understand God with reason alone, He can be reached and understood through faith, which is infinite and allows man to know God through the Son, who transcends him as much as the Father.

1. Introduzione

Ilario di Poitiers sviluppa una teologia apofatica ovvero una teologia che sottolinea l'incapacità dell'intelligenza umana di comprendere l'essenza divina con le sole proprie forze. Dato l'abisso tra Dio e l'uomo, l'uomo non può conoscerlo da solo, poiché "l'imperfetto

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infatti non concepisce il perfetto”.¹ In questo senso, “il nostro spirito non ha accesso alla conoscenza celeste, e la nostra debolezza non potrà concepire per qualche aspetto intellettuale una potenza inafferrabile”.² Questo implica, secondo il nostro autore, l’inadeguatezza del linguaggio umano a spiegare il mistero divino, il che non significa che l’uomo non possa giungere a capirlo. Di seguito rifletteremo sul modo in cui, secondo Ilario, avviene la *cognitio Dei* da parte dell’uomo. Il suo pensiero mostra che tale conoscenza implica un *profectus*³ cioè un progresso che passa attraverso le tre vie epistemologiche precedentemente presentate da Alcino, ⁴ Ireneo di Lione⁵ e Celso⁶ (la *via negationis*, la *via analogiae* e la *via eminentiae*).

Questo triplice percorso viene adottato con alcune varianti anche da Agostino di Ippona⁷ e successivamente dalla scolastica.⁸ È celebre

- 1 Ilario di Poitiers, *De Trinitate* (= *Trin.*) III,24 (CSEL 62, 96): “Non enim concipiunt imperfecta perfectum”. La traduzione italiana è di Orazio, vol. I, 194.
- 2 Ibid., IV,14 (115): “Non subeunt ingenia nostra in caelestem scientiam, neque inconpraehensibilem uirtutem sensu aliquo infirmitas nostra concipiet” (trad. di Orazio, vol. I, 210); cf. Wildman, *In Our Image* (2017), 74; Aroztegi Esnaola, *Encuentro entre la Trinidad y la humanidad en Jesucristo* (2022), 340-342.
- 3 Questo *profectus* dell’uomo nella conoscenza di Dio, punto fondamentale nella teologia di Ilario, è trattato in Aroztegi Esnaola, *Encuentro entre la Trinidad y la humanidad en Jesucristo* (2022), 356-378.
- 4 Cf. Martino, *Alcino, Exposición didáctica de las doctrinas de Platón* (2014), 26-34.
- 5 Cf. Ireneo, *Adversus Haereses* II; Mansfeld, *Compatible Alternatives* (1988), 92-118.
- 6 Cf. Celso, *Il Discorso vero* VII,42, (trad. di Lanata, 142); Origene, *Contro Celso* VII,42-44 (trad. di Colonna, 624-627).
- 7 Agostino sviluppa la triplice via *affirmationis*, *negationis* ed *eminentiae* dalla prospettiva apofatica. Per maggiori informazioni, cf. Van Geest, *The Incomprehensibility of God* (2011).
- 8 Tommaso d’Aquino considera la *via affirmationis* (*Summa Theologiae* [= *STh*], I, q.2, a.3, trad. Domenicani Italiani, 81-91), la *negationis* (*STh* I, q.3, 7, 9-10, pp. 92-114, 164-181, 198-229) e la *eminentiae* (*STh* I, q.4, pp. 120-131) nell’ambito della conoscenza analogica di Dio.

l'affermazione con cui Agostino riassume l'apofasi: "Si comprehendis non est Deus".⁹ Se si potesse comprendere, entrerebbe nell'intelligenza umana, debole e limitata, quindi non sarebbe Dio. Con il risveglio della patristica nel ventesimo secolo, gli autori contemporanei hanno fatto rinascere la teologia negativa e con essa l'apofatismo.¹⁰ Questo studio si concentrerà sul commento di alcuni testi del trattato *De Trinitate* di Ilario che riflettono questa triplice via nella *cognitio Dei* da parte dell'uomo.

2. *La via negationis*

2.1. *Il significato di questa via*

La *via negationis*¹¹ cerca di esprimere l'infinità e gli altri attributi del mistero divino, situandolo al di sopra delle realtà più elevate quali l'essere, la vita, l'intelligenza, la bellezza, la virtù, l'unità e la bontà stessa. Questo metodo non è identico in tutti gli autori, ma varia a seconda di come essi concepiscono il primo principio. Il vescovo di

- 9 Agostino, *Sermo* 117,3,5 (trad. Recchia, 6); cf. Van Geest – Maspero, *L'utilità e la necessità* (2021), 258.
- 10 Cf. Papanikolaou, *Essere con Dio* (2006); Lossky, *Eckhart's Apophatic Theology* (2024); Ticciati, *A New Apophaticism* (2013); Fiskå Hägg, *Clement of Alexandria and the Beginnings of Christian Apophaticism* (2006); Wildman, *In Our Image* (2017); Van Geest, *The Orthodox, Apophatic Proviso* (2021), 389-408; Idem, *Sant'Agostino sull'incomprensibilità di Dio* (2015), 321-338; Van Geest – Maspero, *L'utilità e la necessità* (2021), 257-263; Maspero, *Logos ut ratio e Logos ut relatio* (2012), 197-219; Idem, *Relazione e Silenzio* (2013), 105-116.
- 11 Salvatore Lilla offre una panoramica della storia della teologia negativa, sia nel pensiero greco, dalla classicità alla tarda antichità, sia nella tradizione gnostica, patristica e bizantina, dal secondo secolo d.C. al Rinascimento; cf. Lilla, *La teologia negativa* (1982-1987). Da questo studio risulta chiaro che il metodo negativo non è né un'invenzione né un patrimonio esclusivo della teologia patristica. Tutto indica, piuttosto, che viene utilizzato dai Padri perché è il patrimonio comune dei classici greci.

Poitiers giustifica così questo modo di fare teologia:

Non si addice alla ragione affermare utilmente ciò che utilmente ci demolisce. Ma lo spirito umano è incapace di intendere la sapienza divina, ed è sconsiderato dinanzi alla saggezza celeste; intuisce nella misura delle proprie debolezze e capisce secondo i limiti della propria natura.¹²

Ilario ritiene che non sia opportuno che la natura umana affermi sulla divina, poiché la prima giudica e comprende secondo la sua misura e la sua limitazione. Pertanto, se l'intelligenza dell'uomo afferma sull'essenza di Dio, lo farà entro i propri limiti e secondo la sua debolezza. Per questo motivo quando si riferisce alla natura divina, Ilario ritiene più corretto negare piuttosto che affermare.

Questa *via negationis* comporta l'uso di aggettivi e sostantivi privativi con cui nega gli attributi a Dio. Il nostro autore ricorre spesso a essi, come si può notare nel primo libro del trattato *De Trinitate*: “Rimasi chiaramente ammirato di una definizione di Dio così perfetta,¹³ la quale esprimeva l'inaccessibile conoscenza della natura divina con le parole quanto mai adatte all'intelligenza umana”.¹⁴ È interessante che descriva l'essenza divina come impossibile da comprendere, utilizzando l'aggettivo privativo “inconpraehensibilem”.¹⁵ Egli afferma inoltre che “è un compito senza confini quanto si esige, è incomprendibile quanto

12 Ilario, *Trin.* V,1 (150): “Nec ratione conueniat, ut utiliter adfirmetur quod utiliter destruat. Sed ad diuinae sapientiae intelligentiam humanus sensus imprudens et secundum caelestem prudentiam stultus, iuxta infirmitates suas sentit et iuxta inbecillitatem naturae suae sapit” (trad. di Orazio, vol. 1, 210).

13 Si riferisce al testo immediatamente precedente nello stesso capitolo (cf. *Ibid.*, I,5), che parla “di Dio stesso, il Creatore, che ha dato testimonianza di sé: «Io sono colui che sono» (Es 3, 14); e ancora «Questo dirai ai figli di Israele: Colui che è mi ha mandato a voi» (Es 3, 14)”.

14 *Ibid.*, I,5 (5): “Admiratus sum plane tam absolutam de Deo significationem, quae naturae diuinae inconpraehensibilem cognitionem aptissimo ad intelligentiam humanam sermone loqueretur” (trad. di Orazio, vol. 1, 119).

15 Cf. *Ibid.*

si tratta di osare! [...] Non si può formulare, non si può raggiungere, non si può possedere”.¹⁶ Il suo interesse e la sua insistenza nel descrivere la natura di Dio in modo negativo sono evidenti. Se ne parlerà nel paragrafo seguente.

2.2. Terminologia negativa

Ilario distingue tre tipi di trascendenza e presenta dei testi in cui mostra come essi siano correlati tra di loro. Il primo è quello che chiamiamo trascendenza *in essendo* o dell'essere (anche se l'autore non utilizza questa espressione). Il secondo è la trascendenza *in cognoscendo* o del conoscere e l'ultimo è la trascendenza *in dicendo* o del dire.

I termini privativi utilizzati dal Pictaviense per riferirsi a questi tre tipi di trascendenza sono vari. Nei testi in cui considera la trascendenza *in essendo*, egli definisce l'essenza di Dio come infinita,¹⁷ eterna,¹⁸ immutabile,¹⁹ immortale,²⁰ invisibile,²¹ impassibile e incorporea²² tra altri.

Per quanto riguarda la trascendenza *in cognoscendo*, Ilario spiega che non avendo misura, essendo “immenso”,²³ il mistero divino supera il modo di ragionare dell'intelligenza umana.²⁴ Pertanto non

16 Ibid., II,5 (42): “Inmensum est autem quod exigitur, inconpraehensibile est quod audetur [...] Non enuntiat, non attingitur, non tenetur” (trad. di Orazio, vol. I, 151).

17 Cf. Ibid., I,6-8.13.15; II,6.10; IX,72.

18 Cf. Ibid., I,6-8.12-13; II,6-7; III,2-3; IV,6.12; XII,35. Parleremo tra poco di “eterno”, che non è un termine grammaticalmente negativo.

19 Cf. Ibid., IV,8.12; V,37.

20 Cf. Ibid., IV,8.12.

21 Cf. Ibid. II,6-7.

22 Cf. Ibid., III,3; IV,8; V,37.

23 Ibid., II,31 (67): “Deus [...] inmensus est” (trad. di Orazio, vol. I, 170).

24 Cf. Ibid., III,5 (76): “Ratio intellegentiae nostrae inconpraehensibilis est” (trad. di Orazio, vol. I, 177: è “incomprensibile al modo di ragionare della nostra intelligenza”).

può essere né raggiunto né compreso ed è quindi “incomprensibile”:²⁵ “deve essere pensato come invisibile, incomprendibile, eterno”.²⁶ E se è incomprendibile, è inconoscibile.

Da questa trascendenza del conoscere deriva quella del dire o ciò che viene chiamato *in dicendo*. Se il mistero divino è inconoscibile, non può essere espresso né descritto: “La scienza perfetta consiste nel conoscere Dio in modo da sapere che, pur non potendolo ignorare, neanche lo si può esprimere”.²⁷ Pertanto l’essenza di Dio, essendo incomprendibile,²⁸ è ineffabile,²⁹ inenarrabile,³⁰ così da non poter essere espressa con limite e misura.³¹ In definitiva la trascendenza *in dicendo* deriva da quella *in cognoscendo*.

Ilario presenta diversi testi in cui mette in relazione questi tre tipi di trascendenza. Da un lato spiega come la trascendenza dell’essere causi la trascendenza del conoscere: poiché Dio è infinito ed eterno, va oltre

- 25 Ibid., II,25 (61): “Inconpraehensibilis” (trad. di Orazio, vol. I, 166); cf. Ibid., II,31; III,2-3.
- 26 Ibid., II,7 (44): “Sentiendus est inuisibilis inconpraehensibilis aeternus” (trad. di Orazio, vol. I, 153); cf. Ibid., III,3,17; IV,14.
- 27 Ibid., II,7 (44): “Perfecta scientia est sic Deum scire, ut licet non ignorabilem, tamen inenarrabilem scias” (trad. di Orazio, vol. I, 154); cf. Ibid., III,3,17.
- 28 Cf. Ibid., II,7 (44): “Inconpraehensibilis” (trad. di Orazio, vol. I, 153: “Incomprensibile”); Ibid., III,3,17; IV,14.
- 29 Cf. Ibid., II,6 (43): “Hoc inperspicabile naturae nomen in Patre. Deus inuisibilis ineffabilis infinitus” (trad. di Orazio, vol. I, 153: “Questo è il nome della natura impenetrabile che è nel Padre. Dio è invisibile, ineffabile, infinito”); Ibid., VI,17.
- 30 Cf. Ibid., III,17 (89): “Ex eo natum inenarrabiliter” (trad. di Orazio, vol. I, 188: “È nato da lui in modo ineffabile”); Ibid., III,18 (89): “Vt per inenarrabilium gestorum suorum inenarrabilem efficientiam de uirtute natiuitatis inenarrabilis doceremur” (trad. di Orazio, vol. I, 188: “Affinché, mediante l’efficacia ineffabile delle sue azioni ineffabili, fossimo istruiti sulla potenza della sua nascita ineffabile”).
- 31 Cf. Ibid., IV,2 (101): “Quod enim inenarrabile est, id significantiae alicuius finem et modum non habet” (trad. di Orazio I, 198: “Ciò che è ineffabile non può esprimersi secondo limite e misura”).

ciò che una mente umana può comprendere.³² In altre parole “l’opera di un’eternità infinita esige, per essere capita, una capacità infinita di valutazione”.³³ D’altra parte egli mette anche in relazione questa trascendenza del conoscere con quella del dire.³⁴ A titolo di sintesi è esplicativo questo testo in cui il vescovo gallico riassume il modo in cui le tre trascendenze sono collegate tra di loro: “Accogliamo e adoriamo – confessandoli – il Padre e il Figlio, l’ingenerato e l’unigenito, mistero ineffabile che supera ogni capacità di comprensione e di espressione”.³⁵ La trascendenza *in essendo* causa quella che viene chiamata *in cognoscendo* e da questa deriva quella *in dicendo*.

È particolarmente interessante il modo in cui concepisce e collega, all’interno della trascendenza “in essendo”, i termini “infinito” ed “eternità”. Da un lato sottolinea che Dio “è infinito perché non è in alcuna cosa, ma ogni cosa è in lui. È sempre fuori dello spazio, perché non è contenuto da nulla. È sempre prima del tempo, perché il tempo viene da Lui”.³⁶ D’altra parte colpisce il fatto che, per sviluppare la sua teologia negativa, utilizzi il termine “eternità”, che è privo del prefisso privativo “in-”. Ora, anche se non si tratta di un termine grammaticalmente negativo, Ilario lo considera tale dal punto di vista del significato, poiché intende l’eternità come una mancanza di misura

32 Cf. Ibid., I,13 (13-14): “Vt dum infinitas aeternae in eo est potestatis, omnem terrenae mentis amplexum potestas aeternae infinitatis excedat” (trad. di Orazio, vol. I, 126-127: “Dato che in lui si trova la pienezza del potere eterno, la potenza dell’infinitudine eterna supera ogni abbraccio della mente umana”).

33 Ibid., I,13 (15): “Infinitae aeternitatis operatio infinitam metiendi exigat opinionem” (trad. di Orazio, vol. I, 127).

34 Cf. Ibid., II,21; III,17-18; IV,18.

35 Ibid., II,21 (57): “Confessionemque Patris et Fili, ingeniti et unigeniti, inenarrabilem et excedentem complexum omnem et sermonis et sensus teneamus adque adoremus” (trad. di Orazio, vol. I, 163).

36 Ibid., II,6 (42): “Infinitus quia non ipse in aliquo, sed intra eum omnia. Semper extra locum, quia non continetur. Semper ante aeuum, quia tempus ab eo est” (trad. di Orazio, vol. I, 152).

temporale.³⁷

Consideriamo come Ilario concepisce il rapporto tra infinità ed eternità: “L’infinità dell’eternità senza limiti supera ogni presunta infinità di una natura che voglia raggiungerla”.³⁸ Con l’espressione “l’infinità dell’eternità senza limiti”, che risulta ridondante, si riferisce all’infinità di Dio. Per l’autore l’infinità divina è eterna e l’eternità è infinita.³⁹ Pertanto ritiene che l’infinità sia un attributo dell’eternità, come afferma nel testo seguente: “L’infinità della potenza eterna supera ogni comprensione”.⁴⁰ In ogni caso non solo considera l’eternità come infinita, ma qualifica anche l’infinità come eterna:⁴¹ “e dato che in lui si trova la pienezza del potere eterno, la potenza dell’infinitudine eterna supera ogni abbraccio della mente umana”.⁴² In breve sembra che per Ilario infinità ed eternità, sebbene siano concettualmente diverse, siano in realtà identiche e in definitiva sinonimi dello stesso Dio.⁴³

37 Cf. Ilario, *In Matthaeum* XXXI,2 (SCh 258, 226): “Deus autem sine mensura temporum semper est et qualis est, talis aeternus est” (trad. di Sartori, 319: “Dio esiste sempre senza misura di tempo, e quale Egli è, tale è in eterno”).

38 Ibid., I,6 (7): “Omnem persequentis se naturae infinitatem infinitas immoderatae aeternitatis excederet” (trad. di Orazio, vol. I, 20). È un po’ sorprendente che egli parli dell’infinità della natura umana, che è quella che pretende di abbracciare il divino. Potrebbe essere interessante indagare sul significato che questa frase potrebbe avere per il vescovo di Poitiers.

39 La precisazione “senza limiti” sottolinea ciò che sia l’uno che l’altro esprimono già. In un altro passaggio si riferisce all’ “infinità dell’immensa eternità”, cf. Ibid., I,7 (7): “Inmensae aeternitatis infinitatem” (trad. di Orazio, vol. I, 121).

40 Ibid., I,8 (9): “Infinitas aeternae potestatis excedit” (trad. di Orazio, vol. I, 122).

41 Cf. Ibid., IV,5 (104): “Qui autem caret tempore, non potest eo carere quod semper est” (trad. di Orazio, vol. I, 201: “Chi invece manca della dimensione del tempo non può mancare di essere sempre”); Ibid., IV,6.

42 Ibid., I,13 (13-14): “Vt dum infinitas aeternae in eo est potestatis, omnem terrenae mentis amplexum potestas aeternae infinitatis excedat” (trad. di Orazio, vol. I, 126-127).

43 Cf. Ladaria, *San Hilario de Poitiers: Diccionario* (2006), voce “eternidad”, 123-124. Sembra che eternità e Dio diventino sinonimi.

2.3. *La via negationis applicata alla seconda persona della Trinità*

Non di rado Ilario parla della “generazione indescrivibile del Figlio”. In occasioni come questa, si riferisce alla seconda persona della Trinità con aggettivi privativi che sono comuni all’essenza divina. A titolo di esempio, descrive il Figlio come “impassibile [...] «l’immagine del Dio invisibile» (cf. Gv 10, 38)”,⁴⁴ “l’incomprensibile da incomprendibile [...] invisibile da invisibile”.⁴⁵ La novità qui risiede nel fatto che l’autore applica questo metodo negativo per riferirsi alla persona del Verbo⁴⁶ e non all’essenza divina. Tanto è vero che si potrebbe ritenere che l’aspetto più rilevante della *via negationis* in Ilario risieda nel fatto che la applichi alla conoscenza del Figlio. In un contesto ariano questo è particolarmente significativo, poiché applica al Figlio gli stessi aggettivi che attribuisce al Padre. Ciò implica che il mistero di Dio Figlio supera l’intelligenza umana nella stessa misura in cui lo fa il mistero del Padre: in definitiva, il Verbo è Dio tanto quanto lo è il Padre.

3. *La via analogiae*

3.1. *Il significato di questa via*

La seconda via che si identifica nell’epistemologia teologica ilariana è la *via analogiae*, che cerca di parlare di Dio partendo da ciò che l’uomo già conosce attraverso i sensi. In altre parole l’analogia parte dall’esperienza umana per cercare di arrivare a ciò che l’uomo non ha potuto sperimentare. Ecco come l’autore spiega il motivo di questo percorso:

44 Ibid., II,8 (45): “Inpassibilis [...] imago inuisibilis Dei” (trad. di Orazio, vol. 1, 154); cf. Ibid., IV,6.

45 Ibid., II,11 (48): “Inconpraehensibilis ab inconpraehensibili [...] inuisibilis ab inuisibili” (trad. di Orazio, vol. 1, 156); cf. Ibid., II,31.

46 Il parallelismo tra queste espressioni e il “Dio da Dio, luce da luce, vero Dio da vero Dio” proprio del simbolo niceno è sorprendente, cf. Denzinger – Hünermann, *Enchiridion symbolorum*, 125 (65).

Se poi, trattando della natura di Dio e della sua nascita, porteremo dei paragoni a titolo di esempio, nessuno immagini che essi contengano la perfezione di un ragionamento compiuto. Non c'è infatti alcun confronto tra le realtà terrene e Dio. Ma la debolezza della nostra intelligenza costringe a cercare immagini nelle realtà inferiori come indizi di quelle superiori, così che dal rapporto con le realtà familiari e a partire da ciò che ci dice il nostro pensiero consapevole, possiamo elevarci a quanto non siamo soliti pensare.⁴⁷

Il motivo per cui Ilario fa appello alla *via analogiae* è la debolezza dell'intelligenza umana, che utilizza immagini di realtà inferiori per cogliere, nella misura delle sue possibilità, quelle superiori. E continua così: "Ogni paragone perciò sia considerato utile all'uomo e non proporzionato a Dio, dato che esso indica una comprensione più che esaurirla".⁴⁸ In altre parole, l'analogia non riesce a spiegare pienamente l'essenza divina, ma è utile affinché l'uomo possa coglierne qualcosa.

Il vescovo gallico illustra questa spiegazione con l'immagine dell'uomo che cerca di guardare la luminosità del sole e la paragona a colui che cerca di comprendere Dio solo con la sua capacità intellettuale, quell'uomo persegue un obiettivo irraggiungibile.

Per coloro che guardano la luminosità del sole, la vista è resa insensibile dall'intensità della luce fissata, così che, quando l'acutezza di uno sguardo curioso vuole scoprire con maggiore attenzione la fonte della luce che si irradia, la capacità naturale degli occhi si ritira fino a perdere il senso della

47 Ibid., I,19 (19): "Si qua uero nos de natura Dei et natiuitate tractantes comparationum exempla adferemus, nemo existimet absolutae in se rationis perfectionem continere. Comparatio enim terrenorum ad Deum nulla est. Sed intellegentiae nostrae infirmitas cogit species quasdam ex inferioribus tamquam superiorum indices quaerere, ut rerum familiarium consuetudine admonente ex sensus nostri conscientia ad insoliti sensus opinionem educeremur" (trad. di Orazio, vol. 1, 131).

48 Ibid., I,19 (19): "Omnis [...] comparatio homini potius utilis habeatur quam Deo apta, quia intellegentiam magis significet quam expleat" (trad. di Orazio, vol. 1, 132).

vista, e accade che, volendo vedere meglio, non veda affatto. Se così, cosa dobbiamo attenderci circa le realtà di Dio, che è sole di giustizia? Non incombe il rischio della stoltezza su quelli che vogliono sapere troppo? E quella stessa luce dell'intelligenza, nella sua acutezza, non resterà forse prigioniera dell'intontimento di un ottuso delirio? Una natura inferiore infatti non intenderà la causa prima di una natura superiore, e il disegno celeste non è soggetto al modo umano di pensare. Difatti, resterà all'interno di una condizione di debolezza tutto ciò che è sottomesso alla conoscenza di un essere debole.⁴⁹

L'autore cerca di spiegare che se l'uomo prova a conoscere il mistero divino con la sua sola ragione, sarà accecato dalla luce di Dio. Ma allora, se si tratta di un'impresa impossibile, ci si chiede se abbia senso che l'uomo cerchi di conoscere Dio. Ilario risponde a questo paradosso nel modo seguente:

La potenza di Dio supera perciò la mente umana; e se la nostra debolezza vuole innalzarsi fino ad essa, sarà resa più debole, e perde anche la capacità di cui dispone, perché la natura delle realtà celesti è tanto grande da procurarne l'ottundimento. Così essa vanifica ogni testardaggine di chi vuole raggiungerla, in quanto è più grande di ciò che può essere abbracciato. Come dunque il sole deve essere guardato come può essere guardato, e la sua luce deve essere recepita nella misura permessa – se ci aspettiamo di più, otteniamo anche meno di quanto è in nostro potere –, così il disegno celeste deve essere compreso nella misura in cui è

49 Ibid., X,53 (507): “Quodsi contuentibus solis claritatem uirtus intenti luminis obstupescit, ut si quando causam radiantis lucis sollertius acies curiosae contemplationis inquirat, usque ad emortuum uidendi sensum oculorum natura reuocetur, accidat que nitendo magis uidere ne uideas, quid nobis in Dei rebus et in sole iustitiae expectandum est? Nonne incumbet uolentibus supersapere stultitia? Nonne ipsum illud acre intellegentiae lumen stupor haebetis desipientiae occupabit? Non enim natura inferior causam naturae potioris intelleget, nec subiacet humanae conceptioni ratio caelestis. Nam intra condicionem infirmitatis erit, quidquid infirmi conscientiae subdetur.” La traduzione italiana è di Antonio Orazio, vol. 2, 216-217.

possibile comprenderlo. Esso deve essere cercato nella misura in cui si dà a conoscere, per evitare che, se non siamo soddisfatti di quanto limitatamente ci è concesso, perdiamo anche quanto ci è stato concesso.⁵⁰

Dunque se l'uomo cerca di comprendere la natura divina solo con la sua intelligenza, non solo non ci riuscirà, ma la sua intelligenza si indebolirà. Deve quindi essere consapevole che coglierà il mistero divino in modo limitato. L'ultima frase del testo invita all'umiltà dell'intelligenza: "Per evitare che, se non siamo soddisfatti di quanto limitatamente ci è concesso, perdiamo anche quanto ci è stato concesso." Vale a dire se l'uomo non accetta che la sua ragione non è sufficiente per comprendere Dio, non lo conoscerà affatto.

3.2. *Il protagonismo della fede nella cognitio Dei*

A questo punto sembrerebbe logico che il vescovo di Poitiers riconoscesse l'impossibilità di conoscere Dio e di conseguenza smettesse di parlarne. Tuttavia non è così. Paradossalmente, continuò a predicare Dio fino alla fine della sua vita. Secondo lui "questi paragoni [...] si fanno solo per avere una comprensione della fede",⁵¹ cioè la *via analogiae* è valida se è aperta alla fede:

⁵⁰ Ibid., X,53 (507-508): "Excedit itaque humanam mentem Dei potestas: ad quam si se infirmitas protendet, magis infirma reddetur, dum hoc ipsum quod obtinet amittit, potiore ad obtundendum eam rerum caelestium natura: quia omnem eius consecrantis se peruicaciam ipsa complexu eius maior infirmitat. Vt igitur sol ita uidendus est ut possit uideri, tantus que excipiendus lumine est quantus admittitur, ne si plus uellimus expectare, minus quoque quam possumus consequamur, ita et ratio caelestis in tantum intellegenda est, in quantum se permittit intellegi; in tantum expetenda est, in quantum adpraehendam se dedit: ne si contenti indulgentiae moderatione non simus, amittamus indulta" (trad. di Orazio, vol. 2, 217).

⁵¹ Ibid., VII,30 (297): "Et haec [...] ad intellegentiam fidei tantum comparata sint" (trad. di Orazio, vol. 2, 42).

Quanto viene edificato da Dio si trova nella fede; con ciò si regola il sentimento della venerazione umana con una fedele adorazione dell'onnipotenza divina, e si proibisce che la nostra debolezza si spinga ad indagare quanto fa impallidire la capacità naturale di indagare.⁵²

Sembra che per “edificazione” intenda la conoscenza di Dio da parte dell'uomo, che può avvenire solo attraverso la fede. Proseguendo su questa linea, in un testo precedente di questo stesso libro e capitolo si leggeva che “la potenza di Dio supera [...] la mente umana”,⁵³ non che va contro di essa. Cioè la conoscenza di Dio da parte dell'uomo non prescinde dalla ragione, ma si basa su di essa, illuminata dalla fede. Se questa *via analogiae* viene percorsa alla luce della fede, porterà alla conoscenza di Dio. L'autore illustra questa idea con un paragone riferito alla promessa fatta da Dio ad Abramo riguardo alla sua discendenza:

Forse Dio ingannò Abramo, allorché gli promise l'eredità delle genti e una discendenza numerosa come le stelle del cielo e i granelli di sabbia? Non dubitando infatti dell'onnipotenza divina, la sua fede devota non fu trattenuta nei limiti della debolezza umana. Disprezzando invece quanto in lui era caduco e terreno, accolse la fede nella promessa divina al di là dei limiti della natura corporea.⁵⁴

Questo testo sottolinea che la fede non è limitata dalla natura della debolezza umana, ma la trascende. In questo modo rende possibile all'uomo, superando i propri limiti naturali, di conoscere Dio.

52 Ibid., X,53 (507): “Aedificationem uero Dei in fide esse: ut humanae uerecundiae modum fideli omnipotentiae Dei religione concludat, neque se infirmitas nostra ad perspicienda ea quae perspiciendi naturam haebent extendat” (trad. di Orazio, vol. 2, 216).

53 Cf. Ibid., X,53.

54 Ibid., X,68 (523-524): “Numquid Abraham calumniatus est Deo, cum ei hereditatem gentium et secundum stellarum adque harenae multitudinem mansurae ex se subolis numerositatem pollicebatur? De omnipotentia enim Dei fides religiosa non ambigens, humanae infirmitatis non est detenta naturis. Sed id quod in se erat caducum terrenum que despiciens, diuinae sponsionis fidem ultra modum corporeae constitutionis exceptit” (trad. di Orazio, vol. 2, 229).

3.3. *L'infinità della fede*

Vale la pena soffermarsi un attimo su questo ultimo punto. In *Trin.* VI,36 Ilario ribadisce un concetto simile: “La fede dell’Apostolo ci spinge oltre l’intelligenza umana”⁵⁵ ovvero la supera o la eccede. Ora, se la fede non è limitata, allora gode di infinità. Lo afferma espressamente nel primo libro di quest’opera:

Ma le grandi opere di Dio, nella magnificenza del suo potere eterno, la mente le soppesava non dalle proprie possibilità, ma dall’infinitudine della fede. Così, non rifiutava di credere che Dio in principio era presso Dio e che il Verbo fatto carne ha abitato tra noi per il fatto che non capiva, ma si rendeva conto di poter capire se credeva.⁵⁶

Ilario parla dell’ “infinità della fede” che eleva l’uomo e lo rende capace di raggiungere Dio:

Non si può capire quanto è grande, ma lo si può credere. Mentre da un lato la fede include la comprensione della necessità di un atteggiamento devoto, dall’altro l’infinità della potenza eterna supera ogni comprensione.⁵⁷

Pertanto, la fede infinita rende possibile all’uomo comprendere Dio, la cui conoscenza supera la ragione umana.⁵⁸ Questo insegnamento sembra innovativo: sebbene si fosse certamente consapevoli che l’uomo potesse conoscere Dio attraverso la fede, sembra una novità nella patristica che venga descritta come infinita: un’idea suggestiva che

55 Ibid., VI,36 (239): “Vltra humanam autem intellegentiam se fides apostolica protendit” (trad. di Orazio, vol. I, 302).

56 Ibid., I,12 (12): “Dei autem uirtutes secundum magnificentiam aeternae potestatis non sensu sed fidei infinitate pendebat: ut Deum in principio apud Deum esse et uerbum carnem factum habitasse in nobis non idcirco non crederet, quia non intellegeret, sed idcirco se meminisset intellegere posse, si crederet” (trad. di Orazio, vol. I, 126).

57 Ibid., I,8 (8-9): “Tantum eum esse intellegeret, quantus et intellegi non potest et potest credi: dum intellegentiam et fides sibi necessariae religionis adsumit, et infinitas aeternae potestatis excedit” (trad. di Orazio, vol. I, 122).

58 Cf. Ibid., I,8.

varrebbe la pena di approfondire. Si tornerà a considerare la fede nella prossima sezione.

In conclusione, attraverso la *via analogiae*, Ilario insegna che si può parlare di Dio a partire da ciò che si conosce attraverso i sensi. Allo stesso modo chiarisce che questa via analogica deve essere utilizzata in modo preciso, caratterizzato da due tratti. In primo luogo, chi segue questa via deve essere consapevole della sua radicale limitazione, che gli impedisce di comprendere Dio da solo. In secondo luogo, e come conseguenza di quanto detto sopra, questa analogia deve aprirsi alla fede. Tanto è che, se si cerca di conoscere Dio utilizzando la *via analogiae* con la sola intelligenza, non si raggiungerà mai lo scopo. Se invece la si applica a partire dalla ragione illuminata dalla fede, lo si potrà raggiungere.

4. L'eminenza della fede

4.1. Il significato di questa via eminentiae

La *via eminentiae* afferma che gli attributi che sono predicati sia in Dio che nelle creature si danno nel primo in modo infinitamente superiore, cioè in modo eminente. Non c'è dubbio che Ilario accetti questa idea. L'aspetto interessante del suo pensiero consiste nel fatto che questo modo superiore in cui le proprietà scoperte dalla *via analogiae* sono date in Dio è accessibile all'uomo attraverso "l'infinità della fede".⁵⁹ Si potrebbe quindi parlare, anche se l'espressione non è di Ilario, dell'"eminenza della fede", per cui l'uomo accoglie la rivelazione. Per questo motivo, il nostro autore parte dall'apofasi per parlare della fede cioè dell'eccesso del mistero di Dio di fronte all'uomo, che spiega perché questo ultimo non possa conoscerlo se Dio stesso non si comunica a lui.⁶⁰ Ora, poiché Lui si è rivelato all'uomo, questo può conoscerlo e credere in Lui.

⁵⁹ Ibid.

⁶⁰ L'idea espressa in questo paragrafo è sviluppata in Aroztegi Esnaola, *Encuentro entre la Trinidad y la humanidad en Jesucristo* (2022), 75-76.

4.2. *L'importanza del linguaggio teologico nella cognitio Dei*

È opportuno sottolineare che in questo processo che implica la rivelazione divina, l'uomo non la accoglie in modo automatico. Deve prima riconoscere che, attraverso le parole di Gesù, il Figlio gli rivela il Padre⁶¹ e gli mostra la via che conduce a Lui.⁶² Ilario lo spiega in questo modo: “Quando perciò tratteremo delle cose di Dio, concederemo a Dio la conoscenza di se stesso, e ci metteremo al servizio delle sue parole con devota venerazione”.⁶³ In questa linea, il vescovo gallico espone anche che “per conoscere le realtà divine, occorre utilizzare gli insegnamenti divini [...] Bisogna credere a quello che Dio rivela di se stesso, e attenersi a quello che di sé offre alla nostra conoscenza.”⁶⁴ In definitiva, l'autore incoraggia il lettore a prestare attenzione a ciò che Dio dice di se stesso cioè al linguaggio che il Figlio usa quando rivela il Padre. Tanto è vero che ritiene che l'uomo possa conoscere Dio e parlare di Lui in modo adeguato solo a partire da ciò che il Verbo gli ha rivelato riguardo al Padre:

Quando, riconosciuta la nostra insensatezza, saremo coscienti dell'ignoranza e dell'imprudenza della nostra natura, [...] comprenderemo che solo questo dobbiamo credere di Dio, ciò di cui egli si è fatto testimone e garante appunto perché lo credessimo di lui.⁶⁵

61 Cf. Mt II, 27 (*Trin.* II,20).

62 Cf. Gv I4, 6 (*Trin.* VII,33). Nessuno arriva al Padre se non attraverso il Figlio, che lo ha fatto conoscere, cf. Mt II, 27 (*Trin.* II,20).

63 Ilario, *Trin.* I,18 (19): “Cum [...] de rebus Dei erit sermo, concedamus cognitionem sui Deo dictis que eius pia ueneratione famulemur” (trad. di Orazio, vol. I, 131).

64 *Ibid.*, IV,14 (115): “Ad diuinarum rerum cognitionem diuinis utendum esse doctrinis [...] Ipsi de se Deo credendum est, et his quae cognitioni nostrae de se tribuit obsequendum” (trad. di Orazio, vol. I, 210).

65 *Ibid.*, III,26 (99-100): “Cum enim recognita stultitiae nostrae intellegentia, inperitiam naturalis in nobis imprudentiae senserimus, [...] cum hoc solum de Deo bene credi intellegamus ad quod de se credendum ipse sibi nobis cum et testis et auctor existat” (trad. di Orazio, vol. I, 196-197).

Esprime questa stessa idea in modo simile in diverse occasioni, come la seguente:

Su Dio non bisogna giudicare secondo i criteri umani. La nostra natura è tale da non potersi innalzare alla conoscenza celeste con le proprie forze. Da Dio stesso occorre apprendere cosa si deve pensare di Dio, dato che egli non si conosce se non a partire da quanto è garantito dalla sua stessa autorità [...] Non si deve parlare quindi di Dio in maniera diversa da come egli stesso ha parlato di sé alla nostra intelligenza.⁶⁶

Pertanto, poiché il linguaggio umano è insufficiente per parlare del mistero divino, ci si può riferire a Dio con le parole con cui Lui si è rivelato vale a dire nulla sarà migliore della stessa parola di Dio per parlare di Lui.⁶⁷ In altre parole, per trattare adeguatamente il mistero divino, dobbiamo usare il linguaggio con cui il Figlio ha rivelato il Padre.⁶⁸ È quindi opportuno partire da ciò che Gesù stesso ha detto, “così, quanto si pensa che non possa essere permesso dalla natura delle cose sarà attinto da un ragionamento che poggia sulla verità divina”,⁶⁹ che è proprio la parola che esce dalla bocca del Figlio di Dio fatto uomo e che, in ultima analisi, si identifica con il Figlio stesso, Verbo eterno di Dio.

66 Ibid., V,21 (172): “Non est de Deo humanis iudiciis sentiendum. Neque enim nobis ea natura est, ut se in caelestem cognitionem suis uiribus eferat. A Deo discendum est, quid de Deo intellegendum sit, quia non nisi se auctore cognoscitur [...] Loquendum ergo non aliter de Deo est, quam ut ipse ad intellegentiam nostram de se locutus est” (trad. di Orazio, vol. 1, 253).

67 Cf. Ibid., VII,38 (305): “Non relictus est hominum eloquiis de Dei rebus alius praeterquam Dei sermo” (trad. di Orazio, vol. 2, 49: “Ai ragionamenti umani non è rimasta altra possibilità di discorrere sulle realtà divine se non a partire dalle parole stesse di Dio”).

68 Cf. Ibid., VII,39 (306): “Non possumus uerbis aliis docere nisi Fili” (trad. di Orazio, vol. 2, 50: “Non possiamo insegnarlo con parole diverse da quelle del Figlio”).

69 Ibid. III,1 (73): “Vt quod natura rerum pati non posse existimatur, id diuinae ueritatis ratio consequatur” (trad. di Orazio, vol. 1, 174).

4.3. *L'uso della nominatio nel discorso su Dio*

A questo punto ci chiediamo cosa abbia di particolare il discorso di Gesù rispetto a quello del resto dell'umanità quando parla di Dio. Qui entra in gioco il dibattito sulla filosofia del linguaggio su cui Ilario basa la sua teologia trinitaria e la sua epistemologia.⁷⁰ In questo contesto, occorre distinguere la *nominatio* dalla *nuncupatio*, termini tecnici della teoria classica del linguaggio. La *nominatio* corrisponde a un nome in senso proprio ovvero si riferisce all'assegnazione del nome che corrisponde alla natura della realtà, mentre la *nuncupatio* si riferisce alla denominazione arbitraria o all'assegnazione del nome alla cosa, non relativa alla sua essenza. Ebbene, Ilario a volte usa un linguaggio naturalistico e altre volte uno piuttosto convenzionalista. Riconosce l'opportunità dell'uso della *nuncupatio* o dell'attribuzione nel linguaggio umano. Tuttavia quando parla del mistero divino difende l'uso della *nominatio* o dei nomi naturali, sulla base del fatto che Cristo stesso utilizza un linguaggio naturalistico per rivelare il Padre all'uomo.⁷¹ Questo ultimo può accogliere tale rivelazione mediante la fede, che è indispensabile per la conoscenza e la confessione del mistero divino.⁷²

70 Questo punto è sviluppato ulteriormente in Aroztegi Esnaola, *Encuentro entre la Trinidad y la humanidad*, 48-65.

71 Secondo Ilario, quando Cristo parla del Padre non lo fa in modo figurato, né con una denominazione attribuita, ma in modo reale, alludendo alla sostanza divina. In altre parole, il Figlio parla del Padre usando dei nomi che "si adattano alle cose di Dio secondo il significato naturale" (*Trin.* III,22 [94]: "Secundum naturae intellegentiam [nomina] diuinis rebus aptata sunt"; trad. di Orazio, vol. 1, 192). Se così non fosse, Cristo non si riferirebbe a Dio: "Questa è la verità del mistero di Dio, questo è il nome della natura impenetrabile che è nel Padre [...] Nel Padre c'è pure il nome della sua natura, ma Egli è soltanto Padre. Non ha infatti da altri di essere Padre, come avviene per gli uomini" (*Trin.* II,6 [43]: "Haec ueritas est sacramenti Dei, hoc inperspicabile naturae nomen in Patre [...] Habet tamen naturae suae nomen in Patre, sed Pater tantum est. Non enim humano modo habet aliunde quod Pater est"; trad. di Orazio vol. 1, 153).

72 Cf. Aroztegi Esnaola, *Encuentro entre la Trinidad y la humanidad* (2022), 53-60.

Per concludere questa sezione, si può affermare che secondo la *via eminentiae*, in Dio le proprietà che si identificano nelle creature sono presenti in modo superiore, eminente e possono essere conosciute perché il Figlio stesso ce le ha rivelate. Questo spiega perché si dovrebbero accogliere con fede le parole con cui Gesù ha fatto conoscere suo Padre. Secondo Ilario questa fede è infinita, in modo da superare la limitazione della natura umana, affinché l'uomo possa raggiungere e conoscere Dio.

5. Conclusione: le tre infinità

In breve, l'uomo progredisce nella conoscenza di Dio attraverso un *profectus* che inizia con la *via negationis*. Data l'eccedenza del mistero divino rispetto a quello umano, l'uomo è naturalmente incapace di conoscere Dio. Per questo motivo Ilario ritiene più appropriato parlare di Dio in modo negativo piuttosto che affermativo ovvero con aggettivi privativi che descrivono ciò che Dio non è. La particolarità di questa via nella teologia del Pictaviense è che la applica per descrivere il Verbo cioè tratta il Figlio con la stessa dignità e grandezza del Padre e afferma che Egli trascende assolutamente la natura umana.

Nella *via analogiae* il vescovo gallico utilizza immagini tratte dall'esperienza umana per comprendere Dio, nella misura del possibile. Questa via deve essere applicata con la consapevolezza dei limiti dell'intelligenza umana e, soprattutto, con apertura all'infinità della fede.

Infine, tale fede sembra identificarsi con la *via eminentiae* nella *cognitio Dei*. Essendo un'azione divina nell'uomo, è infinita, il che gli permette di accogliere la rivelazione del Padre e di conoscerlo sulla base di ciò che lo stesso Figlio gli ha rivelato e nel modo in cui l'ha fatto.

In breve, in questa triplice via della *cognitio Dei* in Ilario si possono evidenziare tre infinità interrelate: l'infinità di Dio, da cui nasce il Figlio; l'infinità del Figlio, che attraverso il dono della fede ci permette di conoscere l'infinità del Padre; e l'infinità di tale fede, che ci consente di superare i limiti della natura umana per raggiungere Dio.

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**Dall'amicizia dei filosofi all'amicizia cristiana: alcune
riflessioni a partire dall'insegnamento
di Clemente Alessandrino**

Miklós GYURKOVICS

Keywords: *Clement of Alexandria, Friendship, Philanthropy, Ownership, Christian Platonism*

Abstract

From the Friendship of Philosophers to Christian Friendship: Some Reflections Based on the Teachings of Clement of Alexandria: This study examines the philosophical foundations of Clement of Alexandria's teaching on friendship and considers how the Christian perspective reshapes the conclusions inherited from earlier traditions. The comparison between the ancient philosophers—especially Plato and Aristotle—and Clement becomes particularly meaningful when these sources are read through the interpretive lens associated with the Tübingen School. It is also possible that Clement's engagement with the topic was motivated by the need to respond to Valentinus's homily on friendship. Drawing on Gen 1:26, Clement articulates not only the “divine image” of the human being but also the principle of participation in the divine life. He maintains that all people who come into the world are invited to become similar to God and in this likeness to become God's friends. This universal call to deification, which implies a doctrine of the general redemption of humanity, carries clear anti-Gnostic implications. At the same time, the philosophical

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consequences for practical life can be compared with the Christian ideal of friendship as it took shape in the late second century, within a community that welcomed even those marginalized by society. The model for this ideal is not the fellowship of philosophers or the noble guardians of Plato's Republic, but the mutual love of the Father and the Son and the compassionate love of God for human weakness. Through this divine love, human beings may become friends, children, and similar to God.

1. *L'importanza del tema dell'amicizia*

Analizzando gli scritti di Clemente Alessandrino, si potrebbe avere l'impressione che le idee principali di questo autore alquanto enigmatico siano quasi identiche in tutte le sue opere. In particolare, sebbene ogni sua opera presenti delle caratteristiche stilistiche diverse, il suo messaggio teologico resta invariato. Questo vale anche per il suo insegnamento sull'amicizia. Dopo aver esaminato circa trenta passi in cui Clemente espone il tema dell'amicizia secondo varie prospettive, la nostra conclusione è che questo autore, rimaneggiando in chiave biblica le idee sull'amicizia provenienti dalla letteratura classica, abbia formulato uno dei messaggi più attrattivi e maggiormente missionari del cristianesimo.¹ La particolare attenzione di Clemente nel trattare il tema dell'amicizia è dimostrata dal fatto che nel suo insegnamento egli

1 Abbreviazioni dei titoli delle opere di Clemente Alessandrino: *Prot.* = *Protrepticus*; *Paed.* = *Paedagogus*; *Strom.* = *Stromata*; *Qds.* = *Quis dives salvetur*. Il presente studio è stato redatto sulla base dell'interpretazione dei seguenti passi: *Strom.* II,5,20,2; *Strom.* II,9,41,6; *Strom.* II,9,42,2; *Strom.* II,9,45,4; *Strom.* II,19,103,1; *Strom.* II,20,104,2-3; *Strom.* II,22,133,1; *Strom.* III,10,69,4; *Strom.* IV,3,9,1; *Strom.* IV,7,42,5-43,4; *Strom.* IV, 17,105,1-106,1; *Strom.* V,6,40,1-2; *Strom.* V,14,95,4-96,1; *Strom.* VI,6,52,3-53,1; *Strom.* VII,18,3-19,3; *Strom.* VII,3,21,1-5; *Strom.* VII,11,68,1-5; *Strom.* VII,16,93,5-6; *Paed.* I,3,7,1-3; *Paed.* II,12,120,3-6; *Prot.* XII, 118,1-123,2; *Qds.* 1,4-5; *Qds.* 3,1-6; *Qds.* 11,3; *Qds.* 23,1-5; *Qds.* 27,5; *Qds.* 33,1-3; *Qds.* 34,1-3; *Qds.* 35,1-2; *Qds.* 36,1-3; *Qds.* 37,1-6.

presenta ed elabora le opinioni di un numero di pensatori pagani ancora più vasto del solito. Sebbene Clemente possa aver attinto da raccolte tematiche, il presente studio intende mostrare che egli non copiò le parole degli autori antichi in modo superficiale, ma le approfondì e le trasformò in modo radicale. Al fine di dimostrare con argomentazioni logiche questa non trascurabile affermazione, costruiremo il nostro studio attorno a quattro testi: *Prot.* 12,118,1-123,2; *Strom.* II,9,41-42; *Strom.* II,19,97,1-20,104,3; *Qds.* 35,1-37,6.² È opportuno ricordare che *Prot.* 12,118,1-123,2 è il passo conclusivo del libro, e che nello specifico con queste affermazioni Clemente termina la sua esortazione nei confronti dei lettori ellenici ad abbracciare la religione cristiana. Con *Strom.* II,19,97,1-20,104,3 Clemente compie un percorso spirituale attraverso i concetti teologici più importanti: la fede (2,1-7), l'amore (2,9), la gnosi (2,10-17).³ In seguito egli rielabora l'idea di amicizia, conosciuta dalla filosofia antica, per trasmettere il messaggio cristiano di somiglianza a Dio in *Strom.* II,19,97,1-20,104,3.⁴ Alla fine *Qds.* 35,1-37,6 viene letto nella più ampia prospettiva di *Qds.* 27,3-38,3, in cui si rivela la specificità

- 2 Poiché in *Prot.* 12,118,1-123,2 Clemente ha presentato il suo insegnamento antropologico e teologico in uno stile elevato, nel nostro caso non seguiremo il consueto ordine delle opere (*Prot.*, *Paed.*, *Strom.*). Iniziamo, quindi, con l'interpretazione di *Strom.* invece che con *Prot.*, in modo da chiarire le fonti filosofiche dell'autore, la sua metodologia e il contenuto teologico dei concetti fondamentali da lui utilizzati nella prima parte del nostro studio. Sulla vita e l'opera di Clemente cfr. Hrušová, *Clement and His Paedagogus* (2025), 11-36. Il tema dell'amicizia è stato analizzato a fondo e presentato in modo sintetico in: Pizzolato, *L'idea dell'amicizia nel mondo classico e cristiano* (1993), per Clemente cfr. 246-253; Karuhije, *La Cité du Logos* (2022), 330-379.
- 3 Cfr. *Strom.* II,9,45,4 (fede, amore, gnosi, servitù, amicizia, somiglianza a Dio); *Strom.* III,10,69,4; IV,7, 42,5-43,4. Behr, *Asceticism and Anthropology in Irenaeus and Clement* (2000), 135-208; Choufrine, *Gnosis, Theophany, Theosis* (2002), 43-45; Russell, *The Doctrine of Deification* (2004), 128-129.
- 4 Sulla somiglianza a Dio secondo Clemente cfr. Lilla, *Clement of Alexandria* (1971), 105-117; Gyurkovics, *I sacrifici dell'assimilazione a Dio* (2021), 83-104.

dell'amicizia cristiana in contrasto con le idee che potrebbero essere definite *classiche ed elitarie*.⁵

2. *Strom. II,9,41-42*

In *Strom. II,9,41-42*, in cui viene formulata una concezione cristiana dell'amore (ἀγάπη), Clemente richiama innanzitutto le definizioni dei grandi pensatori del passato.⁶ Così, nelle righe di questi capitoli troviamo riferimenti inequivocabili alle affermazioni delle *Definitiones* (ornate dal nome di Platone),⁷ dello stoico Zenone,⁸ e alle parole di Aristotele,⁹ secondo cui un amico non è altro che un altro me stesso.¹⁰ In questo caso, Clemente cita il detto classico non con la parola φίλος, ma con ἑταῖρος, ovvero il *compagno*, il *prossimo*.¹¹ Dal prosieguito del

- 5 Ad una prima lettura, *Qds.* potrebbe sembrare un'opera che tratta una tematica molto più semplice rispetto a *Strom.*; tuttavia, nonostante qui Clemente non citi spesso opere filosofiche, questo scritto trasmette comunque un messaggio teologico ponderato.
- 6 Sull'interpretazione di *Strom. II,9,41-42*, cfr. Karuhije, *La Cité du Logos* (2022), 344-349. Per quanto riguarda l'interpretazione pagana e cristiana dell'amicizia, Maspero, *Dell'amicizia con Dio nel pensiero greco* (2007), 271-294. Le idee di Pavel Florenskij hanno contribuito in modo significativo all'interpretazione specifica dei concetti relativi al tema dell'amicizia: Florenskij, *Другаба* (1914), 393-463. Inoltre, ha avuto una grande influenza: Dugas, *L'amitié antique* (1914).
- 7 *Definitiones* 413a: l'amore è accettazione totale, in *Strom. II,9,42,1; Definitiones* 416 in *Strom. II,9,41,1-2*.
- 8 Cfr. *Stoicorum Veterum Fragmenta* I, 324.
- 9 Aristotele, *Magna Moralia* 1213,23. Sulla nozione di amicizia nella letteratura greca classica, cf. Konstan, *Friendship in the Classical World* (1997), 52-120; Idem, *In the Orbit of Love* (2018), 33-59. Sul concetto di φιλία in Aristotele, cfr. Konstan, *Friendship in the Classical World* (1997), 67-78, e sull'interpretazione cristiana dell'insegnamento di Aristotele sull'amicizia, cfr. Cerasi, *Dell'amico* (2024) (ebook 1.2-1.4; 2.1-2.2).
- 10 *Strom. II,9,41,2*: Ὁ δὲ ἑταῖρος ἕτερος ἐγώ (GCS 15, 134).
- 11 Cfr. Aristotele, *Ethica Nichomachea* 1161a. Pizzolato, *L'idea dell'amicizia nel mondo classico e cristiano* (1993), 252-253. Pizzolato ha sottolineato che, secondo

testo risulta che il nostro autore intende per “amici” coloro che sono legati da una comune fede religiosa, dato che ora si riferisce non solo ai compagni, ma anche ai fratelli. Quindi, sopraggiunge la definizione clementina dell'amicizia e dell'amore:

E l'amore (ἀγάπη) è un consenso (ὁμόνοια) in tutto quanto è in rapporto con la ragione e con il comportamento nella vita o, per dirla in breve, comunanza di vita, fervore di amicizia e di affettività (φιλίας καὶ φιλοστοργίας) unita a retta ragione nel trattare con i compagni (ἐταίρων): il compagno è un altro me stesso. Perciò, noi chiamiamo fratelli (ἀδελφούς) quelli che sono stati rigenerati per lo stesso Logos.¹²

Non c'è dubbio che Clemente veda nell'ἀγάπη, dotata di caratteristiche cristiane, l'amore reciproco sperimentato nella comunione fraterna.¹³ Questo amore, attraverso il legame con Cristo, stabilisce un'eguaglianza tra i compagni (amici) che può essere manifestata anche nella comunione dei beni.¹⁴ Così, l'eguaglianza è

Origene, nel *Vangelo secondo Matteo* tutti coloro che sono chiamati “compagno” (ἐταῖρος) appaiono come personaggi negativi (Mt 26, 50; Mt 22, 12; Mt 20, 13), cfr. *Commentariorum in Matthaeum series*, 100 (GCS 38, 220). Sul concetto di φίλος e ἐταῖρος cfr. Konstan, *Friendship in the Classical World* (1997), 28-33.

- 12 *Strom.* II,9,41,2 (GCS 15, 134): Ἀγάπη δὲ ὁμόνοια ἂν εἴη τῶν κατὰ τὸν λόγον καὶ τὸν βίον καὶ τὸν τρόπον ἢ συνελόντι φάναι κοινωνία βίου ἢ ἐκτένεια φιλίας καὶ φιλοστοργίας μετὰ λόγου ὀρθοῦ περὶ χρῆσιν ἐταίρων. Ὁ δὲ ἐταῖρος ἕτερος ἐγώ· ἢ καὶ ἀδελφούς τοὺς τῷ αὐτῷ λόγῳ ἀναγεννηθέντας προσαγορεύομεν (trad. di Pini, 213 leggermente modificata). Cfr. *Strom.* II,22,134,2; VII,16,93,5-6; *Qds.* 35,1. In quest'ultimo testo Clemente ha trattato il tema della rigenerazione in relazione al concetto di amicizia con Dio.
- 13 Cfr. *Strom.* III,10,69,4 (gnosis, pistis, agape, fratellanza, amicizia, filiazione); *Strom.* II,22,134,2; VII,3,21,3. Karuhije ha richiamato l'attenzione sul fatto di ricondurre l'insegnamento antropologico cristiano di Clemente alla fratellanza attraverso il senso dell'ospitalità e dell'amicizia. Inoltre, per dimostrare l'influenza del concetto di οἰκείωσις degli stoici, cfr. Karuhije, *La Cité du Logos* (2022), 346-348.
- 14 Secondo Avila, Clemente utilizza il principio della κοινωνία in un senso simile a quello stoico, poiché questa relazione reciproca di comunione può esistere non

assicurata dalla scienza (ἐπιστήμη) del bene comune e dall'armonia delle opinioni concordanti.¹⁵ Prima di rivolgerci alla dottrina del bene comune di Platone, è opportuno rivolgersi ad Aristotele,¹⁶ poiché Clemente cita letteralmente il concetto di *filantropia* nel passo che stiamo esaminando, interpretando ulteriormente le idee dell'*Ethica Nicomachea* (1155a).¹⁷ In questo modo Clemente esprime non solo la *filantropia* (φιλανθρωπία) in senso generale, ma anche l'amore fraterno (φιλαδελφία), che presuppone la condivisione di uno spirito comune.¹⁸ Come sappiamo, Aristotele, in *Ethica Nicomachea* non applica la vera

solo tra gli uomini, ma anche tra Dio e gli uomini, cfr. Avila, *Ownership: Early Christian Teaching* (1983), 38-40.

- 15 Cfr. *Strom.* II,9,42,2 (GCS 15, 135): “[Gli uomini] si lasciano guidare ad uniformarsi mediante la concordia (δμόνοια) dei sentimenti, che è «scienza dei beni comuni» (ἐπιστήμην οὖσαν κοινῶν ἀγαθῶν); così pure la concordia intellettuale è accordo di giudizi (καὶ γὰρ ἡ ὁμογνωμοσύνη συμφωνία γνωμῶν)” (trad. di Pini, 135), cfr. Stobeeo, *Ecl.* II,7,11b; Platone, *Politicus* 311b-c; *Respublica* IV,428b-429a. Si può leggere ancora sulla scienza dell'amore nel seguente passo: *Strom.* VII,11,68,1-5. Sul concetto di ἐπιστήμη nel contesto dell'insegnamento di Aristotele cfr. Cerasi, *Dell'amico* (2024) (ebook 1.4).
- 16 Sulle diverse interpretazioni dei termini φιλία e ἀγάπη da parte di Aristotele e dei pensatori cristiani, cfr. Florenskij, *Дружба*, 398-399, 410. Sul vero amore filosofico e il desiderio verso Dio secondo Platone, cfr. Corrigan, *A Less Familiar Plato* (2023), 60-63; inoltre, sui concetti di ἔρως, φιλία, ἀγάπη in Platone cfr. pp. 208-214 e 219-222; e sulla particolare interpretazione dei questi concetti cfr. pp. 222-239 e 246-249.
- 17 *Strom.* II,9,41,6 (GCS 15, 135): φιλαδελφία ἢ φιλανθρωπία τοῖς τοῦ αὐτοῦ πνεύματος κεκοινωνηκόσιν. Inoltre, riguardo alla filantropia, cfr. *Strom.* VII,3,19,3.
- 18 Cfr. *Strom.* II,20,104,2-3: qui Clemente spiegò anche che l'uomo, diventato simile a Dio, è compagno di vita (σύννοικος) del Signore e commensale (συνέστιος) dello Spirito. Inoltre, l'uomo è parente di Dio, cfr. *Strom.* VII,16,93-94 (συγγενῆς θεοῦ). Rhee ha sottolineato che per Clemente l'avidità e l'amore per i beni materiali sono fondamentalmente incompatibili con la filantropia, poiché conducono all'idolatria. Possiamo, quindi, vedere come una convinzione teologica possa diventare visibile anche nelle manifestazioni sociali. Cfr. Rhee, *Philanthropy and Human Flourishing* (2018), 3-21, in particolare 8.

amicizia solo alla somiglianza tra persone simili,¹⁹ o tra persone che si vogliono bene reciprocamente,²⁰ bensì considera amici perfetti coloro che sono buoni e simili (ὁμοιοί) per virtù,²¹ poiché sono amici in ragione dell'essere dell'altro (in ragione di se stessi).²² Come vedremo in seguito, la somiglianza, lo spirito comune, i beni comuni e la rigenerazione in Cristo saranno i concetti su cui Clemente conferisce un significato profondamente nuovo alla filosofia dell'amicizia.

3. Strom. II,19,97,1-20,104,3

Clemente, in *Strom.* II,19,101,3, riprendendo antichi teoremi filosofici, insegna due scale di amicizia, una delle quali, sul modello dell'insegnamento di Crisippo e di Aristotele, presenta una gradazione di virtù, reciprocità e piaceri.²³ L'altra scala risale, invece, a Ippodamo,²⁴ che insegnava l'amicizia filosofica, umana e animale secondo la scienza degli dèi, il servizio degli uomini (generosità degli uomini) e il piacere degli animali.²⁵

19 Aristotele, *Ethica Nicomachea* 1155a, cfr. *Odissea* XVII,28. Clemente cita anche Platone: *Strom.* V,14, 95,4-96,1; Platone, *Lysis* 214a-d; *Phaedrus* 255b; *Leges* 716c (cfr. *Strom.* II,22,132,4).

20 Aristotele, *Ethica Nicomachea* 1156a.

21 Aristotele, *Ethica Nicomachea* 1156b (Loeb 73, 460): τελεία δ' ἐστὶν ἡ τῶν ἀγαθῶν φιλία καὶ κατ' ἀρετὴν ὁμοίων (cfr. 1158b); 1159b (Loeb 73, 482): ἡ δ' ἰσότης καὶ ὁμοιότης φιλότις, καὶ μάλιστα μὲν ἡ τῶν κατ' ἀρετὴν ὁμοιότης: μόνιμοι γὰρ ὄντες καθ' αὐτοὺς καὶ πρὸς ἀλλήλους μένουσι. Sull'interpretazione del testo e sul fatto che, secondo Aristotele, una persona può avere solo pochi buoni amici, cfr. Cerasi, *Dell'amico* (2024) (ebook 2.1.).

22 Aristotele, *Ethica Nicomachea* 1157b.

23 Cfr. Aristotele, *Ethica Nicomachea* 1156a; *Ethica Eudemia* 1236a.

24 Ippodamo (Mileto, circa 498 a.C. - 408 a.C.).

25 *Strom.* II,19,102,1 (GCS 15, 169): τᾶν φιλιᾶν ἃ μὲν ἐξ ἐπιστάμας θεῶν, ἃ δ' ἐκ παροχᾶς ἀνθρώπων, ἃ δὲ ἐξ ἀδονᾶς ζώων.

In questi versi, senza entrare nel merito delle modalità dell'amicizia dell'uomo con Dio, Clemente si limita ad affermare, da un lato, che l'uomo agisce ad immagine di Dio (εἰκὼν τοῦ θεοῦ) con le sue opere buone, in quanto aiuta il prossimo, e che, dall'altro lato, le sue buone azioni concorrono alla sua salvezza.²⁶ In altri termini, secondo il ragionamento sopra esposto, chi è veramente amico dell'uomo è anche amico di Dio, e questa reciproca amicizia rende l'uomo simile a Dio.²⁷ Per il nostro autore, l'esortazione, derivata dall'insegnamento di Platone e da Gen 1, 26, secondo cui l'uomo deve diventare simile a Dio si realizza nella reciprocità dell'amicizia umana e divina.²⁸ Infine, alla luce di Deut 26, 17-18 Clemente parla di una amicizia reciproca per cui l'uomo si vincola a Dio, e Dio all'uomo:

“Tu hai scelto oggi Dio perché fosse il tuo Dio, e il Signore oggi ha scelto te perché fossi il suo popolo”. Dio rende simile a sé colui che si adopera a servire l'essere come supplice.²⁹

26 *Strom.* II,19,102,2 (GCS 15, 169): Τῷ γὰρ ὄντι εἰκὼν τοῦ θεοῦ ἄνθρωπος εὐεργετῶν, ἐν ᾧ καὶ αὐτὸς εὐεργετεῖται. Cfr. Cicerone, *Oratio pro Ligario* 12 (ed. Kolotz, 99): *Homines enim ad deos nulla re propius accedunt quam salutem hominibus dando.*

27 Anche in questo caso, le questioni che emergono dall'insegnamento di Platone potrebbero costituire il fondamento di questa visione ormai cristiana, cfr. Platone, *Lysis* 219b-222e. Cfr. Maspero, *Dell'amicizia con Dio nel pensiero greco* (2007), 279-283.

28 *Strom.* II,19,100,3 (GCS 15, 169): ὁμοίωσιν θεῷ φησιν αὐτὴν εἶναι κατὰ τὸ δυνατὸν. Riguardo all'insegnamento secondo cui l'uomo saggio è amico di Dio, cfr. *Strom.* II,22,133,1; V,6,40,1-2; *Paed.* I,3,7,1-3: “È giusto che l'uomo sia amico (φίλος) di Dio, poiché è una sua creazione”. In Gen 1, 26 Clemente esprime contemporaneamente l'immagine divina dell'uomo e la sua vocazione a diventare simile a Dio. Per le interpretazioni patristiche e rabbiniche di Gen 1, 26 cfr. Fenyves, *In the Image of God He Created Them* (2024), 523-534.

29 *Strom.* II,19,98,1 (GCS 15, 166): Τὸν θεὸν εἴλου σήμερον εἶναι σου θεόν, καὶ κύριος εἶλετό σε σήμερον γενέσθαι λαὸν αὐτῷ. Τὸν γὰρ σπεύδοντα θεραπεύειν τὸ ὄν ἰκέτην ὄντα ἐξοικειοῦται ὁ θεός (trad. di Pini, 258-259, leggermente modificata). Vale la pena notare che nel seguito del testo si fa riferimento ad Abramo come amico di Dio, cfr. Gen 12, 13 in *Strom.* II,19,103,1-2. Su Abramo come amico di

4. Prot. 12,118,1-123,2

In *Strom.* II,19,102,2, che è stato già esaminato, Clemente paragona l'effetto reciproco delle buone azioni compiute nei confronti degli amici a quello di un timoniere che, nel salvare i suoi compagni di viaggio, salva se stesso. È importante notare che in *Prot.* 12,118,1-5 il simbolo del timoniere e della navigazione riceve un ruolo importante grazie ai frequenti riferimenti al poema di Omero, l'*Odissea*.³⁰ Infatti, dopo aver esortato i suoi lettori a fuggire dalle tradizioni pagane, Clemente incoraggia tutti a legarsi al legno della nave, cioè alla croce di Cristo, per essere salvati.³¹

Come in *Strom.* II,19 Clemente insegna il triplice grado di amicizia attraverso la dottrina di Ippodamo, così in *Prot.* 12,120,3 egli parla del modo di vita animale, umano razionale e divino. In quest'ultimo, dopo il battesimo, il Logos divino stesso offre all'uomo il privilegio dell'immortalità e della conoscenza di Dio (τὴν γνῶσιν τοῦ θεοῦ).³² Inoltre, prendendo la voce del Logos divino, Clemente avverte l'umanità che, sebbene secondo Gen 1, 26 tutti siano immagini di Dio, tuttavia non tutti sono somiglianti (ἐμφερεῖς) al modello (Logos): "Desidero

Dio (Gen 18, 1-32; 2 Cr 20, 7; Giac 2, 23) cfr. *Paed.* I,7,56,3; III,2,12,4; III,8,42,2; *Strom.* II,5,20,2; IV,17,105,3-106,1; V,1,8,6 (Filone, *De Abrahamo* 71, 89, 273; *De Somniis* I,193-195; *De Sobrietate* 55-56). Mosè come filosofo e amico di Dio: *Strom.* IV,3,9,1 (Rm 16, 26-27; Es 33, 11). Sull'interpretazione della figura di Abramo in Clemente, cfr. Karuhije, *Le patriarche biblique Abraham* (2024), 72-90. L'autore presenta Abramo come l'archetipo dell'uomo convertito dal paganesimo e che si è allontanato dalla fede per avvicinarsi alla gnosi. Per ulteriori informazioni sull'interpretazione di Abramo negli scritti di Filone e Clemente, cfr. van den Hoek, *Clement of Alexandria and His Use of Philo in the Stromateis* (1988), 23-47; Gyurkovics, *La violenza di Sara e la riconciliazione di Agar* (2017), 55-75.

³⁰ *Odissea* XII,308; 204; 219; 45-46; 184-185; 178.

³¹ Cfr. *Odissea* XII,178. Il vero governatore della vita cristiana è il Logos di Dio, e con l'aiuto dello Spirito Santo i credenti possono raggiungere la meta, cfr. *Prot.* 12,118,4.

³² Cfr. *Strom.* II,9,41-42; *Strom.* 2,19,97,1-20,104,3, *Prot.* 12,118,1-123,2.

che voi vi raddriziate secondo l'archetipo, affinché diventiate simili (ὅμοιοι) a me".³³

Il modo in cui si può raggiungere la somiglianza a Dio, e quali sono le caratteristiche di Dio, al quale bisogna assomigliare, sono stati espressi da Clemente in uno stile solenne. La particolarità di questa eloquenza si manifesta nel fatto che egli identifica il proprio *io* di autore con la voce del *Logos* divino. In questo modo Clemente e il *Logos* divino guidano insieme e contemporaneamente i lettori alla conoscenza di Dio che conduce all'immortalità.³⁴ In *Prot.* 12,122 l'*io* divino e quello umano diventano una cosa sola, esattamente come già osservato in *Strom.* II,9,42,2, dove egli espone l'essenza dell'amicizia con un'idea mutuata dalla filosofia classica: "Il compagno (amico) è un altro me stesso". Clemente pone il proprio *io*, cioè la propria persona, in relazione reciproca con l'*io* del *Logos* divino. Secondo questo principio egli riporta le seguenti affermazioni sul *Logos* divino e su se stesso:

Questo sono io, questo vuole Dio, questa è la concordia, questa è l'armonia del Padre, questo è il Figlio, questo è Cristo, questo è il *Logos* di Dio, il braccio del Signore, potenza dell'universo, la volontà del Padre.³⁵

Secondo questa formulazione solenne, il Dio a cui l'uomo dovrebbe assomigliare non è la divinità solitaria di Aristotele, bensì il Dio che si manifesta tramite la concordia e l'armonia tra il Padre e il Figlio.³⁶

33 *Prot.* 12,120,4 (GCS 12, 85): Ὡ πάσαι μὲν εἰκόνες, οὐ πάσαι δὲ ἐμπερεῖς διορθώσασθαι ὑμᾶς πρὸς τὸ ἀρχέτυπον βούλομαι, ἵνα μοι καὶ ὅμοιοι γένησθε.

34 In queste righe si manifesta la vocazione di insegnante di Clemente, vissuta secondo il modello del *Logos* divino.

35 *Prot.* 12,120,4 (GCS 12, 85): Τοῦτό εἰμι ἐγώ, τοῦτο βούλεται ὁ θεός, τοῦτο συμφωνία ἐστὶ, τοῦτο ἁρμονία πατρός, τοῦτο υἱός, τοῦτο Χριστός, τοῦτο ὁ λόγος τοῦ θεοῦ, βραχίων κυρίου, δύναμις τῶν ἔλων, τὸ θέλημα τοῦ πατρός (trad. di Migliore, 211).

36 Aristotele, *Magna Moralia* 1212b-1213a; *Ethica Nicomachea* 1159a; *Ethica Eudemia* 1239a. Maspero è partito proprio da questa premessa quando ha sottolineato che, secondo la concezione aristotelica, l'uomo non potrà mai essere amico di Dio, poiché non ne è degno, dato che l'uomo non può trovarsi

L'amore reciproco delle persone divine e l'amore di Dio per l'umanità costituiscono il prototipo eterno al quale l'uomo può conformarsi per diventare simile a Dio.³⁷ Secondo questa visione cristiana, quindi, nell'amore fraterno (dell'amico) che si manifesta nell' "altro me stesso" si scopre non solo l'immagine umana, ma anche l'immagine di Dio.³⁸ In altri termini, i cristiani, creati ad immagine di Dio e diventati simili a Dio, nell'altra persona (nell'amico) possono amare anche il divino.³⁹ Questo reciproco amore umano e divino risuona anche nel seguente invito:

Affrettiamoci, corriamo, (noi) immagini del Logos, cari a Dio (θεοφιλή) e somiglianti a lui.⁴⁰

Con l'aggettivo θεοφιλής Clemente indica, allo stesso tempo, l'uomo che è caro a Dio (amato da Dio) (cfr. *Prot.* 12,121,1) e lo scopo

allo stesso livello ontologico di Dio. Maspero, *Dell'amicizia con Dio nel pensiero greco* (2007), 271-274, l'autore concorda con le conclusioni di Flannery, *Può un aristotelico considerarsi amico di Dio?* (1999), 131-137.

- 37 Sul tema della carità divina e dell'amore umano in Clemente cfr. Osborn, *Clement of Alexandria* (2005), 3, 48-49, 134-140, 263-264; Louth, *Apathetic Love in Clement of Alexandria* (1989), 416.
- 38 Per il tema della cristianizzazione e teologizzazione della dottrina stoica dell'οικείωσις in relazione a πρώτον φίλον (platonico) e πρώτον οικείον (stoico), cfr. Ramelli, *The Stoic Doctrine of Oikeiosis* (2014), 1-25.
- 39 Dietro questo pensiero possiamo intravedere una reinterpretazione dell'insegnamento di Platone. Secondo Dugas, nella concezione di Platone l'amore tra gli amici non è rivolto solo alla persona concreta, ma anche a chi (o a ciò che) è al di là della persona. Secondo questa concezione, solo il bene è amabile in se stesso, e quindi le persone sono amate al massimo grado dell'amore per il bene. Cfr. Dugas, *L'amitié antique* (1914), 95-96. Per l'interpretazione del concetto di πρώτον φίλον in connessione con Dio in Platone (*Lysis* 219c-d), cfr. Gerson, *Plato's Moral Realism* (2023), 61-67; Corrigan, *A Less Familiar Plato* (2023), 225-236. Ancora sull'insegnamento di Platone riguardo all'amicizia cfr. Fürst, *Streit unter Freunden* (1996), 64-75.
- 40 *Prot.* 12,121,1 (GCS 12, 85): Σπεύσωμεν, δράμωμεν, ὧ θεοφιλή καὶ θεοοίκελα τοῦ λόγου [ἄνθρωποι] ἀγάλματα.

della vita umana, ossia che l'uomo divenga caro a Dio, o amico di Dio.⁴¹ In questo contesto, il concetto di *θεοφιλής* esprime l'amicizia e l'amore che Dio manifesta generalmente verso gli uomini, nonché l'amore e l'attrazione dell'uomo verso Dio.⁴² Come Clemente in *Strom.* II,19,98,1, citando Deut 26, 17-18, esprime la reciprocità della relazione tra l'uomo e Dio attraverso l'immagine della compartecipazione dei beni, così anche in *Prot.* 12,122,2 ripropone questo pensiero suggestivo.⁴³ In primo luogo, come introduzione al tema della ricchezza, egli afferma che bisogna riporre più fiducia nel Logos che in qualsiasi tesoro terreno (*Prot.* 12,121,2);⁴⁴ in seguito, sottolinea il concetto, presente anche in Filone di Alessandria, secondo cui tutto ciò che esiste è proprietà di Dio⁴⁵ e, tra tutte le cose, l'uomo è la più bella proprietà di Dio (*Prot.*

41 *Prot.* 12,121,2 (GCS 12, 85): *θεοφιλεῖς ἄνθρωποι γενώμεθα*.

42 Come abbiamo già dimostrato in precedenza, Clemente interpreta Gen 1, 26 non solo come un riferimento all'immagine e alla somiglianza divina, ma anche all'amicizia dell'uomo con Dio. Infatti, se è vero che il simile è amico del simile, allora è anche vero che, se l'uomo diventa simile a Dio, diventa anche suo amico, e così la proprietà di Dio è comune all'uomo, cfr. *Paed.* I,3,71-73.

43 Cfr. *Paed.* II,12,120,3-6; III,7,39,2. Sull'interpretazione del concetto di comunione dei beni in Clemente: Steenbuch, "I Have: Why Should I Not Give to Those Who Need?" (2025), 303-313, sul reciproco amore tra uomo e Dio, cfr. pp. 309-310 e inoltre Avila, *Ownership: Early Christian Teaching* (1983), 33-45; Rhee, *A Patristic View of Wealth and Possessions* (2011), 51-77.

44 Cfr. *Paed.* II,12,120,5-6. Qui Clemente ritiene più ragionevole spendere le ricchezze a beneficio del prossimo piuttosto che in pietre o oro, cfr. Pizzolato, *L'idea dell'amicizia nel mondo classico e cristiano* (1993), 248.

45 Cfr. *Qds.* 19,1-2; *Prot.* 10,94,3; *Prot.* 10,103,3; Filone, *De vita Mosis* I,157: secondo Filone, il vero proprietario e possessore di ogni cosa è Dio. L'uomo saggio è consapevole di non possedere nulla, quindi possiede tutto attraverso la partecipazione alla proprietà di Dio. Inoltre, vale la pena notare che anche Clemente, in riferimento alla figura di Abramo, ha sottolineato la dualità del fatto che, in quanto amico di Dio, suo prediletto (*θεοφιλής*) e uomo saggio, egli possiede tutto, poiché il Dio misericordioso ha dato se stesso all'uomo, quindi possiamo dire che Dio è di Abramo, di Isacco e di Giacobbe, cfr. *Strom* II,5,20,2

12,122,2).⁴⁶ Dopodiché, riformulando il ben noto insegnamento platonico, Clemente prosegue:

E se “i beni degli amici sono comuni” (κοινὰ τὰ φίλων), e se l'uomo è caro a Dio (amico di Dio) (θεοφιλῆς δὲ ὁ ἄνθρωπος), poiché attraverso la mediazione del Logos è amico di Dio (φίλος τῷ θεῷ), allora tutto diventa proprietà dell'uomo, poiché tutto è di Dio, e tutto è comune ad ambedue gli amici: a Dio e all'uomo.⁴⁷

Si può ipotizzare che l'idea della comunione dei beni abbia suscitato reazioni diverse tra i lettori di Clemente, in particolare tra i benestanti.⁴⁸ Lo stesso Clemente ha corretto le idee che miravano alla completa eguaglianza dei beni materiali e alla cessazione dell'unità familiare.⁴⁹

(*Strom.* I,27,173,6). In questo stesso contesto egli menziona anche Mosè, con il quale Dio conversava come con un amico, cfr. *Strom.* II,5,20,3 (Es 33, 11).

46 Clemente sottolinea che l'uomo può rispondere all'amore di Dio con il proprio amore, poiché l'amore di Dio è un compito che riguarda tutta la vita, *Prot.* 12,122,1 (GCS 12, 86): ἀγαπώντας κύριον τὸν θεὸν καὶ τοῦτο παρ'ἄλλοι τὸν βίον ἔργον ἡγουμένους.

47 *Prot.* 12,122,3 (GCS 12, 86): Εἰ δὲ “κοινὰ τὰ φίλων”, θεοφιλῆς δὲ ὁ ἄνθρωπος (καὶ γὰρ οὖν φίλος τῷ θεῷ, μεσιτεύοντος τοῦ λόγου), γίνεται δὴ οὖν τὰ πάντα τοῦ ἀνθρώπου, ὅτι τὰ πάντα τοῦ θεοῦ, καὶ κοινὰ ἀμφοῖν τοῖν φίλοι τὰ πάντα, τοῦ θεοῦ καὶ ἀνθρώπου (trad. di Migliore, 213 leggermente modificata).

48 Cfr. *Qds.* 3,1-6; 6,1-2; 11,1-4. Simona Cives ha sottolineato che, secondo Clemente, i ricchi non devono vendere tutti i loro beni e distribuirli ai poveri per essere salvati, poiché altri filosofi pagani avevano già agito in modo simile in passato, quindi la novità del messaggio cristiano non può risiedere in questo, cfr. Cives, *Quis dives salvetur?* (2003), 11. Sul problema sociale generale della povertà e sulle sue profonde implicazioni teologiche, cfr. van den Hoek, *Widening the Eye of the Needle* (2008), 67-75; Karuhije, *La Cité du Logos* (2022), 349-350, 360-379. Nel descrivere il contesto sociale, l'autore ha fatto riferimento allo studio di Longenecker, *Remember the Poor* (2010), 37-53.

49 Avila ha sottolineato che, secondo Clemente, il diritto di proprietà non significa che l'uomo possa usarla a suo piacimento per qualsiasi scopo, poiché in ogni cosa bisogna cercare la volontà di Dio. Ha chiaramente richiamato l'attenzione dei suoi contemporanei affinché abbandonassero la legittimazione del diritto romano dominante, assolutista e individualista in materia di proprietà e accettassero la

In questo modo alzò la voce anche contro Carpocrate ed Epifanio, che insegnavano la dottrina secondo cui le donne erano proprietà comune della comunità.⁵⁰ Clemente riteneva, infatti, che essi avessero ascoltato male, avessero frainteso (*παρακούω*) l'insegnamento di Platone, poiché secondo lui le donne erano comuni solo come il teatro lo è per gli spettatori, e solo fino al momento in cui non si sposavano.⁵¹ Avvertiva, inoltre, dei rischi insiti nella ricerca della parità dei beni materiali, che prima o poi avrebbe alimentato l'ostilità tra ricchi e poveri. Per tutti questi motivi, egli preferiva all'uguaglianza il concetto di giustizia che, secondo il poeta, unisce gli amici e le città in una reciproca unità.⁵² Infatti, Clemente consigliava di seguire l'insegnamento evangelico: "Diventare come i bambini" – solo così si può realizzare l'uguaglianza vissuta nella semplicità tra gli uomini.⁵³

nuova logica del diritto di proprietà, secondo la quale tutto deve essere posseduto in modo tale da poter essere comune a tutti. Cfr. Avila, *Ownership: Early Christian Teaching* (1983), 38-45; Gyurkovics, *La giustizia bilanciata* (2016), 111-119.

- 50 Cfr. *Strom.* III,2,5,1; III,2,7,1-8,3. Vale la pena notare che Clemente, in *Strom.* VI,6,52,3-53,1, cita la omelia *Sugli amici* dello gnostico Valentino, che trattava il tema dell'amicizia, dei libri e dei beni comuni: "Questo è il popolo dell'Amato, che è da Lui amato e che lo ama" (οὗτός ἐστιν ὁ λαὸς ὁ τοῦ ἡγαπημένου, ὁ φιλούμενος καὶ φιλῶν αὐτόν) (GCS 15, 458, trad. di Pini, 642). Cfr. Os 2, 25; Deut 33, 12.
- 51 *Strom.* III,2,10,2 (GCS 15, 200): δοκεῖ δέ μοι καὶ τοῦ Πλάτωνος παρακηρόεναι ἐν τῇ Πολιτείᾳ φαμένου κοινὰς εἶναι τὰς γυναῖκας πάντων. Cfr. Platone, *Respublica* V,449c; 457d; Epitteto, *Dissertationes* II,14 (II,4,8-10). Inoltre, le osservazioni di Pini, 309-310, n. 17, che assumono una disarmonia nella valutazione della dottrina platonica sulla comunanza delle donne specialmente confutando le idee di Marcione in *Strom.* III,3,12,1; III,3,21,1-22,4. In questo contesto, notiamo che in *Strom.* III,3,21,2, Clemente sottolinea la sua convinzione che Marcione abbia tratto le sue idee errate dagli scritti di Platone in modo ingrato (*ἀχάριστος*) e ignorante (*ἄμαθής*).
- 52 Cfr. *Strom.* V,5,30,1-5 – Euripide, *Phoeniciae* 536-540; *Strom.* II,79,2 – Prv 11, 1, inoltre, cfr. anche Filone, *De Cherubim* 29-31; Platone, *Respublica* VIII,550c.
- 53 Cfr. *Strom.* V,30,3-4 (Mt 18,3); *Strom.* VII,3,18,3-19,3: Clemente spiega qui che il vero gnostico ama vivere con coloro che sono simili a lui, stare con loro sulla terra e in cielo. Per questo costui dona volentieri agli altri tutti i suoi beni e ama l'umanità.

Non possiamo tralasciare che Clemente, nella sua confutazione di Carpocrate (*Strom.* III,2,10,2) e di Marcione (*Strom.* III,3,21,2), non attaccò le opinioni di Platone in modo radicale, ma piuttosto sosteneva che questi eretici avessero “frinteso” (παρακηκοέναι) o interpretato in modo ignorante (ἀμαθής) gli insegnamenti del filosofo da lui stimato. Il fatto è che Platone ha ripetutamente affermato (*Respublica* V,449c-466d) che la proprietà, le donne e persino i figli sono comuni tra i guardiani (tra gli amici).⁵⁴ Pertanto, solo se Clemente non avesse riconosciuto nel sistema di governo delineato da Platone le caratteristiche della realtà terrena, ma piuttosto una perfezione celeste, addirittura un ente perfetto, non potrebbe essere accusato di deliberata *manipolazione*.⁵⁵ Così Clemente potrebbe scoprire dietro le parole di Platone, a livello figurativo, una perfetta unità o comunità in cui lo stesso sentimento unisce tutto e tutti (questo è il pensiero di Platone).⁵⁶ In ogni caso, è opportuno rilevare che la Scuola di Tubinga, insieme agli studiosi di Platone che ne condividono l'impostazione, attribuisce grande importanza al nesso

- 54 Platone, *Respublica* V,449c: ὡς ἄρα περὶ γυναικῶν τε καὶ παιδῶν παντὶ δήλον ὅτι κοινὰ τὰ φίλων ἔσται (Loeb 237, 426). Cfr. anche *Respublica* V,449d; V,450c; V,457d; V,461d; VII,540c. Cfr. Reale, *Platone e l'Accademia antica* (2004), 363-372. Nella sua particolare interpretazione, l'autore sottolinea che l'obiettivo di Platone era, da un lato, quello di far sì che i guardiani potessero godere di una comunità familiare molto più ampia rispetto a quella ristretta, dall'altro quello di ottenere la parità dei diritti delle donne rispetto agli uomini attraverso delle innovazioni rivoluzionarie. Cfr. anche: Findlay, *Platone. Le dottrine scritte e non scritte* (1994), 160-160. Sulla somiglianza tra la visione della Chiesa cattolica e lo Stato platonico cfr. Jaeger, *Paideia. La formazione dell'uomo greco* (2003), 1106.
- 55 Sull'interpretazione di Platone cfr. Lisi, *Koinon and Idion in Plato's Political Thought* (2016), 19-25; Reale, *Platone e l'Accademia antica* (2004), 393-398.
- 56 Platone, *Respublica* V,462b; 462c; 462d. Inoltre, per quanto riguarda l'interpretazione di Platone, con particolare riferimento ai passaggi della *Respublica* da noi esaminati, cfr. Krämer, *L'interpretazione di Platone della Scuola di Tubinga e della Scuola di Milano* (2014), 523-525.

tra la *Repubblica* e la *Settima Lettera*. Secondo l'argomentazione della *Settima Lettera*, la colpa dei "fraitendimenti" (παρακούσματα) non è del maestro, ma dei discepoli disattenti, cioè di coloro che non hanno compreso l'insegnamento di Platone e hanno cercato di comunicare per iscritto queste interpretazioni errate.⁵⁷

Come è noto, nelle *Leggi* Platone delinea tre modelli costituzionali, il migliore dei quali è quello in cui la costituzione e le leggi più perfette sono guidate dall'antica massima: "i beni degli amici sono comuni".⁵⁸ In questo passo Platone discute *quasi* di sfuggita il fatto che le donne, i bambini e i beni sono comuni, soprattutto per indirizzare l'attenzione del lettore sulla condizione in cui la comunione dei beni naturali (occhi, orecchie, mani) formano un'unità in cui le persone, per così dire, costituiscono un unico essere: vedono, sentono e agiscono insieme.⁵⁹ Per Platone, questa è una condizione felice in cui anche gli dèi e i figli degli dèi sarebbero disposti a vivere con piacere.⁶⁰ Per tutte queste ragioni il modello (παράδειγμα) di questo stato eterno, ovvero di questa condizione eterna, dovrebbe essere scelto con la massima

57 Platone, *Epistula VII*, 340b-341b. Una lettura utile a favore della paternità platonica della *Settima Lettera* cfr. Pili, *La Lettera VII di Platone* (2011), 257-278, 263; Platone, *Lettere* (2014), XV, XIX-XXI, 215. Al contrario, Lombardini esprime un parere piuttosto scettico: *Plato's Political Thought* (2024), 7-30.

58 Platone, *Leges* 739 a-b (Loeb 187, 360): ἀρίστην πολιτείαν; 739c (Loeb 187, 362): ὅπου τὸ πάλαι λεγόμενον ἂν γίννηται κατὰ πᾶσαν τὴν πόλιν ὅτι μάλιστα λέγεται δὲ ὡς ὄντως ἐστὶ κοινὰ τὰ φίλων.

59 Platone, *Leges* 739c-d (Secondo la visione di Platone, le donne, i bambini e tutte le ricchezze costituiscono proprietà comune. Il suo obiettivo è che anche ciò che per natura è legato alla persona sia comune, come ad esempio gli occhi, le orecchie, le mani. In questo modo, alla fine, nella società prevale un sentimento comune, grazie al quale la comunità è in grado di creare quasi un'entità) Cfr. anche: *Politicus* 311b-c.

60 Platone, *Leges* 739d (Loeb 187, 362): ἢ μὲν δὴ τοιαύτη πόλις, εἴτε που θεοὶ ἢ παῖδες θεῶν αὐτῆν οἰκοῦσι πλείους ἑνός, οὕτω διαζῶντες εὐφραϊνόμενοι κατοικοῦσι.

approssimazione possibile, ragionava Platone.⁶¹ Non siamo lontani dalla verità se consideriamo che questo modello platonico, detto immortale, è, nella visione di Clemente, Dio stesso, e che l'aspetto terreno della unione delle persone divine è la comunità dei cristiani.⁶² Secondo questa visione, la sinfonia, la concordia e l'armonia del Padre e del Figlio si presentano come una comunità di giustizia e di amore, addirittura come un'unità, in modo tale da poter essere il più fervido prototipo delle comunità terrene secondo i criteri della filosofia platonica.⁶³

5. Qds. 35,1-37,6

In *Quis dives salvetur* Clemente cerca di rispondere alle domande sollecitate dall'insegnamento evangelico sul giovane ricco (Mc 10, 26), non glorificando, ma nemmeno condannando, i benestanti.⁶⁴ In

61 Platone, *Leges* 739e (Loeb 187, 362): διὸ δὴ παράδειγμά γε πολιτείας οὐκ ἄλλη χρὴ σκοπεῖν, ἀλλ' ἐχομένους ταύτης τὴν ὅτι μάλιστα τοιαύτην ζητεῖν κατὰ δύναμιν. Cfr. anche *Respublica* VI,500b-501c; VI,505a; VII,540a-b; IX,591c-592b.

62 Cfr. *Prot.* 12,120,3-4; *Strom.* VII,11,68,2. Sul rapporto di amore reciproco e unitario tra il Padre e il Figlio, cfr. Gyurkovics, *The Forms of the Divine Logos in the Paedagogus of Clement of Alexandria* (2025), 179-198.

63 Cfr. *Paed.* I,71,3; I,88,1-3; *Strom.* V,16,1-5; 38,7; VII,11,68,1-5. Vale la pena confrontare anche le righe di Platone: *Leges* IV,716c; VI,757a-d. Occorre ricordare l'osservazione emblematica di Giovanni Reale secondo cui Platone avrebbe individuato nella cosiddetta "unità nella molteplicità" l'approccio metafisico e teologico che caratterizza lo Stato ideale. Reale, *Platone e l'Accademia antica* (2004), 411-418 (cfr. *Timaeus* 68d; *Leges* X,903e-904a).

64 Cfr. Steenbuch, "I Have: Why Should I Not Give to Those Who Need?" (2025), 302-304. Steenbuch ha sottolineato che Clemente, sia in *Qds.* sia in *Paed.* II,12,120,3-6, non suggeriva ai cristiani di rinunciare semplicemente ai propri beni, ma di usare la ricchezza per stringere amicizie e creare comunità (p. 306). Rhee ha sottolineato che, secondo Clemente, l'amicizia dei ricchi con i poveri è come l'amicizia con Cristo, e che quindi i poveri possono tranquillamente fare amicizia con i ricchi. Questo approccio reciproco ha abbattuto la precedente

quest'opera egli ha cercato di fornire una guida per la più alta *filantropia* sull'uso corretto dei beni materiali.⁶⁵ Abbiamo già visto che Clemente interpreta gli scritti di Platone sul bene comune in modo allegorico, per indirizzare l'attenzione del lettore sulla relazione d'amore tra il Padre e il Figlio. Questo metodo interpretativo può anche essere messo in parallelo con il principio esegetico delineato in *Qds.* 5,2, secondo cui, nei versetti del *Vangelo secondo Marco*, il Salvatore non insegna in modo umano, ma in modo divino e mistico. Per questo, secondo Clemente, è necessario ascoltare e interpretare le parole di Cristo non in senso corporeo (μη σαρκίνως), ma in senso nascosto (κεκρυμμένον νοῦν). Al contempo, ciò implica che tali parole non veicolino soltanto verità di ordine etico, ma racchiudano anche profondi misteri teologici.⁶⁶ È questa la direzione teologica di *Qds.* 27,3-38,3, in cui il nostro autore ha

tradizione che stigmatizzava “i poveri devoti e i ricchi malvagi”. Inoltre, cfr. van den Hoek, *Widening the Eye of the Needle* (2008), 72 e 75. Qui l'autore, basandosi su *Qds.* 11, ha sottolineato con forza che secondo Clemente non è desiderabile essere poveri, e ha addirittura espresso questa sua posizione in un modo che sembra quasi suggerire disprezzo nei confronti dei poveri. Quando invece parla della ricchezza effettiva, Clemente la difende come strumento di beneficenza e considera la condivisione della ricchezza un dovere civile e religioso. Karuhije ha tratto conclusioni alquanto diverse, poiché secondo lui Clemente ha parlato della ricchezza in tono cauto, dispregiativo: Karuhije, *La Cité du Logos* (2022), 360. Inoltre, cfr. Rhee, *Philanthropy and Human Flourishing* (2018), 11-12; Dal Covolo, *L'episodio del giovane ricco in Clemente e Origene* (1986), 12; Nardi – Descourtieux, *Quel riche sera sauvé?*, SC 537, 39-56.

- 65 Cfr. *Qds.* 1,4 (φιλόανθρωπος, cfr. *Strom.* VII,3,19,3; *Paed.* III,8,42,2-43,2). Clemente offre a coloro che amano la verità e i propri fratelli (φιλαλήθως και φιλαδέλφως) una guida su come comportarsi correttamente nei confronti dei ricchi, cfr. *Qds.* 3,1. Egli incoraggia i ricchi a compiere gli sforzi necessari per poter vedere la grandezza dell'amore di Dio per l'umanità (πιστός γε ὢν και τὸ μεγαλεῖον συνορών τῆς τοῦ θεοῦ φιλανθρωπίας), *Qds.* 3,5 (GCS 17, 161).
- 66 Sull'esegesi biblica di Clemente si veda: Kovacs, *Introduction. Clement as Scriptural Exegete* (2017), 1-37; Ramelli, *The Mysteries of Scripture* (2017), 80-110; Le Boulluec, *L'interprétation de la Bible et le «genre symbolique»* (2017), 53-79.

ampliato la narrazione della storia del giovane ricco con il messaggio di Mt 22, 36-39, Mc 12, 29-30 e Lc 10, 27-31. Così, l'interpretazione del comandamento dell'amore per Dio e per il prossimo diventa sempre più eloquente attraverso la parabola del buon samaritano (Lc 10, 27).

Come si è cercato di mostrare nel presente studio, Clemente riconosce nell'amore divino il paradigma originario dell'amicizia. In questa prospettiva, egli qualifica, in *Qds.* 27,5, l'amore di Dio per gli esseri umani come un "pre-amore" (προαγαπηθέντας).⁶⁷ Ne consegue, in modo del tutto coerente, che il compito dell'umanità consiste nel riamare Dio e nell'amarsi vicendevolmente.⁶⁸ Secondo il nostro autore, il Cristo incarnato rivela una forma di amore divino e di amore per il prossimo che può essere realizzato nella vita terrena, e che gli esseri umani sono in grado di contemplare e, quindi, di assimilare.⁶⁹ Sebbene la realtà mistica dell'amore del Padre, del Figlio e dello Spirito Santo rimanga inaccessibile alla comprensione del mondo,⁷⁰ è tuttavia vero, e

- 67 Sul "pre-amore" di Dio e sulla vocazione dell'uomo secondo il piano divino di diventare amico di Dio, cfr. *Paed.* I,3,7,1-3; *Strom.* VI,9,76,3, e inoltre Pizzolato, *L'idea dell'amicizia nel mondo classico e cristiano* (1993), 248-249.
- 68 Questa logica teologica è alla base anche della carità: se Dio ama tutti gli uomini con un amore che li precede, allora tutti gli uomini sono amici (prediletti) di Dio. E poiché gli amici condividono tutto e l'amico è l'altro io, chiunque sia caritatevole con gli altri è caritatevole anche con Dio, cfr. *Qds.* 33,1-3; *Strom.* VII,3,21,3; IV,17,105,1-106,1 (Abramo divenne amico di Dio grazie alla sua ospitalità). La comunione d'amore tra il Padre e il Figlio, e l'amore che Dio nutre per gli uomini, viene rappresentato nelle toccanti parole di *Qds.* 37,1-4.
- 69 Cfr. *Qds.* 27,2-5. Sull'interpretazione della dottrina clementina dell'incarnazione di Cristo vedi Karuhije, *La Cité du Logos* (2022), 80-105; Edwards, *Clement of Alexandria and His Doctrine of the Logos* (2000), 159-77; Eric Osborn, *Clement of Alexandria* (2005), 128-129, 135-142; Ashwin-Siejkowski, *Clement of Alexandria* (2008), 54-63, 165-171.
- 70 Sulla trascendenza e conoscibilità divina cfr. van den Hoek, *God Beyond Knowing* (2009), 37-60; Osborn, *Clement of Alexandria* (2005), 114-128, 141-144; Gyurkovics, *La teologia non scritta in Clemente di Alessandria* (2017), 289-316; Lilla, *Dionigi l'Areopagita e il platonismo Cristiano* (2005), 42-48, 213;

si tratta di una precisazione di grande rilievo, che nell'amore reciproco dei cristiani può rendersi visibile lo stesso amore divino.⁷¹

Per quanto riguarda la rappresentazione di una comunità ideale (di amici, di compagni), Clemente ha fatto un parallelo con la raffigurazione degli antichi eroi o della società ideale platonica, che però non corrisponde pienamente ad essa. In *Qds.* 33,1 egli include tra gli amici di Dio (ὁ φίλος τοῦ θεοῦ) coloro che sono condannati dal mondo a causa del loro corpo, dell'età, della povertà, dell'abbigliamento, della bruttezza e della debolezza fisica. Ed ecco che in *Qds.* 34,2 viene presentato un "esercito" di persone disarmate, non bellicose (senza guerra), senza spargimento di sangue, spassionate (senza passione) e innocenti (senza contaminazione). Tra i compagni di questa comunità si osservano anziani devoti (γέροντας θεοσεβεῖς), orfani amati da Dio (ὀρφανούς θεοφιλεῖς), vedove armate di mitezza (χήρας πραότητι ὠπλισμέναις) e uomini ornati di ἀγάπη (ἄνδρας ἀγάπη κεκοσμημένους).⁷² Si tratta di un'amicizia, o più correttamente, di una comunità d'amore tra cristiani.

Whittaker, *Neopythagoreanism and the Transcendent Absolute* (1973), 77-86; Idem, *Neopythagoreanism and Negative Theology* (1969), 109-125; Idem, *Epekeina nou kai ousias* (1969), 91-104.

- 71 Cfr. *Qds.* 34,1 (I cristiani non possono essere definiti ricchi o stimati dal punto di vista mondano).
- 72 Cfr. *Qds.* 34,2; *Qds.* 23,5 (qui Clemente descrive Cristo come un guerriero che lotta per la salvezza dell'umanità); *Qds.* 35,1 (qui Clemente descrive la comunità cristiana come un esercito composto da forti guerrieri e guardiani; i cristiani sono soldati che possono intercedere gli uni per gli altri presso Dio, confortano gli afflitti, piangono con chi piange e soffrono con chi soffre, insegnano, curano, danno buoni consigli, amano sinceramente). È evidente che qui Clemente ha riformulato radicalmente i principi platonici sulla società perfetta, Platone, *Leges* 739c-d. *Qds.* 34,2 (allegoria del battesimo: la nave precedentemente incagliata torna a solcare le acque sotto la guida di Dio). *Strom.* VII,16,93,5-6 (il cristiano rinato, figlio, amico e discepolo di Dio). Sul battesimo, cfr. Hrušová, *Baptism and Eucharist* (2025), 199-228.

La radice della dolce cura amorosa (ὡ γλυκεῖαι θεραπείαι φιλοῦντων) e del beato servizio (ὡ μακάριοι διακονίαι) che i cristiani manifestano gli uni verso gli altri risiede nel fatto che, in realtà, essi non si rivolgono semplicemente a un amico, ma al *Re dei secoli* (ἀλλὰ τῷ βασιλεῖ τῶν αἰώνων), il quale dimora nelle anime umane.⁷³ Detto in altri termini, con queste parole Clemente chiarisce ancora una volta che i cristiani, amandosi reciprocamente, amano pure il Dio che vive in loro. In tal modo si rende operativa l'affermazione teologica e antropologica secondo cui l'amico è un "altro me stesso", e questo "altro me stesso", secondo la peculiare interpretazione di Gen 1, 26, non è altro che Dio stesso.⁷⁴

Assumendo la natura umana, Cristo è divenuto l'icona eterna dell'amore, dell'abnegazione, della fraternità e dell'amicizia umana.⁷⁵ In questa icona, vale a dire nell'amore fraterno maturato dal Dio incarnato, è dato all'essere umano di contemplare, anche se in parte, il mistero stesso della Trinità. Alla luce di questa logica teologica, si comprende perché l'aggettivo θεοφιλῆς possa assumere in Clemente un duplice significato: da un lato, in virtù del "pre-amore" di Dio per l'uomo, ogni essere umano è "caro a Dio"; dall'altro lato, l'uomo che ama rettamente Dio e il suo prossimo può diventare amico di Dio, simile a Dio e figlio di Dio.⁷⁶

73 *Qds.* 35,2, cfr. *Strom.* IV,17,108,4-5. Anche in questo caso, Clemente scrive che attraverso l'amore e il timore di Dio, lo Spirito di Dio abita nell'uomo. Cfr. inoltre l'insegnamento di *Strom.* II,19,98,1, già discusso in precedenza, con *Qds.* 35,2.

74 Secondo l'insegnamento di *Qds.* 36,1-3, sulla terra si trovano anche quei santi che sono più eletti degli eletti (τῶν ἐκλεκτῶν ἐκλεκτότεροι), che hanno già raggiunto lo stato di immagine e somiglianza divina, ma nascondono la loro santità al mondo.

75 Cfr. *Qds.* 37,4-5.

76 Cfr. *Strom.* VII,3,21,1-5; *Strom.* IV,17,105,3; III,10,69,4 (gnosi, fede, amore, amicizia, fratellanza, filiazione); *Strom.* II,9,45,4 (fede, amore, gnosi, servitù, amicizia, diventare simili a Dio); *Strom.* VII,3,19,3 (giustizia, amore, fede, obbedienza, amico di Dio); *Strom.* II,22,134,2 (diventare simili a Dio, filiazione,

6. *Conclusion*

Da questo studio emerge chiaramente che l'interpretazione filosofica e teologica del concetto di amicizia è centrale nell'insegnamento di Clemente Alessandrino. I numerosi riferimenti alla filosofia antica testimoniano non solo l'attenta raccolta delle fonti da parte dell'autore, ma anche il suo studio approfondito dell'argomento. Non possiamo escludere che la confutazione dell'omelia di Valentino sull'amicizia possa essere stata la motivazione di questo attento approfondimento.⁷⁷ E persino del desiderio personale di Clemente di far parte della comunità e della società ideale proclamata dai grandi filosofi.⁷⁸ Tuttavia, nonostante tutti questi parallelismi con la filosofia antica, è evidente che, negli scritti di Clemente, il quadro lessicale dei concetti principali della filosofia, pur rimanendo intatto, ha subito un radicale cambiamento. Per mezzo di Gen 1, 26 Clemente riesce ad esprimere non solo l' "immagine divina" dell'uomo, ma anche il principio della partecipazione alla divinità, tanto da essere convinto che tutti gli uomini venuti al mondo siano stati invitati a essere simili a Dio e, allo stesso tempo, a diventare amici di Dio. Questo messaggio, vale a dire la dottrina della redenzione generale dell'umanità, può avere forti sfumature antignostiche.

Come emerso dalla nostra indagine, possiamo rilevare che la visione metafisica dell'idea filosofica di amicizia è prossima all'insegnamento di Clemente. Questo parallelo diventa particolarmente significativo

fratellanza, eredità); *Strom.* IV,7,42,5-43,4; *Strom.* V,6,40,1-2 (filiazione, amicizia, contemplazione di Dio, 1 Cor 13, 12); *Strom.* V,14,95-96; *Strom.* VII,11,68,1-5; *Strom.* VII,16, 93,5-6.

⁷⁷ Cfr. *Strom.* VI,6,52,3-53,1.

⁷⁸ I riferimenti alle profonde relazioni di amicizia presenti nella già citata *Settima Lettera* dimostrano che nella comunità di Platone l'amicizia era un presupposto fondamentale per l'apprendimento e per la conoscenza della verità, tanto che persino all' "altare dell'amicizia" veniva attribuito un significato speciale. Platone, *Lettere* (a cura di Parente), 215; Pili, *La Lettera VII di Platone* (2011), 272.

quando i testi di Platone vengono interpretati alla maniera della Scuola di Tubinga e sono messi in relazione con l'insegnamento di Clemente. Allo stesso tempo, le implicazioni filosofiche della vita pratica possono essere messe a confronto con l'ideale cristiano dell'amicizia, quale si realizzava, alla fine del II secolo nella comunità fraterna che accoglieva anche coloro che erano emarginati dalla società. Il prototipo di questo ideale non è la comunione dei filosofi e dei guardiani eminenti di Platone, ma l'amore reciproco del Padre e del Figlio, l'amore di Dio che ha compassione della miseria umana e la comunione d'amore dei cristiani aspiranti alla santità, grazie alla quale gli umani possono diventare amici, figli e simili a Dio.

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Variable Celebrant Prayers in the Medieval Coptic Eucharist: A Bohairic Manuscripts-Based Inventory and Introduction*

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Keywords: *Anaphora, Coptic, Eucharist, Copto-Arabic Manuscripts, Medieval Studies, Euchologion, Liturgical History*

Abstract

The medieval Bohairic Eucharist emerges as a constellation of overlapping local practices shaped by scribal discretion and evolving liturgical memory. That plurality comes into focus through the manuscript tradition itself. Surveying approximately 375 euchologia codices from the 13th to 20th centuries, this article identifies twenty-four alternate celebrant prayers across nine liturgical units from the raising of incense to communion, fourteen of which are entirely absent from the received printed edition of 1902. Beyond offering the first systematic inventory of variable celebrant prayers, the study shows that many prayers preserved in manuscripts never entered the received euchologion, while others privileged in print remained historically marginal. Together, these findings attest to enduring regional

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diversity despite repeated efforts toward standardization. The analysis further uncovers relationships between three previously unexamined manuscripts that preserve distinctive repertoires of alternate prayers, suggesting regional and exemplar-based liturgical families. By recovering this diverse liturgical landscape, the study positions variable prayers as a central feature of the Bohairic eucharistic tradition and a lens for understanding its historical development among the Copts and in relation to other Eastern liturgies.

1. Introduction

The apparent coherence of the Bohairic eucharistic rite masks a more protracted and uneven history of liturgical regulation. Between the thirteenth and fifteenth centuries, a series of instructional and regulatory works—from the anonymous *Guide to the Beginners*¹ to the ritual manuals of Ibn Kabar,² Ibn Sabbā,³ and the *diataxis* ratified under Gabriel V⁴—sought to codify the northern Bohairic eucharistic tradition, plausibly as steps toward a unified formulary, yet without capturing the full breadth of regional and ritual variability that continued to characterize practice.

The printing of the 1902 euchologion of the Coptic Orthodox Church, containing, among other services, the eucharistic liturgies of Basil of Caesarea (E-BAS), Gregory of Nazianzus (GREG), and Mark/

- 1 Various redactions exist for this work as demonstrated in Mīṣā'il al-Baramūsī, *دلال المبتدئين* (2020), 13-31; Idem, *دلالات الكنيسة* (2024). For a German translation based on the oldest redaction, Vatican City, BAV Vatican Ar. (= VA) 117 (1323 CE), ff. 197r-205v, consult: Graf, *Liturgische Anweisungen* (1924), 119-134.
- 2 Consult ch. 17 in Villecourt, *Les observances* (1923), 249-292 and ch. 1 in Mikhail, *Guides* (2022).
- 3 See chs. 59-84 in Mistrīḥ, *Pretiosa margarita* (1966) and ch. 2 in Mikhail, *Guides* (2022).
- 4 See 'Abdallah, *L'ordinamento* (1962), 171-200 (Arabic)/361-383 (Italian) and ch. 3 in Mikhail, *Guides* (2022).

Cyril of Alexandria (CYRIL), was a monumental undertaking by hegumen ‘Abd al-Masīḥ. Although the resulting volume presents itself as a cohesive and orderly expression of a unified tradition, its formation was far more contingent upon the manuscript witnesses available to the editor and thus offers only a partial view of the diversity of certain prayers.⁵ Owing to its status as the first printed euchologion officially authorized for ecclesial use, ‘Abd al-Masīḥ’s edition became the most influential of the tradition.⁶ Notably, it already preserves multiple instances of optional or alternate prayers within individual liturgical units, typically left to the celebrant’s discretion. Their inclusion, together with a dedicated appendix of such alternatives, attests to an explicit awareness of ongoing euchological variability. Yet additional variants surviving only in manuscript form remain unaccounted for, and it is this broader and largely uncharted corpus of alternate celebrant prayers that forms the focus of the present study.

In 2022, while searching for a dissertation topic, I began examining euchologia manuscripts. During this process, as I was already aware that certain alternate prayers existed in the eucharistic formularies, a side project emerged. I started documenting numerous prayers in these manuscripts that never entered the Coptic Church’s received tradition. Across nine distinct liturgical units between the raising of incense until the communion rites (labeled letters A-I below), I identified a total of twenty-four alternate presider prayers, fourteen of which were not included in the *editio typica* of 1902. To complete this study, I surveyed roughly 375 Bohairic euchologia produced between the thirteenth and twentieth centuries, examining them either in autopsy or through facsimiles. While many of these manuscripts are

- 5 On the history of its publication and the liturgical sources consulted, see Mīṣā’īl al-Baramūṣī, *Notes on the Euchologion* (2018), 125-146; Idem, *خولاجي* (2017), 165-197.
- 6 On its authorization as the official euchologion, see Mattā’us, *القرارات المجمعية* (2001), 24.

preserved in major international collections, the majority are housed in Egyptian repositories, most of which receive their first sustained analysis here. The manuscript bibliography below provides sigla and essential codicological data for all cited codices (in bold) and all consulted witnesses (in regular type), organized by holding institution. This introductory study does not attempt an exhaustive accounting of every occurrence of each prayer across the manuscript corpus, a task better suited to a digital environment and currently being undertaken since 2025 under the direction of Arsenius Mikhail.⁷

Beyond assembling a numbered inventory with incipits for these alternate celebrant prayers, this study further demonstrates that some texts later treated as normative were, in earlier practice, in fact marginal. Conversely, some supplications regarded as marginal in print, if they were identified at all, appear in the manuscript tradition as the principal supplication. By situating these prayers within a broad manuscript corpus, the study also uncovers notable parallels among particular manuscripts, evidenced by the exclusive appearance of identical variable prayers, thereby suggesting preliminary relationships between codices.⁸ Finally, it situates each prayer within the broader tradition and, where relevant, cites parallel exemplars from other Eastern liturgical corpora, highlighting broader commonalities across traditions. This initial orientation to the phenomenon of variable prayers serves only as a point of departure, as each liturgical unit and its corresponding findings warrant an independent, multi-disciplinary examination. Arsenius Mikhail has already undertaken such work for

7 Known as *The Bohairic Coptic Euchologia Project*, and accessible at: tinyurl.com/y2tnmwf5 (last accessed: 08/04/2026). See also Mikhail, *A Typology* (2025), 389-404; Idem, *The Bohairic Northern* (forthcoming).

8 See Zanetti's initial proposal, based on the variable prayers of the kiss and the fraction: Zanetti, *Esquisse d'une typologie* (1987), 407-418. For a parallel methodology in the Byzantine rite, see most recently Parenti, *Storia regionale* (2025).

the prayers surrounding the Gospel,⁹ and I am currently conducting similar analyses of the prayers of the veil, the kiss, and the communion rites. What follows offers a concise orientation to the phenomenon of celebrant variable prayers as preserved in the Bohairic manuscript tradition.

2. *The celebrant variable prayers*

A. *Incense prayers*

Two nearly identical offices for the offering of incense appear in the medieval northern Coptic tradition: the morning and evening offering of incense services.¹⁰ While not strictly part of the eucharistic liturgy in origin, since at least the time of Ibn Kabar in the early fourteenth century the service of the morning incense has functioned as a prerequisite for any eucharistic liturgy.¹¹ This office, which includes a sequence of intercessory petitions recited by the celebrant, communal praises, together with a psalm and Gospel pericope, remains essentially identical to the evening service. Aside from their differing sets of intercessions, both offices preserve distinct prayers recited inaudibly within the sanctuary at the altar, four of which are included in the ratified printed euchologion of 1902:¹²

9 See chs. 6 and 8 in Mikhail, *Liturgy of the Word* (2026).

10 On these rituals among the Copts, see Quecke, *Untersuchungen* (1970), 2-13; Athanasius al-Maqrī, *صلوات رفع البخور* (2005). Specifically on the evening service, see Mikhail, *On Evening Worship* (2013).

11 Paris, BnF Ar. (= PNA) 203 (1363-1369 CE), f. 205r. Cf. Villecourt, *Les observances* (1923), 247-248; Mikhail, *Guides* (2022), 37.

12 Šalīb, *πνευχολογιον* (1902), 35-38 (A1), 38-40 (A2), 742-745 (A3), 745-746 (A4); Nicolotti, *Il libro* (2023), 168-170 (A1), 172-173 (A2), 808-811 (A3), 810-813 (A4).

ID	Coptic	Arabic	Translation
A ₁	ⲡⲬⲥ ⲡⲉⲛⲛⲟϥⲧ ⲡⲓⲛⲓⲱⲧ ⲉⲧⲟⲓ ⲛ̀ⲉⲣⲟⲧ ⲟϥⲟⲣ ⲛ̀ⲁⲗⲛⲟⲓⲛⲟⲥ	المسيح إلهنا العظيم المخوف الحقيقي	O Christ our God, the great, fearful, and true
A ₂	ϥⲧ ⲡⲛ ⲉⲧⲁⲣⲱⲱⲡ ⲉⲣⲟϥ ⲛ̀ⲛⲓⲁⲱⲣⲟⲛ ⲛ̀ⲛⲧⲉ ⲡⲓⲞⲘⲛⲓ ⲁⲅⲉⲗ	يا الله الذي قبل إليه قربان هابيل الصديق	O God who received to himself the gifts of the righteous Abel
A ₃	ⲡⲬⲥ ⲡⲉⲛⲛⲟϥⲧ ⲧⲣⲉⲗⲡⲓⲥ ⲛ̀ⲛⲧⲉ ⲡⲉⲛⲟϥϭⲁⲓ	أيها المسيح إلهنا رجاء خلاصنا	O Christ our God, the hope of our salvation
A ₄	ϩⲟⲡ ⲉ̀ⲣⲟⲕ ϥⲧ ⲛ̀ⲛⲧⲟⲧⲉⲛ ϩⲱⲛ ⲁⲛⲟⲛ ⲃⲁ ⲛⲉⲕⲉⲅⲓⲁⲓⲕ ⲛ̀ⲁⲧⲛ̀ⲡⲓⲱⲁ	يا اللهم اقبل منا إليك نحن عبيدك غير المستحقين	Receive to yourself, O God, from us your unworthy servants

A₁, for the evening incense, and A₂, for the morning incense, form part of the standard formulary of this office. By contrast, A₃ (also for the evening) and A₄ (also for the morning), both far less familiar in the tradition, appear only in an appended list of alternate supplications placed after all the eucharistic formularies, thus reflecting their auxiliary character.¹³

Ágnes T. Mihálykó has shown that A₁ was already known in the southern Egyptian Sahidic tradition by the eighth century.¹⁴ Both A₁ and A₂ occur in the oldest dated northern Copto-Arabic euchologion

¹³ The same pattern appears in Byzantine liturgical texts, where ancillary prayers that fall outside the core formulary typically circulate as addenda: Parenti, *La preghiera* (2011), 158-159. A similar phenomenon occurs in Copto-Arabic codices, as demonstrated in other rites: Paul, *Women and Blood* (2025), 182-183.

¹⁴ P.Rain.UnterrichtKopt. 197v (BM, EA 5876). See her discussion in Mihálykó, *Christian Liturgical Papyri* (2019), 138, 292. In Prague, Or. Inst. I from the eleventh-twelfth century, a variation of A₂ occurs: Hažmuková, *Miscellaneous I* (1936), 332-333.

that preserves both the morning and evening incense offices: Cairo, Franciscan Center Museum (= CFM) 2 (13th/14th c.).¹⁵ Yet, unlike the remarkable stability of A₁ and A₂ across nearly all manuscripts, A₃ and A₄ appear only sporadically and even then are commonly attested outside the office of incense. Their earliest attestation is found in Oxford, Bodleian Huntington (= OBH) 360 (ca. 13th c.), from the monastery of Saint Macarius in Wādī al-Naṭrūn. Given that this codex lacks a dedicated section for the office of incense, the scribe inserts these supplications within the liturgy of the word, though he marks them for the incense service.¹⁶

Despite the ubiquity of the two core prayers (A₁ and A₂), manuscripts through the eighteenth century preserve additional alternative supplications for these offices. In total, one further prayer circulated for the morning incense and two for the evening. The Cypriot codex Paris, BnF Copt. (= PNC) 31 dated before the fifteenth century, preserves the Bohairic-only texts of A₅, A₆, and A₇, all of which are transmitted as an addendum to the principal text of the manuscript.¹⁷

ID	Coptic	Translation
A ₅	ⲧⲈⲚⲦⲀⲖⲔⲔ ⲛⲀⲕ ⲈⲗⲢⲏⲓ ⲙⲡⲉⲕⲙⲞⲔⲔ ⲡⲞⲤ ⲙⲡⲓⲤⲞⲓⲛⲔⲔ ⲙⲡⲓⲛⲀⲦⲓⲕⲔⲔⲔⲔⲔ	We offer up before you, O Lord, the spiritual incense
A ₆	ⲢⲦⲧⲦⲏ ⲈⲦⲀⲘⲚⲢⲞⲘ ⲈⲜⲞⲖ ⲢⲈⲚ ⲢⲓⲞⲦⲧ ⲢⲈⲚ ⲔⲞⲙⲈⲦⲀⲢⲀⲞⲤⲔ	O God, who was begotten from the Father impassibly
A ₇	ⲢⲦⲧⲦⲏ ⲈⲦⲤⲞⲘⲞⲦⲧⲧ ⲈⲤⲤⲈⲚ ⲡⲦⲧⲢⲞⲘ ⲔⲞⲘⲔⲔ ⲡⲓⲈⲡⲓⲕⲔⲞⲢⲔⲔ ⲛⲦⲧⲈ ⲈⲏⲤⲀⲓ ⲛⲓⲜⲈⲚ	O God, who looks upon all, and the overseer of all things

¹⁵ CFM2, p. 403 (A₁), p. 388 (A₂).

¹⁶ OBH360, ff. 31r-32r (A₃), ff. 27v-29v (A₄).

¹⁷ PNC31, ff. 184r-v (A₃), ff. 186r-187r (A₄), ff. 183v-184r (A₅), ff. 181r-182v (A₆), ff. 182v-183v (A₇).

The rubrics do not specify which of these prayers belongs to which service. In PNC₃₁, the prayer titles and marginal annotations indicate only whether each supplication is addressed to the Father, as in A₄ and A₅, or to the Son, as in A₃, A₆, and A₇. A comparable pattern, assigning the same prayers either to the Father or to the Son, appears in other witnesses including Asyūt, Monastery of the Virgin Mary, al-Muḥarraḡ Liturgy (= AML) 14B₉ (1773-1774 CE);¹⁸ Wādī al-Naṭrūn, Monastery of the Virgin Mary, al-Baramūs Liturgy (= WBaL) 319 (1792-1793 CE);¹⁹ Wādī al-Naṭrūn, Monastery of the Virgin Mary, al-Suryān Liturgy (= WSL) 496 (before 1895 CE).²⁰ They do not, however, state whether the prayer pertains to the morning or evening incense. Yet this distinction, precisely to which divine person the prayer is directed, offers essential clues for determining its proper placement. In OBH₃₆₀, A₁ and A₃ are both identified as evening incense prayers addressed to the Son, whereas A₄ is designated as an incense prayer addressed to the Father.²¹ Following the consistent logic evident across these manuscripts, we may assign A₅ (addressed to the Father) to the morning, and A₆ and A₇ (both addressed to the Son) to the evening incense. Such a paradigm carries theological significance, for Christ proclaimed as “the Light of the world” (John 8:12) is linked to the evening service, during which the lamp-lighting rite would have taken place and in which Christ is portrayed as a sweet-smelling evening offering (cf. Eph 5:2).²² Accordingly, a celebrant could select from a

18 AML_{14B9}, ff. 172v-173r (A₃), ff. 174r-175r (A₄).

19 WBaL₃₁₉, ff. 201v-202r (A₃), ff. 203v-205r (A₄).

20 WSL₄₉₆, ff. 35v-36v (A₃), ff. 37v-39r (A₄), which is erroneously titled for the “morning.”

21 OBH₃₆₀, ff. 24v, 31r, and 27v. On the presence of prayers addressed to the Son in both the Coptic and West Syriac traditions, see: Mihálykó, *A Coptic Prayer* (2021), 165-184; Varghese, *Prayers Addressed to Christ* (2008), 88-111.

22 Broadly on these theological themes, consult Taft, ‘*Thanksgiving*’ (2001), 169-186.

total of four options for the evening incense service and three for the morning, e.g. in the case of AML₁₄B₉.

B. Pre-Gospel prayer

Among the notable features that shape the proclamation of the Gospel is the audible introductory rite it preserves. While the other scriptural readings in the liturgy of the word include celebrant prayers recited inaudibly and primarily inside the sanctuary, only the pre-Gospel ritual contains a prayer intoned aloud by the celebrant at the threshold of the sanctuary.²³ This audible supplication, accompanied by an incense offering and a procession around the altar before the Gospel reading, publicly draws attention to the solemnity and centrality of the Gospel proclamation. Two prayers before the Gospel's recitation are presented consecutively in the *editio typica*:²⁴

ID	Coptic	Arabic	Translation
B ₁	ΦΝΗΒ...ΦΗ ἔταρχος ἡνεραγιος ἡμαθητης	السيد...الذي قال لتلاميذه القديسين	O Master...who said to his saintly disciples
B ₂	ΦΝΗΒ...ΦΗ ἔταρωγωρη ἡνεραγιος ἡμαθητης ογορ ἡαποστολος εἶθ εἶβολ ἡεν πικοςμος τηρη	أيها السيد...الذي أرسل تلاميذه القديسين والرسل الأطهار في العالم كله	O Master...who sent his saintly disciples and holy apostles into the whole world

23 On these rituals in the received tradition, see Ṣalīb, ΠΕΥΧΟΛΟΓΙΟΝ (1902), 234-260; Nicolotti, *Il libro* (2023), 356-379, as well as its historical development in ch. 2 of Mikhail, *Liturgy of the Word* (2026).

24 Ṣalīb, ΠΕΥΧΟΛΟΓΙΟΝ (1902), 90-95; Nicolotti, *Il libro* (2023), 222-227.

B₁, the most common and unanimously attested in practically all examined codices, already appears in what is likely the oldest known euchologion containing E-BAS, GREG, and CYRIL, Manchester, John Rylands Library Coptic (= MRC) 426 dated to the mid-thirteenth century, making it one of the oldest known Copto-Arabic euchologia in the world.²⁵ B₂, which appears far less frequently in the manuscript record and is commonly associated with GREG, is known from a comparably dated codex, OBH360 where the scribe lists it as second to B₁.²⁶

In his study of the ritual unfolding of the Gospel in the divine liturgy, Arsenius Mikhail shows that prayer B₂ functioned as the preferred pre-Gospel supplication in some of the earliest Greek witnesses to the Coptic anaphoras, while B₁ is more characteristic of Copto-Arabic redactions.²⁷ On the basis of the fourteenth-century Greek-Arabic euchologion Collegeville, Kacmarcik Ms. (= CKM) 6 from the Monastery of St. Antony, he associates B₂ with Alexandrian provenance and B₁ with Old Cairo, while also drawing textual parallels to the Melkite and Syriac traditions.²⁸

In addition to these two prayers of the received tradition, a third and lesser-known pre-Gospel supplication also circulated in the thirteenth century. After listing B₁ and B₂ in E-BAS, the scribe of OBH360 provides a third alternative, specifying in its rubric that it is intended for use in the early morning (τῶοὔη / الغدوات).²⁹

25 MRC426, ff. 33v-35v. Cf. Rodwell, *Liturgies* (1870), 30. On its historicity, see note 143 below.

26 OBH360, ff. 38r-40v.

27 Mikhail, *Liturgy of the Word* (2026), 368-369.

28 Mikhail, *Liturgy of the Word* (2026), 363-364. CKM6, ff. 24r-25v (B₁), ff. 23r-v (B₂); Macomber, *Greek Text of the Coptic Mass* (1977), 319-320.

29 OBH360, ff. 39v-40v. See the Coptic edition and translation in Mikhail, *Liturgy of the Word* (2026), 369-370.

ID	Coptic	Arabic	Translation
B ₃	ϥⲛⲏⲃ ⲡⲟⲥ ϥⲏ ⲉⲧⲧ ⲏⲡⲟⲩⲱⲛⲓ ⲛⲓⲛⲉⲛⲉⲗ	أيها السيد الرب واهب النور الأبدي	O Master Lord, who grants eternal light

C. Post-Gospel prayer

Across the Bohairic manuscript tradition, a prayer designated for recitation after the Gospel appears ubiquitously throughout the sources. This post-Gospel supplication already appears in MRC426,³⁰ and has been part of the received tradition at least since then:³¹

ID	Coptic	Arabic	Translation
C _I	ⲡⲓⲣⲉϥⲱⲟⲩⲛⲉⲗⲏⲧ ϥⲁ ⲡⲓⲛⲏⲱ ⲏⲏⲁⲓ	الطويل الروح الكثير الرحمة	O long-suffering, plenteous in mercy

Although minor textual variations occur, mainly in the ordering or omission of certain elements (especially within the Greek redactions of the Coptic anaphora), Arsenius Mikhail demonstrates that the prayer remains remarkably stable across the witnesses.³² Studying this prayer's structure, Athanasius al-Maqārī identifies a threefold structure: 1) a supplication for the faithful preservation of the Gospel; 2) a series of intercessory petitions; and 3) a prayer offered on behalf of the catechumens—aspects that Arsenius Mikhail develops in greater detail.³³

30 MRC426, ff. 36r-42v. Cf. Rodwell, *Liturgies* (1870), 30-32.

31 Šalīb, ⲡⲓⲉϥϫⲟⲟⲩⲟⲩⲛ (1902), 260-269; Nicolotti, *Il libro* (2023), 380-389.

32 Mikhail, *Liturgy of the Word* (2026), 443, 446-452; Dous, Ἡ Ἀλεξανδρινή (1997), 87-88.

33 Athanasius al-Maqārī, ⲁⲗⲓⲁⲓ ⲁⲗⲓⲙⲁⲕⲁⲣⲓ (2011), vol. 1, 521-523; Mikhail, *Liturgy of the Word* (2026), 442-444.

Despite the predominance of C₁ and its early attestation across the manuscript record, an alternative post-Gospel prayer circulated concurrently. In OBH360, the earliest known witness, C₂ appears in the eucharistic formulary as the first post-Gospel supplication, preceding the transcription of C₁.³⁴

ID	Coptic	Arabic	Translation
C ₂	ΤΕΝΘΕΡΗΜΟΤ ἸΓΟΤΚ ΠΟ̅Σ ΠΑΠΑΝΤΟΚΡΑΤΩΡ	نشكرك أيها الرب ضابط الكل	We thank you, O Lord, the Pantocrator

Unlike C₁, which emphasizes putting the Gospel into practice while weaving together a variety of intercessions, C₂ briefly expresses thanksgiving for hearing the Gospel and then immediately turns toward what will unfold in the assembly, namely the offering of the Eucharist and a plea for mercy.

In his edition and translation of this prayer, Arsenius Mikhail identifies two additional manuscripts that transmit C₂, namely PNC₃₁ and WSL₄₉₆, where it is found in the appendix.³⁵ To these we may add two others, AML_{14B9} and WBaL₃₁₉, where it is also in an appendix.³⁶ Red Sea, Monastery of St. Antony Liturgy (= RAL) 654, an undated all-Arabic euchologion of the three liturgies, also transmits both prayers in its formulary, interestingly placing C₂ before C₁, just like OBH360.³⁷ While OBH360 and PNC₃₁ appear to indicate that C₂ was recited before C₁, the remaining manuscripts explicitly state in the rubric that C₂ is said instead of (عوضاً عن) C₁. This suggests that by the time these codices were copied, either of the two variant post-Gospel prayers could be used interchangeably.

³⁴ OBH360, ff. 41v-43r.

³⁵ Mikhail, *Liturgy of the Word* (2026), 444-445.

³⁶ AML_{14B9}, ff. 177r-v; WBaL₃₁₉, ff. 207v-208r.

³⁷ RAL654, ff. 25v-26v.

The post-Gospel prayer stands as the final alternate prayer not explicitly tied to any of the three anaphoras since it belongs to the liturgy of the word, a generic service common to all formularies. By contrast, the subsequent variant supplications in the pre-anaphora, anaphora, and post-anaphora typically correspond to a specific formulary.

D. Prayer of the veil

The prayer of the veil is the final supplication the celebrant says inaudibly in the pre-anaphora. Functioning as an *oratio accessus*, the celebrant recites this prayer before (re)entering the altar as a preparatory rite prior to officiating the eucharistic liturgy—a topic I presented on, along with the following prayer of the kiss, at the 2024 session of the Society of Oriental Liturgy with an edition and publication forthcoming.³⁸ The Copts’ received tradition preserves a total of six altar-access prayers:³⁹

ID	Coptic	Arabic	Translation
D ₁	ϥⲧ ϥⲏ ⲉⲧⲉ ⲉⲟⲛⲉ ⲧⲉⲕⲙⲉⲧⲙⲁⲓⲣⲟⲙⲓ ⲛⲁⲧⲟⲩⲥⲁⲗⲓ ⲛⲙⲟⲥ	يا الله الذي من أجل محبتك للبشر التي لا ينطق بها	O God who in your ineffable love for mankind
D ₂	ⲡⲟⲥ ⲡⲉⲛⲛⲟⲩⲧⲏ ϥⲏ ⲉⲧⲁⲩⲥⲟⲧⲧⲉⲛ	أيها الرب إلهنا الذي خلصنا	O Lord our God who has redeemed us
D ₃	ⲡⲟⲥ ϥⲧ ⲡⲓⲡⲁⲛⲧⲟⲕⲣⲁⲧⲟⲣ ϥⲏ ⲉⲧⲥⲱⲟⲩⲛ ⲛⲑⲙⲉⲩⲓ ⲛⲛⲓⲣⲟⲙⲓ	أيها الرب الإله ضابط الكل العارف أفكار البشر	O Lord, God the Pantocrator, who knows the thoughts of men

38 *Rites of Transition: Prayers of the Veil and Kiss as Preparatory Rites in the Medieval Coptic Eucharist* (forthcoming).

39 Şalīb, *πνευχολογιον* (1902), 270-272 (D₁), 272-273 (D₂), 453-454 (D₃), 455-457 (D₄), 555-558 (D₅), 559-563 (D₆); Nicolotti, *Il libro* (2023), 390-391 (D₁), 392-395 (D₂), 556-559 (D₃), 559-561 (D₄), 646-649 (D₅), 649-651 (D₆).

D ₄	εΤΙ ΟΝ ΤΕΝΤΑΣΘΟ ἸΜΟΝ ΖΑΡΟΚ Φ† ΠΑΓΓΑΘΟΣ	وأيضًا نرجع إليك يا الله الصالح	Again, we return to you, O God the good one
D ₅	ΠΡΕΦΘΑΜΙΟ ἸΤΕ †ΚΤΗΣΙΣ ΤΗΡΣ	يا خالق البرية كلها	O the creator of all creation
D ₆	Πῶς Φ† ἸΤΕ ΝΙΧΟΜ ἸΠΟΥΡΟ ἸΤΕ ἸΨΟΥ	أيها الرب إله القوات ملك المجد	O Lord, God of powers, king of glory

The primary prayer of the veil of E-BAS (D₁), GREG (D₃), and CYRIL (D₅) are already attested in our earliest specimen, MRC₄₂₆.⁴⁰ When later manuscripts include this liturgical unit, these three supplications appear most consistently in their respective formularies across the codices examined.

Although D₂ and D₄, the variable prayers in E-BAS and GREG, are already transcribed in the thirteenth-century manuscript OBH₃₆₀,⁴¹ their transmission remains very limited, with only a small number of occurrences scattered across time.⁴² Prayer D₆, the alternate supplication in CYRIL, is absent from OBH₃₆₀ despite that codex containing this formulary. Most of its witnesses date from the eighteenth century.

All three alternate texts (D₂, D₄, and D₆) are preserved in the appended prayer collections of AML_{14B9}, WBaL₃₁₉, and WSL₄₉₆, with the first two codices also having the more common prayer in the respective formularies.⁴³ All six prayers also appear in two Arabic-only

⁴⁰ MRC₄₂₆, ff. 42v-44r (D₁), ff. 116r-118v (D₃), ff. 183r-185v (D₅).

⁴¹ OBH₃₆₀, ff. 50r-53r (D₂), ff. 132r-134v (D₄).

⁴² For instance: PNC₃₁, ff. 170r-171v (D₂), ff. 111r-112v (D₄); PNA₅₉₆₉, ff. 3r-5r (D₄).

⁴³ AML_{14B9}, ff. 178r-v (D₂), ff. 179r-180v (D₄), ff. 181r-182v (D₆); WBaL₃₁₉, ff. 208v-210r (D₂), ff. 210r-213r (D₄), ff. 213r-215v (D₆); WSL₄₉₆, ff. 42v-44r (D₂), ff. 44r-46v (D₄), ff. 46v-48v (D₆).

euchologia of the three liturgies: RAL772 (1816-1861, 1874-1927 CE),⁴⁴ and in RAL654.⁴⁵ In the second, all prayers except D6 are clearly present; a lacuna occurs precisely where D6 could have appeared, leaving open the possibility of its original inclusion. A handful of manuscripts from the Eastern Desert that preserve GREG retain its variable option, D4.⁴⁶

The prayer of the veil exhibits notable stability within the Bohairic tradition.⁴⁷ Although these six prayers circulated with differing frequencies, D1, D3, and D5 with the most prevalence, no new variant supplications have come to light despite the divergent transmission of this liturgical unit within the Greek redactions of the Coptic eucharistic formularies.⁴⁸

44 RAL772, ff. 99r-100r (D1), ff. 100r-v (D2), ff. [107]r-[108]r (D3), ff. [108]r-v (D4), ff. [147]r-[148]r (D5), ff. [148]r-[149]r (D6).

45 RAL654, ff. 30r-32r (D1), ff. 32r-33r (D2), ff. 84r-85v (D3), ff. 85v-88r (D4), ff. 132r-v (D5).

46 In addition to RAL772 and RAL654, consider: Red Sea, Monastery of St. Paul Liturgy (= RPL) 134 (1718 CE), ff. 106r-108v; RPL143 (1797 CE), ff. 117r-119v.

47 The apparent stability of this prayer should not obscure the fact that it is lacking in some manuscripts, and that both euchologia London, British Library Or. (= LBO) 429, ff. 61r-v, and RPL148 (1752 CE), ff. 114v-115v, preserve a hitherto unknown optional presider's prayer of piety beginning with, "My Lord Jesus Christ the living Son of God..." (ⲡⲁⲗⲟⲥ ⲓⲏⲥ ⲡⲉⲗⲥ ⲡⲱⲎⲣⲓ ⲙⲉⲫⲧ ⲉⲦⲟⲛⲃ / يا ربي يسوع المسيح ابن الله الحي) in addition to a prayer of the veil. On the phenomena of prayers of piety in the Coptic tradition, consult Paul, *Praying While Officially Praying* (forthcoming).

48 A distinct prayer of the veil accompanies each of the three eucharistic formularies, as evidenced by two fourteenth-century manuscripts: Paris, BnF Gr. (= PNG) 325, which preserves one in E-BAS (ff. 23r-v) and another in GREG (ff. 89v-91v). On the transmission of these prayers, see Mikhail, *Presentation* (2020), 160-167. The second, CKM6, contains a fragmentary prayer in CYRIL (f. 109r), which is the same as a prayer in Melkite MARK: Macomber, *Anaphora of Mark* (1979), 77; Cuming, *Liturgy of Mark* (1990), 16-17.

Many of these prayers show clear parallels with other liturgical traditions, particularly those of Antioch and Jerusalem. For example, D₁ corresponds to the same liturgical unit in the Syriac anaphora of James,⁴⁹ while D₂ appears as a *Prayer of the Oblation* attributed to Basil in the same anaphora, though preserved in its Greek recension.⁵⁰ Likewise, D₅ echoes the veil prayer found in the Syriac anaphora of John of Bostra;⁵¹ this attribution even appears in the title of this prayer within the Bohairic euchological conventions.⁵² Several prayers of the veil entered the Ethiopic tradition as well: D₂ and D₄, two supplications rarely attested in the Bohairic tradition, both appear in the anaphora of the Apostles.⁵³ Distinctively, D₃ reworks the prayers before and after the preparation in the inherited Coptic tradition to formulate this prayer of the veil that is most common in GREG.⁵⁴ These brief comparisons illustrate the broader pattern of inter-traditional exchange and preservation.

E. Prayer of the kiss

The final celebrant's supplication before the commencement of the anaphora is known as the prayer of the kiss, which is proclaimed audibly at the altar with diaconal admonitions and congregational responses. Like the prayer of the veil, these supplications vary according to the eucharistic formulary being celebrated. As I presented elsewhere, the thrust of the prayers emphasize reconciliation between God and humanity and reconciliation among the assembled faithful.⁵⁵ The latter

49 Raes – Codrington, *Anaphorae Syriacae*, vol. 2.2 (1953), 140-141; Brightman, *Liturgies Eastern and Western* (1896), 84-85.

50 Mercier, *La Liturgie* (1946), 78-81.

51 Raes – Codrington, *Anaphorae Syriacae*, vol. 3.1 (1981), 14-15.

52 E.g. MRC426, f. 183r.

53 Brightman, *Liturgies Eastern and Western* (1896), 195.

54 Mikhail, *Presentation* (2020), 168-171.

55 See note 38 above.

finds ritual expression in the ancient liturgical practice of exchanging the kiss of peace.⁵⁶ A total of eight prayers of the kiss form part of the received tradition: two in each anaphora (E1 and E2 for E-BAS; E3 and E4 for GREG; E5 and E6 for CYRIL), and two additional prayers transmitted in appended material (E7 and E8).⁵⁷

ID	Coptic	Arabic	Translation
E1	ϕⲧⲓ ⲡⲓⲛⲱⲧⲧⲓ ⲡⲱⲗⲁⲛⲉⲛⲉⲗ	يا الله العظيم الأبدى	O God the great, the eternal
E2	ϭⲟⲟⲓ ϭⲁⲡⲟⲱⲓ ⲛⲧⲟⲙ ⲛⲓⲃⲉⲛ ⲛⲧⲉ ⲟⲩϭⲁϭⲓ	عالٍ فوق كل قوة النطق	Exalted above all power of speech
E3	ϕⲏ ⲉⲧⲱⲟⲡ ϕⲏ ⲉⲛⲁⲩⲱⲟⲡ	أيها الكائن الذي كان	[He] who is, who was
E4	ⲡⲭⲥ ⲡⲉⲛⲛⲟⲩⲧⲧⲓ ⲧⲧⲟⲙ ⲉⲧⲟⲓ ⲛⲉⲗⲟⲧⲧⲓ	أيها المسيح إلهنا القوة المخوفة	O Christ our God, the fearful power
E5	ⲡⲁⲣⲭⲏⲒⲟϭ ⲛⲧⲉ ⲛⲧⲱⲛⲃ	يا رئيس الحياة	O author of life
E6	ϕⲧⲓ ⲛⲧⲉ ⲧⲁⲒⲁⲡⲏ	يا إله المحبة	O God of love
E7	ϕⲧⲓ ⲡⲗⲏⲏⲓⲟⲩⲒⲒⲟϭ ⲛⲧⲉ ⲉⲛϭⲁⲓ ⲛⲓⲃⲉⲛ	يا الله خالق كل الأشياء	O God, creator of everything
E8	ϕⲧⲓ ⲟⲩⲟⲗⲉ ϕⲏⲏⲃ ⲛⲧⲉ ⲟⲩⲟⲛ ⲛⲓⲃⲉⲛ	يا الله سيد الكل	O God and master of all

⁵⁶ Phillips, *Ritual Kiss* (2010).

⁵⁷ Šalīb, *Πνευχολογιον* (1902), 297-300 (E1), 301-304 (E2), 458-463 (E3), 463-468 (E4), 563-568 (E5), 569-572 (E6), 747-749 (E7), 749-750 (E8); Nicolotti, *Il libro* (2023), 414-417 (E1), 418-421 (E2), 560-564 (E3), 564-569 (E4), 650-655 (E5), 656-659 (E6), 812-815 (E7), 814-817 (E8). See also Zanetti's initial treatment, though he does not identify other alternatives: Zanetti, *Esquisse d'une typologie* (1987), 410-411.

Unlike the *editio typica*, OBH360 transcribes all eight prayers as part of the eucharistic formularies: E1, E2, E7, and E8 in E-BAS, and the remaining prayers in their respective anaphoras.⁵⁸ Similar to OBH360, RAL654 also offers these four prayers of the kiss within E-BAS.⁵⁹ With the exception of E7 and E8, which do not appear in MRC426, this manuscript transmits all others in their proper formularies, except for E4 an alternate prayer for the kiss in GREG, which a later hand added at the end of the codex.⁶⁰

E1 through E6, the most prevalent across the three anaphoras, continued to circulate in the manuscripts consulted, though their relative positions occasionally shift. E1 remains relatively stable as the principal prayer in E-BAS compared to the other formularies.⁶¹ For example, E5, given primary position in the received tradition of CYRIL, is often relegated to second place, with E6 taking precedence, as seen in OBH360 and RAL654. Within these same codices, a similar inversion occurs between E4 and E5, even though the former holds priority in the *editio typica*. A similar phenomenon appears in another early euchologion, Cairo, Coptic Patriarchate Liturgy (= CPL) 174 (mid-13th c.), which privileges E4 over E3 in GREG and E6 over E5 in CYRIL, even enduring into later centuries.⁶² Such patterns suggest that the order later received as standard was not uniformly fixed in

58 OBH360, ff. 60r-62v (E1), ff. 62v-65r (E2), ff. 65v-67r (E7), ff. 67r-68r (E8), 137v-140v (E4), 141r-145r (E3), 204r-206v (E6), 207r-211 (E5).

59 RAL654, ff. 37r-38v (E1), ff. 38v-40r (E2), ff. 40r-41v (E7), ff. 41v-42v (E8).

60 MRC426, ff. 52r-54v (E1), ff. 54v-57r (E2), ff. 119r-123r (E3), ff. 186r-188r (E6), ff. 188v-193r (E5), ff. 279r-284v (E4).

61 Mihálykó has demonstrated that E1 was known in Southern Egypt by the seventh century, as evidenced by two Greek papyri and a Sahidic pottery ostrakon. See MPER N.S. XVII 32, PSI Com. IX 1, and O.Crum 5 in Mihálykó, *Christian Liturgical Papyri* (2019), 298, 307, 366.

62 CPL174, ff. 93r-95r (E4), ff. 95r-99r (E3), ff. 144r-145v (E6), ff. 145v-149r (E5); WBaL229 (1610 CE), ff. 64r-65v (E5), ff. 66r-68r (E4); RPL134 (1714 CE), ff. 106r-108v (E5), ff. 108v-111v (E4).

earlier manuscript contexts and could vary according to local or redactional priorities.

E7 and E8 appear far less frequently than the other known prayers, whether within an anaphora or as a supplement. A few manuscripts preserve only one of these two prayers for E-BAS. When this occurs, scribes tend to copy E8 rather than E7, as seen in PNC73 (1528 CE) from Cyprus and in a Cairene parish manuscript, Ḥārat al-Saqqāyīn, Church of the Archangel Gabriel 3/25 (1696 CE).⁶³ An exception occurs with PNC31, which retains E7 within the formulary.⁶⁴ More commonly, however, scribes place one or both of these supplementary supplications after the formulary. A collective example par excellence of preserving both in an appendix appears in AML14B9, WBaL319, and WSL496, each of which distinctly prioritizes E8 over E7 by listing it first.⁶⁵ By contrast, manuscripts such as Vatican City, BAV Vatican Copt. (= VC) 17 (1288 CE), one of the oldest firmly dated and commonly cited euchologia originally from the Monastery of St. Antony, RPL158 an undated codex, as well as the parish codex from the Nile Delta region, Ṭūkh Dalkh, Church of St. George Liturgy 140 (1751 CE), preserve only E8 in a list of added prayers appended after the formularies.⁶⁶

Although additional prayers of the kiss survive in Greek and Sahidic transcriptions of the anaphoras outside the Bohairic tradition, E2 itself has a Sahidic parallel attested from at least the eleventh century.⁶⁷

63 PNC73, ff. 51v-52r; Ḥārat al-Saqqāyīn, Church of the Archangel Gabriel 3/25, ff. 51v-52r. Other examples include PNC26, ff. 47v-48v; LBO429, ff. 67r-v; Cairo, Coptic Museum Liturgy (= CML) 265 (18th c.), ff. 127v-130r.

64 PNC31, ff. 35r-36v.

65 AML14B9, ff. 185v-186r (E8), ff. 186r-187r (E7); WBaL319, ff. 219v-220v (E8), ff. 220v-221v (E7); WSL496, ff. 52r-52v (E8), ff. 52v-54r (E7).

66 VC17, ff. 129r-v; RPL158, ff. 87r-v; Ṭūkh Dalkh, Church of St. George Liturgy 140, ff. 341r-343r.

67 For the two Greek witnesses, see PNG325, ff. 30r-33v and CKM6, ff. 98r-100v, with the latter finding parallel in Melkite MARK: Macomber, *Anaphora of*

Beyond this, two further examples circulated within the medieval Northern tradition:⁶⁸

ID	Coptic	Arabic	Translation
E9	ϥⲏⲛⲃⲉⲛ . . . ϥⲏ ⲉⲧⲁⲣⲁϥⲉⲙ ⲡⲓⲪⲣⲏⲓ ⲛⲧⲉⲛⲛⲉⲧⲉⲃⲏⲛⲏ ⲃⲉⲛ ϩⲁⲛⲛⲁⲓ	السيد...الذي تعاهد مسكنتنا بالمراحم	O Master...who visited our misery with mercies
E10	ϥⲏⲛⲃⲉⲛ ⲡⲓⲪⲣⲏⲓ ⲛⲧⲉⲃⲏⲛ ⲡⲓⲪⲟⲖⲟⲥ ⲛⲁⲛⲏⲓⲟⲩⲣⲓⲖⲟⲥ	السيد الرب يسوع المسيح الكلمة الخالق	O Master Lord Jesus Christ the creator Logos

All five witnesses of E9 consistently address the prayer to the Father, thereby aligning it within E-BAS and CYRIL, both traditionally directed to the first person of the Trinity. In addition to RAL81, these witnesses include PNC31 and the three codices that preserve commonly shared prayers, AML14B9, WBaL319, and WSL496.⁶⁹ Our sole witness to E10 in RAL81 explicitly titles it for use in GREG (مختص بقداس أغريغور يوس), a designation reinforced by its Christological address within the supplication's text.⁷⁰

As with the prayer of the veil, I have identified several prayers of the kiss in various Syriac anaphoras. For example, E1 and E8 appear in different versions of the anaphora of James.⁷¹ Similarly, E6 is attested

Mark (1979), 78; Cuming, *Liturgy of Mark* (1990), 17-18. A Sahidic prayer of the kiss attributed to Gregory is found in MRC21 (11th c.), which was edited by Crum as #21 in his *Catalogue* (1909), 7-8. See the Sahidic redaction of E2 in LBO3850 A10 (10th/11th c.), f. 3v.

68 RAL81, ff. 219v-220v (E9), ff. 224r-227r (E10).

69 PNC31, ff. 189v-190v; AML14B9, ff. 187r-188r; WBaL319, ff. 221v-222v; WSL496, ff. 54r-55r.

70 RAL81, ff. 224r-227r.

71 Raes – Codrington, *Anaphorae Syriacae*, vol. 2.1 (1951), 11 (E1), vol. 2.2 (1953), 139 (E8). E1 is known in the Ethiopic anaphora of the Apostles: Brightman, *Liturgies Eastern and Western* (1896), 227.

in the anaphora of John of Bostra,⁷² while E7 corresponds to a prayer in the anaphora of Severus of Antioch.⁷³ The Copto-Arabic prayer titles for E6 and E7 commonly ascribe these texts to John of Bostra and Severus, respectively, further underscoring their link to these Syriac liturgies.⁷⁴ These shared texts underscore the broader process of hybridization within the Bohairic eucharistic formularies and reveal moments of interpolation from Syriac liturgical models.⁷⁵

Taken together, the northern Bohairic tradition therefore preserves three variable prayers of the kiss for GREG (E3, E4, and E10). The remaining seven prayers could theoretically be employed within E-BAS and CYRIL.

F. Anaphoral intercessory blessing

Although the celebrant's anaphoral prayers had become largely stable by the mid-thirteenth century, the anaphoral post-intercessory blessing emerges as a rare variable element occasionally preserved in the manuscript tradition.⁷⁶ Uniquely, this anaphoral intercessory blessing, recited inaudibly by the celebrant during the deacon's audible proclamation of the diptychs, represents the only known case within

72 Raes – Codrington, *Anaphorae Syriacae*, vol. 3.1 (1981), 13. The text of E6 is thematically related to the εὐχὴ εἰς ἀγάπην ἥτοι εἰρήνην known in MG53 (9th c.) from Sinai: Rossetto – Galadza, *Codex Sinai Greek NF MG 53* (2025), 344. See the text's edition from a later witness in Arranz, *L'euclologio costantinopolitano* (1996), 357.

73 Raes – Codrington, *Anaphorae Syriacae*, vol. 1.1 (1939), 59.

74 OBH360, f. 204r (E6), f. 65v (E7).

75 For more, see Brakmann, *Zwischen Pharos und Wüste* (2001), 356-361.

76 The variability of this intercessory blessing within the Coptic anaphora stands as a significant exception to Taft's concept of liturgical "soft spots," which he reserves for extra-anaphoral sections of the rite that gradually attracted supplementary prayers, though the intercessions could be considered the most malleable liturgical unit within the anaphora: Taft, *Structural Analysis* (2001), 201 *et passim*.

the anaphora in which the celebrant may choose among variable prayers, if he elects to recite it at all. When written, this blessing most commonly appears in E-BAS and if it occurs in other formularies, it is referenced to E-BAS. The prayers invoke the mercy of the Trinity, God’s compassion, and, ironically, various saints, most of whom were already pronounced in the intercessions just recited audibly.⁷⁷

By the fifteenth century, this ritual unit was featured in Gabriel V’s *Ritual Order*. Although his explanation preserves no full prayer, it includes detailed rubrics.⁷⁸ Earlier liturgical discussions, such as the anonymously authored *Guide to the Beginners* of the thirteenth century, omit any reference to this blessing, yet later derivations of this work include it.⁷⁹ In the received tradition, only one prayer is known:⁸⁰

ID	Coptic	Arabic	Translation
F _I	†ⲧⲣⲓⲁϥ ⲉ̀ⲑⲟⲩⲁⲃ ⲛⲁⲓ ⲛⲁⲛ	أبيها الثالث المقدس ارحمنا	O holy Trinity have mercy upon us

Although it exists in print, I have never seen this blessing taught to newly ordained priests or practiced in parochial or monastic settings, whether in Egypt or abroad. Whether it was still in use in the early twentieth century when ‘Abd al-Masīḥ edited these formularies for print, or whether he faithfully transcribed what he encountered in his sources even if it had fallen out of use, remains difficult to determine. Even if it survived in practice at the turn of the last century, it has since disappeared. Given its absence from contemporary usage, some

77 Ṣalīb, *μεγρολογιον* (1902), 352-361; Nicolotti, *Il libro* (2023), 468-475.

78 PNA98 (17th c.), f. 65v; ‘Abdallah, *L’ordinamento* (1962), 192 (Arabic)/376 (Italian). Cf. Mikhail, *Guides* (2022), 132.

79 See for instance, the developed text in Cairo, Coptic Museum Theology (= CMT) 547 (1852 CE), f. 103v; Mīṣā’īl al-Baramūsī, *دلال المبتدئين* (2020), 160.

80 Ṣalīb, *μεγρολογιον* (1902), 378-389; Nicolotti, *Il libro* (2023), 486-489.

scholars judged it unnecessary to treat it as part of the living tradition.⁸¹ Despite its disappearance from contemporary practice, Achim Budde has demonstrated in his study of E-BAS that no Sahidic or Greek parallel is known at this juncture of the liturgy, possibly marking this prayer as a distinctively Bohairic feature.⁸²

Besides F₁, three additional blessings appear. Their distribution is as follows: F₂, the earliest alternative, appears only as a Coptic incipit in GREG in RAL66 (1344 CE);⁸³ F₃ is attested from at least the sixteenth century in WSL466 (1574 CE);⁸⁴ and F₄, known from the same century, appears in PNC84 (1538 CE),⁸⁵ though copied from an exemplar dated to 1449 CE.

ID	Coptic	Arabic	Translation
F ₂	πῶς νορεμ [Ἰπεκλαος]		O Lord, save your people
F ₃	ϕ† εϕεϱενρητ ραρων	الله يتراء علينا	May God have compassion upon us
F ₄	ναῶς ἵιο† ετῶω Ἰταμετρεϕερνοβι	ساداتي الأباء الراسمون خطيبي	My lords, the fathers, who chose my sinfulness

Although RAL66 offers the sole attestation of F₂, its early date indicates an established awareness of this ritual unit by the mid-fourteenth century when the manuscript was authored. While the received tradition privileges F₁, the manuscript evidence typically places it second-to-last, immediately before F₂. Moreover, F₁ appears

81 E.g. Athanasius al-Maqārī, *القداس الإلهي* (2011), vol. 2, 882.

82 Budde, *Die ägyptische Basilios-Anaphora* (2004), 199, 521.

83 RAL66, f. 123r.

84 WSL466, ff. 64v-67r.

85 PNC84, ff. 63v-66r.

only in manuscripts after the eighteenth century.⁸⁶ By contrast, the most prevalent witness is F₃, which some scribes continued to copy in euchologia as late as the mid-nineteenth century.⁸⁷ On rare occasions, a single manuscript records two prayers, placing F₄ before F₁, such as in LBO429 and in a parish-owned codex from the Nile Delta: Al-Barārī, Church of St. Demiana Liturgy 113 (1729 CE).⁸⁸ Such diversity reflects the ongoing shaping of this liturgical unit across time and place, as scribes worked with whatever alternate prayers lay at their disposal and exercised discretion in deciding which to possibly include or omit.

We might go further and suggest that this ritual unit not only allowed at least four alternate supplications but also remained optional altogether. Codex Wādī al-Naṭrūn, Coptic Central Papal Library Liturgy (= WPL) 517C (ca. 18th c.), includes the following rubric at the conclusion of the eucharistic liturgy: “This blessing is said at the time of dismissal, though if he prefers, he may say it during the commemoration. The choice is his” (تقال هذه البركة وقت التسريح وإن كان اختار يقولها في الترحيم) (والاختيار له في ذلك).⁸⁹ This rubric leaves open the possibility of omitting this intercessional blessing and instead reserving it for the dismissal at the end of the liturgy. Indeed, although ‘Abd al-Masīḥ knew the texts of F₃ and F₄, he did not present them at the diptychs but rather as dismissal prayers for other services, with F₃ given at the end of the incense service and F₄ at the end of E-BAS.⁹⁰ This suggests that the boundaries of this

86 RAL77 (1850 CE), ff. 78r-79v; CPL408 (1873 CE), ff. 74v-77v.

87 E.g. Ḥārat al-Rūm, Church of St. Mary 59 (1809-1852 CE), ff. 42v-44r.

88 LBO429, ff. 103r-106v (F₄), ff. 107r-108v (F₁); Al-Barārī, Church of St. Demiana Liturgy 113 (1729 CE), ff. 100r-103r (F₄), ff. 103r-104r (F₁).

89 WPL517C, f. 79r.

90 Ṣalīb, ΠΕΥΧΟΛΟΓΙΟΝ (1902), 140-146 (F₃), 428-433 (F₄); Nicolotti, *Il libro* (2023), 268-276 (F₃), 532-535 (F₄). One should note that numerous other blessings are prescribed at the conclusion of various liturgical services based thematically on the liturgical calendar. These are not examined here since their seasonal character reflects fixed, appointed usage rather than a conscious decision to select among alternate prayers.

ritual element were remarkably fluid: the blessings used at the diptychs were identical to those employed at the dismissal of the service.

G. Pre-fraction and fraction prayers

Following the anaphora, two audible and closely related liturgical units form the concluding rites of the post-anaphora: the pre-fraction and fraction prayers. The first functions as an introductory petition recited immediately before the second, which the celebrant pronounces while breaking the consecrated bread and as a prelude to the recitation of the Lord's prayer.⁹¹ E-BAS and CYRIL share the same pre-fraction supplication (G₁), whereas GREG preserves its own (G₂) as part of the received tradition:⁹²

ID	Coptic	Arabic	Translation
G ₁	παλιν ον ... χε αϥϩερενερεπεμπα	وأيضًا...لأنه جعلنا أهلاً	Again...for he has made us worthy
G ₂	πενηνηβ πενσωτηρ	يا سيدنا ومخلصنا	O our master and our savior

Both G₁ and G₂ are well attested in the manuscripts from the mid-thirteenth century. Nevertheless, a lesser-known and rarely transcribed variant supplication also exists for GREG, preserved in the appendix of alternate prayers in AML₁₄B₉:⁹³

91 For more on this introductory prayer, see Mihálykó, *A New Coptic Anaphora Fragment* (2025), 294-296.

92 Šalīb, *πιερχολογιον* (1902), 383-386 (E-BAS), 656-658 (CYRIL), 527-530 (GREG); Nicolotti, *Il libro* (2023), 492-495 (E-BAS), 736-739 (CYRIL), 624-627 (GREG).

93 AML₁₄B₉, ff. 191r-v.

ID	Coptic	Arabic	Translation
G ₃	ⲓⲏϥ ⲡⲓϥ ϥⲁ ⲡⲓⲣⲁⲛ ⲛⲟϥϫⲁⲓ	يسوع المسيح [الاسم] المخلص	O Jesus Christ, the name of salvation whose name is salvation

The closest counterparts of AML₁₄B₉, namely WBaL₃₁₉ and WSL₄₉₆, likewise transmit this supplication in their appendices and preserve the same title.⁹⁴

G₃ represents a Coptic translation of the pre-fraction supplication already known from the Greek version of GREG in Coptic.⁹⁵ The fourteenth-century Cypriot codex PNG₃₂₅ witnesses this same prayer, though incorporated into the eucharistic formulary itself rather than placed in an appendix.⁹⁶ This evidence demonstrates the revival, adoption, and translation of an earlier Greek text into Coptic for renewed liturgical use at a later period.

After this proemial supplication, the fraction proper begins. The fraction prayers are numerous. Ugo Zanetti has examined this corpus, producing an inventory of fraction prayers alongside their corresponding manuscripts.⁹⁷ This inventory is presently undergoing expansion through new discoveries and is being prepared for an edition by Epiphanius al-Baramūsi in his forthcoming detailed study of this liturgical unit.⁹⁸

94 WBaL₃₁₉, ff. 224v-226v; WSL₄₉₆, ff. 57v-58r.

95 Hammerschmidt, *Die koptische Gregorianaphora* (1957), 148-152.

96 PNG₃₂₅, ff. 122r-123r. Cf. Renaudot, *Liturgiarum Orientalium*, vol. I (1847²), 114. See also Mihálykó – Chase, ‘*Milan Euchologion*’ (2024), 37-40.

97 Among other studies, see his principal works: Zanetti, *Inventaire des prières* (2014), 767-800; Idem, *Fraction Prayers* (2011), 291-302.

98 A preliminary case study from this project was presented at the 11th St. Mark Foundation International Symposium in February 2025 titled, “The Fraction «ⲡⲓϥⲓⲛⲫⲱⲩⲩ» in Coptic Liturgy: A Study and Research Project on the Coptic Rite of the Holy Fraction and its Prayers.”

H. Prayer after the Our Father

Following the fraction rites, the community recites the Lord’s prayer. After its conclusion, the celebrant inaudibly pronounces a prayer known as the *embolismos* (ἐμβολισμός), a common genre in the liturgies of the Christian East and West since about the fifth century, which “extends” the final petition of the Our Father, “deliver us from evil”.⁹⁹ A total of six prayers appear in the *editio typica*:¹⁰⁰

ID	Coptic	Arabic	Translation
H1	σε τεντηρο εροκ φωτ εθογαβ	نعم نسألك أيها الأب القدوس	Yes, we ask you O holy Father
H2	σε πο̅ς πο̅ς φη ε̅ταϣτ̅ μηπερωιωι ναη	نعم يا رب يا رب الذي أعطانا السلطان	Yes, O Lord, the Lord who has given us authority
H3	σε τεντηρο εροκ φτ̅ φωτ̅ πιπαντοκρατωρ	نعم نسألك يا الله الأب ضابط الكل	Yes, we ask you O God the Father, Pantocrator
H4	σε τεντηρο εροκ πο̅ς πεννοϣτ̅	نعم نسألك أيها الرب إلهنا	Yes, we ask you O Lord our God
H5	ναρμεν ε̅βολρα πιπετρωου	نجنا من الشرير	Deliver us from evil
H6	α̅ρα πο̅ς φη ε̅τε μηπεϣα ρ̅λι ε̅θορογερπιραζιν	نعم أيها الرب الذي لم يدع أحدًا يجرب	Yes, O Lord, who did not leave anyone to be tempted

⁹⁹ Taft, *Inclination Prayer* (1986), 29-60.

¹⁰⁰ Šalīb, *πιεϣολογιον* (1902), 392-393 (H1), 533 (H2), 664-665 (H3), 666-667 (H4), 751-752 (H5), 753 (H6); Nicolotti, *Il libro* (2023), 498-501 (H1), 630-631 (H2), 742-745 (H3), 744-745 (H4), 814-817 (H5), 816-817 (H6).

Although the manuscripts examined revealed no previously unknown prayers, some peculiarities merit discussion.¹⁰¹ As with the prayers of the veil and the kiss, each anaphora preserves a distinct and consistently transmitted *embolismos* in both the manuscript and the received tradition: H₁ belongs to E-BAS, H₂ to GREG, and H₃ to CYRIL. All three appear in our earliest euchologion, MRC₄₂₆,¹⁰² with H₂ also functioning as the petition recited after the Lord's prayer in both offices of incense as referenced in our earliest specimen containing that rite, CFM₂.¹⁰³

CYRIL, however, preserves a second alternative in the formulary, H₄, which has a Sahidic redaction known by the seventh century.¹⁰⁴ In the thirteenth-century codex OBH₃₆₀, H₄ stands as the only supplication assigned to this liturgical unit, indicating its primacy within that milieu.¹⁰⁵ It is also the *embolismos* favored in CKM₆ as well as in the rite of refilling the chalice, a ritual once used to consecrate eucharistic wine in cases of emergency.¹⁰⁶ Moreover, a version of this supplication is attested in Melkite MARK¹⁰⁷ and is known in the Syriac anaphoras of Timothy of Alexandria and Severus of Antioch.¹⁰⁸

101 In PNG₃₂₅, f. 60r, the Greek version of the Coptic liturgies, and in Vatican City, BAV Borgia Ar. (= VBA) 22 (1348 CE), f. 36r, a euchologion of Egyptian origin incorporated into redaction B of the Arabic *Testamentum Domini*, there appears a prayer for which no Bohairic parallel is presently attested. For the latter, see Baumstark, *Eine aegyptische Mess* (1901), 26-27; the proposed sixth-century dating, however, is contested in Budde, *Die ägyptische Basilios-Anaphora* (2004), 583, among others.

102 MRC₄₂₆, ff. 93r-94r (H₁), ff. 167r-168r (H₂), ff. 260r-261r (H₃).

103 CFM₂, p. 399.

104 See Louvain, Ms. Lefort copt. 27-28A, f. 8v (ed. Doresse – Lanne, *Un témoin archaïque* [1960], 32), where it accompanies E-BAS.

105 OBH₃₆₀, ff. 282r-282v; Brightman, *Liturgies Eastern and Western* (1896), 182.

106 CKM₆, f. 137v; Macomber, *Anaphora of Mark* (1979) 98. On the rite of refilling of the chalice, see CML₃₃₀ (15th c.), f. 82v; Al-Masri, *Rite of the Filling* (1940), 90. More recently on this topic, see Miṣā'īl al-Baramūsi – Adel, *حفظ القربان* (2016), 140-143.

107 Cuming, *Liturgy of Mark* (1990), 50.

108 Raes – Codrington, *Anaphorae Syriacae*, vol. I.I (1939), 42-45, 81-82.

Despite its early attestation and diffusion across multiple ritual contexts and traditions, H4 appears to have circulated less widely than H3.

‘Abd al-Masīh provides two additional *embolismos* in the appendix of his euchologion: H5 and H6. He assigns H5 as a replacement for H2 in GREG and H6 as alternative in E-BAS (H1) and CYRIL (H3).¹⁰⁹ In fact, codex VC17 assigns H6 only to CYRIL,¹¹⁰ a designation also found in the appended prayer lists of AML14B9, WBaL319, and WSL496.¹¹¹ Likewise, though the *editio typica* assigns H5 as a replacement in GREG, the manuscript tradition far more frequently transcribes it within CYRIL, as witnessed in PNC26, Vatican City, BAV Borgia Copt. (= VBC) 87 (1734 CE), and CML412 (1867 CE), to name a few.¹¹² Only in WSL496, where the prayer appears in an appendix, does the rubric explicitly state that H5 may replace H2, the standard *embolismos* of GREG.¹¹³ Thus, while ‘Abd al-Masīh envisioned a particular liturgical application for these two prayers, historical precedent overwhelmingly aligns H6 with CYRIL and consistently places H5 not with GREG but within CYRIL.

I. Prayer of inclination

The final variable presider’s prayer considered occurs immediately after the *embolismos* and is introduced by a diaconal command, all of which takes place before the communion rites.¹¹⁴ The printed edition transmits the following four prayers:¹¹⁵

109 Ṣalīb, πνευχολογιον (1902), 751-752 (H5), 753 (H6); Nicolotti, *Il libro* (2023), 814-817 (H5), 816-817 (H6).

110 VC17, ff. 121v-122v.

111 AML14B9, ff. 207r-v; WBaL319, ff. 280r-280v; WSL496, ff. 116r-v.

112 PNC26, ff. 193r-194r; VBC87, ff. 71r-v; CML412, ff. 231v-232r.

113 WSL496, ff. 121v-123v.

114 Ṣalīb, πνευχολογιον (1902), 393-394; Nicolotti, *Il libro* (2023), 500-501. On the proper Greek orthography of these diaconal responses, see: Burmester, *Greek Kírugmata* (1936), 381.

115 Ṣalīb, πνευχολογιον (1902), 394-396 (I1), 533 (I2), 667-671 (I3), 754-756 (I4); Nicolotti, *Il libro* (2023), 500-503 (I1), 630-631 (I2), 744-749 (I3), 818-821 (I4).

ID	Coptic	Arabic	Translation
I ₁	ⲁⲮⲙⲟⲗ ⲉ̀ⲃⲟⲗ ⲛ̀ⲕⲉ ⲛⲓⲒⲙⲟⲧ ⲛ̀ⲧⲉ ⲧⲓⲙⲉⲧⲣⲉⲒⲣⲉⲡⲉⲐⲛⲁⲛⲉⲒ	كملت نعم إحسان	The graces of goodness have been fulfilled
I ₂	ⲛⲟⲟⲕ ⲡⲟ̅ⲥ ⲫⲏ ⲉ̀ⲧⲁⲕⲣⲉⲕ ⲛⲓⲫⲏⲟⲩⲩ	أنت يا رب الذي طأطأت السموات	You, O Lord, who bowed the heavens
I ₃	ⲫⲧ ⲫⲏ ⲉ̀ⲧⲁⲒⲙⲉⲛⲣⲓⲧⲉⲛ ⲛ̀ⲡⲁⲣⲏⲧ	يا الله الذي أحبنا هكذا	O God, who so loved us
I ₄	ⲡⲟ̅ⲥ ⲫⲧ ⲡⲓⲡⲁⲛⲧⲟⲕⲣⲁⲧⲟⲣ ⲥⲟⲩⲧⲉⲛ ⲧⲉⲕⲟⲩⲩⲛⲁⲙ ⲉ̀ⲧⲁ̀ⲙⲁⲒⲓ	أيها الرب الإله ضابط الكل ابسط يمينك العزيزة	O Lord, God the Pantocrator, stretch out your mighty right hand

As with the prayers of the veil, kiss, and *embolismos*, each prayer of inclination is commonly assigned to a specific anaphora in the received tradition: E-BAS uses I₁; GREG employs I₂; and CYRIL utilizes I₃. ‘Abd al-Masīḥ lists all three under separate Arabic titles as a prayer of “submission” (خضوع), though other titles for this prayer abound in the manuscript tradition. He adds one variant (I₄) in the appendix of prayers which he associates with E-BAS and CYRIL. Only in the rubrics for I₃ and I₄ does he explicitly describe the supplication as occurring “before partaking of the holy mysteries” (قبل تناول السرائر) (المقدسة), an attempt to distinguish this prayer from a similarly titled prayer recited after the reception of communion.

I₁ was already in circulation by the second half of the first millennium.¹¹⁶ As Mihálykó has shown, by the seventh century I₃ was already attested in Greek and Sahidic and circulating in Southern Egypt,

¹¹⁶ VBA22, f. 36r-v; Baumstark, *Eine aegyptische Mess* (1901), 26-27. See note 101 above on the historicity of this text. See also its Sahidic redaction in LBO3850 A14, ff. 3r-v.

and she further identifies close textual parallels in Greek witnesses of the Coptic liturgy as well as in the Melkite and Syriac traditions.¹¹⁷ In addition to these witnesses, another three alternate prayers appear in the Bohairic tradition.¹¹⁸ They are given here according to their earliest witnesses: I₅ from the thirteenth-century manuscript OBH360,¹¹⁹ and I₆ and I₇ from the eighteenth-century codex AML14B9:¹²⁰

ID	Coptic	Arabic	Translation
I ₅	ΝΘΟΚ ΠΟ̅C ΠΕ ΤΑΝΡΙΚΙ ΝΑΚ ΜΠΕΝΝΟΥC	أنت يا رب الذي ميلنا لك عقولنا	You, O Lord, are the one to whom we have inclined our mind
I ₆	ΦΗ ΕΤΖΕΜCΙ ΡΙΧΕΝ ΝΙΧΕΡΟΥΒΙΜ	أيها الجالس على الشاروبيم	He who sits on the Cherubim
I ₇	ΠΟ̅C ΝΤΕ †ΡΙΡΗΝΗ ΦΙΩΤ ΝΤΕ ΝΙΜΕΤΩΕΝΖΗΤ	رب السلامة وأب الرأفة	Lord of peace, Father of mercies

The most common of these alternate supplications is I₅, which the Bohairic tradition attributes to John of Bostra and which also appears in the anaphora ascribed to him in the Syriac rite.¹²¹ Beyond its early attestation, OBH360 presents I₅ as the only prayer of inclination in CYRIL. This privileging of I₅ as the principal prayer occurs in at least three additional euchologia,¹²² while another four codices list it

117 Mihálykó, *Christian Liturgical Papyri* (2019), 137; Eadem, *Sabidic Papyrus Fragments* (2025), 391-407.

118 At least one is known in the Greek witnesses: PNG325, ff. 60r-61r.

119 OBH360, ff. 283r-286r; Brightman, *Liturgies Eastern and Western* (1896), 183.

120 AML14B9, ff. 207v-208v (I₆), ff. 208v-209r (I₇).

121 Raes – Codrington, *Anaphorae Syriacae*, vol. 3.1 (1981), 37.

122 VC21 (1343 CE), ff. 67r-69v; RPL134, ff. 260v-263r; Cairo, Franciscan Center (= CFC) 250, ff. 74v-76v, with the latter found in E-BAS rather than CYRIL.

as the first prayer in CYRIL before including I3.¹²³ These manuscripts ranging from the thirteenth to the eighteenth century reveal yet another instance in which what appears normative in the received tradition diverges from the manuscript evidence, even into the early modern period.

A total of three manuscripts transmit I6 and I7. Alongside their appearance in AML14B9, both prayers also appear in its closest counterparts, WBaL319 and WSL496.¹²⁴ In all three manuscripts, the prayers occur in the appendix and in the same sequence: I6, followed by I7, and finally I4. Each of these three prayers is addressed to the Father, as noted in their respective titles, placing them within the orbit of E-BAS and CYRIL.

Following this liturgical unit comes the prayer of absolution, which, though it varies by the eucharistic formulary, remains stable across the manuscript tradition.¹²⁵ It is then followed by the call to communion, a Christological confession, and communion distribution, alongside a diverse body of roughly thirty variable texts associated with communion, including pre-communion, post-communion, and inclination prayers. Given the scope and diversity of this communion material as well as related texts for this liturgical unit preserved outside the euchologia, it warrants a separate and more detailed study, currently in preparation.

123 MRC426, ff. 261v-264r; CFM2, ff. 189v-192r; VC26 (1616 CE), ff. 232v-235r; WBaL229, ff. 143r-144v.

124 WBaL319, ff. 280v-281v (I6), ff. 281v-282v (I7), ff. 282v-283v (I4); WSL496, ff. 116v-117v (I6), ff. 117v-118v (I7), ff. 118v-119v (I4).

125 Şalīb, ΠΕΥΧΟΛΟΓΙΟΝ (1902), 396-400 (E-BAS/CYRIL), 533 (GREG); Nicolotti, *Il libro* (2023), 504-507 (E-BAS/Cyril), 630-631 (GREG). On this liturgical unit, see Quecke, *Zum 'Gebet der Lossprechung des Vaters'* (1979), 68-81.

3. *Conclusion*

The examination of this broad corpus of euchologia dated between the thirteenth and twentieth centuries reveals a largely shared Bohairic eucharistic formulary within which a limited yet persistent degree of variability remained operative at select liturgical units. Although substantial consolidation had already taken place by the fifteenth century and was further reinforced by the published *editio typica*, the manuscript record across the nine liturgical units surveyed preserves twenty-four alternate celebrant prayers outside the standard eucharistic formulary, fourteen of which are entirely unattested in the printed edition. The significance of this evidence lies less in the number of variants than in what their transmission reveals: the endurance of local observance and scribal memory within an otherwise stabilized rite, and a recurrent inversion between historical usage and later liturgical authority, whereby several prayers dominant in the manuscript tradition never entered the received euchologion, while others privileged in print functioned as marginal options in the manuscripts.

The Coptic Eucharist as preserved in the manuscript record functioned as a constellation of intersecting local practices shaped by scribes, worshiping communities, and a continually evolving liturgical memory. Euchologia served primarily as practical manuals intended for local use and thus operated as prescriptive guides—scribes recorded rites as they expected them to be performed within their own contexts and, at times, reshaped earlier traditions by adding or omitting certain prayer texts. At the same time, euchologia also function as descriptive witnesses. The diversity across manuscripts demonstrates that scribes did not merely reproduce authoritative exemplars but regularly adapted them to mirror established local usage.¹²⁶ This dynamic appears most clearly where manuscripts preserve multiple

¹²⁶ A case in point is the pair of euchologia WSL472 and WSL473, copied in 1659 CE by the same scribe, which nonetheless diverge in prayer selection,

variable prayer options for one liturgical unit, revealing an effort to acknowledge recognized diversity rather than enforce uniformity. These editorial choices, shaped by familiarity with particular texts, the transmission of Alexandrian liturgical materials of antiquity, contact with other liturgical traditions, or inherited local custom, provide critical evidence for identifying regional clusters of euchologia and tracing the formation of distinct liturgical families within the Bohairic eucharistic rite.

A recurring example in this study involves the cluster of shared prayers preserved in AML14B9, WBaL319, and WSL496, which together point to the existence of manuscript families. All three codices transmit a near-identical sequence of variant prayers, largely placed in an appendix titled “Prayers gathered from the euchologia” (مجمعة من الخولوكيات صلوات), suggesting a close textual relationship and possibly reflecting a scholarly impulse to collect liturgical material, though the consistent reproduction of these supplications across multiple books used for prayer indicates that their transmission cannot be reduced to passive archival interest alone.¹²⁷ Although these manuscripts are today geographically dispersed (AML14B9 in Asyūt in Southern Egypt, and WBaL319 and WSL496 in two monasteries in Wādī al-Naṭrūn), the scribal colophons of AML14B9 and WBaL319 attest that both were produced in the Asyūt region by different copyists within roughly two decades of one another.¹²⁸ This shared provenance, combined with their nearly identical sequencing and titles, strongly suggests dependence on a common exemplar, if not direct transmission. Taken together, these features indicate the circulation of liturgical materials across otherwise distinct localities and underscore how regional, scribal, and exemplar-

reflecting scribal and patronal discretion: Mikhail – Paul, *Coptic Prayer Books* (forthcoming).

¹²⁷ AML14B9, f. 172v; WBaL319, f. 201v; WSL496, f. 35v.

¹²⁸ See notes 129, 170, and 175 below for further details on these three codices.

based networks shaped the preservation of alternate prayer repertoires within the Bohairic eucharistic tradition into the early modern era.

The phenomenon of alternate celebrant prayers is not a peripheral curiosity but perhaps a defining feature of the medieval Bohairic euchological tradition. The manuscripts reveal a rite shaped by scribal agency and local liturgical practice dynamics that endured well into the nineteenth century. By recovering these variable prayers and tracing their placement across centuries, this introductory investigation lays a foundation for understanding the variable components of the Bohairic eucharistic liturgy and provides a renewed methodological basis for future textual, historical, and ritual analyses of this tradition.

Bibliography

Manuscripts Consulted

Shelf mark (Year in CE), cited manuscripts in **bold**

AML= *Asyūt, Monastery of the Virgin Mary, al-Muḥarraḡ Liturgy*:

14B35 (1634), **14B9 (1773-1774)**,¹²⁹ 14B38 (1784).

Al-Barārī, Church of St. Demiana Liturgy 113 (1729).¹³⁰

¹²⁹ Two different scribal colophons preserve dates for this codex, revealing how long its production likely lasted. One appears on f. 83r, dated to Kiyahk AM 1490 (= 1773 CE), and the other on f. 229v, dated to 12 Tūbah AM 1490 (= 1774 CE). The scribe, ‘Abd al-Malāk nicknamed “Lucky”, concludes his colophon by noting that anyone interested in commissioning his work could find him near Biblāw, a village in the vicinity of Asyūt.

¹³⁰ Based on the scribal colophon on f. 159v, this Copto-Arabic euchologion of E-BAS was completed on 1 Ba’ūnah AM 1445 (= 1729 CE).

- CF (C/M)= *Cairo, Franciscan Center*: 248 (1878), 336 (1882). Undated: 250.¹³¹ *Museum*: 2 (13th/14th c.).¹³²
- CKM= *Collegetville, Kacmarcik Ms. 6* (14th c.).¹³³
- CM (L/T)= *Cairo, Coptic Museum Liturgy*: 463 (13th c.), 330 (15th c.),¹³⁴ 240 (1783), 80 (1796), 265 (18th c.),¹³⁵ 412 (1867),¹³⁶ 462 (19th c.). *Theology*: 547 (1852).¹³⁷
- CPL= *Cairo, Coptic Patriarchate Liturgy*: 169 (1499), 173 (1573), 167 (1675), 331 (1675), 166 (1739), 181 (1771), 178 (1794), 182 (1794), 176 (1826), 407 (1840), 315 (1842), 342 (1843), 408 (1873),¹³⁸ 177 (1898), 183 (1899), 174 (1250-1261),¹³⁹ 168 (1796-1809). Undated: 165, 185, 343, 314, 179, 180.

131 Macomber assigns a nineteenth-century date without offering any explanation. However, the codex itself—especially its lack of detailed rubrics and its inclusion of numerous prayers rarely documented by scribes of that period—undermines this assessment. If the manuscript was indeed produced in the nineteenth century, the scribe may have possessed an older *Vorlage* to which he remained faithfully committed to its transmission, ultimately preserving features characteristic of an earlier era. Cf. Macomber, *Catalogue* (1984), 53.

132 Macomber, *Catalogue* (1984), 92-93.

133 Macomber, *Kacmarcik Codex* (1975), 391-395; Budde, *Die ägyptische Basilios-Anaphora* (2004), 77-82.

134 See Simaika 172 in Simaika – ‘Abd al-Masīḥ, *Catalogue*, vol. 1 (1939), 85. See the discussion on its possible later dating in Al-Masri, *Rite of the Filling* (1940), 78-79.

135 Consult Simaika 263 in Simaika – ‘Abd al-Masīḥ, *Catalogue*, vol. 1 (1939), 119.

136 See New 356 (Macomber CMB 5-4) in Macomber, *Final Inventory* (1995), 137-138.

137 Mīṣā’īl al-Baramūsī, دلال المبتدئين (2020), 28.

138 This Arabic-only euchologion of the three liturgies contains a scribal colophon on f. 119v that records equivalent dates from two calendars: 3 Bābah AM 1590 and Sha‘bān AH 1290, both corresponding to 1873 CE. The named caretaker is metropolitan Yu‘ānis of Manūfiyya. No catalogue entry exists in Simaika.

139 In conversation with Arsenius Mikhail, who identified the name of Pope Athanasius in a celebrant’s prayer (f. 27r), most likely Athanasius III who reigned between 1250 and 1261 CE, this manuscript can be plausibly related to his tenure, rather than left undated as in the catalogue. One cannot, however, entirely rule out the possibility that the codex was produced at a later time from

- Ḥārat al-Rūm, Church of St. Mary*: 61 (1771 CE), **59 (1809-1852)**.¹⁴⁰
Ḥārat al-Saqqāyīn, Church of the Archangel Gabriel Liturgy: 3/25
(1696),¹⁴¹ 67 (1866), 3/27 (undated).
 LBO= *London, British Library Oriental*: **3850 (10th/11th c.)**, 1239 (13th c.),
 431 (1718), 8778 (1726), 430 (1832), 5282 (1872). Undated: **429**,¹⁴² 1324,
 8777.
 MRC= *Manchester, John Rylands Library Coptic*: **21 (11th c.)**, **426 (1243-
 1261)**,¹⁴³ 427 (1764).
 OBH= *Oxford, Bodleian Huntington*: **360 (13th c.)**,¹⁴⁴ 403 (1405), 572
 (14th/15th c.).
Old Cairo, Church of Sts. Sergius and Bacchus Liturgy: 99 (1874).
 Undated: 67, 98.

an earlier exemplar. See Simaika 957 in Simaika – ‘Abd al-Masīḥ, *Catalogue*, vol. 2 (1942), 428.

- ¹⁴⁰No scribal colophon was found in this manuscript. However, Pope Peter is named in several prayers, and a marginal note on f. 35r identifies this patriarch as the 109th, who reigned from 1809 to 1852 CE. This detail implies that the production of this Copto-Arabic liturgy of E-BAS was most likely within his tenure.
- ¹⁴¹A scribal colophon on f. 143v dates the manuscript’s completion to 12 Bashans AM 1412 (= 1696 CE).
- ¹⁴²See Crum 789 in Crum, *Catalogue* (1905), 340-341. Based on his discussion with Hany Takla, Arsenius Mikhail dates this codex between the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries: Mikhail, *Presentation* (2020), 420n65.
- ¹⁴³On f. 83r, Cyril III ibn Laqlaq, who died in 1243 CE, appears as the last commemorated patriarch in the diptychs. This detail suggests that the codex was most likely produced during the tenure of his successor, Athanasius III, who died in 1261 CE. While it remains possible that the scribe copied an older *Vorlage* without updating the list of departed patriarchs, this dating aligns with earlier assessments that place the production of this manuscript between 1235 and 1251 CE, as reflected, for example, on the spine of the newly conserved cover of the codex. Based on this internal prosopographical evidence, however, the manuscript should be dated between 1243 and 1261 CE, with both its initial and terminal limits falling slightly later than previously proposed. See #59 in Crum, *Catalogue* (1909), 200.
- ¹⁴⁴See Uri 34 in Uri, *Bibliothecae Bodleianae* (1787), vol. 1, 324.

Oxford, Bodleian Marsh 5 (14th c.).

PN (A/C/G)= *Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France Arabe*: **203** (1363-1369),¹⁴⁵ **5969** (16th c.),¹⁴⁶ **98** (17th c.).¹⁴⁷ *Copte*: 82 (1307), 28 (13th/14th c.), 24 (15th c.), **31** (15th c.),¹⁴⁸ 39 (15th c.), **73** (1528),¹⁴⁹ **84** (1538),¹⁵⁰ 40 (1550), 25 (15th/16th c.), 83 (1602), 27 (1633), 29 (1638), 30 (1642). Undated: **26**,¹⁵¹ 41. *Grec*: **325** (14th c.).¹⁵²

RAL= *Red Sea, Monastery of St. Antony Liturgy*: **66** (1344),¹⁵³ 62 (1535), 98 (1657), 99 (1661), 102 (1693), 107 (1717), 100 (1728), 57 (1733), 68 (1745), 298 (1746), 75 (1755), 692 (1755), 89 (1756), 83 (1774), 69 (1784), 58 (before 1796), 87 (before 1796), 105 (1798), 74 (1807), 51 (1811), 101 (1812), 72 (1835), 737 (1837), 97 (1838), 55 (1839), 112 (1841), 70 (1842), 76 (1843), 106 (1846), 96 (1847), 742 (1848), 974 (1849), 71 (1816-1843), 54

145 Troupeau, *Catalogue*, vol. 1 (1972), 171-172; Villecourt, *Les observances* (1923), 249-250.

146 Troupeau, *Catalogue*, vol. 2 (1974), 86.

147 Troupeau, *Catalogue*, vol. 1 (1972), 75-76; 'Abdallah, *L'ordinamento* (1962), 45-52.

148 See Delaporte 66 in Delaporte, *Catalogue* (1911), 89-91.

149 See Delaporte 74 in Delaporte, *Catalogue* (1911), 155-156.

150 Although the catalogue does not note it, f. 254v states that this Copto-Arabic codex of the three liturgies was copied from a manuscript dated to 1449 CE from the church of St. Mercurius in Darb al-Baḥr (Old Cairo). See Delaporte 68 in Delaporte, *Catalogue* (1911), 93-94.

151 Consult Delaporte 65 in Delaporte, *Catalogue* (1911), 88-89. Based on his discussion with Hany Takla, Arsenius Mikhail dates this codex before 1523 CE: Mikhail, *Presentation* (2020), 419n53.

152 Renaudot, *Liturgiarum Orientalium*, vol. 1 (1847²), 57-115; Brakmann, *Zur Stellung des Parisinus graecus 325* (1999), 97-110.

153 The scribal colophon on ff. 153v-[154]r of this Copto-Arabic euchologion of GREG records two corresponding completion dates: 10 Baramūdah AM 1060 and Dhū al-Qa' da AH 744, both corresponding to 1344 CE. The colophon also identifies the scribe as the deacon Ṣamū'īl ibn al-qiss Barsūmā ibn al-mu'allim Ṣamū'īl al-Bahnāsī and names the patron as the priest Abū al-Futūḥ.

(1851), 59 (1851), 63 (1851), **77 (1850)**,¹⁵⁴ 95 (1851), 749 (1851), 73 (1852), 109 (before 1852), 800 (before 1852), 92 (1862), 56 (1872), 91 (1872), 65 (1875), 52 (1876), 84 (1880), 82 (1884), 61 (1885), 88 (1887), 781 (1887), 115 (1893), 79 (1895), 920 (1895), 921 (1895), 681 (1897), 763 (1898), 64 (1900), 85 (1902), 799 (1916), 658 (1921), 919 (1929), 922 (1931), 968 (1965), 93 (1718-1726), 108 (1769-1796), 111 (1809-1927), **772 (1816-1861, 1874-1927)**.¹⁵⁵ Undated: **81**,¹⁵⁶ 53, 67, 78, 80, 86, 90, 103, 104, 110, 113, 114, **654**,¹⁵⁷ 764, 771, 826, 923.

RPL= *Red Sea, Monastery of St. Paul Liturgy*: 141 (1324), 133 (1582), 205 (1711), **134 (1714)**,¹⁵⁸ 204 (1718), 135 (1751), **148 (1752)**,¹⁵⁹ 211 (1754), 155 (1766), 166 (1771), 139 (1784), 137 (1789), 136 (1793), **143 (1797)**,¹⁶⁰ 138

- 154 The named scribe, hegumen Istifānūs Būlus al-Ṣaqr of the monastery of St. Antony, records on f. 181v that he completed this Copto-Arabic euchologion of E-BAS on 22 Hātūr AM 1567 (= 1850 CE).
- 155 No date or scribal colophon appears in this all-Arabic euchologion of the three eucharistic liturgies. However, the name of Cyril is invoked in a prayer on f. 12r. This reference could indicate either Cyril IV (r. 1816-1861) or Cyril V (r. 1874-1927), whose patriarchates lie relatively close in time, making both date ranges plausible for the manuscript's production.
- 156 No date identified in this Copto-Arabic codex containing the three eucharistic formularies.
- 157 No date or colophon identified in this all-Arabic euchologion of the three eucharistic liturgies.
- 158 On f. 280r, Mīkha'īl the named scribe records the completion date of this Copto-Arabic euchologion of the three eucharistic liturgies as 29 Hātūr AM 1431 (= 1714 CE). On f. 280v, the priest Abū Sa'ad, a servant of the church of St. Mercurius near Shubṭ in the Asyūt area, appears as the manuscript's patron. An endowment statement on f. [285]v dated to AM 1436 (= 1719-1720 CE) and issued to the monastery of St. Paul, declares that the book belonged to Pope Peter, most likely Peter VI who reigned from 1718 to 1726 CE, during his monastic years.
- 159 The unnamed scribe dates this E-BAS Copto-Arabic euchologion to 14 Abīb AM 1468 (= 1752 CE), as recorded on f. 194v.
- 160 On f. 114r, the priest Shenouda identifies himself as the scribe, owner, and patron of this Copto-Arabic manuscript of the three liturgies. Three dated colophons appear throughout the codex, each attributing the work to Shenouda, though

(1811), 165 (1815), 202 (1818), 160 (1820), 644 (1821), 203 (before 1823), 156 (1827), 528 (1827), 153 (1830), 161 (1836), 195 (1839), 144 (1839), 140 (before 1844), 154 (1846), 167 (1846), 142 (1847), 163 (1847), 672 (1853), 209 (1853), 662 (1857), 145 (1859), 665 (1861), 151 (1862), 652 (1863), 152 (1865), 162 (1865), 190 (1869), 437 (1878), 649 (1882), 464 (1883), 673 (1883), 643 (1886), 149 (1893), 436 (1901), 646 (1905), 146 (1910), 664 (1915), 654 (1916), 660 (1918), 651 (1919), 452 (1930), 650 (1931), 657 (1936). Undated: **158**,¹⁶¹ 197, 199, 200, 582, 630, 638, 653, 655, 658, 659, 663, 667, 671, 675, 147, 150, 157, 159, 164, 191, 192, 193, 194, 206.

Ṭūkh Dalkh, Church of St. George Liturgy: **140 (1751)**,¹⁶² 238 (1771).

VB (A/C)= *Vatican City, Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana Borgia Arabes*: **22 (1348)**.¹⁶³ *Coptici*: 7 (1379), 124 (1459), **87 (1734)**.¹⁶⁴ Undated: 32.

V (A/C/G)= *Vatican City, Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana Vatican Arabes* 117 (1323). *Coptici*: **17 (1288)**,¹⁶⁵ 20 (1315), **21 (1343)**,¹⁶⁶ 24 (14th c.), 25 (14th c.), 18 (1531), 22 (1580), **26 (1616)**,¹⁶⁷ 19 (1715), 78 (1722), 81 (1722), 86 (1727), 99 (1718-1726), 85 (18th c.). *Graecus*: **2281 (1207)**.¹⁶⁸

the dates differ: on f. 114r, the end of Misrā AM 1513 (= 1797 CE); on f. 182r, 16 Bābah AM 1500 (= 1783 CE); and on f. [267]r, 20 Kiyahk AM 1513 (= 1797 CE). I base the manuscript's date on the agreement of the two matching colophons and on the fact that Pope John XVIII appears as the last mentioned patriarch in the diptychs (f. 215r), and the manuscript's production must therefore postdate his death in 1796 CE.

161 No date identified in this all Coptic euchologion of E-BAS.

162 Dated to 18 Misrā AM 1467 (= 1751 CE) according to the scribal colophon on f. [360v].

163 Hebbelynck, *Inventaire sommaire* (1924), 11.

164 van Lantschoot – Hebbelynck, *Codices*, vol. 1 (1947), 364-366.

165 van Lantschoot – Hebbelynck, *Codices*, vol. 1 (1937), 58-63; Wadi, *Testo della traduzione araba* (2008), 138.

166 van Lantschoot – Hebbelynck, *Codices*, vol. 1 (1937), 75-78.

167 van Lantschoot – Hebbelynck, *Codices*, vol. 1 (1937), 90-93.

168 Cuming, *Liturgy of Mark* (1990), xxx.

- WBaL= *Wādī al-Naṭrūn, Monastery of the Virgin Mary, al-Baramūs Liturgy*: 229 (1610),¹⁶⁹ 319 (1792-1793),¹⁷⁰ 251 (1812), 242 (1844), 232 (1848), 257 (1857), 239 (1858), 250 (1858), 226 (1860), 258 (1863), 243 (1864), 272 (1872), 228 (1899). Undated: 240.
- WBiL= *Wādī al-Naṭrūn, Monastery of St. Bishoi Liturgy*: 18 (1594), 16 (1779), 14 (1838), 113 (1848), 1 (1876), 112 (1884). Undated: 19, 4, 159, 17, 15.
- WML= *Wādī al-Naṭrūn, Monastery of St. Macarius Liturgy*: 151 (1771), 234 (1784), 231 (1794), 134 (18th c.), 147 (18th c.), 248 (18th c.), 144 (1846), 137 (1851), 156 (1852), 135 (1809-1852), 142 (1858), 145 (1864), 152 (1868), 148 (1883), 139 (1886), 236 (1887), 141 (1891), 232 (1899), 133 (19th c.), 138 (19th c.), 140 (19th c.), 146 (19th c.), 149 (19th c.), 150 (19th c.), 154 (19th c.), 155 (19th c.), 233 (19th c.), 235 (19th c.), 271 (19th c.), 136 (19th c.), 143 (18th/19th c.), 153 (1908).
- WPL= *Wādī al-Naṭrūn, Coptic Central Papal Library Liturgy*: 509C (1774), 514C (1788), 513C (1745), 508C (1750), 517C (17th/18th c.).¹⁷¹
- WSL= *Wādī al-Naṭrūn, Monastery of the Virgin Mary, al-Suryān Liturgy*: 466 (1573),¹⁷² 471 (1584), 468 (1601), 469 (before 1626), 887

169 This Copto-Arabic euchologion of the three liturgies was written by Slimān al-‘Arīs and dated on f. [150]r to 7 Hātūr AM 1327 (= 1610 CE). ‘Abd al-Masīḥ later used it in preparing the *editio typica*: Miṣā’il al-Baramūsī, *Notes on the Euchologion* (2018), 139.

170 The named scribe Tādrus al-Quṣūrī, records in the colophon on f. 304r that he completed the manuscript in AM 1509 (= 1792-1793 CE). The gentilic adjective indicates that he most likely hailed from the village known as Umm al-Quṣūr in the Asyūt region.

171 The dating of this uncatalogued Copto-Arabic manuscript for GREG relies on the identification of its named scribe, Jirjis ‘Abd al-Masīḥ ‘Abd al-Nūr al-Sirqināwī (f. 114r), a known monk and scribe from the monastery of St. Macarius. According to Ugo Zanetti, who catalogued the codices of that monastery, this scribe was active between the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.

172 The unnamed scribe from Dayr al-Suryān dates this Copto-Arabic euchologion of the three liturgies to 26 Tūt AM 1290 (= 1573 CE), as recorded on f. 218r.

(1635), **472 (1659)**,¹⁷³ **473 (1659)**,¹⁷⁴ 470 (before 1664), 474 (1666), 465 (1745), 481 (1751-1752), 485 (1784), 482 (1786), 680 (1790), 477 (before 1792), 494 (1800-1801), 493 (1800), 484 (1841), 479 (1809-1852), 480 (1809-1852), 486 (before 1865), 487 (1868), 488 (1871), 467 (1872), 489 (1881), 712 (1886), 503 (1893), 504 (1894), 500 (1886), **496 (before 1895)**.¹⁷⁵ Undated: 462, 475, 476, 478, 483, 490, 491, 492, 495, 497, 498, 499, 501, 502, 507, 508.

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173 The scribe Gabriel, a monk-priest of the monastery of St. Antony in the Eastern Desert, dates this exclusively E-BAS euchologion to 22 Bashans AM 1375 (= 1659 CE) on f. 222r. The manuscript was completed at the monastery of St. Bishoi in the Western Desert (f. 122r), where it was sponsored and initially owned by the monk-priest Filūthā’us of Dayr al-Suryān, before later being sold to the monk Yūḥannā of the same monastery (f. 132r).

174 This is also an exclusively E-BAS euchologion completed by Gabriel (the scribe of WSL472), though dated to 25 Abīb AM 1375 (= 1659 CE) and owned by Sulaymān, a monk-priest of Dayr al-Suryān (f. 49r).

175 At least four distinct scribal hands appear in this composite codex. However, the prayers under discussion come from the principal section of the manuscript and were written by what seems to be a single, anonymous scribe. A reader’s note records the date 8 Bābah AM 1612 (= 1895 CE), establishing this as the manuscript’s terminal date of production.

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Il valore del *sensus fidei* in una Chiesa sinodale

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Keywords: *sensus fidei*, *synodality*, *ecclesiology*, *Pope Francis*, *Fundamental Theology*

Abstract

The value of the sensus fidei in a synodal Church: The concept of the synodal Church is a defining image of contemporary ecclesiology, especially in the theological vision of Pope Francis, who argued that this was what God expected of the Church today. This theological approach—among many others—is extremely helpful in rediscovering the *sensus fidei* (sense of the faith) and recovering its original meaning. The *sensus fidei* is not, in itself, the articulation of a specific truth; rather, it is an experienced and lived reality. It is like a fertile soil in which the mystery of God becomes present to such an extent that it is almost tangible and experiential. In this way, the believer can identify with it so deeply that within it they discover Light, Truth, and ultimately the Meaning of their life. This is a possibility open to every baptized person created in the image of God: to awaken within the Church to the truth of God that brings inner peace (LG 12).

1. *Introduzione*

Nell'accogliere la verità su Dio, oltre alla grazia dello Spirito Santo, diverse sono le componenti che rivestono un'importanza imprescindibile: la presenza scritta o addirittura orale della rivelazione

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divina, gli appigli costruttivi della sacra tradizione, e un ruolo significativo è giocato anche dalla inestimabile potenza della Chiesa e delle comunità che fanno parte di essa. Il discepolo amato, l'apostolo ed evangelista Giovanni, dice questo a coloro che gli sono stati affidati: "Voi avete ricevuto l'unzione dal Santo, e tutti avete la conoscenza. [...] E quanto a voi, l'unzione che avete ricevuto da lui rimane in voi e non avete bisogno che qualcuno vi istruisca [...] la sua unzione vi insegna ogni cosa".¹ Questo pensiero dell'apostolo ci rafforza certamente a considerare – insieme a molti altri fattori – che cosa significhi il senso con cui un credente è in grado di accogliere il Vangelo, la buona novella, l'insegnamento divino, il "deposito della fede", e di distinguerlo nella dimensione di ciò che l'autentico insegnamento cristiano significa nella sua vita come via della salvezza.

Il senso della fede è un tema molto attuale anche oggi, ma a mio avviso non si tratta solo di una questione oggettiva, bensì di un modo di vedere e di affrontare le cose che vengono espresse attraverso il servizio responsabile di una persona che vive la propria fede, naturalmente sempre sotto la guida dello Spirito Santo. La Commissione Teologica Internazionale, nel suo documento sul *sensus fidei*,² lo definisce così: "Esso è la fonte vivificante della nuova evangelizzazione, che è uno dei compiti più importanti della Chiesa del nostro tempo".³

Possiamo vedere come l'audace e significativa affermazione del Santo Padre Francesco sia in linea con quanto sostenuto dal teologo Salvador Pié-Ninot, il quale ha attirato l'attenzione sul fatto che il senso della fede, con la sua scoperta, o più precisamente la sua reinterpretazione, nel Concilio Vaticano II,⁴ è in grado di offrire delle sollecitazioni

1 Cfr. 1 Gv 2, 20.27.

2 Commissione Teologica Internazionale, *Il sensus fidei nella vita della Chiesa*.

3 Cfr. Papa Francesco, *Esortazione Apostolica Evangelii Gaudium*, 119-120.

4 Riguardo il tema del *sensus fidei* nell'interpretazione del Concilio Vaticano II vedi due articoli del noto teologo, Vitali, *Sensus fidelium e opinione pubblica nella Chiesa* (2001) e Idem, *Universitas fidelium in credendo falli nequit* (2005).

a diversi ambiti della teologia del nostro tempo. Come egli afferma, “il tema del senso della fede ha agito da lievito per la riscoperta della tradizione della ‘sinodalità’ e dei meccanismi di consultazione che si sono resi necessari a vari livelli dell’organizzazione ecclesiale, e per la formulazione ecclesiastica della responsabilità dei laici”.⁵ Potremmo domandarci: che cosa significa tutto questo?

2. Una Chiesa sinodale

Un credente cattolico vede e sperimenta che la Chiesa, la sua propria Chiesa, sta cambiando molto. Questa Chiesa, che si trova in una fase di cambiamento, è soprattutto una comunità che vuole rivolgersi a tutti. Questa è quell’apertura che, in un certo senso, è già cominciata con il Concilio Vaticano II, specialmente con l’uso corretto del concetto di “cattolicità”. Come leggiamo in LG 13:

In virtù di questa cattolicità, le singole parti portano i propri doni alle altre parti e a tutta la Chiesa, in modo che il tutto e le singole parti si accrescono per uno scambio mutuo universale e per uno sforzo comune verso la pienezza nell’unità. Ne consegue che il popolo di Dio non solo si raccoglie da diversi popoli, ma nel suo stesso interno si compone di funzioni diverse.⁶

Molti, però, percepiscono questo cambiamento e il conseguente arricchimento ancora come qualcosa di molto estraneo, e anzi ne hanno paura, perché nella nostra comprensione della Chiesa essa è, innanzitutto, una Chiesa chiusa in se stessa, ed è “difficile darle consigli, e avere voce nella sua realizzazione terrena”.

⁵ Cfr. Pié-Ninot, *A hitérzék* (2014), 122.

⁶ Vedi anche tutta la teologia complessa del Concilio riguardo al tema del “popolo di Dio”. “Dottrina del sensus fidelium e modello di Chiesa-popolo di Dio sono correlativi” – dice chiaramente il teologo Vitali. Cfr. Vitali, *Universitas fidelium* (2005), 626.

Ma la Chiesa di Dio è stata convocata nel sinodo. Questo può essere interpretato o come un compito oppure come un'opportunità ancora da scoprire o meglio da accogliere, e penso che solo dopo che il sinodo si è concluso saremo in grado di capirlo.

Ricordiamo le prime parole del pontificato di Papa Francesco, pronunciate dalla loggia di San Pietro la sera del 13 marzo 2013, subito dopo la sua elezione: “E adesso incominciamo questo cammino: vescovo e popolo. Questo cammino della chiesa di Roma, che è quella che presiede nella carità tutte le chiese. Un cammino di fratellanza, di amore, di fiducia tra noi.”⁷ Il Papa ha utilizzato per tre volte la parola “cammino”. Come ricorda la Commissione Teologica Internazionale, “cammino” fa parte della radice della parola greca *synodos*, che, composta dalla preposizione *syn-* e dal sostantivo *bodos*, indica il cammino che i membri del popolo di Dio percorrono assieme.⁸ Mettendo in relazione queste due considerazioni, ricaviamo che “cammino sinodale” significa discernimento e ricerca della volontà di Dio, non soltanto a titolo personale, ma come comunità cristiana, in coerenza con il suggerimento di Giovanni Crisostomo: “Chiesa è nome che sta per sinodo”.

Ormai già da diversi anni possiamo constatare che la sinodalità non è solamente la parola-chiave del pontificato di Papa Francesco, ma è anche il fondamento della sua prospettiva ecclesiologicala: si tratta, infatti, di un'ecclesialità sinodale. Come egli stesso dice: “Il cammino della sinodalità è il cammino che Dio si aspetta dalla Chiesa del terzo millennio.”⁹ In sintesi, possiamo dire che la sinodalità è la dimensione costitutiva della Chiesa che è il popolo di Dio.

7 Primo saluto di Papa Francesco, 13 marzo 2013. Cfr. Madrigal, *Che cosa è il cammino sinodale? Il pensiero di Papa Francesco*.

8 Cfr. Commissione Teologica Internazionale, *La sinodalità nella vita e nella missione della Chiesa*, 1-3.

9 Cfr. Papa Francesco, *Commemorazione del 50° anniversario dell'istituzione del Sinodo dei vescovi*. Un articolo molto importante e utile per comprendere il contesto della questione: Rush, *Dei Verbum and the Roots of Synodality* (2023).

3. *La sinodalità fa riscoprire e fa risvegliare il sensus fidei*

Secondo Papa Francesco l'apertura (direi, il cambiamento ecclesiologico) che inizia, in qualche modo, proprio con il Concilio Vaticano II, il cui pegno è la suddetta cattolicità-universalità, realizzata soprattutto nella collegialità episcopale degli ultimi decenni, deve essere integrata nel cammino e nella riflessione sinodale con una verità forse ancora più importante, vale a dire “vige fra tutti una vera uguaglianza riguardo alla dignità e all'azione comune a tutti i fedeli nell'edificare il corpo di Cristo.”¹⁰ Si tratta della dignità, del ruolo profetico e della vocazione dei fedeli battezzati.¹¹ Secondo questa prospettiva, la sinodalità non è primariamente una mobilitazione campestre del laicato cattolico, ma piuttosto il modo di vivere della comunità dei credenti (in quanto popolo di Dio), nella quale svolge un ruolo primario il “senso della fede” (*sensus fidei*), che si rinnova sempre grazie ai diversi doni dello Spirito, alle diversità infinite delle creature, alla ricchezza di culture, credenze, esperienze ed interpretazioni.¹²

4. *Ma che cosa è questo senso della fede, cioè il sensus fidei?*

La risposta è piuttosto complessa. La questione del senso della fede nella storia della teologia,¹³ pur con accenti diversi, ha sempre avuto

¹⁰ LG 14.

¹¹ Secondo Dario Vitali „la novità di LG 12 non sta tanto nei contenuti, che ribadiscono una dottrina ampiamente attestata dalla tradizione teologica, ma nella collocazione: la scelta di introdurre un capitolo sul popolo di Dio che, precedendo le distinzioni di stato e di funzione nella Chiesa, facesse risaltare la radicale uguaglianza di tutti i membri del popolo di Dio, determina una radicale messa in questione del modello piramide dell'ecclesiologia pre-conciliare, fondato sulla distinzione tra Ecclesia docens e Ecclesia discens.” Vitali, *Universitas fidelium* (2005), 617.

¹² Cfr. *Szinodalitás: folyamat – stílus – struktúra*. Cfr. ancora Rush, *Dei Verbum and the Roots of Synodality* (2023), 570.

¹³ Cfr. Burkhard, *The “Sense of Faith” in History* (2022).

un contenuto significativo. La teologia dei primi secoli, l'età patristica, amava parlare di “vista del cuore” e di “occhio dell'anima”, il che significa una “fede che vede”.¹⁴ In questo senso, troviamo anche l'idea che il senso della fede sia quasi sinonimo di un atteggiamento: “sentire con la Chiesa”. Oppure possiamo vedere che il senso della fede aiuta a definire che il contenuto rivelato della fede non può essere che quello che “ovunque, sempre, e tutti hanno creduto”, nella accezione di un *consensus fidelium*.

Nel XX secolo due tendenze ecclesiali hanno ispirato in modo significativo l'approfondimento della teologia del senso della fede. Da una parte, il movimento mariologico, che ha sottolineato quanto strettamente e reciprocamente correlati siano lo sviluppo del dogma e il senso della fede; dall'altra parte, il ruolo importante della voce del fedele laico che aiuta a sottolineare il rapporto stretto tra il *sensus fidelium* e la funzione profetica dei battezzati.

Il Concilio Vaticano II – oltre a numerose citazioni – nella sua costituzione dogmatica LG 12 parla direttamente “del senso della fede e dei carismi nel popolo di Dio”. Cito:

La totalità dei fedeli, avendo l'unzione che viene dal Santo, non può sbagliarsi nel credere, e manifesta questa sua proprietà mediante il senso soprannaturale della fede di tutto il popolo, quando “dai vescovi fino agli ultimi fedeli laici” mostra l'universale suo consenso in cose di fede e di morale. E invero, per quel senso della fede, che è suscitato e sorretto dallo Spirito di verità, e sotto la guida del sacro magistero, il quale permette, se gli si obbedisce fedelmente, di ricevere non più una parola umana, ma veramente la parola di Dio, il popolo di Dio aderisce indefettibilmente alla fede trasmessa ai santi una volta per tutte, con retto giudizio penetra in essa più a fondo e più pienamente l'applica nella vita.

¹⁴ Cfr. Pié-Ninot, *A hitérzék* (2014), 116-118; cfr. anche: Commissione Teologica Internazionale, *Il “sensus fidei”*, cap. 2.

Il senso della fede, direttamente, non afferma verità a sé stanti e non intende realizzare uno stato di cose proclamando certe verità, ma esprime un'esperienza. Si tratta di un "vissuto"¹⁵ – come lo definisce il gesuita Zoltán Alszeghy. Si tratta di una conoscenza impregnata di esperienza, quando viaggiando si conoscono certi paesi o sperimentando si scopre una legge della natura. Questo dinamismo tra verità ed esperienza può dare origine ad una spiritualità ad esso corrispondente. Anzi, mi riferisco alle parole di Alszeghy: "Una teologia, pensata e vissuta a fondo, crea una spiritualità, e una spiritualità sviluppata anche nella vita intellettuale soggettiva, orienta nella scelta di una scuola teologica."¹⁶ Qua si colloca la riflessione sul vero senso della fede. Il battezzato-credente, inserito nella vita di Cristo come il tralcio nella vite, partecipando ai pensieri e ai sentimenti del Signore, sarà capace di giudicare tutta la sua vita.¹⁷ "Il senso della fede è proprio questa capacità di riconoscere l'esperienza intima dell'adesione a Cristo e di giudicare tutto, in base a questa intelligenza."¹⁸ La partecipazione intima alla vita di Cristo costituisce l'essenza delle "cose spirituali". Il credente "sperimenta" una "intelligenza" del mistero a cui partecipa. Secondo me, qui si trova la possibilità e anche il punto cruciale dell'incontro tra *sensus fidei* e liturgia, tra il senso della fede e il vivere in modo liturgico.¹⁹

5. Il sensus fidei nel processo sinodale promosso da Papa Francesco

Nell'attuale processo sinodale possiamo sperimentare una chiara riscoperta della teologia e della pratica del *sensus fidei*, soprattutto attraverso l'enfasi sulla teologia del popolo di Dio e sul ruolo delle chiese

15 Cfr. Alszeghy, *Il senso della fede e lo sviluppo dogmatico* (1987), 144.

16 Ibid.

17 Cfr. I Cor 2, 15.

18 Cfr. Alszeghy, *Il senso della fede* (1987), 144.

19 Sul cammino del *sensus fidelium* nel pos-concilio cfr. Vitali, *Universitas fidelium* (2005), 616-627.

locali.²⁰ Oggi, il senso della fede, nella misura in cui viene considerato alla luce della sinodalità, è concepito come una dinamica spirituale che attiva la partecipazione corresponsabile di tutti i soggetti ecclesiali – *christifideles* – in relazione all’intero sviluppo della vita e della missione della Chiesa, e non solo al deposito della fede o alla dichiarazione dei dogmi. Questa dinamica, però, è una dinamica comunicativa, di cui fa parte anche la *restitutio*. Ciò significa restituire ciò che è stato ascoltato e che è oggetto di discernimento da parte di tutti e da parte di ciascuno nelle chiese locali e sulla base della loro realtà. Questo discernimento richiede, però, un approfondimento della dimensione pneumatologica della vita ecclesiale. Occorre comprendere che nella Chiesa non è possibile essere padroni dello Spirito, anzi al contrario – come dice anche il Concilio – “lo Spirito Santo non solo santifica e guida il popolo di Dio attraverso i sacramenti e i ministri, ma distribuisce anche i suoi doni a ciascuno come vuole, rendendolo idoneo e pronto a intraprendere varie opere o servizi, per il rinnovamento e l’ulteriore edificazione della Chiesa.”²¹ Teologicamente, questo significa che il *sensus fidei* non è un mero esercizio, funzione o attuazione di un’operazione dell’intelligenza della fede, ma è soprattutto un reale dinamismo spirituale comunitario. Questo, dunque, è il presupposto per essere chiamato da Dio come membro del suo popolo. Questa orizzontalità nasce dalla dignità battesimale.

Cercando la risposta alla questione su che cosa sia il *sensus fidei*, possiamo dire che esso indica il discernimento istintivo o “senso spirituale” per mezzo del quale il credente, che vive genuinamente la sua fede nel Vangelo, riesce a percepire intuitivamente ciò che è conforme alla Parola di Dio. Il *sensus fidei*, potremmo dire, è il buon senso del battezzato. È un dono dello Spirito Santo che riceviamo in quanto battezzati e ci rende testimoni e partecipi della funzione profetica di

20 Cfr. Luciani, *Teologia e pratica del sensus fidei* (2023).

21 LG 12.

Cristo. In virtù di questo senso della fede, il credente possiede una conoscenza intima della fede, così come è stata tramandata lungo le generazioni all'interno della Chiesa.²² In base alla dottrina del *sensus fidei fidelium*, tutti i membri della Chiesa sono soggetti attivi di evangelizzazione.

6. Come discernere le manifestazioni autentiche del sensus fidei

La Commissione Teologica Internazionale, nel suo documento intitolato “Il *sensus fidei* nella vita della Chiesa”, pubblicato nel 2014, parla direttamente e molto chiaramente di questo argomento.²³

La prima e più importante fra tutte le disposizioni è la partecipazione attiva alla vita della Chiesa. “Attiva” significa:

una preghiera costante (cf. 1 Ts 5, 17); una partecipazione attiva alla liturgia, specialmente all'eucaristia; una celebrazione regolare del sacramento della riconciliazione; un discernimento e un esercizio dei doni e dei carismi ricevuti dallo Spirito Santo; e un impegno attivo nella missione della Chiesa e nella sua diakonia. Suppone l'accettazione dell'insegnamento della Chiesa in materia di fede e di morale; la volontà di seguire i comandamenti di Dio; e il coraggio di esercitare la correzione fraterna come pure di sottoporvisi.²⁴

Significa un vero *sentire cum Ecclesia* nel suo essere in pellegrinaggio. “I soggetti del *sensus fidei* sono i membri della Chiesa che partecipano della sua vita, coscienti che »noi, pur essendo molti, siamo un solo corpo in Cristo e, ciascuno per la sua parte, siamo membra gli uni degli altri« (Rm 12, 5).”²⁵

²² Cfr. *Sinodo: Sinodalità, sensus fidei*.

²³ Cfr. Commissione Teologica Internazionale, *Il “sensus fidei”*, 87-126.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 89.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, 91.

Una partecipazione autentica al *sensus fidei* si fonda necessariamente su un ascolto profondo e attento della parola di Dio. Il *sensus fidei* è l'intelligenza della fede mediante la quale il popolo di Dio riceve "non più una parola umana, ma veramente la parola di Dio". I soggetti del *sensus fidei* sono i membri della Chiesa che hanno "accolto la Parola con la gioia dello Spirito Santo" (cfr. 1 Ts 1, 6).²⁶

Il giusto discernimento del *sensus fidei* richiede anche l'apertura alla ragione e l'adesione al magistero. I soggetti del *sensus fidei* sono i membri della Chiesa che celebrano un "culto razionale" e accettano il ruolo della ragione illuminata dalla fede nelle loro convinzioni e nelle loro pratiche. Tutti i fedeli sono chiamati a lasciarsi "trasformare rinnovando il [loro] modo di pensare, per poter discernere la volontà di Dio, ciò che è buono, a lui gradito e perfetto" (Rm 12, 1-2).

Una partecipazione autentica al *sensus fidei* richiede la santità. La santità è la vocazione della Chiesa tutta e di ogni credente. "La santità è, infatti, una partecipazione alla vita di Dio, Padre, Figlio e Spirito Santo, ed essa tiene insieme l'amore di Dio e l'amore del prossimo, l'obbedienza alla volontà di Dio e l'impegno in favore dei fratelli."²⁷ Nella storia della Chiesa, i santi sono i portatori della luce del *sensus fidei*.

Richiedendo fondamentalmente un'imitatio Christi (cfr. Fil 2, 5-8), la santità implica essenzialmente l'umiltà. Un'umiltà che è agli antipodi dell'esitazione o della timidezza; essa è un atto di libertà spirituale. I soggetti del *sensus fidei* sono i membri della Chiesa che rispondono all'appello pressante di Paolo: "Rendete piena la mia gioia con un medesimo sentire e con la stessa carità, rimanendo unanimi e concordi. Non fate nulla per rivalità o vanagloria, ma ciascuno di voi, in tutta umiltà consideri gli altri superiori a se stesso" (Fil 2, 2-3).²⁸

²⁶ Cfr. Ibid., 94.

²⁷ Ibid., 99.

²⁸ Cfr. Ibid., 103.

E, infine, un'autentica manifestazione del *sensus fidei* contribuisce a edificare la Chiesa come un solo corpo, senza alimentare nel suo seno divisioni o particolarismi.

7. Conclusione

Papa Francesco, fin dall'inizio del suo pontificato, ha aiutato a riscoprire il legame forte e profondo tra l'essere popolo della Chiesa, che è in cammino, e il *sensus fidei* dell'insieme dei battezzati. In *Evangelii gaudium* egli stesso ha così scritto:

In tutti i battezzati, dal prima all'ultimo, opera la forza santificatrice dello Spirito che spinge ad evangelizzare. Il popolo di Dio è santo in ragione di questa unzione che lo rende infallibile *in credendo*. Questo significa che quando crede non sbaglia, anche se non trova parole per esprimere la sua fede. Lo Spirito lo guida nella verità e lo conduce alla salvezza. Come parte del suo mistero d'amore verso l'umanità, Dio dota la totalità dei fedeli di un istinto della fede – il *sensus fidei* – che li aiuta a discernere ciò che viene realmente da Dio. La presenza dello Spirito concede ai cristiani una certa connaturalità con le realtà divine e una saggezza che permette loro di coglierle intuitivamente, benché non dispongano degli strumenti adeguati per esprimere con precisione.²⁹

Papa Francesco, dunque, attraverso la sinodalità ha risvegliato il *sensus fidei* della Chiesa e di tutti i credenti. E il Papa Leone XIV continua il cammino sinodale della Chiesa.

²⁹ Cfr. Papa Francesco, *Esortazione Apostolica Evangelii Gaudium*, 119.

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Verantwortung als Theosis? Emmanuel Lévinas' Ethik und die Theologie der Ikon

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Keywords: *Levinas, Visage, Icon Theology, Responsibility, Theosis*

Abstract

Responsibility as Theosis? Emmanuel Lévinas' Ethics and the Theology of the Icon: This study explores a surprising dialogue between Emmanuel Lévinas' philosophy of the *face* and the Byzantine theology of the icon. For Lévinas, the face of the Other is not a mere physical appearance but the epiphany of the Infinite, calling forth an unconditional responsibility "older than freedom". In Eastern Christian tradition, the icon—especially the face of Christ—is likewise more than representation: it is a theophanic presence, a "window to heaven", grounded in the Incarnation. Both perspectives resist reducing the face to an object, instead seeing it as the site of revelation, presence through absence, and ethical summons. While Lévinas frames this in a philosophical-ethical register and icon theology in a theological-liturgical one, each affirms that encountering the face—human or divine—opens the horizon of transcendence and calls for transformation. This convergence suggests a shared anthropology where ethics and contemplation meet in the lived experience of responsibility.

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1. *Warum das Antlitz? Lévinas und die östliche Theologie im Gespräch*

1.1. *Ein unerwarteter Dialog*

Was haben ein jüdischer Phänomenologe des 20. Jahrhunderts und die theologische Tradition der byzantinischen Ikonographie gemeinsam? Auf den ersten Blick ganz wenig. Zu verschieden sind Sprache, kultureller Kontext und nicht zuletzt die theologischen Voraussetzungen. Und doch gibt es einen Berührungspunkt, der diese beiden Denkwege miteinander verbindet: das Antlitz – eine Oberfläche, die an der Schwelle der Erfahrung Transzendenz durch ihr Verbergen eröffnet.

Für Emmanuel Lévinas ist das menschliche Antlitz mehr als eine physiologische Erscheinung.¹ Es ist der Ort, an dem das Unendliche in der Konkretheit des Anderen erscheint: “le «Tu ne tueras point» est la première parole du visage. [...] Il y a dans l'apparition du visage un commandement”.² Auch die östliche Tradition scheint etwas Ähnliches zu kennen: die Ikonen, in denen konkrete Personen, wie aus einer urzeitlichen Vergangenheit, auf uns blicken. Das Antlitz Christi in der Ikone ist keine bloße Darstellung, sondern eine epiphanische (ἐπι-φάνεια) Gegenwart. Es ist ein “Fenster zum Himmel”,³ d.h. eine Erscheinungsweise, in der Sichtbarkeit und Entzug zugleich wirksam sind, ein theophanisches Ereignis, ein Ort der Begegnung mit dem ganz Anderen.⁴

1 Cf. Bernasconi, *The Phenomenology of the Face* (2002), 77-101.

2 Lévinas, *Éthique et infini* (1982), 92-93.

3 Die Ikone als Fenster zum Transzendenten ist ein theologisches Allgemeinut der ostkirchlichen Tradition. Die ostkirchliche Tradition kennt eine Theologie der Ikone und beschreibt in ihr die Möglichkeit epiphanischer Gegenwart. Cf. Ouspensky, *Theology of the Icon* (1992).

4 Um die Möglichkeit und das dogmatische Wesen der Ikonographie geht es uns in dieser Arbeit nicht. Jedoch sind zwei Aspekte in diesem Zusammenhang

Die vorliegende Arbeit nimmt diesen zentralen Berührungspunkt zum Ausgang, um die strukturellen Analogien zwischen Lévinas' ethischer Philosophie des Antlitzes und der ikonentheologischen Anthropologie der Ostkirche herauszuarbeiten. In beiden Kontexten erweist sich das Antlitz nicht als Objekt der Anschauung, sondern als Anspruch des Unverfügbaren, als Gegenwart des Nichtgegenwärtigen, als Offenbarung. "Le visage est signification, et signification sans contexte...le visage me parle".⁵

1.2. *Warum Lévinas? Warum die Ostkirche?*

Emmanuel Lévinas (1906-1995) gehört zu den maßgeblichen Stimmen der ethischen Wende im 20. Jahrhundert.⁶ Sein Denken stellt das Verhältnis zum Anderen in den Mittelpunkt, mit einer prophetischen Radikalität, die jede Selbstgenügsamkeit des Ich zerbricht. Das Erscheinen des Antlitzes lässt niemanden unberührt. Die Verantwortung für den Anderen ist bei ihm keine freiwillige Entscheidung, sondern eine ursprüngliche Gegebenheit, "älter als jede Freiheit", d.h. sie ist logisch und phänomenologisch der autonomen Selbstsetzung des Subjekts vorgängig – was für ihn im Antlitz verankert ist.⁷

erwähnenswert: "I do not venerate matter, I venerate the fashioner of matter..." (John of Damascus, *Three Treatises on the Divine Images* I,16 [trans. Louth]) und "For the honour which is paid to the image passes on to that which the image represents..." (cf. Schaff – Wace [eds.], *The Seven Ecumenical Councils* [1900], 1022).

5 Lévinas, *Totalité et Infini* (1961), 172.

6 Emmanuel Lévinas' Denken ist geprägt von einer ungewöhnlichen Synthese philosophischer, religiöser und kultureller Quellen. Zentral sind die phänomenologische Methode Edmund Husserls und die existenzielle Philosophie Martin Heideggers, zugleich aber auch die jüdische Tradition, insbesondere die Mystik und das talmudische Ethos.

7 Cf. Lévinas, *Éthique et infini* (1982), 92-93; Critchley, *The Ethics of Deconstruction* (1992), 5-17; Peperzak, *To the Other* (1993), 56-74.

Die Ikonentheologie in den Ostkirchen – insbesondere seit dem 8. Jh. – versteht das Bild, vor allem das Urbild jeder Ikone, das Antlitz Christi, nicht als bloßes Zeichen im modernen Sinn, sondern als symbolische Realpräsenz,⁸ die in der Lehre der Inkarnation des Logos gründet. Die Ikone ist nicht dazu da, sich selbst auszudrücken, sondern um die Offenbarung aufzuschließen. In diesem Sinne ist sie kein Kunstwerk, sondern Liturgie des Sichtbaren.

Diese beiden Perspektiven – Lévinas' Ethik des Antlitzes und die Theologie der Ikone – können einander erhellen, ohne ineinander aufzugehen. Während der jüdische Denker das Antlitz als Ort des göttlichen Anspruchs beschreibt, spricht die orthodoxe Tradition vom Antlitz Christi als Ikone des unsichtbaren Gottes. In beiden Fällen begegnen wir einem endlichen, materiellen Phänomen, das auf das Unendliche verweist. Eine Gegenwart, die sich in ihrer Nichtgegenwärtigkeit zeigt.

Der vorliegende Beitrag vertritt die These, dass Emmanuel Lévinas' Begriff des Antlitzes und die ostkirchliche Ikonentheologie nicht bloß in einer losen metaphorischen Analogie zueinander stehen, sondern einer gemeinsamen epiphanischen Struktur folgen. In beiden Fällen erscheint Transzendenz nicht als Objekt des Wissens, sondern als ethischer bzw. liturgischer Anspruch, der sich der Verfügbarkeit entzieht. Aus ikonentheologischer Perspektive lässt sich die levinasianische Verantwortung daher nicht primär als moralische Verpflichtung, sondern als relationale Transformationsdynamik deuten, die im Horizont der *θέωσις*⁹ verortet werden kann, ohne in

- 8 Mit 'Real-Präsenz' meine ich nicht eine wesensmäßige Präsenz (*ὄνσια*), sondern eine energetische: Gottes Wirksamkeit (*αἱ θεῖαι ἐνέργειαι*) durch die Ikone, wodurch – im levinasischen Sinne – die Beziehung nicht Besitz, sondern Apell bleibt.
- 9 Die *θέωσις* wird in dieser Arbeit nicht als eine implizite Theologie Emmanuel Lévinas' verstanden. Ich verstehe darunter eher einen Deutungshorizont für die relationale Dynamik der Verantwortung.

eine ontologische Vereinnahmung des Anderen zu münden. Gerade in der bewussten Spannung zwischen ethischer Asymmetrie und sakramentaler Teilhabe zeigt sich eine produktive Konvergenz von Ethik und Theologie, die weder Lévinas theologisch instrumentalisiert noch die christliche Rede vom Heil auf Ethik reduziert.

1.3. Ein methodischer Zugang

Diese Arbeit versteht sich nicht als systematische Synthese, sondern als phänomenologisch-theologischer Dialogversuch. Ihr Ausgangspunkt ist es, Lévinas' Begriff des "Antlitzes" (*visage*), wie er in *Totalité et Infini* (1961) und *Éthique et Infini* (1982) entfaltet wird,¹⁰ ins Gespräch zu bringen mit zentralen Aspekten der byzantinischen Ikonentheologie, wie sie etwa bei Johannes von Damaskus, Gregor Palamas und in der liturgischen Rezeption der Ostkirchen zu finden ist.

Durch diesen Dialog hoffe ich eine unerforschte Nähe¹¹ aufzeigen zu können, die zu einem vertieften anthropologischen Verständnis führt.¹² Der Mensch ist vor allem ein Beziehungswesen. Sein Antlitz ist ein Ort der Offenbarung.

- 10 Sein Konzept des Antlitzes ist tief verwurzelt in der jüdischen Vorstellung der Heiligkeit des Anderen als Spiegel dergöttlichen Gegenwart. Die Verantwortung entsteht aus dem Blick des Antlitzes, das nicht nur körperlich, sondern vor allem ethisch und spirituell ist.
- 11 Interessant ist die Neuheit dieses Zusammendenkens auch, weil Lévinas – wenn auch auf Weise – die Tradition, Mystik und Spiritualität der Ostkirchen sehr gut kennt, wie er es in einem Interview selbst klarstellt. Lévinas, *Éthique et infini* (1982).
- 12 Ich meine damit eine Anthropologie, die den Menschen weder als bloßes Vernunftwesen unter Abwertung der Körperlichkeit, noch als reine Körperlichkeit im Sinne unserer technischen Zeit zu deuten versucht.

1.4. *Mögliche methodische Einwände*

Der hier vorgeschlagene Ansatz impliziert keinen theologischen “Turn” der Phänomenologie. Ziel ist nicht die Behauptung einer Identität, sondern das Aufzeigen einer strukturellen Analogie: Das levinasianische Antlitz bezeichnet eine ethische, die Ikone hingegen eine liturgische Epiphanie – zwei unterschiedliche Zugangsweisen, die einander erhellen, ohne zusammenzufallen.

Der Einwand, Lévinas’ Denken sei grundsätzlich anikonisch,¹³ lässt sich aus ikonentheologischer Perspektive differenzieren. Die orthodoxe Tradition versteht die Ikone nicht als Inbesitznahme des Heiligen. Die Verehrung (προσκύνησις) gilt dem Prototyp, nicht der Materie. In diesem Sinn ist die Ikone kontrollierte Epiphanie, ohne Vergegenständlichung.

Theōsis meint hier weder Moralisierung noch spirituelle Selbstoptimierung, sondern eine relationale Dynamik der Teilhabe an der Gnade, an “der göttlichen Natur”.¹⁴ Sie ist liturgisch – synergisch zu verstehen. Gott wirkt zuerst und der Mensch antwortet.

Wichtig ist jedoch, bei einer theologischen Lektüre Lévinas’ eine klare Grenze zu wahren. Sein Denken enthält keine implizite Christologie. Dort, wo die christliche Theologie das Verhältnis von Offenbarung, Inkarnation und Heil ontologisch definiert, bleibt Lévinas zurückhaltend. Ein theologisches Verständnis seines Werks bleibt daher notwendig eine Lektüre mit und gegen Lévinas. Mit ihm, insofern seine Analyse des Antlitzes die Unverfügbarkeit des Anderen so radikal formuliert, dass jede religiöse Instrumentalisierung dadurch gereinigt wird. Gleichzeitig aber auch gegen ihn, indem das Antlitz Christi und das Heilsgeschehen nicht in einer Ethik aufgehen, sondern ihren eigenen, ontologischen Anspruch bewahren.¹⁵ Diese Spannung

¹³ Zumindest im Sinne einer Repräsentation.

¹⁴ 2 Petr 1:4.

¹⁵ Cf. Lévinas, *Totalité et Infini* (1961); sowie Idem, *Éthique et infini* (1982).

verhindert, dass trotz der jeder Analogie Ethik und Theologie gleichgesetzt werden.

2. *Das Antlitz bei Emmanuel Lévinas – Die Ethik vor der Ontologie*

2.1. *Ein radikaler ethischer Anfang*

Die Philosophie des Emmanuel Lévinas markiert einen radikalen Einschnitt in die gesamte abendländische Tradition, insofern sie den Vorrang der Ontologie und ihre Neigung zur Totalität grundsätzlich in Frage stellt. An die Stelle der Suche nach dem Sinn im Ganzen tritt bei Lévinas die Verantwortung für den Anderen als ursprünglicher Ausgangspunkt des Denkens.¹⁶ Diese Wende formuliert er programmatisch in seinem Hauptwerk *Totalité et Infini* (1961), indem er die Beziehung zum Anderen als eine Beziehung zu einem Geheimnis beschreibt. Sie vollzieht sich nicht als Erkenntnis, sondern als Verantwortung, die jeder thematischen Erfassung, jedem Enthülltwerden vorausgeht.¹⁷ Diese Verantwortung ist nicht theoretisch vermittelt, sondern ereignet sich im Antlitz – im unmittelbaren, direkten und nicht reduzierbaren Blick des Anderen.¹⁸

2.2. *Das Antlitz als Offenbarung und Anspruch*

Was versteht Lévinas unter dem Antlitz (*visage*)? Es handelt sich dabei nicht um ein Gesicht im physiologischen oder psychologischen Sinn, sondern um eine phänomenologische Struktur. Das Antlitz ist das, was erscheint und sich zugleich entzieht, oder mehr noch, sich

16 Lévinas kritisiert grundsätzlich Heideggers ontologische Grundlegung des Seins zugunsten einer Ethik, die in der Begegnung mit dem Anderen wurzelt.

17 Lévinas, *Totalité et Infini* (1961), 20-60.

18 Cf. Peperzak, *To the Other* (1993), 146-166.

dadurch zeigt, dass es sich entzieht. “Le visage est présent dans son refus d’être contenu... Le visage parle”.¹⁹ Das Antlitz ist eine Erscheinung – eine Epiphanie –, ohne verfügbar zu sein. Zugleich ist es aber auch keine stumme Abwesenheit. Es spricht, noch bevor Worte artikuliert werden. Das Erscheinen des Antlitzes ist bereits Sprache.²⁰

Das Antlitz des Anderen ruft mich, bevor ich es begreifen kann. Sein Ruf kann niemals Objekt meines Wissens sein. Für Lévinas bleibt hinter dem Gesagten stets das Sagen selbst²¹ zurück. In diesem Ruf gründet das Gewissen. Der Ruf des Antlitzes ist ein Verbot – kein ontologisches, sondern ethischer Art – das mir verbietet, zu töten und zu vernichten. Es ist im Grunde die ursprüngliche moralische Tatsache schlechthin – nicht ableitbar, nicht relativierbar und nicht umgehbar.

2.3. *Die Ethik als Beziehung zur Transzendenz*

Lévinas geht aber noch weiter. Das Antlitz ist nicht nur der herausragende Ort zwischenmenschlicher Ethik, sondern der Ort, an dem Transzendenz selbst geschieht. “La trace de l’Infini, c’est le visage d’autrui”.²² Das Antlitz des Anderen eröffnet eine Dimension, die die klassische Ontologie übersteigt. In der Begegnung mit dem Anderen begegnet mir das Unendliche.²³ Es überfordert mich, kommt mir zuvor und beansprucht meine Freiheit, noch bevor diese sich selbst entwerfen kann. Die Spur Gottes²⁴ besteht letztlich darin, dass er sich im Antlitz des Anderen für mich als unerreichbares Ereignis – als ethisch erfahrbare Abwesenheitsstruktur – manifestiert.²⁵

19 Lévinas, *Totalité et Infini* (1961), 173.

20 Cf. *Ibid.*, 200-240.

21 Cf. Lévinas, *Autrement qu’être ou au-delà de l’essence* (1990), 72-75.

22 Lévinas, *Éthique et infini* (1982), 105.

23 Peperzak, *The Significance of Levinas’s Work for Christian Thought* (2000), 184-199.

24 Purcell, *Levinas and Theology* (2006), 3-24.

25 Cf. Lévinas, *Totalité et Infini* (1961), 210-220.

Dabei betont Lévinas, dass Gott nicht direkt erscheint, sondern im Antlitz des Nächsten. Transzendenz ist nicht der Gipfel eines ontologischen Systems, wie klassischerweise etwa der “unbewegte Bewegter”, sondern in der ethischen Beziehung zu finden.

Lévinas bezeichnet diese Struktur als “Transzendenz in der Immanenz”.²⁶ Der Andere ist in seiner konkreten Nähe mehr als das, was ich sehen, erfassen, wissen kann.²⁷ Er ist der Ort einer Offenbarung, die keiner religiösen Institution bedarf, und dennoch zutiefst religiös ist, eine Liturgie²⁸ in der Menschheit.

2.4. Zwischen Sprache, Blick und Gebot

Die Beziehung zum Anderen ist bei Lévinas grundlegend asymmetrisch. Ich stehe dem Anderen nicht auf gleicher Ebene gegenüber, sondern bin ihm unterstellt. Dass er mich anblickt, heißt, dass ich herausfordert bin.²⁹ Durch diese Verpflichtung unterbricht er meine Selbstbezogenheit und stellt mich unausweichlich vor eine Wahl.

Das Antlitz ist keine bloße Oberfläche, sondern ein ethisches Ereignis. Es ist ein Appell, der nach einer Antwort verlangt, die Verantwortung (*réponse – responsabilité*) heißt. Das Antlitz des Anderen ist die ursprüngliche Offenbarung des Unendlichen, die sich von der ontologischen Theologie unterscheidet. Doch diese Offenbarung

26 Um diese Konzeption in ihrer Ausführlichkeit besser zu verstehen siehe: Lévinas, *Totalité et Infini* (1961), 277-283.

27 Gerade dieses Mehr ermöglicht die ethische Beziehung, die entstehen kann, je nachdem, ob ich sie akzeptiere oder ignoriere.

28 Wenn ich im Anschluss an Lévinas das Wort “Liturgie” benutze, meine ich diesen Begriff ausdrücklich metaphorisch, und will damit keine kultische oder sakramentale Praxis, sondern die Dynamik der grundethischen Tätigkeit des einen für den anderen, die ethische Struktur des Antwortens auf den Anspruch des Anderen bezeichnen.

29 Cf. Lévinas, *Éthique et infini* (1982), 105.

hat ihren eigenen religiösen Tiefgang. Sie ist die Gegenwart des Unendlichen, das niemals in Gänze gegenwärtig sein kann und das in der radikalen Nähe des Anderen als Anderen hervorleuchtet.³⁰

3. *Das Antlitz Christi in der Ikonentheologie der Ostkirche – Präsenz, Nicht-Darstellung, Transzendenz*

3.1. *Die Ikone – nicht bloß Bild, sondern Offenbarung*

In der ostkirchlichen Tradition ist die Ikone keine Kunst im modernen Sinn. Sie ist nicht dazu da, sich selbst zu zeigen, die Intentionen des Malers auszudrücken oder Emotionen zu wecken. Ihre Präsenz ist wie ein "Fenster zum Himmel". "An icon is not a simple representation, but a manifestation of a presence."³¹ Die Ikone verweist auf eine Zeit, die keiner Gegenwart in der Geschichte angehört. Die Ikone dient als Medium, das die Erfahrung der unsichtbaren göttlichen Wirklichkeit ermöglicht.³²

In diesem Zusammenhang ist auch auf die wichtige Unterscheidung von Jean-Luc Marion hinzuweisen, die er zwischen *Idol* und *Ikone* eingeführt hat. Während das Idol den Blick bindet und ihn im Sichtbaren fixiert, eröffnet die Ikone den Zugang zu einer anderen Ordnung der Erscheinung. Die Ikone unterbricht die Logik der Verfügung und verweist über das Sichtbare hinaus, ohne aufzuhören, sichtbar zu sein. Die Ikone zeigt nicht ein Objekt des Sehens; sie verwandelt diesen Akt selbst. Der Blick wird nicht bestätigt, sondern infrage gestellt und auf eine Präsenz hin geöffnet, die gerade in der Nichtverfügbarkeit sie selbst ist.³³ Die Ikone ist kein Medium der Repräsentation, sondern ein Ort der Beziehung. Die Ikonographie gewinnt hier ihre theologische

30 Purcell, *Levinas and Theology* (2006), 85-110.

31 Ouspensky, *Theology of the Icon*, vol. 1 (1992), 49.

32 Bulgakov, *Icons and the Name of God* (2012), 115-140.

33 Marion, *L'idole et la distance* (1977), 15-42.

Tiefe, nicht als Sichtbarmachung Gottes, sondern als Erfahrung seiner Präsenz, die sich als Gabe und Distanz mitteilt.³⁴

Das zentrale Element der Ikone ist das Antlitz Christi, des Erlösers. Es handelt sich nicht um ein bloßes Gesicht im physiologischen Sinn, sondern um die Offenbarung Gottes selbst, gemäß dem orthodoxen Bekenntnis zur Inkarnation des Logos, der in Jesus von Nazareth Fleisch angenommen hat. Die Ikone wird verehrt, weil sie das Antlitz des unsichtbaren Gottes zeigt, das durch das Ereignis der Menschwerdung ein für alle Mal offenbart wurde, wie Johannes von Damaskus betont:

Of old God the incorporeal and uncircumscribed was not depicted at all. But now that God has appeared in the flesh and lived among men, I make an image of the God who can be seen. I do not worship matter, but I worship the Creator of matter, who for my sake became material and deigned to dwell in matter, who through matter effected my salvation.³⁵

Eine vergleichbare christologische Zuspitzung finden wir ebenso im westlichen theologischen Denken, zum Beispiel bei Kardinal Christoph Schönborn in seiner theologischen Einführung zur Christus-Ikone. Die Ikone des Erlösers erscheint hier nicht primär als kultisches Objekt oder als religiöses Bild, sondern als eine eigenständige Form theologischer Erkenntnis, die im Inkarnationsgeschehen gründet. Weil Christus als der menschengewordene Logos die Unsichtbarkeit Gottes nicht aufhebt, sondern in leiblicher Gestalt eine Begegnung in der Geschichte eröffnet, gewinnt das Antlitz in der Ikone eine dogmatisch unhintergehbare Bedeutung. Es verweist auf die gottmenschliche Wirklichkeit, ohne diese in bloße Sichtbarkeit aufzulösen.³⁶ Damit wird die Ikone als Ort einer theologisch kontrollierten Sichtbarkeit

34 Marion, *Dieu sans l'être* (1982), 233-256.

35 John of Damascus, *Three Treatises on the Divine Images* I,16 (trans. Louth, 29-31).

36 Schönborn, *Die Christus-Ikone* (1998).

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verstanden, wo das materielle Bild nicht verfügbar macht, sondern zur Betrachtung des Unverfügbaren hinführt.

3.2. *Präsenz und Nicht-Darstellung*

Die Ikonographie vermeidet bewusst jede illusionistische Täuschung. Das Antlitz Christi in der Ikone ist keine naturalistische Wiedergabe. Es ist eine theologisch geformte Gestalt, die auf die Wirklichkeit der Inkarnation und der Theophanie verweist. Im Fleisch wird das Unendliche sichtbar, bleibt jedoch hinsichtlich seines Wesens unsichtbar. Die ikonographische Tradition strebt danach, dieses mystische Ereignis zu ergreifen und aufzuweisen. Die Ikone lässt den Betrachter nicht unberührt, sondern fordert ihn dazu auf, über das Sichtbare hinauszuschauen. Es gibt keinen ontologischen Zwang, wie bereits bei Lévinas gezeigt wurde. Der Appell bleibt aber unausweichlich, auch wenn er zurückgewiesen werden kann.

Laut Gregor Palamas (1296-1359), dem großen Vertreter der hesychastischen Tradition, sind die Ikonen durch die göttlichen Energien (*αἱ θεῖαι ἐνέργειαι*) erleuchtet.³⁷ Dadurch führen uns die Ikonen weit über sich selbst hinaus und lassen uns an der göttlichen Natur teilhaben.³⁸ Dies bedeutet, dass das Antlitz Christi in der Ikone weder Gegenstand bloßer Anschauung noch eines repräsentativen Symbolismus ist, sondern eine reale Begegnung und wirkliche Präsenz des stets Größeren und zugleich Abwesenden, eine wahre Theophanie.³⁹

37 Russel, *The Doctrine of Deification in the Greek Patristic Tradition* (2004), 156-201.

38 Cf. Gregory Palamas, *The Triads* II,3,9.

39 Cf. Ammann, *Die Gottesschau im palamitischen Hesychasmus* (2002).

3.3. Das Antlitz als Ort der Transzendenz

Die Ikone des Antlitzes Christi ist daher eine Paradoxie: Sie zeigt einen menschlichen Ausdruck, ist in ihrer Materialität erkennbar und ist zugleich das unbegreifliche Antlitz Gottes, des Unendlichen. Diese Spannung macht die Tiefe des östlichen Ikonenverständnisses aus.

Dieses Antlitz Christi öffnet dem Gläubigen die Tür zur Begegnung mit dem Göttlichen. Das Geheimnis wird dadurch zugänglich und bleibt zugleich als Geheimnis bewahrt. Der berühmte und paradoxe Satz aus dem Johannesevangelium wird hier verständlich: "Niemand hat Gott je gesehen. Der eingeborene Sohn, der im Schoß des Vaters ist, der hat ihn offenbart."⁴⁰

3.4. Begegnung und Verantwortung

Darüber hinaus ist die Begegnung mit dem ikonischen Antlitz Christi aber auch als eine ethische Erfahrung zu verstehen. Die Erfahrung der heiligen Gegenwart führt zur Verwandlung des Betrachters, wenn er den Appell ernstnimmt und im Sinne der Nachfolge und der Liebe zum Anderen auf ihn antwortet.

Die Ikone fordert dazu heraus, nicht nur zu schauen, sondern in Beziehung zu treten. Beziehung aber heißt vor allem, die eigene Selbstbezogenheit aufzugeben und die Neigung zu Wissen und zu Beherrschen hinter sich zu lassen. Die Ikone ist nicht bloß ein Objekt. Sie zeigt und verbirgt, fordert jedoch vor allem heraus, ähnlich wie bei Lévinas das Antlitz des Anderen im ethischen Verhältnis Verantwortung einfordert.

Das Antlitz Christi in der Ikonentheologie ist der Ort, an dem sich Gott in der Welt offenbart, ohne seine Transzendenz aufzugeben. Es ist die epiphanische Erscheinung des Göttlichen in der Geschichte der Menschheit.

⁴⁰ Joh 1:18.

4. *Dialog zwischen Emmanuel Lévinas und der Ikonentheologie*

4.1. *Ein gemeinsamer Ausgangspunkt: Das Antlitz als Begegnungsort*

Sowohl bei Emmanuel Lévinas als auch in der ostkirchlichen Ikonentheologie steht das Antlitz im Zentrum der jeweiligen Anthropologie und Theologie. In beiden Fällen ist das Antlitz kein bloß physisches Gesicht, sondern ein Ort ethischer und transzendenter Begegnung. Lévinas sieht im Antlitz des Anderen die ursprüngliche Quelle der Verantwortung und eine Spur der Transzendenz, aus der die ethische Beziehung hervorgehen kann.⁴¹ Die Ikone des Antlitzes Christi offenbart Gott in der Menschwerdung und lädt zur kontemplativen Begegnung ein. Beide Traditionen verweigern die Reduktion des Antlitzes auf Objektivität und verstehen es als Erscheinung des Unendlichen.

4.2. *Ethik und Theologie: Zwei Seiten einer Medaille?*

Die Ethik Lévinas' ist radikal. Sie fordert eine unbedingte Verantwortung ohne Erwartung irgendeiner Gegenleistung.⁴² Diese Verantwortung wird durch das Antlitz des Anderen ausgelöst, das mir gegenübertritt und mich ruft.

Auch die Ikonentheologie kennt eine Ethik der Begegnung, doch sie ist eingebettet in die Liturgie, in der die Verantwortung für den Nächsten als Frucht der Gottesbegegnung gelebt wird.⁴³ Die Ikone ruft nicht nur zur Verantwortung, sondern auch zur Teilnahme am göttlichen Leben, aus der sich die ethische Haltung ergibt.

41 Cf. Lévinas, *Éthique et infini* (1982), 103-105.

42 Cf. *Ibid.*, 91.

43 Cf. Gregory Palamas, *The Triads* III,1,2.

4.3. Das Antlitz als Ort von Transzendenz

Für Lévinas manifestiert sich die Transzendenz im Antlitz des Anderen, ohne dass Gott selbst direkt erscheint.⁴⁴ Die Ikonentheologie hingegen spricht vom ikonischen Antlitz Christi als Offenbarung Gottes. Hier liegt ein entscheidender Unterschied. Während Lévinas das Göttliche als "Spur" und Ursprung der Ethik in der Begegnung mit dem Anderen Menschen denkt, ist das ikonische Antlitz ein sichtbares Mysterium der Inkarnation.

Dieser Unterschied bleibt zwar grundlegend, doch schließt er Gemeinsamkeiten nicht aus, da die Grundintuition beider Ansätze darin besteht, dass das Antlitz mehr ist als das Sichtbare und Materielle. Es verweist auf etwas Jenseitiges und durchbricht unwiderruflich die reine Immanenz und das monotone Sein.⁴⁵ Es bleibt ein "Geheimnis der Gegenwart", d.h. eine paradoxe Präsenzform, die den Menschen herausfordert und zugleich übersteigt.

4.4. Asymmetrie und Verantwortung

Ein weiterer gemeinsamer Aspekt ist die Asymmetrie der Begegnung. Lévinas betont, dass die Verantwortung nicht das Ergebnis eines Dialogs oder einer Verhandlung, sondern Ausdruck radikaler Einseitigkeit ist. Das Antlitz des Anderen ruft mich an, noch bevor ich entscheiden könnte. Ich bin dabei mit einer ethischen Forderung konfrontiert, die ich nicht selbst gewählt habe. Diese Forderung sprengt den Rahmen einer einfachen Reziprozität und stellt die

⁴⁴ Lévinas selbst würde als jüdischer Denker natürlich nicht von einer Menschwerdung Gottes im christlichen Sinne ausgehen.

⁴⁵ Um die monotone Totalität des Seins auszudrücken, entwickelt Lévinas das Konzept des "Il y a": "Die Müdigkeit betrifft das Dasein (Il y a) selbst; sie ist wie eine Erinnerung an eine Verpflichtung zu existieren. In der Müdigkeit will man dem Dasein selbst entkommen." Levinas, *De l'existence à l'existant* (1978), 24-25 (meine Übersetzung).

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Beziehung auf eine andere Ebene, wo keine Gleichheit herrscht. Der Ausgangspunkt ist die unbedingte Verantwortung für den Anderen. Die Begegnung ist insofern nicht symmetrisch, als ich nicht erwarten kann oder darf, dass der Andere auf gleiche Weise reagiert oder eine gleiche Verpflichtung empfindet. Die Verantwortung liegt zuerst bei mir, sie wird mir durch sein Antlitz auferlegt, unabhängig von seiner späteren Reaktion.

In der Ikonentheologie finden wir eine vergleichbare Struktur der Begegnung. Die Begegnung mit Christus im Antlitz – etwa in der Betrachtung einer Ikone – ist ebenfalls nicht symmetrisch. Christus ist der radikal “Andere”, der mir als der Heilige und als Erlöser gegenübertritt. Sein Blick fordert eine Antwort, nicht in Form von Gleichheit, sondern von Demut, Anerkennung und Hingabe. Die Ikone wird so zu einem Fenster, das den Blick Christi auf mich wirft und mich in eine Haltung der Verantwortung und Umkehr führt. Diese Begegnung ruft nicht zur Gleichstellung auf, sondern lädt zu Demut, Vertrauen und Nachfolge ein, indem sie offenbart, dass die göttliche Liebe immer zuerst auf uns zukommt und wir darauf nur antworten können. Wir sind dieser Liebe in einem ursprünglichen Akt ausgesetzt, analog zur Erfahrung des Blicks des Anderen bei Lévinas. Begegnung und Beziehung sind nicht symmetrisch, weil wir immer schon die zuerst Angesprochenen sind.

4.5. Ethik der Kontemplation und Kontemplation der Ethik

Lévinas’ Ethik ist in ihrem Kern eine Ethik des Ansprechens, der Unterbrechung und der Verantwortung, die sich nicht im Abstrakten, sondern in der Konkretheit des Alltags und des gelebten sozialen Miteinanders von Angesicht zu Angesicht vollzieht. Das Antlitz des Anderen stellt eine unmittelbare, unüberhörbare Aufforderung dar. Es ruft mich zur Verantwortung, noch bevor ich darüber nachdenken könnte. Diese Ethik ist radikal in ihrer Einseitigkeit, denn sie verlangt eine Reaktion, die nicht auf Gegenseitigkeit beruht. Lévinas sieht in

diesem Anruf durch das Antlitz den Ursprung aller Gerechtigkeit und Menschlichkeit – eine Art Urverhältnis, das die moralische Ordnung und jedes ethische Handeln begründet.

Die Ikonentheologie hingegen entfaltet ihre Perspektive auf einer anderen Ebene, indem sie die kontemplative Dimension des Glaubens hervorhebt. Eine Ikone ist nicht bloß ein Bild, sondern ein Fenster zur Transzendenz. In der Betrachtung des Antlitzes Christi öffnet sich der Blick des Betrachters für eine Wirklichkeit, die heiligt, heilt und verwandelt. Kontemplation bedeutet hier nicht bloß passives Schauen, sondern ein inneres Eintreten in Beziehung mit dem Heiligen, ein dialogisches Verweilen vor dem Geheimnis der göttlichen Gegenwart und Abwesenheit. Die Ikone stellt dabei nicht den Betrachter in den Mittelpunkt, sondern lenkt dessen Aufmerksamkeit auf Christus als den vollkommen Anderen, dessen Licht von innen her strahlt.

Die Kontemplation der Ikone kann die ethische Haltung, von der Lévinas spricht, vertiefen, indem sie den Betrachter auf die existenzielle Bedeutung des Antlitzes aufmerksam macht: das Erblicken des Anderen als unverfügbar, als Quelle der Berufung und des Sinns; eines Anderen, der nur kontempliert und niemals verstanden, instrumentalisiert, und dadurch getötet⁴⁶ werden kann. Gleichzeitig kann die Verantwortungsethik des Lévinas die theologische Dimension der Ikone in den Alltag hinein verlängern und konkret erfahrbar machen. Die Begegnung mit dem göttlichen Antlitz darf nicht beim reinen Schauen bleiben, sondern fordert ein Handeln, ein Leben, das von Barmherzigkeit, Mitgefühl und Solidarität geprägt ist.

Diese Spannung lässt sich genauer bestimmen. Eine „Ethik der Kontemplation“ meint, dass die kontemplative Haltung – das stille Verweilen vor dem Antlitz Christi in der Ikone – unmittelbare ethische

⁴⁶ Dies ist die ursprüngliche Bedeutung des ethischen Gebots, das wir im Antlitz erkennen: „Du wirst keinen Mord begehen!“

Konsequenzen hat. In der *θεωρία*⁴⁷ wird der Mensch nicht aus der Welt herausgenommen, sondern gerade in sie zurückgeführt, und zwar als in seiner Beziehung zu den Anderen Verwandelter. Umgekehrt bezeichnet die “Kontemplation der Ethik” den Gedanken, dass jede authentische Verantwortungshandlung bereits eine Form der Gottes-Schau darstellt. Im Blick auf den Armen, den Fremden oder den Leidenden ereignet sich eine *θεοφάνεια*, ein Durchscheinen des Unendlichen. Damit stehen beide Perspektiven in einem Zirkel, in dem sich Ethik und Mystik gegenseitig erhellen. Die “Ethik der Kontemplation“ und die “Kontemplation der Ethik” beschreiben zwei Seiten derselben Medaille. So führt einerseits die kontemplative Erfahrung des Heiligen zur Einsicht in die Verantwortung gegenüber allen Anderen, während andererseits eine lebendige Verantwortungsethik die kontemplative Praxis mit Tiefe und Authentizität erfüllen kann. Beide Perspektiven ergänzen sich, indem sie die Ganzheit der menschlichen Erfahrung von Transzendenz und Verantwortung her aufzeigen.

Schließlich eröffnet sich im Dialog zwischen Lévinas und der Ikonentheologie eine Perspektive, die über Ethik und Kontemplation hinausführt: die *θέωσις*.⁴⁸ Während Lévinas die Verantwortung als einen Anspruch versteht, der mir von außen her, “älter als jede Freiheit”, auferlegt wird, sieht die orthodoxe Tradition darin den Beginn einer Vergöttlichung des Menschen. Denn wer auf den Ruf des Antlitzes antwortet, tritt in eine Dynamik ein, in der die göttliche Liebe nicht nur fordert, sondern auch verwandelt. Johannes von Damaskus schreibt, dass Gott selbst “durch die Materie mein Heil gewirkt” hat – dies meint nichts anderes als eine sakramentale Struktur der Welt, in der jede Begegnung zu einem Ort der Heiligung werden kann. Gregor Palamas spricht davon, dass die ungeschaffene Energie Gottes “die ganze Schöpfung heiligt”; diese Aussage öffnet die Möglichkeit, die

47 Ich benutze den Begriff *θεωρία* hier im Sinne vom Schau.

48 Cf. Lossky, *The Mystical Theology of the Eastern Church* (1997), 133-142.

Verantwortung für den Anderen als Teilhabe am göttlichen Leben zu begreifen.

Bevor hier die *θέωσις* ausdrücklich thematisiert wird, ist es hilfreich, die ihr zugrunde liegende Erfahrungsstruktur phänomenologisch zu klären. Marion hat hierfür den Gedanken einer *Gabe* ausgearbeitet, die sich nicht als Besitz aneignen lässt, sondern den Empfangenden gerade dadurch verwandelt, dass sie sich entzieht. Teilhabe – an der göttlichen Natur, wie auch an der Bildlichkeit einer Ikone – ereignet sich hier nicht als ontologische Erweiterung, sondern als eine Antwort auf eine Präsenz, die sich nicht festhalten lässt. Die Theosis ist daher nicht so zu verstehen, dass der Mensch Gott wird im Sinne einer ontologischen Verwandlung, sondern vielmehr so, dass er in seiner Beziehung zum anderen – zur Ikone Christi – Gott strukturell ähnlicher wird. Die Ethik wird so zur mystischen Teilnahme, und Theosis erscheint als Realität, als Liturgie des Lebens, d.h. eine ethisch strukturierte Praxis responsiver Aufmerksamkeit und als Erneuerung der Selbsthingabe.

Die vorangegangenen Kapitel haben gezeigt, dass das Antlitz bei Emmanuel Lévinas und in der Ikonentheologie der Ostkirche eine zentrale Rolle spielt – sowohl als ethisches wie auch als theologisches Symbol – im ursprünglichen Sinne dieses Wortes.

Bei Lévinas steht das Antlitz für die radikale Begegnung mit dem Anderen, die eine unbedingte Verantwortung hervorruft und das Göttliche als “Spur” im zwischenmenschlichen Verhältnis offenbart. Die orthodoxe Ikonentheologie versteht das Antlitz Christi als wahre Offenbarung Gottes, die in der Menschwerdung verankert ist und durch die Ikone erlebbar wird.⁴⁹

Diese beiden Perspektiven zeigen, dass Ethik und Theologie keine getrennten Sphären sein müssen, sondern sich in der Thematisierung des Antlitzes verbinden können – als Brücke zwischen Menschheit und Transzendenz.

49 Cf. Florensky, *Iconostasis* (1996), 33-54; 79-96.

4.6. Die Relevanz für die heutige Theologie und Philosophie

In einer Zeit, in der Pluralismus, kulturelle Vielfalt und ethische Konfliktlagen nicht nur zunehmen, sondern zunehmend unübersichtlich werden, gewinnt die hier vorgeschlagene Gegenüberstellung von Lévinas' Ethik und der Ikonentheologie eine besondere Aktualität. Sie bietet keine fertigen Lösungen, wohl aber eine Perspektive, die sensibel macht für die Tiefendimension menschlicher Begegnung. Gegenwärtige Gesellschaften sind von Kontakten zwischen Menschen unterschiedlicher Herkunft, religiöser Prägung und weltanschaulicher Orientierung durchzogen. Gerade unter diesen Bedingungen zeigt sich, dass die Frage nach dem Anderen nicht allein politisch oder rechtlich beantwortet werden kann.

Sowohl Lévinas als auch die Ikonentheologie insistieren darauf, dass dem Anderen eine Würde zukommt, die sich jeder funktionalen oder instrumentellen Bestimmung entzieht. Diese Würde erschöpft sich nicht im Status des Individuums, sondern verweist – jeweils auf unterschiedliche Weise – auf eine transzendente Dimension. Die Anerkennung des Anderen ist daher nicht bloß eine Frage sozialer Konvention oder moralischer Höflichkeit, sondern eine ethische Grundhaltung, die vorausgesetzt werden muss, wenn von einem gelingenden Zusammenleben überhaupt die Rede sein soll.

Darüber hinaus eröffnet der Dialog zwischen diesen beiden Denktraditionen einen Raum, in dem Philosophie und Theologie nicht gegeneinander ausgespielt werden müssen. Vielmehr zeigt sich hier, dass die Begegnung mit dem Anderen weder auf einen rein rationalen Diskurs reduziert werden kann noch in einer bloß innerlichen Spiritualität aufgeht. Verantwortung, Demut und das Eingeständnis eigener Begrenztheit erweisen sich als Haltungen, die sowohl ethisch als auch spirituell relevant sind. In diesem Sinn versteht sich die vorliegende Arbeit nicht als Abschluss, sondern als ein möglicher Beitrag zu einem weiterführenden Gespräch, das Differenzen nicht einebnen, sondern produktiv werden lässt.

Nicht zuletzt legen Lévinas' Denken und die Ikonentheologie nahe, die Reichweite rein utilitaristischer oder formal-rationaler Ethikmodelle kritisch zu hinterfragen. Sie lenken den Blick auf eine Verbindung von Menschlichkeit und Transzendenz, die sich nicht vollständig begrifflich einholen lässt. Gerade hier deutet sich an, dass Ethik ihre Tiefe dort gewinnt, wo sie offen bleibt für eine Dimension, die sich der vollständigen Verfügbarkeit entzieht.

5. Schlusswort

Das Antlitz erwies sich im Verlauf dieser Untersuchung nicht als ein eindeutig fixierbarer Begriff, sondern als Spannungsfigur. Es ist der Ort, an dem Nähe und Distanz, Sichtbarkeit und Entzug, Offenbarung und Geheimnis unauflöslich miteinander verschränkt sind. Im Blick des Anderen begegnet dem Subjekt eine Herausforderung, die sich weder vollständig denken noch planen lässt. Das Antlitz konfrontiert mit der Würde und Verletzlichkeit des Anderen und ruft damit eine Verantwortung hervor, die dem eigenen Wollen vorausliegt.

Gerade diese Spannung macht die besondere Bedeutung des Antlitzes aus. Es verweist über das bloß Sichtbare hinaus, ohne sich dem Konkreten zu entziehen. In dieser Hinsicht öffnet sich ein Raum, in dem ethische Verpflichtung und transzendente Erfahrung nicht getrennt nebeneinanderstehen, sondern sich gegenseitig durchdringen. Verantwortung erscheint hier nicht als äußerer Anspruch, sondern als Antwort auf eine Begegnung, die das Subjekt in seinem Selbstverständnis erschüttert.

Zugleich macht die Ikonentheologie deutlich, dass diese Erfahrung nicht auf die zwischenmenschliche Ebene beschränkt bleibt. Die Begegnung mit dem Antlitz Christi ist mehr als eine ästhetische oder symbolische Erfahrung. Sie ist eine Einladung zur Umkehr des Blicks, zur Einübung von Aufmerksamkeit, Vertrauen und Hingabe. Kontemplation erweist sich dabei nicht als Rückzug aus der Welt, sondern als eine Weise, in ihr anders präsent zu sein.

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Die Zusammenschau von Lévinas' Ethik und der Ikonentheologie legt somit nahe, Philosophie und Theologie nicht als konkurrierende Deutungsmodelle menschlicher Existenz zu begreifen. Beide tragen – auf je eigene Weise – dazu bei, die Tiefe menschlicher Beziehungserfahrung sichtbar zu machen. Ob sich diese Spannung zwischen Ethik und Transzendenz jemals auflösen lässt oder vielmehr konstitutiv bleibt, muss offenbleiben. Sicher ist jedoch, dass gerade in dieser Offenheit ein Zugang liegt, der das Verständnis von Menschlichkeit nachhaltig vertieft.

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Review of M. David Litwa, *Early Christianity in Alexandria: From its Beginnings to the Late Second Century*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, UK 2024, 223 pp.

M. David Litwa is a prolific author who publishes monographs almost every year: *Simon of Samaria and the Simonians* (2024), *The Naassenes: Exploring an Early Christian Identity* (2024), *Carpocrates, Marcellina, and Epiphanes: Three Early Christian Teachers of Alexandria and Rome* (2022), *Found Christianities: Remaking the World of the Second Century CE* (2022), *The Evil Creator: Origins of an Early Christian Idea* (2021), *Posthuman Transformation in Ancient Mediterranean Thought* (2020), *How the Gospels Became History: Jesus and Mediterranean Myths* (2019). The monograph devoted to Alexandrian Christianity in the second century—and which has not received much attention until now—is part of this series of publications. The author’s aim is clearly stated in the title of the introduction: “Rethinking Earliest Christianity in Alexandria”. According to the author: “A gloom seems to billow like a fog over the earliest Alexandrian church history, and scholars have but rarely espied more than a candle light glistening over the deep” (p. 1). At first glance, the reader might think that Litwa saw this sparkling candle and revealed its light.

The author’s choice to focus on “apocryphal”, “gnostic”, and “heretical” writings and writers seems very reasonable. But when he says that “in fact, there are considerable sources indicating Alexandrian Christian figures and movements prior to 200” (p. 2) I remain sceptical anyway. All depends on what can be stated with certainty and what remains hypothetical. If assumptions continue to prevail, it will be very difficult to dispel the darkness. Similarly, I think that the “orthodoxy vs. heresy” binary has long been abandoned by research, and currently we tend to talk more about the diversity of early Christianity, marked by all kinds of conflicts (particularly doctrinal) within the religious

reality we call “Christianity”, but also with the surrounding Greco-Roman world in different places and times.

I also don't think that Eusebius when he “did not have data for earliest Alexandrian Christianity, he chose to report his own party's late and unreliable foundation legend” (p. 7). What does exactly “his own party” mean? Mark's activity in Alexandria is a “founding myth”. It says more about the reality, power relations, and geo-ecclesiastical ambitions of the time in which it was written than about the time in which the event described is supposed to take place. Nor do I believe that the Markian myth is a “countertradition” intended to counterbalance and neutralize the Basilidean myth about Glaucias, the alleged interpreter of the apostle Peter (p. 9). In fact, it was the Basilideans who claimed that Glaucias *was* the interpreter (Clement, *Strom.* VII,106,4). We are not aware of any other sources on this subject.

The idea “that Christianity in Alexandria (...) appealed to Gentile populations in Alexandria from a fairly early period (the mid to late first century CE)” is undeniably appealing, but there is no evidence to support it. The same applies to the “multiethnic” character of the Christians of Alexandria “in the wake of the Diaspora Revolt (115-117 AD)” (p. 15). The term seems to be an anachronism for Alexandrian Christianity in the early centuries, which was undeniably Greek in culture, even if individuals may have had diverse origins. But did it really matter? Ethnicity in antiquity was not the same as in modern times.

What, on the other hand, seems quite interesting is the “distinctive character” of the Alexandrian Christian theology, which didn't emphasize a crucified Messiah. Litwa identifies six important topics, which he then attempts to find in the various authors and writings that he considers to be Alexandrian: 1) “a transcendent God”, 2) “distinct from creative agencies”, 3) “the manifestation of God as a primal Human (theandry)”, 4) “the transmigration of souls”, 5) “the rejection of corruptible flesh”, and 6) “the deification of the mind” (pp. 15-16).

While the idea itself is commendable, its implementation seems much more problematic to me. Concerning the origin of the texts considered as Alexandrian, we mostly have hypotheses (often contradictory) rather than certainties, which Litwa also acknowledges. He is absolutely right to say that “the historian is charged to make the best of hypotheses by offering the most probable interpretations of reliable evidence” (p. 16), but he doesn’t really justify his choices (see the table pp. 18-19). The reader gets the impression that the author deliberately favoured the Alexandrian hypothesis without really taking other opinions into consideration and without arguing. Thus, he rejects the *Letter of Diognetus* (“there is simply insufficient evidence, in my view, to determine provenance”) but he accept *Barnabas* (“the hypothesis of an Alexandrian provenance, in my judgment, is strong”) (pp. 16-17).

In terms of structure Litwa’s book is composed of two parts. The first one is devoted to the “Beginnings” (pp. 21-88), the second to the “Early Christian Teachers and Movements in Alexandria” (pp. 89-180). In Chapter 1 (pp. 23-32), the author presents Philo of Alexandria, “representative of all Jews in Alexandria”, and “the best window into Alexandrian Jewish Intellectual culture” (p. 23), as “Foreshadowings”. May we remain sceptical about “all Jews”?! Although Litwa devotes several pages to present Philo’s “select teachings”, and “practice of the Jewish law”, he says virtually nothing about the socio-political context in Alexandria at the time; e.g. the anti-Jewish riots in Alexandria in 38 AD is dealt with later (pp. 57-59). In Chapter 2 (pp. 33-39) he describes how “The Jesus Movement Enters Alexandria”. He rejects the idea of a Palestinian “mission” and concludes that “we do not exactly know how the earliest followers of Jesus came to Alexandria” (p. 39); which is indeed true. However, we know one of Jesus’ first Alexandrian followers, named Apollos, who is presented by Litwa in Chapter 3 (pp. 40-54). Unfortunately, there is no evidence that he was initiated into the “Way of the Lord” in his homeland. His activities tie him to Corinth,

not Alexandria. In my opinion there is no evidence that only two years after the bloody confrontation between the Jews and the Greeks in Alexandria “the Jesus movement(s) entered Alexandria early—by at least 40 CE (though probably earlier)—and swiftly appealed to educated persons in the city whether Jews or proselytes” (p. 55), as Litwa states at the beginning of the Chapter 4—“Factors Motivating Gentile Recruitment” (pp. 55-65)—and then attempts to prove it. Without knowing when and how Christianity took root in Alexandria, Litwa hypothesises “that between about 41 and 115 CE, pockets of Jesus devotees in Alexandria began distinguishing themselves from Jews by creating separate meetings with practices indicating a distinct group mentality and ritual life” (p. 65). Needless to say, we know nothing about this “ritual life”. However, this newly constructed Christian identity is supposed to be represented by *Barnabas* and two Petrine texts (*Preaching of Peter* or *Kerygma Petri*, and *Apocalypse of Peter*), as can be seen in the Chapter 5: “Crafting a Christian Identity: Barnabas and Two Peters” (pp. 66-88). In reality, *Barnabas*’ Alexandrian origin is still a possibility, not a certainty. A Syrian-Palestinian origin is also strong. Therefore, the argument remains weak. It is the same for the *Apocalypse of Peter*, not to mention the fact that the development of a Petrine tradition in Alexandria should be examined in greater depth. According to Litwa: “the Epistle of Barnabas, the *Preaching of Peter*, and the *Apocalypse of Peter* (...) testify to the fact that at least some early devotees of Jesus were—or at least aimed to be—organizationally and ritually distinct from Jewish communities in Alexandria at the time (about 100-135)” (p. 86). The problem is that after the revolt under Trajan (115-117), for a long time there would be no Jewish communities in Alexandria from which Christians would need to distinguish themselves.

In the second part of his book, Litwa moves on to the figures and writings that are thought to embody Christianity in Alexandria in the second century. They represent, he writes, “a new generation of

educated, Gentile theologians who set the pace of Christian thought in Alexandria for the next seventy years” (p. 88). Unfortunately, we know nothing about the ecclesiastical background of these figures, and we know their works only through later quotations and references (often contradictory) that tell us nothing about the socio-ecclesiastical context in which they lived and created.

In Chapter 6 Litwa presents “The Earliest Alexandrian Theologians: Basilides, Carpocrates, and Prodicus” (pp. 91-106). It seems rather difficult to say anything about their relationship with Judaism, both as a community and as a religious system of thought. The same applies to the Jewish Holy Scriptures. It is highly surprising to read “The Witness of Celsus” (p. 96-98), when there is no evidence that he ever lived in Alexandria; in fact, the opposite is most likely. We know practically nothing about Prodicus, but above all, it would have been better to distinguish this character from his followers. Can we really say that: “Basilides, Carpocrates, and Prodicus spoke of a transcendent and good God far above the Jewish creator and lawgiver” (p. 105)? We are entitled to have serious doubts about this. And the last sentence of this chapter is undoubtedly more ideological than historical: “Regardless of their later—often negative—reception history, the earliest Alexandrian Christian theologians played a vital role in the invention of the educated Christian intellectual, an ideal that helped to increase the legitimacy of early Christians as they accrued more social and intellectual capital in time to come” (p. 106). This statement certainly does not apply to the author of *Eugnostus*, but Litwa is quite right to take this text into consideration in Chapter 7 for the beginnings of Christianity in Alexandria: “*Eugnostus* and the *Wisdom of Jesus Christ*” (pp. 107-120). In Chapter 8 the author presents “Julius Cassianus and Alexandrian Ascetic Culture” (pp. 121-136) by using a rather disparate collection of texts whose date and location is subject to discussion: the *Sentences of Sextus*, the *Testimony of Truth*, the *Gospel According to the Egyptians*, the *Gospel of Thomas*, and the *Exegesis of the Soul*. Chapter 9

is devoted to “Valentinian and Marcionite Currents” (pp. 138-149). But while we know that Apelles spent some time in Alexandria, we know nothing about his activities there. In the last Chapter 10 Litwa analyses “The Naassene Preacher” (pp. 150-167) whom he locates in Alexandria and considers to be a contemporary of Clement of Alexandria.

After reading the book, I still think that the darkness is by no means exaggerated, especially since Litwa acknowledges that many of his “historical conclusions (...) remain hypothetical” (p. 19). As a result, his monograph describes what could be rather than what actually was. From a methodological point of view, it could not be otherwise. Constructing a narrative that purports to be historical based on a series of hypotheses can only be a highly hypothetical reconstruction.

In my opinion another weakness of the book is the decontextualization of Christians from their Alexandrian socio-cultural environment. One gets the impression that Christians lived in a virtual vacuum, concerned only with themselves and their competing theologies. Even the relationships between the characters and the texts under consideration remain fragmentary. We do not so much have a picture as paintbrush strokes placed side by side.

Yet, Litwa’s monograph is intellectually stimulating and enriching. He drew attention to a whole series of texts that deserve to be examined in greater detail and compared with other texts. To gain a better overview of Christianity during the first three centuries, it would be necessary to take into account almost all known works (and fragments) and figures, locate them geographically as far as possible, and use the results of network research. He is absolutely right when saying that the “Christian groups in second-century Alexandria cannot be easily separated from each other whether theologically or sociologically. Instead, a variety of independent teachers competed for attention and followers with no single circle of believers attaining clear (numerical or cultural) dominance.” (p. 16)

According to the Litwa's monograph—which concludes with an impressive bibliography (pp. 181-219) and a very useful index (pp. 221-223)—, Christians in Alexandria in the second century represented a tiny minority, relatively invisible in the city's society, but they constituted a kind of intellectual nebula ("competing groups"), with a strong social background; people who had received a good education, were capable of producing knowledge (philosophical and theological), and had a certain socio-economic foundation that made all this possible. Alexandria seems to have been a veritable melting pot of diverse Christian thinkers in the second century, but unfortunately, these figures tell us almost nothing about the Christian community itself, its organisation, or its ecclesiastical life. In this sense, we can say that—thanks to Litwa—we may know a little more about Christians in Alexandria, but we still do not know the Alexandrian Christianity as a community—or communities—in the second century. Litwa's book suggests that, due to the extreme difficulty in accurately determining the place of origin and date of the sources, it may never be possible to establish with precision the development of Christianity in the first three centuries. For certain topics, we will remain trapped in hypotheses and conjecture.

Attila Jakab

Review of Andrew Newberg, *Neurotheology: How Science Can Enlighten Us about Spirituality*, Columbia University Press, New York 2018, 321 pp.

In his monograph, titled *Neurotheology: How Science Can Enlighten Us About Spirituality*, neuroscientist Andrew Newberg provides a fifteen-chapter examination of the intersections between brain science, psychology, and spiritual traditions. The work offers a comprehensive overview of how neuroscientific data might illuminate religious experience.

Newberg begins by framing the brain as both a mediator and a constraint of spiritual experience. The opening chapters define neurotheology's scope, balancing theoretical contemplation with practical applications like meditation. He then explores the evolutionary and psychological origins of faith, utilizing neuropathology and psychedelic studies to examine the biological machinery of transcendent states. The middle section investigates the neurological basis of myths and rituals—notably drawing parallels with biological mating behaviors—and suggests that neuroimaging may eventually evaluate the nature of morality. The book concludes by addressing “big questions” such as free will and mysticism, ultimately questioning whether God reflects universal truth or a sophisticated biological illusion.

Having examined Newberg's arguments, I find several points that warrant deeper critical reflection. In what follows, I will discuss seven major points.

1. *Conceptual Confusion regarding the “Brain”*

A primary concern is Newberg's conceptually vague and often tautological use of the term “brain”. Throughout the text (occurring nearly 500 times), the “brain” is frequently treated not merely as a

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biological organ, but as an autonomous agent of thought and belief. For instance, Newberg claims that “the brain helps us have all thoughts” (p. 5) and that science and religion are “products of the human brain” (p. 9).

This usage often borders on a category error, where the “brain” (the material substrate) is used to replace “cognition” or “the self” (the subject). To suggest that “the brain strives to integrate modern knowledge” (p. 288) is as logically precarious as claiming that a “computer completed a research paper”. While the brain is the necessary biological basis for religious experience, it is not the experiencing subject itself. This confusion reaches its peak when Newberg asks, “Where exactly is consciousness located in the brain?” (p. 49). This reductionist approach echoes his earlier admission that he cannot “scientifically prove” his love for his wife (p. 21)—a query that seems as misplaced as searching for the anatomical location of “love” itself.

2. *Speculative Language and the Threshold of Scientific Validity*

Perhaps the most striking stylistic feature of Neurotheology is its pervasive reliance on hedging language. Terms such as “maybe,” “seems,” and “perhaps” appear over 400 times, creating a tone that, while intellectually humble, significantly softens the foundational claims of this “comprehensive discipline”. For instance, Newberg’s discussion of how rituals might activate specific neural components or trigger the release of neurotransmitters like dopamine and oxytocin (p. 113) remains largely speculative. While such hypotheses are vital for early-stage research, the cumulative effect of these qualifiers suggests that neurotheology’s biological premises are built more on “what might be” than “what is”. Consequently, when theological conclusions are drawn from such tentative neurophysiological data, they can hardly be presented as conclusive scientific evidence.

3. *Internal Inconsistencies and Methodological Impasse*

Newberg's argument faces several internal tensions that challenge the internal consistency of his framework:

Bridge vs. Subsumption: Initially, Newberg frames neurotheology as a neutral "bridge" intended to foster mutual enlightenment between science and religion (p. 6). However, as the book nears its conclusion, this bridge appears to transform into a replacement. His proposal of a "metatheology"—a framework supposedly devoid of specific theological content that sits above all other belief systems (p. 285)—reveals a reductionist agenda that risks subsuming traditional faith into a purely biological interpretation.

The Paradox of Evidence: A logical impasse arises in Newberg's treatment of subjective experience. On the one hand, he critiques skeptics by arguing that personal perceptions of God are "evidence" enough for the believer (p. 21). On the other, he insists that neurotheology utilizes rigorous scientific methods to validate these highly subjective phenomena (p. 46). This creates a contradiction: if spiritual evidence is beyond empirical proof, it cannot simultaneously be claimed as a subject of empirical validation.

The Constraints of Neuroimaging: Newberg's optimism regarding fMRI's potential to evaluate morality and belief is undercut by his own admission of the technology's limitations. He acknowledges that fMRI (functional Magnetic Resonance Imaging) is an indirect measure, capturing blood oxygen levels rather than consciousness itself, and requires a controlled environment unsuitable for many spiritual practices (p. 48). This gap between the complexity of morality and the indirect nature of the BOLD (Blood-Oxygen-Level-Dependent) signal remains a significant hurdle for the discipline's credibility.

4. *Evolutionary Reductionism and the Epistemic Gap*

A particularly jarring moment in the book is Newberg's evolutionary interpretation of ritual, which links sacred rites such as the Eucharist to biological mating behaviors (pp. 34, 108). While identifying biological precursors to human behavior is a hallmark of evolutionary science, suggesting that reproductive instincts provide a sufficient "foundation" for spiritual transcendence is a radical form of reductionism. This highlights a broader epistemic gap in Newberg's definitions; by relying almost exclusively on secular sources and mentioning only one theologian, Paul Tillich (p. 69), the book frames religion as an "adaptive behavior" rather than an engagement with truth. Without the internal perspective of faith, Newberg's "super-theology" risks becoming a conceptual vacuum that fails to satisfy either the rigors of science or the depths of devotion.

5. *Preserving Theological Integrity against Determinism*

Ultimately, Newberg's framework risks eroding the unique order of theological study. By characterizing the brain as the "machine" that produces faith, the author leans toward a form of biological determinism. While his insights into the limbic system's role in the sense of eternity are valuable (p. 28), his suggestion that brain region size—as seen in Neanderthals—dictates spiritual capacity (p. 107) is highly debatable. To maintain its integrity, theology must be more than a sub-field of evolutionary biology; it must remain "faith seeking understanding". If neurotheology is to be a true dialogue, it must respect the Divine as more than a neurological byproduct, ensuring that the study of the "machine" does not overshadow the sacred essence of the Soul.

6. *Theology as Faith Seeking Understanding vs. Neurotheological Chaos*

Faith must be the bedrock of theology. Most theologians operate within a specific belief system, seeking to elucidate the profound meanings of faith and apply them to life. While theological research may trigger reflection or even revision of tradition, its ultimate purpose is to understand and defend faith, not to negate it. Theologians are both practitioners and thinkers; for them, faith provides the impetus, while research provides the depth.

In Genesis, the Divine creation is defined by the transformation of chaos into clarity and disorder into order, establishing the principle of “each according to its kind”. Newberg’s neurotheology, however, seems to move in the opposite direction. By reducing highly subjective and individual matters to mere brain functions (p. 76), his approach risks turning orderly science into conceptual disorder—a regression that erodes pure faith.

7. *Practical Insights and Scientific Scepticism*

Despite these fundamental flaws, the book offers valuable neuroscientific insights that can help explain the biological correlates of religious practice. For example:

The Emotional Centres: Newberg notes that the amygdala and hippocampus link emotional responses to memory (p.23). This helps us understand how positive emotional experiences with the Divine can create lasting neurological imprints, promoting overall brain health.

The Limbic System and Eternity: The description of the limbic system as the “seat of emotions” and the temporal lobes’ role in establishing opposites (p. 28) provides a biological framework for the human sense of eternity.

However, even within these scientific sections, Newberg occasionally falls into unconvincing biological determinism. For

instance, he suggests that the enlarged frontal and temporo-parietal regions in Neanderthals “allowed” for religious thought (p.107). This raises a critical question: is it scientifically sound to equate the mere size or development of a brain region with the capacity for complex spiritual contemplation? Such reasoning remains speculative at best.

After engaging with Newberg’s work, one is left with several unsettling and fundamental questions: These concern 1. the nature of the discipline: Is neurotheology truly a bridge between two worlds, or is it an attempt to subsume theology into a purely materialist science? Then, 2. the leadership of the movement: Is this field led by pious theologians seeking deeper truth, or by atheistic scientists? Can it be likened to a new Reformation, led by figures such as Wycliffe, Luther, and Wesley, who sacrificed themselves for the sake of Divine truth—or is it something else entirely? Again, 3. purpose and function: Is the goal of neurotheology to help people establish a faith grounded in truth, or does it serve to dilute faith, gradually diminishing the awareness of sin and leading toward total secularization? And finally, 4. the ultimate objective: Does neurotheology utilize the discoveries of neuroscience to glorify God’s name and unveil the mysteries of His creation, or does it seek to prove that God is merely one of many neurological illusions, existing on the same plane as any other subjective spiritual experience?

Wang Lijin

